Legend of the Five Rings™

THE CARD GAME



LEARN TO PLAY

An Empire in Turmoil...

"There! Do you see that?" Doji Kuwanan's armor, lacquered in the blue and silver colors of the Crane Clan, clinked as he pointed to the thin column of dust rising along the horizon where plains met sky.

His patrol partner, Takeaki, shielded his eyes from the bright glare of the sun and squinted. "A merchant's cart? The spring rains are late this year," he said, kicking up dust of his own under his armored zori *sandals.*

Around them, birdsong mixed with the chants and drumming of the peasants as they rhythmically tilled the soil and spread seeds atop the furrowed earth. A cool breeze brought the earthy smell of fertilizer to the pair of samurai warriors and sent ripples across the plains.

Kuwanan shook his head. "There's too much dust for a single cart. And no caravan's due for weeks yet." He hurried atop the nearby arched bridge to get a better look. A blur of dark brown silhouettes emerged from behind a gently sloping hill, speeding toward them.

"Quiet!" Kuwanan bellowed at the farmers, who ceased their dance of sowing and planting in an instant. The distant thunder of galloping hooves soon overtook the sound of chattering birds, and Takeaki muttered a curse.

"Someone's coming! Get back to the village!" Kuwanan shouted, and the peasants scrambled up to the road. He and Takeaki strung their bows and took up defensive positions atop the bridge. "If the Lion are finally mounting an attack, let them try to take this village from us!" He nocked an arrow and prepared to take aim.

Game Overview

Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game is a two-player game in which each player takes the role of one of the seven Great Clans of Rokugan. In the game, players vie for political and military dominance while simultaneously observing the strict codes of conduct that preserve their honor. Each player commands their forces from two different decks: a **DYNASTY DECK** that fills their provinces with characters and holdings, and a **CONFLICT DECK** consisting of tactics, maneuvers, and tricks that can be used to turn the tide of a conflict.



Dynasty Card Back



Conflict Card Back

During a game, players engage in conflicts against their opponent's provinces in an attempt to break them. The first player to break the province that holds their opponent's stronghold wins the game. However, the players must also monitor their honor as they contest one another, for it is possible for a player to win by achieving a high degree of honor, or to run out of honor and shamefully lose the game.



Using this Book

This Learn to Play book is written as an introduction to *Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game*. It should be used as a guide for new players while learning and playing the first game. The first part of this book takes players through an entire game round, teaching the rules and introducing the strategy of the game along the way.

After players have learned the basics of the game, they will be ready to enrich their experience by building their own original decks. The rules for doing so are included on page 18.

The latter part of this book contains an introduction to the Rokugan setting and the seven Great Clans featured in this core set. Finally, three appendices are included as a reference for a number of advanced topics, frequently asked questions, and card anatomies.

A comprehensive Rules Reference can be found online at www.fantasyflightgames.com/L5R. That document addresses more advanced topics such as the interpretation of card text, the resolution of timing conflicts, and a detailed phase sequence timing chart. It is recommended that new players become familiar with the game using the Learn to Play book and only look up details in the Rules Reference as they occur during play.



A Living Card Game

Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game is a two-player game that can be played using just the contents of this core set.

In addition, *Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game* is a Living Card Game® (LCG®). Its experience can be customized and enhanced through the purchase of regularly released 60-card expansions called Dynasty Packs. Unlike collectible card games, all LCG expansions have a fixed distribution: there is no randomization to their contents.

Components

The components in the game are presented here for identification purposes. A complete card anatomy can be found in "Appendix III: Card Anatomy" on page 32.



7 Stronghold Cards



17 Province Cards



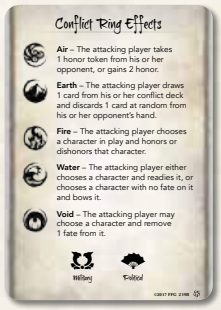
117 Dynasty Cards



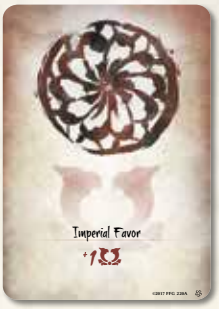
5 Role Cards (double-sided)



98 Conflict Cards



2 Reference Cards (double-sided)



1 Imperial Favor Card (double-sided)



20 Status Tokens (double-sided)



40 Fate Tokens



1 First Player Token



50 Honor Tokens



2 Honor Dials



5 Ring Tokens (double-sided)

Dial Assembly

Assemble each honor dial by using the plastic dial connectors to attach the dial to the faceplate, as shown in the diagram below.



Key Concepts

This section introduces a number of foundational concepts to keep in mind while learning and playing the game.

The Jade Rule

If the text on a card directly contradicts the text of the rules, the text on the card takes precedence.

Winning and Defeat

There are three ways by which a player can win the game: break the province which holds their opponent's stronghold, accumulate 25 honor, or have their opponent run out of honor.

Provinces and Strongholds

A player's province cards represent a variety of circumstances and occurrences in the lands under the control of the Great Clans of Rokugan.

During the game, players declare attacks against one another's provinces, and successful attacks can result in a province breaking.

If three of a player's four non-stronghold provinces are broken, attacks may be declared against that player's stronghold province. As soon as a player's stronghold province is broken, that player loses the game.

Strategy: Break Their Provinces!

Within the core set, breaking an opponent's provinces is the most common victory condition, and new players are advised to concentrate primarily on this method of winning while learning the basics of the game.

Honor and Dishonor



Honor represents both the behavior of a player's clan, as well as the outward perception of that behavior. Players begin the game with the amount of honor designated by their stronghold card. Various effects in the game cause honor to be gained, exchanged between players, or lost. If a player has **25 or more honor** in their pool, that player immediately wins. If a player has **no honor** in their pool, that player immediately loses.

Ready and Bowed

Cards enter play in a ready position (upright, so that the card's text may be read from left to right). At the end of a conflict, or in order to use certain card abilities, cards will bow, which is indicated by rotating a card 90 degrees (sideways). A bowed card indicates that a card has been used, and a card is not able to bow again until it is readied by a game step or card ability.



Ready



Bowed

Fate



Fate is the game's primary resource, representing the karma and destiny a clan has accrued. The primary use of fate is to spend it to play cards.

In addition, after a character is played, its controller may place any additional number of fate tokens from their fate pool on that character. Each fate token on a character allows that character to remain in play for an additional game round.

During the fate phase (see"Phase 4: Fate" on page 16) each character that has no fate tokens on it is discarded. One fate token is then removed from each remaining character.

In Player Order

The phrase "in player order" is used to dictate the order in which players resolve or execute a game step. When players are instructed to do something in player order, the first player does so first, followed by the other player.

Triggered Card Abilities

Many card abilities (such as actions, interrupts, and reactions) are triggered voluntarily by the players throughout the game. Unless an ability specifies otherwise, it may be used once each round. For more on card abilities, see page 29.

Game Setup

To set up the game, perform the following steps, in order:

1. Select Decks

For the first game, each player selects one set of starter decks described below. Each card's collector number, which is used in the decklists below, is located in the lower right corner of the card.

- **Crane Clan starter decks**: This deck uses Shizuka Toshi (2) as its stronghold, and the provinces The Art of Peace (9), Entrenched Position (17), Night Raid (21), Rally to the Cause (23), and Shameful Display (24).

  The Crane dynasty deck uses all of the Crane dynasty cards (40–53), one copy each of the neutral cards Otomo Courtier (122), Miya Mystic (125), Favorable Ground (128), Imperial Storehouse (129), and two copies each of the neutral cards Seppun Guardsman (123) and Wandering Ronin (127).

  The Crane conflict deck uses all of the Crane conflict cards (139–148), and one copy each of the neutral cards (200–213).

- **Lion Clan starter decks**: This deck uses Yōjin no Shiro (4) as its stronghold, and the provinces The Art of War (11), Ancestral Lands (15), Manicured Garden (19), Meditations on the Tao (20), and Pilgrimage (22).

  The Lion dynasty deck uses all of the Lion dynasty cards (67–80), one copy each of the neutral cards Seppun Guardsman (123), Wandering Ronin (127), Favorable Ground (128), Imperial Storehouse (129), and two copies each of the neutral cards Otomo Courtier (122) and Miya Mystic (125).

  The Lion conflict deck uses all of the Lion conflict cards (160–169), and one copy each of the neutral cards (200–213).

2. Create Token Pool and Ring Pool

Place all fate tokens, honor tokens, status tokens, and the Imperial Favor card in a pile within reach of each player. This area is known as the general token pool. Place the rings in a pile within reach of each player. This area is known as the unclaimed ring pool.



3. Determine First Player

Randomly select a player to be the first player. Place the first player token in front of this player. The other player gains 1 fate from the general token pool and adds it to their fate pool.



First Player Token

4. Shuffle Dynasty and Conflict Decks

Each player shuffles both their dynasty and conflict decks separately until the decks are sufficiently randomized and presents them to the opponent for a final cut. Each player then places their dynasty deck to the left of their play area and their conflict deck to the right.

5. Place Provinces and Stronghold

Each player secretly selects one of their provinces, places it facedown above their dynasty deck, and places their stronghold card on top of it. Each player then places their other four provinces facedown between their dynasty and conflict decks, in any order. Each player places one honor dial near their conflict deck.

6. Fill Provinces

Each player places one card from the top of their dynasty deck facedown onto each of their empty non-stronghold provinces. Players will have the opportunity to play these cards from their provinces during the game round.



Dynasty Deck Cardback

After placing these cards during setup, each player has one opportunity to look at their facedown cards, choose which ones they wish to keep, and replace the rest (known as a mulligan). Set aside the cards to be replaced and deal a new facedown card into each empty province. Then shuffle the replaced cards back into the dynasty deck.

Note: After this point, players are **not** permitted to look at facedown cards in their provinces.

7. Draw Starting Hand

Each player draws four cards from their conflict deck to form their starting hand. These cards are typically used during the conflict phase to help players win conflicts.



Conflict Deck Cardback

After drawing these cards, each player has one opportunity to look at the cards in their hand, choose which ones they wish to keep, and replace the rest (known as a mulligan). Set aside the cards to be replaced and draw an equivalent number of new cards from the conflict deck. Then shuffle the cards set aside back into the conflict deck.

8. Gain Starting Honor

Each player gains honor tokens equal to the honor value indicated in the lower left corner of their stronghold.

The game is now ready to begin.



Honor Value on Stronghold

Suggested Play Area (Crane Player, mid-game)



Phase Sequence

Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game is played over a series of rounds. During a round, players bring new characters into play from their provinces, decide how honorably they will act in the coming conflicts, declare military and political conflicts against one another's provinces, check the fate of their characters, and regroup in preparation for the next round. Each round is divided into the following five phases:

1. Dynasty
2. Draw
3. Conflict
4. Fate
5. Regroup

Each phase is described in detail, below.

Phase 1: Dynasty

The dynasty phase represents the clans' attempts to marshal their forces and allocate resources from their provinces.

The dynasty phase consists of three steps:

Step 1. Reveal Facedown Cards in Provinces

Each player, in player order, turns all facedown dynasty cards in their provinces faceup. This process starts from a player's leftmost province that has a facedown card on it and proceeds to the right. **Note**: Character cards in provinces are not yet in play, and players will not be able to use those characters until they are played during step 3, below.

Step 2. Collect Fate

Each player collects fate equal to the fate value on their stronghold card. Other cards may also modify the amount of fate a player collects each turn.

Step 3. Play Characters from Provinces

In player order, players alternate opportunities to do one of the following: play a character card from their provinces, trigger an appropriate card ability (see page 30), or pass. **Note**: At this time, a player cannot play attachment or character cards from their hand.

The first player to pass gains 1 fate. This player forfeits the opportunity to play characters from provinces or trigger actions for the remainder of the phase. The remaining player continues to play characters and trigger actions alone until they also pass. Once both players have passed, play proceeds to the draw phase.

Playing a Character from a Province

In order to play a character from a province, a player must first pay that card's cost (indicated in the upper left corner of the card) by spending that much fate from their fate pool to the general token pool. Next, move that card from the province into that player's **HOME** area – the part of the play area in front of their provinces. All characters enter play in a ready position.

After a character is played, its controller has the option of placing any number of fate tokens from their pool on that character. Placing fate on a character will keep that character in play for additional game rounds.



Once the option to place fate tokens on a character has been completed or passed, the province from which the character was played is **REFILLED** by taking a card from the dynasty deck and, without looking at the card, placing it facedown on the province.

Strategy: Placing Additional Fate

Placing additional fate on a character is an investment in that character's future impact upon the game. The best way to leverage this impact is to invest in your most powerful and important characters. Placing three fate on a character with a cost of one grants you three additional turns of one-cost impact, while placing the same three fate on a character with a cost of four grants you three additional turns of four-cost impact. Being able to maximize the impact of each additional fate that is spent is an important strategic concept in the game.

Also keep in mind: any fate a player does not spend remains in that player's pool from round to round. So, if you have extra fate that you don't have an immediate use for, hold on to it, as it could prove useful later in the game.

Holdings

Holdings are a cardtype that represents the lands, structures, fortifications, and other locations that may be found in a player's provinces.

Holding cards in a player's provinces are not played. A holding modifies the defense strength of a province when it is attacked, and is active as long as it remains faceup in the province.



The Imperial Storehouse holding increases the defense strength of the Pilgrimage province from 5 to 6.



Phase 2: Draw

The draw phase represents the plotting and scheming of the Clans as they prepare for the conflicts ahead.

In this phase, each player determines how honorably they intend to act during the upcoming phases of the round: essentially, they are bidding their honor in order to draw more cards from their conflict deck. These cards, kept in a player's hand, represent secret agendas, surprising tactics, tricks, schemes, and hidden information.

The draw phase consists of 4 steps:

1. Each player secretly selects a number between 1 and 5 on their honor dial.
2. Each player reveals their selection.
3. The player who selected the higher number gives their opponent an amount of honor equal to the difference between the two selected numbers. If both players selected the same number, no honor is given.
4. Each player draws a number of cards from their conflict deck equal to the number they selected on their honor dial.

Once the above steps are complete, proceed to the conflict phase.

***For example**: Kristina, playing the Crane, secretly selects the number 2 on her honor dial. Tom, playing the Lion, also secretly selects a number on his dial. Once both players are ready, they simultaneously reveal their dials. Kristina reveals her bid of 2, and Tom reveals a bid of 5. Tom's bid is 3 higher than Kristina's, so he must give her 3 honor from his pool. Kristina then draws 2 cards from her conflict deck (equal to her bid), and Tom draws 5 cards from his conflict deck (equal to his bid).*

Draw and Refill

During a game, players are frequently instructed to "draw cards" and to "refill" provinces. Cards are always drawn from a player's conflict deck and added to that players hand. Provinces are always refilled facedown from a player's dynasty deck.

Running Out of Cards

If a player attempts to refill a card onto a province from their dynasty deck or draw a card from their conflict deck and no cards remain in the deck, that player loses 5 honor, then shuffles the corresponding discard pile and places it facedown to form a new dynasty or conflict deck. That player then continues to refill the province or draw a conflict card.

Strategy: Honor Bids

There are several things to consider when determining how best to bid.

First, are you happy with the cards in your hand? Do they seem that they will be useful in the upcoming round? If you like your hand, you might consider bidding low to preserve or acquire more honor. If you feel that you need more options, you might consider bidding high to draw more cards.

Second, consider how much honor you and your opponent each have, and be wary of high bids that could push your opponent too close to winning the game.

Third, try to anticipate your opponent's most likely bid, and think about whether you'd like to match that bid (to prevent honor from changing hands) or bid differently (to create more of an imbalance between you and your opponent in terms of honor or card advantage).

Finally, think about whether you (and your opponent) are in a position from which you could leverage more cards to influence the direction of the game.

After considering all of the factors, make your bid with confidence and see what happens — you can never know for sure what the opponent is going to do, and trying to best navigate this decision is one of the unique strategic moments of the game.

Phase 3: Conflict

The conflict phase represents a series of military and political confrontations between the two clans. A military conflict represents a military battle or a physical fight. A political conflict could represent a trial, an argument or debate, or a contest of court intrigue and scheming.

In this phase, each player will have a chance to initiate conflicts against their opponent. After these conflicts have resolved, the players will compare glory in an attempt to earn the Imperial Favor.

Each conflict is identified in two ways: by element and by type.

Element

There are five different elements in *Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game* - Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void. If the attacker wins the conflict they will gain a reward, known as a ring effect, based on the conflict's element. Each element provides a different ring effect, which will be described later.

Type

There are two types of conflicts: military and political. A conflict's type determines whether characters use their military or political skill value when resolving that conflict (see image, below).

Each player is permitted to declare one conflict of each type during the conflict phase.

Conflict Opportunities

Starting with the first player and alternating back and forth, each player has the opportunity to declare a conflict against one of their opponent's provinces. Each player is permitted two such opportunities during this phase, in the order listed below:

1. The first player has the first opportunity to declare and resolve a conflict.
2. The second player has the next opportunity to declare and resolve a conflict.
3. The first player has another opportunity to declare and resolve a conflict.
4. The second player has another opportunity to declare and resolve a conflict.

A player always has the option to pass on declaring a conflict during a conflict oppportunity, but doing so relinquishes that conflict opportunity this phase.



Military Skill (top) and Political Skill (bottom).

Attack and Defense (Terminology)

When a player declares a conflict against an opponent's province, that player is the **ATTACKING PLAYER** and the characters that are committed to the conflict on that player's side are **PARTICIPATING** as **ATTACKING CHARACTERS** (also referred to as **ATTACKERS**).

The opponent whose province is being attacked is the **DEFENDING PLAYER** and the characters that are committed to the conflict on that player's side are **PARTICIPATING** as **DEFENDING CHARACTERS** (also referred to as **DEFENDERS**).

Declaring and Resolving a Conflict

To declare and resolve a conflict, perform the following steps, in order:

1. **Conflict Declaration** – The attacking player determines which characters are attacking, where they are attacking, and how they are attacking.
2. **Declare Defenders** – The defending player determines which characters are defending.
3. **Conflict Actions** – The players alternate using card abilities in an attempt to gain the upper hand in the conflict.
4. **Conflict Resolution** – A conflict result is determined, and the consequences of that result are applied to the game.

Each of these steps is described in detail below.

Step 1. Conflict Declaration

In order to declare a conflict, the attacking player must:

- Declare the type and element of the conflict to be initiated. *(For example: "I declare a political Fire conflict.")*
- Take the unclaimed ring token of the declared element and place it on an opponent's province with the declared type faceup. This indicates which province is being attacked. A player is not permitted to declare an element type if that ring is not in the unclaimed ring pool. A player cannot declare a conflict against an opponent's stronghold province unless three or more of that opponent's other provinces are broken.
- Declare which **ready** characters (under the attacking player's control) are being committed as attackers and slide them forward, separate from their non-committed characters. At least one character must be declared at this time in order to initiate a conflict.

The above items are considered to be performed simultaneously. If any of the above cannot be completed, the conflict cannot be initiated.

When a conflict is declared, if the province that is being attacked is facedown, turn the province card faceup. This may trigger effects that have an impact on the conflict and could influence the result of the conflict.

Step 2. Declare Defenders

The defending player now has the option to declare characters as defenders.

- This player declares which **ready** characters (under the defending player's control) are being committed as defenders and slides them forward, separate from their non-committed characters. The defending player may declare no characters if that player so desires.

Note: A character with a dash (–) for a skill value cannot participate in a conflict of that type.



Slide a character forward from your home area to indicate it is being declared as an attacker or defender.

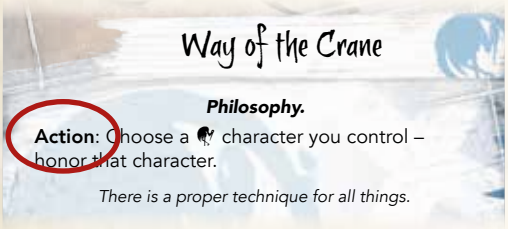
Step 3. Conflict Actions

During this step, the players take turns using action abilities to influence the conflict and gain the upper hand.

The defending player has the first opportunity to act, and the opportunities alternate back and forth between the players until both players pass consecutively.

With an action opportunity, a player may do one of the following:

- Activate an action ability on one of their cards. An action may be triggered from a character or attachment in play, from an unbroken faceup province, or from a holding or stronghold. A player may also play an event card with an action ability from their hand by paying the card's fate cost.



The card Way of the Crane is an example of an action ability, which can be identified by the boldface "Action:" timing trigger.

- Play an attachment card from their hand by paying its cost and attaching it to (i.e., placing it partially underlapping) a character in play. Once in play, an attachment modifies the character's stats and may provide additional abilities for the character.
- Play a character from their hand by paying its cost. The character's controller may place it in the conflict participating on their side, or in their home area. The controller may choose to place any amount of fate from their fate pool on that character at this time.
- Pass. If a player passes and the opponent then takes another action (other than "pass"), the passing player is able to re-enter the sequence.

After using one of the above action opportunities, a player should announce the total relevant skill present on both sides of the conflict that would be counted if the conflict were to resolve with no further actions (see step 4, below).

Once both players pass consecutively, proceed to the next step.

Strategy: Conflict Actions

There are a number of different ways action abilities may be used to influence a conflict. Some might involve raising or lowering a participating character's relevant skill value. Bowing a character means that its skill will not be counted toward the resolution of the conflict. Moving a character home removes that character from the conflict entirely. Honoring or dishonoring a character (see "Personal Honor" on page 30) will modify its skill based on the character's glory value. Finally, there are other, more specialized action abilities in the game that can influence the outcome of a conflict in a variety of ways. The back and forth exchange of action abilities is a source of tension and an opportunity for tactical skill to influence the game.

Step 4. Conflict Resolution

During this step, players determine the result of the conflict.

The conflict type indicates which skill value is used to determine the result. During a military conflict, use military skill; during a political conflict, use political skill.

Each player determines the total skill value (matching the conflict type) of their participating **ready** characters, factoring all relevant modifiers. The player with the higher total wins the conflict.

Note: A bowed character does not count its skill toward the resolution of that conflict.

In case of a tie, the conflict is won by the attacking player. If a conflict is tied with both players counting 0 skill, the conflict resolves with no winner.

If there were no defending characters in the conflict (ready or bowed) at the time skill is counted and the attacking player wins the conflict, the conflict is considered unopposed. If a conflict resolves unopposed, the defending player loses 1 honor.

If the attacking player wins, check to see if the province breaks (see next page) and resolve the ring effect (see next page).

If the defending player wins the conflict, the province does not break and there is no ring effect — that player has prevented the attacking player from making headway and has defended their land.

The player who won the conflict now claims the contested ring and adds it to their claimed ring pool. If no player won the conflict, the ring is returned to the unclaimed ring pool.

End of Conflict

Once all effects of winning a conflict have resolved, each character in the conflict bows and returns home. The conflict is now over. Proceed to the next player's next conflict opportunity, if any remain (see page 10).

After both players have either declared or passed on each of their conflict opportunities for the phase, proceed to the Imperial Favor contest on page 16.

For an example of a conflict, see page 14.

Breaking Provinces

If the attacking player wins a conflict, check to see if the defending province is broken. If the attacking player won the conflict by an amount of skill equal to or greater than the province's strength (located in the upper left corner of the card), the province is broken. **Note**: If the attack is resolving against a player's stronghold province, the stronghold adds its bonus strength value to the strength value of the defending province.

Turn a province 180 degrees to indicate that it is broken.



Unbroken



Broken

Card abilities on broken provinces cannot be used, and further conflicts cannot be declared against broken provinces. A broken province remains broken for the duration of the game.

If the attacking player wins a conflict that breaks a province, that player may discard the dynasty card in that province. The defending player then refills the province with a facedown card from the top of their dynasty deck.

A player is still able to play cards from a broken province, and to replace new facedown cards from their dynasty deck onto that province.

Ring Effects

Each time the attacker wins a conflict (regardless as to whether or not the province was broken), that player **may** choose to resolve the ring effect of the conflict's element. The ring effects are as follows:

Air: The attacking player takes 1 honor token from their opponent, or gains 2 honor.

Earth: The attacking player draws 1 card from their conflict deck and discards 1 card at random from their opponent's hand.

Fire: The attacking player chooses a character in play and honors or dishonors that character. (See page 30.)

Water: The attacking player either chooses a character and readies it, or chooses a character with no fate on it and bows it.

Void: The attacking player chooses a character and removes 1 fate from that character.

Strategy: Attack and Defense

There are four conflict opportunities each conflict phase: two attacking, and two defending. Decide which conflicts are most important for you to win, and prioritize accordingly. Sometimes it's better to concede a conflict you don't care much about losing in exchange for greater chances of winning in other, more important engagements.

The order in which you initiate your conflicts is also important. Is your first conflict a probing attack, aimed at gathering information and forcing the opponent to squander resources? Or is it a heavy strike you need to succeed at in order to take control of the round?

When choosing a ring, consider the ring effect you would like to achieve as well as the possibility of denying an effect to your opponent. Sometimes, preventing an opponent's optimal play is the best move you can make.

Finally, keep all possible outcomes in mind: What would happen if the attacking player wins? If the defending player wins? Can the defending player lose, but prevent the province from breaking? Commit your forces and resources in a manner that makes your desired outcome the most likely result!

Conflict Example



Kristina, playing the Crane, declares a conflict against Tom, who is playing the Lion. She slides her honored Asahina Storyteller forward from her home area and declares it as an attacker (1). She selects the Ring of Air from the unclaimed ring pool and places it on one of Tom's provinces with the ring's political side faceup (2). This establishes which province is being attacked, and that a political conflict is being declared. Tom now flips the province over, revealing that it is the card Entrenched Position (3). Tom then declares Matsu Beiona as a defender by sliding it forward from his home area (4).

Conflict Example (continued)



Once both players have declared their participating characters, the defending player has the first opportunity to take an action. Tom uses this opportunity to play the event card Court Games (5), and chooses to dishonor Kristina's Asahina Storyteller. This removes the honored status token from the storyteller (6) and reduces her political skill from six to four. The total political skill on Kristina's side is now four, while Tom's side remains at two.



It is now Kristina's turn to take an action, and she plays the event card Outwit, targeting Matsu Beiona (7). This event sends Matsu Beiona home, removing her from the conflict (8). The total political skill on Kristina's side remains at four, and Tom's is now zero.



It is now Tom's turn to take an action. He passes as he does not have any way of changing the outcome of the conflict. Kristina also passes as she does not have any other means to increase her skill. Kristina wins the conflict unopposed by a count of four to zero. Tom loses one honor because the conflict was unopposed. Entrenched Position has a strength of 5, and Kristina only won the conflict by 4, so the province does not break. Kristina resolves the Air ring effect, and chooses to take 1 honor from Tom. Kristina claims the Ring of Air and places it next to her stronghold. Finally, the Asahina Storyteller returns home and bows (9). The conflict is now over.

Imperial Favor Contest



Glory Value

At the end of the conflict phase, each player counts their total amount of glory (the number on the right-hand side of the card, above the text box) on ready characters they control and adds this number to the number of rings in their claimed ring pool. The player with the highest total claims the Imperial Favor card and sets it to one side or the other (military or political) next to their stronghold. This player is said to "have the Imperial Favor," and the side to which the card is set will influence the following game round by providing its controller with a +1 skill bonus during conflicts of that type. If players have the same total, the Imperial Favor remains in its current state (either unclaimed, or under the possession of the player who currently has it, remaining set to its current side).

After the Imperial Favor contest is complete, proceed to the fate phase.

Phase 4: Fate

The fate phase represents the moment at which the forces of karma and destiny make themselves known, and the various personalities in play move one step closer to their ultimate fate.

At the start of the fate phase, each character that has no fate tokens on it is discarded (this occurs in player order). When a character is discarded, place it in the discard pile that is associated with the deck from which the card originated. **Note**: When a character leaves play, all attachments on that character are discarded.

Then, each player (in player order) removes one fate token from each remaining character they control.

Finally, place one fate from the general token pool on each unclaimed ring. **Note**: When a player selects a ring with fate on it as the contested ring in a conflict, the attacking player takes all the fate from the ring and adds it to their fate pool.

After completing the above process, proceed to the regroup phase.



Phase 5: Regroup

The regroup phase represents a chance for the leaders of the clans to take stock of their current position and prepare for the following game round.

The regroup phase consists of four steps:

Step 1. Ready Each Card in Play

Each player readies each of their bowed cards.

Step 2. Discard Unwanted Cards from Provinces

In player order, each player may discard any number of faceup cards from any of their unbroken provinces. Each player must discard all faceup cards from their broken provinces. Replace these discarded cards with facedown cards from the dynasty deck.

Step 3. Return All Rings to the Unclaimed Ring Pool

All rings are returned simultaneously.

Step 4. Pass the First Player Token

The player with the first player token passes it to their opponent. That player is the first player for the next round of the game.

The end of the regroup phase marks the end of the game round. Proceed to the dynasty phase of the next game round. Continue to play through game rounds until one player has won the game.

Strategy: Discarding Cards

This step is an opportunity for you to replace any dynasty cards you don't feel are going to help you in the upcoming rounds. Discarding a card in this manner provides an opportunity to replace it with a new card from your dynasty deck, so if there is a specific card or type of card you need, take advantage of this free attempt to find it. Of course, if you like each of the dynasty cards in your provinces, you shouldn't discard any of them!

What's Next?

You now have the rules needed to play your first game. After playing the game, you can learn more about Kakita Asami in the short story, "A Season of War" on page 19. An introduction to the Great Clans of Rokugan follows on page 22.

You can now play a few more practice games with the starter decks, or, if you are ready, you can dive into custom deckbuilding on page 18 and construct your own decks. Finally, some more advanced concepts are introduced in the appendices on page 29.



Deckbuilding

The *Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game* core set is designed to provide a complete game experience and offers significant replayability. After playing a few times with the starter decks, players may wish to explore their own strategies by creating their own original decks.

Why Build Custom Decks?

Deckbuilding is a process by which a player may customize their decks with original strategies and ideas. This allows a player to experience the game in new ways; instead of adapting to the strategy of a starter deck, each player may construct decks that function as they desire. When players construct original decks, they don't just participate in the game: they actively shape how it is played.

Influence

Each stronghold provides its controller with a number of influence that can be used during deckbuilding. This influence may be used to include **out-of-clan cards from a single clan** in that player's conflict deck.

Many conflict cards have an influence cost, shown at the bottom of the card. Each bamboo stalk on a card indicates one point of influence cost. The combined influence value of out-of-clan cards in a player's deck cannot exceed the influence value on that player's stronghold.

If a conflict card with a clan symbol does not have an influence value, it cannot be used as an out-of-clan card in another deck. Neutral cards that do not have influence can be included in any deck.



An influence cost of 2.

Deck Customization Rules

These deck customization rules are for sanctioned tournament play. Additional copies of this core set and other expansions provide for additional customization options. The basic guidelines for a player's customized decks are:

- **1 Stronghold**
- **5 Provinces**
- **1 Dynasty Deck (40-45 cards)**
- **1 Conflict Deck (40-45 cards)**
- **1 Role Card (optional)**

The following restrictions must be observed:

- A player must choose exactly 1 stronghold. Any card with an affiliation that matches a player's stronghold is said to be **IN-CLAN**.
- A player may use 1 role card. A role card is placed next to a player's stronghold card during setup, and modifies that player's options while building and playing the deck.
- A player's dynasty deck must contain a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 45 cards. Each of these cards must be in-clan or be neutral. (A neutral card has no clan affiliation symbol in the upper right of the card.)
- A player's conflict deck must contain a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 45 cards. Each of these cards must be in-clan, be neutral, or be purchased from a single other clan by using influence (see "Influence" sidebar, on left).
- A player cannot include more than 10 character cards in a conflict deck.
- No more than 3 copies of a single card, by title, can be included in any combination in a player's dynasty and conflict decks.
- A player's set of provinces must include exactly 5 provinces, consisting of exactly 1 province associated with each ring. (Each province has a ring symbol in the lower right corner of the card to indicate its association.) Each province must be in-clan or be neutral. No more than one copy of each province, by title, may be included in a player's province set.

Out-of-Box Play

When building decks for one player from a single core set, the minimum dynasty and conflict deck size is 30 cards.

To build decks for two players from a single core set, divide the neutral cards evenly between the players (as in the tutorial game) and use all of the cards and influence points available for the desired clan pairings.



A Season of War

Kakita Asami of the Crane Clan delicately refilled four teacups: one for each of her Lion Clan hosts, one for her bodyguard, and finally one for herself. How she longed to be a student again, when mastering proper tea-pouring techniques was the greatest of her worries, not whether she could prevent a war between her people and the Lion Clan.

She stifled a wistful sigh and settled back into a seated kneeling position on the *tatami* mat floor. The meeting room was small and plain by Crane standards, but then again, she was in a castle in the heart of Lion lands.

"Our priests have heard the laments of our honored ancestors. They demand the Crane return the Osari Plains to their rightful owners," warned Ikoma Eiji, a Lion Clan historian and her diplomatic counterpart.

His attendant, the warrior Matsu Beiona, paced one side of the room, her mouth hardened into a frown. Beneath that mask of self-control, rage and frustration seethed. It wouldn't take much to incite her into an outburst, but that wouldn't serve Asami's purposes here. Her father had bidden that she provide a diplomatic back channel in case tempers flared too hot during the more public rounds of negotiation at the Imperial Capital.

And if tempers flared here, too—well, that's why Kaezin-san had been appointed her personal bodyguard, her *yōjimbō*.

Asami sipped her tea and smiled softly. "Perhaps your *shugenja* misread the omens. The Crane Clan *is* the rightful owner of the plains." Even if the Lion shugenja *were* true mediums between this world and their ancestors, supernatural "evidence" wasn't admissible as proof in any legal proceedings.

The Ikoma historian rose and gestured toward the horizon, his eyes narrowing in indignation. "Your warriors have occupied these lands for but two turns of the seasons. Before that, the Lion were its protectors."

Asami looked to her own stoic guardian, who kept a close watch on the Matsu. She began tactfully: "For three short generations, yes, the Lion *were* its protectors. But our elders can remember the days when the Crane tended the beasts of those pastures and reaped the harvest of those fields—as we did for centuries untold."

The Crane needed those lands now more than it had ever needed them before. After the tsunami, their rice paddies in the coastal provinces had been devastated, and their priests did not know when the Earth spirits would return to the fields and bless their crops once more. For the same reasons, her clan could not afford a war, especially while fighting intensified at Toshi Ranbo.

"The Crane stole those lands from the Lion!" The Ikoma snapped his fan shut and pointed it at Asami. "It was not through strength of blade and honor that the day was won, but through foul trickery. The Crane did not have enough numbers to prevail, and yet somehow they did. The Lion remember. Our ancestors do not lie."



Asami took a deep breath. She had known this accusation was coming, but the foresight did not soften the sting of his words.

The historian stopped in front of a scroll bearing a quote from Akodo's *Leadership*, the definitive treatise on the art of war by the Kami himself. "Without honor, there is no victory. Without fear, there is no defeat," it read. He stroked his goatee as if in thought.

Asami recalled a different line from Akodo's *Leadership*, and she considered offering its wisdom to her host: *On the battlefield, all actions are honorable.*

But he continued before she could speak. "At the dawn of the Empire, the first Hantei charged Lord Akodo himself with maintaining these lands on his behalf. The very Heavens ordained that they belong beneath the Lion's banner."

Asami closed her eyes, and prayed to Lady Doji that her next words would bear the weight of her determination and the levity of her foremother's grace. "We cannot forever dwell in the past; it is in the present that we must live. If the Heavens had truly decreed that the Lion be its safekeepers, your forces would not have lost to our own."

Uncomfortable silence pressed between them. Beyond the open screen doors and the veranda that circled the inner courtyard, cherry blossoms swirled in the breeze. The petals reminded her of a blizzard, of the long nights spent at home with stories, songs, and the smiles of her childhood sweetheart. But winter was already past, and spring would soon be over as well. Summer, the season of war, grew near.

The Ikoma began his counterattack. "The fact remains that the Lion are best equipped to ensure the plains' continued protection. Your coastal holdings have fallen prey to pirate incursions on too many occasions. It would be a shame if a similar roving band of miscreants were to attack the Osari villages. Do we not want the same thing: to safeguard the Emperor's lands as effectively as possible?"

Asami had to consider her words carefully, lest she insinuate that the answer was "no." "We will protect these lands well."

"Then let us try out the courtier's theory!" the Matsu shouted. "Our honor demands we reclaim these lands by force! We waste our time bickering here. Let us test our mettle on the battlefield! My ancestors scream for justice. The Crane will scatter before our mighty roar!"

"Please calm your companion," Asami said evenly, ignoring the *bushi's* outburst. For a moment, she thought she saw the historian smirk.

Ikoma Eiji asked, "Are you afraid of Beiona-san making good on her threats? Isn't Doji Kuwanan-sama posted along the front now, guarding the village of Shirei?"



Asami's heart tightened in her chest. He could be, but she couldn't know for sure. She hadn't seen him in months, and his letters had ceased since the death of his father. Had she really been so obvious with her affections in public? Did the historian know about them?

No. Impossible. Surely Kuwanan was posted elsewhere, safely serving in a court on his sister's behalf.

The screen behind them slid open, and a servant entered to proffer a scroll to his master. "An urgent letter, my lord."

The Ikoma took the scroll and dismissed the messenger. The room grew silent as he read.

"Lady Asami, it appears that our conversation is over. It is just as I feared—a band of honorless *ronin* have slaughtered the Crane forces at Shirei Mura."

Kuwanan's body unmoving in the mud, blood and dirt dulling the brilliance of his blue-silver armor. A hideous ronin brandishing Kuwanan's ancestral katana *in a mockery of the Kakita family technique.*

She banished the image from her mind, but her heart still beat loudly in her ears and her cheeks scalded red. Asami instinctively raised her fan to cover her mouth and lowered it again, in one smooth motion, as though she hadn't tried to hide her reaction.

"This is terrible news," she managed. Ikoma Eiji took a seat again, opened his calligraphy set, and began to compose a letter.

The Crane Clan forces would not have fallen—not to some "band of ronin," as the Lion had claimed. Even if there had been ronin at the vanguard, the Lion had assuredly paid them off, and some bannerless Lion Clan *ashigaru* had no doubt supported the warriors as well.

Honor demanded that Asami believe his words, or at least act as though she did, but the hope in her heart refused. Doji Kuwanan could not be dead. If the Crane Clan Champion lost both her brother and her father in the same season, could she still pursue peace? Or would she be forced to avenge her kin?

With their diplomatic leverage gone, all she could do now was pray the Crane retook the village in time. If the Lion "overcame" the ronin first, the Crane would be dealt a serious blow to their case. Once again the Lion were attempting to provoke the Crane, and whoever struck first would lose the sympathy of the Emperor.

"Kaezin-san," she said, standing at last, her yōjimbō rising beside her. "Let us return home."

Matsu Beiona's hand moved to rest on the hilt of her katana. Kaezin took a step in front of Asami, and she saw him discreetly unlock his sword, ready to strike at any moment.

Ikoma Eiji set down his brush and sighed. "The negotiations in Otosan Uchi have not yet finished, and our lord would have you remain our honored guest until everything is sorted out."

The historian said one thing, but Asami understood the message that lay beneath: she, Kaezin, and their retinue were hostages. In case it finally came to war.

"Lady Asami, you are welcome to add a few lines if you please," he said, gesturing to the parchment. "The Crane Clan delegation to the capital will be glad to see your calligraphy and know that you remain safe during your time with us."

In her writing to him, Kakita Yuri would know with certainty that she had failed him—both as a diplomat and as a daughter.

The final cherry blossom broke away from the branch and drifted to the ground.



The Great Clans

For over one thousand years, the seven Great Clans of Rokugan have served the Chrysanthemum Throne according to their unique strengths and weaknesses. This section provides a thematic introduction to each of these clans.

The Crab Clan



At the southern border of Rokugan stands a grim miracle: the Kaiu Wall, stretching like a great puckered scar along the landscape, its slate-grey blocks fitted together seamlessly into a structure thirty feet thick and a hundred feet tall. To the south loom the blighted Shadowlands, the domain of the corrupted armies of Jigoku, and to the north lie the lands of the Crab Clan, the Wall's crafters and defenders.

After the Seven Thunders repelled Fu Leng's dark army from Rokugan, the first Emperor commanded that a great wall be built to protect the Empire from the evils of the Shadowlands. For centuries, the Crab Clan has carried out that command with dedication. Superstitious peasants whisper that the mortar of the Wall is strengthened with the blood of Crab warriors; although the Crab would never stoop to practicing blood magic—even to protect their beloved Empire—it is an accurate metaphor for their suffering. While others sing the praises of the Thousand Years of Peace, this is at best a false pleasantry to the Crab, who lose troops daily to both the attacks on the Wall and the corruptive power of the Taint. Even when faced with such hardship, the Crab Clan has never wavered, standing steadfast in its duty to protect the border of the Empire.

Strategy: Crab Clan

Rugged, stoic, and tenacious defenders of the Empire, the Crab stand in ever-vigilant watch against the threat of a Shadowlands invasion. This clan is at their best when they are defending against attacks and reacting to an opponent's aggression, and they prefer to go second in the round. Seek to weather your opponent's best attacks, and retaliate when your foe is at their most vulnerable. As builders who excel at living off the land, holdings are important to the Crab to help protect their provinces and strengthen their characters, so be sure to include a few extra holdings in your dynasty deck.



Stubbornness has ever been a trait of the Crab. The Kami Hida placed the seat of his clan in the great mountains of the south, claiming that anyone incapable of surviving in such a place was unworthy of following him. At the clan's founding, three men stepped forward to prove themselves and were sent to slay a terrifying demon. Working together, they prevailed and were accepted as the founders of the great families within the Crab. The stations of their descendants still reflect the roles of their forebears within that legendary battle: the Hiruma, whose founder tracked the movements of the beast, now provide the scouts; the Kuni, whose founder studied the demon's weaknesses, train priests and scholars; and the Kaiu, whose founder forged the blade that slew the demon, have for generations been craftspeople and builders, lending their name to the vast wall they built. Only one family has joined the ranks since then, and under unusual circumstances. The Yasuki family, chafing under the demands of the haughty Crane Clan, broke its ties with the Crane and offered fealty to the Crab, who eagerly accepted. Unlike the other families, who train for battle against the Shadowlands, the Yasuki train as courtiers in negotiation and commerce, an indispensable asset to the otherwise-militant Crab.

To those who look upon the Crab kindly, their strength is impressive and their determination honorable. But to those who do not—those who benefit from the protection of the Wall without knowing the sacrifices it requires—the Crab are impolite brutes, too pigheaded to comprehend the intricacies of court decorum. Regardless of how others might view them, the Crab cannot mire themselves in bickering and intrigue. They present their back to the court only so they may more fully face the true enemy in the Shadowlands beyond.

The Crane Clan

At the dawn of the Empire, after the Kami had fallen from the Celestial Heavens, they found themselves plunged into a mortal world rife with cruelty and war. The Kami Doji—sister of Hantei, the first Emperor—resolved to bring order to this savage realm. The embodiment of elegance and grace, Doji walked among the primitive peoples, calming them in the way fair weather calms a storm-tossed sea. From her, they learned writing so they could record their achievements, politics to govern their affairs, economics and commerce to manage their wealth, and art and culture to lift them from their lives of misery. Those she touched the most became her devoted followers, the first samurai of the Crane Clan. Since that time, the Crane have become both the poets and the poetry of the Empire, at once the swordsmiths and the duelists wielding the smith's blades. In every aspect of their lives, the Crane strive for mastery in all things, an ideal that the other clans can only hope to emulate.

The Doji, the ruling family of the Crane, are perfection made flesh, the pinnacle of grace and beauty. With serene smiles, they offer gifts to those who would oppose them, thereby subtly ensnaring their enemies in intricate webs of favors and debts from which there is no easy escape. The Kakita—a family named after Doji's husband, the first Emerald Champion—craft music, poetry, paintings, and sculptures of such breathtaking beauty that the endeavors of others are, at best, pale imitations. Yet the blur of the sword is the ultimate expression of Kakita achievement, the *iaijutsu* dueling strike of the *katana* blending art and mastery in a single blink of the eye. The *shugenja* of the Asahina family are the pacifist heart of the Crane, mediators and healers who eschew violence and spurn the battlefield. And if violence is inevitable, their delicate *tsangusuri* talismans protect those who march to war in their stead. In times of conflict, the Daidoji family stands ready, a keen but discreet weapon brandished in the clan's defense. Besides filling the ranks of the so-called "Iron Crane," which forms the bulk of the Crane's standing armies, the Daidoji also clandestinely serve as the masters of cunning maneuvers and deceptive tactics. These covert scouts harry opponents of much greater strength and numbers, wearing them down, confounding and demoralizing them, finally striking only when swift and decisive victory is assured.



To the rest of the Empire, the Crane are a study in contrasts. They are both respected and hated for their achievements, both admired and envied for their elegance and grace. They are the makers of beauty and the beauty itself, devotees of peace and civility who nonetheless wield lethal blades. But if samurai of the other Great Clans agree on anything, it is this: from the Crane's impeccable garments, which set the standards for style in the Empire, to the sprawling beauty and wonder of their Fantastic Gardens, to their seemingly limitless talent for artistic accomplishment and political dominance in Rokugan's courts, the Crane don't simply define what it means to be a civilized Empire—they *are* the very civilized essence of Rokugan.

Strategy: Crane Clan

The Crane are known throughout the Emerald Empire as a political powerhouse, with wise and honorable courtiers guiding the clan and protecting themselves against external threats. Leverage this political might to devastate your opponents during conflicts. Keep your characters honored to increase their skill, and control the board by keeping your opponent's characters away. The Crane have only a few characters that excel in military conflicts, so investing fate in them to help defend those conflicts can mean the difference between victory and defeat.



The Dragon Clan

In an empire that usually prizes conformity and respect for tradition, the Dragon Clan is an enigma. Inspired by their mysterious founder, the Kami Togashi, the Dragon place more emphasis than most of their fellow samurai on the individual search for enlightenment and expertise. In the centuries since the Kami fell to earth, Togashi's followers have acquired a reputation for strange behavior. Isolated by the mountains of their northern home and entrusted with watching over the Empire, the Dragon rarely participate as actively in the politics of the Empire as other clans do—and when they do intervene, it is often for reasons others can only guess at. The secret of the Dragon is that they are guided by their founder's foresight, but even they do not always know what Togashi saw in his visions.

The Dragon are not without their traditions, but even those break the mold formed by a thousand years of Rokugani history. It is said that Dragon *shugenja* and courtiers are warriors, their warriors are monks, and their monks are inexplicable. Although the Mirumoto family produces some of the best swordsmen in Rokugan, its members practice a difficult style known as *niten*, or "Two Heavens," wielding their *katana* and *wakizashi* simultaneously. The Agasha shugenja family studies alchemy, which teaches them both to shift between the Elements in their prayers and to create such wonders as specially treated sword blades and the powder for fireworks. These two families often work together, so that Dragon bushi have a deeper understanding of the elemental *kami* than most of their peers, and Dragon shugenja are a surprisingly common sight on the battlefield. The courtiers of the Kitsuki family also study the art of the sword, and their investigative prowess is unmatched; their training teaches them to piece together tiny clues to form a larger picture in a fashion few outsiders can understand. Finally, the monks of the Togashi Tattooed Order, who are called *ise zumi*, channel power through mystic tattoos. They follow individual paths even more than their clanmates do, whether that involves seeking enlightenment through hermitage in the mountains or wandering the Empire in search of new experiences.

This individualistic bent means that friendships and enmities with the Dragon often operate on a personal level rather than a clan-wide one. Their enigmatic and isolated ways have earned them very few true enemies, and even fewer close allies. Due to the great distance between them, the Dragon have little contact with the Crab. They maintain cordial relationships with their neighbors the Phoenix, with whom they share an interest in religion and mysticism, and the Unicorn, whose foreign habits are likewise an odd match with the rest of Rokugan. The Dragon have more difficulty with the Lion, who view individualism with a skeptical eye, and the Crane, whose Kakita duelists have rivaled the Mirumoto's since the earliest days of the Empire. Perhaps their most interesting relationship is with the Scorpion: the Dragon seem to understand the Clan of Secrets better than anyone else—much to the frustration of Scorpion saboteurs unmasked by Kitsuki investigators.

Few can truly say they understand the Dragon. Some insist their beloved paradoxes and puzzles are no more than a game, triviality masquerading as depth. To this accusation, the Dragon quote a common saying of the ise zumi:

"What is wisdom?" one asked.

"What is not wisdom?" the other answered.

Strategy: Dragon Clan

The Dragon are a mysterious and individualistic clan, and they have secluded themselves in the northern mountains of Rokugan to focus on self-improvement and the pursuit of enlightenment. The use of attachments is one of this clan's greatest strengths, and it is wise to invest extra fate on a key Dragon personality with a plan to attach multiple cards to that character: in this manner, both your character and its attachments benefit from the fate. The concept of balance is also important to this clan, and they are well suited for both military and political conflicts. Take advantage of this flexibility and strike wherever your opponent has left an opening.

The Lion Clan

Every samurai who lives in Rokugan measures courage, honor, and duty by the standard set by the Lion Clan. The Lion's military is unrivaled, as there are no sharper tacticians and no larger armies in all of Rokugan. This proud military heritage has earned the Lion Clan a place as the Right Hand of the Emperor, sworn to protect him by serving as his personal guard and his standing army. In light of this duty, fear means nothing to Lion samurai. The threat of death only serves to embolden them and bolster their courage, for there can be no greater end than to perish in honorable combat. As veterans of countless wars, the Lion Clan knows that those who attack first shall be victorious.

Since the dawn of the Empire, the four families of the Lion Clan have embodied the Seven Tenets of Bushidō. The Akodo family bears the name of the Lion Clan's founding Kami: Akodo One-Eye, the god of war and the greatest commander to ever live. According to all the tales, for a thousand years no Akodo general has ever lost a battle, bestowing the family with a reputation for invincible generals and brilliant tacticians. The Matsu family are the teeth of the Lion, sharpened every day by arduous training. Each warrior is raised from the womb for war, to wield the *katana* with fearsome skill and to die for the glory of Rokugan. Having served as the historians of Rokugan since its inception, the Ikoma family makes warriors into legends. History is the key to victory, for samurai learn best from their ancestors' triumphs. The Kitsu family links the Realm of Mortals with the Realm of Sacred Ancestors, their *sōdan-senzo* acting as spirit mediums for their honored dead. These powerful *shugenja* summon the experience and wisdom of their ancient heroes to serve them in the heat of battle, guiding the Lion Clan's armies to victory against all odds. Through strategy, ferocity, sagacity, and legacy, these families of the Lion Clan maintain the disciplined war machine of the samurai way of life.



As generals of the Emperor's own army, the Lion view the other Great Clans only in terms of their value in protecting Rokugan and in upholding the revered tenets of Bushidō. The Crab Clan's fortitude and courage have always earned Lion respect, yet the Lion also know that strategy and discipline serve in places where mere strength cannot. The Lion's rivalry with the Crane stems from the simple question of what serves the Emperor best: the pampered discourse of Crane courtiers or the ready steel of Lion swords? The Lion pay no heed to the Dragon, viewing them as reclusive and hidden, and therefore useless members of the Empire. Peace means death to the samurai way of life, so the Lion cannot abide Phoenix pacifism. The Scorpion must never be trusted, no matter how sweetly their masks may smile, as their sting is never far behind. The Unicorn's lack of discipline renders them little more than barbarians, and Bushidō has no place for such wildness according to the Lion.

Above all, the Lion live, breathe, and die for the Emperor and Rokugan. Should the interests of the Emperor and the welfare of the Empire diverge, toward what deadly paths or dishonorable fates would the Lion march?

Strategy: Lion Clan

The Lion are a proud, aggressive, and violent clan that leverages its strong military skill in order to win conflicts. The Lion have the largest standing army in Rokugan, and Lion decks frequently aim to swarm the play area with characters, strengthening their presence through numbers. Having more characters allows the Lion to maximize their stronghold ability and ensures that they can always participate in military conflicts. However, Lion characters with political skill are harder to come by, so it is often worth the extra fate to keep a character with a decent political skill value in play.



The Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix is a symbol of contradictions: explosive power and great restraint, vast intelligence and deep humility, immolating self-sacrifice and glorious rebirth. These entwined virtues illuminate the path of Rokugan's most mystical Great Clan, the keepers of the Tao of Shinsei and caretakers of the Empire's soul.

The Phoenix's flame burned brightest in Shiba, the wisest and most humble of the fallen Kami. While his siblings sought to secure their legacy and civilize the lands, Shiba sought knowledge and harmony. In the fledgling Empire's darkest hour, Shiba and the Little Teacher, Shinsei, entreated the priest Isawa and his tribe to join them in fighting the forces of the Shadowlands. While Isawa saw their wisdom, he would not surrender his tribe to the rule of the Kami. When he refused, Shiba bent his knee, swearing fealty and pledging that if the tribe joined the Empire, Shiba's line would forever serve Isawa's. With this humble gesture, Shiba established the Phoenix's deferential traditions and founded a clan in which warriors and priests could exist side by side.

The Phoenix Clan follows Shiba's example to this day. Guided by the wisdom of the Council of Elemental Masters, the clan's members tend to the spirits of the land and serve their lords as priests and spiritual advisors. The Phoenix maintain shrines throughout the Empire, teach the mysteries of the Tao, and preserve the harmony between mortals and gods.

Leading the Phoenix is the Isawa family, beloved of the *kami* and the foremost of Rokugan's scholars and *shugenja*. Many of the Empire's shugenja traditions originate with the Isawa family, and more children of the Isawa are born with the ability to hear the kami than any other family in the Empire. Serving these priests are the Shiba, the Phoenix's lone warrior family and foremost of the Empire's *yōjimbō*. Sworn to protect the clan's shugenja, these warriors study theology and philosophy to better understand and guard their charges from threats both mundane and supernatural. Leading them is the Phoenix Clan Champion, an exemplary Shiba chosen not through birthright, but by the ancestral sword of the Phoenix itself, Ofushikai. Yet even the clan champion bends a knee to the five Elemental Masters, an arrangement unique to the Phoenix Clan. If the Isawa are the mind and the Shiba are the arm, then the Asako are the Phoenix's heart. Their compassionate rhetoric can lower any guard, and it is said an Asako healer can overcome any malady. The primary scholars of the Tao, the Asako have a small order of monks to maintain their libraries and keep the Tao's greatest secrets hidden until the world is ready for its truth.

As the scent of incense wafts unseen to all corners of a shrine, so do the spirit realms overlap invisibly with our own. The Phoenix mediate between both worlds, appealing to the very soul of the lands. Mountains collapse at their whispered requests, dry rivers are convinced to flow again, plagues are banished, restless ghosts are returned to slumber, and crops flourish in previously barren wastelands. Nevertheless, the Phoenix understand that even the purest wish can have unintended and destructive consequences if the elements are brought out of balance. Although others consider the Phoenix too hesitant in their entreaties to the kami, few are foolhardy enough to test the Phoenix's dedication to peace and harmony.

Strategy: Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix are the masters of magic in Rokugan, but they are also staunch pacifists with little interest in warfare. Use the clan's shugenja to leverage powerful effects against your opponent from the safety of your home area. The clan's mastery of the elemental rings will help to deny your opponent the effects they aim to use against you while ensuring you'll be able to use the rings you need to win. This clan's distaste for violence can also be used as a calming influence upon your opponent, making overt aggression and military conflicts much less effective against you.



The Scorpion Clan

With six terrible words, the Kami Bayushi set his followers in the newly founded Scorpion Clan on a dark and dangerous path. Enemies loomed beyond Rokugan's borders, but they also lurked within them. Bayushi swore to protect the Empire by any means necessary. Where the Code of Bushidō tied the Emperor's Left and Right Hands—the courtiers of the Crane and the mighty legions of the Lion—the Emperor's Underhand could still reach. To combat the liars, the thieves, and the traitors within the Great Clans, Bayushi's followers would have to lie, steal, and cheat in turn. The weapons of the Scorpion became blackmail, poison, and sabotage. The Scorpion dirtied their hands so that others' could remain pure.

Each Scorpion family specializes in a different sort of deception, wearing masks as an overt promise of their duplicity. The ruling family of the Scorpion, the Bayushi, are the charming smile wielding a poisoned blade. Whether amid the clash of battle or the subtle schemes of court, they specialize in getting close to their foes before striking a killing blow like their namesake, the scorpion. The Shosuro, meanwhile, seem but a family of talented artists and actors, and little more. Yet this, like so many things about the Scorpion, is a lie, because from their ranks come the clan's spies and saboteurs, their poisoners and assassins, and most ominous of all, the sinister *ninja* of whispered legend. The Soshi, a family of *shugenja*, have mastered the subtle art of calling upon the *kami* silently. Some claim the Soshi wield the shadows themselves as a weapon or a shield. Finally, the Yogo, a family of shugenja descended from the Phoenix Clan, protect the Empire from Fu Leng's influence and punish those who delve into forbidden magics. Long ago, the Dark Kami himself cursed those carrying the Yogo bloodline to inevitably betray the one they love most. From then on, the Yogo could serve only the Scorpion, whom they would never love.

The Scorpion have both united the other clans against them in righteous anger and kept the other clans divided so that no one coalition can overpower the Emperor. This has earned them no few enemies over the centuries. The Lion and Crab are the most common victims of the Scorpion's treachery. The Crane and Phoenix pride themselves on refusing to stoop so low as the Scorpion, even though they often find themselves on the same side as the Scorpion clan in the courts. The Unicorn confound the Scorpion with their unpredictable ways, but the Clan of the Wind has brought the Scorpion many new tricks and useful techniques from the lands beyond the Burning Sands. Not least of these is the opium that enriches Ryoko Owari, the greatest and most prosperous city in all the Empire.

Yet, in spite of—and perhaps because of—the clan's fearsome reputation, there is none more loyal than a Scorpion. In a clan of deceivers and manipulators, trust is a hard-earned treasure to be cherished and guarded. Betrayal is punished with swift retribution, the souls of the treacherous forever bound into the horrific limbo of the place known as Traitor's Grove. Such fierce loyalty is a small consolation, at least, given the dangerous but vital role the Scorpion have played in the Empire from the moment their Kami spoke his fateful words: "I will be your villain, Hantei."

Strategy: Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion are seen as the underhanded villains of Rokugan by the other Great Clans, but in truth (or is it "truth"?) they just want to protect the Empire by any means necessary. While playing this clan, you'll want to make high honor bids in order to draw extra cards during the draw phase and surprise your opponents with potent tricks and traps. Take care to not bid yourself into an honor loss, though! Dishonor is also a powerful tool when turned against your foes to keep their stats low and their hopes of beating you in conflicts even lower.

The Unicorn Clan

A thousand years ago, the Ki-Rin Clan rode out of Rokugan, seeking to discover enemies hiding beyond the Emerald Empire's borders. Their journey was arduous, and they found many strange and powerful threats. In defeating each one, the clan learned, changing its fighting styles, magical practices, and even philosophy. To survive, it was forced to adapt—and overcome. After eight centuries of wandering, the Clan of the Wind returned to the Empire as the Unicorn Clan. Their hordes entered Rokugan through the Shadowlands, punching a hole through Crab defenses and making their way past the Kaiu Wall into the heart of the Empire itself.

They wear fur, speak foreign tongues, and wield strange weapons. Although they still revere the Kami Shinjo, they have drifted far from the traditions and ways of the Emerald Empire. Whereas other clans beseech the elemental *kami* for their blessings, the Unicorn command the kami in a form of sorcery known as *meishōdō*, or "name magic." Shugenja of other clans see these practices as barbaric at best or heretical at worst.



Of all those that left countless generations ago, only a few families have returned. The brave Shinjo family leads the clan, claiming descendancy from the Kami herself. The Utaku follow, fierce battle maidens and youths trained in acrobatic styles of horsemanship and war. The diplomatic Ide have quickly relearned the dangers of the Emperor's court, while the samurai of the Iuchi family defend the clan with strange and powerful foreign magics. Lastly, the exotic, brooding Moto horde joined the Ki-Rin Clan during its journeys and had never set foot in Rokugan until the clan returned in the ninth century. All of the families care for the clan's large herds of horses, which are the finest in the world.

The Unicorn Clan may seem at first to be a series of yins and yangs: the patient Ide countering the reckless Utaku; the airy, mystic Iuchi contrasting with the dark, dour Moto. Though these disparate winds might blow in different directions, they all swirl around the clan's heart, the compassionate and courageous Shinjo family.

Yet the Unicorn Clan's homecoming was not without difficulties. Even with proof of their heritage, the Unicorn were greeted as barbarian invaders, not returning heroes. They charged past the defenses of the Crab and then overcame the resistance mounted by the Lion, leaving both clans scattered in the wake of Unicorn cavalry. Reintegrating into Imperial society has been a challenge—and a deadly one at that. Still, there are lights in the darkness. An ancient treaty with the Crane was honored, providing the Unicorn a strong ally within the Empire. The Phoenix watch Unicorn magic with equal parts interest and concern. The Dragon perceive the wisdom of Shinjo's children, and the Scorpion see the advantage in a pliable ally. Yet, all of Rokugan marvels at the speed and might of their magnificent steeds. Perhaps they are, finally, where they belong.

Strategy: Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn are an aggressive, practical, and nomadic clan that has mastered the arts of mobility and warfare. Use the clan's powerful cavalry characters to outmaneuver your opponent during the conflict phase so that your enemies are never sure what will happen next. Use your movement effects to bring characters into and out of conflicts to keep your opponent on edge. The Unicorn are strongest when they are the first to act, so if you have the opportunity to go first as the Unicorn, take it. Finally, the Unicorn are much more comfortable attacking than defending, so be sure to play aggressively and get to your opponent before they get to you!

Appendix I: Advanced Concepts

This section covers some of the more advanced concepts that players may come across during play. For a comprehensive guide to all aspects of the game, see the online Rules Reference guide at www.fantasyflightgames.com/L5R.

Card Ability Interpretation

Some of the most exciting elements of *Legend of the Five Rings: The Card Game* are the unique card abilities. The following is a primer on the basics of how to use and understand these abilities.

A **card ability** is the special game text that a card contributes to the game. A basic approach to card abilities can get you pretty far: do what the card says! Further details, as you will find below and in the Rules Reference, can help you in sorting out any thorny particulars that might arise.

There are a variety of different types of card abilities in the game, and each type interacts with the game in a slightly different manner. These types are: constant abilities, triggered abilities (actions, interrupts, reactions, and forced abilities), and keywords.

Constant Abilities

A **constant ability** is any non-keyword ability that is not prefaced by a bold-face timing indicator. Constant abilities are active so long as the card on which they are printed is in play.

Keywords

A **keyword** is a card ability that conveys specific rules to its card. The keywords in the game are listed on page 36.

Triggered Abilities

A **triggered ability** is an ability that is initiated by a player at a specified point in the game. The player controlling a card has the option of triggering its ability or not. (Forced abilities are an exception to this, as forced abilities are initiated automatically by the game.)

Each instance of a triggered ability (per copy of a card in play) may be triggered once during each game round, unless otherwise indicated by the ability itself.

There are 3 basic types of triggered abilities: **Actions**, **Interrupts**, and **Reactions**. Actions may be triggered by a player during any of the game's action windows.

A round sequence overview, indicating each of these action windows, is presented on the following page under "Action Opportunities." Most interrupts and reactions may be triggered by a player any time the condition described in the ability's text is met. Some interrupt or reaction abilities may be prefaced by the word **Forced**. The initiation of such an ability is mandatory any time the specified triggering condition occurs. (**Note**: Forced abilities are still constrained by the general once-per-round limit that applies to all triggered abilities.)

Each triggered ability consists of one or more of the following elements:

- **Triggering condition** — This describes the time at which an ability may be triggered.
- **Cost** — This describes anything the card's controller must do in order to use the ability.
- **Targeting requirements** —This describes which game elements the triggered ability can affect. The word "choose" indicates that one or more targets must be selected in order to use the ability.
- **Effect** — This describes what the ability does to the game state each time the ability is used. An ability's effect is always separated from its triggering condition and/or cost and/or targeting requirements by a dash (–).

Dueling

Some card abilities may cause two characters to **duel**. To resolve a duel, perform the following steps:

1. Identify the characters involved, and the type of skill being used. This will be indicated by the card that started the duel.
2. Each player secretly bids an amount of honor on their dial.
3. Reveal the dials.
4. The player with the higher bid must give an amount of honor equal to the difference between the two bids to the player with the lower bid. If the bids are tied, no honor changes hands.
5. Each player adds their bid to the relevant skill of the character they control in the duel.
6. The character with the higher skill wins the duel. (If the skill values are the same, neither player wins the duel, and neither loses.) Follow the instructions on the card to apply the consequences of the duel to the game.

Personal Honor

During the course of play, certain effects may cause a character to become either honored or dishonored. This represents the perceptions that Rokugani society has about that character and the actions they have taken.

Characters can exist in one of the following three states:

- Honored
- Ordinary
- Dishonored

A character that is honored receives an honored status token, and adds its glory value to both its military and political skill so long as it possesses that token. When an honored character leaves play its controller gains 1 honor.

A character that is dishonored receives a dishonored status token, and subtracts its glory value from both its military and political skill so long as it possesses that token. When a dishonored character leaves play its controller loses 1 honor.

When an honored character becomes dishonored, it loses its honored status, discards the status token, and returns to ordinary status (i.e., it has no status token). Likewise, when a dishonored character becomes honored, it loses its dishonored status, discards the status token, and returns to ordinary status.

A character with an honored status token cannot become honored, and a character with a dishonored status token cannot become dishonored.

Other Terminology

A few other terms players might encounter while learning the game are descrbed here.

Friendly - The word "friendly" is used in the cost of some abilities as a reminder that costs can only be paid with cards controlled by the player triggering the ability.

Sacrifice – If a player is instructed to sacrifice a card, the player must select a card they control that meets the specified criteria and discard it.

Trait – A card's traits are presented in bold italics at the top of its text box. A trait is a flavorful descriptor that carries no rules of its own, but may be referenced by card abilities.

Action Opportunities

This section indicates when players are permitted to use action abilities during each of the game's phases.

Dynasty Phase

A player may use action abilities any time it is their turn to act during the back-and-forth alternation of playing cards from their provinces.

Once a player has passed an opportunity to act during this sequence, that player may no longer play cards or use action abilities during that phase.

Draw Phase

There is a standard action window during which each player may use action abilities after each player has drawn cards equal to their honor bid. During this window, action opportunities alternate between players in player order until both players have consecutively passed.

Conflict Phase

There is a standard action window during which each player may use action abilities after the phase begins, before the first conflict opportunity. During this window, action opportunities alternate between players in player order until both players have consecutively passed. After each conflict resolves, play returns to this action window before the next conflict may be initiated.

During the resolution of a conflict, there is a special action window after defenders are declared, in which action opportunities alternate between players **starting with the defending player** until both players have consecutively passed.

Fate Phase

There is a standard action window during which each player may use action abilities after the "place fate on unclaimed rings" step. During this window, action opportunities alternate between players in player order until both players have consecutively passed.

Regroup Phase

There is a standard action window during which each player may use action abilities after the phase begins, before cards are readied. During this window, action opportunities alternate between players in player order until both players have consecutively passed.

Appendix II: Frequently Asked Questions



◇ *Why does the ring effect occur when my opponent wins a conflict that breaks my province Pilgrimage (22)?*

Ability text on broken provinces is not active. During conflict resolution, players check to see if the province breaks before ring effects resolve. Therefore, if the province is broken, the ability on Pilgrimage that would have prevented the ring effect is inactive at the time the ring effect resolves.

◇ *If I use the card Contingency Plan (205) to change the value of an honor bid, do I adjust the setting on my dial?*

No. This card only adjusts the value of your bid for the resolution of that bid. The setting on your dial remains where you set it until your next bid.

◇ *Can I use the effect of the Water ring to ready one of my characters that is participating in the conflict?*

At the time the ring effects resolves, the characters participating in the conflict have not yet been bowed and returned home. So, if the character is ready, it will not be an eligible target to ready again. If a participating character in the conflict is bowed, you *may* use the Water ring effect to ready it, but this won't accomplish much, as the character will soon bow again when it returns home.

◇ *If I break my own province by using the ability on Endless Plains (14), does the conflict end?*

No. Continue to resolve the conflict through each of the conflict resolution steps. The conflict may affect the game in other ways (such as the ring effect or an unopposed result), and actions or reactions may still be played in reference to the conflict or its result. However, during the step to check if the defending province breaks, nothing occurs, as the province has already been broken.

Appendix III: Card Anatomy

This section presents a detailed anatomy of each cardtype.

Card Anatomy Key

1. **Title**: The name of the card.
2. **Cost**: The fate cost to play the card.
3. **Cardtype**: Indicates how a card is played or used during the game.
4. **Clan Symbol**: The card's clan affiliation.
5. **Military Skill**: The character's military skill value.
6. **Bonus Military Skill**: The bonus value this card provides to the attached character's military skill.
7. **Political Skill**: The character's political skill value.
8. **Bonus Political Skill**: The bonus value this card provides to the attached character's political skill.
9. **Glory**: The card's glory value.
10. **Element**: This indicates the province's elemental affiliation.
11. **Strength**: The province's strength value.
12. **Bonus Strength**: The bonus strength provided to a province if this holding or stronghold is in it.
13. **Starting Honor**: The amount of honor this stronghold provides at the start of the game.
14. **Fate Value**: The amount of fate this stronghold provides each dynasty phase.
15. **Influence Value**: The amount of influence this stronghold provides for deckbuilding.
16. **Traits**: Descriptive attributes that may be referenced by card abilities.
17. **Ability**: The card's special means of interacting with the game.
18. **Influence Cost**: The influence cost required to include this card in a conflict deck.
19. **Product Set Information**: Indicates this card's product of origin.

Character



Event



Holding



Province



Attachment



Card Anatomy Key

1. **Title**: The name of the card.
2. **Cost**: The fate cost to play the card.
3. **Cardtype**: Indicates how a card is played or used during the game.
4. **Clan Symbol**: The card's clan affiliation.
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Stronghold



Role



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Phase Sequence

1. **Dynasty phase** *(gain fate, play characters from provinces)*
2. **Draw phase** *(bid honor, draw cards)*
3. **Conflict phase** *(declare conflicts, contest Imperial Favor)*
4. **Fate phase** *(discard characters, remove fate, add fate to unclaimed rings)*
5. **Regroup phase** *(ready cards, discard cards from provinces, pass first player token)*

Keywords

A keyword is an attribute that conveys specific rules to its card. The following serves as a quick reminder of how each keyword functions. For complete rules on a keyword, see the Rules Reference.

Ancestral: When the card to which an Ancestral attachment is attached would leave play, the Ancestral attachment returns to its owner's hand instead of being discarded.

Courtesy: When this card leaves play, its controller gains one fate.

Covert: When this character is declared as an attacker, you may choose a character that does not have covert. That character cannot be declared as a defender for this conflict during the "declare defenders" step.

Limited: A player may not play more than one limited card each round from their provinces and/or their hand.

No Attachments: This card cannot have attachments attached to it.

Pride: When this character wins a conflict, honor it. When this character loses a conflict, dishonor it.

Restricted: A character can never have more than two restricted attachments attached to it.

Sincerity: When this card leaves play, its controller draws one card from their conflict deck.

Symbols and Icons

The following is a reference of the symbols and icons in the game.

Conflict Types

Military  Politics 

Clan Symbols

Crab  Crane 

Dragon  Lion 

Phoenix  Scorpion 

Unicorn 

Ring Symbols (with Ring Effects)

Air: The attacking player takes 1 honor token from their opponent, or gains 2 honor.

Earth: The attacking player draws 1 card from their conflict deck and discards 1 card at random from their opponent's hand.

Fire: The attacking player chooses a character in play and chooses to honor or dishonor that character.

Water: The attacking player either chooses a character and readies it, or chooses a character with no fate on it and bows it.

Void: The attacking player chooses a character and removes 1 fate from that character.

