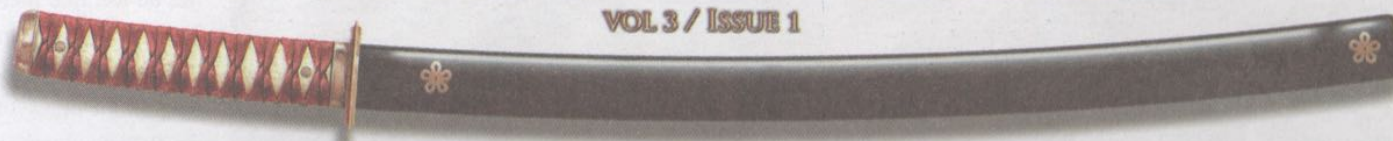


THE IMPERIAL HERALD

VOL 3 / ISSUE 1



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

Death at Koten

DEATH AT KOTEN BRINGS L5R TO THE COMIC PAGE

This 140+ page graphic novel tells the story of the death of Hida Kisada and the events that take place as a result of this loss to the Empire.

The story revolves around the exploits of Seppun Tashime, an Imperial Magistrate who explores the crime and ends up in a multi-layered web that involves nearly every Clan in the Empire. But why would we tell the story via an Imperial when L5R is so much about the Clans? A neutral lead gives us the opportunity to explore all of the Clans of L5R as Tashime's journey takes him the length of the Empire. Every Clan is involved to some extent, even the secretive Spider.

Death at Koten was written by L5R's own Shawn Carman.



all you've been ordered to do at all times or you are not living up to your standard as a samurai.

IH: So tell us about the art. Who did it? What was the process like?

Todd Rowland: Imaginary Friends Studios did the art. The team of artists there did all of the art for the book, coloring, lettering, etc. The process was completely unlike anything else I've done with art. Shawn actually put in the lion's share of descriptions of pages since he was scripting them. However, there was a long process of receiving

the secretive Spider.

Death at Kōten was written by L5R's own Shawn Carman. The book's art direction was handled by Todd Rowland. We asked Shawn and Todd a few questions regarding the development of this project.

Imperial Herald: Was writing the graphic novel different from you normal writing work?

Shawn Carman: Very much, yes. I've played around with writing comic scripts over the years, but nothing anywhere near as long as this one. It was really hard to figure out how to pace things and how to transition between one scene and the next. I think it turned out pretty well, though. I think next time it will be easier.

IH: What can you tell us about the hero, Seppun Tashime?

SC: I guess I'd say that the hero depends on the reader! For me Tashime was great to write and I might be looking

forward to using him again if he survives the events of the story intact. Tashime is the kind of guy who restores your

faith in the Imperial families. He is honorable to a fault and completely without arrogance. He expects the best of himself

and others at all times. It's more than an expectation really, it's simply the reality of his life. You either put everything into

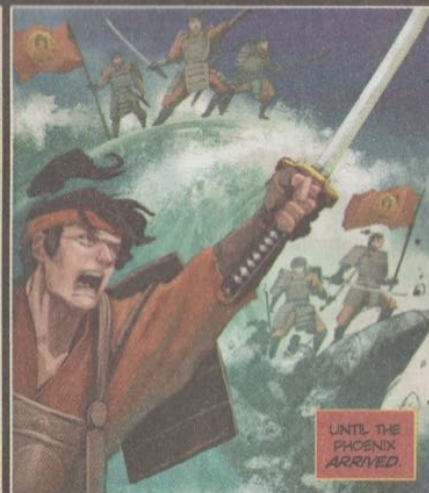
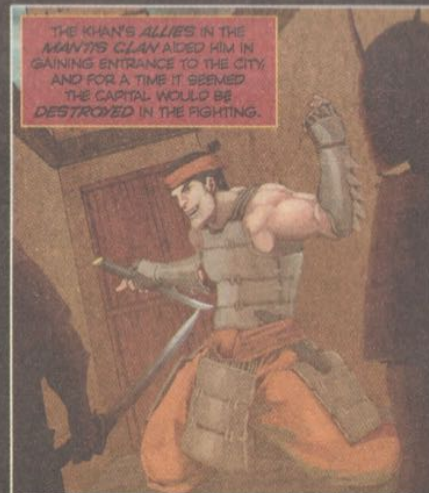
pages since he was scripting them. However, there was a long process of receiving character proofs, approving them, then going onto page sketches, then page lines, then page colors, and finally a full page with lettering.

IH: So will there be any alternate covers like with other comics?

Todd Rowland: There will be. The version sent to comic stores will have a single front cover, while the special version that comes with the Death at Kōten special set will have a wrap-around alternate cover.

IH: The inevitable question is, will there be more after this one?

Todd Rowland: Death at Kōten opens the door to graphic novels and comics for L5R. We don't anticipate closing that door anytime soon. 🌸



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Celestial Edition

by Mark Wootton

We are just into the New Year, and already the new base set for the Celestial Arc is on its way to typeset. The play-testing was finished at the end of November and we are now going through the process of getting from design to production.

I thought now would be a good time to let you in on some of the things that we have been working on.

The first big thing is the way the game starts. One of

first turns will be taken care of from the get go. And in doing so we also hope that we might have taken care of another little problem – the mid game gold flood of doom.

and interactive game play, predominantly based around battles, but with political and other action phase elements of the game a significant factor in determining the outcome of

it was pretty difficult to give them things that would not upset the balance too much.

In Celestial we are expecting decks to be less well-rounded across the board at the start.

we have the strongholds better balanced. Each clan will get at least one stronghold that will be largely familiar to their player base (although in some cases we have tweaked them from their previous versions in support of the new arc). But we do feel that there is better balance across them now.

In turn this will give us room to grow the design of the game as the arc expands. We will be able to give more support to more mechanical themes in each expansion.

Speaking of themes we have been a lot clearer where we intend to take each mechanical theme, certainly in relation to keywords. We want those secondary keywords to be a lot clearer and a lot more focused on consistent in-game roles. We hope that this will support the story feel of the game – with Magistrates doing their thing and Artisans doing their thing. We have also tied those roles to the clans in some way, with our initial objective being each clan developing four broad themes (there will be overlap) – but with one or two playable at a competitive level out of the gates.

It has been a challenging time as well. The release schedule means that we have been working with more cards

have been working on.

The first big thing is the way the game starts. One of the big issues we face when teaching new players the game is running them through those first two turns – search for a Legacy Holding, Shuffle. Buy two holdings, flush the provinces again. And this not only affects the new players' experience of the game. It also probably slows down competitive games by 3-5 minutes.

So we have changed things up a little. From Celestial onwards we are going to take care of the slow start of the game and get people into it straight away. Effectively those

have taken care of another little problem – the mid game gold flood of doom.

Together with the change in the card design, we think that

WE THINK THAT THIS WILL BE THE BIGGEST SHAKE UP OF THE GAME IN CELESTIAL

this will be the biggest shake up of the game in Celestial. In many other ways we want Celestial to have most of the good elements of Samurai Edition. Pretty good balance across the clans, active

other action phase elements of the game a significant factor in determining the outcome of battles.

One thing we do want to do a bit differently is to create more room for the game to grow throughout Celestial. If I was going to be critical of Samurai Edition it would be that in trying to make sure that all clans had access to a reasonable deck at the start of the arc, we created a card pool that meant a number of decks were pretty much as well developed as they were going to be for the whole arc. In turn this meant that clans were not seeing new cards for their favourite deck types, because

upset the balance too much.

In Celestial we are expecting decks to be less well-rounded across the board at the start. Don't get me wrong there are still going to be some pretty strong cards in the mix – and the return of some old favourites. But our commitment is going to continue to be to making the game play the ultimate experience, with the deck-building being the supporting, not the dominant, factor.

That process starts with the strongholds. Again in Samurai, some clans had one or even two such dominant strongholds at the start of the arc that we found it difficult to give them additional ones that were not going to be overshadowed by

it has been a challenging time as well. The release schedule means that we have been working with more cards than ever before. The second part of the Imperial Gift is releasing almost at the same time as Celestial base set and the Graphic Novel, Death at Koton is due out in the spring. Together with the first part of the Imperial Gift and the play-test already starting on the first expansion, we are working a long way in advance and Celestial will launch with a large legal card base.

I think that a big shout out needs to go to the Player Design Team, the Rules Team and to all the Play-test Teams. These people are all volunteers that give a large amount of their time to making this game the very best they can, and over the latter part of 2008 they have been tireless in their efforts.

As usual we are all really excited. It is a time of great anticipation between seeing a set leave your hands and feeling it in your hands as the final product. After the successes of the Samurai Arc we have done our very best to make sure that Celestial Edition maintains and even improves on those high standards. I am looking forward to seeing you all playing with it! 🍀



The First Touch of Flame

by Shawn Carman

The first day of the Month of the Rat, year 1170

The winter months had a noticeable effect on most parts of the Empire. There were a handful of temperate regions in which the effect was limited, mostly in the humid climate of the Islands of Silk & Spice, but the majority of Rokugan enjoyed very cold weather and a reasonable amount of snow each year. Of course, 'enjoyed' was not the word that many would use to describe it. Courtiers and the like took tremendous enjoyment from the opportunities of Winter Court, but virtually no one experienced the true joy and thrill afforded by the low temperatures.

Of course, Kazumasa was not like other people.

The young man thrilled at the burning of the cold mountain wind on his face. His fingers stung badly from clinging to the icy stones. The sensations told him that he was alive. The crag which he had been scaling had ended, but another led farther toward the top of the peak he required. There was a divide between the two, nearly eight feet in width. Kazumasa

his heavier cloak from the pack he carried and wrapped himself within it. Without the constant movement to keep him warm, the wind would make short work of him at this height. He bandaged his bloodied fingers and wrapped them as well, then had a quick bite and a drink from his rations and began to look around the plateau more closely. It was unusual to find such a large, flat region so high in the mountains, and Kazumasa took the opportunity to bask in the beauty of the winter mountain scene. He considered starting a fire, but reflected that it was warmer than he would have expected, and decided that there was no need for it.

**THE MORE
HE THOUGHT
OF IT, THE MORE
CONCERNED
HE WAS**

Something made him frown. Why was it so warm? And while the mountains to the north were basked in a warm, golden glow like that of the setting sun, it was the wrong time of day and the wrong direction for

features had become at such impertinence on the part of a man many still regarded as an outsider.

"You may have won the favor of Lord Kihongo," the gunso began, but then he too reached the edge and saw what lay beyond. "Fortunes," he whispered.

"Can we trigger an avalanche?" Kazumasa asked.

The bushi shook his head. "This region is stable. I would not have shouted at you otherwise."

"Then we must leave immediately." He looked at the men gravely. "How long will the return trip take if we travel directly to Shiro Ichiro."

The man thought for moment. "Six hours. More than likely eight, given the conditions."

"Try to keep pace with me," Kazumasa said.

"Do not bother to look back. We will be there."



The Badger Clan Champion had not been a young man in a great number of years. Men had been born and become old in the time that had elapsed since Ichiro Kihongo

who stood beside him.

Kazumasa nodded. "There can be no question, my lord."

"None," the gunso agreed.

Kihongo tapped his ever-present pipe absently against the fingers of his left hand. "And how many?"

"Tens of thousands," the Explorer said. "More, perhaps."

"They are beyond number," the gunso said. "Never in my life have I seen such a thing, and I stood at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, my lord."

"Then we have little choice," Kihongo said. He turned to the motionless warrior on his right, a man larger than any Crab Kazumasa had ever seen. "Marshall our forces. Every man, woman, or child old enough to wield a blade is to be readied. Secure the fortresses. This is the moment for which we have been born." He turned back to the others. "We must send word to the Empress' Winter Court."

"Let me go, my lord," Kazumasa said. "None can make the journey faster."

"In that I agree, but I require your aid here," Kihongo answered. "Take your pick of

I depend upon you for this? Is the steel that I saw in your eyes on the day we met true?"

Kazumasa looked at his lord curiously. No one had ever spoken to him in such a manner, save for one, and it was in that same man's eyes that Kazumasa had seen the same resolve, the same will of iron that he now saw in the Badger Champion's eyes. "It would betray the memory of my lord and friend Kaneka for me to fail you now, Kihongo-sama," he said. "My life is yours until its end."

Kihongo nodded and turned to another in attendance, a man younger than himself, but not by a wide margin. "Hikenru, my old friend. It is to you I will entrust the task of taking this news to the Empress. If any can convince the Scorpion to allow you admittance, it is you."

The old man bowed. "It is my great honor, my lord."

"And if the Scorpion refuse," Kihongo continued, "it is you that I trust to do what must be done, no matter the cost." He paused and looked at the old man with remorse. "I know what I ask of you, my friend. The trip will be difficult,

peak he required. There was a divide between the two, nearly eight feet in width. Kazumasa brace himself, tensing with all his might, then flung himself to the side. For a brief moment, he was suspended between the two, flying free through the air so high in the mountains that a single mistake might mean his death. Then he reached the other peak and grabbed hold, the stone biting deeply into his fingertips. He laughed at the joy of it all.

From somewhere below him, there was an explosive bout of swearing, making him laugh all the harder. "Are you mad, Explorer?" That was the name by which many of the Badger Clan samurai he now worked alongside called him. He recognized the name belonging to the gunso of the scout patrol he was traveling with. "The path will take you all the way to the peak! What is the point of such foolish risk?"

"The path takes too long!" was his only answer, and he continued the climb. The swearing beneath him continued.

True to his word, Kazumasa reached the summit nearly half an hour before his colleagues. Upon reaching the top, he took only a moment to enjoy his victory, then quickly withdrew

glow like that of the setting sun, it was the wrong time of day and the wrong direction for such a thing. He had been so exhilarated to reach the peak that he had not considered the oddity of the situation at first, but now storms gathered in his expression. The more he thought of it, the more concerned he was.

Kazumasa began running toward the northern edge of the plateau. It was some distance, and the altitude caused his breath to come quickly with very little exertion. He did not stop, however, leaping deftly over obstacles and avoiding the rocky outcroppings that were too large. He made a mental note to recommend to his lord that this plateau was more than large enough to support an additional outpost, if the Badger were so inclined to expand their line of defense. Those thoughts, however, vanished as soon as he reached the edge and looked into the valley beyond.

It was several moments later when the other Badger reached the peak and came in his direction. "I do not know what manner of madness afflicts you," the gunso said irritably, but Kazumasa held up a hand and silenced him. He did not have to turn and see the warrior to know how flush his

had been born and become old in the time that had elapsed since Ichiro Kihongo was young, and yet for all that his mind was as sharp as any that Kazumasa had worked alongside in his many years of wandering the Empire. Kihongo commanded a clan tasked with an impossible duty, and given inadequate resources to ensure its completion. Yet he persevered without faltering. "Are you absolutely certain of what you have seen?" he asked carefully, his gaze boring into the Explorer and the gunso

"In that I agree, but I require your aid here," Kihongo answered. "Take your pick of men. As many as you desire. I will depend upon you to harry our enemies, Explorer."

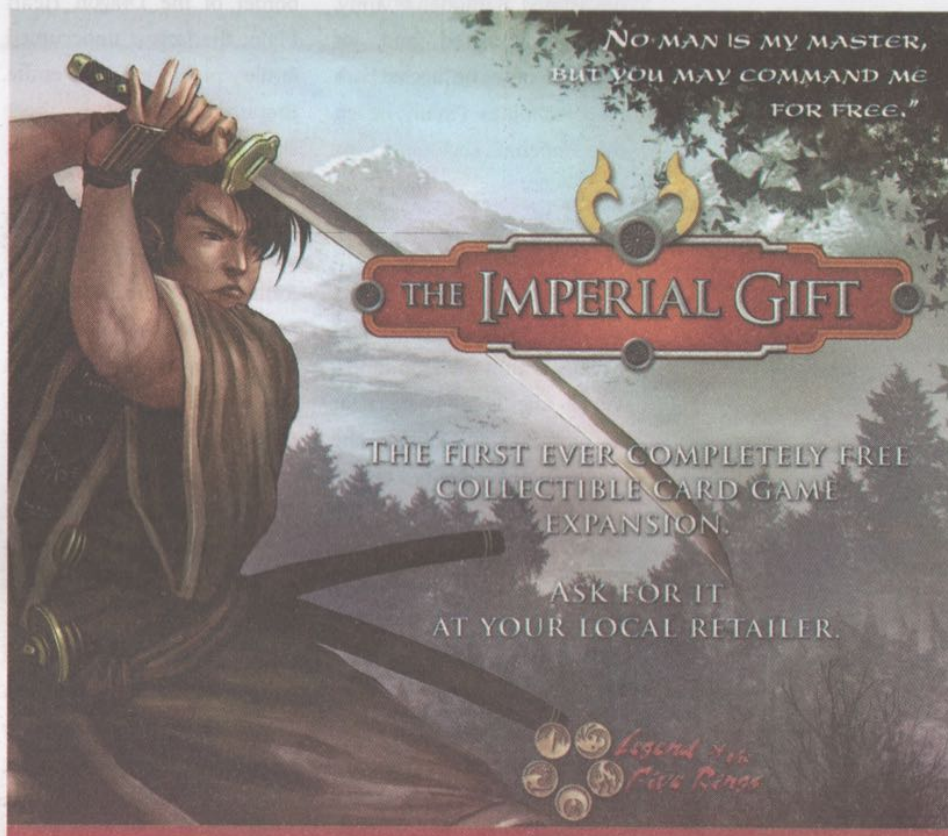
"Of course, my lord," he said with a bow.

Kihongo hesitated. "I know your heart, Kazumasa. I know that you are not a man of war, nor even one of duty. I know that you swore your allegiance to us on a whim, and now I command you to fulfill a task that will leave many dead, including perhaps yourself. Can

man with remorse. "I know what I ask of you, my friend. The trip will be difficult, and your health is not good. Forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," Hikenru insisted. "My great-nephew and I shall not fail you, my lord."

Kihongo nodded. "Tell the Empress that her loyal servants among the Badger are overrun, but that we shall hold the line as long as we live." He turned back to the court. "Go now, loyal vassals. Go now, and fill an old man's heart with pride." ❀



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Legend & Five Rings

The Empire Besieged

By Brian Yoon & Shawn Carman

During the upcoming Kotei season, the L5R storyline will prominently feature the defenders of the Empire, including the honorable and courageous souls of the Imperial Legions, and the beleaguered Ox Clan, whose lands lay in the path of the insidious Army of Fire. Accordingly, here are some basic materials to assist in incorporating these groups into your campaign, including an Ox Clan preview from the sourcebook *Fealty & Freedom*.

The Imperial Legions Revisited

The Imperial Legions serve as the backbone of Rokugani society. It is the arm of the Emperor, extending his justice and will across the land. Only the best and the strongest warriors of each Clan are invited to join, and an appointment to the Legions foretells a bright career for a young samurai. The Legions are composed of samurai from each Clan. Despite this fact, the Imperial Legions act with freedom, unattached to all Great Clans and serving the

The first leader to fall from the ranks was Hitomi Suguhara, commander of the Tenth Legion. He was a unique leader and the only Legion commander to be a monk of the Tattooed Order. In 1169, he verbally resigned from his post in front of his closest advisors and left the camp. He was afflicted with the same madness that raged through the Hitomi monk order, and he died when he singlehandedly attacked a Crane outpost near the Dragon mountains. Mirumoto Ishino, his closest advisor and cousin of Mirumoto Kenzo, became the commander in Suguhara's absence. Unfortunately, he does not understand the methods of self improvement that Suguhara advocated. Though he does not discourage the martial practice, he does not encourage it. While the Legion still retains much of its martial art knowledge, as new blood enters the Legion the practice is slowly but surely dying out.

THE LEGIONS ARE COMPOSED

commission. He did not tell anyone the real reason; he bore the Blade of Hubris, a Shamesword crafted by the villain Kokujin. He could no longer be sure that he could curb the influence of the sword and did not want to risk dishonoring the name of the Legion. Jotaro now seeks a means to be free of the blade. He is no longer sure he will find one.

Dejiko struggles to find someone as capable as Jotaro to replace him but has not yet found someone suitable for the task. Jotaro's advisors currently lead the Second Legion together, but one has yet to prove himself capable.

The Imperial Legions Heritage Table

While the heritage tables in the Third Edition Rulebook are intended for all starting characters, the Imperial Legions Heritage Table should only be used for starting characters in a campaign based around the Imperial Legions. Otherwise, the GM may use this table as a way of enriching NPCs' histories.

This table replaces the

assigned to a region far away from any of the Ox's more valuable holdings, to ensure that he remained ignorant of the clan's true activities.

Like so many other aspects of the clan, the Ox Sentries have been revitalized by Morito Garin. He has appointed Morito Kitaji, daimyo of the Kijuro vassal family, as head of all sentries, and has instilled in them a deep sense of patriotism regarding their duty. They are the first line of defense against a wide array of enemies who wish the clan harm.

New Path: Ox Sentry

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Morito Bushi 1

Path of Egress: Morito Bushi 2

Technique: Blade of the Western Wall – The defense of the western provinces are the Ox Sentry's first duty, and they hunt all who attempt to breach it with dogged determination. A sentry adds twice his Morito Bushi School Rank (including this Path) to the total of all Perception-based rolls. This is increased to three times his School Rank if it is a Hunting roll.



Imperial Legions Heritage Table

Roll	Result
1	Bribery: Your family did not believe in your ability to gain a seat on the Legions on your own. They approached an unscrupulous Otomo and purchased an appointment in the Imperial Legions. You will prove to your family that you are worthy of the position, even if you were not chosen for it. Gain the Driven (prove your worth to

the Imperial Legions act with freedom, unattached to all Great Clans and serving the Empire itself.

The Legions and their commanders have been well documented in the RPG sourcebook *Emerald Empire*. Since that time, the face of the empire has significantly changed. The Imperial Legions did not remain stagnant. Many Imperial Legion commanders have stepped down from their positions for various reasons, and those vacancies were filled by strong samurai who have stepped up to fill their shoes.

The Imperial Legions and the First Imperial Legion remain in the guidance of Kitsu Dejiko. She has only grown wiser in her post and she directs the Legions with a firm hand. Most of the other commanders have remained with their Legions. Both commander and army grow more accustomed to each other, and the Imperial Legions currently flourish more than they have in decades as a result. However, the leadership for the Second, Eighth, and Tenth Legions have changed. Some of these Legions have lost a great deal of their unique qualities in the changeover yet others continue to grow in skill and importance.

THE LEGIONS ARE COMPOSED OF SAMURAI FROM EACH CLAN

The next to leave was Horiuchi Nobane, the Eight Legion Commander. He remained out of the Battle of Toshi Ranbo and remained free from much of the political fallout that came from the Khan's failed assault on the throne. However, after the war, Chagatai asked Nobane to become the general of the devastated Baraunghar army. Nobane accepted and for several months he juggled both responsibilities. Finally, he left the Imperial Legions, citing responsibilities to his Clan. Akodo Sarasa was promoted as the new commander. In her youth Sarasa served with the Wardens, a unit of cavalry within the Lion lands. While she is nowhere near as proficient as Nobane, she understands cavalry tactics and has vowed to keep the Eight in the state Nobane leaves it: an elite cavalry force.

The newest change came as a surprise to all. Doji Jotaro, Second Legion Commander, abruptly cited personal reasons after the ascension of Iweko the First and resigned his

may use this table as a way of enriching NPCs' histories.

This table replaces the Heritage Table found on the Third Edition Revised Rulebook and follows the same rules. However, you may not reroll on this table, and subsequent purchased rerolls occur on the normal Heritage Tables. Be warned, not every legionnaire receives his post through honorable means...

Fealty & Freedom Preview: The Ox Sentry

The Ox provinces exist on the border of the Dragon Heart Plain, the largest unoccupied fertile plain in the entire Empire. Because of the sheer size of the region, the Ox's border has proven difficult to secure with a series of fortifications. Toward that end, Morito created the Sentries, an order that combines the functions of scouts, guardsmen, and magistrates into a single occupation. Traditionally a position as a Sentry indicates one of two very different things for an Ox samurai: either he was a trusted Kolat agent tasked with securing the provinces around the Hidden Temple, or he was an idealist who had not been recruited, and thus was

in the Imperial Legions. You will prove to your family that you are worthy of the position, even if you were not chosen for it. Gain the **Driven (prove your worth to your family)** Disadvantage (but not the CP for it.) If others ever find out about this deceitful deal...

- 2-3 Tradition: Your father served in the Imperial Legions, and his father before him. You gained an appointment to the Legions not by merit but by your blood. You will prove to your family that you are worthy to bear the weight of your family's name. Gain the **Higher Purpose** (Prove worthy of your name) Advantage.
- 4-5 Rivalry: Your entrance to the Imperial Legions occurred without incident, but you immediately find that one of your fellow Legionnaires in your unit hates you with a passion. Perhaps he is a member of a Great Clan with which your Clan recently engaged in war, or perhaps he holds a personal grudge against your family. Regardless of the source, he remains a foil in your stay as a Legionnaire. Gain the **Sworn Enemy** Disadvantage (but not the CP for it).
- 6-7 Appointment: Your sensei recommended you for the Legions and you were chosen for the honor. While this may be the most common method of entry into the Legions, it is still a very prestigious award. You gain +3 Glory Points and +1 Honor Point.
- 8-9 Earned Your Way: You won a tournament within your lands and gained the right to join the Legions. You find that it does not earn you any special treatment within the Legions, but you know deep inside that you deserve this post. Gain +6 Glory Points and +2 Honor Points.
- 0 Daimyo's Eye: your appointment to the Imperial Legions comes with the highest recommendation of all, that of your Family Daimyo. Others watch your progress with interest, as they believe you represent the best of your Clan. All of your exploits and misdeeds spread quickly through the Legions, and you will soon be an officer or a laughingstock of the army. Gain 1 full Rank of Glory. Additionally, all increases and decreases of Glory and Honor are increased by 1. ♦

Glory of the Empire

by Mark Wootton



I am going to try and give you some insights into the design of Glory of the Empire and some of the things that we hope we might have achieved in this set.

The first thing to say is that this set gives us the usual issue to deal with – how do you make a dual-bugged set work? Well, here are some of the cards and the ways that we have tackled it...

One thing we wanted to do from the start was to identify those themes that are generally common to both

where we want Spider to go in the next arc. One of the themes that we intend to carry through for Spider is the Undead Zombie/Ghul theme. You know we had no choice – those of you who watched the live broadcast from the Samurai Championships probably heard John Zinser's philosophy on this – "there is almost no game that is not better for having Zombies!"

Zombie is also a great theme for us to work on in Samurai – the breeder/undead deck is a pretty good deck for Spider,

with 4F for just 5G that will be almost an auto-bow in Spider decks going forward.

In a nutshell, find a theme that can still stand development in this arc, give it cards that will be relevant in both arcs, and let the reduced card pool work for us throughout the Celestial arc.

The next way we design is to look at concepts that are going through from this arc to the next and just design good solid cards that you know are going to work well either side of the cut off. A couple of standout

Speaking of good cards, all of the military clans will have Commanders to some extent. Where tacticians will remain slightly more specialised, every army has those Samurai that lead the troops. Over time we hope to differentiate between the style of leadership that each clan favours, but it will continue to focus around a main theme – getting the best out of your other troops (whether they are followers or other personalities). The Commander battle action in this set, shows one key thing that all commanders will be able to do – get the troops that they need on the field – and it is just an all round really solid card for the theme, Mounting a Defence. It is almost their equivalent of the strategy

**THE PHOENIX
START TO SEE A
CHANGE THAT...
WILL CHANGE THE
WAY THAT THEY
ARE PLAYED**

that *Superior Strategist* gave Tacticians for so long.

There are also cards that

going to be more and more playable. We want to continue to challenge the old mentality that followers that cost more than 3G are a problem. Taoist Archer has already made a splash, we think that Ronin Brotherhood will continue that trend.

Finally, I want to mention that there are the new themes for Celestial that will some way work with existing cards, in Samurai. The Phoenix Inquisitors is a subtheme that has been around for a long time. For the new Inquisitors, we are going to link them in with Magistrate actions, giving Phoenix a new style of play. Linked to one or two straight Magistrates, Phoenix will have a spell-based version of the more traditional Magistrate themes. Asako Serizawa, together with a powerhouse duelist in Shiba Ikkowa make a stronger control element for Phoenix, and we will be looking to develop this theme.

The Phoenix start to see a change that we believe, over time, will change the way that they are played. Just look down the gold cost of spells. Finally in Glory we are

do from the start was to identify those themes that are generally common to both environments. When that was done we looked at how we feel that those themes are going to play out in Celestial, and then where they currently sit in the Samurai arc. The intent is then to find designs that strengthen an existing weaker/average archetype in Samurai, but that will, with the reduced card pool of Celestial be balanced in that new environment.

Let's give you an example theme. We are looking at

for us to work on in Samurai – the breeder/undead deck is a pretty good deck for Spider, and a few extra cards at the edges in Samurai will give it a bit of a push.

The spell *Might of the Shadowlands* would be a good example of a support card of this kind. The actions *Strength of the Dead* and *Power Corrupting* also have some interesting potential going forward, and the latter is a card I like in a variety of Spider decks. *The Legion of Death* is a well-costed follower,

cards that you know are going to work well either side of the cut off. A couple of standout personalities for this are in Mantis Commanders and Crane Scouts. Although these existing themes are going to be handled slightly differently in Celestial, we have designed those in this set to bridge the gap. They will support some of our new ideas, but at the same time are just strong solid personalities – Daidoji Reita and Yoritomo Sunagawa, are both great examples.

that *Superior Strategist* gave Tacticians for so long.

There are also cards that are not at all thematic and we believe will remain strong in the future, as well as in this arc. Two good examples come to mind. For actions there is *Unpredictable Strategy*. A card that pulls in problem personalities from other players, moves your own bowed guys out of harms way, and has a built-in straighten mechanic! For followers we are continuing to see the trend – the expensive followers are

that they are played. Just look down the gold cost of spells. Finally in Glory we are starting to see spells move in the right direction in terms of their cost.

Overall, I think Glory of the Empire has a great array of cards, staple commons, interesting uncommons and some key chase rares. Will it be the Khan's Defiance of Celestial? Who knows? But I think it will be a set that has an impact for a long time to come. 🌸

L5R Online

by Todd C. Rowland

Legend of the Five Rings has always had a strong online presence. From the early days of Deathseeker.com and #l5r on the undernet which is still running - and we're sure Netsune is getting a little tired by now - the net has been the major outlet for fan interaction.

With the advent of new technologies, L5R is moving ahead, with groups on Facebook and the new Ning social networking site at <http://l5rnetwork.ning.com>. These networks make it much easier to know where other players

are and invite each other to events. AEG now uses these for special previews and sneak peeks at upcoming projects including the Death at Koten graphic novel and early artwork for Celestial Edition.

But the core of the L5R community online has always been the fan sites. From the unofficial official Clan sites that have grown to be the home of those Clans, to the many varied sites based on region, language, story aspects, or teams, the L5R community has forged ahead with new and evolving ways to be involved.

The currently active L5R "official Unofficial" Clan sites are:

Crab – www.crabclan.net

Crane – www.thecraneclan.net

Dragon – www.thedragonclan.com

Lion – www.thelionclan.com

Mantis – www.kyuden-mantis.com

Phoenix – www.thelionclan.com/moonandsun

Scorpion – www.kuroiban.net

Spider – www.spiderclan.com

Unicorn – forum.setkitsupass.com

Check these out to meet up with your fellow Clanmates and trade deck advice and story speculation. Also be sure to seek out sites like *Asako.de* (German), *lavosakasha.org* (Spanish), and others for

discussion in non-English speaking areas.

For those who crave as much of the story as they can read, kazenoshiro.com is an invaluable resource. This site has gone to great lengths to archive as much of the L5R storyline as possible, including published fictions, flavor text, rulebook stories, and much more. The "wiki" site l5r.wikia.com is a constantly updating reference of all information L5R, including characters, Clans, families, authors and more.

L5R artists have also been active in creating their own sites and/or sharing their art on *DeviantArt.com*. If you

enjoy the art on L5R cards, there are many ways to find and purchase prints on the web via the artists' sites. 🌸





The Race We Ran

by Todd C. Rowland

Unless you've been under a rock, and a zokujiu hasn't eaten it yet, you've heard that Kitsuki Iweko has been crowned Iweko I, Divine Empress of the Emerald Empire. This was the culmination of two years of struggle by the players of Legend of the Five Rings, fighting to claim the Throne and important Imperial positions in the Race for the Throne.

As stated, the Dragon Clan claimed the prize in an incredible photo finish. A single point separated them from the second place Scorpion Clan. The Scorpion Clan came out well though, continuing to control the courts by dominating the Political Sphere with an iron fist and securing the position of Imperial Chancellor for Bayushi Hisoka. This combined with Shosuro Jimen as the Emerald Champion and the Scorpion have quite a bit of power in the new monarchy. The Dragon did not stop only at Empress, their efforts in the Spirit Sphere put Togashi Satsu in the position of Voice of the Empress.

But other Clans did well also. The Mantis Clan set out from day one to control the Economy Sphere and despite pressure from some other Clans, they did seal the position of Imperial Treasurer

with a massive amount of koku sent in. Yoritomo Utemaro will serve the Empress in the position, not the most glamorous or respected, but one he has accepted with gusto.

The ultimate surprise selection to the Imperial

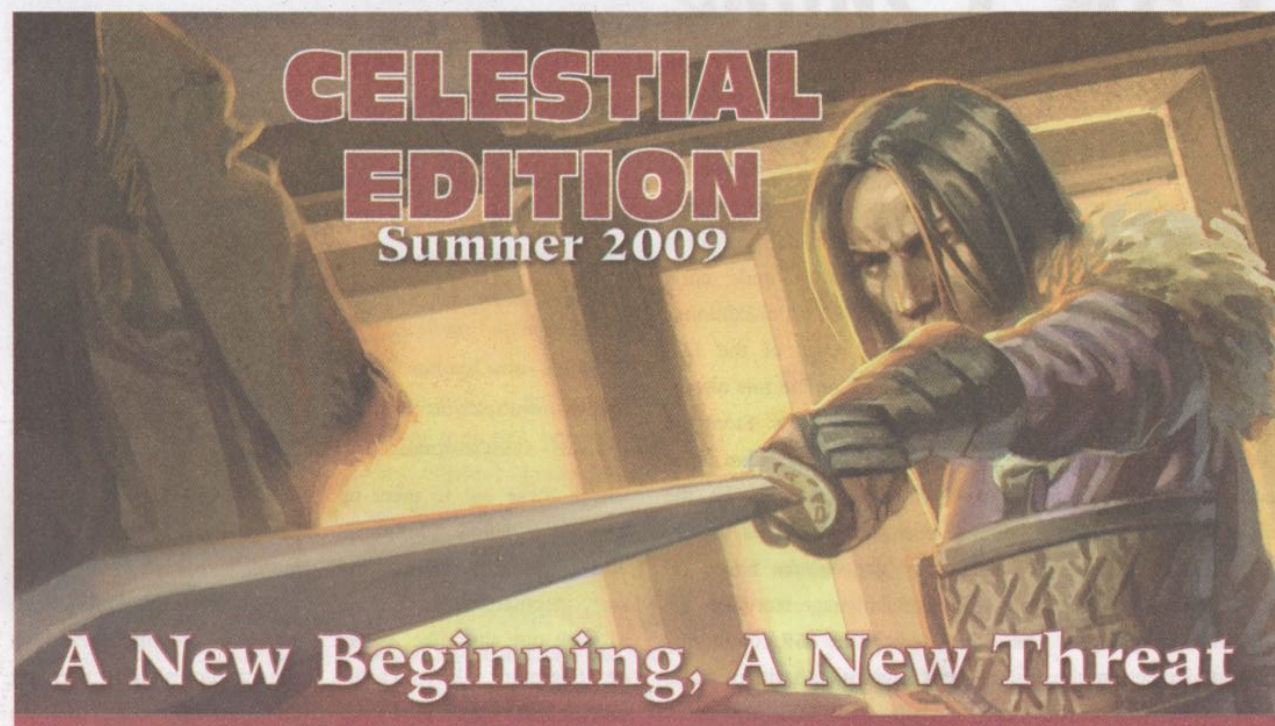
cabinet was the ascension of Daigotsu Susumu to Imperial Advisor. The small Spider Clan fought hard to secure knowledge points, winning both theme deck contests and writing contests online.

There was also an apparent swell of support among non-

Spider players for the Spider to take that position. Those who were normally strongly anti-Shadowlands in the storyline saw the interesting possibilities, and helped the Spider along.

Finally, in one of the most epic clashes in L5R history,

the Unicorn Clan claimed the title of Shogun for Moto Jin-Sahn. At the Samurai Championships in Los Angeles, 32 players came to fight for a huge amount of Military points. Unicorns fought in the final four, guaranteeing the Unicorn a massive lead for



any challengers to overcome, regardless of the outcome. In the end Pablo Rojo fought for the win. The final game was tense, with neither Unicorn deck showing a Moto Chagatai for many many turns, the game essentially decided by the time the Khan made his first appearance on the scene.

The Race for the Throne was a first for collectible card-

gaming and a first for AEG and the L5R Team as well. We experienced great highs and some much publicized lows. The events such as the "Why I Play L5R Contest" created renewed vigor in the staff of this game that you could feel in the office. The excitement generated from the players towards the Race has fueled the development of Celestial

Edition and what is to come.

Of course, not everything in the Race went as smoothly as we might have hoped. We don't have on blinders; we know the things that could have been better. But each of those moments has been taken to heart and given a full in house review. We anticipate the next "mega-game" event will take only the best of the

Race for the Throne and leave the rest. The next game will play much differently as well, with a completely different scoring structure and methods. We would tell you more now, but you'll be hearing all about it soon enough!

Finally we simply want to thank everyone in the L5R community who took part in the Race for the Throne in any

capacity. Each person's efforts, even if it was simply sending in some koku, made a difference for your Clan. With the threats soon to face the Empire, the efforts of the Clans will be put to the test, and we believe L5R players will once again exceed our expectations! ♦

Kotei 2009

THE WAR OF DARK FIRE

by Shawn Carman

By now you've read some of the fiction leading up to the Kotei season, or perhaps seen the flavor text from *Glory of the Empire*, or even just read the information about the tournaments that will be held over the next three months or so.

Any or all of those should have given you some indication of the trials that await the Empire of Rokugan and its Divine Empress prior to the release of Celestial Edition, but just in case you've missed some or all of it, here is a brief summary.

Years ago, Isawa Hochiu and Tamori Chosai solicited the Dark Oracle of Fire, Chosai's brother Agasha

Dragon Clan has been vigilant in destroying them, erecting a mighty line of towers called the Northern Towers of Flame to ensure the border is not broken. And so he has waited, brooding, biding his time until opportunity presented itself.

Then the Ebon Daughter came.

The time for the Dark Oracle's attack on the Empire has finally arrived, and his power is greater now than any

tournament, each of which represents a specific battle for a particular location where the Army of Fire is intruding into the Empire, will be represented in the fiction the week immediately following the tournament. That's correct, we are talking about instant turnaround on your wins impacting the story. The Kotei story is a war story this year, and like all war stories, you will receive constant updates,

both in the fiction and on the website.

In addition, each individual Kotei will have a secondary story effect based on the preferences of the tournament organizer. Some may prefer to use a sportsmanship prize, while others choose a costume contest. There's no telling what you will find, so it's probably a good idea to check the forums for details about individual tournaments. Regardless,

each tournament will have an impact on the Imperial Court as a result of these secondary effects, and that will be reflected in the weekly fictions as well.

Even more impressive than the story turnaround, however, will be the immediate effort on the part of our hard-working design team. Each week, you will see on the website the alpha, pre-playtest version of a card based on each individual tournament win. These cards will be incorporated into our plans for the August and December expansions for 2009, and while some changes are doubtless going to take place as part of the playtest process, you will get an idea of how you have changed the game every week, within days of your victories. ♦

the Dark Oracle of Fire, Chosai's brother Agasha Tamori, to attack their respective clans. They protected themselves from his wrath by using the Dark Covenant of Fire, an ancient artifact that gave protection against Dark Oracles. The men did this in an attempt to spark a war between their clans that would allow each to grow stronger as a result, but their efforts were ultimately doomed. Thousands died, and the plot was uncovered by the combined efforts of Tamori Shaitung and Isawa Nakamuro, with assistance from both clans. Hochiu and Tamori both perished, and Chosai became the new Dark Oracle of Fire. Using the Dark Covenant, Nakamuro commanded Chosai to leave the Empire and never return.

Since his banishment, Tamori Chosai has looked upon Rokugan with both remorse and hatred. He would love nothing more than to return to his home and punish all within it for their temerity, but he is forever forbidden to do so as long as the Dark Covenant of Fire exists. Over the years he has sent various servitors across the mountains into Rokugan to attempt to seek vengeance for him, but the

Oracle's attack on the Empire has finally arrived, and his power is greater now than any could ever have foreseen. The attacks he has made in the years since his exile have been nothing more than attempts to probe the Dragon's defenses, exploratory efforts made to amuse and distract while he consolidated his true power. Now the Army of Fire is ready, and it shall set the Empire to burn.

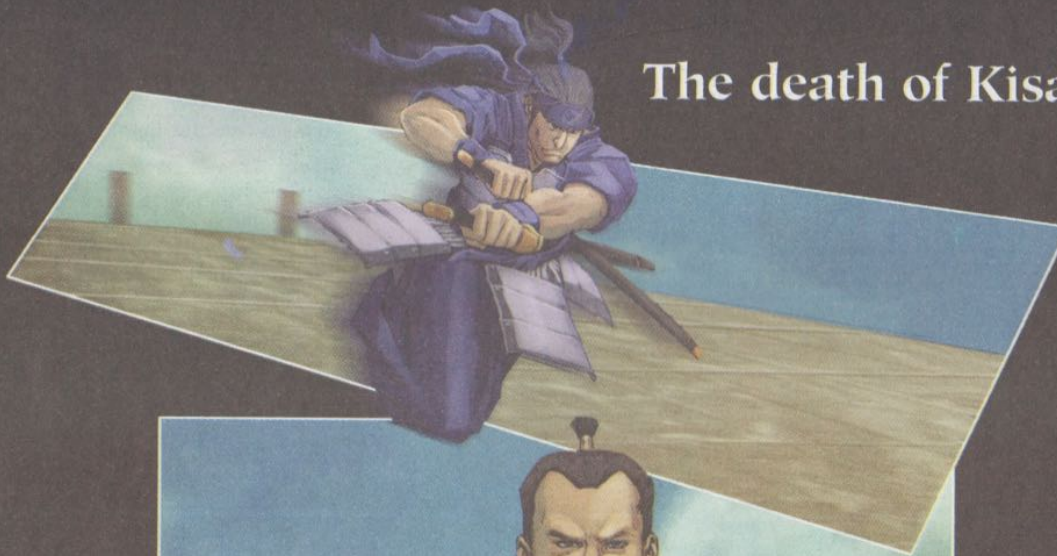
The storyline of the 2009 Kotei season will prove one of the most difficult trials the Great Clans have ever faced, and the effects of the War of Dark Fire will be long-lasting. It also marks the first time that the Empire has been invaded by an external force during the course of the active storyline (it has happened twice before in the history of Rokugan, but that was essentially "off-screen" and therefore did not include player participation). What you might find even more interesting than the story, however (although really, how could anything be more interesting than the story?)), is the speed with which the results of each individual tournament will be seen in both story and design.

Our lofty goal for the 2009 Kotei season is that every

and like all war stories, you will receive constant updates, for details about individual tournaments. Regardless, of your victories.



The death of Kisada is only the beginning...



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