

Religion and Organization in Rokugan

You need at least 1 point in History (Local Rokugan) to gain access to this page or at least 1 point in Knowledge (the Planes) since coming to Rokugan.

In Oriental Adventures the most common religion is based on ancestor worship, the spirits of the ancestors are in realm of Yomi where they can from time to time offer aid and guidance to their ancestors. Prayers and offerings are made to the various spirits at various times depending on the requests made of them. No one spirit is venerated over another, although one may be seen as a patron for an area or field of endeavor. Everything has a spirit and those spirits must be respected. Shamans and shugenjas use their spells to gain help from the spirits or kami. Shamans and shugenjas do not have only one patron deity, but instead honor all the spirits.

In Rokugan there is the philosophical system of Shinseism or Shinto that overlaps the religion of the spirits. It emphasizes the individual's quest for enlightenment. By focusing on the five elements (air, earth, fire, water and the lack of all elements Void) rather than the temporal world, a follower of Shinato hopes to free their soul from the material world and achieve enlightenment.

In Rokugan there is the co-existing religion of the Fortunes. The most important are the 7 kami; children of the sun deity who founded the great clans: Akodo, Doji, Baysushi, Shinjo, Shiba, Togashi, and Hida. Hantei, the oldest, founded the imperial line. Fu Leng, now dead, was dropped from the heavens falling into a pit he is responsible for the Shadowlands and its demonic inhabitants. Lord Sun, Yakamo, and Lady Moon, Hitomi, are the heads of the celestial pantheon. The world existed at one time, devoid of Rokuganians. The Nezumi had an advanced civilization. Lord Sun and Lady Moon founded Rokugan and the destruction when Fu Leng landed all but destroyed the Nezumi civilization. There are hundred's of Fortunes and countless ways to draw their disfavor. Peasants have endless superstitions on how to avoid the wrath of the Fortunes. The Fortunes rarely interact with man and most could care less about human's behavior. Atoning for a transgression against the Fortunes is simple enough, once the proper ritual is known. The Phoenix and the Brotherhood of Shinsei keep detailed texts on these matters. Often times a simple prayer in a temple or family shrine is enough to purge the sin from a soul. If the sin is greater the penance can involve fasting for days, sacrifice of worldly possessions, joining a monastery for life or even seppuku. Seppuku is reserved for the most serious of sins, but it is the cleanest way to erase the stain of sin.

Fear is a sin because it drives men to do shameful things.

Desire is a sin because it inspires samurai to disobey their duty in life.

Regret is a sin because it leads to the other two sins, and it's the sign of a weak mind.

Taint is a sin because contact with the realm of Fu Leng and a sign of his influence.

Uncleanliness is a sin; those in the samurai class are separated from dead flesh, which is handled by the Eta for that is their place in the Celestial Order and is unclean.

The ancestors are the weakest forces in the Celestial Order, but the most active. It is easy for them to move into ninjen-do as long as they have an anchor, their family who they can live vicariously through. Ancestor worship is not remotely and organized religion, but family shrines to them are common. All families regardless of caste maintain shrines to their ancestors. Rokugani believe that the souls of the dead must be first purified of their sins before moving on to reincarnation or eternal rest in Yomi. By

praying for them Rokugani can alleviate their suffering and hasten their trip through the underworld.

Kami come in all shapes and sizes from all objects and creatures they are what binds the world together. Greater kami like a mountain would have more power than a kami who inhabits a lake, who would be more powerful than a kami who inhabits a stone. The more powerful kami watch over the less powerful.

The greater kami in turn answer to the Oracles; manifestations of the Elemental Dragon's power in Rokugan. They change whom or what they rest in from time to time. Each Oracle must answer a question for a mortal, but only once, often they don't know the answer until the question is asked.

Above the Oracles are the lesser Fortunes--hundreds of minor gods, patrons of certain aspects of life or the world such as roads, joy, households, windows, contentment, and so on. Sometimes they are even mortals elevated to divine status.

The Dragons each represent a fundamental part of the universe. There are 5 elemental dragons; air, earth, fire, water and void, the two remaining dragons are the Thunder Dragon who represents the forces of the storm and the human spirit, and the Celestial Dragon, who is charged with the stewardship of the Celestial Heavens and who carries worth mortals to the Heavens. There are reports of a Jade Dragon, but they are attributed to an aspect of the Fortune of Strength, Bishamon. They often appear as mortals, but they are not limited in power as are the kami or the Oracles, they are fond of mankind though and don't express their anger on a whim. They can't be harmed by any means comprehensible to mortals. There are 7 Dragons in the Celestial Heaven, all which represent part of the universe's foundation. The 5 Elemental Dragons (air, earth, fire, water and void) are the best known, they are joined by the Celestial and Thunder Dragons. They do walk the earth and are the most closely tied to humanity. They interfere in the lives of mortals a lot, say once per 100 years. They chose to affect the mortal realm through their Oracles and by sending mortals dreams or visions. Each dragon is the embodiment of its element, but they can appear in any form. They hold reality together with their very existence.

Sun and Moon are the heads of the Celestial Order; Lord Sun is Hida Yakamo. Lady Moon is Mirumoto Hitomi. They are the primal force of creation. They are more powerful than the dragons, but through extreme means they can be killed. Lord Moon was slain by the current Lady Moon, but it took a relic to do it. The power of the Sun and Moon are absolute.

The Fortunes are the head deities of the Rokugani religion. There are 7 major Fortunes and hundreds of lesser ones. The power of the Fortunes are not constrained as they are in the Deities and Demigods; they have as much power as they chose to take. However they can't spend a lot of time in ningen-do or they will suffer the same fate as Hantei and the original heads of the seven clans. They were doomed to a mortal existence until their death when they were promoted back to Celestial Heavens.

Seven Fortunes

Benten = Romantic Love

Bishamon = Strength

Daikoku = Wealth

Ebisu = Honest Work

Fukurokujin = Longevity

Hotei = Happiness

Jurojin = Contentment

Lady Sun and Lord Moon were the original gods created by the 3 gods whose name can't be spoken. Lord Moon ate the children of Lady Sun, fearing that would grow too powerful and destroy him. Lady Sun tricked Lord Moon into swallowing a stone rather than young Hantei and put the god to sleep with drugged tea. Lord Moon slept for many years and when he awoke Hantei, now fully grown, cut open his father's stomach spilling his brothers and sisters upon the earth. Ryoshun died in his father's stomach. Lord Moon reached out for Le Fung, but Hantei severed his father's hand. When they touched the earth the Kami lost much of their divinity and were unable to return to heaven. The kami decided to remain in ningen-do and lead the scattered human tribes. They held a great contest, which Hantei won and so was crowned. Fu Leng was not present having fallen further than the other kami, piercing the veils between the Spirit Realms and landing in Jigoku. The Hantei family become the imperial family. Jigoku twisted and corrupted Le Fung bestowing dark powers that the other Kami couldn't comprehend. Twice he has come close to taking over, both times he was barely defeated by mortals. His name is rarely spoken fearing his power even beyond death. He is still worshipped by maho-tskai, essentially his priests. His worship services involve the spilling of blood.

The Celestial Order

Everything is part of a great pattern and each living soul has a role to play, those who defy it risk being demoted to a lower station after reincarnation. Rokugan's social order is composed of 3 groups; samurai (those who make war), clergy (those who pray) and the bonge (those who work). There is also a non-group; hinin (non-people; entertainers, those who handle the dead and other cast outs).

In Rokugan there is the co-existing religion of the Fortunes. The most important are the 7 kami; children of the sun deity who founded the great clans: Akodo, Doji, Baysushi, Shinjo, Shiba, Togashi, and Hida. Hantei, the oldest, founded the imperial line. Fu Leng, now dead, was dropped from the heavens falling into a pit. He is responsible for the Shadowlands and its Tainted inhabitants. Lord Sun, Yakamo, and Lady Moon, Hitomi, are the heads of the celestial pantheon. The world existed at one time, devoid of Rokuganians. Lord Sun and Lady Moon founded Rokugan and the destruction when Fu Leng landed all but destroyed the Nezumi civilization. There are hundred's of Fortunes and countless ways to draw their disfavor. Peasants have endless superstitions on how to avoid the wrath of the Fortunes. The Fortunes rarely interact with man and most could care less about human's behavior. Atoning for a transgression against the Fortunes is simple enough, once the proper ritual is known. The Phoenix and the Brotherhood of Shinsei keep detailed texts on these matters. Often times a simple prayer in a temple or family shrine is enough to purge the sin from a soul. If the sin is greater the penance can involve fasting for days, sacrifice of worldly possessions, joining a monastery for life or even seppuku. Seppuku is reserved for the most serious of sins, but it is the cleanest way to erase the stain of sin. Shugenja can intercede with the kami since all of them speak the Spirit Tongue.

Lady Sun and Lord Moon were the original gods created by the 3 gods whose name can't be spoken. Lord Moon ate the children of Lady Sun, fearing that would grow too powerful and destroy him. Lady Sun tricked Lord Moon into swallowing a stone rather than young Hantei and put the god to sleep with drugged tea. Lord Moon slept for many years and when he awoke Hantei, now fully grown, cut open his father's stomach spilling his brothers and sisters upon the earth. Ryoshun died in his father's stomach. Lord Moon reached out for Le Fung, but Hantei severed his father's hand. The blood ripped a hole to Jigoku where Le Fung fell. When they touched the earth the Kami lost much of their divinity and were unable to return to heaven. The kami decided to remain in ningen-do and lead the scattered human tribes. They held a great contest, which Hantei won and so was crowned emperor. Fu Leng was not present having fallen further than the other kami, piercing the veils between the Spirit Realms and landing in Jigoku. The Hantei family become the imperial family. Jigoku twisted and corrupted Le Fung bestowing dark powers that the other Kami couldn't comprehend. Twice he has come close to taking over, both times he was barely defeated by mortals. His name is rarely spoken fearing his power even beyond death. He is still worshipped by mahotsukai, essentially his priests. His worship services involve the spilling of blood. During the battle of Oblivions Gate Ryoshun stood in meido trying to prevent the forces of Fu Leng from moving into ningen-do.

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. Only members of the Imperial Family will move on to tengoku, where the Dragons and the Fortunes live.

The Dragons are on the next rung on the ladder of the Celestial Order, each represent a fundamental part of the universe. There are 5 elemental dragons; air, earth, fire, water and void, the two remaining dragons are the Thunder Dragon who represents the forces of the storm and the human spirit, and the Celestial Dragon, who is charged with the stewardship of the Celestial Heavens and who carries worthy mortals to the Heavens. There are reports of a Jade Dragon, but they are attributed to an aspect of the Fortune of Strength, Bishamon. The Dragons often appear as mortals, but they are not limited in power as are the kami or the Oracles. They are very powerful. This power goes beyond mere stats, spells and spell-like abilities, they are not limited to the normal constraints that limit the gods in the Deities and Demigods book so no stats for them are given. They are fond of mankind though and don't express their anger on a whim. They can't be harmed by any means comprehensible to mortals. There are 7 Dragons in the Celestial Heaven, all which represent part of the universe's foundation. The 5 Elemental Dragons (air, earth, fire, water and void) are the best known, they are joined by the Celestial and Thunder Dragons. They do walk the earth and are the most closely tied to humanity. They interfere in the lives of mortals a lot, say once per 100 years. They chose to affect the mortal realm through their Oracles and by sending mortals dreams or visions. Each dragon is the embodiment of its element, but they can appear in any form. They hold reality together with their very existence. There are also Dark Dragons like the Shadow Dragon, few of these Dragons are known and all who have searched for them were lost to that search.

Below the Dragons and above the Oracles are the lesser Fortunes--hundreds of minor gods, patrons of certain aspects of life or the world such as roads, joy, households, windows, contentment, and so on. Sometimes they are even mortals elevated to divine status. Their powers vary with their position in the Celestial Order.

The Oracles; are manifestations of the Elemental Dragon's power in Rokugan. They are the next in line over the kami. The elemental dragons change whom or what they rest in from time to time. They gain a small aspect of the power given to the elemental dragons. This power goes beyond mere stats, spells and spell-like abilities, they are not limited to the normal constraints that limit the gods in the Deities and Demigods book. Each Oracle must answer a question for a mortal, but only once, often they don't know the answer until the question is asked.

The Kami are the spirits. Spirits can be found in anything from the smallest stone to the largest mountain. They live in several realms, but most live in ningen-do. Animal spirits live in chikushudo.

The ancestors are the weakest forces in the Celestial Order, but the most active. It is easy for them to move into ninjen-do (the Prime Material plane) as long as they have an anchor, their family who they can live vicariously through. Ancestor worship is not remotely an organized religion, but family shrines to them are common. All families regardless of caste maintain shrines to their ancestors. Rokugani believe that the souls of the dead must be first purified of their sins before moving on to reincarnation or eternal rest in Yomi. By praying for them Rokugani can alleviate their suffering and hasten their trip through the underworld. The Emperor and a very few mortals are judged by the Celestial Dragon to be worthy of passing on to tengoku.

Samurai

Only a samurai may carry a *daishu*; the katanas and the wakizashi. Any other individual found possessing a set is executed. All members of the samurai class are entitled to a trial if brought up on charges by another samurai. Charges from lower classes are simply ignored. Wearing a katana means you are ready to use it, so most nobles who are not fighters only carry the wakizashi. All nobles are members of the samurai class as are all *shugenja*.

The Emperor: Owns all lands and permits those who owe him fealty to manage it. Those who manage the land must pay yearly taxes. The Emperor is also the head of the Rokugani religion; he is the voice of the Celestial Heavens--thus his title, "the Son of Heaven." His word is law, not to be questioned, and the Imperial Legions are his personal armies. The Kuge: elite of the samurai class who have inherited nobility and powerful positions within the government. Ranking below the Emperor are his functionaries, including the diamyō of the Imperial Families, the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion, the Imperial Chancellor, and the Imperial Advisor. Directly beneath them are the Clan diamyō, though technically the Clan diamyō are of the same rank. They have extraordinary amount of political power and are more respected than the diamyō of the minor clans. Despite equal standing of Clan diamyōs, the minor clans are lower ranking than the major clans. The lowest ranking members of the kuge are the immediate families of the leaders of each family. While many samurai are allowed to carry the name of a noble house, only a handful are actually members, the rest are servants who comprise the buke.

The Buke: most of the samurai who have no lands or titles and serve another household. Samurai in service to a house typically bear the house's name. The highest ranking samurai of the buke are bureaucrats and military personal. This includes the provincial governors, officers, hatamoto (honored advisors), city governors, karo (advisors to a daimyo), Emerald Magistrates, and clan magistrates. Lesser sons and daughters of noble houses are relegated to the rank of buke by default. As they have no inheritance, and serve no direct purpose they must prove their worth to receive respect. The rest of the buke are made up of rank-and-file samurai. Many are ji-samurai (half samurai). Members of vassal families who have not yet earned the right to carry their lord's family name. Ji-samurai also include ronin, who by fault or circumstance server no lord. They are still samurai though and must be treated as such. As a result many people don't know how to treat them. Samurai often consider them to be the symbol of failure, while the peasants think they are dangerous lone wolves who answer to no one and could wreck terrible violence without warning.

The Brotherhood of Shinsei: keepers of the Tao of Shinsei. It is also where samurai who make it to the age of 40 are supposed to retire. This is becoming less popular though. The Brotherhood is responsible for the primary religion of the Empire, based on the conversation between Shinsei and Hantei. Their temples are found all over and are open to travelers, samurai are expected to at least simulate respect of the major temples around them. Their shrines are typically found are typically located in places that were important in Shinsei's life. The most common monk is the retired Samurai of age 40+. They shave their topknot and contemplate the serene wisdom of Shinsei until their deaths. This is considered a luxury, as the lifestyle of the samurai generally does not allow for old age. They are less active than they were in the past 30 years, many returning to their temples to try and find a way to prevent another tragic war from spreading across Rokugan.

Additional Knowledge starts with at least 1 pick in Local History (Rokugan) and the Planes (Rokugan).

Lower Members of the Celestial Order

Ashigaru: The lowest members of the Buke, they are the career soldiers, who are often ill-equipped and poorly trained. They are far more reliable than the peasant levies though. Most houses have several families of hereditary ashigaru serving as guardsmen, doshin (soldiers serving magistrates) and scouts during times of peace. The Clergy: mostly the brotherhood of shinsei and shugenja. Shugenja are considered members of the samurai class and holy men. Magic is holy, except for maho magic. Peasants with an affinity with the kami become shinsei. Casting a spell in front of the Emperor is a privilege offered only to a few. If a shugenja tries to practice magic in front of a daiymo, he can interrupt the shugenja without a loss of face. Clever daiyimos ask their own priests to join in the ritual. Shugenja are often looked upon as healers, guides and keepers of wisdom. Many large villages are blessed by shugenja several times a year. They are a link between the ancestors and the world of the living. They also tend to prefer peace to violence, they believe life is a gift of the Fortunes, and never should be wasted. Magic is a gift and a shugenja who abuses it will find the kami silent when he needs them the most. It cannot be used to defy the Kharmic Wheel and the Celestial Order--this includes tampering with the destiny of a mortal, causing the manipulation of greater elemental forces or the resurrection of the dead. Shugenja may petition the ancestors to perform magic that manipulates greater elemental forces or brings back the dead, but if they say no they must abide by that will.

The Bonge: the class comprising peasants, merchants and craftsman collectively referred to as heimin ("half people"). The highest rank are the farmers who are typically taxed 60% and who feed the Empire. The farmer is followed by the artisan and finally the merchant, who creates nothing, and is so worthless. A hemin can file charges against another hemin, but not against a samurai. A samurai wronged by a hemin technically can execute them on the spot, so the hemin are very polite to samurai. The crafting of steel is considered an art form. Peasants are not paid, though they are the life blood of the Empire. They work the land and pay taxes of around 60% for the privilege. Most goods are hand made, assembly line work is unknown. Most boats are a series of canoes and floats, the keel has yet to be discovered. Many peasants are trained to serve in the army during times of war, but their training and equipment is not the best.

Eta: the *hinin* (non-people), those whose professions cause them to be considered "unclean." This includes anyone whose work regularly involves contact with blood or flesh, criminals, entertainers, and assorted ne'er-do-wells. They are technically human, but killing one is not considered a crime, because they are not part of the Celestial Order. They are not allowed to speak to samurai unless the samurai commands it.

Geisha: a special case of Eta, they are expected to speak to and entertain the samurai. In their company a samurai is allowed to show emotion and unwind. Geisha are primarily entertainers skilled in conversation, dance, music, but they are NOT prostitutes. Affairs are private and what happens between Geisha and samurai are their business though, so sexual congress is possible.

Other Important Groups

The Bloodspeakers: a secret and hidden group.

The Kolat: oppose the kami and the Celestial Order.

Ronin Brotherhoods: many times groups of ronin have banded together for survival and mutual benefit. Some of these groups, called otokodates ("manly fellows") have been in existence for decades or even centuries.

The Eyes of Nanashi is one of the oldest, they defend and protect Nanashi Mura (Anonymous Village). The village is a haven for wave-men and a place where they can find acceptance among their own kind. The village leaders know that if they shelter criminals though, the Great Clans will destroy them.

The Sword of Yotsu may be the most respected, half a century ago a man named Yotsu rescued the Emperor's heir from the Bloodspeakers. Ronin who swear fealty to the Yotsu are expected at all times to defend the helpless, no matter the situation, no matter the consequences. This is in addition to their duty to defend the Yatoshin district of Otsan Uchi. They never accept a ronin from the clans though, no one who has borne another name may bear the name Yotsu.

The Unbroken are a band of ronin who were tainted and cured of that taint by magic of the Nagas, giving them the ability to purge their own taint. United by their pact to be pure or die in the attempt the Unbroken set out to destroy the Shadowlands. They remain with the Shinomen, helping Gehedai guard the sleeping Naga. They also keep close ties with the Kuni Witch Hunters and the Asako Inquisitors.

The Gaze of the Sun Tao is an esoteric band of warriors, are ronin who study the art of war and the duel. They seek to have one of their own become the Emerald Champion.

Ninja: Publicly there are no Ninja, the very practice is dishonorable, they a little more than myth and rumor, they are the antithesis of Bushido. They were all ordered to commit seppuku in the 5th century and have not plagued the empire ever since.

Additional Knowledge starts with at least 1 pick in Local History (Rokugan) and the Planes (Rokugan).

Sins

Fear is a sin because it drives men to do shameful things.

Desire is a sin because it inspires samurai to disobey their duty in life.

Regret is a sin because it leads to the other two sins, and it's the sign of a weak mind.

Taint is a sin because contact with the realm of Fu Leng and a sign of his influence.

Uncleanliness is a sin; those in the samurai class are separated from dead flesh, which is handled by the Eta for that is their place in the Celestial Order and is unclean.

