

Winter Court: Shiro Kyotei

**A One-Round Low/Mid-Rank INTERACTIVE Adventure
for Living Rokugan (Champions of the Emerald
Empire)**

by Robert Hobart

The Emperor has ordered representatives from all the Clans to meet Shiro Kyotei this winter to settle their differences. Who can refuse the dictates of the Son of Heaven?

GM's Information

THIS TOURNAMENT SHOULD NOT BE RUN COLD!

This adventure is a Low-Mid Rank adventure. This means that only Rank 1 through 3 characters should be allowed to play. This adventure was not written with Rank 4 or higher characters in mind and cannot anticipate what these characters may bring to the table.

The world of Rokugan is a cross between feudal Japan and China. It is set in an age of honorable samurai, serving their Lords (Daimyos) and Empire. Remember that family names come before personal names. Akodo Toturi is from the Akodo family and his personal name is Toturi.

A note on female designations: If a samurai has the designation of -ko, then the samurai is a female. For example, if you see Samurai-ko, then this denotes a female samurai.

A note on commerce in Rokugan: Samurai are not supposed to care about worldly possessions, especially money. A samurai pays a commoner as if the money is meaningless, a concession to the commoner's silly needs. Between samurai, the exchange of money and merchandise is an exchange of "gifts."

CREDIT where it is DUE: Shiro Kyotei and its daimyo first appeared in the published L5R adventure *Veil of Honor* (Alderac, 1998).

Notes on this Adventure

This adventure is designed to run as an Interactive, in essence a LARP (Live Action Role-Playing) event, in which the players portray their characters directly for much of the time. There will also be the opportunity for the players to run their characters through a "mini-adventure" which will be done in the normal table-top style. The total event should, if possible, be run in a five-hour time slot to give the players the maximum time to accomplish their goals.

We encourage conventions which run this event to incorporate additional "flavor" elements, such as costumes, authentic props, or catered Japanese food. These will add considerably to the experience of the adventure.

Restrictions on Player Actions

During the Interactive, all players and judges should observe the following restrictions and guidelines in order to ensure that the event runs smoothly.

- **No Touching.** Touching in public is a major Rokugani taboo, and should be observed in play. Any player who willingly touches another automatically loses a point of Honor. Repeated offenses can result in the expulsion of the player from the Interactive.
- **Resolving Events.** Players should seek, whenever possible, to resolve their interactions through role-play rather than by rolling dice. If a player absolutely wishes to perform an action that requires rolling dice, s/he should seek out one of the event judges to have their action adjudicated.
- **Making Purchases.** Players may spend Koku to purchase items from the Taka's Treasures booth. PCs cannot combine their money to make purchases. The judge who plays Yasuki Taka may opt to give certain players a 1-koku discount on the price of an item, if that player has done something to earn Taka's favor.
- **NPCs.** There are several NPCs who can potentially attend the Winter Court. These are listed at the end of the module. The three most important NPCs (Otomo Hiroshi, Yasuki Taka, Doji/Tsume Takashi) should be played by the judges of the event. The rest of the NPCs are less vital to the story, and can be filled out with players who do not normally have Living Rokugan characters, or who would prefer not to play their normal character.

Adventure Background

The PCs and NPCs have gathered for the winter in Shiro Kyotei, a small Crane castle located at the juncture of Crane, Lion, and Phoenix lands. They are here to negotiate the resolution of a number of issues which threaten to breach the peace of the Empire. The Emperor has commanded that representatives of each clan meet in a quiet castle where they will not be distracted by the clamor and courtly games of the larger Winter Courts. The Imperial Advisor, Kakita Yoshi, suggested Shiro Kyotei, a minor castle in a key (and easily accessible) strategic location. The castle overlooks the Kintani Valley, a fertile territory in the

northern Crane lands, located a day's travel east of Toshi Ranbo. The Lion and Phoenix borders are both close. The Emperor agreed with this location, and now the representatives have gathered for a winter of quiet negotiations.

Shiro Kyotei

Shiro Kyotei's history can be learned by any PC who rolls **History**, **Lore: Lion Clan**, **Lore: Crane Clan**, or any other similar skill (with the **Intelligence** trait) at TN 10. The castle was Lion up until twenty years ago, when Tsume Takashi's ambitious father, Tsume Retsu, took the castle and destroyed the entire Lion family who had held it, slaughtering them to the last child. Although his aggressive actions privately appalled the Crane Champion, Doji Satsume, he had no choice but to publicly praise Retsu's actions. Coming on the heels of the Crane's acquisition of their other northern territories in a political maneuver (again, at the expense of the Lion), this left bitter wounds which the Lion have not forgotten.

Tsume Retsu died four years ago. The circumstances surrounding his death (described on Tsume Takashi's character sheet) are considered a SECRET. All that is known publicly is that he was murdered by a ronin.

The PCs and their goals

Each of the PCs is here as a representative of their Clan, and each Clan has specific goals and objectives they must try to achieve at the Winter Court. They also have certain assets which they can use to achieve these goals. Clan-specific handouts are available for each Great Clan, and should be distributed to their representatives when they arrive. Certain Clans (the Unicorn, Lion, and Crane) should always be represented, by NPCs if there are no PCs available from them.

Ronin PCs will be here as representatives of the City of the Rich Frog. Their handout reads appropriately.

Minor Clan PCs have wangled invitations here, but have no "stake" in matters unless they are Mantis (in which case they receive an objective handout) or Dragonfly (in which case they share the goals of the Dragon Clan).

CHRONOLOGY: For those who are interested, the Winter Court depicted in this adventure takes place in between the Living Rokugan adventures "A Heart of Vengeance" and "The Soul of Akodo" (episodes 2 and 3 of the "Lion and the Crane" story arc).

The NPCs

The following NPCs will ALWAYS be at the Winter Court, and should be played by judges:

- **Otomo Hiroshi, imperial historian and representative of the Emperor's will.** Hiroshi should be played by the primary judge at the event, and will have no active role in any of the plots here – he is exactly what he claims, an unbiased observer. There are no statistics for him and he has no objectives of his own.
- **Doji (Tsume) Takashi, daimyo of Shiro Kyotei.** Takashi is generally hostile to Lions and ronin, due to his father's assassination by a Lion ronin. He would like to see the Unicorn go to war with the Lion over the City of the Rich Frog, since this would hurt both ronin and the Lion clan. He is also the gateway to the mini-adventure "A Winter Haunting" which can run during the course of the Interactive.
- **Yasuki Taka, merchant extraordinaire.** Taka runs the "Taka's Treasures" booth, offering minor but useful certified items in exchange for koku (or Honor). He is also the gateway to the mini-adventure "Taka's Quest" which can run during the course of the Interactive.

The following additional NPCs are OPTIONAL and may be added to the cast if you have additional judges, new players, or players who do not want to run their regular character. A character sheet for each of them, giving their statistics and personal objectives, is included at the end of the module. Some of the characters can be either male or female, depending on what players are available.

- Shosuro Tajiki, Scorpion courtier and assassin. (OR, Yogo Asami, Scorpion assassin and seductress.)
- Matsu Ketsui, young bushi duelist representing the Matsu family daimyo, Matsu Tsuko. (OR, Matsu Tagemuchi, rising Lion general and enemy of the Unicorn Clan.)
- Shinjo Taneka, Unicorn Clan magistrate obsessed with destroying the opium trade.

- Isawa Tomo, the Phoenix Master of Water. (OR, Isawa Uona, the Phoenix Mistress of Air.)
- An ise zumi, Togashi Mitsu, here to observe the strange goings-on of these samurai, and perhaps to puncture their arrogance.
- Hida Rokotsu, a Crab bushi who is actually an agent for the Kolat.
- Takuhito, ronin ambassador from the City of the Rich Frog.
- Zurui, a clever and ruthless ambassador for the Mantis Clan.

Running the Adventure

It is intended that the primary motive force in the Interactive will be the PCs pursuing their various Clan goals. Most of the session should consist of the PCs circulating around, interacting with each other, and negotiating.

However, in order to keep things interesting, a number of specific events can take place during the interactive. These are described below under “Timetable of Events.” There will also be the possibility for some of the PCs to purchase items from Yasuki Taka, and to go on mini-adventure on the behalf of Taka and Tsume Takashi. This is described under their NPC handouts and in “A Winter Haunting” and “Taka’s Quest.”

The primary judge (playing Otomo Hiroshi) should keep tabs on as much of the event as possible, and interject timeline events as seems appropriate to liven things up.

Booth: Taka’s Treasures

Yasuki Taka, the enterprising Crab merchant, has managed (against all expectations) to wangle an invitation to Shiro Kyotei. He regards this as a splendid opportunity to make a few koku, and perhaps get some help with a little task he has in mind...

Taka can sell the following certified items to PCs. He will sell them for money, or will give them out in exchange for performing his mission (“Taka’s Quest”). Customers must pay for each item on their own (no pooling of resources), although they are free to buy items and then give them to other PCs. Taka may choose to offer a 1-koku discount to PCs whose actions or background makes him favorable to them (such as

Crab PCs, PCs with Allies in the Yasuki family, and so forth).

Taka is also seeking a few energetic samurai to perform a personal (and, perhaps, slightly illegal) service on his behalf. He will pay such samurai with a free gift of one of the items on the list. He will make this offer to any samurai who seems hesitant to pay the prices for his items, or who strikes him as someone who could be useful on the expedition.

Items:

Epigrams of Shinsei (1 koku, total of 10)
 Good-luck Tokens (2 koku, total of 8)
 Fine-quality Fans (3 koku, total of 4)
 Crystal Broaches (3 koku, total of 3)
 Pouch of Jade Powder (3 koku, total of 6)
 Excellent Puzzle Box (4 koku, total of 2)
 Jade-tipped Arrows (4 koku each, total of 12)
 Crystal-tipped Arrows (5 koku each, total of 8)
 Gaijin Spyglass (16 koku, total of 1)
 Excellent Pony (18 koku, total of 2)
 Jade-Edged Knife (26 koku, total of 1)
 Fine Light Armor (40 koku, total of 1)

Once Taka has accumulated at least four PCs who can do his task, they should be dispatched on the mini-adventure “Taka’s Quest.”

Timetable of Events

1. Opening Ceremony:

Once all the players are assembled, Otomo Hiroshi addresses the collected guests.

“Greetings, honored samurai, and welcome to Shiro Kyotei. I am Otomo Hiroshi, Imperial Historian. We are here as the guests of the honorable Tsume Takashi, of the Doji family of the Crane Clan. We are all grateful, Tsume-sama, for the use of your fine castle this winter.” [Bow to Takashi.] *“You are all here at the command of the Son of Heaven, Emperor Hantei the 38th. The Divine Hantei has commanded you to gather here, away from the distractions of the larger Winter Courts, to settle your differences in peaceful negotiation. I am confident that when I write the history of this winter, it will be one of honor and enlightenment.”*

Once this speech is finished, the judge playing Hiroshi should briefly describe the rules and restrictions of the Interactive (including mentioning that there are mini-adventures if the players can find them).

Once the rules are explained, each player should pick up a copy of their appropriate Clan handout. Make sure players do not read the handouts of other Clans.

2. Contest of poetry

About an hour into the Interactive, have the judge playing Tsume Takashi make the following announcement:

“Samurai, honored courtiers, guests of Shiro Kyotei. I trust you have been enjoying the winter so far?”
[Wait for assent.] *“It has been a profound honor to me to host so many samurai here in the name of the Emperor. I wish I might have something to commemorate this splendid winter. A gift to remember it by in later years. A poem, perhaps, that captures the spirit of this magnificent winter. A guest who could offer me such a poem would have my deepest gratitude.”*

Submissions for the poetry contest should be gathered up by the chief judge (Otomo Hiroshi). At the end of the Interactive, the judges should review all the submissions and agree on who receives the reward (the cert for the Calligraphy Set).

3. Tsume is in trouble

Halfway through the winter court (about two hours in), Tsume Takashi will encounter a problem. His secret (that his father was in debt to a Scorpion gambling house before his murder by a Lion-turned-geisha) will come into the hands of a PC at the court. (Otomo Hiroshi should choose a PC randomly, or select a PC who has had little to do up to that point). Takashi will have to do something to keep his secret hidden – bribe the PC, get some sort of countervailing blackmail on that PC, or else try to get the PC killed in a duel.

4. The Mini-Adventures

Assuming Yasuki Taka is able to recruit at least four PCs to go on his mission, this mini-adventure should be run about halfway through the round.

If Tsume Takashi is able to collect at least three PCs to deal with his ghost problem, this mini-adventure should be run shortly after Taka’s mission concludes.

A specific PC can only go on one mission, not both.

5. Vengeance is mine (optional)

This plot device will require one additional player to run an NPC for part of the Interactive. Consult the

character sheets of all participating PCs and see if any of them have a named Sworn Enemy. One of these Sworn Enemies will storm into the Winter Court near its end (during the last hour or two of the time slot). The Sworn Enemy brings with him/her a signed letter authorizing a duel.

The NPC will publicly “call out” the PC, proclaiming the reasons for their enmity and describing in great detail all the offenses (real or imagined) which the PC has committed. It is up to the PC whether or not to accept the duel, and if not, what sort of excuse to use. If the duel does take place, the Sworn Enemy should have statistics which make it an even fight (meaning that it comes down to die-rolls, unless someone manages to cheat).

The judges should adjudicate this event based on the PC involved.

6. Conclusion

At the end of the time slot, the judges should assess the results of the various PC and NPC interactions and decisions. The chief judge (Otomo Hiroshi) should then assemble all the PCs, inform them of any publicly visible results of the Winter Court, and have each Clan describe the public results of their negotiations.

The chief judge should also publicly announce any marriages (certed or between PCs) and, if possible, read out the certs for each marriage.

The judges should also privately collect the results of any secret negotiations or deals.

A summary of all results from Shiro Kyotei should be e-mailed to the Living Rokugan Campaign Administrator <youta@rollanet.org>.

Rewards and Consequences

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

All PCs who participate in the Interactive earn 2 XP. PCs who play through “Taka’s Quest” or “A Winter Haunting” earn 1 additional XP. However, PCs who play “Taka’s Quest” also lose 1 point of Honor (unless they are Yasuki, Mantis, or Daidoji) for going on a dubious “merchant’s errand.”

Other Glory and Honor awards should be given out by agreement of the three judges, based on actions in play.