

ADVENTURES
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SECRETS OF THE SCORPION™



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NO SECRETS PART ONE

"I do not like this, Hatori-sama," Otomo Taneji said in a low voice. "We have no business here. We should leave."

Hatori knelt in the shadows of the abandoned shrine, head bowed in deep thought, or perhaps prayer. Taneji paced impatiently behind him.

"We learned precious little about the Phoenix during our time here," Hatori said eventually, peering over one shoulder at his vassal. "The note you received at Kyuden Asako gave us our first opportunity to peer beneath the surface, to perhaps learn more than the daimyo are willing to tell us."

"And so we sit in an abandoned shrine, waiting for Fortunes-know-who, on the basis of an anonymous note someone stuffed in my bags at Kyuden Asako," Taneji snapped impatiently. "How do we know this is not an ambush?"

Hatori chuckled. "You know that it is not. Most of my enemies think too little of me to bother killing me. The rest prefer more direct methods."

Taneji nodded, conceding the point. Their journey through the Lion provinces had staggered from one sticky political situation to another, barely ahead of Hatori's old nemesis Ikoma Sume. In contrast, their time in the Mantis lands had concluded with both self-proclaimed champions deeming the old shisha unworthy of their concern.

"Still, this makes no sense," Taneji said, tugging his mustache with one hand. "It is unlike the Phoenix to be clandestine. When they seek an alliance, they ask for one openly. They do not scuttle about in the shadows."

"Perhaps the one we are waiting to meet is not a Phoenix," said Fuzake Sekkou. The young shugenja had been sitting silently in the chamber's corner for several minutes. Taneji had nearly forgotten his presence.

"Not a Phoenix?" Taneji said. "What are you talking about?"

"The Phoenix lands are largely unexplored," Sekkou said. "Countless of these small shrines are scattered about the mountains and forests. A man with something to hide can vanish here quite easily by finding religion, and the Phoenix ask no questions so long as their research and tranquility are undisturbed. I think you might be surprised how many of the wandering monks and shugenja in these mountains were once outlaws."

"That seems uncharacteristically grim coming from you," Hatori said, looking up at the young Monkey shugenja.

"The grandfathers of the Monkey were ronin, Miya," said a dry voice from the shrine's threshold. "Perhaps the boy speaks from experience."

Taneji looked quickly at the door. A small, wiry man stood in the shrine's entrance, clutching a staff in one hand. He wore the short-sleeved robes of a wandering monk, his bald pate gleaming in the candlelight. His skinny limbs were corded with muscle; he looked to be made out of tanned leather. Hatori remained kneeling.

"Miya Hatori-sama," the monk said, staff thumping the stone floor as he strolled inside. "I am glad you have come."

"Who are you?" asked Hatori, not looking back.

"My name is Chian. Once I was a favored vassal of the Shosuro family. In old age, I have found serenity in the Tao."

"I have never heard of you," Hatori said.

"As a former ninja, I take that as a compliment," Chian said.

"Ninja!" Taneji hissed, watching the old man warily.

Chian gave the courtier a lopsided smile and proceeded to ignore him. He strode toward Hatori and knelt with a groan, joints popping.

"I am glad you came, Hatori," Chian said. "I have much to tell you."

"Who are you and what do you want?" Hatori said, his practiced voice taking a slightly irritated edge. "This is highly irregular, Chian-san."

"Of course it is irregular," Chian said. "This meeting is not happening."

Hatori looked at the old ninja curiously. "Taneji, Sekkou, leave."

Taneji opened his mouth to protest but Chian spoke first. "No. Let them remain. If the three of you will go to Scorpion lands, there should be no secrets between you."

"Scorpion lands?" Taneji said sharply. "Why would we go to Scorpion lands on the word of a retired ninja?"

"Because I believe that you may be able to prevent civil war from destroying my clan," Chian said. "There is a conspiracy against the rightful rulers of my clan."

"Civil war?" Sekkou said with some surprise. "I had heard nothing about a civil war within the Scorpion."

Chian looked back at the shugenja. "You would not have heard about it unless we willed it. Even in war, we are the Scorpion." The old monk chuckled. "Especially in war."

"You would think that with the Scorpion's legendary intellect you could find better pawns than us," Taneji said quietly.

Chian looked at Taneji with some surprise. "What do you mean, Otomo-san?" he asked.

"Taneji speaks of the bitterness we all feel," said Hatori. "The Lion belittle us. The Mantis seek to use us. The Phoenix ignore us. It is becoming clear that in an Empire without an Emperor, the Great Clans have little respect for the Imperial Families. How do you expect a simple shisha and his vassals to help?"

"It is a matter of trust," Chian said. "Precisely because you have been so mistreated by the daimyo of the Great Clans, I believe the conspiracy would have little use for you. Thus, you can be trusted. You could root out this conspiracy and expose it to the light, where it will swiftly wither."

"I thought the Scorpion policed their own," Hatori said.

"Impossible in this case," Chian said. "The stakes have become personal, the judgment of our leaders clouded by ambition. Only an impartial outsider can bring an end to this. Will you aid us?"

"Becoming involved in a Scorpion politics is a good way to end up dead," Hatori said bluntly.

"Would not letting the Scorpion destroy themselves bring even greater harm?" Chian countered. "Where is your courageous Lion's heart, Hatori?"

Hatori grimaced. Taneji knew his master did not like to be reminded of his Lion origins, and that the monk knew of them suggested he had researched their backgrounds. "Say what you have come to say," Hatori said, "and I will decide if this errand is worth my time."

"So be it," Chian replied. "Listen well, and I will tell you of the Shadowed Tower..."

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Secrets of the Scorpion is for players and GMs who are interested in adding more depth to their visions of the Scorpion Clan. Unlike *Way of the Scorpion*, which described the history and major institutions of the clan, this book gives finer detail to the different families, their organization, holdings, vassal families, and lesser-known schools.

Secrets of the Scorpion is broken down into chapters as follows:

The Introduction deals with the Scorpion Clan's history, some customs that the clan embraces, and several new rules options for Scorpion characters.

Chapters One through Four each deal with an individual family of the Scorpion Clan: the Bayushi, Shosuro, Soshi, and Yogo families. Each chapter presents information on the family's holdings, including several points of interest for each holding, and adventure hooks for GMs; major NPCs within that family and descriptions of the vassal families that serve them; and new rules for characters from that family.

Chapter Five delves into a hidden stronghold of the Scorpion: the sinister Shadowed Tower. It contains all the information a GM needs to use the Shadowed Tower headquarters as the centerpiece of a campaign, or a player needs to have a background involving the Shadowed Tower.

Chapter Six details the darkest, most unpleasant truths about the Scorpion. Every clan has some shame buried deep within its histories, and this chapter explores the tragedies and secrets that the Scorpion hide from everyone, even themselves.

CUSTOMS OF THE SCORPION CLAN

BIRTH

Childbirth is a welcome event in Scorpion lands. It is an event to be remembered, with the lucky parents celebrating for several days. The lords of the Scorpion often excuse the father of an infant from his duties for a few days so that he may commemorate the birth properly.

Scorpion peasants are generally not treated as well as peasants from other clans, so this custom mitigates their resentment toward the samurai caste. In large villages someone, somewhere, is always having a child, so there are constant festivities. In the samurai caste this custom strengthens the bonds of loyalty within the family. A newborn Scorpion is welcomed from the first moment of his life. Relatives and friends pay their respects and offer their protection.

If there is one thing Scorpion take very seriously, it is a celebration. Though most serve as mere excuses to invite guests into the household (and perhaps gain some advantage on them by loosening their tongues with sake and entertainment) childbirth is an exception. Only family members and close friends may visit the household following a Scorpion birth. An outsider is only admitted if trusted utterly. He who participates in honoring a Scorpion birth is a Scorpion in the clan's eyes. Needless to say, this does not happen often.

Twins are lucky, representing Scorpion friends or lovers from a past life so loyal to each other that they died at the same instant, thus re-entering life together. Also, as Bayushi himself was Shiba's twin, the birth of twins invokes the clan's founder.

Triplets are not viewed with the same joy. The number three is extremely unlucky to the Scorpion, so the birth of three children at once is a dire omen.

GEMPUKKU

Though some clans are secretive about their gempukku ceremonies, the Scorpion are not. Everyone is invited, including visitors from other clans and even strangers who



happen to be in the area. A placard is posted outside a household for a week before a gempukku ceremony begins, giving the samurai-to-be's name, parents, sensei, and dojo, and inviting all to attend.

The candidate is introduced to everybody in attendance, and personally presents a gift to every guest. Ideally the candidate will have created these gifts with his own hands, though extremely wealthy families sometimes "lend" their children koku to purchase expensive gifts. A large number of generic gifts are set aside for guests who wander in, called "face gifts" (i.e., guests need only show their faces to receive one). Face gifts are invariably of much lower value than those intended for invited guests, and need not have been created personally by the samurai-to-be. This is no insult to the unexpected guests, but rather a sign of respect toward the invited guests.

Following the young samurai's rather traditional initiation ceremony, sake flows freely and all present take off their masks to enjoy themselves. The highest-ranking samurai never removes his mask, symbolizing that the Scorpion Clan must always retain some secrets. Entertainment is provided and a good time is had by all.

Later that evening, after the guests depart, the true ceremony begins. The young samurai is not informed of this phase in advance, so this often comes as a surprise. The samurai is taken to a private room by his sensei, and is asked the guests' names and what he learned by how each one reacted to their gift. If the young samurai's answers are satisfactory, then he is given his first mask and welcomed as a true Scorpion. Those who fail are given only a scrap of cloth to cover their face, symbolic of the rough scrap Bayushi wore until he could find a true mask. This scrap is immediately recognizable by any adult Scorpion but meaningless to everyone else. Some samurai choose to continue wearing this simple mask even after they have proven themselves to their sensei's satisfaction, as a symbol of the progress they have made. Scorpion are forbidden to speak of this ceremony, and vehemently deny its existence. To talk about it would ruin

its purpose — testing the future agents of the clan without their prior knowledge. A Scorpion must always be prepared.

Those rare Shosuro who are chosen to receive *kage yakiin* (shadow brands) are branded during this second ceremony. Samurai who learned a great deal about their guests are branded on the back, underarm, or other areas that can be easily hidden. Those who learned nothing are branded in areas difficult to conceal or, in some cases, not branded at all.

COURTSHIP

In a clan that takes as much pride in family and politics as the Scorpion, courtship is taken very seriously. Marriages are arranged well in advance, always to benefit the family. Marriages for the sake of love are rarer in this clan than in any other. After all, a Scorpion can marry only once. If that marriage is not to the clan's benefit, then he has betrayed the clan through his selfishness.

Samurai weddings are always presided over by a Soshi shugenja. A presiding Yogo is unlucky, even if the shugenja in question has already fulfilled his Yogo curse. A Yogo officiating the wedding might well invite the family curse onto the marriage. Even Yogo family members avoid such a thing — who knows what might happen?

Like most Scorpion ceremonies, weddings are great celebrations open to all. Though the initial ceremonies are as stately and reserved as any Rokugani wedding, the subsequent festivities are notorious for their riotous vigor. Even a normally controlled Scorpion samurai relaxes his facade somewhat to display true emotion, crying openly or dancing in joy at the union. Some who know the Scorpion well theorize that this is yet another ploy, intended to draw their guests into lowering their guard. Although the Scorpion

THE YOGO CURSE

As described in *Way of the Scorpion*, all members of the Yogo family are born with a powerful curse that invariably ends with their betrayal of their family. Of course, some betrayals are more dramatic than others, and some Yogo are fortunate enough to fulfill their curse early in life (accidentally destroying a cherished family heirloom, stumbling over a phrase in a loved one's funeral ceremony, injuring a sibling during training, etc.).

The Yogo Curse strikes each family individual exactly once, and though it cannot be detected by outsiders, a Yogo always knows when his curse has been fulfilled. The Yogo take a strange, macabre joy in fulfilling their curses, especially if they were lucky enough to do so in a harmless manner. When a child breaks his curse early, his family celebrates, inviting friends and family for miles around. Fulfillment of the curse is a joy that only a Yogo can truly understand, for once the curse is broken the Yogo can be fully trusted.

Yogo are always firmly warned never to try to break their curse intentionally. The curse's true nature is to bring pain and misery to the Yogo family, so harmless fulfillments seem accidental more than anything else. Those who try to break the curse often draw the wrath of angry kansen spirits, causing the curse to break in a manner that causes pain and misery to the entire family.

seldom refuse such an advantage when it presents itself, they take a sincere joy in weddings. Scorpion see their loyalty to their family as a matter of honor, and the opportunity to share that loyalty by inviting another into their clan fills the heart of a Scorpion with a happiness that outsiders can never understand.

An important detail regarding Scorpion courtship is that Scorpion see arranged marriages as contracts. Backing out effectively declares war on the other party's family. Any samurai who reneges on a Scorpion marriage can expect immediate retribution. Only a moderator of higher social status than either of the engaged samurai can break off a Scorpion marriage without creating bad blood between both parties, and then only well in advance. A samurai who abandons or mistreats his Scorpion spouse earns the ire of the spouse's entire family, even if the spouse marries outside the clan and is no longer technically considered a Scorpion.

Peasant marriages in the Scorpion provinces are also matters of great revelry. They are usually presided over by monks rather than shugenja; samurai rarely attend. The bride and groom wear masks during the ceremony (a practice normally not indulged in by Scorpion peasants) to remind them who they serve.

SUPERSTITION

For a clan that prides itself on logic, the Scorpion are highly superstitious. They do not find this odd. Rokugan is a world filled with spirits (especially near the Shinomen Forest), and those spirits can become wrathful if not placated. Superstition keeps harmony with the spirit world, so the Scorpion may disregard the wrath of invisible ghosts and continue living in a world based firmly upon logic. They do not dwell on their numerous superstitions. A Scorpion samurai says the prayers he needs to say, dons whatever fetishes or talismans he needs to wear that day, and thinks no more on the matter.

The Scorpion have many superstitions that other clans find strange, such as sprinkling salt on a new garment or never stepping backward through a threshold. Even the Scorpion cannot explain the origins of these superstitions, though they embrace them.

Rats are lucky, for they serve Daikoku and the Scorpion revere the Fortune of Wealth. Those who kill rats are advised to visit a temple of Daikoku and beg for forgiveness. Cats are creatures of ill omen who kill rats and anger Daikoku. The Scorpion often must keep cats on hand to prevent rats from getting out of control, but attempt to avert Daikoku's wrath by giving their cats rude and unflattering names.

Scorpion have many superstitions regarding beauty, especially in regard to women. A girl born with green eyes, it is said, cannot tell a lie, and to force her to do so draws the kami's wrath. A woman who does not cut her hair will be faithful to her husband. Any samurai (even a male samurai) who resembles his mother more than his father is loyal and trustworthy, especially if his mother was particularly beautiful. Benten, Fortune of Romantic Love, loves the Scorpion for their charm and grace, so a particularly attractive Scorpion is said to be "guided by Benten." A Scorpion who has an important secret can go to the Temple of Benten and whisper it to her; she will keep the secret safe.

The number three is incredibly unlucky, as Bayushi was the third to fall in the Great Tournament to determine the first Emperor. Scorpion never leave home in a group of three. It is better by far to find a fourth, or leave in two separate groups.

WAR

Though their true power lies in the courts, the Scorpion are a clan of warriors. Their army is not large compared to the Lion, Crab, or Unicorn forces, but the wise general does not relish facing a Bayushi general on the battlefield.

The Scorpion deserve their reputation for ruthlessness in battle. They believe that unnecessary bloodshed weakens the Empire, so the most honorable way to end a battle is rapidly. If this means that a Scorpion must poison the enemy's supplies, hire a ninja to assassinate the opposing general, or pay the enemy's ronin mercenaries to double-cross them, then that is acceptable. Scorpion officers say that "Victory washes away all sins."

Failure, of course, is another matter. Scorpion cannot abide failure in battle. For a Scorpion to fail means that all of his underhanded tricks, diversions, and underhanded maneuvers were for naught, and thus he has truly been dishonored. Of course, for many Scorpion failure is a relative term. A wily Scorpion general may allow a Lion to triumph on the field of battle and see no dishonor in it if the Lion's victory serves a higher purpose for the Scorpion.

RETIREMENT

Scorpion samurai look forward to retirement, the great reward for a life of service to the Empire. While a Crab or Lion may look upon a retired samurai with disdain, regretting the lost opportunity to die in service to the Emperor, the Scorpion do not see things this way. Dying for the Empire is good and noble, but *living* for the Empire is better.

Retired Scorpion samurai are viewed with silent awe. Young samurai show their elders the greatest respect. A samurai seeking guidance would be well advised to visit the remote monasteries in the Bayushi provinces and listen to their retired samurai.

Walking the way of the Scorpion is dangerous indeed, and any samurai clever enough to become an *old* Scorpion and retire in peace is a hero.

FUNERALS

Scorpion funerals are strange events, celebrated with as much joy and enthusiasm as a marriage, gempukku, or childbirth. The Scorpion believe that a samurai who served the clan loyally will be rewarded in death, his soul invited into Bayushi's hidden cavern to share secrets with the First Scorpion. When a samurai dies, the Scorpion tell tales of his loyalty and honor, hoping that Bayushi will overhear the tales and wish to know more.

Like Scorpion marriages and gempukku, all who wish to attend a Scorpion funeral are welcome. Scorpion make a special point of inviting their enemies to clan funerals, especially any enemy responsible for the death. To invite enemies from outside the clan requires the Scorpion Champion's permission, for under Scorpion law such an invitation is an open challenge. Enemies who answer the invitation must be supremely confident or totally unaware of this tradition.

These conventions apply only to Scorpion who died with honor. Scorpion who died disloyal to their clan are seldom given a proper burial. Often their corpses are beheaded and left prone in a field, to be devoured by wild animals. Those who betray the Scorpion and are captured alive are more unfortunate still. They are brought to the depths of Traitor's Grove, where Scorpion shugenja use a painful process to

permanently trap their souls in a tree. Their personal possessions are left hanging from the tree limbs, though thieves know to stay well away. The ghosts of Traitor's Grove enact a terrible curse upon any who steal from it, imposing a painful, lingering death.

The Scorpion say that as the tree grows, its bark cuts through the traitor's soul, causing great pain. On quiet nights, one can hear the traitors' moans in the grove, begging forgiveness. On quiet nights, most avoid the grove.

HISTORY OF THE SCORPION CLAN

Yogo joins the Scorpion: year 36

Cursed by the Fu Leng, the Phoenix shugenja Yogo, husband of Asako, is doomed to betray those he loves the most. Bayushi approaches Yogo with a strange offer: join the Scorpion Clan. When Yogo protests that he is cursed to betray those he loves, Bayushi responds, "but you do not love me." Yogo joins the Scorpion and founds a family.

The Day of Thunder: year 42

The Seven Thunders, led by Shinsei, confront and defeat the dark god Fu Leng deep within the Shadowlands, ending the first war with the Horde. The only known survivor is the strange entity known as Shosuro, the Scorpion Thunder. Wounded and dying, she staggers toward the Empire with the Black Scrolls that contain the secret of Fu Leng's defeat. On the way, she makes a pact with the Lying Darkness, a primordial entity that suffuses and sustains her until she can reach her goal.

Shosuro's return: year 42

Shosuro returns to the Empire with the Black Scrolls. She feigns death, allowing Bayushi to claim the right to guard the Scrolls. Struggling to control the Lying Darkness's influence within her, Shosuro adopts the identity of Soshi and founds another Scorpion family.

The death of Hantei: year 45

A lingering wound from the war with Fu Leng finally claims the life of Hantei, the first Emperor of Rokugan. Weakened by his wounds, the Hantei asks his siblings whether or not he will die. Each lies to him except Bayushi, who tells him in no uncertain terms that he will die, and that he will be alone. Hantei's outrage is mollified only slightly by Bayushi's assurance that, in time, the other Kami will join him.

The Crystal Prison is created: year 82

After four decades of struggling to control the Lying Darkness, Shosuro surrenders herself to the Kami Togashi in an attempt to find a cure for her mystical ailment. Although Togashi cannot remove the Darkness from Shosuro's soul, he constructs a chamber of pure crystal deep beneath Kyuden Togashi to contain Shosuro so that when the Darkness finally takes control, it will be contained.

Disappearance of Bayushi: year 83

The Kami Bayushi mysteriously disappears. His son finds his mask, his sword, and a brief note that reads "I have lost her forever." Bayushi's ultimate fate is never discovered. Some Scorpion whisper of a secret cavern where Bayushi's spirit lives on, presiding over the most loyal of the Scorpion dead.

Emerald Magistrates and Legions created: year 153

At the request of Emerald Champion Doji Hatsu, the famous judge Soshi Saibankan drafts the first charter for the Emerald Magistrates and the Emerald Legion. After years of service to the Emerald Magistrates, Saibankan returns to his clan and spends the last decade of his life teaching his kinsmen the law and how it can be circumvented.

Rulership of the Gozoku: years 391–435

Masterminded by Bayushi Atsuki, the Emperor's master spy and Scorpion Clan Champion, three powerful and influential men form the Gozoku, a conspiracy to rule the Empire from behind the throne. Together with Doji Raigu and the Imperial Scribe Shiba Gaijushiko, Atsuki arranges for the Emperor's heir to be kidnapped.

The Gozoku instigate a number of progressive social reforms during their rule, eventually installing the former kidnapped heir as a puppet Emperor while they control the Empire from behind the scenes. Their puppet's daughter Yugo-zohime is fostered to the Lion and becomes a strong, charismatic leader. She duels her siblings for the right to succeed their father as Emperor and takes the throne. With the support of the Dragon and Lion, she shatters the Gozoku's hold on the Empire.

Battle of Stolen Graves: year 510

Sensing a link between the recent deaths of the Crane, Lion, and Crab Champions and the recent blades given as gifts to them by Asahina Yajinden, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Rikoji sets his blade aside and orders Soshi Takasho, a renowned magistrate, to investigate. Takasho tracks Yajinden to Otosan Uchi and, with his rival Akodo Minobe, exposes the Bloodspeaker cult and the threat of Iuchiban. Takasho is personally responsible for the capture of Iuchiban.

Battle of Kenson Gakka: year 533

Following a failed attempt to annex Lion holdings to the north, the Scorpion are dealt a crushing blow by the Matsu armies. The only remaining Scorpion settlement north of Beiden Pass, Shiro no Meiyo, is seized, and everyone within it is executed. The town is renamed Kenson Gakka, "Humility's Lesson," as a testament to the Lion Clan's wrath.

The return of the Unicorn Clan: year 815

The Unicorn Clan returns to Rokugan after nearly eight centuries wandering the lands beyond. They are met with considerable resistance at first, as many Great Clans refuse to acknowledge that these rough barbarians are the Ki-Rin Clan's children. The Scorpion seize this opportunity and deliberately throw away expendable troops against Unicorn armies at the Battle of White Shore Plain. The Empire's political climate shifts in the wake of the Scorpion defeat by the newcomers. As others attempt to curry the Unicorn Clan's favor, many Scorpion operations go unnoticed for decades.

The Three Man Alliance is formed: year 1121

After a series of minor skirmishes, the Scorpion send one of their promising young generals, Bayushi Tomaru, to crush the Minor Clans that border their lands to the east: the Fox, Wasp, and Sparrow clans. Supremely confident of his abilities and forces, Tomaru drastically underestimates his opposition and is ambushed by the combined forces of all three clans. Tomaru is utterly humiliated by the defeat while the Minor Clans are greatly emboldened by the success of their battle. The three form a permanent alliance against the Scorpion Clan's predations.

The Hare Clan is destroyed: year 1123

Manipulated by a Kolat splinter group, Scorpion general Bayushi Tomaru seeks to cleanse his name by leading a massive Scorpion force against the Hare Clan. The Hare are accused of attacking a Scorpion diplomat and seizing materials that belong to the Scorpion. Usagi Oda, the Hare Clan daimyo, is killed and most of the clan's meager holdings are destroyed. Of Oda's children, his eldest son Ozaki escapes and his daughter Tomoe is taken hostage by Tomaru. She is shortly thereafter taken by the Kolat.

The Scorpion Clan Coup: year 1123

Driven by a lost prophecy of Uikku and the bloodsword Ambition, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shoji masterminds an extensive plot to assassinate Hantei XXXVIII and his heir, ending the Hantei line before it can bring ruin to the Empire. The enormity of such a task proves beyond the Scorpion's capabilities, and they cannot hold Otosan Uchi against the combined Great Clans. Furthermore, they are deceived by Phoenix magic into believing that the Emperor's heir is dead when he in fact escaped the purge. When he returns to Otosan Uchi following a hasty gempukku ceremony in Phoenix lands, he ends the Bayushi line by marrying Shoji's widow, Bayushi Kachiko, and dissolves the Scorpion Clan.

The Scorpion in hiding: years 1123–1129

The Imperial Legions march on a mission of vengeance, destroying every Scorpion palace save Shiro Yogo. All Scorpion who do not abandon their family names are killed or exiled by the vengeful Legions. Bayushi Kachiko subtly gives her followers a single command: "wait." Many Scorpion loyalists hide their masks and set their daisho aside, or build secret compounds in the Empire's deep mountains and forests. There, they plan their revenge.

The Day of Thunder: year 1129

The Scorpion unexpectedly aid the Empire when Kachiko commands the hidden Scorpion to ally with the army of the Seven Thunders. The appearance of so many trained samurai bolsters the flagging armies, and many do not even pause to question where the Scorpion have been all these years.

Coronation of Toturi I: year 1129

Following Fu Leng's defeat and a brief period of frantic rebuilding in Otosan Uchi, ronin and former Lion Champion Toturi is crowned Emperor. One of Toturi's first actions as Emperor is to restore the Scorpion to Great Clan status. Bayushi Kachiko accepts her former husband's position as Scorpion Clan Champion.

Disappearance of Toturi and banishment of the Scorpion: year 1130

On the eve of his second anniversary as Emperor, Toturi I disappears. The only clues left behind are his bloodstained bedclothes in his private chambers in Otosan Uchi. Acting as regent, Toturi's lieutenant Takuan orders Emerald Champion Kakita Toshimoko to punish the Scorpion for their "obvious treachery." Correctly believing the Scorpion innocent of this crime, Toshimoko banishes them from the Empire rather than ordering them killed. Toshimoko orders the Scorpion Clan's children to be fostered to the Crane Clan, ostensibly as insurance against their retaliation against Rokugan. In reality, this is an act of mercy, for Toshimoko knows the children are unlikely to survive the difficult journey.

VASSAL FAMILIES

This book introduces a number of vassal families, lesser samurai who serve the greater families of Rokugan's clans. Though described in previous sourcebooks (such as *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun™* and *Rokugan™*) these vassal families have never before been specifically detailed.

Vassal families occupy an unusual social position within the samurai class. Within the family and clan that they serve, they are recognized by their unique family name as a means of recognizing their distinctive service to the clan. Outside the clan, however, they are identified by the name of the family they serve. Favoring one's vassal name above the samurai family that one serves when speaking to an outsider is presumptuous, implying that the individual presenting himself is so well known that the listener would be more familiar with his own lineage than that of the family he serves.

For example: Rokugo Ichiyo is a member of the Rokugo vassal family of the Bayushi. To all members of the Bayushi and other Scorpion families, he is known as Rokugo Ichiyo. To outsiders, however, he is known as Bayushi Ichiyo. When presenting himself to others outside the clan, Ichiyo may introduce himself as "Bayushi Ichiyo of House Rokugo" or simply "Bayushi Ichiyo of Rokugo." If a member of any other clan should visit Ichiyo in the Rokugo family estate in Honored Treaty City, then he would be entitled to refer to himself by his vassal family name, for it is assumed the visitor realizes that he is in the Bayushi lands.

Crossing the Burning Sands: year 1130

Surviving the trek across the desert through their sheer tenacity, the Scorpion forces arrive at Medinaat al-Salaam, an oasis city within the Burning Sands. They are assaulted by the Senpet Empire, a massive kingdom of polytheistic warriors and sorcerers. The Senpet enslave the majority of the clan and put them to work in their copper mines. Bayushi Kachiko is taken captive, but is mistaken for Selqet, a figure from Senpet mythology. A handful of Scorpion escape captivity, including Bayushi Tange and Shosuro Tage.

Turmoil in Medinaat al-Salaam: year 1131

With Selqet's appearance, the factions in Medinaat al-Salaam are thrown into chaos, as many believe a great prophecy is about to be fulfilled. Kachiko is believed to be one of the Four Avatars, the figures necessary to free an entity known as the Goddess. As the unrest increases, however, it is eventually revealed that it is Shosuro Tage, not Kachiko, who is an Avatar. Together with the other Avatars, Tage releases the Goddess from a poisonous realm called the Black Earth. The Goddess, worshiped throughout the Burning Sands, is none other than the Kami Shinjo, founder of the Unicorn Clan.

The Scorpion lands are contested: year 1131

Citing an Imperial edict that gives the Mantis the duty of patrolling all non-affiliated lands, Mantis Champion Yoritomo attempts to seize control of the former Scorpion lands. Unknown to the Empire, this act is the result of a secret arrangement between the two clans wherein the Mantis will safeguard the land until the Scorpion's return. Bayushi Aramoro's only son, Bayushi Aramasu, is given to the Mantis as a hostage to seal this bargain. The arrangement is complicated

by the treachery of Crane Champion Doji Kuwanan, who seeks to claim the Scorpion lands for his clan. The Crane take the Mantis armies by surprise near the Crane-Scorpion border, and Yoritomo has little choice but to retreat.

Gift of the Emperor: year 1132

The Emperor Toturi I holds a contest to see who will ultimately control the Scorpion lands. Each clan is allowed a single participant, and a lone ronin is permitted to enter as well. The ronin emerges as the victor, and reveals his true identity: Bayushi Aramoro, Bayushi Shoji's brother. Aramoro requests the return of the Scorpion's lands and rightful place among the Great Clans. For the second time in his reign as Emperor, Toturi restores the Scorpion Clan.

War in the Heavens: year 1132

During the chaotic events surrounding the death and replacement of Lady Sun and Lord Moon, the Scorpion forces return to Rokugan. Among their number are several gaijin from beyond the Burning Sands, including the terrible Senpet warrior Abresax and a number of enigmatic Ashalan. Also accompanying the Scorpion is the Kami Shinjo, freed from her imprisonment. A huge army of nomadic Moto accompanies the Scorpion, rejoining their Unicorn brethren.

Devastation of Beiden Pass: year 1150

The War of Spirits comes to a conclusion as Phoenix shugenja and Scorpion saboteurs collapse Beiden Pass upon the Steel Chrysanthemum's armies. The Empire's crossroads is destroyed, but Hantei XVI's attempt to claim the throne is crushed.

Death of Toturi: year 1158

En route to Ryoko Owari, possibly to meet with his illegitimate son Akodo Kaneka, Toturi I is ambushed by a huge force of Shadowlands creatures. The Scorpion defend him as best they are able, but their honor guard is caught completely off-guard by the massive horde of goblins and Tsuno. The Onisu Fushin, Nightmare of the Scorpion, cuts down the Emperor in a duel. The Scorpion are greatly shamed by their failure to defend the Emperor, and the Kuroiban immediately begin scouring the Empire for the oni that murdered Toturi.

The Shadowed Tower is revealed: year 1158

A dangerous splinter group is revealed within the Scorpion, led by the returned spirit of Shosuro Fuyari — actually the spirit of Gozoku leader Bayushi Atsuki masquerading as Fuyari. The group, called the Shadowed Tower, promotes a return to the shadows, abandoning the high visibility that Clan Champion Bayushi Yojiro has brought to the clan. The members of the Shadowed Tower consider maho and other foul practices acceptable ways to serve the clan so long as the result is worth the risk. Many notable personalities join the Tower, including Bayushi Ogura and Yogo Tjeki.

Scorpion governance of the Emerald Championship: 1158

At the behest of Hantei Naseru, the Scorpion oversee the Test of the Emerald Champion to replace the ailing Kakita Toshiken. Scorpion entrant Bayushi Kwanchai deliberately injures Shiba Aikune, son of Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukune, bringing himself great dishonor. An Isawa shugenja heals Aikune's leg, unintentionally disqualifying the Phoenix due to the stipulation that only the Scorpion may perform religious ceremonies (such as magic) during the tournament. The Crane contestant, Yasuki Hachi, is declared Emerald Champion, but everyone believes him to be in collusion with the Scorpion and Hantei Naseru to assure his victory.

Bayushi Kaukatsu appointed Imperial Chancellor: year 1158

The Scorpion Clan is chosen by the Otomo and the Imperial Court to appoint an Imperial Chancellor, a single individual who will be responsible for maintaining relations between the Four Winds. The Scorpion choice for chancellor is hardly a surprise: Bayushi Kaukatsu, unrivaled master of the Imperial Court, accepts the position on behalf of his family and clan.

Otosan Uchi is destroyed: year 1159

Crushed in a sudden onslaught by the Shadowlands Horde, Otosan Uchi is reduced to a smoldering ruin. Several Scorpion heroes are forged in the city's pyre, including Bayushi Tai, the shadowy warrior who aids Toturi Tsudao in defeating Daigotsu and driving him from the Imperial Palace. Tai offers to cleanse the Steel Throne of its Taint, while secretly planning to take it to the Shadowed Tower.

Bayushi Yojiro secretly retires: year 1159

In the face of the Shadowed Tower's cultural revolution, Bayushi Yojiro secretly retires. He gives his handpicked successor the Celestial Sword of the Scorpion as well as his signature armor. With these gifts, Yojiro's successor can impersonate him, presenting the Shadowed Tower with a foe they believe they can anticipate, but of whom they truly know nothing.

NEW MECHANICS

The Legend of the Five Rings game setting has been officially presented in two separate game systems, the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG 2nd Edition System* (presented in the *Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide*) and Wizards of the Coast's d20 System™ (presented in *Rokugan*™, the official supplement to *Oriental Adventures*™). While these two systems are somewhat dissimilar, the setting presented in both versions of the game is the same, and thus it is our intent to present a sourcebook that is useful no matter which of these systems you choose to use when running your game.

Generally, when a new rule or mechanic is presented, whenever applicable we will present equivalent d20 System™ and L5R RPG 2E System versions in close proximity.

Rules and options for the d20 System™ look like this.

Rules and options for the L5R RPG 2E System look like this.

Occasionally, extensive new information may be exclusive to a specific system (such as New Paths for the L5R RPG 2E System or new feats for the d20 System™). In such a case, the information will follow the same convention as above. The d20 System™ material will appear in black and the L5R RPG 2E System material in blue.

In the case of characters, occasionally, a character's name will be followed by a short explanation of his character class in lieu of full statistical information. Such an example might look like this:

TORITAKA TATSUNE

[Samurai 6/Berserker 4/Shadowlands Veteran 10; Hida Bushi 5/Hida Avenger 3]

The information presented before the semicolon is the character's class and level in the d20 System™. The information presented after the semicolon is the character's rank and school in the L5R RPG 2E System.

Sometimes material must be presented for one system or the other. In such cases, this text will be contained in a callout box with a gray background, such as the one below. The headers for these boxes will clearly label which information is for the d20 System™ and which information is for the L5R RPG 2nd Edition ("L5R RPG 2E").

COMPLETE SCORPION TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

The following table lists all feats available to samurai player characters as bonus technique feats. This list supersedes the ones presented in *Oriental Adventures* and *Rokugan*™. Feats which were prerequisites for other feats on this list have been added, and those with excessive prerequisites that did not fit the Scorpion fighting style were removed. To balance this loss, other feats from the *Player's Handbook*™ have been added.

Abbreviations for the locations of these feats are as follows: PHB=Player's Handbook, MoR=Magic of Rokugan, SoSc=Secrets of the Scorpion, WoNin=Way of the Ninja.

BAYUSHI'S INVINCIBLE EDGE SCORPION TECHNIQUE

You inflict great damage on unprepared opponents.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +12 or higher, Bayushi's Technique (three times) or sneak attack +3d6 or higher.

Benefit: Whenever making a sneak attack or using the Bayushi's Technique feat, you inflict an additional point of damage for each bonus damage die you roll due to these abilities. (You now roll 1d6+1 instead of 1d6 damage on sneak attacks or when using Bayushi's Technique.)

BAYUSHI'S MASTERY SCORPION TECHNIQUE

You apply yourself equally well to a variety of roles.

Prerequisite: Int 13+, Versatile.

Benefit: Select a character class from the following: courtier, fighter, inkyo, monk, ninja, ranger, rogue, or samurai. You gain this character class as an additional favored class.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a new additional favored class.

DAZZLING STRIKE SCORPION TECHNIQUE

You can distract your opponent with a well-placed blow.

Prerequisite: Bayushi's Technique or sneak attack class ability.

Benefit: When making a sneak attack or using the Bayushi's Technique feat, you may give up any number of extra damage dice gained from these abilities to attempt to distract an opponent. This allows you to make a Bluff check to create a diversion to hide as a free action (see the *Player's Handbook*™). You gain a +2 bonus to this roll for every damage die you sacrifice.

RUTHLESS STING SCORPION TECHNIQUE

You know how to best take advantage of a helpless opponent.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +8 or higher.

COMPLETE SCORPION TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

Feat	Prerequisite	Location
Armor Focus	Armor Proficiency	Rokugan
Bayushi's Invincible Edge	Base attack bonus +12 or higher +3d6 damage dice from sneak attack or Bayushi's Technique	SoSc
Bayushi's Mastery	Int 13+, Versatile	SoSc
Bayushi's Technique	Base attack bonus +2 or higher Int 13+, Way of the Scorpion	Rokugan
Blind-Fight	—	PHB
Daisho Specialization	Base attack bonus +5 or higher Weapon Focus: Katana or Wakizashi	Rokugan
Dazzling Strike	Bayushi's Technique or sneak attack	SoSc
Depths of the Void	Void Use, Samurai	Rokugan
Different School	By DM permission only	Rokugan
Dodge	Dex 13+	PHB
Expertise	Int 13+	PHB
The Folding Leg	Base attack bonus +8 or higher Bluff Skill, Pincers and Tail Power Attack, Sunder Way of the Scorpion	WoNin
Greater Daisho I	Samurai level 13th+	MoR
Greater Daisho II	Samurai level 15th+	MoR
Greater Daisho III	Samurai level 17th+	MoR
Greater Daisho IV	Samurai level 19th+	MoR
Improved Disarm	Int 13+, Expertise	PHB
Improved Trip	Int 13+, Expertise	PHB
Improved Initiative	—	PHB
Know the School	Knowledge (clan or family, 2 ranks)	PHB
Lightning Reflexes	—	PHB
Mobility	Dex 13+, Dodge	PHB
Pincers and Tail	Base attack bonus +4 or higher Bluff Skill, Way of the Scorpion	Rokugan
The Pincers Hold, the Tail Strikes	+10 Base attack, Int 13+ Bluff Skill, Expertise Improved Initiative Strike at the Tail	Rokugan
Quick Draw	Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Ruthless Sting	Base attack bonus +8 or higher	SoSc
Shosuro's Technique	Poison (4 ranks)	SoSc
Soul Forge	Iron Will or ancestral daisho Masterwork weapon or armor	MoR
Speed of the Kami	Base attack bonus +3 or higher Dex 13+ Improved Initiative Void Use	Rokugan
Spring Attack	Base attack bonus +4 or higher Dex 13+ Dodge Spring Attack	PHB
Strike at the Tail	Base attack bonus +6 or higher Int 13+ Expertise Improved Disarm	Rokugan
Void Use	—	Rokugan
Way of the Scorpion	—	Rokugan
Weapon Finesse	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Proficiency with weapon	PHB
Weapon Focus (katana)	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Martial Weapon Proficiency (katana)	PHB

CHURETSU, THE CELESTIAL SWORD OF THE SCORPION CLAN

None of the Celestial Swords is so unimpressive as Churetsu. To most, it looks like an average blade, not particularly exceptional or poor in quality. The Fortune of Steel Tsi Xing Guo knew that the Scorpion blade would be best served by a simple appearance. The rightful Scorpion Champion will always recognize the sword; to him it is always sheathed in brilliant red light.

When not being carried, the sword stays in an enchanted storage room deep in Kyuden Bayushi alongside a hundred others like it. The ward magic in Churetsu's chamber has three functions. First, it keeps all the swords free of dust and grime. Second, the swords exchange places with one another each night, so Churetsu is never in the same place twice. Third, Churetsu's copies magically slay any who touch them.

Should the Scorpion Champion die, Churetsu instantly returns to its chamber in Kyuden Bayushi. Any who proclaim themselves the rightful Scorpion Champion may step forward and take up the sword. The true claimant cannot fail to select the right blade. Anyone making a false claim had best be extremely lucky. After instituting this tradition, Bayushi Yojiro kept the identity of his heir secret, and future Scorpion Champions will presumably follow his example.

Though the Scorpion Champion carries Churetsu frequently, he sometimes loans it to Scorpion agents on secret assignments. The sword's power and subtlety has helped more than one favored Scorpion agent survive an impossible battle.

D20 SYSTEM™

Churetsu is a +5 vorpal katana of speed which grants the wielder a +20 sacred bonus to any Charisma-based skill check. The Scorpion Champion can identify Churetsu on sight, though to anyone else it appears identical to a standard Bayushi katana. Churetsu does not seem unusual in any way; even to detect magic or true seeing it appears perfectly ordinary.

LSR RPG 2E:

Churetsu is an Exceptional Quality katana with a 3k3 Damage Rating which adds 3 to its wielder's Katana skill. The wielder adds his Air $\times 5$ to all Initiative rolls and may make an extra attack per round against any opponent with a higher Honor Rank. To use the latter ability, the wielder must be aware that his opponent has higher Honor. The wielder may roll and keep two extra dice on all Awareness-related rolls while he carries the blade.

The Scorpion Champion can identify Churetsu on sight, though to anyone else it appears identical to a standard Bayushi katana. Churetsu does not seem unusual in any way, even to Sense, Reflections of Pan Ku, or other magical detection.

Benefit: When attacking any opponents denied their Dex bonus to armor class, your critical threat multiplier is increased by one. For example, a threat range of 19–20/ $\times 2$ becomes 19–20/ $\times 3$.

SHOSURO'S TECHNIQUE

ISCORPION TECHNIQUE1

You are a master of poison.

Prerequisite: Poison (4 ranks)

Benefit: Any poison that you administer has its save DC increased by 2. If you have the Poison Use ability, the DC is increased by an additional 1.

NEW COURTIER ABILITIES

At fourth level, and every third level thereafter, members of the courtier character class gain courtier abilities chosen from a short list (see page 35 of *Rokugan*™). Scorpion courtiers can come from nearly any Scorpion family (with only the Yogo having very few), and the following new courtier abilities are available to any Scorpion Clan courtiers. Members of other clans who have taken the Different School feat and applied it to the Scorpion may also learn these abilities. The normal courtier abilities are still available for Scorpion courtiers.

Shallow Waters (Ex): No secrets remain hidden to a skilled Scorpion courtier. By conversing with an individual for one minute, the courtier can make a Sense Motive check opposed by the target's Bluff, Intimidate, or Diplomacy (target's choice, depending on how they wish to react to the courtier). If this check is successful, the courtier can learn any one of the following about his target: Honor, alignment, character level, any one saving throw bonus, or any one ability score. Any effects that conceal or confuse the reading of Honor or alignment (such as the Perceived Honor feat or *undetectable alignment*) obfuscate the information obtained.

Scrutiny's Sweet Sting (Ex): A Scorpion swiftly learns the vanities and weaknesses of those around him, and knows best how to exploit them. If the courtier spends at least an hour in a social setting with a specific individual (not necessarily speaking to them, but at least observing them) he gains a +4 bonus on all Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Bluff, Spot, and Listen checks pertaining to that individual. This bonus lasts for one month, and can be renewed by spending another hour with the target in a social environment. This ability may be selected twice, providing a +8 total bonus. (Fellow members in a player character's party almost always qualify as targets of this ability.)

No More Masks (Ex): A true master can fracture an opponent's will with nothing more than a well placed word. As a standard action, the courtier may insult an opponent. The target must make a Will save (DC 10 + half the courtier's level + the courtier's Charisma modifier). If the courtier is successful, the target suffers 1d4 temporary Wisdom damage. This ability may be used a number of times per day equal to the courtier's Charisma modifier +3. A target can be reduced to zero Wisdom with this ability, becoming so completely unhinged that they fall into a catatonic stupor: the work of a true Bayushi master. This ability may be taken multiple times, granting an extra number of uses per day equal to the courtier's Charisma modifier +3 each time.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE BAYUSHI

NO SECRETS
PART TWO

"I would tell you that this was an unexpected pleasure," Bayushi Yojiro said, bowing briefly, "but I think that I would be half wrong."

"Wrong that my visit was unexpected or wrong that my visit is a pleasure?" Hatori replied, returning the Scorpion's bow.

"Whichever you prefer," Yojiro said with a chuckle, nodding to a servant. The peasant quickly pushed aside a shoji screen, revealing a small room with a low table, set with tea and plates of food. "Please wait here. Enjoy the Scorpion Clan's hospitality. I have other business to attend to, but I will return shortly."

"I thank you, Yojiro-sama," Hatori replied. He stepped into the chamber with Sekkou and Taneji, and the servant slid the screen closed behind them.

"Is this safe?" Sekkou asked, sitting down at the table and studying the rolls of sushi and bowls of steaming rice with suspicion. "I have heard tales of Scorpion cuisine."

"What, you think that Bayushi Yojiro would poison his visitors?" Taneji laughed, sitting across from him. He plucked up a pair of chopsticks, seized a small chunk of tuna, dipped it into a bowl of white sauce, and popped it into his mouth. Hatori's lips quirked in a small grin as a look of pure horror crossed Taneji's face.

"I do not fear poison," Sekkou said patiently. The shugenja carefully selected several pieces of fish and arranged them on his own plate. "I fear Scorpion spices. I would avoid that sauce. The Shosuro pride themselves on it. They say it is deadlier than Night Milk, and like Night Milk, requires a lifetime of building and maintaining immunity to be consumed safely."

Taneji poured himself a cup of water and swallowed it down. Not finding relief quickly enough, he drank directly from the bottle.

"They say it has no name," Hatori added, "for if it had one, to utter it would burn your lips."

"You could have warned me," Taneji croaked between gulps. "I tried."

"So what were your impressions of Yojiro-sama?" Hatori asked. The old courtier carefully dipped a corner of a dumpling in the white sauce.

"Does he always go about in full armor like that?" Sekkou asked. "Even a Crab takes off his armor in court."

"It is his custom," Taneji said. "He was one of Toturi's favorites, so the eccentricity was tolerated. Now there are few who could order him to stop, so he continues. Some would say that Yojiro is rude, but I think he has earned the right to do as he wishes. He saved the Empire during the War of Spirits. When you save the Empire, Sekkou, you can do as you please as well."

"Some would say that the Scorpion Champion cannot be rude when the Scorpion Clan defines politics," Hatori added.

"The Crane would argue that, I think," Taneji replied. The color was slowly returning to the young courtier's face. "Strange that you have not seen Yojiro before, Sekkou-san. Were not the Monkey Clan lands once Scorpion territory?"

"Yes, and I've had my share of encounters with Scorpion samurai," Sekkou said evasively, "but I've never met the Master of Secrets."

"What were your initial reactions?" Hatori asked, looking at Sekkou.

"He seemed quite calm," Sekkou said cautiously. "I wonder why he dismissed us so swiftly?"

"I did not find that unusual," Taneji said. "Standard practice for an unexpected visitor. No doubt he is in conference with his advisors at this very moment, hoping to determine the reason for our presence. Meanwhile, I have no doubt that his servants are listening to us, hoping we will reveal something of our purpose here."

Hatori looked at Taneji in mild amusement. He knew Taneji had little love for Scorpion, and took a quiet joy in annoying them. To his surprise, the shoji screen slid open and Yojiro stepped into the room. The old Master of Secrets settled wearily into the seat at the head of the table, groaning as his joints popped.

"It has been some time, Hatori-san," Yojiro said, regarding the shisha calmly from behind his mask. "What brings you to Kyuden Bayushi?"

"Truth to tell, it was nostalgia," Hatori replied. "As there was no Winter Court this year, I missed our conversations. I was hoping to catch up on what has transpired in Scorpion lands in the last year."

"Really?" Yojiro asked archly. "And why would you say that? Of all the Great Clans, the Scorpion is perhaps the only one not at conflict with its fellows. Only the Mantis have reason to seek vengeance upon us, and they are currently occupied with their own internal struggles. The Scorpion are at peace."

"I have already visited the Mantis Clan, as you are no doubt aware," Hatori said.

Yojiro nodded slowly. "Well, you are certainly welcome here," Yojiro said. "Far be it from me to deny hospitality to the honored representative of the Imperial Houses. Simply let me know what you wish to see, and when, and I will arrange for your escort."

"You may find that inconvenient," Hatori said with a chuckle. "Our journey here was somewhat on impulse. We have no true plan for where we intend to go, or when, and I would hate to bother you with constant updates as to our location."

"It is no bother at all," Yojiro said firmly. "If you have no itinerary in mind, then I will arrange one for you."

"That is not necessary," Hatori said. "I can prevent myself from getting lost."

"I insist," Yojiro replied. "For your own protection."

"I thought you said that these lands were at peace," Taneji protested.

"And they are," Yojiro said calmly. "Were you a Scorpion, they would be quite safe. Sadly, not all Scorpion are as courteous toward visitors as those of my household. I would hate for you to wander somewhere that you are not welcome. You will, of course, accept my itinerary and an honor guard of my finest samurai. You will go where I wish you to go when I tell you go there. You will see what I allow you to see when I allow it. All in return for my hospitality." Yojiro's voice was polite but firm. It was clear that he would tolerate little argument.

"Of course," Hatori said, watching the Master of Secrets warily. "How could I refuse such a generous offer, Yojiro-sama?"



THE BAYUSHI PROVINCES

The Bayushi family controls the most land and the greatest share of arable farmland in the Scorpion provinces. However, it also falls to them to guard the southern border against the Crane without benefit of the mountainous terrain that protects most other Scorpion borders. Fortunately, battles between the Scorpion and Crane traditionally take place in the courts, not on the battlefield, but the Bayushi samurai patrol these lands vigilantly nonetheless.

Bayushi lands are rich in natural resources, giving the family a great deal of wealth to call upon to secure favors with other families. Their largest export is rice, for the Bayushi typically grow far more than is required to sustain their own population. They also make a fair amount of profit dealing in poppies for use in medicinal opium.

MAJOR BAYUSHI HOLDINGS

The Bayushi are a rich family, and they guard their wealth well. The Bayushi's major holdings are situated in easily defensible areas and are defended by elite Bayushi bushi. In addition, the Scorpion often draw upon favors from the Imperial Families to supplement their own troops with Seppun miharu and Imperial Legionnaires. It is not unusual to see Doji Legionnaires bound by their honor to protect the Bayushi's property. It is a situation that the Bayushi cannot help but view with great amusement (in fact, the Bayushi occasionally specifically arrange for such appointments).

KYUDEN BAYUSHI (LOCATION S10)

The home of the Scorpion lords is among the most magnificent palaces in Rokugan. The massive palace perches on a high plateau, dominating the surrounding countryside. The castle is extremely well fortified, and has been attacked only a handful of times in eleven centuries. It stands at the crossroads of several major highways and is thus a center for trade and commerce. Visitors are welcome, and are treated with the finest of Scorpion hospitality (especially if they are influential samurai or have come to trade with the clan).

Following the Scorpion Clan Coup, the Imperial Legions burned Kyuden Bayushi. The Scorpion made no effort to defend it. Instead, they fled into the forests or into the undiscovered hidden basements beneath the castle. When the clan was fully reinstated, they began rebuilding the palace exactly as it was, a process that was somewhat delayed by their exile to the Burning Sands.

Today Kyuden Bayushi stands as grand and proud as ever. To look upon it one would never know that it was rendered into splinters and ash not thirty years ago.

BAYUSHI'S LABYRINTH

Kyuden Bayushi is surrounded by a great maze, a masterpiece of engineering designed in part by Kaiu who owed the Bayushi favors, but modified in the intervening years so that only the Bayushi know its secrets. Many pathways actually shift as people pass through, and the walls are carefully designed to disorient and confuse visitors.

During times of peace, visitors to the palace are invited to test their cunning by finding their own way through the maze. Since it changes regularly, there is no single reliable path to the castle. The guards that tend the labyrinth do become familiar with the shifting passages after years of wandering them, and can guide any person who does not wish to challenge the maze to the castle proper.

In time of war, the guards can activate the labyrinth's deadly traps with a simple flick of a switch. Spiked deadfalls, explosive magical wards, and crushing walls are only a few weapons that the labyrinth brings to bear.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: In the court of Kyuden Bayushi resides a young samurai-ko, Bayushi Masae. Besides having an indirect relation to the ruling house of Bayushi, Masae is clever, beautiful, and talented, and has caught the eye of several visiting diplomats seeking a political marriage.

Focus: Masae's father has given her leave to choose her own husband, so long as the choice benefits the clan. She has therefore announced an open challenge. In the morning, all her prospective suitors will gather in Bayushi's Labyrinth. The first to find his way to the exit will win her hand. If the player characters are not interested in the prize, perhaps their lord will ask them to participate on his behalf.

Strike: Among her many suitors is a ruthless Shosuro samurai who has somehow obtained a map of the Labyrinth's current configuration. He has secretly activated the deadly traps that guard the maze. He knows how to avoid them, but he plans to scrape himself up just enough to avoid suspicion. In the meantime, the other suitors (including the player characters) may well be walking into a deathtrap.

SLEEPING LAKE

Hidden beneath Kyuden Bayushi, this lake is where Bayushi departed the mortal realm. At the end of the War Against the Darkness, both Bayushi Kachiko and the Shadow-corrupted Shosuro also came to this cavern, where Bayushi's spirit combined their souls and brought them peace. This lake is, in fact, a passage to Meido, the Realm of the Dead. In truth, Bayushi never truly died, but retreated to this gloomy realm to watch over his clan and wait for the day that Shosuro would return to him. Bayushi dwells simultaneously in both realms, though his physical presence has remained in Meido so long that he no longer has solid form in the mortal realm. He sometimes manifests above the lake to see how his descendants are faring, appearing as a terrifying spectral visage. Bayushi's wisdom is nevertheless great, and those who chance to meet him here would be advised to heed his words.

TRAITOR'S GROVE

This stand of trees is but a short walk south of Kyuden Bayushi. The trees here never bear leaves or fruit; instead the discarded weapons, armor, and masks of countless samurai hang from their limbs. This is Traitor's Grove, Hayashi no Uragirimono, the fate of those who would betray the Scorpion.

HIGHWAYS OF THE BAYUSHI PROVINCES

Summer's Kiss Road (Connects S10 to S14) — This road connects Kyuden Bayushi to Shimomura. Even in the deepest blizzards, this road stays remarkably clear of snow and frost. Many local legends exist as to why this occurs. One tells of a benevolent snow maiden who lived in Shimomura and loved the Scorpion Champion, and blessed this road so he could visit her. Another legend says that the Oracle of Fire walked this road when he came to Kyuden Bayushi seeking the solution to a question even he could not answer. A third legend speaks of a powerful fire shugenja who died on this road; the friendly kami that followed him mourned his death and linger here, keeping the road forever warm.

Magistrate's Road (Connects S13 to S14) — Whoever named this road had a great love of irony, for only in the immediate vicinity of Shimomura are magistrates ever seen on this road. The land here is rough and wild, well suited for ambushes. The bandits of Shutai prowl this road, making it very dangerous for travelers. They typically avoid large groups accompanied by Scorpion samurai, preferring to instead prey upon Crane travelers and peasants. The last thing the bandits want is to call down the Scorpion's wrath upon their tiny village, and for the moment it amuses the Scorpion lords that the bandits are helping to protect their southern border from intruders.

Beiden Road (Connects S10 to S8) — In generations past, this road was of critical importance, connecting the barracks at Kyuden Bayushi to Beiden Pass. Since Beiden Pass was destroyed, the Scorpion have come to call this "Worthless Road," for it now leads only to an obsolete military outpost.

Hotei's Path (Connects S11 to S12) — This road is simply a well-beaten path between Kagoki and Hotei Seido. It is typically used by pilgrims and farmers who wish to pray to the Fortune of Contentment that their family will be well during the winter.

Thunderer's Road (Connects S9 to A14) — This path leads across the Plains of Thunder to the Temple of Osano-Wo. Though technically not in Scorpion lands, many pilgrims stop at Ginasutra to pick up supplies before braving the rugged plains. The grim sohei of Osano-Wo can often be seen traveling this road in large groups, fulfilling their duties to the Thunderer.

Traitors to the clan are brought here and, in a painful ritual known only to the Scorpion, their souls are permanently embedded in a tree. As the trees grow, the bark cuts through the traitor's imprisoned soul. The wind carries the painful moans of these trapped souls; combined with the chimes of discarded possessions, Traitor's Grove is always haunted by a strange, mournful song.

Traitor's Grove is tended by a single shugenja. While some believe his duty is to guard the priceless weapons that hang from the trees, this is not so. Any who would steal from Traitor's Grove risk the curses of the Bayushi family; only the most foolish attempt grave robbery here. In fact, the shugenja's true purpose is not to act as guardian, but to tend the trees — to keep them healthy and strong so that their captive souls will never escape.

TRAITOR'S GROVE DAGGER

These curved daggers are kept locked in Kyuden Bayushi and are used to seal a traitor's spirit in the heart of a tree in Traitor's Grove.

D20 SYSTEM™

Traitor's Grove daggers are +3 keen lawful daggers. In addition, any shugenja who wields the dagger can attempt to use the dagger to seal a person's soul permanently within a tree. In order to do this, the shugenja must, over the course of twelve hours, expend a number of spell slots equal to the target's character level. The target must be bound helpless against the tree during this time, and the dagger is slowly pushed through the target's chest into the tree (inflicting no damage). At the end of this time the target must make a Will save (DC 35) or his soul is bound permanently within the tree. A bound soul may not return from the dead by any means unless the tree that imprisons his spirit is killed. This process also makes the tree extremely long-lived. To this day, no tree within Traitor's Grove has died of natural causes.

LSR RPG 2E:

Traitor's Grove Daggers add 2 to the wielder's Tanto skill when wielded and have a DR of 3k2. In addition, any shugenja who wields the dagger can attempt to use the dagger to seal a person's soul permanently within a tree. In order to do this, the shugenja must, over the course of half a day, expend a number of spell slots (of any element) equal to the target's Insight Rank. The target must be bound helpless against the tree during this time. At the end of this time the target must make a Willpower roll (TN 50) or his soul is bound permanently within the tree. A bound soul may not return from the dead by any means unless the tree that imprisons his spirit is killed. This process also makes the tree extremely long-lived. To this day, no tree within Traitor's Grove has died of natural causes.

BAYUSHI KAWAMURA

[Shugenja 8; Soshi Shugenja 3]

She is often called "the ghost of Traitor's Grove." She is a silent, eerie presence, moving about her duties, never speaking to or acknowledging anyone. Her mask is an expressionless face of pure silver, a dagger painted on its forehead to symbolize the sacred knife that transfers traitorous spirits into the trees in the grove. She has lived in the forest for twenty years, never venturing beyond the grove.

Kawamura is a rarity — a shugenja from the Bayushi family. Her family have traditionally been the guardians of Traitor's Grove, an honor that others might not envy but that she takes very seriously. As the eldest child of her family, she was chosen as the guardian. She will take no husband and bear no children; Traitor's Grove is no place to raise a family. When she passes on, her duties will pass to her nephew, Hoitsu. Kawamura goes about tending the grove without pride or sorrow. Decades here have stripped her of all emotion. She is bound eternally to the trees just as the spirits of the dead are, and in the night she hears them whisper their secrets.

Occasionally, Bayushi Yojiro visits Traitor's Grove and Kawamura emerges to speak with him. At these times she shares with the Master of Secrets what she has seen and heard here. This is the only time Kawamura is known to speak; she will speak to no one but the true Scorpion Champion.

SHIMOMURA

(LOCATION S14)

This high-altitude village has a cool climate, and receives the first frost earlier than any other place in Bayushi lands. As winters in Rokugan can be extremely harsh, the sight of frost in Shimomura always sends a shockwave throughout the lands as messengers scramble to alert neighboring villages to the coming frost.

Frost Village is a major holding for the Bayushi, for it is near the most fertile farmlands and thickest forests. The road from Shimomura to Kyuden Bayushi is well tended and carefully guarded while the peasants carry the fruits of their labor to their samurai lords.

BAYUSHI RYO, GUARDIAN OF SHIMOMURA

[Samurai 9; Bayushi Bushi 3]

Recently appointed as steward of Shimomura, Bayushi Ryo is a bitter man. Once he was yojimbo to an important courtier in Otosan Uchi. During Daigotsu's invasion of the capital city, his charge was killed by a shard of flying plaster. Dejected and horrified, Ryo planned to commit seppuku to follow his master, but was forbidden. He had not truly failed, so his death would serve no purpose. Instead, he was ordered to return to Kyuden Bayushi and receive a new assignment.

And so now he is here, guarding farmers and lumberjacks. He would have gladly accepted a post on the front lines. He would have embraced glorious death to expunge the shame of his failure. Instead he is now a tax collector, a protector of rice and wood. Ryo looks to the south, the Crane lands, and prays that some day he will see an army marching toward him so that he can bleed his shame away.

MINOR BAYUSHI HOLDINGS

HOTEI SEIDO

The shrine to the Fortune Hotei (Location S12) lies in a beautiful mountain landscape above the placid waters of Aka Mizu-Umi (location SS in *Rokugan*; location UU in the *Game Master's Guide*). The lake has a violent history, but the monks who care for the great shrine overlook that unfortunate circumstance. The lake is most often painted red not by blood, but by the rising and setting sun. On calm days the lake is a flawless mirror, reflecting the summits of the surrounding mountains and everlasting blue sky above.

The monks here are largely retired samurai who have taken religious vows. Unlike some at other temples, they do not believe every minute should be spent in meditation. They prefer to spend time seeking enlightenment through artistic expression, and have their area's incredible natural beauty to work with. The shrine is dominated by a huge torii arch with footings resting in the lake's waters down the mountainside from the temple.

Ostensibly, this shrine lies within Bayushi provinces, but since it is exempt from taxes by Imperial decree, the Scorpion largely ignore it. Many retired samurai who come here are former Bayushi, so it has many ties of blood to the Scorpion clan. In fact, one reason the shrine and temple may have survived the Scorpion clan purge after the Clan War was its distance from the Bayushi and the Scorpion clan as a whole. During that interregnum the number of monks here increased dramatically, to return to normal again once the Scorpion Clan came out of hiding.

The art produced by the monks of Hotei Seido is among the simplest and most profound in the Empire. Their simple ink paintings of birds and insects capture the creatures' essence, rivaling the Kakita artisans' work. Enchanting haiku both playful and profound, sublime gardens are also passionate works of the Hotei monks.

IZO

[Monk 5/Samurai 5; Monk 2/Bayushi Bushi 2]

The master of the Hotei Seido is a monk known as Izo. In his younger days he was a typical Bayushi warrior: adept, agile, and ruthless. His life was torn apart by his clan's exile to the Burning Sands, for he had been engaged to a beautiful Iuchi girl whom he loved very much. He went with the Bayushi to the lands beyond the Burning Sands. He saw the barbarian tribes of that terrible yet wondrous place. He saw much of the world, but in all his travels he wanted nothing more than to return to his homeland, perhaps to see once again the lovely bride he had lost. He searched for her, but never saw her again, nor could he ascertain her fate. She vanished during the War Against the Shadow, never to be seen again.

Now he is growing old, preparing himself for his next life. He spends his days studying the Tao, practicing kata by the lakeshore in the early dawn, and writing poetry about the vicissitudes of life, the changing seasons, and pangs of regret for those he lost as a young man. His poetry rivals that of any Kakita, and he is sometimes invited to the Scorpion court to read his poetry and invoke Hotei's benevolence.

SHUTAI

The village of Shutai (Location S13) lies at the end of a little-traveled backwater road, all but forgotten by everyone but Imperial cartographers. There is little here to interest the visitor. The surrounding farms usually produce enough to feed the village population, and the village is nestled in a low valley with its back to the River of Gold. Most of the trade that passes through Shutai comes and goes by river. A few small docks reach into the waters, but nothing that would spark the interest of any river barge captain or passing traveler.

This is precisely how the village's bandits want things. It is a poorly kept secret that most ronin bandits who operate in the surrounding areas make their base in Shutai. Fortunately for them, they are so far removed from Rokugan's richest lands that magistrates pay them no heed. These bandits live by preying upon river traffic and by setting up ambushes along the roads to Kyuden Bayushi. They strike and then flee to their haven in the village of Shutai. They keep a shallow-draft riverboat in a secret cove a few miles from the village, with which they raid passing river traffic and nearby villages. All the river villages with thirty miles of Shutai pay the pirates tribute, though the bandits are careful never to prey on villages or boats protected by Scorpion bushi.

A man named Ichibei leads these bandits. His father was a ronin in Toturi's Army, and when Toturi ascended to the throne, Ichibei's father felt betrayed. As the Black Ronin, Toturi had stood for something, but as Akodo Toturi, he was just another arrogant samurai taking what he did not deserve. Ichibei's father lived the life of a bandit, and sired Ichibei with a prostitute from Ryoko Owari. He took Ichibei with him to raise him as a warrior and a free man. He owes allegiance to no Emperor, to no clan, to no family except the memory of his father, who died of an illness before Ichibei was twenty. Ichibei carries on his father's beliefs and way of life, preying upon those unfortunate enough to cross his path.

The bandits live within the town proper unless they receive word from their network of peasant informants that magistrates are investigating the area, then retreating to their hideout a few miles upriver. Their haven is an abandoned mill that fell into disuse over a century ago. From the outside, the mill appears to be about to collapse, but that is a deception. The bandit gang has carefully repaired the roof and walls. The mill is also well suited for defense. The walls are stone, with narrow windows, and the door is thick, heavy wood with a bolt on the inside. The bandits' riverboat usually rests moored inside the lean-to boathouse on the side of the mill.

ICHIBEI

[Fighter 8; True Ronin 3]

Ichibei is a hard man, with a body and face crisscrossed by the scars of his violent life. He dresses in rough clothes of woven hemp, and carries a massive ono as his favored weapon. He cares little for anyone except himself, but he does hold a modicum of loyalty toward the men who follow him. His loyalty to them, however, falls far short of any danger to himself. He would leave them behind in a heartbeat to save his own life.

He disdains those who live within the bounds of conventional Rokugani society. He is a true ronin, and a true rebel. He loves the comforts and luxuries gained by his own efforts. The strong enjoy the fruits of the weak.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A peasant girl from a nearby village has run away from the poverty of her family home. No one in the village knows where she might have gone. She did leave a letter for her parents, stating that she is running away because she has fallen in love with a man who will not sell her to a geisha house.

Focus: If pressed, the girl's father admits that he has discussed selling his daughter to a geisha house in Ryoko Owari. The girl is pretty and graceful, and would make a fine geisha, and his family is so desperately poor that they cannot feed everyone. Her father deeply regrets that she found out. Right now, he knows it was all a terrible mistake, and he wants his daughter safely returned. A few days before the girl's disappearance, Ichibei and his bandit gang came to demand tribute from the village headman, and the girl witnessed the exchange. Her mother noticed that the girl had been acting unusual afterward, asking many questions about the bandits.

Strike: The girl fell in love with Ichibei's fiery demeanor and devil-may-care attitude. Ichibei noticed her as well; she is quite pretty, after all. Knowing that his gang is known to frequent the village of Shutai, she fled there, hoping to meet Ichibei and offer herself to him. Ichibei's response was not what she expected. He amused himself with her for a couple of days, then decided she would fetch a handsome price at a geisha house in Ryoko Owari. He is currently holding her captive until he accumulates enough stolen goods to fence in Ryoko Owari. Then he plans to take her with him and sell her to the highest bidder. Now that she knows what kind of man Ichibei really is, she wants nothing more than to go home and beg her father's forgiveness.

IMPORTANT BAYUSHI NPCS

BAYUSHI YOJIRO, MASTER OF SECRETS

The Master of Secrets is a legend among the Scorpion. Though few remember his true face, none who have met Bayushi Yojiro can forget his smooth, commanding voice and intimidating presence. Whenever he appears in public Yojiro always wears heavy armor and a frightening demon mempo. Though many say this is done to frighten his enemies, the truth is that he does so to set an example for his own clan. Yojiro has always believed that the Scorpion are, first and foremost, a clan of warriors. When he appears, he looks the part.

Bayushi Yojiro has few regrets. Criticized for his junshin (honorable) nature early in his life, he was often chided as an "honest" Scorpion. He did not wear a mask, using only a high-necked collar to conceal his lower face as a nod to clan tradition. Rising to a position as a magistrate, most thought that such an honest and trusting person could hardly hope to progress further in the Clan of Secrets. However, Yojiro's keen mind and unswerving loyalty did not go unnoticed by Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shojiro.

Though he never sought personal glory, it was Yojiro's destiny to have great responsibilities pushed upon him. At Shojiro's command, he allowed the Empire to think that he had abandoned his clan during the Scorpion Clan Coup. He did so once again during his clan's exile during the War Against the Shadow, hiding in the Empire when all other Scorpion were commanded to leave on pain of death.

Near the end of the War Against the Shadow, in a move that shocked many within the clan, Kachiko named Yojiro her heir as Scorpion Champion. Shortly thereafter, she disappeared. Though the Scorpion were reluctant to follow a notorious junshin, the truth about Yojiro's long service to the clan became clear. For years he had feigned disloyalty to the Scorpion to protect the clan's ancestral sword Itsuwari, which otherwise would have been destroyed by the clan's enemies. At Shojiro's command he had agreed to become an exile within a clan of exiles, and at Kachiko's command he hid in the shadows at the risk of his own life and honor. Yojiro had survived for years surrounded by enemies and considered a traitor by his brethren. Who was more qualified to lead the Scorpion?

During the Battle of Oblivion's Gate he first donned the fearsome mask and massive armor that became his trademark. At the time, he gave no thought to intimidating his enemies or serving as an example to his fellow Scorpion. Simply put, he lacked confidence in his martial abilities (he had little battlefield experience at the time) and wished only to make certain that he did not die in the battle, leaving the Scorpion leaderless. During the Great Clans' race toward Volturum he proved his mettle, leading the Scorpion armies to victory against a force of ogres four times as large as his own. Afterward it seemed none would question Yojiro's right to rule his clan again.

Over the next few decades, Yojiro became one of the most feared daimyo in Rokugan. Under his guidance, the Scorpion dominated the courts, overshadowing their Crane rivals. His manipulations were essential to Toturi's success in the War of Spirits, leading the spirit armies to their crushing defeat in Beiden Pass. He formed a network of loyal ninja led by Shosuro Yudoka, who not only refused to draw upon the lingering power of Nothing but aggressively hunted surviving Goju. He forged a secret alliance with Matsu Nimuro, keeping peace with the Scorpion's most aggressive neighbors. Yojiro came to enjoy his role as Master of Secrets, and quietly relished the power he wielded as Scorpion Champion.

When he discovered the existence of a group called the Shadowed Tower, his confidence was shattered. He had thought his clan unified, unswerving in their loyalty. Instead he discovered a conspiracy bent on his personal downfall, led by one of his most trusted advisors. Yojiro realized that this was his truest test — if the Shadowed Tower had dedicated themselves to his downfall, then he would present them with a new enemy, an enemy they did not know so well. Working with Yogo Koji and Shosuro Yudoka, Yojiro helped Bayushi Sunetra undergo the training she would require to take his place not only as Master of Secrets and Scorpion Champion, but as Bayushi Yojiro.

At almost sixty years old, Yojiro has accepted that he is no longer the man he once was. His mind is as sharp as ever, but his body betrays him. His heavy armor makes his bones ache. His demon mask causes him to sweat and breathe heavily if he wears it for too long. Though he enjoyed his reign, he has come to accept that his time as Champion is done. Though he is secretly retired, he has continued to serve, monitoring Sunetra from a hidden monastery near Kyuden Bayushi, communicating directly through Shosuro Yudoka.

Occasionally, when the new Champion must appear as herself, Yojiro ventures forth and fulfills his old role once more. Ironically, he must be cautious; he is no longer the true Scorpion Champion, and many wards (including the Chamber of Swords) no longer react appropriately to his presence. He must be wary at all times lest he accidentally make a mistake and expose his grand illusion. Ironically, he finds these missions — walking about disguised as himself — quite thrilling. After years of ruling Kyuden Bayushi as Master of Secrets, he is finally faced with a challenge once more.

YOJIRO'S MASK (UNIQUE NEMURANAI)

Though Yojiro wore no true mask for much of his early career, he adopted a fearsome demonic mempo upon his ascension to his position as Scorpion Clan Champion. He has never changed this mask and seldom appears without it, to the point that most who know him recognize him only by the mask. In a very real way, the mask has become Yojiro's true face.

Thus, it is no surprise that the mask has gained the properties of a *senzo*, a spontaneously enchanted nemuranai. Though the mask has been passed on to Bayushi Sunetra, it yet carries great power due to Yojiro's legendary tenure as Master of Secrets.

When worn by anyone other than the true Scorpion Champion, the mask has no magical abilities.

020 SYSTEM:

Yojiro's mask is a minor artifact with the standard abilities of a *senzo* (see *Magic of Rokugan*, page 58). The person who wears the mask gains a +10 bonus to all Charisma- and Wisdom-related skill checks. In addition, he gains a special immunity to divination spells. Whenever such a spell targets the wearer, he is immediately aware of the attempt and may choose to render himself immune or to confuse the results as he pleases.

For example, a *detect thoughts* spell targeting an individual wearing Yojiro's mask would instantly alert the wearer that someone was attempting to read his thoughts (though it would not reveal who). The wearer could force the spell to fail outright, or he could deceive the caster into believing the spell succeeded, creating false surface thoughts to be read by the spellcaster.

LSR 276 2E:

Yojiro's mask is a powerful nemuranai that grants its wearer prodigious courtly skill. The person who wears the mask gains four Free Raises on all Awareness- and Perception-related rolls. In addition, he gains a special immunity to divination spells. Any spells that would divine information about the mask's wearer are automatically detected, and can either be canceled or confused as the wearer wishes.

For example, a *Secrets on the Wind* spell targets the individual wearing Yojiro's mask. The wearer can force the spell to fail outright, or he can deceive the caster into believing the spell succeeded, creating a false conversation overheard by the magic.

BAYUSHI YOJIRO

Male human Scorpion, Samurai 5 / Courtier 5 / Emerald Magistrate 9: CR 19; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d10+5 plus 5d6+5 plus 9d8+9; hp 138; Init: +5; Spd 20 ft.; Atk +5 *keen katana of speed* +18/+13/+8 melee, 1d10+5 damage; AC 25 (touch 11, flat-footed 24); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill — Diplomacy (family bonus), Courtier Ability (Eyes See the Heart), Emperor's Seal, Gossip, In His Name, Strength of Purpose +8, Saibankan's Method, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor 2; AL LG; SV Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +22; Str 11, Dex 7 (13), Con 12, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 18 (22); Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 6 in. (Note: these statistics take into account penalties and bonuses for Yojiro's advanced age.)

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Ashalan, High Rokugani, Mekhem, Rokugani, Senpet), Battle +14, Bluff +32 (+28 to feint), Decipher Script +13, Diplomacy +47, Gather Information +32, Hide +6, Iaijutsu Focus +14, Innuendo +34 (send) +28 (receive), Intimidate +34, Knowledge (etiquette) +13, Knowledge (law) +20, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +6, Read Lips +13, Ride +6, Search +27, Sense Motive +26, Spot +28; Alertness, Armor Proficiency (heavy), Bayushi's Technique (x2), Iron Will, Leadership, Pincers and Tail, Pincers Hold the Tail Strikes, Political Maneuvering, Versatile (Bluff, Innuendo), Void Use, Way of the Scorpion.

Possessions: +5 great armor of shadow and silent moves, +5 *keen katana of speed* (ancestral daisho), cloak of charisma +4, courtier's obi, gloves of dexterity +6, haori of resistance +5, periapt of proof against poison, ring of protection +2.

BAYUSHI YOJIRO

Earth: 3
Water: 3
Fire: 5
Air: 6
Void: 4
School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 4 / Bayushi Bushi 3
Dojo: None
Honor: 2.8
Glory: 9.5
Advantages: Allies (Lion Clan), Benten's Blessing, Read Lips, Voice
Disadvantages: Junshin, Reputation (Honest), Soft-Hearted, Unluck (3 points)
Skills: Battle 4, Courtier 9, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 8, Gossip 6, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 6, Katana 5, Kuenai 7, Law 5, Poison 4, Seduction 6, Sincerity 8

BAYUSHI SUNETRA, SCORPION CLAN CHAMPION

Hantei Naseru has called Sunetra "everything a Scorpion should be." She is clever, inquisitive, manipulative, witty, beautiful, and deadly. Though she does not have great fame within her clan, that is to her advantage. She is the perfect spy, and the Scorpion lords often call upon her when all else has failed. She has overcome many of her clan's enemies with her sword, but has defeated many more with her poise, grace, and ice-blue eyes.

When the Scorpion Clan was exiled to the Burning Sands, many of their children remained behind, to be cared for by the Crane. The Scorpion were never expected to return, and the Crane brought up the children as members of the clan, teaching them that their parents had been traitors and

criminals. When the Scorpion did come back, Kachiko offered to return the "favor" the Crane had done by adopting several Crane children. The Crane reluctantly agreed, but *selected children from the least important Crane families*. These children were, in turn, trained in the Scorpion ways. Upon their gempukku they were given the choice to return to the Crane or to swear fealty to their adopted parents.

Sunetra, an adopted Daidoji child, chose to remain in the Scorpion Clan. She had little waiting for her at home. Her parents had been slain in the War of Spirits. Her family's Crane holdings were nearly nonexistent. Her brother barely remembered her, for he had left to join the Crane armies when she was very young and they had never written to each other. Sunetra saw greater potential for advancement in the Scorpion, so she did not regret her choice. She did, however, find it very interesting when her brother Hachi became daimyo of the Yasuki family. Sunetra was adopted by the Bayushi and raised by the most prominent members of that esteemed family. Even Bayushi Yojiro had a hand in her teachings, and her skill and intellect soon won her an appointment to Otosan Uchi.

Shortly after her arrival in the Imperial City, Hantei Naseru noticed her ability. He offered her a position as a spy, informant, and messenger for him. Bayushi Yojiro saw the obvious advantage in having a Scorpion agent aiding the son of Toturi, and gave Sunetra free rein to aid him so long as no harm came to the Scorpion.

Sunetra's first important mission for Naseru came during the Test of the Emerald Champion. Fearing that a strong Emerald Champion could complicate the struggle for the throne, Naseru wanted to insure that the tournament winner would appear weak and ineffective. Sunetra arranged matters so that Bayushi Kwanchai would make it to the semifinals and injure Shiba Aikune, his opponent. As only Scorpion shugenja had been granted permission to preside over the tournament's religious ceremonies, Aikune was disqualified when a Phoenix shugenja magically healed his injury. The result was that Yasuki Hachi — Sunetra's brother — became Emerald Champion. Sunetra found the turn of events amusing, even more so because her elder brother did not recognize her in her identity as a Scorpion.

When the time came for Bayushi Yojiro to select a Scorpion to replace him as Champion, Bayushi Sunetra was his first choice. Though she had not been born a Scorpion, she had chosen to be a Scorpion, and had embraced their ways and philosophy like no other. She was adept in the arts of disguise and misdirection, and had learned the courtly arts from Naseru himself. Though Sunetra was uncertain if she could handle the responsibility, she could not deny Yojiro's call, and has settled uneasily into her new role.

Sunetra is burdened by her new duties. She is uncomfortable in Yojiro's massive armor and fearsome mask; she does not feel like herself. She does not like the idea of so many lives depending upon her, or of so many enemies set to knock her from her place. Though she has not traditionally depended on others, she feels very alone in her new role. Yojiro, Koji, Yudoka, and Hantei Naseru all know her identity, but none of them can truly help her. Until the Shadowed Tower is defeated she must rule the Scorpion alone, from the shadows, and let none know who she is. Nonetheless, she is determined not to fail. She might find it mildly ironic that she and her brother, two lowborn and forgotten Crane children, should come to be the Master of Secrets and Emerald Champion, but she has no time to dwell on irony.

BAYUSHI SUNETRA

Female human Scorpion, Samurai 8/Courtier 4: CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d10+8 plus 4d6+4; hp 99; Init: +7; Spd 20 ft.; Atk *Churetsu* (+5 *vorpal katana of speed*) +17/+17/+12 melee, 1d10+6 damage; AC 21 (touch 12, flat-footed 19); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill — Diplomacy (family bonus), Courtier Ability (Your Life is Mine), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor 2; AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 18; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 1 in.

Dojo: Dojo of the Red Crane. **Kata:** Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Mekhem, Rokugani, Senpet), Bluff +33 (+29 to feint), Diplomacy +38, Disguise +35, Gather Information +26, Hide +24, Innuendo +26 (send) +18 (receive), Intimidate +35, Knowledge (etiquette) +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Move Silently +24, Perform +22, Sense Motive +25; Armor Proficiency (heavy), Bayushi's Mastery (courtier), Bayushi's Technique, Iron Will, Pincers and Tail, Versatile (Bluff, Disguise), Versatile (Hide, Move Silently), Void Use, Way of the Scorpion.

Possessions: +2 shadow great armor of silent moves, *Churetsu* (see introduction), courtier's obi, gloves of dexterity +2, haori of charisma +2, Yojiro's Mask (unique item, see sidebar).

BAYUSHI SUNETRA

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 3/Bayushi Courtier 1

Dojo: Dojo of the Red Crane

Honor: 2.8

Glory: 9.5

Advantages: Dangerous Beauty, Heartless, Kharmic Tie (Yasuki Ichibei)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Crane Blood), Fascination (Hantei Naseru),

Skills: Acting 6, Defense 3, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, Iaijutsu 2, Intimidation 6, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Poison 3, Shuriken 3, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6, Tanto 3

Kata: Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind

BAYUSHI KWANCHAI, SCORPION CLAN MARTYR

Bayushi Kwanchai's name is known in all Scorpion Clan dojo, for his presence is feared in every one of them. Kwanchai was proud to gain entry to Honor's Lesson Dojo shortly after his gempukku, though this event had more to do with the influence of his uncle, Bayushi Kaukatsu, than any display of talent.

Sadly, the young samurai seemed impervious to Soshi Tishi's best attempts to instruct him in the way of the sword, launching into every training session with boundless passion but little skill. He was uncouth, rude, and often started brawls with other students (brawls he generally lost). As often as not his reckless techniques injured himself or his opponent, and Kwanchai was frequently berated for his clumsiness and stupidity.

Tishi grew impatient with Kwanchai, but fearing that to expel him would offend Kaukatsu, he instead gave Kwanchai a courier mission deep within the Twilight Mountains. He was to deliver a crystal mempo to the Oracle of Earth, a gift from the Soshi to thank the Oracle for his aid in their hunt for a maho-tsukai who had been plaguing their southern farmlands. The mission would have been dangerous even for the most highly trained students of Honor's Lesson. Tishi expected the ill-trained Kwanchai to die, ridding Honor's Lesson of an incompetent student without bringing dishonor to the dojo.

Beyond all logic and reason, Kwanchai survived. He somehow avoided all contact with hostile Crab samurai. He encountered no Shadowlands creatures, restless gaki, or wandering beasts during his trek through the haunted mountains. He arrived at the Tower of Vines in record time, disappointed at how boring his mission was proving to be. The Oracle of Earth greeted Kwanchai with typical aloofness, causing Kwanchai to grumble, "When will I earn the respect I deserve?"

Kwanchai had asked an Oracle a question. The Elemental Dragons' wisdom overcame the Oracle, and he gave Kwanchai his answer. He told him to journey to the western Shinomen forest, where he would find a small hut in the ruins of the Naga city Iyotisha. Within it dwelled the sensei who would lead him to greatness.

Kwanchai eagerly embarked upon this quest, thanking the Oracle with polite sincerity for the first and only time in his life. After many months of searching, Kwanchai found the sensei to whom he had been directed: Bayushi Tange, the so-called Failed Martyr, the creator of the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies style of swordsmanship. Kwanchai had heard of Tange, and begged the old samurai to teach him his secret techniques.

Tange refused.

After the Scorpion's exile to the Burning Sands, Tange had become surly and bitter. He had realized that no matter what challenge he faced, no matter what foe he fought, he always triumphed, not through skill but through sheer dumb luck. With this realization Tange had ceased to find any joy in life. There were no more challenges. There was no more glory in victory. Nonetheless, Kwanchai begged Tange to teach him. After months of pestering, Tange finally agreed for reasons of his own.

After three years in the Shinomen, Kwanchai returned to Ryoko Owari. He had abandoned the teachings of Honor's Lesson Dojo, adopting Tange's unique style. Kwanchai's return infuriated Soshi Tishi, who had long since assumed that he had died. Kwanchai's uncle, Kaukatsu, was strangely pleased. Kaukatsu had heard many tales about the Failed Martyr from his father. Tange was one of the most efficient pawns the Scorpion Clan had ever had — ready and willing to do anything they asked, with an uncanny ability to survive (if not succeed) on even the deadliest missions. Kaukatsu was not surprised that brash young Kwanchai's destiny was linked to Tange's, and, for the first time, saw the boy's potential. Kaukatsu invited his nephew into his own household, and commended him for rediscovering the lost Dark Sword techniques. He even encouraged Kwanchai to take on students of his own, sharing Tange's lost techniques with a new generation.

Kwanchai's ego was fueled by his uncle's praise. He became even more egotistical and insufferable than before. On missions of any delicacy whatsoever, Kaukatsu always saw to

it that Kwanchai was accompanied by more levelheaded agents. At the wedding of Ikoma Otemi and Shosuro Yasuko, Kwanchai came perilously close to challenging the Emerald Champion to an iaijutsu duel. Were it not for Soshi Tishi's intervention, the peaceful ceremony might have dissolved into violence.

When the city of Ryoko Owari was recently attacked by two Onisu, Kwanchai was among the first Scorpion heroes to fight them. During the ensuing battle Kwanchai was last seen embracing the Onisu of Betrayal, laughing as they were both consumed in flames, plummeting from Moment's Edge Bridge to vanish into the Bay of Drowned Honor.

Each day Kwanchai's fellow Dark Sword students stand at the bay's edge in quiet vigil, awaiting the day that Kwanchai will emerge from the water and step forward to lead them again. The students do not mourn his loss, for they know that a true student of the Dark Sword does not die so easily.

BAYUSHI KWANCHAI

Male human Scorpion, Samurai 3/Bitter Lies Swordsman 5: CR 8; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d10+24; hp 104; Init: +2; Spd 30 ft.; Atk +2 *katana* 12/+7 melee, 1d10+3 damage; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 17); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill — Diplomacy (family bonus); Honor 1; AL CN; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 18; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 2 in.

Dojo: Dojo of Bitter Lies. **Kata:** None.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +7, Escape Artist +8, Iaijutsu Focus +9, Intimidate +15, Jump +7, Perform +15, Ride +7; Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Void Use, Way of the Scorpion, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: +2 *ashigaru armor*, +2 *katana* (ancestral daisho), *amulet of natural armor* +1, *haori of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1, *vest of escape*.

BAYUSHI KWANCHAI

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Air: 4

Void: 2

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 2 / Bitter Lies Swordsman 1

Dojo: None

Honor: 1.3

Glory: 3.1

Advantages: Daredevil, Great Destiny, Luck (3 ranks)

Disadvantages: Antisocial (4 points), Bad Reputation (insane), Brash

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 4, Intimidation 6, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Poison 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 1

BAYUSHI TORU, DISAVOWED RONIN

Rokugo Toru (known as Bayushi Toru to those outside his family) is a grim, solitary man. He spends much of his time in the seedy sake houses of the City of the Rich Frog, Nanashi Mura, East Hub Village, and any other places where ronin congregate. He is a generally dour and misanthropic individual who keeps to himself, does the job he's hired to do, and seldom asks questions. To many, he is the worst example of what a ronin can become — a filthy dog who cares nothing for honor, only for gold.

He is even so bold as to continue to refer to himself by his former Bayushi family name, a gesture that most see as a feeble attempt to intimidate others. The Bayushi remember how Toru dishonored himself during the War of Spirits, fleeing his unit at Beiden Pass. For his crimes he was expelled from his clan. Toru's encounters with Scorpion magistrates invariably end in violence, with Toru defending his right to keep his name with the edge of his sword. He is the worst a Scorpion can become: a traitor, an outcast, an exile.

The truth, as is usually the case with a Scorpion, is something else entirely. While Toru is indeed a ronin and spends much of his time performing unsavory missions for the highest bidder, his true loyalty is to the Master of Secrets. During the War of Spirits he was one of Yojiro's most cunning spies, though his allegiance to the Scorpion often interfered with his work. He would often be recognized on secret missions, or distrusted because others believed he sought some advantage on the Bayushi's behalf.

For this reason, Toru volunteered to become the Master of Secrets' personal agent. Toru's act of dishonor was staged so that he could be cast out without question. He has since acted as Bayushi Yojiro's underhand, taking responsibilities that no acknowledged Scorpion agent would dare. While there are others more skilled and experienced, Toru's lack of affiliation with the clan allows him to act unseen, to perform actions beneath even a Scorpion's honor with no fear of shaming his lord.

Other than Yojiro only the ninja master, Shosuro Yudoka, knows of Toru's existence (and the handful of others like him). Even Sunetra does not know of Toru. Yudoka has been waiting for the right time to inform the young Champion that she has such a potent weapon hiding in the shadows.

Each time Yojiro calls upon Toru, he knows well that he will be asked to do the impossible. He has assassinated a Goju who infiltrated the home of the Toritaka daimyo. He has stolen artifacts from Kyuden Isawa. He has spied upon Bloodspeakers in the Twilight Mountains. Toru accepts these assignments without complaint, and carries them out with ruthless efficiency. He looks forward to the times when the Master of Secrets asks him to do the impossible; it is the only time that he is truly a Scorpion once more.

BAYUSHI TORU

Male human Scorpion, Rogue 4/Fighter 2: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6+16 plus 2d10+8; hp 53; Init: +2; Spd 20 ft.; Atk paired +1 wakizashi +9/+9 melee, 1d10+3 damage; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15); SA Sneak attack +2d6 damage; SQ Class Skill — Intimidate (family bonus), Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); Honor 2; AL CG; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 10 in.

Dojo: The Brother's Gift. **Kata:** Striking as Earth.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Mekhem, Rokugani), Bluff +8, Climb +13, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +8, Hide +7, Innuendo +8 (send) +7 (receive), Jump +13, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +9, Ride +8, Spot +7, Use Magic Device +8; Ambidexterity, Cleave, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Void Use, Weapon Focus (wakizashi).

Possessions: +1 partial armor, paired +1 wakizashi.

BAYUSHI TORU

Earth: 3

Strength: 4

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 1 (Scorpion Ronin, Insight Rank 2)

Dojo: None

Honor: 2.3

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Large, Silent

Disadvantages: Black Sheep, Social Disadvantage (Ronin)

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Escape 2, Hisomu 3, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kuenai 4, Kyujutsu 3, Poison 3, Sincerity 2, Stealth 3

VASSALS OF THE BAYUSHI FAMILY

THE ROKUGO

Some say that the Lion Clan is the Emperor's right hand, the Crane, the Emperor's left hand, and the Scorpion the Emperor's under-hand. The Bayushi family has an under-hand as well, and that hand is the Rokugo family. Most believe that the Scorpion clan is involved in nearly every illicit transaction, under-handed venture, or dishonorable pursuit: sake houses, opium dens, geisha houses, brothels, smuggling, gaijin trade routes, blackmail, extortion. The list is long, but somehow the Bayushi family maintains a veneer of respectability. How can they do this while taking part in such disreputable enterprises? They have the Rokugo do it for them.

When the Scorpion Clan was reinstated after the Second Day of Thunder, many Bayushi realized that the position of their clan was still tenuous at best. They must avoid any appearance of impropriety or risk losing their newly regained status. But how could they continue their old practices? Trade in secrets was a Scorpion staple, and most of those secrets were gained through disreputable means. The answer came almost by accident. After their reinstatement, they began to reclaim many of their holdings in various lands. Geisha houses, sake parlors, and other such enterprises had to be reclaimed, because these places were indispensable sources of information and wealth.

In the outlying villages of the Bayushi provinces, the Scorpion found a group of ronin in control of most of these enterprises. These bandits, led by a wily and resourceful man known as Rokugo, had seen a lucrative opportunity when the Scorpion clan was cast out. Rokugo and his followers moved quickly to assert their control over these places, using intimidation and outright force. The occupying Imperial Legions did not wish to sully their honor with ties to such places but did recognize that they were necessary to supply routes and troop morale. Rokugo's band of ronin kept the places open and reaped much wealth. They did not operate in the open, however. Rokugo knew that the occupying troops would eradicate him and his motley band if they were discovered, so they worked in secret, much like the Scorpion before them.

Rokugo and his followers were not surprised when the Scorpion clan was reinstated; only a fool could live in their former provinces and not realize that the Scorpion had taken

to the shadows. By the time the came back, the Rokugo had grown wealthy, and extended their control beyond the former Scorpion territories even as far as Ootosan Uchi. It was a matter of days after the Scorpion Clan was reinstated before the clan was moving to retake its old holdings. They found Rokugo and his underground organization.

The Bayushi immediately moved to reassert their control over their former assets, and no clan knows how to exert pressure like the Scorpion. Rokugo was a bold man, however, and a gambler as well. He would die before he gave up everything he had fought so hard to gain, and he would be damned if he let the Bayushi have it easily. He was nevertheless not a fool, and he knew that a group of ronin could not win a war with a Great Clan. Instead, he made the Scorpion an offer. He would keep everything he and his fellows had earned during the Scorpion's exile. He would turn over to the Scorpion all financial records and information that the holdings had accumulated in their absence. In return, he expected fealty and the right to continue running the establishments they had taken over.

The Bayushi were impressed by Rokugo's boldness. As many of their samurai had died in the Clan War, the idea of incorporating a clever, resourceful band of ronin and regaining their holdings without bloodshed was an offer they could not refuse. Thus the Rokugo vassal family was born.

Rokugo had confronted the Bayushi and won. He had gained a degree of legitimacy and maintained control of everything he had achieved. With the Bayushi behind him, his sphere of influence exploded to include virtually every province in the Empire. He took a large portion of his hidden riches and built a small castle in the highlands near Kyuden Bayushi. This location gives him relatively easy access to all of Scorpion territory.

In many cases, the establishments that the Rokugo oversee do not even know the name of those whom they serve. Today, the Rokugo family is a family of secretive enforcers, smugglers, spies, thieves, thugs and blackguards. They serve the Rokugo, and thus the Bayushi, with fierce and ruthless loyalty.

Today, Rokugo is an old man, but he sired many children, both legitimate and otherwise, and adopted many of his most loyal followers. The Rokugo family has its hands in or its eyes on nearly every underworld enterprise. The majority of secret information the Bayushi receives comes through the Rokugo family and their network of underworld informants and assets. Thus far the Rokugo family has had a great deal of problems with the Shadowed Tower. Many have been seduced by the Tower's activities, and joined that sinister organization. Rokugo himself is still a fervent Yojiro loyalist and is sickened by this display of disloyalty. He has several of his own agents on special missions to root out any sign of Shadowed Tower influence, with little success. He is currently considering drawing upon outside help, though he knows that Yojiro disapproves of such actions where the Shadowed Tower is concerned — Scorpion police their own.

SHIRO KURAISHI

Shiro Kuraishi is located two hours' ride north of Kyuden Bayushi. The castle does not appear on any map, for the Rokugo rarely have open relations with anyone other than their Bayushi lords. The castle is relatively small, hidden by forests and natural features. Hidden sentries guard all paths leading to the castle. Anyone entering Rokugo lands must know one of several secret code-words, or possess a writ from a Bayushi noble, to enter. All others are captured and impris-

oned. The fate of prisoners is uncertain at best. Most never see the outside world again.

The castle is only a few decades old, and all the laborers and engineers who built the castle are fiercely loyal to the Scorpion clan, or else died mysteriously after its completion. The Rokugo family is wealthy, enjoying the proceeds of geisha houses and sake parlors across the Empire. The castle maintains a force of two hundred soldiers, and they are among the most ruthless of all Rokugani warriors. Its highland location is easily defensible, and the secret of its location is closely guarded. The only people who come and go are the Rokugo themselves. Loyal peasants populate a small village near the castle. The Rokugo know well fed and lavishly rewarded servants are the most likely to remain loyal. As a result, Rokugoheimin are probably the wealthiest anywhere.

Shiro Rokugo hides the inner workings of perhaps the most dishonorable family in the Empire. The secrets that pass through this place could shake the foundation of every great clan and Imperial house, which is precisely why its location is such a carefully guarded secret. Most Rokugo send their reports and information here to be distributed to their Bayushi masters. The Rokugo would, of course, swear that every scrap of it goes to the Bayushi, but this would be difficult to verify. The Bayushi accept a certain amount of graft from the Rokugo; after all, if the Rokugo can fool Bayushi tax collectors, they can fool anyone in the Empire.

THE ROKUGO FAMILY

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 0.5

Class Skill: Intimidation

Starting Outfit:

1. Disguise kit and 80 Koku.

THE ROKUGO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Strength

Beginning Honor: 0, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, a Rokugo may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Intimidation.

THE AOTORA

Aotora, the Green Tiger, began his life as a simple peasant herbalist in service to the Bayushi family. He and his family tended the gardens of Kyuden Bayushi before the Scorpion clan was banished to the Burning Sands. Throughout his life, he quietly catalogued the medicinal properties of every known plant in Scorpion lands. He had not begun this daunting task on his own. Bayushi Shoji himself commissioned him to do so, in the days before the Scorpion Clan Coup. His real name is lost to time; Aotora is the code name Shoji gave him in their secret communications.

Under the guise of legitimate research, Aotora was to document the effects and antidotes of plant poisons. He quietly continued his research against the day when his masters would return. Bayushi Shoji died without mentioning Aotora's efforts to anyone.

When the Scorpion returned, Aotora was an old, old man. His body was failing. He feared he would die before presenting the fruits of his research to anyone. He did not want his life's work to be in vain, and he respected the new Scorpion daimyo, Bayushi Yojiro. He approached the Bayushi cautiously, implying that he might have something that they

wanted. When Aotora showed Bayushi Yojiro the room full of hand-written scrolls cataloguing decades of meticulous botanical research, Yojiro was amazed. Aotora had continued his efforts throughout the troubles without reward or acknowledgment. Yojiro immediately granted his family the status of Bayushi vassals, and commissioned Aotora and his children to continue this research in perpetuity.

Aotora's loyalty to his Scorpion masters had rewarded him, but the cost was high. His research was not meant to altruistically advance botanical knowledge; it was to find new and deadly poisons. His research entailed the testing of various concoctions on living subjects, both human and animal. It also led to a horrible accident. Three of his five children accidentally exposed themselves to a potent slow-acting contact poison he was testing. All of them died, but not before they touched their mother and their grandmother. In a single afternoon, Aotora lost his entire family, except for his two oldest children, a son and a daughter. After that, he was forever scarred. Aotora died ten years ago.

Today, the Aotora family consists only of Aotora's surviving children and their families. They faithfully continue Aotora's research, steadily amassing knowledge of the effects of botanical poisons and medicines.



AOTORA NO EN

Aotora no Kouen, the Garden of the Green Tiger, is the beautiful garden where Aotora performed most of his research. Aotora was not only a devoted researcher, he was a master gardener, and he passed his knowledge on to his children. The Garden of the Green Tiger is lush and beautiful at first glance, with perfectly pruned bushes, a gurgling stream, and well-tended cherry trees. Camouflaged among the foliage, however, are hundreds of different plant varieties used in creating medicines, poisons, and antidotes. Any herbalist who visits the garden recognizes this immediately. Anyone wishing to create an herbal poison, antidote, or medicine can find what he seeks here.

THE AOTORA FAMILY

Favored Class: Rogue

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skill: Knowledge (herbalism) and Poison

Starting Outfit:

1. One dose each of two different poisons, tanto, set of herbalist's tools, 50 koku.

THE AOTORA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Beginning Honor: 1

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, a member of the Aotora family may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Herbalism or Poison.

BAYUSHI MECHANICS

NEW ANCESTORS

Most who visit the Bayushi lands come away with the impression that the Bayushi do not revere their ancestors. This impression is incorrect. While the Bayushi do not build great shrines to their ancestors as the Lion or Crane do, they have great respect for the shiryo. So great is their respect that they feel that it need not be spoken of publicly, much like the bonds of loyalty the Bayushi bear for one another. Ancestral shrines are generally small, private affairs carefully hidden from the eyes of outsiders. Typically these shrines are found in secret passages within the family castle, or remote mountain passes and forest groves. Only the most trusted allies may see these shrines, where the Bayushi believe their ancestors guard the secrets of ages long past.

BAYUSHI RIKOJI

Though less revered than many other Scorpion Champions, Bayushi Rikoji is perhaps one of the greatest Scorpion leaders in history. His great success stems not from any action that he took, but a single action that he chose not to take. Bayushi Rikoji was the Scorpion Champion who received Yashin, the Bloodsword Ambition. Rikoji did not trust the gift, and never allowed himself to touch it. Instead, he sent his agent, Soshi Takasho, to investigate the blade. Rikoji's wise inaction eventually resulted in the discovery and defeat of Iuchiban the Bloodspeaker.

NO FOOL

SCORPION ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI RIKOJI

You are difficult to deceive by magical or mundane means.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all Sense Motive checks, and a +4 on all saves vs. illusion.

ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI RIKOJI

(4 POINTS)

You gain two Free Raises on all Perception checks. Whenever confronted with a magical illusion, you may make a Perception check vs. TN 25 to see the truth. (This is in addition to any normal chances you receive to pierce the illusion, and your Free Raises apply.)

BAYUSHI SHOJU

Bayushi Shoji masterminded the Scorpion Clan Coup, seizing the city of Otosan Uchi and holding it against the assembled armies of the clans. He assassinated Hantei XXXVIII in full sight of his Imperial Guard. For a time, he held the Emerald Throne as Shoji the First. Outside the Scorpion Clan, Bayushi Shoji is reviled as one of history's greatest villains. Within it, he is quietly celebrated as a hero.

Scorpion samurai know the true motive behind Shoji's Coup. The Scorpion were heirs to a great prophecy, one that warned of Fu Leng's coming and the Second Day of Thunder. Shoji acted out of loyalty. He slew the Emperor to save the Empire, knowing full well that he would likely be slain in turn and remembered as a villain. He put into action a plan to dismantle a dynasty without any but his most loyal subjects suspecting his motives.

In the eyes of his clan, Shoji exemplifies what it means to be a Scorpion. They look upon him as one of their most valued shiryo.

Ironically, Shoji is not a shiryo at all.

Though he attacked Otosan Uchi with the best of intentions, Shoji defied the Celestial Order in an unprecedented way. When he died, his soul was cast into Gaki-do, the Realm of the Hungry Dead, to wander until it had absolved itself. Shoji's hunger took a form rarely seen among the gaki of that Spirit Realm. Shoji hungers for courage, the same courage that he bore in abundance, but put to poor use. He wanders the passages between Gaki-do and the mortal realm, and when he finds a suitable soul, he inspires them to deeds of great bravery.

With their success he feeds, unseen and unnoticed. His presence does no harm, and often brings about great deeds. One day, he will be free to move on to the blessed fields of Yomi. He takes a quiet pride in the good that he is allowed to accomplish, and knows that the Fortunes could have been far less merciful.

Some Scorpion know of Shoji's condition. They adamantly refuse to admit to outsiders that he is a gaki. In their eyes, he is a shiryo, sent from the blessed fields of Yomi. Any who would say otherwise risk the Scorpion's wrath.

(Note: Though he is not technically an ancestral spirit, Shoji is mechanically identical to an ancestor in both systems.)

TRAGIC HERO

SCORPION ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI SHOJU

You possess the patient cunning of Bayushi Shoji, mastermind behind the Scorpion Clan Coup.

Benefit: As a move-equivalent action, you may choose to study one opponent. For the rest of the day you gain a +4 insight bonus on all Bluff checks against that opponent, including feinting in combat. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Intelligence modifier.

Any spells that sense gaki or other malevolent spirits always sense a strange presence around you.

ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI SHOJU

(2 POINTS)

You possess the same cool, calculating mind as Bayushi Shoji. You may add your Intelligence to the total of all Awareness-based skill rolls, and your Awareness to the total of all Intelligence-based skill rolls.

Any spells that sense gaki or other malevolent spirits always sense a strange presence around you.

BAYUSHI SHUNSEN

Immortalized in Kakita Ryoku's novel, *Winter*, Bayushi Shunsen served as yojimbo to Scorpion Champion Bayushi Ujiro. In a gathering of Clan Champions, Ujiro challenged the other clans to prove their loyalty superior to the Scorpion's. As a test of loyalty, he would give a command to his yojimbo. The other Champions would follow suit, issuing the same command, and if any hesitated they would be disqualified. The other Champions agreed, and Ujiro immediately gave Shunsen his command: "Kill me."

Shunsen did not hesitate, but struck down his lord and then took his own life. No other Champion would dare do the same. Ryoku recorded the events in her journal, and Shunsen became a sterling example of Scorpion loyalty.

SCORPION'S LOYALTY

SCORPION ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI SHUNSEN

Your loyalty to your lord is unquestionable.

Benefit: Chose one person whom you serve (preferably your lord or daimyo, not another player character) when selecting this feat. When acting in this individual's defense you are immune to fear effects and gain a +6 sacred bonus against all mind-affecting effects. The person you protect may voluntarily give your service to another, transferring this effect to that person.

If the person targeted by this protection ever dies, the benefits of this feat are permanently lost and your Charisma is permanently reduced by three.

ANCESTOR: BAYUSHI SHUNSEN

(3 POINTS)

Like your ancestor, your loyalty is unquestionable. Select one person whom you serve (preferably your lord or daimyo, not another player character). You are immune to all Fear effects while protecting the person you serve, and gain three Free Raises on all Tests of Honor made while defending him. The person you protect may voluntarily give your service to another, transferring this effect to that person.

If the person targeted by this protection ever dies, the benefits of this ancestor are permanently lost and your Awareness is permanently reduced by one.

DOJO OF BITTER LIES

Classes: Fighter, Samurai, Bitter Lies Swordsman (prestige)

Schools: Bayushi Bushi, Bitter Lies Swordsman (New Path)

HISTORY

The Dojo of Bitter Lies is relatively new, though its origins stretch back three decades to a samurai named Bayushi Tange. The Scorpion histories remember Tange as a great hero of the Clan War, one who frequently succeeded despite overwhelming odds. What the histories do not record is the fact that Tange was often sent on these missions to rid the clan of his presence. Tange was a loud, boorish, arrogant samurai who made a nuisance of himself. A descendant of the original Bayushi Tange who wrote the seminal Scorpion text *Lies*, he memorized his ancestor's teachings quoted them loudly even in the most inappropriate circumstances.

Tange devised his own technique, the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies, and gladly offered to teach it to any who wished to learn. Sadly, more often than not Tange's students ended up seriously injured when attempting to replicate his style. Again and again the clan attempted to rid itself of Tange, but again and again he survived. While there was no question that Tange lacked his namesake's skill and intellect, he possessed devilish luck. When all others fell around him, Tange always survived. Others began to call Tange the "Failed Martyr" for his complete inability to die when he was supposed to, though never in his presence.

During the Scorpion's exile to the Burning Sands, Tange was inevitably among the first to escape the Senpet copper mines. A cave-in killed the rest of his work crew and shattered his chains, allowing Tange to flee and wage a secret war against his clan's captors. The Senpet repeatedly tried to recapture him, and failed. The Scorpion whispered tales of Tange, the Failed Martyr, and the Senpet came to fear his daring attacks.

On one occasion, Tange had planned a daring solo raid against a Senpet military outpost. Tange's plan unraveled nearly instantly, but when the archers turned to fire, a watchtower suddenly toppled, killing the entire unit. The Senpet commander threw down his sword in frustration and confronted Tange.

"Kill me if you must, Failed Martyr!" he roared. "I will be undone by tactics. I will be undone by magic. I will be undone by strength or even by sheer persistence, but if I must be defeated by dumb luck, let the gods kill me now."

And a lightning bolt struck the Senpet commander from a clear sky.

Though Tange freed his imprisoned Scorpion brethren and escaped, he was greatly dispirited. He had always thought his victories a product of natural talent, but now there was no question that he was incredibly lucky. Looking back on his life, he realized that all of his victories were nothing more than dumb luck. Dazed and disillusioned, Tange decided to test his luck's limits by returning to Rokugan alone. The journey should have been impossible. The normally difficult trip across the blazing desert was broken by a freak thunderstorm that provided all the water Tange required. The Unicorn soldiers guarding the pass never noted his presence, as they were all taking shelter from the rain. Realizing that all of his successes had been merely a chain of ridiculous coincidences, Tange retreated to the depths of the Shinomen Forest to live as a hermit.

For three decades Tange lived in solitude. Eventually he moved into the sleeping city of Iyotisha. There, at least, the slumbering Naga provided some company. When a young bushi named Kwanchai sought out Tange and demanded to learn the way of the Dark Sword, Tange refused. He had come to see the power of his technique as a curse, and would not willingly share that curse with another. Kwanchai would have none of it. After months of relentless pestering, Tange became quite irritated. He finally taught the young bushi the Dark Sword technique just to be rid of him. He believed that, like his other students, Kwanchai would not be able to master the techniques.

To Tange's quiet horror, he was wrong.

Tange's curse of luck has been passed on to his student.

TRADITION

Since his return from Tange's hut, Kwanchai has attempted to spread the Dark Sword's teachings. Drawing upon his uncle Kaukatsu's influence, Kwanchai obtained enough resources to construct a small dojo for the students of Bitter Lies near Kyuden Bayushi, subtly hidden in the Seikitsu Mountains.

Though Bayushi Tange had limited success teaching the Dark Sword to others, Kwanchai and his disciples have had no problems. The key, it seems, is a calm, balanced, and logical mind — if you have one, you can never learn the technique. All students of Bitter Lies must consequently be extremely zealous; some would call them "mad." The students of Bitter Lies keep an eye out for others like themselves. Any who allow their overzealous loyalty to the Scorpion Clan to consume their sanity are welcome in Kwanchai's dojo.

Initially, Bayushi Yojiro was uncomfortable with the idea of a dojo full of madmen embracing the teachings of a madman not a day's travel from Kyuden Bayushi. Eventually, however, Bayushi Kaukatsu persuaded him that Tange's students could be quite useful to the clan if used wisely. In his own day, the Failed Martyr was a valued agent. Whenever a situation could not possibly get worse, Bayushi Kachiko sent Tange. The results were seldom what she had intended, but generally were more harmful to the clan's enemies. An entire dojo of samurai as lucky as Tange at the beck and call of the Bayushi family would be unstoppable.

Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on one's perspective), Kwanchai's students do not share Tange's insane luck. While all Bitter Lies swordsmen do seem to be extremely lucky, Kaukatsu's plan to create an army of Tangens was not as successful as he would have hoped. The Failed Martyrs nevertheless make excellent pawns.

TRAINING

The students of Bitter Lies are expected to be intimately aware with the original Bayushi Tange's teachings. Tange's *Lies* is not merely required reading; all students must memorize the entire volume and be prepared to quote it. Laggards are punished with physical labor and grueling calisthenics.

Another common method of training is spring patrol. As winter warfare is uncommon in Rokugan, clans frequently dispatch large groups of soldiers on spring patrol as soon as the ground thaws. Spring patrol can often be boring and uneventful, but it can also be the deadliest mission imaginable if the clan's neighbors are on the move. For such a deadly and unpredictable mission, Bitter Lies swordsmen are the natural choice. Spring patrols around Kyuden Bayushi are always accompanied by a handful of Bitter Lies swordsmen. The officers in the area think of them as "lucky."

SENSEI

There have only been three true sensei in the dojo's short history. The first, of course, was Tange, who taught Kwanchai. The second was Kwanchai, who taught the first handful of students. Sadly, Kwanchai's lust for adventure and drive to prove himself made him a poor choice as permanent sensei. He eventually handed his duties to one of his first students, Sharaku.

The sensei of Bitter Lies fulfills three separate duties. First, he must keep an eye out for rumors of other prospective students. Not all samurai have the right mix of dumb luck and insanity to master the Dark Sword, so he must choose his students carefully. Second, he must care for the students. As all Dark Sword students are somewhat unstable, it is a constant chore for the sensei to make certain that they don't unleash their insane zeal upon each other. Third, he must train the students. Though this seems obvious, the first two duties can be extremely time consuming, so the sensei must be conscientious in setting aside time for training.

BAYUSHI SHARAKU,

SENSEI OF THE DOJO OF BITTER LIES

[Fighter 3/Bitter Lies Swordsman 5; Bayushi Bushi 2/Bitter Lies Swordsman 1]

Like most Bitter Lies swordsmen, Sharaku is loud, arrogant, and obnoxious. He spits when he talks. He punctuates every sentence with a laugh like a braying donkey. He cannot hold a conversation for more than two minutes without quoting Tange's *Lies*. Those who speak with him for any length of time cannot help but conclude that he is not entirely sane. Sharaku is aware of his reputation, and he approves.

Sharaku's insanity is a carefully produced act. As a member of the Kolat Dream Sect, he finds the idea that a mortal man can become entirely invincible by embracing madness fascinating. Though Sharaku can understand Kwanchai's teachings and can practice the Dark Sword technique well enough in the dojo's confines, he finds that when he needs it in combat, the technique does nothing. Apparently, he is not insane enough. Or perhaps the technique does not function since his true loyalty is to the Kolat and not the Scorpion.

In either case, Sharaku gladly agreed to take Kwanchai's place as sensei. This way, he can remain in the dojo, teaching the students even as he learns from them, and never need fear the Bitter Lies technique failing him in a moment of crisis.

The Kolat, in the meantime, have mixed feelings about Sharaku's work. While none can argue that the Bitter Lies swordsmen seem to possess supernatural good luck, the fact that their luck is proportionate to their madness is disturbing and their unswerving loyalty to the Scorpion is discouraging. The Kolat place great value on order, discipline, control, and defiance of the samurai order. What the Failed Martyr's students have created is... unsettling.

DOJO OF BITTER LIES BENEFITS

Being a student of Bitter Lies is a mixed blessing. While a Bitter Lies Swordsman can count on a great deal of loyalty from his fellow students, the Empire considers them lunatics. Of course, the fact that Bitter Lies swordsmen are lunatics makes this somewhat easier to bear.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Being a student of Bitter Lies inspires fear in one's opponent — if not fear for your talent with the blade, then fear for the madness that led you to walk the Failed Martyr's path.

Benefit: The swordsman suffers a -4 penalty on all Diplomacy checks with others who are aware of his school's nature, but gains a +4 bonus on all Intimidate checks with those who have heard of his dojo.

Benefit: The swordsman has a +10 TN penalty to all Courtier and Diplomacy checks with others who are aware of his school's nature, but gains two Free Raises on all Intimidation rolls against those who have heard of his dojo.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The most obvious benefit of the Dojo of Bitter Lies is access to their unique technique, the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies.

Benefit: Assuming the swordsman meets all other requirements, he may enter the Bitter Lies swordsmen prestige class.

Benefit: Assuming the swordsman meets all other requirements, he may take the Bitter Lies Swordsman New Path.

BITTER LIES SWORDSMAN (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The school of Bitter Lies was founded shortly before the Clan War by the infamous Scorpion Clan Martyr, Bayushi Tange. To be a Bitter Lies student is a dubious honor at best. While it cannot be denied that Bayushi Tange and his most notorious student, Kwanchai, have performed extraordinary feats, the sensei of most dojo attribute these circumstances more to dumb luck and stubborn stupidity than to skill. Regardless, the Dark Sword school has gathered a small following (no more than six or seven students at any time) and any who truly wish to embrace the path need only to prove themselves to the Bitter Lies swordsmen.

One thing cannot be denied — though their training is unconventional, the students of Tengen are inexplicably effective. Their refusal to back down or surrender in the face of insurmountable odds has won them begrudging respect from the more established Scorpion schools, and their habit of surviving lethal situations that would fell more conservative samurai cannot be denied (or explained). Their battle cry, "Prepare to face the Dark Sword of Bitter Lies!" inspires dread in allies and enemies alike.

Hit Die: d10.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Bitter Lies Swordsman, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Way of the Scorpion.

Special: A Bitter Lies Swordsman must agree to teach the character. Generally, only those who have been assigned missions guaranteed to end in certain death but have nevertheless triumphed through dumb luck and sheer bullheadedness are deemed worthy to learn Tengen-sama's techniques. The student must renounce all former dojo (losing all former dojo benefits), embracing only the Dark Sword's teachings. Those who exhibit unusual "cowardice" (such as fleeing from superior numbers or refusing a challenge for any reason) are cast out and targeted as enemies.

CLASS SKILLS

The Bitter Lies Swordsman's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Iaijutsu Focus (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), and Profession (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Bitter Lies swordsmen are proficient in all simple and martial weapons as well as in light and medium armor.

Foolish Bravery: So long as they neither retreat nor falter, a Bitter Lies swordsman cannot be defeated. Whenever the Bitter Lies swordsman attacks a more powerful enemy, he gains a +1 morale bonus on all attack and damage rolls for every three levels or Hit Dice his opponent has greater than his own (minimum one; no bonus is applied if the opponent is of equal or lesser level). This applies only if the Bitter Lies Swordsman immediately attacks what he perceives to be the most powerful foe present (in case of a tie, he may choose). Should the swordsman retreat or fail to attack (or at least pursue his opponent) for even a single round, use of this ability is lost for that combat.

If the most powerful opponent present is defeated, then this bonus applies to the surviving most powerful opponent, and so on, until all applicable opponents have been defeated. At 4th level this bonus increases to +2 for every three levels of difference.

Luck of the Dark Sword: Once per day per level in this class the Bitter Lies Swordsman can reroll any attack roll, skill check, or saving throw that he makes during combat or any other life-or-death situation. If the new result fails and would directly result in the swordsman's immediate death (such as failing a Climb check while dangling over a vat of boiling pitch), he may roll a third time, but must keep the final result.

Glory of Bitter Lies: At 3rd level the Bitter Lies swordsman becomes immune to all fear effects, and gains a +2 morale bonus on all saves against mind-affecting effects.

Embrace the Dark Sword: At 5th level, the swordsman has mastered the Dark Sword technique. Each time he defeats an opponent with equal or greater Hit Dice, the swordsman gains a +2 bonus on all attack and damage rolls for the rest of the combat. This bonus stacks with all other bonuses, including multiple applications of this ability.

BITTER LIES SWORDSMAN (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Bayushi Bushi 1

Path of Egress: Bayushi Bushi 2

Technique: The Dark Sword of Bitter Lies — Devised by the infamous Bayushi Tengen, this technique allows the swordsman to succeed where all others would fail. Whenever facing an opponent of greater Insight Rank, he rolls and keeps additional dice on all attack rolls equal to the difference, but never more dice than his ranks in the Luck Advantage. In addition, the swordsman rolls and keeps dice equal to his ranks in the Luck Advantage in all life-or-death situations outside of combat (such as attempting to climb over a vat of boiling pitch).

Should the swordsman ever retreat in the face of superior numbers or skill, or ever fail to attack his most powerful opponent as soon as he can, this technique cannot be used for one day.

This new official version of the Dark Sword technique updates and supersedes the one presented in Bayushi Tengen's description in *Way of the Scorpion*.

BAYUSHI GUARDIAN SPIRITS

Loyalty is integral to the Way of the Scorpion. For many Bayushi, loyalty becomes so ingrained that even death cannot end it. Some Scorpion are so fervently dedicated to their clan that watching over their descendants from Yomi is not enough. Perhaps once every other generation a Scorpion is born who is so fanatically loyal that he returns from the grave to protect his clan.

TABLE 1-1: THE BITTER LIES SWORDSMAN

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Foolish Bravery (+1/3 levels)
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Luck of the Dark Sword
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Glory of Bitter Lies
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Foolish Bravery (+2/3 levels)
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Embrace the Dark Sword

These guardian spirits are generally a sad, confused lot. Clinging to their past lives, they have lost their place in the karmic cycle. Until they can be convinced that they must move on, they go through the motions of their former lives, attempting to help their descendants. These spirits fail to understand that they are dead and have no concept of time. A guardian spirit may fight in the name of a Champion no one remembers, or refuse to surrender except at the command of an Emperor long dead. Usually they get in the way more than they help, frightening their descendants or accidentally damaging the temples and shrines they mean to protect.

Most Scorpion shugenja will go out of their way to help these lost souls move on to the Spirit Realms where they belong. Very rarely one of these guardian spirits becomes aware of his surroundings, recognizing the time and place in which he lives. Upon realizing the truth of their existence, most such spirits move on to the appropriate Spirit Realm.

The only recent example of a self-aware guardian spirit is Bayushi Baku, a spirit who has haunted the halls of Kyuden Bayushi for centuries and frequently offers his advice to the Scorpion Champion and his kin. Baku knows that he should, by all rights, have moved past the mortal realm many centuries ago. However, he claims to have work yet to be done in this realm, and that he cannot enter Yomi until it is done. What this work may be is unknown, for the records of Bayushi Baku's mortal life were lost when the Lying Darkness attacked the histories at Shiro no Soshi.

CREATING A BAYUSHI GUARDIAN SPIRIT

"Bayushi Guardian Spirit" is a template that can be applied to any human member of the Scorpion Clan (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The creature's type changes to "undead" and it gains the "spirit" and "incorporeal" subtypes. It otherwise uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Hit Dice: Increase to d12

Speed: Bayushi guardian spirits have a fly speed equal to their normal land speed, with perfect maneuverability.

AC: Natural armor is the same as the base creature, but applies only to incorporeal encounters. The spirit retains any armor it typically wore in life, though this armor bonus applies only to incorporeal attacks. The spirit also gains a deflection bonus equal to its Charisma modifier (if positive).

Attacks: The spirit retains all the base creature's attacks, though those relying on physical contact do not affect corporeal creatures.

Damage: Against incorporeal creatures, the spirit uses the base creature's damage ratings. Against corporeal creatures, the spirit usually cannot deal physical damage at all. Even spells cast by the spirit have no effect on corporeal targets.

Special Attacks: The spirit retains all the base creature's special attacks, though those relying on physical contact cannot affect corporeal creatures. It also gains the following special attacks:

Fear (Su): The spirit continually radiates a fear effect in a sixty-foot radius surrounding itself (DC 14 + the spirit's Charisma modifier). All creatures within the area with less Hit Dice than the spirit must save or become panicked. All creatures within the area of equal or greater Hit Dice must save or become shaken.

Pain Touch (Ex): The spirit may inflict 1d6 cold damage and 1d6 negative energy damage on corporeal targets by touch.

Soul Burn (Su): Once per day, the spirit may channel a cone

of energy from its own supernatural essence. This does 3d12 damage to the spirit, but also inflicts 3d12 negative energy damage on all targets in a 30-foot cone, Reflex save half (DC 13 + the guardian spirit's Charisma modifier). The spirit typically only uses this attack as a last resort. If it dies from using this ability, it always rejuvenates.

Special Qualities: A Bayushi guardian spirit retains all the base creature's special qualities and also gains the following qualities:

Ancestral Sense (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit naturally senses all of its descendants within 100 feet. These spirits tend to follow their descendants, seeking guidance and becoming enraged when they find none.

Incorporeal (Ex): Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

SR equal to the base creature's HD (Maximum 20)

Loses all Ancestor and Void Use feats.

Rejuvenation (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit that is slain reforms with full hit points in the spot where its body originally died after three days have passed. A Bayushi guardian spirit cannot be permanently killed until the reason for its return has been resolved, or it is banished by a reibai (see *Magic of Rokugan*, page 14).

Turn Resistance (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit has +4 turn resistance.

Saves: Same as base creature.

Abilities: Same as base creature, except that the Bayushi guardian spirit has no Constitution or Strength score, and its Charisma score increases by +4.

Skills: Same as base creature.

Feats: Same as base creature.

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground.

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: Same as base creature +2

Treasure: None

Honor: Same as base creature, though they are usually dishonorable.

Alignment: Same as base creature, though they are usually lawful evil.

Advancement: By character class.

SAMPLE GUARDIAN SPIRIT

This example uses a 12th level human samurai as the base creature.

BAYUSHI BAKU,

GUARDIAN SPIRIT (SAMURAI 12)

Medium-Size Undead [Incorporeal, Spirit]

Hit Dice: 12d12 (78 hp)

Initiative: +3 (+2 Dex, +1 Int)

Speed: Fly 30 ft. (perfect)

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Cha)

Attacks: +12/7/+2 incorporeal touch

Damage: Incorporeal touch 1d6 cold plus 1d6 negative energy

Special Attacks: Fear, pain touch, soul burn

Special Qualities: Ancestral sense, incorporeal, SR 12, rejuvenation, turn resistance, undead qualities

Saves: Fort +8 Ref +6 Will +8

Abilities: Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 17

Skills: Bluff +18, Diplomacy +21, Iaijutsu Focus +18, Perform +18, Sense Motive +15, Tumble +17.

Feats: Bayushi's Technique (x2), Expertise, Improved Trip, Know the School (Scorpion), Pincers and Tail, Ruthless Sting, Versatile (Bluff, Tumble), Way of the Scorpion,

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 14

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

COMBAT

Fear (Su): The spirit continually radiates a fear effect in a sixty-foot radius surrounding itself (DC 14 + the spirit's Charisma modifier). All creatures within the area with less Hit Dice than the spirit must save or become panicked. All creatures within the area of equal or greater Hit Dice must save or become shaken.

Pain Touch (Ex): The spirit may inflict 1d6 cold damage and 1d6 negative energy damage on corporeal targets by touch.

Soul Burn (Su): Once per day, the spirit may channel a cone of energy from its own supernatural essence. This does 3d12 damage to the spirit, but also inflicts 3d12 negative energy damage on all targets in a 30-foot cone, Reflex save half (DC 13 + the guardian spirit's Charisma modifier). The spirit typically only uses this attack as a last resort. If it dies from using this ability, it always rejuvenates.

Special Qualities: A Bayushi guardian spirit retains all the base creature's special qualities and also gains the following qualities:

Ancestral Sense (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit naturally senses all of its descendants within 100 feet. These spirits tend to follow their descendants, seeking guidance and becoming enraged when they find none.

Incorporeal (Ex): Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

SR equal to the base creature's HD (Maximum 20)

Loses all Ancestor and Void Use feats.

Rejuvenation (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit that is slain reforms with full hit points in the spot where its body originally died after three days have passed. A Bayushi guardian spirit cannot be permanently killed until the reason for its return has been resolved, or it is banished by a reibai (see *Magic of Rokugan*™, page 14).

Spirit Qualities (Ex): Bayushi guardian spirits gain a +4 racial bonus against all enchantment effects except those of other spirits. They can sense any passages to Yomi, Meido, or Toshigoku within one mile and avoid such areas stubbornly (they do not wish to risk losing their place in the mortal realm).

Turn Resistance (Ex): A Bayushi guardian spirit has +4 turn resistance.

CREATING A BAYUSHI GUARDIAN SPIRIT

Bayushi Guardian Spirits are created just like any Scorpion character. Add the following Special Abilities:

Fear: Equal to the Spirit's Air Ring.

Pain Touch: The spirit can no longer attack normally, but inflicts 3k3 Wounds with a touch, ignoring the target's armor on all attack rolls.

Soul Burn: Once per day the spirit can belch forth a fiery cone of energy composed of its own supernatural essence. This inflicts 5k5 Wounds on all targets in a 30-foot cone in front of the spirit, including the spirit itself. The spirit typically only uses this attack as a last resort. If it dies from using this ability, it always rejuvenates.

Ancestral Sense: A Bayushi guardian spirit naturally senses all of its descendants within 100 feet. These spirits tend to follow their descendants, seeking guidance and becoming enraged when they find none.

Incorporeal: Can pass through solid objects. Can only be harmed by spells or magic weapons.

Magic Resistance: All spells targeting the Guardian Spirit have their TNs raised by the spirit's Earth × 5.

Void Loss: The guardian spirit can no longer spend Void Points.

Passage Sense: Bayushi guardian spirits can sense any passages to Yomi, Meido, or Toshigoku within one mile and avoid such areas stubbornly (they do not wish to risk losing their place in the mortal realm).

Rejuvenation: A Bayushi guardian spirit that is slain reforms with full hit points in the spot where its body originally died after three days have passed. A Bayushi guardian spirit cannot be permanently killed until the reason for its return has been resolved, or it is banished by a shugenja (requires a special casting of Commune with 6 Raises made for this purpose).

BAYUSHI BAKU

(BAYUSHI GUARDIAN SPIRIT)

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 5

Air: 5

Void: 2

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4

Dojo: None

Honor: 0.4 (2.4)

Glory: 0.0 (dead)

Advantages: Heartless, Higher Purpose (guide the Bayushi family), Perceived Honor (2 ranks), Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Meddler, Proud

Skills: Courtier 4, Defense 4, Hand to Hand 6, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Poison 2, Sincerity 6, Stealth 2.

Special Abilities: Fear 5, Pain Touch, Soul Burn, Ancestral Sense, Incorporeal, Magic Resistance (+15 TN), Void Loss, Passage Sense, Rejuvenation.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE SHOSURO

NO SECRETS
PART THREE

The journey from the Bayushi lands had been uneventful, a fact that came as no surprise to Miya Hatori and his companions. The group was attended by an impressive guard of a dozen men handpicked by the Scorpion Champion. The implication was clear to all who beheld the caravan — they were to be undisturbed not only by the Scorpion, but by anything at all. Hatori was slightly concerned about their visibility within the lands of the Scorpion Clan. If there was indeed a shadow conspiracy within the clan to overthrow Yojiro's rule, this was perhaps not the best time to be announced as honored guests of the Master of Secrets.

"Hm," Otomo Taneji murmured, just loud enough to get the attention of Hatori and Sekkou. "We have almost arrived." The courtier pointed at the western horizon.

All three men looked forward as the caravan crested another low rise. A city of considerable size was coming into view just as Lord Sun was starting to sink into the west. The buildings were all tall and colored distinctly, which coupled with the sunset to cast long and sinister shadows over the area. By gazing at it now, Taneji could hardly get a grasp of just how large or developed the city was.

"Painted City," Hatori said to his two vassals. "It is the city that has grown around the famed Shosuro school for entertainers. Though I have never had the pleasure of visiting, it is said the city changes each season in such a manner that it is completely different after a year. Every resident is an actor from the Butei Dojo playing a different role every turn of the season. The entire city is like a great play, a testament to the skill of the Shosuro actors."

"That would be interesting to see," Fuzake Sekkou said, eyeing the city on the horizon warily. "I would imagine it is quite easy to walk into such a city and become lost among the layers of fiction."

"I thought you had many allies among the Scorpion, Hatori-sama," Taneji interjected, turning to look at his master. "You must have come to the lands of the Shosuro many times, yet you have never come to Painted City?"

With a careful tone, Hatori replied, "I have allies in many houses, Taneji-san. That is the duty of a shisha." Though the aged Miya spoke no further, it was clear to both Taneji and Sekkou that wasn't the complete truth. Hatori's manner indicated that it was an answer best left for another time.

One of the Scorpion riders broke from the front ranks and trotted up to Hatori's side. "My lord," he said quickly, bowing in his saddle. "We approach the city. You would have the honor of riding ahead of us to be announced to Shosuro Furuyari, the famous playwright who resides here. It is our sincerest hope you will not be offended by the unworthy manner in which we receive you, a samurai of the Imperial House."

Hatori dismissed the man with a curt nod and gave his two vassals a warning glance before following the Scorpion to the front of the party. Taneji and Sekkou understood what Hatori was thinking — they had not planned to stay as the guests of anyone in particular, and there had been no message from Painted City indicating a change of plans.

It had not taken long for their journey in the lands of the Scorpion to become interesting.

Hatori sat alone in the room with the Scorpion, having dismissed Taneji and Sekkou into other areas of the massive Academy grounds. Something about this meeting seemed wrong. He had decided he could not afford to have any distractions as he met with Furuyari. The man was a very important Scorpion.

Not just a Scorpion, Hatori corrected himself. A seven-hundred-year-old Scorpion returned from the afterlife, along with so many others during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. He was a legend in two different eras. Hatori had dealt with returned spirits before; the centuries of wisdom they held always made him feel inadequate.

"It is unfortunate your companions are not present, Hatori-sama," Furuyari began, reaching for the steaming pot of tea that sat between them. "Tales of your journeys are just now beginning to reach my old ears, and I think their perspectives would be a delightful insight concerning many things." With his free hand, he motioned to Hatori's empty cup with an unspoken question.

"They have indeed gained valuable experience over the past months, Furuyari-san," Hatori said pushing his teacup away.

"It is a shame they could not join us," the man replied, blue eyes gleaming behind his half mask. Furuyari obviously had Crane blood, or perhaps Imperial.

"It is for your own welfare, trust me," Hatori chuckled. "Taneji is too taken with your reputation as a brilliant man of the court, and Sekkou is a fawning admirer of your plays. I do not think they'd be able to contain their excitement." With a small flourish, Hatori produced a humble, nicked teacup from the folds of his obi. "I brought my own cup, Furuyari-san. A custom of Ryoko Owari, the greatest of the Shosuro cities. I mean no offense."

"Of course," the Scorpion said with a pleased grin, nodding at the cup as Hatori set it down. The playwright poured the cup half full, and then served himself while speaking. "I am honored that you learn the customs of the Shosuro, Hatori-sama. As for your vassals, I do not believe I would mind someone who thought highly of my work. If I did not want the attention I would have kept my plays to myself." Furuyari smiled warmly and added, "But I do understand your concern about fawning admirers. You are something of a writer yourself, are you not?"

Hatori set the teacup at the very edge of the table and nodded just before he raised the teacup to his lips. Although he feared the Shosuro sitting mere feet from him would recognize what he was doing, the shisha trapped the drink in the space between his gums and lips for a moment before swallowing. The Kitsuki had taught him that many Scorpion poisons caused a noticeable irritation of the gums. The lesson had saved Hatori more than once. Though he had many friends in the Scorpion, the Miya could not rid himself of the feeling that Furuyari would never be counted among them.

"I am mostly a historian, but I have written a few plays," Hatori said, placing the cup on the table, empty. If the Shosuro had noticed him testing the tea, he gave no indication. "My travels alongside Emperor Toturi during the Clan War gave me a unique view on events. Much to my contentment, my plays have been received with a minimum of criticism."

"Ah, yes. I believe two are currently being produced here," Furuyari said with warm admiration in his voice. "One of our elder sensei is convinced your Ride of the Wolf Legion should be a standard of the curriculum."

Hatori bowed his head humbly. "Your teachers do me much honor. Nothing tests the talents of a good actor like a bad play."

The Scorpion laughed outright. "A peacekeeper, a playwright, and now a man of humor. I can see why my clan is so taken with you, Miya Hatori." Furuyari took another drink, and set down his empty cup. "You must stay for this season's performance of An Akodo's Shadow, Hatori-sama. It is educational to watch others perform your play, especially if they do not know the writer is there." The Scorpion's eyes shined with mirth.

Hatori smiled brightly. "You speak from experience, Furuyari-san?"

"Oh yes," the Shosuro said, genuine amusement in his voice. "It was a trick I resorted to on many occasions. I masqueraded as a peasant during the first performance of One Winter's Snowfall. It was quite enlightening."

The shisha laughed loudly this time. "Your performers didn't notice anything out of place?"

"Of course not. They weren't looking for me to be there." Furuyari joined in Hatori's polite chuckles.

"I have read of that performance. It was at the Winter Court, was it not?"

Furuyari paused for a moment. "Yes it was, though I am surprised the histories would record such a thing."

"It was an eventful year. That was the same Winter Court at which the Scorpion Champion's son, Bayushi Tamono, defeated the Emerald Champion in a duel."

"Of course," Furuyari said with a broad grin. "How could I forget?" He laughed sincerely.

Hatori laughed as well, though deep within a chill passed through him. He had studied the Soshi Histories for a time in his youth. They were a pit of anachronisms and errors even before the Lying Darkness ravaged them. The duel he had just referred to was one he knew well from the Lion Histories and the Miya Archives; the Shosuro Histories had mistakenly placed the event a century after it had happened. It was an error they had never corrected even though Hatori had pointed it out on several occasions.

Bayushi Tamono had died twenty years before Shosuro Furuyari was born.

Whoever this man was, he was not Shosuro Furuyari.

Hatori allowed his laughter to die down and began to stand. "Furuyari-san, it is good to know that for the unfair sinister reputation the Scorpion carry, an old Miya can still count on the hospitality of the Shosuro. I think I should collect my errant vassals and retire for a few hours if I am to see this play of mine."

Furuyari smiled as he rose. "Of course, Hatori-san. The grounds of the Shosuro Academy are yours to explore. If you need anything, I have informed my servants and subordinates to attend your every whim."

"Thank you," was all Hatori said, fatigue suddenly obvious in his face as he turned to go.

For several minutes, Furuyari stood alone in the small chamber. Finally, another voice seemed to whisper from all around. "He is nothing, Shosuro-sama. A doddering, tired old Imperial, just as you suspected."

"Of course he acts foolish and old," Furuyari hissed back, picking up his own teacup and examining it thoughtfully. "We all wear masks." Furuyari toyed with his teacup idly, eyes narrowed in thought.

"You seem upset, my lord," the voice said.

"He knows."

There was a pause. "How?"

"I erred," Furuyari said. "I was foolish to speak of my stolen past with a historian."

"Shall I attend to him?"

"No," Furuyari said. "Yojiro's guards are no mere gesture; they will protect Hatori with their lives. Killing him now would be difficult."

"All men have a weakness, my lord. All men have families."

Furuyari smiled. "Of course," he said. "Go to Hatori's estates. Arrange for a suitable distraction."

Furuyari thoughtlessly set his teacup down. The table shook just enough that Hatori's abandoned cup tumbled down and smashed into pieces.

THE SHOSURO PROVINCES

The Shosuro family lands share no borders with the other Great Clans, surrounded on all sides but the west by their cousins in the Scorpion. The Shinomen Forest stands to the west and marks the edge of Scorpion lands. Historically the Scorpion have patrolled to the Shinomen's eastern border, rarely venturing into the sacred woodlands. Because of their relative distance from the major powers in the Empire, the Shosuro provinces have historically been the most peaceful in the clan.

Within the past hundred years, the Shosuro lands have seen the Naga's rise and subsequent decline in the Shinomen Mori, survived the clan's banishment on two occasions, and now deal with the incursions of Tsuno and other Shadowlands beasts that have attempted to make a home in the Shinomen. Though the Shosuro provinces are secluded, they are far from uninteresting.

MAJOR SHOSURO HOLDINGS

Though hardly the Scorpion Clan's "face," the Shosuro family's architecture is always stylish and graceful. Those who deal with the Scorpion's most important personages speak to the Bayushi, but the affair is hosted on Shosuro lands. The Shosuro are famed for their kabuki theater and sometimes unsettling arts of impersonation; hardly a single major Shosuro city lacks a notable playhouse and library. It is also in the hidden backrooms of these cities that the infamous Shosuro ninja train in their dark arts.

RYOKO OWARI

(LOCATION 53)

Journey's End City. The City of Green Walls. The City of Stories. The City of Lies. Ryoko Owari has always been a center of intrigue, wealth, corruption, and other facets of high society, and with the destruction of Otosan Uchi it is now the largest city in the Empire.

Recent events have led to an influx of powerful nobles coming to the City of Green Walls; the most notable is Hantei Naseru. Like his siblings, the Anvil has openly declared himself the single rightful heir of Toturi and named Ryoko Owari the new center of Rokugani government. Naseru, the most politically active of the Four Winds, has drawn many functionaries from Otosan Uchi to his court in the city.

Though technically Ryoko Owari is currently under the control of Unicorn governor Shinjo Osema, the presence of Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu blunts Unicorn influence. While the Unicorn magistrates enforce the city's laws, the Scorpion's power in Ryoko Owari makes it nearly impossible for any accusation to stick, provided a Scorpion can even be implicated. Bayushi Kaukatsu claims that his duty

as Imperial Chancellor demands he stay in the political center of Rokugan. However, since his arrival, the Unicorn's control over the city has gone from tenuous to practically nonexistent within the span of a few months.

TEARDROP ISLAND

Teardrop Island is located in the center of Kawai no Kin river, and represents everything that makes the City of Stories what it is. Countless geisha houses, opium rooms, sake houses, and other such establishments stand in open view from the streets that line the small island while drunken revelry and other disgraceful actions are always happening in the dark corners unseen. Respectable samurai openly slander the area, but everyone eventually visits. Most come to enjoy the island's comforts, which include opium and many other illegal pleasures. Many samurai come to Teardrop Island initially to retrieve a wayward companion only to become embroiled in the endless altercations that erupt there. Visitors are expected to set aside their weapons for "polishing" while they sample the island's luxuries. Those who wish to remain anonymous are provided with basket hats to conceal their faces during their visit. Most Scorpion visitors, of course, already have masks.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Though this is not a true adventure hook, it is worth noting that nearly every important excitement that erupts in Ryoko Owari centers on its vast opium trade, which encompasses both medicinal opium and that smuggled for illicit use. Minor lords frequently get themselves killed attempting to claim a small part of the illegal trade, and characters may be drawn into a silent war between two rival factions within the City of Green Walls. While hardly the only thing that can cause conflict within Ryoko Owari, characters that spend more than a few days within the City of Stories inevitably encounter a tentacle of the opium trade.

Maybe the characters could get the idea they could bring it to a halt... only to discover that as long as there's a Ryoko Owari, the opium trade will be alive and well. The endless intrigue and violence surrounding the illegal sale and movement of opium has claimed the lives and honor of samurai far cleverer than they.

SHIRO NO SHOSURO

(LOCATION 55)

The breathtaking Shosuro ancestral home rivals the Doji estates in beauty and the Isawa temples in elegance. The castle's design borders on the bizarre, though all who have seen the structure agree that it is magnificent. Every new year the Shosuro change the castle's decorations, layout, and surrounding lands. Each year's change is subtle, but no two generations grow up with the same Castle of Pretending. As the primary stage for the Scorpion's most important meetings with other clans, Shiro no Shosuro is among the most hospitable Scorpion Clan holdings. Dignitaries from the other clans agree that the Shosuro are more welcoming than their cousins, but the wise take this as a cue to be even more careful.

The Shosuro palace is best known for two things — the Silken Smile Theater and the great Shosuro Gardens. Many visit the Scorpion lands solely to tour these sites, which are without equal in the Empire. The Shosuro are quite accommodating, going to great lengths to put visitors at ease.

Unlike other Scorpion families, they play up the Scorpion Clan's deceitful reputation so they can portray themselves as the exceptions to the rule.

Naïve outsiders do indeed trust the Shosuro more than other Scorpion. Of course, any secrets they spill are rapidly communicated to the clan leaders.

THE SHOSURO GARDENS

The infamous Shosuro Gardens are often compared to the Doji family's Fantastic Gardens, though never in a Crane's presence. Where the Crane gardens are elegant and beautiful, the Shosuro Gardens are exotic and alluring. The Gardens carry a sinister reputation, of course, for it is here that the Scorpion keep samples of the most virulent poisonous plants in all of Rokugan. They do so by special permission of the Emerald Magistrates, for this is also where the Shosuro prepare antidotes to these poisons for the magistrates. (If a few of the rarer blooms occasionally disappear to be given to Shosuro ninja, the magistrates are none the wiser.)

Visitors can view a great many flowers and plants here that cannot be found anywhere else within the mainland Empire. The Shosuro have cultivated tall trees that only grow leaves on their uppermost reaches, creating a canopy over the whole garden that resembles a mesh ceiling supported by pillars all about. Naturally, the Shosuro caution visitors not to touch any of the flowers or to venture from the path. In truth, most of the visible plants are individually harmless. The deadliest Shosuro poisons are all component mixtures of several herbs, perfectly safe on their own. Exceptions to this rule are kept in secluded areas of the garden, monitored at all times by vigilant samurai guardians.

THE SILKEN SMILE

An extremely popular playhouse, the Silken Smile has become such a center of activity that plays have been written based on events that have transpired there. Inspired to fury and passion by acts portrayed on the Silken Smile's stage, many samurai have lost their lives, honor, or both shortly after visiting the playhouse. The Shosuro are naturally upset by these incidents, but after all, is not inspiration the point of theater? For as many samurai as dishonor themselves in the Silken Smile, how many more are inspired to embrace bushido and perform acts of great bravery?

Many magistrates and influential lords have attempted to close the Silken Smile by both force and guile. All have failed, and the colorful plays performed here have continued without interruption since the Smile's founding in 231. Even after the Scorpion Coup, the Silken Smile was saved by the intervention of Otomo Banu, who had been so greatly inspired by a play that he could not stand to see the playhouse destroyed. During the Scorpion's exile, Banu intervened again. Though the Silken Smile stood quiet and empty during these times, it was waiting when the Shosuro returned.

Recently the playhouse has seen a drop in attendance due to the destruction of Beiden Pass. The Unicorn Clan's stranglehold on Seikitsu Pass has turned away most that do not have personal alliances with the Unicorn or the Shogun, Akodo Kaneka. At any other time, the Shosuro may have found this infuriating, but between the Shadowed Tower's rise, the conflict between the Four Winds, constant raids from the Shinomen by the Tsuno, and other events bedeviling the Empire, the family has far greater problems than a struggling playhouse.

HIGHWAYS OF THE SHOSURO PROVINCES

The Journey (connects S3 to S6) — Some believe that *The Journey* derives its name from the fact that it stops at Journey's End City, others say that Ryoko Owari took its name from the road that leads to it. In either case, *The Journey* is among the finest roads in Rokugan. This is largely due to the frequency of travelers to Ryoko Owari, coupled with the wealthy and influential nobles residing there who wish to make their travels to and from the city safe and pleasant. Though historically well guarded, Ryoko Owari has recently become home to Hantei Naseru and the Imperial Chancellor, Bayushi Kaukatsu. Because of this and the resulting influx of diplomats coming to the city, *The Journey* is among the most heavily patrolled highways in the Empire.

The Emperor's Road (connects S6 to S7 and S5) — Though Nihai Tower serves no particular importance to the Imperial family, it stands in the center of Shosuro lands and between both Shiro no Shosuro and Yogo Shiro. Many Imperial troops guard the path between the two strongholds and make their base within the Shosuro outpost between them. The road leading to Shiro no Shosuro is substantially busier than the one leading to the sinister Yogo castle.

The Path of Thunder (connects S10 to S9) — The road to the great Shrine of Osano-Wo stops short in the small town of Ginasutra, where pilgrims are made to walk on rocky terrain and dirt paths for the rest of their journey. The Path of Thunder is maintained as a courtesy from the Shosuro to the monks of Shinden Osano-Wo, and a token force of Shosuro bushi patrol the highway. Though the Scorpion are not particularly known for their regard for the Fortunes and Shinsei, the Shosuro realize the wisdom in keeping the Rokugan's largest sect of militant monks pacified.

NIHAI TOWER

(LOCATION S6)

Nihai Tower is often referred to as "Shosuro's Heart," for it is centered almost perfectly between everything of importance within the Shosuro provinces. The structure has stood since the early Scorpion settlements of the area that would one day become the Shosuro lands. For four generations, Nihai Tower was actually the stronghold for the family's leaders while Shiro no Shosuro was being constructed. Several chambers that housed the Shosuro's nobility remain intact and are maintained should they ever need to fill that role again. During the Scorpion Clan's exile across the Burning Sands, many Shosuro agents remained in the Empire and based their clandestine activities out of this ancient stronghold.

Since the completion of Shiro no Shosuro, Nihai Tower has coordinated all the Shosuro's military endeavors. The Bayushi typically send many of their first- and second-year bushi to the Tower to complement the Shosuro who study the bushi's path. As the Shosuro have no publicly acknowledged dojo to teach combat and martial skills, the Bayushi maintain a dojo within Nihai Tower.

Within the recent years, the number of bushi stationed at Nihai Tower has nearly doubled due to the activity of Shadowlands beasts within Shinomen Mori. Though far from an easy target, the loss of Nihai Tower would give an enemy easy access to nearly every major point within Scorpion control. The Shosuro would also be rendered practically helpless as almost every road within Shosuro lands travels near or through the stronghold. The Scorpion are dedicated to ensuring that possibility remains only that.

THUNDER'S DAGGER DOJO

Thunder's Dagger is the only bushi dojo in the Shosuro lands. It also conveniently explains why many Shosuro ninja are competent with the use of swords. Claiming to have studied at Thunder's Dagger Dojo is more acceptable than confessing to the family's more secretive practices. While perhaps no more than a tenth of Shosuro samurai ever train as bushi, more than half of them claim that they have trained at Thunder's Dagger, at another Bayushi bushi dojo, or even at the Bayushi Courtier School. The lie is covered somewhat by the fact that many graduates of the Shosuro Ninja Academy make Nihai Tower their base of operations, so the dojo appears to have as many students as the Shosuro claim. Further, the dojo's presence is a practical necessity for the Shosuro. The Scorpion Clan is too large for the Bayushi to remain the only family to produce bushi in any significant number.

The school takes its name as homage to the first Scorpion Thunder, Shosuro. The school developed a unique technique several generations ago and added it to the Bayushi style of fighting. The technique is taught exclusively at Thunder's Dagger dojo and as a result a Bayushi bushi's appointment to be stationed at Nihai Tower has a singular honor — the chance to learn the Thunder's Dagger technique.

BAYUSHI HARONOBU

[Samurai 5/Ninja 5; Bayushi Bushi 4]

The current master of Thunder's Dagger Dojo is the resourceful and dangerous Bayushi Haronobu. Haronobu remained a senior sensei among the ranks of Nihai Tower until three years ago when the previous Master Sensei was assassinated. Haronobu and several other sensei personally undertook the task of finding their lord's murderer and extracting revenge, but only Haronobu returned alive. Few questions were asked, as the trail led Haronobu and his peers to Yoritomo Gonkuro, a powerful Mantis lord. As the only survivor and clearly the most capable, Haronobu was granted the late sensei's position and the entire affair was considered just another incident in the poor relations between the Scorpion and Mantis clans.

The truth is slightly deeper. Haronobu did not avenge his master's death as his clan believes. Instead, Bayushi Haronobu confronted the Mantis, and after a deadly battle in which Haronobu's companions fell, he spared the killer's life. In return, Haronobu exacted a promise from the Mantis. Haronobu would take Gonkuro's youngest son, to be raised as a Scorpion. Desperate to save his own life, Gonkuro agreed, faked his death, and fled into hiding.

For ten years Haronobu has trained Gonkuro's son. The boy remembers nothing of his former life. He thinks of himself as a Scorpion, of Haronobu as his father. In three more years the boy will undergo his gempukku, and on that day, Haronobu will tell his adopted son the truth — of how the methods and techniques that he loves so much were almost destroyed, and that his true father abandoned him to save his own life.

The Scorpion, meanwhile, embraced him as one of their own, as a true son of the Shosuro. On that day, Haronobu knows, Gonkuro's son will accept his ninja-to with a grim smile and be given his first assignment — to find and kill his true father. Such is the vengeance of the Scorpion.

THE NIHAI TUNNELS

The storage basement of Nihai Tower connects to a nearly forgotten latticework of tunnels and rooms that sprawl beneath the ground for miles in every direction. The longest tunnels follow the major roads that lead away from the stronghold. These passages were begun when construction of Nihai Tower began and were planned on connecting the tower with nearby Scorpion cities with several "vent" points that reach the surface between the two locations. In practice, the project was eventually abandoned. The task of digging tunnels under the entirety of the Scorpion provinces was too enormous to be completed, even with the aid of magic. Even unfinished, the tunnels are still extensive. Those who know them well can pass unseen through almost the entirety of the Scorpion provinces.

THE SHOSURO BUTEI ACADEMY

North and east of Shiro no Shosuro is the famous Butei Academy. The most talented Shosuro actors receive their training here, between Nihai Tower and Shiro no Shosuro. The Academy grounds encompass a decent-sized city alongside the Emperor's Road, which makes it heavily visited by Scorpion and outsiders alike. Visitors to Shiro no Shosuro often stop over in the Academy to view the practicing butei before attending a play at the Silken Smile.

Naturally, methods of acting and entertainment are not all that are taught at the Butei Academy. The butei are the Shosuro's masters of infiltration and impersonation. Notable students receive instruction on the arts of poison, stealth, and even assassination. The Butei Academy is hardly a true ninja dojo, however — this education is reserved for the students that show both the interest and talent for such a career. The vast majority of students are aware that the school is more than it seems but are content to learn their craft of poetry and acting.

BUTEI DOJO

The Shosuro family's Butei Dojo was founded in 179, just as the Shosuro were becoming a powerful family in their own right. The Shosuro daimyo at the time, Taysuke, was a junshin who was privately disturbed by his clan's reputation as manipulators and assassins. In an attempt to prove that the Scorpion could bring great good to the Empire, he founded a school for the arts, to entertain the courts.

The Shosuro daimyo's growing school of talented actors, musicians, and storytellers drew the attention of the Scorpion Champion Bayushi Marihime, who immediately saw the potential in such agents. He secretly planted the clan's most talented ninja sensei in Taysuke's school, and privately instructed his butei in the techniques they would need to truly serve the Scorpion. Ten years later, the school's first acting troupe emerged and was a great success. The "Scorpion Players" troupe traveled throughout the Scorpion lands at first, but they were soon invited into houses in the Phoenix, the Crane, and even the Lion lands.



Shosuro Taysuke was pleased with the troupe's popularity, and requests flooded in from powerful Scorpion lords to place one or more of their children at the Butei Academy. Bayushi Marihime was much more impressed with the ease with which Taysuke's players moved freely from house to house, and the information they provided upon their return. Tatsuya lived his entire life never knowing the true purpose to which his students had been bent, and died happy that his life had served a noble purpose. His replacement did not share his junshin tendencies, and the Shosuro Butei became the masterful organization of spies and impersonators that they are today.

PAINTED CITY

The small city surrounding the Shosuro Butei Academy is a testament to the Shosuro's skill. The entire city is like a magnificent play to amuse and entertain visitors while Academy students hone their skills. Each resident plays a role defined for them by the current "script" devised by the master sensei and senior Academy students. Each season, the script changes, and the Academy students enter different roles that they must maintain at all times, even in the presence of other students. Every year the structures within the city change as well, further amusing repeat visitors.

The Shosuro are completely guileless in their use of this city as a gigantic training grounds for their students and the entertainment of others. As a byproduct of its denizens' faithfulness to their roles, Painted City is one of the safest locations in Scorpion lands. Scores of Shosuro assassins who study with the Butei Academy become silent guardians each season, protecting the peace and uninterrupted flow of the town's script. Messy assassinations cause problems that may present learning experiences for the actors involved, but also lead to impossibly complex investigations for any sign of a real fact in the midst of a false reality.

SHOSURO MIYO

[Ninja 5/Butei 10; Shosuro Butei 5]

The current leader of Painted City is an old actor with unparalleled first-hand experience in the art of deceiving others. He — and to call Miyo "he" is an assumption, for none truly know whether the old actor is male or female — has lived in Painted City on and off for sixty years. He recently returned after an absence of nearly ten years, an unusually long time.

Miyo's most recent disguise was that of a contemplative Matsu samurai-ko named Uona. He had perfected this guise to such a degree that he even participated in several battles under her identity. Several Lion's Pride members owe their lives to Uona's quick thinking, and Miyo privately took joy in the glory he felt fighting for the honor of the Lion.

In his guise as Uona, Miyo grew truly fond of many Matsu nobles and became great friends with the garrison commander at Kaeru Toshi. His affection for those he manipulated grew greater each day. Finally, Miyo was convinced that he would never be able to master his weakness and perform his duties for the Scorpion. He had stayed in one place, in one role, for too long. With a heavy heart, he stripped off his Lion armor and returned home to Painted City. To those who knew Matsu Uona, she simply vanished in the night.

Sometimes in the Painted City, Miyo weeps for the life he has lost, for the role he enjoyed too much...

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A character's daimyo has offered the assistance of that character as a personal favor to one of his allies. The assignment is straightforward — the ally's son has slipped away into the night and the characters are ordered to find out what happened to him.

Focus: Fortunately, the errant young man did not scurry off into the night at random. Dazzled by the tales of the Shosuro Butei and mocked by his father for his love of theater, the daimyo's heir has gone off to enroll with the Shosuro at the Butei Academy.

Strike: The Shosuro have not only taken the boy in, but have also been impressed with his talent. The young heir is now a part of Painted City for the season and could be anyone, anywhere. Unless the character's lord has a truly significant amount of influence, the Academy masters will not help the characters, being loath to interrupt the season's flow. Of course, they are quite willing to allow the characters to entertain them by running around the city like fools looking for the young man.

MAJOR SHOSURO HOLDINGS

THE HOWLING FIELDS

The flat lands bordered by the Path of Thunder and the Emperor's Road are known as the Howling Fields. The name comes from the low, mournful howling that can be heard whenever a strong wind blows across the grassy plains. The legends that surround the Howling Fields are innumerable, ranging from simple stories of wandering ghosts to fantastic tales of blood-red apparitions riding in huge formations every new moon. All the tales agree upon one thing — there is some-

thing terribly wrong with the Howling Fields. Reports about the area that can be substantiated are several disappearances, multiple incidents of magic gone unimaginably awry, and madness striking those of sound mind without warning.

These incidents have begun within the past generation, and have all been reported to the lords of the Scorpion. Without fail, the response is, "We will handle the situation. Do not return to the Howling Fields," and no more. Any attempt to investigate further by minor nobles or groups of errant samurai are either terminated abruptly by their superiors. Wise Scorpion take the hint that there is something that not even the Scorpion can trust their own with, while the foolish are undone by the mysterious forces in the Howling Fields or put to death by their own clan.

THE GRAVE OF ONNOTANGU

The true story of the Howling fields stretches back over thirty years. When Hitomi slew Lord Moon, she took Onnotangu's power and magnificence. As a heavenly, primal force, Hitomi could not undo the darkness that Lord Moon had carried since the universe's creation, and she feared she could not carry it within herself and master it. Instead, she cast Onnotangu's hatred, rage, and jealousy into the Realm of Mortals. She placed all of these things in the Scorpion's care, a clan that had promised to aid the Dragon Clan in their times of need. The Shosuro flatlands were the ideal place because few dared journey there, and the Scorpion — masters of detecting unseen threats — could possibly make use of Lord Moon's remains somehow.

Though there is no single structure that signifies where Lord Moon's essence is hidden, the Shosuro have erected three false shrines in the area to confuse those who might know what they were looking for. The weight of this responsibility is so huge that only the Scorpion family daimyo know of it, as does the Clan Champion, and the master of the nearby Temple of Osano-Wo (the Fortune of Fire and Thunder has vowed that Onnotangu's sinister influence must be contained and not corrupt the Plains of Thunder to the west). All work in silent cooperation to ensure the secrecy of the Grave of Onnotangu.

These fields have become home to the unquiet ghost of a dead god. It is a burden the Scorpion take very seriously.

GINASUTRA

(LOCATION 59)

The small town of Ginasutra is a Shosuro holding only in the most technical sense. As it lies on the outer edges of Scorpion territory and is only known for its connection to the Shrine of Thunder, the presence of Shosuro influence is minimal. Military presence in the city is unnecessary as the sohei of Osano-Wo are worth a legion of bushi, and the holy order causes no trouble when left to its own devices. The Shosuro keep a claim on the town simply because it requires nearly no maintenance, so any tax they collect is almost pure profit.

Most Ginasutra peasants are hardly aware they are beholden to a Scorpion daimyo. News from across the Empire rarely reaches them. Passing samurai are the best source of recent news, and they are usually uncomfortable at the prospect of spending more than an hour or two in any Scorpion holding, no matter how rural. Ginasutra is the perfect stereotypical peasant backwater village, often to the amusement of passersby who deign to stay overnight or longer. Due to the Shrine of Osano-Wo's influence, the village peasants are well educated and highly spiritual, albeit unaware of current events.

THE SHRINE OF SHOSURO

The only constant Scorpion presence in Ginasutra centers on the huge Shrine of the Scorpion Thunder. The village headman always makes his report to the Scorpion magistrates in the massive temple, and meetings between any two Scorpion always converge there. The structure is somewhat out of place when seen against the backdrop of the village, though it is located a quarter of a mile outside the village borders. Most villagers believe the temple is haunted, and all of them avoid it for one reason or another.

The Shrine of Shosuro is built in a surprisingly traditional manner, given the Shosuro's penchant for dramatic and opulent designs. The Shosuro accept that the First Thunder's role was that of a champion of mortal man, and one of Shinsei's chosen. Because Shosuro submitted herself to such a position, her descendants honor her with a style more in line with the Brotherhood's traditions.

IMPORTANT SHOSURO NPCS

SHOSURO YUDOKA, SHOSURO FAMILY DAIMYO

The Shosuro daimyo is an unusual man, even among the Scorpion. Like many of his fellows, Yudoka lives a hidden life alongside the one he presents to the Empire. Unlike other Scorpion, it is the hard and sinister side of his soul that he exposes to Rokugan, hiding any pretense of humanity under his billowing cloak and porcelain mask. Few can truly call the Shosuro daimyo their ally, and only one man dares to call him a friend — Bayushi Yojiro. None but the Scorpion Champion know just how near Yudoka treads to the edge of madness, and it is Yojiro's influence that has kept the ninja in complete control of himself.

Yudoka was born three years before the Scorpion Clan Coup, the eldest son of Shosuro Hametsu and his wife Mikiko. Hametsu considered himself the most successful Shosuro daimyo in generations, and saw his young heir as his opportunity to continue the family's prosperity after he had passed on. Yudoka was guarded by every resource Hametsu had at his disposal, even during the Clan War. Hametsu did his job so well, few realized that Yudoka existed.

When the Scorpion were exiled from the Empire, the Shosuro daimyo did the only thing that he knew would save his son — he abandoned him as a nameless Scorpion child, with nothing to identify his birthright. The nine-year-old heir would never survive being hidden among the Scorpion caravans bound for the Burning Sands, and whatever had moved against the Scorpion Clan would surely come after the children of important lords.

It was during his abandonment that the heir of Shosuro Hametsu finally came into his own. Without the suffocating presence of his father, he passed his gempukku training under the hand of Shosuro ninja still in Rokugan and took the name Yudoka. Shosuro Yudoka quickly became one of

Bayushi Aramoro's most talented students. Perhaps because no one knew the boy's lineage, he risked his life constantly in the line of duty. For two years, Yudoka advanced in skill and acknowledged rank among the Shosuro ninja until he was training his own small group of initiates. Among these fledgling ninja were several young Scorpion liberated from the Crane's care, including a young woman named Nishiko. It took only a month for their mutual feelings to manifest.

While the Shosuro toiled under cover of darkness, the Empire slipped into chaos. There seemed to be no end to the dangers that threatened the Scorpion. Desperate to do what she could, Nishiko spied even on the highest-ranking Shosuro in an attempt to learn everything she could. When the young woman overheard Yudoka's name mentioned as a candidate for "Shadow Branding," and discovered the unfortunate but necessary effect it would have on him, she revealed herself and offered to take his place. She was less skilled, she reasoned, and therefore less of a threat should she be lost to the Lying Darkness. Impressed by her skill and courage, the Shosuro agreed.

When the Scorpion returned, Yudoka and Nishiko were separated in the confusion of a thousand different duties that had to be undertaken to secure the Scorpion's position and strike back at the Darkness. The Shosuro elders that returned also came for Yudoka at the order of Shosuro Hametsu — though the daimyo did not return from the Burning Sands, he made it clear his son must be found and named heir to the family. At a meeting with Hametsu's former hatamoto, Taberu, Yudoka refused to accept the responsibility. He claimed that there was no way that he could be proven to be his father's heir. Taberu replied that Yudoka had already proven it. In Yudoka's youth Hametsu had carefully dosed Yudoka with *warui paseri* — one of the Shosuro Gardens' deadliest poisons. Only Hametsu's true son would be immune to a large dose — such as the one he had consumed while dining with Hametsu's hatamoto. Yudoka could deny the truth no longer. Suddenly buried in responsibility as the Shosuro daimyo, Yudoka could not slip away to find his lover.



Yudoka did not see Nishiko for months. After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Nishiko was never heard from again, and Yudoka resigned himself to his loss — she had clearly fallen in battle, either slain by the Shadowlands Horde or consumed by the Lying Darkness. He prayed it was the former. When he later heard reports of an assassin named "Goju Nishiko" slaughtering samurai on the Kaiu Wall, he was outraged.

Yudoka insisted that the Shosuro Teijina undergo a lengthy inquisition to determine the effects of their magic on those who used it. His advisors apologized profusely, stating that he was never told the extent of their activities because their involvement with the Lying Darkness was best forgotten. No one had meant to deceive Yudoka; it was only a matter no one wished to raise again. When the true fate of Shosuro Nishiko became clear, Yudoka agreed that the Shosuro were clearly in need of a new beginning. From that moment forward, Yudoka also took great pains to point out that the Shosuro family trained assassins, not ninja. As far as the Shosuro lord was concerned, the ninja were corrupted pawns of the Darkness that begged for extermination.

Without preamble, he ordered every Shosuro practitioner of shinobi into an all-out crusade against the Goju and Ninube that had survived the War Against the Darkness. What followed was a brutal extermination, as Shosuro raiding parties hunted the shadow ninja even within the Shadowlands' borders. Yudoka was a brilliant and fearless leader, and only a handful of his agents fell in combat with the Goju as hundreds of Shadow spawn that died underneath the assassins' blades. Their quiet war went on unseen and unnoticed even by the Crab, despite the fact that most Goju were destroyed in their lands.

Since that time, the Goju have learned to fear Yudoka and his minions. Though more than a generation has passed, his seething fury at the Darkness has not abated. Indeed, it has only evolved to include the Shadowlands that now control the Goju. When the Tsuno raids began and Emperor Toturi I was killed within Scorpion borders, Yudoka initially saw only a frustrating distraction from the quest that had consumed his life. He was the first human samurai to kill a Tsuno in personal combat, but he considered the battle a mere distraction from his hunt for the Goju. As months have passed, it has become clear to the Scorpion that Yudoka and his elite assassins are invaluable against the creatures the Scorpion now battle. For now, he is content to slaughter the Tsuno and goblins that dare attack the lands he calls home.

He has seen Nishiko twice since that time, and both times the abomination that wears his lover's face has eluded him. Now that the Shadowed Tower's existence has redirected his attentions a second time, he is not content to play along. The Tower reminds him too much of what the Shosuro once were — fools who believe they can control the darkness. Yudoka knows if he does not do his utmost to conclude the Shadowed Tower's threat as quickly as possible, he may never have the chance to avenge Nishiko's corruption.

SHOSURO YUDOKA

Male human Scorpion (Ftr6/Nin 12): CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d10+12 plus 12d6+24; hp 137; Init +11; Spd 40 ft.; AC 27 (touch 14, flat-footed 27); Atk +3 *keen ninja-to* +22/+17/+12/+7 *melee* (1d6+5 damage); SQ *Class skill* — Poison (family bonus), Ninja Dodge (+3), Sneak Attack +6d6, Poison Use, Speed of Darkness, Shadow Run, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, flanking); Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 14; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +15, Bluff +10, Climb +14, Escape Artist +12, Hide +26, Jump +18, Move Silently +26, Ride +12, Spot +8, Swim +14, Tumble +20; Bayushi's Technique, Blind-Fight, Deflect Arrows, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (Pincers and Tail), Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Mobility, Poison Immunity (warui paseri), Spring Attack, Strike at the Tail, Untouchable, Void Use.

Dojo: Brother's Gift; *Kata:* Dwell in Darkness, Poisoned Wind.

Possessions: +4 keen lawful crysteel Pincers and Tail (see sidebar), +3 keen ninja-to, kote of armor +5, cloak of stealth (as cloak of elvenkind), boots of stealth (as boots of elvenkind), amulet of natural armor +4, black stone netsuke (casts darkness as a 10th level sorcerer 3/day), ring of protection +4. In addition, Yudoka carries tools useful to his activities as a ninja that vary depending on the time of day and mission at hand, including many marvels of Kaiu engineering and Dragon mizugusuri that he has picked up in his travels.

SHOSURO YUDOKA

Earth: 4

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 5

Agility: 7

Air: 5

Reflexes: 7

Void: 4

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 5, Bayushi Bushi 2

Dojo: Brother's Gift

Honor: 0.6

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2 ranks), Poison Immunity (warui paseri), Quick, Social Position (Shosuro Family Daimyo), True Friend (Bayushi Yojiro)

Disadvantages: Driven (hunt remaining Goju), Insensitive

Skills: Athletics 5, Blowgun 4, Climbing 3, Climbing Tools 6, Defense 6, Explosives 5, Hand-to-Hand 7, Intimidation 5, Investigation 5, Kyujutsu 6, Lore (Lying Darkness) 8, Ninja-to 8, Poison 7, Shintao 3, Stealth 8

Kata: Dwell in Darkness, Poisoned Wind

SHOSURO HIGATSUKU, HERALD OF THE SHOGUN

Shosuro Higatsuku knows there are few certain things in this world, but one has been made clear to him — the Fortunes are greatly amused by his suffering. It was clear since birth that Higatsuku was a bright and gifted child, but as the son of an unimportant Scorpion functionary it was assumed his potential would go to waste. Higatsuku had other plans, and he became something else entirely.

A murderer.

He did not kill with a blade in the back like a ninja, or call out his opponents in a duel as if he were a swaggering Bayushi bushi. Higatsuku mastered the art of manipulation, studying every facet of the human psyche in order to learn what drives men and women. More importantly, Higatsuku learned what could make them do something they would usually never do; something against their honor, their word, or even their character. Though the art of manipulating the actions of others was not particularly unique among the Scorpion, Higatsuku took a surprisingly direct approach: insults. An Akodo bushi

PINCERS AND TAIL

The unusual weapon Shosuro Yudoka carries is unique to Rokugan, a long staff capped by a wicked blade in the shape of a pointed scorpion's tail on one end and a sharp claw on the other. Yudoka named his weapon "Pincers and Tail," a reference to his Scorpion heritage. The name is also derived from his preferred technique when using the weapon — using one end to disarm or neutralize an opponent and then delivering a quick follow-up attack with the other.

The weapon is a variation on the Ashalan khadja and was presented to Yudoka as a gift from Hojyn, the Ashalan sorcerer, for saving his life from a Goju ninja.

Some of Yudoka's favored agents carry imitations of his famous weapon. Though they do not bear the power of the original, they are potent nonetheless. Yudoka looks upon these imitations with mixed feelings. He finds the idea of others following in his footsteps unsettling, but cannot deny that Pincers and Tail is a magnificent weapon.

The statistics below are for a standard Pincers and Tail. Many Pincers and Tail are made of Crysteel (described in Chapter 6) but the standard statistics are for a version made of steel and wood.

D20 SYSTEM™

Pincers and Tail is a Large exotic melee double weapon. One end (the pincers) inflicts 1d8 slashing damage and has a critical range of 19–20/x2; the other (the tail) inflicts 1d8 piercing damage and has a critical range of x3. If the pincers are in your main hand, you get a +2 bonus on your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an enemy (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if you fail to disarm your enemy). If the tail is in your main hand, you can use this weapon to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the Pincers and Tail to avoid being tripped. The weapon weighs 15 pounds and normally costs 60 koku.

LSR R7G 2E:

A Pincers and Tail has a DR of 1k3, and grants a Free Raise on all disarm attacks. By making three Raises on an attack roll, the wielder can make an extra attack with a 2k2 DR. If the first attack misses, the second attack may not be made. It is wielded using the Pincers and Tail skill, a Specialized Weapon skill required to use the strange weapon effectively.

had a fair chance of unraveling intricate Scorpion plots if he tried, but Higatsuku learned that if that same wise general chose not to think, he would kill himself as surely as if he had attempted to duel Lady Moon.

The young Shosuro gained a reputation as a despicable antagonist who took joy in the misery and fury of others. His signature maneuver was to make someone lose his or her temper in a seemingly innocuous manner, or at a time when no one of importance was looking... only for it to become clear that the timing or audience was more significant than his victim had imagined. Three times, Higatsuku has done his

own work. Those three men thought to stop Higatsuku with steel where words had failed them. They learned far too late that the simpering Scorpion courtier had planned his battles well. Each time Higatsuku was challenged, the outcome was the same. Some unexpected party, a samurai indebted to Higatsuku, stepped forward to champion the Scorpion. Though he never drew his blade, he killed his enemies swiftly and surely.

As fate would have it, word of Higatsuku's actions reached the ears of Bayushi Paneki, who passed it along to his Champion. This all occurred as the impending conflict between the Four Winds was becoming clear. Clearly, Higatsuku was manipulative, inventive, and ruthless. As far as Bayushi Yojiro was concerned, Higatsuku was perfect for a plan he had been considering for months.

At first, the young Shosuro was surprised to be invited to Otsan Uchi by the Champion himself. On the trip to the Imperial Capitol, however, Higatsuku assured himself his dreams had come true and that the highest ranks of his Clan had heard of his unequalled skill. Yojiro informed the Shosuro courtier that he would be the key player in a game that would end with the assassination of Yoritomo Aramasu.

Higatsuku was assigned a partner in this mission, the lovely Shosuro Yasuko. The two Scorpion sought to distract Aramasu in the home of Akodo Kaneka, and simultaneously trick Kaneka into not interfering with the battle. Once this had been achieved, the two courtiers stood back as an ambush party led by Bayushi Kamnan slew Aramasu and his guards. Though Higatsuku knew he was witnessing the culmination of years of precise planning, he could barely bring himself to take his eyes from Yasuko during most of the event. She was lovely, devastating in her intellect, and as ruthless as Higatsuku wished to be. He could not push her out of his mind, try as he might.

Instead, Higatsuku focused on a new mission — the shaming of Toturi's unacknowledged son. After the incident with the Mantis, the Bastard would be in a sticky political situation, having witnessed the outbreak of war between two Great Clans and done nothing. The Shosuro hoped to take advantage of this for his clan, perhaps earning a favor from Kaneka's rival, Naseru. Higatsuku attempted to goad Kaneka as he had goaded so many others. Unlike the other times, Higatsuku had no champion in reserve. He hoped only to cause the Bastard to strike out against him, to harm his own claim on the throne through an act of dishonorable violence.

To Higatsuku's surprise, Kaneka saw through the plot. Instead of turning on him in blind fury, Kaneka struck him hard across the jaw in a controlled manner and dictated to Higatsuku what his fate would be. The Bastard said that one day he would be Emperor, and he needed men of political acumen at his side to prepare for that day. Kaneka gave Higatsuku his life; in return, he would serve the Bastard.

When Higatsuku ran back to his contact with Yojiro, he was surprised to learn that the Master of Secrets had predicted Kaneka's actions perfectly. Higatsuku's mind reeled at the implications. Did the Scorpion not fully support Naseru? Why would they lie to him? Was Kaneka so clever that the Scorpion truly desired to support him? Though he was confused, one thing was clear — he was now a captive vassal of Akodo Kaneka, the political advisor and herald of the unrecognized eldest child of Toturi I.

For over a year, Higatsuku has performed a superb balancing act, appearing clever enough to remain useful to Kaneka, but not cunning enough to outsmart him. He constantly finds himself in hostile territory even when not at his lord's side due to the naked hatred the Shogun's allies bear for his clan. The Mantis and Unicorn are openly disgusted by Higatsuku's presence, while the Lion make no effort to hide their mistrust of the Scorpion courtier. Kaneka allows their feelings to run unchecked so long as it is clear that no harm is to come to Higatsuku; he is a valued advisor despite their misgivings.

Higatsuku has found that this indifference is a double-edged sword, and has shamed a Unicorn bushi and a Mantis shugenja by his response to their verbal abuse. When they took their complaint to Akodo

Kaneka, the Shogun simply replied, "Do not come mewling to me when you have failed by underestimating Higatsuku's strength. If you think I would allow myself to

be attended by useless filth, you

are twice the fool he has made the both of you out to be." Since that incident, few are willing to openly confront the Scorpion, though he is liked even less, if that is possible.

As for Higatsuku, his time with the Shogun's army has upset his soul. While it can hardly be said the Shosuro courtier has any fondness for his lord, Higatsuku cannot deny that he has come to honestly respect and admire Akodo Kaneka for both his skill with his own actions and that of others. Higatsuku has come to the conclusion that the two of them are of a common mind — both recognize the worth of goading opponents into underestimating them. Slowly, the young Scorpion is becoming more comfortable with the idea of serving under the Bastard and is willing to share this view with others.

SHOSURO HIGATSUKU

Male human Scorpion; Courtier 7: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d6; hp 27; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 13); Atk +1 *dueling katana* +3 melee (1d10+1 damage); SQ Class skill — Poison (family bonus), Wealth, Talent, Style and Grace, Gossip, Courtier Abilities (No More Masks); Honor: 1; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 16; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 4 in.



Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +7, Bluff +16, Diplomacy +10, Forgery +13, Games (Sadane) +12, Gather Information +13, Hide +15, Innuendo +13, Listen +7, Knowledge (Etiquette) +13, Move Silently +7, Read Lips +8, Sense Motive +12; Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency: Katana, Subtle Manipulator (Ancestor: Bayushi Akoru), Versatile (Forgery, Hide, Move Silently, Battle) Void Use.

Dojo: Dojo of Lies; *Kata:* None.

Possessions: +1 dueling katana, amulet of mind shielding, haori of protection +2.

SHOSURO HIGATSUKU

Earth: 2

Willpower: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3

Dojo: Honor's Sacrifice

Honor: 1.3

Glory: 5.7

Advantages: Crafty, Read Lips, Social Position (Advisor to Akodo Kaneka)

Disadvantages: Unluck (2 ranks)

Skills: Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Forgery 4, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 2, Law 2, Sadane 6, Sincerity 4, Seduction 1

Kata: None.

"SHOSURO FURUYARI," MASTER OF THE SHADOWED TOWER

Ask Shosuro Furuyari who he is and he will have a thousand answers prepared. He has countless names, all with identities and lives of their own that Furuyari would be pleased to demonstrate. He is the consummate Scorpion actor and poet — genial and clever, taking the trademark acidic humor of his family and turning it into a bit of entertainment for everyone present. Shosuro Furuyari is a living legend, easily the most famed playwright of his age, returned through Oblivion's Gate during the titanic struggle against the Lying Darkness. Shosuro Furuyari is a loyal and loved servant of the Empire who sided with the armies of Toturi I and turned against his fellow spirits to serve the cause of justice. Shosuro Furuyari is a respected and highly valued Scorpion samurai, holding a position on Bayushi Yojiro's personal council. Shosuro Furuyari is the icon to which Scorpion playwrights aspire.

Shosuro Furuyari is a complete fiction.

The man claiming the name Furuyari first lived over seven hundred years ago. Bayushi Atsuki was a passionate man who valued the quality of life in the Empire and constantly meditated upon ways to improve it. By the time Atsuki became the Clan Champion, he had come to greatly admire the Shosuro and their ability to charm those individuals immune even to the Bayushi's greatest courtiers. Atsuki's charisma and philosophies soon made him the Emperor's trusted friend. Both men were particularly focused on improving the Empire as a whole instead of attempting to maintain a desirable status quo. Their approaches differed, and though the Hantei listened to his friend and advisor, he had a mind of his own.

Several years after his appointment as Scorpion Clan Champion, Atsuki also became friends with two other like-minded samurai — Doji Raigu, heir to the Crane Champion, and Shiba Gaijushiko, the Imperial Scribe and the most influential Phoenix in Otosan Uchi. It was not long before the three men realized that not only did they share a common goal, but that between them they held the power and influence to make their hopes a reality.

It soon became clear Hantei Fujiwa was not the sort of man who would see their wisdom for what it truly was. The Hantei Emperor favored the use of strength and military might as a catalyst for change, something that Atsuki, Raigu, and Gaijushiko all believed would only lead to wasted lives and a folly that had been passed down for years. With a heavy heart, Bayushi Atsuki suggested an alternative course of action to his fellows. Though he did not wish to bring harm or heartache to the Emperor, it was clear that his duty as a samurai dictated that he put the Empire's good above the Emperor's edicts. The three men conversed late into the night, plotting out the course of their actions for years to come, knowing no force could oppose their concerted effort.

Within the next week, agents of Bayushi Atsuki kidnapped the heir of Hantei Fujiwa just as Doji Raigu's father was found mysteriously dead. The Crane's position was suddenly tenuous, especially against the Lion that constantly threatened their borders. Without the support of his allies among the Doji and Bayushi, Fujiwa turned to his trusted counselor Shiba Gaijushiko for advice. The Imperial Scribe counseled the Emperor to capitulate to the Scorpion Champion's demands. Eventually, Gaijushiko proposed, the Emperor's allies would find their footing and support him once again, making this only a temporary setback for the Son of Heaven. The Hantei reluctantly agreed and ceded much of his Imperial power privately to Atsuki.

Doji Raigu easily took control of his clan, lending military aid to Atsuki, and Gaijushiko ensured the remote Phoenix fell into line. The plan was perfect. The alliance was called the Gozoku, and at last they were free to pursue the goal of improving all of Rokugan, building upon tradition instead of wallowing in it.

Or so Atsuki had hoped. Not all of his lieutenants shared his vision. Many of his officials fell to decadence and corruption. The granddaughter of Fujiwa was turned against the Gozoku Alliance. After forty years of prosperity, the ghosts of the past came for Atsuki and he was powerless to stop them. With his rule opposed by the Lion and Dragon clans, the Scorpion Champion watched helplessly as everyone turned their backs on him, once again embracing the past and destroying everything he had worked to build.

When Atsuki was brought before the Empress, he realized how alone he truly was. Even Shiba Gaijushiko betrayed him. The Phoenix testified that the Scorpion Champion had blackmailed the Phoenix into allying with him. Outraged, Atsuki drew his ancestral blade on the Shiba, prepared for the first time in his life to fight for his belief with steel rather than words. He was cut down by Seppun blades.

Some thought that perhaps Atsuki's spirit was damned to Gaki-do for his crimes, while many among the Scorpion claimed that he had reached Yomi — he was a true Scorpion to the end, after all. None knew that Bayushi Atsuki's final thoughts of vengeance had banished his spirit to Toshigoku. His burning hatred at those who betrayed him condemned him to wander the Realm of Slaughter. Instead of being subverted into a mindless tool of destruction, Atsuki's thirst for revenge took him onto a completely different path.

It focused his mind to such a perfect point that not even the overwhelming influence of Toshigoku could deter him. Silent, Atsuki watched and waited for a time that he could escape his fate and return to the Empire for those who had betrayed him. He questioned all those who ventured into the Realm of Slaughter, learning as much as he could about the Empire.

And he planned.

When Oblivion's Gate was torn open by the conflict between Rokugan and the Lying Darkness, Atsuki saw his opportunity and strode forth. After the Goju's defeat, he was quite surprised to see what had become of his beloved Empire. The same ronin rabble he once laughed out of the Emperor's court now stood beside the Great Clans as the Mantis. The lost Ki-Rin Clan had returned, and now called themselves the Unicorn. Hundreds of years had passed... but nothing had truly changed. It took him no time to realize two things about the current Emperor, Toturi the First. It was clear Toturi was an enlightened and compassionate ruler, the kind that could effect great and wonderful improvements upon the Empire. It was also clear, however, that Toturi was still a Lion at heart. He would keep with tradition not because he thought it was the best choice, but because it was the wisdom of those who had come before.

Atsuki saw that he had work to do.

When the Steel Chrysanthemum's spirit armies threatened Rokugan, Atsuki stepped forward to offer the Scorpion his ancient wisdom. When others asked who he was, Atsuki supplied a carefully prepared answer — Shosuro Furuyari. The ruse was perfect, as "Shosuro Furuyari" had been a pen name Scorpion playwrights hid behind when they were unsure how their work would be received. He easily slid into the role of the fictitious author and was quickly accepted by the Scorpion and in turn, the Empire.

When it was clear Rokugan was no longer threatened by its past, Furuyari set upon a new objective of reconstructing the Gozoku. Those whom he wished revenge on had long ago passed into history... something that Furuyari had spent his life moving away from. In order to gain his position, he would have to reclaim his old mantle as Scorpion Champion. Though Furuyari considered attempting to work with Bayushi Yojiro, the returned spirit knew that he would be unable to function as any man's subordinate. While he respected Yojiro, the fact remained that the man's loyalties were to the Emperor. He had to be removed.

Furuyari has only recently revealed himself fully to Yojiro, as it is far too late for the current Champion to stop the Shadowed Tower and the plots he has enacted. Soon, Yojiro will bury himself with his weakness, and Furuyari will be there to take control. Furuyari does not concern himself at all with the conflicts between the Four Winds except insofar as it affects his plans. He does not care which of Toturi's children claims the Steel Throne. He has already readied his plans for each of them.

"SHOSURO FURUYARI"

Male human Scorpion, Courtier 12/Rogue 8: CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d6+20; hp 137; Init +11; Spd 30 ft.; AC +22 (touch 13, flat-footed 19); Atk +3 *keen ninja-to* +12/+7/+2 (1d6+5 damage); SQ Class skill — Diplomacy (family bonus), Wealth, Style, Talent and Grace, Gossip, Courtier Abilities (3), Leadership, The Heart Speaks, Sneak Attack (+4d6), Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, can't be flanked); Honor: 1 (3); AL LE; SV Fort +7, Ref +13,

Will +12; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 24; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Bluff +30, Disguise +32, Decipher Script +27, Diplomacy +30, Gather Information +30, Hide +36, Knowledge (history: Scorpion Clan) +19, Knowledge (maho) +27, Listen +25, Move Silently +36, Perform +30, Sense Motive +25, Use Magic Device +15; Depths of the Void, Ear of the Emperor (Ancestor: Miya), Ichi-Miru, Iron Will, Perceived Honor (x2), Political Maneuvering, Skill Focus (Disguise), Versatile (Disguise, Hide, Knowledge (maho), Knowledge (law)), Void Use.

Possessions: +3 lawful katana of speed, haori of protection +5, cloak of stealth (as cloak of elvenkind), boots of stealth (as boots of elvenkind), bracers of armor +4, mask of charisma +4, periapt of proof against poison, ring of mind shielding.

"SHOSURO FURUYARI"

Earth: 3

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 5

Fire: 5

Intelligence: 6

Air: 5

Awareness: 7

Void: 4

School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 4/Bayushi Courtier 4

Dojo: None.

Honor: 0.1

Glory: 9.9

Advantages: Perceived Honor, Precise Memory, Benten's Blessing

Disadvantages: Overconfident, Forsaken

Skills: Acting 7, Defense 5, History: Scorpion Clan 8, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 5, Lore (Maho) 4, Manipulation 7, Mimic 6, Poetry 5, Poison 7, Shintao 4, Sleight of Hand 6, Sincerity 9, Stealth 6

Kata: None.

VASSALS OF THE SHOSURO FAMILY

THE KOCHAKO

As the Emperor's unseen agents, the Scorpion must constantly ensure the Empire's security from hidden threats. As the Bayushi's right hand, the Shosuro are often handed the less savory duties of this charter so that the Bayushi can operate in plain sight. This arrangement became clear early in the Empire's history, and has continued from sheer necessity.

But what if the hidden threat against the Empire was not an outside force, but the Scorpion Clan itself? This conundrum was made apparent in the forty years when the Gozoku Alliance took control of the Imperial Court and the Empire from the Hantei line and made an affront to the Way of Heaven. While the Bayushi followed their daimyo's orders eagerly, the Shosuro were dumbfounded by this turn of events. Surely if Bayushi had intended his descendants to rule the Empire, he would have challenged Hantei instead of kneeling before the First Emperor and swearing to guard his line against threats from the shadows.

The Shosuro could do nothing against the Bayushi due to their own bonds of Scorpion loyalty. They watched, helpless, as the Gozoku made a puppet of not one Hantei Emperor, but two. After the Gozoku were finally crushed, Atsuki's successor and the Shosuro daimyo came to an agreement — just as Hantei asked Bayushi to guard the dark corners of his Empire, the Shosuro would have to guard the Scorpion from the darkness in their own hearts. The Scorpion Champion charged the Shosuro daimyo with finding the most selfless ninja he had that could stay true to the First Scorpion's ideals and his oath to Hantei. These silent agents would answer only to the Shosuro, and they would remain hidden even from the Bayushi to forestall the Scorpion's ambition from endangering the Empire once again.

Chief among those chosen to guard the Scorpion from corruption was the quiet and wise man called Kochako. Shosuro Kochako was not a particularly talented ninja, nor was he an exceedingly ruthless Scorpion, but he possessed exactly the drive and ambition that was needed. He was loyal, irreproachable in his code of honor, and had a flawless judge of character. Kochako gathered almost two hundred of his most trustworthy students and retired to the mountains northeast of Nihai Tower. There, Kochako trained his students and his successors in absolute anonymity and silence. The Kochako do not participate in the Empire's politics and they do not associate with any outside the Shosuro, who deliver the family updates of current events via a special cipher known only to the ruling members of both families.

Since the Kochako's founding, the Shosuro daimyo has always known of this potent weapon at his disposal, but he rarely calls upon them. To this day, those within the Scorpion come to the Bayushi elders when another Scorpion has crossed the line one too many times, and in turn, the Bayushi come to the Shosuro daimyo for action. Without exception, the target is investigated and dispatched if he is guilty. Those who think to use the Shosuro's unnamed assassins as pawns instead find themselves the Kochako's victims.

Currently, the Kochako have had their hands full with a single target — the Shadowed Tower. The threat the Tower represents falls clearly into the dictates set down by Shosuro Kochako centuries ago. However, matters are much more complicated this time as the Shadowed Tower's rhetoric has the Kochako asking themselves: who is the traitor to the Scorpion? The followers of Shadowed Tower seek to end what they see as the weak and ineffective rule of a junshin, a man who could lead the Scorpion to destruction. For the first time in history, the Kochako find themselves divided, as several agents dispatched to investigate the Tower have failed to return, due not to capture but to defection.

Shosuro Yudoka, the Shosuro daimyo, knows the Master of the Shadowed Tower's identity and is not blind to the irony that the very thing that the Kochako were formed to fight against is now in a position to control them.

The Kochako are almost exclusively ninja trained in the Shosuro schools, though some multi-class as rangers to cope with life in their rugged homeland. Only rarely does a Kochako show a talent for the kami, and these are trained in the Soshi lands under the Shosuro name.

THE TUNNELS OF THE KOCHAKO

Within sight of Nihai Tower is a latticework of caverns and cave openings that run throughout the Spine of the World Mountains. The Kochako call these halls their stronghold, and have carved a series of chambers deep in the mountains that

resemble the inner rooms of a traditional family stronghold. The tunnels contain everything the vassal family needs to survive save farmlands and livestock, but such things are provided by the Shosuro. None have seen the Kochako's inner sanctum except the Shosuro daimyo — others are kept discouraged from exploring the area by the large mountain cats the Kochako breed as pets. Occasionally, wandering Tainted beasts attempt to nest in the tunnels, only to attract the Kochako's swift attention. As such, the small area the vassal family occupies is perhaps the safest location within the Spine of the World Mountains... as long as you do not attract their wrath.



THE KOCHAKO FAMILY

Favored Class: Ninja

Starting Honor: 0

Class Skills: Wilderness Lore

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork yumi.

THE KOCHAKO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Agility

Glory: 0.0

Special: Kochako family members who attend the Soshi Shugenja School may choose to give up Explosives from their beginning skills to increase their starting Athletics or Poison skill to 2 ranks.

THE TOKAGURE

Early in the Scorpion Clan's development, the Shosuro had a single objective — to serve the Bayushi as spies and assassins. As time progressed, they became much more than simple agents of subterfuge. The Shosuro served as poets, entertainers, courtiers, and myriad other roles within the clan. However, the family's leaders ensured that they would always be able to fill their duty to the Bayushi as their primary allies and most trusted agents. To this end, much of the Shosuro's resources went toward their Shinobi Academy and their research into deadly poisons. After several generations, it was clear that the still Shosuro lacked focus. Some sort of shift was necessary to ensure the Shosuro would not slip up in their responsibilities.

The Shosuro daimyo realized that the aspect of their duties that produced the least return for the effort invested was their gardening and associated poison research. Unless something changed, said the Shosuro lord to his council, they could not serve the Bayushi and the Empire correctly. While the methods of integrating the Shosuro assassins and the members of the Butei academy had already come about, none had a way to maintain the expense of both money and manpower that the Shosuro Gardens required.

An elder daimyo had sat silently through the meeting, attempting to devise a complicated and wise answer as his peers had. In the end, however, his answer was a simple one. "I will do it," he said finally. "I will gather samurai dedicated to caring for and exploiting the gardens so that the rest of the daimyo can go about their affairs." The answer was so simple that the other daimyo were stunned. Instead of dividing the Shosuro's focus in a myriad of directions, an order would be made to tend the gardens. Though the duty was hardly glorious, it was a necessary one fit for a nameless vassal family.

The Shosuro daimyo agreed and named Shosuro Tokagure the first lord of the Tokagure family. With the approval of his daimyo, Tokagure Yoshi gathered the peasants that handled the gardens and elevated them to samurai status in secret, making them his loyal followers. Between their peasant origins and their humble duties, the Tokagure are atypical Scorpion. They favor wry humor and are not naturally deceptive. They are content to while away their time in the vast Shosuro gardens, and most have an unsettling habit of treating the countless plants under their care like children. Most Tokagure have pet names for each type of plant they know and often talk to them as if they were sentient beings. In some truly disturbing cases, Tokagure hold entire conversations for hours with their charges.

The Tokagure possess no family lands, instead calling the myriad Shosuro gardens their home. The Tokagure family's seat of power, if it can be called such, is located within the Shosuro Gardens in Shiro no Shosuro.

The Tokagure rarely attend any established school, instead passing down their knowledge from one generation to another.

THE TOKAGURE FAMILY

Favored Class: Rogue

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skills: Knowledge (Poison)

Starting Outfit:

1. Wakizashi, one vial of mild poison.

THE TOKAGURE FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5

Special: Tokagure family members may give up any one of their starting skills to gain Poison or Herbalism, or increase their starting Poison or Herbalism skill to 2 ranks.

SHOSURO MECHANICS

THE THUNDER'S DAGGER DOJO

Classes: Fighter, Ninja, Rogue, Samurai, Shadow Scout (Prestige)

Schools: Bayushi Bushi, Shosuro Ninja, Thunder's Dagger (New Path)

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

Benefit: At the beginning of the round, you may increase your initiative score by one-half your character level, rounded down (minimum one). If you choose to use this ability, all of your damage rolls suffer a circumstance penalty equal to this initiative bonus for the rest of the round.

Benefit: You may raise your initiative score by twice your Insight Rank. If you choose to do so, subtract an equal amount from all your damage rolls for the round.

SHOSURO BUTEI ACADEMY

Classes: Rogue, Ninja, Butei (Prestige)

Schools: Shosuro Butei

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Students at the Shosuro Butei Academy are skilled in not only in the art of deceiving others, but also in making others want to believe that something is true when it obviously isn't.

Benefit: Characters from the Shosuro Butei Academy add twice their Charisma modifier (instead of applying it once) to their Bluff skill checks. This bonus does not work against hostile creatures.

Benefit: Characters from the Shosuro Butei Academy may add twice their Insight Rank to their Acting skill checks. This bonus does not work against hostile characters.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

NEW KATA

THE THUNDER'S DAGGER

SCORPION KATA

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Duration: 120 minutes

You have mastered the ways of Nihai Dojo, which teaches quick, deadly attacks. This kata guides the practitioner through a slow and steady dance with two short blades focusing on shallow stabbing motions that keep the invisible opponents off guard.

Requirements: Way of the Scorpion, Weapon Focus (Any Small slashing or piercing weapon), Dex 13+.

XP Cost: 750

Effect: When attacking with a light piercing or slashing Small weapon, you gain a +5 training modifier to your initiative roll, but can only use your actions to attack with the weapon for that round. When attacking with two such weapons, you fight as if you had the Ambidexterity and Weapon Finesse feats, but do not gain the initiative bonus. You choose one weapon this feat affects when this kata is learned and gain these bonuses with only that weapon. If at any time you use a Medium-sized or larger weapon during this kata, you suffer a -5 training penalty to all attack and damage rolls.

School Rank: Bayushi Bushi 2 or Shosuro Shinobi 2
Cost: 4

Effect: When attacking with an aiguchi, tanto, or wakizashi, you roll one extra die for initiative but can only use your actions to attack with the weapon for that round. When attacking with two such weapons, you gain an extra attack for the round with your off-hand, but roll two fewer dice on all attack rolls. If at any time you use any other weapon during this kata, you always drop your highest die rolled on attack and damage rolls (to a minimum of one die).

TOOLS OF THE SHOSURO NINJA

Though the Scorpion may not be the only clan to claim proficient ninja, they have certainly had the longest time to perfect their art. Over the years, the Shosuro have developed several items that aid their agents in their missions. Below are descriptions of two such objects that are reserved only for the most deserving Scorpion ninja.

RAINBOW CLOAK

Modeled after the infamous Rainbow Cloak of Shosuro, these capes may shrink or lengthen at the wearer's mental command. The Rainbow Cloak can become long enough to enclose the wearer's whole form, or shrink to a small flap of cloth hanging just below the shoulders. The cloaks can also emit an entrancing display of subtle color and patterns to dazzle those whom the ninja wishes to escape.

RAINBOW CLOAK 1020 SYSTEM

The Rainbow Cloak is a jet black cloth that grants the wearer a +2 circumstance bonus to his Kuji-Kiri skill checks (see *Way of the Ninja*, page 33) and a +5 circumstance bonus to his Hide skill checks. In addition, the cloak may activate a *color spray* once per day, as cast by a 10-level sorcerer (save DC 11).

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *color spray* or *faerie fire*; **Market Price:** 3,000 koku; **Weight:** 1lb.

RAINBOW CLOAK 12ND EDITION

The Rainbow Cloak is a jet black cloth that grants the wearer a Free Raise on his Kuji-Kiri and Stealth skill rolls. (See *Way of the Ninja*, page 33, for the Kuji-Kiri skill.)

BLACKSTEEL SHURIKEN

Though the ninja have many enemies, none are more formidable than those who wield the kami's power. An unwary ninja can find himself immobilized by the power of magic or blasted into oblivion by a shugenja's spells. To this end, the Shosuro have developed a way of disrupting the shugenja's power, if only in an unreliable manner for a short time. Any reprieve against the supernatural is better than none.

BLACKSTEEL SHURIKEN 1020 SYSTEM

A Blacksteel Shuriken is a +1 shuriken that casts a targeted *dispel magic* as a 10th level sorcerer when it strikes a spellcasting creature. In addition, any Concentration check against damage from a Blacksteel Shuriken incurs automatically fails unless the caster spends a Void Point. These items come in groups of ten.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item; **Market Price:** 1,000 koku; **Weight:** 1 lb.

BLACKSTEEL SHURIKEN 12ND EDITION

A Blacksteel Shuriken is identical to a normal shuriken unless it is thrown at a shugenja or other character capable of spellcasting. The shuriken dispels one magical effect currently affecting the shugenja and causes the TN for the next spell that character casts to be raised by 15 unless the caster spends one Void Point.

NEW ANCESTORS

The most famous Shosuro of history are playwrights and actors. The Shosuro revere these artisans, to be sure, but there are an equal number of others that few outside the family have any knowledge of. Assassins, spies, thieves, and even the archetypal ninja are found among this secretive family's history, and the dutiful Shosuro samurai pay homage to each one.

SHOSURO IKAWA

In the years before the Scorpion Clan's attempted coup in Otosan Uchi, a young samurai named Shosuro Ikawa came to prominence. Unlike most Shosuro, Ikawa was a fierce warrior. His nature was like ice, cold and unforgiving. He died during the Scorpion Clan Coup, alongside a Lion who shared his name. Many wondered what mysteries Ikawa held, for while many knew of him, none truly knew him.

Ikawa's father was a Scorpion diplomat who was sent to visit (and spy upon) the Lion Clan. He had an affair with a young Akodo woman. Shortly after his affair was consummated, he swiftly returned to Scorpion lands, never realizing she had borne him a son. Ikawa's Scorpion and Lion sons were born on the same day. Each spent his childhood ignorant of the other, and each took his father's name at his gempukku. The two men met years later when the elder Ikawa was driven mad by the Lying Darkness and murdered his former Akodo lover. The half-brothers joined together on a mission of justice, hunted down their possessed father, and destroyed him.

They met again a second time, years later on the fields of battle at Otosan Uchi during the Scorpion Clan Coup. There they saluted each other, drew their swords, and killed each other with a single sword stroke.

Shosuro Ikawa guides those who catch his eye from Yomi. Samurai who are devoted to their family and clan, to the point of personal sacrifice, often receive his direction and guidance.

UNQUESTIONABLE DEVOTION

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO IKAWA

You will go to any lengths to protect the honor of your family.

Benefit: Once per day, you may add +6 to any check that would prevent an honor loss to a member of your family. This includes saves and skill checks, although the bonus is reduced to +2 if you choose to spend it on an attack.

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO IKAWA

(6 POINTS)

Descendants of Shosuro Ikawa share his selfless devotion to the greater good of their family and clan. Once per day, the character gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Void Ring. These Raises may be used on any social or combat roll for an action that would prevent another member of the character's family from losing honor.

SHOSURO HYOBU

The nondescript daughter of a minor Yogo lord, little was expected of Hyobu. She was average in appearance, and though she was extremely bright, her family was full of bright and sparkling daughters. Hyobu always took a back seat to her sisters, and while it did not bother her overmuch, she resigned herself to a life of mediocrity.

Hyobu's life changed when she married Shosuro Akitada, the governor of Ryoko Owari Toshi. For years their marriage was tumultuous because Hyobu could not understand her husband's overwhelming love for the city. Eventually, she asked him to teach her, and she too came to love it. When he died, she took his place as regent until their son came of age to take over governance of both the city and the province.

Although Hyobu's rule ended with the Scorpion's downfall following the Coup, many older citizens within the city remember her rule fondly. Her calm, patient manner and

even-handed leadership created an environment where virtually everyone could flourish, and it is generally regarded as a golden era in the city's history.

CIVILIZED SOUL

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO HYOBU

You flourish in the urban environment.

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to your class level, you may add a +4 competence bonus to any ability check, skill check, or save. This bonus can only be used when you are within a settlement that is the size of a large town or larger (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*,™ page 137 for settlement sizes).

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO HYOBU

(5 POINTS)

The spirit of Shosuro Hyobu guides and protects those who share her love of Ryoko Owari. The role of a samurai is unimportant: magistrates, bushi, and courtiers alike have shared the gift of her guidance in the past. Like her beloved city, Hyobu does not discriminate. Descendants of Hyobu may roll one additional die on all High Skill rolls while within any large village or city.

SHOSURO SUSHANUME

History records the name Shosuro Sushanume among the Scorpion's greatest and most devious manipulators. In a bizarre political arrangement, the beautiful young woman was married to Matsu Uji, governor of a southern Matsu province. The Ikoma records place her at the head of a conspiracy wherein she seduced her husband's karo and had her husband assassinated in an attempt to take control of the province and cede it to her clan.

Another version of this tale exists, however. Sushanume, abused and neglected by her husband, is said to have fallen in love with Akodo Sanjuro. The honorable Sanjuro came to hate his lord for his abuse of Sushanume. When a jealous handmaiden betrayed the lovers, Sanjuro was forced to kill Uji in a duel. Overwhelmed with guilt at his dishonor, Sanjuro then slew Sushanume and fell upon his own blade. The Lion declared the play *Mercy*, written by Sushanume's descendant Matsu Sinoku, a blasphemous abomination due to its account of these events, and Sinoku was killed immediately following the play's only performance within Lion lands.

MASTER MANIPULATOR

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO SUSHANUME

You can move others to emotions that they might not normally experience.

Benefit: You may double your Charisma modifier when attempting to alter the attitude of an NPC. (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*,™ page 149 for rules on altering NPC attitudes.)

ANCESTOR: SHOSURO SUSHANUME

(2 POINTS)

Sushanume's spiritual descendants can subtly change the mood of others as their ancestor once did. The character can add double his Insight Rank to all Awareness related skill rolls.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE SUSHI

NO SECRETS
PART FOUR

Shiro no Soshi was not at all what Hatori had expected. The other Scorpion castles they had visited thus far were dark, twisted mazes, designed to confuse and unsettle any visitor. While Shiro no Soshi was surrounded by a maze of mountain passes, the castle interior was surprisingly organized and logical. The halls were illuminated with soft white light from nemuranai lanterns, crafted by master Soshi shugenja. All in all, the general mood of Shiro no Soshi was pleasant, cheerful, and open.

Somehow that was even more unsettling than the twisting maze of Kyuden Bayushi or the darkened passages of Shiro no Shosuro.

Sekkou and Taneji stood on a wide balcony gazing out at the jagged Seikitsu Mountains. Their silent Bayushi guardians stood at the balcony's far edge, out of earshot.

Taneji swore under his breath, casting a rueful glance at their guardians.

"You curse like a Mantis," Sekkou said with a chuckle.

"At least I picked up some new vocabulary during our visit to those forsaken islands," Taneji said. "This trip, in contrast, has been a total waste of time."

"Why do you say that?" Sekkou replied, looking at the courtier curiously.

"That monk, Chitan, sent us chasing after shadows," Taneji said. "We have learned nothing here. Even were there a conspiracy at the heart of the Scorpion Clan, we will never find it with Yojiro's guards watching us all the time."

"Is that not something in and of itself?" Sekkou replied. "The Mantis were less paranoid about our arrival, and they are in the midst of open civil war. The Lion did not watch us so closely, and their hatred for Hatori-sama is legendary. These Scorpion are hiding something."

Taneji nodded. "Of course they are hiding something," he said with a sigh. "I have been around the courts enough to know the Scorpion ways. They are usually not so... obvious. But none of them will talk. Every time Hatori seems to get close to the truth, a wall of silence falls. The Scorpion may be fighting one another, as Chian said, but they unite quickly enough against an outsider."

"True enough," Sekkou nodded. "Perhaps Hatori-sama is having more luck with the Soshi daimyo. I have heard that she is a congenial sort of person."

Taneji laughed ruefully. "A friendly Scorpion," he said. "That, Sekkou-san, is the most dangerous kind of Scorpion."

Hatori was well used to meeting dignitaries of powerful families in shrines, gardens, or formal audience chambers. He expected to find himself in another when he was led to meet with Soshi Uidori. Instead, to his surprise, the servant led him to ladder in a side chamber on the top floor of Shiro no Soshi and left him there.

Climbing the ladder, Hatori emerged onto the castle's roof. The fierce mountain wind tore at his kimono and, for a moment, he feared that he would fall. He looked down in awe at the mountains below. One misstep and he would be sent careening down the sharply sloped roof, pitched off into the mountains and certain death.

"You are not afraid," said a voice from above.

Hatori looked up. A woman hovered in midair, supported by the swirling winds. A feathered half mask covered her face, hiding her elegant features. She was dressed in fine robes of blood-red silk, the Shosuro mon emblazoned over her heart. A silver amulet bearing the symbol of an open eye hung about her neck.

"Most men lose their strength when they look into the abyss," the woman said. "You seem to enjoy it."

"Foolish courage," Hatori said with a chuckle. "I blame my upbringing. Lady Soshi Uidori, I presume." Hatori bowed low.

Uidori only smiled and inclined her head. She landed lightly on the roof nearby and whispered a short prayer. The howling winds immediately ceased, allowing Hatori to steady himself. He smoothed his rumpled kimono and ran one hand through his hair.

"You wished to speak with me," Uidori said, eyeing Hatori intently as she walked across the roof. "So speak."

"I must apologize, but I am taken somewhat aback, my lady," Hatori replied. "Do you meet all your guests like this?"

"Only the interesting ones."

Hatori nodded. "I have heard some disturbing rumors of late," he said. "I came to investigate."

"Rumors concerning the Shadowed Tower?" she asked, one eyebrow rising behind her mask.

Hatori paused. "Yes. Though you are the first since my informant to speak of them so openly."

Uidori shrugged. "The kami here are friendly to me. They will protect us from unwanted attention, magical or otherwise. You may speak freely. The other Scorpion lords may be content to hide this problem from outsiders, but I do not think this is a problem that can be solved with silence."

"My informant said something similar."

"Plant two persimmon seeds in different soil, the fruit will be the same," Uidori said. "So it is with wisdom."

"Who are the Shadowed Tower?" Hatori asked. "What do they want?"

Uidori frowned as she paced slowly toward him. "They believe that the leaders of our clan have grown too weak, that we are not prepared to use the resources we have at hand to our best advantage. Among their ranks they count maho-tsukai and Darkness-spawn. Those of the Tower believe that they can control such things. Those who follow Yojiro remember that it was such arrogance that nearly destroyed our clan during the War Against the Shadow."

"You say 'those who follow Yojiro,'" Hatori said. "Does that mean that you do not support Yojiro or the Shadowed Tower?"

"I obey my lord," Uidori said firmly, "but my loyalty is to the Empire. This feud between Yojiro and the Shadowed Tower endangers us all. I will not participate in foolishness." The Soshi daimyo paused beside Hatori, considering the distant mountains. Hatori could smell her fragrance on the wind, like lotus and cranberries. She was likely less than half his age, but he found her quiet confidence and eloquent manner intriguing.

"Uidori-sama, you cannot stand aside in a civil war," Hatori said. "When I was a Lion, I watched the Kitsus fall to corruption. Some stood against the darkness and some embraced it, but it was those few who chose neither side that did the greatest damage of all, standing idly by while my clan consumed itself."

"Who said that I am doing nothing?" Uidori replied, looking up at him with a faint smile. She reached out with one hand, stroking Hatori's cheek with the tips of her fingers. "Who do you think sent Chian to find you, Hatori-san?"



THE SOSHI PROVINCES

The Soshi have controlled their provinces since the dawn of the Empire. They initially settled in the lands they now hold seeking seclusion for both practical and spiritual reasons. Their experimentation with the Lying Darkness and their other illegal ventures would have been impossible in a more accessible region. Throughout their history, the Soshi have kept their lands largely ignored by the Empire, as they were both inconvenient and strategically unimportant. Since the creation of Seikitsu Pass, however, the Soshi have been forced to open their borders to trade and cultural exchange with the Unicorn.

Most visitors to the Soshi lands are either merchants or Scorpion from the other families. Supplies of all kinds pass through Shiro no Soshi and Kashi Mura on the banks of the River of Gold. Large amounts of opium, in both medicinal and somewhat less legal forms, pass through Soshi hands and filter out of their territories through traders in Pokau and through Shosuro connections down-river in Ryoko Owari Toshi. Before the Great Crater's creation and the devastation of Beiden Pass, such trade was limited. Now, however, the Soshi have a profitable distribution system that has allowed them to expand their trade throughout Rokugan.

MAJOR SOSHI HOLDINGS

The Soshi take great pride in using illusion and misdirection to monitor and control traffic through their provinces. Unwelcome travelers sometimes find themselves trapped in a pit at the Soshi's mercy moments after traveling on a perfectly fine road. Even during the Scorpion Clan Coup, the Soshi provinces were mostly ignored by the Imperial Legions, who found patrolling the "haunted" roads more trouble than it was worth.

The Soshi value locations that provide secrecy as well as seclusion. The family knows many caves and paths in the Spine of the World Mountains with which they can move rapidly and unseen through their lands. More recently, the Soshi have come to accept their new place in Scorpion commerce and trade and have, accordingly, come to value sites that allow ease of travel for their customers.

SHIRO NO SOSHI

(LOCATION S2)

Located in the middle of the An'ei province, Shiro no Soshi is the Soshi family's ancestral home. Shiro Soshi is the only true castle within the Soshi provinces. When the Soshi wish it, the Castle of Organization can be quite difficult to reach, as all the roads leading to it are warded with illusion magic. During the Scorpion Coup, Shiro no Soshi was destroyed by the Imperial Legions. When the Scorpion were reinstated, it was the first castle to be rebuilt. In fact, the Soshi had been slowly rebuilding the castle during the Scorpion's banishment, hiding their new construction with illusion.

After the Coup, many Soshi found new identities as ronin. Working as mercenaries and guides, they kept an eye on Shiro no Soshi while keeping themselves fed. The Spine of the World Mountains that surround their ancestral home earned a reputation for being haunted. Small groups ventured into the mountains to try and find Shiro no Soshi, but none ever came back.

Shiro no Soshi has little military use beyond its position at the source of the River of Gold. No other families or Clans want the castle and its location is inconvenient for troops. The winding Road of Treachery's Soul also makes Shiro no Soshi nearly impossible for non-Scorpion to find. This is because of the natural maze formed by the mountains surrounding it and the illusions and traps that the Soshi have enchanted the road with over the years. Some enchantments have recently been taken down to encourage visitors, but they still must retain a Soshi guide to make it to the castle unscathed.

The Soshi castle is a medium-sized structure, approximately seventy feet tall, with six levels above ground and two below. To the ever-increasing number of visitors, Shiro no Soshi looks like any other castle, with a tall main building surrounded by many smaller ones. Absent is the normal stockade found around fortified castles, as the mountains do a much better job than wooden walls could.

To the trained eye of a Scorpion, the castle is far different from its outer appearances. Many rooms are filled with illusions to conceal their actual purpose to outsiders. There is no indication that the two below-ground levels exist, and entrances to those levels are carefully watched by guards and enchantments. When the most powerful wards are activated, many places in the castle become deathtraps.

All of this illusion and concealment protects the Soshi's deepest secrets. Even though they officially renounced shadow magic after discovering its connection to the Lying Darkness, the Soshi continue to clandestinely experiment with dangerous magic, albeit in much smaller numbers. Most experimentation takes place at the Dojo of the Closed Eye, behind powerful wards and in the presence of veteran shugenja.

Shiro no Soshi's remote location also protects the family's opium processing operations from prying eyes. While the rocky lands around the castle cannot support the poppies that are refined for opium's many uses (both legitimate and otherwise), the remainder of the conversion process takes place in this castle. After the raw opiate is brought up the road from Pokau, it is cooked, mixed and altered in complex facilities reminiscent of Agasha laboratories. Many of these activities go on in the two underground levels, and once the final product is ready, it is shipped to Pokau by caravan or downriver to Ryoko Owari Toshi from a secret port just east of the castle. Such shipments are typically escorted by Soshi shugenja and ninja and received under cover of night. Even legal medicinal opium is transported in such a manner, as such caravans make an attractive target for bandits.

Shiro no Soshi has become somewhat of a conundrum, inviting traders and visitors, yet still requiring a great deal of secrecy and illusion, and the Soshi would have it no other way. The air of confusion surrounding their actions only makes their opponents react slowly while they try to guess the true direction the shugenja family is going to take.

HIGHWAYS OF THE SOSHI PROVINCES

The Road of Treachery's Soul (Connects S1 to S2) — This road connects the bustling trade city of Pokau with Shiro no Soshi. Once among the most dangerous roads in the Empire, the Soshi have recently removed many traps, both magic and mundane, that protected the path to their ancestral home, to encourage courtiers and tradesmen to travel there. Travelers should still hire a local guide to prevent any mishaps on the way to the castle, as the Soshi were unable to remove some of the oldest and deadliest traps. Like nemuranai, they have taken on a life of their own and continue to protect the Soshi despite the family's best attempts to disarm them.

The River of Gold (Ruins from S2 to Earthquake Fish Bay, flowing near S3, S5, S9, and S13) — This river is a major travel route for the Scorpion and source of commerce for all of their families. The Soshi, Bayushi and Shosuro all have ports along the river's route and consider it one of their most valuable resources.

Merchant's Ease Road (Connects S1 to the River of Gold) — Operating for almost ten years now, Merchant's Ease Road was created to allow merchants from Pokau to get to the River of Gold only months after the Unicorn finished clearing Seikitsu Pass. A village, now on the verge of becoming a full-fledged city, sprang up at the road's south end near the river's edge. It is known as Kashi Mura (detailed on page 51).

YOGO TANJIN

[Shugenja 14; Yogo Shugenja 5]

Yogo Tanjin is the ward master responsible for the protective spells surrounding Shiro no Soshi and the enchantments that protect the road to the castle. His position has been a hereditary one, passed down through the years to ensure that the castle's secrets are only known to the ward master and the Soshi daimyo. Over two decades ago, Tanjin received the position from his father, Yogo Murenshin. Since then, he has strengthened the wards surrounding the castle while weakening the ones that protect the road to the Soshi ancestral home. The middle-aged Yogo is well aware of the value of his wards and the opiates that they protect. He visits the castle's underground floors often, ensuring that the wards are in place and working correctly.

Recently, many wards along the road have begun to malfunction. While Tanjin blames these problems on wandering spirits, he knows that they are mostly his fault. His addiction to the opiates produced at Shiro no Soshi has begun to seriously interfere with his work. Tanjin doesn't know how much longer he can conceal his failure, but is well aware that if Uidori or Yukimi find out, his death will not be long in coming.

THE DOJO OF THE CLOSED EYE

Hidden in the shadow of Shiro no Soshi, the Dojo of the Closed Eye is a training ground for a great many Soshi shugenja. Classes on the dark methods of sabotage, poisoning and subterfuge are taught alongside the shugenja arts here,

making this dojo's students among the deadliest in the Empire. (More information on Yukimi and the Dojo of the Closed Eye can be found in *Way of the Shugenja*™)

SOSHI KARUKO

[Shugenja 10; Soshi Shugenja 3]

Though originally a Shosuro, Soshi Karuko was found to have a great deal of magical ability during her gempukku and was fostered to the Soshi to take advantage of such gifts. The Soshi believed she would best be served by training in multiple dojo, to give her more experience and so she could report back with knowledge of other clans she had visited. After an incident involving a Kitsu master and his impressionable son, she was shipped back to Shiro no Soshi and refused entry by the sensei of other mystic dojo. The information she provided to the clan was valuable, but she secretly wishes she could have continued to travel the Empire; she liked it.

Soshi Karuko is a respected student at the Dojo of the Closed Eye, having developed many useful easily-concealable variations on common spells. She was recently given a position as a minor sensei, teaching classes on more traditional shugenja practices, including the revering of one's ancestors and worship of specific kami.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The Dojo of the Closed Eye has recently begun to have problems with a ghost haunting the students' rooms. Master Sensei Soshi Yukimi has been unable to communicate with the spirits and has assigned Karuko to handle the matter, as she is more familiar with the Spirit Realms than her daimyo.

Focus: Soshi Karuko, while having trained briefly under a Kitsu master, is in search of anyone who could help her with the spirit haunting. She has contacted the characters in hopes that one of their number will be able to help, either with their own abilities or by finding a sodan-senzo or yorei-ryoushi (phantom hunter) who will trade his services for knowledge or money.

Strike: What Karuko doesn't know is that the spirit haunting the dojo is that of her former Kitsu master's son, who, after learning Karuko's true nature, committed seppuku out of shame, feeling he had betrayed his family to the enemy. His spirit cannot communicate directly with Karuko and will only respond to someone familiar with yorei. He can only be put to rest if Karuko returns to the Kitsu Tombs and apologizes to his father, something that she is highly unlikely to do (as it would likely result in her death).

POKAU

(LOCATION 51)

Located on the Kinbou province's west end, Pokau was once a small village, filled with quiet farmers, barely aware of anything outside of their town. When the Unicorn returned centuries ago, it barely registered here. As soon as new trade caravans showed up in their little town, however, the peasants there understood that their lives would change.

The Unicorn expanded trade in the region, sending enough traffic through the town to expand its boundaries and create a need for trading grounds outside the village. The townspeople wanted enough distance from the traders to keep thieves and bandits away, but not so much that the merchants wouldn't visit the village's shops for supplies or the local bar for sake.

The village continued to expand, eventually becoming a full-fledged city.

Pokau soon became the swiftest and most efficient waypoint for travelers from the southern provinces to reach Shiro Iuchi or the Unicorn palaces to the north.

While the passes through the mountains here were not as wide or traversable as those at Beiden Pass, they were suitable for small caravans or groups of samurai. While the growing city expanded for the next decade, eventually the city's residents believed that Pokau had reached its proper size. Throughout the next two hundred years, including the Clan War and Emperor Toturi's reign, they would be correct.

The devastation of Beiden Pass forced trade through Pokau. The city's population exploded. One morning everything was normal, and the next brought provincial daimyos from both the Unicorn and the Soshi, each claiming part of the city for their group. Strained to their limits, businesses in Pokau ran out of supplies. A line of caravans formed to go through the small passes north of Pokau, growing with each day. The Soshi provincial daimyo took advantage of the situation, charging hefty tolls to enter the passes. Within weeks the chaos died down slightly, but

Rokugan's economy was sure to suffer immensely if a faster way could not be found through the Spine of the World Mountains. Too many businesses had depended on moving their merchandise through Beiden Pass and couldn't afford to send it all the way around the mountains to the east or west. Fortunately, Lord Sun was merciful.

Hurling a great ball of fire from the sky, Lord Yakamo created a passage through the Spine of the World Mountains: the Great Crater. This destroyed the rubble blocking Seikitsu Pass, which had been closed by Akodo One-Eye in the Empire's earliest days. The Unicorn cleared the pass and quickly set up a garrison at either end, seizing on the opportunity to control this new resource. Once again there



was a passage large enough for caravans to go through both coming and going. Merchants in Pokau immediately started using the Seikitsu Pass and Soshi profits from the Pokau passes dried up. Still, the increased trade through Pokau meant there were more travelers for the Soshi to tax.

Soon after the Great Crater's creation, having seen the profits that could be made from commerce, the Soshi decided that they wanted to encourage trade through their provinces and began construction of what is now known as Merchant's Ease Road. Over the past decade, the road has brought many merchants and visitors to the Soshi provinces and allows the caravans a fast route from Pokau to Ryoko Owari by the road and then the Soshi boats that can be found in Kashi Mura.

POKAU TRADING GROUNDS

The Pokau Trading Grounds were once a few small merchant stalls and a well. Since the population explosion, it has become both a bazaar and a merchants' quarter. Geisha houses, bars and other seedy establishments popped up in and around the bazaar, seeking to take advantage of all the koku passing through the merchants' hands. This area has become one of the largest trading grounds in Rokugan and the amount of money being passed around dwarfs even the economy of Ryoko Owari. The area is rife with corruption and all the traffic makes it difficult for the local magistrates to do their jobs.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Merchants have begun complaining to the local magistrates of thieves and vandals, who have been attacking their warehouses and damaging far more merchandise than they steal. Prominent traders have threatened to take matters into their own hands if something isn't done soon.

Focus: The head magistrate is a Soshi and well aware of the thefts. Unfortunately for the merchants, he is the one directing the robberies! The true magistrate was recently replaced by a corrupted Goju duplicate. The Goju have been getting information from the duplicate to further their infiltration of Pokau. As the Goju have little need for wealth, his minions have stolen little. However, they have done a great deal of damage, hoping to weaken the Scorpion's resources.

Strike: After being approached by the merchants to solve the theft problem and being made aware that the local magistrates have done nothing so far, the characters have to find out what they can about the head magistrate and decide what to do. Obviously, if they found out about his replacement, it will be easier to oust him, but that is easier said than done...

THE PLAINS OF THUNDER

Only a small part of the Plains of Thunder is considered a part of Soshi territory. Most is either unclaimed or within the Hare Clan's holdings. The Soshi constructed Merchant's Ease Road on the Kinbou province's recognized southern border and, while connecting Pokau to Kashi Mura, it also acts as a visible buffer between the Soshi and Usagi patrols who might otherwise conflict.

KASHI MURA

This large village occupies the western bank of the River of Gold about halfway between Shiro no Soshi and Ryoko Owari, where the foothills give way to plains and the river becomes easily navigable. It affords those who travel down Merchant's Ease Road easy access to further trade opportunities in Ryoko Owari or any other port further down the river. While originally just a small port, the last ten years have made Kashi Mura into a large village. The next time an Imperial census is taken, the town will most likely be upgraded to a city.

The Soshi have a large number of boats that they hire out to visitors. Most wish to go to Ryoko Owari, but some want to travel further downstream to Shiro no Shosuro, Ginasutra (where a road to the Shrine of Osano-Wo begins) or even all the way down the River of Gold through Crane and Crab territory to where it empties into Earthquake Fish Bay.

A small part of the taxes on those traveling Merchant's Ease Road has gone to support Kashi Mura, but most goes straight into the Soshi's pockets. The Soshi value the road and the port, however, and maintain both. Enough commerce comes through the town that many merchants don't mind when the Soshi tax collectors come around, but some of them wish they weren't so close to the corruption of Ryoko Owari. Others, especially those with shipments they don't want to be checked by the local law enforcement, are glad that there are a few magistrates they can bribe to look the other way.

MINOR SOSHI HOLDINGS

FIRST BREATH DOJO

(LOCATION S15 ON PAGE 96)

At the foothills of the path to Shiro no Soshi (S2), on the outskirts of Pokau (S1), lies the peculiar First Breath Dojo.

Nearly a third of all Soshi attend First Breath Dojo, and unlike most dojo, those children attend the school for only a year and a half. While there, the students learn about the world they were born into. Over the course of their study, the students gain a cursory knowledge of history, geography, philosophy, etiquette, swordplay, and everything else that a samurai of Rokugan needs to know. They learn their place in the world, and their place in the clan.

Among the primary goals of First Breath Dojo is to cater to those children who have no aptitude for speaking with the kami. That gift is relatively common among the Soshi, but unlike some shugenja families (such as the Phoenix's Isawa family), it is nowhere near universal. At First Breath Dojo, those unfortunates born without it find their niches — not as priests, but as nearly anything else. The Bayushi provide the clan with bushi and courtiers, and the Shosuro with courtiers and less public samurai, so there are no large categories for the non-shugenja Soshi to fill. Thus, the Soshi find it useful to send their unblessed children to do whatever their hearts desire, so long as they do it well. The combination of freedom and enthusiasm tends to provide effective samurai, even if their skills are esoteric. When a Scorpion needs someone interested in sailing, *ikebana*, or Ashalan history, often the Soshi have just such an individual who discovered his talent at First Breath Dojo.

First Breath Dojo does not ignore shugenja children. Many shugenja graduates find their experience has helped them considerably, as it gives them a focus for their shugenja gifts. Thanks to First Breath Dojo, the Soshi have perhaps the most versatile shugenja in the Empire.

Note: Only Soshi characters may attend First Breath Dojo. While most students later go on to other dojo, each character may still only retain one set of dojo benefits.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

None.

TRAINING BENEFITS

Benefit: Students of First Breath Dojo select one non-exclusive skill. If it is a class skill, they gain a +3 competence bonus to all rolls with that skill. If it is a cross-class skill, they permanently gain it as a class skill and receive a +1 competence bonus with all uses of that skill.

Benefit: Students of First Breath Dojo may sacrifice two starting skills from their school to begin with a single non-Bugei skill at Rank 3 (which can be raised with character points normally). The skills sacrificed must be different from the skill learned.



SOSHI KWAIIDAN, SENSEI OF FIRST BREATH DOJO

[Courtier 3; Bayushi Courtier 1]

Kwaidan is a young Scorpion woman with a bright smile who cares for the children she teaches as if they were her own. She has become quite good at concealing her true feelings and her shattered dreams of glory. Her parents were both powerful shugenja, who expected their child to be equally talented. She greatly disappointed them, having not a whiff of mystical capacity.

Kwaidan attended First Breath Dojo and while she absorbed her lessons, she also watched the teacher just... teach. She was fascinated with the concept of the power of words, to inform or mislead, and this led her down the courtier's path. However, she could never bring herself to draw upon the Scorpion's more potent techniques. She was junshin, too honorable to bring herself to truly master the Way of the Scorpion.

Embarrassed and ashamed, she returned to First Breath Dojo and accepted a position as a sensei. While she has found that she is an excellent teacher, she knows beyond a doubt that she has no glory in her future. Even yet, she does not truly mind. She may claim no glory, but her duty is to guide the next generation's leaders and heroes.

And that is enough.

SHRINE OF THE SHADOW'S EYE

(LOCATION S16 ON PAGE 96)

Deep in the mountains of Kinbou province lies the Soshi shadow temple known as the Shrine of the Shadow's Eye. It was constructed ages ago in a well-concealed and easily defensible location in the mountains, but was used only infrequently until 1132, when the Scorpion returned from their exile and the Lying Darkness' minions began to take direct action all across Rokugan. The Soshi, who had long feared that their magic would lead Rokugan to a dire fate, began to gather at the Shrine and set into motion plans they had prepared to defeat the Darkness.

Before they could put their plan into action, the Shrine was attacked by Goju ninja and destroyed. All Soshi who knew of its existence and purpose died or were consumed in a single night.

There are none today who know with any certainty what the plan was. The Soshi know the rumors of a Shadow-curse on the Shrine, and even many ninja were loath to go there due to the curse's power. The only Soshi who braved the shrine were those heavily involved in advanced forms of *Tejina* (shadow magic), and they never spoke of what they did there. It is believed (correctly) that the Scorpion Champion was allowed to know what happened in that dark place, though with the whirlwind of events that surrounded the Coup, it is believed that Shoju was the last Champion to know.

In 1151, Scorpion census-takers rediscovered the shrine after two decades of undisturbed rest. The Soshi were naturally curious, and set to investigate it. They found no evidence of any inhabitation or use, save crystal-lined kanji carvings that identified the place as the 'Shrine of the Shadow's Eye' and hailed it as the last line of defense against Nothing.

Not wanting to ignore this potentially useful shrine, and despite the general sense of unease that the place exuded, the Soshi reclaimed the shrine. It is used today mostly for spell

research into dangerous areas — including an attempt to redevelop Teijina to be safer and usable without attracting the Shadow Dragon's attention. Efforts thus far have had mixed results, but work proceeds regardless.

BASEMENT OF THE EYE

Below the Shrine, hidden underground, is a three-room complex. It is here that the truly dangerous Teijina is practiced. Dark conjuring of faceless beings, transformations and infections of Nothing, and even attempts to recreate the annihilating projectile attacks the Goju use have been practiced here. Anyone who says that Teijina is useless since the following the Shadow's naming is unfamiliar with the happenings of these rooms, as it is crystal clear that Teijina is still an effective and powerful form of magic.

The basement is warded with crystal and jade, and is sealed off from the outside with the most powerful wards the Yogo can provide. All of this offers little true protection should the Shadow Dragon ever learn that the shrine exists. Despite this, the Soshi dream of the day they will find a way to steal the power of Nothing back from the Shadow Dragon and have it serve the Scorpion fully.

ASHIO

(LOCATION S17 ON PAGE 96)

Ashio has traditionally been a small but productive farming community, located at the foothills of the Spine of the World on the River of Gold's east bank. Ashio occupies a peculiar place in Scorpion geography — it straddles the provinces of both Kinbou and An'ei, though taxes are paid entirely to An'ai province. The peasants of Ashio do not concern themselves with political matters, preferring instead to remain a peaceful settlement. They pay their taxes each year without complaint, and there has not been an uprising of any sort in remembered history. Even the many crises in the past fifty years that the Scorpion and the Empire faced barely touched Ashio — it held no strategic value for the Empire's foes. The villagers say "The world turns, Ashio does not," and that is precisely how they like it.

All that changed nearly a year ago, when jade was discovered in the hills at the edge of town. The village was instantly thrown into chaos as high-ranking officials from the Soshi family came to investigate the claim, and Kaiu miners began poking about the village looking to trade for the valuable material. When the mining experts came and discovered a truly enormous jade vein, the village celebrated. The mine's wealth would bring prestige and prosperity to Ashio, which had never known either.

The only samurai in residence, Soshi Tanaka, was quite pleased at the attention. His domain, given to him as a punishment for youthful misdeeds, became famous and important. He was even honored with a visit from his daimyo, Soshi Uidori, when the mine began construction.

It did not take long for the local opinion of the mine to sour. Runoff from the mine flooded several rice paddies in the area, completely destroying the crop. After two months had gone by, the river began showing signs of pollution. Fish died en masse. Over the past winter, the inhabitants of Ashio came near starvation until Tanaka began rationing the food and requested more. Now that the winter has left, the peasants of Ashio are left with poisoned fields, a dead river, and mounting debt purely so they can survive. It's only a matter of time before they revolt, and given the mine's importance, there is

little hope among the peasants for a good ending. Tanaka, a capable leader in a position far beyond his experience, dreads the coming revolt but has no idea how to prevent it. He fears asking Uidori for military aid, for to do so would make him appear incompetent and cause him to be replaced with someone who does not understand the village and its people as he does.

Instead, Tanaka has petitioned Soshi Uidori for food and supplies to calm the peasants. Even if this petition is met, there is still the issue of downstream pollution. Ryoko Owari will share the fate of Ashio if nothing happens soon — and such an occurrence would not only threaten the City of Lies, but bring the Scorpion into conflict with the Unicorn who technically run the city.

ASHIO JADE MINE

Despite being in operation for nearly five months, progress has been slow. The mine currently has only one level, but it could go very deep. The Soshi mining expert called in to inspect the mine could not give a proper estimate on how much jade is contained within. Needless to say, it is a rich prize for the village, and for the Scorpion Clan as a whole.

However, there have been concerns. The mine's value is unquestionably immense, though the cost of keeping it in operation is equally huge. Many mining experts among both the Kaiu and the Soshi families are quite certain that within another year of operation, the River of Gold will be almost completely inhospitable to fish for nearly a hundred miles downstream. The Scorpion are not eager to pollute a river that so many rely on, yet at the same time they do not wish to give up their supply of jade — especially as jade has become scarce in recent years.

Solutions both magical and mundane are being sought. The Kaiu, while eager to aid the Soshi in this matter, have thus far come up with no practical ideas. The Isawa, unmotivated to lend any of their true experts, have been less forthcoming.

SOSHI TANAKA

[Samurai 4; Bayushi Bushi 2]

Tanaka is a small man who has been thrust into a large dispute. Born a low-ranking Bayushi, he was wed to his true love — a high-ranking Soshi woman — just after his gempukku. She died in childbirth with their first child, and with her died his heart. Suddenly alone in the world, he quickly became bitter and resentful. After an unfortunate accident at his dojo that crippled his sensei, he was sent to Ashio where he wouldn't have any further "accidents."

Twenty years later, Tanaka has calmed down considerably. He never remarried and has proven to be a wise and capable leader of a tiny farming village. He is respected by the community, and leads his life without regret. However, his patience has been put to the limit with the mining debacle. He has come to genuinely love the peasantry of Ashio, and their misfortune is his. He has been extremely active in securing food for his people while ensuring that those who are taken into the mines are not treated too harshly; they may be peasants, but they are his peasants.

SHINDER GYOKUJAI

With the Lying Darkness' demise, the Soshi lost many unique abilities that had characterized their particular style of magic for over a thousand years. This loss of focus has allowed the Soshi to diversify considerably, but not everyone within the

family believes this is a beneficial effect. Some believe that the Soshi will never reclaim their former glory unless they learn to access the power of Nothing, the primordial emptiness that was the source and origin of the Lying Darkness. As most scholars do not believe Nothing to be an inherently corrupting influence, there are those within the Soshi leadership who have quietly endorsed this research, allowing it to continue well removed from the public eye.

These efforts have not gone completely unnoticed. There are others among the family's prominent sensei that are adamantly opposed to the notion of researching Nothing. They have made their feelings well known to the Soshi leadership, and although their opinions are respected, the decision has been made to permit the research. Not willing to abandon their oaths of loyalty, these individuals have acceded to their lords' wishes, but have not abandoned the issue altogether. Instead, they have gathered a handful of their best students and set them to discovering a means of combating Nothing directly. These talented shugenja have been given a home where they may conduct their research in peace: Shinden Gyokuei, the crystal temple.

Shinden Gyokuei is not constructed from crystal, of course, for such an endeavor would be both exceptionally difficult and expensive beyond imagining. There is a significant amount of crystal used in the temple's decoration, but the walls are wood and stone. While there are few visitors to the temple, located as it is within the Twilight Mountains far south of Scorpion holdings, those who see it marvel at the temple's simple, elegant beauty. The crystals' real purpose is to serve as a focus for the Soshi's research. Much of it was donated by the Kuni family, who are experienced with working crystal and who share a desire to find a means of defeating Nothing should it threaten the Empire again.

SOSHI HIRAKI

[Shugenja 9; Soshi Shugenja 3]

Hiraki is an intelligent and passionate man who has devoted his life to seeing the Scorpion returned to a state of absolute purity. The notion that there are those among his clan who embrace the practice of maho and who consider consorting with Nothing disgusts and outrages him. His rage stems from his experience, as he was a Shosuro by birth and lost his brother to the Lying Darkness during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Even more tragically, his brother survived the Battle and now serves the Shadow Dragon voluntarily. Hiraki longs to help his brother's soul find rest, but he knows that he can best serve his family and clan at Shinden Gyokuei.



IMPORTANT SOSHI NPCs

SOSHI EIJI, SCORPION CLAN MANIPULATOR

Soshi Eiji has many acquaintances and allies among the courts, but few would consider him a friend. He is an acerbic, sarcastic, condescending man who takes obvious pleasure in manipulating and belittling others. As an honored student at the Dojo of Lies he is quite adept at getting what he wants even from his enemies, and will do what he needs to do to succeed.

Eiji is the youngest son of a powerful Soshi lord. While he showed great wit and cunning from an early age, his father made it clear that it would be his elder brother, Ippei, who would inherit the family's holdings. Eiji was doomed to obscurity. His elder brother, in the meantime, was a lazy man with no ambitions beyond charming the local geisha with impressive gifts. While Eiji squandered his meager inheritance on favors to train at the Dojo of Lies, Ippei saw no need to bother with such training. Ippei's future would be bright no matter what he did, and he often mocked Eiji for working so hard to scrape out a future.

Eiji's soul was sickened by the thought that his potential could be crippled by an accident of birth while Ippei wanted for nothing and wasted so much. He endured Ippei's insults calmly, hiding behind a facade of tolerance, and all the while plotted his revenge. When the War of Spirits came, Eiji was called upon as a recruiter, riding forth to deliver the Emperor's edicts and call inactive samurai into duty. It was a dangerous duty, sometimes demanding that Eiji ride into lands that had already fallen into the Steel Chrysanthemum's hands. Again, Ippei mocked his younger brother. He had used his wealth to draw upon favors from the Imperial Families, insuring that he would be allowed to avoid combat.

Eiji had had enough. Stealing into the recruiting headquarters of Otosan Uchi, he destroyed the documents that protected his brother from active duty. He replaced them with forgeries of his own design, ordering that Ippei be reassigned to the Dragon/Phoenix border, where the fighting was heaviest. One month later, despite his feeble protestations, Soshi Ippei was called to battle for the first time. He did not return. Soshi Eiji received the bloodied daisho and ash-filled urn with grim satisfaction, and assumed control of his dead brother's holdings.

Through a careful campaign of manipulation, cruelty, and blackmail, Eiji quadrupled his family's holdings. He won great respect and admiration from his clan, rising swiftly through the court's ranks, though he found no joy in his success. At the end of the War of Spirits, Soshi Eiji was rewarded for his guile with the position of Scorpion ambassador to the Crane.

Eiji accepted the mission graciously, though he left later than he had intended; arranging for attendants to care for his estates over the winter took time. During his journey to Kyuden Doji, the snows set in early. Eiji was trapped in a howling blizzard, unable to see the road around him. He became separated from his entourage, wandering the wilderness alone. Eiji knew then that he would die, and in what he thought would be his final moments he regretted having lived such a wicked life.



To his surprise, Eiji stumbled upon a young girl in the woods. She was hauntingly beautiful, though clad only in scraps of torn clothing. Dressed as she was, it was obvious that she would not survive the blizzard. Impulsively, Eiji removed his thick woolen cloak and offered it to the girl. She was deeply touched by his selfless gesture, but returned the cloak to him and guided him from the woods, seemingly unaffected by the cold. Eiji was surprised to see that the forest where he had become lost was nearly within sight of Kyuden Doji.

Entranced by the mysterious girl, Eiji begged her to come with him. She refused, telling him that she was not human, but a kitsune. Eiji did not care, and insisted once again that she come with him to Kyuden Doji. Again, she refused, for alone without her family there would be no place for her in the human world. A third time Eiji insisted, for he knew that he loved her. She would not be alone — she would be his wife. She agreed, so long as he told no one of her true origins.

The kitsune took the name Kiyo, though her husband always calls her by the name she called herself when they met — Snowflake. Eiji truly loves her; he is courteous, kind, and loving toward her and keeps her secret zealously. When she is not with him, he feels hollow. All the titles, wealth, and commendations he has earned are nothing beside her sincere, innocent love. Eiji continues to treat others with ruthlessness. He knows that it disturbs Snowflake, but he also knows that he cannot afford to show mercy or his enemies will destroy him for his weakness. He has done his best to keep her ignorant of his work.

After the attack on Otosan Uchi, Snowflake became ill. A terrible fever settled upon her and she refused to allow any shugenja to heal her. Eventually, Eiji received an anonymous letter offering aid without the use of shugenja. The letter implied that the sender knew of Kiyo's inhuman origins, and would keep silent on the matter in return for future favors.

Desperate, Eiji agreed. Two days later, three hooded figures arrived. They cured Snowflake of her fever and departed, leaving Eiji instructions on how to contact them for payment. Eiji has realized, to his horror, that he has become indebted to the Shadowed Tower. He cannot see a way to free himself without risking Snowflake's secret and her life. Given the choice between serving his clan and saving his love, Eiji knows that he must choose Snowflake.

It is not a choice he looks forward to making...

SOSHI EIJI

Male human Scorpion, Courtier 10: CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d6+10; hp 54; Init: +0; Spd 30 ft.; Atk wakizashi +8 melee, 1d6+2 damage; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 14); SQ Class Skill — Innuendo (family bonus), Courtier Abilities (Shallow Waters, Voice, Your Life is Mine), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth, Honor 0 (1); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 17 (19); Maximum Void: 5; Height: 5 ft. 4 in.

Dojo: Dojo of Lies; *Kata:* None

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Ashalan, High Rokugani, Mekhem, Rokugani, Senpet), Bluff +23, Decipher Script +14, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +22, Forgery +8, Games (Sadane) +16, Gather Information +23, Hide +8, Innuendo +23 (send) +16 (receive), Intimidate +22, Knowledge (Chikushudo) +8, Knowledge (etiquette) +11, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +11, Listen +13, Move Silently +8, Perform +14, Search +14, Sense Motive +20, Spot +13; Depths of the Void, Iron Will, Leadership (14), Perceived Honor, Political Maneuvering, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Versatile (Forgery, Hide, Knowledge (Chikushudo), Move Silently), Void Use.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +1, bracers of armor +2, circlet of persuasion, haori of charisma +2, ring of protection +1, wakizashi.

SOSHI EIJI

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 4

Dojo: Dojo of Lies

Honor: 0.4 (1.4)

Glory: 4.7

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Heartless, Perceived Honor (1 rank)

Disadvantages: Insensitive, Spoiled, True Love (Snowflake)

Skills: Acting 5, Cipher 5, Courtier 5, Diplomacy 6, Etiquette 6, Forgery 4, Gossip 5, Investigation 6, Law 5, Manipulation 7, Poetry 4, Sadane 4, Seduction 5, Sincerity 7, Stealth 3

Kata: None

SOSHI KIYO, "SNOWFLAKE"

Snowflake was always an investigative sort of kitsune. She wandered the edges of Chikushudo, greeting other spirits with innocent curiosity and making friends wherever she traveled. Eventually, she decided that she would venture into the Realm of Mortals. The journey was not easy, and like all shapeshifters she was required to bind herself with powerful taboos to protect her immortal spirit from the mortal realm's influence.

One of these promises was that Snowflake would never allow elemental magic to be cast upon her. She also swore that every question she was posed would be answered with another question. Third, she promised that within one year she would find and marry a worthy mortal.

Lady Kitsune, the greatest of the fox-spirits, warned Snowflake before she left that the world of men was dangerous. If she was not careful, she would lose herself to mortal violence, sin, and corruption. Snowflake was unconvinced. She knew that Rokugan held great peril, but she had also heard tales of great heroes. She wanted to go to this Empire, to meet these heroes.

Unfortunately for Snowflake, the first man she met was no hero. In a raging blizzard she found Soshi Eiji. When the young courtier offered his own cloak to warm her, an act that surely would have resulted in his own death by exposure, she believed that he was the worthy man who would become her husband. On that day she took the name Kiyo and adopted her guise as a mortal.

Sometimes Snowflake wonders if she made the right choice. She knows that Eiji is often a wicked man. Though he does his best to hide his true nature from her, she has seen the pain and misery he causes. And yet, she will always remember that Eiji risked his own life to save her when he did not even know her. She sees the love in his eyes when he looks upon her, and she knows that he is not wholly evil — not yet. She knows that there is kindness deep within him. She knows that he is worthy. She knows that, given time, she can warm his cold heart and change his ways.

Sadly, time is the one thing she does not have. In three more months Kiyo's taboo will be broken. If she cannot help Eiji overcome his dishonorable nature and prove himself a hero, her own existence will be forfeit.

SOSHI KIYO

Female kitsune Scorpion, Courtier 6: CR 6; Medium-size fey (spirit); HD 6d6; hp 30; Init: +3; Spd 30 ft.; Atk tanto +3 melee, 1d4 damage; AC 13 (touch 13, flat-footed 10); SQ Courtier Abilities (Taunt and Rally), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth, kitsune qualities, shapeshifter abilities (Alias, Animal Tongue, Ghost Tongue, Pack Soul, Silver Tongue), spirit qualities, taboos (cannot allow shugenja to use magic on her, must answer questions with questions, must marry a worthy human); Honor 3; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +14; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 21; Ht: 5'.

Dojo: None; *Kata:* None

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Chikushudo, High Rokugani, Naga, Rokugani), Bluff +20, Diplomacy +22, Disguise +16, Games (Go) +9, Gather Information +18, Heal +8, Hide +5, Knowledge (etiquette) +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Listen +12, Move Silently +5, Perform +15, Sense Motive +12, Spot +12; Iron Will, Soul of the Heavens (x3), Versatile (Disguise, Heal).

Possessions: haori of resistance +2, feet of the kitsune.

SOSHI KIYO

Earth: 2

Water: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 4

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 2

Dojo: None

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 2.1



Advantages: Idealistic

Disadvantages: True Love (Soshi Eiji)

Shapeshifter Abilities: Alias, Animal Tongue, Ghost Tongue, Pack Soul, Silver Tongue

Taboos: Cannot allow shugenja to use magic on her, must answer questions with questions, must marry a worthy human.

Skills: Acting 4, Courtier 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Go 2, Gossip 3, Investigation 4, Law 2, Medicine 2, Sincerity 3, Seduction 2, Poison 1, Stealth 2

SOSHI UIDORI, SOSHI FAMILY DAIMYO

At twenty-six, Soshi Uidori is young for a daimyo of a shugenja family. She has served in the role for the ten years since her mother and father were slain in the War of Spirits. Despite her inexperience, Uidori has proven to be an efficient leader. She has a sharp, agile mind and is expert on a variety of subjects. Though she is a terrible, powerful enemy, she can be quite charming when she needs to be. Even the kami are enchanted by her pleasant demeanor. When her family requires her, she always arrives swiftly, aware of danger even before it arises. Through her sister Yukimi, Uidori keeps close tabs on the Dojo of the Closed Eye and takes the most promising students into her personal instruction.

Not surprisingly, there is a secret behind Uidori's great success as a daimyo. When she was born, she was the eldest of triplets, born to daimyo Soshi Taoshi and his wife, Mutsumi. Among the Scorpion, the birth of triplets is seen as an ill

omen. Taoshi did not wish his children to be born under such a dark cloud, so he quickly concealed all knowledge of the event. He used his magic to wipe all memories of the youngest triplet from the memory of those present at the birth, including his own wife. With a second spell, he escaped along the passages of the Way, carrying the baby away to a hidden tower deep in the mountains.

A less compassionate man might have slain the third child; Taoshi instead raised her in secret, naming her Miroko. When she grew older, he told her of her sisters, and even occasionally replaced Miroko with one sister or the other so that none would be forced to grow up in solitude. Taking one another's places soon became something of a game to Uidori, Yukimi, and Miroko. It was a game that the three of them played against the rest of the world, while their father looked on in pride. Before he left to fight in the War of Spirits, Taoshi gave the sisters three amulets, so that each could speak to the others regardless of distance.

When Taoshi died, the sisters decided to put their game to a more serious use. Miroko's existence was still unknown by any others. When the need arose, she was always prepared to take Yukimi's duties at the Dojo of the Closed Eye, or to rule the clan in Uidori's stead. Likewise, Uidori and Yukimi both became familiar with each other's lives and habits, and could take one another's place in an instant.

The arrangement works well for the triplets, as each can draw upon another's strengths. Uidori possesses grace, charm, and diplomatic ability that make her well suited as daimyo. Yukimi's mastery of magic is unmatched, and thus her role as

the dojo of the Closed Eye's sensei is only natural. Miroko is a talented thief and impersonator and a deadly hand-to-hand combatant. She serves as her sisters' eyes and ears, assuming their identities when they need to move outside Shiro no Soshi unseen.

Together, Uidori and her sisters represent the best that the Soshi family has to offer. They are powerful, versatile, and unpredictable. By relying upon the strength of many, they have become a powerful whole.

AMULET OF THE SOSHI SISTERS

These simple silver amulets were created by Soshi Taoshi. Soshi Yukimi, Soshi Uidori, and Soshi Miroko each bear one. Each amulet is different, bearing the symbol of an eye (Yukimi), a hawk in flight (Uidori), or a sheathed dagger (Miroko). The amulets only work for Soshi family members, and allow each wearer to communicate telepathically with the wearers of the other two amulets regardless of distance or obstruction. The sisters typically keep their amulets concealed so that the differences between them will not be noticed when they are in disguise.

D20 SYSTEM:

In addition to the telepathic abilities mentioned above, wearing the amulet grants a +10 circumstance bonus to all Disguise checks when attempting to impersonate one of the individuals wearing the other amulets, so long as that person is aware that you are doing so and does not mind. (In other words, the target in question can telepathically provide pointers and advice to aid your disguise attempt.)

Caster level: 6th; Prerequisites: detect thoughts, creator must be from the Soshi family; Market Price: 2,000 gp; Weight: —.

LSR RPG 2E:

In addition to the telepathic abilities mentioned above, wearing the amulet grants five Free Raises on all Acting rolls when attempting to impersonate an individual wearing another amulet, so long as that person is aware that you are doing so and does not mind. (In other words, the target in question can telepathically provide pointers and advice to aid your disguise attempt.)

SOSHI UIDORI

Female human Phoenix Shugenja 7/Ninja 5: CR 12; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 12d6+24; hp 69; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk wakizashi+7/+2 melee, 1d6 damage; SA Sneak attack +3d6 damage; SQ Class skill — Innuendo (family bonus), Elemental focus (Air), Ninja Dodge +2, Poison Use, Sense Elements, Speed of Darkness; Honor: 3; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 20 (22); Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 5 in.

Dojo: Dojo of the Closed Eye.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Ashalan, High Rokugani, Kami, Rokugani) Concentration +12, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +15, Innuendo +12 (send) +5 (receive), Knowledge

(arcana) +12, Knowledge (Fortunes) +12, Knowledge (Shintao) +12, Listen +8, Scry +12, Spellcraft +12, Spot +8; Blessing of Air, Chosen By the Kami, Elemental Insight, Friendly Kami, Medium, Void Use.

Spells per Day (6/8/8/5; base DC 18 + spell level for Air spells, 16 for other spells; Elemental Focus — Air, Soshi School): 0-Level — commune with elements, daze, detect magic, flash of insight, flight of doves, ghost sound, guidance, read magic; 1st — change self, cure light wounds, detect snares and pits, expeditious retreat, eye shall not see, obscuring mist, quiescence of air; 2nd — detect thoughts, importune kami II, know the shadows, minor image, reflecting mirror; 3rd — clairsentience/clairvoyance, glyph of warding, invisibility.

Possessions: amulet of the Soshi sisters (see sidebar), bracers of armor +3, haori of charisma +2, haori of resistance +2, Murlynd's spoon, ring of counterspells, wakizashi.

SOSHI UIDORI

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 5

Void: 4

School/Rank: Soshi Shugenja 4

Dojo: Dojo of the Closed Eye

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 7.0

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Blessing of Air, Friendly Kami, Great Potential (Air spells), Medium, True Friends (Miroko, Yukimi)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (triplets), Unluck (2 ranks)

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) By the Light of Lord Moon, Commune*, Evil Ward, Eye Shall Not See*, False Face*, Fires of Purity, Mists of Illusion*, Path to Inner Peace, Reflective Pool, Sacred Ground, Secrets on the Wind*, Sense*, Slayer's Knives, Summon Fog, Summon*, Symbol of Air

Skills: Acting 5, Calligraphy 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Meditation 6, Shintao 3, Sincerity 5

VASSALS OF THE SOSHI FAMILY

THE NANBU

In the year 153, Soshi Saibankan drafted the charter under which the Emperor's enforcers, the Emerald Magistrates, would operate. An accomplished courtier and administrator, Saibankan saved countless lives by efficiently running the Emerald Magistrates. Naturally, his success earned him many enemies.

While traveling through Otosan Uchi at night on official business, Saibankan was ambushed by a group of armed thugs. His yojimbo was stabbed in the back, slain instantly. Saibankan drew his sword but found himself heavily outnumbered. Then, to his surprise, a band of peasants came to his rescue. Their leader, Nanbu, was a simple budoka who had always admired Saibankan. Seeing the legendary magistrate in trouble, he rallied his fellows and came to his aid.

Saibankan survived the attack because of their help, and rewarded Nanbu and his fellows by granting them positions in his personal guard. Over the next twenty years, Nanbu and the others would perform many tasks for Saibankan and the Emerald Magistrates, tasks that were beneath a samurai but still vitally important. After raising his son in Saibankan's service, Nanbu finally died on an assignment for his lord, holding off a group of bandits while a messenger escaped to bring word of their location to Saibankan.

Nanbu's son, named for his father, continued to serve Saibankan. When Saibankan died, he worked for his daughter, Soshi Sayoko. Sayoko was a shugenja, not an Emerald Magistrate, and despised the peasant who followed her with such mindless loyalty. Despite her contempt, Nanbu served Sayoko relentlessly, and nearly died uncovering a rival's plot to poison her. Sayoko realized the asset she had squandered, and used her own magic to snatch Nanbu from the brink of death.

Sayoko thereafter treated Nanbu with the respect due a loyal servant. She promised him that so long as his sons carried his name, that they would serve his family. The Nanbu continued to serve the Soshi loyally, and a century later the Soshi daimyo proclaimed them an official vassal family. They were given a small keep in a secluded valley. Though they guarded the Soshi farmlands and produced wealth for their Soshi masters, the Nanbu eventually became little more than a note in the Scorpion tax collectors' journals.

As they were rarely called for duty, the Nanbu became rustic, backwoods samurai. While they still trained as bushi, the Nanbu rarely saw combat, or even a member of another clan, for nearly seven hundred years. Despite their isolation, their dedication to the Soshi was unquestioned, and they practiced the samurai arts without fail.

In late 1123, the Nanbu were dissolved following the Scorpion Clan's attempted coup in Otsan Uchi. Though the Nanbu had not participated in the Coup, they were not above the Imperial Legions' vengeance. The Nanbu daimyo, Nanbu Tsuchiya, bought the lives of his family with his own, committing seppuku to convince the Emerald Magistrates of his family's innocence through ignorance. His heir, Nanbu Tzurui, joined Toturi as a ronin during the Clan War, and later became a founding member of Toku's Monkey Clan.

After Tzurui's death during the final days of the War of Spirits, his friend and daimyo Toku sent a request to the new Soshi daimyo, Uidori. Several months later, Tzurui's daughter was invited to take over Shiro Nanbu and its holdings, with the Soshi's blessings. Since then, Nanbu Kochoko and her small group of followers have restored life to the valley that had lain fallow for so long.

Before the Coup, the Nanbu were a parochial family, with little knowledge or influence regarding the rest of Rokugan. None outside the Scorpion, and few within the clan, knew or cared about them. The family was content to oversee their land and peasantry, and the Empire was content to ignore them.

After their reformation, however, the Nanbu have chosen to take a much more active role in the world. Their daimyo, Kochoko, regularly visits Shiro Soshi, and has even had an audience with Bayushi Yojiro. She corresponds frequently with her friends in the Imperial Families and the Monkey Clan, most notably Toku's own daughter, Miyako.

NANBU KOCHOKO, FAMILY DAIMYO

[Courtier 4/Samurai 3; Monkey Bushi 2/Bayushi Courtier 1]

Kochoko, born Nanbu Kochohime, was sent to a Shintao monastery to be kept safe when the family was dissolved. Her time with the monks taught her patience. She was recalled by her father once he found a safe home among the Monkey, and raised among the strange wisdom of that Minor Clan. She has few ambitions outside of protecting her fledgling family, and her greatest desire is to see her family's holdings restored and made fertile again. Although she would never admit it, she harbors a slight grudge against her clan for abandoning her family during the Coup, and it is for this reason that she keeps abreast of goings-on within the Scorpion.

SHIRO NANBU

To refer to the Nanbu estates as a "Shiro" is optimistic. A small keep, the Nanbu family's home is little more than a series of farmhouses, enough to house the Nanbu and their peasants.

When Kochoko returned to Shiro Nanbu, she began a search for any surviving family members. Fewer than a dozen surfaced, mostly old men and women. A few Monkey samurai, former students of Tzurui, accompanied her. Ostensibly they had come until the Nanbu are on their feet, but after eight years they're still here. Kochoko is trying to rebuild the family, and any young samurai who prove themselves to her stand a good chance of being offered a place in it.

THE NANBU FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skills: Gather Information

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork nagamaki
2. 300 Koku

THE NANBU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Perception

Glory: 0.5

Special: Nanbu who attend the Bayushi Bushi School may choose to give up Poison or Sincerity from their beginning skills to increase their Defense to 2 ranks.

SOSHI MECHANICS

NEW ANCESTORS

Unconventional though they may be, the Soshi are a family of shugenja, with all the reverence for their ancestors that such a role entails. Because the Soshi have maintained such a low profile throughout history, the ancestors they revere are often unknown to those outside the clan. The Soshi know, however, that glory and destiny are not the same.

SOSHI TAKASHO

A talented shugenja and magistrate, Soshi Takasho spent much of his life administering the Ryoko province of his father. In the sixth century, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Rikoji became suspicious that the blades Asahina Yajinden had forged as gifts for many clan champions had played a role in several recent deaths. Owning one such blade himself (which he had never touched), Rikoji summoned Takasho to his palace and commanded him to find Yajinden, who had recently disappeared in Otosan Uchi.

Takasho's investigation in Otosan Uchi, alongside Imperial legionnaire Akodo Minobe, eventually exposed the Bloodspeaker's horror and treachery. While Minobe led his fellow Legionnaires against Iuchiban's undead creations, Takasho's cunning and insightful mind found the Bloodspeaker's escape route, where he laid the blood sorcerer low with a powerful spell, allowing the Emperor's forces to apprehend him.

Takasho was given a high-ranking position in the Imperial Magistrates, and eventually became one of the chief assistants to the Emerald Champion. Along with his ancestor Soshi Saibankan, he is still among the best-known Soshi in the Empire's history. His guiding spirit remains active among his family, watching over the most cunning and perceptive of his descendants.



EVER WATCHFUL

SCORPION ANCESTOR: SOSHI TAKASHO

You are far more perceptive than those around you.

Benefit: When spending a Void Point on any Listen, Search, Sense Motive, or Spot check, the benefits are doubled. This is cumulative with any increased Void effects such as those conferred by the Kitsuki's Method feat.

ANCESTOR: SOSHI TAKASHO

(5 POINTS)

The guiding spirit of Soshi Takasho subtly draws his descendants' attention to minute details that they might otherwise miss, increasing their powers of perception to levels far beyond the norm. Descendants of Takasho may keep one additional die on any Perception rolls. Any Void Point spent on a Perception-related roll adds two dice instead of one.

SOSHI SEIRYOKU

If ever there has been a life of more thwarted potential than that of Soshi Seiryoku, then that poor soul has escaped the notice of Scorpion historians. Records of her gempukku show that she was an extremely talented shugenja, loved by the spirits. Great things were expected of her, and teachers and family lavished praise upon her. Quieter accounts say that the adoration caused Seiryoku to grow careless and arrogant.

On a trip to assume control of her family's opium cartel, Soshi Seiryoku was kidnapped by a Kolat splinter sect. She was tortured relentlessly until she willingly gave her name to an oni. After that, the Kolat owned not only her body, but her soul. She struggled against them for years, never giving in to the demon within her, but was eventually consumed and damned to Jigoku forever.

Forever was surprisingly brief. Before Seiryoku's soul could be torn asunder by the dark forces of that malevolent realm, she was freed by the Blessed Guard of Yomi, the souls of honorable samurai who considered it their duty to rescue even the most loathsome human souls from Jigoku. Imprisoned within Yomi to meditate upon the enormity of her sins, Seiryoku learned to reach through the veil to Ningen-do, the mortal realm. Now she counsels others not only to avoid the mistakes she made, but to avenge her tragic life.

COLD & VENGEFUL

SCORPION ANCESTOR: SOSHI SEIRYOKU

You long to avenge your ancestor's persecutors, the Shadowlands and the Kolat.

Benefit: You gain a +1 circumstance bonus to all attack rolls versus all Shadowlands creatures and versus any opponent with the Shadowlands subtype or affiliated with the Kolat in any way. You must declare when you intend to gain this bonus, and if you attempt to apply this bonus against an opponent who is innocent of the association, you lose the ability to use this feat for one week per Hit Die of the target.

ANCESTOR: SOSHI SEIRYOKU

(6 POINTS)

Descendants of Soshi Seiryoku gain her undying hatred of those who willingly sell their souls to darkness, and for the enigmatic Kolat. When the character genuinely believes an opponent is Shadowlands Tainted or a Kolat member, he may attempt to call upon this ancestor's power. If the target is guilty of the association, the character rolls one additional die for all attack and damage rolls against that target. If the character attempts to use this ability against a target innocent of any association with the Shadowlands or Kolat, the character loses the ability to use this bonus for a period of time equal to one week per rank of Insight the opponent possessed.

SOSHI BUREZU

The Scorpion's historical records hold precious little information on Soshi Burezu, and it was not until the War against the Darkness ended that scholars made any significant attempt to discover more about this mysterious individual. History tells of a surly young man, the son of Soshi and a bride who died during childbirth. Much of his early life was spent in seclusion, as he was known to be of notoriously weak constitution. When Soshi died many years later, control of the

family passed to the virtually unknown Burezu, who was 25 at the time. Many Scorpion feared that the young man would prove incapable of managing the family's affairs.

Although Burezu proved himself to be only an adequate daimyo, the clan was shocked to discover what an exceptional teacher he was. His time in seclusion allowed him to master intricacies of his father's unique magical style that no other student had ever been able to reproduce. Further, his patient and insightful instruction allowed him to pass the secrets of these abilities on to his students, contributing a great deal to the particular brand of magic that the Soshi would practice for over a thousand years.

In truth, Burezu was the child of Shosuro (who later became Soshi). Some speculate that Bayushi may have been his father, but there is no way to confirm this. Regardless of his parentage, Burezu doubtless received the Lying Darkness's power from his mother, and this greatly attributed to his reputation as one of the most powerful and innovative shugenja of his age. Upon his death, Burezu's spirit ascended to Yomi, where it was cleansed of its Darkness affliction. His descendants have the slightest hint of Shadow ability without actually having been consumed by that now-defunct entity.

DARK HERITAGE

ANCESTOR: SOSHI BUREZU

You possess the vaguest hint of the Lying Darkness's power through your ancestor's bloodline.

Benefit: You gain damage resistance -/1. Magic and any weapons created with crystal ignore this effect. Unlike other Ancestor feats, this feat may be taken multiple times, so long as it is first taken at 1st level. Each time it is taken increases the DR by 1. If this damage resistance ever exceeds 4, you gain the Darkness subtype (see *Creatures of Rokugan*,™ pages 4-5) and are vulnerable to all effects that normally target creatures of that type.

ANCESTOR: SOSHI BUREZU

(4 POINTS)

Burezu's descendants are as hardy as the Darkness's minions, turning aside attacks that should kill them. The character gains a Carapace rating of 2. This rating may be increased through experience points. The cost is equal to the next level ×5. For example, a character could spend 15 experience points to increase his Carapace rating to 3. If this Carapace rating ever exceeds 4, the character gains one Shadow Point.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

THE SCARLET ARMOR OF ILLUSION

This set of *great armor* +5 is a heavily enchanted minor artifact. While it weighs as much as any other set of great armor, it has no armor check penalties and can take on the form of any clothing or adornment that the wearer desires, in any color or combination of colors. Its wearer is constantly under the effects of *true seeing* and *freedom of movement* spells. Once per day, the wearer may, as a free action, activate the air kami's

protection. This protection acts as *blessings of Jizo* cast by a 15th level caster, canceling all of the armor's other magical effects (other than its +5 enhancement) until the protection effect ends or is cancelled by the wearer. Finally, Air spells are cast by the wearer as if he were one level higher.

THE SCARLET ARMOR OF ILLUSION

This heavy armor is a heavily enchanted nemuranai passed down for generations. The Scarlet Armor of Illusion's wearer gains a +20 to his or her TN to Be Hit. While it weighs as much as any other set of heavy armor, the wearer may ignore any penalties to attacking or performing actions for wearing heavy armor. The Scarlet Armor can take on the form of any adornment that the wearer desires, in any color or combination desired. Its wearer is considered to be constantly under the effects of Way of Still Waters and Perceive Harmony. Once per day the wearer may activate the air kami's protection. This protection cancels all the armor's other magical effects (except for the increase to the wearer's TN to Be Hit), including its shapeshifting effect, for ten rounds or until the wearer cancels the ability. During this time, the armor protects the wearer as if he were affected by the spell *Blessings of Jizo* with no Raises. Finally, if the wearer is a shugenja, they gain a Free Raise on any Air spells they are able to cast while in the armor.

SCORPION CLAN SECRET SPELLS

BEYOND NOTHING'S GRASP

Abjuration [Air]

Level: Shu 5

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 2 rounds/level or until discharged

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

White bands of light energy surround the subject, racing up and down his form. These bands of energy have multiple effects:

1. The subject of this spell gains a +4 deflection bonus to his AC against any creature with the Lying Darkness or Shadow subtypes.
2. Spells of 4th level or lower with the Shadow descriptor are negated by this spell's effects.
3. If desired, the subject of this spell may, as a free action, attempt to counterspell any spell with the Shadow descriptor that targets him. The dispel check is made normally. Whether the counterspell attempt succeeds or fails, use of this action discharges and ends the spell.

REVEAL THE DARKNESS

Divination [Air]

Level: Shu 1

As *detect evil*, except that the spell detects Lying Darkness or shadow creatures, spells and magic items, and you are vulnerable to an overwhelming shadow aura. It does not detect undead, but does detect creatures with the Shadowlands Taint if they also have Lying Darkness or Shadow subtypes.

SOSHI'S ANGER

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting] (Air)

Level: Shu 9

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 ft + 40 ft./level)

Target: 1 creature

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Will partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell allows you to strip all skill knowledge from one being for the spell's duration. The target is allowed a Will save at the time of casting to avoid the spell's effects. If the save is made, the target can use his skills normally, albeit at a -4 to all of his skill checks. With a failed save, the target is unable to use any ranks in any skills he possesses for the duration. All skill rolls made during this spell's duration by the affected target are made as if they were completely unskilled.

YUKIMI'S SMILE

Abjuration [Air]

Level: Shu 6

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 20 ft.

Area: 20 ft. radius, centered on you

Duration: 10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell was created by Soshi Yukimi during her first years as a sensei at the Dojo of the Closed Eye and is largely responsible for her ascension to the position of Master Sensei. You summon the air kami to suppress any spell or effect with the Illusion, Enchantment or Mind-Affecting descriptors within the area of effect. Spells cast by casters of higher level than you are entitled to an opposed caster level check to avoid this effect. You are informed which spells are currently subject to negation, whether or not the negation is successful, and who cast the negated spells. If you so desire, any spell being suppressed by Yukimi's smile may be reinstated or suppressed again instantly as a free action.

BEYOND NOTHING'S GRASP

Element: Air

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 minute

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Touch

With this spell, the caster protects the target from the Lying Darkness and its minions. White bands of light energy surround the subject, racing up and down his form. These bands of energy have several effects: First, the subject of this spell gains a +10 bonus to his TN to Be Hit by any creature with any number of Shadow Points. Second, spells of Mastery Level 3 or lower that were cast against the target by creatures with Shadow Points are negated by this spell. Finally, this spell will absorb the effects of one Shadow Bolt that strikes the target. Once a Shadow Bolt is absorbed, this spell immediately ends, its protection exhausted.

REVEAL THE DARKNESS

Element: Air

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: Self

Range: 10 ft. Radius

This spell allows the caster to detect the Lying Darkness's minions or any Shadow-related item. For the spell's duration, Reveal the Darkness divines the location of any creatures with any number of Shadow Points, though it will not specify exactly what they are (i.e. Shadow-branded characters, Shadow-Walkers, Goju family members, etc.). This spell can also help locate any item that was crafted by such creatures, detecting the Nothing's lingering touch upon them.

SOSHI'S ANGER

Element: Air

Mastery Level: 6

Duration: 1 minute

Area of Effect: 1 target

Range: 500 ft.

By summoning the Air kami's rage, the shugenja can temporarily reduce the skills of even the mightiest of opponents to nothing. As his memory is assaulted, the target of this spell forgets the training he has previously received, dropping all of his skills to Rank 0. In addition, the target may not use any of his school Techniques that involve skill rolls of any kind. He may still use Raw Trait rolls to attempt actions.

YUKIMI'S SMILE

Element: Air

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 10 minutes

Area of Effect: 20 ft. radius centered on the caster

Range: Self

This spell was created by Soshi Yukimi during her first years as a sensei at the Dojo of the Closed Eye and is largely responsible for her ascension to the position of Master Sensei. The shugenja casting this spell summons the power of Air to reveal and suppress any spells or abilities involving illusion, enchantment or the subversion of a subject's will. While this spell is in effect, the caster is aware of the spells being suppressed and may reinstate or suppress their effects again at will.

Raises may be used to extend the duration of this spell by 2 minutes per Raise.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE YOGO

NO SECRETS
PART FIVE

The candles burned low in the group's large chamber at the inn. The fading light cast long, sinister shadows throughout the room, even though Taneji had tried to place the candles throughout the room. Hatori suspected the rooms were designed for just such a purpose. The shadows hung heavily, and there was no way to be certain that someone was not lurking somewhere. Listening. Watching. Waiting.

"I thought I would be more comfortable here," Taneji said suddenly. "Ryoko Owari is the largest city in the Empire, after all, and with a Unicorn governor. But after what we've seen and heard, I don't think I'll be comfortable again until we're free of the Scorpion lands altogether."

Hatori nodded. The conflict that had embroiled the Scorpion was so vast and so convoluted that he found himself constantly re-examining the issue in a desperate attempt to find rhyme or reason in it. All he had done was confuse himself and his vassals until he no longer had the slightest inkling which side was worthy of support, if either.

Sekkou mirrored Hatori's thoughts almost exactly. "Why did Chian send us here? What purpose do we serve? I cannot tell who the heroes are supposed to be in this tale."

"There are none," Hatori replied heavily. "To an outsider, there are only two evils. I think I begin to agree that only the Scorpion can solve this problem for themselves."

A chuckling came from the hallway beyond Hatori's chamber. Under normal circumstances, such a sound would almost go unnoticed, for one often heard such things in the hallways of busy inns. The confusion and paranoia all three men were feeling caused them to jump at the sound, however, and Taneji even uncharacteristically reached for his blade.

"There is no need for that, my friends," a velvety voice offered from the hallway. The screen slid open and two figures stepped quickly inside. One was the familiar form of Chian, the monk who had set them all on this strange mission. The other was unknown. "If you can trust anyone here, surely it is me. Had I wished your deaths, I could have killed you before you ever left the Phoenix lands."

"Perhaps," said Sekkou calmly. It was the most composed and subtly threatening statement Hatori had ever heard from his vassal. "And perhaps not. It's best that such speculation goes unspoken, would you not agree?"

"As you wish," Chian said amiably. "I trust you have seen all that I promised you would?"

"That and more," Hatori said roughly. "I would know why you bade us come here, Chian. And I would know who your associate is as well. I am not in the habit of discussing sensitive material in front of strangers."

"How rude of me," the monk said with a slight smile. "This is an old friend I met while enjoying the marketplace today, the most honorable Yogo Ichiba."

There was a clattering sound as Taneji dropped the netsuke he had been toying with. His face slightly pale, he quickly picked the item up. "My apologies for interrupting, Chian-san."

The second Scorpion chuckled and gestured vaguely at Taneji. "This one knows me! Hmm, Otomo Taneji... would you happen

to be Otomo Shikan's son?" Seeing the mute nod, Ichiba smiled. "I dealt with some of your father's men on occasion. That was years back, of course."

"I remember," said Taneji quietly.

"They always do," nodded Ichiba, somewhat proudly.

"Yogo Ichiba. Are we to leave for the Yogo provinces, then?" Hatori asked. "Would you have us complete our little odyssey through the Scorpion lands with a visit to Yogo Shiro?"

"No. You have seen all that I hoped you would. Your mission, if it can be called such, is finished." Chian's mood was inscrutable.

"Is there something in the Yogo lands you do not wish us to see, then?" Sekkou inquired. "Perhaps the secret of this Shadowed Tower is there."

"Sekkou is right," Hatori insisted. "If we have come this far, I will not be dismissed like some common servant. I will hear a reason we are not to visit the Yogo provinces, or I will make the arrangements myself."

"Hatori," said Ichiba quietly, his smile now gone. "Is your father still alive?"

The aging historian frowned at the strange question. "My father died many years ago. I fail to see how this is relevant."

"And did the two of you reconcile before his death?"

There was a long pause, during which Hatori's countenance darkened. "No," he said finally. "He considered me the ultimate traitor to my name and family. He... he insisted on his deathbed that he had no son."

Ichiba nodded. "Now imagine that pain, that betrayal, on an enormous scale. An entire family. And extend that suffering and betrayal for ten centuries." He locked eyes with Hatori. "That is what it means to be a Yogo. We have endured pain such as yours for centuries. Visitors are not welcome in our home. Leave us to our grief."

Hatori reflected on this, then finally nodded briefly. "As you wish." He turned to glance at his two vassals. "But I still do not understand why you brought us here. It seems to serve no purpose. Why did you reveal this conflict to us, and what side is it that you wish us to support?"

The monk looked mildly surprised. "Why, neither, of course. I would have thought that you had come to this conclusion yourself by now."

"Neither?" asked Sekkou incredulously. "But how can we do that? Who is in the right?"

"Both, of course," Chian said calmly. "Bayushi Yojiro has led his clan to an unprecedented peak of power. Unfortunately, in doing so he has exposed a clan that has worked to remain unseen for over a thousand years."

"And the Tower," continued Ichiba, "seek only to restore the Scorpion's rightful place in the Empire, as all our ancestors would have wished. In doing so, however, they have broken the most sacred tenet of our beliefs: unquestioned loyalty."

Hatori shook his head. "You did not bring us here to expose this conflict at all, did you? You want it to remain hidden, even after all this."

"You are correct, Hatori-sama," Chian said lightly. "I only wished for you to witness firsthand the depth and scope of our internal conflict."

"Why?" asked Taneji quietly.

It was Ichiba who provided the answer. "So that you will stay away. And more importantly, so that you will direct others to do the same. You have seen what awaits those who become embroiled in this most intimate of disagreements. You will serve as our guardian, Hatori. Keep others away. This is a Scorpion matter."

Within the inn's darkened confines, with shadows crawling across the surface of every wall, and with two dangerous and enigmatic men standing before him awaiting an answer, there was little Hatori could do but agree.

THE YOGO PROVINCES

The smallest family in the Scorpion Clan, the Yogo control relatively little land. Over the centuries, they have learned that ambition inevitably leads to disaster, and thus they have come to accept what is theirs and aspire to little else. It has been over five hundred years since the Yogo attempted to annex any new holdings, and despite their relatively meager resources, they seem uninterested in expanding their borders.

MAJOR HOLDINGS

The Yogo have a decidedly different outlook from most shugenja families. They are not particularly concerned with the administration of shrines and temples beyond the minimum they deem necessary to perpetuate their status as shugenja. The Yogo consider it their primary duty to safeguard the Scorpion's secrets. All other concerns are secondary. The holdings they consider most important are those that aid them in that duty.

KAGOKI

(LOCATION 511)

Although located near the heart of Bayushi lands, the village of Kagoki falls within the Yogo family's provinces by a little less than a mile. Because the village is so important, it is always home to a large contingent of Bayushi soldiers, and most visitors to the Scorpion lands assume that it is a Bayushi holding. The Yogo care little for the opinions of outsiders, and have done nothing to correct this perception despite that it is they who do the lion's share of the work administering and tending to the village's affairs.

Kagoki sits in the middle of the most fertile Scorpion lands, and annually produces a surplus. The fields surrounding the village are so fertile and so extensive that the Yogo must bring in additional laborers during harvest season. Some have speculated that the Yogo use some form of questionable magic to enhance Kagoki's rice fields. While they cannot be bothered to refute such claims, the Yogo are well aware that the only result of such a practice would be the wholesale destruction of an extremely valuable resource. The only magic used in the fields around Kagoki are the same prayers to the Fortunes that all clans use.

In addition to its agricultural value, Kagoki also often serves as a sort of diplomatic headquarters for the Yogo. The village is reasonably accessible to the representatives of other families and clans. Any need the Yogo have to meet with the Bayushi or with the Crab or Crane clans is usually satisfied with a brief meeting held within the family's holdings in Kagoki.

THE YOGO ESTATE

Smaller yet more pleasant than Yogo Shiro, the family's estate at Kagoki is a major center for diplomacy. The most frequent guests are Bayushi, as the ruling Scorpion family maintains a considerable presence within the city. The post as administrator of this facility is only given to the most promising and shrewd

Yogo, as they are inevitably barraged with merchants and ambassadors attempting to arrange favorable trades for the food surplus from the city's fields. Similarly, these estates are home to the incredibly infrequent Winter Courts hosted by the Yogo family. As might be expected as a result of such importance, the estates are both extensive and well-furnished.

BAYUSHI MILIKO, AMBASSADOR TO THE YOGO COURT

[Courtier 12; Bayushi Courtier 4]

A former student of Bayushi Kaukatsu, Miliko fell out of favor following a disgraceful incident with a Kakita duelist in the Akodo court several years ago. While the Bayushi recognize that Miliko is a talented courtier, they have lost their faith in her abilities. In the Yogo court, she can serve the family with little chance of further disgrace. Her duties in Kagoki involve the appropriation of resources from the Yogo farms to serve the clan.

Miliko is not at all pleased with her current circumstances. At first she recognized that they were a result of her failure in court and resigned herself to her new duties. Over time, however, she has come to resent remaining in Kagoki. Miliko feels that she has redeemed herself for her previous failure and believes she should be returned to a proper court. To the Scorpion, however, she is far more useful where she is; they have long since orchestrated the downfall of those responsible for Miliko's fall from grace, including a prestigious Kakita and infamous Akodo, and many in Rokugan believe that Miliko is some dark mastermind pulling strings from the shadows. It is far more beneficial to the Scorpion to allow others to believe this than to allow Miliko to return to court.

YOGO SHIRO (LOCATION S7)

If there is a more sinister, uninviting castle than Yogo Shiro within Rokugan, it is said, surely such a place would be occupied only by ghosts and oni. The somewhat ironically named "Castle of Learning" is not visited often. Few people are interested in attending the infrequent Yogo court sessions, and even fewer are truly welcome. One week of each month a witch-hunter from the Kuni family or an Asako Inquisitor attends. The two groups alternate their visits so that each family sees the Yogo once every two months. This seemingly invasive practice was requested by the family daimyo in the Clan War's aftermath, when the Yogo were still widely reviled due to the traitor, Yogo Junzo.

Yogo Shiro squats in the worst lands in all the Scorpion holdings. The castle is built upon the Seikitsu Mountains' inner edge, and the plains that surround the entrance to the mountains are a desolate stretch of swampland. This area was specifically selected by the original Yogo not only because of his melancholy, but to ensure that he and his would be ensured privacy for many years to come. His plan was a resounding success: the Yogo rarely draw attention.

YOGO HATSUMI, WARD MASTER OF YOGO SHIRO

[Shugenja 14; Yogo Shugenja 5]

Although she is not the daimyo of her family or the sensei of her dojo, Yogo Hatsumi is nevertheless among the most powerful shugenja in the Scorpion lands. When members of other families require something to be protected, they always

request Hatsumi's assistance. She is owed countless favors by dozens of important individuals throughout the clan and the Empire. She has never called any of them in, but if the need arose she could easily command the aid of any Great Clan.

Hatsumi is surprisingly straightforward for a Scorpion. Many suspect her honesty is some sort of façade. Hatsumi does not use a traditional Scorpion mask, but rather carries a number of handled facemasks that she holds before her to represent her various moods.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters are sent to Yogo Shiro bearing a message to Yogo Hatsumi from their lord. Their orders are to deliver the message, then await her response. Their instructions have led them to believe that the message contains a request for Hatsumi to accompany them and perform some service for their lord.

Focus: Upon receiving the message the characters carry, Hatsumi and the other Yogo at Yogo Shiro grow cold toward the party. They are polite, but reserved.

Strike: Hatsumi had recently requested aid from the characters' lord. Despite her numerous services for him in the past, he does not feel indebted to her and has refused. This has placed the characters in the middle of what could become open conflict between their lord and the Yogo family.

TOWERS OF THE YOGO

If Yogo Shiro is characterized as sinister, then surely the Yogo Towers can be described only as intimidating. The Towers are less than a half-century old, as they were constructed to serve as a military outpost for the Imperial forces that occupied the Scorpion lands following their failed coup in 1123. Initially the Legions had planned to use existing Scorpion structures, but when nearly two entire Legions were killed by the smoke from the burning Shosuro Gardens, it was decided that new buildings would be constructed instead. The Yogo Towers are among the few such buildings that survived both the Clan War and the Scorpion's banishment across the Burning Sands.

Yogo Shiro hosts courts only infrequently, but no court has ever been held in the Yogo Towers. It is the shugenja equivalent of a military installation. Its sole purpose is as the primary school for the Yogo family, and it is rare indeed that any member of that family reaches retirement without having spent at least a portion of their time studying at the Towers.

HIGHWAYS OF THE YOGO PROVINCES

Lonesome Path (Connects S7 to S6 and S5) — This desolate road connects Yogo Shiro to Nihai Tower, the guard tower maintained by the Shosuro to guard the Yogo's privacy. The road winds through a vast swamp and numerous treacherous cliffs, ensuring that few wish to travel to the distant Yogo Shiro.

Koku Road (Connects S11 to S10) — So named because of the great amount of taxes that flow from Kagoki to Kyuden Bayushi, this is perhaps the most heavily patrolled road in Scorpion lands. Bandits attempting to prey upon the large shipments of rice and materials that move between the two locations find that they are hopelessly outmatched by the considerable guard placed on all such shipments.

YOGO IESHIGE, MASTER OF THE TOWERS

[Shugenja 17; Yogo Shugenja 5]

The position as Master of the Towers is among the most powerful within the Yogo family, and carries great influence with the other Scorpion families as well. It would be a simple matter to abuse that power, or to exploit it for personal gain. Fortunately for the Scorpion, Yogo Ieshige is not tempted by worldly concerns. He is driven by his vision for the future, a day when the Yogo will defeat the prejudice of others, even the Yogo Curse itself, and stand with the Isawa, Kitsu, Iuchi, and Asahina as equals. This is Ieshige's vision, and he will work toward it until the day of his death.

Other Yogo leaders have tremendous respect for Ieshige and all he has accomplished, but they also regard him with caution. His single-minded devotion is commendable, but it has been this same obsession that has caused the downfall of many Yogo in the past. So long as Ieshige continues to direct his instruction in the proper direction, there is no reason to doubt him. Yogo Koji is ever watchful, however, and should Ieshige begin to stray from the path, Koji will have him eliminated before his good name and deeds can be sullied by corruption.

THE YOGO CURSE

Since the first shugenja to bear their family name, all Yogo are born with a terrible curse lain by Fu Leng's own hand. One day, all Yogo will betray someone or something they love dearly, and thus far no one has found a way to counteract it.

With such a potent curse afflicting their bloodline, many might wonder how the Yogo family has survived for over a thousand years. The simple truth is that while mankind interprets "betrayal" in the most dramatic, far-reaching manner possible, destiny is often far less melodramatic. If a young man betrays his true love and marries another, then he has fulfilled the terms of his curse, even though the aftermath of such an action is relatively minor. Even if a child steals or breaks a family heirloom, this too is a betrayal. A side effect of the Yogo Curse that most non-Scorpion do not know is that an individual instinctively knows when they have fulfilled the Curse's terms. This is another aspect of Fu Leng's treachery, ensuring that the cursed individual is fully aware of the depth and breadth of his betrayal.

Obviously, there are scholars and archivists among the Yogo who track which individuals have fulfilled their Curses. Typically, the older one gets, the more dramatic the Curse's effects. Thus, those who have not yet manifested their Curse are increasingly shielded from important duties as they grow older in years. Unfortunately, there are those who choose to lie about the Curse rather than see their potential wane. Yogo Junzo claimed to have fulfilled the Curse at a young age when he betrayed his sensei to another Yogo instructor. Obviously, this was a lie he crafted to ensure his rightful place as daimyo. His arrogance and deceit nearly doomed the Empire.

THE CHAMBER OF CURSES

If the Yogo overlook the mistakes of their past, they will be doomed to repeat them as their poisoned karma recycles through the Celestial Order. Only through understanding the enormity of their misdeeds can the Yogo hope to free themselves of the dark magic that afflicts them.

This is the philosophy of a small group of Yogo who have been searching for a way to break the Curse. This group formed around several Yogo Towers sensei who shared a dislike of the Tansaku vassal family. Convinced that the vassal family was doing nothing to further the Curse's removal, these dissident sensei began researching maho and black magic in order to understand the nature of that which afflicted them. If the Curse's nature could be ascertained, they reasoned, then perhaps a means of reversing its effects could be found.

The shugenja responsible for this philosophical movement were secretive, of course, but it was impossible to keep secret indefinitely. The Kuni tsukai-sagasu and the Asako inquisitors may have been in distant lands, but the Yogo Kuroiban were in the Towers' own homeland. The initial discovery and investigation of this group resulted in a strange compromise: the philosophers were not practicing maho, merely studying it. Their interests and motivations were genuine, and their initial research was promising. Reluctantly, the Kuroiban stood back and allowed the shugenja to continue their work.

The materials being studied at the Towers were placed within a chamber beneath the structure, locked inside a series of wards more powerful than any created before them. Several Kuroiban are secretly active among the scholars, constantly searching for any sign of Taint or ill intent. If the scholars who study at the so-called Chamber of Curses ever show even the slightest sign of treachery, their entire organization will be eliminated in less than a day.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters are traveling through the Scorpion lands when they encounter a merchant being attacked by bandits. The merchant's only protection, a shugenja, lies dead at the scene as the characters arrive.

Focus: Assuming that the characters save the merchant, he spins an impressive tale. He is transporting sensitive cargo from Yogo Shiro bound for Ryoko Owari. The merchant does not know what the cargo is, only that it is important and needs to be delivered as soon as possible. The bandit attack killed his only protection, the shugenja assigned from Yogo Shiro to escort him to Ryoko Owari. He assures the characters that they will be amply rewarded if they assist him in reaching the city.

Strike: The merchant is a rogue scholar from the Yogo Towers. He has stolen an ancient maho text with the assistance of a Bloodspeaker cell in the Scorpion lands. He killed his partner, the shugenja, in order to take the artifact and sell it to a corrupt Kuni shugenja he knows. The Bloodspeakers are aware of his treachery and attempted to intercept the text before he could reach his contact in Ryoko Owari. The Kuroiban will also want to make sure that the man is stopped, and the Kuroiban are not in the habit of explaining themselves to outsiders.

KARANDETSU MARKET

While most of the Yogo's trade with other Scorpion families is conducted through the village of Kagoki, the bulk of their trade with other clans is coordinated through the Karandetsu Market. The market appeared during the Clan War when ronin merchants, many of whom bore a striking resemblance to former Scorpion merchants, gathered here. From the market, these "ronin" ranged all across Rokugan peddling their wares, returning periodically to discuss their findings with other merchants. If the Scorpion Clan benefited from this open exchange of information, it was doubtless purely coincidental.

Since the Scorpion's reformation and recent rise to power in the Empire's courts, the Karandetsu Market's role within the clan has diminished. With the Soshi and Shosuro families back in operation, the Karandetsu network of undercover merchants is not as effective by comparison. The market still serves its purpose, however, and in the years following the Clan War it was dramatically reorganized by Yogo Ichiba, a merchant considered to be among the most ruthless and manipulative Scorpion of that or any era.

The merchants of Karandetsu Market are a particularly devious and successful lot. They readily resort to illegal practices to ensure their continued livelihood as merchants. Many among the Scorpion suspect the Karandetsu merchants of criminal activities, but so long as they maintain a legitimate appearance and their efforts aid the clan, they gladly look the other way. In the meantime, the merchants continue to train new members and expand their operations.

YOGO SUTEBO

[Shugenja 9/Kuroiban 2; Yogo Shugenja 2, Kuroiban 1]

Given the sheer volume of materials that pass through Karandetsu Market, it stands to reason that corrupted Yogo could easily move illicit materials through the crowded maze of merchants and merchandise with little risk of discovery. The notion that corruption could arise from their lands is anathema to the Kuroiban, and they have stationed one of their agents at the Market. For the past six months, that position has been filled by Yogo Sutebo.

Sutebo is an intense, brooding young man who considers his assignment distasteful, but extremely important. He is well aware that his family has fallen into darkness once because of a failure of vigilance on the part of the Kuroiban, and he will not allow such a thing to occur again if he can prevent it. The merchants of Karandetsu believe he is a strict and irreproachable customs inspector, and do not suspect his dual nature. In the six months since his posting, Sutebo has not yet found any corrupted materials moving through the market, but he knows it is only a matter of time before he discovers the pipeline that delivers its foul cargo to the Shadowed Tower.

MINOR HOLDINGS

Minor holdings are generally left to the management of vassal families or even trusted peasant administrators. The Yogo have weightier matters to occupy their time than overseeing merchants and farmers.



BEIDEN

(LOCATION 58)

Once this small city was an extremely important Scorpion holding, the gateway for trade with the Empire's northern reaches. Dragon, Phoenix, and Lion merchants conducted their business in Beiden, and more traveled through the city on their way to the Crab and Crane lands to the south. This prosperity came with great risk, as the battles that periodically enveloped Beiden Pass inevitably involved the city in some fashion.

With the conclusion of the War of Spirits, the crucial crossroads at Beiden Pass was destroyed by a combination of Scorpion, Lion, and Phoenix shugenja. Suddenly, the clan's major trade route was completely closed off. Alternate routes were quickly identified, but the damage to the city of Beiden was done. Within months, the merchants and trading houses were gone, and the city was a pale shadow of its former glory.

With typical Scorpion efficiency, however, the Yogo have found new purpose for the city of Beiden. Although there is no evidence whatsoever to link the family to the activities, Beiden is a center for smugglers who traffic in illicit materials. The small mountain passes that remain open allow small groups or single individuals to move across the mountains discreetly. While this is virtually useless for trade, it is an ideal situation for smugglers. Forged documents, sensitive papers, and even small amounts of contraband such as illegal opium or gaijin artifacts can be quietly ushered across the mountains and delivered anywhere in northern Rokugan.

SHAMATE PASS

Although far too small to serve as a major route through the mountains as Beiden Pass did, the recently discovered Shamate Pass does permit small groups to pass through the Spine of the World Mountains. For the moment, only small diplomatic envoys or limited magistrate and merchant groups

may pass. In a rare example of diplomacy, the Scorpion scouts who discovered the pass informed the Lion of its existence and entered into an agreement wherein the Scorpion defend the northern entrance to the pass and the Lion defend the southern entrance.

The pass is named in honor of Matsu Shamate, a former Bayushi who married the renowned Lion officer, Matsu Hataki, and died shortly thereafter of mysterious causes. Hataki believed that his wife had been murdered by a jealous Scorpion lover, and searched the Empire for two years before confronting him in this pass. Though outnumbered by the Scorpion's ronin henchmen, Hataki avenged his love before succumbing to his wounds. He died surrounded by his fallen foes, preserving the honor of the Lion and the Scorpion at once. A wandering peasant, hiding in the nearby rocks, happened to witness the battle and carried word of it to Matsu Nimuro, who ordered that the pass be named in honor of Hataki's love. The Scorpion Champion agreed, and both clans agreed to use the pass in peace. Despite the growing alliance between the Ikoma family and Bayushi Kaukatsu, the majority in both clans are somewhat uncomfortable with the arrangement, but none are willing to countermand the orders of their respective champions.

MATSU HITARU

[Samurai 9; Matsu Bushi 3]

The Lion samurai who commands the honor guard on the Scorpion side of Shamate Pass is perhaps the dourest man in all of Rokugan. Only a few months ago, he lost his brother to the Scorpion. Far from being able to seek vengeance upon that hated clan, he has been relegated to guarding their interests. His fellow Matsu likewise have mixed feelings about their duties. The one thing that eases their hearts about living and working so close to Scorpion is the tale of Matsu Hataki's bravery. Each night the Matsu gather in their guardhouse, tell the tale of Matsu Hataki, Hitaru's cousin, and then drink to his honor.

Sometimes the Scorpion from the other end of the pass are allowed to stand by and listen. The Scorpion never fail to raise a cup in Hataki's honor. Hitaru wondered at first if they were truly sincere, but over the last few weeks he has come to wonder what they would have to gain by lying.

Perhaps some Scorpion are not as dishonorable and heartless as their reputation suggests.

BAYUSHI EITAROU

[Rogue 8; Bayushi Bushi 3]

The captain of the Scorpion honor guard in the Lion lands has earned the Matsu's respect, an accomplishment few Bayushi can claim. Eitarou's sister, Shamate, was murdered, and each family blamed the other, calling for blood. Eitarou knew that Shamate's husband Matsu Hataki could not be guilty of such a crime, and convinced his father not to pursue vengeance on the Lion. Hataki found the killer with Eitarou's subtle assistance, and thus the stain on the honor of both families was expunged.

Further, it was Eitarou who suggested the exchange of guards between the two clans, and together he and Hataki's cousin Hitaru were granted the honor of defending their siblings' memory. On the northern end, Eitarou guards the pass that bears his beloved sister's name with no thought of deceit or sabotage against the Matsu. At least, not yet.

DOKUGUMO MURA

An unremarkable village in virtually every way, Dokugumo Mura lies at the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains. No significant roads lead to the village, only a few minor paths in a constant state of disrepair. The village, while not particularly resourceful, produces enough crops to sustain its inhabitants and to meet its tax requirements. Providing all that is required of it as it does, the village is of little interest to the average Yogo.

As with so many Scorpion matters, Dokugumo Mura is far more than it seems. The swampy areas surrounding the village are densely populated with insects, and thus attract a particularly venomous species of red spider. The village's peasants have become quite familiar with methods of capturing and caring for these spiders and extracting their venom. The rare visitors to the village are often overwhelmed when they see the spiders crawling all over virtually everything in the village. Though their poison is deadly, the spiders' jaws are too weak to bite human beings, so the peasants do not fear them. Homes, carts, furniture, and even children are often seen with the spiders crawling across their shoulders or up and down their torsos. To the people of Dokugumo Mura, the spiders are as common as chickens or dragonflies. They rarely even notice the creatures.

The large quantities of spider venom that are gathered by the villagers are turned over to the Yogo with their bi-monthly taxes. Much of the venom is used in the Yogo's bizarre alchemical experiments, but not all. The family utilizes the remainder for far more nefarious purposes. The Yogo have been known to make a gift of large quantities of venom when meeting privately with Shosuro family members.

YOGO ARIKU, DOSHIN OF DOKUGUMO MURA

[Kumo Shugenja 12; Kumo Yogo Shugenja 4]

Upon his arrival in Dokugumo Mura many years ago, Yogo Ariku was eager to begin his duties. He was fresh from his gempukku and saw his appointment to the small village as the first step in a long climb to greatness among the Yogo magistrates. He often spoke of his dream to serve the clan and later the Empire as a high-ranking law officer, and his sincerity and devotion to duty impressed his superiors. Since that time, however, he has rarely been heard from, and has actually turned down promotions on two separate occasions. The magistrates he serves assume that a secluded life in a small village has robbed him of all ambition and good sense, so they leave him there to perform a duty no one else wants.

The real Yogo Ariku died six months after his arrival in Dokugumo Mura. His incredible powers of perception quickly deduced that something was amiss in the village, and he discovered a nest of kumo in the hills. Rather than risk exposure and lose their valuable position in the village, the kumo killed and devoured Ariku and substituted one of their own as his replacement. That was years ago, and thus far no one suspects that anything at all unusual is happening. Other than the spiders, of course.

THE KUMO NEST

Nestled deep in the foothills and rocks surrounding Dokugumo Mura is an ancient nest of kumo, a sinister race of shape-shifting spiders. These kumo are not like typical members of their species, as they prefer to dwell underground rather than in the gigantic webs their kind normally creates.



They have created a vast network of tunnels from which they can spring and capture their prey in a moment, returning instantly to the ground. The kumo prefer to prey upon wildlife, but also consume the bodies of dead villagers. A few of their brood masquerade as human morticians who arrange to transport all corpses to their lair for consumption.

The kumo are extremely protective of their home and "their" village. They realize that they have achieved an arrangement that perhaps no other member of their hated race has ever managed. The humans use the spiders, and the spiders use the humans. They will go to any lengths to protect it, including the murder and replacement of any individual who threatens their way of life. Yogo Arikū was one such individual, and that problem was dealt with satisfactorily.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Whether as part of their duty or purely as a favor to another, the characters are required to deliver a message to Yogo Arikū, the doshin of Dokugumo Mura. The trip is long and difficult, and the characters' arrival in the village will most likely be a disturbing one given the overwhelming number of tiny red spiders that fill the village.

Focus: Yogo Arikū is happy to see visitors, and proves a most hospitable host despite the meager accommodations he can offer. Once he receives the message the characters have for him, his mood darkens somewhat, but he still seems pleased. If asked, he quite conversationally reveals that his orders are to report to Yogo Shiro for reassignment.

Strike: The kumo are most displeased with this turn of events. They will attempt to fake Arikū's death in such a way that will leave the body hopelessly disfigured. Of course, to do this, they will require a body. They will most likely select a villager, unless a character seems to be a troublesome sort that the nest might be better off without...

EXTRA-TERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

The Yogo rarely take a protracted interest in things outside their borders. Considering their family's small size, they simply do not possess the resources necessary to maintain any significant number of extra-territorial holdings. There are only a handful of exceptions, each one of them unique and important to the family in its own way.

THE RYOKO OWARI PRISON

Perhaps the most unsavory locale in a city famous for them, the prison in Ryoko Owari is piously disregarded by virtually every samurai in the city. Everyone agrees that it is necessary and that it plays a vital role in the legal system that keeps the city functioning, but few care to enter or even look upon the building.

The prison is not only used by the city's magistrates, but sees a great deal of traffic from detainees from beyond its walls as well, as Ryoko Owari is the district and provincial capital. There are inevitably up to a dozen individuals awaiting justice. Unlike some other clans, the Scorpion are not at all hesitant to use torture to elicit a confession, particularly once they have decided they have the proper individual in custody. Of course, no samurai would dare stoop so low as to perform such a grisly, dishonorable deed, but given past experience, the Scorpion require a clan member to oversee the eta as they carry out their grim task. Generally, this witness is a Yogo, as they are used to accepting the tasks no other Scorpion desires.

YOGO SHIRIKO, WARDEN OF THE RYOKO OWARI PRISON

[Shugenja 9; Yogo Shugenja 3]

If passersby in Ryoko Owari are unfortunate enough to hear a scream escape the city prison's silenced walls, it is inevitably Yogo Shiriko's face that surfaces in their minds. If they are lucky, they shudder and move on. The unfortunate ones are plagued by nightmares. Shiriko is the most reviled woman in all of Ryoko Owari. Despite her beauty, those asked to describe her invariably remember twisted scars and a horrible scowl on her face at all times.

Shiriko's stigma stems from the fact that she personally oversees the torture of every inmate in the prison. Her emotionless demeanor as she patiently questions men and women in complete agony has unnerved even the hardest magistrates, and few wish to have anything to do with her once their business is complete.

THE YOGO SHUGENJA SCHOOL

As printed, the Yogo shugenja school on page 92 of *Oriental Adventures* is an Earth school. In order to more accurately represent the Yogo family, it is recommended that Yogo shugenja instead have their Elemental Focus in Air. Their school spells do not change; instead, a Yogo casts all of these Earth spells as Air spells. Yogo may pick alternate school spells from the Air school, rather than the Earth school. For example, Yogo Koji is a shugenja trained by the Yogo family. As his second level school spell, he selected *wind wall* (the second level Air school spell listed in *Rokugan*™) instead of *obscure object* (the second level Yogo school spell). He could not have selected *endurance* (the second level Earth school spell). He casts *obscure object* as an Air spell.

IMPORTANT YOGO NPCS

YOGO ICHIBA, SILK MERCHANT

Rapidly approaching his sixtieth year of service to the Scorpion Clan, Yogo Ichiba is perhaps the single most successful merchant patron the clan has ever known. His merchants have penetrated the trading circles of virtually every samurai family in Rokugan, and tens of thousands of crates, scrolls, and other merchandise bearing his chop are scattered all across the land. The few merchant patrons among the other Great Clans who do not know Yogo Ichiba are those who are not worth his time.

Ichiba's rise to prominence began early, in the years prior to the Scorpion Clan Coup, when he was a simple merchant. With precious few resources at his disposal, Ichiba had little to aid him in his efforts but honeyed words and a disarming smile. Those were not enough to earn the favor of those with whom he was trading, and his successes were few and far

between. In one particularly disappointing endeavor, Ichiba lost a lucrative deal to a Daidoji merchant. Not content with his victory, the Daidoji mocked Ichiba in front of several passers-by. While outwardly he maintained a self-effacing calm, something snapped deep inside Ichiba. That night, he administered a special poison to several large dogs and locked them in the stable with the Daidoji's steed and packhorses. The poison did not kill the dogs but drove them mad, causing them to slaughter every animal in the stable and then turn on each other. The next day, the Daidoji directed his outrage at the inn's owner for failing to supply adequate security while Ichiba quietly offered his condolences and took the Crane's place in the trade agreement.

Just to amuse himself, Ichiba also purchased the remains of the animals and sold them for a healthy profit to the local leatherworker. The saddle on Ichiba's own horse was made from that batch of leather.

That event was a turning point in Ichiba's life. He embraced the most ruthless, deceitful methods possible, utilizing them to brutal effect. In short order he became one of the clan's most successful patrons, and while few outside the clan liked or trusted him, many chose to trade with him for their own benefit. When the Coup's aftermath drove him into hiding, his many enemies gleefully tore his holdings apart, claiming what they wanted and destroying the rest. Ichiba watched and waited for his opportunity to return the favor, for he had relocated his most valuable merchandise to hidden caves in the Spine of the World Mountains months before the Coup. From the shadows, Ichiba and his agents methodically destroyed every one of his enemies, leaving them with no holdings, no wealth, and no honor. More than one committed seppuku to alleviate the shame they had brought upon their families. No one was more surprised than Ichiba when the Scorpion were reinstated, and he returned to business with far fewer competitors.

The Scorpion's exile to the Burning Sands did not affect Ichiba greatly. After surviving the trip across the desert, Ichiba ingratiated himself to the Senpet and served as a liaison rather than a miner. When the Scorpion eventually freed themselves, Ichiba took advantage of the contacts he had made and forged several lucrative deals on gaijin weapons, armor, and magic. He came out of the Scorpion exile one of the richest men in Rokugan.

Most of the time, the Scorpion leaders leave Ichiba to his own devices, as they know full well he will serve them best without their supervision. On occasion, however, Ichiba is given a name by a messenger from Yogo Shiro or Kyuden Bayushi. When this happens, Ichiba turns all other concerns over to his subordinates. From the moment he receives such a message, his only concern is the absolute and utter destruction of that individual. He spares no expense, and has even destroyed thousands of koku's worth of his own merchandise in his grandiose schemes of ruin. In the Scorpion's eyes, this is an unquestioned demonstration of Ichiba's loyalty. While Ichiba certainly is loyal, however, he does not ruin the enemies of the clan because he is ordered to do so. He does it because he enjoys it.

Now that Ichiba is approaching a time when he will have no choice but to retire, he has begun looking for a possible replacement. During his time in hiding following the Coup, he aided in establishing the Karandetsu Market, which has remained the seat of his power in the intervening years. He trains others there to use the methods he has perfected, and the vast majority of successful Scorpion merchant patrons have spent at least some of their time training at Karandetsu.

YOGO ICHIBA, SILK MERCHANT

Male human Scorpion Courtier 13: CR 13; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 13d6+26; hp 72; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 13); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+4, +3 tanto); SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Wealth, Talent, Style and Grace, Gossip, The Heart Speaks, Courtier Abilities (Scrutiny's Sweet Sting, Shallow Waters, Weakness is my Strength, Whisper from the Soul); Honor: 1; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 19, Cha 22; Height 5 ft. 1 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Naga, Nezumi), Appraise +21, Bluff +27/+31 (feint/social), Decipher Script +21, Diplomacy +29, Forgery +21, Gather Information +27, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (etiquette) +21, Knowledge (law) +21, Knowledge (Shintao) +12, Poison +21, Profession (merchant) +24, Sense Motive +20; Depths of the Void, Iron Will, Political Maneuvering, Skill Focus (Profession (merchant), Bluff), Versatile (Appraise, Forgery, Knowledge (law), Poison), Void Use, Way of the Scorpion

Possessions: *bracelets of armor* +3, *cloak of resistance* +2, +3 tanto, and whatever merchandise Ichiba has at the time.

YOGO ICHIBA, SILK MERCHANT

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 6

Air: 5

Awareness: 7

Void: 4

School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 4

Dojo: Kyuden Bayushi

Honor: 1.1

Glory: 4.8

Advantages: Allies (many), Blackmail (many), Precise Memory, Read Lips, Social Position (master of the Karandetsu Market), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Elderly, Greedy, Sworn Enemies (many)

Skills: Commerce 7, Courtier 5, Etiquette 5, Forgery 5, Investigation 4, Intimidation 4, Law 4, Poison 4, Shintao 3, Sincerity 6, Seduction 2

Kata: None.

YOGO KOJI, DAIMYO OF THE YOGO FAMILY

Other Scorpion regard Yogo Koji as simultaneously one of the most tragic and most heroic individuals his family has seen in generations. The Yogo Curse manifested in him in early middle age, and in such a way that he was left with virtually nothing: while he raced to save his wife and child from a sect of Moon cultists, he discovered that his father, the aged daimyo Yogo Masuhiro, was also a target. He raced back to save his father, but was too late. He learned the next day that his wife and child had been slain in his absence. No one would have been surprised if Koji had collapsed under such a blow; what man could recover from seeing all that he loved taken from him in a single day with no one to blame but himself?

Koji did recover. In fact, it was his strength in the face of such tragedy that allowed him to find a new purpose. The Kuroiban had been keeping watch over Koji for quite

some time, evaluating him for membership. When they saw that his Curse had manifested, and that he had emerged from the horror of that incident without a broken spirit, they knew that he would become one of them.

Koji was still very much a soul in anguish when the Kuroiban approached him. His strength and spirit refused to allow him to despair, but his pain had not yet healed. At first, he turned them away purely on reflex so that he might better deal with his wounds. The Kuroiban persisted, for while Koji did not realize it, they could not allow him to risk the secrecy of their order by walking free if he denied them. It was not until one of them offered him the chance to destroy the cult that had killed his family that he paused, then accepted.

Despite the hesitation at the time of his joining the Kuroiban, Koji threw himself into the task with a fervor that few in the order had ever witnessed. He excelled at their grisly work, and in less than a decade he had risen to become the order's leader. When his elder brother died with no heir, Koji became the first Yogo in history to serve as both the head of the Kuroiban and the Yogo family daimyo. Again, it is a tremendous burden that no other would want, but Koji shoulders it without complaint. That he has maintained the Kuroiban's secrecy despite maintaining such a high profile among his family and clan only increases the regard in which his fellow Kuroiban hold him.

YOGO KOJI, DAIMYO OF THE YOGO

Male human Scorpion Shugenja 8/ Kuroiban 5/Ward Master 5: CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 18d6+72; hp 135; Init +6; Spd 60 ft., 30 ft. spider climb; AC 22 (touch 15, flat-footed 17); Atk +5 *wakizashi* +16/+11 melee (1d6+8) or by spell; SQ Class skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Element Focus, Sense Elements, Heightened Wards, Greater Warding, Warding Metamagic, Superior Warding (×2), Ward Sense, Ward Dispel, Seek the Darkness, Find the Darkness; Honor: 1; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +21; Str 16, Dex 20 (22), Con 17 (18), Int 16, Wis 21, Cha 21 (23); Height 5 ft. 9 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Ashalan, Kami), Balance +28, Bluff +14, Climb +18, Concentration +21, Jump +26, Knowledge (history) +19, Knowledge (Maho) +24, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +23, Move Silently +36, Tumble +26; Depths of the Void, Enhance Wards, Extend Spell, Maximize Spell, Silent Spell, Still Spell, Versatile (Balance, Bluff, Climb, Jump, Move Silently, Tumble), Void Use

Spells Known (6/8/8/7/7/7/7/6/5/3; base DC 16 + spell level; Elemental Focus — Air): 0 — *commune with elements* (any), *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *flash of insight*, *gathering swirl*, *guidance*, *know direction*, *resistance*, *Suitengu's surge*; 1 — *cryptic cipher*, *cure light wounds*, *feather fall*, *protection from taint*, *sense spirit*, *speed of breath*; 2 — *cat's grace*, *detect thoughts*, *detect ward*, *remove paralysis*, *silence*, *wind wall*; 3 — *call lightning*, *cure serious wounds*, *haste*, *invisibility*, *magic circle against taint*; 4 — *clouded mind*, *cure critical wounds*, *discern lies*, *the fire from within*, *spell immunity*; 5 — *bad karma*, *flame strike*, *spell resistance*, *summon nature's ally V*, *symbol of air*; 6 — *antimagic field*, *cloudkill*, *heal*, *wind walk*; 7 — *chain lightning*, *guardian of air*, *importune kami VII* (air only), *spell turning*; 8 — *phase door*, *slayer's knives*, *waves are ever changing*; 9 — *elemental swarm*, *walking the way*.

Possessions: +5 armored gi, gloves of dexterity +2, haori of charisma +2, Koji's boots (act as boots of elvenkind, slippers of spider climb, and boots of springing and striding), obi of resistance +2, +5 *wakizashi*.

YOGO KOJI, DAIMYO OF THE YOGO

FAMILY

Earth: 4

Willpower: 6

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Air: 6

Void: 4

School/Rank: Yogo Shugenja 5, Kuroiban 1

Dojo: Towers of the Yogo

Honor: 1.8

Glory: 6.6

Advantages: Blessing of Air, Social Position (Yogo daimyo)

Disadvantages: Driven (destroy the Taint), Lost Love (his family)

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 4, Calligraphy 3, History 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Maho) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 6, Meditation 4, Shintao 4, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6, Tanto 2, Theology 4

Spells: As Yogo daimyo and head of the Kuroiban, Koji has access to virtually any spell known to the Scorpion as well as many that are supposedly secrets of other clans. The sole exception is the Tejina magic practiced by the Soshi family, which calls upon forces that Koji has no experience with.

YOGO TJEKI, SHADOWED TOWER ENFORCER

Tjeki's parents were Scorpion who survived the Clan War and the Scorpion Clan's reinstatement. They filled his youth with tales of Yogo Junzo's betrayal and the importance of loyal service to the clan. Tales of heroes like Bayushi Yojiro, who retained his name to serve Kachiko, Bayushi Shoji, who sacrificed everything to stop the Dark Kami, and Bayushi Kachiko, who stood against Fu Leng when none other could, gave young Tjeki hope for the future.

Then Toturi disappeared, and the Scorpion were banished from the Empire. Tjeki and many of his peers who had not yet been through their gempukku were fostered to the Crane as a means of ensuring their parents did not retaliate against the other Great Clans. During the two years he spent with the Crane, Tjeki learned many things, including what other clans thought of his heroes. Yojiro was not a Scorpion hero, but a traitor who turned his back on his clan twice in order to save himself from persecution. Bayushi Shoji was beneath contempt, a traitor who murdered the Emperor for his own ambition. Kachiko was an opportunistic manipulator who only aided the Thunders because she had no other choice. Tjeki's entire world was shattered. When his parents returned with the Scorpion from across the Burning Sands, the idealistic, cheerful child they had left behind was gone. In his place was an intense, brooding young man with a keen interest in how the clan was governed.

When Bayushi Yojiro assumed the position of Scorpion Clan Champion a few years later, Tjeki was outraged. He would not follow a false hero, and he would serve his clan like a true samurai, not some pathetic, cowering imitation. Despite his smoldering anger, Tjeki was no fool. He knew that he must keep his true feelings hidden or face the wrath of Yojiro's supporters. Instead, he developed his affinity for magic while appearing to be a perfectly loyal vassal. He could

serve the clan, if not the man who ruled it. Tjeki's service to the clan has been flawless, and he has risen to the prestigious position of a master sensei.

Two years ago, Tjeki's time finally came. He was approached discreetly by a group of others who also felt that Yojiro's rule was a disgrace. Their goal, the shadowy figures assured him, was a return to the Scorpion's true glory, when they ruled from the shadows and all who stood against them died. It was the most rapturous moment of Yogo Tjeki's life. In that instant, he cast his lot with the Shadowed Tower.

Since that time, Tjeki has made many sacrifices. He has accepted that some Shadowed Tower members use maho in order to advance the group's agenda, but he does not like it. It smacks of Yogo Junzo's treachery to him, and he must constantly struggle against a lifetime of instinct to force himself to tolerate such foul practices. His comrades understand his reservations, however, and even allow him to serve the conspiracy in a manner befitting his instincts: Yogo Tjeki is the Shadowed Tower's silent enforcer. It was he who conceived of using Witnesses to police Shadowed Tower maho-tsukai. He keeps careful tabs on every member who is known to possess a gift for the black arts. If ever he discovers that they have become irrevocably Tainted or that they are using maho in any capacity other than to benefit the Tower, he executes them instantly. It is not a duty he has had to perform often, but one that he accepts with both solemnity and vigor.

YOGO TJEKI, SHADOWED TOWER ENFORCER

Male human Scorpion Ninja 6/Shosuro Tejina 10: CR 16; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 16d6+80; hp 136; Init +7; Spd 60 ft.; AC 22 (touch 15, flat-footed 17); Atk +15/+10/+5 melee [+17/+12/+7 to Lost] (1d10+5 [+2d6+2 to Lost] [+14d6 sneak attack to flanked], +2 bane (Lost) slayer's katana (soul forged)), +19 ranged 1d4+1 +1 returning aiguchi; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (Shadowlands) (family bonus), Sneak attack +7d6, Ninja Dodge +2, Poison Use, Speed of Darkness, Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked, keep Dex bonus to AC when flatfooted), The Silent Soul, Shadows and Air, An Empty Breeze, Shadowed Soul, Soul Forge (katana); Honor: 2; AL LN; SV Fort +13, Ref +20, Will +17; Str 17, Dex 21, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 19; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +26, Bluff +13, Concentration +15, Hide +34, Jump +12, Listen +22, Move Silently +24, Spot +22, Spellcraft +12, Tumble +26; Iron Will, Mobility, Needle Strike, Silent Spell, Soul Forge (+2 bane (Lost) slayer's katana), Spring Attack, Void Use

Spells Known (3/4/4/3/1 base DC 14 + spell level): 0 — daze, ghost sound, mage hand, reflection of memory, Shosuro's touch, silent sound; 1 — charm person, darken the veil of sleep, expeditious retreat, spider climb; 2 — darkness, invisibility, edge of nothing, see invisibility; 3 — darkness' blessing, haste, hold person, silent step; 4 — lesser geas, polymorph self.

Possessions: cloak of resistance +3, jingasa of disguise, 3 +1 returning aiguchi, +5 shadow armored gi, slippers of striding and springing, Tjeki's katana (soul forged +2 bane (Lost) slayer's katana).

YOGO TJEKI, SHADOWED TOWER

ENFORCER

Earth: 5

Water: 3

Perception 5

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Shosuro Tejina 3, Soshi Shugenja 2

Dojo: Hidden Moon Dojo

Honor: 2.1

Glory: 4.2

Advantages: Blessing of Air, Multiple Schools, Social Position (Master Sensei of Hidden Moon Dojo)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Shadowed Tower), Driven (change balance of power in Scorpion Clan), Obligation (Shadowed Tower)

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 4, Defense 3, History 4, Intimidation 5, Lore (Maho) 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Meditation 4, Mimicry 3, Shintao 4, Sincerity 5, Spell Research 5, Stealth 4, Tanto 4, Theology 4

Spells: As master sensei of a major Scorpion shugenja temple, Tjeki has access to virtually any illusion spell in existence, plus many that he has developed on his own. His abilities extend to Shosuro Tejina abilities as well as the Air-based magic Soshi style of magic.

VASSALS OF THE YOGO FAMILY

THE TANSAKU

Yogo's tale is one of Rokugan's greatest tragedies. By all accounts Yogo was a noble and righteous man, so the curse laid upon him during the first war with Fu Leng was not only insidious in its effects, but also in its duration: it has continued to haunt those of his blood for over a thousand years. During that time, countless attempts to lift the curse have been made, but none have ever borne fruit. The Yogo take small comfort from the fact that one small family branch, the Tansaku vassal family, is constantly pursuing a means of removing the curse.

Early in the family's history, Yogo's granddaughter Hiriko, the family daimyo, commissioned a particularly intelligent and cunning young scholar named Yogo Tansaku to study the curse's effects and a means by which it might be broken. Most considered this a fool's errand, and attributed it to the fact that Tansaku had been blithely unaware that Hiriko had been quite fond of him in their youth, but that her love had not been requited. Some went so far as to speculate that Hiriko hoped for Tansaku to fail so that she might cast him out from the family. Whether or not there was any truth to these allegations, Tansaku accepted the mission dutifully.

While socially inept, Yogo Tansaku was undeniably a fiercely intelligent man possessed of unwavering devotion and an incredible will to succeed. Undaunted by the notion that the greatest shugenja in the Empire had attempted and failed to lift Yogo's curse, he threw himself into the task with a fervor that few could match. He researched obscure texts throughout the libraries of the Great Clans, none of whom would refuse a man on such a noble mission.



Tansaku's quest continued for nearly two decades before he realized the grim truth: the curse could not be broken. The dark lord Fu Leng had played a direct role in cursing Yogo, and no mortal power was able to remove the blight from Yogo's mortal bloodline. The only way he could find to remove the curse was to remove that which it fed upon. If no Yogo felt any love at all, then the curse would wither and die. Tansaku knew that the solution was ridiculous, so he quickly discarded it. Undaunted, he instead turned his attention to circumventing the curse's effects. If he could not cure the illness, then perhaps he could at least alleviate the symptoms.

For another full decade, Tansaku and the handful of shugenja who had joined him in his research delved into various magical styles from across the Empire, each one renowned for its ability to foresee the future. When Tansaku appeared before Yogo Hiriko thirty years after his assignment, he could offer no means of breaking the curse. Instead, he offered a prediction for his daimyo: he told her the way in which the curse would impact her specifically and a means by which such a fate might be avoided. Hiriko was not particularly impressed. In fact, she publicly denounced Tansaku and stripped him of his name and rank, ordering him to a monastery. Many in the family considered such a decree petty and vindictive, but none would voice their opposition, for Hiriko was a wrathful daimyo.

Two years after Tansaku's disgrace, Hiriko succumbed to the curse exactly as he had predicted she would. The matter quickly became the sole topic of conversation in all major Scorpion courts, and this time it was Hiriko who was disgraced. She retired to a monastery, and her son Tomohiko's

first action as Yogo daimyo was to recall Tansaku from the monastery back into service for the clan. Unfortunately, Tansaku had vanished, lost during a winter snowstorm while he searched the nearby forest for food to sustain the starving monks. The curse had shown itself immune even to Tansaku's attempts to reveal it — for Tansaku had been Hiriko's one true love. Saddened, Tomohiko granted Tansaku's remaining followers leave to take the vassal name Tansaku in his honor.

Since that time, the Tansaku family has tirelessly researched means of predicting and counteracting the Yogo Curse's effects. Research into a means of breaking the curse altogether has never stopped, but the Tansaku recognize that their ability to work such powerful magic is virtually non-existent.

TANSAKU TORID-E

Like most vassal families, the Tansaku do not appear wealthy, particularly when one assesses their extremely meager holdings. This is a misleading front, however, as the Tansaku are the richest vassal family in the Scorpion Clan. The Yogo allot the Tansaku tremendous resources to continue their research. The small, unassuming keep that serves as their headquarters looks like a common mountain watchtower, albeit somewhat larger than average.

Within the confines of Tansaku Torid-e, the descendants of Yogo Tansaku plumb heaven's mysteries in an attempt to foresee future events. They are rapt pupils of prophecy and have studied at length the methods and messages of history's greatest prophets: Uikku, Isawa Norikazu, Agasha Hamanari, the Oracles of Light, and the like. The current daimyo, Tansaku Ikaru, corresponds regularly with Hamanari, widely regarded as the modern age's greatest seer.

THE TANSAKU FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skill: Scrying

Starting Outfit:

1. Six 1st level divine scrolls and one 2nd level divine scroll (no Fire spells)

THE TANSAKU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (instead of the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, Tansaku family members may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in History or Lore (Divination).

Special: If they are Yogo shugenja school students, Tansaku family members may change their beginning spells from 3 Air, 2 Water, 1 Fire to 3 Water, 2 Air, 1 Fire. If they choose to do so, their Affinity changes from ward spells to any spell that provides information regarding the future or events that have not yet taken place. They retain their Deficiency for Earth spells.

THE NAGANORI

Even though the Yogo guarded the Black Scrolls for centuries, and despite all of their good works since the Clan War, the single most memorable member of that prestigious family is unquestionably Yogo Junzo. It was Junzo's misdirected devotion to Bayushi Shoji's memory that led to the first Black

Scroll being opened, which in turn led to the awakening of Fu Leng during the Clan War. The highly secretive Kuroiban work tirelessly to cleanse the Empire from the predations of those similar to Junzo, but the Yogo's devotion to avoiding history's mistakes has a more public face in the tiny Naganori family, a strange marriage between the Kuni and Yogo families.

After the Scorpion Clan's attempted coup in Otsan Uchi, the clan's dissolution left a great deal of resources unattended. Most Scorpion holdings were divided among the neighboring Crab, Crane, and Unicorn clans. Familiar with the Yogo's exposure to various dark influences over the centuries, the Imperial Court placed that family's holdings in the Kuni family's care. In a particularly dark twist of fate, the insidious plans of Kuni Yori and the high-ranking members of his family during that time period resulted in the appointment of a young and inexperienced shugenja named Kuni Naganori to oversee the legendary Yogo holdings.

The inexperienced Naganori proved a capable and genial administrator. The people of the Yogo provinces, including the many servants, peasants, and ronin who assisted him (many of whom were former Yogo), found it difficult not to develop a certain fondness for his personality and even-handed leadership. Under his guidance, the Yogo provinces sustained only minimal damage and were spared the ravages that many Scorpion provinces sustained.

When the Clan War ended, Naganori stunned the Crab Clan when by refusing to return to the Kuni. Yori had disgraced the entire line, he insisted, and he would have no part of such a treacherous lot. Naganori abandoned his family name and the teachings he had received from the Kuni family, taking up the mantle of a ronin. His tenure as a wave man was short. The reconstituted Yogo family swiftly offered him fealty, including control of his own family within their ranks, in recognition of his years of just service to the lands and peasants that were once theirs. At first he resisted. He had abandoned Kuni Yori's family; why then would he join Yogo Junzo's? The Yogo were insistent, begging for his aid. With the aid of such honorable and forthright shugenja as himself, their family could not fall to darkness again. Eventually, Naganori agreed and became a Yogo. He took a Scorpion wife, and adopted the Yogo name. He was awarded vassal family status by Yogo Masuhiro to aid in the execution of his duties.

Kuni Naganori's abandonment of his previous family's teachings and philosophies was absolute. He even went so far as to destroy the scrolls he had accumulated since his gempukku and renounce the shugenja way altogether. The family's records insist that he never cast another spell for the remainder of his life, although many consider the tale apocryphal. Naganori and those loyal to him focused on tracking down Shadowlands beasts remaining within the Scorpion holdings. In a short period of time, Naganori and his followers had scoured the Scorpion provinces' remotest corners, destroying the goblins, oni, ogres, and other various creatures that had wandered in from the Shadowlands during the Clan War.

The decades since the Clan War have honed the Naganori into a razor-edged blade against the Shadowlands. Unlike the Kuroiban, Asako Inquisitors, and Kuni Witch-hunters, the Naganori are little concerned with hunting down mahotsukai or Tainted humans. They instead track the beasts and wretched, mindless Shadowlands spawn that escape that dark realm and enter the Empire. They also consider it their sacred duty to ensure the Scorpion's continued secrecy. The sites

where the Black Scrolls were formerly hidden, for example, are routinely checked by the Naganori, as these sites now radiate Taint from their long proximity to Fu Leng's spirit.

NAGANORI MURA

This small village is hidden deep in the mountains found in Fukitsu province's northern reaches. It is not particularly fertile, producing only enough food to sustain those who dwell there. The village meets its tax requirements through a small mine that produces ore for low-grade steel. While this ore is not of sufficient quality for weapons, it is an adequate building material and can be used in the creation of a wide variety of non-offensive items.

The center of Naganori Mura is a small building scarcely larger than one of Ryoko Owari's inns. The Naganori, who number roughly two dozen samurai, are not particularly concerned with appearances or with luxury. Such things have in the past led to arrogance and, ultimately, corruption, and they could do so again if not abandoned.

THE NAGANORI FAMILY

Favored Class: Ranger

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skill: Wilderness Lore

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork ashigaru armor and 50 koku

THE NAGANORI FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school they attend, Naganori family members may sacrifice one rank in any of their school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Hunting or Investigation.

Other: May only attend Bayushi or Yogo schools.

YOGO MECHANICS

WHISPERED SECRET DOJO

While the primary Yogo shugenja temple is located elsewhere, the school contained within Yogo Shiro is more specialized. All Yogo are II versed in the practice of placing wards, but only the most skilled and gifted students study at the Whispered Secret Dojo, perhaps the most prestigious school the family maintains. Some question the Yogo's use of the term "dojo" as opposed to the more traditional "temple," but the Yogo disregard such concerns.

Ironically, the Whispered Secret Dojo is among the better-known Yogo institutions. Its students are spectacularly gifted at placing wards, the preventative magic barriers that the Yogo used to defend the Scorpion's secrets. When the Black Scrolls were under Scorpion control, wards placed by Whispered Secret students and sensei protected them. Today the clan's most private resources are similarly protected, including various nemuranai and the residences of many family daimyo.

A small number of Whispered Secret students have joined the Shadowed Tower conspiracy, and their wards protect that secretive group's resources as well.

Classes: Kuroiban (prestige), Shugenja

Schools: Kuroiban, Yogo Shugenja

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Even though the students of Whispered Secret dojo are generally regarded as the finest ward masters in Rokugan, this reputation is not sufficient to overcome the generally poor image the Yogo family have. There is no social benefit for attending this dojo.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The exclusive emphasis of Whispered Secret dojo is on the mystical process of placing protective wards. Expectations are considerable, and students who cannot meet them are excused to lesser dojo.

Benefit: You may add your Charisma modifier to the damage rolls of all ward spells you create.

Benefit: You may add your Insight Rank to the damage rolls of any wards you create.

YOGO TOWERS DOJO

When the Yogo family reorganized in the wake of Junzo's betrayal, they chose a new home for their primary shugenja school. Yogo Shiro remained the family's seat of power, of course, for not even so non-traditional a family as the Yogo would dare cast aside over a thousand years of tradition and ancestry, but their principal school was relocated to the renamed Yogo Towers. The stark yet elegant style typical for the Legions has been stripped away, replaced by the severe, menacing Yogo style.

Classes: Shugenja, Rogue

Schools: Yogo Shugenja

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Like their kinsmen who study at Yogo Shiro, those who study at the Yogo Towers are already at a substantial penalty because of their family's poor reputation. While the Towers are feared and misunderstood by many, they are not afforded any special considerations in court. There is no social benefit for this dojo.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The sensei of the Yogo Towers train their students to be perceptive above all else, for the weak mind will overlook things that a well-trained samurai can turn to his advantage. While others dismiss the Yogo, they are always looking, always searching for something to turn to their advantage. That their presence unsettles their opponents only makes their task easier.

Benefit: Spot is always a class skill for you. If it is already a class skill, you gain a +1 bonus on all Spot checks.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise on any Perception-related roll a number of times per day equal to your Insight Rank.

NEW ANCESTORS

Among the Yogo family, reverence for one's ancestors is an obligation and often a curse. The Yogo inevitably betray those whom they love, and the dead are no exception. Remembering individuals who have committed terrible sins is difficult at best, but it is the duty of all true samurai to honor their ancestors. The Yogo can at least take comfort in their family's few true heroes, and in the fact that the burden they bear is through no fault of their own. It is meager consolation, but it is all that the Yogo have.

YOGO ITOJU

Ever the guardian of dark secrets, the Scorpion Clan was particularly horrified by the return of Iuchiban to the Empire centuries ago. It was exactly this type of apocalyptic event that their clan had worked against for centuries, and the brutal demonstration of exactly what their vigilance protected against was sobering indeed.

In the aftermath of Iuchiban's imprisonment, the Scorpion Champion held a council of his most trusted advisors to find a way to prevent such a thing from happening again. Yogo Itoju, the Yogo daimyo's younger brother and a powerful shugenja, requested the Champion's leave to form a small cabal of shugenja who would scour the Empire in search of blossoming threats and destroy them utterly. When the Champion asked why such things were not better left to the Kuni witch-hunters or the Asako Inquisitors, Itoju responded, "Because they are not Scorpion and therefore do not understand what is required of such a task." He was given leave to create the Kuroiban at once, and began his work that day.

Like all too many Yogo, Itoju's life ended in tragedy. His youngest brother and second-in-command was captured by a Bloodspeaker cult, and Itoju was forced to allow him to be killed in order to buy the time the Kuroiban needed to discover the cult's allies. Although praised for his actions, Itoju never recovered from the loss of his brother, and retired to a monastery shortly thereafter.

SINISTER GUARDIAN

ANCESTOR: YOGO ITOJU

You study the darkness and protect others from its power.

Benefit: You gain a +6 bonus on all saves to resist accumulating Shadowlands Taint. When one of your allies within 25 feet has to make a Fortitude save to avoid becoming Tainted or increasing his Taint, you may choose to make the save in his stead. If you fail the save, both you and the original recipient gain one point of Taint. If you ever willingly learn or use a maho spell, the benefits of this feat are lost.

ANCESTOR: YOGO ITOJU

(5 POINTS)

Those guided by the spirit of Yogo Itoju are selfless opponents of the Shadowlands and all its influences. Such characters roll three additional dice to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint. In addition, the character may choose to roll in place of any individuals within twenty feet that must roll to resist the Taint. If the roll fails, both the character and the original individual gain one point of Taint. If a character with this ancestor ever willingly learns or uses a maho spell, the benefits of this feat are lost.

YOGO JUNZO

There is no more hated name among the Yogo than that of Yogo Junzo, the Great Traitor. Few remember his decades of loyal service to Bayushi Shoji, another of Rokugan's most reviled names. Junzo's devotion to his duty and his lord was unwavering, even when Shoji fell under the influence of Ambition, one of Iuchiban's Bloodswords. When Shoji was killed, Junzo was driven so mad with grief that he opened a Black Scroll to take vengeance upon the Empire that slew his lord.

The Black Scroll's power transformed Junzo into an undead servant of Fu Leng, the Fallen Kami. Under that dark influence, Junzo launched a campaign of terror that crippled Rokugan. Villages, cities, monasteries, and libraries burned all across the land as Junzo and his creatures scoured the Empire on their campaign of destruction. His forces butchered thousands. Adults and children alike quavered in fear at the mention of his name. When Otaku Kamoko crushed Junzo's undead form beneath the hooves of her mighty steed at the second Day of Thunder, the Empire rejoiced.

In the darkest pits of Jigoku, Yogo Junzo's soul still exists. His spirit is so strong that not even the formless oni that haunt that realm can break it. He has forged his own tiny empire from the stuff of darkness, and rules it with an iron fist. He still looks to the mortal realm, however, and haunts the souls of those who share his passions and outlook.

(Note: Though Junzo is not technically a shiryo, he is mechanically identical to an ancestor in both systems.)

SOUL OF THE DAMNED

ANCESTOR: YOGO JUNZO

The darkness in your soul shines through, weakening others with its foul energy.

Prerequisites: Evil alignment, dishonorable.

Benefit: Once per day, after any successful attack on an opponent, whether a melee strike or a spell, you may temporarily reduce that subject's Strength exactly as a ray of enfeeblement cast at your character level. The Fortitude save vs. this effect is equal to 11 + your Charisma modifier.

YOGO JUNZO

(8 POINTS)

Descendants of Yogo Junzo may weaken others with the dark energy of their own souls. This is not a maho effect, but instead uses dark chi and other unwholesome energies. After a successful melee strike or a successful targeting of an opponent with a spell, the character may make an opposed Willpower roll with the target. If the character is successful, the target rolls two fewer dice on all Strength and Agility rolls (minimum one) for a number of minutes equal to twice the character's Insight Rank.

YOGO ASAMI

In her youth, Yogo Asami was notable for little aside from her beauty. She displayed no particular aptitudes and few noticed her beyond commenting that she would grow into a beautiful woman. The Shosuro daimyo's daughter Kachiko, however, saw much, much more. She took the girl into her service when she realized that the two bore a striking resemblance. Under Kachiko's tutelage, Asami became a master deceiver, and often masqueraded as Kachiko so she could pursue her own agendas unseen by the public eye. To facilitate the

deception, Kachiko saw to it that Asami was trained by the finest teachers of the Shosuro. The end result was nothing less than spectacular: Asami virtually became Kachiko in all ways that mattered.

As the young women grew older, their physical differences eventually prevented the ruse from being continued. Asami continued to serve her mistress in all ways, even when Kachiko was married to the Scorpion Champion.

DISTRACTING COUNTERNANCE

ANCESTOR: YOGO ASAMI

Your beauty is so stunning that others find it difficult to concentrate in your presence.

Prerequisite: Charisma 13+.

Benefit: Once per day, you may select one target and use your natural charms to wreak havoc on his ability to concentrate and function. Your target suffers a -4 penalty to all Concentration checks and Charisma-based skills for a number of hours equal to half your character level, round up. You must remain in relatively close proximity to the target (within 200 feet and in plain sight) for this effect to remain active.

YOGO ASAMI

(6 POINTS)

Descendants of Yogo Asami may focus their considerable wiles on a single target, who loses concentration as he becomes fascinated with the magnificent creature before him. The character may focus on a single target, causing the target to lose two dice from any social skill rolls and Meditation rolls. This effect lasts for a maximum number of hours equal to the descendant's Insight Rank. The character must remain relatively close to the target (within 200 feet and in plain sight) for this effect to remain active.

YOGO WARD MAGIC

One of many strange parallels between the Kuni and Yogo families is in the results of their magical research. The Kuni have spent centuries learning the secrets of magically binding creatures or individuals, preventing them from leaving a particular location. The Yogo have instead mastered warding, the practice of erecting magical barriers that prevent others from entering a particular area. This has proven extremely useful, given the Yogo family's previous duty of guarding the Black Scrolls. Today, they use it in the service of their Champion, protecting the Scorpion Clan's secrets from prying eyes.

The secret of ward magic is known only to the Yogo family, and none but the students of their school are permitted to learn it. No one outside the Scorpion Clan is ever permitted to study ward magic under any circumstances. The process involves erecting barriers of opposing elemental forces that magically bar individuals strong in certain aspects from a certain area. The wards are infused with the essence of their creator, meaning that the more powerful the individual creating the ward is, the more powerful and long-lasting the ward will be.

YOGO SHUGENJA SCHOOL

(ELEMENTAL FOCUS: AIR)

- 1 Ward of the Elements I (see *New Spells*)
- 2 Know the Shadows
- 3 Ward of the Elements II (see *New Spells*)
- 4 Whispering Winds
- 5 Ward of the Elements III (see *New Spells*)
- 6 Vengeance of Kaze-no-Kami
- 7 Ward of the Elements IV (see *New Spells*)
- 8 Slayer's Knives
- 9 Ward of the Elements V (see *New Spells*)

THE YOGO SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Perception

Skills: Calligraphy, History, Lore (Maho), Lore (Shadowlands), Meditation, Theology, any one High Skill.

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, 3 Air, 2 Water, and 1 Fire spell.

Yogo shugenja school students gain an Affinity for ward spells (see below), and have a Deficiency for Earth spells. When attempting to create an Earth ward (a ward that targets an opponent's Air ring), these two cancel one another.

WARD MAGIC

Wards may be created of any Mastery Level up to the caster's School Rank. Creating a ward requires the caster to roll the relevant Ring, keeping School Rank, versus a TN equal to the ward's Mastery Level x 5. Raises may be taken to increase the damage rolled, not kept, by one die (see below). Wards require 10 minutes per Mastery Level to create. For each full time increment the shugenja spends beyond this, he gains a Free Raise, up to a maximum equal to the shugenja's Void. A ward has a variable duration according to the Insight Rank of its creator at the time of its creation (see Table 4-1 below). Wards can cover an area up to ten times the caster's Insight Rank in feet from the warded area's center.

Attempting to enter an area protected with a ward requires an individual to make a contested Ring roll versus the caster. The caster rolls (not keeps) a number of additional dice equal to his School Rank (this dice pool is set during the ward's creation and does not increase later even if the caster's School Rank or Rings increase). If unsuccessful, the individual may not enter the warded area and suffers Wounds with a DR equal to the ward's Mastery Level. If successful, the individual may enter the warded area, but still suffers Wounds with a DR equal to the ward's Mastery Level minus one. Each time the ward is breached, lower the ward's dice pool by one for all future attempts for anyone to enter the area.

TABLE 4-1: WARD DURATION

Insight Rank of Creator	Duration
1	5 hours
2	5 days
3	5 weeks
4	5 months
5	5 years
6	50 years
7	500 years
8	Permanent

AN EXAMPLE

Yogo Mirabi, a Rank 2 Yogo shugenja, prepares to create a ward against Earth. Having an Earth ring of 3, Mirabi rolls 3k3 to create a Rank 2 ward (roll 3 Earth, keep 2 School Rank + 1 Affinity). The TN for this roll is 10. This ward is extremely important, so Mirabi declares one Raise and also decides to spend an additional 20 minutes beyond the normal 20 minutes required for this ward (ML 2 × 10 minutes) to gain a Free Raise. The roll is successful, so the ward is created and will last 5 days.

Two days later, Shinjo Khen-Chi attempts to pass through the warded area. Khen-Chi has an Earth of 4, so he must roll 4k4 versus the ward's 5k3 (Mirabi's Earth + School Rank, keep Earth). Khen-Chi succeeds, but still suffers a total of 4k4 Wounds (2k2 for a ML 2 ward, 1 die from a declared Raise, 1 die from the Free Raise due extended casting time). Now that the ward has been violated, subsequent attempts to pass through it by others will call for them to roll their Earth versus 4k3 (one fewer rolled die after the breaking of the ward). The damage dice remain 4k4 so long as the ward continues to exist.

NEW SPELLS

DETECT WARD

Divination

Level: Shu 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 60 feet

Area: Quarter circle emanating from you to the extreme of the range

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You can detect the presence of wards. Although wards can normally be detected by use of *detect magic*, this spell offer substantially more information due to its intent to search for the specific energies used in creating a ward. This spell detects the presence of any magical effect resulting from the use of a spell whose title contains the word "ward" or "glyph." The amount of information gained depends on how long you concentrate:

1st round: The presence of any wards in the spell's area.

2nd round: The area of effect a detected ward protects, and the creator's level.

3rd round: The name of the spell used to create the ward.

WARD OF THE ELEMENTS I

Abjuration

Level: Shu 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 minute/level

Range: Touch

Area: 25 ft./level radius

Duration: 3 days/level

Saving Throw: Will (see below)

Spell Resistance: No

Shugenja trained by the Yogo family are gifted at placing wards, powerful spells that prevent others from entering an enchanted area. Any sentient being attempting to enter a warded area must make a Will save against the spell or suffer 2d4 damage per round while inside the warded area. The individual may roll a new Will save every round it remains in the area, and three successful Will saves terminate the effect.

WARD OF THE ELEMENTS II

Abjuration

Level: Shu 3

As ward of the elements I, but the damage is increased to 3d6.

WARD OF THE ELEMENTS III

Abjuration

Level: Shu 5

As ward of the elements I, but the damage is increased to 4d8.

WARD OF THE ELEMENTS IV

Abjuration

Level: Shu 7

As ward of the elements I, but the damage is increased to 5d10.

WARD OF THE ELEMENTS V

Abjuration

Level: Shu 9

As ward of the elements I, but the damage is increased to 6d12.

DETECT WARD

Element: Air

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Concentration

Area of Effect: See below

Range: See below

This spell detects the specific energies that are harnessed when a shugenja creates a ward. The basic casting of the spell reveals only the presence of such wards, although each successful Raise made during casting can reveal one of the following pieces of information (caster's choice): the ward's area of effect, the caster's Insight Rank, the ward's damage rating, or the ward's dice pool versus those who try to cross it. This spell allows a shugenja to perceive wards placed anywhere in his line of sight up to a maximum of 75 feet away.

YOGO WARD MASTERS

The shugenja of the Yogo family may be reviled, but their mastery of the art of ward magic cannot be denied. Though the students of Whispered Secret Dojo are no doubt the greatest masters of this art, many other Yogo also display great talent with the creation of wards. Yogo player characters that seek to specialize in this form of magic are advised to become ward masters.

KUROIBAN WARD MASTERS

A quick glance reveals many similarities between the ward master prestige class and the Kuroiban prestige class described in *Way of the Shugenja*. These two schools of the Yogo family have similar philosophies and techniques, and the extremely secretive Kuroiban often go about in the guise of ward masters.

In the case of characters who take levels of both the Kuroiban and the ward master prestige class, all abilities of both classes stack, with the exception of Greater Warding. The second time a character would gain the Greater Warding ability he instead gains a free bonus metamagic feat.

WARD MASTER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Yogo ward masters are always shugenja. They are selected for their attention to fine detail and dedication to the clan.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a ward master, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Clan: Scorpion.

Feats: Enhance Wards, Extend Spell.

Special: Ability to cast 3rd level divine spells.

CLASS SKILLS

The ward master's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int, exclusive skill), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the ward master prestige class.

Spells Per Day: A ward master continues his more general study of elemental magic as well as more in-depth study of wards. For each level he gains in this class, he gains new spells known and spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the

prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of turning or controlling undead, metamagic or item creation feats, increased range of *sense elements*, and so on). This essentially means that he adds these levels to the level of some other divine spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day, caster level, and spells known. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a ward master, he must decide to which class he adds each level for this purpose.

Note on "wards": Many of the following abilities refer to "wards" or "ward spells." For the purposes of the ward master prestige class, a ward spell is any spell that targets an area and has a duration greater than one hour.

Heightened Wards (Su): At 1st level, the ward master's art begins to become more difficult to circumvent than normal. The DC to disable the ward master's wards is increased by his level in this prestige class. Additionally, the ward's caster level is increased by the ward master's level in this class for the purposes of resisting *dispel magic* and other dispelling effects.

Greater Warding (Su): At 2nd level, the casting time of any *glyph of warding*, *greater glyph of warding*, or *guards and wards* spell cast by the ward master is divided by ten, to a minimum of one minute.

Warding Metamagic (Ex): At 3rd level, the ward master can use metamagic feats more effectively when casting ward spells. The final spell level increase after applying any metamagic feat to a ward spell is reduced by one, to a minimum of one. The exception to this is *Extend Spell*, which can be applied to any ward spell once without any increase in spell level.

Superior Warding (Su): At 4th level, the wards placed by the ward master become even more potent. Any damaging spells created by wards cast by the ward master are enhanced, inflicting +1 damage per die of damage inflicted.

Ward Sense (Ex): At 5th level, the ward master can sense all wards in a 100-foot radius around himself with a successful Spellcraft check vs. DC 15. This is a move-equivalent action. Use of this ability does not reveal the specific types of ward, only that they exist and the general area they cover.

Ward Dispel (Su): At 5th level, the ward master can attempt to dispel any ward by voluntarily entering its area. This has the effect of a *dispel magic* cast by the ward master. However, if this dispel attempt fails, the ward is immediately discharged. The ward master automatically fails his saving throw and can apply no spell resistance against the resulting effect. This ability may only be applied to any given ward once per day.

TABLE 4-3: THE WARD MASTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	+1 level of existing class Heightened wards
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	+1 level of existing class Greater warding
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	+1 level of existing class Warding metamagic
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 level of existing class Superior warding
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 level of existing class Ward sense, ward dispel

WARD MASTER (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Yogo Shugenja 2

Path of Egress: Yogo Shugenja 3

Technique: Ward Mastery — You may add your rank in this New Path to any of your former shugenja school ranks. You gain no Affinity or Deficiency for this new Path, but retain any Affinity or Deficiency formerly acquired. You gain Free Raises equal to your Void on all warding magic.

ICHIBA'S CONSORTIUM

During the years preceding the Clan War, the Scorpion were disbanded and scattered to the four winds. Only fools believed they were truly gone, however, and the clan continued to operate despite heavy losses and resource shortages. Among the clan's most valued resources during this dark time was Yogo Ichiba, the premier merchant patron in the Scorpion Clan.

From his place of hiding, Ichiba coordinated his many vassals to carry on the trade he once conducted in their place. Following his careful instructions, seemingly innocuous peasant merchants gathered a great deal of extremely valuable information regarding the other Great Clans, all of which was returned to Ichiba and, through him, given to the Scorpion forces in hiding.

After the Scorpion were reinstated by the Emperor Toturi, Ichiba elevated his most trusted vassals to positions as his lieutenants and bade them train others. In a short time, Ichiba sat at the head of a great web of devious and cunning merchants, all of whom answered to the Scorpion Clan alone.

Ichiba continues to direct the consortium that bears his name. The dozens of merchants who serve the Scorpion Clan through commerce serve a dual purpose: they accrue the funds and materials that the clan needs to continue its activities, and they gather information from all ports of call throughout the Empire. It is a simple system, yet one that works flawlessly.

ICHIBA'S CONSORTIUM (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Members of Ichiba's Consortium tend to come from the courtier and expert classes. They are selected for keen mental abilities and their shrewd business sense.

Hit die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a consortium member, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Clan: Scorpion.

Base Attack Bonus: +3.

Feats: Leadership, Skill Focus (Profession (merchant)).

Skills: Bluff (8 ranks), Profession (merchant) (10 ranks), Sense Motive (8 ranks).

CLASS SKILLS

The consortium member's class skills (and the key ability for each) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Decipher Script (Int, exclusive skill), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Members of Ichiba's Consortium retain all previous weapon and armor proficiencies. They gain proficiency in all simple weapons if they do not already possess such proficiency.

Failure Is Not An Option: No true student of Yogo Ichiba ever fails in negotiations. Three times per day, the merchant may immediately re-roll any failed skill check. Any single roll may only be re-rolled once.

Courtier Ability: At the 2nd and 4th levels, the consortium member may select one courtier ability offered by the courtier character class. He must meet all prerequisites for a given ability in order to take it. He may not take clan-specific courtier abilities other than Scorpion courtier abilities.

Charm & Style: A true master knows that a deal is made purely on the merits of one's presentation. The merchant may double his ability score modifier when using any Wisdom- or Charisma-related skill.

Above Reproach (Su): The reputation of Ichiba's merchants is such that even magic cannot unravel their deceit. The consortium member is affected by a permanent *undetectable alignment* and *non-detection* effect. He may remove or reinstate this ability as a free action. He also gains a bonus equal to his Charisma modifier on all saving throws against divination magic.

ICHIBA'S CONSORTIUM (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Any Scorpion school 3

Path of Egress: Reenter the same school at Rank 4

Technique: Ichiba's Technique — Members of Ichiba's Consortium gain wealth from those under their command. The character gains a number of koku equal to his Insight Rank × 100 per month, although this wealth will be taxed at year's end like any other resource. In addition, the character may choose to immediately re-roll any failed non-combat roll up to three times per day, keeping the better roll in each case. Any single roll may only be re-rolled once.

TABLE 4-2: THE ICHIBA CONSORTIUM MEMBER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Failure is not an option
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Courtier ability
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Charm & style
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Courtier ability
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Above reproach

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE SHADOWED TOWER COMPOUND

In less than a generation, the Shadowed Tower has grown from a single man's ambition to a cultural revolution within the heart of a Great Clan. The organization is now both powerful and ambitious enough to challenge the Scorpion Clan's rulers for supremacy over the Clan of Secrets. Led by the charismatic Bayushi Atsuki in the guise of Shosuro Furuyari, the Shadowed Tower has gone to great lengths and paid heavy costs to reach the level of influence it now possesses. A clear example of Furuyari's ability to invest time, money, and manpower to create something incredible is the Shadowed Tower's compound in Ryoko Owari. In a city rife with degradation, the compound (which has no other name) has become famous in certain circles as a place where the jaded can find entertainment.

The compound is under Ryoko Owari, and has two points of entry from the surface. Visitors to the compound enter through a ramshackle hovel located just outside the Leather Quarter. The hut leads to a spiraling stairwell that takes the guest into the lower regions. The other entry is known and used only by the Shadowed Tower, as it connects to one of the organization's secret holdings above-ground.

The compound serves two purposes for the Shadowed Tower. First, the questionable entertainment it offers is not free, so the compound brings a wealth of funding to the organization. It is also a place where the Tower may gain information from guests in one form or another. Many visitors to the compound are idle nobles of Ryoko Owari who seek more twisted diversions than those readily available. What the Shadowed Tower learns from these

samurai in their chemically induced fits of passion or violence serves them well. Less influential visitors are sometimes kidnapped by the Tower's agents and used in their dark rituals and research. This is common among the heimin and eta visitors who are frequently seduced into serving the Tower on their first visit to the compound. Peasant rumors warn that those who enter the place seldom return, but the agents of the Tower advertise free companionship and cheap opium, ensuring a steady stream of visitors.

USING THE COMPOUND IN AN ADVENTURE

Encounters with the Shadowed Tower will be brief and tangential for most characters. Unless the party includes powerful Scorpion agents, dedicated tsukai-sagasu, or members of the organization, the characters will most likely remain beneath the notice of the Shadowed Tower and lack any reason to confront it. In many cases, the characters will come across information regarding the group only by accident. As one of the largest resource centers for the Shadowed Tower, the compound is perhaps the single most appropriate location in the Scorpion lands for an encounter with that sinister organization.

- It is possible the characters are magistrates assigned to Ryoko Owari. Eventually the missing peasants, tales of dark sorcery, and outright war between the two factions within the Scorpion will become significant enough to involve the characters.
- A more direct involvement may include an all-Scorpion party handpicked by the clan's rightful leaders to combat the Shadowed Tower's efforts. Infiltration and reconnaissance of the compound could take weeks of game time and could even serve as the purpose of an entire campaign if handled properly.
- Most likely, one or more of the characters hears a rumor of an geisha house or opium den that is far better than anything else the City of Green Walls has to offer. Whether they intend to break up this illegal operation or simply partake of it, the characters may find themselves getting involved in much more than they imagined.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Each major area of the city is presented here with all the information a GM needs to use it. Each section contains a heading entitled "At a Glance", which summarizes all the various components of that area. More specific portions of the stronghold are given their own descriptions, which may be read aloud to players if the GM so desires. GMs are encouraged to alter or expand the information presented here to suit their own unique games.

SHADOWED TOWER FORCES

As should be clear from the map and design of the compound, the Shadowed Tower wished the location to be both inviting and impregnable. The number of non-Scorpion that even have the faintest clue the organization exists can be counted on one hand. The Shadowed Tower values its secrecy above all things, and is willing to eliminate anyone that could possibly threaten that secrecy without hesitation. Though the Den of Sin (the main room) appears very lightly defended, guards constantly watch the room through peepholes, and pairs of bushi frequently patrol the hidden backrooms. Coupled with the fact that several shugenja in service to the Shadowed Tower call the compound home, going where one isn't wanted within the compound is hardly a habit-forming experience.

SHADOWED TOWER SAMURAI

Human Scorpion Sam6: CR 6, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 6d10+6; hp 40; Init +9; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); Attack *katana* +1 +10/+5 melee or *yumi* +1 (short bow) +10/+5 ranged (1d8+1 damage); Honor 0; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Height 5ft. 6in.; *Skills and Feats:* Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +10, Climb +11, Diplomacy +9, Jump +11, Iaijutsu Focus +9, Intimidate +9, Sense Motive +9; Bayushi's Technique, Improved Initiative, Pincers and Tail, Void Use, Way of the Scorpion, Weapon Focus (Katana or Short bow); *Dojo:* None; *Kata:* Striking as Fire; *Possessions:* *katana* +1 (ancestral daisho), *wakizashi* (ancestral daisho), +1 *lamellar armor*, *yumi* +1, 20 arrows.

SHADOWED TOWER SHUGENJA

Human Scorpion Shu10: CR 10, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 10d6+20; hp 67; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 13, flat-footed 17); Attack *wakizashi* +2 +7; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 16; Height 5ft. 2in. *Skills and Feats:* Speak Language (Rokugani), Alchemy +16, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (Maho) +16, Knowledge (Scorpion Clan) +16, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +16, Scry +16, Spellcraft +16; Blessing of Air, Hand of the Shadowed Tower, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Void Use; *Dojo:* None; *Kata:* None; *Spells Known* (6/7/7/7/5/3; base DC 14 + spell level; Elemental Focus — Air, Soshi School): 0 — *accounts of Shorihotsu, cleanse, crow's vision, flash of insight, gathering swirl, light, kami's guidance, purity, stun the mind, whispers of the wind*; 1st — *blessed winds, by the light of Lord Moon, false face, pain, ray of enfeeblement, wind-borne slumbers*; 2nd — *eyes shall not see, greater quiescence, kiss of the toad, limb disruption, mists of illusion*; 3rd — *bestow curse, castle of air, glimpse of the soul's shadow, watchful spirit*; 4th — *the fires from within, see the seer, whispering winds*; 5th — *purity of air, pierce the soul*; *Possessions:* *wakizashi* +2, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *bracers of armor* +4, *obi of protection vs. normal missiles*, ring of undetectable alignment.

SHADOWED TOWER WITNESS

Human Scorpion Sam10: CR 10, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 10d10+10; hp 73; Init +9; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); Attack *keen katana* +1 +14/+9 melee or *yumi* +3 (short bow) +16/+11 ranged (1d8+1 damage); Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Height 5ft. 7in.; *Skills and Feats:* Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +14, Diplomacy +13, Jump +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +8, Iaijutsu Focus +13, Intimidate +13, Sense Motive +13; Bayushi's Technique, Depths of the Void, Improved Critical (Katana), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Pincers and Tail, Void Use, Way of the Scorpion, Weapon Focus (Katana or Short bow); *Dojo:* Honor's Lesson; *Kata:* Striking as Fire; *Possessions:* *keen katana* +1 (ancestral daisho), *wakizashi* +3 (ancestral daisho), +1 *lamellar armor*, *yumi* +3, and 20 arrows.

(Note: A Witness will only be found in the company of one of the maho-tsukai in the compound, and only one per maho-tsukai).

SHADOWED TOWER SAMURAI

Earth: 3
Willpower: 4
Water: 3
Fire: 3
Agility: 4
Air: 3
Void: 2
School/Rank: Scorpion Bushi 2
Glory/Honor: 1.2/0.4
Skills: Defense 4, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 5, Poison 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 5
Advantages: Quick
Disadvantages: Insensitive
Weapons & Armor: Katana, wakizashi, yumi and 20 arrows, light armor

SHADOWED TOWER MAHO-TSUKAI

Earth: 3
Willpower: 4
Water: 2
Perception: 4
Fire: 4
Air: 5
Awareness: 6
Void: 3
School/Rank: Soshi Shugenja 4
Glory/Honor: 3.5/0.0
Skills: Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 5,
Lore (Maho) 7, Lore (Shadowlands Taint) 7,
Meditation 6, Shintao 3, Sincerity 6,
Spellcraft 5
Advantages: Hand of the Shadowed Tower
Disadvantages: None
Weapons & Armor: Wakizashi, tanto
Spells (Innate abilities are italicized):
*Sense, Commune, Summon, By the Light of
Lord Moon, Quiescence of Air,
Wind-Borne Slumbers, Echoes on a Breeze,
Mists of Illusion, Secrets on the Wind,
Essence of Air, The Eye Shall Not See,
Wall of Air, Poison of the Windspider*

SHADOWED TOWER WITNESS

Earth: 3
Willpower: 4
Water: 3
Strength: 4
Fire: 4
Agility: 5
Air: 4
Void: 3
School/Rank: Scorpion Bushi 4
Glory/Honor: 1.2/0.4
Skills: Defense 6, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6,
Kyujutsu 7, Lore (Shadowlands Taint) 6,
Poison 4, Sincerity 5, Stealth 6
Advantages: Quick, Combat Reflexes
Disadvantages: Dependent (maho-tsukai
in their care)
Weapons & Armor: Katana, wakizashi,
yumi and 20 arrows, light armor

THE "PUBLIC" AREA

AT A GLANCE

Starting with the aboveground hovel that serves as the main entrance, this area includes the Den of Sin and the private rooms for those with the wealth to afford a more enclosed setting. These areas are often strewn with customers laying about in varying degrees of stupor. Geisha wander about looking for those who don't seem to be enjoying themselves enough, with the intent to ensure each visit to the compound is memorable. Two groups of three Shadowed Tower samurai wander about this area ensuring nothing gets out of hand. Given the exceedingly relaxing atmosphere of the setting, outbursts of a violent nature are rare.

HOVEL (MAP POINT 1)

The only entrance known to those outside the Shadowed Tower is connected to an unremarkable hut that could only house an eta. No one unaware of the compound's location gives the hovel a second thought, as Ryoko Owari's peasants know better than to become inquisitive. A single Shadowed Tower samurai on the inside views all comers through a moving slit on the front. A pass code is required for entry, and there are several the guard is instructed to accept. Eta and other peasants that are invited to become victims of the Tower's rituals are given the code "silver rain."

Wealthy and influential nobles that the Shadowed Tower wishes to learn secrets from are given the code "heavy fog."

All others are told any number of imaginative codes to gain entry and remain generally ignored by the masters of the compound. Gaining entrance in such a manner is intentionally melodramatic; the Shadowed Tower agents know that indulging one's appetites is only half the attraction of the compound. Most of their wealthy patrons take an even greater delight in the clandestine atmosphere the place offers.

THE STAIRWELL (MAP POINT 2)

These stairs are steep, so climbing them while under the effects of an illicit substance is difficult at best. The stairs are pure black stone, polished to a reflective sheen. Under the low torchlight that illuminates the area, the stairs resemble a rippling river of black fluid. The risers are spaced irregularly, so attackers who charge quickly downstairs almost invariably lose their footing.

THE DEN OF SIN (MAP POINT 4)

The main attraction of the compound is this area, called the Den of Sin. Of all the rooms within the Shadowed Tower compound, the Den of Sin is invariably by far the most active. The Den is a huge chamber split up into smaller rooms by removable shoji screens. These sub-chambers make a poor substitute for those who cannot afford the private chambers, but eventually most people are too distracted to notice the events in other chambers.

Any manner of entertainment may be found here, legal or otherwise.

The proprietors have stocked the compound with some of their finest

Liquid Void (opium suspended in sake) in addition to the sake, shoku, and women within arm's reach at any point in the Den. A thick haze of smoke hovers just above the floor at all times of day, which only adds to the mystique of the dimly lit area. Two Shadowed Tower samurai spend most of their time monitoring the visitors in this area.

In addition to the patrols, one Shadowed Tower samurai is positioned on either side of the door leading to the storeroom connected to the Den of Sin. Six Shadowed Tower samurai are stationed within the Den of Sin at all times to quell possible



violence from within and meet assaults from the stairwell. A samurai lurks at each corner of the room, and two more are disguised as visitors to the compound. The four corner samurai and storeroom guards will support the two in the middle with arrow fire unless the two are outnumbered by equal or superior foes. In that case, the hidden corner samurai drop their yumi and immediately attack.

In case of an invasion, the Shadowed Tower agents will not hesitate to fire even if guests are in the way.

PRIVATE CHAMBERS (MAP POINT 6)

Reserved for favored or powerful guests, the private chambers are located just off the Den of Sin. Unlike the sub-chambers of the Den, these rooms are always used by a single guest and at least one geisha. There are two private chambers that are completely sealed off to provide complete seclusion. These are generally held by wealthy visitors of no interest to the Shadowed Tower besides the financial. The third (northernmost) chamber can be viewed from an observation room to the north. Guests in this room always sit facing away from the north wall, ensuring that perceptive visitors have no chance of seeing the agents of the Shadowed Tower spying on their talks.

Only the compound's most skilled and loyal geisha entertain in this room, as they are expected to extract information from guests discreetly and efficiently. Between the music and the ever-present opium and sake, most guests readily follow topics of conversation wherever a skilled geisha leads.

OBSERVATION CHAMBERS AND PASSAGES

AT A GLANCE

Several secret doors in the walls lead to passages that members of the Shadowed Tower may take to secretly observe the events within the Den of Sin, the stairwell, and the northern private chamber. One Shadowed Tower Samurai is stationed at each major point of the observation chambers — the stairwell, the western side of the Den, the eastern side of the Den, and the northern private chamber. There is at least one hollow point every five feet where a hole can be knocked in the wall, allowing clear archer fire into the area seen through the spyholes. Samurai stationed behind the spyholes are under strict orders not to take any action unless the Shadowed Tower forces within the areas are being overwhelmed. There is usually enough time between the start of any altercation and the need for support fire from the observation passages for at least two additional samurai to arrive where there was only one before.

GUARD POST (MAP POINT 3)

The main storage of the Shadowed Tower's weapons within the compound is located in a corner chamber within the main guard post just off the stairwell. Two Shadowed Tower Samurai stand guard over this cache at all times with orders to only relinquish weapons at a standard issue or at the commands of one of the three shugenja or Witnesses within the compound.

PRIVATE CHAMBER OBSERVATION (MAP POINT 5)

As described in map point 6, this chamber is used to view the northern private chamber. At any time, one of the three shugenja is likely to be observing the private chamber, accompanied by his Witness. GMs should feel free to include

or remove the maho-tsukai in this area depending on whether or not the players are being challenged in their attempt to infiltrate the Tower.

ARCHER POST (MAP POINT 7)

Those that manage to find their way through the secret passage in the southwest corner of the Den of Sin will likely be riddled with arrows from the archer post located due south of that secret door. The post always contains a minimum of three Shadowed Tower samurai who have practiced firing through the small archer slots. Even without forewarning of an attack, the samurai have orders to fire on anyone entering the passage that is not accompanied by one or more members of the Shadowed Tower.

The archers in this area have total concealment against ranged attacks and cannot be attacked by melee weapons through the archer slots.

The archers in this area are concealed well enough that their TN to be hit by ranged attacks is raised by 20. Spells that create ranged attack effects such as *The Fires From Within* have their TN raised by 15. Melee weapons cannot strike the archers in the post.

THE TEMPLE AND QUARTERS

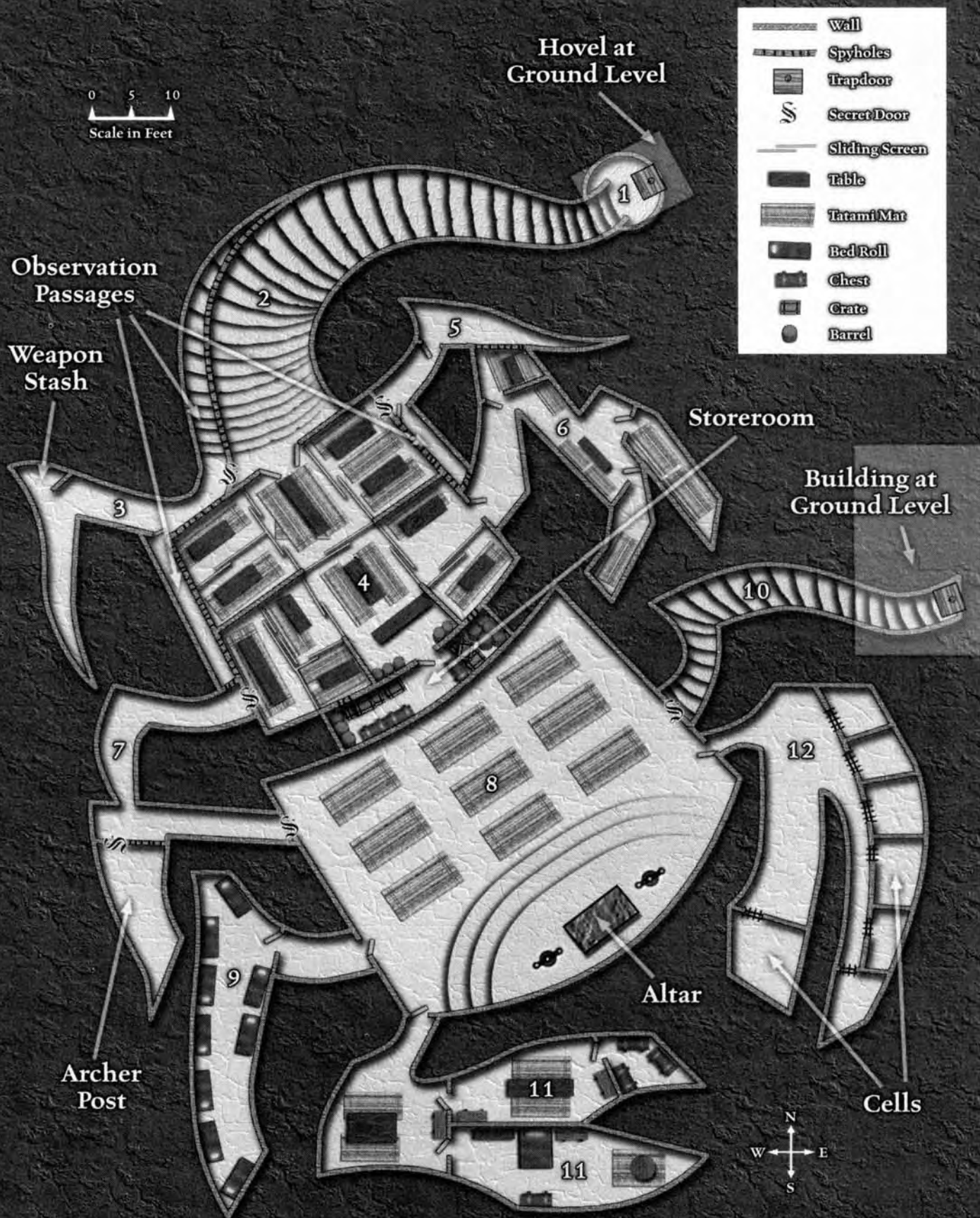
AT A GLANCE

The backrooms include a large temple dedicated to Bayushi and a secret staircase up to the group's aboveground holdings. Outsiders not escorted by a member of the Shadowed Tower are attacked on sight — no questions asked. A breach of this area is the highest sort of security threat and the Shadowed Tower forces will relocate themselves accordingly. Only after intrusions into the back rooms have been dealt with will the Shadowed Tower forces return to any other skirmishes in the compound. Outsiders who witness what the compound hides cannot be allowed to escape. These areas contain any of the three wandering maho-tsukai that are not in a specific location. They are lightly defended in comparison to the front sections, as it is nearly impossible for intruders to reach this section of the compound.

THE TEMPLE (MAP POINT 8)

The largest single chamber in the compound is the huge temple that dominates the back rooms. Here the members of the Shadowed Tower perform their dark arts, and the floor is spotted with bloodstains that cannot be removed even with thorough cleaning. At the room's south end is a raised platform bearing a stone altar, dominated by a statue of Bayushi. This not only honors the Kami but also reminds the Shadowed Tower shugenja that the clan's eyes are always upon them. The blood has run freely over this altar and dried there — attempts at cleanliness have been foiled by the heinous reality of the rituals conducted upon it. The chamber is completely dark save for the slight illumination from the altar's candles. There are two Shadowed Tower samurai, one each in the north and west corners, constantly on guard in the room. The guards are present even when the rituals of the Shadowed Tower maho-tsukai are in progress.

THE SHADOWED TOWER



The unnatural darkness of the room grants a +10 circumstance to all Move Silently and Hide skill checks made farther than five feet away from the altar.

The unnatural darkness of the room grants two Free Raises on all Stealth skill rolls made farther than five feet away from the altar.

The rare outsiders who stumble across a ritual will find at least two resident maho-tsukai in the room with two or more eta sacrifices on the altar. Four more Shadowed Tower Samurai are reassigned here from other posts, watching over each ritual in case something goes awry.

BARRACKS (MAP POINT 9)

This drab room is where the Shadowed Tower samurai sleep and meditate each day. Several of the guards' tatami mats have makeshift shrines laid out nearby in addition to personal trinkets of various types. It is unlikely for more than five or six Shadowed Tower samurai to be sleeping here at any one time. There are twenty total guards in the compound and any that are not on active duty are either asleep in this room or in Ryoko Owari proper.

STAIRWELL (MAP POINT 10)

This stairway leads to the aboveground buildings controlled by the Shadowed Tower in Ryoko Owari. More often than not, this is how Shadowed Tower agents enter and exit the compound. At this point in the structure, there are no further guardsmen — an outside force that could strike from either the hovel or the aboveground building to this point would not be stopped by more guards here. As a cursory security measure, the stairs are hidden by a secret door to discommode infiltrators.

MASTER'S QUARTERS (MAP POINT 11)

These rooms are the personal dwelling of Bayushi Noki, the master of the compound. These rooms are completely off limits to everyone except Noki, his guests, and his personal bodyguard. The quarters are divided into a forward room Noki uses to receive his guests and his masters, his personal sleeping quarters (the northeast room), and the quarters for his bodyguard (the southeast room). Noki's personal room is a wealth of information on the Shadowed Tower's history and relations. His journal and notes give several names of key agents of the Shadowed Tower within Ryoko Owari, though they are written in Noki's personal cipher. Though Noki is the master of a large operation for the Shadowed Tower, he is relatively unknown to the public and such journals would be improper testimony to bring against the powerful nobles mentioned therein. However, they can easily be the seeds for future dealings with the Shadowed Tower or put the party on the trail of other operatives.

Reading Noki's journal requires a Decipher Script skill check (DC 25) or a *comprehend languages* spell.

Reading Noki's journal requires a Cipher/Intelligence skill roll vs. TN 20.

BAYUSHI NOKI

Human Scorpion Ftr4/Rog10: CR 14, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 4d10+10d6+14; hp 82; Init +9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25 (touch 19, flat-footed 19); Attack *keen aiguchi* +2 +17/+12/+7 and *keen aiguchi* +2 +17/+12 (off-hand) melee;

SQ Class skill — Bluff (family bonus), Sneak Attack +5d6, Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked), Special Ability (Bonus Feat); Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 22, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 17; Height 5ft. 5in.; *Skills and Feats:* Speak Language (Rokugani), Appraise +16, Bluff +18, Climb +18, Decipher Script +16, Diplomacy +18, Disable Device +16, Disguise +16, Forgery +18, Hide +29, Jump +18, Listen +15, Move Silently +29; Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Improved Critical (Aiguchi), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Twist the Knife, Two-Weapon Fighting, Void Use, Weapon Finesse (Aiguchi), Weapon Focus (Aiguchi), Weapon Specialization (Aiguchi); *Dojo:* None; *Kata:* None; *Possessions:* *keen aiguchi* +2, *keen aiguchi* +2, 5 potion of invisibility, black stone netsuke (casts darkness as a 10th level sorcerer 3/day), ring of protection +3, +3 light hide armor, bracers of dexterity +4, cloak of stealth, boots of stealth, various poisons.

BAYUSHI NOKI

Earth: 4

Willpower: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 5

Fire: 3

Agility: 6

Air: 3

Awareness: 5

Void: 4

School/Rank: Scorpion Bushi 4

Glory/Honor: 2.7/0.2

Skills: Cipher 5, Defense 4, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kuenai 5, Kyujutsu 5, Poison 6, Sincerity 7, Stealth 6, Tanto 5

Advantages: Crafty, Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Fascination (Language and Text), Small

Weapons & Armor: Katana, wakizashi, tanto, yumi and 20 arrows, light armor, various poisons.

CELLS (MAP POINT 12)

The recessed room to the temple's east contains the Tower's prisoners. The cells are filled nearly to capacity with the moaning or unconscious eta that survive the maho-tsukai's rituals, suffused with Taint but not yet corrupted enough to destroy. There are never more than two such victims in a cell; they are in the last stages of exposure before they are fully Lost to the Taint and subsequently discarded by the Shadowed Tower. Prisoners here can number up to thirty, all eta and low ranking peasants. If allowed out of their cages, the prisoners will be too subdued by the opium and the Taint-induced insanity to do anything but wail and groan. It's entirely possible one or more peasants could go into a frenzy catalyzed by their sudden taste of freedom. If the party is feeling especially lucky, they may free the peasants that have developed Shadowlands powers and get out of the way, hoping that the Shadowed Tower agents are foolish enough to stand in their path.

The peasants also represent a problem. Local authorities may not have the capacity to handle a mob of Tainted peasants. Most likely, they will attempt to quietly burn the victims of the Shadowed Tower and be done with it (The Scorpion will be eager to hush up any word of the Tower). Canny characters may suggest the peasants be taken in by a temple to live out their days in prayer to balance their tortured souls and keep the Taint in check. This thread could be left hanging or quickly resolved at the GM's discretion.

CHAPTER SIX:

BEHIND THE VEIL

PAWNS OF THE SCORPION

CONTACTS OF THE SCORPION

The Shosuro spy network is not legendary. For it to be legendary, others would need to know that it exists. Instead the efficient Shosuro spy network is the most powerful espionage organization in Rokugan (only the Kolat are plausibly on par). Nearly every great house in the Empire has one or more Butei posing as members of that family, quietly gathering information for the Shosuro. Even those not infiltrated by Scorpion spies likely contain at least one noble caught in the trap of Shosuro blackmail. It is these people the Shosuro rely upon most for their information, though they may never know it. The following characters can make good points of contact for spies and other Scorpion agents.

KAIU NAMBOKU

The Scorpion generally wait for the Kaiu to instigate discussions. By and large, the Scorpion do not wish to weaken the family guarding the Empire from the Shadowlands. However, every so often an opportunity presents itself that the Scorpion cannot turn down. Namboku is one of the most experienced and trusted siegemasters on the

Kaiu Wall. His rise through the Crab ranks from a nameless samurai to one of the most respected commanders of their forces is the stuff of legend. It is a legend that the Scorpion were all too happy to help a young and ambitious Namboku achieve.

Through various channels, the Shosuro learned that Namboku wished a greater role for himself, and he was more than capable. He would be overlooked due to his distant connection to any glory within the Crab, so the Scorpion were glad to elevate the Kaiu samurai to a more respectable position. So what if a few heads would be removed along the way, the Shosuro reasoned; the Crab would be all the stronger with such a capable leader in place of those less talented. Since that time, Namboku has thrown himself into his work, attempting to forget the shameful acts that he was party to. He would confess his crimes and beg for seppuku, but the Scorpion's logic haunts his mind — his suicide would only make all those deaths completely pointless, and would also deprive the Crab of a capable leader. The Scorpion promise to release the Crab from his servitude soon, after he pays back their generosity. Just a little longer, they promise. Just a little longer...

"YASUKI HEIKICH"

Two decades ago, young Shosuro Kikamono was excited to get his first assignment as an infiltrator. He was confident his years of training had made him a valuable tool for the Scorpion, but his heart sank when he learned where he was being assigned. The Shosuro elders sent the young butei to the Yasuki family of the Crab to monitor the growing tensions between the Crab and the Crane over the Yasuki

lands. The Scorpion feared that they could be easily drawn into such a large conflict, or that they might miss the perfect opportunity to make fools of both clans at the same time. Kikamono adopted the guise of Yasuki Heikichi and sadly said goodbye to the comforts of the Shosuro lands.

After nearly a generation of laboring and suffering as a mere merchant patron, Kikamono's luck changed for the better. Daidoji Hachi's appointment as the legal heir of the Yasuki line gave the Scorpion butei just the chance he was looking for. "Heikichi" quickly relocated with the Yasuki who turned to the Crane as loyal vassals. All the while, Kikamono has kept a close eye on the developments between the Crab and Crane, including the arrival of Akodo Kaneka.

TOGASHI GIRI

Though the Scorpion have a close and valuable alliance with the Dragon Clan, many Scorpion leaders see the value of continuing to monitor their mysterious allies. One such case involves the recent events surrounding the holy man called Togashi Giri. Though hardly a man of sin or vice, Giri was unfortunate enough to secretly dishonor himself and the Dragon at the wedding of Ikoma Otemi to Shosuro Yasuko. Though he was called upon to perform the ceremony of union between the two samurai, Giri was plagued by impure thoughts about the bride. He meditated for hours but could not clear his mind; in the end, he concluded that Shosuro Yasuko could only be a vile temptress from the Shadowlands. The accusation and the ensuing chaos is the stuff of rumor throughout the Empire to this day.

Of course, the events did not escape the notice of the large number of Scorpion that attended. Giri was approached by Soshi Eiji and was told that in honor of their clans' relations, he would assist the Dragon in keeping the day's events a secret. Naturally, the monk's impure thoughts about the bride would also remain unmentioned. Of course, the Scorpion would require a favor in return, to be provided by the Dragon holy man personally. Wishing to do whatever he could to prevent any shame from falling on himself, Giri quickly agreed. So far, the Scorpion have yet to collect on their favor, and each passing day only makes Giri imagine something more horrible that the Scorpion could be waiting to ask.

THE ASHALAN

In the aftermath of Emperor Toturi's disappearance in the year 1130, the Scorpion Clan again became the popular scapegoats of the Empire. Many demanded their deaths for daring to raise a hand against the Emperor for the second time in their clan's history, even though this time they were blameless. The Emerald Champion of that period, Kakita Toshimoko, recognized that the Scorpion would never be so careless.

Rather than execute them for a crime they could not have committed, he saved their lives by fostering their children to the Crane and banishing the adults beyond the mountains to the Burning Sands.

The Scorpion Clan's trek across the vast desert was not easy. Many died of the excruciating conditions, and even more perished once they reached their destination. Even as the Scorpion reached the end of the desert, they were attacked by the merciless forces of the Senpet Empire. Exhausted and dehydrated, the Scorpion would doubtless have been completely exterminated had not the Senpet commanders mistaken Bayushi Kachiko for a figure out of their mythology. Playing the role to save her people, Kachiko arranged for her clan to be imprisoned and enslaved rather than destroyed outright. She knew that given time, her people could be freed from the Senpet copper mines.

During the long months of her confinement in the gaijin city of Medinaat al-Salaam, Kachiko met many strange and unusual people. Among the most unusual were the Ashalan, a race of immortal mystics who used a form of tattoo magic reminiscent of the Togashi's. Kachiko wisely made inroads with these powerful individuals, and when the time finally came to liberate her people, she counted several Ashalan among her allies. The Scorpion's reappearance in Rokugan was all the more shocking due to the appearance of allies such as Hojyn the Ashalan sorcerer among their ranks.



THE ASHALAN AND THE SCORPION TODAY

Time and discretion have lessened the role the Ashalan play within the Scorpion Clan. Bayushi Yojiro took full advantage of his strange allies' abilities during the War Against the Shadow and the War of Spirits, but at the conclusion of those epic confrontations, he realized that the continued presence of the Ashalan would bring constant scrutiny upon his clan, something neither his clan nor the Ashalan desired. Unwilling to give

up such a valuable resource, Yojiro instead chose to secret his few Ashalan allies in hidden strongholds across the Empire and beyond its borders.

The Ashalan, a virtually immortal people, recognized the need to remove themselves from the public eye until the xenophobic atmosphere of Rokugan relaxed enough to accept them. The Scorpion used their resources and contacts to construct private strongholds in the most remote locations available: the depths of the Shinomen Mori, the desolate peaks of the Twilight Mountains, the untamed jungles of the Islands of Silk and Spice, and even the mountains beyond the Unicorn Clan's expansive holdings.

ASHALAN

Medium-sized Humanoid

Hit Dice: 1d8 (4 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Dagger +1 melee

Damage: Dagger 1d4-1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Immunities, light sensitivity, shadow cloak, tattoo of domination, Will save

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14

Skills: Craft: Tattoo +4, Move Silently +3

Feats: Iron Will

Climate/Terrain: Any desert, underground, temperate.

Organization: Usually solitary, occasionally in groups of 3-5.

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: Standard

Honor: Nil

Alignment: Usually lawful neutral

Advancement: By character class

The Ashalan are a mysterious race from beyond Rokugan and across the Burning Sands that closely resembles humans. They are tall, gaunt individuals with no hair and extremely pale, almost albino skin. Every known member of the race is covered in strange, mystical tattoos. It is possible that these tattoos are in some way related to the Ashalan's immortality, given their penchant for tattooing others (*see below*).

COMBAT

The Ashalan are not particularly threatening physically. They prefer to deal with foes through subordinates or slaves, using their sorcery from afar to ensure victory. Those few who are forced to defend themselves, however, are formidable foes. The Ashalan have centuries to learn various fighting styles, even if they are reluctant to use them.

Immunity (Ex): Ashalan are immune to all non-magical poison and disease.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Ashalan suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or in the radius of a daylight spell. Ashalan sunburn easily, and prolonged exposure to sunlight over long periods of time is very unhealthy for them, inflicting 1 permanent point of Constitution damage per week of such exposure.

Shadow Cloak (Sp): An Ashalan can draw up the shadows around him to conceal his presence. Ashalan using this ability gain a +15 to Hide checks when motionless, and +10 to Hide checks when moving. This ability is a standard action. If the Ashalan is spotted, his tattoos appear to be pulsating softly, revealing their magical nature. An Ashalan who makes any form of attack (melee, ranged, or magical) loses the benefit of Shadow Cloak immediately.

Tattoo of Domination (Su): The Ashalan have the ability to imbue others with mystical tattoos similar to those of the Ashalan. These tattoos mystically bind the creature to the Ashalan race, making it a slave to the will of any Ashalan that commands it. The tattooing process takes 72 hours, during which the Ashalan must succeed at three consecutive Craft (tattoo) checks (DC 20 + target creature's level). The creature being tattooed may make a Will save (DC 10 + Ashalan's Hit

Dice + Ashalan's Charisma modifier) to cause one of these checks to fail. Creatures that are tattooed cease aging completely and are subject to the effects of *dominate person* as if the spell had been cast by a 12th level sorcerer. Any Ashalan may issue commands to the creature as if they were the casting sorcerer. Ashalan themselves are immune to this effect.

Once per week, the tattooed creature may attempt a Will save (DC 20 + level of the Ashalan currently in possession of the creature) to attempt to break free. Those few who manage to free themselves from the Ashalan often flee, for any other Ashalan can renew the domination by making a successful opposed Charisma check against them as a standard action.

Will Save (Ex): All Ashalan have a +2 racial bonus to all Will saves.

ASHALAN CHARACTERS

The favored class for all Ashalan is sorcerer. Other common classes include rogues and paladins — an order of holy warriors called the Blood-Sworn who defend the Ashalan race's interests.

PLAYING AN ASHALAN

No more than a dozen Ashalan have ever been in Rokugan at the same time.

D20 SYSTEM™

Ashalan Racial Traits

- -2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, +4 Charisma
- Medium-size
- Base speed is 30 feet
- **Special Abilities:** Ashalan characters gain the Immunity, Shadow Cloak, Tattoo of Domination, and Will save abilities.
- **Favored Class:** Sorcerer
- ECL: +1

LSR RPG 2E:

Ashalan characters gain the following abilities:

Benefit: +1 Void

School: Ashalan characters may choose to attend any Scorpion school they choose, or they may choose the following benefits as they advance in Insight.

Insight Rank 1: Gains the Immunity ability and the ability to cast any two elemental spells as innate abilities.

Insight Rank 2: Gains the Indomitable Will ability and the ability to cast any two elemental spells as innate abilities.

Insight Rank 3: Gain the Shadow Cloak ability and the ability to cast any two elemental spells as innate abilities.

Insight Rank 4: Gains the ability to cast any two elemental spells as innate abilities.

Insight Rank 5: Gain the Tattoo of Domination ability.



ASHALAN

Earth: 4

Fire: 5

Air: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Void: 4

TN to be Hit: 30

Skills: Athletics 3, Craft (Tattooing) 8, Defense 4, Spell Research 8, Weapon Skills (varies) 4–6

Spells: Ashalan do not use conventional Rokugani magic, but can invoke effects identical to the spells *By the Light of Lord Moon* and *Cloak of Night*.

Special Abilities: Ashalan possess the following special abilities.

Immunity: Ashalan are completely immune to all poisons and diseases, even those that are created through magic.

Light Sensitivity: Ashalan suffer a +3 TN penalty to all rolls made in bright sunlight. Extended exposure to sunlight is unhealthy for them, causing them to lose one point of Earth per week of exposure. This lost Earth may be restored by one week of rest in darkness.

Shadow Cloak: Ashalan may wrap themselves in shadows, hiding them from onlookers. When remaining motionless, an Ashalan may roll five additional dice for all Stealth rolls. If moving, this bonus is reduced to three dice.

Tattoo of Domination: The Ashalan can imbue others with mystical tattoos similar to those of the Ashalan themselves. These tattoos mystically bind the creatures to the Ashalan race, making it a slave to the will of any Ashalan that commands it. The tattooing process takes three days, during which the Ashalan must succeed at three Craft (Tattooing) rolls (TN 5 × the target's Insight Rank). The creature being tattooed may make a Willpower roll (TN equal to the Ashalan's Craft roll) to negate one of the rolls. Creatures that are tattooed cease aging completely. Any Ashalan may issue commands to the creature as if he were the tattoo's creator.

Indomitable Will: The will of the immortal Ashalan is nearly impossible to break. Any attempt to confuse or control the thoughts of an Ashalan, whether through skill use or spells, has its TN increased by 15. If the Ashalan is entitled to roll to resist, he rolls and keeps three additional dice.

Void: Ashalan possess Void, but may not spend Void Points. Their Void Ring determines the number of Raises they may make on any given roll and applies to certain skills.

ASHALAN MATERIALS

There are several secrets that the mysterious Ashalan brought with them from the Burning Sands. These secrets serve the Scorpion well, but only when it is necessary and appropriate. The Scorpion are not willing to risk exposing their secrets to the rest of the Empire, and use these items and materials very sparingly. None outside the Ashalan, not even among the Scorpion, know the secrets of creating these items.

THE KHADJA

An exquisitely crafted polearm with blades on both ends, the khadja is the preferred weapon of the elite Ashalan warrior caste. Khadja are frequently enchanted and can be customized to fit the needs of individual warriors.

The khadja is a Large exotic weapon. It inflicts d8 damage, has a threat range of 19–20, and possesses a critical hit multiplier of ×3. You get a +2 to your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an enemy when using a khadja (including the opposed attack roll to avoid being disarmed yourself if you fail to disarm your enemy).

The khadja is a polearm with a DR of 1k3. Khadja are always of at least Fine quality and confer upon their wielder a Free Raise for all attack rolls. Using a khadja requires use of the Khadja weapon skill.

CRYSTEEL

Normal crystal tempered with mystic rituals and shaped through magic can be crafted into a supernaturally hard substance the Ashalan call crysteel. Crysteel retains the normal pure qualities of crystal, but is as hard as steel and cannot be shattered by any conventional means.

Crysteel can be shaped into virtually any bladed weapon. Such weapons possess an innate +1 enhancement bonus. They possess a Hardness of 15 and 20 hit points. The market price for any such weapon is 1,800 koku plus the cost of a masterwork weapon of the same type.

Crysteel weapons must be of Fine quality or better, and always roll at least one additional die for all attack and damage rolls. A crysteel katana may be purchased by a Scorpion character with a 5-point Inheritance advantage.

THE SHADOWED TOWER

ORIGINS

Centuries ago, the Scorpion, Phoenix, and Crane clans united to silently overthrow the Hantei Dynasty. Though the Emperor remained upon the throne, his power had shifted into their hands. This was the Rulership of the Gozoku, a period that proved that while the Emperor's power may be absolute, the Emperor himself was not invincible. Though the Gozoku eventually fell, the memory of their accomplishment remained.

Most look back upon that period as a dark time, a time when the Emperor was a mere puppet and corrupt officials lined their pockets. Others see the Gozoku reign as a time of progress, when art, culture, and law underwent a great period of growth. Many of the new legal institutions developed by the Gozoku were later appropriated by the Hantei Dynasty and continue to be used today. Still, many of those institutions were originally designed to keep the Emperor in check, a fact most would rather forget.

Some Scorpion look back upon that time with fondness, a time when their clan ruled the Empire through Gozoku mastermind Bayushi Atsuki. The fact that they were forced to

ally with the Crane and Phoenix to accomplish this is somewhat bothersome, but in the Scorpion view this was obviously an alliance of convenience. Ironically, Crane and Phoenix scholars who specialize in the Gozoku period also frequently view the other two clans as pawns, and themselves as the true leaders. The truth of how the Gozoku came to power, and how they managed an Empire, has been lost to the ages.

Or has it?

At the end of the Gozoku's reign, Bayushi Atsuki refused to answer to the Emperor's justice. Cut down by Seppun guardsmen, his soul flew to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. He refused to allow his mind to be consumed by Satsugai, the madness of that hellish realm. Instead, he focused intently upon his life, wondering how he had failed, scheming how to succeed if he were given a second chance. Though he was not able to resist the Realm of Slaughter's control forever, he focused it. His anger was turned toward his own failures, dwelling on them, analyzing them, trying to determine how he failed. Atsuki wandered the Fields of Slaughter while battling his own past. He questioned all new arrivals when he could, learning as much about the Empire as possible before the madness overcame them. He collected information and made plans.

When Oblivion's Gate opened, Atsuki was one of the first to charge through into the mortal realm. The madness of Toshigoku faded, but his memories, his plans, remained. Atsuki knew better than to reveal himself to the Empire, and instead took the identity of Shosuro Furuyari. Furuyari was a popular playwright among the Scorpion, though his work was actually the result of three other writers seeking to gain greater fame by combining their work under a single *nom de plume*. Atsuki adopted Furuyari's identity, knowing that none could prove that he was not who he claimed to be. Having returned to life, he seized the opportunity to create the Gozoku anew.

During the War of Spirits Atsuki quickly realized that allying with Hantei XVI would be foolish in the extreme. The Steel Chrysanthemum knew nothing of the modern world. He was boorish, intolerant, and often violent toward his vassals. In a sitting Emperor, such behavior would have been tolerated, but given a choice it was obvious that the Empire would back Toturi. Thus, Atsuki allied himself with the mortals. He helped the Scorpion gather information about the Steel Chrysanthemum, and gained the Hantei's trust so that his armies could be destroyed at Beiden Pass. During this time he also came to know Bayushi Yojiro. Though he respected Yojiro's intellect and tactical prowess, Atsuki thought it was unfortunate that the Scorpion Champion was so completely dedicated to the Emperor. Atsuki watched Yojiro

carefully, learning his habits and his techniques, so that when he would inevitably challenge the Master of Secrets he would be well prepared.

It was also during the War of Spirits that Atsuki met Bayushi Ogura. Rare for his family, Ogura was a shugenja. Ogura's father, Bayushi Kaukatsu, had little respect for his son, considering his calling as a shugenja strange and aberrant. Ogura, in turn, thought his father foolish and closed-minded. As his father's service offered little opportunity, Ogura's ambition drove him to seek help elsewhere. By chance, Atsuki discovered Ogura and was quite eager to gain the shugenja's help.

At the end of the war, Atsuki was counted among the Heroes of Rokugan, spirits who served with their mortal descendants and thus were allowed to remain and swear fealty to Toturi. Atsuki used his fame and prestige to seek out others like himself, ambitious Scorpion unhappy with the clan's leadership. He began to build a network of spies and informants. However, he was not yet ready to make

his move to take over the clan; he would require a more substantial power base first.

It was at this time that Ogura happened upon a cell of Bloodspeaker cultists operating in Scorpion lands. Sending his agents to infiltrate the cult, Ogura discovered that



THE KOLAT AND THE SHADOWED TOWER

The Shadowed Tower's existence was only recently discovered by the Kolat, a fact that the Kolat Masters find distressing. While the Shadowed Tower and the Kolat share many philosophies and objectives, the Kolat find the Tower's use of maho and the Taint unconscionable. However, until more can be discovered about the Tower and its leadership the Kolat believe that investigating too deeply is too much of a risk. One exception to this policy is the Jade Sect, who have sworn to root out and destroy all maho-tsukai agents of the Tower. The other sects have remained out of the conflict, save the Coin Sect, who find many of the Shadowed Tower's activities rather interesting. (At the moment, the Coin Sect are merely curious, and are not prepared to conflict with the Jade Sect. This could easily change.)

Sadly, the Jade Sect's resources are already strained and competing with such a large group of well-hidden maho-tsukai is proving difficult. The Jade Sect has come to accept that they cannot defeat the Shadowed Tower without help. A group of player characters hunting the Shadowed Tower may receive a helping hand from a most unexpected source.

they had developed a technique that allowed them to minimize the Taint accumulated through the practice of blood magic. Intrigued, Ogura wiped out the cell and stole their research.

After a few months of study, Ogura perfected the technique, allowing him to use maho without accumulating the Shadowlands Taint if a willing subject accepted the corruption. Further, he learned how to use maho to subtly infect food, drink, and other substances so that they would erode the will of whoever consumed them. He presented his findings to Atsuki. The Gozoku lord was hesitant to rely upon dark powers, but he could not deny the advantage Ogura's techniques offered. Through use of maho the Shadowed Tower quickly spread its influence. Peasant pawns were corrupted so that Shadowed Tower shugenja could use blood magic without harm. Influential samurai were quietly subverted, turned into unwitting pawns.

PURPOSE

The Shadowed Tower's purpose is simple. They wish to rule the Empire as the Gozoku once did, controlling their allies and enemies from the shadows. Atsuki believes that the current leadership of the Scorpion is weak, too dependent upon the Emperor. They have become afraid to take risks, to seize power at any cost. Atsuki does not intend to ignore the lesson his clan learned during the Clan War, the terrible price they paid when Yogo Junzo opened the Black Scrolls. Neither does he intend to let one failure turn his clansmen into cowards. They should not ignore past mistakes, but neither should they disregard the resources they have at hand — including maho.

The Shadowed Tower engages in smuggling, blackmail, information gathering and assassination. Their services are not available to outsiders as are those of similar organizations (such as the Kolat). Shadowed Tower operations benefit the Tower, and only the Tower.

ORGANIZATION

While maho is the source of the Shadowed Tower's power, its leaders are not maho-tsukai. Bayushi Ogura is the only shugenja with any real influence within the Tower, and even he is closely monitored. Bayushi Atsuki and other like-minded Scorpion samurai (many of them also returned spirits) lead the Tower from locations across the Scorpion provinces. Though the Shadowed Tower is referred to as if it were a physical place, there is no physical Shadowed Tower. The name is intended as a distraction, to cause enemies of the organization to hunt for a headquarters that does not exist. The agents of the Tower meet regularly in secret locations, mostly underground. Most of these holdings belong to Atsuki under various pseudonyms, purchased using the wealth he was granted at the end of the War of Spirits or the ill-gotten gains of his Shadowed Tower operations.

THE SHADOWLANDS TAIN

While the Tower engages in maho, the Taint is not tolerated. All Shadowed Tower maho-tsukai must report regularly to Atsuki or one of his lieutenants so that they may be examined for signs of the Taint. All shugenja are appointed a "Witness," a yojimbo who also serves as their anchor. The Witness cautions his charge against succumbing to the power of the Taint. Should a shugenja show any mental or physical symptoms of the Taint, it is his Witness' duty to kill him without warning. Thus far the system has worked remarkably well, and none of the Shadowed Tower shugenja have fallen to the madness of the Taint (though a handful have fallen to their Witnesses).

No maho ritual is allowed unless the maho-tsukai has a willing target (usually a peasant addled by Shadowed sake or rice) to accept his corruption. These Tainted subjects are kept under lock and key until their Taint becomes excessive. When they begin to display obvious Taint symptoms, they are swiftly killed by a Jade Strike, Evil Ward, or similar magic and their bodies cremated.

SHADOWED TOWER MECHANICS

NEW FEAT

HAND OF THE SHADOWED TOWER SCORPION FEAT

You can extend your Shadowlands Taint into a willing target.

Prerequisites: Knowledge (maho) 6 ranks, Knowledge (Shadowlands) 6 ranks

Benefit: You can ignore all Shadowlands Taint normally accumulated via maho by casting a maho spell ritually. Multiply the spell's normal casting time by ten. You must be touching a willing, intelligent living creature during the casting; at the end of this time all Shadowlands Taint you would have accumulated is given to the target instead.

Each time you use this feat you must make a Will save (DC 15) or take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage that cannot be healed by any means. A "1" on this roll is automatically

a failure. When your Wisdom is reduced to zero, you immediately gain a Taint modifier equal to your highest ability modifier and become a Lost NPC under the control of the DM. If Wisdom is normally your spellcasting ability score, you take Charisma damage instead.

Additionally, this power allows you to learn and cast maho spells without having the Shadowlands Taint normally required to do so. You must still meet the level requirements normally.

Special: This feat is only available to members of the Shadowed Tower organization.

NEW ADVANTAGE

HAND OF THE SHADOWED TOWER

(6 POINTS)

You can ignore all Shadowlands Taint normally accumulated via maho by casting a maho spell ritually. Multiply the spell's normal casting time by ten. You must be touching a willing, intelligent living creature during the casting; at the end of this time all Shadowlands Taint you would have accumulated is given to the target instead.

Each time you use this ability you must make a Willpower roll vs. TN 25 or your Void Ring is permanently lowered by 1. When your Void Ring is reduced to zero, you immediately gain Taint equal to your highest Ring and become a Lost NPC under the control of the GM.

This Advantage is only available to members of the Shadowed Tower organization. At least one rank of Lore (Maho) and Lore (Shadowlands) are required to take this Advantage.

SHADOWED POWDER

Shadowed Powder is the Shadowed Tower's deadliest weapon. It is a colorless, odorless, flavorless powder that can easily be mixed with rice, sake, Liquid Void, or any other consumable substance. Any who consume it find their will slowly sapped, their ability to resist the Shadowed Tower worn away.

Any individual who consumes a dose (one pinch) of Shadowed Powder suffers a -2 penalty to all Will saves and Wisdom related skill checks for the next 24 hours, or until a *neutralize poison* or similar magic is cast upon them. Multiple doses of Shadowed Powder are cumulative. All penalties are doubled if the source of the save or check involves someone encouraging the target to ingest more Shadowed Powder.

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Brew Potion, Heart of the Shadowed Tower; **Market Price:** 500 koku.

Any individual who consumes a dose (one pinch) of Shadowed Powder suffers a -5 penalty to all Willpower and Earth rolls for the next day, or until a spell that removes poison is cast upon them. Multiple doses of Shadowed Powder are cumulative. All penalties are doubled if the roll involves someone encouraging the target to ingest more Shadowed Powder.

Creating one dose requires six hours of work and access to a variety of rare and expensive herbs found in the Scorpion lands. Only characters with the Hand of the Shadowed Tower Advantage can create this powder.



TYPICAL SHADOWED TOWER ENFORCER/WITNESS

Human Scorpion Samurai 5: CR 5; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d10+10; hp 37; Init +2 (+1 Dex, +1 Int); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); Atk katana +9 melee, 1d10+4 damage or yumi +6 ranged, 1d8 damage; Honor: 1; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10; *Skills and Feats:* Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Bluff +8, Diplomacy +9, Iaijutsu Focus +8, Intimidate +8, Sense Motive +7, Tumble +9; Bayushi's Technique, Pincers and Tail, Versatile (Bluff, Tumble), Void Use, Way of the Scorpion; *Possessions:* Katana, masterwork ashigaru armor, tanto, wakizashi, yumi and 20 arrows.

TYPICAL SHADOWED TOWER ENFORCER/WITNESS

Earth: 3
Water: 3
Fire: 3
Air: 3
Void: 2
School/Rank: Bayushi Bushi 2
Dojo: None
Honor: 1.5
Glory: 2.0
Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 2, Defense 3, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Poison 2, Sincerity 3



FUSHIN, NIGHTMARE OF THE SCORPION

Fushin holds a special place among the Onisu. It was Fushin who killed Emperor Toturi, causing the Empire to be thrown into chaos. Fushin is quite proud of its actions, frequently bragging of its deeds to the other Onisu. It generally glosses over the fact that it was under Daigotsu's control at the time, and it was truly the Dark Lord who dealt the killing blow. Fushin sees the victory as its own.

Not surprisingly, Fushin is the least trustworthy of the Onisu. The demon often breaks off alone, hatching plots and schemes to gain power for itself. As a creature of pure betrayal, such is its nature. Daigotsu is aware of Fushin's aberrant tendencies, and watches Fushin carefully. For the most part, the Onisu's schemes bring greater harm to the Empire than to the Lost, so Daigotsu tolerates them. Occasionally Fushin goes too far and Daigotsu is forced to slay it, sending the Onisu screaming back into Jigoku to consider its crimes until a month passes and it can be granted physical form again.

Fushin is rather embarrassed by its most recent foray into the Empire, in which it and Muchitsujo (the Unicorn Onisu) embarked upon a reign of terror in the heart of Ryoko Owari. Though Fushin slew many Scorpion bushi, it was slain in turn by Bayushi Kwanchai, the mad student of the Failed Martyr. Fushin is uncertain how to deal with this humiliating defeat, so for the moment it sulks in the shadows of the City of the Lost. One day it shall return and wreak glorious vengeance.

Fushin is a massive red-skinned creature covered in overlapping plates of chitinous armor. It has four arms, each of which wields a katana in one hand. It is known to prowl the Shinomen Forest, and has recently been sighted among the ranks of the free ogres in the Twilight Mountains.

FUSHIN, ONISU OF BETRAYAL, NIGHTMARE OF THE SCORPION

Large Outsider (Evil, Oni, Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 16d8 + 64 (136 hp)

Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 28 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +15 natural)

Attacks: 4 Huge +5 dishonorable katana, +23 melee

Damage: Huge katana 2d6+12 +2d6 damage vs. honorable opponents

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 10 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, enhancement, summon weapons, weakening gaze

Special Qualities: Oni Qualities, damage reduction 20/+4 (jade), honorable vulnerability, regeneration 3, rejuvenation, SR 25

Saves: Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +15

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 30, Taint 12

Skills: Bluff +26, Concentration +20, Hide +20, Iaijutsu Focus +26, Knowledge (History) +21, Knowledge (Scorpion) +21, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +21, Knowledge (Yume-do) +21, Move Silently +20, Search +21, Sense Motive +21, Spot +21, Listen +21.

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (katana), Improved Initiative, Multidexterity, Power Attack.

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands, Yume-do, any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 15

Treasure: Standard

Honor: Always 0 Honor

Alignment: Always neutral evil

Advancement: 13–24 HD (Large); 25–36 HD (Huge)

COMBAT

Fushin takes great delight in sapping the will to fight from its opponents with its gaze, then slicing them to pieces with its blades. It usually travels with a pack of Tsuno Ravagers and at least one Soultwister. More recently, it has been seen in the company of free ogres.

Enhancement (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Fushin commits a dishonorable act of betrayal (such as defying his lord's commands or fleeing from battle while his comrades remain behind), the Onisu gains 1d8 temporary hit points. All other benefits of advancement (such as higher saves, base attack, and caster level for spell-like abilities) are also gained. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus hit die per week until it returns to the above statistics. Each time the Onisu gains ten levels from this ability, it increases by one size category.

Honorable Vulnerability (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Fushin commits an act of selfless loyalty, the Onisu receives a negative level. This negative level remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with its enhancement ability. If the Onisu is reduced to zero levels due to this effect, it perishes.

Oni Qualities (Su): All oni have certain qualities, described on page 5 of *Creatures of Rokugan*.™

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons do normal damage to Fushin, as do weapons that have been immersed in the water of the Realm of Dreams.

Rejuvenation (Su): If slain, Fushin can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters. The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month.

Spell-like abilities: at will — *cause fear*, *detect passage**, *dispel magic*, *know alignment*, *passage into darkness**, *passage into dream**, *protection from good*. 3/day — *desecrate*, *emotion*, *gaijin flames*, *haste*. These abilities are as cast by a 16th level sorcerer (DC 20 + spell level). Spells marked with an asterisk are described in *Fortunes and Winds*.

Summon Weapons (Su): If separated from its katana, Fushin can summon them to its hands again as a free action. If Fushin is destroyed, its swords vanish.

Weakening Gaze (Su): Any enemy that meets Fushin's gaze must make a Will save (DC 24) or become panicked.

FUSHIN, ONISU OF BETRAYAL, NIGHTMARE OF THE SCORPION

Earth: 4

Fire: 4

Water: 5

Air: 8

Rolls when Attacking: 10k7

Rolls for Damage: 7k4

TN to Be Hit: 45

Carapace: 8

Wounds: 30: +5; 55: +10; 70: +15; 80: +25; 120: Dead

Special Abilities:

Fear 6 (This fear stems from the oni's gaze; any opponent who makes a Raise on all attacks directed at the Onisu to avert his gaze can ignore this Fear.)

Multiple Arms: Fushin can attack four times per round, once with each arm.

Enhancement: Any time a person within 100 feet of Fushin commits a dishonorable act of betrayal (such as defying his lord's commands or fleeing from battle while his comrades remain behind) one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) increases by one. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus Trait per week until it returns to the above statistics. The oni grows slowly larger each time it draws upon betrayal in such a manner.

Honorable Vulnerability: Any time a person within 100 feet of Fushin commits an act of selfless loyalty, one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) decreases by one. This penalty remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with its enhancement ability. If one of the Onisu's Traits is reduced to zero, it perishes.

Passages: The Onisu can cast *Detect Passage*, *Passage Into Darkness*, and *Passage Into Dream* at will. (See *Fortunes and Winds*.)

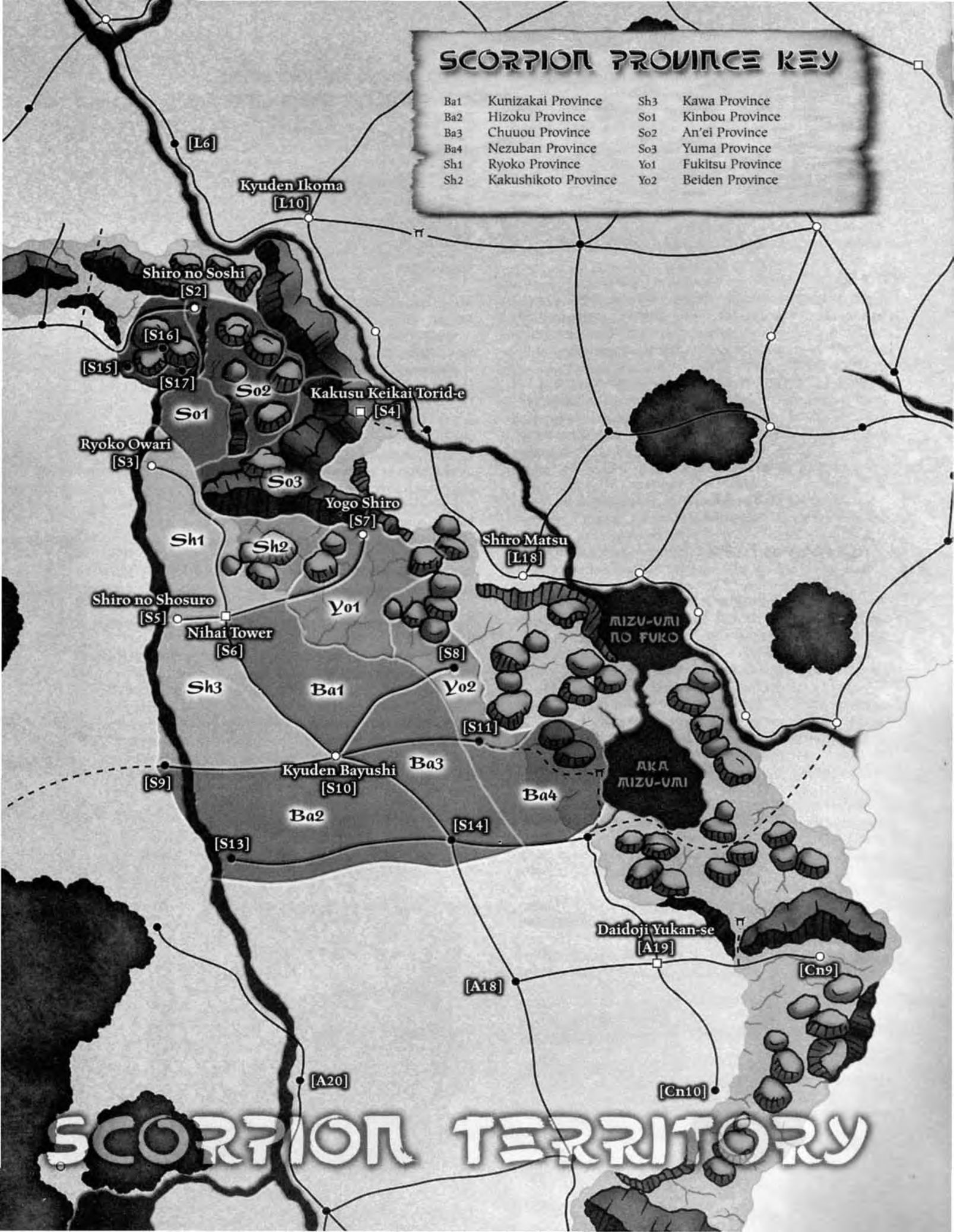
Carapace: Weapons that have been dipped in the waters of Yume-do ignore Fushin's Carapace rating.

Rejuvenation: If slain, Fushin can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters. The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month.

Summon Weapons: If separated from its katana, Fushin can summon them to its hands again as a free action. If Fushin is destroyed, its swords vanish.

SCORPION PROVINCE KEY

Ba1	Kunizakai Province	Sh3	Kawa Province
Ba2	Hizoku Province	So1	Kinbou Province
Ba3	Chuuou Province	So2	An'ei Province
Ba4	Nezuban Province	So3	Yuma Province
Sh1	Ryoko Province	Yo1	Fukitsu Province
Sh2	Kakushikoto Province	Yo2	Beiden Province



SCORPION TERRITORY

"There are deadlier things in the night than ghosts and demons. One man in the right place can topple an Empire."

— Shosuro Yudoka, Ninja Master

Secrets of the Scorpion explores the most sinister Great Clan, illustrating their customs, holdings, and way of life. Explore the secrets of the Scorpion if you dare...

Within, you will find:

- Insight into the culture of the Scorpion Clan and the families that comprise it.
- Mechanics for secret orders within the clan: Yogo Ward masters, the guardians of dark secrets; the sinister Shadowed Tower; revolutionaries willing to use the darkest magic to further their ends; and more!
- Information on the Ashalan, enigmatic nonhumans who followed the Scorpion across the Burning Sands.
- The Compound, a hidden den of vice and corruption where the Shadowed Tower conduct their basest, most insidious rituals.
- The darkest secrets of the Scorpion Clan — ones even the clan of secrets would be surprised to learn.

This book is a dual-system supplement for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game, Second Edition,[™] and Rokugan,[™] the d20 Companion for Legend of the Five Rings. Players and DMs may also find it a useful source of feats and abilities for any d20 System[™] campaign.

Game Masters running the Second Edition L5R RPG will need a copy of the Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide[™] and the Player's Guide[™]. Players need only the Player's Guide.

Dungeon Masters running d20 System[™] games will need a copy of the Player's Handbook[™], the Dungeon Master's Guide[™], Oriental Adventures[™], and Rokugan[™]. Players will need only a Player's Handbook[™].

