
Legend of the Five Rings
Enemies of the Empire



Legend of the Five Rings RPG, 4th Edition: Enemies of the Empire

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空の巻

Enemies of the Empire

Doji Kitaro could not keep the grin from his face as he regarded the vast expanse of forest before him. His horse nickered anxiously, but he clucked his tongue and patted it along the flank, soothing its anxiety. It had dwelt in the wild as a foal and, while completely domesticated, still showed a fear of predators from time to time. Perhaps when Kitaro returned to the Imperial City he would speak to the stable master about trying to cure such behavior, but for now it was a minor annoyance at most. This was too momentous a day to allow such petty concerns to trouble him.

Riding next to him on a young pony, Kitaro's valet-in-training whistled under his breath. "Fortunes!" the boy whispered. "It goes on forever!"

Normally Kitaro would chide the boy for speaking out of turn, but today he could only grin wider. "Is it not impressive, Ito?" he asked.

"It is amazing, my lord!" Ito answered. "I have never seen anything like it!"

"There is nothing like it," the Crane magistrate answered with a nod. "This is the Shinomen Mori, the greatest forest in the world."

Ito nodded eagerly, stopping in mid-nod to settle the falcon on his wrist, which stirred lightly at the motion. The boy whispered something to it, stroking the feathers of its neck to calm it. Kitaro had seen many masters before that could not so easily quiet the restless spirit of a raptor. That was the principle reason he had taken Ito on as a vassal despite the boy's many other failings. He had caused some minor embarrassment here and there with his outbursts in social settings, but it was well worth it for his amazing gift with the birds.

Falconry was Kitaro's passion. He devoted every possible moment to it when he could do so without forsaking his duties as a magistrate in the Imperial City. It was an interest he had inherited from his late father, and the private aviary he maintained within the city was in his father's memory. It brought his mother great joy to visit it and remember.

"My lord," a voice came from behind them, "I must please repeat my request. Do not do this. The forest is not safe."

Kitaro rolled his eyes, drawing a slight snicker from the boy at his side. To Ito's credit, he stifled the noise at once and resumed a calm expression. The boy was learning, the Crane thought. "We have discussed this already, Hikaru," he said loudly. "What can there be in the forest to threaten experienced hunters like ourselves?"

"If your question is a legitimate one, Kitaro-sama," Shinjo Hikaru replied, "then there are any number of accurate answers. Foremost among them, in my opinion, are the Naga."

"The serpent men?" Kitaru scoffed. "What do we have to fear from myth and superstition? Really, Hikaru, I thought you were more practical than that."

"My father laid eyes upon the ruins himself," Hikaru said, a hint of defensiveness in his voice. "The Naga were a warrior culture, and there may be sentries remaining who will defend the ruins. This is their domain, not ours."

"It is the Emperor's domain," Kitaro corrected. "And I do not fear anything as ridiculous as whisperings of serpent-men."

"As you wish," Hikaru observed. "There are also the Nezumi, rat-like creatures that I heard of and witnessed during my training with the Hiruma family of the Crab Clan. They are little more than animals, but cunning warriors just the same. The Hiruma think they have warrens within the forest as well."

"The Hiruma see specters in every shadow," Kitaro said. "That is the sad effect of their duty, which they perform valiantly," he added, seeing Hikaru's face darken. "I find the likelihood of any such rat... things... fairly low."

"There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of historical records indicating the emergence of spirits, unidentified animals, or even oni from the forest," Hikaru said. "There are scholars among my clan who have made it their sole purpose to study and catalogue these incidents. I have among them a cousin. He has spoken to me about the matter at length, given that I have been assigned as a scout in this region in the past."

"And that, of course, is why I asked you to accompany me to the forest," Kitaro said with a smile. "I'm quite grateful you agreed, of course, but now that we're here, if you would feel more comfortable elsewhere, you are of course free to go. Your colleagues are all on leave, and I would not deprive you of that if you wish to be elsewhere."

The young Unicorn samurai frowned. "I do not think that would be wise, my lord. I would be greatly uncomfortable at that thought of you in such dangerous surroundings without some manner of escort. If something were to happen to you, which I must confess is relatively likely, I would be unable to forgive myself for your death." He shook his head. "No, my lord, this is a matter of honor."

Kitaro forced a smile. "As you like, then." He turned to Ito. "Be careful to unhood the falcon only when we have game clearly in sight. Hunting in the forest is vastly more difficult than you are accustomed to, and this forest is, as Hikaru says, quite unlike any other, and possibly dangerous."

"I will be careful, Lord Kitaro."

The Crane smiled. "Very well, then. Let us begin."

"If I may, my lord," Ito said cautiously. "What of the tales of... of doorways between worlds?"

Kitaro chuckled. "Spirit portals? Such things are rare indeed, little one. You have nothing to fear here."

"Some believe that is the origin of the forest's more unusual and varied denizens," Hikaru observed. "Impossible to prove, of course."

"Do not alarm the boy with superstition," Kitaro cautioned, irritation in his voice for the first time. "I came to hunt, and by the Fortunes that is what I am going to do. Now, are you with me or not?"

Kitaro rode into the Shinomen Mori, Ito and Hikaru following behind.



Welcome to **Enemies of the Empire**, the first sourcebook for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition! Modern role-playing tradition is for the first book of a new line to introduce lots of inhuman creatures for your adventurers to fight and kill in order to gain glory in the name of their lord (or in other games, to gain their treasure, but we don't worry too much about that here). With Enemies of the Empire, we have tried to go a little bit farther, and introduce not only the creatures that populate the Empire, but also the people that the samurai of the Great Clans are likely to encounter in their travels. This book contains mundane creatures, the denizens of the spirit realms, the twisted inhabitants of the Shadowlands, the alternately bitter and noble ronin, and everything else in between. Within these pages you will find everything you need to place obstacles and challenges in the path of your players, ensuring that whatever their journey may be, it will not be an easy one.

This is not simply a book of opponents, however. Enemies of the Empire also presents the information necessary to customize the forces described within, making each enemy unique. Of more interest to players, however, is the information available on character mechanics. Players interested in playing falconers and hunters will find information they need in the Bestiary chapter, while those with a yen to play a wave man will find a wide variety of options available to them in the Ronin chapter. Spider Clan fans will discover more than they dared hope for in the chapter on the Lost, while those more interested in the supernatural aspect of the setting may wish to play a shape-changing spirit as described in the Spirits chapter.

Welcome to Enemies of the Empire. We hope Rokugan just got a lot more interesting.

Gauging the Threat

One consideration for all GMs to keep in mind is attempting to challenge players without brutally massacring them in an incidental encounter that was meant to be little more than a distraction on the road to the greater plotline. With its greater emphasis on narrative storytelling than on absolute mechanical equilibrium, this can be a difficult proposition with *Legend of the Five Rings*. However, the 4th Edition Design Team is acutely aware that, while the occasional TPK ("total party kill") can make for powerful stories, it is also a bit of a buzzkill and can severely limit ongoing campaign options. With that in mind, there are means of approximating the danger level posed by a potential enemy.

- Insight Rank – For human opponents, the best and most accurate means of gauging an opponent's potential threat level is by its Insight Rank. This measure determines the individual's overall level of growth by means of his Rings and Skill Ranks, not to mention access to Techniques. For opponents with access to Techniques, comparing his Insight Rank to that of the party will give a relative measure of equality, although the 25 point increments on which Insight Ranks are measured still means that there can be some variance among individual ranks. For opponents without access to Techniques, like some ronin, an equal Insight Rank can indicate that there is a potential advantage, however slight, on the part of the characters. This is probably a beneficial thing, as allowing freshly-made characters a slight advantage over their enemies can increase enjoyment of the game and provide opportunities for the characters to be successful early in their careers.
- Attack & Damage Rolls – The hallmark of any combat is the attack and damage combination. On equally balanced opponents, these should be relatively equal, barring a strange combination of opponents such as a bushi and courtier. If these qualities are roughly equal, then the two opponents have roughly the same ability to strike and damage opponents. An enemy with a lower attack roll but higher damage indicate that it will not be able to strike them regularly, but when it does, the effects will be drastic and immediate. A higher attack roll with lower damage indicates a superior ability to hit with whittling strikes that will gradually erode the characters' ability to function. Ideally, for an even match, the two will have similar rolls. However, be certain to account for other factors as described below.
- Wounds – A battle between evenly matched opponents can often be determined by which one has the greater ability to endure the combat without succumbing to its wounds. For human opponents, this is rarely a complicated matter, as most have Wounds that are very similar at similar Insight Ranks. A creature with increased durability requires a party with above average damage production abilities in order to ensure a fair fight. When comparing Wounds, in particular one should take into account abilities such as Reduction and Regeneration, which make it even more difficult to produce the amount of damage needed to end the encounter conclusively.
- Supernatural Abilities – This is the broadest and most complicated factor to take into account when trying to gauge the relative threat level of an enemy. An opponent who has attack rolls, damage rolls, and wounds that are in keeping with the characters' abilities can completely outmatch them by simple dint of having supernatural capacities. This may be something as simple as Reduction that cripples a party's ability to damage the creature, or it may be the ability to cast spells in a manner equal to shugenja that brings it in line with the party's shugenja as well as its bushi. Unfortunately there is no hard and fast rule about how this should be gauged, as it will vary quite a bit from opponent to opponent. Oni, for instance, have an incredibly broad range of abilities.




空の巻

Bestiary

Verdant forests, windy plains, dramatic mountain vistas and forbidding swamplands, all of these and more can be found within Rokugan's borders, and all are home to a great variety of wild animals. Rokugan is one of the most civilized areas of the world, but its people have great reverence for the natural world, and thus the beasts of Rokugan thrive. The lands governed by the Great Clans of Rokugan cover an enormous area, and each includes multiple types of terrain. A brief summary of the more prominent terrain in each clan's holdings follows.

The Crab Clan borders the Shadowlands and much of its territory is blighted and lifeless. However, there is still plenty of land that remains fertile and energetic. Crab Clan lands include plains, forests, and swamplands, as well as the Wall Above the Ocean and Twilight Mountains and a considerable amount of coastline. Animals common to their territory include badgers, bears, boars, crocodiles, falcons, goats, and stags.

The beautiful and extensive lands of the Crane Clan are lush and green, with many rolling hills and only a few forests. The Crane holdings are predominantly coastal and as such have plenty of open fields and farmlands, although they also control some coastal mountains as well. Common animals in their territory include bats, crane, eagles, foxes, oxen, and stag.

The Dragon Clan controls mainly mountainous and forested regions, although they do have some limited plains in the foothills of their lands. Common animals in their territory include badgers, boars, bears, falcons, foxes, goats, tigers, monkeys, and in the plains, oxen.

The open savannahs of the Lion Clan are the only place where the Rokugani lion can be found with any frequency, and even here they are uncommon; were it not for the protective efforts of the Lion Clan, the noble beasts would surely be extinct. Lion lands are noted for their rich supplies of game. Common to their territory are bears, boar, eagles, falcons, hares, stags, and wolves.

The Islands of Silk and Spice are Rokugan's most unique habitat. Many animals that live in the jungles of the Mantis Clan are found nowhere else in the Empire – for which those who visit from the mainland are profoundly grateful. Common inhabitants of the islands include apes, bats, crocodiles, monkeys, snakes, and a great variety of exotic birds.

The chilly mountains and forests of the Phoenix Clan are incredibly dense with life despite the long winter season and abundant snowfall. Common animals in their territory include badgers, boars, bears, eagles, falcons, foxes, monkeys, oxen, stags, and wolves. Tigers also sometimes cross the mountains to prey on the rich land.

The Scorpion Clan dwells in a dangerous area, for in addition to wooded hills and barren plains, the Scorpion oversee numerous dense forests, strong rivers, and dangerous swamps. Common animals in their territory include badgers, bears, falcons, foxes, oxen, snakes, stags, and wolves.

The vast open plains of the Unicorn Clan stand in contrast with the northern reaches of the Shinomen Mori, the largest forest in the world, that occupies their southern border. Horses are of course extremely common in their territory, as they maintain vast herds on their rolling grasslands. Natural animals include bears, boar, eagles, foxes, hare, monkeys, oxen, snakes, stags, and wolves, as well as occasional tigers from the north.

Fighting Underwater

Samurai face many dangers, and among these is the problem of fighting in or under the water. This may be a fight against a dangerous aquatic animal, an aquatic Shadowlands monster, or even an enemy samurai. Obviously, the greatest danger of fighting in the water is the threat of drowning, as outlined in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook. Moreover, fighting in the water will weigh down the limbs and weaken blows. The GM can make water-bound fighting more difficult for the characters in a variety of ways, such as by raising TNs (especially for larger or clumsier weapons) or forcing the PCs to use Strength (or as they tire, Stamina) in place of Agility for their attack rolls. The GM might also consider inflicting stronger penalties on combatants who do not have the Swimming emphasis of Athletics.

Needless to say, aquatic creatures such as sharks and crocodiles do not suffer any penalties while fighting in the water.

New Mechanics

While most members of the samurai caste have very little to do with animals outside of horseback riding, there are notable exceptions. In the domain of war there are the famed Matsu Beastmasters, known for using lions as weapons of war, and the notorious Unicorn-trained war dogs. Outside of war, it is not uncommon for a samurai to train a falcon as a hunting companion. Falconry is seen as an honorable and worthwhile pursuit and can come in handy during diplomacy, since hunting competitions are common diversions at many courts.

New Advantage – Inheritance: Trained Falcon [Material] (2 points, 1 point for Toritaka characters)

You are in possession of a trained hunting falcon, the most recent of a long line of carefully bred hunting animals maintained by your family's falconry experts. This falcon is an exceptional specimen, and increases the number of Wounds it can sustain at each level by 5. It also rolls one additional die when making an attack. (The stats for a falcon can be found in the *Book of the Void* of the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition.)

Beasts of Rokugan

Ape (Ozaru)

Apes are large manlike animals, covered in fur, with high intelligence; some breeds are known to be able to utilize crude stone or wood tools. They are common in the jungles of the Isles of Silk and Spice, and sometimes appear on the mainland as well, albeit much more rarely. Apes are not overtly aggressive, but they will defend any intrusion into their territory, and a perceived threat to their dominance will be met with brutal retaliation. Any warrior would consider it foolish to face an enraged ape without weapons.

The stats below represent a typical medium-sized ape. GMs may depict larger specimens by increasing the Earth Ring, Strength Trait, and Wounds.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Smash 5k4 (Simple) or Bite 4k4 (Complex)

Damage: 5k2 (smash) or 3k3 (bite)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 4

Wounds: 10: +5; 20: +10; 30: +15; 40: Dead

Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 1*

Badger (Anaguma)

Badgers are small predators with nasty dispositions. While they are not physically imposing, badgers are known for their sharp claws and vicious bites. They do not go out of their way to attack humans, but a cornered or trapped badger will fight with a ferocity matching that of a samurai. Badgers are found in all areas of the Rokugani mainland.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 2	Stamina 2	Agility 3	Strength 2

Initiative: 2k2

Attack: Claws 3k2 (Simple) or Bite 2k2 (Complex)

Damage: 1k1 (claws) or 2k2 (bite)

Armor TN: 10

Wounds: 12: +10; 20: Dead

Bat (Koumori)

Bats are usually seen as a good omen in Rokugan, since they eat insects such as mosquitoes which are often believed to be a form of Gaki. Bats are nocturnal, and are able to make their way in the dark by use of echolocation, "seeing" with their ears. It is rare for a bat to attempt to feed off of a human, but the occasional rabid or confused bat may try to do so.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Perception 3

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Bite 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Wounds: 5: +10; 10: Dead

Skills: Hunting 3

Special Abilities:

- *Echolocation: Bats may operate in total darkness without penalty.*
- *Swift 3 (when flying)*
- *Disease Carrier: Any time a character is bitten by a bat, there is a 1 in 10 chance that the character catches a sickness from the bite. Unless treated with magic or the Medicine skill (TN 30), the character will suffer from chronic fevers, chills, and muscle aches, reducing all physical Traits by 1. If left untreated over the long term, the illness may eventually result in permanent physical damage or death, at the discretion of the GM.*

Bear (Kuma)

Bears are large omnivorous mammals found throughout mainland Rokugan. The most common varieties are the black bear and the brown bear. Black bears are found more often in the lands of the Crane than elsewhere, while brown bears are most plentiful in Phoenix lands. Black bears are noted for being smaller than brown bears and far less aggressive; however, all mother bears are fiercely protective of their young and will tear any threatening creature to pieces.

Hungry bears are dogged hunters, pursuing their victims relentlessly, although they cannot run downhill. Black bears will climb trees to get their prey, while brown bears prefer to knock trees over. Aggressive bears can be terrifying, for they are notoriously difficult to kill. An angry bear can threaten even a group of armed samurai.

Air 1	Earth 6	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	Strength 7

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple) or Bite 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 7k3 (claws) or 4k3 (bite) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 9 — *Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 90: Dead*

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2*
- *Swift 3 (except when going downhill)*
- *Huge*



Boar (Inoshishi)

Boars are medium-sized mammals related to pigs, differing from their smaller cousins by their thick hides, bristly fur, and the two large tusks located at the ends of their jaws. Although herbivorous, they are dangerous and aggressive animals, notoriously difficult to kill, and the only thing easier than underestimating a boar is being disemboweled by one. Boars may travel alone or in herds, and viciously assault all predators. Samurai consider hunting boar to be great sport, doing so with bows and spears.

Air 1	Earth 5	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Tusks 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 12 — *Wounds: 30: +5; 75: Dead*

Skills: Jiujutsu 3

Special Abilities:

- *Disembowel: A boar may initiate Grapple attempts with its tusks. While it controls the Grapple the boar delivers 4k4 damage to its opponent every round.*
- *Goring Charge: When a boar is in the Full Attack Stance, it can attack as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action, and adds +1k1 to its attack and damage rolls.*
- *Huge.*

Cat (Neko)

Cats in Rokugan are the subject of considerable superstition, and some peasants believe them to be shape-changers or friendly spirits. They are sometimes kept as pets, and many monasteries and villages also encourage their presence because they reduce the number of rats and other vermin. However, in some regions rats are regarded as lucky animals, especially among the Scorpion, and these folk take a darker view of cats. Due to their hunting of vermin, cats sometimes become carriers of diseases.

Cats do not like fighting and will try to flee if they take 5 or more Wounds.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	Perception 4

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Bite 4k3 (Complex) or Claw 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 (bite), 1k1 (claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 5: +5; 10: +15; 15: Dead

Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 3

Special Abilities:

- *Cat Scratch Fever: Whenever a character is scratched by a cat, there is a 1 in 10 chance that the character will become sick. This will result in fever and inflammation for 1 to 3 weeks, inflicting a -1k0 penalty to all actions until cured (spells or Medicine TN 30) or the disease runs its course.*
- *Low-light Vision: Cats operate normally in dim light (such as starlight), although they are still blinded by complete darkness.*

Crane (Tsuru)

Wild crane in flight are the subject of numerous Rokugani poems and paintings. Cranes are no threat to humans, and samurai will not harm them, but the occasional ronin will hunt them. Samurai of the Crane Clan in particular see killing one of their namesake birds as an act of needless destruction of innocent beauty, and no one ever shoots at a crane in their presence.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	Perception 2

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Beak 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 2k1 — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 6: +5; 12: Dead

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 4 (when flying)*



Crocodile (Wani)

Crocodiles are large four-legged amphibious reptiles known for preying on humans. The largest crocodile may be twenty feet long and weigh nearly 3000 pounds. While they not common in Rokugan, they can be found in several rivers and many coastal swamps, as well as on the Isles of Silk and Spice. Crocodiles hunt by lying still, either appearing to be logs or disappearing below the surface of the water, then lunging at convenient prey. They like to seize prey in their jaws and then spin and thrash in the water to further damage and potentially drown their victim.

Hieroglyphics found in the ruins of the long-lost troll civilization suggest that the trolls once kept crocodiles as pets and perhaps as war beasts, although any such connection between the races has long since vanished.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Bite 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 bite — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 24: +5; 36: +10; 64: Dead*

Skills: Stealth 2

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Crocodiles swim in water as easily as they move on land, if not easier. They do not need to make a Skill roll to swim.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Fleet 2 (while swimming)*
- *Tenacious Jaws: Crocodiles who bite someone may hold onto them with a Contested Strength roll, inflicting an additional 2k2 damage each Turn. If this happens in water, the victim will begin drowning on subsequent rounds.*

Eagle (Washi)

The largest raptor in Rokugan is the golden eagle. While falcons are far more swift than eagles, eagles are known for their surprising strength and have even been known to make prey of goats. It is possible to train an eagle as a hunting companion in the same manner as a falcon, but this is far less common, as eagles have a more aggressive and less predictable nature than falcons and even trained eagles may attack humans. An eagle which takes 7 or more Wounds cannot fly until it heals.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 4	Perception 4

Initiative: 5k5 — *Attack: beak/talons (Complex) 5k4*

Damage: 2k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Wounds: 7: +5; 15: Dead

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 3 (when flying)*



Elephant (Zo)

Elephants are native to the distant realm known as the Ivory Kingdoms and are all but unheard-of within Rokugan. Some samurai have imported elephants as curiosities, but there have never been more than four in the Empire at any one time.

Elephants are striking creatures, very large and surprisingly intelligent. While they appear fearsome, elephants are herbivores and are usually mild in nature, becoming violent only when they or their young are threatened. An enraged elephant, however, is very much a creature to avoid.

Air 1	Earth 4	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6	Agility 3	Strength 7

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Tusks 4k3 (Complex), Stamp 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 7k2 (tusks), 4k4 (stamp) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 7 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: +20; 100: Dead*

Special Abilities:

- *Charge: If an elephant is in the Full Attack Stance and moves at least ten feet, it can attack with its tusks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Huge*

Flying Squirrel (Musasabi)

The flying squirrel is the largest Rokugani squirrel. It can leap and glide great distances, using a web of skin that connects its front and rear paws on each side. Flying squirrels are not particularly bright or threatening, and are often hunted – by samurai archers for target practice, or by poor peasants who are willing to set aside their distaste for meat in order to stay fed.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 2	Perception 2

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Teeth 3k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 (cannot explode) — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 6: +5; 12: Dead

Skills: Athletics 5

Special Abilities:

- *Glider: The squirrel can glide from higher locations to lower ones as a Complex Action. It is considered to be Swift 4 (instead of Swift 2) when gliding.*



- *Swift 2*

Fox (Kitsune)

Foxes are small vulpine creatures, distantly related to dogs. They are common throughout the forests of Rokugan, especially in the Kitsune Mori and Isawa Mori. Foxes are known for their cunning and swiftness as well as their ability to stalk undetected. They pose no threat to humans, but often prey on chickens and other farm animals, and as a result many Rokugani hunt them.

Hunting of foxes is by no means universal, however, since they are often closely associated with the fox-spirits of Chikushudo. In regions where contact with animal spirits is widespread, such as the Kitsune Mori, killing a fox is considered dangerous and potentially deeply unlucky. Supposedly, fox spirits have green eyes, and many superstitious hunters will try to see the eyes of a fox before they will shoot at it.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	Stamina 2	Agility 3	Perception 3

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Bite 4k3 (Complex)*
Damage: 2k2 (bite) — *Armor TN: 25*
Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 12: +10; 24: Dead*

Skills: Athletics 2, Stealth 3
Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2*

Goat (Kamoshika)

Rokugani goats are among the largest species of goat in the world, standing up to three feet tall and weighing up to 290 pounds. They are notable for their shaggy dark fur and white faces. Both males and females have short horns.

The hardy goat is found in all Rokugani forests and is notable for its tenacity as well as its surprising dexterity. The animal is a herbivore and normally docile, but will not hesitate to drive off threatening intruders.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 2	-	Agility 3	Strength 2

Initiative: 2k2 — *Attack: Horns 4k3 (Complex)*
Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 15*
Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 16: +10; 32: Dead*

Skills: Athletics 2
Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2*
- *Headbutt: Goats gain a Free Raise for Knockdown attempts.*

Hare (Usagi)

Small, fast, and wary, hares can be found nearly anywhere on the Rokugani mainland. They are common game for falconers, though of course proper samurai will not actually eat such red meat. The occasional starving ronin may not be so choosy, however. A fleeing hare will tend to run in a large circle, eventually ending up in its starting place, a habit exploited by experienced hunters.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	-	Perception 3

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: None*
Damage: None — *Armor TN: 20*
Wounds: 5: +10; 10: Dead

Skills: Athletics 5
Special Abilities:

- *Swift 3*

Monkey (Saru)

Far more numerous than their larger ape cousins, monkeys are found in many parts of the Rokugani mainland as well as on the Mantis Isles. Some of them even dwell in the cold mountains of the north, warming themselves in natural hot springs. Monkeys are intelligent and playful, very curious about humans, and will often root through a human's possessions or explore their residence.

Monkeys are not a physical danger to samurai, or even to most peasants, but their thieving and destructive nature can make them a considerable nuisance. Smaller breeds of monkey are sometimes kept as pets by nobles – these types of monkeys will have Strength and Agility of 2.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 4	Stamina 2	Agility 3	Strength 3

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Bite 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k1 (bite) — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 8: +5; 16: +10; 24: Dead

Skills: Athletics (Leaping) 5

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2*

Octopus and Squid (Tako)

Octopi are aquatic eight-tentacled creatures with soft and swollen bodies, inhabiting the waters off of Rokugan's coasts. Squid are similar to octopi but have a tougher body, longer and more dangerous tentacles, and a larger beak-like mouth. There are dozens of octopus and squid species local to Rokugan, and many are very small and harmless. Giant octopi do exist, however, and can reach a size of between fourteen and twenty feet. Giant squid may grow even larger, up to thirty or forty feet long, although such huge specimens are only found deep beneath the waves. Both squid and octopi are eaten throughout Rokugan, fresh or in dried or smoked forms.

Octopi are usually not aggressive animals. Most species of octopus have the ability to expel a dark cloud of ink to obstruct the vision of their enemies, and many of them can also change the color and texture of their skin so as to appear as harmless rocks or blend in with the sea-floor. However, an alarmed octopus may lash out at its attacker, strangling or drowning the unwary. An octopus will attempt to flee from a combat in which it takes at least 20 Wounds. Squid are more aggressive predators and larger squid may attack almost any creature they encounter, fighting to the death.

The stats listed here are for a larger specimen of either species, since those are the only types likely to threaten samurai.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Tentacles 5k4 (Simple), Beak 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 (arms), 2k2 (beak) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 (squid only) — *Wounds: 16: +6; 32: +12; 48: Dead*

Skills: Jiujutsu 5, Stealth (Hiding, Ambush) 5

Special Abilities:

- *Color Change (Octopus only): The octopus' natural ability to change its color allows it to blend into the sea bottom. If it can spend a Simple Action to conceal itself in this way, it gains +1k1 on its Stealth Skill Roll to hide.*
- *Jet Propulsion: A squid or octopus may fire a jet of water to move at a greatly increased rate. If the creature takes a Complex Action to move, it may move up to its Water x30.*
- *Poison Bite: On a successful attack with its beak, a squid or octopus will afflict its target with a paralyzing venom. The target is Dazed for four Rounds, recovering during the Reactions Stage of the fourth round. If the victim rolls Stamina at TN 20, the Dazed effect lasts only two rounds instead.*

Shark (Aoizame)

There are several varieties of shark native to Rokugan's waters, many of which are too small or inoffensive to threaten humans. The most common dangerous variety, the aoizame (also sometimes called the mako) is a fleet, aggressive animal about four feet long. These sharks rarely attack humans, but when they do attack they do so swiftly and mercilessly. Sharks have a tendency to attack in a berserker-like fury when they smell blood in the water, which they are capable of doing from great distances. For this reason sharks are held in reverence by both the Hiruma family and, ironically, some of the smaller Bloodspeaker Cult sects.

A samurai caught in the water with crazed sharks is in a precarious position indeed. His best chance may be to strike the shark on the nose, which often upsets or drives off the beast.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 4	Stamina 2	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Bite 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 12: +10; 24: Dead*

Skills: Hunting 3

Special Abilities:

- *Blood Frenzy: Sharks become enraged by the presence of blood in the water, which they can smell up to a half mile away. A shark in blood frenzy will attack the nearest prey even if it is not hungry. While in this frenzied state a shark rolls +1k1 for all Initiative, Attack and Damage Rolls.*
- *Swift 4*
- *Vulnerability: A successful Called Shot to the shark's nose (2 Raises) will inflict a Fear 3 effect on it.*

Shark, Hohojirozame

The largest breed of shark found in Rokugan's water, the hohojirozame or "white-cheeked shark" can grow to be up to ten feet long, and has jaws powerful enough to bite a grown man in half. It does not like to eat humans but it is an aggressive animal and is much more likely to attack than the smaller aoizame shark.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 3
Reflexes 4	Stamina 3	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Bite 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 7k3 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 18: +10; 36: Dead*

Skills: Hunting 4

Special Abilities:

- *Blood Frenzy: Sharks become enraged by the presence of blood in the water, which they can smell up to a half mile away. A shark in blood frenzy will attack the nearest prey even if it is not hungry. While in this frenzied state a shark rolls +1k1 for all Initiative, Attack and Damage Rolls.*
- *Fear 2.*
- *Huge.*
- *Swift 4.*
- *Vulnerability: A successful Called Shot to the shark's nose (2 Raises) will inflict a Fear 3 effect on it.*

Snake (Hebi), Constrictor

Over three dozen varieties of snake make their home in Rokugan. While not often seen, snakes are present in the lands of every clan and often play a big part in keeping the populace healthy by eating vermin species. No definite link is known between mundane snakes and the serpentine race of the Naga, although samurai often assume the two are connected and those who respect the Naga will try to avoid killing snakes unless necessary.

Constrictor snakes are large beasts, anywhere from eight to fifteen feet long. They are generally found only in the Mantis Isles, although they occasionally appear in the southern coastal swamps of Rokugan as well. They are stealthy predators, lurking in trees, streams, or marshes until their prey comes close enough to seize and constrict. They are willing to attack humans, but prefer smaller and less well-defended prey.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Bite 3k3 (Complex) or Grapple 7k3 (Complex)*

Damage: Bite 1k1, Grapple 4k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: Dead*

Skills: Jiujutsu 4, Stealth 4

Special Abilities:

- *Squeeze: When using its Grappling attack, the constrictor snake will always choose to inflict damage while it controls the Grapple. (It rolls 8k4 to maintain control of the Grapple.) After a victim has taken Grappling damage for a number of consecutive Rounds equal to its Stamina, it will begin to suffocate, taking another 2k2 Wounds per Round.*



Snake (Hebi), Poisonous Asp

Poisonous snakes are found throughout Rokugan but are most common in the central and southern parts of the Empire. The Scorpion Clan uses their venom for its own sinister purposes, and other, more secretive organizations also harvest snake venom. Asps are generally small, two or at the most three feet long, and are usually not aggressive, though they will not hesitate to bite if they are frightened or angered.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Perception 2

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Bite 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 (plus venom) — *Armor TN: 20*

Wounds: 6: +10; 12: Dead

Skills: Stealth 5

Special Abilities:

- *Venom: Asp venom is only dangerous if it is introduced into the bloodstream (via a bite). It reduces the target's Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, and Strength by 1 each hour. At the beginning of the second and each subsequent hour, the target may make a Stamina Roll (TN 25) to prevent suffering additional penalties for that hour. Otherwise, these penalties continue to accrue until the target succeeds on three consecutive rolls, the poison is treated, 24 hours pass, or the target has an uninterrupted eight hour period to rest. If Stamina is reduced to 0 by the poison, Earth and Wounds become 0 as well, and the victim dies. Reduced Traits return at the end of 24 hours if the victim survives.*

Stag (Shika)

The stag is the most widespread game animal in Rokugan. They are prized for their swiftness and the challenge they present to hunters. It is not uncommon for proud hunters to decorate their kabuto with the horns of their kills, and ronin use this to advertise their hunting prowess to potential employers. Due to Rokugani dietary beliefs, stag meat (venison) is normally only eaten by eta, although peasants and even samurai have sometimes eaten it when they had no other choice.

Stags stand around four feet tall and can have very large horns. Most of them are brown or reddish in color and have a pattern of white spots near their hindquarters. Exceptions are the deer of the Mantis Isles, which frequently are a deeper red and spotless, and the occasional white stags found in the lands of the Seppun family.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 5	Stamina 3	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k5 — *Attack: Gore 3k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 12: +10; 24: +20; 36: Dead*

Skills: Stealth 2

Special Abilities:

- *Rut: During their mating season, male stags become much more aggressive and careless. They roll +1k1 on Attack rolls but lose all Ranks in the Stealth Skill.*
- *Swift 3*

Tiger (Tora)

Tigers are massive predatory felines, even larger than lions. Their fur is usually a pattern of white, orange, and black stripes, but some breeds lack the orange coloration and all-white tigers have occasionally been reported. Tigers are not pack animals, preferring solitude and viciously defending their territory against all intruders. While their solitary behavior may make them seem less dangerous than lions, tigers are intelligent and aggressive hunters, strong swimmers, and seem to have a taste for human flesh. They are extremely difficult to domesticate, although wealthy noblemen will sometimes keep them as (well-guarded) pets.

Tigers in Rokugan are found primarily in the northern regions of the Empire, crossing the Great Wall of the North Mountains from the steppes. A more tropical variety of tiger is found in the Ivory Kingdoms and these beasts have sometimes been imported to the Mantis Isles as curiosities. Regardless, all forms of tiger are dangerous and they have little fear of men.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 4	Stamina 4	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Claws 6k4 (Complex) or Bite 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 (claws) or 3k3 (bite) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 24: +10; 48: Dead*

Skills: Hunting 4, Stealth 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Swift 1.*


空の巻

The Bloodspeakers

"What do you know of the Bloodspeakers? Or the name Iuchiban? Children's stories no doubt, told to misbehaving boys. But Iuchiban is more than just a name. He is perhaps the greatest threat the Empire has ever seen, and he lives still."

– Kuni Vistan, Witch Hunter, late eleventh century

The Origins of Iuchiban

The history of the sinister cult known variously as the Bloodspeakers or the Cult of the Blood Red Moon begins with the sorcerer called Iuchiban, and revolves around his life, his various defeats, and his ultimate demise.

Hantei Jama was the younger brother of the Hantei Emperor who reigned at the turn of the sixth century. In keeping with tradition, when his brother took the throne he joined the Otomo family to eliminate any conflict of inheritance with his older sibling. However, Jama from earliest childhood was a deeply embittered soul, jealous of his brother's power and hating the Rokugani power structure that had shunted him off as unimportant. A key youthful experience took place when his brother fell ill and it briefly appeared he might become the heir. Suddenly all the other noble children in the Imperial capital were Jama's friends, playing with him and hanging on his every word... only to abandon him the moment his brother recovered. "I thought you were my friends," Jama protested. "We thought you were going to be Emperor," they replied.

As an adult, Jama buried himself in study and research, seeking a means to redress his unhappy and powerless condition. He was consumed with the belief that he deserved better and there must be some way for him to gain what was rightfully his. Although he maintained the outward appearance of a loyal and scholarly Otomo nobleman, Jama plotted treason and rebellion.

In the final year of the fifth century, Jama discovered the long-forgotten journals of Kuni Nakanu, a Crab priest who had conducted forbidden research into the undead. (For more information on Nakanu, see the "Undead" chapter elsewhere in this book.) These journals contained the basics of what the Empire would come to know as maho, forbidden blood magic. Jama studied them for years and soon began to build on the basic knowledge they contained. He also began to recruit followers, fellow malcontents who were drawn to his megalomaniacal charisma. The most select of these were allowed to join him in the active study of maho and would eventually become his chief lieutenants in the emerging cult: Jama Suru and Asahina Yajinden.

Otomo Jama's obsession with power did not stop with maho. He dreamed of a way to escape the grip of the Celestial Wheel and become immortal. In the early sixth century he and several of his senior cult followers traveled into the Burning Sands, pursuing legends of gaijin sorcerers who could not be killed. The perilous voyage would claim the lives of all but himself, Suru, and Yajinden. However, it bore terrible fruit – Jama discovered the secrets of the Khadi, the immortal sorcerers who resided in the Senpet lands. How exactly he learned their secrets remains unknown, although a shapeshifting gaijin demon called Adisabah the Cruel would later claim some of the credit. Regardless, after Jama returned to Rokugan he did not hesitate to use the abominable ritual. He mystically removed his own heart from his chest, sealing it in a hidden box. The Khadi ritual made him immortal so long as his heart was intact, as well as greatly enhancing his sorcerous power. It was in the wake of this terrible act that he took the cult name of Iuchiban, the Bloodspeaker, although he would continue to go by the name Otomo Jama in public for several more years.

The Early Followers: Asahina Yajinden

Few who knew Asahina Yajinden would have thought him likely to become one of the most terrible blood sorcerers to plague the Empire. In his early years he was a quiet boy who studied the Asahina family arts, especially the creation of magical fetishes known as Tsangusuri. Even as a student he showed an unmatched joy in such creations, and after his gempukku he became one of the family's most promising young magical artisans. His teachers predicted great things for him. But it was Yajinden's very talents which were his undoing. The creation of Tsangusuri soon became so easy for him as to be child's play, lacking any challenge to his skills. Craving new challenges and new knowledge, he set out on a tour of the Empire, departing the isolated temples of the Asahina family.

This journey eventually took him to the Imperial Capital, and it was there he first met Otomo Jama, first in his public identity and later in his hidden guise as the leader of the emerging Bloodspeaker Cult. Yajinden succumbed quickly to the older man's dark charisma and promises of power and glory. Iuchiban showed him new ways to use his arts, ways that would allow him to create more powerful artifacts than ever before – and to overthrow the established order of Rokugan. In the new world Iuchiban would create, Yajinden would be his chief lieutenant, elevated above all others by the power of his superb talents.

Yajinden was a major figure in the early Bloodspeaker Cult's rise to power, crafting innumerable dark artifacts including the porcelain masks they used to animate corpses and, of course, the dreaded Bloodswords (discussed later in this chapter).



Iuchiban's Early Plots

The followers of the first Bloodspeaker joined him in pursuing his goal of seizing power within the Empire. Jama Suru and Iuchiban gathered new recruits while Yajinden used his sinister talents to create more and more artifacts for the cult's use.

Iuchiban proved quite skilled at luring those with similar goals and beliefs into his expanding organization. Disgruntled peasants were an especially fertile recruiting ground, but embittered or power-hungry samurai were also excellent resources for the cult. The Phoenix Clan was especially favorable, for their own legacy was one of power pursued with little regard for the consequences. Isawa himself was long rumored to have used some form of blood magic in the dawn of the Empire, and his practices took a long time completely dying. The early maho cult known as the True Sons of Isawa claimed descent from Isawa's brother Takeshi, and when Iuchiban rose to prominence they willingly chose to ally with him and join his larger organization.

Yajinden's most notable early contribution to the cult was the creation of porcelain masks which could reanimate corpses as obedient zombies. At one of the cult's early rituals, he undertook the extreme experiment of placing the first and most powerful of these sinister masks on the face of a runaway peasant boy, Fushiki. The hideous mask burned through the boy's flesh and fused with his skull, transforming him into a self-willed zombie. The kansen bound into the mask taught him terrible new secrets, and Fushiki – known within the cult as "the Face of the Grave" – became the cult's principle crafter of the porcelain masks, freeing Yajinden to pursue work on even more potent creations.

It was Yajinden's relentless quest to create more powerful artifacts that would give birth to the cult's most sinister early plot – and the scheme that ultimately brought about its defeat. Yajinden had acquired the terrible relic known as the Anvil of Despair, an artifact created from the blood of the First Oni and the souls of the lost Boar Clan. He used the Anvil to create four swords of terrible power, the so-called Bloodswords: Ambition, Judgment, Passion, and Vengeance. In turn, Otomo Jama arranged for these swords to be gifted to the champions of the Scorpion, Crab, Crane, and Lion Clans, intending their power would destroy these leaders and plunge the Empire into chaos.

Three of the swords did their work all too well. The lord of the Crane, recipient of Passion, publicly confessed his love for a geisha half his age, then committed suicide by leaping into the Sea of Amaterasu. The lord of the Crab, recipient of Judgment, murdered his own family for their putative moral failings, then committed suicide when he decided he himself was unworthy to live. The Champion of the Lion went mad with fury at a minor insult from a Dragon courtier and led 15,000 Lion troops in a disastrous assault on the Dragon Mountains. So devastating was the defeat that the Lion studied it for centuries after, determined not to repeat its mistakes.

The one exception to this litany of catastrophe was the Scorpion Champion. Bayushi Rikoji was highly suspicious of the beautiful sword which arrived unexpectedly from the Imperial capital. Rather than accept it for himself, he placed it into careful storage in the tunnels beneath Kyuden Bayushi. Then he dispatched a trusted magistrate, Soshi Takasho, to visit the capital and learn the source of this strange weapon. Takasho would join forces with a Lion magistrate, Akodo Minobe, and the two would eventually uncover the truth about Otomo Jama.

The Battle of Stolen Graves

In the year 510, Takasho and Minobe tracked down the headquarters of the Bloodspeaker Cult within the Imperial capital, Otosan Uchi itself. Iuchiban and his followers were in hiding near the Imperial Crypts, just weeks away from unleashing an army of undead reanimated from the Crypts themselves. When Takasho and Minobe exposed him, Iuchiban hastily animated as many corpses as he could, and the sheer horror of facing an army of their own ancestors' bodies nearly broke the Imperial forces. It was Minobe who rallied them with a furious shout of "Blasphemy!" as he cut down the first of the zombies. Inspired by his example, the Empire's samurai rallied and defeated the undead horde, while Takasho slipped into the Bloodspeakers' lair and captured Iuchiban himself.

This conflict would be known later as the Battle of Stolen Graves, and it brought about a major social change in Rokugan. Horrified by the desecration of ancestral corpses with maho rituals, the Emperor proclaimed that henceforth all dead bodies would be cremated before the bones were buried. This tradition continues in Rokugan to the present day, although most have forgotten the reason behind it.

Iuchiban and his cult were defeated and most of his followers, including Jama Suru, were killed. However, the Rokugani discovered to their horror that the Bloodspeaker himself could not be slain. Bound in chains of blessed jade, he was helpless to use his terrible powers, but some of his followers had escaped; how long would it be before they tried to set him free? Even worse, Jama was of Imperial blood, a terrible blight on the name of Hantei. For days the Emperor and his chief advisors agonized over what was to be done, but finally a Crab engineer named Kaiu Gineza proposed a solution: he would build a tomb, a unique and marvelous prison, with an array of traps making it impenetrable to all enemies. There Iuchiban's immortal body would be entombed forever.

The Tomb was one of the most secretive and important engineering projects in Rokugani history. Gineza built not only the main Tomb but also two duplicates, all of them in remote locations, and each with a sworn force of Imperial soldiers to guard it. When the final Tomb was complete, the Kaiu walked inside, activating each of the traps, and stayed within to die. The secrets of the Tomb's design died with him.

Asahina Yajinden had also been taken prisoner, and he was handed over to his own family for punishment. The pacifistic Asahina devised what they thought was an appropriate punishment, wiping his memories and leaving him as a childlike gardener in the Imperial Capitol. However, their success was illusory. Yajinden had recently learned a dark secret to near-immortality – swapping his spirit from body to body. He escaped their punishment and continued to roam the earth, rallying what remained of his master's cult.

The Early Followers: Jama Suru

The original Jama Suru was born Iga Suru, younger son of a vassal family daimyo in the Phoenix Clan. His early life in many ways mirrored that of Hantei Jama, filled with the same bitterness at being overlooked and destined to a life of servitude solely due to the accident of his birth. Jama and Suru first met as young men, and during their conversation Suru's bitterness so overwhelmed him that he came to blows with the young Imperial, the two wrestling and falling into the mud beside the road. By a random twist of fate, at that very moment a gang of bandits attacked, slaughtering both Jama's Imperial bodyguards and the Iga daimyo's family. Jama and Suru, covered in mud and hidden from sight, survived solely because of their childish fight. In the aftermath of this incident, Hantei Jama declared that since Suru had saved his life, he would be permitted the privilege to serve him as Jama Suru. Suru, who while bitter and driven was not very wise or capable, readily agreed.

Suru was a slavishly loyal follower of Iuchiban, but unlike Yajinden he showed little initial aptitude for the cult's maho spells and rituals. His loyalty, however, was unquestionable, and eventually Iuchiban came up with a solution – he bound a kansen into Suru's body and soul. The corrupt spirit enabled Suru to easily master the powers of maho, but it also slowly devoured his identity and personality, re-rendering him into the capable, ruthless, and utterly merciless general of the Bloodspeaker Cult. So complete was the transformation that the cult would later be able to recreate Suru again and again, re-implanting a kansen in a suitable body to bring Iuchiban's general back once more.

At the time, however, it was generally thought that Iuchiban's threat was at an end. The Imperial Records were cleansed of any mention of Otomo Jama's name, and numerous false stories were crafted to ensure no shame could fall on the Imperial Line for his acts.

The Second Rise of Iuchiban

No one realized that Iuchiban was already aware of Yajinden's body-changing technique. The Bloodspeaker had not yet mastered this power, but once he was imprisoned within the heart of his Tomb, his body tortured by jade chains, he had nothing to do but to practice. First he freed his spirit enough to enter Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams, creating the Oracle of Blood to communicate with his remaining followers. This strange agent continued the Bloodspeaker's work of recruitment and organization over the next two centuries, visiting his most loyal followers in their dreams to teach them maho and subjugate them to his will.

Over two hundred years after his imprisonment, Iuchiban finally escaped from the Tomb, leaping his soul into the body of a peasant (and condemning that poor unfortunate to reside in Iuchiban's immortal body within the Tomb). Traveling across the Empire, leaping from body to body, Iuchiban contacted Yajinden and gathered his followers to prepared for another assault on the Empire. The Bloodspeakers assembled on a remote plain, collecting hundreds of corpses to reanimate into an undead army.

Unfortunately for Iuchiban – but thankfully for the Empire – his new body-leaping power made him overconfident. While his army was still incomplete he continued to travel the Empire, changing bodies and possessing new samurai. In the summer of the year 750 he made the mistake of trying to possess the body of Togashi Yamatsu, an Ise Zumi monk in the Dragon court. Yamatsu was able to call on the strength of his mystical tattoos to resist Iuchiban's power. The Bloodspeaker was hurled back into the body from which he had come, and Yamatsu pointed one trembling finger at him and shouted, "Maho!"

Iuchiban fled the chamber, leaping from body to body and leaving a trail of collapsing corpses in his wake. In the aftermath of this terrible incident, the forces of Rokugan rushed forth to search the entire Empire for the Bloodspeaker, and within weeks they had located the cult's remote headquarters. An army drawn from all of the Great Clans confronted Iuchiban's forces in a bloody seven-day clash known the Battle of the Sleeping River. The struggle was long and bitter, and at times it appeared the armies of Rokugan might buckle beneath the relentless onslaught of undead legions and Bloodspeaker maho. Finally, the battle shifted decisively against the cultists, and Togashi Yamatsu confronted Iuchiban once more... with a new tattoo. When the Empire's troops reached Yamatsu, he stood over a dead body, whispering, "I have him." He had captured Iuchiban's malign spirit within his own body, and shuddered with the effort of holding the Bloodspeaker's powerful soul.

The Empire once again faced the problem of how to contain Iuchiban's power. Now that he was no longer bound by his own body there seemed no way to keep him imprisoned once Togashi Yamatsu's willpower failed. Finally, the Phoenix proposed a solution – a magical ritual to bind Iuchiban's soul into the stone of the Tomb itself. For thirty days a circle of Phoenix shugenja chanted continuously, several of them perishing, as they worked the spell that would bind Iuchiban into the stone. The critical moment came at the end, when Yamatsu would have to release Iuchiban at just the right moment for him to be ensnared by the spell. But at the end, the effort was successful, and Iuchiban's soul was bound into the Tomb.

While the Bloodspeakers had been defeated again, many of them survived the battle and fled, hiding across the Empire. Yajinden had also escaped once more, leaping from one body to another unmolested. Thus while its leader was lost, the Bloodspeaker Cult lived on and would continue to threaten the Empire.



The Bloodspeaker Cult Without Its Master

In the aftermath of the Battle of Sleeping River, the Bloodspeakers became a less unified and more diverse organization, fissuring into many different cells and sub-cults scattered across the Empire. Despite his imprisonment, Iuchiban could still distantly interact with his followers through the Oracle of Blood, and this gave the cult a limited degree of unity even during its worst periods. However, the former iron-clad central control was gone, never to return.

Over the years many cult cells would be exposed and destroyed by organizations like the Kuni Witch Hunters or the Scorpion Kuroiban (Black Watch), but others would continue to operate undetected, cancerous growths within the body of Rokugan. One of the most successful Bloodspeaker cult cells was in the lands of the Unicorn: the so-called Demon's Breath Acolytes, who came about through the accident of the Unicorn Clan's timing in returning to the Empire. Having traveled distant lands for centuries, the children of the Ki-Rin had seen many forms of exotic magic but had never actually encountered the maho spells and seductive ideology of the Bloodspeakers. They were easily recruited when the first Bloodspeaker cultists came to their lands in the years after the Battle of Stolen Graves. Their first leader was Iuchi Ryutaro, and their cult cell displayed an unusual level of unity and loyalty among its members. Rather than being founded on mutual hatred of the Empire's social system and leadership, or held together by fear of a terrifying leader, they were a group typified by strong internal respect and mutual loyalty. This allowed them to develop close and well-maintained ties even when separated by great distances and protected them from the in-fighting and power struggles that often exposed or destroyed other cult cells.

More typically, though, most Bloodspeaker cells during this era were small groups of angry and embittered outcasts – peasants, eta, failed and dishonored samurai, the power-hungry and the failed.

Numerous figures of exceptional power rose among the Bloodspeaker Cult's ranks during this long era. None among those was as unique as the man known only as Daigotsu, born to the Hantei bloodline. His mother was kidnapped by Bloodspeakers in 1111 while she was with child, and the cultists chose to spare her in order to enact an experiment in which the unborn child's soul was bound to an unnamed oni, the child



banished to Jigoku itself to gain power. However, this elaborate scheme backfired – although Daigotsu would train with the cult for a time, he ultimately betrayed the Bloodspeaker movement and sided with Fu Leng and the power of Jigoku itself, rejecting the cult's vision of personal power above all. The Bloodspeakers had effectively created one of their own future enemies.

At the end of the eleventh century, Yajinden set out to locate Iuchiban's Tomb. His motive was not loyalty to his imprisoned master, but betrayal. After the Battle of Sleeping River he had concluded his former master was insane and untrustworthy, a madman who had wrecked the cult's dreams through haste and arrogance. Yajinden hoped to reach the heart of the Tomb and use a maho ritual to steal Iuchiban's power, making himself the true leader of the cult. However, his scheme failed when a small group of samurai pursued him into the Tomb. Their interference disrupted his ritual, and instead of stealing Iuchiban's power the traitorous Yajinden found his own soul imprisoned along with his master.

The Death of Iuchiban

In the year 1165, Iuchiban escaped from his Tomb for the second and last time. A powerful Lost maho-tsukai named Iuchi Shahai manipulated samurai into breaking into the Tomb, allowing her to enter the place safely behind them. Shahai hoped to bargain with the Bloodspeaker on behalf of her lord, Daigotsu, but the sorcerer double-crossed her with the aid of Yajinden, whose imprisonment had forced him into loyalty once more. Iuchiban possessed Shahai's lieutenant Mohai and together the two spirits overpowered her. The Bloodspeaker freed his original body from its jade chains, and he and Yajinden escaped the Tomb for the last time. Thus began the third great rise of the Bloodspeaker Cult, one which would shake the entire Empire to its foundations.

Much like in the past, Iuchiban was impatient to gather power and overturn the Empire. He deposed Daigotsu, the self-titled Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, and seized control of the City of the Lost, initiating a civil war in the Shadowlands. His disciple Jama Suru had been re-created once more, and Iuchiban used an ancient ritual discovered by Suru to sacrifice the sacred being known as the Ki-Rin and unleash an Empire-wide rain of Tainted blood. The Rain of Blood corrupted any who felt its touch too long, and this sudden spread of the Taint sent the Empire into spasms of violence and confusion. The hidden Bloodspeaker cells across the Empire emerged to fight, their ranks swollen practically overnight by the effects of the Rain of Blood.

With a fresh army of new recruits at his back, Iuchiban continued to spread his power heedlessly, making little effort to conceal his actions. This incaution cost him dearly when the Empire launched a ruthless series of purges known as the Blood Hunt, cleaning out cult cells anywhere they could be found and killing many senior cult leaders – including Jama Suru. Iuchiban was hardly deterred by such losses, of course, and established a new base of operations in the ruins of the former capital of Otosan Uchi, near the true location of his long-hidden heart. He personally led an assault on the ancient Phoenix city of Gisei Toshi, where countless relics had been hidden for centuries, and burned it to the ground. He even used one of the Black Scrolls to create a mighty fortress within Otosan Uchi, an open challenge to the rest of the Empire. This visible symbol of his power would soon draw the attention of numerous enemies, including the Emperor's brother Sezaru.

The final battle against Iuchiban raged in 1166, and saw an unusual alliance between Sezaru and the Dark Lord Daigotsu. It was Sezaru who finally located Iuchiban's hidden heart and destroyed it, taking the life of the Bloodspeaker once and for all. The vast majority of Iuchiban's loyal followers perished alongside their insane leader, leaving the cult shattered.

The Bloodspeaker Cult in Modern Times

The Bloodspeaker Cult survived the final death of its founder, but it was considerably lessened in numbers and lacked any clear-cut leadership. The Oracle of Blood, a creation of Iuchiban's dreams, vanished after his death. Yajinden had once again escaped his master's defeat, but his uncertain loyalty collapsed once again, and he departed the cult to follow Daigotsu and his newly formed Spider Clan. Since Jama Suru had also been destroyed once more, the few extant cells of the cult went their own way without any central guidance. Sezaru would continue the Blood Hunt until his death in 1169, rooting out and exterminating any cells he could find. Some of the surviving Bloodspeakers would emulate Yajinden and seek refuge in the Spider Clan, while others went completely underground, ceasing all public activities and seeking only to maintain themselves in the hope of one day resurrecting their lord and master once again.

The modern Bloodspeaker Cult is only a shadow of its former strength, with less than two hundred surviving members. The survivors are hardened fanatics, determined to hide and endure as long as they have to in order to reclaim their power and find some way of bringing back their leader. Iuchiban has escaped imprisonment twice, after all – why should he not defeat death itself?

Bloodspeaker Philosophy

"The Bloodspeakers feel cheated by the great cosmic cycle. Through their magic they hope to snatch what fate has denied them. They claim to be free of the Shadowlands Taint, but I believe the Dark One pulls at their souls all the same. The Taint can take subtler forms than they can possibly imagine..."

– Kuni Vistan

Power is the main focus of the Cult of the Blood Red Moon. Power was the ambition that drove Otomo Jama to search for magical strength in blood magic and the gaijin sorceries of the Khadi. Power drove Yajinden to betray first his own clan and then the vision of Iuchiban, seeking control of his own destiny once more. Power led countless mortals down the paths of darkness the Bloodspeakers espouse in the centuries after the Battle of Stolen Graves. Power may be though of as the pervading tenet of 'faith' in the Bloodspeaker Cult, the only thing any particular cell can truly be said to have in common with all others.

Bloodspeakers have numerous motivations for seeking power, but the most frequent reason is anger and frustration with the limitations and cruelties of the Rokugani social order. Feelings of injustice, unfairness, and frustration can drive almost any Rokugani to impotent fury, lust for revenge, or simple madness – and into the arms of the Bloodspeakers. Iuchiban's philosophies emphasized individualism, the right of every person to seek power and strength without regard for such inconveniences as birth, station, or tradition. These teachings have always had a powerful appeal to those cut off from power – peasants, eta, lower-ranking samurai, junior noblemen without hope of promotion. Indeed, the eta caste have been especially fertile ground for Bloodspeaker recruitment almost since the founding of the cult.

Very few bloodspeakers are willing servants of Jigoku. In fact, for much of its history the cult denied that its power had any connection to the Realm of Evil at all. Although the cult's senior leaders and most powerful sorcerers usually recognize they are actually using the power of the Taint, they try to conceal this from their followers and to pretend they are accessing power from within themselves – an "innate energy" all mortals possess. They find ways to divert their Taint into others, to minimize their exposure to Jigoku even as they tap into its power, and above all to escape their own deaths – for death means facing the judgment of the Celestial Order they have rejected.

The result of this peculiar belief system is a sort of demented tight-rope act. Bloodspeakers are entranced by the powers the kansen grant them, but their leaders are often terrified of the consequences. They are both some of the most horrifyingly corrupt and degraded souls in Rokugan and some of the most fearful. With rare exceptions, they are terrified of death in ways no Rokugani should ever be. The very thought of growing old and dying mortifies them, since their doctrine is built entirely around personal achievement within one lifetime. Even worse, those of them who do truly understand the nature of the afterlife and the kharmic wheel realize their deeds are likely to get them condemned after death as slavering gaki or an oni's eternal plaything. They will seek any possible magic that can extent their lifespans, grant them any kind of immortality, or achieve self-will even in the state of death. They become obsessed with greater and greater acquisitions of magical skill as they look for any means to escape death or to limit the Taint's hold on their souls.



Organizationally, the Bloodspeaker Cult usually focuses on survival and has developed many different ways to ensure it continues to exist. While there may be strength in numbers, large cults are more easily exposed and destroyed, so from an early date the Cult adopted a cell organization. Recruits are carefully chosen and are not initiated into the Bloodspeakers' darkest and most powerful secrets until they prove themselves truly devoted. Although Cult cells are often prone to internal power-struggles, loyalty against the rest of the Empire is intensely promoted and maintained – without it the Bloodspeakers will too easily fall prey to the magistrates and Witch Hunters who constantly try to root them out. While there are often schisms, most Bloodspeaker cells are not exposed by betrayal.

All Bloodspeakers pay at least nominal devotion to Iuchiban, who they regard as the ultimate expression of their doctrine of personal and individual power. When he is active, most cultists follow him with almost slavish devotion, driven by both their reverence for his accomplishments and the overwhelming power of his incredible will. During eras when he is inactive the Cult's homage is more distant, and some members may occasionally harbor doubts or pursue their own agendas (such as Yajinden). However, until his "true" death in 1166, there was always at least some level of loyalty to him. Iuchiban's defeat disrupted the Cult not only for practical reasons but also because it suggested even the first and mightiest Bloodspeaker could not overcome Rokugan.

Outside of these general philosophies and tendencies, each Cult cell will have its own personal agenda, personalities, goals, and methods. Some are more overt and blasphemous, spreading Taint and destruction at every opportunity, while others are more controlled and calculating. Given that Bloodspeaker doctrine emphasizes the power of the individual against Rokugan's collectivist values, it should not be surprising that Cult cells have always been diverse groups of people which pursue their goals in many different ways.

Cult Organization

Fundamentally, the structure of the Bloodspeaker Cult is designed to be self-sufficient and independent, united only by devotion to Iuchiban. During the period after Iuchiban's second imprisonment, a group known as the Circle of Five exerted loose authority over the entire Cult in Iuchiban's name – almost literally, since one of the Circle was the Oracle of Blood. Outside of that era, however, Cult cells operate largely independent of each other.

The Cult's cell structure is created and driven by the need to survive above all else. Each individual cell of a Bloodspeaker Cult branch is normally no more than five to six members with one leader, though during peak activities they may have as many as eight or ten members. These cells are scattered over wide geographical areas and dispersed among the normal population of Rokugan, preferably hiding within towns or cities where population density offers further concealment. Normally each cell knows only of its own members, though in larger branches of the Cult the individual cells generally have some limited contact with each other. These contacts are run solely through cell leaders or sometimes specific other members whose role is to maintain these contacts. In addition, pseudonyms and false names are routinely used to further conceal membership and identity. All of this means that even if one a cell is compromised, no more than one or two other cells will be lost. The Bloodspeakers are effectively impossible to entirely root out.

Almost all cells have only one leader who demands absolute loyalty from other cell members. This senior member is usually the only one with significant knowledge of maho and the only one who knows the Cult's secret methods of averting Taint. He or she is usually (though not always) the oldest member. The remaining cultists serve as foot-soldiers for the goals of their leader, and generally keep their activities local so as to avoid risking accidentally exposing a Cult cell in another territory.

The Bloodspeakers as Adversaries

Bloodspeakers can work extremely well as opponents for both weak, inexperienced PCs and for highly capable and experienced groups. Because of the Cult's cell organization, any particular group of Bloodspeakers might be at any level of power and capability. Weak cells will often have very little spell-casting power, consisting of little more than a collection of crazed peasants and ronin, perhaps with a couple of zombies animated by porcelain masks. A powerful or well-entrenched cell, on the other hand, may have several samurai in its ranks, and be led by sorcerers with terrible maho spells – not to mention legions of undead. GMs who want to challenge their players with an extremely tough supernatural battle without actually sending them into the Shadowlands will find the Bloodspeakers ideal to this purpose.

Even better, the Bloodspeakers can work extremely well as recurring or persistent villains who return to bedevil the PCs over and over again. Maho spells such as Death Beyond Life allow cultists to escape death and return to threaten the Empire once more. This can work especially well in a campaign where the GM is employing a more cinematic style, one where the recurrent villain is thematically appropriate.

The Bloodspeakers can also function as a more sinister and subversive threat. Although the Kolat are perhaps the ideal "conspiracy theory" villains, the Bloodspeakers work almost as well. Like the Kolat, the Bloodspeakers have the potential to be hiding anywhere in Rokugan – that trusted magistrate or kindly priest might actually be another cell member, plotting death behind a smiling face. And of course maho spells like Possession can turn allies or friends into deadly enemies, trapping the PCs in a nightmare world where they don't know who to trust. Skillful GMs can build a very frightening world out of such a storyline, a dark fun-house mirror where the PCs can never be sure who is a Tainted cultist and who is an innocent.

Finally, it should never be forgotten that the three great battles against Iuchiban are some of the greatest clashes between good and evil in Rokugan's long history. A GM who is running the Epic campaign type (as described in the *Book of Void* in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook) will find the Bloodspeaker and his lieutenants ideal villains. Although the official "canon" history of Rokugan already has heroes who defeat Iuchiban, the GM can always set those historical figures aside and leave the fate of the Empire in the hands of the PCs. Are they strong enough to defeat Rokugan's greatest maho-tsukai?

Iuchiban's Influence: The Oracle of Blood

During those times when Iuchiban is free and active in the world, the activities of the Bloodspeaker Cult change significantly. Iuchiban was arguably the most powerful single sorcerer in the history of the Empire (with the possible exception of Isawa himself) and his combined mastery of gaijin secrets and blood magic gave him a power no other Cult leader could match. When he is free and roaming the world, the Cult functions as little more than an extension of his immense will.

During periods when he was inactive but alive, Iuchiban was able to indirectly manifest his will in the mortal plane through the Oracle of Blood. This sinister creation could appear within the dreams of any member of the Cult, allowing Iuchiban to watch over his followers and to some degree guide their plans and activities.

The Oracle appears in dreams as a shape rising from a dark pool of blood, sometimes a human form and sometimes a monster or animal, literally forming itself from the dark red fluid. It speaks in a deep and terrifying voice, revealing secrets of the spirit world, conveying strange prophecies or messages, and occasionally delivering concrete information such as the name of a particular enemy. Regardless of the details of the visit, the Oracle's manifestations always leave their victim shaken and stunned, intensely aware of its power and domination.

Although the Oracle usually prefers to appear to Bloodspeakers, it can actually enter anyone's dreams, and the GM can potentially use it to feed information (true or false) to credulous PCs, using them as Iuchiban's pawns in the mortal world.

A Sample Cult Cell: The Black Wind

For the assistance of GMs, we present here a small Bloodspeaker cell which can be inserted into any campaign with a minimum of changes. Its membership and structure are consistent with most Bloodspeaker cells devoted to the lineage of Iuchiban, regardless of era.

The Black Wind is a cell formed by the greedy Crab merchant Yasuki Hirotada, whose lack of ethics and obsession with using money to gain station and power attracted the attention of the Oracle of Blood. The cell poses under almost all circumstances as a small merchant's caravan with a ronin guard detail. All members of the caravan are cult members, ensuring security and loyalty. The Wind's mobility has been one of the keys to its survival. Its lead merchant is usually of the Yasuki family, capable of maintaining and sponsoring his own mercantile activities anywhere in the Empire so long as no dishonor comes back to his lord and sufficient funds are returned to the clan. This allows the cell to move elsewhere any time there are signs of trouble or Witch Hunters move into the area. This has kept them for the most part unnoticed by magistrates and organizations hunting their fellow cultists elsewhere in the Empire.

Yasuki Hirotada keeps his men well fed and is almost benevolent with them in public, while maintaining iron authority in private. He tries to keep the cell undercover as much as possible, using maho primarily to subvert and manipulate customers to ensure maximum profits and disrupt his competition. All of his followers openly wear counterfeit jade amulets to make them look like devout vassals of the Crab Clan.

The Black Wind are not as ambitious or powerful as many Bloodspeaker cells. Their current leader, Yasuki Hirotada, is still young, willing to be patient and wait for future opportunities. While maho gives him power, he believes money is the best way to gain access to the greater power and influence he craves. He amasses vast wealth while lining his clan's coffers and sharing enough with his men to help keep them subservient and loyal. At some time in the distant future, perhaps, he can use the gold he garners for some greater plan, some mighty ambition of the Bloodspeaker Cult. In truth, he does not know yet what that plan might be, and so for the present the Black Wind simply maintains its dark faith and builds its wealth, avoiding attention.

Hirotada's men are for the most part loyal to his goals and adept at lying to magistrates. They are already wealthier than any ronin or commoners they've ever met, and this only confirms their faith in the Bloodspeaker doctrine of self-advancement. They believe the power of their faith has brought them success and power and will promise more of both in the future.



New Mechanics

The following sections outlines new rules and spells for depicting the Bloodspeaker Cult

The Bloodspeaker Technique (Alternate Path)

The secret methods of the Bloodspeaker Cult were pioneered by Iuchiban himself and passed down through his chief apprentice, Yajinden, to other members of the cult. Only those of the Bloodspeakers who are high-ranking and knowledgeable enough to understand that Maho is the true source of the cult's strength are allowed to learn this technique. The Bloodspeakers make no distinction between social caste, and have taught their secrets to samurai of all types, to peasants, and even to eta.

- Rank: Any
- Replaces: Any
- **Requirement:** Can only be learned from a senior member of the Bloodspeaker Cult.
- **Special Notes:** This technique can be taught to anyone, samurai or commoner, and can replace Techniques at any Insight Rank. If it is learned by a samurai at Rank 1, it replaces the samurai's Rank One Technique and reduces the samurai's starting Honor to 1.0, but does not affect the samurai's Outfit or starting Skills.

Technique: Iuchiban's Method

The high-ranking Bloodspeakers realize they are meddling with the Taint, but have learned ways to mitigate this, in part by shunting the corruption off onto their misguided followers. You learn two Maho spells of your choice and gain a Free Raise for Spell Casting Rolls with Maho spells. When casting a Maho spell, you may reduce the amount of Taint you gain by 1 point for every 2 additional Wounds you take when casting the spell. (This cannot decrease the Taint gain below 1 point.) However, if you are using someone else's blood to power the spell, you may instead use this technique to transfer the Taint for the spell onto that person, at the rate of 1 point of Taint for every 2 extra Wounds inflicted. This can reduce your own Taint gain to 0.

New Maho Spells

These spells have all been employed by the Bloodspeaker Cult at various times, but many of them have been used by other maho-tsukai as well. The kansen share their dark secrets with all those willing to learn.

Mastery Rank One

Heart of the Damned

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Maho)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Caster
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** None



A foul necromantic ritual, first practiced by Iuchiban himself, this spell calls on the strength of the dead to enhance the living. The caster must touch a recently-dead human corpse (dead within the last day) when casting the spell. The corpse shrivels and rots away as the caster draws on its essence, reddish-black energy flowing out of the dead body and into the caster. The caster heals 2k2 Wounds and regains 1 Rank in any Ring or Trait which has been reduced below its normal level.

Purge the Weak

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Maho)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Food and water for up to 5 people
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Range (20' per Raise), Area of Effect (supplies for 1 additional person per Raise)

This unpleasant curse ruins food and drink, rendering it foul, diseased, and inedible. The effects of the spell are obvious – food becomes rotten, water turns foul and discolored, and so forth. The food and water lose all nutritional value and anyone who eats or drinks must roll Stamina at TN 20 or become severely ill, suffering a –3k0 penalty to all Skill, Trait, and Spell Casting rolls. The illness is incurable with medical treatment and will last for two weeks unless magically cured.

Suck the Marrow

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Maho)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 1 day
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per 2 Raises), Range (change to 50' for 2 Raises)

This unpleasant curse impedes the victim's ability to heal and recover from injury and sickness. The victim becomes pale and weak, exuding an unpleasant body odor, and is unable to heal Wounds normally or from applications of the Medicine skill. The victim also is unable to recover from illnesses or poisons, and suffers a –2k0 penalty to any roll made to resist the effects of a poison or disease. Magical healing can still affect the target normally.

Symbol of Blood

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1 (Maho, Wards)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 30' radius
- **Duration:** 12 hours
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+5' per Raise), Duration (+2 hours per Raise)

This spell inscribes a sinister ward onto a flat surface. The caster writes the ward in the blood he spill to cast the spell, and once inscribed the ward cannot be destroyed except by physically destroying the surface on which it is written. The ward causes its victims' blood to become sluggish and cold. Anyone other than the caster who enters the area of effect suffers a –2k0 penalty to all physical Actions. The effect only applies while they are within the area of effect, and does not stack with other Symbols of Blood.

Ward of Divine Peace

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 1 (Maho, Wards)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 50' radius
- **Duration:** 8 hours
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+10' radius per Raise)



This spell is favored by Bloodspeaker cell leaders, who use it to maintain psychological dominance over their followers. The spell's name is an ironic joke within the cult's ranks. The spell creates a false aura of calm and well-being that lasts for several hours. This makes it difficult for them to focus their attention or resist appeals from others. Anyone who is within the spell's area of effect, or who enters it while the spell is in effect, suffers a –1k0 penalty to all Skill and Trait rolls that use Awareness or Willpower. This penalty lasts until the end of the spell's duration, but does not stack with itself.

Mastery Rank Two

Curse of the Clan

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Maho)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target samurai
- **Duration:** 1 month
- **Raises:** Duration (+10 days per Raise)

This subtle curse causes a samurai to manifest his clan's most stereotypical and notorious behavior. For example, a Crab might become more crude, intolerant, and ruthlessly pragmatic, while a Phoenix might become more arrogant and obsessed with magical power. The changes are significant but not overwhelming, and the victim of the spell will try to rationalize and justify his behavior.

If a PC is targeted with this spell the GM should present the situation as a role-playing challenge rather than dictating how the character is played.

Curse of the Kansen

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 2 (Maho)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 8 hours
- **Raises:** Range (+10' per Raise), Duration (+1 hour per Raise)

This curse subtly attracts hostile kansen to harass the target. The spell's victim begins hearing constant whispers inside his head, voices urging him to sinful and corrupt behavior. The continual distraction causes him to suffer a –1k0 penalty to all Courtier, Etiquette, and Sincerity rolls. If he is rolling to resist the Temptation Skill, the penalty is –2k0 instead. (This effect stacks with the maho spell Sinful Dreams.)

If the optional Honor Roll rule is in effect, the victim of this spell also suffers a penalty of -1k0 to Honor Rolls.

Dark Wings

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 2 (Maho)
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** Caster
- **Duration:** 10 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 minutes per Raise)

The caster sprouts monstrous wings from his back, resembling those of a bat or other such creature. For the duration of the spell the caster can fly, and is considered to have Swift 3 (as

per the creature ability from the *Book of Void*, L5R 4th Edition core rulebook) while flying.

Gift of the Maker

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 2 (Maho)
- **Range:** Self or Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature (can be the caster)
- **Duration:** 1 hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+30 minutes per Raise)

The caster summons the power of Jigoku, temporarily granting the blessings of the Taint. Most Bloodspeakers rationalize this spell's effects by claiming it is evoking power from within themselves. The caster (or another person touched by the caster) gains a Greater Shadowlands Power of his choice for the duration of the spell.

Mastery Level 3

Dancing With Demons

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Maho)
- **Range:** 500'
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** 24 hours
- **Raises:** Duration (+6 hours per Raise)

A ritual spell first used by the notorious Doji Nashiko, this spell is also employed by many other maho-tsukai, and has found its way into the repertoire of several Bloodspeaker Cult cells. The spell is a ritual and requires the caster to dance for at least an hour (rolling Perform: Dance / Awareness at TN 25) while casting – if the dance is interrupted or the Skill roll is unsuccessful, the spell fails. However, if the spell succeeds, the caster may choose either to gain a Physical or Mental Advantage for the duration of the spell, or inflict a Physical or Mental Disadvantage on another person within range for the duration of the spell. (The caster need not be able to see the target so long as he is within range.) The maximum Experience Point value of an Advantage or Disadvantage created by the spell is equal to the caster's Air + Insight Rank + Taint Rank, if any.

This spell cannot make extreme physical changes to the target, such as removing limbs or organs (e.g. it cannot inflict Disadvantages like Missing Eye). The GM should exercise intelligent judgment in considering its effects.

Mists of Fear

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Maho, Illusion)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (increase Fear effect strength by 1 per Raise)

This spell summons forth a potent illusion of whatever the target fears most in the world. The illusion is present for only a few moments and can only be perceived by the target, who must roll against a Fear 5 effect. If the target suffers from a Phobia the spell will also activate its effects.



Symbol of the Bloodspeaker

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3 (Maho, Wards)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 50' radius
- **Duration:** 12 hours
- **Raises:** None

The Bloodspeaker Cult uses this spell to protect their meeting places against unwanted intrusion. The symbol must be inscribed into a flat surface (wall, floor, etc) when it is cast. The moment anyone who is not a loyal member of the Bloodspeaker Cult enters the symbol's radius, the symbol glows a bright sickly green and the intruder is bathed in eerie green flames, inflicting 4k3 damage. The symbol can discharge any number of times against different targets, but each target can only be affected once within the duration of the spell.

Mastery Level 4

Tomb of Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 4 (Maho)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Conditional (see below)
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 to damage per Raise)

This spell is a perverse inversion of the elemental spell Tomb of Jade. Instead of targeting those with the Taint, it targets those who are pure of soul – the spell cannot affect anyone who has at least one full Rank of Taint. The victim of Tomb of Earth is held immobile as he begins turning to stone, beginning with the skin and working its way inward. Each Round (including the Round the spell is cast) on the caster's Turn, the caster makes an Opposed Roll of his Insight / Earth against the target's Insight / Air. If the caster wins, the target remains immobilized by the spell (unable to take Actions of any kind) and suffers 2k2 damage. If the target wins, the spell's effects end. If the target is killed by the spell, he is turned completely to stone, which crumbles to dust within 24 hours.

Burning Blood

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 4 (Maho)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per Raise), Range (+10' per Raise), Targets (+1 target per 3 Raises)

This horrible spell infuses the target's bloodstream with angry Fire kansen, causing his blood to superheat and boil through his skin, emerging as a cloud of reddish vapor. The target suffers Wounds with a DR equal to his Fire, and must roll Willpower at TN 20 or fall Prone due to the unbearable pain. Whether or not the target falls prone, he is considered to be Fatigued on his next two Turns, due to the debilitating effect of the boiling blood.

Mastery Level 5

Blood Armor

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Maho, Defense)
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Caster and one target creature
- **Duration:** 3 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per 2 Raises)

This is an extremely vicious defensive spell which high-ranking Bloodspeaker leaders frequently use to defend themselves. When the spell is cast, the maho-tsukai chooses one living target within range. For the duration of the spell, any time the caster suffers Wounds from any source, he only takes 25% of the damage rolled (rounded down). The target of the spell takes the other 75% (rounded up). Casting this spell does not produce any obvious visual effect, but each time the spell shifts damage to the target, the caster glows with unholy reddish-black energy, while appropriate injuries (burns, cuts, etc) spontaneously appear on the target. This spell works on all Wound damage, even from spells like Jade Strike that normally could not hurt the target.

Fierce Blood of the Earth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 5 (Maho)
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Caster
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- Raises: Duration (+6 hours per 2 Raises)

A hideous and blasphemous spell that many Bloodspeakers use to artificially extend their lifespans. The caster touches one living being, who must be either willing or physically helpless (securely bound, asleep, or unconscious). The caster must make an Opposed Earth Roll against an unwilling victim. If the spell is successful, the maho-tsukai consumes the victim's life force, killing him instantly. In return, the caster heals all physical injuries, regrows any missing limbs or organs, and extends his life by one year.

Although this spell has no obvious or immediate side-effects, using it repeatedly will have a price – the maho-tsukai will acquire a desiccated, almost mummified appearance, making his true nature increasingly difficult to conceal.

Mastery Level 6

Take the Body

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6 (Maho)
- **Range:** 500'
- **Area of Effect:** Caster and one target person
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Range (+500' per Raise), Special (cast as a single Simple Action with 4 Raises)

This spell is, to the best of anyone's knowledge, known only to two people – Iuchiban and Yajinden. They have guarded its secrets carefully and so far no other maho-tsukai has ever exhibited its power. The spell allows the caster to literally "leap" his soul into the body of another person within range, instantly and permanently taking their body as his own. The caster must succeed in a Contested Willpower roll against the victim, and if the victim wins, the caster is hurled back into his current body. (The victim will be very much aware that he just fought off some kind of terrible all-consuming power.)

The spell does not normally cause the souls to "switch"– the abandoned body simply falls dead. The fate of the original soul is unknown, and some Rokugani believe it may actually be destroyed, a truly horrific and blasphemous act. There are some reports of powerful Lost or maho-tsukai being able to switch into the other body rather than be destroyed, but these tales are not confirmed.

The occupied body retains its physical Traits and physical Advantages and Disadvantages, but instantly acquires the mental Traits and Void of the caster, along with all of the caster's Skills and any Mental or Spiritual Advantages and Disadvantages the caster may have. (Social Advantages or Disadvantages may or may not persist – the GM should adjudicate such situations.) If the maho-tsukai remains within the same body for an extended period of time (six months or more) it will gradually change to physically resemble the caster's original physical form, changing Rings, Traits, and Advantages as appropriate.

Noteworthy Bloodspeakers

The following section provides statistics for three notable Bloodspeaker leaders who have plagued the Empire's history.

Iuchiban, the Bloodspeaker

Air 6	Earth 7	Fire 5	Water 5	Void 6
Awareness 8	-	Intelligence 8	Perception 6	-

Initiative: 10k9 — *Attack: Knife 10k5*

Damage: 7k1 (Knife) — *Armor TN: 35*

Reduction: 10 (due to Khadi) — *Wounds: 133: Dead*

School/Rank: Otomo Courtier 5/Bloodspeaker Technique (Insight Rank 10)

Taint Rank: 3.2

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, Horsemanship 3, Intimidation (Control) 6, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 5, Lore: Gaijin 3, Lore: Heraldry 4, Lore: History 4, Lore: Maho 10, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Meditation

5, Sincerity (Deceit) 8, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 4, Temptation (Seduction) 6

Spells: Iuchiban has learned and memorized all known maho spells, and has access to other unique maho spells and powers as the GM wishes.

Advantages:

- *Allies (Bloodspeaker Cult)*
- *Clear Thinker*
- *Dark Paragon (Knowledge)*
- *Forbidden Knowledge (Maho, Gaijin)*
- *Languages (Senpet)*
- *Sage*
- *Social Position (younger son of the Emperor)*
- *Voice*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Fate*
- *Dark Secret (actually Hantei Jama)*
- *Infamous*
- *Overconfident*
- *Sworn Enemy (the Empire)*

Special Ability:

- *Khadi. Iuchiban has removed his heart with a sinister gaijin ritual. As a result, he is highly resistant to pain (Reduction 10), has no Wound penalties, and heals his Earth in Wounds during the Reactions Stage of each Round. Even if he is killed, dismembered, beheaded, or burned to ashes, his body will continue to heal and eventually reform, although it takes time.*

Iuchiban, born the second son of the Emperor, was a man overlooked by almost everyone despite his high birth. Underappreciated and ignored, he grew into a man of bitterness and seething rage. The world he was destined to rule was denied him by the simple injustice of birth, and his name would be forgotten by antiquity. It was too much for his petty and hateful soul to take. The Empire paid dearly for his anger.

Iuchiban in all of his incarnations was human ambition incarnate, demonstrating the extremes a man was capable of taking if his desires went unfulfilled. In truth, few other men can claim to have made such an impact on the Empire as Hantei Jama. Without Iuchiban, there would be no Bloodspeakers. Without him, maho tsukai would likely have remained a rare phenomena, isolated madmen who offered little threat to the Empire. No single human being in the history of the Empire has engendered such horror, such disgust, or such outright fear as the Bloodspeaker. Iuchiban is the bogeyman of Rokugan, the terror who nearly destroyed Rokugan not once, not twice, but three times. Even after his final defeat, his immortal black heart burned to a crisp and his soul sent finally screaming to Jigoku, the nightmare may not be over. Iuchiban has come back so many times that people are no longer convinced he can be truly defeated.

These fears may hold a certain element of truth. While the Oracle of Blood has been silent since his death, it may continue to exist, as it is comprised of the ethereal stuff of dreams. It is impossible to say that death has truly defeated Iuchiban. His soul bides its time in whatever dark corner of Jigoku it resides, and one day it may yet find a way to escape the grasp of the Realm of Evil and return to the living world.

Artifact: Porcelain Masks

The infamous porcelain masks created by Yajinden and his undead student, Fushiki, were used to create undead armies during both the Battle of Stolen Graves and the later Battle of Sleeping River. The masks outwardly appear rather plain and unimpressive: they are full-face mempo of smooth white porcelain. Sometimes they are painted or sculpted to display facial features, but more commonly they are left blank except for a vague face-like shape. The masks have no visible method of attaching to someone, and normally have no immediate effect on a living person who puts one on. They are imbued with dangerous Tainted kansen, and those who carry them for long periods of time must roll Earth at TN 10 to avoid gaining a point of Taint.

The true power of these masks is manifested when they are placed on the face of a dead human body. The mask instantly fuses with the flesh of the corpse and the kansen within the mask animates the body, creating a zombie. The power of the mask causes the zombie to obey whoever attached the mask, making it a reliable undead servant.



Asahina Yajinden, the Artificer of Blood

Air 7	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 5
-	Willpower 6	Intelligence 7	Perception 6	-

Initiative: 10k9+2

Attack: Knife 10k4

Damage: 4k1 (Knife)

Armor TN: 40

Wounds: Normal human Wound Ranks

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 2/Bloodspeaker Technique (Insight Rank 8)

Taint Rank: 2.3

Skills: Artisan (several) 2-5, Calligraphy 5, Courtier 3, Craft: Mempo 4, Craft: Weaponsmith 10, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Knives 6, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 5, Lore: Maho 6, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Medicine 4, Meditation 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Spellcraft 6

Spells: Yajinden has learned and memorized all known maho spells, although his knowledge is not as extensive as Iuchiban's.

Advantages:

- *Allies (Bloodspeaker Cult)*
- *Forbidden Knowledge (Maho)*
- *Great Potential (Craft: Weaponsmith)*
- *Prodigy*
- *Soul of Artistry (Craft: Weaponsmith)*

Disadvantages:

- *Compulsion (master his art)*
- *Infamous*
- *Jealousy (Iuchiban)*

Yajinden, the master artificer of the Bloodspeakers and crafter of the legendary bloodswords, remains an enigmatic figure. He has spent seven centuries in an endless search to achieve true and absolute perfection of his art, dwelling always in the shadow of Iuchiban's power and greatness. In the early years he was slavishly loyal to his master, but as century mounted on century, Yajinden grew more and more bitter and jealous of Iuchiban. That the Bloodspeaker's repeated defeats owed as much to his own haste and ambition as to his enemies' power only further weakened Yajinden's loyalty. This culminated in his failed plan to enter the Tomb and consume Iuchiban's soul and power.

Captivity within the Tomb alongside his master humbled Yajinden, but he never regained his old worshipful loyalty to his master. Once he escaped the Tomb it was probably only a matter of time before he betrayed Iuchiban once more, slipping away from the Bloodspeaker's final defeat and joining forces with the so-called Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, Daigotsu.



In the aftermath of Iuchiban's third defeat, Yajinden is the only living member of the original three founders of the cult. He no longer takes a direct stake in the Cult's ongoing activities, and seems to desire no further power, only absolute and complete mastery of his own arts. Now, finally, he believes he himself will be remembered on his own merits and for his own accomplishments rather than being known only as another's follower. Finally, the artist is free to create and experiment once more.

Jama Suru, the General of Iuchiban

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 4	Void 2
Reflexes 5	-	-	Perception 6	-

Initiative: 10k5 *Attack: Katana 10k5*

Damage: 7k2 (Katana) *Armor TN: 30*

Wounds: Normal human Wound Ranks

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 2/Bloodspeaker Technique (Insight Rank 5)

Taint Rank: 3.5

Skills: Battle 5, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Intimidation (Control) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives 3, Lore: Battle 3, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Maho 7, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Shugenja 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Spellcraft 6

Spells: Jama Suru has learned and memorized all known maho spells except for Take the Body. His nature as a twisted kansen-bound entity also gives him perverse insight into the realm of maho, allowing him to create unique spells and rituals that cannot be replicated.

Advantages:

- *Forbidden Knowledge (Maho)*
- *Quick*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial*
- *Disturbing Countenance*

Special Ability:

- *Jama Suru's peculiar nature makes him strangely divorced from normal human behavior and weaknesses. He gains +3k3 on all rolls to resist mental or social influence from anyone other than Iuchiban, but suffers a –3k0 penalty to all Social Skill rolls made to influence others.*

In a very real sense the name "Jama Suru" is more of a title than an actual person. For as long as there has been an Iuchiban, there has been a Jama Suru, and every time the Bloodspeaker returns a new general is created for his armies who bears the same name, as if perversely honoring the memory of the first Jama Suru – or at the very least the memory of his loyalty to Iuchiban.

The later versions of Jama Suru are created through a blending of unique magic developed by Iuchiban and Yajinden. The recipient of this sinister blessing is imprinted with a kansen, much like the original Jama Suru, infusing them with both an absolute loyalty to Iuchiban and strong magical powers. This process re-forges the personality into one of rage and hate, a malignant force who serves as the enforcer of Iuchiban's will. All versions of Jama Suru ultimately reflect the nature of the title more than their own original personalities, the imprinted kansen slowly degrading their individuality and replacing it with the skill, power, and rage Iuchiban required. Whether or not the original Jama Suru is still present in any way within these later versions is unknown.

All those who have born the name Jama Suru died at almost the same time as Iuchiban was defeated, usually shortly before. The last one actually took the name before Iuchiban's rise to power, but he too fell in 1166 to Isawa Sezaru. The Jama Suru personality does seem to have some glimmering of recognition of its past existences, and it seems at least remotely possible that Jama Suru might appear in a time when Iuchiban himself is not active. The Bloodspeaker general might one day rise again or he might be dead forever, another secret in maho practice never explained.


空の巻

The Kolat

"Forget everything you have been told."

– Yasuki Taka, humble merchant, twelfth century

The Kolat. To some, the word means nothing. To others, it means everything. For most of those who dwell within the Emerald Empire, it is a nonsense word, perhaps made up by children to name something unknown. To a few, however, it holds the power of life and death, and with its simple utterance it can transform a single life... or kill hundreds.

The Kolat is a vast and terrible conspiracy, dating back to the very founding of the Emerald Empire, conceived in absolute secrecy and maintained through ruthless practicality, amoral cruelty, and absolute fanaticism. Indeed, it would not be inaccurate to describe the Kolat as a secret philosophical cult, one which clings to its bizarre principles with the same determination as Bloodspeakers and other religious blasphemers.

When Hantei and his divine siblings fell from the Heavens, not all the human tribes welcomed them. Although the vast bulk of humanity adored the Kami from the moment they saw them, some were less enthusiastic – especially the tribal chieftains who had previously ruled over the land which became Rokugan. Some of these malcontents rebelled openly, only to be quickly defeated by the Kami and their rapidly growing armies of followers. The defeated rebels were mostly driven out of the fledgling Empire when they were not simply crushed outright.

Other rebels, however, were more subtle. They met in secret, discussing ways in which the Kami might someday be defeated and their own rule restored. Their most prominent leader was a man known as Tora, a charismatic genius and philosopher. Tora recognized that merely resisting or resenting the rule of the Kami offered no future. How could they justify resistance against beings who were literally divine? Where could they find moral authority for such audacity? Tora and his fellow conspirators spent countless nights arguing over this problem, seeking justifications for their bitter resentment of the Kami's rule. Ultimately, however, it was another man who supplied them with their answer: Shinsei, the Little Teacher, whose wisdom enabled the early Empire to withstand Fu Leng's assault. Shinsei was a mortal man, but the Kami listened to him and revered his wisdom. Tora and the other conspirators pored over Shinsei's Tao, seeking its wisdom for themselves.

Out of these early debates, which lasted for almost a quarter-century, the fledgling Kolat devised their own philosophy, which they called the "Rule of Man." They saw that Shinsei taught all things to be impermanent, changing as the Celestial Wheel turned. If they overthrew Hantei, they would be overthrown in turn. However, Tora argued the Celestial Wheel need not be an eternal circle. What if it was instead working to create some kind of final meaning, an ultimate pattern to the universe? In that case, the question of who ruled mankind became one of vital importance. If mankind was ruled by gods fallen from the Heavens, it would be those gods or their descendents who determined the final pattern. But if men overthrew these gods and ruled themselves, it would be men who ultimately perfected the universe, forming it in their own image. On that basis, Tora argued, rebellion against the Kami was not merely justified but vitally necessary. Moreover, the entirety of human activity would need to be controlled and guided so that the final shape of the universe would be a desirable one. It might take hundreds or even thousands of years to bring mankind entirely under control, but the ultimate goal would be more than worth the effort. His comrades agreed, and the Kolat was born.

Philosophical Conspiracy

The founders of the Kolat were a strange mixture of opportunistic power-mongers and subtle philosophers. How much they truly believed their own doctrines is difficult to know – certainly Tora believed, but many of his comrades may have embraced his ideals simply because they provided justification for the conspiracy. However, within a few generations Tora's ideals of the "Rule of Man" had been firmly inculcated into the conspiracy's recruits. The Kolat quickly became a veritable cult of true believers, men and women absolutely convinced they were doing the right thing for all mankind. This was a source of considerable strength for the Kolat, since it meant the members of the conspiracy were willing to do anything, without compunction or scruple, to pursue their ultimate goals. It also meant the conspiracy was from the beginning an organization dedicated to patient long-term planning. The perfection of the universe was not something to be achieved overnight, after all.

The Kolat admired Shinsei from the moment he appeared, but saw the Little Teacher in a different light than normal Rokugani. To most he was a wise man and servant of the Kami. To the Kolat, however, he represented the actualization of the conspiracy's goals. He was a mortal who stood before gods and took command, briefly imposing his own will on the Celestial Order, just as the Kolat hoped to do for all eternity. The Tao of Shinsei was and remains the only religious text the Kolat respect, although they twist Shinsei's words to justify their darkest ideals.

The Early Centuries

Having settled on their beliefs and justifications, Tora and his fellows began the laborious work of building the Kolat into an Empire-spanning conspiracy. Their early efforts were slow, painstaking, and not always successful. Loyal agents were planted in office close to persons of influence, in the hope that they might slowly build networks of sympathy and control within the Empire. The leaders of the conspiracy, now a council of ten Kolat Masters, began constructing a secret headquarters – a pyramidal structure which would come to be known as the Hidden Temple – deep within the Phoenix Mountains. Within a generation, however, a problem developed. As the early Kolat Masters began to grow old and die, their heirs often proved considerably less capable. The remaining Masters began looking outside their own families for heirs, grooming promising recruits from across the Empire.

The growth of the Kolat was initially a painfully slow process, and might well have failed to make significant headway at all but for the intervention of fate. Early in the second century, Kolat agents in the Crab lands learned of a mysterious object uncovered by Crab miners in the Twilight Mountains. It appeared to be a giant crystalline globe, larger than a man and with the outline of an eye carved into one side. Where it had come from no-one knew, and the Crab themselves were suspicious of the object – it was clearly magical, showing visions and images to those who gazed into its depths, and "weeping" small crystal tears which seemed to contain some portion of its magical essence. They called it the Oni's Eye. Hida, lord of the Crab, reluctantly ordered the Eye brought to Kyuden Hida for investigation, but the Kolat struck first. Their agents staged a bandit attack, stealing the object and quickly moving it across the Empire to the Hidden Temple. In those early days Rokugan was still only lightly populated, and the Kolat agents were not detected during their journey. Hida, secretly glad to be rid of the strange artifact, never searched for it.

The Kolat quickly began to experiment with their new acquisition and discovered it had a host of unique abilities. The Eye permitted them to observe events from vast distances, almost anywhere they wished, and the strange crystal "tears" that oozed from it could be used to communicate over equally long distances. The Kolat suddenly had an intelligence source greater than anything the Empire could hope to match. Even better, the Eye allowed them to regain contact with those of their brethren who had fled into the Burning Sands after the arrival of the Kami. These distant allies, who called themselves Qolat, now became an integral part of the conspiracy.

Centuries of Plotting

"One day, we will stop the wheel of reincarnation forever. And then we shall see what true divinity is."

– Shinjo Yokatsu, Champion of the Unicorn, twelfth century

One of the newly unified Kolat's earliest victories came deep in the Burning Sands, where their agents were among the first to encounter Shinjo's roaming Ki-Rin Clan. As part of a nomadic tribe known as the Ujik-Hai, the Qolat arranged to join the Ki-Rin, subtly and skillfully infiltrating the clan under the very nose of the Kami Shinjo. They would spend the next several centuries slowly tightening their grip on the clan, and by the time the Unicorn Clan returned to Rokugan, the conspiracy was fully in control of the clan's key leadership.

Within Rokugan, the Kolat's development of economic power gave rise to the Empire's first great internal war, the Crab-Crane War of the third century. When the war was concluded, the Yasuki had joined the Crab and the Kolat influence over the family had grown enormously. The financial and historical fallout from the war only confirmed for the Ten Masters that financial warfare would be a very useful tool for controlling and manipulating the Empire.

The Kolat's manipulation of events within the Empire proceeded for centuries, each tiny step advancing their plan by almost imperceptibly small increments, each garnering more power and influence for the conspiracy. Not every campaign

was successful. The Dragon Clan, controlled by its immortal Kami Togashi, defeated every effort to place agents of the conspiracy within its ranks. On the other hand, the Kolat found that when their operations failed and drew public attention, they could easily shift the blame to the Scorpion Clan, using them as scapegoats. They also succeeded in influencing the development of Rokugani law, pushing it even more strongly toward testimony and social status and away from evidence and logical deduction. (The later rise of the Kitsuki family within the Dragon Clan was a source of considerable alarm, and the Kolat went to great lengths to paint the Kitsuki as eccentric and peculiar to discredit them with the rest of the Empire.)

The return of the Unicorn Clan in the early ninth century afforded the Kolat an opportunity to take much greater steps forward. They now had an entire clan at their beck and call, giving them enormous economic and military leverage within the Empire. But even as the conspiracy rose to heights of power it had never before attained, dangers were lurking that would bring its ambitions crashing down.

The Age of Man

"Humanity lives with blinders on. The Kolat must eventually remove those blinders, and show man how beautiful the world can truly be. Until then, we will use his blindness as we would any other tool; to better prepare him for the future."

– Ikoma Soko, Kolat Master, twelfth century

The Second Day of Thunder heralded the end of the Hantei Dynasty and the beginning of it successor, the Toturi Dynasty. This was something of a turning point for the Kolat. The new Emperor, the former Akodo Toturi, was a mortal man, not a scion of the Hantei line. Many Kolat believed this to be a major victory for the conspiracy, a huge step forward in their long-term program of putting the entire universe into the hands of man. However, within a few years they would face a series of crises that tested the conspiracy to the utmost.

The Kolat had long been aware of the Lying Darkness, and had made contingency plans to try to deal with it if its power ever grew too strong. When the Darkness finally made its move, however, the Kolat dithered for months before finally taking action. At last they stepped forward, unleashing hundreds of agents with crystal weapons to purge the Shadowspawn from the castles and courts of Rokugan. It was a key blow against the Darkness, but it exposed the existence of the Kolat to the Empire as a whole.

Even worse, at the very time the struggle against the Darkness was entering its critical stages, the Kami Shinjo unexpectedly returned from the Burning Sands. She unleashed a great purge against the Kolat infiltration of her clan, wiping out centuries of effort in a few weeks. A handful of loyal Kolat agents escaped, eventually founding the Minor Clan of the Ox, but that was hardly suitable compensation for the loss of the Unicorn.

To some of the Kolat leadership, these costs were acceptable, because the end of the War Against the Darkness elevated two mortals, Hitomi and Yakamo, to the position of Moon and Sun. These Masters argued that the loss of the Unicorn was more than compensated for by the ascension of mortals to the positions of rulers over the Celestial Heavens themselves. Indeed, they believed this event meant the Kolat plan had to a large degree been accomplished. A considerable schism developed within the ranks of the conspiracy's leaders over whether the so-called "Age of Man" meant an end to their struggle or only the beginning of its next phase.

Reorganization and Defeat

"The day we need no longer depend on human weakness, that is the day our destiny will be realized."

– Chinoko, Kolat Master, twelfth century

The return of Shinjo and the Kolat's open action during the struggle with the Darkness had exposed the conspiracy's existence to the Empire. Previously, the Kolat had been little more than an enigmatic mystery, a word spoken in whispers which might mean nothing at all. Now at last the Empire had public confirmation that the Kolat existed and had done so for centuries.

The conspiracy attempted to deal with this by adjusting its organization and tactics. The Ten Masters separated their followers into code-named "sects," such as the Cloud Sect (assigned to preserve knowledge and relay it to the other sects) and the Coin Sect (tasked with accumulating wealth). The theory was the separate sects would be less vulnerable than a single unified organization. In practice, communication and coordination between the sects was so close that there was little or no improvement in the conspiracy's security. The Ten Masters continued to meet regularly at the Hidden Temple and agents from the various sects worked together to accomplish the Kolat's goals.

Given such facts, it was perhaps inevitable that the Kolat would face a major defeat just a few years later. During the chaotic era known as the Race for the Throne, shortly before the dawn of the Iweko Dynasty, a traitor to the Kolat named Kaelung revealed the location of the Hidden Temple to the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion took it upon themselves to eradicate this foul conspiracy and assaulted the Temple and its Ox Clan defenders with all their might. The Oni's Eye was captured and the majority of the Kolat perished, including all but three of the Ten Masters. The conspiracy's influence was also purged from the Ox Clan. Although much of the conspiracy's infrastructure survived elsewhere in the Empire, it was weak and leaderless, and the remaining Masters had to devote all their efforts to ensuring something survived for the future.

Less than a year later, Yakamo and Hitomi were expelled from the Celestial Heavens by the new Sun and Moon, the Jade and Obsidian Dragons. A new dynasty took power with the direct mandate of the Heavens, ending the influence of mortal man over Rokugan's leaders. From the seeming heights of near-victory the Kolat had plunged to a position nearly as weak as at its founding, 1100 years before.

Organization of a Conspiracy: The Masters and the Sects

Although the ten Kolat sects were officially created and named during the Toturi Dynasty, in practical terms they existed for centuries before that time. Each of the ten Kolat Masters had always been assigned to run a particular aspect of the conspiracy, and giving names to these branches merely codified the practice.

The identity of the ten Kolat Masters is one of the conspiracy's most closely guarded secrets, even from its own members. What is not known cannot be betrayed, after all, and the knowledge held within any one Master's mind would be enough to destroy the entire Kolat if it fell into the wrong hands. Thus, when the Masters met in the Hidden Temple they always wore full-body black robes and golden masks to conceal their forms and faces. When a Master dies, each of the remaining Masters is allowed to anonymously nominate a potential successor from within the Kolat ranks, and the candidates are tested rigorously by the entire leadership. This theoretically ensures only the finest members of the Kolat can rise to the position of Master, although in practice it does not always work out that way.

When not visiting the Hidden Temple, the Kolat Masters live ordinary lives, behaving in all ways like the loyal and pious Rokugani they appear to be. Their positions in the "real world" often have little relation to their status within the conspiracy, for the Kolat pays no attention to the rules of Rokugan's social hierarchy and will recruit eta as readily as it will samurai. For example, at the end of the eleventh century one of the Ten Masters was none other than the Champion of the Unicorn, while another was a geisha and still another was a captain in the Imperial Guard.

Kolat are masters of concealment and patience. To evade the eye of the Empire's defenders for a thousand years requires strict loyalty and discipline. Individual Kolat agents must live their "real" lives flawlessly, whether they be samurai or peasants, without failing in their duties to the Kolat Masters. One traitor can ruin decades of work, so the conspiracy picks its recruits carefully, often luring and indoctrinating them for years before allowing them to become conscious agents of the Ten Masters.

Chrysanthemum Sect

The Chrysanthemum Sect was the name given to those who served for a thousand years as the Kolat's eyes and ears within the Imperial City – first Otosan Uchi and later Toshi Ranbo. These agents had one of the most dangerous jobs within the conspiracy, for their operations were always liable to draw the attention of Imperial Magistrates or the Seppun family's Hidden Guard. Every agent in the Imperial City was required to keep a vial of poison at all times, to be taken in case of discovery.



Otosan Uchi, site of the first Hantei's home, was a vast, sprawling, and chaotic city, easily infiltrated by new individuals. The key activities in the city were conducted within the innermost holdings, however, where security was vastly more severe. Further, the magical protections of the city grew stronger with every generation, so much so that even the Oni's Eye could not always see into the place. Thus, agents were constantly needed to infiltrate the place, and casualties were high. Fortunately, those who perished never exposed the conspiracy's existence.

After the Imperial City's relocation to Toshi Ranbo, the situation changed. The city's rapid expansion into a major metropolis was not closely supervised, and the Kolat had ample opportunity to not only infiltrate the city but to construct secret holdings in many neighborhoods. Even after the destruction of the Hidden Temple, the Chrysanthemum Sect continued to operate within Toshi Ranbo, albeit with far fewer resources.

Cloud Sect

The Kolat has existed for a thousand years, and all of the knowledge it accumulates, especially all knowledge dealing with espionage, magic, blackmail, and mental conditioning, is maintained and studied by the Cloud Sect. The sect's task is both simple and demanding: preserve everything the conspiracy knows, and distribute the information to the other sects as needed. Thus, the Cloud Sect is among the most outgoing and least secretive branches of the Kolat, freely sharing its wisdom with the rest of the conspiracy. It is staffed heavily by shugenja but also includes scholars and historians of many other stripes. Although most of its membership dwells within the Hidden Temple, its agents are dispatched throughout the Empire when needed.

The Cloud Sect is unique in that almost any member may directly contact its leader, Master Cloud. Every shugenja in the sect is taught a special spell which allows them to directly contact the Master of the sect, albeit without actually seeing him. This allows Master Cloud to maintain tight and direct control over his agents without compromising his identity even if an outsider learns the spell.

The fall of the Hidden Temple all but destroyed the Cloud Sect, an especially heavy blow to the Kolat organization.

Coin Sect

The Coin Sect is in charge of the Kolat's extensive efforts in economic warfare, something the conspiracy has pursued aggressively since the third century. The sect raises vast sums through its control and manipulation of trade within the Empire, and has strong influence within the Yasuki, Daidoji, Yoritomo, and Ide families, among others. It also controls many criminal organizations throughout the Empire. Economic warfare and trade manipulation have been staples of Kolat power for a very long time, and the Coin Sect is quite powerful, albeit somewhat controversial. Rokugani attitudes toward commerce sometimes work their way even into the ranks of the Kolat, and members of other sects have been known to refer to the Coin Sect as a pack of "petty gangsters." Moreover, the Coin Sect often seems to suffer from an unusually high level of internal strife, infighting, and betrayal. Greed is a terrible and powerful force, most especially for those who peddle greed to others.

That being said, the activities of the Coin Sect remain vital to the Kolat and more than one Master Coin has pointed out that commerce can undermine the rule of the Heavens more effectively than any doctrine. Moreover, the Coin Sect's nature makes it far more hardy and resilient than other branches of the conspiracy. The Coin Sect survived the fall of the Hidden Temple with less damage than almost any other branch of the organization, and if the Kolat rise again during the Iweko Dynasty, it will likely be the work of Master Coin.

Dream Sect

A considerable number of Kolat have absolutely no idea they are part of any conspiracy. This is the work of the Dream Sect, which specializes in the strange and unnatural task of creating "sleepers" – Rokugani who have been brainwashed and reprogrammed to serve the needs of the conspiracy. When a sect needs a sleeper agent, they find and kidnap a suitable subject, then hand the poor soul over to Dream Sect agents. The victim is spirited back to the Hidden Temple and spends weeks undergoing physical and mental torture in a careful mixture, using both mundane and supernatural means. The exact methods are a secret known only to senior operatives of the Dream Sect and their leader, Master Dream, also sometimes called simply "the Breaker." After the conditioning is over, the sleeper agent's memory is erased and he or she is returned home with a suitable story justifying the absence.

Sleeper agents may be activated by a trigger word, phrase, or poem, by a set time passing, or any of a wide variety of other signals. Once activated, sleepers lose all sense of self and behave only as previously commanded during their indoctrination. They fulfill their mission at any cost, forgetting their deeds afterward. Sleepers may awake in the morning to find themselves clutching weapons, their lord's blood on their clothes.

The Dream Sect's methods are not perfect, and more than one strong-willed samurai has resisted programming. Failed subjects are killed, and the sect constantly strives to improve its work and to develop more sophisticated sleeper agents.

Like the Cloud Sect, the Dream Sect was largely wiped out when the Hidden Temple fell. The sect's sleeper agents, however, continue to live out their lives, unaware of the programming hidden within their minds. They are an asset which the rest of the Kolat may yet be able to reclaim.

Jade Sect

Just as the Kolat were never willing to tolerate the rule of the Kami over mankind, they also are unwilling to let any other supernatural or otherworldly influence determine the fate of the universe. Indeed, the Kolat have long recognized the fulfillment of their ideals will require them to control the spirit world as well as the mortal realm. The duty of the Jade Sect is to oppose supernatural threats to the conspiracy's goals – whether those threats be the Taint of Jigoku or the corruption of the Lying Darkness. The Jade Sect exists to fight the rule of corruption just as the other sects fight the rule of Tengoku.

Jade agents rarely take direct action. When the scope of a threat is within the ability of a few agents to deal with, they will do so, but more often the Jade Sect utilizes the Kolat's powerful network of control and influence to bring allies to bear on the problem. The Kuni Witch Hunters, the Scorpion Kuroiban, the Phoenix Inquisitors, or the Jade Magistrates sometimes receive anonymous information pointing to dangerous threats – vast Bloodspeaker Cult cells, entire villages fallen to the Taint, or powerful samurai who have gained their positions through corrupted means.

The Jade Sect's most famous member was a tragic figure, the former merchant Yasuki Taka. At one time he was both a Kolat and a secret enemy of the conspiracy, and he witnessed the death of the woman he loved when she tried to assassinate the possessed Emperor Hantei XXXIX. When the Lying Darkness rose he was among the first to combat it and ultimately, he was consumed by it. However, a combination of his own will and Kolat intervention saved him from becoming a mindless pawn of the Darkness. He was encased in a prison of crystal. His memories were mostly destroyed, but his guile and his hatred of corruption remained fully intact, and he ran the Jade Sect for decades from within his crystal cocoon. He finally died when the Scorpion Clan stormed the Hidden Temple.

After the fall of the Hidden Temple, the Jade Sect largely collapsed as an arm of the Kolat, though individual members often continued their personal war against the forces of Jigoku.

Lotus Sect

The Lotus Sect is responsible for dispatching the enemies of the Kolat. They are some of the finest assassins in the history of Rokugan, with skills that would be the envy of any Shosuro shinobi. Lotus assassins live in secluded monasteries in remote regions, training perpetually, waiting for orders from their superiors in the other sects. The Lotus philosophy is that an assassin must be free of human contacts with the outside world, thereby ensuring the assassin can take life without hesitation when the time comes. Master Lotus lives within each of these temples at different times, this constant movement ensuring that even if his location is discovered he will be long gone before the information reaches anyone with the ability to act on it. The Master's constant movement also keeps the Lotus assassins themselves at their best, since he may arrive at any moment without notice. Master Lotus keeps in close contact with Master Silk, with three couriers at each temple ready to run missives between the two. After all, most assassination targets are determined by information given to the Lotus by the Silk Sect.

Kolat assassins are not actually feared by most Rokugani, but this is only because the existence of Kolat assassins is unknown to most Rokugani. Even the few magistrates who investigate Kolat activities seldom recognize the danger they are in... until it is too late. Moreover, the Kolat sometimes employ ronin such as the Weavers as front-men for their assassinations to further confuse their enemies.

Roc Sect

The Roc Sect is a mixture of Kolat and Qolat, and serves as the connection between the two conspiracies. When a Rokugani resource might aid the Qolat's efforts in the Burning Sands, a Roc agent is dispatched to deliver whatever might be required. Likewise, the Roc can deliver the powers and secrets of the Burning Sands to Rokugan. The Roc Sect serves as the medium through which two worlds collaborate toward the same goal.

Indeed, the danger posed by the Heavens is not unique to Rokugan. The Burning Sands were once a lush and fertile realm before the Heavens' wrath reduced it to dry dunes, bleached rocks, and embattled oases. The Qolat, formed originally from the refugees who fled the Kami in Rokugan, have found the Burning Sands ready and willing to hear their message of human supremacy and metaphysical perfection.

Roc agents are among the most scrutinized members of the conspiracy. Due to the freedom of movement required to perform their job, they must be chosen from only the most trusted and loyal recruits, especially since they often spend long periods of time completely beyond the reach of either organization. Before any potential Roc agent is welcomed into the sect's ranks, he or she is kidnapped and tortured for a full week by Kolat disguised as Imperial magistrates. If the agents break they are killed. Only those who withstand this harsh initiation without betraying the Kolat are welcomed into the Roc Sect.

Master Roc is often a recruit from the Qolat, and thus cannot show his or her face openly within Rokugan. However, this also means Master Roc can leave the Empire without fear, knowing the Qolat will be waiting on the far side of the desert.

The fall of the Hidden Temple thus had relatively little impact on the Roc Sect, and the Qolat maintain the conspiracy's dream in foreign lands, waiting for the time when they can return to Rokugan once more.

Silk Sect

The Kolat know that knowledge is power. Knowledge of a single samurai's dishonorable grandfather can be the catalyst for the downfall of an entire family. A single moment of weakness discovered by the Kolat can undo a lifetime's good deeds. Conversely, all the cunning and resources of a thousand years of conspiracy means nothing if the Kolat does not know how or when to use its power. The Silk Sect is responsible for gathering intelligence for the conspiracy, collecting information in every possible way and conveying it back to the Hidden Temple for analysis.

Many Silk agents are actors, geisha, or courtiers, and a large number are heimin or even eta. They are the open ears that none are aware of. They are the comforting arms in which to confide. They are in every city, have agents in every court. They have ears almost anywhere a samurai could be expected to speak. Truth is power to the Silk Sect, and they are in the business of obtaining as much of it as possible.

A separate faction within the Silk Sect analyzes and disseminates the information collected by their field agents. They send reports to the other Sects about what has happened, what may happen, and what the Kolat can do to affect this. They also forge and falsify anything the Kolat might need, from legal documents to famous weapons.

Because of their special function, the Silk Sect is both the most trusted and the most carefully watched of all the Kolat sects. They know everything and thus could betray any of the other sects, even the ruling Tiger. Further, their agents are the most likely to betray the Kolat. A disguised geisha might fall in love with her mark. A power-hungry information broker might decide to try to buy his way into a better life with Silk Sect intelligence. A courtier might succumb to the lure of honor and choose his own clan over the Kolat. In such cases, of course, a Lotus assassin ends the betrayal efficiently and swiftly, but such risks are constant and the conspiracy is ever-vigilant.

Few Silk Sect agents actually died when the Hidden Temple fell, but the loss of their central headquarters left them helpless, unable to report their information or put it to use. The majority of them simply focused on their "normal" lives, hoping that someday the conspiracy might revive and contact them once again.

Steel Sect

The Steel Sect is the name given to the military force which guards the Hidden Temple. Of course, this small army of highly trained ronin, called the "Hidden Guard" in mockery of the Seppun family, existed for many centuries before it took on the name of Steel Sect, and its responsibilities were no different in those earlier eras. After the purging of the Unicorn, the Steel Sect also included the newly formed Ox Clan, whose territories were deliberately placed to occupy the most direct approaches to the Hidden Temple.

The Steel Sect's responsibilities are simple: prevent any outsiders from approaching the Temple. When travelers stray too close, the Steel patrollers first attempt to cause 'accidents' to turn the visitors away. If the accidents do not achieve their desired effect, Steel Sect warriors take a more direct approach. Whenever possible they attempt to maintain the appearance that people died accidentally, so as to give the entire area a reputation as naturally dangerous. Even after the creation of the Ox Clan, the Kolat still had to be careful – the Ox could only explain away so many deaths of Great Clan samurai in their lands. Far better to discourage visitors with 'accidents.'

Ultimately, the Steel Sect and the Ox Clan failed in their missions when the Scorpion Clan attacked the Hidden Temple directly. In the aftermath of the attack, the Steel Sect lacked a true mission – there was no longer a central headquarters to protect. The handful of survivors from the sect attempted to re-purpose themselves as bodyguards and enforcers, hoping the vacant Master positions will be filled and the new Kolat Masters will require protection.



Tiger Sect

The Tiger Sect is tasked with the simplest and at the same time the most difficult and vital of duties – making sure the Kolat conspiracy remains a secret at all costs. Thus the Tiger may be considered first among equals. Their members are the only Kolat agents who are routinely given the identities of other Kolat as part of their duties. They identify and execute those who detect or betray the conspiracy, as well as noting targets for the Lotus Sect to dispatch. Many samurai who have come too close to learning the truth about the Kolat have met their end at the orders of the Tiger Sect.

Within the Kolat, Tiger agents are spoken of in hushed tones and whispers. Their tactics are harsh and they are merciless in their approach. An internal enemy is treated with the same ruthlessness as an external one, and when someone betrays the Kolat the punishment extends not only to that individual but also to his family and friends. Death at the hands of a Tiger agent is never a swift or painless affair.

Master Tiger, the leader of this sect, is an enigmatic figure, and his identity is known only to the other Masters. This is done to prevent him from gaining too much power over the Kolat as a whole, since in theory all the Masters should speak with an equal voice. Even so, the Tiger Master often functions as the de facto leader of the conspiracy.

Resources and Methods

The Kolat rarely find themselves forced into a situation where they must directly confront a group or individual. Problems are uncovered and dealt with far before direct action is required. The Kolat always prefers to act indirectly, using its influence to steer unknowing samurai toward an identified problem. While a few Rokugani do know or guess at the existence of the Kolat, the great majority do not, and the conspiracy likes to keep it that way. They employ a soft and subtle hand whenever possible. For example, the Kolat's influence can be used to ruin the career or reputation of a troublesome magistrate, or to bankrupt a merchant who is working against Kolat interests. Forged documents, seductions, bribery, blackmail... all of these things are weapons in the conspiracy's arsenal. Why go to the trouble and difficulty of killing someone when they can be destroyed so much more easily without bloodshed?

The Silk Sect is particularly adept at dealing with foes in this manner. Their enormous information resources allow them to unleash incriminating evidence to shame a target publicly, usually resulting in exile or seppuku, if not execution. The power of the Oni's Eye makes it pitifully easy for the Kolat to discover dark secrets about its targets once they draw its ire. Moreover, since these sorts of maneuvers are commonly employed by clan samurai against each other, few will question how a particular samurai happened to come across a piece of incriminating evidence. A variation of this method is to actually forge and replace a document or item, then expose the forgery so as to shame a suitable person. A famous katana suddenly breaks in a duel, a merchant is discovered selling counterfeit goods, travel papers suddenly become cheap forgeries... the method has infinite applications, and the skills of Kolat agents can ensure the substitution is never discovered.

All this being said, there are still many occasions when the Kolat must end someone's life, either to protect itself or to advance its cause. Death is not easily hidden, so the Kolat instead hides the cause and method of death. Sleeper agents are a vital tool in this program, since they can be unleashed without warning to kill someone for no apparent reason or motivation. The Lotus Sect is also available, a formidable group of actors, killers, and liars. The typical Lotus assassination will be carried out by an agent who pretends to be someone close to the target, murders him, and then fakes his own death. Poisoning is also a popular method, since poisons can be extremely difficult to trace back to their source. Kolat resources allow their agents to procure the deadliest of toxins and easily slip them into food, drinks, or even gifts. They generally use slow acting poisons, to lessen the chance of discovery beforehand and to create a confusing delay between the poisoning and subsequent death.

The Kolat does not wage open warfare with its enemies – it lacks the resources to do so. If an army is needed the Kolat will try to maneuver the forces of one of the clans into doing the work instead. For example, in the eleventh century members of the Hare Clan stumbled across a Kolat operation in the Imperial capital. The conspiracy quickly arranged for the Scorpion Clan to blame the death of one of its samurai on the Hare, unleashing a Scorpion army to besiege and destroy the Minor Clan's modest castle.

Enemies and Weaknesses

Although the Kolat may appear to be an all-powerful and unstoppable organization, history clearly shows this not to be the case. From the peak of its power in the early twelfth century the conspiracy was cast down into near-ruin just a few decades later. This could not have happened if the Kolat were as invulnerable as its leaders believed. Indeed, long before the fall of the Hidden Temple the Kolat faced many enemies, and it is possible that at almost any time one or more of these foes could have brought the conspiracy crashing down.

The Kolat's most persistent foe throughout its history was the Dragon Clan. For over a thousand years the Dragon were ruled by none other than the Kami Togashi, who changed his name each generation so as to remain in the mortal world until he could face his brother Fu Leng once more at the Second Day of Thunder. Togashi's divine sight could identify every Kolat infiltrator, and the conspiracy's efforts to gain a foothold in the Dragon were always defeated. The Kolat were deeply alarmed by Togashi's power and puzzled by his refusal to simply expose them and wipe them out. The rise of the Kitsuki family, whose strange methods of investigation made them capable foes of Kolat plots, further deepened the conspiracy's fears. Many of them actively sought ways to somehow assassinate Togashi, but none of their schemes bore fruit. For his part, the Dragon Kami allowed the Kolat to exist because he saw they, too, had their part to play in the destiny of the Empire.

Why Samurai Fall to the Kolat

Betraying the will of the divine and fighting to reorder the Empire is nothing an honorable samurai should do. In a land where honor is stronger than steel, why would anyone willingly join the Kolat? For a few, the simple draw of power is sufficient. Kolat recruiters will lure in easily corrupted samurai with demonstrations of financial and political power. Such recruits are rare, however – not because of a lack of dishonorable samurai within the Emerald Empire, but rather because it is difficult to find someone with such petty desires who still has the guile and loyalty to serve the Kolat effectively.

Many of the agents who serve the Masters are actually drawn to the ideals of the Kolat. All too often samurai are forced to choose between their lord and themselves. Some samurai are unable to bear the pressure. They begin to blame the Celestial Order for the tribulations in their lives, for dead lovers and lost fortunes. The Heavens dictated their suffering, so they turn against the Heavens. These fallen samurai who turn to the Kolat are convinced their sacrifices are necessary to free the rest of humanity from their own fate.

Peasants and the Kolat

The Kolat is by no means an exclusively samurai organization. To the contrary, the Kolat's goals and methods mean they judge men by their abilities rather than their birth. Heimin and eta are frequently members of the conspiracy and more than one of them has risen to the position of Kolat Master. For example, during the reign of Hantei XXXVIII, one of the Kolat Masters was a geisha while another was a criminal gang leader.

The use of peasants and untouchables offers many advantages to the Kolat. Commoners are unseen even when plainly visible, for those below a samurai's station are beneath a samurai's notice. This can make it very easy indeed to gather information for the Silk Sect, to pass information on targets to the Lotus Sect, or to smuggle goods for the Coin Sect.



Other Conspiracies

The Kolat are the masters of Rokugani conspiracy, but this does not mean they are the only conspirators in the Empire. Conspiracies are not that uncommon on a local level, such as criminal gangs who work to take control of towns or cities, or clan samurai plotting to control their fief. These conspirators often use methods that closely resemble the Kolat, although obviously the Kolat itself has a much greater reach and much more experience. However, local conspiracies can very effectively control small provinces or individual cities without the need for a larger network. These groups sometimes come into conflict with the Kolat itself, although more often the Ten Masters allow such groups to operate without interference – after all, such groups can form effective scapegoats for failed Kolat plots.

In addition, on at least one occasion a misguided megalomaniac has created his own "Kolat," imitating the rumors about the true organization and embarking on plots and schemes of his own. The true Kolat found this very useful, since the charlatan not only drew attention away from them but his eventual exposure and elimination convinced the Empire that the Kolat had never been anything more than a trivial group of plotters. It is likely that such imitation Kolats have come into existence more than once in the Empire's history, and GMs can use them to challenge PCs without forcing them to take on the immense power of the true Kolat.

Ironically, the Scorpion Clan – the supposed masters of secrets – were never a serious threat to the Kolat until the end, when they learned of the Hidden Temple's location. Up until the twelfth century, most Scorpion were too secure in their own sense of superiority to believe a monstrous conspiracy was lurking undetected within the Empire. Indeed, for much of its history the Kolat routinely used the Scorpion as scapegoats for its own operations.

One enemy the Kolat did watch and fear was the Lying Darkness. Although most Rokugani were unaware of the Shadow and its growing power, the Kolat became aware of it from an early date and observed the Darkness' slow growth and sinister infiltration of the Empire with concern. The conspiracy could not abide the thought that another power might remake the universe into its image, and as the Darkness grew stronger the Kolat employed ever more stringent measures against it. Kolat agents were routinely tested for Shadow corruption, and the Jade Sect was tasked with destroying Shadowspawn as well as the forces of Jigoku. The Kolat knew the Darkness could be defeated by naming it, and during the tenth and eleventh centuries the conspiracy began to assemble the ingredients for a potent magical ritual that could summon the Sun and Moon out of the Heavens to do just that. The ritual was never actually used, which was probably for the best – who knows what destruction might have resulted from mortals compelling the very highest Fortunes?

Ultimately, the Kolat's greatest weakness was that it had to remain absolutely secret if it was to survive. Even at the peak of its power, during the period between the return of the Unicorn Clan and the Second Day of Thunder, the conspiracy's real numbers were small and the Masters knew they could not survive full-scale exposure to the Empire. The Kolat had to continually exert tremendous effort to hide itself and crush anyone who might be stumbling onto its existence. After the Kolat revealed its existence during the War Against the Darkness, the catastrophe that followed was probably only a matter of time.

The Kolat as Adversaries

Conspiracy stories have an intrinsic appeal – just look at the success of *The X-Files* and the enduring obsessions with the JFK assassination. The Kolat are the perfect vehicle for introducing such stories to an L5R campaign. The GM can employ the Kolat in a variety of ways, from single mysterious encounters (why did that magistrate seem so uninterested in the death of Akodo Jinoku?) to a full-scale epic in which the PCs face off against the entire conspiracy. Because the Kolat has agents all through Rokugani society, from the highest levels to the lowest – not to mention sleeper agents – the GM can create a powerful sense of isolation and paranoia among the players. Up until the War Against the Darkness, no one in Rokugan really believes there is such a thing as the Kolat, and PCs who try to prove otherwise will soon find themselves discredited and isolated.

Of course, a story where the PCs are inevitably crushed by an all-powerful conspiracy is not very fun. Some players may be willing to embrace such a story – it is certainly in keeping with the tragic themes of L5R role-playing – but most will prefer to at least have a chance of getting the better of their foes. If the GM is going to make the Kolat into the central focus of the campaign, the players will probably need to have a legitimate chance at turning the tables and ultimately triumphing against the conspiracy.

There are a number of ways this can be done, but the most obvious is to alter the Empire's history such that the PCs can and must take center stage. This is especially important if the players are familiar with the canonical timeline of Rokugan and thus "know" the Scorpion will eventually destroy the Hidden Temple. The GM should strive to take away this sense of certainty and put the players into a situation where the defeat of the Kolat clearly rests on their shoulders. For example, what if the Kolat finally succeeds in assassinating Togashi? The death of a thousand-year-old Kami will certainly let the PCs know they can't depend on canonical history to save the day.

Kolat Player Characters

Running a game with Kolat player characters is a challenge not to be taken lightly. Player characters as enemies can lead to exciting games, but an overzealous player can quickly destroy any suspense with obvious and blatant actions, while a timid player may not ever gain the confidence to play the role of villain. More generally, a Kolat player character will often be in direct conflict with the rest of the party, subverting their efforts and sabotaging them whenever the

conspiracy requires. This can quickly lead to inter-character conflict, bad feelings, and a failed campaign. Other players will be tempted to "meta-game" their knowledge of the Kolat character's true nature, and the Kolat character in turn will be tempted to take improper advantage of his knowledge of the PCs. The GM can obviate this problem easily enough if all of the players are willing to run Kolat characters, but if only part of the group is interested in running a member of the conspiracy, problems may easily arise. The GM should discuss such matters up front with the players and make sure everyone will be comfortable with such situations and can maintain a distance between themselves and their characters. Inter-party conflict is one of the easiest ways to destroy a role-playing campaign, as intense feelings from character interactions spill over into real life, and the GM should be wary of such problems.

That being said, a character who is a member of the Kolat should take the Advantage Forbidden Knowledge: Kolat and the Disadvantage Dark Secret: Kolat. (Needless to say, exposure of this Dark Secret will mean ignominious execution – Kolat are, by definition, traitors to the Emerald Empire.) The player and GM should choose an appropriate Sect (or, in earlier eras, the branch of the conspiracy that corresponds to the later Sects) and establish one or more NPC contacts who deliver orders to the character and collect his reports. In general, player characters cannot be members of the Roc Sect, but any other branch of the Kolat is potentially available.

A good way to handle the flow of information and prevent "meta-gaming" in a game involving Kolat characters is to make every character write down their actions and pass them to the GM. This method can actually greatly enhance a game where there is more than one Kolat present, since Kolat agents don't necessarily know who other Kolat are or whether they are on the same mission. Two agents reporting to different Masters may be separately tasked to interfere with the same group of samurai without ever knowing about each other. Using the note-passing method can result in an entertaining and tense situation in which neither the Kolat PCs nor the rest of the party are really sure what is going on.

The three biggest temptations for GMs running Kolat characters are under-use, over-use, and "safety netting." Under-use is simply never bringing the character's Kolat loyalties into the game – the Masters never give the character anything to do, and his Kolat background loses its value and has no impact on the game. Over-use is the opposite problem, constantly giving the player character special missions to the point that he is playing a separate campaign from the rest of the characters, who generally won't get nearly as fulfilling a play experience. The issue of "safety netting," however, is possibly the most subtle and the most tempting to the GM: using the Kolat to continually rescue and guide the PCs, allowing crucial information to be handed to the Kolat player character any time the party isn't moving as quickly as the GM might like, and generally employing the Kolat to solve all plot problems. This leaves the players as passive figures who are shuttled through the plot by the machinations of the conspiracy, a situation they will quickly find frustrating and uninteresting.

The key to running a campaign with an active Kolat player character is balance. The GM and players alike should be prepared for both the benefits and the potential consequences of allowing a member of the conspiracy into the game. If a PC is exposed as a Kolat agent, the rest of the party's duty is clear-cut: Imperial law demands the Kolat be put to death. Even fellow Kolat agents will follow this edict to maintain their own cover. Likewise, the Kolat game mechanics (Paths and Advanced School) are not to be granted lightly. A samurai doesn't walk into the Lotus Sect Assassin dojo and spend a week training. These Techniques should only be granted to characters who have earned them, and they are as much a burden as they are a source of power.

GMs who wish to introduce the Kolat into the party without most of the problems outlined above can instead opt to add a sleeper agent to the group. In this case, the GM should speak in private with the player for the potential sleeper, making sure the player is ready and willing to undertake such a challenge – which will, after all, probably result in the character's disgrace or death once his sleeper programming is activated. The GM should not force an unwilling player into such a situation – but if the player is willing to embrace the drama and tragedy inherent in such a storyline, it can be a very exciting addition to the campaign.



Kolat of the Empire

The Kolat employ a large number of different methods and personnel to carry out their plans. Herewith we present an assortment of "standard" Kolat NPCs who the GM can use to challenge and threaten the PCs.



Kolat Assassins

Nothing is more terrifying than the knowledge that someone you trusted has betrayed you, and the Kolat utilize this terror to devastating effectiveness. Kolat actors and assassins of the Lotus sect are often trained to eliminate a specific target and replace him or her. This allows them to spy unseen on their enemies, attack completely unsuspecting targets, and then leave the area without anyone suspecting the conspiracy. Their training is rigorous and extensive, often lasting for months or years before they are sent out to conduct missions for their masters.

On those rare occasions when a direct assassination is needed, a Kolat will usually kill the target subtly with poison. This is usually done subtly while the victim is surrounded by others, maximizing terror while minimizing any chance of detection. For example, a Kolat posing as a geisha or servant will slip poison into the victim's food or drink while leaving everyone else's meal untouched. Often the poison is slow-acting or mimics the symptoms of normal illness.

On some occasions the Kolat finds it more useful to carry out a bloody murder and plant evidence framing another party. In these cases the assassin will often attack openly while impersonating someone from the group who is being framed, allowing witnesses to corroborate the story and make sure the targeted group takes the blame. (This is a tactic heavily employed when the Kolat wants to start a war within the Empire.)

Direct Attack Assassin

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 2
-	-	-	Strength 4	-

Initiative: 9k4

Attack: Katana 8k4 or Tanto 9k4 (normally Complex)

Damage: 7k2 (katana) or 5k1 (tanto)

Armor TN: 30 (5 from light armor)

Reduction: 3 (from light armor)

Wounds: Normal human Wound ranks

School/Rank: Clan samurai 2/Lotus Assassin 3

Skills: Acting 5, Athletics 2, Courtier 2, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Kenjutsu 4, Knives (Tanto) 5, Sincerity 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 5

Advantages:

- *Quick*
- *Forbidden Knowledge (Kolat)*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret (Kolat)*

Infiltrator Assassin

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 2	Void 3
-	-	-	Perception 4	-

Initiative: 9k4

Attack: Knife 6k4 (usually Complex)

Damage: 3k1 (knife)

Armor TN: 25

Wounds: Normal human Wound ranks

School/Rank: Lotus Assassin 3 (Insight Rank 5)

Skills: Acting 5, Courtier 4, Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Knives (Tanto) 6, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 5

Advantages:

- *Bland*
- *Forbidden Knowledge (Kolat)*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret (Kolat)*

Wily Trader

A vast network of agents and an equally vast arsenal of exotic weapons and tactics does not come cheap. Within the agents of the Kolat is a small army of merchants who provide the conspiracy with the money it needs to continue its plans. Sometimes these are samurai merchant patrons, but they are just as likely to be commoners. The key to their success is their ability to procure high-demand goods though the Kolat's networks. Whether it be foreign goods from the Burning Sands delivered by Roc Sect messengers, or high grade Kaiu steel from Yasuki contacts, Kolat merchants know where to get what the samurai of Rokugan want.

The Yasuki family has always had a large role to play in the Kolat's mercantile ventures, although over time the conspiracy has also worked its way into other trade-oriented families such as the Daidoji, Yoritomo, and Ide. None of these clans are aware of the degree to which their trade networks serve the needs of the Kolat conspiracy, of course, and the Crab Clan in particular are too pragmatic to examine Yasuki operations very closely – as long as the Yasuki produce a hefty profit to fund the clan's war on the Shadowlands, the Crab do not care much about their methods.

Air 4	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 4
-	Willpower 4	Intelligence 5	Perception 4	-

Initiative: 8k4

Attack: Wakizashi 5k2 (Complex)

Damage: 5k2

Armor TN: 25

Wounds: Normal human Wound ranks

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 4

Skills: Acting 3, Commerce (Mathematics) 5, Courtier 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Forgery 3, Investigation (Notice) 4, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: Law 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 7, Stealth 3

Advantages:

- *Crafty*
- *Forbidden Knowledge (Kolat)*
- *Wealthy*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret (Kolat)*
- *Greedy*

Hand of the Masters

The Hands of the Masters are among the most elite of the Kolat agents, reporting directly to the Ten Masters and carrying their will to the rest of the conspiracy. They are selected carefully from the most loyal of Kolat and are often being groomed for eventual leadership themselves.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 4
Awareness 6	Willpower 6	Intelligence 5	Perception 5	-

Initiative: 8k4 or better

Attack: Katana 7k3 (usually Complex) or Tanto 9k3 (usually Complex)

Damage: 6k2 (katana) or 4k1 (tanto)

Armor TN: 25

Wounds: Normal human Wound ranks

School/Rank: Variable, but always at least Insight Rank 4

Skills: Acting 5, Courtier (Conversation) 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 6, Forgery (Documents) 6, Intimidation (Control) 4, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Knives (Tanto) 6, Sincerity (Deceit) 7, Stealth 6

Advantages:

- *Leadership*
- *Perceived Honor (4 points)*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret (Kolat)*





A Sample Kolat Master:

Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, Master Coin, late twelfth century

Bright and energetic despite his increasing age, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen is fortunate to look much younger than he is, merely one of many tools he employs to make sure others grossly underestimate him. Jinn-Kuen joined the Kolat so long ago he barely remembers life before the conspiracy, but he is quite convinced it must have been very boring. Now, however, life is always interesting. Not always pleasant, of course, but never, ever boring. He would have it no other way.

Jinn-Kuen recognized fairly early on that although the Kolat was largely meritocratic in nature, merit was highly relative. As one of the finest merchants in the entire Empire, he gravitated naturally to the Coin Sect, and quickly discovered his Master, Moshi Shanegon, was only competent by the barest of measures, vastly more concerned with his own well-being and comfort than the prosperity of the Coin Sect. This disturbed Jinn-Kuen greatly, and in time he began to formulate a plan. It was adequate to deal with the boorish Shanegon, he felt, but for it to be successful without bringing attention to himself, he required an unwitting agent, someone highly competent and with an obvious vendetta against the Kolat. When the former Unicorn general Moto Chen left his clan behind to hunt the men who had ruined his reputation, Jinn-Kuen saw his chance.

Subtly guided by Jinn-Kuen, Chen destroyed a large percentage of Shanegon's more important operations, ruining the Master's reputation so completely that he fled the Empire, fearing Master Tiger's enforcers would be coming for him. After years of positioning himself, Jinn-Kuen was the natural replacement for the disgraced Shanegon. As the new Master Coin, Jinn-Kuen has been vastly more successful than his predecessors, and has rapidly become one of the most powerful members of the Ten Masters. He is dismayed by the schism between the Masters over the Kolat's policies, and increasingly believes there is no need to destroy the last vestiges of Celestial involvement in the mortal realm. Jinn-Kuen recognizes the power Master Tiger holds over the other Masters and has begun another of his elaborate plans, hoping to bring Master Tiger to his side of the argument and end the schism once and for all. How he will react to the destruction of the Hidden Temple remains to be seen.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3	Void 4
Awareness 5	-	Intelligence 6	Perception 5	-

Honor: 2.7 (4.7) *Status: 7.2* *Glory: 6.4*

School/Rank: Yasuki Merchant 5 / Kolat Master

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons, Horses) 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 5, Commerce (Appraisal, Mathematics) 8, Courtier (Manipulation) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette 6, Forgery 4, Heavy Weapons 2, Intimidation (Control) 7, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 5, Lore: Kolat 7, Lore: Sake Breweries 5, Meditation 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 6

Advantages:

- *Allies (many)*
- *Blackmail (many)*
- *Crafty*
- *Perceived Honor (4 points)*
- *Social Position (Yasuki Family Daimyo)*
- *Wealthy*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret (Kolat)*
- *Obligation (Kolat)*

New Mechanics

The following sections offer new mechanical options for representing Kolat characters in your campaign. They are primarily intended for NPCs, but a GM who is willing to allow Kolat PCs (as outlined earlier) can also make some or all of these mechanics available to the players.

New Advantage: Shadowed Heart [Mental] (5 points)

You have trained your mind to be nigh-inscrutable to those who surround you. Rolls made to discern your true intentions or motivations, including Social Skill rolls and Spell Casting Roll for any spells which might lay bare your thoughts, have their TN increased by +5.

New Advantage: Spy Network [Social] (8 points)

You have access to an intelligence network that can provide you with a variety of covert information. Once per session if you can contact your spy network you can acquire a piece of useful information which would otherwise be unavailable. The GM has the final say on what you learn, but it will always be something useful to your current endeavors. This Advantage cannot be used in environments where it would be impossible to make contact with your spy network (e.g. wandering the desert, exploring the Shadowlands or the Shinomen Mori, etc).

Daidoji family characters may purchase this Advantage for 7 points, Scorpion characters may purchase it for 6 points, and Kolat characters may purchase it for 5 points.

New Disadvantage: Sleeper Agent [Mental] (5 points)

Unknown to you, the Kolat have previously kidnapped you and programmed you to be one of their sleeper agents. A trigger word or phrase is implanted in your mind. Anyone who knows it may speak it aloud, followed by a simple command of five words or less. You will be compelled to carry out the command regardless of personal wishes. Sleeper agents are generally considered one-time-only assets, so their survival is not a factor in the tasks they are assigned. Some sleepers are given a fail-safe that causes them to kill themselves should the mission fail – if this is the case for you, this Disadvantage is worth 8 points.

New Alternate Path: Kolat Master

The Ten Kolat Masters are among the most devious, manipulative, and ruthless individuals in the entire Emerald Empire. Only ten exist at any one time, and they generally achieve their position by rising through the ranks of the conspiracy, demonstrating great loyalty, adaptability, and efficiency... or great ability to forge alliances with other Kolat. Regardless, no one becomes a Kolat Master without years of dedicated service to the conspiracy.

- **Technique Rank:** 6 (can also be taken at Insight Ranks above 6)
- **Replaces:** Any Technique (or none) at Insight Rank 6 or higher
- **Required Rings/Traits:** Two mental Traits at 5 or higher
- **Required Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Intimidation (Control) 4
- **Other Requirements:** Must be a member of the Kolat conspiracy and chosen to lead one of the ten Sects. Cannot be Tainted or corrupted by the Nothing.

Technique: Will of the Master

The ten Kolat Masters exert total control over the conspiracy. All members of their Sect are answerable to them and other Kolat will show them the greatest of respect and deference. You are considered to be Status 10 to any character who is a member of the Kolat conspiracy and who belongs to your Sect, and Status 9 to any character who is a Kolat but not of your Sect. You gain +2k0 on all Courtier and Intimidation Skill rolls.

New Ronin Path: Guardian of the Hidden Temple [Bushi]

The ancient order of the Hidden Guard, named mockingly after the Seppun Shugenja who safeguard the Emperor, is tasked with protecting the Kolat's headquarters, the Hidden Temple. They are recruited from skilled ronin who have already joined the Kolat conspiracy and shown their loyalty and dedication. Although their primary duty is to protect the Temple, they may also serve as yojimbo to important or high-ranking members of the conspiracy.

The Hidden Guard are taught defensive tactics to allow them to defeat the more specialized warriors of the Great Clans. Of course, they also fight with tactics which most clan samurai would consider dishonorable, and have no compunction at eliminating their foes with ambushes, surprise attacks, and similar methods.

- Technique Rank: 4
- **Requirement:** Must be recruited by the Kolat for their Hidden Guard. Cannot be Tainted or corrupted by the Nothing.

Technique: Tigers Do Not Fall

The lesson of the Hidden Guardians is that defenders must make themselves immovable, stopping all who might threaten the Hidden Temple. Any time an opponent in a skirmish declares a Maneuver against you (including the Increased Damage Maneuver), you may choose to immediately take a Free Action to spend a Void Point and negate the beneficial effects of the Maneuver. (The opponent must still make his Raises in order to hit you, but no longer gains any benefit from them.) In addition, at all times you may ignore the penalty to your Armor TN for being Grappled.

New Advanced School: Kolat Assassin [Ninja]

The assassins of the Lotus Sect are among the deadliest killers in the Empire, swift and merciless. Much of their training is dedicated to infiltration and deceit, allowing them to disguise themselves and replace others, but they are also taught all possible methods of murder. Few of those marked for death by the Kolat are able to escape the reach of Lotus assassins.

Requirements:

- Rings/Traits: Agility 4, Reflexes 4
- Skills: Acting 5, Knives 5, Stealth 5
- Other Requirements: Must be a member of the Kolat and recruited into the Lotus Sect. Cannot be Tainted or corrupted by the Nothing.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Kiss of the Lotus

The Kolat assassins are taught to slip through Rokugani society all but unnoticed. You are a master of deception and infiltration. When you spend a Void Point on a Stealth or Acting Skill roll, you gain a +2k2 bonus instead of the normal +1k1.

Rank 2: Tiger's Claw

When striking on the first Round of a skirmish against an unaware opponent, or an opponent who does not realize you are a threat, you gain a +1k0 bonus to your attack rolls and may make melee attacks as Simple Action.

Rank 3: Steal the Light

During a skirmish, once per opponent you may call 2 Raises to make a melee attack that keeps only 1 die of damage (regardless of the weapon used) but leaves the opponent either blind, deaf, or mute (your choice) for a number of minutes equal to your Water. Blinded characters suffer the Blind Conditional Effect from the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook. The GM has discretion to decide the exact penalties of being deafened or muted, but some effects should be obvious – for example, a muted character cannot cast spells.



New Spells

It may seem strange at first glance that the Kolat, who seek to overthrow the Celestial Order, would be able to call on the kami to do their bidding. In truth, however, the kami have no true understanding of human motivations or morals and do not have free will as humans know it. They will obey any mortal who can speak the proper prayers to invoke their aid. The Kolat have used this power as they have every other, turning the powers of the kami to their service in order to further the conspiracy's goals.

Master Cloud's Eyes

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 3
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 2 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

The kami can share the vision of others. You may view the world through the eyes of another living creature within your line of sight. You only see, you do not experience any of the target's other senses, and you have no control over what the target looks at. For the duration of this spell, any Perception-based rolls you make for your own body suffer a –2k2 penalty, due to the distraction created by the spell.

The Mirror's Smile

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 4
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Caster
- **Duration:** 1 Day
- **Raises:** Special (cast after only seeing the target's face once, 4 Raises)

You call on the Water kami to make your face become that of another person. This is not an illusion but an actual change to the flesh and bone, re-molding your face to match that of the other person. This is a painful experience and it takes several minutes for the kami to complete the re-shaping. Normally, casting this spell requires you to be familiar with the face of the target (you must have studied it for at least 8 hours), although with enough Raises you can take on a face you have seen only once.

Your face looks exactly like the target's face, to the point where even close friends and family members will believe you are the target. However, this spell only affects the face, not the rest of the body or the hair. Scars, birthmarks, and other identifying features elsewhere on the body must be replicated or hidden if the deception is to succeed. Also, this spell does not change your voice.

The World is Truth

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 6
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target person
- **Duration:** 1 month
- **Raises:** Duration (1 additional month per 3 Raises)

This secret spell is an important element in the Kolat's methods for creating sleeper agents, but even when used by itself it is a potent weapon in the conspiracy's arsenal. The Kolat typically use this spell when it is vitally necessary to conceal their operations without actually killing someone – typically because the person in question is too important to be easily disposed of. Casting this spell requires the caster to hold the target by the head and focus on him for 8 hours uninterrupted; typically, the target will be bound to prevent interruptions. If contact with the target is broken for more than 3 minutes the spell will fail. At the end of 8 hours the shugenja makes a Contested Insight/Air roll against the target. If the shugenja wins the roll, the target's thoughts and memories are rewritten and rearranged in whatever way the caster prefers. Mental Advantages and Disadvantages cannot be changed, but the target may be made to think he is someone else, to forget something that happened, to remember events or persons differently, and so forth. (This does not grant any Skill ranks, Techniques, or other actual capabilities. The target may believe he is the Elemental Master of Fire but this will not make him capable of casting spells.)

New Item: Tears of the Oni's Eye

These items appear to be nothing more than a teardrop-shaped piece of crystal, about the size of a man's pinkie finger. Trusted Kolat agents carry these items with them, usually disguised as a pendant or other item of jewelry.

Those who control the Oni's Eye can use it to communicate mentally with anyone carrying a Tear. There is no outward sign of this communication, for the person with the Tear will hear their voices directly inside his mind.




空の巻

The Lost

In the Beginning

"Atarasi-sama, he was the first. Though he fought until he had passed one foot into death, the Great One commanded his servants to stay far from his brother's son, and left Atarasi there, mind bathed in the same pool to which he had condemned my master. When he healed, he knew he had fought for the wrong side."

– Moto Tsume

The Lost have existed almost as long as the Empire itself. When Fu Leng launched the First War and brought the Taint surging into the Empire, countless men and women, commoner and samurai alike, were consumed by its sinister power. Most of them became madmen, raving beasts who turned on their fellow Rokugani with all the fury that Jigoku could grant. The tales of the First War are full of stories about these cackling lunatics, who fought without the slightest hint of self-preservation and whose behavior was more bestial than the goblins and ogres who joined them on the field of battle. But even in those earliest days, there were a few fallen mortals who became... something more.

Tales spread in the ranks of the Empire's armies, tales of samurai who had vanished in battle only to reappear fighting for the other side. Tales of wives killed and devoured by husbands who seemingly had returned home safely from battle. Tales of warriors who followed Fu Leng more loyally than they had ever served the eight Kami. At first, the Rokugani blamed such horrors on Fu Leng's terrible magical powers. None of them, not even the Kami themselves, truly understood the nature of the Shadowlands Taint or the profound and terrible corruption it wrought on those it consumed. Indeed, Fu Leng's own transformation into a being of evil baffled many of his siblings, especially Shinjo, who made futile efforts to reach out to the brother she remembered.

Only gradually as the First War progressed did the Rokugani come to understand that some manner of evil power was spreading with Fu Leng's army, causing dead men to rise again and living men to turn to madness. By the time the Seven Thunders rode forth to confront Fu Leng, they knew to protect themselves with jade and to behead their fallen to prevent the corpses from rising once again. After the battle with the Dark Kami was finished, the Crab Thunder Hida Atarasi took the heads of his fallen comrades, then stayed to fight the creatures of the Shadowlands while Shosuro fled back to the Empire with the twelve Black Scrolls that held Fu Leng's soul.

Atarasi never returned to Rokugan. Some accounts claim he fought a long battle that lasted for weeks or months, while others suggest he fell quickly, within minutes of Shosuro's departure. What is certain is that Hida Atarasi, the greatest hero of the Crab Clan, finally succumbed to the Taint and became Lost, the first hero of the Empire to meet such a fate. He stalked through the Shadowlands, slaughtering all those who fell into his path, raising their bodies to serve him as undead. With time, rumors of his fate reached the Empire, and almost two centuries later his father Hida finally entered the Shadowlands in search of his fallen son. The two met in epic battle. Supposedly Hida finally slew his son, outliving the battle long enough to entomb Atarasi's remains along with the bones of the other Thunders before finally perishing and ascending to Tengoku.

The Legend of Atarasi

Within the Shadowlands a very different tales is told of Hida Atarasi's fate. According to the foul creatures who dwell there, when the Crab Clan Thunder fell to the Taint he embraced it eagerly and drank the blood of Fu Leng, becoming the first of the *akutenshi*, the most terrible servants of the Dark Kami. Even worse, these creatures falsely claim Hida never actually killed Atarasi. The two battle each other still, they say. Deep within the Shadowlands their battle rages, and on the day that Atarasi finally kills his father he will emerge from the dark realm to destroy the world.

Such stories are foul lies, of course. Hida is known with certainty to dwell within Tengoku, which could not be true if he were still fighting his son. The existence of the Tomb of the Seven Thunders, visited by samurai during the twelfth century, likewise puts the lie to any claims that Hida Atarasi still walks the Shadowlands wastes. Those witnesses who claim to have seen the battle still taking place were surely driven mad by the Taint, or deceived by illusions created by that malicious realm.

But in other times, in other worlds, perhaps it is these stories that are true, and the beliefs of the Rokugani that are wrong…



The Long Peace

After the end of the First War, the Shadowlands remained weak and divided for many years. Most of those mortals who fell to the Taint continued to become short-lived ravening madmen. Atarasi's dark fate was known to few outside of his own family, and none in the Empire as a whole. The stories of those samurai who had joined the enemy and fought at Fu Leng's side became blurred by time and forgetfulness. As a result, most Rokugani had little idea that the Lost even existed.

With time the Shadowlands threat would begin to rise once again. During the fourth century, a fearsome attack on the Crab would force Emperor Hantei Fujiwa to march forth with the Imperial Legions and join with the Crab to turn back the invasion. In the eighth century the terrible invasion by the army of the Oni Lord known simply as the Maw would likewise draw the Empire's attention. But in these cases the invading forces consisted chiefly of oni, goblins and other beasts, and undead. The Lost played little to no role in these incursions, for their numbers were still sparse. Thus, Rokugan as a whole remained ignorant of the Lost and their capabilities.

The Crab were another matter. Always alert to new threats from the Shadowlands, they soon came to realize the ranks of their enemies included a small number of creatures who were formerly human and who seemed to retain some sense of self-identity and volition, in contrast to the violent lunatics usually created by the Taint. Initially the Crab treated these foes little differently from any other type of self-willed Shadowlands creature, and in the early days even sometimes mistook them for bog hags or shape-changed oni. Over time, however, the combination of bitter practical experience and the ruthlessly pragmatic research of the Kuni family revealed that these creatures were in fact former humans who had succumbed to the Taint but somehow failed to become mindless. The Crab called these mysterious enemies *akutsukai*, or "servants of evil," and soon came to regard them as some of their most potent enemies. They saw little reason to share this information with the rest of the Empire, however. Rokugan treated the Crab as pariahs for their duty of fighting the Shadowlands, and the Crab in turn regarded the rest of Rokugan as soft, cowardly, and childish. They felt no need to share their hard-earned knowledge with those who would only despise them for it.

The typical Lost during these centuries was a lone creature wandering the Shadowlands, killing or cowing weaker creatures, avoiding or falling under the sway of stronger ones. Their power varied widely – most of them were not much stronger than they had been as mortals, and often they did not survive long within the Shadowlands. The exceptions, however, were fearsome indeed. Notable among these were some Lost who exhibited truly terrifying fighting skills, to the point of being able to slaughter entire squads of heavily armed Hida bushi. These Lost warriors had not studied proper fighting techniques of the sort taught in a dojo – rather, they fought with an unnatural speed, ferocity, and power that seemed to draw strength directly from the Taint itself. The Crab called them *mahobujin*, warriors of maho.

The Early Champions

A few notable individuals did appear in the ranks of the Lost during this era, fallen samurai whose unique skills and power made them long-term and potent threats to the Empire. Several of them would become *akutenshi*, the most powerful Lost of all, although their nature would not be fully understood even by the Crab.

Among the more alarming of these creatures were Doji Nashiko, a courtier from the sixth century, and Daidoji Tsukuro, a fifth-century warrior of the Crane. Nashiko became a fearsome and inhuman seductress, known in the Empire by the whispered title of the Demon Bride of Fu Leng. Tsukuro, a Crane whose cursed birth eventually drove him to rage and madness, become a known and feared leader of Shadowlands armies, and the Crab learned to watch for his banners with trepidation.

The Akutenshi

"My love is elsewhere, bound to me in blood, and not in beauty, and to him, I shall return."

– Doji Nashiko, as quoted in the play Virtue.

Throughout the history of the Empire, there have been reports – sometimes mere rumors, sometimes confirmed with terrible experience – of Lost who exhibited truly exceptional capability. These creatures boasted powers even beyond those of maho-bujin, powers rivaling or exceeding the capabilities of an Oni Lord. The Crab came to refer to these entities as *akutenshi* ("evil angels"), although they had no true way of recognizing them other than by their sheer might.

Exact understanding of the akutenshi has largely escaped the Rokugani, and the term dropped out of usage later in the twelfth century as the Empire's battles and dealings with the Lost became more frequent and the distinction between their power levels became more difficult to make. Regardless of terminology, the creatures sometimes called akutenshi do exhibit both significantly greater power than other Lost and a disturbingly high level of self-will and personality. Unlike the normal Lost, who are twisted and perverted echoes of their former selves, akutenshi seem to exhibit a sort of "will to evil," a delighted embrace of their new corrupt nature that grants them a degree of personal volition beyond even that enjoyed by a normal Lost. The most infamous example of this is the so-called Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, Daigotsu, who appeared in the mid-twelfth century as the primary leader of the Lost. Daigotsu's combination of immense power and apparent free will was quite shocking to the Empire, and left many Rokugani scrambling to explain and understand it.

The Lost themselves claimed for centuries that akutenshi were created by willingly taking the blood of Fu Leng himself into their veins. This explanation reached the Empire from the few prisoners who managed to escape the clutches of the Lost. However, it remains intensely controversial even among the Kuni, many of whom believe it to be a lie – after all, if Fu Leng was defeated at the Day of Thunder, how could his blood have still been available to drink centuries later? Some have theorized that akutenshi are actually created when a powerful Lost passes through a spirit gateway into Jigoku itself, taking the power of the Realm of Evil directly into its body – which may even fit with the claim of drinking Fu Leng's blood, since the Dark Kami's death left his soul trapped in Jigoku. This theory also seems to match what little is known of the Dark Lord Daigotsu's origins – supposedly, he spent many years in Jigoku before returning to the mortal world to lead the Shadowlands. Other Kuni have argued the akutenshi were unique creations of Fu Leng, insisting that Daigotsu is a different class of enemy altogether. Ultimately, however, all such theories remain unproven speculation. Most of the Crab are content simply to know that such dangerous beings exist and must be fought.

Akutenshi exhibit powers of immense potency and scope, even compared to other Lost. Almost all of them are invulnerable to mundane attacks, and they seem to be skilled shapeshifters as well, routinely altering their forms to whatever suits their fancy. Some witnesses have recorded instances of akutenshi who seem to be able to move in a completely unnatural manner, "falling" through reality from one place to another, or walking on air as easily as on the ground. Other Shadowlands creatures readily fall under their sway and even the great Oni Lords have been known sometimes to act at their command. Whatever the source of their power, the akutenshi are terrible foes, often strong enough to turn the entire course of a battle on their own. Thankfully, they are also extraordinarily rare – the Crab have recorded no more than a dozen such beings over the course of twelve centuries.

The Fall of the Moto

"We have never wished an escape. We came here because it is where we want to be."

– Moto Tsume, late eleventh century

Despite the appearance of notable individuals like Nashiko and Tsukuro, the Lost as a whole remained few and scattered until the ninth century. In that era the Moto family of the newly returned Unicorn Clan made their doomed attempt to conquer and defeat the Shadowlands. The daimyo of the family, Moto Tsume, was a fearsome warrior and general but a flawed man, haunted by the subtle but persistent hostility of his family's old gaijin gods, the so-called Lords of Death. Under the influence of their curse, Tsume publicly boasted that he and his mighty army could do what the Crab had never done – conquer and destroy the Shadowlands forever. He swore before the Unicorn Champion to destroy every Shadowlands creature which touched his blade, and in the summer of the year 825, Tsume led nearly the entire strength of the Moto family into the Shadowlands.

Most of them never returned. Those who did were maddened or crippled, many dying within a few weeks. And in the years to come, new forces appeared in the Shadowlands: legions of cavalry, flying the Moto banner as they rode against the Crab. Countless Moto had died and reanimated as undead, but even worse, hundreds had become Lost, forming a major new military force within the Shadowlands. And foremost among them was Moto Tsume himself, one of the mightiest Lost ever to stalk the bleak landscapes of Fu Leng's realm.



Moto Tsume had been a cunning and deadly commander while he was mortal, and as one of the Lost he became more powerful and terrifying still, practicing tactics of cruelty, terror, and subversion as well as direct attacks. His raids against the Crab lands were both brilliant and deadly, and the Crab soon came to regard him as their foremost enemy, more cunning and terrible than the brutal direct force of the Oni Lords. Tsume gathered Lost, undead, and Tainted beasts under his banner, forming dark communities deep within the Shadowlands. Indeed, he was the first example of a Lost champion who formed long-term armies and something approximating a society, rather than simply roaming the dark lands and acquiring whatever followers were available. Tsukuro, recognizing Tsume's capabilities, soon fell into his orbit and became one of his chief subordinates. Tsume's army was in many ways a cruel imitation of a samurai army, and those few who encountered Tsume and were fortunate enough to survive described his entire existence and purpose as a mockery of the Rokugan which he had betrayed.

Much of what the Empire knows about Moto Tsume is recorded by Iuchi Karasu, a Unicorn shugenja who fell into Tsume's clutches at the beginning of the twelfth century. His rambling, often hallucinatory account of his extended captivity and torture remains a highly controversial document, and even the Kuni doubt the truth of much of it. However, Karasu's descriptions of Tsume's behavior – his strange mixture of sadism and solicitude, his dogged insistence that Fu Leng was in the right and the Rokugani were dupes of the Kami – seems to ring true to those Kuni who study the Lost. The later Lost societies created by Daigotsu exhibited very similar behaviors and claims.

Tsume's career of terror finally came to an end in the early twelfth century. Otaku Kamoko, the Unicorn Thunder, had become Tainted. She pretended to succumb to her Taint and traveled into the Shadowlands to lure the Dark Moto into a final confrontation with the Unicorn Clan. The combined strength of the Unicorn, including the Desert Moto who had recently returned from the Burning Sands, crushed Tsume and the Dark Moto and ended their scourge on the Empire.

Later tales would assert that in the wake of their defeat, the few remaining Dark Moto were stripped of their Taint by a wrathful Fu Leng, leaving them to swiftly whither and die as free-willed mortals. This tale is seldom-told within the Empire and is controversial even among those who know it – some scholars claiming that not even Fu Leng could go against Jigoku's will so far as to remove the Taint. Regardless, it is indisputable that the remnants of the Dark Moto did not long survive the defeat of their leader Tsume.

Although Tsume and the Dark Moto perished, he had shown the path which the Lost would follow in the future. His legacy would be inherited by Daigotsu.

Emergence of Daigotsu

At the climax of the twelfth-century era known as the War Against the Darkness, the Empire sent a huge army into the Shadowlands to confront the Lying Darkness in the ruins of the ancient troll city of Volturnum. Although the army ultimately triumphed against the forces of the Darkness, hundreds and then thousands of samurai succumbed to the Shadowlands Taint. Perhaps Jigoku sensed an opportunity here, for an unusually high proportion of these fallen samurai became Lost rather than simply degenerating into crazed madmen. Abandoned within the Shadowlands by their un-Tainted brethren, this large new group of Lost would become the seedbed of a dangerous new threat to the Empire.

Many of the Lost had already made a practice of aping the ways of samurai within the Shadowlands – building "samurai houses" of bone and tanned skin, enlisting zombies to labor as peasants, and similar madness. When their numbers swelled after Oblivion's Gate, they continued to ape the rituals and conventions of their former samurai life, forming scattered communities within the Shadowlands. All they lacked was a leader – and that was supplied to them a few years later, in the form of the Dark Lord Daigotsu.

Daigotsu's origins were obscure, and for many years only a few of his closest allies knew that he was descended from the Hantei bloodline, born to an Empress who had been kidnapped by the Bloodspeaker Cult. More details on this peculiar tale can be found in the Bloodspeaker chapter elsewhere in this book. Daigotsu spent many years in Jigoku, absorbing its dark power and learning the ways of maho at a level few other mortals would ever match. His exact nature and capabilities remain a mystery to the Rokugani – for example, he seems to show more self-will than almost any other Lost, to the point of exhibiting what appear to be positive human emotions like love. There are even rumors he may have somehow lost or given up his Taint for a time, presumably regaining complete free will and control of his actions, yet remaining loyal to Fu Leng. Perhaps the fact that Daigotsu specifically worshipped the Fallen Kami, rather than serving Jigoku more generally, is part of the explanation for such peculiarities.

Whatever his nature, when Daigotsu returned to Ningen-do he immediately began to gather and organize the Lost, forming them into a larger society. Building on the twisted pseudo-culture the Lost had already begun to construct, Daigotsu forged them into a dark and perverse reflection of the Empire which they could no longer inhabit. And as their home he created the City of the Lost.

Located deep within the Shadowlands, the City of the Lost was designed, built, and organized to closely resemble a Rokugani city, even to the point of having a palace and court, as well as more basic social conveniences such as tea-houses and inns. A great temple was raised to Fu Leng, the Ninth Kami, and Daigotsu proclaimed the Lost would worship him in the same way as the Rokugani worshipped their own Kami. Whether the Lost truly comprehended all that Daigotsu demanded of them is unknown, but they certainly proved quite willing to obey his commands and organize their society on the lines he laid down.

A handful of Rokugani eventually discovered and visited the City of the Lost. They were horrified by this strange and perverted version of the Empire's society, a place where Lost samurai ate meals with chopsticks of bone and created "art" from the flesh of living human prisoners. Daigotsu even commanded the Lost to marry and raise children, swelling their numbers by natural reproduction to supplement the more conventional method of corrupting the Rokugani.

The "Code" of Shourido

In addition to commanding the Lost to live like samurai, Daigotsu also created for them his own alternative to the Code of Bushido that guided the lives of normal samurai. This was Shourido, a twisted inversion of Bushido that supported selfishness and raw power. Shourido offered seven Dark Virtues to set against the seven Virtues of Bushido: Control, Determination, Insight, Knowledge, Perfection, Strength, and Will.

The Rokugani were and are uncertain as to how much Shourido truly matters to the Lost. Are they capable of "believing" in Shourido, given that Jigoku's evil has control of their minds and souls, denying them true free will? This remains an open question, and the few Lost who were captured and questioned on the matter were hardly honest or forthcoming in their answers – indeed, they seemed to relish the confusion which Shourido created for the Rokugani. The situation only became further confused when some non-Lost samurai – Tainted or more often merely ambitious or misguided – began to embrace Shourido and its inverted values.

As their names implied, the Dark Virtues were designed to encourage those who sought selfish advancement at the expense of Honor. Shourido had powerful appeal to those Rokugani of weak morality who sought justification for their dishonorable thoughts and deeds. Clearly this was part of Daigotsu's purpose in creating this "code," and his minions went to great efforts to spread the sinful doctrines of Shourido across Rokugan. Shourido definitely has the power to attract willing followers, regardless of whether the Lost themselves can choose it of their own will.

Irrespective of Shourido's appeal within Rokugan, it cannot be denied that this new Code made it easier for Daigotsu to organize and discipline the Lost, to form them into a society and army that could challenge and confront Rokugan. In the past, even the most well-organized groups of Lost had tended to be governed solely by power, with the strong dominating the weak by sheer force rather than through authority and discipline. By imposing a set of rules and a perverse form of "honor" on the Lost, Daigotsu ensured they would work as a single group and obey their superiors. The strict demands and disciplines of Shourido also made the Lost somewhat less likely to succumb to the intrinsic homicidal urges of the Taint, again allowing their power to be better-organized and directed than before.



The Rise of the Spider

Late in the twelfth century, Daigotsu abandoned his earlier tactic of direct attacks on the Empire in favor of a new policy of infiltration. He organized a portion of the Lost into the so-called "Spider Clan." The Spider were a deliberate imitation of a Rokugani Great Clan, designed to operate within the Empire, exploiting the Empire's own rules and social conventions in order to corrupt it slowly and subtly. Although the initial membership of this new clan was almost entirely Lost, Daigotsu made a point of recruiting the ambitious and corrupt – some of them lightly Tainted and some even pure – to swell the clan's ranks and assist its efforts to infiltrate and win acceptance within Rokugan. The Spider Clan enabled the Lost to enter the Empire and work in cooperation with non-Shadowlands allies, a unique phenomenon in Rokugan's history.

The Spider Clan operated from hidden strongholds in the Empire's remote corners and unclaimed territories – the ruins of Otosan Uchi, the shattered valley of the former Beiden Pass, the remote vastness of the Shinomen, and similar locales. From these locations, soldiers of the clan swept out to fight bandits and criminals, building a false reputation as protectors of the downtrodden. Meanwhile, infiltrators wormed their way into the courts and strongholds of Rokugan's true clans, forging alliances and winning converts.

To be sure, not all Lost joined the Spider or even the City of the Lost. The random murderous and destructive impulses of the Taint were too strong for some Lost, who could not tolerate the rigidly disciplined lifestyle demanded by the Dark Lord. Even at the peak of Daigotsu's power, many individual Lost continued to wander the Shadowlands without following any higher loyalty save the evil impulses of their Taint.



Ultimately, while the schemes of the Spider Clan made considerable headway, they were not wholly successful. Daigotsu was unable to plunge the Empire into the total chaos he had hoped to foment, and the ascendance of the new Celestially-endorsed Iweko dynasty exposed much of his scheme.

The Minds of the Lost

"You can never become enlightened until you see beyond the light."

– Yogo Junzo

Of the many aspects of the Lost that horrify the Rokugani, few are more disconcerting than the fact that they are thinking creatures who retain their memories and, in many respects, their personalities from their former human lives. Indeed, the Lost are quite capable of expressing many human emotions, even of conceiving and bearing children (who, while Tainted from birth, are not always themselves immediately Lost). This outward humanity can be both unsettling and quite deceiving, since it allows the Lost to masquerade as normal humans and to infiltrate the Empire.

The Lost are often described (especially by the Crab) as lacking free will. This is literally accurate, but at the same time misleading. What the Crab are describing is the profound subversion which overtakes the mind and soul of one who is Lost. All former loyalties, all normal human feelings and moral impulses, are replaced by the dark desires of the Realm of Evil. Kindness and compassion give way to cruelty and sadism, propriety to malignant lust, honor to ruthless selfishness, courage to murderous rage. Former friends, allies, and family members are now regarded as fools, pawns, victims, or perhaps even as food. Former loyalties to Empire, Bushido, and clan are now replaced by the urgent desire to bring about the victory of Jigoku. Piety and reverence for the Fortunes and ancestors gives way to reverence for Jigoku and the Fallen Kami Fu Leng.

Yet despite these hideous changes, the Lost still retain their human intellect, memories, and knowledge. They remember their former lives and the skills and education they may have gained as samurai of the Empire. Even worse, they retain the ability to plan and plot, to form independent goals and pursue them, even to regard their fellows with jealousy and envy. Lost do not always cooperate with each other or with the other creatures of the Shadowlands, and are fully capable of pursuing personal ambitions without regard for the general status of Jigoku's cause. Indeed, even the mighty Daigotsu sometimes faced disloyalty and rebellion from his Lost followers.

The human-yet-inhuman nature of the Lost is in many ways their most horrifying trait, and certainly the one which most appalls the Rokugani. To the samurai of the Empire, raised in a tradition of unswerving loyalty and devotion to causes and principles higher than themselves, the profound subversion of identity and motivation caused by the Taint is truly dreadful. At a more personal level, meeting a former friend or family member who is now a seemingly-willing servant of evil is emotionally disturbing, to say the least. Discovering that a family member is now Lost is particularly devastating, and more than one samurai has been driven to madness or suicide by such knowledge.

Using the Lost in a Game

The Lost are among the most fearsome creatures of the Shadowlands, but also the most psychologically subtle and complex. Because they retain their minds and memories (albeit twisted and perverted by Jigoku) they do not merely fight for the cause of evil – they also speak, argue, seduce, and manipulate for it. As a result, the Lost offer a very broad scope of potential threats, plots, and schemes for imaginative GMs to unleash on their players.

At the center of any scenario or campaign dealing with the Lost, however, is the profound horror which they represent. The Lost are the ultimate symbol of what the Taint can do – turn friends into enemies, lovers into betrayers, allies into implacable foes. The Taint perverts the mind and soul as well as the body, and transforms the personality into a hideous dark reflection of its former self. Any game dealing with the Lost should not limit itself to their physical threat – it should strive also to depict their psychological and emotional impact.

The following sections discuss different ways to use the Lost in an L5R campaign. The GM need not focus on one of these over the others – indeed, all three elements can be combined.

The Lost as Adversaries: Brutal Power

A "typical" newly-Lost samurai with only three or four Shadowlands Power is only modestly more powerful than his human counterparts. But the ability of the Lost to continue gaining more Taint and acquiring more Shadowlands Powers allows them to soon outstrip any comparable mortal foe. Even worse, the Lost are organized enemies, able to employ cooperative tactics against their Rokugani foes. A squad of experienced Lost bushi can be a formidable combat challenge to most groups of Player Characters.

Higher-power Lost, especially the maho-bujin and akutenshi, are quite capable of annihilating any number of PCs. This can make them very effective as "end boss" villains to challenge very strong and experienced characters. Their sheer power, comparable to Oni Lords and similar creatures, can be daunting to all but the most capable of PCs, so GMs can also use them as the Shadowlands equivalent of a natural disaster, an inescapable force before which the PCs can only flee or die. Of course, many samurai are reluctant to retreat from a fight, even a hopeless one, but the Crab understand that duty may require them to live to fight again. It is not a bad idea for other PCs to learn the same lesson. Samurai do not fear death, but that does not mean they should feel obligated to throw their lives away foolishly or without purpose.

In fact, an enemy who is too strong to defeat can offer many story opportunities to a clever GM. GMs who are running a campaign that relies on an early defeat or humiliation, such as the Vengeance plot described in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook's *Book of Void*, will find that a powerful Lost is well-suited to such a task. For example, a plot could begin with an akutenshi defeating and capturing the PCs, exposing them first-hand to the bitterness of captivity and the horrors of the Shadowlands. Eventually the PCs manage to escape, or better yet are rescued by the sacrifice of a brave Crab patrol. Now they must overcome the shame of their defeat, grow strong enough to avenge themselves on their tormenter, and perhaps struggle to resist the Taint they may have picked up during their travails.

The Lost as Adversaries: Seducers

Although the Lost (especially the akutenshi) are brutal manifestations of Jigoku's raw power, they do not always have to appear in the game as relentless destroyers. The outward human appearance of most of the Lost and their knowledge and understanding of human behavior and emotion allows them to function as very effective infiltrators and subversives. Nearly all Lost seem to feel a powerful urge to bring more and more "pure" humans into the grasp of the Taint. Some Rokugani have even suggested this compulsion reflects some lingering remnant of lost humanity – having fallen to the Taint themselves, the Lost feel the desperate need to prove that all others can fall as they did. Or perhaps this is simply a projection of human motivations onto creatures that no longer possess such things, and the Lost pursue the corruption of others merely because that is the goal of Jigoku itself.

It should come as no surprise that luring men and women to the Taint is far easier for a Lost, who looks human and can remember what it was to be human, than it is for a Shadowlands beast. Furthermore, some Lost have Shadowlands Powers that enable them to conceal their own Taint, making it easy for them to slip into human society unnoticed. The GM can use such sinister creatures to offer false friendship to the PCs, to tempt them with another path when Bushido seems too hard and duty weighs too heavily. The perverse power of the Taint often causes the Lost to appear happy with their fallen status, to claim they have joined the better side and to mock the beliefs of the Empire. Such creatures are well-suited to undermine samurai beliefs, especially the beliefs of those who may already be feeling conflicts or doubts.

GMs who wish to use the Lost as tempters can create a very powerful campaign built around the lure of Shourido and the psychological drama of struggling to remain on the path of Honor. The Lost will use all manner of dishonest arguments and ruthless temptations to snare their victims, freely exploiting the characters' flaws and desires. Why should the PC endure the misery of futile service to an uncaring lord when the Taint offers everything he might want? Why should the PC endure the mockery of a rival when Shourido would permit him to destroy his foes without guilt?

Of course, the Lost will not rely solely on persuasion to win their "converts." A Lost infiltrator will slip Tainted blood into tea or sake, not only spreading the Taint but also allowing him to employ Shadowlands Powers like Blood Domination. A Lost seductress may bestow the Taint through her intimate attentions. A cruel and ruthless Lost may commit a murder and then plant the blood-soaked weapon on a suitable target, leaving that unfortunate with no choice but to sign up or die for a crime he did not commit. Creative GMs will find all manner of ways for the Lost to lure, undermine, and manipulate the PCs.

The Lost as Adversaries: Grand Guignol Horror

Any adventure that features themes of maho or the Taint will tend to include horror elements. Conveying horror in a samurai role-playing game can be tricky, but it is an important aspect of any Shadowlands adventure. Horror role-playing is discussed in more detail in the Undead chapter elsewhere in this book, and most of the advice offered there is equally applicable to adventures using the Lost. The inhuman cruelty of the Lost combined with their tremendous physical powers make them ideal for a horror plot that focuses on gruesome suffering and violence, but the GM should be wary of pushing things too far and turning horror into nausea. If a Lost is going to torture a captured PC, this is something far better depicted indirectly rather than in explicit descriptions. Too much horror will cause the players to overdose and either walk away in disgust or lose interest in the story.

New Mechanics

The following sections provide new mechanics for depicting the Lost in greater detail and capability. It is important to note that the Lost are villains and by definition NPCs, since becoming Lost strips away their ability to be anything other than willing servants of Jigoku. Thus, these mechanics are not designed or intended to be "balanced" in the same manner as the mechanics for player characters. The GM should be cognizant of this at all times. Lost are enemies, terrible and lethal enemies – they should not be unleashed on the player characters lightly or casually.

New Lesser Shadowlands Powers

- **Chitinous Armor:** Your skin has hardened into an insect-like shell that protects you physically but also exposes your inhuman nature. This grants you Reduction of 10 (which stacks with any Reduction you gain from armor, spells, or other effects).
- **Calligraphy of Thought:** You can read the surface thoughts of anyone within your line of sight. This is a Free Action and requires you to win a Contested Air Roll. With a success, you sense whatever the target is thinking about at that moment. This power cannot root out deeper emotions or subconscious knowledge.
- **Eyes of Hell:** The power of the Taint allows you to see with an unnatural clarity under any circumstances. You may choose to see through darkness, shadows, fog, smoke, or any similar visual impairment. However, whenever you use this power your eyes glow with an unnatural light (usually green or blue), betraying your presence and nature.
- **Fear:** The power of the Taint allows you to unleash a wave of inhuman terror, freezing the blood of your enemies. Once per skirmish you can project an aura of fear, inflicting a Fear 5 effect on all your enemies within sight.
- **Sense Purity:** The absence of Taint calls to you, setting your teeth on edge with the knowledge of purity and honor. As a Free Action you can sense the presence of non-Tainted humans within fifty feet by winning a Contested Awareness Roll. (This naturally makes you extremely difficult to surprise.) You can sense them at greater distances, up to a half mile, but this requires a Complex Action and they receive two Free Raises on their Awareness roll.
- **Wings:** Your body has sprouted large wings that allow you to fly for short distances. These wings may be bird-like (feathered), leathery, or reptilian in nature. They can be folded up and with some difficulty can be concealed beneath a cloak or haori (with a roll of Acting / Awareness at TN 25). Folding or unfolding the wings is a Simple Action. When unfolded, the wings allow you to fly, with your Move Actions calculated at Water +2.



New Greater Shadowlands Powers

- **Armor of Death:** The power of the Taint allows you to strengthen yourself by spilling the blood of others, making you resistant to their attacks. Each time you inflict at least 15 Wounds on an opponent, you gain Reduction of 10 (5 to jade) for the remainder of that skirmish. This effect stacks with other sources of Reduction but cannot stack with itself.
- **Beyond the Elements:** Your Taint makes you extremely resistant to the power of the kami, inflicting a +15 TN penalty on any elemental magic that targets you. In exchange, however, maho spells that target you gain two Free Raises. This power stacks with the effects of Above the Elements.
- **Blood Shouting:** Your blood carries a sinister power that allows you to share your injuries with anyone who has ingested it. It works on anyone within hearing who has ingested any of your blood (even as little as a drop). When you take Wounds, you emit a ghastly and terrifying scream, and half the damage you would have taken is instead inflicted on the person who ingested your blood. If there are multiple such persons within hearing of you, the damage is divided between them (rounded up).
- **Disrupt the Chi:** Your aura of power and dominance causes lesser persons to succumb to their own inner weakness. Using this power is a Simple Action and it can only target an opponent within your sight. You make a Contested Willpower Roll against the target. You add your Taint to the total of your roll, while your target adds his Honor to the total of his roll. If you succeed, the target must use his lowest Trait for all Skill and Trait rolls for the next ten Rounds.
- **Evade the Unworthy:** You can become completely invisible, undetectable to any normal sight. Activating this power is a Simple Action and it encompasses both your body and anything you are carrying (including helpless or unconscious persons). This invisibility does not conceal noise or scent, and can be penetrated by magical effects such as the spell By the Light of the Moon. It comes to an end immediately after you make an attack.
- **Flight of Darkness:** You may call upon the Air kansen to carry you through the sky, moving across air as easily as the ground. You can fly at will, without need for spells or wings, and moving at the same speed as your normal ground movement.
- **Strength of the Dark One:** The power of the Taint enhances your physical resilience, making you extremely difficult to kill. You gain +5 Wounds per Rank. This power's effects stack with those of Blessing of the Dark One.

The Lost in Rokugani Culture

It should come as no surprise that most Rokugani prefer to ignore the very existence of the Lost, and consequently Rokugan's artists, poets, and playwrights generally refrain from mentioning them or their deeds. This is typical of Rokugani society in general, where distasteful topics are avoided or ignored as much as possible. There are, however, occasional exceptions.

Probably the most notable of these are found among the Crab. The Clan of Hida must deal with the threat of the Shadowlands on a daily basis, and thus finds no shame in discussing it openly and even depicting it in art. The sinister powers and foul deeds of the Lost have found mention in the works of more than a few Crab artists. One of the more notable examples is the play Closing Night by Hiruma Nabuko. First performed in the Yasuki Winter Court during the early tenth century, this notorious play depicts the final days of Hiruma castle from the perspective of the wife and daughters of a Hiruma general. The final scene, in which the general returns as one of the Lost and slaughters his own family, were so shocking and horrifying that the play was forbidden from being performed again – however, it is rumored that the Crab continue to have it performed for their own lords, without inviting outsiders.

Much more rarely, the Lost have appeared in the work of other Rokugani artists. Ikoma Jijo's play Virtue indirectly depicts Doji Nashiko's transformation into one of the Lost and eventually into an akutenshi. The so-called "evil angels" are also briefly mentioned in Ide Tadehiro's eleventh-century novel Meifumado, which depicts an akutenshi attacking a Crab-hosted Winter Court. His fanciful account is the only known record of this incident, which the Imperial histories insist never took place.

The Lost, of course, have a "culture" of their own, one given considerable scope after the founding of the City of the Lost and the later Spider Clan. The art and poetry which they create is both foul and darkly compelling, made the more horrible because it often employs the most ghastly mediums. "Music" performed through the torture of prisoners, paintings made by brushing blood onto preserved human skin – such are the atrocities reported by the few Rokugani who have survived visits to the City of the Lost and the various Spider strongholds.

The Powers of the Akutenshi

The Lost known as Akutenshi exhibit powers not seen among others who have embraced the Taint. Presumably this is due to their having taken in Fu Leng's blood, granting them unnatural powers and capabilities. However, some of these abilities have also been displayed by Daigotsu and his most potent followers, who never took in the blood of the Dark Kami. Thus in game terms, the GM can use these abilities to represent any Lost of unique and exceptional power.

An akutenshi can have any number of Lesser and Greater Shadowlands Powers, and will always have at least three of each. In addition, all akutenshi possess some of the special powers on this list, usually between one and four of them. It is theoretically possible for an akutenshi to actually have all of these powers, although no such being has ever been recorded, and would certainly be a foe more terrible than anything save Fu Leng himself.

- **Awe of the Dark One:** The akutenshi may exert its will against other Shadowlands creatures, forcing them to do whatever it might desire. No die roll is needed. This power will work against any undead creature and any beast or oni of the Shadowlands, as well as against any Lost with lower Willpower. It will not work against Lost with equal or higher Willpower, nor against Tainted humans who are not Lost. This power cannot affect uniquely powerful creatures such as Oni Lords or other akutenshi.
- **Body of Damned Time:** The akutenshi can force those gazing upon it to see their own deaths. This power requires a Simple Action to use, and may target a number of opponents up to the akutenshi's Taint Rank, all of whom must be able to see it. (Thus it will not work against blind opponents, for example.) Anyone who is affected by this power momentarily does not see the akutenshi, but instead a terrible void within which they can see their own future death. The akutenshi makes a Contested roll of its Taint against the Void of the targets; all targets who lose the roll immediately age by 1-10 years.
- **Breath of Taint:** The akutenshi breaths forth an invisible cloud of pure Taint, corrupting and befouling everything it touches. The cloud can target any one creature within ten feet, forcing the target to make an Earth Roll at TN 25 or immediately gain 1-10 points of Taint. The breath can also be directed against a physical object (as large as a door or wagon), causing it to become Tainted – anyone subsequently touching that object must roll Earth at TN 15 or gain 1 point of Taint. Jade targeted with the Breath of Taint will instantly corrupt into black sludge, but crystal is immune.
- **Claim the Body:** The akutenshi has the ability to send out its spirit and possess other Shadowlands creatures, controlling them like puppets. The akutenshi remains aware of its own body (which is immobile and inactive) but can see, smell, feel, and otherwise sense everything the possessed creature perceives. This power can target any Shadowlands creature the akutenshi can see. If it has previously possessed a particular creature, it can now do so at any distance, even from all the way across the Empire. Each such possession attempt is a Simple Action and requires the akutenshi to win a Contested Willpower roll. If the possessed creature is killed, or the akutenshi's body is harmed or disturbed, the akutenshi's spirit immediately returns to its own body. It can also return to its own body voluntarily as a Free Action.
- **Passing Through the Light:** The akutenshi moves with inhuman and unnatural speed, to the point that it seems to "warp" or "fall" through space from one location to another. The akutenshi can move up to its Water x25 as a Free Action, and up to its Water x50 as a Simple Action.
- **Mastery of Darkness:** The akutenshi is a supreme master of the art of maho, and its spells are fearsomely powerful and effective. It knows all maho spells and can cast them without the need to spill blood. (If the akutenshi does spill blood to cast a maho spell, it gains 3 Free Raises on that spell.) In addition, the akutenshi can cast non-maho elemental spells as maho, although it must spill blood in the normal way to do so.
- **Shapeshifting:** The akutenshi can freely alter its appearance, so long as it remains broadly human-like in size and shape. It can shift its body and features instantly, combining human and monstrous features, making itself as beautiful or as horrible as it desires. It can imitate anyone it has seen before, although its monstrous nature means that those familiar with the original person can try to see through the akutenshi's deception (this is a Contested Roll, typically Investigation against the akutenshi's Acting). Shapeshifting is a Free Action that may be taken any number of times each Round.
- **Soul Drinking:** The akutenshi can consume the soul of a victim, sucking it out through the mouth. This is normally done to a dying victim, but can also be employed against a living but helpless target by making a Contested Roll of the akutenshi's Taint against the target's Honor / Willpower. The consumed soul is stored within the akutenshi's intestines, where it exists in endless torment and agony. Imprisoned souls can only be freed by killing the akutenshi.



- **Terror of Fu Leng:** The akutenshi unleashes a wave of monstrous, supernatural terror that freezes the blood of everyone within sight. Activating this power is a Complex Action and it affects everyone within line of sight. All targets are afflicted with a Fear 10 effect.

Lost Basic School: Dark Moto Cavalry [Bushi]

After the Dark Moto became a new force within the Shadowlands, they began to modify their traditional Moto fighting techniques to their new nature as creatures of the Shadowlands. Over time, a new school evolved, one known at first only to the Dark Moto themselves but later taught to other Lost who served alongside Tsume's fearsome legions. After the destruction of the Dark Moto in the twelfth century, their school survived among a handful of Lost and eventually was passed down to Daigotsu's forces. The later Spider Clan also employed some of the techniques of the Dark Moto.

Unlike the maho-bujin Advanced School (see below), the Dark Moto school does resemble a proper Rokugani school in that its techniques are taught by sensei rather than simply being learned directly from the Taint. Its techniques can be learned by those who are not yet Lost, but the masters of the school will only teach students who are already clearly suffused with the Taint. The school's "outfit" is the result of Lost who equip themselves from their victims or their former lives, and can be expected to vary widely in practice. Naturally, the Dark Moto have no Honor.

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Honor:** 0.0
- **Starting Skills:** Defense, Horsemanship, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Polearms, Spears, any one Bugei or Low Skill.
- **Outfit:** Armor (light, heavy, or cavalry), katana or wakizashi, spear or polearm, bow (yumi or dai-kyu) with 20 arrows, onikage steed
- **Requirement:** Must be Tainted. The Dark Moto have sometimes taught their techniques to those of their allies who not yet Lost, but never to those who have not at least been firmly touched by the power of Jigoku.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Power in the Darkness

The embrace of the Taint grants the Dark Moto strength beyond that of mortals. Your maximum Raises are now limited by your Taint Rank or your Void, whichever is higher. You add your Taint Rank in unkept dice to all attack rolls. However, you no longer gain any benefit from the Full Defense stance.

Rank 2: Ride Beyond Death

Not even death can break the connection between a Unicorn and his steed. The Dark Moto are bonded to onikage, the monstrous creatures created from horses that fall to the Taint. You may mentally summon an onikage as a Simple Action. The creature will appear at the start of the next Round, bursting forth from the ground.

Rank 3: Dark Lord's Fury

The rage of Jigoku courses through the Dark Moto's body, driving him to inhuman speed and fury. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 4: Visage of the Damned

The Dark Moto radiate a powerful aura of terror and malignance, and can intensify this power to the point where it will cripple their foes. Once per skirmish as a Simple Action you may create a Fear effect equal to your Taint Rank against all those who gaze upon you. Any opponent who succumbs to the Fear is, in addition to the normal penalties, limited to one Simple Action (and no Complex Actions) on their next Turn. They may take Free Actions as normal.

Rank 5: Death is an Illusion

The corrupted forms of the Dark Moto are nearly impervious to injury, and they can continue to fight until they are destroyed. You no longer suffer any Wound penalties, not even at the Down or Out Ranks, and you heal Wounds equal to your Taint Rank during the Reactions Stage of each Round.

Lost Advanced School: Maho-Bujin [Bushi]

Throughout the history of the Empire, Lost warriors of great power have occasionally appeared who manifested fighting skills of terrifying capability. These individuals had not learned at a school, or from the words of a sensei – rather, they were instructed by Jikogu itself, whispering into their bodies and minds through the medium of the Taint. When the Lost began to form communities, they saw these warriors as receiving special blessings from Fu Leng and revered them accordingly. Although the Spider Clan later made some attempts to form organized schools around the maho-bujin techniques, they were not successful – the ways of the maho-bujin can only be learned from the Taint itself. The Spider developed simpler techniques that could be taught normally.

In game mechanics terms, the maho-bujin "school" functions somewhat like a normal Advanced School, but it can only be learned by the Lost – who are NPCs, of course. Any Lost who is sufficiently powerful and useful to Jigoku can potentially become a maho-bujin, although thankfully few of them qualify for such attention from the Realm of Evil. The "school" has no real requirement other than that the recipient be powerful enough to be worthy of such dark blessings. Often, maho-bujin are Lost who were already trained as warriors – in such cases, the combination of their former knowledge and power of the maho-bujin techniques can be formidable indeed.

- **Requirements:** Must be Lost, have Jiujutsu 3 and at least one Weapon Skill at Rank 5, and be chosen by Jigoku to learn the ways of the maho-bujin. There are no actual Trait requirements for the school, although its gifts are usually only bestowed on those with significant physical capabilities.

Techniques:

Rank 1: Carve the Crimson Road

The maho-bujin's body flows freely with the Taint that inhabits it, and his blows strike with a terrible power no mortal flesh can match. Your maximum Raises are now limited by your Taint Rank or your Void, whichever is higher. You gain a bonus in unkept dice equal to your Shadowlands Taint Rank on all damage rolls. You can now make the Extra Attack maneuver with only 2 Raises instead of 5.

Rank 2: Corruption Rewards

The fighting instincts of a maho-bujin sense blood and leap for it, striking with preternatural skill and speed, and as his foes grow weaker the maho-bujin moves relentlessly faster and faster. During each Reactions Stage of a skirmish, you increase your Initiative by your Taint Rank. You may now make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank 3: Devourer of Purity

The warriors of Jigoku are able to heal themselves by feeding on the suffering of their enemies, even consuming their honor and strength of soul. Moreover, the maho-bujin has now transcended the Celestial Order and fully embraced the power of the Taint, making him nigh-indestructible. Any time you reduce someone to Down or Out or kill them, you instantly heal a number of Wounds equal to 2 x (their Honor Rank). This may be done any number of times per Round, but you cannot heal off the same person more than once in the same Round. In addition, you gain the creature ability of Invulnerability. (If you are already Invulnerable due to a Shadowlands power, you gain Reduction 10 instead.)

Notable Lost Villains

The following sections lists several unique Lost of legendary power and capability. These individuals come from several different eras in the history of the Shadowlands, and GMs can also use them as models for other villains of their own creation.

Doji Nashiko, the Demon Bride of Fu Leng

Air 6	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 4	Void 3*
Awareness 8	Willpower 7	Intelligence 6	Perception 5	-

**(cannot spend Void points)*

Initiative: 10k9

Attack: Wakizashi 7k4+8 (Simple) or Blackened Claws 8k4+8 (Simple)

Damage: 10k4 (wakizashi) or 10k5 (claws)

Armor TN: 35

Wounds: 95: Dead

School: Doji Courtier 4/Maho-Bujin 2 (Insight Rank 10)

Taint Rank: 8.5

Skills: Acting 8, Courtier 6, Defense 5, Etiquette 7, Intimidation (Control) 5, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Knives 4, Lore (many) 3-6, Sincerity (Deceit) 8, Stealth 4, Temptation (Seduction) 10

Shadowlands Powers: Above the Elements, Blackened Claws, Blood Domination, Blood Knows Blood, Calligraphy of Thought, Child of Darkness, Father of Lies, Mind of Darkness, Undead Strength, Unholy Beauty

Akutenshi Powers: Body of Damned Time, Mastery of Darkness, Shapeshifting, Soul Drinking

Advantages:

- *Dangerous Beauty*
- *Voice*

Special Abilities:

- *Invulnerable*



Doji Nashiko was a vain woman from the era of Clan Champion Doji Komatsu. Her obsession with her own poor looks prompted her to embrace maho and with it, the Taint. She is remembered in the Empire solely through the play *Virtue* by Ikoma Jijo, a work described as "a homily on the evils of lust, vengeance, and the Crane, not necessarily in that order." Nashiko seduced Komatsu and over half the men of the Crane courts, gave their names to oni, triggered a major war that was later erased from the Imperial histories, then fled into the Shadowlands when her crimes were exposed. There she found her way to the Festering Pit, becoming one of the Lost and an akutenshi. She is rumored to have become Fu Leng's lover and perhaps even born him children, although such ghastly stories cannot be confirmed.

It is known that Nashiko has returned to Rokugan more than once, using her powers of illusion to seduce and corrupt men, as well as to kill women whose beauty arouses her inhuman jealousy. She wears nothing but an illusion spell and employs the most ruthless and merciless techniques of manipulation and seduction. Nashiko considers men to be weak and pathetic creatures, easily manipulated and controlled, and she takes a sinister delight in leading them down the path of sin and desire. She is also incredibly vain, wishing to always be known as the most beautiful woman in Rokugan. Any highly attractive woman is liable to draw her hostility.

Hida Atarasi, the First Akutenshi

Air 3	Earth 7	Fire 4	Water 4	Void 5*
Reflexes 6	Stamina 10	Agility 7	Strength 10	-

**(cannot spend Void points)*

Initiative: 10k7+2

Attack: Heavy weapon 10k9+11 (Simple)

Damage: By weapon +9k0

Armor TN: 45

Reduction: 15 (Maho-Bujin 3 plus Heavy Armor)

Wounds: 197: Dead

School: Hida Bushi 3/Maho-Bujin 3 (Insight Rank 7)

Taint Rank: 9

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 7, Heavy Weapons (Tetsubo) 8, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Jiujutsu 8, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Stealth 3

Shadowlands Powers: Blessing of the Dark One, Child of Darkness, Chosen of Fu Leng, Eyes of Hell, Fear, Strength of the Dark One, Undead Strength, Unearthly Regeneration

Akutenshi Powers: Awe of the Dark One, Mastery of Death, Shapeshifting

Special Abilities:

- *Atarasi's Avalanche: Atarasi's unarmed strikes infuse the target with Taint. Each time he strikes someone with an unarmed attack, the victim must roll Earth at TN 20 or gain 1-5 points of Taint. Anyone who is killed by Atarasi's unarmed attacks will be resurrected as undead 5 rounds later.*
- *Invulnerable*

Hida Atarasi was born to the strongest of the Kami. He lived a harsh life of strict training, a life he relished and embraced. When Fu Leng attacked the fledgling empire, Atarasi stood faithfully by his father's side. His greatest joy in life was battle, and he lived to cut down the enemies of his beloved father. Some have suggested in retrospect that Atarasi knew his time was short and his path led to death on the battlefield. Whatever the case, he seemed utterly fearless. When Shinsei came looking for mortals to confront the dark god Fu Leng, Atarasi was more than ready to join in. To perish in battle with the Dark Kami would be the greatest death any samurai could hope for.

But Atarasi did not die in combat with Fu Leng. Instead, he remained behind to win time for Shosuro and Shinsei to return to the Empire with the twelve Black Scrolls. In some ways it was the most courageous choice of his life, for having already beheaded the five fallen Thunders to ensure they were safe from undeath, he knew none would remain to do the same for him. Still, he was prepared to accept that his body would become a travesty of unlife, so long as his soul remained pure. As Atarasi went down under a vast horde of Shadowlands creatures, his fading thought was that he had finally met his good death.

But it was not to be. Atarasi did not die in his final battle, but lay shattered and comatose in the blood-soaked field, succumbing to the power of the Taint. He became Lost, and fed upon the blood of the fallen Dark God to transform into the first of the akutenshi. The transformed Atarasi was a creature as utterly evil as his former self had been noble and true. His former loyalty to his father Hida became monstrous hatred. After all, if Hida had truly loved his son as Atarasi had loved his father, Hida would have accompanied him into the Shadowlands to ensure he was given the death he had earned. His father had served the cowards of Rokugan, had abandoned him, and Atarasi would make him pay. He would make them all pay.

For almost two centuries after the Day of Thunder, Atarasi stalked the Shadowlands, killing every Crab he found. Those who perished at his hands rose from the dead as hyakuhei, serving the cause of Jigoku. Rumors of his terrible activities slowly filtered back to the Empire, and finally reached Hida, who had never truly believed his son was dead. In 210, the Crab Kami marched into the Shadowlands to confront his fallen son.



Moto Tsume, General of the Shadowlands

Air 6	Earth 7	Fire 5	Water 5	Void 4*
-	-	-	Perception 6	-

*(cannot spend Void points)

Initiative: 10k9+2

Attack: Katana 10k6+11 (Simple)

Damage: Katana 10k5 (Maho-Bujin 1)

Armor TN: 40

Reduction: 13 (Maho-Bujin 2 and Light Armor)

Wounds: 157: Dead

School: Moto Bushi 5/Maho-Bujin 3 (Insight Rank 11)

Taint Rank: 9

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 9, Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 7, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation (Control, Torture) 9, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Kyujutsu (Dai-Kyu) 4, Lore: Shadowlands 10, Polearms 6, Spears 5, Stealth 4, Temptation (Control) 6

Shadowlands Powers: Armor of Death, Blessing of the Dark One, Child of Darkness, Disrupt Chi, Eyes of Hell, Flight of Darkness, Jade Sense, Sense Purity, Undead Strength

Akutenshi Powers: Awe of the Dark One, Passing Through the Light, Shapeshifting, Terror of Fu Leng

Special Abilities:

- *Invulnerable*

If there is a single tale in Rokugan that captures the dangers of the Taint more clearly than any other, it is the story of Moto Tsume. A great general and daimyo of a mighty warrior family, Tsume was undone by his own arrogance and by the lingering curse of his family's old gods, the Lords of Death. Many in the Crab warned Tsume that his army could not possibly prevail against the power of the Shadowlands, but he refused to listen. The Crab did not have his skills or his genius, their army was a slow and turgid force of infantry that cowered behind a fortified wall. He would show them, show the entire Empire, the true strength of the Moto.

Instead, he became the greatest general of Fu Leng and led the armies of the Shadowlands against Rokugan for three centuries. Perhaps only Daigotsu and Iuchiban have been a more terrible enemies to the Emerald Empire than Moto Tsume. A brilliant general who specialized in terror tactics, Tsume also reveled in kidnapping his fellow Unicorn and slowly torturing them into submission to the Taint. While he lived, he was by far the most capable and effective leader of the Shadowlands, although he was matched or exceeded in sheer power by the Oni Lords. His dark charisma affected the Rokugani as well as the forces of the Shadowlands; the Crab developed a grudging respect and even admiration for his skill and ruthlessness, and his name hung over the Moto family like a curse. Stories of the final battle between the Unicorn and the Dark Moto claim that the Moto family daimyo, Soro, actually was paralyzed with fear and awe by Tsume's approach, only managing to draw his sword at the last possible moment.

There have been other Lost who have exerted greater influence on the history of the Empire – most notably the infamous Dark Lord Daigotsu. But perhaps no other Lost has so dominated a sustained era of Imperial history as Tsume did.





Tsukuro, the Fallen Crane

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 4	Void 4*
Awareness 4	Willpower 5	-	Perception 6	-

**(cannot spend Void points)*

Initiative: 9k3 *Attack: Katana 10k6+8 (Simple)*

Damage: Katana 10k4+2 (Maho-Bujin 1) *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: 100: Dead*

School: Daidoji Iron Warrior 4/Maho-Bujin 1 (Insight Rank 6)

Taint Rank: 8

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 6, Defense 7, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 5, Intimidation (Control) 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Knives 2, Kyujutsu 4, Spears 5, Stealth 4, Temptation 3

Shadowlands Powers: Above the Elements, Blessing of the Dark One, Child of Darkness, Eyes of Hell, Fear, Sense Purity, Thy Master's Will, Undead Strength

Akutenshi Powers: Awe of the Dark Lord, Breath of Taint

Special Abilities:

- *Invulnerable*
- *Undead*

Daidoji Tsukuro was a fifth-century warrior of the Crane who was born under a curse – from his birth, the Asahina proclaimed him forsaken by the ancestors and prophesied that he was doomed to betray the Empire. Tsukuro tried relentlessly to reject this doom; he became an Emerald Magistrate and served bravely in the Crane army, developing many tactical innovations. But superiors who feared his curse blocked every opportunity for him to advance. Over time, frustration made Tsukuro bitter, and he turned to the solace of opium, taking bribes to finance his vices. When a superior was investigated for corruption, the blame fell instead on Tsukuro, and he was ordered to commit seppuku. Instead Tsukuro fled westward into the Shadowlands – a much easier task in the days before the construction of the Kaiu Wall – and embraced the Taint.

Once he became Lost, Tsukuro led armies of Shadowlands creatures with the same deadly skill he had previously employed for the Crane. Until the rise of Moto Tsume, he was the most prominent of the Lost, and after Tsume's fall he remained a significant leader in the Shadowlands. Tsukuro lacks the shapeshifting powers of many akutenshi, and even more bizarrely, the Taint has granted him the power to return from the grave time and time again, no matter how often he is slain. He has died at least twice, and resembles a rotten corpse with burning red eyes. He always wears a "mempo" of stitched-together human faces, torn from the bodies of those he has killed.


空の巻

The Naga

"You say you fight to honor your ancestors, human, but you know so little of them beyond tales of valor. I can feel mine within my soul, and he whispers the truths of the universe into my ears."

- The Shahadet

The ancient civilization of the Naga rose and fell before humans ever stepped foot on the world, and for many centuries humans were not even aware of them save as strange ruins in the Shinomen Mori. Ironically, although they are known for their peaceful nature and refuse to fight against each other, their greatest contributions to the world have been defined by wars, wars reluctantly waged when they believed their cause was right. Long before the first Day of Thunder, the Naga fought the insidious influence of the Nothing and the Shadowlands Taint all across the world. After their great struggle against the Foul, as they called these forces, the Naga left the world behind and entered a Great Sleep. They had foreseen the Foul would rise again in the far future, and the Great Sleep would allow them to be ready to fight when they were needed by the world once more.

To humans, Naga are fantastical creatures: they have the torso and arms of a human but the tail of a massive serpent. Over the centuries, the Naga have crossed paths with the Rokugani more than once. Though conflict was perhaps inevitable, when faced with greater evils the two alien cultures were able to put aside their differences, at least for a time. And if evil rises again in the future, the Naga may return from their Great Sleep once more to stand against the Foul.

Naga Physiology

Naga have the upper body, arms, and head of a human, albeit one whose skin is covered in a fine layer of scales. Their lower body is that of a great serpent, usually three to five times as long as their human-like torso. Depending on bloodline, from head to tail a Naga can be as short as twelve feet or as long as twenty-five or more. They are usually four to ten feet tall when reared back to "stand" upright, and they can rise up on their tails to achieve extra height. Female Naga have the ability to change their tails into a pair of humanoid legs through magical ritual and concentration, allowing them to traverse areas where the males cannot go and to mingle more easily among other races.

All Naga partake of the Akasha, a sort of collective mind and "well of souls" that connects all Naga to each other and to their ancestors. It is the influence of the Akasha, constantly whispering to every Naga within his own mind and soul, that makes it all but impossible for Naga to fight each other.

Although Naga are warm-blooded and grow hair from their scalps, their nature is nonetheless reptilian and they do not have hair anywhere else on their scaled bodies. They reproduce by laying eggs. Naga mate for love but seldom for life, and a female Naga will lay a clutch of eggs only three or four times during her lifetime. The eggs are cared for by the entire community, and only some of them will hatch – this seems to depend on the fertility of the female's mate, and since the Great Sleep the race's fertility levels have dropped sharply and perhaps fatally.

When Naga grow to adulthood, they molt their skins like snakes – this is an important moment, typically coming around fourteen years of age, and marks the moment when the child becomes an adult. When it happens, the young Naga undergoes a special magical ritual that makes him forever immune to the Shadowlands Taint.

Naga are sometimes born with mutations and deformities. For the most part, these do not affect their ability to serve as part of their society, but a few Naga have severe mutations that also impact their connection to the Akasha. These unfortunate creatures are known as Abominations to the rest of their race, and are treated with horror and revulsion. The Naga will not actually kill one of their own, so the few Abominations that survive infancy are typically abandoned in the forest to survive or die on their own. The handful who survive on their own to adulthood are sometimes allowed to earn a place and rejoin Naga society.

Naga Religion: The Atman and the Akasha

The Naga, like humans, believe themselves the children of the sun and the moon, which they refer to as the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye of their universal god, Atman. According to Naga mythology, their race was born from a great stone, a stone which fell as a tear from the Atman's Bright Eye. When the stone struck the earth and broke, the Naga sprang forth – all from one stone, all with one soul. So did their people begin, and to this day the Naga turn their faces to the west three times a day, paying worship to the Place of Falling, the Holy City they are certain still exists.

The Naga worship Atman, the creator and knower of all things, and his two Eyes that traverse the sky. They believe the Bright Eye sees all the good in the world, and the Pale Eye all of the evil, but the Atman sees all and understands the world as it truly is. The Naga believe in reincarnation, but not in the conventional human sense. Rather, all individual Naga souls are part of the greater collective soul which they call the Akasha. When a Naga is born, his soul is crafted from parts of other ancient Naga souls floating within the Akasha, and when he dies his soul in turn rejoins the Akasha. A Naga can sense his own past lives in the back of his head, guiding his actions and helping him perform deeds he would normally be unable to do. If the Naga has a particularly strong connection with the Akasha, he may speak directly to his past lives and discern even more secrets and advantages to help serve his people. Ultimately, the Naga are all connected by the Akasha. It is both comforting and protective, and those who can feel its influence strongly can coax magic out of pearls, determine lies and emotions, and even gird their souls against outside influences. The Naga can use the Akasha to speak to one another without words, directly from mind to mind. Because of this connection, the Naga feel a sense of brotherhood between every single one of their race, and can act as a cohesive whole in the face of external threats and problems.

The Naga form of reincarnation is very different, obviously, from the Rokugani belief in souls walking individual paths through the Celestial Order. Humans have great difficulty comprehending the Naga connection to the Akasha – while the Naga, for their part, find the isolated and separate lives of human souls quite baffling.

Naga Culture and Customs

The Naga Empire is a merit-based society where each Naga's own actions determine his responsibilities and status. The Naga care very little about lineage – their children are raised by the community from a very early age. In fact, acknowledging one's birth parents in conversation is a social error that can easily result in embarrassment and shame for those involved. The Naga emphasize order and service to the nation over individuality and personal quirks, and value hard work and results over all else. This is not to say they do not enjoy life – Naga are quite capable of happiness, joy, and love. But their deep connection through the Akasha causes them to place their race's collective good ahead of themselves.

The Leaders of the Naga

A Speech by the Dashmar to the Rokugani Imperial Court, twelfth century

We are not so different, you and I, Rokugani. You do not understand because you cannot see the truth behind our titles and our souls. You trust your daimyo understands your position in the Celestial Order, and so do the Naga. The Naga are gifted with the ability to listen to the innermost thoughts of our leaders, and thus understand the intentions of any questionable order.

The Qatol is the leader of the Naga. He is the soul of the Akasha and acts as its voice when the future becomes unclear. He is the spiritual leader, the one who unites all Naga under one banner. He is the child of the Bright Eye, blessed beyond us all. He is the warrior who loves peace and the diplomat who leads us into war. The title has remained vacant ever since the original Qatol disappeared into legend, but we would all instantly obey one who could rightfully lay claim to his title. Your courtiers and your Ikoma speak of the one called the Hantei; the Qatol was that Naga to us, bringing us enlightenment and the foundation of our great empire. We have never seen him since the early days of our empire, yet we have faith he will one day return.

Below him are the two leaders of the Naga who truly govern the day-to-day actions of our people. The Qamar assumes complete command in times of war. He is the best fighter among us, one who understands the best way to defeat an enemy can sometimes follow the path of peace. He must be an accommodating Naga, to assuage the concerns of the five bloodlines. He must be stalwart, to keep their requests from diverting him from his own plans.

The Dashmar assumes command of our race when we are not at war. I am but an old and foolish Naga, and I barely do justice to the title. The Dashmar must make allies of our neighbors and discern where the empire must tread if we are to survive in the future. The world is a dangerous place, my friends, and the Naga do not shy away from the truth. We are nearly always at war, and the Dashmar has the steady hand to guide the Naga. He can be considered the same as your Emperor.

Below the Qamar and the Dashmar are the champions of the five bloodlines. Once, we Naga fought amongst each other until we recognized we were all brothers under the Akasha. Each of the five races of the Naga are led by the Bloodline Champions. The leaders of the Asp, the Chameleon, the Cobra, the Constrictor, and the Greensnake races hold great honor among our people and keep the interests of their own race at heart. Many of them are familiar to you, as they often make ventures out into Rokugan to fight on the front lines. The Asp Champion the Shahadet is a military genius, leading many of the Naga armies into battle. The Shashakar is an amazing jakla, wielding unspeakable powers at his fingertips. The Lord Vedics teach us what is right or wrong. These brave Naga are akin to your Clan Champions. The rest of our society functions nearly identically to your own. Your daimyo serve under your Champions to oversee the minor details required in leading a people. Our generals such as the Isha, the Taquar, and the Malekish serve under the Champions to make sure our civilization can continue against all the threats facing us.

Now, friends, do you still believe that we have so little in common?





Naga do not have personal names. Instead, each Naga is given a functional title, such as "the Qamar" or "the Isha," that describes his role and caste in the Naga Empire. If a Naga changes his social situation and joins a different caste, he gains a new title. This does not cause confusion since others can sense through the Akasha that the individual Naga is still the same person. (Humans interacting with the Naga often found this method of titles and names quite troublesome and confusing, of course.) The Naga are divided into three basic social castes, the Vedics, the Warriors, and the Jakla. The Vedics are keepers of wisdom and moral purity, philosophers who help guide the rest of their race. The Warriors are the soldiers and scouts who protect the Naga race from its many enemies. The Jakla are the keepers of forbidden wisdom, masters of pearl magic, whose power protects the whole race.

The Naga listen to orders from their superiors with little question. They understand their superiors gained their rank through hard work and achievements, not through heritage. In any given situation the Naga with the most expertise becomes the effective leader, chosen by conversation through the Akasha. During a battle, for example, the highest ranking Naga Warrior will become the leader, while during a diplomatic mission the Naga will defer to highest-ranking Vedic. In cases where there is no highest rank, the Naga with the strongest connection to the Akasha becomes the leader. The Qamar and the Dashmar are both considered the leaders of the entire Naga Empire, with the Qamar leading during times of war and the Dashmar during times of peace. It is a convoluted system by human standards, but it works because all the participants share the mental link of the Akasha.

The Naga have a spoken language, but due to their ability to also communicate through the Akasha their language incorporates long pauses, subtle gestures, and silences that can be baffling to humans. It is impossible for Naga to misunderstand or misinterpret each others' words.

Naga morality upholds three supreme virtues, and all Naga swear to follow these virtues when they become adults: Purity, Self-Control, and Truth. These virtues include many subthemes such as courage (an aspect of purity) and patience (an aspect of self-control). Needless to say, the Naga find it very difficult to comprehend the human morality of Bushido, especially the internal conflicts which often arise between the seven Virtues – in the Naga view, morality is always clear and non-conflicting.

A Brief History

Naga history is long and complex, full of strange myths and legends. Little of its details are known to humans, but the Rokugani have gleaned a basic picture from their limited interactions with the Naga race.

The Bloodline Wars

A thousand years before the kami fell to Rokugan, the different Naga bloodlines coexisted in a wary peace. They saw each other and could only perceive the obvious differences in their races instead of celebrating their similarities. Constrictors could see that their large and powerful frames differed greatly from those of the tiny Greensnakes. Most Naga shunned the Cobra, for they were heavily mutated and reclusive. In those days the Akasha was new and its connections tenuous, and the Naga souls did not yet understand their union to each other. Conflict soon erupted.

The Asp, led by one called the Shahismael, decided to conquer all of the Naga bloodlines and bring them under their rule. The military genius of Shahismael fueled the war and the Asp defeated all who tried to stop them. Though he was winning, Shahismael fell into insanity, and his cruel tortures and evil orders began to upset even his closest followers. Finally, a warrior named the Qatol gathered a powerful army to his banner and faced the Shahismael's army on the battlefield. The crazed general finally met his match, and the Shahismael lost everything he had ever gained. The Qatol ordered the Shahismael be imprisoned and magically ejected from the Akasha so his corrupting influence would not destroy the Naga.

In the wake of this victory, the Naga Empire was born under the watchful eye of the Qatol. Although the Qatol disappeared long ago into the mists of legend, his legacy lives on even into modern times in the form of a united people. No Naga has gone to war against other Naga since his time.

The First Burning of the Land

The First Burning of the Land is the name the Naga give to the first great threat their Empire faced in ancient times. The forces of Jigoku and the Nothing, which the Naga collectively referred to as the Foul, raged across the land and threatened to swallow it whole. The war was bloody and costly. In the end, the Naga were victorious, but a curse was placed on them which would engulf those who stepped beyond their Empire into the Burning Sands. Despite this and other heavy costs, the Naga were satisfied with their victory. The war engendered a burning hatred of the Foul within the heart of the Naga culture, an obsession that has lasted through all later centuries.

The Ashalan Threat

The Ashalan are a race of immortal sorcerers that live deep within the Burning Sands. After the Burning of the Land, they foresaw the Naga could be a problem for their long-term goals and decided to strike first. They lured Naga out to the Burning Sands, where they succumbed to the curse and underwent painful transformations, becoming the Naar Tebaan. The Ashalan ambushed them and hoped to destroy them wholesale. Unfortunately, after the Naga finished their transformations they struck back with a swift counterattack that devastated the Ashalan ranks.

The Naar Tebaan never returned to the Naga civilization, and after this incident the Naga vowed to attack any Ashalan on sight. The strange immortal sorcerers remain eager to return the favor, and occasional clashes between the two have continued since.

The Great Sleep

Although the Naga Empire flourished after the First Burning, some threat was darkening the future of the race. The Constrictor astronomers could foresee in the stars the complete death of the Naga race, and the vedic mystics gave prophecies that spoke of the return of the Foul. The Naga would be needed, the prophecy said, a thousand years in the future when the Foul would threaten to engulf the world once more. The jakla sorcerers conferred amongst themselves and decided on a drastic course of action that would make sure the Naga were ready for the Second Burning of the Land.

The Naga fell into a magical hibernation for a thousand years, leaving only a few guardians to stay awake and protect their homes. Unfortunately, the guardians were not always enough to endure for so many centuries. Several Naga cities and their inhabitants were lost forever to attack, natural disasters, and magic. Even as they slept, the Naga race dwindled.

The Second Day of Thunder

The Naga woke from their Great Sleep to find a completely new world. They were no longer the dominant species. Instead, humans now roamed the breadth of what had once been the Naga Empire, and even the great Shinomen Mori was full of strange creatures and unnatural threats. The Naga were initially disgusted by humans, who waged petty civil wars amongst themselves instead of focusing on the real threat of the Foul. Nevertheless, the Naga sent their political leader the Dashmar to broker a temporary peace with the Emerald Empire. Understanding was further aided by a few humans who visited the Naga cities and came to understand and admire their culture – most notably a Dragon samurai named Mirumoto Daini. Ultimately, the Naga joined with mankind to fight against Fu Leng and his armies, driving the Foul out of the heart of Rokugan.

The Yakamo

In the aftermath of the Second Day of Thunder, the Nothing moved to unmake the world, and Naga efforts to oppose it led to further confusion and violence between them and the humans.

During this time, a Naga prophecy foretold the return of a great warrior to their fold. Under the orders of a jakla called the Shashakar, the Naga stole the body of the Crab Thunder, Hida Yakamo, who had perished fighting the Shadowlands. The Shashakar gave his own life and used a powerful artifact to bring Hida Yakamo's soul into the Akasha. The man returned to life as both a human and a Naga, the first of his kind. The Yakamo, as the Naga called him, led them against the Lying Darkness, and fulfilled the prophecy and saved the world when he ascended to the position of Lord Sun – the Bright Eye in Naga cosmology.

Return to the Great Sleep

In the aftermath of the Nothing's defeat at Oblivion's Gate in the early twelfth century, the Naga decided they had perhaps woken prematurely. Their astronomers still foretold a great evil in the future, and the land no longer welcomed their presence. Their numbers were dwindling and many of them were sterile, unable to produce fertile eggs. Unknown to nearly all, it was in fact the Great Sleep itself which had weakened their fertility to the point of almost surely dooming their race. The end of the Naga seemed imminent, most humans still did not understand or accept them, and the Second Burning of the Land was still to come. The Naga decided to return to the Great Sleep once more. They left one of their eggs with allies in the Unicorn lands and disappeared back into their cities, leaving Rokugan to its own devices once more. The egg eventually hatched, revealing a young Naga-like human girl, the legacy of her people. Taking the name Akasha, she stayed in Rokugan and immersed herself in human culture, continuing the Naga presence in the world.

The Bloodlines of the Naga

The Naga race is divided into five bloodlines, each a different sub-species born from the Great Stone at the dawn of time. Although Naga of different bloodlines can mate with each other, the children produced are not "mixed," but always belong distinctly to the bloodline of one or the other of their parents. Much like the families of Rokugan, the bloodlines of the Naga bestow specific strengths (Trait bonuses) upon their members.

The Asp

"We are the warriors, serving the will of the Akasha with our bodies and our blades."

– The Shahadet

Bloodline Benefit: +1 Strength

The Naga of the Asp are known for their sturdy bodies and strong minds. The Asp are the most militaristic of all the bloodlines and dedicate their lives to martial excellence. They believe in the power of might and will follow the strongest among their bloodline. Asp are fearless and determined, and do not back down either from enemy armies or from opposing arguments. The Shahadet, the Bloodline Champion of the Asp, serves as the general of the Naga armies and is generally the most physically powerful Asp.

Unfortunately, this dedication to the physical leaves the Asp short in certain aspects. The Asp are prone to hubris and arrogance, far more so than other Naga. The Bloodland Wars, the conflict that raged before the formation of the Naga Empire, occurred because the Asp leaders decided to conquer their Naga brothers. The crazed leader Shahismael started the bloody quest, but he could not have accomplished his tragedies if the Asp had not followed his orders. The Asp engaged in the Bloodland Wars with relish because they believed their martial might gave them the right to lead other Naga.

Naga of the Asp often speak to others with condescension, for they believe themselves to be the greatest of all. The other bloodlines accept this as a personality quirk, for they know the Asps' hearts are in the right place. The Asp form the majority of the Naga armies, and fight the creatures of the Foul with complete relish and dedication. The Naga Empire would quickly fall to outside forces were the Asp ever to fail in their duties.

Chameleon

"We are the hunters, digging out the enemies hiding in the shadows of our world."

– The Qarash

Bloodline Benefit: +1 Awareness

The Chameleons find themselves at home within the shadows more than the rest of the Naga. They blend in with their surroundings, naturally hiding from predators. The Chameleons are physically smaller than most other bloodlines – only the Greensnakes are smaller. This has never been a problem to the Chameleons, who see their diminutive size as another benefit for their duties.

The Chameleons are naturally adept at performing the role of the scout, since they are able to stalk their targets while remaining unseen. Their penchant for moving through the dark corners of the world makes them comfortable with stealth and deception. They train with the spear and bow, and their familiarity with subterfuge makes them ideal guardians for Naga temples, pearl beds, and the houses where their eggs and children are kept.

Chameleons suffer more mutations than some of the other bloodlines, though rarely enough to turn them into Abominations. In particular, the majority of Chameleons are born with the ability to breath underwater. It should be no surprise, then, that the Chameleons built a city under the sea. They happily tend to the largest banks of pearl beds, knowing the rest of the Naga Empire could not survive without the steady stream of magical pearls they provide to the jakla.

Cobra

"We are the masters of the secrets of the universe."

– The Shashakar

Bloodline Benefit: +1 Perception

The Cobra bloodline has a unique connection to the Akasha that gives them abilities beyond those of the other bloodlines. They can sense the inherent power that lies in many pearls and manipulate them to create potent magic. Other bloodlines can learn to harness the same powers, but they must struggle to complete the simplest tasks while the Cobra master the more potent abilities with ease. This provides the Cobra with many responsibilities to fulfill for the Naga. Physically, the Cobra are the strangest of Naga, with great hoods and serpentine features that make them almost monstrous compared to the rest of the Naga race. Indeed, the Cobra skill with magic comes at a steep price. Their bloodline is the most mutated among the Naga, and the vast majority of the Cobra have at least one significant physical disability.

The Cobra also tend to suffer somewhat from the arrogance of power. They are more comfortable with deceiving other Naga, for they believe their mastery of magical secrets gives them justification in keeping dangerous knowledge away from their lesser brethren. Much like the Asp, the Cobras are arrogant and dismissive of those they believe weaker than themselves.

Constrictor

"We are the judges, shining the light of truth in the shadows of our empire."

– The Radakast

Bloodline Benefit: +1 Stamina

The Constrictors are the most physically imposing Naga in their race, able to spread fear in the hearts of their enemies simply by looming over them. They are often as long as thirty feet from tail to head, and their mighty tails can crush enemies with little effort. However, the Constrictors are also the most peaceful of the Naga, known for their wisdom over their physical strength.

The Constrictors have the strongest connection to the Akasha of any Naga, and understand its ways more than any other bloodline. Some Cobra insist their connection to the Akasha must be stronger because of their mastery of pearl magic; the Constrictors do not contradict them, but simply say everyone must serve the Akasha in their own way. The Constrictors are the arbiters of their civilization, settling disputes and feuds without bloodshed. Every Naga heeds the words of a Constrictor, for they understand the Constrictor only speaks after deep thought and careful study.

Just as they delve the depths of the Akasha, the Constrictors have cast their eyes above to the stars to perceive the future. Astronomy is an imperfect art among the Rokugani, but the Naga consider it a precise science. Because Naga religion revolves around the sun and the moon, astronomers are greatly revered in their society. They can plot out specific

events that will occur in the future by reading the state of the stars. It was a Constrictor who saw the dire future ahead of the Naga Empire and directed them to enter the Great Sleep.

There are fewer Constrictors in the modern Naga Empire than any other bloodline. No one understands why they have failed to make fertile eggs, and everyone worries one day the Constrictors will become extinct. The Constrictors themselves acknowledge their fate with stoicism, stating the will of the Akasha will always guide their nation.

Greensnake

"We are the lovers, the diplomats, and the soul of the Akasha."

– The Mara

Bloodline Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Greensnakes are the smallest of the Naga bloodlines, with adults often measuring as little as ten feet from tail to head. They are also the most numerous of the Naga and have adopted every single role within their society. They serve as warriors within the Naga armies and scouts among the forests. They learn the wisdom of the vedics and even sometimes master the pearl magic of the jakla. They adapt with ease and are always eager to learn more.

The Greensnakes are quick to reach decisions and quick to act, often relying on instincts over reasoning. They are an optimistic bloodline, always choosing to believe in the good in others rather than the negative. Because of this, they often act as the diplomats of the Naga Empire. A Greensnake Scout was the first Naga to make contact with Rokugan after their race woke from the Great Sleep, and it was the Greensnake diplomat the Dashmar who established a working relationship with these strange human neighbors. Above all, it was a Greensnake named the Mara who formed a romantic relationship with the human named Mirumoto Daini, giving birth to a unique human-Naga hybrid named Mirumoto Mareshi.

Among the other bloodlines, the Greensnakes have a reputation for frivolity and impatience. The Greensnakes do not mind, for they know their zest for life and their enthusiasm for the world allow them to appreciate the little details that often pass by unnoticed by the rest of their people.

Abomination

"We are the unwanted, but the Akasha will always be our home."

- Aseth, Naga Abomination

Bloodline Benefit: +1 to any Trait

Mutations among newly born Naga are sadly not uncommon, especially in the Cobra bloodline. However, severe mutations can also hamper the Naga's connection to the Akasha. Those unfortunate Naga who can barely sense the Akasha are born only a handful of times per generation. These Abominations come from all bloodlines with equal frequency. Although they are still connected to the Akasha, they cannot sense it. They usually suffer debilitating physical mutations, but many also have their bodies strengthened by their changes. Such creatures are abandoned in the forest or sea to survive on their own. Most perish without a chance, but the few who survive can sometimes rejoin their society. Since they do not have the support of the rest of the Naga Empire, their mutations often must be vital to their survival.

The Naga are so accustomed to their connection with the Akasha that they cannot imagine a life without its comfortable presence in their minds. The Abomination represents their worst fear and forces them to face those fears every time they see it. Many Abominations who survive to adulthood ultimately become alienated and choose to step further away from Naga society, even though their people might allow them to return.

The souls of Abominations return to the Akasha upon death and they join the reincarnation cycle once more. This is a small comfort, but one that keeps many Abominations' faith against heavy temptations.

The Great Sleep

The Great Sleep was a ritual of massive proportions cast by all of the jakla in the Naga Empire. It was a last ditch effort to send their entire race into hibernation in order to live long enough to meet the future crisis prophesied by the vedics. The Naga gathered in the hearts of their cities and went to sleep for centuries, awaiting the Second Burning of the Land. Casting the ritual cost many jakla their lives, for the power required was more than they could handle. Maintaining the spell also required the constant concentration of several jakla. Volunteer jakla, mainly Cobra, stayed awake for centuries to perform this lonely duty.

The ramifications of the Great Sleep have yet to be fully understood by the Cobra jakla. They recognize their race's looming sterility might well be one of the side effects, for ever since the race awoke fewer and fewer Naga have been born. Unfortunately, the remaining jakla do not have the resources to figure out a solution, and must helplessly watch their species dwindle away into extinction. The next time the Naga awaken, it may well be their last appearance on the mortal world.

The Abominations of the Destroyer

Some Abominations who survive their abandonment actually grow to hate the society that spurned them. They travel as far away from the forests and seas of the Naga Empire as they can, seeking another home. Many find themselves in the Ivory Kingdoms, and indeed the superficial similarities between Naga culture and that of the humans in that distant land may be due to the influence of Abominations who have visited from time to time over the centuries.

The Cult of the Destroyer worships Shiva and the aspect of the goddess known as the Destroyer. The cult seeks the death of all living beings in her name. Several Abominations have become indoctrinated into the cult and serve it with fanatic enthusiasm. Perhaps someday they will turn their attentions toward Rokugan and their Naga brethren once more.

The Naga as Adversaries

Naga civilization is a powerful nation that has lasted for countless centuries, standing united against all the threats surrounding it. The Naga have survived centuries of constant warfare and intend to fight more wars to come. Anyone who rouses the anger of one of the Naga risks fighting a much larger enemy.

Like the Rokugani, Naga culture highly respects martial prowess. Unfortunately, pride and arrogance can come hand-in-hand with reliance on martial excellence. A Naga warrior may spend years trying to avenge a perceived slight inadvertently given by a clueless human. The likelihood of such an occurrence is minimal, thanks to the connection of the Naga collective mind, but it is important to note the limitations of the Akasha. The Akasha guides the Naga but does not control them. It does not wipe away individual personality. A particularly prideful Naga may defy the Akasha's guidance and dedicate himself to destroying a human who has angered him.

Culture shock is a ready and tragically easy source of unintentional disasters between the Naga and humanity. Naga do not know what would be considered a social error in highly ritualized Rokugani society. A samurai can suffer huge loss of face and status if he offers the wrong type of greeting to a passing guest, or mentions the wrong incident in polite company. The slightest misstep in court could mean the abrupt end of a diplomatic career built over decades. Samurai are able to function in this minefield of dangers because they are indoctrinated from birth to skirt these potential traps. Naga, on the other hand, cannot even see the hidden dangers around them and blunder directly into the political danger zone.

During the twelfth century the Naga eventually become wary allies of the human race and are welcomed, albeit with reservations, into polite society. A certain amount of leeway is granted them due to their ignorance of civilization's rules, and the Rokugani endure inadvertent insults and brutal honesty from the Naga because they are guests and allies against the Foul. (To be sure, most sophisticated Rokugani still treat the Naga with veiled disdain, as backwards and ignorant yokels.)

Unfortunately, even in the best of times the Naga and humans are still often able to push each other beyond their limits. Here we present three options for introducing the Naga to an L5R campaign as enemies to the Rokugani.

Threat One: Menacing Sacred Land

Naga civilization existed long before the human Empire, and due to the Great Sleep many of its temples and structures appear abandoned to the passing eye. Some guardians remained awake to destroy any trespassers on their land. The Naga consider their cities, temples, pearl beds, and egg beds to be sacred land and will defend these locations to their death.

Explorers eager to uncover the secrets of Rokugan's great forests and seas have occasionally stumbled onto fabulous Naga ruins. Until the Great Sleep ended, humans had no frame of reference for these discoveries and would inadvertently breach the sanctity of Naga settlements to find treasures and magical pearls. Needless to say, the Naga are usually highly incensed by these intrusions, viewing them much as the Rokugani might see a stranger who simply walked into the Imperial Court without announcing his presence or his intentions.

Further complicating the matter is the lack of communication between the races. The Naga temple guardians would often attack on sight if anyone drew close to sanctified ground. For their part, human explorers would simply see snake-like monsters attacking them with no provocation. Since most Rokugani have no personal knowledge of Shadowlands creatures, they readily mistook the serpentine Naga for oni. Both sides are proud to a fault and prefer to strike first and ask questions later, and the initial encounter would be enough to destroy any chance for a peaceful resolution.

Of course, the conflict does not simply end there. If the explorers escape with their lives intact, they will be subject to further harassment from the remaining guardians. If they took any keepsakes from the ruins, the Naga will be honor bound to retrieve them. The Naga will not stop until either the explorers are dead or their honor is satisfied in some other way. Any compromise between Naga and explorer would be difficult, since the two cultures hold vastly different priorities.

The same situation can also happen in reverse. The samurai of Rokugan hold many places sacred, all of them inconceivable to the Naga. Temples, ancient battlegrounds, and proximity to Imperial land would all be considered sacred in Rokugan. Naga do not recognize these explanations and will enter the land if they have need. Furthermore, the Rokugani must follow strict protocol to approach the Imperial family or the leaders of the clans. Touchy samurai can take umbrage if a Naga attempts to bypass those protocols. Samurai must follow orders despite their personal convictions, so once offense is given a fight is inevitable.

These sorts of situations occur dozens of times in the years before the Second Day of Thunder. With the bulk of the Naga under the Great Sleep, explorers and cartographers sometimes blundered into ancient, half-ruined Naga cities only to be slaughtered by the wrathful guardians. These incidents decreased over time as the Naga awakened and make their presence known, but any campaign set in this era could lead to conflict in this way.

Threat Two: The Foul

The Naga have always had one eternal enemy they will do anything to destroy: the Foul. Rokugan sees this as two different threats, the creatures of the Shadowlands Taint and the minions of the Lying Darkness, but such distinctions are lost on the Naga, who see them all as a single enemy.

There are few goals closer to Naga hearts than the eradication of the Foul. Indeed, they undertook the disastrous Great Sleep solely because they believed they would be needed for a great battle against the Foul in the future. The Emerald Empire, however, has not always stood quite as firm against the ancient enemy. Many powerful military and political leaders have succumbed to the siren song of easy power and unrelenting corruption. Since the Naga seek to eradicate all sources of the Foul whenever they sense its presence, with no exceptions, this can easily create problems in their relations with humans. They do not care about political ramifications for their actions, nor will they explain the reason why they struck – without provocation, from the view of the Rokugani.

In the twelfth century, during the War Against the Darkness, the Naga abandoned their human allies and assaulted the Dragon Clan in its mountains because they sensed the presence of a powerful agent of the Lying Darkness. The Naga dropped everything, traveled across the Empire, and declared war on a powerful military clan because they knew the Darkness had to be stopped. They did not explain their actions, nor did they apologize for abandoning the Crab at a critical moment. Many Crab warriors died as a result, and the survivors carried a bitter grudge. From a human viewpoint the Naga actions were a clear violation of friendship and alliance, but the Naga did not see it that way. They believed all other matters were secondary to destroying the Foul. The lives of dozens of Crab warriors meant nothing in the grand scheme of things.

These sorts of situations could easily occur in any campaign with 'friendly' Naga. The Naga are completely alien creatures, and do not hold the same priorities or thoughts as humans, nor do they embrace the same emotions. Indeed, many Naga believe themselves better and more important than any human allies and would sacrifice them in a heartbeat to gain the tiniest advantage over the Foul. Such a quick and unexpected 'betrayal' could provide an interesting focus for conflict between the two races.

The Fire Salamanders

The Naga have remained for centuries within the borders of their old empire, never entering the outside realms such as the Burning Sands. The Burning Sands is the domain of the Ashalan, a hated enemy, and the Naga know they must fight if they meet. Even worse, the desert houses a magical curse upon any Naga who enter. Those who venture into the Burning Sands are transformed by the magic inherent in that blighted land, a painful and sometimes lethal transformation whose agony echoes through the Akasha, incapacitating those who are close enough to hear the scream. When the transformation ends the Naga has become a Naar Tebaan.

The Naar Tebaan bear little resemblance to what they used to be, and are usually referred to as "fire salamanders" by those who spot them. Their scales are sparkling gold, sending shards of incandescent rainbows whenever the sun hits them. Their tails fall off completely, replaced by a pair of lizard legs. Most bizarrely, they can breathe fire.

Unfortunately, the transformation also irrevocably warps the mind. The Naar Tebaan lose all connection to the Akasha, and feel constant pain from this loss. No creature can withstand perpetual pain, and nearly all Naar Tebaan are mad creatures with little to distinguish them from mindless animals. Furthermore, the sun outside of the Burning Sands reacts dangerously with the salamander's scales, causing him more duress and preventing him from leaving the land which has transformed him.

The Naga consider the Naar Tebaan to be enemies of their people. Any Naga who draws near one of the fire salamanders can sense its mental anguish rippling through the Akasha. The presence of the Naar Tebaan is distracting at best and completely unbearable at worst. Killing them is both a mercy and self-preservation. The Naar Tebaan sense this instinctively and stay very far away from Rokugan.

The souls of the Naar Tebaan do not return to the Akasha upon death.



Threat Three: Ancient Enemies

The Naga Empire flourished for centuries without any competition, but the modern world is vastly changed from that ancient age of Naga power. For example, in ancient times the Nezumi were a semi-domesticated animal which the Naga used for food and for hunting. They see no fault in resuming such usage now, even though the Nezumi are now sentient and have their own culture. Of course the Nezumi do not relish the thought of becoming food once more and will do what they must to preserve their lives. In fact, since some Nezumi have been faithful allies of the Crab Clan (and even other clans during the height of the One Tribe), the conflict between the two alien races could spread to include the Empire as well.

Much like with the Foul, the Naga hold strong opinions about the Nezumi and will not let others sway them. While the status of their former food might not be particularly important in the grand scheme of things, to the Naga it is a reminder of their fallen greatness. Their empire no longer spans all of Rokugan as it once did, and many of their cities are isolated or ruined. It is a matter of pride for the Naga to hold on to their old customs.

The other great enemy of the Naga is the Ashalan, a race of immortal sorcerers who live in the Burning Sands. Their war with the Naga only ended because both sides tacitly agreed to keep within their own boundaries. However, after the Second Day of Thunder the Scorpion Clan endured a brief exile in the Burning Sands and made an alliance with the Ashalan. As a result, several Ashalan returned with the Scorpion to the Emerald Empire. Their immediate goal was not to defeat their ancient Naga enemies, but the enmity between the two races is deep and eternal. It is all but inevitable that their paths will cross once more and the Naga strike with as much ferocity as they would against the Foul. Rokugani could easily get caught in the crossfire, for the Naga hold nothing back when they are faced with an enemy.

Naga Tactics

The Naga prefer to eradicate their enemies as swiftly as possible, hitting them with a thousand strikes until nothing remains. They have a highly trained military that works together with inhuman precision. PCs who find themselves in conflict with the Naga will face significant challenges.

The Naga as Guardians

The primary objective of Naga guardians is to protect their homes, temples, pearl beds, and eggs. They will utilize defensive tactics focused on keeping the enemy away. Intimidation is employed to cow the enemy, especially foes who seem weak or contemptible. The Naga are well aware of how frightening and even demonic they appear at first glance, and shock and fear are effective tools to drive enemies away from their sacred lands. Some Naga guardians, referred to as the Rattlers, use the tips of their tails to emit a threatening sound that further unsettles their opponents.

Asp Warriors make up the large majority of guardians, as they function as the backbone of the Naga army. Greensnake Warriors are often found guarding the Naga underwater cities.

The Naga as Stalkers

When the Naga must follow prey or enemies away from their own homes, their Scouts take pride of place. Naga scouts can relentlessly follow offending humans for countless miles. They hide in the shadows and strike with their deadly arrows when their targets least expect it. The Naga have unbelievable accuracy with their bows, even in the dark of night. Stalking Naga use hit-and-run tactics to sow confusion and fear among their enemies. If caught in the open they can easily perish, since they are not trained for prolonged defense, so if their foes turn and confront them they use their speed to disperse away from the battlefield... then regroup, wait patiently for the next opportunity, and strike again.

Hunting parties are usually formed of Chameleon and Greensnake Scouts.

The Naga on the Battlefield

The armies of the Naga rely on overwhelming firepower to devastate their foes. The Naga Master Bowmen hide behind a wall of Asp Warriors who protect them from the enemy army while they devastate it with missile fire. Naga Master Bowmen are adept at arcing fire designed to cover the enemy with a barrage of arrows as they approach the Naga army. The Naga fight with no finesse on the battlefield, preferring to smash their enemies with the combination of steadfast defense and superior archery.

Campaign Options:

The Naga as PCs (or, Can I Play a Naga?)

The Naga were once a powerful force in Rokugan, and the temptation to play these creatures as characters is great. Every Legend of the Five Rings GM may one day face a decision on whether to allow a Naga character into the campaign. The Naga are attractive for those who want something different (and powerful). The Naga do not follow the Code of Bushido, which can make them appealing to players who struggle with the strict nature of Rokugani society. However, they still share enough emotions and values with humans that playing a proud and virtuous Naga is not too much of a stretch for most players.

The simplest way to allow the players to run Naga characters is to have an entire Naga campaign. This will certainly be a unique role-playing experience, running characters who are able to sense each others' very thoughts and emotions while retaining self-identity. However, while the all-Naga campaign is a simple solution it is also the least likely. After all, most gamers are drawn to Legend of the Five Rings by the appeal of playing honorable samurai, battling monsters and engaging in cutthroat political intrigue. Such players may not be willing to try an entirely Naga-focused campaign.

The alternative of adding a Naga character to an existing L5R campaign is not always easy either. The focus of the campaign must shift to include the presence of this alien in midst of xenophobic Rokugani samurai. Although the Naga are welcomed in the Empire after the Second Day of Thunder, when they proved themselves against the forces of Fu Leng,

their social errors and odd behaviors remain problematic. A Naga player character does not have carte blanche to ignore all Rokugani sensibilities. Even the most accepting lord has a breaking point where he can no longer put aside proper manners, and the results can be devastating.

Snakes in Some Plains:

A Naga Campaign

Playing an entirely Naga campaign eliminates any need to worry about culture clash, and can potentially be a very rewarding experience, but it is also potentially very difficult. The GM does not have to worry about divergent goals, since the Naga can work together for the same goal with ease. The GM can also engage in some fun role-reversal by highlighting Rokugan and its strict samurai as villains. Destruction of the Foul, defending Naga cities, or even hunting down errant Naga Abominations can all serve as fun adventures that will have the players hissing in no time. However, there are some pitfalls to keep in mind:

Pitfall One: The Akasha Is Not a Hive Mind.

The first assumption when dealing with the Akasha is that the Naga are mentally linked to each other so they may share thoughts and experiences. In fact, taken to the extreme, this might cause players to think they are essentially playing extensions of the same person. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Akasha links all Naga together with their shared experiences and the collected knowledge of past souls, but each Naga retains his own individuality and his own personality.

The Akasha is limited in exactly what it can illustrate to others. The Naga learn to convey complex thoughts by a series of emotions broadcast to their fellows, but this system has its limits. Using the Akasha has no mechanical benefits and should not be allowed to impede the progress of the game. Above all, the GM should be wary of players who seek to use the Akasha as a sort of universal short-cut to solve the problems they face.

Pitfall Two: The Naga Are Not Close With All Other Naga.

The Akasha allows a Naga insight into a companion's emotions and some of his thoughts. However, this does not mean each Naga is completely friendly with all other Naga. Every Naga has his own personality, and just like human society Naga can clash and disagree amongst themselves. The Asp's condescending nature could grate on the Greensnake's positive attitude. The Constrictor's wisdom and declarations based on astronomy could sound pompous to a Cobra. Playing a Naga campaign does not mean there can be no interpersonal drama. Ambitious Naga will want to increase their Caste and may do whatever is necessary to make that happen. An all-Naga political campaign could still have Naga who stab each other in the back to get their own way.

A Naga Diplomat in a Daimyo's Court: One Naga

When a single player wishes to play a Naga, the GM must figure out a way to incorporate the character into a group of Rokugani samurai. This is rather difficult to do before the Second Day of Thunder when the Naga have not yet proven themselves to Rokugan. The one cause which can unite a Naga with Rokugani would be the destruction of the Foul. Rokugani would certainly not trust a Naga, especially if they had never seen one before, but might be willing to use a strange tool at their disposal to defeat Fu Leng. After the Naga prove themselves stalwart allies, adding a single Naga to an L5R campaign is much easier. A Naga could certainly work as an ally of magistrates or Witch Hunters with little trouble, for example.

Once the Naga has integrated into the group, however, the real trouble begins. It is not fair to the setting to completely ignore the cultural differences between the two races, yet overemphasizing the culture shock is very likely to ruin the game experience for the players. The Naga player must find a happy medium between acting incredulously at every single Rokugani tradition and just being a "samurai in scales." The player and the GM alike must also keep in mind that the Naga holds very different values and priorities, which could lead to exciting complications in the party dynamics.

The biggest advice on playing a Naga is simple: don't over play the 'stranger' aspect. The point of the game is to have fun, after all, and interjecting alien comments and objections will get old very quickly.

Character Mechanics: Creating a Naga

Creating Naga characters (whether as NPCs or as PCs) follows the same basic rules as for human characters, outlined in the *Book of Fire* in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook. However, a number of modifications are made to reflect the unusual nature of Naga, as listed below.

Step 1: Pick Your Bloodline

Naga are not members of any Great or Minor Clans. While there have been divisive factions in the Naga in their histories, these factions do not define the Naga and do not confer any mechanical benefits on a character. Instead, a Naga is defined by the Bloodline (Abomination, Asp, Chameleon, Cobra, Constrictor, or Greensnake) into which he is born. When he chooses his Bloodline he gains a Trait bonus, similar to a Family bonus for human characters. These are listed in the discussion of Bloodlines both earlier in this chapter and in the following section.

Step 2: Pick Your School

There are four Schools available to the Naga: Jakla, Scout, Vedic, and Warrior. These four basic schools have been present almost since the beginning of Naga civilization and thus can be taken in any era of play. Naga cannot learn schools from other races and Naga jakla cannot cast any kind of spell other than those focused through his pearl. Full details on these and other limitations can be found below under the Naga Jakla School.

Step 3: Customize Your Character

A Naga begins with the standard 40 Experience Points. Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages may be determined normally, though some restrictions apply (listed below). Naga combat styles, education, and skills differ vastly from their Rokugani counterparts. For example, the Naga aim their arrows instead of using the reflexive shooting preferred by Rokugani. However, for ease in character creation, Naga characters should use the same Skills as the Rokugani (Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, etc).

Step 4: Derived Attributes

Certain abilities or traits that a Naga character possesses are determined based on different standards, as appropriate for a foreign civilization. To complete your character, note his Honor (determined by his School), and Glory (0.5 by default). A Naga character does not care about Glory within his own civilization; in a culture where every other person can sense your concept of self through the Akasha, Glory is irrelevant. However, a Naga who fights within the Emerald Empire may be able to increase his reputation and Glory among the humans.

Naga have a code of ethics (outlined earlier in the chapter) and their sense of Honor is based on how they uphold this code rather than on the Code of Bushido. GMs should adjust Honor awards and penalties accordingly.

Since the Glory Rank on a Naga's character sheet only references how famous (or infamous) the character may be in the Empire of Rokugan, Naga Glory Ranks tend to be lower on average than their Rokugani counterparts. However, since they are few in number, Naga are readily noticed and remembered. Any time they earn Glory, they earn an additional point.

All Naga are completely immune to the Shadowlands Taint, and thereby are also incapable of casting maho spells.

Bloodlines

The Naga Bloodlines are vastly different in physical terms. Each Bloodline has its own racial benefits that suit its members for specific roles. The Asp is built for strength and endurance and is well suited for the Naga Warrior School. The Greensnake is built for speed and stealth, and often joins the Naga army as a Scout. Of course, these roles are not limitations. Individual Naga occasionally decide on alternate callings and often become famous for their successes.

The exception is the Cobra bloodline. Cobra Naga rarely become anything other than jakla because of their unique racial abilities. When a Cobra decides to follow another route, he becomes the focus of much attention and consternation from the rest of Naga society. There is a lot of pressure and expectation on that wayward individual to make sure he is not wasting his heritage.

Asp

Benefit: +1 Strength

Preferred School: Warrior

Chameleon

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Preferred School: Scout

Cobra

Benefit: +1 Perception

Preferred School: Jakla

Constrictor

Benefit: +1 Stamina

Preferred School: Vedic

Greensnake

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Preferred School: Scout

Abomination

Benefit: +1 to any Trait

Preferred School: None. Abominations cannot become jakla or vedics.

Character Option Differences

- **Caste:** Status represents a samurai's standing in the Rokugani, and its replacement ability for Naga is Caste. Caste represents a Naga's position within the Akasha. A Naga's Caste determines what jobs he may have and the overall position he holds within the society. A Naga character starts at 2.0 Caste by default, and may raise or lower that rank by performing actions important to Naga society. A simple list of possible rewards and penalties is listed below.
- **The Akasha Trait:** The Void Ring is the representation of man's connection with the elements and the ability to draw upon the strength of mortal men to do the impossible. The Naga do not have such a link. Instead, Naga draw power from their connection to the Akasha, the great consciousness that connects all Naga souls. For Naga characters, the Akasha Trait replaces the Void Ring and mechanically functions in the same way, including the ability to spend and regain Aka-

sha Points for the same effects as Void Points. Spells, Techniques, and other effects that target the Void Ring target the Akasha Trait instead; effects that prevent the character from spending Void Points (such as the Disadvantage Momoku) prevent the character from spending Akasha Points instead. Effects that regain Void Points, such as the skills Tea Ceremony and Meditation, affect Akasha Points (but good luck convincing a Naga to perform a Tea Ceremony properly!).

Jakla characters have bonus pearl magic spell slots equal to their Akasha Ring, and these can be used to cast additional pearl magic spells in any Element of their choice.

- **Kyujutsu:** Naga archers aim at their targets, a radical method that seems foreign and completely ineffectual to most Rokugani. Naga characters use Agility instead of Reflexes when using the Kyujutsu skill.

Caste Ranks, and How to Gain Caste

- **Rank 10:** The Qatol, Spiritual Leader of all the Naga
- **Rank 9:** Leaders of the Naga (the Qamar, the Dashmar)
- **Rank 7-8:** Bloodline Champions
- **Rank 6-7:** Military generals, local rulers, major religious figures, great minds
- **Rank 5-6:** Minor rulers, vassals of major leaders
- **Rank 4-5:** Mid-level military leaders, local political administrators
- **Rank 2-4:** Starting player characters
- **Rank 1-2:** Mundane workers, favored servants
- **Rank 0-1:** Lower-caste servants
- **Rank 0:** Abominations, Outcasts

Naga Specific Advantages

Amphibious [Physical] (3 Points, 2 Points for Chameleon)

Your gills allow you to breath under water as well as in the air. Naga in their underwater cities must have this Advantage to survive.

Divine Focus [Spiritual] (3 points)

You have an unusually strong connection with the Akasha. Sometimes, you may concentrate to increase your empathy with the rest of your race. Twice per day, you gain a +1k0 bonus on a Social roll with another Naga.

Enhancing Mutation [Physical] (5 points, 4 points for Abominations and Cobra)

You were born with physical alterations that are more beneficial than crippling. You retain your connections with the Akasha, and you are able to use your changes to help your standing in the Naga civilization. These modifications are so minor they do not impede your status among the Naga.

Barred Options

The mechanics in the Fourth Edition Core book are designed for Rokugani and are not ideal for depicting Naga. Many of the Skills and other elements focusing on Rokugani society cannot be used because the Naga are completely alien to the Rokugani world. Consequently, the following Skills cannot be taken by Naga characters: Animal Handling, Horsemanship (female Naga may take this skill), and Tea Ceremony.

Naga cannot take human Social or Spiritual Advantages or Disadvantages. Material, Mental, and Physical Advantages and Disadvantages may or may not be applicable to Naga, depending on their specific nature – the GM has the final say. A list of Naga-only Advantages and Disadvantages appears later in this chapter, and these are available only to Naga characters.

Table 5.1: Suggested Caste Rewards and Penalties

Great Exploits	Caste Points Gained
Defeating creatures of the Foul	0-1
Successfully defending a Naga city	1-2
Render a successful judgment	0-2
Devising a new philosophy or adding to an existing thought	1-3
Creating a fertile egg (laying or fertilizing)	1-4
Successfully forge an alliance with another culture	2-4
Developing the Akasha by doing something completely new	2-5
Finding a new cluster of pearls	2-5
Forming a new magical pearl	3-6
Achieving mastery in one skill (Rank 8+)	4-8
Evolution: gaining an Insight Rank	4-8
Finding a lost Naga city	5-10

Ignoble Deed	Caste Points Lost
Losing a battle to a creature of the Foul	0-1
Discussing one's birth parents	0-1
Lying to another Naga	0-2
Hiding secrets from another Naga (when the fact is discovered)	1-3
Running from battle prematurely	1-4
Fighting another Naga	2-4
Allowing intruders into a sacred area	3-8
Letting fertile eggs be destroyed	4-10
Allying with the Foul	9-15

If you wish to determine the nature of your mutation randomly, roll a single die and gain the benefits listed below. Otherwise, collaborate with your Game Master to develop a specific mutation ability (from the chart or personally created).

1. Fins: You may swim with ease. You gain a +1k0 bonus on Athletics (Swimming)/Agility rolls and when swimming you move as though your Water is 3 Ranks higher.
2. Camouflaging Scales: Your scales blend in with your surroundings, giving you a +1k1 bonus to Stealth rolls.
3. Swift Charge: You move your tail with such speed that your Water Ring is considered to be 1 Rank higher for the purposes of land movement.
4. Night Vision: You may see in darkness as well as in daylight.
5. Enemy Senses: You gain a +2k1 bonus to Perception rolls when trying to track or spot creatures of the Foul (creatures of the Nothing or the Shadowlands).
6. Hardened Scales: Your scales are well formed and strong enough to deflect blows. You gain Reduction 1.
7. Regeneration: Your body is able to regrow lost appendages over weeks of rest. However, this ability is both physically and mentally excruciating.
8. Powerful Spit: You may make a spitting attack (Jiujutsu/Agility) as a Simple Action. This attack ignores armor bonuses to Armor TN and Reduction, and deals 3k1 damage.
9. Venom: Your fangs and claws are coated with a poison that can cripple smaller targets. You gain a +1k1 bonus to all unarmed damage rolls.
10. Fertile: You are revered in Naga society as an adult who is able to continue the dwindling race. You gain 5 points of Caste.



Hunter of the Foul [Mental] (6 points)

You have devoted your life to one goal only: the destruction of the Akasha's enemies. You have vowed to never rest until the world is free of creatures of the Shadowlands, the Lying Darkness, and the Ashalan. You gain a +0k1 bonus on damage rolls against those creatures.

Prehensile Tail [Physical] (2 points)

You are able to use your tail efficiently, as if it were another one of your limbs. You may use it to lift objects and dexterously maneuver small items.

Student of the Past [Spiritual] (Varies)

You have a strong connection to your spiritual predecessors, the Naga whose lives and memories helped form your soul from the Akasha. These past lives remain strong within your mind, allowing you to draw on them to help in times of dire need. When you purchase this Advantage, you should devise a name and history for the ancestor whose mind now resides within yours.

Abominations cannot gain this Advantage, as they often have a weak connection to the Akasha.

Naga Specific Disadvantages

Adrift From the Akasha [Spiritual] (3 points)

A Naga uses his connection with the Akasha as a link with the rest of his society. When a Naga's bond with the Akasha weakens due to disease, corruption, or other factors, he is instantly alienated by the foreign emotions of being alone. You suffer a -1k0 penalty on all Social rolls and all Willpower Trait rolls.

Cursed Mutation [Physical] (5 points, 6 points for Abominations and Cobra)

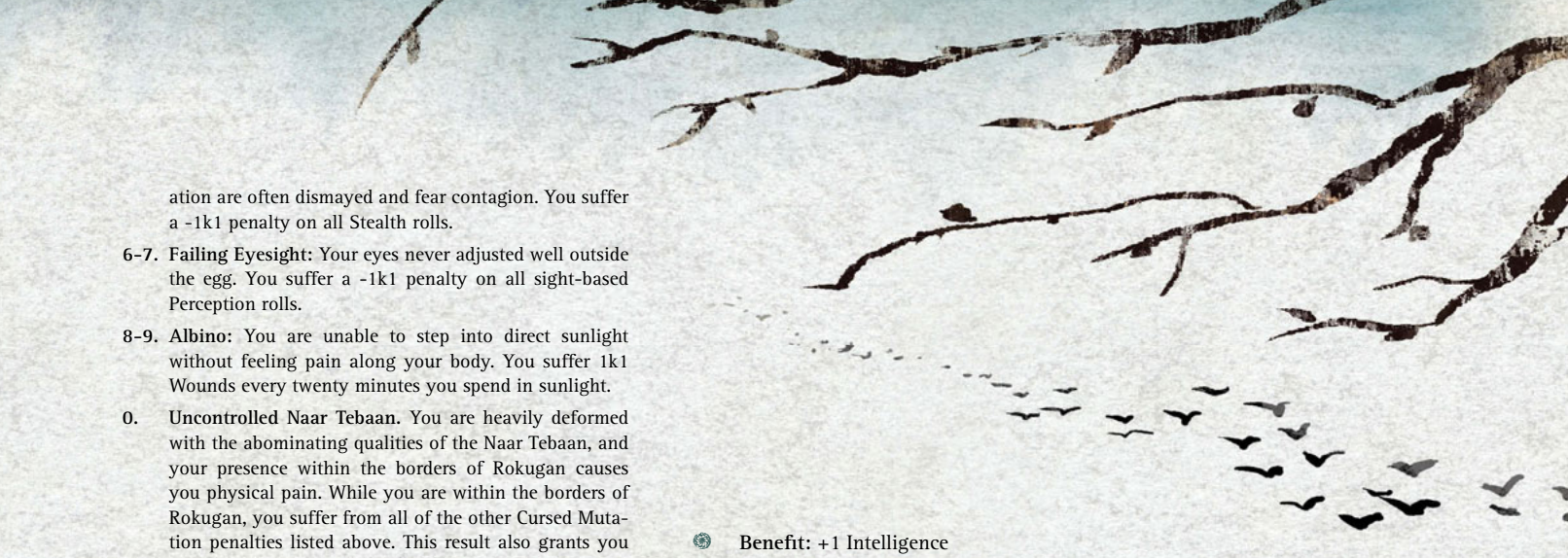
You were born with physical deformities that must be overcome to find your place among the heroes of your civilization. These defects are visible to those around you, and other Naga wonder if you are a representation of a weakness in the Akasha. They are loath to interact with you lest they suffer the same ignoble fate in their next life.

If you wish to determine the nature of your mutation randomly, roll a single die and gain the benefits listed below. Otherwise, collaborate with your Game Master to develop a specific negative mutation (from the chart or personally created).

In addition, any time you gain Caste points, you gain one less point. Any time you lose Caste points, you lose one additional point.

1-3. **Weakened Health:** You are smaller than your fellow Naga, and your body has always been frail. Your Earth Ring is considered one rank lower for the purposes of determining Wound Ranks and resisting disease. This Disadvantage is cumulative with the Bad Health Disadvantage.

4-5. **Brightly Discolored Scales:** Your scales are a sickly color that catches the vision. Those who see your color-



ation are often dismayed and fear contagion. You suffer a -1k1 penalty on all Stealth rolls.

6-7. Failing Eyesight: Your eyes never adjusted well outside the egg. You suffer a -1k1 penalty on all sight-based Perception rolls.

8-9. Albino: You are unable to step into direct sunlight without feeling pain along your body. You suffer 1k1 Wounds every twenty minutes you spend in sunlight.

0. Uncontrolled Naar Tebaan. You are heavily deformed with the abominating qualities of the Naar Tebaan, and your presence within the borders of Rokugan causes you physical pain. While you are within the borders of Rokugan, you suffer from all of the other Cursed Mutation penalties listed above. This result also grants you an additional Experience Point above all other modifications. If you roll this result, you may wish to seek mercy and request permission from the GM to reroll: the condition is crippling and should not be incurred solely at random.

Terror of the Foul [Mental] (3 points)

You have had several traumatic experiences with your enemies that left you with an irrational fear of facing them. All of your TNs are increased by +5 whenever you are near creatures of the Foul or if you are facing them in battle. Additionally, you suffer a -1k0 penalty on damage rolls against the same creatures.

New Naga Schools

The Naga schools listed below are defined by the same school tags (bushi, shugenja, etc.) as their Rokugani counterparts. However, it is important to note that Naga schools follow completely different philosophies that do not translate well into the Rokugani paradigm. Indeed, the Naga refer to their schools as "Lessons," part of the "Great Lesson" of the universe.

Naga schools are much like Rokugani schools in one respect, however: no Naga characters may take Ranks in both a Bushi School and a Shugenja School. There are no further restrictions with regards to Schools. Multiple School characters are very rare in Naga society, due to their strict caste structures, but a few notable heroes have been trained in multiple Lessons, and the option is included so higher-Insight characters may continue their progress if they finish their original School.

New Basic School: Naga Jakla [Shugenja]

The Naga jakla act as conduits of the mysteries of the universe. Jakla learn to use their connection with the Akasha and focus it into displays of powerful magical prowess. They also perform the major religious and spiritual rituals of Naga society, such as the special ritual that makes all Naga immune to the Shadowlands Taint. Only members of the Cobra bloodline can unlock the magic of the pearls and join the jakla School. Other Bloodlines can sometimes coax magic out of the pearls, but at a greatly reduced power, and in mechanical terms they cannot take this School.

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Athletics, Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Medicine, Meditation (Akasha Recovery), Spellcraft, any one High Skill
- **Honor:** 5.5
- **Outfit:** Sturdy Clothing, Bow and Twenty Arrows, Naga Spear, Traveling Pack, Pearl Cache, 4 (non-magical) Pearls
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Water/Fire

Technique: Shining Heart

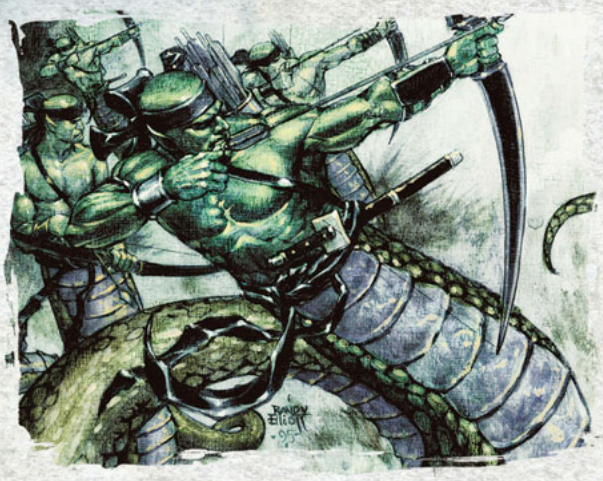
The jakla learns to hone his focus until he can tap into the magical powers that lie within his pearls. Every day, you may cast two of your spells without expending spell slots. You gain one Free Raise on spells cast in this manner.

Pearls: Sense, Summon, 3 Pearls of Water Level 2, 2 Pearls of Earth Level 1, 1 Pearl of Air Level 1

New Basic School: Naga Scout [Bushi]

The Naga have always felt at home in the wilderness, and their greatest cities lie within forests and beneath the sea. Their chosen habitat often holds great mysteries and dangers that need to be dealt with before the Naga cities can be considered safe. The Naga Scouts solve these mysteries and plumb the innermost sanctuaries of forests and oceans. The Scouts are masters are moving without making noise or disturbing their surroundings.

- **Benefit:** +1 Perception
- **Skills:** Athletics, Hunting (Tracking), Investigation, Kyujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth, any one Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Bow and Twenty Arrows, any one weapon, Traveling Pack, 2 (non-magical) Pearls



Techniques:

Rank 1: The Silent Stalker

The Scout is at home within the forest, as comfortable as the animals that reside within. You add +1k0 to all School Skills while inside a forest. Additionally, you may ignore any penalties for wearing light armor.

Rank 2: The Great Enemy

The Scout can sense the foul presence of the Shadowlands Taint nearby. You may make an Awareness roll at TN 20 to discern any creature of the Shadowlands or the Nothing within 50'. This TN may be higher if the creature has abilities that obfuscate attempts to find it. This Technique cannot discern any creatures with less than one full Rank in their corruption.

Rank 3: Eyes of an Eagle

The Scout learns to spot the minutest details, able to spot even the remnants of a trail in the dead of night. You may spend an Akasha Point to add +4k1 to any Hunting (Tracking) roll.

Rank 4: Blackened Sky

The Scout learns to defeat his foes before the enemy is even aware of his presence. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a bow.

Rank 5: Relentless Ranger

The Naga Scout learns to push aside the stresses of his own body when on the hunt, relying on the focus of the Akasha to continue beyond his own means. You may function at full capacity without sleep, food, or water for three days. Once these days are past, you must have food and at least four hours of rest to continue functioning at the best of your abilities – otherwise you become Fatigued.

New Basic School: Naga Vedic [Courtier]

The Naga Vedics serve many different roles within Naga civilization and hold high positions in their society. Vedics who serve the Bright Eye teach the Naga young and heal the sickly. Vedics who serve the Pale Eye are magistrates who render judgment in disputes between different Naga. No matter what role they play, all Vedics are widely known and respected for their wisdom.

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Courtier, Divination (Astrology), Etiquette, Lore: Naga Law, Medicine (Non-Humans), Meditation, any one Lore skill
- **Honor:** 6.5
- **Outfit:** Silk Clothing, Hunting Knife, Traveling Pack, 4 (non-magical) Pearls

Techniques:

Rank 1: Reflecting Calm

The Vedics are often diplomats and negotiators when situations requre a calm eye and an unshakable mind. You may make a Contested Courtier / Awareness roll to impart the calm of the Akasha on any one target. You gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of this roll, +3k1 if the target is a Naga. If the roll succeeds, you sway the target's mood to be more amenable to your position. The target will no longer be combative; if the test occurs during a skirmish, the skirmish immediately ends and the target will attempt to talk through the situation. If anyone else attacks your target or if the talks fail, combat immediately begins once more and your target gains a free Combat Round before normal combat continues.

You may not attempt to use this Technique on the same target more than once a day.

Rank 2: Arbiter

The Naga Vedics are masters of the laws of Naga society and act as judges when the situation merits. You gain a bonus of +2k1 to the total of any Social rolls with Naga.

Rank 3: Heartbeat of the World

The Naga Vedic attunes himself to the pulse of the world, becoming one with nature itself. You immediately gain one Inner Gift of your choosing (subject to GM's discretion).

Rank 4: Finding Harmony Within

The Vedic is calm at all times, balancing his personal desires with the will of the Akasha. While you are acting in the best interests of the Naga, you gain a bonus of +2k0 to the total of any Social Roll. This Technique stacks with your Rank 2 Technique.

Rank 5: Swimming the Depths of the Akasha

The Vedic is in tune with the desires of the Akasha, and the great consciousness of the Naga wishes to protect its children. You may take a Complex Action to touch a target and suffer Wounds equal to one full Wound Rank. If your target is a Naga, he immediately heals two full Wound Ranks; otherwise, the target heals one full Wound Rank.

If the target suffers from a disease, infection, mental illness, or similar problem, you must immediately make a Stamina roll (at an appropriate TN as set by the GM) or succumb to its effects. However, if the roll is successful, you cleanse the target of the negative effect, whatever it might be. You may not be healed from any diseases or other effects gained from this Technique by any means for a minimum of one full day.

The Shadowlands Taint and the Nothing are unaffected by this Technique.

New Basic School: Naga Warrior [Bushi]

The backbone of the Naga armies is formed by the Naga Warriors. They are fearless in battle, striking out against impossible odds to defeat the enemies of the Foul. The Naga live in a martial society, and similar training makes the Naga Warrior ready to stand against the greatest Rokugani bushi and fiercest oni without ever backing down.

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Defense, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Spears (Naga Spear), Lore: Shadowlands, any one Bugei Skill
- **Honor:** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Light or Heavy Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Naga Spear, Bow and Twenty Arrows, any one weapon, Traveling Pack, 3 (non-magical) Pearls

Techniques:

Rank 1: The Soul of the Naga

The first lesson for the Naga Warrior is that he can rely on the Akasha to guide his hand. Once each Turn you may gain a bonus equal to your Akasha Trait to the total of any one roll (except damage rolls). This bonus doubles against enemies of the Naga (Shadowlands creatures, Nothing creatures, Ashalan).

Rank 2: High Strike

The Naga Warrior learns to rear to his full height, rising over his comrades in the front lines to strike at the enemy. As a Free Action you may rear onto your tail to tower over your enemies. While you are standing tall in this way, your Armor TN is lowered by 5 but you add +2k0 to all melee attack rolls against targets at ground height. You may drop back to your normal stance in the same Round as a Simple Action, or as a Free Action on a different Round.

Rank 3: Chosen of Qatol

The Naga Warrior is the consummate fighter, never relenting in the face of his enemies. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using a weapon with the Naga keyword.

Rank 4: The Akasha Protects

The Naga Warrior is never alone, knowing that his connection to the rest of his race cannot be severed. Once per skirmish, you may take a Free Action at the start of any Round to activate this Technique. You gain Reduction equal to your Akasha Trait for 3 full Rounds.

Rank 5: Heart of a Warrior

The Naga Warrior never falters or stops, as the Akasha cleanses his soul. You may spend an Akasha Point as a Free Action during your Turn to remove any one Status Effect on yourself. If you are Stunned, you may still use this Technique but it counts as a Simple Action instead.

New Alternate Path: Disciples of The Dashmar [Courtier]

The Dashmar is the political leader of the Naga, and his benevolent influence spreads out among those who admire his abilities. His desire for peace and alliances with other races spreads to his students. The Disciples of The Dashmar are committed to their goals and work tirelessly to connect with foreigners. The Disciples travel far away from the boundaries of the Naga cities, attempting to find common interests with humans. These Disciples often adopt many human customs and become intimately knowledgeable about Rokugan.

- **Technique Rank:** 2
- **Replaces:** Naga Vedic 2

Technique: Friend of Man

The Disciples of The Dashmar attempt to learn the ways of Rokugan in order to gain new allies against their greatest enemies. You gain a bonus of +1k1 to the total of any Social Roll when trying to convince humans of your goodwill or to soothe dangerous situations with humans.

New Alternate Path: Master Bowman [Bushi]

Naga are famed for their archery, even among their enemies. There are few rivals for their excellence among the Rokugani, save perhaps the Tsuruchi of the Mantis Clan. Naga Warriors serve as the front line soldiers in war, but there are plenty who choose to specialize in the art of archery. The Master Bowman is able to strike down his enemies before they ever approach the Naga. He aims his arrows with pinpoint accuracy, striking his targets without fail.

- **Technique Rank:** 3
- **Replaces:** Naga Warrior 3
- **Requires:** Archery 5

Technique: Arrows From the Ranks

The Master Bowman is an artist with his bow, able to strike an opponent in the eye at a thousand paces. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when using a bow. Additionally, you may string your bow for use as a Free Action.

New Alternate Path: Pearl Shapers [Shugenja]

Jakla are able to contribute to a Naga war band by using their magical pearls to destroy the enemy. However, these abilities tax the jakla's concentration and stamina, quickly rendering him unable to fight with any efficacy. The jakla have determined new methods of channeling the latent energy in pearls by focusing them into bolts of magical power.

- **Technique Rank:** 2

Technique: Shards of Light

Pearl Shapers sacrifice their normal magical connections to focus their talents into fierce magical assaults. They shatter jakla pearls to release their magical energy across the battlefield. As a Complex Action, you may crush any pearl (it does not need to be a jakla spell-pearl) and spend a spell slot of any Element to make a ranged attack against a single target within 100'. Your attack roll is equal to your Agility + (twice your School Rank), keeping your Agility. This attack ignores any armor bonuses to Armor TN. The energy bolt's damage roll is equal to your Akasha + your School Rank, keeping your Akasha.

New Equipment

Naga Scimitar

The Naga scimitar is a heavy curved blade that uses its weight and momentum to deal most of its damage. The weapon relies on strength over finesse. The blade is not made of folded steel and is weaker structurally than traditional Rokugani weapons. This sword is mainly used by the warriors of Naga society and is eschewed by scouts, vedics, and jakla.

- **Keywords:** Large, Naga
- **DR:** 2k3
- **Price:** 20 koku

Naga Spear

The Naga spear appears to be similar to a yari at first glance, and the weapon is similar in function. However, the weapon is larger to accommodate the Naga's larger frame. The spear is seven to ten feet in length and can be used with one or two hands with equal ease. All Naga warriors are skilled in its use and it is quite popular with the majority of their people. The Naga Spear is often used as a deadly piercing weapon at extreme ranges; Naga warriors like to rear onto their tail and strike with spears from the second rank of battle.

The Naga Spear can be thrown short distances. However, since the Naga have many options at a distance, this option is rarely utilized.

- **Keywords**: Large, Naga
- **DR:** 3k2
- **Price:** 5 koku

Cobra Jakla and Pearl Magic

There are many types of pearls used by the Naga. They have figured out different methods of utilizing these pearls over the centuries and have plumbed all of their secrets. The jakla know how to spot the special pearls they use for magic by their glow within the Akasha. Their methods allow them to channel these pearls into powerful magic effects that rival that of any magic created by Rokugani shugenja.

Elemental pearls are able to simulate the abilities of most of the spells listed in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook. Each pearl is attuned to one of the four elements available to the Naga (Air, Earth, Fire, Water). The pearl's strength determines what Mastery Level of spell can be placed inside the pearl; a pearl can contain one spell of a Mastery Level equal to or lower than the level of the pearl. For example, a Pearl of Earth Level 2 can hold a single Earth spell of Mastery Level 1 or 2, but nothing higher. These pearls may be used repeatedly without fear of destruction, though their powers may wane if they are overused.

In addition, there are a few rare and special types of pearls described below, much more limited in number than the elemental pearls handed out to all the jakla. To create a special pearl, the jakla must take an elemental pearl of the appropriate element and alter it to do his bidding, requiring a roll of Spellcraft (Spell Research) / Akasha at a TN equal to 10x the special pearl's Mastery Level. Once a pearl is altered to become a special pearl, it can no longer be used to cast spells from the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook. The exception to this rule is the White Pearl, which can be used to cast multiple spells from the same pearl (see below for details).

There are no Pearls of Void or Pearls of Akasha. No pearl can ever be used to cast Void or maho spells, and no new pearl created through Spellcraft (Spell Research) can ever simulate Void or maho spell effects.

Special Pearls

The Pearl of Cleansing Light

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 1 (Wards)
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** 50'
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Area of Effect (+10' per Raise), Special (Willpower TN +5 per 2 Raises)

A light shines upon the caster, illuminating the ground around him. Creatures with at least 1 full rank of Shadowlands Taint or Shadow corruption must make a Willpower roll at TN 20 or immediately run away from the caster. The victims will not stop running until they leave the area of effect. The creature must make the same Willpower roll again if it steps back into the area of effect while the spell is still active.

The Pearl of Defense

- **Ring/Mastery:** Earth 2 (Defense)
- **Range:** 5' or touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 target
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per Raise)

The target gains scales of steel, preparing him for the enemies that he may face. The target gains Reduction 2, with an additional Reduction 3 against creatures of the Nothing and the Shadowlands (for a total of Reduction 5 against those foes).

The Pearl of Judgment

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air 4
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 target
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute per Raise), Area of Effect (+1 target per Raise)

Naga Vedics are the arbiters of their great cities, but they occasionally require aid when the Akasha cannot determine the truth of the matter at first glance. The Pearl of Judgment allows the caster to link to a single target and achieve a state of complete communication. The caster chooses one willing target for the effects of the Pearl of Judgment.

If the target is a Naga, the caster may ask the target one yes or no question and know if the answer is truthful.

If the target is not a Naga, the target can feel the weight and breadth of the Akasha for one brief moment. The caster gains a +3k1 bonus on all Courtier rolls with the target for the duration of the spell. However, the caster does not receive insight into the target's truthfulness. The sheer size of the Akasha may be disorienting to those who are not prepared for its power, and sometimes leaves the target senseless for many minutes (GM's discretion).

The Pearl of Movement

- **Ring/Mastery:** Water 1
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 target
- **Duration:** 5 minutes
- **Raises:** Duration (+5 minutes per two Raises)

The Naga pride themselves on their mastery in the element of Water. The jakla can use the Pearl of Movement to instantly increase a Naga's swimming speed, making him a formidable foe in the underwater Naga cities. The target's Water Ring is considered to be 2 Ranks higher for the purposes of movement while swimming.

The Pearl of Swift Retribution

- **Ring/Mastery:** Fire 3 (Battle)
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** 25' radius sphere around caster
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0 per two Raises)

The bow remains the most utilized weapon of the Naga, and the jakla recognize its importance within their culture. The Pearl of Swift Retribution was crafted to aid their efforts in battle. When the jakla focuses his attentions through this pearl, he crafts a spherical bubble of translucent energy. When Naga inside the bubble shoot arrows through its surface, the arrows transform into bolts of energy (much like the blasts of light unleashed by the Pearl Shapers). These arrows ignore Armor TN bonuses granted by the target's armor, and gain a +0k1 damage bonus.

The jakla may not move while he is casting and maintaining this spell; any movement immediately cancels the effects.

The White Pearl

- **Ring/Mastery:** Air/Earth/Fire/Water 5

The White Pearl is one of the greatest treasures of the Naga civilization. This pearl resides in a place of honor in the most important Naga city of the time. Those who view it swear they can see the whole of the Akasha within its depths. No one knows the true strength of the White Pearl and it has remained unused except for the greatest of crises.

The Jakla's Pearls and Spell Selection

Naga jakla do not interact with the elemental kami in the same way as humans, so jakla may not use the Commune spell. The Naga manipulate the elements by focusing them through the power inherent in their pearls, and do not speak to the kami. The Naga cannot cast Void spells, for they cannot channel an element they cannot touch. Maho spells are also forbidden to the Naga, since they cannot gain the Shadowlands Taint.

A Naga jakla can cast any other Elemental spell as long as he has the appropriate pearl that holds the power of the spell within. Each pearl can cast a single spell from its Element of equivalent or lower Mastery Level. Thus a Naga with a Water 2 pearl can choose any one Water spell of Mastery Level 1 or 2 which the pearl can cast. Pearl magic spells are otherwise cast in the same mechanical way as normal elemental spells, with a Spell Casting Roll based on the jakla's Ring and School Rank, and using up spell slots in the normal manner. Naga spells do not require scrolls and do not have to be spoken aloud, but the Naga must be able to touch and focus upon the appropriate pearl in order to cast the spell.

A jakla character gains three new pearls from his superiors when he rises in Insight Rank, and is sometimes also given new pearls for committing acts of great heroism. Jakla can potentially create new pearls with new magical abilities, similar to the way a Rokugani shugenja can research new magical spells, using Spellcraft (Spell Research). The exact nature of what spells can be cast with these unique pearls is left to the GM's discretion.

Magical effects unique to the Naga are listed below, in the section titled Cobra Jakla and Pearl Magic.

A jakla with the White Pearl has access to all spells of every element (except for Void) of Mastery Level 5 or lower. He cannot use this great power to cast Void or maho spells. Unfortunately, such power comes with a price. The jakla must spend two spell slots of the appropriate element for each spell cast through the White Pearl. The jakla may not use Akasha spell slots for spells cast through the White Pearl.

Sample Naga Characters

The following section presents some Naga Non-Player Characters for use in your campaign. These can be easily altered to suit your needs. The four major archetypes (Constrictor, Jakla, Scout, Warrior) are listed here as generic templates, along with some famous Naga heroes from various points in their history.

Since the Naga believe their souls return as an amalgam of various earlier Naga residing within the Akasha, any of the specific heroes listed below can be used to represent other Naga heroes from different eras with little effort. For example, the statistics and description of the Qamar refer to the leader of the Naga during the chaotic years of the Second Day of Thunder. However, those statistics could just as easily represent the Qamar during the fifth century.



Notable Naga

The Qamar, Leader of the Naga

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 5	Akasha 7
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 6	Strength 6	-

Caste: 9.2 *Glory: 6.5*

Initiative: 10k8 *Attack: Naga Spear 10k8 + 7 (Simple)*

Damage: 9k2 *Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor): 10 for 3 Combat Rounds, once per skirmish *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Asp Warrior 5

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Hunting (Survival) 3, Investigation (Notice, Search) 4, Kenjutsu (Naga Scimitar) 6, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 4, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 3, Spears (Naga Spear) 8

Advantages:

- *Balance*
- *Great Destiny*
- *Large*
- *Leadership*
- *Strength of the Earth*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Can't Lie*

The Great Sleep held the Naga civilization in stasis for many centuries. When they returned to waking life, they faced a completely different world. As the military leader of the Naga, the Qamar needed to instantly adjust his political and military policies to this new reality. His last memories were of a civilization that spanned the entirety of Rokugan and dealt with trolls, kitsu, zokujin, and other creatures. The Qamar was appalled to find all these races were either gone or corrupted, replaced by a xenophobic, highly militaristic, and deeply suspicious human empire. The vast majority of the humans the Naga encountered viewed them with negativity. It was inevitable that the majority of the Naga responded to this with hostility in turn.

The Qamar and the Dashmar approached the grave situation with composure. They knew their true enemy, the Foul, threatened both the human and Naga races. The only option for survival would be to put aside their vast differences and fight the Shadowlands alongside the humans. The Qamar and the Dashmar extended peaceful greetings to their new neighbors and stood by their sides on the fateful Day of Thunder. The Qamar perished that day, but his partnership with the humans would last as long as the Naga remained within Rokugan's borders.

The title of the Qamar denotes the military leader of the Naga, and is most often the greatest warrior among the race. The Qamar of the Second Day of Thunder was a powerful fighter, yet his greatest strength was that his mind was as sharp as his blade. He was politically masterful, able to sway the opinions of his comrade the Dashmar with his well-reasoned arguments. He knew the death of the Naga was inevitable, but he did not let the future affect his actions. He was a visionary who tried to build a bright future for the Naga and the world. He died in combat on the Second Day of Thunder to preserve that future. No hero could ask for more.

The Isha, Hero of the Second Day of Thunder

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 4	Akasha 3
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 7	Perception 5	-

Caste: 7.3 *Glory: 5.8*

Initiative: 9k4 *Attack: Yumi 10k10 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k2 *Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Scout 4

Skills: Athletics (Climbing, Swimming) 2, Battle 2, Defense 6, Hunting (Survival, Tracking, Trailblazing) 7, Investigation (Notice, Search) 6, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 9, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Medicine (Non-Humans) 1, Meditation 2, Stealth (Ambush, Shadowing, Sneaking) 4

Advantages:

- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest, Spine of the World Mountains, Crab Clan Provinces)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (with non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*



When the Naga civilization emerged from the Great Sleep, the Isha was one of the first to wake from his slumber and venture out into the world. It was his responsibility to scout out the dangers that now festered in the lands surrounding them and report back to his leaders. It was with his fresh eyes that the Akasha first encountered the human race. The Isha met a young man named Mirumoto Daini and decided to trust him. This simple act of kindness laid the foundation for cooperation between the two vastly different races. They worked together up to the Second Day of Thunder, defeating Shadowlands creatures and serving the will of the Akasha.

On the Second Day of Thunder, the Isha fought against the forces of the undead sorcerer Yogo Junzo. A malevolent necromancer stripped the Qamar of his life with one insidious spell. The Isha did not hesitate; he took up the Qamar's weapon. The Naga in the area could immediately sense through the Akasha that the Isha would lead them to victory, and they did not falter from their loss of their beloved leader. The Isha continued to lead the Naga through many trials and tribulations in the years following the Second Day of Thunder. His positive attitude and mindset carried over to his new position as the Qamar and allowed him to make many difficult decisions.

The Isha was a friendly, optimistic Naga who believed in the goodness of humans. His belief and trust in Mirumoto Daini was a positive influence that colored all Naga-human interactions until the Naga finally returned to the Great Sleep. His eyes were sharp, his senses were honed to those of a master hunter, and he always trusted his instincts. Those instincts eventually led him to the resurrection of Hida Yakamo and helped bring an end of the Lying Darkness's menace on the world.

The Radakast, Hunter of the Foul

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 5	Akasha 5
Reflexes 6	-	Agility 5	Strength 7	-

Caste: 4.3 *Glory: 2.4*

Initiative: 10k7 *Attack: Naga Scimitar 10k6 + 5 (Simple)*

Damage: 9k3 *Armor TN: 40 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor): 8 for 3 Combat Rounds, once per skirmish *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Constrictor Scout 2, Constrictor Warrior 5

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle (Skirmish) 5, Defense 6, Hunting 4, Investigation (Notice, Search) 6, Kenjutsu (Naga Scimitar) 7, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 3, Lore: Ashalan 6, Lore: Nothing 6, Lore: Shadowlands 7, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 4, Spears (Naga Spear) 5

Advantages:

- *Daredevil*
- *Large*
- *Multiple Schools*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 4 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Brash*
- *Overconfident*
- *Driven (Destroy the Foul)*

Note: In reality, Radakast is a Vedic of the Pale Eye who keeps the law within the Naga civilization. However, his mechanics reflect his abilities after the Second Day of Thunder when he proved himself as a mighty defender against the Foul forces that threatened the Naga. He is neither Scout nor Warrior, but his School Mechanics simulate his unique abilities. GMs who wish to create other Vedics of the Pale Eye can follow a similar format, though a player wishing to build such a character must as usual gain permission from the GM to purchase Multiple Schools.

The Radakast was widely known for his wisdom and tranquility. He never spoke without reflecting on the ideas he wished to impart, and his peers always stopped and listened to his advice. When he dispensed justice in his role as a Vedic, few ever disagreed with his judgment. He analyzed every aspect of the situation before he took action. Others looked to him as the leader of the Constrictors and followed his every word.

However, everything changed during the tumultuous years before and after the Second Day of Thunder. The Radakast woke and immediately saw the world falling into ruin. He saw the rise of strife and chaos as the many faces of the Foul struck back at the Naga and their allies. In his wisdom he saw the survival of the Naga civilization was at stake. He put aside his reputation as a peaceful negotiator and took up arms. He flung himself into the heart of battle with reckless abandon and destroyed the Foul creatures that faced him. His brutal nature in battle struck fear into the heart of his enemies and earned him a reputation as an unstoppable demon.

The Naga around him sense the truth through the Akasha, no matter how the Constrictor may appear. The Radakast remains a calm and quiet soul beneath his bestial exterior. He made a reasoned decision to become a destroyer for his people, and he followed it to his greatest potential. The Radakast decided to lead his people in combat until the Foul was no longer a threat. He left moderation behind and charged against insurmountable odds without hesitation to find an end to his enemies.

Unfortunately, he never did.

Shahismael, Maddened General of the Bloodland Wars

Air 5	Earth 5	Fire 5	Water 5	Akasha 3
Reflexes 7	-	Agility 6	Strength 6	-

Caste: 0.0 *Glory: 0.0*

Initiative: 10k8 *Attack: Naga Spear 10k7 + 3 (Simple)*

Damage: 9k2 *Armor TN: 45 (Heavy Armor)*

Reduction: 5 (Heavy Armor): 8 for 3 Combat Rounds, once per skirmish *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Asp Warrior 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Skirmish) 4, Defense 5, Hunting 4, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Naga Scimitar) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Meditation 3, Spears (Naga Spear) 7

Advantages:

- *Large*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 4*
- *Brash*
- *Momoku, Overconfident*

At the dawn of the Naga Empire, the Naga bloodlines stood apart in separate nations, much in the same manner as the Great Clans of Rokugan. Shahismael, the leader of the Asp bloodline, engulfed the entire Naga race in a devastating war. Shahismael began the battles because he wanted his own bloodline race to win over the others, yet his madness began to alter his mind. He pained his people with cruel decisions and dominated the other bloodlines under his rule with unnecessary torture. Finally, his own lieutenant the Shahadet overthrew his rule and slew him for all eternity. His soul was separated from the Akasha and denied reincarnation to prevent his madness from tainting the entire Naga race.

Despite his many faults, Shahismael spurred the actions that directly led to the formation of Naga civilization as a cohesive whole. Until his war, each Naga bloodline only thought of the welfare of its own. Shahismael's infamous cruelty had to be stopped, uniting all others against him, and when the dust had settled the Naga Empire was born.

The Shahismael was a brilliant and quick-witted Naga who innately understood tactics and leadership. Despite all his faults, he had the strength and charisma to pull the entire Asp bloodline under his command. His love of power and insane cruelty brought him down to a desperate end. His soul will strain against its bindings, struggling vainly to break free, until the end of time.



Naga Archetypes

Weak Naga Jakla (Rank 1)

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3	Akasha 3
Awareness 4	-	Intelligence 3	-	-

Caste: 3.5 *Glory: 0.5*

Initiative: 4k3 *Attack: Naga Spear 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k2 *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Cobra Jakla 1

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 1, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Kyujutsu 1, Medicine 3, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 3, Spears 2, Spellcraft 2

Spells: Sense, Summon, Clarity of Purpose, Earth's Touch, Jade Strike, Path of Inner Peace, Rejuvenating Vapors, Yari of Air

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Precise Memory*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Insensitive*

Average Naga Jakla (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Akasha 4
Awareness 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 4	-

Caste: 4.0 *Glory: 0.5*

Initiative: 6k3 *Attack: Naga Spear 9k5 (Complex), Shards 10k4 (Complex)*

Damage: Naga Spear 8k2, Shards 7k4 *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Cobra Jakla 3: Shards of Light (Pearl Shapers Path)

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Kyujutsu 2, Medicine 3, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 5, Spears 4, Spellcraft 4

Spells: Sense, Summon, Bonds of Ningen-do, Clarity of Purpose, Earth's Touch, Extinguish, Fires From Within, Hands of Clay, Jade Strike, Path of Inner Peace, Regrow the Wound, Rejuvenating Vapors, Secrets on the Wind, Strength of the Crow, Striking the Storm, Walking Upon the Waves, Wave-Borne Speed, Yari of Air

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Precise Memory*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Insensitive*

Powerful Naga Jakla (Rank 5)

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 5	Akasha 5
Awareness 5	-	Agility 5	-	-

Caste: 6.5 *Glory: 2.5*

Initiative: 8k3 *Attack: Naga Spear 10k5 (Complex), Shards 10k5 (Complex)*

Damage: Naga Spear 8k2, Shards 10k5 *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Cobra Jakla 5: Shards of Light (Pearl Shapers Path)

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 3, Medicine (Non-Humans) 5, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 7, Spears 5, Spellcraft 5

Spells: Sense, Summon, Bonds of Ningen-do, Clarity of Purpose, Death of Flame, Earth's Touch, Ebb and Flow of Battle, Essence of Jade, Extinguish, Fires From Within, Fist of Osano-Wo, Hands of the Tides, Know the Mind, Hands of Clay, Jade Strike, Path of Inner Peace, Peace of the Kami, Regrow the Wound, Rejuvenating Vapors, Secrets on the Wind, Slayer's Knives, Strength of the Crow, Striking the Storm, Suitengu's Embrace, Tomb of Jade, Walking Upon the Waves, Wave-Borne Speed, Yari of Air

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Precise Memory*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Insensitive*

Weak Naga Scout (Rank 1)

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 2	Akasha 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	Perception 3	-

Caste: 2.0 *Glory: 0.5*

Initiative: 4k3 (+3 each Reactions Stage of combat while not first) *Attack: Yumi 7k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 *Armor TN: 25 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Scout 1

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 1, Hunting (Tracking) 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Stealth 2

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Quick*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (with non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Idealistic*

Average Naga Scout (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 2	Akasha: 3
Reflexes 4	-	-	Perception 4	-

Caste: 3.0 *Glory: 0.5*

Initiative: 7k4 (+4 each Reactions Stage of combat while not first) *Attack: Yumi 10k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 *Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Scout 3

Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3, Defense 2, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 5, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 6, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Stealth 2

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Quick*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (with non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Idealistic*

Powerful Naga Scout (Rank 5)

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 5	Water 3	Akasha 4
Reflexes 5	-	-	Perception 5	-

Caste: 4.0 *Glory: 1.5*

Initiative: 10k5 (+5 each Reactions Stage of combat while not first) *Attack: Yumi 10k7 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k2 *Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Scout 5

Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3, Defense 4, Hunting (Survival, Tracking) 6, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 7, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Stealth (Ambush, Sneaking) 4

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Quick*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Can't Lie*
- *Idealistic*

Weak Naga Vedic (Rank 1)

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Akasha 2
-	-	Intelligence 3	-	-

Caste: 3.0 *Glory: 1.5*

Initiative: 4k3 *Attack: Naga Spear 3k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k2 *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Vedic 1

Skills: Courtier 3, Defense 1, Divination (Astrology) 3, Etiquette 3, Lore: Naga Law 3, Lore: Rokugan 2, Medicine (Non-Humans) 1, Meditation 1, Spears 1

Advantages:

- *Balance*
- *Clear Thinker*
- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Idealistic*

Average Naga Vedic (Rank 3)

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Akasha 3
-	-	Intelligence 4	Perception 4	-

Caste: 4.0 *Glory: 2.5*

Initiative: 7k4 *Attack: Naga Spear 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k2 *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Vedic 3/Friend of Man (Disciples of The Dashmar)

Skills: Courtier 4, Defense 3, Divination (Astrology) 5, Etiquette (Courtesy) 5, Investigation (Notice) 2, Lore: Naga Law 3, Lore: Rokugan 2, Medicine (Disease, Non-Humans) 3, Meditation (Akasha Recovery, Disease) 3, Spears (Naga Spear) 2

Advantages:

- *Balance*
- *Clear Thinker*
- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Idealistic*

Powerful Naga Vedic (Rank 5)

Air 5	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 3	Akasha 4
Awareness 6	-	Intelligence 4	Perception 5	-

Caste: 5.0 *Glory: 4.5*

Initiative: 10k5 *Attack: Naga Spear 7k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k2 *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 0 *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Greensnake Vedic 5/Friend of Man (Disciples of The Dashmar)

Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier 6, Defense 4, Divination (Astrology) 6, Etiquette (Conversation, Courtesy) 6, Investigation (Notice, Search) 3, Lore: Naga Law 7, Lore: Rokugan 4, Medicine (Disease, Non-Humans) 5, Meditation (Akasha Recovery) 5, Spears (Naga Spear) 4

Advantages:

- *Balance*
- *Clear Thinker*
- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Idealistic*

Weak Naga Warrior (Rank 1)

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Akasha 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	-	-

Caste: 2.0 *Glory: 0.5*

Initiative: 4k3 *Attack: Naga Spear 6k3 + 2 (Complex)*

Damage: 7k2 *Armor TN: 25 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Asp Warrior 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 1, Defense 3, Hunting 1, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Meditation 2, Spears (Naga Spear) 3

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Large*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Brash*
- *Can't Lie*

Average Naga Warrior (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Akasha 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 4	-

Caste: 4.0 *Glory: 1.5*

Initiative: 7k4 *Attack: Naga Spear 9k4 + 4 (Simple)*

Damage: 8k2 *Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Asp Warrior 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Skirmish) 2, Defense 5, Hunting 2, Investigation (Notice) 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Meditation 2, Spears (Naga Spear) 5

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Large*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Brash*
- *Can't Lie*

Powerful Naga Warrior (Rank 5)

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4	Akasha 6
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 5	-	-

Caste: 6.0 *Glory: 3.5*

Initiative: 10k5 *Attack: Naga Spear 10k7 + 6 (Simple)*

Damage: 8k2 *Armor TN: 35 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor): 9 for 3 Combat Rounds, once per skirmish *Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Asp Warrior 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Skirmish) 4, Defense 5, Hunting 4, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Naga Scimitar) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Meditation 3, Spears (Naga Spear) 7

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose (Defeat the Foul)*
- *Large*
- *Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)*

Disadvantages:

- *Antisocial 2 (With non-Naga characters)*
- *Brash*
- *Can't Lie*


空の巻

The Nezumi

Yesterday and Tomorrow – A Nezumi's View of Time

To understand Nezumi history one must first understand how a Nezumi thinks, as well as how they are regarded in the Empire they sometimes call home. From the Nezumi's perspective, they are a proud and heroic species with a history marked by tragedy. From the viewpoint of most Rokugani, however, the Nezumi are nothing more than filthy vermin and scavengers. They scurry through the Shadowlands and live on the fringes of civilization. They feed on garbage. They spread disease in their wake. They have no nobility, no culture, and no real place in the Celestial Order. Nothing typifies their lowly status more than the pejorative name they have been given – Ratlings (gesshirui in the Rokugani tongue).

What is the truth? Considering the tangled mess that is Nezumi history, it is difficult to say.

As a race, most Nezumi are focused largely on the present. Though they are clever and intelligent, their memories are quite poor compared to an average human's, and they are excitable and easily distracted. Their concept of time is also much different than a Rokugani. What is in the past is in the past. A Nezumi does not distinguish between what happened yesterday and what happened a thousand years ago. It is not that the past is unimportant, but rather that all things that have happened are equally important. To a Nezumi, the past lies ahead of them, already known to their Rememberers, while the future lies behind them, invisible... and always pursuing.

All past events become part of what the Nezumi call K'thatch or, roughly translated, "Yesterday." The Nezumi frequently refer to Yesterday as if it is a place one can visit, a land inhabited by countless generations of dead heroes. Though most Nezumi hold a healthy respect for the events of Yesterday, they have a great deal of trouble comprehending them outside the context of their own poor memories. All they know is that Yesterday is mysterious and distant, but must never be forgotten. Yesterday is the closest thing most Nezumi have to a concept of an afterlife. A dead Nezumi lives on only in Yesterday – and only if he is remembered. Given that Nezumi have such poor memories, this is where the Tch'tch play an important role.

The Tch'tch (Rememberers) are a special caste of Nezumi society born with keener memories than the rest of their species. These individuals are held in high regard and serve as advisors to powerful chieftains and shamans. A Rememberer's unique ability to clearly recall Yesterday allows him to share the wisdom of past Nezumi and represents a powerful link to the race's collective culture. Nezumi tradition and history are passed down orally by the Rememberers, whose recollection is further enhanced by special heirlooms called memory sticks. The Tch'tch serve not only as their tribes' historians but also as their conscience, and are not above embellishing their stories of Yesterday to teach a lesson. As a result, most Nezumi histories are a mixture of fanciful tales and exaggerated legends built around small nuggets of ancient fact.

The flip side of the Rememberers, of course, is that the Nezumi tribes are dependent on them to maintain their connection to Yesterday. If a tribe is so unfortunate as to lose all of its Rememberers, it will lose all connection to its past and culture within a single generation, a fate which has happened more than once to isolated Ratling packs in the Shadowlands.

Another important influence on Nezumi history is their concept of the future. M'atch-tek, or "Tomorrow," is a Nezumi concept that embodies all events yet to come. While Rokugani generally look on the future with hope and even optimism, to a Nezumi Tomorrow is invariably a bleak and terrible force. Rather than viewing Tomorrow as a place, like Yesterday, the Nezumi see it as a sentient and malignant force, chasing them endlessly. Tomorrow is alive. Tomorrow is aware. And Tomorrow hates the Nezumi, and will hunt them until they are all dead. No matter what a Nezumi does, no matter how quickly and cleverly he runs, Tomorrow will inevitably catch up. Death and passage into Yesterday is inevitable. The best a Nezumi can hope to do is face Tomorrow bravely and ensure his life allows his pups and his tribe to keep running – at least for a little while.

In the late twelfth century, major events result in the deaths of much of the Nezumi race, and many of the surviving Nezumi come to believe Tomorrow has finally caught up with their race. The surviving tribes are little more than a sad epilogue to the long history of the Nezumi people. From their perspective, Nezumi history is divided into three periods – the Before Time, the Race Against Tomorrow, and the After Time.

Name

Name ("thich") is the defining force of Ratling personality. While a Ratling's Name may be symbolized by his spoken name, it truly represents much more. A Name is a Nezumi's entire sense of person and identity. It is his strength of character, his virtues, his vices, his dreams, his aspirations, his great deeds, his mistakes, and his destiny – for good or ill. A Nezumi gains insight and power from the strength of his name much as a human might do so from the strength of his connection to the Void. Nezumi struggle to explain the concept of Name to a human because, to the Nezumi, there is no need for explanation. Name is Name.

A Nezumi of Good Name ("charathathich") is a hero. His deeds may be forgotten but his name will never be forgotten. A Nezumi of Bad Name ("m'hrthich") is a foul, wicked, wasteful person who brings misery to the tribe. Nezumi of bad Name are remembered so their mistakes will not be repeated.

A Nezumi who is neither good nor bad faces the most tragic fate – he is forgotten. The Nezumi have no real concept of an afterlife other than living on through dream and memory of Yesterday. To be forgotten is worse than death. It is to have no purpose, now or ever. To be forgotten is to become nothing.

Because given names are a representation of one's actual Name, Nezumi believe there is great power in them. One can learn all there is to know about a person by knowing their true name. Ratling Shamans work their strange magic by learning and manipulating the names of creatures and objects. A Shaman can change something entirely simply by altering its Name. The more powerful Shamans in Nezumi history have demonstrated the power to kill simply by twisting a creature's name, and a few legendary Shamans could even take away a creature's name – making it as if that creature had never existed at all.

Nezumi Physiology

Physically, the Nezumi appear to be rat-creatures with some vaguely ape-like features. They normally stand upright but can run on all fours just as easily, and their long tails (about two-thirds as long as their bodies) are semi-prehensile, allowing them even more maneuverability. They have rather human-like hands with opposable thumbs, but their digits end in sharp claws, and their mouths boast a formidable set of frontal incisors which can chew through wood or even soft metal. Nezumi vary widely in height, with some tribes being as short as four feet tall while the more aggressive tribes have been known to produce warriors as much as eight feet in height.

All Nezumi are double-jointed and are capable of dislocating their shoulders and hips, allowing them to crawl through any opening that can pass their head. Among humans this remarkable flexibility has given rise to the legend that it is impossible to keep a ratling captive.

Nezumi have a very high metabolism, and thus exist in a more-or-less constant state of excitement. They are intensely focused on the moment and seem to lose interest quickly in anything that does not immediately concern them, a general side-effect of their notoriously poor memories. To Rokugani perceptions, Nezumi are hyperactive and prone to snap judgments – indeed some Rokugani have compared them to poorly-disciplined young children. However, this excitement also means the Nezumi can react quickly to any threat or unexpected situation, usually much faster than a human could.

Nezumi have excellent senses of smell, and exude pheromones from glands near their tails in order to convey scent-messages to their kin. Their eyesight, however, is only about half as strong as a human's vision. Their gaze seems to be instinctively drawn to shiny or sparkly things, and staring at "shine-shineys" is soothing to them, rather like the effects of pleasant music on the human mind.

Nezumi are extremely adaptive and seem to be able to adjust themselves to their physical environment within one or two generations, passing these new traits reliably to their pups. Thus ratling tribes that live near water have webbed paws, while those tribes who fight the Shadowlands more frequently are larger and stronger, and so forth.

Perhaps the most puzzling and remarkable aspect of the Nezumi race is their extreme resistance to corruption and disease. Nezumi cannot become Tainted or diseased, and can eat and drink almost anything without danger of infection. The Crab are fascinated by this gift and have tried to study it when they can, but so far no definitive answer has been found. Whatever its source, the Nezumi's peculiar immunities allow them to survive and even, after a manner of speaking, thrive in the most hostile environment imaginable, on "food" which would kill almost anyone else.



Nezumi Communication and Psychology

"Thor'chezz see samurai fight. They line up and kill-kill-kill. Not one run away, not one surrender, not one survive. Samurai call that brave-brave. Thor'chezz call that stupid."

– Thor'chezz, Nezumi warrior, ninth century

The Nezumi language is a spoken tongue, but its words are supplemented with other sounds, most notably clicks and squeaks. Clicks are represented by an apostrophe (') while squeaks are represented by dashes (-). The Nezumi can use these sounds as part of words or alone to conveying raw emotion. For example, three clicks in a row will indicate interest, while three squeaks shows anger. Body language is also important for Nezumi – bared teeth show anger, while a slapping tail conveys importance and a wrinkled nose is attention. Of course, Nezumi also use their pheromones to further supplement their verbal communication.

Ratlings are capable of learning and speaking Rokugani, but their speech is distorted not only by the inhuman shapes of their mouths but also their alien culture. In Nezumi speech, repeating a word means performing or emphasizing it, so Nezumi will often repeat words in Rokugani. Their vocabulary is usually lacking (except among the smartest and most learned of their kind) and they usually completely fail to understand Rokugani etiquette.

Nezumi are, by Rokugani standards, cowards. They believe survival is their first and most important priority. They will not hesitate to flee from a losing battle, and they prefer to fight using ambush, hit-and-run tactics, and similar methods that minimize their own risk. However, Nezumi under the proper circumstances are perfectly capable of fighting with a courage that any samurai can admire. Because they tend to think of the Tribe first and themselves second, when their Tribe or their pups are in danger the Nezumi will fight to the death, striving to take as many of their enemies into Yesterday with them as they can. Furthermore, many Nezumi tribes contain a small number of extremely fierce warriors known as Chitatchikkan ("brave-bold-fearless-sunlit-warriors-with-great-skill") who fight as ferociously as any Hida Berserker.

The Nezumi have a strange attitude toward property – they recognize the concept of ownership, but believe that theft is wrong only if one is caught. Naturally, this makes their relations with humans difficult, especially given their obsession with small shiny objects. Skillful Nezumi will accumulate very formidable hordes of shiny objects, and the Crab often gift their ratling allies with polished stones and other such trinkets. Nezumi will also steal from human farms, regarding such activities as no different than scrounging in the Shadowlands. In some regions of the Empire, experienced farmers will actually set aside a portion of their crop in a certain area, or even leave bowls of cooked rice in the road for the local Nezumi. So long as the ratlings are well fed they are relatively harmless, and might even keep other more dangerous creatures away from the farms. In some regions these ancient practices give rise to local superstitions of setting out rice to feed the "friendly spirits."

The Before Time (Rokugani Pre-History)

"Once, Nezumi have great-great territory. Our territory like the dream realm, with much-much food everywhere and Nezumi camps all across land. Tutkwauwar serve us, not kill us and steal our things. Chief-of-chiefs rule all the One Tribe, and all Nezumi happy-happy. All gone-gone now."

– Kch'tik, Rememberer of the Grasping Paw

Nezumi rarely speak of the Before Time to those outside of their race, and much of what they do claim is considered apocryphal or even blasphemous to other races, especially to the Rokugani. Even the Naga, who form part of this chapter in Nezumi history, reject the Rememberers' unique vision of the past. Of course, the early days of the world are seldom in agreement between the different races even where minor details are concerned, and human civilizations beyond the Empire have even stranger views of the past.

Whether or not the Nezumi's beliefs are true is immaterial and perhaps even irrelevant. What matters is this is what the Nezumi believe, and these beliefs have shaped them as a race and culture.

Long ago, before mankind existed, the Naga ruled the lands that would one day become Rokugan. When they discovered a species of bipedal rodents living in the forests, the Naga domesticated them to serve as pets and guardians. It is also rumored that during lean times they used the primitive Nezumi as a food source. When the Naga began their great sleep, they left their pets to guard their cities.

As time passed and the Nezumi basked in the luminous magic of the Naga pearl beds, they began to change. The little rodents evolved swiftly, becoming more intelligent, adapting to the world around them. In time, they abandoned the Naga cities and set out to create their own empire, forgetting the serpentine warriors who first set them apart from mere animals. It was not until much, much later, well after the Second Day of Thunder, that the returned Naga finally admitted the truth of the Nezumi origins to modern Rememberers.

Unlike the Naga, who built a vast and sprawling civilization, the Nezumi Empire remained concentrated in the lands which would later became the Shadowlands. At the time the Nezumi were comprised of a single great tribe. The name of this tribe was lost to the ages, but the Remembers now refer to it as the One Tribe. They claim the One Tribe was extremely powerful, subjugating the ancient trolls and ogres beneath its rule.

The history of the Before Time is extremely sketchy, but the Nezumi generally see it as a golden age. Their race was strong and powerful, unrivaled by any other force in the world. According to the Rememberers, it was this strength that led to the One Tribe's undoing. The Chief-of-Chiefs was self-absorbed and convinced of his own invincibility. He treated the lesser races like animals, ignoring their needs and forcing them to obey his will. He ignored the dark portents of the Shamans. He neglected the advice of the Rememberers. And one day, when the sky grew dark, the Chief-of-Chiefs realized his folly and everything changed forever.

Nezumi and the Taint

The Nezumi are completely immune to the Shadowlands Taint in all its forms. The source of this immunity has never been fully understood. Some Nezumi believe their ancient Chief-of-Chiefs refused to serve Fu Leng, and so Fu Leng cursed them to never receive his blessings. A more popular tale is that the last Chief-of-Chiefs repented his arrogance in his final moments, offering himself to Fu Leng if the Dark Kami would spare the Nezumi people. Some believe it was the Transcendents – the living memories of powerful Nezumi Shamans – who protected their living counterparts from corruption with the power of their own Names.

After the Naga revealed the origins of the Nezumi race, some Rokugani proposed the explanation that extensive exposure to Naga pearl magic made the Nezumi immune to the Taint, much like their serpentine masters. Since Nezumi seem to have a racial predisposition to pass on any adaptations to their offspring, it seems reasonable that a single generation of Nezumi exposed to Naga pearl magic could pass this immunity forward indefinitely.

Whatever the true reason, the Nezumi are immune to the Taint in all its forms. They can wander the Shadowlands safely without jade and can consume the most corrupt filth without any harm. They are immune to the whispers of the kansen and unable to practice any sort of Tainted blood magic. And although the occasional oni or maho-tsukai might coerce a Nezumi tribe into service, these alliances never last long. What the Shadowlands cannot consume, it must destroy. Thus Jigoku's minions bear a deep and bitter hatred for the Nezumi.

The Nezumi remember this as The Terrible Day. Or, more specifically, The Terrible Day When Air Became Fire and Heaven Fell From Its Perch to Crush Our Glorious Home Beneath Its Blackened Corpse. On this day, a great black mountain fell from the sky and crushed the city where the Chief-of-Chiefs made his home. Shadow spread out from the impact, twisting the countryside and transforming the creatures who once served the Nezumi into mindless monsters. This was the birth of the Shadowlands and the Taint. The Nezumi alone were spared its corruption.

The Race Against Tomorrow (After the Fall of the Kami)

"I will show you 'savage,' Samurai…"

– Ep'kee, Nezumi general

In the decades after the Fall of Fu Leng, the Nezumi struggled to survive. At first they fought against Fu Leng and his minions, trying to retake their Empire and rebuild their shattered civilization. But the Dark Kami's power was too great, and his armies of ogres and trolls, oni and bakemono, were too strong to overcome. The remaining Nezumi soon learned the only way to survive was to run.

Some of them sought refuge outside the Shadowlands, but found themselves no more welcome there. The human tribes had banded together under the banners of the Seven Kami, Fu Leng's brothers and sisters. They saw the Nezumi as dangerous beasts and treated them accordingly. Trapped between Fu Leng and the humans, thousands of Nezumi were slain or simply starved. The Rememberers call this period the Long Lean Time, and though it was a terrible period in their history, it is also when most of their major independent tribes were born. Unable to survive in large groups, the Nezumi split into smaller family packs under different chieftains, eking out their lives in hiding. They did whatever was necessary to survive, and for most Nezumi, this meant returning to the Shadowlands.

Though the arrival of the Dark Kami had twisted the once-beautiful landscape, he seemed more interested in destroying his brothers and sisters than in wiping out a few packs of broken outcasts. And given the circumstances, it was safer to risk the wrath of one god than seven. The Nezumi also noticed how humans who spent too long in the Shadowlands sickened and died or turned mad. Though they did not yet understand the nature of the Taint, they soon realized they were actually safer in Fu Leng's realm than elsewhere. The Taint did not touch them, they could run, and they could hide. These were small blessings, but the Nezumi embraced them.

For hundreds of years, the Nezumi as a people did not truly belong anywhere. They had no real home in either the Empire or the Shadowlands. Though a few tribes carved out meager territories in one place or another, they were inevitably driven out and sent wandering once more. They lived as scavengers and parasites, surviving off the refuse of oni and humans. This did little to improve the Rokugani perception that they were monsters, and their habit of scouring battlefields for food and weaponry was a horrific blasphemy to the Rokugani. In the Empire's culture the Nezumi became symbols of disease and corruption, indistinguishable from the other savage beasts of the Shadowlands.

In truth, however, most Nezumi never truly succumbed to savagery. They endured an existence of poverty and constant danger, but the Rememberers always stood ready to remind the tribes of what they once were. They said the Nezumi were a great people, a noble people, struck down by destiny. Tomorrow might hunt them, but as long as they survived they could never truly be defeated.

As time went by, the Nezumi came to adjust to their position in this new world. Though the Rememberers did their best to keep the old Empire alive in Yesterday, the influence of its memory faded. A life of scrounging and scurrying through the darkness was all that most Nezumi knew. Fear of every stronger creature, both the monsters of the Shadowlands and the humans of the Empire, was normal and accepted. The Nezumi saw these creatures not as rivals but as mysterious and destructive forces to be avoided. Oni were dangerous and deceptive. Humans were vengeful and paranoid. Neither could be trusted.



The Alliance with the Crab

Nezumi hostility to all other races began to change through their contacts with the Crab Clan. Though in later centuries other clans would occasionally seek alliances of convenience with Nezumi tribes, none were as consistent or sincere in their friendship as the Crab.

Over the course of their long struggles with the Shadowlands, the Crab came to notice the rat-like creatures that scurried through the Tainted wasteland. Despite their sinister appearance, these creatures were not like the other monsters of the Fallen Lands. They possessed none of an oni's cruelty, a goblin's madness, or an ogre's brutality. In fact, sometimes these rat-creatures seemed to be as violently opposed to the Shadowlands as any Crab. Even more interesting – they were immune to the Taint.

Hiruma Kazuma, a young scout barely past his gempukku, was the first to offer the Nezumi his hand in friendship. He was the first human to live among Nezumi, learn their language, and make a conscious effort to seek peace between the two races. The Nezumi came to respect him deeply, even going so far as to consider him one of their Transcendent. This began an alliance of mutual benefit that continued all the way into modern times. The Crab made use of the Nezumi as scouts in areas of the Shadowlands where a human could not possibly survive. In return, they supplied the ratlings with food, supplies, and weapons to defend themselves from Shadowlands threats. For much of the Empire's history this alliance was secret, since the rest of the Empire was unlikely to tolerate such generous treatment of foul, disease-riddled ratlings. Not until the mid-twelfth century, when the One Tribe briefly reformed, did the Crab-Nezumi alliance become public knowledge.

The Transcendent

The Nezumi have no concept of ancestors as Rokugani understand them. For them, the only afterlife is memory. Those who die fade into dream, but remain there only as long as the living remember them.

The most powerful of their Shamans, known as Nameseekers, do not truly die. They simply leave their mortal vessels and become beings of pure Name. These Nezumi are known as Transcendent *("Wikki'thich-hie")*. The Transcendent exist in the spirit realm of Yume-do (called "I'thich" by the Nezumi) and can only be contacted if they wish to be. Because they live in dreams, they have a very broad and somewhat alien perspective on the past, present, and future. They are often prophetic, but their visions of the future can be strange and confusing even to a Shaman.

Occasionally, the Transcendent make contact with living Nezumi. The guidance of a Transcendent is a mixed blessing at best. When the Transcendent become immortal they forget much of what it means to be mortal. They demand the impossible and are frequently impatient or insulting. Though many Nezumi become great heroes under the guidance of Transcendent, just as many are driven to ignominious doom. The lucky are merely prophets – involuntary mouthpieces for these powerful spirits. The unlucky become insane.

Though Transcendent are very much like gods, the Nezumi do not worship them – indeed, it would be more accurate to say they fear them. The interference of a Transcendent usually bodes ill, and most Nezumi fulfill the spirit's requests as quickly as possible so it will leave them alone. Only in times of desperation will a Shaman dare to seek their counsel. Other Nezumi wisely avoid them.





The Restoration of the One Tribe

"They fight with such courage. Perhaps we have misjudged these creatures..."

– Matsu Gohei, early twelfth century

During and after the Second Day of Thunder, many other clans began to notice the Nezumi tribes and their hostility to the forces of the Dark Kami. A famous Lion hero named Matsu Gohei led a sizable force of Nezumi against the enemies of the Empire, and he was only one of many Rokugani who came to see the ratlings as more than mere vermin. The Crab began to publicly acknowledge their secret alliance.

Many of the stronger and wiser Nezumi believed this could be the beginning of a bright new era, one which might restore the lost greatness of their people. The leaders of most of the major Nezumi tribes came together to create a new One Tribe, led by a council of powerful Nezumi such as the great warrior Kan'ok'ticheck. This forced the Empire, in turn, to offer them more respect than in the past. Though the Nezumi would never be accepted as equals, they were granted considerably greater rights and privileges than in the past. Emperor Toturi III briefly accepted a Nezumi advisor to his court, and Kan'ok'tichek would lead a delegation to at least one Imperial Winter Court.

Still, some Nezumi did not see view this turn of events as good fortune. They continued to regard mankind with suspicion and disapproval. Centuries of ingrained habits and fears did not die easily, and human language and customs were perverse and alien. They also saw the Rokugani refusal to comprehend the basic concepts of Name as foul and unnatural. Perhaps with time these differences and fears might have continued to shrink, but fate would not allow the Nezumi that chance.

Facing Tomorrow

In the late twelfth century, as the Empire coped with the upheaval of the Race for the Throne, the disruption in the Celestial Realms triggered terrible chaos within Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams. The Shamans of the Nezumi race had a powerful bond to the dream realm and sensed the danger approaching. Visions came upon them of nightmarish draconic beings tearing the dream realm apart, threatening the Nezumi Transcendent and indeed the mortal realm as well. If these entities destroyed Yume-do it would throw all of reality into chaos. To the Nezumi, this could not be anything less than the arrival of Tomorrow itself – Tomorrow for the entire Nezumi race, indeed the entire world.

The greatest Shamans of the One Tribe drew upon powerful magic, allowing most of the Nezumi race to enter the Realm of Dreams while remaining awake and aware. Once there, they attacked the draconic entities with all their might. As a single tribe, the Nezumi faced Tomorrow... and were victorious.

This victory, however, was not without a terrible cost. Those Nezumi who had entered the Dream Realm found themselves unable to return to the waking world. Though their consciousness lived on deep in Yume-do, their bodies withered and died. The vast majority of Nezumi became little more than dream spirits, lost in the deep and unknown realms of Yume-do. Their struggle had saved all of creation, but only a handful of humans ever knew what truly happened. To the rest of Rokugan, it appeared as if a horrible plague had swept through the Nezumi tribes, slaughtering them by the thousands. Only the seagoing Chipped Tooth tribe, which had not joined the great battle, remained intact. Festering corpses piled up everywhere the Nezumi once dwelled. The few survivors abandoned their homes to live on as best they could. With most of their best scouts, warriors, and shamans gone, many more would perish in the winter that followed.

The After Time

In the decades following the great battle with Tomorrow, the remaining Nezumi faced a difficult time. Many living Nezumi did not even understand what happened to their race, for in many tribes there were no surviving Shamans or Rememberers to explain the battle's results. Did their race triumph, or did Tomorrow prevail? Was this truly a battle with Tomorrow, or did the disruptions among the humans somehow ensnare the Nezumi race? Every group of survivors sought its own answers to these questions. Their confusion and suspicions were only worsened by the fact that many of the most intelligent Nezumi – those able to learn and comprehend Rokugani – were the first chosen to join the battle against Tomorrow. In many regions the Nezumi again regarded humans as threats or enemies, and many Rokugani in turn resumed their old attitudes toward these disease-riddled beasts.

The Chipped Tooth Nezumi were the exception to these unfortunate trends, of course, and their relations with humans continued to be quite good.

With the exception of the Chipped Tooth, the surviving tribes generally agreed that Tomorrow was no longer hunting them. It had grown fat and full on the Names of their race and no longer cared about the survivors. This was now the After Time. The race was over, at least for a very long time. Yet despite this bleak and pessimistic outlook they did not truly surrender to despair. Perhaps they are, as a race, incapable of it. The Nezumi continued on as they always had, scurrying through the shadows, struggling to survive.

Perhaps in the future their numbers will recover and the Race with Tomorrow will resume. Or perhaps they will never again be more than a shadow of their former selves. Who can truly say?

Major Nezumi Tribes

Before the arrival of Tomorrow there were many thousands of Nezumi in the world. Most of the major tribes dwelled in the Shadowlands, but several made their home within Rokugan, usually in hiding. During the era of the restored One Tribe in the twelfth century, several tribes took advantage of their improved relations with the Empire to migrate to safer areas inside Rokugan. Following the tragic events of Tomorrow, only a few hundred Nezumi survived within the Empire, most of them in the Chipped Tooth tribe. The others generally retreated back into the Shadowlands.

Blue Fur

Benefit: +1 Awareness

The Blue Fur are a small tribe that split off from a larger one at some point in the distant past. They ranged widely through the Shadowlands for generations, unable to find a stable territory of their own. That changed when they discovered an abandoned Nezumi warren on the southern border of the Hiruma lands. The Hiruma were using the warren as a base for scouting the Shadowlands, and after a tense initial confrontation, a wily scrounger from the Blue Fur tribe suggested the two groups share the warren. Initial reactions on both sides were disgust and derision, but the leading Crab officer took the idea seriously, and negotiations ensued. Eventually the two groups agreed that the Hiruma could use the warren as a safe haven and call on the tribe's scouts in exchange for supplying the Blue Fur with food.

The Blue Fur are a rare example of a Nezumi tribe living in close contact with humans for an extended period of time. They tend to litter their speech with human words and even incorporate human body language into their gestures, often to the irritation of other Nezumi. Despite their close relationship with the Hiruma, the Blue Fur were happy to join the One Tribe when it formed in the mid-twelfth century, and served it loyally to the end. Tomorrow hurts them badly, and in the After Times only a few families scurry through the warren where once the Blue Fur prospered.

Broken Shinbone

Benefit: +1 Stamina

The Broken Shinbone are a small tribe which held territory in the northern Shadowlands for most of their history. Early in the twelfth century, during the conflict known as the Clan War, they were driven out of their home territory and fled into Rokugan, wandering from one clan's lands to the next. Through a series of accidents they wound up serving in battle under the command of the Lion war hero Matsu Gohei, who offered them food and sanctuary if they would fight for him. The Broken Shinbone fought against the forces of Fu Leng with such courage that the Lion warrior came to greatly admire them, and continued to provide them with supplies and shelter after the Clan War came to an end. Eventually, fate drove the Lion away from his Nezumi allies, and the tribe wandered across the northern Empire, taking shelter where they could find it. In later years the Dragon Clan would discover them again and make use of their talents in protecting its borders.

The Broken Shinbone seems to be one of the few major Nezumi tribes that did not join the great One Tribe when it came together in the mid-twelfth century – perhaps because their remote territory kept them largely ignorant of the great events affecting the rest of their race. They also seem to have a certain sense of superiority toward other Nezumi tribes due to their long migrations and sufferings. Tomorrow did come upon them, for their Shamans sensed the threat like all the rest, but it struck a lighter blow on their tribe than it did on many others. Having survived such a terrible event, the Broken Shinbone face the future with less fear than most Nezumi.

Chipped Tooth

Benefit: +1 Agility

Many centuries ago, these Nezumi were hunters and gatherers in the southern Yasuki provinces. That changed when the notorious pirate Yasuki Fumoki needed a new crew. He took note of these odd creatures and their potential, and trained them to serve as crew on his vessels, a task the Nezumi embraced with their typical energy and resourcefulness. With their extraordinary agility, resistance to disease, and natural swimming ability the Nezumi made excellent sailors.

After Fumoki's death, the Crab learned about the great skill of these Nezumi sailors and began to make use of them throughout their navy. After a few generations the Chipped Tooth Nezumi developed webbed fingers to aid them in swimming. In time, Mantis ships hired Chipped Tooth crew as well, further increasing the wealth and prestige of the tribe.

When Tomorrow came for the Nezumi, the Chipped Tooth were not hit nearly as hard as the rest of their race. Only a few of the Chipped Tooth went into Yume-do to face Tomorrow, and the rest of the tribe continued to serve the Crab and Mantis as sailors. In fact, they were granted ownership of the mighty vessel known as the Deathless, using it to hunt pirates and other threats in the seas to the south of Rokugan. The Chipped Tooth seem likely to continue to prosper even in the After Times.





Crippled Bone

Benefit: +1 Strength

This ancient and powerful tribe long made its home deep in the Shadowlands, cut off both from humanity and the rest of the Nezumi race. The dangers of their homeland changed them, making them fierce and savage, much larger and stronger than a typical Nezumi. They became a tribe of fearless berserkers, far less likely to run from danger than a normal Nezumi – and in the lands where they made their home, there was often nowhere safe to run.

In the early twelfth century, however, even the Crippled Bone Tribe was forced to retreat. Powerful new monsters called Elemental Terrors arose from the Festering Pit and turned their inhuman eyes upon the Crippled Bone. The Nezumi fought bravely but were ultimately forced to flee north toward the Kaiu Wall. There they encountered both humans and other Nezumi tribes. Their strength and ferocity quickly earned the Crab Clan's respect. Though the Crippled Bone never set aside their distrust of humans, they recognized a useful ally when they saw one.

Eventually, the Crippled Bone became the military backbone of the new One Tribe. Te'tik'kir, the mighty Nameseeker Shaman who first conceived of a reunited One Tribe, hailed from the Crippled Bone and he drove his tribe relentlessly to unify their race. For many years the Crippled Bone stood defiantly on the front lines against the Shadowlands. They were nearly wiped out by the Stained Paw Tribe and its Tsuno masters, but the timely intervention of the Nezumi hero Ik'krt delivered jade weapons that turned the tide of the battle.

When Tomorrow came for the Nezumi, most of the Crippled Bone Tribe was in their tribal holdings beyond the Kaiu Wall, fighting the Shadowlands as they had always done. After losing most of their warriors to Tomorrow, they came under relentless attack from hordes of goblins, and only the timely arrival of the last remnant of their old foes the Stained Paw allowed them to survive. The two remnant groups banded together, under the darkly humorous name of "Crippled Paw." In the After Times they are the most powerful warrior tribe left among the Nezumi.

Crooked Tail

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

The Crooked Tail are one of three tribes that emerged from the break-up of a much larger group, the Forever Racing Tomorrow Tribe. Centuries ago this great tribe broke up after a violent and bitter encounter with a remote human village that was completely controlled by the Lying Darkness. Only a small piece of crystal allowed anyone to survive the strange faceless "humans." Horrified to encounter creatures without Name, the tribe could not decide what this meant about humans as a whole. Were they irredeemably evil, a whole race of creatures without Name? Had the Nezumi misunderstood the situation? What was the significance of the crystal? Ultimately, the disagreement tore the tribe apart. One group remained where they were, becoming the Third Whisker Tribe. Another moved north to try to learn more about humans, becoming the Tattered Ear. And the third fled westward to a great outcropping of crystal, where they remained. They became the Crooked Tail Tribe.

The Crooked Tail are the only Nezumi tribe ever to try to understand and fight against the Lying Darkness, a force which can consume a ratling as easily as it can anything else. They remained near their precious crystal outcropping ("Driving-Out-Darkness Rock") throughout their history, fighting off assaults from both the Darkness and the Shadowlands, and maintaining a powerful sense of paranoia toward all outsiders, Nezumi or otherwise. Although they nominally joined the One Tribe when it came together in the twelfth century, they sent only a few token emissaries to its gatherings and never revealed the location of their home territory.

Tragically, when the time came to face Tomorrow, the Crooked Tail paid one of the highest prices of any tribe. Their numbers were nearly all wiped out, leaving only a few lone and maddened survivors behind.

Grasping Paw

"Armor is mine-mine-mine, samurai. Took it from ogre. Big-big ogre. Never saw your ancestor. Only ogre."

- Nir'um'tuk, Nezumi guide

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

While it is true that the Nezumi race does not grasp the human concept of personal property, the members of the Grasping Paw tribe suffer an even more pathological version of their racial perception, and other tribes look upon them as consummate thieves. Although this has sometimes caused the tribe difficulty in the past, they do simply know no other way.

The Grasping Paw tribe was created by refugees fleeing north after the Terrible Day and the destruction of the Nezumi Empire. The tribe members were ill-suited to their new lives and many perished in the early months. To save his people, the chieftain sought out a long-shunned group, Nezumi who had been exiled from their society long before Fu Leng's fall. These unusual individuals had been cast out due to their extreme thieving habits, which caused them to even take things vitally needed by others. The chieftain offered these outcasts a superior share of food and treasure if they would join his tribe and help save his people. The outcasts readily agreed and after a short period of adjustment became extremely valuable members of the Grasping Paw Tribe.

The Grasping Paw were renowned among the Nezumi for centuries as the greatest thieves and scavengers of their race. This accolade was balanced by the reputation they have for taking from anyone, even other Nezumi. The Grasping Paw seemed to have no concept that others valued objects at all. They were also notorious for a prominent bloodline within their tribe, bred from the descendants of the original outcasts, who had little or no fur and strange colorless eyes. Although such mutations occasionally appeared in the other tribes as well, they never did so in such numbers as in the Grasping Paw.

Tragically, the Grasping Paw were largely wiped out by the battle with Tomorrow, leaving only a few scattered survivors to wander alone or join other tribes.

Green-Green White

Benefit: +1 Perception

Following the devastation on the Terrible Day, the Nezumi scattered far and wide, but none ranged so far as the tribe then known as the Black Moonset tribe. At first the tribe settled in the Shadowlands, like many others, and prospered there for generations. They were unseated in the eighth century by the assault of the Oni Lord known as the Maw. Fleeing in desperation, they went north into the Empire of men. They sought aid from their allies among the Tattered Ear, but that tribe was in dire straits itself and could only lend token assistance. Through terrible trial and difficulty, the Black Moonset tribe moved north and finally reached lands unknown to all their people: the northernmost reaches of Rokugan, in the domain of the Phoenix Clan. The tribe's new name was taken from their surroundings, the evergreen forests of Phoenix lands and their winter coat of snow.

Due to the heavy losses they suffered to humans along the way, not to mention the perceived abandonment by their allies, the renamed Green-Green-White tribe underwent a significant cultural change after they settled in their new home. They became highly xenophobic, isolating themselves from other tribes with both geography and deliberate policy, and engaging in open hostility with humans. Shiba bushi made frequent efforts to hunt them down and eradicate them from the northern provinces.

Members of the Green-Green-White tribe were at best minor players in what passed for Nezumi society. They had little use for the other tribes, even the Tattered Ear. The creation of the Ox Clan in the early twelfth century dramatically reduced the lands available for the Green-Green-White in their annual migrations, further exacerbating their anti-human bias. Their situation did not change until the emergence of the One Tribe, when their chieftain Kan'ok'tichek became ruler of the entire unified ratling race. Although this briefly vaulted the Green-Green-White into a hugely influential position within Nezumi culture, it held within it the seeds of tragedy: the Green-Green-White Nezumi would also spearhead the battle against Tomorrow, and suffered accordingly. In the After Times, only a few scattered survivors can claim descent from the once-formidable tribe.

Squeaky Eyeball

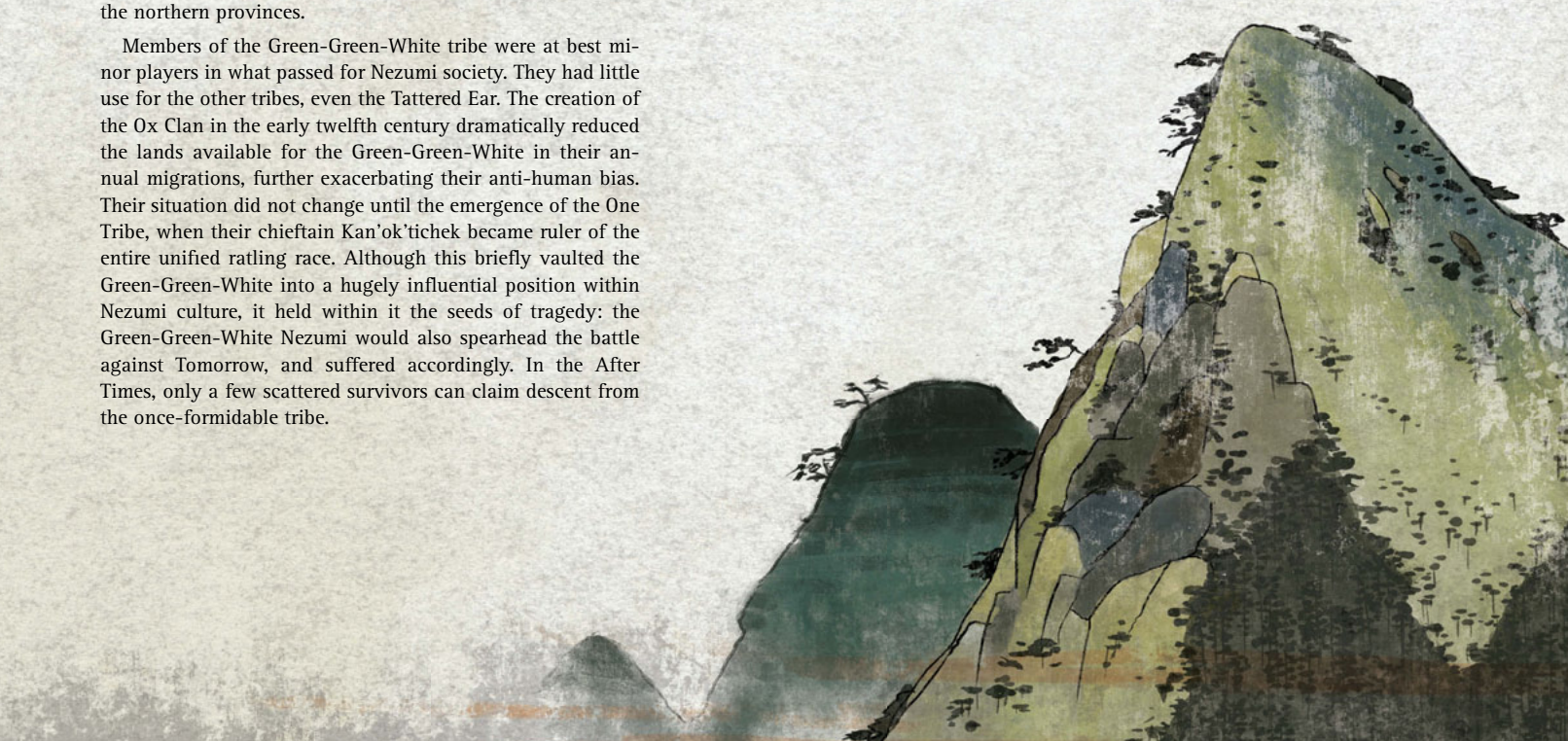
Benefit: +1 Awareness

No Nezumi tribe was so popular with other Nezumi as the Squeaky Eyeball, revered far and wide for having the finest Rememberers of any known tribe. The tribe seems to have been formed by a large number of surviving scholars and historians who came together to survive after the Terrible Day, and their gifts were passed down to their descendents.

Unlike many of the early Nezumi tribes, the Squeaky Eyeball did not try to reclaim their old territory from the armies of Fu Leng – they instead traveled in all directions, collecting every story and legend they could find, not only within the Shadowlands and Rokugan but also to the west in the gaijin territories. They focused their attention most closely on tales of Nezumi heroes and stories of how the world began. In modern times their Rememberers are capable of recounting literally hundreds of different versions of how the world began, how it was formed, and what happened in the ancient times before the Terrible Day. Whether any of these stories are even mildly related to reality is an open question, and indeed the Rokugani would consider all of them blasphemous.

Because of their wide travels, extensive knowledge, and gregarious and friendly natures, the Nezumi of the Squeaky Eyeball are welcomed by almost all other ratling tribes, even the xenophobic Green-Green-White. They also get along better with humans than many other Nezumi tribes, since they regard humans as yet another source of stories and knowledge.

The Squeaky Eyeball's home territory was in the northern Crab lands and the northern fringe of the Shadowlands, in the Mountains of Twilight. They joined the One Tribe along with almost all the other tribes, and often served as ambassadors or messengers during the great Tribe's brief period of near-equal relations with the Empire. During Tomorrow they suffered very heavy losses, but were not wholly extinguished, and their exploratory and curious nature allowed them to recover more quickly than most.



Stained Paw

Benefit: +1 Stamina

The Stained Paw, like the Crippled Bone, was once a powerful tribe of savage warriors that lived deep in the Shadowlands. Their story became a tragic one in the twelfth century when an unusually virulent disease, one which even Nezumi constitutions could not wholly defeat, wiped out their Rememberers. Cut off from their traditions and past, the tribe was left helpless and alone. The sinister race known as the Tsuno learned of the Stained Paw's fate and took cruel advantage of it. A Tsuno Soultwister disguised himself as a powerful Nezumi Shaman and seduced the Stained Paw with lies and false tales, convincing them to willingly become allies of the Dark Lord. The Tsuno turned the Stained Paw against their fellow Nezumi with vicious effect.

It was the Nezumi hero known as Ik'krt who helped the Stained Paw recognize the Tsuno treachery. With his help they defeated the Tsuno and recovered their identity as Nezumi, eventually seeking to join the One Tribe. The Crippled Bone, bitter over past conflict, opposed them at first, but when Ik'krt himself stepped forward to lead the Stained Paw the Crippled Bone set the past aside.

Tomorrow devastated the Stained Paw like every other tribe. Most of their great warriors, including Ik'krt, perished. But when they saw the plight of their old rivals the Crippled Bone, they rushed to their side. Side by side, the Stained Paw and Crippled Bone fought against the Shadowlands – and won, forming the new Crippled Paw tribe.

Tattered Ear Tribe

Benefit: +1 Awareness

For many centuries the Tattered Ear was the largest and most successful of all the Nezumi tribes. The greatest of the three tribes to emerge from the break-up of the Forever Racing Tomorrow tribe, they migrated north and made their home in the Shinomen Forest, surviving by scavenging off of humans in the surrounding territories.

The tribe was so large and successful that it eventually divided into seven semi-independent packs and ranged throughout Rokugan. The lands of the Crab, Crane, Scorpion, and Unicorn, not to mention several Minor Clans, were all at various times home to nomadic Tattered Ear packs. Each pack had a migratory circuit which required three and a half years to complete, followed by a year and a half dwelling in their ancient home in the Shinomen – which they called M-atikf'chtr-foo ("the Great Home"). A massive hollow tree in the center of their village would come to house some of the greatest treasures of the Nezumi: random shiny objects and artifacts collected over centuries of scouring the Empire's rubbish.

Because of their wide range, the Tattered Ear frequently came into contact with Nezumi in other lands. They quickly realized it was to their benefit to befriend these tribes, trading goods and information. Because of their gregarious nature they became the unofficial communication network of their race. If a Nezumi behind the Kaiu Wall wished to know what was happening in the lands of the Unicorn, all he needed to do was wait for the Tattered Ear to arrive and ask them.

The Tattered Ear's fortunes changed in the early twelfth century when the Naga race began to reawaken from their long sleep. The first encounters between the Naga and Nezumi were violent. Many Naga considered the Nezumi to be no more than food animals or rebellious pets. Skirmishes between the two races were frequent, and many Tattered Ear packs fled the Shinomen altogether.

Gradually, many of the Naga came to recognize that the Nezumi were no longer the simple creatures they once knew, but an intelligent race worthy of respect and compassion. They realized the Nezumi, like themselves, were enemies of both the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness. Though relations between the Tattered Ear and the Naga continued to be strained, they were no longer hostile, and when the Naga returned to their slumber decades later, the Tattered Ear expanded throughout the Shinomen once more.

Though it was the Crippled Bone who first proposed the idea of the One Tribe, it would have been impossible without the Tattered Ear. Their connections throughout the Shadowlands and the Empire allowed all the Nezumi tribes to move and act as one, and the Great Home was considered the de facto capital of the One Tribe, where the leaders of many powerful Nezumi tribes often met to decide the fate of their people.

When Tomorrow ravaged the Nezumi race, the Naga understood precisely what had happened. The sleeping Naga sensed the conflict in the world of dreams and communicated the truth to their waking guardians through the bonds of the Akasha. The remaining Naga extended their hands to the surviving Nezumi in friendship. They helped the Tattered Ear to clean the Great Home, tending to the dead and organizing those who remained. Soon the other wandering packs returned, and the Tattered Ear was whole once more – if greatly diminished.

In the After Times, the Tattered Ear again send forth their migrating packs, but now with a new goal: to look for survivors. The Tattered Ear made it their duty to seek out the scattered tribes left behind, to gather the orphans and widows struck down by Tomorrow's wrath, and to bring them all back to the Great Home.



Third Whisker

Benefit: +1 Willpower

The Third Whisker are one of the smallest of Nezumi tribes, never numbering more than a few dozen individuals. However, they have always included a disproportionate number of prophets and Shamans and an especially strong link to the Transcendents. They are the third tribe that emerged from the centuries-old fracture of the Forever Racing Tomorrow tribe, and from their earliest origins they were beset with dire prophecies about terrible events lying in their future. Paralyzed by these visions, they remained in the Shadowlands until the eighth century, when the rise of the Maw forced them to flee north to the Crab lands. When the Maw was finally beaten back, the Third Whisker remained, living in tunnels beneath Shiro Kaiu and the newly built Kaiu Wall. There they remained, eventually forming an uneasy alliance with the Kaiu family. The Crab engineers often found the Nezumi highly annoying, but could not deny that the little creatures contributed to the Wall's defense and upkeep – after all, it was their home too.

The Third Whisker are some of the smallest of Nezumi, with an average height of only three feet. They are also among the grimmest and most stoic of ratlings, believing that the world is doomed and they are the only ones who know the truth. Although their Shamans are skilled, other tribes often regard them with trepidation due to their dour natures.

The Third Whisker were one of the first tribes to join the One Tribe, believing it might offer a way to avert their prophecies. When Tomorrow came, however, they believed their visions had finally come true, and their handful of survivors gave in to despair. To the best the Kaiu could determine, no Third Whisker Nezumi survived the first harsh winter of the After Times.

Campaign Options: The Nezumi as Allies

Many Nezumi tribes and individuals have formed alliances with humans over the centuries, and GMs can introduce them into campaigns in a variety of ways. However, care must be exercised in any such story. Nezumi have a very different view of the world then humans. They prefer to flee from danger whenever possible, only facing it directly when their tribe or young pups are in danger. Thus, ratling allies can be somewhat unreliable – provoking anger from samurai PCs.

To a Nezumi, the survival instinct overrules all else. If a creature poses a danger to you, you must react. If it is weaker than you – kill it before it becomes stronger. If it is stronger than you – flee from it until you become stronger. If flight is not an option, convince it you are not a threat by hiding, cowering, or even offering to help it. If all else fails, fight – and to the death, so as to hurt the enemy as much as possible and thereby help preserve the tribe.

Needless to say, samurai find such behavior contemptible, so a GM incorporating Nezumi into a storyline should proceed with caution. This is especially true if the GM goes so far as to allow a player to run a Nezumi PC. Although this can be done, conflict between the Nezumi PC and the samurai characters will be constant and potentially lethal.

On the other hand, Nezumi have many advantages humans cannot match. They are immune to the Taint and near-immune to disease. They know the Shadowlands better than the most skilled Hiruma scout, and can potentially rescue the PCs from dire and desperate circumstances. A clever GM can use such situations to force stiff-necked samurai to rethink their prejudices.

Ratlings can also be a source of comic relief. Their chattering, word-repeating speech patterns, their tendency to steal things (especially small shiny objects), and their profound differences from humans and human culture – all these things can be exploited to break the tension of an otherwise deadly serious excursion into the Shadowlands or the Shinomen Forest.

Campaign Options: Nezumi as PCs (or, Can I Play A Ratling?)

Sooner or later, nearly any L5R GM will encounter players who want to run Nezumi characters. To many players the idea of playing something foreign and outside the norm strikes a chord like nothing else. However, Nezumi PCs are not appropriate for every campaign. Even if a game is set entirely in the Crab lands, a Nezumi character will change the tone of the game substantially and force the rest of the group to adjust their play and choices to accommodate the Nezumi character. Elsewhere in the Empire, even during a time period when the Nezumi are relatively well regarded (such as the Toturi Dynasty), these problems escalate dramatically. GMs should discuss these issues not only with the potential Nezumi player but also the rest of the group, asking everyone to consider carefully whether the presence of a Nezumi PC will improve or harm the campaign's tone, storyline, and entertainment value.

As an alternative, the GM can consider taking a break from a conventional L5R campaign to run an all-Nezumi game. This can be a single playing session or even a short campaign, chronicling the adventures of a group of Nezumi as they struggle to deal with Shadowlands threats, dangerous humans, and alien Naga. Typically this would be set within a single tribe, but during the One Tribe era of the twelfth century the GM can viably create a multi-tribe party performing missions of great importance for the Nezumi people as a whole.

Another option is to depict a Nezumi who deliberately chooses to join human society and adopt human ways. Such a Nezumi can potentially gain an Honor Rank like a human, consciously attempt to embrace human ideals, and will be viewed as a bit odd (at best) by other Nezumi. There have been a few instances of Nezumi who were allowed to serve in the ranks of the Crab Clan, so the GM can employ this device as a way to add a Nezumi character to a Crab-oriented campaign with minimal disruption. Such a "humanized" Nezumi will function as though he has Honor of 2.0 and Glory and Status of zero, although his Glory can increase later.

A final option is to actually depict a "kinder and gentler Rokugan" in which the prejudice against non-humans like Nezumi and Naga is much less, allowing them to enter human society and function normally alongside samurai. This represents a radical change in the normal depiction of the Emerald Empire and is thus not something to be undertaken lightly, but a skilled GM can potentially create a very fun game out of such an alternative vision.

Campaign Options: The Nezumi as Adversaries

Some GMs may wish to use Nezumi as enemies – or at least as rivals or foils – for their player characters. This can be especially appropriate in a game that uses Naga PCs, but almost any game can potentially incorporate the Nezumi in these roles. The following sections offer some guidelines on different ways to present Nezumi as opponents.

Disease

The Rokugani traditionally view Nezumi as disease-ridden vermin. Though this reputation is not entirely deserved, it contains considerable truth. Because Nezumi are extremely resistant to illness, they are oblivious to the effects of disease. Villages wiped out by plague are attractive targets for Nezumi scroungers. Items once owned by plague victims (such as clothing, armor, blankets, or food) could be picked up by Nezumi and thus spread the disease to others. Also, Nezumi tend to carry fleas and ticks who can spread disease to other races.

When a new plague or sickness erupts in an area frequented by Nezumi, the local humans will readily blame the ratlings. PCs might be sent to investigate any known ratling tribes, and a particularly militant or paranoid lord might simply order the characters to kill the Nezumi immediately.

Hunger

Nezumi have no system of agriculture – they are hunters and scavengers by nature. Most Rokugani peasants make no real effort to protect their crops, trusting in the resident samurai to dissuade would-be thieves. Naturally, many Nezumi see this as an opportunity and take advantage of human farms to feed their tribes. Of course, Nezumi are not stupid. They recognize the danger of samurai and will usually try to be subtle about their thefts. Over time, however, a successful scrounger may grow bold and begin to steal more and more. Inevitably, the local tax collector notices the crop is coming up short and dispatches samurai to investigate.

Farms are not the only targets for a hungry Nezumi. They can consume spoiled or rotten food without harm and can easily digest matter that humans cannot, such as melon rinds, bones, fish scales, and other refuse. If a tribe has a particularly lean year their scroungers will become bolder, sneaking into the streets of local towns and cities to steal garbage. In larger cities an entire tribe may seek refuge in an abandoned house or a sewer. Naturally, if these Nezumi are discovered, the people will look to the local samurai to force the vermin back into the wilderness.

Culture Shock

Nezumi have their own language, customs, and history. Though in some ways they mimic Rokugani, they are essentially a separate culture dwelling in the Empire's shadow, and this inevitably leads to clashes, sometimes violent ones. The language barrier is the simplest and most common example of this. Very few humans can speak the Nezumi language, and even fewer Nezumi can speak Rokugani. A lack of accurate communication can cause simple misunderstandings to explode into violence.



The ratling lack of property sense is also a problem. It is quite common for ratling scroungers to recover samurai weapons and armor from battlefield corpses, a dire insult to any other samurai who later encounters his grandfather's sacred sword in the hands of a chittering rat-man.

Though Nezumi prefer to resolve disputes by running away, there are some insults they will not endure. For example, consider a group of traveling samurai who find a pile of sticks ready to hand when they camp for the night. They use the sticks to light a fire... and in the shadows, a Rememberer watches in horror as two centuries' worth of memory sticks go up in flames.

Madness

With a few exceptions, most Nezumi live in the Shadowlands. Though they are immune to the Taint, resistant to disease, and know how to survive in that barren wilderness, the bleak and hopeless nature of Fu Leng's realm can occasionally shake even the most stalwart Nezumi. In addition, it may sometimes happen that orphaned pups are left without a tribe and thus without anyone to adopt and care for them (a regrettably common problem in the After Times). These Nezumi grow to adulthood without any knowledge or awareness of their culture, with no language and no morality, nothing beyond the base instinct for survival.

When a Nezumi falls prey to madness, there are two possibilities. If he is not dangerous and can still serve a useful function (such as crafting tools, cooking food, or guarding the pups) the tribe continues to care for him as one of its own, though he is forbidden to mate. If he is dangerous, however, he is cast out. The tribe leaves a small supply of food and water and moves on.

A tribe will not actually kill a mad Nezumi unless there is no other choice. The Nezumi believe insanity is carried in the blood, and thus anyone who kills a mad Nezumi will likely become cursed by madness as well.

Outcast Nezumi often cannot distinguish friend from foe. Some even abandon their instinctive flight response and attack anything they see. Such creatures usually perish in short order, either from starvation or the predations of Shadowlands monsters, but occasionally they make their way into Rokugan and become a threat to humans. After Tomorrow, this problem becomes more acute, especially in tribes which were completely devastated.

Prejudice

Rokugani and Nezumi both have an innate tendency to distrust outsiders. In fact, given the vast differences between their two cultures, it is surprising they ever manage to get along at all. PCs who harbor intense prejudice toward non-humans will automatically tend to get into conflicts with them. For a party that relishes combat, the occasional Nezumi encounter might offer a welcome break from battling bandits, rival samurai, and Shadowlands monsters.

However, the Nezumi need not be mere faceless villains. Perhaps they possess information the PCs cannot obtain by force. They might know a safe route through the Shadowlands to reclaim a lost artifact, or know how to kill a particularly rare oni threatening a PC's clan. Perhaps the party has been dispatched to form an alliance with the Hiruma family – who then demand the PCs make amends to their Nezumi allies. Will the PCs swallow their pride?

And if the PCs go out of their way to kill every ratling they meet, the Nezumi are not without resources for vengeance. Perhaps a PC wakes up one morning to discover that his Name is gone and none of his fellow samurai remember who he is...

Territory

While humans are usually quite attached to their homes and cities, Nezumi are a great deal more flexible. A Nezumi warren is a simple thing, usually little more than a natural cave or series of tunnels dug into loose earth, and a tribe faced with sufficient danger will readily abandon its home to find or dig another. In fact, most Nezumi are highly nomadic, moving from place to place as their needs demand, and making a new warren wherever they settle for a season. However, even the most wide-ranging tribes usually have certain territories where they prefer to roam, and tribes will frequently return to old warrens dug during previous migrations. Although these tribal claims are somewhat loose, when they overlap important resources such as good hunting areas or favorite old warrens the Nezumi take them very seriously. Thus, if Rokugani settlers endanger an important resource the Nezumi might attempt to drive them off. Most tribes are hesitant to kill invading humans (killing humans always seems to bring more) and instead attempt to drive the intruders off. They might masquerade as spirits (or, if there are shamans available, summon real ones) to scare the humans away. Conversely, humans are sometimes driven to seek resources Nezumi possess. If a tribe has settled over a gold deposit or other valuable asset, samurai may be dispatched to drive them out.

Theft

As already discussed, Nezumi have odd notions about property. If someone fails to hide or protect something it rightly belongs to whoever can claim it. Some Nezumi are incorrigible thieves and this is a frequent cause of conflict with humans. Ratlings are especially attracted to shiny objects, but also like sweet foods, colorful clothing, human tools, and human weapons. Though human armor rarely fits them properly, Nezumi have become quite adept over the centuries at adjusting it to their own anatomy.

When a Nezumi steals something valuable, it may fall upon the PCs to retrieve it. What will they do when they learn the identity of the culprit? Will they show mercy and attempt to negotiate, or simply answer with violence, perhaps instigating a battle with the entire tribe? What if the Nezumi didn't realize the true significance of the item and wishes to apologize? What if the Nezumi decides he doesn't want to give it back and attempts to flee?

The Fangs of Tomorrow

A GM who wishes to use Nezumi as an ongoing Nemesis in the campaign may wish to consider one special possibility – an actively hostile tribe. The Stained Paw tribe, controlled by Tsuno deceivers, are one example of this concept. Another idea would be to create a tribe for the specific purpose of being an enemy to the PCs.

Consider the idea of the Fangs of Tomorrow, an extremely fatalistic tribe of post-Tomorrow Nezumi. They are survivors of a dozen different doomed tribes who have banded together under a mad Rememberer. The Fangs hate all mankind with a deep passion. They believe Tomorrow has chosen them to exterminate man's Empire. Led by their mad prophet, the Fangs are extremely paranoid and willing to be patient, awaiting the day when their vengeance will strike down the humans. Tomorrow has charged them with a difficult task, after all, and only the strongest Nezumi are worthy to bear its burden. The Fangs can serve as a powerful recurring enemy for a campaign, especially if they gain any Shamans and access to Name Magic.

New Mechanics: Creating Nezumi Characters and NPCs

Creating Nezumi characters (whether as NPCs or as PCs) follows the same basic rules as for human characters, outlined in the *Book of Fire* in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook. However, a number of modifications are made to reflect the unusual nature of Nezumi:

Step 1: Pick Your Tribe

A Nezumi's Tribe has mechanical effects similar to a Family bonus for human characters. These Trait bonuses are listed earlier in the chapter during the discussion of tribes. Given the vast number of other Nezumi tribes which have existed throughout Rokugan's history, the GM and players may also choose to create original tribes with their own Trait bonuses.

Step 2: Pick Your School

Nezumi have four major schools, Warrior, Rememberer, Shaman, and Scrounger. These four schools are normally available to Nezumi of any tribe, but specific historical circumstances may warrant exceptions. For instance, during the Toturi Dynasty (mid-twelfth century) the Stained Paw tribe does not have any Rememberers. The GM is the ultimate arbiter of whether a specific school is available to a specific tribe in his campaign.

Nezumi cannot learn schools from other races and Nezumi Shamans cannot cast any kind of spell other than Name spells.

Step 3: Customize Your Character

A Nezumi begins with 35 Experience Points (the lower point value compensating for the racial abilities which all Nezumi share). Traits, Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages are purchased normally, and the Name Trait (see "Name" below) can be raised in the same manner as a human's Void Ring.

In general, a Nezumi is restricted to Bugei and Low Skills. Certain exceptions can exist: Rememberers and Shamans can take Divination, Shamans can take Meditation and Perform: Dance, and many Nezumi can learn Lore (of appropriate types such as Lore: Name or Lore: Shadowlands). Nezumi who have close relations with humans (such as the Tattered Ear tribe) can legitimately take other Rokugani skills. The GM has the final say on whether a Nezumi character can take a particular skill.

Nezumi cannot take human Social or Spiritual Advantages or Disadvantages. Material, Mental, and Physical Advantages and Disadvantages may or may not be applicable to Nezumi, depending on their specific nature – the GM has the final say.

A list of Nezumi-only Advantages and Disadvantages appears later in this chapter, and these are available to any Nezumi character.

Step 4: Derived Attributes

Under normal circumstances, Nezumi begin with zero Honor, no Status, and no Glory. Nezumi cannot gain (or lose) Honor, Glory, or Status unless they attempt to join human society (see "Nezumi as PCs" earlier in this chapter for details).

Nezumi living within their own society possess a new quality, Niche (explained after this section), which replaces Honor, Glory, and Status in Nezumi society.

All Nezumi have certain basic physical attributes (described later in this section) which they receive at no cost in Experience Points.

Name

Ratlings attach great importance to names, and the "stronger" a Ratling's name is, the more potent and lucky he or she will be. In game terms, Ratlings have a Name Trait which functions mechanically in the same manner as the Void Ring does for humans, including the ability to spend "Name Points" for the same effects humans get from Void Points. However, Ratlings cannot meditate or perform tea ceremonies to regain Name Points, and cannot enter Center Stance.

Because the strength of a Nezumi's name is dependant upon his deeds and standing within nezumi society, whenever the Niche Rank is lower than the Name Trait, an individual Nezumi's Name Trait is temporarily reduced to his Niche Rank (rounded down). The Name Trait reduction functions like Ring and Trait reduction and does not reduce the Nezumi's Insight Rank (as per the Book of Earth, L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook). For example, Ri'pach'ip has a Niche of 3.5 and a Name of 4. His Name is treated as 3 until his Niche Rank has been raised to at least 4.0. He may continue to buy a higher Name Trait, but all rolls associated with the Name Trait and any abilities referencing the Name Trait would still treat his Name as 3.

Niche

All Nezumi have a starting Niche Rank determined by their school. To the Nezumi, Niche is an indication of their place within their society – it thus functions as a sort of combination of Honor, Glory, and Status. Like those stats, Niche is measured in Ranks from 0 to 10, and each Rank is divided into 10 Points. Any Advantages, Disadvantages, spells, or other effects that normally depend on Honor, Glory, or Status instead affect a Nezumi's Niche. (This includes Honor Rolls if that optional rule is used.) Niche is closely related to Name, as outlined in the previous section.

Table 6.1: Sample Niche Ranks

Legendary Shaman or Rememberer	10
Legendary Chieftain or Scrounger	9
Tribal Shaman or Chief Rememberer	7
Chieftain	6
Victorious Hero or Very Successful Scrounger	5
Average Nezumi Shaman	4
Average Rememberer	3.5
Average Nezumi	3
Nezumi Child	2
Newborn Pup	1

Because Nezumi social and cultural standards are so different from the Rokugani, gaining and losing Niche works a bit differently than gaining and losing Honor, Glory, or Status. The following charts show typical awards and penalties of Niche points. As with Honor and Glory, the GM should use common sense and discretion when determining the awards for specific situations (hence the range of numbers presented for each award or penalty.) Some of these effects can be quite common, and the GM should consider not offering rewards for Nezumi who perform the same act repetitively.

Nezumi never lose Niche for using Low Skills.

Table 6.2: Suggested Niche Awards and Penalties

Action of Great Name	Niche Points Gained
Killing an enemy of the tribe	0-1
Running away from an enemy	1-2
Outsmarting an enemy	1-3
Stealing from an enemy	1-3
Making a friend or ally	2-4
Obtaining new food, treasure, weapons, or tools for the tribe	1-2
Inventing a new tool or weapon	2-5
Forming a clever plan	0-1
Seeking advice from someone wise	0-1
Fathering children	1-2
Bearing a litter	4-5
Saving the life of a child	4-6
Action of Poor Name	**Niche Points Lost**
Getting into an unnecessary fight	0-1
Stealing from an ally	1-3
Allowing something to be stolen from the tribe	2-4
Stealing from your tribe	3-5
Wasting resources	0-1
Abandoning the tribe	2-5
Making an enemy	1-3
Destroying food	1-2
Making a poor decision when advice was available	0-1
Causing the death of any Nezumi, by action or omission	3-5
Causing the death of any child, by action or omission	5-7
Aiding Fu Leng's minions	10
Being the final survivor of your tribe	50

Nezumi Physical Abilities

These abilities are automatically available to all Nezumi at character creation, without any cost in Experience Points.

- *Bite:* A Nezumi can inflict normal unarmed damage with its bite, and can chew through wood and soft stone at the rate of 1' per hour.
- *Burrowing:* Nezumi can burrow through soft earth at one tenth their normal movement speed. If they wish to leave a stable tunnel behind, they may only burrow one foot per hour.
- *Disease Resistance:* All Nezumi are immune to most normal diseases and infections. If the GM judges a disease sufficiently virulent to infect a Nezumi, the character still gets a +3k0 bonus to any rolls made to resist its effects.



- *Nezumi Agility:* All Nezumi gain +2k0 on any Athletics rolls that involve climbing or jumping, and on any Sleight of Hand rolls made to escape bonds.
- *Nezumi Scent:* A heightened sense of scent grants Nezumi +1k1 on any Hunting Skill rolls where scent may be a factor.
- *Pheromones:* Nezumi can leave pheromone trails that indicate gender, tribe, and the direction in which they are traveling. These are imperceptible to humans, but can be detected by other Nezumi up to twenty feet away. Pheromone trails linger up to one month, unless washed away earlier. Some animals, notably horses and dogs, become extremely aggressive when they encounter Nezumi pheromones.
- *Swift:* All Nezumi have Swift 2 (as per the creature ability from the *Book of Void*, L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook).
- *Taint Immunity:* All Nezumi are completely immune to the Shadowlands Taint and, consequently, cannot cast maho spells.

Nezumi-Only Advantages

Clever Tail [Physical] (4 points)

Many Nezumi use their tails only for balance, but some manage to "train" their tails to function as a prehensile limb. You may use your tail to pick up and manipulate small objects (including Small weapons). If you make a Knockdown attack with your tail, you gain a +1k1 bonus on the Contested Roll to see if the Knockdown succeeds.

Favored Pup of the Chief [Social] (5 points)

You are the favored child of a prominent Nezumi – most likely a tribal chieftain, although a famous Rememberer or Shaman would also be applicable. Other Nezumi treat you with respect and tend to offer you gifts and friendship in hope of future reward. You start play with +1 Rank of Niche.

Fearless [Mental] (5 points)

You are that rarest of Nezumi, one born without fear, ready to always fight rather than back down and flee. You gain +3k3 when resisting Fear effects, and you may potentially join the Nezumi Berserker Advanced School.

Forever Memory [Mental] (6 points, Rememberer Only)

While other Rememberers can draw upon memories from a few generations past, a Nezumi with Forever Memory can recall stories from ancient times, sometimes even from when the Nezumi Empire was at its height. This extended memory allows the Rememberer to create Memory Sticks with an ease that other Rememberers can only envy. You gain a +1k1 bonus every time you create a Memory Stick. Other Nezumi who are aware of your talents will regard you will awe, respect, and deference.

Human Allies [Social] (4 points)

You have friends and allies among a group of humans, most likely in the Crab Clan although your specific tribe and history might dictate otherwise. You gain one additional item of human equipment (which can be a weapon) and may potentially learn human-specific Skills, at the GM's discretion.

Namebound [Spiritual] (5 points, Shamans only)

Some Nezumi Shamans have exceptional gifts. Choose one Name magic spell – it does not count against the maximum number of spells you may know, and you gain a +1k1 to your Spell Casting Roll when casting this spell. You may purchase this Advantage again each time you gain a School Rank (subject to GM's permission).

Shine-Shiney Eyes [Physical] (3 points)

Nezumi mate for a period of one year, the females choosing new mates each autumn. Competition for the more desirable tribe members is fierce. You are considered exceptionally attractive by Nezumi standards, and gain a +1k1 bonus on all Social rolls with Nezumi of the opposite gender.

Teeth of Stone [Physical] (4 points)

All Nezumi have extremely sharp and powerful frontal incisors, but some are truly formidable. Your unarmed bite attacks inflict an extra +1k1 damage, your speed of chewing through wood and soft stone is doubled, and you may chew through hard stone or metal at the rate of 1' per hour.

Tribal Wanderer [Social] (3 points)

When a Nezumi tribe is too small to properly train all its youth, some of them will travel to larger tribes to seek learning – especially if they have gifts that their own tribe cannot properly evoke. You have trained with Nezumi from another tribe, and may learn a school from them that would be unavailable in your own tribe. You also have friendly contacts in the tribe where you train, which may come in handy if your own tribe faces danger.

Nezumi-Only Disadvantages:

Kwa'thch [Physical] (2 points)

This word roughly translates as "ugly as the boiling pit." You are considered unattractive by Nezumi standards, and suffer a –1k1 penalty to all Social rolls with other Nezumi, regardless of gender.

Lost Tail [Physical] (4 points)

Some gruesome accident or battle has cost you your tail, severely impacting your balance. This carries great stigma in Nezumi social circles (-1k0 to all Social rolls with other Nezumi) and also reduces your natural bonus when running and jumping from +2k0 to +1k0.

Nameless [Spiritual] (9 points)

A Nezumi Shaman has cursed you to remove your Name, cutting you off from your race. Your friends and relatives no longer remember you and you have been cast out from your tribe. Your Niche Rank is zero and cannot increase, and you may not spend Name Points. If you manage to join a new tribe, you may begin to form a new Name and remove these restrictions, but such a quest may only succeed at the discretion of the GM.

Nezumi Madness [Social] (5 points)

A Nezumi with this Disadvantage is considered insane by other Nezumi, although their judgment may not be accurate. You are not allowed to mate and are unable to gain Niche while you are considered mad. However, other Nezumi will not harm you for fear of becoming mad themselves.

Nose Blind [Physical] (2 points)

You do not have the normal Nezumi sense of smell. You may have been born without it or you may have suffered some sort of accident or trauma. You cannot use a Memory Stick and cannot read the pheromone messages from other Nezumi. You are something of a pariah in Nezumi society, and suffer a -1k0 penalty on all Social rolls with other Nezumi.

Nezumi Schools

New Basic School: Nezumi Warriors ("Ch") [Bushi]

Nezumi warriors are a cunning, hardy lot that make the most of their physical abilities. They are adept at utilizing guerilla tactics and fighting as a team. They serve as the hunters and protectors of the tribe.

- **Benefit**: +1 Agility
- **Skills**: Athletics, Defense, Hunting (Survival), Jiujutsu, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth, any one Weapon skill
- **Niche:** 3.5
- **Starting Outfit**: Any one Weapon, Light or Heavy Armor, crude leather pouch, 1 koku worth of scavenged items and shiny objects

Techniques:

Rank One: Speed of the Rat

Nezumi are lightning fast creatures with incredible reflexes. A Nezumi warrior may re-roll his Initiative a number of times per day equal to his Rank in this school. The warrior may choose which of the two rolls to keep. The warrior adds half of his ranks in the Athletics skill to his Armor TN while not in the Full Attack Stance

Rank Two: Strength of the Pack

Young Nezumi warriors hunt and fight in packs to increase their chances of survival. For every ally who has attacked the Nezumi's target since his last Turn (whether their attacks were successful or not), he gains a +1k0 bonus on his next melee attack roll. The total dice bonus may not exceed his School Rank.

Rank Three: Strike-Strike Fast

The warrior has learned the true lightning speed of the Nezumi. He may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank Four: Darting Strike

Accustomed to fighting larger, stronger opponents, the warrior has learned to rely on his speed to avoid their blows. The warrior adds +10 to his Armor TN against any attack roll from an opponent with a lower Initiative score.

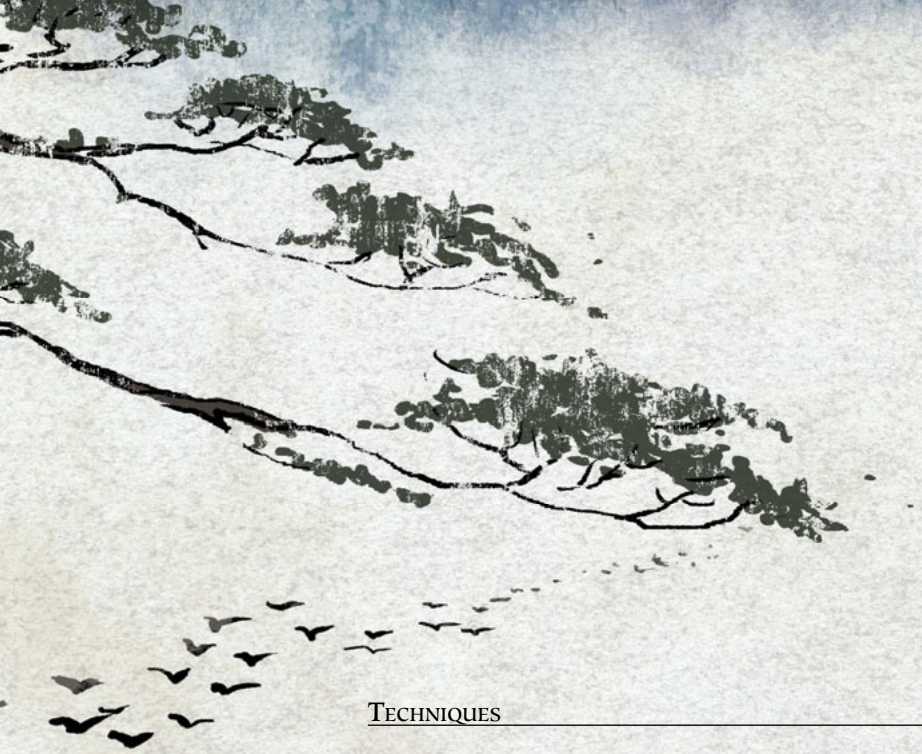
Rank Five: Tail Sweep

The tail is an often-overlooked advantage of the Nezumi warrior, and at this rank the Ratling has learned to make full use of it. During any round in which the Nezumi makes a successful melee attack, he may immediately take a Free Action to make another attack against the same target with his tail. This is normally considered an unarmed attack, although a Nezumi with the Clever Tail Advantage may use Small weapons instead.

New Basic School: Nezumi Scrounger ("Ithith")

The term Scroungers is a catch-all for Nezumi who serve their tribe in many roles: scouts, spies, and thieves. They are extremely cunning and have a knack for using minimal resources to maximum efficiency. They are also masters of defensive combat, able to confound and confuse enemies while they make their escape.

- **Benefit**: +1 Perception
- **Skills**: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth (Sneaking), Sleight of Hand, any one Skill
- **Niche:** 2.5
- **Starting Outfit:** Any Small or Peasant weapon, Ashigaru Armor, large sack, and 3 koku worth of scavenged items.



Techniques

Rank 1: Scurry-Scurry Through the Darkness

The first lesson taught to every Scrounger is to rely on speed and cunning. You gain a bonus of +2k0 to all your Stealth Skill rolls, and you may add your Stealth Skill Rank to your Armor TN at all times (even if you are caught unaware).

Rank 2: Fight and Fly

Scroungers are taught the art of distraction in order to avoid dangerous foes. If you successfully strike an opponent in a skirmish, and there is cover or darkness available nearby to conceal you, you may forego inflicting Wounds. Instead, you spend a Name Point and make a Contested Roll of your Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility against your opponent's Investigation (Notice) / Perception. If you succeed, your opponent loses track of your location.

Rank 3: Yours is Mine

Scroungers are such swift and instinctive thieves that they can steal even from those who are aware of their presence. If you are within 5' of a target, you may take a Simple Action to make a Contested Roll of your Sleight of Hand (Pick Pocket) / Agility against your opponent's Defense / Agility. If you succeed, you snatch a random item from the target's obi, pocket, or any other accessible place. (You cannot steal items directly out of your opponent's hands.)

Rank 4: Riding the Shadow

The Scrounger who has reached this level of skill is now so lightning fast that he may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when he is using unarmed attacks or weapons with the Small or Peasant qualities.

Rank 5: Hide From Tomorrow

At this rank, a Scrounger becomes so swift and cunning that he can literally hide in his enemy's shadow. You may attempt to hide behind your opponent as a Complex Action, making a Contested Roll of Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility against your opponent's Investigation (Notice) / Perception. If you beat your opponent by at least 15, you successfully hide behind him. Your opponent may suspect where you are, but you move too quickly for him to catch a glimpse of you. You may not hide behind more than one opponent at a time.

On each subsequent Round you must take a Free Action to make the Contested Roll again, thereby remaining concealed from your opponent. So long as you continue to succeed, you may take any other actions you desire (including attacking other enemies or using other Techniques). However, if you successfully attack your opponent, you are discovered and this technique cannot be used against that opponent again for the rest of this skirmish.

New Basic School: Nezumi Shaman (Nameseeker/"Kir") [Shugenja]

The powers of Nezumi Shamans are both strange and formidable, and are discussed in depth later in this chapter.

- **Benefit:** +1 Name
- **Skills:** Lore: Shadowlands, Lore: Spirit Realms (Yume-do), Meditation, Perform: Nezumi Dance, Stealth, any two Skills
- **Niche:** 4.0
- **Starting Outfit:** Any Small or Peasant weapon, poor quality robes, leather pouch, two Koku worth of scavenged items.

Technique: Name Magic

A Nezumi shaman is capable of casting Nezumi Name Magic spells. See the section later in this chapter for details. All Shamans begin play knowing three Name Magic spells of appropriate Mastery Level of their choice.

New Basic School: Nezumi Rememberer ("Tch'tch")

Nezumi Rememberers are the keepers of the history, culture, and ethics of the Nezumi race. They are responsible for making certain the deeds of the Nezumi people are not lost to Yesterday. The Rememberers aid their memories with special items called Memory Sticks, which are described in detail in the section following Schools.

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Lore: Nezumi History, Lore: Nezumi Culture, Lore: Shadowlands, Perform: Storytelling, Stealth, any one Skill
- **Niche:** 3.5
- **Starting Outfit:** Any Small or Peasant weapon, leather pouch, two Koku worth of scavenged items, four wooden sticks (suitable to be made into memory sticks)

Technique: Remembering

Rememberers are taught from earliest youth how to create Memory Sticks, tangible reminders of the past. A Rememberer may normally create any Memory Sticks with a Mastery Level equal to his Rank in this School, but may also create one type of Memory Stick that is one Mastery Level above his current School Rank. (Thus a Rank Two Rememberer can create all Mastery Level One and Two Memory Sticks, and one type of Mastery Level Three Memory Stick). See the rules for Memory Sticks for more details on how these items are created and used.

All Rememberers begin with the Precise Memory Advantage at no Experience Point cost.

Nezumi Advanced School: Berserkers ("Chitatachikkan")

- **Requirements:** Agility 4, Strength 5, Earth 4, any Weapon skill (or Jiujutsu) at Rank 5.
- **Special Requirement:** The "brave-bold-sunlit-warriors-with-great-skill" are trained from those of their race born without fear, a rare trait indeed. You must have the Fearless Advantage.

Techniques

Rank One: Mad Fury.

The Berserkers are touched by a power most Nezumi do not understand, and in combat they are a torrent of furious attacks. You gain a +1k1 bonus to all attack rolls made while in the Full Attack Stance. You may make melee attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action.

Rank Two: Dance of the Doomed

The Berserkers do not feel pain, instead fighting all the harder as their life-blood leaks out. Once per skirmish, at the start of your Turn you may take a Free Action to activate this Technique. Once it is active, you may ignore Wound Penalties (including Down or Out) for a number of Rounds equal to your Strength Rank. This ability does not allow you to keep fighting after you are dead.

Rank Three: Sever Tomorrow

For a true Berserker, failure is worse than death. If you suffer enough Wounds to kill you, before dying you may immediately take a Free Action to make a final melee attack against an opponent within melee range (this must be the opponent who killed you if he is within reach). You gain a +3k0 bonus to this attack roll. You die after this attack is resolved (whether or not it succeeds).

Rememberers and Memory Sticks

Remembers are not made, they are born. Only one in every few hundred Nezumi is born with the ability to remember clearly. When a young Nezumi is identified as having this gift, one of the tribe's senior Rememberers will take the young one under his tutelage and begin to teach him about the history of his people and tribe. The young Rememberer learns not only the history of his tribe and people but also the secrets of Memory Sticks and how they aid him to remember events from long ago, a sort of Nezumi racial memory.

Memory Sticks are usually about six inches in length and are often decorated with feathers or shiny things to signify their importance to the tribe. Aside from that, they appear to be little more than a short piece of wood that has been chewed on, leaving it knobbled and irregular. However, to the Nezumi these sticks are the key to unlocking memories of their race's past. The intricate pattern of chew marks that covers each stick are significant in themselves, and each stick is also impregnated with a series of pheromones that temporarily awaken memories within the Nezumi who tastes and smells them. Because the pheromones are temporary, Memory Sticks have to be cared for and refreshed periodically; however, highly experienced Rememberers have learned how to create Memory Sticks that can last almost forever.

Creating Memory Sticks

Creating a Memory Stick is an arduous and lengthy process. Only Rememberers know the secrets of creating them, and because Nezumi pheromones are virtually undetectable by other races, only the Nezumi may use them. Memory Sticks have a Mastery Level much like spells, and Rememberers may normally only create Memory Sticks of a Mastery Level equal or less than their Rank in the Rememberer School. (However, each Rememberer may create a single type of Memory Stick that is one Mastery Level higher than their Rememberer School Rank.)

Creating a Memory Stick from a normal piece of wood takes a number of hours equal to the stick's Mastery Level. Each type of Memory Stick has a TN required to create it – the Rememberer must succeed on this TN with a Skill Roll of Lore: Nezumi Culture / Intelligence. Due to the fleeting nature of Nezumi pheromones, each Memory Stick normally only retains its powers for one week per Mastery Level before it becomes a mundane piece of wood once more. However, any Rememberer who is able to create Memory Sticks of that Mastery Level may "recharge" the stick by examining it for a few minutes and making a Lore: Nezumi Culture / Intelligence roll at a TN equal to half (rounded up) of the original TN needed to create the stick. The most experienced Rememberers (those who have attained School Rank Five) may create Memory Sticks that never become inactive.

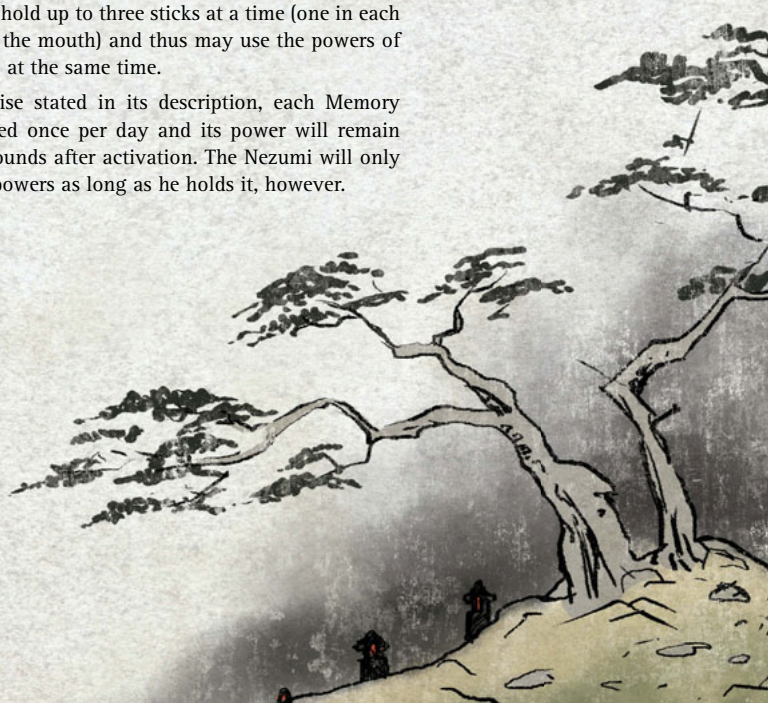
Each Memory Stick a Rememberer creates has an intangible spiritual connection to that specific Rememberer. Because of this connection, most Rememberers may only create a limited number of active Memory Sticks at one time. A Rememberer may have a number of Memory Sticks equal to his Name Ring + Rememberer School Rank. (There is no limit to how many expired Memory Sticks they can have.) At School Rank Five, a Rememberer is no longer limited and may have any number of Memory Sticks active at one time.

Using a Memory Stick

Any Nezumi with a sense of smell can activate a Memory Stick. To activate a stick, a Nezumi must hold it in either a hand or in his mouth and inhale deeply while either looking at or feeling the chew marks on the stick. This is a Simple Action and activates the power of the stick.

A Nezumi can hold up to three sticks at a time (one in each hand and one in the mouth) and thus may use the powers of up to three sticks at the same time.

Unless otherwise stated in its description, each Memory Stick may be used once per day and its power will remain active for five Rounds after activation. The Nezumi will only benefit from its powers as long as he holds it, however.



Raises and Memory Sticks

A Rememberer may enhance the effects of a Memory Stick by taking Raises on the Lore: Nezumi Culture Skill Roll to create it. Each such Raise increases the length of time it takes to create the Memory Stick by an hour.

- Duration: The duration of the Stick's abilities may be increased by one increment for each Raise. One Round becomes two Rounds, one hour becomes two hours, etc.
- Frequency of Use: Many sticks may only be used once within a given time increment (an hour, a day, etc). Three Raises will allow a stick to be used an additional time within the same increment.
- Combination: Two types of Memory Sticks may be combined into a single stick, allowing both to be activated separately or at the same time. This requires five Raises. A combined stick still counts as two active Memory Sticks for the Rememberer who creates or reactivates it.

Some Memory Sticks also have Raises for specific enhancements listed in their description. These Raises likewise increase the creation time of the Memory Stick by one hour per Raise.

Mastery Level 1 Memory Sticks

Builder's Stick

- TN to Create: 10

This stick tells the tale of a clever Builder. It grants the Nezumi a +1k1 bonus to a specific Craft Skill, which must be chosen when the stick is created. These sticks are usually shaved so they are perfectly smooth and uniform wherever there are no chew marks.

Digger's Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a Builder who dug a huge warren in a single day. For an hour per day, this stick doubles the Nezumi's burrowing speed. These sticks are usually cut so that one end is flat like the head of a chisel.

Father's Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a brave father who rescued his kidnapped pups. The stick is attuned to a specific willing creature (not necessarily a Nezumi) and is usually left behind in the warren. Once per hour, a Nezumi holding the stick can command it to point unerringly toward the creature to whom it is attuned. (The stick cannot sense the creature beyond a distance of ten miles.) Raises may be taken at creation to increase the range at which the stick will work, adding an extra ten miles for each Raise. These sticks are usually made from a piece of wood with a large knot in it.

Happy Stick

- TN to Create: 15

This stick tells the tale of a good-natured Nezumi who always did the right thing. It allows the Nezumi to add +2k1 instead of +1k1 to any rolls enhanced by the expenditure of a Name Point. These sticks are usually fairly unremarkable at first glance. A closer examination, however, reveals that these sticks are made from wood that is exotic for the area. The wood is always of the finest quality.

Mother's Stick

- TN to Create: 15

This stick tells the tale of a mother's love. If it is carried for a full day and held for at least an hour during that time, the holder can heal Wounds as if his Stamina is one Rank higher (this does not actually change his Stamina Rank). Rememberers can take Raises to increase the power of the stick: every two Raises increase the holder's effective Stamina for recovering Wounds by 1. These sticks are generally shorter than other Memory Sticks and painted with comforting colors.

Scout's Stick

- TN to Create: 15

This stick tells the tale of an extraordinary scout skilled in many things. While it is active the stick grants one Rank in a single Skill in which the holder is unskilled. The holder may choose the Skill when the stick is activated. These sticks are usually thin and short so they may be hidden easier.

Swimmer's Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the story of a Nezumi who was as at home in the water as he was on the land. While active this stick allows the user to swim in all but the most tempestuous conditions (GM's discretion). For purposes of swimming the Nezumi is considered to have three additional Ranks of Athletics, and gains the benefit of the Swimming emphasis even if he does not have it. These sticks are usually made of driftwood that has been bleached white by the sun.

Wanderer's Stick

- TN to Create: 10

This stick tells the tale of a wandering Nezumi who was always able to find his way home again. The Nezumi using this stick always knows the direction of his home (either the tribe's current location or their largest established warren). It can be used as often as the holder likes. These sticks are usually longer than most other Memory Sticks and sometimes double as walking sticks for the Nezumi who carry them.

Warrior's Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a mighty warrior. It grants the Nezumi a +1k1 bonus to any Skill rolls with a single Weapon skill (or Jiujutsu). The Rememberer must choose which Skill the stick augments when he creates it. These sticks are usually sharpened at one end.

Mastery Level 2 Memory Sticks

Food Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a time of great abundance, and provides solace during the winter, which Nezumi call the Lean Times. By holding this stick for one hour, the Nezumi may ignore the penalties for hunger for one full day. This stick may be used every day for up to one week before it ceases to function. These sticks usually have a hollowed end that resembles the head of a Rokugani spoon.

Friend Stick

- TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a gregarious Nezumi who had many friends. The holder gains a +1k1 bonus to all Social rolls (including rolls with non-Nezumi) while the stick is active. These sticks are usually ornamented with something shiny, often a gift from a friend.

Home Sticks

- TN to Create: 15

Creating Home Sticks actually creates two sticks, attuned to each other. These paired sticks tell the tale of a great friendship. Once per hour, each stick can be commanded to unerringly point in the direction of the other, so long as the other stick is less than fifty miles away. Raises can be used to increase the range, by fifty miles for every two Raises. These sticks are usually made from a single piece of wood, split down the middle lengthwise to create two equally sized sticks.

Lovers' Stick

- TN to Create: 15

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi who sacrificed everything for his love. The holder of this stick can heal another by up to 10 Wounds, once per day, by touch. The holder suffers an equal number of Wounds, which must be healed naturally and not by magic. These sticks are usually very nondescript, though the story written upon them is not.

Nose Stick

- TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi tracker with an extraordinarily sensitive nose. The holder gains an additional +1k1 bonus on Hunting rolls where scent may be a factor. These sticks are usually made from the wood of fragrant flowering trees so that the scent of the wood will not offend the heightened senses of the Nezumi who use them.



Wisdom Stick

- TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi who spent his life seeking the answer to an unanswered question. By breaking the stick, the holder can ask one question of a Transcendent. The Transcendent will answer to the best of its ability, but there are some questions even the Transcendents cannot answer. These sticks are usually very traditional with little or no ornamentation.

Mastery Level 3 Memory Sticks

Armor Stick

- TN to Create: 30

This stick tells the tale of the Nezumi friendship with the Crab Clan and the many things the Nezumi have learned from Crab warriors. If the holder is not wearing armor, his Armor TN is increased by 10 and he gains 5 Reduction, as if he were wearing heavy armor like the Crab bushi. If the Nezumi is already wearing armor, he may ignore any Skill penalties it inflicts. Some ancient versions of this stick were made of petrified wood, but most are made from simply a very hard wood.

Life Stick

- TN to Create: 35

This stick tells the tale of a wounded Nezumi warrior who was able to overcome his injuries and prevail against all odds. The holder of this stick can call upon its power once per day. It will restore Wounds up to 5x his Earth, or instead it can allow him to ignore all Wound penalties (except for death) for one hour. The Rememberer who creates this stick may take two Raises to allow the user to use both abilities at once. The Rememberer may also take four Raises to cause the stick to heal up to 10x Earth of Wounds. These sticks are usually made with green wood that stays green as long as the stick is active.

Runner's Stick

TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of an extremely fast Nezumi. The holder may move as if his Water Ring were two Ranks higher (this stacks with the Nezumi's natural Swift ability). Raises can be made to further increase this effect, adding an additional Rank to the runner's effective Water Ring for every two Raises. These sticks are generally fairly thin and well balanced so the Nezumi using them barely notices their weight.

Scrounger's Stick

TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of an extraordinarily clever Nezumi scrounger. The holder gains a +1k1 bonus on Stealth and Sleight-of-Hand Skill rolls while the stick is active. These sticks are usually made from sharpened and fire-blackened pieces of wood.

Mastery Level 4 Memory Sticks

Berserker's Stick

TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of a ferocious Nezumi berserker. The holder gains a bonus +1k1 on damage rolls with either a specific weapon or with unarmed damage (the creator chooses when making the stick). These sticks often resemble short clubs.

Demon Stick

TN to Create: 30

This stick tells the tale of a great demon defeated by a tribe of Nezumi, who used their wits and ingenuity to beat the Invulnerable creature. While this stick is active the holder can harm Invulnerable creatures with any weapon as if it were a crystal or jade weapon. If the creature is Tainted, its Reduction is also decreased by 3 whenever the Nezumi holding the Demon Stick attacks it. The ends of these sticks are often carved into the shape of a demon head.

Dream Stick

TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a strange dream. Once per week, the holder can enter the Realm of Dreams (Yume-do) while sleeping but remain aware and in control of his actions. These sticks sometimes have small branches attached to them, woven into an intricate latticework.

Trader's Stick

TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of a wily Nezumi trader. Once per day, it allows the holder to know whether the last thing he was told was a lie. There is usually something shiny hidden beneath the bark of these sticks.

Poison Stick

TN to Create: 30

This stick tells the tale of a great Nezumi healer and herbalist. Once per week, the holder can remove the effects of a single poison from a target individual (which may be the Nezumi himself). Magically created poisons are usually un-curable by the memories imparted by this stick. The tip of these sticks is usually fire-blackened.

Shaman's Stick

TN to Create: 30

This stick tells the tale of an extraordinary Nezumi shaman. Once per day, a shaman can activate this stick to cause the next spell he casts to not expend a spell slot. For every two Raises made when creating this stick, the shaman may use it an additional time per day. These sticks are usually ornamented and decorated by the shaman who carries them.

Spirit Stick

TN to Create: 20

This stick tells the tale of a terrible spirit that once haunted a warren, and of the Nezumi who overcame it. For one hour per day, the holder of this stick can perceive and understand (and be understood by) any spirit or ghost. These sticks are usually made of some sort of light colored wood, or sometimes from driftwood.

Sunlit Stick

TN to Create: 20

This stick tells a tale of a hero who never lost his way no matter what conditions he traveled in. The holder of the stick can always see clearly, regardless of blindness, darkness, fog, smoke, or any other kind of reduced visibility. The stick's effects last for one hour after it is activated and it may be used once per day. These sticks are usually made of dry wood whose bark has been slightly bleached by the sun.

Mastery Level 5 Memory Sticks

Chieftain's Stick

TN to Create: 35

This stick tells the tale of a great Nezumi chieftain whose leadership enabled his people to perform feats far greater than they could alone. The holder may bestow Skill Ranks on his companions. He may choose any Skill in which he has at least 4 Ranks, and may bestow up to 2 Ranks in that Skill on up to 10 of his followers. For every Raise made when creating the stick, he may enhance an additional follower. Followers cannot gain a Skill at a higher Rank than the holder of the stick. This stick may be used once per day and its effects last for one hour. Some Nezumi who have learned Rokugani ways will attach a paddle or leaf to these sticks, making them into Nezumi-sized warfans.

Evil Stick

TN to Create: 35

This stick tells the tale of the Terrible Day When Air Became Fire and Heaven Fell From Its Perch to Crush Our Glorious Home Beneath Its Blackened Corpse. The stick's holder is protected from the beasts of the Shadowlands, or by any individual with the Shadowlands Taint. The effects of the stick last for one hour, after which the stick breaks and cannot be used again. While it is active, Tainted creatures must succeed in a Willpower Roll at TN 35 to be able to attack or harm the holder in any way. However, if the holder attacks a Tainted creature the stick no longer protects him from that creature. For each Raise made when creating the stick, the Willpower TN is increased by 5. These sticks are usually made of the darkest colored wood the Rememberer can find.

Rememberer's Stick

TN to Create: 35

This stick tells the tale of a great Rememberer who was able to accomplish miraculous feats. If it is held by a Rememberer when he is creating another Memory Stick, that stick does not count towards his maximum number of active memory sticks. This stick can only be used once per week. Most large tribes have at least one of these sticks, passed down to the most important Rememberer of the tribe as a sign of office. These sticks are often quite large and ornate, as large as a bo staff and able to double as such if necessary.

Tomorrow Stick

TN to Create: 25

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi destined to battle Tomorrow and win. The stick must be attuned to a specific Nezumi when created and will not work for anyone else. The attuned Nezumi gains the effects of the Great Destiny Advantage so long as he carries the stick and it remains intact, but he does not need to hold the stick for it to function. As soon as the stick saves the Nezumi's life, it breaks. If the stick breaks prematurely, the Nezumi attuned to it dies. A Rememberer can only have one of these sticks active at a time, and must wait for that stick to break before making another. These sticks are usually made of green wood with at least one leaf growing from it, which blackens when the stick breaks.

Treasure Stick

TN to Create: 30

This stick tells the tale of a great Nezumi treasure hunter and the various hoards he found. Once per hour, the stick can be commanded to point to the nearest source of valuable treasure not yet owned by the tribe. This treasure could be food, shiny objects, or any other things the holder's tribe might value, but it will always be something the tribe could use and conceivably attain. The stick will not point toward any other treasure until the first one is found. These sticks are usually made from a Y junction of a branch, and resemble a divining rod.

Shamans and Name Magic

"The Nezumi's powerful magic is the only memory of what was once theirs."

– Kuni Kiyoshi, twelfth century

"Do not insult the Nameseekers. They give life, but they take-take it as well. Anger one, and it can also steal away your life, your name....and your soul."

– Chic'uk, Ratling guide

Nezumi do not use magic in any way recognized by humans. They have no shugenja, they do not importune the kami or read prayers from scrolls, and they do not revere the Fortunes or Kami (though the Transcendent are god-like in their estimation). Instead they use their own magical tradition known as Name Magic. While in some ways it is more powerful than Rokugani magic, in other ways it is extremely limited. Players and GMs alike should try not to present Nezumi Shamans as just "ratling shugenja." Name Magic has a unique flavor and style all its own.

Shamans have such a powerful sense of identity, such a powerful Name, that they are able to consciously alter reality by focusing their will. While this means a Nezumi can use magic without relying on scrolls or kami, it also means a shaman must practice rigid mental discipline. If a Shaman's Name weakens, his magic weakens – and since Name is dependent on Niche, a Shaman who behaves in ways that violate Nezumi ethics will soon find his effective Name (and thus his magic) diminishing. Worse yet, some shamans fall into a prison of self-deception *("N-kich")*, becoming twisted and evil.

Learning Name Magic Spells

Nezumi Shamans start play knowing three spells, and when they increase in School Rank they immediately learn two new spells of any Mastery Level which they can cast. Shamans can learn additional spells by training with other Nezumi shamans or by communing with Transcendent spirits in Yume-do – however, each time a Shaman learns an extra spell in this way, he must spend Experience Points equal to its Mastery Level.

Shamans can never know more total spells than 4x their current School Rank. (Spells gained with the Namebound Advantage do not count against this limit.) If a Shaman has an opportunity to learn a new spell but has already reached the maximum number of spells he can know at his current School Rank, he may elect to permanently forget one of his previously known spells in order to learn the new one.

Casting Name Magic Spells

Name Magic spells operate with many of the same basic constraints as elemental magic. Casting a Name Magic spell requires a Spell Casting Roll of School Rank / Name (keeping Name) at a TN of 5 + (5x Mastery Level). Note that if the Shaman's effective Name Rank has been reduced by a low Niche Rank, his Spell Casting Roll will use the lower effective Name Rank rather than his actual Name Rank.

Unless otherwise noted, casting Name Magic spells requires a number of Complex Actions equal to the spell's Mastery Level, and Shamans may take Raises to reduce this casting time by one Complex Action per Raise, to a minimum of one Complex Action.

Shamans have a number of spell slots per day equal to their Name Rank x3. So long as a Shaman has spell slots available, he may cast any spell he knows. Nezumi do not have an Affinity or Deficiency.

Casting Name Magic usually involves an elaborate array of gestures and words, occasionally accompanied by dance – thus, Shamans may not cast spells if they are restrained or silenced in any way. Nezumi do not use scrolls – in game terms, all of their spells are considered to be memorized.

- *Backlash:* Certain Nezumi spells are dangerous if cast improperly. If the Shaman fails the Spell Casting Roll (or his dance is interrupted, where applicable) he suffers the effects listed under "Backlash" in the spell description. If the Backlash effect is "Wounds" the Shaman suffers Wounds equal to the amount by which he failed the Spell Casting Roll. Conjuring spells, which attempt to trick reality into creating Names for things that did not previously exist, often risk Backlash.
- *Bleeding:* Some Name Magic spells require the Shaman to injure himself while casting, by a number of Wounds equal to the "Bleed: X" notation in the specific spell. Although this is sometimes mistaken for maho by humans who witness it, it is not. Rather, the caster sheds his blood as a focus to extend his essence outward. The Wounds are inflicted automatically so long as the caster has a sharp implement available. TN penalties for damage incurred by Bleeding are not applied until after the spell is cast.
- *Dancing:* Some spells can be enhanced by dances performed by the Shaman, and some require dancing in order to be cast at all. The Shaman must dance for a number of hours equal to the spell's Mastery Level before casting it. If the dance is interrupted, the spell fails. If a bonus is listed in the spell's description, the Nezumi gains that bonus on the Spell Casting Roll.
- *True Name:* Some spells require the Shaman to know the target's True Name (see sidebar). If the spell does not require this but the Shaman does know the target's True Name, he gains +2k2 on the Spell Casting Roll against that person (unless the target is himself).

Nezumi Shaman Spells

Mastery Level 1

Beast Speech

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Hearing
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Duration (2 Raises, change duration to Concentration + 1 Hour)

Beast Speech allows the caster to understand and speak the language of normal animals. This spell does not guarantee the animals will wish to speak to the caster, it simply makes communication possible.

Bend Name

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 target
- **Duration:** 5 Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (increase penalty by +5)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds), Bleeding (5)

This spell alters the target's sense of Name slightly, causing him to become disoriented and confused. For the duration of the spell, the target has a +5 TN penalty to all Skill Rolls.

Bless Name

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Name
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Hour

At any time during the spell's duration, the target may re-roll one of his die rolls after seeing the result. He may keep the better of the two results.

Conjure Dream

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)

When this spell is cast, the Nezumi reaches into the target's mind and conjures up an illusion of the person or item they desire most. Every detail of the illusion is as perfect as the target remembers. If the target attempts to interact with an illusionary person or item, he may roll Perception at a TN equal to the caster's (School Rank + Name Rank) x5 to recognize it as an illusion. If the target fails, his mind causes the illusion to react appropriately and he believes the illusion is real for the spell's duration. The caster has no control over the illusion; it is controlled by the target's own subconscious mind.

Only the caster and the target can perceive the illusion.

True Names

Some Nezumi Shaman spells require knowledge of the True Name of the target. A "True Name" is not simply the target's normal spoken name. Rather, it is the single most defining name of that target. Aliases and assumed names do not count. The Shaman must known the "truest" version of the target's name – and must also understand how the target views himself and how others who know him view him. A True Name is frequently an intensely personal and often secret thing. An Akodo general's true name, for example, might not just be his actual name but also a short description of his lineage and exploits. A Hiruma Scout's true name might actually be an affectionate nickname granted by his comrades on the Kaiu Wall, rather than his actual name.

More experienced Shamans can find someone's True Name through their spells (by casting Seek Name) but those of lesser experience must rely on more difficult methods. To find someone's True Name without a spell, a Shaman must come to know that person. For living creatures (whose Names tend to fluctuate as their perceptions of themselves change), the caster must spend at least one week observing them closely and then roll Meditation / Perception at TN 20. If the Shaman does not maintain regular contact with the target (meeting or observing him for at least an hour per week), he will forget the target's Name.

Inanimate objects are much less conflicted. The caster must touch the object physically or study the object for one minute, then roll Meditation / Perception at TN 15. A Nezumi is assumed to be familiar with the True Names of commonly encountered objects and personal possessions.

A Shaman always knows his own True Name and can change it at will. This is sometimes done to make it harder for other Shamans to affect him through his True Name.

Creatures of the Lying Darkness have no True Name, and are thus immune to many of the effects of Name magic.

N-kich ("Self-Deception")

Most Nezumi shamans are beings of so-called "Great Name," who literally cannot bring their people harm. Unfortunately, not all are so. A Shaman's sense of identity is so strong that it can sometimes supersede what is best for all Nezumi. Some shamans fall into prisons of self-delusion and ego. They decide their own power and identity is more important to the future of the Nezumi than any other concerns. This allows them to rationalize all sorts of evil behavior without losing Name. So long as what they do is for their own good, it is an act of Great Name. Such mad shamans cease to gain or lose Niche Points until they break this prison of self-delusion and begin to act on behalf of their people once more. However, this also means they can commit evil deeds without losing Niche Rank.

It is unknown exactly how or why this happens – only that it is a thankfully rare event. When a Shaman begins to act erratically, other Shamans usually see it as their duty to help him regain his sanity or, failing that, to destroy him.

Such powerful and insane Shamans make for excellent villains in any campaign, whether or not the Nezumi as a whole are depicted as allies or adversaries.



Conjure Earth's Bounty

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** Food for one Nezumi.
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (enough food for another adult)
- **Special:** Dance (optional, +2k2), Backlash (Wounds)

This spell causes fresh fruit and ripe grain to burst from the earth, enough nutritious food to satisfy one adult Nezumi for one day.

Conjure Smoke

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 20 foot Radius
- **Duration:** 10 Minutes
- **Raises:** Area (+5' radius), Duration (+1 minute)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds), Bleeding (5)

This spell summons a cloud of billowing smoke in a color of the caster's choice. Visibility within the cloud is reduced to no more than five feet. The smoke will roil about in strong wind, but will not disperse until the duration is complete.

Dream Walk

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 Night
- **Raises:** Special (3 Raises, take another willing creature into the dream)
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory)

This spell is a ritual and dance must be performed in order to cast it. It allows the sleeping Shaman's spirit to enter Yume-do, the Realm of Dreams. The Shaman may take along other willing persons, at 3 Raises per person. While wandering in Yume-do the Shaman and his companions may have glimpses of the future, encounter spirits, or even witness the dreams of others. Their bodies remain asleep and helpless while in the Dream Realm, and cannot awaken until the dream is done. Anyone who dies within the Dream Realm awakens immediately.

In game terms, this spell is a plot device which the GM may use to give the Shaman further information about his current goals and activities, or even to have adventures within the Dream Realm itself.

Importune Transcendent

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Affect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Raises:** Special (+1 question)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds), Bleeding (10), Dance (mandatory),

This spell is a ritual and dance must be performed in order to cast it. After casting this spell, the Shaman falls into a deep sleep from which he cannot be awakened until the duration is complete. During this time, he faces the spirit of a Transcendent Nezumi and may ask it questions. The Transcendent will answer one question plus an additional question for each Raise. When all questions have been asked, the Shaman finds the spell has ended, he has awakened, and an hour has passed.

While the Transcendent have access to a great deal of information, the answers they give are often phrased in the form of a riddle or another question. They also dislike being bothered – if this spell is cast more than once per week, the Transcendent will demand a service in return for its aid.

Mend Name

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Target
- **Duration:** Permanent

This spell can only be cast if the caster knows the target's True Name. It returns a wounded Name to its rightful form, healing physical damage equal to the amount by which the Spell Casting Roll exceeded the casting TN. This spell can also be used to restore broken, burnt, or damaged inanimate objects weighing less than one pound.



Name Friend

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Small Animal
- **Duration:** Permanent

This spell allows the caster to share his Name with one small animal (usually a ferret or cat). Forever after, this animal and the Shaman are one. They can understand one another's speech, instantly sense when the other is in danger, and can always sense each others' general direction and distance. The animal also shares the Nezumi's immunity to disease and the Shadowlands Taint.

The animal will be favorably disposed toward the shaman and help him as much as it is able, but will also depend on him for food and protection. The caster does *not* control the animal, though he can train it normally. A Shaman may have only one Name Friend at a time – if this animal dies, the Shaman may not cast this spell again for a full year.

Named Weapon

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Weapon
- **Duration:** 1 Year
- **Special:** Dance (+2k2)

By casting this spell, the shaman places a bit of his Name in a weapon, increasing the weapon's strength and durability. The Shaman may add a bonus of +Xk0 to the weapon's Damage Rating, where X is the Shaman's effective Name Ring. In addition, the Shaman always knows the weapon's location in relation to himself. Other wielders of the weapon do not gain this advantage but can benefit from the increased damage normally. If the weapon is destroyed, the Nezumi instantly loses a full rank of Name.

A Shaman may only have one Named weapon at a time, typically a spear, bow, or dagger. These weapons are always decorated with feathers, beads, and other symbols of their owner's power.

Smite the Nameless

- **Mastery:** Name 1
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Damage (+1k0), Range (+10'), Targets (+1 target, maximum of 5 total targets)
- **Special:** Bleeding (5)

This spell summons the purity of the Shaman's spirit and sends it forth as a beam of crystalline energy. The beam inflicts 3k3 Wounds to all creatures corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint or the Nothing. If it is used on a target not corrupted by either of these forces, the beam rebounds on the caster and damages him instead.

Mastery Level 2

Burn Name

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Target (+1 target per 2 Raises)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds)

The Shaman summons the strength of his Name to overwhelm the target. Bright energies crackle between the caster and target. The spell has a DR equal to the Shaman's Fire Ring.

If the spell is used against a flammable inanimate object, it will set it on fire. The flame burns normally thereafter.

Conjure Animal

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Special
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Animal
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds), Bleeding (4)

This spell can be used to transport one animal to the caster's location, literally summoning it through space. The animal must be native to the area and it cannot be a specific individual animal – the spell can summon a horse, but not Shinjo Koto's horse. The animal appears at any location within 100' of the caster and thereafter behaves normally. Such randomly conjured animals are confused by the sudden change in location and often will either flee or attack the nearest target, depending on their nature. At the end of the spell's duration, the creature vanishes to whence it came.

The summoned animal may not weigh more than two hundred pounds per School Rank of the Shaman.

Conjure Named Weapon

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Unlimited
- **Area of Effect:** Named Weapon
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Special:** Casting this spell is a Free Action

To cast this spell, the shaman needs a Named Weapon. The spell conjures the shaman's weapon to his hand. If the weapon has been destroyed, this spell restores it to being (and also restores any Name Rank lost when the weapon was destroyed).



Conjure Perfect Self

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory), Backlash (Wounds)

By throwing himself into this ritual dance, the Shaman restores the most perfect version of his own Name. At the end of the spell, all of the Shaman's current Wounds are healed, all poisons or illnesses are cured, any lost body parts are restored, and all hostile spell effects are removed.

Hide Name

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Special (3 Raises, causes additional attempt to fail)

This is a subtle protective magic used to ward tribe members against enemy Shamans. Its effect is simple – it subtly wraps the True Name of the target in a false identity. The first attempt to learn the target's True Name (whether via magic or observation) always fails. Only one casting of this spell can be in effect on a person or object at a time.

Name Talent

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Hour)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds)

By conjuring the power of this magic the shaman alters his Name, adding experiences cultivated from the dreams of others. For the duration of this spell, the caster may use any one Skill as if he had a Rank in that skill equal to his effective Name. Ranks in Skills already possessed do not stack with Ranks gained from this spell.

Purify Name

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Special:** Dance (optional, +2k2)

This spell can only be cast on a subject if the caster knows that subject's True Name. It is essentially an improved version of Mend Name; the Shaman directs his own strength of Name into the target creature, returning the target to a truer version of itself. The spell removes all poisons, disease, and magical effects from the target, though it does not cure any Wounds or other physical damage.

The GM may raise the TN of this spell as he sees fit to mend effects which are particularly potent. It is possible that certain powerful poisons and diseases cannot be cured by this spell.

Seek Name

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Special:** Bleeding (5)

This spell allows the shaman to look into the spirit world and discover the True Name of the target. The spell's TN is increased by an amount equal the target's highest Ring times its Insight Rank (if it has no Insight Rank, the TN is simply increased by its highest Ring).

Share Cunning

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Name
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Minute
- **Raises:** Target (+1 additional creature per two Raises),
- Special (+1 Skill per Raise)

The Shaman selects one Skill possessed by himself. For the duration of the spell, the targets of this spell may use the Skill at the caster's current Skill Rank or at a Rank equal to the Shaman's effective Name (whichever is lower).

Share Name

- **Mastery:** Name 2
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Willing Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Year
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory)

By casting this spell and engaging in the required dance, the Shaman shares the target's Name. For the duration of the spell, the caster knows the target's True Name as well as he knows his own, and can change it as he can change his own. All spells that affect one affect the other, for good or ill. (This happens whether the spells are Name Magic or other forms of magic.) The caster and the target always know the other's location and direction in regard to themselves. A shaman's Name may only be shared with one creature at a time.

If either the Shaman or the target die while this spell is in effect, their counterpart suffers Wounds equal to the Shaman's effective Name in rolled and kept dice, and falls unconscious for 24 hours.

Mastery Level 3

Bonds of Blood

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Target (+1 per two Raises), Damage (+1k0 per Raise)
- **Special**: Bleeding (6 plus special, see below)

This rather ghastly spell has played a large part in Rokugani prejudices against Name Magic, as it is very similar in appearance to maho. The shaman slices open his hand and releases a boiling torrent of bloody red energy at the target. This energy inflicts damage with a DR equal to the caster's effective Name. If the caster Raises for additional damage dice, the Bleeding damage for the spell increases by 2 per Raise.

Conjure Thoughts

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (see below)
- **Special**: Backlash (Wounds x2 – double the amount by which spell TN is missed)

This spell allows the caster to reach into the mind of one creature within range and borrow their thoughts for a moment. If the spell is successful, the caster immediately knows what the target was thinking during the last Round. If used properly, this spell can be used to detect falsehoods or discern motives, among other things.

If the caster makes two Raises on this spell, the target loses his train of thought, inflicting a +5 TN penalty on his actions for his next Turn.

Conjure Trickster

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Mujina
- **Duration:** 1 Month
- **Special**: Backlash (Wounds x3 – triple the amount by which the spell TN is missed), Dance (mandatory)

This ritual dance and spell allows the caster to summon a mujina from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief (see the description of mujina in the *Spirits* chapter elsewhere in this book). The Mujina will demand a gift, usually a small amount of gold, jewels, or an intricately crafted toy. If the mujina approves of the gift, it will serve the Shaman dutifully for one month. If the mujina is not satisfied, it returns to Sakkaku in a puff of smoke and cannot be summoned again for another month. If the mujina is treated well and given another gift at least once a month, it will remain in the Shaman's service, but a Shaman cannot have more than one mujina servant at a time. Each time the Shaman casts this spell it summons the same mujina, unless it has died – thus many Shamans over time come to befriend their strange servant.

Even a loyal mujina will not enter combat unless it has no other choice, unless it feels the combat offers no danger. It is far more likely that these trickster spirits will try to distract or confound opponents so their Shaman can escape.

A Shaman who causes the death of his mujina cannot summon another for at least one year.

Curse of No-Lips

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 1 Mile
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)
- **Special**: Backlash (Wounds x2 – double the amount by which spell TN is missed), Bleeding (5)

This powerful curse is often used to disable enemy Shamans and other spell casters. The spell requires the Shaman to know the target's True Name. The Shaman steals a bit of the target's Name, causing the mouth of the target to become sealed by flesh for the spell's duration. This typically makes both spell casting and any meaningful verbal communication impossible.

A target of this spell can choose to cut his own mouth open with a knife or other sharp implement (inflicting normal weapon damage to himself). This ends the spell's effect but leaves permanent disfiguring scars (at the GM's option, this can inflict the Disturbing Countenance Disadvantage).

Find Name

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** Name
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Target
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raise:** Duration (2 Raises to extend Duration to 1 minute, +1 minute for each Raise thereafter)
- **Special**: Backlash (Wounds), Bleeding (3)

By casting this spell, the Shaman gains a momentary mental image of one creature or item of which he already knows the True Name. He also receives a vague impression of the target's general direction and distance from himself.

Named Warren

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Warren
- **Duration:** 1 Year
- **Special**: Dance (mandatory)

By using this spell, the caster extends a bit of his Name into his home. For the purposes of this spell, a "warren" is any actual structure which the Shaman considers home and whose total area falls within the spell's range. While the Shaman is within the Named area, all magic cast by allies (even non-Name magic) gains a +1k1 bonus to the Spell Casting Roll. All magic cast with a harmful intent toward the caster, his allies, or his home suffers a +10 TN penalty.

A caster may only have one Named Warren at a time, and a given location may only have one of these spells in place at a time.



Shield Name

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 1 mile
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 minute
- **Raises:** Range (+1 mile per 2 Raises), Special (2 Raises to further increase Armor TN of target by amount equal to Shaman's Name Rank)
- **Special:** Bleeding (5)

This simple spell allows the shaman to extend the protection of his Name into the target. While this spell is in effect, the caster's Armor TN is reduced by his effective Name Rank, but the target's Armor TN increased by double this amount. This may be further increased with Raises. However, this spell may not grant the target a total bonus greater than the Shaman's Armor TN.

Temper Named Weapon

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Named Weapon
- **Duration:** 1 Day
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day)
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory)

To cast this spell, the caster must have a Named Weapon. This dance and magic allows the caster to temporarily invest a larger amount of energy into his Named Weapon. This energy is offered up in the form of spell slots. For every two spell slots invested (including the one used to cast this spell) the Named Weapon gains a bonus +1k1 while the shaman wields it. Each 1k1 bonus must be allotted to either attack rolls or damage rolls when the spell is cast, and cannot be changed until the spell expires and is re-cast.

Trade Name

- **Mastery:** Name 3
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 2 Creatures
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Raises:** Special (target is not disoriented, 2 Raises per target)

This spell can only be cast if the caster knows the True Names of both targets. This magic allows the caster to twist reality, causing two living creatures (one of whom may be the Shaman himself) within range to instantly switch places. Both targets are disoriented on their next Turn and can take only Free Actions on that Turn.

Mastery Level 4

Bind Name

- **Mastery:** Touch
- **Range:** Name
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x3 – three times the amount by which the spell TN is missed)

This spell requires the Shaman to know the True Name of the target. The Shaman binds his Name to the target, temporarily subverting the target's will. The Shaman's soul transfers into the target's body and the target's consciousness is suppressed. The Shaman gains complete control of the target's body, though he cannot use the target's skills, techniques, or magic. While possessing the target, the Shaman's mental Traits remain the same, but he gains the physical Traits of the target. (The target's Wounds are unaffected by this change regardless of any resulting temporary change to his Earth ring.) The Shaman may use his own Skills and Name Magic normally.

The target can see and hear everything the Shaman does during the spell's duration, but is helpless to interfere. If the target dies while the caster is in his body, the Shaman dies as well. The Shaman can cancel the spell early and return to his own body with a Free Action, but otherwise his body remains in a trance for the spell's duration. If his body is violently disturbed or killed, the spell ends.

Close the Door

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** 10'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Spirit
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x2 – double the amount by which the TN is missed), Bleeding (20)

This spell cannot be cast unless the caster knows the target's True Name, and can only target a spirit that is not native to Ningen-Do. Examples would include kappa, mujina, oni, ghosts (yorei), ancestors (shiryo), hengeyokai, and gaki. The spell severs the spirit's connection to the mortal world, sending it back to its own Spirit Realm. The creature cannot return under its own power for a year and a day, though it can try to access the mortal realm through other means (such as the Festering Pit or the assistance of a mortal summoner).

Conjure Name

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** 3 miles
- **Area of Effect:** Special (see below)
- **Duration:** Instantaneous
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x3 – three times amount by which TN is missed)

The Shaman reaches out to creatures and objects bound to his Name, drawing them to him. This spell can be used to instantly summon a creature who has been targeted by the spells Share Name, Conjure Trickster, or Name Friend. It can also summon a Named item (such as a Named Weapon or a Set Blood Aside crystal). Alternately, the caster may choose to use the spell to send himself to such an item or creature's location, or to conjure himself into his Named Warren.

Paint the Name

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** 1 pot of paint and 1 living creature
- **Duration:** 1 Day
- **Raises:** Special (increase Advantage cost, 1 point per Raise)
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory)

This spell summons the power of raw Name Magic from the Realm of Dreams and infuses it into a pot of war paint. This paint must be specially prepared before the spell is cast. (Nezumi paint is usually a crude infusion of mud, fruits, plants, etc.) The shaman who created the paint must personally apply it to the target as part of the spell's dance ritual, covering clothing and armor as well as the body. He must paint the target with wild representations of its Name, so the spell also requires the Shaman to know the target's True Name.

Once the spell is complete, the paint cannot be washed off for one full day. The target gains a single Physical or Mental Advantage of his choice. This advantage may not have an Experience Point cost higher than twice the Shaman's effective Name Rank. Alternately, the target may choose to negate one of his existing Physical Disadvantages (with the same Experience Point limitation) for the same duration. No more than one application of this war paint may affect a target at a time.

Set Blood Aside

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** Special
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Raises:** Special (create second crystal with equal effect, 3 Raises)
- **Special:** Bleeding (Special), Dance (mandatory)

The caster sets some of his blood aside for future use. Bleeding for this spell can be any amount up to three quarters of the caster's total Wounds. The blood takes the form a small crystal. At any later time, as a Free Action, the caster may break this crystal and put the blood into himself or another creature by touch. This instantly heals a number of Wounds equal to the amount bled to cast this spell.

A caster may only have one Set Blood Aside crystal at a time.

Steal Cunning

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 hour)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x3 – three times amount by which TN is missed), Bleeding (4)

The caster temporarily borrows a bit of the target's Name. Select one Skill known by the target. For the duration of the spell, the caster gains that skill at the target's Skill Rank, and the target is considered unskilled. If the target is unwilling, the TN of this spell is increased by +10.

Twist Name

- **Mastery:** Name 4
- **Range:** 250' (1 mile if the caster knows the target's True Name)
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Day
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Day)
- **Special:** Bleeding (20), Dance (mandatory)

This potent curse allows the shaman to greatly alter the target's identity. It is among the most feared of all Name Magics. For the duration of the spell, the target gains a Social or Spiritual Disadvantage of the Shaman's choice. Anyone who meets the spell's target will react as if the target has always had the Disadvantage. When the spell ends, all effects of the Disadvantage vanish and those who were affected are left wondering what happened. No Disadvantage bestowed may have a point cost greater than twice the caster's effective Name Rank.

Dependant is a Disadvantage worthy of special note. In the case of this Disadvantage, a trickster spirit actually takes the form of a Dependant. For the duration, the target even has memories of this Dependant's existence, though inconsistencies are possible. (How did I win the Battle of Beiden Pass while carrying my aging grandfather everywhere?) If the truth is exposed, or the spell ends, the spirit immediately vanishes amid cackling laughter, but the memories remain.

Shadowlands Taint cannot be inflicted by this spell.

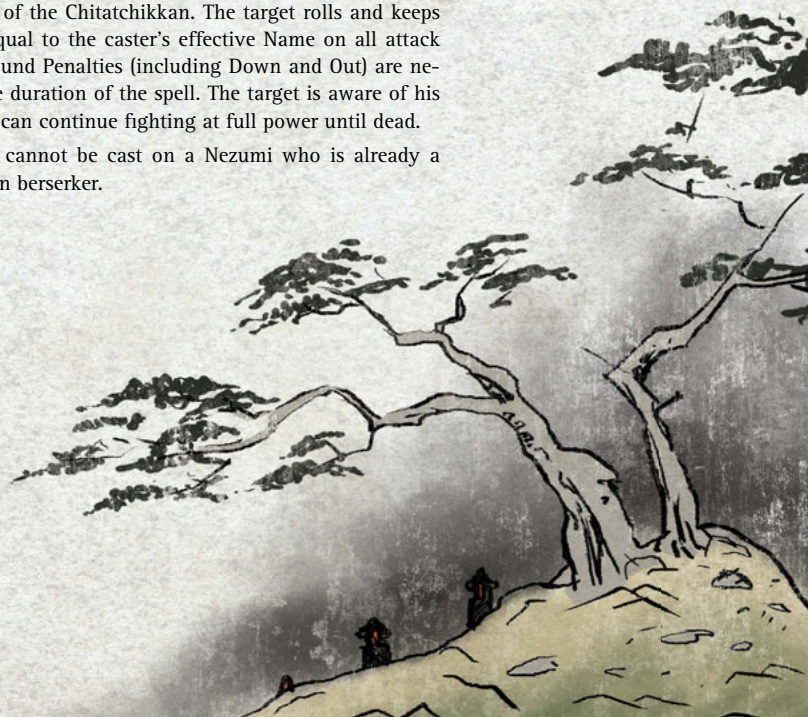
Mastery Level 5

Conjure Chitatchikkan's Fury

- **Mastery:** Name 5
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** Willing Creature
- **Duration:** 1 Hour
- **Raises:** Target (+1 per 2 Raises)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x3 – three times amount by which spell TN is missed), Bleeding (20)

For the duration of this spell the target is enhanced by the berserk fury of the Chitatchikkan. The target rolls and keeps extra dice equal to the caster's effective Name on all attack rolls. All Wound Penalties (including Down and Out) are negated for the duration of the spell. The target is aware of his Wounds but can continue fighting at full power until dead.

This spell cannot be cast on a Nezumi who is already a Chitatchikkan berserker.



Conjure Nightmare

- **Mastery:** Name 5
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Nightmare
- **Duration:** 1 Minute
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 minute)
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x4 – four times amount by which spell TN is missed)

The Shaman reaches into the Realm of Dreams and pulls out a nightmare beast that proceeds to attack everything in sight. Mechanically, treat this creature as an ogre that has no Shadowlands Taint but has a Fear rating of 5 – its physical appearance, however, will be bizarre and different every time the spell is cast. The nightmare beast can not determine who is a friend and who is a foe, though it will know who summoned it. It will only attack its summoner if he is the only target available. The creature returns to the Realm of Dreams when the spell's duration ends or it is killed.

Conjure Storm

- **Mastery:** Name 5
- **Range:** Centered on caster
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Mile Radius
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Special:** Backlash (Wounds x4 – four times amount by which spell TN is missed), Bleeding (10), Dance (mandatory)

The shaman dances and claps his hands, chanting wildly, and summons a terrible thunderstorm from the sky. The storm forms when the dance is complete and is centered on the caster. It does not harm those who remain within twenty feet of the center point (though they will still feel the rain and wind). Outside this area, visibility drops to five feet, ferocious winds and rain fill the air, and the ground turns into thick mud. Flight will be impossible and those on the ground move as though they have Water of 1. Lightning will strike a random point within the storm's area once per Round, inflicting 7k7 damage if it hits a living creature. If the caster stays at the center of the storm and does not move, he can direct these lightning bolts at specific targets as a Complex Action.

Conjure Tribe

- **Mastery:** Name 5
- **Range:** Miles equal to caster's effective Name Rank
- **Area of Effect:** Up to 10 Living Creatures
- **Duration:** Instantaneous

This spell allows the Shaman to send a mental summons (up to twenty words long) to up to ten other creatures. The caster must know the True Name of each creature he wishes to summon. Any creature who agrees to answer the summons is immediately transported to a place of the caster's choosing within one hundred feet of his current location.

Take Name

- **Mastery:** Name 5
- **Range:** 1 mile
- **Area of Effect:** 1 Creature
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Special:** Backlash (death), Bleeding (30), Dance (mandatory)

This is the most feared of all Nezumi spells. The target's Name is taken away forever. The target still physically exists and retains his memory, but no one else remembers him except for the Shaman. The target's family is now someone else's family. The deeds he accomplished are remembered – but as if someone else had done them. The Shaman has no direct control over exactly how this new reality forms itself.

The effect, however, is not entirely perfect. Those who were extremely close to the target may potentially notice discrepancies. ("You say you saved my life at the Battle of Beiden Pass? No you didn't. Matsu Gohei did... But I didn't meet Matsu Gohei until three months after that battle. What's going on?") Characters bound to the target with Kharmic Tie, Blissful Betrothal, or True Love (or Allies with 4 points of Devotion) will still feel compelled to help and care for the target, even though they no longer remember why. Likewise, Sworn Enemies will hate the target on sight without knowing why. Fortunes, Celestial Dragons, and other such powerful spirits will remember *both* versions of reality, and these entities may become interested in the target, wondering how such a peculiar thing could come to pass.

Each time this spell is cast, the Shaman's Name Rank is reduced by one. Shamans do not make use of this spell lightly due to its unpredictable affects on reality. Those who use it are likely to be visited by other Shamans (who know the signs of its use) who wish to know why such extreme magic was used.

The only known way for this spell to be undone is for the Shaman to willingly return the target's Name. To do so is considered the same as failing to cast the spell – that is, the Shaman will immediately die.

Mastery Level 6

Dream Forever

- **Mastery:** Name 6
- **Range:** Self
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Permanent
- **Special:** Dance (mandatory)

The caster becomes one of the Transcendent, casting off his mortal coil and forever entering the Realm of Dreams. This spell can only be learned from the Transcendents, and is revealed only to those Shamans they judge worthy of joining their ranks.

Sample Nezumi

The following section presents some generic Nezumi NPCs for use in a campaign. These can be easily altered on the fly to suit whatever purposes the GM may require. Several major Nezumi archetypes are listed here for ease of use.

Typical Nezumi (Ratling) Warrior (Rank 2)

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Name 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	-	-

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Yari 7k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 25 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Nezumi Warrior 2

Niche: 3.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 4, Jiujutsu 3, Hunting (Survival) 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Spears 3, Stealth 2.

Ratling Physical Abilities (these include Swift 2 and Taint Immunity)

Advantages:

- *Strength of the Earth*

Typical Nezumi Berserker (Chitatchikkan) (Insight Rank 5)

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4	Name 4
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 6	Strength 5	-

Initiative: 10k5 — *Attack: Yari 10k8 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k2 — *Armor TN: 40 (Heavy Armor)*

Reduction: 5 (Heavy Armor) — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks*

School/Rank: Nezumi Warrior 3/Chitatchikkan 2

Niche: 4.5

Skills: Athletics 7, Defense 7, Jiujutsu 6, Hunting (Survival) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Spears 8, Stealth 5.

Ratling Physical Abilities (these include Swift 2 and Taint Immunity)

Advantages:

- *Large*
- *Strength of the Earth*

Typical Nezumi (Ratling) Scrounger (Rank 3)

Air 4	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 3	Name 2
-	-	Agility 5	-	-

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Aiguchi 8k5 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 — *Armor TN: 28 (Ashigaru Armor)*

Reduction: 1 (Ashigaru Armor) — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks.*

School/Rank: Nezumi Scrounger 3

Niche: 3.0

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 5, Jiujutsu 3, Hunting 5, Investigation 4, Knives 5, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Stealth (Sneaking) 6, Sleight of Hand 6.

Ratling Physical Abilities (these include Swift 2 and Taint Immunity)

Advantages:

- *Crafty*
- *Silent*

Typical Nezumi (Ratling) Shaman (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2	Name 5
Reflexes 4	Willpower 4	-	Perception 3	-

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Named Yari 7k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2+6 — *Armor TN: 30 (Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks.*

School/Rank: Nezumi Shaman 3

Niche: 5.0

Skills: Defense 4, Hunting 2, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Lore: Spirit Realms (Yume-do) 5, Meditation 5, Perform: Nezumi Dance 2, Spears 4, Stealth 3.

Spells: Bend Name, Dream Walk, Mend Name, Named Weapon, Burn Name, Conjure Named Weapon, Seek Name, Find Name, Trade Name.

Ratling Physical Abilities (these include Swift 2 and Taint Immunity)

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Namebound.*

Typical Nezumi (Ratling) Rememberer (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Name 4
Awareness 4	-	-	-	-

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Knife 7k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: None — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks.*

School/Rank: Nezumi Rememberer 3

Niche: 4.5

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Knives 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Lore: Nezumi Culture 5, Lore: Nezumi History 5, Meditation 4, Perform: Storytelling 5, Stealth 3.

Usable Memory Sticks: Warrior's Stick (Knife), Swimmer's Stick, Poison Stick, Berserker Stick (Knife), Dream Stick, Wisdom Stick, Food Stick.

Ratling Physical Abilities (these include Swift 2 and Taint Immunity)

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Precise Memory.*

Disadvantages:

- *Small*


空の巻

The Nothing

"Even nothing is something. This, however, is truly Nothing."

– *Goju*, Celestial Agonies

In The Beginning

In the beginning, there was Nothing. But this was not merely a void or an emptiness. It was truly Nothing – an utter lack of matter, of space, even of time. There was no form or substance and yet this Nothing was whole and complete. It was perfect.

At some point, however, the Nothing developed awareness. Why this happened is probably the greatest of all mysteries, but it was the genesis of everything that came afterward. The Nothing became aware of itself and, since it was perfect and complete, realized that this was and always would be the full extent of its awareness; it could only be aware of itself, for there was nothing else. Faced with this fundamental truth, the Nothing experienced its first emotion. It felt Fear, because it was truly alone.

After Fear came the Nothing's second emotion. It felt Desire – a Desire for companionship so it would no longer be alone. Such was the intensity of this Desire that for the first time a turmoil arose within the Nothing. It became less than whole and complete. It became imperfect.

This led to the Nothing's third and final emotion. It felt Regret. It had made itself imperfect and diminished itself. However, as is the way of Regret, this realization came too late. From the swirling imperfection something new had been born. This new thing was substance. At first this substance was simple and chaotic, but it quickly evolved and became ordered, forming the Heavens and the earth and all the spirit realms, and finally fractionating into the five basic elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void. Out of this primal creation appeared the three Gods With No Name, and from them in turn came the first two Fortunes. One was brash, proud, and fearless. This was the first man, who would be named Onnotangu, the Moon. The other was patient, cautious, and humble. This was the first woman, who would be named Amaterasu, the Sun. Together, Onnotangu and Amaterasu set about organizing and naming the world, the elements, and all of the things in it. Naming each thing was critical, because it locked that thing into its particular combination of substance and form, making it permanent and real.

The Nothing raged against this inexorable growth of its own imperfection, but realized it was powerless to overtly prevent it. Worse, as Onnotangu and Amaterasu continued naming all of the things in the world, the Nothing realized that it too would eventually be consumed by this ongoing creation. Desperate, the Nothing fled into the shadow cast by Onnotangu from Amaterasu's light. Hidden, it waited and watched, plotting the unmaking of creation and the return of its own formless and empty perfection. Because it was so hidden, the Nothing escaped being named.

Before the Kami Fell

Little is known about the world before the fall of the Kami from Heaven, as it is not until this cataclysmic event that recorded human history begins. The scholars of Rokugan are far less concerned with such matters than they are with the history of their own Empire. It is clear, though, that great civilizations with rich histories existed before this time. The Five Races – the Kitsu, trolls, Ningyo, Kenku, and Zokujin – came first, constructing great cities such as the ruins known in modern times as Volturnum in the Shadowlands and the City of Night in the Spine of the World Mountains. The Naga, ogres, and Nezumi followed, each building up great societies that subsequently fell into the mists of pre-history.

Certainly, there is no clear evidence that the Nothing meddled in the affairs of these early civilizations. However, it would be naïve to expect the Nothing would ignore any opportunity to advance its obsessive efforts to undo creation. For example, the attack on the City of Night by a group of renegade Kitsu is generally assumed to have been precipitated by the influence of Jigoku. However, it is just as possible that the Nothing whispered its seductive and destructive lies to the Kitsu leader Kishenku, maddening and turning him against his brethren and the other races in the same way Onnotangu was turned against his own children. Likewise, Nezumi Name-Magic bears a striking resemblance to certain effects attributed to the Nothing. The most powerful of Nezumi shaman, the Nametaker, is said to be able to effectively erase an individual from existence. This is similar to effects ascribed to the Nothing, by which a person's identity and ultimately that person himself can be unmade and removed from existence. This by no means confirms that the Nothing insinuated itself into Nezumi civilization, but the possibility cannot be discounted. In any case, it is reasonable to suppose that during the enigmatic time between the creation of the world and the fall of the Kami, the Nothing would not have been idle.



Other Legends of the Darkness

The story recounted here is but one version of how the Nothing – also known as the Shadow, the Living Darkness, or the Lying Darkness – was able to survive the naming of all things, and how it came to become allied with Lord Moon. Other tales of the Nothing's origins circulate in hidden circles of Rokugani scholarship, or are whispered between crazed cultists of the Darkness, or can be gleaned from forgotten pages of Goju's *Celestial Agonies*.

In one version of the tale, the Nothing cloaked itself within something that had already been named: Shadow. Thus it escaped the attention of Onnotangu and Amaterasu, and thus was born its sinister affinity to darkness and shadows of all kinds.

In another version, Onnotangu actually saw the Darkness hiding in the shadows. He spoke with it, and the Darkness whispered back that he should leave it unnamed… in case he ever felt the need to unmake what he had made. And Onnotangu, who even then noticed how much his wife loved the new world and felt the stirrings of jealousy in his heart, listened to the Darkness and allowed it to remain unnamed.

Are any of these tales true? Perhaps none of them are, or perhaps all of them are true in their own ways. With the Lying Darkness, nothing is ever certain.

Having completed the world, Onnotangu and Amaterasu returned to the Heavens. Amaterasu shone a brilliant light down upon the world, while Onnotangu spread a cloak of darkness. There, the couple had the ten children who would become the Kami. Soon, however, Lord Moon began to fear his children's power and worry they would one day turn against him. Some theologians believe this may have been a manipulation by the Nothing, still lurking in Onnotangu's shadow. It became the Lying Darkness, whispering endlessly to Onnotangu and drawing on its own experience of fear, desire, and regret to stir madness in Lord Moon's heart. Certainly some of the later devotees of the Darkness, such as the infamous Goju, wrote documents suggesting this. If it is true, the Nothing came close to unmaking creation before men and women ever walked the earth.

When Lord Moon swallowed his children, the Lying Darkness was pleased, but its scheming had not quite precipitated the destruction of creation that it craved. Hantei had escaped into exile, learning the ways of a warrior, and eventually he returned to confront his mad father. As all Rokugani know, after a great battle Hantei succeeded in releasing his eight surviving brothers and sisters from his father's belly, but in the process caused them, and himself, to fall from Heaven. Fu Leng was pulled into Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. The rest fell into Ningen-do, the Realm of Mortals, and founded what would become the Empire of Rokugan.

The Lying Darkness fled back into hiding. With a single stroke from Hantei's sword, all of its careful plotting was undone. Instead of destroying the world, the madness of Lord Moon had unleashed his children into it, organizing and giving purpose to its scattered mortals, bringing more order, not less. Not even Fu Leng, caught alone in the horror of Jigoku, would listen to the whispers of the Darkness. The Nothing was left with no alternative but to simply continue hiding and waiting, alert for any future opportunity to unravel creation.

The Lying Darkness and the First Day of Thunder

Soon after their fall to earth, the Kami found themselves at war. Their brother Fu Leng had been empowered by the evil might of Jigoku and sought dominion over the world. Hordes of Tainted monstrosities poured from the Shadowlands. Reeling under the assault, the newly-formed clans and their leaders, the Kami, desperately sought to stem Fu Leng's advance. In their darkest hour, Shinsei, an enigmatic holy man, appeared and presented the Kami with their only solution. A group of mortal heroes, the Seven Thunders, would have to journey to the heart of the Shadowlands and confront Fu Leng in his stronghold at the very brink of the great pit leading to Jigoku. Among these Thunders, representing the Scorpion Clan, was a young woman named Shosuro.

Shosuro was the foremost follower and closest confidant of Bayushi, the Kami who founded the Scorpion Clan. Her true origin, however, was unknown even to him. Shosuro was human in appearance, but in fact she was an artifact, created from a fragment of Nothing itself. Contrary to what one might expect, the intent behind this strange act of creation was a good one. A pair of Kenku, observing the grief of a family and village after the apparent loss of a young girl, turned a fragment of Nothing into the lost girl's duplicate. Before she could be returned to her family, however, the actual girl was found, and it was the duplicate who was left alone and forlorn. For ten years, she sought a father and a place in the world. Eventually, she encountered Bayushi, using her preternatural gift for disguise to appear to him first in the guise of a stable boy, then as a geisha holding a knife to his throat. Bayushi was completely taken with her, and accepted her as his follower and close confidant.

Bayushi never meant for Shosuro to join the ranks of the Seven Thunders. The moment Shinsei spoke, Bayushi refused to allow any Scorpion to be part of the mission into the Shadowlands, claiming that he had already lost enough of his loyal followers to the war against Fu Leng. Shosuro, however, chose to ignore her lord's command and joined the Thunders on her own, accompanying them on their perilous quest. In the end, Fu Leng was defeated and his essence bound into twelve scrolls created by Isawa. The only survivors of the desperate battle were Shosuro and a wounded Shinsei. Shosuro gathered what had become the Twelve Black Scrolls and carried the injured Shinsei back through the Shadowlands, a horde of Fu Leng's minions in pursuit. It seemed as though all their efforts had been for nothing as the pursuers closed in, foremost among them the hideous bulk of the First Oni, greatest of all of Fu Leng's monstrosities. But at that moment, when hope had fled, a voice began to whisper to Shosuro.

This was the Nothing, and it offered her a hope of escape in return for friendship...for an alliance. After waiting for so long, it had finally seen its chance to gain a foothold in Ningen-do. To Shosuro, who could sense the power the Shadow contained, there was no choice at all – she could accept its aid, or allow Fu Leng to be released once more and render the Day of Thunder futile. Shosuro accepted the Shadow into herself, gaining the strength to stay ahead of her pursuers. Soon after, she encountered the Kami Shiba, who was searching the Shadowlands to learn what had happened to the Thunders. Shiba fell in battle with the First Oni, but his sacrifice enabled Shosuro and Shinsei to make their final escape and return to Rokugan. Shosuro arrived in the court of Hantei clutching the Black Scrolls and a strange hand of obsidian, and died in a stricken Bayushi's arms.

Fu Leng was defeated, but the Lying Darkness had achieved its goal. By Shosuro's choice – and perhaps because of her very nature as something created from the Nothing – it had entered the Scorpion Clan, setting into motion a thousand-year chain of events that would threaten the very existence of creation.



The Goju

"There is no end to Nothing, and no beginning. All has come from it and all will return."

– Goju, Celestial Agonies

Shosuro was not the only mortal to hear the whispers of the Darkness in those early days.

Shortly before the fall of the Kami, a shaman named Goju rose to great prominence in his tribe. Goju was a man of deep wisdom about the nature of the world around him, but he was also a flawed man, full of secret fear and ambition. When the sky ripped apart and the Kami fell to Ningen-do, Goju fled in terror. Alone, shivering, he stared into a shadow... and the shadow looked back. The Lying Darkness had become aware of him. Goju's fear faded, replaced by madness, and he wrote the strange and sinister book known as the *Celestial Agonies* (or sometimes the *Black Book*), a forbidden and blasphemous tome which survives today only in half-remembered fragments. With time, Goju become wholly turned to the service of the Shadow, and in remote places he gathered around him those who, like him, feared the Kami and wanted nothing to do with the new Empire. Thus were the Goju ninja born, their members corrupted by the Lying Darkness into agents to infiltrate the clans, to spy on them, learn their secrets and subvert their plans.

The Goju "family" would remain a pervasive but elusive presence in Rokugan for countless centuries, serving the Lying Darkness as its spies, saboteurs, and assassins. However, the ultimate fate of Goju himself is unknown, and many legends cluster around the name. Some accounts tell of a man named Bayushi Goju, a Scorpion samurai of some five hundred years later, who led a renegade group of ninja after Emperor Hantei X ordered all of the Scorpion Clan's assassins disbanded. The story goes on to describe how this Goju, now an outcast, succumbed to the promise of power and retribution offered by the Lying Darkness. Other tales claim that Goju Adorai, the avatar of the Lying Darkness at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate in the twelfth century, was actually the original Goju himself. Which of these tales are true, or indeed if any of them are, remains a mystery. So does the ultimate fate of Goju's *Celestial Agonies*, which modern Rokugani believe to have been lost when Goju was finally completely consumed by the Nothing.

The Ninube

While the Goju have served the Lying Darkness since the dawn of the Empire, the Ninube are much more recent adherents. Doji Ninube was born at the end of the eleventh century, the only child of a Crane daimyo. She was sent to spend the winter in the home of her betrothed, the mighty Phoenix shugenja Isawa Ujina, so that she could learn the manner and routines of his household. However, on the road between the Doji and Isawa lands her caravan was ambushed by minions of the Lying Darkness and she was taken prisoner. A group of Emerald Magistrates were dispatched to find Ninube but they too were ambushed and brutally slain by the minions of Nothing. Isawa Ujina himself mounted a second rescue attempt, accompanied by the Dragon Clan magistrate Kitsuki Kaagi, a man who was already deeply enmeshed in investigating the Lying Darkness. They succeeded in rescuing Ninube, but it soon became clear to Kaagi that something was wrong with the young woman they had retrieved. Ujina, blinded by his love for Ninube, refused to listen to Kaagi and took his betrothed home to marry her. Soon after, his own father sickened and died, but he did not see the truth until the day his wife gave birth to their first child.

That day, looking at his newborn child, he saw darkness in her eyes. And looking at his wife, he realized she was a stranger. "Did you kill my father, wife?" he asked, and she agreed that she had. "And did you kill my betrothed, wife?" The nameless thing that had been Ninube agreed that it had done that as well. "You cannot kill me," it mocked. "You can only destroy what you know, that which you understand." And it struck viciously at Ujina, wounding and poisoning him with the power and corruption of Shadow. But the shugenja was not defeated so easily. "I can also destroy what I love," he answered. "And I know you now. You are the mother of my daughter." And with the power of Void, the first Ninube was undone. Ujina named his daughter Isawa Kaede, purging the darkness from her soul, and she would go on to become the Oracle of Void and wife to Emperor Toturi I.

Although the creature which had once been Doji Ninube was destroyed, her name lived on in an awful parody of the beautiful young Crane. Creatures of the Lying Darkness that served it as key spies and infiltrators took the false name of Ninube, creating a second "family" in service to the Nothing, one which would plague Rokugan for many generations.

The Darkness and the Scorpion

"If they take you slowly, a piece at a time, they can have all of you."

– Kitsuki Kaagi

Shortly after her return from the First Day of Thunder, Shosuro died. However, as is often the case when the Lying Darkness is involved, her death was a lie.

Shosuro had actually staged her death, and changed her identity to become Soshi, founder of the Scorpion Clan's oldest shugenja family. Through Soshi, the Lying Darkness continued working its subtle designs in Rokugan, promoting the development of a new form of magic called *tejina*, the magic of Shadow. The foremost practice of tejina was the imprinting of

Shadow Brands – tattoo-like marks that embodied the essence of Nothing – onto specially chosen Scorpion recruits. Each year, a handful of students were removed from the Shosuro school and taken to remote dojo where they were implanted with Shadow Brands, granting them strange new powers with which to serve the Scorpion Clan.

Soshi/Shosuro believed she could resist the Shadow's influence, using its power while resisting its control. For a time, she succeeded, but the insidious power of the Lying Darkness could not be withstood forever. Eventually, Soshi/Shosuro felt herself slipping away, losing her identity to the Nothing. Unwilling to endanger her beloved Bayushi any further, she fled the Scorpion lands to the Dragon Kami, Togashi, who imprisoned her in a chamber of crystal, the only substance known to be impervious to the Nothing. There she would remain for a thousand years.

But the Lying Darkness had merely lost one of its tools. Through the Soshi family, the practice of *tejina* and Shadow Branding continued, spreading the Darkness' influence. Year by year, generation after generation, it learned more about these creatures called humans – their strengths and weaknesses, their emotions and thought, and especially the extent to which they could be influenced by simple appeals to their fears, desires, and regrets. As the decades passed, more and more humans were touched by the Lying Darkness and slowly fell under its sway. The weakest were quickly absorbed, becoming faceless Shadowspawn, the Goju and later the Ninube, their identities wholly destroyed and their knowledge devoured by the Shadow. The stronger victims lasted longer, some to the point of believing they could control the Shadow and use it for their own ends. They were wrong. Sooner or later, everyone touched by the Lying Darkness succumbed to it, was devoured and consumed, and became another faceless pawn. Such creatures, devoid of their own identity, could take on the form and semblance of anyone they met, allowing the Nothing to spy and infiltrate across the Empire with near impunity.

The activities of the Shadow and its Scorpion pawns contributed greatly to the legends of ninja in Rokugan. Although the Scorpion had their own small groups of ninja spies and assassins, the plots and attacks of the Goju and Ninube spread tales of magical, mystical ninja throughout the Empire, mysterious assassins who could walk through walls, disappear into a shadow, and wear a dozen faces the same night. Samurai tended to dismiss such stories as mere superstition, but among the common folk the word "ninja" became a source of terror. Naturally, this only furthered the Nothing's goals by concealing its nature and enhancing fear and uncertainty within the Empire.

The Obsidian Hand

The strange hand which Shosuro brought back from the Shadowlands was actually nothing less than the hand of Onnotangu, the mad Lord Moon, cut from his arm by Hantei during the Fall of the Kami. It, too, had crashed into Ningen-do, where it was found and secreted away by the Nothing. Shosuro found it when she encountered the Nothing in the Shadowlands, and brought it back with her to Rokugan, where it – along with the Black Scrolls – came into the custody of the Scorpion Clan. This suited the purpose of the Lying Darkness, which had infused its own corruption into the Hand so that whoever might wield it would be open to its influence.

Over the ensuing thousand years, four Scorpion Champions sought to master the Hand, only to be driven to madness and suicide. The Hand bore the curse of Lord Moon, the madness which had driven him to try to kill his children. Not until the time of the Second Day of Thunder did the Hand pass into the possession of one strong enough to resist its madness but at the same time weak enough to fall under the Shadow's influence.

This was Mirumoto Hitomi, daimyo of the Mirumoto family, destined to become the reborn Dragon Thunder in the twelfth century. Through the machinations of the Scorpion Empress of Rokugan, Bayushi Kachiko, Hitomi was granted the Obsidian Hand to replace her own hand, lost in battle with a Crab, Hida Yakamo. On the Second Day of Thunder, with Fu Leng once more threatening Rokugan, Hitomi joined the other Clan Thunders in defeating him. She used the Obsidian Hand to pull the Twelfth Black Scroll from the chest of the Dragon Kami, Togashi, thereby rendering Fu Leng mortal. Afterward, she assumed the Championship of the Dragon Clan and retreated to that clan's mountain strongholds, a brooding presence going slowly mad under the influence of the Obsidian Hand and through it, the Lying Darkness.

A Shadow Deepens Across Rokugan

Even as Fu Leng's threat to the Empire was defeated, a new one took its place. The Lying Darkness began to tug at the many dark threads it had woven into the tapestry of Rokugan. Uncounted Shadowspawn roamed the Empire, a secret army recruited over the past thousand years. Shosuro remained a powerful, malign presence trapped in Togashi's crystal prison, and a scant few paces away sat a brooding Hitomi, her body slowly warping and transforming to obsidian as the Hand exerted its insidious influence over her. Dark plans a millennium in the making were coming to fruition.

Only a short time after the Second Day of Thunder, the new Emperor, Toturi I, vanished.

The Scorpion Clan shouldered the blame and was banished to the Burning Sands. But the Scorpion were innocent, for Toturi had been kidnapped and hidden away by minions of the Lying Darkness. Bereft of its Emperor, Rokugan descended into chaos. Hitomi, losing her battle against the subtle influence of the Lying Darkness, inadvertently freed Shosuro from her crystal prison. Toturi was finally rescued, but this, too, was a trick, as the Lying Darkness had infiltrated his soul and drove him to madness. After months of violent insanity, Toturi finally freed himself from the Shadow's influence by committing *seppuku* and passing the regency of Rokugan to his wife, Isawa Kaede.



The Lying Darkness had spread many other tendrils through the Empire. It meddled in the affairs of the Crane, eventually provoking a civil war within that clan. The Lion and Crab marched to the brink of war before their Champions realized that they, too, were being manipulated into a conflict neither wanted. Worse, the Lying Darkness attacked not only the Empire's present, but its past, erasing half of the Tao of Shinsei, the collected wisdom of the Empire's greatest philosophers.

Hitomi, struggling against the power of the Obsidian Hand, realized the enormity of her failure. With Shosuro free, she had given the Lying Darkness the strength it needed launch its final assault on creation. But with this realization, Hitomi also saw the truths echoing from the Obsidian Hand. The Lying Darkness had been manipulating events throughout the Empire's history, all the way back to the fall of the Kami. And she saw back even further, to when the world was new and the Lying Darkness whispered to Onnotangu, Lord Moon, whose severed hand she bore. She saw how he brooded and came to fear his own children, the Kami, to the point of trying to destroy them. Only someone with the power of Lord Moon himself could stand against the existential foe that was the Nothing. But Onnotangu had already been driven mad by the Lying Darkness. Determined that she would stand against the Nothing she had unintentionally empowered, Hitomi gathered up powerful artifacts of the Moon and challenged Onnotangu to a duel. He accepted, eager to reclaim his hand and the other artifacts Hitomi bore, confident he could crush this upstart challenger to his power. Against all odds, Hitomi prevailed and slew Onnotangu, then committed *seppuku* and assumed the dead god's place as Lady Moon. Amaterasu, the Moon's wife, hid herself away in grief, leading to Twenty-Seven Days of Darkness that blanketed the world. Her mourning complete, she in turn committed *jigai*, with Hida Yakamo ascending to become Lord Sun. The two great heavenly presences were restored, just in time for the Lying Darkness to launch its final assault on existence.

The Battle of Oblivion's Gate

With Rokugan in chaos and no Emperor to guide it, the Lying Darkness struck. In the form of its strongest avatar, a powerful shugenja called Goju Adorai, it marched an army of Shadowspawn against the Realm of the Dead, finally making the horrible truth of its plots clear. By destroying Rokugan's ancestors, it would destroy the Empire's past, unraveling its history and unmaking reality itself. If the plot succeeded, the perfect existential void of the Nothing would be restored. The Empire mounted a desperate defense, sending an army to Oblivion's Gate, a portal between the realms located in the ruins of the ancient Troll city of Volturnum in the Shadowlands. At first this appeared to only hasten the collapse of existence, as the walls between the boundaries of the Spirit Realms, already weakened by the Lying Darkness, began to crumble. An army of spirits led by Toturi himself – now cleansed of the influence of the Lying Darkness by his death – joined the forces of Rokugan in battling the Nothing's minions. But even the combined power of the armies of Rokugan, the spirit armies led by Toturi, and the power of Ryoshun, the Tenth Kami who stood guard over the Realm of the Dead, was not enough to do more than delay the destruction of the Empire's history and thereby creation itself. Finally the Phoenix Master of Fire, with the aid of the Elemental Dragon of Air itself, stormed into the Shadowlands and struck down Goju Adorai. The loss of its avatar briefly weakened the Lying Darkness and offered an opportunity to the Heavens.

The Naming of the Lying Darkness

In the moment the Nothing faltered, Hitomi, now the Lady Moon, did what Lord Moon before her had failed to do. Seizing upon a piece of the Empire's history that had itself been all but destroyed – the Akodo family name of the Lion, abolished by Hantei XXXIX after the Scorpion Clan Coup – she named the Lying Darkness. By giving it the name Akodo, Hitomi robbed it of its greatest strength: its lack of identity. The nameless Shadowspawn were named along with it, becoming Akodo, freed from the control of the Lying Darkness. Its plots undone and its attack upon creation defeated, what remained of the Lying Darkness fled, while the inertia of creation reasserted itself, healing the damage done to the Empire's history.

The Elemental Dragon of Air saw the last remnant of the Nothing fleeing, and knew in that instant it would someday grow to threaten creation again unless it could somehow be contained. Already Tainted by the Shadowlands, the Air Dragon chose to take the Nothing into itself, becoming the malignant Shadow Dragon. The Dragon knew full well this would transform it into a terrible and evil being, but it accepted the sacrifice in the belief it would forever limit the power of the Darkness.

After Oblivion's Gate

Unfortunately, while it is possible to thwart the Nothing, it is not possible to ultimately destroy it. Following its defeat at Oblivion's Gate, most of the Nothing's influence in Ningen-do was ended. However, a dark residue of its power still stained the Mortal Realm and may over time grow once again.

Foremost, of course, was the Shadow Dragon. This entity, the former Dragon of Elemental Air, was the most powerful and dangerous manifestation of the Nothing remaining in Ningen-do. A creature as profoundly powerful as an Elemental Dragon does not simply die, but neither is it invulnerable, and when the Dragon of Air absorbed the lingering remnant of the Nothing it was transformed in a profound and terrible way to become the Shadow Dragon, a new avatar for the Nothing in the world. The Shadow Dragon is an enigmatic creature, a strange fusion of otherwise incompatible things – the solidity of an elemental force combined with the absolute emptiness of Nothing. In some ways the Shadow Dragon could actually be more dangerous than the Lying Darkness before it, for it possesses the deep wisdom and insight of a celestial dragon, blackened and twisted by the abhorrence for creation of the Nothing and also influenced by the dark malignance of the Taint. In the years after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Shadow Dragon began its own campaign against Rokugan, shaping and guiding events from the shadows. While it seemed to eschew the long and intricate scheming of the Lying Darkness, it still did great harm, such as by assisting the rise of Iuchiban and the Rain of Blood in the mid-twelfth century.

What does differentiate the Shadow Dragon from the earlier Lying Darkness is that it seems to have less of an immediate desire to destroy creation. Rather, it seems more interested in meddling in the affairs of Rokugan and more generally of Ningen-do overall, with intentions that remain unclear. Whether this changed motivation is an effect of Jigoku's influence through the Shadowlands Taint, a vestige of the former Air Dragon's devotion to the balance and harmony of Ningen-do, or even a cryptic change of intent on the part of the Nothing itself is unknown.



The other remnant of the Lying Darkness after Oblivion's Gate was its followers. When Hitomi named the Lying Darkness, she caused all of its minions that were wholly faceless and without identity to be remade into unique individuals with the Akodo name. However, not all of the followers of the Lying Darkness had fully lost their own identities. Goju Adorai, for example, had retained a semblance of identity, giving him a will and cunning of his own. As a result, many of those from the Goju and Ninube "families" escaped being renamed and remade by Hitomi. There were too few of them to carry on the battle against the combined might of Rokugan and the Spirit Realms, so they fled into hiding.

In subsequent years the Goju and the Ninube went in different directions. The Goju, perhaps drawn by a continuing affinity for the Nothing, gravitated toward its new avatar: the Shadow Dragon, which had taken refuge in the Shadowlands. They served as the Shadow Dragon's servants and spies, and many soon came to bear the Shadowlands Taint. Some Goju eventually joined the Spider Clan under the Dark Lord Daigotsu, though to what ends remained to be seen. Others carried out a sustained campaign of terror and destruction against the Fox Clan, seeking to capture a prophet whose ability to see the future was much envied and desired by the Shadow Dragon.

The Ninube, on the other hand, turned away from the Shadow Dragon, repelled by the fact it no longer sought the immediate unmaking of creation. This did not, however, grant them freedom from the new Dragon's power, and it manipulated them in much the same way it did others. The Ninube took refuge in the ruins of the old Imperial capital, Otosan Uchi, and sought to influence the affairs of Rokugan from there. They dreamed of finding a way to regain the strength the Nothing had lost, most notably by seeking out the reincarnated souls of the Kami and trying to absorb and acquire their power. Although the Ninube eventually drew the wrath of the Jade Champion, it was not clear how many of them were destroyed or whether any survived to continue haunting the Empire.

Finally, another and perhaps even more insidious residue of the Lying Darkness remained in Rokugan. Among those of its minions who escaped destruction or renaming at Oblivion's Gate were an unknown number who were neither Goju nor Ninube. These were the unfortunate Rokugani who had been contaminated by the Nothing, their motives and actions subjected to its influence, but who had not wholly succumbed to it. The defeat and naming of the Lying Darkness seemed to free them from this sinister influence, and they returned to what remained of their normal lives in Rokugan. This is, perhaps, the most sinister legacy of the Lying Darkness, because these men, women, and children, samurai and peasants both, continue to live and work among the people of Rokugan. Through them the Nothing maintains a distant and subtle awareness of what transpires in the Empire. Even worse, they can still be involuntary agents of the Shadow's corruption, offering their voices to whisper in the ears of their friends and neighbors, exploiting fears, desires, and regrets, turning ever more Rokugani to the Shadow and the dark power it offers.

The Nothing As An Adversary

Given the Nothing's history of twisting and manipulating affairs not only throughout the Empire's history but even before, it should be clear that it is an implacable and extremely dangerous foe. It is patient, relentless, and utterly remorseless, willing to employ methods ranging from the most cunning subterfuge to a brutal open attack to achieve its goals. Its minions are both limitless in number and wholly expendable, allowing it to make any sort of maneuver or attack with little concern for casualties or exposure. Even worse, because it is not a discrete being but rather a primal force of the universe, it is impossible for it to ever be truly defeated. The Shadow can be thwarted, forestalled, and set back, but it cannot be truly destroyed. Even Hitomi's naming only succeeded in reducing it to a tiny remnant, rather than completely annihilating it. This means those who earn the Nothing's enmity will never be free of its menace. It will pose an endless and pervasive threat as long as they live. Even death may not offer respite, since the Nothing has demonstrated before that the walls between the Spirit Realms offer no barrier to it. When its enemies finally reach the next life they may find the Nothing already there, waiting for them.

It is against this backdrop of insidious and almost cosmic threat that any story of conflict against the Nothing should be played out. Those who are unfortunate enough to come to the attention of the Nothing should quickly realize they are playing an extremely dangerous game in which any victory is short-lived and the best outcome is probably a draw. For most samurai, no matter how strong or clever they may believe themselves to be, the Nothing is an unbeatable opponent who will ultimately destroy them, body and soul.

How, exactly, does the Nothing manifest itself as an adversary? The answer to that question depends in part on whether one is considering the time before or after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. It depends far more, however, on whether the Nothing is seeking to be subtle and surreptitious, or is prepared to be violent and overtly destructive. It is quite capable of either, which makes it an ideal opponent for an L5R campaign.

The Nothing As Subtle Manipulator

The greatest strength of the Nothing is its ability to discreetly insinuate itself into the affairs of men. It has existed since before the beginning of time, and possesses almost infinite patience. Once it has become interested in an individual, the Nothing will work with great subtlety, nudging that person along the path it desires by manipulating surrounding events and employing its agents to cajole, tempt, and persuade. The later section in this chapter on Shadow Mechanics details the particular in-game means by which this is accomplished, but in general terms the Nothing will play on its target's weaknesses and flaws, with a particular emphasis on the Three Sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret. This should not be surprising, since these are the only true emotions the Nothing has ever experienced; it is thus particularly attuned to those who experience such feelings, with a disturbingly potent awareness of their motivations. All other feelings the Nothing expresses are simply imitations, copied from those it has absorbed and then played back in the manner of an actor performing on a stage.

The implication, of course, is that *any* person can potentially be subject to the manipulation of the Nothing. The extent to which someone might actually be actively sought out and influenced is dependent on the specific individual. A target who is pious, self-controlled, who has a keen sense of honor or a particularly strong devotion to duty, will be approached carefully if at all... although if such people can be taken by the Shadow they are great prizes indeed. Fortunately for the Shadow's designs, there are a great many mortals who give in to the Three Sins and who are thus more readily manipulated. Strong personalities who have suffered great pain, loss, or harm and crave an impossible retribution or justice are popular targets, as are potent individuals weakened by the call of love. Other targets are simply weak – honorless, full of petty spite and jealousy, or simply greedy. It is not difficult for the Shadow to work its way into the lives and minds of such flawed people, offering them redress of past injustices, the wealth and power they crave, or control over their foes. If they accept such offers, even in part, the Nothing has gained a perpetual hold upon them... and the true horror begins. Over time, the Shadow slowly devours their memories, identities, and ultimately their very names and faces, leaving only the empty husk of a Shadowspawn.

One final possibility of the Nothing's intrusion into mortal lives is what happens when one or both parents of a child happen to be Shadow-corrupted. What this could mean for the child is unknown, and the only recorded case is that of Isawa Kaede, whose mother was Doji Ninube. Kaede was cleansed by her father and went on to become a powerful and benign shugenja, ascending to the post of Oracle of Void. Other such children, lacking such a powerful parent, may face a much darker fate.

A chilling example of the Shadow's ability to manipulate even the most honorable of men may be found in the story of the notorious Dragon magistrate Kitsuki Kaagi. Kaagi, born a Matsu, lost his father at an early age to what was believed to be poisoning by mysterious assassins... by ninja. He became obsessed with delving into the ninja legend and as an adult joined the Kitsuki family, believing he would uncover an insidious but mundane organization responsible for murder and mayhem throughout Rokugan. However, his obsessive investigations began to expose a deeper, darker, and far more horrible truth. The Nothing, which had already taken Kaagi's brother and was well aware of his quest, chose to allow the Kitsuki to find tantalizing bits of evidence pointing toward some manner of shadowy cabal. The clues drove Kaagi along the trail with ever more zeal, allowing him to learn more and more about the darkness as he delved into a whole series of kidnappings, impersonations, and murders across the Empire. Kaagi was as obsessive about chronicling his investigations as he was in conducting them, and recorded his journeys and findings in a personal journal without realizing he was documenting his own slow fall to the Shadow. Too late, he realized the truth. By then, the Nothing had so subverted him that it could intrude into his very dreams, consuming his identity with impunity. Kaagi finally vanished altogether, leaving behind only his journal, returned to the Dragon Clan by a servant. Even this journal proved to be hazardous, for merely perusing such a detailed account of the Shadow often allowed its corruption to touch the reader. The book was finally locked away in a crystal vault beneath Shiro Kitsuki. As far as anyone knows, there it remains.





The Nothing As Feral Killer

While the Nothing often prefers subterfuge and manipulation to achieve its ends, it has no qualms about resorting to violence. Since concepts such as honor and compassion are utterly alien to it, the results are almost always horrifying. Even the vilest of the Lost and Jigoku's oni lords exercise some small restraint, because their objective is conquest and subjugation, not annihilation. Because the Nothing's ultimate goal is to unmake reality completely, no such restraint exists – no cost is too great, no carnage too extreme.

The foremost example of the Shadow as a destructive force is, of course, the war waged by the Lying Darkness against Rokugan and its past in the twelfth century. The Lying Darkness unleashed an army of Shadowspawn against the Empire and invaded the spirit realms, completely heedless of the cost in blood and destruction. The Darkness not only slaughtered thousands of Rokugani samurai but also destroyed countless spirits and ancestors. Although it was finally defeated, this only meant that it was driven into the background of the Empire, its power limited for a time by the Shadow Dragon. Eventually it will rise again and once more threaten to erase existence itself.

However, the Shadow has perpetrated many acts of violence on a lesser scale than Oblivion's Gate. Kitsuki Kaagi's story is again illustrative. He accompanied Isawa Ujina on the mission to rescue the kidnapped Doji Ninube. A party of Emerald Magistrates had already gone in search of her, but they had vanished without trace. Kaagi found them slaughtered and dismembered, their mangled remains deliberately arranged in a horrifying display of butchery. Later Kaagi and Ujina were themselves attacked by a pack of Goju Shadowspawn, narrowly escaping with their lives. The significance of this incident is clear – the Nothing will not hesitate to openly attack even a well-armed party of samurai, if it seems advantageous to do so. The Darkness offers no quarter to its enemies, and indeed death is far preferable to the fate awaiting those captured by the minions of the Shadow.

The Nothing also routinely employs more covert acts of violence such as murder and assassination. The Goju and Ninube are ideally suited for such tasks given their unnatural ability to assume the guise of nearly anyone they choose, infiltrating close to their victims and then striking without warning. These methods may be used simply to eliminate inconvenient adversaries, but such killings can also serve more subtle and sinister purposes. By murdering victims in such a way that testimony and evidence points to other perpetrators, the Nothing can sow confusion, mistrust, and strife among the samurai of Rokugan. Such chaos can only further the interests of the malevolent Shadow.

Vulnerabilities of the Shadow

While the Nothing cannot be ultimately defeated, it does have weaknesses that can be exploited by those who understand them. Foremost among these is crystal, born from those of Amaterasu's tears that did not mix with Lord Moon's blood. Because Amaterasu is the only being never to be touched by the Nothing, her crystal tears are profoundly inimical to it. Crystal weapons can harm the Darkness' minions, who are resistant against most other forms of attack, and light shone through a crystal will reveal them for what they are, no matter what false form they may have taken. Sadly, these vulnerabilities were not known to most Rokugani until the climactic days of Oblivion's Gate. Prior to that time, only a few members of the Unicorn Clan understood the value of crystal against the Lying Darkness.

Otherwise, the only effective defense against the Nothing (aside from simply avoiding attracting its attention altogether) is the strength of one's own moral character and soul. Honorable persons find it easier to withstand the Shadow's lure. More importantly, a person's inner Void may offer a bulwark against the Lying Darkness. The Void, the unity of everything and the measure of every soul's inner strength, is the extent to which one can ultimately resist the Shadow's corruption.

Although it is not strictly a vulnerability, for reasons not well understood the corruption of the Nothing and that of Jigoku are to some extent incompatible. The resistance of Nezumi to the Shadowlands Taint may be another hint that the Nothing was actively influencing that race during ancient times. Regardless, combinations of the Shadowlands Taint and Shadow contamination were extremely rare prior to the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. However, after the rise of the Shadow Dragon such joint corruption became somewhat more common.

The Nothing In A Campaign

Given its long history as one of Rokugan's greatest adversaries, the Nothing can serve as an excellent villain in an RPG campaign. However, in order to realize the greatest impact from using this sinister opponent, the GM should consider carefully how it will be used and the form it will take within the story. The Shadow is not appropriate to every sort of campaign. It works well in games built around themes of horror or epic struggle, but a campaign that centers on political intrigue or open-world exploration, or that uses the relationship-mapping method, may be less amenable to the Nothing. Of course, the GM does not have to make the Nothing the primary villain in the story. Its subtle machinations could easily cross the paths of the player characters without their ever having been aware of it... which is exactly how it prefers things.

There are many terrible enemies threatening Rokugan. What sets the Nothing apart is that it represents an existential threat to reality itself. The Nothing does not want to simply



subjugate Rokugan or control it, but to destroy it completely along with all of the other spirit realms, returning to the utter perfect emptiness that existed before the accident of creation. The sheer cosmic scope of this threat should permeate a campaign that focuses its plot on the Nothing. One way to accomplish this is to accentuate an aspect of RPG play that is often downplayed or even overlooked entirely – atmosphere.

Atmosphere is the overall mood developed during the course of an RPG campaign, expressed gradually across many gaming sessions. In many campaigns the atmosphere is primarily one of "action," with an emphasis on exciting chases, furious battles, and narrow escapes. L5R campaigns also often foster the charged atmosphere of tense political intrigue and courtly drama. And in some cases, the atmosphere is simply a by-product of what happens to be going on in the game at the time. There is, of course, nothing wrong with any of this as long as everyone is having a good time. However, using the Nothing as an opponent gives the GM an opportunity to reverse this and develop a different gaming experience. The Lying Darkness lends itself to building up an atmosphere of pervasive dread and impending doom, allowing the GM to create a campaign with a powerful "horror movie" feel. It is in this sort of atmosphere, built out of themes of isolation, alienation, and creeping paranoia, that the Nothing truly shines.

Kituski Kaagi's journal describes an honorable man's steady inexorable descent, first into darkness and madness, then into despair and finally oblivion. While this obviously isn't the outcome desired by players whose characters are contending against the Nothing, it certainly should be clear to the players that this is *often* the outcome of confronting this sinister foe. To accomplish this, there are a number of things both GM and players need to keep in mind:

- The Nothing cannot truly be defeated or destroyed. There may be a "final confrontation" with the Shadow, but it can only result in the Nothing being thwarted and driven off for a time. This, of course, leaves open the possibility for future vengeance against the PCs. This possibility may never materialize... but the PCs won't know that.
- The Nothing is ancient beyond measure, literally predating creation itself. It should be a fearsome, relentless, and extremely smart opponent. This doesn't mean it won't make mistakes; it is also arrogant and dismissive of mortals in the extreme. However, it should be clear to the PCs that they are tangling with one of the most dangerous things in all of existence.
- It is wholly lacking in human qualities such as understanding, empathy, or compassion. The Nothing truly cares no more for humans than humans do for bothersome insects. It cannot be reasoned with or appealed to except insofar as appearing to respond to reason or appeals will further its own interests. In other words, the Nothing is not in any way a *fair* opponent.
- The Nothing is subtle, insidious, and infinitely patient. This is in many ways the most effective attribute of the Nothing for creating an atmosphere of horror and dread, and it can be expressed in many ways in a campaign. The PCs should find themselves being drawn into a nightmare world in which nothing is what it seems. The minions of the Shadow can be anywhere, impersonating anyone. The Nothing may appear in the PCs' dreams, visiting them with terrifying visions that seem to portend an inevitable doom. Paranoia and suspicion should color the PCs' dealings with others – and with one another. As the Nothing wears away at the PCs' minds, it should begin to bait them, tempting them with whatever it is they want most – power, influence, revenge, or even just answers to lingering questions. It can also offer ways to mitigate or even undo their Disadvantages. But of course nothing offered by the Shadow comes without a price, as the section on Mechanics will show.
- Finally, it should never be forgotten that the Nothing's sole true objective is the unmaking of creation. This is wholly unlike any other enemy of the Empire, and the stakes are therefore as high as they can possibly be. To a Rokugani, dying to the Nothing and its minions is far worse than any other sort of death, because it carries the possibility of outright and irrevocable destruction, utter removal from the Celestial Order. In a society which believes in rebirth and reincarnation, this would be the most horrible fate imaginable. The other alternative – absorption by the Nothing – is perhaps even worse, because it involves a complete loss of identity, followed by a perpetual existence as a nameless, faceless pawn of the Shadow. The PCs should clearly understand that this is what they are up against.

GMs seeking atmospheric inspiration for a Shadow-based campaign will be able to find many examples of stories in which an atmosphere of pervasive fear and coming doom reigns. Foremost among these are the works of the horror writer H.P Lovecraft, particularly those focused on the so-called Cthulhu Mythos. Another particularly good example, immediately relevant to the L5R setting, is Akira Kurosawa's film *Throne of Blood*, in which the impending doom of Shakespeare's "MacBeth" is played out in feudal Japan. Many Japanese films and stories about ghosts, curses, and supernatural hauntings, such as *Ringu* and *Ju-on*, are also excellent sources of the sort of creeping horror atmosphere that a Shadow game thrives upon.

The other aspect of the campaign to consider is its tempo. In any well-constructed story the PCs should ideally experi-

ence a gradual ramping-up of events that promotes tension and a sense of danger. This is even more important when the Nothing is involved in the campaign. While the Lying Darkness is not truly omnipotent or omniscient, it has an awareness that in some ways transcends time and space. That being said, the Nothing cares little or nothing for the vast majority of mortals. It is only when a person catches the Nothing's attention, either by stumbling across its activities or by displaying the combination of flaws and potential that would make him useful, that the Nothing will begin to try to influence him. Accordingly, at the outset of a campaign it is quite likely that the Nothing will have no interest whatever in the PCs. This provides a "window" in the story during which the GM can begin to hint at the horrible truth underlying events while still allowing the PCs to have a way out, to decide this may be something they don't want to be involved with – at least not yet. Much like Kitsuki Kaagi, the PCs should not be forced into a confrontation with the Shadow, but should decide for themselves to pursue what could very well be an inexorable descent to their own destruction.

Because the Nothing is an enemy that strikes at its victims' emotional and psychological weaknesses, it can work best as an opponent for higher-ranking and more experienced PCs who have a well-developed personalities and back-stories – and to whom their players have developed some attachment. This also fits well with the nature of the Shadow itself; frankly, it is unlikely to concern itself with the activities of a group of low-ranking minor samurai. This does not mean the Nothing shouldn't be considered as an opponent from the beginning of a campaign with new low-ranking PCs; however, given its nature, the GM should consider reserving any direct confrontation until a later point in an ongoing campaign.

The Avatar of Shadow

Through the course of its existence, the Nothing has been known to have at least one avatar, a physical embodiment in the world. This is the shugenja Goju Adorai, who was finally destroyed at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. It is unknown how long he existed before that fateful confrontation; indeed, there are hints he may have actually been Goju himself, the man who fell into the clutches of the Shadow at the dawn of the Empire and lent his name to the Shadowspawn.

It may seem contradictory for the Nothing to feel it necessary to embody itself in any fashion. This is a requirement forced upon it by attempting to manipulate and influence the physical world. However, there is nothing to suggest Goju Adorai is the only avatar the Nothing has ever used in Rokugan, nor that it only ever uses a single avatar at any given time. Accordingly, GMs should feel free to construct new avatars and representations of the Nothing for their campaigns. The only proviso should be that no matter how powerful such an avatar may be, it is still just a representation of the Nothing. Defeating an avatar is a setback for the Nothing, but no more so than the defeat of a valuable spy is a setback for a large intelligence network. The Nothing itself should never actually appear in the game, and it cannot be destroyed – indeed the very concept of destroying an existential void is a meaningless one.

Shadow Mechanics

The following sections discuss game mechanics for representing the Shadow and its various minions and capabilities in your L5R game. It should be noted that the mechanics here are designed to reflect the nature of the Lying Darkness as described earlier in this chapter. They are not "fair" in any way. Rather, they simulate the malignant and sinister powers of the Nothing, a primal force which transcends all bounds of mortal life. A wise GM will employ these mechanics sparingly, to emphasize the Shadow's power and horror, and avoid letting the PCs treat them as just a new set of Techniques or Advantages.

Shadow Ranks

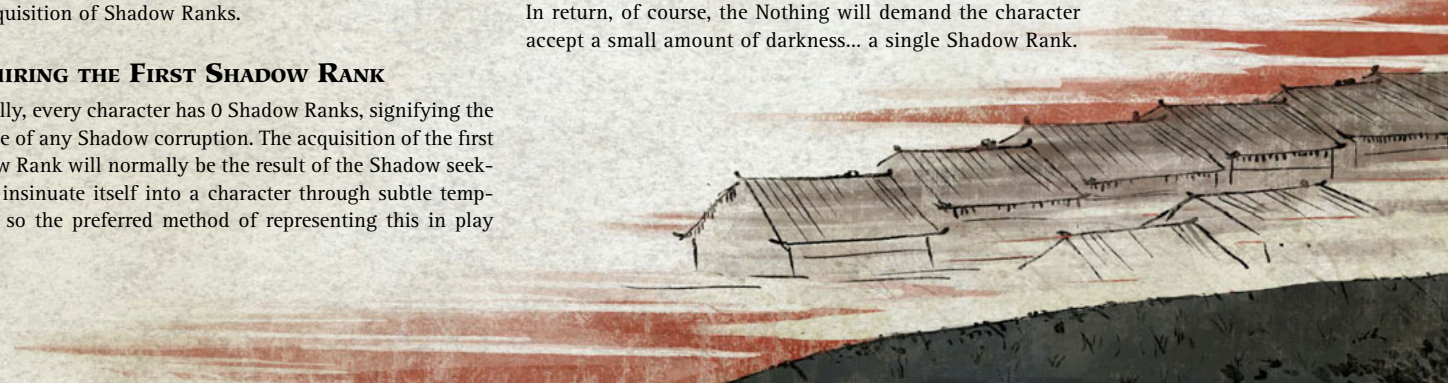
Corruption by the Nothing is a subtle and insidious process. Unlike the Shadowlands Taint, which is a relentless progression not unlike a disease, Shadow corruption by the Nothing requires the individual affected by a willing participant in the process – at least at first. In game terms, this is reflected by the acquisition of Shadow Ranks.

Acquiring the First Shadow Rank

Normally, every character has 0 Shadow Ranks, signifying the absence of any Shadow corruption. The acquisition of the first Shadow Rank will normally be the result of the Shadow seeking to insinuate itself into a character through subtle temptation, so the preferred method of representing this in play should extended role-playing between the GM and the player. The Shadow is deceptive, and the GM can employ clever role-playing and misdirection to initially conceal the reality of the situation. For example, the Nothing (or more likely one of its Goju or Ninube minions) could appear to the character in the guise of someone he trusts – a friend, relative, or traveling companion. This begins a period of subtle persuasion aimed at making the character more open to being tempted by the powers and benefits offered by the Shadow. As discussed in the following sidebar, typical psychological levers employed by the Nothing would be things in the character's past that are sources of pain or outrage, such as a lost love, a dead child, a dishonorable act not yet expunged, or a transgression not yet avenged. For instance, a character could be offered an opportunity to achieve long-sought revenge over a past insult.

The cost, on the surface, is a small one: a single Shadow Rank. But no debt owed to the Shadow is ever truly small.

Another avenue the Nothing can exploit is the character's Disadvantages. In particular, Disadvantages related to the sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret will be used by the Nothing in its campaign to corrupt the character. It may offer to mitigate such Disadvantages or even remove them altogether. In return, of course, the Nothing will demand the character accept a small amount of darkness... a single Shadow Rank.



Sins and Disadvantages

Fear, Desire, and Regret are the only true emotions ever experienced by the Nothing. Consequently it has a particularly keen understanding of and affinity for these three great Sins. In game terms, the following Disadvantages are good examples of a weakness or failure that is related to a particular Sin and therefore fertile ground for the Nothing in its attempts to corrupt a character.

- Fear - Dark Secret, Doubt, Failure of Bushido (Courage), Phobia
- Desire - Compulsion, Consumed, Driven, Fascination, Greedy, Jealousy, Lechery, True Love
- Regret - Bitter Betrothal, Blackmailed, Dependent, Lost Love, Soft-Hearted

If a GM chooses to introduce additional "home-brewed" Disadvantages to the game, he should consider if they could logically be related to one of the Sins. As a general guideline, Mental and Social Disadvantages are more likely to be related to the Sins, while other types are less likely to be so.



Getting Into Their Heads

The Lying Darkness is a merciless opponent and one that transcends the bounds of the merely physical. It can read a samurai's memory and feelings easily, and employs the weaknesses it finds there to claim its victims. As Kitsuki Kaagi discovered to his sorrow, the Darkness' preferred method is to slowly break down its victims, devouring their memory and identity a small piece at a time, thereby absorbing them completely. When the Shadow is attacking a PC, its minions will appear to that PC in the forms of trusted superiors, family members, lovers, or close friends. Only gradually, as the PC speaks with these visitors, will the creatures begin to reveal their true nature. The Goju and Ninube do not have faces of their own, instead wearing whatever form suits their needs. When they reveal themselves, their features slide away to leave a suggestive blankness... a vacant face-shape that always seems to somehow be laughing.

The GM should not hesitate to let the Shadow "play dirty," dredging up the PCs' innermost fears and deepest failures with which to assail them. Kitsuki Kaagi was plagued by visitations from his lost brother Iyeku. Disadvantages such as True Love or Lost Love are fertile ground for the Shadow to strike, but the GM should also consider the personal history of the character beyond any mere Disadvantages. Does the character revere his parents? The Shadow will appear as his father, offering advice or criticism that is strange and disturbing. Does a shugenja admire her sensei? The Shadow will use that emotional tie as well.

The Shadow does not confine itself to the waking world. Indeed, dreams are one of its favorite avenues of attack, since they allow it to bypass many of its victims' defenses. A clever GM can start a scene with the PC speaking with a friend or relative, only for the PC to slowly realize that nothing is right – they are in a strange room, the season is wrong, and the face of his beloved mother is sliding into a suggestive blank that is still speaking and smiling…

It is cannot be overstated that the Nothing is an insidious and devious entity. If it is given leave to diminish or remove a Disadvantage from a character, or to provide a character with some benefit, it will often do so in a perverse way that leads the character to further weakness and sorrow. As inspiration, consider the famous story "The Monkey's Paw," in which the paw of a dead monkey is a talisman that grants its possessor three wishes. The wishes do indeed come true, but each has a horrific price for interfering with fate. The Shadow's methods are likely to be similar. For example, if a character wants to eliminate his Blackmail Disadvantage, the Shadow may do so by publicly exposing the matter over which the character is being blackmailed. This will certainly put an end to the Blackmail, but not in all likelihood in the way the character wanted – and he still has paid the price of a Shadow Rank. This is not to say the Nothing will always use such a perverse approach. Sometimes its boons will be granted with no apparent downside to the character. Ultimately, the Shadow will do whatever is most likely to enmesh and trap the character – this is a judgment call on the part of the GM, based on the character and the needs of the story.

If the GM and player agree that the character would accept the "benefits" being offered by the Nothing, the character should immediately be given 1 Shadow Rank, whose effects are described below. Only after the character accepts the Shadow Rank will the Nothing go to work on his behalf.

As an alternative to simply role-playing the acquisition of the first Shadow Rank, some GMs may wish to use an approach based more on game mechanics. For example, a GM may decide that being subjected to a particular ritual or entering a specific location carries with it the risk of being touched and contaminated by the Shadow. In such a case, the character should make a Void Roll against a TN determined by the GM. Typically this would be about TN 15, although a weak attack could be only TN 10 and a strong one will be TN 20 or even TN 25. Failure indicates contamination, and causes the character to receive 1 Shadow Rank. While this may be more expedient than role-playing, GMs should exercise caution – once a character is contaminated by the Nothing, he has begun a process which will result in substantial changes to his nature and storyline, up to and including his being completely absorbed into the Shadow (and thus made an NPC). Many players will object to the possibility of losing their character to an "arbitrary" effect such as failing a Void roll, and the GM should carefully consider such concerns before using this approach to Shadow corruption.

Acquiring Subsequent Shadow Ranks

Acquiring the first Shadow Rank gives a character some useful abilities along with an apparently minor drawback, as shown on the tables below. This is important; the Nothing wants to attract people to itself, and extracting a horrific price too soon is counter-productive to that goal. Accordingly, it is entirely possible for a character to carry on indefinitely with a single Shadow Rank, representing a small degree of contamination by the Nothing. However, the Nothing will always be aware of that character's actions and, more importantly, the motivations behind them. It will seek opportunities to increase its hold on the character, again by exploiting his actions (or inaction) or Disadvantages, or by making offers at times the character is least likely to refuse them. For example, in a combat that is going badly, the Nothing may whisper to the character that it will cloak him in shadow so he can escape to summon reinforcements or make it more difficult for the enemy to strike him. If he accepts the offer, the GM should have the character make a Void Roll against an appropriate TN (taking into account the increase in TN resulting from his having a Shadow Rank) to resist acquiring another Shadow Rank. If the situation is sufficiently dire, the GM may even decide it is appropriate to give the character another Shadow Rank without the opportunity to resist through a Void Roll.

The Cautionary Tale of Shiba Kieru

Outwardly, Shiba Kieru was a good and honorable man, a skilled yojimbo in the service of a high-ranking member of the Isawa family. Privately, however, Kieru had a dark secret – he was afflicted with epilepsy, a rare disorder within the Rokugani noble class. A proud man, he had kept his affliction hidden since taking up his duties, partly through simple luck but also through the use of powerful herbs obtained from discreet merchants. After all, a yojimbo suffering from such a condition could be regarded as unreliable, not suited as a guard for an important charge. Unfortunately, one of his merchant suppliers proved to be less discreet than others and sold Kieru's secret to a Bayushi. The Scorpion knew only too well how to use such information. Reeling under the effects of blackmail, Kieru desperately sought a way out of his predicament, and one day a glimmer of hope appeared: an unremarkable ronin sat down one day at Kieru's table in a sake house and offered a way out of his bondage to the Bayushi. The man requested no money, no recompense at all; he simply asked that Kieru owe him a favor. The Shiba, desperate for any way out of the trap, readily agreed. To his shock, the very next day the courts were actively gossiping about his affliction, putting an end to the Scorpion's blackmail – and to Shiba Kieru's career as a yojimbo. His reputation was ruined and the clan reassigned him to minor duties in an obscure posting.

Infuriated, Kieru abandoned his duties and embarked on a quest of vengeance, determined to find and kill the strange ronin who had ruined him. He spent months chasing thin leads and obscure clues, sometimes coming very close to his quarry, a few times even glimpsing him on a crowded street – but never quite able to run the man down. This only intensified his burning desire for revenge. Kieru found himself spending more time in the shadowy lowest levels of society, dredging through dark rooms in criminal circles for the mysterious ronin, even as his dreams filled with strange shapes that flitted and danced amid wild music and endless shrieking laughter. As time went on, the shadows became deeper and more familiar to Kieru, like comforting places from his past. Eventually they ceased to be shadows at all. There simply *were* no more shadows to the thing that had once been Shiba Kieru. There was only truth – an awful empty truth about the vast abyss opening behind the thin veil of so-called reality.

Shiba Kieru no longer exists, but something that sometimes resembles the proud yojimbo still haunts and hunts in the dark places of Rokugan.

Graduated Shadow Ranks

Some GMs and players may feel that the acquisition of Shadow Ranks as whole numbers offers insufficient scope to explore the play of a character contaminated by the Nothing. Because it is common for all but very high Insight Rank characters to have a Void Ring of only 3 or 4, the final absorption of the character by the Lying Darkness may come across as too quick and abrupt a process. GMs who are concerned about this may choose to break Shadow Ranks down into graduated Points, in a manner similar to Honor, Glory, and Taint Ranks. Not until a character accumulates some particular number of Shadow Points does the Shadow Rank increase by one. In order to keep the threat of the Shadow strong, we suggest using a total of only 5 Shadow Points per Rank, although GMs who prefer a slower and less immediately threatening corruption process can use 10 Points per Rank instead. Note that until the full number of Shadow Points required for the next Rank are accumulated, the character keeps the powers and drawbacks associated with the current Shadow Rank. For example, if 5 Shadow Points are required to gain another Shadow Rank, a character who currently has Shadow Rank 2 and 4 accumulated Shadow Points would still only receive the benefits and drawbacks associated with Shadow Rank 2. Not until he acquired one more Shadow Point would he advance to Shadow Rank 3 and gain the new abilities and penalties associated with it.

This method allows for a more nuanced and gradual approach to Shadow contamination, with the concurrent effect of potentially allowing characters contaminated by the Nothing to continue to play for longer periods of time. A GM should consider whether this approach fits with his vision of the Nothing. Regardless of whether this method is used or not, the first Shadow Rank should always be given as a whole Rank – it is not possible to have a Shadow Rank greater than 0 but less than 1.

Each Shadow Rank acquired after the first gives a character more powers but also more drawbacks, as the Nothing gets a deeper hold on his body and soul. Moreover, as a character acquires Shadow Ranks, it becomes more difficult to avoid acquiring more. Almost inevitably, the number of Shadow Ranks possessed by a character will eventually exceed his Void Ring. When this happens, he is immediately and irrevocably lost, absorbed into the Shadow, his identity consumed and destroyed. In game terms, he becomes an NPC controlled by the GM. Such is the peril of opening oneself to an entity as dangerous and powerful as the Nothing.

The Scorpion Shadow Brands

When Shosuro became Soshi, she set the Scorpion Clan (and particularly the new Soshi family) on a path of unknowing collaboration with the Lying Darkness for many centuries. During that time, the Soshi came to understand and refine a form of magic called *tejina*, the magic of shadows, also sometimes called *kage-do,* or the Way of Shadow. *Tejina* differs from virtually all other Rokugani magic in that it is wholly unrelated to the five elements of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void. Instead, *Tejina* draws upon the essence of the Nothing itself, a power entirely apart and distinct from Elemental magic. It is most commonly manifested in the form of *kage yakiin*, or Shadow Brands. These are actual physical brands, subtly embodying the power of Nothing, which are permanently imprinted on the recipient's body. Shadow Brands have no specific form and typically appear as shifting intertwined tendrils of darkness; their appearance is always deeply disturbing to those who see them. The Shadow-Branded gain potent abilities that make them useful agents for the Scorpion Clan, employing the powers of the Nothing to further the Clan's interests... at least, until they are lost to the Lying Darkness.

The process of Shadow Branding involved a complex, lengthy, and excruciating ritual, the practice and details of which were a closely-guarded secret even among the Soshi. The extent to which the Soshi actually understood the nature and results of Shadow Branding is a matter of debate. While the general belief among those few even aware of Shadow Branding was that it was a means of exercising control over the Nothing, in fact the reverse was true – the Lying Darkness used the Shadow Brands as another means of spreading its corruption through the world, and it was those practicing Shadow Branding who were actually deceived and controlled. The Scorpion finally realized the truth during the War Against the Darkness, and discontinued the use of this dangerous practice, although a small faction within the Soshi continued to study the nature of the Nothing thereafter.

Accumulating Shadow Brands result in the acquisition of Shadow Ranks (with associated powers and drawbacks) by the recipient, but at a slightly slower pace than if the Nothing was touched directly. A person with two Shadow Brands gains Shadow Rank 1, and each Brand thereafter results in an additional Shadow Rank. Note that while a single Brand does not result in the actual acquisition of a Shadow Rank, it does make the recipient more susceptible to contamination by the Lying Darkness, so he does receive the drawback associated with Shadow Rank 1 (an increase of 5 to the TN of any Roll made to resist the effects of the Lying Darkness or its minions).

Mechanically, in addition to any the specific powers acquired through the acquisition of Shadow Ranks, a Shadow Brand also awards a bonus of its own: for each Shadow Brand which a character possesses, he gains a +1k1 bonus to all Stealth rolls.

Shadow Bolts

The most potent manifestations of the Nothing's power in the material world are Shadow Bolts. The term "Bolt" is something of a misnomer, however; there is no actual missile hurled at the target. Rather, this is the closest description that makes sense within the limits of human perception. In reality, a Shadow Bolt is a direct attack on an individual by exposure to the raw essence of Nothing. A Shadow Bolt attack can only be carried out by a minion of the Shadow which has more Shadow Ranks than its Void Ring, so it is the exclusive province of NPCs.

A minion of the Shadow can cast a Shadow Bolt once per day at any living target in line of sight. The Bolt automatically hits its target, who takes either 3k3 Wounds (if he has a Void Ring or its mechanical equivalent) or 5k5 (if he does not have Void). Note that these Wounds do not function in the manner of a normal physical injury. They represent the literal "unmaking" of the target's physical form, and thus cannot be mitigated

or reduced in any way. Void expenditure, Reduction, Invulnerability, and other such effects do not have any effect on the Wounds caused by a Shadow Bolt. They do heal normally, however, as the target's physical form re-asserts itself.

If the target is an intelligent humanoid, there is also the danger of Shadow contamination. If the target has a Void Ring (or an equivalent characteristic, such as the Name of the Nezumi or the Akasha of the Naga), he must also make a Void Roll (or equivalent) against a TN of 15 (modified as appropriate if he already has Shadow Ranks). If he is successful, the Bolt has no further effect. If he fails (or if he has no Void) he is contaminated by the Nothing. Typically, this means the target gains a Shadow Rank. If the GM is using the more graduated form of Shadow Ranks, he may choose to have the target gain 1k1 Shadow Points instead. Alternatively, the GM may instead prefer to represent the Shadow contamination in a more subtle way, such as by an increase to future TNs to resist the effects of the Lying Darkness – including future Shadow Bolts – by 5 for each Bolt that has struck. In any case, this residual effect of a Shadow Bolt is permanent and cannot be removed or undone in any way.

A Shadow Bolt can also be hurled against a non-living target such as a door, a weapon, or a stone wall. (Crystal is impervious to the effects of Shadow Bolts.) To depict the Bolt's effects, the GM rolls 5k5 against a TN of 10 for paper or wood, 15 for stone, or 20 for metal. If successful, the Bolt "unmakes" (destroys) up to a man-sized volume of material.

It should be noted that a Shadow Bolt attack is an extreme phenomenon, reserved by the Nothing only for correspondingly extreme situations. Casting Shadow Bolts seems to diminish the Nothing's essence in some undefinable way – indeed, some have speculated that the Bolt's destructive effect actually amounts to a mutual annihilation of the Bolt and that which it strikes, thereby diminishing the Nothing's total power in the universe.

The Powers of Shadow

The following table gives the effects and penalties of Shadow Ranks. For each Rank, the corresponding Shadow Powers and Drawbacks are described. Note that each Shadow Power becomes more potent at higher Shadow Ranks, so the effect of increasing Shadow Rank is synergistic. The obvious intent is to tempt players into risking the acquisition of more Shadow Ranks so they can gain new and better Powers. Of course there is a serious downside to this; as Shadow Ranks increase, the use of Shadow Powers makes it more likely that even more Shadow Ranks will be accrued. The result is a character that becomes progressively stronger but also progressively closer to his irrevocable fate – being completely subsumed by the Nothing, which happens whenever a character's Shadow Ranks exceed his Void Ring.

It may be noted that the chart does not list Shadow Ranks above 5. In point of fact, Shadow Ranks do continue to increase above 5, but no further powers or mechanical effects are applied. Thus characters with a higher Void Ring will be able to withstand the Shadow and enjoy its powers considerably longer before their final corruption. Those exceedingly rare mortals with a Void Ring of 10 will never be fully absorbed by the Lying Darkness; of course, it would be unusual in the extreme for such a gifted individual to have such intimate dealings with the Nothing in the first place!



Description of Shadow Powers and Drawbacks

Shadow Rank 1:

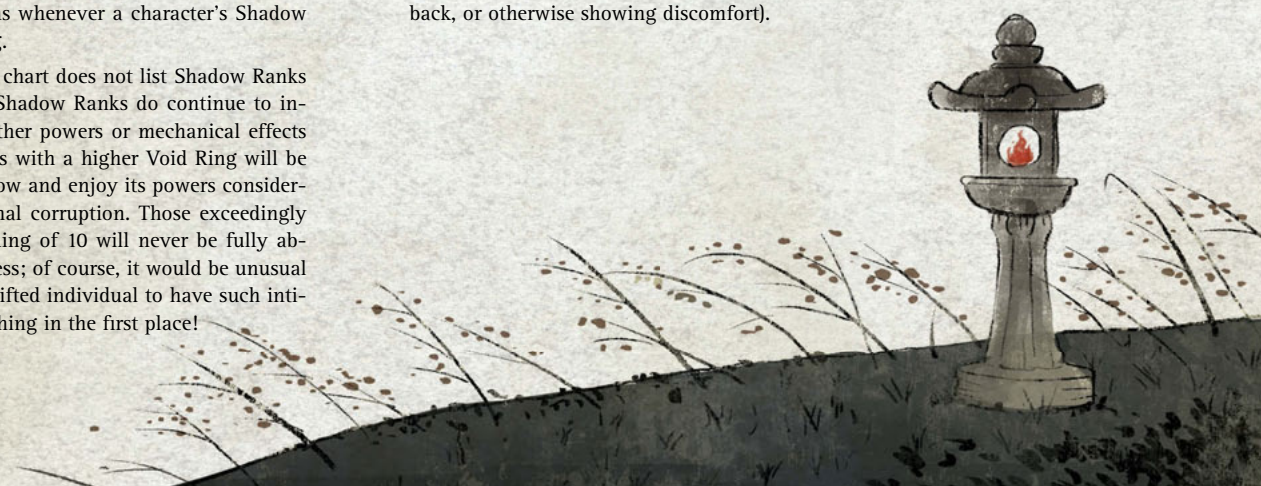
Shadowsight: The character is able to see into shadows and darkness almost as easily as into normal light. As a Simple Action the character can scan the shadows around him for anyone attempting to use Stealth to conceal themselves. When making the appropriate skill roll to locate a concealed target (usually a Contested Roll of Investigation / Perception against the target's Stealth / Agility) he gains two Free Raises. Moreover, the character also gains +1k0 on any Combat Roll made in an area that is substantially in deep shade or shadow.

Drawbacks: Any Contested Roll made to resist skills, effects, or combat maneuvers by the Lying Darkness or its minions has its TN increased by 5.

Shadow Rank 2:

Shadowblend: The character is able to blend himself into the shadows with unnatural ease, as though the darkness actively cooperates in hiding him. He gains two Free Raises on all Stealth rolls to conceal himself. Additionally:

- *The use of* **Shadowsight** *is now a Free Action*
- *The character receives +1k1 (instead of +1k0) on any Combat Roll made in an area that is substantially in deep shade or shadow.*
- **Drawbacks:** Any time a Shadow Power is used, the character must make a Void Roll at TN 15 or gain a Shadow Rank. Additionally, direct skin-contact with crystal will cause the character noticeable discomfort (roll Willpower at TN 10 to avoid wincing, drawing back, or otherwise showing discomfort).



Shadow Rank 3:

Shadow Walk: The character may disappear into a shadow and reappear somewhere else, instantly transitioning from one pool of darkness to another, so long as doing so does not require moving through a solid object. Both shadows must be large enough to fully encompass the character's body. Subject to these limitations, the character may take a Simple Action to move from any one place of darkness to any other such place within 100'. The character must be at least casually aware of the destination to which he is Shadow Walking. Additionally:

- *A character using* **Shadowsight** *now receives three Free Raises.*
- *A character using* **Shadowblend** *now gains three Free Raises on Stealth rolls and can move normally while using the Stealth skill to conceal himself (identical to the Mastery Abilities for Stealth Skill Rank 7).*
- *The character now receives +2k1 on any Combat Roll made in an area that is substantially in deep shade or shadow.*

Drawbacks: Any time a Shadow Power is used, the character must make a Void Roll versus a TN of 20 or gain a Shadow Rank. Additionally, direct skin-contact with crystal will cause the character considerable discomfort which cannot be concealed. The character also begins to show signs of fading identity and an increasing generalization of facial features, causing him to gain the Bland Advantage if he does not already have it. While this does not cost any Experience Points, the effects of this Advantage are automatic and cannot be turned off voluntarily.

Shadow Rank 4:

Shadowshape: The character's form is now largely mutable, since much of his true identity is gone. As a Complex Action he may assume the shape of any other person he knows well (anyone with whom he has spent time totaling at least a full day in close proximity). This mimicry is good but not perfect, and can be discovered by a deliberate observer. Anyone who knows the original person may take a Complex Action to make a Perception Roll against the character's Intelligence x 3 to detect the deception. In addition:

- **Shadowsight** *now allows the character to automatically see anyone attempting to use Stealth to hide in shadows. The character may also see in complete darkness as though in dim light.*
- *A character using* **Shadowblend** *now takes half damage (rounded up) from any source other than a crystal weapon while in this state. Weapons and spells that specifically target the Lying Darkness or its minions may ignore this restriction.*
- *A character using* **Shadow Walk** *may now use the ability as a Free Action, and can move up to 200' at one time.*
- *The character now receives +2k2 on any Combat Roll made in an area that is substantially in deep shade or shadow.*
- **Drawbacks**: Any time a Shadow Power is used, the character must make a Void Roll versus a TN of 25 or gain a Shadow Rank. Direct skin-contact with crystal will cause the character severe discomfort (which cannot be concealed) and inflict 1 Wound (damage from crystal weapons will be increased by 1 Wound). Once per day, the Lying Darkness can attempt to take control of the character for up to one hour of in-game time; the character must make a successful Void Roll versus a TN of 20 to resist. During this time, the character becomes an NPC under control of the GM.

Shadow Rank 5:

Shadowgate: The character's body is now formless and malleable enough to pass through solid objects and even living creatures. Moving through anything more substantial than wood requires a Stamina Roll against a TN of 15 (stone) or 20 (metal or flesh). Failure means the attempt to Shadowgate has failed entirely. Note that crystal or a magical effect specifically intended to block the Lying Darkness and its minions will prevent passage by means of Shadow Gate. Each use of this ability (even one that fails) drains a Void Point from the character; this ability may not be used if it would reduce a character to 0 Void. In addition:

- **Shadowsight** *now allows the character to see in complete darkness as though seeing in full daylight.*
- *A character may use* **Shadowblend** *to meld completely into shadows as a Complex Action. He effectively ceases to have a physical existence and cannot be harmed by any non-crystal weapon or Elemental magic while in this state (except for those which specifically target the Lying Darkness and its minions). Conversely, while in this state the character remains aware of the physical world but cannot interact with it in any way, nor can he move farther than his Water Ring in feet by any means. The character can return to the physical world and end this effect as a Simple Action.*
- *A character using* **Shadow Walk** *may now move up to 500' at one time.*
- *Because the character's form is now almost entirely mutable, he may use* **Shadowshape** *to assume the shape of any other person he has observed for at least a full Round (doing so is still a Complex Action). This mimicry almost perfect; it can only be discovered by a deliberate observer making a Perception Roll against the character's Intelligence x 5.*

Drawbacks: Any time a Shadow Power is used, the character must make a Void Roll versus a TN of 30 or gain a Shadow Rank. Direct skin-contact with crystal will cause the character extreme pain (which cannot be concealed) and inflict 3 Wounds (damage from crystal weapons will be increased by 3 Wounds). If the character is illuminated with light shone through crystal, his true nature will be revealed – the light shines through his body as though it is translucent – and he will take 1 Wound for each Round so illuminated. Once per day, the Lying Darkness can take control of the character for up to one hour of in-game time; during this time, the character becomes an NPC under control of the GM. The character now has no true identity of his own and must use the Shadowshape power simply to appear as himself.

Creatures of Shadow

Lesser Shadowspawn

Lesser Shadowspawn are those poor souls who have been lost to the Nothing, their identities completely destroyed. All that remains is vague hints, fragments of memories from what was once a unique vital individual. Those with relatively low Void Rings (3 or lower) who succumb to the Darkness become Lesser Shadowspawn. They encompass the myriad creatures that serve as the most common minions of the Nothing, whether in its true form as the Lying Darkness or later in the service of the Shadow Dragon. It is important to note the creature described here is a generic one, and may go under the "name" of either Goju or Ninube. It is impossible to know how many Lesser Shadowspawn actually exist, since numbers are somewhat meaningless with respect to such anonymous beings. Their total seems to increase and diminish depending on the activities of the Nothing and the Empire's struggles against it.

In general, a Lesser Shadowspawn in its true form appears as either a humanoid shape composed of inky black shadow, or as a nondescript human with no discernible facial features, just smooth featureless skin on its face. It otherwise has no lasting features or details, although it often creates an impression of laughing or smiling. Suggestions of features may sometimes crawl and flicker across its face as though on some level it still struggles to maintain an identity. This may actually be what is happening, although such efforts are entirely futile. It is probably because of this ultimate loss and the vast frustration and regret that echoes from it that Lesser Shadowspawn are so malevolently disposed toward living things. Only the will of the Nothing keeps them in check; when slipped from their leash, they are ferocious opponents, attacking with weapons or with overlong razor-sharp claws. Since they have no sense of self, they are completely suicidal and care nothing for their own lives – indeed some investigations suggest that they cannot actually be truly killed, and if their physical form is destroyed they will simply be reformed by the Nothing later.

The Nothing employs the Lesser Shadowspawn as spies, assassins, and saboteurs, releasing them to their feral nature as vicious combatants when the time is right. They lack the ability to simulate specific individuals or to maintain human form for long periods of time, and often hide their malleable forms beneath dark clothing and masks – hence their close association with the ninja myth. If they are wounded, they bleed black smoke, and when killed they collapse and unravel into incoherent shadow and drifting smoke.

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 4k3 (Complex) or Weapon 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k2 or by weapon — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 6 (0 against crystal) — *Wounds: 64: Dead*

Skills: Acting 1, Sincerity (Deceit) 1, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2 (when revealed as a Shadowspawn).*
- *Swift 1.*
- *Cohesion of Shadow: A Lesser Shadowspawn does not feel pain and thus does not suffer Wound penalties. It continues to function at full strength until reduced to Dead.*
- *Lesser Invulnerability: Lesser Shadowspawn take half damage (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons and from non-Void spells and other magical effects not specifically intended to target the Nothing and its minions. Crystal weapons and Void spells affect them normally.*
- *Mental Resistance: Lesser Shadowspawn are immune to all Fear effects and to all spells that create illusions or influence the mind or thoughts.*
- *Shadow Powers: A Lesser Shadowspawn has all of the powers and drawbacks of Shadow Rank 5 except for shapeshifting. It can shapeshift to a lesser degree and assume the identity of any generic person, such as a typical servant, eta, low-ranking bushi, or similar, as a Complex Action. Its ability is not sufficient for it to assume a convincing copy of any recognizable individual. Contact with crystal or with light shone through crystal will reveal its true form. If it attacks, its true form is also revealed.*

Greater Shadowspawn

Although the Nothing can consume weak individuals with ease, it prefers to absorb stronger persons whose identity can be devoured more slowly. In these cases, the Nothing will gain the full range of the victim's memories, knowledge, and skill, allowing it to create a more powerful Shadowspawn when the unfortunate victim is fully absorbed. Normally, Greater Shadowspawn are created when the Nothing absorbs an individual with a Void Ring of 5 or higher, but they can also be specifically created by the Nothing for particular purposes, such as was done with Doji Ninube. Thankfully, Greater Shadowspawn are relatively rare.

Again, the Greater Shadowspawn described here is a generic one, and could represent any especially powerful Goju or Ninube. Any particular Greater Shadowspawn may vary somewhat from the one presented here, and the GM should feel free to adjust its abilities accordingly. In particular, specific Greater Shadowspawn may be tailored for particular tasks; one employed to assassinate an important target might be able to inflict more damage than that listed below, but at the expense of having fewer Wounds. Under exceptional circumstances a Greater Shadowspawn may be significantly more powerful than the creature described here and exhibit special abilities retained from its former mortal life, such as spell-casting or School Techniques. Like its lesser comrades, a Greater Shadowspawn bleeds black smoke and dissolves into nothingness if killed – however, their more powerful nature also seems to make them more difficult to replace, and most Greater Shadowspawn never reappear if they are killed.

In general, a Greater Shadowspawn in its true form is not much different from the Lesser type, appearing as a generalized humanoid shape with a featureless yet somehow mocking face. The difference becomes apparent when the Greater Shadowspawn uses its Shapeshifting ability, since it can assume a convincing rendition of both its own former identity as well as of any person it has been able to closely observe. This alone makes the Greater Shadowspawn a dangerous opponent. However, its menace is dramatically increased by the fact it is also a cunning and intelligent being, quite capable of adapting its behavior to suit the circumstances. In fact, Greater Shadowspawn are capable of convincingly impersonating other individuals for indefinite periods, making them ideal as spies and as agents for sowing mistrust and confusion among hapless humans. These creatures have been called by many names through the history of Rokugan – legends speaking of "Ninja Shapeshifters" and "Ninja Mimics" are usually referring to the activities of Greater Shadowspawn.

Air 3	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k4

Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple) or any weapon 6k4 (Complex)

Damage: Claws 5k2 or by weapon

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 10 (0 against crystal)

Wounds: 96: Dead

Skills: Acting 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth 5

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3 (when revealed as a Shadowspawn).*
- *Swift 1.*
- *Cohesion of Shadow: A Greater Shadowspawn does not feel pain and thus does not suffer Wound penalties. It continues to function at full strength until reduced to Dead.*





- *Partial Invulnerability: Greater Shadowspawn take half damage (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons and from non-Void spells and other magical effects not specifically intended to target the Nothing and its minions. Crystal weapons and Void spells affect them normally.*
- *Mental Resistance: Greater Shadowspawn are immune to all Fear effects and to all spells that create illusions or influence the mind or thoughts.*
- *Shadow Powers: A Greater Shadowspawn has all of the powers and drawbacks of Shadow Rank 5, including shapeshifting. In fact, it can assume the form and identity of any person it has been able to observe for a full Round – this shapeshifting requires a Complex Action. Contact with crystal or with light shone through crystal will reveal its true form. However, unlike a Lesser Shadowspawn, if it enters combat its true form is not automatically revealed, although if its uses its claws they will be visible for the duration of the attack.*
- *Shadowbolt: A Greater Shadowspawn can cast a Shadow Bolt once per day, at any target in line of sight.*

Shadowbeast

The interaction between the Nothing and the Shadowlands Taint is complex and unpredictable, as shown by the peculiar nature of the Shadow Dragon. Other Tainted creatures have occasionally been absorbed by the Shadow, however, and the result is usually a fearsome creature known as a Shadowbeast.

Although Shadowbeasts often appear as a great beast similar to a giant wolf or hunting cat, there is no specific form assigned to them. Crab scouts have sometimes reported sighting creatures with horrifying shifting forms that don't seem to conform to what few "rules" seem to apply to the Shadowlands, and those few who have knowledge of the Lying Darkness have offered hints and suggestions that some of these entities may in fact be Shadowlands creatures corrupted by the Nothing. The thought that monstrous creatures such as oni could be further corrupted and perverted is a disturbing one, but also one that cannot be discounted.

What does seem certain is that Shadowbeasts seem to exist not as enhancements to the forces of Jigoku but as agents opposed to it. Most of a Shadowbeast's powers seem to be intended to confound and weaken creatures of the Taint. This is not to say that Shadowbeasts are allies to the enemies of the Shadowlands, however. Shadowbeasts are as dangerous to the un-Tainted as they are to the minions of Jigoku, and exist solely to advance the Nothing's own mysterious interests.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 2
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 6

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Claws 7k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k3 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 12 (0 against crystal) — *Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: +15; 96: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3.*
- *Swift 2.*
- *Invulnerability.*
- *Mental Resistance: Shadowbeasts are immune to all Fear effects and to all spells that create illusions or influence the mind or thoughts.*
- *Shadow Powers: A Shadowbeast has all of the powers and drawbacks of Shadow Rank 3.*
- *Vengeful Howl: Twice per day as a Complex Action, a Shadowbeast may utter a piercing howl that strips power from any Tainted opponents who hear it. All creatures with a Taint Rank of 2 or more within 100 feet of the Shadowbeast automatically suffer 2k2 wounds. For each creature so affected, the Shadowbeast gains a +1k0 bonus its attack rolls for 1 hour thereafter.*


空の巻

Oni

There are few words in the Rokugani language that inspire as much fear and loathing as "oni." Every citizen has heard of the foul beasts and is aware of the horror they can unleash. Even those who are openly scornful of the Crab Clan's defense of the Empire, those who sneer at the Crab as uncultured brutes and suggest the Wall is a needless luxury, admit in their most private thoughts they are grateful the valiant sons of Hida keep oni from reaching their lands. Indeed, the fear and hatred most people feel toward oni is so intense it may actually be a natural, instinctive reaction to the presence of such an inherently evil and loathsome creature. Of course, it may also be because the Rokugani know an oni can be unleashed simply by human weakness.

Oni are the natural denizens of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. They are the antithesis of the life, joy, and goodness that exists in the Celestial Heavens and to a lesser extent in other realms, including Ningen-do, the Realm of Mortals. To the best understanding of mortals, the oni are the only native denizens of Jigoku, although even the most informed Kuni scholar will freely admit there is no way of safely learning what might truly exist within that dark place. Based on the words of the different oni that have visited the Empire, it is believed the oni are formless spirits within the Realm of Evil, simple entities that vary in power and influence but have little in the way of specific attributes. (Of course, oni are liars, so their words may be wholly untrue.) Apparently, the only unifying characteristics of oni in Jigoku are their dedication to evil and suffering and their undying hunger to escape into the mortal realm, where they can wreak havoc on the children of the Celestial Heavens.

It is not easy for oni to enter the mortal world. It can traditionally be accomplished in only two ways. The first is to pass through a spirit portal into Ningen-do. This has historically produced the greatest number of the wretched beasts, populating the entire Shadowlands with their ranks. Thankfully, only one stable portal into the Realm of Evil is known to exist: the so-called Festering Pit of Fu Leng, deep within the Shadowlands, created by the fall of Fu Leng from the Celestial Heavens at the dawn of the Empire. Passage through a portal apparently gives form to the formless oni spirits, creating bodies that mirror their innermost malignant and grotesque desires. The twisted forms that emerge from the Pit are perpetual and deadly foes to the Empire.

The second, and fortunately less frequent, means for an oni to reach the mortal realm is through a summoning ritual employed by foolish and power-hungry humans. This process allows an oni to manifest in the mortal realm by borrowing the name and essence of a mortal, usually its summoner. This is an exceptionally dangerous procedure, but one that allows the summoner to command the oni – at least for a time. Those who do this are playing the most dangerous game imaginable, for while the oni may be able to perform incredible tasks or impart impossible knowledge, the longer the bond between oni and mortal exists, the more of the mortal's soul is absorbed by the demon. If the bargain is maintained for too long – which the demon will try to encourage at all costs – the mortal's name and soul will be fully absorbed by the oni, freeing it. This is one of the most catastrophic events imaginable in the Rokugani cosmology. An oni freed by the absorption of a human name and soul is an impossibly powerful entity, known to the Kuni scholars as an Oni Lord. An Oni Lord fully realizes the power of its spirit form in a physical body, and gains the ability to spawn lesser versions of itself that themselves are as powerful as many of the oni that emerge from the Festering Pit. The number of Oni Lords that have existed in the Empire's history is mercifully few, perhaps no more than half a dozen or so, but each one has left deep scars on the Empire, requiring decades or even generations to heal. The first Oni Lord to be created, known simply as "The First Oni," killed Shiba himself; the Lord known as the Maw nearly destroyed the Crab Clan; the name of Agasha Kyoso remains an eternal shame on the Dragon Clan due to the ravages of the Lord known as Kyoso no Oni.

Oni as Adversaries

"Despite all we have learned, despite all the methods we have devised to fight them, only the most foolish would dismiss an oni's terrible power. Were it not for the diligent efforts of the Crab Clan they would have overrun Rokugan long ago."

– Kuni Mokuna, eleventh century

Oni are not to be trifled with, and the sooner players understand that the better. Oni are not weak or casual foes, and even the weakest oni is usually tougher and more dangerous than goblins, ogres, trolls, bog hags, and other less horrific denizens of the Shadowlands. Furthermore, each type of oni is unique and different from every other type. One oni with horns and a tail may require different tactics to kill than another that also has horns and a tail, and unless someone has encountered a specific type of oni before they cannot predict what each type can do or what their weaknesses are.

It is worth noting that fighting oni is very much a thankless task. The rest of the Empire does not even want to hear about oni, preferring to leave such foul matters to the Crab Clan. The Crab are uncouth and crude in part because they know no one else really understands their grim duty, and certainly no one else wants to hear about it. A samurai who marches into court and proudly proclaims his deeds at oni-slaying is more likely to be thrown out than to be praised – after all, if he has fought oni, he probably has the Taint! Thus, the GM should try to avoid letting the PCs fall into the trap of viewing the Shadowlands as simply a place one goes to gain Glory by killing monsters.

GMs who read the oni in the rest of this chapter will notice that many of these demons are extremely powerful and can probably eat the typical party of samurai PCs like so many tasty snacks. The answer to this, of course, is to make sure the PCs are forewarned and forearmed. In the original edition of the *Legend of the Five Rings* Role-Playing Game, designer John Wick commented, "Samurai are smart, players are dumb." While the words were humorous, they were making a serious point: players do not have all the information their characters should have. The GM should make sure the players fully realize what they are facing when they take on an oni, and see to it they have opportunities to acquire the resources they need – whether those be jade, special weapons, or simply knowledge of special powers and weaknesses – before dropping them into a desperate fight.

Creating a New Oni

Since every oni is unique, it is impossible to provide a standardized set of instructions on how to create one for a game of L5R 4th Edition. Rather, what follows are a set of general guidelines and suggestions to assist GMs in putting together oni of various power-levels.

Rings and Traits

An oni's Rings and Traits form a basis for its physical being. How difficult to kill do you want the oni to be? How intelligent, quick, or strong? Below are values and suggestions as to what kinds of creatures might have each.

Table 8.1: Oni Earth Ranks

Earth 1	Feeble, almost unable to act in the physical world. These oni are potentially incorporeal beings or beings that operate almost solely in the mental world.
Earth 2	The weakest of all normal oni, or perhaps an oni that does not do physical work itself, but works through others.
Earth 3	The average minor oni. Earth 3 oni are physically tough but not overwhelmingly so. Oni with an Earth of 3 are a challenge for two or three samurai of Rank Two or perhaps Rank Three.
Earth 4	The average normal oni. Earth 4 oni can take quite a bit of punishment, certainly more than Earth 3 oni. Generally oni with an Earth of 4 are a challenge for two or three samurai of Rank Three or Four, or an entire group of Rank Two samurai.
Earth 5	Tough oni, very difficult to kill. Generally oni with an Earth of 5 are a challenge for two or three samurai of Rank Four or Five, or an entire group of Rank Three samurai.
Earth 6+	A major challenge. These oni are almost impossible to kill as they usually have high Reduction and/or Invulnerability as well. They are a challenge for any group of samurai but should not be used against lower-ranking groups unless the GM specifically wants to defeat them. .

Stamina: An oni with a higher Stamina than Willpower is able to withstand more physical activity and damage than one whose Earth Traits are equal.

Willpower: An oni with a higher Willpower than Stamina is able to unleash more powerful mental actions and temptations than one whose Earth traits are equal.



Table 8.2: Oni Air Ranks

Air 1	Lethargic is too generous a word for these oni. They are extremely dimwitted when it comes to reading others' intentions and barely able to move themselves out of danger. Air 1 is usually suited to the smallest of oni spawn or extremely large and virtually immobile oni.
Air 2	These oni are not particularly swift, but neither are they extremely slow. They act as quickly as an average peasant and are as good at reading others' intentions.
Air 3	An average oni. Oni are generally fairly skilled at looking into the hearts of men and they are usually fairly quick to react. Air 3 is a good reflection of these general traits.
Air 4	An above average oni. Air 4 oni are faster to react than their Air 3 cousins and generally better at reading others' intentions.
Air 5	Quick on the draw. These oni are fast, not only in their reactions in combat (remember that Initiative is determined using Reflexes) but outside of combat as well. They can see into people's souls and read their intentions.
Air 6+	Swift as the wind. Oni that are meant to be either extremely quick and difficult to hit or almost omniscient when it comes to others' intentions qualify for Air traits over 5.

Reflexes: An oni with a higher Reflexes than Awareness is much faster physically and tougher to hit.

Awareness: An oni with a higher Awareness than Reflexes is much more aware of the feelings and thoughts of those around it.

Table 8.3: Oni Fire Ranks

Fire 1	Pathetic. These oni are dumb as rocks and fighting one is like bringing a katana to a kemari game.
Fire 2	Below average for an oni. These are oni that are as powerful and intelligent as your average peasant or goblin. They generally miss in combat and aren't very bright.
Fire 3	Average oni. These oni hit in combat fairly often and are somewhat intelligent.
Fire 4	Planners and warriors. Fire 4 oni are good at both ripping things to shreds and at making plans, and may be knowledgeable about many things.
Fire 5	These oni are masters of the physical and mental arts. They almost always hit in combat and can plan their way around most groups of samurai.
Fire 6+	These oni are truly super-human in their martial abilities and intelligence. They are the best at what they do, whether it be slashing with their claws or plotting the demise of the Empire.

Agility: An oni with a higher Agility than Intelligence is better at battle than it is at thinking. More physically oriented oni commonly have a higher Agility than Intelligence.

Intelligence: An oni with a higher Intelligence than Agility is a planner or mastermind. It usually has others do its work for it while it sits back and plots its next move.



Table 8.4: Oni Water Ranks

Water 1	Nearly immobile. These oni are so weak they can barely move themselves let alone anything else. They are also almost blind. Water 1 is suited for the smallest of oni spawn.
Water 2	Average mortal. These oni are as fast and strong as an average peasant.
Water 3	Average oni. Most oni are slightly stronger than the average mortal. They are also slightly more perceptive, since the world of Ningen-Do is new to them.
Water 4	These oni are faster and stronger than normal, much more able to hurt their foes. They are also quite perceptive.
Water 5	Faster than a galloping horse. These oni are extremely fast, strong, and able to notice things most others would overlook.
Water 6+	See that blur? The Water 6 oni certainly did. These oni are strong enough to pick up things that aren't meant to be lifted, and see what others cannot.

Strength: Most physically oriented oni have a higher Strength than they do Perception. They are better able to wreak havoc upon the world and rip samurai limb from limb with a higher Strength.

Perception: An oni with a Perception higher than its Strength is more in tune with its surroundings than it is physically powerful. Oni that scout for others usually have a higher Perception than Strength.

Shadowlands Taint Rank

Oni are all highly Tainted, but do not generally have any special abilities granted by their Taint. The typical oni will have a Taint Rank between 4 and 7. Oni that are more powerful or who have a closer connection to Jigoku may have higher Taint Ranks, as will those oni whose Taint is extremely contagious. In general, an oni's Taint Rank simply reflects the fact that the creature is a native of Jigoku. Remember that Shadowlands creatures, unlike the Lost, do not gain any combat bonuses from their Taint.

Reduction

Reduction is what tends to separate oni who can be defeated by a single samurai from those who require an entire group. Nearly all oni have at least some Reduction, due to their otherworldly nature, but the amount varies widely between different demons.

Table 8.5: Oni Reduction

Reduction < 5	Token reduction. Used to represent a creature whose skin is slightly tougher than normal or who is wearing lighter types of armor. Equal to all samurai armor below heavy.
Reduction 5	Equal to heavy armor. Used to represent a creature with slightly tougher hide or more resilient flesh.
Reduction 6-10	Creatures with very thick hide or armored scales fall into this category.
Reduction 11-15	Creatures with unnaturally hardened skin or scales, those with otherworldly resistance to physical attacks, or those made of stone fall in this category.
Reduction 16-20	These are truly tough nuts to crack, although sometimes their Reduction will be lower against certain types of attacks, such as jade. Few samurai will encounter these epic creatures.
Reduction 21+	These are the juggernauts of the oni world, entities that are downright ridiculously hard to kill. Thankfully, their reduction is sometimes reduced if they are attacked in certain ways, such as with crystal, fire, etc.

Derived Values: Attacks, Damage, Initiative, Wounds

There are some values that are not necessarily intuitive to generate. Below are some guidelines that will hopefully make the process easier.

Attacks

Attacks are normally calculated in the same manner as for a player character (Relevant Skill keep Agility). Most oni do not actually have Skills for their claws and teeth, but due to their intelligence and power, the GM should treat them as though they do. A good short-hand method is to give the oni Skill ranks equal to the Insight Rank of the PC who will be facing it. For example, an oni with Fire 4 facing a Rank Three samurai would likely have an attack roll of 7k4. If there are a large number of PCs, the oni can gain additional Skill dice, raising it to 8k4 or 9k4.

Simple or Complex Attacks

An oni that is known for being powerful or having multiple attacks should attack as a Simple Action, while slower or weaker oni attack as a Complex Action. If an oni's attack has extra effects or abilities, such as a paralytic poison, the GM should consider making the attack Complex to keep it from completely wiping the floor with the PCs – unless, of course, that's the point of the encounter.

Damage

Calculating damage is largely arbitrary, since most oni do not use human weapons with preset Damage Ratings. The place to begin is the oni's Strength Trait. With rare exceptions, an oni will never roll fewer dice for damage than its Strength trait. The GM can also use the weapons in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook as guidelines for how much damage the oni can inflict. Swords are generally Xk2, while larger and heavier weapons may be Xk3 or Xk4. For example, the GM wants the new Yoshi no Oni to have a claw attack that is roughly as strong as a katana. He starts with a base DR of 3k2 (the Damage Rating of a katana) and adds Yoshi no Oni's Strength trait (4) giving a claw DR of 7k2.

Initiative

Here again, the simplest method is to treat the oni as having the same Insight Rank as the PCs. Continuing the example from above, Yoshi no Oni is built to fight against a party of Rank Three PCs. The GM adds 3 to Yoshi no Oni's Reflexes of 4 for an Initiative roll of 7k4.

Wounds

Oni generally have more Wounds than humans with the same Earth. They are also monsters and usually have fewer and lower Wound Penalties than humans do. Most oni fight until killed and thus have no Down or Out Rank. Below are some suggestions for values to apply based on the oni's Earth – these may be increased (or the Wound penalties reduced) for oni with higher Stamina or a reputation for being unusually tough.

Table 8.6: Oni Wounds Based on Earth

Earth 2	8: +5; 16: +10; 24: +15; 36: Dead.
Earth 3	12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead.
Earth 4	16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 72: Dead.
Earth 5	25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: Dead.
Earth 6+	Higher Earth creatures will usually have much higher Wound totals, sometimes unnaturally high. There is no set formula, but one simple method is to multiply the Earth Rank of the oni by 5 and then add it to itself for each subsequent value. For example: Earth 7 would be 35: +5 (7x5); 70: +10 (35+35); 105: +15 (70+35); 140: Dead (105+35).

Skills/ School Ranks

Oni are rarely listed with Skills and almost never with school techniques. However, just because an oni does not have a Skill listed does not mean it is not trained in that Skill, and in general an oni should never suffer penalties for being "untrained" in a Skill. In addition, oni who have stolen the names and souls of mortals have access to all manner of knowledge. A GM can generally assume an oni is trained in Skills that seem appropriate for it, with a Rank of 1 to 3 as needed. Of course, if an oni has a specific role or task in the Shadowlands it could easily have a Skill at a Rank above 3.

It is extremely rare for an oni to learn school techniques, since these creatures generally despise human knowledge and capability. Any special training an oni has is reflected in its special abilities. However, a creative GM can use school techniques to represent specific training or abilities for a particular oni.

Special Abilities

Special abilities can be both the most fun and the most difficult part of creating an oni. How do you represent the idea that your oni can destroy a samurai's armor when it hits it with its claws? How does the ability for an oni to swallow a samurai whole actually work? The first thing a GM should do when designing special abilities is look at other oni and creatures which have already been published for the L5R Role-Playing Game and see if any of their special abilities are close to what he envisions. If so, he can adapt that ability as required for his campaign. Otherwise, the GM will have to create an ability from scratch.

The watchword for original oni abilities is: simplicity! An elaborately complex ability requiring multiple die-rolls is more likely to bog down play than to impress or frighten the PCs. Also, although special abilities by definition are "breaking the rules," the GM should be wary of abilities that read as, essentially, "I win no matter what the PCs do." Such things are more likely to frustrate and disgust the players than to awe them.

Be Careful With Invulnerability!

An Invulnerable oni can destroy almost any party of samurai unless they have a ready supply of jade or crystal, or a highly competent shugenja. If destruction is your goal, this is fine, but most players do prefer to have a fighting chance. The GM should try to at least let the PCs get a few pouches of jade powder before presenting them with an Invulnerable oni.

Oni of the Shadowlands

The rest of this chapter presents a large assortment of known oni, ranging from relatively minor challenges to major demons who can slaughter entire squadrons of veteran Hida bushi. GMs should read these entries carefully before unleashing one of these terrible monsters on their player characters!



Akaru no Oni, the Web Lord

The threat of oni is constant for those Crab scouts who venture into the Shadowlands, for the demons roam the entire realm, destroying any living creature that does not bear the touch of Jigoku. Akaru no Oni, at least, is one threat the Hiruma know they need not fear so long as they pay careful attention to their surroundings. The massive and ponderous Akaru no Oni are not very mobile, and prefer to lair in rocky recesses, ideally caves or rocky valleys. Ultimately, any confined space will suffice so long as the Akaru can expect prey to pass through the area on at least a semi-regular basis.

Akaru no Oni vaguely resemble spiders, with long segmented bodies and dozens of jointed legs. Their appearance might make them seem closer to centipedes but for the vast webs they spin in their lairs. They are actually somewhat passive in their hunting methods, preferring to allow prey to become trapped in their webs and waiting for it to grow weak before feasting on it. However, when an Akaru no Oni is hungry or angered it has considerable physical power at its command, and will not hesitate to destroy anything that threatens it.

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 1	Water 4
-	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple), Bite 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 (Claws), 6k4 (Bite) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Spinnerets: Akaru no Oni can project powerful webs of a thick adhesive substance to ensnare and confine its enemies. This is a Complex Action with an attack roll of 6k4. If the webs hit they do not inflict damage, but the target is automatically Entangled. The TN to escape the Entangled condition is 20.*
- *Web Traps: Akaru no Oni spreads its webs where prey might come into contact with it by accident. Anyone who stumbles into the oni's webs is immediately Entangled, with a TN of 20 to escape.*



Arugai no Oni, Immortal Engine of Destruction

There are very few Arugai no Oni, which is a very good thing for Rokugan. These unstoppable engines of destruction were spawned in the lava pits of Jigoku. They stand slightly over ten feet in height and are roughly humanoid in shape, though they have a long tail. They boast three two-foot long claws at the end of each arm and a mouth full of sharpened teeth. Two fin-like horns grow from the side of their heads, which they often use to gore and rend mortal prey.

Arugai no Oni are simple opponents, not particularly intelligent or clever, but what they lack in sophistication they make up for in sheer staying power. Their bodies are extremely tough and their thick grayish-purple skin is difficult to penetrate with weapons. Even worse, when they do suffer injuries the wounds heal almost instantly. Also, because they were spawned from fire they are virtually immune to extreme heat, both mundane and magical. To actually slay an Arugai no Oni, one must destroy the creature's very small heart, hidden deep within its armored chest.

Thankfully, in addition to being rare the Arugai no Oni are very territorial, and when they encounter each other will fight to the death. There are tales of entire Crab patrols being slaughtered by a single one of these creatures, for they are not only very difficult to kill but almost equally hard to outrun.

Air 4	Earth 7	Fire 2	Water 6
-	Stamina 8	Agility 5	Strength 8

Initiative: 9k4 — *Attack: Claws 10k5 (Simple), Tail 10k5 (Simple), Horns 10k5 (Simple)*

Damage: 10k4 (Claws), 10k3 (Tail), 10k3 (Horns) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 20 — *Wounds: 50: +5; 100: +10; 150: +15; 200: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 5*
- *Huge*
- *Nearly Immortal: An Arugai no Oni is virtually impossible to kill. During the Reactions Stage of every Round the oni regenerates 10 Wounds. This regeneration does not stop when the oni is slain, and as soon as it regains any Wounds it will rise from the dead to continue fighting. The only way to truly kill an Arugai no Oni is to find and destroy its heart. The creature's heart is said to be no larger than four Go pieces, and is set deep within its armored body. It is nearly impossible to find without tearing open the creature's chest and rooting around among its internal organs. (The suggested skill roll is Investigation / Perception at TN 30.) The heart can sustain 10 Wounds before being destroyed, ending the creature's regeneration.*

- *Superior Invulnerability: The Arugai no Oni is invulnerable to fire (both mundane and magical) in addition to resisting mundane weapons.*
- *Swift 2*
- *Tail Swipe: An Arugai no Oni can use its tail to perform Knockdown attacks, and gains a Free Raise when doing do.*

Byoki no Oni, Harbinger of Pestilence

There are precious few entities within the Shadowlands that are more disgusting than the plague-wracked form of Byoki no Oni. These rancid creatures are inundated with virulent diseases – some of these accompany them when they first crawl from the Festering Pit, while others they accumulate along the way. The Kuni have struggled to understand why it is that disease is so innate to these creatures, but so far without success. Some supernatural aspect of their existence simply attracts the illness to them and will not allow it to leave, although it can and does freely pass to others. Crab who face the most hideous and fearsome creatures without flinching will avoid Byoki no Oni at all costs for fear of being stricken down by a foe they cannot fight: disease.

In appearance, Byoki no Oni suggest the worst possible manifestations of disease. They are tall thin humanoids, but beyond that any physical characteristics are difficult to discern because every square inch of their flesh is covered with boils, lesions, and pustules that constantly swell, break, drain, and swell anew. The demons literally drip contagion, leaking their grotesque pus and abscess everywhere. Touching them with one's bare skin, or allowing their fluids to touch bare skin, is a virtually guarantee of contracting a hideous disease, usually crippling the victims if not killing them outright. Even fighting the beasts is risky, since striking them frequently causes a splatter of their blood and pus.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 2	Water 3
-	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Claws 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k3 (Claws) — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 2 — *Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 90: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2*
- *Plague Bearer: Byoki no Oni can inflict horrible diseases with a simple touch. After any successful attack against a target, the oni and its opponent must make a Contested Earth Roll. If the oni is victorious, the opponent is afflicted with a virulent disease. Every subsequent day, the target must make an Earth Roll against TN 15 or lose 1 Rank in all physical Traits. Three successful consecutive rolls cures the disease, but otherwise it can only be cured by magical means – Medicine rolls have no effect.*
- *Splatter: Any time a successful attack is made against a Byoki no Oni, the splatter of fluids affects anyone within 5 feet. They must make Contested Earth Rolls as though the oni had struck them (as described in Plague Bearer above).*

Daku no Oni, Scourge of the Forest

Daku no Oni resemble perpetually burning trees. They have bark-like skin and limb-like protrusions growing out of their upper torso and head. Their long arms end in four sharpened claws, while their legs end in feet that resemble masses of roots. Daku no Oni have no eyes, and locate enemies by sensing vibrations through the ground. They also have three long prehensile tongues that they use to taste the air, further helping them navigate the world.

Daku no Oni live in perpetual agony and spend their lives trying to make others as miserable as they are. They are always wreathed in flames that feed on their wooden flesh and cause them incredible agony. The wooden flesh of the Daku no Oni is constantly consumed and then almost instantly regenerates, and if the flames are doused they restart in a violent flash less than a minute later. The Scourge of the Forest delights in walking through forests and farmlands, setting them alight so the trees and farmers may feel the pain it constantly endures.

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 3
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k2 (Claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 8 — *Wounds: 32: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Eyeless: Daku no Oni cannot see, though they function normally and suffer no penalties for blindness. Spells and effects which rely on sight (such as illusions) or which are intended to obstruct vision have no effect on Daku no Oni.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Flaming Bark: Daku no Oni may tear flaming pieces of bark from themselves and throw them at enemies. The Daku no Oni rolls 6k3 to attack with this flaming bark, with a maximum range of thirty feet. The bark has a DR of 3k2 and can set flammable objects on fire.*
- *Flaming Regeneration: Daku no Oni suffer full damage from magical fire, but regenerate all such damage during the Reactions stage of the same Round (unless they are dead).*
- *Partial Invulnerability: Daku no Oni are invulnerable to normal flames, though magical flames damage them normally.*
- *Wreathed in Flames: Daku no Oni are constantly wreathed in fire. Anything flammable they touch will be set alight. Because of these flames, anyone who strikes a Daku no Oni with unarmed attacks or Small weapons automatically suffers 3k2 Wounds. Attackers using Medium weapons suffer 2k1 Wounds, and attackers using Large weapons or ranged attacks suffer no Wounds (though their weapons may catch fire if they are primarily made of wood). The flames wreathing a Daku no Oni may be extinguished with the Extinguish spell or by dousing with a large amount of water (such as getting knocked into a river). If they are extinguished they will relight during the Reactions stage of the same Round.*

Furu no Oni, Serpent of Flames

While Fu Leng's arrival bolstered the power of Jigoku greatly, it would be naïve to believe Jigoku was inactive prior to that time. Long before Fu Leng, there were already powerful demons in Ningen-do, and Furu no Oni is one of these ancient evils. Millennia ago a powerful fire demon destroyed a community of Naga, leaving only a single survivor who had been away at the time. When the survivor felt the death of his entire community through the Naga communal mind known as the Akasha, he sped back to the village, too late to save his people. The Naga hero swore vengeance against the demon and set off to find and destroy it.

After years of travel, the hero discovered the demon's lair deep within a fissure on the side of a volcano. Inside he fought the demon of fire with all he had, drawing on the collective knowledge of his people and the support of his community from within the Akasha, but he was not powerful enough. The fire demon slew the Naga and stole much of the hero's soul in the process, severing both it and the souls of those who were aiding him from the Akasha – the most terrible fate imaginable for a Naga. The fire demon, until that time a nearly incorporeal being of flame, possessed the Naga hero's body and become even more powerful than before. Those Crab who have encountered Furu no Oni in modern times believe it is nearly, if not more, powerful than the Oni Lords, though it is unknown whether or not this power translates to Jigoku as well.

Furu no Oni barely resembles the Naga whose form it stole millennia ago. It has a vaguely humanoid upper torso and a snake-like lower body. Instead of arms Furu no Oni has six whip-like tentacles. Its skin is covered in thorn-shaped protrusions of blackened bone, and it enjoys grabbing foes and impaling them on these thorns. Its torso and head are split in the center, revealing its hideous molten blood – a weapon in itself. Its eyes glow with a deep red fire and can see through the most intricate illusions. Furu no Oni is twenty feet in height when it raises itself up on its tail, and is over fifty feet in length.

The demon spends much of its time hunting for ancient Naga ruins, for it requires the corpses of Naga in order to spawn more of itself. When it manages to find and kill a Naga, it imbues a portion of its own essence into the corpse, creating a creature very similar to itself, though weaker. It is these spawn the scouts of the Crab Clan usually encounter. The spawn themselves are quite deadly, but they are as nothing compared to the power of the original Furu no Oni.

The Naga can sense the presence of Furu no Oni through its tenuous connection to the Akasha, and they have usually been able to react to its attacks and drive it away from their main settlements. This has kept the number of Furu no Oni spawn thankfully low.

Furu no Oni, Unique Oni

Air 6	Earth 8	Fire 8	Water 6
Awareness 7	-	Intelligence 9	Strength 8

Initiative: 10k8

Attack: Tentacles 10k10+2 (Simple or Complex, see below)

Damage: 10k5 (Tentacles)

Armor TN: 40

Reduction: 25

Wounds: 80: +5; 160 +10; 240: +15; 320: Dead.

Taint Rank: 7

Special Abilities:

- *Burning Blood: Furu no Oni's blood is molten fire, and burns all who touch it. Anyone wounding the oni in melee must make a Defense/Reflexes roll (TN 40 for unarmed attacks or attacks with Small weapons, TN 35 for attacks with Medium weapons, and TN 30 for attacks with Large weapons) to avoid being splattered by burning blood. Failure means the attacker takes 5k5 damage (and must roll for exposure to Taint).*
- *Create Spawn: Furu no Oni may, as a Complex Action, imbue the corpse of a Naga with its own foul essence. The corpse arises as a Furu no Oni spawn in the Reactions Stage of the following Round.*
- *Extreme Heat: The air around Furu no Oni is so hot it sets flammable items alight, consuming them. Non-magical arrows shot at Furu no Oni are consumed by fire before they can reach it, causing no damage to the oni.*
- *Fear 5*
- *Fiery Impalement Attack: If Furu no Oni controls a Grapple at the beginning of its Turn it may, as a Simple Action, drag the Grappled foe up its thorn-covered body and impale it upon the thorns. The thorns cause 3k3 damage to the foe on the first Round of the Grapple (only). In addition, contact with the creature's exposed fiery blood causes 4k4 of fire damage every Round Furu no Oni maintains the grapple.*
- *Flame Sight: The fires within its heart reveal the truth to Furu no Oni. It gains +4k0 on all rolls to detect those who are using Stealth to hide from it, and it is immune to all spells which create illusions or otherwise mask the truth.*
- *Hurl Flaming Blood: Furu no Oni may hurl some of its molten blood at foes within thirty feet. This is a Simple Action with an attack roll of 10k9, inflicting 4k4 fire damage if it hits. The blood continues to burn until the Reactions stage of the Round after it is thrown, inflicting an additional 2k2 Wounds of fire damage unless it is washed off first.*
- *Many Tentacles: The Furu no Oni's tentacles are normally Simple attacks. However, if it takes a Complex Action it can attack with up to four of its tentacles at once. Up to two of these attacks may be Grapple attempts.*
- *Pearl Vulnerability: Because of its connection to the communal mind of the Naga, Furu no Oni is vulnerable to the pearl magic of the Naga. Any pearl magic spell targeting Furu no Oni gains three Free Raises.*
- *Superior Invulnerability: The Furu no Oni is invulnerable to fire (both magical and mundane) as well as to mundane attacks.*
- *Swift 4*



Furu no Oni Spawn

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 6	Water 4
-	-	-	Strength 5

Initiative: 8k5 — *Attack: Tentacles 8k6 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k3 (Tentacles) — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: +15; 96: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Burning Blood: Furu no Oni Spawn's blood is molten fire, and burns all who touch it. Anyone wounding these oni in melee must make a Defense/Reflexes roll (TN 25 for unarmed attacks or attacks with Small weapons, TN 20 for attacks with Medium weapons, and TN 15 for attacks with Large weapons) to avoid being splattered by burning blood. Failure means the attacker takes 2k2 damage (and must roll for exposure to Taint).*
- *Fear 3*
- *Fiery Impalement Attack: If a Furu no Oni Spawn controls a Grapple at the beginning of its Turn it may, as a Simple Action, drag the Grappled foe up its thorn-covered body and impale it upon the thorns. The thorns cause 2k1 damage to the foe on the first Round of the Grapple (only). In addition, contact with the creature's exposed fiery blood causes 2k2 of fire damage every Round Furu no Oni maintains the grapple.*
- *Hurl Flaming Blood: Furu no Oni Spawn may hurl some of their molten blood at foes within thirty feet. This is a Simple Action with an attack roll of 8k4, inflicting 2k2 fire damage if it hits.*
- *Many Tentacles: The Furu no Oni Spawn's tentacles are normally Simple attacks. However, if it takes a Complex Action it can attack with up to three of its tentacles at once. One of these attacks may be a Grapple attempt.*
- *Pearl Vulnerability: Because of its connection to the communal mind of the Naga, Furu no Oni Spawn are vulnerable to the pearl magic of the Naga. Any pearl magic spell targeting them gains three Free Raises.*
- *Partial Invulnerability: Furu no Oni Spawn are invulnerable to fire (both magical and mundane) but otherwise take normal damage from all attacks.*
- *Swift 2*

Gagoze no Oni, Plague of the Forest

The singular entity known as Gagoze no Oni is perhaps unique among its kind in that it neither came through a portal from Jigoku nor was it summoned by the will of a mortal – at least not as far as anyone knows. Instead, the beast crawled fully formed from a mire known as the Shadowlands Marsh of the Shinomen Mori, a wretched swamp within the great forest created from the liquefied remains of Shadowlands creatures slain long ago by the Naga race. Naga magic contained the fetid morass for centuries, but long after the Naga had gone to sleep the Gagoze no Oni inexplicably emerged from its foul depths and casually dismissed the Naga wards.

Gagoze no Oni is an exceptionally intelligent and cunning creature, commanding formidable supernatural powers. The creature is unusual in that it not only commands the power of the kansen but can also compel obedience from the elemental kami as well. Those shugenja who have been in the demon's vicinity (and survived) report the kami scream in agony at the creature's commands, but appear to have no ability to defy its wishes. Gagoze is particularly reviled by all shugenja aware of its existence, and the Kuni have dedicated themselves to the demon's destruction.

Perhaps ironically, Gagoze no Oni vaguely resembles the Naga it hates. It has a serpentine lower body that ends in a long and powerful tail, but a human-like upper torso. The creature is capable of dropping into a low crouch where its shoulders are nearly parallel with the ground, allowing it to move like a serpent at great speed along the ground.

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	-	-

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Claws 5k5 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k4 (claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 25: +1; 50: +5; 75: +10; 125: +15; 150: Dead*

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Defense 4, Hunting 6, Intimidation 4, Jiujutsu 4, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Spell Mastery: Gagoze no Oni may cast elemental spells as a Rank 3 shugenja with no Affinity or Deficiency. Within that limitation it seems to be able to cast any spell it wishes, with no need for a scroll, making it an unpredictable and deadly foe.*
- *Taint Affliction: The Gagoze no Oni has the terrible ability to deliberately pass the Taint on to others, an affliction only the most strong-willed individuals can resist. When the Gagoze no Oni turns its burning gaze on its target (a Complex Action), the victim must immediately make a Contested Willpower Roll against the oni. If the oni wins, the victim immediately gains 1 full Rank of Taint. If the target wins, the Taint is averted, but the target instead loses 1 Rank from his Fire and Earth Rings, a penalty which lasts for the next 24 hours. Fortunately, the Gagoze can only ever use this power once against each individual it meets.*

Genso no Oni, Dark Warrior

The Genso no Oni is a legend within the Shadowlands, famous even to the Lost and feared by other oni that seem more powerful. It is painfully well known to the Crab, although few samurai of the other clans have ever heard of it. The demon is said to be stronger than the mightiest Hida, faster than the swiftest Kakita, and more fearsome than the fiercest Matsu. Indeed, perhaps the most terrible thing about this unique oni is that it resembles and understands the samurai it lives to kill.

Genso no Oni is a consummate warrior, flawless in technique and skill. It lives for the challenge of facing worthy foes and destroying them utterly. This demon is by no means honorable, but some of its behavior may well deceive others into believing it is, which only helps defeat such fools in battle. The beast is an eight foot tall humanoid, incredibly well muscled, with dark red skin. It dresses in the manner of a traveling warrior, wearing a hakama and carrying a daisho, even though the creature could never possibly hope to pass for human. It is devoid of hair and has a mouth that seems to split the entire head in two, filled to the brim with needle-like teeth. It has two short horns atop its head, too short to serve as weapons but deadly in appearance just the same.

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	-	-

Initiative: 5k5

Attacks: Obsidian katana 9k4 (Simple), talons 8k4 (Simple)

Damage: 7k2 (obsidian katana), 4k4 (talons)

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 4

Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15; 160: +20; 200: Out; 240: Dead

Taint Rank: 7

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 4, Hunting 7, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Stealth 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Obsidian Daisho: Genso no Oni carries a massive daisho fashioned from obsidian. The blades seem to be spiritually connected to the creature and do not survive its death – if one or both are stolen before death, the Genso no Oni will hunt down the thief to the ends of the earth. Due to its intimate connection to its swords, Genso no Oni may not be targeted with the Disarm Maneuver.*
- *Taunts: Genso no Oni is incredibly gifted at perceiving the faults and regrets of the human soul, and berates those who face him with the most horrific slurs and insults imaginable, mocking faith, human decency, and the Code of Bushido. During the first Round of a skirmish against Genso no Oni, all Rokugani opponents must make a Contested Willpower Roll against it. If they fail, their highest Basic School Rank is effectively reduced by 1 for the duration of the skirmish. This denies them access to the appropriate School Technique and also makes them effectively one School Rank/Insight Rank lower for purposes of Initiative, spell casting, and any other such game effects.*

Ianwa no Oni, Dark Bargainer

Ianwa no Oni are extremely rare, and Kuni scholars believe there may only be one of these creatures. Those few mortals familiar with its existence are enormously grateful for this. What it lacks in physical power, Ianwa no Oni more than makes up for with its strange ability to form terrible, corrupting pacts with mortals. Those foolish enough to succumb to Ianwa's demands face worse than a sentence of death. They face damnation.

Ianwa no Oni is rather small, smaller than most humans. It is slug-like in appearance, with a long tubular body with two small arms and a grotesque head sitting atop it. It cannot speak, but possesses the ability to communicate directly through its mind into the thoughts of those around it, eliminating the need for speech. It has the ability to teleport almost anywhere within the Shadowlands or the Empire, making it a simple matter to reach its victims. The demon can also tremendously magnify its fearsome presence, but only against a single target, so it prefers to seek out lone individuals to prey upon.

When the Ianwa no Oni targets a mortal, it appears when the victim is alone and uses its fearful presence to completely the individual, demanding from the victim some minor gift or sinful deed. It will start with something simple, such as another samurai's tanto or a woman's favorite hairpin. Once placated, the demon disappears, only to return days, weeks, or even years later to make more demands. The demands are steadily more outrageous and dishonorable, and obeying causes the victim to gradually become more dishonored – and more corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint. Since the Ianwa makes sure to only appear to its chosen victim, he will often appear to be mad, babbling about an invisible tormenter. Typically, this ends with the victim's ignominious death. The few Kuni who have studied the creature suspect these deaths somehow feed the demon, although they cannot know for sure.

Although few realize it, Ianwa no Oni is actually a notorious coward. If someone actually manages to inflict more than 1 wound on it with a single attack (difficult to accomplish, since it is Invulnerable) it will instantly retreat, abandoning its victim. For this reason, it prefers to target victims who do not possess jade, spells, or other items that might harm it.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
Awareness 5	-	Intelligence 6	Perception 6

Initiative: 3k3

Attack: Claw 2k2 (Complex)

Damage: 3k3 (claw)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead.

Taint Rank: 7

Skills: Intimidation (Control) 7, Temptation 8

Special Abilities:

- *Dark Demands: If a mortal fails to resist Ianwa's enhanced Fear effect (see below), he must spend a Void Point each day in order to resist Ianwa's demand. If he does not or cannot spend the Void Point, he must obey. Each time he obeys, he gains 1-5 points of Taint. Also, each time Ianwa no Oni returns and uses his Fear Enhancement again on the same victim, the number of Void Points the victim must spend per day to resist goes up by 1. This continues until the victim is no longer able to resist at all.*
- *Fear 5*
- *Fear Enhancement: When facing a single individual, once per encounter the Ianwa no Oni can magnify its Fear effect, projecting an aura of terror that is almost completely irresistible. Against this one target, Ianwa no Oni's Fear effect is increased to 8.*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Teleport: As a Complex Action, Ianwa no Oni may disappear from its current position and appear in any other location anywhere within the Shadowlands or Rokugan. Powerful magical wards can block this movement but otherwise it is unconstrained.*

Kamu no Oni, the Killing Maw

The horrifying Kamu no Oni are among the most immediately recognizable of all oni, and so terrible an impression have they made on those rare instances when they have appeared in the Empire that their shape can be identified by almost any educated samurai. Kamu no Oni is a nearly mindless killing machine with no obvious sensory organs, yet it is an extremely capable hunter and killer. Atop a powerfully-built torso, rippling with muscles, the demon's shoulders and chest split into a massive maw, wide enough to bite even the largest Crab samurai in half. Those individuals unfortunate enough to be caught by a Kamu no Oni are torn to pieces by its massive arms and then rapidly devoured. A full-grown Kamu no Oni can slaughter and consume an entire Crab patrol in less than two minutes.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	Strength 6

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Bite 4k4 (Complex), Claw 7k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k5 (bite), 6k3 (claw) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 50: +5; 75: +10; 100: +15; 125: +20; 150: Dead*

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Intimidation (Control) 7, Temptation 8

Special Abilities:

- *Devour: If a Kamu no Oni controls a Grapple, it may inflict bite damage on the Grappled opponent instead of its claw damage. If this damage reduces an opponent to the Out Wound Level, he has been swallowed and will die in the Reactions Stage of the following Round unless he is somehow pulled free or the Kamu no Oni is killed.*
- *Fear 4*
- *Invulnerable*



Kommei no Oni, Demon of Confusion

Kommei no Oni delight in chaos. Fortunately few of these demons have been known to exist, though it is possible there are many living in the Empire and Shadowlands that have gone unnoticed. In their natural form Kommei no Oni resemble gaunt, almost skeletal, humans wearing long shapeless robes, though the human resemblance is only superficial. Their four-fingered hands are tipped with six-inch-long claws and they have a second face on the back of their head. The "robe" is actually a loose skin that grows out of their neck and hangs almost all the way to their clawed feet. The Kommei no Oni's joints allow its limbs to bend equally as well forward and backward, making it difficult for those who are battling them to gain any sort of upper hand. The Demons of Confusion are natural shapechangers who steal the souls of their unsuspecting victims. When a Kommei no Oni wishes to take the form of a specific individual (or to simply kill them) it breathes out a foul yellow fog impregnated with its own corrupted essence. If the oni's victim dies from the fog, his soul is stolen by the oni and it can take the victim's form. The Demon of Confusion may take the shape of anyone whose soul it has stolen, and when it does so the back side of its body changes into the form of the last person it duplicated. Because of this the Kommei no Oni often wears robes and hats that cover its body and the back of its head.

The foul yellow fog serves another purpose as well; it is an instrument of chaos. When two or more victims are afflicted by the fog at the same time, their souls can be transferred from one body to another. For example, if Hida Hiroku and Bayushi Namoro were battling a Kommei no Oni, the Scorpion would very soon find himself looking out of the eyes of the Crab's body and vice versa. Typically, victims of this effect are believed to have been driven mad, and the result is usually seppuku. Reversing the switch is very difficult and can only be accomplished after the death of the Kommei no Oni.

Air 5	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 3
Awareness 6	-	-	Strength 4

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Claws 7k3 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k3 (Claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Acting 5, Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 5

Special Abilities:

- *All-Around Vision: If a Kommei no Oni is able to expose the eyes on the back of its head, it gains two Free Raises on any Investigation (Notice) / Perception rolls to prevent it from being surprised.*
- *Double-Jointed: Because of the bizarre flexibility of its joints, Kommei no Oni suffers no combat penalties for being Prone, and can stand with a Free Action.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Shapeshifting: As a Complex Action the Kommei no Oni can change its physical form and clothing into the form of anyone whose soul it has devoured. When it does so it also gains three of the Skills the person it is mimicking knew, at the Rank they were known.*
- *Spirit Leeching: The Kommei no Oni can breath out a foul yellow fog as a Simple Action, with a range of five feet. The fog lasts a number of Rounds equal to the oni's Air. Those caught within the fog must make a Stamina Roll at TN 25 each Round to hold their breath. If a victim fails the Stamina roll and inhales, he must roll Willpower at TN 25 during the Reactions Stage of that Round and every subsequent Round he remains within the fog. Two total failures of the Willpower Roll means his soul is devoured by the oni and he dies instantly, allowing the Kommei no Oni to take his shape thereafter.*

Spirit Trading: If two or more victims inhale the fog and fail a Willpower roll on the same Round, instead of their souls being devoured they switch places randomly. The consciousness of each person who failed is placed within the body of one of the others. Each victim retains all Skills and mental Traits, along with Mental and Spiritual Advantages/Disadvantages, but gains the physical Traits, and Physical and Social Advantages and Disadvantages of the body they now inhabit. Powerful magic can potentially reverse the process at the GM's discretion, but only after the death of the oni.

Manesuru no Oni, the Demon of the Dark Mirror

Manesuru no Oni are some of the most deadly foes samurai are ever likely to meet because they force those samurai to fight against foes who are just as well trained and who know their every strength and weakness. In its natural form, Manesuru no Oni are formless masses of black protoplasm, slow-moving and almost defenseless. They spend most of their time lying in ambush, waiting for prey to venture close to them. When other creatures come within sight of the Manesuru no Oni, it studies them for a time and then spawns protoplasmic constructs that closely resemble them. These constructs are virtually identical to the creatures they are copied from. The Demon of the Dark Mirror uses these constructs to slay the creatures and then oozes out of its hiding place to eat the corpses.

Air 1	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4
Awareness 4	-	Intelligence 4	Perception 5

Initiative: 4k1 *Attack: Pseudopod 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 (Pseudopod) *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 8 *Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Investigation 3, Stealth (Ambush) 6

Special Abilities:

- *Malleable Form and Color: The Manesuru no Oni can change its shape and color at will, granting it three Free Raises on Stealth Skill rolls to hide.*
- *Magic Resistance: The Manesuru no Oni can alter its shape to absorb and deflect the most extreme of elemental forces. This makes the demon difficult to effect with elemental magic, granting the Manesuru no Oni two Ranks of the Magic Resistance Advantage.*
- *Spawn Dark Mirror: Once a Manesuru no Oni has studied a creature (using its Uncanny Insight ability) it creates a duplicate out of its own flesh. The oni can create a maximum number of duplicates equal to its Taint Rank, but cannot copy a specific creature more than once in a twenty-four-hour period. The dark mirror duplicate is always a translucent black color but otherwise is identical to the creature it is copying. The duplicate has all of the target's equipment (though this is merely a manifestation of the creature itself and is destroyed when the duplicate is destroyed), all of its physical and mental Traits, and all of its Skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, Wounds, and School/Path Techniques (if any). If it is copying a non-human creature it has all of the creature's Abilities. A dark mirror cannot cast spells, does not have a Void Ring or Void Points, and cannot activate Techniques that require Void expenditure. However, the dark mirror has Magic Resistance and a Taint Rank equal to that of the Manesuru no Oni that spawned it. Dark mirrors will attack the creature they are copied from to the exclusion of other targets; once that creature is killed they will attack anything else that could be a threat to the Manesuru no Oni. They will not attack mindlessly, and can defend themselves from others and even work as a team. If they are destroyed, they collapse back into black protoplasmic ooze.*
- *Uncanny Insight: The Manesuru no Oni has senses that extend beyond those of mortal beings. If the Demon of the Dark Mirror spends two Complex Actions studying a creature, it is able to duplicate that creature. If a creature has defenses that prevent others from reading its mind, the Manesuru no Oni must roll Investigation/Awareness against the target's Insight Rank x5 to break through the defenses.*

Morei no Oni, the Grain Demon

Morei no Oni are fairly harmless, at least by the standards of oni. They appear to be healthy brown trees with leaves that show the barest hint of green, as if they are just awaking from a winter's slumber. Interspersed among the leaves are small white seedpods that closely resemble grains of rice. Grain Demons move very slowly, and the claws at the end of their branches are not particularly deadly. It is the rice-like seedpods that make these oni a true threat to the Empire.

Every night the Morei no Oni can drop up to a thousand seeds from its branches, covering the ground beneath it with what appear to be grains of rice. These seeds are actually the creature's spawn, and each one has the potential to grow into a full sized Morei no Oni if dropped on fertile soil. The soil of the Shadowlands is usually far too lifeless for them to grow (though there are stories of a Morei no Oni spawn landing on

a zombie and consuming the dead flesh for nutrients), but if the seeds are picked up and carried into the Empire they can do far better. When a Morei no Oni spawn falls on fertile soil, it consumes all the nutrients within twenty feet around during a three-week growth cycle, leaving the ground barren for at least the next three years. At the end of three weeks the new Morei no Oni is mature and can begin to drop its own seeds.

If a living creature somehow ingests a Morei no Oni spawn, the spawn will sprout and eat the creature from the inside, an agonizing death. One man-sized creature is enough for a Morei no Oni spawn to grow to full size.

There are rumors of devious Lost and other denizens of the Shadowlands slipping Morei no Oni spawn into bags of rice, allowing them to spread across the Empire. There are even fabulous tales of a warehouse in the City of the Lost, containing hundreds of bags full of Morei no Oni spawn that will someday be sold throughout the Empire.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
-	-	-	Strength 2

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Claws 3k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k1 (Claws) — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Immobile: Morei no Oni are trees and cannot move.*
- *Seed Spawn: Every day the Morei no Oni can drop up to a thousand spawn that look like grains of rice. If a spawn is swallowed, the victim begins suffering damage the following Round at the rate of 1k1 Wounds per Round (these Wounds are not subject to Reduction). The spawn can be killed if the victim ingests a piece of jade or crystal, or a dose of jade powder. The spell Peace of the Kami will also kill the spawn. Otherwise the damage continues until the victim dies and an adult Morei no Oni sprouts from the corpse. Creatures with incredibly caustic digestive systems (such as other oni) can eat Morei spawn without harm.*

Muduro no Oni, the Corrupted Mountain

Muduro no Oni resemble nothing so much as an animated portion of a mountain, and are almost as difficult to kill as the mountains they resemble. They stand nearly fifty feet in height with enormous claws and teeth, and their bodies are covered in sharp rock-like protrusions. An unholy glow radiates from their mouths and eye sockets.

Muduro no Oni are simple, unintelligent foes. They attack with their claws or try to swallow their opponents whole, relying on their rock-like skin to protect them. There are tales of entire mountain ranges in the deep Shadowlands that are composed of Muduro no Oni. It is rumored to be possible for these creatures to grow so large they can no longer move, but must wait for prey to walk between their cavernous jaws and be consumed.

Air 3	Earth 7	Fire 2	Water 4
-	-	Agility 3	Strength 8

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Claws 7k3 (Simple), Bite 8k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 10k3 (Claws), 10k5 (Bite) — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 20 — *Wounds: 100: +5; 150: +10; 200: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 4*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Swallow Whole: If a Muduro no Oni hits with its Bite attack it may attempt to swallow its victim whole. The Muduro no Oni and the creature it has bitten make a Contested Strength roll. If the Muduro no Oni wins the roll, it swallows the creature – otherwise, the creature breaks free of its jaws. Swallowed creatures suffer 3k3 Wounds and automatically gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint during the Reactions Stage of each Round. They can attempt to climb out of the oni's stomach – this takes a Complex Action to roll Athletics (Climbing) / Strength at TN 30 (to reach the mouth) and another Complex Action to roll Strength at TN 25 (to open the demon's jaws and escape). A swallowed creature may also attempt to use a Small or Medium weapon to cut a way out of the oni (this requires a weapon with a cutting blade). Inflicting 20 or more Wounds on the Muduro no Oni will cut a hole large enough for escape, and the oni's stomach does not have Reduction. A Muduro no Oni may swallow up to three human-sized creatures at a time.*





Nairu no Oni, Scourge of the Skies

Ponderous and reptilian in appearance, the multi-legged Nairu no Oni are actually extremely fast and agile opponents once they take to the air with their powerful leathery wings. They plague the Crab with airborne tactics during large-scale assaults on the Kaiu Wall. Together with the smaller and more intelligent Sanru no Oni, the Nairu no Oni represent the most numerous and perhaps most dangerous flying demons within the Shadowlands. The Nairu no Oni earned the particular and enduring hatred of the Crab Clan during a period when one of the clan's watchtowers was controlled by the Shadowlands. This edifice, known as the Tower of Fear, was home to an entire flock of Nairu no Oni.

Air 3	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Talons 6k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k4 (talons) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Diving Attack: Nairu no Oni prefer to fight from the air, circling high overhead and then swooping down to strike their prey. A Nairu who makes a diving attack from a height of at least forty feet gains a +1k1 bonus to its attack roll (this stacks with any bonus from Full Attack) but after the attack is resolved, the oni is no longer flying and automatically becomes Prone.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Swift 3 (when flying)*

Nosloc no Oni, Vassals of the Demon Lords

The Nosloc no Oni are a curious breed of oni descended from one or more progenitors that clawed their way out of the Festering Pit hundreds of years ago. They average eight to ten feet in height and are powerfully built, with swollen muscles and thick limbs. Their skin is a brilliant red, with horns adorning the tops of their heads and vicious talons at the end of each finger. They are exclusively carnivorous and have enormous appetites, so much so that they can sometimes become bloated and fat. They are quite capable of fighting with their claws, but prefer to arm themselves with whatever weapons are available, especially heavy weapons taken from fallen Crab warriors. Unlike many oni, Nosloc are capable of speech.

The true threat of Nosloc no Oni is in their temperament and intellect. They are only slightly less intelligent than the average human, and lack the mindless bestial temperament of most other oni. They can and frequently do fight alongside one another to achieve common goals, and for this reason are favored by powerful Lost and Oni Lords who seek to assemble armies to assail the Empire. In almost every major confrontation between the Shadowlands and the Empire, Nosloc no Oni have comprised a sizeable portion of the rank and file Shadowlands force.

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Heavy Weapon 7k4 or Claws 6k4*

Damage: 8k2 (heavy weapon) or 5k2 (claws) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 24: +10; 32: +15; 48: +20; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Battle 2, Defense 2, Heavy Weapons 3, Jiujutsu 3

Special Abilities:

- *Battlefield Acumen: Unlike most within the Shadowlands, the Nosloc no Oni enjoy working in tandem with one another. For every other Nosloc no Oni within fifty feet, the demon gains a bonus of +1 to the total of all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Battle Skill Rolls.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Invulnerable*



Pekkle no Oni, the Pretender

"Aren't you a darling! Who's your mother, little one?"

Of all the infiltration threats posed by the Shadowlands, perhaps none are more successful and dangerous than the Pekkle no Oni. They are consummate deceivers and tricksters, capable of maintaining elaborate deceptions for months or years on end without offering any indication of their true origin. The creatures are poorly understood by the vast majority of Rokugani scholars, but those few familiar with their origins agree theirs is a terrible and tragic story.

The entities known as Pekkle are mischievous shapeshifting spirits native to Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. In their natural form they are believed to appear as androgynous, vaguely-featured humanoids, although no reliable witness reports exist. Their greatest strength is their ability to instantly assume human form. A shapechanged Pekkle is completely indistinguishable from a normal human and cannot be unmasked by any known means, mundane or supernatural

If it were simply the Pekkle spirits of Sakkaku who possessed this ability, the creatures would be known only as an inconvenience, albeit perhaps occasionally a dangerous one. Unfortunately, this is not the case. During the First War the fallen Kami Fu Leng seized a large number of Pekkle and forced them into his service, infusing them with the Taint and effectively transforming them into oni. Since that time, natural Pekkle seldom venture into the mortal realm, fearing a similar fate. The transformed spirits became Pekkle no Oni, vastly more malicious and dangerous than their trickster brethren. They bring cruelty and death on mortals, or serve powerful Shadowlands leaders as spies and saboteurs.

Pekkle no Oni frequently masquerade as children, although they are fully capable of appearing as males or females of any age. They sow the seeds of corruption and confusion as much as possible, subscribing to no strategy discernable by the human mind. They are capable of greater deceptions, however; during the Four Winds era a Pekkle no Oni killed and replaced a major advisor for one of the Imperial heirs, maintaining the deception for many months before finally being discovered.

Air 5	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2
-	Willpower 6	Intelligence 5	Perception 5

Initiative: 5k5 *Attack: Claws 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k3 (claws) *Armor TN: 30*

Wounds: 20: +5; 30: +10; 40: +15; 65: Out; 80: Dead

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Acting (Clan, Gender, Profession) 6, Courtier (Manipulation) 3, Etiquette 3, Sincerity 5, Temptation 4

Special Abilities:

- *Hidden Darkness: A Pekkle no Oni's Taint cannot be detected by any known means, although other Pekkle no Oni (and uncorrupted Pekkle) will immediately recognize their brethren. Pekkle no Oni blood is an inky black color, so injuring one is an effective way to expose its nature. Magical effects that non-specifically target the Taint, such as area-effect spells or wards, do not Pekkle no Oni in any way. The only anti-Taint spell that does affect a Pekkle no Oni is a Jade spell which directly targets it, such as Jade Strike.*
- *Retributive Taint: When a Pekkle no Oni is killed, it explodes in a burst of inky black foulness ten feet in radius. All creatures within the area of effect must roll Earth at TN 30 or gain 1-10 points of Taint.*
- *Shadowlands Power: Blackened Claws*
- *Shapeshifting: Pekkle no Oni may, as a Complex Action, change their form to that of a human being. They may be of either gender and of any age from infant through young adult. The upper limit appears to be roughly 30 years of age. No Pekkle has ever shown the ability to appear in a non-human form or as an elderly human.*

Quiet Death

The entity called the Quiet Death is a minor oni, a nearly mindless hunter that seeks out solitary strangers and consumes them utterly. It is a cunning thing despite its lack of higher mental functions, and can evade capture rather easily. Infestations of these things sometimes spread through the Crab lands and occasionally farther north. Most who are not learned in the way of the Shadowlands have no idea what the thing is or what it can do, and their depredations typically spark rumors of new plagues or illnesses ravaging the Empire.

The Quiet Death is a formless mass of soft white tissue that resembles nothing so much as cotton or a particularly plush cloth. It draws itself along the ground, alternately pulling itself like a snail or flowing across smooth surfaces like water. It tracks prey by heat, and while it can and does consume smaller animals, it prefers to feed on humans because of their size and relative lack of natural defenses. If the creature detects enough heat to indicate multiple people, it will not attack, but will instead creep into the smallest space available and wait for danger to pass before resuming its hunting.

When it finds suitable prey, the Quiet Death strikes quickly, impeding its prey's movement with its amorphous substance. It quickly flows up the individual's body, covering its every square inch, until it reaches and envelopes the head. Suffocation comes quickly, and then the beast drains the life from the still-warm body. How it feasts is not known precisely, but it leaves its victims dead and slightly desiccated, suggesting it consumes the blood of its prey.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 4
Reflexes 3	Stamina 5	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Touch 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 (touch) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 10 (20 against cutting/slashing weapons) — *Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 120: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Hunting 4, Stealth 5

Special Abilities:

- *Amorphous: The Quiet Death contains no vital organs or important physiology, consisting exclusively of a soft, flowing, almost jelly-like substance. This is the reason for the creature's high Reduction value against cutting weapons.*
- *Suffocation: The Quiet Death may attempt to suffocate a victim by Grappling him – it rolls 8k4 to initiate or control a Grapple. When controlling a Grapple, the Quiet Death may inflict damage as a Complex Action. This damage begins at 3k3 and increases by +1k1 each successive Round it maintains control. If the Quiet Death loses control of the Grapple and later regains it, the damage begins again at 3k3 and increases as normal.*
- *Susceptibility: The Quiet Death is particularly susceptible to fire, which rapidly dehydrates and combusts its flesh. Damage from any source that includes fire inflicts an additional +2k2 damage to the Quiet Death.*

Oni Lords and Spawn

The Oni Lords are far beyond the ability of most mortals to defeat. Barring an army, only an extremely capable group of highly experienced samurai would dare to confront an Oni Lord, and they are still most likely to be slaughtered by one of these demonic beings. Thankfully, Oni Lords are often busy with far reaching schemes that keep them deep within the Shadowlands. Though the Oni Lords are very seldom encountered, their presence is still felt through the existence of their spawn. With the exception of the mysterious being known as the Maw, all of the Oni Lords have created spawn to do their bidding in the Shadowlands and beyond it. These spawn closely resemble the Oni Lord that spawned them but are smaller and have only a fraction of the power of their progenitors.

For the benefit of GMs who wish to challenge their players with a truly epic foe, we have included several of the Oni Lords in a separate section at the end of this chapter.



Akuma no Oni Spawn

The spawn of Akuma no Oni are rare but also generally more powerful than the spawn of other Oni Lords. Akuma no Oni takes great care when he creates his spawn and allows them to amass power within the Shadowlands before he releases them to wreak havoc on humanity.

Akuma no Oni Spawn resemble their creator. They are vaguely humanoid demons with a long tail and their hands sport three massive claws and a viciously hooked thumb. Their body is covered in a combination of chitin, spines, and armored plates. They have three malevolent yellow eyes set in their horned heads and three tongues hang from their toothy mouths, dripping a burning saliva that makes them appear as though they are aflame. Akuma no Oni Spawn delight in wreaking as much havoc as they can among humans. Like their progenitor they are skilled at manipulating and controlling the other denizens of the Shadowlands, and often use them as pawns in their destructive plans.

Air 5	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 5
-	-	Intelligence 5	-

Initiative: 9k5 — *Attack: Claws 8k4 (Simple), Burning Tongues 8k4 (Free)*

Damage: 7k3 (Claws), 2k2 (Burning Tongues) — *Armor TN: 40*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Battle (Mass Battle) 4, Temptation 4

Special Abilities:

- *Burning Saliva: When the Akuma no Oni spawn's burning tongues touch flesh, they leave burning saliva in the wound. During the Reactions Stage of every Round after the tongues hit, that foe will take 1k1 fire damage. This last for 10 rounds or until the saliva is washed away. Simple water will not wash it away – it requires vinegar or alcohol.*
- *Fear 4*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Multiple Tongues: Akuma no Oni spawn can attack with all three of their tongues in the same Round, once with each tongue. This is a special exception to the rule that each type of Free Action can only be taken once per Round.*



Kyoso no Oni Spawn

Kyoso no Oni has always been fiercely independent and her spawn are no different, often venturing off to pursue their own goals separate from those of their creator. Kyoso no Oni spawn are, like their progenitor, the most 'human' of the Oni Lord spawn, often taking time to talk to their victims before killing them. It is this apparent humanity that allows them to at times be reasoned with and perhaps even manipulated.

The spawn of Kyoso no Oni bear a striking resemblance to their mistress. They are slightly over eight feet tall with deep red skin. Their torso is that of an unclad human female with four claw-tipped arms, while their lower body resembles a snake with small spines rising along its ridge. Their face is smooth, unlike that of their creator, except for a pair of blackened pits where eyes would normally be, and their scalp sprouts red tentacles instead of hair. A few sages have suggested Kyoso no Oni does not wish to be reminded of what she once was by seeing her own face every time she encounters one of her spawn, and thus did not make them into exact copies of herself.

Kyoso no Oni spawn fight primarily by hurling bolts of black fire from their claws, searing the very soul of those they hit, though they have also been known to rip men to shreds with their claws. They have spell-casting abilities as well, an unusual quality for an oni, and even Kuni scholars are at a loss to explain how they are able to compel obedience from the kami.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	-	Strength 5

Initiative: 9k5

Attack: Claws 5k4 (Simple), Black Fire 9k5 (Free)

Damage: 4k3 (Claws), 3k2 (Black Fire)

Armor TN: 35

Reduction: 10

Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 72: Dead.

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Black Fire: The Kyoso no Oni spawn may hurl bolts of black fire at any foe within fifty feet. These blasts of soul-searing power ignore the effects of armor on the target's Armor TN. They also ignore Reduction. Each time a foe is hit by black fire, he must make a Void roll at TN 15 or lose one Void Point. If the bolt takes away his last Void Point (or he has none), he falls unconscious for one hour. No normal or magical effect can wake him, but any effect that causes him to regain at least one Void Point will immediately awaken him.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Feed Upon the Soul: If a Kyoso no Oni spawn kills a foe she devours a small portion of the victim's soul. This reinvigorates the oni, causing her to instantly heal Wounds equal to 5 x the Insight rank of the enemy she killed.*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Magical Talent: A Kyoso no Oni spawn can cast Fire and Earth spells as though it is a Rank 3 shugenja with no Affinity or Deficiency. It seems to know these spells instinctively and does not need scrolls, simply casting whichever spell is most useful to it. It cannot cast any spell with the Jade keyword.*
- *Multiple Arms: The Kyoso no Oni spawn may hurl its black fire up to four times in the same Round (once for each claw). This is an exception to the normal restriction that each Free Action may only be used once per Round. It cannot make Claw attacks with any of its claws that hurled black fire in the same Round.*

Shikibu no Oni Spawn

Shikibu no Oni is the least physically imposing of the Oni Lords and his spawn maintain that tendency. In their natural form they resemble small misshapen dwarves with mouths full of sharpened teeth. They have dark orange skin and deep blue hair that always looks as if it is being stirred by invisible winds. They have sharp fingernails and use them to claw their foes.

It is not until a Shikibu no Oni spawn is killed that it becomes truly dangerous. Upon death the spirit of the oni separates from its body and seeks out the corpse of a human. It then inhabits that corpse, restoring it to life and gaining the memories of the previous resident. Over time the Shikibu no Oni spawn reshapes the body into its own form, although this process takes several weeks. While it is reshaping the corpse, the Shikibu spawn will usually use the information from the body's memories to wreak havoc among the humans in the area.

If a Shikibu no Oni spawn is found in its lair there will usually be three or four corpses laid out, ready for future inhabitation. The only way to truly destroy a Shikibu no Oni spawn is to slay it with no human corpses nearby and force it to remain in its spirit form long enough that it fades away.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
-	Willpower 5	-	-

Initiative: 7k4

Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple)

Damage: 5k2 (Claws)

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 12: +5; 24: +10; 36: +15; 48: Dead.

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Acting 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 5.

Special Abilities:

- *Corpse Inhabitation: When a Shikibu no Oni spawn is slain its spirit separates from its body and can inhabit a nearby human corpse, returning to life. If it has a prepared corpse within fifty feet of the place it was slain, it will inhabit that body during the Reactions Stage of the Round following its death. If there are no prepared corpses available within range it will inhabit any other human corpse in range, but it takes three full Rounds for a Shikibu no Oni spawn to inhabit a non-prepared corpse. If there are no corpses within fifty feet the spirit of the Shikibu no Oni spawn will try to find a corpse farther away – it can travel a total of fifty feet per Round and may remain in spirit form for a total number of Rounds equal to its Willpower x5. If it does not find a corpse to inhabit within that time, its spirit fades away, returning to Jigoku. When a Shikibu no Oni spawn inhabits a body it restores the body to full health, gaining the physical Traits, Advantages, and Disadvantages of the person who used to inhabit the body. The Shikibu no Oni spawn also gains the memories of the previous inhabitant, gaining up to two Ranks in every Skill the dead person knew. After three weeks inhabiting a body it is reshaped into the Shikibu no Oni spawn's natural form and the oni loses the memories of its previous host.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Preserve Corpse: Shikibu no Oni will often preserve a few corpses for later inhabitation. This requires them to spend an hour infusing a small amount of their own essence into the body. This preserves the corpse for a month and also makes it easier for the Shikibu no Oni to inhabit later.*
- *Swift 2*

Tsuburu no Oni Spawn

Tsuburu no Oni spawn are forever hungry and devour anything they can get their grubby hands on. They are created from swollen growths that bud from the Oni Lord's massive bulk and fall to the ground fully formed. They are then sent out into the Shadowlands to collect souls to feed their master's eternal hunger.

The appearance of the Tsuburu no Oni Spawn can be deceptive. They look like enormously fat naked humans with livid pink-purple skin, greasy black hair, and boils covering their back and belly. Their mouth is as wide as their head and they can dislocate their jaw to swallow whatever will fit within. Their eyes glow dimly with a reddish light. They move slowly on their grossly fat legs, wobbling as if they cannot catch their balance. This causes many creatures to underestimate them on first glimpse. When a Tsuburu no Oni Spawn truly wishes to eat something, its prey cannot escape, for it simply teleports next to its erstwhile meal and devours it. There are also tales of extremely canny Tsuburu no Oni spawn teleporting above their meal, pinning it beneath their bulk to be devoured at the oni's leisure.

Tsuburu no Oni spawn are simple creatures and in combat their tactics are equally as simple: grab their foe and swallow it. When a creature is slain in the Tsuburu's stomach, its soul is captured and appears as a new boil on the back or belly of the oni. The oni also grows slightly. When the Tsuburu believes it has captured enough souls it travels back to its Oni Lord and feeds them to it.



Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 3	Water 1
-	Stamina 7	-	Strength 7

Initiative: 4k1 — *Attack: Grab 8k3 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k2 (Grab) — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 15 — *Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15; 160: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 5*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Swallow Whole: If a Tsuburu no Oni spawn successfully hits someone with its Grab attack, it may opt to hold onto its prey. This is considered a Grapple and the oni is considered to have 5 ranks of Jiujutsu for the purposes of maintaining the Grapple. If the Tsuburu no Oni spawn maintains control of the Grapple at the start of its Turn, it may as a Free Action stuff the Grappled victim down its throat. Those inside the oni's stomach suffer 2k2 Wounds and gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint during the Reactions stage of each Round. Those trapped in the belly of a Tsuburu no Oni spawn may not do anything that requires physical effort, since they are completely constrained by the creature's bulk. Generally they just scream. The soul of a creature slain within a Tsuburu no Oni's stomach becomes one of the many moving lesions dotting its back and belly, soon to be food for the Oni Lord itself.*
- *Teleport: Tsuburu no Oni spawn can, as a Simple Action, teleport to any location they can see. This counts as having moved their maximum movement for the Round.*

Ryokaku no Oni, the Demon of Purity

Ryokaku no Oni are troublesome for samurai who encounter them because they defy the typical traits one expects to find in an oni. The Demons of Purity seem to have a sense of honor and tradition that closely parallels that of the samurai of Rokugan. They also closely resemble samurai in appearance, appearing to be lightly armored men wearing ornate daisho. Ryokaku no Oni are tall and fiendishly handsome. The only physical feature that distinguishes these oni from normal samurai is the two mouths with which they smile disarmingly.

Ryokaku no Oni are often found in the company of trolls, who appear to serve the demons more-or-less willingly. The Crab believe these demons may have made some sort of bargain with the king of the trolls centuries ago. It is not unknown to find small "samurai estates" nestled within the Shadowlands where trolls labor in fields near a home strangely reminiscent of a samurai dwelling... though the building materials are more sinister.

Every decade or so, Ryokaku no Oni feel the need to seek a human mate in order to carry on their bloodlines. Many of these oni can trace their lineage back dozens of generations, and some are actually related to prestigious family lines in Rokugan, a fact which would horrify those families if they knew. Ryokaku are extremely discerning when choosing a mate, for only the most pure and noble human women are worthy to serve as such.

When the Ryokaku no Oni has chosen its mate, it spirits her away from her home and carries her to its estate in the Shadowlands, where it tests her virtue with various trials and tests. Notable among these is a specially prepared cauldron filled with boiling blood. Supposedly, the Ryokaku no Oni can drop an item belonging to a mortal into the blood and then discern many secret things about that person, including their Honor Rank and any Dark Secrets they may have. If the woman is found to be "pure" (virginal, 6.0 Honor or higher, and with no unpleasant Disadvantages), the Ryokaku no Oni will marry her, and horribly, some ladies have actually fallen in love with the charming demon. If the woman is found wanting she is generally the dinner at the marriage feast when the Ryokaku finds a replacement mate.

There are also rumors of female Ryokaku no Oni who steal handsome and virtuous men as their mates.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
-	-	-	-

Honor: 3.5 - -

Initiative: 8k4 *Attack: Claws 7k4 (Simple), Katana 9k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k2 (Claws), 7k2 (Katana) *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 8 (4 against crystal) *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 72: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu (Assessment, Focus) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity 5, Temptation (Seduction) 5.

Special Abilities:

- *Duel Bound: If a Ryokaku no Oni is challenged to an iaijutsu duel, it will always accept. It will duel honorably and not allow any minions to interrupt. For purposes of dueling, the Ryokaku no Oni is considered to have a Void equal to its Taint Rank (though it still does not have any Void points). It is also considered to be Insight Rank 4 while in a duel. The Ryokaku no Oni will only duel to the death, believing any other type of duel belittles the skill of the combatants.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Insidious Beauty: Ryokaku no Oni are very handsome and are considered to have the Dangerous Beauty Advantage.*
- *Invulnerability*
- *The Black Fog of Purity: As a Complex Action, Ryokaku no Oni may change themselves and one other person they are touching into a black fog that travels as swiftly as the wind – its minimum speed is as if it had a Water Rank of 10, and it can move faster if there is a strong wind or storm available. They usually use this ability to steal into Rokugan and kidnap their prospective mates. In fog-form both the Ryokaku no Oni and its passenger are completely incorporeal and may only be damaged by spells. If the other creature is unwilling to join the oni in fog-form, the Ryokaku no Oni can force it to transform anyway by winning a Contested Air roll. If the Ryokaku no Oni is somehow killed while in fog-form, any passengers are trapped in that form for all eternity, drifting on the wind, only able to affect the world with their screams.*

Shikage no Oni, Many-Armed Death

Shikage no Oni are a foul combination of spider and human. They have thick corpse-white skin, a bald, almost human-like head, and a nearly skeletal human torso with unnaturally long arms sprouting from their shoulders. Four legs sprout from the lower half of their torso and where the knees would normally be each of the legs splits again, ending with viciously clawed hands. The eyes of a Shikage no Oni bulge out of the skull and are a deep bloodshot white.

Shikage no Oni have no true teeth, though they do have a pair of four inch long fangs growing from the front of their mouth. It is their four-foot long prehensile tongue that makes them truly dangerous, however. The tongue is hollow and tipped with a razor sharp stinger they use to inject their prey with venom, either lethal or mind-breaking as the creature requires. It is also used to project the thick, black, silk-like webbing Shikage no Oni use to entrap and store their prey.

The Many Armed Death prefers to ambush those it would eat. It creates lairs filled with elaborate traps made of its foul webbing. After the oni has created the perfect location to capture its prey, it seeks out a weak mind-broken creature to lure stronger, more appetizing victims into the Shikage's lair. Once the Shikage no Oni has trapped prey, it paralyzes them and keeps them around until it is ready to feed. When it is hungry it stabs its tongue into the hapless creature and sucks out their innards, leaving a lifeless husk.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
-	Willpower 5	Agility 5	Perception 6

Initiative: 8k4 *Attack: Claws 7k5 (Simple), or Tongue-Stinger 8k5 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k3 (Claws) or 4k2 + poison (Tongue-Stinger) *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 8 *Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: +15; 96: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5



Special Abilities:

- *Demon Silk: The Many Armed Death can project black webbing from its mouth. This webbing is stronger than most silk and very sticky. A creature who touches it is instantly Entangled and must make a Strength Roll at TN 15 to break free. For each subsequent Strength Roll the TN increases by 5 as the victim becomes more entangled, to a maximum of TN 30. The Shikage no Oni normally uses this webbing to create traps, but can also shoot it at a target as a ranged attack, with an attack roll of 7k4 (ignoring the effects of armor on the target's Armor TN) and a range of twenty feet.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Mind-Breaking Poison: If a creature is hit by the Shikage no Oni's stinger, the oni may inject either paralyzing poison or mind-breaking poison. A victim injected with mind-breaking poison immediately loses 1 Rank of Willpower, and during the Reactions Stage of that same Round the victim must make a TN 20 Stamina Roll or lose an additional Rank of Willpower. This continues during each Reactions Stage until the victim succeeds on the roll (ending the poison's effects) or the victim's Willpower reaches zero, at which time the victim will obey all commands of the Shikage no Oni (even suicidal ones). The poison's effects last for twenty-four hours. Multiple poison doses increase the TN by 5 per dose.*
- *Paralyzing Poison: If a creature is hit by the Shikage no Oni's stinger, the oni may inject either paralyzing poison or mind-breaking poison. A victim injected with paralyzing poison immediately loses 1 Rank of Reflexes, and during the Reactions Stage of that same Round the victim must make a TN 20 Stamina Roll or lose an additional Rank of Reflexes. This continues during each Reactions Stage until the victim succeeds on the roll (ending the poison's effects) or the victim's Reflexes reaches zero, at which time he is paralyzed and cannot move or take physical actions. The effects of the poison last for twelve hours. Multiple poison doses increase the TN by 5 per dose.*
- *Poison Constitution: Because Shikage no Oni have poison coursing through their veins they are immune to the effects of all poisons.*
- *Wall Climbing: Shikage no Oni can climb on any surface that is not extraordinarily slick at the same speed that it can walk on the ground.*

Shokansuru's Brood

Shokansuru's Brood refers to a quartet of extremely powerful oni crafted by an individual known as The Shokansuru, called by some the Master of Demons. Each of these four demons were once a mortal ally of a man named Isawa Shokan. Shokan was corrupted by the influence of the infamous Bloodspeaker sorcerer Jama Suru, and became known as Shokansuru. He killed his four friends and harvested their souls, becoming immortal. Centuries later, he discovered the Forgotten Temple of Fu Leng, a place where the boundaries between the mortal realm and the Realm of Evil were so thin as to not exist. Here, Shokansuru used his friends' souls to craft four oni, each one fully incarnated in the mortal realm rather than existing in both realms simultaneously. This granted them enormous power, but at the cost of mortality; if they should be killed, they would be destroyed forever, with no chance to return to life again like other oni.

Hasaiki no Oni is something of a middle child within the Brood, less intelligent than Sentei and Yojireju, less powerful than Munemitsu, and somewhere in the middle in all other areas. The creature walks hunched over on extremely powerful legs that make it appear ungainly, but which bely an astonishing ability to leap ahead at vast speeds and strike at enemies without warning. More deadly than that, however, is the beast's ability to vomit forth vast gouts of an acid so strong it can pit and score metal and, given a few moments of unrestricted contact, dissolve stone as easily as flesh and bone.

Munemitsu no Oni possesses greater physical power than the other members of Shokansuru's Brood, but it is more feral and bestial than its comrades. It plods on four massive legs, and has a trio of horns sprouting from its head. Two more horns adorn each side of its jaw, and additional smaller horns appear on its forelegs. The demon tends to trample its opponents into oblivion, although if an enemy is hardy enough to truly arouse its bestial ire, it will attempt to gore them with its horns and perhaps consume them once they have been torn asunder.

Possibly the most powerful of the brood, and certainly the most resilient, is **Sentei no Oni.** This insectile creature resembles nothing so much as a gigantic centipede, although with noticeable humanoid features. At its head, the beast's length arcs up to create a torso-like length of segments, allowing it to use some of its dozens or hundreds of legs as arms. The beast is well armored and inspires an almost supernatural terror in those who look upon it, although those accustomed to fighting oni can resist it. The creature's most dangerous ability is its incredible regenerative capabilities, which allow it to survive even the most devastating combats.

Yojireju no Oni is a hideous mockery of a samurai. It is roughly the same shape as the average Rokugani, but it is taller and thinner, as if a normal body had been stretched beyond the point of breaking. Where a head might be is a series of four tentacles, and in its abdomen it bears a fanged maw, mirrored by two smaller maws on each of its palms. While many demons inspire fear, this one inspires only revulsion. The creature's insidious nature is such that it consumes its victims not simply physically but their souls as well.

Hasaiki no Oni, the Burning Sea

Air 3	Earth 6	Fire 2	Water 3
-	-	Agility 3	Strength 6

Initiative: 3k3

Attack: Bite 7k7 (Complex), Stomp 7k3 (Simple), Vomit 3k3 (Complex)

Damage: 6k6 (Bite), 8k6 (Stomp)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 32: +5; 48: +10; 64: +15; 100: Out; 200: Dead

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Leaping: As a Complex Move Action, Hasaiki no Oni can make a massive leap, passing over obstacles up to 25 feet tall, and moving a total distance up to its Water Ring x 30 in feet.*
- *Regeneration: Hasaiki no Oni heals 5 Wounds during the Reactions Stage of each Round, until dead. More than one group of samurai has beaten the demon down to Out, only to believe it dead and leave, allowing it to heal and return to plague the Empire once more.*
- *Vomit: Hasaiki no Oni can vomit forth a massive gout of extremely volatile acid. This attack has a maximum range of 50 feet and ignores the effects of armor on the target's Armor TN. The acid inflicts 4k4 Wounds per Round and persists for five Rounds or until the acid is washed away with an ample supply of water. The acid will not destroy folded steel, but metal plates can be eroded to the point of uselessness over the course of five Rounds.*

Munemitsu no Oni, the Earth Breaker

Air 2	Earth 7	Fire 1	Water 5
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 8

Initiative: 4k2

Attack: Gore 6k4 (Complex), Trample 4k4 (Simple)

Damage: 8k6 (Gore), 6k4 (Trample)

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 6

Wounds: 32: +3; 64: +5; 96: +10; 128: +15; 160: +20; 224: Dead

Taint Rank: 7

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Gore: Munemitsu no Oni can gore an opponent with its tusks. Opponents struck with a gore attack are stuck on the tusks and unable to move unless they pull themselves free with a Strength Roll at TN 20 – this inflicts an additional 3k2 damage as they pull free of the tusks. Munemitsu can trap up to three opponents in this way.*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Trample: Opponents struck with Munemitsu's Trample attack are rendered Prone.*

Sentei no Oni, the Many-Legged Death

Air 2	Earth 6	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	-	-

Initiative: 6k4

Attack: Bite 6k4 (Complex), Talons 4k4 (Simple)

Damage: 5k5 (bite), 4k4 (talons)

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 120: +15; 180: "Dead"

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 4*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Superior Regeneration: Sentei no Oni's greatest weapon is its incredible power of regeneration. Many times the creature has been thought destroyed, but in every instance it has re-grown its body from remnants that were not destroyed, in some cases incredibly small pieces that might fit in one's hand. The oni regains 30 Wounds per hour. If the oni is killed, the regeneration does not begin for one day, then resumes at the normal hourly rate. It is not known whether Sentei no Oni can actually be killed permanently.*

Yojireju no Oni, the Soul Drinker

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 5	-

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Claws 6k5 (Simple)

Damage: 5k3 (claws)

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 20: +3; 40: +5; 60: +10; 80: +15; 100: Dead

Taint Rank: 7

Special Abilities:

- *Corpse Absorption: Yojireju can absorb the energy and material of the recently dead, enhancing its own power. The beast can spend two consecutive Complex Actions to fully absorb any corpse that has been dead less than an hour. When this is done, the oni gains a bonus to one Ring equal to the Insight Rank of the individual killed (animals and creatures that do not possess Insight Ranks are considered Rank 1). This bonus is applied to the Ring which was highest in the deceased individual, and lasts for a full day.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Soul Absorption: Just as the demon consumes flesh, so can it consume souls. When the oni kills a human opponent, the two must make a Contested Insight Rank / Willpower roll. If the demon is victorious, the soul is consumed and the individual does not pass on to the next spirit realm. Yojireju no Oni permanently gains one Rank in each of its Rings each time it devours a soul.*

Sodatsu no Oni, Shugenja's Bane

Sodatsu no Oni are a frightening mass of dark slimy protoplasm that appears to have eyes and mouths swirling and moving within it, floating to the surface in random places every now and then. They often span twenty-five feet, but there are legends of Sodatsu no Oni that are much larger.

Because Sodatsu no Oni are simple masses of protoplasm they can squeeze through almost any opening. Despite their composition and appearance Sodatsu no Oni are quite intelligent, understanding the language of Rokugan and several others as well, though they have no way to speak any language.

In battle the Sodatsu no Oni forms large pseudopods and flails at its enemies with surprising force. The membrane surrounding the oni's protoplasmic body is remarkably durable and can turn aside all but the most well-crafted weapons. These powers make the Sodatsu no Oni a formidable opponent, but it does not show its true strength until a shugenja casts magic at it. When a spell is cast at the Sodatsu no Oni, it absorbs the magical energy and turns it to its own advantage, often hurling the elemental energy back on the shugenja who cast the spell in the first place.

Air 4	Earth 6	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	-	Strength 6

Initiative: 8k4 — *Attack: Pseudopods 8k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k4 (Pseudopods) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 15 — *Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 5*
- *Huge*
- *Malleable: Because it is composed of protoplasm, a Sodatsu no Oni may squeeze through any opening that water can flow through.*
- *Shugenja's Bane: When a spell is cast at a Sodatsu no Oni, it absorbs the elemental magic, causing the spell to have no effect on it. The oni must instantly take a Free Action to use the kami's energy it absorbed in one of three ways. It may fire a bolt of Tainted magical energy at an enemy within fifty feet; the attack roll is 4k4 and the DR of the bolt is equal to the Mastery Level of the absorbed spell. (For example: Kitsu Hiroko casts a Jade Strike spell at a Sodatsu no Oni. The oni can fire a Tainted bolt with a 1k1 Damage Rating.) It may heal a number of Wounds equal to 3 times the Mastery Level of the spell. Finally, the Sodatsu no Oni may increase its Armor TN by 3 times the spell's Mastery Level for the next three rounds (this effect can stack with itself).*

Tasu no Oni, Plague of Flesh

A living blight upon the Shadowlands, Tasu no Oni are relentlessly aggressive creatures who attack any living foe they find, sometimes even other oni or Shadowlands creatures. Even the Lost are not immune to this mindless aggression. For years the Crab believed this was simply a function of the demon's innate stupidity, but in recent years the Crab have come to a much more disturbing realization: Tasu no Oni desires to be killed. This desire does not stem from any significant degree of intelligence, for Tasu no Oni are nigh-mindless. The demons wish to be killed because doing so allows them to fulfill the one and only driving urge the creatures have: to reproduce.

Tasu no Oni resemble nothing so much as huge bulbous cockroaches whose shells are covered in large membranous sacs. They charge into battle striking with their segmented legs and their mandibles, but are generally rather easily slain by those who survive their initial assault. When a Tasu no Oni is killed, however, the membranous sacs on its surface rupture and spill forth newborn Tasu no Oni, each about a foot in length. Although initially defenseless, these creatures are very quick and can grow to maturity in as little as three days and no more than a week, and will be capable of producing more of their own kind within two weeks of their "birth." Because of the speed with which they reproduce, there are entire regions of the Shadowlands that are infested with Tasu no Oni, and thus far the Crab have not found a way to destroy the adults without prompting the reproductive cycle. The only way to stop them from multiplying is to kill the newborns before they reach maturity.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 1	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: 4k4 Leg (Simple) or 4k4 Mandibles (Complex)*

Damage: 3k2 (Leg) or 5k3 (Mandibles) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: Dead*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Spawn: Upon its death, a Tasu no Oni will immediately release 2k2 of its spawn. These creatures are roughly a foot in length and have little means of self-defense. They are considered to have all Rings at 1, with an Armor TN of 15 and 12 Wounds. The creatures will instinctively scatter, and can only move with a Complex Move Action which allows them to move up to 30 feet. They have Stealth 7 and will try to disappear into underbrush, mountains, caves, or other suitable terrain.*

Utogu no Oni, the Endless Hunger

The oni of Jigoku kill for a variety of reasons, but Utogu no Oni kills for the most primal reason of all: to sate its never-ending hunger. Fortunately rare, these truly massive beasts burn from within with a hunger that can never be truly fulfilled. In many ways the hunger appears to be tied to the demon's mental state.

When it is alone, the hunger is reduced to a dull ache, merely driving the beast to idly graze on nearby plants. When confronted with any kind of living creature, however, the hunger blazes like a wildfire, driving the beast nearly mad until it attacks anything that moves in an attempt to devour it. Squads of Hiruma scouts have been known to drive the beasts into such fury that it consumes boulders, earth, and even other oni in an attempt to reach and devour them.

Utogu no Oni resemble extremely large rhinoceroses, with horns sprouting not only from their snouts but also all along the spine and in various other places. The beast has four eyes and four nostrils, and two rows of teeth that open wide to consume any prey that remains still long enough for it to eat.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 1	Water 5
-	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 3k2

Attack: Bite 6k4 (Complex), Charge 6k5 (Complex), Trample 4k4 (Simple)

Damage: 5k5 (bite), 9k4 (charge), 5k3 (trample)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 8

Wounds: 60: +5; 90: +10; 120: Dead

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Charge: Although its horn is not particularly sharp, an Utogu no Oni has a charge attack that is remarkable effective at weakening or crippling prey for consumption. If the oni is in the Full Attack Posture, it can move up to its Water Ring x10 and then make the Charge attack.*
- *Devour: While it prefers to consume things it has killed, occasionally the Utogu no Oni's hunger will prompt it to consume still-living flesh. If the demon inflicts 30 or more Wounds with its Bite attack, the opponent has been caught in the beast's maw. The victim is considered Entangled. On its next Turn the oni will attempt to swallow its prey, making a Contested Strength Roll. If the victim succeeds, he pulls free and escapes, but if the oni succeeds, the victim has been swallowed and suffers 5k5 Wounds during each subsequent Reactions Stage until dead. Devoured victims cannot fight or escape, and their only hope is for their comrades to kill the oni before it is too late. There is no limit to how many victims the Utogu no Oni can devour.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Trample: A successful Trample attack from an Utogu no Oni will render an opponent Prone. If the attack roll exceeds the opponent's Armor TN by 10 or more, the opponent is Dazed as well.*

Uzaki no Oni, the Demon Commander

While the Oni Lords are the undisputed rulers of oni-kind, they are not necessarily good battlefield commanders. When the creatures of the Shadowlands mass for an invasion of the Empire they often look to the Uzaki no Oni to guide them on the battlefield.

Uzaki no Oni are intelligent and exceptionally talented battlefield commanders, and when they capture samurai they wring every bit of knowledge about battlefield tactics from them. They share the knowledge they learn with others of their kind, and as a group the Uzaki no Oni have a considerable store of tactical knowledge about Rokugani battlefield techniques.

Uzaki no Oni are as tall as ogres, though substantially more intelligent. They have jet-black skin and flame-red hair. Horns sprout from their heads and their mouths are full of sharp fangs. Each of their fingers is tipped with two-inch claws. They generally wear armor reminiscent of that of a samurai, and they wield a large obsidian katana that bursts into flame when drawn.

Legends say that if you best an Uzaki no Oni in battle and are foolish enough to allow it to live, it will hunt you down, having memorized the way you fight, so it can prove it is the better warrior.

Air 5	Earth 5	Fire 5	Water 5
Awareness 6	-	Intelligence 6	Perception 6

Initiative: 9k5

Attack: Claws 9k5 (Complex), Obsidian Katana 10k5 (Simple)

Damage: 6k2 (Claws), 9k3 + 1k1 Fire Damage (Obsidian Katana)

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 8

Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 72: Dead.

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 5, Defense 5, Iaijutsu 5, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Obsidian Katana) 5, Lore (Rokugani Tactics) 5

Special Abilities:

- *Commander's Voice: Long ago the Uzaki no Oni made a bargain with the kansen of the air in order to assist them on the battlefield. An Uzaki no Oni's voice can be heard anywhere on a battlefield that it wishes to be heard.*
- *Eternal Enmity: Uzaki no Oni never forget the tactics an opponent uses. If someone manages to defeat the Uzaki no Oni on the battlefield (in either a skirmish or a mass battle) the Uzaki no Oni will learn from the defeat. The next time the oni encounters the person who defeated it, it gains a +1k1 bonus on all rolls against that foe.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Leader of Oni: Other Shadowlands creatures look to the Uzaki no Oni for leadership, as a result all Uzaki no Oni have the Leadership Advantage.*
- *Learn from Your Enemies: Uzaki no Oni gather as much information about their enemies as they can. Some Uzaki no Oni may actually know one or two School Techniques from Rokugani bushi schools. They will never know Techniques above Rank Two and cannot use Techniques which require the expenditure of Void.*
- *Tactician: Uzaki no Oni Are natural battlefield commanders and have the Tactician Advantage.*



Wakeru no Oni, the Demon of the Endless Horde

Wakeru no Oni are not particularly imposing or threatening. They stand the same height as an average samurai. They are gaunt, with brownish-gray skin shrunken down to outline their bones, and their arms are overly long, hanging almost to the ground. When they move, they do so lazily, with an apelike slouch. Wakeru no Oni are not particularly aggressive and are actually fairly harmless... until they are threatened. When threatened, a Wakeru no Oni explodes into a slavering whirlwind of claws.

When a Wakeru no Oni attacks, it flies into a rage and fights with reckless abandon, forgoing all attempts at defense. In fact, however, it is when the Wakeru no Oni is slain that it becomes truly dangerous. When the demon is killed it splits into two smaller versions of itself that continue to fight. When the smaller versions are slain they split as well. These smaller and smaller versions continue to split and fight until the Wakeru no Oni is too small to be threatening.

The Crab believe the first Wakeru no Oni was an attempt to summon an oni that would instantly regenerate from any wound, an attempt that went horribly wrong. Doubtless the sorcerer who summoned the first Wakeru no Oni soon found himself swarmed by smaller unrestrained oni hungry for his blood. Since that time, thousands upon thousands of Wakeru no Oni have been spawned and slain, but it is believed that they are all descended from the original Demon of the Endless Horde.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 5	Strength 5

Initiative: 8k5 — *Attack: Claws 6k5 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k2 (Claws) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 50: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Endless Horde: When a Wakeru no Oni takes enough damage to kill it, it does not die. It instead splits into two smaller versions of itself. These act on the oni's next turn. The smaller Wakeru no Oni reduce all of their physical statistics (Traits, etc) by one Rank, and its Wounds decrease by 5, but its Armor TN increases by 5 to reflect its smaller size. It retains the same Initiative score and its attack and damage rolls are each reduced by 1k1 (to a minimum of 1k1). The Demon of the Endless Horde will continue to spawn duplicates of itself until its physical Traits are reduced to 1. If a spawn is slain when its physical Traits are at 1 it will not duplicate itself again. Duplicates grow to full strength and size within a few months.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Heedless Rage: When threatened the Wakeru no Oni fights with heedless abandon, paying no attention to defense, since destruction only makes it more powerful. A Wakeru no Oni always uses Full Attack in combat.*

Wanizame no Oni, the Finned Maw

The mysterious super-predators known as Wanizame no Oni are an enigma even to the most ardent Kuni scholars, due primarily to their aquatic nature. Observing them in their natural environment, the Sea of Shadows, is virtually impossible, and so the only information the Crab possess on these creatures comes from their occasional attacks on Crab vessels, or examining the carcasses of the slain. It is believed the Wanizame no Oni are an aquatic breed of minor oni, although some Kuni have argued the monsters are not oni at all, but rather perverted natural animals. The prevailing theory is that the creature is in fact a minor demon, a position by its most disconcerting feature.

The Wanizame no Oni bear a strong resemblance to an extremely large hammerhead shark, rare but not unheard-of creatures sometimes spotted in the tropical waters near the Mantis Islands. Despite the resemblance, however, only those who have never seen a hammerhead shark would mistake the two; even a passing familiarity with a mundane shark allows an observer to perceive the oni's proportions are slightly off in a way that, while unidentifiable, is deeply disturbing. Far more disturbing, however, is the feature that has cemented the creature's identity as an oni: at the base of the dorsal fin is a blank, staring human face. Even more horrible, when the oni is bearing down on prey, the face screams aloud whenever it emerges from the water.

Wanizame no Oni are usually solitary hunters, although they have demonstrated the ability to cooperate to bring down larger targets, including large Crab vessels. Although they appear bestial, the creatures demonstrate cunning when they hunt their foes, using effective strategies and deception tactics.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Bite 6k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 (Bite) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 15: +5; 30: +10: 45: +15; 60: Dead*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Wanizame no Oni is an aquatic creature and cannot leave the water. It suffers no movement penalties for water and does not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.*
- *Blood Scent: Wanizame no Oni can smell blood in the water from incredible distances. If any blood has been*

spilled into the water within five miles of the oni's location, it can make a Perception Roll against a TN of 30 minus the total number of Wounds suffered by the bleeding creature. If successful, the oni is aware of the bleeder's exact location.

- *Fear 2*
- *Feeding Frenzy: If a target within fifty feet of the oni's location has lost more than one Wound Rank, Wanizame no Oni gains a bonus of +2k2 on attack rolls made against that target.*

Yuhmi no Oni, Flesh of the Dark Lord

During a failed assault on the Imperial City, Daigotsu, the akutenshi known as the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, lost an arm in combat with the Imperial heir Toturi Tsudao. Although Daigotsu survived to fight another day, his arm was lost and he had no choice but to replace it via the foul magic of his follower Omoni, the so-called Sculptor of Flesh. Some time later, Omoni somehow acquired the decaying remnant of his lord's defeat: the severed arm. The Dark Lord's power and corruption ensured his arm endured long after it was thought destroyed, and Omoni found it distasteful to consider wasting such exquisite material. Privately, he attempted that which he had never done before: crafting an oni. Omoni had mastered goblins, trolls, and ogres, but an actual demon had been outside his reach... until now.

The creature crafted from Daigotsu's arm grew quickly and became terrible in countenance and power. Its appearance can only be described as nightmarish, like a grossly oversized human torso sitting atop a motley mess of crab-like or spider-like legs. Small vestigial legs sprout off of the demon's grotesquely oversized arms, large even for its enormous torso. Its face is covered in natural insect-like armor that resembles a mempo, the iron war-mask worn by many samurai. It also has long black hair that hangs around its face in disarray, increasing its strangely humanoid appearance.

Yuhmi no Oni is a singular entity, possessed of both significant physical power and a peculiar and unique quality, easily one of the strangest ever catalogued among the demons of Jigoku, and likely a result of its unique origin. Early in its existence, Yuhmi no Oni released a single spawn, but one that was nothing like its parent. The creature now known as Daigotsu Yuhmi appears completely human in every way, and wears a mempo that closely resembles the armor covering Yuhmi no Oni's face. Daigotsu Yuhmi is an incredibly gifted warrior, possessing strength and speed beyond the limits of the merely human.

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 6

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Claw 6k4 (Simple), Mai Chong 8k4 (Complex)

Damage: 6k2 (claw), 6k3 (mai chong)

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15: 160: Dead

Taint Rank: 8

Skills: Athletics 2, Jiujutsu 2, Spears 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 4*
- *Huge*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Mai Chong: For reasons unknown to any save the demon itself and perhaps its creator, Yuhmi no Oni wields a mai chong, a highly specialized spear created and utilized by the long-extinct Boar Clan. Although it generally prefers melee, the beast can throw the mai chong with the same attack roll as listed for its melee attack.*
- *Singular Spawn: Yuhmi no Oni can create a single spawn, a minor oni that appears human in every respect save for the armored plates covering its face; fortunately, these resemble a mempo, which prevents detection. The spawn is the equivalent of an Insight Rank 4 human, and possesses School Rank 4 in a randomly determined Lost or Spider Clan Basic School. The spawn may act completely independently of the oni, although the oni is aware of everything that happens to its spawn. If the spawn is ever killed, the oni may create a new spawn within one week of the demise. The spawn are incapable of human speech.*


空の巻

The Five Ancient Races

The Five Races came to prominence long before the rise of Rokugan or even humanity. They preceded the Nezumi Empire and perhaps even the ancient Naga. Indeed, the Five Races civilization is so ancient that little evidence remains to mark its existence or passing. Even the descendants of those who lived in this time recall little of their glorious past, and some are so greatly changed they no longer resemble their ancestors at all.

History of the Five Races: The Beginning

Long ago, there was only chaos. The realm of Ningen-do did not exist as mankind knows it. Everything was a tumultuous maelstrom of elemental energy, seething between the boundaries of the Spirit Realms.

And then, somehow, something changed. Intelligent creatures came into being within the turmoil. Each of these races was marked by the power of a particular element, and all of them possessed powerful magic which they used to survive in their harsh primordial world.

The doughty Zokujin represented the strength of Earth.

The fickle Ningyo represented the impermanence of Water.

The clever Kenku represented the subtlety of Air.

The fierce and inventive Trolls represented the power of Fire.

The wise Kitsu represented the mysteries of Void.

It is not known why these creatures came to be, only that they did. The Ningyo believe they were originally inhabitants of more distant realms, possibly Sakkaku. The Kitsu believe they willed themselves into being so they might be the ones to create order out of chaos. The Kenku chuckle at such arrogance, and suggest instead it was the universe itself that created them to serve as its custodians. The Zokujin and the Trolls are silent on such questions. Whatever the truth of the matter, life and thought existed where once there was none.

Using their natural magic the Five Races each carved tiny bubbles of stable reality within the maelstrom. Unfortunately, these pockets of stable existence were quite fragile. As soon as a new world was created it would begin to crumble, so the earliest inhabitants of the universe had to live a restless and nomadic existence.

All of this changed when the races found one another. Each of the five possessed strengths the others lacked, each wielded wisdom the others could not understand. Their powers both contradicted and complemented one another. The Five Races determined to combine their will to make a world that would last forever. In the center of chaos they created a vast city, and in the heart of this city they combined their most powerful magic in the form of a great crystal focus.

Within the focus all five elements were balanced in perfect harmony. The Five Races used the focus to impose their wisdom and intelligence on the maelstrom itself. They communicated with the elements, awakening them and importuning them to cease their mindless destruction. Thus, by the will of the Five Races, the first elemental spirits were born. The newborn kami drew lines of order through chaos, formed boundaries between earth and sky and between land and sea. They gave purpose to fire's hunger. They made the Void into the balance between all and nothing. Ningen-do, the mortal realm as man knows it, was created.



Is This the Truth?

The story presented here is only dimly known even among the modern descendents of the Five Races. Only the Kenku and some Zokujin remember their proud origins. The Naga, the Nezumi, the ogres, the mortals of Rokugan and the men who dwell in the Burning Sands all believe in yet different cosmologies, most of them mutually contradictory. All of them are certain of the truth of their own beliefs and discount the beliefs of others as lies or quaint superstition. So which is the truth? Perhaps none of them are, or perhaps in some strange way they are all true.

It may be noted that in the year 1158 of Rokugan's history, the Unicorn Clan discovered underground ruins of an ancient city made from purple crystal. The Unicorn claimed a vast crystal was found amid the ruins of the city, which seemed to match the tales of the City of Night. Supposedly, prior to his coronation the Emperor Toturi III destroyed the crystal and defeated the Tsuno Soultwisters who sought to claim it. This story cannot be corroborated, however, and is usually attributed to pro-Toturi propagandists.

The Rise of Jigoku

The magical power used to create Ningen-do was incredible. Even with the power of the great crystal they had created in the heart of their new city, the City of Night, the Five Races were scarcely able to control the forces they had unleashed. Furthermore, as the newborn kami grew in power the strength of the Five Races began to diminish. The wisest among them soon recognized they could no longer safely control the incredible power they had created – nor could they destroy it. Instead, they sealed off the city's heart and forbade further use of the crystal.

The creation of this new world was not without consequence. Deeper in the Spirit Realms, the dark realm of Jigoku stirred awake. A sinister and intelligent realm, it looked upon the stability of Ningen-do with a terrible hunger. It wished to destroy this newborn world, to feed upon the kami and twist the Five Races to its service. It extended its dark tendrils into the mortal world and began to corrupt what it found there. It sent forth its servants, the ruthless oni, and began to wage war upon Ningen-do.

The Five Races had never faced such a threat as this. Jigoku did not wish to parley. It did not seek surrender. It desired only to corrupt and consume. Those who fought it were slain and rose again in its dark service. Those who fled were pursued relentlessly. A shadow spread across the young world, reaching inexorably toward the City of Night.

Tsuno Kishenku, leader of a militant order of Kitsu known as the Soultwisters, believed only the crystal focus could defeat Jigoku. Soli Xiaomin, the elder Kitsu mystic who ruled the City of Night, refused to risk using its power. Instead he argued the Five Races must unite against their common foe. Together they could face any challenge, just as they had when they brought order to the maelstrom.

Kishenku agreed to Xiaomin's wishes... but only so he could marshal his forces in secret and attack the City of Night while Xiaomin was distracted. Kishenku seized the crystal focus for himself, and he proved right – the power of the crystal was so great even Jigoku's forces could not stand against it. Most of the twisted creatures who had invaded the mortal world were incinerated. A handful fled back into their shadow realm to plot vengeance.

Unfortunately, Xiaomin's warnings proved correct as well. Kishenku could not maintain control. A wave of energy ripped through the City of Night, killing its inhabitants and turning the city itself into a strange purple crystal. The shockwaves rippled across the world, bringing death and ruin to all the cities of the Five Races.

The survivors hunted down Kishenku and his followers. For their crimes they were cast into the Realm of Slaughter. There, over time, they were twisted into the creatures now known as Tsuno.

Descendants of the other races, however, survive to this day. All of them have declined from their former lofty status as creators of the mortal realm – some more than others – but all of them yet survive.

The Kenku

"They are an ancient race, burdened with great sadness and greater wisdom."

– Doji Yasuyo

The Kenku are quick and agile creatures, small by Rokugani standards. In their natural forms they resemble humanoid crows and stand a little over four feet high. Around humans they prefer to utilize disguise, combining magical and mundane means to conceal their true nature. Many Kenku live among humans unnoticed, usually disguised as individuals of humble status. They are particularly fond of passing themselves off as monks, and many Rokugani tell stories of wandering monks on remote roads who reveal themselves as Kenku to worthy individuals.

The Kenku lost much of the power they used to help create the City of Night, but its legacy remains. The Kenku do not age and are immune to ordinary maladies. They are effectively immortal, though they can still die due to violence, hunger, or mishap.

After the City was destroyed, the few remaining Kenku retreated to remote regions to contemplate their place in the universe. Some even removed themselves from the mortal realm altogether, withdrawing to Sakkaku, the Realm of Tricksters. The Kenku became a race of loners, with no true civilization or society to speak of. A Kenku will always recognize another of his kind and greet him with courtesy and respect, but they

will inevitably soon go their separate ways. Even mated pairs seldom remain together for long, with one parent or the other claiming responsibility for the offspring before continuing on their way. Indeed, the Kenku rarely mate or reproduce, and over the centuries their numbers have gradually declined. The Kenku themselves recognize that despite their individual immortality their race is probably doomed to vanish into history. From their own perspective, many Kenku believe this fate is no less than they deserve. Their world ended on the day the City of Night became crystal. They failed, and the world's destiny passed into the hands of others.

Though this philosophy might suggest a bleak outlook, the Kenku are surprisingly optimistic creatures. They believe it was the City of Night's destiny to fall. Someone had to be the first. Someone had to learn the dangers of hubris. Someone had to discover the power and face Jigoku's evil. They were not prepared, but who could have been? It was only by great luck they survived, and they do not intend to waste that good fortune. Now the Kenku see it as their duty to pass their hard-won wisdom to their successors. They believe their immortality is proof of the responsibility the universe has placed on them. They shall continue to endure so long as they are needed, to guide those who have inherited the world they helped create.

Kenku Sensei

Modern Kenku are teachers. They watch the world from secrecy, biding their time and searching for those who seem worthy. They have acted in this role throughout the Empire's history and even before. The Phoenix Clan histories feature tales of Kenku teachers dating back to their time as the Tribe of Isawa, and the Crane claim that Kakita himself learned the art of Iaijutsu from a Kenku. The Nezumi and Naga also have many accounts of mysterious teachers in their own histories... though given the nature of Nezumi histories, if and when these things ever happened is anyone's guess.

How the Kenku choose a student is not known. According to many Rokugani legends, only those who have great destinies can find a Kenku sensei. Others argue the reverse is true – so powerful are Kenku teachings that those blessed by them cannot fail to achieve tremendous glory. Indeed, merely proving that one is trained by a Kenku can earn a samurai great attention and admiration. Of course, the irony here is that the Kenku themselves avoid attention, and any mortal so arrogant as to brag of his Kenku training can almost guarantee abandonment by his immortal teacher. It is also quite common for storytellers to embellish a hero's history by adding mention of a Kenku teacher, since the Kenku are unlikely to step out of the shadows to object.

The truth of the matter is that a Kenku's choice can often be quite random. From time to time a hero simply strikes a Kenku's fancy and the creature deems him worthy for consideration. Some individuals may deliberately seek out a Kenku's counsel, although such endeavors rarely end in success. Kenku teachers are never easy to find, and for good reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, Kenku are quite rare. Second, the Kenku bear a healthy suspicion toward those who seek their wisdom. They know that all too often mortals who claim to fight for a just cause are actually selfish and corrupt. Finally and most importantly, a Kenku will never accept a student unless he has been properly tested.

The Tale of the Kenku and the Thief

Shosuro Hanzo was a young vassal of the Bayushi family, and secretly a thief of great talent. Though he needed no wealth, he pilfered gold and treasures from his friends for the sheer thrill of it. He always avoided detection and grew bolder with each success. One evening, he found himself at the estate of his master Bayushi Toshu, prowling the outer walls and seeking a means by which he might sneak inside. If he robbed Toshu, he believed, he would truly know the glory of being a perfect thief.

To his surprise, a rope tumbled down from the wall above. A curt whisper commanded him to climb quickly or forget his dreams forever. Though he was initially suspicious, his curiosity overcame him and he climbed the wall. An old monk was waiting for him there. The monk introduced himself as Koan, and confessed that he too had long coveted Toshu's treasures. He had discovered a way to sneak inside through a cavern that led into the castle's well, but unfortunately the bars that braced the daimyo's strong-room were too heavy for him to move alone. When he noticed Hanzo prowling the walls outside, though, he decided to take a chance and cut the young thief in on the job. Overcome by greed, Hanzo eagerly agreed.

After climbing back down to the courtyard, Koan almost immediately tripped and toppled a large stack of clay pots. As they shattered, a loud alarm and chorus of barking watchdogs erupted through the household. Hanzo cursed Koan's clumsiness and prepared to fight.

"They will kill us both," Koan warned. "We must return to the well, and escape through the cave!"

Hanzo quickly complied. He shimmied down the rope and dropped into the freezing, knee-deep water at the bottom of the well. Once there, the light of his sputtering torch revealed two things: there was no cave, and the well's bucket was quickly ascending.

"Koan," he whispered angrily. "What are you doing?"

"You wished to know the glory of a thief's life," the monk replied. "After tonight, you will know!"

With that, the monk sprouted black feathers and a long beak. With a cackling, cawing laugh, he flew away.

Hanzo spent the night shivering in the depths of the well, praying he would not be found. When morning came, he waited until a servant lowered the bucket, climbed the rope, and fled. Heeding the Kenku's harsh lesson, he never stole again.



A Matter of Trust

If the Kenku have one fault, it is arrogance. They are extremely slow to trust those not of their kind. They believe experience is the greatest teacher, and because the mortal races do not have the benefit of their own prodigious experience, they view them as little more than capricious children. Kenku are always watching for any mistake, any sign of weakness that will disprove a human's worth. Once they decide to refuse their teaching, they can be quite stubborn about it. A thousand good deeds may draw a Kenku's eye, but a single failure can turn it away forever.

Of course, this demanding behavior is true mainly for those who seek a Kenku's teaching. For those who are instead chosen by a Kenku, the reverse is often true. If a Kenku is convinced a student has potential, it can be very difficult indeed to change his mind, since his judgment is superior to all others – even the potential student himself.

Whether the Kenku seeks the student or vice versa, prospective students must always be tested. In fact this sometimes happens without the student's knowledge. The Kenku might present himself in the guise of a blind beggar, a starving old man, or a samurai from an enemy clan. If the student comports himself with bravery, cleverness, and compassion in equal measure, the Kenku may decide to reveal himself in his true form. If the student shows cowardice, stupidity, or cruelty, the Kenku will vanish and never return.

Tests are central to the Kenku philosophy. Just as they believe it was necessary for the Five Races to fall so they could learn from their mistakes, they also believe experience is the best teacher. Kenku tests can be quite dangerous for their subjects, and can sometimes also be extremely humiliating. Kenku have been known to steal valuables, seduce wives, and even defile temples, all with the intent of teaching someone a lesson. This has earned them a reputation as malicious pranksters as much as enlightened teachers, and Rokugani folklore is filled with stories of mischievous Kenku teachers, such as the fable of the Kenku and the Thief.



The Kenku and Shinseism

Many parallels can be drawn between the Kenku's remote, introspective, and sometimes mischievous behavior and that of Shinsei himself. This is no coincidence. In the days before the Kami fell and the First War began, Shinsei was just a man. He was, however, an extraordinarily wise man – and the Kenku recognized this. They knew the forces of Jigoku were growing in power and would soon hunger for the world again. They knew the humans must be prepared to face that danger. Shinsei was the wisest human they had seen, and the Kenku believed he could be the instrument of victory against Jigoku. A Kenku named Takashi came to Shinsei early in life, seeking to teach him all he knew and prepare him for Jigoku's inevitable attack. To Takashi's surprise, Shinsei not only passed his tests but taught the Kenku a great deal in turn. The mortal's unique combination of compassion, intellect, and good common sense impressed him so much that Takashi sought out his twin brother, Mukashi, to learn from Shinsei as well.

The twin Kenku continued to serve Shinsei as friends and advisors throughout his life. Their influence on each was great, and word soon spread to other Kenku about this extraordinary human. Over the centuries, Shinsei's wisdom and deeds have earned him great respect among the Kenku, and is likely one of the reasons they prefer to disguise themselves as Taoist monks.

It is quite likely Shinsei's association with crows, in particular the single crow who served as his faithful companion, was a result of his friendship with the Kenku. Kenku frequently use these keenly intelligent birds as pets, and it is possible they either taught Shinsei how to train these animals or offered him one as a gift.

The Kenku Swordsmen

The Kenku are greatly renowned for their wisdom, but they are respected in equal measure for their extraordinary swordsmanship. It was in the time of the Five Races that the Kenku first took up arms against the invading forces of Jigoku, and they proved to be phenomenal warriors. Though those days are long past, their martial prowess remains legendary.

Most Kenku are proficient with a wide variety of Rokugani weapons. As they are both quite talented and extremely long-lived, they have near-infinite time to practice. Much like the Rokugani, their greatest warriors invariably prefer the katana. The older members of their race admit their people did not originally fight with such swords, but with weapons of similar design – however, these same Kenku are also quick to add that the katana is a crude but acceptable substitute for a true Kenku sword. Whether this is true or merely a remark gauged to irritate the delicate sensibilities of samurai is open to speculation. The reality is probably truth and mischief in equal measure.

A number of Kenku are accomplished swordsmiths, though it was not always so. During the time of the Five Races, the Kenku relied on the Trolls to forge their weapons. As the Trolls fell into decline and corruption, the Kenku were forced to learn the art of weaponsmithing for themselves. Kenku swords are of extremely high quality, and on the rare occasions they are given to humans as gifts, they become treasured family heirlooms.

The Rokugani normally have a very strong stigma against allowing anyone but a samurai to carry a sword. However, Kenku appear to be more or less immune to this social prejudice, perhaps because of their legendary status and their role as teachers to some of the greatest warriors who have ever lived. In effect, they are treated as honorary samurai. Of course, most Kenku care little if a samurai takes offense at their possessions. They have both the guile to escape notice and the strength of arms to defend themselves from those who might be insulted.

For their part, the Kenku are baffled by the reverence with which samurai regard their ancestral swords. While the Kenku think a sword is as worthy of respect as any great piece of craftsmanship, they do not glorify these weapons as the samurai do. The Kenku believe it is the technique, not the blade, that make a true warrior.

The Kenku Kensei ("sword saint") style has persisted since the time of the Five Races, making it the oldest known martial style in Rokugan. While the weapons and techniques have evolved over the millennia, the central Kenku martial philosophies have remained essentially constant. Their style focuses on speed and precision over strength. A Kenku swordsman will patiently bide his time, distracting his enemy with careful feints, while waiting for the proper moment to deliver a single devastating blow. Kenku are also quick learners, able to mimic the techniques of others after brief observation.

The Kenku do not share these techniques lightly. Even when a Kenku sensei deems a human worthy of his teachings, he may not share the secrets of Kenku swordsmanship. For a Kenku to instruct a human in such a way, something more is required.

They will not teach swordsmanship to those without the talent for it, and while this may seem obvious, it is important to note that the Kenku do not always choose to teach those who are already warriors. Artists and philosophers also number among their students, many of whom never touched a blade before the Kenku chose them.

The Kenku will only teach those who need the skill. The Kenku have a philosophy: "A great artist will create his art." The underlying meaning is that one who possesses great skill at something should seek to use that skill. Thus a painter with greater skill than those around him will create great works of art. And thus a swordsman with skill greater than his fellows will unleash great violence. The Kenku believe they possess the wisdom and restraint to use their techniques wisely, but are hesitant to offer such trust to humans. They only share their techniques if the student needs them to defeat a powerful enemy, and only if violence seems inevitable – such as against the Shadowlands or in time of war.

Finally, the Kenku require secrecy. A human who learns Kenku techniques is expected to teach no one else, on pain of his own death. The Kenku believe such secrets as they possess have great power to change the world, and humans can only be trusted with such power in an extremely controlled manner. The Kenku are compassionate creatures, but even they have limits, and such a basic betrayal of their trust will not be endured without reprisal.

See the New Mechanics section below for the rules of the Kenku school.



Sample Kenku

The following section provides two sample Kenku for the use of the GM. Kenku, unlike almost all other nonhuman creatures, not only possess a Void Ring but are capable of spending Void Points in the same manner as humans. They also are considered to possess a form of Honor, at least for game mechanic purposes.

It should be noted that "inexperienced" Kenku do not really exist – even the youngest Kenku are several hundred years old and extremely wise by human standards.

Kenku Swordsman

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 4
-	Willpower 4	Agility 4	Strength 4	-
Honor: 4.5		-		-

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Katana 10k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k2 — *Armor TN: 30 (5 from Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) — *Wounds: Kenku have human-type Wound Ranks.*

School/Rank: Kenku Bushi 3

Skills: Acting 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Lore: History 2, Meditation 4, Defense 3, Stealth 3, Tea Ceremony 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Illusion: Once per day, a Kenku can take human form or become invisible as a Simple Action. This illusion persists until the Kenku chooses to discard it. Invisibility will also cease if the Kenku attacks.*
- *Wings: Kenku in their natural form can fly, and move at twice their normal speed while doing so.*



Kenku Kensei

Air 5	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 3	Void 5
-	-	-	Strength 5	-
Honor: 5.5		-		-

Initiative: 10k5 — *Attack: Katana 10k7 (Simple)*

Damage: 8k2 — *Armor TN: 35 (5 from Light Armor)*

Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) — *Wounds: Kenku have human-type Wound Ranks.*

School/Rank: Kenku Bushi 5

Skills: Acting 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 9, Lore: History 4, Meditation 4, Defense 5, Stealth 4, Tea Ceremony 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Illusion: Once per day, a Kenku can take human form or become invisible as a Simple Action. This illusion persists until the Kenku chooses to discard it. Invisibility will also cease if the Kenku attacks.*
- *Magic: A Kenku Kensei can cast Sense, Commune, and Summon as if he were a Shugenja of equal School Rank. He needs no scrolls to cast these spells.*
- *Wings: Kenku in their natural form can fly, and move at twice their normal speed while doing so.*
- *The reclusive kensei or "sword saints" are masters of the secret Kenku arts, revered and admired by lesser Kenku. These reclusive creatures are invariably extremely old, often older than Rokugan itself. The eldest of their kind can still personally recall the days of the Naga and Nezumi civilizations or even the fall of the Five Races. Despite their age, Kenku Kensei are still extremely sprightly and capable warriors.*

New Mechanics: The Kenku Swordsman School

As stated previously, the Kenku are extremely discerning in regards to their techniques. A human student must either prove his worth to a Kenku sensei or be selected by a Kenku to receive training.

- **Benefit**: +1 Reflexes
- **Skills**: Defense, Hunting, Kenjutsu (Katana), Meditation, Tea Ceremony, any one Lore skill, any one Bugei Skill
- **Starting Outfit**: Light or Heavy Armor, Daisho, Traveling Pack, 3 koku.

Techniques

Rank 1: Wing of Thunder

The kenku bushi has learned to harness the speed of the wind itself, and can draw that element into himself. You may add the total of your Reflexes and School Rank to your Armor TN against any enemy with lower Initiative.

Rank 2: Heaven's Claw

The bushi has tapped the power of the thunderbolt, striking hard at his enemy's weaknesses. Any time you inflict more than 10 points of damage with a single attack, your opponent loses one Void Point. Against opponents with no Void Points remaining (or no Void), you may instead re-roll a single damage die and take the better of the two results.

Rank 3: Lightning Kiss

The kenku bushi has captured the swift fury of lightning. You may attack as a Simple Action while using any melee weapon in which you possess a Skill Emphasis.

Rank 4: Churning Skies

The kenku bushi has learned to patiently build his energies, only to strike with thunderous power. If you choose to delay your Turn during a Round until after all your opponents have acted, you may ignore the effects of all Wound Penalties (including Down and Out) and your may spend any amount of your Void Points on your damage rolls during this Round.

Rank 5: The Same Breeze

Even two leaves carried on the same breeze may take quite different paths. This is the final lesson of the kenku school. At the beginning of your Turn, you may take a Free Action and spend a Void Point to copy one bushi Technique of any other character (human or otherwise) within 20' for a number of Rounds equal to your Air. You must abide by whatever costs and restrictions apply to the copied Technique (Void Point cost, specific armor or weapons, etc).

If you are not a Kenku yourself, you must have seen the Technique you are copying used at least once. Regardless of whether you are human or Kenku, you may only copy one Technique at a time.



The Ningyo

A Ningyo is the Rokugani equivalent of a mermaid. They are elegant creatures with smooth silver skin covered with shimmering scales. From the waist up they are vaguely humanoid, though their fangs and long webbed fingers betray a distinctly nonhuman origin. From the waist down, their bodies taper into serpentine shapes up to twelve feet long, marked with several broad fins.

The Ningyo have always been naturally reclusive. When the Five Races shaped the mortal realm, the Ningyo chose to live beneath the water, building their cities in the lakes, rivers, and oceans. Their bodies changed to suit to their new environment, adapting many qualities shared by fish and other sea creatures – as they appear today. When the forces of Jigoku came forth and sought to conquer the world they had created, the Ningyo chose to hide in their remote underwater homes. They had mastered the art of using pearls to focus magic, projecting a pure radiance that Jigoku's monstrosities could not endure. Sadly these pearls were rare, and the Ningyo could not harvest enough to protect both themselves and their allies. So they retreated from the war and used their magic to protect only their own homes. Though this saved them from sustaining the large casualties the other races did, they were not immune to the repercussions of the conflict.

When the Soultwisters seized the City of Night and unleashed its power against Jigoku, the forces of evil were not the only ones to suffer. Before Kishenku lost control of his stolen power, he also turned it against the Ningyo traitors. Their refusal to aid their allies in their time of greatest need enraged the Kitsu and he leveled a powerful curse against their race.

The Ningyo were driven insane. The Soultwister's curse devolved the majority of them to a near-feral state. Even those who maintained some bit of sentience became a shadow of their former selves. They could no longer survive outside of the water. Those least affected by the curse managed to scrape their less fortunate brethren together into simple tribes, dwelling in their ruined cities, but the once great civilization of the Ningyo was forever lost. Further, they ceased to age, and suffered their madness forever.

The Ningyo curse did not end there. Any creature who consumed the flesh of a Ningyo could potentially inherit their immortality. When this secret was discovered, other races began to hunt them, especially the surviving trolls. The Ningyo race might have eventually met a grim fate if not for an unlikely intervention.

The Orochi Alliance

In Sakkaku, the Realm of Tricksters, there exists one sort of spirit that possesses almost no sense of humor. This was, one could say, Sakkaku's cruelest jest. While the serpentine Orochi seek little more than contemplation, their fellow inhabitants – especially the malicious mujina – take endless glee in disturbing them with capricious practical jokes. The Orochi endured this torment in grim silence for untold centuries, until the creation of Ningen-do finally gave them hope for escape. Here was a realm close to their own where they might find the peace they sought. Here was a realm where there was some sense of order.

The Orochi did not enter Ningen-do immediately. Some feared this realm might fade as quickly as it was created. When Jigoku awakened, many wondered if the troubles of this young world might surpass those of their home. And, of course, a select few wondered if this chance for freedom might be some cruel trick concocted by the Mujina. For a long time they waited, watching for some sign this new world might be the safe refuge they sought. As they watched, they took particular note of the Ningyo. These creatures had helped create the world, but they did not wish to be a part of it. Instead, they separated themselves from others, hiding among the waves. The Orochi felt they saw kindred spirits in Ningyo.

And so when the City of Night fell and the Ningyo were cursed, the Orochi felt a deep sense of guilt. If they had acted sooner, would the Ningyo race have suffered the same fate? If they had offered their help, could the tragedy at the City of Night have been averted? As the mortal world fell into ruin and the scattered survivors began to hunt the Ningyo for their immortality, the Orochi determined the time had come to act.

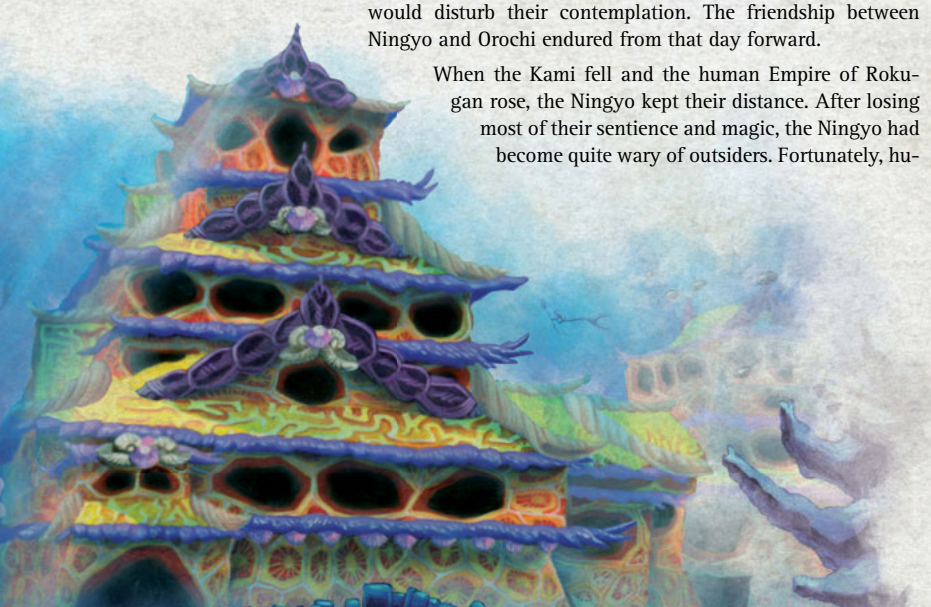




Their hesitation cost them dearly. A few of the more curious Mujina decided to figure out what was going on, and began spying on the Orochi in secret. They soon learned the Orochi had developed a keen interest in Ningen-do, and realized their favorite victims were planning an escape. When the Orochi ruler, King Ryujin, led his fellows into Ningen-do, the Mujina leapt into action. They knew they were not strong enough to face Ryujin in his home realm, but once he crossed into Ningen-do he became much weaker. The tricksters used their magic to seal the borders between Ningen-do and Sakkaku. Only Ryujin and a handful of his fellow Orochi escaped. The rest were left behind to languish in the Realm of Tricksters. Ryujin seethed with anger at this cruelest trick yet, but could do nothing save find a new home for those who had escaped beside him.

At the time, the surviving Ningyo had retreated to a single city deep beneath the waves. Ryujin and his fellows quickly journeyed there. The Orochi king discovered that weakened as he was, he could not remove Tsuno Kishenku's curse. Instead, he showed the true cunning of one of Sakkaku's children by making the curse stronger. After his meddling, no living being could ingest Ningyo flesh without also suffering the Orochi King's curse. Those who had harvested innocent Ningyo to secure their own immortality became crazed, maddened monsters. Soon all but the most foolish seekers of immortality left the Ningyo in peace.

Though crazed and savage, the Ningyo still recognized the good deed Ryujin had done for them. In return, they offered the Orochi safe haven within their cities, protection from all who would disturb their contemplation. The friendship between Ningyo and Orochi endured from that day forward.



When the Kami fell and the human Empire of Rokugan rose, the Ningyo kept their distance. After losing most of their sentience and magic, the Ningyo had become quite wary of outsiders. Fortunately, humans had no ability to survive underwater and only the most daring ventured out to sea. The Ningyo and Orochi generally ignored human sailors so long as they were left undisturbed. Occasionally they might turn a crippled ship toward shore or help a lost vessel find its way, but only to encourage humans to swiftly depart their realm. These errant acts of kindness earned the Ningyo status as creatures of legend, and human sailors regarded them as good luck.

Not so for the Orochi. The serpent-spirits rarely showed themselves to humans. When they did, it was usually in a violent manner, seeking retribution against someone who had dared kill a Ningyo, or destroying ships that drew too close to the Ningyo cities. Their rare appearances painted them as creatures of fear, deadly sea serpents who showed no mercy. Wise sailors studiously avoided any and all signs of Orochi presence... although the Mantis Clan would eventually prove a notable exception.

The Orochi continue to have a calming effect on the Ningyo, greatly mitigating the darker effects of Kishenku's curse. Ningyo who spend a great deal of time in the presence of Orochi become less savage and bestial than their cousins. Most Orochi value their solitude and generally dwell in the remaining Ningyo cities deep beneath the sea, so those Ningyo who dwell closest to land are usually the most feral and savage, while those who dwell in the deepest regions are intelligent and frequently practice pearl magic.

More information on the Orochi may be found in the Spirits chapter elsewhere in this book.

The Naga and Pearl Magic

The Naga bloodline known as the Chameleons, who are often able to breath underwater, built several cities under the ocean in ancient times. They soon came into contact with the Ningyo and Orochi. Initially suspicious, the Ningyo demanded the Naga leave their oceans and never return. The Naga protested that they came in peace. Although the Orochi remained doubtful, the less savage of the Ningyo recognized in the Naga another foe of Jigoku, and recalled their own bitter failure at the City of Night. They offered to share the secrets of their pearl magic with the Naga. While the Naga were willing students, only those of the Cobra bloodline seemed to possess any real talent. Eventually their mastery of pearl magic exceeded even the Ningyo themselves.

So the handfuls of intelligent Ningyo like to claim, at any rate. The Naga have no such tradition in their own histories, and say they discovered the secrets of pearl magic on their own as a result of the Chameleons exploring the seas in ancient times. Whichever story is true, the Naga and Ningyo were certainly allies in ancient times, and even the most savage and primitive Ningyo seem to instinctively regard the Naga as friends. Such creatures will often be found in the waters near underwater Naga communities, searching for pearls to deposit in the mystical Naga pearl beds.

Some of the less feral Ningyo still practice the pearl magic of old, but their skill has atrophied considerably and in modern times they can barely master the basics of pearl magic. In game terms, a Ningyo who knows pearl magic uses it in the same manner as a Naga jakla (see the Naga chapter elsewhere in this book) but can only use it to cast Rank 1 Water spells.

Sample Ningyo

Feral Ningyo

These statistics describe a typical Ningyo encountered in the wild. Feral Ningyo are vicious, but intelligent enough to realize that eating humans only brings trouble. They will only risk attacking humans when they are attacked first or are desperately hungry.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	-	-

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Bite 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 2 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: Dead.*

Skills: Defense 2, Hunting 2, Jiujutsu 2, Stealth 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Ningyo move at normal speed underwater and can swim without the need for an Athletics Skill roll. They cannot breathe air, but can survive outside of water for up to an hour. Outside of water they move as though possessing a Water Ring of 1.*
- *Ningyo Speech: While underwater, Ningyo can communicate with one another at frequencies undetectable by humans.*

Ningyo Pearl-Diver

The typical Pearl-Diver is a more civilized member of the Ningyo race, usually due to being part of a larger Ningyo settlement deep beneath the water. These creatures are skittish and reclusive, but will defend themselves if threatened. Ningyo with this level of intelligence will never willingly feed on another intelligent creature.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
-	-	-	-

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Yari 8k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 2 — *Wounds: Normal human-type Wound Ranks.*

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Investigation 3, Jiujutsu 3, Spears 4, Stealth 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Ningyo move at normal speed underwater and can swim without the need for an Athletics Skill roll. They cannot breathe air, but can survive outside of water for up to an hour. Outside of water they move as though possessing a Water Ring of 1.*
- *Ningyo Speech: While underwater, Ningyo can communicate with one another at frequencies undetectable by humans.*

The Ningyo Curse

Any creature who eats Ningyo flesh gains immortality. They become immune to all diseases and need no longer eat, drink, or even breathe. In addition, they cease aging entirely. However, this immortality comes at a great cost. The mind of any individual who eats Ningyo flesh is twisted and distorted by the curse, causing bizarre and destructive behavior. To select an appropriate curse, roll on the following table and apply the results.

These curses can normally only be removed by Ryujin himself, though in theory a Fortune's power could also end them. They also cannot be undone without removing the immortality they confer. A person who loses immortality will immediately age until his physical body matches his actual age, an often-fatal event. Eating Ningyo flesh a second time does not have any effect, even if the eater has removed the curse in the past.

- 1-2: The Curse of Air – Any time you attempt to speak, you can say nothing except to sing a wailing lament of how you have murdered the Ningyo and devoured their flesh. Any time another being speaks to you, the only words you hear are the same wailing lament, as if sung by a dead Ningyo.
- 3-4: The Curse of Earth – You transform into the shape of a tree or boulder, rooted in the soil where you stand. You will endure forever, unable to speak but forever aware of your surroundings.
- 5-6: The Curse of Fire – You do not gain the usual freedom from needing to eat or drink, but can no longer eat normal food. You are filled with a burning hunger and must feed on a particular substance (chosen by the GM) at least once a day to maintain your immortality. If you do not feed on this substance once a day, you immediately die. You know what this substance is as soon as the curse sets in, and you can sense its presence anywhere within one hundred feet. Typical choices include stones, gold, fresh blood, ashes, or any number of other unappetizing things.
- 7-8: The Curse of Water – You become a Ningyo. You still need to breathe but can only breathe water. You will immediately begin to suffocate unless you enter a body of water quickly. Other Ningyo immediately recognize you for what you are.
- 9-10: The Curse of the Void – Though you become immortal, you also become a hideous carnivorous monster. You grow claws on your hands and develop monstrous appetites. At the GM's option, you may transform completely into an appropriate creature of his choice. In game terms you are now an NPC under the GM's control.

The King of Trolls

Sichi was an ancient troll chieftain, one of the original architects of the City of Night. When the Soultwisters sought to use the City's power against Jigoku, Sichi sided with the Kitsu and exiled them from the city. After the Soultwisters returned and unleashed the crystal's power, Sichi tried and failed to stop them. The Soultwisters channeled great amounts of magical power into the unfortunate troll, transforming him into a mindless rampaging beast. Sichi fled the city, absorbing magic directly from the earth wherever he went, increasing his power and his rage as he destroyed all in his path.

It was the Zokujin who eventually brought Sichi's madness to an end. They drew on Sichi's connection with the earth to transform his body into stone, sealing him into an inert slumber. They moved his body back to the City of Night, sealing it away within the doomed ruins.

The King of Trolls slumbered until the tenth century, when he was accidentally awakened by a group of Imperial Cartographers venturing too closely to the City of Night. After a brief rampage, Sichi returned to his slumber once more. He awoke once more one hundred years later, only to be defeated again by an alliance of human and Zokujin heroes. Returned once more to the form of a slumbering mountain, the King of Trolls rests near the mouth of Seikitsu Pass, waiting until he can rampage once again.

The Trolls

Modern trolls, described in the Shadowlands Beasts chapter elsewhere in this book, are large, green-skinned humanoids covered in layers of flabby muscle and thick green hide. Their eyes are black and beady, barely showing any intelligence whatsoever, and they dwell in vicious packs within the Shadowlands and its coastal waters. Their vile modern state is a great tragedy considering what they once were.

In the civilization of the Five Races, the Trolls possessed the keenest scientific minds. They were expert architects and master craftsmen, creating buildings and weapons of great beauty and skill. They were also clever diplomats and managed to maintain peaceful relations between their many allies despite their wildly divergent philosophies and personalities.

When Jigoku unleashed its forces upon the young world, the Trolls fared far better than their allies. Their territories in the south of what would become Rokugan were far from the front lines, and their well-constructed cities suffered relatively little damage when the City of Night's power was unleashed. While the other members of the Five Races struggled to find a place for themselves in the world afterward, the Trolls continued more or less as they had before. They built several more great cities including their capital, Volturnum, whose ruins still stand deep in the Shadowlands.

Alone, however, the Trolls were not nearly as great as they had been in league with the others of the Five Races. Their culture began to stagnate and decay, falling into moral corruption and self-indulgence. Eventually, they were conquered by wandering tribes of Ogres, who in turn were conquered by the Nezumi. By the time Fu Leng conquered them a third time, there was hardly anything left of the once-great Troll culture.

The Trolls of today are primitive and barbaric shadows of their ancestors. Unlike the other survivors of the Five Races, or even the Ogres, there are no remaining members of the Troll race who remember their former greatness. They have devolved into monstrous Tainted beasts who desire nothing more than to serve Jigoku. Indeed, according to Ogre legends the Trolls willingly offered their servitude to Fu Leng.



The Kitsu and the Tsuno

It is difficult to describe a Kitsu's true form, as few outside their own race ever saw it. They were skilled shapeshifters, their forms limited only to their imagination. They seem to have favored feline forms, however, and often appeared as great lions or humanoid cats. The one consistent feature of all Kitsu (and their Tsuno offshoots) is their eyes, which are naturally a bright yellow-gold in color. Most of their shapeshifted forms reflect this, unless the Kitsu is specifically trying to disguise his true nature.

The Fall of the Kitsu

After the renegade Soultwisters unleashed the power of the crystal and destroyed the City of Night, the Kitsu blamed themselves for their race's failure and retreated entirely into seclusion. They hid themselves from the other races, refusing to interact even with those who had helped them create the world. They were accomplished shapeshifters and took bestial forms so they would not be discovered. They lived as enormous feline creatures deep in the mountains of central Rokugan.

There was a strong feeling among the Kitsu that creating Ningen-do had been a mistake. They felt that in their arrogance they had only created a flawed world and drawn the attention of Jigoku, a realm of pure evil that would inevitably consume Ningen-do and use it as a staging ground to destroy the rest of the universe.

So the Kitsu watched silently as the Naga stepped forward to command the world they had made. They watched and waited for them to fail. After all, these Naga were lesser creatures with no true understanding of the universe. How could they defeat evil where the Kitsu so nearly failed? Rather than help, they watched bitterly, silently, a small part of themselves hoping the Naga would not rise to the challenge.

But the Naga did not fail. They defeated Jigoku and, in time, cast themselves into their Great Sleep so they might add in the battle again at a future time. This left the Kitsu to wonder – had they been wrong? Had they misjudged these lesser races?

When mankind rose to dominate what became Rokugan, and Jigoku began to stir yet again, the Kitsu determined that this time they would not sit idly by. They stepped forward to present themselves to these humans and offer their aid. Unfortunately, the first humans they met were those who followed Akodo. The Lion Clan mistook the Kitsu for monsters in Fu Leng's service and attacked them unmercifully, nearly exterminating the entire race. Only when the last five remaining Kitsu stepped forth to beg for their lives did Akodo realize what a terrible mistake he had made. He offered the Kitsu a place within his own clan, and marriage to his own followers. The surviving Kitsu shifted their shapes one final time and became human. Swearing fealty to Akodo, they founded of the Kitsu family and intermarried with Akodo's human followers. Though modern members of the Kitsu family still exhibit a connection to the spirits and ancestors far greater than normal human shugenja, they are no longer the Kitsu of old.

They are, for better or worse, human.



Kitsu Mechanics

The Kitsu are extinct in modern Rokugan, but campaigns set in the dawn of the Empire could feature encounters with them, and at least one Tsuno has been transformed back into a Kitsu (see "Tsuno Nintai" later in this chapter). Campaigns involving journeys through the spirit realms, or even time travel, could result in a meeting with a Kitsu.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 5	Void 5
-	-	-	-	-

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Claws 6k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k3 (claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 18: +5; 36: +10; 54: +15; 72: Dead.*

Skills: Athletics 3, Hunting 5, Lore: Spirit Realms 6, Meditation 5

Special Abilities:

- *Cross the Realms: Kitsu can sense and enter any spirit portal, crossing easily between the different Spirit Realms. They can also communicate with any creature with the Spirit quality, regardless of language.*
- *Shapeshifting: Kitsu can take any humanoid or feline form (of roughly the same size and weight) as a Simple Action. Their most typical "normal" form is a large predatory cat such as a lion. In all of their forms they have glowing golden eyes. It is believed they may have been able to take other forms as well, although any concrete information on this has been long since lost.*
- *Spirit*
- *Void Usage: The Kitsu are a race deeply associated with the Void and, as a result, they are among the few creatures able to possess a Void Ring and able to spend Void Points in the same manner as humans.*



The Tsuno

The Tsuno were once Kitsu, but were exiled to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, in punishment for their actions in the City of Night. They did not remain there forever; indeed, they soon discovered how to pass freely between the borders of the Spirit Realms. Yet something in the Realm of Slaughter resonated with the Tsuno and their violent hearts. They built great cities within Toshigoku's tormented landscape. Centuries there changed their forms to become monstrous, covered with intimidating spikes and horns, their long slavering mouths filled with sharp fangs. They retained their race's intelligence and added to it a vicious cruelty, embracing a martial culture that prized strength and treated all other races with contempt. And they lost the shapeshifting ability that was the legacy of their Kitsu blood.

The Tsuno did not regret the loss of their changeable forms, for they had embraced the new power to be found in Toshigoku. They developed their own fighting techniques, the so-called Ravager School, a vicious and brutal style that inspired and exploited the terror of their foes. They also developed and refined the magic which their Soultwister founders had discovered, a magic based on the powers and influences of the various Spirit Realms.

Though the Tsuno did not return to Ningen-do, it was not because they could not do so. The Tsuno simply had no interest in the mortal world, which they saw as a fragile, filthy place populated by short-lived creatures with no comprehension of their own existence. It was a flawed creation, and though they watched it carefully they seldom visited it in person. There were exceptions – shortly after the First War, with the Kitsu nearly exterminated, some Tsuno returned to the mortal world in hope of reclaiming the ruins of the City of Night. They encountered the forces of Akodo One-Eye, and the Lion Kami sacrificed himself and the last of his divine power to bring a mountain pass crashing down on the Tsuno troops.

After this incident, Tsuno influence in the mortal realm was extremely limited for centuries. They focused instead on developing their power within Toshigoku and raiding the other Spirit Realms, seeking to extend their dominion wherever they could reach. Not until the time of the Toturi Dynasty, when the City of Night was unearthed once more, did they return to Ningen-do. Driven by their dreams of regaining the City's power and their lust for vengeance on the Lion Clan (which had taken in their foolish Kitsu brethren) the Tsuno entered into an alliance with the new Dark Lord, Daigotsu, accepting the Taint into themselves and joining his sinister armies.

Ultimately, however, the power of the City of Night remained beyond the grasp of the Tsuno. After the City's great crystal was destroyed by Toturi III, the Tsuno's interest in the mortal realm began to dwindle once more, and within a couple of decades most of them had returned to Toshigoku, leaving only a token force to honor their ongoing commitments to Daigotsu (and to keep a watchful eye on his power). Back in the Realm of Slaughter they continue their old goal of expanding their power base and extending their dominion across the Spirit Realms.

Tsuno as Adversaries

The Tsuno present an unusual challenge for samurai. They are fearless warriors, with a twisted sense of honor that compels them to meet challenges from powerful foes. At the same time, they are cruel and sadistic monsters, delighting in torture and murder, willingly slaughtering anyone weaker than themselves. After the rise of Daigotsu, those Tsuno allied with the so-called Dark Lord are also Tainted, although this makes little difference to their already malignant natures.

A party of player characters might encounter Tsuno for a number of reasons. Most commonly, of course, it could happen as a result of conflict with the forces of the Dark Lord Daigotsu, either within the Shadowlands, during one of his major assaults on the Empire, or later during his infiltration of the Empire via the Spider Clan. Tsuno could also be encountered separately, most likely if they are making an expedition from Toshigoku. In such cases their motives will probably be to steal a magical artifact or kidnap a powerful shugenja (those of Kitsu blood are of particular interest). They might also be on a mission of revenge. Tsuno are long-lived creatures with a perverse concept of vengeance, so they are not above waiting centuries to inflict brutal and unexpected punishment on the descendant of a mortal who once wronged them.

Tsuno are dangerous foes, intelligent, merciless, and powerful; they will use good tactics and fight with no sense of compassion or fair play, though they understand and accept individual challenges. Their otherworldly natures make them difficult to kill. The GM should be careful about confronting inexperienced characters with Tsuno adversaries, and even highly experienced characters may find a pack of Tsuno led by a Ravager and a Soultwister to be more than they can handle.

New Mechanics: Tsuno Abilities, Schools, and Spells

All Tsuno have the creature qualities of Fear 2, Spirit, and Swift 3, reflecting their unnatural gifts as malignant creatures who traverse the Spirit Realms. Their unarmed attacks have a DR of 0k2 due to their sharp claws, and they have a natural Reduction of 5. Those Tsuno who have accepted the Taint have a Taint Rank of 4.

New Basic School: Tsuno Ravager [Bushi]

Tsuno Ravagers are the undisputed leaders of the Tsuno military. They are battle-hardened veterans who learn their School Techniques by performing dangerous quests into different Spirit Realms. They return changed: stronger, wiser, faster, and meaner. Ravagers lead from the front, their howls driving their troops into a disciplined but savage battle-frenzy. Tsuno Honor demands obedience in all things and the Ravagers enforce this discipline savagely, killing all who disobey.

- **Benefit:** None
- **Skills:** Athletics, Battle, Defense, Iaijutsu, Lore: Spirit Realms, Kenjutsu (Tsuno Blade), any one Bugei Skill.
- **"Honor":** 4.5
- **Outfit:** Tsuno Blade, Light Armor

Techniques:

Rank One: Kill Your Weakness

Tsuno Ravagers draw strength from the weakness of others, and learn to conquer their own. When a Ravager is wounded he draws strength from the pain. When a Ravager is injured, he gains a Reduction rating equal to his current Wound Penalties. (This Technique works off of base Wound Penalties, ignoring any Wound Penalty modifications for spells, Advantages such as Strength of the Earth, and similar effects.) This bonus changes as the Ravager's Wound Penalties change, and ceases to function once he is at Down or Out.

Rank Two: Howl of the Displaced

Ravagers are leaders among their Tsuno brethren. Once per day a Ravager can take a Simple Action to draw upon the fury of the Tsuno race and unleash a terrifying howl, inspiring the Ravager's allies and disheartening his enemies. Any foes who hear the howl are affected by Fear 5, and any allies within earshot gain a +1k0 bonus to their attack rolls. Both effects last for a number of Rounds equal to the Ravager's School Rank. Multiple Ravagers cannot stack their bonuses, although they can stack the duration and they each generate their own Fear effect.

Rank Three: Tsuno Technique

A Ravager's years of battle in the Spirit Realms have taught him speed as well as strength. The Ravager may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action.

Rank Four: Undying Vengeance

Gaining the ire of a Tsuno Ravager is usually the last mistake its enemies ever make, for Ravagers have a supernatural sense of their enemies' locations. If a Ravager has wounded or been wounded by a foe, he may take a Simple Action to make an Awareness Roll (TN 15 if the foe is within the same Spirit Realm, TN 25 if the foe has moved to another Spirit Realm). With a success, the Ravager learns the direction, distance, and physical condition of the foe. If the Ravager fails the roll, he loses track of his foe until the next time they meet (if any). Magic that shields someone from detection will protect against this Technique. The Ravager may track multiple foes at once if he has been wounded by more than one enemy.

Tsuno Nintai

The tale of Tsuno Nintai is both noble and tragic. He was a powerful Soultwister and a leader among the Tsuno, and launched the plot that turned the Nezumi tribe known as the Stained Paw to the service of Jigoku. However, in a desperate combat with the Nezumi Shaman Te'tik'kir, Nintai was overcome by Nezumi Name Magic and regressed to a younger and nobler version of himself. He became a true Kitsu once more, the last true Kitsu. The Lion Clan were overjoyed by this discovery and actually set aside much of their traditional hatred and contempt for the Nezumi in recognition of Nintai's return.

When the Nezumi passed into Tomorrow, Nintai promised to help ensure they would not be forgotten, and watched over the shrine built in Te'tik'kir's memory within the Shinomen Forest. Unfortunately, this made him a target for the forces of Jigoku, and Nintai was brutally tortured and murdered by members of the Spider Clan.

Rank Five: Slaughter is in the Blood

Centuries of battle within Toshigoku have imbued the Tsuno Ravagers with a thirst for slaughter. If a Ravager kills an opponent, he immediately gains a number of individual +1k1 bonuses equal to his School Rank. These bonuses may be used on attack rolls, damage rolls, or any Skill or Trait roll, and must be used before the end of the next Round or they are lost. This Technique can be triggered a number of times each skirmish equal to the Ravager's School Rank.

New Basic School: Tsuno Soultwister [Shugenja]

Tsuno Soultwisters are peculiar beings – a combination of sage, thief, and warrior. They do not gain their magical abilities by calling on the kami to perform spells for them. Instead they steal the power of the spirits and use it to accomplish what they desire. Soultwisters are some of the toughest Tsuno in existence, for to gain their power they must venture into the wilds of the Spirit Realms and do battle with powerful spirits, stealing their power and claiming it for themselves. These battles leave Soultwisters scarred physically, mentally, and spiritually. Many Soultwisters bear these scars as badges of honor and some go so far as to perform ritual scarification to commemorate important victories.

- **Benefit:** None
- **Skills:** Athletics, Battle, Defense, Intimidation (Torture), Kenjutsu (Tsuno Blade), Lore: Spirit Realms, any one Bugei skill.
- **"Honor":** 3.5

- **Outfit:** Tsuno Blade, light armor, satchel with ritual components
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Soultwisters have an affinity for spells related to any Spirit Realm for which they possess the Touch of the Spirit Realms Advantage. If the Soultwister has the Cursed by the Realm Disadvantage, he has a deficiency with spells related to the Realm associated with the Disadvantage.

Technique: The Power of the Spirits

Soultwisters travel across the Spirit Realms, learning tricks and stealing power, then imbuing their allies and enemies with the traits and powers of the spirits. No Soultwister can master the magic of all of the spirit realms; each Tsuno must choose three Spirit Realms when he becomes a Soultwister. He may only use spells related to those realms. He begins by knowing one spell from each of these three spirit realms. Every time the Soultwister increases in School Rank he may choose to either gain three new spells from his chosen Spirit Realms, or learn magic from a new Spirit Realm and gain one new spell (which may be from that Realm or one of the others he already knows).

Soultwister Magic

Soultwisters do not cast spells in the Rokugani sense. Instead, they use the powers of the spirit realms to twist their enemies' and allies' souls to match those of the Spirit Realms they have visited. Mechanically, however, this functions in the same manner as casting Rokugani spells. Each Spirit Realm is associated with a Ring, and a Soultwister who is casting a spell rolls School Rank/Ring just like a Rokugani shugenja, at a TN of 5 + 5 times the spell's Mastery Level. A Soultwister has spell slots just like a shugenja and conforms to the same rules regarding casting time, Raises, and so forth.

For purposes of Tsuno spell casting, the Rings which are associated with the various Spirit Realms are as follows:

- Air – Yomi and Chikushudo.
- Earth – Gaki-do and Meido.
- Fire – Sakkaku and Tengoku.
- Water - Yume-do and Toshigoku

There are no known Tsuno spells related to Ningen-do.

The rules which follow present only three Mastery Levels of Soultwister spells. This is typically more than sufficient, since Soultwister magic is both powerful and deadly. However, creative GMs should feel free to create higher Mastery spells for their Soultwister villains.

Soultwister Spells

Mastery Level 1

Benevolence of Tengoku

- **Realm/Ring:** Tengoku/Fire
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** School Rank x 5 Rounds.

The Soultwister imbues the target's soul with a sense of well-being and assurance, granting the confidence to do anything. A creature affected by this spell receives a bonus of +1k0 on all Skill rolls and does not suffer any penalties for rolling unskilled.

Bloodlust of Toshigoku

- **Realm/Ring:** Toshigoku/Water
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One ally or enemy
- **Duration:** School Rank x 2 Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (2 raises to increase the TN of the Willpower roll by 5)

The target of this spell is afflicted with the bloodlust of Toshigoku, attacking friend and foe alike with mindless determination. Soultwisters will often use this spell to remove the effectiveness of foes who do not generally attack in melee like bowmen or shugenja. They will also sometimes use it on a Tsuno Ravager and set him loose among the enemy.

A creature under the Bloodlust of Toshigoku immediately changes to the Full Attack posture (if not already in Full Attack) and must adopt the Full Attack Posture every Turn for the duration of the spell. During his Turn he must attack the creature nearest to him, whether it is friend or foe. He must attack with a melee weapon or, if there are none in reach, with unarmed attacks. The mindless rage grants him a +1k0 bonus on attack rolls.

If the target of this spell wishes to resist the bloodlust, he must roll Willpower at a TN equal to the Soultwister's School Rank x 5. The TN is reduced by 10 if the closest target is a friend or close ally. If the roll is successful, the target does not act that Round (he is putting all his effort into resisting the spell's compulsion).

Dream Messages of Yume-do

- **Realm/Ring:** Yume-do/Water
- **Range:** School Rank x 100 miles
- **Area of Effect:** One sleeping target
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in minutes

The Soultwister uses the spirits of the dream realm to send messages to others in their sleep. The Soultwister appears within the target's dreams and imparts a message using images and sounds (including speech if the Tsuno shares the target's language). This is a one-way communication and the Soultwister cannot see how the target reacts to the message he has delivered. When the target wakes he remembers the message clearly, although it is up to him whether to believe the message or not.

Gaki-do's Grasping Hunger

- **Realm/Ring:** Gaki-do/Earth
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One Target
- **Duration:** School Rank x 2 Rounds

The Soultwister imbues the target with a portion of the hunger felt by the spirits of Gaki-do. This all-consuming hunger forces the target to consume the energy of others... or his own. Any successful melee attack made by the target of this spell gain a bonus to the total of the damage roll equal to 2

plus the School Rank of the Soultwister. During any Round in which the target does not hit an enemy; however, he suffers damage equal to 2 plus the School Rank of the Soultwister, as the hunger consumes a portion of his own essence.

Meido's Lethargic Introspection

- **Realm/Ring:** Meido/Earth
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** School Rank x 2 Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (2 Raises to increase the Initiative penalty by 5, 2 Raises to increase the bonus to Knowledge Skills by +1k0)

The Realm of Meido is a realm of waiting, but it is also a realm of introspection where souls review the events of their own lives so they may better present their case to Emma-O. The Soultwister calls on the powers of Meido to slow the actions of the target while enhancing his memory of past events. A creature afflicted by this spell feels extremely lethargic, wanting nothing more than to stand around and wait for judgment. If he is in a skirmish, or enters one while under the effects of this spell, his Initiative score is immediately reduced by an amount equal to 5 times the Soultwister's School Rank. However, while the target's body feels sluggish, his mind functions with a supernatural clarity. The target gains a +Xk0 bonus (where X is the Soultwister's School Rank) to all Lore Skills and to all rolls involving memory.

Primal Senses of Chikushudo

- **Realm/Ring:** Chikushudo/Air
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target
- **Duration:** School Rank x 2 hours

The Soultwister draws on the enhanced senses of the animal spirits of Chikushudo, granting an enhanced sense of smell, sight, and hearing. The senses of the spell's target are enhanced to supernatural levels. He gains two Free Raises on all rolls involving Perception. He also gains 1 Rank of the Hunting skill and the Tracking Emphasis if he does not already have it. However, while the animal spirits of Chikushudo are canny trackers, they are still animals. The target of this spell also gains a fascination with shiny and/or fast-moving objects. He must roll Willpower at TN 15 once per Round as a Free Action any time he is confronted with a distraction of this nature – otherwise he will chase the distraction.

Sakkaku's Vandalism

- **Realm/Ring:** Sakkaku/Fire
- **Range:** 60'
- **Area of Effect:** One object
- **Duration:** Permanent

The spirits of Sakkaku are mischievous and the Soultwister has learned to turn that supernatural mischief to his own ends, mystically causing a single object to break. This spell targets a single non-magical item, which will break the next time it is used. Soultwisters often use this power to make an opponent's weapon snap or to destroy an enemy's armor, though there are other more creative uses for it as well. If the item targeted by this spell gains magical properties while affected by this

Tsuno Blades

The preferred Tsuno weapon is a large, heavy sword with a jagged and hooked appearance. Known simply as "Tsuno Blades," these cruel and vicious weapons use the Heavy Weapons skill and have a base Damage Rating of 3k3. A Tsuno Blade gains a +1k0 attack bonus against any opponent who has at least one Rank of Taint, who has the Spirit quality, or who has the Touched by the Realms Advantage

Tsuno Honor

The creatures that became Tsuno were once Kitsu, a wise and noble race. The Tsuno have retained a dark and twisted form of that nobility, a code of conduct incomprehensible to outsiders which respects authority and strength while rejecting empathy and compassion. Thus the Tsuno, unlike most other enemies Rokugani will face, have an "Honor Rank" that functions mechanically the same as the Honor of samurai characters – enhancing their resistance to Fear and temptation, and allowing an "Honor Roll" if the GM is using that optional mechanic. Tsuno can gain and lose Honor points, much like samurai, but they never gain Honor for acts of compassion or mercy – instead, they lose Honor for those acts. The only other behavior that causes them to lose Honor is disobedience and cowardice.

GMs and Ravager Rank 5

The fact that the Rank 5 Ravager Technique is triggered off the death of a target may be controversial to some GMs, since it can be interpreted as encouraging the GM to kill player characters in order to "power up" a Ravager's attacks. It should be noted that the Technique activates just as readily off killing an NPC as it does off a PC – a GM wishing to challenge player characters with a Rank 5 Ravager can always have a low-ranking samurai or budoka (armed peasant retainer) tag along in order to get killed by the Ravager – perhaps supplying some additional pathos along the way!

It should always be remembered that the Tsuno are a cruel and bloodthirsty race, and their fighting techniques reflect this. L5R is a lethal game, and PCs who confront a powerful Tsuno Ravager should be prepared for an honorable death. That being said, this Technique – like any other in the game – can always be modified by GMs who prefer a less lethal game, such as by making it trigger when reducing a character to Out.

Jigoku and Maigo no Musha

The Soultwisters have not developed any spells related to Jigoku, perhaps because of their ancient origins as a group fighting against Jigoku's power. However, on those occasions when Tsuno become Tainted (such as those who allied with Daigotsu during the twelfth century), their Soultwisters can cast Maho Spells as though they are Soultwister spells, and without the need to spill blood when casting the spells. (They still gain Taint as normal, however, so most Soultwisters are hesitant to use Maho too freely.)

Maigo no Musha (the Realm of Thwarted Destiny) is a fairly modern addition to the Rokugani cosmology, and as of the late twelfth century the Soultwisters have not determined what powers, if any, they can steal from its denizens. It is possible that in future timelines the Tsuno may discover spells related to the Realm of Thwarted Destiny.

power (for example, if a sword targeted by Sakkaku's Vandalism is later targeted by the spell Biting Steel), Sakkaku's Vandalism is negated.

Yomi's Ancestral Separation

- **Realm/Ring:** Yomi/Air
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** School Rank x 2 Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (2 raises to increase the TN penalty by 5)

The Soultwister's knowledge of the spirits of Yomi allows him to lessen the connection between the target and his ancestors. The target of this spell suffers a diminishment of his connection to his ancestors, and while this will not actually negate an Ancestor's guidance, the feeling of loss distracts the target from everything he is doing. All Skill and Trait rolls have their TN increased by 5 for the duration of the spell.

Mastery Level 2

Agony of Toshigoku

- **Realm/Ring:** Toshigoku/Water
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (3 Raises to increase the TN of the Willpower roll by 5, 3 Raises to increase the damage of the spell by +1k1)

The Soultwister has discovered the spirits of Toshigoku are in constant spiritual pain. Their frenzy for slaughter masks this pain, but it exists. The Soultwister channels this spiritual pain into another, causing indescribable agony. Creatures affected by this spell are wracked with terrible (albeit non-physical) pain; at the start of each Turn while they are under the effects of the spell, they must make a Willpower Roll (TN 25) or be unable to act during that Round. Further, if they fail the Willpower Roll the spiritual pain damages their body as well, causing 2k2 Wounds.

Creatures native to Toshigoku and those without souls (such as undead) are immune to this power.

Bestial Nature of Chikushudo

- **Realm/Ring:** Chikushudo/Air
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank x 3 in Rounds
- **Raises:** Special (5 Raises to affect a second set of Traits)

The Soultwister has learned to enhance his and others' physical abilities with the strength and power of the animal spirits of Chikushudo. The target of this spell increases the Rank of one of its physical Traits (Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, or Strength, chosen by the caster) by an amount equal to the Soultwister's School Rank. The mental Trait corresponding to that physical Trait is decreased by an equal amount, but only to a minimum of 1. The target always receives the full increase to the physical Trait even if the mental Trait is unable to drop by the same amount. This spell does change the target's Ring Rank but not the target's Wounds.

Gaki-do's Consuming Hunger

- **Realm/Ring:** Gaki-do/Earth
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank x 2 in Rounds

The Soultwister has learned to channel some of the hunger of the spirits who dwell in Gaki-do into others, allowing them to feast on the essence of their enemies. The target of this spell adds +2k2 to his damage rolls for any melee attack he makes. Moreover, a person wounded in this way must make a Willpower Roll at TN 30) or be Dazed by the feelings of hunger and pain that pass through them.

Knowledge of Yomi

- **Realm/Ring:** Yomi/Air
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Self
- **Duration:** Concentration
- **Raises:** Special (3 raises per extra question)

The Soultwister calls on his connection to the spirits of Yomi to discover information about a single human mortal, tricking the ancestors into spilling their secrets. The caster may ask those ancestors two questions about that human (he must know the mortal's name); the spirits will answer him truthfully. The human's ancestors have complete knowledge of his capabilities and statistics, including his Traits, Skills, Glory, Honor, School Techniques, Advantages, Disadvantages, etc.

If the Soultwister is asking about a human who has the guidance of an Ancestor in the Book of Water, the Spell Casting TN for this spell is increased by the Experience Point cost of that Ancestor.

Malicious Pranks of Sakkaku

- **Realm/Ring:** Sakkaku/Fire
- **Range:** 50'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Instantaneous

Most of the mischief performed by the spirits of Sakkaku is ultimately harmless, but to the truly malicious among them the pain of others is highly entertaining. A creature targeted by this spell becomes the butt of one of these malicious spirit's favorite pranks: phantom pain. The creature suddenly feels wracking pain coursing through its body. The form the pain takes is never the same, so one target might feel like a thousand bees are stinging it while another might feel like its entire body was suddenly set on fire. The target of this power must make a Stamina Roll at a TN of 10x the Soultwister's School Rank; if the roll succeeds the pain does not overwhelm the target, but if the roll fails, the target suffers 3k3 Wounds and falls Prone.

Meido's Call

- **Realm/Ring:** Meido/Earth
- **Range:** 25'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank x 2 in Rounds

A Soultwister can force the target of this spell closer to death. A creature targeted by this spell feels the forces of Meido pulling upon its soul, and for the duration of the spell the creature functions as if it is one Wound Rank lower than it truly is. For example, a samurai in the +5 Wound Rank would function as though he was in the +10 Wound Rank instead. This spell will cause death if the target is at the Out Wound Rank.

Shield of Tengoku

- **Realm/Ring:** Tengoku/Fire
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in Rounds

The Soultwister calls on the power of the spirits of the Celestial Heavens to protect the spell's target. For the duration of this spell, the target gains Reduction equal to the Soultwister's School Rank x2.

Yume-do's Horrific Nightmares

- **Realm/Ring:** Yume-do/Water
- **Range:** 1 mile
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in days
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 day per 2 Raises)

The Soultwister has learned how to utilize the darker side of the Realm of Dreams to inflict terrible nightmare. The target of this spell suffers severe nightmares every time he sleeps, and cannot rest peacefully. For the duration of this spell the target cannot recover Void Points, Wounds, or Spell Slots by resting. Each morning the target must make a Meditation/Stamina Roll (TN 15 + 5 per day affected) to avoid becoming Fatigued.

If the creature affected by this spell has the Phobia Disadvantage, its phobia is extremely prominent during these nightmares and it will begin to see signs of it in the waking world. While the spell lasts, any time the creature is in a stressful situation he will hallucinate something related to his Phobia, activating the effects of his Disadvantage for the remainder of the encounter.

Mastery Level 3

Banished from Yomi

- **Realm/Ring:** Yomi/Air
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target human
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in days

The Soultwister has learned all he can about the way the spirits of Yomi interact with their descendants, and can now sever that connection for a limited time. The target of this spell loses any connection he has to his ancestors. He loses any abilities granted to him by an Ancestor (as detailed in the Book of Water) and also loses the Haunted Disadvantage and the Touch of the Spirit Realms (Yomi) Advantage for the duration of this spell. Also, a person affected by this spell is so distracted by his loss of connection to his ancestors that he suffers a +5 TN penalty on all Actions.

Consumed by Gaki-do

- **Realm/Ring:** Gaki-do/Earth
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** 1 Round
- **Raises:** Duration (+1 Round per 3 Raises)

Soultwisters who are truly familiar with the spirits in Gaki-do have learned how to force the all-consuming hunger those spirits feel upon others. The target of this spell feels an insatiable and monstrous hunger, and for the duration of the spell suffers a TN penalty to all Actions equal to 5x the Soultwister's School Rank.

One with Chikushudo

- **Realm/Ring:** Chikushudo/Air
- **Range:** 20'
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in Rounds
- **Raises:** Duration (+2 Rounds per Raise)

The Soultwister has learned so much from the animal spirits of Chikushudo that he can imbue himself or another with the greatest strengths of the savage animal spirits in Chikushudo. The target sprouts claws, granting a +3k2 bonus to unarmed damage rolls, and thick fur granting +3 Reduction. The target functions as if he had the creature ability of Swift 3 – if he already has Swift, he gains a +1 bonus to it. Finally, the target may make one unarmed attack per Round as a Free Action, but he cannot take any Raises on that attack.



These advantages do not come without a cost, however. If the Intelligence Trait of the target is higher than 2, it drops to 2 for the duration of the spell. He also has difficulty differentiating friend from foe, and when encountering someone for the first time must make an Investigation/Intelligence Roll at TN 20 (using his lower Intelligence Trait) or assume they are an enemy regardless of the truth.

Questioned by Meido

- **Realm/Ring:** Meido/Earth
- **Range:** 40'
- **Area of Effect:** One target human
- **Duration:** 3 Rounds
- **Raises:** Targets (+1 target per 2 Raises)

A Soultwister who has truly learned the ways of the spirits of Meido is a frightening creature indeed, able to cause even the greatest of samurai to question their own actions and abilities. A person afflicted by this spell begins to suffer from a great sense of self-doubt, as if all the spirits of Meido are questioning his actions and his worth. Before taking any Action during a Round, a person affected by this spell must roll Honor at a TN of 10x the Soultwister's School Rank. If the roll is failed, he stands dithering, unable to act (although he is still considered to have taken an Action of the appropriate type for the purposes of what he can do in a Round). If the target succeeds in the roll he may take the action normally, but must continue to roll each time he wishes to do something.

Spurned by Sakkaku

- **Realm/Ring:** Sakkaku/Fire
- **Range:** 100'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank in weeks
- **Raises:** Special (4 Raises for an additional Rank of Unlucky)

The spirits of Sakkaku delight in mischief, and a Soultwister who has mastered their powers can cause them to plague enemies for extended periods of time. Any creature affected by this spell gains a number of Ranks of the Unlucky Disadvantage equal to the Soultwister's School Rank. He also loses an equal number of Ranks in the Luck Advantage (if he has any).

Tengoku's Grace

- **Realm/Ring:** Tengoku/Fire
- **Range:** Touch
- **Area of Effect:** Self or one target creature
- **Duration:** 3 Rounds

A Soultwister who is truly familiar with the power of the spirits of Tengoku can call on the power of the Celestial Heavens for protection. For the duration of this spell the target does not suffer from Wound Penalties, include those from being Down or Out, and gains the effects of the Great Destiny Advantage. The target also feels great confidence in his own abilities, gaining a bonus of +1k1 to all Skill Rolls. Finally, the target cannot gain the Shadowlands Taint, willingly or otherwise, and cannot cast Maho for the duration of the spell.

Trapped in Yume-do

- **Realm/Ring:** Yume-do/Water
- **Range:** 30'
- **Area of Effect:** One target creature
- **Duration:** Caster's School Rank x 5 in Rounds

The dream realm of Yume-do can exert an insidious hold over dreamers. A Soultwister who masters the power of the spirits of dream can trap people within their own dreams. When a Soultwister casts this spell on a creature, the creature immediately begins to live out a dream within its mind. The target of the spell believes what he is seeing is real, and will interact with it while ignoring the reality around him – even if he suffers Wounds or other unpleasant effects in the real world. During the Reactions Stage of any Round in which he takes damage, however, the target may make an Awareness Roll at TN 30 to realize something is wrong and awaken from the dream.

If the target succeeds in awakening from the dream, he is still distracted by the dream's visions for the duration of the spell, suffering a –3k0 penalty on all actions.

Sample Villains:

Sample Villain: Tsuno Ravager (Rank 3)

Air 3	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 4	Strength 4
"Honor": 4.5	-		-

Initiative: 8k5

Attack: Tsuno blade 10k4 (Simple) or unarmed 8k4 (Simple)

Damage: 7k3 (Tsuno blade) or 4k2 (unarmed)

Armor TN: 35 (5 from light armor)

Reduction: 8 (3 from light armor).

Wounds: Human-type Wound ranks

School/Rank: Tsuno Ravager 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 5, Heavy Weapons (Tsuno Blade) 6, Intimidation (Torture) 4, Jiujutsu 4, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Spirit Realms 5, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Special Weapon (Tsuno Blade): The cruel barbed swords of the Tsuno are 3k3 weapons and gain a +1k0 attack bonus against any opponent who has at least one Rank of Taint, who has the Spirit quality, or who has the Touched by the Realms Advantage.*
- *Spirit.*
- *Swift 3.*

Sample Villain: Tainted Tsuno Soultwister (Rank 3)

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	Intelligence 5	-
"Honor": 4.0	-		-

Initiative: 8k5

Attack: Tsuno Blade 9k4 (Complex) or unarmed 7k4 (Complex)

Damage: 7k3 (Tsuno blade) or 4k2 (unarmed)

Armor TN: 35 (5 from light armor)

Reduction: 8 (3 from light armor).

Wounds: Human-type Wound ranks

School/Rank: Tsuno Soultwister 3

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 5, Defense 4, Heavy Weapons (Tsuno Blade) 5, Intimidation (Bullying, Torture) 5, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 6, Lore: Spirit Realms 7, Meditation 5, Stealth 3.

Spells: Agony of Toshigoku, Bloodlust of Toshigoku, Gaki-do's Consuming Hunger, Gaki-do's Grasping Hunger, Malicious Pranks of Sakkaku, Sakkaku's Vandalism, Shield of Tengoku

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Special Weapon (Tsuno Blade): The cruel barbed swords of the Tsuno are 3k3 weapons and gain a +1k0 attack bonus against any opponent who has at least one Rank of Taint, who has the Spirit quality, or who has the Touched by the Realms Advantage.*
- *Spirit.*
- *Swift 3.*

The Zokujin

"Hard as stone, their skin and their eyes whirl like gems. These are not the copper-goblins we once enslaved, but something more. Something worse."

– Ikoma Yosai

The Zokujin are the most peculiar of the Five Races in both demeanor and appearance. They are squat, dense creatures who live deep within the earth. They have metallic green skin, resembling burnished copper, and huge gem-like yellow or silver eyes (with no visible pupils) which often glow faintly. At a brief glance they have a vague resemblance to large metallic-colored goblins, which has earned them the rather demeaning human nickname, "copper goblins."

Though Zokujin are slow to anger and generally rather passive, even the least among them possess startling magical powers. All Zokujin live in such harmony with the earth kami that they can push earth and stone aside as if it were soft mud, allowing it to reform just as solidly once they turn their attention away. They take sustenance directly from minerals, consuming solid rock and metal for nourishment. They possess many qualities often associated with the earth – they are slow-moving, wise, patient, and extremely resilient. Their language is harsh and guttural, with an emphasis on rough consonants and few, if any, vowels. The Zokujin have always been an extremely reclusive and secretive race, and even during the time of the Five Races they kept to themselves, seldom revealing the full extent of their magical power.

When the City of Night was built, none of the respective participants in its creation fully understood its workings. Each did their part and contributed to the whole, but none could fully comprehend the magic that went into building the City and its mighty crystal focus. None, that is, save the Zokujin. As they watched the crystal's creation, the basic workings of the elements became obvious to them. This understanding led them to create a second such crystal focus, identical to that which lay within the City of Night. They called this second crystal the Bloodwhite Stone, the heart of the mortal realm, the source of all magic. It was considered the most sacred artifact of the Zokujin race.

Unknown to the rest of the Five Races, it was only the Zokujin's foresight that prevented the outright destruction of the world. They knew, just as the Kitsu knew, that the power of such an artifact could not be used lightly or recklessly against Jigoku. When the Soultwisters unleashed the City of Night's energies upon the world, the Zokujin sensed what had happened. They felt the massive outbreak of power and cried out in pain as the elements begin to unravel. Only by focusing the collective effort of their shamans on their Bloodwhite Stone were they able to counter the worst of what Tsuno Kishenku had unleashed, directing the brunt of the chaotic energies against Jigoku while struggling to prevent Ningen-do from being destroyed.

After this incident, the Zokujin sealed the Bloodwhite Stone away and forbade its use to all but the wisest of their shamans. Even these individuals employed it as nothing more than a scrying device, watching events unfold on the surface or taking brief cautious glimpses at the future.

Centuries later, the Zokujin came under attack by creatures from Jigoku. Thousands of Zokujin perished in the conflict and the survivors were forced to flee deeper into the earth to escape them. In Zokujin lore, this is seen as a conflict equal in scale and importance to Rokugan's Day of Thunder – except the Zokujin believe they lost. Their once unified civilization was reduced to scattered, wandering tribes. The Bloodwhite Stone was lost, and their race fell into a primitive state. However, unlike the Trolls, they escaped Jigoku's control and maintained at least some sense of their history and culture.





Modern Zokujin

The majority of the Zokujin live so deep within the earth that they have no contact with, or even knowledge of, mankind. The few tribes who live near the surface have met with distinctly mixed results in their interactions with humans. Their first encounters were with the Lion Clan. After the unfortunate extermination of most of the true Kitsu, the Lion were willing to show the Zokujin more mercy, but they did not see them as equals by any means. They forced the non-violent Zokujin into slavery, forcing them to mine metals and other minerals for the Lion Clan. Though this practice was uncommon at first, other Lion soon saw the value in it, and the use of Zokujin slaves became more widespread.

Though the Zokujin do not appreciate lives of forced labor, they made little effort to free themselves. Instead, the Zokujin shamans encouraged a philosophy of patience and non-aggression. So long as the Lion's demands for labor were reasonable and the Zokujin were treated well, they obey. If the Lion show excessive cruelty or disregard toward the Zokujin, the creatures simply cease their labor and refuse to do any more work until reparations are made.

While it would be quite easy for Zokujin slaves to tunnel under the earth and escape their captors, they do not. The Lion believe the Zokujin fear their shugenja, and there may be some truth to this, but in fact most Zokujin slaves do not urgently desire freedom. They are patient and long-lived creatures, and feel confident they will outlast their human bondage. In the meantime, their slavery offers them an excellent opportunity to learn about these strange creatures that have inherited the world they helped create. The Lion, in contrast, have made very little effort to learn anything about Zokujin culture or history (not that the Zokujin have been particularly forthcoming with their secrets).

In other regions of the Empire, Zokujin-human relations have been more positive. In the Dragon lands, for example, a Zokujin shaman helped repel an attack by a dangerous supernatural being, and the Dragon realized they had sorely underestimated these creatures. Kjgkt, a Zokujin shaman of considerable wisdom and power, has since served as an advisor to the Tamori family on many occasions.

Some of the deeper-dwelling Zokujin consider any interaction with the surface world to be a form of lunacy. It is a common belief among the deep tribes that the surface world is lost to evil. Even humans, who do not appear to be controlled by Jigoku, are ultimately pawns of this evil. The only reason to venture to the surface is to search for the Bloodwhite Stone, for they believe its recovery will unite the Zokujin tribes and bring back the greatness of old. Groups dispatched from the deep tribes to search for the stone typically avoid all contact with surface dwellers, and respond to any attempts to communicate with them with either retreat or violence.

Zokujin Miner

The Zokujin Miner's statistics describe a typical Zokujin working in a Lion Clan mine. Similar statistics can also describe a Zokujin living in one of their tribal settlements. Though these creatures are passive and slow to anger, they will fight in self-defense or to protect their families and tribe. These Zokujin rarely speak any tongue save their own.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Claws 5k3 (Complex)*

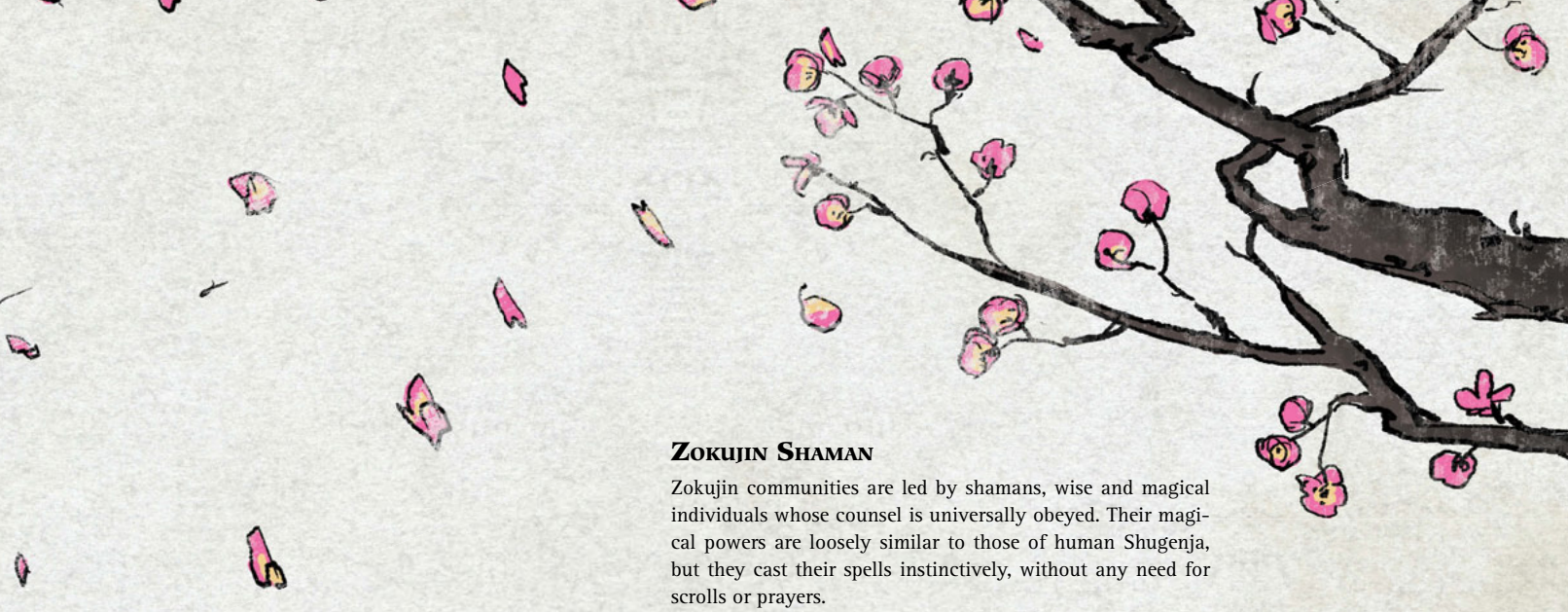
Damage: 4k1 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 10 (see Special Abilities) — *Wounds: 18: +5; 36: +10; 64: Dead.*

Skills: Athletics 3, Stealth 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Burrowing: A Zokujin can move at normal speed through solid earth or stone, leaving no tunnel behind. A Zokujin who moves at Water 2 can leave a tunnel that will last for one minute before collapsing. A Zokujin who moves at Water 1 can leave a permanent tunnel.*
- *Earthshaping: A Zokujin can mold earth or stone in its bare hands as if they were clay. This is reflected in various ways by their other abilities. Any earth or stone molded by a Zokujin will automatically revert to its previous form a round after the Zokujin ceases contact, unless the Zokujin consciously wills it to remain in its new form.*
- *Mineral Resistance: A Zokujin's Reduction functions only against weapons made from stone or metal. Wooden weapons ignore it.*



Zokujin Stonehunter

The strongest and most capable Zokujin are chosen to seek for the missing Bloodwhite Stone. These warriors can be surprisingly capable, and while they prefer to avoid conflict when they can, a samurai who attacks them may be in for a rude surprise.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	-	Strength 5

Initiative: 8k5 — *Attack: Claws 9k4 (Simple)*

Damage: Claws 5k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 20 (see Special Abilities) — *Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead*

Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 4, Investigation 3, Stealth 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Armor Break: A Zokujin Stonehunter can attempt to Earthshape an enemy's armor. A Stonehunter who Raises twice on an attack roll can destroy any armor worn by the target in addition to inflicting damage. Ancestral artifacts and other awakened armors are resistant to this power.*
- *Burrowing: A Zokujin can move at normal speed through solid earth or stone, leaving no tunnel behind. A Zokujin who moves at Water 2 can leave a tunnel that will last for one minute before collapsing. A Zokujin who moves at Water 1 can leave a permanent tunnel.*
- *Earthshaping: A Zokujin can mold earth or stone in its bare hands as if they were clay. This is reflected in various ways by their other abilities. Any earth or stone molded by a Zokujin will automatically revert to its previous form a round after the Zokujin ceases contact, unless the Zokujin consciously wills it to remain in its new form.*
- *Mineral Resistance: A Zokujin's Reduction functions only against weapons made from stone or metal. Wooden weapons ignore it.*
- *Weapon Break: A Zokujin Stonehunter can attempt to Earthshape an enemy's weapons in self-defense. If a weapon made of metal or stone is used to attack the Zokujin, and misses the Armor TN by 10 or more, that weapon becomes warped, twisted, and useless. Much as with the Armor Break ability, this power will not affect weapons which are magically awakened.*

Zokujin Shaman

Zokujin communities are led by shamans, wise and magical individuals whose counsel is universally obeyed. Their magical powers are loosely similar to those of human Shugenja, but they cast their spells instinctively, without any need for scrolls or prayers.

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 4
Reflexes 5	-	Intelligence 5	Strength 5

Initiative: 9k5 — *Attack: Claws 7k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 20 (see Special Abilities) — *Wounds: 32: +5; 64: +10; 80: Dead*

Skills: Athletics 4, Hunting 4, Investigation 3, Lore: Earth 5, Stealth 4

Spells: Zokujin shamans can cast any Earth spell (including Sense, Commune, and Summon for the element of Earth) as though they are a shugenja of School Rank 4. They do not need scrolls to cast their spells, nor do they have to speak aloud.

Special Abilities:

- *Armor Break: A Zokujin shaman can attempt to Earthshape an enemy's armor. A shaman who Raises twice on an attack roll can destroy any armor worn by the target in addition to inflicting damage. Ancestral artifacts and other awakened armors are resistant to this power.*
- *Burrowing: A Zokujin can move at normal speed through solid earth or stone, leaving no tunnel behind. A Zokujin who moves at Water 2 can leave a tunnel that will last for one minute before collapsing. A Zokujin who moves at Water 1 can leave a permanent tunnel.*
- *Earthshaping: A Zokujin can mold earth or stone in its bare hands as if they were clay. This is reflected in various ways by their other abilities. Any earth or stone molded by a Zokujin will automatically revert to its previous form a round after the Zokujin ceases contact, unless the Zokujin consciously wills it to remain in its new form.*
- *Mineral Resistance: A Zokujin's Reduction functions only against weapons made from stone or metal. Wooden weapons ignore it.*
- *Weapon Break: A Zokujin shaman can attempt to Earthshape an enemy's weapons in self-defense. If a weapon made of metal or stone is used to attack the Zokujin, and misses the Armor TN by 10 or more, that weapon becomes warped, twisted, and useless. Much as with the Armor Break ability, this power will not affect weapons which are magically awakened.*


空の巻

Ronin

There are few topics in Rokugan which raises such conflicting opinions as ronin. To some they are romantic heroes, the protagonists of countless plays and works of fiction. This is not entirely without justification, for there have been a few rare individuals over the Empire's history who have shaped its course without bearing the mon of a Great Clan. To most Rokugani, however, these few heroes are aberrations, exceptions who do not bear serious consideration. They consider the majority of all wave men to be beneath their notice. Many go a step farther and regard them as scum worthy only to test the blades of inexperienced clan samurai, or worse yet as a selfish insidious threat that honorable samurai should purge from the face of the Empire at all costs.

The truth, of course, is somewhere in between.

Ronin are samurai, but samurai with no clan of their own. Some were cast out from their clan for sins real or imagined, while others were born of samurai blood but outside the confines of an existing clan or family. Regardless of their origin, they are just as susceptible to good and evil as any others. Unfortunately, the circumstances of a ronin's life are often extremely difficult or perilous, and few are equal to the task of surviving without losing their honor and virtue. Many among their ranks do turn to selfishness, greed, and even criminal villainy to survive. It is not what they were born to do, perhaps, but destiny is a mutable thing, and ronin often find theirs warped by circumstance.

The ronin population of the Empire waxes and wanes with the tides of war. During times of peace the ronin population slowly but steadily increases, most often due to samurai indulging themselves with those outside the clans, be they geisha of ill repute or lovers of another stripe. When war comes, many ronin find gainful employment – employment that can frequently result in their deaths, leading to a diminished population. Their ranks are partially replenished, however, by those who abandon their oaths as a result of war. Some do so for shameful acts committed, others because they believe they have failed their lords.

Ronin tend to have a strange relationship with Rokugani of lower social station. The rare heroes mentioned above are frequently heroes to the people, championing the cause of the common folk and earning undying adoration in the process. Because of this there are many peasants who instinctively look on ronin as kindred spirits and treat them with respect and kindness. Such admiration can assist in the elevation of a ronin to a true hero, as he finds himself struggling to be worthy of such accolades. However, a further complexity of ronin-peasant relations should be noted. Ronin are only barely members of the samurai caste, and many of them cling to their remaining social status so desperately that they find even the thought of associating with peasants intolerable. Thus, while some ronin may bask in the admiration of peasants, there are plenty of others who treat peasants even more harshly than do clan samurai. Such ronin fall easily into the path of banditry, since their contempt for peasants eases their guilt over criminal acts.

There are also many peasants who are bitter and angry over their treatment by samurai, and look upon ronin as an opportunity to take petty vengeance on those who have wronged them, if only by proxy. They ignore and stymie ronin at every opportunity, by stealth or openly as opportunity allows, hoping the wave man will not risk the wrath of the peasants' lord by killing them. Even well-intentioned wave men can find this hostility the deciding factor that finally turns them to a life of villainy and crime, and indeed more than a few begin such dark careers by murdering those commoners who have oppressed and angered them.

Ronin as Opponents

Generally speaking, most samurai do not give a second thought to ronin when counting their enemies. Wave men simply do not have the resources – or in most cases the skills – to pose a challenge to a samurai who has the sponsorship of a Great Clan (or even a Minor Clan). A samurai affiliated with a clan can call on his kinsmen, on the favor of his lord, and on the Techniques of his School to defend him. A wave man has virtually nothing except his personal skill and what he can carry on his back. If he is fortunate, he may have studied with a group of ronin or a lone teacher somewhere in the Empire, learning a single Technique (generally less effective than those taught in the dojo maintained by the clans). Thus most samurai find the notion of a ronin enemy quite nonsensical. Despite what they believe, however, a ronin enemy should never be discounted.

The single most dangerous aspect of a ronin enemy is the simple fact that a wave man has nothing to lose. The strengths a Great Clan samurai possesses are also potential weaknesses, weaknesses almost completely absent from a ronin. Their family honor and reputation cannot be threatened, and no rival can hold a lord's favor over the head of such a man. In similar vein, while a ronin cannot call on his lord to protect him from a challenge to a duel, a clan samurai is likewise unable to avoid a duel with an angry ronin.

A samurai who has well and truly earned the enmity of a ronin faces an enemy motivated solely by honor or vengeance. The wave man is unconstrained in his actions and often quite willing to throw away his life and honor if doing so means his foe will be defeated. After all, a man with nothing to lose does not need to be superior to his opponent in order to purchase victory.

Ronin Brotherhoods (Otokodate)

The perception of the ronin as a singular creature is not an entirely accurate one. Ronin brotherhoods exist, small groups of wave men who band together for protection, mutual benefit, banditry, or out of devotion to some ideal. These brotherhoods are colloquially known as *otokodate* ("manly fellows"). There are generally only a few such groups in existence in each generation, and they seldom survive beyond the lifetimes of their founders – though there are rare exceptions, groups that survive for multiple generations. Successful otokodate are usually rather well known, but samurai of the Great Clans tend to regard them poorly.

Although most ronin brotherhoods are loathe to commit themselves to a debt of honor against a Great Clan, such circumstances are not wholly unheard of. Because most clan samurai do not pay much attention to the brotherhoods, they seldom imagine the idea of offering sufficient insult to earn the enmity of one. When such a thing does take place, the offending samurai's fate is probably sealed. He will face the enmity of not one wrathful ronin but an entire band of them, a formidable threat indeed.



Ronin as Player Characters

Although ronin player characters face many unique obstacles, they also have a particular appeal not comparable to playing a clan or Imperial character. Ronin do not have the protection of a clan and lord, but they are free agents, able to pursue whatever goal or ideal they choose without answering to higher authority. They are answerable to no superior, able to make their own decisions based on their own sense of honor. They can choose their own causes and make their own allies and enemies. However, they are also without any protection, without any resources beyond their own. A ronin lives at the sufferance of the Empire and can be dueled or killed with little provocation and few legal or social consequences. Ronin are truly underdogs, struggling to survive in a world and social system which rejects and ignores them. This can be an exciting role-playing challenge – and an interesting change of pace from playing a normal clan samurai. However, it can also be frustrating, since ronin characters will face all manner of obstacles and social hostility (not to mention the problem of paying for their own food, equipment, and lodging). GMs should discuss such issues carefully with any players who want to run ronin characters, making sure they know what sort of challenges they are letting themselves in for.

Mechanically, the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game 4th Edition core rules present a simple system for ronin characters. Ronin fall into one of two categories: clan ronin, who were cast out from their clan for some failure after already learning one or more of the clan's Techniques; and true ronin, who were born into their station and never had the opportunity to learn any clan Techniques. The core rulebook includes several Rank 1 Ronin Paths, which are similar in many respects to the Alternate Paths presented for clan samurai. These Paths represent individual Techniques created by groups of ronin that have banded together for mutual survival and benefit, taught to other wave men who join their ranks.

Because of their difficult lives, it is not particularly common for individual wave men to possess multiple Ronin Paths. Most true ronin will have no Techniques at all, or at most one from a single Ronin Path they have found during their difficult lives as wave men. Not only are Ronin Paths rare and difficult to track down, but actually gaining access to them can be a trial in itself, especially for a ronin who already knows at least one Technique. Although they would likely never admit it, many wave men are similar to clan samurai insomuch as they jealously guard their Techniques and do not trust a ronin who has already left another group. They are usually extremely reluctant to teach their secret Technique to such an unreliable person.

Of course, player characters can form exceptions to these general principles. Ronin PCs have the potential to be unique individuals with a once-in-a-generation opportunity for greatness, an opportunity the vast majority of wave men will never experience. While most ronin never belong to more than one otokodate during their lifetime, generous GMs can offer characters the chance to break the mold and become truly exceptional individuals. Of course, such opportunities should not come unearned – the GM should try to make sure that a ronin who achieves greatness does so by dint of great effort and courage, rather than having new Techniques handed to him on a silver platter.

47,000 Ronin?!?

Setting aside our play on words, the issue at question is a simple one. Many players and GMs will look at the information presented in this chapter and rightfully ask themselves, "Just how many ronin *are* there in Rokugan?"

The number of ronin in the Emerald Empire at any one time is relatively low, perhaps a few thousand at most. There are eras during which that number increases dramatically – for example, after the Scorpion Clan Coup in the early twelfth century, when both the Scorpion Clan and the Akodo family of the Lion Clan are disbanded. But these are exceptional times, and for the most part ronin are rare. So why are there so many ronin organizations detailed in this chapter?

In keeping with 4th Edition's design principles, this chapter is intended as a universal toolkit. The organizations shown here represent different ronin groups that might have existed at any point throughout the timeline. Few have ever interacted with one another and certainly they all did not exist at one time. The GM will decide which ronin groups are active during his campaign, and players interested in ronin characters should discuss the matter with the GM to determine what options will be available.

New Mechanics

The remainder of this chapter presents a large assortment of Ronin Paths, along with descriptions of the otokodate who created the Technique. These groups are presented as a means of demonstrating how their associated Paths work, and need not be considered as anything more than examples. Most of them can generally be dropped into any point in Rokugan's history and work exactly as described, although some will require a few modifications. A handful of them have origins and storylines specifically tied to notable events or individuals – in such cases, the groups have a Generalization entry that gives examples of how their mechanics could be used for different groups with similar themes but less specific backstories.

Generally speaking, ronin who are fortunate enough to find a second (or third, or more) Path do not have to purchase Multiple Schools or any other Advantage in order to learn the Technique. The price of learning a Path is the time and effort in campaign play to track it down and persuade its masters to teach it. However, GMs who wish to represent this effort more abstractly may choose to levy an Experience Point cost for learning later Techniques – we suggest a base cost of 3 times the Insight Rank of the Technique.

Sometimes a ronin may encounter the chance to learn a Path when his Insight Rank has already exceeded the listed Rank of the Path. In these cases, we suggest the ronin be allowed to learn the Path at a higher Insight Rank instead. For example, if an Insight Rank 3 ronin manages to join the Claws of the Wolf, he could learn Hunting the Darkness in his Rank 3 "slot" even though it is normally an Insight Rank 2 Technique.

High-Ranking Paths

The Ronin Paths presented in the core rules of the L5R RPG 4th Edition represent organizations that tend to have a large number of low-ranking members, hence the Technique Rank of 1. Many of the Paths presented here have higher ranks, up to and including Rank 5 Techniques. Does this mean all members of those organizations are Rank 5? Absolutely not. It does mean, however, that the average Insight Rank of a member of these organizations is higher and therefore they may be more dangerous to the average player character. The members of the Iron Gauntlet Brotherhood, for example, are not exclusively Rank 5, but they are mostly Rank 3 and higher.

This does not mean that groups with low-rank Techniques are not dangerous. The Forest Killers, described in the core rules, contain many high-ranking members, and also has a large number of lower-ranking individuals who could easily overwhelm player characters with sheer numbers.

Rank 2 Ronin Paths

Claws of the Wolf [Bushi]

The Claws of the Wolf are a small group of rather vicious vigilantes who subscribe to the ideals of Toturi Sezaru, an Imperial heir who lived during the mid to late twelfth century and whose death helped usher in the Race for the Throne. Sezaru was one of the most powerful shugenja of his age, and perhaps of all time, but struggled throughout his life with emotional detachment and borderline sociopathic tendencies. He never surrendered his honor, but came close on more than one occasion, especially during his ruthless and relentless hunts for members of the Bloodspeaker Cult. The men who claim to continue his legacy are similarly brutal in their assessment of the world around them, and attempt to eradicate threats to the Empire's stability or to its people. Unfortunately, their judgment of what constitutes a threat can be highly suspect at times. The members wear ceramic masks similar to the one made famous by Sezaru himself.

Generalization: This Technique can be used by any group of vigilantes or devotees to a ruthless figure. Other notable historical figures might include Hantei XVI (the Steel Chrysanthemum), for example, or a notably ruthless or pragmatic magistrate. Even the Clan War-era berserker Hida Amoro might inspire such a group.

Technique Rank: 2

- **Requirements:** Wary, Driven
- **Technique: Hunting the Darkness** – The Claws of the Wolf ruthlessly punish all who violate Imperial law. You gain a bonus of +2k2 to the total of your first attack roll in a skirmish if the opponent you are attacking is an individual you know without question is guilty of a violation of Imperial law.

East Wind [Bushi]

The East Wind is a benevolent ronin brotherhood devoted to protecting the common people of East Hub Village, a city on the outskirts of Otosan Uchi. The Eastern Hub's primary role as a port ensures a constant stream of wealthy merchants, a breed that often suffers from mild paranoia and usually has excess funds to spend in protecting investments. The East Wind initially found gainful employment with such merchants and used their pay to purchase simple holdings of their own within the city. From that power base they extended their influence throughout the city in an attempt to curb crime and other excesses as much as possible. Although they preferred to keep a low profile, the people of Eastern Hub recognized the value of what the ronin did and looked on them with fondness and gratitude. After the destruction of Otosan Uchi in the mid-twelfth century, the fortunes of the Hub Cities declined, but the East Wind brotherhood endured, and eventually the Unicorn Clan began revitalizing the city and sponsoring the ronin.

Technique Rank: 2

- **Requirements:** Commerce 1+, Horsemanship 2+, Honor 4+
- **Technique: Shielded by the East** – The East Wind specialize in the defense of their charges, whoever they might be. When in the Defense or Full Defense Stances and performing the Guard Action, you increase both your Armor TN and that of your charge by 5.

Eyes of Nanashi [Bushi]

Nanashi Mura ("Anonymous Village") sits on the edge of Dragon Clan territory near the vast Dragon Heart Plain. Imperial records indicate the village is a holding of the Dragon, and it is true they are responsible for its administration. In reality, however, the Dragon have always permitted the ronin who call the city home to rule the village's affairs, so long as they meet their taxes and maintain peace in the region. The village is overseen by a council of ronin and their will is enforced by a group of warriors and magistrates known as the Eyes of Nanashi. Within the village the Eyes are generally regarded as honorable law enforcement, and even visiting Great Clan samurai will treat them with some respect, albeit mostly out of deference to the Dragon Clan.

Technique Rank: 2

- **Requirements:** Lore: Law 3, Honor Rank 4+
- **Technique: Strike the Center** – The Eyes of Nanashi prefer non-lethal means of defending the city, and often use non-traditional weapons to gain a psychological advantage over their foes. You gain a bonus of +1k1 on any attack roll intended to disable rather than kill. (This is at the GM's discretion, but maneuvers like Disarm, Knockdown, or certain Called Shots are usually a good indication you are trying not to injure your opponent.)

Moonless Riders [Bushi]

The Moonless Riders are an extremely small and specialized group of ronin who have carefully cultivated skills that allow them to not only survive but seek regular employment by the armies of the Great Clans. The Riders, who are comprised primarily of former Unicorn, Lion, and Dragon samurai, specialize in cavalry tactics – but unlike most samurai, they train at night. As a result, they are among the preeminent nocturnal scouts and couriers in the Empire. The Unicorn find their practices distasteful due to the risk posed to horses in night operations, but the Moonless Riders consider this a necessity in order to maintain their livelihood. Although they wander freely across the Empire, the Moonless Riders do tend to linger in areas where clans share borders, and often find employment by the Lion along the Unicorn border and, less frequently, the Crane border as well. Minor Clans also employ them when possible to protect themselves against hostile neighboring Great Clans.

Technique Rank: 2

- **Requirements:** Horsemanship 3+, Way of the Land
- **Technique: Moving the Shadow** – Moonless Riders are experts at all things nocturnal. You do not suffer any penalties that might be incurred due to natural darkness. When active at night or in other forms of darkness (such as a basement or cave), you gain a bonus of +2k1 instead of +1k1 when you spend a Void Point to enhance any non-Weapon Bugei Skill.

Silent Blades [Bushi]

Although they pride themselves on their skill as hired killers and assassins, the Silent Blades are in truth little more than rank amateurs when it comes to the arts of infiltration and assassination. Although they do have some skill, it is vastly less than they like to imagine, and as a result they are constantly struggling to overcome the impact of botched jobs and the occasional disastrous failure. Fortunately for them, however, those who would hire ronin assassins rarely communicate with one another, and the group has managed to avoid cultivating a poor reputation despite their mediocrity. While they do not know it, the Blades are actually pawns of a more secretive and skilled order known as Shadowed Steel, which is in turn a pawn of yet another unknown force. Thus the Silent Blades are essentially fodder for larger, more powerful, and more skilled groups, brought out when a scapegoat is necessary or when a very unskilled target needs to be eliminated.



Technique Rank: 2

- **Requirements:** Ninjutsu 3+, Stealth 3+
- **Technique: Black Hearts, Red Blades** – The Silent Blades are not completely without skill as assassins. If you are attacking an opponent who is unaware of your presence (for example, a foe you have defeated with a Contested Stealth Skill Roll to remain undetected), you may add your Stealth Skill Rank to the total of all attack and damage rolls made against that opponent for the duration of this skirmish.

Rank 3 Ronin Paths

Broken Guard [Bushi]

In the aftermath of the infamous Scorpion Clan Coup at the beginning of the twelfth century, the Akodo family of the Lion Clan was dissolved by a wrathful Emperor. The majority of the family joined other Lion families, and many others took their own lives in shame. Some, however, took up the life of the ronin rather than remain within the now hostile Lion Clan with its new Matsu leadership. Of those who became wave men, a small group banded together for mutual defense and survival. These men, known as the Broken Guard, were led by a former officer named Saigorei, a man with a deep grudge against the Unicorn Clan. Saigorei gathered men with similar philosophies to his banner, honing their skills with an emphasis on anti-cavalry maneuvers. The Broken Guard quickly gained a reputation as dangerously effective against mounted foes, and they saw regular employment throughout the Clan War era. When the Akodo family finally reformed, many of the Broken Guard rejoined it. Of those remaining, most joined together with other ronin who had fought in the amalgamation known as Toturi's Army, becoming the Wolf Legion.

Generalization: Independent of the timeline, this Path could be used to represent any anti-cavalry group, or a group with a grudge against the Unicorn Clan for whatever reason.

Technique Rank: 3

- **Requirements:** Polearms 3+, Heart of Vengeance (Unicorn)
- **Technique: The Tiger's Teeth** – The Broken Guard are among the finest anti-cavalry forces in the Empire. You may make a melee attack as a Simple Action when using a polearm. You gain a bonus of +1k1 on attack rolls made against targets on horseback (or mounted on similarly-sized creatures).

Hidden Sword [Bushi]

The ronin band known as the Hidden Sword is a large group that patrols the outskirts of the Shinomen Mori, trying to protect the people in the lands around it from the various enemies who threaten them. The Sword targets primarily bandits but also the various enigmatic creatures emerging periodically from the Shinomen. The band's area of operation requires them to interact with the Scorpion, Crab, and Unicorn clans fairly regularly, and as a result the men of the Hidden Sword, while honorable, remain extremely practical and realistic individuals who do not succumb to blind idealism. Historically, the group has opposed and been sworn enemies of the Forest Killers, one of the Empire's largest and most violent groups of ronin bandits, who lair within the Shinomen Mori. On at least one occasion, the Hidden Sword has been completely wiped out by the Forest Killers, but was reformed by its leader's sons to carry on his work.

Technique Rank: 3

- **Requirements:** Hero of the People
- **Technique: Keeping the Peace** – The Hidden Sword excel at combating criminals and bandits, and have been taught effective techniques for dispatching such individuals. When fighting against an opponent with lower Honor Rank than yours, you may make melee attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action when wielding weapons with the Samurai keyword.



Machi-kanshisha [Bushi]

This band of ronin are known by the name of their preferred weapon, a long iron smoking pipe. Perhaps fortunately, the machi-kanshisha pipe is not well known in many parts of the Empire, and as a result many associate the name with the ronin band itself rather than the pipe for which they are named. The Machi-kanshisha are the guardians of the City of the Rich Frog, a major trade hub that sits in the narrow divide between the holdings of the Lion and Unicorn clans. Because of the militant nature of the two clans in question, who closely observe any significant violence near their borders, the Machi-kanshisha prefer to use their namesake smoking pipes as non-lethal weapons, employing them to subdue their foes rather than kill them. In the twelfth century, the City of the Rich Frog is annexed by the Lion Clan, and the Kaeru ronin family, administrators of the city and employers of the Machi-kanshisha, become vassals of the Ikoma family.

Generalization: Most of the Empire's history has seen the Machi-kanshisha employed as listed above. If the GM chooses to modify a campaign set in the modern era, they can remain doing exactly what they have for so long without the Ikoma's involvement.

Technique Rank: 3

- **Requirements:** Athletics 2+, Staves 3+
- **Technique: Smoke and Mirrors** – The Machi-kanshisha are extremely adept at wielding their namesake weapon. When using an iron pipe, you gain a Free Raise on any Disarm or Knockdown attack. You may also spend a Void Point to make a melee attack with a machi-kanshisa as a Simple Action (you may spend up to two Void Points per Round in this manner).

Serpents of Sanada [Bushi]

Over the centuries there has been no shortage of ronin who have turned to violence and brutality to make their way through the world. Some, such as the Forest Killers, have cultivated such a reputation that their name is used to frighten children throughout the Empire. There are very few, however, who have the sheer audacity and penchant for destruction as the Serpents of Sanada. The Serpents are a naval band and over the years they have accumulated a small fleet of vessels, using them to become one of the most successful (and hated) pirate groups in almost a thousand years. In particular the Serpents are an offense to the Mantis Clan, who not only have many former members among their ranks but have actually been attacked on their home islands by the Serpents, something no pirate ever before dared to do. The Mantis ruthlessly hunt down vessels in the Serpents' fleet but find it difficult to destroy the whole force.

Technique Rank: 3

- **Requirements:** Knives 3+, Sailing 3+, Honor Rank 3 or lower
- **Technique: The Serpents' Coils** – The Serpents of Sanada are utterly ruthless pirates, and like others of their ilk they have been forced to master weapons that will not corrode in the sea air. When wielding a wooden weapon or a weapon with the Peasant keyword, you may make melee attacks as Simple Actions rather than Complex Actions.

Snow Riders [Bushi]

Through most of Rokugan's history winter has brought an abrupt end to war. The costs of waging war in the bitter cold and snow are simply too high, and every time it has been attempted the army responsible has ultimately been defeated. This did not change until the Empire's twelfth century, when the boundless ambition of the Unicorn Clan Khan, Moto Chagatai, led him on a winter campaign across the Lion provinces. Although Chagatai's campaign to capture the Imperial City was ultimately unsuccessful, the punishment he inflicted on the Lion forever changed the way the Empire regarded winter warfare. Few attempted to recreate the extent of that campaign, but most recognized it was possible to fight in the winter with adequate preparation and training. One group of ronin who served in Chagatai's forces and survived the Lion's vengeance went on to sell their services as couriers, messengers, and general supplemental cavalry, all with a specialty in winter tactics. The Yasuki family of the Crab would be envious of the discreet promotion the Snow Riders have conducted on behalf of their organization, and they have ensured they are always employed during the winter – if nothing else because their employers don't want their enemies employing the Riders instead. Generally speaking, the Riders make adequate profits during the winter months to support them through the summer, which is exactly their intention.

Generalization: Although the story of this group is tied specifically to the Khan's infamous campaign, there is no reason a small group could not develop along these lines independently of that incident. Doing so might make their services more difficult to market and sell, however.

Technique Rank: 3

- **Requirements:** Athletics 3+, Horsemanship 4+
- **Technique: The Journey's Beginning** – The Snow Riders have mastered the art of mounted warfare and of waging war in winter conditions. You may ignore movement penalties based on terrain if the penalties in question are caused by snow or ice. You may spend a Void Point while fighting mounted in order to make a single attack as a Simple Action.

Rank 4 Ronin Paths

Seven Waves Mercenaries [Bushi]

The Seven Waves Mercenaries are an older ronin group with a reputation for discrete and effective service. The organization was founded roughly a century after the return of the Unicorn Clan to the Empire. The Seven Waves were created by a group of seven ronin, each one an outcast from one of the original Great Clans – this of course predates the elevation of the Mantis to Great Clan status, and the organization's leaders never deigned to add a Mantis ronin to their ranks. When the Seven Waves take a job, those of their number associated with the clans in question remain apart to avoid coloring the employer's opinion of the organization, but still offer expertise and advice to the other members. Over the years the organization has grown, but the leaders of the group, most of them descendents of the original founders, prefer to keep it organized into similar seven-man teams.

Technique Rank: 4

- **Requirements:** Clan Ronin only
- **Technique: Roaring to Shake Heaven** – Members of the Seventh Wave draw strength from their diversity. When fighting alongside your allies, you gain a bonus of +2 to the total of all attack and damage rolls for each different Basic School represented among your group. You may not gain a total bonus greater than twice your Void Ring from this Technique.

Sword of Yotsu [Bushi]

There are few ronin brotherhoods in the Empire better known than the Sword of Yotsu, and perhaps none who have experienced the same degree of success. The brotherhood is led by an actual family, one of only a handful of ronin families in Rokugan's history. The founder of the Yotsu performed a glorious service for the Hantei Dynasty, rescuing the Emperor's youngest son from the clutches of the Bloodspeaker Cult by leaving his own child in the boy's place. In gratitude and recognition of his sacrifice, the Emperor granted the ronin his father's personal name as a family name, and the Yotsu family was born. Having lived many years wandering the Empire in his youth, Yotsu understood very well how the poor and defenseless suffered, and he vowed to use what little he had to ensure he and his would never suffer such fates. Over subsequent generations, Yotsu's children expanded their family's operations into a true ronin brotherhood, allowing other ronin to swear fealty to them and take their name in exchange for a vow to protect the defenseless. The Yotsu are generally honorable men and women, although they place greater emphasis on their duty than on the niceties of everyday samurai behavior.

Technique Rank: 4

- **Requirements:** Kenjutsu 4+, Hero of the People, Honor Rank 5+
- **Technique: Shelter the Blameless** – The Sword of Yotsu draw strength from their duty to protect others. During any Round when you are actively defending or protecting another (GM's discretion), you gain one bonus Void Point for use during that Round. Unspent Void Points gained from this Technique are lost at the end of the Round (after the Reactions stage).

Weavers [Bushi]

Many ronin groups are not well known in the Empire, but few are as completely unknown to the Great Clans as the secretive sect called the Weavers. These men and women rarely associate with one another in person, communicating instead through carefully encoded messages, discrete tattoos, and secret hand signals. They gather together only when there are important matters at hand, typically involving violence or infiltration of the most invasive sort. The Weavers are among the elite agents of the Kolat conspiracy and are only known to its highest-ranking members, or at least so they believe. Although the ten Kolat Masters have access to the entire roster of Weavers, most of their direct subordinates know of perhaps a half-dozen or so they can call upon in dire need. The abilities of the Weavers vary wildly from individual to individual, each having been recruited for a particular skill or set of skills that were needed at the time. In general, however, most have a propensity for violence and an absolute mastery of deceit. One might say lying is a requirement for the job.



Technique Rank: 4

- **Requirements:** Allies (Kolat) OR Dark Secret (Kolat) OR Obligation (Kolat)
- **Technique: Twist the Weave** – The Weavers excel at deceit and manipulation, and use such methods as weapons against their foes. If you have ever won a Contested Skill Roll against someone using your Sincerity (Deceit), Intimidation, or Temptation, if you subsequently face that person in a skirmish you gain a Free Raise that can be used on an attack roll during the first Round of the skirmish.

Rank 5 Ronin Paths

Iron Gauntlet Brotherhood [Bushi]

The battered and scarred veterans who make up the Iron Gauntlet Brotherhood are among the most seasoned and fearsome ronin in all of Rokugan. Those familiar with their reputation whisper prayers to their ancestors when they catch sight of the Iron Brotherhood banner. The individual members of the Iron Gauntlet are survivors of other ronin groups that have been wiped out by one force or another. The first few members were lone survivors of groups eradicated during one of the Empire's greatest conflicts. Some believe it was the First War, while others think it may have been as recent as the Clan War. No one knows for certain, and the Iron Brothers do not speak of it to outsiders. In fact, they rarely speak at all save to negotiate the terms of their contracts. In battle, they are utterly ruthless and without hesitation. Anyone who has seen them on the battlefield understands exactly how they survived their individual units' destruction.

Technique Rank: 5

- **Requirements:** Earth 4, any one Weapon Skill at 5 or higher
- **Technique: For My Brothers** – Members of the Iron Gauntlet stand together against incredible odds and survive. When fighting alongside other members of the Iron Gauntlet Brotherhood, you may expend a Void Point to negate damage inflicted on an ally by an amount equal to your Void Ring x 5.

Shadowed Steel [Bushi]

The word 'ninja' conjures one of two reactions from the Rokugani: exasperation, because of course ninja do not exist, or fear, because they suspect the substance of the night itself will disgorge and assault them for daring to consider such things. The truth is that to some extent both statements are true. On the one hand, the black-clad assassins of superstition do exist, but are largely a diversionary tactic used by groups like the Scorpion Clan – including through pawns such as the ronin group called the Silent Blade. On the other hand, the primordial entity known as the Lying Darkness unleashes inhuman ninja who can steal faces and names. And then there is the middle ground, where few have ever tread and survived. The men and women known as Shadowed Steel are former vassals of the Scorpion Clan, surreptitiously culled from the clan's ranks over the course of generations or even centuries, and carefully cultivated into a completely deniable and disposable asset. The Shadowed Steel are few in number and answer only to the Shosuro family, who communicate with them through covert means such as blind drops. When an objective absolutely must be achieved or a foe eliminated at all costs, when the risk is simply two high to utilize the Shosuro family's own assets, they call on the Shadowed Steel to deal with the matter quickly and with absolute and unwavering finality.

Technique Rank: 5

- **Requirements:** Athletics 4+, Ninjutsu 4+, Stealth 4+
- **Technique: Death's Dark Shadow** – The Shadowed Steel strike from darkness to devastating effect, and rarely need to strike twice. When you succeed at a Contested Stealth Skill Roll against an opponent attempting to detect you, you may spend a Void Point to add the amount by which your Stealth Skill Roll exceeded your opponent's roll to the next attack roll you make against that opponent. This must be done within one hour of the Contested Roll taking place – otherwise you must wait until the next Contested Stealth Skill Roll opportunity.

Wolf Legion [Bushi]

During the epic conflict history remembers as the Clan War, an unprecedented number of ronin gathered together under the banner of Toturi, the Black Lion. The former Lion Champion, cast out when the Akodo family was dissolved, Toturi assembled thousands of his former clansmen who had become wave men, along with many former Scorpion samurai (whose clan had also been dissolved) and legions of simple ronin looking for the opportunity to be part of something greater than themselves. The organization known as Toturi's Army fought to protect the people of the Empire and the stability of the Empire itself. After the war, many of the group rejoined their former clans; those who remained formed a new organization, the Wolf Legion. For decades, the Wolf Legion continued to protect the people of Rokugan, alternately ignoring or confronting the selfish politics of the Great Clans.

Generalization: The Wolf Legion are similar in many respects to Tawagoto's Army (presented in the L5R RPG core rules) in that they are a benevolent organization devoted to the greater good of the Empire. If the GM is running a game in a different era or timeline, they could even represent a more advanced portion of the same organization as Tawagoto's Army.

Technique Rank: 5

- **Requirements:** Honor Rank 5+
- **Technique: Black Lion Talon** – The traditions of the Wolf Legion are steeped in honor and bushido. Whenever you spend a Void Point to add +1k1 to the total of an attack roll, you may add your Honor Rank to the total of that attack roll as well.

Ronin Shugenja

Priests of the kami are rare even in the ranks of Great Clan samurai. Finding a ronin with the ability to speak to the kami is truly an impressive feat. What only a handful among the priests of Rokugan have ever discovered, however, is that the kami are immortal and generally speak to individuals because of their family association. If an individual mortal captures the attention of the kami, they may well continue to speak to his children or grandchildren, which is why the abilities of shugenja usually occur along family lines. If one ronin has the ability to speak to the kami, his children will almost certainly possess the same talent, as will their children, and so on. So despite their incredible rarity, ronin shugenja do in fact exist, difficult though their lives may be.

Ronin shugenja generally fall into a handful of broad categories. Some are self-trained. This is the rarest and most difficult path for a shugenja to follow, as it requires incredible determination and intellect. Only those who are born with the most prodigious gifts of the kami can follow this path, since others generally give up long before their lesser talents let them accomplish anything of note. Other ronin shugenja are fortunate enough to find a sensei to help them along. This might be another more experienced ronin shugenja, or even a sympathetic shugenja of the Great Clans; some priests consider it blasphemous to ignore the gifts of the kami and will teach anyone who they judge can cope with the burdens and responsibilities of priesthood. A third group of ronin shugenja gain the favor of some independent order or monastic sect, and are taught in that manner. The Brotherhood of Shinsei, which contains numerous retired clan shugenja in its ranks, is the most frequent source of such training. Other groups do exist, however, such as the Kanosei Furudera order, or the Order of Isoshi, a group of mystical healers who count many shugenja among their ranks.

New Basic School: Self-Taught Shugenja

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Skills:** Athletics, Hunting, Meditation, Spellcraft, any three non-High Skills
- **Honor:** 4.0
- **Outfit:** Sturdy Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, 5 bu
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Self-taught shugenja typically have great holes in their training as a result of the trial and error method by which they learn the ways of the kami. You may choose any one non-Void Element in which to have an Affinity. You automatically gain a Deficiency in the opposing Element and in any one other Element of your choice.
- **Technique: The Kami's Gift** – Those who are self-taught possess an affinity for the kami that many among the clans would envy. When you spend a Void Point on a Spellcasting Roll, you add +2k2 instead of +1k1. Unfortunately, you do not automatically gain additional spells when you advance in Rank; you must seek them out on your own.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, and any five spells you can cast (no spells may be in Elements for which you have a Deficiency).

New Basic School: Dutiful Disciple Shugenja

- **Benefit:** +1 Intelligence
- **Skills:** Calligraphy, Lore: Theology, Lore (pick one), Meditation, Spellcraft, any two Skills
- **Honor:** 4.0
- **Outfit:** Sturdy Robes, Wakizashi, any 1 weapon, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, 5 bu
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Disciple shugenja typically have the same Affinity and Deficiency of their mentor, which of course varies wildly. You may choose one non-Void element in which you gain an Affinity. You are automatically Deficient in the opposing element.
- **Technique: Soul of Study** – Disciples often idolize their mentors and regard their teachings as the most sacred of verses. When casting one of your beginning spells (the ones given you by you mentor), you roll an additional +1k0 on Spell Casting Rolls.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 spells of your elemental Affinity, 2 spells of a non-Deficient element, and 1 spell of a second non-Deficient element. You gain additional spells for going up in Rank normally so long as you remain on good terms with your sensei.

New Basic School: Ronin Order Shugenja

- **Benefit:** +1 Awareness
- **Skills:** Calligraphy (Cipher), Divination, Lore: Theology, Lore (pick any), Meditation, Spellcraft, any one Skill
- **Honor:** 5.0
- **Outfit:** Sturdy Robes, Daisho, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, 5 bu
- **Affinity/Deficiency:** Ronin orders tend to emphasize practicality over power, and most often favor spells that have utility in daily life. You have an Affinity for Air spells and a Deficiency for Earth spells.
- **Technique: The Path of Dicipline** – Orders such as the Brotherhood and other prominent ronin groups emphasize the most basic tenets of shugenja traditions, strengthening the core beliefs and abilities of their students. You gain one Free Raise on all Sense, Commune, and Summon spells for all elements except Void and Earth.
- **Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air spells, 2 Water spells, and 1 Fire spell

Ronin of the Empire

Wave men are an incredibly diverse and varied lot, for men and women take up the mantle of the ronin for a variety of reasons. No two are exactly the same, but some broad archetypes are common and frequently appear as the subject of Rokugani fiction and plays. Here we present several basic types of ronin, ready for insertion into your L5R game as enemies, allies, or simply interesting NPCs.

Bandits

Bandits are a constant threat to the common people of the Empire, for there are always those who choose to take what they need rather than having to work for it themselves. Bandits are typically vicious and unpleasant individuals, and even the most benevolent among them are quickly corrupted by a life of violence and avarice.

Simple Bandit

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 2
-	-	Agility 3	Strength 3	-

Infamy: 1.1 *Honor: 1.4* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 1

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 1, Hunting 3, any one Weapon Skill at 3

Advantages:

- *Quick Healer*

Disadvantages:

- *Unlucky (3 points)*

Notes: The simplest bandits are desperate men who have turned to crime as a means of survival. They may have no taste for violence other than what is absolutely necessary, or they may find they delight in the subjugation of others.

Experienced Bandit

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 4	-	-

Infamy: 2.2 *Honor: 0.6* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 3

Ronin Paths: Serpents of Sanada

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Athletics 3, Defense 2, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Jiujutsu 3, Knives 3, Lore: Hideouts 3, Sailing 2, Stealth 3, any one Weapon Skill at 2, any one Weapon Skill at 4

Advantages:

- *Quick Healer*
- *Way of the Land*

Disadvantages:

- *Bad Fortune (Disfigurement)*
- *Greedy*

Notes: Bandits who survive their first year as a criminal become vastly more practical and hardened about the nature of their existence. They excel at their craft and at avoiding the wrath of magistrates and other angry samurai. Many have by this point served as part of a larger bandit group and are all the more dangerous as a result.

Bandit Lord

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	-	-

Infamy: 4.4 *Honor: 0.3* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 4

Ronin Paths: Forest Killers, East Wind

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hunting 4, Intimidation 6, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Sailing 2, Stealth 4, any two Weapon Skills at 3, any one Weapon Skill at 4

Advantages:

- *Leadership*
- *Quick*

Disadvantages:

- *Greedy*

Notes: Some bandits discover they not only enjoy the life of a criminal but are very good at it. Some attempt to escape their existence as a bandit early on only to return later, eager to embrace a life without honest work in it. These men and women tend to be very charismatic and can easily recruit others to their banner



Disavowed Assassins

Although rare among the ranks of honorable samurai, there are always those in each clan who believe they perceive the world in a different and more accurate manner than their kinsmen. These individuals, often with a mindset more like a Scorpion than any other clan, occasionally choose to leave behind the trappings of their clan in order to look after its interests in a manner grossly inappropriate for someone of honor. They may take this duty upon themselves, or they might be solicited by a patron within their former clan. Regardless, they seek to eliminate threats to the clan by whatever means possible.

Conspiratorial Madman

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 3	-

Infamy: 1.1 *Honor: 1.4* *Status: 0.5*

Insight Rank: 1

Ronin Paths: None (Clan ronin: Pick one Great Clan Bushi School at Rank 1 instead)

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 2, Jiujutsu 1, Kenjutsu 3, Stealth 2 (add relevant ranks in the School Skills of the School selected above)

Advantages:

- *Crafty*
- *Heart of Vengeance*

Disadvantages:

- *Bad Reputation*
- *Black Sheep*

Notes: A conspiratorial madman is dangerous not so much due to his skills as because he is largely insane. These individuals have been convinced by pure delusion or gross misinterpretation that there are forces beyond the ken of honorable samurai that threaten their family and clan. Rather than risk this threat manifesting, these men strike out on their own to eliminate whatever they perceive as a danger to their clan, leaving their names behind to ensure their shame will not reflect upon their families.

Kolat Assassin

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
-	Willpower 5	-	Perception 5	-

Infamy: 0.2 *Honor: 0.8* *Status: 0.5*

Insight Rank: 4

Ronin Paths: Weavers

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 4, Forgery 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Knives 6, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6

Advantages:

- *Allies*
- *Silent*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Secret*
- *Obligation*

Notes: The Kolat are perhaps the most secretive order in the Empire (and are described at length elsewhere in this book), and have literally centuries of expertise in infiltration and elimination. A Kolat assassin is an invisible force that comes unseen and leaves in his wake death no one even realizes to be violent. The only time a Kolat assassin leaves signs of violence is when he wishes the death to be blamed on someone else.

Master Killer

Air: 5	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
-	-	Agility 5	Perception 5	-

Infamy: 2.5 *Honor: 0.2* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 5

School: Shosuro Infiltrator 1

Ronin Paths: Silent Blades, Shadowed Steel

Skills: Acting 5, Athletics 4, Knives 5, Ninjutsu 6, Sincerity 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 6, any three Weapon Skills at 4

Advantages:

- *Quick*
- *Silent*

Disadvantages:

- *Failure of Compassion*
- *Seven Fortunes' Curse (Ebisu)*

Notes: The master killer is a nightmare given flesh, an unquestioned master of the deadly arts who comes and goes without a whisper, leaving only death and confusion in his wake. Although the statistics here reflect a former member of the Scorpion Clan, one who left the clan decades ago to become a disposable asset, in reality such an individual could be born of any clan, and different skills gained in the service of such clans will allow customizable opponents.

Disgraced Yojimbo

The duty of a yojimbo is among the most sacred in the Empire, as it involves an earnest vow on the part of one samurai to give his life before he permits his charge to come to harm. When that vow is broken, sometimes through the failure of the yojimbo and sometimes simply through chance, the honor of the yojimbo is forever stained. Although unavoidable circumstances can sometimes excuse the disgrace, many who bear the title of yojimbo are unwilling to excuse themselves, and it is not uncommon for a samurai who has failed in this duty to either take his own life or to become a ronin.

Failure of Bushido

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 3	-	-	-

Infamy: 1.7 *Honor: 1.4* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Clan ronin: Select one Clan School at Rank 1

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Defense 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 3 (add the relevant School Skills from the Bushi School chosen above)

Advantages: None

Disadvantages:

- *Failure of Duty*

Notes: This pathetic individual failed in some spectacular fashion, not due to circumstances beyond his control, but due exclusively to his own inadequacies. Perhaps he was drunk when on duty, or deserted his post to visit a geisha, or even allowed gambling debts to pressure him into forsaking his honor. Regardless, his disgrace is well deserved.

Victim of Circumstance

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 2
-	-	-	-	-

Glory: 1.1 *Honor: 4.6* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Select one Clan School at Rank 2

Insight Rank: 2

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Defense 4, Etiquette 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 3 (add the relevant School Skills from the School selected above)

Advantages:

- *Clear Thinker*
- *Paragon of Honor*

Disadvantages:

- *Doubt (Defense)*

Notes: Some who are punished for failing in their duty as a yojimbo are punished not for their own actions, but rather because they are a scapegoat for another. Some are following orders of incompetent superiors, while others are manipulated to serve as the source of scorn for the family and clan while an inconvenient rival is eliminated. Regardless, these men are filled with self-loathing over their failure, and the only thing that keeps them going is their hatred for those who manipulated their downfall. Men such as these will stop at almost nothing to avenge their honor, and frequently wish only to commit seppuku once their vengeance is taken.

Dutiful Retainer

The dutiful retainer is a classic trope of the samurai genre, a samurai who was cast out because his honor made him intractable to those around him. Perhaps his lord's new advisor did not want an obstacle in his path, or perhaps his lord's newly ascended heir wants no reminders of his father's reign. A dutiful retainer is an honorable man denied the opportunity to take his own life, for an honorable samurai would prefer to die before serving a false lord or wandering as a wave man. Unfortunately, given the circumstances, there are few options remaining for such individuals, and they must simple eke out an existence in accordance with their honor.

Remnant Guardsman

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 2
Reflexes 4	-	-	-	-

Glory: 2.2 *Honor: 5.1* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Select one Clan School at Rank 2

Insight Rank: 2

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Battle 2, Defense 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Jiujutsu 3, any two Weapon Skills at 3 (add the relevant School Skills from the School selected above)

Advantages:

- *Higher Purpose*
- *Paragon of Duty*

Disadvantages:

- *Bad Fortune (Unknown Enemy)*

Notes: During changes in power, such as after the death of a lord to causes natural or unnatural, there are always samurai who do not find favor with the new powers that be. Sometimes this distaste is warranted, because the previous lord was corrupt or perhaps simply a poor judge of character. More often, however, there are simply those who are collateral damage for a bureaucratic changeover. Some of these men are unwilling or simply unable to find another lord and end up as wave men, attempting to ply their trade as warriors in a hostile Empire.

Ousted Advisor

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
-	-	Intelligence 4	Perception 4	-

Glory: 3.3 *Honor: 4.2* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Select one Clan School at Rank 3

Insight Rank: 3

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Courtier 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Lore: History 3, Lore: Law 4, Sincerity (Honesty) 3 (add the relevant School Skills from the School selected above)

Advantages:

- *Paragon of Honor*
- *Virtuous*

Disadvantages:

- *Bad Fortune (Unknown Enemy)*

Notes: The ousted advisor was a trusted counsel for his lord, but things changed. Perhaps his lord died and the new lord wants nothing to do with the old guard, or perhaps a treacherous new advisor has the lord's ear now. The latter case usually means there is a nefarious plot afoot, and the advisor may be the only one who can prevent it from bringing ruination to the province.

Heroes of the People

A ronin hero of the people typically appears only in Rokugan's plays and fiction. Most wave men have some degree of resentment concerning their fate, and even for those who do not, the daily struggle for survival is more than enough to keep their sense of altruism under control. Still, there are a handful who managed to rise above their circumstances and attempt to better the lot of those around them, typically out of a strong sense of bushido and particularly the Virtue of Compassion.

Idealistic Newcomer

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
-	-	-	Strength 3	-

Glory: 3.8 *Honor: 4.2* *Status: 0.5*

Insight Rank: 1

Ronin Paths: Tawagoto's Army

Skills: Battle 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 1, Investigation 1, Kenjutsu 3, Spears 2

Advantages:

- *Hero of the People*

Disadvantages:

- *Idealistic*

Notes: Young ronin, born of wave men and never having known service to a clan, are sometimes raised with unrealistic ideals of what it means to be a samurai. They believe they are obligated by the circumstances of their heritage to be heroes and defenders of the people. They embrace the tenet of Compassion, a tenet many clan samurai choose to ignore when upholding Bushido.

Charismatic Officer

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness 4	-	-	-	-

Glory: 4.1 *Honor: 5.5* *Status: 0.5*

Insight Rank: 3

Ronin Paths: Tawagoto's Army, Hidden Sword

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 2, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Spears 3, any other two Weapon Skills at 3

Advantages:

- *Hero of the People*
- *Paragon of Honor*
- *Tactician*

Disadvantages:

- *Driven*

Notes: Most idealistic ronin have their concept of how the world works hopelessly crushed within a few years of beginning their travels in the Empire. The stark reality of samurai life and the condition of the lower castes can be devastatingly depressing to such men, but some emerge hardened and more resolute than ever, determined above all else to uphold a duty to the people that no one else seems to want. These sorts of men are not traditionally close to the common folk, but they consider protecting the people to be a sacred duty.



Pirates

Pirates are rarely a concern for the average citizen of the Empire. Most simply do not have access to waterways large enough for pirates to be a problem. Traditionally pirates only appear along coastal regions and major waterways, and only a few rivers are wide enough to accommodate piracy of any significant nature. Piracy on the open sea is likewise uncommon because there are so few targets of opportunity, barring the Mantis Clan – and the Mantis are not targets many pirates would choose to prey upon.

Desperate Fisherman

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 2
-	Stamina 3	-	Strength 3	-

Glory: 1.7 *Honor: 1.1* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 1

Ronin Paths: None

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft: Fishing 3, Lore: the Seas 2, Sailing 2, any one Weapon Skill at 3

Advantages: None

Disadvantages:

- *Consumed by Determination*

Notes: The most frequent pirates are men who have simply been pushed into a corner and have made the only decision they believe available. These men are not necessarily violent by nature, but for whatever reason they face ruination or possibly even starvation, and they are not willing to allow their families to come to such a fate without doing all they can.

Scourge of the Seas

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	-	-

Infamy: 5.7 *Honor: 0.6* *Status: 0.0*

Insight Rank: 3

Ronin Paths: Serpents of Sanada

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Jiujutsu 2, Knives 4, Sailing 4, any two Weapon Skills at 3

Advantages:

- *Daredevil*
- *Strength of the Earth*

Disadvantages:

- *Disbeliever*
- *Infamous*

Notes: Although few men turn to piracy for enjoyment, some nevertheless discover they enjoy it very much, and these men can become some of the greatest hazards the sea has to offer. The skills associated with a life at sea are many and varied, and men such as these are a genuine threat to most samurai regardless of whether they are actually on the ocean or on land. It is their cruel and violent nature that makes them a true danger; the sea is simply the environment where they prefer to inflict their misery upon others.

Priests of the Kami

Ronin shugenja are exceptionally rare but potentially very powerful. A ronin shugenja often inherits a legacy from a relative or ancestor who also possessed the gift. If this individual was a ronin, it could mean almost anything; if it was a clan samurai, there are many prejudices that could follow them into life as a wave man.

Student of the Elements

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	-	-

Glory: 2.8 *Honor: 4.2* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Self-Taught Shugenja 2 (Air)

Insight Rank: 2

Skills: Athletics 1, Calligraphy 2, Commerce 1, Etiquette 1, Hunting 2, Knives 2, Lore: the Elements 2, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Honesty) 1, Spellcraft 3, Tea Ceremony 1

Advantages:

- *Friendly Kami*

Disadvantages:

- *Idealistic*

Notes: The Student of the Elements is young and idealistic, seeing the world through the beauty of the kami and seeking to share it with others. The cruelty and selfishness of human beings confuses the Student, and he will seek to teach others to live as the elements live at every opportunity, even though such things are patently impossible. Perhaps as he ages, the student will realize the reality of the world, but for now, he is simple and decent, and those around him cannot help but like him.

Seeker of the Path

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
-	Willpower 4	-	Perception 5	-

Glory: 3.1 *Honor: 5.3* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Dutiful Disciple (Air) 3

Insight Rank: 3

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 3, Lore: Theology 4, Lore: History 3, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Deceit, Honesty) 3, Spellcraft 5

Advantages:

- *Friend of the Brotherhood*

Disadvantages:

- *Sworn Enemy*

Notes: A seeker of the path has cast aside the simplistic and idealistic notions that a student of the elements often clings to. For some, the path begins to venture down a sinister road, where the acquisition of power becomes more important than anything else. Others are able to temper their ambition, seeking more power in hopes of aiding not only themselves but those around them.

Sample NPC: Karatsu the Tyrant

Air: 3	Earth: 5	Fire: 5	Water: 4	Void: 4
-	Willpower 4	-	Perception 5	-

Infamy: 5.6 *Honor: 1.5* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Fire) 2 / Self-Taught Shugenja 4

Insight Rank: 6

Skills: Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 3, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 6, Intimidation 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Lore: Theology 3, Lore: Heraldry 3, Medicine 4, Meditation 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Spellcraft 6

Spells: Karatsu has spent his life in an acquisition of power. He knows all spells that he can cast, unless they are restricted to certain families (Karatsu lacks the information network to gain access to secret spells).

Advantages:

- *Great Potential (Iaijutsu)*
- *Leadership*

Disadvantages:

- *Dark Paragon of Strength*
- *Infamous*

If there are greater monsters in his generation than Karatsu, those horrible individuals have fortunately remained hidden from the public view. Karatsu was once a Phoenix, although he went by a different name at that time. He possessed an incredible talent for commanding the kami, but the only trait that could exceed Karatsu's power was his arrogance. The loftiest among the Isawa looked upon him as excessive and overbearing, and he made few allies even in his own family. When his downfall came, his absolute and unrepentant nature cemented his fate: he was to be Forgotten, the worst fate the Phoenix can bestow upon someone.

Karatsu refused to accept his fate, and his departure from the Phoenix lands is remembered among the Isawa as a terrible rampage. Six honorable men died attempting to stop him, and although the Phoenix do not speak of the incident to outsiders, they have never forgotten. There are many Phoenix who would give much to find the man now called Karatsu. The new ronin fled into the Empire and spent some time moving among the various ronin communities, but his arrogance made him unwelcome. When he was confronted, calamity invariably followed, and the Phoenix were quick to follow the trail of devastation he left in his wake. Ultimately, Karatsu took to the mountains west of the Dragon lands in hopes of finding respite from his pursuers.

In the desolate crags between the Dragon and Unicorn lands, Karatsu found his niche. He was not the only one to have fled the Empire for one reason or another; there were many small farms and even villages hidden amid the peaks and valleys, and Karatsu quickly brought them under his heel. None could resist his power, and some found they identified strongly with his philosophies. In the hidden recesses of the Empire, Karatsu carved his own secret kingdom.

The only real threat to Karatsu's rule is his son Kuronada, who he regards as a disgrace. Kuronada was born without the ability to speak to the kami. His birth claimed the life of his mother, something Karatsu did not care about in the least, but when he realized his son could not speak to the kami, he was disgusted and refused to have anything to do with him. Kuronada has spent his life mastering every feat imaginable in homes of earning his father's respect, to no avail. A consummate warrior, brilliant duelist, masterful tactician, and unsurpassed athlete, Kuronada finally fled the mountains to seek his own path, mindful that his father had finally noticed him and considered him a threat. Kuronada now serves alongside other ronin heroes and hopes to marshal forces against the tyranny of his father.

Wandering Swordsmen

Those who wander the Empire in order to improve their skills as swordsmen are a unique breed. Such individuals tend to view wielding the blade as a spiritual practice, a concern that transcends all else in life. Personal relationships, material concerns, perhaps even duty itself become secondary to mastering the art of the sword. These individuals have the capacity to be either heroes, seeking out villains on whom to practice their skills, or utter villains, sociopaths who kill anyone who crosses them.

Banished Duelist

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 4	Water: 2	Void: 3
-	-	-	-	-

Glory: 2.6 *Honor: 4.2* *Status: 0.5*

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi School 2Insight Rank: 2

Skills: Courtier 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 4, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Sincerity 3, Tea Ceremony 2

Advantages:

- *Prodigy (Iaijutsu)*

Disadvantages:

- *Black Sheep*
- *Brash*

Notes: The banished duelist has, for whatever reason, shamed his family or clan with his misconduct, so much so that he has been cast out as a ronin rather than afforded the right of seppuku. It is possible his conduct during a duel was unacceptable, perhaps striking too soon or responding poorly to losing. Regardless, he is now shamed and there may be others pursuing him in search of justice or vengeance. All the duelist has now is his skill with the blade, and he will not permit anyone to pose even a minor threat to him.

Disciple of the Blade

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
-	-	Agility 5	Perception 5	-

Glory: 4.0 *Honor: 5.3* *Status: 0.5*

Insight Rank: 4

Ronin Paths: Disciple of Sun Tao

Skills: Animal Handling 2, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 4, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu (Focus) 6, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Knives 3, Lore: Prominent Duelists 3, Spears 2

Advantages:

- *Fame*
- *Irreproachable*

Disadvantages:

- *Can't Lie*
- *Hotei's Curse*

Notes: A true disciple of the blade needs nothing else, nothing else at all, to sustain him. The simple, fundamental oneness of existing in perfect harmony with steel eliminates all other material needs. The body requires food and protection from the elements, of course, but merely the minimum needed.




空の巻

Shadowlands Beasts

"This land once handsome
Now nurses black, weeping wounds
Where shadows breed pain"

– Hiruma Kaso

The Birth of the Corrupted Lands

Little is known about what inhabited the Shadowlands before Fu Leng's fall. The Nezumi claim to have once ruled those lands, but few people in Rokugan believe the stories of these creatures. Even the Crab, who sometimes deal with the ratlings as allies, have difficulty sorting truth from myth in the Nezumi oral traditions, so the pre-history of the Shadowlands is guesswork at best. However, most scholars believe it was probably a place very similar to Rokugan, with normal features like forests, rivers, and lakes.

When Fu Leng fell from the Heavens, the monstrous impact ruined the lands and tore open a gate to Jigoku, the Realm of Evil; the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, as it came to be known, released the supernatural power of the Taint to spread into the mortal world. Dark clouds shrouded the earth, and even the warming light of the Sun did not seem to reach the land as it once did. Most of the natural life in the affected area quickly died. Those plants and animals which did not perish were warped by the Taint into cruel, dangerous parodies of their former selves, preying on each other and any other victims who entered their territory. Indeed, it is still possible in the modern day to sometimes meet Shadowlands creatures that are nothing more than a heavily Tainted wolves, bears, or even simple plants corrupted into monstrous forms.

In the early years after his fall from the heavens, Fu Leng swiftly corrupted the ancient races of the ogres and trolls, destroying their cultures and civilizations and reducing them to slaves. He also created the race of goblins in a foul mockery of humanity. Although some of these creatures continued to retain a parody of civilization, most behaved like the rampaging beasts they became and fought each other for power, land, or simply food. The Festering Pit also enabled supernatural creatures to break through from the Realm of Evil and invade the mortal world, and within a few years all manner of demons and unnatural horrors roamed the land to the south of Rokugan.

The Nature of the Realm of Evil

"I am not alive because I am a righteous or good man rewarded by destiny. I am alive because I walked to the left of a tree stump and not to the right."

– Kuni Mataemon

The Shadowlands is an unnatural place, but it still has its own ecology, one in which each creature preys upon those weaker or less numerous than itself while avoiding more dangerous opponents. There is plant life in the Shadowlands, but it is often just as predatory as the animals. Although this internal conflict would seem to make the Shadowlands divided and weak, it cannot be forgotten that the dark will of Jigoku drives every single one of these creatures. While they may not be organized much of the time, each of them is a lethal threat, and their infighting only ensures the most dangerous remain on top.

The general environment of the Shadowlands is extremely hostile and malignant, containing dangers unimaginable to clans other than the Crab. First and foremost is the presence of the Taint, which makes it extremely hazardous simply to enter the realm. The heavy cloud cover and dim sunlight makes the passage of time hard to gauge. The air is cold in all seasons and smells of ashes and putrefaction. Fire is very difficult to make in the Shadowlands, and when it does ignite, it burns only weakly, with a pale unnatural green or blue light. Of course, in the Shadowlands fire is more likely to attract predators than to keep them away. Water and food are widespread but fully Tainted, of course, and usually diseased as well.

The landscape is both dangerous and unpredictable. Open plains are little more than desert, lifeless and frequently full of hidden crevasses and tunnels, making falls and surprise attacks a common danger. The scattered forests are dense and forbidding, full of dead trees and clinging roots. Dangerous creatures lurk within their dark confines, and often the trees are predators themselves. Even more dangerous are the marshes and bogs, which are widespread and are a favorite lair of many aquatic creatures. Quicksand sinks are also a common occurrence in these places, appearing without rhyme or reason. Rivers and lakes, of which the River of the Dark Finger and the River of the Dark Moon are the most infamous, are not only utterly Tainted but also full of dangerous rapids, treacherous currents, and aggressive predators. There are only a few true mountains within the Shadowlands, but there are many steep and jagged hills, often stretching for miles, pocked with gullies, canyons, and caves.

The coastline of the Shadowlands is notoriously unstable, a groaning, crumbling shore of blackened stone and shifting sands. Volcanoes are found here, pouring molten rock into the sea. The coastal waters are foul and Tainted, plagued with beasts like aquatic trolls, water-logged zombies, and the notorious gaki known as the Skull Tide.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Shadowlands' environment is that the landscape moves. Some Crab scholars have suggested the entire Shadowlands moves in a spiral pattern from the Festering Pit. However, in truth there seems to be no real pattern to the shifting landscape other than the chaotic will of Jigoku, with the movements becoming faster and more unpredictable the closer one gets to the Pit. As such, it is impossible to truly map the deeper regions of the Shadowlands, where a desert inhabited by a tribe of goblins might be replaced a week later by a marsh filled with trolls.

Perhaps the most alarming tales of the Shadowlands environment are stories of scouting parties returning from the realm years after departing, having aged only a few days. This is so rare as to verge on legend, but at least one Crab of great prominence claimed to experience it – Kuni Utagu, who later became Jade Champion. Whether true or not, this illustrates the most essential fact about the Shadowlands: ultimately, it can never truly be understood or predicted.

Even the kami, the fundamental spirits of the world, are corrupted and unnatural within the Shadowlands. Normal spirits are rare south of the Wall; instead the kansen, the elemental spirits of Jigoku, hold sway. These dark spirits revel in cruelty and temptation, and especially love to corrupt shugenja, the holy priests of the kami. Kansen whisper to everyone they meet, offering to fulfill spells easily or even to teach the seemingly-effortless power of maho. They also plague the dreams of those humans who manage to sleep in the blighted lands, inflicting nightmares and disrupting rest.

Although most Rokugani see the Shadowlands as a discrete location, in truth the influence of the Realm of Evil does not stop at the border with Rokugan. Patches of corruption exist throughout the Empire, although thankfully they are rare and usually limited in size. The most notorious of these include the Forest of Dreamers in Unicorn lands and the Tainted regions in the Shinomen Forest. In the twelfth century, the ruins of the old capital Otosan Uchi are also suffused with Taint due to the activities of the Bloodspeaker Cult and later the Spider Clan. These regions function as smaller versions of the Shadowlands, and inflict the same malignant effects on those who enter their bounds. As one might expect, these places attract Shadowlands creatures and malignant spirits, making them a continual hazard to their surroundings.

Shadowlands Creatures as Adversaries

"I fight every day against things which would freeze the blood in your body if you so much as gazed upon them. Do not tell me about courage and duty, little man. You haven't the slightest idea what they mean."

– Unknown Crab bushi, tenth century

For most Rokugani, the oni, Lost, and undead are the first things that come to mind if the distasteful topic of the Shadowlands is raised. But such beings are far from representative of the whole population of those dreaded lands. The Shadowlands are home to innumerable monsters that defy classification, from hordes of goblins to brutal trolls. These creatures are embodiments of pure evil and exist for the sole purpose of corrupting, killing, and destroying everything they can reach.

Unusual Locations

"I have tried fighting the Shadowlands. I have tried running away from the Shadowlands. In my darkest moments, I have even considered surrendering to the Shadowlands. Only one thing have I learned. The Shadowlands is alive, aware, and playing a game with us all. If you are not prepared to learn the rules of that game, I have only one piece of advice to give: Stay away from the Shadowlands."

– Hiruma Zunguri

The Shadowlands contains many strange physical and geographical features which cannot be found anywhere else in Rokugan. Unique places or phenomena will appear to trick the unwary: a plain covered in monstrous skulls, a dark temple older than man, a spider web extending for miles. A full catalogue of these grotesque anomalies could take up an entire book, but a few of the more prominent locations include:

- Some Crab explorers have reported vast fields of greasy black grass. Those who disturb these fields soon discover the terrible truth – the "grass" is actually the hair of hundreds of zombies, packed together and sunk into the ground. Those who disturb these fields of somnolent undead seldom live to tell the tale.
- Several rumors suggest the existence of an oni so huge that it resembles a mountain, with plants and trees growing on its vast back. Supposedly this entity, called Kusatte Iru by the goblins who live near it, is asleep but may someday awaken and destroy the world.
- A few witnesses recount a set of caves on the southern shore of the River of the Dark Moon. Those who enter the caves never return, but their voices can be heard screaming for hours or days… screaming that all the tunnels lead only down.
- The goblin city known as Big Stink has been visited by a few Kuni who allow it to continue existing in return for the knowledge they gain from studying it. The city displays no discernable social order or government, yet it seems to somehow function nevertheless.
- The ancient troll civilization is long destroyed, and the Tainted trolls do not remember their past. But several of their ruined cities can still be found within the Shadowlands, most notably Volturnum, where the fabled spirit portal known as Oblivion's Gate resides.
- More than one visitor to the Shadowlands has encountered a strange and terrible fortress, the so-called Ruined Keep of Fu Leng. Supposedly this was Fu Leng's military headquarters during the First War, and now it seems to move from place to place, appearing when and where it chooses. A few people even claim to have seen the Keep within the Empire itself. Those who enter the Keep encounter a bizarre mixture of traps, puzzles, and mazes, and only a few have managed to escape alive.

In the context of an L5R campaign, the creatures of the Shadowlands can function as either straightforward combat challenges or as more subtle or psychological demonstrations of the horror of Jigoku. The GM will find an abundance of physical challenges in this chapter, ranging from packs of goblins to individual threats such as the Sanshu Denki. If the PCs are forced to enter the Shadowlands for some reason, the GM can employ these creatures to offer a variety of threats. Unlike oni or Lost, whose power makes them dangerous even for experience groups of characters, the beasts of the Shadowlands vary widely in capability, allowing the GM to tailor encounters to almost any level of challenge, from minor harassment to deadly battle.

Since the Crab cannot stop every single creature at the Empire's borders, the GM can also introduce many of these creatures into a game set within Rokugan. Wandering ogres, infestations of goblins, and infiltrating bog hags can all be introduced into a more conventional campaign to shake things up and remind the players that the threat of Jigoku is ever-present.

A GM who favors a more heavily psychological game can also employ the creatures of the Shadowlands to create powerful horror effects. Goblins may seem like minor threats, perhaps even a bit silly with their gibbering voices and physical antics – until a mischievously grinning goblin slips into the children's quarters with a rusty knife. A bog hag plying seductive wiles from under a geisha's lovely skin, a yamauba who meets a PC on a darkened street to discuss his family duties... these are only a few ways in which clever GMs can employ these creatures for maximum impact.

New Game Mechanics: Creatures of the Shadowlands

The following list of creatures, while extensive, represents only a fraction of the near-infinite diversity of monsters that dwell in the Shadowlands. The dark realm's population grows almost perpetually, albeit at a fairly moderate pace compared to the terrible days of the First War. Tainted animals, mutations and manifestations of the Taint, new entities emerging from the Festering Pit, monstrous creations of inventive maho-tsukai, or just rare and long-forgotten creatures emerging once again to threaten the Empire – all of these add to the endless work of the Kuni scholars who seek to catalogue Rokugan's enemies. Even worse, most of these creatures are able to spawn more of themselves, maintaining their numbers despite their constant infighting and the endless war against the Crab Clan. The sheer size of the Shadowlands also ensures that no one can ever truly know all that dwells within it.

In mechanical terms, GMs should feel free to add their own creations to the monsters depicted in this chapter. Moreover, each entry represents a "typical" example of the creature, but actual specimens vary widely in their strength and capability. GMs are encouraged to tailor creatures to their campaign, adjusting Rings and Traits, increasing or decreasing Wounds and attacks, and even adding or removing special abilities. (More discussion of these sorts of adjustments may be found in the *Book of Void* in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook.) In addition to letting the GM adjust the strength of encounters, this also ensures that PCs will never become complacent about the monsters they face. The Rokugani regard these creatures as terrifying and utterly unpredictable forces of evil, and your players should do the same.



Aka-name

"They care nothing for war or any other purpose. They wish only to feed."

– Kuni Daigo, Jade Champion, twelfth century

One of the more disgusting and reviled creatures of the Shadowlands, the Aka-name is notable for its exceptionally foul appearance. It looks like a bloated, misshapen human with red skin and eyes. The creature moves on all fours, and has long distorted arms and a twisted neck. Its back usually displays a huge hunch, and swollen muscles ripple under its tight skin. The Kuni have recorded instances of both male and female Aka-name, and speculate the creatures must reproduce like humans, although (perhaps thankfully) no concrete proof of this has ever been found.

Aka-name are native to the Shadowlands and are only very seldom encountered inside the Empire. They seem to be scavengers and ambushers, traveling alone or in small groups and feeding on the weak, the wounded, and the dead. They seem to have a special preference for the foulest of substances, and will eat filth and excrement when no flesh is available. They do not seem to posses any true language, communicating in grunts and bestial noises, but do possess a limited form of intelligence and a vicious cunning. When hunting prey they prefer striking from ambush, laying traps and snares, and using their poisonous claws to quickly dispatch trapped prey. They will soon flee from tough opposition, and generally avoid the presence of more powerful entities like oni and

Lost. Despite their bloated bodies they are quick to react to threats, and can run faster on their four legs than all but the swiftest of humans; experienced Hiruma have stated that fighting Aka-name is akin to fighting a pack of vicious and clever wolves.

On the rare occasions when an Aka-name manages to infiltrate Rokugan, the creatures' taste for filth often leads them to eta villages, where they can cause great damage before samurai finally arrive to deal with them. Most samurai are extremely reluctant to even listen to a plea from a hinin, let alone enter an eta neighborhood, so these infestations sometimes linger for considerable lengths of time.

The origins of Aka-name are uncertain. Some among the Kuni family believe they were created by Jigoku from Tainted and dishonorable humans. If this is true, it is just one more reason to kill these wretched monsters.



Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 (0 to jade, crystal, or obsidian) — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: Dead.*

Skills: Athletics 3, Hunting 3, Stealth 3

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Poison Claws: The claws of the Aka-name carry a painful poison that infects wounds and causes them to swiftly become inflamed and agonizingly painful. Any normal living creature wounded by an Aka-name must roll Stamina at TN 20 or suffer an additional 2k1 Wounds. In addition, regardless of the results of the Stamina roll, if the wound is not promptly cleansed and then purified with jade, it will rapidly become infected – the effects set in after ten minutes. The infection imposes a +10 TN penalty to all rolls the victim makes, including the roll to resist Taint for being injured by the Aka-name, and lasts for two weeks or until cured with magic. (Treatment with a Medicine / Intelligence roll at TN 25 will reduce the TN penalty to +5.) Multiple wounds will not intensify the infection, although the extra damage can happen any number of times.*
- *Swift 1.*

Dokufu, the Mountain Spider

"We fell upon her, fighting the brood she spewed at us. With fire and jade and the lives of thirty men, she was no more. One thousand one hundred and ninety human skulls lay in her intestine."

– Kuni Chojin, Witch-Hunter, tenth century

Dokufu are terrifying but mercifully very rare creatures. Their origins are unknown, though they are clearly born of the Shadowlands. Their natural form is a bloated seven-eyed spider the size of a small house, with a slobbering toothless mouth, sharp claws at the end of each of its eight legs, and a rocky and jagged outer carapace. The creature's vast size and stony exterior gives it the nickname of "mountain spider," although it does not habitually dwell in mountains. Although the creature is extremely powerful and dangerous, what makes it a truly terrible threat is that it, like all too many Shadowlands creatures, is a shape-shifter. The dokufu craves non-Tainted human flesh, and enters Rokugan in search of it. It always assumes the form of a woman, but it cannot change its form – it will always look like the same woman, so matter how many times it changes form. Moreover, it always appears as aged as it really is; since dokufu can live for centuries, they often appear as decrepit old women.

The dokufu reproduces with eggs, but the eggs need human flesh to incubate. Thus its preferred method is to trap human victims in its webs and then jam an egg tube down the victim's throat, implanting an egg sac in the belly. That done, it swallows the victim whole, attaching it (and later the hatchlings) to its stomach with black umbilical cords. The victim suffers a slow and agonizing death within the dokufu while the egg grows and hatches. Young dokufu spawn seem to take a very long time to reach adulthood, and remain inside their parent for most of the time until they are approaching maturity. This also gives the adult dokufu an extra weapon, since it can vomit forth its young to defend it against any threats, later using the umbilicals to re-swallow them. It has no direct control over its young, but they will not attack their parent.

A dokufu's size, rock-hard skin, and hordes of young make it a formidable opponent, matching the strength of many of the most powerful oni. Those who would fight one of these monstrous beasts should be prepared to gather a large and courageous force. The dokufu's shapeshifting talents and its craving for non-Tainted human flesh causes it to preferentially hunt in Rokugan proper, where a single dokufu can kill hundreds of humans before being detected. They prefer to target unarmed or helpless victims, and will often infiltrate bathhouses, geisha houses, and other establishments where the customers are habitually unarmed. Fortunately, the dokufu is a solitary creature, and its young depart when they are finally old enough to live on their own.

Air 3	Earth 8	Fire 3	Water 3
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 9

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Claws 9k4 (Simple)*

Damage: Claws 10k6 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 30 (15 against fire, jade, crystal or obsidian) — *Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15; 160: Dead.*

Skills (only usable in human form): Athletics 3, Jiujutsu 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 3

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 4.*
- *Huge.*
- *Shapeshift: A dokufu may change into its human form (or back into its true form) as a Complex Action. This human form is always the same, a plain Rokugani woman, and cannot be modified or made to look like someone else. It reflects the dokufu's real age, so is usually old and decrepit. In its human form, the dokufu loses its Reduction, claw attacks, and its Fear and Huge abilities, so it will usually flee combat until it can change to its monstrous spider form.*
- *Vomit Offspring: A dokufu may vomit 1k1 of its spawn as a Complex Action. The spawn are swallowed back once the fight is over.*
- *Web: A dokufu in either human or monstrous form may shoot webs on an opponent as a Complex Action. This is a ranged attack (8k3 attack roll, and ignores the effects of the target's armor on Armor TN) with a range of 40'. If it hits the victim is Entangled, and can attempt to get free each Round with a Strength roll at TN 20.*

Dokufu Spawn

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 2	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Claws 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k2 — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 10: +5; 20: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 1.*



Garegosu no Bakemono

Living proof of the Shadowlands' lack of rationality, the Garegosu no Bakemono look like nothing so much as land-dwelling giant octopi. Their size and mass have no no limit. They have a pair of small, sinister black eyes and a large mouth filled with gnarled and uneven teeth. The rest of their bodies, however, are constantly changing as they create and absorb tentacles while moving around. Despite the fluid nature of their changing bodies, they are covered in solid plate-like scales, allowing them to withstand strong blows. Although the average specimen is usually the size of a large room, the creatures seem to add to their mass each time they consume food, and Hiruma scouts have spotted some prodigiously huge Garegosu no Bakemono in the deep Shadowlands. (The statistics given below represent an average specimen, and GMs should feel free to increase them.)

The Garegosu no Bakemono has no aquatic tendencies despite its octopoidal appearance. It is a lone predator, preferring to use its unnatural gaze to paralyze victims before grappling them with its numerous tentacles and dragging them to its mouth. The beast's body can actually squeeze and shift through relatively small openings (as small as a normal doorway), making it difficult to escape when it is on the hunt. Its body heals rapidly and it is intelligent enough to retreat from a superior foe.

The peculiar name of the Garegosu no Bakemono derives from the fact that despite their prodigious appetite they never eat goblins, and even seem to enjoy a friendship of sorts with the smaller creatures. The creatures' origins are unknown to man, but some Kuni think they might have been created or tamed as pets by the goblins. Given the grotesque nature of both species, this could actually be possible.

Air 1	Earth 6	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 2	-	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 4k2 — *Attack: Tentacles 8k4 (Simple), Bite 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: Tentacles 5k1, Bite 4k4 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 36: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead.*

Skill: Jiujutsu 4

Effects of the Shadowlands

"Doji-sama: Your son arrived in our lands some ten days past. He was lavishly equipped with the finest weapons and provisions that the boundless wealth of the Crane can buy. We provided him with the jade he requested, of course – to do otherwise would have dishonored your clan's gift of crops during our hardships last winter. Thus prepared, he set out into the Shadowlands. We believe he died within six hours."

– Letter from Hiruma Nunori, twelfth century

The Shadowlands is an unnatural environment, a place where no normal life exists and even the spirits are often replaced by malignant kansen. The very air and water are dangerous to those who are not prepared. Crab samurai have long experience in dealing with these threats, but samurai from other clans who venture into the Shadowlands often fall afoul of the realm's dangers.

- The corrupt nature of the Shadowlands will quickly infest any food or drink brought into it, causing it to become suffused with both Taint and lethal disease. The Crab usually avoid this problem by carrying preserved rations and storing them near jade. Characters who fail to follow such precautions will be running the risk of Taint exposure (as outlined in the L5R Core Rulebook's *Book of Water*). The GM can also require the characters to make Stamina rolls to resist catching a lethal disease – the TN is the GM's option, but we suggest a range from 15 to 25 depending on how long the character is in the Shadowlands.
- The Shadowlands are not a restful place. Characters who sleep in the Shadowlands do not recover Wounds, Void Points, or spell slots from rest. Wounds can still be regained with spells or Medicine rolls, and characters can regain Void and spell slots through Meditation.
- Spells are hazardous in the Shadowlands, since a shugenja invoking the kami is likely to draw the attention of a kansen instead. All Spell Casting Rolls in the Shadowlands suffer a +10 TN penalty. If the Spell Casting roll is failed due to this penalty, a kansen will answer the prayer instead, offering to fulfill the desired spell. If the shugenja agrees, the spell is successfully cast, but the shugenja gains a number of points of Taint equal to the spell's Mastery Level. This cannot be prevented with jade.

The Forest of Dreamers

The so-called Forest of Dreamers is a deeply Tainted patch of woods located near Shiro Iuchi. The forest acquired this dire condition in the early eleventh century, when a Phoenix ronin named Fujio took up residence and began creating magical elixirs. Within a few years, he claimed to achieve great success and began selling his medicines: potent anesthetics which could dull the pain of even the most severe injuries. Unfortunately, these potent abilities were made possible by maho: Fujio was summoning kansen and binding them into the potions. The potions summoned evil dream spirits called *shiyokai* which put the drinker to sleep – and then fed on his soul.

A sizable force of Inquisitors and Witch-Hunters eventually stormed the forest and brought death to Fujio. The center of the forest proved to be deeply twisted and blighted by the Taint which the foolish ronin's experiments had unleashed. The survivors of the battle also reported experiencing a strange lethargy within the forest that made it a struggle to so much as keep their eyes open.

To make matters worse, the Witch-Hunters never recovered the vast wealth which Fujio supposedly earned from selling his accursed elixirs. To this day, greedy peasants and ronin occasionally slip into the forest in search of Fujio's treasure… never to return. The Unicorn guard the Forest of Dreamers carefully, patrolling its borders and stopping anyone who is trying to enter, but even they cannot stop all those drawn by the legend.



Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Gaze of Terror: A Garegosu no Bakemoni can single out an opponent with its terrifying gaze. This is a Complex Action and inflicts a Fear 6 effect on the chosen target. (The gaze does not affect those who are blind. A character can evade the gaze by shutting his eyes, but suffers the effects of the Blinded Condition on his next Turn.) The effects of the gaze last until the Reactions stage of the following Round.*
- *Huge.*
- *Multiple Grapples: Garegosu no Bakemono can maintain up to 10 Grapples against human-sized opponents, while still attacking normally with its tentacles or mouth.*
- *Regeneration: The Garegosu no Bakemono heals 4 Wounds during the Reactions stage of each Round.*
- *Swift 1.*



Goblin (Bakemono)

"Cruel, selfish, malicious, and violent."

– Kuni Mokuna

Goblins, or *bakemono*, are by far the most common creatures of the Shadowlands, and may number in the millions. Their basic nature is discussed in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, in the *Book of Void*. As noted there, goblins are not too bright, prone to both mass and individual hysteria, easily manipulated, and while stronger than their skinny limbs would suggest, are hardly a match for a typical samurai. Despite their mental and physical shortcomings, they thrive in the Shadowlands through the combination of their prodigious birth-rate and their innate cunning and shrewdness. They can be encountered anywhere in the Corrupted Lands, from barren plains and deserts to mountains, forests, and fetid swamps. Unfortunately, they are also the most common Tainted creatures to be found within the Empire, since small groups can slip past the border fairly easily and can quickly become a large tribe if left unchecked.

In the twelfth century, a mysterious Shadowlands entity known as Omoni, the so-called Sculptor of Flesh, employed his supernatural talents to create a more powerful and formidable breed of goblins, albeit at the cost of some creativity and cunning. This race of physically superior goblins served the Dark Lord Daigotsu and eradicated the frailer conventional bakemono in many regions of the Shadowlands. After Daigotsu founded the Spider Clan and launched his campaign to infiltrate the Empire directly, Omoni's creations fell out of favor and their numbers diminished almost as swiftly as they had arisen.

Goblins are a notoriously fecund species. A goblin female gives birth to a litter of four to six "goblings" after approximately four months of gestation. Most females will be pregnant again within two weeks. The newborns are squalling, piteous little beasts who wail and grab onto any living thing within reach. Once attached, they will demand sustenance with their constant keening. Stuffing their mouth with food is the only way to stop the hideous squealing, and is probably the only reason they survive, since goblin parents seem to have absolutely no interest in the welfare of their offspring. Fortunately for the goblings, their state of helplessness lasts only a few days, after which the young goblins have doubled their size and can usually survive on their own.

Goblin society is a crude and twisted imitation of humanity. The creatures are skilled mimics in almost every way and seem to take perverse enjoyment in copying human behavior any way they can, even (or perhaps especially) when they have no inkling of what it is all about. They parrot human language and regurgitate words in sentences that seldom make much sense – indeed goblins have been known to charge into battle shouting things like "die you odious little squeaker." The Kuni believe the bakemono have their own language, composed of grunts, hisses, and obvious visual cues such as arm movements or grimaces. Social hierarchy is established by a simple rule: the strong dominate the weak. Typically, the bigger warmongers and more powerful shamans attain leadership positions, retaining them with cunning and ruthlessness, killing any goblin who would dare challenging them. Bakemono society thus conditions the race to be the obedient minions of more powerful Shadowlands entities like ogres, oni, and of course the Lost.

Goblin battle tactics are typically extremely simple, relying on their near-endless numbers. A handful of bakemono can be promptly dispatched by any samurai patrol, but when mo and more keep coming, exhaustion eventually wears down the samurai and the goblins prevail by overwhelming their foes and ripping them to shreds. The power of numbers is further compounded by most goblins' extreme enthusiasm for battle. They seem to have no regard for their own lives whatsoever, and so far as the Kuni can determine, most goblins do not even understand the concept of death. An attacking mob of bakemono will almost never retreat; it has to be destroyed to the very last goblin to be defeated.





Goblin Berserker

"We ain't afraid of no samurai! We ain't afraid of no samurai! We ain't afraid of no samurai!"

If the average goblin's intelligence is barely above that of a smart animal, the goblins called "berserkers" by the rest of their race (certainly in mockery of the Crab) are far below that – not to mention completely insane. Their usual tactic is to simply run screaming directly at their enemies, assaulting them with absolutely no restraint even by goblin standards. Smarter goblins such as warmongers simply point them at a target and let them loose. Berserkers are only slightly stronger and tougher than regular goblins, but they are much faster, and their frenzied blur of strikes, leaps, and bites makes them surprisingly hard to hit. Berserkers are often the first ones to be "volunteered" to be anointed with magic mud, taking destruction and chaos to the enemy ranks.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Knife or sharp stick 4k3 (Simple), Bite 4k3 (Free)

Damage: Knife/sharp stick 4k2, Bite 2k1

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 10: +5; 20: Dead

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Berserker Rage: On the first two Rounds of a skirmish, a goblin berserker's frenzy makes it hit harder and feel little to no pain. It adds +1k1 to its attack rolls and increases its Reduction by 5 (to a total of 8). These effects end on the Reactions Stage of the second Round.*
- *Swift 2.*

Goblin Chucker

"Small, inaccurate, but numerous. A single chucker is no great threat … but they are rarely found alone."

- Hida Hiyao, twelfth century

Some goblins, possibly those who are slightly conscious of their own mortality, notice that hitting an enemy from a distance is safer. For a bakemono, such a realization is nothing short of genius. These goblins are seldom able to gain access to bows (they can use bows but lack the skill to make them), so usually the most complex ranged weapon in their arsenal is a crude sling (range 100'). Most of the time, the chuckers are happy simply throwing anything they can pick up from the ground – stones, sticks, or even dirt (range 50'). Warmongers often assign the best chuckers together and use them to distract enemies, pelting them with painful stones while the bulk of the bakemono troops sprint into melee.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 2	Strength 2

Initiative: 5k4

Attack: Hand-thrown object 6k4 (Simple), Sling 6k4 (Complex), Bow 6k4 (Complex, and seldom available), Knife or sharp stick 3k2 (Complex)

Damage: Random thrown object 1k1, sling stone 3k1, arrow 4k2, knife or sharp stick 4k2

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 9: +5; 18: Dead

Skills: Athletics (Throwing) 2, Stealth 2.

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Swift 2.*

Magic Mud

Although goblin tactics are usually simple and crude, they have displayed one notable tactical innovation. At some point many centuries ago, some bakemono tribes discovered pools of a foul black substance in areas of the Shadowlands suffused with sulfurous gas vents and bubbling mud. They quickly discovered the sticky pitch could be set afire and would burn for a considerable length of time. Impressed by the flaming arrows employed by samurai, the bakemono decided to use the flammable pitch to "improve" on the idea. Since they lacked the intelligence to make reliable flaming arrows, they decided a far more reliable and exciting method would be to dip a whole goblin in the stuff, set it on fire, and hurl the flaming warrior toward the enemy. Although the idea strikes the typical Rokugani courtier as crudely amusing, the actual sight of a blazing goblin, screaming and running hysterically into battle, gives pause to even a seasoned Crab samurai. The incendiary creature dies quickly, but not before it has caused chaos in the enemy ranks and set most things it touched on fire.

The bakemono see the ritual of magic mud as having a sort of religious significance, and often enter a hysterical frenzy while the sticky pitch is still being smeared onto their bodies. Once the magic mud is ignited, the goblin enters an exalted berserk state, reducing all TN penalties from Wounds by 10 (to a minimum of 0), gaining a bonus of +1k1 bonus to all attack and damage rolls, increasing its Armor TN by 5, gaining 5 points of Reduction, and increasing its Swift rating by 1. However, after four Rounds the goblin begins taking 5 Wounds at the start of each Turn as the burning pitch begins to consume its body.

Anything flammable touched by a flaming goblin will be set on fire, and non-flammable objects will be smeared with burning pitch. Characters who are struck by the burning goblin will take 1k1 damage from the pitch for the next two Rounds. Clothing and other flammable items start burning, and even non-flammable items may end up with some burning pitch stuck on them. Anyone struck by a flaming goblin, or striking it with a Small weapon or an unarmed attack, will be smeared with burning pitch and takes 1k1 damage at the end of their next two Turns. The flaming pitch can be smothered or scraped off, but water will not extinguish it unless delivered in vast quantities (such as by jumping into a pond).



Goblin Shaman

Bakemono often mimic other creatures, for unfathomable reasons and with pitiful results. It is thus no surprise that some tried to copy the rituals of maho-tsukai. The shock is that a few actually managed to learn how to cast crude maho spells. In modern times almost all goblin tribes of significant size have at least one shaman. Just as with other aspects of their race, there is no unity of technique among them. Some shamans focus their skills on offensive maho, but others become twisted "healers," making sure an injured goblin will rise up to die in combat again the next day. Shamans are also typically in charge of the preparation of the notorious magic mud and its ceremonial application on their fellow goblins.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 2	-	-	Perception 2

Initiative: 3k2

Attack: Knife or sharp stick 4k2 (Simple)

Damage: Knife or sharp stick 4k2

Armor TN: 15

Reduction: 4

Wounds: 9: +5; 18: Dead

Skills: Craft (Magic Mud) 3, Hunting (Survival) 1, Intimidation (Bullying) 2, Lore: Maho 2, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Medicine (Goblin, Herbalism) 2, Spellcraft 2, Stealth 2.

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Spellcaster: A goblin shaman can cast maho spells as though it possesses Insight Rank 1. Typically shamans only know spells of Mastery Levels 1 and 2, although a few rare shamans may attain spells of Mastery Level 3.*
- *Swift 2.*



Goblin Sneak

"The only thing worse than the ones that are all teeth are the ones that won't fight."

– Toritaka Sensaichi

The goblins known to their fellows as "sneaks" are as cunning as the ruling warmongers, but lack the physical power of the goblin leaders. All goblins tell lies as readily as they breathe, but most are not smart enough to make their lies believable. The sneaks are less impulsive than the average bakemono, and take deception to a whole new level: when faced with mortal danger, they can fake their own death. Lying on the ground in a grotesque pose, unmoving and covered with the blood of their slaughtered brood, they are difficult to spot for even an experience Crab samurai. The ability to keep calm in the face of violence and danger also makes the sneaks the best scouts the goblins have. They can track enemy troop movements while remaining unseen, and the most skilled among them can even infiltrate enemy camps and eavesdrop on opponents' battle plans. Occasionally they even remember what they heard and saw when they report back to their leaders.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	-	Perception 3

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Knife or sharp stick 4k2 (Simple)

Damage: Knife or sharp stick 3k2

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 9: +5; 18: Dead

Skills: Defense 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 2, Stealth (Ambush, Shadowing, Sneaking) 4.

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Feign Death: A goblin sneak can attempt to fake its own death, smearing itself with blood, falling down, and lying unmoving. A PC who wishes to try to see through this deception must roll Investigation (Notice) / Perception against the sneak's roll of 5k3.*
- *Swift 3.*

Goblin Warmonger

Long before the mysterious flesh-sculptor called Omoni created his enhanced goblins, there were infrequent occurrences of bakemono with superior strength, intellect, and size, sometimes standing as tall as five feet in height. The Kuni speculate that these creatures are what Fu Leng originally intended when he created the race of goblins. Thanks to their abilities, these superior goblins soon rise to command positions, bossing a goblin battle-mob or even becoming tribal chiefs. Of course, even the bakemono elite are barely on par with a typical samurai, but among their kind they are feared and respected leaders. All the most remarkable goblin inventions came from warmongers, such as the infamous "war truck" of the warmonger Ropputu and the "war machine" of Thuk-Kigi. Kuni Mokuna, one of the most astute of Kuni scholars, also reported meeting a highly intelligent goblin warmonger called Basher who sought to breed his fellows for greater strength and cunning.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 3

Initiative: 6k3

Attack: Katana 6k3 (Simple)

Damage: Katana 6k2

Armor TN: 25 (scavenged light armor)

Reduction: 7 (natural Reduction of 4, plus 3 for light armor)

Wounds: 15: +5; 30: +10; 45: Dead

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 3, Engineering 2, Intimidation (Bullying) 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Kenjutsu 3, Stealth 3.

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Mob Leader: As a Complex Action, a warmonger can try to inspire his troops into a fervor of violence. The warmonger makes an Intimidation (Bullying) / Willpower roll at TN 20. If it succeeds, all goblins within hearing (up to a maximum of 10 goblins) gain a +1k0 bonus on their attack and damage rolls. If the warmonger beats the TN by 15 or more, the bonus is +2k0 instead. The bonus lasts until the start of the warmonger's next Turn.*
- *Swift 2.*



Goblin Kings

Occasionally, goblin warmongers appear who are extremely difficult to kill. The Crab are uncertain as to the source of these beings, who are referred to by their lesser brethren as "kings" and are treated with extreme reverence. Some Kuni have theorized that these creatures are actually oni forced into goblin form by Fu Leng in order to better organize the unruly bakemono. Other Crab reject this theory and claim these are simply goblin warmongers who have gained additional powers from the Shadowlands Taint. Regardless, goblin kings appear exactly like goblins, but are calmer, and more manipulative. Mechanically, a goblin king's stats are identical to a warmonger's, but with the addition of the Invulnerability ability.



Goblins of Omoni

"Rise again, there is yet blood to spill!"

– Omoni the Flesh Sculptor, twelfth century

The monstrosity known as Omoni appeared in the Shadowlands during the mid-twelfth century, quickly joining the forces of the Dark Lord Daigotsu. In response to his lord's needs, Omoni – who possessed strange powers to manipulate and change the flesh – created a tougher breed of bakemono. Stronger, faster, more resilient, slightly more intelligent but also less creative and flexible, these new goblins were somber and blood-thirsty warriors, knowing nothing but warfare. They were skilled commanders, but lacked the notorious unpredictability and instinctual resourcefulness of the bakemono.

In eras of Rokugan's history prior to the rise of Omoni, or after the departure of his "children," the GM can use these creature stats to simulate unusually tough goblin troops by reducing Intelligence (and thus the Fire Ring) by 1 and total Wounds by 10.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Knife or sharp stick 5k3 (Simple)*

Damage: Knife or sharp stick 5k2 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 15: +5; 30: Dead*

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Defense 3, Engineering 2, Intimidation (Bullying) 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Kenjutsu 3, Stealth 3.

Taint Rank: 4

Special Abilities:

- *Fearless: Goblins of Omoni gain a +3k3 bonus to resist Fear effects.*
- *Swift 2.*

Hanemuri

Hanemuri are crow-sized reptilian flying creatures. They have scrawny, bony bodies covered with thin brown skin, bat-like wings, and oversized jaws lined with thousands of tiny needle-like teeth. Hanemuri usually lurk in treetops and other high perches, waiting for prey. Alone or in small numbers, hanemuri are cowardly, but when a dozen or more gather together, they become aggressive and will swarm larger prey with voracious ferocity, clutching and biting in a shrieking fury.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Perception 2

Initiative: 4k4 — *Attack: Bite 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 2k1 (Bite) — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 5: +10; 10: Dead.

Taint Rank: 2

Special Abilities:

- *Swarm Attack: For every 3 hanemuri attacking a single opponent, each one gains a +1k0 bonus to its attack rolls (thus, 6 hanemuri attacking the same foe would all gain a +2k0 bonus).*
- *Swift 4 (only when flying).*

Kumo

The race of creatures known as the kumo are not actually native to the Shadowlands. Rather, they are a race of shapeshifting spiders from Chikushudo, the realm of animal spirits. Long ago they were seduced by Fu Leng's promises of power and human flesh, and accepted the Taint into themselves willingly. Since then they have dwelt primarily in the Shadowlands, but can also be found in the Shinomen Forest (which is known to hide several nests of the creatures) and even within Rokugan proper. They are stealthy predators and good swimmers, and infiltrate via marshes, coastlines, and forests. The Shinomen forest is known to hide several nests of kumo.

In their natural form, kumo are giant spiders with an unsettling and malicious glint of intelligence in their six eyes. They usually measure between four and six feet long and stand about three feet high. Unlike many creatures from Chikushudo, they have lost the ability to shapeshift into human form, but they still possess their own language and human-level intelligence despite their Taint.



The kumo are clever and cunning predators. They can change their body color to camouflage themselves from prying eyes, and only attack humans when they are sure to win. Kumo are perfectly willing to survive on only animal flesh if it is necessary to avoid being caught by superior human forces. On the other hand, when the advantage is theirs they have been known to wipe out entire small villages for the sake of mischief and carnage. Their preferred tactics involve weakening their victims with webs and poison before closing in for the kill, and sometimes they bring victims back to their lairs for later consumption. The kumo go out of their way to kill other shapeshifters from Chikushudo, such as kitsune and tanuki, since they are deeply embittered about being stranded in the realm of mortals. These quiet wars usually go completely unseen by the Rokugani.

The kumo race possesses a king, a huge and incredibly powerful entity known as the Great Sea Spider. Fortunately it was imprisoned long ago in the Sea of Amaterasu. This entity was completely unknown to the Rokugani until modern times, when it briefly managed to escape its bounds.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k4 — *Attack: Bite 7k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k2 (bite) — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 48: +15; 64: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Stealth 5

Special Abilities:

- *Camouflage: Kumo can change their coloration to match their surroundings, granting them a +2k0 bonus to their Stealth rolls.*
- *Fear 2.*
- *Venom: A kumo can spit venom as a Complex Action. This attack has a range of 15' and rolls 5k4 to hit. The venom functions as normal spider venom (as depicted in the L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook's Book of Void), functioning as though it has been introduced into the target's bloodstream.*
- *Web: A kumo may shoot webbing on an opponent as a Complex Action. This has a range of 20' and an attack roll of 6k4. If successful, the victim is Entangled, and can attempt to break free as a Complex Action with a Strength roll at TN 20.*

Mamono

"I don't remember what he called himself, but the ward knew the truth – his skin burned away and a bloody creature of muscle and fat stood in his place, with a single eye and spider's fangs protruding from its stomach. Its hands were serrated blades of bone."

– Kuni Kaji, late tenth century

The mamono is a rare and dangerous shapeshifting creature that is extremely difficult to kill. Their ability to mimic human form has prompted the few Kuni who studied the creatures to suspect they are related in some way to the dokufu – perhaps a mutated spawn of the infamous Mountain Spiders. Whatever their origins, these creatures are both cunning and vicious predators. They have only one human form and cannot change their shape as quickly or easily as other infiltrators, so mamono prefer to create a long-term persona and travel the Empire in that guise. They move across the countryside, preying on anything that crosses their path – samurai, peasants, horses, dogs, cats, or whatever else they can catch. They are cunning and cautious, hunting and killing only in their true monstrous form while using their human form to avoid attention. If their true nature is exposed, they will use their invisibility to escape.

Mamono have an intense dislike of sunlight, which pains them. During the night, however, they are extremely resilient and almost impossible to kill permanently. If they are killed during daylight hours they will appear to be dead, but as soon as the sun is down their bodies begin regenerating, even putting themselves back together if they have been burned to a crisp or torn apart. The only reliable way to kill a mamono permanently is to tear it into at least three pieces and bury the parts separately, preventing them from ever reuniting.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Claw 5k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 (claw) — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 15 (5 against jade, crystal, obsidian, and magic) — *Wounds: 25: +5; 40: +10; 60: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Acting 3, Hunting 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 2, Stealth 3

Kumo Option: Limited Shapeshifting

GMs who wish to offer a little more variety in their depiction of kumo can choose to allow the race to retain a limited shapeshifting ability. Under this option, a kumo can take human form (or change back into spider form) as a Simple Action. However, the human form is always an extremely elderly and wizened individual (of appropriate gender) with skinny limbs and a bloated stomach.

Special Abilities:

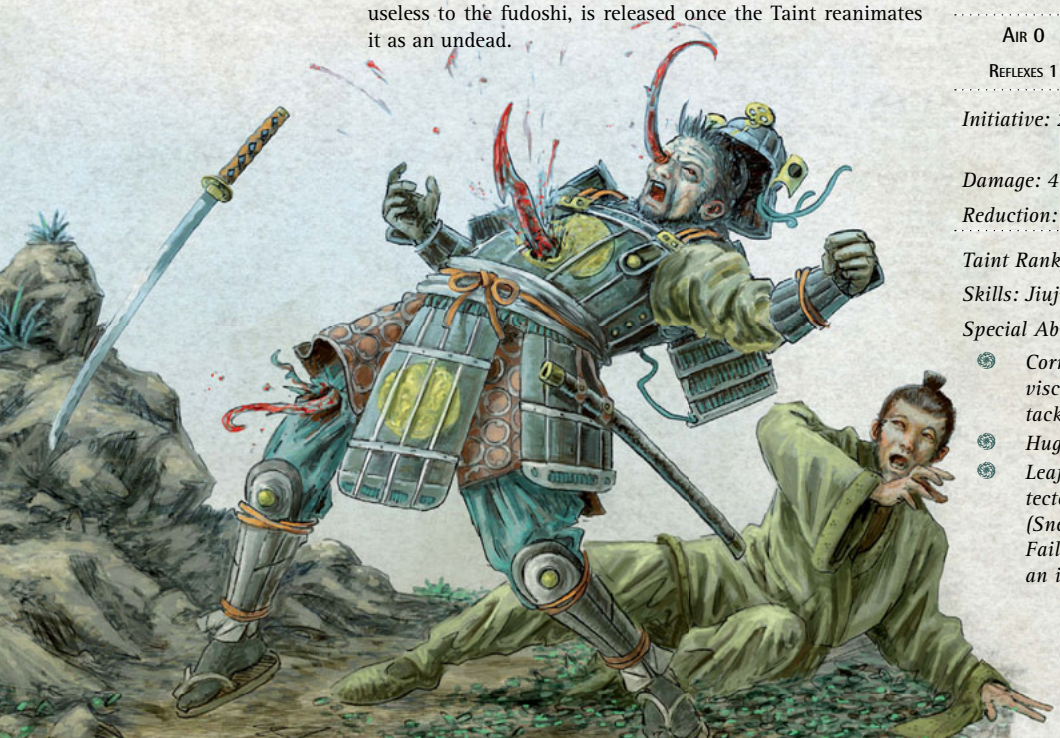
- *Daylight Sensitivity: During daylight, a mamono cannot regenerate Wounds. If its skin is exposed to direct sunlight, it will take 1k1 Wounds per minute. Mamono in human form usually employ hats, parasols, and other methods to protect themselves from the sun.*
- *Fear 3 (in true form)*
- *Inferior Shapeshifting: A mamono can assume human form, but it takes fifteen minutes to do so, and during that time it can only take Free Actions. It has only one unique human form (which may be either male or female). It can resume its true monstrous form as a Free Action and will automatically do so if it takes Wounds.*
- *Invisibility: A mamono can become invisible as a Simple Action, wrapping itself in a cloak of Air kansen. Dropping the invisibility is also a Simple Action, but it automatically becomes visible if it is reduced to Dead. The invisibility also ends after it makes an attack. While invisible it gains +30 to its Armor TN and +2k2 to all Stealth rolls.*
- *Resurrection: During the hours of night, a mamono regenerates 5 Wounds per Round, even if it was previously "killed" by reduction to Dead. If it is dismembered and buried, it can no longer regenerate.*

Monstrous Plants

The Shadowlands' flora is just as predatory and dangerous as its fauna, and can take many different forms. An innocuous looking field of tall brown grass can hide a deathtrap of poisonous thorns. Vines or strange trees will reach for trespassers and choke them to death, and sometimes even a flower can be lethal.

Fudoshi (Tanglevines)

The fudoshi looks like a mundane vine growing along the surface of the earth, covering anything from a few square feet to several hundred square yards. As soon as a living being walks over the fudoshi, the vines react to the warmth of life and reach out to ensnare the victim, holding him tight until death by suffocation. The vine seems to feed off the death-throes of the victim and grows as its captive dies. The cold corpse, useless to the fudoshi, is released once the Taint reanimates it as an undead.



Air 0	Earth 0	Fire 0	Water 1
Reflexes 1	-	Agility 3	Strength 2

Initiative: 2k2 — *Attack: Vine Tentacle 3k3 (Complex, but up to 10 tentacles)*

Damage: Special (tentacle attack, see below) or 2k1 (suffocation) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 15 (5 against jade, crystal, obsidian, and magic) — *Wounds: 6: Dead (each tentacle).*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Abilities:

- *Ensnare: The fudoshi attacks simultaneously with all of its tentacles (between 1 and 10, depending on the size of the fudoshi), reaching to grasp any target within ten feet. Each tentacle attacks as if it were an independent creature, holding on to the victim after a successful attack. Each such successful attack reduces the target's Armor TN by 5 and inflicts a +5 TN penalty the victim's physical actions. These penalties are cumulative. If the total TN penalty ever equals or exceeds the victim's Agility x5, he becomes Entangled and suffers 2k1 Wounds per Round as the fudoshi suffocates him. The only ways to break free from the tentacles are to kill them (each must be slain separately) or to break free from their combined grasp with a Contested Strength roll – to which the TN penalties apply, of course.*
- *Grappling Tentacles: The fudoshi's tentacle attacks ignore the effects of armor on their victim's Armor TN.*

Lava Tree

The lava tree looks like an upside-down uprooted tree with red bark and leaves. The leaves blanket the surroundings, while the roots sway even in windless air. Lava trees are found mainly in those areas of the Shadowlands with volcanic activity and sulfurous vents. The lava tree detects its victims through its leaves, and its tentacle-like roots dart down to snatch victims. It then proceeds to slowly crush them while feeding on their lifeforce.

Air 0	Earth 5	Fire 0	Water 4
Reflexes 1	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Root Tentacle 5k3 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k2 (root) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 60: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Jiujutsu 2

Special Abilities:

- *Corrosive Sap: If a lava tree is damaged, it leaks a viscous red sap that inflicts 1k1 Wounds to the attacker if he is within 5' of the tree.*
- *Huge.*
- *Leaf Senses: Walking on the lava tree's leaves undetected requires a successful Contested Roll of Stealth (Sneaking) / Agility against the tree's Perception. Failure means the lava tree detects its prey and makes an immediate attack (prior to rolling Initiative).*





- *Partial Invulnerability (Fire).*
- *Snatch Attack: The lava tree's tentacles can reach targets up to 15' away. With a successful attack, the tree initiates a Grapple with its target. Grappling damage is 4k2. The lava tree never suffers the penalizing effects of the Grappled Conditional Effect.*

Takesasu (Stinger Plant)

The takesasu appears to be a tall dead stalk. From its top hangs a single vine with a barbed bulb. The bulb contains a paralyzing poison, and whenever the takesasu senses movement nearby, it lashes out and attempts to inject the toxin into its target. Once the victim is paralyzed, the plant will inject digestive fluids that will slowly break down its body into a sludge the takesasu can absorb.

Air 0	Earth 1	Fire 0	Water 1
Reflexes 1	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Poisonous vine 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 (thorn) — *Armor TN: 5*

Reduction: 10 — *Wounds: 5: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Abilities:

- *Acid Blast: When a takesasu is destroyed, its acid reservoir explodes, automatically inflicting 2k2 Wounds on anyone within 5 feet.*
- *Poison/Acid Attack: If its attack is successful, the takesasu's barbed thorn pierces the skin and becomes attached to the victim, inflicting 1k1 Wounds and immediately injecting the paralyzing poison. The victim must succeed at an Earth roll at TN 25 or be paralyzed, unable to take Actions of any kind. Each following round, unless the stinger is removed (with a Contested Agility roll) or destroyed, the takesasu will inject acid into the helpless victim, dealing an additional 2k1 Wounds. After the stinger is removed, the victim's paralysis will wear off in a few minutes (typically 10 minutes minus the victim's Stamina Rank). Magical spells can end the paralysis earlier. Regardless, the victim will still be weak and shaky for the next eight hours, suffering a -1k1 penalty to all rolls.*
- *Vulnerability: The takesasu is easily burned, due to its dry composition. Any fire-based attack (mundane or magical) inflicts an additional 1k1 damage each time.*

Mountain Goblin

At first glance, this creature resembles a goblin, but it is more thickset, its skin is gray rather than green, and its flat, knobby head sports a mane of filthy hair. Unlike true goblins, mountain goblins are not particularly aggressive and their numbers are few. Strictly speaking, they are not the same species as true goblins, but only the few Kuni scholars studying the Shadowlands care about such details.

As their name suggests, these creatures are usually encountered in mountainous areas in the northern parts of the Shadowlands, although there have been some reports of small packs of mountain goblins in the Seikitsu Mountains. Legends tell of a subterranean network under Rokugan, dug and used by mountain goblins. However unlikely this is, it remains a popular story, and is often invoked to explain how these creatures are sometimes found deep in the Empire. The mountain goblin is reclusive, hiding in caves and scavenging whatever food it can find. It usually lives alone or in small familial groups.

The mountain goblin's most striking trait is its ability to regenerate, or more accurately, to reattach severed limbs. A mountain goblin that suffers such a grievous wound will simply pick up the lost limb, quite unfazed, and hold it up to the stump. Moments later it will be reattached and fully functional.

Mountain goblins are not especially aggressive, but when in or near their lairs they will fight fiercely and with seemingly little regard for their own safety, confident in their powerful regenerative abilities. In the face of tough opposition, however, they will usually flee to recover from their wounds and return later to harass their foes with hit and run attacks. The mountain goblin is not capable of skilled crafts, but it can use weapons if it manages to scrounge them from humans.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 3

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claws 4k3 (Complex), Weapon 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 (claws) or by weapon — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 10: +5; 20: +10; 35: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

Skills: Stealth 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Night Vision: Mountain goblins can see equally well in near-darkness as in normal light.*
- *Regeneration: Mountain goblins heal 5 Wounds during the Reactions Stage of each Round, continuing to heal until they are killed. They can reattach a severed limb in 2 rounds, as long as the limb and the stump are held together continuously for that time.*
- *Swift 2.*

Nikumizu (Heart Grubs)

"The creature must be cut out, the difficulty of which depends on the skill of the surgeon and the cooperation of the patient."

– Kuni Mokuna

Nikumizu are some of the smallest creatures in the Shadowlands, but that does not make them any less dangerous. These brown worms are about the size of a human forefinger, and have no obvious organs except for a mouth filled with sharp mandibles, allowing it to pierce and burrow through flesh. Nikumizu commonly hide in dead logs, cracks in the floor, and other locations where they can attack without warning. Once under the skin, they slowly burrow their way to their victim's heart, a very painful process that cuts nerves and muscles and leaves the victim's body parts inert in the nikumizu's wake. Once it reaches the heart, the victim dies and the nikumizu lays its eggs, which mature for 24 hours before hatching and erupting from the body, leaving telltale holes. Crab warriors have come to fear the sight of such a corpse. Worse, this process does not prevent the body from being reanimated as a zombie, making for a very nasty surprise when a dozen worms emerge from a freshly-killed undead.

The pain and panic inflicted by a Tainted worm eating your flesh and aiming for your heart will often result in uncontrolled screaming and thrashing, attracting even more danger in the Shadowlands. It also makes medical extraction very difficult for the patient. Tying the leg in which the worm is burrowing may prevent it from reaching the heart, but may also destroy the whole leg in the process.



The Kuni believe the nikumizu evolved from Tainted earthworms. Whatever their source, their numbers, small size, and horrible attack make them a serious danger in the Shadowlands, and they seem to favor human flesh over other potential prey.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
Reflexes 3	-	-	-

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Burrowing 1k1 (Complex)*

Damage: Special (see below) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: None. — *Wounds: 4: dead.*

Taint Rank: 1

Special Abilities:

- *Burrowing: Once a nikumizu's attack is successful, it burrows under the victim's skin. It deals 4 Wounds each Round until the victim dies or the nikumizu is removed. Removal can only be done via surgery, which requires a Medicine/Agility roll at TN 25. Each attempt at surgery inflicts 2k2 Wounds on the patient.*

Obake

The Obake is the horrifying reminder that not all evil comes from the depths of Jigoku: it can sometimes be found in its purest form in the hearts of men. Some of these men manage to get through old age by manipulating everyone they meet, clawing their way through life by the most avaricious, spiteful, and despicable acts. The most hateful of them naturally draw kansen spirits, who whisper in their ears of ways to cheat death and prolong their malevolent lives. This unnatural pact transforms an old man into an obake, attracting vicious wasps that burrow into the flesh of his back to form great bulbous hives.

The obake appears as a spindly old man with ragged clothes covering a grotesque hump on his back. Always alone, he walks with a painful hunch and usually carries a cane or staff to help him along. He will often rudely demand food or money from passersby. If he is rebuffed, he will become enraged, cursing and scolding them for refusing aid to a helpless old man.

The obake's hump is actually the wasp hives. They resemble huge infected swellings, nodules of flesh crawling with buzzing wasps that continually come in and out through small red-rimmed holes. An obake does not usually directly attack those who enrage him – instead he prefers to flee and then release a vengeful swarm of wasps. If an obake is attacked directly, it can defend itself with its cane, but again prefers to flee under cover of a swarm of wasps.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 1
Reflexes 6	-	-	Strength 3

Initiative: 6k6 — *Attack: Cane 7k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 (cane) — *Armor TN: 35*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 10: +5; 30: +10; 50: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Intimidation (Bullying, Control) 6, Sincerity (Deceit) 6, Staves 3.

Special Abilities:

- *Regeneration: The obake's bargain makes it difficult to slay. So long as it remains alive, it will heal 2 Wounds during the Reactions stage of each Round.*
- *Swift 3.*
- *Wasp Swarm: The obake may release a swarm of angry wasps from the hives on its back. This is a Complex Action. The swarm can fly up to 60' away from him and attacks up to three targets, inflicting 1k1 Wounds per round automatically. A target swarmed by wasps is considered Dazed and cannot cast spells. Only an area-targeting magical effect (spells that unleash gouts or blasts of fire, strong winds, etc.) or a fire attack (such as waving a blazing torch) can disperse the swarm. The obake controls enough wasps to create two swarms at a time, but if a swarm is dispersed, it cannot be used again for a day.*

Ogres

Ogres are one of the most well-known races of the Shadowlands, and most Rokugani are aware of their existence. They are even present in some dubious works of art and poetry. Little more is known beyond that, however, and most Rokugani would be shocked to learn that ogres may have once been a proud race with a rich culture.

Most ogres call the Shadowlands their home. As described in the L5R RPG 4th Edition Core Rulebook, they are massive humanoid creatures, averaging 8' in height, with thick skin and bulging muscles. They commonly have small horns or bulges over their eyebrows, and may have a length of black hair that they tend to tie in a topknot.

The ogres living in the Shadowlands are solitary and brutish creatures. They only have the tiniest inklings of intelligence, and their weapons are often nothing more than huge tree trunks or boulders. They prefer to lair in caves and grottoes, and tend to pile skulls in a surprisingly orderly way in front of their homes, perhaps to impress or frighten visitors. They fight fiercely and without any sort of subtlety, bellowing and swinging weapons or fists as they charge. A victorious ogre will withdraw to consume the flesh of its victims in private.

A group of trained samurai can defeat an average ogre without too much difficulty, so long as they do not underestimate its strength. The creatures usually travel alone and lack any sort of technique or precision, but one blow from an ogre can be enough to kill. Despite their stupidity and lack of stealth, ogres do sometimes manage to slip into Rokugan, usually via the Shinomen Forest. They tend to roam the countryside, staying clear of major human settlements, and hunting whatever or whoever passes close to their new lair.

Although many Shadowlands scholars believe female ogres do not exist, in fact they do. However, they are incredibly rare and carefully guarded by the males. Their low numbers are compensated by the fact that ogres of any kind do not die of old age. They do not seem to look particularly different from their male brethren.



Ogres, Free

"The fallen god lashed out at Muhomono with his sorcerous skill, cursing our race, and driving the Ogre lord mad. We have been mad ever since."

– A free ogre

The phenomenon of "free ogres" is poorly understood at best, and precious few Rokugani are even aware of it. It seems those ogres who travel outside the Shadowlands sometimes begin to slowly change their nature once they are beyond the direct influence of the Tainted realm. After about a month in Rokugan, these ogres find their intelligence increasing, and they discover the ability for elaborate language. It would seem that the farther the ogres travel from the Festering Pit, the weaker becomes Jigoku's grip on their minds and souls. The Taint does not disappear, but the ogres regain a human-like level of intelligence and begin to dimly remember ogre history – a history many of them experienced personally, since this race does not die of old age. The so-called free ogres became much more common after the Second Day of Thunder, and some of them even appeared spontaneously within the Shadowlands itself, apparently set free by the death of Fu Leng. However, free ogres have never been the majority of their race, and unless the Festering Pit is closed this seems likely to remain the case.

According to the ogres, the progenitor of their race was Muhonarak, who came from the north of Rokugan and defeated the ancient Five Race Alliance's leaders in tests of skill, then fought an army of demons led by a tiger-like demon called a rakshasa. Muhonarak built an ogre empire, but centuries later, it was vanquished and enslaved by the Nezumi. After Fu Leng fell from Tengoku and destroyed the Nezumi cities, the ogre king, Muhomono son of Muhonarak, refused to bow to Fu Leng even after the trolls had already done so, and in retaliation the Ninth Kami robbed them of their souls to make them his powerful, if stupid, servants.

Needless to say, few if any in Rokugan have ever heard this story, and those who have dismiss it as blasphemy, fairy tales, or utter lies. However, some of its elements do seem to echo parts of the kenku and Nezumi legends.



Some free ogres also remember a form of sorcery. According to their legends, ogres were creatures of the four elements, and as such can cast spells of the four elements (having no knowledge of the Void). Since this is incredibly rare even compared to normal free ogres, no Rokugani shugenja has ever witnessed ogre magic, nor has anyone formulated a theory about how it works. The handful of female free ogres that exist tend to show talent for magic, and are often called hags.

Free ogres consider humans to be evil but pitifully weak creatures. They will sometimes ally with ronin to form bandit groups inside Rokugan, but they consider the humans to be their slaves. When free ogres manage to become numerous enough to live in groups, they maintain a strict military hierarchy, with promotion achieved through ritual hand-to-hand combat. Ogres love raw flesh and have prodigious appetites, but they will never eat each other. They also refuse to eat Nezumi flesh for fear of being corrupted by the ratlings' cowardice.

The free ogres have divided views on the Lost. Some ally with them, but most loathe them for being humans and bowing to Fu Leng's power. The free ogres do respect the strength of the Lost and do not provoke them needlessly. Free ogres rarely ally with any other race, seeing most of them as either too weak or as slaves to Fu Leng, if not both. The only race they respect is the ferocious Tsuno, although contacts between the two are very rare.

Typical Free Ogre

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6	–	Strength 6

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Club or tetsubo 8k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 8k2 (Club or small tree) or 9k3 (Tetsubo) — *Armor TN: 30 (wears heavy armor)*

Reduction: 15 (includes 5 Reduction for heavy armor) — *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

School/Rank: Ogre Bushi 1 (see "Ogre Schools" at the end of this chapter)

Skills: Battle 1, Defense 2, Jiujutsu 2, Heavy Weapons 4, Hunting 1, Intimidation (Bullying) 2, Stealth 1

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Huge.*

Typical Free Ogre Leader

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 4
–	Stamina 6	–	Strength 6

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Club or tetsubo 9k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 8k2 (Club or small tree) or 9k3 (Tetsubo) — *Armor TN: 30 (heavy armor)*

Reduction: 15 (with 5 Reduction from heavy armor) — *Wounds: 30: +5; 50: +10; 70: +15; 90: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

School/Rank: Ogre Bushi 3

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Jiujutsu 5, Heavy Weapons 5, Hunting 3, Intimidation (Bullying) 5, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: History (ogres) 2, Lore: Underworld 1, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3.*
- *Huge.*

Typical Free Ogre Overlord

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 4	Water 4
–	Stamina 6	–	Strength 7

Initiative: 9k4 — *Attack: Club or tetsubo 10k6 (Complex)*

Damage: 9k2 (Club or small tree) or 10k3 (Tetsubo) — *Armor TN: 35 (wears heavy armor)*

Reduction: 25 (includes 5 Reduction from heavy armor) — *Wounds: 40: +5; 60: +10; 80: +15; 100: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

School/Rank: Ogre Bushi 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 6, Defense 5, Jiujutsu 6, Heavy Weapons 7, Hunting 4, Intimidation (Bullying) 7, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: History (ogres) 5, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 5

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 3.*
- *Huge.*

Typical Ogre Mage/Hag

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 6	–	Strength 6

Initiative: 6k3 — *Attack: Club 7k5 (Complex)*

Damage: 8k2 (Club or small tree) or 9k3 (Tetsubo) *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 10 *Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 60: +15; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

School/Rank: Ogre Mage 2

Skills: Battle 1, Defense 3, Heavy Weapons 2, Hunting 1, Jiujutsu 2, Intimidation (Bullying) 3, Lore: History (Ogres) 5, Spellcraft 5, Stealth 1

Spells: Envious Flames, The Fires That Cleanse, The Fires From Within, Armor of Earth, Soul of Stone, Earth Becomes Sky, To Seek the Truth, two others chosen by the GM.

Special Abilities:

- *Fear 2.*
- *Huge.*

Onibaba (Demon Crone)

Onibaba are thankfully an extremely rare, perhaps even unique, creature. The few Rokugani who have had a chance to observe an onibaba – and who were lucky enough to survive – think it could be some sort of highly evolved bog hag. Kuni scholars theorize bog hags' need to wear new skins goes deeper than mere deception: they may in fact be searching for the perfect skin that can become fully theirs, a skin that will never rot away. Once they were "completed" by such a skin they would gain additional powers. As usual with the spawn of Jigoku, this theory is unlikely to ever be proven one way or the other.

The onibaba and the bog hag both share the same basic shape: an impossibly old human-like woman with monstrous facial features and a large mouth filled with jagged, razor-sharp teeth. Both creatures feed on human flesh. The onibaba, however, does not wear others' skins, and its own natural skin is bone white. It has long unruly hair that seems to have a will of its own. It can use its hair to both attack and defend itself, the strands moving like tentacles. The onibaba also possesses limited shapeshifting abilities, and can alter its apparent age at will to look young and beautiful. Most notably of all, the onibaba is a potent spellcaster.

Again like bog hags, onibaba prey on humans, but their favorite hunting grounds are in the mountains and forests of the Empire, where they lure travelers away from main roads and devour them. They can and often do infiltrate human society, but usually only for the purpose of enticing victims to follow them out to their lair: a rickety wooden shack or a dark cave. There, they kill their prey and expertly carve the flesh from the bones with a large kitchen knife. Witnesses claim to have seen kumo around onibaba lairs, suggesting some manner of partnership between the two species – perhaps the onibaba feed the kumo their leftovers.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
Reflexes 4	-	-	Strength 4

Initiative: 7k4 *Attack: Claws 7k4 (Complex), Knife 6k4 (Simple), Hair Tentacle 7k4 (Free & Simple)*



Damage: 4k3 (Claws), 5k1 (Knife), 3k2 (Hair Tentacle) *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 *Wounds: 15: +5; 35: +10; 55: +15; 75: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Acting 4, Jiujutsu (Hair Tentacle) 3, Knives (Tanto) 2, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 4, Temptation (Seduction) 5

Special Abilities:

- *Demon Hair: The onibaba can extend or retract strands of its hair at will, to a maximum length of 40'. The strands can be used as simple prehensile tentacles, and can also attack, defend, or grapple as the onibaba desires. Each hair tentacle can act completely independently of the others, but the onibaba can never control more than 4 at a time. When attacking (slashing like a whip), the first tentacle attacks as a Free Action, and the others as Simple Actions. When defending, each tentacle provides a +5 Armor TN bonus and increases the onibaba's Reduction by 1. When the hair tentacles are used to grapple, the onibaba does not suffer the effects of the Grappled Conditional Effect – however, if a tentacle is grappling, the others can only be assigned to defend.*
- *Fear 3.*
- *Invulnerability.*
- *Shapeshifting: The onibaba can take the form of a beautiful young woman as a Simple Action, and resume its true form as a Free Action. It also automatically assumes its true form if it attacks or suffers Wounds.*
- *Spellcaster: The onibaba can cast maho and elemental spells as a Rank 3 shugenja with an Affinity for Air and no Deficiency.*



Breaking an Onikage

To break an onikage, a potential rider must first mount it, requiring a successful Athletics/Agility or Horsemanship/Agility roll at TN 25. Then comes the tricky part: stay astride the creature for 3 rounds as it bucks, leaps, and does everything possible to throw the rider off its back. This requires three consecutive successful Horsemanship/Agility rolls, with TNs of 25, 30, and 35. Failing any of these rolls means the rider is thrown off the onikage and will immediately be attacked. Further attempts to break the unnatural animal will not be possible.

Onikage (Demon Steed)

"Their eyes were bulging and yellow, and I didn't realize they had claws on their hooves until they ran Maiko down and leapt on her like lions."

– Hida Teruo, late tenth century

Whenever horses die or are Lost to the Taint in the Shadowlands, they are reborn as onikage. Their forms vary greatly: some look reptilian, with black scaled skin, a forked tongue, and a mane of spines, while others simply look like zombie horses, with green rotting flesh and a mane of tentacle-like hair, and still others are just animated skeletons. Most onikage have glowing red eyes, and all have clawed hooves that they use to attack. Onikage are carnivorous and feed on their victims. They do not like traveling outside of the Shadowlands, but will do so for their riders.

Most onikage encountered in the Shadowlands are wild and travel in herds. However, they can be tamed like regular horses, and the Lost have used them as mounts for centuries. When a rider breaks an onikage, a supernatural bond is established. The onikage marks the rider, giving him a subtle deathly stench that frightens normal horses to the point they won't let him approach, much less ride them. In return, the onikage is extremely loyal to its rider, and will come to him from wherever it might be in the Shadowlands when the rider calls.

Air 0	Earth 4	Fire 1	Water 4
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 6

Initiative: 3k3
Attack: Clawed Hooves 4k3 (Complex)
Damage: 6k3 (Hooves)
Armor TN: 20
Reduction: 10
Wounds: 40: Dead.

Taint Rank: 6

Special Abilities:

- *Huge.*
- *Swift 3.*
- *Undead.*

Sanshu Denki (Muck Monster)

The sanshu denki is an amphibious creature that dwells in the marshes of the Shadowlands. It looks like a huge salamander, thirty or more feet long, with soft and slimy skin in a mottled green and black pattern. Its large head is shaped like a clamshell and its vast mouth is lined with dagger-shaped teeth. It can open its cavernous maw wide enough to gulp down a samurai and his mount entire. Although the sanshu denki possesses two very small beady eyes, it is blind. This disability does not lessen the creature's threat, however, as it compensates with other extremely keen senses, especially hearing and feel.

The muck monster, as it is sometimes called, is a patient creature. It lies in wait, preferably in pools of mud or swamp ooze, until prey gets close. Then it surges out of the water in a blur of motion, biting its target, swallowing it whole, and returning underwater to quietly digest its meal. Its most astonishing feature, however, is its shocking touch: the sanshu denki's skin holds a static charge, and anyone who touches it with bare flesh or metal is dealt a disorienting jolt.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 4k4
Attack: Bite 5k3 (Complex)
Damage: 7k4 (Bite)
Armor TN: 15
Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +15; 90: Dead.

Taint Rank: 3

Skills: Stealth (Ambush) 5.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Sanshu denki swim in water as easily as they move on land, if not easier. They do not need to make a Skill roll to swim.*
- *Blind Hunter: The sanshu denki does not suffer any penalties for its blindness, due to its other superior senses.*
- *Huge.*
- *Shock: Anyone touching the sanshu denki with bare flesh or metal objects suffers 3k1 Wounds and has their Initiative score reduced by 5 until the next Round's Reactions stage. This can affect each character only once per Round.*

- *Swallow Whole: After a successful bite attack, the sanshu denki can choose to hold onto its prey, who is considered Entangled and can only break free with a Contested Strength roll. On its next Turn the sanshu denki can swallow its victim as a Complex Action. The character immediately suffers 2k1 Wounds, and the same amount again each Round he remains in the creature. After a number of Rounds equal to his Stamina+1, the swallowed character will also begin suffocating, suffering an additional 2k2 Wounds every Round. Swallowed characters are squeezed by powerful muscles and can only use Small-sized weapons and unarmed attacks. Fortunately, the sanshu denki can only swallow a maximum of two victims at a time.*

Swamp Goblin

Swamp goblins are goblins only in name. Although they share a similar general physical form and behavior (which earned them their name), these imp-like creatures are actually very different from bakemono. Physically, swamp goblins look like the hideous merge of a humanoid frog and a goblin, with large glowing yellow eyes, long pink-frilled gills where their ears would be, and thin scales covering their body. Their skin color ranges from mottled yellow to bluish green and their limbs are disproportionally elongated. They need to keep their delicate skin constantly moist, and thus rarely leave their native swamps. They are always covered with slimy mud and wet marsh vegetation.

Swamp goblins are smarter than true goblins, and their behavior is sometimes more like a Nezumi's than a goblin's. The smartest of them have been able to learn basic Rokugani. They are not aggressive and prefer to avoid fighting whenever possible – indeed, in that regard they are probably some of the least dangerous of the Shadowlands' denizens. Swamp goblins are extremely curious by nature and attracted to anything shiny or brightly colored. They are known to approach human scouts and bombard them with questions, or sneak up and steal trinkets, jewelry, or even bottles. A savvy samurai could possibly barter baubles for information, assuming he can endure the endless questions and grasping paws. However, one should never forget that swamp goblins bear the mark of Jigoku, and trusting them can prove to be a fatal mistake.

Swamp goblins live in small tribes, usually built around a familial core, and wander through the Shadowlands marshes in search of food. They hunt small animals or fish, and are not above eating carrion. Given the chance they will certainly include human flesh in their diet. They exhibit strong loyalty to their tribe, but they are not sentimental: if food grows scarce, they will not hesitate to eat their dead.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 1
-	-	Intelligence 3	Perception 2

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Bite 4k2 (Complex), Club 5k1 (Complex)*

Damage: 2k1 (Bite) or 1k1 (Club) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 8 — *Wounds: 15: +10; 30: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 2

Skills: Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Stealth (Ambush) 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Swamp goblins swim in water as easily as they move on land, if not easier. They do not need to make a Skill roll to swim.*
- *Night Vision: Swamp goblins can see easily even at night or in very dim light.*
- *Vulnerability: Swamp goblins dislike heat. Any attack based on fire causes them an extra 1k1 damage.*

Trolls

For most of the Empire's history, the Rokugani have believed trolls to be cousins of the ogres. The misconception was buttressed by the outward physical similarities between the two races. However, the truth is very different. The trolls are an ancient race, one of the so-called Five Races that pre-dated humanity. They had a vast but decadent civilization and built many cities, most notably Volturnum, their capital. By the time the ogres came from the north, however, the troll civilization was in decline, and they were soon conquered and enslaved.

Centuries later, when Fu Leng fell from the Heavens, the trolls were all too eager to swear fealty to the Dark Lord, embracing the Taint and becoming slaves once more, this time to Jigoku. The remnants of their civilization lingered for a few centuries but were finally crushed by Hida Osano-Wo. In modern times, the trolls have degenerated so much that none remember anything of their former greatness. Broken and scattered, the troll race now lives only to serve the will of Jigoku.

Trolls are large, flabby, green-skinned humanoids with yellow glowing eyes, slimy skins, and webbed feet. They live deep in the Tainted swamps and seas of the Shadowlands. They cannot breathe water but can stay submerged for several hours without coming up for air. Unlike ogres or goblins, who all possess a fairly homogeneous appearance, trolls are differentiated into two recognizable sub-species. Their strength and size is impressive – only slightly shorter than ogres and just as strong. Their voracious appetite is also well recorded, and they can devour almost anything with seeming relish, even the most putrid of carrion. Trolls prefer to ambush their prey, lurking underwater until a tasty looking passerby approaches.





For the most part, trolls are reclusive. They avoid other denizens of the Shadowlands and behave submissively toward oni, Lost, and other powerful beasts – the legacy on their broken spirit of centuries of slavery. Trolls are territorial and do not travel except when looking for a mate. They usually live in burrows which can only be accessed through underwater tunnels. They do not manufacture weapons, but they know how to use them if they can find them – preferring bludgeoning weapons over anything else.

Little is known of troll society. According to Hiruma scouts, troll females never leave their lairs: they are much larger and more imposing than the males, to the point of having difficulty moving. They spawn "trollings" every few years, in litters of four to eight; these mature very quickly, within a few months.

In ancient times trolls had a special affinity with the element of Fire. This has receded to almost naught in modern times, but a few trolls dubbed "shamans" by their kin can instinctively call upon their forgotten heritage.

Troll, Common

As the name suggests, common trolls (also known as marsh trolls) are the most numerous troll sub-species. They prefer to avoid fighting except when they clearly have the advantage or when trespassers enter their territory. When they do fight, they do so furiously, but not foolishly: they rarely fight to the death, and will try to rescue wounded brethren before retreating.

Air 1	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 5	–	Strength 5

Initiative: 5k3

Attack: Claws 6k3 (Simple), Large Club 5k3 (Complex)

Damage: 6k3 (Claws) or 8k3 (Large Club)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 20: +5; 40: +10; 65: +15; 90: Dead.

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Jiujutsu 3, Heavy Weapons 2, Stealth (Ambush) 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Trolls do not need to make a Skill roll to swim, and can remain underwater for a number of hours equal to their Stamina.*
- *Low-Light Vision: Trolls can see easily in dim light and night, though not in complete darkness.*

Troll, Sea (Umibozu)

Umibozu are trolls that live in the Seas of Shadow, the portion of the Umi Amaterasu that borders on the Shadowlands. Like common trolls, they are reclusive despite their actual power. The intense corruption of the Seas of Shadow seems to render a few of them utterly mad, however, turning them into rampaging beasts. Also, a few umibozu have been known to transform into the giant abominations called o-umi-bozu (see below).

Umibozu resemble common trolls except that their skin is rippled and slimy like an eel's and they have probing, anteater-like tongues, rough enough to saw through planks of wood. Their foreclaws are powerful, but their webbed legs are shrunken and stubby. They delight in attacking ships by breaching the hull from below, then picking off the swimming sailors one by one.

Air 2	Earth 4	Fire 3	Water 2
–	–	–	Strength 6

Initiative: 5k3

Attack: Claws 5k3 (Simple), Tongue 6k4 (Complex)

Damage: 6k3 (Claws), 4k4 (Tongue)

Armor TN: 15

Reduction: 10

Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 95: Dead.

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Jiujutsu 2, Stealth (Ambush) 2.

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Trolls do not need to make a Skill roll to swim, and can remain underwater for a number of hours equal to their Stamina.*
- *Low-Light Vision: Trolls can see easily in dim light and night, though not in complete darkness.*
- *Shock: Anyone touching an umibozu with bare flesh or metal items suffers an electric shock, dealing 3k1 Wounds. The victim's Initiative score is reduced by 5 until the next Round's Reactions step. This can affect each character only once per Round.*
- *Swift 3 (in water).*



Troll, Giant Sea (O-Umi-Bozu)

The Kuni who have seen this creature first identified it as an oni. Later observers suggest it is the product of a summoning pact between a sea troll and an oni. Although troll shamans could potentially give their name to oni, the spawn of Jigoku are not much interested in this wretched and entirely corrupted race. There are some minor oni, however, who are satisfied with a temporary partnership allowing them to revel in carnage in the realm of mortals. This symbiosis can only happen in the most Tainted areas of the Seas of Shadow. The oni inhabits the Tainted body of the troll, granting it terrible powers. The result is a humanoid figure entirely made of seawater, towering 40' or more above the waves. Its long arms end with wicked claws, and its tall head features a vast maw. Somewhere in its chest, hidden in the murky waters, is located the original troll, and destroying the creature also kills the troll.

The o-umi-bozu usually attacks ships in the open seas, favoring Mantis and Crab boats sailing the southern seas of Rokugan. However, in the Empire's thousand years of history there have been reports of the creature destroying coastal villages or ports as far north as the Phoenix coast. Its nature prevents it leaving the sea, which it depends on to regenerate its body. Fleeing the shoreline to higher ground is a safe way to avoid death at the o-umi-bozu's claws.

Air 3	Earth 6	Fire 3	Water 6
-	-	Agility 5	Strength 8

Initiative: 7k3

Attack: Claws 9k5 (Simple)

Damage: 10k6 (claws)

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 15 (5 against jade, crystal, and obsidian)

Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15; 160: Dead.

Taint Rank: 6

Skills: Stealth 6 (only while underwater)

Special Abilities:

- *Aquatic: Like a normal troll, the o-umi-bozu does not need to make a Skill roll to swim. It can remain underwater indefinitely.*
- *Fear 4.*
- *Huge.*
- *Supernatural Vision: The o-umi-bozu can see perfectly in complete darkness.*
- *Waterfall Crush: As a Complex Action, the o-umi-bozu can shoot a torrent of water from its mouth. The range of this attack is 40' and it inflicts 8k4 Wounds to anyone within 10' of the impact point. Repeated attacks will wash away most wooden buildings and seriously damage stone structures by undermining their foundations. It can also quickly sink a ship by swamping it.*
- *Watery Regeneration: As long as the o-umi-bozu remains in a large body of water, it heals 10 Wounds during the Reactions stage of each Round.*

Troll Shamans

Troll shamans are so rare that even most Kuni scholars consider them to be legends. This is mainly because they seldom leave their tribe's burrows, and when disturbed they can hide their location very effectively. Troll shamans possess the same stats as regular trolls, with the following additional abilities.

Shroud of Mist: As a Free Action, a shaman can generate a patch of fog all around him. The initial radius is 30', but consecutive uses can extend it to a maximum of 120'. The fog is so dense that visibility within is limited to 30'; characters attempting to make a ranged attack must make 1 extra Raise per 5' of fog the arrow has to pass through beyond the first 10'. Any Skill or Trait roll involving sight over distance is similarly affected.

Spellcasting: Some (but not all) shamans can cast maho and elemental spells (Fire and Water only) as an Insight Rank 2 Shugenja with no Affinity or Deficiency.

Steam Breath: As a Simple Action, a shaman can breathe scalding steam against a single target within ten feet. The steam has a DR of 3k3, and the target must make a Water roll against a TN equal to the damage total or be Blinded until the end of his next Turn.



Tsumunagi (Blood Eel)

"While I am not certain that chopping these things into small pieces after removal is absolutely necessary, it is extremely satisfying."

– Kuni Mokuna

The tsumunagi is some sort of a cross between a monstrous leech and an eel, and is found only in the Shadowlands' most Tainted regions. Its rubbery black body is almost three feet long and nearly flat. On the underside are two suckling mouths, one at each end. These mouths look like lengthwise gashes about six inches long, filled with tiny serrated teeth. In addition, the sides and ends of the creature are lined with tiny hooks and claws with which it digs into the flesh of its victims.

The tsumunagi dwells in shallow pools of murky water or in rotting trees near water, and is often found in colonies of a dozen or more individuals. When hot-blooded prey approaches, the tsumunagi springs upon the victim's nearest limb and wraps itself tightly around it. It then bites into the victim's flesh and drains blood until death. Even worse, the creature's saliva thins the blood, so even a freed the victim will continue to bleed profusely unless properly bandaged. Removing a tsumunagi is a difficult task, but as with a regular leech, a flame or burning ember applied to its skin will make it squeal in pain and briefly release its grasp.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 2	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Bite 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 3k1 (bite), plus subsequent blood drain (see below) — *Armor TN: 20 (5 while attached to a victim)*

Wounds: 10: +10; 20: Dead.

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Stealth (Ambush) 4.

Special Abilities:

- *Land Crawler: The tsumanugi moves normally in water. While on land, however, it moves only 5' with a Simple Action and cannot move as a Free Action. However, it can coil as a Complex Action and on a subsequent Round it can spring on a target up to 15' away as a Free Action.*
- *Leech: After a successful attack the tsumunagi wraps itself around a limb and begins draining blood. On each subsequent Round it automatically inflicts 2k2 Wounds of blood drain. Removing the tsumunagi by brute force requires a successful Contested Strength roll and inflicts an additional 2k1 Wounds as the claws and teeth are torn loose. If not immediately bandaged (a Medicine/Intelligence roll at TN 20) the wound will continue to bleed, dealing 1k1 Wounds per Round.*
- *Swift 4 (in water).*
- *Vulnerability: Fire or heat will cause a tsumanugi to recoil in pain, releasing any victim it has bitten.*

Yamauba, the Mountain Ogress

"I have ended the Month of Dead Children."

– Kaiu Yukio, 602

The creature known as the Mountain Ogress is a solitary hunter with a singular power: any person who gazes upon it will see their own mother. Naturally, it prefers to avoid crowds. The only giveaway of its true form is its icy-cold skin and a small fanged mouth on the back of its neck. The yamauba reveals its true form when it attacks its prey (or when it dies): a foul humanoid creature with eyeless snakes for hair and six-inch claws on its fingers.

As might be deduced from its illusory powers, the yamauba is an infiltrator and prefers to slip into Rokugan rather than remain in the Shadowlands. It is a much rarer creature than other infiltrators like bog hags, and thus can often remain undetected for considerable lengths of time so long as its illusion is not penetrated. It prefers to live among clans with little Shadowlands knowledge, such as the Crane or Lion, rather than remain among the paranoid Crab. Within the Shadowlands, it preys on weaker creatures like goblins, avoiding powerful enemies like oni. Its native territory is hills and mountains, and it makes secret lairs in such territory whether it dwells in the Shadowlands or the Empire.

Yamauba prefer to feed on children, especially samurai children. They use their illusionary powers to slip into samurai society and work as baby-sitters, picking off children from time to time and then shifting the blame onto others. They will also prey on adults, but always prefer the weak and vulnerable – inexperienced courtiers, sheltered young women, and so forth. Although they do not have the superb imitative powers of bog hags, they are fairly good at play-acting the role of a harmless and devoted old mother, and look as shocked as anyone when their victims are found. If in danger of exposure, they will try to flee to their mountain lair and resume infiltration later.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
-	-	-	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k4 — *Attack: Claws 6k3 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k2 (claws) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 8 — *Wounds: 20: +5; 50: +10; 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Acting 4, Etiquette 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4

Special Abilities:

- *Invulnerable*
- *Mother's Face: A yamauba always appears as the mother of the person looking at it. This illusion can only be exposed if it dies, it attacks, or someone notices its icy-cold skin and the small fanged mouth at the back of its neck.*

New Basic School: Free Ogre Bushi [Bushi]

The so-called free ogres, once they begin to slip free of Jigoku's direct control, quickly discover they remember an ancient set of techniques that can be put to tremendous use in a fight. While an average ogre is already a respectable opponent, those who know the techniques of their bushi school are much more dangerous. Muhomono, the legendary king of ogres and supposedly perfect ogre warrior, epitomized these techniques, so mastering them is a source of pride and glory for free ogres. They revel in the rediscovery of their culture and try to approach the excellence of their long-dead king.

The techniques of this school emphasize the ogres' superior strength and size, focusing these natural advantages into deadly weapons. While the school's techniques outwardly barely look different from a savage ogre's normal assault, this is deceptive; the free ogre school is actually quite sophisticated in its methods. The fact it is not recognized as such by humans is only one more advantage for the ogres.

This school can only be taken by an ogre. No other race would ever be allowed to learn Muhomono's sacred techniques.

- **Benefit:** +1 Strength
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Jiujutsu, Heavy Weapons (ogres treat any large club, tree-trunk, etc, as a Heavy Weapon), Hunting, Intimidation (Bullying), Stealth
- **Honor:** 0 (Ogres have their own concept of Honor, but it is not one shared by the Rokugani.)
- **Outfit:** Heavy Armor, Tattered Clothing, any 2 weapons.

Techniques

Rank 1: Muhomono's Strength

Named for the legendary king of ogres, this technique comes as a profound revelation to most free ogres as they reconnect with their race's ancient legacy. It allows the ogre to focus its strength into more powerful blows, instead of wasting it like his savage cousins. Before rolling Initiative, you may choose to inflict a –1k1 penalty on your Initiative roll. If you do, you gain +2k0 on all damage rolls for the rest of the skirmish. Also, you gain a Free Raise on all Intimidation (Bullying) rolls.

Rank 2: Muhomono's Eyes

The great Muhomono won many fights with his terrifying gaze, striking fear into his opponents before the fight even began. Your Fear rating is increased by 1, and you add +1k0 to your attack rolls against any opponent who failed to resist your Fear.

Rank 3: Muhomono's Speed

The ogre warrior strikes his opponent with speed and strength, certain in his superiority over any opponent. You may make attacks as a Simple Action instead of a Complex Action while using large weapons, Heavy Weapons, or unarmed attacks.

Rank 4: Muhomono's Arm

The broad and powerful arm of the ogre bushi carries over from one opponent to another, never slowing down. Once per skirmish, if you successfully hit an opponent with a melee attack, you may immediately inflict the same damage roll on another opponent of your choice within 5 feet of the first one, without making an attack roll against the second opponent. This does not count as a separate attack.

Rank 5: Muhomono's Armor

A true ogre bushi knows that physical armor is only a disguise – the true warrior needs nothing more than his skin and determination. Your natural Reduction increases to 20.

New Basic School: Ogre Mage [Shugenja]

Some very rare free ogres discover that they have the ability to influence the elements by sheer force of will. Called mages by their peers, these ogres slowly remember how to carve sigils in their skin to summon forth magical powers. Ogres can cast spells of all four elements, although they tend to favor Fire due to its destructive nature. Their flexibility with the kami has greatly disturbed the few Rokugani shugenja who have noticed.

This school can only be taken by an ogre. Humans are incapable of manipulating the kami in this manner even if an ogre was willing to teach them – which none are.

- **Benefit:** +1 Willpower
- **Honor:** 0 (Free ogres have their own concept of Honor, but it is not one shared by the Rokugani.)
- **Outfit:** Tattered Clothing, any 2 weapons.
- **Skills:** Battle, Defense, Hunting, Jiujutsu, Intimidation (Bullying), Lore: History (Ogres), Spellcraft
- **Technique: Strength of the Mind** – The ogre mages do not use the same techniques as the Rokugani shugenja, but instead coerce the kami into submission through mystical sigils and sheer strength of will. You can never learn or use the spells Sense, Commune, or Summon. You do not need spell scrolls; instead you call on the power of sigils carved into your own skin (in mechanical terms, all of your spells are considered to be memorized). You have no Affinity or Deficiency and cannot learn kiho.
- **Spells:** 3 Fire, 2 Earth, and 1 Air.


空の巻

The Spirits

Rokugan has always been a highly religious culture that maintains links to matters beyond the merely physical. The world they inhabit is strongly connected to realms beyond, especially to the ten other Spirit Realms that coexist with the mortal realm. Evidence of these spirit realms is abundant, and most Rokugani are at least generally aware of the spirits and their differing nature. After all, tricksters, wise ancient sages, and beautiful temptresses have meddled in the affairs of man many times over the centuries, sometimes leaving chaos and confusion in their wake. Scholars have written many tomes on the characteristics of the different spirits discovered over the years, theorizing on their nature and behavior. Combined with the adventures of shugenja who explored the spirit world, not to mention the occasional adventurous wanderer, the Rokugani gradually developed a theoretical model of the spirit realms beyond their own. It took many centuries for this understanding to develop, and even in modern times the Rokugani have only partial knowledge of the worlds beyond their own. Of course, some Rokugani have more practical reasons for their interest in these strange creatures. Investigators such as the Phoenix Inquisitors and the Toritaka family learn of the different Spirit Realms so they may better protect the helpless from the predations of ghosts and other malignant entities. Many of these otherworldly creatures intend only harm for the Rokugani, and it is only the efforts of guardians like the Toritaka that keep mankind safe.

The Different Spirit Realms

The various Spirit Realms were discussed briefly in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook. Here we present a more detailed exploration of the Spirit Realms, their individual nature and inhabitants. In general, travel between the different Spirit Realms, and between those Realms and the mortal world of Ningen-do, is difficult – though there are exceptions such as Chikushudo. In most cases, passing between the Spirit Realms requires some manner of portal, and depending on this distance between the various realms these portals can be very difficult to open or sustain, requiring powerful magic to do so. Certain locations within Ningen-do are attuned to the Spirit Realms, and portals can be opened more easily in these places – for example, the throne room in the first Imperial Capital, Otosan Uchi, was a very spiritually potent location where portals could be opened fairly easily.

Most intelligent creatures from the Spirit Realms are fully aware of their own nature and will often consciously attempt to cross from one Realm to another. Ningen-do seems to exert a particular attraction to these creatures, and all manner of them have interacted with mortals over the course of the Empire's thousand-year history.

Chikushudo, The Realm of Animals

Of all the Spirit Realms, Chikushudo has the closest ties to the mortal world. Much of Chikushudo overlaps with Ningen-do, and its inhabitants frequently and easily pass over the border. Spirits from other realms who are attempting to reach Ningen-do often choose to move into Chikushudo first to bypass some of the difficulties of entering the mortal realm.

The Realm of Animals looks almost exactly the same as Ningen-do, albeit without any signs of human habitation. Aside from that, the only discernable difference between the two Realms is that the inhabitants of the Realm of Animals have a firmer grasp on their abilities within their native realm. Chikushudo is home to all manner of creatures both magical and mundane. Normal unintelligent animals do not consciously recognize the differences between Chikushudo and Ningen-do, although they sense by instinct that the Realm of Animals is a better place for them.

Many shapeshifters call Chikushudo home, more than in any other realm. Scholars are unsure if this is a coincidence or if the Realm of Animals exerts some sort of influence encouraging these creatures. Within this realm may be found badgers, bats, cranes, dogs, foxes, hares, and monkeys, among others, who can change their form at will and even take on human bodies. Most do not reveal this fact to those not of their own blood, and when they explore the mortal world they are careful to keep their true nature hidden.

An Animal's Love

Shapeshifters have consistently been a part of Rokugani myth, ever since the country was old enough to have myths. Most involve fantastical creatures taking human form and falling in love with virtuous men. Surprisingly, many of these myths are based on fact. Many shapeshifters, especially Kitsune, have taken human female forms and married samurai. The most famous of these marriages united the future Crane Clan Thunder, Doji Hoturi, to a woman named Doji Ameiko. Hoturi was unaware that his wife was a kitsune and never learned the truth. Ameiko committed jigai when she learned of her husband's apparent infidelities with Bayushi Kachiko, the most notorious temptress of the era, and her true nature was never discovered.

Unfortunately, such tragic endings are common in such stories. Shapeshifters who venture out into the human world are bound by powerful laws known as taboos which restrict their actions and choices. One of these taboos is to never reveal these laws to their spouses. Because of this ignorance the laws are frequently broken, and when that happens the shapeshifter must return to Chikushudo, leaving the human world behind.

Although the Kitsune are the shapeshifters most notorious for their relations with humans, they are by no means the only ones to feel the call of mortal love. The Bat Clan, for example, was founded by a man of half-shapeshifter blood whose immortal parent was a bat.



Gaki-do, The Realm of the Hungry Dead

After a mortal passes on from this life its soul travels to the Realm of Waiting to be judged. Those whose overwhelming depravities make them unworthy to immediately reenter the Celestial Order are ejected to Gaki-do, the Realm of the Hungry Dead, whose negative energies only increase the spirits' insanity. Once a spirit enters Gaki-do, it is surrounded by demons and other spirits intent on devouring everything around them. Although some spirits sent to Gaki-do can eventually achieve redemption and rejoin the Celestial Order, it is more common for them to be eternally warped by their base desire to feed. These creatures hate everything and everyone without prejudice, and hold no thoughts in their minds other than to satisfy their eternal hunger.

Gaki-do has weak borders with Toshigoku, Jigoku, and Ningen-do, allowing gaki to travel to those places with ease. Of course, these hungry dead are only happy to enter these feeding grounds, intent on stripping each place until there is nothing left.

Vampires and Soul Drinkers

Humans have a visceral fear of losing their essence to others. Dozens of terrifying stories speak of monsters that suck the lifeblood or even the soul out of a man, leaving only a husk behind. Most of these stories are mere tales without any basis in fact, but some such creatures do exist... although they seldom match their myths exactly. The undead known as pennaggolans feed on the blood of mortals, as do the spirits known as o-toyo. The spirits called buruburu feed off the adrenaline and exhaustion of their victims, while the average gaki feeds on unclean substances – or simply eats its prey.

More information on the common types of Gaki can be found in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook and in the Undead chapter elsewhere in this book.

Jigoku, The Realm of Evil

Jigoku has been the enemy of Rokugan since the dawn of the empire. It corrupted one of the Kami to lead its armies against humanity, and constantly threatens mankind with endless armies of demons, not the mention the dreaded Taint. Powerful oni can be summoned by misguided shugenja, or simply pour out of the Festering Pit of Fu Leng like water through a hole in a dam. The Pit is the single largest spirit portal in the mortal realm, a direct link between Ningen-do and Jigoku. Thankfully, the size of the Pit has never increased over the centuries, limiting the flow of evil forces. Shadowlands creatures are among the greatest enemies of the Empire, and they are covered in detail in other chapters of this book.

Hell

Jigoku is the worst place in all the Spirit Realms. Indeed, a few Rokugani scholars believe demons attempt to spread their influence into the mortal realm so they may have some moments of peace away from Jigoku. Of course, the oni do not confine their attentions to Ningen-do; they are intent on destroying or conquering all the other Spirit Realms, since they cannot stand the thought that others do not share their miserable existence.

The demons of Jigoku have distinct ranks, a pecking order that derives from strength and size. Weaker oni will always stay out of the way of stronger oni and will slavishly follow their orders in battle. No one knows if this is because of mere self-preservation or if the demons are following the will of the Realm of Evil itself.

Maigo no Musha, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny

Maigo no Musha is a unique Spirit Realm because it did not exist before man. It was the cataclysmic events initiated by mortals that shook the Celestial Order and gave birth to Maigo no Musha. The twelfth-century conflict known as the War of Spirits shifted the balance in the Spirit Realms. The War of Spirits was responsible for thousands of deaths over more than a decade, but those deaths should never have happened – the spirits which killed these people were *shiryo*, ancestors, no longer a part of the Celestial Order. The souls of those killed were left in limbo because they had been blocked from fulfilling their destiny. A new Spirit Realm, the Realm of Thwarted Destiny, formed to house all these poor creatures as they struggled to find a way back into the world. Over time, Maigo no Musha adopted a more expansive role and became the Realm of Lost Heroes, a home for all spirits denied their proper fate.

Souls reach Maigo no Musha when something happens which denies them their true fate and destiny. This may occur because of major unnatural events such as the War of Spirits, or smaller-scale incidents that prevent an individual soul from fulfilling its proper path. These souls wander through Maigo no Musha's vast realm, looking for a way to fulfill their destiny. It is believed the Realms allows them to eventually enter the Celestial Pattern once more and be reincarnated into their next life, although no one knows with certainty.

The Legion of the Dead

The Realm of Thwarted Destiny was formed in part because of a fight between the souls of fallen heroes and villains who had passed away around the time of the Second Day of Thunder. Those who fought to preserve the natural balance called themselves the Legion of the Dead, while those who sought to harness the power of the emerging new Spirit Realm for Jigoku called themselves the Legion of Blood. The Legion of the Dead succeeded in driving off their foes and thus directly helped the formation of Maigo no Musha. Afterward, the Legion remained to guard the realm from any intruders, performing the same role as the Blessed Guard in Yomi.

Meido, The Realm of Waiting

The Celestial Order reincarnates souls, sending them back to the world in another form, or to one of the other Spirit Realms in reward or punishment for their conduct in life. Before that can happen, however, these souls must go to Meido to be judged by Emma-O, the Fortune of Death, and assigned to their new lives.

Meido is a flat, uninteresting place with few distinguishing features. It serves as an interim place, a pause before spirits pass onwards, so there are only a few native races that reside within the realm. These natives tend to reflect the drab nature of their home. They are devoid of emotion and always coldly logical.

The realm's borders are jealously guarded, as Meido must remain in a constant state to keep the Celestial Order from collapsing. Because of this, few native spirits ever leave the Realm of Waiting. Those that do tend to have little impact upon the world since they are uninterested in human affairs. On the other hand, sometimes mortal souls may become lost on their way to Meido, or be drawn back to the mortal world by unresolved emotions. These souls become *yorei*, ghosts. They are discussed in the L5R 4th Edition core rulebook in the *Book of Void*.

"May You Live in Interesting Times"

This phrase is a curse bestowed by the Akodo on their enemies. To the creatures of Meido, however, it is not a curse. Centuries of existing within the uneventful realm are enough to make any spirit desire change. Creatures of Meido who enter Ningen-do are often determined to shake off the influence of their realm and affect the mortal world, but they rarely manage to do so.

On the other hand, some creatures from Meido might be able to bestow their curse of mediocrity and ennui onto others. A "demon" that sucks enthusiasm from its surroundings could actually be a native spirit of Meido. Such a creature would overpower its enemies by removing their desire to do anything – including to continue living.

Ningen-do, The Realm of Mortals

Ningen-do is the focus of attention from all the other Spirit Realms because mortals determine the future of everything around them. Actions taken on mortal soil have consequences that ripple out to the Spirit Realms. Those who wish to affect other Spirit Realms often find it easiest to accomplish this by altering the people of Ningen-do. The inhabitants of Ningen-do have become accustomed to the constant assault from outsiders and are generally determined to repel them all so they can lead lives free from supernatural interference.

Sakkaku, The Realm of Mischief

Sakkaku is unique among all the Spirit Realms for one reason: it serves no higher purpose. Each other realm acts as a destination for spirits that pass through the Celestial Order, but none of those spirits ever enter Sakkaku. The Realm of Mischief is filled with light-hearted spirits who exist only to play pranks on those unfortunate enough to stand in their way. When they can find no victims these spirits are forced to run their hoaxes on themselves. The results are usually disastrous.

The realm itself reflects the chaos of its inhabitants. The landscape follows no rhyme or reason and doesn't seem to follow the laws of physics. Outsiders are instantly confused by an upside-down land where nothing seems to make sense, not to mention the relentless antics of mujina, pekkle, and other native spirits.

The Killing Joke

As a whole, the creatures of Sakkaku do not intend to harm their victims. Instead, they derive pleasure in frustrating their opponents. Unfortunately, their definitions of 'joke' do not often follow human conventions. From a human perspective many of these pranks are deadly dangerous or exceedingly cruel. The tricksters of Sakkaku seldom comprehend the results of their actions because the vast majority of them are long-living and nigh-impervious to physical damage.

Tengoku, The Celestial Heavens

The rulers of the Celestial Pattern gather in Tengoku to hold court over all, watching the activities in the other Spirit Realms at will. Gods, Fortunes, Elemental Dragons, the Sun, and the Moon all reside within the beautiful world of Tengoku. The borders of this blessed realm are guarded by Fortunes, lesser kami, and powerful warrior spirits. Tengoku's guardians make sure that nothing ever enters the Celestial Heavens unless at the bidding of the Fortunes themselves, and indeed the Heavens are better protected than any other Spirit Realm, warding the sanctity of the Celestial Order. No possible enemy would stand a chance against the combined might of Tengoku, yet Jigoku has tried to assail the realm more than once.

Mortals often say that Tengoku is the Realm of Good, much as Jigoku is called the Realm of Evil, but this is not completely accurate. Rather, the forces of Tengoku represent the proper order and balance of all things. Unfortunately, Jigoku's ambitions threaten to tip the scale of power, because Jigoku wishes to extend its control to all other realms. Tengoku is forced to defend the other realms – not in the name of good, but in the name of the proper order of the universe.

The Will of the Heavens

The Rokugani speak of the 'will of Tengoku' and the 'will of Jigoku,' but theologians cannot agree on whether those conceits actually exist. It is comforting, of course, to think of Spirit Realms as having minds of their own. The Rokugani want to believe the entirety of the Heavens are on their side in the eternal battle against the Shadowlands. Likewise, a focused and malevolent evil is easier to accept as an enemy than random chaos. The fact that the borders of the Spirit Realms remain impenetrable most of the time points to a greater intelligence at work. On the other hand, it can be hard to argue for a guid-

ing intelligence when disasters and great calamities disrupt the goals of the Spirit Realms, such as the civil war that temporarily split the Shadowlands after the Second Day of Thunder.

Toshigoku, The Realm of Slaughter

Rokugan is a land of constant strife with a ruling class of warriors. Countless people die on the battlefield while serving the orders of their lord. Those who die with rage in their hearts are often consumed by their powerful emotions. They are reduced to nothing more than unthinking beasts who live only to continue the fight. These blighted souls enter Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, where they wage war on each other for the rest of eternity. The land of Toshigoku resembles Rokugan in every way except one: those who die on its battlefields return on the sunrise of the next day, ready to continue their senseless fight.

Spirits from the Realm of Slaughter may not seem as threatening overall as the creatures of other Spirit Realms, since they have no long-term motive or direction, no ability to plan or consider anything beyond the tactics of their immediate skirmish. On the other hand, they are murderously violent and their skills are honed by an eternity of battle. The borders between their Spirit Realm and the mortal world weaken in places of great conflict, and packs of Toshigoku slaughter spirits often appear in Ningen-do with little to no warning. These malignant spirits are discussed in the Undead chapter elsewhere in this book.

The realm of Toshigoku is also the primary home base of the vicious Tsuno, an ancient off-shoot of the Kitsu. These creatures are discussed in the chapter on the Five Ancient Races elsewhere in this book.

Demons of Human Proportions

The slaughter spirits of Toshigoku are horrifying specifically because they were all once human. They represent what each samurai can become if he allows his base instincts to rule over him. They wear the arms of a samurai and seem to practice the same techniques they did in their previous lives, but they fight without purpose, for no higher goal. The Rokugani consider the Toshigoku spirits' mindless fighting a grave perversion of their own samurai duties. Every samurai who fights against the slaughter spirits must wonder if he will one day suffer the same painful fate.

Yomi, The Realm of Blessed Ancestors

Yomi is the reward for a mortal who fulfills his destiny, whether through a single act of great heroism or many lifetimes of loyal and honorable service. It is the highest reward a soul may achieve without attaining divinity. The Realm of Blessed Ancestors closely resembles Ningen-do, with cities and landscapes that appear exactly like their counterparts from the mortal realm, but free of the pain and misery of mortal life. Ancestor spirits, known as *shiryo*, reside in Yomi and watch over their descendants in the distant mortal world.

Residents of Yomi stay out of most conflicts between the other realms, an act of respect for their position. After all, they have already lived fulfilling mortal lives in Rokugan. They have no desire to return to the mortal realm in their own forms. They prefer to make their presence felt through subtler means – advice and guidance offered to their descendents, manipulating the weather to inspire a downtrodden samurai, and other such simple matters.

This does not mean the ancestors have no interest in the worlds around them. The shiryo of Yomi are also the quickest to rise to the defense of any Spirit Realm that comes under assault. When the armies of Jigoku march to destroy Tengoku or corrupt Chikushudo, the armies of Yomi are always there to oppose their wicked intent.

Best of the Best

Samurai from every century of Rokugan's long history reside within Yomi's borders. The Blessed Guard, an elite unit of shiryo, chooses only the best to join its ranks. Members of the Blessed Guard are the finest heroes ever produced by the human race, and can hold their heads up proudly even amid the inhabitants of Yomi.

Yume-do, The Realm of Dreams

The borders of Yume-do are paper thin and creatures of every Spirit Realm access it nightly. Whenever anyone, man or beast, falls asleep and dreams, he is accessing the Realm of Dreams. Most of these connections are brief and benign, as the dream ends just as abruptly as it began. However, powerful souls are able to maintain and hone this link to manipulate the malleable and chaotic realm. Those who can are often granted access to the great power of the Realm of Dreams.

Many of the inhabitants of Yume-do do not have a defined form. They change and adapt as each mind affects the reality of the realm. Other inhabitants, such as the Nezumi Transcendents, have adapted to the nature of their home and are able to use its power freely.

The Stuff of Nightmares

A malleable realm where any soul can alter reality seems like an excellent idea at first glance. However, Rokugani are not the only ones to access the realm of dreams. Monsters from Jigoku, ghosts from Gaki-do, and tormented spirits of Toshigoku can access Yume-do as well. Their dreams are insane and disturbing at their best, and mind-shattering at their worst. Yume-do is one of the most dangerous Spirit Realms to enter because of its chaotic and unpredictable nature. Fortunately, few people visit it for more than a few minutes at a time, and only rarely are mortals harmed during their normal nighttime dreams.



Unique Mechanics of the Spirit Realms

This section offers two new Advantages for player characters (subject to the permission of the GM) and a set of brief rules for Shapeshifter characters. These rules are intended primarily to flesh out Spirit NPCs (such as a Kitsune who falls in love with a PC), but bold and adventurous GMs may be willing to allow a player character to run a Shapeshifter character. Shapeshifters can potentially learn human Schools if they are able to dwell within human society for extended periods of time. The GM should be aware that Shapeshifter characters can easily disrupt the game, and their unusual powers and abilities are not balanced against other game mechanics and will give them significant advantages, not to mention tending to make them into the center of attention. Such characters should only be introduced if the entire group is comfortable with the idea.

New Advantage:

Child of Chikushudo [Spiritual] (7 points)

One of your ancestors was a spirit from beyond Ningen-do, and you have inherited some of his vast abilities. You may choose a Minor Shapeshifter Ability (subject to GM approval). However, your abilities were never intended to be contained within a human form, so you suffer one of the following special penalties. You may determine the penalty randomly with a single die roll, or collaborate with your GM to develop a specific penalty, either from the chart or personally created.

1-2. *Unsettling Visage: You retain a bit of the animal within even in your natural state. You suffer a -2k1 penalty on all Social rolls.*

3-4. *Crippling Stutter: The ancestor's true form seems to interfere with your ability to communicate. Every few sentences, your words come out garbled and nonsensical.*

5-6. *Painful Change: Every time you use one of your Shapeshifter Abilities, you suffer 5 Wounds.*

7-8. *Base Instincts: Once a week, the animal within compels you to perform humiliating acts that would seem normal to an animal. If others witness your shameful display, you lose 6 Glory points.*

9-0. *Unstable Form: You cannot fully control your shapeshifting abilities. Each time you use a Shapeshifting Ability, you must make a Void roll at TN 20. If you fail, you cannot use your Shapeshifting Ability and cannot use Void Points until the next sunrise.*

Medium [Spiritual] (4 points)

You have a strong connection with the Spirit Realms beyond your own. Though you may not physically travel to the other Realms, you may project your spirit into them by entering deep concentration. Your spiritual projection is malleable, and whenever you encounter other spirits while in this state they will treat you as one of their own unless you choose to reveal your status as outsider to them.

The Shapeshifter

Animal spirits and other shapeshifters have physical traits that resemble normal creatures of their race, yet possess gifts and intelligence far beyond such creatures. Many of these spirits also have fantastical abilities to alter their own form to fit the needs of the moment. Some races have better control of their bodies than others and are able to access greater powers and abilities.

A shapeshifter may choose a number of Abilities from the list that follows. The table shows how many abilities each race of Shapeshifters can potentially take and whether they can take Major Abilities or only Minor Abilities. However, every Shapeshifter is subject to laws and restrictions in order to gain access to its power. For each Ability the Shapeshifter must also choose a Minor or Major Penalty – a Minor Ability can be compensated with a Minor or Major Penalty, but a Major Ability always requires a Major Penalty. If a Shapeshifter ever breaks any of the rules set by its Penalties, it immediately loses all the benefits of its Shapeshifter Abilities until the next sunrise.

Shapeshifter Abilities: Minor

- **Animal Empathy:** You understand the chittering of natural animals. You may not speak their languages yourself, however, as most animals simply are not smart enough to understand what you are attempting to say.
- **As the Fish: You may breathe underwater, and swim as fast as your normal walking speed.**
- **Eyes of the Owl:** You may see as well in the darkness of night as in the light of the sun.
- **Humanity:** You may turn human for one full day (until the next sunrise). During this time you gain a Void Ring of 3 and may spend Void Points. You may choose to use this ability consecutively without reverting to your normal form; if you do so for at least one year and one day, you lose your shapeshifting abilities permanently, becoming entirely mortal.
- **Flight: You gain the ability to fly. While flying you gain Swift 1.**
- **Legendary Healing:** Once per skirmish, you may knit the wounds in your body as a Complex Action, healing 2k1 Wounds.
- **Mimic:** You may alter your form to another form as a Complex Action. The new form must be roughly the same size but otherwise may be anything you wish; however, while your body changes to fit your new form, your stats do not change. The new form only lasts for five minutes; if you use this ability in battle, the form lasts for five Rounds.

Table 12.1: Sample Shapeshifters

Species	Number of Abilities	Strength
Bakeneko (Cat)	Up to 3 Abilities	Major
Fushicho (Phoenix)	2 Abilities	Minor
Inu (Dog)	1 Ability	Minor
Kitsune (Fox)	Up to 4 Abilities	Major
Koumori (Bat)	Up to 2 Abilities	Major
Ryu (Dragon)	Up to 3 Abilities	Major
Saru (Monkey)	1 Ability	Minor
Tanuki (Badger)	1 Ability	Minor
Tsuru (Crane)	1 Ability	Minor
Usagi (Hare)	2 Abilities	Minor



- **A Panther's Moves:** You blend in with your surroundings without a thought. You gain a +3k0 bonus to all Stealth rolls.
- **Piercing Howl:** Once per skirmish, you may emit an ear-shattering howl as a Complex Action; this creates a Fear 2 effect on every character within 10' of you.
- **Speaker of the Dead:** You understand the words spoken by the creatures and monsters of the other Spirit Realms. You may not speak their languages yourself, and most malevolent monsters will ignore your words outright.

Shapeshifter Abilities: Major

- **Bound by the Heavens:** You believe in the truth behind your words. You will move the sun and moon to follow every promise you make to the letter. Three times a day, you gain a +1k1 bonus on any single roll while directly following a promise. Unfortunately, if you ever perform actions that would violate either the letter or the spirit of your promise, you suffer a -1k1 penalty on all rolls until the next sunrise.
- **Ephemeral Form:** Once per day, you may choose to make your body insubstantial. This lasts 10 Rounds and during this time you may pass through other physical objects with ease. This ability only applies to yourself and any non-living objects you are holding or wearing.
- **Possession:** Once per day, you may leave your body behind and attempt to enter another person. This is a Complex Action and requires a Contested Willpower roll. If your target fails, you inhabit the target's mind and control his actions until the next sunrise (when you are expelled from his body). You may not compel your victim to perform actions that would harm him or his loved ones.
- **Protection of Tengoku:** You gain **Partial Invulnerability**; you are Invulnerable to all mundane weapons.
- **Protection of Yomi:** You gain Reduction 5. This is not cumulative with any forms of armor, though it does stack with other natural sources of Reduction (such as racial benefits or School Techniques).
- **Speed of a Predator:** You gain **Swift** 2.
- **Strength of Jade:** You are imbued with the power of eternal jade. Your attacks may ignore Invulnerability as if you are using a weapon of jade, but such attacks suffer a -2k0 penalty on the damage roll.

Shapeshifter Penalties: Minor

- You cannot drink alcohol.
- You cannot cross running water.
- You cannot eat meat of any kind.
- You must always dress in the colors of your natural form.
- Your shadow always reveals your true form.
- You cannot bathe.
- You cannot lie.
- You cannot answer any question with a straight answer; instead, you must answer with another question.
- You cannot wear clothes other than the bare minimum to cover your modesty.

Shapeshifter Penalties: Major

- You cannot be the target of any elemental spell. If you are an involuntary subject of a spell, you cannot use one of your Shapeshifter abilities until the next sunrise (instead of all).
- You cannot kill another living being.
- You cannot enter a shrine or temple.
- You cannot allow a human to touch you.
- You cannot tell anyone your true nature or your true name.
- You may not speak.
- You may never touch an item created by humans.
- You must marry a worthy human within one year and treat your spouse with loyalty and respect. If your spouse proves unworthy of being by your side, you must return to your own Realm and never come back to Ningen-do.

Sample Spirits and Characters

The following sections contain a wide variety of spirits and entities from different Spirit Realms. The GM may use these as adversaries, as allies, or simply as interesting entities for the PCs to meet in their adventures.

Spirits of Chikushudo

Kitsune

Fox spirits are both the most numerous and the most famous creatures from the Realm of Animals. The kitsune's natural form is that of a fox with multiple tails, ranging between two (a minor fox spirit) to nine (a goddess of the forest). The creature shifts its form with ease to fit its whimsy or its needs. However, this transformation is not perfect; those with strong spiritual senses can see the tails of the new form. These people can also sense there is something different about the seemingly normal fox watching them from the heart of the forest.

Kitsune have a zest for life which pushes them to explore as much of the world as possible. They are mischievous and curious creatures. Kitsune relate to humans more than any other spirit, interacting with them as often as they can. They watch humans and occasionally take their form to satisfy their intense curiosity. Some have fallen in love and married humans, living with them for decades before returning to their own realm. These often become stories of tragedy, as humans and spirits can rarely coexist in happiness.

The Kitsune Mori near the Fox Clan has a very close bond with Chikushudo, and many kitsune reside within that deep forest. The Fox Clan knows their lands are home to many spirits and protect the fox spirits as best they can, for they could not have survived in the past without the help and compassion of the kitsune. For their part the kitsune know their human allies have their welfare at heart and do their best to aid them in turn.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 1
Reflexes 5	-	-	Perception 4

Initiative: 6k5 — *Attack: Claws 2k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 2k1 — *Armor TN: 25*

Wounds: 15: +10, 30: +20, 45: Dead.

Special Abilities:

- *Shapeshifter: All Kitsune partake of the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties listed earlier in the chapter. A "typical" Kitsune will have Mimic, A Panther's Moves, Protection of Yomi, and Ephemeral Form.*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 3*

Kitsune-tsuki

When a kitsune dies it attempts to clear its mind and soul of the troubles of the world, entering the next life in tranquility. Those who fail to do so sometimes become consumed by the failures of their life and transform into a kitsune-tsuki, a deadly and tormented mockery of the noble creature they once were. Kitsune-tsuki take the form of ghostly foxes that haunt the land where they passed away. They remain there and prey on passersby in a futile effort to feel the same sensations and pleasures they did while alive.

The kitsune-tsuki remains a highly empathetic creature, as it was when it was still alive. Unfortunately, the creature takes advantage of this fact to steal time away from its victims. Kitsune-tsuki possess mortal bodies, taking control of their actions and using them to vicariously experience life. The kitsune-tsuki cannot force a possessed human to harm itself, since self-preservation instincts are too strong to bypass, but this does not protect the victim from other dangerous activities such as being at the edge of a very unstable cliff or charging headlong into the heart of battle. It should be noted the kitsune-tsuki are generally happy with the time they have regained and do not intentionally attempt to harm their host. Tragedies do occur from time to time, however, and kitsune-tsuki feel no remorse of the havoc their actions may cause.

The kitsune-tsuki's possession does not last long, as its connection with the human body is tenuous at best. Kitsune-tsuki usually hide immediately after any recent possession, reveling in the new sensations. They are content and do not harm any potential victims in their path until the next craving for life returns, usually after a few weeks. Then the kitsune-tsuki goes on the prowl once more, desperately seeking another chance at a corporeal body.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	-	Intelligence 4

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Claws 6k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 (claws) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 15: +10, 30: +15, 45: +20, 60: Dead.*

Special Abilities:

- *Special Abilities:*
- *Partial Invulnerability: The kitsune-tsuki is Invulnerable to all mundane physical weapons.*
- *Possession: The kitsune-tsuki may attempt to possess any target who is sleeping or who is in the Down or Out Wound Ranks. The victim must make a Willpower roll at TN 25 or be possessed. The kitsune-tsuki must exit its host twenty-four hours after the initial possession.*
- *Spirit*
- *Spirit Strike: The kitsune-tsuki's attacks ignore armor, both the Armor TN bonus and any Reduction received from armor.*

Spirits of Gaki-do

Buruburu

The craving that drives creatures of Gaki-do is not limited to the feeding of the body. Some creatures gain energy from different sources of depravity and corruption. The buruburu is no exception. It is a malevolent spirit that loves to torture its victims while it feeds. It mostly hunts in Ningen-do because it is not strong enough to break the barriers to the other realms. Its source of nourishment is universal, and it can gorge wherever it goes.

The buruburu desires the taste of fear. It attaches to its victim undetected and does its best to remain unobtrusive. It is very easily killed by any who recognize its presence. Thus, it must rely on subterfuge and deception to maintain its survival. The buruburu possesses its target and begins to slowly destroy him over weeks of painful manipulation. The spirit does not physically harm the target of its possession. Instead, it tries to unravel the victim's sanity.

The buruburu forces its victim to suffer through the worst of its fears. Every night the target is asleep, the buruburu tortures him to make sure he never gets a peaceful rest. Every nightmare seems brutally real. As the target succumbs to the fear, the buruburu's hold increases until the buruburu can control the target even while he is awake. It is only a matter of time until the buruburu drains the target of his fear, turning him into a mere husk of a person. The victim finally dies from terror – or if he can overcome his fears, sheer exhaustion. This process takes weeks to finish, but the effects of the long descent are painful to behold.

Air 2	Earth 1	Fire 2	Water 1
Awareness 5	Willpower 4	Intelligence 4	Perception 3

Initiative: 3k2 *Attack: None*

Damage: None *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 10 *Wounds: 10: +10, 20: Dead.*

Special Abilities:

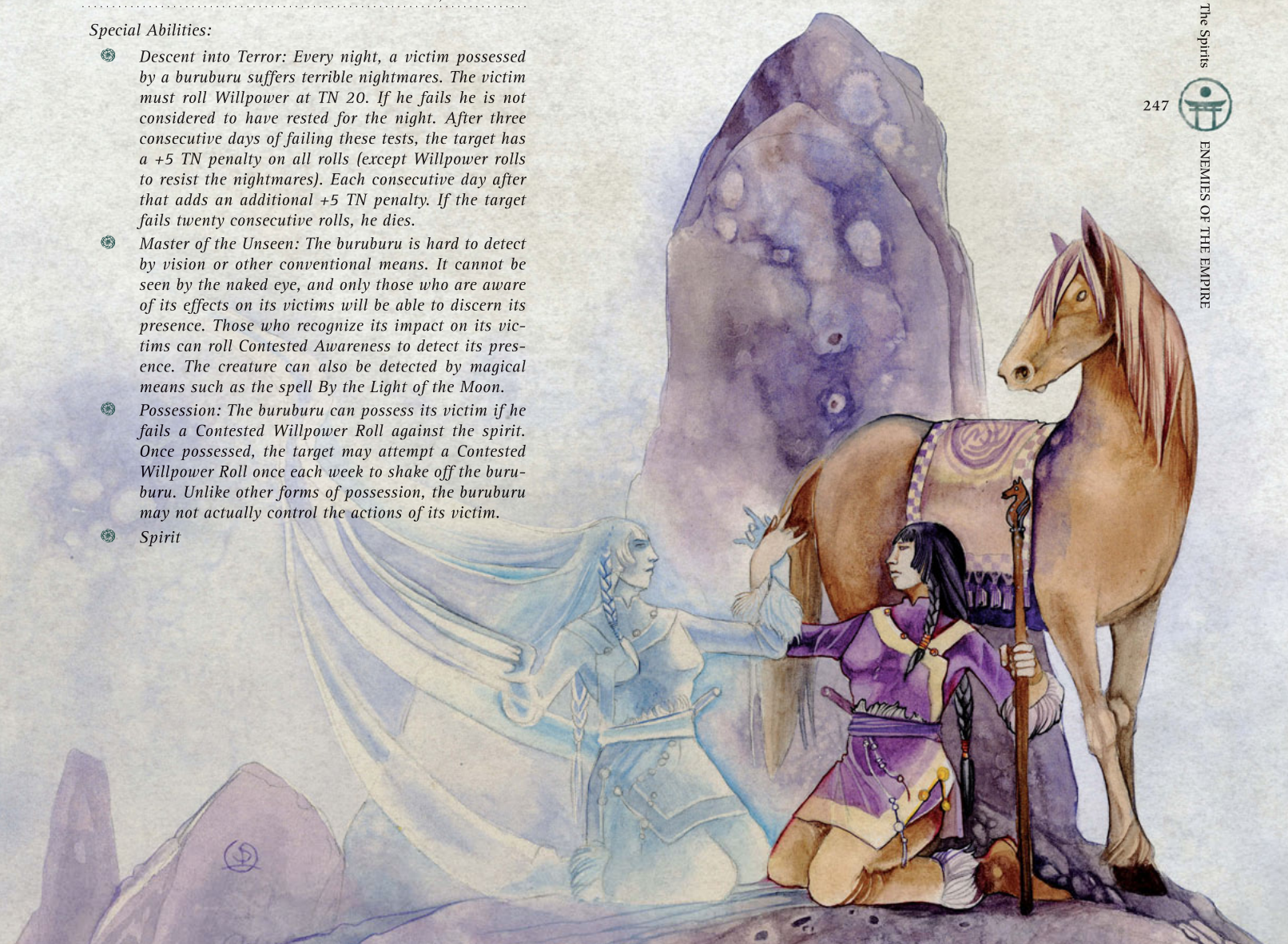
- *Descent into Terror: Every night, a victim possessed by a buruburu suffers terrible nightmares. The victim must roll Willpower at TN 20. If he fails he is not considered to have rested for the night. After three consecutive days of failing these tests, the target has a +5 TN penalty on all rolls (except Willpower rolls to resist the nightmares). Each consecutive day after that adds an additional +5 TN penalty. If the target fails twenty consecutive rolls, he dies.*
- *Master of the Unseen: The buruburu is hard to detect by vision or other conventional means. It cannot be seen by the naked eye, and only those who are aware of its effects on its victims will be able to discern its presence. Those who recognize its impact on its victims can roll Contested Awareness to detect its presence. The creature can also be detected by magical means such as the spell By the Light of the Moon.*
- *Possession: The buruburu can possess its victim if he fails a Contested Willpower Roll against the spirit. Once possessed, the target may attempt a Contested Willpower Roll once each week to shake off the buruburu. Unlike other forms of possession, the buruburu may not actually control the actions of its victim.*
- *Spirit*

O-toyo

No one knows exactly how the o-toyo is formed, yet its presence in the world is painfully felt. Unlike some spirits from Gaki-do, the o-toyo has a strong corporeal form in the mortal realm. Some scholars believe the creature actually has connections to Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals, and draws on that realm's closeness to Ningen-do to maintain a stronger hold in reality.

The o-toyo resembles a human-sized cat with exaggerated fangs and sharp claws. It can take the form of a much smaller cat to fool its prey; however, anyone can spot the o-toyo's true nature by peering at the beast from the corner of their eye. The o-toyo normally maintains a meek and docile nature to fool others into approaching, but once its prey is in range it pounces with supernatural speed. Its favored style of attack is to pin the target to the ground with its claws, then bite into the victim's neck, feeding on its essence.

The o-toyo usually strikes during the cover of night, as it must rely on subterfuge over brute strength to catch its prey. However, like most spirits of Gaki-do the o-toyo is constantly famished and will attack in the middle of the day (despite its better judgment) if it believes it will be able to feed. The o-toyo resides in forests and less populated areas and feeds almost exclusively on humans.



Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	Perception 4

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Fangs 9k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k3 (fangs) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 20: +10, 40: Dead.*

Special Abilities:

- *Deceptive Visage: The o-toyo may change its form to that of a common house cat at will. A viewer who rolls Perception at TN 25 will see its true form from the corner of his eye.*
- *Destroyer of Life: The o-toyo drains the essence of those under its fangs. Each successful attack heals the o-toyo by 5 Wounds.*
- *Spirit*

Mokumokuren

The mokumokuren is a peculiar beast, most especially because no one has ever seen its true form. It is easily banished from the mortal realm and it preys only on the careless. Many Rokugani who have never seen it believe it to be a fairy tale told to children, but the ghost hunters of the Toritaka family know the truth. The mokumokuren is a dangerous spirit that can pose a considerable threat if not properly banished.

The mokumokuren has no physical form. Instead, it resides in the space between Ningen-do and Gaki-do, looking for weaknesses within the fabric of reality in the mortal realm. It has a very specific nesting ground – the mokumokuren only appears in the ripped holes of a paper wall. Luckily for the mokumokuren, paper walls are used all across Rokugan in every home, and get ripped on a regular basis.

The mokumokuren appears to mortals as a set of strange mystic eyes that peer out of holes in paper walls. If any person ever meets the gaze of those eyes, the spirit attempts to mesmerize the victim. If the attack succeeds, the mokumokuren feeds on the human's mental energies.

The easiest way to banish a mokumokuren is to fix all the holes in the paper walls, for the spirit has no other way to appear. It will simply move on in search of another ill-maintained wall.

Air 0	Earth 1	Fire 0	Water 0
Awareness 4	-	Intelligence 1	Perception 6

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Mental Attack 6k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k4 — *Armor TN: 5*

Wounds: 10: +10, 20: Dead.

Special Abilities:

- *Gaze Attack: The mokumokuren's mental attack ignores any armor and any Reduction the victim has. The Wounds which the mokumokuren inflicts are spiritual and leave no outward physical injury – thus, they cannot be treated with Medicine, although magic and natural healing cure them normally.*
- *Spirit*
- *Superior Invulnerability: Mokumokuren takes normal damage from magic and jade, but suffers no Wounds at all from any other form of attack.*
- *The Corners of the World: Mokumokuren exists within the borders of Ningen-do and can only inhabit paper walls. It may stare out through holes and tears in the wall. If a victim locks eyes with the mokumokuren, the mokumokuren immediately makes its mental attack. The mokumokuren may not attack under any other circumstance.*

Spirits of Jigoku

Hannya

Demons of Jigoku often escape into Ningen-do through the Festering Pit. Most reside in the Shadowlands without ever stepping near human lands. The hannya, however, makes it a point to seek out human civilization from the moment it crosses into the mortal world. It thrives off human contact, and unlike almost all other demons from Jigoku, it does not wish to kill humans or destroy their civilization. In fact, the hannya often believes it truly seeks the welfare of humankind. Of course, this is only proof of the demon's warped and insane mind.

The hannya has a vaguely female humanoid form in its natural state. It takes on the form of a human woman when it nears human settlements, and it innately knows enough of Rokugan to blend into society without raising suspicions. When the demon is angered or roused, its face changes form to reveal its true visage. The creature has large intense eyes, two sharp but short horns, and a mouth that stretches across its entire face. Its skin turns dark red, constantly shifting form to show a dull metallic substance underneath. The hannya is prone to intense fits of jealousy or anger, and each emotion plays across its face like a transparent mirror.

The hannya likes to mimic humans, practicing their favored activities. It practices kenjutsu, iaijutsu, some forms of dance, and many courtly games. It latches onto any experts of these arts and constantly attempts to outperform them. Unfortunately, the hannya is not very good at these things and is constantly upstaged by those who have devoted their entire lives to mastering these skills. When the hannya does not reach its goal, it becomes enraged and attempts to kill all who might have witnessed its failures.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 5	Willpower 4	Agility 6	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k5 — *Attack: Chosen Weapon or Claws 8k6 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k2 (claws) or by weapon — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 4 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: +20, 75: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Acting 2, Artisan: Painting 1, Artisan: Poetry 1, Games: Go 1, Iaijutsu 1, Kenjutsu 1

Special Ablities:

- *Alter Form: The hannya has the ability to change its body to match the basic form of the people in its vicinity. This is a Complex Action. It always appears to be female.*
- *Fear 2*
- *Mimic Rival: The hannya always fixates on one target as its rival. Choose one of the hannya's skills that is shared by its target; the hannya will compete with the target using that skill. If it loses, if possible it will use that skill exclusively to murder the rival. (If the competition did not involve a martial skill, the hannya will rip the rival to shreds with its bare claws.)*
- *Spirit*

Spirits of Meido

Koku no Seishin

These creatures are called Empty Souls by those who meet them. They are a perverse combination of multiple Spirit Realms. Spirits from Meido who are awaiting judgment can sometimes be captured by maho rituals, thrusting these souls into the heart of the Shadowlands where they are corrupted by the influence of Jigoku. These tortured and frightened spirits become enraged with their corrupted state and strike out at all near them.

Koku no Seishin are insubstantial spirits that seem to float a few inches above the ground. Wherever they appear, the area around them is covered with a deep impenetrable fog. Those who are brave enough to penetrate the blinding fog can see the creatures for what they are. Empty Souls resemble their former living forms, and since those sorcerers who create them prefer stealing samurai souls to spit on the ideals of Rokugan, most koku no seishin take the form of a heavily armored samurai.

The koku no seishin can sense human prey from miles away, and often choose to hunt them over long distances. Any time they are near living humans they are filled with an overwhelming need to rejoin the Celestial Pattern. They attempt to strike at the souls of their victims directly, trying to steal the essence away from them and imbue themselves with the energy so they may become more human. Ultimately, all koku no seishin wish to return to Meido and be reincarnated, but this is impossible, and the Empty Souls continue to tragically wander the mortal world vainly seeking an escape from their pain.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2
Agility 3	-	-	Strength 4

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Claws 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 6 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Life Rend: The koku no seishin can attempt to gain corporeal form by drawing life from those around it. This is a Complex Action. The target must make a Contested Roll with one Ring (chosen by the koku no seishin) against the koku no seishin's roll of 5k3. The winner of the Contested Roll gains a +1 Rank bonus to the chosen Ring and heals 20 Wounds. The loser of the Contested Roll suffers a -1 Rank penalty to that Ring (to a minimum of 1). All Ring penalties or bonuses fade away after one week.*
- *Spirit*

Koumori

Bat shapeshifter spirits have always maintained strong ties to the survival of the human race. They stay in the shadows and help mankind in many ways, performing these duties without letting the Rokugani know of their involvement. The only publicly known involvement of the koumori in human affairs was the founding of the Bat Clan by a half-koumori mortal. Aside from that notable incident, the koumori have always chosen to remain sequestered and do not ally openly with humans.

The koumori are animal shapeshifters like those of Chikushudo, but they dwell in Meido and serve as guardians of that Spirit Realm, guiding newly dead spirits to their proper place. They defend these defenseless spirits and their realm from the predations of evil spirit realms. In their normal form koumori are giant bats, but as a powerful shapeshifter race they are able to take other forms. When they enter the mortal realm they often take human form and mingle with human civilization whenever they can. Koumori in Ningen-do tend to live in large forests near the sea, most often in the Islands of Spice and Silk.

Koumori are very magically powerful and can perform impossible feats with their secret spells. Despite their best efforts to remain out of the spotlight, the Rokugani have picked up on the fact that bat spirits have been their benefactors for uncounted centuries, and they consider bats to be omens of great fortune.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2
Reflexes 5	Willpower 5	Intelligence 4	-

Initiative: 6k4 — *Attack: Katana 7k3 (Complex) or Claws 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k2 (katana) or 2k1 (claws) — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: +20, 75: Dead.*

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Kenjutsu 4, Stealth 5

Special Ablities:

- *Shapeshifter: Koumori are Shapeshifters and can take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties as listed earlier in this chapter.*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 3 (when flying)*

Hagaken Mokumokuren

The mokumokuren is a creature of Gaki-do, and its hunger has devoured dozens of hapless victims. The Hagaken mokumokuren is a completely different creature altogether, a unique spirit created by fortunate happenstance. There is only one known to exist, but there may be more hidden in Rokugan, family heirlooms in remote areas of the land.

The Hagaken mokumokuren only vaguely resembles its spiritual cousin. It is an insubstantial spirit that resembles a warrior in a bright red kimono. A long katana hangs by its side, shimmering with golden light whenever it is drawn from its sheath. Thousands of small eyes cover the spirit's arms and body, though these are mostly covered by its garments. It is accompanied by a small stone tablet, engraved with its name on one side and the kanji for 'guardian' on the other. The creature remains within ten meters of this stone at all times, but it only takes form when the owner of the tablet is in danger from creatures of other Spirit Realms.

Legend claims the Hagaken mokumokuren was formed because of a dutiful samurai's dying wish. According to these tales, Hagaken was a Phoenix samurai who committed seppuku when he was unjustly accused of nefarious intentions near the Imperial Court. The true assassin made his move the night after Hagaken's death. He silently entered the Emperor's personal bedchamber... only to be slaughtered by the newly created spirit guardian. Whether this story is truth or myth, the Emperor has always retained possession of the small stone tablet that can call the Hagaken mokumokuren into his service.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 4	-

Initiative: 6k4 — *Attack: Katana 8k4 (Simple)*
Damage: 7k2 (katana) — *Armor TN: 40*
Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 32: +10, 64: +15; 96: Dead.*

Skills: Defense 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4

Special Ablities:

- *Eternal Guardian: If the Hagaken mokumokuren performs the Guard Action, the Armor TN bonus it awards is increased by an additional +5 for both itself and its target.*
- *Incorporeality: The Hagaken mokumokuren retains a hazy and incorporeal shape, even while attacking; this is responsible for its high Armor TN. Those with extraordinary forms of vision (such as ways of seeing heat, movement, or night vision) gain a +5 bonus to attack rolls against it. An opponent without these abilities may take a Simple Action to make an Awareness roll at TN 25 to gain this bonus for the rest of the skirmish.*
- *Soul Tablet: The Hagaken mokumokuren cannot be killed unless its host tablet is destroyed. If a Hagaken mokumokuren is reduced to Dead while its tablet is still in one piece, it revives itself at full Wounds an hour later. The tablet itself may take any form, though it is most often a small prayer tablet roughly six inches long. It can be destroyed by making two physical blows that deliver a total of at least 10 Wounds.*
- *Spirit*

Spirits of Sakkaku

Bakeneko

Cats are said to be creatures of great curiosity, following objects of their fancy even unto their deaths. These sayings must have originated due to the bakeneko, shapeshifting spirits from the Realms of Sakkaku and Chikushudo. These creatures are unique in that they rarely inhabit the Spirit Realm of their birth. Instead, the entire bakeneko population exists within Ningen-do, living among humans. This does not mean that the bakeneko has lost any of the traits of Sakkaku, of course. The bakeneko have the souls of pranksters and inventiveness unrivaled by any spirit.

In their natural state, the bakeneko resemble household cats with glowing eyes. They may change form into anything they wish, and routinely do so to perform tricks and hoaxes. They can also turn insubstantial like the mujina. They understand the Rokugani language and use it to assist their pranks.

The bakeneko believe the Rokugani are the most interesting creatures in the world. Unfortunately, this interest is often at the mortal detriment. The bakeneko are very fond of playing pranks and this is their only real form of interaction with the human race. These tricks are never ill-spirited, but the bakeneko do not fully understand human limits and occasionally hurt the targets of their tricks.

Air 2	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 2
-	-	-	-

Initiative: 3k2 — *Attack: Claws 3k2 (Complex)*
Damage: 2k2 (claws) — *Armor TN: 10*
Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 10: +5, 20: +10, 30: Dead.*

Skills: Defense 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4

Special Ablities:

- *Shapeshifter: Bakeneko are Shapeshifters and can take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties as outlined earlier in this chapter.*
- *Spirit*

Konak jiji

The konak jiji is a distant cousin of the pekkle. It is a spirit that resembles a human baby. The creature has no shapeshifting abilities and cannot take any other form, but since the konak jiji does not need to rely on elaborate tricks this limitation does not bother it. The konak jiji enjoy cruel jokes as much as the pekkle. Indeed, the konak jiji's jokes prove fatal to their victims, and the vicious spirit loves feeding on those fools who fell for its deception.

The konak jiji likes to find targets in remote areas of the countryside, such as mountains and large forests. When it finds a suitable victim, it appears to the target and begins to softly cry as a human child would. The sight of an abandoned infant often fools villagers or woodsmen into rushing over and picking the babe, at which point the konak jiji springs its trap.

The konak jiji can control its own weight at will, and when a victim picks it up, it increases its weight hundredfold in mere seconds. It also injects paralyzing venom into its victim's skin, preventing the victim from dropping the konak jiji. The sheer weight of the creature breaks bones and sprains muscles, and the konak jiji slowly devours the paralyzed mortal until nothing is left but bones. Thankfully, there are not many konak jiji in Ningen-do, and their lack of natural defenses makes them only mildly threatening. They must rely on trickery and deceit to defeat their prey.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 3	Water 2
Awareness 4	-	-	-

Initiative: 3k2	*Attack: Claws 5k3 (Complex)*
Damage: 2k1 (claws)	*Armor TN: 10*
Reduction: 3	*Wounds: 10: +5, 20: +10, 30: Dead.*

Special Ablities:

- *Deceptive Weight: If the konak jiji is ever picked up, it automatically hits the target, with no need to roll an attack. Additionally, the konak jiji's weight increases to four hundred pounds, pinning the target in place until it is moved. Moving a konak jiji which has increased its weight requires an Athletics/Strength roll at TN 40 (this may be done as a Cooperative Roll).*
- *Paralysis Venom: If a konak jiji successfully hits someone, it injects a paralyzing venom. The target is considered Stunned for a number of minutes equal to the konak jiji's Water.*
- *Spirit*



Mujina

These simple creatures are the most numerous inhabitants of Sakkaku. In their natural form they are small, portly humanoids with tiny wings, rough pebbly skin, and blunt horns. Though their demonic appearance resembles some of the darker creatures of Jigoku, there is a certain cheerful innocence that separates them from the oni. The mujina exist for a single purpose – to amuse themselves. They are incorrigible pranksters and hedonists with dreadfully short attention spans. Their comedic taste is extremely simple – slapstick and public embarrassment are their favorite methods and leave them writhing with uncontrollable laughter. While they understand more complex forms of humor, they consider such to be a waste of time.

Mujina enjoy manifesting in the mortal realm, and due to the power of the Realm of Mischief they are extremely difficult to kill. They are immune to most magic, render themselves intangible and invisible at will, and can craft powerful illusions at a whim. Mankind, or at least Rokugan, has been no end of fun for the mujina. Samurai are proud and respond to pranks with extremely entertaining tantrums. The only thing the mujina do not understand is mankind's propensity for violence. When a mujina's prank occasionally goes awry and is blamed on a peasant or lower ranking samurai, bloodshed or even death frequently follows. Mujina fail to find the humor in death and will usually move on when things escalate to such a level.

Mujina have also learned to curb their humor while in Crab lands. While the Hida family is somewhat notorious for their own juvenile sense of humor, the Crab Clan as a whole is quite intolerant of mischievous spirits. With the Shadowlands directly beyond their wall, they cannot afford to tolerate inane practical jokes. Additionally, the shugenja of the Kuni family are quite knowledgeable in the art of binding spirits, and have even developed spells that can capture the elusive Mujina. Several tricksters who have tried the Crab's patience have found themselves bound in an iron mine, digging ore for the Kaiu foundries. Which just isn't funny at all.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
-	-	-	-

Initiative: 6k3

Attack: None. Mujina do not actually fight

Armor TN: 15

Wounds: 50: Dead (see abilities)

Spells: By the Light of the Moon, Mists of Illusion, Nature's Touch, Token of Memory, Way of Deception, Mask of Wind.

Special Ablities:

- *Ghostly Form: A Mujina is naturally intangible while in Ningen-do, and can choose to pass through physical objects. It can make itself tangible if it wishes to interact with physical objects (such as throwing things or breaking valuables). Since it can make itself tangible or intangible at will (a Free Action that can be taken at will an unlimited number of times), it can normally only be wounded if it chooses to be tangible or is caught by surprise.*
- *Immortal: A mujina cannot be truly killed in the mortal realm. If reduced to Dead it simply returns to Sakkaku for a year and a day, unless someone summons it earlier. It will usually play relentless pranks on the one who "killed" it.*
- *Invisibility: A Mujina can become invisible at will, cloaking itself in friendly Air kami, and can remain invisible even while casting spells.*
- *Magic Resistance (+6 to Spell Casting TNs)*
- *Spellcasting: A Mujina casts spells as if he were a Rank 3 shugenja. He has unlimited spell slots per day but can only cast the spells listed above.*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 6 (when flying). Though Mujina do have extremely tiny wings, they do not appear to actually use their wings to fly.*

Orochi

These titanic serpentine creatures live within the oceans of both Rokugan and Sakkaku, but prefer the depths of Rokugan's seas, miles away from the affairs of man and a whole realm away from the tricksters of Sakkaku. A limited number of orochi entered the mortal world centuries ago to help protect the race of Ningyo. (Further details on this peculiar alliance may be found in the chapter on the Five Ancient Races.) Of all the characters from Sakkaku, the orochi are unique in that they do not appreciate pranks or tricks at all. The bakeneko, mujina, and pekkle love playing hoaxes on their unfortunate victims. Even the serious kenku can appreciate a good joke, though they always play them to teach a point to their students. But the orochi are as serious as can be, a fact that made life extremely difficult for them within Sakkaku. They are much more content in Ningen-do, where they protect the Ningyo race and sometimes become embroiled in human affairs.

Physically, orochi resemble giant sea serpents, measuring as much as seventy feet from nose to tail. They have large teeth capable of shredding Rokugani boats, and through magical means can sprout legs to traverse the land (though they never exercise this option unless at a mortal's behest). The orochi are intelligent and loyal creatures, though they rarely show that side of themselves to outsiders. They will violently defend any Ningyo under their protection, and will attack without mercy if they suspect someone is in league with the denizens of Jigoku (or worse, Sakkaku).

Orochi are extremely polite, willing to hear out a human brave enough to greet them with proper etiquette. Those who would seek their knowledge or alliance must be warned – orochi are well known for their humorless nature. They regard jokes as base insults and respond to pranks with remorseless violence. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule, and visitors to Sakkaku have occasionally reported meeting orochi with a sense of mischief.

Air 3	Earth 7	Fire 3	Water 4
Reflexes 4	–	Agility 6	Strength 9

Initiative: 5k4

Attack: Bite 10k8 (Complex) or Claws 10k6 (Simple)

Damage: 10k5 (bite) or 9k3 (claws)

Armor TN: 30

Reduction: 7

Wounds: 35: +5, 70: +10, 105: +20, 140: +25, 175: Down, 200: Dead.

Special Ablities:

- *Amphibious: Orochi can survive equally well underwater or on land, and need not make Athletics rolls to swim. However, outside of water they move as though their Water is 2 Ranks lower. They prefer the safety and solitude of the depths.*
- *Constriction: The orochi may squeeze its victims between its massive coils. If an orochi hits a target with its claws, it may opt to initiate a Grapple, rolling 10k10 to control it. Each Round it controls the Grapple, it inflicts 5k5 damage on its Turn.*
- *Huge*
- *Magic Resistance (+6 to Spell Casting TNs)*
- *Spirit*
- *Swallow Whole: If an Orochi's attack roll exceeds a human-sized target's Armor TN by 20 or more, that*

target has been swallowed whole. A swallowed target may only use Small weapons to attack the Orochi from the inside and automatically takes 5k4 damage every Round on the Orochi's Turn. An Orochi can swallow up to five human-sized targets at a time.

- *Swift 3 (while in water)*

Pekkle

The pekkle are dangerous and cruel trickster spirits. It is a curious fact that pekkle remain relatively unknown to the Rokugani while their corrupted and manipulated cousins, the Pekkle no Oni, are widely known and reviled. The Pekkle no Oni retain many of the same traits as their former pristine selves but are consumed by Jigoku's goals. The pekkle, on the other hand, love cruel tricks and serve only their own desire to inflict harsh pranks on their victims.

In their natural state, pekkle resemble small human infants. They can control their appearance in a limited fashion; a pekkle may not take different forms outright, but it may make cosmetic changes to its body to better resemble specific children at different ages. Pekkle enjoy replacing a human baby soon after birth and pretending to be that human child. They take great joy in fooling the human parents into feeling true love and joy over the growth of their 'child.' This hoax continues until the pekkle finally reveals its true identity and disappears. It thinks the despair, fury, and sorrow exhibited by the parents to be the height of hilarity, and travels on to find its next hapless victims.

The pekkle is the natural enemy of the Pekkle no Oni and can sense them through all their deceptions, attacking on sight. They believe the Pekkle no Oni is a terrible perversion of their true state, even though it often commits many of the same actions. Other denizens of Sakkaku enjoy needling the pekkle about their hatred, telling them to learn to take a joke.

Air 5	Earth 4	Fire 2	Water 1
Awareness 7	Willpower 8	-	-

Initiative: 5k5 — *Attack: Claws 4k2 (Complex)*

Damage: 1k1 — *Armor TN: 15*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +20, 60: Dead.*

Special Ablities:

- *Partial Invulnerability: The pekkle reduces all damage it takes by half (rounded down), regardless of its source. Damage dice do not explode against the pekkle unless specifically stated to do so by an ability or Technique (such as the Matsu Berserker Rank 5).*
- *Spirit*



The Mantis Orochi Riders

Most humans have always seen the orochi as terrifying sea monsters, but during the twelfth century the Mantis Clan saw instead a potential ally. During a conflict with the Phoenix Clan known as the War of Fire and Thunder, the Mantis found themselves at a distinct disadvantage against the Phoenix Clan's magical power. Seeking any sort of advantage, they eventually considered the orochi. These powerful sea serpents had been a bane to Mantis shipping routes for centuries, but could they be reasoned with? Perhaps even controlled?

Yoritomo shugenja researched the nature of the orochi and were surprised to discover that they were exiled trickster spirits. They also discovered many of them were still in Sakkaku, enduring the endless torment of mujina tricks and pranks. The Yoritomo offered to free a small number of Orochi from Sakkaku in return for their service in war. The Orochi, desperate to escape a realm they hated, agreed. Thus a small number of these serpents joined the Mantis forces, accepting human mounts who rode them into battle. The Mantis have been careful only to release a small number of orochi from Sakkaku, fearful the creatures may escape their control. The orochi resent that their escape from the mujina comes only at the cost of new servitude, but the Mantis are noble in their own way, and certainly more tolerable than mujina. For now, the great serpents serve dutifully and bide their time.

Spirits of Tengoku

Ryu

The ryu is a lesser spirit compared to the stately Elemental Dragons, yet mortals would be hard-pressed to know that when faced with the ryu's majesty. The ryu's natural form is that of a flying serpent covered with scales that shimmer in every color. These spirits may change their shape with ease. However, they are proud of their association with the dragons and do not alter their form unless it is absolutely necessary.

Ryu are birthed when the Elemental Dragons need to perform a duty beyond Tengoku. The Elemental Dragons do not usually leave their own realm, since the ramifications of their actions cause great ripples in all the Spirit Realms. Instead, they create ryu to act as extensions of their will. Ryu serve as heralds and guides, speaking with the voice of the Elemental Dragons themselves. When its mission is complete a ryu either dissipates into thin air or gains independent thought. Those who live on dwell on the outskirts of Tengoku, waiting to find a new purpose in the world.

Ryu are able to traverse the borders of the Spirit Realms with ease. Most are benevolent creatures; however, ryu



formed by entities such as the Shadow Dragon or the Obsidian Dragon may be less than friendly to mortals.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
Awareness 6	–	Intelligence 5	Perception 4

Initiative: 7k4 — *Attack: Claws 8k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 6k3 (claws) — *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: +20, 75: Dead.*

Special Ablities:

- *Shapeshifter: The ryu is a Shapeshifter and can take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties listed earlier in this chapter.*
- *Soul of a Dragon: The ryu acts as herald of Tengoku and the Elemental Dragons, and those great beings bestow a portion of their power to the ryu. While serving the desires of an Elemental Dragon, the ryu's appropriate Elemental Ring (and associated Traits) increases to 6, and it gains the following specific benefits:*
  - *Air Dragon: Armor TN 40*
  - *Earth Dragon: Wounds 25: +5, 50: +10, 75: +15, 100: +20, 150: Dead.*
  - *Fire Dragon: Attack – Claws 10k6 (Simple)*
  - *Water Dragon: Claw Damage 8k5*
  - *Void Dragon: Reduction 10*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 4 (when flying)*

Fushicho (Phoenix)

The fushicho are spirits that resemble the houhou, noble birds of the Celestial Heavens. The houhou frequently dwell within the mortal realm, however, while the fushicho undertake any duties that require them to cross into other Spirit Realms. The fushicho are phoenixes, birds formed of flame and magic. Their wingspan stretches out over twelve feet and they can fly faster than any other bird in the sky, mortal or divine. They enjoy the feel of the wind beneath their wings, and rarely shapeshift out of their natural form unless they have an absolute need to do so.

Fushicho may act with reason and restraint while they are serving the will of the heavens, but when following their own path they are brash and impulsive. They will do whatever they believe is required to achieve their goal, and will allow themselves to die if need be. This impetuous desire is fueled by their immortality in their native realm. If they perish within Tengoku, they change form into a large bird egg. In that form the fushicho regrows and then breaks free after twenty-four hours, fully healed.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 5	Water 3
Awareness 4	–	–	Perception 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Beak 8k5 (Complex)*

Damage: 6k3 (beak) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +20, 60: Dead.*

Special Ablities:

- *Shapeshifter: The fushicho is a Shapeshifter and can take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties listed earlier in this chapter.*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 2 (when flying)*
- *The Phoenix Rises: When the fushicho dies within the borders of Tengoku, it reforms into a fushicho's egg. The egg cracks after twenty-four hours and the fushicho emerges, alive and fully healed.*

Tennyo

The tennyo (or tennin, as the male versions are called) are curious creatures that dwell in the outskirts of Tengoku. Unlike most of the other inhabitants of that realm, the tennyo are neither good nor at the head of the Celestial Order. They are spirits that seem to simply reside within Tengoku without serving anything greater than themselves. They flitter around, generally restricting themselves to their own Spirit Realm. Several have found their way to Ningen-do but they are content to wander the land without any human interaction.

Tennyo are human in size and form. They can unfold and reveal large wings when they wish to travel quickly. When in Rokugan tennyo wear resplendent kimono and large hats, partly because the tennyo appreciate beauty and enjoy Rokugani styles, but mainly because the hat helps conceal their face from casual view. While the tennyo holds a human form (female for tennyo, male for tennin), its face is completely blank of all features, including eyes, nose, and mouth. Several mortals have mistaken tennyo for creatures of the Lying Darkness at first glance, but the tennyo's noble actions and countenance quickly disabuse that notion. A tennyo is able to change its form when need be, but prefers to remain in its natural shape.

The tennyo does not appreciate combat, though it will defend itself. The only exception is when the tennyo encounters a creature of Jigoku. Then the tennyo strikes with rapid precision, devastating the target in mere moments. In all other situations, the tennyo prefers to avoid confrontation rather than provoke difficult encounters.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 4	Water 3
Awareness 4	-	-	Perception 4

Initiative: 4k2

Attack: Weapon 7k4 (Complex) – the tennyo can use all weapons with equal skill.

Damage: By weapon

Armor TN: 15

Reduction: 3

Wounds: 20: +5, 40: +10, 60: Dead.

Special Ablities:

- *Shapeshifter: The tennyo may assume any humanoid form as a Simple Action, and may take up to 4 Shapeshifter Abilities (Major or Minor) without any Penalties.*
- *Spirit*
- *Swift 4*

Spirits of Yomi

Shiryo

In a society that reveres the ancestors, there is nothing more comforting than knowing the ancestors watch over their descendents and may even help them directly. Shiryo, the spirits of those ancestors who have fulfilled their destiny, reside in Yomi and watch mortal affairs with a fond heart. When the borders between the Spirit Realms weaken, the ancestors sometimes step in to meddle with the path of Rokugan. This occurs only rarely, yet their impact is always felt for years after the event.

In their natural state within Yomi, the shiryo are corporeal and real. They retain much the same armor and weapons as they held or favored during their natural lives. They resemble humans, with one large exception: to human eyes, the shiryo appear to wear large masks that cover their entire face. These masks are decorated to reflect the soul within, and Kitsu shugenja who visit Yomi regularly are able to discern the identity of shiryo based on the mask markings alone.

When shiryo visit Ningen-do, they are incorporeal and can only interact with those of great spiritual power – unless speaking to their own descendents. On rare occasions, shinyo have been able to become incarnate in the mortal world and resume living mortal lives – this happened most famously during the War Against the Darkness, when the armies of the honored dead passed through the mysterious spirit portal known as Oblivion's Gate to fight against the Lying Darkness. However, the return of shiryo to mortal life is always problematic, as the subsequent Spirit Wars showed.

A shiryo will have the same Traits, Rings, Skills, and other abilities it possessed in life, but also has the Spirit creature quality. Shiryo may gain additional knowledge and wisdom during their eternity in the Realm of Yomi – this is typically expressed as increases in mental Traits, Void, and Skills.

Shutsudohin

Rokugan is filled with powerful *nemuranai*, physical items whose spirits have been awakened by many years of great heroism or nefarious villainy. Legendary heroes such as the Thunders and the various Clan Champions have all wielded such weapons. When these mighty items are finally destroyed or cast out of the physical world into another Spirit Realm, the spirits within the items ascend into Yomi. These spirits are called shutsudohin, and they retain a powerful connection with the human race long after they have fulfilled their service.

The shutsudohin have humanoid forms, yet none can mistake a shutsudohin for a normal ancestor. Their angles are sharp and jarring and the spirit as a whole has a peculiar boxy form. They can change form into the item they once were, and can change their size to suit the needs of the moment. They can serve a shiryo or mortal in their original form, or fight as an animate weapon on their own. Shutsudohin spirits love Rokugan and humanity, and will do whatever needed to serve them. Sometimes they will volunteer to be reformed into a new weapon so their power and energy can continue to serve Rokugan in the mortal world. Thus, it is actually possible for a shutsudohin to ascend to Yomi more than once, stronger each time as it infuses one legendary weapon after another.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
-	-	Agility 5	-

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Weapon 4k3 (Complex)

Damage: 5k3

Armor TN: 20

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +20, 60: Dead.



Special Ablities:

- *Exceptional Weaponry: The Shutsudohin may change its form into a samurai weapon or samurai armor. If it takes the form of a weapon, its attack roll becomes 8k4 (Simple). If it takes the form of armor, its Armor TN increases to 30 and its Reduction increases to 10.*
- *Spirit*

Blessed Guard

Every member of the Blessed Guard was once a normal ancestor, yet each of these samurai have earned great importance in Yomi. As Yomi is a Spirit Realm that looks favorably on the humans living in Rokugan, the enemies of Rokugan regularly attempt to destroy it. The denizens of Yomi needed to protect themselves from the predations of Jigoku, Gaki-do, and Toshigoku. Out of this need arose the Blessed Guard.

The Blessed Guard are the shiryo of Rokugani heroes and take the same shape as other ancestors. They look much as they did during their lives; the only difference is that they now wear the glowing armor and arms of the Blessed Guard. The Blessed Guard dress uniformly in heavy lamellar armor, in the fashion of samurai from the dawn of the Empire. Their armor and weapons are created with a special metal found within Yomi itself and dimly glow at all times.

The Blessed Guard rarely leave Yomi, as they take their duties to defend their home seriously. However, on a few occasions members of the Blessed Guard have traveled to the other Spirit Realms to fight for a just cause. They traveled to Rokugan during the Battle at Oblivion's Gate and they defended Tengoku when it came under attack by Fu Leng. The Blessed Guard will not shy away from the greatest of dangers because they know they are the best there ever was.

The stats here reflect a "typical" member of the Blessed Guard. More exceptional examples doubtless exist.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 5	Water 4	Void 5
Reflexes 5	-	Agility 6	-	

Initiative: 8k5 — *Attack: Katana 10k7 (Simple)*

Damage: 7k2 — *Armor TN: 40 (heavy armor)*

Reduction: 5 (from armor) — *Wounds: 20: +5, 40: +10, 60: +15, 80: +20, 100: Dead.*

School/Rank: All members of the Blessed Guard are Rank 5 in a Rokugani Bushi School, and also possess the sacred Technique of the Guard, Light of Yomi (described below).

Skills: Defense 5, Kenjutsu 6, Lore: Bushido 5, Lore: Gaki-do 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Lore: Toshigoku 3, many other Weapon skills at Rank 5, other skills as possessed in life.

Special Ablities:

- *Light of Yomi: Once per skirmish, a Blessed Guard may take a Complex Action to target an opponent with lower Honor Rank (creatures without an Honor Rank are considered to have 0 Honor for the purposes of this ability). That opponent may not perform any Complex or Simple Actions during his next Turn.*
- *Spirit*

Spirits of Yume-do

Nezumi Transcendents

The Nezumi shamans have the peculiar ability to transcend reality and become creatures of pure Name, ascending into Yume-do to live forever. Though they inhabit the Realm of Dreams, the Transcendents always keep a careful eye on the welfare of their race in Ningen-do. The Transcendents love puzzles and riddles, often invoking them when others ask for their advice.

The Nezumi Transcendents appear to the untrained eye to be normal Nezumi, with nothing that seems out of the ordinary. However, those who can sense the spiritual impact the Transcendents impose on their surroundings do not mistake them for anything other than the most potent and dangerous shamans. The Transcendents are powerful beyond imagining. They have a grasp of Yume-do that is unrivaled by any other spirit. Their magic is rarely invoked but has tremendous potency. For more information on the Nezumi Transcendents, refer to the Ratlings chapter elsewhere in this book.

Air 4	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4	Name 5
Awareness 5	Willpower 5	Intelligence 5	-	-

Initiative: 10k5 — *Attack: Knife 9k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 — *Wounds: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: +20, 75: Dead.*

School/Rank: All Transcendents are considered to be Nezumi Shamans with an effective School Rank of 8, and knowledge of all Name Magic spells.

Skills: Defense 5, Hunting 4, Investigation 5, Knife 6, Lore: Name Magic 10, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Lore: Spirit Realms (Yume-do) 7, Meditation 8

Special Ablities:

- *Transcendents retain all Ratling Physical Abilities (as described elsewhere in this book).*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Spirit*

Baku

The baku is the heart of the Realm of Dreams. Without the baku, the dreamers of the other worlds could never access Yume-do during their sleep. Whenever any sentient being falls into a dream, the baku form the dream he will have. These creatures are very short-lived, for they die and disappear as soon as the dreamer wakes up and releases its connection to the realm. The baku have no thought, no unique soul that distinguish them from any other baku.

Once in a while, however, a dream is uniquely powerful and is able to affect Yume-do for a long time. The baku of these dreams survive and grow stronger, drawing individuality from the dream and the surrounding Realm. These baku becomes a spirit able to change form to anything it desires. Its natural form is that of a large dragonfly, but it rarely maintains this form for long. Within Yume-do, the baku has near limitless power, as the Realm itself feeds the spirit with its energy. Outside its native realm, the baku maintains its shapeshifter abilities but loses most of its power.

The baku are passive creatures that do not wish harm on anyone. They will strike to defend themselves but will not move beyond those instincts. A baku's instinct is to run if it is threatened, but it will fight if there are no other alternatives.

Air 3	Earth 4	Fire 4	Water 4	Name 5
Awareness 5	-	-	-	-

Initiative: 6k3 *Attack: Claws 9k5 (Simple)*

Damage: 8k4 *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 3 *Wounds: 20: +5, 40: +15, 60: Dead.*

Special Ablities:

- *Child of Yume-do: Within the Realm of Dreams, a Baku is immune to hostile magic and heals 20 Wounds during the Reactions stage of each Round. It loses these abilities when it is in any other Spirit Realm.*
- *Forge of Dreams: The baku may take many different forms as a Free Action, but may not take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties listed earlier in this chapter. Its stats do not change when it changes forms.*
- *Spirit*

Baku no Oni

Baku no Oni are the dark mirror of the baku. They serve the same function as the baku, transforming to serve a dreamer's thoughts as he touches the Realm of Dreams. However, evil creatures dream as much as noble warriors. When these malevolent entities' strong dreams last on beyond the ephemeral night, the resulting creation is a Baku no Oni. In its natural state, it looks the same as the baku, but it is impossible to mistake the two: the Baku no Oni's eyes glow red with malice towards the world.

Baku no oni have the same abilities as their non-corrupt counterparts. However, their temperaments are as night and day. The Baku no Oni is highly aggressive and strikes out against everything in its way. Yume-do is a horrible hunting ground, since the majority of the inhabitants are non-sentient baku and the rest are strong enough to defend themselves. Instead, Baku no Oni usually decide to break out to Ningen-do to find easier prey. Once they manage to reach the mortal world they are seldom covert, and are usually quickly found and neutralized by Rokugani forces.

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 5	Willpower 5	Agility 4	Strength 5

Initiative: 8k5 *Attack: Claws 9k4 (Simple)*

Damage: 8k3 *Armor TN: 30*

Reduction: 8 *Wounds: 30: +5, 50: +15, 80: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 6

Special Ablities:

- *Forge of Nightmares: The Baku no Oni may take many different forms, but may not take the Shapeshifter Abilities and Penalties listed earlier in this chapter. It changes shape as a Free Action but its stats do not change when it changes forms.*
- *Hypnotizing Sleep: If the baku no oni successfully strikes a target a number of times equal to the target's Void Ring in the same skirmish, the baku no oni invokes the power of nightmares on the target. The target must make a Willpower roll at TN 20 or fall into a deep dreamless sleep that lasts for twenty-four hours. This sleep cannot be broken by normal means, but if the target takes more than 10 Wounds he wakes up immediately. Spells that remove hostile magic will also awaken the target.*
- *Spirit*



The Undead

"You are samurai. Train as samurai, live as samurai. Foremost, from the moment you rise at dawn to when you lay at dusk, keep in mind and heart the understanding that you must die."

– *Akodo*, Leadership.

Death and the Rokugani

To the Rokugani death is not the end of existence but merely the next step on the Celestial Wheel; this belief is deeply ingrained in every samurai, indeed every inhabitant of the Empire. To give your life for your lord is an honor, and to die well is every bushi's hope. For that matter, the teachings of Shinsei stress detachment from the cares and temptations of mortal life. Death is not something to be feared. It is to be embraced as the truest test of a samurai. When Rokugani die, their death is marked with mourning; this is done not for them but for their kinsmen who have lost a valuable friend and ally. Funerals in Rokugan celebrate the dead to console the living. The dead have not been lost, merely returned to the kharmic cycle to be reborn, which is why every funeral features elaborate prayers to guide the soul on to its next rebirth.

According to Rokugani religious belief, a soul in the kharmic cycle is born, lives, and dies, then is judged by the Fortune of Death and reincarnated into another life or another spirit realm. Every soul's fate is determined by the kharmic debt accumulated in life. Those who live honorably purify their kharma and are reborn into a higher station, until they fulfill their ultimate destiny and ascend to Yomi to spend eternity with the blessed ancestors. Those who live sinfully and without honor, deepening their kharmic burden, are punished with rebirth in a lower station, or even condemned to Toshigoku or Gaki-do. Worst of all, those who become Lost to the Shadowlands Taint are condemned eternally to Jigoku, where they become the malignant spirits known as Yokai.

Among the Great Clans of Rokugan there are many superstitions and beliefs about death and the cycle of reincarnation. The Lion tell tales of samurai whose bond of loyalty to their lords is so strong that they serve him in seven different lives. The sensei of the Crane often tell their students, "Perfection attained in this life will allow perfection to be lived in the next." Crab officers like to declare at funerals: "He has earned a small rest before he rejoins the battle."

Prior to the rise of the Bloodspeaker Iuchiban in the sixth century, Rokugani funerals involved burial or entombment of the dead. The bodies were reminders of the fallen and were given the respect due the one who had passed on. After Iuchiban's desecration of the Imperial tombs, however, attitudes changed. Imperial law decreed that all bodies must be burned to prevent any further such desecration by the users of maho. Bodies rendered to ash cannot be raised with unnatural spells. However, the ashes are still treated with the same respect once afforded to the whole bodies.

The Price of Fighting the Undead

In the ninth century, a Crab Witch-Hunter named Kuni Mataemon spent considerable time on the Kaiu Wall, studying not only the horrors of the Shadowlands but also the strains on the Crab soldiers who served there. His treatise on the nature and treatment of stress and madness, and on how to distinguish such madness from the evil insanity of the Taint, remains a valued work among the Crab even today. One of the key focuses of his writing was the extreme strain which the undead placed on the minds of those who fought them day after day:

"The lying of actions causes madness. When I know the dead do not walk, and you know the dead do not walk, and we see a walking dead man, we can be wrong and the universe is right, or we are right and the universe is wrong. The self-lie – saying 'we are right' in the face of the universe – makes us mad."

"On the Wall, a samurai must train until his body gives out. His body must know what to do when the mind is not there. He must fight in water, fight when knocked to the ground, fight with a broken arm, fight in the dark against ten dead men that an hour ago were called friend. The moment something seems amiss, he must break bones as if walking through grass. If he cannot, he will soon be the food or the slave of the enemy. When you wake a Crab, use a stick."

The Rokugani and Undeath

"Every human being who dies in the Shadowlands rises again as one of these. Without soul, without memories, hungering only for the living flesh of those they once called kin. This is the power we fight – the power to utterly destroy who we are."

– Hida Yakamo, Champion of the Crab, twelfth century

For the Rokugani, to deny death is blasphemy. If a samurai cannot die, he cannot purify his kharma and fulfill his destiny. Further, a soul that refuses death is also refusing the judgment of the Heavens on its life and kharma. To live forever holds no appeal to men and women who aspire to die courageously in the service of Bushido. Indeed, to seek to escape death is to be a coward, the antithesis of a samurai, who dies willingly for honor, lord, clan, and Empire. Samurai who cannot die cannot follow Bushido. Thus, it should not be surprising that any sort of misuse of the dead is a capital offense by Imperial law, and grave robbers are executed on capture.

The Rokugani view the soul as the most important aspect of every individual, for it is the soul which is the repository of kharma and which lives on when the body dies. A body without a soul is a thing of horror, which is part of why the touch of dead flesh is considered unclean, fit only for eta.

Any attempt to reanimate or control the dead is doubly horrible to the Rokugani, a profound violation of the Celestial Order. Such acts are the grossest of crimes, and those found guilty of such deeds are tortured and executed in the harshest manner possible. Undead themselves are violations of everything right and proper in the world, bodies living without souls or souls without bodies, and the Rokugani regard them with both disgust and terror. Many samurai who are fearless in the face of an un-winnable battle are rendered pale and trembling by the sight of an undead abomination – even oni and the Lost do not always affect samurai so severely. A samurai who is attacked by a reanimated corpse feels unutterable revulsion and horror, especially if the corpse wears a familiar face. The Crab have become painfully familiar with the horror of fighting the reanimated bodies of comrades who have just fallen, but even they find such experiences horrifying and sometimes more than they can bear.

Almost as bad as a corpse without a soul is a soul without a corpse. Sometimes, depending on the manner and circumstances of death, a soul may not be able to pass on to Meido for judgment. Such souls become ghosts, haunting and sometimes endangering the living. They may become corrupted with rage and bitterness or even infected by the Taint. They remain in the mortal world, trapped by their own regret and fury. In the face of such threats most Rokugani have little choice but to pray to the kami and Fortunes for protection, or call on a passing shugenja to seek to lay the spirit to rest.

Where Undeath Lurks

"I was at the Soshi court this year. They smiled and gave me gifts and offered me friendship, but they were shocked when I asked to sleep in the basement and place wards against evil in my room, the garden, and the castle gateway each night. The Soshi gossiped and looked insulted and asked why I wished to do such a thing. 'Because there are no wards there now,' I said."

– From the journals of Kuni Kaji, Emerald Magistrate, tenth century

The undead present a continual threat to the samurai and peasants of the Emerald Empire, and this is reflected in Rokugani culture. Although grisly topics such as the Shadowlands are always avoided in polite company, ghost stories are a popular form of entertainment, and many poems and plays have been written about vengeful ghosts and undead villains. Apart from the Crab, the average Rokugani samurai will never see an undead monster in his lifetime, but all samurai know the tales of the undead and almost every family has a legend of an ancestor who met a grisly fate at the hands of a ghost or similar entity.

The Story of Kuni Nakanu

In the first two centuries after the founding the Empire, most Rokugani wanted nothing more than to forget the Shadowlands even existed. Not so the Crab, whose duty required them to fight the Tainted realm left behind after the defeat of Fu Leng. The Crab knew that understanding their enemy was vital to defeating it, and the Kuni family took upon itself the grim duty of studying and researching the creatures and powers of the Shadowlands and the Taint.

One of those early researchers was Kuni Nakanu, a distant cousin of the family founder Kuni himself. Nakanu was fascinated by the way the Taint could reanimate corpses, returning them to a grisly semblance of life. Nakanu, a man who possessed far more ambition than he did honor or wisdom, sought a way to turn this power against the Shadowlands itself. He conducted forbidden researches into the nature of the undead, discovering that zombies were reanimated by dark spirits of the Taint called kansen, and learning how these kansen could be summoned and controlled. Many of his writings would later find their way into the hands of aspiring maho-tsukai and would become the basis for the dark magic which has plagued the Empire ever since.

Nakanu perfected the art of raising zombies to serve him. He dreamed of building an entire army of zombies to wage war against the Shadowlands, turning the power of the Taint against itself. But his insane ambitions met the fate that so often visits those who meddle in the Taint – one night, he raised seventeen zombies at one time, testing the limits of his power. It proved too much. His control slipped, and the zombies tore him apart. Nakanu ended up a zombie alongside those he had created, and the Hida spent weeks hunting down and destroying the resultant undead outbreak.

Unfortunately, Nakanu's blasphemous discoveries did not perish with him. A foolish apprentice stole his writings before the Crab could destroy them, and they would go on to become dark inspirations for countless maho-tsukai, including the founders of the later Bloodspeaker Cult.



A Ghost Legend: The Wailing Woman

Visitors to the lake known as Aka Mizu-umi, where ten thousand men perished in battle during the Hour of the Wolf, claim that the lake's waters still show the tinge of red after centuries. When the lake is shrouded in fog, one can hear the shouts of men, and some claim to see shadowy forms riding across the waters. But a more specific ghost story has also become associated with this haunted locale.

Many visitors to Aka Mizu-umi have met a woman, dressed in the white robes of mourning, walking by the lake's shores at dusk. She wears a shawl to conceal her face, and carries a golden fan in her obi. Her grief-stricken weeping is terrible to the ears, and her kimono seems to drift above the sands like a cloud. None have ever been able to speak to her or learn the secret behind her presence. Some believe the Wailing Woman is the widow of one of those who fell in the Hour of the Wolf, others say she is a traveler who drowned in the lake more recently. None know her story for sure, and thus it seems unlikely her unhappy spirit will ever be laid to rest.

The greatest concentration of undead presence in Rokugan is of course in the Crab provinces, where the Taint constantly threatens to bring the dead back to life. Further, the proximity of the Shadowlands means that undead creatures from that dark realm frequently slip past the borders, attempting to infiltrate the Empire. The Crab are painfully familiar with undead and in their lands even some of the peasants have been known to do battle with such creatures, striking down zombies in defense of their villages. It is sadly not uncommon for Crab samurai to have to fight their own brethren, returned to a mockery of life after succumbing in battle or to sickness. The Crab go to considerable lengths to identify those samurai who have been infected with the Taint, but even their vigilance is not fool-proof. Thankfully, the determination of the Crab Clan seldom allows such abominations to survive long after they rise from the dead.

Although the Crab lands are notorious for undead, it is the Shinomen Forest which Rokugani think of most readily when discussing ghost stories and haunting. Many strange spirits inhabit the great forest, including some who are of undead nature. Furthermore, Shadowlands creatures are known to slip past the flank of the Crab lands and enter the southern Shinomen, spreading Taint that, in turn, produces infestations of undead. These problems afflicted the Forest throughout the history of the Empire, although they became less acute during the brief periods of time when the Naga race was awake and active.

In the late twelfth century, the so-called Spider Clan – an organization of Lost masquerading as a Great Clan – took possession of the southern Shinomen. The Spider routinely murdered anyone who came close to their hidden lair, and the victims were frequently raised as undead by the clan's maho-tsukai.

Indeed, it is the notorious maho-tsukai – the practitioners of the dark art of *maho*, blood magic – who are primarily responsible for the occasional outbreaks of undead within the rest of the Empire. The followers of the Bloodspeaker Cult are the greatest practitioners of such foul activities and their campaigns against the Empire are discussed in their own chapter elsewhere in this book. However, individual maho-tsukai have also raised undead to serve them throughout Imperial history, dating back to the infamous second-century shugenja Kuni Nakanu. Such activities often leave "pockets" of Taint and undead creatures behind to plague the lands for months or years.

Ghosts, gaki, and slaughter spirits are a different sort of undead. They do not have any association with the Taint and thus can appear anywhere in the Empire. However, there are certain regions which seem to attract such spirits. Old battlefields which were not properly cleansed with prayer may become home to vengeful ghosts or to slaughter spirits from the realm of Toshigoku. The site of a murder or betrayal may attract not only the ghosts created by that incident, but other such spirits as well. Further, there are some regions which have become generally associated with ghosts in the public mind. The Shinomen Forest and its smaller cousin, the Isawa Mori, are both known to be plagued with these sorts of spirits. Certain ancient castles, ruins, and geographical locations are also reputed to be haunted, such as the castle of Shiro no Yogin in Lion lands, where the Crane defenders committed suicide by leaping from the castle walls, or the shores of the lake called Aka Mizu-umi, where ten thousand men died in a single battle.

The Nature of the Undead

"I bathed the desecrated corpse in holy fire. As it writhed, I ended the thing's life with its father's blade. I looked upon the smoldering remains and fought the urge to weep."

– The Journals of Isawa Burutsu, Inquisitor

The most basic threat offered by the undead is a physical one. With the exception of certain kinds of ghosts, all undead are aggressive, seeking to attack and kill any living creatures they meet. Most of them feel a dark and perverse hunger for the living, a longing to devour flesh and blood and even the spirit. Further, the undead do not face the physical limits of mortals. A samurai cannot strain his muscles to the bursting point, or go without air indefinitely, but the undead can do any of these things. The power of an animating *kansen*, a Tainted spirit from Jigoku, provides a zombie all the strength and resilience it requires, and torn muscles or ruptured lungs are no more of an inconvenience than rotting flesh. Thus many undead are physically stronger and more resilient than their former living selves.

Undead spirits such as gaki or slaughter spirits are even more dangerous, since their nature makes them resistant to many physical weapons while they remain free to kill and feed with impunity. The power of the kami and the holy energy of jade and crystal is often the only effective defense against such beings.

The driving force behind most undead, whether they be physical creatures or unnatural spirits, is hunger. This is most easily seen in the gaki, whose very nature is driven by eternal hunger for something from the living. Their hunger is so deeply ingrained that they will do anything to satiate it. Gaki may hunger for anything, but their most frequent desires are for flesh, blood, or other unclean substances like bile or sweat. Some gaki may hunger for powerful emotions instead, such as terror or anger, and they will seek to evoke such emotions in their victims. Physical undead such as zombies and pennaggolans usually hunger more simply and directly for the blood and flesh of the living, pursuing such foul appetites regardless of cost.

Beyond their direct physical threat most undead also behave like a plague or disease, spreading the Taint or, worse yet, transforming their victims into copies of themselves. Most zombies are deeply Tainted and their filthy claws and teeth are liable to inflict the Taint on their victims (not to mention the sickness spread by putrescent flesh). Maho-tsukai are fond of using undead to attack remote villages with few defenders, allowing them to quickly overwhelm the defenders and swell their numbers with more undead, spreading like a cancer across the land. By contrast, major cities or fortresses make poor pickings for such tactics, and seldom witness such attacks. There are exceptions, of course – in 1122, for example, a major zombie outbreak took place in the city of Ryoko Owari during the Bon Festival.

A Fallen Son

Hakachi walked into the room quietly; even in his armor, he made little noise. His father Kincharo turned, his attention drawn more by the sudden chill in the air than by any sound his son made. There had been a stiff breeze outside earlier that evening, but now even with the doors slid wide, the air was still. Hakachi's walk was brisk, but the candles didn't even flicker as he passed them. He was looking in his father's direction, but his eyes did not seem to see the older man.

Kincharo was too relieved to notice such details. "Son. It is good to see you after so long No messengers have come from the battles in many weeks, and we feared the worst…" His words were interrupted by an embrace. An unseemly display, but it had been months since his son was home, so perhaps it could be forgiven.

Hakachi's skin was cold, cold to the touch, cold to the soul. As they stood cheek to cheek, Kincharo's very spirit felt the chill, until he was as cold as his son's blank eyes. His spine felt as if it were being held in the grip of Winter itself.

"I found great dishonor on the battlefield, father. A dishonor that will haunt our family for generations." The boy's voice was harsh, grating. "I do not think our name will ever recover. It is better the line ends with me."

Kincharo pulled away, staring at his son. "What is this madness? The line does not end with you. Your brothers…" His words faded as Hikachi's hands lifted before him, reaching for his throat. They were dark, glistening in the candlelight. Blood. Fresh.

"I have brothers no longer. The line ends with me."



Self-willed undead such as pennaggolans pose a different sort of threat. These creatures are subtle and clever, seeking to slake their abominable hungers while avoiding detection by the humans around them. They can often operate in the Empire for years, leaving a trail of corpses behind them while moving on to their next victims. The Crab, Scorpion, and Phoenix Clans all maintain organizations dedicated to hunting down maho-tsukai and Shadowlands infiltrators – the Crab Witch-Hunters, the Scorpion *Kuroiban* (Black Watch), and the Phoenix Inquisitors. But it is impossible for these investigators to be everywhere at once, and ordinary Rokugani seldom have the skills and expertise to expose such monsters.

The greatest threat posed by the undead, beyond physical damage or even the Taint, is sheer terror. All Rokugani know that this life will lead to the next, that the kharmic cycle will pass their soul on to its proper role and reward. Samurai are taught from birth to embrace death with the same fervor they embrace life. Even those who are overly attached to their current life know they will eventually pass on to their next one. Ghosts and undeath represent a halt to this progress through the kharmic cycle – a "true death" that is horrific beyond imagining. Ghosts can make even the bravest samurai tremble.

Most dreadful of all, Jigoku's twisted power sometimes leaves pieces of the mind intact within an animated corpse, so that the kansen controlling it can make the rotting body express fragments of its old personality and memories. Zombies and other such reanimated horrors sometimes return to their old homes to attack friends and family, like a vengeful spirit given flesh. There have even been reports of undead samurai demonstrating mastery of techniques they were renowned for in life. The Crab recognize that in many cases these stories are actually about Lost samurai whose outward appearance became so gruesome as to seem corpse-like. Nevertheless, it appears Jigoku does sometimes stimulate undead into a close-enough mockery of life that the body can continue to use the skills and even the memories it gained in life. The more useful this will be for the Realm of Evil, the more terror and destruction it can spread, the more likely Jigoku will allow such talents to survive the resurrection process. A truly infamous example of this was the dreadful terror of Yogo Junzo during the Clan War in the early twelfth century. The Tainted undead are pawns in the truest sense of the word, controlled body and mind completely by the Realm of Evil. Even the Lost retain some ability to think and express emotion, albeit completely twisted by the evil power of the Taint. But undead have no such human feelings at all, no sense of self-preservation, no capacity for fear or disobedience. Lost and Oni Lords may engage in backstabbing or power struggles, but undead never do anything but serve Jigoku's ultimate goal of destruction and corruption. To compound the horror, the limited skills they possess were gained in a life of service to Rokugan, and the rusted, broken blades they bear were once the honor of their ancestors. In a sense, the undead are the ultimate enemies of the Emerald Empire, the ultimate inversion of everything for which it stands.



The Known Types of Undead

There are multiple forms of undead and thus multiple ways in which they can be created. By far the most common is for a corpse to be re-animated by the Taint. This occurs spontaneously whenever a corpse becomes strongly Tainted – either due to someone dying in a heavily Tainted region like the Shadowlands, or due to the victim having already attained a significant amount of Taint before death. In game terms, anyone with at least 1 full Rank of Taint will have the possibility of returning from the dead if the GM so wills, and anyone with 3 or more Ranks will do so with certainty. In the Shadowlands, the intense Taint suffusing the landscape is so strong that even a pure, un-Tainted corpse will re-animate within 10 to 20 minutes.

These sorts of undead can also be created by maho-tsukai using a variety of magical spells and abilities. The Maho rules in the L5R 4th Edition Rulebook contains spells which can reanimate corpses, while the sinister Porcelain Masks of the Bloodspeaker Cult are discussed in the Bloodspeakers chapter of this book.

Re-animated corpses will most frequently become some form of zombie or revenant, but those who are brought back to unlife by the intrinsic Taint of the Shadowlands may also become *hyahukei*, a more aggressive and semi-intelligent form of undead. See the Mechanics section of this chapter for more details on hyahukei.

Independent self-willed undead such as pennaggolans and harionago appear to originate in the Shadowlands – perhaps created by Jigoku from *yokai*, the souls of Taint-corrupted humans. Whatever their source, these creatures seem to have the ability to create more of themselves, which helps explain their continuing presence within the Empire despite centuries of effort at eradicating them.

Souls which return to the world as gaki or slaughter spirits are much more rare. For the most part, souls condemned to the spirit realms of Gaki-do or Toshigoku are expected to remain there, sating their abominable hungers until their kharmic punishment is complete. However, gaki do pass through into the mortal realm with some regularity, and on occasion may even be deliberately condemned to do so. The more malignant types of gaki may even become Tainted, making them difficult to distinguish from those undead created by the Taint itself. Slaughter spirits likewise can sometimes escape into the mortal realm through spirit gateways, going on rampages of violence until they can be dismissed or destroyed.

In contrast to ghosts or zombies, gaki are usually physically unrecognizable to those who may have known them in life. Their existence as one of the Hungry Dead twists and transforms them, and they rarely bear any resemblance to their former selves.

Slaughter spirits, by contrast, appear in death much as they did in life, but dressed for war. There is often a dark crimson aura visible about them. They rarely speak, for they have no need for words – no need for anything save violence. Rokugani sensei point to Toshigoku as a warning to their students to control their passions and maintain their *on* (face). Duty to one's lord is the true and final concern of any samurai. Those souls who abandon duty and self-control to embrace the love of violence and death-dealing are likely to end their celestial cycle Toshigoku.

Optional Rule: Undead Hunger

Almost all undead suffer from unnatural hunger, a lust for something within the living, whether it be life, flesh, emotion, or spirit. Many undead seem to gain an unnatural vitality from satisfying their hunger, but this lasts only briefly, and the hunger itself never subsides, driving the undead on to seek out more and more prey.

GMs who wish to represent this aspect of the undead in a mechanical way can introduce a new special ability to their game: Hunger. Hunger is normally restricted to undead creatures, although other Shadowlands beings could potentially have it as well. Hunger has a Rank from 1 to 3, and always is focused on a particular target – flesh, blood, certain emotions, etc. Hunger is unnatural and malignant in origin and nature, and the object of Hunger should be chosen accordingly. For example, a zombie would not have Hunger (Sushi). Natural living creatures, like humans, will never know the pain of unnatural hunger and cannot possess this ability.

When a Hunger is sated, the undead creature receives a bonus of +Xk0 to all Attack and Skill rolls (where X is the Rank of Hunger) for the next three Rounds. This bonus is normally not cumulative, but its duration can be re-set by further satisfaction of the Hunger. (GMs wishing to create more powerful and threatening undead can allow them to "stack" multiple Hunger bonuses – be warned that this can make a very powerful creature indeed!)

On rare occasions, extremely powerful self-willed undead have appeared within the Empire. Some of these creatures are created by the Taint itself, as happened to Yogo Junzo. However, a few have appeared which seem to have been spawned by powerful maho rituals. The Bloodspeaker Cult created a self-willed zombie that served as one of its leaders for centuries, for example. It also appears that at least one of the terrible Black Scrolls of legend contained a ritual which could transform someone into a self-aware undead monstrosity, a ritual performed by the Fox Clan daimyo, Kitsune Gohei, in the early twelfth century.

A Sinister Offer

The following account is taken from the collected writings of Seikansha, a mysterious ronin from the late eleventh century who spent a lifetime hunting down records, myths, legends, and stories of the Shadowlands, the undead, and maho-tsukai cults. His work is largely forgotten in the modern Empire, and even during his lifetime he was an obscure figure at best, with only a few friends and allies scattered across Rokugan. Some of the tales he collected were later proven untrue, but many did indeed prove to be accurate. This particular piece is supposedly the transcript of a covert meeting of a cult cell led by "Chuda Kosai," a maho-tsukai who claimed descent from the lost Snake Clan. Seikansha claimed that several samurai were among those who attended the cult meeting, leading to speculation that Kitsune Gohei may have been among them.

"The unliving are fearsome and terrible, and no one who has faced one in any capacity has come away unchanged. To many they are enemies; to others, with greater power, they are tools. But there are some who see the undead and their thirst for...something, power, perhaps? ...makes them wish to become undead themselves.

"Some of you are shocked? This should not be so surprising. Eternal life has appeal to those who do not find comfort in your Celestial Order. Why else are you here if you do not feel this urge yourselves?

"There are various methods for those who chose to become one of the unliving, but those who seek such a state will find the more difficult and least likely of them to be the preferable. If 'preferable' is, indeed, a word that can be applied to such a thing. <laughter> *For those who are contemplating such a fate... yes, I see it in your eyes, some of you. You must think carefully, for there is not so much of benefit as you might imagine in this state of being. Far be it for me to dissuade one who is determined on this course of action, though!*

"By far the most simple method is for one of great magical prowess to perform animating rituals on the body of the deceased. These may be performed on a fresh body, frequently of an enemy, but also on bodies pilfered from the eta *crematoriums, or acquired from less scrupulous academies of learning or places of healing. The Kuni can be quite helpful in this regard, with their forbidden experiments!* <laughter> *Such a method is quite effective, but results in little faculty with which to... enjoy... one's state of undeath. Indeed, the animated is generally under control of the animator, with no mind of its own, a state which benefits the deceased little. The benefit to the animator can be great, of course, and the deceased has no mind with which to find objection.*

"Ah, I see this option proves distasteful to your living minds, as I expected. You certainly seek undeath for some greater aspiration of your own. Let us then consider other options.

"On occasion, the animation of the body seems to come from the deceased's own desires or passion. Vengeance, great longing, dishonor, all can draw power to the body and restore it to a semblance of life and thought. The latent passions can themselves drive the recently dead to act on these longings. The dishonored may seek to rid itself of that which dishonored it. The thirst for revenge may bring bloody death on the subject of that vengeance and all that stands between them. Unrequited love can drive the undead being to seek the object of its love, even unto the grave. Although such undead are in control of their actions, their actions are generally limited to the fulfillment of their goals.



"This could, of course, satisfy someone whose goals are the reason they seek unlife. However, depending on your passions to be strong enough is certainly not something that can be considered a reliable method... ah, I see you agree with me. No point in taking chances with such important matters, eh?

"Of course, those who die in the Shadowlands will find themselves animated by the power of that realm itself. Such beings can occasionally maintain their own intelligence, but are driven by far darker instincts than they had in life. If your motives are dark to begin with, this may be a fine path to one who seeks the power of an undead state... but your will is not truly your own, under such circumstances. And you may yourself in the power of other things that dwell in the Shadowlands, including undead mightier than yourself. You might well become a powerful undead warlord... or you might become a feeble creature in its army. Not so appealing, I should think.

"Are there other options available, then? Few, I am afraid. But let us not end our discussion without exploring them all.

"There are some manner of undead which breed, in a manner of speaking. In taking the blood or organs of a victim, they pass along a curse, causing the victim to rise from death under the control of similar hungers. Such creatures are few, I am afraid. Should you manage to find one, it is a simple task to get it to feed upon you... but you must then hope to retain some manner of self-will after its curse afflicts you. Hardly a wise course of action.

"Which leads to what may be the only reliable method of becoming a sapient undead being. A powerful ritual, performed on the self, does exist. A mighty spell, long lost in the past, hidden in the Empire. I dare to say that finding such a ritual and someone capable of performing it would cost you... dearly. Shall we discuss my terms, then?"

It is unknown whether Seikansha was ever able to bring Chuda Kosai to justice.

The Undead as Adversaries: Horror in a Campaign

The undead make superb villains in an L5R campaign, especially one built around themes of horror or the Shadowlands. Even in a campaign that focuses on more conventional storylines such as samurai honor, war, or political intrigue, an occasional appearance by the undead can be a dramatic and powerful change of pace. Regardless of how important they are to the campaign's main themes, the undead in L5R should never be depicted casually or flippantly. In Rokugan the undead are a source of profound horror, and should never be encountered in a conventional or mundane way. At the least, the encounter should be significant, and if possible part of a greater plot. In all cases there should be a powerful sense of fear, dislocation, and revulsion.

Building a sense of horror in a role-playing game can be difficult, especially in a game whose protagonists are highly capable warriors taught from birth not to fear death. Putting the fear into samurai requires pressing the psychological "soft spots" of both the characters and the players running them. The undead, thankfully, can be directed against both of these targets. To modern players, the undead are horrifying because they embody fear of death. To the Rokugani, they represent the horror of a profound violation of the Celestial Order. Moreover, the undead can be the quintessential example of the terror of a friend turned enemy (although the Lost can also evoke this theme quite powerfully). Being attacked by a shambling, moaning zombie reaching for blood is exciting, but only mildly horrifying to experienced RPG players. But being attacked by a shambling zombie that used to be your good friend Hida Koruma, the friendly Crab who liked to drink and tell amusing stories, the one who stood up to the bullies on the Wall and kept them from abusing you – *that* is horror, to players and characters alike.

GMs with experience in the modern film and fiction may be inclined to use undead as adversaries in the same manner – that is, in a context of gruesome, violent, bloody horror. Up to a point, this can be effective, not only for the undead but for any Shadowlands threat. Ever since the French created *grand guignol* theater in the 19th century, audiences have been captivated and compelled by this sort of horror, and GMs can use this method in their games as well. Shambling zombies or ravening gaki are quite effective vehicles for this kind of story. However, shock and violence can only take horror so far, especially in a role-playing game. The very structure of role-playing games distances the players from in-game events. Violence and grue will pall over time and players will become jaded. To make horror effective over the longer term, the GM should employ suspense and psychological dislocation. The unknown threat, the lurking danger that cannot be identified, can be highly effective at evoking the proper atmosphere of horror. Keeping the players and their characters on edge with build-ups, teases, and false alarms can create an intense tone of uncertainty and dread. In some cases, it isn't even necessary for them to actually fight an undead threat for that threat to create fear.

Consider a group of samurai and commoners snowbound at an inn in a remote village. All seems quiet and peaceful – until people begin waking up with torn throats, drained of blood. Is it a Shadowlands beast, or an undead monster, or a crazed maho-tsukai? As the bodies pile up, the PCs themselves come under threat, and clues are few. The paranoid begin to suspect some manner of infiltrator – a shape-shifter, bog hag, or pennaggolan. Every night brings the fear that one of the PCs may succumb to the unknown threat. Then, the GM takes one of the players into the other room to deliver a mundane piece of information... leaving the rest of the table convinced that the player's character has been killed and replaced. Such a situation can be played out at extended length before the real killer is revealed. The longer the GM can keep the players on edge, the more effective the adventure will be at evoking horror.

The GM should work carefully to enhance the mood of a horror-oriented campaign, not only in-game but around the gaming table as well. Dim lighting can help create a sense of unease and fear – a single corner lamp, with just enough light to read notes and character sheets, can set a powerful tone. A truly bold GM can try playing a game by candlelight, although this may be more atmosphere than many players are willing to tolerate. But if they are willing to accept candles, the flickering and transient nature of the lighting adds a level of uncertainty that modern lighting cannot match.

Music can be used to create atmosphere, although this can be tricky and overuse of music can become more annoying than atmospheric. Music should remain soft and in the background so as not to draw focus away from gameplay. That being said, soft and slow instrumentals, heavy with bowed strings, can work effectively to amplify the tension of a scene, creating an aura of dread. Conversely, an absence of any background noise can also work to create atmosphere, especially if the GM can contrive a way to interrupt it with a sudden noise.

Horror thrives on evocative descriptions. Simply announcing that a corpse stands up, sword in hand, lacks much impact beyond the anticipation of combat. A more compelling description can mention the corpse by name, draw attention to its jerky, unnatural movements, make mention of the dreadful moan that emerges from its gaping mouth and the flicker of monstrous hunger in its glowing eyes. A zombie in Rokugan should never be "just a zombie," and undead encounters should be memorable in every possible way.

Adventure Hooks for Undead

Here follow several potential stories involving undead, stories which the GM can easily expand into full campaigns.

- **A Bloody Wedding:** The morning after a wedding among the local nobility, the bride's family, the groom, and their house servants are all found brutally slaughtered. The bride herself is alive and unharmed, making her an obvious suspect, especially when she seems unable to explain what happened. Investigation, however, reveals a previous suitor of hers who died at war some months earlier.
- **The Lost Sibling:** A PC has a brother with whom he/she is very close. In a battle on the far side of the Empire, the PC wages combat with a ravening pack of zombies - one of whom is the beloved brother. What has happened at home? Is this horrible coincidence, or is there a bigger plot?
- **Hunter or Hunted?** A local shugenja discovers a headless body in the city square, and sends the PCs on a hunt for a Pennaggolan. However, their attempts to uncover the monster soon begin to point back at the shugenja himself.
- **Letter from a Corpse:** A PC receives a letter from his deceased father, requesting a visit. All indications seem to indicate the father did indeed write the letter - which is impossible, since he died over a year ago.
- **The Missing Dead:** Corpses are disappearing from the local crematoriums before they can be properly burned. Hundreds of bodies have vanished, but no remains have been found.
- **Vengeance from the Grave:** The PCs track down a formidable maho-tsukai and assail his lair. However, as they battle through the swarms of undead who guard the place, the PCs realize that each of them was once someone they defeated in life. Alternatively, the PCs may begin encountering their former enemies earlier in the plot, facing a different fallen foe each time they get closer to their main enemy.

Mechanics

The following section provides mechanical descriptions of many new types of undead, as well as several unique undead monstrosities from different periods in the Empire's long history. The undead creatures here represent typical examples of their type – the GM can make them stronger or weaker as desired, to represent lesser or more powerful individuals.

Physical Undead

The most common undead in Rokugan are the physical undead – those bodies which have been reanimated by kansen or transformed into monstrous predators like pennaggolans. These entities are relentless predators and violations of the Celestial Order, sources of danger and horror to all Rokugani.

Ghul

In the lands known as the Burning Sands, beyond Rokugan's western borders, necromancy is practiced in more than one realm. The Senpet kingdom has been known to create undead through its religious rituals, and a band of cultists known as the Jackals have expanded the Senpet activities into darker and more fearsome methods. Their most plentiful creation are Ghuls, a fierce and aggressive form of undead, much like zombies but more cunning and sturdier. They are distinguished from normal zombies by their emaciated but intact bodies, bestial teeth, and rapid movement. In contrast to normal zombies, which act alone unless controlled by a sorcerer or a powerful denizen of the Shadowlands, ghuls are capable of forming hunting packs on their own, employing primitive but effective tactics to hunt the human prey they crave. Ghuls ceaselessly desire the flesh of the living, and feed on it with carnivore intensity. Once they bring down prey they will often go into a feeding frenzy, ripping into any living thing until no prey remains.

Ghuls are found primarily in the distant cities of the Burning Lands, notably the Senpet cities and the great metropolis of Medinaat al-Salaam. However, ghuls do occasionally cross the Burning Sands and enter Rokugan, where their strange nature and gaijin appearance are sources of both shock and disgust. In the latter half of the twelfth century, the Lost organization known as the Spider Clan begins taking control of these migratory ghuls and even studying the techniques to create new ones. This may have been due to secret communication between the Spider and the Jackals, but little is known for sure.

Ghuls are not Tainted, for they are created by gaijin magic that does not deal with the powers of Jigoku. The nature of the malign energy which animates their bodies is unknown to the Rokugani.

Although they possess an intrinsic cunning, ghuls have little real volition of their own, and can easily be brought under the control of a powerful leader such as a Bloodspeaker, shugenja, or Oni Lord. They also occasionally produce a leader of their own, a so-called ghul lord. These more powerful ghuls appear to be at least partially self-aware, and are capable of human speech. A few have even been able to cast maho spells. They will often lead large hordes of ordinary ghuls, and seem to have the ability to command Rokugani undead like zombies as well. A ghul lord will have superior Traits and attacks to a normal ghul, and may have other enhancements at the GM's discretion.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 4	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Claw 4k3 (complex)*

Damage: 5k2 (claw) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 72: Dead*

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Throat Attack: If a ghul inflicts 15 or more Wounds with a single claw attack, it will lunge forward and try to bite its victim in the throat. This additional attack is made as a Free Action, with an attack roll of 5k3 and damage of 4k1.*
- *Undead*

Harionago

Harionago are created from women whose violent death leave a legacy of wrath and vengeance so intense that it attracts a yokai to possess and re-animate the corpse. They dwell on less-traveled roadways, far from civilized areas, where they can hunt lone travelers. They seek especially those who remind them in some manner of their original murderer, for while the soul of the dead body is long departed, her memories are inherited by the dark spirit that now animates the body. Prey may be chosen based on mood, appearance, or something as simple as the way they walk, their gender, or a song they whistle. Their preferred prey is usually male but some have been known to hunt females.

When a Harionago is hunting it appears as a quite beautiful woman, often far more beautiful than in life. She is usually dressed as a peasant and will play the role of a simple frightened maiden, looking for help in the wild. Despite her lower-caste appearance her garments will be well-kept and fetching. Her most notable feature is her hair, which is long, lustrous, and notably attractive, and always adorned with small metal ornaments which on closer inspection seem to be hooks – these are actually part of the "hair" itself, though they appear to be decoration. An attentive traveler who notices the hooks may possibly be able to remember tales of the Harionago with a suitable Lore Skill roll (suggested TN is 20).

Harionago, like pennaggolan, are always found alone. They are solitary predators and regard other creatures of their type as rivals. They do not normally reproduce, but the corpses of women who are murdered by Harionago sometimes become similar creatures. When a Harionago meets a potential victim, she will follow and approach by stealth, but then present herself openly, often in a manner that allows the traveler to think it is he who spotted her. The animating spirit of the Harionago drives her to engage the victim's attention, but if a target consistently ignores or dismisses the creature, she will eventually give up and vanish.



However, if a victim does respond and engage in conversation, the Harionago will be driven to try to elicit a specific emotional behavior or response, generally tied to the events of her death. Like pennaggolans, Harionago are cunning and intelligent, able to falsify human behavior with considerable skill. Often they desire laughter, but they could also try to evoke tears or anger with a story of difficult times. In any event, if the desired emotional response occurs, the Harionago will suddenly reveal its monstrous nature and viciously attack. The barbed hair comes alive and tries to grapple and tear apart the victim. If she slays her prey, a Harionago will devour him to the bone, then bury the remains away from the road to avoid warning future victims. She does not like fighting multiple opponents and will usually try to flee engagements with groups.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
-	Willpower 5	Agility 4	Perception 4

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Claws 8k4 (Complex) or Hair Hooks 4k4 (Complex)*

Damage: Claws 3k3 or Hooks 3k1 — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 10 (5 against Jade) — *Wounds: 80: dead*

Taint Rank: 3

Skills: Acting 3, Jiujutsu 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 3, Stealth 4, Temptation 3

Special Ablities:

- *Hook Grapple: If the Harionago hits an opponent with her hair hooks, she will use them to Grapple the enemy. She can use her claw attacks to damage a Grappled foe. An opponent who succeeds in breaking free of the Grapple suffers 1k1 Wounds as the hooks are pulled free.*
- *Swift 1*
- *Undead*

Hyakuhei

Hyakuhei are created from samurai who die in the Shadowlands, attracting unusually powerful kansen to bring their bodies back to unlife. Unlike most of the undead animated by the Shadowlands, Hyakuhei retain some of the intelligence they had in life, along with a fierce animalistic cunning. Their hatred of the living is far more focused and deliberate than the mindless aggression of ordinary zombies. Outwardly they appear similar to other undead, but their empty sockets glow with an eerie green light that serves to hint at their true intelligence. Like most physical undead, hyakuhei hunger for blood, but prefer to spill it with a blade rather than devouring it physically.



Hyakuhei, like Revenents (detailed in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook), are often bound to a powerful master such as a maho-tsukai, Oni Lord, or akutenshi. However, their intelligence, skill, and cunning allows them to serve such masters far more effectively. A hyakuhei fights much like any living warrior in terms of tactics and ability. It is capable of forethought and planning. Whereas a zombie or revenant is generally driven to attack the nearest living creature, a hyakuhei can wait and plan for a more strategic moment to strike. Hyahukei will often travel in the company of normal zombies, impersonating these lesser creatures to keep their foes off guard, although this ruse falls apart quickly when they finally attack. Hyakuhei rarely attack alone, preferring to fight in packs so as to employ group tactics. In fact, fighting a hyahukei is much like fighting a living samurai – but one who is immune to pain and doesn't tire.

The statistics listed here are for typical hyahukei. More powerful specimens exist, and should have their stats increased accordingly.

Air 1	Earth 4	Fire 2	Water 3
Reflexes 3	-	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Weapon 5k3 (Complex) or Claws 4k3 (Complex)*

Damage: By weapon or 4k1 (claws) — *Armor TN: 20 (Note that hyakuhei often wear the armor they had in life, with the appropriate increase to TN and Reduction)*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 80: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, various Weapon Skills at 2.

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 4*
- *Undead*



Kekkai

Unsanctified blood is one of the most impure substances known to the Rokugani, which is why priests are always brought in to engage in purification rituals after a birth, death, battle, or any similar incident that resulted in the spillage of blood. If such rituals are not undertaken, the blood may attract the attention of kansen, and on rare occasions this may result in the creation of a kekkai. If the blood was from someone who was Tainted, this is far more likely to occur. Blood from a difficult or fatal childbirth seems to be particularly likely to create kekkai, or so Rokugani superstition believes.

Kekkai appear as tiny humans, a foot or less in height, blood red in color, and with a sticky and slimy texture. They are clearly composed of blood, a clotted sticky mass in miniature human form, and leave trails of clotting blood behind them wherever they go. Naturally, their nature and behavior makes them intrinsically horrifying to the Rokugani. Kekkai do not appear to be capable of causing serious harm, but they inspire considerable terror in those who see them. They possess a childish malignance that delights in bringing fear to households or entire villages. Kekkai can often cause widespread panic among commoners, and prolonged infestations will spread their Taint into the area. Shugenja can destroy them with purification rituals, but aside from that they cannot be easily killed. If they are destroyed, they collapse back into a puddle of blood that quickly dries.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 1
-	-	-	-

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Fist 1k1 (Simple)*

Damage: 1 Wound — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 16: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 4*
- *Invulnerability*
- *Purification: A shugenja can attempt to dispose of kekkai by performing an elaborate purification ritual. This requires an hour of prayer followed by a Contested Roll of the shugenja's Void against the kekkai's Taint.*
- *Undead*

Nukekubi

These creatures appear to be weaker, more primitive forms of pennaggalon, although some Kuni have argued that they are in fact a completely different kind of entity. They suggest that nukekubi are the creations of maho experiments, though no one has ever taken credit for them. Other Kuni theorize that they are the result of pennaggalon reproduction which goes wrong in some manner, failing to produce a true pennaggolan. Regardless, no accurate documentation of their origins exists.

Nukekubi are found primarily in the Shadowlands and in lands known for hauntings and evil spirits, such as the southern Shinomen Forest. They are less intelligent and devious than pennaggolans, and are driven only by their terrible hunger. In form, they appear to be human, but at night their heads detach from their bodies and float away in search of prey. When detached, the heads sprout sharp fangs from their mouths and their eyes glow with malignant green-blue light. Unlike pennaggolan, they do not drink blood – rather, they feed on the pain and death-terror of their victims, tearing them to pieces with their razor-edged fangs. They are normally quite difficult to kill, but their detached bodies are quite vulnerable while the heads are away hunting. They usually try to conceal their bodies while they hunt, hiding them in forests, underneath porches, in caves, and similar.

Nukekubi are not particularly intelligent and their skills at deception are limited. In their human form they usually take a simple role such as a peasant, beggar, or wandering laborer. They prefer to keep moving, visiting different communities as travelers and moving on before their depredations draw too much attention.

Air 1	Earth 2	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 4	-	Agility 3	-

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: Fist or Weapon 3k3 (Complex, while in body); Bite 4k3 (Simple, while head is detached)*

Damage: By weapon (while in body); 3k2 (bite, head) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 36: Dead*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 3*
- *Swift 2 (detached head only)*
- *Flying Head: A nukekubi can detach and reattach its head at any time between sunset and sunrise. This is a Simple Action. While detached, the head can hover and fly in any direction. However, if it cannot return to its body by sunrise, it will die.*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Undead*
- *Vulnerable Body: While a nukekubi's head is detached, its body is not Invulnerable.*





Nuppeppo

Nuppeppo are truly unspeakable creatures, for they are animated mounds of flesh stripped from bone. They are not properly corpses, like zombies or hyakuhei, but are instead amorphous piles of rotting, stinking skin and tissue. They arise most frequently from the Taint-infused remains of those who have been killed in the most brutal manner, such as those torn apart by rampaging oni or hungry zombies. As such, they are usually found in the Shadowlands, although every once in a while a nuppeppo will appear within the Empire proper. When this happens it usually seems to be the side-effect of sinister maho experiments.

Nuppeppo are not particularly fast or durable, and their chief threat is the sheer horror they inspire in those who see them. Physically they are actually less dangerous than zombies, but many victims are so paralyzed by fear and revulsion that they are unable to resist effectively.

If a nuppeppo is killed, its Tainted flesh will reanimate again within three days unless it is burned.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 0	Water 1
–	Stamina 3	Agility 2	Strength 2

Initiative: 2k1 — *Attack: Bludgeon 2k2 (Simple)*

Damage: 3k2 (bludgeon) — *Armor TN: 10*

Reduction: 15 (5 against jade, crystal, and fire) — *Wounds: 24: Dead*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Ablities:

- *Abominable Stench: Any time a nuppeppo is struck with a bladed or piercing weapon, it erupts with foul, putrescent stench. All living persons within twenty feet must make a Stamina roll (TN 20) to avoid being nauseated. All such targets are considered Fatigued until the nuppeppo is destroyed or they move at least 20 feet away.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Undead*

Pennaggolan

Among the most clever and terrifying of undead, pennaggolon are vampiric creatures who appear outwardly human by light of day. A pennaggolan's human form may be either male or female and is completely normal, identical to its human form before it was transformed into an undead monster. These creatures are both intelligent and skilled, able to maintain a long-term false identity and to masquerade as either a samurai or a commoner, whatever seems most advantageous. Even worse, while they are in their human body their Taint cannot normally be detected.

A pennaggolan's true nature becomes apparent at night, when it goes forth to feed. Its head detaches from the body and rises into the air, dragging along with it the body's various entrails (stomach, heart, intestines, lungs, and other viscera). This grotesque monstrosity flies through the air, seeking lone victims to feed upon. Once it finds its prey, the pennaggolan seizes and strangles the victim with its entrails, then feeds on its blood.

Pennaggolans, unlike most undead, have the ability to control and ration their hunger, and do not have to feed every night. This allows them to remain within the Empire and evade discovery for extended periods of time, especially since they seldom stay in one place for very long. The one real flaw in their masquerade is a peculiar physical disability: when the pennaggolan is out hunting and feeding, its entrails swell and bloat, making it extremely difficult for it to squeeze back into its body afterward. Vinegar acts as a counteragent to this problem, reducing the swelling and allowing the monster to squirm back into its hollow torso. Thus, a pennaggolan is often accompanied by a lingering odor of vinegar, and the creatures use a variety of excuses to justify their need for the liquid. A favorite device is to masquerade as a vinegar merchant, but other schemes may also be used – one especially experienced creature pretended to be a samurai maiden and claimed she used vinegar to keep her skin soft and supple.

Pennaggolan are loners and do not cooperate with each other – indeed they often regard each other as rivals for prey and territory. On those rare occasions when they choose to create more of their own kind, they do so by draining the blood from a living victim, rather than strangling it to death and then drinking its blood. It then hides the body to prevent it from being burned or buried. Three days later, the corpse

rises from the dead as a new pennaggolan. Newly created pennaggolan retain the memories and skills of their former life, but are now animated by a malignant spirit from Jigoku rather than by the soul of the former occupant.

Much like the lesser creatures known as nukekubi, pennaggolan are vulnerable to the loss of their body. If a pennaggolan's body is destroyed, the head will fall helpless to the ground at sunrise. Consequently, they go to considerable effort to hide their bodies and avoid detection by those who hunt the forces of the Taint.

Pennaggolans have a semi-legendary status among the Rokugani, due to their rarity and cunning. Some legends among some of the Great Clans suggest that pennaggolon like to feed on pregnant women and therefore disguise themselves as midwives. Consequently, superstitious husbands will often have midwives watched around the clock.

Air 3	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 4	Stamina 4	Agility 4	Perception 4

Initiative: 5k4

Attack: Bite 4k4 (Complex) or Entrails 9k4 (Complex, Jiujutsu grappling attack). A pennaggolan can only use these attacks while its head is detached. While in human form it can fight with weapons, using any skills it possessed in life.

Damage: 2k2 (bite) or 3k1 (grapple damage from entrail constriction)

Armor TN: 25

Reduction: 15 (10 against jade or crystal)

Wounds: 72: Dead

Taint Rank: 4

Skills: Acting 4, Jiujutsu 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 5, and any skills known during life.

Special Ablities:

- *Deceptive Taint: A pennaggolan's Taint can only be detected when its head is detached from its body. While its head is attached, jade will not burn it and other Taint-sensing spells and effects do not affect it at all.*
- *Entrail Constriction: A pennaggolan uses its Jiujutsu skill to attack with its entrails, attempting to grapple its target and then crush and strangle the victim to death.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Swift 2 (detached head only)*
- *Flying Head: A pennaggolan can detach and reattach its head at any time, but must reconnect its head before the next sunrise. This is a Simple Action. While detached, the head can hover and fly in any direction. If it cannot return to its body by the next sunrise, it will fall to the ground paralyzed and helpless.*
- *Invulnerable*
- *Undead*
- *Vulnerable Body: While a pennaggolan's head is detached, its body is not Invulnerable.*

Plague Zombie

These entities are very similar to ordinary zombies in nature and appearance, but are active carriers of the disease which killed them. In some cases the disease itself may be supernatural in nature, but plague zombies can also occur when a diseased body dies in proximity to the Taint. The disease is made even more virulent by the influence of the Taint, and those wounded or killed by plague zombies are extremely likely to become plague zombies themselves.

Plague zombies usually travel in packs, often in the company of "normal" zombies and revenants. Like their non-diseased brethren, they have an insatiable hunger for the blood and flesh of the living, attacking ceaselessly and without mercy.

Air 0	Earth 3	Fire 0	Water 1
Reflexes 1	Stamina 4	Agility 2	Strength 3

Initiative: 1k1

Attack: Fist 4k2 (Complex) or Club 4k2 (Complex)

Damage: 3k1 (fist) or 3k2 (club)

Armor TN: 10

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 72: Dead

Taint Rank: 4

Special Ablities:

- *Beheading: A zombie normally can only be destroyed by literally hacking it to pieces (reducing it to Dead). However, it can also be destroyed instantly by severing its head. This requires taking the Raises for a Called Shot and then inflicting at least 18 Wounds.*
- *Fear 3*
- *Plague Carrier: Anyone struck by a Plague zombie has a 1 in 5 chance of catching a Taint-enhanced plague. A typical such disease will cause weakening, fits of coughing, and poxes on the skin. The victim's Stamina will decrease by 1 point per week until the victim is magically cured or successfully treated with Medicine (TN 25). If the victim dies due to Stamina reaching 0, the body will reanimate as a Plague Zombie within a few minutes.*
- *Undead*





Undead Spirits

In contrast to the physical undead, these entities are spawned from souls condemned to certain of the spirit realms in punishment for their deeds in life. Whenever mortals die, their souls are judged by the Fortune of Death, Emma-O, and those who have lived sinful lives may be condemned to Gaki-do or Toshigoku. Creatures from these realms sometimes escape back into the mortal realm, plaguing the living with their malignant and destructive natures. In addition, some types of gaki are specifically condemned to walk the mortal world until they have purged their bad kharma. The chief distinguishing feature of all of these beings is their nature as spirits, which makes them far more difficult to drive off or destroy than a physical undead creature.

Gaki, the Hungry Dead

The nature of gaki is discussed in detail in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook. Gaki are driven to feed on some unclean substance or negative emotion, usually based on their sins in life. More rarely a gaki may feed on a positive emotion like courage. Unfortunately, the realm of Gaki-do is closely associated with Jigoku, and most gaki are twisted, malignant, or even Tainted beings. (Some of the more prominent examples of this are presented here.) Because of their predatory and malignant nature, gaki seldom actually manage to purge their kharma and achieve redemption – it is more common for them to continue their predation through all eternity. All gaki share the following qualities:

- **Immortality:** Gaki cannot actually be killed, and if their physical form is destroyed, they reform within Gaki-do.
- **Spirit.**
- **Superior Invulnerability:** Gaki are immune to all illusion spells and to all spells, skills, and techniques which affect the mind or thoughts.

Gaki, Gakimushi

The most malignant of gaki known to mortals, Gakimushi are heavily Tainted entities which seem to draw as much on the power of Jigoku as on their native Gaki-do. They feed on pain, and as such their preferred behavior is to capture mortals and torture them for days, weeks, or even months, feeding on their delicious agony. More than almost any other gaki, the Gakimushi exhibits the insectoid nature that seems to be associated with many gaki, resembling a giant humanoid insect with a long tail mounting a venomous stinger. Due to their unnatural appetites, they try to enter the mortal realm whenever possible, making lairs in remote places and dragging mortal captives there to feed upon.

Air 2	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 4	Stamina 4	Agility 5	Strength 5

Initiative: 6k4 — *Attack: Stinger 6k6 (Complex)*

Damage: 5k3 — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 10 (5 to jade or crystal) — *Wounds: 25: +5; 60: +10; 95: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Skills: Stealth 3

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 4.*
- *Poisonous Stinger: Those who are struck by the Gakimushi's stinger are injected with a fearsome paralyzing venom, reducing their Strength by 1 Rank per hit. Victims whose Strength becomes zero are paralyzed until the venom wears off (which requires 1 hour per dose, cumulative) or it is successfully treated with a spell. A Medicine Skill roll at TN 25 can reduce the venom's duration by half.*
- *Shapeshifting: A gakimushi can take the form of a normal insect as a Complex Action. Regaining its true form is a Simple Action.*

Gaki, Kwaku-Shin Gaki

These bizarre gaki are created from the souls of those who allow others to perish of cold rather than share the warmth they possess. They are quite rare, with typically only one or two created in a given generation. They take the form of pot-bellied men, often elderly, with no legs and a black iron cauldron for a stomach. The cauldron is searing hot, often glowing brightly, and causes exquisite pain to the gaki itself. It is driven relentlessly to find and feed upon mortals in order to quench the fire within its belly.

Kwaku-shin gaki pursue their prey by hopping. They never speak or otherwise communicate, and seem to exist only to pursue and consume their victims.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 5	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 4k3 — *Attack: Slam 6k4 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k3 (slam) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 32: +5; 64: +10; 96: Dead*

Special Ablities:

- *Cauldron Belch: The Kwaku-shin Gaki can belch forth a gobbet of flame once per skirmish. This glob of searing fire rolls 6k3 to attack, and can strike up to three targets who stand within ten feet of each other. It inflicts 4k4 damage and will set flammable objects on fire.*
- *Fear 3.*
- *Fiery Nature: Due to the intense heat they contain, Kwaku-shin Gaku are immune to all fire and heat, whether normal or magical in nature. However, water and cold cause them pain – a bucket of water will inflict 1k1 damage on a Kwaku-shin Gaku (ignoring Reduction), and larger quantities will inflict correspondingly more damage.*

Gaki, Shikko-Gaki

Shikko-gaki are created from the souls of those who defiled graves and other resting places of the honorable dead. This blasphemous sin dooms them to an existence as a gaki that craves the flesh of the mortal dead. Since such dead flesh cannot be found in Gaki-do, the Shikko-gaki are always eager to enter the mortal realm and assuage their hunger. Their taste for such vile food makes them easily Tainted.

Physically, a Shikko-gaki is a foul creature, resembling a hunched, ape-like beast with gray skin, long talons, and insect-like segmented eyes. Its lower torso fades off into vapor, with no visible legs or feet, but nevertheless it moves in a hopping, arching motion that carries it rapidly toward its goal. Shikko-gaki actually retain their human intelligence, unlike many gaki, but are incapable of speech because their mouths are completely packed with irregular rows of jagged teeth. Since they crave dead flesh, they do not normally attack the living on their own, but if a living creature attacks them they will fight back relentlessly until they or their enemy is destroyed.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 2
Reflexes 3	Stamina 5	Agility 3	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k3 — *Attack: Claw 4k2 (Simple)*

Damage: 4k2 (claw) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 32: +10; 64: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 3

Special Ablities:

- *Diseased Touch: A Shikko-gaki's filthy claws carry disease, and those struck by it must roll Stamina against the number of Wounds inflicted or come down with a severe feverish infection. The illness causes Stamina and Strength to drop by 1 Rank; at the end of a week, the victim must roll Stamina at TN 20 to recover, or the disease continues for another week and he loses another Rank of Strength and Stamina. This continues until the victim recovers or dies. The illness can be cured with appropriate magic or with the Medicine Skill (TN 30).*
- *Fear 4.*
- *Swift 2.*
- *Ghoulish Regeneration: Each time the Shikko-gaki eats dead flesh, it heals 1k1 Wounds.*



A Gaki Finds Redemption

Bayushi Shoju was the Clan Champion of the Scorpion in the early twelfth century. Influenced by a fearsome set of prophecies, as well as the sinister whispers of a deadly artifact called Ambition, he sought to overthrow the Hantei Dynasty with the so-called Scorpion Clan Coup. His life and the Coup both ended in the throne room in Otosan Uchi, at the hand of Akodo Toturi. He died reviled throughout the Empire for his brazen action... and revered for his courage within the Scorpion Clan.

After his death, Shoju's soul was sent to Gaki-do, where he was condemned to an insatiable hunger for courage in others. He became the Gaki of Courage, damned to roam Rokugan without form while searching for the courageous. Like most of the insubstantial gaki, Shoju's only power was the ability to inspire an emotion – but due to his unique curse, this was a positive and virtuous emotion. Many in the Scorpion Clan came to see him as a blessed spirit, offering them guidance and aid. He would spend the next half-century inspiring courage in many of Rokugan's greatest heroes, feeding on their stalwart defense of the Empire.

In the latter half of the century, Shoju discovered a young samurai named Bayushi Kwanchai. The incredibly daring samurai was a constant source of Courage. Shoju's eternal hunger slowly began to ebb away as he followed Kwanchai through his glorious career. In the end, Kwanchai courageously sacrificed himself to close a portal to Gaki-Do. This final act at last completely sated Shoju's hunger. Freed from the grip of Gaki-do, his soul moved on to his next life, finally a part of the kharmic cycle once more.

Gaki, Skull Tide

Over centuries of sea-faring, countless sailors have betrayed their captains and crews in pursuit of riches. These murderers and thieves, obsessed with fattening their own coffers, are often condemned to be reborn into the Skull Tide, a giant corrupted gaki that dwells in the Tainted waters near the shore of the Shadowlands. The Skull Tide is a literal sea of skulls, a collective entity that attacks ships and devours sailors. Those who are killed become new skulls in the Tide.

The Skull Tide is one of the most notorious hazards of the waters near the Shadowlands, and the clacking sound of its hundreds of skeletal jaws snapping together is a source of terror to all Rokugani sailors. Thankfully, the Tide is restricted to the sea and seldom leaves the waters near the Shadowlands.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 3	Water 3
Reflexes 3	Stamina 5	-	Strength 6

Initiative: 3k3 — *Attack: 8k4 Biting (Simple)*

Damage: 6k3 (bite) — *Armor TN: 20*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: Dead*

Taint Rank: 4

Special Ablities:

- *Bound to the Wave: The Skull Tide cannot leave the water.*
- *Fear 5 (the Skull Tide's Fear effect is created the moment anyone hears its dreadful chatter in the distance).*

Slaughter Spirits

The life of a samurai is war and the way of the samurai is death. These are commonly accepted philosophies in Rokugan, but even in such a martial culture some samurai cross the line and embrace violence and battle for their own sake, reveling in slaughter and destruction. When those whose souls are consumed with rage and violence die in the senseless frenzy of battle, they are condemned to Toshigoku, the realm of slaughter. Slaughter Spirits live in constant war, fighting bloody, senseless battles for no purpose. They repeatedly die at each others' hands, only to rise again the next dawn to embrace the bloodshed anew. Souls condemned to Toshigoku soon lose the memory of their past and sometimes their very identity, becoming near-mindless killers who exist only for the next battle.

The mindset of slaughter spirits is simple: they exist to kill. They have no discernable higher purpose. They do not know why they fight so relentlessly and terribly, nor do they care. They know only that they must fight and those who surround them must be killed.



Rarely, slaughter spirits (or Toshigokujin, as they are sometimes called) may find a way to pass out of their remote spirit realm and into another domain such as Ningen-Do. They can pass through existing spirit gateways, but on occasion a violent battle or similar event may spontaneously open a temporary rift to the Realm of Slaughter. Within the world of mortals, Toshigokujin appear as they did in life, but with a face twisted by rage and a body which exudes a faint eerie glow. They attack everyone they see, without mercy or quarter, until they are killed or the spirit gateway they are using closes off. A slaughter spirit that is physically killed will return to Toshigoku.

Slaughter spirits can be redeemed, but this is such a rarity that only the most obscure texts even hint at how it may be done. As with all kharmic debts, a Toshigokujin's road to redemption is a personal affair.

Air 1	Earth 1	Fire 1	Water 2
Reflexes 4	Stamina 4	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Weapon 8k4*

Damage: By weapon, or 4k1 unarmed — *Armor TN: 25 (most slaughter spirits also wear Light Armor, with appropriate TN and Reduction boosts)*

Reduction: - — *Wounds: 30: +5; 60: +10; 90: Dead*

Skills: Appropriate Weapon skill (same as in life, usually Kenjutsu) at 4, plus Athletics 4, Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapon) 4

Special Ablities:

- *Swift 3.*
- *Partial Invulnerability: Slaughter spirits are immune to all spells, skills, and techniques which affect the mind or thoughts. They can, however, have their senses fooled by illusions.*
- *Relentless Aggression: Slaughter spirits cannot take any combat stance except for Attack and Full Attack.*
- *Spirit.*

Notable Undead Villains

"There is no safety. There is no infallible defense. Even the souls of samurai we call heroes can become villains in death."

– From the Journals of Kuni Mokuna

The following section lists several unique undead creatures who played important roles in the history of the Empire. The GM should feel free to use these entities as major villains in a campaign, or as models for original villains of a similar nature. All of them are extremely powerful, and should not lightly be unleashed on inexperienced groups of PCs. It may be noted that just because these villains were defeated in the "official" history of Rokugan does not mean they cannot take a starring role in the GM's own campaign, since every vision of Rokugan is unique.



Kitsune Gohei, The Walking Horror of Fu Leng

Air: 4	Earth: 8	Fire: 5	Water: 5
Reflexes 6	-	-	Strength: 7

Initiative: 10k6 — *Attack: Claw 10k5, or weapon 10k5*

Damage: 7k2 (claw) or by weapon — *Armor TN: 40 (Gohei wears tattered but functional light armor, and his Armor TN and Reduction include the armor's effects)*

Reduction: 13 (8 to jade or crystal) — *Wounds: 172: Dead.*

Taint Rank: 7

Skills: Defense 5, Hunting 7, Intimidation (Bullying) 8, Jiujutsu 6, Kenjutsu 5, Spears 5

Advantages:

- *Dark Paragon (Determination)*
- *Quick*
- *Touch of Jigoku*

Shadowlands Powers:

- *Above the Elements*
- *Blessing of the Dark One*
- *Child of Darkness*
- *Chosen of Fu Leng*
- *Feeding on Flesh.*

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 6.*
- *Invulnerable.*
- *Undead.*

Kitsune Gohei, lord of the Minor Clan of the Fox, reigned during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. He was never a happy man, not even in his childhood. From his earliest years he had a fear and horror at old age and death, and dreamed of a way to escape it. He also inherited his father's outrage at the Empire's treatment of the Minor Clans, a rage that left him helpless with impotent fury. When his father was killed for challenging the Crane sensei Kakita Toshimoko, and his sister threw her life away fighting the same implacable foe, his fear and anger became overwhelming. Dreams and nightmares plagued him, full of dark whispers about his impending doom and the certainty that a lowly Minor Clan samurai could never ascend to Yomi. Corrupted by his dreams and fears, Gohei began to seek forbidden knowledge, to hunt for some way he might circumvent death and win eternal life. He would pay any price to anyone who could make him immortal.

In time, Gohei learned of the lost Ancestral Sword of the Fox and of the Black Scroll hidden within it. Nobody knows how he discovered this – some have claimed he learned the truth from the corrupted Crab daimyo Kuni Yori, while others have blamed whispering kansen or a sinister maho-tsukai named Chuda Kusai. Regardless of where he learned the truth, Gohei embraced the promise of an eternal life won through human sacrifice. He raised and trained his daughter Kitsune Ryosei to undertake the quest for Fox Clan's missing Ancestral Sword. She did as she was told, never realizing she was meant to be the final sacrifice who would grant her father immortality. Although she was ultimately saved by a selfless Kitsune spirit, it did not change the fate of her father. Kitsune Gohei was transformed into a terrible undead monster, the so-called Walking Horror of Fu Leng.

To Gohei, the price he had paid was as nothing compared to the relief that he need no longer fear death. Consumed by the Taint, he became a creature of darkness and cruelty, feasting on the blood and flesh of the living. He fled the Empire to the Shadowlands, where he reveled in his newfound power, slaughtering samurai of Great and Minor Clans with equal glee. All were worthy of death save him, all deserved to experience the terror of death he had suffered for decades. He carried with him the blade of the Fox Clan, corrupted by his Tainted grasp.

Kitsune Gohei is a rare creature: a self-willed undead, a Lost soul trapped in an undead body. Only a handful of similar beings have existed through the Empire's history, and he is among the most powerful of them. Although he retains the memory of his former mortal life, it means nothing to him now. He exists only to corrupt, kill, and destroy, and remembers his daughter only with a perverse desire to bring her into the same foul existence.

Fatina, Ghul Lord

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 3	Water 2
-	-	Agility 4	Strength 4

Initiative: 5k4 — *Attack: Claw 6k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k2 (claw) — *Armor TN: 25*

Reduction: 5 — *Wounds: 92: Dead*

Taint Rank: 5

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 3.*
- *Power of the Sahir: Fatina knows the arts of magic from the Burning Sands. In mechanical terms, she can be considered a Rank 3 Chuda shugenja, but because she employs the strange magic of a foreign land, she does not have to spill blood to cast maho spells. Her spell selection is both broad and esoteric, and best left to the GM's discretion.*
- *Undead.*

When the ghuls of the Burning Sands began to appear in Rokugan in the late twelfth century, a handful of the notorious Ghul Lords began to appear as well. Among the most formidable of these was a female creature that began appearing on the fringes of the largest and most aggressive hordes of ghuls. She seemed to have mastered the ways of magic, employing both Rokugani spells and maho, and also displayed knowledge of the tactics and fighting styles of the Jackal cult from the Burning Sands. Fatina appeared to have total control over the ghuls in her small army, able to unleash them with a gesture and stop them in mid-feeding-frenzy with another. She speaks only to chant her spells, but guides her minions with ease.

Some who have heard of this creature believe she is related in some way to a Jackal cultist named who worked in alliance with the Lost a few years before, and whose mastery of the Chuda Shugenja School made her a notable figure among the Jackal gaijin who came to Rokugan.

Only a few believe Fatina the Ghul Lord is the undead form of the real Fatina, but it is the only name that has attached to this terrible and merciless figure. There is some physical resemblance, but most argue that the legendary Fatina would not have allowed herself to become such a beast. Others, of course, will suggest this foul beast is exactly what a gaijin maho-tsukai would wish to be.

Fatina is silent but powerful, with a commanding presence. She generally lets her ghuls do her fighting, staying far back to command their assault. She is not afraid to enter combat if need be, however. Her hunger for flesh seems to be equaled by her hunger for power, and it appears she draws unholy sustenance from the carnage she creates with her minions. The ghuls under her command seem to be more intelligent than average, capable of more complex strategy than normal creatures of their type. Though they are far from a real army, they are still a dangerous force on the battlefield.

Yogo Junzo, Undead Sorcerer

Air: 7	Earth: 5	Fire: 3	Water: 4
-	Stamina 4	Intelligence 5	-

Initiative: 10k8 — *Attack: Claw 5k3 (Complex)*

Damage: 4k1 (claw) — *Armor TN: 40*

Reduction: 10 (5 against jade or crystal) — *Wounds: 95: Dead*

Taint Rank: 7

School: Yogo Shugenja 5

Skills: Calligraphy 5, Courtier 3, Etiquette 4, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: History 4, Lore: Maho 5, Lore: Scorpion Clan 6, Meditation 4, Spellcraft 8, Stealth 3.

Spells: Junzo has an extensive array of both Elemental and Maho spells.

Advantages:

- *Crafty*
- *Forbidden Knowledge: Maho*
- *Dark Fate (to betray the Empire)*
- *Strength of the Earth*

Disadvantages:

- *Bad Fortune (Yogo Curse)*

Shadowlands Powers:

- *Above the Elements*
- *Child of Darkness*
- *Drawing Out the Darkness*
- *Eyes of Hell*
- *Master of Blood*
- *Mind of Darkness*
- *Outside the Elements*
- *Thy Master's Will*
- *Unearthly Regeneration.*

Special Ablities:

- *Fear 5.*
- *Undead.*

Yogo Junzo was the daimyo of the Scorpion Clan's Yogo family at the start of the twelfth century. An elderly man of formidable magical skills, he was a close friend to the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Shoju, and assisted him in the planning and execution of the notorious Clan Coup. Junzo fully agreed with Shoju's plan to save the Empire by overthrowing the Hantei dynasty, and the subsequent defeat and death of Shoju shattered him. Junzo, like many Yogo, carried the family curse to betray what he loved - and Junzo loved the Scorpion Clan. When Shoju died and the Scorpion were disbanded, Junzo sought vengeance by opening the Black Scrolls and unleashing their massive power on the Empire.

Junzo had always believed that physical power was unimportant compared to the power of those who could control the kami. Now, with the fearsome magical power of the Black Scrolls in his hands and the Taint coursing through his body, he embraced this belief as never before. He would free the Empire from its bondage to the Hantei dynasty, and punish it for its treatment of his lord Shoju.



The sheer power of the magic which Junzo unleashed killed his body, but such was the magical power he now commanded that his soul remained within his body. Like Kitsune Gohei, Junzo became a self-willed undead, a walking rotted corpse housing a Lost soul. Brilliant and mad, he gathered an army of undead and Shadowlands monsters to ravage the Empire. His depredations would continue until the Day of Thunder, when the soldiers of the Unicorn Clan finally ran him down and destroyed his physical body.

Yogo Junzo's School

Yogo Junzo is trained in the Yogo Shugenja School, the secondary shugenja school of the Scorpion Clan, maintained by the sinister Yogo family. This school is planned for eventual publication in a future supplement, but until that time, the following short-cut version may be used: treat the Yogo school as a school with neither an Affinity nor a Deficiency. It awards a Free Raise with all spells that have the Wards keyword.



Appendix

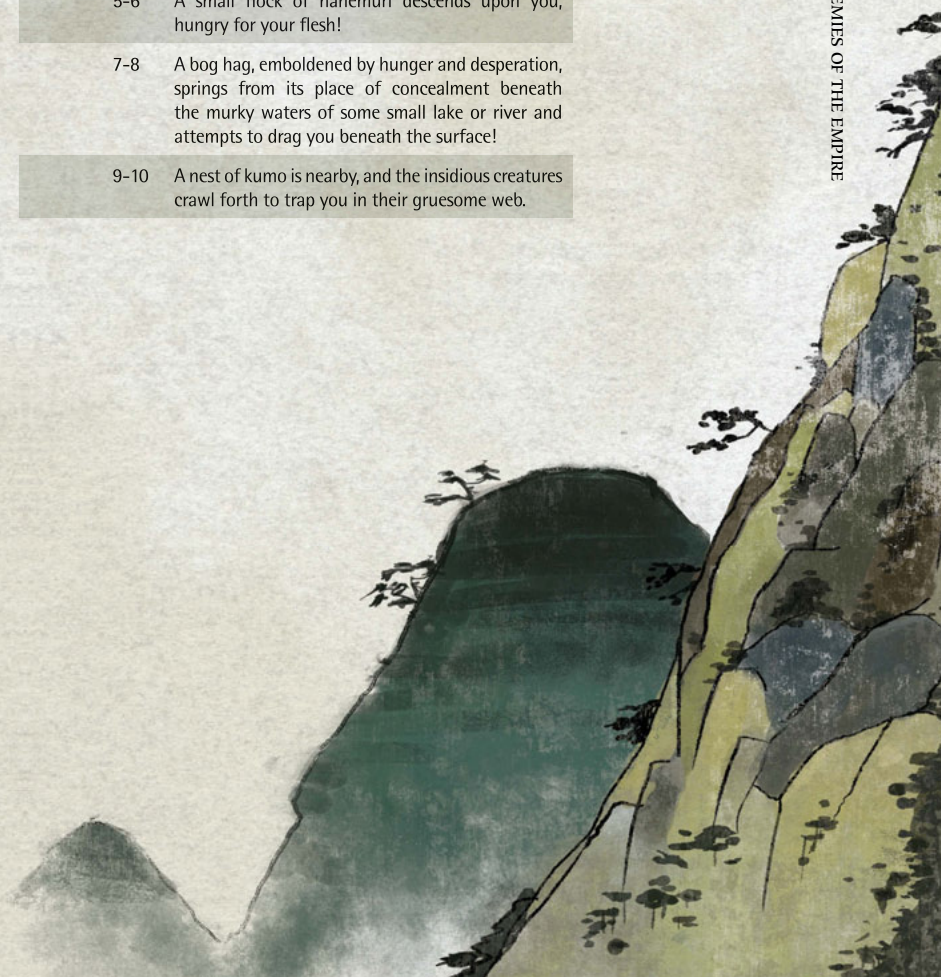
The following tables can be used to generate random encounters when characters are traveling the Empire and may need a little something to spice up their encounters. These represent the most common kinds of encounters that a traveler might encounter, including a table to deal with the possibility of foolish characters entering the Shadowlands.

Ronin Encounter Table

ROLL		ENCOUNTER
1-30	**You encounter a lone traveler, wandering the Empire.**	
	1-2	You find a simple wave man, looking for work. He is a decent sort eager for gainful employment, but will not stoop to criminal or even dishonorable acts in the name of coin. If you are rude to him or inquire after questionable services, he will be polite but move on immediately.
	3-4	A criminal fleeing justice comes across your path! He is nervous and behaving questionably, suspicious that you may be a magistrate or otherwise on his path. He will be eager to move on and will be evasive, perhaps even contradictory, in his conversation. If pressed, he will flee if possible, or attack if given no other choice.
	5-6	You come across a ronin with a familiar face! Someone from the characters' past is now a ronin. Perhaps they were stripped of their status for legitimate reasons, or perhaps it was a situation beyond their control. Regardless, whatever past he shared with the character is now made all the stranger by his status as a wave man.
	7-8	A wandering swordsman wishes to test his skill against yours! The duelist is not belligerent or inappropriate in any way, but respectfully requests the right to duel you to first blood in order to continue improving his skill. Doing so will place him in your debt, or so he says. If you are victorious, he may wish to accompany you and learn from your style, or may become a bitter rival, determined to best you and erase his perceived shame.
	9	You meet a wave man priest! Rare in the extreme, a ronin with the ability to speak with the kami is a strange encounter indeed! Perhaps he seeks to offer you a blessing, or to enlist your aid in dealing with some unknown threat.
	10	You encounter what appears to be a simple ronin, but in actuality is a magistrate traveling in disguise as part of an attempt to locate and bring to justice some notorious criminal. Perhaps the magistrate will attempt to use you as part of his gambit, or perhaps he will seek to avoid you at all costs for fear of arousing suspicion, ironically arousing suspicion in the process!
31-60	**You encounter a group of ronin traveling together.**	
	1-3	You encounter a wave man serving as a yojimbo and the charge under his protection. He may be protecting a shugenja, or a wealthy merchant seeking protection from bandits.
	4-6	A group of ronin, an otokodate, are moving their base of operations and you encounter them in transit. They may be moving because of pressure from a local magistrate who is biased against wave men, or perhaps because they were ousted by other ronin (possibly bandits!). It is also possible that they are criminals themselves and are fleeing from justice, which puts you in a dangerous position.
	7-8	A group of ronin traveling with monks crosses your path. This is an odd combination, to say the least. Are the ronin studying with the monks? Protecting them? Or are the monks prisoners of some sort, perhaps even willingly so, in an attempt to move the ronin away from some protected area?
	9-10	You encounter a ronin traveling with his young son. The son is clearly enraptured with his father, looking upon him as the greatest of heroes, while the father is merely trying to make a suitable life for his son.
61-90	**You stumble upon a conflict of some sort that involves ronin.**	
	1-2	A duel! A ronin is embroiled in what appears to be a duel to the death with a hated opponent. Is it another ronin? A samurai of the Great Clans? Perhaps even a magistrate? Because of the nature of the opponent, you may feel forced to become involved once the duel has concluded.
	3-5	You encounter bandits on the road! Perhaps they are licking their wounds from a recent attack, or they may be on the prowl for easy prey! Are you their next victim?
	6-8	You stumble upon a skirmish between one or more ronin and an equal number of opponents from a Great or Minor Clan. What is the nature of the skirmish? Who is in the right? Will you intervene?
	9-10	You come across a ronin fighting for his life against a deadly but natural beast. Perhaps a lion or a bear.
91-100	**You encounter something truly strange and unusual!**	
	1-2	You come across a duel between two men, the two of whom are completely identical, down to their clothing and weapons! One of them is an imposter, perhaps an oni, a shape-shifting spirit, or a Kolat duplicate attempting to replace his target.
	3-5	You come across a scene of impending execution. One ore more Great Clan samurai are on the brink of executing a ronin. For what crimes? Is he guilty or a scapegoat?
	6-8	You come across a scene that would fit in perfectly at court, except that it is taking place in the wilderness. Perhaps a dozen or so ronin are milling about, conversing and conducting themselves as if in court, completely oblivious to their surroundings. Are they affected by a curse? Subject to a spell of illusion? Or have they all gone mad?
	9-10	Roll again!

Shadowlands Encounter Table

ROLL		ENCOUNTER
1-20	**You encounter one or more goblins.**	
	1-2	A pack of goblins, mostly Chuckers with a few Berserkers, have decided that you are easy prey, and rushes at you from the underbrush, screaming inarticulately as they charge.
	3-4	A trio of goblin sneaks is nearby, plotting how to remove your possessions and kill you when you are defenseless.
	5	A goblin warmonger and a pack of berserkers have discovered your location and are currently planning an attack. Watch out for nightfall, as goblins can be more dangerous than you might think.
	6-7	A lone goblin shaman is watching you, and something that you are carrying has caught his attention. He is preparing an elaborate curse to distract you so that he and his goblin cohorts can attack during distraction to seize his prize.
	8-9	A goblin king and twelve chuckers, a veritable army of the little creatures, are rushing toward you down the path, screaming bloody murder as they charge. Brace yourselves!
	10	A roaming pack of the creatures called Goblins of Omoni have picked up your scent and are tracking you. They are unlike regular goblins, vicious and violent in the extreme, and when they find you, you will have a real fight on your hands.
21-40	**You encounter one or more ogres, one of the Shadowlands most dangerous creatures.**	
	1-4	You encounter a lone ogre, one of the most physically dangerous creatures in the Shadowlands, other than the oni themselves.
	5-8	A free ogre leader and two of his cohorts appear on the path traveling in the opposite direction. They will not let you pass without the chance to slay you and claim your belongings!
	9-10	You traverse the territory claimed by an ogre mage (or an ogre hag, if you prefer). The covetous creature desires something in your possession, and will gleefully onsume your bones to ensure no one threatens its claim.
41-50	**You encounter one or more trolls, dangerous and unpredictable creatures.**	
	1-4	A quartet of common trolls emerges from the marshy land, surrounding you instantly and demanding something of you in their incomprehensible language.
	5-8	A quartet of sea trolls erupt from a lake or river (or the sea, if you are close by) and seize the closest of your number, immediately dragging him into the water and attempting to drown him for easy consumption later.
	9	A foul troll shaman can be seen observing you from a peak overhead, simply watching as you travel along the path through the Shdaowlands. What he wants is unknown, but he may be willing to speak with you rather than simply attack.
	10	The massive, towering form of a giant sea troll emerges from the water nearby (really only suitable near large lakes or the sea coast) and brandishes a weapon almost the size of your home. This will not be easy! Your only hope is to avoid detection by the monstrous creature and hope that it goes about its business.
51-70	**You encounter an oni, a living manifestation of the Realm of Evil.**	
	1-2	A Kamu no Oni, one of the near-mindless beasts known as the killing maws, catches your scent and comes roaring through the underbrush at you.
	3-4	As you make camp, one of the minor oni known as the Quiet Death creeps into your camp and attempts to suffocate one of your number, consuming you while the others rest blissfully unaware.
	5-6	A trio of Nairu no Oni sweep down from the storm clouds to assault your party, carrying you off to a grisly death in their lair.
	7-8	The earth shakes as an Utogu no Oni, devourers of all they survey, lumbers across the shattered earth, intent on consuming you and your allies utterly.
	9-10	Randomly generated unique oni (see the tables in Chapter 8)
71-100	**You encounter one of the myriad of deadly threats in the Shadowlands.**	
	1-2	You come across a field of fudoshi, growing as far as the eye can see and blocking the path to you intended objective.
	3-4	While crossing a swampy region, you are detected by a sanshu denki, which attempts to make a meal of you.
	5-6	A small flock of hanemuri descends upon you, hungry for your flesh!
	7-8	A bog hag, emboldened by hunger and desperation, springs from its place of concealment beneath the murky waters of some small lake or river and attempts to drag you beneath the surface!
	9-10	A nest of kumo is nearby, and the insidious creatures crawl forth to trap you in their gruesome web.



Spirit Encounter Table

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
1	Chikushudo – An animal spirit freed from the Realm of Animals crosses your path. These entities are much like the animals they resemble, save slightly larger and significantly more cunning. They can make dangerous opponents for those samurai who underestimate them!
2	Gaki-do – A creature from the Realm of the Hungry Dead, a gaki, has escaped that sinister realm and now craves sustenance from the living. Will it assault you outright, or lie in wait and attack when you are at your weakest?
3	Jigoku – The creatures from the Realm of Evil, oni, yokai and the like, are among the most hated foes of mankind. One such creature is free and seeks your death for whatever dark purpose. Will you overcome or become a pawn in some ancient evil machination?
4	Meido – The quiet spirits of the Realm of Waiting are no threat, but they are extremely disquieting, and can disrupt the natural harmony of the world. You encounter such colorless, listless spirits. Will you find a way to return them to their wait, or ignore them and leave them be?
5	Ningen-do – There are more races native to the Realm of Mortals than humans. You encounter such a creature, perhaps a kenku or one of the other ancient races, such as the zokujin. If you can establish communication with such a creature, they may prove to be an ally.
6	Sakkaku – You find yourself plagued by a trickster spirit from the Realm of Mischief, such as a neko, kitsune, or even a mujina. Even if you can discover the nature of the difficulties plaguing you, you will have a difficult time determining how to dispatch such a pest.
7	Tengoku – A messenger from the Celestial Heavens, perhaps a ryu spirit or even a manifestation of one of the Fortunes, appears before you to bear a message that is meant for you alone. What will it mean, to receive such an august blessing?
8	Toshigoku – The Realm of Slaughter has disgorged some of its murderous, mindless denizens. These slaughter spirits know only battle and death, and will kill anything in their path. Will it be you that intercepts them before innocent blood is spilled?
9	Yomi – A spirit from the Realm of Blessed Ancestors has somehow managed to cross over to the mortal realm. For what reason would one make such an incredibly difficult journey? And for whom is its message intended?
10	Yume-do – A spirit from the Realm of Dream has manifested in the waking world. Such creatures, usually called baku, can take many different forms and may have motivations that no mortal mind can comprehend. How will youdetermine exactly what the creature needs?

Wildlife Encounter Table

ROLL		ENCOUNTER
01-40		**You encounter a grazing herbivore, which most likely runs from you.**
	1-4	A group of deer grazes lightly at the edge of a forest, their senses alert for any sign of danger.
	5-8	A pair of oxen mill about in a plain, idly grazing. They are peaceful for the moment but they tend to become irritable if disturbed.
	9-10	A mighty stag regards you without fear from a rocky outcropping near a forested area.
41-80		**You encounter some of the vermin that can be found throughout the Empire, although most of them are quite benign.**
	1-4	You come across a small abandoned home, long since reclaimed by the elements. It shows no signs of habitation and has nothing of value, but is absolutely infested with rats, which may carry disease.
	5-7	A wave of insects, cockroaches or perhaps ants, covers the road before you. They are clearly moving with purpose from one location to another, but is it some natural migration or are they in some way compelled to behave in this manner.
	8-9	A swarm of various rodents and vermin, including squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and rabbits, flees the forest, running past you in a wave. Are they fleeing from a predator? From some natural disaster like a forest fire? Or from something altogether different?
	10	As you walk through the wilderness, you are entertained by the sight of a colony of flying squirrels, an uncommon but not unheard of sight, as they leap and frolic among the trees.
81-90		**You encounter a dangerous predator.**
	1-4	You find yourself in the vicinity of an adult bear, perhaps foraging for good or, if you are particularly unlucky, just awakened from hibernation. As long as you remain calm, things should be fine…
	5-7	A boar comes crashing from the underbrush, barreling right toward you. They are notoriously hostile and very tough, so this may be more difficult than you had thought on a simple trip through the wilderness.
	8-9	You come across a lion, perhaps by itself or with a pride. They are quite uncommon in most parts of the Empire, so its presence here is a bit of a mystery.
	10	That rarest of creatures on the mainland, an ape, believes that you Have invaded his territory, and erupts from the wilderness roaring and beating his chest in a threat display. Tread carefully or the beast will attack.



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