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# Courts of Rokugan

A L5R 4th Ed homebrew

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"This doesn't make sense. Kurea-chan would never willingly marry Akodo Takuji. Her parents were killed by Lion during the siege of Toshi Ranbo, and she would never forgive them!" Daidoji Chimaki set the letter down on the table before her. "The rumors we heard before, that she had been dragged from her palanquin and is being held at Swift Sword Castle, that makes far more sense to me."

Ikoma Doi picked up the letter. "My clan would not ever show such dishonor to an artisan such as Doji Kurea. But if she had been caught, for example, carrying intelligence for her clan? Hypothetically? She might be retained for questioning. And certainly many young men and women have found themselves in marriages they don't desire. "

Kuni Yasutake sighed as he steeped his long fingers. Doi and Chimaki had been bickering ever since he had received them. They served as escorts to assist him in tracking down a practitioner of maho who seemed to move freely through Crane, Lion, and Scorpion Lands, leaving a string of corpses in his wake. The paintings that they had found at two of the murder scenes were by a talented Kakita-trained artisan, one Chimaki knew from her childhood. It seemed a promising lead. But they arrived at the Kakita Academy to find only rumors and a letter saying she was being married into the Lion. It could have been a distraction, or something more sinister.

The third young yoriki, Bayushi Juro, traced the bottom of his mask with a finger, as if wiping away a tear of laughter. "It sounds like, then, my friends, we have a large number of things we must find out in rather short order. Has a wedding been arranged, and by who? Where is she now? Has she been involved with anything that might relate to our case, or was the maho tsuke merely a fan of her work? So many questions."

Yasutake growled in his throat. "The Crane will never put up with us. I was offered your aid to assist my investigation, but the guards are growing more hostile to my requests."

"I am sure Kurea-chan is innocent of wrong doing, but our artisans are very highly treasured. We need to find out the truth in a way that won't shame anyone. If we could only ask our questions discretely. We need an invitation into the Kakita court." Chimaki was loyal, Yasutake had to give her that.

Juro drew a beautifully calligraphed scroll from a scrollcase he carried at his side. "Aren't we fortunate, then, that I know a grandmaster of poetry with a new work to share?"

---

Alan held his head in his hands, feeling a blinding headache coming on. Beatrice, Charlie, Damien, and Elizabeth tried to hide their smirks as he sunk behind the screen.

"This is going to take months," he whispered.

"Yeah," Charles winced. "I know it's the right thing to do but..."

"Hundreds of NPCs."

"At least this set during card-game times, so you can use some named characters," offered Beatrice tentatively.

"Plots and counterplots."

"With a Bayushi, I AM the plots," asserted Elizabeth confidently.

"So. Much. Tea."

"Yatsutake hates tea," Damien declared, a look of panic stirring in his eyes.

"The last time you went to Court you started a war and ate four months of real time."

No one had a response to that.

---

### **It doesn't have to be this way!**

The promise of Rokugan is a *World where Honor is Stronger than Steel!* A world where courtesy matters, where the wrong word can break a man, and a character's actions can change the course of destiny. Or not, as the great wheels of culture and fate bind even the mightiest of heroes to constant conflict between their personal desires and their never-ending duty to family, Clan, and Empire.

This promise runs afoul of the limitations built into normal RPG mechanics (and to some extent the format and structure of LARPs). Characters are designed as individuals, with complete histories and families. However, in any large social setting you have complex interactions of hundreds of people, working in institutions and cliques, bound together by social

conventions and separated by practical and moral concerns.

*The Courts of Rokugan* fan-supplement addresses this by proposing a way of organizing the duties of Court and their interactions; then outlining a system for Intrigue and Influence interacting with those duties through actions and competitions; and finally updating courtier Schools to take advantage of these new rules.

To help explain the game we have threaded through the document characters and situations from the fictional Kakita Court described in the opening story. The characters are:

*Alan* – the overworked, unpaid GM

*Daidoji Chimaki (played by Beatrice)* – A Kakita duelist and dabbler in many arts.

*Ikoma Doi (Played by Charlie)* – An Akodo bushi with a knack for playing games.

*Kuni Yasutake (played by Damien)* – A Kuni Witch-hunter and magistrate with Status 3.

*Bayushi Juro (played by Elizabeth)* – A Bayushi courtier who has spent the last six months ducking under cover during the intense fights.

Good luck, good gaming, and try not to drown in the ocean of tea!

## Of Courts

For this supplement, a **Court (capital C)** is any social setting in which the heroes (player and other iconic characters) will participate for more than a single session, either in a block or over an extended period of time. This can include the heroes' home town, an isolated community they have to interact with, or the grand Imperial Winter Court.

The term **Intrigue (capital I)** refers to the mechanics and methods by which Courts function. Intrigues consist of actions which build and expend Influence, social currency which can be cashed in for favors. More details on the great game can be found in the "Of Intrigue" section of the document.

An Intrigue within a Court is divided into **sequences** separated by **contests**. Each hero may take one or more **actions** during the sequence and, if they wish, compete in the contests.

### A Few Example Courts

Examples of possible Courts the heroes might find themselves involved with include but are not limited to:

**The Imperial Court:** the great Imperial bureaucracy and its Ministries, staffed with courtiers drawn from the Clans, manage the Empire and its resources for the glory of the Emperor. To play at intrigue in the Imperial Court is to face the greatest challenge; one's own peers in a setting where one wrong word can cause a famine and a poorly chosen alliance can doom a family for generations to come.

**A City:** The governor of a city must bring together many groups and factions for the successful running of the city. No matter who is in charge, each city has a life of its own that must be navigated if you want those who run the city to work with you.

**Household of the Daimyo:** The Champions of the Great Clans may have a household spanning multiple palaces, while a local daimyo may have only his own fortified home. Both are places where the great game is played though, sometimes more viciously than in the Imperial Courts because the stakes are so much more personal.

**Military Encampment:** During the season of war the great game moves out of the cultured halls of power and into the fields of battle. Samurai battles samurai both between the armies and inside the camps, vying for everything from advantageous position in battle to the basic materials needed to survive the next day.

**A Monastery:** The holy brothers and sisters who study the ways of the Fortunes and the Tao are mortals, not gods. Just gaining entrance to a monastery can be a competition; prayer and passage through its many chambers towards enlightenment can prove that intrigue exists in many forms.

**A Village:** A village offers bed and a place to lay your head, and villagers know things they would rather not share. For a hungry ronin, village intrigues may matter more than the courts of rulers.

**An Underworld Organization:** The criminal, or tainted, underworld mimics the society of its betters, and for those without honor, there is favor to be won.

**Winter Court:** a gathering of diplomats and courtiers, the Imperial Winter Court is the most famous event in Rokugan. Each Clan also hosts a minor Court at the same time, but the real action is wherever the Empire has gathered its luminaries for a celebration of culture, politics, and espionage.



## Courts: Duties, Intensity, Status

Courts are led by individuals who take on responsibility for specific **duties** which they likely share with those below them. Courts also have a level of **intensity** which describes how quickly dramatic action takes place in them; the flurry of Imperial Winter Court is different than the timeless existence of the Brotherhood's monasteries.

Finally, each Court has a specific **status**, which describes its importance in the grand scheme of Rokugani society. For example, the Clan Court of the Sparrow simply not as important as the family home of the Doji. The Court's status limits the Influence which can be earned and spent there, forcing heroes to venture forth if they hope to acquire great favors.

### Court Duties

Each Court has duties to perform, the steady work which creates a civilization rather than a collection of individuals striving brutishly in the mud for bugs. In Rokugan these duties carry with them both practical and spiritual obligations, as many were first identified and embodied by the great Kami. **Advisors** fulfill these duties in most courts.

The following table summarizes these duties:

DUTY	PURPOSE
<b>LORD</b>	Make Decisions
<b>CENTER</b>	Manage Resources
<b>HERALD</b>	Communicate and Explore
<b>RIGHT HAND</b>	Wage War
<b>LEFT HAND</b>	Wage Peace
<b>SPIRITUAL ADVISOR</b>	Provide Spiritual Advice
<b>UNDERHAND</b>	Unorthodox Tactics

### The Lord

First embodied by Hantei himself, the lord is responsible for making the final decisions in all matters. A wise lord listens to those he has placed around him and accepts their work in his name, offering guidance and correction only when needed. Wisdom is, alas, often in short supply.

For Intrigue purposes, the heroes will attempt to build up Influence to meet with the Lord to present their case and persuade him to make judgements in their favor. Petitioning the Lord this way for favors generally granted by his servants is, however, a considerable breach of etiquette.

### The Right Hand

First embodied by Akodo, though often in collaboration with Hida, the Right Hand takes charge of the military and wartime power of the Lord's domain. The Right Hand rises in ascendancy when the Lord goes to war, and weakens in times of relative peace.

In Intrigues the heroes petition the Right Hand for favors related to military forces and the projection of the lord's power within his own domains or beyond if the Lord declares war.

### Example Favors: Right Hand

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Rearrange a patrol's schedule, reassess a settlement's tax burden
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Request a squad to help apprehend a criminal; have a small guard contingent stationed somewhere for a season
<b>LARGE</b>	Request a display of military might in a specific location; secure an appointment in the lord's army

### The Left Hand

First embodied by Doji, the Left Hand takes charge of waging peace and guiding the political aspects of the Lord's domain. The Left Hand rises when things are peaceful or must be restored after the war. They are charged with maintaining and improving the Lord's territory, growing the communities within the lord's domains, arranging celebrations, and providing mercy rather than justice.

In Intrigues the heroes petition the Left Hand for privileges including invitations to the Court, places to stay in in the Lord's household, the right to enter competitions, and material needs related to their communities (e.g. irrigation and roads).

#### Example Favors: Left Hand

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Receive an invitation to the general Court activities; Participate in a seasonal competition; Examine a settlement for needed improvements within the year;
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Secure a tutor for the Imperial Civil Service Exam; Receive lodgings in the household for a season;
<b>LARGE</b>	Request a marriage with a peer; Request a marriage above one's station; Secure a position in the Lord's household for one person

### The Center

First embodied by Shiba and later taken over by the Seppun, the Center is charged with record keeping, "the books", and with bringing information to the Lord. In so doing the Center holds against the forces of wrack and ruin, preventing famines and ensuring the Right and Left Hands have what they need to perform their duties. It also grounds the Lord in history and precedent, maintaining the rule of law in the face of absolute power.

In Intrigues the heroes petition the Center for information, resources for themselves or their communities, and in matters of the law and judgement. They may also have to interact with the Center in matters related to commerce, as this duty encompasses both the management of vassal merchants and shop keepers.

#### Example Favors: The Center

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Resupply travel kits; Arrange a meeting with a vassal merchant; secure travel papers within the lord's holdings; Be accompanied by household guards for a sequence;
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Secure travel papers to an allied lord's holdings; Expedite travel papers; Be accompanied by household guards for a season; request a preliminary judgement
<b>LARGE</b>	Secure permanent travel papers within the lord's demesne; Set aside legal precedent for a specific situation

### The Herald

First embodied by Shinjo and later embraced by Miya, the Herald establishes and maintains communication throughout the lord's holdings. The Heralds communicate the lord's dictates and reach out into the broader community, either through simple messengers, or through magistrates and the force of law.

In Intrigues the heroes reach out to the Herald to pass messages, to secure emergency relief, to gain access to the local magistrates and their resources, or to coordinate with the heimen caste leaders as they engage in activities that require assistance from the common people.

### Example Favors: The Heralds

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Send a message anywhere in the lord's lands; Send a herald to the site of a disaster
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Send a message to an allied lord; Assign a local magistrate to investigate a rumor this season; Send workmen to the site of a disaster
<b>LARGE</b>	Send a message privately without a record being made;

### The Spiritual Advisor

First embodied by Shiba and Togashi at different times, the spiritual advisor is responsible for both spiritual advice and the use of spiritual power. The Advisor is often a monk or shugenja himself, attempting to influence the supernatural for the benefit of all. They also take responsibility for defining the will of the kami and the fortunes for the lord in the world.

In Intrigues the heroes approach the spiritual advisor for divinations, for information about the spirit world, for access to tombs, and the performance of rites.

### Example Favors: The Spiritual Advisor

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Arrange a divination for a major event (birth, marriage, death); Access to a local shrine
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Cause a previously cast divination to be re-examined; get access to sacred texts
<b>LARGE</b>	Have a monk or shugenja examine a spiritual matter personally

### The Underhand

First embodied by Bayushi, the Underhand is the often unrecognized group, who deals with dishonorable issues so the Lord does not have

to....or at least issues even more dishonorable than the Lord would personally have himself associated with. A Yakuza boss might have his personal assassin, a fine Lion Champion might have someone gathering spy intelligence.

In Intrigues the heroes may petition the Underhand for hidden information about their foes; for services the heroes may wish to avoid admitting to in public; and for clandestine interference with the other duties.

### Example Favors: The Underhand

SIZE	EXAMPLE
<b>SMALL</b>	Increase the Influence cost of another duty's favor; Acquire sensitive information
<b>MEDIUM</b>	Acquire secret information within the lord's domain
<b>LARGE</b>	Acquire secret information about the Lord's allies or enemies

### Court Intensity

Courts can last for years, but the "action" of the Court ebbs and flows depending on the season, the situation, and the narrative needs of the story the players want to tell.

Mechanically, an Intrigue within a Court is divided into sequences separated by contests. Each sequence has an in-game duration based on its intensity.

The values given below are suggestions rather than strict guidelines. For example, a GameMaster may decide to treat the Topaz Championship as a Court, setting the duration of the sequence as one day with one of the traditional competitions between each sequence.

INTENSITY	SEQUENCE	EXAMPLE
<b>EXHAUSTING</b>	1 - 2 Weeks	Winter Court
<b>FOCUSED</b>	2 to 4 weeks	Winter Season
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	1 season	Between Adventures



An **exhausting** pace represents the frenetic activity of a Winter Court or a Court on the verge of great upheaval. People are vying for position and attempting to perform their duties as best they can. Exhausting times ebb and flow, but will generally last between six and eight sequences.

A sequence in a **focused** Court setting (e.g. a military camp, working in the Clan Champion's household or the Imperial Capital) is roughly 2 weeks long but can be stretched out to 4 weeks if players do not want to spend much time in Court between adventures. This creates a Court between three and six sequences in length.

A **background** Court sequence, in which the heroes are engaged in their regular, non-adventure duties, takes roughly one season. A year contains three seasons and a Winter or more focused Court set during the winter months. This leads to three "seasonal" sequences and competitions each year; or four if the heroes choose not to secure invitations to a more intense Court.

It is possible for a Court to change Intensity during play. For example, if the heroes manage to start a war the Court will suddenly shift to an exhausting pace.

It is important to note that regular adventuring can occur during Background and even Focused or Intensive Court sequences. Even if your party cannot spend much time doing more than one action related to influence in the court, when the Emperor and Duty calls them, true samurai must go. If their deeds are spectacular enough, such adventures might earn them more Influence.

## Court Status and Alliances

A Court derives its status from the Status Rank of its Lord; a Lord of high Status carries great weight and the ability to drive great changes while one of low Status has a limited scope of action.

The following chart is derived from the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> edition Core Rulebook Status Rank Chart:

POSITION	STATUS RANK
EMPEROR	10
EMPEROR'S HOUSEHOLD	9
IMPERIAL FAMILY	
DAIMYO	
GREAT CLAN CHAMPION	8
MINOR CLAN CHAMPION	7
MINISTRY LEADERS	7
GREAT CLAN FAMILY	7
DAIMYO	
PROVINCIAL GOVERNER	6
CITY GOVERNER	5
VASSAL FAMILY DAIMYO	5
EMERALD OR JADE	4
MAGISTRATE	
CLAN MAGISTRATE	4
DIPLOMAT	2

Similarly, a Court has both allies and enemies based on its Lord's Family and Clan relationships. In general Courts within the same Clan are considered to be allies, those outside of Clan neutral, and those with Clans the Court's families wage war with are by default enemies. This can and should be tailored to fit in with the campaign world.



## Quick Build: A Court Setting

The following chart shows the elements of the Court system brought together into a single table:

Court Name	
Clan:	Family:
Location:	
Status:	Intensity:
Duties	
Lord	
Left Hand	
Right Hand	
Center	
Herald	
Advisor	
Underhand	
Allies	Enemies

## Example: The Kakita Court

In our sample fiction, the heroes are investigating a maho-tsukai who has left behind paintings from a prominent Kakita Artisan. Rather than get embroiled in Academy politics, they turn their attention to the Kakita Court, hoping to unravel this latest lead.

Kakita Family Court	
Clan: Crane	Family: Kakita
Location: Kyuden Kakita	
Status: 7	Intensity: Focused (2 weeks)
Duties	
Lord	Kakita Noritoshi
Left Hand	Kakita Mae
Right Hand	Daidoji Enai
Center	Kakita Atoshi
Herald	Kakita Yariga
Advisor	Asahina Handen
Underhand	Kakita Munemori
Allies	Enemies
Crane Clan	Lion Clan
Unicorn Clan	Scorpion Clan
Dragon Clan	Crab Clan

## Of Intrigue

Courts function, to a great extent, on favors; individuals work with one another, helping each other and each other's friends to drive things forward.

In roleplaying games, tracking the constant interplay of favors owed, to whom, and especially through an extended network of contacts who exist separately from the player characters, can prove mechanically challenging. It will therefore typically default to a simplistic bartering system, where individuals "do favors" for one another or target specific objectives in each scene. Sometimes they may also form alliances with individual characters, but the larger context is lost in the shuffle.

## Intrigue, Influence, Actions, and Contests

To address this challenge the Court system expands the game to include:

**Intrigue:** a discrete game within the RPG which consists of an invitation phase, some number of sequences separated by contests, and a closing phase.

**Influence:** an expendable resource which can be acquired through battles, contests, and deeds. Influence is used to acquire services from the various ministries and their analogues in courts. The actual influence cost of a service may be modified by the hero's Status, his School abilities, and his allies/enemies in the Courts.

**Actions:** discrete activities a hero engages in during a "court sequence" which "focus the camera" of the game in a specific location or in a particular way. Actions allow the hero to either reduce the Influence cost of a specific activity or favor, modify the Influence value of a contest, or prevent another hero or opposing NPC from doing the same.

**Contests:** opportunities for the heroes to gather together and display their skills in the arts, including the art of war. Simply performing competently can earn an individual a little Influence; winning a prestigious contest can earn enough Influence for the hero to, however briefly, accomplish great things.

These three elements work together to create a system in which:

1. Heroes identify or are assigned goals which have an **Influence** value,
2. They take **actions** in to maneuver among their peers, then
3. They **compete** using their various skills to earn influence.

For heroes who do not wish to engage in courtly game can gain Influence through heroic deeds or glorious battle against honorable foes. They can also be, to an extent, given starting influence by more influential NPC characters in the form of letters, commissions, or titles.

## Intrigue: A Mechanical Definition

An "Intrigue" in a mechanical sense is a specific setting to which the heroes need to obtain access, within which they will engage in actions and competitions, and eventually acquire enough Influence to execute on their desired outcomes.

The Court takes place in three basic phases:

- 1) **Invitation:** the heroes use their Advantages, Status, and stored Influence to secure an invitation to the court. Once this is done, the heroes roll initiative (or not) and the GM sets the overall scene – location, the large players, the competition schedule, etc.
- 2) **Sequences:** heroes and characters take Court actions and participate in competitions.

- 3) **Closing:** the court concludes and the heroes must spend their Influence or somehow sequester it for use in the next Court.

Note that a common use for “extra” Influence near the end of one Court is to arrange for an invitation to the next one, thereby skipping the mad scramble to secure a last-minute invitation.

### Influence: Measuring the Web

Influence is the same as air for a courtier; without it he simply cannot survive. It is less important to bushi, monks, and shugenja, though they too find a little influence to be helpful in achieving the goals given to them by their superiors.

#### Measuring Influence

Influence measured as an integer value set to an initial value of 0 at the start of the Intrigue, modified by past events and the hero’s Advantages, Disadvantages, Glory, and School Techniques.

#### Gaining Influence

A hero may gain influence in one of three ways:

- 1) By engaging in battle against honorable opponents. Fighting with the beasts of the Shadowlands may be a deed (see below), but it is conflict with one’s own caste that a samurai truly proves his worth.
- 2) By doing well at various artistic contests staged throughout the year. The exact nature and timing of these contests depends on the sponsoring Clan and the season, but generally a samurai can expect to have four opportunities to compete each year (once each season). A samurai invited to the Imperial Winter Court may engage in as many as twelve different competitions in the span of a single season.

- 3) By performing great deeds, either assigned by the samurai’s daimyo or occurring through happenchance. Seeing that those who break the law are punished, slaying a rampaging oni, or winning an important duel all give the hero the opportunity to earn Influence to a greater or lesser degree.

#### Retaining Influence

Influence is not tied to a specific setting, but Rokugan is a large place and the various Courts are not always closely aligned.

A hero generally has to use all of his Influence by the current Court’s closing phase. However, he may retain an amount of Influence up to his Glory Rank for use in another Court. Some heroes may have Advantages which grant them additional options for transferring Influence between Courts.

#### Using Influence

Influence is used to purchase favors either from the Ministries (in an Imperial game) or from their analogues in the other Court settings. These favors are described in detail in Part V.

### Actions: The Way of the Pen and Scroll

To an outsider, any Court seems remarkably opaque. Individuals come and go, huddle in corners and talk over endless cups of tea. Issues are discussed, and then discussed again, and again, and again until only the very close participants can keep track of all the arguments. Then, eventually, something dramatic happens and all Jigoku seems to break loose for a few days before things settle back down.

In order to represent this the Court structures court time into “sequences” which can last for weeks, months, or a whole season. Sequences are separated from one another by “contests”, which provide an opportunity for interaction and gaining Influence. During a sequence the



hero can take one “action” to focus on the most consequential of the heroes’ actions, either increasing the stakes of a coming contest, preparing for it, or interfering with other’s as they attempt their actions.

A list of actions is presented below. Additional details on the mechanics for each action can be found in Part IV: The Order of Court.

**Arrange:** the hero establishes favorable circumstances for a meeting, reducing the Influence cost of a Rendezvous.

**Assess:** the hero uses his knowledge of politics and others to identify another samurai’s goals, what it would cost him to attain them, and how much Influence he currently possesses.

**Deceive:** the hero uses his skills to seed false information into the environment. This creates false answers to an Assess action targeting him or someone he specifies, misleading the assessor about the target’s goals and intentions.

**Lobby:** the hero spends his time disparaging or promoting one of the contests to be held at the Court; if successful he can increase or decrease either the participation Influence award (and associated loss if the participant fails), the award for winning the contest, or the number of Raises required for each contestant to succeed.

**Ready:** the hero readies himself for the coming contest, hopefully gaining an edge over the competition.

**Prepare:** the hero prepares his submission, entering the competition with finished works. This is particularly important for “cumulative competitions”, described below.

**Stymie:** the hero uses his knowledge of bureaucracy, culture, decorum, and history

to throw up obstacles in another character’s path to victory.

**Wager:** the hero spends his time (and Influence) boldly proclaiming the likely winner. He puts up some amount of his Influence; if the person he names actually wins the contest, then he gets back his Influence and gains an additional amount for his success. If the named person fails then the hero loses his wagered Influence.

Additionally during the sequence each hero may:

**Rendezvous:** the hero may spend Influence to meet with a specific person at a place and time of the hero’s choosing.

**Request Favor:** the hero may spend Influence to activate a favor. Doing so does initiate a role-playing scene.

## High-Stakes Contests and Competitions

*The Unicorn Champion walks in her courtyard, stopping to consider the carefully arranged pot gardens placed for this special day. A sweating Hida stands triumphant, his final sumai opponent still unable to rise from the ground. A Lion and a Scorpion face one another across the go board, the crowd quiet as they probe one another’s strategy.*

Each of these is a contest, an opportunity for samurai to display their skills to their peers and prove their superiority. In a world where supernatural evil exists in every shadow and where convention limits direct confrontation, these contests form a vital battleground for human beings to connect with and overcome one another.

Each contest is described by its importance, its skill, and its structure.

As noted in the section on Influence, contests come in several levels of **importance**: regular,



annual, and championships. These indicate how seriously society takes the event and what weight winning or losing carries.

Each contest also tests one **skill** the hero is expected to show at least minimal competence in. The skill is generally announced well before the competition, and in the case of skills like Artisan or Lore may be somewhat flexible as to what sub-skill is allowed.

Finally, each contest has a **pattern** which falls in line with either a single skill roll with raises, a cumulative skill roll with a minimum result required to add to the total, or one or more duels. This structure can become considerably more elaborate; for example, a poetry contest may require multiple skill rolls with raises, with each competitor who succeeds advancing to the next round.

### Quick Build: Intrigue on a Page

As with a Court, it is useful to summarize the structure of the Intrigue in a single chart for quick reference. The example below provides one way to do so.

#### Intrigue Name

**Court:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Intensity:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Non-player Courtiers

**Order of Court**  
Sequence X

Events

Competition

Where the Sequence # indicates which action window the heroes are in, Events indicates any special events or complications the GameMaster plans to spring on the heroes, and Competition names the competition, pattern, and skills for the competition at the end of the Intrigue sequence.

### Non-Player Courtiers (NPCs)

In some Intrigues the heroes will simply navigate through the endless mazes of social and political interactions offered by the Court. After the novelty wears off, this will come very quickly to feel like a long game of papers and paychecks.

Most memorable Courts involve conflicts and struggles between the heroes and various Non-player Courtiers who may or may not share the heroes' agendas. These are the classical villains, allies, and dramatic foils outlined in loving detail in hundreds of RPG books.

For the purposes of an Intrigue, only list those NPCs who will take actions during the Intrigue sequence. All of the other NPCs are either part of the background Court or opportunities for the heroes to engage in roleplaying scenes which flesh out the world but have little to do with the overall Intrigue mechanics.

### Player Chart: Using Initiative

In Intrigues where the heroes choose to act in initiative order, a chart structured as follows may help keep the action organized:

Initiative	Characters	S1	C1
30+	Name (Init Value)		
25 to 29	Name (Init Value)		
20 to 24	Name (Init Value)		
15 to 20	Name (Init Value)		
10 to 14	Name (Init Value)		
5 to 9	Name (Init Value)		
0 to 4	Name (Init Value)		

Where Initiative indicates the range of the acting character's initiative, the Character column shows who can act, and the following columns are used to show how many actions a hero has taken in the sequence and whether or not he competed in the competition. An extended example of this structure is provided at the end of this document for your use.

### Example: Intrigue in Kyuden Kakita

The following charts display the Intrigue structure at Kyuden Kakita for our heroes in the story.

#### A Cold Trail Freezes

**Court:** Kyuden Kakita  
**Year:** Unknown  
**Intensity:** Focused

#### Non-player Courtiers

Bayushi Tenchi, Kakita Kabe, Shiba Enso

#### Order of Court

<p align="center"><u>Sequence 1</u></p> <p><i>Events:</i> Arrival of the Daimyo  <i>Competition:</i> Formal Reception (Trial: Etiquette \ Awareness and Perform (Dance) \ Agility)</p>
<p align="center"><u>Sequence 2</u></p> <p><i>Events:</i> None  <i>Competition:</i> A Moon Viewing (Master the Moment 3, Poetry)</p>
<p align="center"><u>Sequence 3</u></p> <p><i>Events:</i> Screams in the Night  <i>Competition:</i> Presentation of Concepts (Grand Display, Calligraphy \ Intelligence)</p>
<p align="center"><u>Sequence 4</u></p> <p><i>Events:</i> None  <i>Competition:</i> Plays of Spring (Grand Display, Actor \ Awareness)</p>
<p align="center"><u>Sequence 5</u></p> <p><i>Events:</i> Daimyo leaves suddenly  <i>Competition:</i> Iaijutsu Tournament (Martial)</p>

### Samurai of the Court

#### The Lord and his Attendants

*Lord:* Kakita Noritoshi  
*Left Hand:* Kakita Mae  
*Right Hand:* Daidoji Enai  
*Center:* Kakita Atoshi  
*Herald:* Kakita Yariga  
*Advisor:* Asahina Handen  
*Underhand:* Kakita Munemori

#### Courtiers

*Bayushi Tenchi* – a low-level diplomat studying from his Imperial Exams under Kakita Munemori. Distrustful of the Crab Clan and the Kuni in particular for personal reasons.

*Kakita Kabe* – young, bright, and in the service of Kakita Mae, Kabe works to ensure the Court functions smoothly despite constant challenges and interruptions.

*Shiba Enso* – a nakado for a suitor for the hand of Doji Kurea, very displeased with the current circumstances but unwilling to push to the point of rudeness.

Initiative	Characters	S1	C1	S2	C2	S3	C3	S4	C4	S5	C5
35+	Bayushi Juro (37) Kakita Ichiro (36)										
30 to 34	Bayushi Tenchi (32)										
25 to 29	Daidoji Chimaki (26) Shiba Enso (25)										
20 to 24	Ikoma Doi (23)										
15 to 20	Kuni Yasutke (17)										
10 to 14											
5 to 9											
0 to 4											

## Framing the Action: Intrigue

Traditionally, courts and other social settings are treated as “role-playing only” events in which occasional mechanical challenges appear along the path towards a narrative goal. This system does not attempt to replace that convention. Instead it opens up a new type of play, in which heroes can participate in tactical and strategic engagements, test themselves, and gather resources to be used to accomplish their goals...much like they would during an investigation, a battle, or an adventure.

As mentioned previously, Intrigues play out in “sequences” separated by “contests”. A hero can take one action during a sequence, although if he is willing to risk his Honor he might be able to stretch himself further.

This section provides mechanical details to these generalized concepts; as with any mechanical implementation, the specific details will need to be changed to better reflect a specific playgroup’s preferences.

### Structure of a Intrigue: Initiate, Iterate, Conclude

As described in the Of Intrigue section, intrigues break down into three discrete phases:

- 1) **Invitation:** the heroes use their Advantages, Status, and stored Influence to secure an invitation to the court. Once this is done, the heroes roll initiative and the overall scene is set – location, the large players, the competition schedule, etc.
- 2) **Sequences:** heroes and characters take Court actions and participate in competitions.
- 3) **Closing:** the court concludes and the heroes must spend their Influence or somehow sequester it for use in the next Court.

### Invitation

*A penitent meditates in the snow before the gates of the High House of Light. A magistrate waits in the town below the kyuden, waiting word for when he can attend the lord. A courtier smiles and presents an elaborately written document certifying his presence on Imperial business to the guards at the gate.*

It is a staple of fiction, both Eastern and Western, to be stuck outside a court for months or even years waiting for the powers to be to acknowledge the heroes’ presence. Mechanically this is represented by an invitation, something which can be earned or purchased as a favor from the powers that be.

Invitations can be earned in the following ways:

- 1) The heroes may spend some combination of his stored Influence and Influence generated by Advantages to acquire the invitation on site,
- 2) They may be given an invitation as a reward for a successful battle or deed,
- 3) They may force their way in using their Status, or
- 4) They may be acquired at an Influence cost from the Ministry of the Left or their analogue prior to the heroes’ arrival at the target Court.

The Influence cost of the invitation is based on the **Status** of Court and the highest Status among the heroic group:

**Using Status:** A hero may reduce the Influence cost of participating in a Court by his Status. If the cost is set to 0, he may simply declare that he has an invitation to the Court and proceed. If he enters without spending any Influence (Cost=0), however, this results in a **2 point Honor loss** for his lack of Courtesy. It is customary to politely wait (spending 1 Influence), even if one has the status to simply force the issue.



*Example: Kuni Yasutake is a magistrate with Status 3 attempting to gain entry to a Clan Household (Kyuden Kakita – the household of the Kakita Daimyo). He reduces the Influence cost of the invitation by 3, to a total of 4 (7 base – 3 Status). Without spending Influence, he could spend a lot of time cooling his heels in some very nice tea houses.*

*Fortunately, Bayushi Juro is a courtier who planned ahead. He spends 4 of his accumulated Influence to offset the cost. The player comes up with the idea of a “new poem” to represent both the excuse for getting the invitation and his connections in other Courts.*

#### To Roll Initiative or Not to Roll Initiative...

In play groups where it is important to maintain a regular order and ensure that everyone takes at least one action, it is advised to roll initiative using Rank/Awareness. Heroes take actions in initiative order.

In play groups where the players are more comfortable with chaos, you may instead declare the sequence over when each player hero and NPC has taken at least one Court action or passed on the chance to do so.

#### Sequences: Actions and Contests

Each Court is composed of some number of opportunities for each hero to take actions and then participate in a competition. The in-game duration of these sequences depends on the court's intensity (as described in the section on Sequences below).

As a hero acts and competes in Court he gains and loses Influence, rendezvous with individuals or groups, and experiences the life of the court at its most charming.

#### Closing

At the close of the Court, the hero may:

- 1) Request any favors he failed to request during the Court assuming he has enough Influence for them,

- 2) Request one last Rendezvous if he has the Influence to pay for it,
- 3) Secure an invitation (through a favor from the Ministry of the Left) to another Court.

Any Influence he holds above his Glory Rank is lost.

#### When does a Court Close?

A court closes when it is most logical to do so. This will generally be at a major event and marked with a ceremony of some kind.

If the heroes are passing time in their home court using seasonal intensity, the Intrigue may shift in intensity to focused during the winter months. This is not the end of the Intrigue, merely an acceleration of its usual pace.

If the heroes leave the court for an extended period of time, such that they cannot participate in in (e.g. go on a long journey, go to a Winter Court) the heroes Intrigue at their home Court ends and they have to go through closure. They will also have to secure an invitation to come back, which they may wish to purchase with their remaining Influence before they leave.

Heroes who are ronin or other vagabonds tend to drift from court to court, always seeking invitations and closing down Intrigues after a few sequences. This is the life of a wave man and not to be admired in Rokugan society.

#### Sequence: A Court Round

All courts are organized into “sequences”, a unit of time which denotes how long it takes for each hero to perform one court action. The actual duration of the sequence depends on the intensity of the Court and how dedicated the players are to imagining the outcomes.



### Structure of the Sequence

The sequence flows as follows:

- 1) Describe the current state of affairs in the Court,
- 2) Inform the players of the rules for the competition at the end of the sequence,
- 3) Allow the heroes to meet “in a tea house” or similar venue to discuss whatever they like; once the meeting breaks up,
- 4) Each actor decides if he wants to take one, two, or three actions (described below);
- 5) Heroes and NPCs begin to take actions until each character has taken at least one action during the sequence, then
- 6) The competition begins.

### Duration of a Sequence

As discussed in Of Courts, the in-game duration of an Intrigue sequence is based on the Court’s intensity. The following table summarizes that section:

INTENSITY	SEQUENCE	EXAMPLE
EXHAUSTING	1 - 2 Weeks	Winter Court
FOCUSED	2 to 4 weeks	Winter Season
BACKGROUND	1 season	Between Adventures

### Healing Between Court Sequences

In general or seasonal Courts a hero is assumed to recover any Wounds he suffered during the previous sequence (if any) before his next action. Specific instances (e.g. losing a duel to first blood which ended in near death) may call for more dramatic healing rules.

During a Winter Court, assume the hero heals 7X his Stamina before the start of the next competition.

### Spells and Court Actions

Even a simple Court action takes longer than the duration of most spells. The brief bursts of supernatural power granted by one’s relationship to the Kami and Fortunes is impressive but largely irrelevant in a Court setting.

However, sometimes a shugenja may wish to use his magic as a tool in Court. The specific rolls for doing this are listed in the associated actions, but are mechanically similar to a Importune roll, asking the kami for favors which translate into a Court action. Doing so deprives the shugenja of all spell slots associated with the chosen Ring and his Void Ring during the end of sequence competition.

### Void Recovery and Court Sequences

A hero may, of course, spend a Void Point to improve his chance to perform the Court Action of his choice. However, if he does so he will enter the competition at the end of the sequence with his Void total reduced by a corresponding amount.

#### Wait, What?

Yes, a sequence can last for several months. No, Void Recovery and Spell Use don’t fit in with the simulationist approach to game rules.

It does, however, impose a crunch cost to using these abilities. The intent of the system is to force choices and tactical thinking, not drag the rules for a tabletop wargame into a social setting.

## Actions: The Great Game

Each Court sequence, on his own turn, a hero may take one of the following actions: Arrange, Assess, Lobby, Ready, Prepare, Stymie, or Wager. Additionally, he may spend Influence to: Rendezvous or Request Favor.

### Taking Skill Actions

There will be times when the heroes feel they need to step outside of the bounds established by courtesy to achieve the goals given them by Clan and family. Doing so grants additional actions at a cost to the hero's Honor.

A hero may take one action using any Skill during a sequence without consequences. This is the normal, courteous order of things.

A hero may take one action using a High Skill and one action using a Merchant or Low Skill during a sequence. If both skills were School Skills for the character, he loses 2 Honor. If one is a School Skill and one is not, he loses 4 Honor. If both are not School Skills, he loses 6 Honor.

A hero may take one action using a High or Merchant Skill and two actions using Low Skills. If all three are School Skills for the hero he loses 3 Honor. This loss is increased by +2 for each action which uses a non-School Skill (maximum total of 9 Honor loss).

This is summarized below:

ACTIONS	HONOR COST
<b>ONE ACTION</b>	0
<b>TWO ACTIONS</b>	2 if both School Skill
(ONE HIGH, ONE	4 if one School Skill
MERCHANT OR LOW)	6 if both non-School
<b>THREE ACTIONS</b>	3 if all school skills
(ONE HIGH OR	5 if one not school
MERCHANT,	7 if two not school
TWO LOW)	9 if three not school

At the Game Master's option, a hero with Low Honor (3 or less) may reduce these Honor losses by 2 while a hero with High Honor (7 or higher) increases these losses by 2.

These costs are also adjusted by courtier Techniques, most notably with the Bayushi and Mantis schools, while the Yasuki are allowed to make a Commerce skill check as a free action without Honor cost once per sequence.

### Cooperative Actions

A hero may choose to cooperate with one of his allies rather than taking his own action. This is handled as a cooperative action, with the hero with the higher Skill Rank rolling and the character with the lower Skill Rank providing a bonus.

### Actions and Skills

Each action entry suggests a list of Skill \ Trait combinations. Other combinations are certainly allowed based on the circumstances and the story of the game. However, several of the revised courtier techniques allow a hero to use a specific skill in a unique way – before adding to the skill list please refer to that section and weigh the impact of the change on another character's School.

*Example: Commerce is the skill of conducting business deals. There is a good argument for letting anyone use it to take an Assess or Prepare action. However, the Yasuki Rank 2 and Rank 3 techniques leverage the idea that only they have the ability to use Commerce that way. Making that a common skill use would degrade the Yasuki school.*

### Arrange

*A shinobi sneaks past well-bribed guards. A courtier arranges his tea set as he waits for a guest. A bushi stands guard before a door he was not assigned to, waiting for his lover to arrive.*

The above are examples of an attempt to arrange a rendezvous with a specific character.



In each one, the active character uses a skill to reduce the amount of Influence required to set up the meeting.

**Mechanics:** The character uses a Skill / Trait combination with a TN of 20 as his action. If he succeeds, he may apply one of the following effects to a planned Rendezvous:

- Decrease the Influence cost by -1 (minimum 1),
- Increase the Influence cost by +1,
- Give a +1k0 bonus to one skill roll during the rendezvous. This effect can only be used one per skill roll in a rendezvous.

A hero can perform this action to assist another hero in his Rendezvous action.

**Raises:** The hero may select one additional effect for each Raise the hero takes on his skill check. He may only select the increase or decrease duration effect once per Rendezvous.

**Skills:** The following skills are useful for the Arrange action, subject to GM supervision as to the appropriateness of the combination and Rendezvous intention:

- *Athletics (Climbing)/Agility:* climbing boldly into someone's room is a way to Rendezvous with them...
- *Commerce / Intelligence:* a business meeting or one to discuss trade issues can be used for other purposes as well.
- *Courtier (Maneuvering) / Intelligence* – friends of friends are often the best source of meetings.
- *Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Awareness:* formal meetings are available to those who know how to work the Courts in their favor.
- *Intimidation (Bully) / Willpower:* forcing your presence on someone is not

honorable although it might prove effective.

- *Temptation (Seduction or Bribery) / Awareness* – most people have a price, if you can work out what it might be.
- *Stealth / Agility* – sneaking into a room is almost as effective as climbing into it from the outside for meeting someone, and sometimes more dramatic.
- *Spellcraft (Importune) / Ring* – proper prayers and absence can smooth the way to speak with the Powers that Be (used when there is a spiritual power at Court – an Ancestor, a Dragon, an Oracle, or something similar, Ring appropriate to power).

#### Assess

*An Ide nods behind her fan, watching her peers to divine their intent. A Shinjo quickly reads through his rival's correspondence before returning it to his desk and slipping away. A monk watches as two youngsters never look at one another at a feast, broadcasting their feelings for everyone to hear.*

The above are examples of an Assess action, where by the hero attempts to glean information about the actions and motivations of others.

**Mechanics:** The character uses an Trait/Skill combination with a TN of 20 as his action. If he succeeds, he targets one character and gains one of the following:

- One favor the target is pursuing on the influence chart,
- How many actions the target will take (or took) this sequence,
- One Court action the target took during this or the last Court sequence,
- Current Influence Value
- One of the target character's allies or enemies,

- Detect than an answer given is a deception, or
- In the case of a detected deception, who created the lie in the first place.

**Raises:** Each Raise the hero makes gives him one additional piece of information from the above list.

**Skills:** The following skills are useful for the Assess action:

- *Lore (Clan) / Awareness:* knowledge of a Clan's history, families, stories and myths can be combined with intuitions about another person to discern their motives.
- *Lore (Heraldry) / Intelligence:* knowing the lineage and training of a person, his family and his allies provides context which reveals the target's motivations.
- *Investigation / Perception:* everyone leaves clues about their intentions and deceptions; a trained investigator notices these and can put them together into a picture of method, motive, and opportunity.
- *Sincerity / Awareness:* samurai wear masks and you know how to peer beneath them.
- *Intimidation (Torture) / Willpower:* psychological and physical intimidation can drive the weak willed to spill other's secrets.
- *Spellcraft (Importune) / Air:* The air kami know much and can reveal more, but doing so may carry a heavy price.
- *Temptation / Awareness:* An understanding of what samurai desire when their masks are off starts with careful study

## Deceive

*The Bayushi smiles behind his fan as his peers scurry about, set at odds by the rumors he started*

*ages ago. An Ikoma carefully arranges the genealogy scrolls to highlight the wrong connections. A yojimbo watches negotiations with impenetrable on, his samurai mask guarding his charge as surely as his blade.*

The above are examples of a Deceive action, deliberately acting to mislead others so that they come to an erroneous conclusion.

Deception is a part both politics and warfare, a tool that can be used with care.

**Mechanics:** The character used an Trait/Skill combination with a TN of 20 for his action. If he succeeds he may select from the following list of effects:

- Pick a character. One Assess question targeting that character returns no answer
- A blank answer you have set now returns the answer of your choice
- A blank answer you have set now reveals a different character when it is detected as a deception. This can also be revealed as a deception.

**Raises:** Each Raise the hero makes on his roll grants him an additional effect from the above list.

*Example: Bayushi Tenchi wants to distract his opponents while he works on other things. He makes a TN 35 (20 + 3 Raises) skill check and succeeds, gaining 4 Deceive effects. He targets Kuni Yasutake, spreading a rumor that the Kuni is not actually a magistrate on a mission but rather a Crab Clan spy (Goal: gain access to information about Crane Clan defenses). On cursory investigation, it will seem the lie was spread by Doji Tsubame (1 effect). He uses his last effect to cause the first Assess targeting him to return a blank answer (1 effect, total 4).*

Deceive must be taken as a proactive measure; laying down a convincing web of lies takes time and effort. Deceptions which occur during a



Rendezvous follow the normal rules outlined in the L5R rulebook.

Once a Deceive is set, it remains in play for the duration of the Court. It is always the first target of an Assess on the person it is set on, and all Deceive effects must be discovered before Assess can reveal true information. The assessment of the deception (in the example above, that Yasutake is a Crab Clan spy) is enough, although further assessment may be warranted.

**Skills:** The following skills are useful for Deceive:

- *Courtier (Gossip) / Awareness:* gossip and lies are many courtier's stock in trade.
- *Etiquette / Willpower:* Maintaining and manipulating the samurai mask can create confusion in one's opponents.
- *Forgery / Agility:* Change the documents and you change the perceptions of the world. In a society where justice is based on social harmony; perception is everything.
- *Sleight of Hand / Intelligence:* a fast hand and a gift for staging a scene can create any number of false impressions.
- *Sincerity (Deceit) / Awareness:* A sincere lie well-spoken is often easier to believe than an ill-stated and inconvenient truth.
- *Spellcraft (Importune) / Air:* illusion is an effective, if blunt, way to fool mortals and immortals alike.
- *Temptation / Awareness:* people will believe what is advantageous for them to believe, especially if it is shared with them in just the right way.

#### Lobby

*A Shosoro actor runs through the town dressed as a monkey, raising awareness about coming theater performances. An Ikoma boasts about Go*

*Championships won by the Lion over the years and how those champions pale in comparison to today's heroes. A ronin spends his time telling tales about great swordsmen in the weeks before a tournament.*

The above are all examples of the Lobby action; in which a hero dedicates his time to raise awareness of and interest (positive or negative) in a specific competition.

**Mechanics:** The hero uses an Skill/Trait combination with a TN of 20 for his action. If he succeeds he may select from the following list of effects:

- Target one competition. Increase the participation Influence gain from 1 and the Influence lost on failure by 1 to a maximum of +2 and -2 respectively.
- Target one competition. Decrease the participation Influence gain by 1 and the Influence lost on failure by 1. Both can be reduced to -1 but no lower.
- Target one competition. Increase the Influence gained by the winner by 1.
- Target one competition. Decrease the Influence gained by the winner by 1.

**Raises:** Each Raise the hero makes on his roll grants him an additional effect from the above list. Any effect may be selected multiple times, except for the first, which can only affect a competition if it's value is not at the maximum allowed already.

**Skills:** The following skills are useful for Lobby

- *Actor / Willpower:* using personas and masks, actors can make a contest seem noble or foolish, or even both at the same time.
- *Commerce / Awareness:* money may not be able to buy a contest but it can buy the contest exposure, fine wines, and a bountiful feast so that it is a memorable (for good or ill) occasion.

- *Courtier / Awareness*: bringing important people, and their friends, to a competition or making sure they stay away can directly impact how much Influence the participants gain.
- *Perform / Intelligence*: A series of well-timed and stirring performances (e.g. songs, stories, or other displays) can build or dampen anticipation for an event.
- *Sincerity / Awareness*: carefully spun words can change people's perceptions of an event before, and after, it occurs.
- *Spellcraft (Importune) / Fire*: A flashy display of magical power, when properly timed and theatrically appropriate, can make an important occasion seem even more so.

#### Ready

*The painter casts aside another enzo, knowing it is not enough. An Asako poet stares at the clouds, composing haiku before the banquet begins. A bushi continues his study of the classics, experiencing the shift of the Go board in his mind and soul.*

The above are examples of the Ready action, when a hero spends time practicing his art so that, in the moment, he can accomplish great things.

**Mechanics:** The hero rolls a Skill / Void check (TN 20) using the skill associated with the contest he is readying. Alternately he may attempt a Meditation / Void or Tea Ceremony (TN 30) / Void check instead.

If he succeeds, the hero gains +Void to one of the skill challenges he has to undertake during the competition or a Rendezvous he wishes to engage in this sequence. He may select when to apply this bonus after he rolls but before he resolves the effort.

**Raises:** For each Raise the hero makes, he gains an additional bonus equal to his Void. Each

skill check may only have one bonus assigned to it.

**Skills:** As described in the mechanics text, the following skills are useful in the Ready action.

- *Meditation / Void*: the hero focuses on existing and reacting in the moment.
- *Skill / Void*: the hero focuses on the underlying truth and profound meaning of his art.
- *Tea Ceremony / Void*: the hero centers himself and takes his place in the long tradition stretching back to the Kami themselves.
- *Spellcraft (Importune) / Void*: the hero calls upon the power of the world to aid him in his efforts. The Target Number for this roll is 30.

#### Prepare

*A potter examines the sake set again, then discards the bottle and makes a new one. A gardener attends her plants, carefully pruning those that need it. A theater troop practices their performance of "The Scorpion and the Frog".*

The above are examples of the Prepare action, in which a competitor engages in work which takes more than a moment or two to perform. It is primarily used to accumulate value towards the entrance requirement for a cumulative competition (see that section for details).

**Mechanics:** The hero rolls the Skill / Trait combination listed for the contest, noting his results. Once in the competition, he may need to make a second, different skill check for the presentation of his work.

Prepare may only be used once per Contest per Court sequence, although a hero may Prepare for multiple contests if he has multiple actions using High or Merchant skills.

**Skills:** Determined by the contest.



### Rendezvous (Influence)

*A Daidoji steps out of the shadows and breaks a courtier's neck with practiced aplomb. A Hida and a Shinjo meet in a moonlit grotto for a nude swim. A magistrate presents his evidence in a private audience with two daimyo, sweat beading down his neck as he tries to fathom their response to his news.*

Each of these is an example of a Rendezvous, an opportunity for a hero to interact directly with another character for a short period of time. Rendezvous is the action by which heroes set up role-playing scenes in which they can engage with other characters to advance their goals.

**Mechanics:** The hero spends Influence equal to the difference between his Status and the Status of the individual he wishes to meet with (minimum 1). This is the base cost, which buys the hero one opportunity to make a skill check or, in the case of an ambush or other aggressive meeting, one round of combat before others attempt to interfere.

If using initiative, the hero must set up the Rendezvous during his turn in the initiative order.

The hero may spend the same amount of Influence again to purchase an additional skill check or round, up to a total number of skill checks or rounds equal to his Rank.

If the hero wishes to meet with an Ally, someone he has Blackmail over, or shares a Kharmic Tie with, he may reduce the Influence cost by the Ally's devotion or the Blackmail/Kharmic Tie Rank. This reduction cannot take the total cost below 0.

A hero may also always meet with one or more members of his own party, or accompany a party member to a meeting, without Influence cost, unless that party member has been sequestered or imprisoned for some reason.

When the hero wishes to invite multiple characters to the Rendezvous (as in the third example, above), the cost is equal to the difference between the lowest Status among the heroes and the highest Status among the invited characters, +2 for each invited character after the first.

A hero targeted by a Rendezvous action must go alone unless one of his allies succeeds in a Stymie action.

**Skills:** None, although the Influence cost can be reduced using the Arrange action (above).

#### Wait, What?

The Rendezvous action allows a hero to set up a scene with another character. The amount of Influence spent determines how many "skill checks" you get in the scene.

Want to ambush someone? *Rendezvous.*  
Want a winter romance? *Rendezvous.*  
Want to persuade someone. *Rendezvous.*

Just be ready to make your skill checks or things might get dicey. GMs can choose to extend a scene as a reward for exceptional Roleplaying or Creativity.

### Request Favor (Influence)

*A smiling courtier hands over elaborately beribboned travel papers. A squad of soldiers salutes the Scorpion courtier as they head to Phoenix lands to quell a bandit raid. The engineers present several plans for managing flooding in a river valley for the hero's consideration.*

The above are all examples of requesting a favor by spending Influence with one of the factions. Requesting a favor is a free action during a Court sequence.

**Mechanics:** None, although the Influence cost can be modified by Advantages.



If using initiative, the hero must request favors during his own turn in the initiative order or during a Rendezvous.

**Skills:** None, although the Influence cost can be reduced through Advantages and School techniques, or increased due to Disadvantages.

### Stymie

*A Doji struggles to get to his meeting with the daimyo, drowning under a tidal-wave of urgent missives concerning rice production. A Shosoro actress slips out of the shadows, only to find a faintly smiling Shiba standing in her way, hand resting on the hilt of his katana. A Bayushi's frustration is hidden behind his mask as an Ikoma's stories overtake his carefully crafted lies, ruining months of work.*

The above are all examples of the Stymie action, a deliberate heroic effort to thwart another's schemes. This action is used in a variety of ways: to put pressure on opponents, to provide cover and protection for one's allies, and as a display of skill to impress erstwhile allies.

**Mechanics:** The hero rolls a Skill / Trait check (TN 20) using one of the skills listed below. If he succeeds he may, at any point between when he took this action and first action in the next sequence, initiate a "courier's duel" with a target who attempts to take a Court action.

In a "courier's duel" the two courtiers engage one another in a game of wits and words, described jointly by the hero's player and the GameMaster.

Extended rules for courier's duels are listed in the section on contests (below).

If the hero does not initiate a courier's duel before his first action next sequence, he instead gains 1 Free Raise to his first Court action in the next sequence.

**Raises:** A hero may attempt either 3 or 5 Raises when he takes this action. For 3 Raises the hero can initiate two courier's duels before his first action in the next sequence; for 5 he extends the duration of the action so that he can initiate two courier's duels before his first action in the sequence AFTER the next sequence.

**Skills:** The following skills are useful for Stymie:

- *Defense / Perception:* the knowledge of when and where to step can be just as important as a cunning turn of phrase or a staggering blow.
- *Etiquette (Bureaucracy) / Intelligence:* the world of the Courts runs on paper and that paper can become a weapon in the right (or wrong) hands.
- *Intimidation (Control) / Willpower:* a shouting man can make most other people back down, at least in the moment. The long-term consequences may be more difficult to deal with.
- *Temptation (Bribery) / Awareness:* any plot involving more than one person can, eventually, be suborned or foiled by someone willing to patiently acquire all the pieces – and pay the price for turning them to a different end.

### Courier's Duels

Courier's duels are a mechanically way of describing the intricate ploy and counter-ploy of two courtiers maneuvering around one another to achieve their goals. It uses mechanics similar to those of an iaijutsu duel, as follows:

**Initiative:** Initiative is not important in this version of a duel.

**Set Stance:** Although there are no formal stances in social interactions, this stage is used clarify the Skill / Awareness pairings the courtiers will roll against.

For *Assessment*, both will roll using Skill / Awareness, where Skill for the challenger is the skill he used for the Stymie action and for the challenged is Etiquette. Some courtier school techniques may allow the challenged to use other skills as well.

For *Focus*, both will roll Skill / Void, inheriting the skill they used for Assessment.

For *Strike*, only the challenged needs to roll, using the Skill / Trait combination he originally selected for his Court Action, modified as described below.

In the case of a Rendezvous or a Request Favor, the Influence cost may be modified based on the results of the Focus roll.

**Assessment:** During assessment both challenger and challenged use Skill / Awareness with a TN of 10 + 5x the opponent's Insight Rank to gain information about one another. The skill is the skill set either by the competition or selected by the challenger (per above).

The information gained can include:

- Duel Trait
- Duel Skill
- Emphases associated with the duel skill
- Opponent's Awareness
- Opponent's Void
- Opponent's Current Void pool

Note that some School Techniques expand this list to include other information.

If either party acknowledges the other as a superior competitor and forfeits the duel, the forfeiter gains +1 Honor (Courtesy).

If a character's Assessment roll exceeds his opponent's roll by 10 or more he gains +1k1 to his Focus roll.

**Focus:** The challenger rolls his Skill / Void; the challenged rolls either Etiquette / Void or another skill if allowed to do so by his Techniques. The two results are compared.

If the challenger wins the Focus roll, he imposes a "Forced Raise" on the challenged for every 5 points by which he beat the opponent's Focus roll.

If the challenged wins the Focus roll, he gains a Free Raise for every 5 points by which his Focus roll exceeded the challenger's Focus roll.

**Strike:** The challenged courtier now makes the skill roll for his chosen court action, modified as follows:

- If he lost the Focus roll he must make a number of Raises equal to the "Forced Raises" from the Focus result. If he is forced to make more Raises than he can due to Void restrictions, he automatically fails the skill roll. These Raises have no additional effect, but do replace any Raises called (if any) during the original action declaration.
- If he won the Focus roll, he gains Free Raises as described. These Free Raises can be used for additional effects or used to reduce the hero's Target Number.

In the case of Rendezvous:

- If he lost the Focus roll, he must either include the challenger in the Rendezvous or pay additional Influence equal to the number of Forced Raises imposed.
- If he won the Focus roll, he may claim 1 Influence from the challenger.

In the case of a Request Favor:

- If he lost the Focus roll, he must either pay additional Influence equal to the number of Forced Raises imposed.
- If he won the Focus roll, he may claim 1 Influence from the challenger.

#### Wager

*A Matsu boasts loudly and often of her coming victory over everyone in the coming grand melee. A Yasuki quietly changes coins in the corner while an intense sumai match comes to an epic conclusion. An Utaku grins, knowing no one can beat her at horse archery and aching to prove it.*

The above are examples of the Wager action, in which a hero stakes some portion of his current Influence on the assertion that he (or someone else he has faith in) will win a coming competition.

**Mechanics:** The hero rolls an Skill / Trait check (TN 20) using one of the skills listed below. If he succeeds he may “stake” one point of his Influence in the competition at the end of the sequence. The wager takes the following form:

<Named Participant> will win <Named Competition>

If the participant the hero names wins the competition, the stake is and he gains additional Influence equal to the staked amount. If the participant does NOT win, the hero loses his stake.

**Raises:** For each Raise the hero makes on his skill check he may stake an additional Influence. This increases both the risk and the reward.

*Example: Ikoma Doi believes his friend Kuni Yasutake will win the Presentation of Concepts Calligraphy competition. He takes the Wager action with two Raises, wagering a total of 3 Influence. If*

*he wins the wager returns his 3 Influence and an additional 3 Influence. If he loses, Doi loses the “stake” of 3 Influence.*

**Skills:** The following skills can be used to set a wager:

- *Commerce / Willpower:* no true samurai would wager koku on an event. Unless he had a few laying around, meaningless things they are, and could maybe get a few more and impress his friends...
- *Games (Gambling) / Awareness:* gambling on the outcome of a contest is, naturally, a crass and boorish thing done only by the Mantis. In public. In private, favors and provinces may be wagered and lost and won again many times before the end of Court.
- *Sincerity / Awareness:* clear, direct statements of support can tie two samurai's fortunes together, for better or worse.
- *Temptation (Bribery or Seduction) / Awareness:* promises do not always have to be kept.



## Contests: Patterns of Conflict

Contests are the life's blood of a Court; the source of Influence and the center around which gossip, favor trading, and advancement revolve.

Contests fall into several patterns which can be mixed and elaborated upon to create complex structures. These include:

**Contest of Skills:** in this pattern, matched pairs of contestant's test their skills against one another, generally in a single elimination tournament style. The character who wins all of his duels wins the competition.

**Grand Display:** in this pattern, competitors bring their best work in a specific medium and style to display before the Court. Mechanically these leverage the cumulative roll system outlined in the L5R Core rulebook. The winner is generally the character with the highest total value, with a tie going to the character with the highest Skill Rank.

**Heroic Trials:** in this pattern, competitors must overcome challenges using several Skill / Trait combinations. The winner is selected from among the individuals who completed the most challenges, with a tie being decided by the total number of Raises the character's made during the event.

**Master the Moment:** in this pattern competitors take turns attempting a pre-specified Skill / Trait combination. Each round the base TN increases, and points are scored by making Raises. The winner is the character who competes in the last round of the competition and scores the highest total number of Raises.

Focus: Trait and Skill Selection

<text here>

Each of these is a specific focus for a competition, a chance for a hero to demonstrate specific skills in competition with his peers. Mechanically the focus will usually specify the Skill to be used and will often dictate the Trait involved.

### Competition Focus

FOCUS	SKILL GROUP
ARTISTIC	Acting, Artisan, Craft
GAMES	Games or Performance
MARTIAL	Bugei Skills
rites	Divination, Spellcraft, Lore: Theology
SOCIAL	Etiquette, Performance, Sincerity
SCHOLARSHIP	Lore

**Artistic:** the hero competes in one of several kinds of artistic competitions. Rokugani culture is a product of artistic endeavor, a shared history and aesthetic developed over a thousand years of effort. Those who display mastery of the common arts (calligraphy, ikebana, pottery, tea ceremony, and theater) or the secondary arts (painting, poetry, etc) can gain considerable influence for themselves and their clans.

Art is also important as a medium through which individuals of different social standing, Clan, or background can find common ground for conversation, connection, and even alliance. Small artistic groups meet across boundaries, united by their shared enjoyment of a cultural treasure.

Artistic competitions most often take the form of either Grand Display or Master the Moment.

**Games:** the hero competes in one or more games with others who share a similar passion. Games are a popular pastime and way to create shared entertainment; indeed the more

entertaining the better. Some games are relatively traditional (e.g go) while others wax and wane in popularity as the years pass.

Games typically take the form either of a tournament of Courtier's Duels or Master the Moment.

**Martial Displays:** the samurai are a warrior caste, in theory dedicated to the way of sword, spear, and bow. Opportunities to display those skills, and demonstrated proficiency in them, can provide both influence and status in the Courts.

Martial Displays may take the form of Courtier's Duels, Heroic Trials, or Master the Moment or be resolved using either the standard skirmishing rules (regular order of combat) or dueling rules.

**Rites:** the hero participates in one or more religious rites, demonstrating both his piety and knowledge of appropriate behavior for all to see. Both are important tools in a world where the Fortunes do answer prayers and supernatural evils appear with frightening regularity.

Rites will generally take the form of Master the Moment.

**Social:** the hero finds himself at a dance, feast, or other important gathering where successfully navigating the social waters can easily win favor while failing to do so will carry heavy if hidden costs.

Social competitions often take the form of a Heroic Trial, combining artistic effort with social graces.

**Scholarship:** just as Rokugan is a land of arts, it is also a land of stories and discussion, arguments which stretch back for a thousand years about lineage, history, science, and theology. Samurai are expected to embrace

learning as well as violence, the scroll as much as the sword. A learned man, one who demonstrates his knowledge in reasoned debate with others of equal skill, can find his standing among his peers greatly increased. A blowhard or one who prefers to fake knowledge, or fails to deeply engage with his chosen topics, is likely to earn quiet ridicule.

Scholarship competitions typically use the Master the Moment pattern, though they may culminate with a Courtier's Duel if there is no clear winner.

#### Contests of Skill

*Two shoji masters face one another across a board. A storm of conflicting orders and counter-orders come from different parts of the Court, causing confusion. A Shiba and a Shosoro move in and out of the shadows, both trying to reach the Isawa's chambers first.*

Each of these is an example of a contest of skills. As mentioned in the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> edition core rule book, it is possible to use the iaijutsu dueling mechanics for contests other than those revolving around steel.

In the Court system, contests of skill generally occur when two characters face off to determine a winner in a focused competition.

In order to streamline in-session activity, the Court supplement adopts the following conventions for translating iaijutsu duels into contests of skill.

**Initiative:** It is not necessary to roll initiative during a contest of skills.

**Set Stance:** Although there are no formal "stances" in a contest of skill, this step is when the Skill / Trait combination for the contest is formally declared.

**Assessment:** During assessment both challenger and challenged use Skill /



Awareness with a TN of 10 + 5x the opponent's Insight Rank to gain information about one another. The skill is the skill set either by the competition or selected by the challenger (per above).

The information gained can include:

- Duel Trait
- Duel Skill
- Emphases associated with the duel skill
- Opponent's Awareness
- Opponent's Void
- Opponent's Current Void pool

Note that some School Techniques expand this list to include other information.

If either party acknowledges the other as a superior competitor and forfeits the duel, the forfeiter gains +1 Honor (Courtesy).

If a character's Assessment roll exceeds his opponent's roll by 10 or more he gains +1k1 to his Focus roll.

**Focus:** The Focus action uses a contested Skill / Void, where skill is inherited from the Set Stance stage above.

A competition uses the same rules as an iaijutsu duel for the Focus roll, although the benefit of "striking first" is somewhat mitigated (see below).

**Strike:** In a competition, the strike uses the Skill / Trait combination set for the competition. Unlike in an iaijutsu duel, the strike is a contested roll, modified by the Free Raises gained during the Focus, with the highest roll winning the contest of skills.

### Grand Display

*A display of paintings by different artists turns the Main Court into an art gallery. Theater troops act out new plays to a judgmental audience. The rock*

*gardens are transformed as monks from the Clans translate enlightenment into visual metaphors.*

Each of these is an example of a "grand display", a work of art created by one or more people over an extended period. By the time the display is complete the work is almost done, although presentation does count for something.

Mechanically, this pattern leverages the cumulative roll rules presented in the L5R core rulebook with modifications as follows.

**Preparing for the Contest:** The hero and his allies may attempt to use the cooperative rolls rules to take the Prepare action using the first variant. One hero is chosen to make the roll and he receives a bonus equal to the combined Ranks of all other participants in the Skill in question.

The hero rolls against a Target Number of 20. He may choose to make Raises. So long as he meets the target number + Raises he records the dice result and the number of Raises made as progress in a cumulative roll.

The Skill / Trait combination used to prepare for a contest may or may not be the one used to Stage the contest.

*Example: Soshi Miwa is preparing a play using Intelligence / Artisan (Playwright). She has Intelligence 4, Artisan 3, and Great Potential. Her frequent collaborator Kakita Sadao assists her with his Artisan 3 (Poet). She rolls 7k4+3 on her prepare roll, taking 2 Raises. She rolls a 23, below the 30 she needed for the 2 Raises, and so makes no progress on her play this sequence.*

**Staging the Contest:** during the contest the competitor and his assistants may make one final roll to determine how well they arrange and present the work. This roll only counts towards the total number of Raises in the accumulated total.



The presentation is a variant of cooperative roll using the second manner presented: each participant rolls individually with a bonus from the skill Rank used to prepare for the contest.

Each character who succeeds at a TN of 20 + 5 per Raise can contribute his Raises to the overall result.

*Example Continued: After weeks of sleepless (if pleasant) nights, Soshi Miwa and her troop of Shosoro actors present their play. She has accumulated 110 success over the course of Court and 4 Raises.*

*Her actors (characters in her troupe, which she has as through a creative use of the Servant Advantage) each roll 7k3+3 (her Artisan (Playwright) skill Rank). They accumulate 3 Raises between them, raising her total to 110 success and 7 Raises.*

Judging the Contest: Once all the staging and presentation is complete, the judges make a determination on the winner based on:

- **Finesse:** The total number of Raises in the work
- **Talent:** The cumulative value of the work

These are weighted as follows:

In a contest primarily about *raw Talent*, divide the cumulative value by 5 and add in the number of Raises to determine the winner. These kinds of displays are generally most acceptable for “new talent” and “those with potential” who are being displayed to the Court for the first time.

In a contest where the participant is expected to display a balance of Finesse and Talent, the divide the cumulative value by 10 and add in the number of Raises to determine the winner. These displays are generally for seasoned courtiers who are expected to both know their

own limits and have a working knowledge of the arts.

In a contest primarily about Finesse, divide the cumulative value by 20 and add in the number of Raises to determine the winner. These displays are for masters, those who have already proven their talents in multiple competitions of this sort.

These are summarized in the table below:

FOCUS	CUMULATIVE DIVISOR
<b>TALENT</b>	5
<b>BALANCE</b>	10
<b>FINESSE</b>	20

### Heroic Trials

*A Matsu roars as she leaps across a mud pit, grabs a spear as she rolls by, and flings it into the heart of a target set 20 lengths away. An Asako wipes ink on her brow as she struggles to complete the fifth of eight Imperial Tests in the allotted time. A field of youth race forward to get at the few boats set up to cross the river, knowing that the swim will tire them out for the coming ride and following poetry competition.*

Each of these is an example of the “Heroic Trial” pattern, in which a hero must demonstrate basic skills rapidly and in sequence. Failure at one task makes the subsequent tasks more difficult; conversely doing well may create additional opportunities for success in later challenges.

Traditionally Heroic Trials are based myths about great deeds and mighty victories Traitd to legendary heroes. The participants are to act out these mythic moments, proving to the Fortunes that they have the blood of heroes running in their veins.

Mechanically, this pattern relies on the standard skill roll and Raise mechanics

presented in the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> Edition core rule book. The pattern contains multiple challenges with different Skill / Trait combinations. Raises on one roll provide an advantage to the next challenge, while a failure forces the hero to make Raises for no effect on the next part of the challenge.

#### *The Trial Structure*

A trial consists of between three and five Skill / Trait rolls, each with a different Target Number. These are unified together by a theme, either a story or a specific event, which gives the event structure and meaning.

The difficulty of a Trial depends on its intended participants. Generally a Trail for younger, less experienced samurai will have Target Numbers between 10 and 20, while one for seasoned veterans and masters of the Courts may have Target Numbers between 25 and 35.

*Example: The Scorpion Clan hosts a dinner and dance on the first night of the Topaz Championship. This contest involves two skill rolls: a Etiquette / Awareness (TN 15) roll for the adolescents to display their manners and an Perform (dance)/ Agility (TN 15) roll for them to display their education in courtly affairs.*

#### *Order of Events*

In many trials the order of events is important. In others, the heroes may choose which order they attempt the skill rolls in.

*Example Continued: The Scorpion dinner requires two skill rolls. The participants may attempt them in any order: either focusing first on the dancing to improve others perceptions before engaging in conversation or first trying to be charming before getting caught up in a court dance's intricate measure.*

#### *Passing on Success and Failure*

When attempting a Trail the hero uses the Skill / Trait combination required by each test. He may make Raises as normal for this roll.

The mechanical effect of succeeding or failing depends on how many Raises the hero attempted:

- 1) If he succeeds he progresses to the next task without either bonuses or penalties.
- 2) If he succeeds with Raises, he gains a Free Raise to the next challenge for each 2 Raises he attempted.
- 3) If he fails without Raises he must make 1 Raise on the next skill roll he attempts; if he fails a second time he is removed from the competition entirely.
- 4) If he fails with 2 or more Raises he is eliminated from the competition.

#### *Achieving Victory*

The victor is selected from among those participants who complete the trial with the highest number of Raises. In cases of a tie, the victor is determined by adding together the skill Ranks of all of the skills used or by initiating a courtier's duel between the tied contestants.

#### *Master the Moment*

*A poet slams down her tenth cup of sake and announces her haiku to the watching court. Courtiers seem to work magic with origami, causing a blizzard of shapes to spring forth from the paper provided by the Phoenix. The Voice of the Emperor speaks a word and a dozen master calligraphers try to capture its essence in ink.*

Each of these is an example of the "Master the Moment" pattern, in which heroes try to spontaneously express their mastery of mind, body, and spirit to create ephemeral beauty which lives on only in the memory of those who witnessed it. In many ways this is the ultimate expression of the Rokugani understanding of change, death, and



transformation – that everything exists and must pass away, and therefore must be appreciated within and between the moments.

Mechanically this pattern uses the standard skill roll and raises rules found in the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> Edition core rulebook. However, the pattern is extended to show how target numbers and raises interact to create the various possibilities for victory conditions.

There are three variations of the master the moment contest: progressively increasing TN by round, a combination of Raises and progressive rounds, and single skill rolls with scoring based on highest roll and Raises called.

#### *First Variation: Progressive Target Numbers*

In the **first variation**, heroes face a set of increasing target numbers. Each “round” of the contest the heroes roll; those who succeed pass on to the next round. The competition continues until only one person remains; if both fail during the final roll the contest switches to courtier’s duel.

This variation has TNs and scores as follows:

ROUND	TN	SCORE
1	15	1
2	20	2
3	25	3
4	30	4
5	35	5
6	40	6
7	45	7
8	50	8
9	55	9
10	60	10

#### *Second Variation: Combination of Raises and Rounds*

In the **second variation**, heroes face progressively increasing target numbers and gain points by making additional Raises. These contests usually go for between three and five

rounds, with each round scoring 2 points and each accumulated Raise counting for 1.

This variation has TNs and scores as follows, with the score based on the total number of rounds past plus the hero’s total number of Raises on successful skill challenges:

ROUND	TN	SCORE
1	10	2 + Raises
2	15	4 + Raises
3	20	6 + Raises
4	25	8 + Raises
5	30	10 + Raises
6	35	12 + Raises

*Example: Kakita Toshiki is a master painter with Soul of Artistry who finds himself dragged into an ikebana contest. His Intelligence 5 + Soul of Artistry (2) means he rolls 7K5 on each roll, and can reasonably hit TNs as high as 25 with little effort. In the first two rounds he makes 3 Raises, then 3 Raises again, then tries 1 Raise in round 3. This gives him a total score moving into Round 4 of 13 (6 for Round 3, 7 total raises).*

#### *Third Variation: Highest Roll and Raises*

In the **third variation**, the heroes have one opportunity to make a skill check against a Target Number of 25. The hero may declare any number of Raises up to his maximum as well, or he may simply hope to roll well.

This variation is scored as follows:

- Hero with the highest roll: +2 points
- All heroes: +1 point per Raise

In the cases of a tie, the character with the highest skill Rank wins the contest.



### Wait, What?

Yes, you can imagine many other approaches to contests. Heck, I've seen more than these four just poking around at Topaz Championships run online over the last few years.

Feel free to add, invent, imagine and expand the concept of contests. The point here is to give you a starting point, not a straight jacket.

## Influence

Influence is a mechanical representation of the constant flow of favors and conversation which makes up a courtier's life. Rather than trying to track every interaction, a courtier accumulates Influence and uses it to request favors from other courtiers aligned with the various Duties described in the Court section.

### Measuring Influence

Influence is measured in integers and can be either positive or negative. It is accumulated through great deeds, boldness in battle, and success in competitions. It can be lost if the hero finds himself indebted to the wrong courtiers, if he dares too greatly and fails, or if he fails to use it before the end of Court.

Influence is used to **acquire favors** from those who perform the Duties in a Court. It can also be used to create opportunities to meet (Rendezvous) during which a hero may attempt to persuade another character to his point of view.

A group of heroes may pool their Influence to purchase favors. A hero may also call upon an Ally or leverage someone through Blackmail to help offset Influence costs.

### *The End of Court: Influence and Glory*

As a Court closes down and the Intrigues come to an end, the hero has one last chance to acquire favors. Any Influence remaining at the end of Court over the hero's Glory Rank is wasted.

If a hero has negative Influence (due to bad choices or the plots of others) he retains that Influence, again with a value no higher than his Glory Rank.

*Example: Suzume Kio is a modest samurai (Glory 1) who got himself embroiled in a Scorpion plot, ending Court with -7 Influence. He starts the next Court with -1 Influence; his fame does not proceed him.*

## Gaining Influence: Battles, Competitions, and Deeds

Heroes gain Influence by taking action in the world not by engaging in Intrigue maneuvers. In Rokugan, deeds speak louder than words and the most important messages spoken in complete silence.

The actions which lead to gaining Influence include but are not limited to:

- Heroic Opportunities in Battle,
- Success in Competitions, and
- Performance of Great Deeds.

If Intrigue actions form the backbone of the Great Game, these three are how one earns the currency to play.

### *Where is Influence Earned?*

Courts of Rokugan assumes that all heroes belong somewhere, doing something, so they are not actually homicidal hobos wandering Rokugan. This assumption may not be true in the case of some ronin campaigns.

This raises the question: if Influence is lost at the end of an Intrigue, where is it gained when the heroes are not actively involved with an Intrigue?

The rule of thumb is that the heroes are always, always engaged in an Intrigue at some level of intensity, usually in the background. That Intrigue may shift up or down in intensity as the seasons change, but the Intrigue itself remains until something happens to end the Court.

For heroes who travel a great deal (like wandering magistrates), the Influence is awarded in the Court of the Lord who either assigned or benefited from the task.

Finally, sometimes the heroes may gain Influence with the Imperial Court. Once someone starts to play that part of the Great

Game, it never ends. Even if only in the background, one might find oneself engaged with the Imperials and their schemes for decades. Mechanically, characters with some Advantages may find themselves “resident” in an Intrigue even though they themselves are far away.

#### *Battles: For Honor and Glory!*

*An Ikoma scout remains kneeling as his lord praises his insight and courage before the court. A duelist listens as, with a few well-spoken words, an artisan captures the moment she felled the enemy general with a perfect strike.*

Samurai are to serve their lords first and foremost in battle, both against the lord’s enemies and against the supernatural evils which stalk the land. Those who do so with courage and resolve are honored; those who fail to do so find themselves quickly and sometimes publicly dismissed.

During a battle, the hero may gain Influence by:

- Successfully completing a Heroic Opportunity in battle; or
- Leading a unit in battle.

Each of these gives the hero **1 Influence**.

#### *Contests and Competitions*

Contests come in three categories: regular, annual, and championships.

A **regular** contest covers most contests in a Winter Court or other event which will have multiple contests in a group. It is difficult (TN 20 at least), but anyone who successfully participates gains 1 Influence. The hero who wins the contest gains 2 Influence. A hero who fails to meet the starting target number or who is defeated in the first round (in a martial contest) loses 1 Influence.

An **annual** competition happens once a year and is usually associated with a festival of some

kind. The contest is locally or regionally important and attracts dignitaries from the hosting clan and its allies. Some contests are open to all; others are by invitation only, an invitation which must be secured by wagering 3 Influence. A participant who succeeds during the first sequence gains back his wagered Influence and an additional +2 Influence. The winner gains back his wager and an additional +4 Influence. A hero who fails loses his wagered Influence.

A **championship** takes place when the Emperor or one of the Great Clans invites the samurai of Rokugan to send their best and brightest in a specific field to prove their worth. A championship consists of five to eight regular contests with an annual competition which represents the “penultimate” test of skill. The Influence wager for entrance is often made by the Clan the competitor represents. The hero who accumulates the most Influence during a Championship is declared the winner; in cases of a tie there will be one final duel of some sort to settle the matter.

Type	Enter	Fail	Compete	Win
Regular	0	-1	+1	+2
Seasonal	-3	-0	+5	+7
Championship	-3	V	V	V

#### *Deeds*

These opportunities derived from battles and deeds are translated into common examples of Influence rewards in the table below:

Great Deed	Influence Gained
Defeat a Bandit Gang	1 to 2
Defeat a Maho-Tsukai or other Force of Evil	2 to 4
Discrediting or embarrassing the Lord’s adversary	1
Duel an enemy of the group to the death	Rank of the Opponent



Organize a defense of a location	1 for a village, 2 for a town, 3 for a city
Restore peace to an area	2 to 4
Return the swords of the dead	2
Return with good scouting information	1 to 2
Set up a forward supply cache for an army	1 to 2
Solve a troublesome mystery	2 to 4
Successfully escort an Important Person or Important Cargo on a journey	1
Successfully foiling an attack (physical, spiritual, or courtly) on an Important Person	2
Uncover a dangerous secret and use it responsibly	2

#### Pooling Influence: Allies and Heroes

A group of heroes and their allies (willing or otherwise) may choose to pool their Influence to acquire a hard to procure favor. This is considered a regular part of the great game.

Within the group of heroes, the players can negotiate among themselves how to handle sharing and pooling Influence.

When the heroes reach out to their Allies, each ally will contribute Influence up to their Devotion once per Intrigue. Similarly, a hero may use the Blackmail advantage to cause another courtier to contribute up to half his Status in Influence once per Intrigue, or up to his full Status in Influence which “pays off” the Blackmail.

#### Influence Cost and Status

Some Influence costs (i.e. invitations and Rendezvous) are modified by the Status Rank of the individuals involved. Favor costs are

NOT modified by Status, although there may be Courts where the heroes simply cannot ask for favors because of Clan alliances, personal history, or Disadvantages like Black Sheep.

#### The Many Kinds of Rendezvous

Rendezvous, the action in which the hero spends Influence to meet with someone for a number of skill rolls, is a flexible way to engage in that most traditional of L5R Court activities – persuading someone to the hero’s point of view. It is also how heroes engage in tense negotiations, conduct torrid affairs, and ambush enemies in the dead of night.

Note that, as with any Influence cost, it is possible for two or more heroes (or courtiers, for that matter) to pay the cost for a meeting or reduce the cost using the Arrange action.

During the Rendezvous, the heroes engage in a role-playing scene using the persuasion mechanics detailed in the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Core Rulebook, generally pitting Courtier or Sincerity against the target’s Etiquette. Please refer to the core rules for more details on persuasion and social interaction in a social scene.

The following examples link different kinds of Rendezvous with the appropriate Arrange Skill / Trait combination.

Rendezvous	Arrange
Commercial Transaction	Commerce / Willpower
Deliver a Report	Battle / Awareness
Persuade to Cause	Etiquette / Awareness
Pillowbook Meeting	Temptation / Agility
Present a Case	Investigation / Perception
Stage an Ambush	Stealth / Awareness

## Of Favors

While courtiers plot, plan, and scheme they also have jobs: work which needs to get done to keep the lord's holdings and the Empire functional. Focusing this work in specific ways, to the benefit of the heroes and the detriment of their foes, requires Influence to acquire appropriate favors.

The *Of Courts* section provides details about the Duties taken on in a Court and the favors those Duties may grant. This section provides more details about these favors, both in a generic sense and with specific examples which provide guidance to the infinite creativity of players.

### Favor Size and Influence Cost

Favors come in three general "sizes", which represent the disruption granting the favor will inflict on the Court. These are: small, medium, and large. **Small** favors cause little disruption and fit into the normal flow of activities. **Medium** favors represent a deviation from normal operations, while a **Large** favor will disrupt the Court and its activities in a significant or dramatic way.

The specific Influence cost will vary slightly depending on the circumstances, but will generally fall into the following ranges:

SIZE	INFLUENCE
<b>SMALL</b>	3 to 7 (5)
<b>MEDIUM</b>	7 to 12 (10)
<b>LARGE</b>	13 to 18 (15)

When in doubt, the "base" Influence cost is 5 for small favors, 10 for medium favors, and 15 for large favors.

### Influence and Alliance

*Of Courts* raises the concept that two Courts might be aligned. This can be purely

descriptive, informing heroes of the general political state of the world at a given time.

Alternately, the GameMaster may allow the heroes to use Influence to acquire favors in allied Courts as well as the heroes current one. Doing so increases the Influence cost of the favor by +3.

*Example: The Imperial Court is allied with every Court in Rokugan. A hero wishing to acquire a small favor in Crab lands can do so for a base cost of 8 Influence (5 + 3 for the allied Court).*

For even more detail, the cost can vary based off the relative Status of the Courts. In this case, the modifier is equal to the absolute value of the negative integer between the two Court Status (minimum +1).

*Example: The heroes find themselves stuck in the City of the Rich Frog, trying to influence Imperial taxes. The City Court has Status Rank 5 vs. the Imperial Court's Rank 10. All favors cost an additional +5 Influence. Conversely, someone in the Imperial Court may ask for a favor from those in the City for +1 Influence. It might make more sense for the heroes to go directly to the Imperial Court with their requests...*

### Detailed Favor Charts

#### Detailed Favors: The Lord

The Lord does not grant favors; instead he is a target for Rendezvous actions which create the opportunity to persuade him to take decisions.

#### Detailed Favors: Right Hand

The Right Hand coordinates and manages the Lord's military forces, the administration of justice, and taxation. The favors granted by the holder of this duty reflect his military focus and responsibility to protect the Lord's lands.

Small favors include:



- Rearrange a patrol's schedule for a day (often used to describe using Influence to pay for a Rendezvous)
- Reassess a settlement's tax burden
- Receive a military assessment of an uncontested region
- Receive permission to practice with the lord's soldiers during their training (+1 XP)

Medium favors include:

- Place a small guard contingent at a specific station for a season
- Delay the lord's taxes for a season
- Receive a military assessment of a contested region
- A military squad accompanies the heroes on a mission within the lord's lands
- Suspend the lord's taxes on a settlement for a season

Large favors include:

- Request a display of military might in a specific location and time
- Secure an appointment in the lord's army (may participate in the Court at background intensity without an invitation)
- Prevent an allied force from moving through the lord's lands for a short time
- Receive a military assessment of an allied region
- A military squad accompanies the heroes on a mission close to but outside of the lord's lands

#### Detailed Favors: Left Hand

The Left Hand is responsible for the lord's household and lands. This duty, often taken on by the lord's wife, extends to caring for the

welfare of the lord's people as well. It does not include either gathering resources from the lands (under the Right Hand) or stores and provisions (under the Center).

Small favors include:

- Participate in a seasonal competition (already included in the Competition rules)
- Receive an invitation to the focused Court Intrigues;
- Examine a settlement for needed improvements within the year
- Request a named artisan to provide entertainment or assistance during a meeting/festival (+1 Glory)
- Train with a sensei at the Court, if one is available (+1 XP)
- Receive permission to take residence in an untenanted household in settled or unsettled lands
- Have a household servant assigned to the courtier for a season (effectively gain a minor Servant (3 point) for 1 season)
- Survey roads and waterworks in an area to identify possible improvements
- Request mercy in a matter of minor importance or civil law

Medium favors include:

- Secure a tutor for the Imperial Civil Service Exam (may spend Influence to secure a chair at the examination if the tutor is impressed)
- Receive lodging in the household for a season
- Request a marriage with a peer
- Request a prominent place in a festival (+1 Glory)
- Gain access to a location reserved for members of the household (reduces Rendezvous costs by 1 in the Court)



- Delay a marriage between two people of unequal station
- Receive permission to take residence in a household in settled lands (allows purchase of Gentry advantage)
- Perform upgrades to a settlement to increase its value or ability to support those who live within it

Large favors include:

- Request a marriage above one's station
- Secure a position in the lord's household for one person (may participate in the Court at background intensity without an invitation)
- Delay a marriage between two people of equal station
- Receive permission to create a settlement in unsettled lands (allows purchase of high-value Gentry advantage)
- Request mercy for a criminal case

#### Detailed Favors: Center

The Center takes care of record-keeping, regular order, the treasury, the household guard, and the stores. This work encompasses everything from maintaining the grounds to keeping detailed records of the comings and goings of samurai and managing the census.

Small favors include:

- Resupply a group's travel kits
- Arrange a meeting with a vassal merchant
- Secure travel papers within the lord's holdings
- A household guard accompanies the hero for a sequence

- Research legal precedent (+1k0 to one Lore: Bushido or Lore: Law roll during the Court)
- Receive general maps of the local area
- Access records of local events or travel
- Schedule a contentious case for judgement (if not handled as a Rendezvous)

Medium favors include:

- Secure travel papers to an allied lord's holdings
- Receive expedited travel papers (in the same sequence as the request)
- A household guard accompanies the hero for the duration of the Intrigue
- Send supplies to a village sufficient for a season
- Be assigned a vassal merchant for a year (earn 10 koku for that year)
- Receive general maps of the lord's lands or specific maps of a single area within them
- Access to records of correspondence
- Request a preliminary judgement on a matter not handled by the local magistrate

Large favors include:

- Secure permanent travel papers in a lord's demesne
- Set aside a legal precedent for a specific situation
- Send supplies to a village sufficient for a year
- Be assigned a vassal merchant and a trade route (earn 20 koku for that year)
- Examine detailed maps of the lord's holdings

#### Detailed Favors: Herald

The Herald takes care of communications, disaster relief, and the daily administration of justice in the lord's lands. These duties can and do sometimes come into conflicts with other's duties.

Small favors include:

- Send a message anywhere in the lord's lands
- Send a herald to the site of a disaster
- Build a small home
- Receive a license to practice a craft in the lord's domain for a year
- 

Medium favors include:

- Send a message to an allied lord (if not using the alliance system)
- Assign a local magistrate to investigate a rumor (one free Assess action)
- Send workmen to the site of a disaster immediately
- Build a large home or a small compound
- Y

Large favors include:

- Send a message privately without a record being made
- Secure a position as a local magistrate (may participate in the Court at background intensity without an invitation)
- Have a magistrate investigated by another magistrate
- Build a large compound

#### Detailed Favors: Spiritual Advisor

The Spiritual Advisor serves as both a counselor to the Court and its defender against

supernatural evils. In the case of an advisor who is also a shugenja, he is expected to use his supernatural power to protect the lord and his servants first, then the rest of the household.

Small favors include:

- Arrange a divination for a major event
- Gain access to a local shrine for a sequence (may use Spellcraft to take a Court action as a free action)
- Permission to build a shrine to the Fortunes (+1 Glory)

Medium favors include:

- Cause a previously cast divination to be re-examined
- Receive permission to study the holy books (+2 XP)
- Permission to build a shrine to an ancestor on sacred grounds (+1 Honor)
- Receive the considered advise of a scholar in a matter of lore
- Have a monk stationed as an advisor to a community for one year

Large favors include:

- Have a monk or shugenja examine a spiritual matter
- Have a shugenja stationed as the advisor to a community for one year
- Permission to build a small temple or other holy site at the location of your choosing
- Secure a position with the staff of the Spiritual Advisor

#### Detailed Favors: Underhand

The Underhand deals with matters best left unspoken – tradecraft, the criminal elements of a lord's lands, and blackmail among them. The underhand sacrifices his honor, separating

himself from his ancestors and the chain of rebirth, so that the lord does not have to.

Small favors include:

- Intercede against a courtier, causing his Influence costs to increase by +1 for the duration of the Court
- Remove an intercession
- Have a courtier or other member of the court followed (free Assess action)
- Acquire sensitive information (free Assess action)
- Make a connection (Rendezvous) with a yakuza, or other criminal figure

Medium favors include:

- Acquire secret information within the lord's domain (access to a secret selected by the GM)
- Acquire a small favor from another ministry without the rest of the Court knowing

Large favors include:

- Acquire secret information about the lord's allies and enemies
- Acquire a medium favor from another ministry without the rest of the Court knowing
- Secure a position in the Underhand



12 sequences, and a corresponding number of competitions) in which individuals can prove themselves worthy of positions in the Clan or Imperial Courts.

Advancing in position in this way shifts the hero's "Home Court" to the court where he has found a position. Such ambition is admirable in its way but also runs counter to the oaths sworn and the traditions of service which bind the samurai caste together.

## Of Goals

*"The man who comes to court without a goal gets exactly what he planned for." - Bayushi, Little Truths*

Heroes are heroes because they face great obstacles and perform daring deeds to overcome them. Samurai are samurai because, in the end, their duty to serve conflicts with their personal desires. This is the essence of heroic samurai drama – to face great obstacles which one overcomes through daring and determination at the cost of one's own soul.

Through the Courts of Rokugan setting, we now have mechanics to describe struggles others than skirmishes and pleas for clemency. These still have a place, but so also does the long work of gathering influence, the false gaiety of parties while the people starve, and the maneuvers of courtiers played out on the field of bones.

The Goals presented below summarize the Influence costs and probable steps to reach heroic goals; tasks which can shape the destiny of a family, a community, or even a nation.

### Disaster Relief

A strange black rot kills the rice in the fields. An earthquake and fire ravage a town. Drought dries the ancient waters, leaving the community's wells dry.

Each of these is an example of a disaster, a natural or supernatural occurrence which causes wide-spread damage. In a traditional scenario the heroes would investigate the cause of the disaster and, if it was caused by someone, deal with that issue.

In a Court, the heroes can also quest to restore the community, petitioning the various powers that be for assistance and relief. Doing so will require them to get involved in politics and competitions, to work together and come into

conflict with others whose communities are equally in need.

**Summary:** Cost between 30 and 50+ Influence, depending on the exact nature of the damage and the amount of relief needed.

**The Advisors:** Depending on the exact scenario, the heroes may find themselves in need of favors from all of the Advisors. The most common will be:

*The Right Hand:* charged with gathering taxes, the Right Hand can provide relief for 10 or 15 Influence.

*The Left Hand:* charged with management and maintenance of the lands, the Left can provide resources to rebuild for 10 Influence.

*The Center:* charged with resource management, the Center can provide supplies for 10 (for relief in a season) or 15 (for a year).

*The Advisor:* charged with intervening in the divine, the Advisor can provide magical assistance for 15 Influence.

*The Herald:* charged with the lord's mercy, the Herald can provide immediate aid for 10 Influence.

**Rendezvous:** The heroes may choose to meet with some or all of the members of the Court, including the Lord, to plead their case. If they do so, one or more of these luminaries may contribute Influence to the cause.

**Complications:** The heroes may encounter one or more of the following complications:

- 1) A group from a neighboring settlement, equally affected by the disaster, competes for the same resources,
- 2) An adversary, sensing an advantage, may begin a military campaign against the lords and his lands,

- 3) An enemy of the lord may arrange a campaign of sabotage (using an allied Underhand) to sow chaos in the court
- 4) An evil force may use the disruption as cover for an intricate plot involving oni, deception, and death.

**Adventure Hooks:** Depending on the complications, the heroes may find themselves dragged into any number of traditional adventures including battles, investigations, and fights against Shadowlands evils.

This goal is also sourced in an action-adventure premise – a natural or supernatural disaster which can start the game off with huge momentum.

### Reclaim Ancestral Lands

*A young bushi vows to restore the ruined kyuden where her family once dwelled. A forest has grown where once a thriving town stood, mocking the efforts of the poor samurai family who attempt to tend the shrines. Only one old monk remains to watch the Temple to the Seven Thunders, once a thriving community, as it fades into memory.*

Each of these is an example of an opportunity to reclaim ancestral lands, an effort to rebuild the glory of the past and pass it into the future. Heroes who take on this goal face a daunting task, for they must not only rebuild what has fallen but may find themselves face-to-face with whatever caused the decay in the first place.

**Summary:** The cost of reclaiming lands can vary between 30 and 60 Influence per year, potentially extending across a period of several years or even a decade.

**The Advisors:** The Right, Center, and Left Hands are all deeply involved with this effort, as follows:

*The Right Hand:* may be called upon to provide military assistance, stationing forces in a location for a season (10 Influence) or a

year (15 Influence). This cost may have to be paid multiple times as the lands are tamed over a period of years.

*The Left Hand:* will be called upon to help rebuild, providing resources to improve the lands over time at a cost of 10 to 15 Influence per year. The Left Hand may also be required to extend mercy, setting aside judgements which caused the lands to be abandoned in the first place (5 or 15 Influence) or to affirm the right of an individual to settle the area (10 Influence).

*The Center:* provides the resources to rebuild and sustain the lands (15 Influence per year) and may be required to reverse judgements in cases where the lands were abandoned for cause (5 to 15 Influence).

**Rendezvous:** The hero may wish to meet with one or more of the Advisors, or with the Lord in cases where he feels a decision needs to be made.

**Complications:** The following complications may occur during the reclamation:

- 1) Another claimant may appear, with a superior claim to the lands.
- 2) An ancient evil may stir beneath the ancestral lands, which were abandoned to avoid the disaster which would befall the lands were it to be awakened.
- 3) The lands may not actually be suitable for habitation for a variety of natural reasons, requiring additional resources (and therefore Influence) to be restored.

**Adventure Hooks:** The heroes may have to take up sword and scroll in order to:

- 1) Duel a rival claimant.
- 2) Defeat bandits or other forces who have taken over the abandoned lands.



- 3) Overcome the evil which plagued the lands, driving the hero's ancestors from their rightful home.

## Marriage

*Two lovers stare across the crowded room, knowing they will never see one another again. A man looks at his wife, hoping he can remember her name. A promise is made and a destiny will be fulfilled, even if it takes a hundred lifetimes.*

Each of these is an example of a Rokugani marriage, a business arrangement between two families which happens to involve two people joining together to have children and continue the family lines.

Romance is the simple stuff of writing a pillow book with one's life. Marriage is work.

**Summary:** The cost of a marriage depends on the relative status of the individuals involved. An in-Clan marriage may cost as little as 30 Influence, while an out-of-Clan marriage between two individuals of unequal status could cost as much as 80.

**The Advisors:** The following Advisors are involved with arranging a marriage:

*The Left Hand:* is the primary actor in marriage arrangements, deploying match makers and arranging festivities at appropriate times. A marriage between samurai of equal Status costs 10 Influence; one between those of unequal Status costs 15 and an additional 5 Influence to arrange for an appropriate venue.

*The Spiritual Advisor:* is a secondary actor, casting and if necessary recasting divinations as well as arranging for the religious rites. A marriage requires at least one divination for each individual and one for the marriage itself, for a total of 15 Influence.

**Rendezvous:** The hero would be wise to attempt to Rendezvous with the intended at some point, to at least secure cooperation (and potentially help with the Influence cost).

**Complications:** The primary complications a hero might encounter pursuing his goal might include:

- 1) An out of Clan match requires paying the cost (10 or 15, depending on status) for the marriage arrangements in BOTH courts.
- 2) More than one suitor may pursue an intended.
- 3) The intended may favor another suitor, contribution Influence and other resources to the other's cause.
- 4) The divinations may turn out unfavorably, forcing the hero to get it recast or to engage in some quest to change fate, delaying efforts to acquire Influence.
- 5) The hero's or the intended's family may rise or fall in fortune, resetting the negotiations.

**Adventure Hooks:** Heroes involved in a marriage goal may find themselves in need of improving their fortunes, performing great deeds and winning renown to impress their intended (and their intended's family), or exiled for daring beyond their station. Additionally, as in the fiction accompanying this supplement, there is always the chance that a marriage may not be quite what it seems...

## Secure a Position

*A ronin waits in the rain, shielding his swords under his damp straw cloak, hoping to hear of his appointment to the city guards. A monk meditates, his fate being decided by the abbot and his masters. Two courtiers consider one another as the Imperial Examiners post the results of the first of the six great exams.*

Each of the above is an example of securing a position, one of the great questions in a samurai's life. Ronin seek a position to restore themselves to their rightful place in the Celestial Order; Clan samurai seek positions to further their family's ambitions or to rise in the world, or both. Some even find a place where they can engage in *ikigai*, the experience of a life of purpose and meaning.

**Summary:** Securing a position requires at least 15 Influence with one of the ministers. In some cases it may also require an act of mercy by the Left Hand (5 or 15), research by the Center to prove claims (5 to 10), and proclamation by the Heralds (5) for a total of between 20 and 45 Influence.

**The Advisors:** The Left Hand, Center, Herald and Spiritual Advisor the hero wishes to find a position with are all involved with this goal. In particular:

*Position Holder:* A bushi will generally petition for a position with the Right Hand; a shugenja or monk with the Spiritual Advisor, and a Courtier with either the Left or the Center. Whichever the hero selects, the cost is 15 Influence for a permanent position.

*The Left Hand:* in situations where the hero has become a ronin due to accusations of a crime he will require either a small mercy (5 Influence for setting aside a civil matter) or a large one (15 Influence for setting aside a criminal matter) in order to secure a position.

*The Center:* in situations where the hero wishes to reclaim an ancestral position, the Center must be petitioned (5 Influence) to provide access to the appropriate records.

*The Spiritual Advisor:* may be called upon to provide a divination to show whether the Fortunes favor the appointment (5

Influence). This may be done as a pre-emptive move to avoid an adversary providing a conflicting divination and interpretation.

**Rendezvous:** The hero will be required to execute at least one Rendezvous and successful persuasion with the Advisor whom he wishes a position from in addition to paying the Influence cost.

**Complications:** Potential complications include:

- 1) An adversary providing a divination indicating the Fortunes do not favor the appointment,
- 2) An event from the past coming back to cast the hero's story in doubt, causing him to have to persuade his potential patron all over again,
- 3) False accusations casting the hero as a villain and disruptor of harmony cause several people to reconsider their support.

**Adventure Hooks:** While attempting to secure a position, a hero may have to:

- 1) Face an accuser,
- 2) Investigate the actual circumstances leading to him not having a position in the first place,
- 3) Discover a truth about his family and ancestry, or
- 4) Engage in a duel to settle a matter of honor from his past.

## Seek Justice

*A murder and blood magician hides behind his fan, knowing the hero cannot reach him even though he stands only three feet away. The creature who stole the heroes ancestral lands watches and waits for the next moves to play out. A child cries in the night, wondering when her imprisoned father will return.*



Each of these is an example of seeking justice, striving to get the law of Rokugan to take seriously, if just for a moment, the idea that righting the wrong is more important than maintaining stability and social harmony.

**Summary:** The cost of justice can vary between 10 and 60, depending on the amount of resources the opponent can bring to bear and the corresponding response the heroes must organize.

**The Advisors:** Three duties interact in the quest for justice – Right Hand, Left Hand, Center, and Herald.

*The Right Hand:* can be called upon to provide military support in situations where a criminal has considerable martial resources. This cost can range from 10 to 15 Influence or more, depending on the number of troops needed.

*The Center:* is charged with maintaining records of history and precedents as well as passing judgements. Scheduling a contentious case (one not settled at a local level) may require up to 10 Influence in addition to the cost of performing research to prepare for the event (5 per research effort).

*The Left Hand:* charged with mercy, the Left Hand can be petitioned to intercede in matters both civil (5 Influence) or criminal (15 Influence), extending mercy rather than the need for harmony or justice.

*The Herald:* is charged with maintaining the lord's presence in his lands through the administration of the magistrates. Much of the work done by magistrates does not involve criminal matters: settling neighborhood disputes, negotiating disagreement, and witnessing contracts are all regular duties. They are also involved with criminal investigations but will draw on the

Right Hand in his role as military commander for additional support in large matters. The cost of having a magistrate look into a situation can range from 5 to 15, depending on the sensitivity and the depth of the issue.

**Rendezvous:** Heroes may wish to Rendezvous with potential witnesses, with family members of those who suffered from the crime, or with other interested parties who may exert Influence to change the outcome of the proceedings.

**Complications:** This goal represents a standard L5R magistrate plot translated into the Court system. The complications are well established and explored in other supplements.

**Adventure Hooks:** As with complications, magistrate and investigation plots are well established in the L5R canon. Interweaving a complex investigation with a focused Court could make for an interesting set of sessions but does not require extended elaboration in this supplement.

### Write a Pillow Book

*Old lovers meet just before Court to renew their acquaintance. A young man scales the ivy under his lover's window, hoping she is waiting for him. Unaddressed letters are on open display in the Court, their words filled with meaning unseen to those who were not there.*

Each of these is a moment from a pillow book, a story of romance and tragedy in which enrapture audiences of all sexes and ages. To “write a pillow book” means to engage in a romance, filled with significant moments but ultimately doomed by time and fate.

**Summary:** The Influence cost depends entirely on the relative Status and the frequency of the meetings between the lovers. Two individuals of equal status can usually find time together (1-2 Influence per encounter) while those of



greatly differing status must strive greatly for the opportunity to glimpse one another (5 to 7 Status or more, depending on circumstances).

**The Advisors:** The Advisors are generally uninvolved, unless they are individually *involved* with the story.

**Rendezvous:** A pillow book is entirely a story of encounters, some at competitions and in the moments of the court, others stolen in gardens and empty chambers. The more daring and bold the lovers, the more they risk and the greater their eventual, inevitable fame when the story of their love becomes a book that later generations read in the dark of night.

**Complications:** The complications in writing a pillow book are endless but might include:

- 1) Being discovered by another courtier.
- 2) Being discovered by either lover's family.
- 3) One or both either being or in the process of getting married to another person.
- 4) One or both lovers develop feelings of jealousy, ambition, or regret regarding their liaison, opening the path to larger sins.
- 5) Another person woos one or both of the lovers, creating even more complex interpersonal dynamics

**Adventure Hooks:** What a person will do, and not do, for a beloved is the stuff of a thousand stories and the engine behind a thousand tragedies. Feel free to use any or all of them here.

**Note:** Beyond the persuasion mechanics established in the L5R core rulebook, this supplement does not advance either an internal conflict mechanic or a "personal influence" mechanic. There are reasons for this beyond it

being kind of skeezy but those are best left for other times and places.

### Quick Build: A Cold Case Freezes

Elizabeth (not wanting her Bayushi to become lunch for the NPC Bayushi) and Alan, along with the rest of the players, discuss the group's goal for this Court. They come to the following:

**Summary:** The heroes need to at a minimum get access to some combination of Doji Kurea's travel papers (5 Influence), correspondence (10 Influence), and activities (5 Influence). They may also want to meet with one or more courtiers she had dealings with (Rendezvous) or get access to her chambers (5 Influence). They will need between 5 and 25 Influence plus what they need for Rendezvous, depending on the outcome of their investigations.

**The Advisors:** The advisors involved include:

*The Left Hand:* Kakita Mae is responsible for artisans in the Kakita Lands and may be a candidate for an interview. Additionally as the Left Hand she can authorize entry to the Doji's chambers for an investigation (5 Influence).

*The Center:* Kakita Atoshi takes responsibility for the records and correspondence of the Kakita Court. Members of his office can share information about travel papers (5 Influence), Kurea's correspondence (10 Influence), and her participation in local events (5 Influence).

**Rendezvous:** The heroes may wish to meet with Kakita Mae or Shiba Enso (an artisan in the Court). Mae has a high Status Rank (7) for 4 Influence per "round" of social interaction, while Enso is of low Rank (1) and much easier to speak with at 1 Influence per "round".

Alan then adds in Complications and Adventure Hooks.

**Complications:** Alan, the GM, knows that Kurea was actually kidnapped and being held by her “admirer”, the maho-tsuaki the group is pursuing, and that he has sent her a number of letters expressing his admiration. The individual was also present during one or more local events and encountered Shiba Enso at least once.

Bayushi Tenchi is covering for the maho-tsukai under orders from his superiors – he knows nothing of the individual’s maho use, but is aware that he is highly placed in the Lion Clan.

If things go as Alan plans, the heroes will also need to borrow a unit from the Right Hand (10 Influence) and secure travel papers (5 Influence) to go storm a ruined castle and save the Doji princess...er...artisan.

**Adventure Hooks:** The following events will occur in “adventure time” rather than during the Court sequences:

- 1) Research the Records (Calligraphy \ Intelligence or Etiquette (Bureaucracy) \ Intelligence or Investigation \ Intelligence)
- 2) Search the Room (Investigation Scene)
- 3) Storm the Castle (Combat)

## Of Courtiers

The rules for skills and courtier Schools were designed with the original, highly abstract, Court and Intrigue system contained within the L5R 4<sup>th</sup> Edition core rule book.

This supplement provides alternatives to these School techniques and skill usages, more in keeping with the rules presented here.

## Design Parameters

The redesign will fit into the following parameters:

**Iconic Design:** All school techniques, skills, advantages and disadvantages will be balanced around the concept of “iconic design”. That is, the design will contribute to the creation of memorable moments in play which are distinctly and uniquely appropriate to the Clan, School, and specific player intent of the character.

**Flexible Courtiers:** Courtier schools should provide bonuses in at least three of the following four areas: action economy, action effectiveness, competition, Influence manipulation, and iconic effects. Of these, iconic effects will be prioritized and placed early in the Rank progression so courtiers can become recognizably from their Clan and School more quickly.

**Available Actions:** Skills will be redesigned only to the extent necessary to ensure that characters from most Clan, Family, School combinations have at least two meaningful actions to take during a Court sequence. Skills will not be used to create iconic moments except in cases where they are called by Techniques.

**Accessible Icons:** Advantages create the opportunity to customize a character, giving it access to iconic moments not associated with its Family, Clan, or School. These should provide mechanical advantage in Intrigue but not the flexibility of the iconic school Techniques.

**Replacement:** These are full alternate schools. For play purposes, you may allow heroes to choose between these schools and the more persuasion focused traditional schools

**Minor Supernatural Influence:** At least one of the courtier’s Techniques should border on supernatural or magical, representing their alignment with the Celestial Order.



## Courtier Schools

The courtier schools and key iconic moments include but are not limited to:

School	Iconic Moment
Asako Loremaster	"Yes, yes. I read about this happening in the Court of Hantei Sukune in the Seventh Century."
Bayushi Courtier	"No one else need know about this unfortunate affair, especially if..."
Doji Courtier	"Yes, I know someone who can help."
Ide Emissary	"Please, there is no need for this to devolve into violence."
Ikoma Bard	"For the glory of our Ancestors and Clan!"
Kakita Artisan	"A perfect moment preserved forever."
Kitsuki Investigator	"I see."
Mantis Courtier	"Why yes, it is solid gold. Impressive, no?"
Shiba Artisan	"Come. Embrace Eternity."
Yasuki Merchant	"So, we have a deal, yes?"

### Asako Loremaster

A Loremaster is, first and foremost, a scholar who uses his understanding of the Tao and history to aid his Clan in the Great Game. They see the patterns of history, of culture and tradition, and know how events will unfold.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Win a scholarship competition
- Predict what someone will do next based off your knowledge of the past
- Provide advice to the other Phoenix that supports their actions

- Use reason and argumentation to defeat an opponent

### Loremaster Revised Techniques

The Asako school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: Temple of the Soul

The Asako are historians and scholars, and their approach to the courts reflects that training. They also share the Phoenix devotion to peace and civility, relying on genteel discourse to resolve problems.

The Asako gains a Free Raise on Lore skills rolls. If the Asako spends Void on an Etiquette or Lore roll during the Court sequence, he can recover 1 Void before the competition phase.

#### Rank 2: From the Ashes

The Asako's in-depth study of history and culture allows them to both notice subtle patterns of events and provide useful advice to their comrades in a variety of situations.

The Asako can use a Lore skill rather than the assigned skill when participating in a collaborative roll.

#### Rank 3: Voice of the Universe

As the Asako's training progresses, he begins to analyze and act without conscious thought, combining intellect and spirituality in spontaneous displays which seem effortless.

The Asako can use a Lore skill once per sequence (or round) as a free action, including participating in a collaborative roll.

Additionally, he can use Lore: History / Awareness to initiate a Stymie actions.

#### Rank 4: Invincible Mind

The enlightened and educated Asako can see through the games, tricks, and deceptions of the courtly world.

On a failed Social or Lore Skill Roll, including in a courtier's duel, the Asako can spend 1



Influence and attempt a second roll using his Intelligence as the Trait. He must accept the results of the second roll. If he fails the second roll he loses 1 Honor (Sincerity).

#### Rank 5: Wisdom of the Ages

The Asako can, in times of need, draw from the Void the wisdom of the Asako who have come before.

When the Asako uses his Rank 4 technique, he substitutes Lore (Highest Ranked Lore Skill) / Intelligence for the failed skill roll. When he does so, he may pay the Influence cost with a Void point.

#### Bayushi Courtier

A Bayushi Courtier is an ambush predator, trained to spot and exploit the weakness of those around her. They serve a dual role as both the villain of the piece and the mirror which shows the unflinching truth to those who dare to look.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Compete and arrange for a winner
- Notice the subtle clues which reveal illicit behavior
- Spread lies and gossip which damage impede a target's ability to procure favors
- Win a courtier's duel and let the victim off. For now.

#### Bayushi Revised Techniques

The Bayushi school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: Weakness is My Strength

The Bayushi embrace their role performing the duties of the Underhand; doing what other samurai will not so that the Empire continues.

The Bayushi reduces the Honor cost of taking multiple actions by his school Rank.

Additionally, he gains a free Raise on Deceive

actions regardless of which Trait / Skill combination he uses for the roll.

#### Rank 2: Shallow Waters

The Scorpion know how to assess others, sensing their weaknesses and formulating extended stratagems to bring them down.

When the Bayushi rolls Assessment in a courtier's duel he adds the questions from the Assess Court action list to the Duel Assessment List. Additionally, he can reveal, at a cost of 1 Raise each, an Advantages and Disadvantages possessed by the target.

If the total cost of the target's Mental and Social disadvantages is equal to or greater than their Honor Rank, the Bayushi gains +1k1 in the Focus stage, or +2K2 + his Status if he wins the Assessment stage.

#### Rank 3: Patience in All Things

Simply because one has exposed a weakness does not mean that it must be exploited immediately. A Bayushi know this and acts accordingly, taking the long view rather than seeking immediate gain.

If the Bayushi wins the Focus roll in a courtier's duel, he can choose to allow the challenged character's action to take place without any Forced Raises. If the challenged character continues with his action, the Bayushi "reserves" those Forced Raises and may apply them against the target at a later point in the Intrigue. This can be done in rolls where the Bayushi is not a participant.

Alternately, the Bayushi may expend reserved Force Raises to force the target to give him Influence, at the rate of 1 Raise to 1 Influence.

Any reserved Raises against a target are lost at the end of the Intrigue.

#### Rank 4: Scrutiny's Sweet Sting

The Bayushi's insights give him the ability to shatter his opponents, if he chooses to do so.

When in a Contested Social Roll with a target against whom he has previously won a courtier's duel Assessment or upon whom he has the Blackmail Advantage, the Bayushi gains +1k1+ the opponent's Honor rather than +1K1 when he spends a Void Point.

#### Rank 5: No More Masks

The Bayushi know that for all the strength of Doji's Dream the world is also a hard place where samurai must make difficult choices. Those choices provide leverage; leverage a skilled courtier can use for permanent advantage.

At the end of a Court, the Bayushi gains the Blackmail Advantage against any target he has more Reserved Raises against than that target's Honor or Status (whichever is higher).

#### Doji Courtier

A Doji Courtier is a friend to all, with an open hand and polite manner which hides the iron fist. Remain in his good graces and the debt may never be called in; instead it may pass to your children and your children's children, until the Empire finally comes to an end.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Free someone from an obligation by transferring it to you
- Play the Great Game honorably and win
- Use connections to help someone who then helps you
- Win a courtier's duel through presence and dignity

#### Doji Revised Techniques

The Doji school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: Soul of Honor

Apprentice Doji courtiers are taught to rely on

their honor when dealing with others and to build networks of allies by aiding those in need.

The Doji adds his Honor to all Courtier, Etiquette, Sincerity rolls. He may spend 8 - his Honor Influence (minimum 0) to take a second High Skill action as a free action once per Sequence.

#### Rank 2: Speaking in Silence

The most important truths can only be expressed in absolute silence. No courtiers understand this as well as the Doji, who spend their lives in a world woven from words. They know how to listen, how to wait, and how to use a single word to reshape the world.

A Doji learns how to communicate through "Cadence", holding elaborate conversations without speaking a word. The courtier may, once per sequence, Rendezvous for one round with another Crane character or collaborate with an Ally or a character with whom he shares a Kharmic Tie in a Social skill roll as a free action.

Additionally, in a courtier's duel the Doji's gift allows him to better assess his foes. If he wins the Assess roll by 5 or more he gains +2k2 to the duel's Focus roll.

#### Rank 3: The Perfect Gift

The Doji build their networks of alliances through selflessness, offering others what they need so that in the future the Doji may rely on their assistance.

As a Court action, the Doji may "Give the Perfect Gift", making a Courtier / Awareness roll (TN 20 + Raises). This action reduces the Influence cost of a favor another person seeks by the number of Raises made to a minimum of 0.

The target may choose to pay the full Influence cost for the favor, ignoring the Doji's gift. If he does so, he loses 1 Honor (Courtesy). If he



accepts the gift, he owes the Doji Influence equal to the reduction applied. So long as he owes the Doji Influence, his dice do not explode in contested Social Skill rolls or courtier's duels in which the Doji participates.

Any Influence not paid back at the end of the Intrigue is lost.

#### Rank 4: Voice of Honor

The Doji has learned to infuse his every word and deed with the force of his Honor, forcing those who disagree with him to weigh their actions against the ideals of the Empire and Bushido.

When the Doji makes Raises in a contested Social skill roll the opponent must make an equal number of Raises with no effect if his Honor is lower than the Doji's. If the Doji makes more Raises than the opponent is allowed to, his action automatically fails if the Doji meets his TN.

#### Rank 5: The Gift of the Lady

Mortals play the Great Game for their own reasons. Lady Doji created the game to forge an Empire from the hearts of mortal men and women. The Doji who masters this understanding takes up her task, creating the Empire everyone else squabbles over.

At the end of the Intrigue, any character who owes the Doji more Influence than his Status Rank + Rank is transformed into an Ally with Devotion 1. If the target is already an Ally, increase his Devotion by 1, to a maximum of 4.

#### Ide Emissary

An Ide knows how to go with the flow, how to sense the currents of Intrigue and quiet troubled waters. He does this because, in the end, there is more to be gained by understanding one another and trading than fighting. Until there is not; then it is time for the Utaku to step in and deal with the matter

using the knowledge the Ide gained to the Unicorn's best advantage.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Stop a courtier's duel without loss of face on either side
- Read an opponent's heart through the cracks in their samurai mask
- Sense a conflict and intercede in it before it occurs, gaining favor from both sides in the process
- Avoid an opponent's stratagem through experience and knowledge of the hidden flows

#### Emissary Revised Techniques

The Ide school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: The Heart Speaks

The Ide are taught to adapt instantly to new customs and social nuances, allowing them to avoid giving offense in even the most dangerous and hostile of courts.

When the Ide takes a Court action he may use Raises to pay for the Honor cost of the action in addition to the other Raise effects.

Additionally, if he fails in the first round of a contest he may attempt a Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness (TN 20) roll to reduce the Influence loss by the number of Raises he makes (minimum 0).

#### Rank 2: Piercing the Veils

After centuries of dealing with the unpredictable and sometimes violent folk in the Burning Sands, the Ide have learned an almost preternatural ability to read the emotions of others.

When engaged in an Assess Court action, the Assessment phase of a duel, or a contested Social Skill roll, the Ide may use Raises to reveal information about the target's emotional state. If he does so, he gains +1K1 on Social skill rolls



targeting that character until the end of the sequence.

### Rank 3: The Heart Listens

The Ide family training emphasizes friendship and good personal relations as the key to successful diplomacy.

The Ide gains the ability to “Intervene” in a Stymie as a free action once per sequence. During the intervention, the Ide Sincerity (Honesty) / Void as his Focus roll, modified by +1k1 if he has assessed the emotions of one participant or +2k2 if he has assessed both.

If he wins the Focus roll the Stymie ends with neither party gaining or losing advantage, and the targeted action is prevented. Both losers must pay the Ide 1 Influence. The Ide may use any Free Raises generated by his Focus roll to increase this cost at a rate of 1 Influence per Raise expended, each Raise effects only one of the participants.

If the Ide loses the Focus roll, he must pay the winner(s) 1 Influence.

### Rank 4: Answering the Heart

At this level of training, the Ide have become true masters of mediation, able to see a path forward through most difficulties.

When the Ide uses the Ready action for a Rendezvous he gains his Sincerity (Honestly) skill rather than has Void as the bonus.

### Rank 5: The Immovable Hand of Peace

The final lesson of the Ide school is that through perfect commitment to peace none can raise a hand against them in violence.

The Ide may spend a Void point to make a Contested Social Skill roll using Sincerity (Honesty) / Awareness against a target's Etiquette (Courtesy) / Awareness. If the Ide wins the roll the target cannot take hostile actions against you for a number of rounds or

Court sequences equal to your School Rank as long as the Ide like wise refrains from hostility against that person.

This Technique does not work against those with an Honor Rank less than 2.0 or those who possess no Honor Rank.

### Ikoma Bard

An Ikoma Bard is the living memory of the Lion Clan, the voice of their stories and a reminder of who they choose to be. He rarely acts alone; instead he supports his fellows in their competitions and skillfully weaves their Influence into advantage for the Clan.

### Bard Intrigue Iconic Moments

- Boast of your ally's assured glory in a grand competition
- Defeat an opponent in a courtier's duel by remembering the wisdom of the ancestors
- Remind a faltering ally that his ancestors are watching, providing renewed purpose and focus
- Weep freely for a Akodo's daughter killed in a siege, driving home to the Crane the human cost of their arrogance

### Bard Revised Techniques

The Ikoma school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

### Rank 1: The Herald of Glory

The Ikoma are historians and storytellers, tasked with both recording and retelling glorious deeds for prosperity.

When the Ikoma takes a Lobby or Wager Court Action, he weaves his own story into those of the competitors. If one of the Ikoma's allies wins the competition then the Ikoma gains +1 Influence. For the purpose of this Technique, an ally is either a member of the Ikoma's group or a character who the Ikoma has taken as an Ally through the Advantage.

Additionally, the Ikoma gains the Precise Memory Advantage for no cost in Experience Points. If you already have this Advantage, the Ikoma is refunded those Experience Points.

#### Rank 2: The Voice of the Ancestors

The Ikoma act as the Battle-Criers for the Lion, inspiring their fellows with stories of the ancestors and their heroic deeds in battle and in life.

The Ikoma gains a pool equal to his Honor + Glory which he can give, as a free action, to other characters after they have rolled but before they determine success. When the Ikoma gives this bonus to another Lion character, they receive +3 to their roll for every 2 points given.

The pool refreshes at the start of a Court sequence or when the Ikoma attempts a Perform (oratory) / Void roll as a complex or Court action.

#### Rank 3: The Heart of the Lion

The Ikoma are tasked with conveying the emotions which the rest of the Clan keeps bottled away in stoic rectitude.

The Ikoma does not lose Honor or Glory for displaying emotion in public so long as he does so on behalf of another Lion or honorable (Honor Rank 5 or higher) samurai.

Additionally, the Ikoma may use this ability to point out the human costs of the actions samurai take. He gains the "Count the Cost" Court Action, using Sincerity/Awareness (TN 25). Each Raise increases the Influence cost of a specific favor sought by one courtier by +1.

The increased Influence is given to the Ikoma.

#### Rank 4: The Strength of Tradition

The Ikoma's steadfast encouragement calls on the examples of noble ancestors to infuse their

allies with a strength they did not know they had.

The Ikoma may now use his bonus pool on his own actions. He counts as a Lion clan samurai, gaining +3 for every 2 points of the pool spent.

Additionally, a character who has received a bonus from the Ikoma's pool may choose to hold it until the end of the scene rather than using it immediately on his already made roll.

#### Rank 5: Every Lion Is Your Brother

The Ikoma's understanding of Bushido, history, emotion, and human nature empowers them at court.

At the end of an Intrigue, the Ikoma may give his excess Influence to one or more other Lion or allied samurai rather than lose it, subject to the limitations of the target's Glory Rank.

#### Kakita Artisan

Doji's Dream was of an Empire bound together by culture and common understanding, of waging peace to create the light others fought to protect. An Artisan takes up that mantle, using the arts to shape perceptions and illuminate the shared samurai spirit which binds the Clans together.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Cause a samurai to stop, stunned momentarily by beauty he never imagined
- Capture a perfect moment and use it to invoke shared connections later
- Send an origami crane through a lover's window in the night to deliver a haiku
- Win a Trail of the Five Common Arts

#### Artisan Revised Techniques

The Kakita school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: From One, Many

The Kakita know that there is only one true art:



Iaido, the Way of the Moment. Yet that one art is expressed in a myriad of styles, through an ever changing moment which must be lived to the fullest. This understanding gives them mastery of the arts which others sometimes see as almost supernatural.

The Artisan gains one of Soul of Artistry (Artisan), Soul of Artistry (Craft), or the Sensation Advantage. Alternately, the Artisan may increase the default level of one of these Advantages he already possesses by +1.

Additionally, the Artisan names one Artisan, Craft, or Perform skill he has at Rank 1 or higher as his “noted skill”. He gains a bonus to his skill rolls with that skill equal to his School Rank.

#### Rank 2: Opening the Door

A Kakita Artisan out of his apprenticeship is welcome in nearly any Court. This may be because of her wit and charm, for the beauty she brings to the world, or due to generations of work by the Doji courtiers to ensure such invitations are always available when needed.

The Artisan may make an Noted Skill \ Void (TN 20) roll to reduce the invitation cost to a Court by the number of Raises made. He may retain Influence from an Intrigue equal to his Noted Skill Rank or Glory Rank, whichever is higher.

#### Rank 3: Master the Moment

Over time the Kakita deepens his understanding of the moment, gaining additional skill.

The Artisan’s mastery of the moment allows him to Prepare or Ready using an Artisan or Performance skill as a free action once per Court sequence.

Additionally, the Artisan gains one of Soul of Artistry (Artisan), Soul of Artistry (Craft), or the Sensation Advantage. Alternately, the

Artisan may increase the default level of one of these Advantages he already possesses by +1.

#### Rank 4: The Ancient Arts

One of the most closely guarded secrets of the Kakita Academy are the *maya*, feats of art which border upon the supernatural. Many Rokugani believe such feats are product of myths and legends; the Kakita would generally prefer to keep that illusion intact for reasons of their own.

The Kakita may, as an Court or Complex action, spend a Void point to provide himself and his allies with a bonus equal to the highest of the hero’s Soul of/Performer Rank to any skill checks they make this sequence/round.

The bonus manifests as a minor supernatural effects (moving origami, faint illusions as the artisan recites poetry, positive fortune from a well-crafted ikebana, etc.) The exact description of these effects is negotiated by the GameMaster and the player but the mechanical effect is the bonus described above.

#### Rank 5: A Garden of Snowflakes

The world of Rokugan is a garden of snowflakes, a million million moments given meaning and form by the souls of the samurai who lived them. The Artisan gives form and life to this truth, allowing others to understand it before it, to, passes away.

The Artisan increases the base level of his: Soul of Artistry (Artisan), Soul of Artistry (Craft), and Performer by +1, or gains any of these Advantages he does not already have.

Additionally, spending a Void point for the Rank 4 effect is now a free action. If the Artisan takes an additional action, he gains the bonus as well.

#### Kitsuki Investigator

An Investigator knows things. He knows what people are thinking, where they have been, and



what they have done. He reads the clues of their actions and dress, their movement and breath the same way an Asako reads scrolls. That knowledge gives him power; power he may choose not to use in the moment, but which he will use when it becomes necessary for the good of the Clan and the Empire.

#### **Investigator Intrigue Iconic Moments**

- Read a person's history with a glance
- Detect a lie and let it pass, waiting for the moment to use it for best advantage
- Appear where you are least expected, led by a trail of clues only you can see
- Win a duel by forcing someone to back down from truth they would rather not see

#### *Investigator Revised Techniques*

The Investigator school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

##### **Rank 1: Kitsuki's Method**

The Kitsuki are masters of investigation and perception, learning to notice telling details with a single glance.

The Kitsuki gains a Free Raise to any Investigation Skill Rolls. Additionally, for an Assess Court action he can allocate 3 Raises from his roll to make the roll a free action.

In a skirmish, the Kitsuki adds his Perception to his Armor TN.

##### **Rank 2: Wisdom the Wind Brings**

Kitsuki are notoriously difficult to deceive, using their remarkable prowess and rigorous training in observation to quickly disassemble the pretense a lie.

The Kitsuki gains 1 Free Raise per School Rank each sequence to apply to Assess Court actions which can only be used to remove Deceive effects.

Finally, in a skirmish an attack which includes the Disarm and Feint maneuver adds +5 to its TN for each of your Kitsuki School Ranks.

##### **Rank 3: Know the Rhythm of the Heart**

The Kitsuki study a secret methodology known as Ichi Miru, or "first look", which allows them to size up a person in a single glance.

You may use your Free Raises from Wisdom the Wind Brings to pay the 3 Raises to make Assess actions "free" actions. You may use this ability in skirmishes or in social scenes as well as in Court sequences.

He may prepare no more than his School Rank k1 in bonuses against a single target.

##### **Rank 4: Finding the Path**

The Kitsuki has mastered the art of intuiting the larger strategic context from a scattering of clues. This allows him to piece together complex puzzles and intuit method and motive with remarkable speed.

The Kitsuki can identify a Goal, not just the individual favors being pursued, with a Raise on an Assess action. Identifying a target's Goal also identifies:

- a) The path the target is currently pursuing to get to the Goal in terms of actions and favors,
- b) If there is a faster path towards that goal.

##### **Rank 5: Eyes Betray the Heart**

Kitsuki's method allows its master practitioners to see through even the most practiced falsehoods and tricks, turning them into weapons in the Kitsuki's hands.

Each Raise on an Assess action used to reveal information about a target gives the Kitsuki +1k0 one skill roll targeting the assessed opponent or on a contested skill roll with the opponent. The Kitsuki may choose when to

apply this bonus, but most do so before the roll is made.

If the contested roll is against Intimidation, Sincerity (Deceit), or Temptation the bonus is increased to +1k1 per Raise expended.

The Kitsuki may use a maximum of +5k0 (or +5k5) on any one roll.

#### Mantis Courtier

Ambition, power, and wealth: these were the Son of Storm's tools and they are yours as well. Audacious maneuvers and bold wagers are just part of the plan; sometimes they fail and other times you trap the Great Clans before the Day of Thunder, threatening to destroy the world if you don't get your way.

Some days, it's good to be the Mantis. Other days, not so much.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Bluster your way through a courtier's duel, perhaps not winning but making everyone so embarrassed they back down,
- Make a ridiculous wager and win big,
- Rely on your wealth to buy favors and smooth over your own conscience,
- Let everyone underestimate you until the moment of truth

#### Courtier Revised Techniques

The Courtier school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

##### Rank 1: Duty Before Honor

The Mantis have a long history of dealing with dishonorable sorts to create the vast wealth which, if not entirely couth, makes it much easier for them to maneuver. This wealth forms the cornerstone of their Court doctrine, as well as their strategies in many things.

The Yoritomo gains a pool equal to your Wealth advantage which can be used to pay for

the Honor cost of taking multiple actions or using Low skills in a Rendezvous during an Intrigue. The pool can be refilled by taking an Court action to make a Games (gambling) / Intelligence roll with a TN of 25. If successful, this roll refills the pool by 1, +1 per Raise, to a maximum of the hero's Wealth advantage.

##### Rank 2: Roll the Dice

The Mantis like to claim they are adept at wagering. Indeed, they do so much of it that they may well be. But the Yoritomo also teach that commitment to the moment is more important than studied skill; a wager can be won or lost as much by bravado as by calculation.

When the Yoritomo uses the Wager action, he regains 1 Influence if your chosen champion loses and gain +1 Influence if he wins. In either case he refills his Wealth Pool by the number of Raises he made on his Wager roll.

##### Rank 3: Command the Waves

Violence and rude behavior have no place in samurai life. Except when they do, or when a properly timed bit of bluster can turn the tide of an encounter. Then, of course, they have a perfectly reasonable place.

When the Yoritomo enters a courtier's duel or Rendezvous, he may spend a Void to roll a contested Intimidation (Control) \ Willpower vs Sincerity \ Willpower. If he succeeds, can negate a number of Free or Forced Raises equal to his School Rank.

##### Rank 4: Bargaining with Sea Devils

A Yoritomo knows that when one makes a wager, one should only do so in a way that allows one to win, regardless of the outcome.

If you Wager on someone they lose, they owe you Influence equal to the number of Raises you make on the Wager action roll.



So long as they owe the Yoritomo Influence, any Influence they gain is added to the courtier's Influence total until the debt is paid in full.

#### Rank 5: Strength in All Things

A Yoritomo knows that, regardless of what they might personally feel, their samurai mask must always display perfect indifference to risk, perfect willingness to do what must be done, and an absolutely commitment to the moment.

The Yoritomo can "set his mask", using Intimidate rather than Void to set his bonus for his Prepare action in a Rendezvous; in non-court settings he can use Intimidate in place of Etiquette, Sincerity, or Courtier without paying an Honor cost.

#### Shiba Artisan

Before everything, there was the Way. Within everything, there is the Way. After the sun sets on the world, the Way will remain. This is the truth the Shiba artisan shares with the world through her art and presence. That truth has power; the power to shape, the power to change, the power to bring people together in a moment to be heroes.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- The Shiba draws an ensō and the world grows still
- A perfect haiku stops an argument as the participants contemplate its meaning
- Among a dozen perfect entries, a lone ikebana, imperfect in itself, reflects the sum of all things
- A Bayushi backs away from the fathomless depths hidden in the Shiba's eyes

#### Artisan Revised Techniques

The Artisan school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: Polish the Mirror

The Shiba learns to focus his mind and spirit, expressing art in and through the moment he finds himself in.

The Shiba may reserve Void points into a skill group (Artisan (arts), Artisan (crafts), Scholarship (Calligraphy and Lore), or Perform) to gain a +1 bonus to skill rolls in that group per reserved dice.

He may reserve up to his School Rank in any one group and may reserve Void in more than one group. Reserved Void may not be spent and is not recovered, but can be released by making a Meditation / Void (TN 20) roll as a complex action in a skirmish/Rendezvous.

In a Court, the Void points are reallocated and reserved as the Shiba sees fit at the start of the Court sequence.

#### Rank 2: In the Moment

The Shiba's ability to express the truth behind all things through his art expands, giving him the opportunity to recover from simple mistakes.

On a Craft or Social roll the Shiba may spend 2 reserved Void to reroll using Artisan (choice) \ Void. He may accept the results of the results of either roll.

#### Rank 3: Without Pretense

The Shiba's art is without pretense, created in the moment for the moment in accordance with the Way.

If the Shiba has not used the Prepare action to prepare for a contest which uses cumulative rolls (e.g. the Grand Display pattern), he may roll Competition Skill / Void + 1k1 for each reserved Void point in the skill group which would apply with a TN of 20. The result plus any Raises becomes the hero's starting value for the contest.



*Example: Shiba Enso enters a Calligraphy contest. He has not prepared but reserves 4 Void into the Scholarship skill group. His Calligraphy is 4 and his Void is 4, so as he enters the contest he rolls 8K4+4k4 (12K8) which comes to 10K9+4 (his reserved skill bonus) with a TN of 20.*

#### Rank 4: At the Center, Emptiness

The Shiba knows that a cup is only useful because of the emptiness it contains. In the same way, art and an artist is only as useful as their ability to be present in the moment and respond to it.

The Shiba may spend 1 Void point to take an additional Court action, an additional simple action, or to take an additional skill roll in a (non-combat) Rendezvous. This counts as the Shiba's Void point for the sequence/round.

#### Rank 5: The Empty Wellspring

The Shiba knows how to draw forth inspiration from the emptiness, for it is not truly empty but rather the wellspring of all existence.

When the Shiba makes 3 Raises he gains the benefit of 4. When he spends a Void point on a roll his maximum Raises is no longer limited by his Void.

#### Yasuki Courtier

Honor and glory, duty and bushido; these are masks the samurai wear, just as they wear their stoic faces. Their truth is in the flow of gold, in the debts they owe and the things they need to keep up appearances. You know this; you also know what they need and how to get it.

#### Iconic Intrigue Moments

- Get another samurai to admit he needs funds for something
- Purchase what others cannot get through political manipulations
- Deny a samurai what he needs in order to force him to do what you want

- Ferret out a deal where everyone else believes the situation cannot be resolved

#### Courtier Revised Techniques

The Courtier school is revised as follows to deliver these iconic moments:

#### Rank 1: The Way of the Carp

The Yasuki are masters of commerce and practice it far more openly than most other samurai families. This practice is a matter of some pride for them, although that pride does have its limits if they intend to continue functioning in polite society.

The Yasuki may make a Commerce skill roll once per sequence as a free action. He may use the Commerce skill without losing Honor in non-Intrigue settings.

#### Rank 2: The Eyes Speak Truths

Though their obsession with zen is boorish by samurai standards, it has taught the Yasuki to watch the eyes of those they deal with. The eyes, they say, always speak the truth through even the most determined samurai mask.

The Yasuki may use Commerce to take Assess actions. If he does so, a Raise may be used to determine what material needs a samurai might have or physical comforts he might desire.

Additionally, favors from duties aligned to the *The Center* cost 1 Influence less for the Yasuki.

#### Rank 3: Treasures of the Carp

The Yasuki's elaborate network of contacts in merchant and commercial circles make it possible for them to quickly acquire material goods and comforts that samurai desire but cannot admit to.

The Yasuki may make a Commerce / Willpower roll as an action to find material goods a person needs (TN 10 + 5 per Status Rank of the target). You gain +1K1 on this roll if you have previously assessed their needs.

If you succeed, the target owes you Influence equal to your Raises on the roll. Owed Influence can be paid immediately from the target's pool or taken from what he earns in competitions.

The target cannot refuse the treasure if you have assessed him before making the roll and your Raises on the Assess Roll + your School Rank is greater than his Honor. If the treasure can be refused, doing so carries an Honor loss equal to your Honor Rank – the target's Honor Rank (minimum 1).

#### Rank 4: Wiles of the Carp

The Yasuki famously deal with the intersection of political and economic power, not carrying that the other families look down upon them for doing so.

The Yasuki can convert commerce into influence directly, attempting a Commerce / Awareness challenge (TN 25) as an action to gain 1 Influence. He gains 1 Influence and loses 1 Honor for each Raise. If he has the Wealthy Advantage, reduce the Honor loss by 1.

#### Rank 5: What is Yours Is Mine

The Yasuki take as they give, always ending up with more than they started with.

The amount of Influence the Yasuki retains at the end of an Intrigue is equal to his Glory + Wealthy Advantage Rank.

### Advantages

The following Advantages have clarifications in this system.

**Allies:** A hero may reduce the Influence cost of Rendezvousing with an Ally by the Ally's Devotion. Once per Intrigue, he may ask an ally to contribute up to the Ally's Devotion in influence.

**Balance:** The hero may roll +1k0+Honor on the Focus roll if a courtier engages you in a

courtier's duel using Intimidation or Temptation.

**Blackmail:** A hero who has Blackmail may, during the course of an Intrigue, leverage the target for up ½ the target's Status Rank in Influence. Alternately, he can demand Influence equal to the target's Status Rank to help pay for one favor. If he does so, the Blackmail is discharged. If Experience Points were used to purchase the Advantage, those Experience Points are refunded.

**Clear Thinker:** The hero may roll +1k0 on the Focus roll of any courtier's duel where the opponent uses Courtier (Manipulation), Sincerity (Deceit), Forgery, or Temptation.

**Dangerous Beauty:** The hero applies this bonus to any Court action where there is a target and the hero uses the Temptation skill. This includes Arrange, Assess, Stymie, and Wager.

**Seven Fortune's Blessing (Benten):** The hero applies the bonus to the Arrange and Lobby actions.

**Wealthy:** The hero may take one free Prepare action for himself or another player per Court, rolling Wealthy Rank / Wealthy Rank + Commerce (TN 20). This represents his ability to purchase the finest materials and tools.

### Disadvantages

The following Disadvantages have clarifications in this system.

**Bitter Betrothal:** the hero always has a courtier who is opposed to him in his home Court.

**Black Sheep:** The hero cannot secure an invitation to his Clan's courts, although he may be brought in as part of a group. The influence cost to advance one Rank in the hero's school is 15.

**Epilepsy:** can be triggered by a courtier's duel or a Contest of Skill.

### Home Court: Where a Hero Starts

All heroes (except ronin and those with the Black Sheep disadvantage) are assumed to start with a Home Court, a place where they have already earned a place. This is the purpose of the genpukku ceremony and competitions like the Topaz Championship – to secure invitations to serve. Family connections and Clan loyalty are also important in these matters.

These “home courts” generally have an Intrigue at seasonal intensity (1 sequence per season, separated by a festival/competition each season) and a focused Intrigue at a local lord's court during the winter months (6 sequences and 6 competitions).

During the spring, summer, and fall heroes have time for normal adventures that involve modest travel but also leave time for regular duties. During the winter the social calendar is more intense – adventures taking more than a few days will disrupt the hero's ability to interact with the court for that sequence.

As a hero progresses on his heroic journey, he may find himself invited (or secure himself an invitation to) some of the great Winter Courts hosted by the Clans and the Emperor. These courts are intense intrigues (8 to 10 sequences).



## Example Court Sequence

Stepping back, our heroes have a quick way through the challenge of their investigation. The simplest path is to:

- 1) Get access to the travel records for 5 Influence. Alan notes here they will notice a discrepancy between the travel papers (saying she was going somewhere) and the rumors (that she was married).
- 2) Meet with Mae (4 Influence) to present the discrepancy and ask for access to the room. This is a lower cost approach than purchasing the favor and can be a persuasion scene, though with a low total TN requirement – Mae has no reason to prevent them from doing so if they act quickly enough.
- 3) Search the room for her correspondence rather than asking for it from the records. This is an adventure/investigation scene, which can reveal a number of private letters written by a character they have previously suspected.
- 4) Go back to the travel records and track where the suspect travelled to.
- 5) Ask for a squad of bushi to assist with rescuing the princess. This requires an intervention by Daidoji Enai (Right Hand) and the expenditure of 10 Influence.

This is only one possible path – the heroes may chose others in varying levels of complexity.

Our heroes have several opportunities to gain influence including:

- 1) Participating in the Formal Reception, which requires both an Etiquette \ Awareness and a Perform (Dance) \

Agility challenge. They do not have to win the competition – simply participating will generate 4 Influence, or 8 if one of them succeeds at a Lobby.

- 2) If they win 4 Influence, their next opportunity is the Moon Viewing party, a Poetry competition which will be won on Raises. Again, they do not have to win – just participating without making a fool of yourself (failing) will give the party another 3d to 4 Influence (total 8).
- 3) Their best chance win a great deal of Influence is in the Presentation of Concepts, a Grand Display of Calligraphy. The Kuni is a grumpy old man, but he's also quite good at Calligraphy \ Intelligence rolls (Calligraphy 5, Intelligence 4), so... With enough daring the heroes can probably scrape together another 4 to 8 Influence here, bringing their total up towards the 19 they need (5 for the Records, 4 to meet with Mae, 10 for the favor)

## How Did It Play?

Taking this story and placing it into an Intrigue with character actions we see:

In Sequence 1		Influence 0
HERO	ACTION (SKILL)	TN/RO
CHIMAKI	Ready (Perform (Dance) / Void), 1 Raise	25/32
DOI	Assess (Lore (Heraldry) / Intelligence), 1 Raise	25/34
YASUTAKE	Prepare (Calligraphy / Intelligence)	30/48
JURO	Lobby (Sincerity / Awareness): increase participant gain by +1	20/22

Chimaki spends the sequence getting ready for the dance. Doi searches for information on Enso and Tenchi, coming up blank on Tenchi as

the man is a cypher (and good at Deception). Yasutake begins to prepare calligraphy and attends meetings with the local enthusiasts (including Kakita Ichiro) while Juro works the Court talking about how famous the opening events at Kyuden Kakita are.

### Formal Reception: Results

After some complexity and the expenditure of a great deal of Void, the Kuni gets through the event without spitting on the floor, the Ikoma dances well enough not to embarrass himself, and the heroes emerge with 8 Influence.

### Sequence 2 Influence: 8

HERO	ACTION (SKILL)	TN/RO
<b>CHIMAKI</b>	Ready (Artisan (Poetry) / Void)	20/14
<b>DOI</b>	Ready (Artisan (Poetry) / Void)	20/21
<b>YASUTAKE</b>	Prepare (Calligraphy / Intelligence), 2 Raises, Void Point Request Favor (travel papers)	30/33
<b>JURO</b>	Arrange (Etiquette / Awareness), 1 Raise, Void Point	25/29

Chimaki and Doi ready themselves for the Moon Viewing party while Yasutake continues to work on his calligraphy. Juro works to arrange a meeting with Kakita Mae. A brief conversation with Kakita Atoshi during the reception bears fruit, as the magistrate gains access to the travel papers he is interested in.

*Note:* The favor triggers a research scene, where the heroes spend time investigating the travel papers and searching for clues.

### Moon Viewing: Results

Chimaki and Doi compete; Chimaki does not win but gains 1 Influence. Doi fails, losing 1 Influence. The net result for the heroes is 0.

### Sequence 3 Influence 3

At the start of the sequence the heroes regain their spent Void Points.

HERO	ACTION (SKILL)	TN/RO
<b>CHIMAKI</b>	Stymie (Defense / Awareness)	20/27
<b>DOI</b>	Rendezvous (servants) Assess (Lore (Heraldry) / Intelligence, 1 Raise	25/12
<b>YASUTAKE</b>	Prepare (Calligraphy / Intelligence), 3 Raises, Void Point	30/62
<b>JURO</b>	Rendezvous (Mae) Arrange (Etiquette / Awareness), 1 Raise	25/40
	Wager (Commerce \ Willpower), 2 Raises, Void Point	30/31 -2 Honor

Chimaki takes a Stymie action, hoping to provide cover for her team this critical sequence. None too soon, as she triggers her Stymie in reaction to Bayushi Tenchi's Stymie action against Yasutake's Prepare. The Kakita scrapes out a win, but just barely, and the assessment revealed things she would rather others not know. Doi got lost in the moment, while Yasutake is READY for the competition with a total of 142 dice result and 7 Raises on his Calligraphy so far.

Armed with the information from the travel papers, the group wants to speak with both the servants travelling with the Doji and with Kakita Mae but their Influence is limited. Chimaki takes point on the first meeting. Yasutake manages the second, speaking with the lady of the household and getting access to the Doji's room, where they find the correspondence and cross-reference the names with the travel documents they already purchased access to.



For Juro, this is the sequence where he Scorpions-up. His successful Arrange means that Yatutake meets with Kakita Mae for 0 Influence. However, with the sequences revelations he can clearly see two things:

- 1) Bayushi Tenchi is going to be a problem,
- 2) They need to act fast to save the artisan.

So he takes a second action, using a non-school skill, to Wager 2 Influence (the 2 remaining for the group) on Yasutake in the competition.

*Note:* There are actually four investigation scenes in this sequence; the meeting with Mae, the meeting with the servants, searching the room, and then rechecking the travel records.

**Presentation of Concepts:** Yasutake wins the contest handily, even though Shiba Enso presents fierce competition. Unbeknownst to Yasutake, Kakita Ichiro has been quietly Lobbying for his favorite event, increasing the winner's Influence gain to 4 (from 2).

With won wager, our heroes come into sequence 4 with 8 Influence...not quite enough to get a squad of soldiers. Should they stay or should they go?

#### **Sequence 4**                      Influence 8

At the start of the sequence the heroes regain their spent Void Points. Additionally, Kakita Mae calls them to her office; she is grateful that they have discovered Doji Kurea's location and wants to help if she can (+2 Influence Award for a Great Deed). The award raises their Influence to 10, enough for Kakita Ichiro and Kakita Mae to secure cooperation from Daidoji Enai for the mission.

At this point the story returns to "adventure time", although the heroes may get back in time to participate in Sequence 5 and 6 if they so

desire. There are leads to follow and problems to resolve, both in their main investigation and new leads at Court...

#### **How did it Narrate?**

*While it was possible that, under Kuni Yasutake's writ, they could have demanded entrance, the implication that something improper was going on in the Crane Lord's household, especially coming from a Kuni, would have only shut doors that they needed open. Even with a writ, influence would win cooperation, and access to things that would otherwise remain out of reach.*

*Bayushi Juro presented the group's papers to the guards at the gates of Kuyden Kakita, along with a letter expressing the desire to share with the Crane Lord a new poem written on his behalf, that he had created while they were travelling through the area and working on their investigations. The response came fairly quickly...an invitation to the court, and to a formal meal and dance coming shortly.*

*Ikoma Doi immediately set to work trying to get a feel for who they would be working with in the court, and whose favor they would need to win in order to access the marriage and travel records that they would need to find out more about their missing artisan, while Doi and Yasutake work on impressing their hosts and Juro works to raise the profile of the upcoming dance, confident that their presence will earn them influence with the Lady of the House. The group is now seen by many in the court as savvy, welcome guests, and curiosity about their presence and their case rises among advisors to the daimyo.*

*The next day, Yasutake formally asks Ichiro for a favor...to review the travel records of Doji Kurea, to see where she might have been travelling. While Ichiro might have leaned toward denying him...even with Yasuki Hachi as Emerald Champion, their clans were less than friendly...the Crab had proven a worthy guest, and others in the castle spoke well of him and his friends. He granted access. During the*



*evenings, the group looked through the records to find Kurea's last trip, while during the day, they prepared for the upcoming Moon Viewing, where they hoped to make an impression on the Lady of the house, Kakita Mae.*

*Unfortunately, they failed to impress with their poetic efforts. It was hard not to feel that someone in the court was seeking to interfere with their investigation. On the other hand, they did find a clue....that Doji Kurea had last received papers to travel to a keep they had just recently visited. She had never arrived.*

*They decided they must find out and block whoever it was that was getting in their way. The servants were not willing to open up, so they decided to take a big risk and go directly to the lady of the house anyway. It took some intense politicking, but Juro was able to pull off an arrangement. Kakita Mae listened to them describe the note about the wedding. "There was no arrangement for a wedding," she answered with concern. She agreed to allow them to access Kurea's rooms.*

*They searched the rooms, while Chimaki intercepted Bayushi Tenchi, who was keen to foil their investigations lest they actually be about his various affairs. By searching, they found hundreds of letters, praising the young artisan's beauty, grace, and work...each growing more intimate and inappropriate than the next. The final claimed, with utter devotion, that the writer would have the young artisan, no matter what stood in his way. They were all signed 'Kitsu Barai.'*

*That name had come up before. An unassuming shugenja that had helped them early on in their quest, but the letter put his earlier statements in a far different light. But if Barai was the maho tsukai they sought, he was powerful. Too powerful to tackle alone. But, if Kurea still lived, they could not wait for an Imperial assist. They would need the lord of the Kakita to help.*

*But Noritoshi was too busy to meet with them. They would need to impress.*

*They resolved to do well in the Calligraphy contest, both proving Yasutake's scholarship credentials and authority, and then leverage that into a request for troops and access to maps of the area near where Doji Kurea was last seen travelling.*

*Their efforts were successful. The poetry contest went their way, especially when Tenchi, the one who had opposed them, was forced to step out by Juro's own tricks. They were able to inspect some local maps, finding an abandoned castle where, possibly, their artisan could be found.*

*While they pleaded their case with the commander of the local troops, he still would not trust them, despite being pleasingly disposed given the reputation they had earned for their masterful scholarship.*

*Fortunately, Mae intervened on their behalf, making the case to the commander and her husband for a unit of troops to accompany them to Lone Tree Tower.*

*It was before the crack of dawn they set up. With the fortunes' favor, they would catch the maho tsuke before he grew disenchanted with his prize...*

## Types of Rokugani Courts

Rokugan's culture and strict etiquette rules, along with its well-established Imperial Government, make for a wide array of interlocking Courts.

These include but are not limited to:

**The Imperial Court:** provides an overarching structure of ministries and courtiers who keep the machinery of government running and maintain the basic infrastructure over which the Clans squabble.

**Household of the Daimyo:** reflects the Clan's internal politics and arguments, generally organized around factions corresponding to the great families.

**A Military Encampment:** demonstrates how a group of people, gathered together with common purpose and a clear mission, can still find time for social interaction and interpersonal political strife.

**A Village:** shows how intrigues play out over months and years in a world where the stakes are actually life and death, rather than just one's political reputation.

**Winter Court** – a gathering of diplomats and courtiers, the Imperial Winter Court is the most famous event in Rokugan. Each Clan also hosts a minor Court at the same time, but the real action is wherever the Empire has gathered its luminaries for a celebration of culture, politics, and espionage.

## The Imperial Court

Everything in theory belongs to the Emperor, yet he cannot personally oversee the allocation of every koku of rice and reed of bamboo. Therefore he delegated the work to his loyal family and followers. As the Empire expanded, so did the need for gentlemen of skill who could oversee the Emperor's good works.

Eventually the Empire's growth led to a crisis; a crisis addressed in the writings of Doji Neo and creation of Ritsuryo by Otomo Kuchiryu based on the law designed Soshi Saibankan and Doji Hatsuo. They jointly created a system by which individuals from all the Clans were tested for competence, formally assigned to perform work, and rewarded for their efforts in an appropriate fashion. That many of these samurai came from the Imperial Families, the Crane Clan, and the Scorpion Clan was of course of little note.

### Locations

The Imperial Court, seated in the Imperial City (either Otosan Uchi or Toshi Ronbo depending on the era). This is the seat of the Emperor's power and where the Ministries are most obviously employed.

The Ministries reach out into the lands of the various Clans. Major settlements may have full offices for each of the ministries; smaller settlements may have only one or two courtiers representing the Empire while villages default all of the Imperial duties to a single magistrate or the local samurai assigned to watch over the location.

### The Ministries (Groups and Factions)

The major ministries are: Divinities, Center, Left, Right, and Heraldry. Each is composed of numerous sub-ministries, with more detail on those given in a later section.



**Ministry of Divinities:** The Empire was founded by the Kami who fell from the Heavens; they were in turn taught wisdom by Shinsei, a mortal man. Every action in the Empire thus reflects both Heaven and Earth, and both must be kept in balance. The Ministry of Divinities is charged with maintaining that balance both within the lands of each Clan and more broadly throughout the Empire.

Ministers of the divine take responsibility for divinations, rites, sacred texts, shrines and monasteries throughout the Empire. Some are also members of the “Jade Magistrates”, an organization associated with the formal if generally ignored sub ministry of the inquisition.

The Ministry was led by the Seppun for most of the Empire’s history but in later years comes under the direct control of the Jade Champion.

Samurai petition the ministry for official divinations for formal events (e.g. births, deaths, festivals, marriages); to participate in holy rites; to place official shrines; to speak with revered teachers, and for access to holy texts under Imperial control.

**Ministry of the Center:** At the heart of the Empire lies the Imperial Court; at the heart of each Clan’s lands lay their Clan Courts. These Courts are more than just pretty places where flowers gather; they are the center of commerce, organization, and authority within their respective lands. This effort takes more than just good intentions and a swift sword. It takes discipline, effort, and tireless attention to mundane duties the bushi often mistake for diversions.

Ministers of the center take responsibility for recording the census; maintaining the formal histories; passing judgement in matters of the law; and managing/defending lordly households.

The ministry was led by the Otomo and the Seppun through most of history, although sometimes the Crane of Scorpion would displace them for a generation or two.

Samurai petition the ministry for access to census records to have them changed; to stay in the Court buildings; and to access or contest official histories.

**Ministry of the Herald:** The Miya were, and are, traditionally associated with spreading the Emperor’s decrees throughout the Empire. They are also charged with the “Emperor’s Mercy”, the duty of the Celestial Emperor to his people to provide food, shelter, and infrastructure. It is in this way that the Mandate of Heaven is seen in the physical world.

Over time this mandate extended to include responsibility for disaster relief outside of the capital city, cartography, carrying messages across the Empire, certifying and coordinating craftsmen, and overseeing the various groups of magistrates who enforce the Imperial Law.

The ministry is traditionally lead by the Miya, in deference to their original charter from the Hantei-no-kami. They share responsibility for the magistrates with the Emerald Champion, who is officially a member of the Emperor’s Household rather than the ministry.

Additionally, much of their work is coordinated with the Households of the Daimyos, especially at the level of the Clan Champions and the Daimyo’s of the named samurai families.

Samurai petition the ministry for assistance with civil matters, disaster relief, to take messages especially across Clan borders, and for assistance either from or with matters involving magistrates.



**Ministry of the Left:** Traditionally the “Emperor’s Left Hand” was thought of as the Crane Clan with their scholarship, grace, and charm. More properly, the “Board of the Left” was charged with maintaining the Emperor’s household and, by extension, the city within which it resides. The scope of the Imperial mandate for this Board extends throughout the Empire; the Clan courts are more modest but similarly charged.

Ministers of the left take responsibility for promoting arts and culture, maintaining the lands and treasures (including roads and waterworks), managing the Lord’s household and granting his mercy, and ensuring the calendar of religious and civil festivals proceeds in an appropriate style.

The ministry is also responsible for the education of the samurai caste, specifically for ensuring that tutors are available to the Clans to prepare bright students for service in the ministries. It also administers the great exams once each year in the capital city, as well as helping to manage the Topaz Championship.

The Ministry is generally managed by the Emperor’s Wife or the Imperial Chancellor, both of whom were traditionally from the Crane Clan. Other clans have taken over the position in recent years, including the Scorpion and the Crab.

Samurai petition the ministry for formal documents recording their authorizations and status; for the development of transportation, irrigation, flood-control projects that go beyond the lands of a single clan, for the right to participate in competitions; for positions in the household or rooms; for invitations to court events; for clemency after a judgement is passed, and for tutors or the right to sit for an examination.

**Ministry of the Right:** Traditionally, the “Emperor’s Right Hand” was thought of as the Lion Clan with their martial power and acumen. More properly, the “Board of the Right” was composed of several Offices, each with a different responsibility in the focusing of martial and material power to enact the Emperor’s will. In this way, the Clans were bound together into, if not harmony, at least intense focus.

Ministers of the right take responsibility for gathering taxes, managing the Imperial roads and canals, mustering the Imperial Legion and its resources, coordinating Clan militaries during a war, and recording the application of the law in its many forms.

The ministry is generally managed by the Ikoma family of the Lion Clan, although the Shogun can also take control if it during times of great hardship. The Lion’s grip on this ministry has been near absolute, with the exception of the Scorpion Clan Coup when it was briefly under Scorpion dominion.

Samurai petition the ministry for permission to move material on the Imperial roads or canals; for assistance supplying or raising troops, and for issues of military discipline.

#### [The Ministries Outside the Capital](#)

Although the ministries are concentrated in the Imperial Capital, they maintain offices in the major Clan holdings as well. Such positions are sometimes referred to as “positions in exile” by experienced ministers, who know that being isolated from the constant activity of the Imperial Court can derail an otherwise promising career.

## The City Court

The structure of a single city can provide the requirements to function as an individual court with many factions competing to carve out places in the human jungle. City courts are very much flavored by the nature of the environment they are in.

For example, politics in Ryoko Owari tend to be noticeably more cut-throat than in most other court types due the consistent presence of the Scorpion. More so than most courts, players are likely to encounter resistance to their actions and competition for their goals. The city has always straddled clan borders, with large populations of Crab, Scorpion, and Unicorn keeping the city lively - and deadly.

### Influence Gains and Costs

Favors and Influence in the city generally stay in the city. Influence is earned through doing favors, humiliating enemies, and winning the right to participate in festivals.

Favors within a city can involve access to city records, access to specific areas in the city, use of the city guard, and decisions about how certain events or challenges are done.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The roles in a city include:

**Governor:** The ruler of the city. Almost invariably, this is a strong personality, highly adept at playing factions off each other.

**The Right Hand:** The leader of the military groups of the city, often the personal army of the Governor, such as the Thunder Guard in Ryoko Owari.

**The Left Hand:** Is often formed around a cluster of *Clan Embassies*, with each clan has some sort of presence in the city, and can be petitioned for favors related to their unique culture and political goals.

**The Center:** is run primarily by the Governors Karō, an overworked and under-appreciated player who tries to keep the city from collapsing under the weight of its own decay.

**The Spiritual Advisors:** come from The City Temples.

**The Herald**s are primarily represented by the: *Imperial Magistrates*: Traditionally, Imperial Magistrates have had a presence, but a very limited one.

**The Underhand** would be the leaders of one or more 'illegal' groups that are allied with or loyal to the city Governor. Whether it is, for example the Firemen, Leatherworkers, Yakuza, Ninja, Kolat, or other groups in Ryoko Owari, that depends on the era.

## Household of the Daimyo

Households vary in size from the samurai in charge of a single castle to the Champion of an Entire Clan. Players may want to come here in order to investigate wrongdoing, earn favors, or seek out information. In past games without an influence system, a character might come in to speak with such luminaries with an assumed influence carried by the weight of their commissions. For example, a written decree declaring them to be investigating on behalf of the Emerald Champion will certainly carry a lot of influence on its own. But if they wished to pursue quieter investigations without such an illustrious cover, or if they have already used up the weight of their papers in welcome, they may need to earn more influence to get what they seek.

### Influence Gains and Costs

Influence within a household might be earned in various ways depending on what that daimyo prioritizes. A Unicorn family might value horsemanship and shows of tolerance for gaijin ways while a Phoenix family might value lore and peaceful pursuits.



The practical value of favors granted depend entirely on the clan and status of the household involved. For example, the Hiruma are a poor family; even if they wanted to help rebuild a village they might not have the resources to do so.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The roles in a Household include:

**Daimyo:** The person in charge of the area or clan. Above the interplay of his court, generally will require influence to meet, though cost depends on the size of the court.

**Bugyo:** Leader of the Daimyo's troops.  
Equivalent of Ministry of the Right

**Karō:** Lead household advisor, in charge of the Daimyo's internal household. Keeps the records and is roughly equivalent of Ministry of the Center.

**Inkyo:** Advises the Daimyo on matter of the shrines and on religious matters. Equivalent of the Ministry of the Divine

**Chief Magistrate:** Circulates through the Daimyo's villages, carrying messages, collecting taxes, and dispensing justice in the Daimyo's name. Equivalent of the Ministry of Heraldry.

**Chief Minister:** Often the spouse of the daimyo, in charge of presenting the face of the daimyo, keeping the household respectable, peaceful, and in good order. Equivalent of the Ministry of the Left.

#### How Many Households Does a Daimyo Have?

A Minor Daimyo will only have one household and some associated villages. A Clan Champion may have a household in each city. In a household where the Daimyo is not present...for example, in a City Embassy, the Karō steps up to fill the position of the Daimyo in his absence, and the Chief Scribe will take the roll of the Karō.

## The Military Encampment

Even if it does not resemble a court at all, a common foot soldier cannot simply barge in on a general whenever he likes without facing significant consequences. While some generals are easy to reach, others are not, and even if they are reached, it doesn't mean they will listen to someone who has not yet earned merit in their leaders' eyes. Likewise, an army is not just a collection of individual warriors – it has logistics, camp discipline, rules and order which require enforcement.

Thus, a camp is a court, even if it is one where influence is often earned on the battlefield. Nevertheless the courtly game (e.g. trading favors, influencing decisions) is still played. This court is called the Bakufu and it is always in session.

A single Rikugunshokan might have many lesser Bakufu command groups depending on the size of his army.

#### Influence Gains and Costs

Influence within the Bakufu comes primarily from Heroic Opportunities in Battle, but can also come from contests of martial skill and the other, more standard means of acquiring influence.

Influence is spent in the Bakufu to get equipment and supplies, increase glory, offer tactical or strategic advice, and, most frequently, to earn the chance for a rendezvous with the commander to speak of problems or threats.

#### Roles and Responsibilities (Groups)

The roles in an army include:

**Rikugunshokan:** General in charge of an army. Above the interplay of the regular field, will often require influence to meet.



**Shireikan:** In charge of a group of the General's fighting men, for example, the garrison of a single castle. Equivalent to the Ministry of the Right. For smaller command group bakufu, the Shiereikan might be in charge rather than a Rikugunshokan, and this role will be filled by a Gunso.

**Hatamoto:** In charge of managing and maintaining the logistics associated with the care and upkeep of an army. Equivalent to the Ministry of the Left

**Head of the Signal Corps:** In charge of communicating commands from the Rikugunshokan to the troops. Equivalent to the Ministry of Heraldry

**Head Sohei/Head Shugenja/etc:** Each clan calls the shugenja or monks that lead their army's spiritual might a different title, but these are the ones who direct the shugenja in battle or healing and also coordinate the rituals of purification necessary to honor the dead and cleanse the living. Equivalent to the Ministry of the Divine.

**Head Scout:** In charge of coordinating the scouts and bringing information for the generals. Equivalent to the Ministry of the Center.

#### Extending the Structure

These roles translate to the very smallest units with a Gunso commanding even smaller groups of Nikutai having scouts, signalers, provisioners, and shugenja reporting to them. The command structure for military forces, however, goes strongly through the Ministry of the Right.

### The Village

The Court of an individual village is very different than other courts, since, for the most

part, samurai can order any heimen to do anything for them, and the heimen must comply. However, if the characters themselves are heimen or low-ranked monks, or the characters want the heimen to assist them with delicate matters that the heimen would not normally divulge to outsiders, they may need to earn the villagers trust with influence.

#### Influence Gains and Costs

Influence within a village, whether by samurai or lower caste, is earned by honest work, generosity, and protecting the villagers from danger. Contests are less important, though drinking contests or contests of strength that don't cost the villagers and provide them entertainment can win their favor. Threatening behavior will quickly lose favor.

Influence in a village, for samurai, can be spent on getting villagers to provide you honest, complete, and truthful answers, having them act as local guides, or asking them to perform tasks of labor for you they are not required to, going above and beyond the minimum. For ronin or monks or heimen, it could also earn a place to stay, a meal, an offer of more work, and so on that will help you improve your lot.

#### Roles and Responsibilities (Groups)

The roles in a village include:

**Sonchou:** The chief magistrate or samurai in charge of an individual village. In charge of interactions between the village and higher authorities.

**Yoriki:** Assistants to the magistrate, in charge of interactions between the villagers and the Sonchou.

**Chonin:** Heiman Headman of the village. In charge of farming and defense, chosen by the Sonchou or the villagers themselves.

**Doshin:** Assistants to the Chonin.

**Matriarch (Daitōryō):** Heimen Headwoman of the village. In charge of children, crafts, hospitality, and festivals. Roles between the Matriarch and Chonin may be switched in some villages, or a town may focus only on one or the other.

**Village monk (usually a Rishi):** Monk in charge of the village's temple. A Monk may or may not have an Initiate or two.

**Midwife:** Burakumin (Eta), but an important and respected role none-the-less. Useful to speak to communicate with the lowest classes.

**Head Burakumin (Eta):** Leader of an acting troop, Geisha house, or other burakumin organization, whom a samurai might order to have bodies disposed of or for other purposes.

These do not map closely to the Ministries, given the size and scope of a village, but some of the same Influence expense options may be available depending on the Clan and the size of the settlement.

## The Underworld Court

Whether built in the Shadowlands or from Yakuza who have earned power in the heimen underworld, the villains and thieves of the world mimic the structures of the courts in their own organizations. It is a dark mirror of honor.

### Influence Gains and Costs

In an underworld court, Infamy, rather than glory, determines the Influence you can earn or carry with you from one court to the next. Influence can be earned by destroying the enemies of the court, performing tasks that impress others either by their depravity or their effectiveness, or proving your skill and strength in the low or bugei arts. In this world, loyalty is the greatest virtue, and betraying the court will destroy most built-up influence.

Influence in an Underworld court can be spent on getting truthful answers, having others do underhanded tasks for you, or get illegal items or military.

### Roles and Responsibilities (Groups)

The roles in an Underworld organization include:

**Boss:** The leader of the Underworld organization.

**Enforcer:** Leader of the Underworld group's fighters, equivalent to Ministry of the Right.

**Fixer:** The person who covers or hides the Underworld groups illicit nature, equivalent to Ministry of the Left.

**Comptroller:** The person who manages the underworld organization's books and equipment, equivalent to Ministry of the Center.

**Infiltrators:** Those who disguise themselves as respectable people, carrying the Underworld's court messages and acting as their spies. Equivalent to the Heralds.

**Tsukai:** The kami...and Kasen...offer power. The Tsukai knows how to use it. Equivalent to the Spiritual Advisor.

**The Horror:** There is always one member of the organization who is willing to go to greater extremes than anyone else, to perform the very darkest of deeds. Equivalent to the Underhand.

## Winter Court

A Winter Court is a combination of the Imperial Court and the Household of a Daimyo, with representatives from each of the Clans in attendance.

The structure of Court revolves around courtly maneuvering interspaced with competitions

and demonstrations of skill, each of which earns the participants some Influence and the winner's considerably more. This is a unique opportunity, one where fortunes can be made or lost by someone willing to live heroically and risk all for Clan and Empire.

#### Influence Gains and Costs

Winter court is the quintessential court and its influences and costs are described elsewhere.

#### Ministries and Roles (Groups)

The roles in a Winter Court include:

**Host Daimyo:** the entire Household of the Clan Champion for the Clan who hosts the Winter Court is present and can be petitioned for favors.

**Clan Delegations:** each of the Great Clans will send a delegation to Winter Court. These delegations may or may not have full authority within their Clans but can certainly carry requests back to the Household of the Clan Champion come Spring.

**Imperial Court:** the full Imperial Court is in attendance, with the leaders of all five Ministries and the Emperor's Household.

#### The Games of Thrones

Poetry. Tea Ceremony. Letters left in the courtyard. Refined commentary on the failings of a piece of art. Each of these is a contest, with at least one big "event" occurring each week of the Winter Court. Those who do well gain Influence; those who fail miserably bring shame and dishonor to their Clan's name.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Example Competitions

Here is an example competition to show how the mechanics can be combined.

#### The Dragon Boat Race

At the start of Spring, many Rokugani make and float “dragon boats” down rivers and streams to ensure good luck for the year. Additionally large towns, cities, and many of the Clan Courts will sponsor a “Dragon Boat Race”, in which two teams representing Lady Sun and Lord Moon compete to determine the fortune for the coming year.

**Competition Type:** Hybrid (see below)

**Structure:** The Dragon Boat competition is broken down into three “events”:

*Ship Building:* The teams are expected to build their own ships. This is a Grand Display (Artisan (Shipwright) / Intelligence) with a Finesse focus. The boat with the highest results receives 2 “points” towards winning.

Once the crews present the ships, the race begins. The captains engage in a duel of wits and skill while the rowers pull the oars and respond to commands.

The race is divided into three lengths, each of which includes the following two contests. The winner of each length gains 1 point.

*The Captain’s Duel:* The captains engage in a Contest of Skill (Sailing / Perception). The winner of the Focus roll passes his Free Raises to the rowers.

*The Rowers:* the rowers (generally 4, but may go as high as 8) make a cumulative Athletics / Strength roll, with a total equal to the combined total of all their rolls +5 for each Free Raise contributed by the captain. These totals from

the two teams are compared and the highest total is the “winner” for that length of the race.

**Variations:** The number of lengths is always odd, and can be either three, five, or seven. The more lengths there are, the less the quality of the boat matters and the more likely it is that a skilled rowing crew can overcome momentary slips on the part of their captain.

## Appendix B: Detailed Ministry Structure for Rokugan

For my own games, set in a kind of fallen Rokugan where the Imperial Court just grinds on and on while monsters roam the world, I use an extended Ministry structure; mostly for flavor.

It is included below.

### Ministry of Divinities

The Empire was founded by the Kami who fell from the Heavens; they were in turn taught wisdom by Shinsei, a mortal man. Every action in the Empire thus reflects both Heaven and Earth, and both must be kept in balance. The Ministry of Divinities is charged with maintaining that balance both within the lands of each Clan and more broadly throughout the Empire.

Those who seek rank in this Ministry are expected to master calligraphy, divination, scholarship, and the rites which form the Empire's foundations. Without this knowledge, they cannot be expected to fulfill their duties. A hero's maximum Ranks in these offices is a combination of his Ranks in those skills.

**Ministry of Divination:** responsible for managing the process of discernment through which the Empire identifies the movement of Heaven and Earth. All official acts can only take place at the appropriate time, in the appropriate place; this ministry identifies those times and places so that order is maintained.

**Ministry of the Inquisition:** responsible for investigating heresy and suppressing forbidden knowledge. The Ministry is officially headed by the Jade Champion although the Jade Magistrates are considered a separate group; the ministers are the individuals who keep the

records, process information, and prosecute cases in an appropriate and legal fashion.

**Ministry of Rites:** responsible for staging and sometimes performing the myriad of rites required by the ancestors and kami. The office also maintains the registry of rites and the official books which describe the proper preparations, actions, and completion for each event.

**Ministry of Sacred Texts:** responsible for maintaining, creating, and distributing copies of the most sacred texts including Akodo's *Leadership* and the *Tao of Shinsei*. Access to and the ability to directly study these texts is key to both illumination and advancement in the Celestial Order.

**Ministry of Shrines and Monasteries:** responsible for overseeing the various shrines, temples, and monasteries within the Court's jurisdiction. This oversight can range from simple physical maintenance to complex negotiations with powerful abbots with their own political agendas.

### Ministry of the Center

At the heart of the Empire lies the Imperial Court; at the heart of each Clan's lands lay their Clan Courts. These Courts are more than just pretty places where flowers gather; they are the center of commerce, organization, and authority within their respective lands. This effort takes more than just good intentions and a swift sword. It takes discipline, effort, and tireless attention to mundane duties the bushi often mistake for diversions.

The courtiers who expect to excel in the center must master the arts of diplomacy and organization. A hero's maximum Ranks in these offices is a combination of his Ranks in Compassion, Courtesy, Duty, and Sincerity.



**Ministry of Calligraphy and Seals:** responsible for the certification, copying, and distribution of official documents throughout the Court's jurisdiction. Functionaries of this office oversee much of the paperwork which keeps civilized society functioning including contracts and travel papers.

**Ministry of Cartography:** responsible for making and updating maps. This includes the not inconsequential establishment of the boundaries between holdings, be they Clan, farm, village, or homestead.

**Ministry of Census:** responsible for maintaining the roles, genealogies, and counts for each settlement within the jurisdiction. They also coordinate with the Ministry of Heraldry and Ministry of Treasury to collect and distribute the bounty of the Empire in accordance with the will of the Emperor and the Heavens.

**Ministry of the Guard:** responsible for securing the Court and providing protection to all within its domain. The Guard provides physical defense and practical assistance in times of need as well as bodyguards for visiting dignitaries. It embodies the ancient rules of hospitality; that all who come under the ruler's roof are under his protection.

**Ministry of History:** responsible for maintaining and consulting the official chronology; the historians have the ultimate say in terms of precedent within the Empire. What the historians write is what happened; truth is what they read aloud when called upon.

**Ministry of Justice:** responsible for recording law and precedent well as advising the lord in matters of justice. This ministry concerns itself primarily with samurai-caste law, but does maintain the records of heimen law as well.

**Ministry of Treasury:** responsible for managing commerce, coin, and tribute so that the Court can fulfill its many duties in a civilized society. This office also manages patronage, retirements, stipends, and widow's gels; sometimes they manage the Court's hostages as well.

**Ministry of the Secretary and Chamberlin:** responsible for assisting the ruler in his duties, for organizing his schedule, and recording his decisions. In larger Courts the Secretary and Chamberlin are two separate offices coordinating these activities.

#### Ministry of Heraldry

The Miya were, and are, traditionally associated with spreading the Emperor's decrees throughout the Empire. They are also charged with the "Emperor's Mercy", the duty of the Celestial Emperor to his people to provide food, shelter, and infrastructure. It is in this way that the Mandate of Heaven is seen in the physical world.

The specialties associated with the Heraldry include:

**Ministry of Carpentry and Trades:** responsible for both organizing public works and certifying craftsmen in their fields. This ministry is arguably the oldest in the Empire, founded on Miya's original interpretation of the Emperor's Mercy.

**Ministry of Earth and Water:** responsible for damns, flood control, water management, wells, and terracing; especially during time of disaster. This ministry primarily deals with issuing permits and inspections and relies on the Ministry of Carpenters and Trades and local levies for workmen and on the Right Hand when emergencies require a large, coordinated action to address immediate disaster.



**Ministry of Magistrates:** responsible for appointing, certifying, and managing magistrates throughout the jurisdiction. Individual magistrates may adjudicate simple matters and deputize heimen to assist them but are expected to refer more complex matters to the Ministry of Justice for resolution.

**Ministry of Messengers:** responsible for delivering messages, proclamations, and official decrees within the jurisdiction. Messengers or “heralds” are considered sacrosanct; to cause one harm during his official business is an insult to the highest lord of the Court.

#### Ministry of the Left

Traditionally the “Emperor’s Left Hand” was thought of as the Crane Clan with their scholarship, grace, and charm. More properly, the “Board of the Left” was charged with maintaining the Emperor’s household and, by extension, the city within which it resides. The scope of the Imperial mandate for this Board extends throughout the Empire; the Clan courts are more modest but similarly charged.

Courtiers who expect to excel in the service of the “Left Hand” are expected to be artisans, diplomats, and scholars. Their total ranks in Offices associated with these seals cannot exceed their total Ranks in Artisan, Calligraphy, Poetry, and Scholarship.

**Ministry of Arts and Music:** responsible for the preservation of traditional arts, the recognition of artistic accomplishment, and the certification of artisans within their disciplines.

**Ministry of Ceremonies and Festivals:** responsible for staging civil ceremonies including gempukkus and official events as well as organizing festivals. This office often finds itself at odds with the Office of Divination and the Office of the Guard about appropriate arrangements.

**Ministry of Education:** responsible for managing the system of schools and testing which find worthy candidates for the Ministries and assign them suitable placements.

**Ministry of the Grounds:** responsible for the palace and its surrounding urban area. In a small Court, the grounds consist of little more than some fields or a small garden; a Clan’s Grounds may extend through parks, preserved areas, and ancient buildings in addition to the palace itself.

**Ministry of the Household:** responsible for maintaining the palace, it’s stores, and provisions. In even the smallest Court this is no easy task; the household must both provide for itself and maintain sufficient stores to support its domain during times of trouble. Although traditionally headed by the wife of the local lord, the Minister of the Right or Imperial Councilor leads the Imperial Household directly.

**Ministry of Roads and Waterways:** responsible for the infrastructure which links the Empire together. Many political battles are waged between the ministers of the right and the heralds as to where this office properly falls; but in the end samurai are warriors and they need a way to get to the field of battle more than they worry about clean water. This Ministry also maintains the checkpoints which monitor/control traffic throughout the jurisdiction.

#### Ministry of the Right

Traditionally, the “Emperor’s Right Hand” was thought of as the Lion Clan with their martial power and acumen. More properly, the “Board of the Right” was composed of several Offices, each with a different responsibility in the focusing of martial and material power to enact the Emperor’s will. In this way, the Clans were

bound together into, if not harmony, at least intense focus.

Courtiers who expect to excel in the service of the “Right Hand” are expected to be historians, leaders, and capable combatants (if not on par with their bushi brothers). Their total ranks in Offices associated with these seals cannot exceed their total Ranks in one Jutsu skill of their choice, Commerce, Scholarship, and one of Strategy or Tactics.

*Ministry of Stores:* responsible for managing military supplies, including arms, armor, and food. Some Courts include managing the stables under this ministry as well; others treat horses as a matter for the individual samurai to manage or as ornaments for the Ministry of Grounds.

*Ministry of Taxation:* responsible for both gathering the Court’s bounty of rice so it can be distributed in keeping with the law and traditions of the Empire. Tax collectors are the closest of the noble caste to the heimen “economy” and are expected to understand how commoner’s use coins as a system of measure.

*Ministry of War:* responsible for leading the Court’s forces outside of Court holdings and for raising forces in times of strife. Courtiers in this ministry generally do not hold direct positions in the military ranks, but rather work to provide administrative and intelligence support to their war-trained brothers and sisters.

## Appendix C: Designer FAQ

This appendix is reserved for frank, direct responses to design and structural questions. You don't have to like where I came to from a design standpoint, but I'll try to explain WHY I did what I did, so that you can follow through with your own tweaks more cleanly.

Concept: Iconic Moments and Story Engines  
Quick comment.

When I look at a game system or write something, I am trying to do three things:

- 1) Create iconic moments, those times when the player sits back and says "Damn, that was cool."
- 2) Create story engines, mechanics which interact with each other to mill out unique play opportunities,
- 3) Control the in-game "camera" so that something interesting (either to experience or to watch) is always "on screen".

The interaction of these three creates some interesting moments. And a lot of headaches, because I'm not always focused on purely "mechanical" balance.

Concept: Roll-Play vs. Role-Play

The Actions create provide a framework to describe significant events initiated by the heroes during an extended in-world event.

A player can say "my character uses Forgery / Agility to take the Deceive Action with 3 Raises" and mechanically describe the result.

Or a player can state "I sneak into the secretary's chambers, planting perfectly forged letters saying..."

Both are mechanically Deceive actions. There may be times when the player uses the first formulation for simplicity, but the second

**focuses the camera** on the hero for a moment and clarifies his actions in the game world.

Idea: Can I use Deceive to create a deception about a deception about a deception?

Yes, you can get to *Inception*-level recursion. You can do the same things with Stymie.

This falls into the "level stare at the player" category of interaction. I left it in place because it is something that should be able to happen and that GMs may want to set up ahead of time. If a player tries it at the table, make them keep track of it and feel free to have a Kitsuki blast through the entire multi-sequence artifice in a single Assess action.

Or not, if the play group is having fun with it.

Idea: Can I Lobby for a Contest that doesn't exist yet?

Yes, so long as you bring the booze. I drink bourbon, but you should check with your GM as to his favorites.

More practically, the Lobby action description requires you to target a competition. We could get into a deep sophistic argument about whether you can target something that doesn't exist yet...

...or we could just admit that allowing a character to create his own competition, in an already packed Court schedule, disrupts the flow of the game. It's OKAY if the GM wants to allow it but you are introducing a world of chaos.

Thus, booze.

Idea: I really feel like the Left Hand comes into its own if you would write a settlement and regional management system.

Yes, it does. No, I'm not writing that right now.



Yes, I have a draft of such a system. No, I'm not up to writing the 30K words it would take to publish it at the moment.

Statement: But I don't like social combat systems!

Neither do I.

Social interactions are not combat; war is the pursuit of political goals by another means, not the other way around.

Practically, that's why I put the Influence system in place. It creates a persistent social world for the heroes to interact with.

Also, yes, I'm trying to gamify EQ.

Statement: It's not written like a software manual

No, it's not.

If I wanted to write software manuals, I would be a tech writer.

I come from an earlier, halcyon era when we were OKAY with words like dweomer and games where the focus was on creating iconic moments rather than arguing about keyword linkages across supplements written by a dozen different authors, sentences could have multiple nested clauses, and L5R was mocked as a low-lethality system.

Statement: The new game world has costs.

Yes. It does and that's a shame.

Understandable after 20 years of not having a way to measure your wealth and influence, but a shame.

Question: Do you hate shugenja?

Yes.

That out of the way, they also pose a structural problem in any game which takes place over an extended in-game period of time. They can, effectively, do ANYTHING. Given my

druthers, I'd nerf them out of existence entirely and start over. In fact, I did in my Limitless system.

However, that's not entirely appropriate for a Court system. They should play on roughly equal footing with other characters, tipped a bit towards courtiers (who spend a lot of their game-time in other people's play-space).

I settled on a modification of the Importune rules as a compromise. It gives them some flexibility of action but prevents them from overwhelming every other character and specifically the courtier characters, while still giving them a shtick.

Could you come up with other, more complicated approaches. SURE! Have fun with that, and if you get all of the spells converted into a Court setting...um...wow. No, really. Wow.

Question: Can a character be involved with more than one Intrigue

Don't go there. Save yourself!

Technically yes. It's implied, for example, that you can be involved with both your "home" Court on an Intrigue level and with the Imperial Court.

However, the "Influence Clearing" mechanic is there for a reason. It helps keep you out of situations where you have to track Influence in several Courts, their relationships with each other, and your heroes' relationships with them.

It's possible and if you want to do it, go for it. I've tried it, and it's a lot of paperwork on everyone's part for what was for my groups very little gain.

In general, I suggest that characters participate in their "home Court" most of the time, with a shift in intensity covering the local "Winter

Court". Mechanically securing an invitation to another court effectively "closes" the previous Court, as does receiving an invitation to either the Imperial or a Clan Winter Court.

In game, I describe this as the heroes closing up their business, engaging in with the larger Intrigues, then coming back and trying to fit back in after a period of absence and growth.

You truly cannot go home again.

Question: What is with that big favor chart?

Don't think of it as a giant list of admini-trivia. Think of it as a list of goals that player characters may get assigned or obstacles they need to overcome on their way to getting on with their actual mission.

Question: What is a play-space?

What do you remember about your first game? Your second? Your tenth?

Odds are good, when you stop to think about it, that you remember your characters and some neat tactical moments. In L5R, you might also remember some interesting political situation that your GameMaster set up and you talked your way through. All for the good.

That said, now go and read your RPG books. How much ink is spent on character options? How much on combat options? On spells (more character options)? How much on "fluff", ideas that fill out the world of the game?

Two points:

- 1) Fluff (narrative details) does not balance crunch (game rules).
- 2) You play what the rules tell you to play

In a game with lots and lots of options for combat and spells, and only a few for other things, you will do combat and spells. In a

game with other options, you'll make other choices.

That's the play space. It's interesting to see that the new L5R game from Fantasy Flight has slightly expanded the battlefield play-space (a topic for a different day, and using a design I first tried out almost twenty years ago), but they buried all of their social elements in the character-building play-space.

Sometimes I want to make everyone who wants to write a game watch a *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* marathon just to force us to think our way through how to apply EQ to game plots in a non-contrived way.

Question: Where are the <insert missing school here>?

I don't understand their iconic moments well enough to construct a meaningful icon array, so after trying to translate them I stopped. The Otomo and the Spider both proved to be beyond my skills.

Feel free to take a stab at it yourself!

Question: Why do you keep using the word hero rather than player character?

I play heroic fantasy (or science fiction) games. I play heroes, not characters. It's a personal thing.

More generally I use:

- Hero to refer to a player character
- Character or target to refer to a non-player character

Question: Why is X skill not allowed to do Y in terms of Court Actions?

Honestly, because the junction between Skills – School Techniques – Advantages in L5R 4<sup>th</sup> edition is a mess. This is partially a result of the dice system, but mostly a result of twenty years of iterative design that tried VERY HARD to make some very strange things work.



No disrespect to the designers, the play testers, and everyone involved. It's just there was never a clear doctrine about how things were supposed to work together and it got messy. I've thought about rewriting it occasionally to make more sense, but that's a good bit of work.

**Question: Why not just use contested skill rolls?**  
You can use a contested skill roll for almost any competition. That is covered, extensively, in multiple L5R supplements.

The patterns are designed to show different approaches, not to prevent you from doing something you already know how to do.

**Question: Why Structured Competitions?**  
*I like being able to narrate the cool scenes!*

Great! Go do that. In fact, do it more! More cool scenes for everyone!

Ahem.

Now, look back up at point one about play-space. Fluff does not balance crunch. We can talk about how neat it is to have courtly scenes, make up things on the fly so they sound cool, and generally carry on as we always have.

Or we can try to create a more complex play-space, driving character building actions and system focus into new areas. I'm inclined towards the later.

Also (and just as importantly), formal competitions in many arts are a common form of both entertainment and social integration throughout most of history. It seemed like a good way to highlight and emphasize all of the "fluff" skills that people really just pick up to add a bit of flavor to their character or drive up their Insight Rank.

**Question: Why so many Court Actions?**  
*This is too complicated! I like just doing occasional contested rolls!*

Great! Ignore the Actions section and use the Influence and Courts sections if they help. Or don't. It's all good.

However, for the sake of argument, let's turn the question around a bit:

*Why so many combat actions, when combat basically boils down to sticking the pointy end into the other guy? Why so many spells that buff stats or blow things up in various creative ways?*

The answer is there are a lot of court actions because, fundamentally, there are a lot of things to **do** in a Court which don't involve hauling out a sword or casting a spell. Those options typically involve deploying emotional rather than abstracted or tactical intelligence and resolving challenges through negotiation and clever maneuvering.

Go watch *Memoirs of a Geisha* and map the characters' plans (and efforts to gain Influence) to sequences, actions, and competitions. If you do, you'll notice something:

**We don't have too many Court actions. We have too few. Far, far too few.**