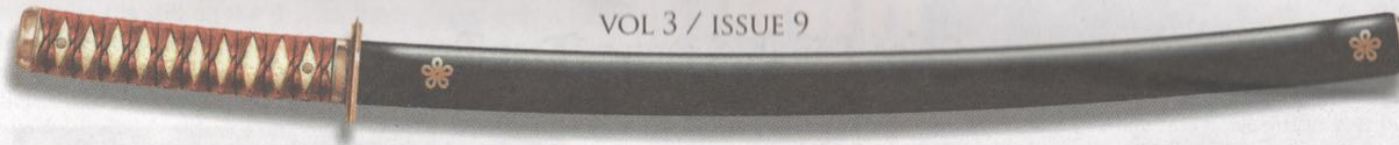


THE IMPERIAL HERALD

VOL 3 / ISSUE 9



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

The Birth of Emperor Edition

BY BRYAN REESE

How a New Arc is Designed

Many of you out there may be wondering about what the process is like for creating a new base set. If I had to describe it in a single word: tedious. It is a very long and strenuous process. To give you an idea of how long, we first started working on Emperor Edition in March of 2010, close to two years before it actually released.

The first thing we do before even starting on design of a new base set is the development of it. Working with the Story Team, we get a rough outline of what will be happening in the story. This helps us determine what themes and types of decks each clan should be getting. For example, the Spider zombie theme was created because the Spider were going to be resurrecting zombies. Had that not been one of their achievements in the Celestial story, then they would not have received that mechanic. This is not to say that everything translates perfectly between story and mechanics, but where we can overlap we do.

Using this information, we brainstorm about what we would like to see each clan doing, and what our goals are for each clan. From here we look at all of our possible themes for each clan and settle on four per clan, then ask ourselves a series of questions for each clan. Are the themes fun? Do they properly represent the clan? Has the clan lost its identity? Is this



sadly necessary, but I worked very hard to keep these to a minimum. Being strict

we can make the card replacement. This process takes place dozens of times every week, and went on for about a year straight while Emperor Edition was being playtested. It was quite a challenge, but one I met head on and gleefully, and couldn't have done without the support of a great design team and great playtest teams.

So with that we have the basic outline of how a base set is designed, but this is only the tip of the iceberg in creating a new, exciting, and engaging arc. We have done much more with Emperor Edition than we have ever done before in an effort to truly bring you a premium product. But lets not get into any of that today. Instead lets look at some of the cards coming back.

With Emperor Edition we tried really hard to bring back some classic cards. One of these was One Koku. Likely the most expensive common in the game's history, One Koku was widely used when it was last legal in Jade Edition. Though it may not look like much, the ability to produce one Gold independent of a holding can be very strong. Lion can use it to buy a four gold cost

each clan and some on each per clan, then ask ourselves a series of questions for each clan. Are the themes fun? Do they properly represent



the clan? Has the clan lost its identity? Is this different enough from the previous are to be new and refreshing? Can this be improved? There are some other questions as well, but these are some of the larger ones. I feel with Emperor Edition we have made sure we got the correct answer to each of these.

The next step in designing is defining how many cards we are giving to each theme, and what those cards should (roughly) do. By laying this foundation, we maximize our ability to create a balanced environment. It also allows us to then properly adjust theme by theme to compensate for inherent strengths or weaknesses in mechanics. For example, a blank seven force Crab Berserker is a pretty good start towards taking opposing provinces. However, a blank Scorpion Courtier is not as good at helping his controller win the game. These differences need to be accounted for at every stage of the game, and this is one of those stages. After a lot of discussion and debating, we have laid the foundation for what our next base set will look like, assigning every available card slot, even if it is in vague terms at this point such as Dragon Magistrate or Ninja Strategy which is good for Scorpion and Spider. Now we are ready to actually start designing the base set.

Doing so is much different than designing a regular set. In a regular set, we are designing all brand new cards. In a base set, we are largely working with existing cards, only designing new cards to fill in holes. This creates some unique challenges, especially with me as I despise MRP'ing cards. For those unfamiliar with the term, MRP stands for Most Recent Printing, and means a card is returning but the mechanics are changing, usually only slightly. In Emperor Edition you will notice that there are comparatively very few MRPs. Some were still

sadly necessary, but I worked very hard to keep these to a minimum. Being strict on MRPs made the process more difficult as I could not tweak cards as the need arose.

In a typical expansion, if I am having a difficult time with a card, such as a Mantis Thunder Spell, I can tweak the mechanics to balance it. However, with a base set, that would be an MRP since we use primarily existing cards; instead I try to find a Thunder Spell which fits our needs better. In the case of something like Thunder Spells, this is even more difficult given the lack in the game's history. This issue is compounded by a few more restrictions.

First, there is always a possibility we no longer have the art for a card. Over the years files have been lost, hard drives have crashed, and other issues have risen, greatly restricting the number of cards we have to choose from. This can be ok though as we can always commission new art, which is acceptable. There is, of course, a restriction here though, two restrictions actually. First is time. If I am in the last week of playtest and need to make this adjustment, that is not enough time for an artist to create a new piece of art. More important than this though is the constraint of the budget. Each project, including base sets, has a budget, and we cannot go over that budget. So now, when I have to change out that Thunder Spell near the end, I can only look at existing cards that we have the art for. This leads us to our next restriction.

Rarity. If my Thunder Spell is a rare, I need to find a rare Thunder Spell to replace it. If I find a suitable replacement that is an uncommon, I now have one too many uncommons in the set, and one too few rares. I now have to find one of the uncommons in the set and remove it to put a rare in its place. Luckily in the case of most card types, this can be done. With personalities though, this becomes even more difficult, as each clan is sort of an independent island with its ability to make these kinds of changes. What I mean by that is if I have to swap a Crane uncommon for a Crane common, I can't then make up for this by swapping some Scorpions around, the solution has to be found in the tiny subset of the Crane personalities.

However, this is not the end of the restrictions. I also need to find cards that are simple. While we all want personalities with great abilities, the reality of gaming is players like simplicity on their cards. Gamers, and people in general, do not like to read massive blocks of text. This goes double for a new base set, when L5R gains a lot of new players. When showing a new player the game, you don't want to have a deck full of long, confusing, complex cards. Personalities with no game text are better for teaching than a personality with lots of game text.

Keeping all of these restrictions in mind, the replacement card still has to meet the basic requirements. Does it fit the theme? Is it a fun card? Is it a fair card? Once all of these questions, plus more, are answered,

in the game's history, One Koku was widely used when it was last legal in Jade Edition. Though it may not look like much, the ability to produce one Gold independent of a holding can be very strong. Lion can use it to buy a four gold cost holding on their first turn, or Unicorn can use it to buy a six gold cost holding that produces five gold. It can purchase some of the cheaper personalities in the game, as well as some of the cheaper holdings, such as Large Farm. And, as the name would suggest, it is also worth One Koku for the Imperial Assembly. This is a great, fun little card that will surely earn the hearts of many players today, just as it did many years ago.

The evil historians among us will remember our next card, I Give You My Name, one of the few older Spells in the game's history to actually see a good amount of play. I Give You My Name was once the basis of a very popular Oni Summoning deck.



While we may not have cards like Sentei no Oni anymore, this Spell will have more than its fair share of fun Oni to bind its helpless victims to.

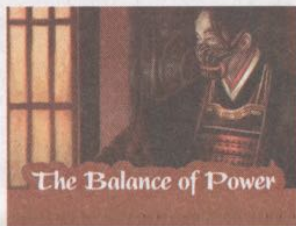
Last but certainly not least is one of the most recognizable cards in the history of the game: Imperial Gift. Coming from Imperial Edition itself, this card has not been legal for play for quite a while, but now is the time for a glorious return. As with the other cards previewed here, it will certainly gain a brand new audience of devoted fans. I know just seeing it brings back fond memories for me.



Now you have gotten a small glimpse behind the curtains and seen what the process is like for designing a new base set. This was my first experience of doing it without a partner, so I hope you like what I have worked so hard to create for you.

Enjoy!

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



NINJA

Legend of the Scorpion Clan

The Night Turns Deadly

Ninja: Legend of the Scorpion Clan is a new board game coming from Alderac Entertainment Group. Designed by veteran game designer Frédéric Moyersoen, Ninja features fast play, hidden movement, limited information, bluff and guile. It is sure to challenge players and bring hours of enjoyment.

Ninja marks a major excursion of the vaunted Legend of the Five Rings property into a board game format. L5R, as it is called by its fans, has become a staple of hobby gaming over its 16 years, thanks in large part to its loyal and devoted fans. It has won numerous awards for both its collectible card game and its role-playing games versions, and the property has also spawned novels and a miniatures game. Ninja: Legend of the Scorpion Clan brings the depth and detail of L5R's fantasy samurai world to board gamers in a fast-playing exciting, and accessible manner.

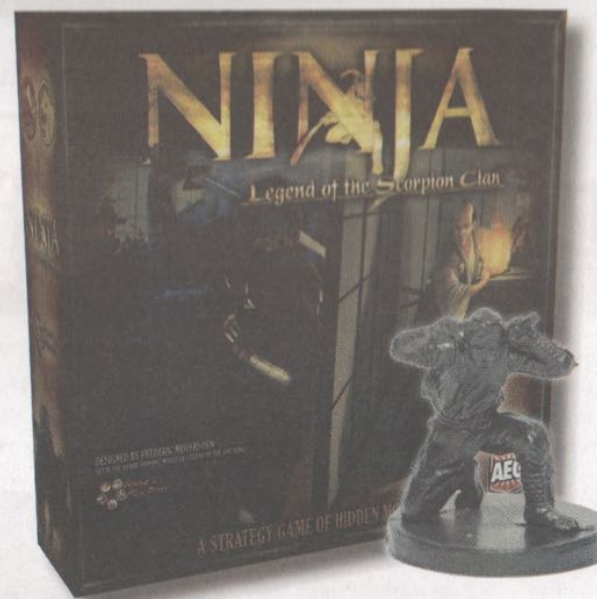
The game centers around one very dangerous night at a castle in the provinces of the Lion Clan. Honorable Lion samurai stand vigilant watch around the castle, protecting it from harm. The Scorpion Clan sends one well trained ninja to intrate the castle for nefarious purposes... it may be to assassinate an imperial guest under the Lion's protection, or poison the well, or steal the daimyo's war plans for the coming season. Whatever the goal, the ninja has vowed to accomplish it, or die trying. Worse yet for the Lion Clan, the ninja has an accomplice: a traitor among the ranks of the Lion samurai whose true loyalty lies with the Scorpion.

The intruders move in secret, marking their positions on a small copy of the game board. They can move freely, but the faster they move, the easier they are to detect. Moats, walls, and most especially sentries all serve to hamper their movement. And if a guard stumbles across their position, the alarm will be raised!



The guards must listen for intruders, search the area, and rouse additional guards when they think there's trouble.

All this is handled through the Alarm Level. As incidents occur the Alarm Level rises, allowing the



The guards have their own secrets, of course. The intruders don't know the precise location of their mission targets, and while searching for them, they may stumble upon a nightingale oor that gives a telltale squeak, or even a hidden guard ready to slay any foe!

The game is designed for 2-4 players, and plays in less than an hour. With three players, one player handles the guards, one the traitor, and one the ninja (the intruders don't have to cooperate, either). With 4 players, the guards are split into two teams, which has its own benets and challenges.

Ninja: Legend of the Scorpion Clan includes comes with over two dozen 28mm miniature gures, four pads of secret maps, 58 playing cards that delineate each player's available actions, a full-color map, and all



All this is handled through the Alarm Level. As incidents occur, the Alarm Level rises, allowing the guard player to take more actions each turn. Over time, the Alarm Level gradually diminishes... until a new incident raises suspicions once more. All this is handled through card play, but deductive reasoning and intuition will also be required to find the intruders before they can complete their missions and escape.

Although time and numbers weigh in the guards' favor, the intruders have tricks aplenty. Climbing ropes, shuriken, drugged sake, and other tricks will distract the guards... or eliminate them completely. But of course, each such action may raise the Alert Level, as well as give the guard player a clue to your location.

dozen 28mm miniature gures, four pads of secret maps, 58 playing cards that delineate each player's available actions, a full-color map, and all the other items you need to play (except for pencils, sharp minds, and steely nerves).



European Championships

BY EGIN BURKE

In association with Gaelcon (<http://www.gaelcon.com/gaelcon/>) the European Championships will occur over the 28th-30th of October 2011 in the D4 Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin, Ireland. This hotel is just one part of an extended complex with several bars, restaurants and a supermarket. This is an event for all levels of play from ex-World Champions to the new players we're teaching the game to the night before.

We have representatives from Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Iceland and The United States coming, making this the World Cup of L5R. The current plan is to run three qualifiers on the 28th for the main event, which will be running along with a Second Chance event on Saturday the 29th. On Sunday the 30th we will be running the finals of the European Championships, a War of Honor event, and several other side events. We'll have Charles Urbach, the man who makes your strongholds look amazing, in attendance and the irrepressible Mike Colson as our first Special Guest Judge, as well as a "Masked Judge", whose identity will remain secret for the sanity of our players. The storyline for the main event allows the winner to choose the Ivory Champion, the equivalent of the Emerald Champion for the Colonies. There is also the Irish National Convention, Gaelcon, taking place in the same building, and attendees of the European Championships will have free entry to if you feel like a change of pace, a board game or an RPG. If before, during, or after all the L5R you feel like a refreshing drink, there is a bar opposite the CCG area...and one in it. So if you can make it at all, come along to Ireland. We're looking to end this one with a "Banzai!" that will shake the Pillars of Heaven.



The Balance of Power

BY SHAWN CARMAN

Emperor Edition will soon be upon us, and with it, some fairly comprehensive changes to the world of Rokugan that we all know and love. Already, many questions have been raised about how the world will have changed in the interim decades between the conclusion of Celestial Edition and the dawning of Emperor Edition. Some of this you have seen already in the form of the cards in the Forgotten Legacy direct-to-player set, or in the cards of the Second City expansion in September, both of which offer a lot of hints as to exactly what has changed and what has not.

First and foremost, the center of power still rests with the Iweko Dynasty. Iweko I is still on the throne, having aged only a little since the waning days of the Destroyer War, but enough to prove that despite her semi-divinity, she is not immortal. Her spouse, Iweko Setai, and their two children are also extremely important and powerful individuals who are active in the Imperial Court, although Iweko's youngest child is something of an enigma for many, having only recently returned from his fostering to the Spider Clan in the distant Colonies.

Immediately beneath the Iweko Dynasty in terms of sheer power and influence are the Emperor's Chosen and the Jeweled Champions. Many of these individuals have not had their identity revealed as yet, mainly because they will be determined by player tournaments. Those who do remain from Celestial Edition, however, include the Voice of the Emperor, the elderly but still spry Togashi Satsu, and the Turquoise Champion, the legendary storyteller and poet Matsu Kasei.

Extremely influential newcomers to the setting appear in the personage of the Imperial Governor of the Colonies and his attendants in the court of the Second City. The Imperial Governor is perhaps one of the most powerful men in the world, ruling over an enormous area of land with the full authority to speak in the Empress' name. The previous Governor was killed during the hostilities with the Dark Naga, and his replacement was determined at GenCon 2011. One of the new Governor's first edicts will be the creation of the position of Ivory Champion, a samurai similar in many respects to the Emerald Champion, but whose authority extends only to the Colonies. Other major positions of power in the Colonies will arise soon after the release of Emperor Edition, such as the Master Sensei of the Imperial Explorers, but we will examine those at a later date.

And of course, the more things change, the more things stay the same! Which is to say that the Clan Champions remain some of the most powerful and dangerous individuals in the world of L5R. With the Champions of Emperor Edition, you will find familiar themes and identities of the clans represented in their leaders, but with some new twists and takes that make them interesting as well as familiar. For example, let's look at a couple



War Of The Twins
by Shawn Carman

Five years before the events of Emperor Edition...

The wind swept snow up in clouds of swirling white that danced across the rocks before scattering, only to be lifted again by the next gust. It was a beautiful dance, the playful manifestation of the Frost Dragon's will in the mortal realm, but today it went unnoticed despite the large number of individuals who stood atop the mountain. Two groups met atop the mountain, one clad in brilliant reds and yellows, the other terrible in crimson and black.

Shiba Tsukimi, the Lady of the Phoenix, stood at the front of her delegation. Her armor caught every stray ray of sunlight in the drab, gray winter, and gleamed like the summer sky. "This must not continue," she said simply.

Across from her, a young man clad in a mask stepped forward. His armor was as black as the heart of midnight, and seemed to drink in all light around it. "The Phoenix alone have the power to end this," said Bayushi Nitoshi, the Scorpion Clan Champion. "Withdraw the petition you have set forth in the Imperial Court, and the slight to my clan's honor will be satisfied."

leaders, but with some new twists and takes that make them interesting as well as familiar. For example, let's look at a couple of the new Champions and discuss their current situations.

The new Dragon Champion is Mirumoto Shikei, the son of Mirumoto Kei and Mirumoto Mareshi. He is a bushi, trained by the master swordsmen of the Mirumoto family, but has also been blessed with several mystical tattoos of the Togashi order. His demeanor is much like that of an Ise Zumi, and has resulted in him being known as the Laughing Dragon. He is presently betrothed to the Unicorn Champion, for whom he feels genuine love and affection, but neither are willing to leave their clan for the other's, and the situation has become something of a political hotbed.

Bayushi Nitoshi is the new Scorpion Champion. He is the son of Bayushi Paneki and Bayushi Miyako. He scarcely remembers his father, but the fact that the Disgrace still exists hidden in some corner of the world drives him like nothing else. His issues with his father and his mother's obsession with destroying the undead abomination have left Nitoshi somewhat detached and impersonal, but he has learned very well how to emulate the emotions others expect from him. He is well known and feared in court, and his ruthless manipulations have caused some to call him the Poison Mask. Nitoshi is not completely content with politics, however; sometimes, when there are dark deeds that must be done in the name of the Scorpion Clan, he takes to the night and does them personally. This horrifies his closest advisors, but Nitoshi is completely uninterested in their opinion on the matter.



Bayushi Nitoshi, the Scorpion Clan Champion. "Withdraw the petition you have set forth in the Imperial Court, and the slight to my clan's honor will be satisfied."

"That you have convinced the Imperial Court of your injured honor is amusing, but it has no place here," Tsukimi said. "You and I both know the truth."

The man some called the Poison Mask smiled. "I am certain I do not know of which you speak."

"Too many have died already in this war," Tsukimi pressed. "The Phoenix can ill afford to lose so many so soon after the Destroyer War's conclusion. We are yet replenishing our numbers." She stared pointedly at her opponent. "I know full well the Scorpion suffer as much as the Phoenix. You cannot continue to sustain the losses you have endured thus far."

"Every living soul in the Scorpion would gladly sacrifice his or her life to avenge the insult you have offered us," Nitoshi said. "We will fight until satisfied, or until you have removed all reason for it." He raised his eyebrows. "Unless of course you can think of another way this might be concluded?"

Tsukimi turned very slightly so that her sword was closer to Nitoshi. "Are you challenging me to a duel?"

Nitoshi waved the comment away. "Do not be ridiculous," he scoffed. "A woman of your advanced years? It would be disgraceful for me to do such a thing."

"Your youth is an asset, but not an advantage," Tsukimi warned. "Do not be so assured of yourself."

"I have no interest in such things," Nitoshi said. "If there is nothing further to discuss, then we will see one another again on the field of battle." He gestured for his men to withdraw.

"This is very much the field of battle," Tsukimi countered. "I challenge you."

Nitoshi stopped and glanced over his shoulder. "Are you absolutely certain?"

"I challenge you," Tsukimi repeated. "The victor's clan will set the terms for her enemy's surrender."

"Her enemy's surrender?" Nitoshi said, smiling. "Arrogance ill suits you, Lady Tsukimi." He handed his blade to one of his subordinates and began removing his armor. "I accept your challenge, on the condition that it be carried out here and now."

"Of course," Tsukimi said at once. "I had assumed you would like time to prepare, however."

"I have learned that any time a Scorpion is given time to prepare, others accuse them of malfeasance," Nitoshi observed. "However, when you challenge me atop a mountain, I accept, and the duel is conducted immediately... who can claim that anything improper took place?"

"Unless of course provoking a challenge was your intent," Tsukimi said, removing her armor as well.

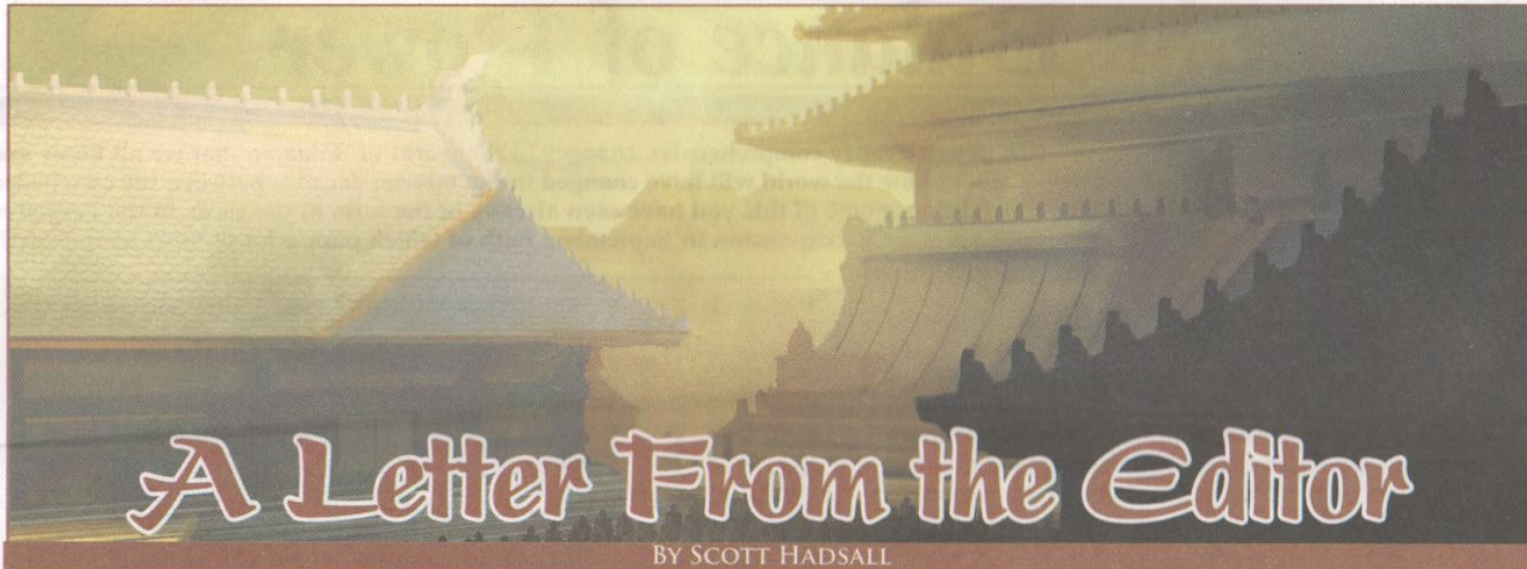
"Your years have made you paranoid, my lady," Nitoshi said. Having finished removing his greaves and do-maru, he held out his hand and his lieutenant returned his blade. "I stand ready whenever you are at peace," Nitoshi said.

"We did not agree upon the terms of the duel," Tsukimi said.

Nitoshi shrugged. "I have no wish to take your life, but if mine must be lost to end this war, I have no compunctions."

"Let us see how fate guides our hands, then," Tsukimi said with a bow.

The Scorpion Champion smiled. "You have the most beautiful eyes, Lady Phoenix. Now, if you please, show me your stance."



For nearly two years I have had the pleasure to be the Editor-in-Chief of the Imperial Herald, and during that time I've tremendously enjoyed working with players and employees alike to create an informative magazine that players of the L5R RPG and CCG alike can enjoy. Not everything we do is perfect, we are after all, only human, but I believe the Herald has made tremendous strides to be more than just a carrier for your quarterly promos, but a real asset to the Imperial Assembly. While we've made a lot of progress, I think it is important that the Imperial Herald continue to make aggressive changes to not only function as a viable informational medium, but also to go beyond and make the Imperial Assembly a unique community of its own.

Emperor Edition's release is the start of a new arc for L5R, and from packaging to promotions, the term Premium has been used liberally to describe a wide variety of aspects of L5R. Your Imperial Assembly membership will be the next thing to be upgraded, and with that comes the Imperial Herald. Starting in 2012, the Imperial Herald will undergo significant changes, and continue on as something wider in scope. We are currently working on many of the specifics of the program, but rest assured, an improved Imperial Herald has been my singular focus since becoming the Editor, and we will work to make sure you get everything you pay for and more.



While I've talked about extensively improving the coverage of the RPG, don't for a minute think we're going to leave the CCG behind. 16 years and going strong, we're going to get out and cover L5R's biggest CCG events, from GenCon to European Championships, and as many Kotei and Jeweled events as we can. It's interesting to see what clans win specific story events, but it's equally interesting to see why they won, with a write-up of the deck and event from the tournament winner. Analysis of winning deck lists and the lists themselves will find their way into articles more regularly than ever before. Tournament analysis regarding the meta-game or other environmental factors is a huge part of why players choose to use specific cards in decks, but how often is that discussed publically? It's almost never spoken of! Typically, L5R strategy at its highest level has been reserved for shady backroom dealings and private forums. Now Imperial Assembly members will be able to read and discuss strategy on a larger platform, which has been, up until this point, nearly impossible.

L5R is more than a competitive card game, and as such we are planning more strategy articles than high level of play ones. Many players from years gone by will be returning with Emperor Edition, and some may be completely new to the game. Beginner level and intermediate strategies will help take these players from an intermediate level of



Up until now, we've used somewhat of a template process in order to create the Herald you're reading right now. While this has streamlined the magazine contents greatly, it does have its limitations. Whether it is the size of images (cards or art) or the size of articles, we are constrained by what we can fit onto a page. We are looking at changing this state of fact in the future. The new Imperial Herald will contain longer articles from a wider variety of authors. From AEG employees to members of the Story Team, players and play testers, the Herald will ramp up the quality of the content by allowing people to write longer, more informative articles. The size of the article is only an important aspect of some of the sweeping changes we're making, however.

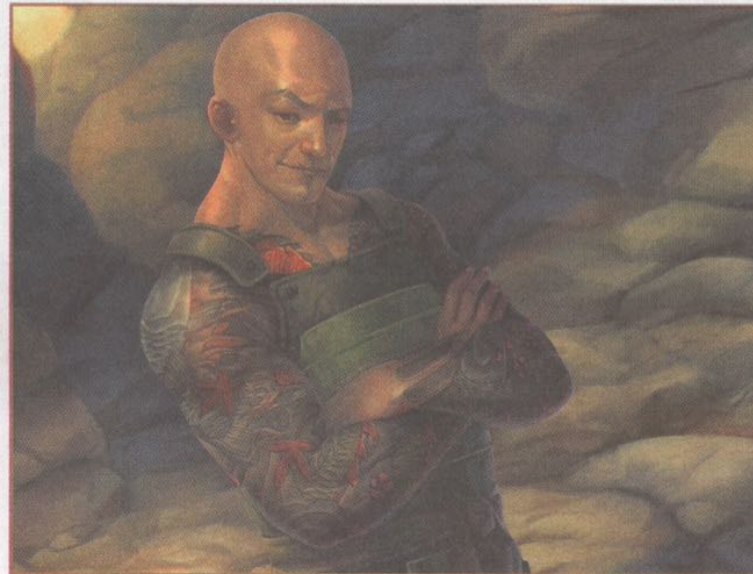
L5R has a ranging membership base, covering design elements of the CCG, to Fiction, all the way to the RPG line. We want to expand all of that. It's great to see a new RPG School in the Herald, but don't you want more information about the RPG? I know I do. So, we plan on doing that. You want to see expanded fictions covering some of your favorite clans or characters. Guess what? That will be one of our objectives. Design Diaries from the PDT, strategy articles from some of the top CCG players in the world, and not simply previews of new cards or new sets due to time constraints, but real reviews of sets from players who know what to look for. This doesn't mean we won't preview information, of course! We'll continue to preview cards from upcoming sets on a regular basis – maybe even more regularly than you're used to. Being an Imperial Assembly member has its rewards, and we aim to make sure your membership is worth its weight in koku.

A community means that every member has a chance to participate meaningfully, which is why we are looking into taking submissions from fans as well, so if you have an RPG module, or a great deck list from a Kotei or Jewel event, don't be afraid to write an entire article about it, because it may end up being seen by thousands of your peers. We're also looking into bringing back more direct, personal stories through the Imperial Assembly, like the Clan letters that used to be included with each Imperial Herald. Online access is available like never before, and the IA will likely be moving into the 21st century by having more online aspects. This isn't to say we will be abandoning the Imperial Herald as a magazine, of course, but there will be more varied aspects to your membership with this massive upgrade to the Assembly. We want to produce a product that we can all be proud of, while being more unique to the individual IA member.

play to the next level, where they can compete on a regular basis with players who have enjoyed L5R for years. Making L5R as "newbie" friendly as we can will be an important aspect of the new Imperial Assembly. Everyone had to start somewhere, and with the help of the Assembly a new player can integrate into the community and learn about everything Rokugan has to offer quickly and effortlessly. At the end of the day, we want everyone, whether they've been playing for 15 years or 15 days to have more fun, and that's a goal we're not afraid to reach for.

I know what you're thinking, "I usually just get the membership for the promos." I know, once upon a time, I was the exact same way. Nothing about the promotional cards is going away, so if nothing I've said has held any interest, you'll still get the cards. Actually, we are also looking into increasing the numbers of promotional cards you will receive with the Imperial Herald. I'll bet that got your attention. Yes, we want you to get more of everything, including cards through your membership.

Moving into a new arc is incredibly exciting. We're all enjoying a brand new storyline with stories from characters that we're only just getting to know. There are new tournaments and tournament formats and upgrades to L5R at almost every level. Don't think we left the esteemed membership of the Imperial Assembly behind. We're going to upgrade every aspect of what makes being an IA member important, from content to cardboard. These are decisions we haven't been taking lightly. We understand your concerns, value your membership greatly and want to provide the highest quality we possibly can. I said before that many of these aspects are still in the final planning stages, and most of these changes will go into effect in 2012. Stay tuned to www.L5R.com for more updates about the sweeping changes coming to the Imperial Assembly and Imperial Herald!





As you surely have noticed thanks to our previous articles on Emperor Edition in this magazine, the next base set for Legend of the Five Rings will be placed under the premium sign. We have amply detailed in the previous Imperial Herald issue (Issue 3 Vol.8) what that word entails product-wise with the new packaging and the design of the cards. You have also undoubtedly noticed the elegant touch of the art direction (started by Justin Walsh and continued by Steve Argyle and Adrian Burton) each time you look at your Emperor legal cards. L5R is more than a card game with great art and mechanics: it firmly stands on story interaction.

The story interaction we will offer you in Emperor Edition will be broken down in three distinct stages. Each stage will offer you its own interaction points within the story of Rokugan, and its characteristics will offer you multiple rewards leading up to the start of the next stage. This article will focus on the first stage: The Age of Conquest.

EXPLORATION

As explained in the past issues of the Herald, the action of Emperor Edition is set 25 years after the defeat of Kali-Ma the Destroyer at the hands of the forces of the Empire and will take place on the main land of Rokugan but also in the Colonies, the land formerly known as the Ivory Kingdoms.

While the continent will still be recovering from the grave wounds inflicted by the march of the Destroyer's army towards the heart of the Empire and will essentially focus on rebuilding, the Colonies will see a flurry of activity, with the players deciding during the Winter Court season of tournaments who the major players in that

the starter packaging), the latter is encouraged by the presence in each booster of a premium card, a free 16th card whose back will be the draft stronghold for the Edition: The Governor's Estate. Each format of tournament will be run as a separate Global Storyline tournament that will have a dedicated storyline prize attached to it so you can experience the interaction with the Emperor storyline immediately after your initial purchase. As an added benefit, in Emperor, every time you open up a booster of the base set you will have at your disposal the stronghold for the draft format. This will let you not worry about losing your draft pack (or having enough draft packs available if you are a Tournament Organizer). Drafting will never have been so



Court season of tournaments who the major players in that faraway place will be (the Imperial Governor, the Ivory Champion to name a few). Essentially an empty place, there will be an influx of population to the Second City, the place of Imperial power within the Colonies, which will see a massive increase in population.

This period of time (from July to December 2011) will be an opportunity to stay true to our commitment to the local environments as the vast majority of the tournaments will be happening in your local stores regardless of their Stronghold Store level, none of which are less important than the release event of Emperor Edition in November 2011.

Over the course of an entire month, you will get the chance to participate in multiple tournaments in Sealed and Draft formats. While the former is highly facilitated by the Emperor Edition starters (the intent of which is to be a playable deck on its own that can be improved with the three boosters that are added to it in

enough draft packs available if you are a Tournament Organizer). Drafting will never have been so easy in L5R!

Once an initial foothold has been established, the next logical step to take is exploring and conquering the new land. While the Mantis have initially been tasked to do this, the arrival of other Clans in the Second City will shake things up, especially since the Empress' Edict concerning the Spider Clan. Part of the coastline is now populated and is being shaped in the mainland's image, but the vast majority of the Colonies are still a hostile wilderness over which strange creatures (and maybe even humans) hold dominion.

CONQUEST

The 2012 Kotei season, always an anticipated moment in the L5R tournament scene, will offer its players a unique prize: the chance to explore the entirety of this new land and try to mold parts of it to their Clan's image thanks to the brave venturing of their samurai into the hostile land that is the Ivory Kingdoms.



Similar to recent Kotei seasons, the 2012 season will use an online map, this time of the Colonies. However, this one will be almost empty as the majority of the Ivory Kingdoms is uncharted territory. Beside the Second City itself, the few known locations already established as Clan holdings in the current storyline (Kalani's Landing, Suitengu's Torch, The Aerie to name a few) will serve as

Similar to recent Kotei seasons, the 2012 season will use an online map, this time of the Colonies. However, this one will be almost empty...

general landmarks for the players. Beyond those, only the basic lay of the land will be represented as well as a finite number of currently unnamed locations that have been reported as existing by the Imperial Explorers, the new branch of the Imperial bureaucracy created by Iweko the First upon the end of the Destroyer War.

Each tournament will give the Kotei winner the opportunity to choose a personality from his Clan (already present in the Colonies) to lead the exploration and conquest of a location on the map. That personality will then be featured in an official story as being the one who discovered the location and the treasures it holds, as well as slaying the potential monstrosities that live there. The victory will also be celebrated as a card in a future expansion, the card type being at the design and story team's discretion in order to allow for balanced expansion. Pretty much any card type besides Celestial and Rings will be eligible as a vessel to the celebration of the victory in card form: it could

be the experienced version of the personality leading the discovery party, a holding named after the location being claimed, a dreadful and mystical item that was discovered buried in the sands of the Forbidden Wastes etc...

The Honor Event winner, on the other hand, will be working with the Story Team to determine the name of the location that was

after year play a crucial role in the well running of the Kotei season, we also will be sending them a copy of that commemorative item, as without them, the event and all the rewards associated with them would never have happened.

SPOILS

The shipping of these items will happen at the end of each month within the Kotei season, and will correspond with the unveiling of the stories to the L5R fans through the official website (<http://www.l5r.com/>), emulating the time it takes for news from the Colonies to reach the mainland and the Imperial Court, cementing the achievements of the winners into the mind of the people of the Emerald Empire as well as consigning them into the Imperial Histories.

It will also give the opportunity to the Story Team to further the overall plot of the Emperor Arc in between the unveiling of these monthly stories. As it currently stands, the Kotei season format is set up as a miniature storyline that is not conducive to the advancing of the general plot. This is an aspect we are determined to fix in the future and we hope that the format chosen for the 2012 Kotei season will, if not completely, help accomplish that.

At the end of the season, the players will thus have been the driving force behind the colonization of the Ivory Kingdoms, a step that will be instrumental in the development of the Colonies as true and vivid part of the Empire of Rokugan. It will also serve as a starting point for the interaction with the story in the second semester of 2012, but that is something to be unveiled in a later issue of the Imperial Herald!

Always appreciative of the hard work put in by the Kotei tournament organizers who year



Emperor Edition: Under Construction

BY SCOTT HADSALL

A new arc is a lot like building a house. Before the Dawn was a great blueprint, giving us insight into how clans would develop. Second City and Forgotten Legacy added a lot of electricity and provided a strong foundation. Much like a house, it's one thing to see an arc slowly develop, and a completely different thing to see the finished product. Emperor Edition releases soon, and for many clans, new, radically different styles of play come from themes that you may think should be down in the basement; themes that are actually on their way to the penthouse. I'll be taking a look at some of the themes that you may be skeptical of in this Imperial Herald and the next, with the next issue also bringing a preview of the first full Emperor Edition expansion!

While much of the surprise for the Crab was focused on the Yasuki Merchant theme, Crab's new Siege Masters were hard at work during the time-jump, rebuilding the Crab lands to a higher, more formidable standard. Carpenter Castle's gigantic province strength and fantastic ranged attack ability (with an honor gain, something not even most Crane strongholds have!) lends itself to a strong switch-style deck, with great offensive and defensive capabilities. A reliance on castles, augmented by the return of the Celestial promo Fortifications, and the Strategy Siege Volley really allows a fairly fluid change from a defensive, province strength increasing honor deck, to a province strength reducing, tactician



deck Twin Soul Temple, where only a few Courtiers are necessary in deck construction, where the rest of the deck is based upon Yojimbo Paragons. The fate deck choices, of course, are legion. A Paragon's Strength, Murderous Intent, Strength in Terror, Guided by Honor, Sacrifice of Pawns, Inexplicable Challenge and Useful Connections are all examples of older cards reprinted in Emperor Edition that could potentially be used by the Paragons of Loyalty. The deck does not build itself however. Obviously, choosing to utilize more of the Paragon cards and other battle actions leaves little room for Strategies like Sacrifice of Pawns, but the option to use more

honor deck, to a province strength reducing, tactician based attack deck. This is a deck that can also make great use out of some older cards like Treachery and Deceit and Heavily Engaged. Kaiu Iemasa from Before the Dawn may lead the way for the Kaiu, but the other personalities with the Siege trait are pushing hard at his heels. The new champion, Hida Kisada, has the Siege trait, and many (if not all) of the other personalities with the Siege trait also have the Tactician trait, double-dipping into potential card choices for deck development. Solid tacticians with good personal honor, high province strength and the ability to adjust province strength on a near whim make the deck harder to attack than most, something that any Crab player will relish over the entire arc.

In the Celestial arc, Crane shugenja were nearly non-existent. Without old staples from the Samurai arc like Asahina Beniha, using any Spells was out of the question for Crane, unless they wanted to borrow shugenja from other clans. All that changes in Emperor Edition, with the Asahina shugenja getting their own theme, and stronghold. Old Spells like Hanabi and Walking the Way will help search your fate deck and gain honor, while old personalities like the Soul of Asahina Yoshino will be a great Dynasty accelerant. Asahina Michiru will compliment a few solid duelist personalities (notably the Crane Champion, Doji Makoto) by making them immune to a single destruction during battle, giving you the opportunity to defend more often against greater numbers. The stronghold, Shinden Asahina, may force your opponent's best personality to bow as an Open action and negate their straightening this turn, unless of course, they choose to give you honor. Asahina Shigemitsu from Forgotten Legacy will help increase your province strength (which may be useless against Crab Siege masters!) while the experienced version of Doji's Guidance will allow you to use the Imperial Favor without presence, making the Crane Shugenja a surprisingly formidable opponent. This theme certainly looks to be the weakest of the Crane themes at the start of the Emperor format, but with such a large pool of cards available at the start of the arc, it will not take very long for this theme to go from underplayed to prominent.

My personal favorite of all the non-traditional themes are the Scorpion Paragons of Loyalty. No other clan has access to Yojimbo and Paragon cards while mixing in the Courtier trait. The selection of personalities and fate cards using all three traits effectively makes flexibility this theme's largest strength while at the same time being it's largest weakness. The one choice the Paragons of Loyalty will not have any issue with however, is which Stronghold to play! Shiro Chugo uses the best of both worlds, with a Battle action that creates a ranged four attack (or five if your personality is Loyal) and a Reaction that targets an unbowed Courtier, reducing an honor gain or loss. Note that you can use the Reaction on yourself, allowing you to dip into the Paragon based action set available to the Spider without dishonoring yourself out of the game, while also having the option to use the Reaction as debilitating honor meta, freeing up valuable space in your fate deck. The Courtiers available range from strong battle based Courtiers like Bayushi Nitoshi, the new Scorpion Clan Champion, to more anti-Honor cards like Bayushi Rentatsu, the Soul of Bayushi Goshiu Experienced 3. I tend to think of this more as a military deck styled after the Celestial Phoenix



The Design Team and Story Team have set the stage for an impressive beginning to what is clearly going to be one of the most exciting arcs [for] Legend of the Five Rings!

title room for strategies like Sacrifice of Pawns, but the option to use more Courtiers (and thus more Courtier-based cards) exists, making each deck from this theme uniquely terrifying.

While the Scorpion are able to borrow from other clans by utilizing Paragon and Yojimbo cards, the Lion have taken a theme from the Spider and made it their own. Breeder has returned, albeit a much less insidious form of Breeder, with the Kitsu Ancestor theme. Lion players have had the

option of playing honor before, but Ancestor summoning Kitsu Shugenja lead the charge where Paragons have left off. Halls of Memory, the new Ancestor-based stronghold for the Lion features three important traits. It is not so much the number of the traits that is important as much as it is the fact that they're traits, not abilities. Lion traditionally haven't been able to use any of their strongholds while bowed, and while Halls of Memory doesn't have an ability, the traits more than make up for it. The Kitsu will be able to produce 2F/2C Ancestor Samurai at a fairly rapid rate. The first trait reduces the force of the Ancestors while attacking by 1, preventing this deck from being the same as Spider in the Celestial arc. The Kitsu Shugenja who have battle abilities will be able to use them from the safety of your fief thanks to the second trait, while the third gives you honor each time your Ancestor is destroyed in battle, encouraging you to defend and interact. I personally find the very old card Ancestral Protection my favorite fate card for the deck, but Strategies like A Forefather's Vengeance can destroy an enemy card without attachments by destroying your Ancestor, triggering your Stronghold making the deck difficult to attack without yielding a great deal of honor.

Nearly everyone loves Ninja. While the Spider lose the Breeder theme to the Lion, the Shadow Dragon bestows upon them a very, very large gift. The Goju have returned, and they brought their stronghold with them. This deck is about as control-military as it gets. Stealing your opponent's personalities, rampant negation and cards that can remove abilities abound, wreaking havoc on opponents of any clan. The only issue the Ninja have, thankfully so, is base force. However, they will have the option (and it is almost a necessity) to borrow their Ninja brethren from the Scorpion to make up for the lack of battle strength, slowing the deck down somewhat. The benefit of course, is that they get a stronghold which cannot be attacked early, has a defensive ability you can use even if bowed once per battle, and can't be delayed or negated. Of course, that is somewhat necessary, considering it has zero province strength! Cards like Ninja Tricks and Unseen Assailant make a comeback to give the Goju some strength in battles, but it shouldn't surprise anyone that the real strength of the deck will be more of the hit and run tactics, to delay until they can take control of the game through attrition.

The remaining five Clans not previewed in this Herald will be featured in the next issue. Embers at War, the first expansion after Emperor Edition, will add to every theme. The Design Team and Story Team have set the stage for an engaging, impressive beginning to what is clearly going to be one of the most exciting arcs in the storied history of Legend of the Five Rings!

RPG Preview: Imperial Histories

BY SHAWN CARMAN

By the time you read this, *The Great Clans* is either already out, or it will be very, very soon. Since we've spent so much time talking about it in previous installments of this column, I think it's time we switch gears a bit and look a little farther forward. Following *Great Clans*, we will be releasing a book called *Imperial Histories*, which presents information about the Empire from all different eras throughout its history. It contains everything you need to know in order to run a game set during a different era and, much more importantly, it gives players an entirely different set of tools in order to create compelling and nuanced characters.



An important point that needs to be made about *Imperial Histories* is that it is not a GM book. Is there a lot of information there for GMs? Of course there is! But we have gone to great lengths to ensure that there is ample material there for players of all clans, whether it's the robust selection of new mechanics or simply the opportunity to create a compelling character history. If you are a player of the game, you are going to want to check out the things in *Imperial Histories*.

Now, one of the things that we examine in the Hidden Emperor chapter is the corruption of the Kitsu Tombs at the hands of Kitsu Okura, the madman whose good intentions nearly led his family to ruin. Probably one of the most controversial storylines in the game's history, there is a lot of compelling information to be found in the material presented on it, not the least of which is this issue's mechanical preview, the oft-requested Sodan-Senzo!

Lion Advanced School: Kitsu Sodan-Senzo [Shugenja]

All members of the Kitsu family have some degree of ancestral connection to the original five kitsu who became human, although in most cases it is only via marriage. Still, the connection is sufficient that the average practicing Kitsu shugenja has the ability to perceive and influence the connections mortals possess to the ancestral realms. A small handful of the Kitsu share a true blood lineage with the inhuman kitsu, however, and in these individuals, much more significant powers can manifest.

The true Kitsu, known as Sodan-Senzo, can not only sense ancestral connections, but can actually project their souls into the spirit realms in order to interact with the spirits of the dead. The Kitsu regard this as the most sacred of tasks, and never undertake such a thing lightly. Some are also able to manifest a pale shadow of the original kitsu's physical abilities as well, something that has proven a fatal surprise for many of the Lion's enemies over the centuries.

Techniques

Rank 1: Senses of the Kitsu

The first ability of a true son of the kitsu is the ability to detect portals between the realms. Any time a spirit portal exists within a radius equal to your School Rank x 10 miles, the GM may secretly make a Spellcraft / Perception (TN 25) roll to determine if you detect it. If the portal is within a number of miles equal

Rank Two: Hand of the Kitsu

Although peaceful, the kitsu were powerful warriors, and their descendants carry that potential within them. Your unarmed damage increases by an additional +0k1 to represent the spiritual talons of the kitsu. You may make a Meditation Skill Roll (TN 30) to project your soul into the realms of Meido or

Rank Three: Soul of the Kitsu

For the true kitsu, there are no boundaries. When you project your soul into the spirit realms as described above, you may take another with you if they also succeed at the Meditation Skill Roll. This passenger may see and hear everything you experience, but may not speak. Ancestral spirits with whom you interact can sense

Requirements

- ◆ Rings/Traits: Water 4, Awareness 3
- ◆ Skills: Lore: Spirit Realms 4, Meditation 5
- ◆ Other: The ability to cast Water Spells of Mastery Level 4 or higher.

Within a radius equal to your School Rank x 10 miles, the GM may secretly make a Spellcraft / Perception (TN 25) roll to determine if you detect it. If the portal is within a number of miles equal to your School Rank or less, you pass this test automatically. Your previous School Rank increases by one for the purposes of casting spells.

additional +0k1 to represent the spiritual talons of the kitsu. You may make a Meditation Skill Roll (TN 30) to project your soul into the realms of Meido or Yomi, where you may interact with ancestral spirits using Social Skill Rolls as normal.

the Meditation Skill Roll. This passenger may see and hear everything you experience, but may not speak. Ancestral spirits with whom you interact can sense this passenger. Additionally, you gain one additional rank in your previous School for the purposes of casting spells.

❖ **Other:** The ability to cast Water Spells of Mastery Level 4 or higher

Story Time with Shawn Carman

BY SCOTT HADSALL

In addition to writing fiction on a regular basis for the Celestial and Emperor Edition storyline, Shawn Carman writes books for the L5R RPG and still makes time for the Imperial Herald. As Emperor Edition rapidly approaches, we all want to know who the major players will be for the upcoming arc. Shawn was kind enough to foreshadow for us all.

Imperial Herald: The Celestial story is wrapping up and the Empire is moving forward in an era of expansion. Did you get to tell all the stories you wanted? Were there any you didn't get to tell?

Shawn Carman: I never get to tell all the stories I want, and some of the stories I do tell don't turn out the way I want them to. I'm afraid it's just the nature of the beast when you're producing as much content as we do over the course of an arc. In general I would have liked to have altered the pace a little bit more; the original pace of the story was much faster but the timeline of the arc changed in such a way that the pace suffered a bit, I think. It's been a very valuable lesson for me, and one I don't mind, because I consider every shortcoming a chance to do an even better job the next time around.

One of the stories I was most interested in was the arrival of the Mantis in the Ivory

Kingdoms. In the wake of how much other stuff happened and how much time we spent on that, I know it must seem very odd for me to be so keen on something that had such a small amount of the spotlight, but I was both very excited about that particular story and very pleased at how it turned out.

IH: The Second City provides you the opportunity to tell us a lot about the 25 year leap forward in time. How much planning did that take to wrap up some Celestial stories and lay the foundation for the Emperor Edition arc?

SC: The planning for wrapping up Celestial stories was remarkably easy! I told my team to find the subplots that they wanted to deal with, and told them that they could handle it in literally any way they wanted. We've never had this kind of freedom, because the previous arcs have been so close together. This is a completely new opportunity, and



it's going to be difficult in places, but I think I speak for the whole team when I say we are incredibly excited to get started on it.

IH: We've seen how Winner's Choice, The Jeweled Champion events, and other premier level events have all enjoyed fantastic player interaction in the past with CCG and non-CCG contests to impact the story. How is that interaction going to change in the future?

SC: Not so long ago, we moved the Winner's Choice format more toward card representation and less toward story representation. It was a pretty big relief at the time, I won't lie! We were so bogged down at the time that it was really hard to try and advance the plotline because we were so busy resolving tournaments. However, I think that we've figured out a way to keep that from being a problem, and I'm pleased to say that we're about to move the format back to a story-centered format, which I hope is still what the fans want to see.

IH: Emperor Edition is right around the corner. It's obviously much different from the Celestial arc, moving into a new land. How will you balance between what is going on in the Emerald Empire and in the lands beyond Rokugan? Will we still see some fan favorites from the Celestial arc, or are we going to need to pick new favorite characters?

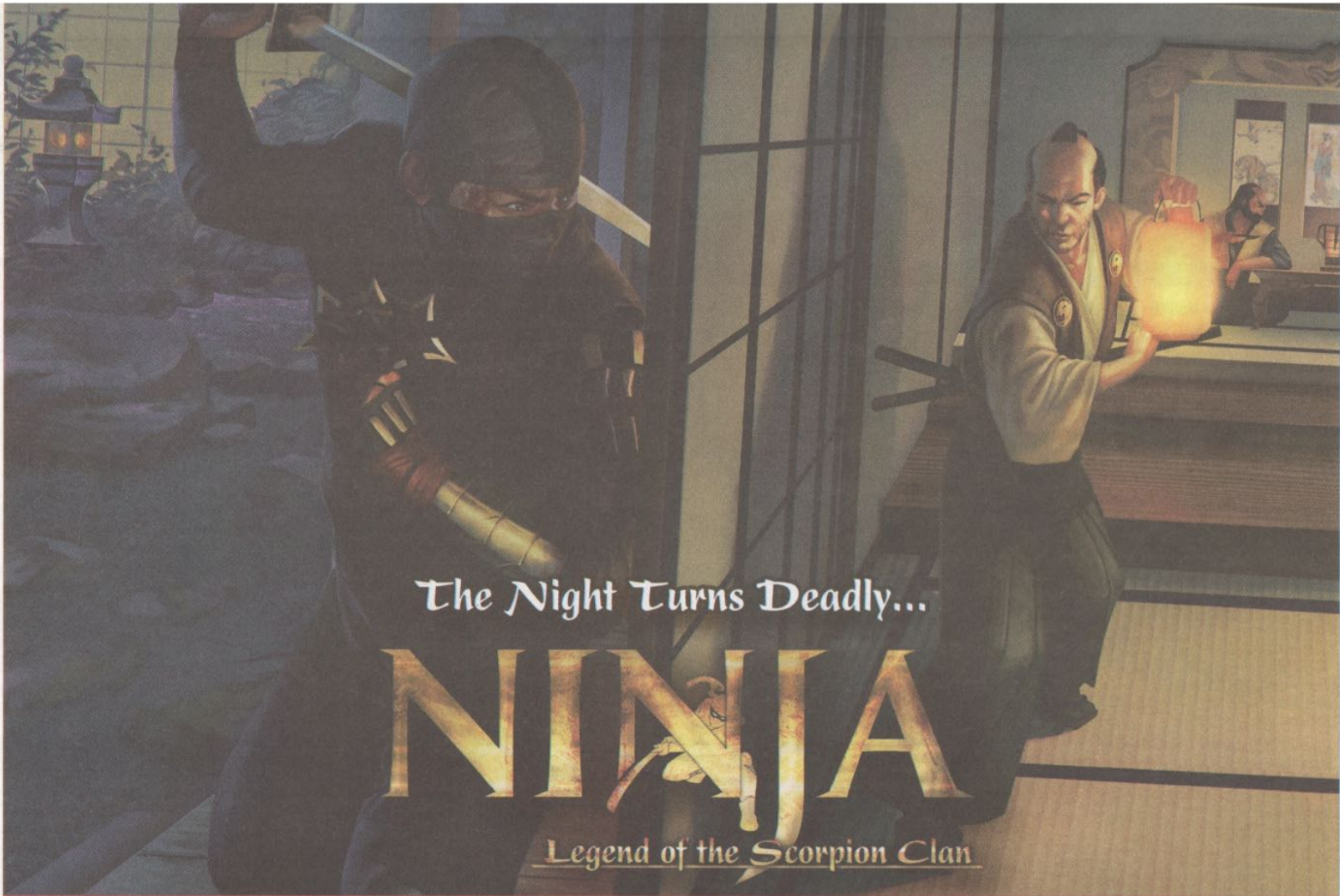
SC: There are a few folks who are still around from Celestial, but not a tremendous number of them. Keeping too many around would sort of defeat the purpose of a time jump! To me, the more interesting part is how the new characters you'll be seeing very soon tie into the previous generation. Is this new samurai someone's son? Is this priestess someone's daughter? It will be a lot of fun exploring those ties, I think, because Rokugan is a place where that kind of thing really, really matters.

As for the Colonies... well, just wait. I think you're going to like it.





YOUR CLAN, YOUR STORY,
YOUR GAME!



The Night Turns Deadly...

NINJA

Legend of the Scorpion Clan

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