

Freedom of the Air

**A 1-Round Mid-High Rank Adventure for Heroes of
Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido**

by Michael Sander
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In the midst of political turmoil, a minor detail reported by a mapping expedition several years ago has captured the Imperial Chancellor's attention, and he has enlisted you to sate his curiosity.

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This module is written for the Legend of the Five Rings: Fourth Edition, published by Alderac Entertainment.

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

A four hour time block has been allocated for playing this game. The actual playing time should be about three and a half hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, gender, glory and status at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in *bold italics*. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters. All bulleted information is just that, pure information. Feed it to the players through an NPC when appropriate, as sometimes reading it straight just doesn't sound right.

Players will have Module Tracking Sheets that need to be filled out at the end of the game, which is to keep track of certain circumstances and events for future GM's to create a better roleplaying experience for the player. Important information to be included in the game will be listed at the beginning of the module, and information that needs to be recorded will be listed at the end of the module. Please fill out the GM tracking sheet attached to the end of this module and return it to the Campaign Coordinator. If you need an electronic version of the form, please contact the Campaign Administrator or Campaign Coordinator (e-mail addresses are available on the website).

Rokugan has a complex and rich culture that is different in many ways from modern Western civilization. The Legend of the Five Rings book details these numerous differences, but it is suggested that GMs keep a few specifics in mind.

- Family name precedes personal name for all characters; Akodo Toturi was a member of the Akodo family with the personal name of Toturi.
- Samurai do not commonly concern themselves with money or commerce; exchanges between samurai are treated as gifts, and payments are made to peasants as though humoring the lower orders petty ways.
- An event is not truly considered to have happened without samurai witness; even criminal investigations rely entirely upon eyewitness testimony.

Some events that occur within this module affect the storyline and may need to be reported by the Campaign Administrators. This module has an effective 'active' period which is 3 months after its release, and these events (listed at the end of the module) **MUST** be reported by the GM to the campaign administration before the end of the active period for them to take effect.

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

This adventure contains suggested Glory and Honor awards (and penalties) for dealing with the challenges presented herein. However, at times the players may take extra actions which the GM judges worthy of additional reward or punishment. **Please consult the Honor table on page 91 and the Glory table on page 93** of the Legend of the Five Rings Fourth Edition core source book for more specific guidelines for Honor and Glory gains and losses. Specifically, be mindful of the performing PC's current Honor, Glory, and Infamy when meting out rewards and punishments.

Reminder

This module is intended for entertainment purposes; this means that the goal is to provide an enjoyable playing experience for the players. The events of the module should be challenging, so as to ensure the players have a sense of accomplishment, but the mechanics presented here are, ultimately, guidelines. If adjustments are necessary to adapt to the specific group of players, it is suggested that care should be taken to ensure the player characters do have a reasonable chance of achieving their goals (or at least of achieving an entertaining failure). Remember that the GM has the final word at the table, and use that power with both discretion and consideration.

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Mid rank adventure and carries the expectation that the characters can handle a wide variety of situations. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank 3.

Although most of the challenges here are role-play oriented and thus not terribly dependent on party strength, a few changes can be made to adjust the adventure difficulty for low-end and high-end parties, as follows:

High End Party (most/all characters Rank 4):

Adventure Summary and Background

Almost a decade ago, Miya Gokinju lead a group of young samurai through the Phoenix lands on an expedition to chart the Empire's northern border. There are some among Rokugan's political elite who claim that this expedition may have touched off the series of events that lead to the siege of [Place I can't Remember], and shifted the bureaucracy's focus away from settling the Regency issue. As he reviewed Gokinju's report while setting up the new Imperial postal service, Otomo Mitsuhide came across a curious entry. Apparently, bridge had been built across the [River], along with a road leading into the mountains making up the Empire's northern border. Gokinju hadn't put this bridge on his map for some reason, but there were brief mentions of it in the testimony of several members of the cartographer's escort. Being a man whose reputation is built on details, Mitsuhide has decided he needs answers. Where exactly is this bridge? Where does it lead and why was it left off of Gokinju's map? The answers he receives, however, may reveal a great many things the Phoenix Clan does not wish known.

The poorly-maintained road crossing this mysterious bridge leads deep into the Great Wall of the North, and eventually reaches the Phoenix outpost of Yobanjin Mura. This village has been a carefully guarded secret for hundreds of years, and the Phoenix will not be pleased if its existence and purpose revealed to the Empire. Yobanjin Mura has clearly been built without Imperial sanction, as trade with gaijin is strictly prohibited. The reasons for it's founding will be revealed, and the Phoenix will have to deal with the repercussions.

As the investigation continues, a Yobanjin raiding party swoops in, demanding the surrender of the village, or it's destruction, as reparation for the loss of many of the tribe's spirit-brothers, their giant hawk mounts. Something the gaijin can only describe as "black arms" has been capturing and killing any of the birds that fly too close to the "Sky Castle". This is a reference to the Oracle of Air's home near the summit of a nearby mountain, but the description of the "black arms" lends itself to some very sinister speculation. The reality may be much, much worse.

The Shadow-corrupted doppelganger of Kakita Kaiten that escaped from the [Realm of Thwarted Destiny] has taken up residency in the Oracle's castle atop the mountains, and is trying to persuade her to return to her former master's service as the Oracle of Shadow. It was her connection to the fallen Air Dragon that allowed the beast to survive despite the destruction of the Nameless by Hitomi, and it wishes to show its gratitude by becoming Doji Hanae's patron once more. As with the other Oracles, Hanae was driven near to madness by the death of Toturi Kaede, and this has manifested in crippling guilt over her role in allowing the Shadow to survive, and doubt in her own ability to prevent herself from falling under its control. The PCs will need to convince Doji Hanae to make the correct choice, while fending off the attacks of the Shadow Kaiten and his horrifically familiar companions. All while dodging the fall-out of the celestial combat raging over their heads, as the two Air Dragons fight over the fate of Hanae and all of Ningen-do.

Introduction

Otosan Uchi is in mourning. The days [and weeks] following the [Night of Long Knives] have been full of rumors and confusion. The Kolat assassins struck deeply into the upper tiers of Rokugani society, leaving an already strained bureaucracy to bear the weight of governance while those who remain in positions of power fight to determine who will guide the Empire out of this dilemma. Life in the Imperial Capitol cannot come to a complete halt however, as taxes must still be collected and disputes must still be settled. It is in the midst of this mixture of quiet solemnity and everyday bustle that you now find yourselves.

The PCs have been summoned to meet with Otomo Mitsuhide, the Imperial Chancellor, to discuss “a minor point of curiosity” regarding one of their earliest assignments. The Chancellor’s invitation did not provide any details on the matter, but such things are not simply ignored, and the players find themselves once again drawn to the political and spiritual center of Rokugan. Prior to their meeting, there is time for the players to speak with the locals and get a feel for what’s happening in the city by rolling **Courtier (Gossip)/Awareness**. They gain additional information based on how well they roll..

TN 10 - *Otosan Uchi hasn’t changed much in the years since Hantei Okuchoe declared himself Regent for the young Empress, but there is a quiet fear that crosses the face of the local populace whenever a samurai wearing the symbol of the Owls passes. Whispers of disappearances and mysterious deaths surround Okuchoe’s agents, mostly involving citizens who have been indiscreet in their disapproval of the former Emperor. For their part, the Owls go about their business as usual, and the bonuses that the badge offers has brought many of the Capitol’s less fortunate to seek positions within the organization.*

TN 15 - *The Capitol is still coming to grips with the loss of so many powerful samurai to assassins' blades. Combining that with rumors of the agonizing deaths that some of the Returned Ancestors experienced during the [Ritual of Mortality], such as what happened to the Master of Water, Isawa Tomo, has only compounded the fear among the residents of the City.*

TN 20 (10 for Owls)- *The Emerald Champion’s decree that all returned ancestors submit themselves to the potentially deadly [name of ritual to reattach Spirits to Ningen-do] ritual has resulted in an influx of veterans of the Battle of Oblivion’s Gate to the city seeking refuge. Hantei Okuchoe has offered them his protection, claiming that the edict cannot possibly come from the compassionate heart of the Empress, and promising swift justice for anyone who feels threatened by agents of Toshiken.*

TN 25 - Campaign rumor

TN 30 (20 for Imperial Legionnaires) - *A unit of scouts from the [Otosan Uchi Legion] have gone missing somewhere in the Dragon Heart Plains, along with Asako Sagoten, a returned spirit who trained under Isawa himself. Rumors for what happened range from bandits to an ambush by forces loyal to the Black Lion and even a previously unknown portal to the Spirit Realms.*

Players who ask may roll **Lore: Underworld / Awareness TN 30 (40 if Emerald Magistrates or Yoriki are present)** learn the following: *While there are rumors of sinister events surrounding the Owls, it is all hearsay. No one knows any such victims personally, only that they, “heard from a friend who heard someone at the noodle shop say that they knew someone who had heard something.” The only true disappearances have been among the various criminal groups who work within the city, and mostly involving people with suspected ties to the Kolat. Some have been found dead, their faces contorted and eye sockets empty, as though their minds had burned from the inside out.*

Once the PCs have finished scouring the city for gossip, they will have time to get cleaned up and make themselves presentable for their meeting with the Chancellor. [Do we want to put an Honor hit in here for failing to dress appropriately?]

A young courtier meets you at the entrance to the Otomo Palace, introducing himself as Otomo Daiki. You are lead through the maze of passages and stairways that make up the halls of bureaucracy that surround the Imperial Court. Along the way, you see several large waiting rooms filled with people petitioning for meetings with various functionaries, and your guide shakes his head sadly as you walk past one of the larger rooms. “Tsk. These people are all here to see Mitsuhide-sama, despite several announcements that he will be unavailable today. Luckily, you have an appointment. Everything works so much better when you have an appointment.”

Daiki eventually stops at the doorway to a small waiting room. An assortment of light snacks has been placed on the table, and once you are settled into your seats, a servant silently offers to pour tea. Somewhat surprisingly, you have only been seated for an hour when Daiki returns, saying, “Otomo Mitsuhide-sama will see you now, and apologizes for the delay. There will be one other person in your meeting, and he wanted to make sure his guest was properly prepared.”

Otomo Mitsuhide rises from behind his writing desk when you enter, as does an elegantly dressed woman wearing the mon of the Isawa family. Mitsuhide introduces her as Isawa Akiko, and she bows politely to each of you, despite the unmistakable annoyance in her eyes. “Akiko-sama is here on a separate matter,” he explains, clearly ignoring Akiko’s displeasure, “but I felt that our discussion may be of interest to her, so I asked her to stay. She was kind enough to agree. Please, be seated.”

Characters who participated in SOB[XX]: Castle of Water will recognize Isawa Akiko, and everyone has heard that Isawa’s daughter had returned following during the battle in Voltturnum. Unlike most of the Returned Ancestors in the Capitol, Akiko no longer bears the tell-tale golden aura of those who have not yet submitted themselves to the [Ritual].

“Let me begin by saying that the reason behind this interview is trivial, but I am nothing if not a man of details. Several years ago, most of you participated in one of a series of expeditions to map the northern edge of Rokugan and the Dragon Heart Plain. Some, but not all of the reports from those expeditions mention a bridge crossing the Hadazamui River. This bridge is not mentioned in Miya Gokinju-san’s official report, nor is it on any of the maps created for the Empress’ libraries, despite being detailed in the testimony of most of the samurai who participated in the charting mission. I would like to know why.”

Mitsuhide will look expectantly at each of the PCs who reported finding the bridge in their run of Undefined Boarder. The bridge itself was described as “an old, but sturdy-looking bridge that crosses the river as it passes through a narrow gorge,” but is otherwise uninteresting. Those who crossed the bridge on their journey quickly returned to their original route rather than following the poorly maintained path that went deeper into the mountains, and should have no idea where it leads.

After the PCs have answered, the Chancellor turns his gaze to Isawa Akiko, who responds archly. *“As I said earlier, Otomo-san, I don’t know anything about this bridge. Have you asked Miya-san why he left it off his map?”*

“As a matter of fact, I did, Akiko-sanma,” Mitsuhide counters, despite the Phoenix’ annoyance at the more familiar tone. “He said that he felt the bridge was of little importance to the Empire at large, as he was told by your clan Champion that it was likely just a hunting trail used by the local peasants. Unlike the Imperial Cartographer, I am unsatisfied with this answer.”

Turning his attention back to you, Mitsuhide continues, “Therefore, I would like you to relocate this bridge, and follow this ‘hunting trail’ to wherever it leads and report back. Do you have any questions?”

This is a very straightforward request, but there are a few questions the PCs may have, and some are covered below.

Why wait until now to investigate this bridge?

“With the recent cessation of hostilities between the Dragon and Phoenix Clans, this area has now come under the protection of the Dragon. I discovered this odd detail while researching the treaty agreement, and would like to have a complete understanding of the area being handed over to the Dragon before the Empress approves the treaty.”

What about the Dragon? Will they have any objections to our expedition crossing their territory? Should we report our findings to them, as well?

“Your travel papers have taken that into account. You are working for the Office of the Imperial Chancellor, and the Dragon can speak to me if they have any questions.”

Some PCs may be interested in why a high-ranking samurai like Mitsuhide has not yet acted on the Emerald Champion’s command to undergo the [Ritual]. Have these PCs roll **Etiquette / Awareness TN 20** to realize this is an extremely sensitive question, and that accusing such a well-connected individual of disobeying the Empress’ protector could have very dangerous repercussions. Any PC of Status 3.4 or lower who follows this line of questioning will get an answer along the lines of, **“I am still making my preparations, samurai-san,”** from the Otomo. The PC will also lose a full rank of Glory at the end of the module, as Mitsuhide uses his influence to undermine the PC’s achievements. See the “Rewards” section at the end of the module for other repercussions.

Characters with a Status of 3.5 or higher have a little more pull, especially Emerald Magistrates or their Yoriki, and they will receive more detailed, if nuanced, answers. Otomo Mitsuhide feels that the clarity and focus he received as a result of several centuries in Meido has been the key to making sure the Empire’s bureaucracy has continued to operate, despite the power struggle over the Regency, and he is reluctant to return to the everyday distractions that come with a more normal life until that matter is settled.

After your questions have been answered, Mitsuhide stands to excuse you, saying that preparations have been made for an early morning departure aboard a Mantis vessel headed to Kyuden Isawa, adding, “Meet me there once you have completed your explorations.”

Part One: Children of the Mountain

The PCs will have to leave their horses at the stables in Ootosan Uchi, where they will be treated with the best care available outside of the Unicorn Provinces. While they are traveling under the auspices of the Imperial Regent, the PCs are still bound by the rules of Etiquette, and should not wear their armor nor carry unbound weapons of war (anything other than a Daisho) openly without expecting some impact on their glory and honor. When their journey takes them outside the Empire, they may equip themselves as they wish.

The journey to the northern reaches of the Empire goes much faster than when you were part of Miya Gokinju’s expedition, and you find yourselves descending the cliffs of Ryokou ni Joukai Mura only a couple of weeks after leaving Ootosan Uchi. During the Dragon occupation of the area, the steps leading down the steep face of the mountain have been repaired, and the path is clear and sturdy. Continuing northward, the presence of the Dragon quickly becomes apparent, as you pass several more villages than you remember from your previous visit to the area. You reach the Hadamazui River around noon the next day, and find Mitsuhide’s bridge an hour later.

The bridge is old, but sturdy, allowing the party to cross with little difficulty.

NOTE: The PCs are now technically outside of the Empire, so they may equip themselves as they wish.

Once across, the trail heading away from the bridge eventually forks, with one path heading back towards the Dragon Heart Plain, and the other continuing north, deeper into the mountains. The path is overgrown and occasionally difficult to follow, but the next morning finds you looking out over a narrow valley, and the small village nestled inside of it. Most of the settlement’s dozen or so buildings are nothing more than simple huts, but there are a pair of larger, Rokugani-style samurai dwellings.

PCs who choose to scout the village from here before approaching may roll **Investigation, Hunting, or Battle / Perception TN 20**. Success reveals the following information, with more detail coming with higher levels of success.

TN 20 - The village is laid out like a traditional Rokugani village, with the majority of the buildings placed inside a low stone wall. A higher wall surrounds the two larger buildings, and pair of watchtowers have been built into the wall on the far side of the village. It is clearly inhabited, as smoke rises from inside several huts, and peasants are tending to several small fields of grain.

TN 25 - Each of the buildings has sharpened metal poles jutting from the roof in several places.

TN 30 - The path leading to the village from here is well maintained, though it appears to be rarely used. A similar, though significantly wider road can be seen leading away from the village, deeper into the mountains.

TN 40 - What at first appears to be a small flock of birds circling over the village is, in reality, much further away, made up of much, much, larger birds - and they appear to be getting closer.

Presuming the PCs decide to proceed to the village, it isn't long before they are spotted, especially if the party is moving quickly. One of the villagers spots the PCs, and shouts something before running towards the largest of the samurai residences. The streets and fields quickly clear as the party approaches.

You can hear a commotion from inside the samurai compound, and it isn't very long before its gates open to reveal a trio of very flustered shugenja and a pair of yojimbo. As they approach, the wind carries snippets of a hushed conversation: "... Taeruko-sama never mentioned ...", "... I'll handle ...", "... some tea, I hope...".

The five orange and red clad Phoenix take a position in the center of the road, and bow deeply when you draw close enough. "Welcome, Samurai," greets a broad-chested man of about 40, wearing the mon of the Isawa and it's renowned school of earth magic. "I am Isawa Kenta, servant of the Empress and of the Five Masters, and administrator of this humble village. Before you approach any further, you should know that you are trespassing, and that any further intrusion will be seen as an act of war b-

"KENTA! NO!" interrupt the other two shugenja interrupt simultaneously, as the two Shiba bushi avert their eyes. "I must apologize, samas, for Kenta-san's choice of words. I am Isawa Noriko and this is Gennai Suzu" an older woman continues, indicating the remaining shugenja, a young woman. "We share the duties of maintaining this outpost, along with Isawa Kenta and our yojimbo, Shiba Hibiki and her brother, Shiba Kanon. What is your business here, so that we may return you to your lords without further inconvenience?"

Isawa Noriko stands a full head taller than her fellow administrators, and wears the mon of the Isawa school specialized in working with the spirits of Air. Her hair remains tied-up in a maiden's fox-tail, despite being of similar age to Isawa Kenta. The younger woman, Gennai Suzu, has her hair fashioned in something that resembles the traditional fox-tail, but it seems to be actively resisting such restraint, with several strands dancing joyfully in the soft mountain breeze. In addition to the new mon of the Gennai family, Suzu wears the mon of their shugenja school.

As the party explains the reason for their investigation, the three shugenja will react with different levels of fear, anger, and surprise, but they are all concerned about what the discovery of Yobanjin Mura will mean for the Phoenix clan. If one of the PCs mentions the large hawks headed towards the village, Noriko will nod in hesitant acknowledgement, saying, "We are expecting them, yes."

Isawa Kenta responds with indignation and posturing, saying things like, "You were sent by an Otomo? Trust them not to respect the words of the Council," and, "We are performing important work here, and your interference will not be tolerated."

Noriko is much more diplomatic, asking to see the party's travel papers as proof of their claims. Once she is satisfied that their documents are in place, she works to clarify the village's existence. "Very well, you have seen for yourselves where the bridge leads, and can report back to the Imperial Chancellor that the Phoenix maintain a research outpost just north of the border of the Empire. We come here to test different rituals for calling upon the kami in areas where they are not as prevalent, using techniques reported by our friends in the Unicorn, Mantis, and Crab. If he does not find that to be a satisfactory answer, Otomo-sensei is more than welcome to speak with Isawa Taeruko-sama."

Gennai Suzu remains quiet during these exchanges, cringing slightly when Kenta gets confrontational, and straightening with pride when Isawa Noriko speaks of their noble purpose for being here.

While the three are talking, the PCs may roll **Investigation (Interrogation)/Awareness TN 25** to determine that Isawa Noriko is not being wholly truthful in her explanation for the village's existence. The fact that no one has referred to Yobanjin Mura by name is also strange. Rolling a **35** or higher catches Gennai Suzu occasionally

glancing over her shoulder towards the mountains in the distance. Pursuing any of these subtle cues requires an appropriate argument or threat, and the primary speaker must roll either **Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness or Intimidate/Awareness TN 35** depending on the method being used to convince the trio to open up further. Failing this roll results in the three administrators adamantly refusing to answer any further questions, and pressing further will result in Isawa Kenta calling for a duel, as the PCs have questioned the honor of all three diplomats. Both of the Shiba are skilled duelists, though Shiba Hibiki is the better of the two and should be called upon to face off against a dedicated PC duelist.

If a PC loses a duel against one of the yojimbo (or the party simply backs down), Kenta orders one of the guards to escort the 'visitors' to rooms in the smaller samurai dwelling, with the understanding that the PCs are expected to stay there until they are escorted back to the bridge in the morning.

Success (or winning a duel) elicits a reluctant sigh from Isawa Noriko as she pinches the bridge of her nose before continuing.

"Before today I could say with certainty that this village did not appear on any map within the Empire. Those who know of its existence refer to it simply as Yobanjin Mura due to our proximity to their lands, and the fact that many of the local peasants can claim descent from the mountain tribes. What I said before about conducting spell research here is absolutely true. The kami here are less accustomed to interacting with humans, as are most of the spirits outside of our borders. Learning how to speak to these timid spirits is not only beneficial from an academic standpoint, but has helped our friends in the Mantis, Unicorn, and Kasuga, as well."

PC Shugenja will indeed notice that the kami here don't act with the same eagerness that the spirits did within the borders of the Empire, though they are not as difficult to communicate with as those in places like the Ivory Kingdoms or the Burning Sands.

"Having the Yobanjin so close also gives us the ability to study their primitive magic, offering us deeper insight into the methods used by our own ancestors at the dawn of the Empire. Because some of their practices might easily be seen as blasphemous by those who are ignorant of history, it was decided centuries ago to keep our interactions with the gaijin a secret from the Empire as a whole. The Five Masters are aware, of course, as is the new Jade Champion, who has grudgingly allowed us to continue our work as long as we are careful to avoid any actual blasphemy in our own research."

If the PCs ask about the approach of the giant hawks, or why Gennai Suzu keeps looking back towards the far mountains, Noriko sighs once more.

"We are expecting a visit from one of the more peaceful gaijin tribes this afternoon, the Sons of the Wind. You are, of course, welcome to stay and observe, but I fear there will be little of import discussed. For now though, please feel free to leave the road behind you. Kanon-san, please escort our visitors to the guest rooms at the castle."

If the PCs were accepted peaceably into the castle, they will be allowed to wander the grounds as they please until the Yobanjin visitors arrive. Losing the duel or failing at a diplomatic approach with the negotiators means the PCs will be asked to stay within the lodging provided in the smaller residence, which is not much more than a barracks for the small squad of guards stationed at this remote outpost. Regardless of which set of rooms the PCs end up in, there is little to do in the village beyond resting and washing away the dust from their travels. There is a moderately-sized library, where Kenta and Noriko can be found preparing for their meeting with the Yobanjin, while Suzu will be tasked with preparing the court chamber itself. A temporary marketplace has been set up just inside the northern gates to the village, though there is little available that would be of interest to most PCs.

The Library

The space normally given to a central courtyard in most Rokugani castles has been covered over and is now home to thousands of scrolls devoted to the research carried out at Yobanjin Mura, and the village's history. Isawa Kenta and Isawa Noriko have gathered documents together on a small table in one corner, and are obviously discussing something very important.

PCs who wish to explore the library's contents may roll **Investigation (Search)/Perception** to discover documents pertaining to the history and purpose of Yobanjin Mura, or they may roll **Spellcraft (Research) / Perception** to gain insight into the research being done here. There isn't enough time before the meeting w/ the Yobanjin for the same PC to explore both options.

Investigation:

TN 20 - Many of the documents you come across contain details about the regular meetings between the Isawa family and the Yobanjin. It appears that these negotiations occur approximately once each season, with the date of the next meeting agreed upon as part of the current one. While there isn't time to pinpoint the exact date this system was put in place, it is easy to determine that the meetings have been happening for almost as long as the Empire has existed.

TN 25 - There are passages in some scrolls discussing the necessity of keeping Yobanjin Mura a secret from the rest of the Empire due to how close its very existence comes to violating Imperial Law. One ancient Isawa argued that as long as they avoided coming to "fair terms" in regards to the items being traded to and from the gaijin, that there was no breach of the Imperial laws against outside trade. Another, later document put forth the idea that trading with the Yobanjin was really not much different than trading with the (then) recently returned Ki-Rin. **Lore: Law/Intelligence TN 20** reveals these arguments to be extremely thin, if not completely incorrect.

TN 30 - A treatise on the language of the Yobanjin discusses the likelihood that the gaijin tribes and the early Rokugani people probably shared a common language in the distant past. Since that time, the two languages have drifted apart, but are still similar enough that interpreting is not that difficult.

TN 40 - In a scroll dated to 1134, you find the following entry: "The Sons of the Mountain are demanding compensation following an assault on one of their villages by someone described as a 'mad *Leung* sorcerer.' Despite the fact that this 'sorcerer' is probably a tainted Dragon shugenja and not one of ours, we have chosen to direct the gaijin towards the village of Konchuu to appease them. They have agreed to limit their raid to this village, as per the usual arrangement."

Spellcraft:

TN 20 - It is common knowledge that conversing with the kami outside the borders of the Empire is more difficult, but very little is known about why this is the case. Some sources suggest the kami exist in lesser quantity in gaijin lands, while others speculate that the spirits in those places are merely dormant, unused to interacting with humans, and reluctant to start.

TN 25 - The magic practiced by the Yobanjin shamans is similar to the Iuchi family's Meishido, by-passing the kami and focusing elemental energy into poultices and talismans. While this does allow a priest to reproduce the effects of a ritual prayer, it lacks the spiritual connection and reverence for the kami of traditional spellcasting.

TN 30 - Yobanjin healers often combine medicinal herbs and other natural ingredients into their magic when tending wounds and illnesses. Doing so increases the efficacy of the spell, and boosts the body's healing process. Unfortunately, many ingredients used in traditional Yobanjin poultices - such as animal bones, dung, and blood - are considered blasphemous or unclean by the Empire at large.

TN 40 - Some very old texts discuss early attempts to incorporate so-called 'pure blood magic' back into the practices of Rokugani priests. This implies two potentially disturbing things: first, that blood was used as a ritual focus at some point in the Empire's past, and secondly, there is probably more information on blood magic in this library than would be allowed to be maintained anywhere else in the Empire proper.

The two Isawa grow quiet whenever someone approaches, with Noriko offering the PCs assistance in locating whatever it is they are looking for, while Kenta offers little more than a scowl. Asking about any information uncovered in the library results in a brief acknowledgement from Noriko, and an offer of deeper discussion following the meeting with the gaijin. Both are simply too busy with their preparations to answer any questions now, and rolling **Etiquette/Intelligence TN 20** confirms that it may be best to wait until a better time to discuss things. Pressing the issue, or attempting to bring up details uncovered by TN 40 research results brings Kenta to his feet as

he angrily summons the guards. He will then command that the PCs "spies" be kept in their quarters until they can be sent home in the morning.

Curious PCs may try to listen in on the discussion, but doing so has its consequences, as the honor loss involved comes paired with an opportunity for being caught spying. The eavesdropper should roll **Agility (Sneaking)/Stealth** against the two priests. Kenta will be aware of their presence if the PC rolls **25 or less**, while avoiding Noriko's detection requires a roll of **35 or better**. Being caught eavesdropping by Noriko compounds the honor loss with an equal loss of glory, and she will politely ask the PC to return to the guest wing until the gaijin arrive. If Kenta also detects the PC listening in, the guards are called to make sure the PCs return to their rooms until morning, and the glory loss will be doubled, as Kenta does what he can to ensure the PC's lapse of etiquette follows them back to the Empire.

If successful in their attempt to remain inconspicuous, the eavesdropping PC overhears the following conversation:

"They are going to want to know why we've ended the agreement, Kenta."

"Who cares what they want?! We are probably going to have to abandon the village anyway, now that the Imperial spies have found us. Let the Dragon figure it out on their own, now that they've taken over the border villages."

"The Kitsuki might be interested in taking over negotiations with the tribes, but the Agasha are far more militant than they were before the Gennai joined us, and I firmly believe our research will stagnate if we don't remain at least minimally involved. It is in our best interest, I think, to let them know what to expect, and maybe even collaborate."

"It is true that Hoshi-sama may be more flexible now that Tamori is gone, but I don't think Chosai's temper is any cooler than his brother's."

The conversation continues on in this vein for several minutes, eventually turning to more mundane topics.

The Court

Adjacent to the library is a large chamber used for holding negotiations with the gaijin. Gennai Suzu is here, directing a pair of servants as they make the space ready for the impending visitors. In addition to a pair of banners bearing the mon of the Phoenix clan is a second pair emblazoned with a stylized hawk motif. A fifth banner has been placed next to the right-most Phoenix banner, and has been embroidered with the Imperial Chrysanthemum.

In addition to the banners, three low tables have been set up in the center of the room. The two largest tables are set up opposite each other, with the third table placed on the right side of the room, perpendicular to the other two.

Suzu is very busy, but will take time to engage in small talk while directing the servants. If asked, she will admit that this is only her second time serving as part of the Phoenix delegation, and is still nervous about interacting with the Yobanjin. She prefers to let her elders lead the discussions while she takes notes and assists in their research.

The Market

A half-dozen merchant stalls have been set up along the inside of the north wall, near the gates. The selection at most stalls is mediocre at best, consisting mostly of things readily available at any peasant market in the empire. A few of the locals have placed more unusual items for sale, including dried plants, strange fruit, and even small trinkets created by gaijin craftsmen.

Unicorn PCs will recognize some of the plants as being commonly used by the Iuchi for their medicinal properties, and among the unusual fruit is a small, white variety of pepper that is well known for being incredibly hot. Talking with the merchants is initially a challenge, as they are unused to having customers from inside the Empire. They do show signs of mixed heritage, more closely resembling the recently returned members of the Moto family than the majority of Rokugani peasants.

If any player wishes to make a purchase from one of these stalls, have them make a **Lore: Law / Intelligence or Commerce / Intelligence TN 15** roll. PCs with 2 or more ranks in either of these skills do not need to roll. Success

reminds the player that Imperial Law expressly forbids trading with gaijin without Imperial Sanction. Mantis, Unicorn, and Tortoise Clan characters with 3 ranks in Commerce may get around this restriction easily, losing 1 point of glory for each item purchased. Anyone else seen doing so risks losing [significant amounts of honor and glory?] for breaking Imperial Law. Any item in the Market can be purchased for a single zeni, and offering more than that will result in the peasant refusing the sale by throwing themselves on the ground and saying, "***Too much, sama. Too much! You would have me killed!***"

PCs who visit the marketplace after rolling 30+ while doing spell research at the Library are able to identify several of the herbs and other plants specifically called out as boosting healing magic. Any PC who acquires these herbs and adds them to their medicine kit may expend one use of their kit to add their rank in the Medicine skill to the number of Wounds healed by a single casting of *Path to Inner Peace*. This use may only target an individual once per day, but does not count against the PC's use of Medicine for that target.

After the players have explored up to two of these locations, move on to the next section.

Part Two: Sons of the Wind

Roughly two hours after midday, a terrifyingly loud shriek echoes through the valley as more than a dozen enormous birds appear in the skies to the north of the village. Several of the beasts at the head of the formation swoop down towards those peasants unlucky enough to be caught out in the fields, sending the poor unfortunates diving to the ground, followed by fits of whooping and joyous laughter from the men riding on the backs of the giant hawks.

The trio of Phoenix shugenja gather together once again in the center of Yobanjin Mura, and Shiba Hibiki signals that your motley band should join them. Upon seeing you, the hawk riders begin yelling among themselves, and several draw short spears from behind their backs. Isawa Noriko steps forward and shouts to the sky, "Fengzhi! Put your weapons away! These samurai are our guests, as are you. We will share our rice with them, and they will share rice with us. Please, comfort your brothers, and join us inside."

With that, the Phoenix turn as a group, and move into the castle, leading the PCs towards the low tables that have been set up in the courtroom. A series of small cards have been placed on the table along the eastern wall, each one bearing the Clan mon of a different PC. Phoenix PCs have been placed closer to the table at the north wall, followed by Imperials, then Dragon, and everyone else seated randomly. Imperial PCs who are offended by not being seated at the top of the table should roll **Etiquette/Awareness TN20** to realize this is probably an intentional reminder that this village is outside the Empire, and the Imperials have less clout here. This is exactly the intent, as Isawa Kenta is not a very subtle person.

Shortly after you've reached your places at the table, the chamber doors open once more, and Shiba Kanon announces the new guests. "Masters, please know that you are in the presence of Jin-sheng of the Fengzhi tribe, the Sons of the Wind, and his honor guard. He has come in peace, but is prepared to battle should his demands not be met."

The apparent leader of the warband and his five guards take their positions at the table opposite the three Phoenix, and bows deeply before speaking in a deeply accented version of Rokugani. "It is good to meet with the powerful shu-gen-sha of the Phoenix clan once again. Our fathers were friends, and our fathers' fathers before them. Yet today, you bring mosheng to share our rice without telling your friends. We do not know how to react to such change, and are worried that the time has come to end our friendship."

Isawa Noriko responds calmly, her arms outstretched in a sign of open intentions. "Do not worry, mighty Jin-sheng. These are not mosheng, but cousins who have come to learn what happens here. We are teaching them of our friendship, so that they do not misunderstand what happens in our meeting place. Gennai-san, please introduce Jin-sheng to our new friends."

The young shugenja steps around the head table, and stands at the closest end of the PCs table. Starting with the closest PC, Suzu will introduce them in the following manner, starting with Imperials. Clan Samurai are introduced

by name and clan, along with a description of their primary duties for their clan: Warrior, Diplomat, Priest, or Merchant. Minor clan samurai and Imperials should just be introduced by their family names and duties, and Ronin introduced as "one of the clan-less." For example, Ikoma Kouma would be, "Ikoma Kouma, Diplomat of the Lion clan," and Tsi Horihime would simply be "Tsi Horihime, the merchant."

Jin-sheng bows respectfully to each of you, before turning back to Noriko and Kenta. "Now that we have observed your pleasantries, I would like to discuss the matter at hand; I have come to warn you. You have abandoned centuries of cooperation, and your eyes are blinded to the beasts that hunt our brothers, so we have little choice but to destroy this village and all who dwell inside its walls. I am sorry." Once he finishes delivering his threat, the barbarian and his retinue turn as one to leave.

"Wait!" Noriko and Kenta shout as one. "Explain yourself, gaijin!" Kenta continues, "How have we abandoned our agreements?"

With a half-smile, Jin-sheng turns back to face the shugenja, who are clearly nervous about what the gaijin warrior might say..

"For many years, our warriors tested themselves by raiding the villages beyond the mountains at will, and bringing glory to their tribes. Then the Phoenix came, and promised the Fengzhi power over the other tribes, but only if we promised to stop raiding their villages. Over time, a balance was reached, and we only sent our warriors against those villages that the Phoenix told us were ready to offer us a challenge. Now you tell us there are no villages we can send our warriors to prove themselves. Our scouts say that the Phoenix have surrounded their villages with high, stone walls, and have given many to the Leung, who fill the new walls with half-naked mad men. If the Sons of the Wind cannot prove themselves against the low-land villages, we cannot prove our superiority over the Shanzhi. If the Sons of the Mountain command the tribes, they will fall upon your villages like an avalanche, leaving nothing behind. Starting with this one."

"As we discussed last time, Jin-sheng, we no longer control those villages, and we do not want the Leung to think you are invaders, like the Sons of the Mountain." Noriko explains. "Now that our friends have learned of our arrangement, perhaps it is time we invited the Dragon to take part in our negotiations. This is something we can discuss later. You said something was hunting your brothers?"

"Some of our scouts went missing just before the snows melted. We sent more scouts to find them, but only one returned, and without his sky-brother. He said he was knocked from the sky by a long, black arm that flowed like mud from the home of the Feng Shaonu. She has never noticed us before, and we have done nothing to anger her, but she has killed many of our brothers. Now, some of the Fengszhi have joined the Shanzhi, claiming this is a further sign that the Ro-ku-kens are now mosheng, and must be destroyed."

Isawa Kenta and Noriko turn to each other with startled expressions at the mention of the *Feng Shaonu*, and Gennai Suzu mouths the words for a few seconds before puzzling them out. She explains that they are referring to the Maiden of the Wind, known to the Empire as Doji Hanae, the Oracle of Air.

Kenta, Noriko and Suzu (and presumably the PCs) will begin to press the Yobanijin ambassador for more information about the "black arms" coming from the Oracle's Castle, but he has very little information.

When did you first encounter these "black arms"?

Our first group of scouts went missing just after the snow started melting (late Winter), but we don't know when the castle became cursed. Everything appeared normal before winter.

How far away from the castle was the survivor when he was attacked?

The castle could be seen to be shrouded in darkness from several miles away, but it wasn't until he came within sixty *bu* (approximately 300 ft) of its walls that his hawk was knocked from the sky and killed. Additionally, he claims that he was chased from the ground outside the castle by a group of warriors dressed all in black.

The Castle of Air is rumored to rarely stay settled in one place long. Do you know if it has moved since your scout escaped?

We have been watching it from a distance. It has not moved, though the darkness surrounding it grows deeper.

After answering several questions, the Yobanjin warrior gets visibly frustrated, and pounds his fist against the door frame. "Enough! We have explained your betrayals, and you have offered no apologies or solutions, only questions. I must return to my tribe and prepare them for war."

"Don't be hasty, Jin-sheng," Isawa Noriko cautions while turning her gaze towards the PCs. "Perhaps we can send scouts of our own to investigate what has happened to the Castle of Air while we discuss the matter of bringing the Dragon clan into our other agreements. Would you be willing to assist us in this endeavor, friends?"

It is possible that the PCs (especially those with very high Honor) will refuse to help, seeing the destruction of Yobanjin Mura as the proper punishment for the crimes committed by its very existence. If this occurs, the Yobanjin will storm out of the room angrily, calling for the others to mount their giant hawks and fly off. PCs who try to stop them are instantly attacked while one of the barbarians sounds a horn to call more warriors from just over the horizon. There will be time for the PCs to evacuate the village before more enemies arrive, but they must first fight off the existing war-band if combat breaks out. The Yobanjin horde will come with such numbers that anyone who stays behind will eventually succumb to death. PCs who choose to simply leave the Phoenix to their fate may lose Honor and Glory depending on their reasons for doing so, but will live to make their report to Otomo Mitsuhide. Skip ahead to the Conclusion.

If the PCs agree to investigate what happened to the Oracle of Air, Jin-sheng will agree to resume negotiations with the Phoenix in the morning, while some of his men guide the PCs to the current location of the castle. It is nearing dusk, and will be too dangerous to travel the mountain paths at night. There is time tonight for the PCs to have one more chance to take a look around the village, but no one will be in the Library and the market has closed for the evening. PCs who seek out the Phoenix emissaries will find Isawa Kenta in his quarters reading a treatise on Yobanjin combat tactics, while Gennai Suzu prepares tea for Isawa Noriko in the common room shared by their apartments. More information about interacting with these characters can be found in the NPC appendices.

In the morning, Jin-sheng returns to the village along with his honor guard and two scouts mounted on their giant hawks. The warrior approaches your group to explain the presence of several riderless birds circling overhead. "I have brought some of our... older ...brothers to serve as mounts for you. They are not very strong, but they have served us for many years, and are used to working with.. young ..riders."

There are enough hawks such that PCs who want to fly to the castle may do so, but the birds are not strong enough to carry Large PCs, or PCs wearing Heavy or Riding Armor. Characters who have decided to fly are given a quick tutorial on how to strap themselves securely onto the birds back using several lengths of twine, and how to guide the animals by leaning in the desired direction. (The Yobanjin use leather straps, but are familiar with the Rokugani taboo against such things. This option is available for PCs, but the PC will take a minor glory penalty for handling animal hide). In addition, each rider is asked to hold a small bronze dagger in one hand while one of the reins is wrapped tightly around their fist. *"To cut yourself free, if your sky-brother falls," one of the scouts explains.*

The scouts will fly ahead, guiding the PCs towards the castle, but maintaining a speed that allows anyone traveling on foot to keep up. Air-borne PCs who have at least 2 ranks of Horsemanship find the experience very familiar, though the birds seem to be doing most of the decision making for themselves.

Just before mid-day, you catch your first glimpse of the Castle of the Wind. Stories about the Oracle of Air's residence on Ningen-do describe it as a creation of pure light floating above the clouds, but the fortress of pure darkness that soon appears before you seems to be firmly anchored into the side of the mountain. A Yobanjin scout flies ahead until it comes within the range of the "black arms" described by Jin-sheng. Suddenly, a pair of inky tentacles shoot forth from the darkness, and only a series of deft maneuvers keeps the rider and his mount from being knocked out of the sky. The gaijin scout returns and joins the rest of the hawks as they descend onto a wide shelf safely out of range of the shadowy tendrils.

After the party has come together once more, the PCs may roll **Battle/Perception** to survey the best means of approaching the castle.

TN 15: There are a number of rocky outcroppings that can provide cover for an ground-based approach, but the last 100 ft or so is completely open.

TN 20: The open space may be ideal for landing the landing the hawks so that the riders can dismount before entering the castle.

TN 25: You see the value of using flying units to distract the beastly tentacles while the rest of the party moves towards the castle on foot.

The Yobanjin are reluctant to risk their brothers as part of a distraction. It is possible to convince them to do so with **Courtier (Manipulation)/Awareness TN 25**, but it will take a result of **30+** to convince them to let party members attempt to ride the birds themselves as they are more concerned about the well-being of the birds than about their own safety. Once the plan is set, the combat begins, and will continue until the party reaches the gate.

When the ground party gets within 200 feet of the gate, a shadowy tendril peels away from the castle walls and slams into the ground with tremendous force. The tendril bursts on impact, and five faceless samurai dressed all in black leap towards you.

During each Reactions Phase, one of the giant tentacles slams into the ground, splitting into five more Shadow Samurai (50 Wounds, half damage from non-crystal weapons, 8k4 ATK, 6k2 DMG). If no one is providing a diversion with the giant hawks, *two* tentacles hit the ground each round, becoming *ten* shadow samurai.

PCs who are riding hawks roll **Horsemanship/Awareness** each round to dodge the Shadow Tendrils that come hurling towards them.

TN 25 : The hawk and rider move as one, causing the tentacle to miss them completely!

TN 15 : Glancing blow! The rider takes 2k1 Damage as the bird turns, but not in time to avoid being hit.

Failure: Direct hit! The rider takes 3k3 damage as the hawk completely ignores their commands.

If the hawk and rider team is hit a total of 3 times, the bird plummets from the sky, too weak to fly any longer. The PC must roll **Knives/Strength TN 10** to cut themselves free of the harness before the bird crashes to the ground, dealing 3k3 falling damage to the rider. A PC who cuts himself free may leap away before taking the damage, and can roll **Athletics/Agility TN 20** to reduce the falling damage to 2k1.

BONUS! If the airborne PC actually role-plays his movements at the table by leaning into a turn or a dive, feel free to reward them with a Free Raise on the Horsemanship roll. Giant hawks do not like making barrel rolls, however.

Basically, it should become apparent that the PCs are being herded into the Castle. As soon as all of the PCs on the ground have reached the castle gate, the Yobanjin will signal for any airborne characters to land their birds in the clearing and dismount. Strangely, the Shadow Tendrils do not prevent this final approach.

Part Three: Children of Shadow

Once inside the castle, the PCs hear a mockingly familiar voice say, "It's about time you showed up. I've been waiting here for months!"

Kakita Kaiten, or at least his Shadow-infested double from an alternate Rokugan, lounges on a dais in the center of the large chamber inside the castle. Seated to his left is a woman with white hair wearing sky blue kimono. This is Doji Hanae, the Oracle of Air. She appears to be incredibly withdrawn, and it is obvious that she has been weeping recently.

Kaiten welcomes the PCs once again to his home, and says that they are just in time to witness Hanae's rebirth as the very first Oracle of Shadow. "Isn't that right, Oracle-sama?" Hanae nods weakly.

Hanae still feels bound by her oath to the former Dragon of Air, and feels extremely guilty over having been the reason that the Shadow was able to survive its defeat at Oblivion's Gate. She also has a tie to the new Air Dragon, and is torn between her twin obligations. This is a role play challenge, with the PCs having to convince the Oracle

that she cannot serve two masters, and that she must choose. Unfortunately, the only choice that makes sense to her is to sever her ties to both Dragons, so that a new, untainted Oracle can be chosen by the Dragon of Air.

Kaiten will mock the Celestial Heavens, calling on them to strike him down if they object to Doji Hanae becoming the Oracle of Shadow. When nothing happens, he will proclaim his mission to be ordained by the Heavens!

During the conversation, Kaiten summons forth two more familiar specters, the Shadow-clones of Toku and Seppun Toshiaki. Players who have karmic ties to these men will feel a connection to them immediately. Toku is impatient, and will want to attack as soon as possible, while Toshiaki remains a quiet observer.

As the PCs engage with Kaiten, the shadows around him will lengthen until finally coalescing into the enormous, sinewy form of the Shadow Dragon. Its glowing green eyes look down on the PCs with an amused expression.

If one of the PCs brings up the possibility that the Oracle should sacrifice herself to sever her ties with the Shadow Dragon, Kaiten will order the others to attack.

The Shadow doppelgangers all share the following abilities: Damage from non-crystal weapons is reduced by half, before applying armor reduction.

Additionally, the speed granted by the Shadow Dragon allows Kaiten to make attacks as simple actions despite his Kakita Kenshinzen training.

Seppun Toshiaki's spellcasting has also been amplified by his connection to the Shadow Dragon, and he gains 2 Free raises towards reducing the casting times of his spells. He also arrives with the spell Armor of Earth already in place.

After the first round of Combat, the gentle breeze inside the castle intensifies, and clouds begin swirling around the chamber, eventually coalescing into the Dragon of Air! The two Dragons crash together, locked in combat that mirrors the events going on in the struggle below. If a PC falls, the Dragon of Air becomes visibly weakened. If one of Kaiten's minions falls, the Shadow Dragon bellows in pain and so on.

If the PCs prevail (by killing Kaiten and his cohort), they will turn to the Oracle just as she says, "I know what I must do," and drives a tanto upward under her chin, tears streaming down her face. This act severs her ties to the Shadow Dragon. The Dragon of Air survives, despite its wounds, and confirms that while the Shadow Dragon is defeated, it is probably only a temporary reprieve. It then leaves, saying that it must begin its quest to find a new Oracle.

Conclusion

When the PCs return to Yobanjin Mura, they find that Kenta and Noriko have concluded their negotiations with the Yobanjin, and are in the process of packing up. Because the village has been discovered, Gennai Suzu is also packing up much of the contents of the library.

The three shugenja and their yojimbo accompany the PCs back to Pale Oak Castle, where they meet with Otomo Mitsuhide and offer their report. That evening, Isawa Akiko is invested as the new Master of Water. During the ceremony, Mitsuhide presents the Elemental Masters with a 'gift' from the Imperial Regent, Hantei Okucheo: A dozen Phoenix children, including Isawa Taeruko's daughter and Shiba Tsukune's son, have been invited to experience life in the courts of Oosan Uchi. He clarifies that this is not in anyway punishment for keeping Yobanjin Mura a secret, but a valuable learning opportunity (The fact that he says this in open court is another matter).

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

At the end of the scenario, any PCs with Shadowlands Taint must make a Raw Earth roll with a TN of 5 + (5 x Taint Rank). If the roll fails, the PC acquires one additional point of Taint.

If a PC has a Crafting cert, they may make a Crafting roll at this time.

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	+1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Discovering Yobanjin Mura's Secret:	+1XP
Defeating Shadow Kaitein:	+1XP

Total Possible Experience: 4XP

Honor

Honor gain or loss

Glory

Glory gain or loss

Other Awards/Penalties

Status, Favors, Allies, other stuff

Module Tracking Sheets

Stuff for the Mod Cert

GM Reporting

Metaplot questions

GM must report this information BEFORE (Expiration date) for it to have storyline effect

Appendix #1: NPCs

Character Name

Description

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
Honor	Status	Glory		
Initiative:	Attack:			
Armor TN:	Damage:			

Reduction:

School/Rank:

Skills:

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages:

Character Name

Description

Air	Earth	Fire	Water	Void
Honor	Status	Glory		
Initiative:	Attack:			
Armor TN:	Damage:			

Reduction:

School/Rank:

Skills:

Mastery Abilities:

Advantages/Disadvantages:

Appendix #2: Stuff

Other Important Stuff