

THE
IMPERIAL

HERALD

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SEASON OF THE
UNICORN
REVEALED INSIDE

Legacy of the
NAGA

by Ed Bolme

ROKUGAN GOES

d20

A Perfect Cut

Full Preview Inside

ALSO:

ZEN'S CARD FOCUS

KOKU REDEMPTION





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It's all too easy when designing cards to focus one's attention on the high-level tournament scene. Most of L5R's playtesters play at that level, many of the game's most vocal customers are tournament regulars, and I would consider myself remiss if I didn't at least try to keep up with them and with the changing tournament scene. That's tunnel vision.

For every GenCon, there are hundreds of five-way pickup sessions and untold numbers of new customers finding out for the first time the advantages of an all-Cavalry deck. There's more than enough room in a 150-card set to write cards for these players while still maintaining balance in the rarefied atmosphere of 1-on-1 world championships. L5R has long been played as a sealed deck game, and *A Perfect Cut* recognizes that with cards like *Reassert One's Mettle* and *Banner Guard*. Fans of multi-player games are sure to find a spot for *Where Respect is Due* in

A Perfect Cut: An Expansion Not Just About the Tournament Scene

their decks, and they'll appreciate the extra attention.

A Penny Saved

Saving gold to spend on other players' turns was announced back at GenCon 2000 as something we were looking to add to the game. Right now, there is little brainwork involved in figuring out how many of your Holdings to bow on your own turn — you bow all of them and buy as much as you can! If you do that after *A Perfect Cut* hits stores, however, you'll never be able to play *Celebration*, which is a reaction that gives you 3 Honor after another player's Event resolves. Nor will you be able to play *Too Much Too Soon*, which, one way or another, will prevent an opponent's Shugenja from casting a spell on the turn it's

attached. Cards like these serve two purposes. First, the new card wordings pay to the multi-player environment. They add decision-making to a part of the game that has always been rather automatic, which increases the overall importance of skill over luck. Second, the act of leaving gold unspent turn after turn will slow the pace of the game in a more interesting way than simply making all the cards in the Gold tournament environment more expensive.

Winds Aren't Everything

With the functions of the Imperial Favor being split across the Four Winds, some players may fear not having the right Favor abilities against the right opponent. Never fear! *A Perfect Cut* provides ways besides your Wind to use the

by Jeff Alexander

Favor, like the action card *Political Warfare*, for those times you're facing a deck that your chosen Wind is weak against.

To The Last Man

L5R's all-or-nothing combat rules have always given pause to players entering the game from other CCGs. It's a difficult mechanic to get used to, I'll admit, and while we'd never even think of removing it entirely, we're not averse to adding a bit of attrition for the winning army. That's why you'll start to see the *Yu* trait on some samurai, particularly Crab. (Those of you familiar with the L5R RPG might recognize the word as one of the seven tenets of the Code of Bushido: "Heroic Courage.") Samurai with this trait are able to take some of the victor's force with them should they have the misfortune of being destroyed at the end of a battle, not neglecting their duty even in the face of their own death. See p.30 for Zen Faulkes' take on this new ability.

We also wanted to introduce cards that encourage players to attack with less than their full collection of units at times. Most of the ideas we had for this aren't going to appear until the next set, *An Oni's Fury*, but one made it into this set: *Contingency Planning*.

New Directions

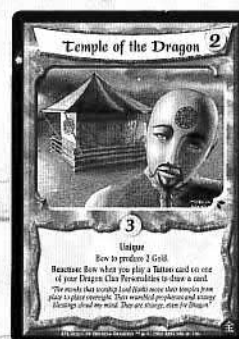
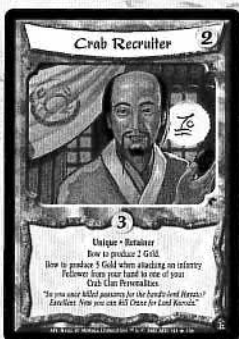
The Great Clans have changed greatly since Imperial Edition. They don't necessarily have the same directions they did during the reigns of Hantei the 38th or Toturi the First. The Dragon have reincorporated the tattooed *ise zumi* and much of the Brotherhood that has not returned to a wholly meditative life; that,



plus their growing quarrels with the Phoenix, is reflected in the steady trickle of Dragon Clan Monks and the increasing number of monk-only *Kihos*. The Crab have greatly increased their recruiting so they can fight the Crane over the Yasuki family at the Wall: is their new focus on Followers rather than their traditional defensive measures. The far-reaching Unicorn will have more of a use as messengers and

couriers now, taking advantage of their knowledge of foreign trade routes and their background outside Rokugan, which explains their slowly-building new affinity with the Item card type. As for the Shadowlands, well... what are these Tsuno, anyway, and why are they on so many cards? And who is this Daigotsu fellow?

If you want to know more, check out the Clan-specific Holdings in *A Perfect Cut*.



What good is a card game where you can't combine your cards in new and interesting ways? Here are a couple new ones you'll need to plan for — or against — once this expansion releases.

Mirumoto Taiu + The Great Climb

The Great Climb is a terrain that lets all your cards in the battle make every ranged attack they have, without bowing, just before the battle resolves. This works particularly well with Personalities and with cards that have more than one ranged attack on them. Mirumoto Taiu fits both descriptions.

The Hand of Thunder + A Desperate Act

The Hand of Thunder bows all opposing 0F and 1F Personalities and Followers. Ordinarily that's not many, unless your opponent is kind enough to use lots of token Followers. A Desperate Act lets you give -1F to each of those opposing cards (though at the pricey cost of one of your own Personalities), which brings the game's far more common 2F Followers into bowable range. Other cards from Gold Edition that combo well with The Hand are Uncertainty and, on defense, Moat.

Yoshi's Fan + Shosuro Yasuko

Shosuro Yasuko can prevent a samurai from attacking... provided his Personal Honor is no greater than hers. The problem is, she only has a PH of 1. Enter Yoshi's Fan, an item that raises the Personal Honor of its wielder by 2 (as well as providing the **Courtier** trait, which Yasuko already has). With a Personal Honor of 3, there are very few samurai beyond her grasp. Of course, dishonoring the samurai in question will also work, but that usually requires two other cards (a Shugenja and Secrets on the Wind, or a high Chi duelist and Iaijutsu Challenge), isn't as fast since you need to dishonor the samurai ahead of time, and isn't as flexible since another, even more threatening samurai could come along in the meantime. There's also the Scorpion Clan Champion, Bayushi Yojiro, who works better if you have multiple Yasukos but only raises their Personal Honor to 2.

Snowy Fields + any send-home action

The beauty of this combo is that your opponent will end up able to take one fewer action regardless of whether or not he tries to keep his unit in the battle. Remember, Reactions are actions too!



Goblin Ground

The theme of the deck revolves around using lots of Followers and distributing Force boosts to them. But that's not its only trick: **Stand Against the Waves** has always been effective against decks that focus more on Personalities, like many Shadowlands and even more honor decks; **Arrows From the Woods** can make **Stand Against the Waves** bow one extra Personality, combo with **Ashigaru Spearmen**, or pick off an annoying Shugenja all by itself. But the single biggest benefit will probably be your Stronghold ability. Play a Follower, draw a card. (Play Ashigaru Spearmen, draw two cards!) Who needs Toturi Sezaru?

Besides their Force boost, the +1C from **Personal Standard** resolves the difficulties you'll likely have playing **Superior Tactics** with the large number of 2 Chi Personalities in the deck, and their drawback is often meaningless on a 4F Personality. Don't make the common mistake of putting one on **Wukau**, though. He's not a samurai, and can't have one.

Playing the Deck

Try to put your Scouts on **Hida Wukau** for the Force bonus and so you don't lose a large Personality if your opponent kills **Wukau**. Larger Followers can go on **Wukau** — or **Toritaka Tatsune** — so you don't lose them if he's killed in battle. Also, don't forget **Hida Kagore's** ability to move one Follower to or from himself during battle — it's helpful when you cannot play your cards exactly where you want them. Don't overcommit when you attack or you won't be able to play **Outmaneuvered by Force**, not to mention being left stranded if you don't have a **Rallying Cry** yet.

If you have one problem, it will be meeting gold costs. Discard early Personalities to get to more Holdings if you have to. Discarding unwanted Dynasty cards is the number one useful tip for inexperienced players. Remember to cycle, cycle, cycle!

"Twenty Goblin Winter"

by Jeff Alexander

Format:
Gold 45/40

Stronghold:
Kyuden Hida

Personalities:
2 Hida Kagore
1 Hida Kuon Exp.
2 Hida Reiha
1 Hida Rohiteki Exp.
3 Hida Tenshu
3 Hida Wukau
3 Hiruma Masagaro
2 Toritaka Tatsune

Holdings:
1 Crab Recruiter
3 Iron Mine
3 Jade Works
3 Large Farm
1 Oracle of the Earth
1 Plum Tree Training Ground
3 Small Farm
3 The Hiruma Dojo

Regions:
3 Farmlands

Events:
A Matter of Pride
Blazing Sun
Imperial Gift
In Time of War
Twenty Goblin Winter

Actions:
3 A Test of Courage
2 Arrows From the Woods
2 Contingency Planning
2 Deadly Ground
2 Encircled Terrain
3 Outmaneuvered by Force
2 Rallying Cry
2 Refugees
2 Snowy Fields
2 Stand Against the Waves
3 Superior Tactics

Followers:
3 Ashigaru Spearmen
2 Heavy Infantry
3 Scout
3 The Damned

Items:
1 Celestial Sword of the Crab
3 Personal Standard

Rings:
Ring of the Void

Wind:
Akodo Kaneka

Attack of the Killer "Bs"

Big Bad Berserker decks have long been a staple of the Crab clan, and Gold Edition environment is no different. The strict Gold Triple-B deck consists of big, chunky personalities and cheap or free gold holdings, and a trim Fate Deck that sings the praises of force pumps and battle enders. Combining powerful personalities with cheap gold and a no-frills Fate Deck gives you the recipe for speed and province destruction. So, get in, sit down, hold on, and destroy your opponents' provinces with the speed and force of the Big Bad Berserker deck!

"SPEED KILLS" is the motto of the Triple-B. The Dynasty flow is fairly simple: race through the cheap and free gold while trying to buy your high force personalities. Don't let any cards sit and clog your provinces early in the game. Continually clear your provinces to get a continuous flow of gold into play. Once you get a personality into play, it is time to follow the second motto of the B.B.B.: "ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK!"

Supporting your attacking personalities in their blitzkrieg is a well-tuned Fate Deck. With a hand full of force pumps and battle-ending terrains, your personalities should be more than a handful for most defenders. Opposing a dueling deck is one of the B.B.B.'s weak points, so hold onto those anti-dueling cards. One basic but strong combo is the **Rallying Cry + Accessible Terrain** combination, which can be good for an occasional extra province.

If there is ever a doubt as to what course of action is needed when playing the B.B.B., step up, ATTACK, and take a province! The B.B.B. boasts a fast and forceful Dynasty Deck. Big Bad Berserker decks are an old and faithful cornerstone of the Crab clan. Toss the B.B.B. together, and give it a spin.

Remember, above all else, the goal of this deck is to have fun!

"Big, Bad, Berserker Deck"

by Brian Duff

Format:
Gold 40/40

Stronghold:
The Citadel of Hiruma

Personalities:
3 Gakochun
3 Hida Kuon
3 Hida Tenshu
3 Hida Yaushiro
3 Togashi Nyima
3 Voitag

Holdings:
3 Corrupted Iron Mine
3 Corrupted Silver Mine
3 Iron Mine
3 Large Farm
3 Small Farm
1 The Kaiu Forge

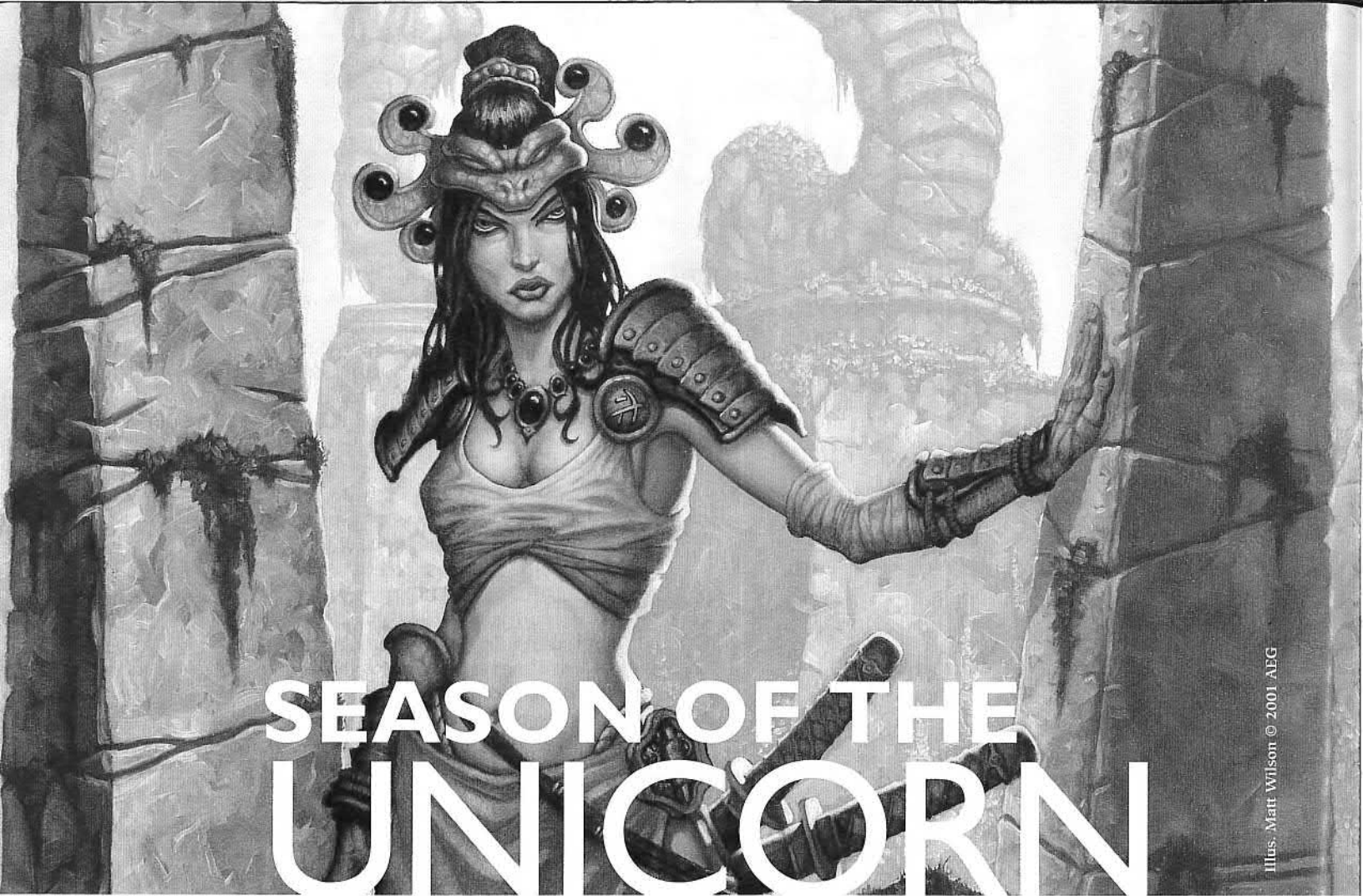
Regions:
2 Farmlands

Events:
Gift of the Unicorn
Imperial Gift
In Time of War
Proposal of Peace

Actions:
3 A Test of Courage
2 A Test of Might
2 Accessible Terrain
1 Ambush
1 Another Time
3 Deadly Ground
1 Call to Arms
3 Charge
2 Counterattack
3 Dead Eyes
2 Diversionary Tactics
3 Frenzy
2 Oath of Fealty
2 One Life, One Action
2 Poisoned Weapon
3 Rallying Cry
1 Refugees
3 Sneak Attack

Items:
1 Celestial Sword
of the Crab

Wind:
Toturi Sezaru



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SEASON OF THE UNICORN

by John Zinser

Back in 1995 when the Imperial Edition of Legend of the Five Rings first shipped, we knew that we had something different, something special. Not only was L5R a great game, but the interactive story was something that no other game was did. Overnight, L5R became the “grass roots” phenomenon that you are now a part of because players not only wanted to share this great samurai game with friends, but also wanted to be a part of something bigger.



The Season Of the Great Clans Storyline Event Program

Fast forward six years: adding a story to a CCG has become standard, not the exception. When we found out that L5R was returning to AEG, we spent many long nights talking about how we could add to and improve upon what we had started all those years ago. In the end, we settled on two goals: 1) Allow the players more opportunity to affect the story; and 2) Reach players across the globe, increasing the participation of the entire L5R community. As a result, we came up with a program that will result in bigger and better storyline events...

The *Season of the Unicorn* begins in August. This event package, available to game store owners through distributors, is the first in a series of eight bi-monthly global storyline tournament packages. Inside each kit is a major storyline event,

prizes, and exclusive participation cards. So what makes this promotion better than anything we've done before?

Availability — In the past, the only stores that could participate in these special events were those on the small list in our retailer database. Now new stores, international stores, and even small-town shops have equal access to these events.

The Story — Ultimately this is what L5R is all about. The story effects contained in the *Season Of* events are, in a word, “BIG!” The boxed text provides a brief synopsis of what you will be fighting for in the first season. While it may be called the “Season of the Unicorn,” in truth, every clan has a reason to participate and win.

Selection of Events — The types of events will vary as much as the storyline effects. Store owners have a number of different options in each *Season Of* package (such as running leagues, tournaments, interactive events, or even RPG adventures). You never know what you will find when you show up at your store each Season.

Cool Prizes — Tournaments and leagues would be nothing without cool prizes, and we think we've created the best. Foiled Clan Swords, special participation cards, and clan-specific card boxes, all are part of the first season, and who knows what other goodies we will throw in...

These event packages are available for a very short time, and then the next Season starts and takes its place.

This Season's participation card is the Akasha, an awesome 2F/4C

Unicorn Personality that comes into play for 8 Gold. What makes her so amazing is her versatility. Once per turn, she can gain the Cavalry, Double Chi, or Tactician trait, or perform a Ranged 2 Attack, or even gain the ability to cast Kihos until the end of turn. With so many abilities, Akasha fits into almost any Unicorn deck.

One tactic is to equip Akasha with a No-dachi, making her a 4F/5C threat. Then



you decide whether she is more suitable to gain Double Chi and duel that round, or go on the offense by gaining either the Cavalry or Tactician traits. Being so flexible, Akasha can change from round to round depending what cards make up your fate

hand. Look forward to more great cards in upcoming Season of the Clans promotions.

A Deck for All Seasons

This Gold-legal honor-running deck uses the promotional card from the Season of the Unicorn, Akasha. Its strength lies in its great defensive cards, while it causes honor losses to slow down your opponent. Ambush is included just in case you need to remove a major unit that is causing problems. With the new Imperial Favor system, the 5 honor loss will hurt, but the card remains supremely useful.

During the first turn, always buy a gold-producing holding if one appears in your Provinces. Also, try to buy personalities at full cost to add their personal honor to your family honor. Personalities such as Utaku Yu-Pan give a whopping 4 honor when paid in full! Yu-Pan is very nice to attach Honorable and Bitter to, and can effectively use the battle action Return for Training. Once weapons get into play and the dishonoring process starts, you can begin the personality denial by lowering your opponent's honor. The traditional Marries a Barbarian + Shame combo has been added because it has proven very successful in the Gold environment, and feeds off of the other dishonoring cards in the deck.

Utaku Honor decks have proven effective against many Crane, Lion, Dragon, Ratling and Scorpion decks, but have problems playing against Corrupt Crab, Corrupt (speed) Unicorn, and Shadowlands opponents.

You may want to make some changes of your own. Contemplate removing Utaku Shiko and the Great Crater for something more useful if you wish. It's fun to include a card or two for storyline purposes, and Great Crater is good to deny attacks... but not extremely effective in most games. Try substituting another Region card, or maybe even replacing Great Crater and Utaku Shiko with two more copies of Shinjo Shono.

"Utaku Honor" Deck

by Jason Pitcole

Stronghold:

The Utaku Palaces

Personalities:

3 Akasha
1 Ki-Rin
1 Miya Yemi
3 Moto Vordu
3 Shinjo Osema
1 Shinjo Shono, Exp
1 Utaku Shiko
3 Utaku Xieng Chi
1 Utaku Xieng Chi, Exp
3 Utaku Yu-Pan

Holdings:

3 Jade Works
2 Kabuki Theatre Troupe
3 Silk Works
3 Small Farm
3 Stables
2 The Hiruma Dojo

Regions:

1 The Great Crater

Events:

Chrysanthemum Festival
Imperial Gift
Welcome Home

Actions:

2 Ambush
3 Counterattack
3 Entrapping Terrain
3 Iaijutsu Challenge
3 Iaijutsu Duel
3 In Search of the Future
3 Marries a Barbarian
2 Poisoned Weapon
2 Refugees
3 Return for Training
3 Shame
3 Strength of Purity
3 Superior Tactics

Spells:

2 Secrets on the Wind

Items:

1 Bitter
1 Celestial Sword of the Unicorn
1 Honorable
1 Judgment

Season of the Unicorn Storyline Effects

The Crab

Open war has erupted between the Crab and Crane as they battle to see which clan truly deserves to possess the Yasuki name. The Unicorn have allied with both clans in the past, and now stand in indecision, helping neither. If the Crab win, their Shinjo allies will arrive in force to help turn the tide.

If the Crane win, their allies in the court convince the Ide to turn the Unicorn's attention away from the conflict.

Dragon & Phoenix

The Dragon and Phoenix both consider themselves masters of magic, and of late they have become bitter enemies as well. As son of the Emperor and a shugenja, the favor of Toturi Sezaru would do much to support either clan's claim. Whichever clan, Dragon or

Phoenix, has a larger number of wins gains the Wolf's favor.

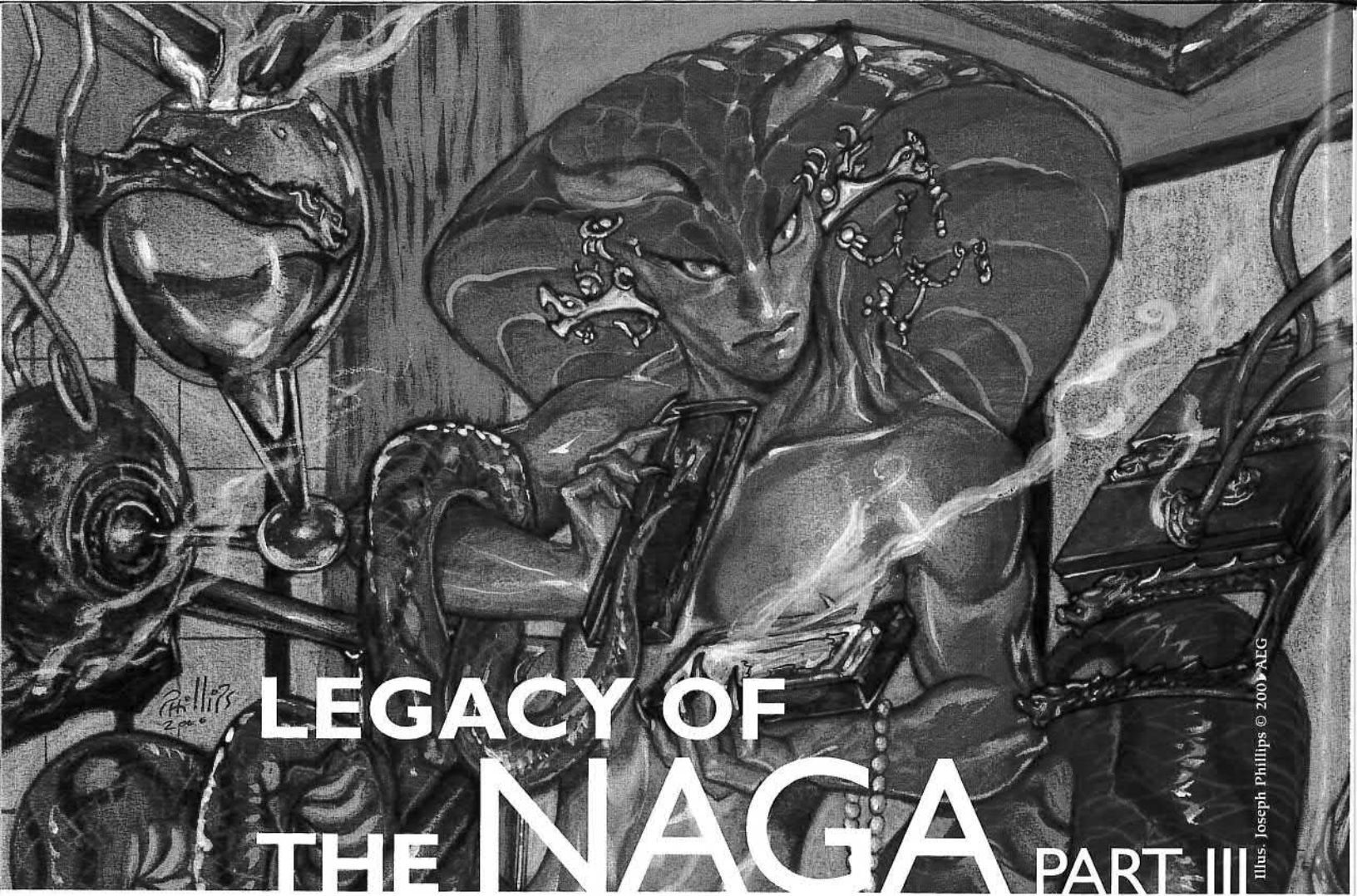
Lion & Crane

Hantei Naseru has agreed to end the Crane and Lion's long feud over Violence Behind Courtliness City. The Clan with more wins — Lion or Crane — gains control of the city.

The Unicorn

Unicorn players will receive a special prize — a chance to vote on the destiny of their clan, and helping the Khan decide who will face their fury, and which of the Four Winds will find the favor of the People of the Wind.

These are interesting times indeed for the Unicorn, but there are more great events transpiring in the Empire than even the mighty Khan can monitor...



LEGACY OF THE NAGA PART III

Illus. Joseph Phillips © 2007 AEG

| Ten years later...

Thunder rolled ponderously across the open plain, slowly fading into the hoofbeats of a Unicorn bushi at full gallop. Shinjo Masu glanced up at the sky again. The clouds hung low and menacing, threatening a storm at any moment. Even if the east wind rain did not freeze on the way down, the frost-covered land would turn the downpour into a bitter, if not deadly, ride.

Thunder boomed again — thunder without a flash. The lightning was hidden somewhere amidst the black thunderheads, and what little light there was seemed to illuminate the underside of the clouds far more than it did the war-scarred lands around the rider. Masu urged his steed faster, even though the horse's speed tore the wisps of breath from their mouths to freeze on the cheeks of horse and rider alike. Masu leaned forward and whispered a kind word in his mount's ear, for he well knew the steed was working harder than it ever had before.

"In your next life, you will be born samurai," he said, smiling. *Even if I have to arrange it myself*, he added silently.

Like all of his clan, Masu had learned to ride a horse before he could walk; thus, the horse needed little guidance from him. It was just as well; the chilled

air made his eyes water as it flew past his face, and, between the darkness and the tears, he could see little detail in the terrain. Probably his horse was equally blinded, but the trusty beast knew the way to Shiro Shinjo by heart.

Masu lowered his head, blinked a few times to clear his eyes, then glanced upward over his shoulder again. The bottoms of the clouds grew fuzzy and indistinct. Rain was on the way. He clenched his teeth and waited. Waiting for the first cold drops always seemed the hardest part. Riding low over his horse left his back fully exposed to the rain, and he could feel his kidneys already tensing in anticipation of the coming cold.

He waited. His shoulders tightened.

And then the storm hit. Fat, cold rain fell on rider and horse like a plague of locusts. The water wormed its way into every conceivable crevice, pooling at the base of Masu's neck and running down his spine. Bothersome droplets clung to the tip of his nose. Mud splashed from his horse's hoofs, spattering all around, sticking his hair to his face.

He wished he had worn his helmet.

Hard as the horse had been working, it redoubled its efforts, for it enjoyed this rain not a whit more than its rider. Masu did his best to ignore the cold water and focus on rolling with the horse's stride, hoping to shave even a tiny amount of time off of this ride. It was tortuous work.

by Edward Bolme

And just when he thought he could get no wetter, the clouds burst.

The horse slowed down immediately. It had to; the rain was so heavy that neither horse nor rider could see more than a yari's reach in the darkness. The hapless beast tossed its head to try to rid itself of some of the rain, then trotted onward. For Masu's part, he was only too happy to stand in the stirrups; he had no desire to sit in the saddle anymore.

It also helped to get his rain-soaked clothes off his back.

He did not know how long they moved through the rain in that way; he could not even see the countryside around him to gauge landmarks. Yet somehow the horse's instinct brought them at last to the gates of Shiro Shinjo, solidly closed against the elements. No guards were posted, for only a madman would ride in this weather; moving an army through these storms would be a disaster.

Weary and shivering, Masu fumbled for his hunting horn. He held it in his numb hands, willed his chin to stop chattering, and blew the call of the successful hunter returning home. He hoped it would be audible over the drumming rain. He took a breath and blew again, more to warm himself than repeat his call.

After a short wait, one side of the gate opened. A glass lantern and a guard's head poked out around the door. "Masu?" asked the guard. "Didn't I overhear you say that only a madman rides in weather like this?"

"Yes, you did, and, if you do not let me in, I will be a dead man," he replied. "Then my ghost will chill your bath water for a thousand years."

"I am chilled enough already," said the guard, opening the gate further and standing aside, "though I daresay you now have much more to teach me about cold."

Masu rode in, dismounted clumsily, staggered, and fell onto his back in the mud. "Curse this rain," he muttered. He felt thin shards of ice crack beneath his hands as he stood up again.

"Some say that the wars have brought this weather upon us," observed the guard.

"Bah! The spirits bring it upon our heads by defying the natural order of things. They should have the good sense to stay dead and await their chance to be reborn. Instead, they break a thousand years of tradition."

Masu kissed his horse's snout, then handed the reins to a waiting stable boy. "Give her double rations," he grunted, "and if she's not dried, groomed, and fed by the time my bath is ready, I'll ride you through this rain!"

The guard closed the gate as the young boy ran for the stables, Masu's horse trotting wearily behind. "Others fear what this weather will do to the fields," he added. "Some say the blood of the dead will salt the earth. Others think this rain will wash away all the good soil. Either way, our harvest was bleak enough already this year, and next year will be worse."

"That's enough idle chatter," barked Masu. "You whine like a spoiled child! We survived the Burning Sands, we survived the White Wastes, and we survived the

return to our homeland. We may die in this war, but it will not be by starvation."

"Then the Fortunes smiled upon you?"

"We found a small herd of deer and brought down five. We let the buck and two does live. The other hunters are holding up at the magistrate's station and will come when the weather eases up. I rode ahead to bring the good news. Besides, I have duty tonight."

The guard watched Masu, tired, soaked through, and spattered with mud, lurch toward the keep. "Lucky man," muttered the guard enviously.

* * *

Freshly cleaned and much warmer than before, Shinjo Masu dressed quickly but carefully in his best clothes. He tied his hakama with care, ensuring that no wrinkles marred its appearance. He chose his golden-threaded obi and put that on. He pulled his shirt hem down beneath his obi, making the shirt taut across his chest. His daisho he slipped into place. Once everything else was in order, he picked up a deep green headband adorned with the mon of the Naga.

The headband had not always been worn, but no one spoke of times when it had not. Within a week of the gift of the Golden Pearl, Ide artisans had crafted these headbands for Moto Gaheris, fashioned after the headbands found on the corpses of the Naga messengers. Since that time, no one was ever asked to guard the pearl; when a samurai was to be so honored, he awoke that morning to find one of the headbands outside his bedroom door.

Masu had found such a headband on the morning he was to ride out for the hunt. It was a great honor, indeed, but the clan also needed food, and he was one of the best hunters available. Aided by the tactful intercession of Ide Michisuna, Masu was able to pass the honor along to another worthy, postponing his own shift until this evening.

He braided his hair into the tails of the headband, taking care to ensure the mon was perfectly centered on his forehead.

He was ready.

At least, he hoped he was. He could feel the weariness of the long ride, compounded by the relaxation of the steaming hot bath he had just finished. He was hungry, but he'd decided to get warm and clean rather than fed, so he would have to tolerate a growling stomach. It would take all of his concentration to give his duty the respect it deserved. Death was easy. Not showing exhaustion while standing guard duty all night in a darkened hallway — that was a challenge. He thanked the Fortunes that they had granted him this opportunity to demonstrate his devotion to bushido.

He moved through the hallways of Shiro Shinjo to the Pearl Room. Throughout the castle, servants were preparing it for nightfall. Within a few moments of his arrival, all six guards were present. As the senior samurai of the group, Masu inspected the group and appointed the posts. A passing servant extinguished the nearby

lights, plunging the hall around them into darkness. Lights burned further down in either direction, illuminating the hall (as well as any intruders), but here in front of the Pearl Room the only light was the dim, golden glow cast by the treasure within.

The long night's vigil began.

Throughout the midnight hours, the guards never spoke. There was ever only one need to communicate, and that was for a guard to excuse himself briefly. This was accomplished by a single bow. Occasionally, Masu would leave his post to take the post of the guard next to him; this precipitated a complete rotation of the guards, one by one, to new positions, to ensure no one grew complacent.

This night passed like every other duty night — quietly and slowly, giving the guards time to bask in the honor of their silent vigil while their comrades slept all around them.

As dawn approached, Masu could feel exhaustion tapping on his shoulder, prying at his jaw, peering into his eyes. He began to focus more and more within, maintaining his face, standing like a bushi. Thus, as the light of dawn began to creep into the sky, he did not notice the change.

He stood at attention, eyes open but not really seeing. A slight movement of the guard beside him caught his eye. He turned his head slightly to scowl at the guard, to let him know he must maintain composure. The guard was looking at him earnestly, then darted his eye to the gossamer veils behind them.

The pearl's golden light had vanished.

For the briefest blink of an eye, panic flashed through Masu's mind. The pearl, ruined on his watch. Dishonorable seppuku. Stolen by ninja. Golden magic lost forever. He fell asleep at his post. Blood magic. Betrayal of his duty.

Then he heard a small clatter, as of a porcelain cup or two dropped gently onto the floor. At the sound, bushido roared to the forefront of his mind. He raised his hand, and two of the guards silently reached for the partition in the thin silken veils. The others placed their hands on the hilts of their katana and readied themselves behind their leader.

Masu's hand cut through the air. The two guards whipped open the veils, and Masu and the other guards charged into the room. They fanned out automatically, ready for anything.

But Masu was not ready to see the golden pearl lying on the floor in shards.

The guards looked around the room, looked at the pearl, looked at their leader. He pried his eye away from the golden pieces and scanned the ceiling, half expecting to see shadowy ninja hiding in the darkened corners. He turned around, making sure no one was trying to slip out the doorway, then motioned to one of the guards at the door to fetch a light. He turned back to the pearl.

The pearl — parts of it at least — lay upon the carved wooden stand, broken open like an eggshell. A golden

glow, weak as dying embers, could just barely be seen. The rest of the pearl lay on the floor, one larger piece still rocking slightly. Masu edged closer. His hand tightened on the hilt of his katana, preparing for an iaijutsu draw.

As he neared the pearl's remnants, a small shadow shifted behind the stand. Masu whipped his katana out before he even realized that he'd seen the motion, the blade whistling through the air in a perfect arc. Holding the blade out in front of him defensively, Masu shouted, "Show yourself! Who are you?!"

The shadow shifted again, mostly hidden by the wooden stand. It began to move out from behind the coiled serpent carvings. Masu backed up, giving ground, and he heard other blades sing out of their saya, ready for action. The shadow started to rise.

The guard returned with a lantern and ran into the room.

The lantern's light shone on the face of a young girl, not yet waist-high, raising a trembling hand to shield her eyes from the sudden light.

No one dared breathe. Confusion, adrenaline, and curiosity warred within every guard's heart, and they waited for Masu to act.

The girl slowly lowered the hand protecting her eyes, and the bushi saw large eyes of deepest emerald staring back at them. Masu saw no fear, but perhaps confusion or uncertainty. He lowered his sword slightly, remembering the tales Shinjo Shono had told of the pekkle no oni.

"Who are you?" Masu asked, more gently this time. The girl did not answer.

"What is your name?" he asked again, gruffly.

The girl paused to consider this, eyes roaming the floor randomly. In a voice pure as crystal she finally answered him. "My name is Akasha."

* * *

Moto Gaheris sat on his throne and studied the small child in front of him. She stood in the center of the room, wrapped in a kimono hastily acquired for that purpose, and looked back at the daimyo frankly. Even at her young age she looked thin, and the kimono did little to fill her body out.

Earlier this morning, this girl had not even existed. Now here she was. No one had any explanation other than she had come from the pearl. No one could even tell him what she was, if she was even human. She looked perfectly human, except for the tinge of green in her lips and her fingernails. She looked like a child, except for the abnormal depth of her eyes. Her hair had an interesting sheen, too. It didn't look like it would feel like... well, normal hair. Her skin, though, was as smooth and clear as... as a pearl.

The pearl itself was a mystery, as well. When the Naga gave it to the Unicorn ten years ago, it had taken four strong bushi to put it into its place of honor. Now this little girl had torn it apart, apparently from the inside. Iuchi shugenja had looked at the remnants of the pearl, and their preliminary assessment indicated that the pearl was indeed hollow, possibly had been hollow all along. The pieces were all there; they fit together to form a

whole, although a hollow whole. The shugenja had also implied that the weight of the shell was much less than it should have been, that perhaps whatever made the pearl glow had leaked out over the years, making the pearl lighter and lighter as time had passed. There was now no way to tell for certain, since, once the pearl had been put into place, no one had ever tried to lift it again, and now the pearl was broken.

Gaheris heard Ide Tadaji close his fan, nudging the daimyo from his reverie. He straightened up on his throne and rested his hands on his knees.

"Your name," began Gaheris.

"My name is Akasha," said the girl.

"So my people tell me. Where did you get that name?"

The girl shrugged. "It is the only name I know. So it must be my name."

"Do you know what Akasha means?"

"It is my name, so I guess it means me."

Gaheris frowned. He could sense her answers riding in circles, and somewhere in the center was the truth. Time for a new tactic. "How old are you?"

"I do not know."

"I see." Ide Tadaji leaned over and whispered something into the daimyo's ear. Gaheris smiled and asked, "How is it that you speak Rokugani so well?"

"Oh, I learned," she smiled brightly. "I have been listening to your stories for as long as I can remember. They are very good stories. I heard about the Burning Sands, and the Battle of White Shore Plain, and how Utaku Kamoko was brought into the sky to be a constellation, and about finding the Emperor, and the creation of the world, and how Shinjo was the very best Kami, and even that story Tadaji told Michisuna that one night the Scorpion named Yuito was seen with —"

"We are well aware of all the stories we told, child," interrupted Tadaji gently. Gaheris looked at the diplomat out of the corner of his eye and made a mental note to speak with him later.

"Well..." she continued, "they are all very good stories, and I liked to hear them."

"But how did you understand?" asked Gaheris.

The girl looked confused. "I heard them tell the stories?" she answered, hesitantly.

"But how is it that you speak our language?" repeated Gaheris. "You are not one of us." At that, the girl froze in place, eyes wide. Gaheris leaned forward and waited for a reply. At length, he got it: a single tear rolled down the girl's face. There followed another, and then another, as her eyes slowly closed and her body started to shake with silent sobs.

"My lord," whispered Tadaji needlessly, "you have upset her."

"Good!" whispered Gaheris back. "Maybe now she'll give us some answers! I am tired of her games; she's holding something back!" He turned back to the little girl. "Stop crying and answer me!" he ordered.

"Do not tell me that I am not one of you!" she shouted back defiantly through her tears. "This is my home, and you cannot make me leave!"

Ide Tadaji leaned toward his daimyo again. "It doesn't look like she's holding anything back to me," he observed quietly.

"She most definitely is not an Utaku," agreed Gaheris.

"No," whispered Tadaji, stroking his graying goatee, "in fact, she rather puts me in mind of her daimyo, when he was younger."

"Her daimyo?" Gaheris paused, then sighed. "You are right, trusted friend. She is brave, she is willful, and she is straightforward. We can ask no more of a Unicorn."

Gaheris popped open his fan and raised it, a gesture of finality. He looked at the young girl. "You shall stay, Akasha, but you must become Unicorn and swear a blood oath to our clan. Arrangements will be made immediately. Do this, and this clan shall be your home. But you must always remember what the clan learned in its long travels: the Unicorn's home is not the castle, not the tent, but the family."

He looked about at the nobles gathered in the hall. "The clan is your family, but it would also help if you had a mother." He gestured to a samurai woman kneeling nearby. "You! You have no children. Take this one."

In the back of the room, the slender woman bowed, then rose to her feet. She shuffled forward daintily to Akasha, smiled, took her hand, and began to escort her out of the throne room. Akasha dried her eyes with the sleeve of her borrowed kimono as she trailed along.

At the door, Akasha pulled her hand free, turned, knelt, and bowed to Gaheris with perfect etiquette. Then she stood and left the room with her adoptive mother.

"That, my lord," whispered Tadaji, "is a girl with more wisdom than we know."

* * *

Shinjo Masu moved silently through the woods, stalking his prey. The continued warfare was making life very difficult for the clans; hunger was now as much a threat as the spears of the spirits. Fields of rice had been plowed under by warriors' feet, farmers had been pressed into service as soldiers, and, with less grain in the fields, game animals were getting harder to find. Yet somehow, this morning, the sharp-eyed Masu had seen a boar at the margin of the woods near Shiro Shinjo, and he hoped that he would be able to bring it back for the clan.

The boar's tracks were relatively easy to follow in the soft earth, and he held his bow at the ready. His horse paced a bow's shot behind him as quietly as it could. The tracks cut along the edge of a small clearing, and Masu could tell the boar had been trotting along easily. He moved to follow, when a flash of motion out of the corner of his eye startled him. He whipped his bow into firing position, thinking the boar had flanked him.

Instead, he saw Akasha practicing in the clearing. She was tall, lithe, graceful, and recently past her gempukku, and he realized that she was also lovely.

She was dressed immodestly, showing an untraditional amount of skin — much like the Naga had always dressed. She held a spear in her hands and moved fluidly through an elaborate kata that Masu had never seen before. Yet, while she moved, she watched him.

He bowed slightly. "I apologize for interrupting you," he said.

"You did not interrupt," she smiled in answer. "I heard you coming."

"You heard — how long have you been here practicing?" he asked, flustered.

"I came out here a little before dawn," she said, her spear spinning and thrusting, slicing through the air. It moved almost like a snake in her hands.

Masu glanced down at the tracks beneath his feet.

"If you are looking for the boar, it went down toward the stream over there," she said, gesturing with her spear. Masu could not tell if the lunge was part of the kata or she had improvised to point the way.

Masu struggled to reconcile everything. "But you — it did not run off at the sight of you?"

"No, of course not."

Masu thought for a moment, as Akasha continued her routine. Sometimes it seemed like she moved like a willow, others a dragon. It was smooth, elegant... and noiseless. He watched in amazement until she completed the routine.

"How is it that you are so quiet?" he asked respectfully.

"It is hard to explain," she said. "It is a feeling. Perhaps the best way I could describe it is that you walk through the woods. I walk in the woods."

"How did you learn to do that?"

"The same way I learned to use the spear," she said. "From the whispers."

* * *

I have heard the whispers for as long as I can remember," Akasha said, sipping her tea. "You do not... you cannot hear them?" The assembled shugenja shook their heads.

Akasha sat on the carved wooden stand, still in its place in what was still called the Pearl Room. She was the only person who ever sat on the stand; no one else dared, nor could anyone bring themselves to stop her

when she had first sat there. She had, as near as anyone could tell, spent her first ten years in that spot.

"Originally, I only heard the whispers in my sleep. It was a cool, comfortable dream, like standing on the beach at dawn. And there was always this smell, like dried leaves and copper. I have never smelled anything quite like it." She paused to smell the tea and shook her head.

"After I learned to meditate, I was able to open my soul enough that I could hear the whispers, just barely. That was the worst. You remember that year or two when I was so temperamental? I could just barely reach the whispers, but I could not understand what they said, and then I would try so hard to hear them that I would usually get frustrated, and that would drive them away. It was agonizing; it was like being lost inside your own soul.

"Eventually, under your guidance, I mastered my anger. If I concentrate, I can feel their presence. It is like a lake of scales. It moves and swirls, like the whispers, but it is also very still. There is no fear there, but there are the whispers.

"The whispers are like strands of silk. I can reach out gently and coax one forth from the lake, and then I can understand it. But I cannot just take one, because I cannot enter the lake."

"What do the whispers say?" asked Horiuchi Shem-Zhem-Zhe, one of the shugenja.

Akasha swirled her tea in its cup. "All sorts of things. It is not words, really; it is more like paintings... or dances.

I can learn things. See things."

"Is that how you learned to fight with the spear?" asked Shem-Zhe.

"Yes. That and other things. I cannot always hold onto them for long; some of the whispers are too big to keep in my head. Some of them are very old, older than I could ever be." There was a long silence as Akasha finished her tea.

Shem-Zhe broke the silence. "Do you know what these whispers are?" he asked. Akasha looked at him. "I believe the whispers are the soul of the Naga race. You seem to be able to tap into their wisdom. It does not surprise me that you can't always retain what you learn; I understand that some of their teachings were based on many lifetimes' experience, far more than we will attain."

"I knew that," said Akasha quietly. "My heart is Unicorn, but my blood is Naga. "I just have to find where my soul belongs."



THE IMPERIAL ASSEMBLY

News

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

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UNICORN

SHADOWLANDS

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KOKURENMENTION

2 Hida Rohiteki

0 6 2

Clan: Clan Shugenja • **Experienced:** Unique
Battle: Once per battle, Kaiten gains a Power bonus equal to his Personal Honor.
"So, his form is still as agile as a new Champion, even after all these years. He will need to stay a new Champion."

4 Kakita Kaiten

8 10 3

Clan: Clan Samurai • **Experienced:** Unique
Battle: Once per battle, Kaiten gains a Power bonus equal to his Personal Honor.
"The Shugenja are arrogant, but not so arrogant that they should fear touching the Clans to get back behind their skills."

7 Togashi Hoshi

7 15 4

Clan: Clan Champion • Dragon • **Creator:** Cavalry Double Clans • **Experienced:** 2 • **Unique:** Hoshi will only use a Dragon Clan or Shugenja card. Hoshi can attack Dragon Clans without Gold cost. Once per turn, Hoshi can cast a Kite as if he were a Monk, without paying.
Legend: How Hoshi is here, all of your Hoshi Personalities in your Province, in your Dynasty deck, and in play were ready to the Dragon Clan.

5 Akodo Ginawa

6 13 2

Clan: Clan Samurai • Akodo Dynasty • **Tenets Army Faction:** Experienced 4 Ginawa • **Unique:** Limited. Once per turn, draw a card. You cannot discard on attack this turn.
"I no longer need a sword of steel, the Akodo are my sword. I have forged them, shaped them, and tempered them. They are my steel."

1 Agasha Hamanari

0 10 2

Clan: Clan Sage • Shugenja • **Seal of Jensei Ninkato** • **Unique:** Hamanari. When a player plays an action card from his or her hand that targets you, your cards or your tokens are affected in a battle that allows the battle to be a Tactic, how Hamanari is used in the action. When the Tactic, those with this card, the player returns the card to his or her hand.

3 Bayushi Yojiro

10 2

Clan: Clan Champion • Samurai • **Experienced:** 2
Unique: Yojiro will only use a Scorpion Clan card.
Clan: Scorpion Clan Personality you control gain a Personal Honor when Yojiro is in play.
Open: If you have the Shadowlands card in play, permanently lower Yojiro's Chi by 1 to make your family honor to your enemy. Only those Clans in a combat on those cards.

3 Utaku Xiang Chi

4 10 3

Clan: Clan General • Battle Master • Samurai • **Cavalry** • **Experienced:** Unique
Reaction: Whenever Xiang Chi gains a Family bonus, her Followers each gain +1F. Xiang Chi gains +2F while she has the Armor of Earth.
"I will die in my saddle, not in the monastery on the living hill."

0 Ki-Rin

15 0 5

Unaligned Creature • **Unique:** While the Ki-Rin is unaligned and honorable, Personalities with 0, 4, or 7 Personal Honor cannot be its armies attacking your Province. The first Ki-Rin you see is the Ki-Rin of the Celestial Court. Slays and followed by a distant guest to journey level.

6 Kyoso no Oni

10 0

Unaligned Oni Sovereign • **Nonhuman** • **Experienced:** Unique • **Shadowlands** • **Home:** Kyoso no Oni cannot attack Followers or Jensei.
Open: Destroy one of your Personalities to give Kyoso no Oni +2F+2C.
"You do not bargain for allies, you have no one to betray."

3 Thuk-Kigi

6 1

Unaligned Nonhuman • **Experienced:** Noble Warrior • **Seal of Kappa** • **Unique:** Shadowlands
When: Thuk-Kigi would be destroyed, if he has any Golden Followers, instead destroy the Followers and you have been bound.
Battle: If Thuk-Kigi's unit is honor, switch it with one of your units in the combat battle.

Festering Pit of Fu Leng

2

Unique • **Shadowlands**
Reaction: When paying for a Shadowlands card, how the Festering Pit of Fu Leng to lower the card's Gold cost by 3 until the next end of Honor.
"The night dark who hauled the bodies here you are ignored, but their shadows live on. As you are ignored, then that the night dark's reaction from an on a gift." -Shugenja Hoshi

Big Stink

Unique: Whenever a Golden Personality enters play from this Province, attack two of Golden Shadowlands Followers (only to 10 Non-Golden Personalities and one Golden Followers each have +1F while in a battle in this Province.
Golden from your province, Shadowlands followed the path of the Shadowlands, and based their village to the ground, according to their master's wishes.

Great Crater

Unique: **Reaction:** When another player's event triggers, how the Great Crater to prevent players from assigning units to attack this Province this turn.
Tend Sun watches over his homeland. The Lion and Scorpion claim it, but it is ours to protect. For he has revealed more than just a path through the mountains." -Hida Hoshi

Mountains of the Seven Thunders

Unique: Ignore Honor requirements of Personalities in this Province.
Those who have seen the Gods of Thunder have already been judged worthy by their ancestors.

Plains of Otosan Uchi

Imperial • **Unique:** This Province is permanent two Provinces for containing cards that will use Province for targeting and during the Attack Phase. When this Province is destroyed, lose 10 Honor. Three of your provinces, remnants of the legacy. My heart lightens when I see your walls across the fields." -Hida Tachiro

The Ruined Keep of Fu Leng

Unique: This Province gains a permanent Strength bonus equal to its current Strength. Destroyed, lower each of your other Provinces' Strengths to 0.
The warriors do not understand that something harmful and broken can still be useful." -Agasa no Oni

Celestial Alignment

Cost your next turn, Shugenja Personalities need not how to create Spell effects or use innate abilities. Until your next turn, no Shugenja may create a Spell effect or use an innate ability more than once. All magic flows from the same, the spirit who create and control the world.

Chrysanthemum Festival

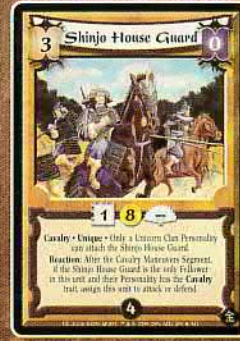
Each player gains a Province to the left of his or her leftmost Province.
The spring's end is here. In the face of his family, his spirit shines and one. -Shugenja Hoshi

Imperial Funeral

Starts with you and every Shugenja, each player may have any number of his or her Personalities and gain 1 Honor for each Personality he or she loses. Each player loses 1 Honor to reach his or her Personalities who does not or cannot lose, and those Personalities are not Destroyed.
Each card has a 0, is carried to his person. The still adds the others, as he needed.

Imperial Gift

Gain 2 Honor.
 Get an item from your Fate deck, show it to the other players, and add it to your hand. Shuffle the deck.
"What mystery is stronger than a gift?" -Hida Tachiro



Koku Redemption

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

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- CHRYSANTHEMUM FESTIVAL
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- FESTERING PIT OF FU LENG
- FOCUS
- GREAT CRATER
- HIDA ROHITEKI
- IMPERIAL FUNERAL
- IMPERIAL GIFT
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- KI-RIN
- KYOSO NO ONI
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- PLAINS OF OTOSAN UCHI
- SAMURAI WARRIORS
- SHIBA HOUSE GUARD
- SHINJO HOUSE GUARD
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- SPIRIT GUIDE
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THE FUTURE OF CLAN WAR

by Ken Carpenter

As many already know, I recently left the employ of Alderac Entertainment Group,[™] which leaves Clan War[™] without an internal design team for the moment. This does not mean that either AEG or I are abandoning Clan War.

Clan War has scheduled releases months into the future, including many new figures, such as the Shadowlands' Oni no Sanru Lord and the Phoenix Clan's Clay Soldiers. The fact that AEG recently reacquired rights to the Legend of the Five Rings[™] property also means that exciting things may be on the horizon for Clan War players.

Clan War will continue to receive support from AEG through new releases, Bounty Hunter efforts and officially sanctioned tournaments (which may once again include storyline events). The game will also have continued support online at clanwar.com and on the Clan War list. Additionally, it will be supported through material appearing here in the Imperial Herald.

Clan War Daimyo Edition (DE) included approximately 500 force profiles (personalities and troops), allowing a huge degree of flexibility in forces. There are also over 400 miniatures available for the game, with more being released every month. Clan War has a bright future and I look forward to watching it grow.

Official Profiles for DE

When DE was released, the sheer volume of profiles prevented us from including every profile that had been available in the first edition... even at 320 pages, the book just wasn't big enough for everything! Thus, we're including the missing profiles here:

- *Agasha Daido*
(Dragon clan personality)
- *Agasha Rocket Team*
(Dragon clan unit)
- *Shiba Rushu*
(Phoenix clan personality)
- *Students of Shinsei*
(Brotherhood unit/Dragon and Phoenix ally)

Mirumoto Bujun was not omitted from DE accidentally: he was superseded by Togashi Bujun, a proud and honorable Ise Zumi of the Dragon Clan.

Thunder's Challenge Results

The honorable Crane Clan was victorious in the second half of the Thunder's Challenge storyline tournament and has yet to receive its reward. The following item will serve both as their ancestral weapon and their reward for an honorable and hard-earned victory.

IRON SPEAR OF THE DAIDOJI

Nemuranai, Unique, Weapon

Kiso: Only a Crane personality of at least Glory 5 who is either a Daidoji personality or the army general may attach the Iron Spear.

Kiso: This personality gains +2 ATT and +2 DAM in Close Combat.

Kiso (SO): Once per battle, when leading a unit, this personality's unit gains one of the following; First Strike during

Close Combat until the end of the turn or Fast Strike during Close Combat until the end of the next turn.

Cost: 50

AGASHA DAIDO

Dragon Samurai

Air:	3	ATT:	+1
Earth:	4	DAM:	+2
Fire:	4	#S:	2
Water:	3	TL:	7
Void:	4	ML:	6
ATN:	8/7	Glory:	4
Wounds:	4	Honor:	1
		Cost:	132

Equipment: No-dachi, Light Armor

Traits: Infantry, Unique

Skills: Battle 2, Leadership 3, Defense 4, Daisho

Kiso: Daido may not lead troops with a Ranged attack that has a range greater than 10".

Kiso: When leading an Unaligned unit, Daido gains the Revered Sensei skill (increasing his command limit to 45).

AGASHA ROCKET TEAM

Dragon Samurai

Air:	—	ATT:	1/+1
Earth:	—	DAM:	1/+0
Fire:	—	#S:	1
Water:	—	TL:	8
Void:	—	ML:	7
ATN:	6	Glory:	—
Wounds:	2	Honor:	1
		Cost:	26

Equipment: Rockets, Katana, Light Armor

Traits: Infantry, Cavalry base

Skills: —

Kiso: This unit may not use archer's row, perform reactionary fire or fire during a turn in which it moved.

Ranged (rockets): 32" close. If the ranged attack causes at least one Wound, the target unit must make an immediate Maneuver test. If the unit fails the test, it becomes unformed.

Kiso: Cost reflects one team of two models on a cavalry base. Maximum of two units, no more than 12 teams total.

SHIBA RUSHU

Phoenix Samurai

Air:	3	ATT:	+2
Earth:	4	DAM:	+1
Fire:	5	#S:	2
Water:	3	TL:	6
Void:	4	ML:	6
ATN:	6	Glory:	4
Wounds:	4	Honor:	3
		Cost:	128

Equipment: Katana

Traits: Infantry, Unique

Skills: Battle 2, Leadership 3, Defense 2, Iaijutsu 3

Ability (SO): When engaged, target a dishonored personality in the engaged enemy unit. Rushu challenges that personality to a duel. If Rushu wins the duel, his army gains double the normal Honor award. If the enemy personality refuses the duel, that personality immediately becomes spent.

STUDENTS OF SHINSEI

Brotherhood Monks

Air:	—	ATT:	+1
Earth:	—	DAM:	+1
Fire:	—	#S:	1
Water:	—	TL:	6
Void:	—	ML:	6
ATN:	6	Glory:	—
Wounds:	1	Honor:	1
		Cost:	14

Equipment: Bo

Traits: Infantry

Skills: —

Kiso: The Students of Shinsei may ignore all penalties to Attack and Damage rolls and to Maneuver and Morale tests.

The Honorable Wall Deck

by Brian Duff

Format:

Gold 40/40

Stronghold:

The Great Walls of Kaiu

Personalities:

3 Isawa Taeruko

2 Kuni Utago

Holdings:

3 Bridged Pass

3 Garrison

3 Iron Mine

2 Kabuki Theater Troupe

3 Large Farm

3 Poorly Placed Gardens

3 Sanctified Temple

3 Small Farm

1 The Edge of Shinomen

Forest

3 Watch Tower

Regions:

3 Crossroads

Events:

Peasant Revolt

Proposal of Peace

Regions of Rokugan

The Price of War

Welcome Home

Actions:

2 Another Time

3 Avoid Fate

3 Block Supply Lines

3 Deeds, Not Words

3 Encircled Terrain

3 Entrapping Terrain

3 In Search of the Future

3 One Life, One Action

2 Overconfidence

3 Refugees

1 Return for Training

3 Shame

3 Three-Stone River

Kihos:

1 The Wind's Truth

Spells:

2 Secrets on the Wind

1 Walking the Way

Regions:

Ring of the Earth

Wind:

Toturi Tsudao

The Honorable Wall is a fortified Crab honor runner. Its Dynasty side couples inexpensive fortifications with honor-producing holdings, while the Fate deck is full of defensive cards, with some dishonoring sprinkled in. In a "Crab shell," the idea is to hold out behind the fortifications while making a quick, and hopefully unstoppable, honor run.

With the Great Walls of Kaiu's cost reduction for fortifications, you should be clearing your provinces every turn. Using **Taeruko** to find fortifications in your deck, and slapping them onto your **Crossroads**, helps thin the deck out very quickly. You will want to stay behind your overlapping fortifications. Meanwhile, bring as many honor-producing holdings into play as possible, and start the honor run. One of my favorite Dynasty combos is multiple **Taeruko**'s, and **The Edge of Shinomen Forest** during a battle.

On the Fate side you will want to use the twenty-one defensive cards to shut down any military threat that would even dare to attack The Wall. Use your **Deeds, Not Words** to slow down other honor-runners. Also, to help put a fast end to corrupt decks, and to further slow down other honor runners, you can use the **Secrets on the Wind** + **Shame** combination. Remember, setting up your fortifications quickly is the key to this deck's success.

d20

ROKUGU



If you're a Legend of the Five Rings fan (and if you're reading this you probably are!) then you may want to keep an eye out in your local game store this year. Slated for release in the latter half of 2001, *Rokugan, the Legend of the Five Rings d20 Companion* unites the fantastic setting of Rokugan with the easy-to-learn *Dungeons and Dragons*™ d20 game system. Designed to work in tandem with Wizards of the Coast's *Oriental Adventures*,™ Rokugan contains a wealth of setting information, skills, feats, spells, equipment, and everything else you need to bring Rokugan to life.

Those fans who already play AEG's *Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game* won't be disappointed either. Rokugan presents a great deal of Rokugani historical, cultural, and geographical material in one easily accessible volume, and presents a timeline updated through Gold Edition. In addition, the book is written by Shawn Carman, Seth Mason, and Rich Wulf, three authors you may be familiar with from AEG's *Legend of the Five Rings RPG*. Future RPG releases for L5R will support both the "classic" mechanics and the new d20 style, so those of you who are playing already will also be able to take advantage of this new material.

The following preview presents the new Ninja character class. The final book will contain a number of new character classes such as the courtier, inkyo, bushi, and shugenja. New Prestige Classes will include the Emerald Magistrate, Artisan, Mastermind, Sword of Yotsu, Kolat Agent, Elemental Guardsman, Siegemaster, and Shosuro Butei.

It's a terrific time to come to Rokugan.

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THE d20 NINJA

by Seth Mason

To the Empire, ninja do not exist. They are simply peasant superstition passed down from generation to generation in farmer villages and old women's tales. Though tales of shadow-walking ninja persist to this day, noble samurai dismiss them as the result of paranoia or as lazy guards' excuses.

Those who still walk in shadow would have it no other way.

Adventures: Invariably, ninja are spies, assassins, or both. Like rogues, they are masters of subterfuge, stealth, thievery, and lies. Unlike rogues, they understand the deeper mysteries of the shadows, and are far better at misdirection and murder. Because of this, and the Empire's view of ninja, they generally fit into a samurai party under false pretenses, or into a party of ninja. When a ninja ventures forth, it will always be to cause disorder and confusion among his lord's enemies. This can range from simple assassination to a more prolonged campaign to disrupt activities in an area. Some ninja are not assassins at all, but merely serve as spies for their lord. These spies are generally more honorable than their assassin brethren. Most non-Scorpion ninja in service to a lord fill the role of a spy, and use their skills for little else than simple information gathering, thievery, and causing confusion.

Characteristics: Ninja are impossible to classify as a group by personality. Because every Rokugani publicly despises them, a ninja must keep his actions secret, or face execution — one of the lowest forms of dishonor. Many ninja in service to a daimyo adopt a public face to hide their activities behind, and are accepted among the samurai caste. Being able to adapt different personas, anticipate the movements of their

enemy, and acquit themselves well enough in a fight to survive are the skills that separate the ninja that are feared from the ninja that are dead.

Honor / Alignment: The motivations for a ninja's actions can be anywhere from serving the wishes of his lord to simply working for his own gain. A ninja can be of any non-lawful alignment, though they are generally evil. The actions of a ninja, however, are nothing short of dishonorable, no matter who their lord is or why they do their tasks.

Background: Ninja are usually without clan affiliation, except students of the Shosuro Dojo in the Scorpion lands. Though the Scorpion take great pains to train their ninja well, Non-Scorpion ninja are generally as effective as the Shosuro. This usually is due to natural talent more than effective training — there are many more Scorpion ninja than ronin ninja. However, every Clan has at least one minor lord who employs the shadowy services of the ninja.

Races: Ninja are strictly human. Naga and Ratlings practice stealth on a daily basis, with the Ratlings stealing from humans as much as they speak with them. However, neither race cares enough about assassination and sabotage to ever put their efforts into training ninja.

Other Classes: Ninja must be cautious in their associations with other classes, as one false step could lead to their execution. Ninja also have rather skewed views of honor, though that is no reason they cannot find a place within an adventuring party. Those ninja with a samurai lord see themselves as the daimyo's worthiest servants, willing to give up their own honor for that of their lord. In any case, ninja tend to

multi-class in order to create more complete false identities, or in rare cases become ninja after being dishonored as a samurai. Many Scorpion "samurai" are actually ninja (or multi-class fighter-ninja) in order to further the goals of their clan. A Scorpion is not above the law of Rokugan, however, should he be caught walking the dishonorable path of the ninja.

Examples of Ninja in Legend of the Five Rings: Shosuro Nishiko, Matsu Hiroru, Mamoru, Bayushi Aramoro, Shosuro Chian, Bayushi Yokuan, Hirariko, Hoseki.

Game Rule Information

Ninja have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Dexterity and Intelligence are the most important scores for ninja, who are almost constantly in a position where they must stay on their toes mentally and physically. Extra skill points foster a ninja's adaptability to any given situation, and a high Dexterity will aid the ninja in a fight and when the time to run comes.

Honor / Alignment: Any non-lawful, dishonorable.

Hit Die: 1d6

Class Skills: A ninja's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int, Exclusive Skill), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pick Pocket (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex). See the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at 1st Level:

(4 + Int Modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional**Level:** 4 + Int modifier**Class Features**

All of the following are class features of the ninja.

Weapon and Armor

Proficiency: Ninja are proficient with the following weapons: Dagger, Dart, Shuriken, Katana, Ninja-to, Chain, Kusari-gama, and Blowgun. Though ninja are able fighters, this comes more from their training in hitting pressure points and finding weaknesses in another's defense than from sheer martial prowess. Ninja are not proficient with any armor or shields, relying on freedom of movement and highly trained reflexes to keep them out of danger. When wearing armor that incurs a penalty check greater than 0, the ninja loses several of his abilities, as noted below.

Armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble. Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every five pounds of armor or equipment carried.

Sneak Attack: If a ninja attacks an opponent who is unable to defend himself effectively, the ninja can strike a vital spot for extra damage. Any time the ninja's target would be denied his Dexterity bonus to AC (whether he actually has a Dex bonus or not), or when the ninja flanks the target, the ninja's attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 1st level and an additional 1d6 every two levels thereafter. Should the ninja score a critical hit with a sneak attack, this extra damage is not multiplied. (See table 8-8: Attack Roll Modifiers, page 132 of the Player's Handbook, for combat situations in which the ninja flanks an opponent or the opponent loses his Dex bonus to AC.)

Ranged attacks can only count as sneak attacks if the target is within 30 feet. The ninja can't strike with deadly accuracy from beyond that range.

With a sap (blackjack) or an unarmed strike, the ninja can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of normal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals normal damage to deal subdual damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty, because he must make optimal use of his weapon in order to execute a sneak attack. (See *Subdual Damage*, page 134 of the *Player's Handbook*.)

A ninja can only sneak attack a living creature with a discernible anatomy — undead, constructs, oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures lack vital areas to attack. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is also not vulnerable to sneak attacks. The ninja must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach a vital spot. The ninja cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment (see Table 8-10: Concealment, page 133 of the *Player's Handbook*) or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

Ninja Dodge: The ninja gains this special variation of the Dodge feat for free at first level. Effectively, this ability has the same effect as Dodge, except that the ninja gains the ability multiple times. At fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth level, the bonus granted by Ninja Dodge is raised by one. At fifth level, the ninja may also choose to dodge multiple opponents in a round, declaring his dodge feat during his action. The ninja may choose to use some or all of this bonus to dodge each attacker; a ninja with +3 dodge may choose to use Ninja Dodge to gain +2 AC against one attacker, then +1 against another in the same round, +3 against a single attacker, or gain +1 AC against three attackers in the single round. Unlike the normal Dodge feat, this ability may not be used when wearing armor with a check penalty greater than 0. This ability stacks with the

Table: The Ninja

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Will Save	Ref Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+0	+2	Sneak Attack +1d6, Ninja Dodge +1
2	+2	+0	+0	+3	Poison Use
3	+3	+1	+1	+3	Sneak Attack +2d6, Uncanny Dodge
4	+4	+1	+1	+4	Speed of Darkness
5	+5	+1	+1	+4	Sneak Attack +3d6, Ninja Dodge +2
6	+6/1	+2	+2	+5	Uncanny Dodge
7	+7/+2	+2	+2	+5	Sneak Attack +4d6
8	+8/+3	+2	+2	+6	Shadow Run
9	+9/+4	+3	+3	+6	Sneak Attack +5d6
10	+10/+5	+3	+3	+7	Blind Fight, Ninja Dodge +3
11	+11/+6/+1	+3	+3	+7	Sneak Attack +6d6
12	+12/+7/+2	+4	+4	+8	Deflect Arrows
13	+13/+8/+3	+4	+4	+8	Sneak Attack +7d6
14	+14/+9/+4	+4	+4	+9	—
15	+15/+10/+5	+5	+5	+9	Sneak Attack +8d6, Ninja Dodge +4
16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+10	—
17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	Sneak Attack +9d6
18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	—
19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Sneak Attack +10d6
20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Ninja Dodge +5



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bonus provided by the actual Dodge feat. A ninja may take feats with Dodge as a prerequisite if he has Ninja Dodge, but may not use these feats when wearing armor with a check penalty greater than 0.

Poison Use: Ninja are trained in the use of poison and, beginning at 2nd level, never risk accidentally poisoning themselves when applying poison to a blade.

Uncanny Dodge: At third level, the ninja gains the ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) despite being caught

flat-footed or being struck by an invisible attacker. He still loses his Dexterity bonus if immobilized.

At 6th level, the ninja can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies other ninja and rogues the ability to use flank attacks to sneak attack him. The exception to this defense is that another ninja or rogue at least four levels higher than the character can flank him (and thus sneak attack him).

Speed of Darkness: The strength of a ninja's attack lies in his ability to strike quickly at exposed areas

and fade away. At fourth level and beyond, the ninja adds his Intelligence modifier to his initiative roll.

Shadow Run: The ninja gains a speed bonus equal to his Constitution modifier \times 5 when wearing no or light armor (and not carrying a heavy load). This bonus is to his base speed, before modifiers such as taking the double move action are figured in.

Blind-fight: At tenth level, the ninja gains this feat for free.

Deflect Arrows: At 12th level, the ninja gains this feat for free, even if he does not have Improved Unarmed Strike. This ability may not be used when wearing armor with a check penalty above 0.

Scorpion Ninja Starting Package (Shosuro Family)

Armor: No armor

Weapons: Ninjato (1d8, crit. 19–20, medium, slashing), Aiguchi (1d4, crit 19–20, 1 lb., tiny, piercing)

Skill Selection: Pick a number of skills equal to 4 + Int modifier

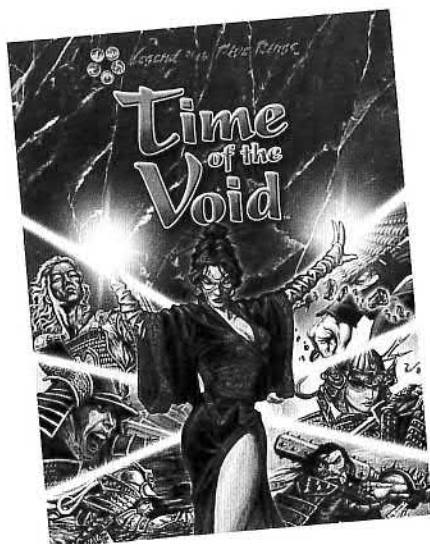
Skill	Ranks	Ability
Bluff	4	Cha
Gather Information	4	Cha
Listen	4	Wis
Move Silently	4	Dex
Search	4	Int
Spot	4	Wis

Skill Focus: Move Silently

Bonus Feat: Many Masks (Ancestor: Shosuro Furuyari) (Ancestor feats are introduced in *Oriental Adventures*, and many more are introduced in *Rokugan*)

Gold: 1d6 \times 10

Ex-Ninja: A ninja who becomes lawful or honorable may no longer progress in levels as a ninja, though he retains all class abilities. Note that judicious use of the ninja class abilities should quickly return the character to a state in which they can continue to progress as a ninja.



TIME OF THE VOID

Legend of the Five Rings' latest RPG offering, *Time of the Void*, contains everything gamers need to run a campaign through the Clan War saga, originally presented in the L5R CCG. Within, you will find the following and more:

- A detailed timeline covering all of the major events from the Clan War.
- Adventure hooks for each period of the Clan War, as well as a five-part adventure taking a party of characters through the major events of the Clan War to the Day of Thunder.
- New statistics for major characters from every Great Clan.
- The Black Scrolls, the Jade Hand, and other legendary artifacts of power.
- New school techniques, advanced schools, spells, and kata.

From Chapter 2: Forbidden Knowledge

New Spell: Courage of the Seven Thunders

Element: Earth
Mastery Level: 2
Duration: 1 Hour
Area of Effect: 5' Radius
Range: 10'

By calling forth the spirit of those who have fought the

darkness before, the caster(s) can create a powerful barrier of magic. Any number of casters can participate in the spell's casting; for each shugenja involved the area of effect increases by a five-foot radius and the range increases by five feet. Those who attempt to pass through the barrier will feel as though they are walking through mud. Although breathing is unaffected, movement is halved. Anyone possessing any amount of Taint will feel physical pain while passing through the barrier, as each round the spell causes 1k1 Wounds for every rank of Taint (rounded up) the character or creature has.

From Chapter 3: Anvil of Despair

New Skill: Beastmaster

This is a specialized form of Animal Husbandry, similar in many respects to Falconry, that deals in particular with large, predatory animals. The Matsu family utilizes this skill almost exclusively to train and lead lions and lionesses into battle as the dreaded Lion Warcats, though it can be used with other fighting animals as well (such as the Unicorn's *gaijin* attack dogs). Beastmaster governs the care and training of large animals, as well as leading them in combat situations. A practitioner of this skill may handle a

number of animals equal to his Beastmaster skill rank without fearing loss of control. Any more in number, and even a skilled trainer risks being attacked.

From Appendix: Who's Who

Isha

Earth: 4
Willpower 5
Water: 4
Perception 5
Fire: 4
Agility 6
Air: 3
Reflexes 5
Akasha: 3
School/Great Lesson: Greensnake Scout 4
Caste: 6.0

Advantages: Acute Smell, Combat Reflexes, Fertile, Great Destiny, Large, Quick, Way of the Land (Naga, Shinomen, Unicorn)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Fascination (Rokugani), Soft-Hearted

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Conceal 6, Defense 3, Jiujutsu 3, Hunting 3, Investigation 4, Meditation 2, Moksha 3, Stealth 6, Swordsmanship 5, Yarijutsu 3, Yomanri 8

Adjustments: On the Day of Thunder, Isha becomes the Qamar. His Caste increases to 8.0.



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BLOOD TIES

A TALE OF ROKUGAN

The Kuni called this place the Teeth of the Serpent.

It was a place of whispered legend, a place that could not — should not — exist. Spires of jagged obsidian tore from the earth, stretching higher into the heavens than the tallest kyuden. They were geographic anomalies with no rhyme or reason. The wind screeched through their pitted surfaces, pure black and unreflective in the dim light of the deep Shadowlands. Clouds roiled in the sky above, impenetrable and blood red. The earth beneath her feet was brown, dead, and cracked. Here and there small, scuttling things moved quickly to escape the warm life she represented.

"Trite," Shahai mused, unimpressed. Shahai was an attractive woman. Her hair was drawn back in a fashionable style, held with an elaborate network of pins and strings of black pearls.

A long braid spilled down her back, looping about her throat twice. Her skin was pale and smooth; her powerful blood magic had shaved the edge off her forty years. She wore pale lavender robes, with a silver tanto tucked beneath her obi. A blood-red ruby was set upon the hilt, a symbol of her command of the Order of Bloodspeakers. A necklace of jade Witch Hunter amulets hung about her neck, both a trophy of her conquests and a protection against the Taint. Shahai was no stranger

to corruption, but she saw no reason to hand over the remainder of her soul before she was prepared to do so.

So slight and exquisite a flower seemed out of place so deep in the Shadowlands. Surely she would be easy prey for the minions of darkness. The trail of slaughtered oni, ogres, and bakemono between here and the Carpenter Wall disproved that notion. For the last three days, the beasts had thought better of disturbing the Lady of Blood's journey. Shahai appreciated their newfound wisdom.

She pressed forward, pausing at the edge of a murky river. The flow was more like tar than water. Nothing could live there, nothing normal. A bloodshot yellow eye emerged from the muck, swiveled to consider her, and sank beneath the surface.

"The Black Finger," Shahai whispered. The jade Kuni amulets chimed gently as she took a tentative step forward.

"What's wrong, girl?" the voice called out from deep within her furoshiki sack. "Don't tell me that you are afraid?" A mad cackle drifted into the darkness.

"Of course I am not afraid, Grandfather," Shahai replied, still staring numbly at the surface of the water. "I have never been afraid."

"Take me out then!" the voice demanded. "I've been waiting a long time to see this!"

"Yes, Grandfather," she replied dutifully.

by Rich Wulf

Shahai knelt, removed the bag from her shoulder, and carefully unfolded it. Heaps of food and supplies lay stacked neatly within, far more than should have fit within a satchel so small. It was a simple trick of *gaijin* magic, learned during her time with the Unicorn. Though her magic had taken a darker turn since those days, such simple spells still served her well on excursions such as these. Resting amid the rice cakes and clay water jugs sat an ivory skull, the kanji symbol of Void scrawled in blood upon its forehead. A jagged crack split the skull down the center, a bitter reminder of an encounter with the Unicorn Thunder two decades earlier. Shahai fondly smoothed one hand over the skull's pate. Gently, she took it in both hands, holding it against her chest so the empty sockets could stare out at the river. The skull's jaw rattled rapidly.

"Just as I read, just as the legends said!" Grandfather cackled. "Is it not wonderful, Shahai-chan?"

Shahai gazed out at the river once more, took in the Teeth of the Serpent, and shrugged. "I suppose, Grandfather," she said. "It is not what I expected. It all seems so... so blunt. So cheap. Enough to frighten a child, I suppose, but I had hoped for something more subtle."

"Yes, well, the Shadowlands caters to all tastes," Grandfather said. "The Black Finger River has no reason to be subtle. Simply step across it and you shall see why. Those who cross it lose their souls, cast forever into the Pit. Those who cross it join the Lost."

"And become raving madmen," Shahai sighed. "It seems like such a waste."

"Waste?" Grandfather said, baffled.

"The Shadowlands goes to such effort to corrupt men's minds, and then throws them away. If Fu Leng had an ounce of sense, he'd keep the mind that goes with the soul."

"Yes, well, he did lose, Shahai." Grandfather cackled. "Twice. Still, no reason not to be cautious."

"I doubt the Dark Lord has interest in my soul," Shahai mused. "What may be left of it..."

"Do not be so certain, Iuchi Shahai," whispered a woman's voice. "We always have room for another..."

Shahai looked about quickly, searching for the source of the voice. She saw nothing, only the river, the jagged Teeth of the Serpent, and the barren plains beyond. When Shahai had turned completely about she found herself facing another woman, standing inches away from where Shahai had been facing only a moment before. She was very tall, with unadorned black hair falling loose to her waist. She wore a kimono of pure white — the sort most only wore to funerary ceremonies. The sleeves of her robes were dyed a dark brownish-red. Her beauty was indescribable, dark eyes painted with midnight purple, blood-red lips, skin paler even than Shahai's own.

"Who are you?" Shahai demanded.

"I am the daughter of the Kami," she said. "I am what you aspire to be. I am power. I am death. I am the Dark

Daughter of Fu Leng, and this is my domain. Have you come to offer me fealty?"

"Hardly," Shahai said boldly. "I did not come to join the ranks of the chained."

"Chained?" the Daughter replied, looking at Shahai curiously. "Why do you say that we are chained? Your order bears my father's Taint as well, though you resist it."

"Bloodspeakers are no one's slaves," she replied. "We use maho because the power suits us, but we are not Lost like you. We are not mindless minions like Junzo and Yori. We are free."

"If it pleases you to think so, Iuchi Shahai," the Dark Daughter said. She stepped closer, bowing slightly to peer into the smaller woman's eyes. Her gaze was piercing, unsettling, and unnatural. "Why have you come here?"

"I have come seeking a member of my order," she replied. "A man, a bit younger than myself. His name is Daigotsu. I have searched for him for eight years."

"A dangerous quest," the Dark Daughter said. "I was not aware you Bloodspeakers held such loyalty for one another. It seems strange, considering how long you have left your master Iuchiban to languish in a tomb of eternal death."

"He languishes only because the keys are hidden," Shahai answered. "At least I did not release my master only to see a ronin slaughter him, and a mad Crab run off with his head."

The Dark Daughter's eyes narrowed. "You tempt my wrath, Iuchi Shahai. This is my domain." She held her hands out to either side, displaying long fingernails the same featureless black as the Teeth of the Serpent.

Shahai whispered something indecipherable under her breath.

"What was that?" the Dark Daughter snapped, talons clicking against one another.

"I am not Iuchi," Shahai said, returning the challenge. "Call me by that pathetic name again and you will tempt my wrath, Dark Daughter."

The two stared at one another for several moments, hardly a foot of space separating them. Shahai had heard the legends of the Dark Daughter. It was said she was *akutenshi*, a dark servant of Jigoku. It was said that she was the corrupted daughter of the Crane Thunder, lost centuries ago to the power of Fu Leng. It was said that she was death incarnate. Shahai did not care. She decided years ago she would not live in fear, and even this creature of nightmare would not change that. She would rather die than surrender.

The Dark Daughter smiled. "You are as bold as he promised," the Dark Daughter laughed, folding her hands in her bloodstained sleeves again.

"As who promised?"

"The one you seek, of course," the Dark Daughter answered. "Daigotsu. I shall take you to him."

* * *

For three hours the Dark Daughter led Shahai across the cracked landscape of the Shadowlands. At last they arrived at a most unlikely destination. In the shadows of a darkened box canyon, they came upon a large temple built of blackened timbers and shingled with gold.

"Did the Crab live here once?" Shahai asked, surprised to see the structure. "I did not think their domain ever extended so deep into the Shadowlands."

"No," the Dark Daughter said. "The Hida have never seen this."

"Surely the bakemono could not have built this? Or the Nezumi?"

"Surely not," was all the Dark Daughter would answer.

"You worship the Tao here?" Shahai asked, sneering in disgust.

"Some do, though their numbers were few, the Brotherhood fought more fiercely than anyone at Voltturnum... many of Shinsei's children joined our number. They have built these temples throughout the dark lands, and continue their meditations. Mostly out of habit, I suppose."

"And you allow it?"

"I allow nothing. I merely do not care," the Dark Daughter said with a shrug. "Their souls belong to Iigoku. Their Tao is a twisted aberration of the Shinsei's teachings. Father would approve."



They continued on toward the temple.

Shahai approached the canyon carefully, ready for any sign of ambush. At her side, the Dark Daughter walked with no outward expression of concern. Why would she have any? If she was truly the daughter of a Kami as she claimed, even the Dark Kami, what could possibly threaten her?

"What indeed?" Shahai mused to herself.

"Do you hear that, Shahai-chan?" Grandfather whispered from within Shahai's furoshiki.

Shahai shook her head; she heard nothing, but she knew well when to trust in Grandfather's instincts. As she drew closer, she began to hear a dull chant. It seemed almost as if multiple voices were chanting a sutra.

As they approached, Shahai noticed movement in the canyon itself. Dozens of men and women knelt in silent prayer before the Temple. Most were covered with scars, sores, or other manifestations of the Taint. Some had skin as pale and blue as corpses. Some were not misshapen at all, but possessed an unearthly beauty similar to the Dark Daughter's. As they continued to approach, two men on skeletal horses galloped out to meet them.

Shahai frowned. "I had been led to believe there were no more Dark Moto."

The Dark Daughter smirked. "Moto Tsume and his brother are dead and their curse lifted, this is true," she answered, "but any family who thinks their line pure

after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate is a fool. See for yourself, Shahai. I believe one of these is your kin."

As the two men approached, Shahai realized that she did recognize them. One she knew only from his mon — Moto Yesugai, a worthless *gaijin* who followed the usurper Gaheris from the Burning Sands. His face was hardly recognizable, skin pulled tight about his bones like a living skeleton. The other was more familiar — Shahai's cousin, Iuchi Katta. He had not aged a day in twenty years, though his eyes had become pits of darkness and his skin glowed like witchfire. The two Unicorn reined in their skeletal mounts and paused to study their visitors. When Katta recognized Shahai, he smiled broadly.

"I was wondering when you would arrive, cousin," he said, his voice echoing as if through a deep cave. "My lord has been long awaiting your arrival."

Shahai said nothing at first, hoping to show no surprise. The Katta she had known had been a weak-willed fool, all too ready to bow and caper to the tenets of bushido. This was not the same man. She could sense his strength, his power, his raw corruption. Shahai did not know who Katta's new lord was, but if he could bring about such change in a waste of flesh like Katta then he was the sort of man she wanted to meet.

"Who is your lord?" Shahai asked finally.

"Daigotsu," Katta said. "The man you seek, and who seeks you."

Shahai's mouth closed with a click.

"Are you certain this is your cousin?" Yesugai asked, his own voice a leathery hiss. "I thought you said she never shut up."

Yesugai would pay for that.

Katta laughed. "Give her time, Yesugai-san," Katta replied. "Return, Yesugai-san, and tell the others that Shahai-sama has arrived. In the meantime, I shall escort these ladies to the temple."

* * *

Shahai stared about the temple grounds in awe. All about her, she saw men and women of Rokugan, dressed in the colors of every Great Clan. She even noted a Hare and a handful of Monkey bushi. All were Tainted, all Lost to the power of Fu Leng. Yet these were not the Shadowlands madmen she had seen in the past. Their eyes burned with intelligence. Their will was their own.

"All of these were lost at Voltturnum?" Shahai asked Katta.

"Most," Katta said, pushing open the heavy doors of the temple with one hand. "Some were taken since, mostly Crab and Mantis. We are always recruiting. A handful..." Katta regarded her with a devilish grin, "...were born here. If we have time later, I shall introduce you to my sons."

The trio entered the temple. A large shrine dominated the entry chamber, with a thirty-foot statue depicting a tall, beautiful man with hair of midnight black. In his

hands, he crushed a writhing snake. Beneath one foot, he cracked the shell of a crab. An elderly monk knelt before the statue, burning incense as he chanted twisted sutra. He peered up as the three entered. Two jagged, criss-cross scars marked where the old monk's eyes had once been.

"Welcome to the Temple of the Ninth Kami," the old monk said in a pleasant voice. He rose and bowed deeply. "I shall return presently with the master." He shuffled off across the temple, making not a sound as he moved.

"Brother Hanoshi sought enlightenment in the Tao for years," Katta said. "When he discovered it in the Shadowlands, he gouged out his own eyes. I suppose some people are more nostalgic than others."

"Apparently," Shahai answered.

The sound of heavy footsteps soon approached from across the temple, and Shahai turned to face the new arrivals. One was a tall man in black obsidian armor, face entirely hidden beneath a black mempo. The other was a tall man with long white hair, braided exquisitely into a complex topknot. He wore a kimono of black and silver, padded here and there with the light battle armor of a shugenja. His handsome young face was tinged eternally with amusement, and he bowed deeply when he saw Shahai. He had changed much, but she recognized him.

"Daigotsu-san," she said, returning his bow.

"Shahai-san," he replied. "I have been waiting for you." His obsidian guardian vanished into the shadows without a word of introduction. "Katta-san, you may go," Daigotsu said. "Dark Daughter, remain. This discussion may be of interest to you."

The Dark Daughter of Fu Leng nodded in assent. Iuchi Katta bowed and departed, closing the temple doors with a heavy thud.

"Daigotsu, you have much to explain," Shahai said after the doors had closed. "You disappeared from the order, leaving no trace. I scoured Rokugan for years, seeking any sign of your passing. The blood rites revealed to me that you journeyed to the heart of the Shadowlands, and here I find you in the heart of a village of Lost, who revere you as their lord. What is happening?"

"It is as they say," Daigotsu replied simply. "I am their lord."

Shahai's eyes narrowed. "You wear no jade," she observed. "Are you a fool? This deep in the Shadowlands, with no jade, your soul may already be Lost."

"Much as these men and women are Lost, I imagine," Daigotsu said. "These are not the Shadowlands madmen of old. They are samurai. The Shadowlands have changed, adapted. Hellish Jigoku has recognized the ways of its enemy. Only through organization can we truly destroy the Empire. Only by becoming a reflection of Rokugan may we tear the clans apart. What you see here is the beginning of the new way. Twenty miles from here, the Lost have built a city, a palace to rival Otosan Uchi's. Miles from here, our Kaiu engineers have begun

construction on a wall to defend us from the incursions of the meddlesome Hiruma. Soon we will be a dark reflection of Rokugan, but stronger. I shall lead the Shadowlands to a new era of greatness."

"Daigotsu, listen to me," Shahai said. "We must leave this place. Return to the order."

"Return to hiding?" he said with a laugh. "Return to our delusions of vengeance upon a dead dynasty? No, Shahai. This is our time. This is our vengeance. You know what I am. You know who I am, or you would not have dared so much to retrieve me. Surely in your heart you must suspect that this is what was meant to be. I am the new lord of the Shadowlands."

"And where does that leave the Bloodspeakers?" Shahai asked. "Those who raised you, taught you your magic? Where does that leave me?"

"At my side, dear sister," Daigotsu replied, extending one hand toward her. "Darkness recognizes its own. Through dark times and bright, the Bloodspeakers have survived. They have grown. They have triumphed. Like those lost at Voltturnum, they are an example of what the Shadowlands could become. You are an example of what they could become. You can rule the Shadowlands, Shahai, second only to myself and the Dark Daughter."

At Shahai's side, the Dark Daughter smiled viciously.

"And if I do not wish to join you?" Shahai said.

"Then the Dark Daughter will send you to Jigoku," Daigotsu said. The words held no rancor, or any emotion whatsoever. They were not a threat, but a simple statement of what would be. The Dark Daughter extended her hands from her sleeves once more, revealing her long black fingernails. Daigotsu turned his back on both women as he strode quietly up the steps to study the statue of Fu Leng.

Shahai turned to face the Dark Daughter, shook her head slightly, and grinned.

"Are you prepared to die, Bloodspeaker?" the Dark Daughter asked.

"I am always prepared to die," Shahai said. "Are you?"

Shahai snapped one hand backward quickly. The Dark Daughter's eyes widened as a plume of red energy suddenly lanced from her heart to Shahai's outstretched hand. The Daughter shrieked and extended her claws, but Shahai extended her other hand. Another pulse of red energy exploded from the Daughter's chest, sending seizures throughout her body. The ancient creature of darkness collapsed, helpless, on the floor.

"Well done, Shahai-chan!" Grandfather cackled from her satchel.

Across the temple, Daigotsu seated himself on the stairs. He watched the exchange with mild interest.

"What..." the Dark Daughter groaned, shivering as she attempted to control her body. "What have you done to me?"

"The incantation is subtle, but powerful," Shahai said, circling the Dark Daughter. The twin streams of power continued to siphon blood and strength from Shahai's

fallen opponent. "Slow in application, but nearly impossible to detect. Once it takes effect, there is little that can be done to stop it. You say your soul belongs to Jigoku? You are wrong. Your soul is mine, Dark Daughter."

"How?" the Dark Daughter gasped.

"I've been weaving this spell since shortly after we met," Shahai said. "While you were still preening over your superiority, I decided in that moment that you had to die. If you'd simply killed me instead of threatening me like the villain from a poor Scorpion melodrama, then perhaps you would have had a chance. Not any longer."

"No!" the Dark Daughter screamed. "I am immortal! You cannot do this!"

"You are mortal enough, I think," Shahai said. "And now your power is mine."

"Lord Daigotsu!" the Dark Daughter screamed. "Save me!"

"Why should I?" Daigotsu said. "You failed. You failed your father, and now you have failed me. Perhaps it is time for Shahai to assume your position."

"I will be no one's minion, Daigotsu," Shahai snarled, tightening her fists about the coils of blood. "We will be equals, or we will be enemies. I do not care what power you think you wield, or how many minions you have at your disposal. I will be no one's slave."

"Excellent," Daigotsu replied with a smile. "I would have it no other way, Shahai-san. Or should I say Dark Daughter? I think the name fits you."

"Whatever," Shahai said, attention still focused upon her spell and her victim.

The young man rose, dusting off his black kimono with one hand. Behind him, the obsidian yojimbo formed from nothing and waited to attend its master's wishes. "When you're finished with her, attend me in the rear garden," Daigotsu said. "Brother Hanoshi will show you the way. We have much to discuss, and an Empire to conquer. In the meantime," Daigotsu smiled again, "enjoy yourself."

The Lord of the Shadowlands turned and exited the chamber. Shahai laughed as she focused the spell once more, drawing another scream of pain from the dying spawn of Fu Leng.

Stand Your Ground

Yu brings attrition to Legend of the Five Rings' "winner take all" combat.

Stand Your Ground is one several cards in *A Perfect Cut* that feature the new Yu trait. What is this trait, what does it do, and why might you want to give it to your samurai?

Only samurai have Yu, because it represents discipline gained through bushido training. The Yu trait is a specialty of the Crab Clan, similar to the way **Tactician** is associated with Lion.

Yu provides attrition to L5R's "winner take all" combat. Here's how it works: After the victorious side in a battle has been determined, if you're unlucky enough to have lost, each of your cards with the Yu trait can target and destroy an enemy Follower, or Personality without a Follower, that has equal or lower Force than your samurai's Yu. The losing commander picks the order that Yu effects are applied in, so if you have several samurai with Yu in your army, they can pick off Followers first, leaving a Personality vulnerable.

Yu works much like a Ranged Attack (though it's not a trigger for Ranged Attack effects, like *Arrows from the Woods*). Perhaps the most important difference between Yu and a Ranged Attack is that using

Yu is not an action. It won't be stopped by any of the standard action denial tricks, like *Deadly Ground*.

Stand Your Ground is a straightforward Action card featuring Yu. As an Open action, it gives a samurai a Yu bonus equal to his or her personal honor, or personal honor plus two for Crab samurai. If a Samurai without the printed Yu trait is given a "Yu bonus," they essentially gain the Yu trait at that level, so this card works with any samurai — or more accurately, any samurai with personal honor above zero, although its built in boost for Crab samurai means even dishonored Crabs can use it.

Other cards in *A Perfect Cut* that give Yu bonuses are a Spell (*Fortify*) and a Holding (*Plum Tree Training Grounds*). *Stand Your Ground* might be the most popular. It's the only Yu bonus that doesn't cost gold, and doesn't require another card, unlike *Fortify*. And, unlike *Plum Tree Training Grounds*, you can use multiple copies on a single Personality.

But this just begs the question: why give a samurai the Yu trait? You see, there's just one problem with Yu: you have to be beaten to



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use it. In more general terms, you might ask, "Why use a card that helps when you lose instead of one that will help you win?"

The most important reason is that having a high Yu total in your army lets you indulge in risky tactics. If you win, terrific. If you lose, you can still take out some of your opponent's important cards. A lot of Yu can act as a deterrent. An opponent should be more likely to step aside when facing your army, since there's no way to stop the Yu trait from being used.

While I have reservations about the Yu trait, I'm looking forward to seeing how it develops. I can imagine lots of interesting cards making use of the trait. The Tactician was introduced in Imperial Edition, but Tactician decks didn't come into their own for years. I expect the same will be true of Yu.

Previously, in the *Card Focus* column covering the Spell *Devastation of Beiden Pass*, I talked about using *Decoy* to save the shugenja casting the ritual. Unfortunately, that doesn't work! If a card has to be destroyed as a cost, destroying something in its place won't meet the cost. I apologize for the error.

by Zen Faulkes

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