

Facts and Customs in an Oriental World

Koku is gold coin with a hole in it so it can be strung on a necklace. Its value changed from year to year and is based on the value of 5 bushels of rice (enough to feed a man for 1 year), its value fluctuates from year to year. One koku weighs as much as a standard coin, twice as much as a Lilis minted coin. **Bu** is effectively a silver (worth 2 silver) and **Zeni** are copper coins (worth 2 copper). Individual clans mint their own coins with distinct markings, but they are usually universally accepted. In theory a coin may be redeemed for its value in rice, but this is rarely done. A koku of rice weighs about 150 kilograms (23.6 stone or 330 pounds). Koku was also used to measure how much a ship could carry when all its loads were rice. Smaller ships carried 50 koku (7.5 t) while the biggest ships carried over 1,000 koku (150 t). Those of the samurai class have all their needs provided by their lord, rarely do they need to stoop to the hemin habit of exchanging coins for goods or services. This is the providence of merchants and merchants are not as well respected as farmers. Almost no one is crass enough to sell magic items, but some merchants have illegal contacts with far off lands.

Shugenja Magic Actually there are no shugenja spells, instead shugenja recite prayers to the Fortunes from their *ofudas* (individually scribed tablets, similar to a wizard's spell book). If the prayers are recited properly then the kamia and the elemental spirits perform what is asked of them. They need to cast their spells directly from the *ofudas*, like a mage reading a scroll, they do not memorize their spells. They have a spell casting matrix like a sorcerer and are limited to what spells they can cast per day by that matrix. Shugenja are taught specific Schools of kami magic; spell that they can cast spontaneously, like a cleric would cast their Domain spells. The shugenja uses their own spiritual energy to both request and demand the service of the elements themselves, telling the kami to perform the magic. Shugenja do not have scrolls, nor can their *ofudas* be used like a scroll or a spellbook. Read Magic is not needed to read an *ofudas* and only another shugenaja could use the *ofudas*. It is possible for a Clan to capture a shugenja and take away their *ofudas* or even copy them, but this is dishonorable and so is not done. Shugenja are rare and universally respected, they are the only members of the samurai class who can surrender and maintain their honor. If that happens the shugenja's clan would ransom the hostage shugenja back from the clan that took him captive. Shugenja can take and use metamagic feats, they would have to create a new *ofudas* for that spell using the metamagic feats that they have them before they could cast them. All shugenaj speak the spirit tongue and so can ask the kami directly to do things, usually minor magics. The kami will always have a request or demand that must be performed before it does the service and talking with a kami can be time consuming, they are often insular and care little about the world around them, many are vain. Typical demands could be a sacrifice or offering made to the kami or for some deed to be done.

Sohei are monks who can cast divine magic they only get spells of 1st to 4th level and have a limited spell list. As with all monks they must have a lawful alignment.

Sorcerers are more common among the Nezumi than among the Rokugani. They are mysterious arcane spellcasters who always face the temptation of *maho*, blood magic. That load leads to corruption through the Taint and an eventual loss of the character to the forces of Taint.

All divine magic in the Shadowlands is impeded (shugenja are divine casters), the caster must make a Spellcraft check DC of 20+ the level of the spell. If the check

succeeds the spell works without difficulty. If the check fails the spell doesn't function, though it still counts as a spell cast that day. In addition the spellcaster exposes herself to the Shadowlands Taint and adds 1 to their Taint score for every 5 points by which she fails the Spellcraft check.

Arcane spells cast in the Shadowlands have the Empower Spell feat applied to them at no additional cost to the caster.

Ritual Magic is a method of casting used by several Shugenja to improve a spell; any more requires advanced knowledge.

When casting Ritual Magic for each shugneja beyond the first:

- Increase the spell's duration by a single increment (ie from 1 minute/level to 2 minutes/level). Spells with a duration of Instantaneous or Permanent cannot have their duration changed.
- Increase the damage of the spell by one die (ie from 4d6 to 5d6), this can increase the spell's damage beyond its normal maximum, though not more than twice its normal maximum damage.
- Increase the DC of the spell by +2.
- Increase the effective caster level for the spell by 2 levels.

Each additional shugenja's bonus may be applied to a different spell improvement (for example you can take 5 shugenja and increase the duration by 1 increment, add 2 additional dice of damage, and increase the DC of the save by 2).

The Emerald Empire is extremely xenophobic. Throughout most of Rokugan's history it was quiet unusual to encounter sentient, non-human creatures. Following the Clan War, the Rokugani people became somewhat more accustomed to non-humans due to their peaceful interaction with the Naga and the Nezumi races. The Unicorn have regular relations with the Ivory Empire, but this is kept secret, because officially it is not allowed. Unfortunately, the recent predations of the mysterious Tsuno coupled with the Naga's return to slumber may undo all progress that has been made. The Lion have enslaved a race of humanoids called the Zokujin. The zokujin are treated humanly, but are not even considered to be sentient. Gaijin (alien) are only accepted by the Unicorn Clan and a few of the Mantis. Most humanoids could pass themselves off as funny looking humans (dwarves, elves, gnomes, half-elves, half-orcs, halflings, orcs). Members of a monster race, especially goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears, and ogres could be considered to be oni. Oni are not talked to, negotiated with or appeased, they are simply killed. Oni are dangerous and even combat with one carries the risk of getting Taint. Contact with outsiders is illegal. The gaijin betrayed the empire early in its history and this has not been forgotten. Gaijin also tried to bring gunpowder to the empire. This alarmed the Emperor and he ordered that, except for fireworks, the use of gunpowder is illegal.

Government: The Emperor has direct absolute rule, but he can't handle it all so he has to delegate. His chief delegate is the Emerald Champion; the chief enforcer and personal bodyguard of the Emperor, his palace is located outside of Otasan Uchi the central HQ for the Emerald Champions. There are thousands of Emerald Magistrates who roam the empire helping the Emerald Champion do his job; those appointed to this job are expected to act with the justice of the Empire in mind, and nothing else. They must put aside matters of Clan and family, politics or loyalty to this service. Clever magistrates do use their position for power. The clans also have their own magistrates chosen by the daimyo across the provinces. They carry out the Emperor's will, but only within the boundaries of their province; they are considered the hands of their lord and

can act in his name. However, rarely do they have to work against their family's interests. The government is an example of the Celestial Order in action. The religion of the Fortunes decrees the Imperial Family will be in charge and sets the rank of the people. When people die they pass on to Meido, the Realm of the Dead and then are reincarnated to continue their individual journey on the Karmic Wheel. When a person fulfills their destiny they pass to Yomi, the land of the Blessed Ancestors.

The Jade Champion is the authority on what is and what is not maho (forbidden blood magic). The Jade Champion's inquisitors work as magistrates do for the Emerald Champion.

Family daimyo report to their province daimyo, who report to the Clan daimyo, who in turn report to the Emperor. The family daimyo is responsible for the courtiers, lords, shugenja, and samurai under his command and reports to the Clan Champion. The Champion only answers to 3 individuals--the Emperor, the Emerald Champion, and the Jade Champion.

Imperial court, especially the winter court, is host to the courtiers who negotiate on behalf of their daimyo and their clans. Often they make alliances, trade rice and hostages and declare war. These acts, agreed on in the winter court, are typically conducted in the summer when there is no snow. It is illegal for the great Clans to attack a minor clan, unless that clan insults them. Courtiers are quick to take offense at the slightest slight so the minor clans tend to avoid court.

Crime and Punishment: Like everything else is highly ritualized often the outcome is already known before the trial.

- Honorless assassination is a crime punishable by execution, those honorably killed can have their family call for a blood feud and little else. Almost any time someone is killed, the deceased's family may claim the right of vengeance or demand reparations.
- In most manners the law is severe and inflexible, theft and forgery are punished by execution.
- Treason against the Emperor is the worse crime of all and the offending party can expect to be executed dishonorably, along with his wife and children. Their house is razed and their names are expunged from the Imperial history and the Emperor commands that their name will never be spoken again.
- Crimes committed by children have the consequences fall upon their father.
- A villager who commits a crime brings the repercussions down upon the village headman instead of himself.
- Kidnapping is the illegal theft of a living person. Hostages are taken legally with prior notification to their family. Hostages can also be used to cement an alliance, typically the 2nd sons of the allying daimyo. Occasionally these hostages are required to swear fealty to their captors, and learn the school techniques of their new clan.

Testimony is gathered before the judgment, evidence has little place in the courts. Only the Kitsuki family of the Dragon clan hold to weighing evidence first, it is openly mocked, but is slowly gaining acceptance. Confessions from a criminal is testimony against himself, often extracted through torture. Testifying falsely is a crime punishable by death. Execution is viewed as honorless and in many cases dishonorable. Many samurai who are supposed to die claim the honor of seppuku with their own wakizashi (when a noble lady kills themselves it is called Jigai). It is considered the honorable and correct way to

atone for one's crimes before departing to the land of the dead. If their daiymo doesn't feel they deserve this honor they give the samurai a wooden wakizashi--an indication the daimyo believes the samurai is too cowardly to perform true seppuku. Testimony is the ultimate standard, those who can be trusted to speak the truth can sway judgments with a word. Because shugenja are holy men their testimony can carry more weight than that of a samurai. Magic may be used to hunt down the criminal and bring them to justice, but not in court. Torture however is considered an indirect method of magic and can be used in court. Testimony gleaned by magic is considered useless, even in the lands of the Phoenix. A minor Scorpion shugenja was accused of murdering a powerful Lion general, the Kitsu summoned the murdered Lion's spirit from the afterlife to give his testimony. The Scorpion was put to death. It was revealed that the Lion was still alive, the Soshi had held him hostage the whole time. The Scorpion accused the Lions of practicing imperfect magic, while the Lion claimed the Scorpion had perverted the Kitsu shugenaj somehow. Because of this case it is accepted that magic is not foolproof and it is not used in court. Magic that reads men's souls or tells lies from truth amounts to nothing in trial. Even the noble spirit of the deceased ancestors can't be heeded as only a shugenja can bring their words to the land of the living. This is important; it will be your word against your accusers and your accusers will be considered to be more reliable than gijian. In a case of a difference of opinion or fact, using magic to determine this is illegal. No honorable person would give false testimony so the testimony of a gijian would always be in doubt.

Those who speak sincerely are believed over those who speak the truth poorly in court. A character's *on* (face or respectability) is a measure of how well-tended a character's reputation is, this is a little different than honor or concerns of glory. A worthless samurai who can speak well in court is given more respect than one who is a stuttering fool. The battlefield of the courts is where *on* tends to be the most important, as a man's reputation can kill another before the chance to engage in a formal duel, even appears. Those with an impressive *on* are rarely challenged, as doing so could make a samurai appear foolish. A samurai with a reputation as a highly skilled duelist can laugh off the challenges from those who are perceived as lesser opponents, even if his reputation is in no way justified.

The roads are well constructed and shaded by trees. Along the roads are way stations staffed by younger samurai, usually the apprentices of the Imperial Magistrates. These samurai often serve as scouts in case of invasion and help defend against bandit attacks. They are generally charged with assisting travelers and keeping order in the general area and have 1-2 shugenja on hand to help. Imperial Magistrates have permanent travel papers. Legionnaires with their unit do not require traveling papers.

The roads are capable of moving large amounts of troops. In order to travel one the Emperor's Roads, one must carry travel papers from the daiymo who presides over the road. These papers are checked each time a traveler passes a way station or crosses a border between clans. Emerald magistrates and their Legionnaires may travel at will as duty commands, they may also write temporary travel papers for anyone they deem worthy. Traveling off road is risky, close to the Shadowlands you might run afoul of beasts or monsters. Even those away from such areas may be subject of bandits. Someone caught sneaking around the fields of the Crane without papers will be dealt with much more severely than someone who attempts to enter the Crane lands by road, but with no papers.

To protect themselves from spies Clans keep close track on traveling samurai. Others traveling the road could be members of the Imperial Legion following orders by their commander, ronin seeking a cause to serve, ambassadors, diplomats, magistrates, spies, or even bounty hunters.

Etiquette is all important, the battle in the courts can be as brutal as that one the battlefield. Failure to display proper etiquette to one's peers and superiors will result in dishonor.

Bowing and Kneeling: it is customary to bow when greeting another samurai, it's a show of respect between 2 individuals. The lower the bow the greater the respect. Bushi and shugenja both bow to each other. Bowing only slightly is commonly interpreted as a thinly veiled insult.

Kneeling is done before a person of superior rank.

Terms of address can be means of showing respect or insult. Samurai of different clans are expected to address one another by the name of their clan, or family (if their clothing signifies which family they belong to).

When addressing another, it is traditional to add a suffix to their name in order to reflect the relationship between you. If one is speaking to a friend or someone of equal rank the suffix -san is added. Superiors always receive the -sama suffix, using -san would be dishonorable. A woman who is loved generally gets the -chan suffix, while the male gets the -kun suffix. This is common between relatives, spouses or close friends. The prefix O (great one) is added to another's name as a show of enormous respect and admiration to that individual.

Gifts: It is customary to offer a gift when meeting a host or a superior for the first time, or to reward loyal service. The more personal and sentimental the gift is, the more meaningful it is, a pristine gift clearly purchased from the market could be a sign of disfavor or indifference. It is bad form to purchase a gift. The gift of a weapon or armor to another can actually be an insult, implying the other needs protection or that their lord is unable to provide protection. When accepting the gift it is customary to refuse the gift 2 times before accepting allowing the person to demonstrate their sincerity.

Learning

- Usually done in a specific school (dojo) starting at age 7 or so, for 6-9 years. Upon graduation, gempukku, there is a coming of age ceremony and the student becomes an adult.
- A samurai taught by their dojo continues their education throughout their life. It is generally accepted that after a time the student will return to demonstrate what he has learned, and if it is sufficient to take advanced training. Teachers are called sensei and are highly respected.
- Each Clan has its own shugenja dojo, and each family has its own School of shugenja magic that is similar to a Cleric's Domain.
- Some training can only be taken in specific schools, usually determined by the specific Clan. Cross clan teaching is possible, but rare and requires the Different School feat. This feat can't be taken without the DM's permission. There has to be a reason for the student to take this feat. For example if a character is held hostage by a different Clan as part of a treaty then the feat can be used, or if a student is on good terms with a different Clan. There must be some roleplaying reason for

allowing the Different Schools feat.

- Almost exclusively among the heimin and hinin is the apprenticeship program.

The Kuni Witch Hunters were founded by the Kuni family and have dedicated themselves to understanding the Shadowlands. They roam the Empire hunting down Tainted opponents, testing for maho magic and rule over the Crab Legion of the Damaned. Many are shugenja tempered by the teachings of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, except oni for their vow of pacifism.

The Brotherhood of Shinsei: Keepers of Shinsei's Wisdom, their temples and shrines are found all over the Empire and are open to all. Samurai who reach the age of 50 are expected to retire and become inkyo monks shaving off their topknot and contemplating the wisdom of Shinsei for the rest of their lives, this custom is becoming unpopular. The Dragon and Phoenix have the best relations with the monks and the Scorpion tend to scorn them. Currently they are trying to find the missing half of the Tao, they have been active in society over the last 30 years and some of the monks are returning to their families to reenter life there. With the assassination of Toturi I many have sought out their guidance and comfort.

Musha Shugyo: the "warrior pilgrimage" is an old tradition where the student leaves behind family and clan wandering the Empire to perfect their art and skill. The daimyo must authorize it and will not do so until after receiving testimony from the student's sensei, clearly saying the pilgrimage will help him. The daiymo may refuse the pilgrimage or even to hear from the sensei. A samurai on Musha Shugyo appears as a ronin, wearing no sign of his family or Clan. They may travel alone or in small groups.

Bandits and Pirates: Are unfortunately common in the Empire. Patrols of young samurai are common on the roads and one of their mandates is to stop bandits, but yet the bandits sill come as do infiltrating Shadowlands creatures. Some bandits are often smugglers. At sea pirates are also fairly common, no one clan takes responsibility for protecting the seas around Rokugan. The Mantis could do it, but they are also sometimes pirates. Some ships are smugglers and occasional pirates.

Ninja: Hantei I told the first Scorpion "Watch." The Scorpion family took the duty of watching the empire and informing the emperor. Many families developed their own ninja as part of this watch force. But, by the 5th century the dishonorable actions of the ninja became too much for the emperor to bear and he ordered that all ninja commit seppuku. By that time the ninja had become baby stealing, demon summoning masters of the night who knew no bounds; creatures with no honor. The emperor saw his mistake and corrected it and they have been illegal in the empire ever since.

Officials of the Law: The village headman will be assisted by Peasant Enforcers, the headman himself is in charge of the village and will be held responsible for any crimes committed by someone in the village. Young samurai are often sent out on patrols for bandits and other dangers. Clan Magistrates are the most commonly encountered law officials. Magistrates oversee illegal travel, local crimes, patrols and property disputes they work in the name of their daiymo. Imperial Magistrates are similar only with jurisdiction that stretches across the empire. The Emerald magistrates are the supreme law enforcers of the land and typically answer only to the Emerald Champion and the Emperor. It is beneath their station to become involved in petty crimes and minor offenses. Emerald Magistrates are tax collectors, travel paper inspectors and protect traveling dignitaries. They have an enormous amount of power and the right to travel

across the empire at will. They have the right to detain any individual of a lower rank, but need an Order of Appearance to detain those of higher station, they are considered to be direct representatives of the emperor. They handle crimes against the emperor, national crimes, fugitives, civil disorders organized blasphemy, and occasionally Shadowlands incursions. The Jade Champion and his deputies, the Kuni Witch Hunters, are responsible for preventing and investigating the practice of maho (blood) magic. They are also experts on the Shadowlands. The Legion of the Damned are lead by Kuni Witch Hunters. Jade Magistrates are either shugenja or individuals who are experts in the practice of maho. They are expected to work side-by-side with Imperial Magistrates, but take over in areas of their specialties. Imperial Legionnaires take over in cases of martial law. Under martial law Legion Commanders are given wide leeway.

Yojimbo: young samurai assigned as bodyguards for important courtiers or shugenja, even prominent merchants.

Seven Tenants of Bushido

Gi (honesty)	Honesty
Yu (courage)	Courage
Jin (compassion)	Benevolence
Rei (courtesy)	Respect
Meyo (honor)	Honor
Makoto (sincerity)	Rectitude
Chugo (duty)	Loyalty

"Bushido, meaning "Way of the Warrior-Knight", is a Japanese word which is used to describe a uniquely Japanese code of conduct and a way of the samurai life, loosely analogous to the concept of chivalry. It originates from the samurai moral code and stresses frugality, loyalty, martial arts mastery, and honor unto death. Born from Neo-Confucianism during times of peace in Tokugawa Japan and following Confucian texts, Bushido was also influenced by Shinto and Buddhism, allowing the violent existence of the samurai to be tempered by wisdom and serenity. Bushido- developed between the 9th and 12th centuries and numerous translated documents dating from the 12th to 16th centuries demonstrate its wide influence across the whole of Japan, although some scholars have noted "the term bushido- itself is rarely attested in premodern literature." Under the Tokugawa Shogunate, aspects of bushido- became formalized into Japanese Feudal Law. In Rokugan Bushido is the law for the noble class. It is the code of moral principles which the samurai were required or instructed to observe.

Respect: Those who speak sincerely are believed over those who speak the truth poorly in court. A character's *on* (face or respectability) is a measure of how well-tended a character's reputation is, this is a little different than honor or concerns of glory. A worthless samurai who can speak well in court is given more respect than one who is a stuttering fool. The battlefield of the courts is where *on* tends to be the most important, as a man's reputation can kill another before the chance to engage in a formal duel, even appears. Those with an impressive *on* are rarely challenged, as doing so could make a samurai appear foolish. A samurai with a reputation as a highly skilled duelist can laugh off the challenges from those who are perceived as lesser opponents, even if his reputation is no way justified.

