

# Questionable Pilgrimage

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**A Mid-Rank Adventure for  
Heroes of Rokugan: Champions of the Ivory Throne**

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Travel, Investigation

*Part One of the Little Teacher*

Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth...

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This module is written for the Legends of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Fourth Edition, originally published by Alderac Entertainment Group.

Please refer to the *Heroes of Rokugan 4: Champions of the Ivory Throne Campaign Primer* for information on how to run official campaign modules. In addition to the basic setting information and house rules for this campaign, it details the various administrative necessities of the living campaign. GM reporting is crucial to players' ability to engage with the setting and to increase their characters' influence.

## Adventure Background and Summary

At the dawn of the Empire, the nascent realm of Rokugan was saved from the threat of the Fallen Kami by the guidance of an enigmatic little man from a distant land. Shinsei's wisdom was inspired by the Heavens, and he gave the Emerald Empire many of its traditions before he departed as mysteriously as he came. What few samurai know is that he went to the vast wastes of the Burning Sands to provide some of the same guidance to the struggling peoples there, and helped them found the city that eventually became Medinaat al-Salaam. A tradition has sprung up from those with a particular devotion to the Tao of Shinsei, and who were studious enough to discover this fact from the reports of the Scorpion Clan, to travel "on the Path of the Little Teacher" and follow his steps to the desert city on a pilgrimage to honor his wisdom.

In recent months, the Unicorn Clan have petitioned the Imperial authorities for permission to open an embassy in the Jewel of the Horizon, and they have begun work on the project with the assistance of the Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion have a somewhat fraught history with Medinaat al-Salaam, having been held in captivity there after their banishment during the early years of the Toturi Dynasty. The Scorpion have kept a certain amount of attention on the distant city, aware of the Unicorn's presence but keeping their involvement as discreet as possible.

The leader of the Scorpion Clan in the city, Bayushi Utemaro, returned to his post from a journey to the Empire three years ago having unwittingly acquired the Taint. Unaware of his affliction, his mind was gradually warped under the malign influence of the Realm of Evil, and when he discovered a secret hidden by history, he saw no choice but to kill to keep it. The secret is the true origin of Shinsei: the Little Teacher was born in the lands now known as the Ivory Kingdoms.

Utemaro arranged the death of the Dragon who told him of the secret, and the Empire chalked up the old monk's demise to accident. He then stole the proof from the Order of the Ebon Hand, to hopefully ensure it did not spread further. A number of monks that may have been getting close also fell to the Scorpion's blade, but in the last year his madness has grown, and three samurai have died. As far as anyone in the Empire knows, they simply disappeared, but this is enough for the Emerald Champion to authorize an investigation – as three separate clans are involved, the potential political ramifications led to the assignment of one of his more delicate agents.

The PCs will be sent by their lords to assist Emerald Magistrate Bayushi Tamaki, and while she attends to the politics around the nascent embassy, will be tasked with following up the movements of the missing samurai. This should allow them to explore the exotic location somewhat, learning about what has happened and following the clues to the ruined Hoshi Trading House – the scene of Utemaro's first crimes, and where proof of both his involvement and the secret he has been trying to keep can be found. Confronting him and bringing the secret to light will require finding this proof, but the PCs will have the support of the Emerald Magistrate when they make their move.

## Upkeep

The events of the modules are certainly of primary importance in the lives of the characters, but many of them will have been working on a variety of tasks in the times between modules. At the beginning of the module, several things will need to take place (though some are obviously dependent on the actual needs of the PCs at the table).

### Character Notes

The GM should take a few minutes to examine the players' character sheets in order to have an idea of the nature of the PCs at the table.

- Language: Mekham
- Language: Ivindi

### News from the Empire

While the GM is looking over sheets, it's a good time to distribute the first player handout of most modules. The News of the Empire is an overview of the recent events of the Empire in a fashion that shares the ongoing story with the playerbase without requiring a Skill Roll or interfering with the actual plot of the module. Any plot-relevant Rumors will belong in the appropriate section of the module to be learned during play.

### Inactivity

Time passes, and though the PCs' deeds will earn them a reputation, the Empire is a large place and lasting fame is a long-term goal not easy to achieve. **Each PC loses 5 points of Glory.** This cannot reduce a PC's Glory Rank to less than their Insight Rank, and the Fame Advantage increases their Insight Rank by one for these purposes.

### Taint Progression

If a PC possesses the Shadowlands Taint, they will need to roll at the beginning of the module to see how much it has grown over the intervening time since the last module. The TN of this raw **Earth Roll** is **10**. Failure on this roll causes the PC to gain a point of the Shadowlands Taint. If a character is growing close to being Lost (Shadowlands Taint Rank 4.5+) , it is recommended that the player have another PC ready to replace them.

### Crafting

The Crafting rules are detailed in the Campaign Primer, based largely on the Crafting rules in the core book (page 258). Unless explicitly indicated otherwise, a PC may only make one Crafting Roll per module, and any Void Points or other character resources (spell slots, Luck, etc) spent on the roll do not refresh for the duration of the module. Any successful roll is noted on the provided sheet with the description.

### Preparation Techniques

Techniques like the Agasha Shugenja or Yogo Wards do not quite fall under Crafting, but still can benefit from pre-planning and the Upkeep is a good opportunity. However, unlike Crafting, this is not the only time these Techniques may be used during a module – this is just a chance for the GM to remind the players and get it out of the way.

### Ronin Survival

Life is difficult for ronin in the Empire at the best of times. PC ronin are no exception to this. At the start of the module, a PC ronin must roll **Hunting (Survival) / Stamina** at a TN of **20**. Failure on this roll gives the ronin the Permanent Wound Disadvantage for the duration of the module. Koku may be spent on this roll to gain a Free Raise for every koku spent before the roll is made, or one Free Raise for every two koku spent after the roll is made.

### Experience Expenditure

Finally, the players should be given one last chance to spend any experience they wish before the module begins. Unless the module specifically allows it, experience may not be spent during the adventure.

## Introduction

Camels, they say, are the ships of the desert. You were informed of this fact by the merchants who provided you with the recalcitrant mounts, and if half the tales of the Empire's trade routes to the Ivory Kingdoms are to be believed, the parallels are painfully clear. Both modes of transport are uncooperative, subject to the whims of the Fortunes, and far less than comfortable. However, samurai do not perform their duty for comfort, but in the name of their daimyo, and so you find yourself on the vast, sere expanse of the Burning Sands, en route to Medinaat al-Salaam.

You are traveling with Bayushi Tamaki, an Emerald Magistrate tasked with an investigation into the disappearance of three samurai in the last year. For nearly two centuries, devout samurai and monks from Rokugan have made pilgrimages to Medinaat al-Salaam, "following the Path of the Little Teacher" and tracing the steps that Shinsei walked after he left the Empire. Three of these pilgrims, in different groups, have not been reported to have left the foreign city, and Tamaki has been charged by the Emerald Champion to determine what happened to them – likely to forestall any political fallout among the clans.

The PCs will have several weeks of travel to get to know one another, allowing them to exchange introductions and basic information with little fanfare. If they have specific questions about the mission, they can be shared at this time (the basic information can be found in Part One, the "Scorpion Consulate" section on page 7 and Player Handout #2). The purpose of starting the module slightly in media res is to get the process moving without worrying about the practicalities of what is a daunting journey.

To that end, Bayushi Tamaki has arranged to have her party accompany a Unicorn caravan that travels regularly between Medinaat al-Salaam and Bugaisha, providing knowledgeable guides, plenty of supplies, and a strong enough group of guards to give bandits pause. Between the PCs, Tamaki and her yojimbo (Soshi Tsuya and Soshi Heizo, a married couple who are more than a little standoffish in favor of their duty), a dozen guards and eight laborers, the caravan under Ide Aman numbers nearly thirty people. Aman is an experienced caravan master, and is happy to provide

basic information to the PCs on what to expect if they ask. (Unicorn PCs are the only ones likely to be trusted with their own horses as mounts; even they will be strongly recommended to stick with the camels unless they have Horsemanship 5. Any PC with less than five Ranks of the Skill will do serious harm to their steed over the course of the journey if they insist on riding them.)

The principle issue the PCs are likely to encounter is the language barrier; the common tongue of Medinaat al-Salaam is “Mekham”, linguistically related to Senpet but distinct enough to qualify as a different Language Advantage. It is not possible to learn enough of the language to be considered fluent on the journey, but any PC who spends time trying to pick up some basic phrases and words may roll raw **Intelligence** at a TN of 15 to gather enough to assist with communication. (This allows them to reduce the penalty from Social Skill rolls from +10 to the TN to +5.) Aman will specifically mention that, while Rokugani is very rarely spoken in the city, Ivindi is not as uncommon. “Between the merchants, the Ebonites, the Ra’shari, and less reputable individuals, perhaps one in ten people in Medinaat al-Salaam have a few words of the language of the Ivory Kingdoms. Our tongue is only spoken by the few Rokugani present, and perhaps a dozen scholars.”

Travel in the desert is hard and uncomfortable – the caravan starts out each morning shortly after dawn, pauses at mid-day when the heat becomes too much to continue, and resumes travel in the early evening. The nights are cold, in painful contrast to the misery of the day. You are specifically instructed in everything from how much to eat, how often to drink, and how to sit on the broad wooden seats of the camels. The evening camp is always at a covered well or oasis, so as to allow the water casks to be refilled for the next day’s journey. There are occasionally other travelers present at these places, but they tend to leave your group alone. One of the normally-inviolable rules of the sands is that fighting is kept away from the oases, as it could all too easily damage the fragile safety (and all-important water) provided by the locations.

Thus, it is something of a surprise when, at an oasis only a few days’ away from your destination, a pair of aggressive horsemen charge forward upon your approach. They shout in a strange, unfamiliar tongue, but their insistence that you leave is quite clear.

These hostile nomads are remnants of the Moto tribes that wandered the sands before being unified under Moto Gaheris and returning to the Empire. They do not speak Rokugani, or even Mekham, having

interbred with some of the itinerant Ra’shari tribes and taken on a unique culture influenced by the mixture.

The purpose of this encounter is more to indicate for the players that the language barrier is real and significant, and to teach shugenja PCs what they can expect from their abilities in the Burning Sands. Ide Aman can roughly translate, though he is not terribly familiar with their precise dialect of Mekham, and is more than a little frightened by their attitude – hostility at an oasis is largely outside his experience. (If the players require a nudge, Tamaki will “suggest” they go find out, with Aman, what the problem is.)

While they are very rough around the edges, and their attempt to intimidate the samurai away from the oasis is absolutely the wrong approach, the nomads largely mean well. They believe that the oasis is haunted, and dangerous for anyone who approaches without performing the proper ceremonies for the spirit that resides there. Aman does not understand their speech precisely but can get the gist across. PCs with 5 Ranks of Medicine (or those that can roll **Medicine (Disease) / Intelligence** at a TN of 25) can recognize from the description of the rituals provided and the “wrath of the spirit” that the issue is disease, not exclusively spiritual.

The nomads will not attack unless the PCs start hostilities. However, they will be unfriendly and noisy all through the night if the PCs don’t make an attempt to pacify them (this causes the PCs to fail to recover Void for the night, though this is of no major significance for the module and actually nothing more than an irritant). Pacifying them is fairly simple: a **Courtier / Awareness** roll (TN 30 due to the translation issues), giving them at least three koku (one each for the nomads that approached, plus one they can turn over to their companions), or any demonstration of power from a shugenja will be sufficient to cause the nomads to back away to their own camp. Aman does not believe it wise to attempt to bypass the oasis, as it puts undue stress on the caravan’s water supplies and the party boils the water by habit already. (Tamaki will back his decision if the players are recalcitrant; again, this encounter is primarily for educating the players on the differences they will be dealing with.)

**Note for shugenja:** any spell cast while the PCs are in the Burning Sands (essentially for the duration of the module) requires the shugenja to call one Raise with no other effect. This is slightly worse than the Ivory Kingdom’s simple +5 TN because the number of Raises that can be called is limited, but this is due to the spiritual difference between the Sands and Rokugan.

If pacified, the nomads will leave the party alone. However, any PC that goes out of their way to placate them or make friends with them should be welcomed to a reasonable degree. At the GM's discretion, any samurai who makes a good impression with the nomads will be given a gift of a janbiya knife with the symbol of a running horse. (As noted in the "Rewards" section, this is a knife that does 1k2 damage but causes a D2 Honor loss every skirmish it is used.)

## Ersatz Moto

Dusty nomads in sun-bleached purple robes, atop steeds as barely tamed as the riders.

Air 2	Earth 3	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 2
Reflexes 3		Agility 3		
Honor 3.7		Status 0		Glory 0

**Initiative:** 6k3+4      **Attack:** 9k3e (scimitar, Simple, Mounted)

**Armor TN:** 20      **Damage:** 7k3 (scimitar)

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+0), 27 (+0), 33 (+5), 39 (+10), 45 (+15), 51 (Down, +35), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Moto Nomad 3

**Techniques:** *Out of Sight:* add Stealth to Initiative, +1k0 damage when Mounted

*Out of Mind:* ignore 5 points of Wound Penalty, no penalty to movement from Wounds

*Out of Control:* Simple Action melee attacks

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Battle 2, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 4, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Scimitar) 5, Kyujutsu 4, Stealth 4

If a fight breaks out at the PC's instigation, the rest of the nomad's group (around a dozen people of various ages and roles, mostly non-combatants) will flee the oasis and the two facing the PCs will retreat as soon as it is clear they are overmatched.

The oasis is not haunted – all spirits present, even those of fallen warriors from two hundred years ago, are slumbering peacefully. A PC who decides to dive deeply into the water of the pool may find the remains of a long-dead Moto nomad and their corroded weapon (returning this to the nomads earns their gratitude and a knife).

## The Disease

The nomads will depart well before dawn the next day. The actual danger of the encounter is the airborne illness they bore. Speaking with them is enough to catch it, however it is a fortunately weak strain. Every PC must roll Stamina upon waking the next day; if

there was a combat, the following TNs are increased by 5 for more direct exposure.

Less than 5: the PC suffers the Fatigued condition for the entirety of the module.

Less than 10: the PC suffers the Fatigued condition through the first day in Medinaat al-Salaam.

10 or higher: the PC is uncomfortable, but not mechanically penalized, with the degree of discomfort largely judged based on the result of the roll (up to absolutely minimal symptoms at 50)

If a PC has the Disease Emphasis of the Medicine Skill, they may attempt to ease the suffering of a character who failed the TN of 10 with a Medicine (Disease) / Intelligence roll at a TN of 25. Success moves them up by one category of failure.

Everyone in the caravan suffers to a greater or lesser extent. The symptoms are headache, shortness of breath, cough, fever, and chest pain. This is a variety of pneumonic plague, though one unknown in the Empire and the strain the PCs are exposed to is very mild.

However, the three days it takes to get to Medinaat al-Salaam proceed without further incident.

## **Part One: No-Mind**

Medinaat al-Salaam was described to you as a large city, but it was difficult to lend credence to the descriptions provided by your guides. Until, that is, your caravan crests a line of dunes and the sight of the sprawling metropolis spreads before you. A mighty river flows from the hazy north, bringing green life into the wide valley and the haphazard structures of the massive city. Crammed together within the surrounding city walls, different districts can be identified at a distance – though the pattern of the city's quarters are a jumbled mess compared to the usual concentric harmony preferred in Rokugan. The buildings themselves are generally taller, and far less wood is in evidence, replaced with a strange dusty stone. The noise and smell of the city are almost physical assaults upon you as you approach, the sheer scale of the place providing an unprecedented sensory overload.

There are guards on the enormous, wide-open gates, but they pay almost no attention to the traffic surging along the road into the city. Just past the gates, Ide Aman pauses the caravan. "As requested, I have brought you to your destination. I would be honored to be of service again, if you seek to return within the

next week. Otherwise, there will be another caravan along in time.” He gestures to an approaching figure in flowing red robes trimmed in black. “It appears you were expected. Good fortunes follow you.”

The figure is obviously a Scorpion samurai, though one dressed in light robes pattered off of local fashions – they look cool enough, though traditional-minded samurai should be disapproving. His head is covered in a black scarf, with light chains mounted on it and crossing his face to provide his mask. He is wearing a daisho, but more strangely, is carrying a small cat on his shoulder. The creature does not react as he bows deeply, keeping its eyes closed as he balances it with a practiced motion.

“Greetings, my friends. I am Yogo Korin, translator and guide assigned to this wondrous place these last ten years. She is Medinaat al-Salaam, the City of Peace. She is Kala Jahir, the City of One Thousand Stories. She is Aliqet-Ra, the Jewel of the Horizon. She is an oasis of life in a land of death, and she is my home. It is my honor to be of service to you in your time here. Be welcome, and peace be upon you.”

Yogo Korin was sent by his superior Bayushi Utemaro at the Scorpion Consulate (the unofficial title for the unofficial headquarters of Scorpion operations in the city) to assist the Emerald Magistrate and her yoriki. He is happy to answer any questions he can about the city, and will escort the group to the Consulate at Tamaki’s request. (The Emerald Magistrate intends to send the PCs into the city following the trails of the missing pilgrims with assistance from the local Scorpion, while she deals with the Imperial authorities at the official embassy.)

On the way to the Consulate, Korin will give a brief tour in and amongst a few pointers about the city. Medinaat al-Salaam is extremely cosmopolitan, with people from dozens of different nations living, working, and trading within its walls. The southern part of the city that the PCs entered into is predominantly given over to merchant bazaars of a wide variety of wares. The mighty Nahr’umar River that provides the city with life and water (“The two are the same thing, here.”) runs through the center of the city. The Caliph and Sultan have vast palaces in the central part of the city, slightly to the north and west, and the Houses of Dahab keep their estates nearby on the west (and windward) side. The Embassy Quarter, where the Rokugani Imperial Embassy is trying to open, is just south of the Houses, while the River District and Merchant Quarters hug the River that is

the center of trade. To the north is the Khesir, the Last Stop slum area of the city that the underworld and less fortunate call home. The Scorpion Consulate is in the River District.

### Customs of Medinaat al-Salaam

Medinaat al-Salaam is ruled by a lord called the “Sultan”, a hereditary title roughly analogous to the Emperor. They establish the law, while an official called the “Caliph” enforce it – this has parallels to the Emerald Champion, in the Rokugani view. Local law enforcement is provided by an organization called the Order of the Ebon Hand. The noble Houses of Dahab are the wealthy elite, though more akin to merchants than the military aristocracy of the samurai.

Samurai are very rare in the city, though the Scorpion and Unicorn have both maintained something of a presence for their own reasons. The recent official opening of an Imperial Embassy is unprecedented, and has taken the number of Rokugani in the city to nearly a hundred. The locals generally seem to interpret the samurai as a noble caste, and regard them warily for their propensity for violence, while impressed by their evident wealth.

The local currency is a small copper coin called a “dinar”, somewhat smaller than a zeni. It is possible to live for a week on between 2 and 5 dinari. The local merchants are not accustomed to trading in gold, though there is an uncommonly-used silver coin. It is possible to change a single koku for a hundred dinari at a money changer, and even a bu will net around fifty dinari. The PCs should not expect to have a lot of time to shop, but money is not generally an issue for the samurai that have come to Medinaat al-Salaam.

The locals do not normally wear weapons more significant than knives; samurai carrying swords openly puts them in about the same category as mercenaries, earning attention from the Ebonites but usually not troubled. Anything beyond the daisho, however, generally earns greater attention and causes concern among the locals unused to such weapons of war. Armor is essentially unknown unless fighting is imminent, due to the major discomfort caused by it in the heat. (Mechanically, any PC carrying any weapon other than the daisho or wearing armor will increase Social Skill Roll TNs by 10; additionally, wearing armor gives the PC the Fatigued Condition. Hida-trained bushi do not suffer the TN penalties associated with this condition, but may not enter the Full Attack Stance.)

There are people from a wide variety of cultures in the city. Korin will mention that he speaks “over a dozen languages in common use here”, but that Rokugani is fairly rare. The local tongue is called “Mekham”, after the name that they knew the Prophet as (“Mekhem”). He is more than happy to provide his services, and in fact has been ordered to do so – this should prevent the PCs from being completely shut out of sources of information.

### Yogo Korin

The man offering to be their guide may be a subject of curiosity for the PCs as well. He is fairly open, particularly for a Scorpion, and has none of the usual dour reticence common to the Yogo family. Korin is in his late twenties, was born in Ryoko Owari Toshi and misses his home (though he sees parallels between there and Medinaat al-Salaam), and has been sent to the Burning Sands as much due to his facility with languages as to the circumstances around the early triggering of his Yogo Curse. While not eager to speak of it, the curse left him betraying Ryoko Owari, and his current duty is something of a punishment.

The cat on his shoulder is an indolent, silent creature that Korin refers to fondly by the name “Gengo”; counter to usual Scorpion prejudice, as normally the clan views rats as blessed by Daikoku and are not generally cat people. In fact, Gengo is a Cat of Many Tongues, a feline demi-spirit from a line touched by the jinn. Her ability to speak when those present do not understand one another is largely immaterial as long as Korin is alive (but can serve as a benefit should something befall the Scorpion guide). Gengo is independently sapient, and appreciates Korin’s scholarship, making the two friends and colleagues rather than master and pet. If her services become necessary, she serves as an instant translation device, appearing to speak in the native language of any observer.

### The Scorpion Consulate

When the group arrives at the Scorpion Consulate, they will find a somewhat comforting breath of home inside the compound. While the exteriors of the buildings and the central courtyard are entirely of local design and somewhat strange to Rokugani eyes, some effort has gone to decorating the interior in a fashion meant to evoke the standards of the Empire. Wall hangings, delicate pottery, and most importantly, subtly painted screens to block out the sights of the strange gaijin city all help provide comfort for travelers far from home.

Bayushi Utemaro meets the PCs and the Emerald Magistrate in his office near the center of the building’s second floor. The office is packed with shelves laden in scrolls, though the writing desk Utemaro sits behind through the meeting is immaculately clear and there is more than enough room for the group to sit. Utemaro is a well-built samurai swathed in dark red robes and a full face mask of lacquered wood; a swirling pattern of red in the black lacquer evokes the image of a hand, though it may simply be from where long years of use has worn the imprint of his own fingers. He speaks in a low, deliberative manner, choosing his words carefully.

“I am certain that Korin-san has already extended you a warm welcome to this city. If there is anything the Scorpion Clan can do to be of assistance, you have but to ask. I invite you to accept our hospitality – I assure you it will be more comfortable than you are likely to find at any inn. While we do not have the staff that the Imperial Embassy will eventually be able to put to work, we do have the advantage of being established here already. I, my political adjutant Bayushi Jinamaeru-san, and of course Korin-san, are at your disposal.”

Tamaki offers Utemaro an elegant nod and explains the mission. “Doji Makibesu-sama has some concerns about the disappearance of three samurai from three different clans causing undue stress in the Empire, particularly in the first stages of establishing our official Embassy here. I will attend to the Embassy, while my yoriki follow after the missing samurai. There are only so many places they might have gone, being unfamiliar themselves with the area or the language. My information on the samurai is sadly incomplete; if you have any further insights to provide, they would be appreciated.”

If the players have not already received Player Handout #2: the Missing Samurai, they should be given it now.

Utemaro shakes his head slowly, but does offer, “Bayushi Mushin and I spoke on several occasions. He was a dedicated samurai, I thought, a skilled duelist and though I have little need for that skillset on staff here, I had thought to find a post for him here when he was finished with his pilgrimage. He indicated to me that he found focus in his meditations that helped him on the dueling field. I do not know much of his doings in the city, though I understand he spent some time at the Portals of Delight and Fancy – the local

entertainment district. It did not seem proper for me to inquire as to his affairs there.”

The PCs have an opportunity to ask a few questions here. In general, Utemaro will attempt to mislead the PCs and the Emerald Magistrate without engaging in outright lies. He never spoke with Shiba Mujo or Togashi Nehan (which is true, his interaction with them was limited to killing them and hiding their bodies). He did speak with the Ebonites, the local “magistrates” on several occasions, and they had nothing to say to him about the missing samurai (because he did not speak to them about the missing); he will tell the PCs that he does not recommend dealing with the Ebonites unless they must, as they are likely to be “unhelpful” (primarily to Utemaro’s interests).

Utemaro speaks of the missing samurai in the past tense, though most of the rest of the people the PCs will meet will use the present tense since they are officially “missing”, not “presumed dead” yet. He knows they are dead, of course, though he is making every attempt to prevent the PCs from realizing this (and his Shadowlands Power prevents Social Skills or courtier Techniques from getting further information from him, though he does not realize it).

When the conversation is wrapping up, Utemaro will send the PCs to Isawa Sadako, since her involvement is a matter of public record that the Emerald Magistrate will learn from the Imperial Embassy in short order. He will, however, not mention the specifics of the pilgrimage, claiming ignorance, and absolutely will not speak of the Brotherhood monks (hoping the lower social order will lead the PCs to overlook them).

“I would suggest you speak with Isawa Sadako-san. She is the Phoenix samurai responsible for coordination of the pilgrimages. I have not dealt with her much, myself, though I would imagine all the pilgrims do at some point. She can be found at the Pillars of Qaharaba, a sort of park or garden in the northern part of the city.”

Tamaki will leave the PCs from this point, heading to the official Imperial Embassy, where the Empire’s diplomat Ide Nadah is attempting to establish the embassy under the oversight of Otomo Seiho. The political issues surrounding the case, and the overall tensions in the city have her focusing on the bigger picture while she entrusts the PCs with the immediate matter of the investigation. However, she assures

them before she leaves that they can call upon her as soon as they know anything and are ready to act.

Once Tamaki departs, Korin asks the PCs, “Where do you wish to go, my friends?”

### Ancient Pillars of Qaharaba

An ancient city known as Qaharaba once stood where Medinaat al-Salaam now does, destroyed in a massive cataclysm that ravaged the area and created the Burning Sands. In recent years, irrigation has been run to the ruins from the river, and the Sultan has opened the area as a sort of public garden for the city. Families spend time here, merchants peddle their wares, entertainers perform for the crowds, and scholars study the mosaics and carvings still visible on the stone pillars that give the park its name.

Isawa Sadako can be found under a bright orange silk pavilion flying the banner of the Phoenix. She is a stocky woman in her late thirties, and somewhat distracted with her studies, but she welcomes the PCs politely enough. (Her work involves study of the ruins of a civilization that may predate the Fall of the Kami, so she is careful in how she discusses it with other samurai.) She will provide what help she can to the PCs, especially if it means they’ll go away and leave her to her studies, but apologizes for not having a lot of information for them.

“I do not generally meet directly with the pilgrims, you see, instead relying on correspondence. I do not keep track of them in the city, though when these three went missing, I of course reported it to the Imperial Embassy. I do provide something of a guidebook to the pilgrims, detailing and providing directions to a few local sites that would be of interest to students of the Tao. I can provide a copy for you, though I should note it is a little out of date; the Hoshi Trading Post was destroyed three years ago. Burned down in a fire, shame, but at least only one of the Dragon died.” She rummages through one of her many chests of scrolls to produce one that she hands over.

This is Player Handout #3.

If asked about the missing samurai, she has little information on either Bayushi Mushin or Togashi Nehan. “I remember the names, I reported their disappearances, but all I ever did was exchange letters with them. Their correspondence struck me as devout, but that’s how all the pilgrims are. I suppose one doesn’t brave the Burning Sands without strong reason.”



Shiba Mujo is a slightly different story: “I spoke with Mujo-san on several occasions. She is a well-known historian, you know, and I actually attended a few lectures she gave in the Empire, oh, ten years ago now. Her focus is on the deeds of Shinsei more than just on his words and wisdom. Trying to track down the historical fact behind the traditions we remember. The more we understand, she says, the closer to his lessons we come.”

Before the PCs leave, she should encourage them to go to Duqaq’s School of Astronomy. “I work regularly with Kiyonobu-san, the monk who leads the Brotherhood presence in the city. The Brotherhood also, obviously, has a great interest in the pilgrimage, though they handle their affairs internally of course. Still, there’s an overlap in our interest, and if one of us learns something of interest to the other, we generally share it freely.”

## Part Two: Impermanence

Following the leads that the PCs are given by Isawa Sadako should provide them with the chance to speak with people that remember the missing samurai. Splitting the party is not recommended, as the best option for communication is through Yogo Korin, who can only be in one place at a time. That said, some of the locations will have people that speak Rokugani (the Prophet’s Wall, Duqaq’s School of Astronomy, the Rebuilt University) or Ivindi (Temple of the Black Stone).

### The Prophet’s Wall

Medinaat al-Salaam has many walls, separating the districts, surrounding the city, or even just providing decoration. The section called “The Prophet’s Wall” was once part of the outer wall of the city, when it was first established. Something, and accounts vary, happened to destroy the walls while the city was in danger. Mekhem spoke a few words and touched the stones, and they sprang back into shape to defend the tribes that had gathered together for protection.

Today, the very stones tradition holds that Mekhem touched are still there, and considered holy for both the miracle performed by the Prophet and the historical importance of the survival of the city’s founders. With relatively few direct historical records in the Empire, even most Rokugani are impressed by the idea of touching the wall that Shinsei himself laid his hands on. It is obvious that a large number of people have done so over the centuries, and the site serves as a gathering point for a wide variety of people that hold

Shinsei in reverence, whatever name they know him by.

Speaking with the scholars, priests, monks, or wise men that can be found at the site requires an **Investigation / Awareness** roll at a TN of 25 (this is treated as a Social roll). Success allows the PC to find a few people who recall seeing Togashi Nehan, whose tattoos and demeanor are more unique in the local experience. Success with a 35 allows them to find some people that recall seeing Shiba Mujo. Both samurai are noted as having an interest in learning more about Shinsei’s doings in the city, and were referred to the Rebuilt University and the School of Astronomy.

If a PC wishes to join the scattering of supplicants praying at the site, they may roll **Lore: Theology / Void** at a TN of 25. Success gains them an extra Void Point that may be spent at any point during the module, even on a roll that another Void Point has been spent on.

### Rebuilt University

On the northeast side of the city lies a sprawling university campus, comprised of many buildings in a vast array of architectural styles. There are hundreds of students and scholars present on the campus at any time, engaged in lectures, demonstrations of arts and math (or both at once), assembling feats of engineering, or performing scientific experiments.

There are relatively few people who speak Rokugani, but the presence of samurai is not unprecedented, and it does not take long for a burly scholar with a bristling black beard to track down the PCs. Speaking to them in broken Rokugani, he identifies himself as “Rilaki, a student of el-Faddil-sensei”, and will escort them to a significantly less burly scholar with a much more bristling silver beard, introducing him as “the Master el-Faddil, scholar of the words of the Prophet and the way of the Tao.”

El-Faddil essentially lives in his office, which is crammed with shelves groaning under the weight of scrolls, books, tomes, papyrus, clay tablets, and even more exotic forms of writing. He rests confidently in this academic nest, and in heavily-accented but passable Rokugani, asks how he can help the PCs.

Most of the samurai or monk pilgrims that come to the university eventually are brought before el-Faddil for an interview. He has transcribed several dozen conversations with Rokugani about their interpretation of the words of the Prophet – what Rokugan knows as

the Tao. As such, he has records of his conversations with both Shiba Mujo and Togashi Nehan. Mujo was recognized as a fellow scholar, and the bulk of their conversation was on very esoteric interpretations of the Tao, or the Forty-Seven Sayings of Mekhem (the most famous local collection of the Prophet's sayings). Nehan, by contrast, was more relaxed in his theology, but shared a deep interest in the deeds Shinsei performed while he was in the city, and where the Little Teacher went after his time in Medinaat al-Salaam was done. El-Faddil has read reports that Mekhem went to the west, toward the Ivory Kingdoms, and knows that the Order of the Ebon Hand has traditions that talk about it as well.

Additionally, el-Faddil considers the monk Kiyonobu at Duqaq's School of Astronomy to be a respected colleague, and suggests the PCs confer with him on any matter having to do with the pilgrims.

### Temple of the Black Stone

The city's law enforcement has been managed by the Order of the Ebon Hand for two centuries. The Order is a semi-monastic organization, though with a particularly martial bent. Their headquarters prove to be a large white building with black hand and sunburst iconography. Membership in the order is fairly cosmopolitan, as they draw membership from all of the city's culture groups. The members of the Order, or "Ebonites" as they are known less formally, wear white tabards with a black hand on the left shoulder. Sunburst emblems are also used to denote rank. They do prove to be among the best-armed people the PCs have seen in the city, with all of them wearing straight longswords and even a few carrying spears or other polearms.

When the PCs present themselves, they are escorted to a fairly spartan meeting room, where they are joined by a stern woman in her mid-thirties. She is lean and moves with the grace of a trained warrior, but offers a polite greeting in faltering Rokugani. She introduces herself as "Wisdom", whether speaking in Rokugani or Ivindi, indicating it is more of a title than a name. If a PC speaks Ivindi, she will be more comfortable conversing in that language, otherwise, relying on her grasp of the PC's tongue and a translator will make some communication awkward.

Once the PCs explain their mission, Wisdom is very willing to help. She has spoken with several samurai over the years, though fewer in recent years. She does remember all three of the missing samurai, having spoken with them in a timeframe that appears to have been within a week of their disappearance. Bayushi

Mushin was the most common visitor, having had an interest in the Order's law enforcement duties on behalf of the Scorpion Consulate. The others visited once each, but all three had expressed curiosity about the Ebonites' traditions concerning Shinsei's involvement in their founding.

Wisdom shared stories with all of them about the founding of the Order, claiming that Shinsei helped them seal away a great evil force and charged them with guarding it. His lessons also gave them purpose once the evil was eventually destroyed, centuries later, informing the development of their Code. (The five tenets of the Ebonite Code most likely resonate with certain samurai, particularly Crab: "Suffer not the Darkness Within", "Suffer Not the Darkness Without", "Shelter the Weak", "Stand with Your Brothers", "Be True")

"This all took place in the Ivory Kingdoms, though the kingdoms involved have long since fallen and now are only barely remembered even by us. Mekhem led us with wisdom, and we eventually came to this city. We have many tales, and are happy to share them with any who are interested. Particularly the Rokugani, with whom we have a common enemy in the Cult of Ruhmal."

If the PCs inquire further, she will tell them that the last samurai before Mushin who had come to them was Togashi Zentai, the leader of the Hoshi Trading Post, before his death three years ago.

If the PCs ask about anything else that might have happened three years ago, Wisdom will share that the Temple was robbed and one of their oldest relics was stolen. "A box, of ivory and silver, with the black hand on the top. Locked for centuries, no one now knows what it contains, but tradition holds that it carries secrets of our founding."

If the PCs have already been to the School of Astronomy, they will likely have learned about the missing monks. Wisdom knows about the issue, but the case is ongoing and the Order has been unable to find anything useful. The only commonality among the missing monks, and the missing samurai for that matter if the cases are related, are that they were devout followers of the Tao who had spent some time with the Order asking questions about Shinsei.

### Festival Grounds

There are no festivals currently taking place, though the area is still a popular place for merchants and entertainers. If the PCs attempt to circulate here

regardless, they may make an **Investigation / Awareness** roll (as a Social roll) at a TN of 25. Success allows them to find someone who knows enough about the pilgrims to tell them they should “go to the observatory to talk with Rokugani there.” Failure means they learn nothing.

### Jenna’s Shop of Wonders

The mysterious “Jenna’s Shop of Wonders” proves to be a large, cluttered merchant post with all manner of goods for sale. Korin is somewhat nervous about going there, as there are a lot of local stories about the owner and the terrible curses she has pronounced on those who attempted to steal from or cheat her. Upon entering, the PCs see that the proprietor is a tiny, ancient woman with a piercing stare; she speaks no Rokugani or Ivindi, and even her Mekham is oddly-accented.

One of the side rooms off the main floor of the store holds display cases containing items of mystical interest; Jenna describes them as “relics of power and mystery” to Korin, who translates skittishly. Of interest to the pilgrims are the artifacts left behind by Duqaq, the Hooded Ronin, descendent of Shinsei – a broken sword wielded by him in battle, a jingasa, and a tattered robe. These are actually legitimately relics, and a shugenja or monk with sufficient spiritual sensitivity (success on a **Lore: Theology / Void** roll, TN 20) will feel a stirring of power associated with them. However, they are also under the protection of the proprietor, a sahir with powers not understood by Rokugani. The relics are not for sale on a scale available to PCs. Attempts to steal from or intimidate her will result in the offender simply being whisked outside magically and unable to re-enter.

Jenna has nothing to say about the pilgrims. Rokugani come into her shop sometimes, even purchasing something every once in a while, but she pays them little attention. PCs who wish to be pleasant and get further information out of her may attempt to roll Etiquette (Conversation) / Awareness at a TN of 30. Success does not give them any more about the missing samurai, but she will speak in a creepy voice that seriously disturbs Korin. He translates what she said as, “The place that is no more has the answers, but the questions you must provide yourselves.” Jenna has nothing further to say.

### Duqaq’s School of Astronomy

A pair of observation towers on the west side of the city, where the light of civilization provided less

impediment to the efforts of the astronomers, surrounded by a small compound of buildings – a few low structures used by the Brotherhood as living quarters, a two-story library, and a Taoist shrine that looks like it was moved directly here from the Empire.

There may be some confusion about the connection between astronomy and the Tao of Shinsei, but the School was established by the Hooded Ronin, as one of the tools used to fight against the darkness two hundred years ago. (The scholars here found the Seventh Star, a mystical realm associated with the morning star – called “Amaterasu’s Handmaiden” in Rokugan – and this was instrumental in resolving the prophecies around the Awakening.)

There are around sixty monks living at the School, though at any point in time, most of them are out in the city going about their business. They are very happy to see the PCs. “Oh! Samurai! You are here to do something about the missing people? We reported the issue, but it seemed like nothing was being done for so long...” It may take a little time before the monks realize the PCs are not present to investigate the dozen monks that have gone missing in the last three years.

The leader of the monks is a spry sixty-year-old named Kiyonobu. Normally possessing a wry sense of humor, the situation has left him nervous and unhappy. Once it becomes clear that the PCs were not actually sent to do something about the missing monks, he sighs in disappointment but is absolutely willing to help out however he can.

Togashi Nehan had been living at the School, and Kiyonobu had spent quite a bit of time speaking with the tattooed monk about the stars, about the omens that Nehan had spent a lifetime studying, and about the Tao. Nehan is described as a thoughtful man, not given to rash action, and much less martial than most ise zumi who wander the Empire. Kiyonobu considers Nehan to be a friend, and is very interested in learning what happened to him. “He was close to Togashi Zentai, before Zentai came to this city. I know Nehan wants to do something with the old Hoshi Trading Post, to honor his friend, but he hasn’t really told me what. He may not know yet himself.”

The monk does not recall Bayushi Mushin, and will mention that Shiba Mujo came to the School a few times but was less interested in the heavens than in the histories the School has in the library. (This in contrast to Nehan, who spent basically no time in the library, preferring to learn by speaking with the monks.)

There is little information on the missing monks. The time frame can be established, with the first going missing three years ago and the most recent about six weeks ago. Kiyonobu also knows of the destruction of the Hoshi Trading Post around the same time as the disappearances started, but given that everyone thought that an accident, has not put the two together. The missing monks are noted to be some of the most devout, but no other common element and there are no eyewitnesses as to what happened to them. The disappearances slowed when the monks started traveling in groups, but have never really stopped. Kiyonobu will specifically mention that he reported the issue both to the Ebonite guardsmen, who have had no luck looking into the matter, and to Bayushi Utemaro at the Scorpion Consulate (who did not make any mention of it to the Emerald Magistrate or the PCs).

### Portals of Delight and Fancy

There is little to be found in the city's "entertainment" district – at least, few of the things the PCs likely want to find. Utemaro mentioned it specifically in order to bog the investigation down. The locals in this area do not cooperate with the Ebonites, and are even less friendly toward strangers just arrived in the city but asking questions. If the PCs can succeed at a roll of **Investigation / Awareness** with a TN of 40, they will learn that Scorpion samurai are at least recognized for what they are in the area, but there is no one that is willing or able to confirm Utemaro's assertion that Bayushi Mushin spent time in the area.

## Part Three: Nirvana

### The Hoshi Trading House Ruins

After killing the Dragon leader and setting a fire to destroy any evidence he couldn't find, Utemaro quietly purchased the property the ruined building stood on. He has been using it as a hiding place for his misdeeds, and set a street gang to guard it.

When the PCs arrive, they will see little more than an empty lot, with only a few stone pillars fallen to lay on the ground and any scrap from the old building that could have been taken long since gone. Korin is confused at the sight, and will tell the PCs that property is too valuable in the city, let alone this district, to just lie unused for three years. He doesn't know who would own it now, but is certain he could find out with a little time (and, should the PCs have no other leads to take them to Utemaro, Korin will uncover papers demonstrating his ownership).

Before the PCs can begin a more thorough examination, they may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (the Wary Advantage applies) at a TN of 25 to spot a small gang watching the group from a nearby alley. If no one notices the gang or acknowledges them, the gang will move to attack when the party finds the basement (PCs who are not warned in some fashion are Surprised and suffer a -20 penalty to Initiative).

If the PCs acknowledge the gang watching them or move to confront them, the surly, ugly crew swagger over to exchange words. Though the interpreter, they inform the PCs that they are trespassing and should leave. Their attitude is one of arrogance and condescension, believing themselves to be in their element (and having no idea what samurai are really capable of). If asked who they are working for, they laugh roughly and point at Korin's clan mon (or that of any PC Scorpion); Korin is very bothered by this, relaying "they said one of us..." The gang can be intimidated (**Intimidation / Willpower**, TN 30; a shugenja casting a spell can add a Free Raise to this roll) or paid off (at least two koku and **Temptation (Bribery) / Awareness**, TN 25), at which point they will slink off to report to Utemaro. If the PCs are at all hostile, it will likely move into a fight, with Imaad and as many Ghost Blades as there are combat-capable PCs at the table. The gang is not so devoted to their payment that they are willing to die to keep the PCs out of the basement, and any display of magic from a shugenja PC will clearly unsettle them. In general, they should retreat upon being put at the +10 Wound Penalty or when it becomes impossible to miss that they are outclassed.

Searching the lot requires an **Investigation (Search) / Perception** roll, TN 20 (or a variety of automatic success options such as Light of the Moon or Eight-Direction Awareness) to discover a trap door hidden under one of the fallen pillars where it rests atop another. The door leads down to what was the basement of the building before the fire, and is clearly still in some use as there is no sign of fire damage on the wooden slats. Failure to find the door leads to a confrontation with the Ghost Blades when the party leaves – in this instance, the fight is inevitable but the gang will say something to the tune of "they didn't find the door", with a response of "kill them anyway" from Imaad – Korin or his cat can translate this, giving the PCs another chance to look after the fight, and reducing the TN to 15 since they have a better idea of what they are looking for. (Failure on this one means Korin suggests bringing the matter to the Emerald Magistrate's attention, reducing the Glory gain at the

end by two but involving her in the situation immediately – she will not descend into the basement, especially after the PCs describe what they find, but will have everything not a dead body brought up.)

### Imaad, the Leader of the Ghost Blades

Leader of a moderately influential street gang, Imaad has a lot of potential as a tool in Medinaat al-Salaam - this was recognized by Bayushi Utemaro and he was brought under the Scorpion's control for a variety of tasks. (None would qualify as remotely honorable.)

Air 3    Earth 4    Fire 3    Water 4    Void 2  
 Reflexes                      Agility 4  
 4  
 Integrity 1.6                      Status 0                      Reputation 2.1

**Initiative:** 8k4                      **Attack:** 10k5e (Knife, Simple); 9k4e (Unarmed, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 29 (dual wield)                      **Damage:** 6k2 (Knife), 5k1 (Unarmed)

**Wounds:** 20 (+0), 28 (+3), 36 (+5), 44 (+10), 52 (+15), 60 (+20), 68 (Down, +40), 76 (Out), 77 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Khesir Blades 4

**Techniques:** *Way of the Streets:* no dual wield penalty with knives, Free Raise to Extra Attack Maneuver with Knives if dual-wielding, +1k0 Knife damage

*On the Ground!:* Free Raise to Knockdown; if succeeds with an Unarmed Knockdown attack, adds Hand-to-Hand Skill in unkept dice to Contested Strength Roll (+5k0)

*No Holding Back:* Simple Action Attacks with Knives : Additional Free Raise to Knockdown (total 2), may make an Unarmed Knockdown as Simple Action; adds Athletics Skill to Contested Strength Roll to resist Knockdown (+4k0)

**Skills:** Athletics 4, Commerce 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 5, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Knives (Janbiya) 8, Lore: Underworld 4, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

**Mastery Abilities:** no off-hand penalty with Knives, Free Raise to Extra Attack Maneuver with Knives

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Quick, Strength of the Earth / Blackmailed, Bounty

### Ghost Blades

Somewhat skilled street toughs, more suited to scaring local merchants than attempting anything whatsoever involving samurai.

Air 2    Earth 3    Fire 2    Water 2    Void 1  
 Reflexes                      Agility 3    Strength  
 4    3  
 Integrity 1.1                      Status 0                      Reputation 2.1

**Initiative:** 5k4                      **Attack:** 8k3e (Knife, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 26 (dual wield)                      **Damage:** 5k2 (Knife)

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Khesir Blades 1

**Techniques:** 1: no dual wield penalty with knives, Free Raise to Extra Attack Maneuver with Knives if dual-wielding, +1k0 Knife damage

**Skills:** Athletics 3, Commerce 1, Defense 2, Hand-to-Hand 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Knives (Janbiya) 5, Lore: Underworld 2, Stealth 2

In the former basement of the building, the PCs will find a large storage space filled with shelves (largely holding scrolls, monastic clothes, and a few tools). A musty scent hangs heavy in the air, sealed away with no wind. At one end of the room, the shelves have been arranged away from the wall to display a grisly sight: sixteen corpses, hanging on the wall by large pegs under their armpits to place them in a mostly-upright position. The dry desert air has partially mummified them, reducing the odor to a faint unpleasantness.

In the same area as the corpses is a work table with several objects on it.

- A small travel shrine in the Rokugani style, with a place for offerings and the dedication plaques blank. It appears to be an ancestral shrine, with a Scorpion daisho and a Phoenix wakizashi
- A rack is built on the wall holding twenty four aiguchi of similar construction. Sixteen of them are unsheathed (close examination reveals blood spots on the hilts or nicks in the blade indicating use), while the remaining eight are still in their saya. (This may cause players to assume a ritual of some sort is in play, but is due entirely to the fastidious nature of Utemaro's madness.)
- A black cloth mask lies folded precisely on the table under the knife rack. While it does not possess any particular distinguishing marks, it resembles the sort of face covering worn by stage hands in larger productions. (It's a ninja mask.)
- A medium-sized box, covered with a mosaic of ivory and silver in a sunburst pattern and with the image of a hand worked in black stone on the top. The box is approximately eighteen inches wide, a foot long, and eight inches deep. There is a locking mechanism, but it is broken (and will clatter to the bottom of the box when opened), having obviously been forced.
- Inside the box is an ancient travel scroll in the Rokugani style, with an embossed pattern of a white crow on the end caps. Reading it shows it to be a text in both Rokugani and Mekham (with

the languages in columns, theoretically providing a translation) that claims to show the location of Shinsei's tomb. (Player Handout #4)

All of the bodies are of Rokugani, four of them samurai and the rest monks. Closer examination of the corpses (and perhaps either an Investigation or Medicine roll) reveals that the oldest is three years deceased and was clearly a heavily-tattooed older man; the most recent death is also of a heavily-tattooed older man, though it likely took place in the last two months. (Togashi Zentai, the leader of the Hoshi Trading Post, and Togashi Nehan, respectively.) All of the bodies were killed by a single knife blow, though the locations vary from a slashed throat to a thrust at the base of the skull or behind the ear – all surprise strikes from stealth, with basically no fighting involved. Bayushi Mushin and Shiba Mujo are identifiable by their mon as well as the swords by the altar.

### Confronting Utemaro

There are a number of ways this encounter can go, depending on how the PCs enter into it. Ideally, the PCs will have evidence in hand and at least some reason to suspect Utemaro of misleading them before they confront him. Having received a report from the survivors of the street gang, Utemaro is most likely to be found writing at his desk (a confession/justification for his actions should things go poorly for him, that he can burn if he prevails). If the PCs accuse him of misdeeds, he will call for the guards to claim that the PCs have stolen from the Ebonites, ordering the guards to take them into custody and coldly informing them that the “suspects will be slain attempting escape.”

Yogo Korin's reaction is shocked denial, but he is not articulate enough to be of significant assistance. The guards are quite obviously ill at ease at the prospect – Scorpion loyalty is strong, but the PCs are acting as yoriki to an Emerald Magistrate. If the PCs do not immediately attack, it is quite possible for them to convince the guards to wait until Bayushi Tamaki can be summoned or arrive. This only requires a successful roll of either **Courtier / Awareness** (TN 25) or **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** (TN 20). Scorpion PCs gain a Free Raise on this roll, but if Korin is not present, the TNs are increased by 5.

It is possible a PC may attempt to challenge Utemaro over his deeds, especially the lie about their actions. If a PC is not known as a duelist, he will accept such a challenge himself. If a PC is known as a duelist (Kakita Bushi-trained or Iaijutsu 7+), he instead summons Bayushi Jinmaeru, his political adjutant and

the nephew of the Scorpion Clan Champion to claim that there is an insult to the entire Scorpion Clan on the table, allowing Jinmaeru to accept the challenge so that his champion may step forward. This is a lethal duel, however, and will require an official witness (like an Emerald Magistrate), so the matter may shift once Tamaki arrives. If Utemaro is revealed as Tainted before the duel happens, it will be denied by Tamaki if she has the opportunity.

If he PCs fail their rolls or attack, there are three guards and Utemaro. The guards will attack to disable, if possible, trying to de-escalate the situation, while Utemaro will duck out the door into the next room and attack from stealth. Utemaro will be vicious and strike as lethally as possible. When Utemaro is hit, his blood is dark and thick (not black, but an obviously unnatural looking shade of red), giving a clue as to his Taint.

### Consulate Guards

Sweaty and miserable in their armor, but ready to defend the Scorpion Consulate with their lives.

Air 3    Earth 3    Fire 3    Water 3    Void 2

Honor 2.7

Status 2.0

Glory 2.0

**Initiative:** 6k4

**Attack:** 8k3e-5

(Katana, Complex,  
Fatigued)

**Armor TN:** 25/30

**Damage:** 7k2 (Katana)

**Reduction:** 3 (light armor)

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Bayushi Bushi 2

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

*Pincers and Tail:* Free Raise for any Maneuver

**Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity 3; Athletics 3, Battle 2, Horsemanship 1, Jiujutsu 2, Lore: History 2, Stealth 2

Assuming the PCs don't start a fight, they can engage Utemaro in conversation to try to learn what he has done and why. He is resigned at this point, willing to speak without requiring a roll. There is, however, a difference between “admission” and “surrender”. Utemaro is conflicted, having regret for the deaths he determined to be necessary (particularly the fellow Bayushi), so talking him down is difficult but not impossible. While his Shadowlands Power prevents the PCs from affecting his mind, when that mind is not settled, a Skill roll can convince him to stand down.

If the PCs provide reasons for him to surrender (the reputation of the Scorpion Clan, keeping the peace between the clans, even obeying the Emerald Magistrate's wishes, as long as it's more than accusations of his wrongdoing) and succeed at a **Courtier (Manipulation)** or **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a TN of 35, Utemaro will give in without a fight or attempting to flee, providing all his explanations and justifications. If, somehow, the PCs manage to prove Utemaro is Tainted, he will immediately surrender.

Failure on the roll likely sees him try to flee after admitting his crimes. (Initiative is rolled; on his Turn, he retreats into the other room to break line of sight and use Stealth to attempt to go out the window and avoid capture. Contested Rolls from that point of Investigation / Perception against his Stealth / Agility are required; if he wins three, he escapes, if the PCs win three, they can surround him.)

Utemaro speaks in a tightly controlled voice, almost a monotone, and only showing emotion when he speaks of the reason for his actions. When he learned from Togashi Zentai that the Ebonites had proof that Shinsei had come from the Ivory Kingdoms, he decided that he had to kill to keep the secret. He killed Zentai, burned down the Hoshi Trading Post, broke into the Temple of Black Stone to steal their relic, and kept watch for any other Rokugani likely to uncover the secret. Utemaro honestly believes that learning that the Empire owes its existence, the victory over Fu Leng, and everything that has come since the Day of Thunder, to a gaijin interloper will be disastrous to Rokugan. He is overreacting, largely because of the madness the Taint is afflicting him with, though it will be a difficult concept for some more traditional samurai to deal with.

## Conclusion

If Utemaro escapes or is slain, he still left behind a confession, satisfying Tamaki on the resolution of the investigation. There is still some mystery as to what drove him to take such extreme measures, but it is less important than that he was stopped.

If Utemaro is killed or captured, his Taint will come out as soon as his mask is removed and the condition of his skin comes to light. Any test with jade will burn him, confirming the matter. He does not know when he contracted the Taint, though his major changes in thoughts and nightmares began three years ago (when he began the murders). If possible, he will cooperate

fully before his execution and will make no attempt to escape or hide anything further.

Tamaki is pleased with the resolution, though possibly unsettled by a trusted Scorpion in such a distant post having contracted the mark of Jigoku. She will convey the scroll to the Imperial Capitol, so the Brotherhood of Shinsei may determine the best path to take forward. Regardless, the PCs are sent back to the Empire on an uneventful journey with the thanks of the Emerald Magistrate.

## The End

## Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 EXP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 EXP
Located the missing samurai:	+1 EXP
Confronted Utemaro:	+1 EXP
Total Possible Experience:	4 EXP

### Favors

Discovering the deaths of the missing samurai and publicly bringing Utemaro to justice for it gains each PC one Favor.

### Honor

Successfully bringing a murderer to justice and uncovering a Tainted samurai in a position of power gains the PCs an H7 Honor gain.

The GM may grant up to 2 extra points of Honor to a PC for actions not detailed in the module, though no PC should gain more than 2 points in this fashion.

### Glory

Though the distance from the Empire makes the recognition difficult, the nature of the case will gain attention for the PCs: G9 Glory gain.

### Other

Every PC should gain a 0-point Physical and Supernatural Advantage: "Ekirei Survivor" following their exposure to the illness at the oasis.

Any PC who receives a knife from the nomads, or buys a janbiya in the city (for 2 bu), may add the weapon to their sheet – but this does not make it part of their Outfit, so will not be replaced if it is lost. It is a knife requiring its own Emphasis but using the Knives Skill, it does 1k2 damage and suffers a -2k0 penalty to the attack roll if thrown. Additionally, it is a gajin weapon largely meant for street fighting and using it is dishonorable. In any combat where the PC uses the janbiya, they suffer a D2 Honor loss (similar to using a Low Skill). This is once per combat, and if it matters, takes place when the weapon is readied.

### GM Reporting

- 1) Was there a fight at the oasis?
- 2) Did Utemaro escape?
- 3) Was the Account of the Last Disciple recovered?

**GM must report this information BEFORE 11/9/2019 for it to have storyline effect**



## Appendix #1: NPCs

### Bayushi Utemaro

Face hidden by a full wooden mask, lacquered black with a swirling red pattern, clad in dark red traditional kimono. He was once a loyal Scorpion, and still thinks of himself as one, though the madness brought by his Taint has caused him to be even more paranoid and untrusting. He does not realize he is Tainted, and if it is proven to him (by touching him with jade, for example), his denial will break and he will surrender.

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 5 Water 3 Void 2  
Strength 4

Honor 1.9 Status 5.0 Glory 4.1

**Initiative:** 9k5 **Attack:** 10k5e (Katana, Simple) or 10k6e (Aiguchi, Simple)

**Armor TN:** 25/30 **Damage:** 8k2 (Katana) or 5k1 (Aiguchi)

**Shadowlands Taint:** 3.2

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58 (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Bayushi Bushi 4

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

*Pincers and Tail:* Free Raise for any Maneuver

*Strike at the Tail:* When assuming a Stance at the start of Turn, may choose a target within 30'. If successfully hit them during that Turn, the target is Fatigued as if he had gone without rest for 24 hours. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to negate the effects of this Technique. If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

*Strike From Above, Strike From Below:* May make melee attacks as a Simple Action.

**Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation) 4, Defense 2, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 2, Iaijutsu (Assessment) 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Sincerity (Deceit) 5, Stealth 6; Athletics 4, Investigation (Notice) 3, Jiujutsu 2, Knives (Aiguchi) 7, Lore: Theology 3

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Irreproachable, Silent / Dark Secret: murderer, Driven: hide the secret of Shinsei's origin, Shadowlands Taint

**Shadowlands Mutation:** Discolored Skin (pale, with darkened veins – normally hidden by mask)

**Shadowlands Powers:** Master of Shadows (+3k0 to Stealth rolls), Chosen of Fu Leng (immunity to mind-affecting effects, including Social Skills, Techniques, and spells)

### Shosuro Inazuma

A lean young woman with an attitude of calm equanimity, except where Phoenix samurai are concerned, Inazuma is Bayushi Jinmaeru's yojimbo and champion.

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

Honor 3.8 Status 3.5 Glory 3.2

**Initiative:** 8k5 **Attack:** 9k3e (Katana, Complex)

**Armor TN:** 25/30 **Damage:** 6k2 (Katana)

**Reduction:** 0

**Wounds:** 15 (+0), 21 (+3), 27 (+5), 33 (+10), 39 (+15), 45 (+20), 51 (Down, +40), 57 (Out), 58+ (Dead)

**School/Rank:** Bayushi Bushi 3

**Techniques:** *The Way of the Scorpion:* +1k1 to Initiative Rolls. +5 to Armor TN against any opponent with lower Initiative.

*Pincers and Tail:* Free Raise on any Maneuver

*Strike at the Tail:* When assuming a Stance at the start of Turn, may choose a target within 30'; the target is Fatigued if you hit them this Turn. During the Reactions Stage, an affected opponent may attempt an Earth Ring roll against a TN of 25 to negate the effects of this Technique. If he fails, the effects of this Technique end during the next Reactions Stage (the second Reactions Stage after he was struck).

**Skills:** Courtier (Manipulation) 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 7, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Sincerity 3; Athletics 3, Battle 2, Horsemanship 1, Intimidation (Control) 3, Jiujutsu 1, Stealth (Sneaking) 3

**Mastery Abilities:** ready swords as a Free Action, Free Raise to Focus, +2k2 to Focus if wins Assessment by 10+, +1k0 sword damage

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Heart of Vengeance (Phoenix), Wary / Disbeliever

Assessment: 10k6 w/Void

Focus: 10k7e+9 w/Void or 10k10+11 v/Void and Assessment by 10+

Strike: 10k4, damage 8k4+4 w/Void before Raises

## **Player Handout #1: News From the Empire**

Samurai of Rokugan,

It has been quite an active spring this year indeed! And as the wheel turns, we are blessed with good tidings from around the Empire!

Shinjo Hazumi has miraculously recovered and resumed control of the clan. She has thanked Moto Sartaq for his exemplary service during her period of incapacitation and declared a renewed focus on foreign magics that might threaten the empire in the future. With the Unicorn having committed to avoiding war with the Dragon, it seems that the northwest, at least, has calmed for the time being.

The same cannot be said within the Owl lands, however. The Scorpion have begun their incursions in earnest, engaging with the First Heichi Army in several minor engagements. The Owl, for their part, seem to be stalling for time while Owl Courtiers try to calm the situation. Unfortunately for the Owl, going against the Scorpion in court is fraught with peril, and word is a couple of Owl Courtiers have committed seppuku for various failures in dealing with experienced Scorpion Diplomats.

We should end on good news, though, yes? I am happy to bring to the Courts that Toturi X and his wife have announced the birth of Twins! Young Ichiro and Ichiko are both very healthy young children, and the Astrologers already have very optimistic things to say about their divined destinies.

Blessings of the Summer Upon us all.

Otomo Yusuke

## **Player Handout #2: Missing Samurai**

Bayushi Tamaki has only basic information on the missing samurai, and no real reports of their doings in Medinaat al-Salaam. It is known when they left the Empire, and by extension, when they arrived in the city. The last known reports of their presence in the city come from witnesses associated with the Imperial Embassy or the Scorpion Consulate. The disappearances may have gone unnoticed in the Empire but for the expanded presence brought by the Imperial Embassy.

### **Bayushi Mushin**

A Bayushi-trained bushi in his early thirties, Mushin has a reputation as a moderately successful duelist with seven victories to his name (one of them a lethal duel). He has served as a yojimbo, court champion, personal guard, and battlefield champion over the course of his career. It is known that he arrived in the city nine months ago, and was last seen eight months ago. Mushin is described as a tall, lanky man with a small scar on the left side of his lower lip; his mon is provided, and appears to be a pair of scorpion pincers folded in prayer.

### **Shiba Mujo**

Mujo is an Asako Loremaster more known for her time spent in the libraries of the Empire than its courts. She is a noted historian and theologian, and has published more than a dozen treatises on Shinsei and the Tao over the last two decades. She arrived in the city six months ago and was last seen three months ago. Descriptions of Mujo indicate she is an almost monastic woman in her mid-forties, with short-cropped hair and usually a bit of ink somewhere unexpected. Her mon is a stylized series of elongated triangles, worked into a pattern evoking a feather.

### **Togashi Nehan**

All ise zumi are somewhat enigmatic, though Nehan has been more active in the Empire than most. In his early fifties, he is more known for having traveled the Empire gathering observations on the heavens and learning local superstitions. He arrived in the city four months ago, with the last reported sighting two months ago. A short, wiry man covered in tattoos, Nehan has a distinct appearance. His personal mon is a simplified star pattern with a single curved line representing a dragon's claw.

## **Player Handout #3: Isawa Sadako's Guidebook**

Isawa Sadako has prepared a scroll with a rough description of a few sites of significance to pilgrims following in the steps of the Little Teacher. Details are scanty, and summarized below. Sadako does note that one of the locations – the Hoshi Trading House – no longer exists, having been destroyed in a fire three years ago. However, the scrolls were prepared before that happened, and they have simply not been updated since.

### The Prophet's Wall

Perhaps the most important site for the local residents of the city, there is a tradition that Shinsei rebuilt the city walls with a word and a touch in a time of need. The location of the “miracle” is a destination for pilgrims from across the region, and is of significance to the history of Medinaat al-Salaam. Priests, scholars, and wise men regularly can be found here, and much can be learned about the way that the city views the deeds of the Little Teacher, who they call “Mekhem”.

### Duqaq's School of Astronomy

Founded by the Hooded Ronin, the descendant of Shinsei, in 1132, this school has two towers for observation of the Heavens and a small shrine devoted to the Tao that would not be exceptional in the Empire. The Brotherhood of Shinsei maintain the facilities, though scholars with an interest in astronomy travel from far and wide to learn of the stars and what their patterns may mean for the mortal realm.

### Rebuilt University

The city once had a university with a history stretching back to the time of Shinsei, but it was destroyed by the Senpet in 1132 during a particularly tumultuous time. It has been restored in the last two centuries, to something of note if not quite to its former glory. Scholars on all topics can be found here, in particular one by the name of “Master el-Faddil”, who has devoted his life to understanding the teachings of the Prophet.

### Temple of the Black Stone

The Order of the Ebon Hand serve as city guards and magistrates for the Caliph, keeping the peace of the city, but they also have a tradition that they were founded by Shinsei. More a military order than a religious one, there are some similarities to the monastic Brotherhood that lend credence to their claims. They are generally willing to share their knowledge of the Little Teacher, though the mixed nature of their organization makes it difficult to judge their reliability.

### Festival Grounds

Much like in Rokugan, there are a variety of celebrations of a religious or cultural nature that take place regularly in the city. The many different traditions held by the city's inhabitants ensure that there is almost always something taking place on the area set aside for such celebrations, even if there is no formal festival scheduled. However, there are several dates held to be of importance to the Prophet: the first day of spring, the entire first month of summer, the week leading up to the autumnal equinox, and a day in the second month of winter claimed to be the birth of Shinsei.

### Hoshi Trading House

A unique combination of monastery and merchant, this location is of interest to anyone studying the deeds of Shinsei in his time in the city. The Dragon have had a minor presence in the city since the events of the twelfth century, though their focus has been primarily on spreading the Tao and doing good works for the less fortunate of the city.

### Jenna's Shop of Wonders

Many superstitions and stories surround the establishment known as “Jenna's Shop of Wonders”, among them that the founder still operates the business despite it having existed for centuries. Whatever powers the gullible ascribe to the proprietor, she does have several relics from the time of the Hooded Ronin on display.

## Player Handout #4: The Account of the Last Disciple

This is the introduction of the scroll found in the broken Ebonite lockbox. It continues for what would be more than a hundred pages, divided into columns of Rokugani script in an ancient style (on the left) and writing in the local fashion (on the right). It is a mostly scholarly work, in a very religious style.

Know that wisdom is the blessing of the heavens, brought upon us by the words and deeds of the Prophet, he who is known as Mekhem in this city, he who was known as Shinsei in the land of the rising sun, he who was born as Sayid-art in the lands of the setting sun, and who has returned to the realm of his birth to rest.

This is the account of Abdul Tarkan ibn Qazai, the last disciple of the Prophet, and a full and true tally of the Little Teacher's final days, and the place where his remains lie to serve as inspiration for those who would follow after.

اعلموا أن الحكمة هي نعمة السماوات ، التي جلبتها علينا  
كلمات وأفعال النبي ، الذي يعرف باسم مكهم في هذه  
المدينة ، والذي كان يعرف باسم شينسي في أرض  
الشمس المشرقة ، الذي ولد كما قال سيد الفن في أرض  
غروب الشمس ، وقد عاد ذلك إلى عالم ولادته للراحة.

هذه هي رواية عبد التاركان بن قزاي ، آخر تلميذ للنبي ،  
ورواية كاملة وحقيقية للأيام الأخيرة للمعلم الصغير ،  
والمكان الذي تكمن فيه رفاتة ليكون بمثابة مصدر إلهام  
لمن يتبعهم.

[A large map is drawn across both columns, recognizable by coastlines as being territory in the Ivory Kingdoms; the location of the Tomb of the Prophet is noted in a Kingdom near to, but not bordering, Balishnimpur]