

Tomb of Shinsei

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

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[Travel, Investigation, Roleplaying]

Part Two of The Little Teacher

“There are only two mistakes one can make on the path to truth: not going all the way, and not starting.”

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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

Fourteen centuries ago, a man was born in what is now the Ivory Kingdoms. The son of a powerful king, he left his life of ease and sought enlightenment. He traveled the world, teaching what he learned and helping those he met; there are few who know all of his deeds, for he went by many names. In Rokugan, he was called Shinsei, and he guided the Thunders in their defeat of Fu Leng.

As it did not begin in the Emerald Empire, neither did Shinsei's journey end there. He continued to travel the world, bringing what wisdom he could to those in need. In time, he returned to the lands of his birth, and died there. His followers built a tomb to house his remains and serve as a shrine to honor his lessons. The Little Teacher's philosophy did not spread as widely as it did in Rokugan, but there were those in the Ivory Kingdoms, as elsewhere, that tried to live by the lessons he taught.

Recently, samurai from the Empire found a record of the resting place of Shinsei in the Burning Sands. Several of the clans began preparations for an expedition to "discover" the Tomb, and to establish a pilgrimage route for more followers of the Tao to take. Due to conflicting interests from multiple clans and an unfortunate factionalism growing in the Imperial Families, this has become a political issue. The Phoenix Clan, who have spent most of the last year isolated from the rest of the Empire, ceded their influence in the project to the Dragon.

In recent weeks, it has become a matter of more immediate concern: the invasion of a Shadowlands Horde through the Unicorn lands, on a scale unseen for ten generations, has left the leaders of the Empire

scrambling for any hope. Those who had been interested in making a pilgrimage to the Tomb have turned the expedition into an opportunity to find some sort of knowledge or weapon to be used against the forces of Jigoku. The fact that there is almost no reason to believe that such a resource will be found there has been glossed over, under the press of desperation brought about by the return of a Lost Emperor.

The PCs have been sent to accompany the official expedition from the Empire, to lend the benefit of their experience in the Ivory Kingdoms and hopefully provide some diplomacy in the face of what is otherwise an extremely scholarly and martial group. The monks and Imperial Legion sent by the Emperor's advisors and the Dragon Clan are not particularly politically-minded, and have no experience with the Ivinda people.

The essential conflict of the module comes down to the casual arrogance of the samurai, who assume that they know the truth of things they have never experienced. While the expedition's leaders hope to find something they can exploit (in fairness, against an objectively evil enemy) at the Tomb, they will instead find a person who may be able to provide assistance instead: the current descendent of Shinsei is there, and will return to Rokugan as long as the PCs can defend him from an attack that no one, even the attacker, know is about to happen.

Note for the GM: While the stories of Shinsei are clearly inspired by the living tradition of Buddhism in our own world, it is important to remember that there are real people for whom those traditions are important. Drawing the direct parallel between Shinsei and Siddhartha Gautama is not intended to be disrespectful to those beliefs, and the GM should remember that there is a vast difference between the assumptions of the samurai characters in this module and the consideration that should be given to people from different cultures.

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. PCs with the following mechanics should be taken note of:

- Language: Ivindi
- Paragon of Compassion or Failure of Compassion

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. At the start of the module, 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 **20**. 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, any ronin PCs lose half of their koku. This cannot reduce their accumulated wealth below an amount of bu equal to their highest Skill.

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

Once again, the PCs have been sent by their lords to the Ivory Kingdoms. This time, they are to assist the Imperial expedition to find the Tomb of Shinsei as described in the Account of Qazai, a document found in Medinaat al-Salaam last year. It is quite likely that the PCs both have previous experience with the Ivory Kingdoms and were involved in the recovery of that work.

The journey from Rokugan was as arduous as ever, though unseasonal winds sped your ships over the waves with greater speed than usual. This did nothing for the comfort of the voyage, though the majority of the rest of the expedition took it as a good omen. As the commander of the expedition's guards spent the vast majority of your time on the ships violently sea-sick, however, those positive interpretations were kept relatively quiet.

The sea voyage gives the PCs ample time to introduce themselves to the other players, and to get at least a basic understanding of who they are traveling with.

It should be noted that, as this is an Imperial expedition with the full backing of the Emperor, discussion of the current Dark Lord of the Shadowlands and his identity before taking command

of the Horde should be extremely circumspect. The NPCs involved here are generally reasonable, but they are loyal and honorable samurai and there is a limit to how much they can overlook in good conscience.

In addition to the PCs, there are thirty-two Rokugani travelling to the Tomb of Shinsei. The majority of the expedition is a guntai (squadron of twenty troops) from the First Imperial Legion under the command of taisa Mirumoto Orinosuke. The Legion troops presumably serve as protection for six Seppun shugenja, led by Seppun Masae – a religious scholar of some note. Finally, there are five monks from the Brotherhood of Shinsei, who answer to Takuya, a spry and energetic representative from the Four Temples.

There is some difference of opinion among these three NPCs as to who is actually “in command” of this expedition. Orinosuke is a military commander and has roughly equal Status with Masae, who is a priest and scholar considered something of an authority on the Tao by the Imperial Families. And, while he is not a samurai (any more), Takuya is a high-ranking member of the most influential monastic order in the Empire and has a history of getting groups of people to follow his advice. While they each began the expedition with the honest intention of working along with the others and each providing guidance in their own area of expertise, the difficulties of the journey have worn on them and a certain amount of tension is beginning to show.

Unfortunately, one of the few subjects they are in agreement on is their shared disdain for the local Ivinda. Each of them has a certain amount of the typical Rokugani xenophobia, and the sort of arrogant superiority that comes from being both legitimately competent at their own skillset and highly privileged members of their culture’s ruling caste. (Takuya was a Crane samurai and courtier before his retirement, so shares too many of these attitudes.)

In addition to these leaders, there are twenty Imperial Legionnaires from a variety of clans. Orinosuke’s second in command is a gruff Owl samurai-ko named Hantei Kohuri, and the expedition’s quartermaster is the quietly competent Seppun Akio. The rest are a mix of Lion, Dragon, and Phoenix; all are at least somewhat familiar with basic theology as well as being elite bushi (they can be considered to be mostly School Rank 4, though they are not quite up to the same level as most PCs in a High-Rank module).

The Seppun shugenja are much more scholars than warriors – none of them are members of the Hidden Guard, and they have no particular martial capabilities. Two of them (Seppun Hiroshige and Miya Yuma) speak Ivindi, though all they know about the Ivory Kingdoms comes from books rather than practical experience. Masae has studied the Account of Qazai found in Medinaat al-Salaam extensively, and a copy has been made for the expedition; this includes the map, but without some local assistance, it likely will take a great deal of time to find the Tomb.

The monks are physically fit and have basic competence at unarmed combat, but are not particularly aggressive and were chosen for their religious devotion to the Tao more than their prowess with jiu-jitsu. They are also largely expected to serve as camp servants for the otherwise-entirely samurai company.

First Stop: Balishnimpur

When the expedition docks at Balishnimpur, they do not spend much time in the city. There are certain tensions among the populace that they will not have any time to do anything about, and likely won’t even notice. The expedition leaders, eager to be on their way, will ensure that the group is fully supplied and prepared, but will spend only a few hours before leaving the city.

Seppun Akio will ask the PCs for any advice on any additional supplies the expedition should acquire before heading out. The assumption that the expedition has been operating under, which should also be given to the PCs, is that the Tomb of Shinsei is some sort of dangerous, trap-laden complex that safeguards the remains of the Little Teacher and any treasures that were buried with him. The Rokugani are assuming that gaijin would not have cremated Shinsei’s body, and that there will be funerary goods like other gaijin cultures leave at similar tombs. (The players should be encouraged to think of it as a typical dungeon-crawl, as might be expected in another kind of role-playing game.)

The monks tend to the pack mules with supplies; the party’s samurai are mounted and carry most of their equipment on their steeds. The expedition has brought (at least) the following gear, and Akio will take any reasonable suggestions from the PCs under

consideration (and, as the Imperial Legion is paying, they can be acquired – this does not allow PCs to gain equipment for their personal use for free, but they may spend Favors as normal for equipment).

- Rations (rice, dried fish, fruits)
- Extra water
- Fodder and extra gear for the steeds
- Medical supplies
- Rope and climbing gear (grappling hook, pitons, harnesses)
- Tents and sleeping rolls
- Lanterns and oil
- Torches
- Tools – hammer, shovel, pick, prybar, axe, others
- Extra sacks and boxes
- Mirrors
- Scrolls, pen, and ink
- Six carrier pigeons to send messages back to Balishnimpur

In addition, there is an ornate chest (about three feet long, two feet wide, and a foot and a half tall) covered with gold filigree and the symbols of the Five Rings and the Crow of Shinsei. It is kept wrapped in oilcloth for the majority of the trip, though it can be spotted when the taisei checks on it every day; the box contains an intricately illuminated set of scrolls. These scrolls are the collected Tao of Shinsei (as recorded by Rokugan), with commentary and notations from the Empire’s most renowned scholars throughout its history. This lavish offering is kept under close watch by Mirumoto Orinosuke, and is intended to be left with the Tomb to demonstrate the Empire’s devotion to the Tao and Shinsei’s lessons.

It is worth note that the local conditions are very rainy; the monsoon season is almost over, and it can be expected that as the party heads inland, they will encounter less rainfall, but there will be at least one torrential rainstorm every day the party is traveling. This is a normal, seasonal weather pattern that can be anticipated by anyone with knowledge of the area (including merchants supplies are acquired from).

Part One: Overland Journey

On the first leg of the overland journey, the PCs should be approached by or interact with the specific NPCs in a few ways. In particular, the NPCs are concerned with the sort of challenges the “Tomb” is likely to provide them, and should ask the PCs what

sort of difficulties they think the group will face. This will reinforce the (incorrect) assumption that the conflict of the module will be about the Tomb itself.

Mirumoto Orinosuke will try to be friendly with other Dragon, and only slightly less so with Lion or Scorpion. He is also interested in the martial experiences of any PC who has Status in a military organization (particularly the Imperial Legions), and will confer with them especially if they have had previous engagements with the Ivinda. Orinosuke is the most active of the three leaders, being involved with the practical aspects of the expedition due to the guards largely being responsible for a large amount of the group’s safety and camp security.

Seppun Masae should speak with any Imperial PCs, as well as any shugenja. In addition, the Imperial Families are taking some effort to reach out to the Phoenix to secure as much loyalty to the throne as they can in that clan, as well as build relationships with the Crab in light of the Shadowlands invasion. She should also make some effort to smooth relations with Owl and Unicorn characters, as those clans are intimately involved with the invasion of the Horde. Masae is mostly focused on studying the Account of Qazai for any more clues to be found (there largely aren’t any, but she is a scholar first and foremost) about the journey.

Takuya has a secret. (Well, he has two, but he knows about one of them.) The Brotherhood of Shinsei, after the invasion, are quietly looking for the Heir of Shinsei, the descendent of the Little Teacher himself, as there is a tradition that the members of the bloodline will lead the Empire in times of spiritual imbalance. Takuya, who is most interested in speaking with other monks, courtiers, Crane, Mantis, or Minor Clan PCs, will be looking for trustworthy and/or pious confidantes to secure their assistance in looking for Henro (the name the heir is believed to be using). Unfortunately, he is unaware of his Taint, and it is being kept in check until his mission is ready (making it undetectable outside the Empire until triggered).

Travel from Balishnimpur to the fortified city of Piprakote takes another week along the banks of a mighty river the Rokugani call the “Shinano”, but the locals know as Alaknanda. Following the swift waters up into the Vindhya Mountains, the expedition passes into the Gurjara principality. Guides provided by the ruler of these lands meet you at Piprakote, a

city clearly meant to defend against incursions from the Balishnimpur kingdom. Though the guides speak almost no Rokugani, the translators with your party manage to speak with them well enough, and they lead you on toward your goal: the Tomb of Shinsei.

There are four guides provided by Raj Vitatha, the ruler of Gurjara (and the brother of Prince Bhoja, if the PCs played *CIT48: To Serve Justice*). They are highly skilled hunters, some of them with experience as scouts in the Raj's army, some with less savory (or legal) backgrounds, but they are all competent and generally willing to work with the samurai. The Ivinda of the neighboring provinces have far less experience with the Rokugani invaders than the local population of Balishnimpur, but aside from some caution of the samurai's bloodthirsty reputation, the locals largely view them as similar enough to their own kshatriya caste that they generally can manage.

The guides are limited in their understanding of their charges – only Rajnish speaks much of the Rokugani language, and even he is only barely fluent. Between the Imperial translators and basic charade-style communication, the basic sense of what the guides need to tell the samurai can be gotten across, but if any of the PCs is fluent in the Ivindi language, it will make things significantly easier. The TNs of any of the following Social Skill Rolls are decreased by 10 for a PC who has the Language: Ivindi Advantage, and by 5 if at least one of the PCs does have it and translates for another. These TNs are increased by an additional 10 if the PC has the Failure of Compassion Disadvantage, and reduced by 5 if they have the Paragon of Compassion Advantage.

The four guides are:

- **Kavi:** the oldest, is in his early fifties, and the quietest; he's got the most experience and confidence but won't generally go out of his way to volunteer anything other than keeping the people he's guiding safe
- **Asmita:** the youngest, at barely sixteen, is an energetic and somewhat naïve youth with a talent for hunting; he is related to Kavi, but is easily led astray by Rajnish if the PCs do not make some attempt to mitigate the other samurai's attitude
- **Rajnish:** in his early thirties, he is a (mostly) reformed smuggler and thief who has worked with Rokugani merchants in the past, though this is his first direct experience with samurai; he is fairly smooth despite his limited command of the language and is always on the lookout for a

profit – he identifies the offering as the most valuable cargo being carried by the group early

- **Vipul:** an enormous man in his late twenties, Vipul is a veteran of the Raj's army and something of a thug; he is stolid and unassuming despite being nearly seven feet tall, but has little patience for the scorn heaped on him by kshatriya or samurai either one; not being stupid, however, he will simply leave when he has had enough rather than explode in some form of suicidal rebellion. The majority of the samurai scorn for their guides will start out on his shoulders, as he fits the image of a “brutish gaijin oaf” the best to the Rokugani.

The Rokugani treat the guides poorly. The Imperial Legion mostly views them as “expert peasants”, listening to their advice (as best they can) and following where they lead for safety, but they make their disdain for the lower class and foreign men absolutely clear in any number of ways. The Imperial shugenja generally ignore the guides, trying to pretend that the gaijin don't exist – treating them in most ways as inconvenient servants. Note that this is actually relatively moderate behavior for samurai; they are not making a significant distinction between the gaijin and lower-class Rokugani, but it still sits poorly with the guides. The NPCs sent along with the expedition were expecting to deal with gaijin, after all, so this situation is not a surprise to them, but the PCs are likely much more experienced with non-Rokugani (after all, most of the samurai of the Empire have never left it or met someone from outside the borders).

If one of the PCs is fluent in Ivindi, they may attempt to intercede with the samurai on the guides' behalf. The most this will do is keep one of the guides from deserting, but does demonstrate a certain devotion to Compassion.

This is most likely to come to the PCs' attention on the first night out of Piprakote, after picking up the guides.

During the day, the guides did their best to help your journey by leading your group through the dense vegetation, picking the surest paths, and avoiding dangers or discomforts from the local flora and fauna. The other samurai of your group seem largely unimpressed with their expertise, however, and while they are not overtly abusive they still make their disdain for the foreign commoners quite clear.

As your group begins to set camp the first night out of Piprakote, Hantei Kohuri strides around the group as she has every previous night, checking the troops under her command. This time, however, the gaijin guides catch her attention as they start to build a fire near the taisa's tent. Her voice is cold, but carrying, and the hostility in her voice clearly transcends the language barrier. "What do you filth think you're doing? Get away from your betters, now!"

Though they do not understand the exact wording she's using, her meaning is clear, and the guides will grudgingly and slowly move their camping spot away from the higher-ranking members of the samurai party. Their reluctance and indignation is likewise obvious despite their complying, and while Kohuri's continued admonishment of them is unpleasant, she does not attempt any further chastisement once they have moved.

If the PCs wish to intercede, they may attempt to do so by using Social Skills and roleplaying their intent. This can be done by either speaking with the Ivinda or addressing the samurai causing the scene, but both tactics will be required to mitigate the brewing conflict between the guides and the ones being guided. In general, reassuring the Ivinda requires a **Sincerity / Awareness** roll at a default TN of 40 (before adjustments for fluency in their language) and some indication that not all of the Rokugani will treat the guides in that fashion.

However, simply reassuring the guides is not enough on its own, as the Legion samurai will continue to follow the example set by their second-in-command unless the PCs convince them otherwise. This requires either **Courtier / Awareness** (TN 35) or **Intimidation / Willpower** (TN 30) rolls, depending on the approach taken by the PC (other Skills may be appropriate at the GM's discretion). Alternately, the PC may issue a formal challenge – this requires a **Courtier / Awareness** roll at a TN of only 25, but does cause a minor loss of Honor (D5) and Glory (L6); taking this more aggressive avenue also gets grudging acquiescence, since none of the Legion samurai cares to shed blood over the issue.

Success reduces the tensions somewhat, though the gaijin are still somewhat ostracized by the samurai (other than potentially the PCs) and shunted off into their own section of the camp away from the rest of the group. This is not violent, but is unpleasant for

the guides – and is difficult for them to accept since they are giving the best service possible without much in the way of gratitude as far as they can tell.

The guides will talk relatively freely with the PCs if they are friendly; they don't have quite as rigid an attitude as Rokugani peasants, but they still respect the prowess of the samurai. They know a little about the "Tomb", though they don't call it that – it is the "Pathiknirvana Stupa" (which basically means "Wanderer's Nirvana Temple") as far as they know.

Needless to say, the Rokugani NPCs are uninterested in any information the guides have regarding the Tomb other than its location.

If the PCs do not intercede successfully here, then the day after Vipul leaves, Rajnish will convince Asmita to steal some of the expedition's tools and meet him in Lavinagar to sell them to his contact there. This will cause Orinosuke to be more aggressive in his treatment of the Ivinda, in turn increasing the TNs of Social Rolls to convince him to avoid attacking the village by 10.

The journey continues regardless:

As your path takes you west into the mountains, you leave the heavy humidity of the lowland jungles behind. The lush greenery transforms gradually to drier evergreen forests clinging to rocky cliffs, with thick underbrush growing from rich soil deposited across the land by the rivers as they flow to the sea. Small farmsteads dot the area, among a scattering of villages and smaller settlements. The further from the border with Balishnimpur your party travels, the more pastoral and peaceful the countryside appears.

On the third night after leaving Piprakote, Vipul quietly departs. He gathers up his gear, takes a large sack of rations as payment, and leaves without being seen by the Legion guards. Kiva sees him depart with his stolen goods, but does not interfere or inform anyone unless he is asked.

While it is obvious that Vipul has deserted (from the expedition's point of view), the theft will not be discovered until the expedition makes camp that night. At that point, the fact that one of the party managed to depart without being noticed by the guards on duty will become a disciplinary issue for the Legion.

Making camp the night after Vipul's departure, you see Seppun Akio, the Legion quartermaster, approach Orinosuke with a nervous expression. The two men speak for a moment, then the Legion commander barks a series of orders and approaches the group of gaijin. Taking a deep breath, the Dragon speaks through gritted teeth, "Where did the thief go?"

Rajnish and Asmita loudly proclaim their ignorance, while Kiva remains as taciturn as ever. This presents another opportunity for the PCs to reduce the tension in the group, but if they did not succeed at a previous attempt, the TNs are 5 higher.

Orinosuke is not foolish; while upset at the theft, he is not going to countenance violence against the only guides available to get the troops under his command where they need to go (though PCs who are paying attention will note that he is careful to assign some of his own scouts to making a map of their route so that the party can at least return to where they came from).

The Lost Message

Tensions between the Rokugani and Ivinda will continue to grow through the trip, regardless of how much the PCs run interference, though there is a marked difference if they are successful in their attempts. By the fifth day, there will be very little camaraderie between the groups, save perhaps the PCs. During the march that day, Asmita will run up to the most approachable of the PCs (a Paragon of Compassion, another at the GM's discretion or random if there hasn't been any effort to make up with the guides).

The youngest of the guides stumbles out of the tree line, face pale and frightened. He trots up to you and stammers out something difficult to make out at first. "Mu- mujhe ek mirt vyakti mila ha. A body! Dead! Body!"

The poor lad, in the process of checking the line of march, has stumbled across a corpse. This can be made clear with a translator, though Asmita is unsettled by his first direct experience with human death (he is, after all, only 16). While he doesn't know why such a person would be there, he does

recognize the basic equipment as being of the same origin as that which the samurai are carrying.

If the PCs wish to investigate, they will find the dead body of a Rokugani messenger. A relatively simple **Medicine** or **Battle / Intelligence** roll (TN 20) will let the PC determine that the man has been dead for at least six months, but less than a year. Scavengers and vermin have been active, leaving not much more than weathered bone and some dried skin. The man's pack has been scattered across the small clearing, and can be sifted through without coming into contact with the body itself quite easily.

There are a few personal belongings (daisho, clothes, shaving kit, that sort of thing) and a sealed scroll-case containing travel papers that identify the deceased as "Agasha Kinji", a Dragon bushi and messenger with duties across the Colonies, based on his access to all Imperial and Clan holdings in the Ivory Kingdoms. There is also a sealed letter addressed to Togashi Hoshi, the Dragon Clan Champion. (The text of this letter can be found in Player Handout #3, if the PCs are curious.)

If the PCs do not investigate, or have made a significant effort to alienate the guides, Orinosuke will send one of his troops to see what's wrong. The scout returns with the messenger's daisho and scroll case, but the taisei will properly leave the message untouched.

That night, after the expedition makes camp, Rajnish will try to convince Asmita to grab some valuables from the Rokugani and flee. This attempt will not be successful if the PCs have managed to reduce the tension in the group, but if they have not, he will do so. Once again, the local's familiarity with the area and their far greater experience with the environment allows the disgruntled guide to escape without detection. This time, as Asmita chooses to take some of the more specialized tools that the Legion brought along (as more valuable for resale), Akio and Orinosuke will be far angrier about the theft.

Whether or not Asmita leaves, the group is getting much closer to its destination – Kiva will inform the PCs of this in his usual taciturn fashion when the expedition breaks camp the next morning.

The eldest of the guides approaches, and his greeting is translated, "The village of Lavinagar, the closest to the temple you're seeking, is about another day's

journey from here. It'll be harder travel. We're in the mountains proper now."

Part Two: Theft in the Mountains

As the expedition nears their destination, they face several more physical challenges. The journey has not been entirely comfortable to this point, but the change in the situation and the sudden press of events require these particular challenges to be rolled out in order to track consequences and expended resources.

There are any number of alternate things the players may attempt to mitigate these challenges; in general, clever use of equipment or magic can give each PC a Free Raise on their rolls. More than that is at the GM's discretion, though in the final challenge, Rajnish's theft should be carefully-enough planned to still happen. (The greater question there is if the PCs realize it is intentional or not.)

This sequence is physically taxing for the expedition, and by this point it should be noted whether the PCs are wearing armor or not – they are entirely within their rights to do so, if they have it, and the majority of the Legion bushi are prepared for combat. Any appropriate TN penalties for the following rolls should be applied.

Rolling hills and rocky cliffs rise steadily to the northwest, and the terrain becomes more difficult as you travel through the day. The daily rainstorms no longer have the same driving force that the greater winds in the lowlands gave them, but the cooler air makes up for that with a different discomfort. These mountains are not as stark as the Dragon mountains in Rokugan, being neither quite as high or as devoid of vegetation, but the wet ground and regular broken tree limbs make your progress difficult.

Through the first several hours of the day, the PCs are scrambling up a series of relatively narrow passes. Their horses can make the climb, but riding puts the animals in great danger of a broken leg. The NPCs are largely managing on their own, though the monks in particular are struggling with the pack mules.

Each PC must roll **Athletics (Climbing) / Strength** at a TN of 20. Raises may be called on this roll to earn an additional "success" per Raise; the group must gain a number of successes equal to the

number of PCs in the group. If they do not, then every PC that failed their roll takes 12 Wounds. Additionally, one NPC member of the group is lost for every success they are short. (This will increase the TN of any rolls to talk Orinosuke down later.)

PCs who ride may use their Horsemanship Skill in place of Athletics, and they use their steed's Strength – but if they fail their roll, or if the group does not accumulate enough successes, the horse stumbles and breaks a leg. Short of ridiculously powerful magic (the Mastery Level 6 Peace of the Kami spell) combined with a TN 40 **Animal Handling / Awareness** roll, the animal's pain and panic will require putting it down before it does further injury to itself and others.

After a difficult four hours of climbing, you find yourselves facing a wide chasm spanned by a swinging rope bridge. Perhaps five hundred feet long, the wooden slats that make up the deck of the bridge seem sturdy enough, and the structure is wide enough for your horses, but the thick ropes sway in an unsettling fashion as you step onto it. A chill wind wails across the canyon, and the prospect of keeping your balance while you cross the abyss causes several of your companions to grasp the ropes with white-knuckled grips.

Each PC must roll **Athletics / Agility** at a TN of 25; once again, they need to accumulate a number of successful rolls or Raises to avoid unpleasant consequences, but they need a number equal to the number of PCs times 1.5. (Six PCs = 9 successful rolls and Raises) If they do not accumulate enough success, then each PC who failed their roll loses a point of Void and takes 8 Wounds (if they have no Void remaining, they are Fatigued). Additionally, if more than one of the PCs failed the roll, one of the pack mules is lost over the side. Each PC must roll to resist **Fear 3** (TN 20) as the terrified screams of the animal and its handler abruptly cease in the canyon far below. Failure on this Fear check causes the PCs to suffer the appropriate penalty until they rest that night.

Again, riders may guide their steeds, though this time they use their own Agility Trait and Horsemanship Skill. Failure on this roll is not so dire, though the horse may panic if the pack mule falls – horses being ridden must also make the Fear roll, though those not being ridden can be calmed automatically. If the horse fails their Fear roll, their rider may roll **Animal**

Handling / Awareness at a TN of 30 to calm them (or substitute **Horsemanship**, but without exploding 10s). If this fails as well, then the horse goes over the side – a PC may throw themselves clear with an **Athletics / Reflexes** roll at a TN of 20, but if they fail this final roll, they are killed upon impact with the ground far below.

Finally, your end is coming into sight as the sun drops behind the mountain ahead of you. In the shadow of the peak, you see firelights flickering to life across the valley: a village lies on the other side, only a few more hours away. Unfortunately, a flooded river stands between you and rest. Your guides indicate a safe place to ford the raging torrent, where the water will not rise much higher than your chest, or your mount's saddle... but the water is a hundred yards wide, and the day has been taxing already.

Each PC must roll **Athletics** or **Horsemanship / Stamina** at a TN of 20; this roll does not have added complications for mounted PCs, but they must use their own Stamina Trait. Like before, the group must accumulate successes – this time equal to twice the number of PCs. If the group does not gain enough successes, any PCs who failed are washed downstream, become **Fatigued**, and take 8k3 Wounds. (This does mean that if the group does not gain enough successes but every PC succeeded at their own roll, they do not suffer this consequence.)

You wearily come up onto shore, the rest of the group following through the flood. At the rear of the group, a wave washes over Rajnish and carries him into one of the pack mules. Before you can blink, the surging water carries the guide and the animal off into the river. Orinosuke, shocked, cries out, “No! The offering!”

If the group did not earn enough successes, they are distracted by their own efforts and do not immediately realize that Rajnish is intentionally stealing the offering.

If they did succeed fully, however, they have enough time to recognize that he pushed himself into the animal and clutched at it deliberately before the water pulled them away.

In either case, the Legion will move as quickly as they can (which is not all that quick, after the day's activity) to follow. Orinosuke orders some troops

back to the other side of the river in case the mule, the guide, or the cargo wash up on that side, and sets off to try to find the offering.

The PCs may not realize exactly what is in the package that has Orinosuke so worried, and he will explain that it is an offering to the Tomb of Shinsei if it seems required in order to motivate them. If the PCs tell him that Rajnish acted intentionally, he will lose his temper and have the other guide(s) taken into custody.

Finding Rajnish is essentially impossible in the fading light, though if the PCs can succeed at a TN 30 **Hunting (Tracking) / Perception** roll, they will find his tracks leading toward the village they were heading for. Once the trail gets to the town itself, however, it will be lost in the general traffic. If no PC can make this roll, Kavi can do so readily – or one of the Legion troops, rather less readily – and direct the part to the village.

Village of Lavinagar

Lavinagar is a moderately-sized village by Rokugani standards, having about three hundred inhabitants. There is an inn and a few businesses in the market square at the center of town, where many of the locals are gathered at the end of the day's labors.

Unfortunately for them, they have no local kshatriya or other defenders capable of standing up to the samurai. Whether the PCs told him that Rajnish was acting deliberately or not, when the tracks led to the village instead of back to the expedition, Orinosuke believes that the guide has stolen the only thing of monetary value from the expedition and is very close to ordering his troops to attack. While vastly outnumbered, this is certain to be a bloodbath.

War Crimes

The PCs can convince Orinosuke to hold off while they investigate or attempt to recover the offering themselves. This does require a Social Skill Roll at a TN of 20 (he isn't truly a brutal man, but it's been a long, stressful day); this TN is increased to 30 if any troops were lost in the mountains.

If the PCs fail this, or do not attempt it, the Legion storms into the village and begins to kill the peasants they find. Aruna (see below) will, in turn, kill several Legionnaires with her bow while covering a retreat of

as many of the villagers as she can manage. During the next hour or so, there will be intermittent fighting that PCs can take part in – no rolls are necessary for this brutal display. Eventually, Aruna will call for a parley and offer the head of Rajnish as well as the booty he was trying to make off with. The Legion will then make camp a bit away from the village and prepare for the final leg of their journey to the “Tomb of Shinsei”.

This outcome results in a loss of D2 Honor for all PCs, and an additional loss of D-3 Honor for any PCs who take part in the slaughter. (“D-3” means that the PC loses Honor equal to their Honor Rank plus 3.)

Investigation/Negotiation

Assuming the PCs approach the town with some form of discretion, they will be regarded with curiosity (and some trepidation due to the general reputation samurai have in the area) by the locals, but the Ivinda will cooperate to the extent they are capable. The largest collection of locals is in the market square, around the inn and a local drinking establishment – assuming the PCs approach with any intent to speak with the locals, they will be directed to talk with “Aruna”.

As noted above, there is no local kshatriya in residence, but an itinerant noblewoman by the name of Aruna is passing through town. (She has just come from the temple, and received a message that is leading her to Balishnimpur.) A skilled archer and warrior, despite the fact that the Ivinda have fewer traditions of female fighters than Rokugan does, Aruna is a clever woman in her early twenties. Clad in loose-fitting clothes meant for action over artistry, and never far from her bow, she speaks easily with the samurai in their own language.

Aruna is actually a fairly important young woman, being of an ancient lineage fallen on somewhat hard times. In the interest of preventing bloodshed, she is entirely willing to assist and cooperate with them in recovering their property. If asked, she will somewhat ironically mention that her “cousin Pari” demonstrated the dangers of conflict with Rokugan. (Pari was the Ivinda nobleman that orchestrated an uprising in Balishnimpur a few years before; Aruna has no ill will toward Rokugan as a result of what she views as Pari’s disastrous mistake, but she is also of the bloodline of the last Maharajah of the Ivory

Kingdoms and wants to smooth relations between the countries as much as possible.)

Ultimately, this is not intended to be a particularly difficult investigation. Rajnish has a contact in town, a merchant that acts as a fence. He also has a cousin that owns a livestock farm on the edge of the village. He can be tracked down to either location with a minimal amount of effort. Any confrontation with the locals should not be resolved with a full combat scene, just immediately declare that the PCs kill any peasant they attack. The most basic of Intimidation is sufficient to get full cooperation, and Rajnish is utterly uninterested in confrontation – he will gladly give up the loot when found, and do his best to run and hide (the box is heavy enough that he absolutely leaves it behind).

General Information

The locals know that the temple is a holy site and that it has no traps or other dangers – just a small group of priests and gurus that take care of the place. They call it the “Pathiknirvana Stupa”, and the followers of Lakshipura Gaudhama (also called Shakyamuni, Shinsei, Mekhem, Sayid-art, the Little Teacher, and too many other names to include) maintain it as a monument to his teachings. The followers of the Eight-fold Path, as they are known, are largely respected by the polytheistic majority of the Ivory Kingdoms for their dedication to their philosophy, but relatively few Ivinda follow it.

The Pathiknirvana Stupa is regarded as the location that Shinsei found Nirvana at the end of his life; some believe that he transcended the physical realm and moved into the Heavens, while others simply believe he died there. Regardless, none of the locals think of the place as a tomb of any sort, though there is a monument there to the end of his journey.

Part Three: Shinsei on the Road

The next morning (after recovering the expedition’s offering one way or another), the group will head up the mountain path to the temple that Orinosuke, Masae, and Takuya believe to be the Tomb of Shinsei. At long last, near to his goal, Orinosuke will make his hopes of finding something tangible to use against the Shadowlands clear to the PCs (if he has not already done so).

As you climb the mountain path, it strikes you that this road is far easier than yesterday's, and you see several signs that this route is more frequently travelled than the one that led you to the village. After less than an hour of climbing, a stocky form with the strangely familiar silhouette of a jingasa atop their head comes into view, heading down the path toward you. The figure pauses for a moment, then bows in a fluid, entirely Rokugani gesture. "Ah, konichi-wa, samurai. I ask your forgiveness; I was not expecting such a party on the road." He raises a hand to remove the hat, revealing the bald head of a monk and several brightly colored tattoos across sun-darkened skin. "I am Togashi Kuzejiro, Wayfinder of the Dragon Clan. I am glad to see my messages finally made it through."

Kuzejiro is a wandering ise zumi who serves as a personal agent of the Dragon Clan Champion, arranging travel routes for the monks of his odd order and reporting back to the leaders of the clan. He does not know that none of his messages made it back to the Empire (the PCs may have found one of the three he sent back), and has heard nothing of Rokugan's affairs since before the Phoenix isolated themselves. Thus, he (and Henro, below) knows nothing about the Phoenix attempted coup, or about the Shadowlands invasion. This news will, to say the least, disturb him.

Kuzejiro will accompany the Imperial expedition to the temple, asking about the doings of the Empire and trying to get specifics on the various threats he missed in his year away from Rokugan.

When the expedition reaches the temple grounds, Orinosuke assigns his Legion to guard the path; the taisa, Seppun Masae, and Takuya accompany the PCs and the Togashi onto the path that leads to the end goal.

Pathiknirvana Stupa

The Temple is a domed structure with an arched entryway in front. The grounds are well-tended, with trees lining a winding path that leads around the entire building before coming to the door. A light floral scent hangs in the air from the garden-like exterior, and a low chant can be heard coming from the archway. Eight stone plinths carved with the swirling letters of the Ivindi language stand on the

path, with platforms to meditate upon the lessons written on each. Acting as a guide, Kuzejiro describes each of the steps of the Eightfold Path, as the teachings of Shinsei are known here. "A pilgrim must pass each of these teachings, and may devote thought to the lessons they may learn from them."

Kuzejiro is entirely willing to give a lesson on theology, but recognizes that the samurai are likely more interested in getting to the heart of the temple. (A basic translation of the Eightfold Path of Buddhism would be: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.)

Inside, there is a large golden statue of a man lying on his side. The figure faces west, away from the main entrance, and four monks kneel at the four cardinal directions around the granite slab that holds the statue, chanting in a low drone.

Kuzejiro will take the opportunity to inform the PCs of some of the history of the location; while Shinsei did die in this location, he was cremated and most of his remains were dispersed as holy relics to various locations through the Ivory Kingdoms.

The ise zumi explains, his voice low and respectful. "There is no grave, no tomb, and no artifacts here. It is simply a temple to his memory, and a place that records his wisdom to share with those who come after. There is value in that, but perhaps not in the way you wish. Something else, however..."

The monk from the Four Temples breaks in, uncharacteristically blunt. "Where is Henro? I have a message for him."

Kuzejiro glances briefly at the monk in surprise, then glances almost involuntarily at the man kneeling by the head of the statue. "How did you...?"

Takuya interrupts again, his hand rising to his forehead. "I have.. a message. The Brotherhood – the Empire – needs him to return... he must help, he must stand..." His face goes pale, and sweat beads on his skin. "He must stand... against the Dark. No. None shall defy the Dark Lord! NO!!" He cries out in confusion and terror, green veins spreading from eyes suddenly pitch black. "Samurai! Stop me!!" His voice cracks, as obsidian talons erupt from his

fingers and he locks his gaze upon the kneeling chanter, preparing to strike.

The PCs have an opportunity to do something here, though if they ready weapons, Togashi Kuzejiro shouts “Do not shed that blood in the temple! Get him outside!”

This can be run as a combat, but it should not be necessary – the only antagonist is Takuya, who is not in a state of mind to attack with calculation and has no access even to kiho, though his Shadowlands Taint does fuel his violence. In general, if the PCs swing swords on him while in the temple, they suffer a minor imbalance for defiling the holy place. If the PCs are paralyzed by being unable to attack using their normal means of combat, Kuzejiro will grab Takuya and drag him out of the temple.

The distinction here is whether the PCs choose to act immediately, or if they stop to think about what they’re doing. In that case, Takuya has an opening to slash at Henro, though Kuzejiro again will grab the aggressor and try to get the PCs to help him get the Tainted monk out of the temple.

Conclusion

When the Tainted assassin is dealt with, Henro joins the PCs. Kuzejiro introduces him as “the Rahula, descendent of Shinsei, known as Henro for now.”

Henro is a fairly nondescript monk in his early twenties, somewhat younger than many of the PCs, and has a common appearance for many samurai in the colonies – he clearly has heritage from both the Ivory Kingdoms and Rokugan.

Whether he was injured or not, Henro will gravely thank the PCs. Assuming they give any kind of explanation (or gave one to Kuzejiro, who will pass it on) about the dangers threatening the Empire now, he will decide to return to Rokugan.

“You are welcome here, samurai, though I do not know that I can provide what you are looking for. I have heard no call to return to the Empire, as I understand my bloodline experiences in times of need. But then, it may be possible that this,” he glances at Takuya with concern and sighs, “is the Heavens’ way of sending that call. When the balance between the Realms is endangered, I have a duty to assist in restoring it. But it sounds as though this

assault is the action of a mortal man. One touched by Jigoku and Tengoku both, but still a mortal man – one whom Fortune favors, we are taught. Perhaps that is why the Celestial Heavens have yet to take action.” He nods slowly. “But I must be ready when they do; or, failing that, do what I can to help with or without the blessings of the Heavens.”

If the PCs capture him alive, Takuya is dangerously unbalanced, torn between his actual loyalty to the Empire and his devotion to the Brotherhood on one side, and beset by mystical control from Taint he did not know he had on the other. He will explain that he feels a compulsion to prevent the heir of Shinsei from returning to Rokugan, but he doesn’t want to follow through on that and will desperately beg the PCs to stop him permanently. “You must do whatever it takes to stop me; let me die as a loyal servant of the Brotherhood and not the monster that crawls through my veins...”

Henro will return to the Empire with the expedition; there is some disappointment from Orinosuke that no actual weapons were discovered (though the scholars and priests in the group dismiss any complaints as somewhat childish). Seppun Masae asks the PCs to be discreet about the events and the return of the heir of Shinsei, while acknowledging that a secret known to a group as large as the expedition cannot be kept for long.

The expedition will return to Rokugan as soon as it can, though the PCs will likely have a few more matters to tend to in Balishnimpur...

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

Surviving the Module:	1 EXP
Good Roleplaying:	+1 EXP
Recover the Offering:	+1 EXP
Save the Heir of Shinsei:	+1 EXP

Total Possible Experience:	4 EXP
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Favors

As long as the PCs get the expedition to the Temple, they gain one Favor.

If the PCs prevent Takuya from actually injuring Henro, they gain another Favor.

Honor

If the PCs manage to avoid violence in the village and recover the offering, they gain H8 Honor.

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

For successfully escorting the expedition to the Pathiknirvana Stupa, the PCs gain G8 Glory.

Module Tracking Sheets

If the PCs make no effort to minimize bloodshed in the temple, causing the Tainted blood of a hapless assassin to defile a monument to one of Rokugan's greatest figures: they gain one Rank of Unlucky. This Disadvantage is temporary, and does not refresh once a GM uses it in a future module. (At the GM's discretion, this can be given only to those directly involved with the bloodletting.)

GM Reporting

- 1) Did the expedition engage in violence against the local Ivinda at Lavinagar?
- 2) Did the PCs prevent Takuya from injuring Henro?

GM must report this information BEFORE (2/13/2022) for it to have storyline effect

Hand-to-Hand 2, Hunting (Survival, Trailblazing) 6,
Investigation (Notice) 4, Stealth 4
Advantage: Way of the Land (Gurjara)
Vipul: Strength 4, Hand-to-Hand 4, Intimidation 4,
Swordsmanship 5, Large

Asmita: Reflexes 4, Archery 5, Athletics 5
Rajnish: Agility 4, Lore: Underworld 3, Sincerity 3,
Stealth 6, Greedy
Kavi: Intelligence 3, Willpower 4, Void 3, Archery 5,
Battle 4

Player Handout #1: News of the Empire

Player Handout #2: Letter to Togashi Hoshi

16th Day of the Month of Hida
Fifth Year of the Reign of Toturi X
1342 IC

Grandfather,

I have found it.

It is both more and less than we thought it might be. Like so much, it is not the place that is important, but the meaning that has been brought to it – and those that have brought that meaning – that is important. I can only hope that the wisdom to be gained will provide consolation to those that follow, looking for material gain – but I fear that, had they enough of the former already, they would not be seeking the latter. So they may well be doomed to disappointment.

I hope also that the storm you see on the horizon has not broken yet. There are things to be learned here that may serve the soul of the Empire, but the time it will take to teach those lessons seems precious. (Time is, perhaps, less dear to you than others, but the more I see of the world outside the mountains, the more I realize it passes the same for the rest of us – and even you cannot recover it once it is gone.)

Still, the rest of the Empire can know at least that there is something to be found here worth the looking. I will do what I can to prepare their way, and share what I have learned in the meantime when they follow.

Always in service,
Togashi Kuzejiro
Dragon Clan Wayfinder