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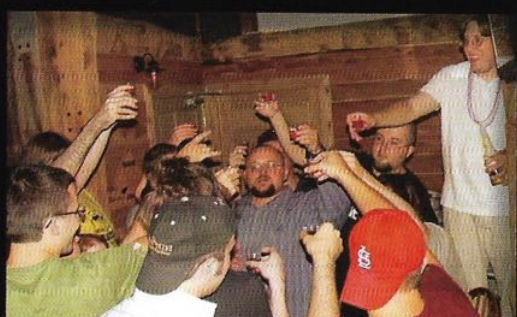
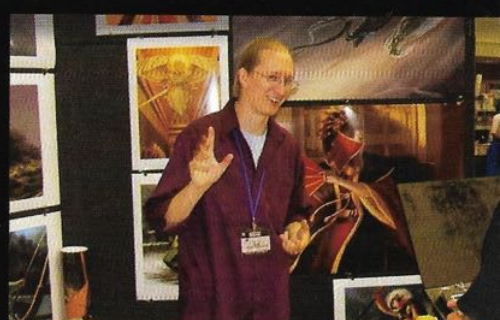
A samurai warrior in green armor, holding a bow, stands against a dark, textured background. The warrior is wearing a green helmet with a gold crest and a green surcoat with gold trim. The armor is made of green plates with gold accents. The warrior is holding a bow in his right hand and an arrow in his left hand. The background is a dark, textured surface with a large, glowing orange and yellow shape in the center.

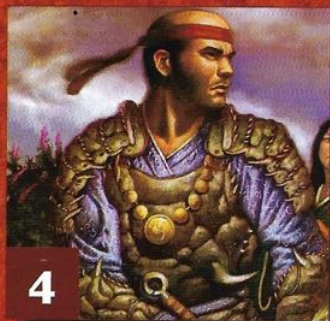
VOL. 2  NO. 23

**RESULTS FROM
GENCON INDY 2007**

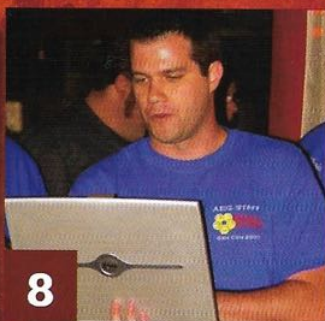
**TEST OF THE
EMERALD CHAMPION
FICTION & RPG**

GenCon Indy 2007





4



8



10



11

GenCon Indy 2007 Report	4
GenCon Indy 2007 Photo Gallery	8
Decktype: Vigilance Keep.....	10
Imperial Assembly Goes Live Online	11
Tales of the Emerald Championship.....	12

The Emerald Championship in the RPG....	16
L5R Comic.....	22
Koku Redemption Form.....	23
Koku Redemption Cards.....	24

Greetings Samurai!

Welcome to another issue of the Imperial Herald. Looking back, I have to say that the summer of 2007 has been one of the most exciting in the history of Legend of the Five Rings. Samurai Edition has been a huge success for the game, selling out in less than three months and bringing more people to the game than we've had in a long time. The entire team worked long hours to create the best product possible, and we are glad you are enjoying it.

This summer also saw the Test of the Emerald Champion at Gen Con 2007, which was in many people's opinion the most enjoyable L5R experience ever. More story points were decided in more ways than ever before, and the whole story will be told in a direct to player set later this year.

But that is, of course, not the whole of L5R this summer. The Race for the Throne continues, with the Clans fighting and scraping for every point they can gain! Later this fall the European Championship will take place and more of what is at stake for winning — or not winning — the Race will be revealed. Lets just say, you don't want to be in last place.

I hope to see many of you in Madrid for the European Championships. Banzai!

Todd C. Rowland

Brand Manager, Legend of the Five Rings

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Credits

Brand Manager: Todd C. Rowland
Layout & Design: Mark Jelfo
Editors: Todd C. Rowland
Project Manager: Todd C. Rowland

Contributing Writers: Shawn Carman,
Bertrand Daine, Dave Lepore
Bryan Reese, Todd C. Rowland

Cover Artist: Steve Argyle
Additional Art: Steve Argyle, Leonardo
Borazio, Mike Capriotti, Miguel Coimbra

www.L5R.com

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GenCon Indy

GenCon 2007 in Indianapolis, Indiana proved to be a great moment in Legend of the Five Rings history. The convention played host to not only the Test of the Emerald Champion storyline event, but many exciting events that took place around it. From multiple storyline events in the CCG, the Mikado dinner, the koku auction, and one of the best LARP events ever by Heroes of Rokugan, GenCon 2007 was the premiere L5R event of the year.

"For me, this was a better event than the Day of Thunder," says AEG President John Zinser. "While the Day of Thunder is a legendary event, this year's GenCon had a level of excitement for L5R that I have not seen in all my years at this show." That excitement was evident in the many faces, old and new, masked and unmasked, that took part in the games.

The Test of the Emerald Champion saw 170 players from around the world face-off for the title of the Emperor's personal champion. Players came from all over North America as well as countries such as Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The field was wide and varied, even within Clans. As the days went by and more people qualified into the finals, it appeared as if the Lion Clan was the favorite for winning the event. The Test of the Emerald Champion was the first major event after the release of Samurai Edition and the Lion Clan had very

strong options. However, the uncertainty of the format did produce several surprise decks, including Spider honor played by LeAnn Dennis. While not making the final cut, LeAnn did come out of left field to take the Top Spider position.

While Lion was the favorite, it was not to be for the children of Akodo. The final four were made up of two Scorpions, a Unicorn, and a Crane. Pablo Rojo of Spain playing Unicorn and Myke Clark playing Scorpion were eliminated in the top four. In the final, Scott Rixon of the Crane faced Eugene Earnshaw-White of the Scorpion. Scott was running his deck out of Mountain Shadow Dojo and Eugene played Kyuden Wasemarumono. However, rather than playing out their game, they came to a storyline agreement that would shock the playerbase of L5R. Shosuro Jimen, poison master of the Scorpion Clan, had defeated Kakita Noritoshi, daimyo of the Kakita in the final round of the Test.

Of course the ascendance of Jimen was not the only storyline effect determined that weekend — far from it. In a special side event, Eric Gardner won the chance to have Jimen take notice of Tsuruchi Ki and invite him on as an Emerald magistrate. A Legacy format event won by Matt Demand playing Dragon will bring new insights into Mirumoto Taki, whose story will be told in kabuki form at the Test of the Emerald Champion. More on that later! One

of the closely watched events was the only Lotus format event, The Mad Dragon. Determining the fate of Kokujin, this event was hotly contested by both the Dragon and Scorpion, each wishing to finish the deed. In the end, Mike Schmidt of the Scorpion Clan was victorious and Bayushi Shinzo slew Kokujin. The whole tale can be found in the Story section of l5r.com, in a fiction entitled The Mad Dragon. The last major storyline event determined by the CCG was in the Samurai Edition booster draft event. Josh Gaydos of the Mantis won, which led to the very controversial death of Mirumoto Chojiro at the hands of Yoritomo Eriko.

Outside of playing the card game, GenCon Indy was full of ways for the players to take part in the Race for the Throne. The first ever L5R Scavenger Hunt saw a hotly contested race between the Lion and Spider, with Luke Fleeman's efforts causing the Spider to eek out a victory. From old Fire and Shadow boosters to prints signed



by artists such as Drew Baker, April Lee, and Charles Urbach, the amount of items brought in by the Clans was outstanding. The Clan T-shirt Dominance competition was an easy runaway victory for the Mantis. The players of the Mantis had prepared in advance, printing up dozens of simple black and white Mantis Clan T-Shirts and distributing them to anyone at the con who would come by the booth wearing them. This ingenuity moved the Mantis way ahead of the second place Clan in the competition. The Mantis also won the Theme Deck competition with Julie Ratliff's adaptation of Shakespeare's The Tempest in L5R deck form (including the accompanying Playbill) and

GenCon Indy Main Event Top 16

Eugene Earnshaw-White (**SCORPION**)

Scott Rixon (**CRANE**)

Myke Clark (**SCORPION**)

Pablo Rojo (**UNICORN**)

Chris Yau (**CRANE**)

Brandon Smith (**PHOENIX**)

Josh Gaydos (**MANTIS**)

Aaron Boyhan (**UNICORN**)

Jason Aken (**LION**)

Zhi Liao (**DRAGON**)

Aaron Barto (**LION**)

David Nevarez (**CRANE**)

Paul Ashman (**LION**)

Nick Jones (**LION**)

Matt Demand (**DRAGON**)

Dan Dineen (**MANTIS**)



the Mantis "We are the Storm" banner took home the win in the Clan Banner Competition.

The First Annual L5R Costume Contest saw twenty contestants, including many of the L5R LARP players turn out. The contest was judged by, John Zinser, Dave Lepore and Todd Rowland. "By far the coolest contest I believe," says L5R Brand Manager Todd Rowland, "the detail and time spent on these costumes was amazing." Steven Kupisch won the contest for the Crab Clan, his full armor fully made by his own hand, complete with Crab decoration, was a runaway hit with the judges. The entire group was so impressive, however, that John Zinser decided as President to award every contestant at least



1 point for their Clan in Politics. "The effort and dedication these people show for L5R deserves it," he said.

The L5R RPG was also going strong at GenCon Indy. The AEG booth released and sold out of Emerald Empire shortly into the convention and had to order a rush restock just to meet demand. The Heroes of Rokugan RPG events were packed as usual, with the team having to requisition additional tables and judges in the halls of the RPG area just to accommodate everyone who wanted to play. "It has really been amazing," said Claudia Hall of Heroes of Rokugan, "we've had a larger turnout every year compared to the prior year. L5R is really becoming one of the larger GenCon RPG events."

The Heroes of Rokugan LARP saw a very large turnout at the Radisson Ballroom on Friday night. This event, while not set in the canon storyline, was for Race for the Throne points, and the Crane and Crab were the runaway winners, both securing most of their objectives for the LARP. Heroes of Rokugan has many events scheduled around the country for next year, and are looking to extend their events around the world in the near future. For more information on how to become involved with this ongoing L5R RPG world, visit www.heroes-of-rokugan.com.

The annual Koku auction was highly anticipated, with even GenCon staff coming by to watch. The L5R community pulled together for veteran player Bob Yager to

win the experienced personality auction for his personal character, Hida Yagimaki. Tens of thousands of Koku were spent in the auction, a significant amount of which was later won by the Unicorn when John Seals won the special sealed event where players bid for a spot to play. We expect a significant swing in the economy sphere towards the Unicorn at some point in the future!

Sunday morning saw the first ever L5R Game Show. This trivia contest included one member from each Clan, decided at the Clan Councils the night before. These players were all asked the same questions. If they were incorrect on a single question, they were out! While they all made it into the intermediate level questions a few began to fall out shortly after, and the final question knocked out six players, leaving the Lion player, Daniel Walters as the only man standing. The question that took out the most players was from the L5R RPG. According to the RPG, How far does a samurai live from death? The correct answer was "3 feet."



A spotlight event of GenCon Indy this year was the Mikado Dinner. When the tickets for the dinner went on sale, it was billed as a chance to enjoy a nice dinner with AEG staff and discuss Legend of the Five Rings. However, Friday morning the AEG staff arrived at the convention wearing "Death at the Mikado" shirts. This instantly started a buzz, with many players who would not be attending begging for hints as to what was going to happen. The staff stayed tight-lipped, and the attendees were not disappointed.

Upon arrival at the dinner, the attendees were greeted with a specialized menu, including the Essence of Water (seafood) and Essence of Earth (steak), among

others. Brent Keith of AEG gave the attendees an official welcome, and offered up the tragic news that Seppun Shogo had been murdered. Each attendee received a unique clue inside a black or red sealed envelope. Whether the attendee wished to share his or her clue was up to them. After dinner and much passing about of accurate and inaccurate information, the attendees were asked to present their testimony as to who had committed the deed and by what method. In the end Ben Raisher had determined that the actual killer, Bayushi Takaharu, had used Black Silk Poison to kill Seppun Shogo.

But was the case as simple as that? You will all know soon...

The events of GenCon 2007 and the Test of the Emerald Champion will be immortalized in this year's special direct-to-player set (set name TBD). This 110 card set breaks from the tradition of reprinting the championship deck and instead focuses on the whole event of the Test including the various story points

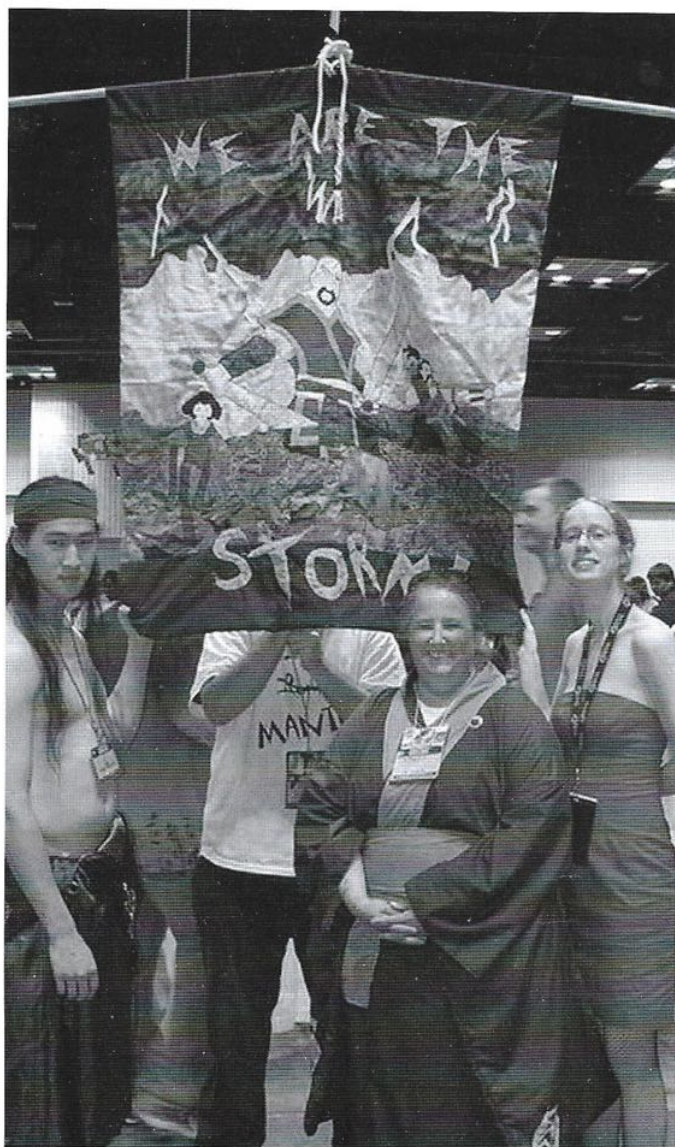


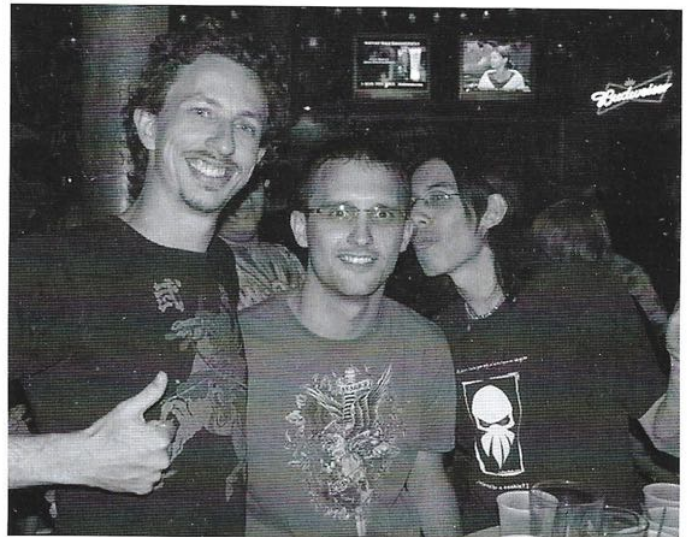
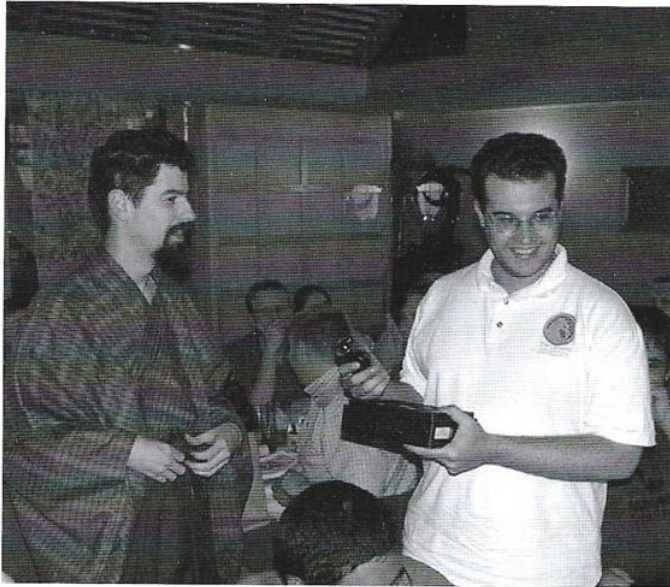
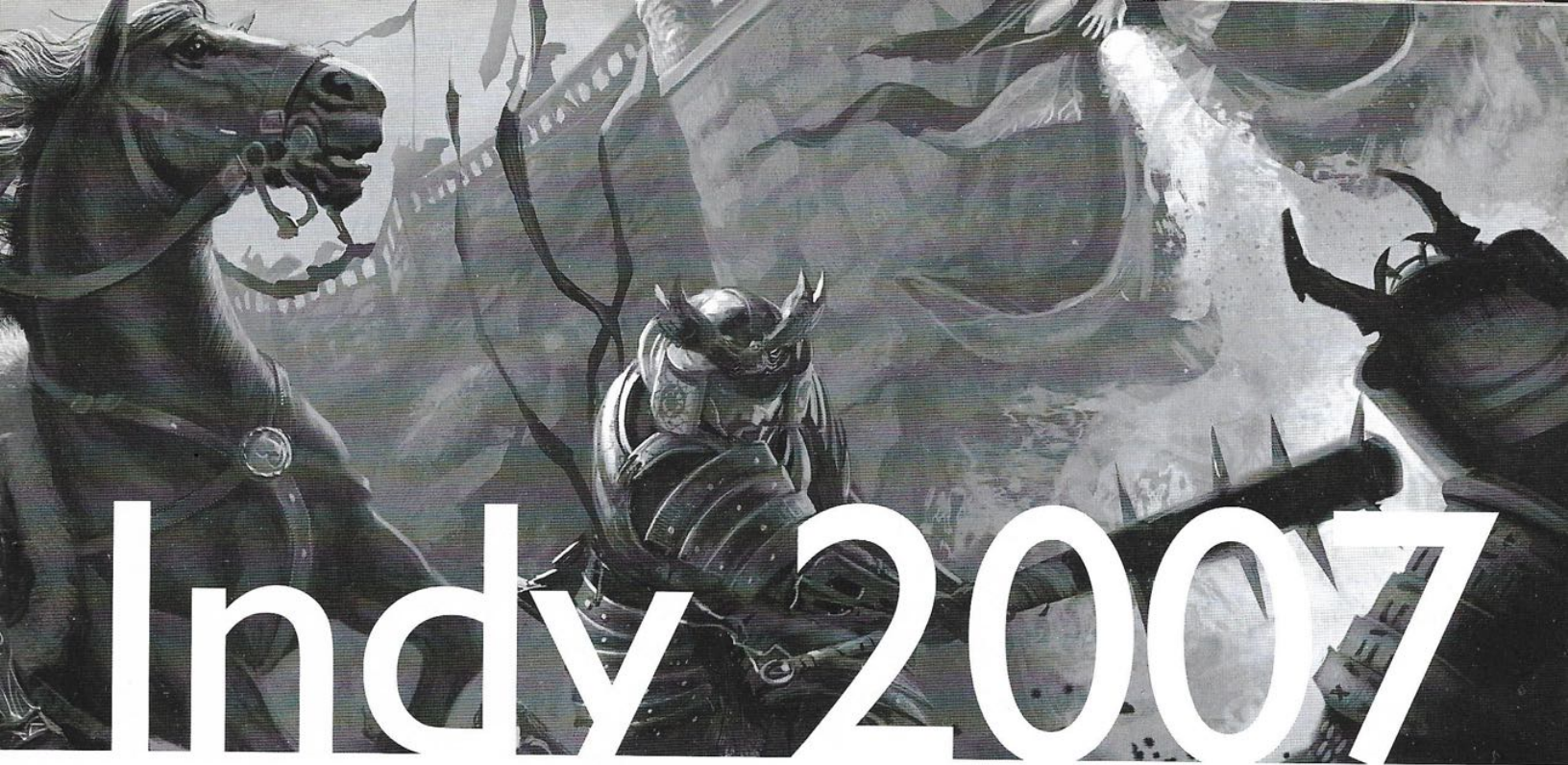
determined in the games, the choices made at the Clan Councils, and even the events of the Death at the Mikado. While not only deep in theme and story, the cards will be strong as well, great additions to your Samurai Edition arsenal. Look for this special set, available at l5r.com before the end of this year.

GenCon 2007 was an amazing event, and we are delighted that so many of our players and friends were able to come out for it. We hope that even more will be there next year for what we hope to be an even larger event.

GENCON 2007 SAW AN AMAZING TURNOUT OF L5R PLAYERS, both CCG and RPG. It was difficult to turn down a hallway without seeing people dressed as samurai or wearing L5R shirts and other attire. The banzai blew the lid off the CCG Hall, and even the judges of competing games were joining in by Sunday! If you have the means, you should not miss L5R at GenCon Indy.

GenCon





VIGILANCE KEEP

BY BRYAN REESE

In *Stronger Than Steel*, Lion received a simple, yet elegant stronghold. *The Vigilance Keep* may initially appear unimpressive, but in practice this stronghold is quite useful. By destroying two provinces in a game — not too difficult for Lion — players will cross 40 honor one full turn quicker out of this stronghold than other Lion strongholds. For proof all we need to do is a little math, making a few assumptions:

- You destroy two provinces over the course of a game (from attacking on turns 4, 5, and 6), netting 7 honor from the box (one 3PH and 4PH Personality)
- You buy 4 guys for full on turns 3-6, netting 14 honor (3, 3, 4, 4)
- You gain 6 honor from battles (*Resolution*, *Shinjo's Courage*, *A Noble End*, etc.)
- Yobanjin Alliance will resolve by turn 6 about 75% of the time, gaining you 8 honor

So with 7 starting honor +7 from the Stronghold +14 from Personalities +6 from battles +8 from *Yobanjin Alliance*, we wind up at 42. There are also some neat tricks you can employ, such as *Ikoma Noda* and *Governor's Court*, which we did not calculate in here. What this means is on your average draw, you should be able to cross 40 honor on turn 6, allowing you to win at the beginning of your turn 7. All the while you have done nothing more than attack and fight battles like any other Lion deck.

So we have established that this stronghold will allow you to cross 40 honor quicker than any other Lion stronghold, but let's look at what you might want to play in your deck to help achieve that end. First, we will need personalities.

1 Akodo Hiroyuki	3 Akodo Shunori
1 Matsu Yoshino	3 Matsu Fumio
1 Ikoma Yasuko	3 Ikoma Noda
1 Matsu Aoiko	3 Kafu
3 Akodo Shinichi	3 Matsu Yufu

We chose these personalities either for their high PH, unopposed movement, or synergetic interaction (such as Noda and Yasuko) with other cards which will be

in the deck. Your personality base may very well differ, but we believe this is a good starting place. So let's look at holdings.

1 Lion Advisor	3 Secluded Waystation
1 Seat of Power	3 Seiden Sanzo
1 Temple of the Seekers	1 A New Wall
3 Copper Mine	(I count this as a holding)
3 Governor's Court	

This puts us at 38 cards, and we will round out the deck with...

1 City of the Rich Frog
1 Yobanjin Alliance

Now when building the fate deck, we are going to want good honor gaining actions that also help us win battles. Some good, unopposed movement to try and sleaze a province or two will also be beneficial.

3 Strength in Certainty	1 Unexpected
3 A Noble End	Reinforcements
3 Misdirection	1 Shinjo's Courage
3 Flash of Steel	1 Knowledge
3 Stay Your Blade	1 Ordered Retreat
3 Rapid Deployment	1 Extended Maneuvers
3 Superior Strategist	1 Three-Stone River
3 Unshakable	1 Unfamiliar Ground
1 Heart of the Katana Style	1 Koutetsu Sessou
1 True Strength	
1 Unexpected Intimidation	1 Ring of the Void
1 Overwhelming Numbers	1 Ring of Water
1 Flanking Assault	
1 A Lion's Roar	

The actual card choices may vary from one deck to the next, but this is a general outline of what you can do with the deck. We have chosen to toolbox in a lot of cards, and use cavalry (*Kafu*, *Lion Advisor*, and *Seiden Sanzo*) and movement tricks (*Rapid Deployment*, *Akodo Shinichi*, *Ikoma Yasuko*, and *Matsu Aoiko*) to try and take an unopposed province or two. After those two, you should have enough honor to be over 40 or close to it.

Take the ideas laid out here and run with them. Certainly there are even better ways to use this stronghold. Always remember that being able to threaten two victory conditions simultaneously is a very powerful tool.

IA GOES LIVE ONLINE

BY DAVE LEPORE

No, not the Imperial Herald, that remains a print-based magazine. In fact, there have been many discussions about new and exciting ways to bring you the Imperial Herald, but that is for another article. This is about the giving you more access to your own account information, the ability to modify it, and even more.

I have to admit that the idea of taking the Assembly online was somewhat self-serving. Managing almost 3,000 accounts (and growing fast) had become almost overwhelming. Wouldn't it be great if I could automate some of my most basic processes? Wouldn't it be even better if I could answer your questions *before* you even asked? I knew the technology was there, but I just manage a database, not develop it. But what if...

The two most frequent questions I received from members were: 1) What's my Imperial Assembly Number? and, 2) When does my subscription expire?

I thought I'd take the time here to walk you through your on-line account and cover what you can do with it. If you've already logged on (and more than half of you have) then you'll know most of this already, but I will also try and describe the why as well.

To start with the login page (which you can get to via <http://www.l5r.com/imperial-assembly>) you enter your email address and password. If you don't have a password (or if you forgot, use the "Forgot your password?" link to recover it. A bit of explanation though, this only works if the email address we have on file for you is correct. If this doesn't work, it means we probably don't have the correct email address for you so email imperialassembly@alderac.com and let me know so we can get that fixed. If it is correct, you'll receive an email with a new password.

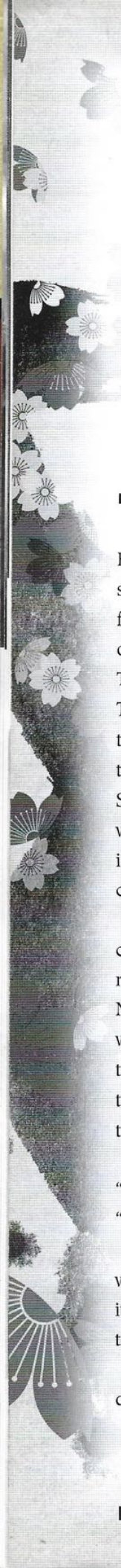
Once you've successfully logged in, you are taken to the Home page and immediately see the current issue of the Herald and when it shipped. If you have not received your copy of the current Herald within 10 business days of the shipped date (15 days for international subscriptions) then feel free to go ahead and let me know so I can reship it. You'll also get an expected ship date for the next issue. Below that is an announcement section specific to Imperial Assembly members.

The Profile link takes you to your account information. Here you can update your mailing address, email address and change your password. Below that shows your subscription information. If you have multiple subscriptions, you no longer have separate accounts, but one account with multiple subscriptions. If you have more than one subscription, one if them is marked Primary to identify your primary clan affiliation. Next to that is your ID. The first five digits represent your account ID (or IA#). Most of the time, this is all you will need. The number after the dash (-), is the ID for that particular subscription. Next your Clan mon is displayed and next your Stronghold store. If you haven't linked your subscription to your Stronghold Store, then you will see a "Choose Home Store" button. Click that and follow the logic tree to select your Stronghold Store. This is critical to make sure you are getting all the benefits membership has to offer as a lot is tied to Dojo Days.

You can see the status of your Dojo Days store by following the Browse Stores link. This takes you to the Dojo Days store list without taking you out of your account. Run a search for your store and see how many Assembly members, including yourself belong to that store. The number in the circle next to each Clan mon represents how many members of that Clan are linked to that store. If that number is in a star, it means that Clan has reached the magic number. Three or more members of a single clan linked to the same store gets you even more benefits.

I've also made it easier to email me. The Contact us link takes you to a page where all you do is type in your comment or question and click submit. This automatically sends an email to imperialassembly@alderac.com and includes your account number, name, email address, and your questions or comments so I can quickly find and review your account, and get answer your questions more quickly than ever before.

The most exciting thing about this for me is not what we've done so far, but what we can do next. Online voting (temptations, as well as other things), koku redemption, and a host of other things you may see roll out over the next few months.



TALES OF THE Emerald Championship

BY SHAWN CARMAN

The impromptu temple was one of many that had sprung up in the area surrounding the Test of the Emerald Champion, placed there by devoted monks and shugenja who could not bear the thought of Rokugan's faithful not having the option to pray in a proper temple of their choosing, regardless of what that might mean. To Mirumoto Narumi, it seemed somewhat ridiculous. The kami were present in all things, after all, and as such the Fortunes were present in all things. What need had the pious for a temple? Devotion was all that mattered. Still, the scent of incense had always comforted the young woman, ever since she was a child, and so she stepped into the wooden doorway for a moment of quiet to center herself.

A large man stood in the center of the temple's altar chamber. He had not knelt, and while his posture was rigid, there was an air of reverence about him that Narumi recognized at once. She smiled, but waited, not wanting to interrupt. After several minutes, the man turned as if to leave. The only sign of surprise was a slight tilt to his head. "Hello, Narumi-sama," he said. "It is good to see you. I had heard you were in attendance."

"Thank you Nagiken-san," she said, bowing slightly. "I had hoped our paths would cross." She smiled wryly. "Although preferably not only the field."

Predictably, Kitsuki Nagiken did not smile. "That would be most unfortunate," he said, "although I suppose it is still possible. I assume you will be competing in the tournament?"

"I will," Narumi replied. "And I know better than to question whether or not you advanced as well."

"I have been fortunate," Nagiken said simply. "I have been training for an opportunity for years."

"I remember. The last time I was home, I mentioned to the sensei at the Iron Mountain that you and I had crossed paths. They spoke of you with what I might call reverence. You are their favored student, I believe."

"They are great and honorable men," Nagiken said. "If there is anything about my duty as a justicar that I regret, it is that I am not able to visit the dojo with more regularity, to benefit from their ongoing guidance. But that is not my duty."

"Where has your duty taken you?" Narumi asked.

"Taikitsu Mura," the justicar replied.

Narumi frowned. "I am not familiar with the name."

"Few are." He withdrew a scroll and held it out to Narumi. "It is a small but highly productive agricultural holding of the Crane, a few hours' ride from Toshi Ranbo. The Crane Champion ceded it to the Dragon upon the conclusion of our... recent unpleasantness. The transition to Dragon control has been relatively unremarkable, but Mirumoto Kei believed it prudent to have me on hand. She referred to it as 'deterrent.'"

Narumi smiled broadly. The Mirumoto daimyo was adept at diplomatic statements. Most would have referred to Nagiken as a master of death that terrified those around him into the strictest possible interpretation of the law. "I am sure you have been most efficient in that regard, my friend."

"Perhaps," Nagiken said, "but I hope for a more interesting assignment, and very soon." He nodded toward the fields beyond. "At the very least, perhaps I can impress those in power to offer me a position where

I can benefit not only the Dragon, but others as well."

Narumi nodded. "Of that, my friend, I have little doubt." She bowed sharply. "Good fortunes to you, Nagiken-san."

He returned the bow. "And to you, Narumi-sama."



Despite the transitory nature of the tea house, those who had erected it so quickly had somehow managed to ensure that it remained dark inside, just as it did in so many such establishments all throughout the Empire. For once, Isawa Sawao did not mind the darkness, for it gave him the chance for quiet reflection. In the chaotic environment that had sprung up around the tournament, that was something he had dearly missed over the past few days.

There was a fleeting glimpse of sunlight as someone entered the house. Sawao saw on the samurai's face a familiar expression, and smiled. He gestured to the man, who stared at him blankly. Suspicion dawned on his face, much to Sawao's expression, but he approached all the same. "I do not know you," he said.

"No," the old sensei replied. "Perhaps we can change that? Sit with me, please. Have a drink."

"I do not drink sake," the Lion warrior said.

"Nor do I," Sawao said, "except of course when I do." He chuckled at his joke. "All the same, I am merely having tea today. Will you join me?"

The Lion frowned and regarded the table mutely for a moment, then finally sat. "May I know the name of my host?"

"Isawa Sawao," he replied.

"I know of you," the Lion said. "The shugenja duelist. A sensei and priest, and I believe a former Amethyst Champion."

Sawao raised his eyebrows. "More than most would know, it seems! Still, they are simply titles, all meaningless. Particularly the last one, especially now that the curse of the Amethyst Crown is broken. I am impressed all the same. Now, may I know your name?"

"Akodo Shigetoshi," the man replied.

"Daimyo of the Akodo family," Sawao said, inclining his head respectfully. "But of course you would know me. I am, after all, part of what you would consider a hostile force occupying a city on your border."

"Naturally," Shigetoshi said flatly.

"I am familiar with that insignia," Sawao said, gesturing to the armband Shigetoshi wore, "but not why a Lion might wear it."

"The Wolf Legion," Shigetoshi said, gesturing to the stylized wolf's head mon. "It was offered to me by a representative of their organization the first day of the tournament. It seems that after my involvement at the Battle of Toshi Ranbo, they wish to offer their service to the Lion Clan, and the Akodo specifically, on a permanent basis. I was of course deeply honored."

"Of course! I take it from your demeanor, however, that you are no longer a contender for the Emerald Championship," Sawao continued. "That much, at least, we have in common."

"I failed," Shigetoshi said.

"Your people are so quick to judge, both themselves and others," Sawao said. "You never examine the larger picture. Destiny unfolds for each of us, and you have a different destiny. How do you know that destiny will not lead to even greater glory for your clan?"

"Destiny is for greater and wiser men than me to debate," Shigetoshi said. "But you are mistaken about me. I am disappointed, yes, but I do not judge myself too harshly. I was defeated by Kakita Noritoshi."

"Yet another thing we have in common," Sawao said, saluting the Lion with his tea. "I have heard that one of Noritoshi's students is to be appointed the commander of the Legion of the Sapphire Chrysanthemum. The Kakita are quite prodigious these days, it would seem." He paused for a moment. "Your disappointment, then, is not at yourself?"

"I am disappointed with myself for losing a duel with Noritoshi-sama in the same way I would be disappointed with my son for losing a wrestling match with Hida Kisada." Shigetoshi took a draught of tea. "My son is ten years old."

Sawao laughed. "Well said," he replied. "Let us then drink to the success of our opponent, then, and hope that he shall carry the day."

"Indeed," Shigetoshi said. "And if what I have seen today is any indication, then I will drink to the alliance of the Crane and the Lion, as I would prefer not to face Noritoshi-sama again any time soon."

The two men laughed and drank tea into the late afternoon.



"You are not from Kudo."

The statement seemed simple enough, and those few who had assembled to watch the duel between two ronin paid it little mind. The true effect could be read on the face of the man calling himself Iemitsu, however. His lip curled up in a dismissive snarl. "You have no idea what you are talking about," he hissed.

"That much is true of us all on an alarmingly regular basis," the ronin swordswoman Utegawa agreed. "It does not change the truth. You claim to be from Kudo, but you are not. You are a liar, and you hide something from the people conducting this most honorable of contests. That is unacceptable."

Iemitsu's eyes narrowed. "You have made a mistake," he said quietly.

"I think not. I spent several years studying in Kudo. I know its traditions, customs, accents... you have none of them. Have you passed through the village? Quite possibly. Lived there? Never."

"That was not the mistake I was referring to," Iemitsu said, his voice just above a whisper. "No, in that you are correct. Your mistake was in bringing it to my attention. I would have let you live, possibly even serve me, if you wished. I could always find a use for a woman, even a homely creature like you." He clicked his tongue disdainfully. "No, now I must kill you, just to be certain."

"That is your decision," Utegawa said. She dropped effortlessly into her stance. "Come and take my life, if you can."

Iemitsu likewise entered a dueling stance. Utegawa recognized it as a modified version of the Lion in Wait, an older style that was no longer in favor in many modern dojo. It was powerful and deadly, but had weaknesses. Unfortunately for many, because the style was so rarely seen, there were few who knew how to exploit them. That the alleged ronin had advanced so far in the tournament suggested that others had fallen prey to his archaic yet effective technique.

Fortunately for her, the Lion in Wait was among the styles Utegawa was familiar with.

The mysterious ronin lunged forward with devastating speed, his blade clearly angled to take Utegawa's head. The little woman moved deftly outside his strike zone and countered with a blow that, if it had landed, would

have crippled her opponent while sparing his life. The big warrior spun away, however, and the strike glanced off of the armored plates covering his thigh.

The two dropped into a circling motion, eyeing one another warily. There was a murmur from the few onlookers, for it was rare for such duels to enter the skirmish stage. That it was occurring with two ronin, an unusual match in the first place, made it all the more interesting. If more than a dozen had shown up to watch their match, perhaps it might have even been a popular story to tell in court.

Utegawa pushed such thoughts from her mind, and countered another pair of strikes. Her technique was nearly flawless, but still the sheer force of the strikes caused her to be pushed involuntarily back a step each time. She waited, letting him push her farther and farther back, allowing him to grow overconfident in her impending defeat. Then, like a fool, he risked an overhead strike, possibly correct in that even if she blocked it, the force of it would cause a head wound that would end the contest.

She had no intention of permitting such a thing. Once her opponent lifted his blade, she ceased to limit herself and struck with her true speed. As she anticipated, the Lion in Wait style did not allow for rapid counter-defense, and her blade struck across the man's abdomen. She felt the armored plates give way, and the gentle resistance that indicated she had struck flesh. She allowed her blow to carry through, and she spun several steps away before turning to face him again in a defensive stance. All in a matter of seconds.

Iemitsu snarled in irritation and pain, bringing an arm to cover his bloodied midsection even as his armor fell away. Despite his attempts, she caught a glimpse of lesions covering his abdomen. She was not particularly surprised.

"You will suffer for this," Iemitsu said simply. He could not attempt to attack her without revealing his secret to their onlookers, and so kept one hand covering his stomach as he stuck his blade into the earth with the other and retrieved the armored plates at his feet.

"Tell your Chuda masters that their days are limited," Utegawa returned. "I will fulfill the oaths I made."

"Hear my oath, then," Iemitsu said. "I will lick your blood from my blade while you lay dying in the dirt."

He turned quickly and departed, no doubt eager to be far from the tournament grounds lest she choose to report his presence.

Utegawa made no effort to stop him. She wanted the Chuda to know that she was coming. She wanted them to know, in whatever small part, the fear and anxiety it had taken her years to drive from her spirit.

Her day was coming.



The Scorpion woman took a moment to prepare herself through a brief martial arts kata before the match began. She glanced at her opponent with a curious, almost innocent expression. "May I ask you a question?"

Akasha raised an eyebrow. "If you like."

"Is it true what is said of you?" Bayushi Hisako asked. "They say that you are half-Naga, but then there are so many ludicrous rumors that circulate about your clan, and the Naga as a whole, that I typically dismiss them. The rumors regarding you, however, are remarkably tenacious and consistent."

"Of course," Akasha replied. She had long since become accustomed to such inquiries. "The rumors are not entirely true. I am human, yes, with something of the Naga's communal mind as well. That is the source of my name. If it is a half-Naga you wish to see, however, then you will have to travel to the Dragon lands."

"How curious," Hisako said, completing her exercise and beginning to stretch before taking her position.

"A fascinating people, the Naga."

"Indeed," Akasha agreed. "I have answered your question, and now I pose one of my own."

"Please," Hisako said, her head inclined.

"I have heard rumors that the Bitter Lies Swordsmen are madmen and fools to a fault. You seem like neither, and yet I have heard that you are administrator of their dojo, and the wife of their master sensei, Bayushi Kwanchai."

"I am honored to be a Bitter Lies sensei," she answered, "and I am indeed married to the great hero Kwanchai. I think you can see, however, that the reputation of those who study the Bitter Lies style is greatly exaggerated."

"So it seems. Perhaps I have been misinformed."

"Perhaps you have," Hisako said. "A dojo is being

created in the Imperial City, under the largesse of the newly appointed provincial daimyo Bayushi Tsimaru. Perhaps you can join us there at some point, and see for yourself the power our techniques command."

"I would like that," Akasha said. "Are you prepared to begin?"

"I am."

The two women took their stances and faced one another. Hisako shifted her position, however, adopting a peculiar stance wherein her gaze was leveled at the ground at her feet. Akasha frowned at the oddity of it, but found her center and continued.

The minutes the two women faced one another seemed to drag on into hours. There was an occasional stirring among the impatient onlookers, but neither woman paid them any heed. They both focused on the task at hand, dwelling only on one another.

Without warning, both exploded into motion at the same time. Their movement was so rapid that many did not see it, and only a second after it began, it was over. Both women stood one step past the other, their backs to one another. For a moment, no one could say who won.

Then a single lock of Akasha's hair drifted idly to the ground.

"Oh for the Heavens' sake," she muttered, staring at the lock. "Now I will have to endure another month of Chen pestering me to cut my hair." She glanced over her shoulder at the Scorpion warrior. "My husband prefers it shorter."

Hisako grinned. "Kwanchai prefers it long. Men are peculiar."

"I have plumbed the depths of the Shinomen Mori, and seen creatures that I am certain no other mortal being has ever laid eyes upon," Akasha observed. "None of them are as strange as men, I think."

Hisako laughed before bowing. "Thank you for honoring me with the duel."

"My pleasure," Akasha said, bowing. "Congratulations on your victory. May the Fortunes grant you their blessings as the day continues."

THE EMERALD CHAMPIONSHIP IN THE RPG

BY SHAWN CARMAN

"In the Month of the Goat, in the year 1169, the Great Clans sent their finest warriors to the Plains of Thunder, where those of Imperial blood oversaw the selection of the newest Emerald Champion. Surely in an Empire so threatened by conflict and vice, no man shall bring glory to the position as will the honorable Shosuro Jimen." —The Miya Histories

In an Empire with no Emperor, how can the law be maintained? How can the clans be trusted not to succumb to their petty vices and grudges, as they have so many times in the past, without a recognized authority to rein them in? The clans have demonstrated all too often that they have little use for the Imperial families when those noble samurai are not serving an Emperor, and so the Imperials took it upon themselves to convene that greatest of contests, the Emerald Championship, in the wake of the deaths of the Emperor, his Empress, and the Emerald Champion Yasuki Hachi.

The outcome was not what anyone expected. The events surrounding the tournament played out as one might expect, as they have for centuries. The clans sent their finest warriors, along with a handful of ronin fortunate enough to secure an invitation, to compete. Thousands attended to watch the spectacle. Political maneuvering was intense, and rivalries were both created and resolved without anyone ever setting foot upon the field.

New Advanced School: The Emerald Magistrates [Bushi]

Requirements:

Rings/Traits: Fire 4, Perception 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Investigation 5, Lore: Law 3, any one Weapon Skill at 4

Advantages: Clear Thinker

Other: Glory 3.0+ or Honor 3.0+, must be invited by the Emerald Champion or his representatives

Techniques:

Rank 1: Saibankan's Method

The Emperor's magistrates are taught the simple but effective methods of Soshi Saibankan, the Scorpion who helped create the tradition of the Emerald Magistrates. You may spend a Void Point to gain Free Raises equal to your Insight Rank when making a roll using any of the following Skills: *Courtier, Etiquette, Hunting, Investigation, Lore: Heraldry, or Lore: Law.*

Rank 2: For the Empire

The blessings of Tengoku shine upon the Emperor's most loyal servants. You may spend a Void Point as a Simple Action to negate the damage reduction ability of any opponent within 50 feet. Effects that may be negated in this manner include Carapace, Advantages, Techniques, the abilities of Shadowlands Creatures or Shadowlands Minions, or maho or elemental spells. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Honor.

Rank 3: In the Emperor's Name

The Emperor's justice cannot be avoided. You may make an additional attack per round.

The Emerald Mempo

Although crafted at the same time as the much more famous Emerald Armor, the Emerald Mempo has been worn only rarely throughout history, typically on those occasions when the Emerald Champion has taken to the field of battle against a large military force. For most, carrying the Champion's blade and wearing the Emerald Armor have been sufficient badges of office, and the mempo, which obviously makes it difficult to determine the wearer's identity, has largely been eschewed over the centuries. Shosuro Jimen, the most recent Emerald Champion, has done exactly the opposite. Jimen rarely wears the Emerald Armor, preferring instead to wear the Champion's blade on his hip (and even that is subject to his whim, as he often simply relies upon his yojimbo,

Bayushi Hisoka), and wears the Emerald Mempo with great frequency. The mask serves him well, as he is accustomed to concealing his features and expressions from others, making it all the more difficult for them to gauge his reaction. And of course it serves as a constant, subtle but inescapable reminder of exactly who he is and what he can do. When the time arises, he can simply remove it and almost no one in the Empire will have any idea who he is, allowing him considerable freedoms that his predecessors have never enjoyed.

The Emerald Mempo is a powerful artifact with a number of unique abilities. First, while it is worn, the wearer may spend a Void Point to gain the benefits of wearing light armor for a number of rounds equal to his Insight Rank. This only works if the wearer is unarmored and is not cumulative with other effects of a similar nature. While wearing the mask, the wearer also rolls three additional dice on any test or roll that requires him to

Shosuro Jimen, the Emerald Champion of Rokugan

Air 4 Earth 3 Fire 3 Water 3 Void 4

Awareness 8 Intelligence 6 Perception 6

School/Rank: Bayushi Courter 5 / Emerald Magistrate 1*

Honor: 1.1 Status: 9.1 Glory: 8.4

Advantages: Allies (numerous), Blackmail (numerous), Heartless, Leadership, Social Position (Emerald Champion)

Disadvantages: Cruel, Lechery (1 point)

Kata: None

Skills: Acting 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 7, Deceit (Intimidation, Lying, Seduction) 7, Defense 4, Etiquette (Sincerity) 8, Forgery 3, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Interrogation) 6, Kenjutsu 2, Know the School: Doji Courtier 6, Know the School: Ide Duelist 3, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 4, Lore: Law 3, Poison 8, Stealth 3, Storytelling (Oratory) 2, Tea Ceremony 2, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 4, Underworld 6

Note: Jimen possesses ranks in the Emerald Magistrate Advanced School due to his possession of the Emerald Mempo. This effect is in place despite that Jimen does not meet the pre-requisites to enter that Advanced School.

use his Honor Rank as a statistic. Finally, it grants ranks in the Emerald Magistrate Advanced School equal to the wearer's Honor Rank, to the obvious maximum of three ranks. This benefit is conferred regardless of whether or not the wearer meets the pre-requisites for entry into that Advanced School.

Only a short time ago, no one outside of the Scorpion lands had ever heard of Shosuro Jimen. He was one of a large number of courtiers serving in the court chambers of Kyuden Bayushi and rarely, if ever, made an impression one way or another on those who encountered him. His appointment to serve as the personal representative of Bayushi Paneki at the Imperial Court sent those in attendance scrambling to find more information about this enigmatic individual. Those

who did heard a strange number of contradictions, all from various trustworthy sources.



Jimen was foolish, but brilliant. Brash, but patient. Ruthless, but compassionate. In short, no one knew anything of any substance about Shosuro Jimen.

After a year serving in the Imperial Court, and now having so unexpectedly ascended to the position of Emerald Champion, the same continues to hold true. If there is anyone in Rokugan who truly knows Jimen, he or she has never spoken of it to outsiders. Some wonder if even Paneki knows his vassal, of whom he has only ever said "He is my most trusted representative, and he speaks with my full authority." Some whisper that Jimen may have done the unthinkable, and blackmailed the Master of Secrets himself in order to achieve his position. If Jimen were to hear such a thing, he would only laugh.

It was not difficult to see that the Imperials would convene the Emerald Championship. While their painfully transparent plans came only days after Empress Kurako's death, Jimen's began within hours of hearing the news. The stodgy old Imperials could not bear the thought of losing their position, and so they would seek to create someone who would both reinforce their role in the societal order while simultaneously looking to them for guidance and support. It was, after all, what Jimen would do if their positions were reversed.

It was a simple matter for a man of his influence to gain an invitation to the Championship, despite that doing so raised the eyebrows of many. He was a courtier, after all, not a warrior. It did not matter if he were a warrior, however, so long as he knew his competition, and Jimen had months to research who would appear. There were some wild cards, of course, but for the most part, his predictions were accurate, his preparations flawless. What he had not expected was the simplistic idealism of those assembled. So many of them actually believed they could win! As if anyone in the Empire could have defeated Kakita Noritoshi, and there was no question in Jimen's mind that was who he would face in the final battle. He spent months preparing, and even as he took the field, a small voice in the back of his mind wondered if it would be enough.

Jimen brought every weapon in his arsenal to bear on Noritoshi, unleashing one after another in a ruthless bid to break the man's will to win. He imperiled his clan's strongest alliance, the honor of his Champion, and then, when all else failed, the life of Noritoshi's beloved son.

Had he poisoned the boy, as he claimed? Why would he? There was no need. All that was needed was that the love of a father would push Noritoshi just far enough to make him back down, and the day belonged to Shosuro Jimen.

Now, the game has become interesting. Jimen is one of the most powerful men in the Empire, if not the most powerful. He has resources beyond imagining at his fingertips, with fools and foes alike lining up to become his ally. He has the opportunity now to mold the entire Empire in a manner of his choosing, and that is exactly what he plans to do.

And in the back of his mind, if the little voice that once wondered if he would lose now fears the inevitable retribution of Kakita Noritoshi, he pays it no mind.

Tsuruchi Ki, Emerald Magistrate

Air 2 Earth 2 Fire 3 Water 6 Void 5
Reflexes 4

School/Rank: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 3 / Orochi Rider 1
Honor: 2.2 Status: 2.4 Glory: 3.7

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Daredevil,
Magic Resistance (2 points)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Idealistic
Kata: Striking as Fire, Striking as Water,
Strike of the Cliff's Edge

Skills: Athletics 5, Craft: Sailing 2, Defense 3,
Horsemanship 5, Hunting 6, Investigation 4,
Jujitsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu (Tsuruchi Longbow) 6,
Lore: Orochi 3, Meditation 5, Staves 3, Stealth 4

"I know you," Shosuro Jimen had said. "You are the man who brought the Orochi to the moral realm."

Tsuruchi Ki had been quite surprised to hear such words coming from someone other than a Mantis. In truth, few outside the Yoritomo were aware of his accomplishments. His family had been more than happy to tell anyone interested of his story, and there had even been a play written about it, but ultimately there were few outside of the Islands and the Tsuruchi mountains that found such things of interest. What's more, as the Orochi Riders had fallen out of favor with the elder sensei at Tempest Island, Ki often found himself in the position of an unpleasant reminder, and his status within the clan seemed to have plummeted. The young warrior had tried to be understanding, but a hint of resentment had begun to creep into the back of his mind, and try as he might he had been unable to unseat it.

He did not want fame or riches, after all. Only a little recognition for the enormity of what he had done. He had survived a trip into the Realm of Mischief and not only survived to tell the tale, but brought back powerful weapons for his clan to use. His companion on the trip, Moshi Mogai, had lost her ability to speak to the kami as a result of their journey, but in the process became appointed to the clan's delegation to the Imperial Court. Did Ki not deserve something other than scorn for his work? He struggled to put such thoughts away, working diligently on whatever duty his clan assigned to him, but he could not escape them completely.

"You are a man who adapts quickly, and who seeks advantage where there is none," Jimen continued. "I will have need of such men very shortly. Would you be interested?"

The tournament had not yet ended, and yet Ki had known, in that one instant, that Jimen would be the

victor. He agreed instantly. Now, he is the first Emerald Magistrate to swear his oaths of service under the command of a new Emerald Champion, and Jimen has promised him great things if he but serves loyally.

Kakita Noritoshi, Daimyo of the Kakita

Air 6 Earth 4 Fire 6 Water 4 Void 7

Agility 7 Perception 6

School/Rank: Kakita Bushi 5 / Kenshinzen 3

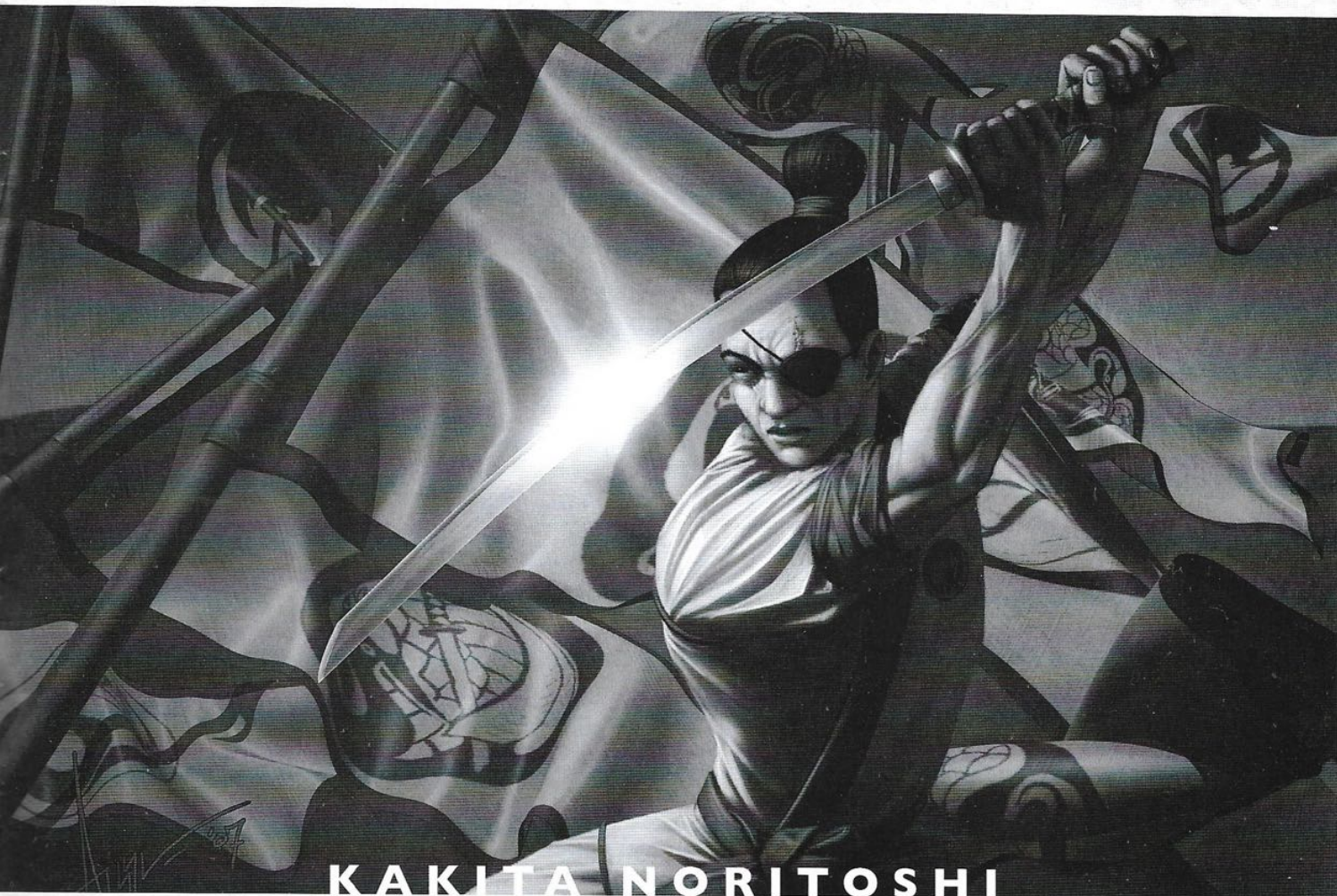
Honor: 3.8 Status: 8.2 Glory: 7.9

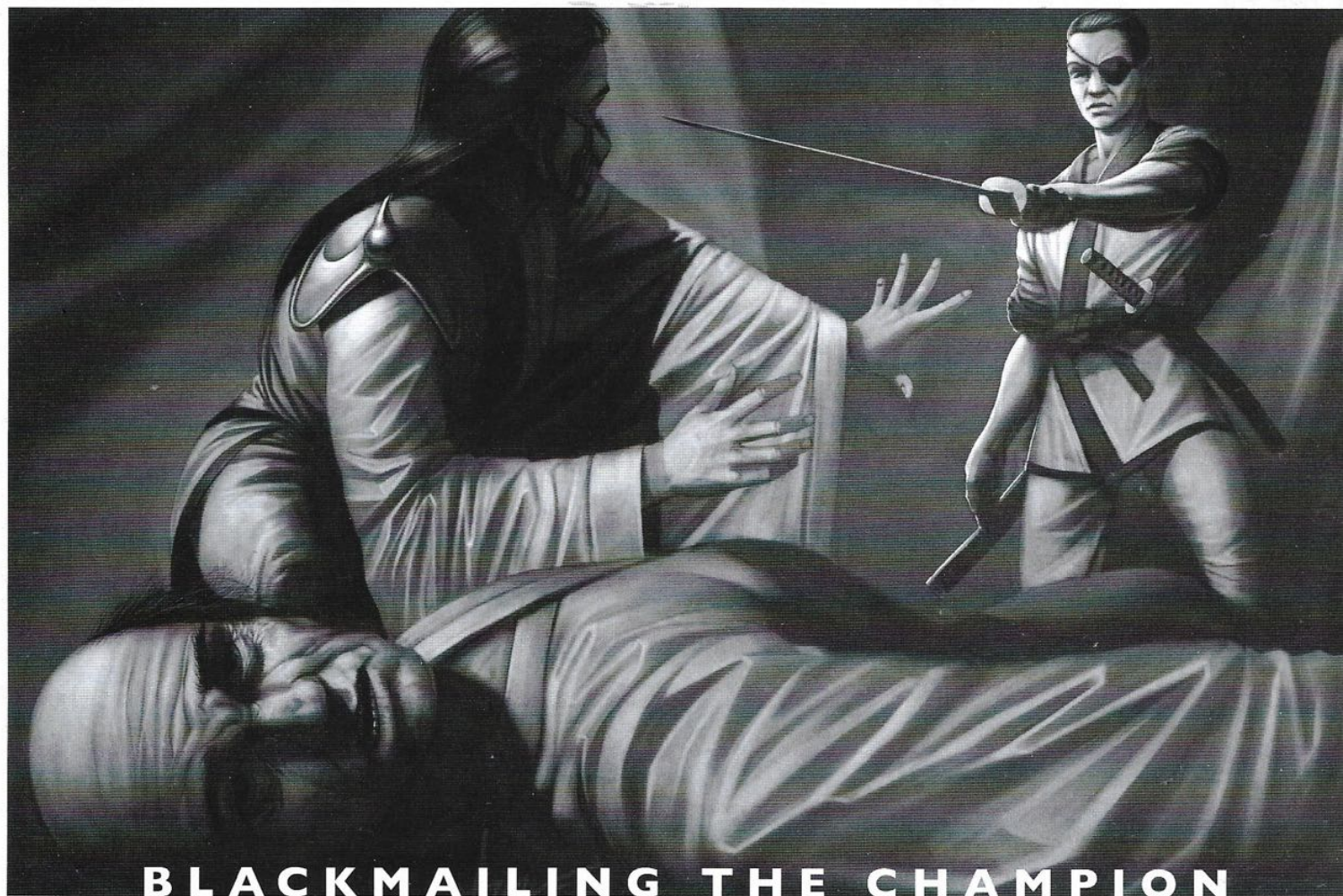
Advantages: Quick, Social Position (Kakita Daimyo)

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 points), Missing Eye

Kata: Noritoshi has all Common Kata and Crane Kata (for which he meets the prerequisites) listed in the L5R RPG, Third Edition, as well as any and all additional Kata specified for the Kakita Bushi School

Skills: Athletics 4, Courtier 5, Defense 7, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Iaijutsu 9, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 5, Lore: Iaijutsu 8, Meditation (Void Recovery) 5, Tea Ceremony 4, Theology (Shintao) 5





BLACKMAILING THE CHAMPION

A playwright once said that a man's worth was measured by the caliber of his enemies. If that is true, then Shosuro Jimen is indeed a worthy man, for in the course of securing his victory, he made many enemies, and none more dangerous than Kakita Noritoshi.

Kakita Noritoshi is one of the deadliest men in the Empire. He is the daimyo of the Kakita family, and as such commands resources that most families cannot marshal even under ideal circumstances. He is the master sensei of the Kakita Dueling Academy, which means that he is perhaps the fastest, most perceptive, and well-trained warrior that exists in the entirety of the Crane Clan, if not the whole of Rokugan. In the course of his lifetime, he has killed seventeen men in legal duels, and countless more on the field of battle. He has never known defeat, until he faced Shosuro Jimen in the final duel of the Emerald Championship in 1169.

The depth of Jimen's dishonor astounded Noritoshi; he had quite simply never encountered anything like it.

The Scorpion's verbal assault was annoying, but easily put aside. Then he had mentioned the harriers, and Noritoshi's calm began to slip for the first time in his life. Relentlessly, the Scorpion explained how he knew of the harriers, hinting at more even than Noritoshi knew, and how the simple revelation of that knowledge could destroy the Crane's alliance with the Lion Clan, and disgrace Noritoshi's Champion, the Lady Doji Domotai. Noritoshi wavered, but apparently Jimen was unable to see it, and so the madman continued.

It was then that he threatened Noritoshi's young son.

Jimen believes that Noritoshi conceded because he was intimidated, perhaps even frightened, by the Scorpion's threats, but he does not understand the situation. In that instant, Noritoshi knew that he would kill Jimen, but to do so at the Emerald Championship would forever taint his position as Champion, and the disgrace would extend to the rest of his clan as well. It was also possible, he had no choice but to admit, that Jimen spoke the truth,

and that his defeat or death would spell the doom of the Crane's alliance with the Lion, and the disgrace of Domotai. Noritoshi could not allow that to happen, and so he committed the one act he would never have believed: he conceded a duel in the final match to determine the identity of the Emerald Champion.

Following that dark day, Noritoshi had made a number of dramatic changes in his life. For years prior to the Championship, he had secluded himself from the world at large, focusing instead on serving his family and clan, and looking after the well-being of his own family in the process. He has been remarkably hands-on in the dojo, resulting in perhaps the finest trained and most competent generation of young Crane samurai that the Empire has ever seen. This was his life, and one he was comfortable with so long as his Champion was content to permit it. No more.

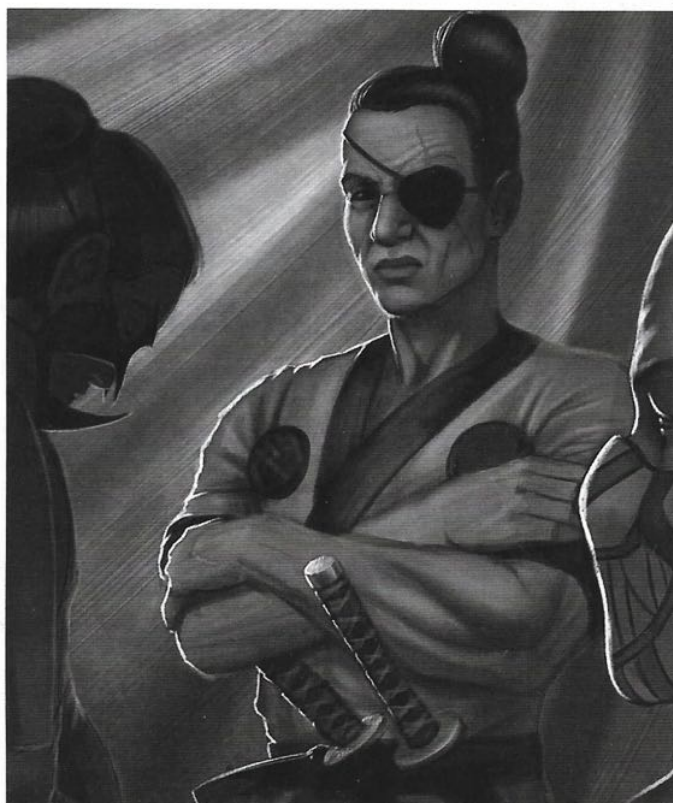
Noritoshi did not speak to anyone after his concession. He returned home immediately. Within three days of his return, Kyuden Kakita was inundated by dozens of women and their children, all of whom were invited to attend an impromptu festival, and all of whom bore at least a passing resemblance to Noritoshi's wife and son. When the festival

was over and the guests departed, Kakita Mai and the couple's son were gone. No one knows where they are, and Noritoshi will not speak of it. He has sought and been granted permission to travel throughout the Empire by his Champion, and has ceded his sensei duties to his most promising students, including the young prodigy Kakita Korihome. Those who know Noritoshi whisper that in his preparations for his journey, it seems that his is preparing for war.

They are, of course, completely correct.

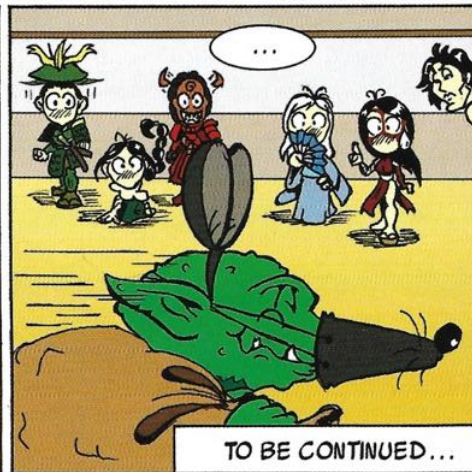
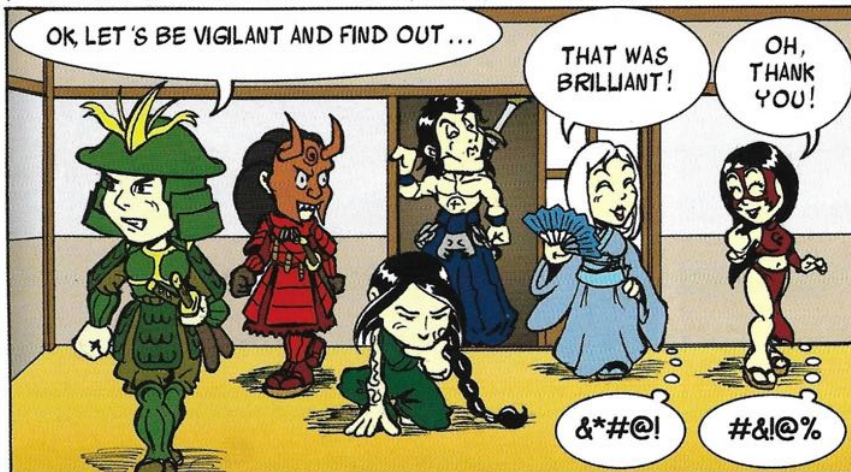
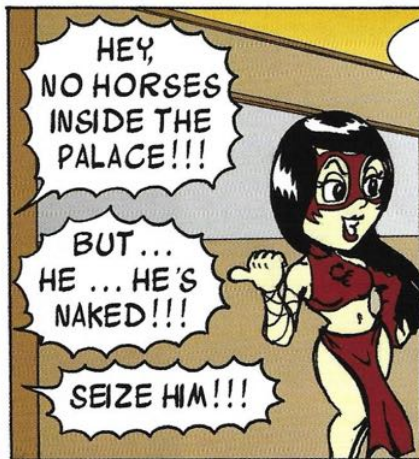
Trappings of the Emerald Champion

For more information on the rights, responsibilities, and trappings of the office of Emerald Champion, see the chapter on the Test of the Emerald Champion in Art of the Duel, and on the Emerald Armor and other items in the upcoming supplement, Prayers & Treasures.





CSI : courtier-samurai investigator



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