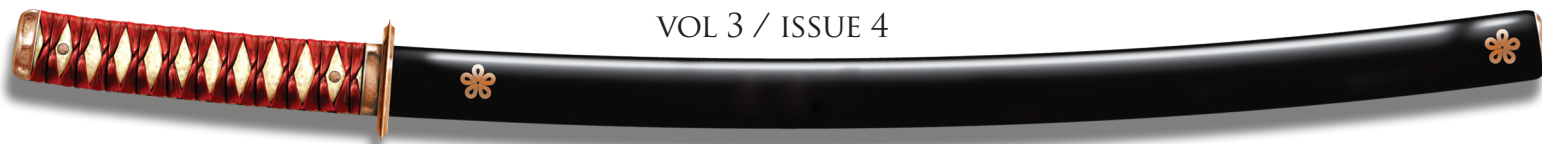


THE IMPERIAL HERALD

VOL 3 / ISSUE 4



LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS INTERACTIVE STORYLINE COLLECTIBLE CARD & ROLEPLAYING GAMES

The Plague Is Coming

The first whispers of a plague afflicting the remote regions came almost a year ago, when the Empire was finally recovering from the War of Dark Fire. Since that time, efforts have been made to determine its source, or a means to combat it, but without success. The truly insidious nature of the plague was revealed soon, when it was discovered that a percentage of those who perished from its effects rose again as undead that would go on to pose as great, if not a greater, threat to the Empire. Even then, it was merely assumed that the plague was the spawn of some oni or perhaps originated within the Shadowlands itself, having spread with the wind or possibly some diseased creature that crossed the border into the Empire.

Such delusions are no more.



Some among the clans have asked how the plague spread, or how it could so completely resist the effects of the incredibly powerful shugenja seeking to purge it from the face of the Empire, but most paid them no heed. Disease has always been poorly understood by many, after all. But even the least learned among the Empire looks now at how the disease has spread, at the devious movements of the plague zombies spawned by its effects, and knows without question that there is a greater evil afoot. No simple wind could carry the plague with such malevolent intent, and no random wanderings of undead could create such hordes laying waste to vital supply lines and strategic fortifications.

While the clans continue to struggle against the forces arrayed against them, both in the form of the Destroyer horde and the new Army of Fire, the stresses of the plague and its effects are beginning to fray at their alliances. The fleeing of afflicted refugees across clan borders creates allegations of infection stemming from other



lands, and the sight of a predator clad in another clan's colors killing one's family is difficult to endure without hostility, even if the rational mind recognizes that the beast in question is no longer a samurai.

With the wars raging all around them, the greatest threat that the samurai of Rokugan may face during the reign of the Divine Em-

press is not an external threat that can be battled with steel, but one that cannot be seen or touched, as the plague threatens to turn clan against clan despite the desperate measures the Clan Champions take to ensure the Empire stands united against its foes.

With "The Plague War" releasing soon we wanted to take a few minutes and talk to Lead Developer Mark Wootton about the direction of the set to get a feeling of what we might see. He set aside some time to answer a few of our questions candidly, giving us some real insight that we're happy to pass on to you. Mark has even provided us with a few previews of cards so we can get a real idea of what The Plague War is going to look like.

"The Plague War" nears the midpoint of the current story arc and shares the same name as the current Kotei section of the Mega-Game, so this expansion could potentially set major trends from here until the end of the Celestial environment.

Imperial Herald: *Thanks for taking the time to answer some questions Mark. This seems like it is going to be a real turning point in the Celestial format! Let's get right to it, shall we? What clans will have strongholds? What is the basis for the design of these strongholds?*

Mark Wootton: The clans are Crab, Crane and Lion. We have tried, to some extent, to maintain a design for strongholds that can be used with a range of personalities from the clan, but are just better with some keywords than others. To that end I would say the themes are Berserkers, Dueling and Heroes, respectively. If I am honest, the Lion and Crab boxes are significantly better with their targeted personality type. All of the strongholds are battle focused. The Berserkers are about getting into battle and never mind the consequences, the Lion is about making sure that their heroes are as effective as they can be in battle and the Crane stronghold is about the benefits of looking good when you win!

IH: *Where do you see the format right now and how will this set affect that?*

MW: I think that we hope that this set will continue some of the recent rebalancing we have done and bring forward a number of strategies that have been needing it (in combination with the cards in the final part of the free set Imperial Gift, with Imperial Gift 3). We recognize that naked swarm, as of The Harbinger, is still more

powerful overall than we want it to be, but that because of the different flavors that it comes in (from Lion to Spider) we are trying to incrementally move the format away from that deck-type so much, without rendering entire deck-styles completely unplayable. We are also looking to slow down the straight honor rocket a little to go with that, although Harbinger again did that quite a bit. It is the usual mantra of trying to increase the degree of interaction that has to take place between players to get an outcome to the game. I think that there will be some format defining cards in the set. Cards like Iron Gauntlet Brothers and The Cost of Pride will cause players to rethink some of the staple cards used at the moment, specifically Ranged Attacks. I also think some of the tools that we have given Monk, Kensai and Ninja for example will really push the way they are played and allow what are, essentially, more mid-game decks to move forward a bit.

IH: *Did you have any specific design goals for this set? What were they? I know that this is a hard*

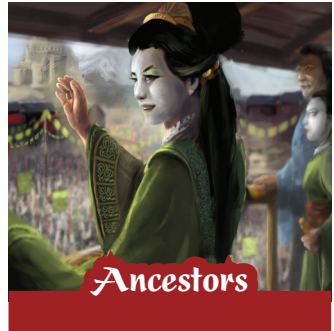


question to answer but do you feel they were accomplished?

MW: Every set has design goals and we always feel like we have accomplished them, but honestly, you can never really say for sure. Our play testers do a great job, but we are working within a limited

(Continued on Next Page)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



The Jeweled Champions

The Divine Empress has decreed The Jeweled Champions will rise this year to unknown heights. What else do these events hold for the loyal samurai of Rokugan?

In the last Herald we told you about a new set of tournaments called "The Jeweled Champions." While some of you have attended these events in the past, this new sub-set of events has been tied together this year to create a level of cohesion that adds to the tournament landscape by offering high level events that are no longer simply independent story-line tournaments. Since the announcement there has been some clamoring for more information and thanks to Mike Colson, we have some exclusive information for you the reader!

These annual, tournaments won't just be for name recognition only. The implications of winning one of these events is much more far reaching than one might think. Qualifying for the European Championships or the GenCon Championships has always been a true challenge, but for the winners of these events, the challenge will be significantly lessened. Winners at the Jewel tournaments will be automatically qualified for the championships following the event, putting these tournaments immediately on a level with your regional Kotei. If you can't get to one of these events this year, don't worry however. As these are annual tournaments, there will be more next year, and Mike has let us know that they won't necessar-

ily always be in the same places. These hand-picked locations may be changing year to year, so there will always be the chance that one could end up in your own backyard!

While this may or may not have raised a few eyebrows, there is even more reason to attend (as if playing a ton of L5R wasn't enough!) The Plague War mega game will rage on to the end of the year encompassing not only the Kotei season. The Jewel events, along with Level 10, Level 15 and Championship level events, will continue to influence the mega game beyond the Kotei season and provide your clan the opportunity to earn Glory to aid in the defeat to the enemies threatening the Empire. Loyal samurai of Rokugan, take up your swords and honor your Empress in the spirit of competition, that Her enemies may know defeat on the fields of battle! Become the next Jeweled Champion!

What follows is a list of the most recent information that we have at present, so that you can start planning your L5R schedule. Be sure to visit the website and forums for up-to-date information as it comes in!

THE JEWELLED CHAMPIONS EVENT CALENDAR

THE AMETHYST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: July 2010

Location: Greece

Manolis Trahiotis (mantrah@hotmail.com)

THE TURQUOISE CHAMPIONSHIP

Date: August 2010

Location: Neutral Grounds, Philippines

Des Tan

THE RUBY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: September 2010

Location: Luxembourg

Tom Mulheims (phantasiespiller@gmx.net)

THE EMERALD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: October 2nd, 2010

Location: Sacramento, California

Bryan Reese (breese@alderac.com)

THE OBSIDIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: October 16th, 2010

Location: Feeding Hills, Massachusetts

Eric Devlin (SmokeSignals@bbq-brethren.net)

THE ONYX CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: November 2010

Location: Santiago, Chile

Mario Luncumilla (bayushi_shite@hotmail.com)

THE JADE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Date: December 2010

Locatio: Spain

Pablo Rojo (projo@millenniumdist.com)

THE TOPAZ CHAMPIONSHIP

Date: January 1st, 2010

Location: Chicago, Illinois

Mike Colson (mantrah@hotmail.com)



We caught up with Bryan Reese and extracted answers from him as to what exactly we will be seeing from Imperial Gift III (IG 3). While we only got a few cards out of him, we were impressed with exactly how this set differs from the two previous Imperial Gift sets. On top of that, Bryan reveals some of the process behind the design of The Imperial Gift III, pulling back the curtain a bit to give us a sneak peek at why this set, of all the expansions in L5R history may be one of the most unique yet.

Imperial Herald: Bryan, based on what we saw with IG 1 and IG 2 (learn to play set) approximately how many cards can we expect for IG 3?

Bryan Reese: There are 44 different cards in IG 3.

IH: 44 different cards - can you comment on uniqueness between

those 44? I mean 44 cards could mean as many as 132 or 44!

BR: It makes for 102 total cards.

IH: Bryan, where IG 2 taught people to play, what is the goal with IG 3? Is it just a supplemental set to The Harbinger and the Celestial format? Or was there a design goal? How do you balance a goal in a limited card pool versus a design goal with a regular expansion?

BR: This is a good question. The Imperial Gift has been an amazing and revolutionary product that is unheard of in the CCG market. In the Imperial Gift series, IG 2 has been far and away the most successful part, as it was two free, pre-constructed decks. That is a tough act to follow for IG 3 and in some ways the set will not be as diverse as IG 2 was (it is, obviously, smaller). However, IG 3 is no slouch and offers two new personalities per clan for use. At 44 different cards and two personalities per clan, it is about twice

INTERVIEW BY SCOTT HADSALL

What began over a year ago with the release of the landmark Imperial Gift sets is almost coming to a close. We told you about what you could look forward to in the previous Herald with this, the third part of a completely free and legal set. Now it's time to show you.

the size that IG 1 was. Our design goal with IG 3 was to supplement the current card pool with new tools for all clans.

On top of this, we designed IG 3 backwards from a normal set, art-wise. What I mean by this is the art came first and we designed a card around it, rather than the other way around. L5R not only has 15 years of being a great game and a great story, but also has 15 years of great art, not all of which has been used in the CCG. You will see much of this art come back in IG 3, giving you brand new cards starring your favorite characters of old.

to player set like Death at Koten or even an entire expansion?

BR: Usually art matches what the mechanics do anyway, but in this case it matches even more so due to the reverse engineering. It created a unique challenge in that it gave us a much more rigid framework to work in. It definitely forced us to tap into our creativity more than normal, but it was fun. I wouldn't want to design every set this way, but doing it every so often is interesting.

IH: What are you personally looking forward to with the release of IG3? What are some of your personal favorite cards and why?

up interesting possibilities for Scorpion Ninjas as a deck type. Though my favorite card from the set is unquestionably Kazuwaru. The flavor of this card is simply the best.

IH: That's interesting about single cards opening up possibilities for entire deck archetypes. Are there other cards like this in IG 3 that change the scope of certain deck types like Scouts or Magistrates?

BR: The interesting thing about L5R is often times it is not some powerful card that changes the scope of a deck type, but is just the last tool needed. There are certainly some great cards in the set that will change some decks.



IH: What kind of unique challenges did reverse engineering a set provide? Certainly this is not the way it is done typically, especially in the style you describe. Since the art drove the design, do the cards feel more like they do what the art shows them doing? I know that kind of doesn't make sense, but maybe you get my meaning. "Charge!" for example has a samurai attacking on it and not a courtier fanning himself. Would you consider doing another set like this in the future? Maybe a direct

BR: As Todd mentioned in the previous Imperial Herald, my favorite card was "Sword". Not for any particular power reasons, but because I couldn't stop laughing at the thought of this card with "less good" art (which was changed), simply called "Sword", going to press. Of the cards actually seeing print I really like Shosuro Nishu, a Scorpion Ninja. He harkens back to one of my favorite characters and really opens

IH: Where do you rate IG 3 in terms of power? Do you think it is an escalation in power from The Harbinger? Some of the cards from IG 1 and 2 were amazing in power level and scope (for example, Game of Sincerity), and as a format moves on, the power level of cards typically continues to increase.

BR: One thing we set out to do with Celestial Edition was to start

(Continued on Page 7)

The Fields of Yomi

BY NANCY SAUER

The lotus floated on the surface of the pond, its creamy white petals unmarred by the muddy water below it. The sitting man had been looking at it for hours, enjoying the serenity it inspired. He had been listening to his companion for what seemed like hours, though he would not describe the experience as serene.

"The Crab have been pushed back to the far northern provinces. The northern provinces! The Horde never got that far in my day." The speaker was a powerfully built man who circled around the pond, never looking at the lotus. There was a slight oddness in his walk, as if he wanted to limp but couldn't remember why.

"In your day," the sitting man said, "they got as far as Otosan Uchi." He deliberately ignored the look that earned him. "I don't know why you are so unsatisfied. The armies of the north and the south are fighting with skill and honor. What more do you expect of them?"

"I want them to fight with their hearts," the other said. "I want them to dig deep and find the strength they didn't know they had and fling it in the face of their enemies!"

"Then you should be rejoicing," the sitting man said. He looked up from the lotus to gaze at something in the middle distance.

over his left eye that poured out blood and hampered his vision. His kabuto, Jinzaburo wondered, what in Tsukune's name had happened to his kabuto?

He headed off in what he thought was the right direction, looking for some cloth he could tear off and fashion into a bandage for his head. The clothing of the dead was off limits, but perhaps he could find a back-banner somewhere? The thought was cut off by the harsh wail of a Yobanjin battle cry. Jinzaburo spun around to find himself being charged by a warrior who was fully seven feet tall.

The Shiba immediately launched an attack with his naginata, but his one-eyed vision threw off his distance perception and the Yobanjin easily evaded it. They circled for a moment, each taking the other's measure, and then Jinzaburo swept in for a cut aimed at the other man's torso. The Yobanjin let it come, and then at the last possible moment he pivoted, bringing his heavy sword down on the shaft of the naginata. The blade ground harmlessly in the dirt and the shaft broke, sending Jinzaburo reeling back in surprise. Naginata often broke in combat, but this was the first time he had ever seen one snapped by a sword strike. On his second step backwards his foot turned on a rock and his bad ankle sent him crashing down to one knee.

"Draw your sword, little man, and I'll snap that too!" yelled the Yobanjin, brandishing his sword above his head. "And then I'll end your life!"

"My life, my soul, for the Phoenix," Jinzaburo said. Wrapping both hands around one end of the remaining shaft he leaped up, showing the end of the pole into the other man's larynx. "But your life first." The Yobanjin fell to the ground, choking.

Jinzaburo drew his sword and continued across the battlefield. He could see Shiba Tsukimi's banners now, and he hastened to her call.

"Draw your sword, little man, and I'll snap that too!"

to kill him with a single cut of his naginata, but not until he had collected his own wound: a ragged gash



The standing man looked away. "Good man," he said. "You should be proud of him."

"I am," the sitting man said. "But you know that one can find men just as good among the Crab. In every clan."

The standing man took a deep breath and released it. "I know. But I know what it means to fight in the thick of battle. It is hard sometimes to simply give counsel."

The sitting man smiled. "Well do I know that, Yoshi. But that is our part of the battle now, and we cannot ignore it any more than our descendants can ignore the call to arms."

"You fight this kind of battle well, Ujimitsu," Yoshi said. "Perhaps I will do as well, in a century or so."

Ujimitsu laughed. "Skills grow sharper with use, my friend. And you should not lack for practice."

AEG News in Brief

RPG NEWS

Recently announced for GenCon release is **Enemies of the Empire**, the first sourcebook for the 4th Edition of the L5R RPG. Enemies contains everything a GM needs to use any adversary imaginable against his players (or, if he's nice, to allow them to play ronin, Kolat agents, Bloodspeakers, members of the Lost, or a dozen other things).

This fall, we will finally be reprinting **Emerald Empire**, our most requested sourcebook of all time. It will have everything you missed the first time, updated for 4th Edition and with at least 25% new material to boot! Don't miss out this time!

FREE RPG DAY

Saturday, June 19th is **Free RPG Day**. This program brings players around the world the opportunity to play many RPGs at their local store, for free. **Legend of the Five Rings** will take part, with a special quick-start adventure titled "Legacy of Disaster."

A lower-ranking Crane functionary has always sought to move up in standing, to run with the real influential members of court. He finally sees his opening with a legendary Seppun daisho that can earn him attention and acclaim. However, just before the court where he planned his grand moment, the daisho disappears. Will the PCs



The Plague Is Here! (Continued from Previous Page)

timeframe and trying to anticipate what we need to do to develop an environment that does not exist outside of play test. To give you, and the readers, some idea here I went back and checked the last playlist database for this set - it was 28th October 2009. That means that our first goals for the start of this set were probably set about July 2009. Of course as the set goes through play test and we see the environment change and develop so we change our goals. This set is a great example of



that. At the start I think Celestial had just (or was about to be) released. By the time we ended play test we had seen Gen Con and the European Championships. That changed our ideas and goals about many things!

Perhaps the easiest way to give you something concrete on this is to describe how we start off. We set up a Design Spreadsheet, and on that sheet we put slots for all of the clans and clan themes. We have some long discussions about where we think the power level of that clan and that theme is, both now and with the changes that we will see when the intervening sets are released. We go back and look at play test for those sets and we try to understand what the strengths and weaknesses of each of the themes are. Having done that, we set goals, again through ongoing discussion, for the sorts of things that we might use to address those issues. The spreadsheet then goes forward as an embodiment of those goals, but we then fluidly modify that initial assessment on the basis of play test results as well as anything that is happening in the current environment throughout the play test period.

We go back and look at play test ... and we try to understand what the strengths and weaknesses of each of the themes are.

I am not sure if that answers your question, but it is, as you suggest, difficult, because we have sort of big goals - and cards and set composition ideas that will address those bigger, more global issues within the game - and then we have cards and abilities that deal with some very specific issues for one clan and one theme.

IH: We saw some really interesting and powerful things from a design standpoint in the Harbinger with a clear increase for Clan themes that were kind of the "off theme," like Magistrate, Monk, Scout and Ninja. Some of those are fairly clan specific and some are not. Do you feel that this set addresses any of these themes more than others? Of these themes seem only a few cards away from breaking through to becoming great deck types; are they going to get some help?

MW: As I alluded, Monk is getting some help - both Spider

be able to help this Crane diplomat? Or will they face more dangers than a simple thief?

Legacy of Disaster features quick-start rules, allowing players unfamiliar with L5R or with the new 4th Edition rules to jump right in. There are also many pre-generated characters from each Clan to speed you into the adventure.

For more information and a list of stores participating in **Free RPG Day**, visit www.freerpgday.com

HANTEI BECOMES A MYTH!

At the dawn of civilization, cosmic beings vie for supremacy. Only one can rule, and the rest must bow down. This is the setting of **Myth**, a new game from AEG, where each player takes on the role of a deity competing with the other gods for the most mortal followers. This is also the story of **Hantei**, the son of **Lord Moon** and **Lady Sun**, who faced his divine brothers and sisters at the dawn of the Empire.

Myth already includes **Amaterasu**, the Japanese sun goddess, who inspired the figure by the same name within Rokugan's legends and history. If you go to your local stronghold store, not only can you purchase your copy of Myth (not to mention boosters from the latest L5R set), you can also pick up your free copy of Hantei and his special cards!

These special cards, much like the special cards for each of the deities, reflect Hantei's place in the cosmos and the powers he commands. His basic deity card highlights his position in the divine or-

der as the Celestial Heaven's direct representative in Rokugan, increasing the number of Heavens tokens he receives over the course of the game. (Heavens tokens are used to see and manipulate future cards, and to defend cities from the plague - a very valuable skill, as the current Empress can attest.) The Blessings of Hantei create prosperity in his cities, causing them all to grow. With his sword he can command one person to attack another. As the child of Sun and Moon he is gifted with great insight in the affairs of mortals, and can affect what is to come. He bears the mantle of Heaven, which allows him to see what others are capable of doing. Finally, from his throne he dictates the course of upcoming conflicts.

Go to your local stronghold store and pick up your copy today!

THE BATTLE OF KYUDEN TONBO

This exciting new learn-to-play box releases this summer. It features two decks - the **Lion** and **Dragon Clans** - and the story of the battle of **Kyuden Tonbo**. The set also features a full color rulebook, to help to get new players started.

For the experienced player not only does the box represent a great resource to reach new players about the game, but the set features some highly sought after cards, that you can use in your decks, and will be great value for money for those cards alone.

Look out at your local stronghold store early this summer!



The Economic Warfare theme will also see more support in the set with Strength of Will. A focus that will have general knock on effects for the environment, together with My Life is Yours and Claw and Shell.

IH: This is certainly a lot to digest! It sounds like "The Plague War" is going to live up to the lofty expectations the fans have placed upon you guys in Design. The readership and I really thank you for your time, Mark.

MW: Cheers!

There are a significant number of Focus Effects in this set, which will both support and hinder dueling decks, including one that also has a non-lethal battle duel on it - in Impetuous Challenge.



By now you have not only read about the **2010 Kotei MegaGame** (<http://www.l5r.com/events/the-plague-war-and-how-you-can-fight-it/>), but you’ve likely been a participant whether through voting online through your Imperial Assembly Account (<http://www.l5r.com/Imperial-Assembly/>) or playing in a Kotei Tournament. That participation, upon which the foundation of L5R is built, will continue through the rest of the Kotei season and beyond. What has been revealed thus far is only the beginning of a game that will run through the end of this year: **The Empire's Glory**.

The 2010 MegaGame, the **Empire's Glory**, is divided into parts: The Kotei Season section is known as the Plague War. The Plague War is in full swing right now, through the Kotei Tournaments near you and the online Interactive Map. Both give players the opportunity to gain Glory and Honor for the Clans of Rokugan, or the Empire (and in the Spider's case, Jigoku). Currently the game is well underway, with threats being dispatched by the legions of the Clans, while new threats appear and the fate of the Empire as a whole, and the Clans that make it, hang in the balance.

There have been questions for the Spider on what donating points to Jigoku means. Canny followers of the story will note that, as things currently appear, Fu Leng is no longer in a position of power within the Realm of Evil, but that Kali-Ma herself now occupies his former position as the Champion of Jigoku. This essentially means that, until and unless Fu Leng's (allegedly) rightful position is returned, supporting Jigoku is in fact supporting Kali-Ma and her Destroyers. Should this practice become widespread, then the faction that replaces the Spider Clan in the game will likely have more in common with the Destroyers than the Shadowlands Horde of old, although it is possible that the strategies employed may be similar in some respects.

AFTER THE KOTEI SEASON

As the Kotei season ends on June 30th, the next part begins with a series of tournaments and contests that provide players new ways to gain points for their Clans. Starting in July, six one-month long contests along with long-standing community efforts will be the predominant way to earn Honor for your clan post-Kotei season. Should Glory points be what your clan or the Empire need GenCon and the World Championships will give you an added chance to win Glory. There will also be the Jeweled Champions events along with Level 10, Level 15, Level 20 and Championship level events.

In the same vein as the Interactive Map, Honor points may be gained in a variety of ways that do not relate to the card game. The contests will be announced towards the end of the Kotei season, but luckily we're able to give you the inside track on to what type of contests are coming up. Two of the long-standing Honor events will be Koku donations and Clan Attendance at MegaGame sanctioned events.

Koku, once again will have an influence this year. The single largest donation will have an impact, and it will be important to continue to donate to your clan's coffers



through the course of the event as the largest overall donation will claim first place. Clan Attendance at MegaGame events will work the same way: the largest total (cumulative) and the largest at a single attendance by a Clan at a tournament, also weighs in for Honor, making it incredibly important to show where your loyalties lie. These two long-standing community efforts will reward each clan in Honor points based on their ranking in relation to the other Clans, so don't let yours be last!

From July through December, month long events will allow you, as a player, to help your clan gather Honor points. The first contest beginning in July will be a Photo Contest in which we ask you to "show your L5R spirit!". Dress up as your favorite character from the long history of L5R, or even as your own character and submit the resulting picture to megagamerresults@alderac.com. Do you have an amazing collage of L5R history, from first issues of The Imperial Herald to pictures from the celebration of the 5000th card? We want it! Does your car have Chuda Ruri on the side? We'll take that, too. We will be taking the best four submissions and contacting those individuals about where they would like to donate their Honor points, whether it be a Clan, the Empire (or Jigoku in the Spider's case). You can participate in these events, even if you aren't a part of the Imperial Assembly. This contest will be judged by some of the AEG staff, so dress to impress! Only two submissions will be allowed per person however, so it's important to make the two photos you turn in be the best that you can make them.

Also starting in July will be **The Jeweled Champions** event series beginning in Greece, along with Level 15 and 20 Stronghold Store events. Level 10 events will start in late August or early September, with kits shipping in July. Level 10 events will give the opportunity to gain Glory points for the two top CCG competitors, but Level 15 and 20 events will have Honor side events in addition to the card tournaments, and these Stronghold Store events will give Honor and Glory, and more points, to the top participants.

The Honor contest set for August may be one of the greatest contests in the history of the game: a brand new RPG contest! Everyone has a favorite character (or characters!) from L5R, and this is your chance to bring that character to life in the RPG. Using the new 4th Edition RPG rules (releasing in June), we want you to submit a design on any canon charac-

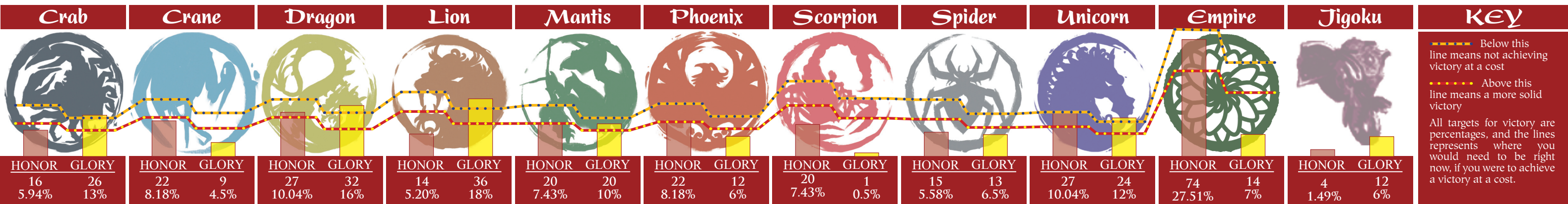
ter from any time in the entire 15 year history of L5R. Matsu Hiroru? Daidoji Uji? Yoritomo Naizen? Moto Tsume? Design them. This is a dream opportunity to take a nostalgic character from yesterday or today and create them under the new rules - maybe even for use in your current campaign! Even non-RPG players will want to recreate their favorite characters, so the competition is sure to be fierce. The Story Team and RPG team will be the judges for this contest, so take your time, and make sure your one submission is the best it can be. Do your favorite character proud by submitting him to megagamerresults@alderac.com in August!

GenCon US also gives you more opportunity, with the main event and multiple side events where Honor and Glory can be gained. Each side event at GenCon will yield Glory to the top players, and Honor events will be ongoing throughout the convention. GenCon is one of the most important L5R events in the world but this year, that title of new World Champion of L5R will be earned at the European Championships. Remember when we said that whatever happened at GenCon would happen at the World Championships in Europe? We weren't kidding: the biggest rewards in terms of Glory points will be awarded at both events this year with the top 16 all receiving Glory points, and numerous Honor events and side events will test the mettle of players competing for the love

of their respective clans.

This only covers a portion of what's left with regard to the 2010 MegaGame. More contests through the end of the year are to come, providing our great community of not only the L5R CCG players, but also the L5R RPG players to turn the tide of the war against Kali-Ma and the Destroyers. The two Honor events previewed in this article are but foreshadowing of the remaining four contests, all of which will deal with the 15-year history of L5R. The Empire is in the fight of its life, and you have the opportunity to choose how your Clan will deal with the threats presented before you. Will you choose isolation or will you band together to defeat a common foe? You fight an enemy the Empress demands be destroyed, and every loyal samurai of Rokugan rushes to heed her command. The fate of the Empire rests in your hands. The time for deeds of legend are at hand! Expect more information and precise rules on the various contests and tournaments on www.l5r.com in the near future.

Honor points may be gained in a variety of ways that do not relate to the card game.



Stronghold Stores

LEVEL 7 STORES*	
ACME GAMES	Cincinnati, OH
BARD CENTRUM	Gier (PL)
BULLE2JEUX	Limoges (FR)
GAME PRESERVE III	Bloomington, IN
PATRIOT GAMES	Huddersfield (UK)
THE GAME CASTLE	Londonderry, NH
THE TOWER GAMES	Lawrenceville, GA
WAYNE'S WORLD	Anchorage, AK

LEVEL 8 STORES*	
COMIC WARRIORS	Annerley (AU)
PLAN B	Barcelona (ES)
ROLE GAMES	Marseille (FR)

LEVEL 9 STORES*	
GUARDIAN GAMES	Portland, OR
LEGENDES D'AUTRES MONDES	Bois-Jallieu (FR)
LIBRERIA GIGAMESH	Barcelona (ES)
ROCAMBOLE	Lilles (FR)
TSS	Laguna Hills, CA

LEVEL 10 STORES*	
ALIANZA	Santiago (CH)
VISIONS CARDS & GAMES	Montgomery, AL
WHO'S ON 1ST GAMES & COLLECTIBLES	Dublin, CA

LEVEL 11 STORES*	
GAME ON!	Puyallup, WA

LEVEL 12 STORES*	
ALTERNATIVE REALITIES	Stillwater, OK
KAISSA MONKEROS	Athens (GR)
PATRIOT GAMES	Sheffield (UK)
UNIVERS PARALLELE	Toulouse (FR)

LEVEL 14 STORES*	
ULTRA COMIX	Nurnberg (DE)

LEVEL 15 STORES*	
PADIS	Madrid (ES)
WAR DOGS GAME CENTER	Jacksonville, FL

LEVEL 16 STORES*	
GNOME GAMES TOURNAMENT CENTRE	Green Bay, WI

LEVEL 18 STORES*	
TROLL2JEUX	Paris (FR)

* as of press time.

Level 7+ stores will enjoy an exclusive megagame Global Storyline Tournament option during the CE 15 Launch GST. In addition to their level 7 participation, Level 10+ stores will participate in limited storyline tournament. In addition to their Level 7 & Level 10 events, Level 15+ stores will receive their own unique storyline event.



Recent errata and re-printings in Celestial Edition: 15th Anniversary have changed the landscape of the game, breathing life into some deck types, while bringing others like the Undead swarm, back to the pack.

This allows a slightly slower, more mid-game approach to be taken to deck construction. I personally believe some of these mid-game decks to be amongst the best military decks out there. Crab Berserkers and Heroes, Mantis Commanders, Spider Oni and Unicorn Commanders and Heroes are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to a slower style, but like any deck you must be aware of what is played at tournaments and prepare yourself.

Since we're discussing a style of play that takes more time than usual to get up and running you must be acutely aware that blitz can ruin your day. Cards with dual purpose, like Outer Walls can save your province early or prevent the death of one of your costly personalities or followers. Settling the Homeless is also useful during early battles and can even be applied against honor decks by sending home defenders, especially personalities like Houhou, who can come back for three more honor. While less played, Shameful Injury also shows potential in mid-game builds with the amount of force bonuses available. It also has the best focus value of the three if you'd like to keep focus values in mind for dueling, which can be important with many honor decks utilizing duels to gain the majority of their honor and deal with problematic military personalities.

In addition to this, you have to be mindful of swings in game tempo. You're likely not going to be the one to take the first province from your opponent, so consider cards like Retribution and Sneak Attack that give you a big advantage. Also, large important personalities (think Tamago or a champion) can be protected through a variety of redirection effects like Imperial Command, Deflection and Chugo Seido. Unicorn even com-

If you are playing a mid-game military deck, you likely cannot attack an honor deck right away.

War of Dark Fire, The New Order, Midnight Assault, Thriving Light and Unfortunate Incident are all really strong effects that cost you nothing. You may need several of these depending on the speed of your build, so it's important to test against honor regularly and determine what is the best combination for your specific deck.

Followers are fantastic now, may be even the best they have ever been in the history of the game. Why not take advantage of them if your personalities can abuse them? Crab, Mantis and Unicorn have a slew of Commanders that all benefit from running followers. Big followers can usually kill all mid-range personalities, have card draw built in and they give you a form of protection. Unfortunately most of these followers can only handle personalities that have five force or less, so make sure you run cards like Game of Sincerity or Low Stance to deal

vantage of this with cards like Flanked by Nightmares and other actions like Rout, that don't just kill or remove a unit, they drastically change the tempo of a battle in their favor. Your per unit force should be higher than that of the opponent, so keeping those units in the battle is of utmost importance.

Take care to not over prepare for honor, dishonor, or blitz decks. You have to find a way to create a balance where you don't get caught in battles with nothing to do! I went to a recent tournament and an attacker was up four provinces to one. He attacked then asked his opponent, "Can you gain two force?"

His opponent answered, "No, but I have eight battle actions in my hand." The attacker then conceded. Having that right mixture of cards won't just win you battles, it will win you games.

Any time someone posts a deck list asking for advice, the conversation invariably turns into some players questioning card choice X, Y, and Z, and the original player defending their choices. Any time there's a large tournament, someone asks for a deck list, and almost invariably someone also copies it card for card, plays it, then complains about how bad some of the cards in the deck are. Both of these scenarios occur because of one simple thing: players play differently.

Before you say "well thanks, Sherlock," let me explain. If you ask someone what kind of player they are, they will most likely respond with "oh I'm an honor player," or "I'm a military player," or "I play control." The responses you get barely scratch the surface of what kind of player someone is. For example, I am generally considered a military player, yet I've played quite a bit of honor out of Lion with reasonable success. A more accurate description of my play style would probably be: I'm a speed freak. I am super aggressive and want to win as quickly as possible so that my opponent doesn't have a chance to catch his breath and respond to what I'm doing. This means that I'm usually playing military decks, but doesn't necessarily mean that's all I play. One of my best friends is the exact opposite: he likes to shut his opponents down as completely as possible so that he can win at his leisure. This usually means he's playing control style decks, but not always. It's not enough to categorize players as simply control or military. So how do you know what kind of player you are?

Well, in general, there are about 5 different types of players:

- Super Aggressive: Almost always, this type of player plays military decks that attack every turn. This type of player might also play rocket style honor or bomb dishonor. More often than not, they simply try to be faster than their opponent, and rarely plan for defense. Think blitz.

- Aggressive Control: This type of player doesn't really have a specific deck type. If they have super-aggressive inclinations, they will more often play a military battle control style, but just as often they'll lean towards some kind of fast honor control deck.

- Passive Control: This kind of player likes to sit back and put their opponent on a clock. They try to set their win condition to occur by a specific turn more or

less no matter what happens. Dishonor and Phoenix honor players often have this kind of inclination.

When you are selecting the last few cards, it is important to consider not only which meta cards are strongest, but also which meta cards fit your deck best. You wouldn't put Charge into a Crane honor deck; why put shutdown meta like Unfortunate Incident into a super aggressive deck when you'd be better served by putting in a card that helps advance your win condition, like Unwavering Assault?

A deck's play style isn't fixed in stone. New cards and environmental changes can cause a deck to shift from one style of play to another...

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less no matter what happens. Dishonor and Phoenix honor players often have this kind of inclination.

- Controlled Aggression: This kind of player generally plays what would be considered a midgame military deck, such as crab or spider. These types of players defend often, and generally try to maintain a province advantage against everything they play against.

- Lockdown Control: These kinds of players try to dominate the opponent by whatever means necessary. This play style is usually what players think about when they consider "control" decks, but includes much more than limited control decks, though limited kill is a favored card for these players. Lockdown doesn't necessarily win at a particular point in the game.

L5R RPG 4th Edition Preview

BY SHAWN CARMAN, ROB HOBART, & BRIAN YOON

The Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game, 4th Edition, will be here very soon, and your friendly neighborhood Design Team could not be more excited! By this time, hopefully, you have seen some of our design diaries or previews posted online as we try to get the word out about the new game. So far we've tried to speak in pretty general terms, saving those juicy mechanics previews until a bit closer to the release date. For you, our valued IA associates, however, we thought it might be time to draw back the veil and let you have a look at something specific.

Ancestors are a vital part of Rokugan's theology, and any warrior who cannot name the glorious deeds of his forefathers is a poor excuse for a samurai indeed. In 4th Edition, the mechanics for Ancestors are included in the Book of Water: Advanced Mechanics, as an option for GMs who want to include them in their campaign. Here's a preview of how they work, along with an example of an Ancestor Advantage write-up!

ANCESTORS

Ancestors are a special form of Spiritual Advantage, and are purchased with Character Points in the same manner as other Advantages. They represent guidance and advice from great heroes of Rokugan's past who now dwell in Yomi. Only a rare and exceptional character should receive an ancestor's guidance, and players who choose this option will be subjecting their characters to significant role-playing restrictions. The GM should consider carefully whether to allow Ancestors in the game, and discuss the options with the players. Ancestors are powerful, but the constraints they place on characters may be frus-



trating to many players, especially given their high point cost.

All ancestors are governed by the following restrictions:

- Loyalty: An Ancestor will only advise someone from the same clan/faction. They will not aid those who are not part of the clan they served (and in some cases, founded) in life, even if that person can claim a direct blood descent from them.
- Piety: A character who has an Ancestor is expected to offer veneration and devotion on a daily basis. In general, any character with an Ancestor Advantage should expect to spend at least one hour a day in prayer and devotions. The GM can allow this requirement to be set aside when unusual circumstances dictate (character is in the Shadowlands, on a ship in a storm, etc), but the

Only a rare and exceptional character should receive an ancestor's guidance, and players who chose this option will be subjecting their characters to significant role-playing restrictions.

character must make amends with renewed prayers as soon as he is able. If a character consistently fails to offer veneration, the Ancestor will abandon him – the character will have to spend at least a month in devout prayers and atonement in order for the Ancestor to return.

- Jealousy: Only one Ancestor will ever advise a character. Further, if the favor of that Ancestor is ever lost, no other Ancestor can be purchased to replace it – the character's failing will be known in Yomi, and other Ancestors will disdain to approach him, no matter how noble his later deeds.

- Demands: All Ancestors place specific demands on the characters they help. In return for the Ancestor's potent aid, the character must live a life which accords with the Ancestor's beliefs and principles. If a character fails to meet these demands, the Ancestor leaves, perhaps forever. At the GM's option, a character that shows sincere repentance and devotion – typically at least a month of devotions, as under "Piety" above – can regain his Ancestor's favor. However, a character who fails to follow the Ancestor's demands a second time will be allowed no further chance to atone.



KUNI

[8 POINTS]

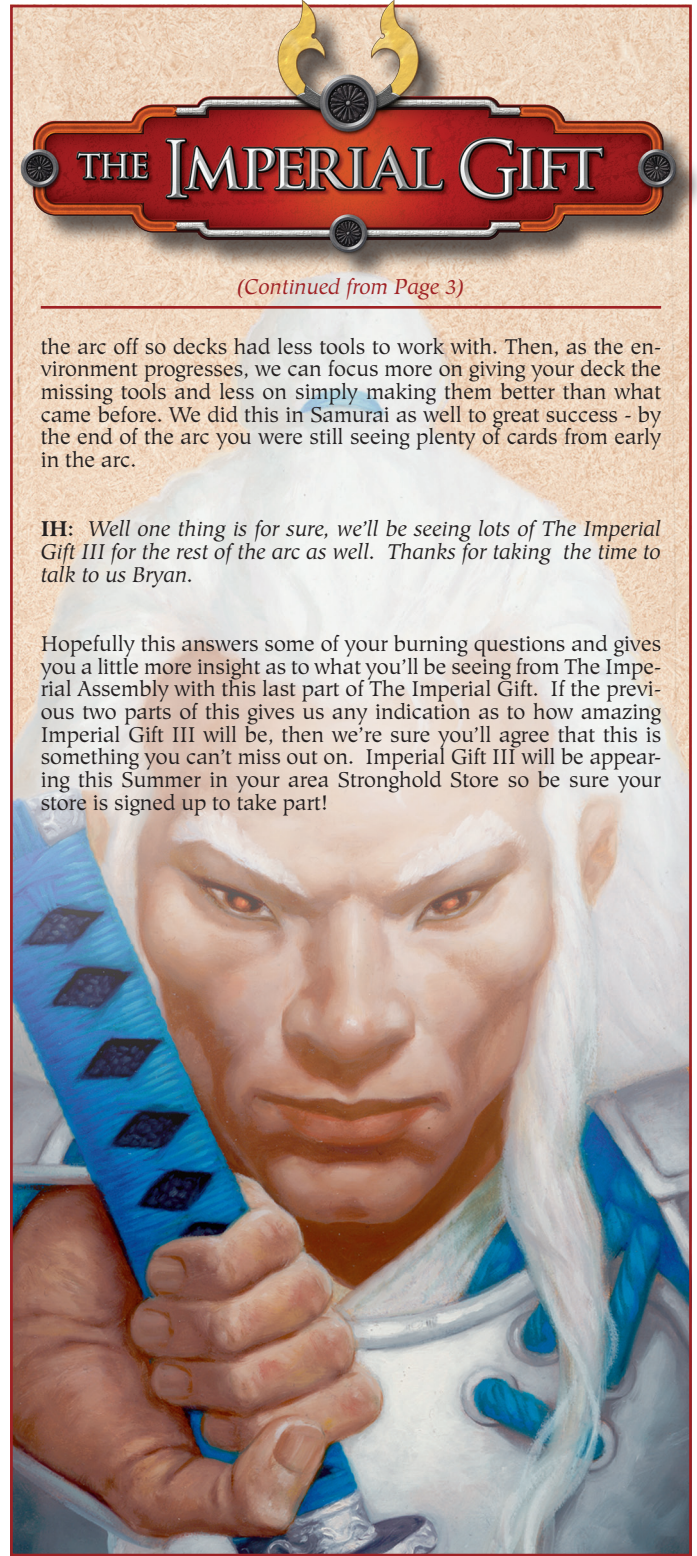
The founder of the Crab shugenja school was a capable shugenja and a man who knew more about the creatures of the Shadowlands than any other. Once per session, you may spend a Void point to gain a bonus to your spellcasting roll equal to your Earth Rank in kept dice. Also, when rolling to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint, you may roll twice and keep the better result.

Demands: Kuni's demand to his descendants is a simple one – stay pure. If you ever gain so much as a single point of the Shadowlands Taint, Kuni will abandon you.



TITLE	START TIME
L5R North American Championship Qualifier	08/05/2010 10:00 AM
L5R Draft	08/05/2010 11:00 AM (and throughout the day)
L5R Invitational	08/05/2010 12:00 Noon
L5R Sealed deck	08/05/2010 2:00 PM
L5R Draft	08/05/2010 3:00 PM (and throughout the day)
L5R North American Championship Qualifier	08/06/2010 10:00 AM
L5R Draft	08/06/2010 11:00 AM (and throughout the day)
L5R Winner's Choice	08/06/2010 12:00 Noon
L5R Draft	08/06/2010 3:00 PM (and throughout the day)
L5R North American Championship Main Event	08/07/2010 10:00 AM
L5R Draft	08/07/2010 11:00 AM (and throughout the day)
L5R 2nd Chance Storyline Event	08/07/2010 12:00 Noon
L5R Draft	08/07/2010 3:00 PM (and throughout the day)
L5R North American Championship Finals	08/08/2010 10:00 AM
L5R 2nd Chance Storyline Event Final	08/08/2010 11:00 AM
L5R Draft	08/08/2010 11:00 AM (and throughout the day)

Draft games will be provided as and when we can, and as pods of players come forward, so if you are interested, speak to the team in the CCG Hall.



(Continued from Page 3)

the arc off so decks had less tools to work with. Then, as the environment progresses, we can focus more on giving your deck the missing tools and less on simply making them better than what came before. We did this in Samurai as well to great success - by the end of the arc you were still seeing plenty of cards from early in the arc.

IH: Well one thing is for sure, we'll be seeing lots of The Imperial Gift III for the rest of the arc as well. Thanks for taking the time to talk to us Bryan.

Hopefully this answers some of your burning questions and gives you a little more insight as to what you'll be seeing from The Imperial Assembly with this last part of The Imperial Gift. If the previous two parts of this gives us any indication as to how amazing Imperial Gift III will be, then we're sure you'll agree that this is something you can't miss out on. Imperial Gift III will be appearing this Summer in your area Stronghold Store so be sure your store is signed up to take part!



THE PLAGUE WAR

“The greatest threat is one that
cannot be seen or touched...”



“Learn quick,
play smart...
Survive!”

BATTLE OF KYUDEN TONBO

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WE MAKE
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