

THE
IMPERIAL

HERALD

VOL. 2 / NO. 4

WAY OF THE
NINJA

SNEAK PREVIEW

MANTIS
DIARIES
REVEALED

1,000 YEARS
OF DARKNESS
Full Preview Inside

BROKEN
THUNDER

by Rich Wulf

ALSO:
GENCON AND ORIGINS EVENT SCHEDULE
KOKU REDEMPTION





Illus. Craig Maher © 2002 AEG

SEASON OF THE Mantis

The Mantis are a clan divided. Their lord Aramasu is dead, slain by an unknown assassin. His position has been assumed by the young and untested Yoritomo Kitao, whom many in the Empire regard as little more than a pirate. But a faction within the clan is devoted to exposing her treachery and restoring the proper order to the clan. Old allies and enemies will be radically altered, and new alliances and conflicts will be born. Who will reap the benefit of this upheaval?

Now is the Season of the Mantis.

This will be a tale of ambition.



For more information on Legend of the Five Rings products, visit us at l5r.alderac.com

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THE
IMPERIAL

HERALD

THE OFFICIAL LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS™ QUARTERLY

VOL. 2 / NO. 4



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Editorial

It's midnight; the Imperial Herald goes to press tomorrow, and Ray Lau, the L5R Brand Manager, just asked me to write an editorial. "Good Grief," I thought, "what am I going to write about?"

Well, anyway, it's summer. For most people, summer is family vacations, SPF 30 all over your face, taking care of younger siblings and going to the movies. What does summer mean for the gamer? Well, it means SPF 45 all over everywhere, lots of movies and gaming galore. Now, while I am not really sure this differs from the rest of the year, there are a few events that define summer, namely the big cons. Origins, GenCon, DragonCon, MegaCon, and UK GenCon are only a few of the conventions in store for the lucky gamer at this time of year.

What is summer without a trek to one of these cons? In my humble opinion, if you have not pulled an all-nighter with five others in a four-seat, four-cylinder car, on the way to your favorite con to play in an L5R tournament, then you have not really lived summer life as it was meant to be. And if you have not yet completed your summer road trip schedule, plan one today: there's still time.

Summer also marks the grandest of times for a gaming company: new releases, big tournaments, and cool promotions. The majority of the Kotei have been completed. Organized Play is up and running; you can access your ranking online, any time, at www.organizedplay.com. The L5R Experience is the greatest promotion ever for Legend of the Five Rings; thank you all for making it a reality. Origins and GenCon are filled with L5R events (see this issue for a complete listing). Come and play with us!

Alas, summer always comes to an end. And since I don't know when I'll get to write another editorial, I would like to take this opportunity to say "Thank you." Thank you to the most loyal fans a game could have; the Legend of the Five Rings fans are the greatest. Thank you all for being a part of the longest running Interactive Storyline CCG. We have only just begun.

— Maureen "Tsuko" Yates





It has been long since last I walked the paths of Ootosan Uchi and smelled the cherry blossoms in bloom, or saw the sapphire blue skies of the lands of Amaterasu. It lifts my spirit to return again to these places that I know so well, and to come among you, those whom I hold in such great respect.

As you know, our Empire has been rocked by changes in the past several years. We have seen the tides of fortune ebb and flow, carried on the backs of heroes from every province of Rokugan. Indeed, even within the halls of the Houses of Records there have been disruptions, gaps in the ledgers of deeds and even in the lists of those who owe fealty to the Great Clans and other factions within our realm.

By order of the Emerald Magistrate, I have been asked to return to the Emerald Empire to serve once again. While I have been beyond the borders of Rokugan, I have been studying the ways of those in far lands who face similar problems; the keeping

Members of the Imperial Assembly, Esteemed Rokugani, and Honored Dignitaries!

of accurate records, the knowledge of relative strengths, and the presentation of the history of our struggles. I am pleased to announce that we will all shortly benefit from these studies, and that soon each of you will know where you stand in the numbering of the Heroes of Rokugan!

As many of you know, I left Wizards of the Coast last year to start a brand new business, dedicated to the idea that most games can benefit from using the ideas WotC pioneered for "organized play." I am very pleased to announce that Alderac Entertainment Group has agreed to use the services and systems I've developed to enhance the *Legend of the Five Rings* experience. "Organized play" refers to the process of creating a player network, scheduling events for those players to take part in,

recording the results of those events, and presenting player ratings based on the results. My new venture (cleverly named "OrganizedPlay") provides software and solutions for publishers who want to implement that strategy for their games. This process will have several steps, some of which are already complete, and others which will be finished by the time we all go to Milwaukee for GenCon this year.

We have started by creating a special section of the web devoted just to the Imperial Assembly. This content will eventually be integrated directly into the L5R web site (l5r.alderac.com). Temporarily, you can get access to this new material by pointing your browser at: www.organizedplay.com/IA The following notes refer to materials accessible via this web site.

by Ryan Dancey

Imperial Assembly

We have already migrated the Imperial Assembly into the OrganizedPlay ("OP") system. All of your data has been uploaded into the OP databases, and we have created an on-line mechanism for you to gain access to your IA account. In addition, we've implemented a totally automated registration system that will allow new Assembly members to get signed up on-line without delay.

To register as a brand-new Imperial Assembly member, click the "Register for Membership" button, and follow the instructions.

If you already have a valid Imperial Assembly membership, click "Activate an Existing Membership". This tool sets up an OP user identity for you, and allows you to set your privacy options, review your contact information, select a clan or faction, and perform other housekeeping details.

Once you've set up a new membership or activated an existing one, you can return at any time and click the "View Your Membership Info" button to view and edit your personal settings.

It is critical that you Activate your membership if you're a current Assembly member. In the future, mailing lists (including the mailing list for the Herald) will be generated via the OP system, and if you have not Activated your membership you will not receive those mailings. In addition, we're establishing new Assembly IDs, and we need you to activate your membership so you can receive a new ID card and Assembly number. You'll need that card to participate in future sanctioned L5R events, and the only way to get it is to register as a new member or Activate your existing membership.

Sanctioned Events

The Assembly is going to begin sanctioning events again. The method will resemble the original one at Five Rings Publishing, which was also used for a while at Wizards of the Coast.

To request that an event be sanctioned, click the "Request Event Sanctioning" button and follow the instructions. An AEG staff member will be reviewing

these requests regularly and you will be notified automatically when your event is sanctioned.

All players in sanctioned events who wish to receive player rankings need to be members of the Imperial Assembly.

You can view a list of sanctioned events by clicking the "View Event Calendar" button. On the calendar screen you'll be able to sort the list displayed by date, and by location.

Results and Rankings

There are two ways that the results from a sanctioned event get posted to the system. First, the event organizer can click the "Report A Sanctioned Event Result" button and report results on-line. For larger events, or for those organizers who choose not to use the web-based reporting tool, we can accept batch reporting. If you are interested in reporting via an off-line batch, click the "Report A Sanctioned Event Results" button, then click the link for "Off-Line Batch Reporting Instructions".

When reporting a result, the Assembly needs match play information. Match play information means that we need to know the Assembly ID numbers of each player in each match, who won (or if the game was a tie) and the clan or faction of each player in each match.

We are going to be updating the system with all the result reports that have been received at the AEG offices. Those results were comprised only of individual play results (i.e., who played, and whether they won or lost a game). As a result, the older data will be somewhat less complete, and will not be used to calculate rating points. These results will still appear in your win/loss score.

To view the standings in the Assembly, click the "View Current Standings" button. You will be presented with a screen showing the scores of the players in the Assembly by "Player Points". In addition, you can view the Win/Loss records and the "Rating" results. Within each type of score, you can elect to see totals by player, or totals by clan or faction. To change categories, click the hyperlink of the category you want to view. To change between player totals and faction totals, click the

hyperlink for the kind of result you wish to view.

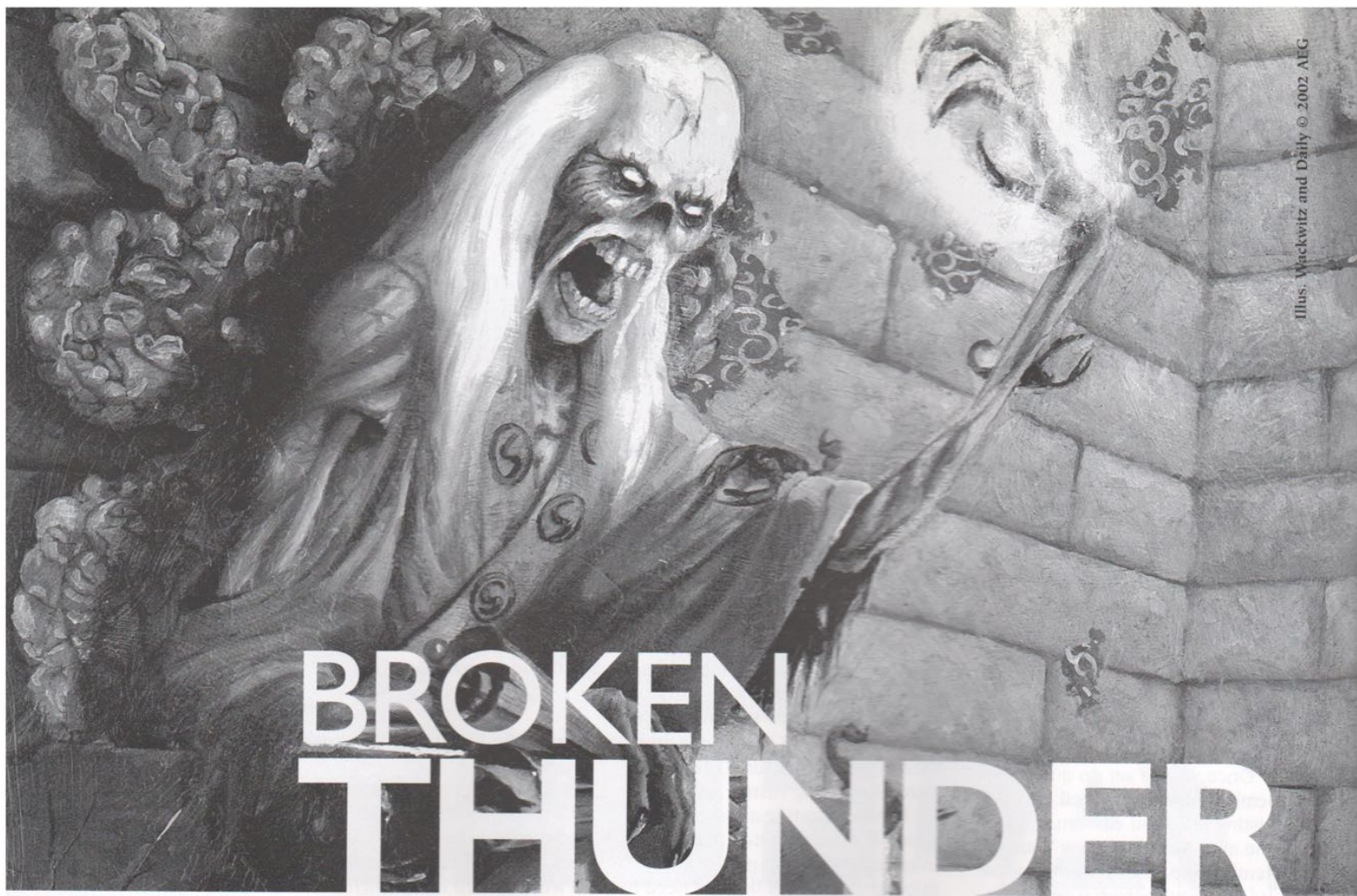
On the Faction Totals pages, you can see the detail of play by each person who reported results for that faction at the bottom of the page. It is possible for a player to report a result for a faction other than that they have sworn fealty to in the Assembly. A player's combined score includes the results from all factions that player has played; the Faction Totals will show just that faction's information for each player.

A brief explanation of the ranking categories is probably in order.

Player Points: These are points that you earn just for participating in a sanctioned event. They do not reflect your successes or failures. In the future, Player Points may be available for other kinds of events as well.

Win/Loss: This information tells you how you performed in play, but doesn't give you a sense of how tough your opposition was. The system is biased in favor of wins, so it will rank a person with 10 wins and 20 losses higher than a person with 5 wins and 10 losses.

Rating: Currently, we are calculating ratings using the ELO method, though we may use a couple of different ratings systems in the future. Your ELO score is a relative measure of how tough your opponents were and how well you did against them. When you beat someone with an ELO score higher than yours, you gain a lot of ELO points. When you beat someone with an ELO score lower than yours, you gain fewer points. If you beat someone who is much worse than you, you might get no points! We started our ELO rankings at 1,200 points. Generally speaking, you can use ELO scores to compare the skill level of two opponents; generally, the player with the higher ELO score has performed better in the past than the player with the lower ELO score.



BROKEN THUNDER

So this is what it feels like to die, thought Isawa Tadaka.

by Rich Wulf
& Shawn Carman

The palace shook with the sound of thunder. Doji Hoturi's eyes narrowed as he peered through an archery slot. Outside, he could hardly see the battlefield for the smoke. Lightning gouged the earth at the command of unseen shugenja. He could smell the reek of the walking dead. The banners of the clans stood above the chaos. Most were torn, burnt and damaged.

"It is only a battle," the stranger said. "You have seen this before."

"Not like this," Hoturi said.

"We came to save the Empire from Jigoku, but it is already here. What victory can we yet find amid such loss?"

"You might be surprised how much you have left to lose," the stranger said. "There is still hope."

"At what cost? We are samurai planning to kill the Emperor. If we win this battle, what purpose would we serve afterward?"

The stranger shrugged. "If I merely gave you the answer, you would learn nothing."

Hoturi chuckled.

"Think upon it," the stranger said.

"I must see to the others."

The Hooded Ronin stepped back into the shadows, leaving Hoturi alone. The Crane watched the battle alone for a long time.

* * *

Hida Yakamo scowled when he saw her enter — the girl who had taken his hand. "Fortunes," the Crab swore, glancing at Toturi. "Don't tell me she's one of us?"

Toturi nodded briefly. "Do you have a problem with that?" he said, fixing the Crab with his typical cool stare.

Yakamo shook his head. "I know my duty."

Toturi nodded.

"If we fail because of her," Yakamo whispered, "I'll kill her."

Toturi nodded again.

"When this is done, I want to have a talk with whoever picked the Seven Thunders," the Crab added sarcastically.

"You would challenge the forces of destiny itself?" the ethereal voice of Togashi Yokuni echoed moments before the great Dragon entered the darkened chamber. "You will need such bravado, I think."

"Are we ready?" Yakamo asked tersely. "Let's get this over with!"

Toturi looked at the Crab. "Why so impatient?"

"We're about to fight a god," Yakamo said. "Either we'll win or we'll die. The Crab have been waiting for this for eleven centuries. I'm tired of waiting."

"We will begin," Yokuni said, "as soon as the Phoenix arrives."

The doors behind them opened.

* * *

So this is what it feels like to die, Isawa Tadaka thought as Tsukune and Osugi helped him enter the secret passage. The other Thunders waited for him. With a strange clarity he noted the shock on their faces. Tadaka's Tainted flesh was scorched and bloodied from his duel with Isawa Tsuke.

Tsukune begged Togashi Yokuni not to force Tadaka to enter the battle, but she may as well have begged a mountain. The decision was not Yokuni's; Tadaka would not allow himself to be carried from this place. Better that he die on his feet, fulfilling his destiny, than to die on his back in a tent. Finally, Tsukune and Osugi turned to leave. Osugi looked back, giving him a comforting smile. Tadaka would have smiled in return, but for the bandages covering his ruined face. Tsukune never looked back. Tadaka had never truly told her how he felt, not really. It was a terrible thing, to die with regret, but it was no less than he deserved. His quest for the Black Scrolls had destroyed his clan.

Perhaps redemption was too much to hope for.

The Master of Earth looked up just as the doors to the throne room opened.

* * *

Yokuni said something as they prepared to enter the throne room. Otaku Kamoko did not hear him; her mind was on the fight. The Unicorn samurai-ko held her blade ready, shifting her weight from foot to foot. She only regretted that this demon was too cowardly to meet them outside, where she could face him mounted on the back of noble Hachiman. Kamoko chuckled at the prospect, launching herself eagerly into the throne room.

The Battle Maiden paused, eyes wide with astonishment. Two great dragons twisted in mortal combat.

A moment before, one had been Togashi Yokuni; the other had been the Emperor. Seeing two of the Kami in their true forms filled the Battle Maiden's heart with fear for the first time.

With a loud snap, Yokuni's serpentine body hung limp in the claws of his dark brother. Fu Leng cast the defeated creature to the floor; the dragon vanished, replaced by the body of Togashi Yokuni. The Emperor

appeared as well, seated in the cracked throne, smirking in victory.

Kamoko paused, sword ready. For a moment, she had the feeling that something was wrong, like a missed beat in a steady rhythm. Shaking off the feeling, she held her katana high and charged.

* * *

Muramoto Hitomi knelt over Togashi's body, heart pounding. She barely flinched as Kamoko hit the wall, knocked aside by a single blow from the Emperor. Yakamo and Tadaka charged next; she ignored the battle. Her right hand — the Obsidian Hand — moved of its own accord, fingers clenching over the fallen Kami's chest. The Hand seemed eager to taste his blood, to tear out his heart and rend the meat. She found the urge hard to resist. The Dragon Champion's helm was gone; his face was peaceful.

"Do it," Yokuni whispered. "Fulfill your destiny. Complete the riddle."

Hitomi paused, fingers hovering above Yokuni's heart. Her mind, usually clear and focused, filled with questions. Could she kill her own daimyo? Why should she not? This creature who had brought so much pain into her life, had sent her brother to his death so his precious Day of Thunder could continue as planned. Hitomi looked up at the battle. Hida Yakamo glanced back, looking at her with his black, pig-like eyes. He was not worth Satsu's life.

"My lord," Hitomi said, leaning low to whisper in Togashi Yokuni's ear. "There will be no more riddles. Live, and relish your failure."

Hitomi saw something in Yokuni's eyes at that moment that she had never seen before — surprise.

With supreme satisfaction, she turned and left the throne room.

* * *



Illus. Matt Wilson © 2002 AEG

Hitomi!" Toturi shouted as the Dragon exited. "Where are you going?"

"I told you," Hida Yakamo shouted, struggling as great chains of shadow bound him at Fu Leng's command. "I warned you not to trust her!" On the floor beside Yakamo, Isawa Tadaka's body lay smoking. Fu Leng had turned the Master of Earth's own purifying magic against his Tainted body.

The Emperor chuckled. "You may come to envy her, Thunders," he said. "She will be the only one who survives this day."

Toturi scowled as he drew his blade. "You are no Emperor!" Hoturi shouted in defiance.

"And you are no god," the Emperor said. "Fight me, and die."

"He is correct," the Hooded Ronin said quietly. "You cannot win; Hitomi has made her choice. The reign of darkness begins."



"No!" shouted Doji Hoturi.

The fallen Lion met his friend's gaze and nodded. Together, they charged. Toturi's blade swept cleanly through the Emperor's neck; Hoturi's pierced his heart.

The Emperor did not flinch. His head did not fall, but simply hovered above his neck. He filled the room with cackling laughter and buried his fist in Doji Hoturi's chest. With a backhand swipe, he knocked Toturi's katana from his hands.

"Thunders!" Toturi swore, staggering backwards.

At Toturi's side, the ravaged Master of Earth staggered to his feet. Yakamo stood beside them as well, shattered chains hanging from his wrists and ankles. "Well, general?" Yakamo asked. "What do we do now?"

"You run," Tadaka replied. "I die."

"Tadaka, what are you—" was as far as Toturi got before the Master of Earth began his spell. With a

brilliant explosion of energy, Tadaka consumed the throne room in fire.

"We are lost," Toturi whispered, backing into the hall.

"Not yet, general," Yakamo replied. Seizing the Black Lion by the arm, he turned and ran.

* * *

The Emperor's hand tightened about Bayushi Kachiko's throat. A savage grin spread across Fu Leng's features. In his other hand, he clutched the Twelfth Black Scroll, torn from Togashi's chest, firmly sealed. Black energy crackled in the wounds Toturi and Hoturi had given him. How had Yokuni expected them to fight something like this?

"A trap all along," he said, looking at the scroll with a bemused expression. "Amusing..." He looked into Kachiko's eyes. "Your plan failed. Shinsei chose his Thunders poorly."

Kachiko said nothing.

"Silent, for once?" Fu Leng laughed. "Togashi is dead. Soon, your Empire will be dead. You have lost. Isn't this where you try to insinuate yourself into the graces of the victor, as you always do?"

"Have you won?" she said hoarsely, meeting his stare.

Fu Leng frowned. "Is there any doubt?"

"Kill me, then," she spat in his face. "I would rather die than see the Empire ruled by you! You can destroy Rokugan, Fu Leng, but only an Emperor can rule it!"

Fu Leng sighed and released his grip. Kachiko crumpled to the floor in a heap. "How sad," he said, tucking the Black Scroll behind his obi. "Ever the manipulator, even with your death imminent. What do you hope to accomplish? Do you even know? Or are you simply hoping for the best?"

Kachiko said nothing, but simply continued to stare into the Dark God's eyes.

"Fine, then," he said with a tolerant chuckle. "If all you wish is survival, then that is what I shall give you. I am, after all, a benevolent god, am I not?" His smile chilled her even more than his scowl. "You will serve me as you did before — as Empress and concubine. I will rule Rokugan as Emperor. At my side you shall witness a thousand years of darkness." He knelt and pulled her closer, his breath cold upon her cheek. "You will remember that the Empire I create was fashioned at your request, and that when you had a chance to stop me... you failed."

With a shove, he pushed her away, leaving her alone in the throne room with the bodies of the fallen. Kachiko's fingers gingerly touched her sore throat. Tears ran down her cheeks. She had saved the Empire from outright destruction, but would rule by the dark god bring an even worse fate?

**To be continued in
1,000 Years of Darkness.**

GENCON 2002 / ORIGINS 2002 SCHEDULE

Packed with a ton of events, you can't afford to miss this year's Origins or Gencon. We've got thousands of dollars worth of prizes to give away and they've got your name on them. Come and get them!

Origins 2002 Schedule

All Weekend	
L5R CCG Skirmishing	
Thursday	
12 PM L5R CCG Team Tournament	
2 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Intro Adventure	
Friday	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Intro Adventure	
11 AM L5R CCG National Championship — Open	
2 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Advanced Adventure	
2 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Advanced Adventure	
7 PM Strategic L5R CCG	
7 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Advanced Adventure	
Saturday	
10 AM L5R Clan War Miniatures Tournament	
10 AM L5R RPG GM Seminar	
11 AM L5R CCG Storyline Tournament	
Battle in Otosan Uchi: Forbidden City	
2 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Advanced Adventure	
2 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan	
Test of the Emerald Champion	
6 PM AEG CCG Triathlons	
7 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Advanced Adventure	
Sunday	
10 AM L5R CCG Multiplayer	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Advanced Adventure	

Gencon 2002 Schedule

All Weekend	
L5R CCG Skirmishing	
Thursday	
12 PM L5R CCG Qualifiers 1	
12 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
12 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
2 PM L5R CCG Team Invitational	
4 PM L5R CCG Qualifiers 2	
4 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
4 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
7 PM L5R CCG Strategic L5R	
Friday	
10 AM L5R CCG Qualifiers 3	
10 AM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
12 PM L5R CCG Invitational	
2 PM L5R CCG Qualifiers 4	
2 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
2 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
7 PM AEG CCG Triathlons	
7 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
Saturday	
10 AM L5R CCG Storyline World Championship Semi-Finals	
10 AM L5R Clan War Miniatures Tournament	
10 AM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
2 PM L5R 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	
2 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
4 PM L5R CCG Team Tournaments	
7 PM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure	
Sunday	
10 AM L5R CCG Storyline World Championship Finals	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure 1	
10 AM L5R d20 RPG Rokugan Adventure 2	
12 PM 2nd Edition RPG Adventure	

CCG

With the exception of the National Championship at Origins, *all* L5R CCG events are Strict Gold.

Skirmishing

Don't have time for a full-blown tournament? Or are you in them all and you still can't get enough? Check in with us in the CCG room, and get a badge and rules to play in the weekend-long skirmish league for *Warlord*, *Legend of the Five Rings*, or *7th Sea*.

L5R Team Tournament

Do you work well with others? Pair up and face other teams in this alternative play style and find out for yourself. Please arrive in the tournament room 30 minutes early for tournament processing.

L5R OPEN National Championship

Everything goes in this *open format* tournament! This is for the US National Championship. Are you the best in the country? You can prove it here and win a seed in the World Championship at Gencon 2002.

L5R CCG Storyline Tournament

Change the world and affect the storyline. Here is your chance to make a real difference in the L5R world. Will you take your clan to the top and reap the rewards? Or will you forego this opportunity and watch your clan fall?

Strategic L5R

Introduced in 1997, Strategic L5R offers a refreshing new way to play *Legend of the Five Rings*. Described as a cross between a board game, a strategy game and a card game, Strategic L5R offers players a unique look at large-scale combat in Rokugan. Please arrive in the tournament room 30 minutes early for tournament processing.

L5R CCG Team Invitational

3-Man Team tournament for Kotei Winners, Warlords, Hatamotos, and Standard Bearers.

L5R CCG Qualifiers

The top 16 advance to Saturday's Storyline World Championship. Play against the best of the best and carve a

path in Rokugan's history. A player may participate in only one Qualifier each day.

L5R CCG Invitational

Singles Swiss tournament for Kotei Winners, Warlords, Hatamotos, and Standard Bearers.

AEG CCG Triathlon Championships

Play in this triathlon event where you fight for the AEG championship crown. Check our website at www.alderac.com for more details.

L5R CCG Storyline

World Championship Finals

By invitation only. The finale to an extraordinary weekend, the final 16 duke it out for the title of L5R World Champion 2002. The reading of the storyline results and the award ceremony will be at the end of this tournament. Don't miss it!

RPG

L5R 2nd Edition RPG

Intro/Advanced Adventure

Return to the Age of Heroes. The L5R 2nd Edition RPG offers a completely revised look at the culture, history, and background of the Emerald Empire. Roleplay in a world where samurai live the line between life and death, glory and honor. Pre-generated characters will be provided.

L5R RPG d20 System™

Intro/Advanced Adventure

Return to the Age of Heroes. Come and experience Rokugan in the new d20 System™. Pre-generated characters will be provided.

L5R GM Seminar

Meet the designers of this rich and extraordinary world. Get your questions answered by AEG's design team.

CLAN WAR

Clan War Storyline Tournament

The time to make a change is now. Participate in L5R's mass combat miniatures game, *Clan War*, and help shape the future of the Emerald Empire. Storyline effects will be revealed at the time of the tournament.



In 1995, a small company in Ontario, California decided that it would try its hand at the collectible card game business. With nothing more than a gaming magazine, an engineering degree, and tremendous heart, *Legend of the Five Rings* was born.

In its short lifetime, *Legend of the Five Rings* has set standards in the gaming industry that have been imitated, but never surpassed. For the first time, L5R integrated an immersive storyline into the core of a collectible card game design. It created an environment where players were allowed to make very real choices about the direction of the storyline through player voting and tournaments.

It was AEG's great good fortune that these innovations attracted a wonderful community of players. As evidenced at GenCon, Kotei events, and your local stores, L5R brings the best out in people.

In a game where honor and duty are more important than sword and steel, L5R promotes respect among its players. For instance, players bow to each other in respect before the start of a match and shake hands at its end. In most large L5R events, a sportsmanship award is given to one star player.

Enter Stage Left: the L5R Experience.

Welcome to the L5R Experience, one of our biggest L5R promotions in AEG history. With your help, we want it to send the message: "L5R is more than just a game, it's an experience!" We want to take this opportunity to expose new

One of the biggest L5R promotions in AEG history.

players to L5R's interactive storyline, great game system, Koku redemption program, and fan club. Through these and many other facets of the L5R gem, together we can immerse players in the L5R world.

Here's our plan — and we'll need your help.

You received a special gift package (the L5R Experience Kit) in addition to your Imperial Herald #4. Give this package to a brand new player, introducing him or her to the wonderful world of L5R. Each package contains the following:

L5R Experience Kit

1 L5R Rulebook

2 Demo Decks: Prebuilt Crane and Scorpion decks, so new players immediately have cards to play with. These two decks are well balanced against each other and are an excellent introduction to L5R.

1 Herald Lite: This is a miniaturized version of our standard Imperial Heralds. It includes a short history of the game line (L5R community), an introductory story (immersive storyline), an exclusive cutout offer for a free rare card (Koku Redemption), and a vote on how the introductory story should end (interactive storyline). The Herald

Lite exposes new players to all the benefits associated with being an L5R player.

1 L5R Experience Poster

There is no better way to attract a friend to play a new game than through a demonstration and good testimony from you.

And if that's not enough, we're also going to send 10 L5R Experience kits to any L5R store interested in participating. We'd like to give everyone to get a chance to try L5R. To top it off, we're going to include an exclusive storyline tournament for that store designed specifically for your friend and other new players. After all, when it comes down to it, that's what L5R is all about!

This is a great opportunity and fantastic way for you to start up that buddy who's always been interested but never had the time. With a little help from us, you can get someone to join you in playing one of the best games on the market.



L5R CCG RANKINGS

These are the top ten players of each clan, as of April 15th, 2002. Check l5r.alderac.com for more recent tournament rankings!

Crane

330	John Ling – Montgomery, AL
300	John Stevens – Greensboro, NC
240	Casey Bennett – Terrehaute, IN
240	Brandon Flores – Milwaukee, WI
225	Hazel Warde – Tuscaloosa, AL
180	Andy Sim – Canyon Country, CA
180	Patrick Green – Peoria, IL
165	Brian Rasmussen – Denmark
150	Justin Schenck – Peoria, IL
150	Terry Madden – Menomonee Falls, WI

Crab

810	Philippe Pinsonneault – Quebec, Canada
555	Jason Hawkins – Los Angeles, CA
240	Lucas Twyman – Lexington, KY
180	Louis Branch – Milwaukee, WI
180	Charlotte Ashley – Toronto, ONT
165	Daniel Tomotsugu – Concord, ONT
150	Mark Armitage – Southampton, UK
135	Don Majors – Madison, WI
135	Chad Jensen – Santa Rosa, CA
120	Alexander Skrabut – Allston, MA

Dragon

795	Greg Osborn – Michigan City, IN
240	Brian Poole – Pembroke Pines, FL
225	Fotis Flevotomos – Athens, Greece
210	Kelly Garcia – Thousand Oaks, CA
180	Rob Bowman – Wilmington, DE
180	Dana Osborn – Michigan City, IN
165	Kevin Christopher – Freetown, MA
165	Marc Messner – Stuttgart, Germany
165	Kraig Theriault – Queensbury, NY
150	Paul Jacoby – Metz, France

Lion

510	Travis Brown – Santee, CA
435	Jason Van Wert – Toronto, ONT
315	Ioannis Reppas – Athens, Greece
240	David Raynor – Townson, MD
240	Travis O'Brien – Maxwell AFB
225	Jim O'Neil – Calgary, AB
225	Davona Brown – Three Oaks, MI
180	Jowel Mazorra – Davie, FL
165	Rob Tollefson – Bellevue, NE
165	Andrew Dupy – Montgomery, AL

Phoenix

450	Chris Kulisz – Toronto, ONT
225	Art Reid – Fullerton, CA
180	Eric Swanson – Rapid City, SD
180	Eric Neuman – Montgomery, AL
180	Michel Streng – Netherlands
165	Will Campbell – Sydney, Australia
150	Jason Brown – Newbury Park, CA
150	Marco Slifer – Highland, IN
150	Doug Luman – Peoria, IL
135	Jeremy Bloyd – Bettendorf, IA

Scorpion

930	David Brown – Anderson, IN
270	Timothy Neal – Salem, NC
255	Thomas Vesterkoeb – Denmark
255	David Chow – Toronto, ONT
255	Jubal Kerchner-Pirrone – Queensbury, NY
195	Nikos Parnithos – Athens, Greece
165	Chris Paliogiorgos – Athens, Greece
150	Marc Orr – Ashland, OR
150	Derrick Slowikowski – Hooksett, NH
135	Dan Lazarus – San Jose, CA

Shadowlands

270	James Jackson – Nottinghamshire, UK
180	Sam Pulley – Cornelius, NC
180	Derrick Correia – St. Fall River, MA
165	Jens Schlossgartenstr – Germany
150	Adem Diephouse – Cedar Falls, IA
150	Britain Babione – Calgary, AB
135	Richard Jones – Columbia, MD
135	Mike Colson – Highland, IN
105	Lars Ruskaer – Denmark
105	Tim Tran – Cabramatta, Australia

Unicorn

315	Ray Daugherty – Latham, NY
210	Adrian Dion – Etobicoke, ONT
195	Robert Kenny – Toronto, ONT
180	Jonathan Heep – Waukesha, WI
165	Ben Cumming – St. Paul, MN
150	Ryan Carter – Yasilant, MI
135	Ralf Loshemer – Merzig, Germany
135	Shannon Price – Pelham, NC
120	Kirk Carroll – Cornolius, NC
120	Kyle Jones – Buena Park, CA



PACING THE GAME

In the tournament scene, speed is the name of the game. Your main focus is to get to your goal as fast as possible, while holding off your opponent from doing the same thing. This isn't just what you're thinking; your opponent has the same mindset. One key to success is taking advantage of play style, mechanics, or strategies to best suit your position in the game.

Handling blitzing military is easier than people let on. The best way to do it is to take advantage of each precious action you have in battle. Cards that offer a decent bang for the buck include: *To Do*

What We Must, *Iaijutsu Duel*, *Fist of the Earth*, and *Purity of Spirit*.

Lethal actions are preferred, even if you must sacrifice a unit in trade. The aim of this strategy is to exchange units you've spent few resources on for units your opponent's invested heavily in.



Your main focus is to get to your goal as fast as possible...

Another method for handling speed military is employing cards that don't require your presence in a battle, such as *Refugees*, *In Search of the Future*, *Flattery* and *Defensive Duty*. When you're capable of stifling attacks without the risk of your own personalities' presence, you're setting up for a more capable counter. Also, in an effort to take your Provinces, your opponent has probably spent Fate cards or gold trying to take you down early. Essentially, it sets him back a turn if you successfully turn him away.

By now you'll have noticed I haven't named any terrains. Unless a terrain is immediate and pressing (e.g.: *Night Battle*, *Deadly Ground*, *Come One at a Time*), you shouldn't play it unless it has great global effect. Also, since most attack decks tend to use Superior Tactics, you'd need to use at least two terrains to be sure that at least one would take effect. If your

opponent has three *Superior Tactics* and you have three *Suspended Terrains*, how often would you honestly expect your terrains to resolve? Not very.

The other reason terrains are usually left off of my advice sheet is because of their low focus. Since cutting your deck for first play is now a major part of the game, as are duels in honor decks or raw focus values for *Tacticians* or *Gambling Houses*, terrains get left in the cardbox simply because of their 1 focus value.

Speed honor calls for a similar mindset to speed military, since in both cases you're aiming to knock out resources. You must constantly track not only honor totals, but also the honor-runner's fate hand. Honor decks live and die on their fate hands, and must constantly draw extra cards.

Judicious use of *Deeds, Not Words* is critical. Honor decks tend to landslide in honor in the same way that military decks landslide in production: slowly at first, then accelerating every turn. Honor decks tend to gain very little early, then string together some five- or six-point turns and finally finish off with a twelve-point or greater gain to breach 40 honor. With this shape in mind, you should save your *Deeds, Not Words* for the turns on which your opponent begins blasting towards the goal. My personal rule is to start using them when my opponent is around 23 honor, which seems to be a traditional flash point for honor decks.

When coming at an honor deck, keep in mind that their most devastating countermeasures come when you're opposed in battle. Early movement is important to avoid personality loss, and you can often take out a province ahead of schedule if you continue

the "catch me if you can" playstyle. Since *Superior Tactics* can move people into battles with no units, resolve the battle you'd want to enter first to dictate battle control. Since 99% of players pass on empty battles, when you move in with your action your opponent is at your mercy: he either moves in and becomes susceptible to your next action, or he doesn't and the province falls. This is the Unicorn's main strength, and there is no reason why other clans shouldn't emulate it.

Slowing the game to your speed is the best way at handling speed in any form of deck. Against military, you slow by efficient card economy. Against honor, you slow by sacrificing in-battle tricks and amplifying movement tricks. Pacing the game is all about finding the most efficient answers and delaying the greatest, most lethal confrontations — just like you would in everyday life.

Cold, Calculating Evil

There are three keys to playing this deck:

1. Patience — Take your time. On a long enough timeline, the survival rate for every opposing deck drops to zero. If you have control of the game, do your best to keep the pace slow. Kill enough of your opponent's Personalities to keep them from attacking, and try to cause them enough Honor loss through killing dishonored personalities to keep them from crossing 40. Your purpose in life is to set up your opponent for a sequence of late game attacks that he simply can't do anything about. You have all game to get there, so don't rush.

2. Card flow — Sadly, your kill rate is pretty much "one Fate card, one Personality." With one very valuable exception (*Judgement/Secrets*), there are no real Personality-kill engines available in Gold. Instead, you need to do what you can to keep up with your opponent's Personality production. To this end, the *Ring of the Void* and *Oracle of Void* are the two most important cards in your deck. Do whatever you have to do to get them in play.

3. Pacifism — No, really. Pacifism, that is, until your opponent is helpless. If you look at the deck list, you'll notice that the deck has no available Battle actions. This is not a mistake. As part of tip #2, any card that can't be dropped in some way during your Action Phase has been cut. So, you really have no ability to do anything during battles other than sit there with a lot of Force. Unless that's definitely going to be enough to win the battle, stay out of it.

Cold, Calculating Evil

By Vaughn Derderian

Stronghold:

The Spawning Grounds

Wind:

Any one you want

Dynasty:

Personalities:

3 Gakochun
3 Goblin Wizard
2 Kuni Utanu
2 Kyoso no Oni
3 Oni no Fushiki
1 Shahai

Holdings:

3 Corrupt Iron Mine
3 Corrupt Silver Mine
1 Emperor's Under-Hand
1 Festering Pit of Fu Leng
3 Jade Works
3 Large Farm
1 Oracle of the Void
1 Shadowlands Bastion
3 Small Farm

Regions:

1 Plains of Otosan Uchi

Events:

1 A Plague Spreads
1 Imperial Ambassadorship
1 Imperial Gift
1 In Time of War
1 Proposal of Peace
1 Suspicions

Actions:

3 Ambush
3 For the Empire
3 Iaijutsu Challenge
3 Interesting Sticks
3 Kolat Assassin
3 Kolat Master
1 Ninja Thief
3 Poisoned Weapon
3 Uncertainty

Spells:

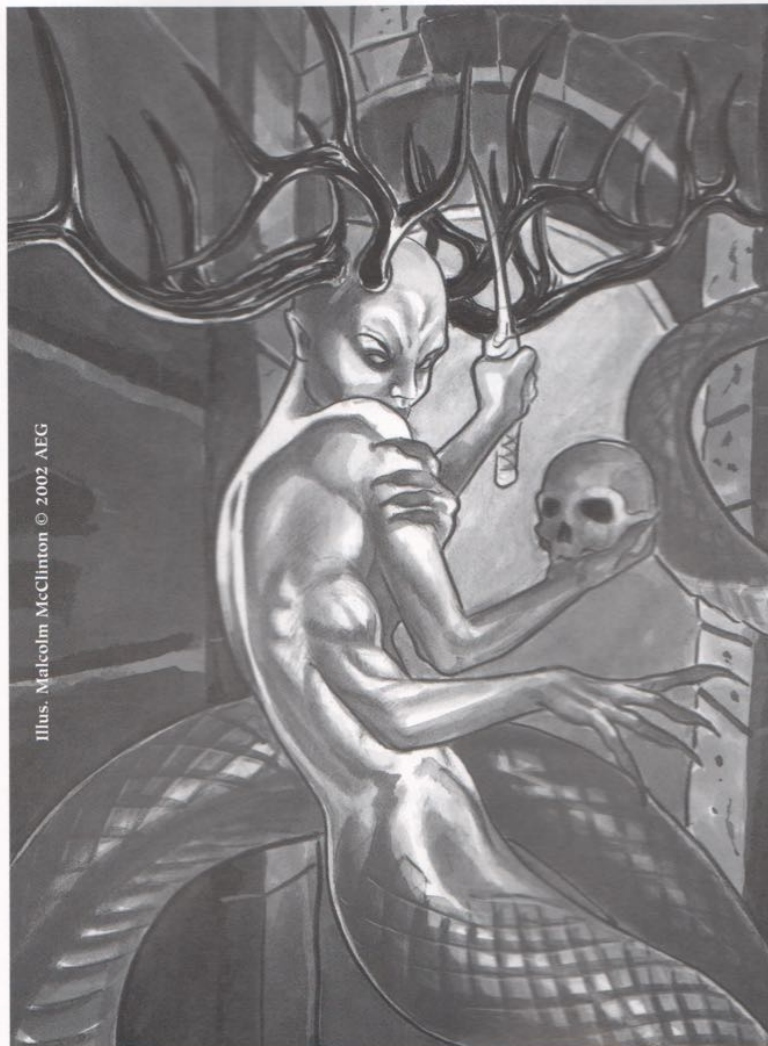
3 Fist of Osano-Wo
3 Secrets on the Wind
3 Walking the Way

Items:

3 Blackened Claws
1 Judgement
1 Yakamo's Claw

Rings:

1 Ring of the Void



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REGIONAL PLAYSTYLES

Environment plays a major role in how you construct your decks. Players take this for granted because they mostly play in their local store, visiting the odd tournament here and there. Maybe they're lucky enough to hit a big event like a Kotei or GenCon over the course of the year. Reading reports from tournaments is an easy way of figuring out how environments in other areas differ from your own. Taking advantage of these reports is an indispensable tool; a quick overview of select regions is as follows.

West Coast, US — The cradle of L5R deck construction, the core of most deck designs today come from SoCal designs and theories. The Southern California scene sees a lot of inflexible, single-minded military and honor decks. Simple metagame cards like Deeds, Not Words and Fall on Your Knees hold disproportionate power in this environment.

East Coast, US — The New England play region is a breeding pit of personality kill (PK): Ambush, Kolat Assassin, Kolat Master, Poisoned Weapons, and pretty much anything leading up to a dishonorable control mechanic. Quick fixes to your own deck to counter such methods are Imperial Scrutiny or Investigation. Being able to cope with personality control goes great lengths toward your success out on the East.

Northwest, US — The land of the tricks, the northwestern corner of the States tends to have success with streamlined honor decks, twitchy honor/dishonor variants or gimmick decks. A simple piece of metagame disruption is often times

enough to knock their game plan askew for a few turns. Use timely PK, a late-game Deeds for pressure rather than for control, or even Ryoshun's Last Words to squelch the combo-inducing Walking the Ways or defensive Torrential Rains. Think of traditional deck failsafe devices, and common ways to handle them; your answer to doing well in the Northwest lies there.

Midwest, US — The perennial meta-region, the Midwest is the home of brutal metagame. They tend to use a standard honor or military base for a deck while playing a fair amount of cards specifically targeted against the strongest decktypes rather than affecting the decktype they're weakest against. One thing the Midwest is also noted for is the ability to handle the "mirror match," where a player is pitted against the clan he's playing. They tend to trip up on rogue decks, not knowing what they're capable of nor knowing which metagame cards to hold onto just in case.

South, US — The playstyle is a bit conservative in the South, foregoing the Midwest's harsh metagaming in lieu of a solid physical presence. They tend to utilize more insurance for the buck. For example, where some Goblin decks would run the Warmonger for ease of deck flow, the South would run Slidge due to cost efficiency; for two more gold you get two more force and another point of chi. Against the South, it's safest to not change your deck, but merely pace yourself to their speed. The subtle differences between their decks

and the ones you're used to are often overlooked if you're not methodical.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada — The Toronto scene used to mimic the Midwest scene at a three month delay, usually catching up by the time the next expansion was released. This has all changed, as the environment has now evolved its own unique style: versatility in design while still running for a single-minded goal. Little metagame is seen; these decks are focused and tuned. Handle these breeds the same way as the Midwest: run a little Jank. Jib. Tech. Whatever word you want to use for "cards that rarely see tournament play." Slashing a deck's rhythm because you resolved some odd card throws off their whole game. Lately, I've been finding success with Code of Bushido or Contingency Planning.

I'm currently working on visiting other regions to better gather information on their environments as well. Until then, don't be afraid to crack open a browser and do some tournament report hunting. Some of the greatest sources of metagame and environment knowledge are encased in the reports of previous tournaments. I use them before any road trip where I'll be playing for a story prize, that's for sure.

Knowledge truly is power in Legend of the Five Rings.

by Vaughn Derderian

THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLY

News

It's good to be back! As you've probably noticed, the Imperial Herald has a whole new look. It's the first of many improvements planned for the Imperial Assembly Fan Club. Look for more in future issues.

Membership Number

Your new membership number is located on the address label of your Imperial Herald. For those of you with a DCI #, please take note of it; we're working DCI #'s out of our system.

Call to Arms

The Emperor is no more and chaos is slowly infecting the Empire. Delay no longer; the time has come to gather your forces! Without support your clan is doomed to failure and death. Call together your samurai and speak as one. The time is now. For a limited time, when you

refer a new player who joins the Imperial Assembly, **your own subscription will be extended for an additional 2 issues (6 months)**. When they fill out the form below, just make sure your name and membership number or DCI # is included in the space provided.

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If you're not sure if you need to renew, look at the address label on the envelope that contained your Imperial Herald. Your last issue number is printed there.

Remember, members of the Imperial Assembly get all of the the following benefits:

- At least 4 exclusive cards each year only available to Imperial Assembly members.
- A year's subscription to the quarterly Imperial Herald.
- Special offers exclusive to Imperial Assembly members.

- Advance notice of promotions, news, and updates for all Legend of the Five Rings games.

- Special opportunities to affect the storyline through Imperial Assembly voting.

You can join or renew by one of the following methods:

- Call (909) 390-5444 (Please have your credit card # ready).
- Mail the form below to:
Attn: Imperial Assembly
Alderac Entertainment Group
4045 Guasti Rd #212
Ontario, California, 91761 USA
- Fax the form below with credit card information to (909) 390-5446.

Q & A

For any questions regarding membership benefits, Koku redemption, or changes of address please contact Customer Support at (909) 390-5444 or email at fanclubs@alderac.com.

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MASTERCARD

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REFERRING PERSON'S MEMBERSHIP # / DCI #

AFFILIATION (CIRCLE ONE): CRAB CRANE DRAGON LION PHOENIX RATLING SCORPION UNICORN SHADOWLANDS RONIN

0

Scenario: *Two other one of great Personalities with both an Arrogant and a Wagon enters a duel with a Personality who does not have both. The first mission immediately. Your Personality wins.*

Scenario used by me: *Two human did not, or he could not control against the Human. I did not know I could use the one of them until that moment.* - *David Igo*

4



Koku Redemption

If you are looking for something to give you an extra edge against your opponents, here are some cards that may help you in your quest. Each order must be accompanied by the order form (photocopies are accepted). All artwork is © 2002 AEG and used with permission. Cards are 20 Koku each.

All selections are limited by availability — first come, first served. **Only one request of each card per order, please!**

- ☐ AGETOKI NO SHIRYO
- ☐ ASAKO MISAO
- ☐ AUSPICIOUS HOUSE
- ☐ BAYUSHI NORACHAI
- ☐ BLADE OF TRUTHS
- ☐ CELESTIAL SWORD OF THE MANTIS
- ☐ CONSTRUCTION CREW
- ☐ COURT INTRIGUE
- ☐ DOJI KAZO
- ☐ DRAW FROM WITHIN
- ☐ EBBING STRENGTH
- ☐ GALE FORCE WINDS
- ☐ HONOR'S LESSON DOJO
- ☐ KAIU NAMBOKU
- ☐ KANBE NO SHIRYO
- ☐ KANEKA'S BLOCKADE
- ☐ KAWARU COINS
- ☐ MAKE THEM PAY
- ☐ MOTO CHAOZHU
- ☐ NAISHI
- ☐ NIKUSHIMI
- ☐ NO FAILURE
- ☐ PERSONAL SOHEI
- ☐ PILLAGED
- ☐ SHIBA'S SHRINE
- ☐ SHRINE OF REVERSE FORTUNES
- ☐ TE'TIK'KIR
- ☐ TEETH OF OSANO-WO
- ☐ TOGASHI MATSUI
- ☐ TRUSTED ADVISOR
- ☐ UJI NO SHIRYO
- ☐ UNPREPARED
- ☐ VETERAN SAMURAI
- ☐ WIKKI'THICK-HIE A'TCK
- ☐ YORITOMO'S KAMA

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LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS FAQ AND ERRATA

Described below are the most commonly asked questions for the L5R CCG. For the complete FAQ, please visit l5r.alderac.com.

Q: What are the deck construction rules for Strict Gold?

A: Four Winds Storyline Simulation, a.k.a. "Strict Gold" Format. Decks must be entirely comprised of cards and Strongholds with the Rokugani symbol for "gold" in the lower right-hand corner, or previous printings of such cards. All cards in Gold Edition and all subsequent expansions have this symbol, but so do many cards printed just prior to Gold.

For Gold-legal Personalities that are the "Soul of..." Personalities from earlier sets, the earlier versions may also be played, but they count in all ways as the newer "Soul of..." version, including any changes to family name, traits, or any other card elements. (This is true for Strict Gold only. In Open games, the older Personalities are played exactly as written.)

The Gold-legality of a Personality does not automatically make all other Experience levels of that Personality Gold-legal. That rule is from older storyline tournament formats. It does not apply to Strict Gold.

There is no "Extended Gold" Format.

Q: When are promotional cards legal?

A: Brand new promo cards become legal in Constructed Deck

tournaments the next time a base set or expansion becomes legal following the promo's first official release date.

Errata and changes to existing cards, Strongholds, or the rulebook through reprinting take effect immediately.

Q: Do I need to join the Imperial Assembly to redeem koku?

A: No.

Q: Can I name one of the non-Gold-legal factions like "Ninja" for the Alliance Event?

A: Yes. The list of what traits count as Faction alignments does not change depending on the tournament format. The entire list in the rulebook is always valid.

Q: The *City of Lightning* is a "Mantis Clan" Stronghold. If I use it, are "Yoritomo's Alliance" Personalities considered part of my clan? I'd like to buy them for 2 Gold less or for Honor, if I can.

A: You can. They are, in fact, aligned with you. "Mantis Clan" and "Yoritomo's Alliance" are completely equivalent. Any time you see one phrase, you can replace it with the other. (There are one or two cards that work with only one of those traits, but they're exceptions and are clearly worded.)

Q: Do Onisu count as Oni?

A: Not unless they also say "Oni". You can't use a piece of a trait as another trait.

Q: Can the Defender turn a battle into a naval invasion?

A: Yes. He doesn't get to take two actions in a row, since the only time the order of actions changes is when the Attacker makes the battle naval, but the other two special rules still hold. This is a good way to prevent someone from using a *Sneak Attack* or *Scout* against you.

Q: How long do effects last?

A: Being dishonored lasts forever. Tokens last forever. "Swearing fealty" lasts forever. Focusing in a duel lasts until the duel ends. Effects of Immediate Terrains last only while the Terrain is in play. All other effects, including those of Delayed Terrains, normally last until the end of the turn they happened in. This applies to all effects, not just stat bonuses.

Q: Does the Event "*Tsukune Ascends*" give a Force bonus to everyone I have in my deck or just the people I have in play?

A: Only those you have in play. The word "your" has been used to mean more than one thing in the past, but starting with Gold Edition we're being very careful to use it exclusively when we mean "controlled by you," and that means things in play only.

(This is not a reversal of any rulings on pre-Gold Edition cards where a change or bonus to "your" cards was judged to apply to those still in your deck as well, such as *Artok'tuk Sensei*. Those cards were written with much looser templating.)

Q: So that means I won't gain extra honor for buying a Personality at full price while I have the *Experienced 2 Bayushi Yojiro* or the *Experienced Ki-Rin's Shrine*? But everyone I know says I do!

A: Neither of these cards affects Personalities while they're still in your deck, since they both say "your", but you will still gain extra honor. Here's why: when you bring an aligned Personality into play at full price, you gain Honor based on what his Personal Honor is once he's in play, not what it was before he entered. If something increases his Personal Honor right away, you'll gain the increased amount. Likewise, if something decreases it as soon as he enters play — perhaps the Personality enters play Dishonored — you'll gain a reduced amount.

Q: How does the *Dragon Tattoo* work with *Gaijutsu no Shiryō*?

A: The act of using the *Dragon Tattoo*'s Open action to gain one or more Fire tokens permanently applies the effects "cannot have more than three Fire tokens," "cannot straighten if he or she has any Fire tokens," and "Remove a Fire token from this Personality instead of straightening him or her during the Straighten Phase," to the Personality. Even if the Personality loses the *Dragon Tattoo* or its ability later in the game (for example, because *Gaijutsu no Shiryō* moves to a different Personality), those restrictions will stay with him.

The restrictions are part of the Personality who made the tokens, not the tokens themselves. Moving one of these Fire tokens onto another Personality, one who has never used the *Dragon Tattoo*'s action, will have no adverse effects on him. He'll just get the +1/+1 bonus.

In Search of the Future

1) Reduces all Force bonuses currently active on cards in the current battle to 0 except those provided to or by a directly attached card. [card text] The following bonuses are all reduced:

- Bonuses from Strongholds, such as the *Spawning Grounds*
- Bonuses from most non-Follower tokens (since only Follower

tokens automatically count as both tokens and cards)

- Bonuses that cards give themselves, such as *Matsu Domotai* and the *Celestial Swords*
 - Bonuses from Tattoos (Tattoos are often attached as a reminder, but this is technically incorrect; they are played, have a permanent effect on the Personality, then get discarded)
- 2) Will not reduce the bonus that an Item gives to its Personality, but will reduce any bonuses that Item gives to itself first. For example, a Celestial Sword's own bonus to itself will be reduced to 0, and it will then only give +0F to its Personality.
 - 3) Is instantaneous. It affects only bonuses active when it's played.
 - 4) The phrase "in this battle" describes which cards are affected, not the duration of the reduction. Any bonus reduced to 0 stays 0 until end of the turn, no matter where the card may move afterwards, and cards moved into the battle after In Search... is played will not suffer any reduction.
 - 5) A variable or conditional bonus that counts other cards does not come from those cards. It comes from the card it's written on.
 - 6) A card that adjusts its own Force and has a printed Force of "+" is not considered to be giving itself a bonus unless the word "bonus" is used in its text.

Errata

Gold Edition

(MRP = Most Recently Printed)

- *Isawa Riake* should refer to herself in her text, not "Natsumi". [errata]
- *Asahina Kimita* should have the Common rarity symbol. [errata]
- *Bayushi Kaukatsu*'s ability is correct as printed. It is truly not Political.
- *Counterattack* is now played after the entire Attack Phase, not immediately after the last battle of one. It will always be played after Reactions to the end of one battle, such as *Rallying Cry*. [MRP]
- *Dragon Tattoo*'s action now places "one to three", not "up to three", Fire tokens on the Personality. It cannot be used to gain zero tokens. [MRP]

- *Hiruma Masagaru* has a Gold cost of 5, not 4. [MRP]
- *Imperial Funeral* should read: Starting with you and going clockwise, each player may bow any number of his or her Personalities and gain 1 Honor for each Personality he or she bows. Each player loses 3 Honor for each of his or her unbowed Personalities who does not or cannot bow, and those Personalities become Dishonored. [errata]
- *Yakamo's Claw* is correct as printed. It is truly not a Weapon.

A Perfect Cut

- *Fire and Air*: The second ability does not require bowing the Shugenja. [MRP]
- *Nagamaki* should be a Weapon. [errata]

An Oni's Fury

- *Slaughter the Scout*: There are two versions of this card. Both are played according to this wording:

Reaction: Bow one of your Personalities after a target unit moves into the Personality's battle to destroy the moving unit. [errata]

- *Taking the Wall*: There are two versions of this card. They are both played as written.
- *Written in Blood* should be a Kiho. [errata]

Dark Allies

- *Bayushi Toru* should have the Uncommon rarity symbol. [errata]
- The following cards were incorrectly printed without the Gold Edition symbol. They are legal in the Four Winds Storyline format: [errata]

Clear Water Village
Construction Crew
Deep Earth Sanctum
Honor's Lesson Dojo
Shackled Oni
Shrine of Reverse Fortunes
Trusted Advisor

Other Sets

- *Emperor's Under-Hand*: The second-last sentence should read, "You may discard the Emperor's Under-Hand to discard one of those cards." [errata]
- *Evil Feeds Upon Itself* should not have the Gold Edition symbol. It is not legal in the Four Winds Storyline format. [errata]

FIRE AND AIR

The serpent bared its fiery fangs and hissed a terrible steam cloud toward the two shugenja.

by Rich Wulf and
Shawn Carman

Isawa Nakamuro ran his hand across the stone wall, marveling at its smoothness and rich golden color. The Master of Air looked up, and at his command a sparkling mote of fire appeared and spiraled up into the darkness, lighting the cavern. The walls seemed to go up forever. Here and there, circular holes broke the perfect smoothness of the wall; each was roughly three feet in diameter. The yellow gleam of two large eyes shone in one of the nearest, reflecting the light of Nakamuro's wisp.

"Konichiwa," Nakamuro said, bowing slightly and smiling.

A large, flat head emerged from the hole, surrounded by a mane of thick, wiry hair. The creature blinked down at Nakamuro with huge yellow eyes. "You spend much time in Cavern of Gold, Isawa Nakamuro," the creature said. "Zelgk would think you were shaman in human shape." A low rumble issued from the creature's throat. A less experienced person might think the noise threatening; from the weeks he had spent among the zokujin, Nakamuro recognized the sound as laughter.

Nakamuro shrugged. "This is a beautiful place, Zelgk-san," the Phoenix said. "I have never seen stone quite like this."

The creature nodded. "This cavern is sacred place," the zokujin agreed. "Voice of earth spirits strong here." Zelgk's eyes flicked upward; it watched Nakamuro's flickering fire spirit with open curiosity.

"I can hear them," Nakamuro said. Like all shugenja, Nakamuro could hear the voices of the spirits of fire, earth, air, and water when he listened. Though his mastery of earth magic was fairly weak, even he could sense the power in this place. Though he had not seen the light of the sun since the Battle of Snow and Fire, being in a place like this made him feel much more comfortable about his fate.

With a single agile bound, Zelgk leapt from his perch and landed in a squat at Nakamuro's side. "Your friend does not like this place," Zelgk said, peering up at the taller Phoenix.

Nakamuro frowned. "Shaitung is not my friend," he said. "I don't know if anyone could call her friend."

Zelgk nodded slowly. "She is solitary, like the mountain," he said. "Hard, cold, unyielding. Is great shame. In she had been a zokujin, she would be mighty shaman."

"Among our people, she is a mighty shaman," Nakamuro said. "She defeated five of the greatest... shamans... in our human Empire."

Zelgk shook his massive head slowly. "Shaitung told me," he said. "Told me you were one of them." The zokujin snatched a small chunk of rock between two fingers, considered it for a moment, then popped it into his mouth. He peered up at Nakamuro speculatively.

"It's true," Nakamuro nodded. "We were enemies, before we came here. Our clans were at war with one another. Clans... are similar to your tribes."

The zokujin blinked. "Zelgk know that," he said. "Cannot live underneath Empire for eleven centuries and not learn something about it. You think we can learn your language, but not know about clans?"

"I guess I didn't think about it at all," Nakamuro laughed. "Please forgive me."

Zelgk nodded slowly. "Continue story. Nakamuro seem like peaceful man. Why you fight against Shaitung?"

"It was not my decision," Nakamuro said. "I had hoped we could resolve the conflict between our two clans without incident, but there were others who disagreed. Some among my clan would blame Shaitung for her father's crimes."

"The Dark Oracle of Fire," the zokujin said, its eyes narrowing. "The one my people fight against."

"Yes," Nakamuro replied. "Has there been any progress?"

"No," the zokujin said. "Tribe of Zesh loses ground every day to Tamori and his terrors. Retreat deeper into the earth with each day. Soon, we fear even sacred Cavern of Gold will be lost." The zokujin looked up at Nakamuro with wide, golden eyes. "Then all will be lost."

"You should let us help you," Nakamuro said firmly. "Shaitung and I are both powerful shugenja. Our magic could help turn the tide against your enemies."

Zelgk gave a short, growling laugh. "Humans need light to travel through caves." He gestured at the flame fluttering near Nakamuro's head. "Demons of fire would see you in caves long way away. Would be more hindrance than help. If want to help, stay here in caves, be ready to fight when terrors finally come."

"If you're certain," Nakamuro said. "I still think that there must be some way we can help."

"And of course your own opinions outweigh all others, no matter how knowledgeable," said a cold voice from the opposite side of the chamber. "How like a Phoenix."

A flickering light appeared at the voice's source, illuminating the figure of Tamori Shaitung. She was tall, lithe, and exotic. Her features were sharp, but elegant. She strode across the golden cavern toward Nakamuro; the sound of scuttling claws echoed behind her. Like Nakamuro, she was not allowed to go anywhere in the caverns without a zokujin guardian.

As much as it disturbed Nakamuro to think of it, Shaitung still considered him an enemy. On the surface far above this cavern, their clans — Phoenix and Dragon — were at war. Nakamuro had never had much use for armed conflict, but the choice to enter the war had not been his own. He was a member of the Council of Masters, the most powerful and prominent shugenja in the Phoenix. When his clan had need, he could do no less than answer, even if that meant going into battle. He had no hatred for the Dragon Clan, and found the entire war unfortunate. He had learned early in life that those who made war reaped only death. During the War of Spirits, the soldiers of the Steel Chrysanthemum kidnapped a number of Phoenix children in an attempt to extort their clan's cooperation. The soldiers murdered Nakamuro's first love, Isawa Yuruko, daughter of Master of Earth Isawa Taeruko. Though he was only a boy at the time, Nakamuro blamed himself for not being able to save Yuruko. He felt that Taeruko blamed him as well, causing many of his arguments for peaceful resolution to go unheard by the other Council members.

Shaitung, on the other hand, bore great malice toward the Phoenix. Her father had been Agasha Tamori, the last Dragon daimyo of the Agasha family. Thirty years ago, the Agasha family had defied her father's wishes and defected to the Phoenix. Her father embarked on a great crusade to force the Agasha to return, allying himself with Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum, during the War of Spirits. Tamori's advice turned the Hantei's armies against the Phoenix Clan.

When a treaty was forged to end the war, the Steel Chrysanthemum rewarded his lost servant by demanding a family be founded in Tamori's name. Ironically, Agasha Tamori vanished before he could enjoy his reward. Rumors flew that Tamori had been a maho-tsukai who finally found his Taint too difficult to disguise, and had taken his own life in shame. Even the Dragon generally regarded the Tamori family with disdain and suspicion for their namesake's connection to the Steel Chrysanthemum. This was the legacy Shaitung, Tamori's only child, had inherited. Circumstance had forged her into a strong leader and a powerful shugenja, but had also filled her with hatred.

The recent war between Dragon and Phoenix had begun when volcanic eruptions in Dragon territory forced their peasants to seek farmland in lands the Phoenix considered their own. What could have been ended through diplomacy burgeoned into open war due to the lingering resentment between the Tamori and Isawa families. The war came to a climax during the Battle of Snow and Fire. Tamori Shaitung stepped forward to challenge the entire Council to personal combat. There was no way a lone shugenja could face the entire Council and survive, but Shaitung had not intended to survive. Through a combination of preparation and determination she managed to drag the entire group into a cavern deep under the earth.

There, Shaitung and the Council were met with a surprise. The rumors of Agasha Tamori's corruption were not only true, but were vastly understated. Tamori had vanished to answer a new calling — the calling of

Jigoku itself. Retreating to the deep caves beneath the mountains, he had become the Dark Oracle of Fire. It had been he who had fanned the flames of war between Dragon and Phoenix by causing the volcanic eruptions. The entire war had been engineered to derail the Phoenix Clan's planned campaign against the Shadowlands. Tamori was prepared to do anything to destroy such a threat to his new power base — even sacrifice his own family.

Nakamuro and Shaitung had barely escaped their confrontation with the Dark Oracle. The other Masters had not been so fortunate. The last Nakamuro had seen them they were being overwhelmed by a wall of lava summoned by Tamori. Shortly after their escape from the Oracle, the strange creatures they had come to know as zokujin had discovered them. The zokujin bore a strong connection to the spirits of the earth, and were disturbed by the Dark Oracle's presence. Just as the Dragon and Phoenix fought one another on the surface, the zokujin had been fighting the Dark Oracle's minions in these caves for months even before Nakamuro and Shaitung arrived.

"Shaitung," Nakamuro said, bowing to the Dragon. "How have you been?"

Shaitung sneered at the Phoenix. "Are you aware of our situation? We are bottled under the earth without the light of the sun, forced to use our magic to summon enough food to sustain ourselves amid these rock-eaters, with an army of elemental terrors barring us from warning the Dragon of my father's plans. How do you think I have been?"

Nakamuro folded his arms in his sleeves and bowed his head slightly. "I am aware of the danger in which we find ourselves, Shaitung-san," he replied. "However, I see no need to reason to surrender to anger. After we return to the surface, there will be plenty of time to continue our ridiculous war. In the meantime, we may as well be polite to one another, and learn as much as we can from the zokujin."

"You may be content to remain a prisoner, but I am not. While you have been admiring these caves, I have been planning. I think I know what to do about the Dark Oracle."

"Oh?" Nakamuro asked. "Does this mean that you are at last prepared to trust me?"

"No, I simply require your aid." Shaitung's jaw was clenched tight; Nakamuro could tell that asking for his aid had not been easy for her.

"You can trust me to do all I can, Shaitung-san," he said with a respectful bow. "What is your plan?"

"I have heard legends of a spell that allows a master of

air magic to transport himself from one place to another," she said. "Is this true?"

"Indeed," Nakamuro replied. "A skilled shugenja can entreat the air kami to open a path to a realm called the Way. Through the Way, a shugenja can reach any location with which he is familiar. A talented shugenja can move an entire army through the Way."

"And do you know this spell?" she asked.

Nakamuro nodded. "For all the good it does us, yes. But the range is limited, and the shugenja must be able to picture his destination clearly. Thanks to our... abrupt... arrival underground, I have no idea where we are beneath the earth, or where the relative locations of Shiro Tamori or Kyuden Isawa are on the surface. Any attempt to return home via the Way would be extremely dangerous."

"I don't want you to take us back home," Shaitung said. "I want you to take us to the place where we encountered my father."

"Back to the Oracle's lair?" Nakamuro was shocked. "Why would he be there? Surely he moved to a new location once we violated his privacy."

"My father is not fond of change," Shaitung said grimly. "As you might recall, he was vehemently opposed to the Agasha's defection to the Phoenix. And it only makes sense. After all, the zokujin have tried to find a way past the Oracle and his elemental terrors, and they have failed. We have tried to find a way, and have also failed," Shaitung said. "Clearly he has established what he believes to be a center for his territory. I think a new plan is in order. I am done hiding underground."

"He defeated the entire Council. The zokujin have battled him for months. We could not possibly defeat him."

"And a lone girl could never defeat the Council of Masters. I would have thought that you had learned it was a mistake to underestimate me, Isawa Nakamuro."

"You have a point," Nakamuro conceded. "I am listening."

Tamori tore through the earth like a great burrowing beast. It was such crude material, not like the delicious, searing touch of fire. He had spent the last few days directing and amplifying the power of his terrors. It would be refreshing to return to his personal chamber and bathe in the sweet liquid of his lava pool. It had been far too long since he had indulged himself.

The Dark Oracle exploded through the floor of his chamber. Already he could sense the heat of his pool,



and it brought a smile to his face.

"Hello again, father."

Tamori turned slowly to face the voice. Two figures stood in the shadows of the chamber, illuminated only by the subtle glow of the lava. "Daughter!" he exclaimed with a sinister grin. "So wonderful to see you again! It seems like you and your... friend were only just here."

"We are not here for conversation, father," said Shaitung tersely.

"Then whatever are you here for, my dearest?"

"Given leave to do as I please, I would prefer to cleanse the stain upon our family's honor you have become," replied the shugenja, hatred evident in her voice.

"And you?" Tamori looked to Nakamuro. "Have you come to make me a better offer? Or perhaps you want revenge. —Yes, I remember you, Phoenix, though you were just a boy then. You were the one who cried like a woman when the Hantei's soldiers killed your little friend..."

The normally peaceful Master of Air snarled in rage, but was stayed by Shaitung's hand on his arm. "Nakamuro knows better than to accept any offer from you, father. He is quite learned in the ways of the Oracles. For instance, he assures me that a Dark Oracle cannot use his powers against another being without being invited or attacked." She glanced sidelong at her Phoenix companion. "And I have come to discover if there is anything of my father left in you."

The Oracle's laughter was as genuine as it was unexpected. "Oh, that is magnificent! How very enlightened of you!" Tamori actually wiped away a tear as his laughter tapered off. "Your friend is indeed correct. Fortunately, however, I was invited to provoke hostilities between your two clans.

"By whom?" demanded Shaitung.

Tamori's grin grew wider. "You mean you don't know? Truly? Silly girl. Let us just say that it was someone who bears a sizeable grudge against the Agasha for their defection," grinned Tamori. "And thanks to their invitation, I can act against any Phoenix that I choose." He fixed Nakamuro with a terrible stare. "Or perhaps this one would like to further his knowledge of the Oracles by joining my cause?"

"You are an abomination," said Shaitung softly.

"I am indeed," replied Tamori. "And as I recall, you joined the Masters against me." A great serpent of fire rose up in the pool behind Tamori as he spoke, twining around his body without noticeable effect. "Against your father. Your own flesh and blood. If ever there was an invitation, you have given it to me." The serpent bared its fiery fangs and hissed a terrible steam cloud toward the two shugenja.

Shaitung gave a great shout. To Nakamuro, it seemed equal parts anguish and blind hatred. Power radiated from her like a forge that suddenly blazed to life, and in that moment Nakamuro understood perfectly how Shaitung could have defeated the Masters. She was a

primal, passionate force of nature. And she clearly took after her father.

Tamori and his daughter came together with a force that made it seem as if the Fortunes themselves were entering battle. Shaitung summoned forth great pillars of earth that she crashed into her father over and over again, only to have him melt them away with the incredible heat of his magic. Tamori retained his smile, yet Nakamuro could sense that even he was staggered by the ferocity of Shaitung's relentless assault.

Nakamuro struggled to stay on his feet as the chamber rumbled from the battle. The walls crumbled and rolled dangerously, and Nakamuro found himself thrown to the ground, face to face with a scorched skeleton in a charred kimono he recognized. "Riake," he whispered. He felt the beginnings of panic blossom in his chest, spreading through his limbs like wildfire. Leaping to his feet, he glanced around desperately.

There. On the northern wall. The tremors had opened a tunnel that had previously been blocked. Was that sunlight? Was it possible that this tunnel led all the way to the surface? Dare he hope that escape might be possible? He clenched his jaw as he glanced back to the battle.

"Nakamuro!" shouted Shaitung. "Help me destroy this filth!"

To be continued...

VOTING FORM

Fire and Air

The story ends here, but the tale is not yet over. You are the one who tells the story! Fill out the questionnaire below, and be the one who decides which path this story will take in future expansions of the collectible card game. Seize the opportunity to affect the fate of Rokugan!

Check or circle one of each for the following:

- ☐ Nakamuro should take the opportunity to escape and rejoin the Phoenix.
- ☐ Nakamuro should aid Shaitung in her battle against Tamori.
- ☐ Nakamuro should join the Dark Oracle to gain more knowledge for the Phoenix Clan.

NAME

STREET

CITY

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COUNTRY

PHONE

EMAIL

REFERRED BY

REFERRING PERSON'S
MEMBERSHIP # / DCI #

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MILITANT CRANE

The more militant Cranes feel safer behind a Province strength of six than behind a mere five, leaving Kakita Dueling Academy and the Iron Fortress as their main targets. Since the Fortress can get better usage out of its Stronghold ability and has a stellar personality base, it's the smarter choice.

Being able to get Daidoji Hachi and Daidoji Megumi early makes the Iron Fortress more stable than the other Crane Strongholds, and the four starting Family Honor is still higher than the low Honor Requirement military Personalities in the environment.

The Holdings and Personalities help maximize the disparity of economy that Kosaten Shiro supposedly provides. Also, don't be afraid to declare attacks with the deck, since you have your own fail-safes in To Do What We Must, Iaijutsu Duel, and your Stronghold duel to plow through opposing units. If things go badly, you can Block Supply Lines and call in the Imperial Favor to signal retreat. The Mantis Raiders don't pose much of a drawback when the attaching Personality bows to lobby for Favor, or bows with the Crane Tradesman to get some gold back.

Even though you're capable of attacking, just remember that this is still an honor deck.

Stronghold:

Iron Fortress of the Daidoji

Wind:

Toturi Tsudao

Personalities:

- 1 Asahina Handen
- 3 Daidoji Enai
- 3 Daidoji Hachi
- 3 Doji Kurohito
- 1 Doji Kurohito Exp
- 3 Daidoji Megumi
- 1 Doji Reju Exp2
- 1 Daidoji Reikai Exp2
- 1 Yasuki Hachi Exp

Holdings:

- 1 Crane Tradesman
- 3 Jade Works
- 1 Ki-Rin's Shrine Exp
- 3 Marketplace
- 3 Small Farm
- 3 Sanctified Temple
- 3 The Hiruma Dojo

Regions:

- 3 Campsite

Events:

- 1 Imperial Gift
- 1 Unexpected Confrontation
- 1 Welcome Home

Actions:

- 2 Block Supply Lines
- 2 Code of Bushido
- 3 Contingency Planning
- 2 Counterattack
- 2 Deeds, Not Words
- 2 Fall on Your Knees
- 3 For the Empire
- 2 Iaijutsu Challenge
- 3 Iaijutsu Duel
- 2 Imperial Edicts
- 2 In Search of the Future
- 2 Superior Tactics
- 3 To Do What We Must

Followers:

- 1 Doji House Guard
- 3 Mantis Raiders
- 1 Shiryō no Hotēi
- 1 The First Legion

Items:

- 1 Armor of the Shadow Warrior Exp
- 1 Celestial Sword of the Crane
- 1 Imperial Standard

Rings

- 1 Ring of the Void

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WAY OF THE NINJA

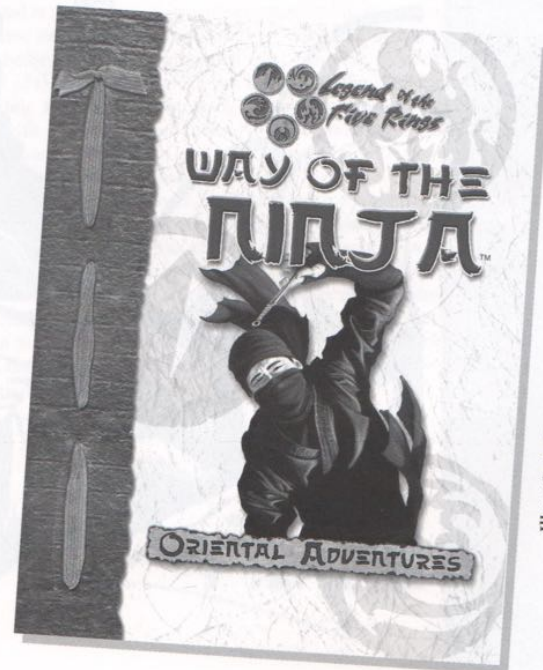
The second in a series of hybrid system books that support both the L5R RPG Second Edition rules and the d20 Rokugan game systems, *Way of the Ninja* is the definitive guide to the assassins, spies, and shadow agents of Rokugan. The samurai of the Great Clans hold their katana high and shout the name of their ancestors with honor, but there are others who sacrifice honor for the advancement of their clan's agenda. An opponent that bushido cannot overcome, the stealthy thrust of a poisoned blade can silence forever.

Way of the Ninja introduces the covert operatives of the Great Clans, many of whom operate without their clan's knowledge to achieve the desires of their lords. From the saboteurs of the Daidoji to the sinister agents of the mysterious Kolat, all are detailed here. Way of the Ninja contains new schools, classes, kata, feats, paths, and equipment for use by players and Game Masters alike.

A preview segment has been leaked for you to enjoy on the next few pages. This is the book your ninja have been waiting for...



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Illus. Craig Maher © 2002 AEG

The "ninja" of popular Rokugani legend do not, for the most part, exist. Ironically, much of the myth and legend surrounding ninja was created by the ninja themselves to make themselves more impressive. A baby-eating demon worshiper is far more fearsome a foe than a martial artist in black pajamas; most would rather flee than face such an opponent. Fear of the unknown made the ninja's job easier.

As the legends of ninja grew, they spread even to the ears of the bizarre entity known, among other names, as the Lying Darkness. When the Darkness rose to power, it granted its pawns abilities that reflected those described in the legends of demon-ninja. These creatures still exist today (though the Darkness itself has been banished from Rokugan) and are as much an enemy to true ninja clans as they are to the rest of Rokugan.

True ninja come in many forms. A Daidoji harrier would be quite surprised how similar his training, methods, and duties are to those of a Shosuro assassin. Hiruma scouts constantly prowl the depths of the Shadowlands unseen, striking at their targets from the shadows. These, as well as others who rely upon stealth, can be grouped by the loose definition "ninja."

Just don't let the Daidoji hear you call them that.

PLAYING A NINJA

"Ninja? There are no ninja among the Scorpion. I am a samurai, like yourself. I carry the swords forged by my great-grandfather. I was the finest swordsman at Honor's Lesson Dojo, and finished second at the Topaz Championship. Not all legends are true, my friend. More tea, Akahito-san?"

— Bayushi Paneki, in conversation with Shinjo Akahito, two hours before the latter's death via heart attack

Despite the extensive measures most ninja take to conceal their existence, a surprising number of ninja player characters attempt to survive openly as ninja — assassins, saboteurs, liars, and thieves who make little pretense about being anything other than what they are. Of course, this raises the question: why is this sort of character in a party? If the characters are a band of reprehensible villains, the question is moot, but chances are your party is not.

The presence of ninja within a party can stretch the boundaries of plausibility. Honorable characters may find themselves acting wildly out of character, tolerating the ninja for the sake of party unity. This is a terrible option for all concerned, and can be avoided with a bit of forethought by both player and GM (while providing a nice bit of back story for your ninja character at the same time).

Keep in mind that just because the other players know that you have "ninja" written on your character sheet doesn't mean that their characters know. With a group of mature players, and a bit of caution, you should be able to avoid most problems.

Most common among ninja who travel in groups is the spy. On the surface, the character is an emissary of his lord just like the rest of the characters, willing to contribute what he can to the group to ensure success. Beyond that, he is a clever and helpful soul with an uncanny knack for disappearing unpredictably, turning up later with information the more honorable party members never uncover on their own. Taking the common example of a party of Emerald Magistrates: a ninja in such a party might pose as a yoriki (magistrate's assistant) slipping off on his own to do work that the magistrate cannot be bothered to do, and spying on the party's enemies while doing so. It's not uncommon for powerful daimyo to secure such social positions for their underlings, even the ninja.



Illus. Troy Graham © 2002 AEG

Other times, the ninja is a special yojimbo, protecting his charge from threats that a simple bushi could never see or handle. Such a ninja is trained in his art because his lord understands a basic truth — the best way to guard against ninja is with ninja. The yojimbo ninja can also serve in a way a bushi could not by preemptively assassinating potential threats.

In extreme situations, perhaps the ninja has been assigned to assassinate a member of the party, or to frame the party for another target's death. This can be an interesting arrangement for a one-off game, but hardly the best idea for a ninja in a long-term campaign. In any case, the ninja must exert extreme care that his true profession is never revealed in the execution of his duties. This is even more of a problem when traveling in a party, as he will be under the constant (if unintentional) scrutiny of the other party members.

HISTORY OF THE NINJA

The legend of the ninja, a shadow warrior who strikes from darkness to cause instant, painful death, is almost as old as the Empire itself. In the aftermath of the war with Fu Leng, the peasantry was particularly fearful that the hideous monstrosities of the Shadowlands would return. They cowered in their homes at night, unsure if the samurai of the Empire could protect them from the unknown threats that filled the night. Although in time the presence of the Great Clans calmed the fears of the heimin, it is during this time that many legends and myths that the peasants have believed for centuries first came into being. The first years of Rokugan is when the lower classes came to fear the shadows.

In truth, there was reason to fear the darkness.

Ninja have existed almost as long as the Empire itself. They have remained largely unseen, hidden from the enemies that surround them. They have deliberately spread the rumors that ninja are masters of foul magic and demonic practices. In this way, they have ensured that they are feared by all who encounter them. It makes their duties far simpler.

THE DAWN OF THE NINJA

The first ninja came into existence at the behest of a strange patron: the first Hantei. During the War Against Fu Leng, the Hantei recognized that it would be difficult to maintain a working knowledge of the clans' activities, yet knew that it was essential that he do just that if he were to rule successfully. To this end, he gave his brother Bayushi a single order: "Watch." Bayushi did so gladly, creating a sect of his own Scorpion Clan devoted solely to the covert observation of the other clans. The Hantei never asked for the details of Bayushi's operations, for it was quite clear that sometimes these informants had to lower themselves to less than honorable tactics to accomplish their missions. During the difficult times of the War Against Fu Leng, only results were important.

THE HATERU NINJA FAMILY

Descendants of Ide Hateru, sworn servant of Ide, the Hateru are second only to the former ninja of the Scorpion Clan in the length and depth of their operations. When the Lion claimed the Ki-Rin lands from the remnants of that clan, the Hateru migrated north to the outskirts of the Dragon holdings, where they remain to this day. Their small size and unassuming nature makes it easier for them to masquerade as Dragon samurai.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the Hateru is that they have successfully infiltrated the Kitsuki family, some of the greatest adversaries of other ninja throughout the Empire. The reason is simple: the Hateru have been involved with the school since the days of Agasha Kitsuki himself. They use his family to gather intelligence from across Rokugan.

D20 SYSTEM:

Class Skill: Gather Information; other family information is the same as the Kitsuki.

LSR RPG 2E:

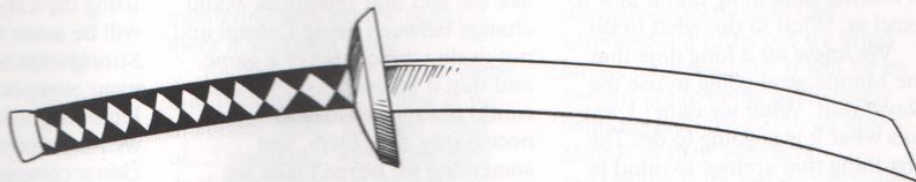
Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Schools: Kitsuki Magistrate, Mirumoto Bushi

Even after the War ended, Bayushi's ninja continued to serve the Emperor's interests. As time progressed, the ninja began not only gathering information, but also preventing undesirable situations from arising in the first place. They became more proactive, interfering in the events that they were created to observe. During the reign of Hantei X, events came to a head. The Otomo family, jealous of the Bayushi's influence, saw to it that rumors of the ninja's corrupt and dishonorable deeds reached the ears of the Emperor.

Incensed at the notion of atrocities committed in his name, the Hantei called the daimyo of the Scorpion, Bayushi Hajioki, before him. He commanded the Champion to bring the ninja of the Scorpion before the Emerald Champion for questioning. Hajioki's own brother, Bayushi Aramoro, came forward with many of his followers. All were found guilty of practicing corrupted magic, and were executed. The Hantei considered the matter concluded.

Of course, only a fraction of the Scorpion's ninja network had come forward. The rest simply went into hiding. They divorced themselves from the Scorpion Clan utterly so as to avoid incriminating their brothers by their actions. These rogue ninja splintered into a dozen different secret organizations, joined the Kolat, or formed bandit groups. In the meantime, the Scorpion have quietly rebuilt their ninja orders. After all, the Hantei never rescinded his original command — the Scorpion must continue to "watch."



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MANTIS DIARIES

Illustration by William O'Connor, Craig Maher, Jason Engle © 2002 AEG

Dark Allies is out, and it marks a unique milestone: the re-introduction of a clan that has not been seen since before *Gold Edition*. That clan is the *Mantis*. With a confidence matched only by that of their brash champion, Yoritomo Kitao, they have asserted themselves upon the playfield of L5R and made their presence felt by all. The Mantis' elevation to Great Clan status has never been rescinded, and with their fangs potentially at the throat of Rokugan's merchant trade, they are able to exert economic pressure upon their rival Great Clans even though their military forces are weak.

Lead Designer David Williams has publicly maintained that no faction would be introduced or returned into the Gold environment unless it had a unique role to fill in both story and mechanics. Ability overlap was one of the reasons factions were kept out of the Gold environment to begin with. When the design team learned that both the story team and brand management had solid goals for bringing the Mantis back, it fell to us to fill in the missing pieces and give the Clan of Storms something brand new to excel at. What to do, what to do...

We knew for a long time that the Mantis were going to use the Naval trait. What we didn't know was what it was going to do. The first thing that springs to mind is the extra maneuverability provided by the Mantis fleets, so that's the direction our initial brainstorming took. In looking over older cards, though, we found the Naval trait

had been used or referred to so few times that there is no one overriding theme associated with it. That meant we had some flexibility. We weren't locked into a movement-related effect to stay consistent with past Naval cards. That turned out to be a good thing.

Movement, especially during assignment, is already the focus of other factions, particularly the Unicorn. Introducing a new faction that's better than an old one at what the old one does best falls under the category of "overlapping focus," even if it is based on a different trait. Giving the Mantis maneuverability while making sure the Unicorn's was better is also not a good solution. It still dilutes the Unicorn's theme, but now we'd have Mantis, not Unicorn, players angry they had gotten a second-rate version of another clan's specialty. We started looking for other ideas.

Dave thought it would be neat to declare every player's leftmost and rightmost Provinces "Coastal" and give all Naval cards some sort of bonus at Coastal Provinces, like +1F. There might also be Regions or Fortifications that made a Province Coastal no matter where it was. This idea had some promise, but also some problems, like the fact that Provinces would change between being Coastal and not during the course of a game, and that a player's last Province would always be Coastal — not necessarily a problem, just something we weren't sure we liked. So, we kept thinking, and ultimately came up with the ability you see in the rulebook today. Taking the first action in a battle does represent, in a way, the

advantage of being able to move troops unobserved and land them with little to no warning. It doesn't lead directly to a victory condition, like a Force bonus would have. It's something unlike any other clan's focus. And it's an effect that's already in the game (albeit not with this level of certainty or repeatability), so we already had a good idea what its most likely abuses would be. (In particular, to stop this from leading into easy action denial, we prohibit early Terrains across the board. This is our reward for making sure only Terrains have those sorts of effects in the Four Winds Storyline environment. A little foresight is a wonderful thing!) The only flaw remaining is that little bit of weirdness whereby absolutely every last patch of land in Rokugan is now apparently accessible by a sea or major river, but that's what our Story Team is for.

Some of you might be wondering why we had to add a brand new rule to the game instead of just printing a Stronghold that said "Reaction: If your whole army is Naval, bow for a Sneak Attack." If we did that, the Naval trait would only mean something to the Mantis players using the City of Lightning. There will be more Mantis Clan Strongholds in the future, and we want every single one of them to have roughly the same strengths, weaknesses, and flavor to give the clan a cohesive feel. We couldn't do that if the Naval trait only meant something special to one Stronghold, or if it meant something different to each of them.

by Jeff Alexander

Once we had the Naval mechanic settled, the design issues turned to what else the Mantis were going to do. After all, one single mechanic does not a Clan make.

On the surface, it seemed straightforward. In the storyline, the Wasp and Centipede Clans chose to formally merge with the Mantis following the breakup of the Alliance so they could still be part of a Major Clan. Fair enough. Let's see what they offer.

The Centipede's Moshi family is a shugenja family. That's good. Every Clan needs one of those. Since the Kitsune family is still with the Fox Clan and Ryosei never took the Yoritomo name, the Moshi make the short list for Mantis shugenja families.

The Wasp's Tsuruchi family is even better known for its exceptional archers. Furthermore, in the Gold environment, ranged attacks were the only major game mechanic in which no one Clan specialized. Unicorn do Cavalry, Lion focuses on Tacticians, the Shadowlands are full of Fear, and even the new Yu trait places itself first and foremost among the Crab, but ranged attacks had no faction to call "home."

And yet, despite the perfect storyline and design fit, it was a call that couldn't be made lightly. Historically, ranged attacks have been weak in actual play. By themselves, they serve little purpose beyond causing some of the opposing army to die before it kills all of yours — an event all the more likely to transpire when you consider that your Personalities have less Force than ones who cost the same but don't have bows built in. Ranged attacks work better as a deterrent against attack — say, in an honor-gaining or multiplayer deck — than as an offensive strategy, and the City of Lightning was neither a particularly honorable nor a multiplayer-centric Stronghold.

Ultimately, we decided to include the Wasp on the condition that we work extra-hard to give them the best ranged attack cards the environment could support. That's the reason Tsuruchi and Mukami earned "Soul of..." cards. In fact, Mukami edged out Moshi Wakiza for the role of Mantis's

fifth first-turn Personality (the first four being Yoritomo Kitao, Moshi Shanegon, and Tsuruchi Okame, who were already Gold-legal, and Yoritomo Sumio, who had already been playtested). This leaves the Mantis in the situation unique among the Gold-legal factions of having no first-turn shugenja (at least, not until we give every faction a sixth first-turn Personality, which won't be for a while), but the choice was not difficult. The Mantis need cards as strong as Mukami if ranged attacks are to be more than an amusing sideline for them.

What about Mantis' mercenary nature? The days when the Crane Clan was paying the bulk of the Mantis army to fight for them are long past. Although still quite fond of the money that mercenary work

Bringing the mechanic back out of the bottom drawer really does make sense. Mantis had nine cards in the Gold-legal environment prior to *Dark Allies*, compared to almost twenty-five for each *Gold Edition* faction. But to give one faction twice as many new cards as all the rest, in one set? That's a sure way to bother a large chunk of our non-Mantis customers. By printing "Soul of..." cards, we can give one faction more cards than any other while giving everyone just as many new cards. And putting them only in decks means customers won't find twice as many Mantis Clan people in their packs, either, whether they're buying in bulk or about to start a sealed deck tournament. That's also a good thing.



brings, Mantis Personalities are, like their players, Mantis first and foremost, and by and large will not work just as well for other Clans as they will for their own.

Mantis's influence on trade is also being de-emphasized in the card game for the time being, mostly because of how uncomfortable we are about gold denial in general in L5R. There's that role overlap issue again, too: interfering with others' plans is more a Scorpion thing.

Back when *Gold Edition* came out, I stated, publicly and in no uncertain terms, that the "Soul of..." mechanic was a one-time deal and would not be used in expansions.

Um... "Oops?"

Hindsight is 20/20. I hadn't been sure back then that Mantis was going to be reintroduced.

Where do we want to see Mantis in the tournament standings? In the long run, the Mantis are intended to be as playable and as strong as the eight factions in Gold Edition. That's one of those lofty goals that's easier said than done. It's far, far easier to nudge the power level of a clan up a notch or two than it is to rein in a powerhouse, so if we fail to estimate Mantis's initial strength correctly, don't be surprised if it turns out we erred on the cautious side. It will be by design. We're being deliberately cautious with the cards we give Mantis in their very first expansion. If it's not enough, rest assured that the Winds of Fortune will fill Mantis sails before blowing over the rest of Rokugan.

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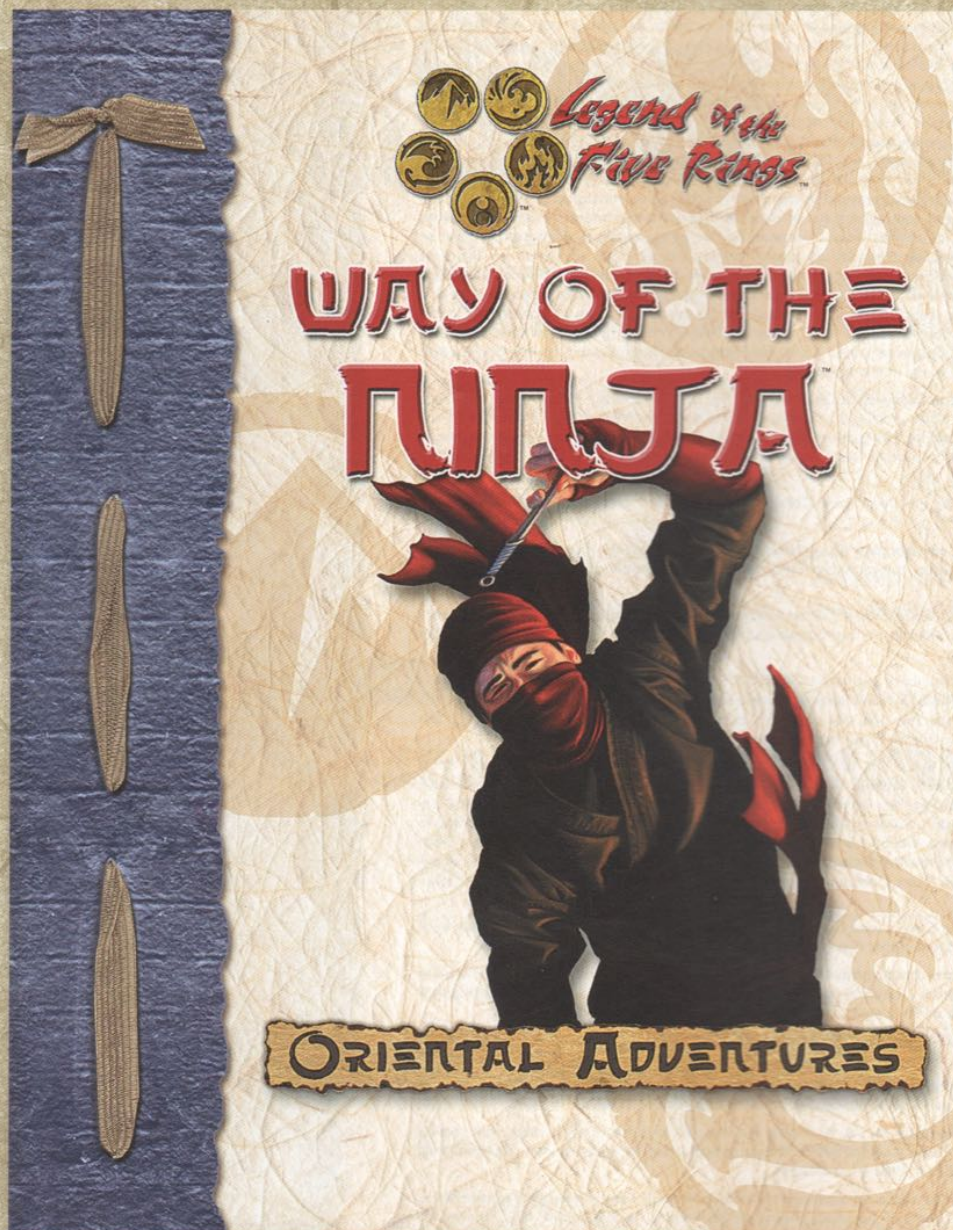
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