



Legend of the Five Rings



ROLEPLAYING GAME

BETA RULES



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answers to rule queries, or just to pass on greetings, visit us online at

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Welcome to the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Beta Playtest

The *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* development team welcomes you to the open beta playtest! For over twenty years, Rokugan has been home to fantastical and dramatic tales featuring the samurai of the seven Great Clans. Now, we invite you to gather your friends, play the game of twenty questions, and return to the Emerald Empire to tell new stories of triumph and tragedy.

We here on the development team invite you to join us in the process of creating the best *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying* experience possible. This beta rulebook is a fully functional game that provides players and game masters with the tools they need to play countless sessions of *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying*. However, it is important to note that many elements of the beta are not representative of the final product. Many of the character options (including schools, techniques, advantages, and disadvantages), as well as game master advice, artwork, and setting information have been removed to provide a more concise playtesting experience.

Once you've finished creating characters, the fastest way to begin playing is to purchase the *Legend of the Five Rings Dice App*, available on the App Store and Google Play. The *Legend of the Five Rings Dice App* is a comprehensive physics-based dice roller that can be used to roll the custom six- and twelve-sided dice used in the game, as well as the ten-sided dice occasionally used during character creation. The app allows you to manually change die faces, group dice, display total results, and explode dice, as well as create custom presets for any combination of dice. Alternatively, the **Dice Sheet** included on page 233 can be printed out on sticker paper and attached to normal six- and twelve-sided dice. If you don't have sticker paper, gluing the paper die faces works just as well. You'll probably want to create at least five of each type of die to get started. Spraying these with a bit of transparent dull-coat (found at most hobby stores and friendly local game stores) will help keep the stickers on.

After you've had a chance to try out the system (we recommend running through the included adventure, "A Rōnin's Path" on page 207, to get a feel for the four major types of conflict scenes as well as the new paradigm for investigations), there are three main methods for you to submit your feedback. First, we have a public forum on the FFG website:

<https://community.fantasyflightgames.com/forum/537-legend-of-the-five-rings-roleplaying-game-beta/>. You can use this board to post questions and discuss the beta test with the other people involved. Second, you can submit any specific reports or feedback directly to the development team at the beta test email address (L5RRPGbeta@fantasyflightgames.com). When submitting your feedback via email, it is most helpful to us if you consolidate all of your questions and comments into a single document for your entire group, waiting to send it in until you have collected all related feedback into a single document. This will help the development team here more easily organize and process all of your comments. Third, the development team will occasionally post surveys to help us aggregate specific feedback and data points. You will also have the chance to vote for additional preview mechanics through social media!

The best way to get news updates from the Legend of the Five Rings RPG team, such as when updates are released or when new surveys are available, is to [sign up for our mailing list](#). In doing so, you'll also have a chance to receive a signed copy of the final product!

We would like to include a note as to what constitutes useful feedback. The sort of information that is most useful to us is specific, well considered, and concise. Good feedback states the issue at hand and accurately cites page numbers related. It can pertain to rules contradictions, typographical inconsistencies, or even experiential problems that arose in gameplay, but the more specific it is, the better we can implement it. Reports that include not just an overview of the problem, but also the circumstances and reasons that it might have occurred are most valuable. We will be adding weekly updates to our website as the testing progresses.

To close, we would like to extend our sincerest thanks to you for your enthusiasm and your diligence during the beta playtest. Your feedback is incredibly valuable to us, and we thank you for helping us in making this game the best it can possibly be. We hope you enjoy this document and have many great adventures in the Emerald Empire.

Happy gaming.

The Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Team
October 2017

Welcome to Roleplaying in the Emerald Empire

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

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

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

The Code of Bushidō

The Way of the Warrior, or Bushidō, elevates samurai from the rest of society while also chaining them to near-unattainable ideals. Samurai must embody righteousness and honor, loyalty and duty, and courtesy and compassion, as well as courage in the face of death. A samurai is expected to uphold these virtues in their every word and deed, even when these ideals conflict with one another.

A samurai's reputation for adhering to the Code of Bushidō reflects not only on the individual, but upon that samurai's household, family, and clan. Should they prove unable to live up to these expectations, only ritualized suicide can wash away the stain to their honor. According to Bushidō, there is no room in a samurai's life for anything that would get in the way of these ideals. Love and ambition, pride and greed—even happiness—are to be sacrificed for the sake of Bushidō. Yet, samurai are still human, made from the mingling of Lady Sun's order and Lord

Moon's chaos. The tenets of Bushidō would not be ideals to strive toward if they were easy to realize in daily life. Characters in Rokugan are measured by their own faith in, and devotion to, the Code of Bushidō through their honor rank.

The Samurai's Struggle

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

The Way of Five Rings

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

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

The World of the Samurai

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

The root of the word samurai is, literally, "one who serves." The samurai rule the Emerald Empire as nobles and lords, but they also serve

others—whether the people of Rokugan below or those samurai who sit as lords above them. Most samurai fall into one of three broad categories: *bushi*, who train their martial skill; courtiers, who engage in deadly political games; and *shugenja*, who serve as priests and conduits between the mortal and sacred realms.

Government and Power

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

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

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

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

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

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

Crime and Punishment

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

The Celestial Order

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

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

To enforce laws and maintain an orderly society within their borders, provincial daimyō appoint special investigators called magistrates. These magistrates are loyal to clan and daimyō, and are assisted by *yoriki* (lesser-ranking samurai) and *budōka* (armed peasant vassals) in tracking and apprehending criminals. Historically, two classes of magistrate have attended to Imperial crimes: Emerald Magistrates, appointed by the Emerald Champion, and Jade Magistrates, appointed by the Jade Champion. The former investigate crimes crossing multiple clan boundaries or involving national personages. The latter were shugenja tasked with investigating crimes against religion or black magic involving the Shadowlands, but the office has not been filled in centuries.

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

Commerce and Currency

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

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

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

Those Who Serve

The samurai, “those who serve,” rule Rokugan in the name of the Hantei. The class consists of many social ranks: The *kuge*, or houses of the nobility, consists of the Emperor and Imperial families, the family lines of the

clan champions, the heads of vassal families, and the greatest servants of the Hantei. The *buke*, or chivalric houses, comprises all other samurai, including provincial daimyō and city governors, magistrates, and others. The vast majority of the *buke* are warriors, courtiers, and shugenja, down to the *ji-samurai*, or half-samurai—those not allowed the name of their lord, including rōnin. Samurai are not permitted to question or oppose someone of higher social rank without extreme justification, or treat those of equal rank with anything less than complete respect and courtesy. They may treat those below them however they please, although Bushidō still governs their actions.

Those Who Work

The vast majority of people in Rokugan are the *bonge* (also called *heimin*, or “half-people.”)

These peasants keep the nation running by cultivating the land, crafting the tools and implements of daily life, and transporting those goods across the Empire by land and sea. Farmers who grow rice and other food are considered the most important of the *bonge*. Below the farmers are the raftpeople: carpenters, blacksmiths, brewers, and practitioners of the other skilled trades. Below them all are merchants, regarded with contempt by all others since they do not actually make anything themselves.

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

rai, and it is the samurai's duty to protect the *heimin* and administer the Empire. Slaying a *heimin* means answering to that *heimin*'s lord.

Most samurai treat *bonge* with indifference. A rare few are outright cruel. *Heimin* must always be completely respectful and obedient toward samurai, but they seldom feel anything other than fear for the upper castes. Samurai who demonstrate an abundance of compassion are rewarded with true loyalty.

Those Who Do Not Belong

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

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

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

A Samurai's Life

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

Samurai youth have very few expectations placed on them and aren't expected to maintain their face. Most want for nothing. So long as they obey their parents, they have no cares until sometime between ages eight and twelve, depending on the family or clan. They are then enrolled in a family dōjō to train for their adult responsibilities. This training varies in length depending upon its nature (shugenja students in particular often have widely varying educational careers, depending on when and how strongly their gifts with the kami manifest themselves) and the capabilities of the student, but typically lasts about four years.

Training

For the upper classes of samurai, learning one's place in the Empire means training at the family dōjō, practicing techniques perfected over centuries of effort and mastery. Students with another clear aptitude are often transferred to another family dōjō within the same clan and given instruction on how to best use their talents to serve. On rare occasions, they may even be traded to another clan, an arrangement that requires a great number of favors and concessions. After they have met the requirements of their sensei, a samurai is deemed ready for *gempuku*.

Gempuku

The greatest day of a samurai's young life is the day they become an adult, graduating from their academy dōjō in the coming-of-age ceremony and becoming a full-fledged member of the clan. Usually, this occurs sometime around a samurai's sixteenth year, although both earlier and later *gempuku* aren't uncommon. Most involve tests of some sort, to ensure the samurai has learned all they were required and are capable

of performing their duties with excellence. Should the young samurai pass, they are gifted with a *wakizashi*—traditionally their grandfather's, although more often a replica made in the same style—and expected to serve the clan faithfully.

Marriage

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

Retirement

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

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

Funeral

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

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

Losing One's Lord or Honor

The exception to the samurai way of life is the lifestyle of a rōnin, literally “wave-man,” one tossed by the vicissitudes of fate. A samurai need not accept seppuku to cleanse their honor—they may choose to forsake their

duty and leave. Though many rōnin do not conform to the stereotype of honorless, masterless samurai—some are simply the children of rōnin born to their station, acting with greater honor than many samurai of the Great Clans—enough do that they are automatically assumed to be untrustworthy and without decency.

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

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

Even the lowest rōnin is higher than the bonge.

The Land of Ten Thousand Fortunes

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

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

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

The Seven Great Fortunes

Many powerful Fortunes exist. Emma-o reigns supreme over Meido in his role as Fortune of Death and Judge of the Dead, while Megumi, Fortune of Heroic Guidance, often appears to aid minor samurai throughout the Empire. It is the sacred right of the Hantei to declare a new Fortune, elevating deceased former mortals to the ranks of divinity. Such was the fate of Osano-wo, son of Hida and Fortune of Fire and Thunder. Still, seven Fortunes rank above all others:

- Benten**, Fortune of Romantic Love
- Bishamon**, Fortune of Strength
- Daikoku**, Fortune of Wealth
- Ebisu**, Fortune of Honest Work
- Fukurokujin**, Fortune of Wisdom and Mercy
- Hotei**, Fortune of Contentment
- Jurōjin**, Fortune of Longevity

In some regions, Fukurokujin is replaced by Kisshōten, the Fortune of Happiness, Fertility, and Beauty. The Seven receive a disproportionate amount of worship and obeisance, but their purviews are treasured above all others in Rokugan.

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

While Fortunism celebrates diversity, another line of philosophical thought emphasizes unity. Called “Shinseism” for the man who promulgated its core beliefs, the ideology focuses on a core of simplicity: all the universe comes from the Void, and all will eventually return to it. Embracing the oneness of the five elements, or Rings, and living in accordance with the principles of an ordered society could, according to Shinseism, enable one to transcend the cycle of rebirth and attain Enlightenment. These teachings were recorded in full during Shinsei's audience with the first Emperor and became known as the Tao of Shinsei. Following the Tao means acting in accordance with virtue and the harmony of the universe, which itself leads to order and the furtherance of good over evil. The Tao is studied and debated by the Brotherhood of Shinsei, a vast collection of monastic orders, each with an individual approach to study and practice. This religious heterodoxy occasionally gives rise to potent heresies, and many divergent sects of Shinseism have appeared over the centuries.

Mortal Intermediaries

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

When a samurai is chosen by the kami and manifests the ability to communicate with the spirits, they are called shugenja and given specialized training. Under the tutelage of other shugenja, the samurai learns prayers, offerings, devotions, and invocations designed to entreat the assistance of the kami, sometimes in spectacular and miraculous ways. Titanic fireballs, stealing the thoughts out of another's head, creating great fissures in rock, or washing away the despair of battle—with the proper prayers to the kami, all things are possible.

Bushidō

Literally “the way of the warrior,” Bushidō is the code by which all samurai in Rokugan strive to live. Samurai are taught to embrace the ideals of Bushidō and strive ever toward them, at the expense of personal gain. Not even the Kami upheld Bushidō without flaw; the strictures put down by Akodo are nearly impossible to maintain in their entirety, and the struggle to maintain them consumes a samurai’s existence. Many clans emphasize one virtue over others, but all clans acknowledge the different virtues to varying degrees.

The virtues of Bushidō are:

Gi: Righteousness

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

Righteousness is not a matter for debate; it is sunlight glinting off the katana, bright and painful to the eye. There is only truth and falsehood, justice and injustice. Yet Righteousness may be forsworn or delayed in the course of a samurai’s duties. Courtiers and magistrates alike must remain truthful and committed to justice even as they manipulate other courtiers and turn a blind eye to lesser injustices; some families make an art warping the light of truth just so.

Yu: Courage

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

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

Jim: Compassion

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

Samurai are above the heimin and hinin of Rokugan, but the root of their title is those who serve. Most embrace Compassion in the abstract, defending the commoners of the realm from military incursion and being butchered by rival clans. Few take the virtue to the logical extreme of preventing abuse of the lower classes, although clans such as the Phoenix take the virtue extremely seriously, educating the heimin to a degree unheard of elsewhere.

Rei: Courtesy

“Samurai have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. A samurai is courteous even to their enemies. Without this outward

show of respect, we are nothing more than animals. A samurai is not only respected for their strength in battle, but also by their dealings with others. The true inner strength of a samurai becomes apparent during difficult times.”

The social order isn’t just important to Rokugan—it is, in a literal manner, what the Heavens rest upon. A samurai is required to maintain appearances and withstand adversity, exhibiting courteousness even when faced with the most vile lack of it. It is for this reason that courtiers practice indirect insults and the art of the subtle insinuation. While it may be socially appropriate for those of higher rank to lose their temper, their own integrity is proven by maintaining Courtesy.

Meiyo: Honor

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

Meiyo is the most subtle, yet the most basic and all-encompassing virtue. Samurai without Honor cannot truly follow the other virtues of Bushidō, for they act as others expect and not as their own conscience dictates. If their own honor is intact, however, they will follow the ways of Bushidō and pursue justice without flaw or failure, even when commanded otherwise by their lord. For this reason, honor can also justify disloyalty and cause samurai to disobey their lord; without moral backing, the other virtues are hollow.

Makoto: Sincerity/Integrity

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

Samurai must express Sincerity in word and deed, acting with complete and total conviction, whether they serve themselves or their lord. A convincing manner is more valued in Rokugan than the absolute truth, for the samurai who speaks with sincerity has committed the totality of their being to the sentiment. For samurai to do anything less is a slight upon their clan, their lord, and their honor.

Chūgi: Duty and Loyalty

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

More so than honor, Duty and Loyalty are central to the martial spirit of Rokugan. Samurai are expected to do their duty to their lord and their subordinates without hesitation or reservation, no matter the cost to their own honor. Of course, any duty given by their lord is expected to be within the bounds of Bushidō and bring honor to the samurai by obeying it... but this expression of duty is rarely seen. Should a samurai feel their duty conflicts with the other virtues of Bushidō, they may commit seppuku in protest, a rare exception to needing a lord’s permission to end one’s life. The sentiment is impossible to ignore: the lord has forfeited the samurai’s honor, and no one without honor is fit to serve.

The Great Clans

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

The Crab Clan

"Courage. Duty. Sacrifice."

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

The Crane Clan

"There is a proper technique for all things."

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

The Dragon Clan

"Find your own path."

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

The Lion Clan

"For my ancestors!"

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

The Minor Clans

The Great Clans dominate the politics and military of Rokugan, but several Minor Clans exist, founded by brave heroes whose selfless service to the Emperor resulted in awards of land and titles. Most Minor Clans are roughly equal in power to one of the individual families of the Great Clans, though some—such as the Mantis—are powerful enough to command greater respect. Many fulfill specific niches or duties within the Empire. In theory, their members receive the same social respect as any other samurai from the Great Clans. In practice, ignoring a Minor Clan samurai outside of their region of control carries few repercussions.

The Phoenix Clan

"Master the elements and be reborn."

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

The Scorpion Clan

"I will be your villain, Hantei."

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

The Unicorn Clan

"One cannot capture the wind."

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

Chapter 1: Playing the Game

A **ROLEPLAYING GAME** is a group storytelling exercise that enables groups of people to develop their own characters, scenarios, and worlds together with their friends. Unlike in a competitive game, the rules of a roleplaying game are intended first and foremost to help people tell stories and have fun. The rules for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*

(commonly abbreviated to simply “*L5R*”) are written with a certain degree of technical precision, but they should be understood as tools to enable storytelling rather than as restrictions that must be applied “correctly” in all cases. Remember, as long as everyone is having fun, you’re playing the game properly!

Goals of the Game

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

Players

Most of the participants, termed **PLAYERS**, portray a person within the world of the story. Each player controls one such **CHARACTER** (called, intuitively enough, a player character, or **PC**). Players decide the history, beliefs, desires, and quirks of their player characters, make decisions

for their characters during the game, and control and portray their characters when roleplaying.

The Game Master

To facilitate the telling of the story, one participant serves as the **GAME MASTER (GM)** instead of as a player. The game master is the group’s guide, who helps them interface with the world and tell a unique story in the Emerald Empire. The game master is not the sole architect of the story, but this person does have a particularly important role. They portray the other inhabitants of the world (**NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS**, or **NPCs**), describe each scenario and scene to the players, and act as an arbitrator in the infinite number of situations that can arise.

Custom Dice


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

Roll and Keep

The core mechanic of rolling dice in *Legend of the Five Rings* employs a concept called **ROLL AND KEEP**. When attempting to have their character resolve a task in the story, a player rolls a number of dice and then chooses to keep a number of those dice. This activity (rolling and keeping dice to see the consequences of a character’s effort) is called a **CHECK**.

Only kept dice are resolved, which gives the player the strategic opportunity to decide which symbols will make for the best story in a given situation. Many die faces indicate both positive and negative outcomes, and a player must decide if the benefits of keeping such a die outweigh the costs.

Ring Dice

The six-sided dice are **RING DICE**, which reflect a character’s core personality and fundamental aptitudes. In text, they are represented with the  symbol.


Minimum Values

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

Rounding

Whenever a formula in *L5R* results in a fraction, round up to the nearest integer.

Skill Dice


























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

Dice Symbols

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

Success (Q)

The **SUCCESS SYMBOL (Q)** represents the output of the character’s effort in the task they are attempting. More **Q** symbols mean a higher chance of carrying out the task successfully.

Breakdown of the Dice	
Ring Die ()	Skill Die ()
[Blank]	[Blank]
	[Blank]
 	
 	
 	 
 	 
-	 
-	
-	 
-	
-	
-	

Who's in Charge Here?

Many roleplaying games rest on the general conceit that “what the game master says goes,” and *Legend of the Five Rings* is no exception. This is mostly for the sake of expedience: the story will flow better if the players generally accept the facts that the GM is establishing. If they don't, the game tends to bog down in arguments of minutiae about the fracturing point of steel or what Rokugani samurai are and aren't allowed to eat.

The roleplaying game social contract thus revolves around the idea that the players give the game master the benefit of the doubt on most matters of setting the scene and story (the GM's job is hard, after all). This isn't to say that there can never be any discussion, but if the GM shoots down an idea or wants to stick to a point, the players should accept it and move on. In turn, the GM should give the players' ideas fair consideration. The GM gets to approve the players' ideas at the

GM's discretion and determines what happens when the results of a situation are indeterminate or fly in the face of common sense. With that said, cool, exciting, or dramatic ideas should be encouraged, so long as everyone is getting their turn in the spotlight. Remember, everyone is there to have fun (including the GM).

If someone isn't comfortable with something going on in the story, that's another matter entirely. Players should feel free to tell the GM if something in the story is making them uncomfortable, and vice versa, and it can be a good idea to establish a set of signals beforehand to clearly indicate when such concerns arise. Many excellent resources about establishing and respecting boundaries in one's roleplaying games can be found in books on the subject and online, and reading a bit about this subject before running or playing in your first roleplaying game is a good idea!

Explosive Success (☄)

The EXPLOSIVE SUCCESS SYMBOL (☄) represents a particularly effective part of the character's effort. In addition to counting as a ○ symbol, it gives the character a chance to generate even more symbols and add them to the check. See ☄ under **Step 6: Resolve Symbols of Kept Dice** on page 14. Importantly, this symbol means that a character can potentially succeed on tasks they otherwise could not hope to accomplish—allowing grit and a bit of luck to overcome the odds, as it often does in fictional samurai dramas.

Opportunity (㊦)

The OPPORTUNITY SYMBOL (㊦) represents secondary options available to the character thanks to the check. It does not contribute directly to

success, but it lets the character do or notice something useful that is unrelated to their goal at the outset, or enhance their success with an additional effect or story detail.

Strife (🌸)

The STRIFE SYMBOL (🌸), a stylized single cherry blossom petal, represents an upwelling of emotion within the character. This emotion can be positive, negative, or neutral, but the more it accumulates, the harder it becomes to maintain the decorum expected of a samurai. Samurai drama as a fictional genre is often defined not by the external battle, but by the wars characters must wage within themselves. Strife does not affect success or failure on the check but instead accumulates, causing the character to grow more and more emotional until they can calm themselves or reach a tipping point at which they can no longer suppress their emotions fully.

Making a Check

To make a check, a player constructs a DICE POOL that consists of Ring and Skill dice, rolls the pool, selects a number of dice up to the character's ring value to keep, and then resolves the positive and negative effects of the symbols on all kept dice.

Fundamentally, a check always results in one of two outcomes: success or failure. It also may include outcomes such as strife and opportunity.

When to Ask for a Check

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

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

If you answered “no” to any of these questions, don't have the character make a check. They can either simply succeed at their action or fail at it, and you should work with the player to narrate the results in the story. Alternatively, the task may not be one that fits within the scope of the story, and you should help direct the player to a more suitable effort—ideally, one that still uses their core idea but is adjusted in such a way that it fits better in the narrative you are weaving together. And occasionally, you just need to say no to a particular idea and move on.

A check is resolved by the following six steps:

Step 1: Declare Intention

When a player declares that their character is attempting a task with dramatic stakes where failure is a possibility, the GM may call upon that player to make a check. The INTENTION behind the check should be made clear: whether the character is undertaking a task in the narrative, performing an Action within the framework of a conflict, pursuing a downtime activity between scenes, or trying to resist a negative effect, the player describes what they want their character to achieve if they succeed at the check. The OUTCOME of the check determines whether or not the character succeeds in achieving their intended objective, and whether any complications or other narrative results arise in the process.

The GM performs these and all following steps for non-player characters.

Targeting and Checks

Sometimes, a check affects one or more characters other than the character performing the check. These characters are considered TARGETS of that check.

Step 2: Determine Skill, Ring, and Target Number of Successes

A check is resolved through rolling dice and selecting results from a dice pool; a number of Ring dice (■) and Skill dice (◇). Follow the process below to determine which skill and ring the character will use:

1. **Determine Skill Group:** First, the GM and player determine the activity the character is trying to accomplish, which determines the **SKILL GROUP** used. See **Skill Groups** on page 79 of **Chapter 3: Skills** for more guidance on the activity each skill group governs.

2. **Determine Skill:** Next, the GM and player determine the body of knowledge that applies to the specific activity—this provides the specific **SKILL** to use. The player can propose a skill, or the GM can call for a particular skill based on circumstances. As with all matters, the GM is the final arbiter over appropriate uses of skills. See **Chapter 3: Skills** for a list of individual skills.

3. **Determine Approach:** Next, the player provides a brief description of their character's methods to overcome the challenge using the chosen skill, as well as the outcome they desire to achieve through their check. Then, the GM selects which of the five elemental **APPROACHES** corresponds to the methods the player described. This determines which of the Five Rings the character uses for the check. See page 19 for more details on **Rings**, and **Chapter 3: Skills** for a detailed list of approaches, which correspond to the general set of concepts for each ring described below:

- **Air:** The Air Ring represents grace, perceptiveness, cunning, and precision.
- **Earth:** The Earth Ring represents resilience, memory, patience, and discipline.
- **Fire:** The Fire Ring represents passion, invention, candor, and ferocity.
- **Water:** The Water Ring represents adaptability, awareness, gregariousness, and power.
- **Void:** The Void Ring represents mysticism, wisdom, intuition, and instinct.

Choosing a Skill from a Different Group

After selecting the skill group that governs a particular type of task, the GM and player determine the specific skill the character uses. However, sometimes the skill that reflects the most relevant body of knowledge is actually in a different skill group.

When this happens, use the more fitting skill; it behaves as if it were a skill of the group already selected for resolving the check, and it uses that skill group's approaches instead of its usual approaches. For more details on this topic, see **Using Approaches from Other Skill Groups**, on page 80.

Sometimes, multiple approaches are viable for the same task; in these cases, the GM can offer the player a choice of which approach they want to use (see **Multiple Approach Options**, on page 178, for more guidance). Note that at other times, the ring a character uses will be specified by an ability, effect, or stance. In these cases, the character uses the indicated ring rather than one specified by the GM.

4. **Determine Target Number of Successes:** Finally, the GM selects a **TARGET NUMBER OF SUCCESSSES** ("TN") between one and eight. This target number should be based on the innate difficulty of the task, the complexity of the outcome the player described, and the appropriateness of the methods the character is using. This is the number of successes

the character must achieve to succeed. For some common checks, such as combat checks, there are preset base TNs and recommended modifiers that apply to many situations. Except in special circumstances, the GM should announce the TN of the check to the player at this point (see **When to Reveal or Conceal Target Number of Successes**, on page 178).

Guidelines for difficulties break down as follows:

- **TN 1:** An easy task, such as carrying half one's weight or finding a misplaced item.
- **TN 2:** An average task, such as jumping a ten-foot ditch or recognizing someone in disguise.
- **TN 3:** A difficult task, such as scaling a cliff without a rope or finding a well-hidden object.
- **TN 4:** A very hard task, such as diving safely from a waterfall or remembering someone's exact words.
- **TN 5:** An extremely hard task, such as stirring a demoralized army with rhetoric alone or hurling a person across a room with one hand.
- **TN 6:** An extraordinarily challenging task, such as discerning someone's whereabouts from the kind of mud on their sandals or felling a tree with a single axe blow.
- **TN 7:** A heroic task, such as outwrestling a troll or naming all of one's ancestors in order.
- **TN 8:** A legendary task, such as shattering stone with one's bare hands or outwitting a Fortune.

Target Number 0

TN 0: There are no TN 0 checks in the game. In theory, such a check would be a simple task, such as carrying one quarter of one's weight or remembering a cousin's name. Of course, a task this trivial should not require a check—the chances of failure are low, and the consequences of failure are usually minor and uninteresting. However, specific circumstances might modify the difficulty of such a task to a TN of 1 or higher. If the consequences of failure would be interesting and the circumstances make failure possible, the GM can call for a check to perform a task that would normally be TN 0.

Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool

The player assembles the dice pool. The player picks up a number of Skill dice equal to the character's ranks in the selected skill and a number of Ring dice equal to the value of the ring associated with the selected approach. Then, the player rolls all of these dice. All of these dice are **ROLLED DICE**.

Then, any effects that modify rolled dice (such as the resolution of advantages and disadvantages) are applied.

Step 4: Apply Advantages and Disadvantages (If Applicable)

After the player rolls dice, the player and GM have a chance to decide which (if any) of the character's **ADVANTAGES** and **DISADVANTAGES** (see **Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 60) apply for this check. Each advantage and disadvantage can only be applied once per check by any character. Often, no advantages or disadvantages will apply to a check—in which case, skip this step.

Dice Terminology

The following terms are used frequently for dice.

Modification: Any effect that changes the contents of the dice pool after it has been rolled is considered a **DIE MODIFICATION**. If an effect instructs you to modify two or more dice, you must modify those dice at the same time, and you cannot select a single die to modify multiple times this way; if the number of dice you are instructed to modify exceeds the number of dice in the pool, simply modify all dice. Dice can be modified multiple times (including by the same form of modification, such as rerolling) if multiple effects instruct you to modify them.

Reroll: When an effect instructs you to **REROLL** a die, pick it up, roll it again, and use the new result.

Alter: When an effect instructs you to **ALTER** a die, pick it up and change it to a different face as instructed by the effect (such as “a face containing a ☯ symbol” or “a non-blank face”).

Reserve: When an effect instructs you to **RESERVE** a die, pick it up and remove it from the roll, then set it aside or record the result. The die will be used for a future roll as described by the effect (usually, it is added to a future roll in place of a rolled die).

Negate: When an effect instructs you to **NEGATE** a die result, ignore that result when resolving the check (but not other results from that die).

Applying Advantages

Each advantage a character possesses specifies the circumstances under which it applies, and lists two specific checks for which it is relevant as examples to guide the GM and players. If the GM agrees that the check fits within these circumstances, the advantage applies to the check.

Applying Disadvantages

Once advantages have been applied, the GM and player apply disadvantages. Each disadvantage a character possesses specifies the circumstances under which it applies, and lists two specific checks for which it is relevant as examples to guide the GM and players. If the GM agrees that the check fits within these circumstances, the disadvantage applies to the check.

Consolidating Advantages and Disadvantages

Once the player and GM have finished applying advantages and disadvantages, these are consolidated. Each applied advantage cancels one corresponding applied disadvantage (e.g., an applied **DISTINCTION** and an applied **ADVERSITY** cancel each other, and an applied **PASSION** and an applied **ANXIETY** cancel each other). Cancelled advantages and disadvantages have no effect on the resolution of the check.

Resolving Advantages and Disadvantages

The player resolves each type for its listed effect. Each type of advantage or disadvantage can only be resolved once, even if it was applied multiple times. The most common categories of advantages and disadvantages have their effects summarized as follows:

- **Distinction:** The player may choose and reroll up to two dice.
- **Passion:** After resolving the check, the character removes 3 strife.
- **Adversity:** The player must choose and reroll two dice showing ☯ or ☳ results. If the initial roll contains only one such die, the player rerolls only 1 die; if it contains no such dice, the player does not reroll any dice. After resolving the check, the character gains 1 Void point if they failed.

- **Anxiety:** After resolving the check, the character suffers 3 strife. If the character suffers an outburst this way, the character regains 1 Void point after resolving the outburst.

For example, Doji Shigeru is currently making a Command check using Reason (the Earth approach) in order to restore morale to a group of palace guards before a company of Lion warriors strikes. To bolster their courage, he reminds them of how this castle has withstood past sieges on numerous occasions. His player and the GM determine that both the Sensation (a distinction) and History (a passion) advantages apply, because his naturally lovely voice will make the guards listen to his speech closely, and the chance to relate current events to historical events he is familiar with sets him at ease. He also has a disadvantage affecting the check: his Cynicism disadvantage (an anxiety), which causes him to assume internally that the worst will occur. Corresponding advantages and disadvantages are canceled, so History (his passion) and Cynicism (his anxiety) cancel each other out and are not resolved on this check. Sensation (his distinction) still applies, and so Doji Shigeru resolves its listed effect (rerolling up to two dice during Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool).

Within the fiction of the game, Doji Shigeru's voice captures the attention of the guards, and while he has his inner doubts, he sounds confident when he says that reinforcements are coming soon—they simply need to hold out until Daidoji Uji's forces arrive. Shigeru's resolve inspires the guards to retake their posts with renewed confidence.

Step 5: Choose Kept Dice

After applying advantages and disadvantages, the player looks at the results and decides which of the rolled dice will be **KEPT DICE** (those used in the resolution of the check) and which will be **DROPPED DICE** (those that will be discarded with their results unused). The player chooses a number of kept dice from 1 to the ring value for the approach the character used for the check in this way, then removes all dropped dice.

Then, any effects that modify kept dice are resolved.

Step 6: Resolve Symbols of Kept Dice

Once the dice pool has been reduced to only kept dice, the player resolves the remaining results on those dice.

Dice results are resolved in the following order:

1. ☳: For each ☳ result, the player may roll 1 additional die of the same type as the one showing the ☳ result. After rolling a die this way, the player chooses whether it will be kept or dropped. If the die is kept, the player resolves its results in addition to the rest of the kept dice in the dice pool (including further ☳ results).
2. ☯: For each ☯ result, the character suffers 1 strife. Strife represents the emotional swell that comes alongside facing challenges—the frustration of a difficulty, the anger of humiliation, the surge of victory, or a complex combination of feelings that threatens to peel back the samurai's

Reminding the GM of Your Disadvantages

This seems like a pretty strange idea—after all, isn't it better for the player if the GM forgets their character's weaknesses and flaws? But remember, without trials, there are no heroes, and without adversity, there is no chance for a samurai's determination to shine through. If a samurai never tastes failure, how can they rise above it?

Resolving disadvantages is the primary means by which characters recover **VOID POINTS**, so if your GM is overlooking your disadvantages, you will not be getting as many Void points to spend on the checks that really count.

Adding and Canceling Dice

Some effects instruct you to **ADD** dice to the pool or **CANCEL** dice in the pool. During **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, resolve these effects as follows:

- **Add a Rolled Die:** When an effect instructs you to add a rolled die showing a particular result, after rolling dice but before choosing kept dice, place one die of the noted type in the pool showing the specified result. It is a rolled die.
- **Add a Kept Die:** When an effect instructs you to add a kept die showing a particular result, after choosing kept dice, place one die of the noted type in the pool showing the specified result. It is a kept die.
- **Cancel a Rolled Die:** When an effect instructs you to cancel a rolled die showing a particular result, after rolling dice but before choosing kept dice, choose one die in the pool showing the specified result. It becomes a dropped die.
- **Cancel a Kept Die:** When an effect instructs you to cancel a kept die showing a particular result, after choosing kept dice, choose one die in the pool showing the specified result. It becomes a dropped die.

outward persona. Accumulated strife is measured against a character's composure, and various consequences can occur when a character's strife exceeds their composure. For more on strife in various situations, see **Strife and Composure**, on page 16.

3. **Spending**: The player may spend **Spending** results to resolve opportunity abilities. Opportunities represent narrative flourishes and game effects that occur independently of a check's success or failure, as created by the player and GM. Each ring also has a number of example mechanical effects and story cues that may be resolved if a character used that approach for the check (see page 18). Further, many school abilities and techniques, such as kata and kihō, provide new ways to spend **Spending**. Ultimately, GMs are encouraged to allow players to spend **Spending** creatively to improvise

Additional Rules Governing Checks

The following are some additional rules that can affect checks.

Assistance

While a samurai must face some tasks alone, allies can frequently offer critical assistance during the major challenges. There are a number of ways that one character can provide assistance on another's check (such as those described in **Downtime Activities**, on page 151, and in **Conflict Scenes**, on page 151), but the effect is always the same.

During **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, if a character making a check receives assistance from one or more others, the character making the check rolls 1 additional Skill die per assisting character who has 1 or more ranks of the skill in use, and 1 additional Ring die per assisting character who has 0 ranks in the skill in use.

At the GM's discretion, during **Step 4: Apply Advantages and Disadvantages**, up to one advantage from each assisting character can be applied to the check.

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

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

new dramatic avenues or compelling complications for the narrative. Although **Spending** is spent independently of success or failure, some specific uses of **Spending** have an effect only under certain circumstances, such as if the check was successful (or failed).

4. **Spending**: If the sum total of **Spending** and **Spending** results equals or exceeds the TN of the check, the character succeeds at the intention declared. If this total is less than the TN of the check, the character fails at the proposed action, instead.

Narrating a Check's Results

So long as the character succeeds at a check, their player gets to narrate the outcome of the success within the confines of the intention described in **Step 1: Declare Intention**. For example, if a bushi character succeeds at the Attack action they declared, the player gets to narrate that their character slashes upward with their katana, cutting through the robes of their adversary and into the soft flesh beneath. The player is also responsible for describing the emotions the strife represents if the check is particularly poignant. In this instance, the **Spending** they accumulated as part of the Attack action could represent their grief at being forced to cut down a loved one at their lord's order—or their glee at finally taking personal vengeance against a hated foe. The narrative context of the check—how the check fits within the story—guides how players and GMs should interpret the **Spending** as specific emotions.

Finally, the player also is responsible for interpreting the **Spending** they spend as part of the check: they should indicate whether they want to spend it in a manner that steers the narrative in a direction interesting to them, according to the example narrative or mechanical options appropriate to that ring, or if the player character's school ability or techniques give them a special means of spending **Spending**. Sometimes, the GM will need to approve or contribute to the interpretation of **Spending**, such as if the character noticed an important detail or remembered a relevant fact. If the player does not (or does not wish to) designate a way to spend **Spending** generated on a check, it is unspent. **Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending** **Spending** on page 23 provides a number of simple, purely mechanical options players can use in almost any circumstance. The GM and players alike are encouraged to use these to keep the game moving whenever adding further narrative details could slow down play without making the scene notably more dramatic or interesting.

Bonus Successes and Shortfalls

Sometimes it is important to know the amount by which a character succeeded at a task (or the extent of their failure). While success and failure are sometimes binary, at other times, the degree of one's success or failure is relevant. Successes in excess of the target number of successes (bonus successes) might help the character succeed more thoroughly. On the other hand, if the character fails, the amount by which they fell short of the target number of successes (their shortfall) can reveal the depths of their failure.

Determining Bonus Successes

If a character succeeds on a check, their **BONUS SUCCESSSES** are the number of **Spending** and **Spending** results in excess of the target number of successes for the check.

Determining Shortfall

If a character fails a check, their **SHORTFALL** is the amount by which the sum of their **Spending** and **Spending** results fell short of the target number.

Checks to Resist Effects

While most checks targeting other characters are made against static values (such as the target's vigilance), some are opposed by an opponent's more active efforts. When a character succeeds at a check to **RESIST** an effect (whether the effect comes from a check or another source), they avoid the ill effects they would otherwise have suffered.

For instance, if one character succeeded at a check to hurl an opponent off a parapet, the target would get a chance to resist with a skill check using an elemental approach based on their chosen method of resistance. If the target succeeds on the check to resist, they are able to avoid being thrown off the parapet.

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

Competitive Checks

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

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

Strife and Composure

Rokugani ideals state that samurai are to maintain proper decorum at all times, keeping their emotions under a tight leash in almost all situations. However, achieving this ideal would hardly be a worthy accomplishment if the world did not heap challenges, joys, frustrations, and sorrows upon every soul. Even those raised under the strictest standards of emotional self-control or committed to finding spiritual peace risk cracking from time to time under the pressures of rule, courtly life, love, or warfare.

Accumulating Strife

Strife is in all things, and therefore a common result on both Skill dice and Ring dice is a face containing ☹ ☹. When kept dice contain ☹ results, the character suffers strife as a cost of their effort. This mental, emotional, and spiritual turbulence can reflect run-of-the-mill frustration, the joy of a challenge, old sorrows dredged up by the present situation, fear, shame, rage, passion, hope, the thrill of victory, deep ambivalence, or any number of other feelings that heighten the character's emotional state. If the check is a crucial one for the character, the GM should ask the player to narrate the emotions stirring in the character's heart. For checks with lower emotional stakes, the GM should consider whether or not it is worthwhile to go into detail on the strife the character is suffering, as too much lengthy narration of inner turmoil can bog down play.

Characters can also acquire strife for other reasons, such as facing their **Anxieties** (see page 60), neglecting their **Ninjō** (see page 22) or **Giri** (see page 24), being affected by abilities used by other characters, and for narrative reasons. Players should feel free to suggest times that their characters should suffer strife to the GM, and the GM can inflict strife on characters as circumstances dictate.

Players are responsible for tracking how much strife their characters

Universal Tiebreaker

Many effects stipulate a tiebreak mechanism (such as higher honor, lower honor, higher focus, etc.), but some effects do not specify a means of breaking the stalemate if these values are tied as well. While sometimes a draw is possible, at other times, effects require an additional level of tiebreaking beyond what is provided to resolve properly. In these cases, the GM should have PCs supersede NPCs and Adversary NPCs supersede Minion NPCs. If there is still a tie, the GM should determine a random means of resolving it (such as flipping a coin, or having the participating parties play rock-paper-scissors).

Scaling Opportunity Abilities

A character can only resolve a given opportunity once per check, but many Opportunity abilities can scale for effect. If an effect reads “✳+” in the cost to activate it, the character may spend 1 or more ✳ when activating this ability. These abilities provide a single scaling effect based on the number of ✳ spent, specified within the text of the ability.

Simultaneous Dice Modification

Some effects modify rolled dice, such as by rerolling them or altering them after they have been rolled (or rerolled).

If two or more effects would cause a die to be rerolled (or altered), the player whose character made the check performs their rerolls (or alterations) after the GM and any other players have resolved their effects. If a single player controls multiple such effects, that player chooses the order in which they resolve.

have accrued. The GM should track strife for NPCs, though some NPCs use simplified rules for strife.

Composure

Each player character has a **COMPOSURE VALUE**, which represents the character's ability to withstand strife. As a character's strife approaches that character's composure, they move toward an emotional tipping point, at which the character must express their feelings in one way or another. This can come in the form of a minor slip-up or a major public scene, depending on what the player feels is appropriate for their character in that moment. Collectively, these moments in which the character's outward mask drops are referred to as **OUTBURSTS**—though some are subtle but meaningful expressions of vulnerability while others are major breaches of social protocol.

Outbursts

Although specifics vary by region and tradition, Rokugani culture at large idealizes a samurai who maintains a stoic outward demeanor. However, the truth of the matter is that no individual upholds this ideal perfectly all the time. In fact, important moments in a character's life often revolve around the incidents in which they let their mask slip, even briefly. Sometimes, this bared emotion even allows the character to transgress societal norms for an advantage or surpass their own limitations to pursue a goal they otherwise could not.

The first time a character's strife exceeds their composure each scene, the upswell of emotion causes the character to have an outburst. Importantly, the player does not lose control of their character during an

outburst—instead, the player chooses the shape the character's outburst takes. The outburst lasts until the end of the scene.

The following are a number of example outbursts, but players can also invent their own outbursts based on their character's personality (such as the **PERSONAL OUTBURST** they determine during character creation), the circumstances, or both. No matter the outburst the player chooses, there should be narrative consequences, usually both for good and for ill.

Compromise (or Flee)

The character does something that stands in contrast to their values, oaths, or view of right and wrong. This might be bending their moral code, or it might be fleeing from a terrifying situation or foe. The character must forfeit 3 honor, and until the end of the scene, the character ignores one of their Interpersonal or Mental disadvantages, as they see the need to bend their morals. At the end of the scene, the character removes strife until their strife is equal to half their composure.

Expose a Weakness

The character gives away a vital hint about one of their weaknesses, either through a physical tell that makes it obvious or an ill-considered word that reveals it to others. This exposure of weakness catches the other characters in the scene off guard. The character chooses one of their disadvantages they have not revealed in this manner this session; each other character in the scene learns of that disadvantage. Until the end of the scheme, reduce the TN of Scheme checks made by the character who exposed their weakness. At the end of the scene, the character removes strife until their strife is equal to half their composure.

Become Enraged

The character's soul calls out for blood. The character must challenge an antagonist in the scene to a duel (not necessarily to the death) or attack them outright, and suffers the Enraged condition (see page 170). Additionally, the character ignores one of their Mental or Physical disadvantages until the end of the scene. At the end of the scene, the character removes strife until their strife is equal to half their composure.

Opportunity

Opportunity (✳️) is a symbol that gives players and GMs a cue to add narrative flair and secondary effects to the tasks the characters attempt. It can be spent to add in these secondary details that are not related directly to the success or failure of the check, but nonetheless make the story more exciting or realized. Usually, the more ✳️ symbols a character spends on a single effect, the greater its magnitude.

The most fundamental way to use ✳️ is to add a narrative detail that surfaces as the character undertakes the task—a new piece of information that does not directly affect success or failure but creates interesting new avenues for the story. Whether an opportunity is the result of the action (intimidating someone after narrowly missing them with a sword swing) or an incidental occurrence (spotting an old friend in town while looking for a specific merchant), it should stem from the particular way the character was going about the task. Procedurally, the player suggests this detail, and the GM then approves it or poses an alternative option.

The ring the character chose can help to inform the detail the player creates. **Table 1-1: ✳️ Descriptors**, right, offers some key phrases players can use when thinking about the opportunities they want to introduce.

Like all good improvisational tools, ✳️ can be extremely effective when used to build upon details that already exist in the scene. For example, in one session that features a wedding reception, two couples are each having clandestine meetings on opposite sides of a courtyard, so they are not aware of each other's presence. When Charlie's monk character earns a Water ✳️ on one of his checks, the players and GM agree that it would be

Battle Rage

The battlefield is one of the few places it is appropriate for a samurai to act with emotions (and steel) bared. As a result, the Become Enraged outburst seems like an obvious selection for combat situations such as duels and skirmishes. To a large degree, it is intended that strife can be more easily vented during combat. However, that is no reason to miss out on a good roleplaying opportunity, and the GM should encourage the player to have their character pursue increasingly risky or violent actions as they let their emotions flow out of control in combat.

Shut Down

The character locks up, becoming withdrawn, silent, or generally unresponsive. The character does not lose face, but also cannot perform Attack or Scheme actions. Increase the TN of Scheme checks targeting the character by 1 until the end of the scene. At the end of the scene, the character removes strife until their strife is equal to half their composure.

Inappropriate Remark

The character says something out of line or commits a deep breach of etiquette, shocking onlookers. The character must forfeit 3 glory, and until the end of the scene, the character ignores one of their Interpersonal or Mental disadvantages, as they have been pushed beyond what they would normally tolerate. At the end of the scene, the character removes strife until their strife is equal to half their composure.

Removing Strife

In addition to removal of strife as a result of an outburst, characters naturally remove strife as time passes. At the end of each scene, each character removes a number of strife equal to their Water ring rank.

Outbursts during Conflict Scenes

During a conflict scene, a character checks their strife at the beginning of their turn. If their strife exceeds their composure, they suffer the outburst and resolve its effects immediately, then proceed with their turn.

Table 1-1: Opportunity Descriptors

Element	Opportunity Descriptors
Air ✳️	Subtle, precise, cunning
Earth ✳️	Defensive, thorough, reassuring
Fire ✳️	Flashy, creative, inspiring
Water ✳️	Intuitive, flexible, gregarious
Void ✳️	Mystical, wise, instinctive

most dramatic for him to spend it to catch a glimpse of the other samurai pair in the courtyard: Mercedes's courtier character and the recently married bridegroom! From that point on, the interactions between his and her characters are enriched because of the not-quite blackmail Charlie's character has on Mercedes's. The whole group is excited to see how the characters will react, all thanks to one simple ✳️.

Table 1-2: Example Ways of Spending ✨

Element	Narrative Uses	Mechanical Uses
Any ✨	<p>✨: Add an exciting story detail that stems from your check but is unrelated to your success or failure.</p> <p>✨: Determine the easiest way to accomplish the task you were attempting (including the skill and approach that have the lowest TN when used).</p>	<p>✨: If you failed, provide assistance (see page 15) to the next character to attempt a similar check.</p> <p>✨ ✨: If you succeeded, provide assistance (see page 15) to the next character to attempt a similar check.</p>
Air ✨	<p>Air ✨: Observe an interesting detail about a character in the scene. At the GM's discretion, you may use this to add a detail that did not previously exist to an NPC in the scene (such as an advantage or disadvantage).</p> <p>Air ✨+: You are extremely subtle in executing the task, and you attract the minimal amount of attention. Additional ✨ spent this way increases the subtlety of your method.</p>	<p>Air ✨+: Choose one character in the scene per ✨ spent this way; learn their demeanor and current strife.</p> <p>Air ✨*: Choose a Water or Fire opportunity from this or another table and resolve it. <i>The cost of this Opportunity is double its normal cost.</i></p>
Earth ✨	<p>Earth ✨: You suddenly recall an important piece of information not directly related to your check. At the GM's discretion, you may use this to reveal a small preparatory action you took earlier, such as bringing along a common item useful to your current task.</p> <p>Earth ✨+: You act extremely carefully, maintaining your balance and keeping a safe distance from sources of harm. Additional ✨ spent this way increases the efficacy of the precautions you take.</p>	<p>Earth ✨+: Choose one character in the scene per ✨ spent this way; each chosen character removes 2 strife.</p> <p>Earth ✨*: Choose a Water or Fire opportunity from this or another table and resolve it. <i>The cost of this Opportunity is double its normal cost.</i></p>
Fire ✨	<p>Fire ✨: You notice something conspicuously missing or out of place in the vicinity that is not directly related to your check. At the GM's discretion, you may use this to add an absence to the scene (such as a missing pair of shoes that indicate that the occupant is not home).</p> <p>Fire ✨+: You perform the task in a particularly flashy way, drawing the attention of others who observe you. Additional ✨ spent this way makes you even more noticeable.</p>	<p>Fire ✨+: Choose one character in the scene per ✨ spent this way; each chosen character suffers 2 strife.</p> <p>Fire ✨*: Choose an Air or Earth opportunity from this or another table and resolve it. <i>The cost of this Opportunity is double its normal cost.</i></p>
Water ✨	<p>Water ✨: You spot an interesting physical detail present in your environment not directly related to your check. At the GM's discretion, you may use this to add a (previously unnoticed) piece of terrain or a mundane object to your environment.</p> <p>Water ✨+: You perform the task very efficiently, completing the task more quickly or saving supplies in the process. Additional ✨ spent this way further reduces the time or materials required.</p>	<p>Water ✨+: Remove 2 of your strife per ✨ spent this way.</p> <p>Water ✨*: Choose an Air or Earth opportunity from this or another table and resolve it. <i>The cost of this opportunity is double its normal cost.</i></p>
Void ✨	<p>Void ✨: You gain some spiritual insight into the nature of the universe or of your own heart. At the GM's discretion, you may use this to reveal a fact about your character that has not been previously established but relates to the situation in some way.</p> <p>Void ✨+: You feel a chill down your spine, notice a sudden silence, or otherwise detect a sign of the supernatural around you. Additional ✨ spent this way gives you an increasingly precise location for the supernatural occurrence.</p>	<p>Void ✨: Name Air, Earth, Fire, or Water. If your next check uses that ring, reduce its TN by 1.</p> <p>Void ✨*: Choose an Air, Earth, Fire, or Water opportunity from this or another table and resolve it. <i>The cost of this opportunity is double its normal cost.</i></p>

Numerous tables throughout this book (such as **Table 1-2: Example Ways of Spending ✨**, above) offer concrete examples that players can employ or draw upon as inspiration for novel uses of ✨ for the five elements.

The mechanical uses of opportunity should help inspire roleplaying, and vice versa. For example, a character might spend an Earth ✨ to remove strife from another character, which is represented in the narrative as the character's actions providing emotional or physical support to the other character. Alternatively, an Air ✨ to observe a detail of interest

about a character in a scene might be a distinction or adversity that can then be used against the character during a future check.

There are numerous other possible and suggested uses of opportunity, many of which are explored in **Chapter 3: Skills**. Characters can also purchase techniques that grant them new ways to spend ✨ on specific checks. Ultimately, ✨ should provide the players and GM (but especially the players!) the chance to collaborate on the details, direction, stakes, and consequences of the scenes unfolding across their jointly told samurai story.

The Character

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

The Five Rings

Each of the Five Rings represents a character's natural inclination and adeptness toward a certain approach to solving problems. When making a check using a given ring, a character rolls a number of Ring dice equal to the value of that ring. For player characters, each ring has value between 1 and 5, though some supernatural beings might possess values that fall outside of this range.

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

The rings are as follows, and they represent the following different means of facing a challenge:

Air

The AIR RING represents a graceful, cunning, and precise personality. This approach is swift or layered with nuance, as the character moves too quickly or speaks too obliquely to be pinned down. A character with a high Air Ring value is eloquent, physically and socially deft, and shrewd.

The Air approaches for each skill group are as follows:

- **Refine (Artisan Skills):** For Artisan skills, the Air approach allows a character to improve the finer points of a work, honing a piece's details or stripping away unnecessary things to enhance the work.
- **Analyze (Scholar Skills):** For Scholar skills, the Air approach is focused around observing and understanding details, detecting subtle nuances, and unraveling implications and hidden meanings.
- **Trick (Social Skills):** For Social skills, the Air approach relies on subtlety and cleverness to imbue one's words with multiple meanings or obscure the truth. It allows a character to convince others of a statement, deceive (by direct dishonesty or omission), imply secondary intentions, and control what information others have by which to evaluate a situation. While not always malicious, it is always manipulative on a certain level.
- **Feint (Martial Skills):** For Martial skills, the Air approach is precise and graceful, and it is focused around maintaining control over the character's body at every turn. Rather than trying to crush opposition head-on, it seeks opportunities to excel or gain an advantage that demand exact positioning and timing.

Earth

The EARTH RING represents a character's aptitude for taking a steady, thorough, and grounded approach to problems. This approach is cautious and considerate, as the character works to get results without suffering losses or taking unneeded risks. A character with a high Earth Ring value is likely to be physically tough, mentally resilient, and reliable.

The Earth approaches for each skill group are as follows:

- **Restore (Artisan Skills):** For Artisan skills, the Earth approach governs a character's ability to repair items and perform upkeep, re-turning or preserving function. It also covers related tasks, such as archiving and storage.
- **Recall (Scholar Skills):** For Scholar skills, the Earth approach reflects a character's ability to remember and accurately reproduce information about a subject. An Earth approach is not useful for wild leaps of logic or intuition, but is necessary for creating a solid foundation of known factors and proven facts upon which to build conclusions.
- **Reason (Social Skills):** For Social skills, the Earth approach governs a character's ability to get others to think rationally, set aside their emotions, and remember their duties and responsibilities. It is also used for instruction, keeping subordinates in line, and maintaining order.
- **Withstand (Martial Skills):** For Martial skills, the Earth approach is based around endurance. Any task can be accomplished with effort and tenacity in sufficient measure. An Earth approach to a Martial task is often cautious, moving slowly to avoid pitfalls or exhaustion.
- **Prepare (Trade Skills):** For Trade skills, the Earth approach is based around acquiring resources via physical toil. It can also let a character create a proper inventory, manage goods, and store goods safely.

Fire

The FIRE RING represents a ferocious, direct, and inventive personality. This approach is explosive and intense, as the character works to get results no matter the cost to themselves or others. A character with a high Fire Ring value is likely to be passionate, curious, physically strong, occasionally brusque, and a fast learner.

The Fire approaches for each skill group are as follows:

- **Invent (Artisan Skills):** For Artisan skills, the Fire approach allows a character to draft and create wholly new works, turning raw materials into novel pieces of art.
- **Theorize (Scholar Skills):** For Scholar skills, the Fire approach is creative and energetic, attacking the problem with vigor and interest to come up with solutions none have considered before. It allows a character to extrapolate what things might be and might be to come, connect the dots, and identify absences in a subject or environment.
- **Overwhelm (Martial Skills):** For Martial skills, the Fire approach generally relies on a burst of power, speed, or agility to overcome a challenge in one fell swoop. Such tactics are aggressive, no-holds-barred displays of force that can frighten onlookers. A Fire approach epitomizes the burst of adrenaline to fight or flee, the *kiai* of an attack move in the martial arts, or the battle cries of a host of Matsu berserkers.

- **Incite (Social Skills):** For Social skills, the Fire approach lets a character engage with someone's existing emotions and desires rather than their raw logic. The Fire approach can also be used to get others to act on these things in spite of obvious pitfalls or justified fears.
- **Innovate (Trade Skills):** For Trade skills, the Fire approach allows a character to develop new technologies and techniques, create new products and services, and get resources in new ways.

Water

The WATER RING represents an adaptable, powerful, and perceptive personality. The approach is balanced and reversible, as the character works to get results without overextending themselves or underperforming. A character with a high Water Ring value is naturally affable, physically flexible, observant, and easygoing.

The Water approaches for each skill group are as follows:

- **Adapt (Artisan Skills):** For Artisan skills, the Water approach hinges upon transformation—making works function in new ways by changing them, translating works of art into other languages or mediums, and reducing works to their component parts to serve as raw materials for a new piece.
- **Survey (Scholar Skills):** For Scholar skills, the Water approach serves to give a character information about their environment and wider circumstances. It can be used to identify things within an area of expertise, detect broad trends and currents, or find out how things work in a practical sense.
- **Shift (Martial Skills):** For Martial skills, the Water approach relies on making the circumstances work for the character. It seeks the path of least resistance for greatest efficacy. Those taking a Water approach will seek to redirect incoming energy rather than expending energy of their own.
- **Charm (Social Skills):** For Social skills, the Water approach is focused around interacting gregariously and building a rapport with others. It allows a character to instill desires and emotions in others, uncover the existing desires of others, and win people's sympathy.
- **Exchange (Trade Skills):** For Trade skills, the Water approach allows a character to trade resources or labor of one type for another. This lets the character acquire items and services efficiently and at a low cost.

Void

The Void Ring represents a centered, unflinching personality; it can also represent the "flow state." By letting go of the suffering inherent in one's ego-driven desires, the samurai can transcend earthly limitations. It is the enlightened approach, accepting the nature of all of the elements at once, yet allowing no one element to dominate. A character with a high Void Ring value is likely to be spiritually sensitive, wise, and introspective.

The Void approaches for each skill group are as follows:

- **Attune (Artisan Skills):** For Artisan skills, the Void approach lets a character understand the purpose of a work, know why the work has appeared before them now, and sense the work's supernatural qualities, if any exist.
- **Sense (Scholar Skills):** For Scholar skills, the Void approach represents a character's "sixth sense," giving them hunches about supernatural phenomena in their environment and even future events.
- **Enlighten (Social Skills):** For Social skills, the Void approach allows the character to challenge the core beliefs of others, causing them to reassess their decisions, look again at what they truly desire, or even break free from powerful emotional states or mystical manipulation.

Matching Rings with Skills

Each ring can function alongside any skill, but each ring/skill pairing (called an approach) reflects a different strategy and set of results. As such, rather than reflecting only discrete mental or physical traits of a character as they have in past editions of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*, in this edition, each ring represents a character's propensity toward a particular way of thinking, acting, and using the tools that their skills provide them. A character with a high ring value for Fire is best at seeking out novel, flashy solutions, whereas a character with a high Earth Ring value is patient and respectful of tradition—and this is true regardless of whether they are in a social situation, crafting a piece of art, or fighting.

Each skill group has a set of five approaches (one per ring). This means that all rings are useful in all spheres of activity, but they function in different ways. This can help to differentiate two characters who have similar skill ranks, so long as their ring values are different, as one will be better at achieving some ends with those skills than the other.

- **Sacrifice (Martial Skills):** For Martial skills, the Void approach covers acts that are so in tune with the rhythm of the cosmos as to appear effortless. Rather than opposing or using existing forces, it transcends them. Without direction by any conscious thought, the character's body instinctively does what is necessary for success, no matter the cost.
- **Subsist (Trade Skills):** For Trade skills, the Void approach allows a character to live in harmony with their environment, finding ways to make the most out of very little without disturbing their surroundings.

Skill Ranks

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

- **Rank 0:** This represents a lack of formal training. The character has only a cursory understanding based on limited direct experience.
- **Rank 1:** This represents the beginner or amateur level. The character has taken their first steps in formal education on the topic and has grasped the rudimentary elements of its study.
- **Rank 2:** This represents the apprentice or initiate level of study. They have begun to delve into the deeper nuances of their art.
- **Rank 3:** This represents the trained professional. They have enough theoretical understanding and practical experience to go out into the world and use their skills to earn a living or serve their lord well.
- **Rank 4:** This represents the advanced level of study. They are called upon to invent new subfields within their area of expertise or train others in their art. They might be asked to teach lower-ranking students within their dōjō or be given supervisory responsibilities by their lord.
- **Rank 5:** This represents so-called mastery of a given skill, though in truth, it is just the beginning of mastery. These individuals often become sought-out teachers or champions of their specific field, and their names will be passed down as exemplars of the art. And yet, greater mysteries always exist, to be pursued for the acquisition of secret techniques, personal enlightenment, and a greater understanding of the wider world.
- **Rank 6+:** This represents enlightenment on a given matter, or a degree of supernatural knowledge that exceeds human limitations.

Powerful kami, Elemental Dragons, oni, and other such beings of vast wisdom and experience might possess skills of rank 6 or higher. Player characters cannot normally reach these values.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages and disadvantages are intrinsic quirks of a character's body, mind, personality, or spirit. A character is assigned several of these at character creation, but they can also acquire more during play as a result of narrative events or through certain circumstances (such as suffering **Critical Strikes**, as described on page 168). Each advantage and disadvantage is assigned to the specific ring to which it most often pertains. The most common types of advantages and disadvantages are distinctions, passions, adversities, and anxieties, and a character is assigned at least one of each of these during the process of character creation.

For more details, see **Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 60.

Derived Attributes

Derived Attributes are numerical values that are determined by a character's rings and other decisions made at character creation, and can be altered over the course of play. They have various mechanical and narrative effects, as described in this section.

Resilience

RESILIENCE represents a character's physical stamina and will to fight on despite harm. A character's resilience is equal to (Water Ring + Earth Ring) x 2.

Focus

FOCUS represents the speed with which a character reacts to threats. When determining which character acts first in a structured scene by making an Assessment check, a character's focus is often taken into account. A character's focus is equal to (Fire Ring + Air Ring).

Composure

COMPOSURE represents a character's capacity to suffer mental and emotional strife without becoming unsettled. When a character's strife exceeds their composure, they suffer an outburst, as described on page 16. A character's composure is equal to (Earth Ring + Fire Ring) x 2.

Vigilance

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

Void Points

In works of samurai fiction, force of will is often a deciding factor at crucial moments. Void points are a resource that allows characters to tip the scales in their favor, tapping into their strength of character to persevere in situations that seem insurmountable. Void points are gained through facing adversity, for without struggle, there can be no triumph. Thus, when a character's disadvantages hinder them, and under certain other circumstances, a character can gain 1 or more Void points.

A character begins each game session with 1 Void point, and can accrue a maximum number of Void points equal to the value of their Void Ring. If a character's current Void points equal their Void Ring, they cannot gain further Void points. Void points unspent at the end of a game session do not carry over to the next game session.

Spending Void Points

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

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

- **Seize the Moment:** A samurai should know the right moment to act, but sometimes, even the hand of fate must be given a nudge by bold action. While making a check, during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, a character may spend 1 Void point to roll one additional Ring die and subsequently keep one additional die during **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**.
- **Last-Ditch Effort:** When faced with death, a samurai must sometimes accept terrible losses to survive. Before suffering a critical strike, a character may spend 1 Void point to block the attack with a weapon or body part, damaging or potentially even sacrificing it entirely to survive as described in **Parrying** on page 172.
- **Techniques:** Certain techniques require spending a Void point to activate (see **Chapter 4: Techniques**, on page 107).

Gaining Void Points

Characters can gain Void points in a number of ways, most of them representing moments in which the character faces adversity and is galvanized to succeed by it. A few common instances include:

- After failing a check on which one of their adversities was resolved (see **Adversities**, on page 60).
- After suffering an outburst due to one of their anxieties (see **Anxieties**, page 60).
- After the GM conceals the TN of a check from the players (see **When to Reveal or Conceal Target Numbers of Successes** on page 178).

Honor, Glory, and Status

In many genres of fiction, including samurai drama, a character's primary conflict is often internal. While external foes and challenges frequently drive the plot and force the protagonist to face their own jagged edges, a samurai's primary battle is often fought within their own heart. Internal desires, duties, and expectations must all be weighed against one another, and to achieve one, a character must often sacrifice the others.

As such, in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*, characters have three attributes that help players to think about the forces that are constantly pulling upon a samurai. HONOR reflects the character's personal investment in Bushidō, and their belief in the righteousness of this code. GLORY reflects society's view of the character, and their reputation in the wider world. STATUS reflects circumstances of the character's birth and, occasionally, achievements that elevate their rank in the world.

Value and Rank

A character's honor, glory, and status attributes have a VALUE from 0 to 100. When an effect calls for a character's HONOR, GLORY, or STATUS RANK, use the tens digit of the character's honor attribute (or 10, if the value is 100).

Increasing Honor, Glory, and Status

These three attributes can increase over the life of a character, usually via an honor, glory, or status reward from the GM. Performing certain deeds, succeeding in narrative goals, and playing to one's core character motives can advance one or more of these attributes. Generally, this is arbitrated by the GM—see page 182 for recommendations on ways characters can increase their honor, glory, or status.

Decreasing Honor, Glory, and Status

Additionally, these three attributes can decrease over the life of a character. However, instead of being arbitrated by the GM, decreases to honor, glory, and status always occur because the character's player chooses to forfeit or stake honor, glory, or status to achieve some end the character desires. Decreasing any of these attributes is a conscious choice on the part of the player, rather than a penalty imposed by the GM.

Forfeiting Honor, Glory, or Status

Some deeds are intrinsically dishonorable, inglorious, or sacrilegious. To perform such a deed, the player must forfeit honor, glory, or status, reflecting the fact that the character is purposefully disregarding the code of Bushidō, damaging their reputation, or abdicating political responsibility or power. The GM should inform the player of the number of honor, glory, or status points their character must forfeit before a proposed deed takes place, giving the player the chance to have their character step back from the threshold or commit to seeing it through. If the player has been hasty in their description and has not given the GM a chance to describe what they are forfeiting, this might mean “re-winding” a few seconds of narration—or having the character abruptly stop what they were starting to do or say within the fiction as they consider the consequences.

If the player decides to make the forfeit, they reduce their character's honor, glory, or status by the required number of points (to a minimum of 0). Then, the character undertakes the deed. Note that a character can forfeit more of one of these attributes than they actually have, but the attribute's value cannot be reduced below 0.

Staking Honor, Glory, or Status

Sometimes, a character has nothing to put on the line but their honor, glory, or status, and they must take a risk and hope the dice fall in their favor. In these cases, the character stakes honor, glory, or status on an event.

For instance, a character might swear to protect someone during a dangerous journey, boast of a task they intend to complete, or even risk their title on a gambit to sway their lord's mind on an important matter. As with forfeiting honor, glory, or status, the GM should inform the player that their character's proposed deed will require the player to stake some amount of the character's honor, glory, or status before the character acts. Oftentimes, staking honor, glory, or status will come from an NPC asking the character to do so within the fiction of the game, in exchange for something or as part of their preexisting relationship. While characters within the fiction should obviously not state a value of honor, glory, or status that the character must stake to secure their support, the GM should inform the player of the value before they commit to the oath.

If the player decides to stake their character's honor, glory, or status on something, they or the GM should note the amount that has been staked and the conditions that would make the character lose it. If the character fulfills those conditions through action, inaction, or simple bad luck, decrease their honor, glory, or status by the staked amount.

Honor

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

A character's honor can decrease or increase by various means. Generally speaking, honor decreases when a character forfeits it to act in opposition to the values of Bushidō or because they lose faith in these ideals, or when they stake their honor on an oath that they later break or fail to uphold. By contrast, the GM can give a character an honor reward when they act in accordance with this set of values despite this making

their path more difficult, increasing their honor value by the set amount (see **Awarding Honor for Performing Honorable Deeds** on page 183) or an amount determined by the GM. Note that behaving honorably only results in an honor reward if doing so introduces a new challenge the character must overcome, comes at a cost, or requires personal sacrifice.

Table 1–3: Honor Scores on page 23 gives concrete examples of what a character's honor attribute says about their moral fiber. As described in **Table 1–3: Honor Scores**, if a character's honor enters a certain range, the character receives one or more virtue distinctions or flaw adversities, chosen by the player and based on the parts of the code they hold dearest or spurn, respectively. These advantages or disadvantages are removed if the character's honor rises (or falls) outside of the specified range. See **Advantages and Disadvantages** on page 60 for a list of virtue advantages and flaw disadvantages.

Ninjō

Alongside their honor attribute, each character has an associated ninjō (“human feelings”), which represents a personal desire, ideal, or crisis that is core to the character. When a player selects a ninjō, they are selecting the reason why their character's honor will be tested over the course of the story—the thing that could cause the character to forsake the ideals of Bushidō or their obligations to their lord, clan, and Emperor. The problems that this ninjō causes during the campaign should be problems that the player wants the character to face (even if the character does not).

Choosing Ninjō

At its core, ninjō is a personal desire. Ninjō can be broad (“accumulate esoteric knowledge”) or specific (“get vengeance on the person who murdered my parent”), but it should be something that the PC will have to grapple with in the scope of the campaign. Further, it should be concrete enough that the player is clear on how to pursue it, even when the GM isn't providing specific plot hooks that encourage the PC to uphold it or fail to do so. While it will not be front and center all the time, if a player is unsure of how to pursue their ninjō in play over a number of game sessions, they should speak with the GM and decide on a new ninjō that is more obviously actionable.

Resolving Ninjō

Ninjō is not cast in stone, and it should be allowed to evolve as the character develops over the course of the story. If a character ever reaches a moment of true clarity on the matter of their ninjō through the events of the narrative, whether this means discarding it, embracing it wholly, or reinventing it for themselves, this should have a substantial impact on their honor based on how their worldview is changed by events.

If the character's faith in Bushidō is strengthened, the GM should give the character an honor reward (5 to 10, generally). If the character's faith in their code crumbles, the character must forfeit some amount of honor (5 to 10, generally). Then, the player should consult with the GM to choose a new ninjō for the character.

Ninjō and Strife

It is always hard to go against one's own personal feelings, even when following the orders of a superior or adhering to an inflexible code. When a player wishes to have their character defy their ninjō, the character suffers strife equal to their honor rank (or more, at the player's discretion). If it represents a significant sacrifice on the character's part, setting aside their ninjō for honorable reasons can also result in an honor reward, as described in **Increasing Honor, Glory, and Status**, on page 21.

Table 1-3: Honor Scores

Value	Description	Additional Advantages/Disadvantages
100	Honor is Stronger than Steel: The character believes that Bushidō is worth upholding at any cost, and that by following its tenets, they can surmount any obstacle. Only the most dire circumstances or outright trickery would cause them to forsake their honor. They are remembered as paragons of the samurai caste.	3 virtue advantages
80–99	Never Stray from the Way: The character has given up much to embody the ideals of Bushidō, and they shall continue to do so as honor requires. They would rather forfeit their personal desires than face the shame and guilt of not living up to their own expectations. They will go to extreme lengths and endure significant personal sacrifices in the name of their lord and of what is right.	2 virtue advantages
65–79	My Honor Is My Life: Those who live in accordance with Bushidō are strengthened by it, and can therefore endure the hardships it sometimes requires of them. On rare occasions, such samurai may abandon virtue in the name of practicality or for selfish ends, but afterward they cannot easily forgive themselves for doing so.	1 virtue advantage
30–64	Honor Is the Ideal: Most samurai are brought up to believe in Bushidō and strive to embody its virtues. When the character speaks and acts, it is with honor in mind, but they are still human and periodically succumb to temptation, or they are simply willing to sacrifice their honor if they must. Importantly, they still feel guilt over betraying their ideals or disappointing society, and they work to do better in the future.	–
20–29	Honor Is About Appearances: While the character cannot or will not reliably uphold the virtues of Bushidō, they still recognize the importance of honor to society and strive to fit in and play the part of a samurai. Nevertheless, they are willing to dishonor themselves if the need arises—or if the rewards are sufficiently enticing. They are motivated more by the threat of shame—and bringing dishonor upon their family and lord—rather than by feelings of guilt or remorse for their actions.	1 flaw disadvantage
1–19	Honor Is a Nicety: Although the character still places some stock in Bushidō, they believe that most of the tenets get in the way of what they need—or want—to accomplish. Their reality no longer aligns with samurai ideals, so they have given up on such luxuries as honor and make no efforts to pay lip service to them. The prospect of shame is no longer a motivating factor for the character, and they rarely feel guilt.	2 flaw disadvantages
0	I Make My Own Code: The character has completely lost faith in Bushidō and follows some other set of ideals—if they adhere to any personal code of conduct at all.	3 flaw disadvantages

Sample Ninjō

Create a secure future with (or for) the one you love
 Become the greatest sword duelist in the Empire
 Become the best-known artisan or performer of a certain art
 Create a secure future for a particular location or small group of individuals
 Create a masterful work of art that wins praise across the ages
 Take revenge on the family that you blame for the death of someone you loved
 Protect a person or group from a particular enemy
 Develop a new swordsmithing technique or shugenja invocation
 Uncover lost secrets vital to combating a specific demon or ancient supernatural enemy of your family
 Discover your true parentage
 Achieve a particular rank within your clan
 Become the captain of a ship or the main owner of a particular business

Glory

Glory represents society's view of a character's success in their mandated role. For a samurai, this reflects the reputation they have won as an effective agent of their lord, as well as the general consensus about whether or not they uphold Bushidō. In particular, glory is affected by the opinion of a character's sworn lord. A character whose lord deeply respects their commitment and openly celebrates their achievements is likely to have a high glory. In contrast, a character who is seen as a necessary evil, or who has lost the faith of their lord, has a low glory.

A character's glory can decrease or increase by various means. Generally speaking, glory decreases when a character forfeits it to openly profess a lack of faith in the values of Bushidō or when they voluntarily allow their reputation to be damaged, or when a character stakes it on a boastful claim they fail to fulfill. By contrast, the GM can grant a character a glory reward for receiving public accolades, achieving great deeds that become widely known, or working to spread their fame. See **Receiving Glory Rewards**, on page 187, for more information.

See **Table 1-4: Glory Scores** for descriptions of what a character's glory value says about their reputation. As described in **Table 1-4: Glory Scores**, if a character's glory reaches a certain range of values, the character receives one or more fame advantages or infamy disadvantages, chosen by the player and based on their reputation. These advantages or disadvantages are removed if the character's glory rises (or falls) outside of the specified range. See **Advantages and Disadvantages** on page 60 for a list of fame advantages and infamy disadvantages.

Table 1-4: Glory Scores

Value	Description	Additional Advantages/Disadvantages
100	A samurai who has become a legendary hero, whose deeds have become worthy of poetry and song, and who is a household name even among peasants or is known by name to foreigners	3 fame advantages
90–99	A samurai considered among the most trusted and capable in their clan, whose exploits have become well-known and news of which have spread to the far corners of the Empire	2 fame advantages
80–89	A samurai whose exceptional deeds have garnered attention in the courts of other clans	
65–79	A samurai of great accomplishment, whose name has reached the ears of those outside their family	1 fame advantage
60–64	An extremely competent and valued samurai	–
45–59	A samurai known for their effectiveness and reliability	–
40–44	A yet-unproven or ordinary samurai	–
30–39	A samurai whose reputation is marred by failure, disappointment, or ill-omen	–
20–29	A samurai or individual who is considered incompetent or untrustworthy	1 infamy disadvantage
10–19	An individual who has become known for their misdeeds across several provinces	2 infamy disadvantages
1–09	An individual whose heinous acts have been publicized across the land	
0	One of the most villainous or scandalous individuals to have walked the Empire	3 infamy disadvantages

Giri

As part of their glory attribute, each character has an associated giri (“sworn duty”), which represents the way in which they serve their lord. This is the theme or issue by which the player wishes to see their samurai rise and fall during the campaign. When a player selects a giri, the player should choose it with the intent of naturally opposing the ninjō associated with the character’s honor. The conflict between personal feelings and duty is an important, recurring theme in works of fiction about samurai, and by setting these two in opposition, a player gets to help set the course for their samurai’s story and create opportunities for conflict and drama.

Choosing Giri

Drama in works of samurai fiction frequently arises when a noble samurai must choose between the orders of a flawed lord and their personal ideals. Sometimes, a samurai is able to navigate these two perils; at other times, this ends in a death in battle or even seppuku, so that the samurai can escape the two unfulfillable tasks.

Thus, in many campaigns, a character’s giri should revolve around fulfilling direct orders bestowed by the clan daimyō. These orders can be broad (“win glory for the Lion Clan on the field of battle, wherever you find it”) or specific (“protect Kakita Asami as her yōjimbō”), but they should be attainable within the scope of the campaign and concrete enough that the player knows how to pursue them at any given time, even when the GM isn’t providing specific hooks to follow. If a player is unsure of how to pursue their character’s giri, they should speak with the GM and decide on a new giri that they can pursue more directly.

Resolving Giri

As with ninjō, giri can change—though generally, it does so based on the character’s narrative accomplishments or the needs of their lord. If a character ever succeeds in the task they have been assigned and receives recognition from their lord for it through events in the narrative, the GM should give the character a glory reward of 5 to 10 glory, and then their daimyō should assign them a new giri (determined by the player and GM).

If a player ever feels that their character has definitively failed in their giri, or decides to wholly abandon it, they must forfeit an amount of glory

determined by the GM (often 5 to 10 glory, but possibly much more). Assuming their daimyō accepts this failure or honors their request for a new duty, they should then assign them a new giri (determined by the player and GM). If the character has no lord to serve as a result of this, their giri becomes finding a new lord to serve.

Giri and Strife

When a player wishes to have their character pass up an opportunity to pursue their giri, the character suffers strife equal to their glory rank. At the GM’s discretion (in cases such as if word of their laxity will get back to their lord), they might also have to forfeit some amount of glory to pass up the opportunity, or stake glory on the success of the endeavor they pursue instead (see **Forfeiting Glory** and **Staking Glory**, on page 187).

Sample Giri

- Restore the reputation or fortunes of your teacher’s dōjō
- Invent a new weapon that will give your clan an advantage
- Protect your lord (or another charge who appears often in the campaign), even to the death
- Capture a particular region of land held by an enemy clan
- Persuade a powerful leader to ally with your lord
- Negotiate a trade agreement with a major ally
- Gather information and use it to topple an enemy faction
- Keep a particular secret of your lord from becoming public under any circumstances
- Maintain the reputation or prosperity of a specific shrine
- Attend to the needs of a particular kami or spiritual being
- Guide your lord to victory against a particular enemy
- Retrieve set of sacred (or unholy) artifacts for your clan
- Assassinate multiple members of an enemy faction (or a single extremely well-guarded individual)

Status

Status is an attribute that reflects a character's social standing, based on both political sway and the mandate of the Celestial Order. Unlike honor and glory, status changes infrequently; instead, it is mostly used by the GM to measure the comparative social standing of the PCs and various NPCs, as well as by the PCs to know the proper etiquette they must use to interact with a given NPC. See **Table 1-5: Status Scores** for examples of what a character's status means for their position in the social hierarchy.

Barring truly exceptional events such as renouncing a formal position, being known to have contracted the befouling touch of the Shadowlands, or being dismissed from service, a player character's status rarely decreases. However, to intentionally incite any such catastrophic event (such as by publicly admitting to having contracted the dark touch of the Shadowlands or by requesting a lower position from their lord), a character must forfeit status. Player characters are much more likely to have their status increase through appointment to superior positions, acquisition of titles, beneficial marriages, and similar events.

Titles

Titles are the primary means by which a samurai's status changes. A samurai does not usually begin play with a title. These are instead acquired through play, either in recognition for deeds or as a part of the general narrative flow. Titles are not included in rules for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* beta at this time.

Those Outside the Celestial Order

In Rokugan, burakumin such as entertainers, geisha, leatherworkers, butchers, torturers, and gravediggers are all considered to be excluded from the Celestial Order. Society would not function without them, but their efforts bring few accolades. Their status is permanently 0, and it cannot be increased unless they erase all evidence of their past.

Foreigners are much rarer, but they similarly hold no formal status in Rokugani society—although a few are quite influential in a practical sense, thanks to economic agreements with the Toriose Minor Clan and other groups specifically permitted to trade with them.

Table 1-5: Status Scores

Value	Example
100	The Emperor
90–99	The Empress, the Voice of the Emperor, the Emperor's children, a daimyō of the Imperial Families, the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion, the Imperial Advisor, the Imperial Chancellor
80–89	A Great Clan Champion
70–79	A Minor Clan Champion, the Imperial Herald, the Imperial Treasurer, a Great Clan family daimyō, the commander of an army
60–69	A hatamoto, a provincial governor, a commander of multiple legions
50–59	A city governor, a captain of a military legion, a vassal family daimyō
40–49	A karo, an Emerald/Jade Magistrate, a revered sensei, a clan magistrate, a sergeant or lieutenant of a military squadron, an Imperial Messenger
30–39	An abbot of the Brotherhood, an average Great Clan samurai
25–29	Average Minor Clan samurai, average vassal family samurai, a monk of the Brotherhood
20–24	Village officers, disgraced samurai, rōnin
10–19	Ashigaru, artisans, laborers
01–09	Merchants, bandits
0	Burakumin (entertainers, geisha, leatherworkers, butchers, torturers, gravediggers), those outside the Celestial Order

Techniques

Techniques are special abilities granted to characters by their schools and, rarely, from other sources. There are several different types of techniques. Most schools grant access to only three different categories of technique, which characters are allowed to purchase with experience points (see **Experience Points and Character Advancement** on page 44).

Chapter 2: Creating a Character

The process of creating a character for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* can be a quick series of a few decisions or a relatively lengthy process that helps ground the character deeply in the world. However, in either case, the most important aspect of creating a character is not the mechanics that represent their abilities, but rather their personality, history, and ambitions. Samurai are not mindless warriors,

despite the strictures the Code of Bushidō places on their lives; they are flesh-and-blood humans who possess an incredible zeal for life, yet are expected to completely lack fear of death. They grapple with anxieties, passions, fears, and dreams. As you create your character mechanically, it is important to consider and come to understand this person's identity, their desires, their ideals, and how they will struggle when these collide.

The Game of Twenty Questions

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

These questions are also used to build your character mechanically. As you answer the questions, you will be instructed to note down ring and

skill increases, as well as other static values to be applied to your character. You will want to keep a running tally of your current ring and skill ranks.

To get started, print out a copy of the **Character Sheet** on page 223 as well as the **Twenty Questions Worksheet** starting on page 229 (alternatively, you could use a few pieces of scrap paper or some pages in a notebook!). It is recommended that you use pencil, as your character will be growing and evolving over the course of the campaign. You may also need a ten-sided die for some tables.

Part I: Core Identity (Clan and Family)

The first few questions will define your character the most strongly.

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

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

For more information on what the different ranks mean for rings and skills, see page 19 in **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

1. What clan does your character belong to?

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

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

The Crab Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increase: +1 Fitness

Status: 30

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

Crab Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushidō mean to your clan?

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

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

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Crane Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increase: +1 Culture

Status: 35

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

Crane Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushido mean to your clan?

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

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

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Dragon Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increase: +1 Meditation

Status: 30

In an empire that usually prizes conformity and respect for tradition, the Dragon Clan is an enigma. Inspired by their mysterious founder, the Kami Togashi, the Dragon place more emphasis than most of their fellow samurai on the individual search for Enlightenment and expertise. In the centuries since the Kami fell to earth, Togashi's followers have acquired a reputation for strange behavior. Isolated by the mountains of their northern home and entrusted with watching over the Empire, the Dragon rarely participate as actively in the politics of the Empire as other clans do—and when they do intervene, it is often for reasons others can only guess at. The secret of the Dragon is that they are guided by their founder's foresight, but even they do not always know what Togashi saw in his visions.

Dragon Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushido mean to your clan?

Sincerity—finding the truth of oneself—is the greatest virtue to the Dragon Clan. Lies obscure not just the world, but one's own path to greater understanding.

While members of the Dragon Clan take their obligations seriously, they define Duty and Loyalty somewhat differently than most other samurai. To a Dragon, unquestioning loyalty is no loyalty at all, and Dragon Clan lords have been known to tolerate and even value criticism that others would see as grave insubordination.

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Lion Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increase: +1 Tactics

Status: 35

Every samurai who lives in Rokugan measures courage, honor, and duty by the standard set by the Lion Clan. The Lion's military is unrivaled, as there are no sharper tacticians and no larger armies in all of Rokugan. This proud military heritage has earned the Lion Clan a place as the Right Hand of the Emperor, sworn to protect him by serving as his personal guard and his standing army. In light of this duty, fear means nothing to Lion samurai. The threat of death only serves to embolden them and bolster their courage, for there can be no greater end than to perish in honorable combat. As veterans of countless wars, the Lion know that those who attack first shall be victorious. Above all, the Lion live, breathe, and die for the Emperor and Rokugan.

Lion Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushidō mean to your clan?

Honor is at the center of the Lion Clan's view of Bushidō, especially in the context of martial virtue.

The codes of Akodo are read very literally by many of his descendants, with little room for Compassion or forgiveness.

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Phoenix Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Void

Skill Increase: +1 Theology

Status: 30

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

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

Phoenix Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushidō mean to your clan?

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

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

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Scorpion Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increase: +1 Skulduggery

Status: 35

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

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

Scorpion Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushidō mean to your clan?

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

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

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Unicorn Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increase: +1 Survival

Status: 30

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

Unicorn Clan Culture

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

What specialized knowledge do you have?

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

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

What does Bushidō mean to your clan?

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

The Unicorn Clan has had several centuries to acclimate to the Emerald Empire to which it has returned, but certain cultural practices they abandoned or adopted during the journey have only mildly altered the clan's culture. The focus on Courtesy and protocol that pervades many courts is one such practice that was let go, and certainly the most contentious way in which Shinjo's clan differs from those of her siblings.

See page 183 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

2. What family does your character belong to?

Even within a single clan, the various families offer a wide variety of characters that can be created. Once your clan is chosen, pick one of the families that make up the clan in order to receive additional benefits.

Crab Clan Families

The Hida Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Tactics

The Hida family stands guard against the Shadowlands, their task an eternal vigil to keep the Empire safe from the forces of Jigoku that would despoil Rokugan for their dark master. Like their founder, the Kami Hida, they are large and strong, tough and enduring, with little patience for the weaknesses of others. Their harsh duty makes the Hida exceedingly pragmatic, with little time for the polite fictions of court. Thus, they are often bitter about the mocking condescension concerning their manners and dress from those clans they shield at such high cost.

Glory: 44

The Hiruma Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival

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

Glory: 39

The Kaiu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Smithing, +1 Labor

Monuments to the skill of the Kaiu are everywhere in the Crab lands, from the vast Kaiu Wall itself to the armor and weapons used by those who stand guard over it. The Kaiu are responsible for the road network that allows the Crab to move quickly, the siege engines large and small that kill the Shadowlands forces before they even reach the Wall, and defensive works spread across the interior of the Crab holdings. There are very few problems that the Kaiu will not try to solve with applied engineering.

Glory: 40

The Kuni Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Survival, +1 Theology

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

Glory: 40

The Yasuki Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Commerce, +1 Design

The slim and loquacious Yasuki do not fit the Crab stereotype, perhaps because they split from the Crane Clan in the third century, provoking a bitter conflict between the two clans that has never quite ended. The first masters of mercantilism in the Empire, the Yasuki use the tools of trade and industry to keep the Crab armies well equipped and fed, even if it means the occasional shady deal. The Yasuki trade network extends throughout the Empire, and they can be found just about anywhere, looking for the next deal.

Glory: 39

Crane Clan Families

The Asahina Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Aesthetics, +1 Theology

The Asahina seek harmony and peace in all things, embodying a philosophy of compassion and pacifism that sets them apart even from their fellow Crane. Through art and prayer, they seek to calm and soothe the world around them and spread peace and accord throughout the Empire. The Asahina know that only through sacrifice can true peace be purchased, and it is a price they will pay to foster a better Empire.

Glory: 40

The Daidoji Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Tactics

The Daidoji are practical and hardworking Crane who compose the core of the clan's standing military. Devoted to serving their clan, they are its underappreciated foundation—from the Iron Crane, who form the center of the armies, to the wary yōjimbō, to the Daidoji Trading Council, which provides the raw materials and wealth for Crane arts. The selfless efforts of the Daidoji underpin all as they do what is necessary to defend and advance the purpose of the Crane.

Glory: 40

The Doji Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Courtesy, +1 Design

The descendants of the Kami Doji have embodied the courtly arts and refined culture of the Empire since its dawn. No major court is complete without its contingent of Doji spreading art, friendship, and—until very recently—generous gifts. For courtly news and rumor, the Doji communication network is unrivaled. This network aids them in keeping ahead of their rivals as much as their mastery of etiquette and art does. Rare are those who can afford to offend the Doji; rarer still are those who do so more than once.

Glory: 44

The Kakita Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Aesthetics, +1 Meditation

While the Doji seek excellence in all things, the Kakita tend to focus on a single skill, which they strive to master thoroughly. Whether this skill is

the art of the sword or of the brush, they pursue it with a singular focus. The graceful Kakita usually exhibit the beauty of the Crane in a more athletic manner than do their Doji cousins. They are renowned as some of the finest duelists in the Empire, and graduates from their academy defend the honor of the Crane with sharp finality.

Glory: 44

Dragon Clan Families

The Agasha Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Medicine, +1 Smithing

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

Glory: 40

The Kitsuki Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Government, +1 Sentiment

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

Glory: 44

The Mirumoto Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Tactics

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

Glory: 44

The Togashi Order

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Theology

Followers of the Kami Togashi are the oddest family in the Empire. More a monastic order than a true family, they welcome anyone willing to embrace their teachings and accomplish the challenges required to join, the first of which is usually finding one of the Togashi monasteries high in the mountains. Togashi monks and nuns wander the Empire, known to all by their skill with koan and the martial arts, as well as by the beautiful and mystical tattoos that grant them supernatural abilities.

Glory: 45

Lion Clan Families

The Akodo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Government

The Akodo are the master strategists and tacticians of the Empire; no one understands war better. The Akodo embody the discipline and control of the Lion Clan, always weighing several options in order to strike at the perfect time. They are warrior-scholars seeking to understand war and battle in all its complexity; no part of the martial disciplines is too small for their study and no part too large to evade their understanding. "No army led by an Akodo has ever known defeat" is a well-known adage, and no Akodo will allow it to become untrue.

Glory: 44

The Ikoma Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Composition, +1 Performance

The Ikoma are the finest storytellers in the Empire. Their proud voices extol the virtues of Bushidō and, thus, the Lion Clan. They serve as the memory not only of the Lion Clan, but of the Empire as a whole; no fact is considered historical truth if it is not part of the Ikoma histories. The Ikoma courtiers are the expressive face of the Lion; their bards openly show the emotion Lion samurai must hide. Boasts, tears, and stories are the tools the Ikoma use to advance the Lion in the courts.

Glory: 40

The Kitsu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Void

Skill Increases: +1 Survival, +1 Theology

All samurai venerate their ancestors, but the Kitsu bloodline, which mingled with otherworldly beings, produces members who can part the veil to speak with them. The Kitsu are known for being traditional and conservative, even among the Lion. All Kitsu answer to the ancestors. Those without the talent to speak to spirits keep genealogies, tend to the tombs and shrines, and otherwise honor the noble dead.

Glory: 40

The Matsu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Fitness

The Matsu are the courageous, implacable heart of the Lion. As the largest family in the Empire, the Matsu fill the ranks of the vast Lion armies. Founded by one of the greatest of all samurai in the early Empire, they retain many matriarchal traditions in her honor, including several elite military units that are exclusively female. The Matsu exemplify the harsh militarism of Bushidō. Due to their numbers, they are the Lion most well-known in popular culture. Fiery, honorable, unrelenting: while the stereotype of the Lion exaggerates these traits, they are all part of the Matsu character.

Glory: 44

Phoenix Clan Families

The Asako Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Culture, +1 Theology

The Asako are a quiet family, viewed as being content to follow their scholarly and philosophical pursuits while the Isawa drive the goals of the Phoenix. The Asako prize knowledge, but they prize wisdom even more, and they use their studies to advance their spiritual evolution as well as their political agendas. The Asako serve as courtiers for the Phoenix, and they are much in demand as court scholars and tutors across the Empire.

Glory: 40

The Isawa Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Meditation, +1 Theology

The Elemental Masters who sit on the Council of Five are the true rulers of the Phoenix, and these masters are almost always drawn from the Isawa. As one of the oldest shugenja families in the Empire, they have had centuries to learn to commune with the spirits and the most effective ways to request their blessings. Some might confuse authority with arrogance, but at heart, they are a pious and dutiful family that is devoted to ensuring harmony and balance.

Glory: 44

The Shiba Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Courtesy, +1 Tactics

The Shiba family descends from a Kami and provides the Phoenix with a champion, but they bent the knee to the Isawa family early in their history and have dutifully served them ever since. The Shiba focus on keeping the Phoenix Clan safe and rely first and foremost on diplomacy before resorting to force. The Shiba are expected to be learned in scholarly ways as well as in the warrior arts, and they understand the shugenja they serve better than most bushi families.

Glory: 40

Scorpion Clan Families

The Bayushi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Design, +1 Courtesy

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

Glory: 44

The Shosuro Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Performance, +1 Courtesy

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

Glory: 40

The Soshi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Design, +1 Theology

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

Glory: 40

The Yogo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Composition, +1 Theology

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

Glory: 39

Unicorn Clan Families

The Ide Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Commerce, +1 Courtesy

The Ide are the only Unicorn many people in the Empire have ever met, as they tirelessly serve as diplomats, couriers and, yes, even merchants across Rokugan. While they are Unicorn through and through, the Ide have learned to blend their foreign customs with the traditions of the Empire to prove to the other Great Clans that the Unicorn are one of them. The Ide work to radiate calm and competence, seeking to build alliances and friendships with others across—and occasionally beyond—the Empire.

Glory: 40

The Iuchi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Theology

The Iuchi are a priestly family providing the majority of the shugenja in the Unicorn lands. Many of their practices stretch back to the time the Unicorn were beyond the borders of the Empire. They are used to serving beside the warriors of the Unicorn and often ride to war alongside them. Iuchi shugenja practice sorcery known as *meishōdō*, the art of using talismans and names to manipulate the spirits, which is unknown outside of their family. Their history makes them more open to exploring different mystical paths than are those bound by centuries of tradition.

Glory: 40

The Moto Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire

Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Fitness

The Moto are considered to be the least civilized of the Unicorn families by the standards of the Empire. From their stocky builds and the heavy beards of their men, to their style of dress and equipment, the Moto seem foreign and strange. Indeed, the Moto have no use for the soft trappings of what some call civilization; they are nomadic warriors seeking the next battle, and they embrace that harsh life. While their heritage and culture are often questioned, especially by the more traditionally minded, their bravery and warrior ethic are not.

Glory: 40

Part II: Role and School

A character's rings represent their potential, but their school and skills represent their learned expertise.

If a school grants you a technique as part of its Starting Techniques section, you ignore any other prerequisites listed for that technique in **Chapter 4: Techniques**.

3. What is your character's role and school?

In Rokugan, duty is central to every samurai's life—performing one's societal role is the paramount responsibility of a samurai, and most serve in one of the following roles. Bushi are warriors by trade, courtiers are politicians and civil servants, and shugenja (by far the rarest of these three classifications) are priests of the samurai caste who share a special bond with the kami that lets them invoke miraculous powers that more common religious leaders cannot.

Monks nominally stand aside from society, but many samurai enter monastic life—most commonly toward the end of their lives, but some much earlier. As a result, at various points in history, monks have been known to wield considerable political influence, even if they are supposed to be above such earthly concerns.

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

Each school fits into one or more of these role categories. A school's role has no direct mechanical effect, but it is descriptive of the preparation and duties that will affect your character's mind-set and options during the campaign. For instance, if you want to play a character who

The Shinjo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Government

The Shinjo are the core of the Unicorn, the explorers who followed their Kami into the dangerous world beyond the Empire. This love of discovery has not left the Shinjo, and they travel widely when they can. They administrate and lead the Unicorn, working to keep all of the parts of the clan yoked together for the Emperor. Master equestrians and scouts, the Shinjo pursue peace with all, but never flinch from the prospect of war.

Glory: 44

The Utaku Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth

Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Tactics

No other Unicorn family has so deeply and spiritually embraced Bushidō as the Utaku, who embody it in their elite battle maidens, the *shiotome*. Not even the Lion question the honor of these warriors. The matriarchal Utaku allow only their women to ride to war; the Utaku men serve afoot as infantry and in the stables and households, making them unusual among their own clan. There is no finer heavy cavalry in the Empire than the battle maidens, and no finer equestrians than Utaku men.

Glory: 44

Where Is My Favorite School?

The schools featured in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Beta* are not representative of the full list of schools that will be available in the core rulebook. The schools featured in the beta were chosen to include a mixture of iconic and interesting school options, as well as to test a variety of different school types and techniques.

wields supernatural powers, you should select a shugenja or monk school. If you are more interested in social exploration than combat, you should choose a courtier instead of a bushi (or vice versa). If you want stealth and deception to be an important part of your character's story, you might choose a ninja.

In most cases, a samurai is limited to the schools within their clan. If you wish for your character to study at another school, ask your GM's permission and work out a set of circumstances that have allowed for your character to study at another school.

Crab Schools

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

Hida Defender School [Bushī]

Producing the most stalwart protectors of Rokugan against the horrors that mass and swirl beyond the Kaiu Wall, the Hida Defender School teaches its disciples fortitude, courage, and practicality in equal measure. Goblins, oni, and the unliving are not honorable foes, and Hida Defenders cannot afford to behave as though the fight against these creatures is fair. An oni with skin like stone and acidic blood can be overcome by any warrior with sufficient skill and strength of will, but the Hida Defenders have specialized in killing such monsters for centuries. From their heavily plated armor to their techniques for shattering iron hides with mighty hammer blows, Hida Defenders have developed an armory and fighting style that gives them the utmost advantage and greatest chance of not just victory, but survival.

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics

Techniques Available: Kata, Rituals, Shūji

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 40

Way of the Crab (School Ability): You are trained in using your school's signature heavy armor, and you trust it to be your shield, allowing you to plow forward into your foes without hesitation.

You ignore the Cumbersome quality of armor you wear. Once per scene, before making a check to resist a critical strike, you may reduce the severity of the critical strike by the physical resistance of your armor plus your school rank (to a minimum of 0).

Starting Outfit: Lacquered armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), tetsubō or ōtsuchi, club or crossbow, knife, traveling pack, 3 koku.

Kuni Purifier School [Shugenja]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Fire, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose three different skills): +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Medicine, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Techniques Available: Invocations, Kata, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 35

Gaze into Shadow (School Ability): You stare unflinchingly into the darkness, channeling your righteous anger into determination.

When you make a check targeting a being you know to possess the Shadowlands Creature ability or the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, you may choose a number of your kept dice up to your school rank showing 6 results. Alter each of these dice to any face showing a 6 result.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi, knife, makeup kit, scroll satchel, traveling pack, 3 koku.

Crane Schools

The Crane Clan is concerned foremost with preserving Rokugani culture and ensuring civility in the courts. To that end, the schools of the Crane Clan inculcate proper decorum in all their students no matter their primary curriculum, so much that Crane are sometimes perceived as priggish or haughty by the members of the other clans. Crane samurai are also expected to have at least a basic appreciation for the arts if they are not artisans themselves.

Doji Diplomat School [Courtier]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Air, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Design, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged]

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 50

Speaking in Silence (School Ability): Doji Courtiers are known across Rokugan for the subtlety with which they act, and no other courtier school can express such depths from a single gesture. Without ever breaking their perfect etiquette, the Doji Diplomats ensure that none can forget the grandeur and magnanimity of the Crane Clan, and that every favor they deign to give is returned to the Crane tenfold.

Once per scene when making a check to persuade or influence someone, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, you may add a number of kept Ring dice showing 6 results equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothes, wakizashi, bow or spear, calligraphy set, traveling pack, an attendant or pony, 10 koku.

Kakita Duelist School [Bushī]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Air

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Design, +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Sentiment, +1 Smithing

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 50

Way of the Crane (School Ability): Precision is a virtue of the Crane Clan, and the Kakita Duelists are the most precise among combatants. No other duelist school's students can match the exactness of each cut the Kakita Duelist School's students inflict.

When you inflict a critical strike, you may increase or decrease its severity by an amount up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), naginata or spear, traveling pack, an attendant or pony, 10 koku.

Dragon Schools

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

Kitsuki Investigator School [Courtier]

The Kitsuki Investigator School is a recent school, founded when Agasha Kitsuki saved the life of the Mirumoto daimyō by use of evidence. The Kitsuki Investigators use their method of observation, experimentation, logic, and reason to understand the truth, which puts them outside the norm of the Rokugani testimony-based judiciary system. For the Kitsuki Investigators, justice and truth align more often than many in the Empire like, yet they pursue their investigations where it takes them. The Kitsuki Investigators gravitate to legal work as magistrates and justicars, and are also found serving as courtiers and representatives of the Dragon Clan.

Ring Increases: +1 Air, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Culture, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Medicine, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 45

Kitsuki's Method (School Ability): Your training teaches you to look at things systematically, finding patterns and inconsistencies in any field, even those where you are a relative novice.

When performing a check to investigate (see **The Art of Investigation**, on page 95), you may treat your ranks in the skill you are using as being equal to your school rank. If your ranks in the skill are higher than or equal to your school rank, you may add one kept Ring die showing ❸.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, wakizashi, knife, calligraphy set, bo or jian, traveling pack, 5 koku.

The Togashi Tattooed Order [Monk]

The Togashi Order accepts members from across the Empire and of any caste. Those few who can find their way to one of the Togashi monasteries in the first place have proven themselves worthy of becoming initiates. The Togashi Order follows a particularly muscular interpretation of the Tao of Shinsei and expects its members to be able to travel and defend themselves as they seek their own path to Enlightenment. The members of the Togashi Order are known for and by the mystic tattoos that bind them to their order, and their artistry is matched only by their unusual powers. Only those who become true *ise zumi* know that their power flows from the blood of Togashi, the Dragon Clan Kami, which is mixed into the tattooing inks.

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Void

Skill Increases (choose four different skills): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Techniques Available: Kihō, Rituals, Shūji

Starting Techniques:

- **Kihō (choose three):** Earth Fist, Earth Needs No Eyes, Flame Fist, Chi Protection, Water Fist
- **Shūji:** Lord Togashi's Insight

Honor: 40

Blood of the Kami (School Ability): Togashi monks adorn themselves in mystical tattoos that frequently take the shape of animals and natural phenomena, and they can draw power from these tattoos. Your character's tattoos reflect revelations they have gained into the nature of the universe, themselves, and the falsehood of the division between the two, and thus each one grants a benefit to a particular skill to reflect these insights. Each of these tattoos is unique, and the form each takes on your character should have personal meaning to them in their quest for Enlightenment.

When performing a check with a skill for which you have the associated tattoo, add one rolled Ring die showing 1 ❸ result.

You possess a number of these tattoos equal to your school rank:

- **Mountain Tattoo:** Fitness
- **River Tattoo:** Survival
- **Cloud Tattoo:** Skulduggery
- **Volcano Tattoo:** Command
- **Bat Tattoo:** Sentiment
- **Tiger Tattoo:** Martial Arts [Unarmed]
- **Lotus Tattoo:** Meditation
- **Vine Tattoo:** Medicine

Starting Outfit: Common clothing, bo, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Lion Schools

As befits the clan named as the Right Hand of the Emperor, the Lion Clan has committed itself to the study of warfare in all its forms. From soldiers to commanders, logisticians to tacticians, medics to morale-boosters, the Lion have schools to train samurai for every battlefield role. Every student is trained in at least one martial art to cultivate the soul but also to serve if called upon.

Akodo Commander School [Bushī]

The Akodo War College's curriculum is focused on control: of one's weapons, of the battlefield, over the flow of conflict, and ultimately, over oneself. Its students study the advice of Akodo's *Leadership*, the last word on the art of war, which was written by the Lion Clan Kami himself. In addition to their training as warriors, the Akodo Commanders are educated to be leaders on the field of battle. They often treat war as a game of go, to be decided by exact moves. The Akodo Commanders strike precisely without hesitation when using a sword or commanding a unit—for them, purpose and execution are one. Their goal is to minimize losses while achieving their objectives: the pinnacle of the art of war.

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Tactics

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 50

Way of the Lion (School Ability): When you succeed at an Attack or Support action check during a skirmish or mass battle, you may remove a number of strife from your character up to your school rank. If you do, add that many additional bonus successes to the check.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), spear, any one weapon, 2 knives, bow, quiver of arrows, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Ikoma Bard School [Courtier]

In the end, after trials, sacrifices, and death—once their body is burned and the ashes scattered to the winds—all that truly remains of a samurai is their story. The greatest monuments of humans may vanish to dust, but legends live on so long as there is someone to kindle them in the memory of the living. The Ikoma Bard School trains its students for this purpose—they are historians, bards, and keepers of the stories of heroes. They exist not just to preserve knowledge, but to transmit these tales to the next generation, inspiring the warriors of the Lion Clan to equal and even exceed the achievements their ancestors won in ancient days. Thus, while Ikoma Bards do not usually serve as frontline combatants, they are no less warlike than the other scions of the Lion Clan—they simply fight a different battle, remembering and venerating glorious deeds in story. Although they teach the lessons of the past to their clan's commanders and rulers on and off the battlefield, perhaps their most important duty is in supporting every member of the Lion Clan's will to seize glory no matter the danger, and to fight against any odds with the confidence that no hero will die unsung.

Ring Increases: +1 Water, +1 Fire

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Tactics

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 45

Heart of the Lion (School Ability): When you perform a check using a

Social skill targeting one or more characters, you may gain an amount of strife up to your school rank to remove that amount of strife from the targets (divided among the targets as you choose).

When you perform a check using a Social skill targeting one or more characters, you may remove an amount of strife up to your school rank from yourself to have your targets gain that amount of strife (divided among the targets as you choose).

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi, spear or tessen, bow, quiver of arrows, traveling pack, any one instrument, journal, 4 koku.

Phoenix Schools

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

Isawa Elementalist School [Shugenja]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Fire, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose three different skills): +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Medicine, +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Theology

Techniques Available: Invocations, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 40

One with the Elements (School Ability): The Isawa Elementalist School excels not at one particular elemental art, but at the discipline of invocation itself. Its teachings are widely applicable across many different appeals to the kami, making its practitioners especially versatile.

Once per scene when making the check to activate an invocation technique, before **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you may reduce the TN of the check by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi, knife, scroll satchel, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Shiba Guardian School [Bushī]

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

practice has taught the Shiba Guardians how to dance in harmony with elemental kami when called forth by the invocations of the shugenja.

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics, +1 Theology

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 45

Way of the Phoenix (School Ability): The Shiba Guardian School teaches the idea of a life-preserving blade, one that is drawn only after all other options have been exhausted. In a clan so full of shugenja, emotional turbulence can lead to catastrophic destruction; it is the Shiba Guardian's sworn task to keep their clan's shugenja from being harmed and from harming themselves. If a conflict or disaster can be cut off at the source with a word of wise counsel rather than a swift sword, all the better.

Once per scene, when a character at range 0–3 makes a check, you may negate a number of ☯ results up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, travel clothing, daishō (katana and wakizashi), spear or naginata, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Scorpion Schools

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

Bayushi Manipulator School [Courtier]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Courtesy, +1 Command, +1 Design, +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 35

Weakness Is My Strength (School Ability): The Bayushi Manipulator School teaches that any disadvantage can be exploited, any flaw in armor turned into a fatal gap, and any stain spread to ruin a reputation.

When you exploit a target's disadvantage as part of a Scheme action (see **Turning Advantages and Disadvantages**, page 61), you may re-roll additional dice up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothing, clothing, travel clothes, wakizashi, any one weapon, calligraphy set, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Shosuro Infiltrator School [Ninja]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Skill Increases (choose five different skills): +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Games, +1 Performance, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Skulduggery

Techniques Available: Kata, Rituals, Shūji

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Soaring Slice
- **Shūji (choose one):** Whispers of Court, Sensational Distraction

Honor: 30

The Path of Shadows (School Ability): Striking a foe from behind or while they are asleep is extremely advantageous, and thus extremely dishonorable. Fortunately for the ninja of the Shosuro Infiltrator School, such considerations are hardly worthy of notice.

When performing an Attack action against a target who is unaware of your presence or is suffering the Incapacitated or Unconscious condition, treat the base damage and deadliness of your weapon as being increased by an amount equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothes, common clothes, travel clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), knife, bow, 10 arrows, traveling pack, 5 koku.

Ninja and Shinobi

Shinobi are covert agents and infiltrators who hide from sight and strike with surprise and without honor. Shinobi are often called ninja in popular legend, but as anyone will tell you, ninja do not exist. The shinobi are a weapon of war, but they are often used in times of peace to hide the origin of an attack and deflect blame for drastic but precise violence. The use of such tactics, and the shinobi themselves, are officially banned by Imperial Edict, but somehow rumors of their use remain.

Unicorn Schools

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

Iuchi Meishōdō Master School [Shugenja]

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

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Water

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

Techniques Available: Invocations, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 40

The Way of Names (School Ability): As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Design check** using any ring to bind a spirit to a vessel and create a meishōdō talisman for one invocation of that element that you have learned. While you have the talisman in your possession, reduce the TN to activate that invocation by 1.

You can give the talisman to another shugenja, allowing them to perform that invocation even if they have not learned it and reducing the TN to activate it by 1, but the talisman ceases to function after a number of uses equal to your school rank.

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

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi, any one weapon, calligraphy set, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse, 8 koku.

Shinjo Outrider School [Bushī]

The Shinjo Outriders are the core of the Unicorn military, emphasizing speed, flexibility, and getting there first with the needed strength. All Shinjo Outriders learn the art of reconnaissance and how to get the most out of their horses. No samurai is more mobile than a mounted Shinjo Outrider. Their preferred weapon is the cavalry bow, which they use with great accuracy even while moving at a gallop. Trained to live off the land and explore on their own if need be, the Shinjo Outriders thoroughly learn the terrain of each potential battlefield before having to fight over it.

Ring Increases: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Skill Increases (choose five): +1 Commerce, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Medicine, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics

Techniques Available: Kata, Shūji, Rituals

Starting Techniques:

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

Honor: 40

Born in the Saddle (School Ability): The bond between a Shinjo Outrider and their mount is legendary. In Shinjo lore, many noble steeds are nearly as famous as their riders.

Once per scene, before rolling dice, you may declare that you are directing your horse to aid in a task and describe how its efforts should be helpful in those circumstances. Reduce the TN of the check by your school rank. Your horse must be present in the scene for you to use this ability.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ashigaru armor, daishō (katana and wakizashi), scimitar, yumi, knife, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse, 7 koku.

4. How does your character stand out within their school?

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

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

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

Part III: Honor and Glory

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

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

5. What is your character's duty to their lord?

In theory, samurai care only about serving their lord. What is the primary service that you render to your lord? How does your lord call upon your skills?

Write down your answer on your character sheet under "Giri." Giri is how your character acquires esteem in the eyes of their lord, and thus is the main way your character gains and loses glory. See more under **Giri**, on page 24 of **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

- Bushi characters might be given tasks suited to bodyguards (yōjimbō), guards, soldiers, magistrates, executioners, or generals.
- Courtier characters might be given tasks suited to artisans, performers, guides, diplomats, magistrates, seneschals, or spymasters.
- Shugenja characters might be given tasks suited to priests, researchers, librarians, warrior-priests, shrine keepers, or spiritual advisors to daimyō. Rarely, shugenja might be guards, artisans, or magistrates.
- Monk characters who no longer belong to a Great Clan generally do not serve their lord but the interests of their order. They might be given tasks suited to priests, temple caretakers, charity workers in their local community, librarians, teachers, or pilgrims. Monks who still belong to a Great Clan usually have duties similar to those of a shugenja.
- Ninja characters are hired assassins and infiltrators, but they usually have a cover guise. A ninja's giri is almost always a secret, and the player of a ninja should also decide what their character's outwardly stated giri is when selecting their true objective.

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

Your character might even have two lords, such as if they are an Emerald Magistrate. In this case, not only would your character be expected to serve the Emerald Champion on behalf of the Emperor, but their family daimyō would still expect them to work toward the clan's interests at the same time. If your character possesses or acquires a title or major obligation to a different lord or bureaucracy, the GM might ask you to create another giri for them based on this other lord's expectations. Again, the GM and player should collaborate to create something both are excited to explore in the story.

Selecting One's Giri Properly

Giri provides characters with the first of their two primary drives within the story. You should be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative when considering your character's giri and ninjō (personal

feelings) together, and if you cannot, you should talk to your GM about selecting a different giri:

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

6. What does your character long for?

In theory, samurai care only about serving their lord, but in practice, samurai possess their own individual desires as well. What is the greatest, most pressing personal goal or belief that your samurai carries within their heart?

Write down your character's personal goal on your character sheet under "Ninjō." Ninjō is a challenge that you set before your character, forcing them to confront the ideals of Bushidō and the cost to uphold them as they pursue their desire. Thus, it is the main way your character gains and loses honor. Another way to look at ninjō is to ask yourself what goal might tempt the character to disobey their lord or do dishonorable things in their attempts to achieve or protect it. See more under **Ninjō**, on page 22 of **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

Samurai drama revolves around competing desires. To create quandaries for your samurai that enhance drama and make for enjoyable role-playing, you should set your character's giri and ninjō in opposition. The GM will be working to bring both up during the course of the campaign and force you to make difficult decisions relating to each.

Selecting One's Ninjō Properly

Ninjō provides characters with the second of their two primary drives within the story. Some classic personal desires from works of samurai fiction include variations on the themes of ambition, art, beauty, belonging, Enlightenment, envy, family, glory, greed, love, justice, knowledge, peace, safety, revenge, or a combination thereof. Things like "to be an honorable samurai" or "to obey my lord" are poor selections for a character's ninjō. These are simply baseline requirements of being a samurai, and more importantly, they do not provide the character with clear moments of fallibility that make characters in *Legend of the Five Rings* interesting to play. By comparison, the similar ninjō of "to punish samurai who abuse their power by dishonoring themselves" or "to win my lord's love" provide enough room for conflict with the general precepts of being a samurai to function well as ninjō.

You should be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative when considering your character's ninjō and giri (duty to one's lord) together, and if you cannot, you should talk to your GM about selecting a different ninjō:

- Is this ninjō something you want to see your character pursue or contend with during the story? This does not mean that your character should always find pursuing their desire pleasant, wise, or even

healthy, but you, the player, should be excited by the prospect of getting to watch your character struggle with it.

- Is this ninjō likely to arise no matter where the campaign takes your character? A good ninjō tugs at your character's heart no matter where they wander, and it should be something that can influence your character's choices no matter what location they travel to or what obstacles they face.
- Is this ninjō something for which your character might sully their honor or defy their lord? A good ninjō means enough to the character that pursuing it is a serious temptation, while ignoring it has serious enough stakes that it would cause the samurai to be unhappy or unmotivated to continue serving their lord.

7. What is your character's opinion of their clan?

Not every samurai is truly a loyal and devoted servant of the clan. Now that you know who your lord is, does your character embrace their clan's ideals and goals, or do they find themselves in conflict with them? Does your character agree with current policies or regard them as mistakes? Perhaps a militaristic samurai is born into the Crane or the Phoenix Clan, or a pacifistic samurai is born into the Lion or Crab Clan. Perhaps a Scorpion disagrees with their clan's sinister behavior. Perhaps a Lion believes their clan's enmity with the Crane is an error.

Choose one of the following:

- If your character believes firmly in the precepts of their clan and has sought to uphold them whenever possible, gain +5 glory based on their reputation as an upstanding member of their community.

- If your character has a fundamental disagreement with their clan's beliefs, policies, or practices and has defied these in the past, gain an additional rank in one of the following skills based on clan: Crab Clan (Aesthetics or Design), Crane Clan (Commerce), Dragon Clan (Seafaring), Lion Clan (Skulduggery), Phoenix Clan (Tactics), Scorpion Clan (Labor), Unicorn Clan (Culture).

8. What does your character think of Bushidō?

All samurai are supposed to respect and venerate the Code of Bushidō, but some clans and families pay more attention to some tenets over others (see **The Clans' Views of Bushidō**, on page 187), and there are always a few samurai who refuse to believe in Bushidō at all. Does your character agree with their clan's views, or does your character differ on certain points or even disregard certain elements of Bushidō? If your character's belief in Bushidō is completely in alignment with their clan, what past experiences have reinforced it or renewed their faith in it? If your character has come to believe that Bushidō is flawed, or at least that most people are misguided in the way they practice it, what events drove them to this development?

Choose one of the following:

- If your character's belief in the orthodoxy of Bushidō is very staunch, gain +10 honor.
- If your character diverges from some or all common beliefs about how samurai should behave honorably, gain one rank in one of the following skills to reflect past behavior that was unbecoming of a samurai or deeply defied the norm: Commerce, Labor, Medicine, Seafaring, Skulduggery, or Survival.

Part IV: Strengths and Weaknesses

Beyond their rings and skills, characters are also defined by their advantages and disadvantages—the quirks and vulnerabilities that make them tick. Each advantage or disadvantage is assigned to a single one of the character's rings and is classified with one or more types. Different school abilities and techniques may interact with the different types of advantages and disadvantages.

During character creation, a character is assigned two advantages (one distinction and one passion) in Questions 9 and 11, two disadvantages (one adversity and one anxiety) in Questions 10 and 12, and one additional advantage or disadvantage of your choice in Question 13.

9. What is your character's greatest accomplishment so far?

What is your character's greatest achievement so far in life, and how did they accomplish it? Your character might have won a tournament or event thanks to innate ability, created a work of art that caught the eye of their daimyō, slain a remarkable beast while on a hunt, or even taken the initiative to cultivate a politically advantageous marriage. Your character likely possesses some ability or strength of character that assisted in this noteworthy achievement, which you should also select at this stage. It can even be interesting to create a contrast between what the character thinks are their strengths, and what these really are—your character might not be aware of their own best quality, or might mistakenly believe they succeeded for unrelated reasons.

In addition to deciding your character's greatest achievement in their life so far, choose one distinction advantage that was key to accomplishing this success, or that your character developed as a result of it. See **Specific Distinctions**, on page 61, for a list of options. If you want to create your own distinction, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77.

10. What holds your character back the most in life?

Many things are expected of samurai in the Emerald Empire, and nearly all of them have some ongoing challenge in their life that makes these expectations harder for them to live up to. This might be a personality quirk such as naïveté, selfishness, or a bad temper, or it could be a physical ailment or disability, or it might even be a spiritual vulnerability such as a family curse. When choosing a challenge, you should select something that you think you will enjoy roleplaying (especially at times when your character does not enjoy facing this difficulty).

Choose one adversity disadvantage for your character. See **Specific Adversities**, on page 68, for a list of options. If you want to create your own adversity, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77.

11. What activity makes your character feel at peace?

The answer to this question could be anything from food and drink to specific activities, certain material possessions, or particular persons. Why does the character like or dislike these things? Does it stem from sharing the activity with a loved one in the past or a seemingly spontaneous fascination with the subject itself? How has an enjoyment of this activity shaped your character's life? Have they made friends—or enemies—as a result of this hobby?

Choose one passion advantage related to your character's interests or hobbies. See **Specific Passions**, on page 66, for a list of options. If you want to create your own passion, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77.

12. What concern, fear, or foible troubles your character the most?

Samurai are expected to maintain a controlled facade befitting of their station at most times, but no human can avoid having some things that make them anxious, afraid, or angry. Are your character's fears or frustrations derived from past experiences, trauma, or personal failure? Are they related to a person or specific event? Does your character fully understand the source of their emotional turmoil, or do they have trouble expressing or even processing these feelings? As with the adversity you selected, you should select something that you think you will enjoy role-playing when it becomes a challenge to your character.

Choose one anxiety disadvantage for your character. See **Specific Anxieties**, on page 74, for a list of options. If you want to create your own anxiety, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77.

13. Who has your character learned the most from during their life?

Nearly every human owes some portion of their personality, strengths, and weaknesses to the people around them, and usually, a few people in particular stand out as mentors—although their influence is not always positive. Who has taught your character the most about life, for better or for worse?

An instructor in your character's school might have set them on their current path, or a parent's influence might still guide their actions. Your

character's lord might have served as a political mentor, showing them the value of compassion—or of ruthlessness—and thereby shaped their ethos for life. A good marriage might have led your character to a true peer who helped them overcome a challenge or personal obstacle, while a bad marriage might have left your character jaded about relationships overall. Having to care for a younger sibling or child might have caused your character to develop in unforeseen ways. Losing a loved one might have driven your character into anguish, or it might have forced them to grow in ways they never thought possible to stand on their own. A disastrously bad relationship or a long-running feud with a hated rival could have forged your character into the person they are today. Your character might even have met a supernatural being who has served as a guide or patron, or one who set a curse upon your character in exchange for giving your character power or as punishment for transgressions against the Celestial Order.

In the Relationships section of the character sheet, record the name of the person from whom your character has learned the most, along with the nature of their relationship. Then, choose one of the following options and gain the listed attributes:

- One advantage related to your character's mentor and their relationship.
- One disadvantage related to your character's mentor and their relationship, and one rank in a skill that your character developed as a result of your character's closest confidante and their relationship.

If you want to create your own advantage or disadvantage, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77.

Part V: Personality and Behavior

Your character is more than a set of statistics on paper; knowing how they are likely to behave in a situation is important when you are role-playing their decisions and interactions.

14. What detail do others find most striking about your character?

In a given region and especially within a particular clan, samurai are expected to behave, dress, and comport themselves in a certain way. Customs vary somewhat by region, and certain allowances are made for outsiders—a battle-hardened Crab bushi on business in a Crane court is hardly expected to be able to maintain perfect etiquette, although their manners are sure to be subtly criticized by the courtiers present.

Within their homeland, however, any aspect of a character that veers from the norm, from slight oddities of appearance to the most trivial mannerisms, tend to attract attention. A character might stand out for their unusual looks, strange fashion of dress, or ancestry that can be traced to far-flung parts of the Emerald Empire (or even beyond, in the case of some Unicorn families). A minor behavior, like chewing one's lip when nervous or clasping one's hands to hide trembling fingers, can be the thing that others remember about a character. Perhaps the character always says the same thing when meeting a stranger. All these things add subtle depth to the character—and so does a deliberate absence of memorable details.

Record the answer in the Notes section of your character sheet.

15. How does your character react to stressful situations?

Although samurai are supposed to maintain proper decorum and conceal their emotions, few of them are truly able to control their feelings at all times. Even the most stoic and rigidly self-controlled samurai occasional-

ly lets out a true sign of feeling, especially when they are being berated by their lord or treated disrespectfully by their subordinates. What emotions does your character show, and why? What events or feelings can make them lose their self-control? Conversely, what emotions can they always control, no matter what?

Describe a noteworthy physical response that your character has during times of stress. Record this in the Personal Outburst section of your character sheet; when your character has an outburst (see page 16), they also display the listed behavior.

Customizing Outbursts

Outbursts are great opportunities for your character's personality to shine through, so you should customize your character's outbursts to their foibles. In the Customized Outburst section of the character sheet, record your character's most common outburst from the list on page 16, alongside some physiological, verbal, or mental signs they display when having an outburst.

Does your character get loud and abrasive when enraged, or does their voice fall to an icy whisper? Do they fall to their knees in prayer when wracked with uncertainty or respond to everything as if it is a violent threat? Perhaps they have a simple mannerism they display as they grow more anxious, such as idly flexing their hands or shifting to a guarded posture. Do they have a particular turn of phrase they tend to use upon growing excited or frustrated? Come up with one or two examples that help breathe life into your character as they approach their emotional threshold.

With the GM's permission, you can even mix and match the narrative and mechanical effects of outbursts, re flavor the narrative side of an outburst to better fit your character, or make up a wholly new outburst.

16. What are your character's preexisting relationships with other clans, families, organizations, and traditions?

A character is exposed to many other groups during their life in numerous ways; diplomacy, marriage alliances, trade, wars, and travel all may bring a person into contact with groups they do not belong to (at least initially). What other groups within the Emerald Empire has your character been exposed to, and what impression have these exposures left? Is your character betrothed or married to a member of another family or clan? Did they marry into that family or clan and suddenly need to ac-

climate to a very different set of expectations and social strictures? Are your character's marriage prospects poor due to bad relationships or due to bad blood with neighboring families or clans? Has your character been too involved in battles or even all-out war against another clan? Did victory or defeat harden their heart against members of this clan, or did the pointlessness of war against other clans become obvious during the war? Does your character have a personal reason to feel sympathy for a particular group or to hate them, and if so, how did this develop?

Record any noteworthy history, quarrels, alliances, or grievances your character has with other groups in the Relationships section of your character sheet.

Part VI: Ancestry and Family

Now is the time to determine who your character's parents and ancestors are, and how that has defined your character.

17. How would your character's parents describe them?

Parental devotion is an expected virtue in a land where the family, not the individual, is the repository of honor and reputation. However, despite this ideal, there are plenty of samurai who have a fractious relationship with their parents, or who offer outward veneration while concealing a lack of respect. Does your character have a proper relationship with their parents, or are they estranged? Was the character's childhood a happy one, or were they a torment to their parents? Are their parents still alive?

Record the relationship between your character and their parents or immediate family members in the Relationships section of your character sheet.

18. Who was your character named to honor?

When receiving or choosing one's name, it is common to use a name that honors a recent or particularly noteworthy ancestor. In the Emerald Empire, using a portion of an ancestral name combined with other syllables to change its meaning is one common practice for many families. Whose name does your character share? What was meant by bestowing this name upon your character? What did this person accomplish during their life? How did they die, or do they still live? Did or does your character have a personal relationship with this ancestor? Does your character feel pride in the name they carry, or do they fear failing to live up to the person it represents?

First, roll a ten-sided die twice. Choose either result, and then consult **Table 2-1: Samurai Heritage** to determine information about a famous relative from the last few generations whom your character is named for. Then, roll a ten-sided die again as specified by individual entries.

19. What is your character's personal name?

Choose a personal name for your character to be known by in the family register. In the Rokugani style, the character will typically be addressed by their family name (chosen in Question with the appropriate honorific 2), but close associates may refer to them simply by their given name. What does your character's name mean? Does your character's appearance fit with their name, or are the two incongruous?

Below are some sample Rokugani names and meanings, otherwise you may choose or invent another name:

- Aki, which means "autumn," is a unisex name
- Aoi, which means "blue," is a unisex name
- Daisuke, which means "great helper," is a masculine name
- Fumio, which means "scholarly child," is a masculine name

- Hikaru, which means "shining," is a unisex name
- Hana, which means "flower," is a feminine name
- Hitoshi, which means "even-tempered," is a masculine name
- Ichirō, which means "first son," is a masculine name
- Jun, which means "obedient," is a unisex name
- Kaguya, which means "radiant night," is a feminine name
- Kaoru, which means "fragrance," is a unisex name
- Kyoko, which typically means "respectful child," is a feminine name
- Makoto, which means "sincere," is a unisex name
- Mamoru, which means "protector," is a masculine name
- Masako, which means "political child," is a feminine name
- Michiko, which means "beautiful child" or "wise child," is a feminine name
- Murasaki, which means "purple," is a feminine name
- Nadeshiko, which means "pink flower," is a feminine name
- Nobu, which means "faith," is a masculine name
- Ren, which means "lotus," is a unisex name
- Ryū, which means "dragon," is a masculine name
- Sakura, which means "cherry blossom," is a feminine name
- Satoshi, which means "wise," is a masculine name
- Shizuka, which means "quiet," is a feminine name
- Sora, which means "sky," is a unisex name
- Takeshi, which means "warrior," is a masculine name
- Tomoe, which means "holy symbol," is a feminine name
- Tsubasa, which means "wings," is a masculine name
- Yoshi, which means "good luck," is a unisex name
- Yuki, which means "snow," is a unisex name

Table 2-1: Samurai Heritage

Roll	Result	Modifiers	Other Effects
1	Famous Deed: One of your ancestors won a great victory for their clan or even the Emperor, and was rewarded with an item of incredible quality.	Increase your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again and add the resulting family heirloom to your starting items (1–3: a weapon, 4–6: a set of armor, 7–8: another item, 9: a horse or other animal, 10: a boat or estate). You choose one item quality and the GM chooses one item quality from the list of item qualities on page 145; these are applied to the item.
2	Glorious Sacrifice: One of your ancestors perished nobly in battle, and one of their signature items vanished with them or was lost in the subsequent years.	Increase your honor by 5 and your glory by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine your lost family heirloom (1–3: a weapon, 4–6: a set of armor, 7–8: another item, 9: a horse or other animal, 10: a boat or estate), which exists somewhere in the world. You choose one item quality and the GM chooses one item quality; these are applied to the item. You do not know where the heirloom is, but you could later reclaim it during the campaign.
3	Wondrous Work: One of your ancestors crafted a piece of great beauty that won renown for your family, and others expect you to live up to that legacy.	Increase your glory by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine an Artisan skill (1–3 Aesthetics, 4–6 Composition, 7–8 Design, 9–10 Smithing); gain +1 rank in that skill.
4	Dynasty Builder: One of your ancestors was instrumental in the rise of a powerful lord, using cunning stratagems and shrewd advice to secure their ascension. You have heard this story many times and know the importance of power subtly wielded.	Decrease your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Social skill (1–3: Command, 4–6: Courtesy, 7–8: Games, 9–10: Performance); gain +1 rank in that skill.
5	Discovery: One of your ancestors made an incredible discovery, invented something of great importance, or uncovered an ancient secret that served the realm. Thanks to family lore, you have at least a rudimentary understanding of the subject of their discovery.	Increase your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Scholar skill (1–3: Culture, 4–5: Sentiment, 6–7: Government, 8–9: Medicine, 10: Theology); gain +1 rank in that skill.
6	Ruthless Victor: One of your ancestors claimed a bloody victory over a rival, smashing their forces with a cunning maneuver or seizing their domain after vanquishing them in battle. From this relative or their story, you learned well the importance of brute force.	Decrease your honor by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Martial skill (1–3: Fitness, 4–5: Martial Arts [Melee], 5–6: Martial Arts [Ranged], 7–8: Martial Arts [Unarmed], 9: Tactics, 10: Meditation); gain +1 rank in that skill.
7	Elevated for Service: One of your ancestors was a ji-samurai or even a commoner who served with such distinction that their position was elevated to that of a Great Clan samurai by marriage or mandate of a daimyō. As a child, you learned the basics of the skills for which they won their esteem.	Decrease your glory by 3 and increase your honor by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Trade skill (1–2: Commerce, 3–4: Labor, 5–6: Medicine, 7–8: Seafaring, 9: Skulduggery, 10: Survival); gain +1 rank in that skill.
8	Stolen Knowledge: One of your ancestors learned a secret of another school and clandestinely passed it down through the ages; now, it has reached you.	Decrease your honor by 5.	You know one additional technique. Roll a ten-sided die again to determine the category (1–3 kata, 4–6 shūji, 7 ritual, 8 invocation, 9 kihō, 10 mahō), and then select one technique with a prerequisite of school rank 1 and learn that technique. You can perform that technique even if it is not normally allowed by your school.
9	Imperial Heritage: You can trace your lineage back to the Imperial line.	Increase your status by 10.	You gain the Blessed Lineage advantage (this can be assigned in excess of the normal limitations on advantages at character creation).
10	Outsider: Your character was not named for an ancestor—perhaps your character was an adopted orphan with no knowledge of their blood relations, perhaps your character was named for an outsider who did a great service to the clan, or perhaps your character's parents were trying to send a message.	Decrease your glory by 3.	Choose two of your character's rings; you may reduce the value of one of these rings by 1 to increase the value of the other by 1 (this still cannot raise a ring above 3). If you do not do so, choose one item of rarity 6 or lower and assign it to your starting outfit.

Part VII: Death

20. How should your character die?

All proper samurai fully expect to die in the service of their lord, and it is said that every samurai lives at all times three feet from death—the length of a katana blade. However, some deaths have more meaning than others, and there are plenty of samurai whose outward facade of courage hides a

deep-seated fear of mortality. How would you like your character to end their life? Will they fulfill their destiny and join their ancestors in Yomi, or will their soul be forced to undertake another cycle on the Celestial Wheel of reincarnation?

This has no mechanical implications, but you should keep it in mind. Your GM certainly will...

Experience Points and Character Advancement

Over the course of play, characters gain experience points (XP), which their players can spend between sessions to make the characters more potent. XP can be spent on the following character **advancements**:

- Increasing ring values
- Increasing skill ranks
- Purchasing techniques
- At the GM's discretion, acquiring advantages or "buying off" disadvantages in accordance with narrative events

Awarding Experience Points

As a general guideline, GMs should award about 2 XP per hour of play. GMs can award additional XP at their discretion, as discussed in **Chapter 7: The Game Master** (see page 178).

Purchasing Advancements

Within the walls of a dōjō, a samurai will fail countless times before perfecting a new technique. As a samurai pushes themselves past their limits, their skillfulness grows. As they study the texts of those who came before, they widen their breadth of knowledge. As they meditate upon the nature of the universe and themselves, they unlock new insights about their capabilities and approaches. With these improvements, they can grow as individuals and become better servants to their lords.

Advancement Costs

Different advancements have different costs, as described in **Table 2-2: Advancement Costs**. Additionally, some advancements have restrictions on when they can be purchased.

Prerequisites

In addition to the listed general restrictions in **Table 2-2: Advancement Costs**, some individual advancements have prerequisites. To purchase an advancement, a character must meet all of its prerequisites or the advancement must be listed in the character's current school rank.

Advancements that appear in an earlier school rank than their usual prerequisite limitations would allow are marked with special formatting.

Table 2-2: Advancement Costs

Advancement Type	Cost	Restrictions
Ring value +1	3 XP x value purchased	Cannot increase a ring to a value greater than lowest ring + Void Ring
Skill rank +1	2 XP x rank purchased	None
Technique (Opportunity activation)	2 XP	The technique's category must be listed among your school's Techniques Available
Technique (Action activation)	3 XP	The technique's category must be listed among your school's Techniques Available

Advancing Within Your School

Each dōjō has developed a curriculum over the centuries that represents its tried-and-true method of training its samurai. This curriculum includes a set of skills, techniques, and approaches that all its students must master before they are tested and allowed to proceed to the next rank. Some of these skills deviate from the expected purview of the school, but in such cases, it is because the sensei have determined that its study enriches the samurai and expands on certain philosophies espoused by the school.

Not all samurai may agree with the requirements laid down by the sensei, which is why some leave to develop their own schools. Samurai are, of course, permitted to pursue other studies as they see fit, but in the school's eyes, these extracurricular pursuits are extraneous and do not count toward advancement. By contrast, samurai might focus solely on their school's curriculum and advance through the ranks more quickly, but in doing so, they will not have time to pursue their own interests and studies. Most samurai take a balanced approach, following the path of their school and supplementing their studies with their own hobbies and interests.

When purchasing advancements as usual, check to see whether the advancement is listed on the school advancement table for your specific school. If it is, record the amount of XP spent on the advancement in the blank area to the right of the technique or skill.

Real-World Experience versus School Secrets

A little bit of practical experience can be as potent as years of training. Characters in any campaign should be allowed to spend their experience on skills and rings during play as they desire, as one can learn through practice no matter their circumstances.

In the fiction of the setting, a character is usually taught school secrets, like techniques, by an instructor in their school or another individual who knows the technique. Advancing to the next school rank might be a more involved process, requiring the character to undertake tests or visit specific locations and meet with particular instructors of their tradition.

In practice, many campaigns are not conducive to having characters return to their dōjō as frequently as they would like to spend experience or increase their school rank. As a result, the game's default assumption is that characters can learn techniques and increase school rank wherever they go, presumably receiving foundational methods

to practice on their travels or scrolls containing deeper mysteries for them to decipher during their journeys. A character might need to return to their school to formally verify their newly elevated rank within their school from a thematic standpoint, but they can use its mechanical benefits as soon as they earn it.

If you, as a GM, want to maintain the narrative element of learning techniques and advancing school ranks, you can do so by specifying that a character must use a downtime activity to visit their dōjō or search for an NPC who knows the technique. School ranks can only be increased after visiting the proper dōjō and passing the requisite test or training under an individual who has attained a higher rank in that school. If you decide to take this route for your game, be sure that you inform your players before the game begins and provide the PCs with sufficient opportunities to spend their hard-earned experience on techniques.

In addition to specific skills, techniques, and rings, school advancement tables include a skill group: this means that as long as you have spent XP on a skill found within that skill group, it will count toward advancement. Note that you cannot count XP twice: if a school includes both the Martial Arts [Melee] skill and the Martial skill group on the advancement table, you do not get to list XP for both lines if you increase your ranks in the Martial Arts [Melee] skill—that XP counts only for the more specific line. There is no limit to how much XP can be spent within a skill group. Also note that techniques and skill ranks gained during character creation do not count toward the XP needed to rank up in your school.

Emily's character is a Hida Defender. She's rank 1 within her school, and she wants to spend 2 XP on increasing her character's Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill rank to 1. That counts as 2 XP toward the Martial skill group: e.g., 2 XP toward graduating to school rank 2. She decides at a later time to spend 4 XP on increasing Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill to rank 2. Now, she's spent a total of 6 XP in the Martial skill group line, and all 6 XP count toward getting to the 16 XP she needs to achieve rank 2 in her school.

Once you have spent the specified amount of XP needed for the rank on items listed on the school advancement chart, your character is considered eligible to take the test to rank up. You do not need to learn everything within a rank, but you need to have invested enough time and effort (in the form of XP) studying the general curriculum.

Once a character has finished the fifth rank in their school, they are invited to learn the deepest mysteries of that school's techniques. The Rank 6 Mastery ability is the capstone to the samurai's studies and allows them to unlock their true potential in their service to the Emperor.

Hida Defender School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1 Kata	Technique Category	
	Rushing Avalanche Style	Technique	
	Honest Assessment	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Technique Category	
	Slipper Maneuvers	Technique	
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Trade Skills	Skill Group	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Technique Category	
	Iron in the Mountains Style	Technique	
	Rallying Cry	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Technique Category	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Technique Category	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	The Immoveable Hand of Peace	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

The Mountain Does Not Fall (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

At the beginning of your turn, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, increase your resilience and composure by your Void Ring and ignore all disadvantages, conditions, terrain, and negative effects of techniques and abilities you are currently suffering. If you would die during this time, you cling to life for a few moments longer instead (but still die when the effect ends). This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Kuni Purifier School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1 Earth Invocations	Technique Category	
	Bind the Shadow	Technique	
	Biting Steel	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1-2 Water Invocations	Technique Category	
	Essence of Jade	Technique	
	Symbol of Earth	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Trade Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1-3 Fire Invocations	Technique Category	
	Rise, Earth	Technique	
	Open Hand Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Earth Invocations	Technique Category	
	Tomb of Jade	Technique	
	Flowing Water Strike	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Air Invocations	Technique Category	
	Stagnation	Technique	
	Earthquake	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Purge the Darkness (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Once per game session, you may spend 1 Void point to wield an invocation against all the wicked in your sight. Instead of affecting its usual number of targets, the next invocation technique you perform targets each being in range that you know to possess the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage or Shadowlands Creature ability.

Doji Diplomat School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Aesthetics	Skill	
	Culture	Skill	
	Composition	Skill	
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	Civility Foremost	Technique	
	Well of Desire	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Technique Category	
	The Wind Blows Both Ways	Technique	
	Artisan's Appraisal	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Artisan Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Games	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Ebb and Flow	Technique	
	Regal Bearing	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Composition	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji Rank	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Pillar of Calm	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Aesthetics	Skill	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Command	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Technique Category	
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique	
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

The Lady's Grace (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Once per scene, you may spend 1 Void point to reduce your strife to 0. Additionally, each friendly character in the scene may reduce their strife by half your honor rank.

Kakita Duelist School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Aesthetics	Skill	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Rank 1 Kata	Technique Category	
	Crescent Moon Style	Technique	
	Striking as Air	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill	
	Smithing	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Technique Category	
	All Arts Are One	Technique	
	Lightning Raid	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Artisan Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique	
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Technique Category	
	Pillar of Calm	Technique	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Aesthetics	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Fire Shūji Rank 1–5	Technique Category	
	The Immoveable Hand of Peace	Technique	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Strike with No Thought (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Activation: Once per scene, as an Attack action, you may make a Martial Arts [Melee] (Void) check targeting one character at range 2–4 using a sheathed katana or wakizashi. The TN of this check is equal to your target's vigilance.

Effect: You immediately move to range 1 of your target.

If you succeed, your target suffers a critical strike with a severity equal to the deadliness of your weapon plus your bonus successes.

✳+: One character of your choice at range 0–2 of your target per ✳ spent this way suffers the Dazed and Disoriented conditions.

Kitsuki Investigator School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 16 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Honest Assessment	Technique	
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Technique Category	
	All Arts are One	Technique	
	Feigned Opening	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 24 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Regal Bearing	Technique	
	Battle in the Mind	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 32 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Technique Category	
	Sear the Wound	Technique	
	Bravado	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 48 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Wolf's Proposal	Technique	
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Eyes Betray the Heart (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Once per scene when performing a skill check to investigate, you may spend ☞ as follows:

☞+: You may reserve up to one unkept die per ☞ spent this way. The next time you perform a check to interact with the person or thing you were investigating (such as a check targeting that person or a check to use that object), you may add any number of these reserved dice as kept dice. Then, remove any unused reserved dice.

Togashi Tattooed Order Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1 Fire Kihō	Technique Category	
	Way of the Earthquake	Technique	
	Honest Assessment	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Composition	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Water Kihō	Technique Category	
	Grasp the Earth Dragon	Technique	
	Stirring the Embers	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Air Kihō	Technique Category	
	Still the Elements	Technique	
	All Arts are One	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Labor	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Void Kihō	Technique Category	
	Touch the Void Dragon	Technique	
	Pillar of Calm	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Void Kihō	Technique Category	
	Rank 1–5 Ritual	Technique Category	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Blood of the Dragon (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Activation: As a Support action, you may choose one of your tattoos and empower it. Each tattoo can be empowered only once per game session.

Effects: When performing checks to which the empowered tattoo applies, add two rolled Ring dice showing any faces instead of one rolled Ring die showing a face with 1 ☯. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Akodo Commander School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Command	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Rank 1 Kata	Technique Category	
	Iron Forest Style	Technique	
	Warrior's Resolve	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1-2 Kata	Technique Category	
	Rallying Cry	Technique	
	Lightning Raid	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Composition	Skill	
	Sentiment	Technique	
	Rank 1-3 Kata	Technique Category	
	Bravado	Technique	
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Disappearing World Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Akodo's Final Lesson (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Once per round, when you fail a check during a skirmish or mass battle, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, you may attempt the check again, treating the TN as 2.

Ikoma Bard School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Composition	Skill	
	Culture	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Rank 1 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Soaring Slice	Technique	
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Technique Category	
	Dazzling Performance	Technique	
	Spinning Blades Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Composition	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Rallying Cry	Technique	
	Regal Bearing	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	Sear the Wound	Technique	
	Pillar of Calm	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Lion's Pride (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Activation: Once per game session as a Support action, you may attempt to convince everyone in the area of the glorious reputation of one character in the scene, embellishing the truth as needed, by making a TN 5 Performance (Fire) check targeting one character. The TN of this check is 6 if you target yourself, and 4 if you target another Lion Clan character.

Effects: If you succeed, reduce the TN of all of the character's Social skill checks by 3 until the end of the scene, and the TN of all of the character's other checks by 1.

Isawa Elementalist School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Composition	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Rank 1 Fire Invocations	Technique Category	
	Dance of Seasons	Technique	
	Sanctification	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Rank 1-2 Water Invocations	Technique Category	
	Fury of Osano-Wo	Technique	
	Stonewall Tactics	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Composition	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1-3 Air Invocations	Technique Category	
	Strike the Tsunami	Technique	
	Wings of the Phoenix	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Earth Invocations	Technique Category	
	Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami	Technique	
	Rise, Flame	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Composition	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1-5 Fire Invocations	Technique Category	
	Moon's Reflection	Technique	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Master of Elements (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

When another character performs an Air, Earth, Fire, or Water invocation technique, you may spend 1 Void point to recognize the kami they are invoking and its qualities. Increase your supernatural protection against that technique by an amount equal to your ranks in Theology. You may perform that technique if you do not already know it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Shiba Guardian School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1 Kata	Technique Category	
	Stirring the Embers	Technique	
	Civility Foremost	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Technique Category	
	Iron Forest Style	Technique	
	Rallying Cry	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Culture	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Technique Category	
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique	
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Tactics	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Technique Category	
	Disappearing World Style	Technique	
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Stand of Honor (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Activation: You may spend 1 Void point to perform this action, targeting each enemy in the scene.

Effect: When an enemy moves into range of your readied weapon, you may immediately make a TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee] check using the ring associated with your stance; if you succeed, the target suffers physical damage equal to your weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes and suffers the Immobilized condition. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Bayushi Manipulator School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 16 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	Stinging Insult	Technique	
	Weight of Duty	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 20 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Fanning the Flames	Technique	
	Veiled Menace Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 24 XP)
	Trade Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Culture	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Technique Category	
	Wolf's Proposal	Technique	
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Aesthetics	Skill	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Bravado	Technique	
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (____ XP / 48 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Culture	Skill	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Sear the Wound	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Little Truths (Rank 6 Mastery Ability):

When you perform a check targeting another character to which one of your advantages or disadvantages applies, you may choose another advantage or disadvantage that shares a type with it (see **Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 60). Unless they have clear evidence to the contrary, the target comes to believe that you have the advantage or disadvantage you chose instead of the one you actually have.

If the target attempts to seize or exploit this false advantage or disadvantage (see page 61), their check automatically counts as failing with a shortfall of 3. They suffer 3 strife and the Disoriented condition.

Shosuro Infiltrator School Advancement Table

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Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1 Kata	Technique Category	
	Veiled Menace Style	Technique	
	All in Jest	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Trade Skills	Skill Group	
	Fitness	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill	
	Rank 1-2 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	Feigned Opening	Technique	
	Open Hand Style	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1-3 Kata	Technique Category	
	All Arts Are One	Technique	
	Dazzling Performance	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Sentiment	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1-4 Air Shūji	Technique Category	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Performance	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Rank 1-5 Kata	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Sear the Wound	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

The Final Silence (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

As an Attack action, you may make a TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check targeting any number of minion NPCs at range 0-4. If you succeed during a narrative scene, you silently kill all targets over the course of a few minutes. If you succeed during a conflict scene, at the end of each of your turns, you may silently kill one of these targets at range 0-2 (in addition to your other actions).

Tsuchi Meishōdō Master Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Design	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1 Water Invocations	Technique Category	
	Sympathetic Energies	Technique	
	Sanctification	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Design	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Earth Invocations	Technique Category	
	Hands of the Tides	Technique	
	Artisan's Appraisal	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Artisan Skills	Skill Group	
	Performance	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Rituals	Technique Category	
	Rise, Earth	Technique	
	Dazzling Performance	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Air Invocations	Technique Category	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	A Samurai's Duty	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Artisan Skills	Skill Group	
	Culture	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Theology	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	The Soul's Blade	Technique	
	Tomb of Jade	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

The Spirits Unbound (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

At the end of your turn, you may spend 1 or more Void points to unleash the powers within that many of your meishōdō talismans, sacrificing the talismans and freeing the entities within. You may immediately perform each of the invocations for which the talismans were created, reducing the TN by 3.

Shinjō Outrider School Advancement Table

Rank 1	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 16 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Commerce	Skill	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	Technique Category	
	Pelting Hail Style	Technique	
	Cadence	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 2	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 20 XP)
	Trade Skills	Skill Group	
	Courtesy	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill	
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill	
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Technique Category	
	Flowing Water Strike	Technique	
	Dazzling Performance	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 3	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 24 XP)
	Scholar Skills	Skill Group	
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill	
	Medicine	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Technique Category	
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique	
	Crimson Leaves Strike	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 4	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 32 XP)
	Martial Skills	Skill Group	
	Command	Skill	
	Skulduggery	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Technique Category	
	Bend with the Storm	Technique	
	Bravado	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

Rank 5	Advances	Type	Purchases (___ XP / 48 XP)
	Social Skills	Skill Group	
	Government	Skill	
	Meditation	Skill	
	Survival	Skill	
	Rank 1–5 Fire Shūji	Technique Category	
	Striking as Void	Technique	
	Rouse the Soul	Technique	
	Rings	Ring	

I Will Always Return (Rank 6 Mastery Ability)

Once per game session, you may call out for your steed. At the beginning of the following round, your horse arrives, regardless of any barriers that might normally have prevented it from reaching your location. If your steed has recently been slain, its spirit will possess the closest horse to you and come to your aid regardless, such is its loyalty to you.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Beyond their rings and skills, characters are also shaped by their advantages and disadvantages—the quirks and vulnerabilities that make them tick. Each advantage or disadvantage is assigned to a single one of the character's rings (the one to which it most commonly applies) and has one or more types and a category. Various abilities and effects interact with the different types and categories of advantages and disadvantages.

All player characters are assigned a number of advantages and disadvantages during the character creation process. Characters can be assigned advantages and disadvantages in the course of play. Characters can also optionally purchase additional passions with experience or receive additional anxieties, as described on page 179.

Advantage and Disadvantage Types

Each advantage and disadvantage has one or more types, which describe the general sphere of activities it affects. Common types include physical, mental, interpersonal, spiritual, material, injury, and curse. An advantage or disadvantage can have multiple types (such as “injury, physical” and “curse, spiritual”). Advantage and disadvantage types have no mechanical implications by default, but they are sometimes referenced by other game effects.

Advantage and Disadvantage Categories

There are a number of categories of advantages and disadvantages, each effecting characters differently. Several common categories are as follows:

Distinctions

Distinctions represent a character's natural aptitudes of body, of mind, or of character. Most distinctions apply to a narrow field of activities, as described in their entries. Distinctions are paired against adversities, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 61 for a list of **Specific Distinctions**.

All distinctions have a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the advantage.

Gaining Advantages and Disadvantages

A character mostly gains advantages and disadvantages during character creation, when the character has the opportunity to gain up to two advantages and two disadvantages. However, under certain narrative circumstances, a character can acquire additional advantages and disadvantages.

Acquiring Distinctions

Distinctions cannot be acquired through training—they reflect intrinsic qualities rather than regimen and hard work—but some game effects grant distinctions, especially ones related to a character's social attributes (honor, glory, and status). As described in **Honor** (see page 22) and **Glory** (see page 23), a character can be granted a new distinction by reaching certain heights of valor or renown.

A character can have any number of distinctions.

Developing Passions

Usually, a character's areas of interest are fairly set by the end of character creation, but sometimes people find a new art or source of joy in the world that they wish to pursue, even late in life. At the GM's discretion, a character may spend 3 experience to develop one new passion, determined by the GM and the player together.

A character can never have more than three passions. At the GM's discretion, a character might be able to remove a passion based on narrative events or to make room for a new one.

Passions

Passions represent a character's interests unrelated to their purpose in life or grand desires—the little things that nonetheless bring them to life and give them solace in times of hardship. Even the most dutiful samurai can find time to pursue such an interest, for to deny all joy is to hardly live a human existence. Passions are paired against anxieties, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 66 for a list of **Specific Passions**.

All passions have a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the advantage.

Adversities

Adversities represent the factors in a character's life that make performing the duties of a samurai more difficult, be they physical, mental, or even circumstantial. While none of these interfere in all aspects of life, deviance from the ideal is frequently questioned in wider society, and might create challenges for the character in and of itself. Adversities are paired against distinctions, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 68 for a list of **Specific Adversities**.

All adversities have a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the disadvantage.

Anxieties

All characters have fears, hatreds, or things they would simply prefer not to deal with, and anxieties represent a character's notable emotional vulnerabilities. Anxieties are paired against passions, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 74 for a list of **Specific Anxieties**.

All anxieties have a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the disadvantage.

Acquiring Adversities

A character can acquire adversities through a number of means: injury, illness, spiritual impurity, or any of the many other wretched fates that can befall them. **Critical Strikes** (see page 168), the **Afflicted condition** (see page 170), and numerous other sources can cause characters to acquire adversities in play.

A character can have any number of adversities.

Developing Anxieties

Generally, the anxieties of a player character are set by the end of character creation. Still, if the GM and the player decide together that a character should develop an anxiety over the course of play (for example, a hatred of some new rival or a fear of some trauma) and both agree on the form it should take, they can assign a new anxiety to a character at any time. This confers limited benefits, but it might add a great deal to the story, and it does grant the character a new means to recover Void points.

A character can never have more than three anxieties. At the GM's discretion, a character might be able to remove an anxiety based on narrative events or to make room for a new one.

Using Advantages and Disadvantages in Play

In addition to their uses as described in **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**, advantages and disadvantages can apply to checks in a number of other ways.

Narrative Use

Advantages and disadvantages all confer certain narrative effects, some of which give players quite a bit of leeway to shape the story. Frequently, an advantage means that the character is able to do things within the scope of the narrative that others cannot, or can accomplish things more quickly. Alternatively, a disadvantage might mean a character is more limited within certain spheres. Remember, though, that most advantages have a downside somewhere, and most disadvantages confer some sort of benefit under particular circumstances.

Another way these can factor into the story is by eliminating the need for the character to make certain checks. This is meant to help the traits and backstory of a character factor into the way they behave at the table organically. For instance, a character who is passionate about a topic should never fail to recall a piece of trivia about that subject—nor should a blind character have to make a check to avert their eyes from a flash of light that disorients others. At other times, a character's advantage or disadvantage might cause them to make a check others don't need to make—a character's fascination with a topic might make it hard for them to research a less interesting subject, or a character's fear of a thing might mean they need to make a check to face it. The GM is the arbiter of when a character does not need to make a check as a result of an advantage or disadvantage (or needs to make a check that others don't).

Turning Advantages and Disadvantages

Under the wrong circumstances, even a strength can actually become a weakness to a character. On the other hand, sometimes even an attribute that seems like a weakness can become a source of strength. Further, sometimes other characters' advantages and disadvantages play into checks that affect those characters. Collectively, the set of options described below are referred to as turning advantages and disadvantages.

- **Inverting Your Advantage:** If one of a character's advantages creates a logical vulnerability for that character in a specific check, the GM may invert that advantage, causing it to be applied as a corresponding disadvantage for the check (a distinction becoming an adversity, or a passion becoming an anxiety, for instance). If the GM does so, the character gains 1 Void point after resolving the check.
- **Seizing a Target's Advantage:** Advantages of other characters can also be used against them sometimes. If a character's check has one or more targets, their player may choose one of the target's known ad-

Specific Advantages

While players and GMs can create advantages as they see fit (see **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77), this section provides a number of premade advantages ready-made to anchor characters in the *Legend of the Five Rings* setting.

Each advantage lists the attached ring in parentheses after the name, along with its types (interpersonal, mental, physical, social, etc.), description, narrative effects, and examples of checks for which it applies.

Specific Distinctions

Distinctions frequently represent some of a character's most visible features to the outside world: how they stand out for the better or excel in their field over and above routine training and rote drill.

Advantages, Disadvantages, and the Narrative

Advantages and disadvantages are as much narrative hooks as they are mechanical bonuses. If you take something like *Blissful or Bitter Betrothal*, you're telling the GM you want your spouse or spouse-to-be to appear during play, because otherwise you won't have a chance to reroll dice or use the narrative effects these confer. Players and GMs should consult with one another on the advantages and disadvantages they want to bring into the game and ensure that they fit within the intended tone of the campaign, as certain choices (such as *Shadowlands Taint* or *Momoku*) can have a substantial impact on the tenor and details of a character's story.

Advantages and disadvantages can encapsulate the core of your character, but they aren't meant to limit you from adding other narrative details to your character. Complex backstories, ancestry, and relationships should exist beyond what is represented on the character sheet. Don't feel as though you need to represent your judgmental father on your sheet unless you want your character's self-criticism that stems from their upbringing to be a major part of who they are.

Advantages that logically could be a weakness for that check. If the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to seize the target's advantage, causing it to be applied as an advantage on the player's check.

- **Leveraging Your Disadvantage:** If one of a character's disadvantages creates a logical edge for that character in a specific check and the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to leverage that disadvantage, causing it to be applied as a corresponding advantage for the check (an adversity becoming a distinction, or an anxiety becoming a passion, for instance).
- **Exploiting a Target's Disadvantage:** If the check has one or more targets, the player may choose a known disadvantage of one of the targets that logically could be used against the target on that check. If the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to exploit the target's disadvantage, causing it to be applied as a corresponding advantage on the check (an adversity becoming a distinction, or an anxiety becoming a passion, for instance).

Advantages and disadvantages can be turned during **Step 4: Apply Advantages and Disadvantages**, before they are consolidated or resolved. As in all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether the use of an advantage or disadvantage is appropriate.

Advantages, Disadvantages, and the Beta

Advantages and disadvantages have been a defining element of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* since its earliest edition. There are hundreds of specific advantages and disadvantages that have been published over the years, not all of which could be fit in this beta document. Certain setting-specific advantages and disadvantages that are familiar to veteran players have been held back for inclusion in the core rulebook, where more space can be devoted to explaining the cultural context for them.

When to Apply Advantages and Disadvantages to Checks

There are essentially two extremes for how GMs can go about using advantages and disadvantages, and neither is intrinsically right or wrong. The GM should consider their group's preferred mode of play (creative flexibility or speed of play) in deciding whether to choose one of the extremes or use elements of both models.

Creative Application: Advantages and disadvantages apply whenever it makes sense that they'd apply or when they would make for a cool story moment; the listed example checks are just examples, and shouldn't be considered a comprehensive list. If a player can come up with a good reason that one should apply, then the GM should allow it. Similarly, if the GM feels one should apply and offers a good reason, the player should accept it without protest. This style of play gives GMs and players a lot of room to apply "common sense." In this play style, things run most smoothly if the GM and player are both willing to move on to rolling dice after anything more than a brief bit of haggling. This is the assumed play style throughout the rest of the book, but some groups may find it too contentious at the table, as it requires a certain willingness to trust that the GM (or players) won't take the

story out of scope. It also works best for groups in which the GM and players operate with a fundamentally collaborative dynamic rather than an adversarial one.

Discrete Application: Advantages and disadvantages only apply to the listed example checks and closely related checks from skills in the same skill groups (Artisan, Social, Scholar, Martial, Trade) as the listed checks. This method allows GMs and players to speed up checks and minimize discussions of whether or not advantages and disadvantages should apply in a given set of circumstances. The downsides of this method are that it can create odd moments of dissonance when advantages or disadvantages that seem like they should be relevant do not apply by the letter of the law, and that it leaves certain storytelling moments out of reach. As a general guideline, no advantage or disadvantage should apply more than once per scene in this model except at the GM's discretion. GMs who go this route should also consider being much more sparing with custom advantages and disadvantages, as they are likely be much more powerful than the sample ones provided.

Ally [Character's Name] (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You have forged a powerful alliance with a specific non-player character, and they will grant you their protection or aid in exchange for your continual service to them. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate NPC when choosing this advantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ally [Character's Name] distinction:

- You have proven yourself to a particular individual, who is willing to help you when doing so will not damage their reputation. They are open to sharing what knowledge they have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether that be through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence. They are also willing to arrange for introductions on your behalf with exclusive members of society or places of business.
- When performing a check that benefits from your close relationship with the character (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to requisition an item through them or a Sentiment [Water] check to read their emotions), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Ambidexterity (Air)

Type: Physical

Description: You can use both hands equally well and do not favor one over the other. In Rokugan, the ability to use one's left hand well is often an unexpected advantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ambidexterity distinction:

- As you have no dominant hand, you can compensate more easily if your right hand is injured or lost.
- When making a check for which your equal skill with both hands is a benefit (such as a Martial Arts [Melee] [Air] check to strike an unexpected blow with a weapon in your left hand or a Skulduggery [Air] check to stealthily pick someone's pocket), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Blackmail on [Character's Name] (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You have acquired blackmail against a certain individual. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate NPC when choosing this advantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blackmail on [Character's Name] distinction:

- You have incriminating information on an individual, which you use to force them to help you even when doing so may damage their reputation. They will share what knowledge they have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether that be through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence. They will also arrange for introductions on your behalf with exclusive members of society or places of business.
- When performing a check to demand favors of the chosen individual or (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to remind them of the consequences of their disobeying you or a Command [Fire] check to order them to risk themselves on your behalf), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Blessed Lineage (Void)

Type: Interpersonal, Spiritual

Description: One of your ancestors did a service to the Emperor in the past, and harming you would have serious political ramifications.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blessed Lineage distinction:

- Characters with status of 50 or higher understand that they might suffer a loss of prestige if they harm you, and thus do not choose to kill you as their first option, even if you are a political obstacle they would otherwise eliminate without hesitation.
- When performing a check for which your esteemed lineage is a benefit (such as a Command [Void] check to challenge someone's perception of a situation or a Government [Void] check to know the likelihood of a political eventuality), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Blissful Betrothal (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: By good fortune and hard work, you and your betrothed or spouse are actually a happy couple who would choose to be together in the absence of your obligations.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blissful Betrothal distinction:

- Your spouse fulfills certain social duties in your name when you are absent (such as attending events or caring for family members), provides assistance in their areas of expertise, and offers counsel when you face a difficult decision.
- When performing a check for which your good relationship with your betrothed or spouse is a benefit (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to persuade someone from their family or clan to assist you or a Culture [Water] check to identify the traditions of your spouse's family), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Dangerous Allure (Fire)

Type: Physical, Interpersonal

Description: You have an air of dangerous beauty around you, and qualities that others find difficult to ignore. People find your looks and demeanor both alluring and intimidating.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Dangerous Allure distinction:

- You always make an impression, and NPCs remember your name and face after interacting with you for one or more scenes (unless you take pains to disguise yourself).
- When performing a check for which your good looks (such as a Command [Fire] check to get someone to act in spite of the possible consequences or a Performance [Fire] check to incite emotion in someone), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Famously Honest (Air)

Type: Fame, Interpersonal

Description: Everyone knows that your word can be taken on its face, even in a world that relies on half-truths and double speak to avoid ruffling feathers.

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

- Other people have heard of you for your honesty, and believe you by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for telling the truth (such as a Command [Air] check to assert a statement of fact or a Commerce [Air] check to sell an item at an inflated price), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Famously Lucky (Void)

Type: Fame, Interpersonal

Description: The Fortunes indeed seem to favor you, and things seem to work out for the best for you more often than not.

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

- Other people have heard of you for your good fortune, and believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for having things turn out your way (such as a Command [Void] check to get your troops to put their faith in you utterly or a Games [Void] check to let your reputation trick your opponent into defeating themselves), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Famously Reliable (Earth)

Type: Fame, Interpersonal

Description: So pristine is your reputation that others assume you will see things through, even against the greatest of odds.

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

- Other people have heard of you for your remarkable adherence to your oaths and responsibilities, even over and above most samurai, and believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for keeping your oaths and bargains (such as a Command [Earth] check to calm a panicked soldier or a Performance [Earth] check to relate a tale that inspires patience), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Famously Successful (Fire)

Type: Fame, Interpersonal

Description: When you put your mind to something, you can solve almost any problem, and the rest of Rokugan knows it, too.

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

- Other people have heard of you for your ability to get results at any cost, and believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for efficiency (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to convince your lord to give you a position or a Tactics [Fire] check to get an enemy force to withdraw in the face of a show of force), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Famously Wealthy (Water)

Type: Fame, Interpersonal

Description: Your estates are known for their opulence and refinement, which brings members of the Yasuki family and Daidoji Trading Council to your doors on a regular basis.

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

- Other people have heard of you for your riches or ability to procure wealth, and believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for access to resources (such as a Commerce [Water] check to buy goods on credit or a Courtesy [Water] check to win over a group of people), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Flexibility (Water)

Type: Physical

Description: You are physically flexible, and can contort yourself into positions others could never achieve.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Flexibility distinction:

- You can fit through spaces too tight for most people, allowing you access to places others cannot reach.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your physical flexibility (such as a Performance [Water] check to perform a dance or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Water] check to grapple another person), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Indomitable Will (Earth)

Type: Mental, Interpersonal

Description: Although nobody is without fear, your will cannot be overcome so easily.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Indomitable Will distinction:

- You can always choose to stand your ground, even when faced with untenable odds, supernatural terrors, or sorcerous powers that bend the minds of lesser souls.
- When performing a check for which you need to keep your cool when dealing with danger (such as an Command [Earth] check to give orders under pressure or a Meditation [Earth] check to focus in the face of terror), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Keen Balance (Earth)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: You have an innate sense of balance, and maintain your posture more easily than others.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Balance distinction:

- When moving across treacherous terrain (such as rooftops or the rigging of a ship), so long as nobody is opposing or hindering you, you do not fall.
- When performing a check for which your balance is a benefit (such as an Fitness [Earth] check to resist being knocked down or moved or a Seafaring [Earth] check to withstand getting sea-sick during a storm), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Keen Hearing (Air)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: Your sense of hearing can hone in on especially quiet sounds.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Hearing distinction:

- You can hear noises that others do not detect, and can assess your environment by sound alone. Even in darkness, you can accurately pinpoint the location of people and other moving objects in your immediate vicinity.
- When performing a check for which you need to hear soft, distant, or subtle noises (such as an Investigation [Air] check to listen to a distant

conversation or a Survival [Air] check to listen to an animal's movement before springing a trap), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Keen Sight (Water)

Type: Mental

Description: Your eyesight is particularly good.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Sight distinction:

- You can spot details of objects at a much greater distance than others can, and can pick up on small visual details that others might overlook.
- When performing a check for which you need to spot details or see things at a distance (such as an Investigation [Water] check to spot minor details in your environment or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit a faraway target), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Keen Smell (Fire)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: You have a keen sense of smell, and can discern subtleties in scents that most people overlook.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Smell distinction:

- You always remember scents you have smelled before, and can identify things by their smell that others would certainly overlook.
- When performing a check for which you need to use your sense of smell (such as a Labor [Fire] check to experiment with a new recipe or a Survival [Fire] check to determine if a plant is poisonous based on its smell), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Karmic Tie (Void)

Type: Interpersonal, Spiritual

Description: For purposes that mortals can only guess at, the destinies of certain samurai are bound tightly together, such that if the strings of fate are pulled against one person, the other can feel the same intrinsically. This bond might even transcend death, and even after one person has died, the other occasionally feels their presence guiding them.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Karmic Tie distinction:

- You have a supernatural tie with another character of your choosing, and you can tell as if you had a sixth sense when the character to whom you are karmically tied is in danger or has died. You always know the general direction they are located in, even if they are separated from you by thousands of li.
- When performing a check to act on behalf of the one with whom you share a bond (such as a Composition [Void] check to express your truest feelings in a poem or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Void] check to fight on their behalf), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Large Stature (Earth)

Type: Physical

Description: You are larger than most other people.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Large Stature distinction:

- You can easily reach objects on high shelves, are easy to spot in a crowd, can see over other people, and tend to hit your head on doorways.
- When performing a check for which you can take advantage of your size (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to hold up a heavy object or a Labor [Earth] check to build the frame of a house), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Paragon of a Bushidō Tenet (Various)

Type: Mental, Virtue

Description: Courage (Fire), Propriety (Air), Compassion (Water), Loyalty (Earth), Justice (Void), Mindfulness (Void), Truth (Void). A character may have multiple instances of this advantage for different tenets.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Paragon of a Bushidō Tenet distinction:

- You believe utterly in the chosen Bushidō tenet, and other people can instinctively discern that your actions are genuine when you act in accordance with it.
- When performing a check for which you need to convince others of or leverage your faith in the Bushidō tenet (such as a Performance check to recount a tale that impresses its importance upon others or a Martial Arts [Melee] check to take up arms for this cause), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Precise Memory (Earth)

Type: Mental

Description: Almost any fact that enters your head stays there forever.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Precise Memory distinction:

- You can recall anything you have read or heard within the current game session exactly, and can often dredge up older facts with much greater ease than others.
- When performing a check for which you must recall details precisely (such as a Games [Earth] check to recall the opening moves of a classic defensive strategy in shogi or a Government [Earth] check to remember the specifics of a historical event), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Quick Reflexes (Fire)

Type: Physical, Interpersonal

Description: You have especially fast reaction time for athletic feats.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Quick Reflexes distinction:

- At the start of each scene, you can always grab an item within reach or reposition it a few meters within your environment. The GM is the final arbiter of how much you can prepare or how much distance you can achieve before the rest of the scene begins.
- When performing a check for which you must act swiftly (such as a Meditation [Fire] check to generate initiative during a duel or a Survival [Fire] check to put together a makeshift weapon), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Seasoned (Void)

Type: Mental, Interpersonal

Description: You've been a samurai for some time now and have seen some things.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Seasoned distinction:

- You are older and more worldly than most of your fellows, and have learned a few things along the way. While you do not start with additional experience, your experience expenditures might reflect "revealing" aspects of yourself you have held back to avoid overshadowing your younger companions. You have met members of many cultures and organizations, and you know how to properly behave in almost any city in Rokugan—and perhaps even beyond. You also know many other old people, and the breadth of your acquaintances often surprises your younger companions.
- When performing a check for which your hard-earned wisdom is an advantage (such as a Courtesy [Void] check to impart wisdom to an impetuous comrade or a Theology [Void] check to intuit whether a spirit will appreciate your offering), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Sixth Sense (Void)

Type: Spiritual

Description: You are especially in tune with the spirit world, even if you cannot hear or speak to the kami directly. If you do have the gifts of a shugenja, you are especially sensitive to mystical phenomena.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Sixth Sense distinction:

- You have an instinctive sense of supernatural beings, and you can feel the presence of spirits and similar beings even when they have not chosen to reveal themselves. This feeling is ominous in the presence of beings with evil intentions and neutral when the beings are simply going about their business as usual.
- When performing a check for which you need to follow your hunches (such as a Meditation [Void] check to generate initiative during a duel or a Theology [Void] check to detect a snarl in the invisible threads of the universe), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Small Stature (Air)

Type: Physical

Description: You are smaller than most other people.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Small Stature distinction:

- You can fit into small spaces, can hide behind other people, are hard to spot in a crowd, and sometimes need assistance reaching objects on high shelves.
- When performing a check for which being small is helpful (such as a Fitness [Air] check to resist a critical strike by evading or a Skulduggery [Air] check to pick someone's pocket), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Subtle Observer (Air)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: You have a innate sense of empathy for the feelings of others, even when they are trying to tamp down their emotions.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Subtle Observer distinction:

- You can understand the minor cues that people give off while speaking, and can read people's lips and even facial expressions to understand what they are saying, even if you cannot hear them.
- When performing a check for which you need to spot or use small details in other people nearby (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to tell an unpleasant truth without offending someone or a Sentiment [Air] check to detect someone else's weaknesses), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Support of [One Group] (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Whether through your own efforts or simple good fortune, you have gained the support of a particular faction or organization. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate group when choosing this advantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Support of [One Group] distinction:

- You have proven yourself to a particular group, who is willing to help you when doing so will not damage their reputation. They will offer you their hospitality, including meals, a place to rest, and medical attention if they have a healer. They will also grant you access to their other facilities, such as laboratories, libraries, smithies, stables, or sparring rooms.
- When performing a check to interact with the chosen group that relies on your rapport with them (such as a Command [Water] check to issue them orders or a Performance [Water] check to cause an audience of them to desire something), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

Specific Passions

Passions are not your character's purpose in life, but they often reflect the smaller interests that make life worth living.

Animal Bond (Earth)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: You have a special animal friend.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Animal Bond passion:

- Reciprocating your interest, a small, mundane animal of some kind has attached itself to you. Choose one silhouette 0 or 1 animal; it follows you around wherever you go and generally acts as your companion. It can be cajoled to do what you want, but it might need incentives (usually food) to perform difficult tasks on demand. If you are granted an animal as part of your starting outfit, that animal can be your companion (regardless of the usual size restrictions).
- After performing a check to interact with an animal (such as a Medicine [Earth] check to mend its injuries or a Survival [Earth] check to calm it), you remove 3 strife.

Armament (Earth)

Type: Mental

Description: You love arms and armor and are passionate about their uses, applications, and minute differences.

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

- Unless the piece comes from outside of the Emerald Empire, you know the name of any weapon or piece of armor you encounter, are aware of its function, and have a rudimentary understanding of how to equip and wield it.
- After performing a check to make or study arms and armor (such as a Smithing [Earth] check to polish a suit of armor or a Tactics [Earth] check to know how to arrange a proper spear formation), you remove 3 strife.

Brushwork (Air)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: Calligraphy, painting, and other brush-oriented arts fascinate you, and you take every opportunity you can to study them.

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

- You can identify the signature styles of numerous different schools and individual artists, as well as common motifs and techniques.
- After performing a check to study or practice brushwork (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to assess a painting's qualities and artist or a Composition [Air] check to add the finishing touches to a letter written in calligraphy), you remove 3 strife.

Curiosity (Fire)

Type: Mental

Description: Your thirst for knowledge is insatiable, and it drives you to try things that others would not risk.

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

- The first time you attempt a new task and fail, you always think of another route you could take to try to overcome it or to learn more about the problem.
- After performing a check to seek answers to an intriguing question (such as a Medicine [Fire] check to create a new chemical concoction or a Theology [Fire] check to try to determine the metaphysical underpinnings of a particular kami's behavior), you remove 3 strife.

Daredevil (Fire)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: Nothing brings you joy quite like the thrill of adrenaline, when you risk your life on a moment's gamble or a mighty leap. You do not become unsettled by the possibility of failure or the risk of defeat.

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

- You can risk your life without consideration or hesitation, even if the consequences are obvious and dire.
- After performing a check to risk your life (such as a Fitness [Fire] check to resist a critical strike or a Games [Fire] check to win a contest in a flashy display), you remove 3 strife.

Enlightenment (Void)

Type: Spiritual

Description: You are devoted to the principles revealed in the Tao of Shinsei and are well on your way to transcending this existence.

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

- You feel no attachment to mundane items and earthly titles; you cannot be tempted with material wealth or the promise of power.
- After performing a check to detach yourself from material concerns (such as a Meditation [Void] check to contemplate your place in the universe or a Survival [Void] check to exist in harmony with your environment), you remove 3 strife.

Fashion (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: The trends of design and culture fascinate you, and you are always looking for new ways to innovate upon what has come before. Worn items you prepare are always striking and capture the attention of those who see them.

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

- You always know the current trends in your home region, and you can identify what is in vogue (and how to take advantage of that fact) in a new place after spending one or more scenes there.
- After performing a check to interact with clothes, jewelry, or other worn works of art (such as a Culture [Fire] check to theorize about what others might wear at the next Winter Court or a Design [Fire] check to create a stunning work), you remove 3 strife.

Fortune-Telling (Void)

Type: Mental, Spiritual

Description: You have a love for puzzling out omens as revealed through natural phenomena and divinatory tools.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fortune-Telling passion:

- You can identify any common portents (such as constellations and other stellar phenomena, the cracks in oracle bones, the appearance of certain animals, and various other signs of things to come), along with their implications for the future.
- After performing a check to discern the future (such as a Survival [Void] check to look for small omens in your earthly environs or a Theology [Void] check to perform a divination by reading the stars), you remove 3 strife.

Generosity (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You derive a great deal of pleasure from gift-giving, and you have an intuition about proper gifts for people.

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

- You can always identify a proper gift for a particular person that does not risk giving offense or slighting them publicly.
- After performing a check to acquire or give a gift (such as a Design [Water] check to select an item that complements some else's wardrobe or a Commerce [Water] check to find and select a gift at a market), you remove 3 strife.

Gossip (Air)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You live for the salacious details of other samurai's personal lives.

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

- At the start of each scene, you can always identify the character present who will know the juiciest rumors (besides yourself, obviously).
- After performing a check to spread or receive rumors (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to cast someone in a certain light when telling a story about them or a Culture [Air] check to read people's current anxieties from the subtle ways they obey or break etiquette), you remove 3 strife.

History (Earth)

Type: Mental

Description: The past is an infinite well of fascination to you, and you never tire of it.

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

- After a short time spent studying it, you can discern the era and context of any object, structure, or text you encounter—or else you know for certain that no chronicler of the Emerald Empire has encountered this thing before.
- After performing a check to remember a historical anecdote (such as an Government [Earth] check to draw parallels to past events or a Smithing [Earth] check to know about past uses of and trends in the creation of tools and artifacts), you remove 3 strife.

Ikebana (Water)

Type: Mental

Description: You love flowers and are devoted to the meticulous, aesthetically pleasing arrangement thereof.

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

- You can always identify a plant by any of its parts, and you know its physical properties and its *hanakotoba* ("language of flowers") meaning.
- After performing a check related to flower arrangement (such as an Aesthetics [Water] check to rearrange an ikebana piece or improve it or a Survival [Water] check to acquire flowers from a marketplace), you remove 3 strife.

Playfulness (Air)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You enjoy lightly teasing others, and you generally do so in a way that people find amusing.

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

- When you say something untoward to someone of lower or equal status, they write it off as your playful nature instead of being significantly angered or saddened by it.
- After performing a check to gently mock or chide someone (such as a Composition [Air] check to find the parts of a rival's poem that you can echo with parody in your next piece or a Courtesy [Air] check to tease someone with a clever pun on their name), you remove 3 strife.

Provocation (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Your tongue is razor-sharp, and you never feel better than when you are delivering a clever quip or venomous barb.

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

- You can always identify a point of sensitivity that you can push upon in another person—though not whether they will take your comment as slightly aggressive banter or a grave insult.

- After performing a check to get a rise out of someone (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to call someone by an aggravating nickname or a Command [Fire] check to get a group of soldiers passionate and angry enough to storm an enemy position), you remove 3 strife.

Sake (Water)

Type: Mental

Description: You are a connoisseur and partaker of exceptional rice wine.

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

- You can identify regional variations in sake and other alcohol, and you know a great deal about the various processes of making sake. It takes you twice as much alcohol as it does anyone else to become intoxicated.
- After performing a check to interact with the fine art of fermented beverages (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to serve someone else alcohol according to proper procedure in a social setting or a Labor [Water] check to ferment rice), you remove 3 strife.

Secrets (Void)

Type: Mental, Interpersonal

Description: While samurai are deeply invested in maintaining their face, you live to find out what lies beneath their veneer of honor.

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

- You never forget a secret you have heard, and you instinctively know if something you have heard is common knowledge or something someone wants concealed (even if you do not know who or why).
- After performing a check to acquire or preserve a secret (such as a Meditation [Void] check to resist efforts to pry a secret from you or a Sentiment [Void] check to have a hunch about whether someone is concealing a dreadful secret), you remove 3 strife.

Stories (Earth)

Type: Mental, Interpersonal

Description: You live for a well-told story and consider yourself quite the storyteller in turn.

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

- You can recall any story you have been told, including the details that others would gloss over or forget.
- After performing a check to recall or tell a story (such as a Performance [Earth] check to spin a tale to hearten comrades or a Theology [Earth] check to recite a passage from the Tao of Shinsei or Akodo's *Leadership* applicable to your situation), you remove 3 strife.

Specific Disadvantages

While players and GMs can create disadvantages as they see fit (see **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 77), this section provides a number of premade disadvantages ready-made to anchor characters in the *Legend of the Five Rings* setting.

Each disadvantage lists the attached ring in parentheses after the name, along with its types (interpersonal, mental, physical, social, etc.), description, narrative effects, and example checks for which it applies.

Specific Adversities

Adversities are things that make your character's life more difficult. Most

Tea (Void)

Type: Physical, Spiritual

Description: You love tea, possibly as much as you love breathing. Your zeal for the fine art of steeping leaves might focus around traditional Rokugani powdered teas served in the highest courts, common brews made in humble teapots, unique foreign blends from the Isles of Spice and Silk or the Burning Sands, or all of the above.

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

- You can identify regional variations in tea, and know a great deal about the process of preparing and drying leaves. In the wilderness, you can acquire the natural ingredients required to make rustic teas of various sorts with relative ease.
- After performing a check to interact with tea (such as a Medicine [Void] check to brew a tea with ingredients that help the body recover on its own or a Performance [Void] check to perform a tea ceremony that helps the recipients contemplate their state in life), you remove 3 strife.

Travel (Water)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: The Emerald Empire is large, and larger yet are the lands that lie beyond. You believe in seeing as much as you can of this wondrous realm in your lifetime.

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

- You are not unsettled by foreign customs, and can comfortably fit in even in strange environments.
- After performing a check to travel to a new location or interact with a novel thing (such as a Survival [Water] check to try to identify a new plant, animal, or phenomenon or a Seafaring [Water] check to travel by boat), you remove 3 strife.

Wordplay (Air)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: You love double meanings, clever verbal constructions, and puns, especially in a poetic context.

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

- You can always identify rhetorical and literary patterns in the works of others when reading or listening to them.
- After performing a check to interpret or create a play on words (such as a Composition [Air] check to write a poem with a perfectly executed poetic pun or a Performance [Air] check to subtly imply something to your audience via a double meaning), you remove 3 strife.

are a result of your character's circumstances, often beyond their control.

Even though some of the limitations adversities create seem very constraining, remember that there are ways to disable disadvantages temporarily (including **Outbursts**, as described on page 16). This allows your character to break through their normal limits in dramatic scenes.

Bitter Betrothal (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Through ill fortune or the machinations of others, you and

your betrothed or spouse are woefully incompatible and have as little to do with each other as would be considered proper.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bitter Betrothal adversity:

- Something significantly complicates your relationship with your betrothed or spouse. As a result, they often undermine your efforts, whether out of malice, negligence, or an incompatible set of goals.
- When you make a check that requires the collaboration of your betrothed or spouse (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to make a polite request to their family for political backing or a Culture [Water] check to know the proper thing to do at a social function involving their relatives), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Blackmailed by [Character's Name] (Air)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: A certain individual has acquired blackmail against you. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate NPC when choosing this disadvantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blackmailed by [Character's Name] adversity:

- Someone has incriminating information on you, which they use to force you to help them even when doing so may damage your reputation. You must share with them what knowledge they have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether that be through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence. You must also arrange for introductions on their behalf with exclusive members of society or places of business.
- When performing a check to evade complying with the character who is blackmailing you (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to nominally tell them what they want without giving away key pieces of information or a Performance [Air] check to pretend as though you will go through with something they have demanded of you), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Blindness (Water)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: Your eyesight is impaired to the point that you cannot see.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blindness adversity:

- You are unable to see out of either eye. Your lack of sight does not mean you cannot perceive your surroundings (using your other senses), but you cannot observe things that can be perceived only by sight.
- When you make a check for which sight is an asset that cannot easily be replaced by other senses (such as a Sentiment [Water] check to identify someone's hostile intentions from across a noisy room or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit a moving target with an arrow), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Bluntness (Air)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: The need for the countless white lies the Rokugani tell

each other to ensure social harmony is lost on you, or you have simply stopped caring.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bluntness adversity:

- You have difficulty expressing things indirectly, and overlook insinuations and implications in the statements of others unless they are pointed out to you directly.
- When you make a check to create or interpret subtext (such as a Design [Air] check to select a wardrobe that conveys the proper subtle message to your intended recipient or a Sentiment [Air] check to read someone's unstated feelings), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Clumsiness (Fire)

Type: Physical

Description: You lack the coordination most have to maintain their balance or avoid bumping into their surroundings.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Clumsiness adversity:

- You are physically imprecise when dealing with tasks that require notable dexterity (or any task, really). At the GM's discretion, you periodically drop items, make a mess of precise crafting efforts, or slip and fall onto people.
- When you make a check that requires precise motor skills (such as a Fitness [Fire] check to vault over an obstacle or a Design [Fire] check to create an intricate piece of jewelry), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Cognitive Lapses (Void)

Type: Mental, Scar

Description: You suffer periodic losses of awareness without warning, during which time you cannot form new memories. These last usually last only a few seconds, but might last longer at the GM's discretion.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Cognitive Lapses adversity:



- At the GM's discretion, you sometimes lose your ability to focus or think consciously. Your body continues to act during these times according to your general instincts and does not undertake actions you would not consciously perform, but you do not form coherent memories of these times. After you suffer such a lapse that lasts for more than a few brief moments at the GM's choice, you regain 1 Void point.
- When you make a check for which you must recall anything that happened during a period of cognitive lapse (such as a Meditation [Void] check to understand your past decisions or a Sentiment [Void] check to guess what you might have said to someone based on their reaction to you), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☙ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Damaged Heart or Organ (Earth)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: You have suffered a major injury to a vital organ that might cause you pain and limits your ability to perform physical activities.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Damaged Heart or Organ adversity:

- Your heart or another vital organ is weak due to physical trauma or illness, and you can only engage in strenuous activity for half as long as other characters before needing to rest.
- When you make a check to undertake strenuous activity over a long period of time (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to march for a long time or a Smithing [Earth] check to hammer plates back onto a damaged piece of armor), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.



Healing Time: Permanent

Deafness (Air)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: You are unable to hear, or can only hear extremely loud sounds.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Deafness adversity:

- You are unable to hear.
- When you make a check for which auditory cues are very useful (such as a Sentiment [Air] check to discern if someone is being sincere or a Courtesy [Air] check to pick up rumors), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, you regain 1 Void point.



Healing Time: Permanent

Disturbing Countenance (Air)

Type: Interpersonal, Physical

Description: Something about your looks or your bearing is extremely off-putting to others. Perhaps your face is proportioned uniquely, you bear a notable birthmark, or you have a skin tone or hair color that is rare in Rokugan. It might even be as simple as carrying yourself in a way that people find jarring. Regardless of the specifics (which you and the GM should determine as part of this disadvantage), people tend to look upon you with suspicion and find excuses to distrust your words.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Disturbing Countenance adversity:

- Characters of lower status must generally be respectful of you to your face, but characters of higher status might try to use your looks as a way of attacking your character. Additionally, you are extremely memorable, and find it difficult to act subtly without being remembered.
- When you make a check to get someone to trust your word (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to make someone believe a lie or a Performance [Air] check to present a story as genuine), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Disdain for a Bushidō Tenet (Various)

Type: Flaw, Mental



Description: You have been taught or developed a considerable dislike for one of the tenets of Bushidō.

Options: Courage (Fire), Courtesy (Air), Compassion (Water), Loyalty (Earth), Righteousness (Void), Honor (Void), Sincerity (Void). A character may have multiple instances of this advantage for different tenets.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Disdain for Bushidō Tenet adversity:

- You no longer believe in the chosen tenet of Bushidō, though you still lose honor for disobeying it. When you act in accordance with this

tenet of Bushidō, others can sometimes sense your insincerity.



- When you make a check to pay lip service to this tenet of Bushidō or uphold it (such as a Courtesy check to express its importance or a Meditation check to use a belief in this tenet to your advantage), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Fractured Spine (Earth)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: Your spine has been badly damaged, and while it has likely healed (or will heal), it causes you discomfort and makes it hard to push your body to its limits.

Effect: The following apply to a character with the Fractured Spine adversity:



- You have suffered major trauma to the spine, and harsh impacts cause you to be shot through with agonizing pain. You can only lift and carry half the weight that someone of your strength normally could.
- When you make a check to resist harm or exhaustion (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to shrug off further injury or a Labor [Earth] check to carry heavy objects as part of building a structure), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Gaijin Name, Culture, or Appearance (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal (Name), Mental and Interpersonal (Culture), Physical (Appearance)

Description: Your looks, your behavior, or your very name marks you as an outsider and leads others to distance themselves from you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Gaijin Name, Culture, or Appearance adversity:



- People of higher and equal status tend to assume that you are uneducated at best and a barbarian at worst, while people of lower status respond to you with fear.
- When you make a check to inspire others (such as a Command [Fire] check to rally troops or a Commerce [Fire] check to create a product that people desire), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Haunting (Void)

Type: Interpersonal, Spiritual

Description: A ghost, an ancestor spirit, or a spirit from another realm is haunting you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Haunted adversity:

- The spirit has their own agenda (determined by the GM), which interferes with yours at inopportune times.
- When you make a check to defy the will of the spirit haunting you (such as a Meditation [Void] check to find solace in meditation or a Skulduggery [Void] check to perform disreputable acts to survive), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Incurable Illness (Earth)

Type: Physical

Description: A lingering physical malady plagues you, cutting your stamina short and making it risky for you to remain continuously active without rest.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Incurable Illness adversity:

- Periodically, if you push yourself too hard, you are afflicted by especially violent fits that render you largely incapacitated for a brief period of time.
- When you make a check to remain active for long periods of time (such as a Labor [Earth] check to plow a field or a Survival [Earth] check to build a shelter), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☳ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Lost Arm or Lost Hand (Fire)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: You have only one hand or one arm.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Arm or Lost Hand adversity:

- You are have one usable hand or arm fewer than most other people. You cannot wield weapons in a two-handed grip or hold anything in your missing arm. If you are missing only the hand, you can strap items to the arm for use.
- When you make a check for which having two hands is very valuable (such as a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Fire] check to grapple a foe into submission or a Survival [Fire] check to hold on to a horse while spurring it to run quickly), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☳ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Lost Eye (Water)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: You can only see out of one of your eyes; the other does not function or is completely removed from your body.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Eye adversity:

- You have one eye fewer than most people. Your field of vision is narrower, and your depth perception is somewhat diminished.
- When you make a check for which your reduced ability to observe a wide field or discern the exact distance to faraway objects would cause difficulties (such as an Investigation [Water] check to spot incoming threats or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit targets while moving), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☵ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Lost Fingers (Fire)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: One of your hands has fewer usable digits, whether due to an accident, warfare, or simply being born with fewer fingers.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Fingers adversity:

- You have fewer functional digits on one of your hands than most people. Checks to craft new items take you twice as long as they would

take a character with their full complement of fingers.

- When you make a check for which you must maintain a precise grip with both hands at once (such as a Design [Fire] check to weave cloth or a Martial Arts [Fire] check to draw your blade quickly), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☳ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Lost Leg (Water)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: You have only one functional leg.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Leg adversity:

- You have one fewer legs than most people. You cannot walk at all without assistance (such as from a crutch or cane), and standing is much more difficult. Traveling by walking takes you twice as long as it does others without some form of compensatory tool.
- When you make a check for which you must reposition yourself quickly or maintain your balance (such as a Fitness [Water] check to move across difficult ground quickly or a Seafaring [Water] check to operate a boat in difficult conditions such as a storm), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☵ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Lost Memories (Void)

Type: Mental, Scar

Description: You significant have gaps in your memory that call part or all of your past into question.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Memories adversity:

- There is a period of your life that you cannot remember at all. The less important this period is to your identity, the longer it should be (for example, a single day lost might be sufficient if the character committed a terrible act during that time and struggles to understand how or why, whereas a full decade of lost memories might be insufficient if they are not especially foundational to who the character is). The player and GM should work together to determine the amount and importance of memories lost. Skills and abilities acquired during the lost time are largely retained, even if the character does not remember the act of developing them.
- When you make a check for which you must recall information you learned prior to or during the period of lost memories (such as a Culture [Void] check to intuit how to behave in a particular situation you encountered during that time or Meditation [Void] check to understand your past decisions), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ☐ or ☶ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.



Maimed Arm (Fire)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: One of your arms is significantly harder for you to use, possibly due to a wound or injury.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Maimed Arm adversity:

- Your right or left arm is injured (determined by you at the time the disadvantage is assigned), making it much harder to perform activities that need it. You can use the arm, but gripping anything tightly causes you pain, and you might need a sling to help the arm heal properly.



- When you make a check for which you need to use two hands at once (such as a Design [Fire] check to sew a new kimono or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Fire] check to overwhelm a foe with rapid attacks), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Maimed Visage (Air)

Type: Physical, Interpersonal, Scar

Description: Your face is scarred by an injury—a badge of honor for some, a reminder of bitter defeat to others, or perhaps a simple mark of your misfortune.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Maimed Visage adversity:



- You have been struck in the face, causing a very noticeable and difficult-to-disguise sign of your altercation. Your injury is disquieting to many, and speaking causes you some pain, hampering your social endeavors that hinge on subtle implication and manipulation.
- When you make a check to subtly convince others of something or speak in implication (such as a Commerce [Air] check to sell an item at a higher price than usual or a Courtesy [Air] check to insult someone by implication), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Momoku (Void)

Type: Spiritual

Description: You are disconnected from the Void, severed from the cosmic energy of the universe and unable to instinctively detect its ebb and flow.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Momoku adversity:



- You do not detect supernatural presences even when they make themselves evident to everyone else, and are blissfully unaware of the ripples in reality such entities and phenomena create. You can still discern effects they have on the physical world, but only when they become quite obvious.
- When you make a check to understand or appeal to otherworldly powers (such as a Games [Void] check to put your faith in the power of the universe or a Theology [Void] check to call upon the cosmic energy around you), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Muteness (Air)

Type: Interpersonal, Physical or Mental, Scar

Description: You cannot speak verbally, though you are by no means incapable of meaningful communication.

Effect: The following apply to a character with the Muteness adversity:



- You are physically or psychologically unable to produce intelligible spoken words verbally. You can still make yourself understood through signing, gestures, and meaningful looks.
- When you make a check for which you must make your verbal tone understood by others (such as a Command [Air] check to convey nuanced information to others or a Performance [Air] check to impersonate someone convincingly), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Nerve Damage (Air)

Type: Physical, Scar

Description: Your nervous system has been permanently damaged in some way, reducing your sensitivity to physical sensations and making precise tasks more difficult.

Effect: The following apply to a character with the Nerve Damage adversity:



- You are unable to feel in certain parts of your body.
- When you make a check for which sensitive feeling is helpful (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to delicately paint glaze onto a ceramic piece or a Fitness [Air] check to maintain your posture exactly while moving), you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Scorn of [One Group] (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Whether through your own efforts or simple ill fortune, you have antagonized a particular faction or organization. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate group when choosing this disadvantage.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Scorn of [One Group] adversity:



- You have earned the ire of a particular group, which has seriously damaged your ability to work with them or enlist their help. You have been barred from entering their facilities, and they refuse to meet or communicate with you directly.
- When performing a check to interact with the chosen group that relies on your rapport with them (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to persuade them to do something or a Performance [Water] check to impress a group of them), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Air)

Type: Curse, Interpersonal, Spiritual

Description: Your personality becomes twisted and cruel in ways that are hard to disguise as the power of the Shadowlands takes root. Your feelings for others grow numb, and you struggle to find joy in anything except acts of destruction. As you lose touch with your humanity, however, you gain the ability to understand the minds and desires of Shadowlands creatures, and find them much more amenable to your rhetoric and logic.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Air) adversity:

- You have trouble sympathizing with other humans, but can understand the emotions of corrupted beings easily.
- When you make a check to show compassion for other human beings (such as a Composition [Air] check to edit a work for emotional refinement or a Courtesy [Air] check to say something difficult without harming the recipient's feelings), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing  or  results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Earth)

Type: Curse, Physical, Spiritual

Description: Down to your very bones, the power of the Shadowlands

has taken hold of you, binding your will and your body beyond natural limits even as it twists both to nefarious purpose.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Earth) adversity:

- Your ability to feel physical sensations is significantly diminished, and when you perish, your body rises as a **Zombie Peasant** (see page 204), pursuing your last goal with bestial purpose before turning on anyone else nearby.
- When you make a check that relies upon physical sensitivity (such as a Design [Earth] check to repair a damaged item or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Earth] check to grapple with a foe), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Fire)

Type: Curse, Mental, Spiritual

Description: The power of the Shadowlands infiltrates your mind, turning your intellect to dreadful ends. Your curiosity about forbidden topics becomes obsessive, and no consequence for delving into dangerous lore seems too great to you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Fire) adversity:

- You can instinctively identify Shadowlands creatures and powers, you know how to turn them to their most destructive ends, and you are drawn inexorably toward such forbidden powers.
- When you make a check to foresee possible negative outcomes of your actions (such as a Government (Fire) check to extrapolate that your actions could lead to great destruction or a Theology (Fire) check to know that the powers you are dealing with will likely destroy you in the end), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Void)

Type: Curse, Spiritual

Description: The essence of the Shadowlands has suffused your very soul, drawing you closer and closer to the darkness by heaping miseries upon you and those around you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Void) adversity:

- Each time you spend your last Void point, someone near you suffers a terrible misfortune as the woven cord of fate itself frays because of your will.
- When you make a check to discern your future (such as a Government [Void] check to know that a course of action will certainly end in tragedy or a Seafaring [Void] check to detect the arrival of a storm before it hits), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Water)

Type: Curse, Physical, Spiritual

Description: Beneath the skin, your flesh begins to putrefy as the power of the Shadowlands flows through your veins and creeps through your muscles. Your touch brings rot and eventual corruption.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint adversity:

- Each time your blood is spilled (such as when you suffer a critical strike), foulness spills forth from the wound. Anyone who comes into contact with it suffers the Afflicted (Water) condition.
- When you make a check to heal others or deal with food (such as a Medicine [Water] check to identify symptoms of a disease or a Survival [Water] check to forage for food), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Sworn Enemy (Earth)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Somewhere, you have made a hated foe, and your destinies are now bound to clash with one another throughout your lives.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Sworn Enemy adversity:

- You and the GM should select or create a character to be your sworn enemy. Your sworn enemy exists within the world and periodically meddles in your affairs, directly or indirectly, at the GM's discretion. If your sworn enemy perishes, you must either remove this disadvantage via the rules for buying off disadvantages (see page 179), acquire a new sworn enemy (perhaps someone who hates you because of your role in the demise of the previous one), or find a way for your deceased foe to continue playing a role in your life.
- When you make a check to remain rational in the presence of this person you hate (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to interact with this person without being provocative or a Meditation [Earth] check to stay stoic in the face of their insults), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Cruelty (Earth)

Type: Interpersonal, Infamy

Description: Rumors of vicious acts follow you, and true or not, they cling to you and poison the impressions people have of you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Cruelty adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you will act in a ruthless and destructive manner, and they act accordingly.
- When you make a check to attempt to calm others (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to convince someone to cooperate with you or a Command [Earth] check to get someone to accept your authority calmly), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Doom (Void)

Type: Interpersonal, Infamy

Description: You are believed to be cursed, and others shy away from your presence as if your perceived misfortune might prove to be contagious.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Doom adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who

do not know you personally always assume that those around you will perish or meet bad ends, even if you survive to spread your ill fortune further.

- When you make a check to dispel someone's false preconceptions (such as a Courtesy [Void] check to get someone to question their decision or a Command [Void] check to get someone to see the pointlessness of their position), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Failure (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal, Infamy

Description: Fairly or not, a reputation of incompetence precedes you, and others assume you to be a fool, a drunkard, a coward, or some combination of the above.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Failure adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you are incompetent, and do not trust you with important tasks.
- When you make a check to get others to follow your lead (such as a Command (Fire) check to lead a charge or a Performance (Fire) check to inspire others), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Poverty (Water)

Type: Interpersonal, Infamy

Description: People believe your fortunes to be in decline, your lineage fallen from the lofty heights.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Poverty adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you don't have financial solvency and won't be able to muster resources quickly.
- When you make a check to acquire items quickly or make trade deals (such as a Command [Water] check to win over troops under your command with the promise of rewards or a Commerce [Water] check to secure a large supply of any commodity or service), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Treachery (Air)

Type: Interpersonal, Infamy

Description: You are infamous for a rumored betrayal—said to have turned your back on a friend, slain someone you had sword to defend, or renounced an oath to your lord. While few dare to confront you directly over hearsay, people look for your deviousness at every turn.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Treachery adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you will plant poison in their tea or a knife in their back at the first opportunity.
- When you make a check to get others to trust you (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to convince someone of your sincerity or a Skulduggery

[Air] check to steal from someone who is aware of your presence), during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, you must choose and reroll 2 dice showing ○ or ☉ results. After resolving the check, if you failed, you regain 1 Void point.

Specific Anxieties

Although emotions, especially negative ones, are things that samurai strive to banish from their hearts, all human beings are susceptible to the so-called “three sins” of fear, desire, or regret when exposed to certain people, locations, things, or situations. The negative emotions and inner turmoil that these things inspire are represented mechanically with specific anxieties.

Even though some of the limitations anxieties create seem very confining, remember that there are ways to disable disadvantages temporarily (including **Outbursts**, as described on page 16). This allows your character to break through their normal limits in dramatic scenes.

Addiction (Earth)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: You have become dependent on some physical substance or experience—perhaps opium, which once soothed the pain from an old injury, or perhaps the thrill of battle. Being deprived of it causes you considerable distress and physical symptoms, making it difficult to move or even focus your mind properly.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Addiction anxiety:

- Choose an addictive substance or experience; deprivation from this substance or experience for more than three days causes shakes, chills, distraction, or even more violent physical symptoms that become increasingly difficult to conceal.
- After performing a check to resist the substance or experience (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to suppress signs of your addiction during long absences of the substance or experience or a Meditation [Earth] check to resist pursuing the experience or substance), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Battle Trauma (Fire)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: Though few speak of it, no samurai returns from war without their share of scars, whether physical, mental, or both. Yours run deeper than most, however, and make it difficult for you to take the field again. The things you saw—or felt you had to do—still linger, haunting you as surely as any phantasm. When you take to the battlefield, you are prone to lapsing into your memories. In peacetime, even small reminders of war, such as the smell of blood or a face that looks like a dead comrade's can send you tumbling into difficult memories, distracting you or even leaving you unresponsive in extreme cases.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Battle Trauma anxiety:

- At the start of a duel, skirmish, or mass battle, your hands shake, your body tenses up, or your mind might even lock down. You can act normally, but your unsettled state is obvious to everyone around you, and others may try to exploit it.
- After performing a check related to battle (such as a Martial Arts [Melee] (Fire) check to strike down a foe or a Tactics (Fire) check to generate initiative), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Cynicism (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: You tend to assume that things will go poorly and that new or inventive methods will fail.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Cynicism anxiety:

- When faced with a truly novel or unconventional idea, you always look for ways it can fail, and others must persuade you that it could work before you will try it (even if it is your idea).
- After performing a check to think unconventionally (such as a Performance (Fire) check to improvise during a performance or a Tactics (Fire) check to develop a new strategy on the fly), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Dark Secret (Void)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You have a dark secret that, if exposed, could bring ruin upon your house and disgrace your ancestors and descendants alike.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Dark Secret anxiety:

- If the details of this secret are exposed publicly, your glory decreases dramatically (by 10 to 20). Depending on the secret, your status might also decrease considerably (by 5 to 10).
- After performing a check to assert your will over yourself or others (such as a Command [Void] check to order troops to fight to the bitter end or a Meditation [Void] check to find inner peace), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Delusions of Grandeur (Void)

Type: Mental, Interpersonal

Description: You believe yourself destined for greatness, and nothing will dissuade your fixation upon this goal.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Delusions of Grandeur anxiety:

- When you are presented with a chance to advance your glory, you must attempt to pursue it.
- After performing a check that requires facing your humble place in an uncaring universe (such as a Labor [Void] check to eke out a living in the fields or a Meditation [Void] check to contemplate your place in the cosmos), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Fear of Death (Earth)

Type: Mental, Physical

Description: A samurai does not fear death, and yet, despite your upbringing and training, the thought of your demise terrifies you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fear of Death anxiety:

- You cannot voluntarily choose to die or sacrifice your life (including committing seppuku when honor demands it), and if there is a chance you could live, you must always pursue it.
- After performing a check to risk your life or accept your mortality (such as a Meditation [Earth] check to find inner tranquility before battle or a Tactics [Earth] check to hold a position against long odds),

you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Ferocity (Air)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: When you strike, you have trouble holding back your power, and you tend to lash out even when a subtler approach would be more appropriate. Your ferocity can be terrifying to behold, and it often scares even you when you see its effects.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ferocity anxiety:

- When you defeat a Minion NPC, the Minion is always killed, even if you would prefer to incapacitate.
- After performing a check to intentionally hold back or apply force subtly (such as a Games [Air] check to manipulate your opponent or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Air] check to strike a precise blow), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Impatience (Earth)

Type: Mental

Description: You find it difficult to repress yourself, and when you are forced to wait, it causes you palpable discomfort.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Impatience anxiety:

- If given the choice between seizing an opportunity and waiting for a better moment, you strive to seize the opportunity, despite risks that might be mitigated if you act later.
- After performing a check to strategically weigh your options (such as a Government [Earth] check to think of a historical anecdote related to your situation or a Tactics [Earth] check to identify the right moment to strike), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Intolerance (Water)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: A particular hate festers within you for a group of people (or even supernatural beings), and it overwhelms your better judgment when faced with members or representatives of this group.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Intolerance anxiety:

- Choose one group of people or supernatural beings to be your hated enemies. When you are in the presence of these beings (or even when they are mentioned), your enmity is evident to all who observe you.
- After performing a check to interact with a member of the chosen group (such as a Commerce [Water] check to bargain with someone from a family that once wronged your own or a Composition [Water] check to translate from the language of a group of foreigners you dislike due to a battle you fought against their people), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Irrepressible Flirtation (Earth)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: Your ability to assess the risks a romantic liaison might present could be described as poor. When interacting with someone you

find attractive, you tend to be more distracted and pliant to their requests than perhaps you should be, and you act carelessly to win that person's attention or admiration.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Irrepressible Flirtation anxiety:

- You find it difficult to pass up the chance to flirt with people you find attractive, and when someone you find attractive flirts with you, you cannot help but return their advances with your own flirtation. Your interest is obvious to all onlookers.
- After performing a check to interact with someone you are interested in without exceeding propriety (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to make appropriate small talk or a Sentiment [Earth] check to accurately recall what anyone present besides yourself and that person was feeling at the time), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Jealousy (Air)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: You desire the attention of others and find it extremely aggravating when someone else outshines you. Failing to capture people's attention arouses your ire like nothing else.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Jealousy anxiety:

- You cannot voluntarily pass up an opportunity to one-up a rival or demonstrate your superiority to someone else in the eyes of others.
- After performing a check to compete with someone to demonstrate your excellence (such as a Performance [Air] check to convince an audience of something before a rival can or a Smithing [Air] check to refine a weapon to perfection before presenting it as a gift to your lord), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Materialism (Void)

Type: Mental

Description: You are obsessed with physical possessions and objects, despite what the Tao of Shinsei says about such material earthly bonds.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Materialism anxiety:

- You cannot refuse gifts of rarity 3 or higher.
- After performing a check to give up a physical object in your possession or other thing of value (such as a Government [Void] check to find a way to sacrifice a holding to gain a political advantage over a rival or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Void] check that hinges on destroying a valued possession), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Meekness (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You are extremely shy, and struggle to stand up for yourself. You likely use pronouns that indicate subservience when speaking, and you desire to defer to others rather than create conflict.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Meekness anxiety:

- You cannot interrupt people of higher status, and you find it very hard to assert yourself over anyone, including people of lower status.
- After performing a check to stand out or get what you need (such as a Command (Fire) check to inspire troops under your command or a

Government (Fire) check to assess your rights on a matter), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Painful Honesty (Air)

Type: Interpersonal

Description: You are tormented by internal conflict when you lie or allow a lie to pass. You cannot lie directly, and though you can tell or abet indirect lies or lies of omission, you don't enjoy it.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Painful Honesty anxiety:

- When you have the chance to show off your cleverness or slyly insult someone, you take it, even if you gain nothing from it.
- After you make a check to mislead someone else (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to falsely besmirch someone's reputation or a Command [Air] check to manipulate an underling), you suffer 3 strife. If you suffer an outburst this way, you gain 1 Void point after resolving the outburst.

Paranoia (Water)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: In every shadow, you see assassins, and in every smile, you see a rival in pursuit of your undoing. This fear makes it very hard for you to rely upon others, and it might distract you from real threats.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Paranoia anxiety:

- You cannot relax unless you have confirmed vital information (such as your current safety) for yourself.
- After performing a check to identify danger in your environment (such as an Authority [Water] check to know the political currents in a court or a Sentiment [Water] check to sense if someone's intentions toward you are hostile), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Perfectionism (Water)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: Anything short of perfection in your work is unacceptable to you, and you have been known to create works of beauty only to cast them aside over some perceived flaw.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Perfectionism anxiety:

- You cannot help but try to improve any work in which you identify a flaw, even if it means informing someone of higher status of an error they have made.
- After performing a check in which you must interact with an imperfect or unfinished work (such as an Aesthetics [Water] check to improve an existing piece of art or a Composition [Water] check to translate a work without losing any of the nuance present in the original language), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Phobia (Water)

Type: Physical, Mental

Description: You have an intense fear of something specific. The more narrow the fear, the more overwhelming its effect on you.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Phobia anxiety:

- Choose something mundane. You have a debilitating fear of this thing. You cannot speak its name. In its presence, you cannot hide your fear, and you attempt to flee if at all possible.
- After performing a check to deal with your phobia (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to talk pleasantly about the subject or a Survival [Water] check to identify it as the thing you fear), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Softheartedness (Fire)

Type: Interpersonal, Mental

Description: Samurai are warriors, yet war is not in your nature. Despite any skill with the blade or experience on the field that you might accrue, the sight of the suffering of others wrenches at you in a way your code as a samurai says it should not. When you do kill someone, you feel incredible guilt over it, even if you did not intend for them to die.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Softheartedness anxiety:

- If given the choice to kill someone or spare them, you always spare their life, even if it is not in your interest to let them live.
- After performing a check to kill others or let them die (such as a Gov-

ernment (Fire) check to estimate the burden a war would place on the common people or a Martial Arts [Ranged] (Fire) check to shoot to kill), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Superstition (Void)

Type: Mental, Spiritual

Description: Whether based on whispered tales of vengeful lovers' ghosts and monsters that stalk the night or on personal experiences with the unknowable, you have a terrible fear of the supernatural, and your wild imaginings cast a pall across your life.

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Superstition anxiety:

- When faced with signs of the supernatural, you become visibly agitated, and you attempt to leave the scene, appease the being or phenomenon in question, or acquire supernatural protection of some kind.
- After performing a check to interact with or learn about a supernatural being or phenomenon (such as a Meditation [Void] check to perceive the presence of a supernatural being or a Theology [Void] check to know a supernatural being's designs or desires), you suffer 3 strife. If this causes you to suffer an **Outburst** (see page 16), gain 1 Void point.

Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages

While there are numerous advantages and disadvantages to be found in this volume, GMs and players should not feel limited to this list. If you can't find the advantage or disadvantage you want on the list, talk to the GM and ask permission to create a new advantage or disadvantage together.

Custom Advantage and Disadvantage Concepts

Advantages and disadvantages are designed to provide occasional benefits and drawbacks based on your character's intrinsic quirks. They should be distinct from the know-how characters develop with experience, which is represented by skills and techniques, and from the character's overall aptitudes, which are reflected by rings. These features should also have sufficient distinction from a character's giri and ninjō, which should remain the character's core motivations.

Advantages and disadvantages should not always be applicable, but they should be broad enough to come up at least once every couple of sessions. If your GM doesn't think an advantage or disadvantage will come up often, try collaborating with your GM to come up with something that provides the same sorts of story hooks or ideas but will be more useful.

In designing a custom advantage or disadvantage, do not just consider scenarios in which it could be applied, but also think about one or two examples of when it could be turned to give your character an edge or cause your character problems (see page 61). If an advantage or disadvantage begins to get wordy, consider what is fundamental about it and keep the longer phrase in a notebook to describe your character; not everything about your character needs to be represented mechanically on your sheet.

Developing a Custom Advantage or Disadvantage

When creating an advantage or disadvantage, follow the process below for its type:

- **Distinction:** A distinction represents a feature of your character that makes your character more effective in certain circumstances. Consider and record the narrative effects it conveys and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then record two specific examples of checks for which the distinction works in your character's favor.

Example: Sam wants to reflect the fact that his character, Hitoshi, grew up on merchant vessels, and is as sure firing an arrow from the rigging as he is staying one step ahead of another vessel. He proposes the Born Sailor advantage, which he posits should protect the character from seasickness, no matter how tempestuous the ocean. Then, he notes two examples for when this should apply: When Hitoshi makes a Martial Arts [Ranged] (Water) check to hit a target from the deck of a boat, and when Hitoshi makes a Seafaring (Water) check to find high-quality supplies for nautical activity. After the GM approves this advantage for use, Hitoshi is ready to conduct "legitimate business" on the seas!

- **Passion:** A passion represents an area of interest for your character, something that makes them feel better when they practice or pursue it. Consider and record the narrative effects that their love of this subject conveys and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the passion works in their favor.

Example: Luna wants to represent the fact that her character, Hei, a Unicorn Clan warrior, is fascinated by grappling technique, and that Hei goes out of their way to seek out chances to study other fighters and their methods. The GM notes that this advantage could be quite potent, as it pertains to a Martial skill, but the two discuss the idea and decide that it is important enough to be worth representing mechanically. Luna proposes that it grant Hei the narrative capacity to recognize a fighter's grappling school by a single move (a very narrow utility, albeit a very useful one for a wrestler), and that it should have example applications to Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) checks to engage in grappling contests and Culture (Earth) checks to recall anecdotes and trends related to the history of grappling. The GM agrees that this isn't too powerful as a passion, and so the Grappling passion is assigned to Hei.

- **Adversity:** An adversity represents something that makes your character's life harder in a direct way. Consider and record the narrative challenges that the adversity imposes on your character and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the adversity undermines your chances of success.

Example: Andrew wants to give his character, Kiriko, an adversity that adds a bit of levity to the otherwise serious Scorpion courtier. However, the character is decidedly stoic in nature, and so he wants to create the situational humor of her artful ploys being lost upon her less refined comrades, to her constant exasperation. He proposes to the GM that Kiriko should have the Wasted in Such Company adversity, which has the narrative impact of causing her attempts at searing jabs to end up coming off rather harmlessly to her fellow PCs, who simply do not pick up on the cutting insults she has so subtly implied. The GM decides that while this narrative effect might be too influential if it worked on all characters, encouraging intra-party banter (especially after the other players agree with the concept) is fun, and the ability shouldn't cause too much trouble. Andrew then proposes that it should have example checks of Courtesy (Air) checks to spread malicious gossip and Performance (Air) checks to send subtle messages. The GM agrees, and so Kiriko is assigned the Wasted in Such Company adversity.

- **Anxiety:** An anxiety represents something that stirs up negative emotions in your character. Consider and record the narrative challenges this fear, hatred, regret, or other emotional weight places on your character and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the anxiety causes your character to suffer turmoil.

Example: Sara wants to represent her character Karasu's tendency to be overwhelmed by the desire for revenge against her parents' killers. However, she has already selected this as Karasu's ninjō, and so the GM recommends that she consider how to create an anxiety that ties into Karasu's ninjō but also helps reveal more about the character. Sara decides that because Karasu had to fend for herself from an earlier age than most, she cannot tolerate weakness in herself or others. She proposes the anxiety Might Will Make Right, which prevents her from asking for help from others when pursuing her ninjō of revenge upon her parents' killers, as Karasu views the task as hers alone. Additionally, the disadvantage has example applications of Meditation (Earth) checks to see the costs of her quest for revenge and Tactics (Earth) checks to make plans or take actions to protect allies. The GM agrees, and so this anxiety is assigned to Karasu.

As with all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether a given advantage or disadvantage is appropriate or not. GMs should be aware that custom advantages that apply to Martial skills can easily become very potent, and should thus pay careful attention to any such advantages their players propose.

Chapter 3: Skills

More so than almost any other mechanic, skills define the knowledge and competency of a character in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*. While rings represent a samurai's general outlook and natural talent, skills represent what they have learned throughout the course of their entire lifetime. As such, skills allow them to accomplish a tremendous amount, giving them access to more dice to choose from on their rolls

and new results that do not exist on the Ring die. Each skill represents an area of competency—a particular body of knowledge and practical experience, essentially. A skilled character is not only more likely to succeed than an unskilled character, but also has a much better ability to create useful opportunities or complete a task effortlessly.

Skills and Checks

When making a check, a player first states what their character wants to accomplish, which determines the skill group used for the check. Then, the GM and player determine which skill in that group is the most fitting for the task. Finally, the player describes the method their character uses, which the GM uses to determine their approach. Each skill group has five approaches (one for each element) that reflect the various methods a character might use to leverage a skill of that group. Each of these approaches encompasses a number of concrete ways of using the competency that a skill reflects to achieve different goals. Approaches have slight differences in their application for individual skills, as described in

the individual skill entries in this chapter.

Thus, when assessing a character's ability to perform a given task, one must examine at both their skill ranks (their expertise in the field of study) and the ring the character will use for the end they want to accomplish (their core aptitude at that sort of approach). This means that even two characters with the same number of ranks in a skill might actually have radically different probabilities of completing a given approach to a skill, based on their natural aptitudes for the skill's various approaches (reflected by their rings).

Skill Groups

Skills in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* are divided into five categories based on their primary use:

- **Artisan skills:** The high arts of Rokugan have an influence disproportionate to what one might expect. While commoners produce most items in Rokugan, artisans produce influential, sometimes even supernatural works that alter the course of history. Artisan skills allow characters to engage in the process of creating and understanding art.
- **Martial skills:** The core function of samurai is generally warfare, and so, Martial skills are seen as being of utmost importance. Even the high courts of Rokugan pay a certain degree of lip service to martial virtues, although few courtiers practice these skills full-time. Martial skills allow characters to contest with others and overcome the limitations within themselves.
- **Scholar skills:** Information is power, and Scholar skills give a character access to information about society, the world, and other

Optional Rule: Subskills

Legend of the Five Rings means many different things to many different people, and not every possible campaign should use the exact same skill list. The skills used in a particular group's game should be a function of what skills will actually be important to the story—and your campaign should be no exception!

Even two campaigns run for the same group might have different skill needs. For example, if your campaign is going to be a tale of adventure and intrigue culminating in a journey into the depths of an ancient sorcerer's tomb, having fully fleshed-out skills for both ikebana (flower arrangement) and rock gardening is likely superfluous. Both reflect an understanding of aesthetics, nature, and minimalism, and thus both can be covered by the provided Aesthetics skill. In contrast, in a courtly drama in which swords are rarely drawn and knowledge of forbidden secrets is all but irrelevant (to say nothing of uncouth), there is little reason to have both Martial Arts [Staves] and Martial Arts [Swords] as skills—but the difference between the Ikebana and Rock Gardening skills might be crucial to distinguishing the skill sets of two different characters!

The skills listed in this chapter are intended to be a solid starting selection for many *Legend of the Five Rings* campaigns, and they cover the bases without taxing characters of any specific archetype excessively if they want to achieve competency in their field. We have generally condensed skills from past editions that were unlikely to be used frequently, with the goal of producing a smooth system.

However, as the GM, you should feel free to tailor this skill list

to the type of game you want to run. Think about the focus of your game—is a skill that you think players should roll on often missing? Feel free to add it in as a SUBSKILL. You should even allow players to suggest new subskills, though you might advise them not to get overly specific and narrow, lest they never have a chance to get a benefit out of the 12 experience they dutifully invested into Games [Shogi] (the game of Rokugani chess) or Culture [The Ivory Kingdoms]. Still, if a player wants to have a very specific skill, that desire tells you something useful about what the player might want to do in the campaign, and you can capitalize on that information by working it into your plans!

To develop a subskill, choose the skill that already covers that activity (or is the closest to doing so), and add the new subskill to its skill group. It should function in much the same way as the skill from which it was divided, and it should count as a member of the same skill group. The skill from which it was divided no longer covers the activity of the subskill. When a listed check calls for the main skill (such as in a technique, or when a character is resisting an effect), the character may choose to use any subskill that you deem could logically apply. It's a very good idea to alert your players about any planned subskills before they build their characters. **Adding subskills in the midst of an ongoing campaign is generally not recommended.**

In each skill entry, this chapter offers a number of specific ways you might want to break certain subskills off from their main skills, along with conveying what this added granularity signals about the campaign's focus and story.

people. Scholar skills allow characters to recall information, identify things related to an area of expertise, observe their environment, and draw conclusions.

- **Social skills:** Courtiers hold incredible sway in Rokugan, negotiating the agreements by which wars are waged and averted and influencing marriages, trade, and other events of great import in the lives of all samurai. Thus, Social skills are at least somewhat important to almost all samurai, from the most silver-tongued denizens of ruling courts to the roughest of field soldiers. Social skills allow characters to affect the emotions and thoughts of others through rhetoric.

- **Trade skills:** These are skills most commonly practiced by occupants of the bottom tiers of Rokugan's stratified society. While most are necessary to the Empire's survival, samurai generally look down upon these skills, or at least view them as matters to be handled by menial laborers. Of course, Trade skills can also be very useful in practical terms, and so some samurai find ways to learn and practice them subtly, or simply bear the scrutiny of their more socially minded peers stoically (see the "**Low**" Skills sidebar, on page 103). Trade skills allow characters to procure resources from their environment and perform work.

Breakdown of a Skill

Each skill is made up of a number of elements, as described below.

Description

Each skill's **DESCRIPTION** explains the body of knowledge that the skill encompasses and how it differs from other skills in general terms. Specific activities that can be undertaken with the skill are described under its approaches.

Approaches

Each skill group has five **APPROACHES** that correspond to the Five Rings, and each skill write-up includes additional examples and details of how these approaches function for that particular skill. Because the Five Rings

express different attitudes for undertaking tasks, each approach governs a specific set of avenues to which a character can apply a skill.

Sample Tasks, TNs, and Times

Each skill lists a number of sample tasks and the various requirements to perform them, including the target number (TN) of the involved check and the time span of the task (usually "action" or "downtime"). These are meant to help give the GM a sense of how to apply the skill in play; they are not intended to be a comprehensive list of everything the skill can do. Players and GMs should feel free to logically extrapolate how they can use skills for other tasks they would reasonably cover, using the examples to inform how an approach can function mechanically.

Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach

The process of choosing a skill group, skill, and approach is summarized in the chart below. Additionally, the chart includes descriptions of hindrances that might make each approach more difficult or even impossible. When you are unsure which skill group, skill, or approach fits best, consult **Table 3-1: Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach**, asking yourself the listed questions and answering them in sequence to determine the best option at each stage.

Using Approaches from Other Skill Groups

For some tasks relating to a given skill, the approaches of a different skill group are actually more fitting than the default approaches for the skill's own skill group. This chapter provides a number of examples for tasks that are best accomplished using the approaches of a different group than the one a skill usually occupies. GMs should feel free to resolve skill checks using the approaches of other skill groups whenever common sense dictates, such as in the following examples.

For a particular plan of his to work, Agasha Johei needs to know how much heat is required to melt steel. The Smithing skill encompasses the knowledge of metallurgy needed for the creation of arms and armor. Even though Artisan skills are most often used to fabricate and maintain creations, there is no separate Scholar skill that covers the information Smithing provides. When Johei wants to know the melting point of steel, he treats

Smithing as a Scholar skill for the check to remember this fact. Because this activity requires recalling information rather than creating or studying works of art, Johei makes a check with Smithing (Earth) and resolves the results of that check using the Recall approach (described on page 91).

In another example, Zhu Li, an aide to an Emerald Magistrate, wants to make a particularly insightful comment about her employer's bow technique after observing him in battle. Though this skill is usually used for launching projectiles, it can also be used for discussing the technicalities of the craft. Thus, Zhu Li makes a Martial Arts [Ranged] check using an approach from the Social skill group. Because she wants to pay a backhanded compliment—in the hope that her employer will understand the subversive nuance without being able to accuse her of rudeness—she uses Trick, the Air approach for her check.

Investigation is one particularly common activity for which characters will undertake activities using the approaches of a different skill group. *Legend of the Five Rings* does not have a single skill for finding things or connecting the dots, so when a character wants to perceive, intuit, or remember something related to a particular area of expertise, they use the skill that best applies to that body of knowledge with Scholar skill approach that pertains to the way they want to acquire the information. See **The Art of Investigation** sidebar, on page 95, for more guidance on investigating using various skills.

Table 3-1: Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach

What do you want? <i>Determines skill group</i>	What specific expertise do you need? <i>Determines skill</i>	What method do you use? <i>Determines approach</i>
To craft a piece of art (Artisan Skill Group)	Artisan Skills (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-utilitarian art (<i>Aesthetics</i>) • Literature and poetry (<i>Composition</i>) • Finery and worn art (<i>Design</i>) • Armor and weapons (<i>Smithing</i>) 	Artisan Approaches (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore a damaged piece through upkeep (<i>Earth</i>) • Adapt an existing piece into something else (<i>Water</i>) • Invent a new piece from raw materials (<i>Fire</i>) • Refine an existing piece to make it function better (<i>Air</i>) • Attune yourself to a piece of art (<i>Void</i>)
To overcome an opponent or challenge with force (Martial Skill Group)	Martial Skills (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing athletic feats and resisting harm (<i>Fitness</i>) • Using close-quarters arms (<i>Martial Arts [Melee]</i>) • Using missile weapons (<i>Martial Arts [Ranged]</i>) • Fighting bare-handed and with improvised weapons (<i>Martial Arts [Unarmed]</i>) • Mastering oneself and controlling emotion such as anger, fear, and hate (<i>Meditation</i>) • Fighting with squads and armies (<i>Tactics</i>) 	Martial Approaches (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withstand opposing force to wear it down (<i>Earth</i>) • Shift opposing force to work against itself or for you (<i>Water</i>) • Overwhelm opposing force with a quick burst of power (<i>Fire</i>) • Feint to lure opposing force into a position of vulnerability (<i>Air</i>) • Sacrifice to let opposing force score a victory so that you can achieve a greater end (<i>Void</i>)
To know or learn a piece of information (Scholar Skill Group)	Scholar Skills (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current events, historical trends, and etiquette (<i>Culture</i>) • Law, bureaucracy, posts, and positions (<i>Govern-ment</i>) • Health, injury or disease (<i>Medicine</i>) • Psychology, people's emotions and motivations (<i>Sentiment</i>) • The spiritual realms, mystical beings and phenomena, and religious rites (<i>Theology</i>) 	Scholar Approaches (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall it from memory (<i>Earth</i>) • Survey the surroundings for clues about it (<i>Water</i>) • Theorize possibilities of its nature (<i>Fire</i>) • Analyze a specific thing for details about it (<i>Air</i>) • Sense it with your instincts or a hunch (<i>Void</i>)
To influence a person (Social Skill Group)	Social Skills (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to assert authority over others, especially of lower status (<i>Command</i>) • How to appeal formally to others, especially of higher status (<i>Courtesy</i>) • How to discuss and play games to socialize (<i>Games</i>) • How to communicate with and influence an audience (<i>Performance</i>) 	Social Approaches (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reason with them to act based on logic and duty (<i>Earth</i>) • Charm them to develop positive feelings toward you (<i>Water</i>) • Incite them to act on their emotions and desires (<i>Fire</i>) • Trick them into believing something you want them to believe (<i>Air</i>) • Enlighten them to understand a fundamental truth (<i>Void</i>)
To get resources or perform work (Trade Skill Group)	Trade Skills (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales, trading, and speculation (<i>Commerce</i>) • Farming, construction, and production (<i>Labor</i>) • Sailing and living on the ocean (<i>Seafaring</i>) • Criminal organizations and activities (<i>Skuldug-gery</i>) • Living in the wilds beyond civilization (<i>Survival</i>) 	Trade Approaches (choose one) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce what you need through physical toil (<i>Earth</i>) • Exchange one type of labor or resources for another (<i>Water</i>) • Innovate a new way to get what you need (<i>Fire</i>) • Con someone get something for nothing (<i>Air</i>) • Subsist in your environment without disrupting it (<i>Void</i>)

Artisan Skill Group

Artisan skills are seen as the noblest pursuits in Rokugan, and they are generally only practiced by the highest elements of the social strata. While many have little utility in day-to-day life, or rather because of this fact, these arts are a means of acquiring and leveraging important social currency in the courts of Rokugan. Writing a poem that stirs the hearts of its readers or restoring an ancient sword used by a hero of old can turn the wheels of politics as surely as a marching army.

Elemental Approaches for Artisan Skills

A character's natural aptitudes likely push them to a variety of endeavors, even within the sphere of expertise a single art represents. The elemental approaches for Artisan skills function as follows.

Restore Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth Ring represents a character's tendency toward cautious, well-considered approaches that show due respect for history, and so the repair and upkeep of art is governed by the Earth approach to Artisan skills. The creation of art is a monumental task, but so is its maintenance and preservation. Even for arts that exclusively create ephemeral works of beauty, tools must be maintained and records must be kept so that future artisans in the tradition can understand and reflect upon the achievements of the past.

A character uses RESTORE when they want to:

- Restore a damaged or degraded work of art to its previous state.
- Perform routine maintenance on a work of art.
- Store or transport a work of art safely.

Adapt Approach (Water Ring)

Water is an element of change, and so for Artisan skills, the Water approach determines a character's ability to reframe, combine, divide, or entirely transform their own creations and those of others. Whether this means translating a piece of literature, cutting down and remounting a blade for a new wielder, or remaking a piece of broken pottery completely by filling in the shattered seams with lacquer and powdered gold, adaptation is transformative and fluid.

A character uses ADAPT when they want to:

- Break a piece down to serve as raw materials for a new work.
- Modify a creation to serve a different function.
- Reflect upon the other ways that a piece could function.

Invent Approach (Fire Ring)

Pure invention is the domain of the Fire Ring, and as such, creating new works of art is the Fire approach to Artisan skills. Even seemingly minimalistic pursuits such as flower arrangement or bonsai call for vast amounts of passion and mental energy. If an artist makes few decisions in the process of making a work, then each decision the artist does make carries incredible significance. However, passion alone cannot sustain art. The greatest creators often review, embellish, and transform a work numerous times between creating their first draft and settling on the final form of the piece. As such, Invent must be supported by the other approaches to an Artisan skill in order to create a great work of art.

A character uses INVENT when they want to:

- Create a new piece from raw materials.
- Draft a new work.
- Develop a technique or tool to assist in the creative process.
- Brainstorm possible new works that they could make.

Refine Approach (Air Ring)

Understanding nuance is part of the Air Ring, as is the careful addition, manipulation, or removal of detail. This applies to Artisan skills via the Refine approach, which allows a character to improve a piece's core function, elevating it to heights otherwise unreachable. Refine turns a creation into a masterwork, and it differs from the Adapt approach in that instead of changing, subverting, or reinterpreting function, it enhances and deepens it. Refine also allows a skilled artisan to layer nuance and hidden messages or meanings into a piece that viewers must disentangle for themselves to fully understand.

A character uses REFINE when they want to:

- Improve the core function of a piece by adding or manipulating details.
- Improve the core function of a piece by removing unnecessary things.
- Adding a subtle message or complex nuance to a piece.

Attune Approach (Void Ring)

The Void Ring governs self-knowledge and self-reflection, so the Void approach to the Artisan skill revolves not around learning about a work of art per se, but around learning about oneself by entering deeply into the mind-set the piece evokes. This sort of artistic reflection allows a character to use a piece of art as a lens to understand their own heart. It can reveal not only the piece's purpose in a grander sense, but also why it has entered into the character's life at this time and what conclusions the

Table 3-2: Additional Artisan Skill Opportunities

Opportunity	Effect
Any ☯+	Affect (or create) 1 additional item per ☯ spent in this way.
Any ☯+	Learn something of value about the item, reducing the TN of your next Artisan skill check to interact with it this scene by 1 per ☯ spent this way.
Earth ☯	Add the Durable quality to an item you are repairing or maintaining.
Fire ☯	Add the Resplendent or Subtle quality to an item you are inventing.
Water ☯	Add or remove the Cumbersome or Razor-edged quality to an item you are adapting.
Air ☯	Increase one of the numerical values of the item (base damage, physical resistance, supernatural resistance, rarity, etc.) by 1. This ☯ can only be applied once per item.
Void ☯+	Reduce the TN of your next check to use the item this scene by 1 per ☯ spent this way.

character can draw about their own circumstances and emotions from that incident.

A character uses ATTUNE when they want to:

- Use a piece as a lens to disentangle their own emotions or contemplate Enlightenment.
- Spiritually center their being around a work.
- Imbue an item with supernatural properties.
- Awaken the supernatural properties of an object.

Artisan Skill Opportunities

In addition to the example uses of *Attune* on checks (see **Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending *Attune***, on page 18 of **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**), players and GMs may refer to the following ways of spending *Attune* when making a check using the Artisan skill approaches for more inspiration.

Artisan Skills

Artisan skills represent a character's expertise with works of surpassing beauty that capture the imaginations of those who see them and that win renown for their creators at court.

Aesthetics

The high arts of Rokugan are among the most refined of skills, and they are frequently pursuits that serve no purpose beyond artistic elevation. The Aesthetics skill covers activities that create non-utilitarian visual art, such as bonsai (trimming plants to encourage their growth in an artistic fashion), ikebana (flower arrangement), origami, painting, and rock gardening. Such arts serve a deeply important role in the courts of Rokugan,

Table 3–3: Sample TNs, tasks, and times for Aesthetics

Task	Check	Time
Sketching a new drawing with charcoal	TN 1 Aesthetics (Fire) check	Action
Mixing a new color of ink from two existing pigments	TN 2 Aesthetics (Water) check	Downtime
Repairing a cracked teapot	TN 3 Aesthetics (Earth) check	Downtime
Weaving a subtle message into a painting that only the desired recipient will understand	TN 4 Aesthetics (Air) check	Action
Imbuing a work with supernatural properties	TN 5 Aesthetics (Void) check	Action

and any courtier is expected to have an understanding of their principles, techniques, and guiding philosophies. By understanding a work of art, one can gain insight into its creator, and that insight can be invaluable for pursuing political agendas and court intrigue alike.

Aesthetics Approaches

The Aesthetics skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Restoring a damaged piece, performing maintenance on a piece to keep it beautiful, safely transporting a piece.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Altering an existing work, completely reworking or rebuilding an existing piece, finding inspiration for new works.

Possible Aesthetics Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Aesthetics skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which several or all characters are striving to be great artisans and move their way up through the echelons of court with their artistic endeavors.

Bonsai: Bonsai is the art of carefully pruning and cultivating plants to restrict their growth in certain ways and encourage it in others.

Drawing: Artistic renderings on paper, canvas, or even animal hide (in some rugged locales) are an age-old tradition. Drawing requires a steady hand and a keen eye, and countless different styles of drawing have flourished across the ages and regions of the Emerald Empire.

Ikebana (Flower Arrangement): The art of flower arrangement holds a special place in Rokugan, and it is especially valued by the Crane Clan and thus in the Imperial Court. Hanakotoba, the language of flowers, assigns complex meanings to different plants that artisans weave into their arrangements to help them make enduring statements with this transient medium.

Kōdō (Fragrance Appreciation): The ritualized preparation and burning of incense made from wood and fragrant herbs is one of the high arts of Rokugan. Rokugani samurai practice it for a number of ends, including but not limited to the search for tranquility, the purification of the spirit, and solace in the face of heartache.

Painting: Rokugani painting varies wildly from region to region, and innumerable styles have developed across the centuries. Ethereal, stark

works of black ink washed onto canvas mark the sumi-e style, while wild colors decorate picture scrolls that accompany the pillow books of famous writers. The Unicorn Clan has introduced even more styles and motifs to the Emerald Empire, and some of the fantastical creatures and elements of their art have worked their way into more classic styles over the centuries.

Origami: Folding paper animals, plants, and other forms.

Rock Gardening: The path to Enlightenment takes many forms, and some seek it through the manipulation of a minimalistic environment. By working with the most elemental of mediums—sand, stones, and their surroundings—an artist can focus on finding greater beauty in the transient moment.

Sculpture: Carvings are a particularly enduring form of art, and there are some that have existed since the dawn of the Emerald Empire—or longer. From the carved animal bones decorated by the Yobanjin to the elaborate stone statues that decorate the Imperial Capital, sculpture can be found all across Rokugan.

Woodblock Prints: A popular style of art found in some cities, woodblock printing has ancient roots but has only recently come to prominence in Rokugan. By painting pigment onto a carved board and then pressing it onto relatively inexpensive paper, this art form exists in an odd space. While the artistry involved is clearly superb, the low cost of production has granted it a certain degree of traction with peasants and merchants, leading some samurai to dismiss it as unrefined. Others see the potential for grand creative exploration in this art form thanks to the popularity it enjoys.

- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Creating a new work, brainstorming new possible works, developing new methods and techniques for creating art.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Finding a flaw in a piece and removing it, adding a detail that enhances a piece, hiding a subtle message within a work.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning a work's purpose, discerning whether a work has any supernatural qualities or features and awakening those features within it.

Composition

Literature is an elevated art in Rokugan. Almost all samurai are literate—for holding nearly any office, bureaucratic or military, requires the ability to read and write. However, not all pursue a deeper understanding of wordsmithing or its analysis. Literature allows a character to create powerful compositions that sway readers, and to understand the literary devices and allusions that underlie such influential works. Additionally, the aesthetics of calligraphy are important to many writers in Rokugan, and so, Composition also governs the act of putting words on a surface in ink in a pleasing way.

Composition Approaches

The Composition skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Restoring an old text that has been damaged by time or exposure, annotating a difficult text with references that make it easier for readers to understand, transcribing a work without errors.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Translating a text from another language, adapting a work for a new medium, using an old quote in a new context that reframes its meaning, combining visual elements with textual elements.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Writing a first draft of a new text, filling in the missing gaps of an incomplete text, brainstorming ideas for new written works.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Correcting errors in a work, removing

Table 3-4: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Composition

Task	Check	Time
Refining the draft of a letter	TN 1 Composition (Air) check	Action
Drafting a new poem	TN 2 Composition (Fire) check	Downtime
Translating a work into a different language that one speaks without losing any meaning	TN 3 Composition (Water) check	Downtime
Determining whether a scroll's contents are mystical in nature	TN 4 Composition (Void) check	Downtime
Transcribing a text that has been damaged by fire and smoke without any divergences from the original	TN 5 Composition (Earth)	Downtime

excessive and unnecessary verbiage from a work to make it read more cleanly and quickly, adding a nuanced allusion or reference, introducing implications and subtext into a work.

- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Understanding a writer's deeper purpose behind a work, discerning whether a work has any supernatural qualities or features, learning about oneself from a text.

Design

Design covers the act of making clothes for times of peace and formal occasions. After all, arms and armor are not appropriate for all situations in a samurai's life, much as some individuals might lament this reality. However, that does not mean that a samurai attending court can afford choose their clothing with any less care than when they take to the battlefield. Carefully selected clothes and adornments are vital weapons and armor to courtiers, allowing them to send subtle signals to others and avoid humiliation at the hands of enemies. Thus, the creation, maintenance, and assessment of clothes is an important field of expertise, allowing a character to create and improve on items worn in many formal situations.

Possible Composition Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Composition skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which several or all characters are striving to become great writers and are moving their way up through the echelons of court with their artistic endeavors:

Calligraphy: A calligrapher has but one chance when committing brush to paper, and the strokes they produce say much about them in that moment. Some calligraphers try to represent their feelings in the stroke of a brush, while others focus on composing the work in an aesthetically pleasing way. In some instances, the act of calligraphy becomes a performance itself.

Essays: In the Emerald Empire, the essay is a great challenge to its writer: convention calls for it to present a persuasive argument while adhering to the strict formulas of high-level writing. Oftentimes, the latter stands in the way of the former, and it falls to the essayist to reconcile these two needs.

Poetry: Poetry is, among other things, the act of combining emotion

with wordplay to create art with words. Haiku is one form of poetry, but there are numerous other variations. Rokugani poetry generally does not rely on rhyming due to the particulars of the spoken language, but it does make frequent use of double meanings and puns for both comedic and dramatic effect.

Monogatari (Narrative Literature): Emotion is at the heart of understanding art, and narrative literature is especially effective in allowing the reader to not just observe but empathize with the emotions of others. The introduction of characters, plots, and themes allow a writer to immerse their reader fully in the created world, and this in turn allows the reader to feel the writer's emotions across gulfs in distance and time.

Nikki Bungaku (Travel Diaries): One popular form of literature, travel diaries are generally nonfictional accounts of a journey—though some do embellish occasionally. While some of these accounts are of pleasant pastoral journeys that reflect on the writer's feelings and their natural surroundings, Rokugan is a land where supernatural beings are out and about and mysteries throng in the shadows, so other travel diaries are accounts of adventure, heroism, and horror.

Design Approaches

The Design skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Stitching up a tear in a damaged piece of clothing, storing a piece of clothing such that it will not degrade in quality, replacing lost parts of a piece of clothing.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Repurposing an old piece of clothing to a new function, adding a new element to an outfit to let it function in different circumstances, turning an old piece of clothing into raw materials for a new project.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Sewing a new piece of clothing, inventing a new style, crafting a new accessory, conjecturing about possible new trends in clothing.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Improving an existing piece of clothing with embellishment, choosing clothes that send a specific message, adding filigree to a piece of jewelry that enhances its beauty.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning the deeper purpose for which a piece of clothing was made, discerning whether a worn item has any supernatural features, infusing an object with supernatural properties.

Table 3-5: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Design

Task	Check	Time
Choosing the right color of clothing to express a specific message to someone	TN 1 Design (Air) check	Action
Stitching up damage to a piece of clothing	TN 2 Design (Earth) check	Downtime
Creating a new mask for a Scorpion courtier	TN 3 Design (Fire) check	Downtime
Determining whether a piece of clothing has any supernatural qualities from a distance	TN 4 Design (Void) check	Action
Finding an appropriate replacement for a lost garment among a pile of miscellaneous clothes	TN 5 Design (Water) check	Action

Possible Design Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Design skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which social conflicts are heavily influenced by the accoutrements that the characters bring into them, so different characters can pursue different means to make an impact on their appearance and that of others at court:

Hair Styling: Hair styling and coloration traditions vary greatly by region. Monks and other ascetics tend to shave their heads, while many members of the Crane Clan dye their hair stark white, creating a striking look.

Jewelry: Jewelry is an art with countless uses in Rokugan. Jewelers create pieces that enhance the beauty of their wearers, such as pendants and hair ornaments, which are integral to creating complex hairstyles. Jewelers also work with jade, a sacred material that wards

off evil, making their work extremely vital to the Crab Clan and others who must face the denizens of the Shadowlands.

Layering: As with many other aspects of court life, the way in which one layers multiple kimono conveys meaning. Those skilled in this art can wear a kimono in a manner that evokes specific emotions.

Makeup: From the imposing face paint of the Kuni family, to the makeup used by actors, to the archaic practice of tooth-blackening that died off some centuries ago, cosmetics have had many different uses in the Emerald Empire, the most common of which is simply to enhance the beauty of the wearer.

Weaving: Lady Sun is said to be the original weaver of creation, and her daughter Lady Doji brought the gift of the loom to the mortals of Rokugan. The art and craft of weaving, embroidering, and dying fine fabrics such as silk, satin, and brocade is an art form still practiced by some samurai, especially in the Crane and Phoenix lands.

Smithing

Samurai are warriors, and even their arts are influenced by war. Sometimes, this connection is abstract: a veteran might find reprieve from the demons of the past in flower arrangement, for instance, and bring that experience to the work. At other times, especially in the art of smithing, this connection is very direct; the Smithing skill covers the creation of arms and armor for both ceremonial use and battlefield application. Many samurai go into battle wielding armor and weaponry that are stunning works of art in their own right.

Smithing Approaches

The Smithing skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Repairing a damaged weapon or piece of armor, performing routine upkeep and cleaning on a weapon or piece of armor, properly treating a weapon or piece of armor to prevent rust and corrosion.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Improving an existing weapon or piece of armor, repurposing a weapon to a new function, reshaping a

Table 3-6: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Smithing

Task	Check	Time
Performing maintenance on a sword after normal use in battle	TN 1 Smithing (Earth) check	Action
Honing a blade to improve its edge	TN 2 Smithing (Air) check	Action
Fitting a blade onto a new hilt	TN 3 Smithing (Water) check	Downtime
Forging a new blade	TN 4 Smithing (Fire) check	Downtime
Learning the mystical properties of a suit of armor without knowing its name, history, or creator	TN 5 Smithing (Void) check	Downtime

mundane item into a weapon, cutting down or sizing up a weapon for a new wielder, salvaging a destroyed sword to reforge it.

- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Forging a new blade, crafting a new piece of armor, inventing a new weapon or piece of armor, conjecturing about possible new weapons and armor technologies.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Polishing a blade to hone its edge,

improving a sword's grip for better performance, adding embellishments to a sword to accent the beautiful wave pattern of the steel.

- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning the purpose for which a weapon or piece of armor was forged, discerning whether a weapon or piece of armor has any supernatural features, unlocking supernatural potential within an item, understanding how one can personally wield a specific weapon in accordance with the flow of the universe.

Possible Smithing Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Smithing skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which crafting new weapons and armor is a common activity for the PCs and the story behind this activity is important to those characters.

Armorsmithing: Rokugani armor varies considerably across the Emerald Empire. Lion and Crane armorers tend to layer thin sheets of iron with leather to create lighter armor. The Unicorn and Crab smiths sometimes create plate armor, which uses considerably more metal but also provides more protection. The Unicorn rely on their steeds to make up for the weight and train to compensate, while the Crab often fight from fortified positions on the Wall. In other places, armorers make armor from other materials as well, including silk, cloth, or leather studded with metal, and even from bone.

Bowmaking: From the Unicorn horsebow to the traditional yumi, numerous types of bows exist in Rokugan. The Crab Clan have designed mechanical contraptions—crossbows—that can fire one or

even multiple bolts with the pull of a trigger. Most bowyers specialize in one type of bow as well as creating arrows for that type of bow.

Swordsmithing: Akodo's *Leadership* names the sword as one of the six great weapons of the samurai, and among swords, the katana stands as the most popular among the samurai of Rokugan in the contemporary era. The steel for the blade is prepared through a lengthy process of folding that removes impurities in the metal, leaving behind a distinctive and beautiful wave pattern. A character familiar with swordsmithing can easily tell the region of a blade's origin from the coloration of the metal and the forms in its pattern, and one with a particularly keen eye might even be able to identify the work of a particular smith—though this information can usually also be found stamped on the tang of the blade, which resides within the hilt.

Weaponsmithing: The katana is one of the samurai's most iconic weapons, but some warriors argue that the spear should occupy the highest place of esteem. The spear, the knife, and countless other weapons are also wielded by the warriors of the Emerald Empire, and thus are forged by its smiths.

Social Skill Group

The Social skills relate to interpersonal interaction, and they reflect a character's degree of comfort and adroitness at dealing with others. While these skills have obvious application when one is at court, they are useful to characters in all walks of life. Dedicated warriors must still be able to command their troops or provoke their enemies, and many people outside of the samurai class must be able to be as persuasive as any courtier to get by in life.

Elemental Approaches for Social Skills

Each Social skill represents a character's expertise at dealing with people in a certain context, and each approach dictates a set of results a character can produce when influencing others with that particular ring and skill pair. The elemental approaches of Social skills function as follows.

Reason Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth Ring is cautious and grounded. When used with a Social skill to influence others, it is rational and conciliatory, counseling a slow, thoughtful approach to problems. It is useful to get someone to measure twice before cutting, as the saying goes, or to get them to consider all available information before drawing their sword. A speaker using this approach appeals to reason and obligation rather than passion and desire, reminding the listener of their duties or the risks they face should they act rashly.

A character **REASONS** with someone when they want to:

- Convince that person to listen to reason rather than emotion.
- Soothe that person's emotions.
- Comfort that person.

- Instill discipline in that person.
- Get that person to wait rather than acting rashly.
- Get that person to uphold an existing oath rather than pursuing their personal desires.

Charm Approach (Water Ring)

Flexibility and change are the domain of the Water Ring, and so, Charm, the Water approach for Social skills, revolves around fostering positive emotions in others toward oneself. This approach is frequently based around mutual understanding, sympathy, and shared feelings, or at least the facsimile of these.

A character **CHARMS** someone when they want to:

- Get that person to like them.
- Build a pleasant rapport with that person.
- Offer their sympathies to that person.
- Instill a new desire for something (or someone) in that person.
- Win that person's sympathy.

Incite Approach (Fire Ring)

A Fire approach to a Social skill seeks to persuade through emotional appeals and charisma, rallying others around exciting or novel ideas by inflaming their existing passions, desires, and fears. When deployed

properly, it can get people to fall in line or rally behind a cause. However, such unsubtle approaches are unwelcome in many courts, as this method risks running roughshod over propriety and obligation, both of which can become matters of life and death to a samurai. Further, a character cannot necessarily control the group they have incited to act—stopping them once they are in motion might prove far more difficult than rousing them to a heedless course in the first place.

A character **INCITES** someone when they want to:

- Rouse that person's emotions (positively or negatively).
- Get that person's attention.
- Persuade that person to listen to emotion rather than reason.
- Get that person to ignore the potential consequences of a proposed plan.
- Get that person to prioritize their existing desires instead of their oaths and responsibilities.

Trick Approach (Air Ring)

The Air Ring represents a character's subtle control over their outward countenance and choice of words, as well as their attention to the priorities and façades of others. Thus, the Air approach for a Social skill is Trick, and allows the character to lie, persuasively convey information, and draw out the faults and features of others from the subtle cues they display. Tricking someone does not always mean lying to them directly—it might mean manipulating them into thinking something is their own idea by subtly suggesting it, playing devil's advocate to get them to solidify their position, saying something in a deniable way, or just leaving off a piece of information that might complicate the situation too much—but it is always a form of manipulation, even if it is not malicious.

A character **TRICKS** someone when they want to:

- Get that character to believe something untrue, partially true, or only technically true.
- Obscure a key truth from that character.
- Deflect that character's attention away from someone or something.
- Convey an idea to the character in a deniable way.
- Imply something to that character without stating it outright.

Enlighten Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach to a Social skill seeks to get others to evaluate the wider situation and state of existence. Enlighten, the Void approach to Social skills, allows a character to attempt to shake someone to their core, calling into question the person's fundamental truths. If a person has lost sight of one of their dearest ideals because of rage or despair (or even supernatural forces), this approach can be used to force them to remember it, realigning them with the person they strive to be. If a contradiction exists at someone's core, Enlightening them to it can help them face it, and perhaps eventually overcome it.

A character **ENLIGHTENS** someone when they want to:

- Challenge that person's deeply held beliefs.
- Force that person to question a moral or philosophical truth they believe to be certain.
- Cause that person to remember an experience they had forgotten (or wish to forget).
- Shock that person out of a stupor (mundane or supernatural).

Table 3-7: Additional Social Skill Opportunities

Opportunity	Effect
Any ✨+	Affect one additional character with your check per ✨ spent this way.
Earth ✨	Choose another character in the scene. Increase the TN of that character's next Social skill check made targeting you this scene by 1.
Earth ✨ ✨	Choose another character in the scene; learn that character's composure value.
Fire ✨	Choose another character in the scene. That character suffers 1 strife. Reduce the TN of that character's next check this scene by 1.
Fire ✨ ✨	Choose another character in the scene; learn whether that character's glory is higher or lower than yours.
Water ✨	Choose another character in the scene; reduce the TN of your next Social skill check using Earth, Fire, Air, or Void targeting that character before the end of the scene by 1.
Water ✨ ✨	Choose another character in the scene; learn whether that character's status is higher or lower than yours.
Air ✨+	Choose another character in the scene and one skill per ✨ spent this way; learn the number of ranks that character possesses in these skills.
Air ✨ ✨	Choose another character in the scene; learn whether that character's honor is higher or lower than yours.
Void ✨	Choose another character in the scene. Learn whether that character is conflicted about their objective in this scene.

Social Skill Opportunities

In addition to the example uses of ✨ on checks (see Table 1-2: Example Ways of Spending ✨, on page 18 of Chapter 1: Playing the Game), players and GMs may refer to the following ways of spending ✨ when making a check using the Social skill approaches for more inspiration.

Social Skills

Social skills represent a character's deftness and experience in dealing with other people in various contexts, from court to the battlefield.

Command

The Command skill is used to instill order, whether in court or on the battlefield. It is generally used with subordinates rather than peers or in the context of a clear command structure, as it revolves around telling others what to do (and, usually, expecting them to do it).

Command Approaches

The Command skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Verbally reprimanding a group of soldiers who have grown lax in their duties, establishing order on a chaotic battlefield, making someone afraid of the consequences of their actions.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Cultivating loyalty from troops under your command, motivating troops with a promised reward, getting a mixed force to share a common goal without squabbling, making someone afraid of letting you down.

Possible Command Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Command skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are military commanders and frequently have command of troops.

Instruction: In most samurai schools, teaching others to perform tasks at which you are already skilled is considered an integral part of the learning process. In addition to reinforcing basics, teaching others effectively can be challenging, and it teaches oneself patience and understanding.

Interrogation: Interrogation is the art of extracting information from people who desire to withhold it. While interrogation can include torture, veteran interrogators know that torturing someone will cause them to say what they believe you want to hear rather than the truth, and is thus far less useful than subtler methods.

Intimidation: Samurai are not at the very top of the social hierarchy, but they are certainly near it, and some take great pleasure in reminding those of lower station of their place with a harsh look or withering comment. While this does not especially align with the virtue of Compassion, intimidation can be useful in other circumstances.

- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Restoring morale to weary troops, stoking an old grudge, getting others to follow you despite clear and present dangers to life and limb, making someone afraid of you personally.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Giving an assignment without letting on to the dangers it entails, misleading your own troops to confuse your enemy, communicating in code with your troops.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Convincing troops embroiled in a battle to see its pointlessness, persuading enemy soldiers that their cause is not just, snapping someone out of shock or a rage in battle.

Courtesy

The essential Social skill of Rokugan's highest circles of power, the Courtesy skill represents a character's ability to influence others' opinions, persuade others to a course of action, outmaneuver their opponents, win arguments, steer a conversation in a desired direction, and deliver cunning put-downs—all without ever openly giving offense or stepping beyond the complex rules of Rokugani etiquette. Proper use of courtesy involves the use of High Rokugani, a formalized version of the common tongue meant to give proper respect to the Emperor, his family, and the highest-ranked ministers in Otosan Uchi.

Courtesy Approaches

The Courtesy skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Convincing someone to listen to reason rather than their emotions, reminding someone of their duties, convincing someone to wait rather than acting and suffering potential consequences.

Task	Check	Time
Calming someone with a reminder about propriety	TN 1 Courtesy (Earth) check	Action
Moving up the scheduled date of an appointment with a court official of lower status	TN 2 Courtesy (Water) check	Downtime
Spreading a rumor such that it reaches the ears of an intended person	TN 3 Courtesy (Air) check	Downtime
Getting the attention of someone well above your station (a character with much higher status)	TN 4 Courtesy (Fire) check	Action
Causing a samurai to consider their common humanity with a member of another class of society	TN 5 Courtesy (Void) check	Action

Table 3-9: Sample TNs, tasks, and Times for Command

Task	Check	Time
Convincing an inexperienced soldier that they will likely survive a battle	TN 1 Command (Air) check	Action
Intimidating an average person of lower status	TN 2 Command (Fire) check	Action
Getting a group of samurai from rival clans to work together without friction	TN 3 Command (Water) check	Downtime
Getting a group of armed peasants to rally after breaking formation	TN 4 Command (Earth) check	Action
Getting two characters of status equal to or higher than yours to see that a conflict over perceived slights is pointless	TN 5 Command (Void) check	Action

- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Getting someone to like or trust you, fostering desire for something or someone in a person, discerning someone's current desires, efficiently making your way through the complex bureaucracy of a court by being pleasant and gregarious.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Convincing someone to listen to their emotions rather than reason, reminding someone of their desires, drawing attention to yourself, getting someone to ignore risks before them, insulting someone openly.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone of something untrue (or incomplete), deflecting attention from yourself onto others, spreading a rumor about someone, leading someone to an idea to convince them it is their own, insulting someone subtly and deniably.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Using well-chosen words to get someone to question a truth they held as absolute, getting someone to remember their true self when they are acting out of fear, despair, rage, or supernatural influence.

Games

Games are an important tool at court, serving as a vital outlet for the rivalries that develop in the highest circles of power and as a crucial opportunity to maintain and develop relationships, especially outside of the strict confines that one's station would usually dictate. As a result, success at games is one way a new arrival at court can earn distinction and get access to people of much higher rank, whom they would otherwise be unable to approach. However, only the truly naïve overlook the fact that games are merely a means of social contact, and success in this arena is only useful if each game played serves a purpose in the real contest: the subtle, shifting struggle for power and influence. Skill at games can mean

Possible Courtesy Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Courtesy skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are career courtiers and must very often jockey for position and power with others of their ilk.

Gossip: The greatest courtiers manipulate and leverage the information that circulates throughout the courts of the Emerald Empire,

spreading rumors true and false and maintaining a web of contacts from whom they can always receive the latest news.

Sincerity: The art of maintaining a façade is crucial to courtiers, and Sincerity lets a character develop and maintain a reputation of truthfulness and accountability (even if they possess neither). A character sufficiently versed in this subskill can always present the countenance they desire, and only the most observant can detect flaws in it.

the ability to win, but it can also mean knowing when to orchestrate a graceful loss to advance a more important objective.

Games Approaches

The Games skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Playing without upsetting your opponent, playing cautiously, instructing someone else in the basics of a game, minimizing your losses.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Using a game to build a rapport with your opponent (or someone else present), playing casually, using a game to get your opponent to trust you.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Using a game to make your opponent angry or afraid, playing aggressively, spurring your opponent to wager more, developing new tactics in a game.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Using a game to uncover your opponent's strengths and weaknesses, playing deceptively, cheating, losing purposefully (without it being obvious), sending a subtle message to your opponent through your play.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Using a game to shock your opponent into seeing something clearly, playing minimally, putting the fate of the game to pure chance.

Table 3-10: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Games

Task	Check	Time
Teaching someone the rules of a game	TN 1 Games (Earth) check	Downtime
Making a positive impression on someone during a game	TN 2 Games (Water) check	Downtime
Demonstrating your strategic prowess clearly to someone through a game	TN 3 Games (Void) check	Downtime
Winning double your wagered money at a gambling hall	TN 4 Games (Fire) check	Downtime
Rigging a game in front of a crowd	TN 5 Games (Air) check	Action

Possible Games Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Games skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are likely to often engage in games to prove their skill and wits, either at court or in the command tents while waiting for battles to commence.

Fortunes and Winds: A game of chance that uses five dice (one for each of the traditional elements, and one for the moon, signifying uncertainty). Players (and onlookers) wager on certain combinations of dice resulting from a roll. The origins of the game are uncertain, but it is especially popular in port towns and among sailors.

Gambling: The art of betting on arbitrary events such as the roll of a die or a horse race, gambling can be very simple or extremely complicated, depending on the type of game. It is illegal in some provinces, and it is certainly frowned upon for samurai to participate in it in most places. In rougher locales, such as on the Kaiu Wall, samurai often participate in the occasional game of dice or other wager.

Go: A simple game with nearly infinite strategic depth, go is a game of area control played with stones of two colors on a board.

Kemari: A physical game of dexterity played with a ball that players kick back and forth, kemari is particularly popular in refined courts such as those in Crane lands, as well as in Otosan Uchi.

Letters: The Game of Letters is an ancient contest, said to have grown alongside the Imperial court as it developed into its modern form. In this game, two participants send poems of thirty-one syllables back and forth,

each a response to the last, often with small accoutrements such as flowers or incense attached. The game is said to end when one party responds with an inferior poem to the previous entry—but since there is no formal arbitration, the end point of the game often grows contentious unless one player admits defeat. Note that Letters could also be considered a subskill of the Composition skill, if the GM chooses to include it.

Sadane: A game of insults popular at Winter Court, sadane revolves around contestants making escalating criticisms of a chosen object (or unfortunate individual). Sometimes the game is arbitrated by a judge, while at other times, it is simply played until the contestants tire of it or run out of criticisms to level. Common wisdom marks the subtlest insults as the best in sadane, and the barbs contestants deliver are often envenomed with wordplay and double meanings. The Scorpion Clan has, predictably enough, contributed considerably to the advancement of the game of sadane, but it is the Kasuga family of the Tortoise Minor Clan that has produced some of the most famous players, their dry wit nearly matchless in the Empire.

Shogi: A complex game with the theme of generals commanding their troops in battle, shogi is popular in many military encampments and among samurai who fancy themselves tacticians—whether or not they have seen a battlefield in the last decade.

Sport Hunting: Red meat is eaten inconsistently across the Emerald Empire, but hunting is a popular pastime for samurai in most regions, functioning as a social activity and opportunity to build political ties (rather than a source of sustenance).

Performance

The Performance skill pertains to the act of entertaining others with active arts, from song to dance to storytelling. Performances of sufficient caliber can help to bridge political divides, influence people to rethink their lives, or even set off artistic or political movements.

Performance Approaches

The Performance skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Transmitting some moral lesson to your audience, soothing your audience, educating your audience on a particular matter, setting your audience members' minds at ease.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Gaining your audience's sympathy, causing your audience to desire something, building a positive rapport with your audience.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Rousing your audience into a state of excitement, intentionally needling your audience, stirring your audience to immediate action.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Giving an extremely convincing performance, getting your audience to come to a particular conclusion, playing to your audience's tastes, impersonating others.

Table 3-11: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Performance

Task	Check	Time
Reciting a popular poem to win over your audience	TN 1 Performance (Water) check	Downtime
Performing a traditional tea ceremony that sets the participants at ease	TN 2 Performance (Earth) check	Downtime
Impersonating someone else's voice and posture at a distance	TN 3 Performance (Air) check	Action
Performing a play that causes someone of higher status to reflect upon a major decision	TN 4 Performance (Void) check	Downtime
Singing a song that drives a bedraggled army into a frenzy against the enemy	TN 5 Performance (Fire) check	Downtime

- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Causing your audience to reevaluate something in their lives, breaking your audience out of an emotional rut such as sorrow or rage, delivering a message to your audience through supernatural interference.

Possible Performance Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Performance skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns centered on a group of artist PCs, whether they are courtiers rising to prominence or a troupe of entertainers making their living on the fringes of society.

Acting: There are numerous forms of theater in the Emerald Empire, including traditions such as Nō and Kabuki.

Dance: Artistic dance has numerous uses in Rokugan, from popular performance to religious rituals.

Instruments: Musical performances are a popular source of entertainment at many courts. Traditional instruments such as drums, flute, shamisen, biwa, and numerous others have long been used in the Emerald Empire. The Unicorn Clan adopted and developed numerous different instruments, including the morin khuur, during their journeys, many of which are a major part of their unique musical traditions today.

Puppeteering: Puppets, usually controlled from within rather than marionettes with strings, are a popular form of entertainment in the Emerald Empire. Tales of warriors, demons, sacrifice, and triumph come alive through the deft gestures of skilled artisans of this craft. The similar tradition of shadow puppetry, which places cut-out shapes in front of a light source, is especially prevalent in the Islands of Spice and Silk, and has thus come to some of Rokugan's cities through the Mantis Minor Clan.

Singing: The use of the human voice for the creation of music is, unsurprisingly, popular in the Emerald Empire. From bawdy tavern songs in the lowliest village to beautiful serenades before the highest courts, songs can be found everywhere.

Storytelling: Perhaps as ancient as the campfire, storytelling still plays a major role in the Emerald Empire. Storytellers are especially venerated in some regions, especially among the Phoenix Clan, which prides itself on maintaining not just records but this living memory of the past.

Scholar Skill Group

Scholar skills revolve around acquiring, recalling, expanding, and leveraging the information that a character has absorbed over the course of their life.

Elemental Approaches for Scholar Skills

The elemental approaches of Scholar skills function as follows.

Recall Approach (Earth Ring)

An Earth approach to a Scholar skill is thorough and detailed; it starts by establishing the fundamentals and then builds from there. Once a character has been prompted to discuss a topic, Recall allows them to draw forth facts that expand upon that topic. However, because it can only build upon a solid foundation, a character cannot Recall information about something completely novel or unfamiliar, and they must use other approaches to gather enough context to know which facts are relevant to the situation at hand.

A character uses RECALL when they want to:

- Remember and recite information.
- Commit things to memory via rote memorization.
- Create a detailed time line of a topic to date.
- Pore over their own memories of something they observed firsthand.

Survey Approach (Water Ring)

The Water Ring is practical and results-oriented. Survey, the Water approach to a Scholar skill, focuses on information as it pertains to the environment right in front of the thinker. This allows a character to identify things in front of them and gain wider information about their circumstances based on what they can currently perceive. A character can use Survey to get enough information to begin a deeper inquiry, but this approach generally cannot delve beneath surface-level information such as identification.

A character uses SURVEY when they want to:

- Identify something they are currently observing.
- Become oriented in an environment.
- Narrow their search for something to a small area.
- Look for physical cues related to a topic in their surroundings.
- Perceive lurking threats in an area.

Theorize Approach (Fire Ring)

Fire is creative and flashy, even in its approach to the Scholar skill. Theorize, the Fire approach for Scholar skills, is imaginative, seeing the possibilities instead of the certainties. It is good for approaching the unprecedented and the unforeseen, but reckless conjecture can sometimes lead it to incorrect conclusions. Taking a Fire approach to a Scholar skill allows a character to come up with a novel idea for how something might function or behave based on limited evidence. However, if the character is wrong, or simply missing key underlying information, they might well come up with a fanciful answer that, while interesting, is far from true.

A character uses THEORIZE when they want to:

- Connect the dots between two seemingly unrelated pieces of information.
- Conjecture an explanation for a physical phenomenon or unexplained occurrence.
- Brainstorm possible solutions to a problem.
- Come up with a list of foreseeable outcomes of a future event.
- Determine that something is conspicuously missing from an area.

Analyze Approach (Air Ring)

The Air Ring frequently deals with nuances and subtleties, and therefore the Air approach to a Scholar skill, Analyze, focuses on uncovering and understanding details. Analyze allows a character to unveil hidden things, focus on minute details, and hone in on traits possessed by people and objects. It also allows a character to infer subtle meanings about people from their countenance, objects, or statements.

A character uses ANALYZE when they want to:

- Study the details of a physical object or idea.
- Learn about a particular trait of a subject.
- Infer something about a person from their countenance, their statements, or an object.
- Find an object they know to be hidden in an area.
- Search a small area in detail.
- Untangle an apparent contradiction.

Sense Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach to a Scholar skill is an attempt to look beyond worldly circumstances to see that physical appearances and even time are illusory. Sense, the Void approach to a Scholar skill, is rooted in an understanding that supernatural forces are at the root of the world and that what is yet to come is already written in what the viewer can observe now. It represents hunches and other seemingly supernatural hints a character might receive about a topic. It also allows a character to take a possibility they have already thought up (such as by Recalling or Theorizing it) and determine how likely it is to occur.

A character uses SENSE when they want to:

- Rely on their instincts and hunches for information.
- Understand the spiritual ramifications of an action.
- Predict the likelihood of a particular outcome to a future event.
- Sense a supernatural presence or influence in their vicinity.

Scholar Skill Opportunities

In addition to the example uses of ✨ on checks (see Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending ✨, on page 18 of Chapter 1: Playing the Game), players and GMs may refer to the following ways of spending ✨ when making a check using the Scholar skill approaches for more inspiration.

Table 3-12: Additional Scholar Skill Opportunities

Opportunity	Effect
Any ❖+	Provide an insight that reduces the TN of the next friendly character's check this scene by 1 per ❖ spent this way.
Earth ❖	Thoroughly review a topic in your mind to discern whether there is information left to be gained from it or not.
Fire ❖	Have a flash of insight to realize something nobody else has considered about a related (or unrelated) topic.
Water ❖	Notice a seemingly unrelated lead in the environment that offers an avenue to pursue.
Air ❖	Discern some fact of interest about an individual to whom the check pertains.
Void ❖	Realize whether or not the angle of inquiry under investigation is worthwhile.

Scholar Skills

Scholar skills are those for which the primary sphere of expertise is not practice in the physical sense, but a body of knowledge that must be acquired, maintained, and honed through academic study.

Culture

The Culture skill covers knowledge of the Emerald Empire's customs, traditions, trends, and practices. This includes knowing the proper etiquette for the many different situations a samurai must deal with, as well as staying current with the fashions that hold sway over the courts of provincial lords and even the Emperor.

Culture Approaches

The Culture skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Knowing the proper way of greeting samurai and those of other classes, knowing the formalities of entering

and leaving a room, knowing the names of the most influential members of a particular court, knowing the particular customs of a region.

- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying a fellow samurai using their clan, family, and personal mon (crest); identifying an object's region of origin; identifying a samurai's general status by their manner of dress; identifying which cultures have influenced a location.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Assessing the likelihood of a character's committing an honorable or dishonorable act, theorizing the proper decorum for an unusual social situation, anticipating political trends in different regions.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Detecting traces of a regional accent in a character's speech, discerning a character's feelings about honor and Bushidō, noticing slight imperfections in a mon or personal chop that reveal it to be a forgery, recognizing hints of dishonorable character traits.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Identifying the purpose traditions fulfill in society, identifying the rising stars at a particular court, sensing a character's ease or uneasiness in a given social situation.

Table 3-13: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Culture

Task	Check	Time
Finding your way to the right part of a festival	TN 1 Culture (Water) check	Action
Guessing what an unfamiliar idiom might mean	TN 2 Culture (Fire) check	Action
Determining the significance behind an unfamiliar cultural practice	TN 3 Culture (Void) check	Action
Remembering the mon of a Minor Clan from a distant region of the Empire	TN 4 Culture (Earth) check	Action
Untangling a complex paradox created by two conflicting tenets of the Code of Bushidō	TN 5 Culture (Air) check	Downtime

Possible Culture Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Culture skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills, to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns where the PCs are career courtiers who must stay aware of many different spheres of influence and power.

Bushidō: This subskill pertains to the Code of Bushidō, both in theory as it is expressed in Akodo's *Leadership* and also in practice as it has been applied by different samurai throughout the ages.

Etiquette: The Emerald Empire is a large country, and it could be considered to consist of multiple distinct cultures rather than a single unified set of beliefs—even if there are some shared similarities between the most disparate of regions. This subskill covers cultural expectations and knowing the written and unwritten rules of behavior for samurai. The more expansive a character's knowledge, the more

familiar they are likely to be with not just the etiquette of their homeland, but that of distant provinces as well.

Heraldry: Any samurai in Rokugan can likely name icons of the seven Great Clans, but the study of heraldry goes far deeper, covering household emblems and the symbols of Minor Clans, along with their significance and the subtle nuances that organization within a heraldic display can represent.

Region [Any One]: Learning everything about the geography and culture of the Emerald Empire would be the work of a lifetime. In fact, some chroniclers have made it their goal, but few who have undertaken such journeys have claimed real success, for each discovery they have made has revealed more to learn. These subskills cover knowledge of how people live in various parts of the world, such as the Crane lands, Otosan Uchi, or Burning Sands.

Possible Government Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Government skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are confidantes in the retinue of a daimyō or other powerful political figure with a need for day-to-day logistical expertise.

Bureaucracy: The rule of law comes at a price: bureaucracy. Though burdensome, it is a price most samurai gladly accept. Organizing and dealing with large groups of people and navigating the Emerald Empire's bureaucratic structure are crucial to ruling the Empire and require training as specialized as any warrior's regimen.

Law: The Emerald Empire's legal code is mired in centuries of accretion, precedent, and Imperial fiat. It values testimony based on status rather than on evidence, meaning that true justice can be hard to

come by. Still, some who desire to see justice done, such as the Kitsuki Investigator School's famous investigators, are able to use this arcane system to achieve fair outcomes despite the hurdles the system itself throws in their way.

Logistics: Daimyō take in taxes from their domains and pay some portion of these to the Emperor—but the rest are needed to maintain their own domains. Supply management is a crucial part of rule, and this subskill provides vital knowledge of how to effectively acquire, transport, and use supplies across a domain, province, or battle line.

Warfare: This subskill covers wisdom in the gravest of arts—how and when to wage war on a logistical level, how to run and organize military campaigns, what makes for an effective leader, and how to avoid the mistakes of past rulers in the prosecution of war.

Government

The daimyō of the samurai clans, who rule the various provinces of the Emerald Empire in the Emperor's name, must serve in many capacities. Each of these individuals must be part warlord, part courtier, and part bureaucrat, and they must act effectively in each of these spheres to maintain their rule. This encompasses a strong understanding of political machinations, a solid foundation in logistics, and a familiarity with Rokugan's strict and sometimes arcane legal system, which favors status rather than testimony and propriety over evidence. Most daimyō keep a number of valued retainers who are experts in these fields close to them for consultation, and any samurai who wishes to advance within their clan's structure must know how to rule.

Government Approaches

The Government skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Knowing the letter of the law, knowing the explicit structure of government, knowing about past events and legal precedents, knowing political history and precedent in detail, knowing past scholars of history and law and quoting their works.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying an illegal act, reading the tacit structure of power, determining who to ask to get something done within a system, identifying classical schemes and ploys put into play by one's opponents.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Understanding the various ways the law could be applied in an unprecedented case, framing an argument about why the law should be applied differently in a particular instance, guessing the political ramifications of a new ruler's ascension.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Finding a contradiction or loophole in a system or the law, assessing a political opponent's strengths and weaknesses, studying a system in detail to find the places where pressure can be applied to get specific results.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Knowing how likely a given verdict is in a particular case, identifying the mostly likely candidate who will next hold a position, knowing the likelihood of success for a particular ploy or scheme.

Table 3-14: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Government

Task	Check	Time
Identifying the specific member of a lord's staff who can actually help you get something you want	TN 1 Government (Water) check	Action
Knowing whether a proposed action is legal or not	TN 2 Government (Earth) check	Action
Creating a plea that a law be applied nontraditionally in a specific instance	TN 3 Government (Fire) check	Downtime
Finding a legal loophole you can exploit	TN 4 Government (Air) check	Downtime
Foreseeing where shortfalls in supplies will occur after studying the outlined plan for a military campaign	TN 5 Government (Void) check	Downtime

Medicine

More practical in its application than some other Scholar skills, Medicine covers knowledge of the human body and its function.

However, Medicine is also a practiced art, and so it often behaves like an Artisan skill (using those approaches to apply the knowledge uncovered with the Scholar approaches). While any skill can operate with another skill group's approaches, it is fairly common for Medicine, and so several examples of when it uses Artisan skill approaches are noted below.

Medicine Approaches

The Medicine skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Studying and recalling existing remedies and other recipes, creating bandages and medical supplies (*Restore* approach), stanching blood loss (*Restore*), mending other minor harm (*Restore*).
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying helpful and harmful herbs, gathering ingredients, finding hazards and contaminants in an

environment, brewing remedies (*Adapt*), speeding patients' recovery from long-term illness and injury (*Adapt*).

- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Studying new medicines and treatments, treating unknown ailments, experimenting with unknown ingredients (*Invent*), brewing poisons (*Invent*), instilling patients with energy (*Create*).
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Recognizing symptoms, diagnosing diseases and ailments in patients, performing surgery in the field or a place of healing (*Refine*), administering medicines and poisons in the proper dosage (*Refine*).
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Detecting spiritual ailments, working entirely without ingredients, realigning the energy in others (*Attune*), treating spiritual ailments (*Attune*).

Table 3-15: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Medicine

Task	Check	Time
Diagnosing a common illness correctly	TN 1 Medicine (Air) check	Action
Identifying useful herbs from the woods	TN 3 Medicine (Water) check	Downtime
Recalling the proper proportion of ingredients in a medical recipe	TN 3 Medicine (Earth) check	Action
Combining ingredients in a nontraditional way to treat a disease	TN 4 Medicine (Fire) check	Action
Realigning internal energy to help someone recover from a spiritual malady	TN 5 Medicine (Void) check	Downtime

Possible Medicine Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Medicine skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These subskills are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are involved in scientific discovery or research.

Anatomy: Knowledge of the specific structure of the human body is considered somewhat uncouth—after all, the only way to get it is to go digging around inside of corpses, which are unclean, or to read the writings of someone who did. The Scorpion Clan, ever willing to dirty its hands in the service of the Emperor, imparts many of its agents with knowledge of anatomy, that they might both seize the advantage in battle and survive it to be useful again.

Chemistry: Alchemists have long sought immortality through strange concoctions and admixtures—and while there have been

explosive missteps, some of these have borne useful knowledge. The flammable powder behind *hanabi*—fireworks used at festivals and as signal flares—was one such discovery. Knowing how to mix two substances together to create potent effects is always valuable (though knowing when not to mix two substances lest they explode can be even more valuable!)

Poisons: Poisoning trails medicine like Bayushi once trailed Shiba, the dark twin. They were born of the same knowledge and are inextricably linked. If a person knows how to heal, they know how to harm, for many cures become deadly poisons if applied wrongly or in excess. Opium can dull the pain of a wound or let a patient survive surgery that might otherwise kill them—but it can also dull the mind or even kill. Poisons are, unsurprisingly, favored by certain members of the Scorpion Clan, for they can level the greatest divide between warriors.

Sentiment

The Sentiment skill reflects a character's ability to understand the psychology and emotions of others. It is used to spot emotions like hostility and fear in others, empathize, and know how people will behave based on their emotional state. It is also used to see through lies—and understand why those lies are being told.

Sentiment Approaches

The Sentiment skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Detecting inconsistencies between someone's current and past behavior, understanding someone's fears and responsibilities, determining how best to set someone at ease.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Discerning someone's personal feelings about a person or subject (and whether they are positive, negative, or neutral), detecting whether someone's intentions are hostile, understanding someone's desires, determining how best to win someone's approval or support.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Determining whether someone has left out important details or told you a lie of omission, catching that someone has left out something important, understanding someone's convictions and ideals, determining how best to excite or enrage someone.

- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Knowing whether someone is lying to you directly, knowing how a choice or action will make someone feel, understanding someone's self-perceptions and vulnerabilities, determining how best to get someone to do something you want.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Determining whether someone is under the effects of supernatural persuasion or a supernatural being, determining whether someone is acting in opposition to their own

Table 3-16: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Sentiment

Task	Check	Time
Determining whether someone likes you or not	TN 1 Sentiment (Water) check	Action
Discerning whether someone is conflicted about their current course of action	TN 2 Sentiment (Void) check	Action
Detecting a subtle tell in someone's countenance that indicates that they are bluffing	TN 3 Sentiment (Air) check	Downtime
Assessing a statement for possible lies of omission or missing information	TN 4 Sentiment (Fire) check	Action
Viscerally and deeply understanding the fears of a person from a different walk of life than yourself after only a brief conversation	TN 5 Sentiment (Earth) check	Downtime

Seeing Through Lies

Sentiment is the skill used to discern whether someone has lied to you, and each approach possesses a different means of doing this. However, remember that this is not the first defense a character has against being lied to—a character's vigilance sets the TN of an opponent's check to successfully lie to that character in the first place (see Checks to Resist Effects, on page 16). Therefore, most of the time, a character should not make a check to resist a lie with their Sentiment skill by default.

If the opponent's check to tell the lie exceeds the character's vigilance, it means that the character can't tell that the person is lying offhand, but that doesn't mean they're obligated to believe that person, either—especially if they have reason to think there might be contradictory evidence somewhere. At this point, if the character still harbors suspicions, they can spend an action (or even a downtime activity) performing a Sentiment check to find a crack in the lie, based on the approach used:

Recall Approach (Earth Ring): Lets you know whether they're behaving differently than in past encounters with you. This might reveal a bad liar by one of their tells, or suggest that someone is lying unwill-

ingly. If someone tells an easily verifiable lie, the Earth approach of Recall might also be used to pull forth the correct information needed to disprove them, usually paired with the skill that pertains to the relevant body of knowledge.

Survey Approach (Water Ring): Lets you know whether someone has your best intentions at heart. This doesn't reveal whether or not they're lying, of course, but it might give you a hint not to trust what they say either way.

Theorize Approach (Fire Ring): Lets you figure out whether someone neglected to mention something important. However, it's less useful against direct lies.

Analyze Approach (Air Ring): Lets you know whether someone lied directly, but if they constructed their lie carefully enough, it might not help you get an answer.

Sense Approach (Void Ring): Lets you uncover what someone wants to accomplish with their words. This might or might not help break through a lie, but it is almost always useful as part of the greater game of intrigues.

desires or is suppressing their emotions, knowing the purpose behind someone's words.

Theology

Theology covers knowledge of religious philosophy, doctrine, and practice. A character can use Theology to know about kami, the Fortunes, and the powers and deities associated with Shinseism and other religious traditions, as well as to perform supplications to these powers. A character versed in Theology is also versed in religious history and associated knowledge, including astronomy (for the study of portents) and the related fields of metaphysics and science with mystical implications.

Theology is also the skill used for most invocations, the powerful appeals to the kami that shugenja make to wield astonishing elemental powers. However, for most characters, Theology does not involve such flashy displays, dealing more in the doctrines and histories of the various spiritual traditions of Rokugan. It usually entails rituals of philosophical and religious significance, as well as communion with the forces of the universe on a more subtle level. Not everyone has the potential to be a shugenja—and perhaps more importantly, the shugenja schools guard their secrets jealously—so most priests in the Emerald Empire are humble keepers of the faith, serving the kami via proper veneration and performing social and religious functions for their communities. Monks, courtiers, and even bushi also study Theology frequently, for a variety of personal and societal reasons.

The Art of Investigation

Legend of the Five Rings does not use any one skill for perceiving one's environment or drawing conclusions about it; instead, various approaches of other skills cover this activity. Most often, the task of investigating an object or place uses the Scholar skill group approaches relevant to the information the character wants to acquire.

Within the fiction of the game, this reflects the fact that perceptiveness is in large part derived from one's expertise. Sharp senses can be helpful, to be sure, but knowing what to look for is far more crucial.

For example, a skilled weaponsmith will be far more able to see subtle details in the pattern of a blade than those of a forest, and can identify the significance of minor nicks and dents that even the keenest survivalist would not notice. It also allows different characters to shine in different fields and show off their expertise in their respective areas of strength.

Below are a number of common examples of investigations characters might undertake:

Table 3-17: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Investigations

Task	Check	Time
Noticing someone in a crowded room who has unconcealed hostile intent and could be a danger	TN 1 Sentiment (Water) check	Action
Discerning that someone is lying about a commonly known historical event by remembering it correctly	TN 2 Government (Earth) check	Action
Searching a criminal's abandoned hideout to determine their goals based on what they took with them	TN 3 Skulduggery (Fire) check	Downtime
Finding an object that a shugenja has rendered invisible	TN 4 Theology (Void) check	Action
Learning a potentially identifying detail about a killer by studying a weeks-old corpse	TN 5 Medicine (Air) check	Downtime

Theology Approaches

The Theology skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Knowing facts about the formal doctrines of religious traditions of the Emerald Empire, knowing about historical occurrences of supernatural events, correctly reciting scripture, communing with Earth kami.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying religious artifacts and supernatural phenomena, knowing how the average person of a given walk of life interacts with spiritual traditions, relating a piece of scripture or quote to your current situation, researching a piece of scripture to learn its meaning, communing with Water kami.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Guessing what supernatural forces might be at work based on secondary evidence, reconciling two contradictory pieces of religious doctrine, offering a novel explanation of the meaning of a piece of scripture, communing with Fire kami.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Determining how religious or spiritual a person is and what traditions they follow, finding and reconciling contradictions within scripture, communing with Air kami.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Performing divinations, determining the veracity of a supernatural occurrence, predicting the behavior of supernatural entities, knowing the philosophical ramifications of a decision, communing with the root of the universe.

Table 3-18: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Theology

Task	Check	Time
Performing a basic divination or reading to determine whether a time or action is auspicious, ill-omened, or conflicted for a particular character	TN 1 Theology (Void) check	Action
Properly performing a common ceremony, such as a harvest blessing	TN 2 Theology (Earth) check	Downtime
Explaining scriptural nuance to the less educated in a way they can easily relate to	TN 3 Theology (Water) check	Action
Finding the right piece of scripture that will convince someone of higher status to reconsider a stated plan	TN 4 Theology (Air) check	Action
Coming up with a cosmological explanation for a miracle that occurred centuries ago	TN 5 Theology (Fire) check	Downtime

Possible Theology Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Theology skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are shugenja, monks, and other spiritualists from very different traditions who must work together to face supernatural threats to the Empire.

Ancestor Worship: While most Rokugani venerate their ancestors to some degree—and many samurai can claim a degree of divine ancestry thanks to the founding Kami, who built the Emerald Empire—some theologians take this further than others. The Kitsu Medium School specializes in communing with the honored departed. Its members wield unique abilities as a result of their special faith, and other spiritual traditions also claim the ability to pierce the veil of time and speak to one's predecessors.

Astronomy: The study of the Heavens is inextricable from the study of the future, for portents in the sky are a source of many prophecies, both beneficent and dire. As a result, however, Rokugani stargazers have grown quite adept at predicting the patterns of the heavens, and centuries of records give scholars deep insights into the nature of the universe.

Divination: The desire to read the future is as ancient as any form of mysticism, and numerous traditions in Rokugan purport to be able to unlock the future's mysteries. The Seppun onmyōji claim to be able to read it from the stars, while there are those in Dragon lands who look to the ash marks upon the shoulder bones of oxen cast into the fire to see the future's course.

Fortunism: The Seven Great Fortunes are figures of great religious significance in the Emerald Empire—they are worshipped by most people to varying degrees. Many people also worship lesser Fortunes and local kami that inhabit sacred spaces. Each Fortune holds sway over a particular domain of life, and people seek out their temples and shrines when in need of their particular blessing.

Invocation: Invocation is the art of relating with, understanding, and communing with the kami directly, often to produce visible effects in the world. Knowledge of this art is largely confined to the shugenja families of the Great Clans, the priests of the samurai class charged with serving the kami and using their prayers in service of their clans.

Mahō: The evil sorcery known as mahō is powered by blood—that of the user or their victims, whether willing or unwilling. The purer the blood, it is said, the greater the power it imparts, and the more powerful the kansen that will answer the summoner's call. These corrupted kami found in the Shadowlands are no less enigmatic than their counterparts that exist in sacred spaces, but their thirst for true desolation makes them single-minded and terrible in a way even the raging spirit of a wildfire or tsunami cannot match.

Shinseism: The Tao of Shinsei is perhaps the most read single religious text in Rokugan—and oddly, it seems to stand in contradiction to the common worship of the founder Kami and the theory of the Celestial Order on certain points of cosmological order. Some clans, such as the Lion Clan, have never adopted Shinsei's path, while others, especially the Phoenix Clan, have made it integral to their faith, coexisting with their relationship with the founding Kami.

Martial Skill Group

In theory, any samurai could be called to battle in service of their lord at any moment. In practice, only bushi, the martial members of the caste, are expected to march to war with any frequency, to defend their homes or claim lands in the name of their lord. After all, it would be foolish for a lord to waste a skilled courtier by sending them to the front—though it does happen occasionally, especially when said courtier has made one too many careless remarks in their lord's presence. As a result, many samurai are less focused around the rough skills of warfare and might practice them only as a contemplative exercise, as a way to achieve self-mastery, or in times of dire need. Other samurai embrace the soldier's lifestyle and find themselves restless when stuck at court.

Elemental Approaches for Martial Skills

Each approach of a Martial skill represents a tactical goal that a character can pursue while fighting or undertaking a related activity—maintaining a solid guard, moving fluidly, crushing the foe with unrelenting force, or others. The elemental approaches to Martial skills function as follows.

Withstand Approach (Earth Ring)

An Earth approach to a Martial skill focuses on solid basics, firm defenses, and simple, reliable tactics. Martial arts often revolve around seemingly endless drilling in these basics, and even those who have achieved a degree of mastery are expected to put considerable time and energy into the upkeep of such skills. A character practicing this approach moves through obstacles slowly and carefully, without risking harm. An Earth approach is consistent and safe, but also predictable—therefore, it is most favorable in situations and terrain where the enemy has no choice but to fight at a disadvantage. The Earth approach to a Martial skill frequently revolves around setting up in such a position and then waiting patiently for the perfect moment to strike. If the enemy can slip through the defenses of a character practicing a Martial skill with an Earth approach, however, the technique or tactic's rigidity turns from a strength to a weakness in an instant.

A character uses **WITHSTAND** when they want to:

- Meet hardship head-on and shrug it off.
- Move slowly and carefully.
- Wear their foe down.
- Lift and carry heavy objects.
- Practice a technique that relies on endurance above all.

Shift Approach (Water Ring)

The Water approach to a Martial skill focuses on meeting force with softness and softness with force. Instead of attempting to overcome a foe at their strongest point, the Shift approach relents until the moment the foe overextends, then turns to crushing power in an instant. A character practicing this approach slides past obstacles fluidly, without expending energy unnecessarily. The greatest vulnerability of the Water approach to a Martial skill is an enemy who can afford to wait. To capitalize on the use of the Water approach, a character must have force to turn against itself.

A character uses **SHIFT** when they want to:

- Redirect force rather than stopping it.
- Move via the most expedient path.
- Use their foe's energy against them.

- Slide through tight spaces or shifting crowds.
- Practice a technique that relies on flexibility above all.

Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring)

The Fire approach to a Martial skill focuses on direct and crushing force, against which no foe would dare stand firm. By abandoning caution, the Overwhelm approach hopes to win the battle in the mind, guaranteeing victory of the body. It moves through obstacles with the swiftness and fury of a wildfire, with no regard for the consequences. The Fire approach is frequently meant to inspire confusion or panic, and at its heart, it is always unrelenting, pressing the foe at every turn so that they cannot regroup or stabilize. However, the risks of the Fire approach are obvious—any gap in the onslaught is a vulnerability that a cunning enemy will exploit, and a character taking the Fire approach will have no defense against it. Still, so long as there is no relief to be had from their attack, the Fire approach can serve a character well in battle.

A character uses **OVERWHELM** when they want to:

- Meet force with opposing force of their own.
- Move rapidly and heedlessly.
- Break objects and obstacles with brute might.
- Force their foe to meet them head-on.
- Practice a technique that relies on power above all.
- Terrify an enemy through aggressive action.

Feint Approach (Air Ring)

The Air approach to Martial skills is opportunistic and evasive, using agility and cunning to create and exploit openings. It vaults over obstacles gracefully, taking advantage of new positions the enemy did not expect. This can allow a character taking the Air approach to a Martial skill to overcome an entrenched enemy, cleverly flanking them or feinting an attack on another target to open up their defenses. However, the Air approach to a Martial skill risks becoming an unnecessary flourish. In battle, the only objective is to destroy the enemy without hesitation, and a cunning plan can become a snare for the schemer who created it in the face of overwhelming force.

A character uses **FEINT** when they want to:

- Evade oncoming force with minimal effort.
- Move precisely and subtly.
- Slip past a foe's defenses into an advantageous position.
- Land acrobatically (and safely).
- Practice a technique that relies on grace above all else.

Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring)




The Void approach to a Martial skill is formless, and it gives away no information. By being without form until the moment of action, it is entirely unpredictable. On the other hand, this approach is unable to take advantage of preparations. As a tactic, the Void approach can startle an enemy certain of their overwhelming power, causing them to reconsider a winning move. However, it is often an all-or-nothing gamble, and a character who takes the Void approach to a Martial skill puts a certain

part of their fate in the hands of the universe.

A character uses SACRIFICE when they want to:

- Meet force without any resistance to create an opportunity.
- Act unpredictably.
- Move without regard to their own life.
- Make an intentionally risky move to sow doubt in the opponent's mind.
- Practice a technique that relies on centering oneself within the universe above all else.
- Leave the outcome of a strike to fate.

Martial Skill Opportunities

In addition to the example uses of  on checks (see Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending , on page 18 of Chapter 1: Playing the Game), players and GMs may refer to the following ways of spending  when making a check using the Martial skill approaches for more inspiration.

Martial Skills

Martial skills represent a character's experience at fighting, preparing for war, and making decisions on the battlefield.










Fitness

Fitness is a reflection of a samurai's capacity to perform feats of physical prowess and grace. It governs activities such as running, leaping, lifting heavy objects, marching long distances, swimming quickly, and other physical activities that rely on quick bursts of power and precision or sustained physical effort. Additionally, the Fitness skill governs a character's ability to avoid lethal harm when struck, resist the Shadowlands Taint, and recover from poison and disease. Any veteran with real battlefield experience knows how to take a hit to minimize its impact, and thus knows the crucial importance of maintaining the edge on their physical fitness both during wartime and days of peace.

Fitness Approaches

The Fitness skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Moving cautiously, pushing one's body up to the breaking point without suffering permanent harm, marching long distances, holding up heavy objects for long periods of time, hiding by standing still, shrugging off hits with toughness.

Opportunity	Effect
Any  +	You may sheathe one of your readied weapons per  spent this way.
Earth 	You complete the task safely, or as safely as possible, reducing the harm you suffer to the minimum amount. In a conflict, ignore the effects of difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.
Fire  +	You complete the task with more haste and vigor than others anticipate. In a conflict, at the beginning of the next round, increase your initiative by 1 per  spent this way.
Water  +	You move fluidly, gaining or closing distance quickly. In a skirmish, you may move 1 additional range band per  spent this way before or after completing your action.
Air 	You perform the feat with extreme precision or hit a specific part of your target. In a conflict, if this is an attack that causes a critical strike that applies a condition or disadvantage, you choose the condition or disadvantage.
Void 	You put mind over matter and perform the feat despite all odds. In a conflict, ignore the effects of one condition you are suffering until the end of your next turn.

- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Moving around obstacles and through crowds without slowing, fitting through small spaces, performing exercises to speed recovery from injury, losing someone in terrain or a crowd, rolling with the punches.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Moving without heed for obstacles, leaping long distances, pushing and lifting heavy objects quickly, breaking things, catching someone in a footrace, blocking hits with force.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Moving stealthily, maintaining balance, trailing someone without them realizing it, falling safely and landing gracefully, evading someone in a footrace, controlling where hits land on your body or evading the worst of a blow.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Acting on sheer instinct, pushing one's body beyond the breaking point to achieve a goal, overcoming physical limitations with sheer will, taking hits directly.

Possible Fitness Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Fitness skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are warriors or infiltrators who are frequently tasked with overcoming environmental challenges with stealth, speed, or stamina.

Acrobatics: The Acrobatics subskill represents a character's training in contorting their body and keeping their balance. Acrobatics also covers activities such as running, climbing, jumping, and tumbling when agility is required, such as when an infiltrator tries to evade their pursuers by leaping over walls and running atop rooftops.

Athletics: The Athletics subskill deals with feats of strength and en-

durance including swimming, throwing, lifting, sprinting, running long distances, distance jumping, and climbing.

Defense: The Defense skill reflects a samurai's training in dodging or, as a last resort, deflecting incoming blows. In campaigns where Defense is used, the Fitness checks typically used to resist effects from techniques may be replaced with the Defense skill at the GM's discretion.

Stealth: Walking or running without being seen or heard is governed by the Stealth subskill. Stealth can also be used to hide in place or lay in wait to spring an ambush. Honor demands that samurai show respect for their enemies by confronting them face-to-face, but less honorable individuals who value pragmatism over propriety may stoop to sneaking about in the shadows when the need arises.

Table 3-20: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Fitness

Task	Check	Time
Vaulting over a short gap	TN 1 Fitness (Fire) check	Action
Sneaking past the average person	TN 2 Fitness (Air) check	Action
Marching a long distance without tiring	TN 3 Fitness (Earth) check	Downtime
Squeezing through a very tight gap	TN 4 Fitness (Water) check	Action
Instinctively waking from unconsciousness in response to immediate danger	TN 5 Fitness (Void) check	Action

Martial Arts [Melee]

Martial Arts [Melee] covers combat with close-quarters weapons in both practice and theory.

Martial Arts [Melee] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Melee] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Fighting defensively, blocking carefully, exhausting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on stamina.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, baiting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on fluidity of motion and flexibility.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Fighting aggressively, attacking directly, unnerving your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on bursts of speed and power.

Table 3-21: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Martial Arts [Melee]

Task	Check	Time
Slipping out of the center of a tavern brawl as it starts without being harmed	TN 1 Martial Arts [Melee] (Water) check	Action
Hitting a target in range with the Strike action (see page 165)	TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] (Any) check	Action
Intimidating the average person with your fighting prowess	TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] (Fire) check	Action
Stealthily dispatching a single Minion NPC guard outside of a conflict scene without alerting others	TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee] (Air) check	Action
Safely subduing a small group of armed Minion NPCs outside of a conflict scene without killing any of them or being hurt	TN 4 Martial Arts [Melee] (Earth) check	Action
Discerning the best way to defeat a single foe in armed melee combat	TN 5 Martial Arts [Melee] (Void) check	Downtime

- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Fighting subtly, attacking indirectly, outmaneuvering your opponent, evading attacks, practicing techniques that rely on grace and poise, reading your opponent's moves.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Fighting instinctively or without regard for your life, attacking without regard for anything else, putting mind over matter.

Possible Martial Arts [Melee] Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Martial Arts [Melee] skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are all warriors of one stripe or another, and thus have strong incentives to train with and wield numerous different weapons to face different battlefields and foes.

Bōjutsu (Staff Fighting): The staff is a simple, versatile, and deeply flexible weapon. Monks and shugenja often favor staves.

Iaijutsu (Quick-Draw): The formalized dueling of Rokugan relies on specialized quick-draw sword techniques known as iaijutsu.

Kenjutsu (Swordplay): The katana is the most prominent form of the sword within contemporary Rokugan, but numerous other types of blades are used regionally. From the elegant jian and unique hook swords favored by some Dragon Clan duelists, to the enormous zanbatō used by the Matsu family in response to a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Unicorn Clan some centuries ago, to the cutlasses used by Mantis sailors, there are many types of swords in Rokugan.

Sōjutsu (Spear Fighting): The spear is an ancient weapon, and a highly revered one in Rokugan. The Phoenix and Crane Clans in particular have an affinity for spears and other polearms, as do some families within the Unicorn Clan, who favor the reach they provide. Pole

weapons are also crucial to the defense of the Kaiu Wall, and many Crab Clan warriors wield halberds among their numerous armaments.

Heavy Weapons: The Crab Clan regularly faces enemies that are inhumanly tough, and as a result, its warriors commonly wield weapons that would be excessive in many other contexts. Massive hammers, spiked iron clubs, and other such weapons are certainly effective against human opponents—provided one has the strength to wield them—but they are absolutely necessary when facing ogres with skin like iron and oni that can shrug off the mightiest of sword strokes.

Chain Weapons: Nunchaku, meteor hammers, flails, kusari-gama, and other hinged or chain weapons are relatively rare as battlefield equipment, but they are common enough in certain martial arts traditions in Rokugan. The Mantis Minor Clan's martial arts style, which draws heavily from the local fighting style of the Islands of Spice and Silk, uses such weapons, as do several monastic traditions in the interior of Rokugan.

Ninjutsu (Ninja Weapons): This subskill covers weapons of assassins, spies, and other individuals who view honor more as a pretty ideal than as a way to live one's life. Ninjutsu includes specialized blades, blowguns, shuriken (as both ranged and melee weapons), and other such tools of assassination. Note that this subskill can also function as a subskill of Martial Arts [Ranged].

Possible Martial Arts [Ranged] Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Martial Arts [Ranged] skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are all warriors of one stripe or another, and thus have strong incentives to train with and wield numerous different weapons.

Kyūjutsu (Archery): There are several prominent archery styles in Rokugan. Traditional archery is practiced standing, but the Unicorn Clan specializes in horseback archery, and it features prominently in their strategic doctrine. Other variations exist across the Empire, differing based on the characteristics of their bows and the specifics of

the draw technique employed.

Crossbows: The Crab Clan's unique situation has led to many technological innovations, not the least of which is the crossbow. From atop the Wall, the Crab Clan can have even modestly trained recruits rain death upon the advancing armies of Fu Leng with these contraptions.

Ninjutsu (Ninja Weapons): This subskill covers weapons of assassins, spies, and other individuals who view honor more as a pretty ideal than as a way to live one's life. These include specialized blades, blowguns, shuriken (as both ranged and melee weapons), and other such tools of assassination. Note that this subskill can also function as a subskill of Martial Arts [Melee].

Martial Arts [Ranged]

Martial Arts [Ranged] covers combat with thrown and projectile weapons in both practice and theory.

Martial Arts [Ranged] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Ranged] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Maintaining a consistent field of fire, suppressing targets, firing to keep targets from overtaking a position, properly sheathing ranged weapons.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, baiting your opponent, firing to create openings to reposition.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Firing to create openings in the enemy line, firing to allow allies to advance, firing to terrify the enemy.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Firing without giving away your position, hitting specific parts of your target, firing to create vulnerabilities in the target's defenses.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Exposing yourself to get a shot on your target, putting your faith in the universe that your shot will find its mark.

Martial Arts [Unarmed]

Martial Arts [Unarmed] covers combat with the body as one's primary weapon in both practice and theory, as well as the use of some improvised weapons.

Martial Arts [Unarmed] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Fighting defensively, blocking forcefully, exhausting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on stamina.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, baiting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on fluidity of motion and flexibility.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Fighting aggressively, attacking directly, unnerving your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on bursts of speed and power.

Table 3-22: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Martial Arts [Ranged]

Task	Check	Time
Identifying the best piece of cover nearby	TN 1 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Water) check	Action
Hitting a target in range with the Strike action (see page 165)	TN 2 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Any) check	Action
Unnerving the average person with a warning shot	TN 2 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Fire) check	Action
Maintaining a fortified position against less than ten attackers	TN 3 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Earth) check	Downtime
Picking off a single sentry from outside a camp without alerting the camp	TN 4 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Air) check	Action
Visualizing a target so accurately that you can hit it without any perception of it	TN 5 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Void) check	Action

Table 3-23: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Martial Arts [Unarmed]

Task	Check	Time
Slipping out of the center of a tavern brawl as it starts without being harmed	TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check	Action
Hitting a target in range with the Strike action (see page 165)	TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Any) check	Action
Intimidating the average person with your fighting prowess	TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check	Action
Subduing a small group of unarmed Minion NPCs outside of a conflict scene without killing any of them or being hurt	TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check	Action
Dispatching a single Minion NPC guard outside of a conflict scene without alerting others	TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check	Action
Discerning the best way to defeat a single foe in unarmed combat	TN 5 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void) check	Downtime

- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Fighting subtly, attacking indirectly, outmaneuvering your opponent, evading attacks, practicing techniques that rely on grace and poise.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Fighting without regard for your life, attacking without regard for anything else, putting mind over matter.

Meditation

Martial skills are defined by struggle, and for many warriors, the greatest struggle is the one within. Meditation is the skill that covers these battles fought in one's own mind, the skill used to process one's own emotions, recover mental control when shocked, and resist confusion and supernatural influence of the mind. War might be a samurai's pursuit, but a human being at war must face the steady erosion of the soul it can cause or risk succumbing completely to brutality. Most samurai train in Meditation both to ready their minds for the terrors of battle and to seek greater cosmic knowledge within themselves.

Meditation Approaches

The Meditation skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Using logic to overcome your personal feelings, reflecting on the nature of your responsibilities, maintaining a level head despite challenges and provocation, resisting temptation.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Understanding your own emotions and desires, reflecting on the nature of your desires, understanding how to align your goals with your desires, resisting rage.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Using your emotions to reject a seemingly inevitable conclusion before you, staying focused on a single topic, maintaining an emotional state for long periods of time, resisting fear.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing yourself of the truth of something, finding weaknesses in your viewpoints and ideologies, understanding how to align your goals with your ideals, resisting despair.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Understanding one's place in the universe, understanding the role fate has provided for you, knowing what you are willing to give up to achieve your goals, seeing glimpses of your own future, resisting supernatural mental interference.

Table 3-25: Sample TNs, tasks, and times for Meditation

Task	Check	Time
Shaking off your fear after seeing a grisly corpse	TN 1 Meditation (Fire) check	Action
Stoically bearing tragic news without allowing your true feelings to show	TN 2 Meditation (Earth) check	Action
Determining whether one of your desires is healthy for you or not	TN 3 Meditation (Water) check	Downtime
Intentionally convincing yourself of a lie	TN 4 Meditation (Air) check	Downtime
Reflecting deeply on an upcoming decision to know which choice will help you achieve the outcome you intend	TN 5 Meditation (Void) check	Downtime

Table 3-24: Sample TNs, tasks, and times for Martial Arts [Unarmed]

Task	Check	Time
Slipping out of the center of a tavern brawl as it starts without being harmed	TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check	Action
Hitting a target in range with the Strike action (see page 165)	TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Any) check	Action
Intimidating the average person with your fighting prowess	TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check	Action
Subduing a small group of unarmed Minion NPCs outside of a conflict scene without killing any of them or being hurt	TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check	Action
Dispatching a single Minion NPC guard outside of a conflict scene without alerting others	TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check	Action
Discerning the best way to defeat a single foe in unarmed combat	TN 5 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void) check	Downtime

Possible Martial Arts [Unarmed] Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are all warriors of one stripe or another, and thus have strong incentives to train in multiple combat styles.

Brawling: Brawling is usually less of a formal pursuit and more of a matter of practical experience, but the ability to face multiple opponents at once with fists, feet, teeth, and whatever is on hand is undeniably helpful when a battle breaks out in a sake house.

Jūjutsu (Grappling): The art of controlling force in oneself and one's foes, jūjutsu is Rokugan's most prominent formal unarmed martial art, and is practiced by many samurai lest they have to defend themselves while unarmed.

Sumō (Wrestling): A martial art consisting of full-contact wrestling, sumō literally means "striking one another." The Sumō subskill is best known in Crab lands as sumai, and legend states that its techniques were developed to wrestle demons to the ground. Recently, it has become a popular avenue for rōnin to make money in large cities. When performed publicly as part of a sumō match, this subskill may be used to sway a crowd with the Social skill approaches.

Other Unarmed Combat Traditions: There are numerous additional unarmed combat traditions in Rokugan, as well as traditions that teach a mix of armed and unarmed techniques. Monks of certain sects practice styles unique to their temples, while many peasants study homegrown unarmed techniques to protect their villages against bandits and other threats. Any specific tradition could constitute a subskill if the GM desires, with a specialty defined by its function and the techniques it teaches.

Tactics

Samurai learn many arts, but the practice of war is their most core function. And while it may be that every battle's outcome is decided before the first soldier moves, it falls to battlefield leaders, from generals to squadron sergeants, to make that outcome a reality. Tactics governs battlefield leadership, from the general's tent to the front line, and reflects a character's awareness of the flow of battle and their ability to both stick to their orders and also seize the opportunities that arise to greatest effect. While the Command skill is used to motivate soldiers, restore morale, and maintain order, the Tactics skill is used to manage troops who are already obedient effectively. Where the Government skill handles logistics in the lead-up to battle, the Tactics skill governs a character's ability to think and react once the battle is joined.

Tactics Approaches

The Tactics skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Resisting a head-on assault, holding a point at all costs, mitigating losses during a retreat, overseeing the construction of siege weapons.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Executing a counterattack, repositioning swiftly after an attack, taking full advantage of useful terrain, moving and operating siege weapons.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Executing a head-on assault, overrunning the enemy, breaking enemy morale with terrifying tactics, designing siege weapons.

Trade Skill Group

The majority of the populace of the Emerald Empire survive thanks to their skill at various trades, from farming to commerce to more specialized tasks like medicine and sailing. Samurai are generally not expected to gain expertise in these fields, but some find these skills too useful to ignore.

Elemental Approaches for Trade Skills

Each approach of a Trade skill is a means by which a character can extract resources from their environment or perform work of some kind that provides for their needs or those of society.

Produce Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth approach for a Trade skill covers the activities a character must undertake to establish a foundation for living, such as creating infrastructure and buildings, creating and maintaining equipment, planting and harvesting crops, mass-producing common items, and keeping records related to these activities.

A character uses PRODUCE when they want to:

- Harvest resources from their environment.
- Mass-produce items related to their trade.
- Repair or maintain trade equipment.
- Build and repair foundations and basic structures.
- Create records or tallies of their work.

Exchange Approach (Water Ring)

The Water approach for a Trade skill revolves around finding things and making acquisitions—of basic supplies, of commodities, and of customers. It

Table 3-26: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Tactics

Task	Check	Time
Assessing the strategic value of a piece of terrain	TN 1 Tactics (Water) check	Action
Finding a gap in the enemy's defenses that you can lead a sizable force through secretly	TN 2 Tactics (Air) check	Downtime
Coming up with tactics that obscure your identity even from an enemy commander you know well	TN 3 Tactics (Void) check	Action
Finding and sealing every entry point in your castle's defenses	TN 4 Tactics (Earth) check	Downtime
Orchestrating a plan to terrify an enemy force into fleeing despite its superior numbers	TN 5 Tactics (Fire) check	Downtime

- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Executing a feigned retreat, flanking the enemy, discerning weaknesses in the enemy's defenses and targets of interest.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Sending a unit to die to create a strategic opening, commanding a force without revealing one's identity to the enemy.

is used whenever a character wishes to go about trading one type of resource or labor for another, and it is especially useful when dealing with currency.

A character uses EXCHANGE when they want to:

- Purchase items related to their trade at the best price.
- Barter goods or services for other goods or services.
- Track down specific items within a marketplace.

Innovate Approach (Fire Ring)

The Fire approach for a Trade skill allows a character to use creativity and drive to make their work easier, create new things, or find new ways to solve problems.

A character uses INNOVATE when they want to:

- Create a novel product or service.
- Develop a new tool for their trade.
- Find new uses for a product or new applications for a service.
- Expand to new markets.

Con Approach (Air Ring)

The Air approach to a Trade skill revolves around understanding the value of things better than everyone else and then ruthlessly exploiting this advantage to get something for nothing. It can be used to manipulate people's perception of an item's value, getting them to pay more for it or making it easier to steal it. This approach also governs most criminal activity that falls into the category of theft (from pickpocketing to embezzlement), bribery, and smuggling.

A character uses CON when they want to:

- Sell a product for an amount higher than its common value.
- Pick someone's pocket.
- Falsify a manifest or other record.
- Offer someone a bribe in a deniable fashion.
- Disguise a shipment of contraband as legal goods.

Subsist Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach naturally reflects a certain material disinterest that is at odds with Trade skills. Instead of building, changing, or exploiting the environment, such an approach centers around finding the resources that already exist and using them only as much as needed. Many ascetics take to the wilds, seeking food and shelter from the natural world rather than changing it to their needs—though some do starve.

A character uses SUBSIST when they want to:

- Live in harmony with their natural surroundings rather than trying to change them.
- Instinctively know what changes will occur in their environment.
- Know whether an activity will help their chances of survival or not.

Trade Skill Opportunities

In addition to the example uses of ✨ on checks (see Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending ✨, on page 18 of Chapter 1: Playing the Game), players and GMs may refer to the following ways of spending ✨ when making a check using the Trade skill approaches for more inspiration.

Trade Skills

Trade skills are the means by which most people of the Emerald Empire make their livelihoods. These skills of the common people are looked down upon by some samurai, but they are obviously vital to the continued existence of the Empire and its ruling class.

Commerce

The Commerce skill covers the buying and selling of goods for a profit, as well as related activities. To operate any sort of business successfully, a character must have at least a cursory proficiency in this skill, for without it, they are sure to see their fortunes collapse.

Table 3–27: Additional Trade Skill Opportunities

Opportunity	Effect
Any ✨+	Reduce any glory you have staked to perform a Trade skill in an inappropriate context by 1 (to a minimum of 0).
Earth ✨	When producing, double the amount of work you are able to complete in the given time.
Fire ✨	Choose a skill; you have a flash of insight inspired by your current task that reduces the TN of the next check you make with the chosen skill this game session by 1.
Water ✨	When buying an item or service, instead of paying the monetary price for it, identify something you can trade to the seller in exchange for the item.
Air ✨+	When selling an item or service, increase the price the buyer will pay by an additional 10% per ✨ spent this way (to a maximum of an additional 50%).
Void ✨	Reduce the supplies or time you use to complete the task by half.

Commerce Approaches

The Commerce skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Balancing accounts, storing and maintaining merchandise, moving merchandise safely.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Buying goods from wholesalers, finding a good deal on items and services, bartering on favorable terms, getting an item as cheaply as possible.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Finding ways to make your product or service distinctive, creating new incentives for customers, inventing a new product or service, finding a new market to serve.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone your goods are of the highest quality or best price, determining a product's monetary value, getting as much money out of a customer as possible, assessing the competition's progress and possible weaknesses.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Operating with minimal expenditures, stretching supplies as far as possible, knowing how product values will change in the future.

"Low" Skills

Trade skills pertain largely to the tasks of the common people of the Emerald Empire, and though they are not intrinsically dishonorable or inglorious, some of them are considered inappropriate for privileged individuals such as samurai to perform for themselves in many contexts. For instance, at court, discussing money in any but the most clandestine terms is terribly uncouth, and buying or selling items directly would be unacceptable. Similarly, a samurai would not want to be seen doing manual labor in most contexts—though on the battlefield, personally assisting in reinforcing a barricade might become a necessity due to circumstances.

A character does not lose honor or glory simply for possessing or even using these skills. However, using these skills openly in the company of characters of higher status, particularly in formal contexts,

opens the character up to gossip and criticism concerning why they feel the need to possess or flaunt such pedestrian expertise. Of course, these rules are not cast in stone, and they vary regionally. When on a hunt, use of the Survival skill is obviously appropriate—and among the Unicorn, any samurai worthy of the name is expected to be skilled at tracking and felling various beasts, even if the Crane are likely to view them dimly for doing so.

When a character wishes to use a Trade skill in front of a character with higher status in an improper context, the character of lower status must stake glory equal to their glory bonus. If the higher-status character offers no criticism, the glory of the character who used the Trade skill's staked glory is restored after they complete the task.

Labor

Shinsei spoke highly of the simple virtues of manual work, and while most samurai (and most peasants, for that matter) disagree with his glowing assessment, none can deny society could not exist without a great deal of backbreaking labor on somebody's part. From farming to construction to simple ditch-digging, there are countless tasks that must be completed for the Emerald Empire to continue functioning.

Labor Approaches

The Labor skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Mass-producing items, laying groundwork and foundations, maintaining tools, plowing fields, planting seeds, harvesting crops.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Acquiring items and tools, negotiating with tax collectors, fermenting harvested goods, cooking food.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Developing tools to make your work easier, drafting new plans and designs, experimenting with new methods, creating new recipes.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Overseeing others on a project effectively, covering over flaws in one's work, disguising one sort of object as another, pretending to work.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Knowing how to expend minimal supplies in your work, using the natural landscape to do your work for you, knowing when to let a field lie fallow for a better season later, knowing the best location to build.

Possible Labor Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Labor skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are *ji-samurai*, *rōnin*, or commoners who must work for a living.

Agriculture: The Crane lands are home to the most productive farmland in the Emerald Empire—though recent events have left the Crane struggling to recover from natural disasters and more. Most clans have some amount of their economy supported by farming—generally rice, but also barley, millet, oats, and other grains. Agriculture takes different forms in other regions, including the growing of hardier crops in the mountains the Dragon and Phoenix Clans inhabit.

Construction: Without infrastructure, Rokugani society would collapse immediately, and without people to dig ditches, mend fences, and build houses, infrastructure would be impossible. Though such labor is generally considered beneath the station of a samurai, some clans, such as the Dragon Clan and the Crab Clan, encourage their members to understand it—albeit for different reasons. Members of the Dragon Clan, especially Togashi monks, tend to partake of honest labor to cleanse their spirits, while members of the Crab Clan must know how to maintain the Kaiu Wall in emergencies lest the whole of Rokugan be swallowed by the endless hordes of Fu Leng.

Table 3-28: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Commerce

Task	Check	Time
Maintaining operations of a storefront without losing money	TN 1 Commerce (Void) check	Downtime
Getting someone to sell you an item at a 10% discount	TN 2 Commerce (Water) check	Action
Getting someone to pay an extra 10% for an item	TN 3 Commerce (Air) check	Action
Finding a minor inconsistency in the accounts of an individual	TN 4 Commerce (Earth) check	Downtime
Creating a new product that customers actually desire	TN 5 Commerce (Fire) check	Downtime

Table 3-29: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Labor

Task	Check	Time
Discerning how well a field will produce crops	TN 1 Labor (Void) check	Action
Cooking a pleasant meal	TN 2 Labor (Water) check	Downtime
Mass-producing a single, uncomplicated item	TN 3 Labor (Earth) check	Downtime
Directing a crew to build a solid fortification on the battlefield	TN 4 Labor (Air) check	Downtime
Designing a more efficient irrigation system	TN 5 Labor (Fire) check	Downtime

Seafaring

Though many Rokugani live their whole lives without seeing the ocean, it has an enormous impact on the entire country, even far beyond shores and inlets. A great deal of Rokugan's food production comes from the sea, as do other vital useful things such as salt. Further, despite Rokugan's relatively inhospitable policy toward foreigners, foreign trade does occur in numerous port cities, both under the sanction of the Empire and clandestinely. The Mantis Minor Clan consists in large part of hardy sailors who have ventured onto the seas, reaching the Islands of Spice and Silk, the Ivory Kingdoms, and locales more distant still.

Seafaring Approaches

The Seafaring skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Maintaining boats, maintaining ship logs and records, knowing facts about historical routes, knowing how long supplies will last, fishing aboard a ship.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Navigating on the ocean, knowing which routes are the fastest with the current winds, determining your current location, operating a boat.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Building new boats, mapmaking, pioneering new routes.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone to hire your ship instead of the competition, managing sailors during a voyage, trailing another ship without being noticed, escaping a pursuing vessel, tracking another ship.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Sensing storms before they descend, placating ocean and wind kami.

Table 3-30: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Seafaring

Task	Check	Time
Knowing the expected weather for a voyage at a certain time of year	TN 1 Seafaring (Earth) check	Action
Knowing the route another ship captain will take	TN 2 Seafaring (Air) check	Action
Sensing a storm before it descends	TN 3 Seafaring (Void) check	Action
Keeping a boat steady (and afloat) during a small storm	TN 4 Seafaring (Water) check	Downtime
Building a raft or small rowboat	TN 5 Seafaring (Fire) check	Downtime

Skulduggery

The rule of law is not absolute in the Emerald Empire, no matter how harsh the consequences for breaking the law often are. Criminal elements exist in every major city, and often outside of them in the form of bandits and other dispossessed individuals who eke out a living at the expense of others. While brigands and thieves usually turn to this path out of necessity and almost invariably struggle to survive, some criminals are tremendously successful, creating massive cartels and criminal operations that spread across numerous cities. Skulduggery also includes the craft of spies, for while their goals may be different than those of petty criminals, many of the tricks they use are similar.

Skulduggery Approaches

The Skulduggery skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Securing a location, creating measures to keep people out, memorizing maps and codes, dividing spoils in an organized manner.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Finding a fence to sell stolen items to, knowing how to move freely through a city while avoiding law enforcement, determining how to break into a secure facility.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Creating maps and secret codes, creating new tools for criminal activities, concocting complex plots to slip past security measures, picking an unfamiliar lock.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Picking someone's pocket, shadowing a mark without being noticed, organizing a group of thieves on a job, tracking someone through a city, knowing the right bribe to secure a corrupt official's cooperation.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Erasing all trace of your presence, blending into a crowd, placating spirits and other supernatural beings who might punish you for your sins.

Table 3-31: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Skulduggery

Task	Check	Time
Knowing the best escape route through a city	TN 1 Skulduggery (Water) check	Downtime
Clandestinely observing an average mark for a day to get information about their habits	TN 2 Skulduggery (Air) check	Downtime
Scrubbing all evidence you broke into a room	TN 3 Skulduggery (Void) check	Downtime
Memorizing a map of a castle fully before a break-in	TN 4 Skulduggery (Earth) check	Downtime
Building a device to sap a castle wall	TN 5 Skulduggery (Fire) check	Downtime

Possible Skulduggery Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Skulduggery skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These subskills are best suited to campaigns in which the PCs are ninja or otherwise likely to personally attempt intrigue plots, assassinations, and similar clandestine deeds.

Crime: Whether it's smuggling banned substances or foreign goods, counterfeiting legal goods, or simple racketeering, criminal enterprises have flourished throughout Rokugan's history. Such activities are below proper samurai, of course, but in the shadowy alleyways of Rokugan's largest cities, even samurai can fall prey to the lure of wealth and power. The Crime subskill can reflect a character's participation or orchestration of such activities, including leading gangs or networking with local dealers. More often, the Crime subskill can be used with the Scholar approaches to reflect a magistrate's knowledge of the criminal element in their territory and the major names associated with such organizations.

Sleight of Hand: Through a combination of distraction and deftness of fingers, a character can lift items off another character or pilfer objects from a room without being noticed. Besides criminals, performers frequently master this art to entertain a crowd with tricks. Of course, unscrupulous magistrates may also find legerdemain beneficial when trying to collect evidence against an individual.

Survival

By weight of numbers, most Rokugani are farmers, but in many parts of the Emerald Empire, this is not enough to completely support one's living. While the verdant farmlands that have provided the Crane Clan with incredible economic power for centuries are dedicated farmlands, many villages border forests, mountainsides, or swamps from which villagers can extract additional resources. Whether this means hunting, fishing, gathering plants, or even small operations such as prospecting for ore and other valuable trade goods, it is crucial to the survival of many people in Rokugan. Samurai tend to have only a passing familiarity with this sort of subsistence living, though some clans and schools—in particular, the Dragon, given their rugged environs, and the Unicorn, with their love of travel and the hunt—encourage their members to learn basic proficiency at survival in the wild.

Survival Approaches

The Survival skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Creating shelter, storing food, calming animals.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Foraging for food and potable water, fishing, befriending animals, cooking familiar ingredients.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Finding ways to cook unfamiliar ingredients, building makeshift weapons, creating tools, spurring animals to move quickly or fight.

Table 3-32: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Survival

Task	Check	Time
Spurring a horse to reach a destination more quickly	TN 1 Survival (Fire) check	Action or Downtime
Finding enough food to sustain yourself for several days in the forest	TN 2 Survival (Water) check	Downtime
Building shelter in the wild	TN 3 Survival (Earth) check	Downtime
Setting a trap to catch a large animal such as a boar or bear	TN 4 Survival (Air) check	Downtime
Knowing that a natural disaster is about to occur based on subtle changes in your environment	TN 5 Survival (Void) check	Action

- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Making and using traps, tracking people and animals in the wild, getting animals to do things they normally would not (often using food as an incentive).
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Rationing food and water, sensing natural disasters before they occur, placating mountain and forest kami.

Possible Survival Subskills

The following areas of expertise are currently covered by the Survival skill, but the GM might choose to separate one or more of the following as subskills to serve the specific game they are running. These subskills are best suited to campaigns in which all of the PCs must often deal with horses and other animals, especially in time-sensitive situations.

Animal Handling: Falconry is one popular pastime in Rokugan, and numerous other animals are kept as pets and trained to do various tasks. Animal Handling covers the care, nurturing, and training of animals.

Nature: The natural world holds countless wonders, and it is the subject of much art as a result. Knowledge of individual species, environ-

ments, and phenomena is covered by this subskill, along with their cultural connotations. The Nature subskill is most often used with Scholar approaches, but with the Trade approaches it can be used to gather herbs, find the choicest specimens at a market, or blaze trails in wild vistas.

Riding: Horseback riding is relatively common among the samurai of the Emerald Empire, but the Unicorn Clan are the only ones who make it a way of life. However, horses are not the only creatures that can be ridden by humans: the warriors of the neighboring Ivory Kingdoms have been known to ride elephants into battle, making their forces especially terrifying and deadly.

Chapter 4: Techniques

TECHNIQUES are special abilities that a character can use in a variety of circumstances. They represent advanced training that let a character act in unexpected ways or exploit opportunities others would overlook.

Technique Structure

Each technique has a number of parts, described below:

Category

Different characters wield different abilities, and each character is granted access to a number of technique categories by their school (see **Schools** on page 33). The different categories are as follows:

- **Kata:** Kata are specialized combat techniques that allow the most skilled practitioners of the martial arts to vanquish even foes who exceed them in physical strength, speed, or agility. They are primarily practiced by bushi and other dedicated martial artists, but some courtiers also learn them in case they are called upon to take to the battlefield.
- **Kihō:** Kihō are philosophical and spiritual techniques for aligning one's inner energy—*ki*—to that of the wider cosmos. This allows practitioners to act in perfect harmony with the universe's natural course and, in doing so, tap into its limitless potential. They are primarily practiced by monks and others seeking spiritual enlightenment. Kihō have additional elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void).
- **Invocations:** Invocations are prayers and offerings to powerful spirits in exchange for earthly support, and they are jealously guarded by the shugenja families that have discovered them. They are primarily practiced by shugenja, the priests of the samurai class, and those with strong connection to these groups. Invocations have additional elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void).
- **Mahō:** Mahō are evil sorcerous techniques, dark pacts made with wicked spirits in exchange for diabolical powers. They are practiced only by sorcerers called *mahō-tsukai*.
- **Rituals:** Rituals are religious ceremonies, performed by spiritualists across the Emerald Empire. They tend to be ceremonial, lengthy, and of esoteric effect rather than the immediate and flashy invocations displayed by shugenja, but they are nonetheless vitally important to many monks, priests, and other religious figures.
- **Shūji:** Shūji are verbal and social techniques, allowing those who employ them to communicate clearly, avoid social traps, motivate their allies, and manipulate their rivals. They are primarily practiced by courtiers and other characters who specialize in speechcraft, but many schools for bushi, monks, and shugenja teach them to help navigate political obstacles or lead on the battlefield. Shūji have additional elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void).

Name

Each technique has a **NAME**, though this name is not necessarily used by all who practice the technique. Different schools might have different ways of describing similar tactics and moves, and in some cases (such as invocations), these are noted in an "Other Names" field. Alternate names have no mechanical effect, but players are encouraged to use them in and out of character to help play up the unique traditions of their individual schools.

XP Cost

Each technique costs a set amount of XP. A technique's **XP COST** is listed in its entry.

Description

Each technique has a description to give the GM and players an idea of how it functions in the fiction of the game. The description has no mechanical effect, but sometimes imposes narrative limitations on the technique, and should be considered a guideline for how it works in the story.

Prerequisites

If a technique has any school ranks, ring values, skill ranks, other techniques, or other attributes that a character must possess to purchase the technique with experience, these are listed in the **PREREQUISITES** field. Some techniques have no prerequisites, in which case this category is not listed. Note that if a character receives a technique during character creation (or at another time) for which they do not meet the prerequisites, they can still use this technique—prerequisites apply only to the option to learn the technique by spending experience.

Activation

In addition to its category, each technique has an **ACTIVATION**, which specifies when and how it is used, what targets are affected, the range limitations for it, any checks the character must perform to make the technique work, any circumstantial requirements it has, and any other pertinent information about how a character goes about wielding the technique. Techniques specify some or all of the following information in their activation field.

Use

All techniques specify how a character who knows the technique puts it to use. Common uses are as follows:

- **As an Action:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "as an action" or "as a [type] action," it means that the character must perform an action during a conflict scene to activate the technique. If the action lists one or more types, it possesses these types. Most techniques that require an action to activate also require a check (also listed), and have effects based on the success or failure of that check, as described in **Effects**, below.
- **As a Downtime Activity:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "as a downtime activity," it means that the character must spend a downtime scene to accomplish the task. Most techniques that require a downtime scene to activate also require a check (also listed), and have effects based on the success or failure of that check, as described in **Effects**, below.
- **When Making a Check:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "when making a check" or "when making a [skill/skill group] check using [ring]," it means that the character can activate the technique only during checks using the specified skill, skill group, ring, or skill and ring combination. Most techniques that activate "when making a check" also require additional resources to activate (usually spending ☼).

Check

If a technique requires an action or downtime scene to activate, it generally also requires a separate check, which is also specified in the activation field, along with its TN. If the check does not specify a ring, it can be performed with any ring (such as the one matching a character's current stance in a conflict scene), and if it lists a skill group, it can be performed with any skill from that group.

Targets

If a technique contains the phrase “targeting one character” or “targeting [a number] of characters,” the characters specified are considered to be the targets of the technique.

Range

If a technique contains the phrase “at range [number]” or “at range [number]–[number]” in relation to a target or area it affects, it can only affect those targets or areas that fall within the specified range. If a technique would affect a target beyond the specified range, the effects of the technique are not resolved against that target, as described in **Choosing Targets Outside of Range**, on page 155.

Effects

Each technique lists the effects that occur after the character performs the activation. Each paragraph represents a distinct effect. See **Actions** on page 155 for more details on resolving action effects. Effects that begin with “If you succeed” only resolve if the check specified in the activation was successful. Effects that begin with “If you fail” only resolve if the check specified in the activation was unsuccessful.

Kata

Kata are martial techniques, sets of moves that warriors practice while training to gain the edge when they find themselves in combat situations. Kata allow a combatant to perform incredible martial feats and capitalize on openings that might slip away from less skilled combatants. Kata can be used in duels and skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists “kata” among its available techniques can purchase kata.

The kata in this section are organized alphabetically by their school rank prerequisite.

School Rank 1 Kata

The following kata have a prerequisite of school rank 1.

Iaijutsu

Description: The bushi draws their blade and cuts in a single, fluid motion.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action using one sheathed Razor-edged weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] check** targeting one character at range 1–2.

Effects: You draw and ready the sheathed weapon in a one-handed grip.

If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's deadliness plus your bonus successes.

Resisting with Checks

Sometimes, effects produced by techniques or other sources will call upon a character to “resist with a [specified check].” In such cases, the affected character must attempt the check, with the GM (or the character's stance, during a conflict) selecting the ring based on the character's methods of avoiding the negative effect as normal.

Persistent Effects

Some effects persist for a set duration (such as “until the beginning of your next turn,” “for one round plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes,” or “until the end of the scene.”). These effects end once the stated end point is reached.

A character cannot benefit (or suffer) from more than one instance of the same persistent effect, even if this effect would be applied by multiple different sources. If a character would benefit (or suffer) from more than one instance of the same persistent effect, the character chooses which one applies if it is beneficial; the GM chooses which one applies if it is harmful.

New Opportunities

Many techniques that involve checks list one or more uses of ✨ specific to the check to activate the technique. Some uses of ✨ are preceded by a requirement for the type of ✨, such as “Air ✨” needing to be activated with an ✨ symbol from a check using the character's Air ring.

New Opportunities

✨: As part of this action, you may choose and ready one additional sheathed Razor-edged weapon.

✨✨: After performing this action, you may sheathe one readied weapon.

Soaring Slice

Description: Jerking their arm in a sudden motion, the bushi hurls their weapon at the enemy, hoping to take the foe off-guard or create a gap in their defenses.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon in a one-handed grip, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** with the appropriate skill for the weapon targeting one character at range 2–3.

Effects: You hurl your weapon at the target. It travels a number of range bands toward the target equal to the maximum range of the technique.

If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✨+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✨ spent this way.

✨: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action against the target before the end of your next turn by 1.

Striking as Air

Description: A fundamental rule of martial arts is to withdraw after striking, for a blade left embedded in a foe is useless and an overextended kick is a vulnerability others will exploit. A punch should return even faster than it lands, and a blade should be readied for the next strike as part of the follow-through. After striking, the bushi matches their motions to their foe's, moving as their enemy does to eliminate the best angles of attack.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Air) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Air ☯+: Increase the TN of the first Attack check targeting you before the beginning of your next turn by 1 per ☯ spent this way.

Striking as Earth

Description: After striking, the bushi roots, hunkering down to make sure their armor takes the brunt of a hit or raising a weapon in a warding position where it can deflect harm without being damaged.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Earth) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Earth ☯+: Increase the physical resistance of your armor by 1 per ☯ spent this way until the beginning of your next turn.

Striking as Fire

Description: Victory cannot be achieved through defense alone, and it is a poor student of the sword who forgets that their most important goal is simple: cut down their enemy. All else fades to the background as the bushi fiercely presses the attack, trying to force an error or open an opportunity to end their enemy.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Fire ☯+: Increase the severity of the next critical strike your target suffers by 1 per ☯ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Striking as Water

Description: The finest armor is useless if a warrior can bypass it, slipping a blade through the gaps that allow the wearer to move or using blunt, concussive force to create a vulnerability. As the bushi strikes they attempt to slide past the target's defenses to deliver a lethal blow.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Water) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Water ☯+: Reduce your target's physical resistance by 2 per ☯ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Warrior's Resolve

Description: The bushi draws a deep breath, exhaling as they rise to their feet. Pain can be conquered so long as there is a duty to be done, they remind themselves, for honor is stronger than steel.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per scene, as a Support action, you may spend 1 Void point to recover from incapacitation.

Effects: Heal wounds until your total wounds are equal to your resilience minus your honor rank.

School Rank 2 Kata

The following kata have a prerequisite of school rank 2.

Crescent Moon Style

Description: Striking first is valuable, but so is living through a battle. To defend without sacrificing offensive potential, the bushi must be ready to retaliate swiftly after blocking or evading. With a quick shift in their weight, the bushi switches from defense to attack, bringing down their full force upon their enemy.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you perform the Center (see page 162) or Guard action (see page 165), you may spend ☯ in the following way:

☯: Until the beginning of your next turn, after a character at range 1–2 performs an Attack action targeting you or another character you are guarding, you may perform a Strike action targeting that character.

Iron Forest Style

Description: A bushi versed in the spear can control their spacing with their opponent very efficiently, forcing their foe to risk impalement each time they advance or catching loose clothes or stray body parts on the head of the weapon. Akodo's *Leadership* refers to such a technique as the Iron Forest style, turning the length of a single spear into an insurmountable gap for a would-be attacker.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] check using a spear, naginata, or other polearm, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

☯: One target of your action becomes PINNED until the beginning of your next turn. While pinned, if the target attempts to move closer to you, the target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check**. The target suffers physical damage equal to their ☯ on the check. If the target fails, they cannot move closer.

Lord Hida's Grip

Description: The Kami Hida, patron of the Crab Clan, was a legendary slayer of monsters. It was this titan of a warrior who beheaded the massive orochi that once menaced the rose-marble palace, and who was said to have ripped out one skull of the two-headed Kabuto no Oni and crushed the other head with it. However, Hida was no mere brute—he was cunning, and killed monsters not just with brute strength, but also by discovering and exploiting their weaknesses. Over the generations, his descendants have not forgotten his lessons about how to kill creatures much larger than themselves. While traditional Rokugani martial arts struggle to overcome many creatures of the Shadowlands because they are meant to vanquish human opponents, warriors of the Crab Clan are instructed in techniques that target the weak points of trolls, ogres, and even oni, turning their great weight against them by pinning or strategically damaging specific body parts.

Prerequisites: Crab Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 2

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **Fitness (Void) check** targeting one creature of silhouette 3 or larger at range 0–1. The TN of the check is equal to the silhouette of the target.

Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers the Immobilized condition, and you count as granting assistance (see page 15) to all characters who perform Attack actions against your target.

New Opportunities

☯: Your target must resist with a **Fitness check** or suffer the Prone condition. The TN of this check is equal to your school rank.

Lord Shiba's Selflessness

Description: Once, in the Shadowlands, the Kami Shiba alone stood between a vast horde of its foul denizens and the last of the Seven Thunders after their victory against Fu Leng. Drawing the legendary sword Ofushikai, Shiba swore that these lives were under his protection and cut his way through the host to the First Oni. Legends say that their blades flashed for a hundred days, leveling the mountains around them and cutting great rifts across the ground. In the end, each cut the other down, but Shiba fell with his oath unbroken, and as a result of his prowess and sacrifice, the Thunder Shosuro and the prophet Shinsei survived. Shiba's act is remembered across Rokugan, and his heroism still reminds the warrior of the Phoenix Clan why they draw steel—not to win glory or kill their enemies, but to protect the people they swore to defend.

Prerequisites: Phoenix Clan, School Rank 2 **XP Cost:** 3

Activation: Once per game session, as a Support action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics (Void) check** targeting any number of friendly characters in range of your weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, other characters cannot select your targets as the targets of the Attack or Scheme actions if they could select you instead. If an action has multiple targets, you must be the first target chosen. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your school rank.

✳️: If you succeed, increase the TN of Attack and Scheme checks targeting you by 1. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your school rank.

Open Hand Style

Description: Power does not come from speed alone, and a master martial artist can apply force for maximum effect, making even gentle movements devastatingly effective blocks and strikes. With enough experience, a martial artist can even control their opponent's stance, keeping them off-balance and unable to properly defend.

Prerequisites: School rank 2 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

✳️+: One target of your action per ✳️ spent this way must switch to a different stance of your choice and suffers the Immobilized condition. Targets of silhouette 3 or greater resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check**, and ignore this effect if they succeed.

Pelting Hail Style

Description: A volley of arrows on the battlefield can be deadly, but most importantly from a strategic standpoint, it is terrifying to even the staunchest veterans. Even if only one in ten shots finds its mark, a salvo of arrows will rattle defenders and force anyone advancing on a position to reconsider their options.

Prerequisites: School rank 2 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Ranged] check, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

✳️+: Choose a number of other characters at range 0–2 of your target equal to ✳️ spent this way. Each chosen character suffers strife equal to the base damage of your weapon.

Rushing Avalanche Style

Description: When a samurai says something will be done, it will be done—and this resolution applies as much to the grim task of warfare as to any other activity. When adopting this style, the bushi strikes with reckless abandon using a heavy weapon. Thanks to the sheer weight of their weapon and the ferocity of their strikes, even a glancing blow can cause serious harm, a telling blow against a grounded foe usually ends the battle.

Prerequisites: School rank 2 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] check using a tetsubō, maul, or staff, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

✳️: If you fail and fall short by two or fewer successes, your target suffers physical damage equal to your school rank.

✳️: If you succeed and your target is Prone, increase the damage you deal by two times your school rank.

Spinning Blades Style

Description: The biggest advantage of dual wielding does not usually stem from attacking with two weapons simultaneously, largely because this is a very difficult feat. Instead, the greatest advantage of two-weapon fencing styles comes from the fact that the warrior does not need to sacrifice defense while attacking or offense while defending. The offhand blade can deflect and threaten even as the main hand weapon attacks, or the bushi can strike with the offhand weapon while the main hand weapon is locked with the foe's blade. The opponent cannot afford to take their eyes off either weapon, for either could deliver their death.

Prerequisites: School rank 2 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee or Unarmed] check, if you have a second readied weapon you did not use for the attack, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

✳️✳️: You use your second readied weapon against one target of your action, inflicting physical damage equal to its base damage. If that target is Dazed, increase this damage by your school rank.

Veiled Menace Style

Description: Assassination and other clandestine tactics are frowned upon by many samurai. The etiquette of battle allows, however, that a warrior who has made a proper entrance need not repeat their introduction to every foe they meet, and some take this as permission to use misdirection for ambushes and secret strikes. By drawing their enemy's gaze away from the true threat or striking from an unexpected angle, a bushi can often tip the scales against a better warrior and win a victory that would have been impossible otherwise.

Prerequisites: School rank 2 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee or Unarmed] check using a weapon in a one-handed grip, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

✳️+: If you succeed, choose one unaware or Disoriented target of your action. That target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness plus 1 per ✳️ spent this way beyond the first.

School Rank 3 Kata

The following kata have a prerequisite of school rank 3.

Battle in the Mind

Description: As two masters of any martial art square off before a duel, each seeks to predict the other's angle of attack, strategy, and the ways their predictions might be foiled by the opponent's.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make an Assessment check for a duel using your Void ring, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Void ☯+: Your opponent must name a ring. When your opponent selects their stance during their first turn of the duel, they must select the named ring as their stance.

Void ☯☯+: Choose a technique category. Learn one of your opponent's known techniques of that category (chosen by the opponent) per ☯ spent this way.

Crimson Leaves Strike

Description: Sweeping their blade down in a sudden arc, the bushi lands a blow atop the enemy's weapon, scattering it from their hand like falling leaves.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts (Earth) check** using the appropriate skill for one of your readied weapons targeting one character within the range of the weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers 1 physical damage, plus additional damage equal to your bonus successes. Choose 1 of your target's readied weapons; the target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 5, Water 2) check** or lose control of the weapon, which travels 3 range bands in a direction of your choice.

New Opportunities

Earth ☯: If you disarm your opponent, you may take control of their weapon instead.

Flowing Water Strike

Description: A skilled warrior is not restricted by the optimal range of their weapon, and can quickly open or close gaps to compensate positional disadvantages.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts (Water) check** using the appropriate skill for one of your readied weapons targeting one character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers the Bleeding condition. The target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Earth 2, Fire 5) check** or suffer physical damage equal to your weapon's base damage, ignoring their physical resistance.

New Opportunities

Water ☯☯: Remove the Dazed, Disoriented, Immobilized, or Prone condition from yourself.

Heartpiercing Strike

Description: Battle is the art of killing, and woe betide any warrior who forgets it. With a roar, the bushi launches forward, stabbing out with their weapon to fatally impale their enemy.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts (Fire) check** using the appropriate skill for one of your readied weapons targeting one character the range of the weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness plus your bonus successes. The TN of the Fitness check to resist this critical strike is 3 (Water 1, Air 4) instead of the normal TN.

If you fail, you suffer the Disoriented condition.

New Opportunities

Fire ☯+: Increase the TN of the check to resist this critical strike by 1 per ☯ spent this way.

School Rank 4 Kata

The following kata have a prerequisite of school rank 4.

Crashing Wave Style

Description: The wave washes over the stone, wearing it away, and so the bushi's weapon passes across their foe's flesh, leaving behind a bloody gash or slice that is sure to slow their enemy even if the hit is not telling.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Water) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Water ☯+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 2, Fire 4) check** or suffer the Bleeding condition. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ☯ spent this way.

Disappearing World Style

Description: Seeing nothing but their enemy, the bushi surges forward in a flurry of strikes, seeking to land a hit to the eyes, temple, or other vulnerable area rapidly after their initial attack. This stunning blow can leave the enemy staggered, giving the bushi a chance to finish the battle with their next attack.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) check, you may spend ☯ in the following way:

Fire ☯+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 4, Water 2) check** or suffer the Dazed condition. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ☯ spent this way.

Iron in the Mountains Style

Description: The bushi strikes with crushing force, breaking their enemy's roots with an overwhelming blow or sweeping their stance out from underneath them with a well-placed kick.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Earth) check, you may spend ☸ in the following way:

Earth ☸+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 2, Water 4) check** or suffer the Prone condition. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ☸ spent this way.

School Rank 5 Kata

The following kata have a prerequisite of school rank 5.

Kihō

Kihō are powerful spiritual techniques generally known only to monks, activated by aligning their inner energy (*ki*) to specific elements or universal forces. Kihō can be used in intrigues, duels, skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Kihō are techniques that have an associated check and an effect while active. If the character succeeds on the check to activate a kihō, they receive a potent, immediate benefit (the **IMMEDIATE EFFECT**). Additionally, whether they succeed or fail, the kihō becomes active, applying the effect it describes to the character (the **KIHŌ EFFECT**). These two effects represent the amazing feats that experienced monks can perform and the ongoing benefits that training to perform these feats can have.

Once activated, the kihō effect remains active until the character activates a different kihō. A character can only have one kihō active at a time, and cannot reactivate a kihō that is currently active.

Only characters with 1 or more school ranks in a school that lists "kihō" among its available techniques can purchase kihō.

The kihō in this section are organized alphabetically by their elemental classification.

Earth Kihō

Earth kihō focus around securing one's roots, feeling the vibrations of all that pass across the ground, and waiting patiently for the right moment to strike.

Earth Needs No Eyes

Description: The monk who waits and listens sees much, even without eyes. Sending out waves of their own energy and letting the ki of the life around them to flow into their body through the ground, the monk feels the reverberations of everything moving nearby, from the thunderous breaths of a warrior in battle to the footsteps of the tiniest ants. A monk sustaining this kihō is nearly impossible to ambush unless one can avoid touching the ground entirely.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Earth) check** to gain an awareness of your surroundings.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, you instantly become aware of all living creatures and objects touching the ground within a number of range bands equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you can use vibrations through

Striking as Void

Description: The future is part of the Void's domain, infinite in possibility and unfathomable in depth. Because of its formlessness, one cannot scheme to undermine the uncertain future—but the instant it takes shape, an action is vulnerable to countermeasures. The bushi rests until the last possible second, allowing the potential energy of their strike to take shape only after it is too late for their enemy to respond.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Void) check, you may spend ☸ in the following ways:

Void ☸: Immediately switch to a different stance of your choice.

Void ☸: If you fail, you may perform another action. This must be an action you have not yet performed this turn. You can only activate this opportunity once per round.

the earth to "see" a number of range bands in all directions equal to your Earth ring. While this kihō is active, increase your vigilance by your Earth ring.

Earthen Fist

Description: Placing their hand on the ground, the monk draws clumps of hardened earth that coat their skin, forming a rocky gauntlet.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effect: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Earth ring, and your target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 2, Water 4) check** or suffer the Prone condition.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, treat the base damage of your unarmed punch and kick profiles as being increased by your Earth ring.

While this kihō is active, when you perform a successful Attack action using a punch or kick against a target with the Prone condition, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, double your bonus successes on the check.

Grasp the Earth Dragon

Description: Planting a foot on the ground and taking a wide stance, the monk stomps, sending reverberations of ki rushing down into the depths. An instant later, stones begin to rise around them, orbiting their body and deflecting attacks, or even adhere to their flesh, armoring them in rocky scales.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 5 Meditation (Earth) check** to shield yourself from harm.

Effects: If you succeed, until the beginning of your next turn, reduce all physical damage you suffer to 1.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you count as wearing armor with resistance (Physical [Earth Ring]). You cannot benefit from other armor while this kihō is active.

Way of the Earthquake

Description: The monk slams a hand or foot into the ground and the earth itself shudders under the weight of this blow as their ki rushes through the soil. Nearby enemies are hurled from their feet, and find the ground shifting treacherously underneath them even after they rise to face the monk.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting each other character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers physical damage equal to your Earth ring and the Prone condition.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, after you perform an Attack or Support action, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, each other character at range 0–2 must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 2, Water 4) check** or suffer the Prone condition.

Air Kihō

Air kihō center around hearing the whispers of the world and understanding their meaning while detaching from earthly desires.

Air Fist

Description: The monk swirls their hands in an intricate pattern, channeling their ki into the air itself and turning even a placid breeze into a funnel of roaring wind. A gale follows the monk's strikes, hurling foes back and slamming them against intervening objects.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0 to your Air ring.

Immediate Effect: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Air ring, and your target is pushed 1 range band away from you.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you may treat the maximum range of your punch and kick unarmed weapon profiles as your Air Ring.

While this kihō is active, after you perform an Attack action using a punch or kick, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, your target must make a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 4, Fire 1) check** or be pushed 2 range bands away from you.

Riding the Clouds

Description: The monk inhales and lets go their earthly tether to ascend to new heights. Born aloft on a small tornado, an invisible current of air, or even a small cloud, the monk can move far more freely.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a movement action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 4 Meditation (Air) check** to move on a pillar of air.

Immediate Effect: If you succeed, you may immediately move one range band, plus additional range bands up to your bonus successes. You may make this move vertically, and ignore the negative effects of terrain while doing so.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when you move 1 or more range bands, you may move that number of range bands plus 1, and may do so vertically. Additionally, you may ignore the negative effects of terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167).

The Great Silence

Description: The monk swirls their hands in a spiral, pulling air inward and stealing even the reverberations sounds make through the air. Lies die on the lips unspoken, and prayers never reach the spirits for whom they were intended. Sound returns slowly to the area as the effect ends.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Scheme and Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Command (Air) check** to create an area of silence around you.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, characters at range 0–4 produce no noise and cannot hear. Invocations and mahō cannot be performed in this area, for even the kami cannot hear the shugenja's call. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, increase the TN of any checks for Scheme action targeting you by your Air ring.

Way of the Willow

Description: The oak stands firm against the storm and breaks, but the willow survives it by bending. The monk dances on the wind like the willow, feeling the currents of ki upon the air and moving out of the way of attacks mere instants before the strike. The more forceful an attack, the greater the energy it generates, and the better the monk can evade it.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 5 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check** to adjust your defenses to your foes, making yourself much harder to hit.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, increase the TN of Attack checks targeting you by your ranks in Martial Arts [Unarmed] until the beginning of your next turn.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when you are targeted by an Attack action, you may spend 1 Void point to increase the TN of the check by an amount equal to your ranks in Martial Arts [Unarmed].

Fire Kihō

Fire kihō function by kindling the energy within, fostering its life-giving force and channeling it outward to change the wider world.

Breaking Blow

Description: The monk delivers a strike that looks like a gentle tap, unleashing a spark of ki into an object and igniting the latent energy within it uncontrollably. This causes the object to explode, shatter, or splinter.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers physical damage equal to your Fire ring. Additionally, choose one worn piece of armor or readied weapon in your target's possession. It gains the Damaged quality (see page 146). At the GM's discretion, this can also be used to shatter mundane objects such as wooden doors, stones, and trees.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when you succeed at a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check with a target, you may spend 1 Void point to choose one worn piece of armor or readied weapon in one target's possession. It gains the Damaged quality (see page 146).

Channel the Fire Dragon

Description: The monk inhales sharply and then exhales their ki as a torrent of fire. While sustaining this life-giving fire within their lungs, the monk is largely immune to cold weather and flames alike.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to unleash a burst of flame targeting each other character at range 0–2.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 4, Water 2) check** or suffer the Burning condition. Flammable objects in this area ignite.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you automatically pass all checks to resist extreme weather with bonus successes equal to your Fire ring. You count as having resistance 3 against supernatural and physical fire (including Fire invocations and kihō).

Flame Fist

Description: The monk throws a rapid, reckless strike and flame streams out, seizing and charring whatever they touch. While sustaining this kihō, the monk's hands and feet trail fire, lending power to their strikes.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers physical damage equal to your Fire ring and must make a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 4, Water 1) check** or suffer the Dazed condition.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you may treat the deadliness of your unarmed punch and kick profiles as increased by your Fire ring.

While this kihō is active, when you perform an Attack action using a punch or kick against a Dazed target, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, increase the damage you inflict by your Fire ring.

Way of the Falling Star

Description: The monk hurls a series of rapid strikes and with each one, fire erupts from their palm or foot, scorching their target. While sustaining this kihō, the monk's attacks continue to explode like fireworks, burning their foes.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 5 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting each character at range 0–2.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring and the Burning condition. Flammable objects in this area ignite.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when you perform an Attack action, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, each target with the Burning or Dazed condition suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your Fire ring plus your weapon's deadliness.

Water Kihō

Water pervades all life, the ground, and even the air. Water kihō allow their practitioners to feel the ebb and flow in all things, and to alter these currents to their needs.

Freezing the Lifeblood

Description: The monk touches a single point on the target's body and, with an icy stare, causes the ki within the target to seize up, contracting muscles into a spasmed state and then causing them to fall slack. While sustaining this kihō, the monk's touch continues to fell their foes in this nonlethal (albeit extremely unpleasant) manner.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water ring and the Immobilized condition.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, after you perform a successful Martial Arts [Unarmed] check, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, your target suffers the Immobilized condition, and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 2, Fire 4) check** or suffer the Bleeding condition.

Ki Protection

Description: The monk touches the injured individual, feeling the flow of their ki and using their own to gently correct its flow. While sustaining this kihō, the monk's touch continues to heal, though repeating the effort numerous times is quite draining.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Medicine (Water) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, your target heals wounds equal to your Water ring. You may remove the Bleeding, Injured Body Part, or Dying condition from your target. Each target cannot be affected by this effect again until the end of the scene.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, after you perform an action, you may spend 1 Void point to heal wounds equal to your Water ring from yourself or another character at range 0–1.

Ride the Water Dragon

Description: The monk shifts their stance and moves with inexorable purpose, making their inner energy fluid and allowing supernatural effects to ripple of them harmlessly. Despite their measured approach, monk becomes nearly impossible to pin down with supernatural effects, sliding past invocations and curses with ease.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 5 Meditation (Water) check** to cleanse yourself of supernatural conditions and persistent effects.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, remove any conditions and persistent effects that you are suffering from supernatural sources such as invocations, mahō, and kihō.

Kihō Effects: While this kihō is active, increase the TN of any checks for invocations, mahō, and kihō targeting you by your Water ring. At the GM's discretion, while this kihō is active you can pass through certain supernatural barriers and wards without triggering them.

Water Fist

Description: The monk throws a soft blow against a nearby object and makes their ki as water, rippling across intervening objects and sliding past protections to reach its destination. The force of the strike finds home against its target, even if they are on the other side of a wooden door or stone wall.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character within a number of range bands up to your Water ring who shares a contact surface with you.

Immediate Effect: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Water ring.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, your unarmed attacks ignore an amount of your target's physical resistance up to two times your Water ring.

While this kihō is active, you may spend 1 Void point to perform an unarmed attack with a punch or kick indirectly through any solid surface your target is touching. As long as you and a target are both in contact with the same solid surface (such as a wall, floor, or body of water) at range 0 to your Water ring, the target is considered to be in range for any Attack action you perform with your punch or kick unarmed attack profile.

Void Kihō

Void kihō revolve seeing through the lie of material reality and into the truth that exists beneath. When one sees with eyes unclouded, the subtlest movements can create vast ripples and the gentlest strikes can become deadly.

Death Touch

Description: The monk delivers a blow to a single point on their target's body and gives a dread proclamation that echoes across the ensuing stillness. The lucky are merely wounded by this experience, but a single brush can be fatal.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 5 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, you deal supernatural damage to the target equal to your Void ring plus your bonus successes.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when performing an Attack action, if you succeed, you may spend 1 Void point to cause one target to suffer a critical strike equal to their current strife.

Still the Elements

Description: The monk seeks the infinite Void within themselves, delving into their ki and pushing back spiritual beings. Kansen, kami, and other spiritual powers are repelled by the emptiness within the monk, and flee to a safe distance in their presence.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 4 Meditation (Void) check** to targeting all characters at range 0–1.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, characters at range 0–1 cannot perform checks to activate invocations, mahō, and kihō. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Void ring.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, when you are targeted by a check for an invocation, mahō, or kihō technique, you may spend 1 Void point to choose a number of kept dice from the check up to your ranks in Meditation. Alter those dice to blank faces.

Touch the Void Dragon

Description: The root of the universe is nothing and everything, and the monk pursues this spiral to its depths, finding limitless power within. The monk sees many realities swirl around them while maintaining this kihō, the storm of possibilities slowly solidifying into the present, and can jump at opportunities that might otherwise have passed them by, vanishing unseen into the abyss that is the past.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 6 Meditation (Void) check** to draw cosmic energy into your being.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, you regain 1 Void point. You can only regain 1 Void point from this technique per scene.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, you may spend ☯ from Void checks as if it were ☯ from a check of any element.

Way of the Edgeless Blade

Description: The wise know that it is not the blade that cuts, but the swordmaster. After all, the Tao of Shinsei teaches that weapons are simply another tool, no more sacred than a harvesting thresher or plow. The monk runs their hand along an object, channeling ki into it and transforming it into a killing edge, even if it appears nothing more than a common stick, a wooden sword, or their wizened hand.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 6 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void) check** to deliver an unarmed or improvised weapon strike targeting up to three characters at range 0–2.

Immediate Effects: If you succeed, you deal supernatural damage to each target equal to your ranks in Meditation plus your Void ring plus your bonus successes.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, count the base damage and deadliness of any unarmed profile, improvised weapon, or staff you wield as being equal to your ranks in Meditation plus your Void ring.

Invocations

Invocations are the techniques wielded by shugenja, the elite priests of the samurai class who turn their unmatched spiritual potential to the gravest of affairs: researching and understanding the nature of the universe, suppressing the powers of the Shadowlands, and war among the clans. Invocations can be used in intrigues, duels, and skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with 1 or more school ranks in a school that lists "invocations" among its available techniques can purchase invocations.

The invocations in this section are organized alphabetically by their elemental classification.

Check

Because invocations entail calling upon specific kami, each one requires a particular approach to be executed properly. As such, the checks to perform invocations almost always specify a ring to be used rather than leaving it to the GM's interpretation of the player's narration.

Channeling

Appealing to the kami can be a lengthy process, and even when a character is in a hurry, some spirits cannot be rushed. Patience is key when dealing with the kami, lest the kami in turn grow impatient with the shugenja. The actual act of saying the words, performing the gestures, or undertaking the rites that activate the invocation comes only after a process of attuning oneself to the powers that make the magic possible. CHANNELING is a way for a character to delay the completion of an invocation, allowing them to carry results over from one check to the next while performing invocations of the same element.

Choosing to Channel

When making a check to perform an invocation, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, the character may choose to channel any number of kept dice. Instead of resolving the rest of the check, the character reserves these channeled dice (making sure to keep track of the faces they are showing). The character does not resolve any effects of dice at this point, including determining success or failure.

Using Channeled Dice

During the character's next turn, if they perform an invocation of the same element, they may tap into their channeled dice. During **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, the character rolls one fewer Ring die for each reserved Ring die and one fewer Skill die for each reserved Skill die, then adds the channeled dice to the results (with the faces they were showing when channeled) instead of rolling them.

Limitations on Channeling

A character may channel any number of times sequentially during a conflict. Outside of a conflict, a character can channel only once, which doubles the amount of time required to perform the invocation.

Deadliness and Attack Techniques

When a character suffers a critical strike due to wounds caused by an invocation or its associated effects, if the technique does not specify a severity, treat the severity of the critical strike as equal to the ring the shugenja used plus their current strife.

The Proper Time for the Proper Invocations

Invocations can be used outside of their proper circumstances, but kami are not obligated to answer the call of a shugenja, nor do they tend to react to frivolous entreaties. Outside of Conflicts and other life-and-death situations, a shugenja can only attempt a given invocation once per scene; if the shugenja succeeds, the kami have done as asked and it would be unseemly to request more. If the attempt ended in failure, the kami have made their answer clear.

Additionally, if a shugenja attempts to use an invocation in a way that falls far outside of its relevant context (for instance, attempting to summon vast quantities of jade to turn a profit, rather than to smite evil), the kami may not answer at all. The kami are not at the beck and call of the shugenja; if anything the relationship works the other way around, and the shugenja merely receive certain benefits as favors for their devotion.


Interruption

If a character with channeled dice performs any action other than an invocation of the same element as the one from which they channeled the dice, all of their channeled dice are lost.

If a character with channeled dice suffers the Dazed or Unconscious condition, all of their channeled dice are lost due to the break in their concentration.

Spiritual Backlash

Shugenja wield forces beyond mortal ken, and they are extensively trained to interact with the kami without stirring their ire. However, even the most practiced shugenja risks unintended consequences when appealing to the kami. Further, if the shugenja's soul is in turmoil, the power of the kami they call forth will be similarly disordered. Kami are responsible for all manner of phenomena, after all, and a shugenja whose spirit is unsettled may call forth a destructive maelstrom when beseeching a lake for a gentle current.

When a shugenja generates 3 or more  results on kept dice while performing an invocation, the shugenja suffers some form of spiritual backlash. The form this take depends on the sort of kami the shugenja is entreating for aid.

Fire

Description: Fire kami are naturally drawn to powerful emotions, and when a shugenja loses control of them, they roil forth, spreading chaos and destruction wantonly.

Effect: The technique targets each character in range instead of its normal targets.

Earth

Description: Earth kami repay disrespect with stony silence.

Effect: Characters cannot perform this technique again until the end of the scene.

Water

Description: Water kami can shift suddenly, flowing with power one moment and ebbing away without warning the next.

Effect: Until a character performs an invocation of another element, characters in this scene cannot perform Water invocations.

Air

Description: Capricious air kami are mischievous at the best of times, but when angered, their practical jokes can take a decidedly deadly turn.

Effect: Each target of the invocation may choose 1 additional character in range to be affected by it (these additional targets cannot select further additional targets).

Air Invocations

Blessed Wind

Description: The shugenja recites a short chant and the dust whips up, carried upon twisting currents of air that foil and deflect projectiles. Stones, arrows, and even larger missiles are knocked aside by buffeting winds, keeping the target safe from such attacks.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, any character at range 0–2 of the chosen position counts as being in Obscuring terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167) for the purposes of Attack actions targeting them. This effect persists for one round, plus additional round equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✧✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

By the Light of the Moon

Description: Revealing the secret of an illusion can ruin it, but the playful air kami can be cajoled to undermine the work of another schemer, especially if it leaves that person in a compromising position. When a shugenja performs this invocation, the quality of light in the area briefly changes to that of a moonlit night, granting illumination of the affected area for those inside and unweaving the shadows to lay bare the things they conceal. Hidden objects glow faintly with silver light, while mystical illusions are revealed as translucent, gossamer forms.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting each concealed object (such as secret compartments, trap doors, and concealed weapons) and hidden character at range 0–2. This invocation only targets objects and people concealed by mundane means.

Effects: If you succeed, all targets appear with slightly luminous outlines to you. Only you can see the presence of these objects.

New Opportunities

✧+: If you succeed, you may also reveal up to one magically concealed object per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Choose 1 additional character to be able to see the objects per ✧ spent this way.

Prepared Invocations

With their scrolls and other proper materials, shugenja can perform invocations on the spot, calling forth the power of the kami to perform a particular task immediately. However, they can also imbue this power into physical objects, creating mystical talismans that even the uninitiated can use. Generally, these prepared invocations consume the object in the process of being cast, and thus can only be used once.

A shugenja can have one invocation prepared at a time; if the shugenja prepares another invocation, the blessing of the kami fades from the previous receptacle, and it becomes a mundane object. Certain school techniques allow a shugenja to have additional prepared invocations.

Preparing an invocation is a downtime activity that requires access to appropriate ingredients (based on the method of preparation) and a preparation check. This check uses the ring and TN specified by the invocation, but uses a different skill based on the method of preparation (the Composition skill for wards and the Medicine skill for potions, for instance). The player should record the results of this check wherever the prepared invocation is noted.

Any character in possession of a prepared invocation can activate it in a manner determined by the method of preparation.

There are two major ways in which any shugenja prepare an invocation.

Wards

Wards are invocations sealed within parchment marked by mystic symbols.

Preparation Check: Composition

Additional Requirements: A calligraphy set, 1 bu worth of blessed parchment.

Activation: A character can place a ward on any surface to which it can be affixed and write a condition on the ward, specifying the circumstances under which the sealed invocation is unleashed. When the ward's condition is fulfilled, the invocation activates at its current location.

Potions

Alchemists such as the Agasha are renowned for sealing the gifts of the kami within admixtures of various sacred ingredients.

Preparation Check: Medicine

Additional Requirements: A blessed glass container, 1 bu worth of alchemical supplies.

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

Invocations and the Beta

There are said to be ten thousand kami inhabiting Rokugan, and there are as many or more ways to invoke those kami in prayer. The invocations included in the beta for the *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG is by no means an exhaustive list of such techniques, and many more such techniques will be included in the final list in the core rulebook.

Call upon the Wind

Description: The shugenja whispers breathless prayer and rises slightly from the ground as gentle winds bear them aloft. Air spirits usually carry their charges gracefully, without dropping them to stumble the last few feet—usually.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, winds swirl around you, carrying you aloft. In addition to being able to move vertically freely, you ignore the effects of terrain while flying. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧✧+: While flying, you may carry up to one additional willing character at range 0–2 with you per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Cloak of Night

Description: A sufficiently learned shugenja can call forth air kami to play one of their simplest and most effective tricks—enveloping an object or person in their embrace to hide it from sight. Pulling threads of shadow and weaving them into a shroud of invisibility that covers the desired target, the air kami render it imperceptible by mundane sight.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **Theology (Air) check** targeting one object or character at range 0–1. The TN is equal to the target's silhouette (see page 166).

Effects: If you succeed, the target becomes invisible to the naked eye. The object is still physically present and can be touched, smelled, or sensed with any normal sense other than vision. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✧✧+: Choose 1 additional target of the same silhouette or smaller per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Grasp of the Air Dragon

Description: The shugenja exhales a long breath at the end of the incantation and extends a hand pointing to their target. A stillness descends, the moment before the storm breaks. Then, the clouds high above twist and trail like festival streamers after an invisible force as it from the heavens, rattling loose objects and shaking people nearby. The wind swoops toward the target and hurls them into the air—carrying them to safety or to their doom, depending on the will of the shugenja.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action or a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting one character at range 3–5.

Proper Offerings

Shugenja enjoy a special relationship with the kami, even over and above other priests. While anyone can theoretically reach out to the kami and receive their blessing, and all priests train in the art of doing so to some degree, only shugenja know the secrets required to unlock the pinnacle of these powers. The shugenja schools dedicate considerable resources to safeguarding their secrets, and crush any who try to infringe upon their sacred lore.

However, at the heart of even the most potent invocation is a simple transaction of faith in exchange for power, and the offering symbolizes the shugenja's devotion to the spirits who grant them their incredible abilities. While material offerings might seem odd for spiritual beings, these sacraments are extremely efficacious. A trained shugenja can do without them, but the process of the invocation is more difficult, as the shugenja's own spirit must bear the burden in place of the offering.

A shugenja who makes a material offering alongside an invocation counts as having a Distinction that applies to the check. The material offering is consumed in this process.

Different types of spirits prefer different offerings, some examples of which are provided below:

- **Air Spirits:** Incense, feathers, flowers
- **Earth Spirits:** Salt, soil or stones from sacred places, seeds
- **Water Spirits:** Coins, seashells, precious materials, seaweed, sake
- **Fire Spirits:** Kindling, paper, ash, small flammable objects
- **Fortunes:** Texts, food, origami, works of art
- **Honored Ancestors:** Food, incense, sake or other libations

Effects: If you succeed, you move the target a number of range bands equal to your Air ring plus your bonus successes (to a maximum of 6 range bands), ignoring any intervening terrain. You may choose to set the target down on the ground gently (if you chose Support action) or slam them into it with full force (if you chose Attack action). When you slam a target to the ground this way, the target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Fire 2, Earth 5) check** or suffer the effects of a fall from range 3.

New Opportunities

✧✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Increase the height of the fall the target suffers by 1 per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Essence of Air

Description: The shugenja entreats the air kami to briefly make them as mist, intangible and immune to most physical harm. While in this state, the shugenja seems to be shrouded in fog, floats several inches above the ground, and mundane swords and arrows pass through them without effect. When they reform at the end of the invocation, the mist dissipates, and they land gracefully (or are dropped unceremoniously, if the air kami are feeling overly exuberant) upon the ground beneath their feet unharmed.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you become insubstantial. In this state, you remain at ground level, but you cannot interact with physical objects, and can pass through them freely. Your overland movement speed is doubled while insubstantial. You cannot perform invocations while insubstantial, but you are affected by invocations and other supernatural effects as normal. This effect persists until the end of the scene or until you dismiss it as an action.

New Opportunities

✧: While insubstantial, you are also silent and transparent, betrayed only by a telltale shimmer. A character attempting to locate you must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Fire 1, Earth 4) check** to pinpoint your location.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Know the Mind

Description: Meddling in the minds of others clearly defies the Bushido tenet of Gi (Righteousness), for deception imposed on the very heart is difficult to countenance. The kami, however, are less preoccupied with such matters of human morality, and with the right incentives, can be convinced to delve into the minds of humans—willing or unwilling—to extract and even alter the memories found there. This process is difficult even if the target is willing, for memories often seem to have a will of their own, and are not easily extracted without inflicting considerable discomfort or lasting harm to the spirit.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting one character at range 0–1. You must forfeit 3 honor to perform this check on another character without their permission, in addition to other honor you must forfeit to undertake such duplicity.

Effects: If you succeed, you peer into your target's mind to find information. Your target must resist with a **TN 4 Meditation (Earth 5, Fire 2)**. You telepathically ask your target a number of questions up to their shortfall on the check, which they must answer truthfully via this mental connection.

If you fail or your target succeeds on the check to resist you, your target asks you one question via the telepathic bond, which you must answer truthfully.

New Opportunities

✧: If you succeed, choose one piece of knowledge you found; your target must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Earth 4, Fire 1) check** or forget that information.

✧: If you succeed, you may leave one memory you create in your target's mind; your target must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Earth 4, Fire 1) check** to realize that the memory is implanted.

Mask of Wind

Description: Deception is not the way of the samurai, but it is often the way of expedience. The shugenja asks the air kami to mask their features and even their voice, causing onlookers to see a different person.

A character must forfeit 1 honor to knowingly impersonate someone of higher status (in addition to any honor they must forfeit for any dishonorable actions such as lying that they take under that guise, per normal).

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you alter your appearance to look like another person. An observer must resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment (Earth 5, Fire 2) check** to notice something amiss from your appearance alone, and may spend ✧ if they succeed to recognize you specifically.

New Opportunities

✧: You may alter your voice to sound like someone else while the illusion is in place. An observer must resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment (Earth 5, Fire 2) check** to notice something amiss from the sound of your voice alone, and may spend ✧ if they succeed to recognize you specifically.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Rise, Air

Description: The kami are felt most often through natural phenomena—the breeze that raises the hairs on the back of one's neck, the gentle wind that carries a familiar scent, or the sound of trees rattling on a winter's night. However, their influence on the world is not always so subtle, and shugenja possess powerful secrets needed to convince these beings to manifest in the mortal realm wearing a semblance of their true forms. A manifest air kami is a flickering, shifting thing, a whirlwind of power with lashing arms that screams with the voice of the storm. It towers above the tallest of mortals, yet can find its way through the slightest of cracks. To guide such a being—for even shugenja dare not claim to control it—is a vast task, and the slightest slip of concentration can lead to untold devastation as the child of the tempest carves its way across the landscape before eventually subsiding.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 3–5.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon a manifest air kami (see page 200) to fight for you. It appears at the target point and obeys you for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or begins to follow its own directives, if stirred to particular ire. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

✧: The manifest air kami arrives in a cyclone that hurls aside anything nearby. Each character at range 2 of the chosen point must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Fire 2, Earth 5) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Air ring and be pushed away 2 range bands.

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Summon Fog

Description: Tendrils of mist spill forth from the character's robes or armor, billowing out before them and wrapping the world in an ominous haze. The fog clings to the shugenja, making them hard to spot and harder to strike. When the invocation ends, the fog thins and eventually vanishes, the last traces melting into dew upon the ground.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you create a fog bank that fills one range band around the target point. You may expand this cloud by additional range bands up to your bonus successes. This fog bank counts as terrain with the Obscuring quality (see **Terrain**, on page 167).

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: The fog also counts as terrain with the Dangerous quality.

✧✧: You may choose a character instead of a point. The fog bank follows that character.

✧✧: Reduce the TN of the next movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Tempest of Air

Description: The shugenja beseeches the air spirits to lash out at all around them, calling buffeting winds into existence in the blink of an eye. The force of this burst of air might push foes backward, their robes flapping about them, or even hurl them from their feet.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting each character at range 2–3.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Air ring and must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Earth 5, Fire 2) check** or suffer the Disoriented condition.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Each target who fails their Fitness check is also pushed 1 range band away from you.

✧✧+: Choose 1 character in range to exclude as a target per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Token of Memory

Description: People often see what they desire to see, and reminiscence can fool the senses by stirring the heart. After performing this invocation, the shugenja conjures an illusion from the air, a trick of the light captured in hand. The illusionary object seems real to sight, and other senses at the GM's discretion.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, you create a flawless illusion of one inanimate object at the target position. The illusory object's size is a silhouette up to your bonus successes (to a minimum of 0). The item appears real, but does not actually exist, and cannot be used. Any character confronted with one of these illusions must resist with a **TN 4 Artisan, Smithing, or Design (Earth 5, Fire 2) check** using a Scholar skill approach to discern its illusory nature. The object persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Create one additional illusory object in range per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: The object can appear to be a creature or person (though it does not move).

✧✧✧: Illusory objects you create this way have mass, and can function as if they were real (though they are still inanimate). They still vanish when the effect ends.

Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami

Description: Despite their mercurial nature, air kami are not easily stirred to grand acts of destruction. However, like all nature spirits, they are beings of creation and destruction, shaping the world and tearing it apart in a tireless cycle. When stirred to wrath through the deepest secrets of the shugenja's art, the spirits of the wind become a howling tornado, spinning around the priest and raising them from the ground while devastating everything in reach. Enemies nearby are casually tossed aside or crushed with flying debris, while trees are uprooted, buildings are cracked, and loose objects are thrown at deadly speeds.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Air) check** targeting each character at range 2–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you unleash a hurricane that buffets all characters in range. At the end of each of your turns, each target in range must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Earth 6, Fire 3) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Air ring and suffer the Disoriented condition. The hurricane persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air ring.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: While within the hurricane, you can fly, moving vertically and ignoring the effects of terrain.

✧✧+: Choose 1 character in range to exclude as a target per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: You may end the hurricane at any time as an action.

✧+: If you succeed, each target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Earth 6, Fire 3) check** or be hurled a number of range bands away from you equal to ✧ spent this way. Upon landing, each target hurled this way suffers the negative effects of falling the number of range bands they moved.

Earth Invocations

Armor of Earth

Description: Earth is the element of protection, and many shugenja schools teach invocations to use it as armor and a shield. When a shugenja performs this invocation, shards of rock fly toward them, fastening together in midair to form a suit of protective armor. As the torrent of earth dissipates, the shugenja stands clad in rocky battlegear, maintaining a degree of flexibility thanks to their bond with the earth kami.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: You create (and equip) a suit of armor that grants physical resistance equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes and has the Cumbersome and Wargear qualities. The armor persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth ring, at which point it tumbles to the ground as loose stones or dirt.

New Opportunities

- ✳: The effect persists until the end of the scene instead.
- ✳: The armor you create has the Durable quality.
- ✳✳: The armor you create has the Sacred quality.
- ✳✳: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Bind the Shadow

Description: The shugenja draws forth a small sanctified object, such as a piece of jade or blessed ward or holy prayer beads, and beseeches the spirit within to stop a Tainted being in its tracks. The presence of the pure spirit is so abhorrent to the corrupted creature that it disorients or even paralyzes the monster until it musters the strength to fight back.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one Shadowlands creature or character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, you bind your target; it must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 3, Water 6) check** or suffer the Immobilized and Stunned conditions. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth ring.

New Opportunities

- ✳+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳ spent this way
- ✳✳+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ✳✳ spent this way.
- ✳: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound until the end of the scene instead.
- ✳✳: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound for 1 year instead.
- ✳✳✳: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound for 100 years instead.

Courage of Seven Thunders

Description: At the dawn of the Empire, the Seven Thunders stood against Fu Leng, and their clash resounded from the Shadowlands to every corner of Rokugan. Earth is the element of recollection, and from the earth kami, a shugenja can unearth fragments of the memories of these heroes from across the ages and impart them to their comrades in arms. This invocation does not erase fear, but it reminds a samurai of the legacy they must uphold—that others stood against the darkness before and prevailed.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Earth ring at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, each target increases their composure by your Earth ring. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

- ✳+: Each target removes 1 strife per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳✳: This technique targets each friendly character in range instead.
- ✳: If you succeed, each target increases their resilience by your Earth ring while this effect persists.
- ✳✳: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Earthquake

Description: Earthquakes are common in some parts of Rokugan, and are rightly feared—whole villages have been known to vanish when the earth spirits are set to turmoil. To intentionally raise their ire is dangerous, but one of the most powerful techniques a shugenja can wield. While wielding this invocation, ripples shoot across the ground around the shugenja as the earth bucks and tumbles, or cracks might form beneath their feet, splitting apart to expose magma, the glowing blood of the earth. The shugenja's foes plummet into chasms of darkness and sulfur, entombed forever beneath the ground they once walked.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Earth) check** targeting each other character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you unleash an earthquake that encompasses the range of the invocation in all directions around you. At the end of each of your turns, each target must resist with an **TN 5 Fitness (Air 3, Water 6) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to twice your Earth ring and suffer the Prone condition. The quake persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth ring.

New Opportunities

- ✳: The quake persists until the end of the scene, and you may it any time as an action.
- ✳: This effect inflicts physical damage instead of supernatural damage.
- ✳+: If you succeed, you may create a chasm beneath the feet of one character in range, causing that character and anyone at range 0–1 of them to fall a number of range bands equal to ✳ spent this way into the bowels of the earth.
- ✳✳+: If you succeed, you may destroy one building or fortification in range per ✳✳ spent this way. Each character inside must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness (Air 1, Water 3) check** to escape by immediately moving outside or suffer a critical strike with severity 10.

Earth Becomes Sky

Description: The shugenja gives a short incantation, stomps a foot on the ground, and a torrent of dirt sprays toward their foe, carrying with it stones or even boulders heaved up by the earth kami. These land with the force of an avalanche, raising a hideous crash and sending out tremors that rock everyone nearby.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 1–3.

Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 1, Water 4) check** or suffer the Prone condition. If your target is already suffering the Prone condition, double the damage they suffer this way.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: This effect inflicts physical damage instead of supernatural damage.

✳️: Damage inflicted as part of this action counts as being inflicted by a weapon with the Sacred quality.

Embrace of Kenro-Ji-Jin

Description: The shugenja appeals to rumbling subterranean kami, offering the proper prayers to receive safe passage even across places humans were not meant to tread. The spirits shroud the shugenja, allowing them to stick to rocky surfaces or gently parting the ground to allow their passage.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you gain the ability to stick to earthen surfaces, allowing you to traverse even vertical surfaces made of earth or stone. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes (or one minute in narrative time).

New Opportunities

✳️: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

✳️: If you succeed, you can also pass through solid earth as if it was water when you move. You count as having supernatural resistance against damage from Earth invocations, kihō, and mahō equal to your Earth ring.

✳️✳️: The effects also apply to metal. You count as having physical resistance against damage from metal weapons equal to your Earth ring.

Essence of Jade

Description: The shugenja takes a pinch of jade powder and sprinkles it in a pentagram-shaped pattern on the earth, recalling the spirits of the land to their rightful place to provide a bulwark against the forces of evil.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, you may remove the Defiled terrain quality (see **Terrain** on page 167) from the terrain in a number of range bands around the target equal to your Earth ring. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

✳️✳️: While the effect persists, the terrain gains the Hallowed (Earth) quality.

✳️: While the effect persists, each Shadowlands creature and character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage in the area increase the TN of all checks they make to resist effects by 2.

✳️: You may choose a character instead of a point. The cleansed area follows that character.

✳️: While the effect persists, damage inflicted in the area count as being inflicted by a weapon with the Sacred quality.

Grasp of Earth

Description: With a harsh chant and a gesture of seizing, the shugenja calls upon the earth spirits to lay hold of someone, dragging them down and containing them. Usually, this invocation causes the target's legs to sink into sucking mud that springs up from the ground, fall into recently arrived quicksand, or an inconveniently placed hole that entraps them.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth ring and must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check** or suffer the Prone condition.

New Opportunities

✳️: Each target that fails the check to resist also suffers the Immobilized condition.

✳️: This effect inflicts physical damage instead of supernatural damage.

✳️: Reduce the damage each targets suffers to 0.

✳️+: Choose 1 additional target per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: Damage inflicted as part of this action count as being inflicted by a weapon with the Sacred quality.

Jade Strike

Description: Jade, said to be the tears of Amaterasu, is a sacred stone. It is anathema to creatures of darkness, and one of the few substances capable of harming the greater minions of Fu Leng, the fallen kami. While the material is extremely rare and valuable, a shugenja can mimic its effects by entreating earth kami to punish evil before them. The shugenja's hand is enveloped in the sacred green glow, which strikes forth, withering creatures of evil and humans under the sway of the Shadowlands' insidious power.

Because conviction is a key part of wielding the unyielding power of the sacred stone, a character cannot simply hurl the holy power of jade at anyone they suspect to harbor the corruption of the Shadowlands. If a character attempts the invocation and the target is not Tainted, their certainty might be shaken. Worse, the earth kami may even stop responding to their call for a short time, angry to have been roused without good reason.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed and the target is a Shadowlands creature or a character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, it suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes.

If you succeed and your target is not a Shadowlands creature or a character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, it suffers no ill effects.

Opportunities

✳️+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳️ spent this way

✳️: If you succeed, each target that is a Shadowlands creature for character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage suffers the Disoriented condition and cannot use mahō techniques until the end of your next turn.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Jurōjin's Balm

Description: Jurōjin, guardian of longevity, health, and physical wellbeing, is one of the most sought-after of the Seven Fortunes—for whether one is a lord or a peasant, one is sure to pray for health sooner or later. A shugenja can impart spiritual fortification in this Fortune's name, anointing the body of the target with sacred earth, healing plants such as ginseng or rhubarb, or stranger remedies still. While under the effects of this blessing, a character is much more resistant to poison, disease, and the effects of alcohol—though whether the last is a boon or a curse depends on whether the character is determined to stay sober or drown their sorrows.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, your target reduces the TN of all checks to resist the effects of poison and disease by 2 (to a minimum of 1). Additionally, the target cannot become intoxicated via imbibing alcohol. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳️ spent this way

✳️: If you succeed, your target also reduces the TN of all checks to resist mahō and the corrupting influence of the Shadowlands by 2 (to a minimum of 1).

✳️✳️: If you succeed, your target is also cured of any poisons currently afflicting them and the Dying condition, and any symptoms of diseases affecting them are suppressed until the end of the scene.

✳️: The effect persists for 24 hours instead.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Power of the Earth Dragon

Description: The shugenja places a hand on the earth and a hand over the target's heart, reciting a deep, reverberating prayer that thrums loudly through both. From the earth, vitality swells into the target, reinforcing their bones, invigorating their muscles, and deadening their nerves.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, your target increases their resilience by your Earth ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Power of the Earth Dragon invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

✳️+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Rise, Earth

Description: A manifest earth kami arrives in a tumult of stone, like an avalanche bursting from the ground itself. These beings often take the form of guardians like those found at Fortunist temples and tombs of ancient kings, creatures of living rock with veins of precious stone like sapphire, ruby, or even jade. Earth kami can be cantankerous, and woe to the shugenja who awakens one without proper cause, but they hate the impure beings of the Shadowlands most of all, and strive to obliterate them.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position with a patch of dirt, clay, or stone at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon a manifest earth kami (see page 200) to fight for you, which bursts forth at the target position. The manifest earth kami obeys you for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or begins to follow its own directives, if stirred to particular ire. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Increase the earth kami's resilience by 2 per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: The earth kami's rocky fists unarmed weapon gain the Sacred quality.

✳️: The manifest earth kami creates a rumbling shockwave when it erupts from the ground. Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen point must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check** or suffer physical or supernatural damage equal to your Earth ring and the Prone condition.

✳️: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Stagnation

Description: Earth is the element of patience and tempo, and a shugenja can invoke earth kami to slow the flow of time within an area enclosed by a circle drawn in the dirt, causing it to pass more slowly within. Some shugenja use this to entrap foes, as it lets them make preparations against their enemies. Others have made more creative use of this power, using it to hide from their pursuers or even preserve a specific state until the time when they need it.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you slow the pace of time at the chosen point and 1 range band around it. The initiative of each character in the affected area counts as 1. Each character inside the area can move a maximum of 1 range band per round. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️: The stagnation persists until the end of the scene instead.

✳️✳️: The stagnation persists for 24 hours instead (during which time only six hours pass within the stagnated area).

✳️+: Increase the size of the affected area by 1 range band per ✳️ spent this way.

Symbol of Earth

Description: Earth spirits govern boundaries and domains, and by inscribing an emblem in dirt, scratching it upon stone, or imprinting it upon sand, a shugenja can create a field that repels malevolent supernatural entities, hurling those inside out of the sanctified area with the force of an earthquake.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, you create an sacred symbol at the target position. Each time a Shadowlands creature attempts to move closer to the target, it suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth ring and must make a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check** or suffer the Prone condition. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

☼: This effect persists until the end of the scene.

☼☼: This effect persists for 24 hours.

☼☼+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ☼☼ spent this way.

☼: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Tetsubō of Earth

Description: The shugenja takes a steady stance and calls the spirits of earth, and a pillar of stone erupts from a nearby plot of soil, chunks cracking away to reveal the form of a studded club. Despite the great weight of this weapon, the shugenja can heft it with ease, their might reinforced by the spirits of earth that brought forth the tetsubō for their use.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** to have a tetsubō made of rock and stone erupt from a target position with a patch of stone, dirt, or earth at range 0–1 and slide into your hand.

Effects: If you succeed, you create and immediately ready a tetsubō (see **Weapons** on page 143) made of stone. When you deal damage with an Attack action using this weapon, if a target is suffering the Prone condition, that target suffers additional damage equal to your Earth ring. The tetsubō persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it collapses into dust or shatters into pebbles.

New Opportunities

☼: The weapon you create can be any kind of melee weapon instead of a tetsubō.

☼☼: After performing this action, you may immediately perform a Guard action using the weapon you created.

☼☼☼: The weapon you create has the Sacred quality (see page 147).

☼☼: Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Tomb of Jade

Description: One of the most powerful invocations of the spirits of earth, the rite the Kuni shugenja call the Tomb of Jade seals a malevolent entity—one suffused with the power of the Shadowlands—within a prison of jade, transforming its blighted flesh into this sacred substance.

The jade behaves as normal, adversely affecting other evil creatures nearby. However, if the prison of jade is cracked or broken, the spell weakens, and the being sealed within might be able to escape to wreak havoc once again.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed and the target is a Shadowlands creature or has the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, it begins transforming into jade. At the beginning of each of its turns, permanently reduce each of its rings with the Tainted disadvantage attached by 1, or all of its rings if it is a Shadowlands creature. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes. If any of its rings are reduced to 0 in this manner, it is turned into jade entirely and permanently, though damage to the statue might allow it to slip free.

If you succeed and your target is not a Shadowlands creature and does not have the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, it suffers no ill effects.

New Opportunities

☼: The effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

☼☼+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ☼☼ spent this way.

☼☼+: Choose one of the following conditions for each ☼☼ spent this way: Dazed, Disoriented, or Prone. If the target is a Shadowlands creature or has the Tainted disadvantage, it suffers these conditions.

Fire Invocations

Armor of Radiance

Description: Shugenja attuned closest to the kami of fire know that the best defense is an attack from which the foe can never recover, and by appealing to the fire kami that slumber within an object, a shugenja can turn even a set of armor into a weapon. The fire kami's creative energy expands rapidly as the incantation ends, causing shimmering radiance to burst forth into a halo of fire that encircles the armor. These flames are harmless to the wearer—though if the shugenja is not performing this invocation upon their own armor, they would be well-advised to take a step back afterward.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one set of armor at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, one piece of armor is wreathed in blinding radiance and searing heat (that miraculously do not affect the wearer); when a character at range 0–1 of the wearer begins their turn, they suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

☼: The armor gains the Wargear quality.

☼☼: The effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

☼☼+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ☼☼ spent this way.

☼☼: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Biting Steel

Description: Flame, passion, and ingenuity transform ore into steel, and steel into a sword. So too, then, can a shugenja wield the flame to transform a sword into an even greater weapon, an impossible edge that parts nearly any substance in its ferocity. By drawing a pattern along the naked blade, a shugenja can wake the spirits of fire still sleeping within it.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one weapon at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, increase the weapon's base damage by your Fire ring. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️✳️: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

✳️+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: After performing this action, if you have readied the weapon you enhanced, you may immediately perform a Strike action with it.

✳️: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

✳️+: If you succeed, until the end of the scene, increase the weapon's deadliness by 1 per ✳️ spent this way.

Breath of the Fire Dragon

Description: "Fire is born of the breath," or so the Isawa elementalists have long said. Some shugenja make this practice more literal, calling upon the fire kami to ignite the air they exhale, transforming it into a gout of charring flame. A shugenja properly trained in breath exercises can maintain this stream of fire for some time, building its intensity until the final moment and annihilating almost any opposition in the process. It also tends to ignite nearby flammable objects.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring plus two times your bonus successes and the Burning condition. Each character at range 0–1 of the target must make a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 4, Water 1) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 lower or higher per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

✳️+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ✳️ spent this way.

Extinguish

Description: Shugenja who commune with the spirits of fire must learn to still them, lest the flames they conjure consume them. However, it is not in the nature of fire spirits to be quelled—therefore, the shugenja instead master the art of precisely inciting the raging fire kami further, causing them to quickly exhaust themselves. With a few words and a rising gesture, the shugenja inhales, drawing the flames to a searing glow, then exhales, letting them settle to embers.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting any number of mundane fires at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you instantly extinguish the targets.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️✳️: If you succeed, you may also end all persistent effects from other Fire invocations and flame-based supernatural effects in the area.

✳️: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Fires of Purity

Description: The shugenja's eyes glow as they finish the gestures and chant and unleash fire around them. These flames swirl from the shugenja's hands, clinging to their body, and withering heat blasts anyone else nearby. This invocation also ignites nearby flammable objects.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, flames radiate out from the target. A number of range bands around the target equal to your Fire ring count as Dangerous terrain for any character besides the target (see **Terrain** on page 167). This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

✳️: If you succeed, the target also gains resistance equal to your Fire ring against physical and supernatural fire.

✳️✳️: The effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Fury of Osano-Wo

Description: The storm Fortune of Rokugan, Osano-wo is a figure of ancient myth whose blood is said to run through the hardy sailors of the Mantis Clan. With a sudden, harsh incantation and a downward gesture or gaze, a shugenja trained in the invocation call the Fury of Osano-wo can conjure a bolt of lightning to strike foes with a powerful blast.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–4. This technique can only be performed outdoors. If the weather is already stormy, reduce the TN by 1.

Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring plus three times your bonus successes. If a target suffers a critical strike as a result of this damage (see **Critical Strikes**, on page 168), treat the severity as 10 plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️: Each target and other character at range 0–2 of the target must make a **TN 3 Meditation (Air 5, Water 2) check** or suffer the Dazed condition and strife equal to three times your Fire ring.

✳️: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Haze of Battle

Description: The shugenja calls to kami of war and flame with an ancient chant, and the calamitous spirits of the battle-din roar back, inciting fury within nearby targets. Those affected seem almost to glow when seen by a spiritualist, their eyes ablaze and their physiques appearing to warp to unearthly proportions. This is a dread incantation for most shugenja to invoke, but it is done as a last-ditch effort to draw one's enemies into a trap or empower one's own troops for a desperate last stand.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make an **TN Theology (Fire) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Fire ring at range 0–2. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, each target immediately suffers 1 strife plus additional strife equal to your bonus successes, and must resist with a **TN 3 (Air 5, Water 1) Meditation check** or immediately suffer the Enraged condition.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Increase the TN of the check to resist this effect by 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Katana of Fire

Description: Fire seems insubstantial, and yet anyone who has felt it knows its bite. The shugenja takes a kenjutsu stance, holding their hands aloft or in a guarded position, and a burst of fire swirls existence in their grip in the shape of a sword. This blade weighs nearly nothing but its edge cuts like the finest steel, leaving blazing trails of light in the air behind it and scorchmark cuts through any flesh it crosses.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** to summon forth a blade of flame in your hand.

Effects: If you succeed, you create and immediately ready a katana (see **Weapons** on page 143) made of fire. Damage inflicted with this weapon is supernatural rather than physical. The katana persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it scatters into embers or sputters out.

New Opportunities

✧: The weapon you create can be any kind of melee or ranged weapon instead of a katana. ✧: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the katana you created.

✧: If you succeed, you may create and immediately ready a pair of weapons instead of a single weapon.

✧: After you perform an Attack action with the weapon, each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 5, Water 2) check** or suffer the Burning condition.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Ravenous Swarms

Description: The shugenja ignites a number of candles and hurls them into the air, and the flames leap forth and quickly devour the tallow. These ghoulish motes of flame settle around the shugenja's shoulders or

near their feet, sputtering cheerily and spitting out sparks that seek to spread and multiply. In addition to providing a (dangerous) source of light, these flames can also leap onto anyone the shugenja attacks, distracting or even searing them as they dissipate.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** to targeting one position containing a flammable object at range 0–1. The object is consumed by flames.

Effects: If you succeed, you call forth a number of fiery motes equal to your Fire ring plus the silhouette of the object consumed. These motes follow you, periodically setting fire to nearby objects. When you succeed at an Attack action, you may spend a number of motes up to your school rank to add one bonus success per mote spent this way. The motes persist until the end of the scene.

If you succeed, after you perform a Fire invocation, you summon one additional fiery mote. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧: The fire motes only set nearby objects on fire when you will them to do so.

✧: When you are targeted by an Attack action, you may spend a number of fiery motes up to your school rank. Reduce the damage you suffer from the Attack action by 1 for each mote spent this way.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Rise, Flame

Description: A humanoid form wrought of flame, garbed in a flowing robe of cinder and smoke, with hair of trailing sparks, a manifest fire kami is an alluring and terrible sight to behold. Where its gaze passes flames arise, and only ash remains in its wake. To summon such a being is an act of desperation only for most shugenja, for fire kami are notoriously hard to suppress once invoked to take form in the realm of mortals.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one position containing flammable material at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon a manifest fire kami (see page 200) to fight for you. It appears from the flammable object (which it consumes) and takes its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or begins to follow its own directives, if stirred to particular ire. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

✧: The manifest fire kami bursts forth in a pillar of searing flame. Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen point must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 5, Water 2) check** or suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions.

✧+: The manifest fire kami consumes one additional large source of flammable material in range (reducing it to ash) per ✧ spent this way. Increase the manifest fire kami's resilience by the silhouette of each such object it consumes this way.

✧: When the manifest fire kami's wounds exceed its resilience, it detonates. Each character at range 0–3 of it must resist with a **TN 5 Fitness (Air 6, Water 3) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring and suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

The Fires from Within

Description: The incantation to call fire is guttural and raw. Even as the words echo, the shugenja's hands snap open and motes of flame trail from their fingertips, searing their way toward the objects of the shugenja's ire. Any of these motes that fail to hit their intended targets seize upon any flammable material in their path, devouring it greedily before spreading to seek their next meal. If precisely controlled, this invocation can be a pinpoint strike, smiting only their intended foes; if the shugenja's emotions flare up wildly during the invocation, however, the fires spread rapidly, their avarice unchecked by the shugenja's intentions.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Fire ring at range 1–3.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

- ✳+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.
- ✳✳+: One target per ✳✳ spent this way must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness (Air 3, Water 1) check** or suffer the Burning condition.

The Fires that Cleanse

Description: With a roared incantation, the shugenja spreads their hands wide and a circle of fire spills forth, rippling across the ground and searing everything in its path. These flames are indiscriminate, hungrily lapping at friend, foe, and inanimate object alike. The shugenja, for their part, is unaffected by the initial wave of flames, though any incidental fires that spring up as a result might burn or asphyxiate them as normal if they are exposed for too long.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** targeting each other character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers the Dazed condition and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 5, Water 1) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring plus their shortfall and the Burning condition.

New Opportunities

- ✳+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳+: Increase the TN of each target's check to resist the effect by 1 per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

The Soul's Blade

Description: The shugenja extends a hand to the sky and makes a dangerous appeal, calling for a heavenly weapon to vanquish their enemy. If the invocation is performed properly and the shugenja's cause is judged worthy by the powers they sought, the sky cracks and a thunderbolt

descends, piercing intervening objects and arriving in their hand in the form of a weapon. Be it the hide of a great beast or the sorcerous ward of a mahō-tsukai, there is nothing this blade of judgement cannot pierce, and only in the depths of Jigoku will the unrighteous find respite from it.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** to summon forth a blade of pure energy in your hand.

Effects: If you succeed, you create and immediately ready a katana or naginata (see **Weapons** on page 143) made of searing, crackling energy. Attacks made with this weapon inflict supernatural damage, but ignore all forms of resistance. The weapon persists until it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it flickers out.

New Opportunities

- ✳: The weapon you create can create any kind of weapon instead of a katana.
- ✳: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the weapon you created.
- ✳: If you succeed, you may create and immediately ready a pair of weapons instead of a single weapon.
- ✳: One chosen character other than you may wield the weapon.
- ✳: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.
- ✳✳: After you perform an Attack action with the weapon, each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 5, Water 2) check** or suffer the Dazed condition.

Wall of Fire

Description: A roiling wall of fire sends a very specific message: approach and die in a manner most awful. Shugenja who commune with fire spirits can summon forth such blazing warnings with relative ease, brushing oil or powder across the ground and then igniting it with a word of invocation. The wall of fire sparks to life with great force and extends up a few meters for several moments, but maintains its intensity only so long as it has fuel.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting two positions at range 2–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you create a wall of flame between the target points that extends to range 1 in thickness and range 3 in height (see **Range Bands** on page 166); this area counts as Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167). This effect persists for one round plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. Any character standing where the wall erupts suffers the Dazed condition, and must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness (Air 3, Water 1) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring and the Burning condition (see page 170).

New Opportunities

- ✳+: Treat the minimum or maximum range of this technique as 1 lower or higher per ✳ spent this way.
- ✳: The wall of fire is terrain with one of the following qualities: Entangling or Obscuring (see **Terrain** on page 167).
- ✳: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Wings of the Phoenix

Description: The shugenja leaps into the air and fiery wings burst forth behind them, carrying them into the sky. Small motes of flame fall in the wake of the shugenja's passing, igniting the ground before fading into delicate feathers of ash.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you are carried aloft by flames. In addition to being able to move vertically freely, ignore the effects of terrain while flying. This effect persists one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. While this effect persists, any terrain you fly over at range 0–3 is ignited, and becomes Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167) until the beginning of your next turn; each character within that area suffers the Dazed condition, and must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness (Air 3, Water 1) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire ring and the Burning condition (see page 170).

New Opportunities

✧+: While flying, you may safely carry up to one additional willing character at range 0–2 with you per ✧ spent this way.

✧: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

✧✧: This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Water Invocations

Bō of Water

Description: Water can be as soft as a gentle rain or as hard as a tidal wave, and can shift between the two in an instant. A shugenja can invoke the spirits of water to take the form of a weapon, drawing forth a staff of shifting water or ice from a source of water or even moisture within the air. This weapon can change form at the bearer's will, swirling from a staff into a blade in the blink of an eye.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Water) check** to summon forth a staff made of water from a nearby pool, stream, or even airborne vapor.

Effects: If you succeed, you create and immediately ready a staff (see **Weapons** on page 143) made of water. At the end of each round, you may transform this weapon into a different melee weapon. The bō persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it dissipates into mist or splashes to the ground in a puddle.

New Opportunities

✧: The weapon you create can be any kind of melee or ranged weapon instead of a staff.

✧: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the weapon you created.

✧: When performing an Attack action with this weapon, treat the minimum or maximum range as 1 higher or lower.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Dance of Seasons

Description: A skilled shugenja can impart meaning into subtle intonations and gentle movements, entreating with the kami to change the world around them through a rite that seems as much performance as invocation. The spell that shrine-keepers call the Dance of Seasons exemplifies this practice. In the dance, the water kami mirror the movements of the shugenja and shift the state of the water around them from water to ice to vapor and back again. The water inside of living beings is unaffected by this seemingly gentle invocation, though a skilled shugenja might be able to use it to entrap the unwary, drenching them in the waters of a summer storm and twisting quickly through autumn's tumbling movements before plunging them into the frozen heart of winter.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a source of water (such as a pool, a river, snow or ice, or even mist) at range 1–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you may freeze, thaw, or evaporate the water at the target. If you transform water into ice, it becomes solid, Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167). If you transform water into vapor, it creates a fog, which is Obscuring terrain. If you transform water into mud, it becomes Entangling terrain. Water within living beings remains unaffected, as the kami conveniently ignore it so as not to ruin the elegant scene with grotesque results.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧✧: If you succeed, you may attempt to encase one character in the affected area per ✧ spent this way in ice. Each of these characters must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 2, Fire 5) check** or suffer the Immobilized and Disoriented conditions.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Dominion of Suitengu

Description: Shugenja deeply attuned to the kami of water can implore their spiritual patrons to show other places in the reflections they perceive, linking two bodies of water together. The shugenja completes the invocation by tracing a circle across a pool of water, and as the ripples subside, the reflections coalesce into a vision of a second body of water nearby chosen by the shugenja. Onlookers can see out from the pool as if they were beneath the surface of the water at the second location. Incredibly powerful practitioners of the art can even use this reflection to bridge the gap in space between the two locations, transporting themselves and others to the desired place through the water—even if they arrive slightly damp.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a body of water at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, the target shows an image of a second body of water of your choice as if the onlooker were just below the surface. This second body of water must be at range 0–6 of the target, and you must have concrete knowledge of a specific body of water (such as a particular river, lake, stream, or even a small pool) to use it this way.

New Opportunities

✧: In addition to being able to see out the other pool of water, you can hear (very muffled) noises.

✧: Only you can see the vision; to others, the pool of water shows no images.

✧: The location you see can be any distance from you (but must still be familiar).

✧✧: You may use clouds, fog banks, snow mounds, and sheets of ice as bodies of water for this technique.

✧✧✧: In addition to being able to see out of the other body of water, you and a number of other characters up to your Water ring may pass through the temporary portal you have created to the other location. The trip is always one-way for a given use of the technique, and you always arrive soaked.

Ever-Changing Waves

Description: The cycle of reincarnation sends those involved through many existences. A shugenja might have lived as a bird, a wolf, a plant, and humans of various stations before being born into their current position on the celestial order. All these existences are separate, and yet inexorably bound. By following the bond backward, a shugenja adept in communing with the water kami can reshape their flesh to mirror a past form—albeit briefly—transforming into a natural animal or mythological beast for a short time. The shugenja maintains their memories and intellect, but possesses the basic knowledge of how to function in their transformed state. This invocation generally cannot be used to transform into a different human, although it might be able to be used to take the form of a sentient natural creature, at the GM's discretion.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you transform your body into that of another natural creature of silhouette 2 (see **Animals** on page 201). While in this form, you use its ring values, derivative attributes, abilities, and physical and social advantages, but use your own mental and spiritual advantages and skill ranks. This effect persists until you choose to end it or are rendered unconscious, at which point your form reverts to its original state. Do not remove any wounds or strife you have suffered in the alternate form when you return to your original; if this causes your wounds to exceed your resilience (or your strife to exceed your composure) when it had not in the altered form, you suffer a critical hit with severity 5 (or an outburst, in the case of strife).

New Opportunities

✧+: Increase or decrease the minimum silhouette of your new form by 1 (to a minimum of 0 or a maximum of 6).

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

✧: You can transform your body into that of a mythical beast, such as a dragon, ki-rin, komainu, or phoenix.

Hands of the Tides

Description: Water binds all living beings, and by communing deeply with the vital spirits that flow through everything, a shugenja can master many arts. Using this esoteric invocation, a shugenja can exchange the positions of living beings near to one another, throw enemies off-balance, or put allies in a position of advantage. While the Elemental Masters have been known to debate whether the targets are moved or it is the world that the spirits of water reshape around them, the effect of the invocation—shuffling the positions of a number of individuals in a small radius as the shugenja sees fit—is easy to understand, if hard to comprehend.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself and a number of other characters up to your Water ring at range 1–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you may exchange the positions of the targets; each character's original position must be filled, and each original position must be occupied.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧+: If you succeed, you may choose a new stance for one target per ✧ spent this way.

Heart of the Water Dragon

Description: The shugenja traces a gentle pattern on the target's skin with purified water, calling upon the water kami in their body to protect and mend the flesh they call home. The target becomes extremely resistant to invocations, sorcery, and other supernatural abilities, with arcane flames rippling off their skin harmlessly and curses parting that they might pass.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, each target gains supernatural resistance equal to your Water ring (see page 168) and heals 1 wound at the end of each round. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Heart of the Water Dragon invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

✧✧: When the target succeeds on a check to resist the effects of a kihō, mahō, or invocation technique, the character who used the technique must also make the check to resist that effect.

Inari's Blessing

Description: Shugenja often offer food to the kami as oblations, but like many things in their relationship, this can go both ways. Water is life, and water kami can provide life-giving gifts of food and drink even from the most desolate environments. After the shugenja performs the rite, splashing the sacred sake or other offering across the ground, the land nearby flourishes with life, delivering food to the shugenja, and pure water springs from the ground. The food might consist of mushrooms and berries in a forest, fish in a river, or even edible cactus in a desert. This food is simple and nourishing, and can be cooked or even packed away as rations for later if needed.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** to targeting one position at range 1.

Effects: You summon forth a meal at the target position that can feed a number of people up to your Water ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✧: The meal is particularly fortifying. Any character who partakes of it during downtime heals a number of wounds equal to your Water ring.

✧+: The meal can feed a number of people up to your Water ring plus your bonus successes times the ✧ spent this way instead.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✧✧ spent this way.

Path to Inner Peace

Description: Water is the element associated with healing and revivification, and water kami can encourage the body to heal at an accelerated rate. By communing with the water kami that dwell within the body, a shugenja can right imbalances and correct the flow of chi, speeding the process of recovery dramatically. This form of healing is useful for everyday cuts and bruises, but cannot fully replace surgery when dealing with major traumatic injuries or restore lost body parts. As it relies upon the patient's own vitality to help them heal, there are also limits to the amount it can restore within a short time span before it begins to do more harm than good.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** to targeting yourself or another character at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, each target heals wounds equal to your Water ring plus your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Path to Inner Peace invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✧✧ spent this way.

✧: Choose one of the following conditions: Bleeding, Dazed, Disoriented. Remove that condition from each target.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Reflections of D'an Ku

Description: Water kami are notoriously covetous, and things lost to their depths rarely resurface. Still, their avarice can have advantages, for a shugenja who knows how to pique their curiosity can glean a great deal of information about magical objects from water kami. After all, water kami have the whole of the world's oceans as their treasure vault, and

can compare any item to countless specimens in their endless collection. A shugenja learned in this art can call forth water spirits to recognize their own by submerging the item in sacred water, making the proper obeisances, and awaiting a response. The water spirits often provide cryptic answers, and might demand further payment for further details, but can usually grant the shugenja a good idea of an item's composition, whether it possesses any mystical properties, and the general disposition of these traits.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** to targeting one item at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, you learn all properties an item possesses, including its name, maker, mundane qualities, magical properties, curses, and sealed techniques.

New Opportunities

✧: Gain knowledge of the item's origin in broad strokes, such as where it was forged, the clan of the individual who has carried it the longest, or a similar piece of information.

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧: You may target a character instead of an object. If you succeed, you identify one invocation, kihō, mahō, or supernatural ability or item possessed by that person, along with its name and general qualities.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Rise, Water

Description: Water kami are nurturing, for water fosters all life. But like all nature spirits, they are beings of destruction and creation, and calling a water kami to take manifest form is to summon a potent force indeed. A manifest water kami often takes a humanoid form, rising from a nearby lake, river, or ocean and carried aloft on a crushing wave. As water splits into rivulets, a manifest water kami can also split into multiple smaller beings, each one surging forth to devastate the object of the shugenja's ire.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a large quantity of water at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon a manifest water kami (see page 201) to fight for you. It appears from the targeted body of water and obeys you for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or begins to follow its own directives, if stirred to particular ire. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

✧+: You split the manifest water kami into a number of smaller manifest water kami equal to ✧ spent this way. Each one has a resilience equal to 12 divided by the number of ✧ spent this way (rounded up).

✧: The manifest water kami attempts to swallow up anyone inside the pool of water; each such character must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Earth 2, Fire 5) check** or be pulled into the water kami and begin suffocating (see **Suffocation** on page 171). As an action, a character may make a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 1, Fire 4) check** to escape this watery prison.

✧: Upon arrival, the water kami may move a number of range bands up to your Water ring.

✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Stride the Waves

Description: Walking across water is one of the earliest invocations the Isawa elementalists sought to master, demonstrating clearly their divine favor to any onlooker, be they peasant or lord. By communing directly with the water kami, an artful shugenja can do far more than merely walk across ponds, however—guided by the spirits of water, a character can slide effortlessly across the surface of a stormy sea, ride a current of water out of the ocean, or even plunge beneath its depths, breathing the brine as though it were air.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water)** check targeting one character at range 0–2.

Effects: The target is swept along by the currents as they choose. Even if they cannot swim normally, the target can move as they please along the surface of the water or within it. The character ignores any negative effects of terrain while in the water, and does not suffocate while under water. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Strike the Tsunami

Description: The shugenja calls to the water kami to become violent, rising from their tranquility to lash out at enemies nearby. Upending the contents of a water pouch or reaching into a nearby lake or stream, the shugenja pulls an impossibly large torrent that slams into several foes nearby, pushing them back or dragging them forward as the shugenja wills.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water)** check targeting a number of characters up to your Water ring at range 0–3. The character must have a source of water (a waterskin or larger) to perform this technique.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water ring plus your bonus successes. Each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth 1, Fire 4)** check; you may move each target who fails a number of range bands up to their shortfall in any direction.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Each target who fails the check to resist suffers the Bleeding condition.

Suitengu's Embrace

Description: The ocean is the source of much life—and much bounty for the people of Rokugan—but it is also a dangerous realm, hostile to humans who venture into its depths. A shugenja with the proper knowledge—and the will to wield it—can inflict a drowning death upon their enemy, transforming the air in their lungs into seawater and killing them as surely throwing them off a pier while tied to a heavy stone.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water)** check targeting one character at range 1–3.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water ring plus 2 times your bonus successes. If a target's wounds exceed their resilience this way, instead of suffering a critical strike, the target begins to suffocate (see **Suffocation** on page 171).

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✧ spent this way.

Sympathetic Energies

Description: Water kami flow through all living beings, and a shugenja can use their winding channels to transfer boons and curses alike between individuals. With an incantation and a swirling motion of the hands or body, the shugenja spreads or transfers the lingering of effects of an invocation or sorcerous ability between multiple people.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water)** check to spread one chosen persistent invocation effect across a number of targets equal your Water ring at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, choose one persistent invocation effect on one target. Each other target counts as being affected by it as well. This effect persists as long as the original effect persists on the original target.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose 1 additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: You may choose a condition instead of a persistent invocation effect.

✧✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

The Rushing Wave

Description: The shugenja calls the torrent as their steed and rides it, pulling a wave of water from a nearby lake, pond, or river to propel them forward at incredible speed. The rush of water carries the shugenja (or another character, at the shugenja's will) to a destination and then stops, soaking into the ground or splashing back into the source whence it came.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water)** check targeting one character at range 0–1. There must be a large source of water nearby to perform this invocation.

Effects: If you succeed and the current scene is a conflict, the target may immediately move 1 range band, plus additional range bands equal to your bonus successes.

If you succeed and the current scene is a narrative or downtime scene, the target's movement speed across the water (such as in a sailing ship or riverboat) is doubled. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✧+: Choose one additional target 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of the beginning of your next turn.

Importune Invocations

The kami can sometimes be cajoled to do things without proper decorum being observed, but doing so is costlier than most shugenja are willing to pay on a regular basis. Still, any character capable of invocations may attempt to importune an invocation, executing it without full knowledge of the surrounding rites.

Once per scene, a character who knows one or more invocation techniques may choose one invocation technique that they have not learned (even if they do not meet the prerequisites) and makes an offering to the kami responsible for this power. The offering must be something of suitable interest to the kami (see **The Proper Time for the Proper Invocations**, on page 116), but additionally, it must be of value to the character. Whether or not something is sufficiently

important is left to the GM's discretion, but generally, the item should at least be significantly inconvenient to replace, and unique things should yield the best results. Obviously, the item is lost forever to the character, as the kami absconds with it in some suitably dramatic manner.

If the GM determines that the kami is satisfied with this exceptional offering, the character may perform the action associated with that technique. However, the TN is increased by 1, plus 1 for each school rank by which the prerequisite exceeds the character's current school rank. The character may channel this invocation as normal (see **Channeling**, on page 116), but can only perform the action once.

Rituals

Rituals are religious ceremonies performed to appease the kami and draw forth their blessings. Unlike invocations, rituals are not the rarified secrets of shugenja schools; instead, they are day-to-day practices performed by many religious functionaries throughout Rokugan. Nonetheless, they allow mortals to reach out to the kami to receive their favor—albeit with somewhat less dramatic or devastating results than most invocations. Still, they are miraculous occurrences, if subtle ones. Most priests, shrine-keepers, and court mystics know and perform rituals on a regular basis. Monks and shugenja also frequently know how to perform rituals.

Rituals are performed during downtime, and potentially during other types of scenes at the GM's discretion. Only characters with 1 or more school ranks in a school that lists "rituals" among its available techniques can purchase rituals.

The rituals in this section are organized alphabetically.

Cleansing Rite

Description: The ritualist sanctifies a person or group, anointing them with sacred substances that drive out unholy presences and malign sorcery.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting up to five characters to remove spiritual contaminants from the targets before they spread. Note that this cannot remove the Shadowlands Taint once it has taken hold, but can prevent it from catching after exposure.

Effects: If you succeed, remove all instances of the Afflicted condition from the target.

New Opportunities

✳+: Choose 1 additional target per ✳ spent this way.

✳+: Instead of targeting a character, you may target an area that encompasses a number of range bands around you equal to ✳ spent this way. Remove the Defiled terrain quality from this area. If it is a deeply unhalloved place that has long been the domain of evil, the Defiled quality returns after one day, plus additional days equal to your bonus successes.

✳: If one or more targets possess the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage, you become aware of it after completing the ritual—but not which target possesses it.

Commune with the Spirits

Description: The ritualist centers their mind on one of the elements, appealing to the spirits in their environment and seeking their counsel or boon. Only shugenja can speak to and hear the kami directly as though they were speaking Rokugani to one another. However, other priests and laypeople are able to use this ritual to receive less specific guidance from the spirits, such as a leaf that falls to the ground pointing in the direction of the person or thing they are seeking.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a downtime activity or Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology check** using Air, Earth, Fire, Water, or Void to appeal to nearby spirits of that element (or non-elemental spirits and other supernatural presences, if using Void) for aid.

Effects: If you succeed, choose and receive one of the following boons from the spirit or spirits you contacted:

- **Sense the Kami:** Detect all spirits and uses of their magic by shugenja within a number of range bands equal to the ring you used plus your bonus successes.
- **Spiritual Knowledge:** Learn one fact the spirits know about the area.
- **Elemental Gift:** The kami deliver a small amount of the element in question to you. For instance, a prayer to a water kami might cause it to begin raining lightly, for a short time, but it might also cause you to run across a stream, or even find groundwater. In contrast, a prayer to fire kami might bring forth a small shower of sparks, while a prayer to an air kami might elicit a gust of wind. Praying to an Earth kami might cause you to stumble across a large stone, or find a small patch of arable ground amidst a wasteland.

New Opportunities

✳+: If you succeed, receive one additional boon per ✳ spent this way. Each boon can only be received one time per activation.

✳: Reduce the TN of your next check to interact with or appeal to kami of this element by 1.

Divination

Description: The ritualist peers into a character's future, ascertaining their fate from the patterns of the stars, the char-marks upon animal bones, the casting of shells, or other omens they can read.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character to see glimpses of their future.

Effects: If you succeed, choose one of the following omens that you see in the target's near future:

Omen of the Azure Dragon: The next time the target performs an Artisan skill check this game session, the target adds a kept die showing ☯ to the check.

Omen of the Black Tortoise: The next time the target performs a Scholar skill check this game session, the target adds a kept die showing ☯ to the check.

Omen of the White Tiger: The next time the target performs a Martial Skill check this game session, the target adds a kept die showing ☯ to the check.

Omen of the Vermillion Bird: The next time the target performs a Social Skill check this game session, the target adds a kept die showing ☯ to the check.

Omen of the Weaver and the Cowherd: The next time the target performs a Trade Skill check this game session, the target adds a kept die showing ☯ to the check.

If you fail, the GM chooses one of the above omens instead.

The target cannot receive another divination until the end of the game session.

☯: If you fail, you see an additional omen beyond the first. Choose one of the above omens in addition to the one the GM chose.

Shūji

Shūji are social techniques, and thus leverage that most powerful of human tools: communication. Shūji can be used in debates, duels, skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with 1 or more school ranks in a school that lists "shūji" among its available techniques can purchase shūji.

The shūji in this section are organized alphabetically by their elemental classification.

Air Shūji

Air shūji are indirect, probing, and sometimes teasing. More than other forms of rhetoric, this style of conversation tends to revolve around setting up subtle traps in conversation for others to fall into before exploiting them for all they are worth. Air shūji thus tends to hinge on details rather than the bigger picture, and controls the scope of the conversation to deflect away from contrary evidence or inconvenient points of logical argumentation.

Artisan's Appraisal

Description: The courtier looks at object but sees its maker. Each thumbprint tells a story about the hand that crafted the piece, every subtle choice reveals something about the desires that linger in the artist's mind.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 2

Threshold Barrier

Description: The ritualist wards an entryway against beings of a certain sort of creature, causing them to fail to observe the entryway or be mentally repulsed by their efforts to enter it.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Theology check** using Air, Earth, Fire, Water, or Void targeting a threshold, gate, or other entryway at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed, the threshold is barred against a particular type of entity based on the ring you chose for one hour, plus additional hours equal to your bonus successes. When an entity of this type attempts to enter, it must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** or be repelled by the spiritual barrier. Whether it succeeds or fails, you immediately become aware of its attempted entry. The particular type of being is based on the ring you chose, as follows:

- **Air:** Spirits, ghosts, and incorporeal beings.
- **Earth:** Living Shadowlands creatures and characters with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage attached to their Earth ring.
- **Fire:** Undead beings with corporeal form.
- **Water:** Wild animals.
- **Void:** Humans.

☯: Instead of protecting a threshold, you may protect the entirety of a sealed area that extends a number of range bands around you no greater than your bonus successes.

☯: If any beings of the type you attempted to seal the threshold against have passed through it within the last 24 hours, you become aware of their passage.

Range of Shūji

Shūji can generally affect characters close enough to hear the speaker (or otherwise understand them). In most circumstances, this is range 0–4, but under less than ideal conditions (high winds, the clash of swords and screams of dying warriors, pounding rain), it might be a smaller area.

Additionally, shūji can sometimes be transmitted by means other than speech. While written rhetoric is often less effective for stirring large groups, a well-targeted letter to a specific person might be extremely moving. At the GM's discretion, a character can transmit a shūji technique over time and distance via epistolary or similar means, though it generally only affects a single intended recipient.

Activation: When assessing an object or performance with an Artisan skill (Air), Performance (Air), or Games (Air) check you may spend ☯ in the following ways:

- ☯: Choose a ring; learn the value of that ring for the creator or performer and all non-Curse advantages and disadvantages attached to that ring.
- ☯: If the creator or performer is an NPC, learn their disposition.

Bend with the Storm

Description: “On the slopes of Seven Thunders Mountain, one does not stand before the thunderstorm.” When faced with a much more powerful foe, a cunning courtier often presents a position of apparent weakness. In this way, they can lead this individual where they desire them to go by creating opportunities their opponent cannot pass up rather than trying to overcome them and being crushed underfoot.

Prerequisites: School rank 5

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check targeting another character, you may spend ☸ in the following way:

Air ☸: Choose an advantage or disadvantage. The target comes to believe you possess that advantage or disadvantage without you having to expend noticeable effort or state it directly. Further, the target believes that you do not know you have given this advantage or disadvantage away. If you do anything that would call this misconception into question, any character may resist with a **TN 5 Sentiment (Fire 3, Earth 6) check** to discern that the advantage or disadvantage is not real. This effect persists until the target is faced with incontrovertible evidence or succeeds on the check to resist in the face of cracks in your façade.

Cadence

Description: In courtly situations, it can become advantageous for courtiers of the same clan to be able to communicate wordlessly. The Crane Clan is the undisputed masters and originators of Cadence, a highly complex and highly secretive technique that is taught only to members of the Crane Clan. Over time, the Scorpion, Phoenix, and other clans have developed their own styles of body and sign language as well. Even the Mantis Minor Clan has such signals, used to communicate on the deck of a ship during storms.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check, you may spend ☸ in the following ways:

Air ☸: Convey a secret message that alters the meaning of what you are saying outwardly (or has nothing to do with it at all) to one character observing you who possesses this technique.

Air ☸☸: Convey a secret message that alters the meaning of what you are saying outwardly (or has nothing to do with it at all) to one character observing you who does not possess this technique.

Feigned Opening

Description: A wise leader creates the impression of weakness to disguise strength and the appearance of strength to conceal weakness. Whether one is brawling in the streets with a few allies or leading a host, the feigned retreat is a time-honored tactic—falling back and tiring the foe while maneuvering them into position for the finishing blow.

Prerequisites: School rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **Performance (Air) check** targeting one character in the scene who is observing you. The TN is equal to the target's vigilance. This technique can only be used during skirmish and mass battle conflicts.

Effects: If you succeed, reduce the TN of the next Attack checks against each target (or their cohort, in a mass battle) by 1 plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

☸+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to the original target per ☸ spent this way.

☸: In a mass battle, increase the TN of Attack checks targeting your cohort by 1 per ☸ spent this way.

Rustling of Leaves

Description: The best rumors are the ones with no obvious perpetrator, and courtiers quickly learn that for gossip to take root, it must seem to come from everywhere at once. After all, if everyone seems to have heard a scandalous story but it has no clear source, what can it be but true? The courtier exploits this for all it is worth, cleverly placing hints for people to find, setting up conversations that will lead to the rumor spreading without their action, or even using false letters or impersonation to draw new people into the spreading story.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check to create or propagate a rumor, you may spend ☸ in the following ways:

Air ☸+: Increase the TN of any check to trace the rumor back to you by 2 per ☸ spent this way.

The Wind Blows Both Ways

Description: A word in the right ear at the right time can enhance the accomplishment of another, or a cutting slight can diminish their success in eyes that matter (usually, their lord). By offering words of praise or criticism at the perfect moment, a character can prime another person for success or failure in the delicate courts of Rokugan.

Prerequisites: School rank 3

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Courtesy or Performance (Air) check targeting another character, you may spend ☸ in the following way:

Air ☸+: The next time the target receives a glory reward (see page 187), increase the glory they gain by 1 per ☸ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Air ☸+: The next time the target forfeits or stakes glory (see page 187), increase the glory they must forfeit or stake by 1 per ☸ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Whispers of Court

Description: Rumors are the currency of court, and the most skilled brokers of gossip make sure to maintain a healthy stock of scandalous news they can barter. When such news is in short supply, many courtiers simply spin it themselves, using cunning schemes and plausible half-truths to bait their webs of intrigue.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a Courtesy (Air) check targeting each character in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the lowest vigilance among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, you create a rumor that sweeps across the room like a storm. Everyone in the scene hears it, and characters with vigilance lower than your bonus successes even come to give it some credence. If spreading a rumor is your social objective in an intrigue, you score rhetorical points equal to your Air ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

☸: Learn one other rumor that is spreading in the current scene.

Wolf's Proposal

Description: Being honorable is of the same value to a courtier as appearing honorable. True honor within one's heart cannot be faked, but fortunately for many courtiers, the appearance of respectability and propriety can easily be fabricated. The courtier carries themselves with utmost dignity, seeming for all the world trustworthy and earnest.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Courtesy or Performance (Air) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, each target behaves as though your honor is 10 higher or lower than its actual value, plus or minus an additional 10 for each bonus success (to a maximum of 100 or a minimum of 0). If you do anything that would call your honor into question, any character may resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment (Fire 2, Earth 5) check** to determine your actual honor attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️: Learn if the honor of one other character in the scene is higher than your honor (the actual value).

Earth Shūji

Earth shūji focus on building others up through a combination of support, expectation, and pressure when needed. A character using this sort of rhetoric is likely to speak at a measured pace, weighing words carefully and developing an argument from the foundation up. Earth shūji rarely uses florid speech, and can be direct to the point of bluntness.

Ancestry Unearthed

Description: A samurai's ancestry often reveals a great deal about their political opportunities, assets, and likely allies in the Emerald Empire, for the rigid social strata allow little divergence. Any courtier can likely dredge up another samurai's lineage from the dark corners of their mind, but some specialize in recalling this information with a glance.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1 **XP Cost:** 2

Activation: When you make a Scholar skill (Earth) or Social skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✳️ as follows.

Earth ✳️: You know one sworn oath the character's family took in the past, and whether or not they have broken or bent it.

Earth ✳️✳️: You know one secret of the character's family that they would prefer be forgotten, and have perhaps even worked to bury.

Earth ✳️✳️✳️: You know something the character does not even know about their own ancestry.

Civility Foremost

Description: Samurai are warriors, but there are many contexts where violence is inappropriate. For instance, katana and other long swords are not worn in many places, and many strictures exist around the times they can and cannot be drawn according to the code of Bushidō. A courtier who has memorized the rules of such engagements can easily turn this to their advantage, finding an excuse that fighting would be improper or profane for nearly any imaginable situation.

Prerequisites: School Rank 2 **XP Cost:** 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Command or Courtesy (Earth) check** targeting one character to claim protection for an individual of your choice by rights of honor. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If you succeed, the target must forfeit honor equal to your Earth ring plus your bonus successes and suffer that much strife to perform an Attack or Scheme action targeting the chosen character. This effect persists for until the end of the scene, or until the target performs an Attack or Scheme action.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to your first target's vigilance per ✳️ spent this way.

Honest Assessment

Description: Honesty is a virtue of Bushidō, but direct honesty is often seen as rudeness among the Rokugani samurai—instead, one is expected to find a polite way to imply one's meaning to spare the feelings of the other involved. As a result, directness can be something of a rare and valuable commodity, and it is most often dispensed by those with little time for frivolity, such as veteran warriors, or those with little to lose socially, such as monks.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Courtesy (Earth) check** to appraise the weaknesses of a character.

Effects: If you succeed, choose 1 of the target's known disadvantages. The target ignores that disadvantage until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️+: Choose one additional disadvantage per ✳️ spent this way.

✳️✳️: Reduce the TN of the target's next skill check using the ring the disadvantage is attached to by 2.

Pillar of Calm

Description: Leaders in the field need to know when to raise the stakes, but also when to lower them. The character calls for reason to prevail and swords to be sheathed, appealing to a common ideal or greater threat that stands before the belligerent parties.

Prerequisites: School Rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **Command (Earth) check** targeting a number of character up to your Earth ring times your school rank. The TN of this check is equal to the highest strife among the targets.

Effects: If you succeed while targeting all of the leaders involved in the conflict, you may de-escalate the conflict one level (from a mass battle to a skirmish, a skirmish to a duel, or a duel to an intrigue).

New Opportunities

✳️✳️+: You may de-escalate the conflict by one additional level per ✳️✳️ spent this way.

Stonewall Tactics

Description: The courtier makes themselves impossible for the target to ignore, raising a pressing concern that must be addressed first or even physically planting themselves between a rival and their allies.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: When making a Social skill (Earth) or Martial skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

Earth ✳️+: Increase the TN of any check the target makes that does not target you by 1 per ✳️ spent this way. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Touchstone of Courage

Description: Armies are rarely routed in the field; instead, most collapse when morale becomes impossible to maintain. As panic rises in the ranks, soldiers look to leaders to set an example. The character does just this, speaking to the importance of duty or the desire to defend home to bring their troops back from the edge of chaos.

Prerequisites: School Rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Command (Earth) check** targeting any number of characters (or your cohort during a mass battle).

Effects: If you succeed during an intrigue, duel, or skirmish conflict, each target increases their composure by your Earth ring. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed during a mass battle conflict, increase your army's discipline by your Earth ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️: During an intrigue, duel, or skirmish, each target removes strife equal to your Earth ring.

✳️: During a mass battle, your army removes panic equal to your Earth ring.

The Immoveable Hand of Peace

Description: The courtier calls for the warriors in the field to lay down their arms and withdraw.

Prerequisites: School Rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per game session as a Scheme action, during a duel or skirmish, you may make a **TN 5 Command (Earth) check** targeting every character in the scene.

Effects: If you succeed, the scene becomes a debate between you and the other principal players. This effect persists for a one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. If you have not achieved a peaceful resolution by the time this effect ends, the scene returns to its previous state.

New Opportunities

✳️: You may also perform this action during a mass battle or other form of conflict (other than an intrigue).

The Weight of Duty

Description: The different clans ask many different things of their members, and yet all samurai know the pressure of expectation, even if it takes countless forms. An observant courtier can read this from engaging with another character, learning what they believe and how they fail they might not live up to these ideals.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✳️ as follows:

Earth ✳️: Learn one way the target fears failing as a samurai.

Earth ✳️✳️: Learn the target's giri (see page 24).

Fire Shūji

Fire shūji focus on provocation in the most direct sense, eliciting a reaction not slowly over time but immediately and with fervor. Anger, joy, despair, and the burning desire for justice are all tools of one who wields Fire shūji. With it, a speaker can illuminate injustice or set hearts ablaze with pride, but it can also blind people to the wider situation or the consequences of their actions.

Bravado

Description: Glory is half reputation and half poise, and behaving as if one is well-known can open many doors on its own. The courtier adopts a confident mien, speaking more informally than propriety should perhaps allow. Their words and posture carry a tinge of arrogance, which makes them that much harder to ignore.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Games or Performance (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, each target behaves as though your glory as being 10 higher or lower than its actual value, plus or minus an additional 10 for each bonus success (to a maximum of 100 or a minimum of 0). If you do anything that would call your glory into question, any character may resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment (Air 2, Water 2) check** to determine your actual glory attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳️: Learn if the glory of one other character in the scene is higher than your glory (the actual value).

Dazzling Performance

Description: Performing a great feat can win a character renown, but performing a great feat and telling the story of it well draws far greater accolades. A courtier who wishes to build a reputation in the competitive environment of a Rokugani court must master not just excellence, but also highlighting the sorts of flourishes that capture people's imaginations.

Prerequisites: School Rank 3

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making an Artisan skill (Fire), Games (Fire), or Performance (Fire) check, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

Fire ✳️+: The next time you receive a glory reward this scene (see page 187), increase the amount you receive by 1. If there is a character of higher status in the scene, increase it by 1 per ✳️ spent this way instead.

Fanning the Flames

Description: Inciting people to act foolishly or to flinch at the crucial moment is a key skill of a courtier, for words are their most powerful weapons. Unchecked emotion is another tool in the courtier's arsenal, and most become quite adept in the art of manipulating people into feeling certain things that are advantageous for them at the time. The courtier stings their target's pride with needling comments or makes a flirtatious remark to put them on their back foot, drawing the target's emotions to the surface and making them easier to predict.

Prerequisites: School Rank 2

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

Fire ✳️+: One target gains the Dazed condition per ✳️ spent this way.

Fire ✳️✳️+: One target gains the Enraged condition per ✳️✳️ spent this way.

Lightning Raid

Description: The Unicorn Clan is famous for its quick strikes, smashing down upon its enemies with cavalry to sow chaos in their ranks and leave them vulnerable to the main body of the army. Other clans also employ similar tactics, usually by ambushing exposed cities or catching supply trains in the field. The leader calls their troops to execute such a maneuver, rousing them for a quick attack that targets supplies and infrastructure rather than troops and leaves the enemy in a state of panic.

Prerequisites: School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per scene, as an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 3 Command (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene (or one cohort in a mass battle).

Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish scene, each character increases their initiative by your Fire ring plus your bonus successes at the beginning of the next round.

If you succeed during a mass battle, one enemy leader's cohort suffers panic equal to your Fire ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

⚡: During a skirmish, immediately perform a Strike action (see page 165).

⚡: During a mass battle, immediately perform an Assault action (see page 175) against the chosen enemy cohort's leader.

Rallying Cry

Description: The leader roars, calling their troops to battle, and the voice of an army echoes around them as the one cry is joined by many. As one, they surge forward to claim victory or perish in the attempt.

Prerequisites: School Rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Command or Performance (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene (or one cohort in a mass battle).

Effects: If you succeed, the targets are energized and excited by your rhetoric. After **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, each target adds a kept Ring die showing ⚡ and ☯. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

⚡+: In a skirmish, each enemy in the scene suffers 1 strife per ⚡ spent this way.

⚡+: In a mass battle, the enemy army suffers 1 panic per ⚡ spent this way.

Sear the Wound

Description: Many courtiers cannot resist the opportunity to twist the knife after delivering a stabbing remark, but the wise use this power judiciously. Though somewhat cruel, the technique of bringing a rival's weakness to the forefront of their mind to burn away at their resolve is often effective. Preoccupied with this insecurity, they cannot bring their full force to bear. Of course, to do this, a courtier must actually know what their target believes to be their flaws.

Prerequisites: School Rank 5

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ⚡ in the following way:

Fire ⚡+: Choose a known disadvantage of one of your targets per ⚡ spent this way. That disadvantage applies to all of the target's checks until the end of the scene.

Sensational Distraction

Description: Standing out in court requires a great deal of both cunning and flair, and standing out on purpose can be even harder. Courtiers train much of their lives to learn to control the attentions of courts, and the best courtiers know when to draw attention to themselves with a display of rhetorical prowess or another social feat and when to avoid attention. Drawing attention to oneself can give collaborators the chance to work unnoticed as well, and thus it is an extremely valuable tool in the courtier's arsenal.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ⚡ in the following way:

Fire ⚡+: When interacting with other characters, the target treats their vigilance as 1 lower per ⚡ spent this way; when interacting with you, the target treats their vigilance as 1 higher per ⚡ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Stirring the Embers

Description: A good leader does not just compensate for the weaknesses of those around them, but also fosters their strengths. The courtier reminds an ally of one of that character's finer qualities, sparking pride within them to get them to fight more fiercely or speak with greater conviction.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ⚡ in the following way:

Fire ⚡+: Choose a target and one of their known advantages per ⚡ spent this way. Until the end of the scene, when that advantage applies to a check, the target may reroll up to three dice (instead of two).

Truth Burns Through Lies

Description: The courtier rapidly extrapolates from what they have heard, imagining the ramifications of a story they have heard, as well as the possibilities for what might have gone unsaid. If a gap in the account exists, they can find it, and that first thread can become the undoing of the most cunning duplicity.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Scholar skill (Fire) check to assess a character's story, you may spend ⚡ in the following way:

Fire ⚡: If there is a single statement upon which the character's story hinges, you determine what it is and what you would need to do to verify or disprove it.

Water Shūji

Water shūji play to the heart rather than the mind, calling upon the listener to let their emotions guide them and be swept along without question. Camaraderie, shame, guilt, as well as material needs and base desires are all the domain of Water shūji, and with it, a skilled courtier can draw even the harshest enemies to the negotiating table by making it the path of least resistance.

All in Jest

Description: Veteran courtiers often play off missteps as a joke. This underhanded but effective tactic puts the other person in a difficult position—press the issue and seem stubborn, or let it slide. The wise know to listen especially closely to anything a courtier says in jest, for in it, one can often read their true desires.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Commerce (Water) check, Courtesy (Water), or Performance (Water) check, you may spend ♨ in the following way:

Water ♨+: Regain 1 honor that you forfeit as part of this check to say something rude or appeal to your target's base desires (greed, lust, laziness, etc) by 1 per ♨ spent this way (see **Forfeiting Honor, Glory, or Status** on page 22).

Buoyant Arrival

Description: Some people have the ability to blend in with any social environment, fluidly adapting to the rough atmosphere of the humblest tavern one day while walking among the rulers of the Empire the next. This self-assuredness and tact is a skill like any other, cultivated by the most experienced courtiers so that they can pass in whatever circles they desire to accomplish their ends.

Prerequisites: School Rank 5

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a scheme action, you may make a **Courtesy (Water) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Water ring. The TN of the check is equal to the vigilance of the character with the highest status among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, you may enter or leave the conversation gracefully. You need not forfeit honor or glory for interrupting or suddenly departing, regardless of the status of the participants.

Ebb and Flow

Description: The hardest ice and the gentlest mist are composed of the same water, and seasoned courtiers know that all it takes is time and temperature to transform strength into weakness and weakness into strength. By slowly eroding someone's confidence, their greatest strength can become their biggest vulnerability. On the other hand, the greatest challenges people face can become a source of resolve, helping them to overcome new tasks before them. The courtier manipulates these with ease, keeping their allies confident and their foes uneasy.

Prerequisites: School Rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme or Support action, you may make a **Courtesy (Water)**, **Command (Water)**, or **Games (Water) check** targeting one character. The TN of this check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If you succeed and chose "scheme," choose one of the target's advantages that you know; whenever it applies, invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed and chose "support," choose one of the target's disadvantages you know; whenever it applies invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

♨: Choose one additional advantage or disadvantage and apply the effect to it.

♨+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to your first target's vigilance per ♨ spent this way.

Regal Bearing

Description: The Emperor is recognizable in even plain regalia, for such an august individual carries themselves differently from others. Courtiers train in this art as well, gaining impeccable control over their posture, tone of voice, and choice of words to project exactly the social standing they desire others to see.

Prerequisites: School rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a scheme action, you may make a **Command** or **Performance (Water) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, each target treats your status as being 10 higher or lower, (to a maximum of 100 or a minimum of 0), plus or minus an additional 10 per bonus success. If you do anything that would call your status into question, any character may resist with a TN 4 Sentiment (Earth 2, Fire 5) check to determine your actual status attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

♨: Learn if the status of one other character in the scene is higher than your status (the actual value).

Shallow Waters

Description: The Yasuki family claims to be able to look at anyone and know exactly what they want but will never ask for. Whether or not this boast is true, a good courtier learns to read the desires of those around them from the subtle cues of their responses in conversation, as well as how to probe for details without revealing their intentions.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Water) check targeting a character, you may spend ♨ as follows:

Water ♨: Learn one material item or worldly experience the target desires.

Water ♨ ♨: Learn the target's ninjō (see page 22).

Slippery Maneuvers

Description: The leader makes several signals and calls out a command—often a code word—to their troops and suddenly the formation shifts in unison to take advantage of the terrain around them. Experienced leaders make sure to train their troops in a variety of theaters of war, so that they can use any field of battle to the greatest possible advantage.

Prerequisites: School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Command (Water) check** targeting any number of friendly characters in the scene (or your cohort during a mass battle). This technique can only be used during a skirmish or mass battle.

Effects: If you succeed and the conflict is a skirmish, nominate a piece of terrain you can see. Each target may immediately move 1 range band toward it. Attack checks targeting any of your targets inside the terrain treat the terrain as having the Obscuring quality. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed and the conflict is a mass battle, you and your cohort may immediately move to occupy it if it is unoccupied. Attack checks targeting you and your cohort while you are inside the terrain treat the terrain as having the Obscuring quality. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✳: Each target is able to leverage Obscuring terrain to better effect; attack checks targeting them have their TN increased by 2 instead of 1. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Tributaries of Trade

Description: Gift-giving is an important cultural practice in Rokugan (as is the art of gift-refusal, which any potential recipient must repeat at least twice before accepting the third offering). While some courtiers have a gift prepared for any possible contingency, many simply get acquainted with the art of explaining why a gift could only have been intended for its current recipient (even if they originally procured it for a different purpose). The ability to quickly acquire an item is valued among all courtiers, and can be the source of many favors from others.

Prerequisites: School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a TN 1 **Commerce (Water) skill check** to reveal an item you procured earlier. From a narrative standpoint, you procured this gift during your last opportunity (or sent an attendant to retrieve it), but only reveal it now.

Effects: If you succeed, you produce an item with rarity less than or equal to your 1 plus your bonus successes. You must still pay the costs of the item.

New Opportunities

✳+: Reduce the cost you must pay for the item by one quarter per ✳ spent this way (to a minimum of one quarter of the original price).

Well of Desire

Description: Bribery is a terrible offense in Rokugan, but courtiers are also expected to exchange gifts regularly, and sometimes they come attached to favors or other offers the recipient would prefer to refuse. In these circumstances, a clever courtier often engineers a scene where their refusal will tarnish their reputation, thus creating a no-win situation for a political rival.

Prerequisites: School Rank 1

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When you make a Courtesy (Water) check to present a gift to a target, you may spend ✳ as follows:

Water ✳: To refuse your gift, your target must forfeit glory equal to your Water ring. Additionally, if the gift is something that the target desires, the target must suffer strife equal to its rarity to refuse it. If your target accepts the gift, reduce the TN of your next Social skill check targeting them by the rarity of the item (to a minimum of 1).

Void Shūji

Void shūji revolve around understanding and expressing the inner mysteries of the universe to help oneself and others move toward enlightenment, selfless goals, or otherworldly ends.

All Arts are One

Description: Just as the four elements are bound together by Void, there are underlying principles that unite all forms of art, be they aesthetics or logic or discipline. By meditating on these similarities, you are able to more easily grasp the fundamentals of a given subject and apply them to particular instances.

Prerequisites: School Rank 3

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a TN 4 **Martial skill (Void), Games (Void), or Performance (Void) check** to rapidly absorb a new activity covered by that skill.

Effects: If you succeed, you immediately intuit how to wield a new weapon, play a new game, or perform a new instrument, song, dance, or other task. You do not apply an TN increases that might be associated with dealing with something completely new to you.

New Opportunities

✳: Choose a ring. Reduce the TN of your next check using that ring for the chosen skill by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn (or until the end of the scene during a narrative scene).

A Samurai's Fate

Description: The leader asks their warriors for the final service all samurai must someday render to their lords: to lay down their lives that others might live. Even as they fall in battle, their shed blood waters the fields that will grow a thousand victories.

Prerequisites: School Rank 4

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an action, you make a TN 5 **Command (Void) check** targeting any number of characters (or your cohort, during a mass battle).

Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish, each target ignores any critical strikes with severity lower than your Void ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of the scene (at which point the injuries take effect).

If you succeed during a mass battle, your army counts as having the Fearless Army ability: At the end of each round, your army removes panic equal to your glory rank. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Courtier's Resolve

Description: Warriors do battle with their bodies, and courtiers do battle with their minds. To maintain one's composure while surrounded by the challenges of court, one must be able to clear and organize one's mind, returning focus to the most vital tasks. With a few measured breaths, the courtier centers themselves in the moment and comes at the matter at hand with renewed vigor.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per scene, as a Support action, you may spend 1 Void point to recover from panic.

Effects: Heal strife until your total strife is equal to your composure minus your honor rank.

Lady Doji's Decree

Description: Culture, writing, law: without Doji, Rokugan would have none of these. Propriety and order were of great importance to the founder of the Crane Clan, and along with grace and eloquence. With a word, she was said to defuse the most dangerous situations. Crane Clan courtiers follow in her footsteps, striking at the heart of a matter with their words and transfixing all but the most callous or duplicitous hearts with the demand that they be heard.

Prerequisites: Crane Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per game session as an action, you may make a **Courtesy (Void) check** targeting a number of characters up to your school rank. The TN of this check is equal to the vigilance of the character with the highest status among your targets.

Effects: If you succeed, your targets cannot perform Attack actions targeting you. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, or until you perform an Attack action.

New Opportunities

✳+: Choose 1 additional target with status lower than your first target per ✳ spent this way.

✳✳: Your targets also cannot perform Scheme actions targeting you.

Lady Shinjo's Speed

Description: The Kami Shinjo carried within her a curiosity that could never be fully satisfied, and she ceaselessly sought out new places, new cultures, and new discoveries. Her passion carries on to her clan, who still feel the call of the unexplored. Peerless riders with large, powerful steeds brought back from beyond Rokugan, the samurai of the Unicorn Clan can relocate more swiftly than anyone else, and can still find their way across even unfamiliar terrain with relative ease as Shinjo taught them centuries ago.

Prerequisites: Unicorn Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a downtime activity, if you have a steed available, you may make a **TN 2 Survival (Void) check** to reach a destination with extreme swiftness.

Effects: If you succeed, you reach the destination in half the time it would normally require. Up to one character can ride along with you.

New Opportunities

✳️: You may lead a number of willing characters with mounts of their own up to your school rank.

Lord Akodo's Roar

Description: Akodo One-Eye was founder of the Lion Clan and the greatest tactician of the Empire. His victories rested not upon the strength of his arm, however, but upon his keen mind and faith in the people he rallied behind him. The true general never stands alone, for they are always bolstered by the united will of their followers. With a roar that echoes through the ranks and spreads, chilling their foes and heartening their comrades, the leader charges as Akodo himself once did.

Prerequisites: Lion Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per game session, as an action, you may make a **TN 1 Command (Void) check** targeting each hostile character within a number of range bands equal to your school rank.

Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers the Dazed condition.

New Opportunities

✳️✳️: One other friendly character per ✳️✳️ spent this way at range 0-3 may immediately make a Strike action targeting a Dazed character.

Lord Bayushi's Whispers

Description: Bayushi, self-appointed villain of the Emperor Hantei and master of duplicity founded the Scorpion Clan with a simple purpose: dishonor themselves so that others could live honorably. Thus, it is not duplicity that is the surest sign of Bayushi's method, but pragmatism. Everything in creation has a weakness, and if one can simply find it, it can be unmade. Bayushi maintained vast networks of spies and informants, and was extremely skilled at turning assets others used to try to spy on him. The Scorpion Clan has carried on this tradition with an efficiency that would surely make Bayushi proud, and hardly a town exists in the

Empire where an agent of the clan cannot find someone ready and willing to provide the information they need.

Prerequisites: Scorpion Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per game session, during a narrative scene or as a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Skulduggery (Void) check** to uncover an informant who can give you information about a subject.

Effects: If you succeed, reveal one informant who can give you information about a topic of your choice. If the informant's profile is required, use an appropriate NPC of the GM's choice found in NPCs (see **Chapter 8: Non-Player Characters**).

New Opportunities

✳️: If you succeed, choose one skill. The informant has a number of ranks in that skill equal to your school rank, and can perform checks with that skill to assist you until the end of the scene.

Lord Togashi's Insight

Description: The enigmatic Kami Togashi was said to be able to see the future, by which provenance he excused himself from the tournament of the kami. Occasionally he appears to his descendants, the members of the Dragon Clan, in flashes of visions or sudden, unexplained bursts of insight. Whether those who hear the voice of Togashi himself are truly in contact with their progenitor, channeling his essence across the ages, or letting their imaginations run a bit too wild is a topic of discussion among the clan's scholars.

Prerequisites: Dragon Clan, School Rank 2

XP Cost: 3

Activation: Once per game session, as an action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Void) check** to seek cosmic wisdom regarding a quandary in front of you.

Effects: If you succeed, you receive a brief vision or hear the voice of Togashi providing a hint of one way you might proceed (which the GM should furnish). This hint should not be the full answer, but it should help you move forward toward a solution or at least a formulate plan of action.

New Opportunities

✳️: Reduce the TN of your first check to overcome the problem you are facing by your school rank (to a minimum of 1).

Rouse the Soul

Description: Many things can cloud the soul, but words can awaken it. The courtier speaks honestly and without pretension, calling upon their allies to overcome earthly circumstances and reach a mutual goal.

Prerequisites: School Rank 5

XP Cost: 2

Activation: When making a Social skill (Void) or Theology (Void) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✳️ in the following way:

Void ✳️✳️: Remove one of the following conditions from one target per ✳️✳️ spent this way: Afflicted, Enraged, Fatigued, Intoxicated, Unconscious.

Mahō

Kansen are evil spirits, twisted kami that spill forth from Jigoku or were once kami dwelling within Rokugan before becoming corrupted. While kami can be mercurial and dangerous to mortals, especially if provoked, they are fundamentally creative forces within the world. When they bring destruction, it is often a prelude to greater creation, much as a wildfire rejuvenates a forest. Kansen, by contrast, bloom in the wake of devastation, choking out all life or twisting it with their touch. They are drawn to despair, terror, and most of all, fresh blood, and where they take root, nothing else can grow.

Those mortals who dare to wield this evil sorcery are called mahō-tsukai. Reviled by society and hunted by several sworn orders within the bounds of the Emerald Empire, mahō-tsukai often act subtly, disguising their corruption beneath a pleasant façade and stirring words. Unlike the invocations of shugenja, which are frequently direct in their application, mahō techniques are often staggered. The mahō-tsukai first invokes a subtle curse upon their target, drawing kansen to that ill-fated individual. Once the curse takes hold, the mahō-tsukai can call the kansen to act

Proper Sacrifices

Kansen are far more mercenary than kami by their nature, for loyalty is a anathema to their very being. As such, a mahō-tsukai must always provide a sacrifice to fuel mahō techniques. This is usually blood (their own or someone else's), but particularly evil acts can in and of themselves function as sacrifices, at the GM's discretion. Small amounts of blood can satisfy the kansen, but exceptional sacrifices (killing a human victim or crossing a vital personal line) draw forth their greatest powers.

A mahō-tsukai who makes an exceptional sacrifice alongside a mahō technique counts as having a distinction that applies to the check. The material offering is consumed in this process.

upon the target in a variety of unpleasant ways, from mental and social manipulation to inflicting agony, illness, and death. While this can all be done quickly during battle when needed, a far more common strategy for mahō-tsukai is to slowly insinuate themselves into the presence of their target, wearing them down over a long period of time before destroying them utterly. If the mahō-tsukai is subtle enough, none ever realize that their target was afflicted with a curse.

Unlike other kami, kansen respond to the call of any with the knowledge needed to invoke their power so long as their price is paid. However, the knowledge to call them is in itself corruptive.

Only characters with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage can purchase mahō (see **Shadowlands Taint**, on page 72). Additionally, a character must have access to a source of evil lore to purchase mahō.

Incite Haunting

Description: Mahō-tsukai are distinct from shugenja in a number of ways—though some shugenja do turn to such sorcerous practices out of desperation or depravity. The kansen are kami twisted by the power of Fu Leng and they need little prompting to cause harm. Directing these beings upon a target with a vile rite and profane words that seem to warp the air, the mahō-tsukai afflicts the poor soul with a spiritual malady that can fester and bloom, fueling darker curses still. Spiritualists can sometimes see the work of mahō-tsukai, and the kansen appear as wretched, ghostly figures, clinging to their victim and dragging them slowly, inexorably, toward a wretched end wrought by their worst nature.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **Theology check** targeting one character or corpse at range 0–1. This check uses any ring of your choice, and the TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance (or 1 for a corpse).

Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers the Afflicted condition for a ring based on the ring you used for the Theology check:

- **Theology (Earth):** Afflicted (Water)
- **Theology (Water):** Afflicted (Fire)
- **Theology (Fire):** Afflicted (Air)
- **Theology (Air):** Afflicted (Earth)
- **Theology (Void):** Afflicted (Void)

If you succeed, assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring you used for the check.

If you fail, the target rebuffs your efforts. If your shortfall is two or higher, the target also becomes aware of your efforts.

New Opportunities

✧+: Count the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Choose 1 additional target per ✧ spent this way.

Grip of Anguish

Description: The mahō-tsukai calls for the kansen afflicting their victim to wreak sickness and agony upon them. The victim is tormented by nausea, pain, and feverish delusions as they struggle to stand under this vile onslaught.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **Theology (Water) check** targeting one character with the Afflicted condition at range 0–2. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers supernatural damage and strife equal to your Water ring plus the number of your rings with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage attached.

If you succeed, assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring you used for the check.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Choose 1 additional target per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: One target must resist with a TN 3 **Fitness (Earth 1, Fire 4) check** or suffer one of the following conditions per ✧ spent this way: Dazed, Disoriented, Immobilized.

✧✧: One target must resist with a TN 3 **Fitness (Earth 1, Fire 4) check** or suffer one of the following conditions of your choice: Bleeding, Incapacitated, Injured Body Part.

Mark of Desecration

Description: The mahō-tsukai performs the rite upon a corpse or group of corpses, often placing ominous masks over their faces and whispering dark words into their dead ears. The dead are dragged to their feet by the kansen possessing them, moving with the jerking, unnatural gait of an ill-made puppet and relentlessly seeking the destruction of all that is good in the world.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a TN 2 **Theology (Earth) check** targeting a number of corpses with the Afflicted condition up to your Earth ring at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, each target rises as a **Zombie Peasant** (see page 204).

Spiritual Backlash

Kansen ceaselessly corrupt those who wield their power, turning mahō-tsukai to Fu Leng's wicked ends whether they know it or not.

When a mahō-tsukai generates 3 or more ✧ results on kept dice while performing a mahō technique, the mahō-tsukai suffers a critical strike with severity equal to two times the number of their rings with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage attached. Then, the GM assigns the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to one of the mahō-tsukai's rings that does not already have this disadvantage attached.

Channeling Mahō

Like invocations, mahō techniques can be channeled (see **Channeling**, on page 116). However, holding such potent negative energy inside one's body incurs a cost: for each die a character reserves while channeled a mahō technique, the character suffers 1 supernatural damage that ignores all resistances.

If you succeed or fail, an area encompassing 1 range band around each target's position gains the Defiled terrain quality (see page 167).

If you succeed, assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring you used for the check.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Choose 1 additional target per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Increase each zombie's resilience by 1 per ✧ spent this way.

✧✧: The zombies may use your skill ranks instead of their own.

Sinful Whispers

Description: The kansen assail the victim's mind, murmuring dark things that wear upon their concentration, making them more receptive to the words of the mahō-tsukai and less able to think coherently. If this infection of the spirit is able to grow, the victim eventually finds themselves unable to resist the mahō-tsukai's command.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Air) check** targeting one character with the Afflicted condition at range 0–4. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.

Effects: If you succeed, the target must answer your questions honestly (and finds doing so unremarkable at the time). This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air ring plus the number of your rings with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage attached.

If you succeed, assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring you used for the check.

Importune Mahō

Kansen are far easier to entice than kami—provided one has the stomach to pay their gristly price.

Once per scene, a character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage may choose 1 mahō technique that they have not learned (even if they do not meet the prerequisites) and makes a sacrifice to the kansen responsible for this power. To importune a mahō technique, a character must kill a human victim or cross a previously inviolable personal line. A character might betray a close friend, abandon a personal ideal, or allow despair to overwhelm them entirely.

If the GM determines that the kansen is satisfied with this exceptional offering, the character may perform the action associated with that technique. The character may channel this mahō as normal (see **Channeling**, on page 116), but can only perform the action once.

New Opportunities

✧: The target does not remember what you asked, even if prompted to think about the conversation later.

✧✧✧: You may give the target a single simple order. The target may resist that order, but suffers 2 strain at the end of each scene in which they disregarded it. The next time the target suffers an outburst, they must attempt to fulfill the order. This effect persists until the character has attempted to fulfill the order (and succeeded or failed).

Unholy Fervor

Description: The kansen bite and tear at the flesh of the victim, wracking them with pain that is transformed into mindless fury. As their rage builds, they become more and more dangerous—to others, but also to their own safety.

Prerequisites: School rank 1

XP Cost: 3

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character with the Afflicted condition or Shadowlands Taint disadvantage at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, until the end of the scene, the target treats any Curse and Shadowlands Taint disadvantages as advantages on any checks where they apply instead.

If you succeed, assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring you used for the check.

New Opportunities

✧+: Treat the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✧ spent this way.

✧+: Choose 1 additional target per ✧ spent this way.

✧: Each target suffers the Enraged condition.

Chapter 5: Equipment

Samurai must rely on more than merely their own wits and prowess to secure their lord's interests on the battlefields or in the courts. Countless arms, armor, and implements of war have been devised to suit any and every combat situation, while the courtier has an arsenal of their own to maintain, including clothing and jewelry, art and artist's tools, and other signifiers of status. More important than the tools themselves, however, are the hands that have wielded them—the most precious items aren't the most expensive to create, but rather the ones that have figured in the lives and legends of great samurai.

When a character wishes to acquire an item, they can buy it, requisition it, or find another means to get it at the GM's discretion. Every item has a **rarity**, which affects how difficult it is for a samurai to acquire the item through **Requisition** (see below), as well as a **price**, which is the going market rate for such an item, if it can be purchased at all.

Buying Items

As a downtime action or during a narrative scene in which a character has access to a market, the character may make a **Commerce (Water)** check with a TN equal to the rarity of an item to find that item for sale. They can then purchase the item for its listed price, attempt to get the merchant to seek restitution from their lord's local representative, or otherwise attempt to acquire the item.

As always, at the GM's discretion, the TN of this check might be adjusted based on region, the likelihood of the item's being available, and other factors. For instance, a large market in a major city like Otosan Uchi or Ryokō Owari would decrease the TN of these checks by 2, while a small market in a mountain town far from major trade routes would increase the TN of these checks by 3 or more.

Requisitioning Items

Generally speaking, when a character's lord gives them a task, the lord equips the character appropriately, as befits their station. When sending a bushi to war, a daimyō would equip them with at least ashigaru armor, various weapons suited to their fighting style, and perhaps a Rokugani pony, depending on the field of battle. To do otherwise would be a death sentence, and would send a very clear message about the lord's opinion of their underling. Similarly, when sending someone on a journey, to court, to collect taxes, or to complete other work, any responsible lord outfits their servants with the equipment they will need to complete their task.

Weapons

It is said that the sword is “the soul of the samurai,” and indeed katana are the weapons most commonly used by the warriors of the Great Clans. Nevertheless, countless martial traditions have been founded around the use of weapons other than the classical longsword, from knives and staves to war fans and warhammers, not to mention the myriad weapon styles that have come from outside Rokugan's borders. Each weapon type offers a different array of speed, handling, power, flexibility, lethality, and other important characteristics, which in turn inform a wielder's techniques.

To help differentiate them from one another mechanically, weapons have the following attributes:

Name: The name of the weapon.

Skill: The specific skill used to wield the weapon.

Range: The distance in range bands at which an attacker can hit a target with the weapon. Generally a single number (e.g., “1”) or a range of values (e.g., “1–2”). Note that range is both a maximum and a minimum;

Samurai and Money

In theory, Rokugani samurai do not generally pay for material goods. They are retainers to their lord, who should provide them with the things they need to serve to the best of their abilities. Some samurai—particularly traditionalists—see money as unclean, or at least uncouth, and generally beneath their station.

In practice, however, currency is tremendously useful. Whether one is a daimyō attempting to wage a war or a low-ranking samurai tasked with an arduous journey to deliver a letter to a local ally, there are many occasions when having money is easier than not. While a daimyō can call upon alliances and oaths to rally troops, levying soldiers is much easier if one offers immediate compensation rather than promises of future tax exemption. While even the lowest samurai can order peasants in their lord's lands to support them on their journeys and appeal to the local magistrates for compensation, said peasants will be much more helpful if they feel they are being treated fairly—and money goes a long way to building such feelings. And, of course, some people—criminals in particular, but also particularly brazen mercenaries and others with little to lose—might refuse to deal in such abstract terms entirely, demanding currency as payment for their goods or services.

Of course, sometimes a character might think of an item their lord has not provided to them. Broaching this subject is not easy, but it can be necessary to success. As a downtime action or during a narrative scene in which the character has access to their lord (or a representative thereof), a character may make a Courtesy check to request the use of an item they need to perform their work. At the GM's discretion, the character might have to make a check with a different skill (such as Culture, Government, or Tactics) to convince their lord of the importance of the matter instead. The TN of the check is equal to the rarity of the item minus the character's glory rank (to a minimum of 1). If the character succeeds, their lord (or the lord's representative) sees to getting the item for them. This process might take some time, however, as some items are not easily acquired, even by powerful samurai.

As always, at the GM's discretion, the TN of this check might be adjusted based on region, the likelihood of the item's being available, the fear of scandals that might arise from the item's acquisition, and other factors.

a target closer than the lowest listed value of a weapon's range cannot be attacked with that weapon.

Damage: The base number of wounds inflicted by a hit from the weapon. Many Attack (Weapon) actions inflict this number of wounds plus an additional amount derived from another source.

Deadliness: The lethality of the weapon. A weapon with higher deadliness is more likely to inflict gruesome injuries or death, as described on page 168.

Grips: The different ways to wield the weapon. If a weapon has multiple grips listed, each may have one or more additional effects or alterations to the profile that the grip applies to the weapon. Whenever a character readies a weapon, they must choose one of its grips to use. A character may switch between grips whenever they have the opportunity to ready a weapon.

Special Qualities: Any abnormal effects not covered by a weapon's profile. These qualities frequently relate more to the wearing of the weapon than the wielding of it, and they distinguish battlefield armaments from accoutrements appropriate in polite company.

Table 5-1: Weapons

Name	Skill	Range	Damage	Deadliness	Grips	Special Qualities	Rarity	Price
Katana	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	4	5	1-handed: – 2-handed: Deadliness +2	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	7	20 koku
Wakizashi	Martial Arts [Melee]	0–1	3	5	1-handed: – 2-handed: Deadliness +2	Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-Edged	7	15 koku
Chokutō	Martial Arts [Melee]	0–1	4	5	1-handed: –	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	7	20 koku
Unicorn Scimitar	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	4	5	1-handed: –	Durable, Razor-Edged	8	20 koku
Bokken	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	3	2	1-handed: – 2-handed: Damage +2	Durable, Mundane	3	1 bu
Jian	Martial Arts [Melee]	0–1	4	4	1-handed: – 2-handed: Deadliness +1	–	7	15 koku
Dao	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	3	5	1-handed: –	–	6	15 koku
Hook Swords	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	4	3	1-handed: –	Snaring	7	15 koku
Zanbatō	Martial Arts [Melee]	1–2	5	6	2-handed: –	Cumbersome, Wargear	7	40 koku
Knife	Martial Arts [Melee]	0	2	4	1-handed: – 2-handed: Deadliness +2	Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged	1	1 koku
Jitte	Martial Arts [Melee]	0	1	2	1-handed: –	Concealable, Snaring	5	5 bu
Club	Martial Arts [Melee]	0–1	5	2	1-handed: – 2-handed: Damage +1	Mundane	1	1 bu
Tetsubō	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	8	3	2-handed: –	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	5	20 koku
Ōtsuchi	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	9	3	2-handed: –	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	6	15 koku
Staff	Martial Arts [Melee]	1–2	6	2	2-handed: –	Mundane	2	2 bu
Yari	Martial Arts [Melee]	2	5	3	2-handed: –	Wargear	3	5 koku
Naginata	Martial Arts [Melee]	2	6	6	2-handed: –	Cumbersome, Razor-Edged, Wargear	7	10 koku
Kusari-Gama	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	3	3	2-handed: Range 2–3	Concealable, Snaring, Wargear	6	5 koku
Unarmed	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	0–1	1	2	Punch: Snaring Kick: Rng 1, Damage +2 Bite: Rng 0, Deadliness +2	Natural	–	–
Yumi	Martial Arts [Ranged]	2–5	5	3	2-handed: –	–	3	20 koku
Crossbow	Martial Arts [Ranged]	2–5	7	3	2-handed: –	Wargear	7	30 koku
Repeating Crossbow	Martial Arts [Ranged]	2–5	7	3	2-handed: –	Cumbersome, Wargear	8	40 koku
Improvised Weapon (Blunt)	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	0–1	2	2	1-handed: – 2-handed: Damage +2	Mundane	1	–
Improvised Weapon (Edged)	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	0–1	1	3	1-handed: – 2-handed: Deadliness +2	Mundane, Concealable, Razor-Edged	1	–

A Samurai's Daishō

Throughout this section, you'll likely see mention of a daishō. This is a katana and wakizashi, a longsword and a short sword, wielded by a single samurai and sometimes forged together as a pair. The katana is the bushi's weapon, while the wakizashi signifies that the bearer is a member of the samurai caste. While courtiers and shugenja carry wakizashi and are not forbidden from carrying katana, most do not bother to do so—after all, their duty is not usually to fight with weapons, but instead to support their lord in other ways. Bushi generally carry both, but few wield both at the same time, instead using the blade that is better suited the circumstances of an engagement.

Some bushi substitute another weapon (usually a sword) for a katana in their daishō. The chokutō, the straight-edged predecessor to the tachi and eventually the katana, is favored by many blade-masters of the Phoenix Clan, while members of the Unicorn Clan often wield a scimitar. Mirumoto duelists are known for using a katana and wakizashi together, but some specialize in other paired weapons, including hook swords, *dao*, or even a *jian* paired with an open hand.

Armor

To defend against the many threats that will be leveled against them, samurai have taken to armoring themselves with a wide variety of components. Some are better at protecting against stab wounds or slashing damage, while others have been blessed to protect against evil spirits, and still others are used by shadowy individuals who hope to guard themselves against being seen in the first place.

To mechanically differentiate the types of armor, armor has the following attributes:

Name: The name of the armor.

Protection and Resistance: Most armor provides defense against one or more categories of damage. While a character is equipped with a set of armor, the character gains the listed amount of **resistance** against each of the types of damage listed under its **protection** profile. Two common categories of protection are as follows:

- **Physical:** This armor provides the listed amount of resistance against physical harm in its many forms.
- **Supernatural:** This armor provides the listed amount of resistance against invocations, kihō, mahō, and any other effects that stem from supernatural sources.

Special Qualities: Any nonstandard effects not covered by an armor's profile. These qualities frequently relate to the wearing of the armor.

Special Qualities of Equipment

Samurai are warriors, but not all weapons and armor are appropriate for all situations. As such, weapons and armor have qualities that pertain to their appropriateness in various contexts, as described here. Wearing a weapon in the wrong context might merely be a faux pas in some circumstances, but it can be a declaration of war in others.

Ceremonial

Ceremonial gear is indicative of the wearer's rank. It is allowed in many contexts in which a similar item might not, and it is mandatory in many situations. Using a Ceremonial item meant for someone else is frequently viewed as a grave transgression against society or even the Celestial Order. However, in certain situations, a character might be loaned a Ceremonial item for temporary use, as proof of their task's gravity or as a sign of respect. Additionally, Ceremonial items are frequently used as identifying tokens; thus, making off with one would make impersonating someone much easier—though no upstanding samurai would dream of such deception.

To use another character's Ceremonial item without permission, a character must forfeit 1 honor. While wearing a Ceremonial item openly, a character reduces the TN of checks to convince others of their identity

Resistance

When an effect deals damage to a character, if the character possesses a resistance value that applies to the type of damage being dealt, reduce the damage the character suffers by this value (to a minimum of 0).

A character can only count as wearing one set of armor at a time. If a character dons another set of armor narratively (such as subtly hiding concealed armor underneath sleeping garb, or haphazardly pulling ashigaru armor over ceremonial clothing as a pitched battle erupts), the character must immediately choose one set of armor that counts as the one they are equipped with. Any other armor they are wearing narratively provides no mechanical benefits until they remove the armor they have chosen.

Additionally, a character can only benefit from one effect that increases the physical or supernatural resistance provided by their armor at a time. If a character would benefit from more than one such effect, the character chooses which increase applies.

as the known holder of that item (or that they are one of that person's retainers or allies) by 1.

Concealable

Some weapons and armor are easy to hide on one's person, due to size or a design that incorporates them into another, more innocuous item.

Unless explicitly worn openly or revealed for use, a Concealable item is assumed to be hidden. When observing the wearer of a hidden item, a character must succeed at a **TN 3 Design (Air) or Smithing (Air)** check to discern that the wearer is armed or armored. If the character succeeds with two or more bonus successes, the character also determines the type of the hidden weapon or armor.

Armor with the Concealable quality can be worn underneath robes and other loose-fitting clothes, but a character can still only benefit from a single set of armor at a time.

When a Concealable item would otherwise gain the Cumbersome quality, it loses the Concealable quality instead.

Table 5-2: Armor

Name	Protection (Resistance)	Special Qualities	Rarity	Price
Sleeping Garb	–	–	2	1 koku
Common Clothes	Physical (1)	Mundane	1	1 bu
Ceremonial Clothes	Physical (1)	Ceremonial	3	1 koku
Concealed Armor	Physical (2)	Concealable	4	5 koku
Sanctified Robes	Physical (1), Supernatural (3)	Ceremonial	5	2 koku
Traveling Clothes	Physical (2)	Durable, Mundane	2	2 bu
Inconspicuous Garb	Physical (1)	Mundane, Subtle	3	2 bu
Ashigaru Armor	Physical (3)	Wargear	3	5 koku
Lacquered Armor	Physical (4)	Ceremonial, Wargear	6	25 koku
Plated Armor	Physical (5)	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	7	40 koku

Cumbersome

This item is extremely heavy or unwieldy. In addition to being impossible to conceal on one's person through mundane means (though it can be hidden in the environment like any other object), it puts a toll on anyone who carries it.

Increase the TN of Movement action checks and other checks to reposition yourself in your environment by 1 per Cumbersome item you are carrying beyond the first.

When a Cumbersome item would otherwise gain the Concealable quality, it loses the Cumbersome quality instead.

Damaged

Routine wear and tear and a lack of proper maintenance can mar an item as readily as extraordinary circumstances on the battlefield can, so samurai must carefully maintain their kit in the field. While the most elevated samurai likely have staff to assist with such matters, most battle-tested samurai have learned at least a bit about how to keep their equipment functional.

If a tool becomes Damaged, increase the TN of checks using it by 1. If a weapon becomes Damaged, decrease the damage it deals and its deadliness by 2 (to a minimum of 0). If armor becomes Damaged, reduce the resistance it provides by 2 (to a minimum of 0).

If a Damaged item would become Damaged a second time, it loses the Damaged quality and gains the Destroyed quality instead.

Destroyed

Extreme events or long use without maintenance can completely shatter, tear, or otherwise render an item nonfunctional.

Such an item is broken and cannot be used for its intended function. It might still be usable as an improvised weapon or tool, at the GM's discretion.

Durable

Items crafted to last can endure damage that would destroy less well-made works.

When a Durable item would otherwise gain the Damaged quality, it loses the Durable quality instead.

Mundane

Mundane items are objects that are found in all contexts of daily life. They are usually tools in addition to having combat applications; people in all walks of life need tools like knives, walking sticks, wheat threshers, and countless other things that can be utilized to deadly effect by someone sufficiently determined. As such, Mundane items are permitted in most social circumstances, and people from any stratum of society are allowed to wear them openly.

Wearing a Mundane item openly has no additional effects, though onlookers might take note of the fact that the character is armed.

Natural

Martial arts teaches that the body can be a weapon, and so certain weapon profiles have a quality called Natural. Natural weapons are a part of one's body, and thus cannot be conveniently removed. As such, they are permissible in all social contexts. In extreme circumstances, a prisoner might be bound so that they do not have access to their hands, feet, or mouth, eliminating their ability to use them as weapons.

Natural weapons always count as being readied unless the character has been bound in some way.

The Natural quality cannot be applied to weapons unless they are actually a part of one's body, and as the GM, you are the arbiter of whether and how this applies.

Razor-Edged

Some weapons are particularly sharp, and thus particularly brittle, and must be carefully honed and wielded to keep functioning at their best. The traditional Rokugani katana is one such weapon—its keen edge can hew off limbs more easily than other swords, but it is also more susceptible to damage if swung carelessly against armored foes. This is part of the reason why the Crab Clan's warriors tend not to wield katana as their weapon of first choice on the battlefield, for many of the monsters from the Shadowlands have thick hides that will ruin a fine blade in a few swings.

When you succeed at an Attack action check that deals damage to a target using a Razor-Edged item, if the damage dealt is reduced to 0 by the target's resistance, this item gains the Damaged quality. Additionally, certain techniques require the use of a Razor-Edged weapon.

Resplendent

An item with the Resplendent quality is embellished to attract attention to its presenter or wearer. When a character wearing one or more items with the Resplendent quality would normally gain 1 or more glory, they gain that amount of glory plus 1 instead.

When a Resplendent item would otherwise gain the Subtle quality, it loses the Resplendent quality instead.

Sacred

Items with the Sacred quality are imbued with purifying power—often in the form of jade, the mystical stone said to be the tears shed by Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun and protector of humanity against the terror of the night. Such items are anathema to the creatures of the Shadowlands and other horrors that prey upon humanity, and they can banish even powerful creatures of darkness.

When a Shadowlands creature or a character with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage makes an Attack or Intrigue action check targeting the wearer of one or more Sacred items, increase the TN by 1. When a character carrying one or more Sacred items would otherwise gain the Afflicted condition, one of those items of the carrier's choice gains the Damaged quality instead. Sacred weapons ignore any resistances possessed by Shadowlands creatures and characters with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage.

When a Sacred item would otherwise gain the Unholy quality, it loses the Sacred quality instead. If the item is made with jade, the jade parts of the item become pure water and drip away.

Snaring

Flexible or, in some cases, harshly curved weapons are excellent for snaring, grabbing, and disarming. They let a skilled warrior control the flow of battle by seizing hold of their opponent or their opponent's weapon—though this nuance is difficult to capitalize on unless one is specially trained.

Certain techniques require the use of a Snaring weapon.

Subtle

An item with the Subtle quality is made with the intention that it will not stand out. While it is no harder to spot its presence or absence than that of any other item, discerning its unique elements is more difficult, and people tend to overlook its quality. Increase the TN of checks to ascertain information about the item or the person wearing it by 1. At the GM's discretion, this might also apply to checks to conclude what the creator or wearer of the piece intends by presenting it.

When a Subtle item would otherwise gain the Resplendent quality, it loses the Subtle quality instead.

Unholy

Some physical artifacts carry a dreadful miasma. Frequently, such objects have been tainted by direct exposure to the power of the Shadowlands or by foul rituals of mahō-tsukai, but some are made with obsidian, said to be the shed blood of Onnotangu, the god of the moon and ancient foe of the Kami. While obsidian did not always bear the corruption of Jigoku, this mystical stone draws negative emotions and powers to it, absorbing and amplifying them. This includes the boundless hatred of Fu Leng and his countless dread servitors—and so virtually all obsidian in the Emerald Empire now contains the essence of the Shadowlands.

When a character suffers damage or a critical strike from an Unholy weapon, the character suffers the Afflicted condition for the ring associated with their stance. At the end of each scene in which a character uses an Unholy item, that character must make a TN 4 Meditation check with the ring of their choice or suffer the Afflicted condition for that ring.

When an Unholy item would otherwise gain the Sacred quality, it loses the Unholy quality instead. If the item is made of obsidian, the obsidian parts of the item splatter into blood that burns away in an acrid smoke over several minutes.

Readied Weapons

A readied weapon is a weapon that a character is prepared to use, offensively or defensively. When a character has the opportunity to ready weapons, they may choose any number of weapons at range 0–1 that they can hold at once. For most characters, the maximum number of readied weapons is a pair of 1-handed grip weapons (one in each hand) or a single 2-handed grip weapon.

During narrative scenes (see **Narrative Scenes** on page 150), a character can ready a weapon or shift their grip as much as the time they have to do so would logically allow. During a conflict scene, as part of setting a stance on their turn, a character may ready or sheathe one item or weapon and set the grip with which they are wielding it.

Remember that even without weapons, a warrior is dangerous. The “Unarmed” weapon profile has the Natural quality, which means that it is always readied. Even if a character's hands are full, they can throw potentially devastating strikes with elbows, knees, and other body parts.

Sheathed Weapons

Sheathed weapons are those on a character's person, properly stowed for quick access but not yet readied for use. Sheathing a weapon properly does not require a check if done during narrative time, and a character can sheathe a single weapon when choosing their stance during their turn in a conflict (see **Step 2: Set Stance** page 153). Some techniques, such as iaijutsu (the art of drawing and cutting with a katana or wakizashi in a single move), refer to whether a weapon begins sheathed or not. See page 108 for more information on iaijutsu as a technique characters can perform.

Wargear

Implements seen on battlegrounds and in few other contexts—items with the Wargear quality—are decidedly inappropriate for most social contexts. Wearing Wargear openly makes people nervous, which in turn impedes negotiations and other attempts at reconciliation between aggrieved groups.

Whenever a character suffers 1 or more strife due to the actions of someone wearing one or more Wargear items, they suffer that amount of strife plus 1 instead.

Equipment

While it may seem that clan samurai live only for battle, their lives are richer and more complex than they may seem at first glance. Aside from their daishō and armor, samurai require a number of items to meet their needs and make their lives more comfortable, edifying, and enjoyable.

Finger of Jade (Price: 5 Koku)

A finger of jade is a length of the precious green stone worn about the neck on a thong to ward off the corrupting effects of the Taint. It counts as having the Sacred quality. This protection is only temporary, as the longer the jade is exposed to the Taint, the more corrupt it becomes. As the jade absorbs the Taint, it slowly softens and turns black.

Poison (1 Vial) (Price: 2 Bu)

In the courts of the Emerald Empire, the wheels of politics are sometimes turned by unsavory means. The Scorpion Clan is certainly not above using poison to weaken or eliminate political rivals—not that one could ever prove their culpability—and many individual samurai turn to such measures in times of desperation or fear. Three common poisons are listed here:

Noxious Poison: A catchall term for a wide variety of deadly compounds (many of which have perfectly legitimate uses in medicine and other trades), noxious poisons often act by attacking the heart, the organs, or the brain directly. When a character ingests noxious poison, they suffer a critical strike with severity 8.

Fire Biter: A poison that wracks victims with searing pain, fire biter is easily identified by its bitter taste, which makes it difficult to slip into food or drink clandestinely. When a character ingests fire biter, the character suffers 5 strife and the Dazed and Fatigued conditions.

Night Milk: A favorite of the Shosuro family, night milk is a dizzying concoction that must be injected or otherwise delivered directly into the bloodstream. When night milk is introduced into a character's bloodstream, the character suffers the Disoriented and Fatigued conditions.

Quiver of Arrows (Price: 20 Zeni)

A quiver is a cloth or leather container used to carry arrows. Worn at the waist or slung over the shoulder, a common quiver can hold sixty or more arrows.

As long as a character has a quiver of arrows available, they are assumed not to run out of standard ammunition. Further, the character is assumed to refill the quiver at reasonable opportunities, such as when visiting a guard outpost or a castle with an armory. See **Ammunition**, right, for more information on arrows.

Ammunition

Many player characters often carry a bow and a quiver of arrows, whether as their main weapon or as a situational option. However, as the GM, getting your players to track every single arrow they fire can be tedious and not especially rewarding. Instead, we recommend the following: as long as a character has a quiver of arrows, they do not need to track commonplace arrows individually. They should still track special ammunition they carry, such as flesh-cutter and armor-piercing arrows, as these are harder to acquire and replace.

If a character goes an especially long time without having a reasonable opportunity to refill their quiver (such as while adventuring in the Shadowlands, the Shinomen Forest, or other places without infrastructure), the GM may state that the quiver is running low; the character gains a Void point, and at the end of the next scene in which the character fires one or more arrows, the quiver is depleted of standard arrows. The character still possesses any special arrows they might have had.

A depleted quiver can be refilled by visiting a location where the character can acquire arrows, or by making arrows using the Survival skill if the character has the proper supplies (see page 106).

Poisons Applied to Weapons

Poisons can be applied to melee and missile weapons to make sure that even minor wounds cause injury—though obviously, poisons are the tool of shady assassins and figures of ill repute rather than upstanding samurai. Unsurprisingly (given their namesake), the Scorpion Clan favors such methods.

As an action, a character may make a **TN 1 Medicine (Earth) check** to properly (and safely) apply a poison to a weapon. Only a single poison can be applied to a weapon at a time. A poison applied to a weapon remains effective until after the weapon is used to perform a successful Attack action. Common poisons grant the following effects when applied to a weapon:

- **Noxious Poison:** Increase the deadliness of the weapon by 4.
- **Fire Biter:** After a target suffers damage from this weapon, the target suffers the Dazed and Fatigued conditions.
- **Night Milk:** After a target suffers damage from this weapon, the target suffers the Disoriented and Fatigued conditions.

Additional Equipment

- ◇ Bowyer's Kit (Price: 2 bu)
- ◇ Calligraphy Set (Price: 1 bu)
- ◇ Kubi Bukuro (Head Bag) (Price: 2 zen)
- ◇ Medicine Kit (10 uses) (Price: 2 bu)
- ◇ Tent (Chomchog) (Price: 20 koku)
- ◇ Tent (Small) (Price: 1 koku)
- ◇ Tent (Yurt) (Price: 10 koku)
- ◇ Traveling Rations (1 Meal) (Price: 5 zen)

Traveling Pack

When a character's starting outfit refers to a traveling pack, it refers to an assortment of items carried within a *furoshiki*, or decorative wrapping cloth. The precise contents of the traveling pack is up to the player based on their character's *giri* and personal interests. Choose any ten items from the following list:

- Basket
- Blacksmith's hammer
- Blanket
- Bottle of bleach/dye
- Bottle of sake (rice wine)
- Bottle of shōchū (distilled liquor)
- Bottle of umeshu (plum liqueur)
- Bottle of water
- Bucket
- Candles (6)
- Chopsticks
- Coin purse
- Cooking pot
- Daishō stand
- Divination kit (kawaru coins)
- Divination kit (yarrow sticks)
- Fan
- Fishing net or pole
- Flint and tinder
- Grappling hook
- Incense sticks (10)
- Incense brazier
- Ink brush kit
- Jewelry or accessory
- Lantern
- Lucky cricket (in cage)
- Makeup kit
- Mask
- Miniature go or shogi set
- Mortar and pestle
- Musical instrument
- Parchment and charcoal (10)
- Perfume
- Personal seal or chop
- Pet (dog, cat, monkey, songbird [two items])
- Pillow book
- Rope (50 feet)
- *Sashimono* (small back banner)
- Set of dice and dice cup
- Shovel
- *Shuki* (set of one flask and two sake cups)
- Small folding stool
- Small hand mirror
- Small knife (non-combat)
- Small statue
- Small tent
- Smoking pipe
- Snowshoes
- Spare kimono
- Spices (small bottle)
- Straw cloak
- Sweets (4 servings)
- Tatami mat
- Tattoo needles (set)
- Tea set
- Vial of paint
- Walking stick
- Week's rations
- Whetstone
- Wicker umbrella
- Wide-brimmed straw hat
- Wig

Chapter 6: Scenes and Conflicts

Game Sessions

In the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*, a GAME SESSION is a period of time during which the GM and players gather to venture into the imaginary realm of Rokugan to pursue stories of adventure, intrigue, and drama together. Each session can be broken down into one or more scenes, which are the anecdotes within the group's shared story during which players have their characters explore the world, overcome obstacles, and deepen their relationships with each other.

Scenes

A SCENE is a portion of a game session. Much like a scene in a book or film, it continuously follows one or more characters as they engage in some activity. The GM decides when a scene begins and when it ends. At the outset of a scene, the GM should furnish some basic details of what is going on to the players to help ground them in the upcoming activity. At the end of a scene, the GM might want to provide a bit of denouement, or some additional details that help the transition to the next scene.

Each scene encompasses a set of events during which characters undertake tasks and move the story forward. There are three types of

Once Per Session Abilities and Effects

Some abilities can be used “once per game session,” and some effects apply “until the end of the game session.” Such abilities and effects are written assuming a session that lasts from two to four hours. As the GM, you might find yourself running much shorter or longer game sessions (assuming player attention and the supply of snacks hold out). If you do, you may want to consider refreshing such abilities more or less frequently. For instance, you could treat a pair of one-hour-long opportunities to play as a single “game session” for the purposes of such effects, or break an eight-hour marathon session into two “game sessions.” You should always feel free to use real-time hours to define a “game session,” as long as you communicate these divisions clearly to the players.

scenes: narrative scenes, downtime scenes, and conflict scenes. Each type of scene is best suited to a particular set of story activities, as described in this section.

Narrative Scenes

NARRATIVE SCENES constitute a large portion of play at many gaming tables. These are scenes in which PCs interact with their environment, each other, and non-player characters in a nonstructured manner. Most narrative scenes have a narrow focus and take place over a relatively short period of time, from a few minutes to a few hours of game-world time.

At their heart, narrative scenes are an opportunity for roleplaying. The participants might be a mix of NPCs and PCs, or a narrative scene might take place exclusively between the PCs. During these scenes, the GM should encourage the players to speak in character if they wish, and to describe their specific actions in addition to their overall goals. As the

players make choices (and checks, when appropriate) for their characters, the GM reveals the details of the scene to them and reacts to their choices and actions.

During these scenes, the GM need not track the order of actions, nor the exact flow of time. If the order of actions becomes extremely important, the GM should transition the scene to a conflict scene. If the group has exhausted roleplaying options for the scene, but the activity continues in the story, the GM can transition the scene to a downtime scene, allowing the PCs to pursue goals in an abstract manner rather than calling for the players to narrate their every word and action.

Downtime Scenes

DOWNTIME SCENES can be as short as a few hours of rest or as long as a journey from Otosan Uchi to the Kaiu Wall. Generally, downtime scenes have low dramatic stakes, though they can still be extremely important to the narrative arcs of the characters and overall story. During a downtime scene, time is not regimented formally; instead, the GM and players should choose to roleplay only the moments that matter, treating these anecdotes as narrative scenes that intersperse the downtime scene. A

journey might last weeks, but contain only a few individual interactions that the players and game master wish to act out as narrative scenes.

Characters can be called upon to make checks during downtime scenes, based on their desired activities or circumstances that the GM introduces. However, if the order and economy of actions becomes important, the GM should switch the scene to a conflict scene.

Length of Scenes in Real Time

As the GM, it's up to you to decide where one scene ends and a new one begins, based on both narrative-time and real-time considerations. Individual scenes should usually last from half an hour to three hours, though you can end a scene at any time you see fit or extend one as needed. Remember that your PCs regain the use of certain abilities and remove strife at the end of a scene, so ending a scene allows characters a chance to refresh slightly.

If a scene is resolved extremely quickly, you should feel free to say that it does not count as the end of a scene for the purposes of effects

that trigger at the end of a scene (such as removal of strife). If a scene transitions to another type of scene (such as a friendly discussion turning into a tense intrigue scene, or poor overland navigation on a week-long journey leading the PCs directly into a bandit camp), it generally does not count as ending.

If it has been more than two hours and a scene is still going on without any sign of ending, you can also consider introducing a break point at which effects that would normally trigger at the end of a scene occur (even if the scene continues afterward).

Narrative Mode and Conflict Mode

Your character sheet has two sides: one for narrative mode, which contains the character traits most often referenced during narrative and downtime scenes, and one for conflict mode, which contains the character traits most pertinent to conflicts. When switching from one sort of scene to another, you can flip your character sheet for ease of access to the most helpful information for that type of scene. You might need to reference the other side occasionally, but most of what you need for that kind of scene should be there.

Downtime scenes are also an excellent opportunity for roleplaying, but they lend themselves better to characters pursuing their big-picture goals. If a player wishes to jump into a more interpersonal interaction between their character and someone else in the downtime scene, the GM should consider briefly shifting the scene to a narrative scene.

Downtime Activities

During each downtime scene, each player chooses one or more DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES that their character is pursuing. Downtime activities are meant to help give players clear options for their characters during downtime scenes.

What Can Be Accomplished in a Downtime Scene?

Not all activities are suitable to all downtime scenes. For example, a downtime scene that consists of an hour or two before the player charac-

ters storm a castle to rescue a friend would accommodate one PC gathering necessary supplies for the break-in (a ladder, rope, and disguises) or another's efforts to gather local malcontents to assist in the effort. However, the downtime scene would likely not be long enough for another PC's effort to forge a sword, as this is an extremely time-intensive process. As in all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether an activity can reasonably be completed during a particular downtime scene.

Long Downtime Scenes

During especially lengthy downtime scenes (those longer than two days), each PC might be able to pursue multiple different downtime activities. As a general rule of thumb, the GM should allow each PC to pursue one downtime activity for every two days of downtime—though at the GM's discretion, a character might be able to squeeze in an extra activity if they sacrifice sleeping and other necessities. In contrast, downtime scenes dedicated to arduous activities such as travel might not give the PCs an opportunity to perform any downtime activities besides the act of traveling itself, or at least such a scene would limit their options.

Extremely Long Narrative Gaps

If the GM wants to have an extremely long time-skip within the story (a month or more), the GM should simply stipulate that the time passes, though they should perhaps let the players describe what their characters do during this extended period of inaction and allocate a small amount of experience points to the PCs for their activities to reflect their growth in the interim. Such gaps are a good opportunity for PCs to pursue their societal obligations, return to their dōjō for training, or undertake individual endeavors that do not involve the larger group.

Conflict Scenes

When two or more characters are acting in opposition to one another over an extended period of time, the GM may call for a conflict scene. If the contest can be resolved with a brief interaction, then it should be resolved with a check and a check to resist (see page 16), or with a competitive check (see page 16).

There are several primary types of conflicts. Each uses the same core framework but has unique rules for the options characters can pursue and for its resolution. Common types of conflicts are as follows:

- **Intrigues:** Even the Emperor does not make decisions without first listening to the counsel of his highest retainers. The most impactful conflicts in all of Rokugan are often the words traded between high-

ranking samurai—or, at least, begin with those words. Petitions to great lords, treaties, political schemes, trade agreements, pacts, and marriages change the face of Rokugan every day, and exerting political influence is the primary duty of many samurai.

- **Duels:** When a matter cannot be resolved with will, wits, and rhetoric alone, honor sometimes demands that a samurai seek resolution by drawing steel. Duels are an important part of the political process in Rokugan, and the mere possibility of a formal challenge can be incredibly potent leverage.
- **Skirmishes:** From pitched battles between rival factions to targeted

Other Forms of Conflict

The forms of conflict detailed in this section are the ones most obviously pertinent to *Legend of the Five Rings*, but as the GM, you can use the conflict rules to model other sorts of challenges as well. If you want to run a scene in which the order of actions and limitation of options are relevant considerations, you should consider using the conflict rules. Below are several other examples of scenes for which you could use the conflict rules:

Chases: Chases are common encounters in roleplaying games, and they can be tense conflict scenes even if there is no armed—though frequently, chases are also running battles. The PCs might pursue a suspect during an investigation while serving as Emerald Magistrates, or an individual PC might need to flee a teahouse when debtors come calling. Chases can generally use the rules for skirmishes, but if the pursued party ever ends a round more than four range bands from the pursuers or loses them through narrative actions (such as suc-

cessfully hiding, slipping into a crowd, or using mystical means of escape), the chase ends. Alternately, if the pursuers make escape impossible, the chase ends, though this might lead to the start of a more standard skirmish.

Natural Disasters: The Emerald Empire is vast realm with a wide variety of climates and weather patterns, and its cities are often struck by natural disasters—earthquakes, storms, and fires are all seasonal scourges that its citizens must face periodically. Natural disasters can generally be handled with the rules for skirmishes. At the end of each round, however, the area the PCs are trying to escape might change, becoming more dangerous or making it harder to survive. You can use the rules for **Terrain**, on page 167, to simulate difficult ground, flooding, fire, and other hazards. The scene ends when the PCs find a way to survive the disaster (or fail to do so).

Escalating and De-escalating Conflicts

While some samurai would certainly like to be able to simply solve all of their problems with the sword, the fact of the matter remains that most of leadership is diplomacy, compromise, and a great deal of talking. As the GM, you might choose to have conflicts worsen or abate in response to the characters' decisions and checks.

Violence is not the most common means of conflict resolution in Rokugan, but it is one tool in a wide and varied arsenal used by the samurai to maintain their rule and compete against their rivals for status. Thus, a conflict that starts as an intrigue might escalate if each successive means of resolving the conflict becomes unsuccessful.

During a conflict, if the situation worsens, the conflict can potentially **ESCALATE**. If a conflict escalates, it changes into another, deadlier type of conflict. For instance, an intrigue might escalate into a duel if one character suffers an outburst and challenges another participant to honorable combat. A duel might escalate into a skirmish if a group in attendance takes issue with the result. A skirmish might escalate into a mass battle if two scouting forces clash in the field, drawing the armies they represent into a full pitched battle.

A conflict might even skip a step when escalating—for instance, if an intrigue grows violent, it might turn into a skirmish if all parties draw steel rather than letting assigned champions fight as proxies.

A conflict can also **DE-ESCALATE**. A character might be able to defuse a skirmish or even a mass battle by challenging the right foe to a duel, or a particularly skillful master of rhetoric might be able to get enemies to put away their weapons entirely to settle the matter with an intrigue scene.

When a conflict changes forms, whether it is escalating or de-escalating, you can handle this in one of two ways. First, you can have the original conflict end. If both parties withdraw as negotiations break down, for instance, the conflict should end, and a downtime scene should likely begin. After the downtime scene, both sides return to the new conflict, and it begins.

Alternatively, a conflict can change forms without ending. If a skirmish between vanguards spills over into a mass battle, for instance, there likely is not time for the participants to regroup and switch to commanding the entire army before all hell breaks loose. In this case, at the end of the current round, you should switch the conflict to the new type of conflict. When switching conflicts in this way, do not repeat **Phase 1: Assess the Scene** (see page 152); there simply is not time for participants to reevaluate their situation. Begin a new round in **Phase 2: Take Turns** (see page 153), using the rules that apply to the new conflict. When a conflict shifts modes, generate initiative for all characters as described in **Late Arrivals**, on page 154.

raids against enemy clans, skirmishes tend to be chaotic, small-scale battles with a few combatants on each side.

- **Mass Battles:** Open warfare is relatively rare in Rokugan, but it is devastating in effect. On the off chance that their daimyō asks them of it, any samurai must in theory be prepared to serve in war in some capacity, whether as a warrior, an advisor, a strategist, or a negotiator. Because they tend to be culminating story arc moments rather than everyday occurrences, mass battles are covered at the end of this chapter (see page 172).

Structured Time

Conflicts take place during structured time, in which characters act in an order, and they are limited in what they can accomplish before the other characters have the chance to respond. Some conflicts also track the relative positions of characters involved in the space they occupy, albeit in an abstracted manner. If a scene does not require this sort of detail on who is acting when and where, it should likely be handled as a narrative scene (see page 150) or downtime scene (see page 150) instead.

Conflict Overview

Although there are numerous types of conflicts, all conflicts follow a general structure. The overview below gives a general primer for conflict scenes, while the **Detailed Conflict Breakdown**, right, presents a more technical set of instructions.

- **Phase 1—Assess the Scene:** During this phase, characters have a chance to observe their environment, opponents, and options by making an **ASSESSMENT CHECK** (see **Assessment Checks**, on page 152). This lets them learn about the unfolding situation and identify possible plans of action for the scene. A character may choose to skip this check to remove 3 strife. Additionally, in many types of conflict, the characters' order of action (called **INITIATIVE**) is important, and initiative is determined during this phase.
- **Phase 2—Take Turns:** After characters have gotten their bearings in the scene, play proceeds to this phase, during which characters can use the many means at their disposal to pursue victory in the conflict.

In a duel, this might mean trading sword strokes or unleashing powerful elemental invocations, while in an intrigue scene, it likely means making verbal arguments and setting one's schemes into motion. Time is divided into segments called rounds, during which each character takes one turn. During their turn, each character selects their stance and performs one action, which usually includes a check to determine success or failure in the task it represents. The number of rounds varies by conflict, as do the actions available to participants and the order in which they can act.

- **Phase 3—Resolution:** Each conflict ends with a Resolution phase. During this phase, the conflict's results are made clear to those involved, and final effects are resolved.

Detailed Conflict Breakdown

The following section provides specific details on how a conflict scene is resolved. All conflicts follow this form, though some individual conflict types have rules that simulate unique parts of the scenario they represent.

Phase 1: Assess the Scene

At the beginning of any conflict, each involved character may assess the scene. Each player can take the opportunity to ask the GM any questions they have about the surroundings, and also to have their character make an **Assessment check** to discern information about the environment, their foes, and the unfolding conflict overall. The results of the **Assessment check** also influence a character's initiative value in those conflicts that use initiative to determine the order of action (duels, skirmishes, and mass battles, for example).

Assessment Checks

At the start of a conflict scene, each participating character may make an **Assessment check**. If a character chooses not to make this check for any reason, they can instead focus on stilling their inner emotions, which allows them to heal 3 strife. If the order in which characters make their **Assessment checks** is relevant, the character with the highest honor makes their check first, followed by the other characters in descending

order of their honor.

Each type of conflict uses a skill for its Assessment check, listed below.

- **Intrigue:** TN 1 Sentiment check.
- **Duel:** TN 1 Meditation check.
- **Skirmish:** TN 1 Tactics check.
- **Mass Battle:** TN 1 Command check.

Assessment checks have their own elemental approaches, which operate the same way as approaches for conducting skill checks. Depending on the approach a character uses for the Assessment check, the character receives different information about the scene if they succeed, as described below:

- **Discern Motivation (Fire):** The character deduces the immediate goals or objective of one other character in the scene.
- **Perceive Scenery (Water):** The character spots and learns about one object, item, or terrain feature in the scene, discerning its narrative features and qualities (see **Terrain** on page 167).
- **Find Defenses (Earth):** The character chooses one known disadvantage of another character in the scene; the target ignores the chosen disadvantage until the end of the scene.
- **Determine Demeanor (Air):** The character chooses one target in the scene and learns their demeanor and current wounds and strife. (See **Demeanor** on page 191 in **Chapter 8: Non-Player Characters**.)
- **Sense Disturbances (Void):** The character senses any spiritual disturbances in the scene. If any powerful supernatural creatures or active kihō, invocations, or mahō are present in the scene, the character becomes aware of ripples they create in reality, though not their location or specific identity.

Finally, after a character resolves their Assessment check, that character enters the stance associated with the ring they used for the check. Any character who chose not to make a check begins in a Void stance.

Determine Initiative Values

For conflicts that use initiative (duels, skirmishes, and mass battles, for instance), these values are always generated in one of two ways:

- If a character is prepared for the conflict, the character uses the value of their focus attribute. If they made an Assessment check, they add any bonus successes from that check to the result.
- If a character is not prepared for the conflict (such as when ambushed or caught by surprise), the character uses the value of their vigilance attribute. If they made an Assessment check, they add any bonus successes from that check to the result.

Changing Initiative

If a character's initiative value changes during **Phase 2: Take Turns**, apply the change at the time specified (generally, "at the end of the round"). At the beginning of each round, adjust the initiative order to reflect any altered values.

NPCs and Assessment Checks

As a GM, you generally don't need to have Minion NPCs make Assessment checks—most of the time, there simply isn't much reason for them to do so, and it can bog down play at the start of the scene. If you'd like to add a randomized element to their initiative value (such as if they're walking into a trap set by the PCs, and you want to build tension), then you can have them make this check, but most of the time, it's best to have them skip it.

You should feel free to have Adversary NPCs make Assessment checks, especially in scenes that use initiative, but you should feel equally free to have them skip these checks if there are a large number of Adversary NPCs, or if it would not make sense narratively for them to make these checks. After all, hubris is a common downfall of antagonists in stories!

Set Initiative Order

In conflicts that use initiative, the character with the highest initiative value acts first during **Phase 2: Take Turns**, and then the rest of the characters act in descending order of initiative.

Phase 2: Take Turns

After **Phase 1: Assess the Scene**, the characters involved in the conflict act in the initiative order over a series of rounds. The number of rounds the characters should play out before proceeding to **Phase 3: Resolution** is defined in the description for each type of conflict.

Rounds

Before any character acts during **Phase 2: Perform Actions**, a new round begins. Any effects that occur "at the beginning of the round" resolve.

Then, starting with the character with the highest initiative and descending in order, each character takes one turn each round.

After the turn of the last character in the initiative order ends, the round ends, and any effects that occur "at the end of the round" resolve. Then, the GM declares either that the conflict has ended (in which case, the conflict proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution**) or that it has not ended (in which case, the participants repeat **Phase 2: Perform Actions**, beginning a new round). Certain types of conflict stipulate a specific number of rounds, while others can rage on until the characters achieve their objectives.

Turns

During a character's turn, the character performs the following steps:

Step 1: Beginning of Turn

When a character's turn begins, that character becomes the active character. Any effects that occur "at the beginning of the character's turn" resolve at this point.

Step 2: Set Stance

Next, the character sets their **STANCE**. This is a character's poise, footwork, tact, or some combination of the above depending on what the conflict entails. Each turn, a character can remain in the stance they were already in or switch to a new stance.

Each stance has a default effect that applies in all types of conflicts. A character assumes one of the following stances:

Late Arrivals

Sometimes, a character arrives at a conflict after it has already begun. The character does not act until the next round after the one in which they arrive. At the beginning of the next round, the character makes an Assessment check to determine their initiative based on the type of conflict, as described below.

- **Intrigue:** As there is no fixed order in an intrigue, a character can join at any time. Upon their arrival, the character simply makes an Assessment check as normal to generate their initiative for the conflict.
- **Duel:** Generally, a character cannot join a duel late. Arriving to a duel late simply results in the duel's starting after the appointed time.
- **Skirmish:** Combatants joining a skirmish in progress make a TN 2 **Tactics** check.
- **Mass Battle:** Any commanders arriving late make a TN 3 **Command** check.

Given that a character stumbling into a scene unprepared must usually react to unforeseen threats and unexpected circumstances, these checks are generally made with the character's Water Ring. If for some reason a character arrives late by design, they might use a different ring at the GM's discretion, based on their preparations or strategy.

- **Earth Stance:** A rooted, firm stance, an Earth stance means that the character is enduring anything that comes their way, waiting for the perfect moment to act.
- **Water Stance:** A flexible, shifting stance, a Water stance lets a character react to opposition and preempt it with sudden force.
- **Fire Stance:** An aggressive stance, a Fire stance indicates that the character is abandoning caution to make an all-out effort.
- **Air Stance:** A precise, graceful stance, an Air stance is ideal for striking at the opposition's weak points to create vulnerabilities.
- **Void Stance:** A stance without form, a Void stance indicates that the character is looking inward for answers rather than outward.

As part of setting a stance, a character may ready or stow one item or weapon and set the grip with which they are wielding it (see page 143). A character may also drop any number of items on the ground.

After setting a stance, a character remains in this stance until the beginning of their next turn.

In addition to determining which ring a character uses for the action they perform during **Step 3: Perform Action** and for any other checks they make while in that stance, each stance confers a passive benefit during a conflict, as described in **Table 6-1: Stances**, right.

Step 3: Perform Action

After setting their stance, a character may perform one ACTION. The actions that a character can perform are determined by the sort of conflict they are engaged in, but most actions involve a check. When making a check as part of an action, the character must use the ring associated with their stance. To choose an action that stipulates a specific ring, the character must be in the matching stance. A character can also move some distance (narratively or in specific increments, depending on the way the conflict type handles movement) before or after performing an action.

Table 6-1: Stances

Name	Description	Effect
Earth Stance	You focus on your foundation, employing tactics that keep you rooted and defended while you await the exact right moment to act.	When other characters make Attack action checks and Scheme action checks that target you, they cannot spend ✨ to inflict critical strikes, conditions, or persistent effects on you.
Water Stance	You remain flexible, ready to adapt as the situation demands or to turn your opposition's force against them.	After you make a check, you may remove 2 strife, ready or stow an item, or move one range band.
Fire Stance	You go on the attack, bearing down on your foes and trusting your momentum to carry you forward to safety.	When you succeed on a check, you count as having one additional bonus success for each ⚡ result on your check.
Air Stance	You move into a stance that favors mobility, circling around your opponents gracefully while their attacks slide harmlessly past you.	Increase the TN of Attack and Scheme action checks targeting you by 1.
Void Stance	You take a stance that does not commit to any particular direction or tactic, reading the potential energy of the situation and then acting as a conduit for its release.	While in a Void stance, you do not suffer strife from ⚡ results.

Some actions are focused around speech, and thus a character can say as much as the GM deems reasonable in that time. However, as a part of any action, a character may always speak up to five words (or six words, as long as the last word is "fool" or a similarly dismissive form of address).

Step 4: End of Turn

After a character performs an action and completes any associated activities (such as movement in a skirmish), the turn ends. Any effects that occur "at the end of the character's turn" resolve at this point. The character ceases to be the active character, and the turn or the next character in the initiative order begins.

Suiting the Stance to the Scene

In a combat-oriented conflict, your character's stance is their primary means of repositioning themselves on the battlefield, in addition to dictating the sorts of Attack actions they can perform. In a social setting, your character's stance instead pertains to their body language, tone, and physical positioning insofar as they have an impact on what your character conveys. Standing with arms crossed or positioning one's sword in a certain way might convey the aggression of fire, while one's gentle poise could help to set others at ease with the relaxed nature of water. Because stance influences a character's action, players might want to give a brief bit of additional description when declaring their stance, to reflect the action they intend to perform from that stance.

Actions



Actions are the main way that characters interact with others and the environment during a conflict. Each type of conflict has a number of default actions available to all characters.

When a character has the opportunity to perform an action, the action occurs in the following order:

Step 1: Declare Action

The character declares that they are performing the action, and what they generally intend to accomplish with it. If the action lists one or more targets, the character chooses those targets. The target of an action is also considered to be the target of any check associated with that action.

Step 2: Make Check

If the entry for the action specifies a check, the character makes the listed check, using the ring matching their current stance. When performing this action, the character may spend  to resolve any listed NEW OPPORTUNITIES, in addition to the usual uses of .

In the language of the system, a check made as part of an action is described as an “Action Type” check. For example, the check to smite a wretched goblin with one’s katana would be described as “an Attack check using the katana targeting the goblin.”

Step 3: Resolve Effects

Then, the character resolves the effects of the action. Each paragraph in the “effects” section of the action denotes a single, distinct effect, which are resolved as described below:

- If an effect begins with “If you succeed,” resolve it only if the character succeeded on the check.
- If an effect begins with “If you fail,” resolve it only if the character failed on the check.
- If an effect lists any other requirements, those requirements must be met for it to resolve.
- If an effect lists no requirements, it occurs automatically.

These effects of an action are resolved in the order they appear in that action.

Action Example



Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.

Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the range of the weapon.


Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon’s base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities


 : If you succeed, you inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon’s deadliness.

Choosing Targets Outside of Range

In some types of conflicts (skirmishes, for example), distances between characters and objects are tracked. Many actions intended for use in these conflicts have a specified range at which they can be used (see **Range Bands**, on page 166, for more details).

However, characters can attempt to perform actions against people or objects that are outside of the specified range or are otherwise ineligible to be targeted. During **Step 1: Declare Action**, a character is allowed to choose a target upon whom they cannot act due to the target’s being out of range, a lack of visibility, or some other obstacle. Usually this is not prudent, but during **Step 2: Make Check**, some uses of  allow a character to extend the range of an action or otherwise overcome barriers.

At the beginning of **Step 3: Resolve Effects**, if the target is not within range or the character does not meet some other requirement of the action, the character cannot resolve any effects of the action.

As the GM, you are also the arbiter of whether certain uses of  (particularly those that would bodily affect the target) can or cannot be resolved against targets who are not in range of the action’s effects. Generally speaking, such effects should not apply unless common sense dictates otherwise.

Step 4: End Action

Any effects that occur “after a character performs an action” resolve.

Additionally, certain techniques grant characters access to additional actions. Any such technique specifies the circumstances under which the action can be used.

Each action has one or more types, listed below:

Attack

ATTACK actions are actions that a character can use to inflict harm on another character. An Attack action always specifies at least one target, who suffers the listed effects if the character succeeds at performing the action.

Scheme

SCHEME actions allow a character to attempt to influence targets with whom they can communicate, manipulating them, wearing them down, or bringing them around to a different point of view.

Movement

MOVEMENT actions are actions that allow a character to reposition themselves in their environment.

Support

SUPPORT actions build up the character’s position or help others, protecting them or helping them to set up for their own actions.

Phase 3: Resolution

Once the characters involved have completed their objectives (or definitively failed to do so), the conflict has reached an obvious end, or the GM feels that the scene should naturally draw to a close, the conflict concludes. Any effects that occur “at the end of the conflict” resolve at this point. Play proceeds to a new scene as directed by the GM.

Intrigues

INTRIGUES are social engagements, opportunities to persuade the opposition to adopt one's viewpoint, gather favor from superiors, sow the seeds of one's plots, or subtly besmirch the reputation of hated rivals. Intrigues are how the fortunes of clans rise and fall. The power and influence of all ruling families rest in no small part on the skill of the courtiers who excel in this arena.

When to Use an Intrigue

Intrigues are most useful when a large number of characters are going to be participating in a social exchange, and managing that many active participants requires a greater degree of structure than a narrative scene accommodates. For a conversation between only two participants, a full intrigue is often unnecessary, though the rules for persuading NPCs described in this section offer helpful guidelines for determining how much effort it will take to win someone to a cause.

Similarly, a full intrigue is generally excessive when only one group involved has a concrete objective to pursue. If the PCs simply need to convince an NPC to give them something they require, the GM should feel free to have the PCs make appropriate skill checks as they roleplay during a narrative scene. The NPC will of course seek to serve their own self-interest during these interactions, but that does not usually constitute the sort of agenda that lends itself to a full intrigue.

An intrigue conflict is especially useful for a complex court scene in which multiple factions vie for the favor of a powerful lord or try to discredit or gain political capital over one another. It can also be useful for trials, interrogations, and similar interactions that have a natural structure based on Rokugani law or custom. Finally, the various priorities reflected in the PCs' *ninjō* and *giri* can sometimes make even a seemingly simple scene rather complex; an intrigue can be useful for letting multiple PCs pursue a diverse set of goals simultaneously in an organized fashion.

Social Objectives

In addition to the various rules listed for all conflicts, intrigues use the rules for SOCIAL OBJECTIVES described in this section. Social objectives help to give an intrigue structure, and they give the GM a guideline on when the intrigue should draw to a close.

At the start of **Phase 1: Assess the Scene** during an intrigue, each participating character chooses their social objective. This is a concrete goal that the character hopes to accomplish during the scene; this goal also helps to define when the conflict should end.

Any number of characters can choose to pursue the same objective. For instance, all player characters in a group might choose the same objective and support each other in accomplishing it. Alternatively, each PC might have their own objective—and thus, their own priorities—in a given

Line of Sight, Earshot, and Legal Actions

There are certain logical limits on when a character can perform actions of each type, especially when it comes to actions with targets. For instance, striking someone through an intervening stone wall is impossible under normal circumstances, as is communicating with someone who is unconscious. While individual actions might contain exceptions as relevant, the following restrictions generally apply to actions of various types, as described below. As the GM, you are the final arbiter of whether a restriction applies in a given case.

Attack: To affect another character with an Attack action, a character must generally have line of sight and an unobstructed path to that target.

Scheme or Support: To affect another character with a Scheme or Support action, a character must generally be able to communicate with that character, verbally or otherwise.

Movement: To perform a Movement action, a character must usually have a path to the point they are trying to reach. Characters who can fly or scale sheer surfaces (via invocations and other supernatural abilities) are naturally more able to reach places earth-bound characters cannot.

en intrigue. The PCs might even need to accomplish numerous objectives to bring a larger plan to fruition. The players can confer as they desire, and then each player should decide upon their character's objective and inform the GM.

The GM should also decide upon objectives for any Adversary NPCs in the conflict who have an agenda of their own, but the GM should not tell the players these objectives (unless they discover them via other means, such as their Assessment checks). At the GM's discretion, an Adversary NPC with no concrete goal relevant to the scene might not have an objective, and Minion NPCs generally do not need to have objectives.

Sample Social Objectives

The following are a few examples of social objectives that a character can pursue during an intrigue. However, this list is not intended to be fully comprehensive; if a player wishes to have their character pursue a goal that does not fall under one or more of these categories, the GM should allow them to create a custom Social objective for the intrigue and should give them some guidance on the narrative and mechanical avenues they must take to achieve it.

Rhetorical Points

Several of these objectives refer to rhetorical points, which are a way of tracking the traction gained by the arguments, traps, and rhetorical devices a character has employed in pursuit of their social goals. Each successful social skill check contributes one rhetorical point, plus one additional point per bonus success on the check, as described on page 15. Rhetorical points are cumulative, and they persist until the end of the scene or until the objective is achieved.

Multiple characters making the same argument can combine their points on such checks into a group result. When trying to persuade a

group rather than an individual regarding a particular matter, checks should target the character in that group with the highest status.

You can use rhetorical points to track these and other things characters might try to accomplish in intrigues, or even in other conflicts or narrative scenes, at your discretion.

Keep in mind that while rhetorical points can be used fully abstractly, they work best when supported by and supporting roleplaying—in other words, you can always feel free to ask a player what their character actually said, and weight the TN of the check to accumulate these points based on whether their argument was coherent or not.

Appeal to a Person or Group

Description: The overarching social objective that covers the majority of reasons a character would enter an intrigue, this objective signifies that the character is trying to convince someone to behave in a certain way. Often, this objective is directed at a character's lord, in an effort to get the lord to back the character in one of their efforts or take one of their claims seriously. However, it might also be used to get a belligerent party to agree to come to terms, to sway a judge away from (or toward) meting out a punishment, or to win wide support from a large number of people.

Requirements: A character can get someone else to adopt their viewpoint by accumulating a preset number of rhetorical points on successful social skill checks against that target (usually using the Persuade action, as described on page 159).

The GM sets the number of rhetorical points the characters must make to complete this objective (and can tell the players this value, or not, at their discretion). The focus attribute of the target of the Persuade action is a good starting value for this number, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on factors like stubbornness and the character's innate resistance to the perspective being proposed.

Completion: At the end of any round in which a character accumulates the requisite number of rhetorical points, the target is persuaded to adopt their perspective (or stops being able to raise an argument against it). If another character has accumulated a greater number of rhetorical points at that time, that character persuades the target to adopt their perspective instead. In the case of a tie, the character with the highest status wins.

Various circumstances, such as certain outbursts (on the part of the person doing the persuading or the one being persuaded) or narrative events such as giving grave offense or making interruptions, can make it impossible to persuade someone during the course of an intrigue, in which case this social objective cannot be completed. Additionally, if the character retires from the scene before completion (after completing their own objective or otherwise), this objective cannot be completed.

Discern Someone's Qualities

Description: Sometimes, information gathering is a character's main Social objective: they seek to ferret out the strengths, weaknesses, or loyalties of another character. This goes deeper than understanding their target's social objective, and extends to trying to get a measure of their target's character. Beyond quiet observation, this objective requires engaging with a target to draw out their less obvious qualities.

Requirements: A character can draw out and study someone else's nature by accumulating a preset number of rhetorical points on appropriate social skill checks against that target. A character might also investigate the target with other skills (like Culture or Sentiment) to fulfill this objective.

The GM sets the number of rhetorical points needed to achieve this objective (and can tell the player this value or not, at the GM's discretion). The vigilance attribute of the target is a good starting value for this number, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on the target's wariness in the situation.

Completion: At the end of any round in which a character accumulates the requisite points, the character learns up to three of the following about their target: social objective, ninjō, giri, composure, resilience, one advantage, one disadvantage. The same option cannot be selected multiple times this way.

If the character retires from the scene before completion (after completing their own objective or otherwise), this objective cannot be completed.

Discredit Someone

Description: Provoking one's enemies directly is a dangerous art, but it can put them in positions where they must accept a loss lest their reputation suffer harm. Applying this pressure subtly, without exposing oneself to criticism, is no easy task.

Requirements: A character can back someone into a corner by causing them to have an outburst. They can do this by inflicting strife on the target (or getting others to do so), which in turn is something they can accomplish by using various ☸ (see page 18) and techniques.

Completion: At the end of any round in which a character suffers an outburst this way, the character must either forfeit glory equal to their glory rank (as they allow themselves to be humiliated or shamed for a moment of vulnerability) or retire from the intrigue. Such provocation makes it very hard to get someone to take the provoker's side in a matter, so if the target's support is vital to a cause, this tactic is usually very ineffective. Further, many samurai respond to this sort of humiliation with a demand for a duel—or with a dagger in the night, if they are of less-than-honorable persuasion.

If the target retires from the scene before completion (after completing their own objective or otherwise), this objective cannot be completed.

Spread a Rumor

Description: Rumors are among the courtier's greatest weapons, and a well-placed rumor can be vital to laying the groundwork for future victories. Spies often place rumors in enemy courts as well, to lead foes astray or into cunningly laid traps.

Requirements: A character can spread a rumor across a group by accumulating a preset number of rhetorical points on appropriate social skill checks. However, no two of these social skill checks can target the same character, as the rumor must appear to come from multiple sources within the group to be accepted.

The GM sets the number of rhetorical successes needed to achieve this objective (and can tell the player this value or not, at the GM's discretion). The vigilance attribute of the character in the scene with the highest status is a good starting point, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on that character's disposition toward the rumor in question.

Completion: At the end of any round in which a character accumulates the requisite number of cumulative rhetorical points, the rumor becomes self-sustaining within the group. This does not necessarily mean that everyone believes it personally, but they do discuss it, for it is too reputable to fully ignore.

If the character fails at two consecutive checks to spread the rumor, it fails to take root, and this objective cannot be completed in this scene.

Phase 1: Assess the Scene

During this phase of an intrigue, characters set their objectives and then may optionally make an Assessment check to read the room, giving skilled courtiers a chance to begin any scene with more information than their rivals.

Secret Social Objectives

Since you're running the scene, players are required to inform you of their characters' objectives. This helps you set the scene and build a story around what the characters want to accomplish. However, players aren't obligated to inform their fellow players of their objectives. Passing notes or communicating electronically can let players inform you of their goals without telling their compatriots if they want to maintain secrecy regarding their own ends.

Establish Social Objectives

As described earlier, each player character and NPC with a relevant goal sets their social objective. This defines their conditions for success in the intrigue, and it helps the GM determine whether the scene should continue or end at any given time.

Assessment Check

For an intrigue, the Assessment check is a **TN 1 Sentiment check** not just to listen, but to politely probe other characters' strengths, weaknesses, and perhaps most importantly, objectives. This check is optional; any character may choose not to make it if they do not wish to acquire any particular information before the scene begins. If a character does not make the check, they may remove 3 strife instead.

Initiative Order

There is no fixed initiative order in an intrigue, so characters do not generate initiative values when they make their Assessment checks. However, for the sake of simplicity, time is still divided into rounds, and characters still act sequentially. Each character simply takes a turn when they see fit during a round, rather than at an appointed time.

If two characters wish to act simultaneously in an intrigue, the one with the higher focus acts first (with ties resolved at random in a manner determined by the GM). However, a character must forfeit 1 honor to preempt a character of higher status in this way (and might suffer further narrative ramifications for doing so, depending on circumstances).

Phase 2: Take Turns

During this phase of an intrigue, characters can raise points, refute arguments brought up by others, and generally engage in social intrigue to attempt to achieve their social objectives.

Rounds

Each character takes one turn each round, but they take that turn whenever they see fit rather than at a specific time determined by an initiative order. A character who does not wish to take a turn during a given round may pass. Once each character has taken a turn or passed, play proceeds to the next round.

An intrigue does not last a fixed number of rounds, and instead moves to **Step 3: Resolution** once all objectives have been achieved or it is clear that they cannot be achieved.

Rokugani Culture Cues

- **Earth:** An Earth stance in a social situation is closed off and shows that the character is protective.
- **Fire:** A Fire stance in a social situation is forward and engaging, possibly to the point of rudeness, and shows that the character is seeking to attain something.
- **Water:** A Water stance in a social situation is relaxed and indicates that the character is at ease.
- **Air:** An Air stance in a social situation is alert and attentive.
- **Void:** A Void stance in a social situation is resolute and self-confident without appearing aggressive.

Narrative Descriptions of Your Assessment Check

When making an Assessment check during an intrigue, you can use the following guidance to flavor your Assessment check narratively:

- **Air:** You read the subtle cues of another character in the scene, parsing their poise, face, and emotional output for signs of strength and weakness. If you succeed, choose one target in the scene and learn their demeanor and current wounds and strife. (See **Demeanor** on page 191).
- **Earth:** You assess the social environs defensively, seeking ways to deflect conversations away from any vulnerabilities you might possess or using the rules of etiquette to keep people from exploiting them. If you succeed, choose one known disadvantage of a character in the scene; the character ignores the chosen disadvantage until the end of the scene.
- **Fire:** You try to determine the objectives of your foes, drawing conclusions about what they might be trying to achieve in the current scene. If you succeed, deduce the immediate goals or objective of one other character in the scene.
- **Water:** You look at the physical features of the room around you, seeing what you can comment upon or use. If you succeed, spot and learn about one object, item, or terrain feature in the scene, discerning its narrative features and qualities (see page 167).
- **Void:** You focus on the mystical energies in this place, to see if the minds of others are clouded by spiritual influences or other supernatural powers. If you succeed, you become aware of whether there are any ripples in reality nearby of the type that accompany supernatural disturbances, though not their location or specific identity.

Turns

Turns function in the standard way described in the conflict scene rules (see page 153).

Stances

During an intrigue, stances dictate a character's rhetoric and poise, as well as any physical posture that reflects this aspect of communication. Stances provide their default effect during an intrigue, and they have a number of narrative implications based on Rokugani custom.

Movement and Positioning

Players should feel free to narrate how their characters physically position themselves in intrigues, but characters can generally be assumed to be within range to resolve their effects, and movement need not be closely tracked unless it is relevant. If it becomes relevant, the GM should adjudicate the distance between characters, objects, and one another in range bands.

What Do I Do on My Turn?

The GM might need to reference the technical breakdown, but as a player, what you need to keep in mind is pretty straightforward. During your turn in an intrigue, you do the following:

1. **Set your stance**, which reflects your posture and tone. Are you making a passionate appeal (Fire)? Perhaps you're trying to manipulate someone's beliefs (Air)? You can work this into the narrative of your action by describing your character's tone of voice, physical positioning in relation to the person they're addressing, and posture. You must make a check using the ring matching your stance, so if you want to use an action that requires a particular ring, choose the matching stance.
2. **Choose your action** based on what you want to accomplish. You can do nearly anything you can think of via the Use Skill action, but the action you'll most often want to use in an intrigue is probably Per-

suaire, which encompasses your efforts to use Social skills (or other skills, at the GM's discretion) to win people over. If your character has any shūji techniques (see page 140), you can also use those.

Remember to **describe what your character is saying** (or say it in your character's voice!), because the GM will take this into account for setting the TN of your check. If you can't think of a good thing for your character to say, your GM might offer a suggestion or let you poll the room—after all, your character might be more eloquent than you are (or vice versa).

3. **End your turn when you're done.** It's a good idea to start thinking about what you want to do next round!
4. Keep in mind that there's no initiative order during an intrigue—you can act whenever you like, but only once per round.

Actions

The following actions are generally available to all characters in an intrigue.

Assist

Description: You offer another character an argument they might use, an insight about the opposition, or moral support.

Activation: As a Support action, you grant assistance to one character at range 0–2.

Effects: You provide assistance (see **Assistance**, on page 15) to the target's next check.

Persuade

Description: You attempt to foster or quell an idea, emotion, or desire in a person (based on the approach you are using, as described in **Social Skill Group**, on page 86).

Activation: As a Scheme action, you make a Social skill check targeting one or more characters who can hear you. The TN of the check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets. Additionally, apply the following modification to TN based on the skill you chose:

- **Command:** You present a plan with authority, sweeping your targets along with all the confidence a lord should have among their vassals. If each target's status is lower than yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.
- **Courtesy:** You present a proposal backed by honeyed words and clever implications—perfect for dealing with one's superiors, but perhaps overly deferential when addressing equals or subordinates. If each target's status is higher than yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.
- **Games/Performance/Other Skills:** You offer a diversion from the affairs at hand, turning the conversation to a less pressing topic. If your target's status is equal to yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.

Effects: If you succeed, you make a rhetorical point that counts toward an appropriate social objective in addition to the narrative ramifications of your successful check, plus additional points equal to your bonus successes.

Opportunities

For suggested uses of ✨, see **Table 3–7: Additional Social Skill Opportunities**, on page 87.

Use Skill

Description: You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 79).

Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.

Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, for any sample use that can be completed in a single action, or for pursuing another task that the GM deems appropriate.

Opportunities

For suggested uses of ✨, see **Chapter 3: Skills**, on page 79.

Phase 3: Resolution

The GM should generally end an intrigue once all characters' social objectives have been achieved or have clearly failed, or the characters pursuing these objectives decide to let them drop for narrative reasons.

What Do I Actually Say?

Some groups often have players speak in their characters' voices, while others prefer to allow a character be more (or less) eloquent than their player, and thus have the player summarize the point they want their character to make and the manner in which they want them to say it. What you do with this is up to your group!

During an intrigue, you (and the GM, for NPCs) should offer up either a portrayal or a summary (or some combination of the two) of the points your character is making for the Persuade action. Additionally, the GM should strongly consider altering the TNs of checks based on the points the characters make even on top of the alterations for **Demeanor** (see page 191). If you raise an excellent point or deliver a particularly well-executed appeal, the GM should take this roleplaying into account when determining your character's chance of success on the check, perhaps even waiving the check entirely sometimes. Your character might also need to stake honor or glory (see page 22) to back up their words, which can have further effects on the TN of the check.

Remember, the GM is the final arbiter of how social skill checks are resolved, and should view the rules for resolving checks (and intrigues overall) as tools to help them guide the action rather than as absolute restrictions on the story.

Duels

Duels are stylized engagements, usually fought to settle disputes that cannot be put to rest with words alone. While they are fought between individuals, the fate of whole families, clans, or the entire realm might ride on a duel. Duels function in a manner similar to that of skirmishes, but with a number of key differences noted throughout this section.

When to Use a Duel

Duels almost invariably result from one character challenging another, who accepts the challenge in the hope of humbling or even killing their foe (or who finds themselves in a position where they cannot afford to refuse). Duels should be used for one-on-one martial contests that are substantial enough that they cannot simply be settled with a check and a check to resist.

Duel Objectives

Duels are fought all the time in Rokugan, from good-natured exhibition matches in the dōjō to deadly clashes that carry the weight of generations-long grudges. **DUEL OBJECTIVES** set the terms of the duel and the conditions under which it will end. While the objectives of a duel are usually agreed upon at the start, it is possible for a character to decide to ignore these for personal reasons (see **Malicious Intent** on page 160). Note that achieving one's objective does not guarantee victory on its own, as these formal engagements have many conventions, technicalities, and other considerations that can alter the outcome. At the end of any round in which one or more characters succeeded in their duel objective, the duel proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution** and the winner is determined.

Thematically, characters can be disqualified for illegal strikes or maneuvers, or be judged to have delivered a more telling blow than they actually did. In rare circumstances, the character declared the winner might die of their injuries while the supposed loser walks away having suffered only moderate harm—though such occurrences would obviously create contention among onlookers as to who truly won the duel.

To First Strike

Description: When fighting in a duel to the first strike, a combatant is expected to wield a practice weapon, such as a training sword or a blade with no edge. Of course, accidents do happen, and even duels not intended to result in injury can end with one combatant dead. Note that simply striking first does not guarantee victory—the strike must be legal and telling, as determined by those judging the duel.

Requirements: At the end of each round, if a character succeeded on an Attack check targeting their enemy that dealt 1 or more damage, this objective is completed.

Completion: Proceed to **Phase 3: Resolution** to determine the winner.

Malicious Intent

Although the combatants theoretically agree to the duel objectives before the conflict begins, sometimes an individual will decide to set their own, decidedly more lethal, conditions for victory. Walking into a practice duel with lethal intent is, of course, dishonorable in the extreme, but proving that lethal intent is far more difficult.

Your character must forfeit honor equal to two times their honor rank to choose any objective besides the agreed-upon one for the duel. At the GM's discretion, you may choose an objective different from the ones listed here (such as using the duel to talk your opponent down, or other creative plans), in which case you must stake this amount of honor on achieving your objective instead.

Other Options in Intrigues

The Persuade action is meant to help you and your players by presenting an example structure for the use of Social skills during an intrigue scene. It is certainly not meant to be the only option that players and GMs can exercise, however!

Shūji techniques (see page 133) give characters more options for tactics in intrigues (and other conflict scenes), but even these cover only a tiny fraction of the ways a character might go about trying to come out ahead in the intrigues of the Rokugani courts.

Above all, as the GM, you should encourage your players to be creative with both the Persuade action and the intentionally open-ended Use Skill action. For instance, a player might propose using Culture (Fire) to intentionally break the rules of Rokugani society to incite a political rival, or using Courtesy (Air) to trick another character into believing that their own charms have worked, setting a social trap for them to fall into later. You should cooperate with the players to figure out how they can accomplish their desired goals rather than trying to cleave so closely to the examples provided that it stifles their (or your) creativity.

To First Blood

Description: A standard Rokugani duel of honor between two aggrieved parties, if such a thing exists, is to first blood. Again, simply drawing blood first is not always enough to ensure a win in the eyes of the judges, though it is at least an obvious sign that a strike occurred and an indication of its efficacy.

Requirements: At the end of each round, if either character is Incapacitated, this objective is completed.

Completion: Proceed to **Phase 3: Resolution** to determine the winner.

To the Death

Description: Any duel with live weapons is likely to end with one or both parties dead, but some duels demand that at least one combatant perish.

Requirements: At the end of each round, if a character slew the enemy (or inflicted the Dying condition upon them), this objective is completed.

Completion: Proceed to **Phase 3: Resolution** to determine the winner.

Ending a Duel Prematurely

It is said that all battles are won and lost before they are fought, and that knowing the outcome in advance is the highest martial skill. The most experienced and talented duelists often fight entire battles in their minds before steel is drawn, and take the field with a certain degree of surety of the outcome.

After the Assessment check, either participant may withdraw from a duel instead of fighting it, acknowledging their opponent's superiority. This carries no social stigma, but a character who withdraws is considered the loser of the duel, and must forfeit whatever they staked on its outcome (such as honor, glory, or even the duelist's life).

Why would you do this? It is a way for a character to lose a duel gracefully, so if the stakes are low or recoverable, it might be better than risking life and limb. Circumstantially, a character might also withdraw from a duel to make a political point, or in the hope of a better outcome for their family or allies in the long run.

Phase 1: Assess the Scene

Drawing first in a duel is less important than delivering the final strike. Still, reading the situation well and reacting quickly has an important role to play in a duel, as duels are often decided by which participant better identifies the vital moment to strike and capitalizes on it. Unlike in many other types of scene, each character in a duel has an opportunity to increase their initiative each round.

Assessment Check

For a duel, the Assessment check is a **TN 1 Meditation check** to attempt to foresee certain aspects of how the duel will transpire.

- **Earth:** You reflect on your weaknesses, thinking of how you can mitigate them when facing this opponent. For instance, if you have lost your left eye, perhaps you can position yourself so your opponent must approach from the right. If you succeed, choose one known disadvantage of a character in the scene; the character ignores the chosen disadvantage until the end of the scene.
- **Fire:** You focus on your desires, and those of your opponent. What do they intend to gain from this duel? How will that influence their strategy—and yours? If you succeed, deduce the immediate goals or objective of one other character in the scene.
- **Water:** You center yourself in your environment, looking for how you can use the tiniest irregularity to your advantage. Is the grass beneath your feet slick enough to trip your opponent? Is the third tatami mat to the left slightly out of place? If you succeed, spot and learn about one object, item, or terrain feature in the scene, discerning its narrative features and qualities (see **Terrain** on page 167).
- **Air:** You consider the advantages you have over your opponent, and how you can use those to press upon their weaknesses. Are they already unsettled by the prospect of fighting you? If you succeed, choose one target in the scene and learn their demeanor and current wounds and strife.

- **Void:** You center yourself in the universe, seeking out the spiritual currents and eddies around you. If you succeed, you become aware of whether there are any ripples in reality that accompany supernatural disturbances, though not their location or specific identity.

Initiative Order

Each character has an initiative value based on the results of their Assessment check, as usual. However, instead of acting in order of initiative, participants begin each round with a **STAREDOWN** (see below).

Staredown

At the start of each round (including the first), each character may bid strife to increase their initiative value for that round. Each participating character secretly chooses a number between 0 and their composure. Then, all simultaneously reveal the number, and each suffers that amount of strife. Finally, each character adds the number they chose to their current initiative value to determine their initiative value for the round.

Order of Action

The character with the higher initiative value takes the first turn during each round, followed by the character with the lower initiative value. At the end of the round, each character's initiative value resets to its value before the staredown.

Phase 2: Take Turns

During this phase of a duel, the characters attempt to strike each other down with their weapons of choice.

Rounds

Each character takes one turn each round in order of initiative. The character with the higher initiative value takes their turn, followed by the character with the lower value. If the characters are tied, the one with the lowest honor acts first.

What Do I Do on My Turn?

The GM might need to reference the technical breakdown, but as a player, what you need to keep in mind is pretty straightforward.

At the start of each round, you have a staredown with your foe.

Each of you secretly bids strife up to your composure. Then, you receive that strife and increase your initiative by that amount for the round. Remember not to bid too high—when your strife exceeds your composure, your opponent will get to try to strike you with a finishing blow!

During a duel, you do the following on your turn:

1. **Set your stance.** Are you staying light on your feet while slowly circling to make you harder to hit (Air)? Maybe you're preparing to make a powerful linear attack to overwhelm your foe (Fire)? You must make a check using the ring matching your stance, so if you want to use an action that requires a particular ring, choose the matching stance. When you set your stance, you may ready one weapon and choose how you're wielding it. The grip you use might affect the base damage or deadliness of your weapon.
2. **Choose your action** based on what you want to accomplish. A duel is a structured encounter, so your options are more limited than in a skirmish, but there is still room to be creative. You might Center

yourself, focusing on defense to wear your opponent down, or you could choose a **Provoke** action to try to set up your next move. Or you might simply try to **Strike** them directly, or use another combat technique you have to hit your foe. Center, Provoke, and direct attacks like **Strike** form a sort of rock-paper-scissors.

You don't need to worry about range bands in a duel. You and your opponent are always in range of each other's attacks during a duel. However, you can still take advantage of terrain in your environment, at the GM's discretion.

Perhaps even more so than skirmishes, duels offer a great chance to roleplay. Describing how you use your surroundings might alter the TN of your checks (or your opponent's checks). Finding ways to exploit your enemy's weaknesses or capitalize on your strengths is just as valid during a duel as it is at any other time. Also, the five words plus "fool" rule applies, so you can deliver an insult to your foe as you finish them off (but make sure not to miss, or that stinging retort could be the last reminder of your character's fatal hubris).

3. **End your turn when you're done.** It's a good idea to start thinking about what you want to do next round!

A duel does not last a fixed number of rounds. At the end of each round, if either character achieved their objective, the duel ends and proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution**. Otherwise, the duel returns to **Phase 2: Perform Actions** and continues for an additional round.

Turns

Turns function in the standard way described in the conflict rules.

Stances

During a duel, stances dictate a character's physical stance and overall strategy for the duel. Stances provide their default effects during a duel, and reflect certain physical postures.

Movement and Range

During duels, players should feel free to narrate how their characters are moving as they vie for position, feint, and sidestep unexpectedly. However, ranges and specific maneuvering are tracked as follows: at the start of the duel, the characters move to range 2 from each other. For the duration of the duel, each character is considered to be in range of all of their opponent's weapons and techniques. At the end of the duel, the two characters once again move to range 2 from each other.

Actions

The following actions are available to characters during a duel. Characters can also select any other action they possess that would logically function in a duel, such as most Attack actions granted by techniques.

Center

Description: You watch your foe closely, predicting their strategy and preparing to subtly shift to avoid it or make the attack impossible altogether.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts check** targeting one character. Additionally, secretly choose one of the Five Rings (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, or Void) and record this choice.

Effects: If you succeed, increase the TN of the next Attack check targeting you by 2 plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

If you succeed, when your opponent makes a check for an action, you may reveal the ring you chose. If their check used that ring, they suffer 3 strife. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Provoke



Description: You try to draw a reaction out of your foe, getting them to commit to an attack or defense before they are ready.

Shame of Survival

A samurai who loses a duel to the death but survives by some cruel twist of fate or the intervention of others is generally expected to end their own life. If your character somehow has the misfortune to survive a duel to the death, they must forfeit 20 honor and 30 glory to defy this expectation. Of course, many good stories start with a samurai who has some pressing reason to live—a task they must perform, a person they must protect, or an ideal they must embody—refusing to accept society's judgment and forging ahead to complete their goal. This sort of occurrence might be more the exception than the rule, but PCs are nothing if not exceptional!

The Finishing Blow

As two combatants stare each other down and one begins to make a move, a gap sometimes opens in their defenses, giving their opponent a chance to end the fight with a single well-placed blow. Normally, a character can only perform actions during their turn, but in a duel, things can turn in an instant.

The first time each character's strife exceeds their composure during a duel, their opponent may immediately perform a **FINISHING BLOW**. The character performing the finishing blow chooses an Attack action and performs it, interrupting anything their target is doing (including resolving a check of their own, in which case the finishing blow resolves during **Step 6** of the check, after  results are resolved but before  is spent). One finishing blow can even interrupt another finishing blow!

If the character performing a finishing blow succeeds, instead of dealing damage, the finishing blow inflicts a critical strike with severity equal to two times the deadliness of the weapon or Attack action used plus the attacker's bonus successes. Any other effects of the Attack action are resolved as normal.

If the duel's objective is achieved by the finishing blow, the duel ends immediately. Otherwise, the duel picks up where it left off (including returning to resolving a check, if one was interrupted).

Activation: As a Scheme action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character.

Effects: If you succeed, reduce the TN of your Attack action checks targeting your foe by 1 plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.



Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.

Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the range of the weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

Opportunities

  If you succeed, inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness.

Use Skill

Description: You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 79).

Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.

Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, implementing any sample use that can be completed in a single action or pursuing another task that the GM deems appropriate.

Opportunities

For suggested uses of , see **Chapter 3: Skills**, on page 79.

Table 6-2: Duel Scoring

Feat	Points Awarded
Achieved your objective	3 points
Struck the enemy first	3 points
Inflicted wounds on the enemy	1 point per wound inflicted
Inflicted one or more critical strikes on the enemy	Points equal to severity of the highest critical strike (after reductions)
Killed the enemy (in a duel to the death only)	14 points
Suffered an outburst	-2 points
Was witnessed cheating	Automatic loss

Phase 3: Resolution

A duel draws to a close at the end of any round in which one or more characters achieve their objectives (see **Duel Objectives**, on page 160).

While some duels are clear in their outcome, with one samurai dead and the other standing untouched, blade red with blood, most duels are a bit messier, and so it falls to one or more judges to call the victor. Legality of strikes, contention over who struck first, and the efficacy of the blow delivered can all influence a character's odds of victory, for good or for ill.

During the Resolution phase of a duel, each participant tallies up their score, as described in **Table 6-2: Duel Scoring**. Then, the lower score is subtracted from the higher, and the duel's results are determined by consulting **Table 6-3: Duel Results**.

Additional Rules Concerning Duels

Here are some additional rules that cover duels.

Duels with Other Weapons

Generally, both combatants in a duel wield the same sort of weapons—and in Rokugan's elite circles of power, the katana is the preferred duelist's weapon. However, from a practical standpoint, a duel can be fought with any weapon. Two master archers might face one another across a field with bows in hand, or a pair of Unicorn Clan bushi might wrestle to settle a conflict. A shugenja and a bushi with a particularly deep grudge against each other might even face each other spells against sword, though such an event would be highly irregular and perhaps a bit uncouth.

Mechanically speaking, any appropriate skill can be used for the as-

Skirmishes

Skirmishes are pitched battles between limited numbers of combatants. This type of conflict can represent anything from a clash of scouting forces before a mass battle, to a teahouse raid that involves a few dozen combatants, to a pitched battle between a few individuals in an alleyway. Duels have formalized rules in Rokugan, but in a skirmish, the winner is simply the one who survives, whatever that might require.

Phase 1: Assess the Scene

During this phase of a skirmish, characters get their bearings, identify their foes, and determine the initiative order they will use for the scene.

Assessment Check

For a skirmish, the Assessment check is a **TN 1 Tactics check** to gain a read on the battlefield conditions and enemy.

Table 6-3: Duel Results

Score Difference	Result
0	No Winner: The duel is considered a draw, as the fighters land telling blows simultaneously (or not at all). The characters might choose to repeat the duel in hopes of a more meaningful conclusion, or they might retire to tend to their wounds.
1	Narrow Victory: The character who won takes the edge in the duel by a thin margin.
2	Clear Victory: The character who won claims victory in the duel definitively.
3-4	Absolute Victory: The character who won gives a clear demonstration of mastery. The winner is awarded 1 glory.
5+	No Contest: The character who won does not so much win the duel as demonstrate to onlookers that it was never a contest. The winner is awarded glory equal to the opponent's glory rank.

essment check in a duel if it is relevant to understanding one's foe, and any Attack action can be used to win a duel.

As a general rule, to use any weapon or means of attack other than the agreed-upon ones, a character must forfeit honor equal to their honor rank and, if the duel is public, glory equal to their glory rank.

Shugenja in Duels

Shugenja are elite, secretive, and powerful; thus, despite their spiritual duties, their rivalries are as fierce as those among the highest tier of sword duelists. Shugenja generally fight with invocations and supernatural weapons. Because shugenja are rare and any wasted shugenja life is a great loss to their school, a few shugenja schools forbid their members from fighting duels to the death—not that this restriction is always obeyed.

Monks in Duels

Monks of the martial bent frequently spar with one another for practice, but formal duels are rarer than they are among bushi. Solving problems with violence is, after all, an option of last resort for the enlightened soul. Of course, some monks are more militant than others, and not all are pacifistic. Monks often fight duels unarmed, but they sometimes fight with staves or other weapons.

Initiative Order

Characters act in descending order of their initiative value for the scene.

If two or more characters tie for initiative, the character with the lowest honor acts first, then the other tied characters act in ascending order of honor.

Phase 2: Take Turns

During this phase of a skirmish, characters fight for their lives.

Rounds

Each character takes one turn each round in the order dictated by the characters' initiative values.

Narrative Descriptions of Your Assessment Check

When making an Assessment check during a skirmish, you can use the following guidance to flavor your Assessment check narratively:

- **Air:** You read the subtle cues of another character in the scene, taking the measure of their mental state as they rush into battle. You seek to determine the sorts of tactics they are most likely to be susceptible to, and whether you can intimidate or manipulate them. If you succeed, choose one target in the scene and learn their demeanor and current wounds and strife.
- **Earth:** You look at your environment for defensive positions, covering your blind spots (or those of your compatriots) or forcing attackers to come at you from the direction of your best defense. You might use cover, walls, or other terrain to limit the angle of attack against you, negating a key weakness. If you succeed, choose one known disadvantage of a character in the scene; the character ignores the chosen disadvantage until the end of the scene.
- **Fire:** You try to determine the objective of a foe, ascertaining their current objective and whether you are their target—or someone else is. If you succeed, deduce the immediate goals or objective of one other character in the scene.
- **Water:** You assess the field in which the battle is taking place, looking for possible improvised weapons or terrain you might exploit to put your foe at a disadvantage, such as mud or loose shale. If you succeed, spot and learn about one object, item, or terrain feature in the scene, discerning its narrative features and qualities (see page 167).
- **Void:** You focus on the mystical energies in this place, to see if there are any mystical presences on the field of battle or supernatural beings at work here. If you succeed, you become aware of whether there are any ripples in reality nearby of the type that accompany supernatural disturbances, though not their location or specific identity.

Skirmishes do not have a fixed round limit. However, when things are clearly going badly for one side, many combatants will retreat and regroup. If a warrior believes they have a chance to escape and survive, most will not voluntarily choose to fight to the death. Honor forfeited when retreating can be regained, but an ignoble death is more enduring.

Turns

Turns function in the standard way described in the conflict rules; each character sets their stance and may perform one action during their turn.

Stances

During a skirmish, stances govern a character's physical posture. When setting their stance during a skirmish, a character may move (see below).

Movement and Positioning

Of all conflict types, skirmishes make the most detailed use of the range bands, as described on page 166.

Movement

Each character is able to adjust their position on the battlefield slightly each turn, either at the beginning of their turn or at the end of their turn.

When a character sets their stance (at the start of their turn), they may move up to two range bands. At the end of their turn, if a character has not moved already during their turn, the character may move up to one range band.

Range Bands

In skirmishes, range bands are used to measure the distances between characters, objects, and positions on the battlefield. See page 166 for more information on **Range Bands**.

Actions

The following actions are available to characters during a skirmish. Characters might also possess techniques that give them additional options for actions in combat. A character may choose not to perform any actions during their turn.

Assist

Description: You offer another character an plan of attack they might use, an insight about the opposition, or moral support.

Activation: As a Support action, you grant assistance to one target at range 0–2.

Effects: You provide assistance (see page 15) on the target's next check.

Challenge

Description: You issue a challenge to a foe, calling for them to face you in single combat.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** to issue a formal combat challenge targeting one character at range 0–5. You must stake 10 honor and 5 glory upon the challenge, which you forfeit if you intentionally avoid fighting or sabotage your target's attempt to participate.

Was That There Before?

When one of your players makes an Assessment check, the player is signaling to you where their character's attention lies—and you can take advantage of this in the way you structure the encounter. For instance, if a character uses a Water Assessment on the terrain and objects nearby, you should consider detailing a piece of terrain in the scene such that it is useful (see **Terrain**, on page 167) or describing an object the character could use in the scene. Similarly, when a character uses an Air Assessment to find an NPC foe's demeanor, you might want to add an advantage, disadvantage, or both to that NPC that the PC can learn and exploit, both because this adds mechanical

options to the scene and because the player has expressed interest in that NPC. You can even turn to the PCs to ask for suggestions about these things, and use their input to help shape the scene!

Of course, don't feel pressured to add in any specific details if they don't make sense, but expanding upon parts of the scene that weren't described earlier can make battles more tactical and more cinematic. Even minor adjustments to detail can have a significant impact. Turning "grass" to "dew-slicked grass on a slight incline" is a very slight change in the scene, but might well become the deciding factor in a skirmish if one character can exploit this newly created Dangerous terrain (see page 167).

What Do I Do on My Turn?

As a player, what you need to keep in mind is pretty straightforward. During your turn in a skirmish, you do the following:

1. **Set your stance.** Are you taking a rooted, defensive stance (Earth)? Maybe you're getting ready to quickly shift to a new position (Water)? You must make a check using the ring matching your stance, so if you want to use an action that requires a particular ring, choose the matching stance. **When you set your stance, you may ready one weapon and choose how you're wielding it.** The grip you use might affect the damage or deadliness of your weapon.
2. **Choose your action** based on what you want to accomplish. You can do nearly anything via the Use Skill action, but most often you'll want to use Strike (a basic attack with your weapon), Guard (a defensive form to ward off attacks), or Charge (a quick burst of speed to move around), or use a technique you know. You could even Challenge a foe to fight you one-on-one—but remember it can be dangerous! You can also Wait to seize the perfect moment later in the round.

You can move up to two range bands when you set your stance, or one range band after you perform an action. This is because it's easier to close with an enemy than to escape. If there's any terrain on the battlefield (see page 167), you might want to move into (or out of) terrain to try to get an advantage.

Remember, combat is still a great opportunity for roleplaying. If you give a brief description of your action, you might be able to take advantage of terrain, your own or your enemy's advantages and disadvantages, or other circumstantial benefits. This sort of creativity enhances the story, and it can also give you a tactical edge over a foe. Also, keep in mind that even if you don't spend your action talking, you can still say up to five words (or six, if the last is "fool"). Never underestimate the power of a good one-liner!

3. **End your turn when you're done.** It's a good idea to start thinking about what you want to do next round.

Effects: If you succeed, the target must immediately choose whether to accept or decline your challenge. Depending on the target's decision, resolve one of the following:

- If the target accepts, they stake 10 honor and 5 glory, which they forfeit if they take any Attack or Scheme action before the end of the round. At the end of the round, you and the target enter a clash (see **Clashes**, on page 175).
- To decline, the target must forfeit glory equal to your ranks in Command plus your bonus successes. Then, you recover 1 Void point.

If you win the clash, each of your foe's allies in the battle suffers 3 strife.

Charge

Description: You focus on moving a long distance in order to gain distance from or close distance to your foes beyond the usual slight repositioning that occurs in battle.

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 2 Fitness check** to move extra range bands.

Effects: If you succeed, you may move one range band, plus one additional range band per bonus success (to a maximum of 6).

New Opportunities

✳️✳️: If you succeed, after moving, you may choose a target in range of one of your readied melee weapons. That target suffers physical damage equal to the base damage of the weapon.

Guard

Description: You focus on warding off foes from yourself or an ally by positioning yourself defensively, taking cover, throwing strategically placed strikes to keep foes cautious, or even firing shots menacingly close to the enemy.

Activation: As a Support action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 1 Tactics check** targeting yourself or one other character within the range of that weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, you are **GUARDING** the target until the beginning of your next turn. Increase the TN of Attack checks against the guarded target by 1 plus your bonus successes.

Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.

Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the range of the weapon.

Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✳️✳️: If you succeed, inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness.

Use Skill

Description: Use Skill is a ubiquitous and versatile action that covers almost any activity you can imagine. You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect of that skill, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 79). The GM is the final arbiter of what you can or cannot accomplish in a single action. If an action requires multiple rounds to complete, the GM might have you make multiple checks to see it through.

Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.

Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, engage in any sample use that can be completed in a single action, or pursue another task that the GM deems appropriate.

Opportunities

For suggested uses of ✳️, see **Chapter 3: Skills**, on page 79.

Wait

Description: You bide your time, waiting to spring into action.

Activation: As a Support action, you may declare an action you will perform upon the occurrence of a specified event before the end of the round.

Effects: When the specified event occurs before the end of the round, you may perform the action. You must still use the ring matching your stance for this action.

If the specified event does not occur this round, you may perform one action of your choice (other than Wait) at the end of the round.

Silhouette, Range Bands, and Terrain

During scenes, concepts such as the size of objects, distance between points, and nature of the surrounding terrain sometimes become important. The following rules offer guidance on how to model these phenomena during the game.

Silhouette

Objects in *Legend of the Five Rings* are classified into a number of different size categories called silhouettes. While these categories are abstract and are frequently more useful for description than for specific mechanical consequences, they do have some important ramifications for certain techniques (see **Chapter 4: Techniques**, on page 107).

As a general rule, most creatures cannot carry any combination of objects and creatures with a silhouette total greater than their own (for example, an adult human can pick up one child and one small dog, or one other adult human, without notable effort, but they cannot carry a horse on their own). Player characters can sometimes make checks to temporarily exceed these limits, with TNs based on the examples in **Step 2: Determine Skill, Ring, and Target Number of Successes** (see page 13). The GM should apply common sense when it comes to matters of carrying capacity and items.

Range Bands

Instead of measuring discrete units of space, *Legend of the Five Rings* handles the concept of distance between two people or objects abstractly, using range bands. Range bands are a set of numbered, approximate distances that can be used to define spatial relationships between two points when that information is needed.

Range bands allow narrative scenes and conflicts—especially skirmishes—to move at a faster pace, glossing over some specifics. It also means that representations on a tactical map are not strictly necessary for such scenes using structured time, though they can still be useful for helping the GM and players keep track of relative positions and maintain consistent range bands.

Note that range bands increase in scale as they increase in number—the difference in the distance between range 0 and range 1 (from arm's reach to sword reach) and the distance between range 5 and range 6 (from a hundred or more meters to the edge of perceptible range) is quite substantial. This is meant to reflect the difficulty inherent in maneuvering to close with or escape a foe while allowing characters to reposition on a strategic level more easily when they are not being impeded.

There are seven range bands, which function as follows:

Range 0 (Touch)

Range 0 represents direct contact—a distance from the character out to their arm's reach, roughly. At this range, two foes can grapple and use

Table 6-4: Examples by Silhouettes

Silhouette Value	Examples
0	Handheld objects, cats, small dogs
1	Children, Nezumi, large dogs, goblins (bakemono), Zokujin
2	Adult humans, Ningyo, Kenku
3	Horses, Naga, Rakshasa, Trolls
4	Ogres, elephants
5	Dragons

small weapons such as knives on each other without difficulty, but longer weapons are hard to wield effectively. Objects at range 0 might be at the person's feet, or even on their person, and a character can interact with them. Closing to range 0 with someone in a public social context is generally considered impolite.

Range 1 (Sword)

Range 1 represents the optimal range for a sword and other weapons of similar length—about 1 to 2 meters. A character can generally interact with people and objects at range 1. Most skills that have a manual aspect require the target or object to be at range 0 to 1.

Range 2 (Spear)

Range 2 represents the range at which pole weapons such as spears and naginata have the greatest advantage—a distance of 3 to 4 meters.

Range 3 (Throw)

Range 3 represents the range at which thrown missile weapons are most effective—a distance of 5 to 10 meters.

Range 4 (Bow)

Range 4 represents the midrange for missile weapons like bows—a dozen to a hundred meters. Generally speaking, this range coincides with the edge of earshot for most characters.

Range 5 (Volley)

Range 5 represents the distance to the outer edge of the range at which missile weapons are generally accurate—a hundred to several hundred meters. For most characters, this is as far as they can pick out any details.

Tracking Range Bands

There are a few ways you can track range bands as the GM. You can mentally track them, note them on scratch paper, or use figures, tokens, or other markers to track the distances between characters, objects, and terrain. By placing tokens closer together or farther from each other to indicate relative range, you can use them to give the players a clearer picture of the scene and remind everyone where the combatants are. Using this method, you and the players can usually “eyeball it,” remembering that a few centimeters on the table is range 2, while range 1 is

touching the other token and range 0 is overlapping it.

A slightly more precise method is to place a number of marker tokens between characters and objects indicating the distances between them. This can help the GM and players keep an especially consistent picture of the swirling melee of battle, especially when there are numerous combatants.

You should select the method of tracking range bands that works best for your group and the individual scene in question.

Range 6 (Sight)

Range 6 represents the maximum distance at which one can interact with a human-sized target, though interactions are relatively minimal at this range of more than a few hundred meters to several kilometers. To move a distance of range 6 or farther, a character must generally undertake a journey in narrative time.

Maximum and Minimum Range

When a distance or distances are given for an effect or ability, the provided value(s) are both a maximum and a minimum. In other words, if an ability affects something at range 1–3, it cannot affect an object closer than range 1 any more than it can affect one farther than range 3.

Terrain

Battles are often decided by the ground on which they are fought; knowing when to attack and when to reposition for more favorable conditions is a key part of strategy.

At the outset of a duel, skirmish, or mass battle, the GM should establish any relevant terrain features, which the characters can identify as part of their Assessment check. A meeting in an open field might have no terrain features, but such encounters tend to be less interesting than ones that take place in a more varied environment.

Each terrain feature occupies a number of range bands around a particular point, as determined by the GM. A terrain feature can be as small as extending to range 0 (arm's length) in all directions from that point, or it can be much larger; it can even stretch unevenly in different directions. Keep in mind, however, that combat in *Legend of the Five Rings* is meant to be narrative and quick—the presence or absence of terrain features is more important than their exact positions down to the centimeter. They should generally be positioned such that they can be exploited by PCs and NPCs alike, to create scenes with many opportunities for clever ambushes and turnabouts using the battlefield itself.

In mass battles, terrain qualities affect cohorts that occupy them. When a cohort would otherwise suffer damage from a terrain effect, it suffers that much attrition instead.

Terrain Qualities

While within a terrain feature, a character is subject to any effects its qualities entail.

An area can have multiple terrain qualities. For instance, a burning building would likely possess both the Dangerous and Obscuring qualities, while a thick forest would have the Entangling and Obscuring qualities.

Dangerous

Dangerous terrain is physically hazardous to enter or even linger in. This is a mundane terrain quality, and it can be found in most regions.

Effects: Whenever a character performs a check while within Dangerous terrain, the character suffers physical damage equal to the ☯ results on the check.

Examples: Fire, intense cold, thawing ice, steep inclines, jagged rocks, an uncovered foundation, rubble.

Defiled

Defiled terrain is afflicted by the vile touch of the Shadowlands. Even those uneducated in the dark secrets of the realm beyond the Kaiu Wall feel a pervasive sense of wrongness when standing on such unholy ground. This is a supernatural terrain quality. It occurs much more com-

monly the closer one is to the dreaded Shadowlands, but it can also be found in places where atrocities were committed in the past.

Effects: At the end of the scene, each character who entered Defiled terrain must make a **TN 2 Fitness** or **Meditation** check. Each character who fails suffers the Afflicted condition for the ring they used for the check.

Examples: An oni's lair, a battlefield filled with unburned dead, a haunted castle, the secret hideout of a mahō-tsukai.

Entangling

Entangling terrain is ground that seriously hampers the mobility of anyone within it. This is a mundane terrain quality, and it can be found in most regions.

Effects: While a character is within Entangling terrain, increase the TN of all checks to move and for Movement actions by 2.

Examples: Sucking mud, briar patches, deep snow, icy ground, moving water.

Hallowed (One Element)

Hallowed terrain is particularly close to the Spirit Realms, and thus invocations are easier to perform in such a location. This is a supernatural terrain quality, and it exists in most regions at places of power where kami dwell, as well as in places where miracles have occurred in the past.

Effects: While within Hallowed terrain, a character reduces the TN of Meditation and Theology checks using the specified ring by 1. Shadowlands creatures and characters with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage increase the TN of their checks to resist the effects of Meditation and Theology checks of the associated elemental ring by 2 while within Hallowed terrain.

Examples: A shrine to a kami, a particular place of natural beauty, a location where a powerful spirit resides.

Imbalanced (One Element)

Imbalanced terrain is marked by a distinct absence or disquiet of the kami of a certain element, and thus invocations are harder to perform in such a location. This is a supernatural terrain quality, and it exists in regions affected by an elemental imbalance.

Effects: While inside Imbalanced terrain, a character increases the TN of Meditation and Theology checks using the specified ring by 1. Shadowlands creatures and characters with the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage decrease the TN of their checks to resist the effects of Meditation and Theology checks of the associated elemental ring by 2 while within Imbalanced terrain.

Examples: A forest mysteriously missing its leaves, a barren farm field, an out-of-control river.

Obscuring

Obscuring terrain limits the visibility of (and to) anyone within, making it very difficult to land strikes. This is a mundane terrain quality, and it can be found in most regions.

Effects: A character in Obscuring terrain cannot see beyond range 2 of their current position into the Obscuring terrain (though they can see out of it, if they are within range 2 of an edge). A character outside of Obscuring terrain cannot see into it beyond range 2 of the edge. Increase the TN of all Attack checks targeting characters in Obscuring terrain by 1.

Examples: Dense foliage, darkness, cramped indoor quarters, heavy rain or snow, choking smoke.

Harm and Healing

At least in theory, all samurai are members of a warrior caste, and war is a grave affair. Killing is not something that most enjoy—and neither is dying—but both are realities of a warrior's life. Battlefield leaders, yōjimbō, and other samurai who unsheathe their blades on a regular basis can expect to suffer some number of battle wounds, and they are likely familiar with all manner of injuries, from minor cuts and bruises to gaping, bloody gashes to fatal cuts.

Damage

When a character suffers bodily harm, it is represented through damage, a numerical abstraction of an occurrence of trauma to the body.

Dealing Damage

When an effect deals damage to a character, the character frequently suffers wounds as a result (see below). Some effects and abilities increase damage, while others reduce damage. When dealing damage to a character, first apply any increases to the damage, and then apply any reductions to the damage. Then, the character suffers a number of wounds equal to the remaining damage, to a minimum of 0. If damage is reduced to 0, the character does not count as suffering wounds.

Damage Source

The source of damage is determined by the effect that deals it. If damage is dealt by an effect “using a weapon,” that weapon is the source of the damage. If damage is dealt by a supernatural power that is not a weapon, that power is the source of the damage. If damage is dealt by a physical phenomenon such as gravity or fire, that phenomenon is the source of the damage.

Damage Types

Each instance of damage has a type, which is specified in the effect that deals the damage (or determined by the GM in the case of damage dealt for narrative reasons). The two most common types are described below:

- **Physical Damage:** Physical damage is dealt by punches, cuts, falls, and other physical phenomena.
- **Supernatural Damage:** Supernatural damage is dealt by many invocations, mahō, elemental effects, curses, and other mystical phenomena.

Unspecified Deadliness

While each weapon specifies its deadliness, some other sources of damage do not. The following guidelines should only be used when a source does not provide a deadliness.

Invocations: Invocations that deal damage directly have a deadliness of the ring the shugenja used plus the shugenja's current strife.

Mahō: Mahō that deal damage directly have a deadliness of the ring the mahō-tsukai used plus the mahō-tsukai's current wounds.

Kihō: Kihō that deal damage directly have a deadliness of 8.

Extreme Temperature: Open flames or frostbite have a base deadliness of 5, but the GM can have this deadliness increase over time if a character continues to be exposed.

Falls: Falls have variable deadliness, specified on page 171.

Heavy Objects: A miscellaneous object hitting a character with sufficient force to cause harm has a deadliness equal to three times the object's silhouette.

Resistance

When an effect deals damage to a character, if the character possesses a RESISTANCE value that matches the type of damage being dealt (physical, supernatural, etc), reduce the damage the character suffers by this value (to a minimum of 0).

Resistance is frequently granted by armor (see **Armor**, on page 145), but it can also be granted by other effects.

Wounds

Wounds represent minor cuts, bruises, and abrasions that result from damage. As they accumulate, a character might eventually be overwhelmed, but each individual wound is a relatively minor issue that should not stop the character on its own.

When a character suffers wounds, their player should record these wounds on their character sheet.

Consequences of Wounds

After a character suffers wounds, if their wounds exceed their resilience, the character suffers a critical strike (see page 168) with severity equal to the deadliness of the source.

After any critical strikes have been resolved, a character whose wounds exceed their resilience also suffers the Incapacitated condition (see page 171). This represents the character's having suffered a telling blow and being physically overwhelmed to such a degree that they can no longer take effective action.

A character's wounds cannot exceed an amount equal to their resilience plus 10. When a character's wounds reach this amount, after resolving any critical strikes, the character suffers the Unconscious condition (see page 172) as they pass out completely. Any wounds that a character suffers beyond this amount are not recorded, but they still count as being suffered for the purposes of suffering a critical strike.

Healing from Wounds

From rest and various game effects, such as the Medicine skill, characters can heal wounds. When a character heals a number of wounds, their player should remove that many wounds from their character sheet.

After a full night's rest, a character heals a number of wounds equal to two times their Water Ring.

Critical Strikes

Critical strikes represent incidents that cause grave injuries, permanent scars, and even death to characters.

Suffering Critical Strikes

When a character suffers a critical strike, the critical strike has a severity value, which is influenced by the circumstances under which it was inflicted (such as the weapon used or the character's current state of health). The critical strike's severity reflects the worst possible outcome for the character, but the character has a chance to mitigate the injury and other negative effects they actually suffer through narrow evasion and sheer grit.

After an effect causes a character to suffer a critical strike, the character must make a **TN 1 Fitness check** to mitigate its effects (using a ring of

Table 6-5: Results of Critical Strikes by Severity

Severity	Result	Conditions, Scars, and Other Effects
0	Close Call: The character's clothes or hair are sliced, but the hit fails to draw blood or leave other obvious signs of harm beyond some aesthetic damage.	If the character is wearing armor, the armor gains the Damaged quality (see page 146).
1–4	Staggering Strike: The hit leaves a painful reminder of its passing that should heal cleanly in short order.	The character suffers one of the following conditions based on the ring they used for this check: Immobilized (Earth), Dazed (Water), Prone (Air), Disoriented (Fire), Bleeding (Void).
5–7	Crushing Blow: The hit is agonizing, and the character likely will not fight at full capacity for some time.	The character suffers the Injured Body Part condition associated with the ring they used for this check: Injured Arm (Fire), Injured Jaw (Air), Injured Leg (Water), Injured Ribs (Earth), Injured Brain (Void).
8–9	Devastating Strike: The strike leaves the character permanently injured, bearing a scar that will impact them the rest of their life.	The character is assigned one of the following scar disadvantages of their choice for the ring they used for this check: Fractured Spine (Earth), Lost Eye (Water), Lost Fingers (Fire), Lost Memories (Void), Maimed Arm (Fire), Maimed Foot (Water), Maimed Visage (Air), Nerve Damage (Air). Additionally, the character suffers the Bleeding condition.
10–11	Maiming Blow: The character is gravely hurt by the strike and might never be able to fully recover from it.	The character is assigned one of the following scar disadvantages of their choice for the ring they used for this check: Blindness (Water), Cognitive Lapses (Void), Damaged Heart (Earth), Damaged Organ (Earth), Deafness (Air), Lost Hand (Fire), Lost Arm (Fire), Lost Leg (Water), Muteness (Air). Additionally, the character suffers the Bleeding and Unconscious conditions.
12–13	Agonizing Death: The blow is mortal, and the character knows it. Without rapid intervention, the character will perish after a short time.	The character suffers the Bleeding and Dying (3 rounds) conditions.
14–15	Swift Death: The character lives barely long enough to realize that they have been killed, and perhaps to pass along a final message or perform a last action.	The character suffers the Bleeding and Dying (1 round) conditions.
16+	Instant Death: The character dies immediately, with scarcely even time for dramatic last words.	

their choice in a narrative scene, or the ring their stance dictates during a conflict scene).

If the character succeeds, they reduce the severity of the critical strike by 1 plus their bonus successes on the check (to a minimum of 0). Then, the player consults **Table 6-5: Results of Critical Strikes by Severity** and immediately applies all conditions, scar disadvantages, and other effects listed for the appropriate severity to the character.

Death

Player characters are not ordinary people. They are, after all, the main characters of the story the group has gathered to tell together, and often-times, death at a particular juncture is not the most interesting outcome for one of these characters. After all, it is a classic samurai trope to survive defeat and bear the shame of that loss while seeking to restore one's honor or find some other solace besides the Code of Bushidō. However,

Legend of the Five Rings is also meant to evoke a setting where characters stand to lose their lives in the pursuit of their duties and passions. Thus, the rules presented in this chapter are calibrated to a particular balance of dramatic tension, story flow, and fun for everyone at the table.

Readers might note, for instance, that skirmishes and mass battles are generally less lethal to PCs than duels—though clashes allow this higher level of lethality to seep into other types of conflicts, at least for those characters who choose to fight in them. This is meant to simulate the genre of samurai fiction—main characters are less likely to die in brawls against nameless foes than they are in climatic face-offs against their hated personal nemeses. Characters certainly can still die in skirmishes, but it usually takes a particularly deadly enemy or a concerted effort on the part of the GM to actually kill an individual PC rather than leaving the character temporarily incapacitated and permanently scarred. In skirmishes, it is intentionally very unlikely for a PC to be killed in a single hit without having a chance to reevaluate and react to their situation.

Repeated Injury

If a character would be assigned a second instance of the same Injured Body Part condition due to recurring harm, the character suffers the effects of the Devastating Strike result for that ring instead.

At the GM's discretion, if a character would be assigned a second instance of a scar disadvantage due to recurring harm, the character is struck with a mortal blow. Instead of being assigned a new scar disadvantage, the character suffers the Dying (10 rounds) condition.

Conditions

While many negative effects of battle are expressed through wounds, strife, and scars, sometimes a character is subjected to a temporary negative effect called a condition. While a character is suffering a condition, all of its effects are applied to them. Each condition specifies these effects, as well as how the condition can be removed.

Afflicted

Description: The character is possessed or otherwise tormented by an *onryō* (vengeful ghost), *kansen*, or other malevolent spiritual entity. Given time, this evil force threatens to plant the seeds of the Shadowlands Taint.

Effects: While Afflicted, when the character makes a check with an Afflicted ring, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, the GM may change one kept Ring die to a face showing an ☘ ☯ result. Additionally, when the character has an outburst, one or more of the following effects applies based on their Afflicted ring or rings.

- **Air:** If the character's Air Ring is Afflicted, they fall into a melancholic haze of memory, unable to discern the past from the present or the living from the deceased. When the character suffers an outburst, they mistake someone in the scene for a person from their past, accusing them of some half-remembered sin or taunting them over some ancient failure until the end of the scene.
- **Water:** If a character's Water Ring is Afflicted, their health collapses and they begin to wither away, wracked by mysterious coughing fits or fevers that resist all medical care. When the character suffers an outburst, they become violently ill and suffer a critical strike with a severity of 5.
- **Fire:** If the character's Fire Ring is Afflicted, they become possessed by a desire, pursuing it to their own destruction. When the character suffers an outburst, they must attempt to pursue their desire; if prevented from doing so by circumstance or intervention, they suffer the Enraged condition.
- **Earth:** If a character's Earth Ring is Afflicted, their flesh becomes pale and begins to show signs of decay. When the character suffers an outburst, reduce their resilience by 1. This reduction is cumulative, and it persists until the character is cured of the Afflicted condition.
- **Void:** Ill fortune dogs the character's every move, and anything that seems a boon rapidly sours. If the character's Void Ring is Afflicted, they sink into a state of emotional disarray, unable to control or even process their feelings. When the character suffers an outburst, they immediately lose all unspent Void points.

Removed When: Rituals such as Cleansing Rite (see page 132) and other abilities can remove the Afflicted condition.

Every two weeks, an Afflicted character must make a **TN 4 Fitness or Meditation check** using the Afflicted ring. If they fail, remove the Afflicted condition and assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to that ring (or to another ring, if that ring already has it).

Bleeding

Description: The character is losing blood, internally or externally.

Effects: While Bleeding, when a character suffers strife, the character suffers the same amount of physical damage ignoring their resistance. Each time wounds inflicted this way cause the character to suffer a critical strike, the severity of the critical strike is treated as being equal to the character's current strife.

Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of a Bleeding character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Earth) check** as a Support action to remove the Bleeding condition.

Burning

Description: The character is ablaze.

Effects: While Burning, after performing an action, the character suffers 3 physical damage ignoring their resistance and 3 strife. If wounds inflicted this way cause the character to suffer a critical strike, its severity is 5.

Removed When: A character may attempt to smother the flames with a **TN 2 Fitness (Water 1, Air 4) check** as a Movement and Support action; if they succeed, they remove the Burning condition.

Dazed

Description: The character's vision is obscured or their focus is hampered, making it harder for them to attack others.

Effects: While Dazed, a character increases the TN of Attack and Scheme action checks by 2.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform an Attack or Scheme action, they remove the Dazed condition.

Disoriented

Description: The character's senses are scattered, leaving them vulnerable to attack.

Effects: While Disoriented, a character increases the TN of Movement and Support action checks by 2.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement or Support action, they remove the Disoriented condition.

Dying

Description: The character is on the verge of death due to blood loss, organ failure, suffocation, or another cause.

Effects: While Dying, a character is hovering on the precipice of life and death for a number of rounds (or an amount of narrative time) specified by the effect that applied the Dying condition. Once the allotted time has passed, the character perishes at the end of their next turn (or after completing one task in a narrative scene). If the Dying condition is removed before then, the character stabilizes and narrowly survives their close brush with death.

Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of a Dying character may make a **TN 3 Medicine (Air) check** as a Support action to remove the Dying condition.

Enraged

Description: The character is consumed by rage and fights with a fury that is as devastating as it is terrifying to behold.

Effects: While Enraged, the character increases the severity of all critical strikes inflicted by and upon the character by 2. The first time an Enraged character kills another character each scene, the Enraged character gains 1 Void point.

Removed When: An Enraged character may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** as a Support action to remove the Enraged condition. Otherwise, the condition is removed at the end of the scene.

Suffocation

At the beginning of each of their turns, a character who is suffocating suffers 2 wounds and 2 strife. The character does not suffer critical strikes for wounds suffered this way. At the beginning of each of the character's turns while they are suffocating, if they are suffering the Unconscious condition, the character must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth) check**; if the character fails, they perish.

Fatigued

Description: The character is physically and mentally exhausted. Characters who go more than twenty-four hours without sleep (or less time under trying circumstances, at the GM's discretion) suffer this condition.

Effects: After a Fatigued character performs a check, the character gains 1 strife.

Removed When: A Fatigued character removes this condition after sleeping for six or more hours.

Immobilized

Description: The character is physically restrained or otherwise incapable of movement.

Effects: While Immobilized, a character cannot perform Movement actions or otherwise reposition themselves during their turn, and they cannot select a different stance during their turn.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement action this turn, they remove the Immobilized condition.

Incapacitated

Description: The character is largely incapable of action due to the scope of the harm they have suffered.

Effects: While Incapacitated, a character cannot perform actions that require checks. An Incapacitated character can still make checks to resist effects. Increase the severity of any critical strike the character suffers by 5.

Removed When: The character's wounds are reduced to a value lower than or equal to their resilience.

Injured Body Part

Description: A part of the character's body is injured badly enough to hinder their use of it.

Effects: While a character has an Injured Body Part, the character has trouble using that body part for narrative functions (for instance, a character suffers one of the following negative effects based on the ring the Injured Body Part is assigned to):

- **Injured Face (Air):** The character has trouble maintaining balance and difficulty speaking clearly. Increase the TN of Social (Air) and Martial (Air) checks by 2.
- **Injured Leg (Water):** The character cannot put weight on the leg, and they move more slowly. Increase the TN of Social (Water) and Martial (Water) checks by 2.
- **Injured Arm (Fire):** The character cannot wield anything in the injured arm or use it for most tasks. Increase the TN of Artisan (Fire) and Martial (Fire) checks by 2.

• **Injured Torso (Earth):** The character struggles to remain active for long periods of time. Increase the TN of Trade (Earth) checks and Martial (Earth) checks by 2.

• **Injured Head (Void):** The character has trouble focusing and thinking things through. Increase the TN of Scholar (Void) skill checks and Martial (Void) skill checks by 2.

Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of a character with the Injured Body Part condition may make a **TN 4 Medicine (Water) check** as a downtime activity to remove the Injured Body Part condition. This check can be attempted once per injury per week.

Additionally, a character can remove the Injured Body Part condition on their own with bed rest. Once per week per instance of the Injured Body Part condition, as a downtime activity, a character with the Injured Body Part condition may make a **TN 5 Fitness check** using the ring associated with the condition (ignoring the +2 modifier to the TN that the condition would normally apply). If they succeed, remove the Injured Body Part condition. Reduce the TN of this Fitness check by 1 for each time the character has previously failed the check for this instance of the Injured Body Part condition.

Intoxicated

Description: The character is drunk.

Effects: While Intoxicated, a character doubles all strife they suffer and doubles all strife they remove.

Removed When: At the end of each scene, an Intoxicated character may attempt to sober up by making a **TN 3 Fitness (Water) check**; if the character succeeds, remove the Intoxicated condition. A downtime scene spent resting also removes the Intoxicated condition automatically.

Falling

The length of a fall is measured in range bands, and the number of range bands a character falls determines the ill effects they suffer. When a character lands, they must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 1, Earth 5) check**; the character reduces the number of range bands they count as having fallen by one plus their bonus successes.

Table 6-6: Falling Damage

Distance	Effects
Range 0	The character suffers the Disoriented condition.
Range 1	The character suffers 4 physical damage and the Disoriented condition.
Range 2	The character suffers 8 physical damage and the Disoriented condition.
Range 3	The character suffers 12 physical damage and the Unconscious condition.
Range 4	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 10 and the Unconscious condition.
Range 5	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 12 and the Unconscious condition.
Range 6	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 16 and the Unconscious condition.

Prone

Description: The character is flat on the ground.

Effects: While Prone, a character cannot move more than one range band during their turn.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement action, they remove the Prone condition.

Unconscious

Description: The character has been knocked out, has fallen asleep, or has otherwise been rendered totally unaware of their surroundings.

Effects: An Unconscious character cannot move, perform actions, or otherwise act upon the world. An Unconscious character can still make checks to resist effects, but they cannot generally make checks that represent any agency on their part. Increase the severity of any critical strike the character suffers by 8.

Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of an Unconscious character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Fire) check** as a Support action to remove the Unconscious condition. Characters also generally awaken from Unconsciousness after several hours. If a character is Unconscious for any reason other than physical harm (such as if they are asleep), they generally wake up if they suffer harm, hear a loud noise, or otherwise experience something that would normally wake someone.

Mass Battles

Though they fulfill many societal functions, serving as everything from bureaucrats to courtiers to guards, samurai stem from lineages of martial distinction, and their most fundamental duty centers on the battlefield. As such, any samurai might occasionally be called by their lord to serve in battle—though some jump at the task more readily than others. If the situation grows dire enough, even a samurai unready for command might be tasked with leading an army, and the PCs are no exception. As members of a warrior caste, samurai are expected to be capable of command, and even when they are not explicitly in command of a unit, ashigaru and other, lower-ranking troops look to them for leadership and guidance.

When to Use a Mass Battle

The rules for mass battles are best for simulating large-scale conflicts in which the PCs play an important role. If a group of PCs is thrust into a larger battle that they have no ability to influence strategically and must simply survive as chaos swirls around them, the GM would likely be better served by using the skirmish rules (see page 163) and narrating the wider effects of the battle that the PCs cannot control.

Similarly, if the PCs have a single, specific role to fulfill within a wider conflict, such as infiltrating an enemy fort while the main force draws off the defenders or executing a mahō-tsukai before the sorcerer can complete a wicked ritual, the GM might want to use the skirmish rules or integrate the two. For instance, the GM could run a mass battle that transitions into a skirmish once the strategic objectives needed for the PCs to complete their special task are fulfilled.

Armies

While some individual PCs and NPCs act during a mass battle, the majority of the conflict is handled by each side's **ARMY**. Armies are abstracted representations of large groups of warriors as well as the general acumen, training, and equipment of those assembled. Like characters, armies possess certain attributes and abilities.

Most mass battles involve only two armies. In rare cases (such as a battle with three or more factions involved, each with a different goal),

Parrying

Rokugani swordsmanship generally does not encourage blade-to-blade parrying, as a katana's razor edge is quickly degraded or even ruined by such techniques. While a skilled warrior might use the flat of their blade to ward cuts, their primary defense is usually positioning and evasion, with the blade functioning as a last line of defense. However, when the choice is between losing one's blade and losing one's life, a samurai might dramatically intercept a blow with a readied weapon (or even a bare limb).

When a character suffers a critical strike, instead of making a check to resist the effects, they may spend 1 Void point to **PARRY** it directly, putting the brunt of the impact on one of their readied weapons. The critical strike's severity is reduced to 4 (Staggering Strike), and the weapon gains the Damaged quality. At the GM's discretion, an unarmed character may use their arm, leg, or torso, reducing the severity of the critical strike to 9 (Devastating Strike) instead. Unconscious characters cannot parry.

there might be more than two armies, but most of the time, two armies are sufficient to cover the whole conflict.

Commanders

Each army has one **COMMANDER**, a character appointed to direct the entire army. This character is chosen during the Assessment phase. Usually, a prior appointment by the daimyō and other powers supporting the army dictates which character will be the commander, but if there are disagreements—or if the commander is killed without a clear chain of command in place—the role might come into contention. Characters with lower status are expected to defer to characters with higher status in these situations.

At the beginning of each round of a mass battle, the commander selects the army's strategic objective for the round, which in turn influences the actions performed by the army's leaders.

If an army's commander is killed, it suffers 10 panic. Then, if it has not collapsed, the character with the highest status assumes command (or

Determining Cohorts

An army can be organized into any number of cohorts, but it is generally prudent to have enough cohorts in an army for all of the PCs to be able to do important things during the battle.

Note that cohorts usually do not suffer casualties directly; instead, casualties are applied to the overall strength of the army. Given the strategic pace of mass battles, damaged cohorts can usually be reinforced from elsewhere in the army long before they are wiped out.

However, at the GM's discretion, a cohort can be annihilated by a particularly devastating attack. If a cohort is targeted by a single Assault action that causes it to suffer a number of casualties greater than a quarter of the army's total strength, it is wiped out. Its leader suffers a critical strike with severity 10 (and makes a Fitness check to resist as usual, as described on page 16) and this cohort ceases to exist.

appoints someone else to command). The GM might wish to briefly shift to a narrative scene (see page 150) if several characters get into an argument over command before returning to the mass battle.

Leaders and Cohorts

In addition to a commander, an army has one or more **LEADERS**. Depending on the size of the conflict, their ranks might vary from squad leaders to full-fledged generals in their own right. Regardless of the size of the forces involved, each leader commands a relatively independent chunk of the army called a **COHORT** and must be able to make tactical decisions that serve the commander's objective without direct oversight. The commander of each army chooses the army's leaders during the Assessment phase. Generally, each PC participating in a mass battle should be chosen as a leader, to give all players an important job in the conflict. The GM should then assign a similar number of NPCs as leaders to cohorts of the opposing army.

During each round of a mass battle, each leader selects an action and leads their cohort in pursuing that action. For the purposes of identification and effects, each cohort is defined by its leader.

Army Attributes

Armies have two attributes that reflect their overall state of preparedness and efficacy. Both of these attributes are tracked on a scale from 1 to 100, and like resilience and composure for characters, they reflect the physical and mental losses an army can suffer before collapsing.

Strength

STRENGTH is an abstraction of the army's ability to suffer casualties without ceasing to function. A large part of an army's strength is raw numbers, but other factors, such as good infrastructure (to keep soldiers well fed, mended, and free of disease), ready access to supplies and equipment, and sufficient rest can also have a substantial impact on army strength. Strength is measured against casualties, which are the measure of an army's losses in battle and function like wounds for a character. Attacks against an army's forces, positions, and supplies deal attrition to it (much as Assault actions deal damage to a character), from which the army suffers casualties after applying any increases and reductions to attrition dealt.

At the end of each round, if an army's casualties exceed its strength, the army is routed, and a majority of its constituents are killed. While individuals (especially PCs) likely survive, the vast majority of a routed army's soldiers are slain in battle. Note that it is unusual for an army to be destroyed in this manner, as only the most disciplined troops fight to the bitter end. Most armies collapse from loss of morale long before a rout can occur.

Knowing the Best Course of Action

At the beginning of each round, each army's commander may make a **TN 1 Tactics check** to assess the enemy's forces and find weaknesses, opportunities, and chances to strike. If the commander already knows what they want to do, you can have them skip this check.

When a PC succeeds on this check, you can tell them a strategically valid course of action they could take—or you can ask them to make one up and then help them fit it into the story. You can then either fit their course of action into one of the sample strategic objectives (see right) or invent a new objective for them to set.

Discipline

DISCIPLINE is a reflection of an army's psychological state and the ability of its troops to remain in the field despite witnessing the horrors of war. A majority of discipline is provided by the training of the soldiers who make up the army, but confidence in the army's leadership or belief in the righteousness of a cause can buoy this attribute, while prolonged conflict, deprivation, and fear can drag it down. Discipline is measured against panic, which is the measure of an army's current state of disarray.

At the end of each round, if an army's panic exceeds its discipline, the army suffers a morale collapse, its warriors scattering, losing cohesion, or turning on their own. In most battles, one side breaks in this manner long before casualties threaten to wipe it out. However, some forces in Rokugan are extraordinarily disciplined and can hold the field to the last warrior, especially when backed into a corner where retreat is impossible or facing inhuman foes such as the creatures of the Shadowlands, against whom there is no hope of peace.

Army and Cohort Abilities

Many armies possess one or more abilities, which are listed in their profile. At the GM's discretion, an individual cohort can also possess an ability.

See page 176 for several sample armies.

Strategic Objectives

Despite the terror of war and the awful hardship it imposes upon the people of Rokugan when it flares up, relatively few battles end in an absolute rout of one side or the other. Instead, strategic objectives are the pivotal points on which most conflicts are decided. There is considerable renown to be won in being the one to carry out the commander's orders, and in some armies, battlefield leaders often compete against one another as fervently as they do against the enemy.

At the beginning of each round, each army's commander determines one strategic objective for the entire army for that round (a few examples can be found in **Sample Strategic Objectives**). The commander should also describe some specifics of the objective, fitting the details into the story of the battle that has unfolded so far. To fulfill this strategic objective, one of the army's leaders must perform an action that satisfies that strategic objective's listed requirement. Once a strategic objective has been fulfilled, it cannot be completed again that round.

When a leader's action completes a strategic objective, that leader is awarded 3 glory, and the effects under the strategic objective's listed completion resolve. Note that only the leader who personally completed the action gets this glory reward—others who contributed do not receive the same benefit.

Sample Strategic Objectives

The following are a few examples of strategic objectives that a commander can assign during a mass battle. However, this list is not intended to be fully comprehensive. The GM can prepare objectives specific to the battle, and players can even set their own goals for their army, in which case the GM should allow them to create a custom strategic objective for the mass battle and give them some guidance on the narrative and mechanical avenues they must take to achieve it.

Capture a Position

Description: The commander calls for the leaders to uproot the enemy from a specific position this round, so that the army can occupy it. This position must be a fortification or piece of terrain occupied by the enemy.

Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's lead-

Fortifications

Fortresses and the like can be extremely powerful assets in wartime. A fortification grants the Fortified Position advantage to any cohort that defends it. Additionally, the casualties inflicted upon the army by any opponents attacking that cohort are reduced by an amount based on the quality of the fortification.

Only a single cohort can occupy a fortification. If one cohort moves to such a position to fortify it, the army's other cohorts must find something else to do on the battlefield.

- **Outpost:** -1 to casualties inflicted
- **Fortress:** -2 to casualties inflicted
- **Castle:** -5 to casualties inflicted

ers perform actions targeting the cohort occupying the chosen position that inflict a total of 8 or more casualties on the enemy army this round. Alternatively, it can be fulfilled if the enemy army vacates the position and a friendly leader successfully performs the Reinforce action there.

Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy cohort occupying the fortification is driven out and no longer counts as occupying it. The leader who completed this objective may choose to have their cohort occupy the fortification immediately.

Cut Off the Head

Description: Kill a particular leader or the commander.

Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled when the chosen enemy leader or commander is slain by a member of your army.

Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective against an enemy leader, the enemy army suffers 10 panic. When a leader completes this objective against the enemy commander, the enemy army suffers 20 panic instead.

Draw Them In

Description: Get the opponent to commit to attacking a particular position and then hold firm against them.

Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after an enemy leader performs an Assault action that inflicts 5 or fewer casualties against the cohort occupying the chosen position.

Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic and the leader's army removes 5 panic.

Grind Them Down

Description: Inflict a certain number of casualties.

Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's leaders have inflicted a total of 10 or more total casualties on the enemy army during this round.

Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic and the leader's army removes 5 panic.

Seize Victory!

Description: After completing a certain number of strategic objectives, deliver a final blow to the enemy force.

A commander can only declare this strategic objective after a number of other strategic objectives have been fulfilled during the battle. The GM sets the number of strategic objectives required to win a mass battle; 4

is the recommended starting number, but the GM can adjust this up or down as they see fit.

Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's leaders inflict 10 or more total casualties on the enemy army.

Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army is driven back and must retreat from the field. While the army might not be destroyed completely, it can no longer achieve a meaningful victory in this battle due to strategic considerations.

Phase 1: Assess the Scene

During this phase of a mass battle, each army selects a commander, who then makes an Assessment check and assigns leaders.

Choose Commander

At the start of Phase 1: Assess the Scene, each army selects its commander.

Assessment Check

Then, the commander performs an Assessment check to marshal and organize the forces of the army by making a TN 1 Command check.

Select Leaders

Then, the commander chooses the army's leaders. The commander can choose to personally be one of the army's leaders—though doing so carries certain risks, as it means the commander is easier for enemy leaders to slay. The commander must choose at least one leader (though generally, it is a good idea to choose more, as described in the Determining Cohorts sidebar, on page 172).

Initiative Order

The commander with the higher initiative result decides whether their army makes the first move or waits. If the commanders had the same initiative result, the one with the lower honor must have their army make the first move.

Then, starting with the army that makes the first move, each commander nominates one of their leaders who has not acted yet this round to act, alternating back and forth between armies until all leaders have acted.

Setting the Battlefield

Battlefields are handled abstractly in the rules for mass combats. Armies and cohorts move slowly, but each round takes a relatively long period in game-world time in a mass combat, so a cohort is expected to be able to reach any location in the battlefield to perform its action there within the span of a round.

However, this does not mean that terrain, including fortresses and other structures, should not play a role in the battle. On the contrary, these features should be something that the PCs can use against their foes—and vice versa! At the outset of a battle, the GM should define several terrain features relevant to the combat to the PCs, describing their relative locations and distances to help set the scene. These could include forts, castles, forests, cliffs, rivers, villages, caves, swamps, haunted shrines, and other locations of strategic and tactical import in the area where the battle is taking place.

Although it is not strictly necessary, if you want to mark vital locations on a map, or just use placeholder objects to reflect their relative positions, this sort of visual aid often helps the players envision the field of battle in their minds, more fully immersing them in the proceedings.

Battle Fatigue

After a certain amount of constant battle, even the most stalwart human troops begin to look for excuses to withdraw.

During **Phase 1** of the seventh round of a mass battle and in each subsequent round, each army's commander must make a **TN 4 Command check** to control their beleaguered forces. If the commander fails, the army suffers 10 panic, plus panic equal to their shortfall.

Phase 2: Take Turns

During this phase of a mass battle, characters lead their cohorts against enemy cohorts and attempt to complete the strategic objective the commander assigns for the round.

Select Strategic Objective

At the beginning of each round, each commander chooses the army's strategic objective for the round.

Rounds

Each cohort leader takes one turn each round when called upon to act by their commander.

A mass battle does not have a fixed length, but in practical terms, armies can only remain in the field for so long without needing to withdraw to resupply and recuperate. Mass battle rounds are much longer in the fictional time of the game than rounds in other conflicts are, and six mass battle rounds are considered to cover a full day of fighting.

After six rounds of a mass battle, strategic engagement generally terminates, and armies withdraw to their camps. If a commander decides to have their army remain in the field, both armies begin to suffer the effects of Battle Fatigue (see left).

Actions

Leaders may perform the following actions during a mass battle.

Assault

Description: You move your cohort to a particular position, attacking an enemy cohort under the command of a chosen enemy leader.

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics check** to lead your troops in a strike targeting one enemy leader's cohort.

Effects: If you succeed, you deal attrition to the enemy army equal to twice your bonus successes.

Challenge

Description: You stride to the forefront of your force, bellowing a challenge to the enemy leader.

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** targeting one enemy leader with a challenge to single combat.

Effects: If you succeed, the target must immediately choose whether to accept or decline your challenge. Depending on the target's decision, resolve one of the following:

- If the target accepts, they stake 10 honor and 5 glory, which they

Clashes

On the battlefield, even as lesser combatants swirl around them, heroes frequently mark each other out for battlefield challenges, here referred to as clashes. A **CLASH** is a less formal duel fought in the middle of a larger skirmish or mass battle. If the target of the Challenge action accepts, they are bound by honor to face their foe without delay or interference.

At the end of the round, the participants fight what is effectively one round of a duel (see page 160). They follow the steps below:

1. **Set Strife:** Because outbursts are resolved at the beginning of a turn, it is possible for a character's strife to be greater than their composure when they enter a clash. If this is the case, they remove strife until it is equal to their composure before the staredown.
2. **Staredown:** This determines which character takes the first turn in the clash. Each character starts with their focus attribute as their initiative, and they may bid strife to increase their initiative to attempt to preempt their foe. To bid strife, each participating character secretly chooses, and then all participating characters

simultaneously reveal, a number between 0 and their composure; they then suffer that amount of strife. Then, each character adds the number they chose to their focus attribute to determine their initiative.

3. **Order of Action:** The character with the higher initiative value takes the first turn, followed by the character with the lower value. If they have the same value, the character with the lowest honor acts first.
4. **Determine Winner:** If both characters are still standing at end of the clash, there is no winner, and both withdraw to fight another day. If one character inflicts the Incapacitated, Unconscious, or Dying condition on their enemy (or kills them outright) without suffering any of these, they are victorious in the clash.

Finishing Blows: Clashes use the finishing blow rule from duels (see the sidebar on page 162), which comes into play when a character's strife exceeds their composure during a clash.

Interrupting a Clash

Other characters can interrupt the clash before it begins or during the clash. A character can interrupt a clash in one of two ways:

- By calling out one of the participants with their own use of the Challenge action. This method is not dishonorable (though the challenged target might refuse, suffering the usual consequences, if they would prefer to fight their original foe).

- By taking a dishonorable action. The character must forfeit 10 honor to do so, but can interrupt the clash by attacking one of the participants or narratively making the battle impossible. If an outsider attacks someone involved in a clash, the other character in the clash loses their staked honor.

Retreating

As an action, a character can also retreat from a mass battle. A character must forfeit 10 honor to retreat from a mass battle, and they must also forfeit 10 glory if anyone else knows that they willingly retreated. Additionally, if they leave their cohort leaderless, the army suffers 10 panic.

If a character is ordered to retreat by their lord, they must stake 10 honor and 10 glory on completing whatever other task their lord has given them to accomplish instead of staying to fight.

forfeit if they take any Attack or Scheme action before the end of the round. At the end of the round, you and the target enter a clash (see **Clashes**, on page 175).

- To decline, the target must forfeit glory equal to your ranks in Command plus your bonus successes. Then, you recover 1 Void point.

If you win the clash, the enemy army suffers 5 panic.

Rally

Description: You command your troops to regroup and support an allied contingent.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** targeting one friendly leader's cohort.

Effects: If you succeed, your army removes panic equal to your bonus successes.

Whether you succeed or fail, the target counts as having your assistance (see **Assistance**, on page 15) on their next check before the end of the scene.

Reinforce

Description: You call for your troops to dig in and hold a position at all costs.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics check** to have your cohort dig in at one chosen position.

Effects: If you succeed, increase the TN of Assault action checks targeting your cohort by your bonus successes.

If you choose an unoccupied fortification or piece of terrain this way, you are considered to be occupying it until the beginning of your next turn.

Resolution

A mass battle can end in a number of ways, with different results for the characters involved depending on how it concludes. The possible resolutions to a mass battle are as follows:

Rout: If an army's casualties exceed its strength, it is routed at the end of the round. All Minion NPCs who are part of the army are killed or scattered to the winds. Each PC and Adversary NPC who is part of the army suffers a critical strike with a severity of 12.

At the GM's discretion, any PC or Adversary NPC within the routed army might instead be captured or simply left for dead on the battlefield.

Morale Collapse: If an army's panic exceeds its discipline, the army breaks apart, with individual elements fleeing, fighting, or turning on their own. Each PC and Adversary NPC is assumed to be able to escape in the confusion.

Strategic Victory/Defeat: If an army succeeds in achieving the Seize Victory! strategic objective, it wins the mass battle at the end of the round (and any

Table 6-7: Spending ✨ in Mass Battles

✨ Type	Result
Earth ✨+	Remove 1 panic from your army per ✨ spent this way.
Earth ✨ ✨	Choose an allied leader other than yourself. That leader's cohort cannot be targeted by Attack actions until the beginning of your next turn.
Fire ✨+	The enemy army suffers 1 panic per ✨ spent this way.
Fire ✨ ✨	When performing an Attack action against an enemy leader's cohort, inflict a critical strike with severity equal to the deadliness of your weapon on that leader.
Water ✨+	Choose an allied leader other than yourself. Reduce the TN of that leader's next check for a Movement action by 1 per ✨ spent this way.
Water ✨ ✨	Choose an enemy leader. That leader's cohort cannot perform Movement actions until the beginning of your next turn.
Air ✨+	Choose an allied leader other than yourself. Reduce the TN of that leader's next check for a Scheme action by 1 per ✨ spent this way.
Air ✨ ✨	Choose a leader in a fortification. That leader's cohort loses the benefits of the fortification until the beginning of your next turn.
Void ✨+	Your army and each enemy army suffers 1 attrition per ✨ spent this way.
Void ✨ ✨	When you perform a Support action, after its effects are resolved, you may immediately perform a Challenge action against an enemy cohort's leader.

other armies involved lose). The winning army can be assumed to achieve the goals for which it took the field, such as driving the enemy out of a region, capturing a particular location, or making a show of force for control over the area. However, all participating armies that did not fall prey to a rout or morale collapse are able to retreat relatively intact, and their constituents suffer no further ill effects (save any narrative effects of defeat).

Example Armies

Below are a number of example armies designed for use in mass battles. Keep in mind that the sample armies provided here are entire armies, not single cohorts, which do not have individualized profiles. In most mass battles, there are only two armies.

GMs are encouraged to adjust the strength, discipline, and abilities of these armies to reflect the circumstances of the story, or to build new armies of their own using these as models.

Peasant Levy

Farmers and townsfolk generally want to live their lives in tranquility, with minimal interference from their overlords and peace across the lands. After all, war is a scourge most of all upon the common people, even if they are never drawn directly into the fighting. Taxes rise, resources are drained, and vital goods become scarce. Crops are destroyed or confiscated, and starvation spreads. Banditry flourishes as order collapses. In such circumstances, even untrained citizens often find the resolve to fight. At other times, soldiers sweep in to conscript anyone able to hold a spear to bolster their forces. Whether they fight to protect their homes from Shadowlands creatures, from organized bandits, from conquering armies, or as part of a conscripted force, peasant levies have no love of war, and they have almost always taken the field because they have no other option.


Strength: 35**Discipline:** 20



Conscripted (Army Ability): Each leader in this army increases the TN of their Assault actions by 1.

Ashigaru Army

The solid core of most fighting forces in the Emerald Empire, ashigaru are career soldiers. Though they are not of the samurai class and lack the elite training and equipment that birth into the warrior caste entails, many are veteran campaigners with more practical battlefield experience than the majority of Rokugani samurai.

Strength: 55**Discipline:** 35

Rank Formation (Army Ability): When a leader in this army performs the Reinforce action, they may spend  as follows:

+: After an enemy cohort attacks this leader's cohort, the enemy army suffers attrition equal to  spent this way.

Elite Samurai Army

Fighting forces composed of samurai are relatively rare in the Emerald Empire—more often, samurai form the backbone of officer corps that command ashigaru. Certain groups, however, such as the Imperial Legions, are primarily composed of members of the samurai caste, and these armies are terrifying to behold indeed. Unlike most other armies, they have been known to fight to the death with some frequency, though their fanaticism can be their undoing.

Strength: 50**Discipline:** 60

Hardened Veterans (Army Ability): When this army removes 1 or more

panic, it removes that amount plus additional panic equal to the glory rank of its commander instead.

Elite Training (Army Ability): Each cohort in this army possesses one of the following abilities, which is conferred upon its leader for the mass battle:

- **Cavalry:** After you perform an Assault action, if you succeed, the enemy army suffers panic equal to your ranks in Survival.
- **Siege:** When performing the Rally action, if you succeed, add a number of bonus successes equal to your ranks in Labor.
- **Infantry:** When you perform an Assault action, if you succeed, add a number of bonus successes equal to your ranks in Command.
- **Archery:** After you perform a Reinforce action, if you succeed, the enemy army suffers panic equal to your ranks in Tactics.
- **Shugenja:** After you perform a Support action, if you succeed, heal attrition or panic from your army equal to your ranks in Theology.

Shadowlands Horde

The creatures of the Shadowlands—goblins, oni, undead monstrosities, and other horrors—rarely march to war in anything resembling an organized fashion. Their disunity and chaotic nature makes them hard to marshal and harder still to control, and the Kaiu Wall keeps any small groups confined to the Shadowlands. However, every few centuries, a leader emerges who can unite these disparate groups and lead them to battle, giving them strategic intelligence and terrifying purpose. If a truly massive force were to ever breach the wall, the Emerald Empire might fall in a matter of months.

Strength: 65**Discipline:** 45

Relentless (Army Ability): The creatures of the Shadowlands live for battle, and their rage does not gutter out so easily as that of human soldiers. This army does not suffer the effects of battle fatigue (see Battle Fatigue, on page 175).

Monstrous Enemies (Army Ability): At the end of each round, each opposing army suffers 3 panic.

Wake of the Shadowlands (Army Ability): After a mass battle against this army, each participating opposing leader must resist with a TN 1 **Fitness** or **Meditation check** using a ring of their choice or suffer the Afflicted condition for the ring they used. After a mass battle against this army, the battlefield becomes Defiled terrain (see **Terrain** on page 167).

Chapter 7: The Game Master

Running a Game Session

The game master (GM) is the players' guide to Rokugan, helping their characters maneuver and act within the story. The rules of the game are tools for the GM and players to help give structure and a sense of order to these interactions. The following section provides guidance on how best to use many of these rules to enrich the narrative and keep the game running smoothly, along with several expanded concepts such as **discord** (see **Ninjō, Giri, and Discord**, on page 180).

Rules Adjudication

While the GM and players are collaborating to tell a story, the GM is ultimately the arbiter of all rules matters. The GM should attempt to keep the pace moving during a game session, and not get too bogged down in looking up details at the table—they can always reference the relevant sections later to clarify the correct way things should be resolved in the future.

The players should endeavor to support the GM rather than undermining them. Players should feel free to offer their interpretations of a rule when it becomes relevant, or if the GM asks, but they should let the ruling stand once the GM has made it. Discussing the rules after a session can be one way to untangle unclear issues or apparent contradictions.

The game works best if neither the GM nor the players attempt to create “gotcha” moments, or use the rules to entrap the other party in a contradiction. The *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* is fundamentally not a competition between the GM and the players (if for no other reason than that the GM wields final authority over the rules), and it operates most harmoniously when the rules are used to collaborate and tell a good story that everyone enjoys!

Multiple Approach Options

Sometimes, multiple approaches are viable for the same task. In these cases, the GM should offer the player a choice of which approach they want to use. For instance, to get support for an idea, a character could use their Fire Ring with a Social skill to incite interest in their idea or their Air Ring to trick the other person into supporting it. These have very similar outcomes, at least in terms of getting support in the short term. However, the target number to succeed (hereafter referred to as the difficulty) for these two tasks can and should vary—some people are easily excited but hard to mislead, while others are calm but gullible. If you're letting the player choose their approach, it's helpful to tell them which ring will be easier and which one will be harder so that they can make an informed choice. Additionally, remind them that different approaches can have different consequences in the case of success or failure, and give them a hint of what these might be.

Variable Difficulties by Approach

In checks in printed materials, such as published adventures, the text indicates a variable difficulty by ring by including the alternative difficulties for specific rings in parentheses within the check. This is expressed in the text with a description, such as “a TN 3 **Fitness (Fire 5, Earth 2) check** to keep their footing on the swaying deck of the ship.” This tells the GM that the check has a TN of 5 if the character uses their Fire Ring (an aggressive and hasty approach that is disadvantageous for keeping balanced), but a TN of only 2 if the character uses their Earth Ring (an approach defined by patience and caution), and a TN of 3 if the character uses any other ring.

Where's the L5R Guide to Gamemastering?

Because the purpose of the beta is to test the core mechanics of the new edition of the *Legend of the Five Roleplaying Game*, it does not devote much space for advice on how to be a GM or what makes for a successful L5R GM. The material included in this chapter was content deemed important to conducting a successful beta. The core rulebook will contain guidance for new game masters, as well as tips for experienced game masters, to help both bring their campaigns in Rokugan to life!

Different Solutions, Different Challenges

Many problems have multiple possible solutions, and so a character might be able to choose between two different skill approaches to solve the problem. For instance, when attempting to get to the other side of a river (the Fitness skill), a character might be able to leap over it (Overwhelm, the Fire approach of a Martial skill) or swim across it (Shift, the Water approach of a Martial skill). A character might even be able to use another skill entirely (such as Labor, to build a bridge, or Theology, to persuade the water kami to grant passage). These and many other specific ways to use skills are described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 79).

This does not mean that a character's chosen method is unimportant in these situations, however. Even if multiple solutions exist, some are usually easier to enact than others. For instance, in social circumstances, some people are extremely receptive to flattery (Charm, the Water approach of a Social skill) but respond to provocation (Incite, the Fire approach of a Social skill) with matched hostility; others are easily brow-beaten into doing something honorable (Reason, the Earth approach of a Social skill) but see through even skillful attempts to deceive them (Trick, the Air approach of a Social skill).

The TN of a task frequently varies based on the skill and approach determined by the character's intended results. If a character is walking into a task with only cursory information, they might not know which approach will be the hardest until the GM announces the TN after the player has described their method. If the character has foreknowledge of the task, on the other hand, the GM might want to hint to the player—or even inform them outright—that one approach is easier than another. A character might know how to smooth-talk a familiar NPC, for instance, even if their player does not, but neither the character nor the player is likely to have any idea whether picking a lock carefully or smashing it open will be easier.

If a skill or one of its approaches is ill-suited to a situation, the GM should increase the TN of the check by 1–3 (to a maximum of 8). If a skill or one of its approaches is particularly well-suited to the circumstances, the GM should reduce the TN by 1–3 (to a minimum of 0).

When to Reveal or Conceal Target Numbers of Successes

Much of the drama (and strategy) of choosing which dice to keep derives from how much strife a character is willing to suffer in order to succeed, as well as whether they are able to activate other abilities as part of the check using ✨ results. If the player knows the TN they are trying to achieve, they will have the agency to choose interesting dice combinations.

In contrast, if the player does not know the TN, the choice of which dice to keep has a “push your luck” incentive to avoid accidentally keep-

ing too few ☯ and ☳ symbols. While this can heighten tension at the table, it also means that many players will always favor taking as many <SU> as possible to reduce the risk of accidentally failing a check they could have passed, ignoring chances to use their unique ☳ abilities to enhance the narrative or open up new gameplay options.

As such, for the majority of checks, it is recommended that the GM tell the players the TN, as this gives the players a more interesting set of choices. However, there are some rare occasions when the difficulty of a task would not be something the characters could accurately assess. For instance, when the PCs are striking bargains with supernatural beings, researching entirely unprecedented scientific topics, or venturing into new lands, the GM might have them roll a hidden check, for which the player does not know the TN.

After a character performs a hidden check, the character regains 1 Void point.

Applying Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages and disadvantages can add a great deal of flavor to a scene. Conflicts in samurai stories are often determined by the slightest differences between combatants, or circumstances that give one warrior the edge because of their unique qualities. The GM and players alike should make full use of these descriptive traits at appropriate narrative moments, shaping the story based on their characters' individual qualities. The GM can record the advantages and disadvantages of each character on the **Campaign Sheet** (see page 227) for ease of reference.

Describing Advantages and Disadvantages

When a player calls upon a character's advantage or disadvantage (or the GM does so for an NPC), they should describe how it factors into the scene. Does the bushi's rippling physique help them to cast aside the heavy stone in the group's path, demonstrating the clear favor of Bishamon, Fortune of Strength and War? Does a courtier's almost obsessive passion for tea mean that the mere scent of an exquisite jasmine blend dispels their worries after a stinging exchange with a rival? Filling in these details can help bring the story to life, and reinforce that the characters are more than the numerical values of their rings and skills.

Similarly, exposing a character's adversities and anxieties can help to bring out the depths of their character, and players should describe how they take effect when they are applied to checks.

When to Skip Advantages and Disadvantages During a Check

While advantages and disadvantages can be applied to any check (successful or not), a good rule of thumb is to use them only when their intervention might be decisive. For instance, if a character has already failed, there is no good reason to apply their disadvantage unless the amount by which they fall short matters. Similarly, if a character is already successful, it might not be worth spending much time discussing which of their advantages might apply—although bonus successes can sometimes make this worthwhile. Ultimately, the GM is the final arbiter of this matter (and most others), and should feel free to have the group table a discussion about advantages and disadvantages so that everyone can proceed with the story.

Assigning New Advantages and Disadvantages

While each character starts with a number of advantages and disadvantages, characters can also end up acquiring more in the course of play (see **Gaining Advantages and Disadvantages** on page 60). Critical strikes can permanently wound characters, leaving them with a scar disadvantage, while the Shadowlands Taint can infect a character's very soul. Honor and glory can also give characters advantages that represent their good reputation and personal convictions (or infamy and doubts).

Further, a character's social bonds and circumstances can be represented with advantages and disadvantages. A powerful alliance that a character forms might earn them the Support of [One Group] distinction, helping them in their dealings with that group. In contrast, spurning a group or coming into conflict with one of their prominent members might cause a character to be assigned the Scorn of [One Group] adversity. The GM is the arbiter of when these advantages and disadvantages should be added to or removed from a character. As a guideline, however, a character should not gain the Support of [One Group] advantage without having made a significant sacrifice or having undertaken a major task in that group's name, and they should not be assigned the Scorn of [One Group] disadvantage without having done something serious to provoke the group's ire. Insulting a member of a rival faction should not result in receiving a disadvantage, but murdering a rival over an insult—or even killing them in a duel—certainly could. If an individual rather than a group takes grave offense at someone's behavior, it could result in the Sworn Enemy disadvantage (see page 73) instead, at the GM's discretion. These advantages and disadvantages can also be removed at the GM's discretion, based on the character's actions and the turns of the story.

Using Opportunity (☳) in Play

Opportunity gives GMs and players a chance to add narrative flair to their checks and activate additional abilities. However, it can also create a feeling that one needs to examine every possible option for ☳ on a check. It can be a lot of pressure to be creative on the spot—but it doesn't need to be.

Remember that the default options from **Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending ☳** (see page 18) are always available. Assisting another character on a subsequent check (for ☳ if the first character failed a similar check or ☳☳ if the first character succeeded on a similar check), for instance, is always useful. More importantly, it can make for a simple but effective narrative moment of two characters working in concert to overcome a challenge before them that fits in nearly any context. Maybe one character calls out a warning to the other, letting them cut down a foe they wouldn't have seen. Perhaps it is as simple as the two exchanging a reassuring glance before going into a challenging negotiation. While long descriptions can bog down play, even a short aside about how a character is helping a comrade can enrich the story in a significant way, underscoring the bond (or tensions) between those two characters. These little moments can help to reinforce their relationship, and are sometimes more memorable in the long run than even the more narratively pivotal scenes when taken as a whole.

Keep in mind that you can also activate ☳ from other rings listed in **Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending ☳** at double the cost. This means that if a character wants to remove strife, a very simple mechanical use of ☳, they can do it with Earth, Air, or even Void ☳ (though it is only half as efficient as if they had used Water ☳).

Asking the Players

As the GM, you can always tell your players when you think their advantages apply—but why do all the creative work for your players? Encouraging them to participate in the narrative can create unique descriptive moments you might never have considered, and such novel twists and turns of the story are half the fun of being the GM.

If you notice your players aren't making full use of their advantages, try the following trick: after a player fails a roll, ask them if they have any advantages that might apply. If they can't think of one, see if one of the other players has an idea. Give them a hint if you had one or more of their advantages in mind, but above all, encourage them to be creative and describe to you how their character uses the advantage to gain the edge. If nobody can think of anything, though, don't get stuck—they can always find a way to use one of their advantages on the next roll!

A player or the GM can even poll the group for ideas for using ☯, asking if anyone else has an idea for how to spend it, narratively or mechanically. Sometimes, the GM or another player will have a good idea already in mind.

Above all, whether you're a player or GM, try not to stress out over ☯. If you can think of a good use for ☯ from one of your abilities or a relevant table, use it. If you have a great, creative idea to use ☯, pitch it to the

group. But if you can't think of anything specific, there's nothing wrong with using one of the basic options from **Table 1–2: Example Ways of Spending ☯** (see page 18) or even letting it go unused. If it doesn't add anything to the story or you're just not feeling especially creative, letting an opportunity pass by is completely fine. This can be especially useful for the GM, when rolling for narratively unimportant NPCs.

Running a Campaign

A campaign is a series of sessions, linked together by a cohesive narrative thread and a recurring cast of player characters.

Awarding Experience Points

Character progression is an important theme of *Legend of the Five Rings*, as each character pursues mastery within their domain while expanding their knowledge of the wider world. The recommended rate of experience gain is 2 XP per hour of play, with an additional 3–5 XP awarded to each character in the group at the GM's discretion whenever the party overcomes a significant milestone, obstacle, or recurring foe.

GMs should feel free to adjust these numbers as they see fit—more XP per hour will not only result in characters growing in competency more quickly, but also encourage players to buy ring increases more often (as they do not have to save up for multiple sessions for these purchases). Fewer XP per hour will have the opposite effect. At their discretion, GMs can also give bonus XP for particularly strong moments of roleplaying among the group.

Standardized XP across the group makes it easier for everyone to track and helps keep the characters at a roughly equivalent level of competency, but GMs should also feel free to award XP on a per-player basis if that is their group's preferred method.

Ninjō, Giri, and Discord

Ninjō and giri inform the players and GM about a character's relationship with their desires and their duty. In many works of fiction about samurai, a character strives to maintain their personal values while achieving glory in the eyes of their lord. During this process, the character's perspectives on honor and glory are often challenged, and they frequently evolve as the character develops. When faced with someone else with extremely different priorities or personal values, a character might be forced to reevaluate their own life. Alternatively, a conflict between one's personal beliefs and the needs of a sworn lord might drive a character's development over the course of a story. Such moments of conflict are called **discord**, and this system offers GMs a way to seed this friction between the needs, desires, and ideals of the characters.

In *Legend of the Five Rings*, the twin motivations of ninjō (a character's internal feelings, tied to their belief in Bushidō) and giri (the oaths to their lord that they must uphold to advance in the world) are levers that the GM can use to create interesting, dramatic confrontations between characters, or even within a single character.

While ninjō and giri are an important part of understanding a character's motivations and desires, discord is an optional play aid meant to help the GM lay the foundations for interesting, potentially unpredictable stories. If the GM would prefer not to use discord in a mechanized manner, they could simply choose a ninjō, giri, or both to be focal to each session based on what fits the current arc of the narrative. Like most other rules, discord is a tool rather than a mandate, and each group should decide for themselves how best to put it to use to enrich their shared story.

Character Death and Retirement

Player characters in *Legend of the Five Rings* live three feet from death at all times, and so one or more PCs might well meet their end during the story. Alternatively, a character might be retired from play because they have completed their duty, because they have been stripped of their status as a samurai, or because they have simply gotten too old for such adventures and wish to spend their final years in contemplation at a monastery. It is recommended that you allow a player whose character has perished or otherwise been retired to create a new PC with the same amount of experience as their late character. The possibility of character death can be an important part of *Legend of the Five Rings*, but it should always be an occurrence that serves to show the stakes of the narrative and makes the story more interesting rather than a "punishment" for a player's decisions.

Additionally, the GM should keep in mind that death is often the least interesting way a character's story can end. If the PCs are vanquished in battle, for instance, instead of simply dying, they might be taken hostage (hostages are valuable, after all) and need to escape. If a PC falls into a river from an incredible height, they could die—or they awaken downstream, gravely injured but alive. Even a lethal blow from a critical strike can often be healed to stabilize a character before the Dying condition causes them to expire, and if no PC is trained in Medicine, an NPC might be able to step in to save their life (likely with an expectation of a significant favor down the road, of course). Sometimes, the dice decide that a PC's time is up, but frequently, the GM has some leeway to interpret the results as best serves the story.

Building the Discord Tracks

Once all characters have chosen their ninjō and giri, the GM should fill in the discord tracks. One track is for giri, and the other is for ninjō. The GM writes each character's name outside of the tracks as indicated, then each character's giri on the outer track and ninjō on the inner track.

Choosing Discord for Each Session

For the first session, the GM should begin at Spoke 1 for both tracks. For future sessions, GM should begin at the spokes that contributed to the last session's discord for each of the two tracks.

To determine a session's discord, roll and keep a number of Ring dice equal to the number of players (resolving ☯ as normal). Total the number of ☯ and ☯, then count that many spokes clockwise on the giri track, skipping any blank spaces. The final spoke indicates the character whose giri is part of the session's discord.

Next, total the number of ☯ and ☯, then count that many spokes counterclockwise on the ninjō track, skipping any blank spaces. The final spoke indicates the character whose ninjō is part of the session's discord.

Each character whose motivation is invoked as part of the discord gains 1 additional Void point. The GM may inform the player whether it was their character's giri or ninjō that was invoked if they want to let the player start thinking about ways to work it into the story—or not, if that builds tension more effectively.

Then, the GM should record the session's discord on the **Campaign Sheet**, to know where to begin the rolls for the next session. If the same paired giri and ninjō ever occur again, the GM might choose to roll again, progressing from that point. To create tension, the GM should set these two motivations in opposition with one another—though this might mean direct opposition or indirect opposition, as described below.

Plotting in Advance

Alternatively, the GM can fill in the **Campaign Sheet** (see page 227) in advance, planning out the beats of various sessions long before they transpire. This has the advantage of ensuring that the discord of each session works in an obvious way, as the GM can avoid any pairings that might be less intuitive to put in contention. On the other hand, planning more than a few sessions ahead can be difficult, as the GM can never be fully certain which characters among the current ones will be present—or even alive—at that juncture.

Staging Discord

Ask yourself if there is a clear way for one character's orders, or general mandate as a samurai, to conflict with another's personal feelings? Can you set them at odds, or at least create the appearance that they are at odds? When staging the dilemma, you should first decide if the two naturally lend themselves to direct opposition or indirect opposition. A direct opposition of motivations occurs when the completion of one stands directly in the way of the other: for one to be completed, the other must be thwarted, at least on some level. In contrast, an indirect opposition of motivations occurs when the two compete for resources, such as time or the group's attention.

Direct Opposition

Are there obvious circumstances in which the two motivations are mutually exclusive? If so, setting them in direct opposition should be relatively easy—but that does not necessarily make it the best approach. Direct opposition between PCs should be saved for particularly dramatic moments, such as the conclusion of a story line, the climax of an adventure, or the turning point in a character's personal arc. As the GM, you should weigh this option carefully before selecting it.

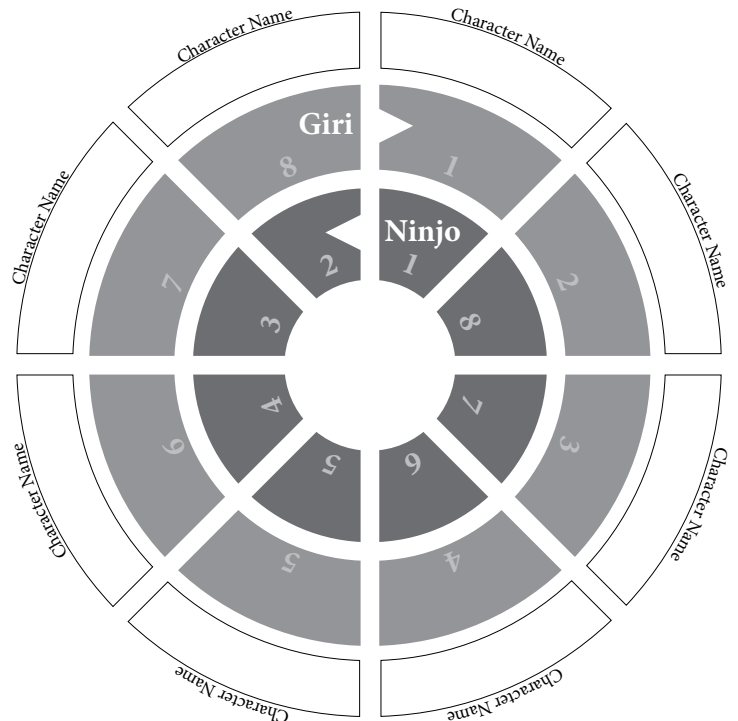
Indirect Opposition

Almost any two motivations can be set in indirect opposition simply by putting chances to pursue both in front of the group and presenting them with limited time, resources, or energy. This is not the only way to create indirect opposition, however. Presenting the group with a situation that evokes or reflects a conflict between the characters' motivations is one effective way to create an indirect conflict.

For instance, if a character has a strong familial obligation to a younger sibling, presenting an NPC who has a similar relationship with their own sibling can create an immediate parallel between the two characters. Then, setting that NPC at odds with another PC's motivation creates an indirect conflict: the first PC might well feel sympathy for the NPC, while the second sees them as an obstacle to be removed. No matter what fate befalls the NPC, the first PC does not stand to lose anything, per se, but they might be drawn into caring about this character due to their similarities. Alternatively, they might reject this parallel, highlighting some part of their belief system that differs from the NPC's to side against them. In either case, something interesting about the first PC is revealed through this indirect opposition with the second PC.

Building Tension

Creating satisfying discord doesn't mean "trapping" your PCs in an unsolvable problem where one has to "defeat" the other—in fact, doing so is usually a recipe for disaster, unless both players are very invested in



that idea from the outset. Frequently, conflicts between characters can be resolved in one way or another. However, if you offer your PCs incentives to act against each other's interests—whether overtly or covertly—you'll often find that their players will go along with it, creating an interesting story in the process. Even if you eventually reveal that both characters can benefit in the end, the mere idea that they might have to compromise or act against each other can have interesting effects. Honor and glory can be excellent incentives, as they are meaningful resources that reflect the characters' desires and duties, but they can also be won back if lost. A character who compromises their personal morals at a friend's behest now might take a firm stance in a future discord, regaining their honor but straining the relationship.

Even if you don't want to encourage your PCs to openly oppose one another, you can get some use out of the discord track. Instead of rolling twice, simply roll once on one track (alternating which track each session) and use the result to inform which character will be in the spotlight and how they will be challenged. You can always set an NPC in their path who is an affront to their sense of honor, or have their lord give a questionable or difficult order in pursuit of their goal. A conflict within a single character can still be very interesting, and if you're only focusing on the one, the rest of the group can support this PC rather than questioning them.

Character-Defining Moments

Often, the best moments of disharmony between two characters are not the ones when they are in open opposition, but the times when one character has the chance to act selfishly without the other's knowledge. Does a character who witnessed an incriminating act by a comrade report it to their lord, as ordered? Does a character steal a dangerous artifact from a comrade because they fear it might be misused if they think they will not be caught in the act? What does a character say about a friend behind their back, when presented with the chance to weaken their reputation? These are the choices that define characters, the ones where they must choose between the bonds of loyalty and their internal motivations.

Release Valves and Resolution

In planning how discord factors into a session, it is often wise to have a release valve prepared. As a concept, a release valve is a sort of off-ramp

for tension between characters, letting both vent their frustration or concern on someone or something else that is more pressing or more aggravating. This can be a major event that forces the characters to set aside any differences that have built up over the course of the session, such as an attack by a common enemy or a disaster, or it can be a revelation that the conflict between the two motivations can be resolved peacefully despite earlier appearances.

Compromise and Favors

One excellent means of managing the give-and-take that discord introduces at the table are Favor advantages. In myths and tales of heroism, it is not uncommon for one champion to withdraw their own ambitions in favor of another character once, under the explicit or tacit understanding that the favor will be repaid. This is a perfect place to dole out the Favor from [Person's Name] distinction (see right). One PC might request Favor from another explicitly (presumably leaving aside game mechanics by framing it as an oath or other obligation of goodwill) in exchange for compromising on a matter of honor or glory. Defeat might carry with it dishonor, but standing down willingly in exchange for political leverage in the future can often be a valid tactic, on the battlefield and in the deadly games of court alike. The context of the situation—and the way it is retold after the fact—are all that draws the line between shrewdness and cowardice, or compassion and spinelessness.

The Favor from [Character's Name] distinction is also a good social reward that GMs can assign to PCs when they go out of their way to do something for or that benefits a recurring NPC.

Using Social Attributes in Play

Honor, glory, and status are important aspects of a character in *Legend of the Five Rings*. Not only can knowing these values for their characters help players roleplay these individuals more aptly, but the GM can also use honor, glory, and status as tools to help players engage with the setting. Reminding a player that they must choose to have their character forfeit 1 honor if they wish to make that snide remark to someone of higher status reinforces the importance of courtesy in Rokugan. Similarly, noting that a character must stake glory if they wish to boast that they will be the first into the enemy's castle the next day can be an excellent way to help bring the society the characters live in to the forefront of the players' minds. Knowing the status of another character (and whether it is higher or lower than one's own) is often vital to properly interacting with them. Rokugan is not our world, and the PCs are immersed in this society even if the players are not. Honor, glory, and status exist to help bridge that gap, giving players clear indicators of the costs their choices might bear and of the standing of others within the world.

It usually falls to the GM to bring these attributes into the game, although players can certainly make use of them actively as well. Players can ask to make checks to determine an NPC's honor, glory, or status in an attempt to learn about social dynamics or predict their behavior.

The GM can have NPCs do the same to the PCs, and should have them give different reactions based on these values and what the NPCs know about the PCs. The sections for these attributes each list several ways the GM can use the attribute in question to guide the story and PCs' interactions with NPCs.

Honor in Play

Literally meaning “way of the warrior” in Japanese, Bushidō is the code by which nearly all samurai in Rokugan strive to live. Samurai are taught to reach the ideals of the samurai at the expense of one's own personal gain. Of course, samurai are also human, so the “breaking point” when one abandons Bushidō out of self-interest or the need for self-preservation makes for rich story and roleplaying material. The other rich story

Favor from [Character's Name] (Water)

Type: Interpersonal, Temporary

Description: You have earned a favor from a particular individual. That character is willing to help you once so long as the favor they do for you will not damage their reputation.

Effects: Choose one of the following effects to apply when applying the Favor from [Character's Name] distinction. After the effect has been resolved, the Favor from [Character's Name] distinction is removed.

- The character shares what knowledge they have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether that be through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence.
- The character to arranges for introductions on your behalf with exclusive members of society or places of business.
- The character offers you their hospitality, including meals, a place to rest, and medical attention if they have a healer.
- The character grants you access to one of their facilities, such as a laboratory, library, smithy, stable, or sparring room.
- When performing a check that benefits from their indebtedness to you (such as a Command [Water] check to tell them to do something for you or a Courtesy [Water] check to ask them to requisition something on your behalf), you may reroll up to two dice during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**.

opportunity associated with Bushidō occurs when its tenets inevitably come into conflict with each other. What does a samurai do when their lord commands them to do something dishonorable? What does a samurai do when Honesty clashes with Courtesy? When Justice calls for blood but Compassion counsels mercy?

Forfeiting Honor to Perform Dishonorable Deeds

A character's honor reflects their choices and their actions. However, dishonorable actions are occasionally necessary, and often terribly convenient. And the ideals of the samurai of Rokugan are not always in alignment with the reality in which they live, which is difficult and messy.

To act dishonorably, a character must forfeit an amount of honor stipulated in advance. This reduces their honor value by the stated amount (to a minimum of 0 honor); then, they can perform the dishonorable deed. If a character does not have sufficient honor to forfeit, they can still perform the dishonorable act (their honor just becomes 0, even if it is already 0).

Reductions in honor represent the dissonance between the code the character believes in and the reality of their life that they have accepted in the moment. The price in honor for any particular dishonorable deed, however, often depends upon how honorable the character committing the act is—for the greater their belief in Bushidō, the more their self-image as an upright samurai is eroded even by small transgressions. The price of a dishonorable deed is often derived from the character's honor rank (the tens digit of their honor). The **Tenets of Bushidō**, starting on page 183, contain a number of examples to help guide GMs on gauging the appropriate cost for a dishonorable act.

Staking Honor

A character sometimes stakes honor instead of forfeiting it, placing it on the line until they fulfill their word to someone else or to himself.

Any time a character wants to make an important promise or statement of intention, the GM may ask the player to stake some amount of honor on this. Generally, the amount of honor they must stake is equal to the amount they would have to forfeit to intentionally break their word (see **Makoto [Sincerity]** in **Tenets of Bushidō**, on page 183), but the GM might adjust this value up or down based on circumstances.

Awarding Honor for Performing Honorable Deeds

Honor cannot be gained without adversity. As such, the GM should award honor to characters for deeds that put their code above their immediate needs or desires.

Characters generally should not be awarded honor for things that cost them nothing or are not accompanied by risks. For instance, being courteous to someone of higher status is simply expected—but maintaining perfect etiquette when faced with a hated enemy is exceptional, even in the Emerald Empire. The **Tenets of Bushidō**, below, contain a number of examples of how much honor a character should be awarded for making a sacrifice in the name of honor.

The Tenets of Bushidō

Each of the seven virtues listed below is accompanied by a number of examples of situations when a character might have to forfeit honor to disobey it, need to stake honor on upholding it, or receive an honor reward for giving something up to pursue it.

Gi (Righteousness)

Set lies aside. A samurai does not make Righteousness a matter for debate; he knows that there is only truth and falsehood, justice and injustice.

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Abetting or covering for a comrade's minor breach of honor Lying to preserve someone's feelings or protect someone
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Abetting or covering for a comrade's major breach of honor Lying to someone of equal or lower status for personal gain
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Abetting or covering for a comrade's massive breach of honor Lying to someone of higher status for personal gain
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Murdering someone of equal or higher status in cold blood (with or without anyone else knowing) Lying to your lord for purely selfish gain

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Correcting someone's (positive) misconception about your abilities Giving proper credit to someone else, forfeiting a portion of your glory reward for a heroic deed
Minor Sacrifice	3	Delivering unpleasant news to your lord without deflecting blame from yourself Taking responsibility for the failure of a subordinate or character of lower status under your charge
Major Sacrifice	6	Retiring honorably from a position you are no longer capable of fulfilling properly Relinquishing your claim to something in favor of someone of equal or higher status
Massive Sacrifice	9	Refusing to deny true allegations of a failure or misdeed that require you to forfeit 9 or more glory or status

Yu (Heroic Courage)

Only fear of death can destroy life; the samurai replaces it with an understanding of danger.

A samurai is expected to be ready to give up life and limb for their daimyō at any moment. The people of Rokugan not only believe in reincarnation, but also believe that the actions of this life will affect a thousand lifetimes to come. Karma, the moral state of the spirit that persists from lifetime to lifetime, is not erased by death. A samurai knows that selflessly giving this life in service of their lord will let them be born into a higher station still in the next lifetime. Common folk allow fear to swallow their hearts. An extraordinary soul is one who has the courage to truly live life to its limits, to live as if each moment were the last one.

Table 7-3: Bushido Tenet: Yu (Courage)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Allowing fear for someone else's well-being to influence your actions Fleeing from battle (rather than being sent elsewhere to perform another task) at your lord's order Concealing your identity in battle or a similar situation
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Allowing fear for yourself to influence your actions Fleeing from a lost battle to protect your lord's interests
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Allowing fear to prevent you from acting entirely Fleeing from battle purely to save your own skin
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Allowing fear to drive you to a despicable act Sacrificing someone else to save your own life

Table 7-4: Bushido Tenet: Yu (Courage)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Refusing to back down when faced with a numerically superior force Accepting a challenge from an enemy of unknown skill
Minor Sacrifice	3	Refusing to back down from an armed enemy while unarmed Accepting a challenge from a foe you know to be a superior warrior
Major Sacrifice	6	Refusing to back down from an inhuman enemy such as a Troll, ogre, or oni Attempting to stop a comrade from doing something deeply dishonorable (a major or massive breach) Suffering a critical strike with severity 8 or lower in direct defense of your lord
Massive Sacrifice	9	Acting to stop your lord from doing something deeply dishonorable (a major or massive breach) Suffering a critical strike with severity 9 or higher in direct defense of your lord

Jin (Compassion)

Just as the farmer does not grow crops merely to fill their own belly, the warrior does not fight for just their own sake. A samurai must be constantly aware of their duty to protect others.

Table 7-5: Bushido Tenet: Jin (Compassion)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Saying something deeply cruel to an enemy Failing to offer proper respects to an animal you have killed or letting its sacrifice go to waste Letting someone die when attempting to save them would likely have cost your own life
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Saying something deeply cruel to someone you do not know well Failing to assist someone with a significant problem you could trivially solve Tormenting an animal
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Saying something deeply cruel to a friend or ally Physically harming another human being for no reason but revenge Letting someone die when you could have attempted to save them without meaningful risk to yourself
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Murdering someone of lower status in cold blood (with or without anyone knowing) Physically harming another human being for no reason but your own satisfaction

Table 7-6: Bushido Tenet: Jin (Compassion)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Showing kindness to someone of lower status in a context where this requires forfeiting 1 or more glory Sharing your rations with a person or animal that has no food Acting as second to someone who commits seppuku to cut short their suffering
Minor Sacrifice	3	Giving someone a useful item you could replace, such as a knife or piece of clothing Spending your time (two or more downtime scenes) helping a friend instead of advancing your own interests Treating your foe's wounds after a battle
Major Sacrifice	6	Giving up your chance to do something heroic (an act that awards 6 or more glory) so that someone else can achieve it Saving someone's life despite knowing that they bear you ill will and may trouble you later
Massive Sacrifice	9	Giving someone a useful item you can never expect to replace, such as an heirloom or relic Completing a dangerous heroic task for someone else who cannot repay you or spread word of your deeds

Rei (Courtesy)

A samurai is neither a bully nor a brute killer. Samurai must treat their enemies with Courtesy.

Table 7-7: Bushido Tenet: Rei (Courtesy)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Cursing or using disrespectful language in the presence of someone of higher status Publicly and explicitly discussing your finances or mercantile pursuits Forgetting the specifics of a minor societal ritual in the presence of someone of higher status (turning your teacup the wrong direction or using an improper form of address)
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Being visibly drunk in the presence of someone of higher status Directly asking someone of equal or higher status about their finances or mercantile pursuits Letting an insult to your clan or family pass without remark
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Directly insulting someone of equal or higher status Letting an insult to your ancestors, sensei, or lord pass without remark
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Directly insulting your lord

Table 7-8: Bushido Tenet: Rei (Courtesy)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Paying an honest compliment to an enemy during battle Letting a serious insult (one that requires you to forfeit 1 or more glory to ignore) to your person pass
Minor Sacrifice	3	Allowing a tired foe to rest a moment before you attack them Allowing someone of equal or higher status to have their needs attended to first by a host
Major Sacrifice	6	Giving an unarmed foe a weapon, or setting aside your own weapons to fight them
Massive Sacrifice	9	Taking an enemy of equal or higher status captive without killing or permanently harming them

Meiyo (Honor)

Praises and curses are not what defines honor; the samurai reserves their own judgment.

Table 7-9: Bushido Tenet: Meiyo (Honor)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Touching dead flesh on the battlefield Openly displaying raw emotion in the presence of someone of equal or higher status
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Touching dead flesh anywhere other than the battlefield Persuading or manipulating someone else into acting dishonorably
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Neglecting your duty to your lord to pursue your earthly desires Killing someone in an unjustified duel
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Refusing to commit seppuku when commanded to do so by your lord

Table 7-10: Bushido Tenet: Meiyo (Honor)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Suppressing your feelings (positive or negative) about someone else despite the angst this causes you Choosing to leave a scene while your strife is equal to your composure to avoid an outburst
Minor Sacrifice	3	Persuading someone to abandon a dishonorable plan (one that would require them to forfeit 1 or more honor) that would assist in your goals
Major Sacrifice	6	Convincing someone not to make an unjustified challenge
Massive Sacrifice	9	Offering to commit seppuku after failing your lord (with the expectation that they might actually accept your request)

Makoto (Sincerity/Integrity)

Sincerity is more complex than mere Honesty; Sincerity is the ability to speak earnestly without giving offense or compromising one's family's interests, for these are also dishonorable. It is to be truthful without causing embarrassment or inconvenience—to maintain one's Integrity while eliding unpleasant realities. Sometimes, the only honest and honorable path is to say nothing at all—this is why Rokugani courts do not call for or even allow the testimony of family members in trials, for it would put these people in an impossible position. A samurai's word is always good, and if a samurai says they will do something, they will do it or die trying. The wise pay attention, therefore, to what a samurai does not say, for in these gaps many important truths can be found.

Table 7-11: Bushido Tenet: Makoto (Sincerity)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Breaking your word to someone of lower status Propagating rumors you know to be false Impersonating someone of lower status
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Breaking your word to someone of equal or higher status Using false courtesy to mislead a friend or ally to your own advantage
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Manipulating someone for no reason beyond the satisfaction of doing so Impersonating someone of equal or higher status
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Breaking your word to your lord Manipulating your lord

Table 7-12: Bushido Tenet: Makoto (Sincerity)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Going significantly out of your way to keep your word to someone of lower status Getting someone of equal or higher status to accept constructive criticism by suggesting where they could improve rather than stating their shortcomings Claiming responsibility for the failing of a subordinate or character of lower status (requiring a forfeit of 1 or more glory)
Minor Sacrifice	3	Publicly revealing a truth that damages your reputation (one that requires forfeiting 3 or more glory) Getting your lord to accept constructive criticism by suggesting where they could improve rather than stating their shortcomings
Major Sacrifice	6	Giving (honest) testimony against a possible political ally from another clan that jeopardizes future relations
Massive Sacrifice	9	Pointing out a serious flaw in one of your lord's strategies by claiming it as your own failure (requiring a forfeit of 6 or more glory)

Chūgi (Duty and Loyalty)

Actions and their consequences define those who take them. The samurai's loyalty to those that they guard is unshakable.

There is another reason that a samurai is so willing to live dangerously. They know if they give their life for their daimyō, their daimyō will look very well upon their family. The concept of loyalty goes both ways. A daimyō will be loyal to a fallen samurai's memory by rewarding their family in return for their devotion. This concept of giving one's life to better one's family is very important. In Rokugan, nothing is as important as your family. Without family, a samurai's life (even a peasant's life) is worth nothing.

Table 7-13: Bushido Tenet: Chūgi (Duty and Loyalty)

Action	Honor You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Breach	1	Disbelieving someone of equal or higher status Intentionally misinterpreting your lord's order to protect their interests Asking to be relieved of a duty from your lord
Minor Breach	Honor equal to honor rank	Committing an act of disloyalty to your spouse or superior Refusing an order from your lord to protect their interests Intentionally misinterpreting your lord's order so as to advance your own interests
Major Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 2	Refusing an order from your lord for personal reasons Obeying an unjust order from someone of equal or higher status who is not your lord
Massive Breach	Honor equal to honor rank x 4	Committing an act of disloyalty to your lord Forsaking your post to serve someone other than your lord for your own gain

Table 7-14: Bushido Tenet: Chūgi (Duty and Loyalty)

Action	Honor Reward	Examples
Trifling Sacrifice	1	Refusing to commit an act of disloyalty to your spouse or superior despite your significant personal feelings for the people involved Choosing to believe someone of equal or higher status despite having evidence to the contrary
Minor Sacrifice	3	Refusing to commit an act of disloyalty to your lord despite your significant personal feelings for the people involved
Major Sacrifice	6	Refusing to obey an unjust order from someone of equal or higher status who is not your lord but can make your life much more unpleasant or do you harm
Massive Sacrifice	9	Giving up a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to advance your personal interest or glory to complete a task for your lord

The Clans' Views of Bushidō

Honor is a guide to help your players play their characters, and it can also help underline the differences between the ways the various clans focus on certain aspects of this cultural code of conduct.

Each clan has one or more tenets it views as paramount, even above the others. When a character chooses to forfeit honor due to defying one of their own clan's paramount tenets, they double the amount of honor they must forfeit. When a character is awarded honor as a result of making a personal sacrifice in the name of one of their clan's paramount tenets, the GM should double the honor they are awarded.

- **Crab:** Courage
- **Crane:** Courtesy
- **Dragon:** Sincerity
- **Lion:** Honor
- **Phoenix:** Righteousness
- **Scorpion:** Duty
- **Unicorn:** Compassion

Each clan has one or more tenets of Bushidō it views as less significant than the others. When a character chooses to forfeit honor due to defying the tenet their clan sees as less significant, halve the amount of honor they must forfeit (rounded up, to a minimum of 1). When a character is awarded honor as a result of making a personal sacrifice in the name of the tenet their clan sees as less significant, halve the honor they are awarded (rounded up, to a minimum of 1).

- **Crab:** Courtesy
- **Crane:** Courage
- **Dragon:** Duty and Loyalty
- **Lion:** Compassion
- **Phoenix:** Sincerity
- **Scorpion:** Righteousness, as well as Honor
- **Unicorn:** Courtesy

Glory in Play

Honor is the inner measure of a character's alignment with the tenets of Bushidō: a character who is scorned by the world might still have high honor, if they have arrived at that point without defying the samurai code of conduct. Glory, then, is the external measure of a character's success as a samurai. The higher a character's glory, the more widely they are recognized as a paragon of samurai virtues; the lower a character's glory, the more others believe they are unworthy of the name. Being a proper samurai includes competence, and a character with good intentions can still see their glory fall if they stake it on unsuccessful ventures.

Glory is not exactly a character's fame—a character who is known for deeds both good and ill might have a modest glory value due to the conflicting accounts of their actions—though it does confer advantages that reflect fame (or disadvantages that represent infamy) if it reaches certain highs (or lows). Rather, it is how much the outside world (with a particular emphasis on the character's sworn lord) believes the character is a proper samurai.

Forfeiting Glory

A character must forfeit glory to undertake certain actions publicly. Publicly admitting personal failure or disbelief in the validity of some aspect of Bushidō requires forfeiting some amount of glory. Deeds that defy Bushidō, or are just especially wicked, can also require that a character forfeit glory to perform them publicly.

Unlike honor, glory relies upon external perception, so actions taken clandestinely or in disguise do not require forfeiting glory, though sometimes they require staking it upon avoiding discovery.

Staking Glory

Sometimes, a character must stake glory rather than forfeiting it—in these cases, the glory rides on the results of their actions. Most often, this occurs when a character boasts that they will complete a task, in which case they stake the glory until such time as they clearly succeed or fail (in which case, it is forfeit). The amount of glory they must stake depends on how great their claim was. The GM can use the sample glory rewards (see

Table 7-15: Sample Acknowledgements, right) as a guideline for how much the character must stake to boast that they can perform a task.

Staking glory can also occur when a character undertakes an inglorious task clandestinely. In this case, they must stake the amount of glory they would forfeit to perform this task openly (see **Table 7-16: Sample Diminishments**, right). The glory remains staked until the risk of their discovery has ended (such as until all loose ends are tied up) or they are unmasked publicly (in which case, it is forfeit).

Receiving Glory Rewards

When a character is recognized for a notable deed (whether or not they actually did it), the GM should give that character a glory reward based on the degree of acclaim it represents. See **Table 7-15: Sample Acknowledgements**, right, for more information.

Status

Status is much more static than honor and glory: rarely do characters need to forfeit it, and generally, they only receive it as a reward upon receiving a new title. If a character does need to forfeit status, they generally reset it to a specific value; for instance, if a character gives up the position of Emerald Magistrate and retires to a monastery, their status goes from 40 (the status of an Emerald Magistrate, as set by the title) to 25 (that of a monk, found in **Table 1-5: Status Scores**, on page 25). Characters can be stripped of status under rare circumstances. If a character wishes to resist an effort to do this (such as by covering up or destroying evidence that they are, in fact, suffering from the Shadowlands Taint), they must stake their status upon preventing the events that would expose them from occurring.

Therefore, status is most often used as a comparative value, to know which of two characters stands higher in the Celestial Order. This has many uses, both narratively and with regard to abilities. The Social skills reference interacting with characters of lower, higher, or equal status, as do many examples of times a character must forfeit (or be awarded) glory or honor.

The GM should know the status of the PCs and compare it to that of NPCs where relevant. Additionally, the GM can hint at relative status and

Table 7-15: Sample Acknowledgements

Action	Glory Reward	Examples
Trifling Acknowledgement	1	<p>Being publicly acknowledged by someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Getting someone of equal or higher status to accept an item you crafted as a gift</p> <p>Bragging publicly after receiving recognition for a glorious deed</p> <p>Getting others to gossip and speculate about your most recent love affair (without their knowing the identity of your lover)</p> <p>Publicly defeating a group of bandits or other petty ruffians</p> <p>Participating as a leader in a mass battle</p> <p>Challenging someone to a duel publicly</p> <p>Receiving a marriage proposal from someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Reading a love letter from an anonymous source in public</p>
Minor Acknowledgement	3	<p>Achieving a strategic objective as a leader in a mass battle</p> <p>Publicly receiving a gift of rarity 7 or higher from someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Participating on the winning side in a public debate (an intrigue scene)</p> <p>Defeating an opponent with glory 40 or higher in a duel or clash (or other relevant contest)</p> <p>Receiving accolades for completing a minor task for someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Marrying someone of equal or higher glory</p> <p>Orchestrating a marriage of a relative to someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Reaching school rank 2, 3, or 4</p>
Major Acknowledgement	6	<p>Participating as a leader on the winning side of a mass battle</p> <p>Defeating an opponent with glory 60 or higher in a duel or clash (or other relevant contest)</p> <p>Receiving accolades for completing a major task for someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Defeating a superhuman creature such as a troll or oni with the assistance of allies</p> <p>Marrying someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Reaching school rank 5</p> <p>Settling a long-standing feud, acquiring agreements of palliation from both sides</p>
Massive Acknowledgement	9	<p>Defeating an opponent with glory 80 or higher in a duel or clash (or other relevant contest)</p> <p>Defeating a superhuman creature such as a troll or oni in single combat</p> <p>Being the victorious commander in a mass battle</p> <p>Marrying someone in the Imperial family</p> <p>Reaching school rank 6</p>

Table 7-16: Sample Diminishments

Action	Glory You Must Forfeit	Examples
Trifling Diminishment	1	<p>Choosing to share credit for a deed with someone of lower status</p> <p>Admitting a minor lie publicly</p> <p>Having a gift declined by someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Declining a gift from someone of lower status (beyond the customary two refusals politeness demands)</p> <p>Being seen retreating from a brawl</p> <p>Killing an opponent who can no longer fight back</p> <p>Choosing to leave the public eye for a month</p>
Minor Diminishment	Glory equal to glory rank	<p>Allowing an insult to your person to pass without comment</p> <p>Choosing to share credit for a deed with someone of equal or higher status</p> <p>Admitting a serious lie publicly</p> <p>Declining a gift from someone of equal or higher status (beyond the customary two refusals politeness demands)</p> <p>Allowing an ancestral weapon to be destroyed or lost</p> <p>Being seen retreating from a skirmish</p> <p>Choosing not to commit seppuku alongside your lord (if not asked to do so)</p> <p>Choosing to leave the public eye for three to six months</p>
Major Diminishment	Glory equal to glory rank x 2	<p>Murdering someone of lower status in cold blood</p> <p>Withdrawing from a mass battle</p> <p>Failing to arrive at a duel</p> <p>Attacking a surrendering enemy army</p> <p>Choosing to leave the public eye for six months to a year</p>
Massive Diminishment	Glory equal to glory rank x 4	<p>Murdering someone of equal or higher status in cold blood</p> <p>Ordering a retreat in a mass battle</p> <p>Refusing to commit seppuku when ordered to do so by your lord</p> <p>Choosing to leave the public eye for years</p>

underlying personalities of NPCs by having these characters treat each other differently based on it. Most characters will defer to someone of higher status and expect obedience from those of lower status, but the manner in which this occurs can be an extremely good way to hint at the true nature of the NPCs. A sycophantic person will lavish attention on those of higher status but disdain those of lower status; a more fundamentally decent person will likely treat people well despite not being told to by society. Someone who hates their superior will still likely treat them well to their face, but might work to undermine their efforts, and occasionally let subtle hints of their dislike slip through the veneer of servility.

Relationships

Relationships are vital to samurai drama. A character's relationship with their lord, their enemies, or their loved ones often drive their actions in the plot—especially when these relationships come into conflict with the character's desires and obligations. Being ordered to serve alongside one's hated rival might cause a character no small degree of strife, while being obligated to seek revenge against an old friend by the precepts of Honor might cause a character to question the Code of Bushidō itself. Each character has several relationships established during character creation, and players can record more as they see fit.

Each character sheet provides a space to record a character's most significant relationships, along with some brief notes for each relationship on the nature of the bond (or enmity) the two characters share. The player should notify the GM when they add a relationship, so that the GM can also record it on the **Campaign Sheet** (see page 227) to help

The PCs, for their part, can use status by uncovering the status of other characters via narrative interaction or various skills and abilities, so that they can most effectively roleplay their interactions with these characters. As with NPCs, players might wish to have their characters act differently around characters of different status levels—though many players are notoriously disdainful of authority, and GMs should remember to ask for clarity on whether disparaging statements were actually intended to be in character and give players a bit of leeway on taking back their more biting comments unless they actually wish to forfeit the associated honor or glory.

them keep track of the people the PCs know. Similarly, the GM might tell a player to add a relationship if their character's actions stir someone's emotions greatly, for good or for ill. The GM should pay attention to relationships that a player wants their character to forge, as this gives them an excellent insight into the plot threads that interest that player, and lets the GM bring back characters of interest later to pull upon those threads once again!

Relationships can change. A rival might become a friend after the two characters serve together, or a friend might become a hated enemy in the wake of a great betrayal. However, importantly, relationships do not go away even if one person involved dies. After all, the departed often have a great impact on the way people live their lives and on the choices they make. Every person a character feels strongly for is someone they will likely always remember.

Chapter 8: Non-Player Characters

Non-player characters are the other inhabitants of the world, with whom the player characters interact. In story terms, the PCs are the main protagonists, and NPCs can be thought of as the supporting cast: bit characters, friends and allies, rivals, and antagonists. Although they can be extremely important to the arc of the narrative (the call to aid from an old friend or the diabolical scheme of a villain might be the sorts of events that initiate

a story), in most scenes, these characters are not in focus. The majority of the time, the story that the group tells flows best if it is framed around the player characters and their perspectives, decisions, and actions.

Like other elements of the world outside of the PCs, NPCs are controlled and portrayed by the GM. Portraying a wide variety of characters can be a challenge, but it can also be one of the best parts of sitting in the GM's seat.

NPC Profile Breakdown

GMs can of course invent their own NPCs, but many printed materials provide premade NPCs, along with the various rules needed to run them in play. An NPC profile consists of the following elements:

- **NPC Type:** This denotes the importance of the NPC in the story. Minor characters are **minions**, who have simplified profiles for ease of use. More narratively significant characters are **adversaries**, who have rules more similar to those for a player character, so that the GM can more easily use them in a variety of situations.
- **Conflict Rank:** Each NPC has a rank in two categories (combat and intrigue). These ranks are broad estimates of the NPC's capabilities as an opponent in each of those spheres. See **Constructing Appropriate Conflicts with NPCs**, on page 192, for more details.
- **Rings:** Each NPC has a set of ring values, just as a player character does (see **The Five Rings**, on page 19). Note that NPCs can have ring values that a PC cannot possess.
- **Derived Attributes:** Each NPC has a set of attributes, just as a player character does (see **Derived Attributes**, on page 21). Note that NPC attribute values are assigned as needed to create appropriate opposition, rather than being derived from their ring values.
- **Advantages and Disadvantages:** Each NPC has one or more advantages and disadvantages (see page 60). NPCs can be given advantages and disadvantages from the **Advantages and Disadvantages** section of **Chapter 2: Creating a Character**, but printed NPC profiles usually have customized advantages and disadvantages that do not appear in that chapter. These advantages (or disadvantages) are treated as distinctions (or adversities), and they apply when the GM deems them appropriate (although an additional type has been assigned to NPC advantages and disadvantages to give inspiration on skill groups they're applicable to). They exist to add flavor to NPCs, and to let cunning PCs exploit the weaknesses (and strengths) of their adversaries!
- **Skill Ranks:** Each NPC has a number of ranks in skill groups or skills that apply to their checks as usual (see **Chapter 3: Skills**, on page 79).
- **Abilities:** NPCs possess abilities, which sometimes include techniques also available to player characters and at other times consist of wholly new powers and effects. An NPC's techniques sometimes differ from the versions available to player characters and function as they are described in the NPC's individual profile.
- **Demeanor:** It is important to remember that NPCs are more than just a set of rules and statistics! Even though they are supporting characters, NPCs can have interests, quirks, and desires that make them feel realized and compelling. **Demeanor** (see page 191) offers a simplified snapshot of an NPC's personality, providing a brief overview of their responses to different approaches to Social skills and of how they react to pressure.

NPC Types

There are two types of NPCs: minions and adversaries.

Minions

Minions are characters of lesser importance in the scope of the story: they might be minor characters in a town or village, or they might be disposable foes meant to be more of a speed bump than a challenging opponent to the average samurai. Because they have a smaller role in the story, they have simplified character profiles to help GMs get to the most pertinent information quickly. A group of seasoned PCs might face a numerically superior force of minions in a conflict with some regularity. Of course, some minions are more powerful than others—being a minion doesn't mean that a character is weak per se, but simply that their expected role in the story doesn't require a more complex set of rules.

Minions behave like other characters, with the following exceptions:

- When a minion's wounds exceed its resilience, it does not suffer any listed effects of the associated critical strike. If the severity of the critical strike it is dealt is 7 or higher, the minion is killed; otherwise, the minion merely suffers the Incapacitated and Unconscious conditions.
- If a minion is dealt a critical strike from any other source, the minion suffers a number of wounds equal to the severity of the critical strike instead.
- Minions do not receive the passive benefits from stances (see **Chapter 6: Scenes and Conflicts**). They still assume stances for the purpose of determining the rings they use for checks.
- Minions should only spend \spadesuit on options listed in their profile (generally under their **abilities**, as described below). The GM may waive this at their discretion under special circumstances, but it often helps conflicts run more smoothly.

Minion Profile Breakdown

Minions are denoted by the text "(Minion)" appended to their NPC profile. Minions have an altered profile, as discussed below:

Silhouette: The size of the NPC.

Derived Attributes: The resilience, composure, focus, and vigilance derived attributes are at the top of the minion profile for easy reference. Note that these are set at specific values based on the intended function of the NPC, rather than generated with a formula as they would be for a player character.

Rings: Each of the NPC's ring values is included.

Skills: Minions have ranks in entire skill groups, such as "Martial skills 1." This means that the minion possesses 1 rank in each Martial skill (Fitness, Martial Arts [Melee], Martial Arts [Ranged], Martial Arts [Unarmed], Meditation, and Tactics).

Void Points: Minions do not have (and thus cannot spend) Void points.

Advantages and Disadvantages: Minions generally possess only one or two advantages and disadvantages. These are the touchstones around which the rest of the minion is built (in the same way that one or two

NPC Squads

Having a large number of NPCs in a conflict can make it pretty chaotic for you as a GM, especially if each one has an initiative value. If you want to streamline handling a group of NPCs of the same type, you can treat them as a **squad**. Generally, you'll want to make squads of minion NPCs, since they'll be the bulk of unnamed participants in a skirmish, but there's no mechanical reason you couldn't have a squad of adversaries—they'd just be more complex to manage and likely more dangerous to the PCs.

Initiative: A squad consists of two or more NPCs with the same name and profile. They generate a single initiative value, and in any order within their group that you choose at that initiative value each round.

Group Actions: If you want to reduce the number of rolls the

squad makes, simply have all members of the squad but one take the Assist action targeting the one member who performs a different action. Having more than six NPCs in a squad is not advised, simply due to the size of the dice pools involved when they make assisted checks.

Group Stances: To help reduce complexity, all members of a squad should assume the same stance each round.

Group Strife: You can track strife individually for members of a squad, but if you prefer not to track each member of a squad's strife individually, you can give them a squad strife value equal to 2 or 3 times an individual member's composure (depending on how brave and organized they are). This can be helpful as a means to determine the point at which a group of undisciplined minions, such as bandits, might break and run, or at least fall back to lick their wounds.

adjectives is enough to describe a one-off NPC).

Honor, Glory, and Status: A minion's honor, glory, and status attributes are included here. Non-human NPCs typically do not have honor, glory, or status values.

Demeanor: Demeanor is a simple reflection of an NPC's likes, dislikes, and priorities. It means that certain social tactics will work better on the NPC than others, and it helps guide GMs when running these NPCs in intrigue conflicts.

Abilities: Minions often possess abilities. These abilities can encompass everything from innate quirks of creatures (like a boar's fury when it is wounded) to battle techniques of sentient beings (like the formation training possessed by ashigaru), but they are generally simpler than techniques.

Gear (Equipped): This section details any items the minion is likely to have on their person and prepared for use at all times.

Gear (Other): This section details any items that the minion possesses but might not have on hand or prepared for use at a moment's notice.

Adversaries

Adversaries are NPCs of substantial narrative significance. These might be rivals or powerful allies to the PCs, and they generally stand on the same footing as player characters. Their profiles are organized somewhat differently than a PC's profile for the GM's convenience, but each adversary is a match for one or more PCs in the adversary's arena of expertise. Adversaries behave like standard characters.

Adversary Profile Breakdown

Adversaries have an altered profile, as discussed below.

Silhouette: The size of the NPC.

Derived Attributes: The resilience, composure, focus, and vigilance derived attributes are at the top of the adversary profile for easy reference. Note that these are set at specific values based on the intended function of the NPC, rather than generated with a formula as they would be for a player character.

Rings: Each of the NPC's ring ranks is included.

Skills: Adversaries usually have ranks in entire skill groups, such as "Martial skills 1." This means that the adversary possesses 1 rank in each Martial skill (Fitness, Martial Arts [Melee], Martial Arts [Ranged], Martial Arts [Unarmed], Meditation, and Tactics). Adversaries can also have ranks in individual skills that exceed their ranks in that group, as the GM sees fit.

Void Points: Adversaries can accrue and spend Void points in the nor-

mal manner (see **Void Points**, on page 21). They always start with 1 Void point, like PCs, and they may gain more during scenes in which they appear.

Advantages and Disadvantages: The relevant advantages and disadvantages are included under each ring. One distinction, one adversity, one passion, and one anxiety is usually enough for a given adversary, and some NPCs might not even have one of each.

Demeanor: Demeanor is a simple reflection of an NPC's likes, dislikes, and priorities. It means that certain social tactics will work better on the NPC than others, and helps guide GMs when running these NPCs in intrigue conflicts.

Honor, Glory, and Status: An adversary's honor, glory, and status attributes are included. For named characters (rather than archetypal examples), this section often includes the particular character's ninjō, giri, and titles. Non-human NPCs typically do not have honor, glory, or status values.

Abilities: Adversaries can also possess abilities. These abilities can encompass innate quirks of a creature (like an oni's thick hide) or battle techniques of sentient beings (like a skilled courtier's vast pool of knowledge of clan politics). If the NPC has any school abilities or special techniques, they are listed here as well. For ease of use, adversary abilities are often simplified (or empowered) versions of standard techniques that have fewer (but more potent) options for ☸ than the versions used by PCs.

Gear (Equipped): This section details any items the adversary is likely to have on their person and prepared for use at all times.

Gear (Other): This section details any items that the adversary possesses, but might not have on hand or prepared for use at a moment's notice.

Demeanor

Each NPC profile includes a demeanor. A demeanor is a common personality type for characters of that sort, and it makes some Social skill checks easier while making others harder. Each demeanor lists an increase to the TN of Social skill checks with certain rings (" +1" or " +2") and a decrease to the TN of Social skill checks with other rings (" -1" or " -2"). This is to reflect the fact that some characters are much more resistant to particular avenues than others, and prone to certain types of outbursts when things do not go their way. Of course, GMs are encouraged to give individual NPCs unusual demeanors (or even invent new ones) to keep the PCs on their toes! Some of the animals included in this chapter have unique demeanors that represent their personalities as beasts.

Some common demeanors are as follows:

Assertive

This character is used to being in charge, and thus does not like being told what they can or cannot do (especially when the other person is right). However, they are more pliant when they think they are getting their way as a result.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Earth +2, Water -2

Outburst: Become Enraged (see **Outbursts**, on page 16)

Shrewd

This character is used to maneuvering around powerful people, and tends to avoid direct conflict. They are very wary of such efforts on the part of others as a result, however.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Water +2, Fire -2

Outburst: Expose a Weakness (see **Outbursts**, on page 16)

Ambitious

This character pursues power whenever possible and is extremely resistant to giving it up. However, they can be misled more easily thanks to their ambition, and they jump to believe facts that line up with their desires.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Fire +2, Earth -2

Outburst: Compromise (or Flee) (see **Outbursts**, on page 16)

Gruff

This character has a rough exterior and a no-nonsense attitude, and has little tolerance for frivolity, niceties, or trickery. A direct, honest approach generally garners the best results with such a person.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Air +2, Earth -2

Outburst: Inappropriate Remark (see **Outbursts**, on page 16)


Detached

This character is extremely meditative, spiritual, enlightened, or simply uninterested in other people.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Air +1, Earth +1, Fire +1, Water +1, Void -2

Outburst: Shut Down (see **Outbursts**, on page 16)

NPC Advantages and Disadvantages

NPCs have simplified advantages and disadvantages. Instead of having concrete rules, these advantages and disadvantages simply apply to checks with the listed ring and skill group. You can also have them apply to any other checks to which they logically apply. As with PC advantages and disadvantages, an NPC advantage can sometimes apply as a disadvantage if circumstances dictate (and vice versa). Additionally, if the PCs discover these advantages and disadvantages through careful observation or the use of , they can turn them against NPCs, as described on page 61.

These advantages and disadvantages are treated as distinctions and adversities, respectively, unless noted otherwise. Each one notes a skill group, which is the one to which it is most commonly applied (though it can be applied to checks from other skill groups at the GM's discretion), as well as any types and elemental association.

Using NPCs

The following is advice for getting the most out of NPCs in your campaigns.

Rolling for NPCs



While NPCs do periodically need to make checks, you can keep the following advice in mind when rolling dice for NPCs. Generally speaking, it is prudent to keep the resolution of NPC rolls quick, with a brief bit of narration as needed to help the players understand what is going on.



Closed Versus Open Rolls

As the GM, it's your choice whether you want to make a given roll for an NPC openly (in sight of the players) or closed (behind a screen or otherwise obscured). It's generally a good idea to make most rolls openly, because certain character abilities allow them to alter enemy rolls, but this isn't a hard-and-fast rule. Sometimes it can build tension to secretly roll for NPCs, or it can be useful for the story.

If a player wishes to use an ability that alters an enemy roll, you can perform the alteration for them on the NPC's dice pool (in an optimal manner for the player's desired outcome). If for some reason even this would give away too much information, you can give that character 1 Void point (and they do not count as having used the ability), but this is an option you probably shouldn't exercise too often.

Spending for NPCs

Because they roll the same Ring and Skill dice as PCs, NPCs also generate . As a GM, it might be easy to fall into the trap of agonizing over the many ways Adversary NPCs can spend their  (minions can only generally spend it on opportunities listed in their profile, as described on page 191).

As a rule of thumb, however, the best advice here is simple: don't overthink  when it comes to NPCs. If you think of something unique quickly, great—it can really add neat moments of flair to the story. But if thinking about how an adversary can spend  is taking you more than a few seconds, take a look at their profile, which should contain some specific options, and at the default narrative options on page 18. And if none of these seem to fit, just don't spend it. Sometimes, you only need to know if the NPC succeeded or failed on a check, and additional information isn't necessary.

Tracking NPC Strife

NPCs accumulate strife in the normal manner (see **Accumulating Strife**, on page 16). However, sometimes when handling numerous NPCs, it can be taxing to track NPC strife individually, especially for minion NPCs. See the guidance for using **NPC Squads** on page 191 for more about simplifying strife for groups of NPCs.

Constructing Appropriate Conflicts with NPCs

Because of the open-ended nature of character advancement in *Legend of the Five Rings*, it is difficult to generalize exactly how much of a challenge a given NPC will be as an opponent. A highly trained Doji Courtier might be no better at fighting than they were at the time of character creation, because they have never made martial arts training a priority. Meanwhile, with the same amount of experience, a character from the same school could well have invested their experience broadly in becoming knowledgeable, well-spoken, and skilled at arms, and thus perform modestly in all spheres but excel in none of them. This means that alone, these two characters would be able to tackle very different sets (and difficulties) of challenges.

However, when taken as a group, a party of PCs can generally be

expected to have certain capabilities at a given school rank. More well-rounded characters provide less power but are very consistent, while more focused characters provide more efficacy but under narrower circumstances.

To give GMs a rough idea of an NPC's efficacy, each sample NPC profile has a conflict rank for both combat and intrigue. For the above reasons, these estimates cannot be especially precise, but they are a useful guideline when deciding how many foes to hurl at the player characters.

Determine Total Conflict Rank

To estimate how challenging a conflict scene will be, determine if it is a combat scene (a skirmish, duel, or other clash of arms) or an social conflict scene (an intrigue or other battle of wits), then take the sum of the conflict ranks in that category for all NPCs opposing the PCs. This is the **encounter rank**.

Gauging Encounter Rank for Your Party

To estimate the appropriateness of this conflict scene for the party, take the sum of the party's school ranks (the **party rank**). **Table 8-1: Encounter Rank versus Party Rank** gives guidance on how these two should compare.

Table 8-1: Encounter Rank versus Party Rank

Encounter Rank Is...	Encounter Difficulty
...roughly equal to party rank	The PCs are roughly matched with the encounter. They will likely prevail, but they could certainly still lose, especially if the dice forsake them.
...1.5–2 times party rank	The PCs are significantly outmatched by the encounter. Victory will probably require clever maneuvering or shifting their goals from a heedless all-out attack to a strategic victory.
...1/2 of party rank	The PCs are likely at a significant advantage. It might be worth adding stronger NPCs, giving the enemies improved equipment, or making another adjustment to even the odds and make the clash more exciting

Adding Adversary Templates

If the GM wishes to use one of the generic profiles to represent a named NPC, the GM can add advantages and disadvantages to reflect that character's unique strengths and weaknesses, alter the character's demeanor, and increase or decrease the character's rings and ranks in skills. The templates in this section provide some structure for doing so, allowing a GM to quickly add extra flavor to a named NPC for whom they are using a generic profile. However, these options are hardly all-encompassing. When creating profiles for characters they will portray, GMs should feel free to create their own templates or simply add, remove, or alter advantages, disadvantages, and other aspects of NPC profiles as they see fit!

Artistic

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Fire

Skills: +1 Artisan and Social skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Eye for Detail (Air) [Artisan], Renowned Artist (Fire) [Artisan], Steady Hand (Earth) [Artisan]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Cantankerous (Water) [Social], Naiveté (Fire) [Social], World-Weariness (Earth) [Social]

Demeanor: Gruff or Detached

Twists of Fate

As the GM, most of the time, you should let the dice lie where they fall. If the PCs happen to catch the intended main villain of the story flatfooted and vanquish them in battle earlier than expected, this can be an interesting turn that keeps the story exciting for you, too! Perhaps one (or even several) of the villains' lieutenants rise to fill the power vacuum—and, as it turns out, they are actually more cunning or dangerous than their former master! Maybe someone close to the villain swears revenge upon the PCs, and the PCs must now contend with an antagonist who is not a villain per se, but views the PCs as a source of injustice in the world. Or perhaps the PCs had not yet proved the villain's evil to their own lord and must now undertake the far more difficult task of proving the guilt of a dead person to show their master that they acted honorably.

However, there are times when it is not narratively satisfying to have a character fall in battle at a particular time. If a PC's ninjō is to take revenge on a specific individual, having a different PC kill that character during a seemingly minor skirmish might be very anticlimactic. Or perhaps the PC has yet to discover that the villain is the long-lost parent they have been seeking, and the battle does not yet have the appropriate stakes set up. Every once in a while, it really is best for the story if an adversary gets away to fight another day.

As the GM, you could always stipulate that an adversary escapes, but when delivered by fiat, this often feels unfair to the players. As a result, if you want an NPC to escape what should be certain death, we recommend invoking a **twist of fate**. When you call upon a twist of fate, tell the players that you are doing so and narrate what happens. Do reinforcements appear to drag the enemy leader away for medical attention? Does a candle knocked down earlier in the battle ignite the building, forcing everyone to retreat? Does the fraying rope-bridge collapse, spilling both combatants into the river far below? Does the PCs' lord arrive in desperate need of their assistance, cutting off the chase? These circumstances should make it impossible for the PCs to pursue, and you should ask the players to accept that this is in the best interest of the story. After you do so, each PC immediately gains 1 Void point. Further, at the end of the game session, each PC receives 1 additional XP, to reflect their having gone above and beyond to overcome a challenge unexpectedly. You can feel free to note to the players that this is XP they would not have received had they slain their foe or otherwise brought them to justice.

Generally speaking, twists of fate should be saved for special circumstances, and used sparingly to keep them exciting and unexpected!

Crafty

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Air

Skills: +1 Social and Scholar skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Excellent Liar (Air) [Social], Patience (Earth) [Scholar], Haggling (Water) [Trade]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Fear of Failure (Fire) [Martial], Narcissistic (Earth) [Social], Unmemorable Face (Air) [Social]

Demeanor: Ambitious or Shrewd

Gregarious

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Water

Skills: +1 Social and Trade skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Well-Spoken (Air) [Social], Prim (Earth) [Social], Seemingly Trustworthy (Water) [Social]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Doomed Love (Fire) [Social], Lack of Empathy (Air) [Social], Bad Eyesight (Water) [Scholar]

Demeanor: Assertive or Shrewd

Knowledgeable

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Earth

Skills: +1 Scholar and Trade skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Forbidden Knowledge [Mahō] (Fire) [Scholar], Exact Memory (Earth) [Scholar], Well-Read (Fire) [Scholar]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Bitter Marriage (Water) [Social], Know-It-All (Air) [Social], Frailty (Earth) [Martial]

Demeanor: Detached or Shrewd

Warlike

Conflict Rank: Combat +1, Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Fire

Skills: +1 Martial and Social skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Master of Many Arms (Earth) [Martial], Fear-some Presence (Fire) [Social], Veteran's Instincts (Water) [Scholar]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Bad Dreams (Void) [Martial], Quick to Anger (Fire) [Social], Shattered by War (Earth) [Social]

Demeanor: Assertive or Gruff

Perceptive

Conflict Rank: Combat +1, Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Air

Skills: +1 Martial and Scholar Skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Analytical Mind (Fire) [Scholar], Self-Awareness (Void) [Martial], Sharp Eyes (Water) [Scholar]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Disbeliever (Fire) [Social], Haughty Tone (Air) [Social], Severe Allergy (Earth) [Martial]

Demeanor: Gruff or Shrewd

Spiritual

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +1

Ring: +1 Void

Skills: +1 Artisan and Scholar Skills

Advantages (choose 0–2): Partial Enlightenment (Void) [Scholar], Empathy (Air) [Social], Friendly Kami or Spirit (Fire, Earth, Air, or Water) [Scholar]

Disadvantages (choose 0–2): Poverty (Water) [Trade], Fanaticism (Fire) [Social], Suppressed Emotions (Fire) [Social]

Demeanor: Detached

Sample NPCs

The following profiles are intended to provide GMs with a basic set of options for the non-player characters in their *Legend of the Five Rings* games.

Humans

In most campaigns, humans will likely make up the majority of NPCs. While there are other sentient species in the Emerald Empire, they tend to live in enclaves, hidden away in the shadows of Rokugan or in the places where the borders between physical and spiritual realms grow blurriest.

Peasant (Minion)

Most of Rokugan's inhabitants are peasants. These hardworking people live their lives largely beneath the notice of samurai (except when it comes time to collect taxes from them), and yet without their toil, society would not exist.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	2	1	4	4
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			3	2
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
1	1		0	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue 1

Skills: Social 1, Trade 1

Advantages: Salt of the Earth (Earth) [Trade; Interpersonal, Physical]

Disadvantages: Deferential (Water) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Shrewd (Fire -2, Water +2)

Typical Outburst: Expose a Weakness

Honor: 20 **Glory:** 30 **Status:** 15

Abilities: None

Gear (equipped): Rags, cloth headband, shoddy farm equipment, a handful of zeni.

Ashigaru (Minion)

Most armies consist of a small number of samurai who form elite units and the command cadre. They are backed by a large number of ashigaru: levied or even career soldiers who serve the Great Clans but are drawn from the lower classes. Many ashigaru are veteran campaigners, and some are expertly skilled in the arts of battle—though the profile here reflects an especially average rank-and-file soldier rather than a particularly notable warrior among the ashigaru.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	2	1	6	5
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	1	3	2	
PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES			
3	0			

Conflict Rank: Combat 2, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 1, Social 1, Trade 1


Advantages: Strength in Numbers (Water) [Martial; Physical, Mental]

Disadvantages: Jaded by Battle (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Gruff (Earth +2, Air -2)

Typical Outburst: Inappropriate Remark

Honor: 25 **Glory:** 10 **Status:** 19

Abilities: Rank Tactics (When an ashigaru provides assistance (see page 15) to the Martial skill check of another character at range 0–2, that character adds one kept die showing a  result instead of rolling an additional die.)

Gear (equipped): Yari (Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear), peasant's garb, ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear), helmet, a handful of zeni and bu.

Bandit (Minion)

Wherever there are people, there are some who prey upon those weaker than themselves. In times of famine, plague, or war, many peasants and even some samurai turn to banditry, taking at swordpoint what they cannot otherwise acquire. Most bandits in Rokugan are ill-trained, ill-mannered ruffians. Many fall into the life because they lack better prospects; others have always had a knack for unsavory work, or even enjoy it.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	2	2	5	6
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			4	2
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
2	1		1	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 1, Trade 1

Advantages: Nothing to Lose (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Only in It for the Money (Water) [Social; Interpersonal, Mental]

Demeanor: Gruff (Air -2, Earth +2)

Typical Outburst: Inappropriate Remark

Honor: 15 **Glory:** 05 **Status:** 01

Abilities: Ambush Tactics (When performing an Attack action against a target with the Dazed or Disoriented condition, increase any damage dealt by 2.)

Gear (equipped): Yari (Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear) or yumi (Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3), worn robes (Physical 1, Damaged, Mundane), sake jug (empty), a pouch containing a handful of zeni.

Experienced Bandit (Adversary)

Bandits and other criminals who are successful for more than a short time are usually those who are good at talking others into taking the most extreme risks their dangerous lifestyle entails, and using their less cunning comrades for all they are worth. Failing that, they tend to be fast on their feet—at least, faster than the other bandits.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	2	9	8
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			6	3
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
3	1		2	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 2, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 2, Trade 1, Social 1

Advantages: Fleet of Foot (Air) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Fool's Avarice (Water) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Ambitious (Air -2, Fire +2)

Typical Outburst: Compromise

Honor: 10 **Glory:** 10 **Status:** 05

Abilities: Dirty Tricks (When performing an Attack action check, an experienced bandit may spend 1 in the following way:

1: One character at range 0–2 suffers the Disoriented condition.)

Gear (equipped): Katana (Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged), ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear), sake jug (half empty), a pouch containing a handful of bu.

Bandit Lord (Adversary)

While most bandits end their career when they grow too old (or too wise) for its risks or they are finally served justice, some reach a venerable age while still pursuing their criminal endeavors. The oldest bandit in a group is not always the most dangerous, but reaching a certain age often is a good indicator of a degree of experience, cleverness, and sheer will to survive among criminals.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
4	4	2	14	10
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			6	4
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
3	1		3	—

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 3

Skills: Martial 3, Scholar 1, Social 2

Advantages: Good Liar (Air) [Social; Interpersonal], Fast Draw (Air) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Arrogance (Fire) [Social; Interpersonal, Mental]

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water -2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 05 **Glory:** 15 **Status:** 01

Abilities: "... Get Them" (As an action, a bandit lord may have up to two bandits or experienced bandits immediately move 1 range band and perform a Strike action. They count as having skilled assistance (see page 15) on this check.)

Age and Cunning (When performing an Attack action check, a bandit lord may spend 1 in the following way:

1: One character at range 0–2 suffers the Disoriented or Dazed condition.)

Gear (equipped): Katana (Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged) or yari (Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear) or tetsubō (Range 1, Damage 8, Deadliness 3, Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear), yumi (Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3), ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear), sake jug (full), a pouch containing a handful of bu.

Rōnin (Adversary)

Rōnin are masterless samurai, and thus exist in a strange place in society: they are of the warrior class, but they lack prestige, financial backing, and the privilege of status. They fight for money, but nominally do so for noble ends. Thus, the line between rōnin, mercenaries, itinerant laborers, and bandits can be indistinct, and it often shifts depending on whether a rōnin can find legitimate work at a given time. What sets a rōnin apart from any other rootless warrior is honor: a desire, on some level, to uphold Bushidō and its virtues in the way of the samurai class.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	3	3	9	11
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			5	3
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
2	2		1	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 3, Scholar 1, Trade 2

Advantages: Killer Instinct (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Rude (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Detached (Void -2, Fire +1, Earth +1)

Typical Outburst: Shut Down

Honor: 30 **Glory:** 40 **Status:** 20

Abilities: School of the Wolf (Once per round, when an Attack action check targeting the rōnin succeeds, the rōnin may spend 1 Void point to change the target to another character (other than the attacker) at range 0–1 of the rōnin.)

Gear (equipped): Daishō (wakizashi [Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged] and katana [Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged]) or one other weapon, worn robes (Physical 1, Damaged, Mundane), empty sake jug, straw hat, a pouch containing a handful of koku, bu, and zeni.

Techniques**Iaijutsu**

Activation: As an Attack action using one sheathed katana or wakizashi, the rōnin may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] check** targeting one character at range 1–2.

Effects: The rōnin draws and readies the sheathed katana or wakizashi in a one-handed grip.

If the rōnin succeeds, they deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's deadliness plus their bonus successes.

Striking as Water

Activation: When the rōnin makes a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or

Unarmed] (Water) check, the rōnin may spend ☸ in the following way:

- **Water ☸+:** For this Attack, treat targets' physical resistance as 2 lower per ☸ spent this way.

Warrior Monk (Adversary)

Monastic orders are fairly common throughout Rokugan, especially in the lands of the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Although these individuals dedicate themselves to many different religious faiths and philosophical doctrines, they are consistent in their renunciation of worldly affairs and search for greater truth within the universe and themselves. Some monks train in the arts of battle to unify their bodies and minds, and even wield powerful kihō, unlocking their inner energy to shape the universe around them.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE	
4	2	3	10	12	
FIRE		VOID		FOCUS	VIGILANCE
2		3		4	3
				PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
				1	3

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 3

Skills: Martial 3, Scholar 2, Social 2, Artisan 1

Advantages: Hardened Physique (Earth) [Martial; Physical], Inner Peace (Void) [Social; Mental, Spiritual]

Disadvantages: Brutally Honest (Earth) [Social; Interpersonal]

Demeanor: Detached (Void -2, Fire +1, Earth +1)

Typical Outburst: Shut Down

Honor: 55 **Glory:** 45 **Status:** 25

Abilities: Practiced Ritualist (Once per game session, a warrior monk may perform any one ritual technique [see **Rituals**, on page 132]).

Techniques

Earthen Fist

Activation: As an Attack action, a warrior monk may activate this kihō. The warrior monk makes a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check** to deliver an unarmed strike targeting one character at range 0–1.

Immediate Effect: If the warrior monk succeeds, they deal 4 physical damage to the target, and the target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 2, Water 4) check** or suffer the Prone condition.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, treat the base damage of the warrior monk's unarmed profile as being increased by 4, or 8 if the target is Prone.

The Great Silence

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, the warrior monk may activate this kihō. The warrior monk makes a **TN 3 Command (Air) check** to create an area of silence around them.

Immediate Effects: If the warrior monk succeeds, characters at range 0–4 produce no noise and cannot hear. Invocations and mahō cannot be performed in this area, for even the kami cannot hear the shugenja's call. This effect persists until the beginning of the warrior monk's next turn.

Kihō Effect: While this kihō is active, increase the TN of any Scheme action checks targeting the warrior monk by 3.

Gear (equipped): Monk's robes (Physical 1), walking staff (Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, Mundane).

Veteran Bushi (Adversary)

Samurai dedicated to warfare, bushi defend the interests of their clans and the Chrysanthemum Throne across Rokugan. The finest of these warriors serve as yōjimbō to their lords, command squadrons in battle, or captain garrisons of ashigaru and other troops. Trained in precision and perseverance, armed with the best equipment available, and honed in battle, an experienced bushi is a dangerous opponent even when outnumbered or caught off guard.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	2	12	9
FIRE		VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
3		2	5	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			4	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 3, Scholar 2, Social 1 or Artisan 1

Advantages: Battle-Hardened Toughness (Earth) [Martial; Mental, Physical], Precise Aim (Air) [Martial; Physical], Sworn to Bushidō (Void) [Social; Mental]

Disadvantages: Hot-Tempered (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Assertive

Social Skill Check Modifiers: Earth +2, Water -2

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 55 **Glory:** 50 **Status:** 39

Abilities: Sworn Protector (Once per round, when an Attack action check targeting another character at range 0–1 succeeds, a bushi may spend 1 Void point to intervene. The bushi becomes the target of the attack instead of the original target.)

Gear (equipped): Daishō (katana [Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged] and wakizashi [Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged]), yari (Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear) or naginata (Range 2, Damage 6, Deadliness 6, Cumbersome, Razor-Edged, Wargear), yumi (Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3), knife (Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 4, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-edged), lacquered armor (Physical 4, Ceremonial, Wargear).

Gear (other): Plain robes (Physical 1, Mundane).

Techniques

Crescent Moon Style

When performing the Cemter (see page 162) or Guard action (see page 165) using a sword, the bushi may spend ☸ in the following way:

- ☸: Until the beginning of the bushi's next turn, after a character at range 1–2 performs an Attack action targeting the bushi or another character the bushi is guarding, the bushi may perform a Strike action targeting them.

Striking as Fire

When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) check, you may spend ☸ in the following way:

- **Fire ☸+:** If the bushi succeeds, one target who would have suffered 1 or more wounds instead suffers a critical strike with severity of 3 plus 1 per ☸ spent this way beyond the first.

Seasoned Courtier (Adversary)

While some conflicts are settled on the fields of battle, the vast majority of strikes and feints between the Great Clans of Rokugan take place at court. The clans that control the ear of the Emperor enjoy vast favor, and all clans rely upon their courtiers to advance their agendas, orchestrate alliances through marriages and pacts of allegiance, and undermine their foes' reputations and positions. While courtiers are rarely as skilled in personal combat as bushi, they are no less deadly. People live and die by their words as much as by the swords of bushi.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	3	4	6	12
	FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
	2	2	6	2
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			1	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue 5

Skills: Social 3, Artisan 3, Scholar 2

Advantages: Unfailing Politeness (Air) [Social; Interpersonal], Wealth and Resources (Water) [Trade; Material]

Disadvantages: Sheltered from War (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Demeanor: Shrewd (Fire -2, Water +2)

Typical Outburst: Expose a Weakness

Honor: 60

Glory: 50

Status: 39

Abilities: Prey on the Unready (When making a Social skill check targeting a Dazed character, reduce the TN by 1.)

Gear (equipped): Wakizashi (Range 0-1, Damage 4, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged), extravagant robes (Physical 1, Ceremonial), calligraphy set, tea set.

Techniques**All in Jest**

Activation: When you make a Commerce (Water), Courtesy (Water), or Performance (Water) check, you may spend 1 in the following way:

- Water 1:** Regain 1 glory the courtier forfeit for saying something rude or for appealing to your target's base desires (greed, lust, laziness, etc.) per 1 spent this way (see **Forfeiting Honor, Glory, or Status**, on page 22).

Fanning the Flames

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, the courtier may spend 1 in the following way:

- Fire 1:** One target gains the Dazed condition per 1 spent this way.

Scholarly Shugenja (Adversary)

The elite priests of the samurai class, shugenja are trained by secretive schools within each of the Great Clans and some Minor Clans. Every shugenja is privy to secrets unknown even to the vast majority of priests and other clergy across the Empire, and each school works hard to hide the full extent of its mystic knowledge from the others, lest they find weaknesses or ways to use it for themselves. As a result, these insular groups are fiercely competitive with one another, and each calls to the kami in a unique way, whether with words of ancient power, through alchemical concoctions or woven enchantments, or even by the intercession of ancestral spirits.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	3	10	12
	FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
	3	2	6	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			1	3

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 3

Skills: Scholar 3, Social 2 or Artisan 2, Marital 1

Advantages: Mystical Insight (Void) [Scholar; Spiritual]

Disadvantages: Sheltered Scholar (Earth) [Martial; Physical, Mental]

Demeanor: Ambitious (Air -2, Fire +2)

Typical Outburst: Compromise

Honor: 55

Glory: 60

Status: 39

Abilities: Elemental Alignment and Deficiency (Choose one element (other than Void); the shugenja gains the "Elemental Alignment [Scholar; Spiritual]" advantage for that ring, empowering their invocations using that element. Then, choose a different element (other than Void); the shugenja gains the "Elemental Deficiency [Scholar; Spiritual]" disadvantage for that ring, interfering with their invocations using that element.)

Disciple of Secret Lore (Choose zero to five additional invocations (see page 116) and zero to three additional rituals (see page 132) that this shugenja can perform. Add 1 to this character's combat rank for each invocation of rank 3 or higher chosen this way.)

Gear (equipped): Wakizashi (Range 0-1, Damage 4, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged), sanctified robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 3, Ceremonial), scroll satchel, pack of offerings.

Techniques**The Fires from Within**

Activation: As an Attack action, the shugenja may make a TN 3 Theology (Fire) check targeting up to three characters at range 1-3.

Effects: If the shugenja succeeds, each target suffers supernatural damage equal to the shugenja's bonus successes plus 3.

Opportunities:

1: Choose 1 additional target 1 per 1 spent this way.

1: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per 1 spent this way.

Path to Inner Peace

Activation: As a Support action, the shugenja may make a TN 2 Theology (Water) check to target a character at range 0-2.

Effects: If the shugenja succeeds, each target heals wounds equal to 3 plus the shugenja's bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Path to Inner Peace invocation again until the end of the scene.

Opportunities:

1: Choose 1 additional target 1 per 1 spent this way.

Spirits

Shugenja and their allies may encounter manifest elemental kami when they have been summoned or when a kami is in great distress.

Manifest Earth Kami (Adversary)

When they take physical form, earth kami often shape bodies of stone for themselves, appearing as statues of warlike Fortunes or the sacred beasts that guard ancient shrines and tombs. These beings are powerful, wise, and slow to anger—but their wrath is that of an avalanche, and once started, it cannot be stopped.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
6	1	2	12	8
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	1	4	3	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		5	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 8, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 2, Trade 3, Scholar 3

Advantages: Massive Stature (Earth) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Honest to a Fault (Earth) [Social; Mental], Extremely Literal (Earth) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Gruff (Water +2, Earth –2)

Typical Outburst: Inappropriate Remark

Abilities: Silhouette (3)

Burrow (As a Movement action, a manifest earth kami may withdraw into the ground. It cannot be targeted by effects or perform actions other than Eruption while burrowed.)

Living Earth Spirit (Once per scene as an action of the appropriate type, a manifest earth kami may perform any one Earth invocation technique [see **Earth Invocations**, on page 121].)

Gear (equipped): Crushing fists (Range 0–2, Damage 6, Deadline 4, deals physical or supernatural damage), stony hide.

Techniques

Eruption

As an Attack action, while burrowed, a manifest earth kami may burst forth from the ground at a chosen point at range 0–3 from where it originally burrowed in. Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen point must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check** or suffer 6 physical damage and the Prone condition.

Manifest Air Kami (Adversary)

When air kami abandon subtlety to act directly upon the world, they are terrifying to behold—the twisting storm, howling with rage and fury. Their form is that of a many-armed whirlwind, flickering hands reaching out to toss about loose items, and it can grow or shrink in an instant to serve the entity's needs.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
1	2	6	10	6
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			8	2
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
2	1		3	3

Conflict Rank: Combat 7, Intrigue 5

Skills: Martial 2, Social 5, Scholar 2

Advantages: Variable Size (Air) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Short Memory (Air) [Scholar; Mental], Easily Distracted (Air) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Shrewd (Earth +2, Fire –2)

Typical Outburst: Expose a Weakness

Abilities: Silhouette (1–5)

Flight (A manifest air kami can move vertically and ignores the negative effects of terrain [see **Terrain**, on page 167].)

Living Air Spirit (Once per scene as an action of the appropriate type, a manifest air kami may perform any one Air invocation technique [see **Air Invocations**, on page 117].)

Gear (equipped): Talons of air (Range 2–3, Damage 4, Deadline 6, deals supernatural damage), swirling form.

Techniques

Swoop

When performing an Attack action, a manifest air kami may spend ✨ as follows:

✨+: Move one range band away from the target per ✨ spent this way. If the target is of silhouette 5 or smaller, the air kami may carry it to its destination instead.

Manifest Fire Kami (Adversary)

Energy given form, a manifest fire kami usually appears as a humanoid shape. Clothed in a robe of smoke and with blazing skin, it is the harbinger of destruction but also of renewal. While they are intelligent and knowledgeable, fire kami are notoriously single-minded once they have taken form, seeking only to consume everything within their reach before sputtering out.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	1	2	12	3
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
6	1	4	1	
PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES			
2	2			

Conflict Rank: Combat 9, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 3, Social 1, Scholar 5

Advantages: Primal Terror (Fire) [Social; Interpersonal]

Disadvantages: Extremely Direct (Fire) [Social; Mental], Endless Hunger (Fire) [Scholar; Mental, Physical]

Demeanor: Assertive (Air +2, Water –2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Abilities: Silhouette: 3

Mantle of Smoke and Ash (Other characters treat the area at range 0–1 of the manifest fire kami as Dangerous and Obscuring terrain [see Terrain, on page 167].)

Living Fire Spirit (Once per scene as an action of the appropriate type, a manifest fire kami may perform any one Fire invocation technique [see **Fire Invocations**, on page 124].)

Gear (equipped): Blazing touch (Range 1–3, Damage 6, Deadliness 4, deals supernatural damage), flaming form.

Techniques

Searing Caress

When performing an Attack action, a manifest fire kami may spend ✨ as follows:

✨+: The target and up to one other character per ✨ spent this way at range 0–1 of the target suffer the Burning condition (see page 170).

Manifest Water Kami (Adversary)

Water kami usually take the form of a humanoid torso rising from a source of water; if they have legs, these are often obscured within the water or become visible only if the kami stride onto land. The forms of these kami shift and change as circumstances require, and they can even split themselves to act in multiple places at once and reabsorb damaged copies to restore their own vitality.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	6	2	12	8
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			8	2
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			1	5

Conflict Rank: Combat 7, Intrigue 4

Skills: Martial 2, Social 5, Scholar 2

Advantages: Liquid Body (Water) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Without Convictions (Water) [Social; Mental], Loves Shiny Baubles (Water) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Ambitious (Air –2, Fire +2)

Typical Outburst: Compromise

Abilities: Silhouette (1–5)

Split (Once per round, after a manifest water kami suffers wounds, it may split in two. The two new manifest water kami each have a resilience equal to half that of the original [rounded up], and any wounds it had suffered are divided evenly [rounded up]. Then, both may remove any conditions the original was suffering. All of them act during the original water kami's turn, in the order of the GM's choosing.)

Absorb (Once per round, after performing an action, a manifest water kami may absorb another manifest water kami [or another suitably large source of water] at range 0–1, healing 6 wounds and increasing its resilience by 3.)

Living Water Spirit (Once per scene as an action of the appropriate type, a manifest water kami may perform any one Water invocation technique [see **Water Invocations**, on page 128]. A water kami who has divided one or more times can still only perform one invocation this way per scene.)

Gear (equipped): Smashing torrent (Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 4, deals supernatural damage), form of shifting water.

Animals

Many animals can be found in the Emerald Empire. Some are hunted for meat or sport, others are domesticated.

Boar (Adversary)

Ferocious and territorial, boars are dangerous game indeed.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	2	2	9	4
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			6	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			3	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 5, Intrigue –

Skills: Martial 2, Nature 2, Survival 3

Advantages: Territorial (Earth) [Martial; Mental], Keen Sense of Smell (Earth) [Scholar; Physical]

Disadvantages: Hot-Tempered (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Territorial (Earth +2, Water –2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Abilities: Silhouette (2)

Enrage (Each time a boar suffers 1 or more wounds, it suffers 1 strife.)

Sustaining Fury (A boar cannot suffer the Incapacitated or Unconscious condition while it has the Enraged condition.)

Gear (equipped): Deadly tusks (Range 0, Damage 7, Deadlines 7, Natural, Durable), thick hide (Physical 3).

Unicorn Warhorse (Adversary)

The Unicorn Clan brought back magnificent warhorses from their travels abroad, and these beasts quickly became storied across the Emerald Empire.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	4	2	12	8
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			4	2
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			3	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue –

Skills: Nature 1, Survival 2

Advantages: Tireless Runner (Earth) [Martial; Physical], Bred for War (Fire) [Martial; Mental, Physical]

Disadvantages: None

Demeanor: Domesticated (Earth –1, Fire +1)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (3)

Noble Steed (A horse can be ridden by a human-sized rider. A character may mount or dismount from a horse at range 0–1 as an action.

While it is being ridden during a conflict, a mount does not take a turn of its own, but provides the following benefits to its rider:

- Increase the rider's bonus successes on Movement action checks by the value of the horse's Water Ring (4).
- The rider may use their Survival skill in place of their Fitness skill for Fitness checks they make while mounted.

During narrative and downtime scenes, a character riding a horse doubles their overland travel speed.)

Warhorse (A Unicorn warhorse always provides assistance to its rider on Martial Arts [Melee] checks made while on horseback.)

Gear (equipped): Iron-shod hooves (Range 2, Damage 7, Deadliness 6).

Rokugani Pony (Minion)

There were horses in Rokugan before the Unicorn Clan returned with their foreign-bred steeds, although the Unicorn often insinuate that the native horses hardly qualify as such. Still, these creatures are intelligent and domesticated, if not nearly as selectively bred for battle and long rides across great distances. On a journey, however, few would deny their value as pack animals or for the companionship they provide on the lonely road.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	2	10	6
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			3	3
FIRE	VOID		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
2	1		2	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue –

Skills: Nature 1, Survival 2

Advantages: Sure-footed (Earth) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Skittish (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Demeanor: Domesticated (Earth –1, Fire +1)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (3)

Steed (A Rokugani pony can be ridden by a human-sized rider. A character may mount a Rokugani pony at range 0–1 or dismount from a Rokugani pony as an action.

While it is being ridden during a conflict, a mount does not take a turn of its own, but provides the following benefits to its rider:

- Increase the rider's bonus successes on Movement action checks by the value of the horse's Water Ring (3).
- The rider may use their Survival skill in place of their Fitness skill for Fitness checks they make while mounted.

During narrative and downtime scenes, a character riding a Rokugani pony doubles their overland travel speed.)

Gear (equipped): Hooves (Range 2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, Natural).

Wolf (Minion)

The wolves of Rokugan are large, powerful predators that hunt in packs. They are not especially predisposed to hunt humans, for they instinctively recognize the danger humans pose, though wolves have been known to opportunistically feast upon the dead and dying in the wake of large battles. They do frequently target the livestock of farmers who live on the edges of the wild, which can lead to clashes with humans who try to drive them off or exterminate them in reprisal. Rōnin often jokingly claim the Wolf as their clan, for they too congregate at sites where conflict is brewing in the hopes of winning their next meal.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	2	5	4
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	1	5	4	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		1	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 2, Intrigue –

Skills: Martial Arts [Unarmed] 2, Nature 3, Survival 4

Advantages: Loyal to the Pack (Earth) [Social; Interpersonal, Mental], Keen Sense of Smell (Water) [Trade; Physical]

Disadvantages: Opportunist [Martial]

Demeanor: Feral (Air +2, Fire –2)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (2)

Gear (equipped): Teeth (Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 2, Natural).

Techniques

Tendon Rip

When performing a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check, a wolf may spend ❸ in the following way.

- **Water ❸:** The target suffers the Bleeding and Immobilized conditions.

Circle the Kill

When performing a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check against a target with the Bleeding or Immobilized condition, a wolf may spend ❸ as follows:

- **Air ❸:** Move up to two range bands away from the target.
- **Fire ❸:** The target suffers 3 strife.

Hawk (Minion)

Hawks and other raptors are airborne predators. Hawks are majestic, graceful creatures, and many samurai see a certain kinship with these lords of the skies. Some even tame them for sport hunting, especially those who view themselves as too refined for the rough and dangerous hunts for boar, deer, bears, and wolves.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
1	2	4	3	4
	FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
	2	1	5	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			0	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue –

Skills: Martial Arts [Unarmed] 2, Nature 2, Survival 3

Advantages: Keen Sight (Air) [Scholar; Physical]

Disadvantages: None

Demeanor: Domesticated (Earth –1, Fire +1)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (1)

Flight (A hawk may move vertically, and it ignores the negative effects of terrain [see Terrain, on page 167].)

*Techniques***Swoop**

When performing an Attack action, a hawk may spend ♫ as follows:

♫+: Move 1 range band away from the target per ♫ spent this way. If the target is of silhouette 0 or smaller, the hawk may carry it to its destination instead.

Gear (equipped): Talons (Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 5, Natural).

Dog (Minion)

Dogs are domesticated kin to wolves, and they come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Extremely devoted to humans, they assist with a variety of tasks, including acting as guards, serving as trackers and hunters, and even fighting on the battlefield alongside their masters in some extreme cases. The Moto family of the Unicorn Clan breeds particularly large, vicious war hounds; several of these beasts working together are easily capable of bringing down a warrior in armor and rending their throat in a few heartbeats.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	1	3	5
	FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
	3	1	3	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			0	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue –

Skills: Nature 2, Sentiment 1, Survival 1

Advantages: Keen Sense of Smell (Water)[Trade; Physical], Unwavering Loyalty (Earth) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Overly Trusting [Social]

Demeanor: Domesticated (Earth –1, Fire +1)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (1 or 2)

Various Sizes (Dogs come in a variety of sizes, from small hounds for rabbit hunting to massive beasts bred for battle or to assist with hard labor. Choose one of the following for a dog:

- **Large Dog:** The dog is silhouette 2. Increase its physical resistance by 1 and its resilience by 2.
- **Small Dog:** The dog is silhouette 1. Increase its vigilance by 1.

Working Companion (Choose one Trade skill. When the dog provides assistance on a check with this skill, it counts as providing skilled assistance.)

Gear (equipped): Teeth (Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 2, Natural).

Cat (Minion)

Cats are small, furry felines that have cunningly shaped human society to fulfill their needs over generations of adaptation. In Rokugan, they often reside as companions in the homes of samurai and peasants alike, providing their nominal owners with entertainment, pest control, and occasional affection.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
1	2	3	3	8
	FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE
	2	1	5	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			0	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue –

Skills: Martial Arts [Unarmed] 1, Nature 1, Survival 3

Advantages: Natural Hunter (Water) [Martial, Trade; Mental, Physical], Feline Flexibility (Air) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Hubris (Fire) [Social; Interpersonal]

Demeanor: Mostly Domesticated (Water –1, Air +1)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Abilities: Silhouette (1)

Gear (equipped): Teeth and claws (Range 0, Damage 1, Deadliness 2, Natural).

*Techniques***Pounce**

When performing an Attack action against an unaware or Prone target, a cat may spend ♫ as follows:

♫: The target suffers the Disoriented condition.

Shadowlands Creatures

The Shadowlands are filled to the brim with terrifying creatures that are corrupted by the power of Jigoku and bound to the will of Fu Leng, the fallen Kami. From the walking dead to massive Trolls to unspeakable oni, there is no end to the horrors a samurai might face in these lands of darkness.

Zombie Peasant (Minion)

Rokugani funerary rites involve cremation. Despite the difficulty of doing so in many places, this is afforded even to the lowliest members of society—for in Rokugan, the dead do not sleep soundly, and ancient stories tell of the days when powerful cults of mahō-tsukai wandered the land backed by vast armies of the hungry dead. Those days are long gone, but so ingrained is their memory that dead bodies are still considered unclean, and they are disposed of with great haste after an individual's passing. While the vast majority of the inhabitants of Rokugan have never seen one, many Crab Clan warriors are well versed in dealing with zombies. All varieties of these undead are extraordinarily dangerous, but most are not especially intelligent, for the false semblance of life imbued into them is a pale, flickering thing that does not rekindle their minds as it does their bodies. Intelligent undead are whispered to exist, but it is said by members of the Kuni Purifier School that they are usually created under exceptional circumstances or raised through complex, taxing rites that bind a greater portion of the spirit to its fleshly cage.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	2	2	4	∞
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
3	0	2	2	
PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES			
3	0			

Conflict Rank: Combat 2, Intrigue –

Advantages: Hungry for Flesh [Martial]

Disadvantages: Forgetfulness (Earth) [Scholar; Mental], Shambling Gait (Water) [Martial; Physical]

Demeanor: None

Typical Outburst: Enrage

Abilities: Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Putrid Flesh (The first time a zombie peasant would otherwise be defeated each scene, if it has no scar disadvantages, it receives one scar disadvantage of the GM's choice instead.)

Cadaverous Bite (After a character suffers a critical strike result of 3 or higher from an Attack action by a zombie peasant, the target suffers the Afflicted condition for the ring they used to resist the critical strike [see page 170].)

Gear (equipped): Ragged robes, bloodied teeth (Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 3, Natural), grasping hands (Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 1, Natural).

Techniques

Pile On

When performing an Attack action check with assistance from one or more other zombie peasants, this character may spend ☼ as follows:

☼+: Count the target's physical resistance as 2 lower per ☼ spent this way. ☼ spent this way cannot exceed the number of zombie peasants assisting with the check.

Shadowlands Goblin (Minion)

Shadowlands goblins often serve as the foot soldiers in the armies that march under the name of Fu Leng. While a single goblin is a trifling challenge for an experienced samurai, there is never only a single goblin.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	1	2	3	4
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	1	3	2	
PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES			
1	0			

Conflict Rank: Combat 1, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 1, Trade 1

Advantages: Sneaky (Air) [Martial, Trade; Physical]

Disadvantages: Cowardice (Earth) [Martial; Mental]

Demeanor: Cowardly (Fire –2, Earth +2)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Honor: 0

Glory: 02

Status: 0

Abilities: Silhouette (1)

Unsightly Rabble (☼: One character other than the target at range 0–2 suffers 4 damage. This ☼ can be activated a number of times per round equal to the number of goblins assisting with the check.)

Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Gear (equipped): Goblin-sized yari (Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear) or goblin-sized yumi (Range 1–4, Damage 5, Deadliness 3), salvaged scraps of armor (Physical 1, Damaged).

Shadowlands Goblin Chieftain (Adversary)

Goblin chieftains usually rule their wretched kin through cunning and occasional bouts of unexpected brutality. They claim the best spoils for themselves, and thus have modestly better weapons than their minions.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	2	2	7	8
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
3	1	4	3	
PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES			
3	1			

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 2, Social 1

Advantages: Sneaky (Air) [Martial, Trade; Physical], Desperate Strength (Fire) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Cowardice (Earth) [Martial; Mental]

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water –2)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Honor: 0

Glory: 20

Status: 0

Abilities: Silhouette (1)

Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Gear (equipped): Spiky club (Range 0–1, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Mundane), scavenged ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear, Damaged).

Shadowlands Goblin Shaman (Adversary)

The mystics from the goblin clans of the Shadowlands have mastered strange spellcraft that often has grotesque, terrifying effects. From strange balms and concoctions that sputter sulfurously to the horrific tactic of igniting their own allies with dark incantations that they might fight more savagely before their inevitable end, these evil creatures wield a variety of deadly magics.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
2	2	2	8	10
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
3	2	5	2	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		1	3	

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 1, Scholar 2

Advantages: Sneaky (Air) [Martial, Trade; Physical], Whispers of Fu Leng (Void) [Scholar; Spiritual]

Disadvantages: Cowardice (Earth) [Martial; Mental]

Demeanor: Cowardly (Fire -2, Earth +2)

Typical Outburst: Flee

Honor: 0 **Glory:** 10 **Status:** 0

Abilities: Silhouette (1)

Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Anointment of Filth (At the start of a skirmish, a Shadowlands goblin shaman anoints up to five other goblins, smearing wicked sigils upon them with the befouling muck of the Shadowlands. Each of these goblins gains the Enraged condition, and their weapons gain the Unholy quality. This effect persists until the end of the scene.)

Gear (equipped): Staff (Range 1-2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, Mundane), goblin shaman robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 3, Damaged).

Techniques**Boiling Tar**

Activation: As an Attack action, a Shadowlands goblin shaman may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one anointed goblin (or the corpse of such a creature).

Effect: If the shaman succeeds, the muck daubed upon the target ignites violently. Each character at range 0-2 of the target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Water 1, Air 5) check** or suffer supernatural damage with the Unholy quality equal to their shortfall.

Twisted Troll (Adversary)

While the Trolls once had a society within what has since become the Shadowlands, the fall of Fu Leng consumed them, all but destroying their culture and transforming the survivors into terrifying abominations bent to the will of the forsaken Kami.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	2	1	16	6
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
4	1	4	1	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		4	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 7, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 2, Trade 1

Advantages: Massive Stature (Earth) [Martial; Physical], Bestial Ferocity (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Gullible (Air) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Savage (Air -2, Fire +2)

Typical Outburst: Rage

Honor: 0 **Glory:** 20 **Status:** 0

Abilities: Silhouette (3)

Enrage (Each time a troll suffers 1 or more wounds, it suffers 1 strife.)

Sustaining Fury (A troll cannot suffer the Incapacitated or Unconscious condition while it has the Enraged condition.)

Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Gear (equipped): Crushing claws (Range 0-2, Damage 6, Deadliness 4, Natural), scraps of armor and scaly hide (Physical 4).

Lost Samurai (Adversary)

The Shadowlands are a place within the world, but even those who escape the Shadowlands' physical confines sometimes remain lost in this realm of darkness as it spreads into their mind. "The Lost," as they are called, are living humans who have been fully suffused with the power of the Shadowlands. Like the other denizens of that realm, they are bound to the power of Fu Leng and serve the fallen Kami's dark designs.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	3	9	11
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	2	6	4	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		4	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 3, Social 1, Trade 2

Advantages: Unholy Vigor (Earth) [Martial; Physical, Spiritual], Strength of the Possessed (Void) [Martial; Mental, Spiritual]

Disadvantages: Shadowlands Taint (Air) [Social; Interpersonal, Spiritual]

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water -2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 29 **Glory:** 40 **Status:** 0

Abilities: Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Unholy Bloodthirst (When performing a Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Ranged] check against an enemy with no wounds, if the Lost samurai succeeds, increase their bonus successes by 3.)

Gear (equipped): Daishō (katana [Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged] and wakizashi [Range 0-1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-Edged]), worn robes (Physical 1, Damaged, Mundane), sake jug (empty), straw hat, a pouch containing a handful of koku, bu, and zeni.

Skeletal Bushi (Minion)

Little more than tattered flesh, bleached bones, and an undying hatred for all that is right and good in the world, a skeletal bushi is a terrifying opponent.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	2	6	∞
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
3	1	4	3	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		3	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 2, Trade 1

Advantages: Unholy Strength (Fire) [Martial; Physical, Spiritual], Visage of Death (Water) [Social; Interpersonal, Physical]

Disadvantages: Skin and Bones (Earth) [Martial; Physical]

Demeanor: Gruff (Air +2, Earth -2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 15 **Glory:** 15 **Status:** 0

Abilities: Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Does Not Bleed (A skeletal bushi ignores all critical strikes inflicted by sources that do not have the Sacred quality.)

Gear (equipped): Katana (Range 1, Damage 4, Deadline 5/7, Concealable, Damaged, Razor-Edged), ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Damaged, Wargear).

Dark Moto (Adversary)

In the years since their return, the Unicorn Clan has suffered no folly greater than that of the Moto family, whose warriors rode into the Shadowlands to crush its evil under their hooves. This catastrophic venture crippled the Moto family and created the so-called "Dark Moto"—a legion of lost samurai atop unholy steeds, who now hunger only for the annihilation of Rokugan.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	3	4	10	9
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
2	2	5	2	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		4	0	

Conflict Rank: Combat 4, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 3, Trade 2, Survival 4

Advantages: Unholy Vigor (Earth) [Martial; Physical, Spiritual], Precise Aim (Air) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Shadowlands Taint (Air) [Social; Interpersonal, Spiritual]

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water -2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 29 **Glory:** 50 **Status:** 10

Abilities: Hellish Rider (After the Dark Moto performs an Attack action while mounted, each character at range 0–2 of the target must resist with a TN 3 Meditation (Earth 1, Water 5) check or suffer the Disoriented condition.)

Gear (equipped): Daishō (katana [Range 1, Damage 4, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged] and wakizashi [Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadline 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged]), yari (Range 2, Damage

5, Deadline 3, Wargear) or naginata (Range 2, Damage 6, Deadline 6, Cumbersome, Wargear), yumi (Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadline 3), knife (Range 0, Damage 2, Deadline 4, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged), centuries-old lacquered armor (Physical 4, Damaged).

Techniques**Onikage Mount**

The Dark Moto is mounted on an unholy steed. If a profile is needed for this creature, it is a Unicorn Warhorse (see page 201) with the Shadowlands Creature ability and the Withering Breath ability, which allows the Dark Moto to spend ☘ as follows when performing an Attack action:

☘☘: Each character at range 0–2 of the target suffers 3 supernatural damage. If Disoriented, that character suffers 6 supernatural damage instead. Characters with the Shadowlands Creature ability ignore this effect.

Hideous Oni (Adversary)

Oni are demonic entities from the heart of Jigoku itself. The Hideous Oni is one ugly part of a larger demonic whole, though it is still more than enough to crush any foolish samurai who attempts to stand against it.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
4	3	3	24	12
FIRE	VOID	FOCUS	VIGILANCE	
6	3	8	2	
		PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES	
		5	5	

Conflict Rank: Combat 12, Intrigue 5

Skills: Martial 3, Trade 1, Social 1, Scholar 3

Advantages: Massive Stature (Earth) [Martial; Physical], Unholy Strength (Fire) [Martial; Physical, Spiritual]

Disadvantages: Sickening Visage (Water) [Social; Interpersonal, Physical]

Demeanor: Capricious (Air -2, Earth +2)

Typical Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 10 **Glory:** 40 **Status:** 00

Abilities: Silhouette (4)

Shadowlands Creature: Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.

Gear (equipped): Crushing claws (Range 0–2, Damage 6, Deadline 4, Natural), scraps of armor and demonic hide (Physical 5, Supernatural 5).

Techniques**Dread Bellow**

Activation: Once per scene as an Attack and Scheme action, the hideous oni may unleash a bone-chilling howl, instilling primal terror in all who hear it and then feeding on this fear.

Effects: Each character at range 0–4 must resist with a TN 4 Meditation (Earth 2, Air 5) check or suffer the Disoriented condition and stumble back 1 range band from the oni. For each character who fails the check to resist, the hideous oni heals 2 wounds.

Hateful Talon Swipe

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, the hideous oni lashes out.

Effects: Each character at range 1–2 must resist with a TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Earth 5) check or suffer physical damage equal to the hideous oni's strife.

Chapter 9: A Ronin's Path

When a rōnin suspected of aiding and abetting a murder flees to the Kaiu Wall, it falls to a group of junior agents of an Emerald Magistrate to go after him and prevent the catastrophic chain of events set into motion by the murder. This adventure serves as a perfect place to start a campaign, whether the players are completely new to the setting or just need to get themselves acquainted with the new system.

Prior to playing this adventure, players should create characters and spend 24 XP to advance them. All types of characters and clans may be used.

Players should avoid reading further if they wish to play this adventure!

Prelude: Dark Promises

The characters are deputies in service of Seppun Hirohide, a respected Emerald Magistrate and member of the Imperial families. Hirohide is a stern but fair man who expects devoted service but holds himself to lofty standards of behavior as well. He is known to have worked on several complex murder cases in the past, including some related to the practice of mahō.

As the adventure begins, the player characters and Seppun Hirohide are in a small town named Ishikawa Mura in the northern Crab territories. Hirohide was notified of a murder that occurred two weeks ago at the local travelers' inn, and he immediately traveled to the site with the characters. A customer at the inn, a Crab samurai named Hida Kayo, was found dead in his room, collapsed in a pool of his own blood.

The scene begins in the street outside of the inn where the murder took place. Hirohide has just spoken to the local headman of the village in private and has returned to give the PCs their orders. Read the following text aloud as Hirohide addresses the characters:

"The initial reports were correct: there has been a murder here. Hida Kayo, last of a proud line of Crab warriors, was killed as he stayed at this inn two weeks ago. It took that long for the headman's messenger to find us.

"The headman and I believe the culprit to be a woman named Michiru, a mahō-tsukai who has escaped the Emperor's justice in the past. Michiru has fled north to the lands of the Scorpion Clan, but she had an accomplice, a rōnin named Keinosuke. He fled south in the direction of the Kaiu Wall. I will go after Michiru and bring her to justice, but you must follow Keinosuke's trail and bring him back here, then wait for further instructions."

Here, Hirohide pauses to see if the characters have any questions. If not, he continues.

"I have not had time to review the crime scene and interrogate the witnesses, so you must do so for me. Our duty requires us to be thorough. As he has a two-week lead, it will not be speed that brings this rōnin to justice, but cunning."

Mahō

Mahō is blood magic, which uses the power of blood and death to fuel fell rituals and compel evil spirits. Mahō is entirely forbidden in Rokugan, and anyone who practices this art is automatically condemned to death once their misdeeds are discovered.

The characters have heard of mahō, although they are likely fortunate enough never to have faced a mahō-tsukai (blood sorcerer) in person. Knowledge of the specifics of mahō is as forbidden as the practice of it, but the PCs probably have heard terrible tales of the devastation wrought by mahō-tsukai in Rokugan's early years.

The Emerald Magistrates

The Emerald Magistrates are a group of samurai appointed to dispense justice across Rokugan, serving as both investigators and judges in important cases. While most belong to one of the Great Clans, their status grants them jurisdiction all over Rokugan. They are tasked with investigating the most heinous of crimes, such as murder, conspiracies, and the practice of mahō, but they also intervene in affairs involving samurai of more than one clan as an objective party. While granted a lot of leeway while they dispense justice, the Emerald Magistrates still answer to their lords as well to as an internal hierarchy at the top of which is the Emerald Champion, who is chosen by means of a tournament culminating in an iaijutsu competition.

As the player characters are deputies to an Emerald Magistrate, they operate under his authority, but their own authority is a bit more tenuous. They cannot simply act with the full authority of the Emperor, and they may get better results with tactful requests than with orders. However, they do have some authority imparted by their master, so people they interact with can't simply dismiss them out of hand.

Peasants, of course, must obey the PCs completely, as is only proper when dealing with samurai.

The characters may suggest going with Hirohide to assist him in bringing the known witch and mahō practitioner to justice. If they do, he responds as follows:

"Your devotion is appreciated, but misguided. Both criminals must be caught, and Michiru is a dangerous quarry. If you confronted her, you would be lucky if she killed you. Only I can face her."

At this point, Hirohide dismisses the PCs, mounts his horse, and leaves the PCs to enter the inn to investigate what happened.

Investigating Hida Kayo's Room

The crime scene can be found on the second floor of the inn, where the room has been left untouched save for the body, which has been removed. Bloodstains can still be found on the mats that cover the room floor. The GM should read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The door shudders and jerks in its frame as you open it and step into the sparsely furnished guest room. Inside, the stench of death fills your nostrils. The low bed is untouched, but the small table that once sat in the room's center has been knocked into a corner. Dried, rusty blood splatters the mats that cover the floor and outlines the silhouette of a prone body. Streaks and prints indicate that someone may have walked through the blood while it was still wet.

The PCs can make the following checks to obtain clues by investigating the scene (see **The Art of Investigation** sidebar, on page 95):

- **TN 2 Aesthetics (Water 1, Fire 3) check** or **TN 2 Labor (Water 1, Fire 3) check**: The door frame is damaged, which indicates someone must have opened the door screen with great force.
- **TN 3 Survival (Fire 2, Air 4) check** or **TN 2 Tactics (Fire 1, Air 3) check**: Two sets of tracks are visible in the blood, which indicates that one person was at the far end of the room and walked through the blood to leave it, while the other was standing between the victim and the door when the victim was killed, and then left as well.

- **TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee] (Air 2, Earth 4) check** or **TN 2 Medicine (Air 1, Earth 3) check**: Based on the imprint of the body and the blood splatter, Hida Kayo was likely killed with two strikes. One left little blood and may have been from a clean stab to the torso. The other was a vicious and powerful slash that splattered blood everywhere, and likely came from a larger blade.
- **Water** ☞ can be spent in this scene to spot a small item under the knocked-over table that has escaped attention until now. The item is a box of waterstones for sharpening and polishing a blade. The box (which is small enough to be tucked into a samurai's kimono) has no identifying markings, except for discoloration and scratches on the cover where a clan mon made of metal was once attached; the mon has since been pried loose. Such kits are owned by samurai who are so dedicated to their swordsmanship that they have learned to polish their own blades. The kit belongs to Keinosuke, who dropped it during the fight. Although the PCs may not realize that, they would know that no samurai in good standing with their clan would remove the mon from their kit.

Examining the Body

In Rokugan, bodies are disposed of quickly after death. Needless to say, Hida Kayo's corpse has already been cremated. However, the PCs can speak to the burakumin—a member of the lowest class of people, tasked with the dirtiest work in society—who was responsible for moving and cremating the body.

The PCs find the burakumin in the hinin quarter of the village, where he prostrates himself before them. The PCs can make a **TN 1 Command (Fire 2) check** to compel the burakumin to recall anything he remembers (he would not dare disobey the PCs' orders, but the check is to ensure he recalls the details correctly and is not so intimidated by the PCs that he forgets something important).

The burakumin remembers that the body did indeed have two wounds. One was a stab wound in the upper chest, and the other was a large slashing wound across the back. He suspects that the slash was the killing blow.

The burakumin has an urn of Hida Kayo's ashes and is waiting for someone to deliver them to the victim's family on the Kaiu Wall. Enterprising PCs may wish to take the ashes with them when they depart to the Wall.

Eyewitness Testimony

The characters can also interrogate the locals to learn more about what happened. Two in particular were nearby when the murder happened: the innkeeper—a man named Yoshika—and a samurai named Mirumoto Chiaki, who was in the room next door. Given their difference in status, the two must be approached differently.

Yoshika (if needed, use the profile for a **Peasant**, on page 195, who has the **Ambitious** demeanor—see page 192) is a short, pudgy man who is constantly wiping sweat off his brow with a piece of cloth, and he stammers when confronted by samurai. He is quite shaken by what has happened, having never been confronted with death or violence until now. With a PC's successful **TN 1 Command (Water 2) check**, Yoshika can overcome his fear of what happened and tell the PCs what he knows: Michiru is a rich merchant who was paying Keinosuke to be her bodyguard. She met Hida Kayo, and they started drinking sake together. They seemed friendly, and they eventually retired to drink in his room, with Keinosuke standing guard outside. Later the same evening, Michiru and Keinosuke came rushing down and left without a word. (Characters can also use a **TN 3 Courtesy (Fire 4, Water 2) check** to convince Yoshika to share what he knows. This is more difficult, because Yoshika would prefer not to get involved if he's not compelled to do so.)

A warrior of the Dragon Clan, **Mirumoto Chiaki** (if needed, use the profile for a **Veteran Bushi**, on page 197, with the **Spiritual** template,

on page 194) is a lean woman with a shaved head. She usually smiles as though she knows something others don't, and she keeps a cheerful tone even when discussing issues as grisly as the murder. She is initially reluctant to talk, as what happened could be seen as dishonorable for the victim, since he was drinking in the company of a woman of lower station; she does not wish to speak of something that may dishonor the Crab Clan (her sister, whom she was visiting, joined it by marriage). However, with a PC's successful **TN 2 Courtesy (Air 3, Void 1) check**, Mirumoto Chiaki shares what she knows. Chiaki tells the PCs she heard sounds of drinking and laughter late into the night, followed by what she later realized had been a stifled cry. She then heard the screen door being slammed and a sword being drawn. By the time she was on her feet with her blades in her hands, everybody was gone except for the victim.

If the player characters wander about the village, they can ask around and see if anyone was awake during the night of the murder. This requires a **TN 1 Sentiment (Void 2, Earth 3) check**. If successful, they eventually come across the blacksmith, Totsu, who was working late. He remembers Keinosuke riding south "like Kaze-no-Kami himself were after him."

Spiritual Inquiries

Shugenja (and anyone trained in rituals such as **Commune with the Spirits** or **Divination**) can attempt to reach out to spirits and other supernatural beings for guidance. Elemental kami can sometimes offer information mortal eyes have overlooked; for instance, an earth kami might be able to reveal something about the footsteps of someone who walked across that kami recently, or the spirit of a river might tell a shugenja that someone spilled blood into it upstream in the last hour, suggesting an injured person passed that way recently. The souls of the dead are harder to reach: in general, they pass on directly to one of the Spirit Realms. While they might be drawn forth by a very skilled practitioner of the mystic arts to convey their wisdom, they need to be enticed, usually with offerings of the sorts of things that appealed to them in life.

In this particular case, shugenja and other mystics might be able to pursue the following avenues, or others at the GM's discretion:

- The **Theology** skill could be used for investigations to try to spot traces of the dark sorcery worked here.
- Using the **Commune with the Spirits** ritual (see page 132) with **Void** could yield a subtle hint from the murdered samurai's troubled soul. While it is in too much turmoil to manifest and speak with them directly, it might point them to a clue they overlooked earlier.
- Other invocations or rituals might be useful for getting information if the player can offer a rationale for their use. However, as the room has been spiritually defiled by the twisted magic called mahō, causing the elemental kami to flee the vicinity, increase the TN of all checks to perform invocations here by 1 unless the room is purified (such as with the **Cleansing Rite** ritual, on page 132).

Investigation Concluded

With all or even only some of those elements, the PCs should be able to form an impression of what happened, and they leave the village to go after Keinosuke. He made no attempt at covering his tracks, so by simply asking locals from village to village, they are able to track him down all the way to the Kaiu Wall. The villagers can provide the PCs with horses, with which the PCs can reach the Wall in six days. The characters can investigate the ronin's passage by making a **TN 2 Skulduggery (Air 1, Earth 4) check** to track him down by talking to passersby or a **TN 2 Survival (Air 1, Earth 3) check** to track him down by finding and extrapolating from physical evidence of his passage. A successful check means the PCs can make quicker time and have their efforts pay off in **Report, Soldier!**, on page 210.

Part I: To the Third Watchtower

Once the PCs have declared they are pursuing the rōnin and have made any desired checks, read the following text aloud to the players:

You've tracked Keinosuke all the way to the Kaiu Wall. It looms in the distance well before you reach it, towering one hundred feet above the ground and stretching beyond sight. The imposing structure is matched by the dour Crab samurai who barely spare you a glance, too busy with their eternal duty. Why has he come here, of all places?

The PCs can speak to nearly any Crab samurai they come across, but the likeliest individuals to talk to are a unit of samurai on guard duty at the nearest of the Kaiu Wall's great gates. As the PCs ask about Keinosuke, they are told he went to Kyūden Moshibaru, a small stronghold situated close to the Wall. With a **TN 3 Culture (Earth) check** (**TN 2** for Crab samurai), the PCs can recall that the Moshibaru are a vassal family of the Hida. More specifically, they are the vassal family of samurai whose new members must complete a Twenty Goblins Winter before becoming full-fledged members of the Crab Clan.

Any character from the Crab Clan is familiar with the tradition, and the Crab NPCs present are happy to explain it: during times of hardship, the Crab can declare a Twenty Goblins Winter, an ongoing challenge that states that any samurai can come to the Wall and join the Crab Clan after killing at least twenty goblins. These foul creatures are among the most common—and weakest—denizens of the Shadowlands. This by far the most reliable way for a rōnin to obtain a place within any of the Great Clans, although it is by no means an easy one. Although the tradition emerged during a winter season, the Crab Clan Champion can declare it at any time, and in fact, it can last well beyond the span of a season if the champion desires it.

The characters do not need to travel all the way to Kyūden Moshibaru, however, as they are told Keinosuke quickly moved on to one of the twelve great watchtowers of the Wall. It is the Third Watchtower, the first being the easternmost, and the PCs need to travel for two more days to reach it.

When they reach it, the PCs are directed to speak to the watchtower's commander, Hida Hiromichi. Hiromichi is quite familiar with Keinosuke. He informs the PCs that the rōnin arrived roughly ten days ago, and that he has just completed the Twenty Goblins Winter. Keinosuke is now a part of the Crab Clan.

The Duel

The fact that Keinosuke is now a member of the Crab Clan complicates the task of the PCs, as the Crab are unlikely to be pleased with being deprived of one of their own, particularly as the PCs lack any testimony proving Keinosuke's involvement in the murder. If they confront him, he refuses to go with them and abandon his new comrades-in-arms. If they insist, he grows angry and challenges them to a duel to the death, saying they have accused him of a grave offense. However, if the PCs argue that they only wish to bring him back for questioning, and if they succeed on a **TN 2 Courtesy (Earth 1, Air 3) check**, they can convince Keinosuke to limit the duel to first blood.

The PCs may try to persuade Keinosuke to come back with them without the duel, or even to persuade Hida Hiromichi to give him up because he is a criminal wanted by an Emerald Magistrate. If they pursue this line of argument, eventually Hiromichi takes the PCs aside and explains the following in a low tone:

"Do not mistake the Crab Clan for fools—we understand all kinds of criminals use the Twenty Goblin Winters to join our clan and hide within its fold. If you are right, and this man has collaborated with a mahō-tsukai to murder one of us, then he deserves whatever

The Kaiu Wall

The Kaiu Wall was built in the year 716 at the site where the forces of a powerful oni known as the Maw had pushed back the Crab's line of defenses. It has remained the greatest accomplishment in Rokugani engineering ever since. One hundred feet tall and running the entire length of the border between Rokugan and the Shadowlands, it is always garrisoned by thousands of Crab samurai and ashigaru. It is set just north of the River of the Last Stand, which runs in parallel with it along its entire length, all the way to the sea. The Wall has twelve great watchtowers at intervals along its length, with large doors that can be opened to allow warriors to sally into the Shadowlands. Passage over the border also occurs through tunnels bored under the Wall and the river. The Crab have filled these tunnels with traps and false ends to confuse the creatures of the Shadowlands.

Many cities and villages are situated only a small distance north of the Wall, to provide the Crab armies with the extensive support they need. Siege weapons such as ballistae and catapults can be found atop the Wall, where the walkway is large enough for entire units of samurai to pass by one another. The Wall is the greatest responsibilities of the Kaiu family, whose name it bears; the Kaiu constantly repair and improve it. But it is also a symbol of Crab determination and courage, and it often serves as a metaphor for the whole Crab Clan.

fate you have in mind for him. But as of now, he is a samurai and a Crab. He deserves the right to defend his honor, and I am bound by duty to stand by him and defend that right. Therefore, I request a duel to first blood; let steel show us who is in the right."

Use the rules for **Duels**, on page 160, to resolve the conflict scene. Keinosuke's NPC profile is included in the **Appendix** on page 220. As the PCs have been challenged as a group, they can choose any one of themselves to fight against Keinosuke.

Whether to the death or to first blood, the duel takes place on the top of the Kaiu Wall. In this duel, both Keinosuke and the PC are expected to fight with katana, and they may only use the armor they are currently wearing.

Depending on whether the duel is to the death or first blood and on whether Keinosuke wins or loses, the following can happen:

- If Keinosuke loses a duel to the death, he is declared guilty of abetting Michiru, and his body is cremated without a ceremony. This is a shameful death, and the Crab are forced to thank the PCs for revealing the criminal in their midst.
- If Keinosuke wins a duel to the death, his honor is proven beyond question, and the Crab refuse to let him leave the Wall. The deceased player character is granted funeral rites and is not spoken ill of, but the Crab insist the matter is now closed. In case of such a result, the player of the deceased PC should be allowed to create a new character to be introduced in the next scene, perhaps as reinforcement sent by Seppun Hirohide or by one of the other Crab samurai on the Wall.
- If Keinosuke loses a duel to first blood, his involvement is proven, and the Crab allow the PCs to interrogate him and bring him to Seppun Hirohide (see **Debriefing**, on page 210).
- If Keinosuke wins a duel to first blood, his honor is proven, and the Crab refuse to let him go (see **Debriefing**, on page 210). They do offer medical assistance in treating any injuries the PC suffered in the process of the duel, along with their general—if somewhat gruff—hospitality.

After the duel and the debriefing, if they have one, and before they can depart, the PCs are summoned by the commander of the garrison, who wishes to speak with them. Proceed to **Report, Soldier!**, below.

Debriefing

If Keinosuke is still alive, the PCs can ask him about what happened, but only after the duel has taken place. If he lost, he explains **his story without the PCs' needing to make any checks**. If he won, a **TN 2 Courtesy (Earth 1, Air 4) check** can be used to persuade him to talk to the PCs despite being under no obligation to do so. If the check isn't successful, Keinosuke remains silent on the matter. If the check is successful, he tells them the following:

"I thought she was just a rich merchant. She certainly paid like one. She was drinking with the man, and when I heard a cry, I thought she was in danger, so I rushed to her aid. They were screaming at each other, the Crab holding her by the wrists. I told him to let her go, but he didn't listen. He didn't even turn to face me. I struck him in anger, and it was only when his body hit the floor that I saw the bloody knife in her hand. She spoke words I couldn't understand, and her face twisted into something monstrous, so I ran. Fortunes forgive me, I ran."

"Perhaps she had been planning to kill the man all along and use his blood in an unholy ritual, but he must have been stronger than she thought... So, I came here and joined the Crab Clan. I cannot repair the damage I've caused, yet I can at least try to die serving the same clan he did."

Report, Soldier!

Once the PCs have debriefed Keinosuke (or failed to do so), a messenger arrives and informs them that the commander of the local garrison would like to speak to them immediately.

The leader of the Crab army in the area, Hida Tomonatsu, receives the PCs in a stark room at the top of the watchtower. She is in full armor and giving orders to various subordinates as they arrive. She dismisses them all except for an old monk, who remains standing at her side.

Tomonatsu greets the PCs and briefly discusses the outcome of the duel with Keinosuke. She won't linger on the issue, however, and quickly explains that she has bigger concerns. The forces of the Shadowlands have led repeated assaults on her section of the Wall, each time with greater intensity, in what she knows were attempts to probe the defenses. Her scouts have now spotted a much larger force, which will be here in a matter of hours. She requests the help of the PCs in defending the Wall.

Some characters might be hesitant to agree to help her, particularly if Keinosuke is alive and they wish to get back to Seppun Hirohide. The GM should remind them, however, that as they are deputies of an Emerald Magistrate, the defense of the Empire against external forces is also part of their duty. More pragmatic characters might also realize that if the Wall is breached, they will have monsters at their back as they travel north. However, most of all, they should recognize that their honor and duty demands they help the Crab.

Once the PCs agree to help her, Tomonatsu briefly conveys how to handle Keinosuke—either keep him under watch if he's alive and suspected, or allow him to fight alongside the Crab if he has won his duel—and explains what she needs of them (read the following aloud):

"The battles of the last few days have all been won, but at an ever-increasing cost. My senior officers are all in the field preparing for the final assault, but I need to know what they think should be done. As you are impartial arbiters, I need you to go see them and come back to meet me once you have all the information you need. Then, we can plan a strategy together to protect the Empire."

She can give the PCs any detail they require, but insists they only have a few hours before the battle. She offers basic information on the five officers she'd like to hear from:

- **Hida Tsukiko** is the officer in charge of the Hida troops, which compose the bulk of the army. They are mostly heavily armored melee troops. See page 210.
- **Hiruma Yukito** leads the scouts of the armies, who also serve as archery units in battle. He's the one who spotted the approaching army. See page 211.
- **Kaiu Masae** is responsible for a small squadron of engineers who both repair the Wall and crew the siege weapons. She is currently overseeing repairs of the recent damage to the Wall. See page 212.
- **Kuni Terumi** is the lead shugenja, and she has a small cadre of fellow priests who perform religious duties and invocations. Her family's knowledge of the Shadowlands is unparalleled. See page 212.
- **Yasuki Hatsu** is not a warrior but a quartermaster, and together with other members of his family, he performs mundane but essential tasks to ensure supplies are maintained. See page 213.

Tomonatsu leaves it up to the PCs to choose whom they want to speak with first, as she believes every officer will have relevant insight. Unbeknownst to the players, they only have time to speak to three out of the five before the forces of the Shadowlands attack the Wall. The GM is free to hint at this through descriptions during the following scenes, whether of dark clouds gathering on the horizon, or samurai looking more and more pressed for time as they get ready as quickly as possible. If the PCs succeeded on their check to track Keinosuke to the Wall, they can speak to one more officer before the alarm bell tolls. If there are five characters or more, they can split up and speak to all of the officers before the battle, but they might be at a disadvantage should some of the PCs not have the required skills to get the information they need.

If the PCs inquire about the monk (whether they speak to him directly or ask Tomonatsu), they learn his name is **Gakuto**. He is a retired samurai who belonged to the Crab Clan. He remains silent through their interaction with Tomonatsu, but she can confirm that he is one of her closest advisors, even though he is not a samurai anymore.

The sections below detail the scenes with the individual officers, but as discussed above, they can happen in any order, and the players should only be allowed to meet three of the officers unless they split up.

Hida Tsukiko, Infantry Officer

Read the following passage aloud:

At the foot of the watchtower, Hida Tsukiko yells orders at her troops. She's among the tallest of the burly Crab warriors here, which is saying something, and an impressive collection of scars bedecks her hardened face. Her samurai wear scarred armor and weary expressions. Some are in the midst of polishing or repairing their weapons, but none have fully removed their armor or racked their blades.

When the PCs approach her, Hida Tsukiko bluntly tells them that she cannot give her report yet (if needed, use the profile for a **Veteran Bushi**, on page 197, with the **Perceptive** template, page 194, and the **Shrewd** demeanor, page 192). A number of her soldiers (equal to the total number of PCs) have been missing since last night's skirmish, and given the chaos of the battle, she can't be sure that they weren't killed or injured. She asks the PCs to find them before they can discuss strategy with her, as she needs a full assessment of her troops first.

Hounding the Troops

The characters can investigate, asking after for the missing soldiers with a **TN 3 Courtesy (Earth 2, Fire 4) check** or simply looking around the place with a **TN 2 Survival (Fire 1, Air 4) check**. It shouldn't take more than thirty minutes to find the samurai, but the PCs can reduce the time needed by ten minutes for each bonus success. If the PCs reduce the search time down to zero or ten minutes, this can give them enough time to talk to an additional officer, or for one character to join another if they have split. If they fail the check, they still find the soldiers, but it takes enough time that they lose a chance to speak with another officer. Eventually, they find the soldiers hiding in a small stable, sleeping off a night of heavy drinking.

The characters can wake the soldiers up and lead them back to Tsukiko, but they should be careful not to admonish the soldiers: not only are they still slightly inebriated, they also drank themselves to a stupor after two days of nonstop fighting against terrible creatures that took the lives of many of their friends. While their method of grieving wasn't particularly honorable, many samurai stationed at the Wall turn to such diversions to briefly escape the horrors of life. If provoked, the soldiers don't hesitate to start a fistfight with the PCs, regardless of their status. The GM should run this as a skirmish.

When the PCs return, Tsukiko orders the troops back to their posts and finally turns her attention to the PCs. She is once again blunt and straight to the point: she wants Tomonatsu to open the gates for her troops to charge through, straight at the enemy. While she has complete respect for the traditional defensive fighting strategy of the Crab, she believes the enemy is too numerous for them to survive a war of attrition. Her troops are, one to one, superior to the masses of the Shadowlands; she thinks she can lead an assault that will destroy the enemy leadership, after which their army will collapse into smaller groups. She is ready to die trying if necessary and understands this is a significant risk, but she thinks it is the best course of action.

Hiruma Yukito, Scout Leader

The leader of the scouts is harder to find, as he is still outside the Wall, coordinating the last scouting efforts and making sure all his samurai get back to the Wall before the battle starts. The player characters need to request that a Crab samurai take them outside the Wall. This samurai first gives them each a small piece of carved jade (a "finger," in Crab jargon: see page 148) to protect them from the corrupting influence of the Shadowlands. Although they will barely go beyond the Wall, the samurai warns them to remain vigilant and to carry the jade on their persons at all times. He takes them through the tunnels below the Wall, warning them not to try to enter them without the guidance of a local samurai. He points them in the direction of Hiruma Yukito, telling them that if they don't find Yukito, Yukito will find them.

Optional Scene: Goblin Scouts

If the group of player characters is particularly martially focused, or if the group has enough time to add another scene (or the PCs are simply anxious to unsheathe their katana), the GM may add an optional skirmish against a group of six **Shadowlands Goblins** (see page 204).

The goblins have been sent by Teeth-Taker and are tasked with finding cracks in the Crab's defenses along the Wall. The goblins are skittish, and will avoid directly confronting a large group of PCs if they can avoid it, instead using their goblin-sized bows to harass smaller groups of PCs from afar. If threatened, they will attempt to flee back to the rest of the horde, fighting to the death only if they become trapped.

Read the following passage as the PCs emerge on the other side of the Wall:

As you make your way into the Shadowlands, you are struck by the apparent stillness of the place. There are no signs of life: only emptiness between the rocky plain under your feet and the overcast sky above your heads. Yet only a few steps away from the Wall, you notice odd details, such as the desiccated corpse of a tree whose branches move the wrong way in the wind, or how your voices don't carry as far as they should, as though the air is denser somehow. The reassuring presence of jade feels like the only protection against the foul nature of this place.

As predicted by the Crab samurai, Yukito finds the PCs first—he has scouts across the area who are adept at hiding behind the smallest rocks and blending with the environment, and they report the PCs' approach to him. He is a small, lithe man who wears light armor and a bow, and his hair has gone gray prematurely (if needed, use the profile for a **Veteran Bushi**, on page 197, with the **Crafty** template, page 194, and the **Ambitious** demeanor, page 192). He seems gloomy and exhausted as he approaches the PCs, but he is willing to cooperate. He has seen the enemy army and confirms that it outnumbers the Crab three to one at least. It comprises a variety of Shadowlands creatures: goblins, zombies, skeletons, and stranger creatures still. He plans to make sure all his soldiers retreat behind the Wall and form an archery unit, as they are too few to efficiently harass the opposing forces.

Unexpected Allies

Hiruma Yukito is hiding something, however. It is obvious to the PCs (and the GM should tell them this) that he is nervous about something other than the approaching army. To find out more, the PCs can do one or more of the following:

- A **TN 2 Sentiment (Air 1, Fire 4) check** reveals that Yukito knows something that he isn't sharing, but that pressing him directly could get him to open up.
- Investigating with a **TN 3 Design (Water) check** or a **TN 2 Smithing (Water) check** can be used to spot a strange item in his quiver: a stick decorated with teeth and ribbons of rough fibers, with bite marks all along its length. It is certainly not made by the Crab, and Crab characters automatically recognize it as something made by the nonhuman sentient species known as the Nezumi.
- Finally, the GM can have any characters who are stumped make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** (TN 2 for members of the Crab Clan). Success means that they remember stories of a strange race of rat people who hate the creatures of the Shadowlands and have provided unexpected aid to the Crab in the past.

Regardless of whether the PCs press Yukito regarding the information he's withholding, point out the strange stick he's carrying, or simply broach the topic of the Ratlings with him, Yukito sighs and begins to discuss the issue. He has established an alliance with a small tribe of Ratlings—who he calls Nezumi—hidden in the tunnels beneath the Wall, and he believes they could be of great assistance. He knows Rokugan thinks of Nezumi as little more than vermin, however, and he asks the PCs to keep his involvement a secret if they desire the Nezumi's help. The Crab are unlikely to think badly of it, as such alliances are common, but Yukito's younger brother is betrothed to a samurai of the Crane Clan, and he doesn't wish to shame his brother through his association with the Nezumi. If the PCs agree, he can guarantee the Nezumi will strike the enemy by surprise at the most opportune moment.

Nezumi

Ratlings, or Nezumi, are they are most appropriately called, are a race of ratlike humanoids. In most of Rokugan, they are thought of as little more than vermin or wild animals, and sometimes they are even considered akin to Shadowlands creatures like goblins or ogres. The Crab know better, however: the Nezumi are sentient beings possessed of a complex culture of their own. What makes them particularly interesting is that they are fully immune to the Shadowlands Taint. Their tribes eke out a meager existence in the Shadowlands and the wilds of Rokugan, doing what they can to survive. Their culture lacks the conception of a code of martial honor, and they favor survival over glory,

though they fight with wild abandon when cornered or defending their homes and young. Many Nezumi can speak intelligible Rokugani (albeit with a squeaking tone). They also have their own language, a tongue punctuated by clicks and squeaks that make it sound alien to Rokugani ears. Crab samurai, particularly from the Hiruma family, sometimes bargain with them for information or supplies. There are many facets of the Nezumi that even the Crab understand poorly, though, such as the strange powers of their Kir. The Nezumi call the Kir's mystical ability the power of "Names"—or the tales of their Rememberers, who speak of a forgotten yet glorious past.

Kaiu Masae, Master Engineer

Kaiu Masae can be found atop the Wall, where she is directing repairs. She is of rather short stature and walks with a limp, delivering her orders with the calm of someone who is comfortable being in charge (if needed, use the profile for a **Seasoned Courtier**, on page 198, with the **Knowledgeable** template, page 194, and the **Assertive** demeanor, page 192). From the top of the Wall, the PCs can see that the last assault caused some severe damage: a ten-foot-long crack opening from the top and spanning three feet at its widest. A crew of samurai and heimin alike are hurrying to complete the last repairs before the next attack comes.

Humble Work

Masae has no time for idle chitchat, and if the PCs want to speak to her, she has one simple request: they need to help. This is manual work, which some samurai could see as beneath them, but to the pragmatic Crab such considerations are less important than the security of the Wall. Masae can find tasks for all to accomplish: Strong characters can carry heavy stones to where they need to be with a **TN 2 Fitness (Water 1, Earth 4) check**. Less physically imposing ones can chisel the smaller stones that need to be cut or can remove the bamboo scaffolding as the repairs progress with a **TN 3 Labor (Earth 2, Air 4) check**. Those repairs might not be glorious, but any assistance the PCs provide helps them earn the respect of the Kaiu and ensure the Wall is ready when the attack comes, since there are only a few hours left.

Once the Wall is fixed, Masae finally has time to speak with the PCs. She is confident the Wall can hold, and she has a small squadron of engineers under her command who can deliver devastating strikes with siege weapons. If more characters succeeded at attempted checks than failed, she is able to complete her plan to include a weakness in the section of the Wall they repaired. If they let the Shadowlands creatures come to them, they can collapse that part of the Wall on the creatures. While this would leave them open to further attacks, it could take down many enemies in a single blow. She will leave it to the PCs or the commander to decide when to activate the trap. Should any character balk at the dishonorable aspects of fighting with a trap, she is quick to remind them that the Shadowlands is an enemy without honor and shouldn't be afforded any respect.

Kuni Terumi, Priestess of Bishamon

The head shugenja of the garrison can be found at the local temple, which is dedicated to Bishamon, the Fortune of strength. While traveling to the temple, the PCs notice several funeral pyres being assembled, replacing recently burned ones. Other priests are preparing to perform funeral rites with what can only be described as urgency. If there is a Crab samurai among the PCs, or if they ask anyone local, the PCs learn that the Crab always perform funeral rites as quickly as possible, as proximity to the Shadowlands poses a risk that a body will rise to become one of the undead. If Keinosuke or a PC died during **The Duel**, one of the pyres being prepared is theirs.

Purity and Corruption

Kuni Terumi greets the PCs within the temple (if needed, use the profile for a **Scholarly Shugenja**, on page 198, with the **Knowledgeable** template, page 194, and the **Shrewd** demeanor, page 192). She wears the traditional ceremonial makeup of the Kuni, her face covered in white paint over which intricate patterns are applied in black. She also wears long silk gloves to complement her kimono and hide the stains caused by the most practical and gruesome aspects of her research into the creatures of the Shadowlands. She is initially polite, but when asked about matters of strategy, she halts the PCs. The creeping corruption of the Shadowlands is insidious and dangerous, and she needs to ensure that the PCs are pure. Although she would normally carefully assess them, time is of the essence. Therefore, she offers to call upon the kami to perform the Cleansing Rite ritual, which will reveal if the Shadowlands corruption afflicts any of the PCs (see **Rituals**, on page 132). Each PC suffers 2 strife at the suggestion (Crab PCs suffer only 1 strife, as such things are commonplace reminders of the grim realities of the Wall).

Any character may be justly offended at such a suggestion, as it implies suspicion of the darkest of crimes. Further, and perhaps worse in the current context, it is a waste of valuable time; if they allow her to perform the ritual, it counts as two of their available visits instead of one. Terumi is quick to point out, however, that the PCs have been involved in the investigation of a mahō-tsukai, and that she could have cursed one of them or even killed them and taken their place. The PCs can attempt to persuade Terumi to dispense with this test with a **TN 2 Courtesy (Water 4, Fire 1) check** or a **TN 3 Command (Water 5, Fire 1) check**; if they succeed, she begrudgingly agrees to discuss strategy with them.

"The Sixth Element"

The dangers of the Shadowlands can far more insidious than an oni's club or goblin's spear. The vile essence of the Shadowlands and its fell denizens can slowly but surely corrupt a samurai's body and soul.

Known as "the Taint," this corruption eventually consumes anyone it touches. Their skin turns pale, their hair turns lank and greasy, and their veins slowly turn black as if filled with a foul ichor. At the same time, a Tainted individual becomes short-tempered, erratic, and eventually dangerous to all those around them. The Taint can even cause the dead to rise as zombies if it is powerful enough, which is why Rokugani culture emphasizes cremation.

Taint cannot be cured, but jade can protect against it. Those who fight in the Shadowlands often wear a piece of jade on their person, as the jade absorbs the corruption instead. This eventually destroys the jade, which makes it one of the most valuable substances in Rokugan, prized by the Crab above all else.

Terumi has given the PCs insult here, and particularly hot-tempered PCs might challenge her to a duel over the suggestion that they might be unclean. If a PC challenges her, Terumi shrugs and tells them she needs the permission of her superior, Hida Tomonatsu. In the meantime, she points out that they, too, are under an obligation to assist Hida Tomonatsu, and so they should allow her to serve the needs of both of their obligations by properly inspecting them. Some shugenja characters might question Terumi's own purity, but she retorts that the kami and Bishamon watch over her, and she knows the symptoms to look for in any event.

If the PCs refuse to submit to her ritual and inquiries or fail to convince her to overlook her concerns this time, she tells the PCs she has no business with them and departs to attend to other matters; the time they spent with her is wasted, using up one of their opportunities to visit an NPC during this scene. If the PCs fail their check or agree to her demands, she performs the Cleansing Rite.

The characters' purity (or lack of thereof) now established to her satisfaction, Terumi lets them know what she has learned. She has suspected since the beginning that the attacks have been too coordinated to be random, and through observation of various portents, she has concluded that an oni will appear during the next attack. She knows of a ritual that can be researched that will weaken the oni and make it easier for the Crab to take it down. This ritual will require all the help she can gather, however, which means that no Kuni shugenja will be available during the battle, something Tomonatsu will have difficulty approving without concrete proof of the oni's coming. Terumi is quite certain of her conclusions, but she will obey the orders of her lord.

Before she departs, she offers any characters of a scholarly bent—such as shugenja, but also any character with the Theology skill—a chance to help her research the ritual. This would prevent them from being present during the initial stages of the battle (see **The Battle is Joined**, on page 214), but it would help her get ready quicker, and it might offer them a chance to help if they aren't skilled in battle. Further, the PC can purchase the ritual at an experience discount (see page 219). However, as researching matters of the Shadowlands isn't an honorable task, a PC must forfeit 3 honor to participate in this dubious undertaking (or forfeit 1 honor if they belong to the Crab Clan).

Jigoku-Touched Characters

If any characters admit to being Tainted, or are revealed to be as such, Terumi is on her guard and asks to interview them separately. After all, many Crab warriors are afflicted by the dark power of the Shadowlands—only knowingly hiding this fact is a crime. She asks any Tainted characters extensive questions to determine the nature and depth of their affliction, and she examines them physically to verify this. Given the circumstances, she does not attempt to mete out any punishment for neglecting to mention the fact that they are Tainted—if the character even knew about their spiritual illness.

Refusal to answer her questions or to go through the physical exam, however, is seen as suspicious behavior, and Terumi warns the character of the same. Should they still refuse, she asks the character to leave and quietly advises Hida Tomonatsu not to trust them, which causes the character's Tainted disadvantage to apply to all of their Social skill checks to interact with either NPC. If the character answers honestly and goes through the exam, Terumi records their symptoms and identity for the records of the Kuni family. She watches the character closely for the remainder of the adventure whenever she is nearby, but she does not pursue any action against them.

Yasuki Hatsu, Quartermaster

The storehouse from which Quartermaster Yasuki Hatsu leads his small team is farther from the Wall than any other building. It looks less like part of the military structure and more like part of the village to the north, from which most of the garrison's supplies come. Hatsu is an impeccably dressed man with a traditional samurai topknot and a thin, elegant mustache (if needed, use the profile for a **Seasoned Courtier**, on page 198, with the **Gregarious** template, page 194, and the **Assertive** demeanor, page 192).

He greets the PCs with the utmost courtesy and offers them tea as they enter, leading them to a comfortably furnished room. If some characters indicate they are in a rush, Hatsu will insist. While he is a proud servant of the Crab Clan, he resents the perception others have of them as uncouth brutes, and he cannot bring himself to speak with deputies of an Emerald Magistrate without a minimum of decorum. To insist on skipping the tea ceremony, they must succeed at a **TN 3 Courtesy (Earth 5, Water 1) check** or a **TN 2 Command (Earth 4, Water 1) check**, otherwise he will perform it against their protestations. Doing so causes Hatsu's demeanor to switch from **Assertive** to **Shrewd** when interacting with the PCs.

Otherwise, once tea has been had and a decent amount of small talk has been exchanged, Hatsu confirms what some characters might already suspect: he is no warrior, and he has little information to offer other than the state of the supplies. He explains that everything is accounted for and that although their jade stores are running low, the Third Tower Command has everything else they need. He is happy to show his ledger and manifests to the PCs, and if the PCs request it, he will also permit them to inspect the storehouses. If the PCs require any additional supplies—whether weapons, ammunition, or more practical items—and succeed on a **TN 2 (Earth 4, Water 1) Courtesy or Command check**, Hatsu provides them with what they need. The items are free of charge in the name of “defending the Empire,” but PCs will need to return them after the battle. He does not have any extra jade to give out, however.

Taking Stock

Characters who insist upon looking through the storehouses might notice something is amiss. The GM should have them make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Ranged] (Earth) check** or a **TN 2 Smithing (Earth) check** to investigate the armory. A successful check reveals that storehouse's supply of arrows seems dreadfully low for the number of samurai the PCs saw on the Wall.

If the PCs point this out to Hatsu, he immediately checks with the storehouse attendants, who recall with horror that one of their colleagues was killed in the attack last night and must not have recorded the change in inventory in his haste to resupply the archers on the Wall. As a result, the only arrows left are the ones currently in the storehouse, which will only allow for a volley or two from the Hiruma scouts. Hatsu is livid, but he thanks the PCs and asks that they let Tomonatsu know about it, so as not to jeopardize the position of the Hiruma in the coming fight.

Hatsu is deeply concerned for his reputation and says he would also appreciate it if the PCs present their report in a way that does not lay blame upon him or put into question the quality of his service to his lord. Hatsu is willing to bribe the PCs to testify as such, although he is polite enough to avoid stating it directly. Instead, he offers a gift—his own jade dagger—and while he would deny it if pressed, the intent is clear enough to anyone. To accept such a dubious gift, the PC who receives it must pay 3 honor (whether or not they intend to put in a good word for him).

The Shadowlands Forces Approach

After the PCs talk to three out of the five officers (or more if they succeeded on their check to track Keinosuke to the Wall, saved time when talking to any of the officers, or split up to talk to the officers), a loud bell rings from the watchtower, signaling the approach of the enemy forces. Almost immediately, soldiers come to fetch the PCs and bring them to Tomonatsu. There is little they can do but follow them, as the officers must get ready for the battle to come.

Battle Plans

Tomonatsu once again greets the PCs and wastes no time in getting to business. She wants to know what they have learned and what course of action they advise. There are four main points that she needs to decide upon:

Should the front gates of the watchtower be opened to allow a frontal assault or closed to adopt a defensive strategy from the top of the Wall? Kaiu Masae and Hiruma Yukito favor a defensive approach, and if the PCs helped Masae, she even has a trap in store for the enemy. However, Hida Tsukiko wants to attack head-on, believing it's the only way to break the enemy leadership.

Should the Hiruma scouts be deployed as an archer unit on top of the Wall or be used as light melee troops? Yukito fully intends to use them as archers, but if the PCs have interacted with Yasuki Hatsu, they might know the reserves of arrows are critically low.

Should the Kuni shugenja be held back to participate in Kuni Terumi's ritual, or should they be deployed in battle? If the oni is coming, the ritual might weaken it enough for the Crab to kill it, but a lack of invocations during the battle could be extremely costly to the Crab.

Should the tunnel entrances be closed or left open? Most often, they are closed to prevent incursions, but in dire circumstances they can be left open in hopes that the traps and maze take more creatures out than they let through. If the PCs have spoken to Hiruma Yukito, they might know of the Nezumi hidden beneath, and opening the tunnels would provide them with the perfect opportunity to strike.

Part II: Battle for the Third Watchtower

Their meeting concluded, Tomonatsu gives her final orders and brings the PCs to the battlements, where they can see the Shadowlands army. As Hiruma Yukito informed them, it outnumbers them three to one and comprises just about every nightmare the Shadowlands hold: goblins, skeletons, zombies, Tainted humans, Trolls, ogres, and creatures for which most characters don't even have a name. There is little pause before the battle begins: the Shadowlands army leaves no time for bragging, posturing, or preparation. It charges in the direction of the Wall.

Given the losses she's suffered in the last few days, Tomonatsu is short of competent leaders and offers the PCs the chance to lead a cohort of their choice into battle. Her army is described in the sidebar for the **Third Tower Command** on page 215. The three types of units that are definitely available to the PCs are the Hida Regiments (**Infantry**), Hiruma Scouts (**Archery** or **Infantry**) and Kaiu Siege Engineers (**Siege**). Unless the PCs have convinced Tomonatsu to hold them back, the Kuni shugenja (**Shugenja**) are also available. Finally, if the PCs have convinced Tomonatsu to hold the entrances to the tunnels open for the Nezumi to strike, the Nezumi tribe (**Infantry**) is also available, although any non-Crab characters who want to lead Nezumi into battle must forfeit 5 glory to do so (or stake 10 glory to take on a disguise and lead them, forfeiting this glory if their identity is revealed). All cohorts occupying a Fortified Position (the Kaiu Wall) reduce all casualties inflicted on them by 10.

The Shadowlands forces' army is described in the sidebar for **The Horde of Kazanagan no Oni** on page 215.

Use the intrigue rules, on page 156, to resolve this conflict scene. Tomonatsu will base her strategy on the arguments of the winning side, and each decision will have consequences in the following conflict scenes. Tomonatsu listens to the arguments from the PCs on each point, and she allows the monk Gakuto to speak his mind in turn (if needed, use the profile for the **Warrior Monk**, on page 197, with the **Perceptive** template, page 194, and the **Detached** demeanor, page 192). He will invariably oppose the PCs: he resents the involvement of outsiders, and even if some of them are part of the Crab Clan, he considers their allegiance diluted through their involvement as deputies of the Emerald Magistrate. Although he is not a samurai, Gakuto is afforded great respect by Tomonatsu, so the PCs must carefully present their arguments to convince her to act.

Social Objective: Advise Hida Tomonatsu

Description: The PCs are attempting to get Hida Tomonatsu to agree to their perspectives on the four points of the plan outlined above.

Requirements: The PCs and Gakuto must use the Persuade action with Social skills (or other relevant skills, such as Labor, Survival, Tactics, or Theology, which can be used as if they were Social skills to make arguments). Track the total number of rhetorical points (see **Rhetorical Points**, on page 156) that the PCs and Gakuto accrue from these checks targeting Tomonatsu. Remember to take Tomonatsu's Gruff demeanor into account, which raises the TN of Air checks to influence her by 2 and decreases the TN of Earth checks by 2.

Completion: Hida Tomonatsu ends the discussion and explains the strategy she will pursue at the end of any round in which the PCs and Gakuto achieve a cumulative 16 or more rhetorical points on their checks to use the Persuade action targeting her.

For every 4 rhetorical points the PCs scored, Tomonatsu agrees to one course of action the PCs proposed in the order they raised their points. For any other points, she agrees with Gakuto's judgment.

The Battle Is Joined

Resolve the scene using the rules for **Mass Battles**, on page 172. Hida Tomonatsu (played by the GM) is the commander, so the GM decides the strategic objective for each round. The enemy commander is Kazanagan no Oni. Although it is not fully materialized yet, the oni can fully communicate its will to its followers. As the Horde of Kazanagan no Oni fears its master far more than its enemy, the most reliable way to defeat it is to fully rout it, by inflicting more casualties than the army's strength or achieving the Seize Victory! strategic objective. Depending on Tomonatsu's decisions in the previous scene, the mass battle is affected as follows (see **At the Start of the Battle**, **During the First Round of Battle**, and **During the Second Round of Battle** on page 216).

Each of the leaders chooses the following strategic objectives on the listed round according to **Table 9-1: Strategic Objective by Turn** on page 215. For additional narrative and descriptive inspiration, as well as an overview of the major figures on both side of the battle, the GM may refer to **Leaders of the Shadowlands Forces** and **Officers During Battle** on page 217.

After three full rounds of mass battle, the GM should zoom in the narrative focus from epic to personal scale, proceeding to **Skeletal Skirmish** on page 218.

Third Tower Command

Hardy veterans of decades of war, the Third Tower Command serve Hida Tomonatsu with admirable dedication, even against long odds.

Strength: 25

Discipline: 30

Hardened Veterans (Army Ability): When this army removes 1 or more panic, it removes that amount plus additional panic equal to the glory rank of its commander.

Elite Training (Army Ability): Each cohort in this army may possess one of the following abilities, depending on the setup leading to the mass battle:

- **Siege:** The leader of this cohort reduces the TN of their Support actions by 1.
- **Infantry:** The leader of this cohort reduces the TN of their Attack actions by 1.
- **Archery:** Increase the TN of checks targeting this cohort by 1.
- **Shugenja:** After you perform a Support action, if you succeed, heal 3 points of panic or attrition from the army.

The Horde of Kazanagan no Oni

A band of wretched creatures, abominations, and horrors risen from the depths of the Shadowlands, Kazanagan no Oni's Horde lacks in organization but possesses ferocity and hatred in abundance.

Strength: 35

Discipline: 80 (while Kazanagan no Oni lives) / 20 (if Kazanagan no Oni is slain)

Relentless (Army Ability): The creatures of the Shadowlands live for battle, and their rage does not gutter out so easily as that of human soldiers. This army does not suffer the effects of battle fatigue (see **Battle Fatigue**, on page 175).

Monstrous Enemies: At the end of each round, the enemy army suffers 3 panic.

Wake of the Shadowlands (Army Ability): After a Mass Battle against this army, each participating opposing leader must succeed on a **TN 1 Fitness** or **Meditation** check using a ring of their choice or suffer the Afflicted condition for the ring they used. After a Mass Battle against this army, the battlefield becomes Defiled terrain (see page 167).

Table 9-1: Strategic Objective by Turn

Round Number	Hida's Strategic Objective	Kazanagan no Oni's Strategic Objective
1	<p>Draw Them In</p> <p>Description: Get the opponent to commit to attacking a particular position and then hold firm against them.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after an enemy leader performs an Assault action that inflicts 5 or fewer casualties against the cohort occupying the chosen position.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic and the leader's army removes 5 panic.</p>	<p>Capture a Position</p> <p>Description: The commander calls for the leaders to uproot the enemy from a specific position this round, so that the army can occupy it. This position must be a fortification or piece of terrain occupied by the enemy.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's leaders perform Assault actions targeting the cohort occupying the chosen position that inflict a total of 8 or more casualties on the enemy army. Alternatively, it can be fulfilled if the enemy army vacates the position and a friendly leader successfully performs the Reinforce action there.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy cohort occupying the fortification is driven out and no longer counts as occupying it. The leader who completed this objective may choose to have their cohort occupy the fortification immediately.</p>
2	<p>Grind Them Down</p> <p>Description: Inflict a certain number of casualties.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's leaders have inflicted a total of 10 or more total casualties on the enemy army during this round.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic and the leader's army removes 5 panic.</p>	<p>Cut Off the Head (targeting a living leader)</p> <p>Description: Kill a particular leader.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled when the chosen enemy leader or commander is slain by a member of your army.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective against an enemy leader, the enemy army suffers 10 panic. When a leader completes this objective against the enemy commander, the enemy army suffers 20 panic instead.</p>
3	<p>Cut Off the Head (targeting a living leader)</p> <p>Description: Kill a particular leader.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled when the chosen enemy leader or commander is slain by a member of your army.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective against an enemy leader, the enemy army suffers 10 panic. When a leader completes this objective against the enemy commander, the enemy army suffers 20 panic instead.</p>	<p>Grind Them Down</p> <p>Description: Inflict a certain number of casualties.</p> <p>Requirement: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army's leaders have inflicted a total of 10 or more total casualties on the enemy army during this round.</p> <p>Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic and the leader's army removes 5 panic.</p>

At the Start of the Battle

A number of preparations the PCs have taken might affect the outcome of the battle, as follows:

If the main gates are opened:

The massive oaken gates of the watchtower creak as they are opened, and dust falls from the rafters. The ranks of the Hida soldiers march through in unison, sashimono fluttering in the wind as they deploy beyond the Wall. Grim determination is painted on their faces as they march to meet their adversary head-on. The few samurai remaining on the Wall offer a silent prayer to the Fortunes—these samurai will be the Crab Clan's last line of defense.

Mechanical effect: The TN of Assault actions are reduced by 1 and the TN of Reinforce actions are increased by 1 for the whole battle. Additionally, the Hida cohort does not count as occupying a Fortified Position at the start of the battle (and cannot take up such a position without abandoning their post).

If the gates remain closed:

The Hida troops take up positions along the battlements, climbing the steps of the many stairways leading to the top. Frustration mars their brows as they clutch their weapons and wait for the enemy to draw closer, but the strength of the Wall and the siege weapons at their backs are reassuring.

Mechanical effect: The TN of Reinforce actions are reduced by 1 and the TN of Assault actions are increased by 1 for the whole battle.

If the Hiruma are deployed as light melee troops:

Bows stowed on their backs, the Hiruma samurai grab polearms and swords and take their place next to their Hida kin. Although the lightly armed scouts can't compare to their more heavily armed fellow Crab, the steel in their eyes indicates they are just as dangerous.

Mechanical effect: The Hiruma cohort loses the Archery ability, and it does not count as occupying a Fortified Position at the start of the battle if the gates of the watchtower are open. The cohort gains the Fearless Army Ability: At the end of each round, your army removes 6 panic.

During the First Round of Battle

If the tunnels were left open for the Nezumi to strike:

A grinning goblin leads dozens of its kind through the opening of a tunnel, eager to exploit the apparent weakness it's just found. They never emerge on the other side. Instead, a chaotic force of Nezumi erupts from the entrances, some running on all fours, and they strike with an unexpected fury. Cheers burst from the Crab army, and they fight with renewed vigor.

Mechanical effect: The Nezumi automatically inflict 5 casualties on the Shadowlands army, and the Crab army gains the initiative on the next round.

During the Second Round of Battle

If Kaiu Masae was able to prepare her trap on the Wall:

Ladders made of bone, leather, and other materials you'd rather not think about cling to the Wall like flies, and despite the best efforts of the defenders, creatures start climbing up the ramparts, slowly gaining a foothold. With a nod of gratitude to you, Masae gives the order, and two of her subordinates push an oversized lever. The portion of the Wall the monsters are on slides away, like a sand castle before the sea, and crashes a hundred feet farther down, amid the screams of the Shadowlands creatures.

Mechanical effect: The Kaiu cohort does not count as occupying a Fortified Position. However, they automatically inflict 10 casualties on Horde of Kazanagan no Oni, and the Crab army increases its discipline by 5.

If the Hiruma are deployed as archery troops but do not know that they are short on arrows:

The archery fire from the Hiruma slows to a trickle, then fully stops. The samurai clutch at empty quivers, shouting for a resupply, but it doesn't come. As goblins start climbing the Wall, the Hiruma draw their swords, prepared to sell their lives dearly.

Mechanical effect: The Hiruma cohort loses the Archery ability and gains the Infantry ability, and the Crab army suffers 5 panic.

If the Kuni shugenja were held back to prepare the ritual:

Screams of panic come from a portion of the Wall where the soldiers appear to be fighting against the wind itself. Wispy white silhouettes appear in their midst, cutting them to pieces with ethereal claws, their faces open in a perpetual howl of rage. "Where are the shugenja?" one of the bushi screams as a ghost lifts a samurai and drops them to their death. The soldiers take out jade powder, apply it to their weapons with oil, and start pushing the ghosts back, but at a heavy price.

Mechanical effect: The Crab army suffers 5 panic and 3 casualties.

Leaders of the Shadowlands Hordes

The following list of enemy leaders is intended to help you, the GM, provide the PCs with opposition during the battle. You don't have to use all of these leaders; in fact, the best option is to use one for each player character acting as a leader, to give the PCs a sufficient challenge. If more enemy leaders than those listed are needed, or to replace those killed in battle, just reuse the profile for Teeth-Taker, as goblins are the most numerous of Shadowlands troops. All the enemy leaders have been marked by Kazanagan no Oni: the symbol for fire (火) can be seen somewhere on their body. A character facing one of the enemy leaders in single combat can notice this with a successful **TN 3 Theology (Water) check**.

- **Teeth-Taker:** A brutal and intimidating goblin, Teeth-Taker has earned his name for the trophies he collects after fights. He wears most of them on strings of rope across his body, but some he uses to replace his own long-gone teeth. While strong for a goblin, he does not seem much of a threat to a trained samurai. Nevertheless, those who have underestimated him in the past now adorn his grisly regalia. Teeth-Taker commands hordes of troops and is a vicious, clever fighter. (If needed, use the profile for a **Shadowlands Goblin Chieftain**, page 204, with the **Assertive** demeanor, page 192.)
- **Kazuyoshi:** A good counterpoint to Keinosuke, Kazuyoshi was also a rōnin, but when he marched south, he didn't stop at the Wall. Now one of the Lost, he strikes back at Rokugan with all the fury of a man who feels he has been cheated by the Celestial Order. Kazuyoshi is a gifted duelist who still wears the katana of his ancestors in battle. The Shadowlands have made him into a much stronger warrior than he was before, and he commands a mix of Tainted humans and zombies in battle. (If needed, use the profile for a **Lost Samurai**, on page 205, with the **Ambitious** demeanor, page 192.)
- **Moto Morikazu:** One of the fabled Dark Moto, Moto Morikazu is the closest thing to a samurai commander the Shadowlands army has, despite looking like little more than a skeleton in armor. He and his troops ride on onikage, the monstrous steeds of the Shadowlands, and they are some of the only troops equipped with bows. Morikazu would like to make a name for himself by defeating the Crab, but he won't hesitate to retreat if his un-life is threatened. (If needed, use the profile for a **Dark Moto**, on page 206, with the **Shrewd** demeanor, page 192.)
- **Sakae:** A mahō-tsukai and oni summoner, Sakae lacks physical strength but has tremendous spiritual power. A commoner born with the ability to hear the kami, she was seduced by kansen with promises of power. She is closer to Kazanagan no Oni than any leader and has helped it gather the other leaders under its command. Her troops are a mix of weak oni and other Shadowlands creatures, such as Trolls and ogres. (If needed, use the profile for a **Mahō-Tsukai**, on page 199, with the **Assertive** demeanor, page 192.)
- **Old Prickly:** One of the so-called "goblin shamans," Old Prickly is a wizened little creature who has remained dangerous despite the years. He has only mastered a few mahō spells, but that is enough to command the respect of his fellow goblins. His troops are mostly goblins but include a few lesser Shadowlands creatures. He also has access to "magic mud," a flammable paste that he uses to cover some goblins and send them forward as flaming, shrieking living weapons. (If needed, use the profile for a **Shadowlands Goblin Shaman**, on page 205, with the **Shrewd** demeanor, page 192.)

Officers During Battle

If the PCs have established good relationships with the officers they met in the previous scenes, they can receive their assistance at crucial moments, such as at the ends of the second and third rounds. The GM can use the officers as wild cards during the battle, particularly if the PCs are having trouble. This shouldn't make the battle costless, however; if one of the officers comes to the rescue of the PCs, consider having the officer die in the process to showcase the dangers of fighting against the Shadowlands. The effects listed below shouldn't be used more than once, regardless of whether the NPC survives or not.

If the PCs have obtained the favor of **Hida Tsukiko**, she can lead a charge at the head of her unit of samurai to relieve pressure from one of the PCs' cohorts. The first time a PC would otherwise suffer a critical strike during the battle, Tsukiko intervenes and suffers the critical strike instead.

If **Kaiu Masae** wishes to help the PCs, she can turn her siege weapons in the direction of their closest enemies, increasing the attrition caused by one of the PCs' Assault actions by 5. However, this will leave the Kaiu Siege Engineers dangerously exposed, costing them the benefit of their Fortified Position until the end of the round.

Kuni Terumi, if she is participating in the battle instead of conducting the ritual and the PCs have made a positive impression on her, can use an invocation to heal the PCs. She can remove all wounds from all the PCs, but this will tire her and her shugenja, who won't be able to use the same invocation again in this mass battle.

Hiruma Yukito can lead the PCs through the tunnels if they have established a good relationship with him and they need to retreat and recover for a bit. Prevent 5 casualties from being inflicted on one of the PCs' cohorts, but keep in mind that there might be lost monsters or forgotten traps in the tunnels, which could claim the life of even an experienced Crab like Yukito.

Yasuki Hatsu is perhaps the most likely to help the PCs no matter what, as he understands the value of a favor (unless they have been discourteous to him such as by refusing his tea, in which case he will remain out of the PCs' sight for the whole battle). At the same time, he is the most likely to perish should he show up on the battlefield. Still, he can resupply a cohort with water (or something more potent), bandages, and weapons when they are most needed, allowing the army to remove 5 panic.

Skeletal Skirmish

At some point, no matter how the battle is going, the PCs must engage in combat themselves. This scene should happen after the second round of combat. Read the following passage as this conflict scene begins:

The battle rages all around you, the screams of samurai and monsters alike coming from every direction. The Wall is covered with ladders, ropes, and creatures attempting to climb them, while the Crab forces continue to fight the creatures off. However, on a portion of the Wall where the defenders have fallen, a skeletal hand reaches the top, soon followed by the entire skeleton of a reanimated samurai, bits of armor still dangling from the bones. The creature is followed by others of its kind, and they unsheath their weapons as they turn their empty eye sockets to the Third Watchtower, where Tomonatsu's command is. There is no one to stop them—except you, if you hurry.

This scene should be resolved as a skirmish, using the rules on page 163. Use the profile for **Skeletal Bushi**, on page 206. However, the circumstances of the skirmish will be affected by how the mass battle has been progressing. Compare the number of strategic objectives each side has achieved so far to determine if the Crab are losing, winning, or tied. Depending on the results, adjust the circumstances as follows:

Composition of the enemy group: If the Crab are winning, use one **Skeletal Bushi** per character. If they are tied, use one and a half as many **Skeletal Bushi** as there are PCs (rounding down). If the Crab are losing, add a leader to the group (preferably Moto Morikazu if he is still alive, but any of the leaders listed on page 217 will do). Note that if the **Skeletal Bushi** outnumber the PCs, some of them will keep going toward the watchtower while the rest are engaged in combat.

Assistance from the Crab: If the Crab are winning, soldiers the PCs encounter can provide the PCs with weapons; other items they need, such as rope; or quick medical assistance. If the Crab are tied, only one such weapon or item can be provided before the Crab must get back to the fight. If the Crab are losing, the corpse of a soldier returns to life as a PC passes by, and it attacks them! Resolve a single **Attack** action against the surprised character, using the **Zombie Peasant** profile, on page 204. Resolve the skirmish that follows, but remember that the zombie is suffering from the **Prone** condition to begin with.

Terrain: If the Crab are winning, some fortifications on the Wall remain that can hinder the skeletons' progress; the skeletal bushi begin the scene on the other side of two range bands of **Entangling terrain**. If the Crab are losing, the Wall is strung with debris and corpses: the PCs begin the scene in **Dangerous terrain** that extends one range band in the direction of their foes. If the two sides are tied, the terrain is **hazardous**, with pieces of the Wall broken or about to break. At the start of each round, choose a PC or skeletal bushi; the terrain within one range band of that character's current location becomes **Dangerous terrain**.

The characters start the scene at range 3 of their enemies. The skeletal bushi begin at range 5 of the watchtower, moving toward it. If even one of the skeletons escapes, it will strike an unaware Tomonatsu and injure her, meaning she won't be present in the next scene, which immediately follows.

Managing the Skeletal Bushi

The skeletal bushi should probably be treated as a minion squad (see **NPC Squads**, on page 191), or potentially two minion squads if there are five or more skeletal bushi. Skeletal bushi are still aware enough of their surroundings to assess threats and accept challenges from the PCs (even if their response is little more than a horrible scream and a piercing stare from their burning eyes). They generally ignore Incapacitated and Unconscious PCs, instead moving on to livelier targets.

Confrontation with the Oni

As the PCs reach the watchtower, hopefully after defeating the skeletons, read the following text aloud to them:

The stench of rotten blood and volcanic smoke fills the air, emanating from the watchtower. It overpowers anything else coming from the battlefield and is utterly sickening. Before you can enter the watchtower, a brilliant flash crosses the sky from the direction of the Shadowlands, and a thunder-like crack reverberates from the watchtower, causing the top battlements to explode into shards of masonry. A towering figure emerges from the smoke and dust. Surpassing thirty feet in stature, the monster dwarfs the Crab warriors before it. While it is roughly humanlike in shape, the glowing cracks in its gravelly skin point at its otherworldly nature. Its rumbling voice echoes across to you: "There is no Hida Kayo to protect you anymore! Centuries have passed, and I am finally free! Now I shall tear down this Wall once and for all!"

Kazanagan no Oni is now fully materialized in the mortal realm and aims to defeat the Crab once and for all. If Tomonatsu survived the previous scene, she is the oni's first target; it aims to crush both the leadership and the spirit of the Crab. If she has been taken out of the fight already, the oni will instead use her blood to prepare a foul ritual that, if completed, will destroy the entire watchtower. This would not only serve as a blow against the morale of the clan, but create a breach through which Shadowlands creatures would be free to enter Rokugan and rampage through the countryside. The characters need to stop it!

This scene is resolved as a skirmish, using the rules on page 163. It takes place on the top level of the watchtower. The battlements have been destroyed, but most of the roof is intact. Falling is a genuine risk here; any PC who plummets from the Wall counts as falling six range bands (see **Falling** on page 171), but no PC should fall without a chance to resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 1, Earth 5) check**.

Four main factors influence the ultimate battle:

Hida Tomonatsu's Fury

The commander of the Crab forces is the main target of the oni. While she hasn't been wounded at this point in the battle, she is still no match for the oni on her own. If the PCs advise her to flee or retreat, she nods and takes the stairs to the lower level of the tower, as she understands she needs to remain alive for the army to have a fighting chance. Otherwise, their best option is to join the battle, inflicting as much damage as possible on the oni or causing distractions to stop it from attacking her. Social skill checks can be used, depending on the PCs' approach, to refocus the oni's attention on the PCs rather than on Tomonatsu.

If Tomonatsu is Incapacitated, the oni is instead preparing a destructive mahō ritual. The characters only have eight rounds before it is complete, after which the watchtower will crumble and they will certainly perish. Since the oni is focusing its power through the ritual, it ignores the PCs. If a PC inflicts a critical strike on it (or uses the **Challenge** action against it), it pauses the ritual to begin attacking the nuisance who drew its ire. The oni does not bother to attack Incapacitated or Unconscious characters unless they make it truly irate.

The Kuni Ritual

If the PCs have spoken to Kuni Terumi and convinced Tomonatsu to keep her and the Kuni shugenja in reserve, read the following aloud as the skirmish begins:

The oni's figure dominates the tower, and it glares at you as you reach the upper level. Its eyes are two red-hot embers, the air distorted around them from the sheer heat. It is then that you notice the growing sound of ritual chanting, coming from the shugenja gathered around the lowest level of the tower. Rays of glowing jade energy spread across the floor in an angular pattern, weaving together and piercing the oni's flesh where it touches the floor. It writhes with pain and screeches, yet it doesn't fall. "Hurry! We have tied it to the tower and weakened it, but the kami can only contain it for so long!" you hear one of the shugenja scream.

The Jade Labyrinth ritual weakens the oni. Once completed, it counts as having been performed successfully with 4 bonus successes, plus one per PC who assisted Terumi in her research.

Jade Labyrinth

Prerequisites: School rank 1 XP Cost: 3 (1 for a PC who helped Terumi research it)

Description: The character inscribes a snaking pattern across the ground in jade powder, creating a maze of sacred energy that weakens unholy beings and restricts their movement. Struggle as they may, they must walk the intricate path before them to escape, wasting their time and leaving them vulnerable to even mundane attacks.

Type: Downtime.

Activation: As a **downtime activity**, make a **TN 4 Theology (Earth) check** targeting a position at **range 0–1**.

Effects: If you succeed, for the next hour, the first time a Shadowlands creature enters the targeted position, it suffers the Immobilized condition and is dealt supernatural damage equal to your bonus successes as though it were attacked with a weapon possessing the Sacred quality. While the creature is trapped, Attack checks targeting it deal as though they were made using a weapon with the Sacred quality. At the beginning of each of its turns, it must make a **TN 3 Theology (Water 5, Air 1) check** to find its way free; if it fails, it suffers the Immobilized condition and is dealt supernatural damage equal to its shortfall as though it were attacked with a weapon possessing the Sacred quality.

✦+: Choose one additional position at range 0–3 to be encompassed by the labyrinth. It can still trap only a single creature.

Siege Weapons

If the PCs assisted Kaiu Masae in repairing the Wall, she was able to spend some of her time installing a number of siege weapons atop it. These massive ballistae are not mounted to rotate to fire at a target atop the Wall, but with a bit of jury-rigging, they could be tilted to target Kazanagan no Oni. There are two such ballistae nearby at range 4 of the oni.

The ballistae are much too large for a single person to heft, but they can be adjusted to hit the monster. As an action, a character at range 0–1 of a ballista may make a **TN 1 Labor (Water) check** to modify one of its mountings or a **TN 2 Fitness (Water) check** to force it into place. Then, any character at range 0 of the ballista may fire it, using the following profile. Each weapon has five bolts loaded, and it must be reloaded (as an action) after these are fired.

Third Watchtower Command Ballista			
Skill	Range	Damage	Deadliness
Martial Arts [Ranged]	Range 2–5	12	10

The Absolution of Keinosuke

Should he still be alive, Keinosuke joins the battle against the oni, eager to redeem himself after his involvement with Michiru, the mahō-tsukai. The first time Tomonatsu or one of the PCs suffers a critical strike of severity 8 or higher, he intercepts the blow and suffers it instead, allowing him to regain his honor (albeit possibly in death). Aftermath

Once the oni is defeated, the battle is essentially over. Some Shadowlands creatures fight to the very end, but without Kazanagan no Oni's direction, their army falls apart, and many retreat deep within the Shadowlands. The characters are praised for their actions during battle that contributed to the victory, and should Tomonatsu still be alive, she considers herself in their debt. This might be only the beginning for the PCs, however, as Seppun Hirohide still awaits their return, which the GM could use to set up another story. Alternatively, the PCs could remain at the Wall, particularly if the attack is later found to be part of a larger pattern indicating a change in the behavior of the Shadowlands. Regardless, the GM should reward the PCs with experience points as well as glory and honor where appropriate, as they have thwarted a major threat to Rokugan through their actions.

Appendix: 4 Ronin's Path NPC Profiles

Keinosuke the Ronin (Adversary)

Keinosuke is genuinely remorseful for his involvement with Michiru, whom he did not know was a mahō-tsukai. Now, he has sought out a new identity and new home among the Crab Clan to atone for his sins.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
3	1	2	12	10
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			5	2
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			1	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue 2

Skills: Martial 2, Scholar 1, Trade 2

Advantages: Killer Instinct (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Rude (Fire) [Social; Interpersonal]

Demeanor: Assertive (Earth +2, Water -2)

Outburst: Become Enraged

Honor: 30 **Glory:** 40 **Status:** 20

Ninjō: Clear his name

Giri: Defend the wall

Abilities: School of the Wolf (Once per round, when an Attack action check targeting Keinosuke succeeds, Keinosuke may spend 1 Void point to change the target to another character (other than the attacker) at range 0–1 of Keinosuke.)

Gear (equipped): Daishō (wakizashi [Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged] and katana [Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-edged]) or one other weapon, worn robes (Physical 1, Damaged, Mundane), empty sake jug, straw hat, a pouch containing a handful of koku, bu, and zenī.

Techniques

Iaijutsu

Activation: As an Attack action using one sheathed katana or wakizashi, Keinosuke may make a TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] check targeting one character at range 1–2.

Effects: Keinosuke draws and readies the sheathed katana or wakizashi in a one-handed grip.

If Keinosuke succeeds, he deals physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's deadliness plus their bonus successes.

Striking as Fire

Activation: When Keinosuke makes a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) check, Keinosuke may spend ☼ in the following way:

- **Fire ☼+:** Increase the severity of the next critical strike your target suffers by 1 per ☼ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Hida Tomonatsu (Adversary)

Stern and unflinching, Hida Tomonatsu takes the charge of her ancestors very seriously. A veteran of many battles, she understands all too well the horrors the Shadowlands hold.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
4	2	1	12	14
			FOCUS	VIGILANCE
			4	1
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			4	0

Conflict Rank: Combat 3, Intrigue 1

Skills: Martial 3, Social 1, Trade 1

Advantages: No-Nonsense (Earth) [Social; Mental], Self-Sacrificing (Fire) [Martial; Mental]

Disadvantages: Culturally Obtuse (Air) [Artisan; Mental]

Demeanor: Gruff (Air +2, Earth -2)

Typical Outburst: Inappropriate Remark

Honor: 45 **Glory:** 50 **Status:** 55

Ninjō: Spend time with her family in Nishiyama village

Giri: Ensure that the Wall is not breached

Abilities: Sworn Protector (Once per round, when an Attack action check targeting another character succeeds, Tomonatsu may spend 1 Void point to intervene. Tomonatsu becomes the target of the attack instead of the original target.)

Gear (equipped): Ōtsuchi (Martial Arts [Melee]; Range 1; Damage 8; Deadliness 3; Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear), yumi (Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3), wakizashi (Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Concealable, Razor-edged), knife (Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 4, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged), lacquered armor (Physical 4).

Gear (other): Plain robes (Physical 1, Mundane), miniature go set.

Techniques

Lord Hida's Grip

As an Attack action, Tomonatsu may make a Fitness (Void) check targeting one creature of silhouette 3 or larger at range 0–1. The TN of the check is equal to the silhouette of the target. If she succeeds, her target suffers the Immobilized condition, and she counts as granting assistance (see page 15) to all characters who perform Attack actions against the target.

☼: The target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check** or suffer the Prone condition.

Kazanagan no Oni (Adversary)

A powerful and devious creature, Kazanagan no Oni has plagued the Crab several times over the centuries. During its last appearance, however, it was defeated by a samurai named Hida Kayo, who swore that he and his descendants would always stand in its way. Now that the last of them—also named Hida Kayo—has been murdered, Kazanagan no Oni is ready to return to the mortal realm. Its spiritual power allows it to reach through the borders between Spirit Realms and communicate with the minds of heavily Tainted creatures, which it recruits to its cause through promises of carnage and power. Unique among oni, it can be summoned without a ritual if enough blood is spilled upon the battlefield. Its goal is simple: to enter Rokugan and bring down every single structure humankind has ever built. Kazanagan no Oni is as strong as a volcano's eruption, able to kill a mortal with only a few blows and hurl fiery rocks torn from its own body. Its skin is black and gravelly, with orange-hot veins tracing lines between chunks of muscle. Despite having no mouth, it can make itself heard by anyone near it, its voice echoing as a low rumble in their ears.

EARTH	WATER	AIR	RESILIENCE	COMPOSURE
4	3	3	24	10
FIRE	VOID		FOCUS	VIGILANCE
6	3		6	3
			PHYSICAL RESISTANCES	SUPERNATURAL RESISTANCES
			5	3

Conflict Rank: Combat 5, Intrigue 3

Skills: Martial 4, Trade 1, Scholar 2, Social 1

Advantages: Massive Stature (Earth) [Martial; Physical]

Disadvantages: Consumed by Rage (Fire) [Social; Mental]

Demeanor: Furious (Air -2, Earth +2)

Typical Outburst: Rage

Honor: 00

Glory: 10

Status: 00

Abilities: Shadowlands Creature (Weapons with the Sacred quality ignore this creature's resistances.)

Gear (equipped): Molten fists (Martial Arts [Unarmed]; Range 0–2; Damage 6; Deadliness 4), scraps of armor and demonic hide (Physical 5, Supernatural 3).

Techniques

Molten Flesh

- **Fire** ❸+: When performing an Attack action, Kazanagan no Oni may spend ❸ to cause one target at range 0–1 per ❸ spent this way to suffer the Burning condition (see page 170).

Volcanic Boulder

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, Kazanagan no Oni hurls partially molten rocks it tears from its own flesh. Each character at range 1–3 must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 4) check** or suffer physical damage equal to 4 plus their shortfall.

Fire for Blood

After Kazanagan no Oni suffers a critical strike, fiery molten rock spills from its veins. Each character at range 0–1 suffers the Dazed condition and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 5, Water 1) check** or suffer supernatural damage equal to the severity of the critical strike.

Narrative Mode

Rings

Technique Types Available _____ School Rank _____






Skills

Social Standing

Advantages and Disadvantages

Relationships and Character Notes

Symbol Key

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
				



○ Honor ○ Glory ○ Status

Ninjō

Giri

Titles

DISTINCTIONS: Reroll up to two dice of your choice when a distinction helps you on a check.

ADVERSITIES: Reroll two dice showing  or  results when a flaw hinders you on a check. Then, if you failed, regain 1 Void point.

PASSIONS: After performing a check related to your passion, remove 3 strife.

ANXIETIES: After performing a check related to your anxiety, suffer 3 strife. If you suffer an Outburst as a result, regain 1 Void point.

PERSONAL OUTBURST

Other Character's Name	Status	Notes
------------------------	--------	-------

[illegible]

ARTISAN SKILLS		Ranks
Craft or repair a work of art	Aesthetics	
	Composition	
	Design	
	Smithing	

Artisan Approaches

- Refine (Air)
- Restore (Earth)
- Invent (Fire)
- Adapt (Water)
- Attune (Void)

Overcome an opponent	MARTIAL SKILLS		Ranks
	Fitness		
	Martial Arts [Melee]		
	Martial Arts [Ranged]		
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]		
	Meditation		
	Tactics		

Martial Approaches
Feint (Air)
Withstand (Earth)
Overwhelm (Fire)
Shift (Water)
Sacrifice (Void)

<i>Influence a person</i>	SOCIAL SKILLS	Ranks
	Command	
	Courtesy	
	Games	
	Performance	

Social Approaches

- Trick (Air)
- Reason (Earth)
- Incite (Fire)
- Charm (Water)
- Enlighten (Void)




	SCHOLAR SKILLS		Ranks
	Know or learn a fact	Culture	
	Government		
	Sentiment		
	Theology		
	Medicine		

Scholar Approaches
Analyze (Air)
Recall (Earth)
Theorize (Fire)
Survey (Water)
Sense (Void)

Acquire or use resources	TRADE SKILLS	Ranks
	Commerce	
	Labor	
	Seafaring	
	Skulduggery	
	Survival	

Trade Approaches
Con (Air)
Produce (Earth)
Innovate (Fire)
Exchange (Water)
Subsist (Void)

- Success
- ⦿ Explosive Success
- ✱ Opportunity
- ⚔ Strife

EXPERIENCE		
Total XP	Spent XP	Saved XP
		

Conflict Mode

Rings and Stances

Earth Stance
(conflict only):
Other characters cannot
spend ⚔ targeting you.

Void Stance
(conflict only):
You do not gain Strife from ⚔
results on checks.

Water Stance
(conflict only):
After you make a check, you may
remove 2 strife or move 1 range band.

Air Stance
(conflict only):
Increase the TN of Attack and
Scheme checks targeting you by 1.

Fire Stance
(conflict only):
If you succeed, increase your degrees
of success by 1 for each ⚔ result.

Resilience
(Earth + Water) x 2

Composure
(Fire + Earth) x 2

Focus
(Air + Fire)

Vigilance
(Water + Air) / 2

Void Points

Wounds

Strife

Maximum

Current

Derivative Attributes

Conditions

Advantages

Disadvantages

School Ability

Armament

WEAPONS

Name	Damage/Deadliness	Range	Qualities

Name p. #

Activation

Effects

⚔

Name p. #

Activation

Effects

⚔

ARMOR

Name	Protection Type (Resistance)	Qualities

--	--	--	--

Notes and Gear Inventory

Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Name p. #

Activation

Effects



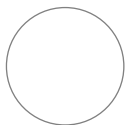
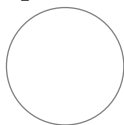
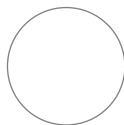
Name p. #

Activation

Effects



Saved XP



Advancement	XP Invested
Skill Group	
Skill	
Skill	
Skill	
Technique Category	
Technique	
Technique	
Rings	
○ Completed	

Advancement	XP Invested
Skill Group	
Skill	
Skill	
Skill	
Technique Category	
Technique	
Technique	
Rings	
○ Completed	

Advancement	XP Invested
Skill Group	
Skill	
Skill	
Skill	
Technique Category	
Technique	
Technique	
Rings	
○ Completed	

Advancement	XP Invested
Skill Group	
Skill	
Skill	
Skill	
Technique Category	
Technique	
Technique	
Rings	
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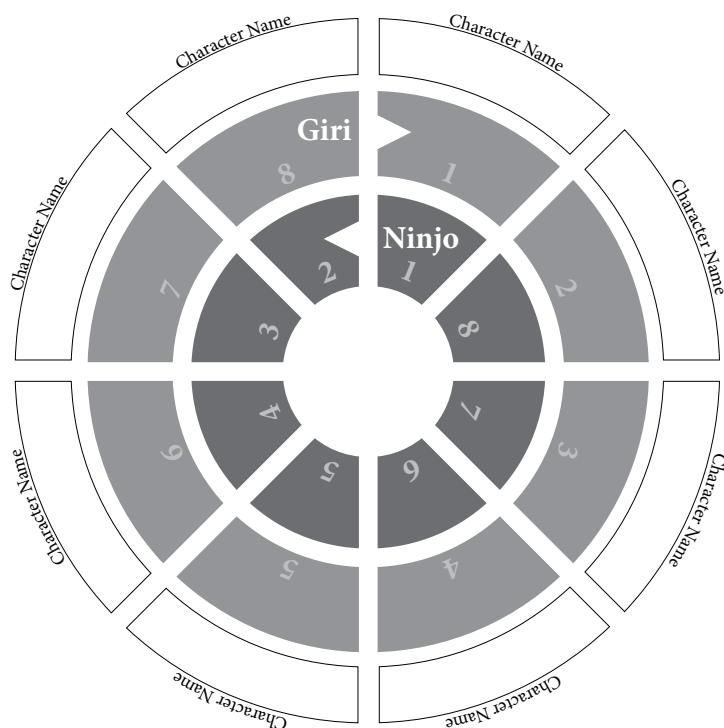
Advancement	XP Invested
Skill Group	
Skill	
Skill	
Skill	
Technique Category	
Technique	
Technique	
Rings	
○ Completed	

☐ **Unlocked**

[illegible]

	XP Invested
<input type="radio"/> Completed	

☐ **Unlocked**



Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
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Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
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Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Session #
Character (Ninjō)
Character (Giri)
Notes

Campaign Sheet - Page 2

PC Name	Vigilance
Ninjō	
Giri	
Advantages:	Disadvantages

Key Relationships	
Other Character	Status
Notes	

PC Name	Vigilance
Ninjō	
Giri	
Advantages:	Disadvantages

Key Relationships	
Other Character	Status
Notes	

PC Name	Vigilance
Ninjō	
Giri	
Advantages:	Disadvantages

Key Relationships	
Other Character	Status
Notes	

PC Name	Vigilance
Ninjō	
Giri	
Advantages:	Disadvantages

Key Relationships	
Other Character	Status
Notes	

PC Name	Vigilance
Ninjō	
Giri	
Advantages:	Disadvantages

Key Relationships	
Other Character	Status
Notes	

You can use this sheet to fill in your answers to the Game of Twenty Questions, and to take notes for later!

Part I: Core Identity (Clan & Family)

1). What clan does your character belong to?

Ring Increase (1)

Skill Increases (1)

Status

2). What family does your character belong to?

Ring Increase (1)

Skill Increases (2)

Glory

Part II: Role & School

3). What is your character's school and role?

Ring Increase (2)

Skill Increases (3-5)

Honor

Techniques Available

School Ability

Starting Equipment

Starting Techniques (2-5)

4). How does your character stand out within their school?

Ring Increase (1)

Part III: Honor & Glory

5). What is your character's duty to their lord?

6). What does your character long for?

7). What is your character's opinion of their clan?

Skill Increase (0-1)

OR

Glory Increase

8). What does your character think of Bushidō?

Skill Increase (0-1)

OR

Honor Increase

Part IV: Strengths & Weaknesses

9). What is your character's greatest accomplishment so far?

Distinction (1)

10). What holds your characters back the most in life?

Adversity (1)

11). What makes your character feel at peace?

Passion (1)

12). What concern, fear, or foible troubles your character the most?

Adversity (1)

13). Who has your character learned the most from during their life?

Skill Increase (0-1)

OR

Advantage (1)

Disadvantage (1)

Part V: Personality & Behavior

14). What details do others find most striking about your character?

15). How does your character respond to stressful situations?

Personal Outburst

16). What are your character's preexisting relationships with other clans, families, organizations, and traditions?

Part VI: Ancestry & Family

17). How would your character's parents describe them?

18). Who was your character named to honor?

Samurai Heritage (Result)

19). What is your character's personal name?

Part VII: Death

20). How should your character die?

Dice Sheet

To create your own custom dice, print out this page on sticker paper, cut out each die face, and affix one of each die face to a side on the appropriate dice. (You may refer to the **Breakdown of the Dice** on page 11.)

The black die faces correspond to the six-sided Ring die, and the white die faces correspond to the twelve-sided Skill die. In lieu of sticker paper,

regular paper may be used, but you will need to use glue to affix the faces to the dice (a regular gluestick worked well for the development team while developing prototype dice for alpha testing!). Spraying these with a bit of transparent dull-coat (found at most hobby stores and friendly local game stores) will help keep the stickers on.

