

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

THE
IMPERIAL

HERALD

VOL. 2 / NO. 18

KOTEI 2006!

**PATH OF HOPE
MEETS DRAFT**

**ALL-NEW CARD
ENCYCLOPEDIA**



WHO WILL FIND
THE PATH OF HOPE...

...WILL IT BE YOU?



PATH OF HOPE



THE LAST DESCENDENT OF THE PROPHET SHINSEI LIES DEAD, but Asahina Sekawa has achieved the dream of generations – Enlightenment. Word spreads throughout the Empire, leaving turmoil and wonder, in its wake. A new Age is upon Rokugan. Conflicts swirl, armies march, alliances crumble, and an Age of Enlightenment begins with *Path of Hope*.™

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THE
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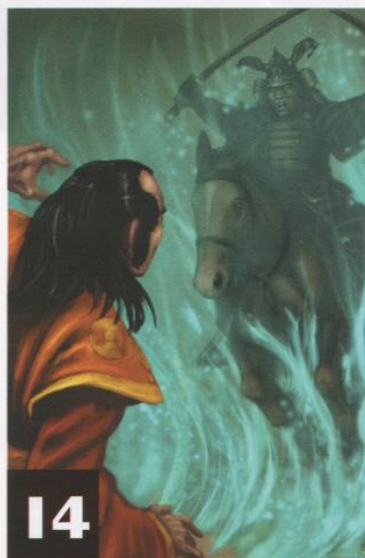
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SCORPION CLAN COUP, SHADOWLANDS, SOUL
OF THE EMPIRE, AND TIME OF THE VOID ARE
TRADEMARKS OF WIZARDS OF THE COAST AND
USED WITH PERMISSION.

1,000 YEARS OF DARKNESS, CODE OF BUSHIDO,
CREATURES OF ROKUGAN, DAWN OF THE
EMPIRE, DIAMOND EDITION, ENEMY OF MY
ENEMY, HEAVEN & EARTH, HIDDEN CITY, LOTUS
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SECRETS OF THE CRAB, SECRETS OF THE
CRANE, SECRETS OF THE DRAGON, SECRETS OF
THE LION, SECRETS OF THE MANTIS, SECRETS
OF THE PHOENIX, SECRETS OF THE RATLING,
SECRETS OF THE SCORPION, SECRETS OF THE
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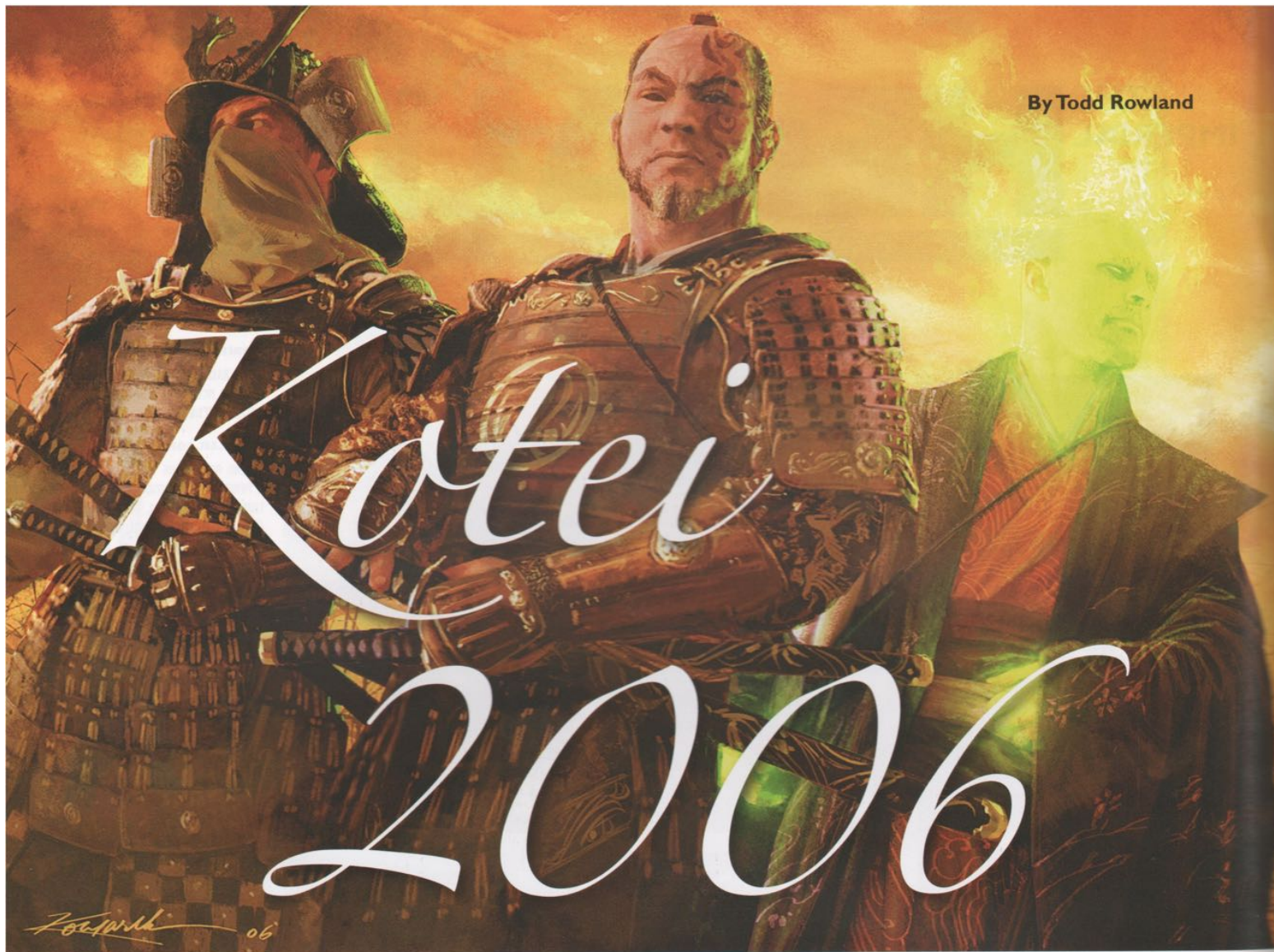
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By Todd Rowland



UPPING THE ANTE FOR THIS YEAR'S KOTEI SEASON

The 2006 Kotei season is upon us, and it couldn't be more exciting! This year, players have the opportunity to bring the gift of Enlightenment to their clan. While some may doubt Asahina Sekawa's claims of Enlightenment, many others believe him, and a few are even claiming to have found it for themselves. Is their power real? And if so, what can that power mean for your clan? Now is the time to find out!

All characters chosen during the Kotei events will be featured as part of *Test of Enlightenment*, a new special direct-to-player set releasing

this summer. This exclusive set will be legal for GenCon and the World Championships, so your Kotei actions will have a *direct* impact on the environment heading into two major storyline events.

KOTEI PARTICIPATION

Everyone who attends a Kotei 2006 event will receive a special set of preview promo cards from *Test of Enlightenment*. These 10 Action and 3 Personality cards all bear special Kotei





bugs to set them apart from those in the *Test of Enlightenment* set. On top of that, the Personalities all have special alternate art not available anywhere else. The prize support for this year's Kotei events is huge as well, with an unprecedented amount of product and special prizes being sent to each location. Just take a look at the list below. You will definitely want to attend as many as you can!

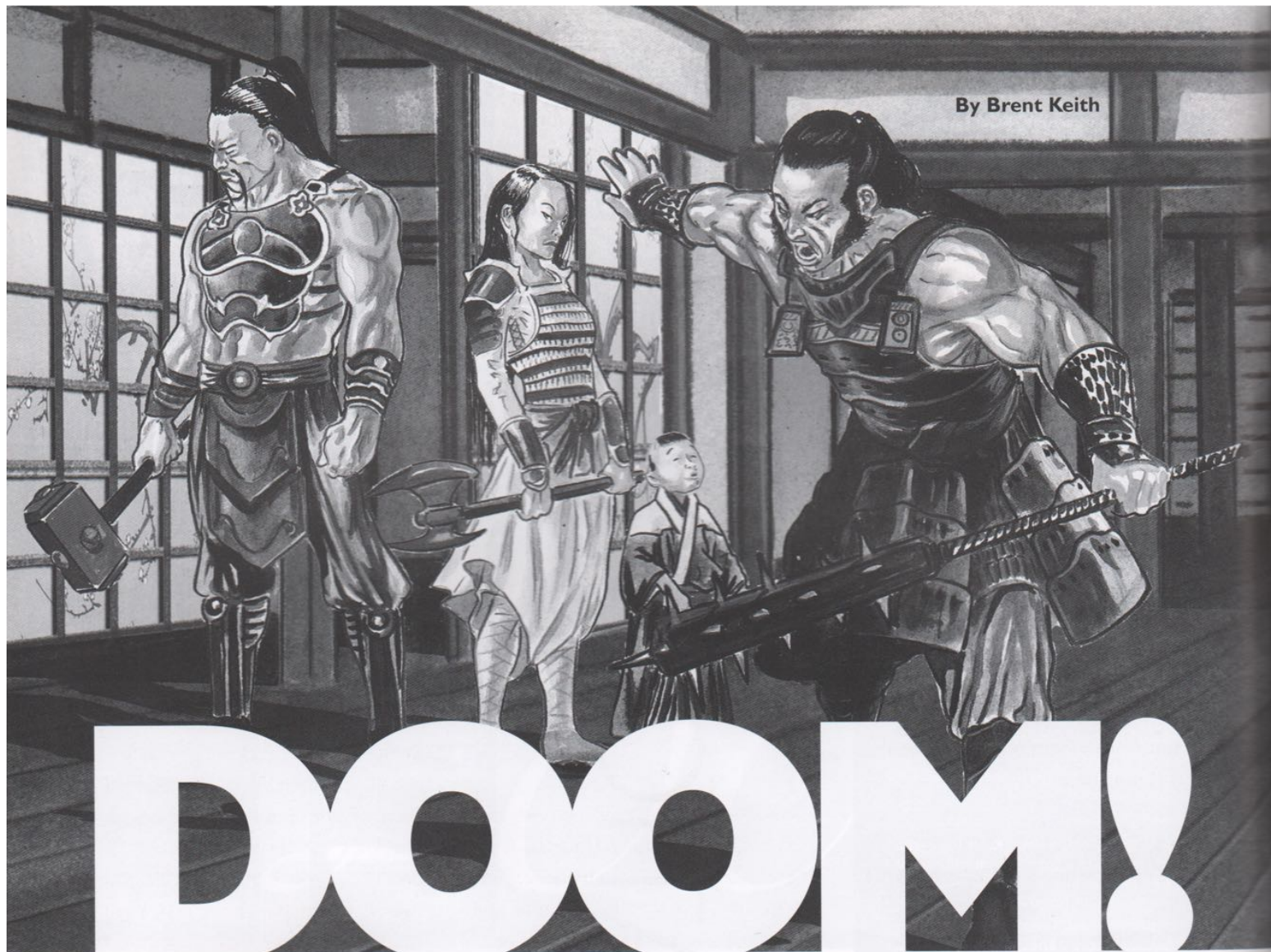
- 10 Preview Cards from *Test of Enlightenment* – Each participant at the Kotei will receive these cards that will be in the special set, all marked with Kotei 2006!
- 3 Alternate Art Personality cards from *Test of Enlightenment* – Three very important characters will be in *Test of Enlightenment*, and every participant at the Kotei events will receive an exclusive alternate art version of them unavailable anywhere else!
- An L5R Lanyard
- A Limited Edition 2006 Kotei Pin exclusive to each Kotei – Each Region will have its own pin. Go to several Kotei — collect the pins and fight for your clan!
- A Booster Draft Pack and four Lotus-legal booster packs – Enough to run a booster draft event right there at the Kotei!
- Top of Clan players will receive a special Artist Print from the 10 *Test of Enlightenment* Preview Cards!
- Top 16 players will receive exclusive Kotei 2006 Honor Counters!
- The Kotei Winner will receive an exclusive “Kotei Champion” version of the *Test of Enlightenment* set (to be delivered after production) as well as seeding in the World Championships!
- A sealed envelope containing a piece of the Seven Thunders’ letter will be presented to each Champion at their respective Kotei.
- Among other prizes, the prize kit also contains many foil rare sets from Lotus-legal expansions and two entire cases of Lotus-legal booster displays!
- We reserve the right to add more before the Kotei events begin!

For more information on the 2006 Kotei season, including locations, the list of characters available for Enlightenment, and images of some of the prizes you can win, visit www.l5r.com.

PARTICIPATION CARDS



By Brent Keith



THE ORIGINS OF THE DOOMS IN PATH OF HOPE

One main feature of the overall Lotus-era story arc is the recurrence — or first real occurrence, depending on how you look at it — of the Dooms of the Great Clans originally foretold by the prophet Uikku. Sets will revolve very roughly about them in the same chronological order they come to pass, starting with the Crab and the Crane together in *Path of Hope*. One thing that became clear early on was how well these two Dooms led into the set's overall theme.

Crab fall to the taint of the Shadowlands, and Crane fall to the shadow of dishonor. Shadowlands tainting is something we need to

include in this set anyway, for it is a theme begun in the expansion immediately previous, *Code of Bushido*.

With the bright Lotus victory of Gen Con 2005, the reemergence of the Dooms is set off in sharper relief against the great hope for the Empire that begins with Asahina Sekawa's attainment of enlightenment.

The toughest part about designing this set was the requirement to begin well before Gen Con's outcome was known. The press date for *Path* was only a few weeks after Gen Con, leaving time simply for production and editing. And playtesting a double

sized set with alternate "light" and "dark" versions of many cards while also testing and producing *Lotus* itself wasn't within our reach.

Gen Con's story comes through largely in the flavor and fiction surrounding *Path*, and mechanically is primarily seen in the Crane with two Enlightened personalities and their new stronghold.

THE CRAB

The Crab are about defying the Shadowlands at every step. One of the worst things that could happen to a Crab is to fall to, or in league with, the

Taint and become a minion of the Dark Lord.

The Prophecies of Uikku foretell that the return of an ancient hero shall mark their Doom. In the Clan War saga, Hida Kisada sacrificed one son to the darkness and used his other son to seal a deal with the Shadowlands, which lead to Kisada marching to the capital city with a legion of Shadowlands followers. Having returned from the realm of the dead, he and his grandson Kuon are being offered another deal: his other grandson to be returned to the light — in exchange for once again bringing Shadowlands to the capital city.

The Crab Stronghold in *Path of Hope* focuses on a Berserker-centric theme reminiscent of *Koten*. Balancing the Berserkers are some more honorable Samurai, with focus on the Yu and the new Heroic traits.

THE CRANE

The Crane are about perfection, status, and honor. One of the worst things that would happen to a Crane is to be dishonored in the eyes of his Clan and his Emperor.

Part of their doom is the revelation that their Champion's wife, Doji Akiko, was a powerful Gozoku supporter. (The Gozoku are a conspiracy of members from multiple Clans whose ultimate plan is to depose the Emperor and replace him with someone loyal to their cause.) Their Champion, Doji Kurohito, executes her himself, then commits seppuku to cleanse the shame of her crimes.

The Crane Stronghold in *Path* revolves around the new found Enlightenment, won by Scott Rixson at Gen Con 2005. If a Crane won Enlightenment, what would the clan do with it? Raise their status in the

Empire, of course! A major goal with any new stronghold is to encourage new styles of decks for the clan, rather than simply rehash existing deck styles, and the Gen Con victory handed us an opportunity to provide the Crane something reflecting both the storyline and a new twist on their existing themes.

Supporting the new stronghold, *Path of Hope* includes the Enlightened Keepers of Fire and Water. In future sets, more Enlightened Crane will see print, starting with those characters chosen by Kotei winners in the coming months and also including *Sekawa* and the new Keeper of Void. Also in this set we introduce a new theme for the Crane: increased overlay ability, representing the Crane's perpetual quest for perfection.

THE SHADOWLANDS

We have Ogres. We have Oni. We have Goblins. We even have Undead. There are, however, those who have heeded the luring call of the Shadowlands and embraced its corruption willingly, or who have spent their entire lives in the shadowy reflections of Rokugan's

cities and social structure. These are the Lost, neither dead nor undead, fully human yet fully tainted. They are ruled over by Daigotsu, whose ultimate goal is to bring the Lost into Rokugan as a true clan, equal in stature to the other followers of the sons and daughters of Lord Moon and Lady Sun.

The Shadowlands Stronghold in *Path* centers on Daigotsu's Lost minions and their ability to tempt the weak of spirit, luring them into turning against their own kind.

DISHONOR AND TAINT

So, we have an overriding theme of taint and dishonor in *Path*. One huge design question that's hung over our heads ever since beginning *Code of Bushido* design is this:

Originally, cards with anti-Shadowlands effects were priced cheaply for their effects. *Iris Festival*, *Tomb of Jade*, and *Purity of the Seven Thunders* were as efficient as they were because of how infrequently they were useful. A card that can only be used in situations outside your control needs to be cheaper than one that can be used every game. These cards were



metagame cards — cards you would only use if Shadowlands decks were prevalent in your area.

With the advent of cards such as *Jama Suru*, anti-taint meta turned into a powerful offensive tool. Without high situational play restrictions (also called “opportunity costs”) holding these cards back, their low resource costs rendered them supremely affordable. Taint/Kill combos became the core of powerful, unfriendly Personality destruction decks.

How do we stop corruption based decks from just being Taint/Kill all over again? We had a number of design rules in place to avoid this undesirable result:

1. Don't price anti-corruption effects as if they were rarely-useful meta.

Price them instead so that the cost of tainting a card, plus the cost of acting against it, is the same as other actions that have an outright effect on anything, minus a little to account for the fact that it's still a combo and thus less reliable and more card-intensive.

2. Have anti-corruption effects other than destruction.

Cheap kill is frustrating to play against. It can be avoided by taking away the “cheap” part or by taking away the “kill” part. (This holds true for duels, too, by the way. That's why there are more non-lethal duels now than ever before.) A player with a tainted Personality might find himself bowed, used to performing other players' actions, or providing Force bonuses to opposing armies rather than simply getting destroyed outright.

3. Avoid unconditional corruption.

As with dishonor, ways of unconditionally causing this condition to another player's cards should be scarce, expensive, or both.

This was the hardest rule to stick to, for reasons discussed in a moment. The entirety of the Diamond eras successfully stuck to the rule of “no unconditional dishonor at all” in the wake of the disruptive nature of the *Secrets on the Wind* comboing with cards such as *Shame* throughout the Gold environment. This stopped unfun “I dishonor you / I hurt you” combos, but at a price.

THE BIG DECISION

There is a downside to avoiding unconditional dishonor and tainting effects. That downside is that it renders all cards that exclusively target these



conditions unreliable, and largely untenable for serious play. After all, how many cards would you build into a deck that are literally illegal to play without your opponent's permission?

One obvious approach, which parallels how we've designed metagame cards since *Diamond Edition*, is to avoid cards usable only against dishonored or tainted targets. Instead, we print designs with a standard function that is always usable and that have either an extra function or a stronger effect versus dishonored or tainted targets.

The other thing we've done, and it quickly shows to anyone looking over the set, is provide cards of all types, for all Clans and all deck styles, that require or benefit from dishonoring and tainting one's own cards. Whatever deck you play, there are Personalities and Items and Followers and Actions in *Path* that will make it better, but will open it up as a target to some opponents. With some of these cards making their way into most decks, there will be more targets out there for someone gunning for them, without the need to make them.

We have also put some limited forms of unconditional, or at least not every conditional, tainting and dishonor in the game so that there is always a bare minimum that can be relied upon for triggering other actions.

SCOUTS AND MAGISTRATES

These widespread themes, first hit upon in *Code of Bushido*, are further developed in *Path*. Again, both are spread across multiple Factions. These traits are not like Cavalry or Tactician or Monk; they are not restricted to just one or two primary Clans. Scouts still possess or enable Recon actions to be

taken, which target Provinces ahead of battle to create a beneficial condition there if the player should attack it this turn. Magistrates still focus on acting against dishonored Personalities... and not necessarily just challenging them to duels, either, so Clans other than Crane and Dragon can find use for them.

DRAFT

Path marks the first set where we can dedicate a proper amount of time and set space to the new Booster Draft format. *Code of Bushido* was the first set we assigned draft design goals to, but its unusual ratio of Dynasty vs. Fate cards may ultimately render it less useful for drafting than sets that simply have lots of strong cards, such as *Web of Lies*. *Lotus* was restricted in the number of new cards it could introduce, both by virtue of being a base set and due to art constraints. Common cards of all types and alignments were delegated to have draft-specific functions before the Player Design Team even started working on card ideas.

How does a card designed for draft look different from a normal one? Well, for starters, it doesn't mean we don't care how strong it is. The simplistic idea that a card that is too weak to see play as a key component in a competitive constructed deck will "still be good for draft" is not a good approach. Combos are key. They have to be all over the set, especially between Personalities within a Faction, but also between Factions and between Personalities and Fate cards. Draft players get a very small collection of cards from which to work compared to someone building a *Lotus* deck. Abilities need to be simple and flexible across a wide variety of deck styles rather than tightly focused, deck-



specific cards designed to strengthen one particular constructed archetype.

Redundancy with cards from previous sets is okay, and in fact is kind of necessary. When all tournament formats are Constructed, it isn't necessary to print some kind of Terrain destroying action in every single set. That stops being true with Draft in the picture.

Rarities need to be determined at the outset, since draft-specific designs should never go onto rare cards. A draft card cannot be Wind- or Stronghold-specific, and we need to take into account the very real distinction between an action that only a Lion Clan player can use versus one that requires a Lion Clan Personality to perform. The future of the Draft format for L5R looks very bright, if the skill of the people who helped develop and playtest it and the reception it received at Origins, Gen Con, and conventions since then are any indication. As draft packs become more and more widely available, we expect to see it take off in all sorts of venues — from store events all the way up to the World Championships!

By Todd Rowland

THE PATH OF DRAFT

THE NEW ERA OF BOOSTER DRAFT IN L5R

Path of Hope brings some surprising options to boosters draft, some of which many players won't see until you've hit them with a devastating combo. Besides the obvious draft cards such as *Righteous Doshin* and "bombs" such as *Kokujin* or *Second Doom of the Crab*, there are many other great cards for draft in *Path of Hope*.

MEAT AND POTATOES

We can start with the cards you will want when you see them. We're not going to worry about rares yet, since the chance of them is just luck. *Righteous Doshin* is a great card for

draft. When you see one, take it. The power of a 4F Follower with a 4 Range Attack in a set without a great deal of attachment removal is undeniable. The little attachment control that there is, such as *Conserve Your Strength*, are not must-picks, but they can greatly help if you were cut off from the *Doshin*

and others. *Rapid Deployment* can help your military options by being able to spread your small forces among several provinces, then pull them in to take the undefended one. *Tawagoto* is a great addition as well, as readying is always helpful.



BUT IT'S SO COOL

Yes, *Arrival of the Obsidian Champion* is a beefy, beefy card. But there is only a single Personality in *Path* who can play it: *Hida Takuma*. So unless you are planning on going Crab, or just want to really cut off the Crab player in your pod, let it pass for something more strategic for your deck. The focus of your deck is more important than cutting off a particular card from an opponent. So one or two strong Actions get through. There is a good chance that if your deck is focused, you will win before the opponent can draw that card, or when he does it won't have as big of an impact.

THE BIG SURPRISE

Very few players will see this coming... well, unless they've read this article. There is a surprisingly strong, yet simple, combo in *Path*. It's not something you would go for right away, but a mid-pack pull of a few can help. If you see it come by, grab an *Allegiance to the Emperor* or *Allegiance to the Shogun*. You'll likely see a good number of *Test of Loyalty* come by as well. Grab them up. Since no one else will worry about them, you can now cause the opponents entire army a -2F per Personality loss right before your attack. Using this late game can cause a loss of force that few decks can fight back against.

THE FIRE CHICKENS MEET THE LIZARDS

So here is an example of a deck I was able to draft at our last *Path of Hope* draft tournament (thanks to the guys in Montgomery, AL). Early picks are *Isawa Tomita*, *Shiba Riza*, and *Kitsuki Seiji*. All are commons so you shouldn't have difficulty getting them. *Tomita* will be hot even as a defensive draft, so be



sure to grab him any chance you get. *Seiji* is a relatively inexpensive courtier who will fuel *Nanashi Mura's* honor gaining ability and play *Credit Where Due* should you pull it. *Mirumoto Chojiro* is a solid samurai who can be bought for 2 honor then tossed using *Riza's* ability to get a *Tomita* you had to discard earlier. *Hoshi Masujiro* will contribute a quick 4 honor should you see him (he is uncommon after all). The remainder of your personality base can be a mix of Dragon and Phoenix, and *Tawagoto* if you see him. As to the fate side, we're building for an honor run, so you can let military cards slide by, and pick cards that few people will care for, but which combine to a strong deck.

Start by grabbing up *Righteous Doshin*. They will be very strong on *Riza* and *Chojiro*. Follow that with *Secret from the Ratling*. Unless someone else is going Phoenix, you shouldn't have trouble getting this and it will be strong with *Riza*. *Letter of Confession* is a nice addition to *Tomita*, as you can dishonor him to use his ability, then follow up with the *Letter* to punish the opposing forces. Later, you can spend the *Letter* on a dishonored *Tomita* to provide continued use of his ability.

The remainder of the deck can be filled out with whatever you might find. *Credit Where Due* is good for the honor run, and you can try for the *Allegiance* trick if you are passed the cards multiple times.

FINAL WORD

Path is a great set for draft. With the *Hammer and Anvil* promotion on the horizon and many Kotei also hosting draft tournaments, now is the time to brush up on your knowledge of the cards and what to take.

By Thomas Abrams



PLAYER MISTAKES: ADVICE FOR NEW PLAYERS

I'm not the greatest L5R player, but I know my strengths and weaknesses, (and I'm sure many of you know yours as well). One of my strengths is not making the "easy player mistakes" that always seem to cost good players to lose bad games. So, I've decided to write a couple of them down, in the hopes that maybe some of you will learn something new, or be reminded of lessons you already know. (Read: something other than who would best play Kisada in a movie, or which anime character has the same haircut as Omen).

First Easy Mistake: First Turn Draws.

I'm not an angel in this category either, but many a time, I see players fail to understand the importance of the first turn draw. Simply, you need Holdings to win games. Honestly, I can see only few circumstances when you will want to keep an 8+ gold cost Personality in your provinces on your first turn. Remember, your optimal deck performance wants to play Holdings for its first two turns in most circumstances. Don't leave it up to chance by letting a bad early-game

investment block your provinces. Clear them out for the chance to get more Holdings.

Second Easy Mistake: Missed Open Action Opportunities.

Turns out that you get to play actions during your opponents turn as well. Really! It's in the rulebook! It's very important that you make sure that your opponent knows that you have an action on his turn. Even making sure that you say "pass" on their turn makes it so that you don't forget that clinch action that can win you the game.

There's no excuse for saying "whoah whoah, before you go to dynasty...". Often, people will take an action only if their opponent is going to attack, but they have no way of knowing if an attack will happen that turn. You have to make sure that they have ample opportunity to take an action or pass before you let it be known you will attack. It will save you a lot of trouble in the end, trust me.

Third Easy Mistake: Discarding Again!

It's so important that you discard cards from your provinces at all points during a game. I can't tell you how many times that I have been able to walk all over people just because they have forgotten to discard a superfluous Holding that is clogging their province. The reason people play cards like *Fortune's Gift* and *Regions of Rokugan* is so that players can search specific cards in their decks and thin it out at the same time. L5R is as much about the cards you don't play as it is about the cards you do. Therefore, you must constantly clear your provinces of cards in order to realize new ones. L5R takes about 7 turns to play, so you have to make sure that you get Holdings for the first couple of turns, and cards that win you games each turn after that.

Fourth Easy Mistake: The Judge is Not a Rulebook.

This is really important: you have to know how your cards work, as well as the basic rules of the game. The Lotus Edition Rulebook is no dictionary, and in about an hour you can make sure that you know how to play L5R. Knowing all the rules when your opponent doesn't is like reaching a



level of legally cheating. It pays to know them. The rules list of late has become almost an extension of the book, as many decks are based off changes to cards that you won't know just by reading them. Like it or not, if you are playing in a tournament, it is your responsibility to make sure that you know everything about your deck, especially if you want to win with it!

Fifth Easy Mistake: Know Your Cards, Know Your Deck.

In my Kotei experiences, I have had many an opponent that has pretended to know how to play a deck when they were actually completely inexperienced to how it worked. I am going to propose that a player who is skilled in playing a mediocre deck will do better than a player who is unskilled in playing a strong deck. It just adds up. Cards and decks are only strong if you know how to use them. Playtesting, discussion, and substitution all let you understand the cards you are playing with, and will

provide a clear advantage over those who just use decks that their "really good friend" made for them. Playtest, playtest, playtest!

Sixth Easy Mistake: Forgetting Your Environment.

When you are making the transition to a Kotei environment from your local "Thursday free-for-all!" you have to remember that certain cards are only good in certain situations. Although you might beat your little brother Josh every week with a specific card or combination, it is only good if you play Josh in every Swiss round. You need to playtest your decks versus competitive decktypes, or you are going to be blind when it matters. You should pick up each card your opponent plays if you can't recite it verse-by-verse. You're going to read it afterwards when something unanticipated happens, you might as well be aware before you lose the game.



PATH OF HOPE

CARD-BY-CARD ENCYCLOPEDIA

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, then L5R Brand Manager Raymond Lau and I had the crazy idea of creating a visual reference for all the cards in the environment and offering it to the public. This project eventually became the Gold Edition Encyclopedia, which absolutely failed to sell as well as projected. Why? Because in order to create such a book, all the cards needed to be designed and available — which meant that such a product must arrive at the tail-end of a cycle. Since Legend of the Five Rings does not have a large Open Tournament scene, the value of such a product was extremely limited. Players want a reference product they can use now, not in two years, after a cycle's remaining sets have been designed and released.

So the idea struck me last year while talking to some players on the L5R Forum: why not put out a card-by-card encyclopedia as each set is released in the Imperial Herald? Seemed like a great idea! Such a reference would both add value to the Herald and provide subscribers a convenient guide that they could carry with them.

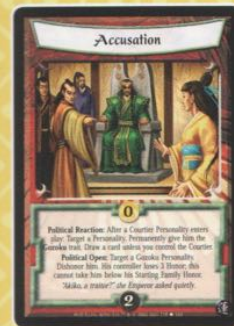
So this issue marks the launch of the card-by-card encyclopedia section. Hope you enjoy it.

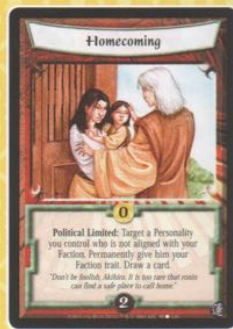
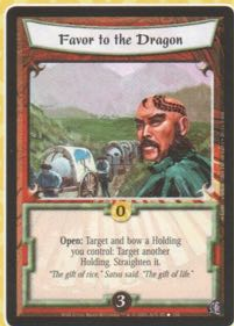
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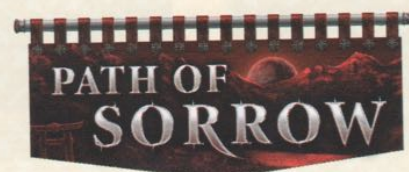








DID YOU KNOW that Path of Hope stood a very good chance of being named Path of Sorrow? Yep, that's right, this set's identity was developed so that in the event that the Shadowlands won Gen Con Indy 2005 (or any Corrupt Deck for that matter), the future of L5R's first expansion set would have swung toward the dark side. Luckily, the nobler forces prevailed with Crane Clan's victory.



WHAT'S INSIDE

HAMMER & ANVIL?

A NEW KIND OF TOURNEY KIT

Available to store owners and tournament organizers this March, *Hammer & Anvil* marks the first major push of the new Sealed Booster Draft format. While Booster Draft has been in development for a while, and players have been enjoying this challenging format for some months now, *Hammer & Anvil* is the first kit specifically designed to support the format.

Included in each kit are 12 Draft Packs, participation promo cards, *Seppun Shogo* and *Shogo's Gift*, and a 4-column card box for winners to store their *Lotus Edition* cards.

Like any good politician, *Seppun Shogo* is an Imperial Courtier who will work for any party that pays for him. The complementary Item card, *Shogo's Gift*, will keep him on your side of the table

once equipped. But its uses aren't limited to just Shogo. The Gift will benefit any deck that can gain control of the favor, including *Path of Hope's* new stronghold, *The Halls of the Damned* (just make sure you're using *Dark Heart of the Empire* as your Wind).



Hammer & Anvil is expected to run for 3 months, and will have an effect in the Age of Enlightenment storyline.

For details, go to www.l5r.com.



IMPERIAL HERALD VOTE: CREATE A CARD

In our continuing player poll, we're offering Herald readers another chance to have a lasting effect on the ongoing L5R Storyline. This one is a bit more light-hearted than most. This poll provides the opportunity to create a new and unique character who will become a future personality.

Simply choose one option from each of the following three questions.

A new personality will appear in a future expansion, based on your response to these questions.

1. What is the new character's race?

- A. Naga
- B. Ogre
- C. Kenku
- D. Ningyo
- E. Kappa

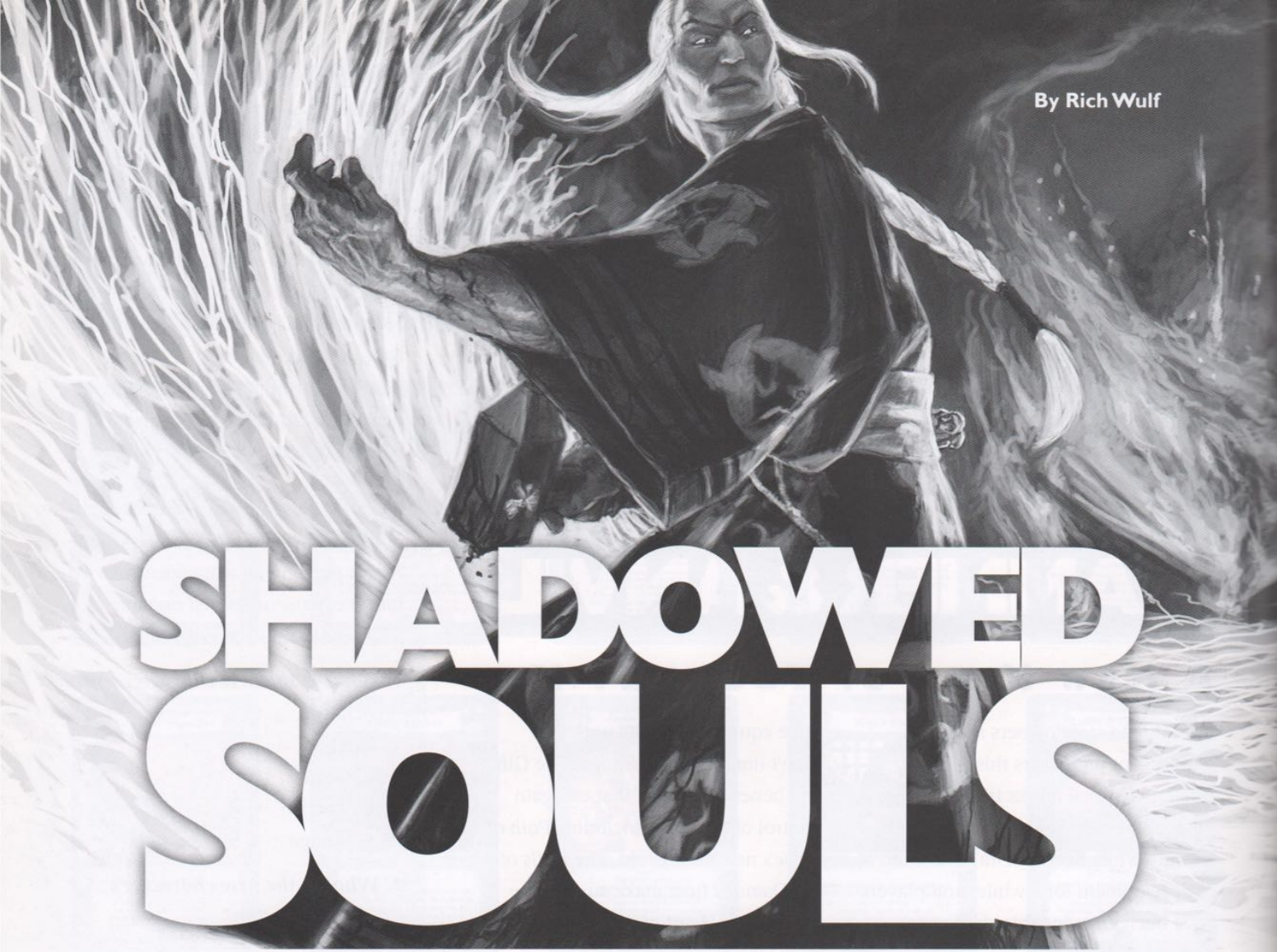
2. What is the new character's clan affiliation?

- A. Crab
- B. Crane
- C. Dragon
- D. Lion
- E. Mantis
- F. Phoenix
- G. Scorpion
- H. Unicorn
- I. Shadowlands
- J. Nezumi

3. Pick a trait for the new character:

- A. Samurai
- B. Shugenja
- C. Courtier
- D. Ninja

Please email your response to fanclubs@alderac.com by April 30th. Please include your full name, mailing address and day and month of birth.



By Rich Wulf

SHADOWED SOULS

"Man creates art, but the art creates the man as well. When I make a thing, I may not immediately know why it is beautiful, or why it is useful. I only know that it is. Tomorrow, or the day after that, or the century after that, the art may finally reveal the reason why. That is completeness. That is excellence. That is beauty."

– Daigotsu Yajinden

Otaku smiled, spit blood in the dark god's face, and died. Then there was only shadow. She shivered alone in the darkness, stripped bare of all armor and clothing, shivering as she hovered in a void of nothingness. Otaku knew she was dead. Lady Shinjo had promised her that one day, when she died, her soul would venture free of its body and journey on to its next adventure, a wonderful land of verdant fields, no pain, no loss, no war.

Otaku shivered as she felt the first of the cold tendrils pry into her soul. There would be no eternal peace for her. She had died in the Shadowlands, where Fu Leng was master. Though her fellow Thunders might win the day, the Dark God would have his vengeance. Her soul would be stripped bare, twisted to Jigoku's desires. "You have lost, little Thunder," the darkness laughed as it wove deep within her essence. "All that you were will be

turned toward our purpose. Fu Leng will rise again, and you will rise beside him."

She closed her eyes. A warm tear streamed down one cheek. She thought of Shinjo, Ide, Iuchi. She thought of wise old Shinsei and his little bird. She thought of Genji, the brilliant young Emperor who looked so sad when the Thunders departed. She thought of her husband, her daughter. She saw each of them, like distant candles, providing barely enough light to see.

Yet in this light, she saw something nearer at hand. "Surrender, Otaku," the darkness begged her. "Do not make this tedious for me and humiliating for you." Otaku extended both hands into the shadows. They closed over the hilts of two blades, the blades that Lady Shinjo had given her. Warmth spread through her body. A brilliant suit of lavender armor appeared instantly around her body, shielding her from Jigoku's embrace. Light erupted from the blades, burning away the shadows. For an instant she saw countless inhuman beasts swimming through the void like eels. They retreated swiftly, and she felt the darkness tremble.

In the mortal realm, she sensed her swords lay in the rubble near Fu Leng's shattered keep. Iuchi had infused those blades with his magic, awakening their spirit. When the darkness sought to corrupt the blades, they reached out to Otaku's soul just as she had reached out to them. "You are strong, little Thunder," the darkness said. "How long can you fight?"

Otaku said nothing, only held her blades ready.

Eleven centuries later...

Two horsemen waited at the edge of the small forest, staring out into the night. The tall, black trees of the Forest of Dreamers loomed silently behind them, with not even night insects to break the silence. The charming name of this place concealed a terrible secret. The Forest of Dreamers was home to magic of the darkest kind.

Those who ventured too deeply into its recesses fell into nightmarish sleep, from which they did not return. The Iuchi family had studied the cursed woods for generations hoping to find a way to expel the evil that had taken root, but to no avail. The Forest of Dreamers taught the Iuchi a difficult lesson. Some evils could not be conquered, only contained and controlled.

"Why are we here, Katamari?" Moto Latomu asked hoarsely.

The shugenja turned to study his comrade. The steel mask that concealed his features shone dully in the

moonlight, revealing nothing. Katamari shrugged.

"Was it not made clear when I asked for your aid?"

"You only said that you wanted to meet with an informant," Latomu said. "One of the men who helped you lead Sezar and Chagatai to so many of the Bloodspeakers' hidden camps. You didn't say why you felt you would need help this time, or why you thought I would be able to help you." Katamari did not answer immediately.

"I wished for your aid because you have proven yourself to be a cunning ally," he said. "You fought well at Ootosan Uchi, and your insight against the Bloodspeakers was invaluable."

"I see," Latomu replied, scanning the plains for any sign of their contact.

"And because I know that you have been conspiring with the Dark Lord's agents, Latomu," Katamari added coldly.

Latomu looked back at Katamari. The Moto's weathered face twisted in rage. One hand darted to his scimitar, but it fell away. Latomu's shoulders dropped with a weak sigh. "The Wolf's justice is absolute, is it not?" Latomu said bitterly. "It doesn't matter. My wife and son have been avenged, so my betrayal has served its purpose." His eyes drifted to the ground as he drifted off into thought. When Latomu spoke again, his voice was thick. "I died so long ago, Katamari. Take my life, if that would serve the Emperor's justice."

"I do not intend to kill you, Latomu," Katamari said. Latomu's eyes flicked to Katamari's, hidden behind his steel mask. "It makes no difference," the Moto said. "When you report what you have discovered to Sezar, he will have no mercy. The Wolf has no sympathy for the Dark Lord's minions, or for those who conspire with them."

Katamari chuckled. "You believe I would tell Sezar your secret?" Katamari asked. "Latomu, what you believe I have 'discovered,' I sensed the moment you first came to us offering to aid us against the Bloodspeakers. I knew no mere samurai would glean such insights from Nakanu's lost journals, no matter how clever he appeared to be." "You knew what I had done and you said nothing?" Latomu asked, shocked.

"Not only that," Katamari replied. "It was my magic that shrouded your thoughts from Sezar. Did your vengeance blind you so much that you truly thought you could keep such secrets from the Wolf without aid?"

Latomu's eyes narrowed. "Why have you done this?" he asked.

"Because I, like you, have lost much that I love to the shadows," Katamari said, "but unlike Sezarú I have not let anger blind me to the advantages of compromise." "Such words are dangerous, Katamari-san," Latomu said. "But you do not disagree," the Doomseeker replied, "or you would never have made the deal that you did." "And that deal has served its purpose," Latomu said. "Iuchiban is dead. My family rests in Yomi now. I will not truck with darkness again."

"Latomu," Katamari said sadly. "Do you truly think that the threat Iuchiban posed died with him? Another will rise to take his place. One always does. Heroes must be ready to do what must be done."

"Heroes?" Latomu asked with a bitter laugh. "You think that I am a hero? Or that you are, after what you have said?"

"No," Katamari said. "I said that heroes must be ready. Isawa Sezarú is a hero. Matsu Aoiko is a hero. We are the sort of men who make sacrifices so that the heroes will be prepared – so that they will survive. Do you know what it means to be a Doomseeker, Latomu?" "Legendary figures of the Iuchi family," Latomu said. "They fight that which cannot die."

"They are a sham," Katamari said. He removed his mask, revealing a lean, tired face. "The Doomseeker legend was created by Asahina Yajinden. Unable to fight Iuchiban directly, he gave us the knowledge we would need to be dangerous. For centuries the Doomseekers have believed we fought toward some great and legendary destiny. No. We were never intended to be anything more than a thorn in Iuchiban's side while Yajinden devised a way to escape his master's leash."

"Then why do you continue to wear the mask," Latomu asked, "if your title is a sham?" "Because I can give it purpose," Katamari said. "Even something born of darkness can be brought into the light and redeemed, Latomu. The Doomseeker can be more than it was intended to be – and so can you." "What are you talking about?" Latomu snapped. "I know what you plan to do, Latomu," Katamari said. "Do not presume you know anything about me, Doomseeker," Latomu shouted, his voice resounding through the haunted forest. Latomu looked about in embarrassment, surprised at his own lack of control. "There is no shame, Latomu-san," Katamari said. "I have lost family as well. I know that you loved

your wife dearly, and that you were as proud of your son as any father can be. I know that when they died, the purpose of your life vanished. Each day was a struggle, a struggle to find purpose, to find a reason to bother fighting. Why fight when all that gave you purpose has already been lost? You knew all along that victory would not bring them back. You knew all along that even revenge would change none of your feelings."

"So are you saying it did me no good to fight?" Latomu asked.

"No, fighting was the right choice," Katamari said. "It is what you have decided to do next that is flawed. A samurai's life is not his own to take away, Latomu. We both serve the Empire, and it has need of us yet." "Is that why you brought me here?" Latomu asked. "You thought the wisdom of a madman like yourself would keep me from falling on my own blade now that Iuchiban is dead?"

"No," Katamari said. "I wanted you to see the good that men like us can do."

Latomu looked puzzled, but Katamari grew tense. He looked into the distant shadows, quickly replacing the mask over his face.

"Someone is coming," Latomu said.

Katamari only nodded.

There was no sound for several minutes, only the undeniable sensation of life in the darkness. Someone was approaching, Latomu could tell. He felt a sense of power, like heat radiating from an unseen fire. Then, with no further warning, a man stood before them. He wore deep blue robes and kept his face hooded. A half dozen warriors in obsidian armor stood behind him, weapons at the ready.

"It is only the two of us," Katamari said. "You need not fear ambush."

"My new brothers are cautious," the man said. "You are dismissed, my friends. I must meet with these two gentlemen alone."

The black samurai bowed as one and turned to depart. Only one hesitated, stopping a moment to glare up at Latomu. The Unicorn recognized Meguro, the Lost samurai with whom he had brokered a deal to learn more about Iuchiban's magic. Meguro's yellow eyes fixed on Latomu's. The corrupted samurai inclined his head in a gesture of respect and continued walking. "Who is this?" the hooded man demanded.

"This is my comrade, Moto Latomu," Katamari re-



plied. "Latomu, this is my ally..."

The stranger pushed back his hood, revealing a blunt, square-jawed face and long white hair.

"I am Yajinden," the man introduced himself with a wry smile.

Latomu's face grew pale. His hand flew to his scimitar, but Yajinden shook his head quickly. "Do not do that, Moto," he said. "It will do you no good, and I would hate to blemish my friendship with Katamari by killing you." Latomu pulled his hand away, though his fingers shook with rage.

"Have you brought what you promised?" Katamari asked. "I have," Yajinden answered. He drew a pair of sheathed blades from his robes, holding them aloft so that Katamari and Latomu could see. Their saya were worked in ivory and lavender. A perfect circle of pure purple was emblazoned on the hilt.

"I realize trust can only extend so far in a friendship like this," Yajinden said. He stepped forward two paces, set the blades gently on the earth, and stepped away. He folded his thick arms across his chest and watched expectantly.

"Latomu, retrieve the swords," Katamari said. "They may be trapped," Latomu whispered. "You were prepared to kill yourself only one minute ago," Katamari said. "What difference will this make?" Latomu looked at the Doomseeker in disbelief, but stifled his argument. He sensed something when he looked upon those swords; he was uncertain what it was but he felt the need to look more closely. He leaped from his saddle and approached cautiously, keeping his eyes on Yajinden.

"I assure you, you are safe, Latomu-san," Yajinden said. "I am not the madman Iuchiban forced me to be-

come." Latomu ignored Yajinden and seized the swords. The instant his hands touched the saya he felt a rush of power surge through him. His mind swam with images, a mighty battle between mortal heroes and an immortal god, the struggle between good and evil, the dawn of an Empire. He sensed the soul within his blade drink deeply of his soul as well, scouring his memories for news of what it had been denied during long centuries trapped in the darkness. Latomu fell to his knees and breathed a single name. "Otaku..."

"I see that your friend is pleased with his gift," Yajinden said. "Now what of mine?"

Katamari gestured and held out one hand. The air shimmered and a chrysanthemum formed of perfect crystal appeared there. Yajinden's breath caught at the sight of it.

"So many long centuries and I could never find where it had gone," Yajinden said. "How did you do this, Doomseeker?"

"What is that?" Latomu asked, looking up at the flower urgently. "What are you giving him, Katamari?" "A trinket I crafted for Jama," Yajinden said. "It bears no maho; its value to me is entirely sentimental. I thought it lost." "A treasure of the Imperial archives," Katamari said. "It will not be missed."

"You cannot give him that," Latomu hissed. "He must have some darker purpose!"

"What do you care of my purpose?" Yajinden roared. "You have your Soul of Thunder back, Unicorn. I have already shown my good faith by not reducing the two of you to blood on the wind and taking what I desire. Now, Katamari, will you honor your bargain?"

"And your promise, Yajinden?" Katamari asked. "Promise me that you will craft nothing intended to harm the Unicorn."

"I promise my intentions toward your clan will remain innocent," Yajinden said. "I make no promises for those who may wield what I create."

"That is all I can ask," Katamari said.

The crystal drifted gently through the air between Katamari and the former Bloodspeaker. Yajinden reached for it with shaking hands and clutched it gently between his palms. Yajinden bowed deeply and faded into the shadows. "He has deceived us, Katamari," Latomu said. "What you gave him was worth more than he claims." "Of that I have no doubt," the Doomseeker said, "but was it worth it?"

Latomu clutched the blades to his chest. He felt a power surge through his being, something ancient and pure. He sensed Otaku's joy at her escape from the darkness. He sensed the Thunder's gentle fingers brush his brow, her lips upon his cheek. He felt a peculiar sense of hope, as if he no longer fought alone. "Let us leave this accursed place, Latomu," Katamari said. "The Khan must see the glorious treasure you have reclaimed."

Latomu said nothing, only climbed into his saddle and numbly followed the Doomseeker back to Shiro Iuchi. "All that for a flower?" Meguro asked, looking over Yajinden's shoulder.

"All that for art," Yajinden said, gazing into the depths of the chrysanthemum. "My creations are like my children. I may grow angry at them at times, feel they have failed to meet my expectations, but I cannot look upon one that has been lost and not feel love again. You would not understand, Meguro."

"Daigotsu will not be pleased," Meguro replied. "Otaku's swords were a priceless treasure. If they could have been corrupted..."

Yajinden chuckled. "Eleven centuries in the Shad-owl lands and no trace of Taint? I think to meddle with Otaku's soul would only bring us harm. No, Meguro. There is no need to break a sword when it works just as nicely as a lever."

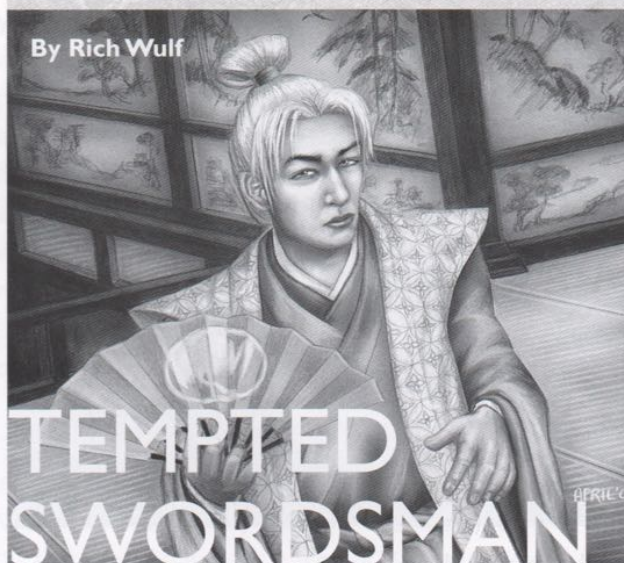
"You are a peculiar man, Yajinden," Meguro said, looking at the shugenja evenly.

"I am a genius," the Swordsmith replied, with no trace of humor. His blue eyes were cold.

Meguro did not press the matter further. He moved away, returning to the other guards. Yajinden returned his attention to the heart. He wove his hands about the sculpture in complex patterns, unraveling the illusion that had been woven around it. His earlier claim had not been a lie. There was no maho here nor any magic born of Rokugan. Long ago he had been commanded to never touch or seek this treasure. He had been forced to live every day knowing that it remained vulnerable, tucked away among the many treasures of the Imperial house. Iuchiban was dead now, and his commands had died with him.

Yajinden looked down at the treasure between his hands. What once had been a crystal sculpture was now an iron box, bound in thin chains. The Swordsmith cradled the box that contained his heart in his hands. At last he was his own master.

By Rich Wulf



Daidoji Shihei guards a terrible secret — he is damned.

When Daidoji Shihei discovered the Anvil of Despair, he kept the cursed artifact in guarded seclusion for several months before deciding what to do with it.

He was unwilling even to report its existence to his lord, Kikaze, for fear that Kikaze might attempt to use the Anvil and be corrupted by its influence. For months, Shihei sought a means by which the Anvil could be destroyed, but found nothing.

When tensions began to mount between the Lion and Crane, Shihei made a fateful decision. The Daidoji have always sacrificed their honor for the good of the clan, but where is that line drawn? Shihei decided that he must use the Anvil of Despair and craft weapons that would prepare his clan for the Lion's inevitable betrayal.

Soliciting the aid of Tsi Xiao, shamed member of the Tsi ronin family of smiths, Shihei commissioned several blades to be crafted on the Anvil in secret. As Xiao worked the Anvil, the Anvil began to guide him, encouraging him to make blood sacrifices to temper the steel. Shihei complied, offering the blood of criminals in line for execution. They would not be missed, and perhaps in the end their lives might serve a useful purpose.

Shihei himself now wields Satsugaisha, the finest of Tsi Xiao's creation. If he will risk the souls of the Daidoji to insure the future of the Crane Clan, then the first soul he risks will be his own.

TIMES OF TREACHERY



By Shawn Carman

A SCENARIO FOR THE L5R RPG: RANK I CHARACTERS

SYNOPSIS

This adventure is set during the late Diamond, early Lotus period. Although the events of this adventure are somewhat disconnected from the Empire at large, the conflict between the Emperor and Shogun is the backdrop for the events taking place in tiny Rojiro Mura, a village on the open plains west of the Shinomen Mori, south of the Unicorn Clan provinces and north of the Toritaka provinces that fall under the Crab Clan's jurisdiction. In this distant, forgotten corner of the Empire, a bitter and resentful magistrate has turned

his back on the oaths he swore to his family, his clan, and his Emperor, and has carved out his own petty fiefdom from the surrounding area. Now, his plans to extend his sphere of influence are almost complete, and he finds himself threatened by the most dangerous sort of individuals: a roaming band of player characters.

This scenario is decidedly less linear than most, and can be used in a number of ways. The events in the area are detailed on a timetable, and may be changed or prevented entirely depending upon the actions of the

player characters. Individual GMs are encouraged to modify the events or timetable to suit the needs of their campaigns as they see fit.

SCENARIO

Rojiro Mura has never been a particularly prestigious post. It is small, and extremely removed from anything of any importance. Because of the ever-present threat of invasion from the west (primarily in the form of roaming Shadowlands beasts, but also from the Moto family's many enemies beyond the Empire), the inherent dangers from the Shinomen Mori, the



fertile farmlands in the area, and a variety of other reasons (including, at one time, the relative proximity to the Tomb of Iuchiban), Rojiro Mura is home to an office for the Emerald Magistrates. Unfortunately for the village, the Emerald Champion and his subordinates rarely squander a talented magistrate on such a remote post, and instead the villagers have seen a steady stream of incompetent, untrustworthy, or simply insubordinate magistrates sent to oversee their village. One year ago, a new magistrate arrived, and Kitsu Tengoro has proven to be a different sort altogether.

Given his background and the unique political situation in the Empire at the present, Tengoro quickly decided to make the most of his poor fortune. With the conflict between the Shogun and Emperor in full swing, Tengoro quickly rationalized two things: the precedent had been set for a powerful military mind, such as Tengoro believed himself to be, to take power for no other reason than that he was able to do so, and that given this conflict, no one was going to pay any attention whatsoever to tiny Rojiro Mura and the surrounding lands. Tengoro quickly made it clear to the villagers and the residents of the even smaller farming settlements around it that he was the unquestioned ruler of all he surveyed.

Ironically, the villagers in the region saw nothing unusual about this

incident. The magistrates to which they had become accustomed tended to have large egos and controlling, even cruel, natures. Tengoro asserting his authority came as no surprise. When he insisted that all adult villagers begin weapons training, however, they quickly realized something was amiss.

After nearly a year, Tengoro has honed his small, private army into a reasonably well-trained fighting force supplemented by his magic. He has earned their loyalty by misreporting the harvest and allowing them to keep more food. When an Imperial official came to investigate the change in crop reports, Tengoro killed him. He and his men now know that they cannot turn back. They have stepped up their timetable and are planning to conquer a village two days' ride to the north. Once there, they will cement their position and move to the next. Tengoro's visions of a western fiefdom of his own are quickly growing.

LOCATIONS IN ROJIRO MURA

The Magistrate's Office

This is Tengoro's headquarters and the center of his tiny empire. He keeps all his personal belongings here, including a number of weapons that seem odd in the hands of a shugenja, even a Lion. There is a hidden chamber in the floor beneath a rug under Tengoro's

desk. There, he keeps his journals detailing his destiny and the progress he is making in honing his men, as well as the blades of the tax collector he killed only a few months previously. This door cannot be found without a dedicated search that would involve moving both the desk and the rug.

The House of Green Tea

This is the village's social center, such as it is. It appears normal, save for the number of yari standing in a cluster in the corner. The owner of the teahouse and his family are calm, reasonable people that Tengoro trusts to put visitors at ease in order to make them easier prey. The owner's wife has been struggling with a guilty conscience ever since the tax collector's murder. Any character with the Notice Emphasis of Investigation will recognize something is wrong with her on a roll against a TN 10.

Empty Warehouse

This large building seems oddly out of place in the village. The villagers claim that it was constructed years ago during a particularly bountiful harvest, and was used to store excess rice and grain until tax collection. Inspection of the interior (which Tengoro will be reluctant to permit) reveals hard-packed dirt and signs of recent use. An Investigation/Perception roll (TN 15) will allow any bushi or magistrate to determine that this building is being used as a dojo.

Rojiro Mura is a small, remote location with little to offer for travelers, even those who find themselves in such an odd corner of Rokugan. Involving the characters may seem difficult, but there are several options. The characters are Emerald Magistrates sent to investigate the disappearance of an Imperial tax collector. The characters temporarily in the service of a Miya cartographer, are scouting the area to confirm the accuracy of his maps. The characters may be guests or servants of a Crab or Unicorn daimyo, and have been asked to assist in securing the border by checking up on the handful of villages that lie between the two. The characters may be made aware that something unusual is going on in the area by Muhitsu, a monk from the Order of Heroes who has been monitoring Kitsu Tengoro's activities. Muhitsu will not tell the characters exactly what is happening, but will only tell them that they are needed in Rojiro Mura.

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

Day -2: The monk Muhitsu infiltrates the village and speaks to the wife of the local teahouse owner. He shares with her that the characters are on their way, and encourages her to help them in any way she can. If they do not uncover Tengoro's treachery on their own, he asks her to have them meet him on a hill one mile southwest of town so that he can guide them in the right direction.

Day 0: The characters arrive in Rojiro Mura. Tengoro meets with them and seems delighted to have guests. He claims that the tax collector never arrived, and appears genuinely concerned to hear of his unaccounted for disappearance. He arranges for rooms for the characters in the local teahouse.

Day 1: If by the end of the day the characters show no signs of leaving the village, Tengoro orders the teahouse owner to poison their tea. He uses a light dose of snake venom gathered from the plains (see page 162 in the LSR RPG). Assuming the characters survive, Tengoro kills the teahouse owner and plants clues blaming the tax collector's death on the owner.

Day 2: Angry at her husband's death and guilty over what has happened to her village, the teahouse owner's widow delivers the monk's message to the characters. Muhitsu meets with the characters outside of town and explains what Tengoro has done.

Day 3: If characters are still in the village, Tengoro grows impatient and gathers a half-dozen men. He and his men attack the characters openly in the street in an attempt to capture or kill them.

Day 5: If he has not been stopped, Tengoro and two-dozen trained ashigaru march north toward the first village on their agenda. The monk Muhitsu challenges Tengoro to a duel in a desperate attempt to stop him, but is overwhelmed when Tengoro instead orders his men to attack.

Day 12: A force of Unicorn cavalry descend from the north after hearing tales of Tengoro's campaign. The rogue magistrate and his followers are killed, as well as a large contingency of innocents who are caught in the midst of the battle or who are mistaken for Tengoro's supporters by the Unicorn. Many lives are lost, and the Order of Heroes mourns for their failure to prevent it.

NPCS

Muhitsu

Air: 2
Reflexes 4
Earth: 3
Fire: 3
Water: 2
Perception 4
Void: 4
School/Rank: Order of Heroes Monk 2
Glory: 3.6
Status: 0
Honor: 2.3
Advantages: *Bland, Clear Thinker, Luck (6)*
Disadvantages: *None*
Kiho: *Cleansing the Spirit, Flame Fist, Slap the Wave, Way of the Willow, Will of Destiny*
Skills: *Athletics 3, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Defense 3, Jiu-jitsu 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Meditation 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 3, Theology (Fortunes) 4, Underworld 2*

Kitsu Tengoro

Air: 4
Earth: 3
Fire: 3
Water: 3
Perception 4
Void: 2
School/Rank: Kitsuki Courtier 2
Glory: 2.6
Status: 1.8
Honor: 1.7
Advantages: *Heart of Vengeance (Imperial families), Magic Resistance (4)*
Disadvantages: *Benten's Curse, Black Sheep*
Skills: *Courtier (Gossip) 3, Defense 3, Etiquette (Bureaucracy) 2, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: History 2, Meditation 3, Theology 1*

Peasant Insurrectionists

Air: 2
Earth: 3
Stamina 4
Fire: 2
Water: 3
Void: 1
School/Rank: Ronin Warrior 1
Glory: 0.0
Status: 0.2
Honor: 1.1
Advantages: *Crafty*
Disadvantages: *Overconfident*
Skills: *Athletics 2, Deceit 3, Defense 3, Hunting 1, Knives 2, Spears 3, Stealth 3*

Note: Tengoro's training for his followers has not included training with the katana or bows, as he has no such weapons to offer his men, nor the resources to make them. Instead, they have been equipped with yari. This is why they lack the Kenjutsu and Kyujutsu Skills from the normal starting Skills of the Ronin Warrior School.

NEW MECHANICS

The Order of Heroes

The Order of Heroes was, until rather recently, a distinct splinter group within the Order of Strength, the monastic sect devoted to Bishamon, Fortune of Strength. The sect's origins are unclear, but it is believed to have been created by a monk named Koan, a former shugenja who won the Tournament of Thunder in the year 912. After honing his art, the shugenja retired and joined the Order of Strength, where he sought out others who shared his strange beliefs: Koan believed that samurai, while noble and capable warriors, could not truly achieve their potential, and thus their destiny, if they were not presented with adversity. Koan and his adherents began seeking out dangerous problems throughout the Empire, bandit groups, Bloodspeaker cells, unchecked oni and the like, and arranging for samurai to come into contact with them. When it was revealed that Matsu Goemon had become the Fortune of Heroes, the current head of the sect, also named Koan, petitioned the Brotherhood to form a new sect devoted to the Fortune. The Brotherhood agreed.

Other more traditional sects within the Brotherhood denounce the Order of Heroes for the activist role they take in events throughout the Empire. Many believe that achieving an enlightened spirit can only be accomplished by finding one's individual path; and that

TIMES OF TREACHERY (continued)

the Order's actions force samurai to follow a predetermined path. Recently, Koan gathered together a select group of samurai and aided them in defending the tiny Crossroads Village from a large band of ruthless bandits. When word of the incident spread throughout the Empire, the Emperor declared the seven samurai to be the Champions of Bushido, and credited each one with embodying a different tenet of that code.

Monk Temple: Order of Heroes

Primary Devotion: The Fortunes

(Specifically Goemon, Fortune of Heroes)

Honor: 2.5

Skills: *Athletics, Jiu-jitsu, Lore: Heraldry, Meditation, Theology, any two Skills*

Technique: You gain Glory normally through skirmishes, despite the fact that most monks do not. When spending a Void Point to gain 1k1 to a roll, you may add an additional bonus to the total equal to your Glory Rank.

New Kiho: Will of Destiny

Element: Void

Type: Kharmic

Mastery: 5

The Order of Heroes believes that each soul's destiny is dormant, and requires guidance and shaping in order to truly achieve that for which it was created. By drawing upon your inner strength, you may overcome virtually any obstacle. By spending a Void Point to activate this Kiho, you may roll a number of additional dice equal to your Glory Rank on any Bugei Skill roll. This bonus is only conferred to a single roll per Void Point spent. Activating this Kiho does not count as an action, and may be done immediately before the roll in question is to be made.

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Each order **must** be accompanied by this order form. All selections are limited by availability — first come, first served. Please contact Customer Service at (909) 390-5444 if you do not receive your order after six weeks. Orders without an S.A.S.E.* will be given lowest priority.

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ITEM	COST: KOKU	QTY	SUBTOTAL
HIDA TAKUJI	20 KOKU		
KAIU SUGIMOTO	20 KOKU		
DAIDOJI UJI	20 KOKU		
KAKITA KIYONOBU	20 KOKU		
HITOMI KOBAI	20 KOKU		
HITOMI MORIMASA	20 KOKU		
HOSHI KAEUNG	20 KOKU		
MATSU SANRAKU	20 KOKU		
YORITOMO BANTARU	20 KOKU		
YORITOMO KAIGEN	20 KOKU		
RYOKEN	20 KOKU		
SHIBA NINGEN	20 KOKU		
CZINN'TCH	20 KOKU		
NEM' TEK	20 KOKU		
BAYUSHI KAN	20 KOKU		
BAYUSHI SHUN	20 KOKU		
DAIGOTSU YAJINDEN	20 KOKU		
MINIKUI NO ONI	20 KOKU		
IUCHI LIXUE	20 KOKU		
MOTO KINNOJO	20 KOKU		
BARAUNGHAR TACTICS	20 KOKU		
COUNTERMOVE	20 KOKU		
DARK FATE	20 KOKU		
STRIKE AT THE HEAD	20 KOKU		
TACTICS OF THE BEAR	20 KOKU		
COMPASSION	20 KOKU		
COURTESY	20 KOKU		
DUTY	20 KOKU		
HONESTY	20 KOKU		
HONOR	20 KOKU		
SINCERITY	20 KOKU		
SEAL THE WAY	20 KOKU		
MASAHIGI'S BLADE	20 KOKU		
GRAND TOTAL			

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HLD18

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