

Tomb of Jade

**A One-Round Mid/High-Rank Adventure for
Heroes of Rokugan: Spirit of Bushido
Month of Akodo, 1143 (Early Summer)**

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Acting on information from a questionable source, you must find the final pieces of a tactical puzzle and decide which weapons to deny a powerful enemy.

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

GM's Information

THIS SCENARIO SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

Please read the scenario thoroughly before attempting to run it.

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

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

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

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

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

- Family name precedes personal name for all characters; Akodo Toturi was a member of the Akodo family with the personal name of Toturi.

- Samurai do not commonly concern themselves with money or commerce; exchanges between samurai are treated as gifts, and payments are made to peasants as though humoring the lower orders petty ways.
- An event is not truly considered to have happened without samurai witness; even criminal investigations rely entirely upon eyewitness testimony.

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

Glory and Honor Awards and Penalties

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

Reminder

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

Adjusting for Party Strength

This is a Mid-High rank adventure, and thus can involve parties of widely varying capabilities. The encounters have been optimized for a party of average Rank Four.

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

Low End Party (most/all characters Rank 3): Band of the Ox Leaders do not have Simple Action attacks. Shining Spears Akodo have Earth 2. Reduce the TN of the scouting rolls and Social Skill Rolls with the Lion gunso by 5.

High End Party (most/all characters Rank 5): The Ox ronin are wearing riding armor, increasing their Armor TN by +7 and Reduction to 4. The Ox Leaders all have Simple Action Attacks.

Adventure Summary and Background

Prominent Emerald Magistrate Doji Oharu has retired, but there are still a few loose ends that he wants to tie up before he settles into a life of quiet, if unusually extravagant, contemplation of the Tao. Toward that end, Oharu has begun a pilgrimage through the Empire, visiting various shrines and holy sites near places where the former he still maintains contacts. The PCs have been invited to join Oharu at the first stop on this tour: the Shrine to Duty in the Lion's Eiyu Province, during the annual Festival of the Wandering Hero. Also taking part in the festival are Matsu Sachiko and Akodo Hidenori, and their respective units from the Lion Armies headed towards the siege at Mukui Toshi. The atmosphere in Eiyu is tense, as a large number of peasants have been allowed to move south, fleeing the still-erupting volcano in the Dragon mountains.

When the PCs arrive, Oharu (now going by the name "Teinen") and Towa, an aged monk from the Temple to Duty, are engaged in a rather unusual game of go. Eventually, the PCs learn the real reason they were invited to join the erstwhile Magistrate on the Lion/Dragon border. A young ronin by the name of Kohuri has been working as one of Oharu's informants, collecting information on the okudate known as the Band of the Ox; he has uncovered some information

that could help the Emerald Magistrates strike a major blow against the Kolat conspiracy.

Over the last few years, the Band of the Ox has been slowly moving goods and people from their former home in the Dragon Heart Plains to their current camp outside of the City of the Rich Frog, and then onward to their new headquarters somewhere in the Spine of the World Mountains. Unknown to most of Rokugan, this band of ronin is almost entirely made up of members of the Kolat who managed to escape the purges led by the Kami Shinjo and Emperor Toturi I. The band's leader, a former Unicorn named Morito, is using the peasants fleeing the Dragon and Phoenix lands as a cover for moving the last of his people and some very important Kolat artifacts to a safer location. Two of the Kolat Masters are accompanying this final caravan, though they have very different reasons for doing so. The aging but powerful Master Cloud is very tightly bound to the Oni's Eye, no longer able to survive being separated from it for very long, while the Shadow-corrupted Master Jade is actually held prisoner within the second artifact, a large crystalline boulder.

The PCs will have to convince the Lion to assist them in seizing the two artifacts, as well as determine the best location to launch their assault and the tactics they will use. Who the PCs trust with their planning matters as well, as the Kolat have plans, and spies, of their own.

Character Notes

Check the PCs' character sheets for the following:

- Shikkui's Pendant from Prison of Earth
- Military Social Positions
- The GM should note each PCs' Willpower

Introduction

It is early summer, when the clans are mobilizing for war and the first few clashes of arms have already begun. While they are preparing for whatever duties the season will bring them to, the PCs each receive a letter (Player Handout #1) from the former Emerald Magistrate Doji Oharu, now simply a monk called "Teinen." It does not take a great deal of political acumen to realize that the matter is likely to be important, and their lords will grant them leave to assist the monk.

The letter from the monk Teinen, who was once the Emerald Magistrate Doji Oharu, was unexpected; his invitation to join him in Lion lands was also unusual, given the Lion's current military policies. The Village of the Reinstated Hero sits near the Lion's border with

the Dragon, and is not too far away from where forces have started to gather on the Dragon Heart Plain. There is little to differentiate this town from any other Lion holding, save for the statue of a young man that stands outside a moderately-sized temple dedicated to the tenet of Duty and the large tent city outside the low, stone walls.

There are actually three separate groups of tents surrounding the village. Two of them are rigidly ordered and maintained in the fashion of the Lion armies, and the insignia for two separate divisions are easily visible. **Lore: Heraldry / Intelligence** (TN 20) or 2 Ranks in **Lore: Lion** reveals these units to be single squads from the Matsu Fifth Legion and Thirty-Second Akodo. Both of these units are comprised mostly of Lion Elite Spearmen, and each comprise roughly twenty troops. The third encampment seems to be a hastily constructed home for displaced peasants.

Dragon and Lion characters are aware that these peasants are refugees from the Dragon lands to the north, who have been driven from their homes by the eruption of the volcano known as the Wrath of the Kami in the central Agasha lands. The volcano is no longer sending plumes of ash and brimstone into the sky, but the lava field at the base of the mountains continues to inch closer to more settled areas.

You arrive at the Inn of the Hero at mid-morning on the appointed day and are unsurprised to find that you were not the only samurai to have been invited. The Inn is largely empty at this time of day, but Oharu is nowhere to be seen. Inquiring with the innkeeper earns a nod towards one of the private rooms at the back of the common area. Approaching the door, you find it blocked by an apologetic servant, who bows deeply and speaks in quiet, respectful tones.

“I am sorry, samurai-samas, but Teinen-sensei and one of the local monks have just begun a game of go, and do not wish to be interrupted. You are welcome to enter and watch, but they ask that you remain silent. If you would rather explore the village until Teinen-sensei is ready for you, please feel free. One of the servants will be sent to find you once the game has concluded.”

Reinstated Hero Village is a relatively small town, but there are several places of interest nearby, the most obvious being the Shrine to Chugo. PCs may also choose to relax in the common room of the Inn of the Hero, visit the small marketplace, or explore the various encampments outside the walls.

The Game

You are led into the room, which opens into a small courtyard. Under a silk canopy, the retired Doji Oharu and an older monk sit facing each other across an exquisitely crafted go board. The board is decorated with a map of Rokugan, with the Fortunes of the Four Winds depicted at the corners. Neither man looks up as the servant directs you to a low table overlooking the garden where the two monks are playing. From here, you can observe the game as it is being played without distracting the players.

If any of the players have Shikkui’s Pendant (from Prison of Earth), the older monk will motion the servant over, and whisper something. The servant returns, bowing very deeply, and saying very quietly, *“I am very sorry samurai-sama, but Towa has asked that you not be present during the game, as he finds your presence to be a distraction. He apologizes, and promises to explain later.”*

The older monk is playing black, and each man takes a long, thoughtful draw on his pipe between plays. The first hour of the game seems uneventful, until the monk begins making several unorthodox moves, as evidenced by the momentary confusion that crosses Teinen’s face.

The monk has started playing stones using his left hand, and alternating hands each turn. PCs with any Ranks in **Games: Go** should consider this to be highly unusual, as typically stones are played with the right hand only. Players with 3 or more Ranks in the Skill or who roll **Games: Go / Intelligence** (TN 25) can get a better picture of what is happening: Up until this point, the monk has been playing a very traditional game, taking several early turns to set up moves that may not pay off until later. The stones he lays with his right hand are continuing this strategy. With his left hand, however, the monk is using a more aggressive style that grabs territory as quickly as possible while disrupting Oharu’s strategy, but also interferes with the plans of the right-hand stones.

The game will take several hours, and while fascinating for those who know the game, it does not make for particularly engaging role-playing. If all of the PCs stay to watch, the story can be taken up in the **The Game (Cont.)** section; otherwise, the GM should deal with those characters who are exploring the town.

Rumors

PCs visiting any of the following locations, except the Inn itself, may attempt to learn some of the local gossip with a **Courtier (Gossip)/Awareness** roll; the TN is 10, with one additional piece of information for every additional +10. Dragon or Akodo PCs get a Free Raise on Gossip rolls in the Refugee Camp or Marketplace. Akodo or Matsu PCs get a Free Raise in their respective camps. There are other rumors available in specific locations as well.

TN 10: One of the peasants reveals that the men and older boys from the refugee camp have either been recruited to help dig trenches in the Dragon lands to direct the lava flow away from the more populated areas, or they are among the peasant levees defending the Dragon Heart Plain, leaving mostly women, children, and a few old or disabled men here.

TN 20: When the Lion Clan took Toshi Ranbo from the Crane last summer, the city and the lands around it were almost destroyed by the battle. This is why the Dragon refugees have been relocated this far to the west, as the Lion have tried to disperse the influx across multiple provinces.

TN 30: There are a number of conflicting rumors concerning the eruption of the volcano in the Dragon lands. Everything from a curse from the Phoenix to the wrath of the Celestial Heaven is bandied about, as the refugees try to rationalize the disaster that has devastated their lives.

TN 40: The monk Towa has been a monk at Chugo Seido for seven years, where he has counseled visitors from every clan. Though he has a reputation locally as a wise and learned advisor, he has never sought fame in the wider Empire. Despite this, visiting samurai from across Rokugan often come to listen to his advice. He is always quiet about the matters brought to him, which has earned him a reputation for discretion as well as wisdom.

Inn of the Hero

The Inn of the Hero is well-maintained and elegant in the subtle fashion of all high-end Lion establishments. Currently, the common room is almost empty, but several Akodo bushi are seated together, enjoying an early lunch. They make no sign of having noticed your arrival.

Akodo Hidenori, the Gunso of the unit from the Thirty-Second Akodo is here, along with a few of his men. Lion PCs or those who have trained at Lion schools

receive a polite nod from him. If there are Scorpion (or Scorpion-trained) PCs or the PCs approach the table uninvited, Hidenori will offer polite introductions, but will then excuse himself and his men, saying they must return to their camp.

PCs who bear the Akodo family or school mons receive a warmer welcome from Hidenori, who will wave that character over, introducing his men and offering the newcomers a seat. Non-Lion PCs are then welcomed as well, unless they are Scorpion, as mentioned earlier. The other men are Akodo Jiro, Akodo Atsushi, and Akodo Masato.

Once you join the Akodo at their table, the quiet group takes on a more jovial demeanor, smiling broadly as the servants pour you drinks. After a few minutes of small talk, Akodo Hidenori takes on a slightly more serious tone, and says, "Tell me about your grandfather."

Hidenori is specifically looking to see if Akodo PCs are Pure Akodo, or if they are one of the New Akodo, created when Mirumoto Hitomi named the Lying Darkness. Few, if any, of the PCs are young enough to be the child of a New Akodo parent. Hidenori will proudly declare himself the grandson of Akodo Masatori, who fought and died at the side of Akodo Arasou during the then-Lion Champion's assault on Toshi Ranbo in 1120, and the son of Akodo Kenji, who regained his family name after serving as a ronin in the army of the Black Lion, Akodo Toturi. The other men tell similar tales, with all of the men counting parents who served with the former Emperor as ronin.

Hidenori is a very closed man, even for an Akodo, though he is genuinely attempting to be personable and welcoming (to any non-Scorpion, at least). However, PCs that speak with him may get the feeling that he is not as honorable and forthright as he appears. A standard **Lore: Bushido / Awareness** check at a TN of 30 reveals his Honor Rank to be 4; if the subjects of Imperial rule or the kami come up in some fashion (likely references to the founder of the Lion, in this context, or the loyalty of the Akodo to the Hantei), a PC may roll **Investigation / Awareness** (TN 40) to catch a flinch in his eye – well-suppressed anger. Confrontation on the subject will gain nothing but his ire.

If an Akodo PC answers that they are, in fact, one of the recently created Akodo, and do not have or remember a grandfather, Hidenori takes on a serious expression, and says, *"It is unfortunate that you do not have ancestors of your own to ask for guidance, [Clan]-san. I wish you well on your journey."* Following this, Akodo Masato clears his throat and declares that it is time for

the men to return to camp, and the four samurai excuse themselves.

Chugo Seido

This large pagoda houses a bronze statue of a wounded young samurai gripping his katana in both hands and staring menacingly down at an unseen opponent. Behind the statue is a shrine centered around the funerary urn and daisho of Ikoma Teidei, a hero of the Lion Clan and the man depicted in the statue. The floor of the temple is littered with sheets and scraps of paper, and even the occasional sealed scroll.

PCs who roll **Lore: Theology**, **Lore: Bushido**, or **Lore: Lion / Intelligence** (TN 20) or those with 2 or more Ranks in those skills know the following story: *Ikoma Teidei's daimyo was assassinated, making Teidei a ronin. For seven years, the Ikoma searched for the man responsible for his lord's death, eventually tracking the assassin to what would become Wandering Hero Village, and cut the other Lion down in a duel. Unfortunately, Teidei had been wounded by the murderer's poisoned blade, but was able to resist death until the Ikoma daimyo learned of Teidei's deeds and reinstated him as an Ikoma. His lord avenged and name restored, Teidei performed seppuku and joined his daimyo in the afterlife. The shrine was built to commemorate these events, and the annual Festival of the Wandering Hero is held here in the early autumn.*

Additionally, they know that the bits of paper scattered on the floor are typically haiku or other writings centered on their view of Bushido's tenet of Duty. Investigating the paper or asking one of the monk attendants will also reveal this information. A PC who wishes to follow this tradition may do so, rolling **Lore: Bushido / Void**. Characters who actually create a haiku or write an example of Duty from their perspective may be awarded a Free Raise on the roll. Make a note of any PCs who achieve a TN of **35 or higher**. PCs who visit the Shrine later may also pay their respects in this fashion.

If the PCs visit the Shrine during the Go game, they will meet up with an old acquaintance, Matsu Sachiko. Sachiko was the Lion contestant in the ill-fated Topaz Tournament several years ago (module SoB00: *New Beginnings*), and has since been promoted to the rank of Gunso, and given command of the Matsu unit camped outside the village. She will gladly ask any PCs who took part in her rescue how they have fared in the years since they met, and will engage in small talk briefly before excusing herself to resume her duties.

It should be noted that there are no sohei present at this shrine who will be willing to assist with the PCs mission. Their duty is to defend the shrine, and nothing else can distract them from that responsibility.

Potential Rumor: TN 30: Perhaps leery of the difficulties caused by the last time the Brotherhood stepped in to help the lower orders, the monks of the shrine are being very careful with the assistance they are lending the refugees. The ill and wounded have been tended, but the Brotherhood have actively encouraged many of the dispossessed peasants to find service with the Lion Clan.

The Lion Encampments

The Lion camps are laid out in a very similar fashion, with the only real differences coming from how the troops entertain themselves when they are off duty.

Matsu Camp

The banner signifying this camp as this belonging to the Matsu 5th Legion also bears an unusual circular mon consisting of a stylized lion breaking out of a cage. Like most of the Matsu forces, this squad from the 5th Matsu Legion is primarily female, and there are more than a dozen women running through various spear kata and drilling with sankaku-yari.

(Sankaku-yari are spears that have a triangular cross-section, designed to pierce the armor of mounted troops; it has no "edge" like other yari, but leaves vicious wounds that are difficult to treat.) The Matsu troops will continue with their drills, unless a Crane, Unicorn, or Phoenix PC is approaching. In this instance, one of the women will issue an abrupt shout, dismissing the squad and striding towards the PCs. If there are none of the previously mentioned clans represented by the PCs, she will approach the PCs while the drills continue. (She will not be so crass as to accuse a samurai of spying, but she is also uninterested in allowing her clan's most common enemies easy observation of her unit's training and tactics.)

"Greetings, samurai," The clearly irritated woman croaks, her voice ruined by a vicious scar across her neck. "I am Matsu Haruka, nikutai of the Broken Cage Spears. Who are you, and how may I help you on your way?"

During the go game, Haruka is in charge of the camp while Matsu Sachiko is at the shrine. If the PCs have any questions, she will deflect them quickly, saying that they should return later to speak to her commanding officer, Matsu Sachiko.

Akodo Camp

A pair of crossed spears carved from crystal is reflected on this unit's war banner, and each of the dozen or so soldiers in this unit wear the Akodo family mon on their armor. There is a casual camaraderie in the camp, with several samurai sparring or playing games of go or shogi against each other. When you arrive, several of the soldiers step forward to greet you.

Two men, Akodo Madoka and Akodo Yoshito, and a woman named Akodo Monori, introduce themselves to the PCs as members of the Shining Spears unit of the Akodo 32nd Legion. These Lion are much friendlier than those in the Matsu camp, inviting the PCs to join them in sparing or gaming regardless of the clans represented. However, there is an obvious edge of distrust to any encounter with Scorpion PCs. If a PC agrees to play Go or Shogi, their opponent will suggest a puzzle challenge, rather than a straight game. The object of these puzzles is to see if the defending player can win the game from a predetermined, and unfriendly, set up. Monori will ask interested PCs for their *dan* (use Skill Rank), and will set up a puzzle at the appropriate difficulty. Each participant will have their own puzzle to solve, and will be paired up with an Akodo NPC of similar skill. PCs should roll **Games: Go** or **Games: Shogi / Intelligence** vs a TN of (10+5x Skill Rank). Scorpion PCs will receive a puzzle that has a difficulty one step higher than their *dan* would indicate, but do not get an extra point for succeeding. PCs earn 1 Point per *dan* for completing the puzzle, and may call Raises to complete the puzzle faster than their opponent, with each Raise counting as an additional Point. The winner will be the one who finishes the hardest puzzle the fastest (the most Points), and will be awarded a Go stone or Shogi tile crafted from clear crystal. If only one PC attempts this challenge, they will be paired against an Akodo of equal skill.

PCs may wish to check for gossip here, but only an exceptionally high roll will offer anything other than what they may have already heard, and they do not have this chance if they come back after the Go game at the Inn. **Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness TN (40)** catches a brief snippet of conversation between two bushi playing shogi: *"I guess now we're just waiting for word from the Black Lion."* If a PC wishes to follow up on this statement or ask the Akodo what he means, the man will respond that no one said anything about the Black Lion, and the other Akodo will agree that the PC must be mistaken. Pushing it further could result in the PC being challenged to a duel, which will be settled immediately. If the PC wins, both Lion will insist on cleansing their honor rather than explaining

further (*"Doing so would force me to betray the tenet of Honesty."*), and Akodo Hidenori will allow it, having returned to camp during the duel. This will also mean that the PCs will automatically fail if they try to recruit the Akodo later.

Akodo Hidenori and his command staff will be returning to the camp just as the players leave. Hidenori offers Akodo PCs a friendly nod in passing, while Scorpion PCs receive icy stares from the four men. Otherwise they will ignore the visitors.

The Refugee Camp

This camp has grown up along both sides of the road leading into town from the south. You notice a marked difference in the conditions of the various tents and huts, based on which side of the road they happen to be on. The eastern camp is laid out in an orderly fashion with well maintained paths and a latrine stationed well away from the tents and huts, while the western camp is haphazard and dirty.

A quick look around the divided camp reveals some clues to this discrepancy: a pair of Akodo bushi patrol the eastern side of the road, while a pair of Matsu patrol the western side. The Matsu patrol barely acknowledges the people they are tasked with protecting, and the peasants scurry out of their way to avoid the two women. This is not all that unusual in the Lion lands, as the Lion have a well-earned reputation for treating their peasants roughly. On the other hand, the Akodo stop and speak with the refugees, and one of them bends to pick up an item dropped by one of the peasants.

Another thing that becomes obvious almost immediately is that women and children make up the majority of the camp's population, with only a few elderly men present. If the PCs look for or ask to see the person who is in charge of the refugee camp, they will eventually be pointed to Fugo, in the marketplace.

Potential Rumor: TN 30: A group of peasants seem excited about someone claiming to be the "son of the Black Lion" coming to bring peace to the Empire by freeing the Empress from the control of Kakita Toshiken and keeping her safe from Hantei Okucheo.

The Marketplace

During the early autumn Festival of the Reinstated Hero, the village's marketplace is a bustling center of activity away from the main festivities at the Shrine to Chugo. Now, however, there are only a handful of stalls, and most of those are selling tools and common food-stuffs. One merchant, however, has a table full

of a wide assortment of personal items, like finely carved walking sticks and ornate tsuba. There are even a couple sets of well-crafted ashigaru armor.

There are dozens of items on display on Fugo's table, and PCs are able to find most of the items listed in their daimyo's write-up. Most show obvious signs of use, though all are in excellent condition despite the patina of age that each item carries. Based on the imagery depicted on several of the items, it is clear that they were created by Dragon craftsman. If asked, the merchant, Fugo, will lower his eyes sadly before explaining, *"Many of the people who fled the Wrath of the Kami brought with them items of great personal value, but of limited use to their lives here. I offer them goods and material in exchange for these items, with the understanding that I will be selling the items at a reasonable price to cover my costs."*

Rolling **Commerce / Intelligence** (TN 20) reveals the prices to be fair for used items, but there's no way to know if the merchant is offering a fair price to the people selling their belongings. **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** or **Intimidation / Awareness** (TN 25) will encourage Fugo to confess that he's making a tidy profit from each sale, but he has not come anywhere near recovering his investment.

PCs may attempt to find gossip here, but they will not be able to overhear the peasants talking about the Black Lion. They will get the following information, instead:

Potential Gossip TN 30: In the year since coming to the village, Fugo has earned a reputation among the local villagers and the refugees of being very fair, and uses most of his profits to assist people fleeing war or natural disaster. The fact that he's occasionally seen carrying on conversations with himself is just an unusual quirk.

If PCs ask Fugo about himself or his past, he will admit that he fled to the Lion lands after his home at Face of the West Castle was destroyed and his wife was murdered by mounted raiders last year. He decided that if anyone had experience fighting bandits on horseback, it was the Lion. If they ask him about the rumors that he talks to himself, he will redden with humiliation, and will confess to speaking with his wife when something reminds him of her.

A generous samurai may make a 'Donation' to the relief effort, but it will take an offer of 15 Koku to convince Fugo to return all of the items to their previous owners.

The Game (cont)

The game eventually reaches a very unorthodox conclusion. The monk's bizarre two-handed playing continued until the left-handed strategy caused his right-hand defense to completely collapse, and he switched to primarily laying stones with his left hand. On the rare turn where he does make a right-handed play, the placement of that stone inevitably leads to Teinen claiming territory from the monk's left. The game ends with Teinen claiming a board almost completely devoid of black stones, and the two men stand before exchanging bows.

"Thank you, Towa, for the opportunity to play such a challenging game."

"It was my pleasure, Teinen. Please, see to your guests," the monk motions towards the table where you are seated, before moving towards the door to the common room, leaning heavily on a carved wooden cane of his own.

PCs may make a number of rolls to get more information from what they may have just witnessed.

- **Games: Go / Intelligence** (TN 20): The monk's aggressive offensive play eventually turns to a reactionary defense as Oharu takes advantage of the openings presented by Towa's occasional right-hand plays. Interestingly, the few black stones remaining on the board at the end of the game were placed using his right-hand. (A second roll, using Awareness as the Trait and a TN of 40 will reveal that this was entirely deliberate, to make some sort of point to Teinen, and that the message was received.)
- **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 20): A stalking tiger wraps it's way around Towa's walking stick, with the big cat's striped tail forming the handle.
- PCs who specifically study the board may roll **Investigation / Perception** (TN 40) to note that there are no more than half-a-dozen places on the board where black stones remain; comparing them to the map that makes up the board, the largest collection sits atop a point between the Scorpion and Unicorn lands, in the mountains just north of the Shinomen Mori.
- **Etiquette / Intelligence** (TN 15): The two men do not use honorifics when speaking to each other, a reminder than Doji Oharu is now simply Teinen the monk, whatever rank he formerly held.

Teinen will politely ask for servants to be sent to summon the other PCs. While that is happening, if a PC was asked to leave the game by Towa, the older

monk will wait for them in the Inn's common room, and speak with them quietly before they enter the meeting with Teinen.

"I apologize for what happened earlier, samurai-sama. I am Towa, from Chugo Seido, and I believe you are carrying something that you may not fully understand. A small, opaque crystal, perhaps? About the size of your thumb. I would like to see it, if you don't mind." He is describing the pendant most likely given to the PC by Gennai Shikkui in SoB13: *Prison of Earth*. If the PC agrees to let him see it, he will continue. *"Do you know what this stone is, [clan]-san?"* If they do not let him see the pendant, or indicate that they do know what it is (or are one of the few players to have received an Oni's Tear from someone other than Shikkui) the monk will bow knowingly, saying, *"Be careful, samurai. I am sorry to have troubled you."*

If they indicate that they do not know what it is, or ask for more information, Towa will offer the following explanation. *"In my previous life, I carried a stone much like this one for so long that I can... hear one when it gets close. How did you come to possess this pendant?"*

After you explain how the pendant came into your possession, Towa nods, and responds with a warning. "I do not know this Gennai Shikkui person, or what his intentions were in giving you this stone, but you should know that there are others who can use the magic it contains to spy on you. It is likely that they are listening even now. Do with it what you will, but I suggest throwing it into the river."

Towa won't offer any further information about the pendant, saying that he has put that life behind him. He bows respectfully once more, and leaves the inn. Trying to force more information out of him is fruitless; his experience has left him largely immune to courtier Techniques, and violence is not a practical option. **IMPORTANT:** If a PC keeps the pendant on his person during the module, it will affect which combat the PCs encounter later on. There is time now for the PC to put the pendant in their room at the inn until after the meeting, but they will have to wait until after the meeting with Oharu to make a more permanent decision.

Part One: Path of Steel

Once you have all returned to the Inn of the Hero, Teinen greets each of you with a bow far lower than you remember receiving prior to his retirement. "I

thank you for accepting my invitation, and for your patience while I concluded my visit with Towa. Please be seated while we wait fo..."

The door to the private room opens once more, and a ronin enters, breathing heavily and almost falling to the floor as he bows. "Forgive my... late arrival, Oharu-sama. I had difficulties breaking away from the..."

"Nonsense, Kohuri-sama!" Teinen interrupts. "Take a moment to catch your breath while I explain your mission to the samurai who will hopefully be acting on your report." The players may have met Kohuri in module SoB00: *New Beginnings* as the ronin contestant in the Topaz Championship. These characters will receive a friendly, if exhausted smile from the ronin as Teinen continues with his introductions.

"This man is Kohuri. He came to my attention following the events at Tsuma several years ago, and I tasked him with gathering information about various ronin okudate for the Emerald Magistrates. About a year ago, a group of samurai provided the Emerald Champion with testimony from a dubious source that many ronin belonging to the Band of the Ox are also members of the blasphemous organization called the Kolat. Kohuri was assigned to be our man on the inside, to investigate these allegations. I hadn't heard from him until about a month ago, when he sent word that we needed to meet. That's when I arranged to meet you all here. Now, Kohuri-sama, please give us your report."

"Hai, Doj- Oharu-sa- Teinen," the ronin stammers briefly, before passing his hand over his face and continuing. "From what I have been able to gather, at least half of the Ox are members of the Kolat conspiracy. That includes most of the band's leadership, and possibly Morito himself. Over the last two years, Morito has been moving his people out of the Dragon Heart Plain, and into a camp outside the walls of the City of the Rich Frog. From there, I've heard that some members have begun moving south into the Spine of the World Mountains. They have almost completed the evacuation of the Dragon Heart Plain, with the exception of one last caravan consisting of two wagons carrying a pair of powerful artifacts, along with a mounted escort. The caravan will be passing this area on the Imperial Road sometime in the next two days."

"Unfortunately, little of this information is backed up by usable testimony, samurai, so I'm not sure how the Emerald Magistrates, or you, can act on it," Kohuri concludes.

Rolling **Lore: Law / Intelligence** (TN 20) confirms that the testimony of one ronin based on the words of other ronin is barely even hearsay in Rokugani courts. The fact that the inquiry itself hinges on the testimony of an already dubious person doesn't add to its reliability.

The PCs may roll **Lore: History, Lore: Law, or Lore Kolat / Intelligence** to recall hearing stories of the Kolat:

- **TN 15** - The Kolat was a blasphemous cult that denied the divinity of the Kami; there have been a number of purges in the years since the conspiracy was revealed, but rumors abound that the organization has made a return.
- **TN 20** - The conspiracy reached to the highest levels of power within the Empire in the years before and during the Clan War, counting several family daimyo, a revered Lion sensei and even the Unicorn Clan Champion among their number.
- **TN 30** - There were rumors that crystal weapons were supplied to the Imperial armies during the War against the Shadow by a mysterious source. It was later learned that these weapons had come from the Kolat, which led to investigations that were thought to have caused the destruction of the conspiracy.

"This is where you come in, my friends," Teinen responds, a hint of his previous manner coming through his humble façade. "I need you to intercept this caravan, capture the artifacts, and gather evidence that definitively links Morito and his Band of the Ox to the Kolat. Since my retirement, I no longer have the ability to commandeer troops from the Imperial Legions, but you may be able to convince some of the Lion units nearby to help. I will leave the intelligence gathering and battle plan to you. Now, do you have any questions for either Kohuri or me before he rushes back to his cover and I begin my meditations on Duty?"

- Who is this "dubious" source you mentioned?
"His name was Yasuki Kumo before he was cast out of the Crab for attempting to cover up his illicit activities by bribing a group of samurai. Some of you may be familiar with him. He is believed to have been killed in the raid on Face of the East Castle, but he offered testimony to several samurai, who brought it before the Emerald Champion. Unfortunately, Kumo's testimony is weak because of his actions, as well as the fact that he insists on blaming the Kolat for what happened in Friendly Traveler Village, despite contradictory testimony from the clan magistrate."

- How many people are in this caravan?
"There are two ox-wagons with drivers, and roughly twenty mounted guards. Each wagon carries a shugenja escort as well."

- How far away are they? When will they be close enough to intercept?

Kohuri digs out a map with a few marks sketched on it in charcoal. "A forced march leaving tonight will bring you into contact with the caravan tomorrow, somewhere in this area." He taps a clear portion of the map to the east. (Battlefield A) "They should pass just north of the village on the Imperial Road the day after, somewhere around here..." He indicates a much rougher section of terrain, judging by the map's original markings. (Battlefield B)

- What are the artifacts they are transporting?
"I don't know for sure, but both wagons are carrying heavy loads, and both have shugenja guards in addition to the mounted troops. Rumor has it they are powerful nemuranai. One of the wagons is covered in symbols that I do not recognize." (Questioning on this point is not going to yield results; Kohuri is a fairly clever ronin, but not familiar with esoteric subjects like binding magics or wards; he is, in fact, only barely literate.)

Once the PCs have finished their questions, Kohuri will excuse himself, saying that he has to hurry to make it to his rendezvous with the caravan. Before he leaves, however, he offers a final warning. *"Be careful. I have heard that the Ox have a contact in the area, and they may try to get word about your plans for the caravan."*

As the ronin leaves, Teinen stands. "I have spoken with Ikoma Bokkai, the daimyo of this province, and told him of my desire to begin my pilgrimage by visiting the nearby Chugo Seido. When I explained that there are quite a few criminals who would see me dead rather than living the life of quiet contemplation that I am attempting to find, he agreed that my escort should be prepared to protect me. This does mean that at I will be accompanying at least one of you at all times until this matter is resolved."

This also means that any PC who wishes to wear armor in the province or carry weapons other than their daisho must be accompanied by Oharu. Doing so otherwise causes an Honor loss equivalent to a Minor Breach of Etiquette, and will certainly attract negative attention from the local Lion. (The party can't simply choose to have their epileptic courtier hang out with the monk

while they go off to fight the Kolat. Unless they want to do it without their armor.)

“What do you say, my friends? Will you take on this task?”

Part Two: Clouded Vision

This section of the mod is largely open for the PCs to decide. Teinen has made arrangements to have use of the Inn’s private meeting room for the next several days, and tells the PCs that they may use it to make their plans.

Honor and the Law

Rokugan’s legal system complicates the situation; while the PCs may have valid information to indicate their targets are criminals, they have no proof or legally-binding testimony. The players should try to come up with a reason to interfere with the caravan, since they don’t really have any legal authority to do so. Oharu no longer has the powers of an Emerald Magistrate, and their jurisdiction here is sketchy, at best. Even if a PC is an Emerald Magistrate themselves, they cannot simply assault the caravan without cause, and are really not likely to get support from the Lion camps without something resembling a valid, legal reason. Choosing to go forward with the matter without a legal justification or attempt to find one is, at least, an abuse of power worthy of an Honor loss (one point for every Rank of Honor the character has).

This is a difficult situation, and there is no intended “right answer” that will allow the PCs license to attack the Ox without repercussions either legally or at least to their own Honor. The players should be encouraged to find a way, but it should be remembered that any deception that does not serve the purpose of saving face for another (preferably higher-ranking) samurai is dishonorable and will cause an Honor loss. Any deception at all should be distasteful for a PC with particularly high Honor (8+ Ranks). It is highly likely that such PCs will lose Honor for simply being involved in the situation; the need for expediency means that they will probably violate one tenet of Bushido or another (Courtesy, Honesty, or Compassion are all likely candidates). Essentially, the most honorable course is simply not prudent (taking steps to inform the local lord and openly declaring an intent to capture the Ox regardless of law or custom).

If the players are stumped, the PCs can roll **Lore: Law / Intelligence** to think of a few legal options:

- **TN 15:** The Ox are, obviously, ronin and have few if any rights under the law; attacking them would, however, constitute an insult to the local daimyo, as it indicates that the people traveling his province are untrustworthy and his own guards are not competent to tend to the matter. This can be gotten around by informing him of the situation formally; there is not enough time to actually do so, but sending a documented letter indicating the issue will likely give the PCs enough excuse to go on with. This will result in any theoretical spies catching wind of their plans (mail in Rokugan is not secured in any real fashion, and in fact, both the Akodo and the caravan will be able to anticipate the PCs’ actions if they do this).
- **TN 20:** PCs with a position in the Emerald Magistrates, or local Lion samurai, can justify taking an interest in a caravan traveling across the borders between clan territories. A reasonably-made request to inspect the caravan’s travel papers by a proper authority should be obeyed; however, in this instance, presenting a martial appearance (by wearing armor, for example) would prevent this from being particularly subtle.
- **TN 25:** If the ronin are themselves presenting a martial appearance by wearing armor, Lion authorities are within their rights to call them to account to keep the peace within the Lion lands. This would include members of the Lion army, such as the forces in the camps or PCs with an appropriate position.

Preparations

There is enough time left in the first day for each PC to take one of the following actions, and depending on their choices, there will potentially be three “slots” for doing things on the second day. **Recruiting Allies** or **Exploring the Village** takes one slot per location visited, while **Scouting the Battlefields** takes one to three slots, depending on how far away the PCs wish to go. There is not enough sunlight remaining on the first day to scout beyond **The Bridge** on the map. If the PCs decide to force-march to intercept the caravan rather than taking an extra day to prepare, information for that course of action is in “Forced March to Battlefield A” in Part 3.

Once all of the PCs have had a chance to do something with the evening “slot”, they should meet up at the inn once more to discuss their plans; Part 3 also details the changing events when they do.

Scouting the Battlefields

Based off Kohuri's report, there are two locations nearby that would make decent points to confront the Band of the Ox and their mysterious caravans. One of them (Battlefield A) is a good site for a pitched battle, though it is further east and the caravan will be arriving there much sooner. The other (Battlefield B) is closer to the village and further along on the caravan's route, so it would give the PCs more time to prepare – but the terrain is more difficult to work with.

Battlefield A

This area is shown on the Lion maps as a large expanse of open ground, with a small village on the far eastern edge, and the Imperial Road to the north. Looking at the maps and rolling **Battle / Perception** or **Craft: Cartography / Intelligence** will give an opportunity to discover the following information:

TN 15: Reaching this field in time to catch the Ox caravan will require setting out almost immediately, and infantry units would be forced to march all night. There are not enough ponies available to outfit even one of the two units of bushi camped nearby. (Mechanically, this will result in having to fight while suffering from the Fatigued Condition; +5 to the TN of all Skill, Physical Trait, and Spell Casting Rolls and the character cannot take the Full Attack Stance.)

TN 25: A series of rolling hills offers high ground to the south of the Imperial Road, but infantry forces gathered there would be facing what could be an unbroken charge from a mounted opponent.

TN 35 (Battle Only): It would not be *completely* impossible to defeat the enemy as it's been described to this point, provided the PCs can gather enough bushi to turn the odds to their favor, but the Ox will have fresher troops and could mount a devastating offensive charge before the PCs can get into position.

Part 3: Jade Strike! details what the consequences are if the PCs decide to force march to this area.

Battlefield B

The area directly to the north of the village is bordered by the Imperial Road, which runs parallel to the Drowned Merchant River further to the north. The southern edge is marked by a series of rolling hills, and there is a small forest to the east.

The Map (Player Handout #2) is divided into three sections: the Bridge, the Field, and the Forest. The PCs have time on the afternoon of the first day to have someone scout the Bridge, but they will have to wait until the next day to scout the Field and the Forest.

PCs who wish to scout the area should roll **Battle / Perception**, or **Hunting (Survival)/ Perception** with the results for each area listed below. The PCs get a Free Raise for working with another character – basically, if another PC or one of the Lion scouts explores each area with them. If the PCs dispatch a Lion Scout NPC to explore an area, they will bring back any information listed for TN 25 or lower. Succeeding at a 30 or more on any of the following rolls gives at least one Free Raise for battle planning (for the Battle, described in Appendix #2).

The Bridge

TN 15: The Imperial Road has been built along an elevated road-bed, so that travel is not impeded during the occasional flash floods that occur in this part of the Lion lands. There is a small bridge crossing an almost dry stream bed just to the north of a small copse of trees.

TN 25: The stream originates somewhere to the southeast, but there it will take more time to investigate further. (This grants a Free Raise when scouting the Field.)

TN 30: There is a hill at the southwest corner of this area that would be an ideal location for the command staff to over-see the fight, if they don't intend to be on the front lines with the troops. (This grants a Free Raise for battle planning.)

TN 35: The bridge may be an ideal location to attempt to stop the caravan with a "routine check of travel papers" or other reason. It offers a natural barrier, and the trees provide a spot for a small group of samurai to wait. (This grants an additional Free Raise for battle planning.)

The Field

Scouting this area takes two action slots, meaning that a single PC cannot explore this area and the Forest on the same day. There is time for a scout to explore both the Bridge and the Field on Day 2.

TN 15: This area is essentially an open field of tall grass with the pounded-earth bed of the Imperial Road crossing through it. From here, it is easy to make out the Forest to the east, as well as the copse of trees near the Bridge to the west.

TN 25: The sight lines from the road are clear of obstruction, with nothing that could impede a cavalry charge visible from that vantage point.

TN 35: A natural fold in the earth runs along a line from the southern hills towards the Bridge to the northwest. This fold meets up with a small stream that trickles towards the Drowned Merchant River. The tall grass conceals this depression from observers on the road, and is just deep enough to cover a carefully hidden unit of spearmen, and providing a nasty surprise

to any cavalry attempting to charge through it. (This grants a Free Raise for battle planning.)

The Forest

Scouting this area takes all three action slots available on the second day. PCs cannot explore this area and make it back to the village before sunset, even on horseback.

TN 15: The forested area begins just short of the Imperial Road and stretches into the southern hills. A village can be seen far to the east, surrounded by fields of grain. PCs with spyglasses can make out a caravan consisting of two wagons and a sizable mounted escort moving along the road.

TN 25: The forest is large enough to offer concealment to a force of up to 30 samurai, but there is not time to get back to camp and mobilize any infantry troops that have agreed to assist. It does provide a screen that would keep the caravan from seeing any preparations being made in the Field or Bridge areas, however.

TN 35: A well-concealed path travels the entire length of the forest, from the Imperial Road south and continuing into the hills. It is likely a woodcutter's shortcut or smuggler's path, as it is just wide enough for an ox-drawn carriage to navigate. If the scouts wish to try and blockade the road, they will need to have brought the appropriate tools and supplies with them. (This grants a Free Raise for battle planning.)

Recruiting Allies from the Lion Camps

Matsu Camp

Once again, Crane and Unicorn PCs get the distinct impression that they are not welcome here, as the troops cease their drills.

As you enter the Matsu Camp, you are greeted by a possibly familiar young woman who introduces herself as Matsu Sachiko, Gunso of the Broken Cage Spears. "Good afternoon, samurai. How may I help you?"

Once the PCs have explained, but before they can get into too much detail, Sachiko will lead them to her command tent, stopping briefly to all but throw a young woman wearing shugenja's robes into the tent ahead of her.

"This is Kitsu Chiyoko, my unit's spiritual advisor and member of my command staff. Matsu Haruka, my second in command, is currently patrolling the refugee camp. Now, tell me exactly what you need me to do."

The PCs must decide how much they are willing to reveal to the Matsu, and roll **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** (TN 20). Success means the PCs gain a Free Raise on the next roll to convince Sachiko to help them intercept the caravan, and PCs may call Raises on this roll to earn an equal number of Free Raises on the next roll. Unicorn or Crane PCs suffer a -5 penalty to this roll, while PCs who helped free Sachiko during New Beginnings get a Free Raise. If the PCs are lying about why they need help, they roll **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** (TN 25) instead, with all the same bonuses and penalties; a failure means they will have a -10 penalty to the next roll.

Interested PCs may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness** TN 25 to get a feel for how the commander is reacting to their request. Matsu Sachiko is curious about what is going on, as she thinks there may be more than what the PCs are telling her. If the PCs are lying, **TN 35** reveals her to be disappointed that her friends don't trust her enough to be honest with her.

After all the PCs who are trying to convince Sachiko to help have made their arguments, one of them may roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 35); other PCs may add their Ranks in the Courtier Skill to the total, as a Cooperative Roll. If any of the PCs mentioned this would be a fight against the Kolat, they get two Free Raises. Success brings Matsu Sachiko's assurance of help, as well as access to the Matsu's map of the area. Failing this roll means the PCs will have to look elsewhere for assistance.

Akodo Camp

How the PCs choose to interact with the Akodo Commander will determine how the battle will be fought, and which Master(s) will be encountered. Once again, Scorpion or Scorpion-trained PCs will get cold glares from just about everyone in the camp. If the PCs decide not to talk to the Akodo AT ALL, Akodo Hidenori will find out about the mission when the Matsu march out the next morning, and will follow up by asking Matsu Haruko why the Matsu are on the move. Haruko will tell him that the Matsu are headed to the nearby plains for some field exercises, but only that. She is not a Kolat Agent, but that doesn't keep her from being a useful source of information.

Akodo Monori leads you to her unit's command tent, where a banner bearing the image of two crossed spears carved from crystal proclaims this to be the quarters of Akodo Hidenori, gunso of the Shining Spears. Inside, you are introduced to Hidenori and his command staff, who are seated around a large go board. The men stand and bow as their commander

excuses them so you can talk. “How may the Shining Spears be of service, samurai?”

As with the Matsu, the PCs will need to make a compelling argument if they are trying not to let on that they need help dealing with the Kolat. Again, they should roll **Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness** (TN 20). Success means the PCs gain a Free Raise on the next roll to convince Hidenori to help them intercept the caravan, and PCs may call Raises on this roll to earn additional raises on the next roll. Scorpion or Scorpion-trained PCs suffer a -5 penalty to this roll. If the PCs are lying about what they need help with, they roll **Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness** (TN 30), instead, with all the same bonuses and penalties. (There is no penalty for failing this roll, save for tipping off Hidenori.)

Interested PCs may roll **Investigation (Interrogation) / Awareness TN 25** to get a feel for how the commander is reacting to their request. Hidenori is very interested in hearing what the PCs have in mind. **TN 40** reveals he may be *too* interested.

After all the PCs who are trying to convince Hidenori to help have made their arguments, one of them may roll **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 30), adding any raises they earned in the previous roll. If any of the PCs mentioned this would be a fight against the Kolat, the roll automatically succeeds. Success means that Hidenori will be a part of the battle planning, and will offer advice. Failure means that Hidenori will decline his assistance (but does not keep him from showing up at the battle).

Exploring the Village

Chugo Shrine, Marketplace, or the Refugee Camp:

The encounters here are the same as earlier, except Matsu Sachiko and Akodo Hidenori have returned to their respective camps, and Matsu Haruko is patrolling the refugee camp. The monk, Towa, can be found at the Shrine, and can tell the PCs about its history. If they ask about the strange go game against Oharu, he will not offer any insight, saying only that he wished to offer his friend a unique challenge.

Part Three: Jade Strike!

It is almost sunset when you gather together again at the Inn of the Hero to discuss your battle plans. Teinen settles onto a cushion on the floor, and looks at you each expectantly. “Before you can begin planning, you should decide who will be commanding your forces. The troops won’t follow an old monk.”

The bushi with the highest Status should be selected as the Battle Commander, with ties going to Lion PCs, since this is Lion territory. A PC may defer command to another character, of course, if that character is better suited to leading troops. Several ranks in the Battle Skill and a high Perception score are important for making this decision.

If Matsu Sachiko’s or Akodo Hidenori’s troops were successfully recruited to assist in the fight, the commanders of those units will be present, as well. While both are gunso with a Status of 3.0, they will defer to a PC commander (even one of lower Status) since they are involved on the behalf of the PCs. The PCs may instead simply choose to have one of the Lion act as commander.

Sachiko has Battle 5 and Perception 4. Akodo Hidenori has Battle 7 and Perception 4. If either of these characters are chosen as the Battle Commander, they will gladly accept the PCs council, though some things may require extra persuasion.

Forced March to Battlefield A

Matsu Sachiko is reluctant to put her troops in this situation, especially since there is an alternative. Convincing her to send her troops along will require a well-reasoned argument, as well as rolling **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** (TN 35). Akodo Hidenori has no problems at all leading his troops on such a march, and will actually suggest the PCs take this course of action in order to dictate the terms of the engagement (in actuality, it puts them in a very bad tactical position, and he is well aware of it). If he is chosen as the Battle Commander, it will take a **Courtier (Manipulation) / Awareness** roll (TN 30) or the flat refusal of the rest of the party (Sachiko included) to get him to wait the extra day.

Teinen will refuse to go along if the PCs do not have some sort of help from at least one of the Lion units; otherwise, he insists on following along on horseback, so that the party is not breaking his agreement with the local daimyo regarding the use of combat arms and armor. He will remain out of sight during the fight (his principle combat skill was his swordsmanship, and monks are not commonly found wielding katana).

See “Confronting the Caravan” below for details on how the PCs’ approach to the caravan should be handled. “Appendix #2: The Battle” has the rules and mechanics for the battle encounters, and specific notes that go along with the “Forced March” option.

Dilemma at Battlefield B

It is just after sunset on the second day when everyone gathers at the Inn of the Hero to discuss the coming battle. Before any decisions can be made, however, the pounding of footsteps echoes from the common room. The door slams open, and a sweat-soaked and bloodied Kohuri collapses onto floor of the private room. Several broken arrow shafts protrude from his armored back, and there is a deep slash across his left thigh. "They've split the cara.. caravan!" the ronin gasps, before a gurgling cough overtakes him.

"Someone, help him!" Teinen commands. "We need to know what's happened."

If none of the PCs are able to offer any healing or medicine, Kitsu Chiyoko will cast Path to Inner Peace, allowing him to speak, if painfully.

The tale starts slowly, between ragged breaths, but Kohuri eventually gets the words out. "When I... returned... to the caravan, I learned that we would be splitting up. One of the wagons is heading south along a smuggler's road through the forest to the east, with a smaller escort. As soon as I heard this, I hurried to escape the camp undetected so I could warn you, but I was seen. The guards attempted to stop me, but I charged through their line before they could strike me down. Couldn't outrun their arrows..."

"Which wagon is going south?" Teinin asks.

"I... I didn't wait to find out, Teinin-sama," the ronin replies. "There wasn't time. There isn't time! You'll have to leave NOW to catch it."

PCs who explored the Forest section of the map know this to be the truth. It will take two to three hours to reach the forest. If the PCs found the smuggler's path, they also know that it is narrow, and the wagon will be slowed down considerably.

Looking down at the map, Teinen uses his pipe to point to the forest. "If the wagon heading south has a small escort... a similarly-sized group of samurai should just be able to cut off the wagon before it can get too far away, if they leave within the next hour. Otherwise we miss our opportunity to capture whatever it carries." He looks at each of you expectantly. "Do you want to send a group of our allies to capture this wagon, or will we be taking care of this ourselves?"

IMPORTANT! While the encounter in the woods is designed for a standard PC party, it is offered in this mod as an option for parties that are not well suited for Mass Combat encounters. It is purely up to the players to decide which encounter to pursue.

Should the PCs ask what Teinen means by "we," he will remind them that their ability to bear combat arms and armor hinges upon their duty to act as his escort. Therefore, he will be accompanying anyone who wishes to do so. **Note:** This also makes it difficult to split the party to go after both wagons, as one group of PCs would have to go without their armor and any weapons other than their daisho.

The PCs now have three options:

They can go charging into the night themselves: They will not be able to participate in the Battle tomorrow, trusting someone else to command the troops there. (This option is best suited for parties that aren't well-prepared for Mass Combat.) Teinen will point this out, if the PCs don't consider it. If the PCs decide to follow this wagon, they must decide who will be in charge of the troops taking on the wagon and guards that still remain on the Imperial Road. Proceed to **The Skirmish**.

They can send a group of bushi from the Matsu or Akodo camps, if they have been recruited to help. Sending troops from the Matsu will have no effect on the Battle, but they will be slaughtered and the wagon will get away. Any Akodo sent to intercept this wagon will never be seen by the PCs again, but the number of "ronin guards" counted at the next checkpoint will have increased by that many.

They can let the wagon in the forest go, and focus their attention on **The Battle**. The mechanics and description of this option is in Appendix #2: The Battle (though things pertaining specifically to the Forced March obviously do not apply). Note that if the PCs have not secured any assistance, they will be choosing to confront a much-larger group of mounted samurai on their own and are likely to die.

Which Wagon?

The caravan will split up regardless of what the PCs choose to do, but the choices the PCs have made will determine which direction each wagon takes. Keeping the Akodo out of their plans will result in Master Cloud taking the smuggler's path, riding in the wagon that carries the Oni's Eye.

If the Akodo become aware of the Battle Plan through the actions of the PCs, Hidenori will get word out to the Ox caravan, and the wagon carrying the Crystal Prison and Master Jade will be the one diverted south along the smuggler's road, in an attempt to draw the PCs away from the main battle.

Confronting the Caravan

When the PC's approach the either of the wagons, the shugenja will present papers saying that they have been guaranteed safe (and unhindered) passage through the Lion lands. These papers are marked with the personal chops of each of the provincial daimyo overseeing territory along the Imperial Road leading to the City of the Rich Frog. (In order, Togashi Ryoko of the Chuda Province, Mirumoto Takejiro of the Nanashi Province, Kitsuki Baishon of the Kaitou Province, Akodo Hiraku of the Oiku Province, Kitsu Kyuwa of the Hayai Province, Ikoma Bokkai & Ikoma Suzuko of the Eiyu Province, Ikoma Yachi of the Meiyu Province, and Kaeru Edonichi of the Kanemochi Province.)

The PCs may roll **Investigation / Perception** (TN 30) to test the papers; PCs with an Oath of Fealty to any of the listed daimyo gain a Free Raise on this roll. Failure gives the impression that these papers are, in fact, legitimate. Success reveals the majority of the chops to be very clever forgeries; a more detailed examination, or success with a 40 or higher, shows that two of them stand out for being real, and not in fact on the listed travel route: Asako Miya of the Kyuukai Province, and Akodo Kyuwa of to Ken-Ryu Province.

PCs who succeed at a **Lore: Law / Intelligence** roll (TN 20) know that the caravan is currently traveling along the Imperial Road through Ikoma lands, and neither of the two legitimate provincial daimyo are located any where near the path leading to the Kaeru territory, nor do they actually have the power to keep the caravan from being searched outside of their provinces. If the PCs force the issue, combat will ensue; the ronin are not shy about fighting their way clear, particularly if the PCs are armored and appear ready for a fight already.

The Skirmish

If the PCs decide to take on this fight instead of the actual Battle, it will be a regular skirmish against one of the two Kolat Masters (determined in "Which Wagon", above) and a smaller force of senior (Rank 3) Ox samurai. Catching up to the lone wagon and its smaller complement of guards takes a few hours' ride, but they

have time to catch their breaths before things start to happen:

The path through the woods is narrow; barely wide enough for a wagon. Teinin carefully dismounts from his horse and settles to the ground under a nearby tree. "I will be fine here, my friends, while you capture the wagon." After waiting for most of an hour, the sound of hoof beats reaches your ears, followed shortly by the sight of four mounted ronin leading an ox-drawn wagon. It's hard to tell for sure, but there may be additional riders following the wagon as well.

What the PCs see depends on which wagon has been sent through the Forest. There should be one Band of the Ox Leader for each PC. If there are any courtiers or non-combat shugenja in the party, they should instead be matched up with a Band of the Ox Ronin, or one from the rear guard who has to take additional rounds to move through the dense forest (at the GM's discretion). A recent counter-interrogation method the Kolat have developed has been implemented on these bushi; their minds will literally burn out once they are reduced to the Down or Out wound boxes, causing their eyes to burst into brief flames and killing them to prevent them giving up any secrets.

Master Cloud

The wagon that approaches is riding low on its axles, despite appearing to be mostly empty. An object roughly the size of a large, clay cooking pot is wrapped in waxed cloth and secured in the middle of the wagon bed. Seated at the front of the wagon is the peasant driver, and an old man wearing shugenja robes and a patch over his hideously scarred left eye.

When you confront the wagon, the elderly priest stands, clearly angry, revealing the orange and red mon of the Isawa family mon under his travel cloak. "Do you have any idea whose business you are interrupting? I am Isawa Korekado, sensei at the Isawa Air School, and I have been promised safe and unhindered passage through these lands." The one-eyed shugenja declares. "Now, step aside, or I will be forced to report your interference to the Emerald Champion directly."

Phoenix PCs and other shugenja have never heard of Isawa Korekado, and his travel papers are as detailed earlier (in "Confronting the Wagon"). If this encounter is taking place in the Forest, it is probably worth pointing out that the wagon has now deviated from the route detailed in the papers, giving the PCs further reason to press for inspection.

As soon as it becomes obvious combat is about to begin, Master Cloud will cast *Striking the Clouds* before Initiative is rolled. During the fight, he focuses on his own defense or uses the spells *Wind-born Slumbers* and *Your Heart's Enemy* to weaken opponents for his Ox allies to finish off. Cloud will fight to the death, especially in situations where he is acting as a diversion to keep the PCs from capturing the Oni's Eye. Just as with the lower-level initiates, Master Cloud's brain will burn itself out if he is reduced to the Down or Out wound levels.

Master Jade

The approaching wagon carries something the size of a small hut covered by a tarp that is secured to the wagon with silk rope.

"Get out of our way!" shouts the shugenja riding next to the wagon's driver. "We have been assured of safe passage through these lands!"

The papers are exactly as described above, and the priest will identify himself as Kuro if asked. The PCs may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 20) to notice a number of strange symbols have been carved and painted onto the side of the wagon. Additionally, the silk rope used to secure the tarp appears to have prayer beads knotted into it at regular intervals. PCs with 3 ranks in Spellcraft or who roll **Spellcraft / Intelligence** (TN 20) know that this is some sort of spiritual seal or ward, though they cannot say for sure what it is warding against. If they attempt to lift the edge of the tarp, combat will begin immediately, as the Kolat Disciple leaps at the offending PC, while screaming, *"NO!! You fool!"*.

Master Jade has been driven mad – being corrupted by the Lying Darkness, imprisoned within a crystal cage, and forced to work on behalf of an organization you tried to destroy will do that to a man. His fondest wish is to die, but the part of him that has succumbed to the Shadow wants to take as many people with him as possible.

During the first round of combat, PCs with **Willpower 1** (and the wagon driver) will hear a deep, resonant voice in their head say, *"Free Me."* On the second round, PCs with **Willpower 2** will hear the voice, and the driver will begin trying to untie one of the silk chords. This continues each round, and PCs with higher Willpower will eventually begin hearing the voice as well. There is no compulsion involved, so the PCs may act on this voice however they wish.

If left alone, the driver will succeed in untying one corner of the tarp at the end of Round 5, breaking the wards on the wagon with a horrific result:

An inky black tentacle thrusts out from under the cloth and grabs the man by the head, slamming him face-first into the side of the wagon. The tarp disintegrates, revealing a large block of crystal filled with a pulsing and writhing black mass. More black tendrils begin to seep through spreading cracks in the crystal, and as they pull themselves out, a small humanoid figure can barely be discerned in the roiling shadows. The voice reaches into everyone's mind now, screaming, *"KILL ME!"* and the PCs must make a **Fear Roll** to resist Fear 3 (TN 20).

Characters who roll **Lore: Shadowlands** or **Lore: Shadow / Intelligence** (TN 20) know that this creature is heavily infected by the Lying Darkness, granting it unusual powers and very few weaknesses. PCs who make TN 30 know these creatures are at least partially immune to damage from anything other than crystal weapons or Void Spells.

During this section of the fight, Master Jade will attempt to use its *Shadow Bolt* power to target PCs with high Armor TNs. If the PCs are struggling to finish off the Ox bushi or Kuro, Master Jade screams *"KILL ME!"* and uses *Shadow Tendrils* to move things along and to bring itself closer to the sweet release of death.

Once the Kolat Master has been defeated, proceed to the appropriate Conclusion.

Conclusion

Success - Forced March:

The dust kicked up by the conflict eventually clears, and you find yourself looking over a scene of absolute carnage. Dead Lion bushi lay all around you, some staring blankly from eyeless faces. Matsu Sachiko's rage at the Akodo betrayal pushes her through the pain of several vicious wounds, and she stalks among the corpses of her traitorous cousins to claim their heads. Others among the Matsu survivors begin collecting the daisho of their own fallen, leaving you to search for answers among the questions raised by what happened here.

Success - Battle!:

As the eerie blue flame dies out in the eyes of the last traitorous Akodo bushi, there is finally time to take stock of what happened around here. The few remaining Matsu spear-women move amongst the bodies of their fallen sisters, gathering daisho and

other personal effects while Kitsu Chiyoko begins ministering to the more grievously wounded. The group of samurai sent to intercept the other half of the caravan never reports back, and scouts sent to find it return empty handed. A quick survey of the survivors verifies that not one of the Matsu had any indication that the Akodo would turn on them, leaving you with more questions and few answers.

If a unit of Matsu was sent after the wagon in the forest, their bodies are found by the scouts, but if an Akodo unit was sent, there is no sign of a battle. There are tracks indicating a group of 12-15 mounted bushi escorted a wagon south into the hills, however.

Failure:

The battle has ended with victory for the Akodo of the Shining Spears, and their Kolat masters. Among the casualties are Matsu Sachiko and her entire command staff.

The Akodo turncoats do not chase down fleeing PCs, nor do they stop to make sure any unconscious PCs are completely dead before escaping with the wagons. They do, however, ensure that word gets out about samurai matching the PCs' descriptions attempting to assault a refugee caravan fleeing from the Phoenix lands, resulting in any surviving PCs gaining a full rank of Infamy and a similar loss of Glory. Emerald Magistrates or Emerald Yoriki who participated in this failed attempt will also lose a half-rank of Status for letting both of these artifacts escape.

Success - Skirmish!:

It takes some time to get the wagon moving after turning it around, but eventually you make it back to the Imperial Road and the site of the battle. Matsu bushi tend to their wounded and dying, while the remnants of their command staff come to you, asking questions you can't readily answer. They tell you that the wagon carrying the other artifact escaped in the chaos caused by a traitorous sneak attack by the Akodo squad, but they were able to kill the Kolat Master that accompanied it.

If, somehow, one of the Kolat agents survives the fight, they will be unable to reveal any useful information, due to either a true lack of knowledge or rigorous mental conditioning. Not even the cruelest of torture will be able to draw out usable testimony, and significant exertion simply burns their brains out.

PCs may search the bodies of any of their fallen foes, taking the usual precautions, and may call upon a family of eta from the nearby village to help begin constructing a pyre. Only the two Kolat Masters, the

Ronin Shugenja and Akodo Hidenori carry anything of value, however.

Master Cloud and his Kolat Disciple carry travel papers as described in "Confronting the Caravan."

Both shugenja carry elaborate scroll cases, but they are rigged to explode if someone opens them without uttering the proper password. Any PC who attempts to open the cases should roll **Defense / Reflexes** (TN 25) to avoid taking 3k3 Fire damage from a burst of intense heat that incinerates the scrolls instantly.

Hidden in Akodo Hidenori's sleeve is a coded message that looks to have once been sealed with some sort of soft metal rather than regular wax. **Calligraphy (Cipher) / Intelligence** (TN 50) breaks the code, though this will take several days' worth of work. PCs that think to search Hidenori's tent will find his command journal, which contains a hidden pocket that can be found with an **Investigation (Search) / Perception** (TN 25). Inside is the key to the cipher, which allows the message to be decoded. It reads, *"Greetings Friend. Two wagons are headed your way carrying some very important friends of mine and their belongings. I am placing their safety in your hands. The Prisoner can be sacrificed, if necessary. – Steel"*

Clutched in Master Jade's blood-soaked hands is a sealed letter addressed to Yasuki Oguri (Player Handout #3). It is up to the players to decide whether or not to deliver the message, or if they will read it first.

Akodo Hidenori's men fall into two categories: his top eight men, who were genuinely sympathetic to his cause though not truly members of the Kolat themselves, or the other two dozen who simply were following his orders. None of them know why their commander ordered them to attack, though the most trusted group does know that he had friends in the caravan and presume it had something to do with that (even they don't know the specifics, however).

Back in the village, Teinen collapses onto a comfortable seat at the Inn. As drinks are served, he thanks you profusely for your assistance. "Due to the political backlash this fiasco is bound to incur, it is probably best for me to begin my pilgrimage elsewhere." The monk Towa arrives during this, carrying a bag of go stones. Teinen shakes his head to the other monk, apologizing, "I am sorry, my friend, but I think today will not be a good day for another match." Towa sets the bag down and taps it with his pipe. "While you rest, your enemy prepares."

The PCs may roll **Investigation (Notice) / Perception** (TN 40) to see a tattoo under Towa's sleeve; more specifically, to see that it is the edge of a full-arm tattoo. The older monk smiles at any who does.

Teinen pauses, then nods slowly before turning back to you. "I will be in touch, my friends. I feel that there remains much to be done..."

The End

Rewards for Completing the Adventure

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

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

Experience Points

Surviving the adventure:	+1XP
Good roleplaying:	+1XP
Surviving the Battle or Skirmish:	+1XP
Recovering the Oni's Eye	+1XP
Recovering the Crystal Prison:	+1XP
Total Possible Experience:	5XP

Honor

Players may lose Honor for lying about why they need military support.

Glory

If the PCs were successful at the Battle, they gain Glory equal to the Tier Ranks they faced.

If the PCs were successful at the Skirmish, they five points of Glory, minus one for every Rank of Glory they already have over five, to a minimum of 1. (So a PC with Glory 7 would gain 3 points of Glory, or a PC with Glory 10 would gain 1.)

Other Awards/Penalties

If Matsu Sachiko survives and the PCs recover at least one artifact, the PCs gain her as an Ally with 2 Dev/1 Inf.

Emerald Magistrates or Emerald Yoriki may lose .5 Positional Status if they do not recover either of the artifacts, as it is widely reported that they took part in an illegal assault on a refugee caravan.

Failure also means all PCs gain a Full Rank of Infamy for taking part in that assault.

PCs who noticed Towa's tattoos, or PCs who interacted with him specifically in a polite fashion, gain him as an Ally (Devotion 1/Influence 0).

Module Tracking Sheets

PCs who win the Shining Spears Go or Shogi puzzle challenge gain a Go stone or Shogi tile crafted from pure crystal.

GM Reporting

Which artifact did the PCs recover, if any?

Did Master Cloud survive?

Did Master Jade survive?

Did Akodo Hidenori survive?

Did the PCs find Hidenori's cipher key?

Did the PCs deliver the message to Yasuki Oguri?

If not, did they deliver it to anyone else? If so, who?

GM must report this information BEFORE (11/15/2014) for it to have storyline effect.

Appendix #1: NPCs

Isawa Korekado, Master Cloud

Wizened, withered, and scarred, Master Cloud is the epitome of a power-mad shugenja, bending the spirits to his will and caring little for anything but his own studies and power... and the Oni's Eye.

Air 4	Earth 2	Fire 2	Water 3	Void 6
Awareness 5	Willpower 5	Intelligence 6	Perception 6	
Honor 4.5		Status		Glory

Initiative: 10k4 **Attack:** by spell

Armor TN: 41 (Defense Stance) **Damage:** by spell

Reduction: 20 (Be the Mountain, pre-cast with Silent Waters)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+3), 18 (+5), 22 (+10), 26 (+15), 30 (+20), 34 (Down, +40), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 6 (Air)

Technique: *Isawa's Gift*: Free Raise on all Air Spell Casting Rolls

Affinity/Deficiency: Air/none

Relevant Spells: (Air: 10k5+FR) Hidden Visage (ML2, change features for disguise), Wind-borne Slumbers (ML2; apply Fatigue to target), False Realm (ML4; area-effect illusion), Know the Mind (ML4, mind-reading), Striking the Clouds (ML4, variation of Way of Deception, noted below); Your Heart's Enemy (ML4; illusion of target's worst fear causes Fear 4 effect); (Earth: 9k2); (Fire: 9k2); (Water: 10k3)

Relevant Skills: Defense 5, Intimidation 4, Investigation 7, Spellcraft 8, Stealth 4

Advantages/Disadvantages: Allies, Higher Purpose, Magic Resistance (special) / Bad Eyesight (Missing Eye), Compulsion (Oni's Eye), Dark Secret (Kolot Master), Lamé

Special: Master Cloud has a strong connection to the Oni's Eye, and its resonance grants him several abilities, but this comes at a great price: he is utterly dependent on it, and will die within a few days if he is unable to commune with it. The TNs of all spells targeting Master Cloud are increased by +20, and he may make a simple Void Roll (TN equal to the Mastery Level of the spell) as a Free Action to end any spell effect on him.

Striking the Clouds: Master Cloud's signature defensive spell, this creates four illusory duplicates of him that confuse the enemy. Unless they can detect the swirl of air that surrounds the caster, requiring an **Investigation (Notice)** / **Perception** roll with a TN of 50, any attack made against the caster will strike one of the duplicates, destroying it immediately. This includes spell effects, though only one is disrupted per spell (area-effect spells do not clear them all away).

Kuro, Kolat Disciple

Master Cloud's understudy, this reedy man has been a Kolat Agent for so long he has little identity of his own left. He is fascinated by the possibilities of the Oni's Eye, but has not developed anywhere near Master Cloud's affinity with (or dependence upon) it. He is more physically active than his master, focusing more on damaging or debilitating spells than mental ones.

Air 4	Earth 3	Fire 3	Water 3	Void 4
		Intelligence 4		
Honor 1.3		Status 0		Glory 0

Initiative: 9k4 **Attack:** by spell

Armor TN: 44 (Defense Stance) **Damage:** 7k5 (Slayer's Knives, 30' x 10' area)

Reduction: 7 (Armor of Earth, pre-cast Silent Waters)

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

School/Rank: Self-Taught Shugenja 5

Technique: *The Kami's Gift*: +2k2 instead of +1k1 when spending Void on Spell Casting Roll

Affinity/Deficiency: Air/Earth, Fire

Relevant Spells: (Air: 10k4) Blessed Wind (ML1; +15 to ATN against ranged attacks), Tempest of Air (ML1, Knockdown with Contested Air vs Earth Roll, 1k1 DR), Call Upon the Wind (ML2, limited flight), Howl of Isora (ML4, 3k2 DR in 40' radius, everyone in area must roll Earth TN 30 or be Fatigued), Slayer's Knives (ML5, 7k5 damage in 30'long x 10'wide area); others at GM's discretion, with a focus on movement, stealth, and investigation

Skills: Acting 3, Athletics 4, Calligraphy (Cipher) 6, Defense 7, Engineering 4, Etiquette 3, Forgery 4, Hunting 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation (Search) 6, Jujutsu 2, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Kolat 5, Lore: Theology 3, Meditation 5, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 6, Stealth 4, Temptation 3

Advantages/Disadvantages: Clear Thinker, Luck I, Silent / Dark Secret (Kolot Agent), Overconfident

Yasuki Taka, Master Jade

A tiny, wizened form shrouded in shadow. His eyes gleam in the darkness, and a vicious snarl can be seen on his face when the light touches it directly. Though he used to be a brilliant man, he is tired of his imprisoned existence and nearly feral with a desire to end it.

Air 5	Earth 2	Fire 5	Water 2	Void 6
Awareness 6			Perception 5	
Honor 0.7		Status 0		Glory 0

Initiative: 10k6

Armor TN: 30

Attack: Shadow Powers

Damage: 3k3 (bolt) or 5k2 (tendrill lash)

Reduction: 10 (0 vs crystal)

Wounds: 35 (Dead)

Shadow Taint: 5

School/Rank: Yasuki Courtier 5 (Insight Rank 7)

Techniques: Yasuki Taka was one of the most skilled merchants in the history of the Empire before he was touched by the Lying Darkness and his personality was largely erased. He retains those skills (and Techniques), but it is unlikely they will factor into his actions in this module.

Shadow Powers: *Fear* 3

Swift 4

Cohesion of Shadow: No Wound penalties.

Partial Invulnerability: Takes half damage (rounded down) from non-crystal weapons and from non-Void spells and other magical effects not specifically intended to target the Nothing and its minions. Crystal weapons and Void spells affect him normally.

Mental Resistance: Immune to all Fear effects and to all spells that create illusions or influence the mind or thoughts.

Shadow Powers: can see in darkness, blend into shadows and become insubstantial, may teleport up to 500' through shadows, and can change shape at will

Modified Shadowbolt: 3k3 damage ranged attack as a Complex Action, it automatically hits any target in line of sight; the damage cannot be mitigated with Reduction, Void Points, or any other mechanic

Shadow Tendrils: By dealing himself 10 Wounds, he can summon a number of writhing tendrils shaped from pure shadow; these lash out in a 15' radius around him, striking all targets that fail an **Athletics / Reflexes** roll with a TN of 30 (a PC may immediately go Prone to add +10 to the result of their roll, even after the roll has been made); this has a DR of 5k2 but, like a Shadowbolt, is not reduceable.

Relevant Skills: Acting 5, Animal Handling (Oxen) 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation (Interrogation, Notice) 7, Stealth 5

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Clear Thinker, Luck III, Read Lips, Voice / Small

Akodo Hidenori

Air 4 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 4 Void 3

Honor 4.1 Agility 4
Status 3.0 Glory 5.3

Initiative: 8k4+10 (+5 **Attack:** 10k5e (Bisento, first Round) Simple)

Armor TN: 30 (light **Damage:** 8k3 (Bisento) armor)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Lion Elite Spearman 4

Techniques: *The Way of Magari-Yarijutsu:* +1k0 to Spear or Polearm rolls; +3 Reduction when using a

spear or polearm in Center, Defense, or Full Defense Stance

Strike Like the Lion: when using a spear or polearm, may ignore 2 points of enemy Reduction

Strike Through the Eagle: Simple Action Attacks with ranged spears, and may ready a nage-yari as a Free Action any number of times in a Round

Strike Like the Wind: Simple Action melee attacks with a spear or polearm

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 7, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 2, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: History 5, Polearms (Bisento) 7, Sincerity 4, Spears (Magari-Yari) 6

Mastery Abilities: +5 Initiative on first round and +1k0 damage against larger or mounted opponents with Polearms

Advantages/Disadvantages: Large, Leadership / Dark Secret: Kolat, Driven: Destroy Tools of the Shadow

Shining Spears Akodo

Air 2 Earth 3 Fire 2 Water 3 Void 2

Reflexes 3 Agility 3
Honor 5.2 Status 1.0 Glory 2.6

Initiative: 5k3 **Attack:** 8k3e (magari-yari, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 (light **Damage:** 5k2 (magari-armor) yari)

Reduction: 3

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

School/Rank: Lion Elite Spearman 2

Techniques: *The Way of Magari-Yarijutsu:* +1k0 to Spear or Polearm rolls; +(half Skill Rank) Reduction when using a spear or polearm in Center, Defense, or Full Defense Stance

Strike Like the Lion: when using a spear, may ignore 3 points of enemy Reduction

Relevant Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Defense 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: History 4, Polearms 4, Spears (Magari-Yari) 5

Mastery Abilities: ignore 3 points of enemy Reduction in first Round (total 6)

Band of the Ox Ronin

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 2 Water 3 Void 2

Reflexes 3 Stamina 3 Agility 3
Honor 1.6 Status 0 Glory 0

Initiative: 5k3 **Attack:** 7k3 (katana, Complex)

Armor TN: 25 **Damage:** 7k2 (katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

Wounds: 10 (+0), 14 (+0), 18 (+2), 22 (+7), 26 (+12), 30 (+17), 34 (Down, +37), 38 (Dead)

School/Rank: Band of the Ox/Insight Rank 1

Technique: *Legacy of the Four Winds:* +1k0 to Initiative if starts the combat Mounted, +1k0 to attack rolls while Mounted

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 2, Defense 2, Horsemanship 5, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Investigation 2, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Kolat 3, Lore: Underworld 2, Stealth 2

Mastery Abilities: may Full Attack while Mounted, may mount as a Simple Action and dismount as a Free Action, +1k0 damage with swords

Advantages/Disadvantages: Strength of the Earth / Social Disadvantage: Ronin; (about half) Dark Secret: Kolat

Band of the Ox Leader

Air 3 Earth 4 Fire 3 Water 4 Void 3
Reflexes 4 Agility 4
Honor 1.2 Status 0 Glory 0

Initiative: 9k4+5 **Attack:** 10k5e (katana, Simple or Complex*)

Armor TN: 30 **Damage:** 8k2m (katana)

Reduction: 3 (light armor)

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

School/Rank: Band of the Ox/Insight Rank 4

Technique: *Legacy of the Four Winds:* +1k0 to Initiative if starts the combat Mounted, +1k0 to attack rolls while Mounted

**Relentless Assault:* Simple Action melee attacks (only half of the Leaders should have this Technique)

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 5, Defense 4, Horsemanship 7, Hunting (Tracking) 5, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 7, Lore: Kolat 4, Lore: Underworld 4, Stealth 3

Mastery Abilities: +5 Initiative, may Full Attack while Mounted, may mount or dismount as a Free Action, +1k0 damage unarmed and with swords, may ready a sword as a Free Action, 9s explode on sword damage

Advantages/Disadvantages: Absolute Direction, Quick / Social Disadvantage: Ronin; (about half) Dark Secret: Kolat

Appendix #2: The Battle

This is resolved using a modified version of the Battle Interactive Rules; any mechanics that PCs have that may reference those rules apply here. The combat is divided into two “Battle Rounds”, each representing two different parts of the engagement with a slight pause between them. Each Battle Round, the Commander rolls **Battle (Mass Combat) / Perception**; the result of this roll determines the difficulty of the fight in that Round, and how close it brings them to their goal. If Matsu Sachiko is along with the PCs, she gives the commander a Free Raise on this roll. More bonuses can be gained at Battlefield B by having scouted it out prior to the fight, as noted in that section. No scouting is possible for Battlefield A, as the Forced March prevented taking such measures.

The Tier chosen in the first Round determines how close to the wagon(s) the PCs are able to get; this is not represented by distance, but by time and the number of the enemy between the PCs and their target. The shugenja will not appear until the second Battle Round, but when they do, the higher Tiers the PCs fought through, the closer they will be to the shugenja. Tier 4 allows the PCs to attack the shugenja in melee after one combat round, Tier 3 requires fighting through the enemy for at least two rounds, and Tier 2 gives the shugenja three rounds to cast spells without opposition from the PCs. Ranged attacks and offensive magic are at the discretion of the GM; this is not a matter of distance but of the swirling chaos of the battlefield.

Additionally, if the PCs chose to make the Forced March to Battlefield A to confront the enemy as soon as possible, they and their forces will be fighting while suffering from the Fatigued Condition (+5 to the TN of all Skill, Physical Trait, and Spellcasting Rolls, and they cannot take the Full Attack Stance). More, both of the Kolat Masters will be present in this case. It is the only way possible for the PCs to capture both artifacts, but they will have a very difficult fight ahead of them...

If the PCs did not recruit the Akodo forces along, then in Round Two, Hidenori will arrive with his most-loyal troops and attack the PCs and the Matsu from behind.

Round 1

The Ox have seen you coming, and the mounted guards are charging as you march towards them. The ronin attacking you are lightly armored, but fast. To either side of you, your allies are clashing with ronin wearing heavier armor decorated with a stylized ox head.

Failure to succeed at a TN of 20 means that the PCs must face Band of the Ox Leaders (as in Tier 3), but will not advance at all toward the wagon (meaning that they must wait five rounds to engage the shugenja in Round Two).

TN 20: Tier 2: The PCs will each find themselves battling one of the Band of the Ox Ronin. Combat lasts until 8 Ox Ronin have fallen. (10 for Forced March tables)

TN 30: Tier 3: Same as Tier 2, except the PCs are fighting two Band of the Ox Leaders and enough Band of the Ox Ronin to each engage another PC (4 for a 6-PC table, 5 if there are 7 players, etc). If an Ox Leader would be reduced to the Down Wound Rank, their eyes flare with brilliant blue fire and they drop to the ground, dead. Combat ends when 7 of the Ox have fallen. (9 for Forced March tables)

TN 40: Tier 4: The PCs may choose to fight the Tier 2 enemies for the Tier 3 reward (engaging with the shugenja in the third round of combat in the next Battle Round) or face an entire group of Band of the Ox Leaders; again, the combat ends when 6 of the Ox fall. (8 for Forced March tables)

There is a lull in the fighting, as both forces pause to regroup and catch their breath. You see shugenja moving though the enemy forces, and assume they must be offering healing prayers, if the Kolat believe in such things.

The PCs have time to heal up a bit, but there is not enough time to meditate or perform a tea ceremony (no more than two minutes or so). If the Matsu squad was recruited, Kitsu Chiyoko will offer to heal the PCs before moving on to her own troops.

Round 2

The enemy is not without their own tricks, as a pair of shugenja begin circling one of the wagons and chanting. They point, and several remaining Ox guards obediently wheel their horses around you, in an attempt to keep you from reaching the two priests.

(If the Akodo and Matsu were brought along): *On some unseen signal, the Akodo that had been fighting at your side break their engagements with the ronin. Though some appear hesitant, they wheel and plunge their spears into the Matsu unit's flanks, and Akodo Hidenori can be seen ordering his men forward to defend the wagons.*

(If the Akodo were not brought along): *Suddenly, a dozen or so spearmen charge the fighting from the south. Though clad in Lion colors and bearing the Akodo mon, they slam into your allies and begin to cut their way through the Matsu lines. You recognize Akodo Hidenori in the press, calling out a password of some kind to the ronin and being recognized.*

The PCs are separated from the enemy shugenja by a press of the enemy, and a certain amount of distance. The shugenja do get one spell off before Initiative is rolled (*Striking the Clouds* for Master Cloud and *Call Upon the Wind* for Kuro), but they have more time to continue buffing themselves depending on what Tier the PCs faced in the first Battle Round, as noted above. The enemies listed here are the forces the PCs must contend with; if the PCs manage to drop the listed number of foes, they can get to the shugenja regardless of how many combat rounds it has been.

Tier 2: TN 20: A pair of Ox Leaders and several Ox Ronin charge the PCs. Combat ends when both Veterans and 4 Guards are defeated. (6 for Forced March tables)

Tier 3: TN 30: The Shining Spear Akodo attack the PCs. Combat ends when 6 of the Akodo are defeated (8 for Forced March tables)

Tier 4: TN 40: Akodo Hidenori and two of the Ox leaders form up against the PCs; each of them have three of their followers as well. Unlike the other Lion, Hidenori has been given the same indoctrination as the Ox; reducing him to Down or Out will trigger his death. Defeating all of these foes means the PCs can access the shugenja.

Defeating the shugenja will cause the Ox and traitor Akodo to break (Forced March tables must kill both shugenja in order to accomplish this). If he is not killed by the PCs, Hidenori will be given a horse by the Ox and ride off with them; the PCs may attempt to pursue, requiring Contested Horsemanship / Agility Rolls. Failure means he escapes, where success allows them to try to finish him off (finish the combat; he will attempt to fight to the end and will fall on his own sword if his defeat appears inevitable).

Player Handout #1: Letter from the Retired Magistrate

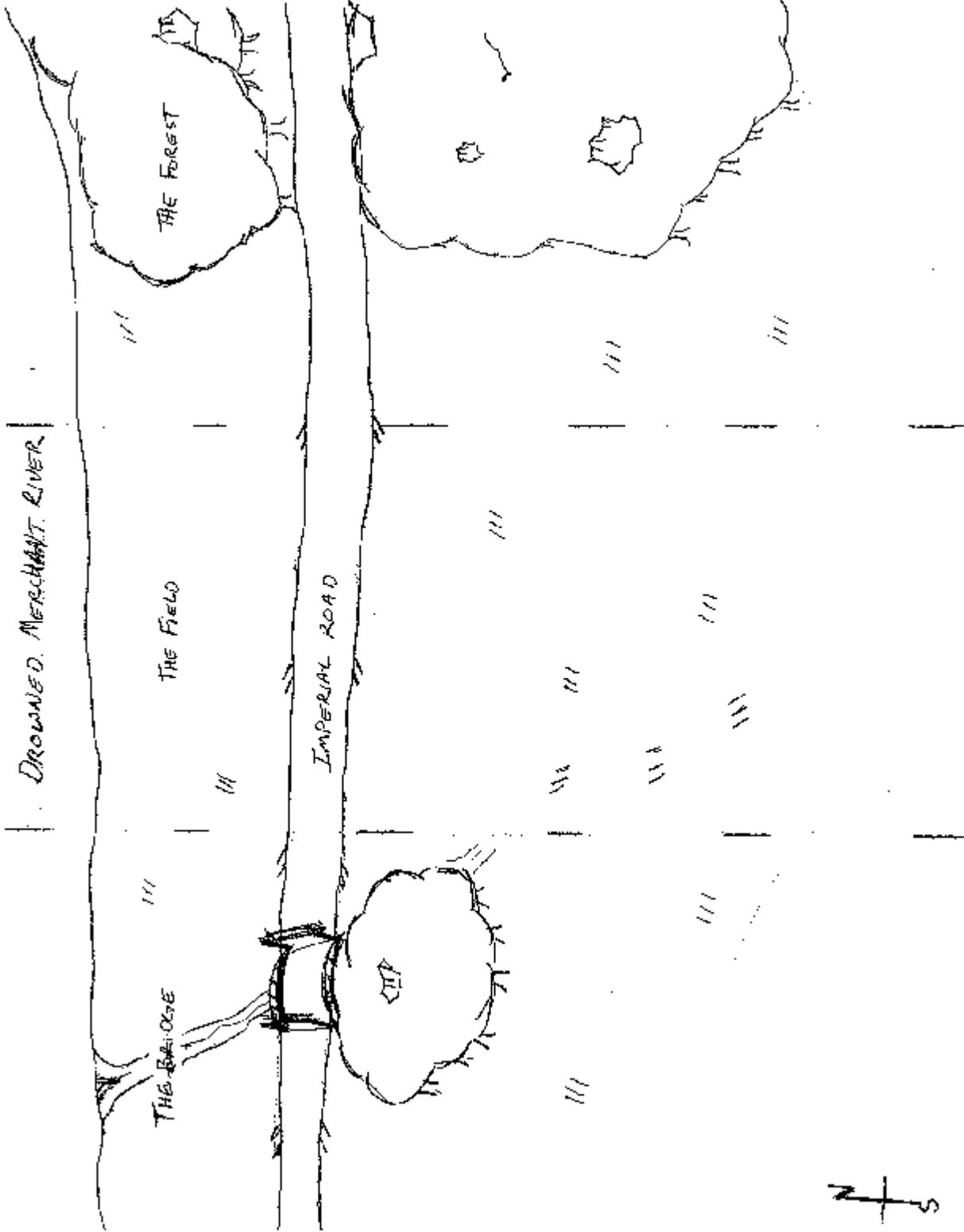
My good and dear friend,

I would be deeply honored to have you as my guest at Mura sano Eiyo ni Suru as I begin a pilgrimage to visit shrines throughout the Empire. Your wise counsel would be greatly appreciated, as I am starting with the Shrine to Duty, and you are justly renowned for the way in which you fulfill your obligations.

Please join me at the Inn of the Hero on the third day of the Month of Doji.

*-Teinen,
who was once known as Doji Oharu*

Player Handout #2: The Map



Player Handout #3: Letter from the Fallen Shadow

My son,

I know that they have told you I am dead. I know that you have continued to serve them, as I once did, though you have been loyal to their aims where I was not. I cannot fault you for it; all I can do is ask your forgiveness, both for leaving you with them then, and for leaving you now.

You must understand, Oguri, that they have grown as corrupt as the system they claim to oppose, if not worse. The things that the Masters order cannot be justified, whatever they claim their ends to be. If our way, the way of man over that of gods, is superior, should it not be superior in truth? Instead, they seek power simply for the sake of having power, rather than to free us from the tyranny of the heavens.

They have kept me, bound, chained, enslaved, for a decade. I barely remember you; I do not remember your mother. These wounds to my mind were not dealt by them, but they were quick to turn my condition to their use. There is little to distinguish their rule from that which they would overthrow.

I cannot live like this. I have spent my entire adult life in the pursuit of freedom. The Masters make the same claim, Oguri, but my fate shows the true strength of their convictions.

Be careful, my son. Our family will fall if the Masters have their way; they will not care about any cost that brings them more power or wealth. You will be sacrificed by your fellow Masters as soon as it is expedient. Steel showed that too high a profile was dangerous, and hunters already close on you.

They have prevented me from contacting you, so many times. All I can do is pray that this letter reaches you.

Forgive me.

- Taka