

The Emperor's Legion

The Lion Clan are the finest examples of what a samurai should be in Rokugan. Their honor, their courage, and their skill at the art of war is beyond compare. No clan embodies the virtues of Bushidō and honor more fully than the Lion.

In a thousand years of history, no clan has been untouched by war. Many hate it. Some fear it. But for the Lion Clan, it is their purpose. As the Right Hand of the Emperor, the Lion Clan stands ready at all times to bring war to any who would think to rise above their station or to threaten the Celestial Order. The bulk of the Imperial Legions are samurai raised and trained by the Lion. Following in the tradition of the Kami Akodo, the Lion Clan is blessed with the finest generals in the Empire. In an empire of warriors, the samurai of the Lion Clan are the only soldiers.

Akodo's Army

Although the Lion now boast the largest and most powerful army of any Great Clan, this was not always the case. At the Dawn of the Empire, Lord Akodo struggled to build his clan. He sought not followers to obey him, but equals to stand at his side. He walked through the nascent Empire and challenged many mortals, though few proved themselves comparable to his prowess and tactical ingenuity. Each winter, he returned to his brother Hantei's court with few followers to his name.

"You are a Lion without a pride," Hantei chided him.

"A Lion does not stand with sheep," Akodo replied.

One of Akodo's early followers was the boastful and charismatic braggart Ikoma. The two met in a sake house, where the aged Ikoma boasted of one incredible feat after another, even promising to defeat Akodo in a wrestling match. When the sun rose, Ikoma put the last of his sake aside and asked if Akodo was ready to wrestle.

"You cannot hope to defeat me, old man," said Akodo. "So why try?"

"I said I would, so I shall," Ikoma said. "And one way or another, it should make for quite a story!" Akodo refused the contest, and Ikoma declared himself retired—undefeated—from wrestling. Although Akodo could scarcely credit the man's tales of his own exploits, he also could not doubt his courage, and so Akodo began to see that his equals may have strengths different from his own.

Over time, Akodo found other warriors, tale-tellers, and even humble farmers whose honor and courage made them worthy to stand beside him. Still, Akodo sought a champion who was his equal in the arts of war. He found one in Matsu, a former bandit who had renounced those dishonorable ways. Matsu at first rejected Akodo, seeing him as just another brute killer who lived by the sword. Eventually, she consented to join his clan, but refused his proposal of marriage.

"I will be no man's bride," she said, "even if he is a god."

Between them, Ikoma's horde of children and grandchildren and Matsu's seven sons became the core of Akodo's growing army. More and more warriors flocked to his banner, and with them more and more farmers, smiths, carpenters, and others who needed a safe place to live. Akodo and his followers set out to carve new lands from the largely wild Empire, putting countless monsters and would-be-bandits to the sword. The bitterest war was fought against the kitsu, powerful lion-like yokai every bit as skilled in war as any samurai. By the time Akodo had realized that the kitsu had honor to match any member of his clan, there were only five kitsu left, all male. Akodo went alone to parlay with the survivors, who forgave him for massacring their people—because he had done so with honor.

"We pass from the world now with pride," said one kitsu, "under the approving gaze of our ancestors." Akodo offered them a place at his side, and the kitsu changed their form to become human beings, took wives from among his followers, and became the Kitsu family.

One Thousand Years of Not-Quite-So Peace

Since the defeat of Fu Leng at the Day of Thunder, the Empire has enjoyed one thousand years of peace—or so the official histories say. And in truth, while there has been no war to equal that first desperate conflict against the demons of the Shadowlands, to describe the millennia since the Empire's founding as "peaceful" is a gross exaggeration.

The Lion Clan has fought in more than one hundred wars, blood feuds, border skirmishes, and lesser conflicts. Some historians claim that the Lion have been at war more than they have been at peace, and many Lion philosophers believe that the clan is best serving its role under heaven when it is at war.

The Lion Clan were given their first opportunity to prove their supremacy when they made war against the rebel Doji Takamori, the so-called Bloody Crane. Although the Bloody Crane was supported by many within the Crane, Phoenix, and Scorpion Clans, as well as some members of the Imperial families, Akodo's army proved its worth and destroyed the rebels.

In the fourth century, the Lion defeated an enormous and dangerous army of Ujik horse-lords that attacked from the west. The gaijin cavalry had superior horses and mobility, but new reforms in standards of training and equipment for Lion ashigaru ultimately prevailed.

At times, the Lion Clan's skill in war has been put to grim purpose, as with the complete destruction of the Bear Clan in the seventh century. Following their descent into blood-tainted berserker madness, the Emperor ordered their utter destruction and the legions of the Akodo did not hesitate to carry it out. The fate of that minor clan stands as a constant reminder of the Lion's role, always ready to enforce the Emperor's will against any clan that would defy the Celestial Order.

The Lion Clan's long-standing rivalries with the Crane and the Unicorn have repeatedly broken out into conflict. The Lion have always acquitted themselves well in these battles, thanks to their superior strategy and sizable army. However, these victories have all come at a cost that explains Lion belligerence: with so much of their population under arms, the Lion constantly require imports or capture of food and farmland. If famine were to take hold in Lion lands, their vaunted armies would have to shrink as peasants return to their farms...and that could leave the Lion vulnerable.

Families of the Lion

The Akodo

The peerless leaders of the Lion clan, the Akodo family traces its lineage to the kami Akodo himself. Like their founder, the Akodo are warriors, whose skill on the battlefield shines as brightly as their honor—as brightly as shining steel. The Akodo War College, where most Akodo bushi are trained, teaches not only the use of weapons but also logistics, leadership, geography, and all the other necessities for any general to find victory.

The daimyō of the Akodo family is Akodo Toturi, the Right Hand of the Emperor, High General, and Champion of the Lion. Toturi also serves the Emperor as his Emerald Champion, master of the Empire's laws and commander of its legions.

The Matsu

The matriarchal Matsu family are the fiercest and most deadly warriors in a clan known for its skill in the art of war. The Matsu approach to battle—and to all things—favors forthrightness, boldness, and courage above all else. This sometimes puts Matsu warriors at odds with their Akodo colleagues, a tension that has its roots in the often-tempestuous relationship between Lady Matsu and Akodo-no-Kami themselves.

The current head of the Matsu family is Matsu Tsuko, who commands the Lion armies in their entirety while Akodo Toturi is busy with his responsibilities in the Imperial capital.

The Ikoma

Historians, orators, and storytellers without equal, the Ikoma represent the scholarly and diplomatic core of the clan. Ikoma storytellers move amongst the Lion armies, reminding them of the greatness of their ancestors and building their morale for the battles to come. The Ikoma fight another battle in the Imperial Court, where they often have cause to defend or justify the military adventurism of the Lion generals.

The Ikoma daimyō is Ikoma Anakazu, who is so devoted to his clan he was willing to set aside his beloved wife and forge a new marriage alliance by welcoming the Unicorn Khan into his family. Shinjo Altansarnai's insulting and dishonorable breach of their marriage treaty is the subject of much Ikoma outrage.

The Kitsu

The Lion clan venerates their ancestors to an extent remarkable even in Rokugan, and it is the priests of the Kitsu family who oversee this worship. Thanks to their heritage as the human inheritors of proud race of yokai, many Kitsu possess the ability to see or even travel into the spirit realm. Kitsu shugenja invoke and commune with the ancestors, even allowing them to possess their bodies, and their sodan-senzo possess much wisdom of the ancestors that the other clans can only envy.

The Kitsu daimyō is the young Kitsu Takeko, whose skill as a pyromancer brings her much unwanted attention. Takeko would rather contemplate the stories of her ancestors than use her magical ability to shape her clan's destiny, as others urge.

Honor is Stronger than Steel

The Lion live Bushidō as if they invented it—in fact, Akodono-Kami's seminal work *Leadership* is arguably the first time
Bushidō was codified and defined. To the Lion, honor is
everything, for it is from their honor that all other virtues flow.
Lion samurai hold themselves as the examples of Bushidō
for the lesser clans to follow. They hold themselves to high
standards—some would say impossible standards—of honorable
behavior. Perhaps those standards are too strict for the average
samurai...but the Lion are not average.