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VOL. 2 / NO. 15

DREAMS IN DARKNESS

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OF MY
ENEMY
DESIGNER'S JOURNAL

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THE OFFICIAL LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS™ QUARTERLY VOL. 2 / NO. 15

Editorial

Hi folks!

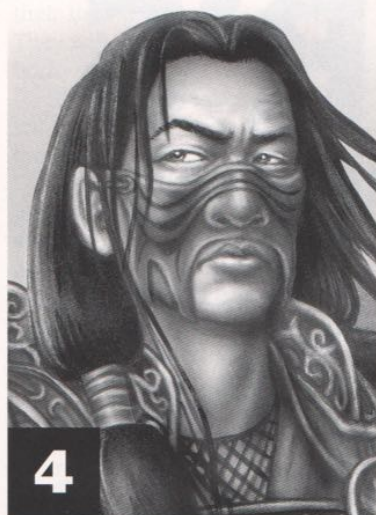
Generally, in my role as head of the L5R Story Team, I make it a point not to show any clan bias. Generally, this is pretty easy. I like all the clans, and each of them certainly has their edge of cool. It's not hard for me to get into the mindset of any given one, to see their virtues and vices and to present their stories objectively.

Of course, the truth of the matter is that I became involved with this game because I was a player. Some of you may know that when I did play, my original clan was Crab. Thus, I could not have been more overjoyed when Gen Con was won by a Crab deck. Salman Barakat did a great job (and you can read about his deck in this very issue). The Great Bear is back. Good times are ahead for our boys on the Kaiu Wall, and I don't mind taking a moment here to cast aside my impartiality and give all my fellow Children of Hida out there a big round of applause.

In closing, I only have one more thing to say:

HIDAAAAAAA!!!

Rich Wulf
L5R Story Guy



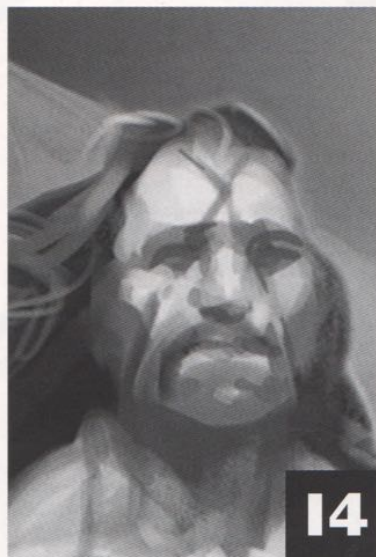
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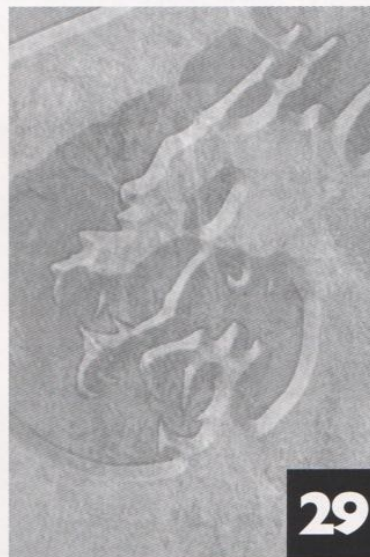
10



14



24



29

ARTICLES

- Designer's Journal 5
- Judging 102 9
- Gen Con Winning Deck . 14
- The Imperial Histories .. 24
- Fan Favorites 29

FICTION

- Dreams in Darkness* 10

PREVIEWS

- Enemy of my Enemy 4
- L5R 3.0 20

THE REST

- Order Form 31
- Koku Redemption 16





DESIGNER'S JOURNAL

by Jeff Alexander

Although we are designing Strongholds with *Lotus* and *Diamond* both in mind, and also paying close attention to which clans are going to have two *Lotus*-appropriate Strongholds by the time *Code of Bushido* is finished, past *Diamond* releases still determine clan selection. Dragon, Crab, and Ratling are the three chosen to receive Strongholds. Ratling has two themes we've developed recently that don't have much history. They have discard pile manipulation, which reflects their scavenging nature, and various Tribe-related mechanics as well.

As we'll cover later, a major theme in this set is various Fate-side attachment cards, so it makes much more sense to focus Ratling's Stronghold on the discard pile theme. Dragon has a number of different Stronghold themes, but one thing they don't have is a dueling one. Since we're altering dueling in *Lotus*, it makes sense to give Dragon a dueling Stronghold here. (Yes, that means there's a very good chance this will be one of Dragon's two LE boxes.) Crab will be trickiest. We want to give them a Follower-related Stronghold, since that fits both the Clan's and the set's theme, but we have to make sure it isn't completely better (or worse) than Kyuden Hida.

Re-schooling Sensei

When we first brought Sensei back into the game, we had a clear idea in mind for them. Due to the consistency of having them in play on turn 1, they serve as a great way to kick start a Clan in a new mechanical direction. The situation we need to do that most is when we have a Clan with an intact Tier 1 tournament deck archetype. Creating a fundamentally new deck for Clan to play lets us make strong cards for the Clan without automatically elevating its tournament status.

At least, that was the original plan. Like many plans, it felt sound while it was in design, but real time application brought up unexpected issues. For one, players didn't like it. The majority expected Sensei to be something players could simply add to their existing decks, and many were disappointed to learn they needed to make brand-new decks to use their Sensei properly. Worse was the fact that some Sensei in *Wrath of the Emperor* didn't match this pattern and could be dropped straight into what had become their Clan's best existing decks to make them better with no other changes. There is also the perception issue, where giving the strongest Clans a priority on new Sensei appeared to be a case of the rich getting richer.

In *Enemy*, we relax our design rules for Sensei and use them whenever we feel a Clan would benefit from a new deck type (and we need a tool to help it happen). Lion gets one to help develop the notion of two different styles of military deck in the same Clan. Crane gets one to bring sharp focus to the kind of things we want Courtiers to be able to do in *Diamond* and on into *Lotus*. Unicorn gets one to give them the possibility of an Item-centered deck that doesn't revolve around Shinden Horiuchi and thus be forced to include Shugenja and Spells to obtain maximum utility. All three of these Clans also got Sensei in *Wrath* that turned out to be too hard to build decks for, so this gives us a chance to give them something more playable.

What About the Other Clans?

Web of Lies resulted in big changes to Unicorn and Mantis. The former gained a strong ability to manipulate and gain advantage from Regions, and the latter received an entirely new type of attack to launch. "Why did they get all new themes?" you might ask. "Their best decks weren't winning much." Well, Mantis is easy to explain. They get a new theme because we want every Clan to have at least two distinct deck styles. Too many Mantis

Personalities exist with both a ranged attack and the Naval trait to expect players to ever go back to playing decks full of just one or the other. There was only one Mantis deck, and without something new on top of Naval and ranged attacks, there wouldn't be another. The Raiding mechanic will continue to get almost exclusive focus in *Enemy* since it's still so new.

Unicorn would get an exclusive focus on Regions as well, although their Item focus still needs work. They will get some support for both.

Shadowlands takes a radical left turn this set. They have more than enough Bloodspeakers and Chi loss. This time, they get oni...big, nasty, scary oni, the kind every brash warrior forgets grows in the deep Shadowlands until it crushes his trophy-hunting head.

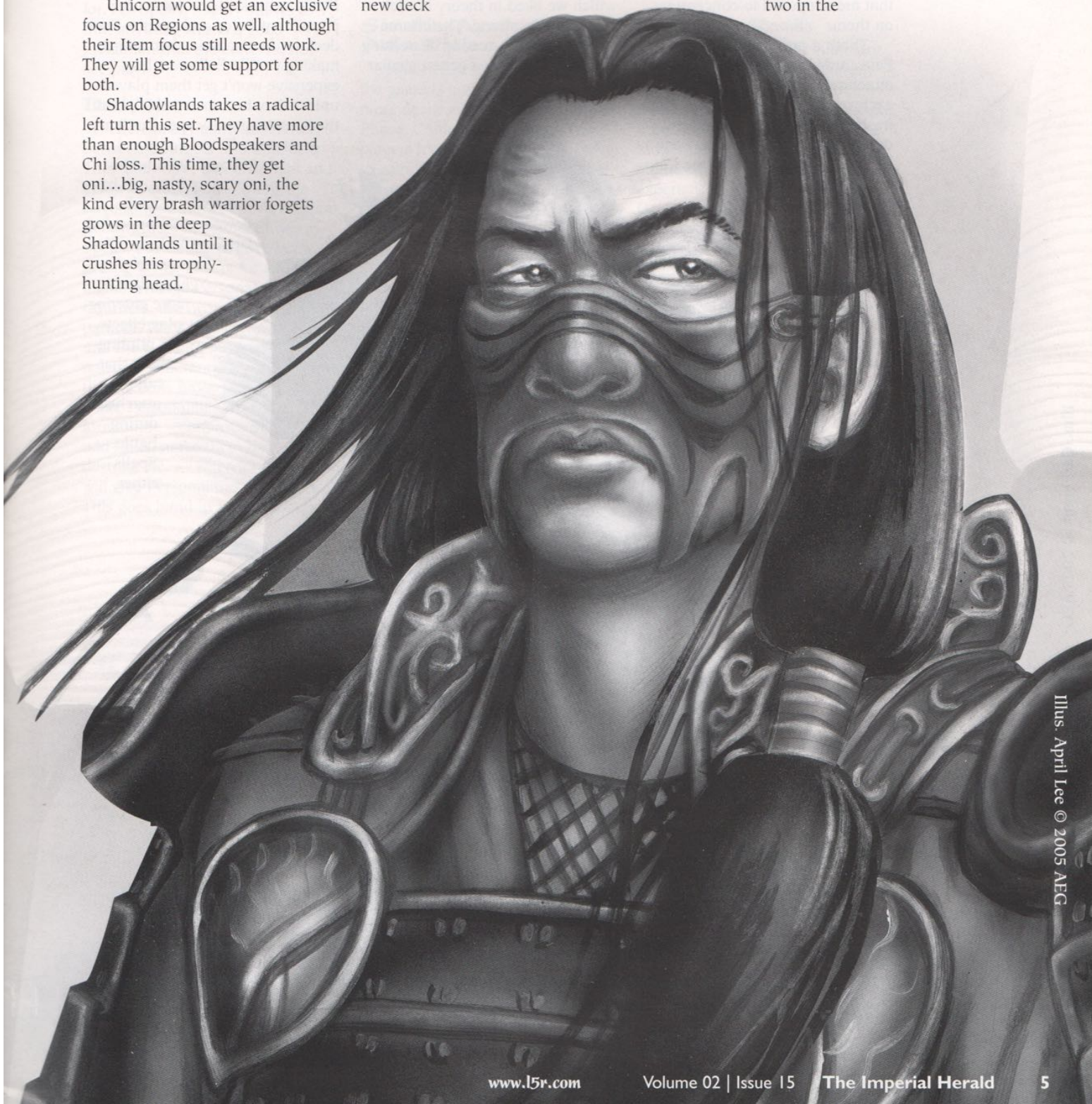
Scorpion still has great strength in their control decks, so *Enemy* continues to focus on their in-battle prowess by highlighting the battlefield confusion caused by their legendary ninja and the danger of Scorpion revenge.

Phoenix's focus in this set concerns itself more with improving all their existing archetypes' benefits from Spells than on creating a new deck

for them. It's a matter of priorities. We were already committed to improving their synergy with Spells, and we are happy with the variety of decks Phoenix can build.

My Grandfather's Weapon

Attachments have a long history of casual but not competitive use in L5R. Followers have had a hotspot or two in the



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timeline when either they were key to efficient blitz military strategies (*The Palace of Otsan Uchi*) or they fed into potent support cards (*Stand Against the Waves*). We don't have those situations in *Diamond* right now, so Followers have cycled back into disuse. Items and Spells, with only a handful of exceptions each, have never been the centerpiece of top winning decks, not even for Clans that are supposed to concentrate on them.

That's a problem. A third of the Fate cards in every expansion are attachment cards. That's a sixth of each set relegated to coaster-dom fresh out of the box if we keep designing them the way we have. Not only that, we have three Clans in L5R themed around Fate attachments of various types: Crab with Followers, Unicorn with Items, and Phoenix with Spells. We have good reasons to make all of them better: Crab so we can give them cards that don't make their current top tier decks better; Unicorn so their decks can become top tier while staying in theme; and Phoenix

because we promised we were going to do this at Gen Con.

We've been making small steps to encourage attachment cards since *Diamond* began. Many of the Follower-encouraging cards from the *Anvil of Despair* / *Crimson and Jade* era — *Refugees*, *Fist of the Earth*, *Narrow Ground* — were selected for *Diamond* on this basis. *Peasant Vengeance* was created to replace *Stand Against the Waves*, which we liked in theory but felt was a bit too strong. The cost of Items has been steadily decreasing as well, and they've gotten similar

support cards like *Armed and Ready*.

However, all of this combined hasn't been enough. In *Enemy*, we tackle the issue at a basic level. Instead of simply making these cards less expensive, we re-examine the roles that Items, Followers, and Spells serve in a deck. For example, if players aren't using Followers because it is smarter to rely exclusively on the Dynasty deck to provide basic permanent Force and use the Fate deck for free actions, then simply making vanilla Followers less expensive won't get them played unless they become so cheap that they create an easy speed military strategy. To get Followers played more without just powering up blitz, we have to find a way to make Followers more appealing relative to Action cards,

— for example, by giving them more entering-play effects, or printing more that can be attached during battle. Spells either



need to do things that Kiho can't (hint: expect a sharp increase in the appearance of Rituals) or produce effects that are truly advantageous when they're available turn after turn. They also need to be worth the enormous cost of paying for two cards and bowing a Personality, or Action cards will, again, remain more effective. The initial fan response to *Eclipse* is what we're shooting for. For Spells, history shows us that anything less is a good indication that the card will not see play.

Dual Nature

There aren't many differences between Courtiers and Shugenja. They both have moderate Chi and below-average Force. Shugenja have Kiho; Courtiers have Political Action cards. Shugenja have Spells, but Courtiers have been getting Writs. Except for a slightly higher average Personal Honor on Courtiers, the two classes run in parallel. We'd like to change that, and the current plan entails more narrowly differentiating the effects their actions have. Shugenja will make Personalities more formidable — improve their stats, add traits, make them harder to destroy, etc. — whereas Courtiers will give Personalities more to do. This goes hand in hand with giving

Crane extra ways to issue challenges, both in general and in ways that don't require Fate cards both for the duel itself and for focusing. (Dragon will see a small rise in Kitsuki family Courtier/Magistrates to balance this, but not enough to make them another heavy Courtier-using Clan besides Crane and Scorpion. They'll get the rest of their challenges on other cards.)

Something New for the Action Phase

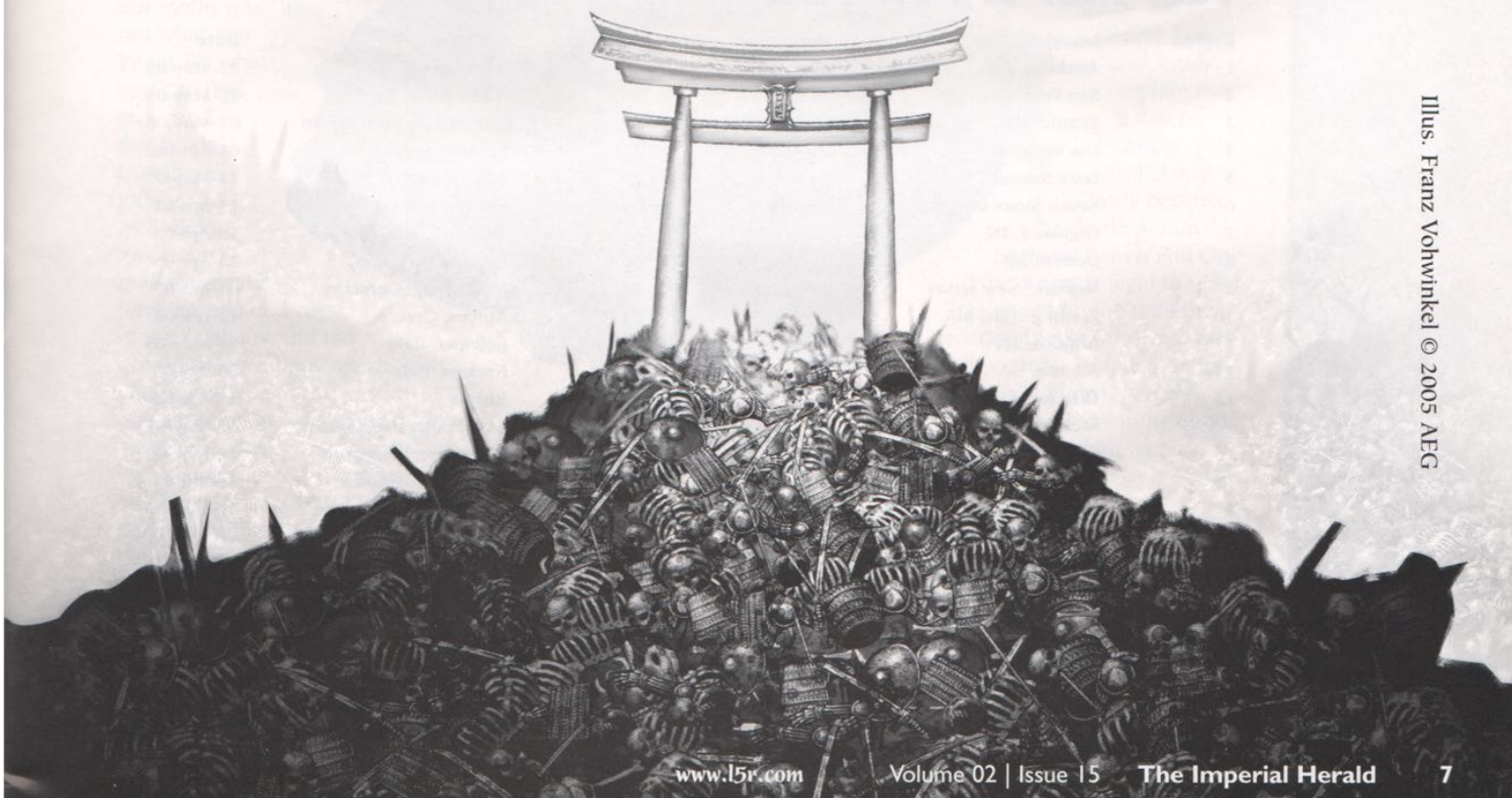
Finally, *Enemy* tries to add to the game is more actions, and more decisions, during the Action Phase. Contests will involve two players trying to outbid each other to gain some reward. An inflexible player dead-set on pursuing his personal strategy will find his opponent winning contest after contest unchallenged and gaining a distinct advantage.

Contests started as something for Courtiers to do. They were initially Political in nature and based primarily on Chi, but as we developed our plans for Courtiers (and for dueling), we saw too much overlap with how we wanted Courtiers to innately operate.

Contests were generalized and broken away from Courtiers and Chi. They were also separated from duels by having no penalty for losing and by allowing anything to be given up as part of the contest — discarding cards for Focus value might be involved, but so could discarding them for Gold cost, or bowing Personalities for Force, or destroying Holdings, or anything else.

More Story Results

Looking through my summary of tournament prize results from the Story Team, I see no fewer than twenty that are going to make it into card form in *Enemy*. That's more than any recent set has managed. Among these cards are experienced versions of several Clan Rivals characters and, of course, Hida Kisada as a result of Salman Barakat's World Championship victory. Expect the Great Bear to have a Force of at least 11. After all, he's got to be bigger than Kuon. Right?



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UPCOMING TOURNAMENTS

Look for AEG and Legend of the Five Rings at these great conventions in 2005:

by Kristy Mack

Mouzaka Championships - Athens, Greece

February 17th - 19th
<http://www.l5r.gr>

ConQuest- Los Angeles, California

Toturi's Legacy
February 18th - 21st
<http://www.conquestla.com>

GenghisCon XXVI - Denver, Colorado

February 17th - 20th
<http://www.genghiscon.com>

Test of the Ruby Champion 7 -

Luxembourg
Date TBA
<http://webplaza.pt.lu/mulheims/torc04/default.htm>

World Kotei Season

April 1st - June 15th
<http://www.l5r.com>

Crossroads - New Jersey

April 29th - May 1st
<http://www.dexposure.com>

The Kotei Cruise

May 23rd - May 27th
(contact saberinc@prodigy.net for more details)
<http://www.koteis.com>

KublaCon - San Francisco, CA

May 27th - May 30th
<http://www.kublacon.com>

Gamex - Los Angeles, CA

May 27th - May 30th
<http://www.strategicon.net>

Test of the Amethyst Champion -

Columbus, OH
June 29th
<http://www.comictown.net>

Origins - Columbus OH

June 30th - July 3rd
<http://originsgames.com>

Gen Con Indy - Indianapolis, IN

August 18th - August 21st
<http://www.gencon.com>

Dragon*Con - Atlanta, GA

September 2nd - September 9th
<http://www.dragoncon.com>

Gateway Con - Los Angeles, CA

September 2nd - September 9th
<http://www.strategicon.net>

European Championships - Europe

Date TBA
<http://www.l5r.com>

Gen Con SoCal - Anaheim, CA

Date TBA
<http://www.gencon.com>

Test of the Topaz Champion - Kansas City, MO

December 31st
<http://www.l5r.com>

UberCon

Date TBA
<http://www.ubercon.com>

Look for the 2005 Convention and Events schedule to be updated regularly at <http://www.l5r.com>

If you have any questions, or have a convention that you don't see listed here and want AEG involved, please contact Kristy Mack (kmack@alderac.com).

KOTEI EVENTS

Region	Location	Date	Region	Location	Date
1	Anaheim, CA	16-Apr-05	25	Scandinavia	22-May-05
2	San Francisco, CA	28-May-05	26	Nottingham, England	28-May-05
3	Seattle, WA	09-Apr-05	27	Miranda de Ebro, Spain	07-May-05
4	Las Vegas, NV	23-Apr-05	28	Madrid, Spain	02-Apr-05
5	Lee's Summit, MO	04-Jun-05	29	Lille, France	14-May-05
6	South Sioux City, NE	23-Apr-05	30	Potiers, France	11-Jun-05
7	Highland, IN	30-Apr-05	31	Avignon, France	16-Apr-05
8	Detroit, MI	21-May-05	32	Brussels, Belgium	23-Apr-05
9	Newark, New Jersey	30-Apr-05	33	Nuremberg, Germany	04-Jun-05
10	Feeding Hills, MA	02-Apr-05	34	Athens, Greece	12-Jun-05
11	Antioch, TN	28-May-05	35	Bologna, Italy	28-May-05
12	Atlanta, GA	14-May-05	36	Krakow, Poland	30-Apr-05
13	Orlando, FL	28-May-05	37	Russia	17-Apr-05
14	McLean, VA	11-Jun-05	38	Baguio City, Philippines	07-May-05
15	Eagle River, AK	29-May-05	39	Singapore, Singapore	29-May-05
16	Hawaii	TBA	40	Sydney, Australia	11-Jun-05
17	Kotei Cruise	24-May-05	41	Melbourne, Australia	21-May-05
18	Houston, TX	04-Jun-05	42	New Zealand	TBA
19	Toronto, Canada	09-Apr-05	43	Chile	TBA
20	Vancouver, Canada	30-Apr-05	44	Brazil	TBA
21	Saskatoon, Canada	21-May-05	45	Guatemala	04-Jun-05
22	Thunder Bay, Canada	04-Jun-05			
23	Quebec, Canada	21-May-05			
24	Ireland	04-Jun-05			

*All dates are tentative at the time of this printing

**Please visit <http://www.legendofthefiverings.com> for the most up to date Kotei 2005 information.

JUDGING 102:

By Jon Palmer

A GUIDE TO BEING A TOURNAMENT JUDGE

I was asked to write a column entitled "Judging 101." But Judging 101 is easy – a two-line class: "You are always right. Allow players a chance to convince you that they're more right, but make the final decision." Don't be afraid of making a mistake, but realize that occasionally you will, and if so, move to correct it.

For people moving up from running local events to judging a major tournament, or looking to improve their technique, there are certain things I've picked up along the way that hopefully can help you provide the best possible experience for your players. I call this Judging 102, and it's the absolute difference between leaving players with a feeling that your tournament was run shoddily, or the feeling that they'd like to come back again next time.

The single most important thing for a judge is a willingness to use all his available resources. When I majored in history, our motto was "it's not what you know, it's what you can find out," and this holds true in judging as well. Before any event, make sure you have an updated copy of the rulebook and the accumulated rulings with you. If you're not sure of the answer to a question, before you make a logic-based educated guess, consult with these sources. A tangent to this has crept up with regards to newer printings of cards. Having the most recent wording of all legal cards available, whether in a text file or via the internet, is a key resource for resolving any issues

arising from wording changes that come from set to set. Also, if you have players attending your tournament with particular skills in judging or rulings, don't be afraid to ask them their thoughts before making a tough decision. Most players are happy to help, and can be valuable consultants when needed.

Second, make sure you read cards before making a ruling. Most rules questions are answered by a simple reading of the involved cards. However, unless you've repeatedly answered a question before, always read the cards

involved before issuing your judgment. There may be a wording issue pertinent to the specific ruling at hand that even the most veteran player would miss.

Third, keep up-to-date. Marty Lund is kind enough to publish his rulings on an almost-daily basis. While many people don't have the time to peruse the entire CCG list, digest mode and searching for his name are an easy way to ensure that if any major rulings are issued, you will have at least seen them. Even only reading a ruling once is often enough to trigger the thought that you might want to go look in the accumulated rulings before you give an answer you think you have.

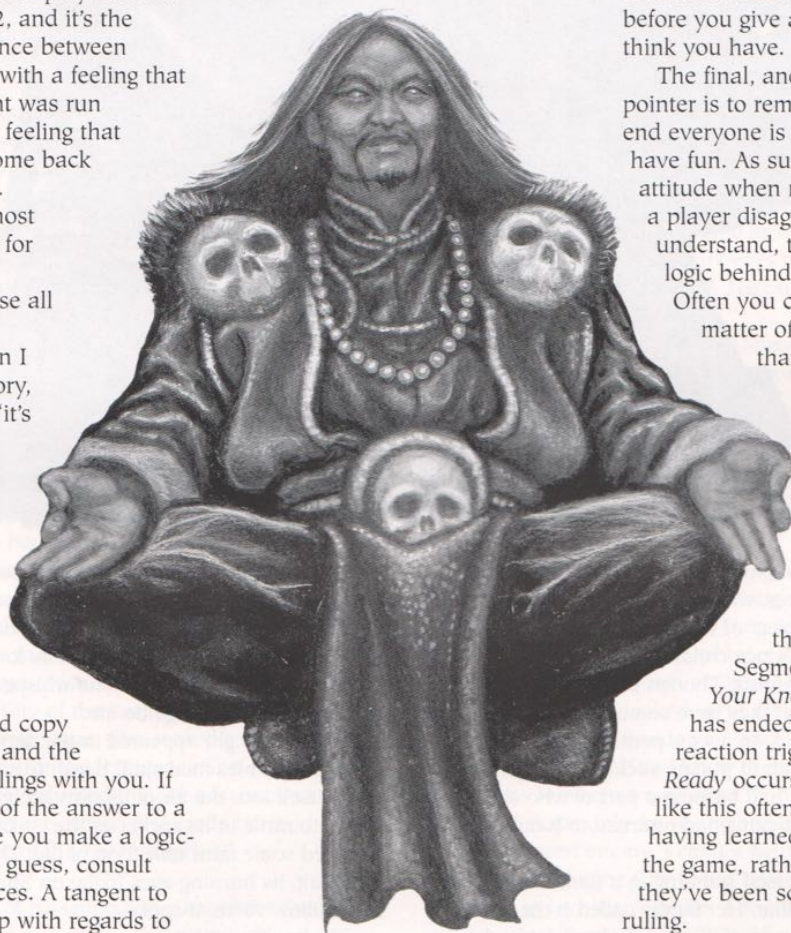
The final, and most important, pointer is to remember that in the end everyone is at the event to have fun. As such, keep a good attitude when making rulings. If a player disagrees or doesn't understand, try to explain the logic behind the ruling to him.

Often you can do this as a matter of course – rather than just saying that

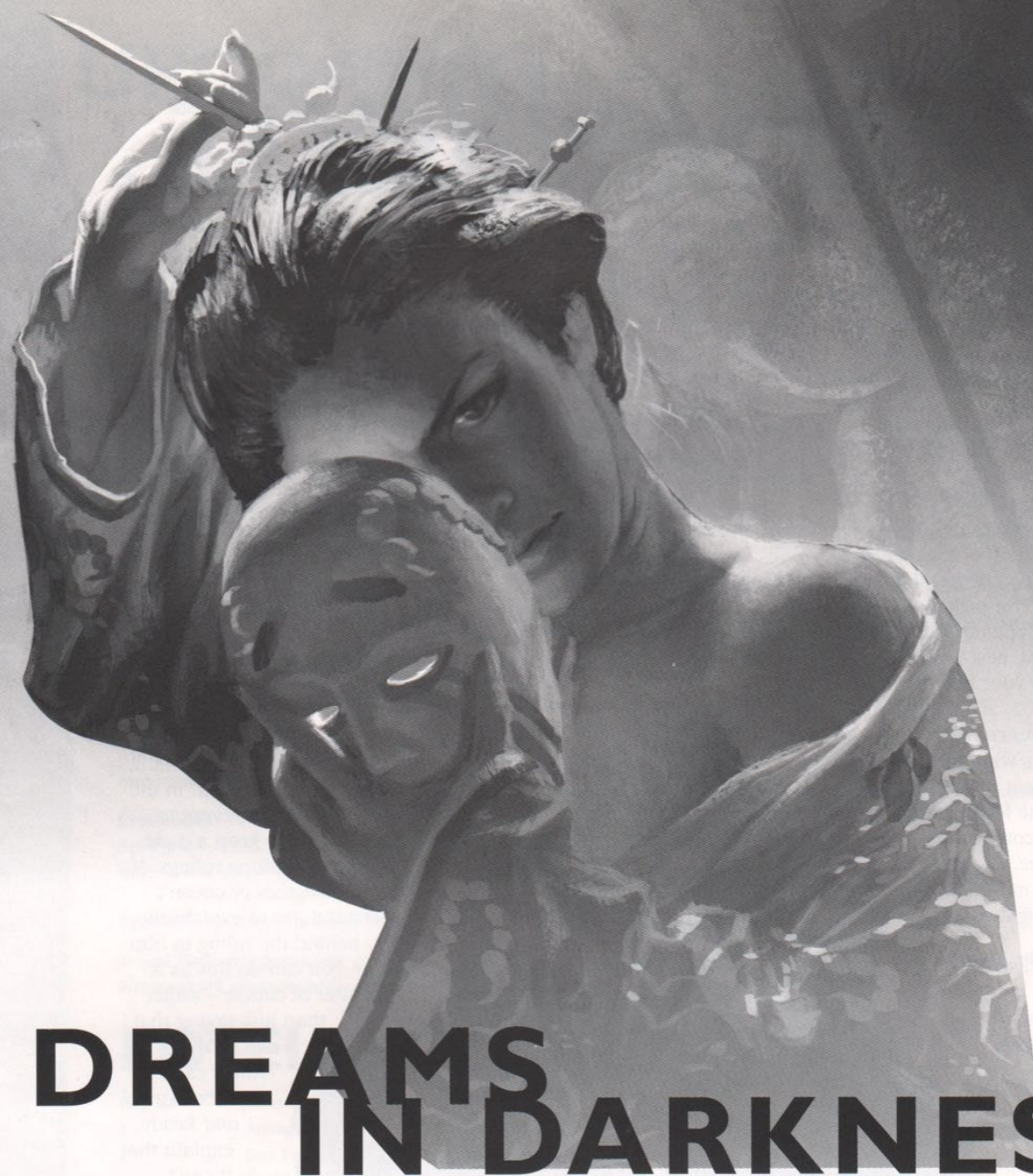
Fall On Your Knees can't cancel *Armed and Ready*, explain that it can't cancel *Armed and Ready* because the Battle Action

Segment (when *Fall On Your Knees* is legal to play) has ended by the time the reaction trigger for *Armed and Ready* occurs. Simple touches like this often leave players having learned something about the game, rather than feeling they've been screwed by a bad ruling.

As with everything, practice makes perfect. But follow these steps and you're significantly less likely to have complaints about the judging at your event.



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DREAMS IN DARKNESS

by Rich Wulf

The Dark Daughter was a woman accustomed to nightmares, which was ironic considering she was the subject of so many throughout the rest of the Empire. Ever since childhood, her sleep had been plagued with restlessness. Though the nightmares disturbed her at first, they were something she had grown accustomed to. In a way, perhaps it was her dreams that drove her to pursue such a dark path in the waking world. They had become a part of who she was.

Yet of late, her dreams had returned to haunt her again.

Shahai found herself standing in a dark forest grove. This place was familiar. Her family called it the Forest of the Dreamers. It was an accursed place. A hundred years ago a mad ronin named Fujio had suffused the grove with dark magic. Now her family forbade anyone from entering... but Shahai was too clever for the guards that patrolled the boundaries of the forest. Too clever, and too curious.

She knelt among the crumbling ruins that had once been Fujio's home. A broken skeleton lay beside her,

clad in rotting orange robes. Shahai cradled the dead man's skull in her pale white hand. One delicate finger, dipped in blood from the wound on Shahai's arm, traced the kanji of the Void upon its forehead.

"Awaken, Grandfather," she whispered in a husky voice. "Awaken, and guide me."

A dim red light appeared in the depths of the empty sockets. The bleached skull began to shake in her palm, lifting itself into the air of its own accord. Fujio's jaw began to rattle in its socket as the tsukai's remains regained some faint reflection of life. The skull pivoted in midair, its burning eyes fixing on Shahai's own. In a hollow voice, it spoke.

"Traitor," it said.

"Grandfather, no," she whispered. "Why do you say such a thing?"

"Because you have abandoned all that was important," the skull hissed. "The path of the Bloodspeaker promises freedom... but the only true reward is slavery to Iuchiban. I placed you on the path

so that we both might one day be free, and we almost were. Now look what you have done."

"What could I have done?" she replied.

"Fight him," the skull replied.

"I cannot fight him," she answered. "My will is not my own."

"There are many for whom that is not a limitation," the skull said. "There is always a way."

"It is too late," she whispered. "The Dark Lord will never rise again."

With those words, a peal of thunder erupted behind Shahai. She was thrown forward on the floor by the force of it. A shower of splinters fell upon her as one wall of the ruined shack was torn away. Shahai looked up in terror as a tall figure loomed above her, radiating a palpable aura of magical energy. His lean frame was wrapped in deep black robes. A white mask covered his face, painted red with the features of a demon. Long white hair fell over one shoulder, and he gazed down upon her with cold blue eyes.

"Daigotsu," she whispered, staring up in terror at the former Dark Lord, her former love.

"Choose, Shahai," Daigotsu commanded. "Iuchiban knows that your loyalty to him is not true. You live only so long as it causes me pain to see him serve you, but you cannot hide behind your lies forever. You cannot hide from them, Bloodspeaker. You cannot hide from me."

"I cannot disobey him," Shahai hissed.

"I am bound to obey."

Daigotsu only looked down at her impassively. "Such weakness does not become you, Shahai. You must choose. There is always a way."

Shahai sat up on her palette with a start. Her slim body was drenched in sweat, her shoulders shaking. She cursed herself for such fear; it was unbecoming of the Dark Daughter. It was only a dream. It meant nothing.

She looked to the small table beside her bed, where Grandfather's skull rested. The spirit's voice had remained silent since the day Iuchiban had seized the City of the Lost, but its empty eyes seemed to stare at her accusingly. She truly wished she could disobey Iuchiban, to help her Dark Lord, but how could she?

How could one choose when there was no choice at all?

The low rumble of thunder echoed in the distance, causing Shahai to rise from her bed. She moved to her window, looking out toward the northern horizon. The skies around the City of the Lost were always dark, but such storms were rare here. She sensed a strange magic in the air, familiar, like the fragrance of an old lover. The Dark Daughter returned to her bed, removed the knife from beneath the pillow, and made her way toward the Temple of the Ninth Kami.

In the depths of his workshop, Omoni the Sculptor labored on his latest creation. The mass of blood and bone that lay upon his anvil squealed in terror and pain as he continued his work. He moved to the rhythm of the cries, like a blacksmith keeping a steady pace with his hammer. The goblin-man's face was blank, lost in thought as he continued his work.

He did not notice the ripple of movement behind him. The goblin Skub, crouched at the foot of the

handle, looked up at his master and hissed a warning. Omoni spun about quickly, the fingers of his right hand sharpening into long blades. His dull black eyes widened in fear when he recognized the man who now stood before him.

"Daigotsu," he whispered.

The former Dark Lord stepped forth from the shadows of the workshop. Skub scampered forward on its thick arms and legs, crouching at Daigotsu's feet like an eager dog. Daigotsu looked down fondly, resting one hand on the little goblin's bald head.

"What are you doing here?" Omoni asked in a low voice. "The City of the Lost is not safe for you any longer."

"The time has come for a reckoning, my friend," Daigotsu said. "I will live as an exile no longer. I intend to reclaim my home."

"Leave here, Daigotsu," Omoni said sharply.

"You are fortunate that Iuchiban is not here; he is transporting his most loyal servants to the ruins of Ootosan Uchi. He would sense you if he were here. You know that the enchantments within the temple allow it to detect all who trespass within this city who are..." Omoni trailed off uncomfortably.

"Who do not bear Jigoku's touch," Daigotsu said wryly. "Who are not blessed, or as the Crab would say - Tainted."

Omoni bowed his head. "Iuchiban told us how you have fallen from the Dark Kami's favor. He told us that you have lost a great deal of your magic."

"But we both know it was never my magic that gave me power," Daigotsu said. He rested one hand on the sculptor's shoulder. "Look at me again, Omoni."

Omoni looked up, his dark eyes narrowing as he studied the former Dark Lord. He caught his breath in surprise. "But how?" he asked.

"A long story, Omoni-san," Daigotsu said. "I will tell you another time. For now, I must know - will you join me? I would have you fight by my side once more."

"I cannot," Omoni replied, his voice shaking. "On the day the Shadow Dragon gave me the Hantei Emperor's sword, he drew a promise from me that I would forever serve the one who wielded it. The sword belongs to Iuchiban now."

"Accursed dragon," Daigotsu replied.

"His games will be his own undoing one day."

Omoni fell to his knees at Daigotsu's feet.

"My lord, I beg of you," he whispered. "Kill me."

Daigotsu looked down at Omoni in surprise.

The goblin-man looked up at Daigotsu with pleading eyes. "I have stood beside you since we were children," he said desperately. "You know there is no soul in all the realms to whom I owe more than to you. I made the promise I made only for your glory, but now it binds me to your greatest enemy. I cannot fight you, Daigotsu, but if you attack the City of the Lost I will be forced to protect it in Iuchiban's name. Allow me this one last service, Dark Lord. Kill me." He lifted his chin, exposing his throat granting his old friend a cleaner strike.

Daigotsu frowned. With a smooth movement he drew his katana. He lifted it into the air in a one handed grip, held high and angled at Omoni's throat. A single, swift stroke was all that was required. At the Dark Lord's feet, Skub whimpered in confusion.

"May the Ninth Kami forgive me," Daigotsu said in a thick voice. "I cannot do this."

Daigotsu sheathed his blade and stepped back into the shadows, vanishing from the workshop. Omoni blinked in surprise then fell forward on one hand, his twisted body shaking with quiet sobs. After several minutes he staggered uneasily to his feet and made his way through the caverns, skulking in the former Dark Lord's wake.

Shahai quietly opened the doors of the Temple of the Ninth Kami and stepped inside. The central chamber was large, but seemed strangely empty. Once, this room had been dominated by Daigotsu's trophies of war. Now Sezaru's mask, the Celestial Jitte, and even the Steel Throne had all been lost. Even the great statue of Fu Leng had been dismantled and cast away, destroyed by Iuchiban's servants. Only a single broken foot remained, now a lump of unrecognizable stone. Even the guards were gone; this place bore no significance to Iuchiban. The only reminder of the former Dark Lord's rule were the black scorch marks upon the floor, the place where Daigotsu had once died in battle against the Empress, Toturi Tsudao.

The Dark Daughter folded her arms in her long sleeves and stared at the floor, her expression strangely unfocused. She had helped her lord build the city, had helped him bring unity to the mad denizens of the Shadowlands. Under their combined forces, Emperor Toturi was punished for his crimes on the Day of Thunder. Through their planning, Fu Leng was restored to his rightful place in Jigoku and the City of Otosan Uchi was destroyed. No other ruler had ever brought the Shadowlands such success.

So was this the end? Was Daigotsu's return from death merely a footnote to his proud history? Was he doomed to be usurped by Iuchiban's madness? Stripped of his corruption and cast into exile until the Bloodspeakers found and destroyed him?

It was unacceptable.

She sensed his presence before he ever arrived. She turned to face the doors of the temple. With a slow, grinding sound they opened. He looked much as he had in her nightmares, garbed in black, white hair falling loose about his shoulders.

"Shahai-chan," he said, his rich voice echoing through the temple. He strode toward her, pausing in the space where the black marks stained the floor.

"Daigotsu," she whispered. "You should not have come here."

"Why not?" he asked with a small laugh. "Is this not my home?"

Shahai's eyes moved past him. Daigotsu turned toward the doors of the temple. Lightning flashed in the skies above the City of the Lost, outlining the figure that now stood in the temple doorway. He wore white robe, the color of death. He held a golden no-dachi in a two-handed grip, its steel outlined in black flame.

"Iuchiban," Daigotsu replied with a sneer.

"You were a fool to come here for Shahai," Iuchiban said. "Why do you think I kept her alive? My eyes are upon her always, waiting for the day that your weak sentiment overruled your judgment and you sought to rescue her. Now we finish what we began on the day I took your sword and your city."

Daigotsu shrugged and adjusted his stance, holding one hand open above the hilt of his blade in a parody of the Crane dueling technique.

Iuchiban shook his head. "Not yet," he replied. "Shahai, kill him."

Shahai felt her body wrench. Her hand moved to the dagger at her hip, unable to resist the Bloodspeaker's commands. Daigotsu gestured toward her without moving his eyes from Iuchiban, hurling her heavily against the wall with the force of his magic. The room went dark as she slid to the stone floor.

Iuchiban raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"You are not the only one who knows his enemy, Iuchiban," Daigotsu said, advancing toward the Bloodspeaker. "Now ask yourself... which of us drew the other here?"

Thunder echoed outside the temple once more, but this time it was echoed by the cry of a thousand voices. "For the Dark Lord!"

"What have you done?" Iuchiban snarled. He lunged toward Daigotsu, no-dachi cutting a savage arc through the air. Daigotsu drew his sword and caught the blade on his own, locking their weapons together as he leaned forward and spit in the Bloodspeaker's face.

"Go and aid your armies, Bloodspeaker," Daigotsu hissed. "Or stay here, and fight me."

"Fool," Iuchiban retorted. He pushed forward, throwing Daigotsu to the floor. "My Bloodspeakers are bound to serve my whim. They already fight as if I were among them. My will controls them all. I sense their every action. Even the few who remain in this city will deal sufficiently with your rabble."

"I would not be so sure," Daigotsu replied. The echoes of shattering stone and roaring goblins sounded from the walls. In reply, the sounds of terrified shrieks filled the city. "If you can truly sense your followers, then you must sense that many of them are leaving now."

Iuchiban glanced toward the door, lips fixed in a humorless line. "What have you done?" he demanded.

"It is your unique power, your blend of khadi sorcery and Rokugani blood magic that binds the Bloodspeaker initiates to your will," Daigotsu said, rising to his feet and leveling his blade at Iuchiban's chest. "That power is no longer quite so unique."

Iuchiban laughed. "Whatever khadi serves you, his power cannot match mine," he said, withdrawing toward the door. "There will be time enough to deal with you later, fallen one."

In a flash of movement too swift to be seen, Daigotsu appeared in the doorway of the temple. "I did not give you leave to exit my home, Iuchiban."

"Fine, fool," Iuchiban said. "You shall fare no better than last time."

An aura of raw magical power erupted around the Bloodspeaker. His no-dachi cleaved the air, unleashing a torrent of black energy at Daigotsu. Daigotsu dove to one side, summoning an aura of shadows around his body to protect himself from the Bloodspeaker's power. He rolled to his feet again, holding his blade steady. Iuchiban approached with a confident smirk.

"What madness drove you to challenge me, Daigotsu?" Iuchiban demanded. "Did you finally tire of your exile and come here to seek the solace of death? I doubt that even when you carried your Kami's Taint you had the strength to defeat me."

"I suppose we shall soon see the truth," Daigotsu said. He flipped his sword in one hand and drew it sharply across his left palm. Bright red blood erupted from the wound and Daigotsu spoke a single word of magic. A shrieking bolt of red energy erupted from his hand, scouring the air around Iuchiban. The Bloodspeaker fell back, his white robes now scorched by the mystical energy.

Iuchiban smirked. "Quite impressive," he said. "How did you win your Taint back from the Fortune of Death?"

"The answer lies within your own weakness, Iuchiban," Daigotsu said.

Iuchiban charged Daigotsu with a fierce cry. Another burst of magic erupted from the Dark Lord, but the Bloodspeaker charged through unscathed. Daigotsu lifted his sword to protect himself, but Iuchiban struck with incredible strength, shattering the blade and leaving a deep wound across the Dark Lord's chest. Daigotsu stumbled backwards, falling against the foot of Fu Leng's broken statue.

Behind Iuchiban, the sound of animal shrieks and growls filled the temple. A pack of frenzied bakemono scuttled into the darkened chamber. Omoni stood at the center of the group, his face pale as he looked upon the duel.

Iuchiban kicked the shattered halves of Daigotsu's blade away. Seizing the Dark Lord by the throat, he held him against the wall. Sheathing his no-dachi across his back, he drew the sharp knife at his hip and pressed it against Daigotsu's chest. From the corner of his eye, Daigotsu saw Shahai stir, struggling to her feet again.

"Omoni, how goes the battle?" Iuchiban asked, eyes fixed on Daigotsu's.

"Poorly, Iuchiban-sama," Omoni replied. "Many of the Bloodspeakers have fled. Some have turned against one another. The city is in chaos."

"While my khadi leads my armies, you no longer control the Bloodspeakers, Iuchiban," Daigotsu said defiantly. "That is why you fail – you offer no loyalty to your followers, and receive none in turn."

"Power is the only absolute," Iuchiban retorted. "Loyalty means nothing."

Shahai extended one arm and whispered a simple spell. The cord holding Iuchiban's sword in place came free. The no-dachi tumbled to the floor. The Bloodspeaker looked down in surprise.

"Kill!" Omoni cried without hesitation, pointing at Iuchiban.

The bakemono rushed forward in a pack, swarming the Bloodspeaker. Iuchiban succumbed with a frustrated cry, the knife falling neatly from his hands. Daigotsu rolled free of his enemy's grip, lifting the Hantei sword and unsheathing it in a fluid motion. Iuchiban shrugged the lifeless husks of Omoni's goblins aside and summoned another bolt of magical energy. Daigotsu deflected it with his reclaimed blade. With a second stroke, he took Iuchiban's arm.

"This city is no longer yours," Daigotsu hissed.

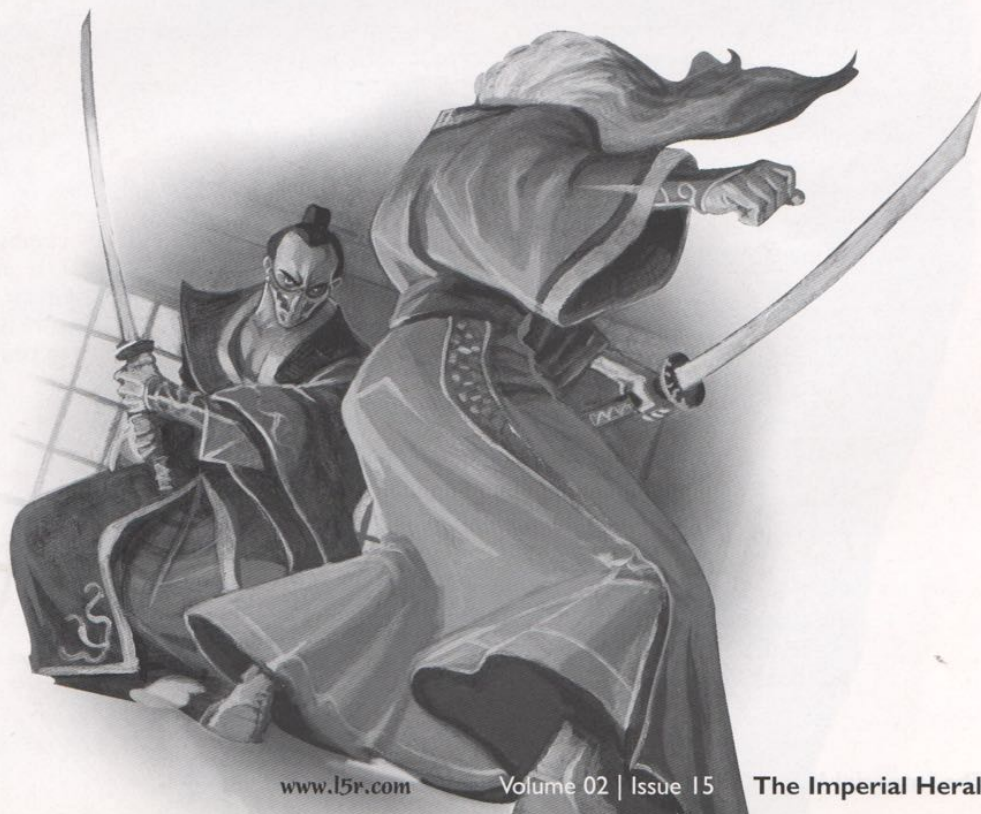
"Fool," Iuchiban said. "I cannot die!"

"Good," Daigotsu replied. "The torment you will face at my hands will make your time in the Kaiu Tomb seem a fair memory."

"Fine," Iuchiban growled, withdrawing slowly from Daigotsu, Omoni, and Shahai. "My iron fortress in Ootosan Uchi awaits me. Savor your city of ashes."

Iuchiban breathed another spell. He vanished from the temple, but as he did so, a cacophonous explosion shook the building. Daigotsu rushed to the temple doors. The sight that greeted him drew a spiteful curse from his lips.

Iuchiban's parting spell had set the City of the Lost ablaze.



THE BAD DECK THAT WON GEN CON: KUON'S ARMY

by Salman Barakat

The question many have asked: Why and how did this deck win Gen Con? Isn't it too slow? Too weak against control? Missing some powerful uniques (*Kaneka* and *Kamnan* come to mind)? I will try to give you some insights into the deck design.

Crab win militarily, period. To do this, you have to attack consistently on turn 4 with enough force to either take a province or destroy the opposing army with minimal losses. In this deck the gold scheme is built to make you produce 6 and 7 gold with your stronghold and 3 holdings. Preferably the 7 gold are produced by *Crystal Mine* and *Barley Farm/Shrine* to *Daikoku* so you can pay for the followers and still have your stronghold open. All personalities except 3 meet the following criteria. They have 4 force and cost 8 or 9 gold and have Yu. The odd ones out are *Kuon*, who can be bought with the above gold and is a no-brainer in any Crab deck. *Omen* is 4/5 for 9 with powerful meta abilities, but he can also fetch the *Egg of Pan Ku* with *The Refuge of the 3 Sisters*. It sounds silly but having 2 *Kuons* has easily won me more games than I can remember. And finally *Todori*, who, to be honest, is just in there for the stats.

But why is there no *Kaneka* or *Kamnan* in the deck? The answers are simple, firstly I play Crab personalities only, secondly one stole Crab lands, the other is a Scorpion and both are *Gozuku*; not the kind of men I would trust in my deck.

Although the non-unique personalities don't really have active abilities, they work well together with the denial theme of the Crab. *Sozen* is mean, especially after *Rend the Soul*, just remember that you can't

play *Pick your Battles* if his trait makes him survive the resolution! *Tatsuza* has a very important ability: CANCELING! Give him an *Iron Legion* and see the Mantis start to sweat. If your opponent targets him, he has to discard, and if you cancel the action successfully, he has to discard AGAIN for the next action. *Daizu* is just too good. *Katai* gets important followers back and can attach *Traveling Ronin* in the discard pile in the battle which can be quite nice. *Benjiro* is great. Although a single *Written in Blood* kills him, my experience is that chi death decks do not worry a lot whether you have 2 or 3 chi, and against military, dishonor and dueling he is just great.

But the main point is, most of the time you absolutely don't care who you buy on turn 3, they all do the job one way or another...

Shrine to Duty and *Corrupt Officials* are one whole more turn against honor runners, which is more than you need, if you have *Refuge* and *Desperate Wager* in your deck as well.

Boundless Sight will always fetch *Kuon*, even on turn one while *A New Wall* is nearly always *Crystal Mine*.

The Fate deck allows you to counteract practically anything your opponent might try to do. He wants to bow, you straighten, he kills you, you play *Mountain Does Not Move*, he out forces you, *Rend* plus *Wedge* do the job; *Stay Your Blade* gets important guys out of battles you are losing and gives you access to more cards. If a bowed *Kuon* gets ambushed, simply straighten, drop his hand and go home drawing 3 cards. *Pick Your Battles*, of course, needs no explanation.

The only really unusual card in here is *Brutal Confrontation*, so let's look at it a bit more closely:

1. One card, MANY actions for everybody. Nice
2. Your opponent will have less cards in hand normally, so duels with focusing is good.
3. Ranged 3? Ignore that...
4. Look at your guys: 4/4, 4/4, 4/3 can't be destroyed unless you have bigger unit, 4/3, 4/2 but gets plus 3 on his stat and that's only the non-uniques. You can kill people with followers just as easy and normally other military decks will have either chi or force on their peeps. Also with *Inexorable March* you can straighten again and repeat, plus you can use it directly after dropping it if you have 2 or more units. Finally, if you have *Pick* in your hand, kill as many units as possible and then Yu the rest away. Remember also that thanks to your stronghold, all of your guys are +1 force when you want it. Basically *Brutal Confrontation* for this deck is what *Hida's Formation* is supposed to be, only better.

That's it. The deck has no big combos, no big surprises. It is fast and consistent and efficient, and if played flawlessly, there is very little your opponent can do to beat you.

Kuon's Army RED/ Daigotsu

Dynasty

Personalities

3x Hida Benjiro
3x Hida Daizu
3x Hida Katai
1x Hida Kuon
1x Hida Reiha
3x Hida Sozen
3x Hiruma Tatsuzo
1x Hiruma Todoru
1x Omen

Holdings

1x A Favor Returned
2x Barley Farm
1x Corrupt Officials
3x Crystal Mine
1x Gifts and Favors
3x Hiruma Dojo
2x Iron Mine
1x Kisada's Shrine
2x Shrine to Daikoku
1x Shrine of Duty

Regions

1x Refuge of the 3 Sisters

Events

1x A New Wall
1x Boundless Sight
1x Commanding Favor

Fate

Actions

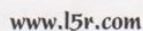
3x Brutal Confrontation
3x Call to Arms
1x Desperate Wager
1x Egg of Pan Ku
3x Feign Death
3x Inexorable March
1x Make a Wish
3x The Mountain Does Not Move
3x Outmaneuvered by Force
3x Pick Your Battles
3x Rend the Soul
3x Stay Your Blade
3x Tireless Assault
2x Wedge

Followers

2x Iron Legion
2x Traveling Ronin
2x Political Adjunct



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WRATH OF THE EMPEROR	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
COURTLY SABOTAGE	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TROUBLESOME BUREAUCRAT	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TOWER OF THE NINGYO	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
YASUKI HACHI (CRAB BORDER)	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
YASUKI HACHI (CRANE BORDER)	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MIRUMOTO ROSANJIN	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TAMAGO	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TSURUCHI OKAME	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
SHIBA TSUKIMI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TE' TIK' KIR	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MEGUMI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MOTO CHEN	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
THE BARBARIAN WALL	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
STRIKE WITH NO SHADOW	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
WAR ON THE PLAINS	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
FURY OF THE DARK LORD	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MOTIVATION	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
ARMOR OF SACRIFICE	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
SURU'S MEMPO	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MARTIAL INSTRUCTION	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TENSHU SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
MIHOKO SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
SOMEISA SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
SETAI SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
SHOSUKU SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
YOMA SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TOMORROW SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
TISHI SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
JIGOKU SENSEI	SEND S.A.S.E. WITH ORDER	20 KOKU PER CARD		
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By Shawn Carman

STORYLINE

YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year has been incredibly busy where the L5R storyline is concerned.

In addition to the normal evolution that events normally undergo in Rokugan, we have made a concerted effort to place more options in the hands of the fans, increasing the influence tournaments have on the storyline by changing the format from a situation wherein the winner's faction gains a specific benefit, to allowing winners to choose specific personalities for certain effects or to choose from multiple outcomes based on their preferences.

The Kotei Season

If anything could have stirred up more interest than last year's Kotei season, then surely it was the announcement that this year's season would be used to nominate characters from L5R's rich history to return to the storyline. Every tournament allowed the winner to select a single personality from previous story arcs to be eligible for resurrection at the World Championship in Indianapolis. Bounties and player movements seemed to spring up overnight as everyone tried to get their favorite character back into the game. At the season's end, thirty-five characters had been nominated, at least one from every faction in the game.

In the storyline, the nominated characters comprised the Legion of the Dead, an elite fighting force of spirits from the Realm of Ancestors, and the Legion of Blood, a collection of insidious spirits bound to Iuchiban's will. The two Legions waged war with one another in the spirit realms, a bizarre mirror of the chaos afflicting the mortal world. The two Legions came together in a mysterious new realm even as it was emerging from the nothingness of creation. The Legion of the Dead was victorious, and prevented the Shadow Dragon's apparent schemes, establishing a realm where souls robbed of their destiny can await a new opportunity to fulfill their role in the Celestial Order.

The Paths of Enlightenment

To prepare for *Lotus/Dark Lotus* in 2005, this year saw the launch of a new series of GSTs, the Paths of Enlightenment. The Paths are challenges set before the Empire by the Hooded Ronin's son, a man known only as Rosoku. Each tournament covers a set time period, during which any store can purchase kits and run tournaments. The results are compiled and the faction with the most wins will have a Personality succeed at Rosoku's challenges. Tournament prizes for winners and participants include the Keeper and Book series of cards, each with dramatic new effects that affect the Enlightenment Victory condition.

The ultimate outcome of the Paths tournaments is one that will alter the balance of clans in Rokugan for generations. While the Keepers of the Elements will be powerful individuals with enlightened spirits, the Paths lead to Gen Con 2005, when one clan will achieve enlightenment through the ultimate secret of Rosoku's quests. This will result in unique new mechanics for that clan and a new focus as the game moves into the *Lotus* era. Unless, of course, the Shadowlands claim victory, in which case the enlightenment victory condition will be eliminated from the game for the entire *Dark Lotus* story arc.

Origins

The tournament at Origins typically marks the end of the Kotei season, and this year was no exception. In addition to being the last chance to nominate a beloved character for resurrection, the tournament would also determine the fate of Rezan, the famous ronin poet who returned to Rokugan at the Battle at Oblivion's Gate. Rezan, an honorable and popular figure in the storyline, was sought after by players from many factions, but in the end,

the Shadowlands claimed victory. Kyojin the enforcer was selected as the final nominee for the Legion of Blood, and Rezan was doomed to the Shadowlands.

The impetus for Rezan's sudden defection to the Shadowlands lay in the nature of his return: Oblivion's Gate. Rezan was denied eternity with his true love when she disappeared from Yomi to be reincarnated. Desperate to make amends with his wife, Rezan returned through the Gate and began scouring the Empire for her. Ultimately, he discovered that she had been lost in the Rain of Blood. Determined to make Iuchiban suffer for his crimes, Rezan joined the one man he believed could defeat the Bloodspeaker: the Dark Lord Daigotsu. Not long afterwards, the sinister poet returned to Crab lands as an emissary of Daigotsu and led Crab patrols to Oblivion's Gate to witness Hida Kisada's return.

Gen Con Indy

The World Championships at Gen Con this year offered circumstances that will likely never be seen again: a chance to resurrect a dead hero or villain to return to Rokugan and join in the battle against the Bloodspeakers. The true spirit of L5R players was demonstrated at the highest levels yet again when the two finalists, both Crab players, agreed before the final match even began that there was only one true candidate for resurrection: Hida Kisada.

In the storyline, the return of Hida Kisada to Rokugan caused shockwaves throughout the already tumultuous Empire. First and foremost, Kisada's purpose for returning is clear: he must seek out the hidden heart of Iuchiban and destroy it, for he is the only soul in the mortal realm who knows of its location. In doing so, Kisada will render Iuchiban mortal again, and the Great Bear longs to crush the

first Bloodspeaker beneath the weight of his tetsubo. Kisada's reappearance is strangely divisive for the Crab Clan, however, as many are eager to follow such a legendary hero. Kisada's own disappointment over his son's alliance of convenience with Daigotsu leads him to find his own path. Still further complicating Kisada's new lease on life is the fact that he is a Fortune, essentially a demigod in the eyes of Rokugan's people, though he sacrificed much of his power passing through Oblivion's Gate. Kisada finds himself deluged with worshipers, disciples, and sycophants, something the Great Bear finds most disturbing.

Gen Con Barcelona

The year's first Gen Con was host to the Hidden Heart Tournament, the winner of which would determine the location of the hidden heart of Iuchiban, the Bloodspeaker who brought the Rain of Blood upon Rokugan. The winner was playing a Lion deck, ensuring that the Emperor's Right Hand will play a pivotal role in uncovering Iuchiban's weakness.

The results of this tournament have yet to appear in the storyline, but the potential for an alliance between Hida Kisada, who knows the heart's location, and the Lion, who can aid him in obtaining the heart, is enough to frighten even the most sinister Bloodspeaker.

Gen Con So Cal

Toturi Tsudao's fate was the result of Gen Con 2003 and a defining moment in the conclusion of the Gold Story Arc. The strong emotion many fans feel for her is the primary reason she has been treated so sparingly in the storyline thus far; it would be a disservice to cheapen her sacrifice with repeated appearances. Still, the reverence clans reserve for her can be a powerful motivating tool, particularly when they learn that her golden obi, a sacred artifact blessed with the lingering power of the Sun Goddess, remains within the Shadowlands where Tsudao fell. Now that its continued existence has been revealed, many will do whatever it takes to retrieve it.

The prize for Gen Con SoCal is a prime example of how the L5R team is trying to make prizes more interesting for players. The winner of this tournament will select any one character to receive the obi, and it will be given by a member of the winning faction. This allows players some measure of control over the relationships between clans. The recent cease-fire between the Lion and Crane, for instance, could be greatly solidified if the Lion gave the obi to those among the Crane. In return, of course, the Crane would be considerably indebted to the Lion. Whatever the outcome, this will definitely help determine the direction of inter-clan relations as the storyline prepares to complete the *Diamond* arc and move into *Lotus/Dark Lotus*.

Top of Clan Prizes

Major tournaments tend to have prizes not only for the winner, but for the highest-placing player of each faction. This is a means of congratulating and rewarding players who continually prove their skill at the highest level of play, even if they do not make it to the finals. Top of Clan prizes can have a tremendous outcome on the storyline, determining directions or courses of actions for entire factions over the course of months and years.

Top of Clan prizes typically only occur at Gen Con and similar large events across the globe. Of all those offered this past year, none has more flexibility and more player control than those offered at Gen Con SoCal. This year, the highest-placed player in each clan will be ranked according to overall placement. Beginning at the top, each player will name a faction and decide if the faction they are playing will grant a favor to the named clan or learn a secret of the named clan. This has the potential to be the most storyline-altering prize offered yet, and could cause a remapping of all clan alliances at the beginning of *Lotus/Dark Lotus* edition.

Challenge Booths

Challenge booth tournaments, typically only held at major tournaments, are unique in a number of ways. These enormously popular events do not depend upon Swiss-style elimination, but rather on

the sheer volume of one-on-one games played between players who welcome any and every challenge. The player from each faction who gains the highest number of wins the chance to face off with the other faction winners at the end of the convention to determine a storyline effect. There is a small fee to play a game at the challenge booth, and all money goes to charity.

The challenge booth at Origins 2005 was an integral part of perhaps the most memorable campaign in L5R history. The winner of the booth's final match would be permitted to select one final member for the Legion of the Dead or Legion of Blood, based on the winning faction. Lucas Twyman played an almost hazardous number of matches during the convention, securing his place in the final match. Lucas was victorious using a Dragon deck, ensuring that his beloved Sanzo would join the Legion of the Dead and be eligible for resurrection. Lucas went on to place fourth at the Gen Con Indy tournament, missing his goal by only a fraction. For his efforts, Sanzo played a significant role in the Gen Con final fiction.

Gen Con Indy's challenge booth witnessed the creation of a new alliance between minor clans, a facet of the Clan War storyline that was very popular and led to the creation of the Mantis as a viable faction in their own right. The winner's faction, the Dragon Clan, will aid one minor clan, the Tortoise, in becoming the centerpiece of this new alliance, giving such minor clans as the Sparrow, Fox, and Ox a renewed voice in the Imperial Courts.

In a theme with Gen Con Indy, Gen Con SoCal's challenge booth helps establish links between the minor clans and their more powerful counterparts, this time through matrimony. The winner of this challenge booth final match will select an existing minor clan and name a character from their faction. A marriage will be arranged between the character and an individual from the named clan, forging close bonds between the two clans and noticeably advancing the minor clan's political clout.

LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS, THIRD EDITION

By Shawn Carman

The *Legend of the Five Rings* Role-playing Game first appeared in 1997. At the time, it was one of a tiny handful of samurai-based role-playing games available, and its characteristic easy-to-learn mechanical system and emphasis on storytelling quickly made it a hit among customers who were looking for more than standard fantasy fare. Not only did *Legend of the Five Rings* offer something new and unique, however, it provided a more in-depth look at a world that had previously only been explored in flavor text, rulebook fiction, and an occasional story posted on the company website. The new line was supported vigorously with sourcebooks covering the Great Clans and other factions in the game, including the Shadowlands, the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and the Lying Darkness.

Three and a half years after the first edition was published, *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG Second Edition came out in early 2001. Second Edition built heavily on the foundation of the first edition, and expanded the story and mechanical themes that had made the game popular. Second Edition also saw the addition of d20 material to L5R books in an attempt to support two systems. This brought new fans into the world of Rokugan, but decreased the space available for new story and mechanical information. The advent of dual system also brought the RPG timeline up to date with that of the CCG, unifying all L5R products into a single, cohesive storyline.

In the fall of 2005, the *Legend of the Five Rings* Role-playing Game, Third Edition will be released. Third edition is, in many ways, a return to L5R's roots: beginning with the core rulebook, all L5R RPG products will contain only mechanical information for the d10 roll-and-keep system that began with first edition seven

years ago. The creative team is carefully examining the best features of the previous editions and incorporating them with new material to make this edition the definitive L5R RPG.

So what can readers expect to find in the new Third Edition? In order to get an idea, take a moment to review the design objectives being used by the creative team while they write the new book:

- *Objectively evaluate existing systems – existing game systems, including skills, spells, schools, kiho, and other subsystems, have been divided among the team to determine what works and what doesn't. Systems should be streamlined and intuitive, with synergy but still distinct in and of themselves. Change for change's sake is not an acceptable motive, but no system should be considered above the need for revision if the team and playtesters deem it necessary.*
- *Establish all basic systems in a single book – with the diversity of systems available in existing sourcebooks, the basics for each should be available in one place. Further sourcebooks should expand upon existing mechanics rather than introduce completely new ones. Kata, kiho, ancestors, heritage tables, and Void magic, among others, should all be complete and included in the core rulebook. All of these previously optional rules will be included in the main book, offering an unprecedented wealth of variety in character creation.*
- *Backward compatibility is essential – fans of the L5R RPG have been purchasing books for years. For a new edition to completely negate their existing book collection is a colossal disservice to the fans. First and second edition materials should*

continue to be of use in a campaign with only minimal conversion necessary. Adjustments to existing material that cannot be presented in the space allowed in the main book should be provided as a web enhancement within a matter of days or weeks following the book's release.

Using these guidelines, the creative team further established several concrete expectations, based primarily on fan feedback over the past seven years. While much of the book's content will be modified over the course of both writing and playtesting, there are some plans that are definitive.

Schools – Every clan or faction will have four schools detailed within their clan write-up. In addition to the clan's predominant bushi, courtier, and shugenja schools, there will be at least one "wild card" school that best characterizes the clan's flavor and theme, such as Scorpion ninja or Utaku Battle Maidens.

Skills – Over the course of the RPG's history, more and more skills have been introduced, many of which overlap application-wise. The skill system in Third Edition will be completely overhauled, taking into account all pre-existing schools and condensing, renaming, or eliminating skills as necessary to prevent overlap. The goal for Third Edition is to eliminate a need for further skills to be added through sourcebooks. In addition, the greatly enhanced difficulty of succeeding at skill rolls that arose in Second Edition will be revisited, and a skill system more reminiscent of First Edition will be in place.

Character Build – The process of using points to purchase traits during character creation changed significantly between first and second edition to mixed reviews from fans. Both previous methods possessed merits and drawbacks, and need careful assessment to

guarantee equality between beginning level characters regardless of their design.

Advantages/Ancestors – Similar to the skill system revamp, the existing body of advantages available to characters will be examined and adjusted for balance. Mechanics will be streamlined to make them as intuitive as possible, and point costs will be recalculated to ensure balance is maintained.

Along the same lines, the ancestor advantages currently available will be assessed for both balance and thematic mechanics, and to make them more than mere Advantages with interesting names.

Adjustments will be made as necessary to ensure all clans have access to appropriate and thematic ancestors, hopefully ensuring that the system plays as great a role in games as reverence for one's ancestors does in the story.

As of the publication of this article, the work on Third Edition has just gotten underway. There are no mechanical tidbits to reveal yet, or at least none that are not expected to undergo heavy editing and revision. So for a taste of what will be found in the core rulebook, examine this tentative working outline the creative team used at the beginning of the project. The contents have almost certainly changed, but this is an appropriate sampling of the kind of material that you can expect in the final product.

I) Book of Earth

- A) Short Fiction
- B) Brief Clan Description
 - i) Crab
 - ii) Crane
 - iii) Dragon
 - iv) Lion
 - v) Mantis
 - vi) Phoenix
 - vii) Scorpion
 - viii) Unicorn
 - ix) Nezumi
 - x) Imperial Families
 - xi) Minor Clans
 - xii) Ronin
 - xiii) The Brotherhood of Shinsei
 - xiv) Shadowlands
- C) History of Rokugan
- D) Culture, Etiquette, Superstitions

- i) The Celestial Order
- ii) Time and Seasons
- iii) Lore of the Land
- iv) Etiquette / Customs
- v) Superstition
- v) Coin and Commerce
- vi) Magic in Society
- viii) The Shadowlands Taint
- ix) Craft and Engineering
- E) The Clans
 - i) Crab
 - a) Hida family
 - b) Hiruma family
 - c) Kaiu family
 - d) Kuni family
 - e) Toritaka family
 - f) Yasuki family
 - ii) Crane
 - a) Asahina family
 - b) Daidoji family
 - c) Doji family
 - d) Kakita family
 - e) Yasuki family
 - iii) Dragon
 - a) The Order of Hitomi
 - b) The Order of Hoshi
 - c) Kitsuki family
 - d) Mirumoto family
 - e) Tamori family
 - f) The Order of Togashi
 - iv) Lion
 - a) Akodo family
 - b) Ikoma family
 - c) Kitsu family
 - d) Matsu family
 - v) Mantis
 - a) Moshi family
 - b) Tsuruchi family
 - c) Yoritomo family
 - vi) Phoenix
 - a) Asako family
 - b) Agasha family
 - c) Isawa family
 - d) Shiba family
 - vii) Scorpion
 - a) Bayushi family
 - b) Soshi family
 - c) Shosuro family
 - d) Yogo family
 - viii) Unicorn
 - a) Horiuchi family
 - b) Ide family
 - c) Iuchi family
 - d) Moto family
 - e) Shinjo family
 - f) Utaku family
 - ix) Nezumi
 - a) Chipped Tooth
 - b) Crimson Paw
 - c) Crippled Bone
 - d) Crooked Tail
 - e) Grasping Paw
 - f) Green-Green White

- g) Squeaky Eyeball
- h) Tattered Ear
- i) Third Whisker
- x) Imperial Families
 - a) Miya family
 - b) Otomo family
 - c) Seppun family
 - d) Toturi family
- xi) Minor Clans
 - a) Badger
 - b) Bat
 - c) Dragonfly
 - d) Fox
 - e) Hare
 - f) Monkey
 - g) Ox
 - h) Sparrow
 - i) Tortoise
- xii) Ronin
 - a) ronin-born
 - b) wealthy retainers
 - c) discordant samurai
 - d) dishonored samurai
 - e) dead master
 - f) musha shugyo
 - g) ronin agent
- xiii) The Brotherhood of Shinsei
 - a) Order of Osano-Wo
 - b) Order of the Seven Fortunes
 - c) Order of the Seven Thunders
 - d) Order of the Ten Thousand Temples
- xiv) Shadowlands
 - a) Bloodspeakers
 - b) Chuda family
 - c) Daigotsu family
 - d) The Order of Tsuno

F) Starter Characters: Crane bushi, Lion courtier, Scorpion courtier, ronin bushi

II) Book of Water

- A) Short Fiction
- B) Introduction to character creation and The Game of Twenty Questions
- C) General game mechanics
 - i) Basic roll and keep mechanic and how it works
 - ii) Character features
 - a) Character Points and how they are spent
 - b) Rings and traits
 - c) Skills
 - d) Clan, family, and school
 - e) Advantages and disadvantages
 - f) Honor
 - g) Glory and status

- h) Heritage
- i) Insight and school rank
- iii) Skills
 - a) Skill rolls
 - b) Types of skills
 - c) Skill list
- iv) Advantages / Disadvantages
 - a) advantage list
 - b) disadvantage list
- v) Example of character creation
- D) Clan schools
 - i) Crab Clan
 - a) Hida bushi
 - b) Kuni shugenja
 - c) Yasuki courtier
 - d) Hiruma scout
 - ii) Crane Clan
 - a) Kakita bushi
 - b) Asahina shugenja
 - c) Doji courtier
 - d) Daidoji harrier
 - iii) Dragon Clan
 - a) Mirumoto bushi
 - b) Tamori shugenja
 - c) Kitsuki courtier
 - d) Three Orders Tattooed Man
 - iv) Lion Clan
 - a) Akodo bushi
 - b) Kitsu shugenja
 - c) Ikoma courtier
 - d) Matsu berserker
 - v) Mantis Clan
 - a) Yoritomo bushi
 - b) Moshi shugenja
 - c) Yoritomo courtier
 - d) Tsuruchi bounty hunter
 - vi) Phoenix Clan
 - a) Shiba bushi
 - b) Isawa shugenja
 - c) Asako courtier
 - d) Asako Henshin
 - vii) Scorpion Clan
 - a) Bayushi bushi
 - b) Soshi shugenja
 - c) Bayushi courtier
 - d) Shosuro ninja
 - viii) Unicorn Clan
 - a) Moto bushi
 - b) Iuchi shugenja
 - c) Ide courtier
 - d) Utaku Battle Maiden
 - ix) Imperial Families
 - a) Seppun bushi (Imperial Guard)
 - b) Seppun shugenja (Hidden Guard)
 - c) Otomo courtier
 - d) Miya herald
 - x) Minor Clans

- a) Hare bushi
- b) Kitsune shugenja
- c) Tortoise courtier
- d) Monkey bushi
- xi) Nezumi
 - a) warrior
 - b) shaman
 - c) rememberer
 - d) thief
- xii) Ronin
 - a) Ronin
 - b) Shugenja
- E) Name glossary
- F) Heritage Tables
- G) Starter Characters: Dragon bushi, Mantis bushi, Ratling Bushi, Unicorn courtier, Shadowlands bushi

III) Book of Fire

- A) Fiction
- B) Roll and Keep and how it works
 - i) simple rolls
 - ii) contested rolls
 - iii) "exploding" 10's
 - iv) Raises, Free Raises, and a Table of Raise effects
 - v) Void use, and a table of Void effects
 - vi) Table of TN penalties and bonuses
- C) Trait rolls
- D) Combat Resolution
 - i) Your TN to be hit
 - ii) Wounds and the penalties thereof
 - iii) Special maneuvers
 - iv) Table of combat bonuses and penalties
- E) Glory, Honor, and Status
- F) Kata
- G) Mass battles
- H) Experience and character progression
- I) Starter Characters: Crab bushi, Lion bushi, Mantis Shugenja, Unicorn bushi

IV) Book of Air

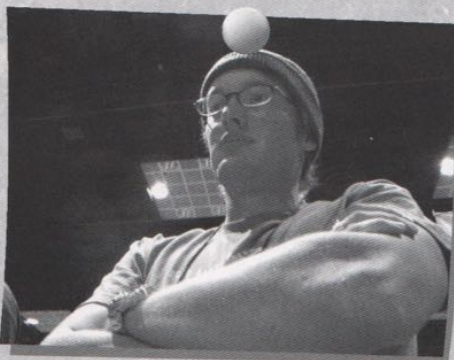
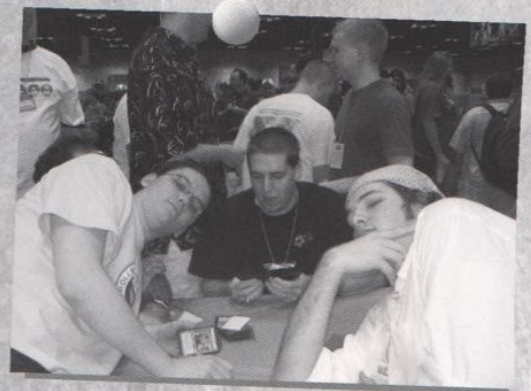
- A) Fiction
- B) A Primer on Rokugani Magic
- C) Afterlife and the Spirit Realms
 - i) Jigoku
 - ii) Gaki-do
 - iii) Ningen-do
 - iv) Sakkaku
 - v) Meido
 - vi) Yomi
 - vii) Tengoku

- viii) Chikushudo
- ix) Toshigoku
- x) Yume-do
- xi) The Realm of Thwarted Destiny
- D) Nemuranai
- E) Spells and magic
 - i) Affinity and deficiency
 - ii) Learning spells and innate abilities
 - iii) Raises and effects
 - iv) Multiple schools and Shugenja
 - v) How to cast a spell
- F) Spell Glossary
 - i) Basic spells (sense, commune, summon, counterspell)
 - ii) Air spells
 - iii) Earth spells
 - iv) Fire spells
 - v) Water spells
 - vi) Void spells
- G) Monks
 - i) Monk schools and retirement rules
 - ii) Kiho
- H) Ancestors
- I) The Shadowlands Taint
- J) Starter Characters: Crane courtier, Phoenix Bushi, Scorpion shugenja, Ratling shaman,

V) Book of the Void

- A) Fiction
- B) Game mastering tips
- C) Equipment, weapons, and armor
- D) Sample adversaries
 - i) Bandit/Peasant thug
 - ii) Yobanjin raider
 - iii) goblin
 - iv) ogre
 - v) oni
 - vi) horse
 - vii) other assorted creatures/beings as needed
- F) Travelogue
- G) Suggested reading
- H) Reference tables
 - a) skills
 - b) advantages
 - c) disadvantages
 - d) spells
- I) Glossary
- J) Starter Characters: Crab shugenja, Dragon Tattooed Man, Phoenix yojimbo, Shadowlands bushi, ronin shugenja
- K) Character sheet
- L) Family mons

Legend of the
Five Rings
Gen Con 2004



Special Thanks to Amanda Martyn

THE IMPERIAL HISTORIES

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LEGEND OF WHITE SHORE LAKE

by Rich Wulf

Welcome to the most recent chapter of player interaction for *Legend of the Five Rings*. In the interest of those of you who are reading your first Herald and aren't already familiar with the Imperial Histories, we'll review the rules here.

In each Imperial Herald we plan to feature a new Imperial History extended adventure hook. These will be written in classic Challenge Focus Strike format, but will also contain a few pointers for how to flesh the hook out into a full adventure. Each will also include some new mechanical tidbit for both systems, a feat, Advantage, magic item, spell, or some other cool option. Each of these hooks will also feature a character or location from the L5R canon fiction. The specifications will be left for the individual GM to flesh out to suit his campaign (remember, doing so in a clever and unique manner is an important part of the contest).

GM's are encouraged to take these adventure hooks, use them as inspiration, and expand upon them. For example, the GM may decide when running the following adventure hook that the players have come to the village to investigate the truth underlying the ningyo legends for themselves, or perhaps Koto has contacted a renowned Unicorn player character asking for aid in investigating his brother's disappearance. In this way, both players and GM's will have a chance to influence events (and players with a subscription to the Herald who take a look at this article won't necessarily know what's going on when they play the adventure).

Upon successful completion of the adventure, the GM should write up a short report including the names of his players and their characters, his own name, how he altered the Adventure Hook, and how the game turned out. Special attention should be put on clever or resourceful actions by the players as well as how the game resolves itself. These reports should be no longer than 3000 words and then emailed directly to Rich Wulf at rwulf@alderac.com with the subject "Imperial Histories Report" as the subject line.

The L5R writers will evaluate these submissions and select the one that stands out as the most interesting or extraordinary (and will probably choose a runner up for humor value as well). This adventure will be retold as short fiction in the subsequent Imperial Herald. All of these stories will be considered canon though the story team reserves the right to edit for space and content. (For example if your character is the reincarnation of the Fortune of Stone destined to return to his place in the Celestial Heavens, that's fine for your campaign, but we probably won't mention it in the fiction.) The names of the GM plus all players will also be listed in that issue of the Imperial Herald, so that your names may be recorded in the Imperial Histories for all eternity duly included among the greatest of Rokugan's heroes.

One thing to note about this Imperial History in particular – it will be the very first article of this sort to present its new mechanics entirely in the classic d10 system.

And with that said, it's time to get down to business with the first Adventure Hook. Good luck everyone and, most importantly, have fun.

— Rich Wulf

Head Writer, *Legend of the Five Rings*

BACKGROUND

In the heart of Unicorn territory lies a majestic body of water known by all as White Shore Lake. As it represents the largest lake in the Empire, many nearby settlements depend upon it as their primary source for both fish and fresh water. The city offers as well a particularly valuable treasure – freshwater pearls, the most beautiful of their kind to be found anywhere in the Empire. Of course these pearls are gathered at great cost, and many divers perish every year while exploring the depths of the lake.

But as wondrous as these treasures are, the lake holds within mysteries even more profound. At the depths of the White Shore Lake lies a sunken city, inhabited by the mysterious ningyo. Upon discovering the city, a clever diver named Bakoto from the settlement of Mizu Mura began leaving a selection of his finest pearls just within sight of the city, where the ningyo would be sure to find them.

Within months of initiating this offering, the village's fortunes turned dramatically. The quantity of fish harvested by the village's fishermen increased threefold. Over the next few months, four divers that would have otherwise drowned, entangled fatally in the thick plant life at the bottom of the lake, were rescued by ningyo and deposited safely on the shore. Though the creatures never made any other efforts to communicate with the villagers, it was clear that they appreciated the gifts Bakoto had given them. It became tradition to leave one out of three pearls for the ningyo, and since that time the village has prospered.

Curious shugenja who have visited Mizu Mura seeking to discover whether ningyo truly dwell within the depths of the lake are quietly rebuffed by the local population. The peasants intend no disrespect toward their samurai masters, but simply recognize the shyness of the ningyo and the debt they owe them. Many superstitions claim that devouring the flesh of a ningyo can grant immortality. The idea that the lake would become flooded with such murderous opportunists was a fate that the villagers did not wish to endure. Not only had the ningyo become their friends but without the fish the ningyo help provide, the village would be unable to properly supply the Unicorn armies.

During the Clan Wars, when the Naga awakened from their slumber, many Chameleon scouts undertook a pilgrimage to Mizu Mura. When they arrived, the ningyo flocked to the shores of the lake, eager to meet their long-dormant cousins. The Naga learned of the services the humans had provided for the ningyo over the centuries, and were impressed. As a reward, they taught several of the village elders the ningyo language.

The Naga also helped the villagers maintain the illusion that the lake was uninhabited, as they too wished to protect the safety of the mysterious ningyo.

In the decades since this meeting, the bond between the ningyo and the villagers has only strengthened, and production has increased. Khan Moto Chagatai easily counts Mizu Mura among the most valuable of his clan's holdings. The Khan has heard rumors of the ningyo that dwell beneath the lake, and finds them amusing. In a sense, the ningyo have already granted him immortality, for with a well-supplied army the greatness of his clan's deeds will surely echo throughout all of history.

CHALLENGE

While passing through the village of Mizu Mura, the player characters come upon a strange sight. A band of thugs have pursued a local peasant into an alley and have begun savagely beating him. If the player characters investigate, they will notice that the thugs are not simply assaulting the man, but attempting to bind him with rope and gag him. This is not a robbery or a murder, but a kidnapping.

FOCUS

If they choose to intervene, the peasant is extremely grateful. He is a local pearl diver by the name of Kota, hailing from one of the more respected

families of divers in the village. If the player characters are courteous to the peasant (especially if they help tend his wounds) then he will glance cautiously about and ask the characters if he might entrust them with an important secret. Otherwise, the player characters might find out the following merely by interrogating Kota.

Kota and his family are one of the few families in the village that speak the ningyo language, as taught to them by the Naga. Kota's brother, Hideyoshi, was renowned as one of the most talented and successful divers in the city. This was due to his deep secret love for a ningyo maiden named Shilasha. The ningyo often accompanied him on his deepest dives, transferring a lungful of air to him with a kiss when he grew weak. Hideyoshi kept his true love hidden from everyone except his brother.

Recently, however, Kota's brother vanished. When Kota began investigating Hideyoshi's disappearance, these strange thugs began to pursue him. Now it seems they wish to abduct him, though he does not know why. He begs the player characters for their aid.



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STRIKE

If interrogated, the thugs reveal that they are in the employ of a local shugenja named Iuchi Matsuyo. Matsuyo sent them to retrieve Kota to aid him in his "research." A bit of information gathering around the village will quickly reveal that Matsuyo is one of the more reviled figures in the village. He has made no secret of the fact that he intends to capture a live ningyo and test the truth of the rumor that their flesh grants immortality. This, of course, has gained him few allies amongst the villagers.

The player characters have only just begun to uncover a rather dark and twisted tale. Matsuyo had long suspected that Hideyoshi knew the truth about the ningyo in the lake. One day he followed Hideyoshi and Kota on their way to the lake, well hidden by his magic. He saw Hideyoshi call out to the water, and saw the ningyo maiden arrive to greet him. When the brothers returned later in the day, he followed Hideyoshi to his home. There, his thugs overpowered the young diver and brought him back to Matsuyo's home.

Though Matsuyo questioned Hideyoshi at length, he refused to tell the shugenja any of the ningyo's secrets. The Iuchi resorted to torture, but still Hideyoshi remained resolute. In the end, he died under the shugenja's merciless ministrations. The diver's death infuriated Matsuyo, but he knew that even this could only halt his investigation temporarily. The next day, even as he began to explore the areas of the lake where he knew Hideyoshi frequently dove for pearls, he dispatched his thugs to retrieve Hideyoshi's brother.

Kota understands little that could truly aid Matsuyo, for the shugenja already knows all of the areas where Hideyoshi frequently dove. It is only a matter of time before Shilasha returns seeking her lost love. When she does, Matsuyo will be ready to capture her. If she dies in the Iuchi's mad quest for immortality, not only will an innocent soul have perished but the friendship between Mizu Mura and the ningyo could be shattered forever.

RESOLUTIONS

If the player characters discover the truth, this becomes a delicate matter. Matsuyo is a high-ranking member of the Unicorn Clan, and by the strict interpretation of the law it was entirely within his right to kill Hideyoshi for his defiant behavior. If there are no members of the Unicorn among the party, any attempt to bring him to justice may be denounced by the Iuchi as an act of war. What seems to be a clear cut murder investigation may dissolve into a messy political situation. Matsuyo has many allies in the Khan's court and will do what he can to turn this situation to his advantage if given the chance.

Of course if the truth of the matter is brought to the attention of the Khan (or another high-ranking Unicorn), that Matsuyo's experiments threaten the productivity of the village, then the Iuchi's punishment will be swift. Of course, such a tactic may result in the secret of the sunken city becoming exposed. Other ningyo-hunters will flock to Mizu Mura, eager to hunt the ningyo for their flesh.

Overall, discretion remains crucial. If the characters are not cautious, the fragile harmony of the village may be destroyed even if the murderous Matsuyo is brought

to justice. Ironically a party that resorts to dishonorable tactics, such as killing the Iuchi and dumping his body in the lake before he can contact his allies, may well result in the most efficient resolution.

To make matters more complicated, the above assumes that the player characters will not see reason in the Iuchi's twisted plans. What if the legends are correct and a ningyo's flesh truly can grant immortality? Will they aid the Iuchi in his goals so that they, too, might live forever? Will they sacrifice the peace and productivity of Mizu Mura simply for their own selfish gains?

For a party that wishes to indulge in such activities, the GM is encouraged to study the Curse of the Ningyo section that follows. Also, remember that the ningyo are not without protection. A powerful orochi (see Fortunes and Winds) dwells within the ningyo city. For centuries the orochi has been content, happy that the villagers have made its job easier by insuring the well-being of its charges. Should hunters begin to murder the ningyo, this sea serpent will rise from the depths and unleash its horrible vengeance upon Mizu Mura.

THE CURSE OF THE NINGYO

Superstition holds that a mortal who devours the flesh of a ningyo will gain immortality.

The legends are true.

Many centuries ago, the ningyo were a sophisticated race. They possessed an extraordinary talent enabling them to call upon the spirits of Water to perform their bidding. A magical catastrophe destroyed their civilization, causing them to flee to the seas. The backlash of magic damaged the souls of many ningyo, causing them to revert to a near-feral state. This also resulted in infusing the ningyo with a mysterious and enduring magic that prevented them from aging in any noticeable manner.

Some time after this tragedy, the ningyo made a deal with the orochi, a race of powerful sea serpents from the Realm of Trickery, Sakkaku. The humorless orochi had grown tired of the endless pranks and nonsense of their brethren, and wished for safe haven in the mortal realm. The ningyo agreed to let the orochi share their cities, and in return the orochi promised to always protect the ningyo from harm.

Ryujin, the king of the orochi, soon recognized the power that ningyo flesh held. Being already quite immortal himself, Ryujin had no wish to devour his peaceful allies, but he realized that many others would not share this opinion. If other races were appraised of the power that resonated within ningyo flesh, not even he could protect them for long.

So Ryujin placed a powerful curse upon the ningyo race. For all time, any who dared to eat ningyo flesh would receive the immortality they sought, but at a horrible price. Those few who have dared investigate whether the superstitions are true invariably face a horrible fate. To make matters even more difficult for those so accursed, any orochi can see the marks of the curse on a mortal as clear as day. Such an accursed immortal is well advised to avoid large bodies of water, for the orochi will never stop hunting anyone who

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performs the heinous act of killing a ningyo simply to selfishly preserve themselves.

Any individual who eats ningyo flesh becomes immune to all diseases and need no longer eat, drink or breathe. In addition, they cease aging entirely. However, they also must roll on the following table to determine the effects of Ryujin's curse.

D10 roll	Curse
1-2	The Curse of Air – Any time you attempt to speak, you can say nothing except to announce the hideous crime you have committed by wronging the ningyo so. Any time another being speaks to you, the only words you hear are a wailing lament from the soul of the dead ningyo.
3-4	Curse of Earth – Your immortality takes a savagely ironic turn. Your body becomes a tree, rooted in the soil where you stand. You will endure forever, like a mighty oak, forever aware of your surroundings.
5-6	Curse of Fire – Your immortality comes at a cost. You do not gain the usual freedom from needing to eat or drink, but can no longer eat normal food. You are filled with a burning hunger and must feed on a particular substance (chosen by the GM) at least once a day to maintain your immortality. If you do not feed on this substance once a day, you immediately die. You know what this substance is as soon as the curse sets in, and you can sense its presence anywhere within one hundred feet.
7-8	Curse of Water – You become a ningyo. Unlike other immortals, you still need to breathe, but can only breathe water. You will immediately begin to suffocate unless you enter a body of water. Such an immortal will have a difficult time avoiding vengeful orochi.
9-10	Curse of the Void – Though you become immortal, you also become a hideous, mindless monster. The GM should select any creature from the <i>Game Master's Guide</i> , <i>Fortunes and Winds</i> , or another source. Your normal statistics are immediately replaced with those of this creature, and you become an NPC under the GM's control.

CHOOSE YOUR FATE

One of the first major story prizes in the history of *Legend of the Five Rings* came out of the Imperial Herald. This was a player vote, in which the readers were allowed a chance to "doom" a clan. The result of this vote led to the kidnapping of Doji Hoturi, the creation of the False Hoturi, and the near-destruction of the Crane Clan.

A more recent Imperial Herald vote resulted in a somewhat more positive story. The new Empress, Toturi Kurako, was chosen by Imperial Herald readers. Now we continue this proud tradition with a new opportunity for Herald readers to contribute to the future of Rokugan.

At one time the children of Toturi vied with one another for their father's throne. That throne has now fallen under the rule of

Naseru, youngest of Toturi's children. This hardly means that peace has come to the house of Toturi. Naseru and his half-brother, the Anvil, continue to struggle with one another to determine who wields true power and respect among the Empire's populace. Isawa Sezar, the Wolf, seeks only peace but has removed himself from the Empire for now to find a means by which the Bloodspeakers might be defeated.

One of these three brothers will claim the daisho once wielded by their legendary father, Toturi.

Which will you choose?

- A) **The Righteous Emperor, Toturi Naseru, otherwise known as the Anvil, Toturi III.**
- B) **The fearsome Shogun, Kaneka, otherwise known as the Bastard.**
- C) **The mysterious Wolf, also called the Voice of the Emperor, Isawa Sezar.**

E-mail your vote to Rich Wulf at: rwulf@alderac.com

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FAN FAVORITES

By Ray Lau

Although I don't really have a clan affiliation anymore, back when I started playing *Legend of the Five Rings*, I exclusively played Dragon. I chose that clan for a number of reasons: it had the most exotic name, it was one of the few clans that wasn't getting played in my group, and generally speaking, dragons rate really high on my cool scale. Thus began my short yet torrid affair with the Dragon Clan.

I played a non-standard attack deck filled with your typical Dragon personalities. They included versatile 2-4 for 5 gold *Daini*, cavalry *Sukune*, and all-business-all-the-time *Hitomi*. My favorite of the three is *Mirumoto Hitomi*.

I'm more of a mechanics guy than a story guy, so let me go over *Hitomi's* card first. Although not quite as efficient as *Mirumoto Daini*, *Hitomi* was still good at a vanilla 7 gold, 3-4 personality with 2 personal honor. With the publishing of *Merchant Caravan* and *Doji Plains*, *Hitomi* became a staple personality in my decks. I could bring her into play with *Inheritance* or throw away a *Focus* to *Merchant Caravan*.

She was also particularly resistant to most of the personality killers that existed in at the time. Three *Evil Portents* couldn't take her down, *Kolat Assassin* couldn't touch her (at the time, *Kolat Assassin* only targeted personalities with less than 4 Chi), and duels didn't automatically kill her. *Hitomi* was the baseline upon which I judged all Dragon cards.

Even though I typically weigh the mechanics of a card more heavily than the story, *Hitomi's* tale is the reason I put her above all others.

At a young age, she watches her brother, Satsu, die in a duel with Hida Yakamo. *Hitomi* swears

revenge. She grows up, passing up her right to rule her family and instead training for vengeance. When she finally finds Yakamo, she takes his hand in a duel. Shortly there after, hand replaced by an oni's claw, he crushes her hand thereby returning favor. But on the Day of Thunder, *Hitomi* puts aside her hatred to assist Yakamo by destroying the oni that had taken his name.

Hitomi returns to her mountain home, having inherited some of Togashi's divine power and begins making her own tattooed men as he once did, creating a new family, *Hitomi*. However her own prosthetic hand, made of magical Obsidian, slowly corrupts her and her family. Realizing

the damage being caused by the battle within herself, she turns to Kokujin for help. Unfortunately Kokujin's madness twists her rule, causing great bloodshed and turmoil within the Dragon Clan.

In time, *Hitomi* learns control and exiles Kokujin. To purge Lord Moon's influence, she enacts an ancient ritual by which she could ascend to Tengoku and confront Onnotangu. Defeating Lord Moon in a duel, she assumes his power and his purpose. She has risen above the anger and vengeance that defined her early life, and now seeks to guide others along the path of enlightenment.

Not only had *Hitomi* found redemption, but she had the wherewithal to find it twice, ultimately finding divinity in the journey. She was the one Dragon who learned that there cannot be enlightenment without trial and tribulation.



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