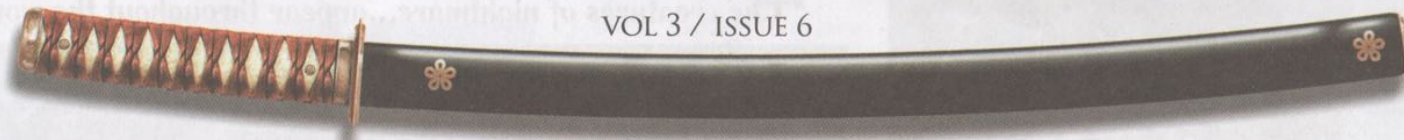


THE IMPERIAL HERALD

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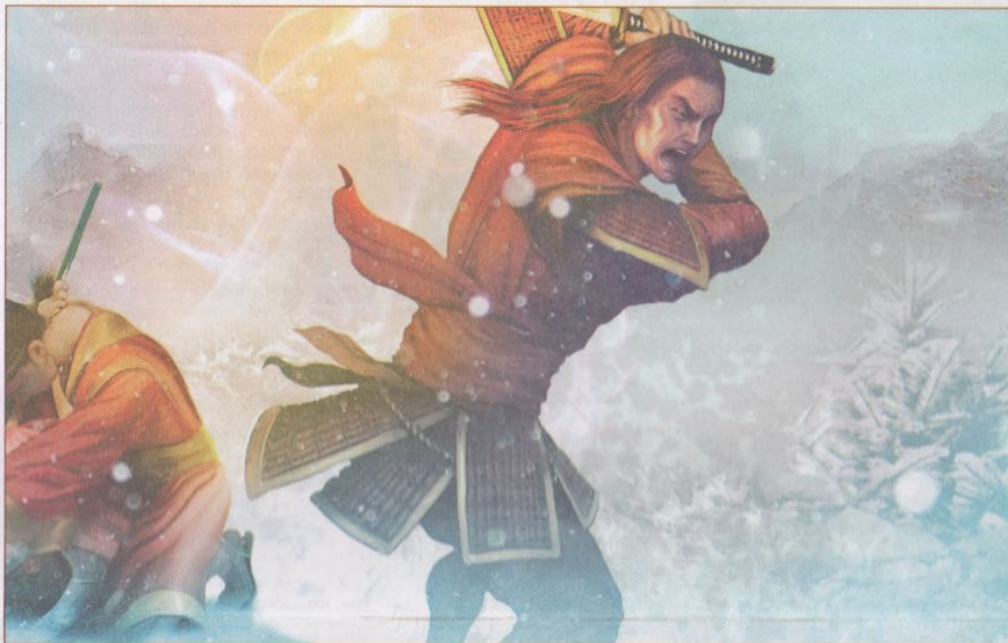
LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS INTERACTIVE STORYLINE COLLECTIBLE CARD & ROLEPLAYING GAMES

The Dead of Winter

BY THOMAS KWONG

The Dead of Winter was one but also exciting, because play are difficult to change increase in power. Balancing creep under control with the cards that can work with the playability of others, or for players of all clans is no we do not have to hedge our with dual-bugged sets, and actual design options are Dead of Winter provides new types, but the set's strength is new opportunities. We will design objectives for the set actual cards starting with the the way dishonor functions Team has been working on Dead of Winter pushes this goal. Attachments as a whole throughout the game's history adds some tools to make them deck building choice.

Celestial Edition has seen boxes to fit the clans' various these types of strongholds is new deck types without giving better stronghold to use. That might be more efficient than that to really utilize a new will have to change how your



of the trickiest sets to design, many of the decks people without creating a massive the need to keep power desire to make exciting existing deck types, improve create entirely new options short order. The upside is, bets in the same way we do power concerns aside, the essentially limitless. The options to existing deck that it provides many more look at some of the principle and how those translate into set's strongholds. Changing is something the Design for all of Celestial and The even closer towards our have increased in playability and The Dead of Winter an even more worthwhile

the rise of more structured themes. The advantage of it allows design to enable an already strong deck a is not to say the stronghold current options, but rather stronghold's potential you deck is built.

better stronghold to use. That might be more efficient than that to really utilize a new will have to change how your



is not to say the stronghold current options, but rather stronghold's potential you deck is built.

Kyuden Suzume is a perfect example of this dynamic. Clearly this stronghold works perfectly as a kensai monk stronghold. Turning hand-clogging weapons or kihos into a proactive action, along with a fate card, help monks overcome a lack of printed battle actions and often unusable fate draws. No Pure Breaths, Katahide, and all of the kensai support pushes the almost-there kensai monk deck into a much more competitive place. Spider Clan paragons may also find use for a stronghold action that rewards having high force personalities on the table.

Geared more towards the goal of making new deck types competitive, Aramasu's Vigilance gives the Mantis Clan's economic warfare deck an incredible stronghold to use. Certainly, you could run a more control-oriented commander deck, but the stronghold will truly shine in a dedicated magistrate deck. Yoritomo Eihiko gets a powerful experienced version in addition to Southern Blockade that will also help the deck's strength.

The new Crane stronghold, Embassy of the Crane, is one that should strengthen an older deck while opening up an entirely new one. The stronghold is a clear contender for the long-struggling dueling magistrate builds, but it makes an even better fit for an artisan-based honor or dishonor switch deck. Doji Bukita and Daidoji Gisei both become more potent and the deck type receives further support from The Dead of Winter cards Doji Nukada, Kakita Yosuga, and Favor of Artisans.

(Continued on Next Page)

The Dead of Winter: Storyline Update

BY SHAWN CARMAN

Only a short time ago, the samurai of Rokugan had no concept of how to fight during the winter. It was an idea never considered, one that had been cast aside centuries ago and never examined again. Winter warfare simply did not exist, not outside of small skirmishes between dedicated scouts, the purpose of which was simply to ensure that one's enemies remembered where the lines of battle drawn.

That was before the age of Moto Chagatai.

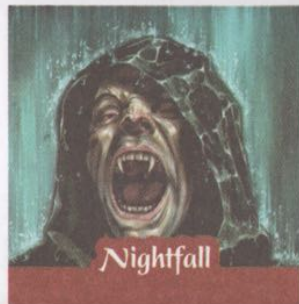
Now, the Great Clans know all too well that war during the winter is a real possibility, and that those who are not prepared can and will suffer greatly. The armies of the Divine Empress stand ready to repel the incursions of the Destroyers, but the attacks do not come. Both the blessings and curses of the Celestial Heavens have arrived in the form of an early winter, and one more severe than any in memory. Even the ironclad monstrosities of the Destroyer have no choice but to slow to a standstill during the intense and punishing weather. Finally, the samurai of Rokugan see that their gods have not abandoned them.

As winter grips the Empire, shocking events occur within the Imperial

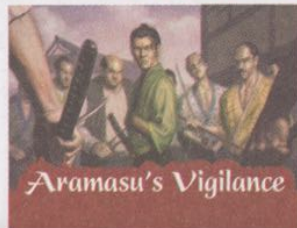
City, events so appalling that the Emerald Champion cancels Winter Court for fear of the safety of those attending. For years, the Emerald Champion has played a secret game with his nemesis, the outcast Kakita Noritoshi, each man giving and taking from the other in an attempt to utterly destroy his rival. Now, Jimen's paranoia and Noritoshi's obsession will not allow them to see past one another, and the events of the Winter Court are blamed on each other. What had become a game is now a war, and blood will run in the streets until it is concluded.

Although the war with the Destroyers grinds to a halt in the icy grip of winter, the northern front is vastly more active, as the blessings of the Dark Oracle of Fire allow his minions to ignore the worst ravages of the season and continue their incursions into Dragon, Phoenix, and Minor Clan territories. Vastly worse, however, is that with the retrieval of the Dark Covenant of Fire, the Dark Oracle himself is capable of entering the Empire once more. Thus far, his forays into the Empire have been limited. He strikes at targets, razes them to the ground, and retreats, allowing fear of his next appearance to grow among his enemies before he destroys them forever.

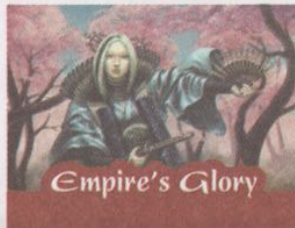
While the Empire is in the throes of winter, the Mantis Clan continues its cautious expansion into the seemingly deserted Ivory Kingdoms. As they learn more and more about the apocalypse that was visited upon that distant land, however, Moshi Kalani and his expedition begin to wonder if the kingdoms are as deserted as they appear...



Nightfall



Aramasu's Vigilance



Empire's Glory



Honor in DoW



RPG School

Nightfall

BY TODD ROWLAND



Nightfall is a new, fast, furious and fun deck-building game from Alderac Entertainment Group. Featuring direct head-to-head combat, amazing art, a new AEG world, and unique mechanics by designer David Gregg, Nightfall will be the deck-building game to own--and to prove it, AEG is offering players a chance to own the game for free before it's even released!

"The creatures of nightmare...appear throughout the world"

The sun has retreated from the earth. It has been a little over a week since the last hint of light shone over the horizon, and the chaos has begun. People fear for their existence, scientists struggle to explain the phenomenon, or why the effects haven't been more dire than a simple lack of light.

Until they came.

The creatures of nightmare: vampires, werewolves, and ghouls have begun to appear throughout the world, and they show no sign of hesitation in claiming the dark world as their own!

Alderac Entertainment Group knows card games. They brought you multiple hits during the CCG era, including Legend of the Five Rings, Doomtowntown, and Warlord, and now, right on the heels of the hit deck-builder Thunderstone AEG brings you the first true direct-damage deck-building game. Nightfall takes the deck-building genre out of multi-player solitaire and into the realm of building a deck to attack your opponents while fending off all threats, thus ensuring your control over the night.

Nightfall Basics

Before the game begins, there is a draft to determine which cards are available for purchase, and by whom. During this draft players select two cards from the set for their personal cache, and they also select cards to put into the common area. The cards drafted into personal caches may only be purchased by the player who drafted them.

After the table has been set with the private and common cards, players begin play.

The meat of Nightfall is in the chaining mechanic.

Each card has a main color and two linking colors. If you can match the main color of a card to one of the linking colors of another card, then you can chain those cards together. Once chain is started, players all get an opportunity to link additional cards onto the chain during that turn.

Cards in the chain then resolve in reverse order: first in, last out. Instant effects fire off as cards come off the chain, doing damage

to your opponents or bringing characters into play to defend you and attack your opponents.

The object of Nightfall is to put wounds into your opponents' decks and end the game with the least amount of wounds in your deck. Beware; the more wounds a person has, the more enraged they become and the faster their deck works, which means more cards and bigger chains coming your way!

To kick off Nightfall, AEG is doing one of the boldest promotions in board game history: The First 100 Days. During The First 100 Days, players will have the opportunity to submit their name and contact information to AEG.

Every day from January 1 through April 10 one name will be drawn to receive a free full copy of Nightfall in a special preview collector's box! Not only that, but hundreds of retailers will also receive the preview so players can try the game out well before it goes on sale. Be sure to visit www.nightfallthegame.com for more information!

Dead of Winter (Continued from Previous Page)

The concept of a Crane dishonor deck may seem a bit puzzling at first, but it is part of the Design Team's overall goal of changing how dishonor functions. One of the most common complaints is that dishonor is a victory condition only accessible by one clan. Celestial Edition has been giving other clans some tools to

Increasing the possibility of facing a dishonor deck means we also need to change how dishonor decks work. Historically, dishonor was either a deck devoted towards locking down the board and maybe dropping the other player to -20, or a bomb deck that would wait until a combo of epic proportions could be unleashed.

is the same successful interactive approach that honor decks have been moved to over the years.

The Dead of Winter also changes how dishonor plays against honor. Presently, these games are time consuming, tedious, and leave both players generally unhappy. The Design Team has made a conscious effort to rectify

clans is receiving a personality that supports their honor victory condition, but can help the honor player make an attack against a dishonor deck. Obviously this is an ongoing process, but establishing a clear design for how we want this match up to go will help make it less of a burden for both styles of play.

Bowing two of your eight gold cost weapons is not nearly as appealing as bowing two smaller ones. While all of these Strategies help, ultimately we need to increase the utility of lower cost attachments. Archery Unit, Daisho, Retired Magistrates, Tsume Spearman, and Improvised Weapon are all steps towards breaking the

condition only accessible by one clan. Celestial Edition has been giving other clans some tools to create honor losses, but The Dead of Winter really opens dishonor up to Crane and Phoenix. Both clans will continue to receive support for their dishonor decks, and Dragon will receive access to the victory condition in the future. Not only does this make the game more dynamic and flavorful, but it makes dishonor meta easier to include. Players will find that including meta will be much easier and much more of a requirement for competitive play. If you play military and are not running cards to help against honor and dishonor, then you are building your deck to lose to those decks.

to -20, or a bomb deck that would wait until a combo of epic proportions could be unleashed. Neither of these styles fits with what we want dishonor to do. The goal for dishonor with Celestial has been to move dishonor towards a true clock deck. In that vein, dishonor support cards will have more actual honor losses on them. The flip side is that cards that punish a personality for being dishonored will be better in battle. Dishonor will have to go to battle to defend itself, but will have the tools to do so. There will still be cards that do things to dishonorable personalities during the action phase, but without the overt control mechanism that prevents the other player from participating in the game. This

and leave both players generally unhappy. The Design Team has made a conscious effort to rectify this by purposefully designing cards to change how the matchup functions. This matchup will now favor dishonor if both decks attempt to pursue their normal victory condition. Honor decks will certainly slow a dishonor deck's clock, but they won't be able to completely reverse it. Honor decks will therefore have to switch to an alternate victory condition. Some decks will be able to switch to dishonor, but most will switch to military. To support this move to military each of the main honor

we want this match up to go will help make it less of a burden for both styles of play.

The last thing to address is The Dead of Winter's increase in attachment support. Attachments have had a bumpy ride as Celestial winds on. As The Dead of Winter was being developed, the Design team sought to make two changes with attachments in the set; make them easier to protect, and increase the playability of smaller attachments. Muscle and Steel is obviously not going to help a deck with cheap attachments, but Preserve Your Forces and Rally Through Sacrifice can work for any attachment deck regardless of cost. 1,000 Cuts is another card that cries out for cheaper attachments.

Magistrates, Tsume Spearman, and Improvised Weapon are all steps towards breaking the monopoly on deck construction that expensive attachments currently enjoy.

Looking over The Dead of Winter, when cards jump out as being strange, over powered, or just unplayable, give them another look. What you have been playing may not be what you will want to be playing after the set is released. Hopefully this look inside our design objectives for this set helps you understand the design process and gives you some insight into what you can expect from us moving forward.

Volunteer Thanks

BY MARK WOOTTON

We really wanted to take this opportunity, as we come towards the end of the year, to say a big thank you to all of our volunteers. The work and dedication of many of the fans of this game is what makes the L5R community special.

We think it is important to remember the contributions that those who volunteer to carry some of the workload make, to the community that you are part of. From our Forum Moderators who keep the AEG boards a constructive and polite environment to the Gen Con, Essen and other



convention volunteers that tirelessly demo AEG games to new players, or run events for us.

Whenever you get your promos remember Chad Phillips' (our Customer Services man) team of friends and volunteers that will come and spend the day putting the packs together.

Also don't forget many of the Tournament Organizers all over the world that give their time to make events happen.

We would just like to say on behalf of all of us, a big "Thank you" from all the staff at AEG.

Aramasu's Vigilance

BY TREVOR VALENTINE

DEAD OF WINTER MANTIS REVIEW

Economic Warfare. This is perhaps the polite term that people use when referring to the Mantis clan strategy of stealing the lunch money from their opponents. Up until now the theme as a whole has been vastly overlooked. Commanders and pure Naval shenanigans provided a blunt instrument to crack your enemy's provinces. Economic Warfare does not do that. It is more like a scalpel. You identify problems, isolate them, and extract them. The Dead of Winter provides the boys and girls in green with an entire suite of cards that ensure that come Kotei season no one will be safe. The Mantis magistrates are coming for your koku.



The key that really unlocks everything for this theme is the new stronghold, Aramasu's Vigilance. While it might not seem as immediately powerful as Dragon's Guard City, its strength lies in what it enables. With the proper holding base, such as Rich Coffers and Offices of the Emerald Magistrates you can effectively use all sorts of Strategies that cost gold for little or no cost. Paid Off? It sees plenty of play at four gold. It only gets more appealing when you can toss one out per turn for free. Control? In conjunction with Paid Off and Defensive Nature it would seem an auto-include. Deflection? Well considering Imperial Command infiltrates lots of decks; and this is a vastly superior version, there is no reason not to run it. Perfect Aim? Rout? The list goes on and on. Perhaps most importantly however, it lets you play a little card called Southern Blockade.

Southern Blockade is a game changing card. The ability to essentially lock down a province for a number of turns, or to eat four of the opponent's gold, easily swings tempo in your favor. This has unbelievable implications for a clan that already has an innate advantage when it comes to directing the flow of battles. You ensure that your opponent does not get optimal usage of their resources. Actually you get to go further than that. If you see the card on turn two you get to control exactly who your opponent buys in the early turns. This, combined with the open phase bow of Magistrates and the advantage of Naval, is a lethal combination. It really lets you plan ahead to systematically eliminate the personalities you let through the Blockade. With the help of Stolen Property whoever gets through the Blockade is sure to meet a swift end.

Enabling the usage of previous economic warfare cards is

With the proper holding base...you can effectively use all sorts of Strategies that cost gold for little or no cost. ...

something that Yoritomo Eihiko does admirably. His ability to reduce any cards gold cost to zero is the signal that all sorts of horrible things are about to happen. Tsuruchi Ogata can steal most holdings with ease. Yoritomo Tatsuhiro and Yoritomo Manzo can get their abilities off without blinking. Most importantly is the ability to turn A Stain Cleansed and Laying in Wait into absolutely terrifying kill actions. It really makes your opponent think twice when they know they are going to lose their lynchpin personality

before they get a chance to take an action. That is the kind of tempo manipulation that wins games.

Yoritomo Ai is another superb personality. Holdings are crutches. The ability to turn holding off will frustrate people to no end. Ask your local Spider player how keen they are on having Expendable Resources blanked out. Chugo Seido has proven decisive in late game battles. Now it just gets to sit there and look pretty. Against honor and dishonor you can stop either a Traveling Peddler or Counting House per turn. Not to mention that she is also four force and four chi allowing you to get Magistrate actions off with relative ease against personalities with higher personal honor, and of course she can make it rain for a ranged five attack with Rain of Justice.

Remember: it is not blackmail, it is protection money.

The War of Dark Hearts

BY NANCY SAUER & SHAWN CARMAN

It wasn't much of a snowfall; just barely enough to cover the streets with a soft mantle of white. It was early in the year for it as well, and Kakita Matabei knew that when morning came the feeble heat of the sun would melt it away. Nothing was forever.

Matabei strolled through the quiet streets, taking turns at random. Winter was almost here, and soon he would be swept up in the glitter and show of court politics. The season promised to be an odd one: on the one hand, no one wanted to be seen as impeding the defense of the Empire,



an odd one: on the one hand, no one wanted to be seen as impeding the defense of the Empire, and on the other hand material and manpower were beginning to run low, and lords were starting to think about protecting their own. Tonight he could forget it all and simply walk in the snow.

Turning back home he chose an alleyway that led to the main street of the temple district. Matabei had not gotten halfway through when three men in Scorpion red entered the other end and came waking towards him. None of them had weapons to hand, but the Kenshinzen felt the hair on the back of his neck prickle. He stopped and waited.

The three came to just outside of his zone and stopped. "Your pardon, Crane-san, but are you Kakita Matabei?" the middle one asked. He wore a red mask with a demon's feral grin.

"I am," Matabei said. Three ahead of him, and two more behind; he wondered if there was anyone on the rooftops.

"Excellent. I am Bayushi Sorii, and by my authority I require you to come with me."

"I am not subject to a Scorpion magistrate's authority," Matabei said.

"Forgive me, but I see I have been imprecise," Sorii said. He reached held up a jade seal carved with a chrysanthemum. "I am an Emerald Magistrate."

One of Jimen's dogs, Matabei thought. Shosuro Jimen, who had brought him back into the good graces of the Imperial Court. Who had ordered the murder of Kakita Mai. Were you thinking of her when you stood there in court? he wondered. Even then, were you planning the death of my lord's wife?

"My time is valuable," Sorii said, breaking in on Matabei's thoughts. "You will come with us, now." The two men at his side had their hands on their hilts, watching for the Kakita to fall into a dueling stance, and Matabei could tell without looking that the two behind had already drawn steel.

"I am afraid you are mistaken," Matabei said. "If you or your time were valuable, Jimen would not have sent you after me."

"I--" Sorii said, and then Matabei was drawing his blade, turning in a smooth arc to meet the men behind him. The magistrate blinked in amazement--the Kakita hadn't even changed



his stance--and then he was drawing his own blade and joining the fray.

When silence returned the alley stunk of blood and offal. Matabei cleaned his blade with a precise move and sheathed it. He wasn't sure what sort of message Jimen intended to send by this, but the Kakita was quite sure of what message he wanted to the Emerald Champion to receive. "For the coward there is no life," he said, then he walked away.

"My lord, I... I am horrified. I have no idea what to say." The Crane magistrate was paler than anyone Jimen had seen in recent memory, although there were certain elixirs that could elicit a similar response. "Are you... forgive me, but are you absolutely certain that Matabei-san was involved in this... this carnage?"

"Unquestionably," Jimen said, his tone perfectly casual. "I would also describe it as unsurprising."

Doji Numata's complexion grew even paler somehow. "I am sorry, my lord. Of course I will notify my lady immediately and see to it that restitution is made to the families of your men, and of course a search for Matabei will begin immediately."

"No thank you," Jimen said. "Matabei is a bit of a disappointment, but ultimately he is a symptom and not the problem itself."

Numata stared at Jimen blankly. "Are you suggesting the Crane are complicit, my lord? Because I can assure you..."

"Kakita Noritoshi," Jimen said, shaking his head. "It was only a few years ago, but I was quite young and foolish, or so it seems to me now." He gestured around the office. "I

craved authority and power, the ability to enact my wishes without obstacles." He sighed lightly. "I fear I underestimated Noritoshi's tenacity. He must be some sort of lunatic idealist to have clung so tightly to the idea of justice and revenge for so long. And after I have taken so much from him already."

"It... you... Kakita Mai-sama?" Numata sputtered.

"Of course," Jimen said. "It did cost me quite badly, though. I regret it quite a bit." He shook his head again. "So many of his vassals, men like Matabei, refuse to do the sensible thing and turn their back on him. It's maddening, really. How many more of my own forces will I have to compromise to end the game? No, I made an error when I made an enemy of Noritoshi. Even after his death, I will have squandered so much time and so many resources, it will not even be satisfying."

"My lord!" Numata said. "You are confessing to terrible, terrible things! Why are you telling me this?"

"A moment of weakness, I suppose," Jimen said with a shrug. "I really should not have, although of course you will say nothing. To do otherwise would ruin you utterly and gain nothing." He stopped and looked at Numata for a long moment. "Will you join me for tea?"

"I... I think not, thank you," Numata said.

A thin smile spread slowly over Jimen's face. "I really must insist."



The End Is A New Beginning...

The Empire's Glory - Finale

BY NICOLAS BONGIU

Let's look back at the second semester of L5R tournaments, which saw an unprecedented number of ways for the players to affect the world of Rokugan as the War against Kali-Ma draws to a close.

GenCon Indy 2011 was a special event for AEG and the players responded en masse. A total of 288 players attended the various storyline tournaments that were held over the 4 Best Days of Gaming in the United States. 195 players vied on Thursday's qualifier to join the Kotei winners in the Saturday Main event, while close to 150 tried again on the Friday qualifier. As the dust settled, 109 players entered the Main Event and 118 joined the Second Chance tournament.

For the second year in a row, Spider shocked GenCon with Fields of the Dead Breeder, but unlike last year, the deck was piloted by Roby Swann who defeated Greg Wong and his Pillars of Virtue Dragon deck. Rounding up the top 4 were Case Kiyonaga (winner of GenCon 2007) with Tetsu Kama Mura and Feargal Fanning (from Ireland, who was in the top 4 at the 2009 European Championships) with his Shattered Peaks Castle Crab and Ronin deck. Crane and Unicorn were the only Clans to miss the top 16. The results of that tournament were included in the fictions Wrath of the God-Beast part 1 and 2, that you can read on the L5R website (www.l5r.com)

The Second Chance tournament was a Scorpion / Dragon affair as all members of the top 4 were of those 2 Clans. In the end,

T Shirt contest (with Unicorn Crane and Crab completing the top 4) and the Live Performance during the 15th Anniversary Party (Crab, Unicorn and Ronin also placed). Spider won Theme Deck thanks to Paul Li (Crab, Spider and Unicorn placed as well) and the costume contest (with Crane, Mantis and Crab rounding up the top 4).

All the results from GenCon can be found on the website at <http://www.l5r.com/events/2010-gencon-recap>

GenCon was more than just a tournament: the 15th Anniversary Party was a huge success and an occasion for players to meet each other outside the confines of a tournament room, and also discuss with the people that create the card game they love in a friendly environment. At the conclusion of the party, John Zinser, CEO of AEG, personally handed out the bags to commemorate the event (a shoulder bag) which contained 15 boosters and the promotional card Festival of Coronation. AEG also answered a panel of questions on Friday, which let players in on the future of L5R as a game and AEG as a company. Those 2 events were filmed by L5RChives and the videos can be found on www.l5rchives.com if you haven't had a chance to watch them.

Yoshihara, a dishonor player favorite, will advise Kuni Daigo. Finally, Crab took home the Topaz Championship for the first time. Congratulations to Petros Meletakos, Edwin Penafuerte, Frédéric Dacquin, Andrew Ornatov, Tim Wells, Fernando Lobos, Ferran Villegas and Daniel Jacobson for their respective victories!

This year's Winter Season was also marked by the **Winner's Choice** and **Stronghold Store** series. Those events of lesser renown made sure that L5R storyline tournaments were accessible to a lot of players. Winner's Choice tournaments even allowed the winners to have their names written on the side of a card in the future sets leading to the next arc of L5R. Here's a brief recap of where each Clan stands as far as those traits are concerned.

Spider won the most of those with seven; Crab won five of those tournaments; Dragon four; Scorpion and Unicorn three; Lion and Mantis two and Phoenix one. Crane could not secure a win but came close on several occasions. Full results can be found on the L5R forums or the Jade Hand (jadehand.com/tourneys)

The largest opportunity to carve your name in Legend of the Five Rings tournament lore and impact the story was the **L5R World**

Spider won the Clan presentation and T-shirt contest while Lion claimed victory in the Theme Deck category.

GenCon saw AEG promise that what was happening at GenCon would happen at Worlds and that's why all attendees received the Anniversary bag from the hands of our crew at the event (Nicolas Bongiu, Bryan Reese, Justin Walsh, Mark Wootton and John Zinser). It was, all things considered, one of the greatest events ever ran by an independent crew of organizers for L5R and it set the bar for future European and World Championships. We hope to see you at either (or both!) next year!

The last two monthly Honor events were the deciding factor in the fight for the Imperial Heir between the Spider and the Crane and thanks to their win in each of those, Spider edged the Crane by one point (out of 1314!)

As the Empire's Glory game comes to an end here is a brief recap of the end result and an outlook on the consequences they will have on the status of your favorite Clan at the beginning of next Arc.

As previously mentioned, Spider donated the most to the Empire in the Honor category.

The Second Chance tournament was a Scorpion / Dragon affair as all members of the top 4 were of those 2 Clans. In the end, Adam Carey (for Scorpion) defeated Joshua Lindsey (for Dragon) as Jesse Gibson and Ian Cameron completed the top 4 (Scorpion and Dragon respectively). Adam chose to spare Bayushi's Paneki life which ties in nicely with the sending of Paneki's Disgrace to all Imperial Assembly members on October 1st, which you've assuredly benefitted from.

While players were trying to qualify on Friday, a Winner's Choice tournament was held in which 61 players competed. Dennis Dreischmeyer won and chose Captain of the Third Kama as a trait, as we explained in the previous Herald, Chris Dorman (with Phoenix) chose Villain, Case Kiyonaga (with Dragon) chose Master of the Blade and Josh Cook (with Mantis) chose Prophet.

Non-CCG competitions were also run during those 4 days with Mantis and Spider making the best of it. Mantis won both the

... and the videos can be found on www.l5rarchives.com if you haven't had a chance to watch them.

As was mentioned in the previous issue of the Imperial Herald, the **Jeweled Events** started in July, and all results are now known for this new successful series of tournaments. Unicorn won the Amethyst Championships and as a result, Utaku Tairu will become a vassal to Yoritomo Yoyonagi. Lion claimed the first Turquoise Championship and Matsu Kasei (pending Story Team Approval) will become the sponsor of the fine arts in Rokugan, which should make for an interesting story. Crab kept the Ruby Championships home and Hida Mochitoko will become the advisor to Yasuki Miliko. Spider took home the Emerald Championship, infiltrating one of the highest offices in the Empire, Lion won the Obsidian Championships and elected Hotako to remain in place, while Scorpion won the Onyx Championship and decided that Fosuta would not stay in position. Scorpion also won the Jade Championships and Soshi

The largest opportunity to carve your name in Legend of the Five Rings tournament lore and impact the story was the **L5R World Championships**. It was run for the first time in Lyon, France, from November 5 to November 7 and close to 400 players from around the world attended.

Saturday and Sunday were devoted to the Main Event and the Second Chance Event. The Main Event let the winner decide of the fate of Agasha Kyoso. Now that she has been severed from Kyoso no Oni and returned to her human form, the shugenja is still convinced that her fate is to bring destruction to the Empire and as such has planned to repeat the past and give her name willingly to another Oni. The winner of the tournament was asked to determine the Clan affiliation of the hero who arrays his skill and forces against the madness of Agasha Kyoso and was presented with a choice: slaying Kyoso to prevent the release of another oni lord, or take the terrible risk of permitting her to succeed in the hope that the Oni can be turned against Kali-Ma

All 9 Clans were represented in the Top 16 of the Main Event – a testament to the game's tournament balance. After two days of games, Phoenix prevailed, with Maxime Desprez beating Victor Diaz's Unicorn and choosing to have a Hero slay Agasha Kyoso. Mantis and Spider rounded out this surprising Top 4.

The Second Chance event let the players determine the fate of the fan favorite Ronin Kuronada: the winner of the tournament could offer Kuronada fealty on behalf of his Clan or dictate that Kuronada remains a Ronin. 238 players entered this tournament and David Attali's Lion had to defeat Scorpion in the Semi Finals and Finals to claim victory and force Kuronada to stay a Ronin. Three Scorpion players completed the top 4 of one of the biggest tournaments in L5R history.

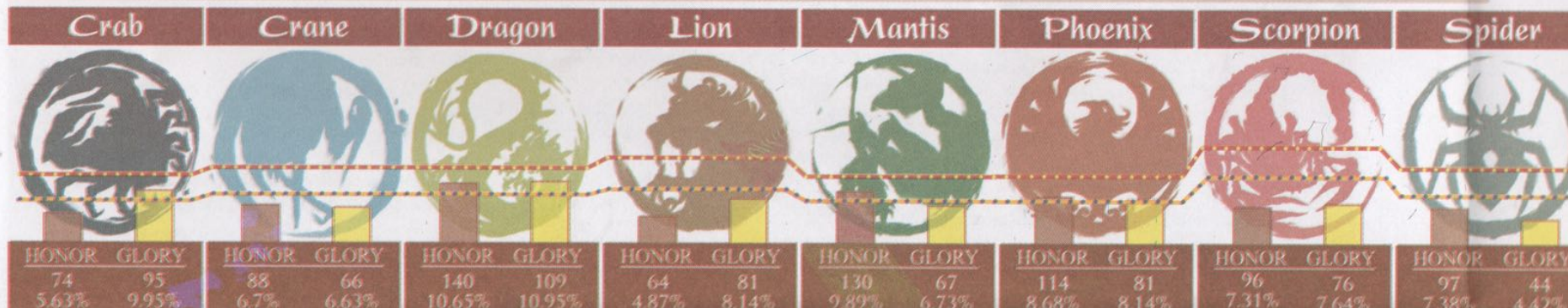
Finally, much like GenCon, Honor events were organized during these 3 days of intense L5R playing. Ronin won the Costume Contest,

As previously mentioned, Spider donated the most to the Empire in the Honor category and thus will foster an Imperial Heir, a story that will undoubtedly prove intriguing. Lion donated the most in the Glory category and will receive as a reward an Imperial Unit (who will join their ranks). The Lion will definitely put those extra forces to a good use, given how much they sacrificed to make sure the Empire succeeded in its struggle against Kali-Ma and her Destroyers. Thanks to the joined efforts of the Clans (and the significant sacrifices of the best placed), the Empire survived its most current threat in its two incarnations: the supernatural Plague and its aftermath, and Kali-Ma herself. It was not easy as the points that secured the win came from the last event (the Topaz Championship).

In Glory, Spider could only achieve Total Failure – essentially due to their inner struggle between Empire and Jigoku loyalists - while Crane, Lion, Mantis and Scorpion failed. Those five Clans will suffer significant losses over the course of the next months, some irreversible for the Spider. The other four Clans however will play a role in the defeat of Kali-Ma as the Destroyer War reaches its climax.

In Honor, Crab, Scorpion, Crane and Spider reached Failure – the last two due to their competition for the Heir- while Lion achieved Total Failure (missing only 2 out of 995 points to reach simple Failure). Those five Clans will see the plague take a higher toll on them despite the overall success of the Empire. The Dragon, Mantis, Phoenix and Unicorn on the other hand will be instrumental in the curing of the supernatural disease that scoured the Empire for the past year.

You will be able to see the very detailed consequences of those results as the story of Rokugan in the Celestial Arc enters its final chapter before a new Arc releases in late 2011 so be sure to check www.l5r.com for your weekly official fiction!



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Kotei 2011: The Destroyer War

BY NICOLAS BONGIU AND SHAWN CARMAN

Kotei List 2011

Utaku Yu-Pan stood in the center of the Imperial army camp and watched quietly as the long icicles dangling from the edge of the different canopies slowly dripped and disappeared, their life's blood mingling with the diminishing snow on the ground. As a child she had never cared for winter, had always looked forward to spring and riding through the green, blossoming meadows. Now, ironically, she looked to the impending thaw with trepidation.

"Winter's end comes soon," a deep, familiar voice said.

"Hai," Yu-Pan said flatly.

Akodo Shigetoshi sat down on the rough wooden bench beside her. "There are increased reports of activity south of the front line," he added. "The Destroyers are preparing to renew their assault."

"We knew that they would," Yu-Pan said.

"I never doubted that they would," Shigetoshi confirmed. "I look forward to the opportunity for renewed victory." He frowned. "But I would be dishonest if I did not confess that I fear the effect any losses will have upon the morale of our forces. They have suffered greatly thus far, and the winter has been a beneficial opportunity to restore their spirits." He stared into the distance. "My Lion will fight with every breath of life within them, and they will never accept defeat. As an Akodo, I celebrate their devotion and share their certainty. As a tactician, I have no choice but to consider the potential alternatives." His face was grim. "They are bleak indeed."

"Realism is an appropriate trait in a leader of men," Yu-Pan replied. "Some find it questionable in a samurai, of course, but then those are men and women who have never stood on the field of battle and stared inevitability in the face."

Shigetoshi chuckled slightly. "You have a gift for phrasing. Perhaps you missed your calling as a poet or storyteller."

"That is the province of your Ikoma cousins, I think," Yu-Pan said. "I fear there will be few stories worth telling of this war when all is said and done."

The Lion Champion looked genuinely surprised. "Oh, no, my friend," he said warmly, "in that you are most mistaken. Look around us." He gestured to encompass the camp. "There are men and women among us who would have killed one another with almost no provocation not so long ago. Have you seen the Crab and the Scorpion working together, united in suffering over the plight of their homes? Or the Mantis and my own clan, standing shoulder to shoulder to put an end to our enemies?" He shook his head. "No, Yu-Pan-san, there will be many, many stories to tell of this war regardless of its outcome. Stories of valiant men and women of honor who stood beside one another and refused to retreat in the face of certain death. The generations that will follow us will have no end of examples for their children when instruction as to the code of bushido is called for, I think."

Yu-Pan smiled. "I only hope that there are generations remaining to be so instructed."

In 2011, the Kotei season will determine the results of the Empire's war with the Destroyers. As the ravages of winter subside, the forces of Kali-ma resume their ruthless onslaught with a vengeance as yet unseen. And it is the Scorpion who must bear the brunt of their anger, as the front line resumes at the southern end of their provinces and pushes northward toward the heart of Rokugan.

Each Kotei tournament this season will present the victor with a

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How much should one stronghold do? In the Celestial arc, most clans have only had access to strongholds that affected the game in one or two ways. Granted, simplicity can be deceptive in its flexibility – just look at all the ways people have used Shiro Daidoji and City of Tears – but it's nearly always been obvious from the start of the game how a deck would put its stronghold to use. Those days, I'm happy to say, are long gone.

Honor is My Strength

DEAD OF WINTER
CRANE REVIEW

BY CHRIS RUSSELL

Embassy of the Crane essentially makes everything about your deck just a little bit better. It significantly changes the game in five different ways, three of which work for just about any Crane deck you can imagine. Right off the bat, everyone will notice that this is the first non-draft stronghold in almost a decade with a starting honor higher than seven. The most important implication of that stat bump is the guarantee of going first (unless your opponent plays the Embassy as well). This addresses a major problem that less battle-ready Crane decks have with high-honor military: the constant need to play from behind. Going first in every game allows you to take that breathing room for granted while building your deck, which any Lion player will tell you is invaluable. The other universal bonuses are an extra point of province strength while you control the Imperial Favor and, thanks to the Market keyword, an extra point of gold production from your Docks and Markets. All these advantages will make your deck more consistent, and consistency wins games.



What Empire at War began as a rise of power for the Scorpion Clan, The Dead of Winter continues both militarily and in the courts of Rokugan. The Emerald Champion, on his quest to end the rivalry between himself and Kakita Noritoshi finally makes his appearance in the Celestial era, and he's bringing friends.

Honor is Your Weakness

DEAD OF WINTER
SCORPION REVIEW

BY SCOTT HADSALL

One of the most interesting and difficult Personalities from the Samurai edition story arc, Bayushi Muhito, returns as not just another pretty mask. With the Duelist trait, he now has a level of protection against other duelists, a battle ability that can kill the opposition, and of course, a reactive move ability that reminds you of why everyone hated Muhito several years ago. He's hardly the only ninja to make a an appearance, however. Shosuro Higemasa provides a solid ranged attack and a good stat line for only 7 gold, and compliments the new ninja ranged attack Strategy Shuriken and Smoke.

Ninja followers get a major boost with Midnight Shadows, providing ninja some real opportunities to stand up and fight when you're forced out of hiding with another ranged attack and potential kill ability (provided you're handing out Poison like candy), and the Strategy Hidden in Shadows provide your ninja with some much needed straighten tech. Out of Nowhere also can provide a real shocker in battle when your opponent is suddenly facing up to two additional ninja Personalities from your provinces!

The Dead of Winter is not all about subterfuge and battle however. The battle in the courts of Rokugan rages on while the lines of battle have fallen somewhat quiet, and there the Scorpion flourish. Bayushi Jou provides you with a boxable courtier with a fantastic ability that actually allows you to defend, giving you the opportunity to use more dishonor battle actions like The Shadow Court and Words Have Strength. If you weren't taking advantage of Scorpion shugenja before, you may revisit the idea now with an incredibly powerful spell called The Kami's Whisper.



Those bonuses are useful, and they might make Embassy the Crane stronghold of choice for the rest of the arc, but it doesn't truly shine until you consider it in the context of dueling decks. When I said Embassy changes the game in five different ways, I wasn't counting the Imperial keyword. The boost to your focus values gives you, for the first time in Celestial Edition, the ability to play cards with a focus value of 5, thus assuring victory if your Duelist challenges someone with equal chi. Just look at Kakita Takashima to see what that'll cost you elsewhere. On top of that, this trait greatly expands the card pool available to you: upping your lower focus values means you can play a dueling fate deck that would be a liability with other strongholds. All in all, Embassy of the Crane is the clan's most exciting card of the arc, and I can't wait to start building decks with it.

Just as the stronghold lends itself to flexible deck design, a number of the new Crane personalities have multipurpose abilities and keyword combinations that allow them to play multiple roles in your decks. This is critical for decks that try to dominate the Action Phase; you need to be able to push forward with your strategy regardless of the specific cards you draw, but you can only buy two or three personalities per turn. In the right kind of deck, Doji Shikatsu is an ideal utility personality. The ability to either keep a troublesome personality out of battle or dishonor him and produce an honor gain is like combining Doji Senta and Kakita Taminoko into one personality. Of course, better stats, an extra useful keyword, and a trait to help in the dishonor matchup are all thrown into the bargain. Kakita Yosuga is another great all-around card with solid stats, three important keywords, and a powerful control ability. These personalities are classic designs; packing so much utility into one card lets Crane players adapt to the game state and create strategies on the fly while taking up minimal space in the deck.

Shikatsu and Yosuga's abilities make you pay for their flexibility by letting your opponent choose which benefit he's willing to give you. It's certainly a worthy trade for effects this powerful, but even so, you don't want your opponent to make all the decisions for you; it's good to hold a few sure things in reserve. Winter Pilgrimage will keep most heavy hitters out of your hair for a turn, and Impromptu Weapon is a great way to accelerate a dueling deck's honor gains. Some players say that these "guaranteed" effects are superior to those that give the opponent a choice, and sometimes that is true. The key to using cards like Shikatsu and Yosuga, though, is to make sure that you can capitalize on whatever choice your opponent makes. If your deck can both threaten an honor victory and punish dishonorable personalities, he can only hope to make the least painful choice, and when you've got your opponent guessing, you've got him right where you want him.

Like actions like The Shadow Court and Words Have Strength, if you weren't taking advantage of Scorpion shugenja before, you may revisit the idea now with an incredibly powerful spell called The Kami's Whisper, which, for long-time Scorpion players will make you cheer that the L5R Gods have brought back Secrets on the Wind!

Bayushi Saito is an additional Magistrate with another solid battle ability to compliment a true dishonor military switch, something that has been rarely seen in the history of L5R. With strategies like Rain of Justice and Taxing the Scum, military dishonor can force your opponent into a real strategic quandary. Defend and get sent down in honor, or not defend and lose the province? As the opposite side of the military honor switch, Scorpion can now switch forcing the opponent into poorly timed attacks (or defenses) that you can take full advantage of with an action set of solid battle actions that also happen to cause honor loss.



Then, there's Jimen.

The cards mentioned previously provide a fantastic boost to the Scorpion, but none so much as the most hated man in the Empire, the Emerald Champion, Shosuro Jimen. While Jimen is only one man, he may be the best one card in the entire set. A plethora of traits including Courtier, Magistrate and Duelist provide him an opportunity to fit into whatever deck you may be constructing, and I have a good feeling he'll be an auto-include into Scorpion decks for the rest of the arc. These keywords are amazing in conjunction with each other, but the additional trait of being able to move home after any battle action he performs is what truly makes him shine. Adding to that, a Limited dishonor or honor loss ability, he compliments any game strategy you plan to employ. He may have a mere 3 force, but it's his 6 chi for a 9 cost (7 to real Scorpion players!) allowing him to use any of the Magistrate strategies that compare chi to a target's personal honor along with his protection from other duellists, that make Jimen not only the most hated man in the Empire, but one of the most feared in the TCG.

While Scorpion players may have had a difficult time with winning tournaments and gaining Glory points this past year, The Dead of Winter provides ample resources to change all that. A strong personality set with two amazing uniques and Strategies to compliment them, along with a powerful follower and more powerful spell are sure to vault the Scorpion straight to the top!

L5R Production At a Glance

BY SCOTT HADSALL

While you may have played a game of L5R against Bryan Reese, or had a talk about the history of L5R with John Zinser or Todd Rowland, none of us would be playing cards without the tireless work of Dave Lepore. Dave has been the Production Manager at AEG for roughly two years and with the recent change in printers we were luckily able to catch Dave while he was still stateside. Luckier than you might think.

Imperial Herald: *How often have you been overseas?*

Dave Lepore: I haven't really kept track of miles as much as days in a foreign country. In terms of production trips, I've travelled to China three times, in April, June and in July. Over those three trips, I've spent about 50 days there. (Editor's note: Dave has taken another trip since press time.)

IH: *Is this kind of hands-on approach usual when printing?*

DL: With each trip, not only do we learn more about our printer's capabilities, but they learn more about our needs and standards. As we address each issue in the process, we aim to have it completely fixed. That is, the issue should not come up again and thus our involvement in the print process should comfortably decrease with each set printed. Our current expectations for a new printer with L5R is to be on hand for the first two sets. After that, everything should be able to be accomplished remotely. I still expect to make the trip to the printers at least once, if not twice a year. Part of that is simply maintaining a relationship as well as making the most out of each trip as we have the opportunity to see other printers that are printing our board games.

IH: *Why is printing L5R such a challenge?*

DL: Almost everything about L5R makes changing printers challenging. L5R's need for each set to fit with those that came before and those coming after makes it a lot more challenging than printing one board game to the next.

From a production standpoint, there are so many details that have to be considered. Paper availability and quality, print resolution and color matching previous sets, coating, cutting, collating. That represents the physical production of the product. The product is produced, then it has to be packaged for shipping. This is not a simple as putting it in a box and putting it on a boat. The weight and strength of cardboard for the cartons has to be specified and checked. Additional things like cardboard corners and scrap pieces on top to protect the product from box knives when the case is being cut open. Unfortunately, some of these things you plan for, but some we learn after the fact.

DL: We've addressed press sheet layout, print color, coating and shipping issues. Remember, Empire at War was our first L5R set to print in China. We expected to have to address a lot of issues on site. As further issues arise as the product gets to market, we address each customer service issue as it appears. We also log them so that I can address each issue with the printer for the next set.

IH: *So, this begs the question, why China?*

DL: Over the last couple of years, we have learned quite a lot about the printing process since we started publishing board games. Creating new partnerships with new printers allow us options that we did not have with our printers in the states. Additionally, the printing cost has increased each year in the US reducing our margins



and our ability to bring new and exciting options to L5R. We believe the cause of this is that there were fewer CCGs being printed and economies of scale were not what they used to be ten years ago. Therefore, we have had to make hard choices between things we wanted

to do, and things we had to do. Developing new printing partnerships re-opens options for bringing you cool things in the next arc and we already have some ideas in mind.

IH: *How does this affect your shipping timetables and estimates on street dates?*

DL: We've had to add a lot of time to shipping mainly because we cannot anticipate all the potential delays. We've had natural disasters (Icelandic volcano), customs, documentation, lost then found shipments and all kinds of other unexpected

delays when shipping from China. It also becomes harder, and later in the process to provide a street date for the product because potential delays can happen all the way up until the product arrives in our warehouse.

However, one of the things we have not done is take away time from design and playtest. The quality of the game design is paramount and we will not sacrifice time there.

IH: *Are there any issues specific to L5R that cause difficulty in printing?*

DL: Unique to L5R in the trading card business are the two different card backs. I never thought about this until I started handling the L5R production, but this really makes it challenging from how the press sheets are built, to how the decks and booster packs are collated. This affects both how the press sheets are built, and more so collation. Collation appears to be a specialized task. Many printers I've approached are confused when I talk about the collation of a booster pack. If you take the standard collation of seven commons, three uncommon and one rare card, then factor in it has to be a dynasty to fate ratio of 4:3 for common, 2:1 for uncommon, and 1:0 for rare, then flip that for the next pack, it multiplies the difficulty. That's not even including the collation within a booster display or a case, which we have to be aware of as well.

IH: *Thanks for taking some time out of your jet setting schedule to talk to us Dave, best of luck in China!*

4th Edition RPG School

BY SHAWN CARMAN

New Mechanics

The following section offers a new Basic School for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition rules. The



The following section offers a new Basic School for the Legend of the Five Rings 4th Edition rules. The *Shinjo* are known as wanderers, and few samurai in Rokugan can claim to have as deep a knowledge of its landscapes and animals than the *Shinjo*.

The *Shinjo* are an ancient and honorable family that sustained considerable damage to their reputation due to the subversion by their leadership by the sinister *Kolat* organization. Information on this shameful episode may be found in the *Kolat* chapter of the L5R 4th Edition expansion book *Enemies of the Empire*. Prior to the exposure of this shame, the *Shinjo* were the ruling family of the Unicorn Clan, maintaining a line of Clan Champions descended from the clan's founding Kami herself. After the purge of the *Kolat*, the *Shinjo* were removed from power and replaced by their distant kinsmen, the *Moto*. Despite this change, the family persevered in its duties to the Unicorn Clan, and remained one of the pillars of the Unicorn Clan and its military endeavors.



New Basic School: Shinjo Bushi

The *Shinjo* excel at mounted tactics, a trait common to all Unicorn bushi traditions. The family's fighting techniques incorporate a number of *gaijin* fighting methods encountered during the clan's centuries of travel outside the Empire, and as a result they employ a unique defensive style that depends on concepts such as the active parry, riposte, and other such oddities that most *Rokugani* are unfamiliar with.

Shinjo Bushi School [Bushi]

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any one Skill

Honor: 4.5

Outfit: Ashigaru or Light Armor, Sturdy Clothing, Daisho, Bow, Knife, Traveling Pack, Horse, 10 Koku

Techniques:

Rank One: The Way of the Ki-Rin

The *Shinjo* family's natural affinity for horsemanship is immediately obvious and pervades their every action. When spending a Void Point to add +1k1 to any School Skill Roll, you may also add your rank in Horsemanship to the total. This bonus cannot be used while in the Center Stance.

Rank Two: Dance of the Blade

The ancient *gaijin* swordsmanship techniques practiced by the *Shinjo* have given them a defensive edge against many styles practiced within the Empire. When you are in the Full Defense Stance and an opponent succeeds with an attack roll that targets you, you may immediately take a Free Action to make a Contested Agility Roll against that opponent. If successful, the attack misses instead. This may be done a number of times per Round equal to your School Rank.

Rank Three: The Four Winds Strike

The swift and relentless assault of a *Shinjo* is a dreadful sight to behold for his enemies. You may make attacks as a Simple Action rather than a Complex Action

when wielding weapons that possess the Samurai keyword. If you are fighting while mounted, you may also attack as a Simple Action when wielding a bow.

Rank Four: Spirit of the Blade Unleashed

Those who mistake the defensive style of the *Shinjo* as weak can find themselves brutally surprised in the last moments of their lives. When you are in the Defense or Full Defense Stances and an opponent makes a melee attack targeting you, after the attack resolves you may immediately take a Free Action to make one melee attack against that opponent. This causes you to immediately assume the Attack Stance. This Technique may be used a number of times per skirmish equal to your School Rank, but may only be used once per Round.

Rank Five: Dancing with the Fortunes

A *Shinjo* atop a horse is a sight that gives even the most seasoned among his enemies pause, and for good reason. During a skirmish, when mounted, when you wish to spend a Void Point you may make a Void Ring Roll (TN 20) as a Free Action. If the Ring Roll is successful, you gain the mechanical benefit of having spent the Void Point without actually spending it. (This does not actually create a bonus Void Point, it simply generates the mechanical effects of spending one.) If the roll fails, you spend the Void Point as normal. You may only use this Technique a number of times per skirmish equal to the number of Void Points you had at the start of the skirmish.

You may utilize this Technique when on foot as well, but the TN of the Void Ring Roll increases to 30.



*"As the fury
of the elements is unleashed,
who will remain standing?"*

THE DEAD OF WINTER





Kotei Season

The End ... A New Beginning ... Your Empire

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WE MAKE
FUN