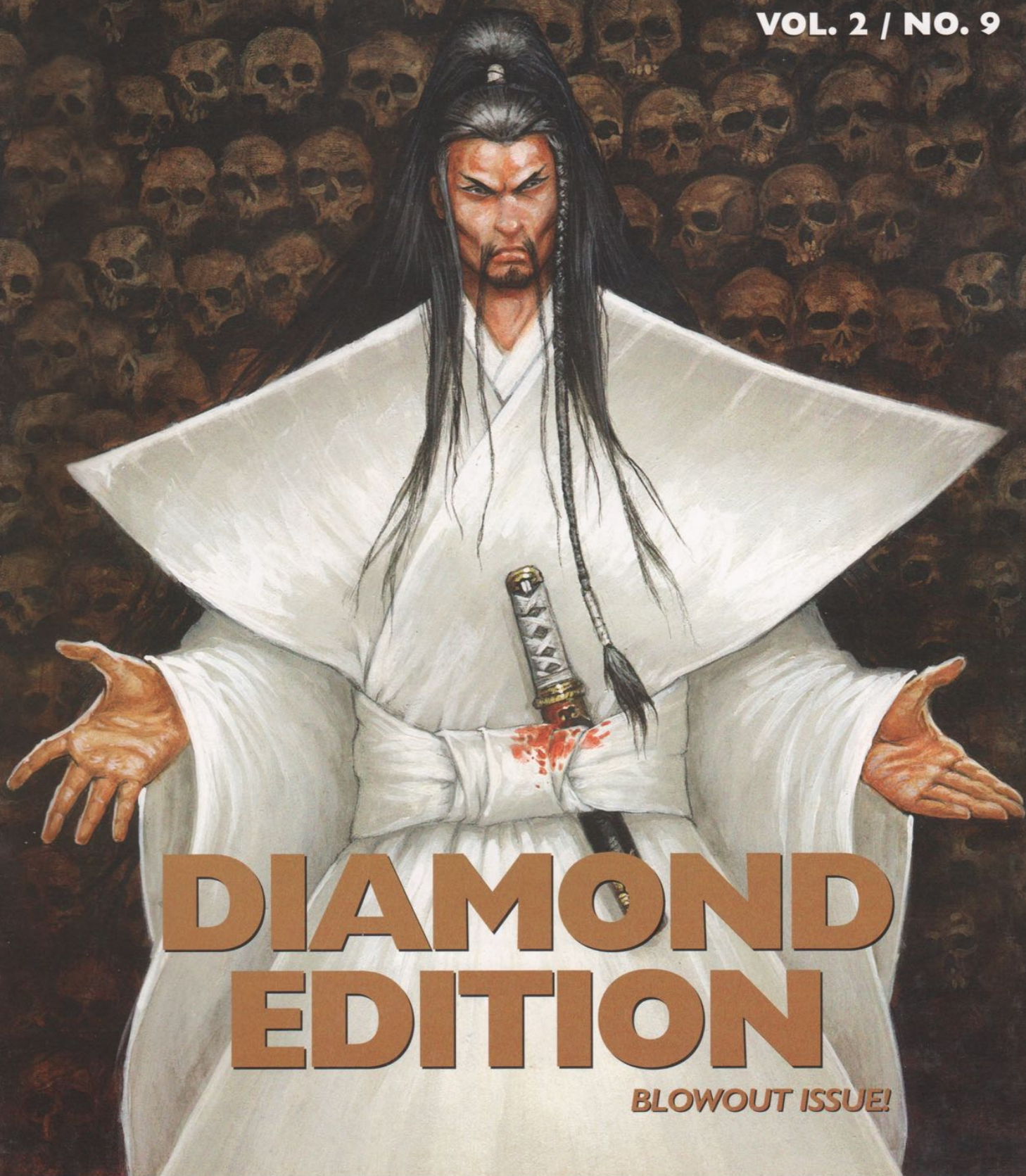


LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS • INTERACTIVE STORYLINE COLLECTIBLE CARD & ROLEPLAYING GAMES

THE
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HERALD

VOL. 2 / NO. 9

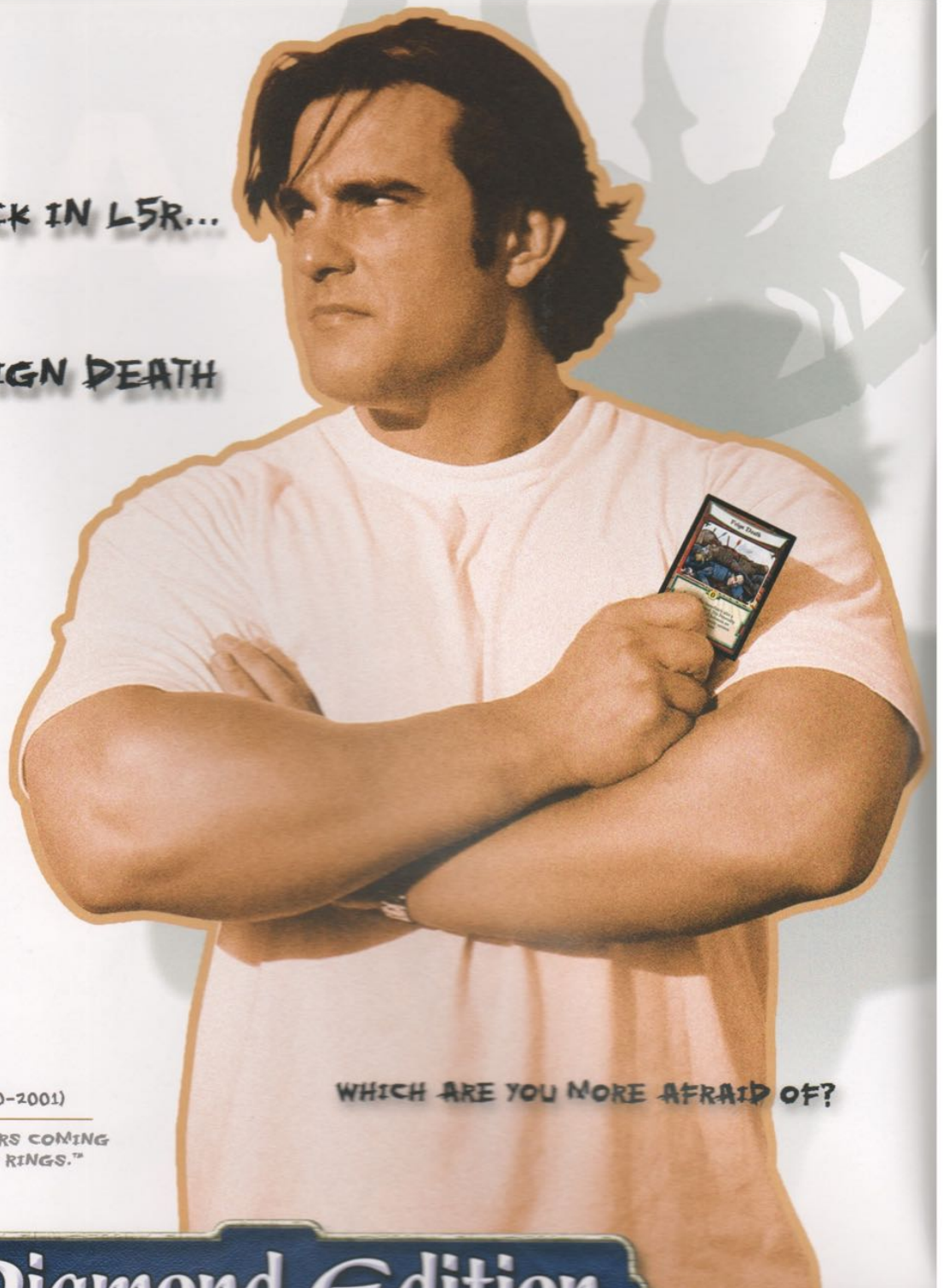


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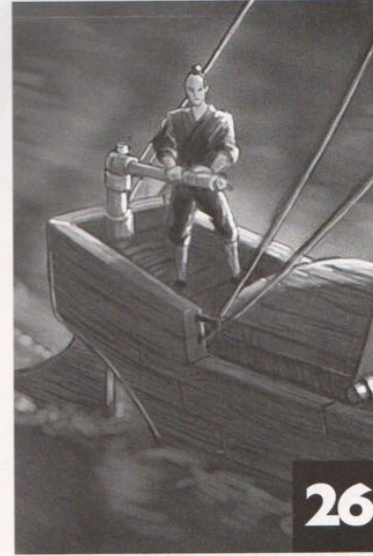
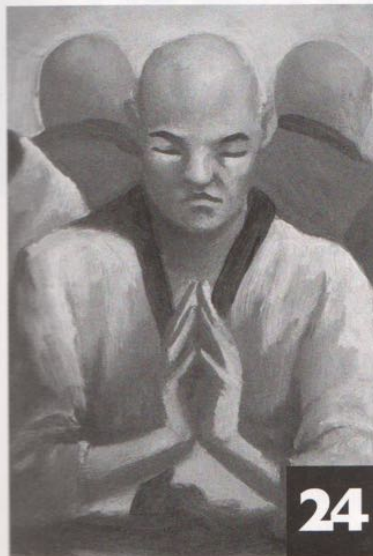
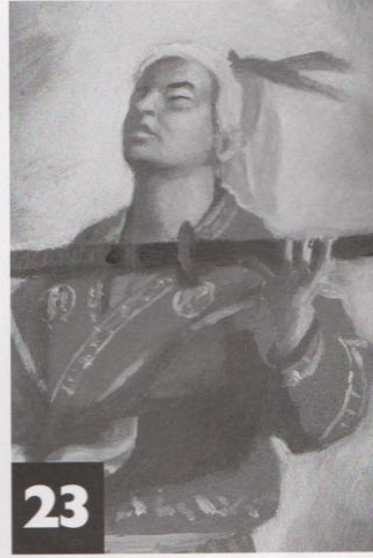


THE
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HERALD

THE OFFICIAL LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS™ QUARTERLY

VOL. 2 / NO. 9



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Editorial

Back in June, when the anticipated articles for this issue came in, I decided to stand my staff on end and only accept articles based on Diamond Edition.

Any L5R player who hasn't heard of Diamond Edition should probably crawl back into a hole or devoutly take this opportunity to catch up by immediately reading through this Imperial Herald.

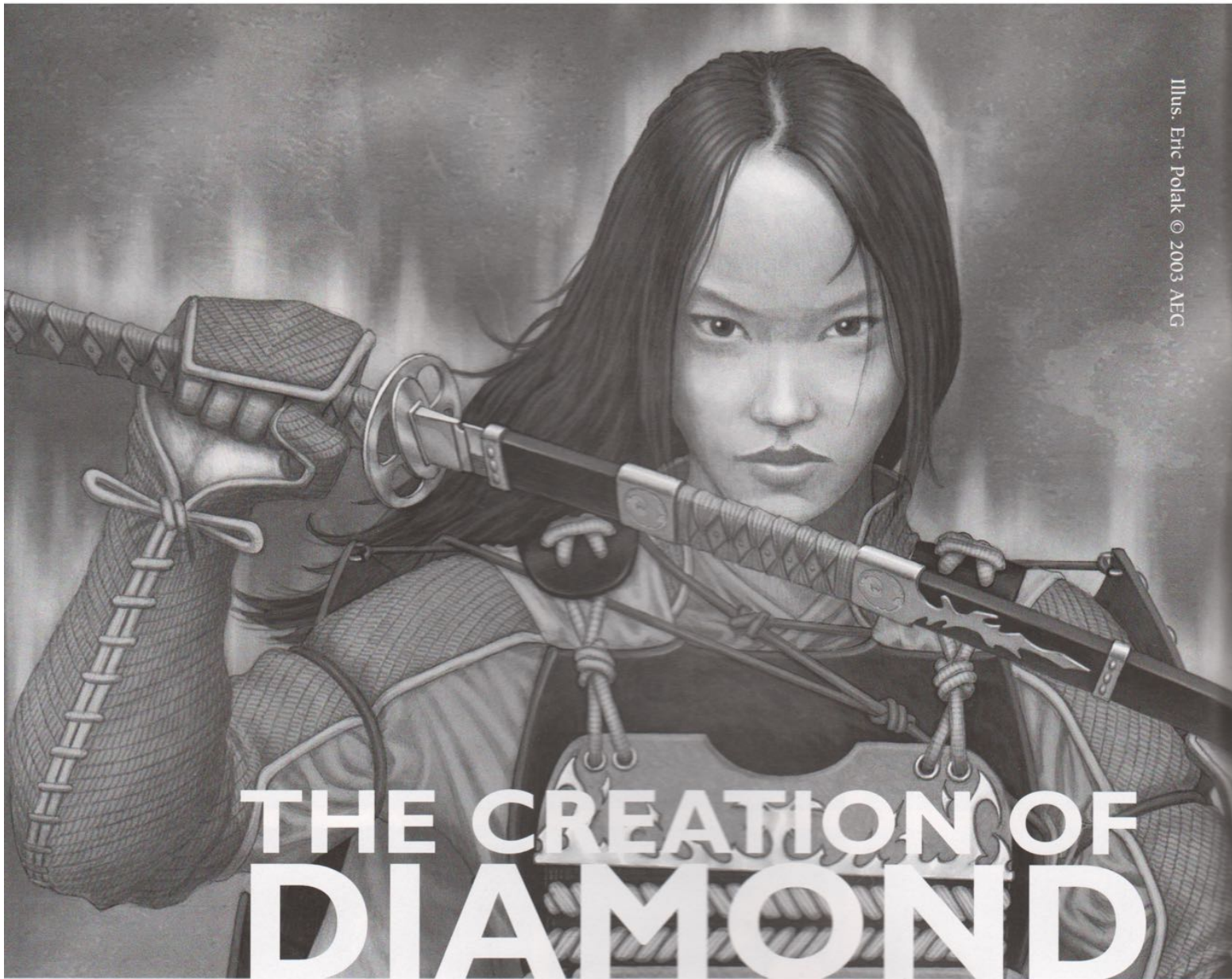
We've had a hell of a time putting Diamond together. From my zero coaster mandate policy to large scale player input, this is the best set we've put together. Jeff is still trying to forget scenes of me galloping around on my Brand Management horse screaming, "Evil Portents!" at the top of my lungs.

We've got some stuff you'll enjoy in this issue: the design philosophy behind each clan, insight into changes to the tournament environment, and another excellent story from our writing team.

Over the years, we hope that Diamond will serve to entertain you as much as we will enjoy designing it for you. So without further ado, we present Diamond Edition!

— Raymond Lau
L5R Brand Manager





THE CREATION OF DIAMOND

by Jeff Alexander
and Vaughn
Derderian

Welcome to *Diamond*! In the following articles, we're going to introduce you to *Diamond Edition*, give you a little glance at the history of the set, let you take a look "under the hood" to see what we were thinking when we put **that** card into the set (and there's probably at least one that you're wondering about), and then let you take this set and go crazy.

But first, you may be asking, "Why do we need this set, anyway?" Well, sticking strictly to card game related issues, we've found that a CCG begins to break down the larger the card pool gets. When players have access to a large number of cards, they tend to find more degenerate combos using those cards (naturally).

On top of that, a playable pool of cards that consists of everything ever printed will result in only the most efficient cards, less than 1% of the available pool, seeing play, completely removing the ability of the Design Team to control the speed level of the game.

"Wait. Didn't you once say your preferred way of fixing a problem was to print a card for it?" Yes, we would prefer that. It is the ideal. But that ideal has to be tempered with experience, or we will keep making the same mistakes. We have found, time and again, that rebalancing an entire environment is simply too hard to do correctly through potent metagame cards. *The First Scroll is Opened* was printed to balance Phoenix dominance, but really only hurt Dragon and Naga, two

Clans at the bottom of the tournament standings in those days. *Bandit Attack* was supposed to bring the overpowered and ubiquitous *Merchant Caravan* into check, but was too weak to be a threat. *Rise From the Ashes* was introduced to give slower decks a chance to compete against 4-turn blitzers and honor-rockets, only to become instead the lynchpin in Utterly-Shut-You-Down-While-They-Win-All-Along dishonor and enlightenment decks.

Yeah, yeah — that's what we said before *Gold*, too, right? Why not just stick with *Gold*, if it was the same thing? Well, while *Gold Edition* was a massive cut from Open and Extended Jade, there were still a lot of problems in it. Courtiers, despite being a recognized card type and the

alleged focus of two Clans, could do nothing better than what Shugenja could already do. Free corrupt gold, put into the set to allow Shadowlands to work, had wound up being used by pretty much every Clan with quality “—” Honor Requirement people, speeding up the economy for players whose favorite Strongholds had the necessary Personality mix and who had no qualms about corrupting a Clan in the storyline. In essence, the changes made in *Gold* hadn't gone far enough, mostly because cards weren't available to create the effects we needed, but also in part because we didn't know exactly what things would look like on the other side of the Open-to-Gold switch. So, *Diamond Edition* lets us refine and complete the process started with *Gold Edition*, and gives us a chance to act on the things we've learned over the past two years, **as well as** things we've learned over the past **nine** years (more on that later).

Now, take a look at the list of people who've written one of the following articles about *Diamond*. You might recognize some of the names. Some of them may be people that you know. How are they involved in this whole deal? Well, the answer to that lies deep in the heart of the AEG offices...

Flash back with me, if you will, to the Thursday before OrcCon, 2003. Slaving away in front of a hot computer is Mr. Dan “The Man” Tibbles, working hard on a learn-to-play set to be released around the same time as *Diamond*. His brow furrows in deep concentration as he realizes that, unless he knows what cards are going to be in *Diamond*, he cannot create a learn-to-play set from those cards! So, in a flash, he rushes over to AEG's massive supercomputer and gets the list of every *L5R* card that has ever been printed. Enter, from Stage Left, Vaughn Derderian! Shocked to see each other there (Dan was supposed to be in Seattle, and Vaughn was supposed to be in Detroit), the two strike up a conversation about *Diamond*. Sitting in the presence of the Design Gods, Jeff and Dave, the Brand God Ray, and the

mysterious and powerful being known only as “Jelfo,” the two idle away a few hours talking in the office. Dan and Vaughn resolve to continue their conversation at the convention.

Cut to Saturday. OrcCon lies deep in the heart of *L5R* territory, an hour from the AEG offices. For many across the land, southern California has always been a mythical place. This year, a group of friends had all decided to make the pilgrimage, to experience *L5R* on its home turf. When word of Dan's efforts on *Diamond* circulates to these pilgrims, it's decided that the project is too big for just one man. Like much of *L5R*, this is a project that belongs to the players. So, a close-knit group of around twelve is gathered, late at night in a secret location, to work in hushed tones on a dream of the future. The meeting carries on until early in the morning, and despite their weary eyes, the group soldiers carried on until a few of them began to fall asleep. If only there were more time...

But there is! While gathered for a final dinner Sunday night, the possibility of continuing their earlier conversation arises! The location: Dave Williams' house. The possibilities: endless. In the dark of that SoCal night, a group is formed. Their name: BBD (Bigger, Better *Diamond*). Their purpose: the future...

Now that the team was assembled, we had to figure out what it was that we wanted **not** to do. See, as players, we had always been on the other side of the design wall, always wishing that one thing or another had been just a little bit different. Complaining about the selection of personalities we had to work with, complaining about not having one card or another, or complaining about someone else having too **much** of one card or another. This was our chance to step in and try to fix all of that. So again, what didn't we want to do?

Well, what had we complained about in *Gold*? For starters, free gold had ruined the environment. The ability of some Clans to use the Corrupt holdings as a speed boost wound up tainting the

environment irreparably (no pun intended). Not only were you at a speed disadvantage if you weren't using Corrupt gold, you had a tremendous weakness to Dishonor if you couldn't handle the redirection of honor losses — which brings up the next point. The Design Team had experimented with using honor requirements as a costing method in *Gold*, and that experiment had failed. With the ease of causing honor losses to other players in *Gold* (corrupt holding + *Wind's Truth*, *Secrets on the Wind* + *Shame*), even maintaining starting honor is undependable unless you dilute the offensive power of your deck to shore up that weakness. More importantly, the extra difficulty imposed on a pure military deck to buy a Personality with an honor requirement four, three, or even two points above the deck's starting value is far, far steeper than that imposed on a pure honor or a switch deck. It is *much* harder for Crab to buy a Personality with an HR of 5 than it is for Crane to buy someone with HR 8, yet the Personalities with these requirements were not appropriately stronger.

L5R has been described as “the chess of CCGs”. Grandiose metaphors notwithstanding, chess isn't a very fun game if I can go “knight to queen's bishop three” sas my first move and win if you don't capture it immediately. That's why *Diamond* leaves out cards like *Deadly Ground*. Battles will once more depend on a back-and-forth interplay of actions down to the bitter end. We're also taking more of the one-sidedness of the Action Phase out of it, by cutting back on Personality destruction and unconditional dishonor and honor loss. You shouldn't find your Personalities being dishonored merely because your opponent played Card X. Instead, you'll be dishonored because you chose a dishonorable course of action. If your Personality dies, it's because your opponent spent impressive resources.

We also didn't want any coasters. I've been a playtester for a little while, and I've always kinda laughed when people said they didn't want any coasters in

their expansion sets. For an expansion, it's difficult to have every card equal the power level of all the other available cards. But we didn't have that burden when designing *Diamond*. We had every single card available to us, and no matter how many we had to pick, we wanted to do our best to make sure that we picked the best cards available. Period. There may be one or two cards in the set that wind up being unused, but if anything, that'll be because all the other cards available are so good.

Favor when the action doesn't help. We fixed this by giving the Winds two actions each, one that uses the Favor and one with an alternate cost. (*Daigotsu* doesn't get a second action because its secondary effect is denying your opponent the Favor even when you have less Honor, something the other Winds do not offer.) Not only does this allow us to balance each Wind's total power level by offsetting a strong Favor action with a weak Stronghold action (or vice versa), it gives

could they? The game hadn't hit the market yet, so although the Rings were thematic, they also had little to no connection to the way that the game would eventually be played. Not any more. We tore them down and built them back up, redesigned them from scratch to match the elements they represent while meeting the new design goals: every Ring should have an effect powerful enough to encourage building a deck around it, every Ring should have feasible play conditions that don't depend too much on what your opponent does, and every deck should be able to add at least two Rings without changing in any other way and still have a good chance of playing them. With benefits and play conditions based on nine years of research, the Rings will now truly be the center of the game.

Next, we went after the Personalities. See, Personalities are really the engine of the game. Just about everything that you do over the course of a game either comes from or goes towards a Personality. They're the way you gain honor, the way you destroy provinces, the way you duel, the way you play Rings, and on, and on, and on. We wanted to make sure that the *Diamond* Personalities represented not only the themes of the Clans, but also the themes of the game.

What do I mean by that? Well, how about Clan Champions? How often do you see Clan Champions enter play at a tournament? Just about never. These people are supposed to be the pinnacle of your Clan, the spiritual and physical leaders of everyone swearing fealty to them. Yet they never see play? Well, that needs to change. We've had success at the end of *Gold* in printing Personalities in the 10–12 gold price range that get used in tournament-level decks. Clan Champions are one simple notch higher on the dial. If you can get your Clan Champion onto the table, the momentum of the game should **immediately** swing in your favor. From now on, the **thud** of Clan Champions being revealed in provinces should be audible in tournament halls across the world. They're that big.

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Finally, we wanted to balance the Winds. The *Gold* Winds might as well have been titled *Toturi Tsudao* and *Three Other Guys Who Will Never See Play*. Breaking up the Favor was a good thing for the game, and was certainly interesting. But the Winds as initially presented just didn't stack up against one another. *Tsudao* ended up the clear frontrunner, despite being reactive — something high-level players often say is the trademark of a poor card. In hindsight we see why it was so useful despite this: of all the Winds, *Tsudao* is the only one with an ability that you usually need in games where you have Favor control. *Sezaru* and *Kaneka* help your deck play better no matter what your opponent does, but with their abilities, you will often need the action when you can't get the Favor or have the

non-Honor decks a mechanical reason to use something besides *Tsudao* or *Daigotsu*.

But was that all we wanted to do? Fix mistakes? No! This was a chance for us to really make the game better, more vital, more interesting. Were we gonna pass that up? Would you?

So, we took a little bit of inspiration from the name of the game, and started with the Rings. Their effects don't match their costs. Other than in Enlightenment decks, only two out of the legendary five Rings ever saw play. Two out of five? That's pretty low. Wouldn't it be great if all five Rings were playable? If all five Rings were powerful cards that tied into decks that people are actually playing? When the Rings were originally designed, the design team had no idea how to make them playable. I mean, how

Finally, we looked at... everything else. When you first saw the list of cards in *Diamond*, I'm sure you winced when you saw at least one card. Whether it be *Wedge*, *Shinsei's Shrine*, or the Butcher of the Clan Wars, *Matsu Gohei*, there are some cards in this set that you probably thought you'd never see again. But they're back. How can that be? Didn't these ruin the environment once before? Well, as we started looking at things that we wanted out, we realized that, without certain cards that had **always** been around, things were different. Is *Shinsei's Shrine* really that powerful when you can only have one? Is *Wedge* really that powerful when there's no *Deadly Ground* to make sure that your opponent can't do anything more to that personality? Is *Matsu Gohei* really all that great when all the Province strengths in the game are one point higher... and there's no way to get both *Gohei* and gold first turn... and there is no *Superior Tactics* or *Charge*, nor *Matsu Agetoki* to back him up in the mid-game? What we learned in *Gold* is that a card's strength is as much determined by the total environment as by its own ink. With *Diamond*, we're working with that fact instead of against it to bring back some fun, strong cards from yesteryear that old and new players alike will enjoy playing. (Not to mention there's very little in this world we enjoy more than hearing players scream, "That's broken!" and be wrong.)

And just as many of those core cards are rotating back in, so too are several staple utility cards taking a vacation. Bye, *Jade Works*, so long, *Superior Tactics*,



sayonara,
Rallying Cry...

More than one other CCG has kept its gameplay fresh by juggling its fundamentals. *L5R* has gone too long with certain cards going into every single deck, regardless of Clan or victory. It's time we took some of the brainless decisions out of deckbuilding. A good honor or military deck will be a much different beast in *Diamond*, using cards to good effect that have gotten passed over for years. Players building decks by imitating what worked in *Gold* will find their decks poor indeed... which is the whole point.

Lest we all get too carried away, *Diamond* is not just about change. There is no wisdom in changing something just because you can. The Extended Jade tournament format, for example, wasn't the best idea in the world, so there was no Extended *Gold*. *Diamond* will continue that trend and possess only one, strict storyline format. In the *Gold* reset, the limited number of first-turn Personalities for each Clan had the desired slowdown effect, so that's one more trend you'll see reappear in *Diamond*, though we're refining it to correct the two flaws that marred *Gold's* implementation: the

high number of cheap, efficient Shadowlands Followers and the lack of *quality* first-turners for Unicorn. *Gold* lacked Jade's half-dozen ways of making a card Storyline-legal, which made maintaining legality lists much easier, so expect that to apply to *Diamond*, too. The basics of the different Clans' refocused strong points is also going to stay, including Yu for Crab, Items for Unicorn, and ranged attacks for Mantis. **Yu** has been brought to a useful level with support cards since its inglorious debut, and the other two are expected to be right behind it once *Diamond* releases.

So, having said all that, now let's hear from a couple of other guys who've got some things to say about this set. I think you'll find that they're all just chomping at the bit to tell you why they're excited about *Diamond*. Whether it's the Clan Champions, the Rings, the great Personalities who are coming back, or the chance to finally play out a battle in a two player game like those great battles in multiplayer, there's something for just about everyone to get happy about in *Diamond*. In a lot of ways, this set represents the essence of *L5R* — it's made up of hopes, dreams, and second chances. Things we wish were done differently the first time, things that we're making sure to do **right** the first time.

Diamond has players, just like you and me, at its heart, and that's a big part of why it's special. More than any other CCG out there, this game is about the players. About the man or woman sitting across the table from you. Up until now, the only players involved in *Diamond* have been a lucky few. But now, it's your chance. Take the game and make it yours.

If we did make any mistakes, please feel free to let us know. We'll make sure to fix 'em next time.

Diamond Crab

Stronghold:
Razor's Edge Dojo

Personalities:

3 Kuni Tansho
3 Hida Hitoshi
1 Hida Reiha Exp
1 Hida Kuon Exp2
1 Hida Isamu
3 Hiruma Ashihei
3 Hida Utaemon
3 Hida Tenshu

Holdings:

1 Shrine of Stone
3 Hiruma Dojo
3 Iron Mine
2 Shrine to Daikoku
1 Gifts and Favors
1 Shrine to Ebisu
2 Rice Paddy
3 Ashigaru Fort
1 Shrine to Bishamon

Events:

1 Boundless Sight
1 In Time of War
1 New Year's Celebration

Regions:

1 Tidal Land Bridge
1 Farmlands

Actions:

2 Ambush
3 Call to Arms
2 Diversionary Tactics
1 Egg of P'an Ku
3 Feign Death
3 Kolat Assassin
3 Path of Wisdom
3 Refugees
2 Uncertainty
3 Sneak Attack
3 Tireless Assault
3 Test of Courage
3 Tsuruchi Technique
3 Wedge

Followers:

1 Hiruma House Guard

Items:

1 Obsidian Mirror
1 Celestial Sword of the Crab

Strategy

This is one of my favorite decks of the environment that utilizes the Crab discard strategy to limit the number of things that your opponent can do to you. The idea is to systematically force your opponent to continue burning resources out of their hand to deal with your attacks. With *Kuni Yori* and *Path of Wisdom* you can create a stalemate on fate hands. That is where you want to be, as your personalities and followers are going to have better force than any other deck. The only things they can throw at you are the things you can see. *Uncertainty* and *Kolat Assassin* are included to deal with the other player's clan Champions!

Designing the Crab

by Scott Hadsall

The Crab are designated Rokugan's truest masters of defense. From a simple thematic point of view, it is the Crab who take it upon themselves to save the Empire from the grips of the Shadowlands by defending the Kaiu Wall. In card game terms however, doing what the Crab do best is no certain condition for victory.

Defense, recognized as the traditional theme of the Crab clan, was sidelined in favor of a more proactive set of themes, allowing us to create Crab decks that are both offensive and defensive.

We wanted to give each clan two separate but equal themes to assure variety within the clan. With the Crab we were faced with a sort of dilemma. What other two things did we want the Crab to do that were proactive, or what did they already do well that we could capitalize on?

Our first two ideas were Yu Military and Follower Based Attack. At the time these sounded perfect, and we decided to start building a Crab personality base and picked the two strongholds. The first pick was easy. *Kyuden Hida* is the perfect platform from which to stage strategic sorties, while replenishing the fate hand. This would obviously support the follower attack decks. We decided on *Razor's Edge Dojo* (RED) with the following change?:

"The first time each phase each other player targets one of your personalities with an action, he must discard a card from his hand. Battle: Bow *Razor's Edge Dojo* to give each of your Crab Clan Personalities in the current battle +1F."

This change made other players discard a card the first time they targeted a RED player's personalities in not only the Action

Phase but in the Attack Action segment as well, punishing the opponent's fate hand. This stronghold would be the one to support our honorable Yu military deck.

One problem.

Why would anyone run the Yu personalities in *Razor's Edge Dojo*? Why not run Yu personalities in *Kyuden Hida* with followers and simply attack? Our themes had gone terribly wrong. They crossed into one another.

Back to the drawing board we went and came up with more strategic ideas.

Thankfully, *Razor's Edge Dojo* bailed us out in this respect and did most of the real thinking for us. We decided that the Crab, thematically, are about what you cannot do to them, not what they can do to you. Now that's defense!

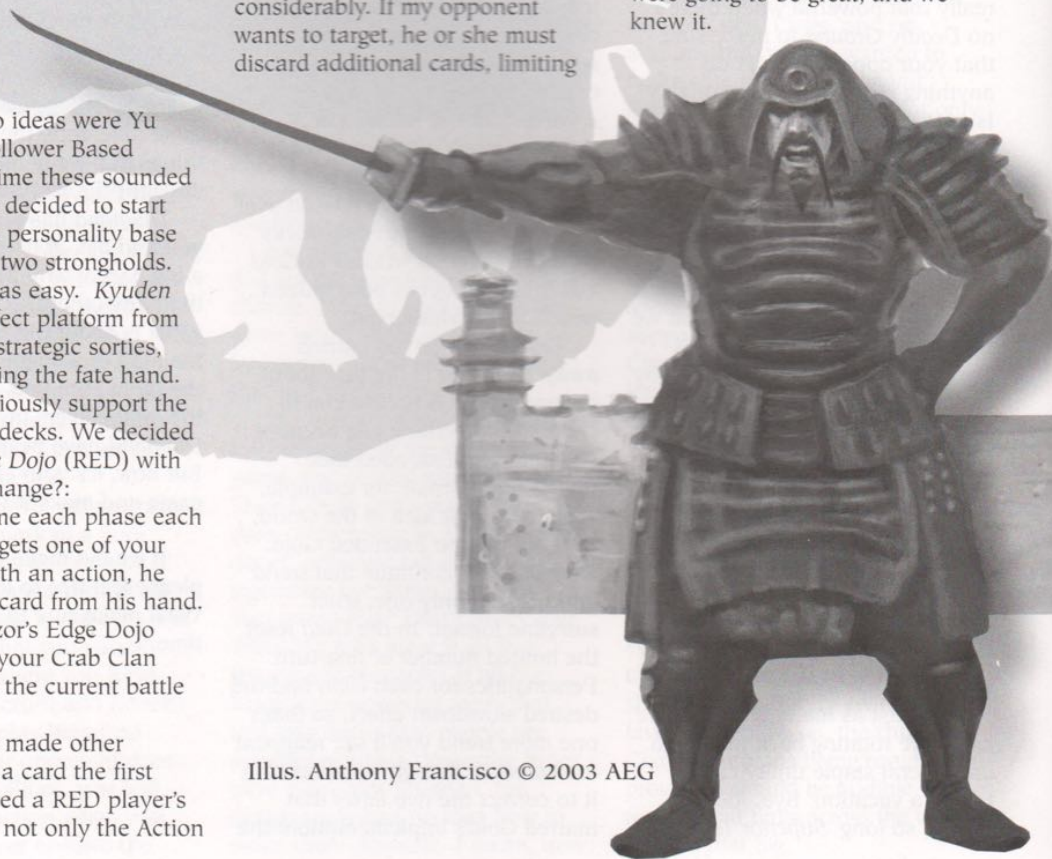
How to show this in the cards? Limiting the opponent's options on what to do against Crab attackers. *Razor's Edge Dojo* with the present change helped considerably. If my opponent wants to target, he or she must discard additional cards, limiting

the options he or she has. A stronghold can't make a deck type or theme work however, so what else creates discard?

Using the "Soul of" trait we decided to bring back Kuni Yori. Finally we designed all new Clan Champions and turned Kuon into a real monster with a discard ability. Do you have any idea how much fun it is to design personalities with 10 printed force? It was a beautiful thing and created a real problem for the opponents, exactly where we wanted to be.

Now we had an offensive/defensive strategy based in Discard Military. What about *Kyuden Hida*? We were wrong to make followers a specifically Crab theme. Followers are a military theme, not specific to any particular clan. The second theme of Yu military could be supported through the additional card draw *Kyuden Hida* provides, making the Crab themes sync with their strongholds and personalities.

The Crab, after several long weeks of working and playtesting finally had two cohesive themes and separate deck types. They were going to be great, and we knew it.



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Designing the Crane

by Vaughn Derderian

Towards the end of the *Gold* arc, things were really starting to heat up for the good guys in blue. *Tireless Assault* gave attack decks a new tool with which to beat your head in. *Daigotsu* was making it hard to get the Favor. *Ashura* were using *To Do What We Must* in a way that you could only dream of.

The bad news? Pretty much all of that stuff is still going to be around in *Diamond*.

The worse news? A lot of the tricks that Cranes have been using to try to hold off the oncoming hordes have vanished.

So, you're asking yourself... where's the upside? Why should I start playing these low Force, high Chi guys? Let's start at the beginning.

The Crane personality base in *Gold* consisted of two basic parts — *Doji Yasuyo* and *Doji Kurohito*. Almost without exception, those two personalities were in every Crane deck from the beginning of the arc until the end. Their unquestionable efficiency, combined with the miserable power level of the Crane boxable personalities, made them the backbone of Crane in *Gold*. For *Diamond*, we wanted to move Crane away from that, and towards a style of play that had fewer 3 Force beef guys just hanging around, waiting to crush stray provinces.

So, first thing, start with the boxables. Due to fear of the 4 gold/2 honor power combo that existed at the start of *Jade*, Crane had been given weak boxables to start out *Gold* with, and that largely dictated their course through the entire arc. If your early game personalities aren't good enough to stand up to an early assault, you skip right past them and find deck space for the big, beefy second turn personalities that can **really** blunt an early attack. Seeing as we wanted to get rid of those second turn beefcakes, that meant that

we had to give Crane a few personalities who were quality first turn purchases. So, whipping out our handy database of Cranes, we started to look at all the possible guys. Two Samurai leapt right out at us: *Doji Reju* and *Daidoji Karasu*. *Reju* gives you a fantastic early duel platform, and *Karasu* gives you a personality that stops just about any personality that's in print from attacking without a Follower. That pair makes for a great start. Toss in a *Soul of Doji Shizue/Doji Nagori* (now with the Courtier trait for extra spice), and you've got a boxable personality base that supports just about anything you want to do with Crane.

Next, let's take a look at the midgame personalities available. For the Ranged Attack midgame, you've got the *Soul of Daidoji Gudeta*, who's in the 2–3 holding range with 3 Personal Honor. For the Dueling midgame, you've got the *Soul of Kakita Kaiten*, quite possibly the best non-Unique duelist ever. And for additional Courtier support, look to the *Soul of Kakita Ichiro*, who provides not only a box + 3 3 Personal Honor personality, but a solid ability on top. Also available are *Soul of Doji Jotaro* and *Soul of Kakita Gosha*. Despite their somewhat difficult honor requirements, both personalities are Courtiers with attractive stats and interesting, combolicious abilities.

Finally, let's take a look at the guys who represent the top end of the personalities — the Uniques. Aside from the previously mentioned *Soul of Ichiro Exp*, who gives you a reusable Iaijutsu Challenge every turn, you've got a *Soul of Kakita Toshimoko Exp*. and the complete and total package, *Doji Kurohito Exp2*. All three of these personalities are worth inclusion in every Crane deck at the beginning of the arc, if not all the way through.

Now that we've gotten a good look at the personality suite available for your deckbuilding needs, what's going to be the watchword for Crane decks in

Diamond? Well, if you've caught the hidden theme among all the personalities listed up above, you'll know that the word for the day is attrition. Just about all of the Crane personalities fall into one of three camps: dueling, ranged attack, or Courtier. The fact that two of those themes deal directly with methods of attrition should toss out a good sized hint.

Your two Rings are Fire and Water, Fire supporting your dueling aspect, and Water giving you the ability to defensively deal with movement. The followers protect you against *Peasant Vengeance*, Ranged Attacks, and enable both your dueling and Ranged Attack themes. With *Kakita Ichiro*, you should be able to drop Fire from your hand as soon as you get it, and maintain card advantage while you keep the benefit of the Ring. *Ambush* punishes your opponent in situations where he cannot (or chooses not to) protect his bigger units from bowing due to battle, and just about all of the other actions are battle-related. Most of the games in *Diamond* should be won and lost on the field of battle, and you'll need to be prepared for that.

Playing Crane in *Diamond* is going to be a tough road. You'll be hard-pressed to maintain a steady amount of attrition and keep your opponent in check. At the end of the day, though, the chance for skill and knowledge to shine through is high. If you learn your deck, play the game to the best of your ability, and get just a little lucky, you can win victories that **mean** something. In *Diamond*, no one will ever be able to claim that a win with a Crane deck is meaningless, due only to superior cards and mindless play. Take the opportunity to prove (or improve) your skill, and you can win. With one pure strike, victory can be yours. **That's** the essence of Crane in *Diamond*.

Diamond Crane

Stronghold:

Kyuden Doji

Wind:

Voice of the Empire

Personalities:

3 Daidoji Akagi
1 Doji Kurohito Exp. 2
3 Doji Domotai
1 Fire Dragon
3 Doji Mai
1 Doji Mai Exp
3 Doji Masazumi
1 Kakita Korihime

Holdings:

3 Daidoji Merchants
1 Gifts and Favors
3 Hiruma Dojo
3 Marketplace
3 Sanctified Temple
3 Kobune Port
2 Fantastic Gardens

Regions:

1 700 Soldier Plain

Events:

1 Boastful Proclamation
1 Imperial Quest
1 Naga Storm Mirumoto Mountain
1 Wisdom Gained

Actions:

3 Ambush
3 Avoid Fate
3 Block Supply Lines
2 Come One At A Time
2 Contested Holding
1 Egg of P'an Ku
3 Iaijutsu Challenge
2 Slaughter the Scout
3 Tireless Assault
3 To Do What We Must

Followers:

3 Elite Spearmen
1 Empress's Guard
1 Kakita House Guard
3 Kenshinzen

Items:

1 Blade of Truths
1 Celestial Sword of the Crane
1 Chukandomo
1 Gansen of Water
1 Imperial Standard

Rings

1 Ring of Fire
1 Ring of Water

Diamond Dragon

Stronghold:

House of Tao

Wind:

Voice of the Empire

Personalities:

3 Mirumoto Gonkuro
3 Togashi Katsune
3 Togashi Jusai
2 Kitsuki Iwoko
3 Hitomi Daisetsu
3 Tamori Chieko
1 Togashi Satsu Exp
1 Kitsuki Kiyushichi

Holdings:

3 Gold Mine
3 Hiruma Dojo
3 Shinimaki Monastery
2 Shrine to Daikoku
2 Shrine to Fukurojin
3 Shrine of the Sun
1 Shrine to Ebisu
1 Gifts and Favors
1 Mystic

Events:

1 Doom of the Dark Lord
1 Wisdom Gained
1 Boundless Sight

Actions:

3 Wedge
3 Block Supply Lines
3 To Do What We Must
2 In Search Of the Future
3 Come One At a Time
3 Overwhelmed
3 Iaijutsu Challenge
2 Iaijutsu Lesson
1 The Egg of P'an Ku

Items:

1 Celestial Sword of the Dragon
1 The Imperial Standard
1 Mempo of the Void

Kihos:

3 Palm Strike
3 Flee the Darkness

Rings:

1 Ring of the Void
1 Ring of Fire
1 Ring of Earth
1 Ring of Water
1 Ring of Air

Spells:

3 Walking the Way

Strategy

Start with the Fire Ring versus military decks and Earth versus honor decks as those are generally the hardest ring to play versus those deck types. The Battle Actions are usually saved up for when you want to play Water (since 4 is a ton) or used for saving a province in the early game. You have to choose your battles carefully otherwise you'll end up with only 3 Rings in play. Often it's advantageous to wait till you've lost a province or two, to step in the way and defend.

Designing the Dragon

by Jared Devlin-Scherer

Throughout the history of *L5R* the Dragon clan has been a thorn in the side of the designers. The mysterious nature of the Dragon clan made it difficult to give them a distinct design focus, and thus Dragon has never been in what *L5R* players call the "top tier" of the tournament environment. In *Diamond* this has completely changed. Design felt the need to ensure that Dragon would have two well thought out clan focuses in order to provide them with real decktypes to compete in the tournament environment. After much debate design decided that the Dragon clan would be best off with the themes of card draw and rings (thus enlightenment).

In order to better pursue these design goals the Dragon strongholds were chosen accordingly. *Shiro Mirumoto* was chosen for the card draw theme for obvious reasons. Mirumoto will be a card drawing powerhouse in *Diamond* similar to the method it worked its magic in *Gold*. For the enlightenment theme it was decided that the *House of Tao* would become a Dragon aligned stronghold. Deciding to align the *House of Tao* to the Dragon clan was one of the more difficult decisions of the playtest process. With the rings changing completely and the introduction of the dark rings in the *Thousand Years of Darkness* Set (already diamond legal) ensuring a balance with the *House of Tao* became one of the priorities of the playtest process. In the end it was decided to keep the *House of Tao* in the environment and control the varying power levels of the new rings. For example, the *Ring of the Void* was toned down later in the playtesting process just so *House of Tao* would not outshine *Shiro Mirumoto*.

Dragon's personality base and fate support was chosen with both these themes in mind. Dragon's boxable personalities offer powerful monk support for their

House of Tao decks (*Maseru, Kochi*), while not leaving out personalities that add to the Mirumoto stronghold such as *Daini, Tsuge* or *Mitsu*. In addition players will notice the plethora of high force personalities that the Dragon clan has, *Togashi Mitsu*



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Togashi Katsune... etc. Design wanted to ensure that Dragon players could still play military/honor or switch decktypes in the *Diamond* environment. Cards, such as *Palm Strike* and *Aid of the Grand Master*, cards which played a starring role in the *Gold* environment for Dragon decks have all continued into *Diamond*. Dragon players will find themselves still able to build dueling decks and switch decks similar to their tournament *Gold* decks. In addition, Dragon players will now be able to build a multitude of new decktypes with the cards in the *Diamond* environment. I think one of the most difficult parts of *Diamond* for Dragon will be their deck design. Players may find it difficult to focus on one victory condition with so many available to them.

In the process of developing new themes for the Dragon clan, the Design team dropped support cards that didn't directly help either theme. Dragon players may notice the low number of tattoos in the *Diamond* base set, zero. It was decided to concentrate more on card support which was more in tune with their focus. They may come back in the future, but for now, they are taking a break. Instead, Design included multiple

powerful kihos (from *Gold* and *Open*) as part of the new focus on enlightenment and card drawing. Dragon players will find that the new kiho selection allows them to piece together a large amount of battle control for their fate decks, giving them the necessary tools to get in the thick of it.

Dragon players will find the *Diamond* environment able to fulfill their every desire. Their deck types will range so wildly that players across the table will often have trouble anticipating what's in the Dragon players hand. As the Dragon clan continues to develop in *diamond* their themes will grow in power exponentially. The Dragon clan is under the close watch of the design team and for good reason, Dragon players will finally be happy.

Designing the Lion

by Dan Tibbles

The mightiest army in Rokugan, and the most honorable samurai of the empire, the Lion clan reigned as the master of tactics and battle. The Lion are the prototypical underdogs at the start, but rise up to win the battle with actions and tactics. This is what Lion does, and at no time has this been better represented than at present.

Lion was the hardest clan to redesign for *Diamond*. There were several goals for *Diamond*, the overriding one was that each clan would have two distinct deck types worth playing. Lion have had only two successful deck types, small personality blitz and tactician. Tactician is fine, but another of the *Diamond* goals is to make less blitz decks, so the blitz deck type was out of the question. In the end, two different tactician decks were the result of playtesting and design.

Choosing two Lion strongholds for *Diamond* was impossible. The first stronghold gives +2F to an attacking Lion personality, and is only good for blitz. The second stronghold negates terrain, and has made terrains nearly unplayable for the last 5 years. The third stronghold was corrupt, and the fourth stronghold saw no play because it was not good at all. The fifth Lion stronghold, *Shiryo Matsu*, creates a type of blitz that is bad for *Diamond*. The most recent Lion stronghold, *Kyuden Ikoma*, seemed like the way for one of Lion's strongholds. The second, however, was tough to decide on. In the end, Lion was the only clan to get a completely new stronghold in *Diamond*.

Kyuden Ikoma will be the more traditional Lion deck, using tacticians to control the battles and win them. Most Lion players are familiar with this type of deck, as it has been the predominant deck in *Gold Edition* arc for Lion. This new stronghold, however, both introduces new concepts, and brings back old deck types. For the new, it takes the direction that

Lion's terrain mastery has had in the past and changes it into a beneficial ability, as opposed to a denial strategy. The old is taken from *Akodo Sensei*, which did basically the same thing. Tactician actions are complicated to design, because tacticians are usually better spent taking provinces and defeating armies with force bonuses then using actions that use their tactician trait, unless those actions are quite good.

Akodo Sensei, and now this stronghold, allow Lion players to use those tactician actions with their smaller personalities that are now useful mid and late game to support the rest of the army that they belong to.

Kenson Gakka creates a new deck for Lion in *Diamond*, a deck with inherent force, but also great ability to radically change battles with their versatile fate deck. This is an example of one such deck from early playtesting that proved to be exactly what Lion needed to have moving into this new story and game arc.



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Diamond Lion

Stronghold:

Kenson Gakka

Wind:

Right Hand of the Emperor

Personalities:

1 Akodo Mino
3 Matsu Aoiko
3 Matsu Mabuchi
1 Matsu Kenji
3 Akodo Shigetoshi
3 Matsu Masakado
3 Matsu Reishiko

Holdings:

3 Copper Mine
3 Dragon Dancers
2 Gifts and Favors
3 Ashigaru Fort
2 Shrine to Daikoku
2 Shrine to Benten
3 Noh Theatre Troupe

Regions:

2 Refuge of the Three Sisters

Events:

1 Birth of the Sword
1 Doom of the Dark Lord
1 The Shogun's Fealty

Actions:

1 Battlefield of Shallow Graves
3 Call to Arms
2 Come One At a Time
1 Diversionary Tactics
1 In Search of the Future
1 Luring Tactics
1 Nezumi Technique
1 Overwhelmed
1 Peasant Vengeance
3 Slaughter the Scout
3 Spearhead
3 Superior Strategist
1 Suspended Terrain
1 Test of Might
1 Three-Stone River
1 Twisted Forest
1 Wedge
1 Imperial Proclamation
1 Tireless Assault
1 Volcanic Fields

Followers:

1 Akodo House Guard
3 Omoidasu
3 Elite Spearmen
3 Veteran Samurai

Items:

1 Celestial Sword of the Lion

Diamond Mantis

Stronghold:

Castle of the Wasp

Wind:

Right Hand of the Emperor

Personalities:

3 Tsuruchi Nobumoto
3 Tsuruchi Sho
3 Tsuruchi Hiro
1 Tsuruchi Hiro Exp
3 Isahada
3 Yoritomo Hiroya
1 Tsuruchi Ichiro
1 Yoritomo Kumiko Exp

Holdings:

3 Daidoji Merchants
3 Kobune Port
3 Hiruma Dojo
2 MarketPlace
2 Shrine to Daikoku
2 Shrine to Fukurojin
1 Shrine to Ebisu
1 Gifts and Favors
1 Mystic

Events:

1 Boundless Sight
1 Imperial Ambassadorship
1 Are You With Me
1 Restoring the Doji Treasury

Actions:

3 Tsuruchi Technique
3 Overwhelmed
3 Call to Arms
3 Tireless Assault
3 Peasant Vengeance
3 Three Stone River
2 Explosives
1 Egg of P'an Ku

Followers:

3 Ashigaru Fishermen
3 Mantis Raiders
2 Sailors for Hire
3 Tsuruchi Hunters
3 Tsuruchi's Legion
1 Yoritomo House Guard

Items:

1 Celestial Sword of the Mantis
3 The Deathless

Rings:

1 Ring of Water

Strategy

This is a basic version of what will become the standard *Castle of the Wasp* removal deck. Attack, removal all defenders and destruction of the province. *Explosives* are there to stop their *Call to Arms* once per game, many military decks may end up playing holding control in order to stop cards such as *Call*. The general idea is come out with a midgame army full of ranged attacks and attack repeatedly until they are forced to defend.

Designing the Mantis

by Jared Devlin-Scherer

The Mantis clan is definitely going to be the powerhouse of *Diamond*, and I'm not just saying that to make them feel better for being relegated to the bottom 2nd tier throughout the majority of the game. I mean there have been successful Mantis archetypes; METH, Mantis corrupted control, and even honorable military control has made an impact on the tournament scene. Unfortunately the Mantis have never been the clan to fear. The design team decided to take a completely different approach to balancing the Mantis clan this time around. We took the best of the Mantis and threw it all into *Diamond*, then picked away the pieces that were obviously too good.

Originally Mantis had the most incredible gold scheme, ranged attacks unparalleled in the history of the game, and more boxable personalities than any other clan. Now with a toning down in the gold scheme and the boxable personalities brought into check, Mantis still remains strong. In five words here's why, ranged attacks are finally amazing. In the *Diamond* design process the two themes chosen for the main Mantis archetypes; powerful ranged attacks and naval military.

The *Castle of the Wasp* was the obvious choice to support the ranged attack theme in *Diamond Edition*. The ability to create ranged attacks that don't require bowing is amazing in an environment where ending the battle is replaced with removing all opposing units. Expect to see tournament decks out of this stronghold take the scene by storm upon *Diamond's* release. *Kyuden Gotei* will be more of a finesse stronghold for the Mantis clan. Naval battle control is a tricky task. But with the improved gold scheme from the port clause you'll find Mantis decks with more of a control feel using this stronghold. Unbowable ranged attacks may be strong, but better gold scheme and

two battle actions before their first action will become much stronger as the expansions set in. Mantis players will find decks off both strongholds tournament viable in the *Diamond* environment.

The Mantis personality base was chosen with care. Initially it contained powerhouses such as *Yoritomo Chujitsu*, but for obvious reasons it was toned down to fall more in line with the Mantis clan foci. Players will notice *Nobumoto* has returned with the naval trait now printed on his card. *Gotei* and *Castle* players will find his ability to remove defenders with little or no cost extremely strong in the environment. Many Mantis decks will contain a splatter of ranged attack personalities such as *Yoritomo Nobumoto*, *Tsuruchi Hiro* and *Tsuruchi Sho* (*Heaven and Earth*) while using the available

On the fate side, *Tsuruchi Technique* is still in the environment while most of the other ranged attack support such as *The Arrow Knows the Way* has been removed. Mantis players should not fear, ranged attack followers will be stronger than ever, and the lack of definite action support (outside of *Tsuruchi Technique*) is due to the fact that Mantis doesn't need it.

Mantis players should take a second to sigh at what could have been. Early versions of the *Diamond* list included such gems as *Shipyard*, *Blackened Sky*, *Arrow Knows the Way*, and *Chujitsu*. The balance level for Mantis was argued on deep into the playtesting process. Many of the playtest teams still feel Mantis is too strong while others see them as just right, the standard for the top tier of the environment in *Diamond*. After playing plenty of games against Mantis decks, the *Diamond* Mantis design makes the



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powerful midgame beef personalities to back up their initial base such as *Yoritomo Yukue*, *Tsurayuki* and of course *Kumiko*. Its worth noting that *Hyobe* has returned and his ability will be strong in an environment with no *Rallying Cry*. Expect to see his face in every Mantis deck, because it's worth bowing a port or two to rally key units.

opponent think about his next move. Opponents are forced to defend with multiple units to have any hope of playing any battle actions. Mantis are the new Sneak/Deadly.

Designing the Phoenix

by Bryan Reese

The Phoenix have long been a clan in reverse from the rest of the Empire. Their shugenja have been the main focus, supported by their samurai. But since *Imperial Edition*, this has had little success. Most of the time the successful decks have had very minimal samurai included in their design. This is one of the problems we set out to deal with in *Diamond Edition*.

It was decided early on when setting up the base set for *Diamond* that we were going to try and bring back the Samurai-based deck with Shugenja support as one of two themes for the Phoenix clan. This is to be the military side of the clan. A Shugenja-based deck using spells to defend itself as a means of achieving an honor victory, is the other Phoenix theme. So with our two themes in mind, we decided that *Morning Glory Castle* and *Kyuden Agasha*, respectively, would work best for the two different deck types.

With its solid stats, *Morning Glory Castle* is a flexible stronghold. It goes first, has a good gold base, and a good province strength to repel early attacks. The ability allows for key personalities to return when killed. Most importantly, this stronghold is solid for both samurai and shugenja. Its ability in no way lends itself to be used by shugenjas over samurais and vice versa.

But a stronghold alone will not make a deck viable, it also needs a good personality base for support. For this we looked through the history of *L5R* to find some good personalities. The first personality we came to was *Shiba Tetsu*. With an amazing ability that requires shugenja for success and three personal honor, this "boxable" personality fit the glove perfectly. We would also need strong Shugenja that have useful battle abilities. This brought us to *Isawa Ihara*. A great personality for a military deck that is slightly too

expensive. A quick change in stats and suddenly *Isawa Ihara* is perfect. This was still not enough, however. We had to have a way to protect these Shugenja in battle. This left us with one choice, *Shiba Raigen*. *Raigen* was a little too cheap, so we fixed this problem and suddenly, we had a good personality base from which to start the deck.

When it came time to decide which stronghold to use for the honor side of the clan, the obvious choice was *Kyuden Agasha*. The cost reduction on spells is a very strong and useable ability, but more importantly is the other ability on *Kyuden Agasha*. The ability to play spells as an Open action gives the flexibility of using your defensive spells the turn you bring a personality into play. Also, it allows you to play that key spell you draw at the end of your turn. This is a crucial ability if your main defense is going to be spells.

Again, we needed a good personality base for this deck. Looking through the history of Phoenix personalities, we found that many Shugenja had great abilities, but were too expensive. One of these was *Asako Oyo*. A great ability to use in a spell-based deck but needed to be cheaper in order to see play. So we made this adjustment and had a great start for this personality base. *Isawa Ihara* also fits well with this deck, since you will be using plenty of battle actions with all of your spells. Even with these two, we still needed some personalities which allowed card cycling, a standard ability for all Phoenix decks. For this, we used *Shiba Ningen* and his Experienced versions, as well as *Naka Kuro Exp. 2*.

We now have a solid base for two completely different themes in Phoenix. This is a concept we had been trying to achieve for years and with *Diamond Edition*, we are making it happen.



Diamond Phoenix

Stronghold:
Morning Glory Castle

Wind:
Voice of the Empire

Personalities:
3 Agasha Seruma (Soul of Ningen)
3 Shiba Danjuro (Soul of Raigen)
3 Shiba Emiri
3 Shiba Tsukimi (Soul of Tetsu)
3 Isawa Ihara
1 Shiba Mirabu exp. 2
1 Shiba Ningen exp.
1 Isawa Fosuta
1 Shiba Yoma
1 Isawa Washichi (Soul of Naka Kuro exp. 2)

Holdings:
3 Silver Mine
3 Hiruma Dojo
3 Shrine of the Moon
2 Shrine to Daikoku
1 Shrine to Fukurokujin
1 Shrine to Bishamon
1 Shrine to Ebisu
1 Shrine to Benten
1 Shrine to Jurojin
1 Shrine to Hotei
1 Gifts and Favors
1 Military Advisor

Events:
1 Boundless Sight
1 Occult Murders

Actions:
3 Stay Your Blade
3 Overwhelmed
3 Rend the Soul
3 Tireless Assault
3 To Do What we Must
3 Rage
3 Test of Might
3 Sound Strategy
1 The Egg of Pan Ku

Kihos:
3 Feeding on Flesh
3 Flee the Darkness
3 Aid of the Fortunes

Followers:
1 Isawa House Guard

Items:
1 Celestial Sword of the Phoenix Clan

Rings:
1 Ring of Water

Spells:
3 Earthquake

Diamond Ratling

Stronghold:
Tch'tch Warrens

Wind:
Right Hand of
the Emperor

Personalities:
3 Ik'krt
3 Pep'trcek
3 Ratling Conjurer
3 Rik'tik'tickek
3 T'k
3 Yoee'trr
3 Ep'kee
1 Zin'tch
1 Kan'ok'ticheck Exp

Holdings:
3 Treasure Hoard
3 Eye of the Needle
2 Gifts and Favors
2 Shrine to Daikoku
2 Shrine to Fukurojin

Events:
1 New Emerald Champion
1 Doom of the Dark Lord
1 Boundless Sight

Regions:
2 Ratling Village

Actions:
3 Ambush
2 Overwhelmed
3 Return for Training
2 Refugees
3 Tireless Assault
3 Peasant Vengeance
3 Tsuruchi Technique
2 Nezumi Technique
2 Shosuro Technique
2 Suspended Terrain
2 Three Stone River
2 Sneak Attack

Followers:
3 Chitatchikkan
3 Ratling Scroungers
1 Tattered Ear Watcher

Items:
1 Armor of Earth
1 Bone of the
Tattered Ear Tribe

Rings:
1 Ring of Water
1 Ring of Earth

Strategy

This is mostly a battle control deck. The key to this deck is to get some force out on the board and use the action cards to win some key battles in the early game. If you let the game go too long then you'll end up in a situation where your opponent is outforcing you by too much for you to get into battle with them.

Designing the Ratling

by Jared Devlin-Scherer

Finally! Ratling players, you will have the support you deserve. Unlike the Gold arc where the design team kept Ratling to one or two personalities per expansion the *Diamond* base set gives Ratling a full complement of personalities just like everyone else. In *Gold* Ratling decks are a one-trick horse, based around the Great White Rat, *Kan'ok'ticheck*. Often Rat players are found digging through their Dynasty deck hoping to see a White Rat as soon as possible. Although the White Rat was the strongest of the Ratling's *Gold* personalities, *Diamond* has brought an entirely new concept to the Ratling personality base, cheap boxable force. Instead of bringing cards into play for free Rat players will now have cheaper personalities overall than any other faction. Ratling players will find they have Fate support just like every other faction, with a

powerful follower base, and even their own unique clan sword and house guard. In *Diamond*, Ratling is just like any other great clan, they will be a force to be reckoned with coming right out of the gates.

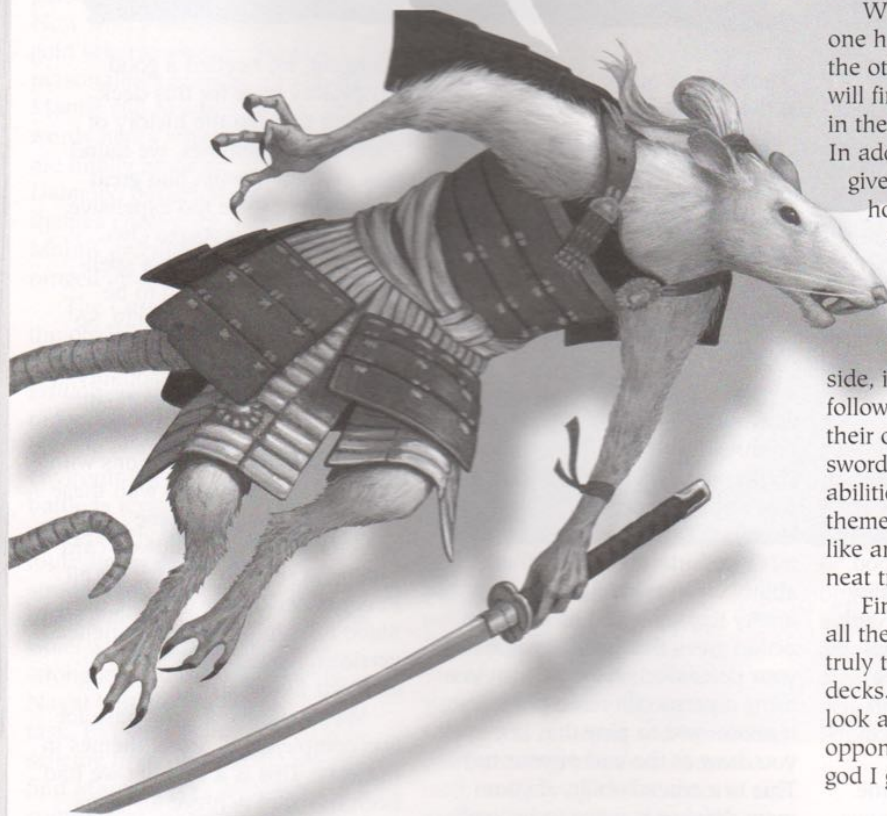
The two *Diamond* design themes for Ratling are stealing opponents' cards and follower-based battle control. Out of their new stronghold in *Winds of Change* (the expansion released before *Diamond*) Ratling players can now steal their opponents Fate cards (although not followers). This ability creates an entirely new facet of the game for Ratling players and their opponents. Often players will find it difficult to decide whether or not to play an action based on the fact that their Ratling opponent will be able to use it against them on the next turn. Ratling players will continue to receive support cards like this stronghold in the coming expansions, expect to see a few support cards in each expansion.

Out of this stronghold, Ratling decks will be filled with multiple battle action cards, using their own cards in addition to their opponents to win key battles turning the tide of the game.

The second stronghold Ratling players receive in *Diamond* is their trusty old Warrens stronghold. Rat players will find even without the White Rat around that they still have the speed that they need to overcome players with more provinces than them thanks to their 8 boxable personalities instead of the normal 3. In the Warren's stronghold rat players will find all their old tricks. The ability to use the powerful *Return for Training* without side effect, the cheaper follower base, and the ability to take quick provinces despite initially being down on production. The Ratling follower base in *Diamond* is powerful and brings back some of the Rat players' favorites such as *Chitatchikkan*. With this powerful base cheapened by the Warren's ability Rat players will be able to create a pseudo-blitz deck in an environment where blitz decks don't exist.

With two distinct decktypes, one having a control-like feel and the other a blitz feel, Rat players will find they have many options in the *Diamond* environment. In addition design has finally given them their own clan holding and when used in conjunction with *Eye of the Needle* and *Gifts and Favors*, Rat players finally have a truly workable gold scheme. On the Fate-side, in addition to their powerful follower support, Rat players have their own house guard and special sword both of which have useful abilities when used with their new theme of stealing. Ratlings, just like any other clan, gets all the neat tricks.

Finally, Rat players, you have all the cards you need to build truly tournament competitive decks. No longer do you have to look across the table at a smirking opponent who is thinking, "Thank god I get to play Rat this round."



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Designing the Scorpion

by Scott Hadsall

The Scorpion are due for a change. That was the design motto used when designing the Scorpion Clan for *Diamond Edition*. The clan had been experiencing the Shadowlands syndrome, where there was only one competitive deck, and had only been one competitive deck for the entire story arc. To add insult to injury, dishonor as a means to victory had all but been eliminated from the Scorpion's repertoire of deck types. The removal of cheap shugenja with no honor requirements and the change to *The Wind's Truth* forced Scorpion players into military decks, and that is where they stayed.

Two distinct deck types was the goal with every clan in *Diamond*, and the Scorpion were no exception to that rule. Courtiers were becoming more powerful with cards in *Winds of Change*, and the Scorpion as one of the more powerful Courtier clans in the Empire were going to be well represented in the card game. Keeping this in mind, and the fact that we wanted the Scorpion to have a more control-oriented deck, we decided to build the Scorpion personality base around control and military.

Keeping a military deck for the Scorpion was not a problem. We wanted to keep the *Yogo Towers* as the military deck, because that would give the players something for their personalities to do besides simply force. The Scorpion needed tricks in battle to keep their hopes for victory alive, and the *Yogo Towers* does that best. The ability was too good however, otherwise, why wouldn't players simply use the control-personalities in the *Yogo Towers* stronghold and play that way? The ability was then changed, to only let your samurai bow the opposing personalities or followers, making things safe for future design and the current format.



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The *Shadowed Tower* of the *Shosuro*, a stronghold that had potential but couldn't function as a consistent deck in the *Gold* environment was something that would certainly be strong in the *Diamond* one. It would add quite a bit to the strength of the courtier aspect of the Scorpion in *Diamond* complementing the control aspect we had already decided upon as one of their main themes.

Samurai were easy to come up with. The Scorpion had a wealth of strong samurai personalities that we could draw from and add to the already quite good mix of *Diamond* legal samurai giving them an apt attack deck. The control-based personalities were good as well, but we kind of had a problem after we finished with the personality base. Where are the courtiers?

The thing is, in giving the Scorpion strong control-personalities, we neglected giving them any strong courtiers. Truth be told, strong courtiers are not abundant, even for a clan who has

a strong base in politics like the Scorpion. Why not make some of the control-personalities into courtiers?

The courtier trait was added to *Yogo Asami*, a personality that no one thought would make it into *Diamond*, and personalities like *Shosuro Higatsuku*, *Soshi Angai* and *Bayushi Kaukatsu* were all added in to make readily available in-clan courtiers should a player want them.

Ultimately, the Scorpion posed interesting issues at the beginning of design, but were diverse enough in their pre-*Gold* edition personalities that we were able to easily give them two defining strongholds and sets of personalities to complement both of their ideological themes. The courtier-based control deck and military deck are both very playable decks that have favorable matchups against a great deal of the field. The Scorpion can rest assured that both styles of play will be well represented in the *Diamond Edition* Format.

Diamond Scorpion

Stronghold:

The Yogo Towers

Personalities:

3 Shosuro Maru
3 Shosuro Toson
3 Bayushi Tai
1 Bayushi Tai Exp
3 Bayushi Churai
3 Bayushi Shunko
1 Bayushi Sunetra Exp

Holdings:

1 Gifts and Favors
2 Shrine to Daikoku
1 Shrine to Fukurokujin
3 Geisha House
3 Hiruma Dojo
3 House of the Red Lotus
1 Tange's Lies
1 Scorpion Distracter
3 Ashigaru Fort

Regions:

1 Tidal Land Bridge

Events:

1 Boundless Sight
1 Restoring the Dojo
Treasury
1 Doom of the Dark Lord
1 In Time of War

Actions:

3 Tireless Assault
2 Test of Courage
3 Dying Effort
3 Ambush
2 Wedge
3 Call to Arms
3 Face of Ninube
3 Refugees
2 Geisha Assassin
3 Tsuruchi Technique
3 Kolat Assassin
3 Shosuro Technique
1 Egg of P'an Ku

Followers:

3 Traveling Ronin
1 Legion of 2000
1 Shosuro House Guard

Items:

1 Celestial Sword
of the Scorpion

Strategy

Use personality destruction to eliminate problematic defenders and send the rest in for the kill. The Legion of 2000 is there for the solid five force and to fetch your House Guard or Ronin, whichever you need at the time. There is quite a bit of personality destruction in the fate, with 11 cards able to kill personalities. The bowing ability and *Yogo Asami* should take care of the rest.

Diamond Shadowlands

Stronghold:

The Spawning Grounds

Wind:

Black Heart of the Empire

Personalities:

1 Iuchiban
1 The Maw
3 Ashura
3 Fushiki no Oni
3 Voitagi
1 Voitagi Exp
1 Omoni Exp
3 Gekido no Oni
1 Kyofu

Holdings:

3 Obsidian Mine
3 Corrupted Dojo
1 Shadowlands Bastion
1 Gifts and Favors
2 Shrine to Daikoku
1 Shrine to Fukurokujin
3 Private Dojo
2 Ashigaru Fort
1 Oblivion's Gate

Events:

1 Boundless Sight
1 Heavy Shadow of Fear
1 Doom of the Dark Lord
1 In Time of War

Regions:

1 Plains of Otosan Uchi
1 Ruins of Otosan Uchi

Actions:

3 Ambush
3 Kolat Assassin
1 Yakamo's Claw
3 Tireless Assault
3 Call to Arms
1 The Egg of Pan Ku
3 Face of Ninube
3 The Face of Fear
3 Feign Death
3 For the Empire
3 Wedge
3 Uncertainty
3 Sneak Attack
3 To Do What We Must

Items:

1 Porcelain Mask of Fu Leng Exp

Followers:

1 Ogre Elite

Strategy

This is the standard Diamond Shadowlands Oni attack deck. The light personality destruction helps to compensate for the fact that you go second and your personalities have a higher gold cost than most of the other clans. This deck uses a good selection of strong battle actions along with personality elimination to create strategic advantages.

Designing the Shadowlands

by Tyler Lucas

Since the beginning of the game, the Shadowlands have been Rokugan's greatest enemy. The Shadowlands traditionally wreak havoc trying to destroy the Empire. In card terms, they are exactly as the story portrays them. Quick and hard to deal with. Shadowlands decks in the *Gold* arc strayed little from one another. There were two separate decks, Oni Control and Goblin Blitz. However, most decks were a hybrid of the two. This is not something we were looking for in *Diamond*.

In *Diamond*, we wanted all clans to have two separate themes off of which they could build decks. When we thought about Shadowlands, we came to an agreement easily. Big Oni Attack and Bloodspeaker Control is what we wanted to see in *Diamond*.

The biggest problem we had with Shadowlands in general was their gold structure. *1,000 Years of Darkness* helped us out with *Obsidian Mines*, and in *Winds of Change* we put in two new holdings that would tremendously complement Shadowlands gold structure. These changes to the traditional gold structure helped the transition from the Shadowlands you know, with all the free gold-producing holdings, to the Shadowlands of *Diamond Edition*, where every holding has a cost.

The second problem that we came to is the same one that we came to with all the clans. Why wouldn't someone just use the best personalities and cards from both themes? The solution was simple. We already had two very different boxes, *Temple of the Ninth Kami* and *Spawning Grounds*. All we had to do was come up with different personality bases that would complement each box.

The Spawning Ground was designated to be the Shadowlands attack deck. The Oni military deck was the easiest to construct. We



brought back favorites from the gold arc like *Fushiki* and *Kyoso no Oni*, and older personalities like *Gekido no Oni*. All of the personalities work with *The Spawning Ground* and fit well with the gold structure.

The Temple of the Ninth Kami had the difficult role of filling in as the Bloodspeaker control stronghold. No one would run *The Spawning Ground* as none of the Bloodspeaker personalities benefited from the strongholds single ability bonus. Where the Oni, Troll, and Ogres get a bonus, the *Temple of the Ninth Kami* would have a different strength, its gold structure.

Being the only stronghold in *Diamond* that produces four gold for Shadowlands cards has its advantages. In *Winds of Change* the gold structure for the Shadowlands was strengthened through the inclusion of a quasi-clan holding and a holding that produces three gold at a four gold cost, both with hefty honor losses. Combined with *Obsidian Mines*, the *Shadowlands Bastion* and *Shrine to Daikoku*, *The Temple of the Ninth Kami* has the dubious distinction of having the best gold scheme in the *Diamond* format, a title that, in the *Gold Arc*, had belonged to the Crane.

So what are Bloodspeakers going to buy with all that gold? Bloodspeaker personalities aren't the cheapest. *Asako Kinyue*, *Mohai* and *Kuni Yori Exp. 3* all in the eight gold cost or more range, and let's not forget *Iuchiban*.

Kitsu Gongson and *Goblin Wizard* are cheap shugenja to add to the deck and help smooth out the expensive personality base. What does this deck have over *The Spawning Ground*? All of those personalities have one important trait that no Ogre, Oni or Troll has, shugenja. It allows Bloodspeaker players access to a whole new set of cards that Shadowlands players have been slow to use in the past.

Overall, the Shadowlands are still going to be formidable in *Diamond*, even considering they no longer have the free resources from earlier story arcs and have no chance at going first. For once, I feel that Shadowlands players will finally have a choice in deck style as opposed to being forced to play the same deck archetype out of the same stronghold.

Designing the Unicorn

by Bryan Reese

Throughout the history of *Legend of the Five Rings*, the Unicorn clan stood out from the rest of the empire. Though never an incredibly strong clan, the Unicorn is always that clan which you do not wish to face in a tournament. They are the clan which bends the rules, holding a military superiority unrivaled by any other clan. They have always had the coolest story as well and are my personal favorite. However, in an effort to keep them from running rampant over the tournament scene, the Unicorn has always been over-corrected for their strengths. This has kept the Unicorn from being a powerhouse throughout most of their history. This is what we set out to fix in *Diamond Edition*.

When looking at the different strongholds to choose from for *Diamond Edition*, we ran into a conundrum. We simply could not find two strongholds that we could play in the *Diamond* environment. *Shiro Shinjo* was an acceptable stronghold but what would work for the second stronghold that would not be too powerful. We came up with the idea that perhaps if we used *The Northern Provinces of the Moto* but changed the province strength to match that of *Shiro Shinjo*, it would be a balanced stronghold. This gave us our two themes; *Shiro Shinjo* was to be the more flexible deck, allowing you to switch to an honor victory during any given game. The Moto are to be the military theme of the clan, using followers and movement to their advantage.

Now we had to decide on a set of personalities for our two themes that would allow for a balanced environment. For both sides of the clan, we needed to reach back on some old favorites to give them a boost in order to overcome their low starting honor. For this we found *Shinjo Shirasu*, a great personality you can afford turn one. For the bruiser, we found that

Moto Zhijuan would work great if only she cost a little less. So we fixed this oversight and she made the cut. From the more recent sets, we found a great personality in *Shinjo Noriyori*. With the built in followers, *Noriyori* is a great addition to the follower based military deck. *Moto Kadu-Kai* would also be a great personality except that his honor requirement is a little too high since the *Utaku Palaces* is no longer a stronghold. We changed this and almost had a complete set. Now we could not make a Unicorn base set without *Moto Chagatai*, he has become a standard personality in most Unicorn decks. So of course we left him in the set. We still needed one more good personality to

round out the two decks. This left us with one choice. *Utaku Tetsuko* needed to come back and show these new decks how the Unicorn used to get it done.

We thought she might be a little too powerful as she was printed, so we altered her just slightly and we found ourselves with a great personality base for Unicorn.

To finish off the personality bases of both decks, we used a couple of good, unique personalities. *Shinjo Yasamura*, always a fan favorite and solid personality, works well for both deck types. *Utaku Kamoko Exp.* is a great personality for any follower-based deck. With these last two additions, we have created a set of Unicorns that will be tournament competitive while not compromising Unicorn's unique place within the larger design of *Legend of the Five Rings*.



Diamond Unicorn

Stronghold:

Northern Provinces of the Moto

Wind:

Right Hand of the Emperor

Personalities:

- 3 Moto Chagatai
- 3 Shinjo Yushiro (Soul of Shirasu)
- 3 Utaka Tama (Soul of Tetsuko)
- 3 Iuchi Najato (Soul of Katta)
- 3 Moto Latomu
- 1 Shinjo SHono Exp. 2
- 1 Shinjo Xushen Exp.
- 1 Utaku Etsumi (Soul of Kamoko Exp.)
- 1 Shinjo Nakaga (Soul of Yasamura Exp.)

Holdings:

- 3 Hiruma Dojo
- 3 Akodo's Grave
- 3 Stables
- 3 Silk Works
- 1 Shrine to Ebisu
- 1 Shrine to Hotel
- 2 Shrine to Daikoku
- 1 Gifts and Favors
- 1 The Shogun's Barracks
- 1 Military Advisor

Regions:

- 1 Shinsei's Last Hope
- 1 Toturi's Grave

Actions:

- 3 Kamoko's Charge
- 3 Tireless Assault
- 3 Refugees
- 3 Retribution
- 3 Peasant Vengeance
- 3 Spearhead
- 1 The Egg of P'an Ku

Followers:

- 3 Light Mounted Infantry
- 3 White Guard
- 3 Heavy Mounted Infantry
- 3 Outrider
- 3 Traveling Ronin
- 1 Ox House Guard

Items:

- 3 Daikyu
- 1 Chukandomo
- 1 Celestial Sword of the Unicorn

Strategy

This deck is pretty simple with a limited amount of battle actions. The idea is simply to attach followers and use your cavalry advantage to take your opponents provinces out one by one. In an environment with no Rallying Cry, Cavalry is a huge advantage and this deck does everything it can to take advantage of this.

Winds of Change Rare Cards: 20 Koku Each

KOKU PREEMPTION

Commanding Favor

This card remains in play in your home. While it is in play, you may discard it to pay a cost of using or discarding the Imperial Favor.

"The Shogun commands your presence, Honma!" the Lion said. Lord Kameki has word of your family's unique talents.

Cost: 7, 2

Yasuki Namika

Cash Clan Samurai • Courteous • Experienced • Unique

Political Reaction: Once per turn, whenever a Personality alter for the Shogun is challenged to a Cash Clan Personality with less Chi than the challenger.

Cost: 3, 2

Doji Tanitsu

Cash Clan Samurai • Courteous • Experienced • Unique

When Tanitsu enters play or is overplayed, you may select a Wind you do not currently control from outside the game and bring it into play. Remove the Wind from the game if Tanitsu leaves play.

"Watch out for that one. Whatever takes the throne, he shall stand at our side!" - Honma Home

Cost: 10, 6, 3

Kitsuki Kiyushichi

Dragon Clan Justice • Samurai • Double Chi • Unique

Kiyushichi costs 1 less Gold if your Wind is Tensai's Storm.

Political Reaction: How Kiyushichi when a Personality enters a challenge from one of your other Dragon Clan Personalities to cause that Personality to accept the challenge instead.

"Sensei, like the Wind, will not be defied."

Cost: 9, 11, 3

Akodo Tadenori

Lion Clan Campaigner • Samurai • Tactician • Experienced • Unique

Tadenori costs 1 less Gold if your Wind is Akodo's Kanata.

Tactical Battle: Before the Force of an opposing Personality or Follower is its personal Force.

"Come, my friends. I still sleep but have I not?"

Cost: 5, 7, 3

Isawa Fosuta

Phoenix Clan Impetuous • Shogun's • Unique

Once: How Fosuta enters another player's action phase to target one of that player's Personalities and a Limited or Open action on that Personality. That player cannot use the action of his or her next chance to act if the action is legal.

"Sensei is impetuous!" - Honma Home

Cost: 6, 7, 2

Bayushi Kwanchai

Scorpion Clan Martyr • Experienced • Unique

Whenever Bayushi Kwanchai leaves one of your hands or an unowned Scorpion Clan Personality dies during battle or dies in another way, you may discard a limited destiny Kwanchai to put him on top of your Dynasty deck (your choice).

"A true measure of the Dark Lord's control die!"

Cost: 1, 5, 1

Settozai

Unaligned Order of Lancers • Unaligned • Century • Unique • Shogun's • Loyalty 3 Honor

Reaction: Once per turn, before all effects of a Battle occur by the attacker if the Defender has not yet taken a Battle or Open action, or passed during the current battle, Reaction: Exchange one of your Unaligned Personalities to produce 2 Gold and lose 2 Honor. This ability may be used once per turn by each player, and while Settozai is bonded.

Cost: 9, 0

Miya Shoin

Unaligned Imperial Herald • Courteous • Unique

While you control Shoin, other players may not lobby and may, as a Political Limited action, pay 8 Gold to take permanent control of Shoin.

"With Shogun, Kameki, and Daido, he has swayed the court. It is a fortunate destiny who draws his force, and a fool who opposes him." - Honma Home

Cost: 2, 6, 3

Shinjo Yasaka

Unicorn Clan Noble • Loyal • Experienced • Unique

Reduce the strength of all support stacks targeting cards in Shogun's empty 10, or the 10 of Shogun assigned during Infantry Movement.

"Battle has been a tragedy to them."

Cost: 4, 8, 5

Ichido no Shiryo

Cash Clan Noble • Unique

After this card enters play, you may place a 10 Follower token on a maximum of your bonded and unowned Cash Clan Personalities up to this Personality's Honor plus 10.

"The lords of the mountains will not be able to reach their borders if a battle!"

Cost: 1, 0

Yasu no Shiryo

Phoenix Clan Ancestor • Unique

Political Reaction: How this Personality after one of your non-Shogun's Loyalty Personalities dies to gain 2 Honor.

"Yasu believed that a powerful role mine would mean the Phoenix is granted. Look upon your clan and our connection... you are wrong!"

Cost: 2, 0

Ox House Guard

Unique • Cavalry

Ox House Guard gains +2F while defending.

"We are fortunate to have such wonderful allies!" - Shibu Ningen said to a thoughtful voice.

"Did Master I wish to meet him, Sensei?"

Cost: 1, 4

Kitsune House Guard

Unique

This Personality may use Shoin as if he or she were a Shogun.

"Though the Shogun said a weak person was needed, they understood both things. Such wisdom is rare indeed!" - Honma Home

Cost: 1, 3

Monkey House Guard

Unique • Imperial Magistrate

This Personality has +1 Personal Honor.

Political Limited: How Monkey House Guard to return a Dishonored Personality to honor.

"How were we helped by Shoin? It remains to be seen whether they will enjoy his successor's favor!"

Cost: 1, 3

Suzume House Guard

Unique

After Suzume House Guard enters play, how this Personality and gain 2 Honor.

"As we understand why Shoin did what he did."

"Night and day is a beautiful voice."

"Ah, 'Daido said. 'With your aid we might undo it."

Cost: 1, 3

Dark Soul Mask

Unique

This unit does not add its total Force to its army.

Battle: How Dark Soul Mask and this Personality to permanently move the Mask onto an opposing Personality.

"Some questions are best answered!" - Eitai Eitai

Cost: 0, 6

Writ of Justice

Will only attach to a Cavalry. When it enters play, put three tokens on that Cavalry equal to the Cavalry's Personal Honor.

Political Limited: How this Personality and remove three Honor tokens to have a Dishonored Personality.

Political Limited: How this Personality and remove six Honor tokens to destroy a Dishonored Personality.

Cost: 0, 2

Banner of Heroes

Unique

Will only attach to a Samurai.

Give +1F to each Follower in the army.

"Shogun and Phoenix begin this war."

"Honorable began as he moved before Eitai."

"Did Shogun and Phoenix shall and it."

"Honoring himself, granted by his side."

Cost: 0, 8

Yoritomo Manobu

Mantis Clan Samurai

Open: How Manobu to straighten a Naval card.

"Ready yourselves, lords!" Manobu roared.

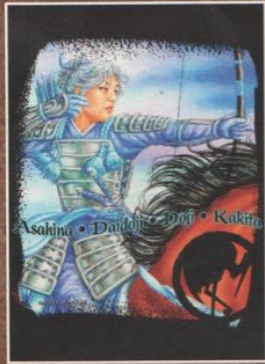
"Call me, and you will not arrive to report your submission to the Daughter of Honma!"

Cost: 3, 8, 2

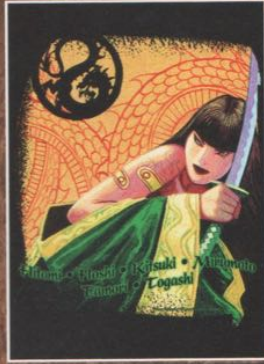
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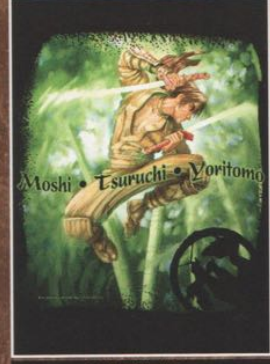
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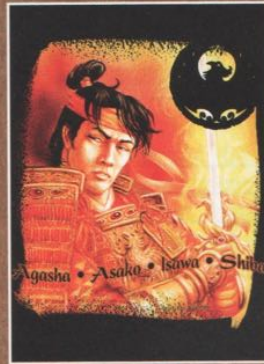
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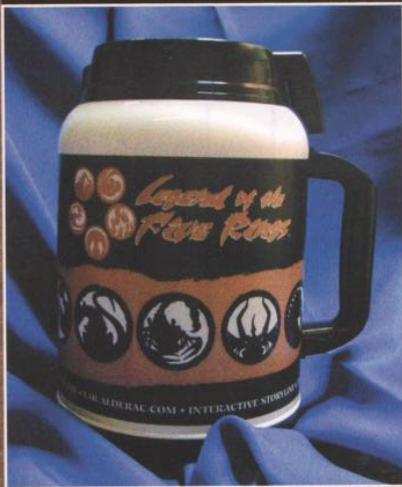


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DIAMOND STRATEGY

You've heard the pronouncements about the sky falling. Maybe you've heard prophecies that this is the best thing that's ever happened to the game. Or you're just starting up, and all of this is brand-new to you. Whatever the case, there is one important consideration that you will eventually be considering about *Diamond Edition*: How do I win this game? The answer to this question hasn't technically changed since the game was first released. With a new edition, at least with this particular one, come brave new paradigms. Consider this a brief primer on winning strategies for *Diamond*, as opposed to specific in-depth analysis.

No free Gold?

We're going to go ahead and start with a facet of *Diamond Edition* that you've probably heard something about, and probably even have an opinion concerning. There are no longer truly free resources available in *Diamond Edition*. Not even *Small Farm*. What does this mean for somebody who wants to win games? It means you're going to have to learn (or possibly re-learn) how to buy things. It truly isn't as simple as it sounds. A good strategy is to take a hard look at everything in your Dynasty deck that costs money. Categorize from most expensive to least. Now look at how you can afford each card or, more specifically, what the smallest combination of holdings

you could bow to pay for it would be. You should be looking at a layout that is a rough pyramid in shape. Most winning decks in Gold do this already, so it may be an old routine for you. But if you're an older player who hasn't logged much time since Open, where free Holdings and so-called "boxable" Personalities were more or less the norm, or if you're a new player, remember that pyramid. Your most expensive Personality (and it should almost definitely only be one) will be at the top. Then you'll have two or three (ideally) Personalities that cost about four Gold less, then six or so that cost about four less than them, and so forth. In the same fashion, lay out your Holdings that produce Gold, separately from the main "pyramid", and see how they buy each other. Most, if not all, of your Holdings should have a cost equal to your Stronghold's production. To put it another way, the most expensive Holdings should be the least numerous by far. This "pyramid" was an important concept in Gold Edition, but now that you have to pay for all of your Holdings, it's absolutely vital in *Diamond Edition* strategy. Just try to remember that "cheaping out" for any kind of fast push has become even more of a gamble than it has ever been.

The secondary effect that a lack of free Gold has on the *Diamond* environment is tempo. Tempo is basically the "when" of things happen during a game. For instance, you buy a holding on

your first turn, you buy a Holding and a Personality second turn, or two Holdings, etc. Your tempo dictates when you will attack, and how. You want your tempo to be consistent, otherwise your deck will perform inconsistently. If you're trying to take Provinces but you get to attack by turn four only sometimes, your tempo is inconsistent and you should probably go back to the step outlined in the section above, and "check your pyramid." If you find that you are almost always staging an attack on turn four, then the tempo of your military deck is probably just fine. So what has changed in the *Diamond* environment vis-à-vis tempo? Well, simply put, the timing of consistent attacks has been delayed roughly a turn. However, due to other factors, the quality of that attack will likely be much higher than a comparable early attack was in Gold. This has the effect of letting "hapless" defenders get situated without making the game slower.

Wait, I thought that these old cards were broken?!

Unless you are a brand new player, you've probably been looking at the card list for *Diamond* with either a burgeoning sense of elation or a spiraling feeling of betrayal. Don't worry. It's neither that good nor that bad. I know there will be a lot of knee-jerk reaction to cards like *Matsu Gohei* and *Wedge*, but think back to what we were just talking about.

by Lee Masheter

With no free gold-producing Holdings, most “blitz” strategies that involve cards like *Matsu Gohei* and *Wedge* are simply untenable. On the other hand, many of you are thinking “*Matsu Gohei*... *Wedge*... Cool!” It’s a win-win situation: The cards no longer lead to degenerate strategies, because the basis of such strategies has been removed, and “cool” cards have gotten the chance to be rotated into the new edition. So how do you use these cards to win, then? Simply put, you must learn to adapt. *Gohei* can still help you win, and he’ll even add an element of speed to

a battle won, with Honor to gain, and a losing opponent’s army laid to waste. Basically, what you need to remember as you look at the *Diamond* card list, or rip open the new packs and gape in amazement at what has made it back into the basic set, is that you might have to teach old dogs new tricks.

A secondary consideration in regards to “broken” old cards coming back is that the entire card pool is much different. Beyond the lack of free gold, there are other missing culprits that make seemingly ridiculous card choices not such a big deal. Sure, *Gohei the Butcher* is back, but he won’t

named, represent big changes for *Diamond Edition*. The Rings will probably get the biggest reaction. The reason for their change overlaps with strategy. Think about the Rings before *Diamond*. There were many tournament-winning decks that simply didn’t use them. Think about that for a moment. A game called “*Legend of the Five Rings*,” yet you can succeed at a tournament level without even using the cards that the game’s name is based on? So it was time for a change. Now, with *Diamond Edition*, it is unlikely that you will see a good deck that won’t want at least two different Rings in it, and Enlightenment is once again a healthy, albeit non-dominant, victory condition. The strategic uses for Water and Earth in military decks, and Air and Fire in more subtle control decks should be obvious even to new players, and that’s good.

Speaking of new players, there is another effect the changes to card text have, and an ironic one at that. This effect is that to a large extent the brand new players will have a slight edge when it comes to cards that have changed significantly. But beware, new players: It won’t take long for the savvier veterans to acclimate to the new wordings and more superficial “MRPs.” It will probably take them longer to get accustomed to the new rules, though.

Some of the rules and card changes must be amazing to a few of you experienced players. Well, I was surprised by the ideas, too. Changing the Favor was a good first step, back when *Gold Edition* came out. But some parts of that change weren’t up to the highest of standards. (Remember using *Kaneka* before his “Bane” was printed? Yeah, neither do I.) *Diamond Edition* is a bold step in evolving this game that we all love so much to be ready for a new group of players, as well as remaining strategically challenging and refreshing for the players that have been here all along. I am looking forward to it, and I hope that you are, too. I also hope this article has helped in some small way, and finally, I hope to see you on the fields of battle!



Illustration by William O'Connor © 2003 AEG

your strategy, but you’ll likely have to consider how to make *Gohei* effective on defense as well as offense. I know it sounds bizarre to you veteran players, but in the *Diamond* environment it is something you will have to consider. Likewise with *Wedge*, there may be times when it will help you take a fast Province, but more likely, it will pay off better as a well-timed stratagem in a tense and hard-fought battle. The sacrifice of one unit might mean

be *Charging*, and with Province Strength getting just a little bit higher, and *In Search of the Future* still around, is *Gohei* really such a bad guy anymore?

So many changes... Why?

Something else you will notice as you look at the *Diamond* card list is a very significant amount of change. Cards like *Rhetoric*, *Spearhead*, *Retribution*, and *Peasant Vengeance*, and the very Rings for which the game is

THE IMPERIAL FAVOR IN DIAMOND

Redesigning the Imperial Favor for *Diamond* was a daunting task. It was nothing like designing a clan's themes, or giving them personalities to fit their themes and strongholds. Designing the Winds for *Diamond Edition* was a difficulty it's own.

The *Gold Edition* Story Arc was all about the children of Emperor Toturi I and their individual struggles to claim the throne. The story was centered upon these four, and later five Winds, and so too was the card game. With *Diamond Edition* and an Emperor on the throne, the game reverts to a more clan-centered type of design and gameplay, where the Winds, will take less prominence.

Keeping this in mind, we knew right off the bat that the present Favor abilities were not balanced. Hardly anyone used *Naseru* through the entire story arc, and if they did, it was because they wanted to be the most obscure Wind for the purposes of cards such as *The Shogun's Fealty* or *Kaneka's Blockade*. *Kaneka's* use came around through the use of his *Bane* and the additional cycling. *Tsudao*, through the entire story arc, was the one Wind that virtually every deck could use, which brings us to the Shadowlands, who had no incentive before Daigotsu to use a Wind at all.

Balancing the Winds took us from every possible ability to the impossible ones and back again. Ultimately we decided that for this mechanic to be truly balanced, there had to be a way for every

player to use their Wind's ability. After working on the different Favor abilities we decided the mechanic itself might be what we need to change.

We definitely wanted each player to be able to use his or her own Wind. That much we were sure about. But how? Simple. Multiple abilities.

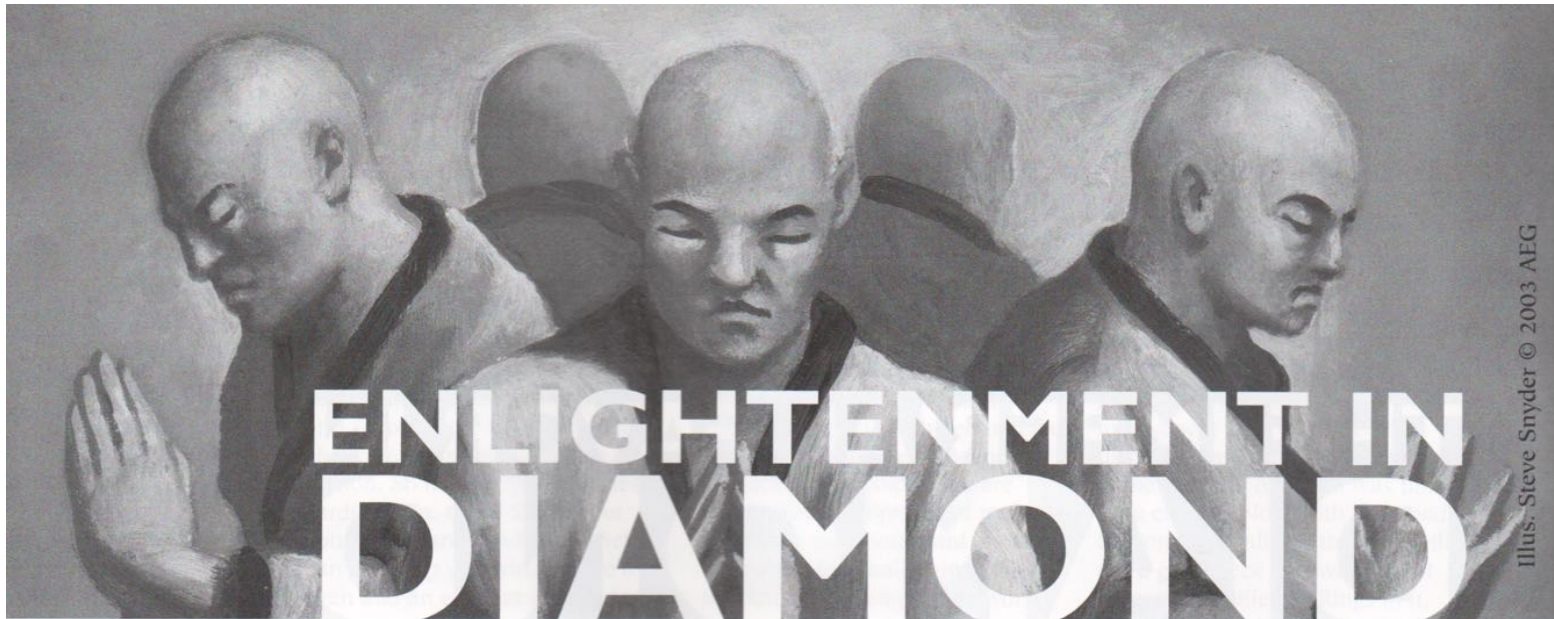
The Winds always had one ability, but before *Gold Edition*, the Imperial Favor had four separate abilities. *Diamond Edition* was already a throw-back set to the older game, and this gave it another subtle touch of that classic form of *L5R*. The difference was that the old Imperial Favor had four abilities that all required the discarding of the Imperial Favor. Now we know that not every player can discard the Favor if they can never lobby, so the second abilities for the respective Winds had to not require discarding the Favor. Because we wanted to increase the power of courtiers through the course of the game to make them on par with samurai and shugenja, it was decided that the second abilities should all be based on bowing courtiers or your stronghold (for those clans and decks that don't want to run courtiers.)

This worked out great, but the names still needed to change. How were we going to design *Toturi Tsudao* and *Akodo Kaneka* if one of them became Emperor? Would we leave them the same? What about if one of them dies at GenCon Indy? This too had to change. The favor

was taken from the Winds, and introduced as Favors. Instead of putting the children of Toturi I on them, instead we figured out that we should instead put representations of the four aspects of the Favor (and then Daigotsu as the fifth) so that should anything happen to the Four Winds, we wouldn't have to worry about anything happening to our Favors.

The Imperial Favor has gone from being a multi-faceted ability in the past, to a strength that was only moderately used in the *Gold* arc to now becoming a more inclusive and stronger power for every deck in *Diamond*, not just the high honor decks. Every player will be able to use his specific aspect of the Favor in one way or the other. The abilities have been assigned pros and cons for each deck, with each favor being uniquely powerful, and providing a difficult choice in deck construction. Honor decks will no longer only run *Toturi Tsudao*. Honor players will have much more of a choice, and as will the military players, who have not had a lot of experience lobbying for the Favor. Courtier-based decks will also come into their own, with each Favor's additional ability playing directly to their special trait. Now, more than ever, the Favor will go a long way to changing the styles of decks that are available in *L5R* now by promoting more new and varied deck styles in the future, making *Diamond* one of the best and most balanced formats *L5R* has ever seen, and ultimately, that's most important!

by Scott Hadsall



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Enlightenment has been one of the hardest facets of *L5R* to balance. For most of the game's life span it rests as the most difficult victory condition to achieve. For a brief period *Finding the Harmony* made enlightenment an overly powerful deck type.

In *Diamond*, Design decided to go straight to the source of the Enlightenment problem: the Rings. With a bold move, all new abilities and play conditions were designed for the Rings. The goal was to make most decks able to play two or three rings without difficulty. Enlightenment would still be a lofty goal, but one with the potential to be a tournament viable deck.

In accordance to *Diamond* design theory, the Rings are more personality centric. The more global effects of the old rings were dropped and the new rings designed to represent the personality's awareness of the elements. The Rings play conditions were also changed to force more interaction. Below is a synopsis of the "how to" for each of the rings. You'll find that even outside of enlightenment decks you'll want to consider each and every one.

Air

The play condition for Air is similar to the old version. It will be a little more difficult, as innate abilities no longer count towards playing Air. The ability has been changed to a much more proactive

ability than the old Air, which was a pure meta card. The ability to straighten the caster of a spell/kiho will make this an auto-include in any deck able to play it.

Earth

Earth gained a much more offensive ability and play condition. Instead of being a purely defensive card, Earth can be played just as easily by an attacking army. A military deck with Earth in play has the huge advantage of keeping its most important unit in the battle, with little the defender can do. Unless offensive send home becomes more popular, expect to see Earth in few honor decks but most military decks.

Fire

Fire got the biggest overhaul of all the Rings. With the lack of irrefusable duels in the base set, Fire is currently the hardest ring to play. *Come One at a Time* will be your best bet to get it in play. Once you do get it into play it is well worth it. Fire encourages focusing in duels not only with +1 focus values, but also with the incredibly powerful hand refilling ability. Any dueling deck would be crazy not to pack this powerhouse.

Void

The old version of Void was probably the most abused card in *L5R* history. The new Void is still strong, but cannot be abused as the old Void could be. The new play condition for Void is balance as to give each clan equal access

to its ability. Once in play it essentially gives the player the *Shiro Mirumoto* ability. Card draw is a powerful mechanic that every successful deck needs to take advantage of. Void should make the cut in virtually every deck.

Water

Water was historically the most difficult of the Rings to play. With an overly specific play condition it rarely saw play outside of enlightenment decks. The new Water keeps the flavor of being a master of the ebb and flow of battle, while keeping it playable. Battle control will be incredibly important in *Diamond*. Battle enders such as *Deadly Ground* have been removed to encourage back and forth, exciting battles. The ability favors offensive decks. Expect most military decks to try and get Water in play. Four actions seems difficult at first glance, but large battles are sure to be the norm in *Diamond*. You should see Water in play much more than at any time in the game's history.

The new rings are sure to be one of *Diamonds* hot topics. At the moment enlightenment is still incredibly difficult. *House of Tao* may be the only deck with the tools to make a tournament viable enlightenment deck. Don't think that will stop players from taking advantage of the powerful abilities of two or three of the rings. With the new abilities the rings may finally live up to the name *Legend of the Five Rings*.

by Ryan Carter

THE GOLDEN TOWER

Kitsuki Tadashi gripped the vessel's side and steeled himself against the incessant pitching and rocking as the ship climbed the waves. And for not the first time, the courtier wondered if he had angered someone in his family to receive such an appointment. The Mantis court was not a particularly glamorous assignment, especially given the internal conflict that had erupted between forces loyal to Yoritomo Kumiko and Yoritomo Kitao. Tadashi was certain the clan must be terribly uncivilized to resolve their differences with open warfare. Inter-clan politics could be difficult, but were rarely so severe that violence was necessary.

Voices from the tiny cabin behind him caused Tadashi to grimace. Of course an unpleasant journey to an unpleasant assignment could only be complemented with unpleasant travel companions. "Tadashi-san!" a woman's voice called out from the cabin's entrance. "Are you going to stay out there all afternoon? The sun will surely discolor your delicate complexion!"

Tadashi frowned and steeled his nerves. The trip to the Mantis islands should take another three days at most, meaning their journey was almost complete. He had tolerated Horiuchi Shoko's strange humor for quite some time now, and could deal with it for another three days. "Of course, Shoko-san," he answered with a forced smile. "Even if I wished to remain here all day, I could hardly deprive myself of your company for so long a time."

The courtier turned and straightened his robes before returning to the cramped cabin. "Although if we encounter another storm, I daresay you will wish you had spent some time on deck when you had the opportunity."

"Oh, I don't know about that," Shoko said with a smile. "It seems to me that we'll have enough time to enjoy the tropical weather when we arrive at Kyuden Gotei. And besides, the sea air dries my skin terribly."

Tadashi refrained from frowning in disgust, but it was a near miss. He knew from first hand accounts that Shoko was a skilled warrior and shugenja, but her attention span left much to be desired. Without something to occupy her attention, he had noticed she had a tendency to lapse into vacuous conversation. And he had nowhere to go to escape it.

Smiling politely, Tadashi turned and entered the cabin to while away the hours with mindless conversation.

The weather worsened during the night. The wind was roaring so loudly that Tadashi could do little more than doze, and even then he was awakened every few minutes by the storm's intensity. Finally, he gave up attempting to sleep altogether and began preparing for the day. He was straightening his obi when the ship hit a reef.

The lurch was so sudden and so severe that Tadashi was thrown

across his tiny quarters and rapped his head sharply on the port wall. He staggered to his feet, only vaguely aware that he was bleeding. He forced the doorway open and lurched out into the main cabin despite the fact that the deck was tipped precariously to one side. There was shouting out on deck. Tadashi threw open the door and looked about to see what had happened.

The deck was in chaos. The Tortoise crewmen he had hired were running about in every direction, shouting about rope, repairs, and something about taking on water. The ship's captain, a swarthy man by the name of Burekku, was standing calmly near the ship's port side, Horiuchi Shoko at his side. "What... what is going on here?" Tadashi shouted above the roar.

"You are injured," Burekku said flatly. He reached over and seized the sleeve of Tadashi's kimono and tore it, then handed the patch of cloth to the courtier. "You had better stop the bleeding. If we end up in the water, you'll draw sharks."

Tadashi looked at the captain in mute horror. "End up in the water?" he finally managed. Even in this crisis, he maintained a placid calm; his Kitsuki training insured that. "What has happened? Are we sinking?"

Burekku gestured to the gray skies, his rough kimono rippling in the strong wind. "The storm has died down somewhat, but the wind is still strong. It drove us into a reef.

by Shawn Carman

Shoko-sama is holding the hull together with her earth magic, but we're going to have to make for land to repair the ship."

"Where?" asked Tadashi.

The captain pointed to a small island on the horizon. "There. It's large enough to serve our purpose. Nothing much there, though."

"Can we make it?"

Burekku smiled slightly. "We'll find out soon enough."

The ship made it to the island safely. Shoko had held the hull secure, but the hold had taken on a considerable amount of water before her spell took effect. As a result, it took a surprisingly long time to reach the small island. Tadashi counted every second.

Once the ship made landfall, the crew erupted into frantic activity. Burekku directed his men like a general on a battlefield. Several grabbed tools and headed inward toward the scattered trees while others worked to drain the water from the ship's hold. Still others inspected every inch of the ship, looking for further damage.

Horiuchi Shoko finally released her spell, and promptly healed the wound on Tadashi's scalp. The pain subsided quickly, but the dizziness remained. Tadashi sat heavily upon the beach, but Shoko insisted he get to his feet. "A wound such as yours can be treacherous," she claimed. "You need to walk around for a while and regain your bearings."

"I would like to rest," he had muttered. "Perhaps sleep for a time."

"Fine," she said matter-of-factly. "As long as you realize you may never wake up."

Supremely irritated, Tadashi consented to walk with Shoko for a while until she was confident his injury would not threaten his life further. His attitude was poor, but Shoko seemed content to walk in silence, and after a while he began to feel much better. Perhaps there was something to the folk tales of the sea air's healing qualities after all.

The two had been walking for nearly half an hour when Shoko smiled at him. "I think you will be fine, Tadashi-san. If there were any lingering effects of your wound that my spell could not correct, they would have appeared by now. We can return to the ship so that you may rest if you like."

Tadashi frowned, pointing farther down the beach. "What is that?"

Shoko raised her eyebrows questioningly. She looked down the beach where he was pointing, but frowned. "Are you feeling well?"

"I feel perfectly fine," Tadashi insisted. "There is something lying along the beach down the coast."

"I don't see anything," Shoko insisted.

Tadashi frowned again and headed down the beach. Shoko called after him, but he ignored her. Fate had placed him in the courts, and while he excelled there, at his core he was as much a magistrate as any of his brethren. The world was laid bare to a man who appreciated detail, and no one found detail of more importance than Kitsuki Tadashi. He truly saw nothing in the water, but he noticed unusual ripples in the water, bubbles that should not have been there, tears in the rough beach vegetation that did not belong. He could sense something was there as surely as if he could see through the darkened water. Even as his mind raced through the possibilities, he came to a stop on the beach. None of his experience could have prepared him for this.

"Tadashi!" Shoko called, running after him. "What in the world are you... oh my!" Her voice trailed off as she saw what he had discovered. "What... what is...."

"Go get Burekku," he commanded. "Go now."

The Unicorn shugenja turned and ran back toward the ship as Tadashi carefully studied his find from a distance. Just under the water were the decaying corpses of half a dozen dead people. No, not people. Their lower bodies were long and slender, and in place of legs they had broad, fishlike tails.

Burekku seemed far less impressed by the sight of the dead creatures than Tadashi and Shoko. "Ningyo," he said casually. "They're some sort of water spirit that serve the Naga. It's not uncommon to see them on long voyages, particularly in the deep currents. I've heard of a dead one cropping up now and again, although I admit six is a bit much."

"These are clearly not spirits," Tadashi insisted, pointing to the terrible wounds many of the bodies bore. "These creatures are flesh and bone, just as you and I are, and something terrible happened to them."

"Shark attack," Burekku said. He seemed utterly unconcerned.

"No, these bite marks were made after the ningyo were already dead," Tadashi said, his voice clear and decisive. "This was no shark attack."

Shoko frowned. "How can you possibly know that?"

The courtier pointed to the wounds. "These are too clean. I've seen battle victims before. Wounds like this would be far more severe. The bodies were already dead by the time the sharks found them." Hearing Burekku's snort of derision, Tadashi picked up a stick and pointed to a small mark on one of the corpses' necks. One of the sailors turned and retched at the notion of touching dead flesh. "Do you know what this is?"

"A minor scratch. Probably caused by debris in the water or a submerged coral reef."

"Very possible," Tadashi admitted. "However," he probed the wound with the stick's tip, causing more sailors to recoil in disgust. He noticed that while Shoko paled, she did not look away. Burekku was unaffected. "Aha, here we are." With one last flick of his wrist, the stick Tadashi was using tore free of the wound. A single arrowhead fell from the ningyo's neck to the sand below. "Burekku-san, if there are sharks who practice archery, especially with this degree of accuracy, I think I will be returning to the Dragon lands."

Burekku scowled, his face darkening in anger. "No one shoots at the ningyo. They are good fortune to sailors. This shouldn't happen."

Tadashi stood and surveyed the sea. After a moment's calculation, he turned and asked "The currents that wash up on this beach, they come from the northeast?"

"Yes," Burekku confirmed. "It's a strong current. Plays havoc with trade routes."

"Take me in that direction," Tadashi said firmly.

The captain's brow furrowed. "Our arrangement was finalized before we left, Tadashi-sama. Changing it in mid-journey is never a good idea."

"I will double your fee."

Burekku rubbed his chin thoughtfully, then turned to regard his men. "Gather what additional supplies you can find, men. We're going to be out a bit longer than we expected."

The ship had sailed northeast against the currents for three days when Tadashi first noticed the tower. The courtier stood near the prow, constantly scanning the horizon for any clue to the mystery that had produced the dead ningyo. The Tortoise crew seemed unnerved by his intensity, and gave him a wide berth. Burekku likewise did not bother him, although whenever Tadashi shouted out a course correction, the captain grudgingly responded. Only Shoko stood by his side, occasionally questioning his actions but never truly interfering with his vigil. She was standing nearby when he first saw the tower.

"There," he muttered under his breath. "There it is."

"What is it?" Shoko asked. "What do you see?"

"There is a tower," Tadashi said, "a golden tower in the middle of the sea. There are three vessels surrounding it."

Shoko squinted at the horizon. "Are you sure?"

"Certain."

The shugenja shook her head. "How can you see all that? I only see specks."

"Training," Tadashi replied curtly. "Kitsuki eyes are sharper than most. You should be ready in case there is a battle."

"Battle?" asked Shoko incredulously.

Tadashi paid no attention, but turned to find Burekku. "Captain, if you and your men have weapons, I would suggest you prepare them."

Burekku's eyes narrowed. "Tread carefully, Dragon. I do not enter combat lightly, not for you or anyone else."

"You sell your loyalty to the highest bidder, mercenary," Tadashi said flatly. "I have purchased it, and I expect you to fulfill your end of the bargain. I saw the boarding weapons stored in your hold. Do you intend to put them to just use, or are you nothing more than a pirate?"



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The captain's expression grew cold. "No one calls me a pirate."

"Then act like a samurai and fulfill your agreement," Tadashi commanded. "Prepare your weapons."

"We will discuss this again," Burekku said grimly.

"I expect we shall," Tadashi agreed.

* * *

Tadashi's predictions were correct. The vessels surrounding the mysterious tower were pirates. Burekku recognized their vessels and identified them as a band that had been harassing the northern trade routes for nearly six months. The pirates apparently mistook Burekku's ship for reinforcements, as they did not react to their approach until it was far too late.

The first two ships were defeated within moments. Shoko warped the hull of one, twisting the wood until it gave way and broke apart. Half the ship was underwater before the crew even realized what had happened. The second maneuvered to attack, but the pirates had little chance. Again, they were brought to ruin in very short order by the sailors' archery and Shoko's magic. The third vessel turned and fled at the sight of a second ship sinking beneath the waves.

"Pull up alongside the tower," Tadashi ordered. "But slowly. We must be cautious."

Burekku and Shoko both looked at the tower cautiously. Many silent forms could be seen moving around its base and along the top. "Are certain that is wise, Tadashi-san?" Shoko asked.

"I did not come all this way to leave without the truth," Tadashi said. "I share your concern, however. If anything happens to me, you should depart immediately."

"We will," Burekku assured him. The captain ignored Shoko's look of disgust.

As the ship drew near, Tadashi gazed up at the tower from the starboard side. It was truly a thing of beauty. It seemed to be composed of

coral, grown directly from the reef on which it sat. Its color was unusual: a deep gold, the color of the rising sun. As he looked, there was a great commotion in the water between the tower and the ship. It seethed and roiled as if subjected to great heat, and then a column rose between the two.

A long ningyo sat atop this bizarre column of water. He regarded Tadashi with an impassive stare, obviously wary of treachery. His bearing was such that Tadashi instantly recognized him as a leader of his people, and bowed accordingly. "Greetings, lord of the tower. I am Kitsuki Tadashi of the Dragon Clan."

"If you have come here to pillage our tower like the others, you will find that we are well prepared for your treachery." There was no condemnation in the creature's voice, only curiosity and concern.

"My comrades and I discovered that some of your people had been killed," Tadashi explained. "We came to investigate. We mean no harm to you."

"Your aid is much appreciated, Ta-da-shi," the ningyo stumbled over Tadashi's name. "The other humans have assaulted us without end for weeks. We have had little time to prepare an adequate defense. Now that you have driven them away, perhaps we will have time."

"They'll return," grumbled Burekku.

"And we will be ready," the ningyo replied. He gestured to the north. Tadashi looked in that direction and, for a moment, though he saw the shape of an enormous serpent vanish beneath the waters. "In the meantime, allow us to demonstrate our gratitude to our saviors." The creature gestured to the tower, where a portal opened and crude stairs appeared on the tower's exterior. "We would be honored if you would allow us to prepare a gift for you and your Dragons, Ta-da-shi."

"Thank you, my lord," Tadashi said with another bow. "We are unworthy of so generous an offer, but if accepting it will allow our two

peoples to grow closer to one another, I would gladly accept your gift and offer one in return."

The ningyo waved the notion away. "You and yours have already given us your friendship and support when none was required. Such generosity is rare among your people, we have learned. If you are a representative of this Dragon Clan, then we are already your allies." The creature inclined its head respectfully. "Please, allow us a short time to put our affairs in order. If you will return in one cycle of the Pale Eye, my people will show their gratitude to the Dragon in a manner befitting your noble people."

Tadashi smiled. "Then we will return, my lord. I eagerly await building an alliance between our two peoples." The ningyo ruler nodded again and retreated into the tower, his soldiers likewise disappearing into the waves. Tadashi smiled as he turned to face his traveling companions.

Perhaps he would not be stranded in the Mantis courts for long after all.

Zen Predicts...

The arrival of *Diamond Edition* is only the third time the L5R tournament scene has been "levelled" by a fundamentally different base set. What cards and deck styles might propel each clan to the top of the playing field?

Mantis

The easy prediction first. Mantis has the most to gain from *Diamond Edition*. Considering their embarrassing shut out of this year's Kotei finals, they simply can't do any worse... The clan will still have a tough row to hoe, since there has never been a Ranged Attack deck archetype to shake the tournament scene, and Naval has been a surprising non-issue. One Personality to watch may be the *Soul of Hyobe*. With the removal of *Rallying Cry*, never bowing could become mighty handy.

Lion

The toughest clan to call, because Lion is the only clan to have an entirely new stronghold in

Diamond. The new stronghold retains a familiar emphasis on the Tactician trait. But the Tactician trait has been somewhat unpredictable, and will continue to be so, especially with *In Search of the Future* available. There won't be lot of Tactician support cards. Removing the disincentive to play Terrains, though, may give them a chance to pull some wild stunts.

Ratling

The furry ones are another big wildcard. Ratling players will have to face the removal of the card that fuels every successful Ratling deck since *The Hidden Emperor, Episode 2: Kan'ok'ticheck* (the artist formerly known as T'chick'chuk). Yeah, *Ratling Conjurer* is still around, and *Ratling Village* is back, but the White Rat was the engine that ran the train. It may take some time for Ratling players to develop new play styles.

Scorpion

Old school Scorpion players will take their experience to the bank. They've got the longest serving stronghold in *Diamond*, the good ol' *Yogo Towers*. Scorpion veterans know how to play this box. The real old school players also know the havoc the *Soul of Yogo Asami* will wreck. There are fewer ways to dishonour a Personality or make a player lose honour in *Diamond*, but opponents will have fewer defences against such tactics. Respect your elders!

Crab

Crab was the clan to beat for most of the Kotei season, when Daigotsu was released as a Wind card and corrupt decks smashed out of the bottom tournament rungs. Removing *Corrupt Iron Mines* will hurt the corrupt deck style, but Crab has good

Personalities, good support cards, and is going into *Diamond* with too much of a head of steam to evaporate quickly.

Dragon

A Ring victory may not return to the easy win it was during the heady days of *Kaede Sensei* and *Finding the Harmony*, but come *Diamond*, expect a small cadre of Dragon players to win by Enlightenment. On second thought, that might not be such a small group, as Enlightenment seems to hold much more promise than the old defensive duelling decks.

Crane

Crane's been a strong clan more often than they've been a weak clan. Besides all their Courtiers, they still have more than enough samurai with deadly duelling talents to keep them at the top, or close to it, in the *Diamond* environment.

Unicorn

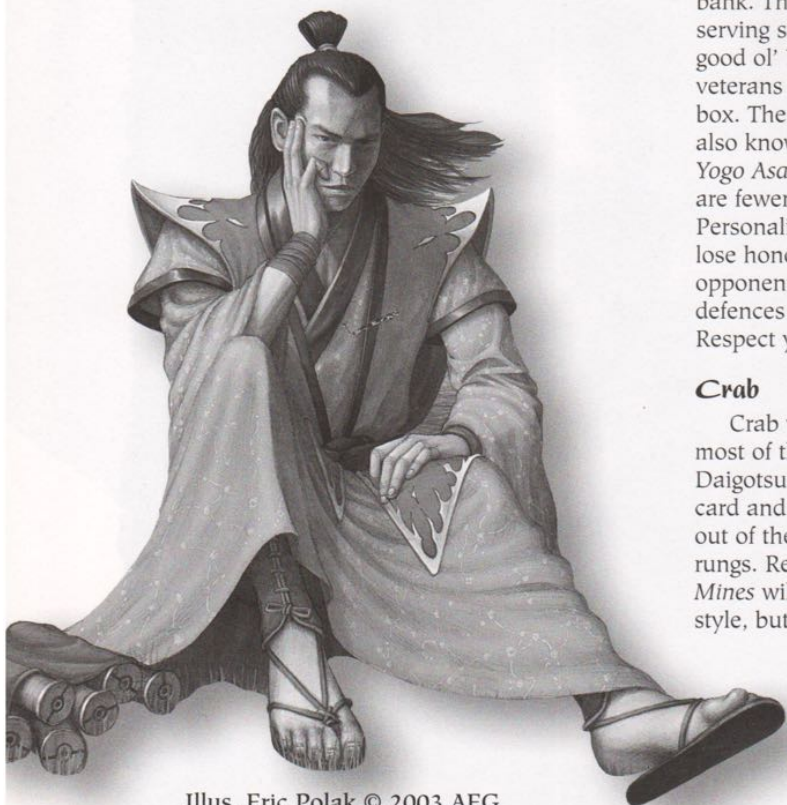
Unicorn has never been known for their depth: Cavalry and Cavalry. Unfortunately, with fewer force boosts and a small number of Cavalry followers, it may be challenging to use Cavalry to its best advantage. There could be a niche for honourable duelling decks that use the clan's Item-related abilities to their best advantage.

Phoenix

Phoenix has few returning "star" Personalities in *Diamond*, so what does spells and kiho fortell? *Importune Kami* will continue to raise player's ire, and a few destructive spells like *Fear's Bane* may be the ticket to make Phoenix one of the stronger honour runners.

Shadowlands

The 0 cost, corrupt holdings are no more, but Shadowlands still has some of the best values in the game, like *Voitagi*, *Kukanachi*, *Obsidian Mine*, *Shokansuru*, and *Skeletal Troops*. And to top it all off, the first expansion after *Diamond Edition* is named *Reign of Blood*, which promises lots of new toys for the bad guys...



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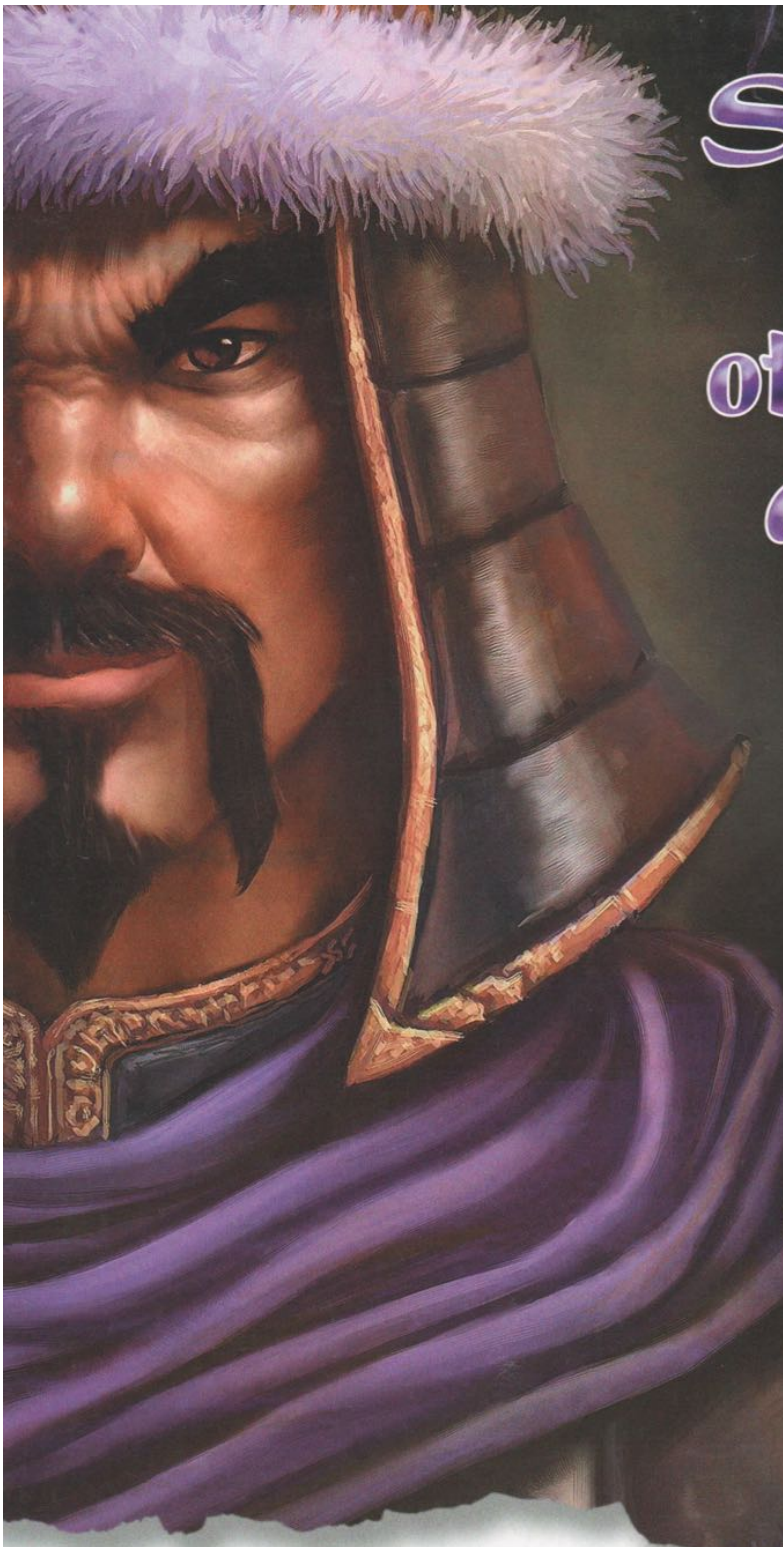
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Some call them
barbarians,
others call them
a swift death.

"All who oppose me die."

- Moto Chagatai,
the Khan



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