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by Paul Norman

Legend of the Burning Sands

Legend of the Burning Sands is set in the hot, arid desert which lies just beyond the northern mountains that border the land of Rokugan - the setting for LBS's sister game, Legend of the Five Rings. While in the lush green fields of Rokugan a man's honor is supposedly a force more powerful than steel, in the land of the Burning Sands, Water is simply life. Lying deep in the midst of this vast desert lies a single great city. She goes by many names, including Medinat al-Salaam, Kala Jahir, The Jewel of the Desert, and The City of One Thousand Stories.

Long ago, the city was ruled by a great and noble family, but dark sorcery, and the powers of one who would become the city's undying Caliph usurped the throne, and brought the family's reign to an end. But the family lived on in secret, silently plotting their revenge and waiting for the day when one of their number would again be returned to power. They became known as the Assassins, and helped finance their continued existence by carrying out stealthy political killings for the highest bidder. Led by the Old Man of the Mountain - the young prince who was deposed by the Caliph on that fateful day, so many long years ago - the Assassins operate behind a web of secrecy.



The Burning Sands has also seen travelers from another land, for the nomadic Ki-Rin clan passed through the desert when it left the Emerald Empire of Rokugan on its travels many hundreds of years ago. Despite rumored encounters with heartless sorcerers (who sound suspiciously like the Caliph's Khadi), a part of the Ki-Rin clan were to return to the lands of Rokugan, where they became known as the Unicorn clan. Some of their number remained, however, principally from a single family within the clan - the Moto. While a few of the Moto still inhabit the land of Rokugan under various allegiances, the majority remain in the Burning Sands under the leadership of their great Khan, Gaheris. The Moto are no longer Samurai, but Desert Raiders. Through use of their mighty steeds and lightening strikes they have slowly adapted to life in the sands, slowly mastered the art of living in a different world.

Not long before the current storyline of LBS, the Scorpion Clan had also been banished to the Burning Sands as punishment for the alleged abduction of Emperor Toturi. Without water and near to death, they were set upon by the Senpet and captured. The Senpet themselves have a strong presence in the Burning Sands, and have been closely allied with the Caliph and her Khadi. But one of their ranks has secretly turned against them. The High Priest and sorcerer Hekau has formed a secret Cabal of Sahir (sorcerers) intent on defeating the Caliph and her Khadi Sahir. For the Caliph has outlawed the practice of magic in the city, and her Khadi execute any who are found practicing it.

The Senpet are not the only ones who defend the city streets, however. The noble order of Ebonites both defends the city from without, and upholds the law from

within. They are the defenders of the innocent, and their symbol is the strong black hand of the righteous. But just as light always stands in contrast to shadow, so too do the Ebonites stand in contrast to their dark mirror image - the Jackals. A sinister underground movement, with many ties to the undead, the Jackals have an ancient connection to the Ebonites who at first seem so different from them. Many of them are thought to be outcasts from the Ebonite order, who failed their sacred test, and they now worship a series of dark gods trapped within a sacred stone. The stone lies in the hands of the Ebonites, for the time being...

Several other factions have their roots in more distant times. The Ashalan are an ancient and long lived race who can even remember a time when the Burning Sands was not the barren desert it now is. Their secret City of the Seventh Star is actually built below Medinat al-Salaam itself, and they cover their faces and bodies with intricate and powerful tattoos. The Ashalan have also mastered the use of sand as a material, with their sandsmiths specializing in the manufacture of the potent Glassteel swords. Medinat al-Salaam itself has long contained a guild of merchants known as the Houses of Dahab. Their connections seem dubious to say the least, but there is no doubting the quite considerable financial and political powers at their disposal. For so long the power of the sun has dominated the Burning Sands, and a small band of sorcerers and Jinn seek to restore the balancing power of the moon to the land. This band is known as The Celestial Alliance, and only time will tell if their quest to restore the moon's power in this land will actually benefit its inhabitants.

The events of more recent times have brought three new factions to the city. The gypsy-like Ra'Shari people once lived freely within the city, but moved their nomadic tribe to the outskirts of the desert long ago, before their more recent return. They seek to help the powerful Moto Horde in freeing the city from the influence of the Caliph and her Senpet allies, and have been joined in this by a faction of great power from far away - the Yodatai. Possessing an Empire bigger than any other in the game, and bigger than the lands of Rokugan or even the wasteland that surrounds Medinat al-Salaam, the Yodatai are a faction to be feared for their military power and savage warriors. The army they have sent to the sands is small by their own standards, but their more recent conflicts have brought them to the doorstep of the Senpet, who they are slowly bringing to their knees. Finally, the last LBS faction is the Ivory Kingdoms. Riding on great Elephants and worshipping a strange and dreadful goddess, the motivations of the Ivory Kingdoms faction are most likely not fully revealed as yet, although their merchants have already begun selling their Ivory goods upon the city streets.

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## Beginning the Game

### Stronghold Cards



The first thing players must choose is their Stronghold card. This represents the power base of one of the 12 playable factions mentioned above: The Assassins, Moto, Senpet, Ashalan, Qabal, Ebonites, Jackals, Celestial Alliance, Houses of Dahab, Ivory Kingdoms, Ra'Shari, and Yodatai. The Stronghold has several abilities, such as number of City Points, Copper production, and Influence production. It may also have a special ability that you can use. You spend the City Points at the very beginning of the game, by using them to choose City Section cards. Each City Section has its own City Point number on it (a green octagon), and you can choose any number of City Sections that have a total number of City Points which is less than or equal to the number printed on your Stronghold (for example, the Senpet have 18 City Points, and the City Section cards "Jewel of the Desert" and "The Merchant Quarter" cost 5 and 4 City Points respectively, and so a Senpet player could start the game with two of each in play - since  $5+5+4+4 = 18$ ). The Copper (represented by a coin) and Influence (the white lamp) values printed on Strongholds are used to pay Copper and Influence costs when bringing a card into play (more on that later). Strongholds (like all other cards besides City Sections) also have a Fate value printed in a triangle at the bottom, which can interact with certain card effects.

### City Sections



After choosing your Stronghold, the next thing to do is to use your City Points to buy City Section cards. Besides the number of City Points they cost, City Sections have two other numbers at the top right and left of the card - these are the City Section's Base Strength (the sphere) and the number of Water tokens it holds (the jug icon). You can represent these tokens by placing beads or coins (or the tokens provided in Awakening Starter decks) on the City Section. Water plays a vital role in Legend of the Burning Sands because you need it to bring certain cards into play, and are also eliminated at the end of any turn in which you have no Water tokens. Your opponent can deplete your reserves of Water by Attacking or Raiding you, and there is even the possibility (if the Attack is strong enough) that the entire City Section will be destroyed. If all of your City Sections get destroyed in this way then you are eliminated from the game immediately. For various reasons it is usually an advantage to choose as many City Section cards as you can, because this gives your opponent more City Sections that they have to take out, usually gives you more overall Water, and also gives you more cards in your starting hand.

Once your Stronghold and City Sections have been chosen, play then proceeds through the main deck. Decks have a minimum size of 55 cards, and you begin the game by cutting your deck, and your opponent doing the same. You then compare the Fate number at the bottom of each card, and the player with the highest number gains the "Caliph's Blessing" (which basically just determines the order of play). Both players then deal themselves a number of cards equal to 4 plus the number of City Section cards they have in play (so if you start with 5 City Sections then you draw 9

cards in your initial hand). This number is also the maximum number of cards you can keep in your hand at the end of any turn, and note that if you lose a City Section then this maximum hand size goes down by one as well.

## Holdings



At this stage you're all ready to start the cut and thrust of the game. So what are the basics? Well, in this article I will consider the three most fundamental types of card (but look out for more in next month's issue!), and I'll also describe how they interact with one another. Typically the game tends to revolve around Heroes, who are characters you bring into play and use to defeat your opponent by destroying or gaining control of their Water. To bring Heroes into play you need Copper, however, and while all Strongholds provide 3 or 4 Copper by themselves, you almost certainly want more to bring your Heroes into play - and this is where Holdings come in. Holdings are cards surrounded by a brick border that can be used to pay Copper costs, or occasionally bow to produce Influence like the Stronghold. To bring a holding into play you will have to pay any Copper or Water costs shown on the coin and jug symbols of the card (although some have a zero for one or both of these). Water comes straight off of your City Sections (ie. by removing tokens), and Copper can be paid for initially with your Stronghold by bowing it (rotating it 90 degrees from the upright position). Note that Holdings themselves enter played bowed, and only unbow at the start of your next turn - which effectively means you cannot use them until the turn AFTER you bring them into play. Besides Copper production, Holdings may also have their own special abilities. For example, besides producing

Copper, Safiyya's Sweetwater lets you bow and destroy it to place one Water token on any of your City Sections. There are also two special types of Holding (called Fortifications and Advisors) that I will come onto next month.

## Heroes



Without Heroes there is a considerable limit on what you can do in a game, since you need Heroes to Attack and Raid with, and also to perform a number of Actions. Once you have a couple of Holdings in play, you should be able to play most of the Heroes in your deck. Heroes are brought into play in exactly the same way as Holdings, by bowing cards to produce the number printed in the Copper coin symbol on the card, and then removing an amount of Water from your City Sections equal to the number in the blue jug symbol next to that. Heroes have several statistics. The first two of these (in the top right and left hand corners) are Strength (the number in the sun symbol) and Ka (the number in the moon symbol). Strength determines the Hero's physical might, and the damage they can do in battle. Ka determines a Hero's inner strength, force of will, and dueling ability. Just like Strongholds, Heroes also have an Influence score in the lamp icon, and a Fate Value at the bottom of the card. Heroes interact in the game in a number of different ways, the most principle among these being Battles, Duels, Raids, and certain other effects such as bowing a Hero as part of the cost for playing a card (eg. to play a spell card you must bow a Hero with the Sahir trait in his or her text box).

To learn more about Battles, Duels, and Raids, let us first discuss the order in which

play proceeds. The game starts with the *Day Phase*. After both players have dealt out their starting hands, the player who won the Caliph's Blessing when the decks were cut gets the first action. With this action the player may play a single card from his or her hand if this is possible, or the player may pass. Once (and once only) in the Day Phase a player may also declare an attack on their opponent's City Sections. Once the first player has taken his or her action (for example, brought a Holding card into play), it is then the other player's turn to take an action. That player might perhaps bring a Hero card into play, and then it becomes the original player's turn to take an action again, and so on. As soon as both players pass consecutively (perhaps because they don't have enough available Copper to bring more cards into play) the Day Phase ends. As soon as a player declares an attack on their opponent, a battle begins. Heroes are assigned to City Sections in the following order: Attackers without the flying trait in their text box, Defenders without the flying trait, Attackers with the flying trait, Defenders with the flying trait. This strict ordering can give a player the opportunity to see where their opponent is committing his or her forces, before committing Heroes of their own. An Attacking Hero on an undefended City Section can be bowed to deal damage equal to their Strength to the City Section. Water tokens can be removed to take one point of damage each. If all Water tokens have been removed and there is still remaining damage, then the City Section will itself be destroyed if its own Strength is less than or equal to the engaging (ie. bowing) Hero's strength. If one or more Attackers and Defenders come up against one another, the situation is a little more complicated. In this case the Defender gets the first battle action, and can bow one of their own Heroes to engage for damage equal to that Hero's Strength. The Attacker must then absorb damage equal to this engagement, UNLESS all of his or her cards have a higher strength than the engaging Hero - such Heroes are said to be immune to the damage, and do not have to be destroyed (although they can be sacrificed to save weaker Heroes if the player wants to do so). For each Hero destroyed, the Attacker may also discard a card from their hand to absorb extra damage equal to the Fate Value at the bottom of the discarded card (eg. the Defender bows a 5 Strength Hero to engage for 5 damage, the Attacker then destroys a 2 Strength Hero and discards a card with a Fate Value of 3 to take up the damage). After the Defender has taken their battle action, it is then the Attacker's turn. When an Attacker engages the situation is slightly different, since the Defender also has their City Section and Water at the battle. Water is considered to have a Strength of one for the purposes of absorbing damage, and so will not be immune to any engagement above zero. Therefore the Defender almost always has to sacrifice something to take up the damage, although this could be Heroes, Water, or cards in hand (one per Hero) as he or she sees fit. Once both Attacker and Defender have finished taking actions (ie. they both pass consecutively) then the battle ends and all unbowed Attackers become bowed (Defending Heroes remain in their current orientation). Several traits can give Heroes special abilities

during battles, such as the Berserk trait (which prevents your opponent using cards in hand to absorb damage), or the Tactician trait (which lets you, as a battle action, discard a single card from your hand to add its Fate Value to the Hero's Strength for the remainder of the battle).

Once the Day Phase ends, the *Night Phase* begins. During this phase players (beginning again with the one who has the Caliph's Blessing) also take turns to take actions that specifically say they can be played in the Night Phase (in general Heroes and Holdings can only be played in the Day Phase, but other card types such as Actions - see later - maybe be playable during the Night Phase). During the Night Phase each player may declare one Raid against their opponent. Raiding is a way of stealing Water from your opponent to add to your own City Sections at the end of the turn. This can be very useful, since Water supplies tend to slowly dwindle throughout the game, so grabbing some of your opponent's remaining Water is a good means of getting some back. Raids start off fairly similar to Battles, in that the Raiding player assigns his or her Raiders first, and the Defending player assigns their own Raiders last. If a Raiding Hero comes up against an undefended City Section then they must only play a card from their hand with a fate value above the City Section's Strength in order to Raid successfully. If this happens, one Water token is taken from the Section and put onto the Hero, to be placed on one of the Raiding player's City Sections at the end of turn. Certain cards can be used to give a "Carry" bonus, which allows more than one token to be taken in this way. If a Raiding Hero comes up against a defending Hero, then both players play a face down card from their hands and compare the Fate Values. If the Attacker has the higher value then Water is stolen in the same way as for an undefended City Section. If the scores are equal, or the Defender has the higher value, then the Raiding Hero takes no Water from the Raid. Some cards have or can generate a Raid bonus which can be added to the Fate Value of the discarded card. Once the Raid has finished, all Raiding Heroes become bowed, and all Defending Heroes remain unbowed (note that all Heroes MUST be unbowed initially to be assigned to a Battle or Raid in the first place). The Night Phase ends once both players have taken all of their actions and passed consecutively. Both players then check their cards for Water (the player with the Caliph's Blessing first) and eliminate players in this order if they have no Water. A player wins if at any time they are the only player remaining in the game. Remaining players get to redistribute Water tokens from Raiding Heroes onto their own City Sections, and also redistribute Water between their City Sections as well (so if one Section got depleted after your opponent attacked it, you can stock it back up a little). Both players then get to draw 4 cards from their deck (discarding down to their maximum hand size if this takes them above that), and finally the Caliph's Blessing then passes to the next player. The turn then ends and play begins with a new Day Phase again, at the beginning of which players unbow all of their bowed

cards (this brief part of the Day Phase is known as the *Dawn Phase*).

In general Battles tend to be lethal, while Raids tend to be non-lethal. Another form of lethal confrontation exists, however, in the form of Duels. Duels can be initiated at various times (including during Battles and Raids, and also as actions during the Day OR Night Phases) by cards of several different types, including Heroes and Holdings, and also Action cards (see later). In a Duel, Heroes compare not Strength, but Ka values. At the end of the Duel the Hero with the highest Ka will win (or in the case of a tie, both will die), but both players have the opportunity to lower the Ka of their opponent's Hero by playing thrusts and parries in the Duel. As in a Battle, the player who gets challenged to the Duel gets the first opportunity to thrust, or can pass. To thrust, a player plays a card from his or her hand face down. The opponent must then attempt to parry this by playing a card of their own - either from their hand, or, if they prefer, from the top of their deck (this has the advantage of not depleting your hand, but also gives you an unknown value as your parry). The Fate Values of the two cards are compared, and the difference between the two is subtracted from the parrying Hero's Ka until the end of the Duel (eg. Player 1 thrusts with a 1 Fate Value card, and Player 2 parries with a 3 Fate Value card. The difference is 2, so the parrying Player must reduce their Hero's Ka by 2 until the Duel ends). If at any time a Hero's Ka reaches zero or below they are destroyed and the Duel ends immediately. The Duel proceeds with each player getting to alternately thrust and parry until one of the Heroes reaches zero Ka, or until both players pass consecutively on their opportunity to thrust. If the latter happens, then the Hero with the highest Ka wins, as mentioned earlier. The trait most useful on Heroes entering Duels is the Duelist trait, which lets a Hero raise the value of any of their parries by one, and can thus reduce the damage by one point if their parry is too low.

## Actions



We come onto the final type of card that I'll be discussing in this month's issue - Action cards. Action cards are played quite simply whenever it is your turn to take an action in the game. You simply pay any Copper and Water cost, and the Action generates an effect before being discarded from play (for example, the card "Knife Fight" forces a duel between two Heroes unless your opponent pays 3 Water). Actions come in several basic types; Day, Battle, and Night (which can be played only in those specific phases of the game), and Open actions (which can be played whenever you can take an action). There is also a special form of action called a Reaction, which is triggered by certain events in the game. Finally there is another type of Action, called Omens, which remain in play, and will be discussed in more detail in next month's issue.

Although you now know many of the things necessary to play a good game of Legend of the Burning Sands, I'll also include in next month's issue a discussion of the other card types in the game: Items and Followers which you can attach to your Heroes, Spell cards which you can cast with your Sahir, Story cards which provide an alternative means of victory by weaving a powerful Legend, and Patheon or Deity cards which represent the favour of the Gods of the Burning Sands. I'll also highlight some of the best and most useful cards of each type for those of you seeking to become Masters of the Desert. See you next time!

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By Paul Norman

Hello there. Welcome to part II of my Beginner's Guide to Legend of the Burning Sands. Last month we discussed only the very basics of the game, covering the Stronghold and City Section cards that you begin the game with, and the three simplest types of cards that go into decks - Holdings, Heroes and Actions. This month we'll take a look at the other card types, beginning with several special types of Holdings and Actions.

### **Special Holding and Action Cards**



We discussed how to play Holdings and Actions in last month's issue, but there are two special classes of Holding that I purposely saved for discussion this month. These two classes are Fortifications and Advisors. Fortifications have a special feature connected with them, in that after you have brought them into play (by paying the appropriate Copper and Water costs), they then become attached to one of your City Sections. Most fortifications then have an ability that affects that City Section (for example, it might raise the City Section's Base Strength, or, as in the case of the card "Burning Oil", let you bow it as a Battle action to create a Strength 4 engagement). Fortifications generally make it more difficult for your opponent to destroy or Raid from the City Section they are attached to. However, they do have the disadvantage of being destroyed when the City Section itself is destroyed - so in that sense they can be more vulnerable than many of the other Holdings.

Advisors act just like conventional Holdings in many ways, except that their status as Advisors interacts differently with certain other cards in the game (for example, because Advisor cards are generally considered to represent people rather than stone work, they can be affected by cards like "Qolat Assassin" - which destroys either an Advisor, or a Hero with a Ka of less than 4). Advisors have uses that range from retrieving Story cards from your discard piles, to allowing you to assign units to a Battle after the Flying Assignment phase.

As for Action cards, well I mentioned the special "Reaction" cards last week, which are triggered by certain things happening in the game. Another type of Action exists, however, in the form of Omens. These are a special type of Action that stay in play

after you have paid the cost of playing them. Only one Omen may exist in play at any one time, and so you may remove any other Omen by simply playing another, and the more recent one then replaces it. Like Pantheon cards (which we'll come onto later), Omens tend to have a type of global effect, much like an Enchantment does in Magic: The Gathering. Omens generally come in two types - Open and Battle. Open Omens can stay in play for any amount of time, as long as they are not replaced by another Omen. Battle Omens only last for the duration of the Battle in which they are played, however, and are removed from play as soon as the Battle has resolved. There are many powerful types of Omen, including one which sets up a new victory condition if you can bow cards with sufficient Influence.

## Followers



While the Hero cards in your deck form the main players in the Legend of the Burning Sands game and storyline, most Heroes benefit from the attachment of Follower cards. These represent small units of troops that are under the command of the Hero to which they are attached. Followers have a Strength value, but no Ka of their own as such (although in some cases they may grant a Ka bonus to the Hero to which they are attached). A Hero and any cards attached to him or her form what is called a "unit". In Battles you may bow either a separate Hero or Follower to engage, or you may bow the whole unit for an engagement equal to its total Strength. Followers therefore form an excellent way of enhancing the Strength of your engagements, and a Follower with a certain Strength score often costs somewhat less than a Hero with the corresponding same Strength value. Followers also protect

the Heroes to which they are attached in several ways. The first of these is through immunity. - An attached Follower will make its Hero immune to engagements of lower Strength than the Follower's Strength, which can be of great use if the Follower is of higher Strength than the Hero (for example, Adnan (Strength 0) has an Elephant (Strength 4) attached to him, and is attacking an opponent's City Section - in this instance Adnan, and indeed the whole unit, is immune to engagements of Strength 3 or lower). Followers also give their Hero a certain amount of protection against a number of other effects which target either a Follower, or a Hero without attached Followers. The most noticeable of these effects is probably the Archery trait - an ability that lets you make engagements which target specific cards (but you can normally only target Heroes in this way if they have no attached Followers). Of course, with all of these great advantages, Followers have to have a few minus points. The most noticeable of these is probably the frailty that comes from the fact that they are destroyed if the Hero they are attached to is destroyed (and while strong Followers can protect their Heroes in Battles, they often offer limited protection in Duels). While Followers can be destroyed to absorb damage equal to their Strength in a Battle, they also have the disadvantage that only Heroes destroyed in this way allow you to discard a card from your hand to absorb additional damage. On a more fundamental level, Followers also cannot exist on their own - so despite them being more cost-effective in terms of Strength, even a heavy Follower deck needs its share of Heroes.

## Items



While Follower cards let you attach small units to your Heroes, Item cards let you equip them with powerful weapons and magic objects. Unlike Followers, Items do not have Strength scores of their own, but instead grant Strength and Ka bonuses to the Hero to which they are attached. Like Followers, Items tend to be quite cost-efficient for the bonuses they provide, and since these bonuses go straight to the Hero they are attached to, this can have important implications in terms of immunity (for example, a 3 Strength Hero with a 3 Strength Follower attached will only be immune to engagements of Strength 2 or below - however, although a unit consisting of a 3 Strength Hero with a +2 Strength Item has a lower overall Strength, it will be immune to all engagements of Strength 4 or below). Items have a wide range of diverse abilities as well, and a number of them (particularly the fixed items that come in the Starter decks) have high Fate Values too. A couple of common traits also bear a special mention with respect to Item cards. These are "Weapon" and "Armor" - of which a Hero may normally have only one of each type attached at any one time (although there are a few special cards that allow a Hero to use two Weapons at once).

## Spells



Spell cards in LBS operate slightly differently to those in its sister game, L5R, in that they are not usually attached to Heroes when they come into play. To play a Spell you must generally bow a Hero you control who has the "Sahir" trait (the equivalent of "Shugenja" in L5R), and the card generates its effect and cannot normally be used again (although there is a special Item card that allows you to keep Spells attached

to your Sahir for repeated uses). There is one particularly notable group of spell cards, that are used to Summon Jinn Heroes. In this case, a player bows their Sahir and pays any costs as normal, and the Spell then enters play as a Jinn Hero with Strength, Ka, and special abilities as printed on the card. Jinn tend to make pretty useful Heroes, because many of them have no Copper cost (and therefore can be played fairly quickly, without any speed restrictions), and several of them also have the "Flying" trait, which can make them difficult to block. There are a number of anti-Jinn cards in the game, however, which can be used to either destroy Jinn directly, or else inhibit the ease with which they can be brought into play. Jinn tend to be the only Spell cards which remain in play after they are cast, and most other Spells create effects similar to the way in which a number of Action cards do.

### Story Cards



So far, I've described three different methods of winning the game. The first is by destroying all of your opponent's City Sections - at which point they are eliminated immediately. The second is by leaving them with no Water (something which you would have, by default, done if you destroyed their City Sections). Players with no Water are then eliminated at the end of each turn. Thirdly, there lies the path to victory through the Omen card "Old Friends" - with which you raise your influence throughout the City to such a level that you claim victory outright. A fourth victory condition exists in the form of a specific card type - Story cards. By the use of Story cards you attempt to create a powerful Legend by performing incredible deeds, and claiming victory by virtue of your now Legendary status in the City. Story cards are

played as reactions to certain deeds you perform (for example, the card "The Tale of the Moto and the Senpet" can be played after a battle where you were the Defender against an opposing army, and no Water tokens or City Sections were lost). Once in play, Story Cards give you a Story Reward - which is a special ability you can use as a bonus for getting the card into play. Once in play, the Story card also gives you a number of Story points (typically one or two), and if you ever have five or more points worth of Story cards in play then you win the game. Note that, as with all other card types except Pantheon, you may have up to three of any individual Story card in your deck (this includes the two different versions of "The Tale of the Fourth Avatar" released in The Awakening set). However, you may have only one of each card in play at any one time (so you cannot win the game just by playing three copies of "The Tale of Selqet's Capture", for example). In general, Story victories in LBS are thought to be quite a bit more viable than the corresponding Enlightenment victories in L5R. This is probably for two reasons. - Firstly, you pick the stories from a number of different possible choices, and so it is possible to have cards more closely based around one theme than it is with the more diverse requirements of the L5R Ring cards. Secondly (again connected to the fact that you have a choice of which cards to go for), your opponent will often not know exactly which cards you're trying to play to finish off your Story victory - in complete contrast to L5R, where your opponent will always know which Rings you have left to play.

### Pantheon Cards



Finishing off my look at all of the current LBS card types are the newly released

Pantheon cards. Introduced a couple of months ago in The Awakening set, Pantheon cards represent the favor of the Gods of the Burning Sands. Played as an Open action (and typically with a cost of 3 Water), Pantheon cards have a global effect on the game, much like Omen cards do (for example, "Conquest", the Yodatai Deity of War gives all Heroes aligned to your faction +1 Strength). Note that any faction may use any of the Deity cards (so Conquest may be played by non-Yodatai players, and a Pantheon card with the trait "Ivory Kingdoms Deity" may be used by all players, and not just Ivory Kingdoms players). Pantheon cards are limited to one of each type in a deck. To reflect the fickleness of many of the LBS deities, you may also only have only one of any Pantheon card in play at the same time (so if you play a different Pantheon card, it replaces the old one). Pantheon cards are not exactly "Unique" cards, however (of which there can be only one in play at any time), because both you and your opponent may bring the same Pantheon card into play (you may both worship the same gods, after all). These cards give a nice feel to the game, and despite their high Water costs, they are beginning to see use in a number of decks.

That completes my look at all of the existing card types in the game. While I've mentioned a number of ways in which LBS differs from L5R, a number of other significant differences are present. Perhaps most obvious of these is the set-up. - In LBS, provinces are replaced by City Section cards which you choose beforehand. LBS is also played from a single deck - unlike L5R. This also gives rise to differences in card drawing, since in LBS you draw 4 cards from a single deck at the end of turn, while in L5R you draw a single card from your Fate deck, and can replace upturned Dynasty cards in your provinces. While neither game suffers from quite the same "top-decking" problem that Magic does, the L5R Fate deck draw is rather slow, although albeit this is not a huge problem given that the more often key cards (Personalities and Holdings) lie in the Dynasty deck. We also have Water costs in LBS, which compare, in a way (although there are obviously slight differences) to Honor requirements in L5R. Battles and Duels also reflect major differences in the two games, since L5R battles can often hinge on one or two points of Force that a player generates with an action to go just past his or her opponent's Force (or Province Strength), thereby wiping them out. LBS battles tend to be much more about attrition, with both sides usually taking losses unless particularly big units are present that are immune to the lower strength opposing units. That's not to say one method is definitely better than the other, however, since while a 31 Force army completely destroying a 30 Force army without losses in L5R is plainly unrealistic, so too is a single 5 Strength Hero being completely immune to damage from six 4 Strength Heroes in LBS. Duels again show different strategies.

While an L5R duel involves simply who can generate the highest Chi through a

combination of starting Chi and focusing (in which players can virtually guarantee a win if they know they are ahead at some point - unless cards such as "Bend Like a Reed" are used, of course), LBS duels can be more uncertain because they require successful thrusting and parrying. Finally, we have a different set of victory conditions in both games. L5R offers us Military (including by Dishonor), Honor victories, Enlightenment, and a number of card-specific victories such as with "The Darkest Magics", and through the set of four Walls of Otsan Uchi from Scorpion Clan Coup. LBS has a similar Military victory, Water deprivation, Story Victory, and as with L5R, card-specific victory conditions, such as through "Old Friends" or the set of four Goddess cards which I didn't mention earlier, but featured in my review of The Awakening set last month.

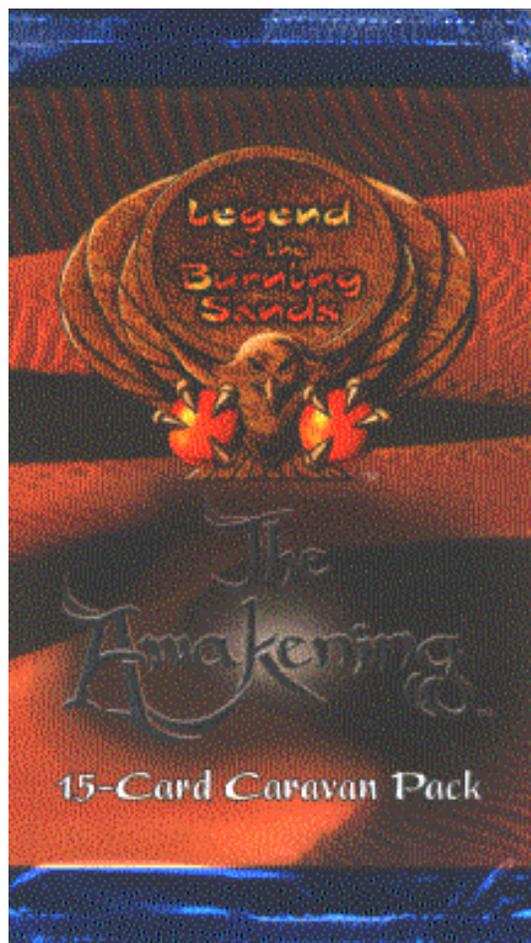
So now you know about all the different card types used in LBS. You know how cards interact with each other, how the game differs from L5R, and some basic strategy. Join me again next month, when I'll move onto deck building principles, and also highlight some of the more useful and powerful cards of each type in the game. Also, look out for my article on the LBS Champions, coming later this month. See you all then!

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By Paul Norman



The Awakening has been a much anticipated expansion for Legend of the Burning Sands. I say "expansion", although in fact The Awakening is the first real Legend of the Burning Sands basic set, since the last two expansions contained only two factions each, and the original "Shadow of the Tyrant" set contained only three. While there was no doubting that Shadow of the Tyrant was a good set, the small number of available factions (plus the Assassins being difficult to play without rare cards) meant that a lot of games tended to be Moto against Senpet, which could get a little repetitive after a while.

The Awakening set gives us for the first time the full twelve factions of Legend of the Burning Sands, including the five completely new factions of the Yodatai, Ra'Shari, Ivory Kingdoms, Houses of Dahab, and The Celestial Alliance. It also contains over

three hundred completely new cards, and includes reprints of some of the more fundamental cards from previous sets in the starter decks only (although note that starter decks also contain new cards, including three of the new rares per starter).



The Awakening set also concludes the first story arc of the Legend of the Burning Sands storyline. Following on from the storyline of Black Hand, Black Heart (the previous LBS expansion), the Moto Tar-Khan Kiyoshi has built a powerful Horde intent on storming the city of Medinat al-Salaam to end the rule of the Caliph and her Senpet allies. His forces are soon joined by the Yodatai and Ra'Shari factions. The Yodatai have already had preliminary clashes with the Senpet, with their Strategists slowly taking note of the Senpet's ways and tactics. The combined Horde (now known as the Erba'a Alliance), also swells its ranks with many former slaves of the Senpet, now hell-bent on revenge. The Senpet are unable to stop the Horde from advancing on the city, where they set about laying siege to its walls. Inside, the Ebonites attempt to rally the people of the city into defense. But even their formidable skills of organisation prove ineffectual, as the Yodatai wheel in catapults to pound the city walls.



Elsewhere, the previous heads of the Moto are undergoing their own separate trials. Believed lost by their people, the former Khan Gaheris and his wife Kara undergo divine experiences. In the secret Ashalan city of the Seventh Star, Kara trains under the Ashalan sandsmith Maymun, and slowly feels the power of the Goddess that makes her one of the four Avatars who will bring about the new age. Meanwhile, Gaheris' travels take him to the spot of land known only as the "Black Earth", where even he cannot guess the soul changing experiences that await him. Elsewhere in the sands, the rest of the Avatars gather. Little Amru, hidden by the Qabal in their attempt to keep the Avatars safe from the Khadi, searches for her surrogate father Hekau. But when she finally finds the mighty Qabal champion, he has changed forever; a mighty Jinn has sprung forth from his being. The other two Avatars are somewhat of a surprise. Zahra, one of the twins Janan is one of them.

After a ferocious battle with her twin sister Kamilah, Zahra struggles through the sewers to the City of the Seventh Star to fulfil her part in the prophecy. The final Avatar is not Selqet/Bayushi Kachiko, but in fact her fellow Scorpion, Shosuro Tage - currently with the Moto. Selqet herself IS rescued, however, by the mysterious stranger known only as "The Eye of Night". As many people have suspected, The Eye of Night is none other than Toturi's henchman Dairya in disguise (who had vowed to follow Kachiko to the ends of the world if necessary, in order to discover the whereabouts of his Emperor).



Within the city walls, a dark and ancient curse finally comes to an end. The Old Man of the Mountain - the young prince who was deposed by the Caliph three hundred years ago - finally, with his last breath, sees his family's curse end when he is killed by his own first born daughter Fatima. At this the Assassins erupt into open warfare, with Fatima controlling a small faction, and her second born sister Shala another. The Old Man's son, Haroun, also reveals his true colours; being a member of the Houses of Dahab, and a Qolat. He controls his own small troupe within the Assassins - the group known only as The Cursed. Eventually, the event of the expansion's title, The Awakening, occurs. Powered in some way by the Avatars, a great goddess awakens from her slumber beyond a rift in the Black Earth. The Ki-Rin clan kami, Shinjo, flies forth from this rift into the Black Earth where Moto Gaheris is waiting. Travelling beside the Moto champion for a while, they eventually escape the barren realm of the Black Earth, and Shinjo's freedom is complete. In the city, the Erba'a Alliance has broken through the city walls, and open warfare erupts on the streets. The Senpet, summoned by the Caliph to aid her in this struggle, falter in their defense. The Moto and Hanif slaves attack them remorselessly, and they are forced to back down from the struggle, leaving the Ebonites and Khadi to stand alone. Finally realizing the Caliph's betrayal, the Senpet Pharoah Hensatti dispatches a Phalanx of guards to help end the Caliph's rule. Attacked from all sides, the Caliph sends her elite guard into battle, but soon even they are also defeated. Her Khadi fair little better, particularly against the Ashalan Lammassar, who has collected three Khadi hearts in their Ivory boxes, making him all but invulnerable to their powers. As the battles ends with the defeat of the Caliph and her henchmen, even the Senpet, Ivory Kingdoms Ruhmal worshippers, and city folk turn on the Khadi. As events come

to a close, two Ashalan attempt to flee the city. Named Sylmun and Bakira, they are the birth parents of the first Ashalan child to be born in centuries. The story ends with the installation of the Assassin Adira as the new Caliph. Only time will tell how strong her grip on the throne will be, and one suspects her tenuous grasp on power will hold only so long as the city's true powers allow her to. With the escape of Lady Shinjo from her imprisonment, Lord Moon has finally returned to the Burning Sands for the first time since the long ago Day of Wrath. But the prophecies and portents, including the capture of the child Onaja by a dark Jinn, point to this as the signal of a new, dark age for the Burning Sands and its inhabitants. Only time will tell how this new age unfolds.



That concludes my look at the storyline aspects of the new set, and these aspects all make for a thoroughly enjoyable tale indeed. Now for a look at some of the cards. The set obviously introduces the five new factions, and their various specialties. The Ra'Shari tend to favor card advantage over their opponents, both through their Stronghold, and through cards like their champion, The Living Memory, and the potent Hero Fazil. The Yodatai have many heroes that carry the berserk trait, and also have the champion with the highest Strength in the game in Aurelian. They also have a useful hero in Adrianna, who has something like the tactician trait, except the Strength boost happens both before the battle, AND doesn't deplete your cards in hand. Their Stronghold is a bit of an enigma, having by far the lowest number of City Points (they are the only faction who cannot start with five City Sections). However, the ability of their Stronghold does allow them to gain City Sections after destroying those of their opponent. This is made slightly more difficult by the fact that you must

bow the Stronghold to gain a section in this way though. The Ivory Kingdoms tend to favor archery attacks, and though their champion starts off with the lowest overall stats of any champion, she gains +2S/+2K permanently every times she destroys an opposing Hero in a battle or duel. The Houses of Dahab offer another interesting faction for deck building. They have easily the highest number of City Points of any faction in the game with their Stronghold, The Doomed City of Laraman, which is backed up by them having no faction restrictions on their City Sections. While a new City Section (The Last Stop) allows both the Qabal and Ebonites to play six City Sections if they want to, The Houses of Dahab are the one faction who can easily start with six City Sections, even without it (and The Last Stop does have a drawback, so I suspect most other factions will only play with at most five City Sections). On top of that, they are able to use several of the powerful Moto specific City Section, Secret Well. Combined with the 10 card starting hand, this provides immense card drawing. The other new faction, The Celestial Alliance, is a bit of a mystery at the moment in storyline terms (in fact they were called for a long time the "Mystery Faction" on the lbsinfo mailing list). They have a couple of strong points, including not being eliminated from the game because of zero Water, and they can also recruit unaligned Heroes for one less Copper. The Celestial Alliance also has one of the biggest champions in the game in Lurza, who has both a Strength and Ka that are even higher than Gaheris'! These factions blend in well with the LBS storyline, and indeed two or three of them were hinted at in previous sets. The Awakening also has a completely new card type in the Pantheon cards. These add a wonderful flavor to the game, because they depict the favor of the gods of the people of the Burning Sands - and being able to summon the very gods of the game to your aid is something that seems to add an extra dimension in some ways. The Pantheon cards have black borders, and enter play as an Open action. They remain in play somewhat like an enchantment does in Magic, generally having some global affect on the game (for example, Vishnu the Preserver reduces the Strength of all attacking Heroes by -1).



With regard to new versions of old card types, we see experienced versions of some familiar Heroes. Adnan, Haroun, Kara, Nim, Seff Seven Fingers, Shalimar and Monkey Man are among those who get experienced versions in The Awakening. Experienced cards always add a nice touch for gamers who already have the previous versions of the card. Each faction also has a completely new Ancestral item in their respective starter decks. Both the Ancestral items and Experienced Heroes offer some interesting abilities. The Awakening even offers a new way to win through the Omen card "Old Friends". To win via this card, a player must produce 30 Influence in one go, by bowing cards that they control. Certain cards in the set also directly play out the storyline of the expansion. Shinjo's release is depicted in "Voice of the Star", and the various "Goddess" cards. The Goddess cards are a set of four cards that also provide an alternative method to victory, but only if played in the correct sequence. If you can manage to set this sequence up successfully, then a "Kirin" City Section is created on your side at the end of turn, and you win the game if it is still in play at the end of the following turn. We also follow the story of the Ashalan child through the Heroes "Sylmun" and "Bakira", and through the Omen "Onaja". You also see the eventual death of the Old Man of the Mountain through the cards "Rite of Assassination" and "Immortality's End". "Ulterior Motive" and "Unexpected Rescue" shows the story of Selqet's rescue by Dairya, following on from the previous Black Hand, Black Heart card "The Tale of Selqet and the Eye of Night". Given their prominent role in the storyline, it's a slight disappointment not to see cards like Selqet (perhaps as an unaligned Hero) and Shinjo (perhaps as a Moto Pantheon card) in the set. LBS is obviously a game which must have its own separate identity from L5R, but - like it or not - many LBS players are drawn to LBS through L5R, and

there is no harm in shamelessly playing to that audience a little. That said, LBS does establish its own identity quite successfully, in particular through this new set and the large numbers of cards and rich storyline that it provides. We also do get the story of the Scorpion clan's eventual return to the land of Rokugan, through the Story card "Dark Journey Home". A number of the other most useful cards in the set include the Holding "The Scale Man", the Omen "A Coming Storm", and the Reaction card "Routed" (all of which see action in my Moto deck this month). Another potentially useful card is "War in the Streets", although this has certain problems associated with the current ruling/wording, and awaits errata from official sources before its true effectiveness can be gauged. In keeping with previous sets, most factions also seem to have the typical 3S/3K or 3S/4K Heroes that form staples in most decks. These are essential, because only a small handful of fairly poor Heroes can be brought out with just the Stronghold, and since few Heroes have 4 Strength or more, these tend to be the most cost effective. The Awakening has made an attempt to give many of the factions at least one Hero they can play with just the Stronghold, however, although these vary in effectiveness, and tend to be nowhere near as useful as the likes of Nephurus (who was released back in Shadow of the Tyrant).



To conclude my review, let me first say that The Awakening is an excellent set, which should appeal to both new and experienced players alike. For new players it offers the wealth of factions which were perhaps lacking in the original release, while at the same time maintaining many of the more fundamental cards in the starter decks for them. For the old boys who, like myself, have tagged along since the start, The

Awakening offers an awesome culmination of the first story arc, while at the same time hinting at a possible new storyline to come. The number of cards in the set is also phenomenal, being over three hundred new cards, and over four hundred cards in total if reprints in the starter decks are included. This means that there are enough cards for almost anyone, although a new player wanting to play one of the old factions may want to try picking up some cards from the previous expansions, to get Heroes such as Abresax, Kalesha Sesh, the unexperienced Haroun and Kara, and also the various champions of the old factions. Fortunately, the company has made this transition easier through the availability of old cards for dinari (for those who don't know, these are tokens you get on packs, which can be sent in for extra cards). All of the currently available cards are from Shadow of the Tyrant (the original release), and include some of the most powerful cards in that set (and indeed the game, since that set contained some really strong cards). These even include the clan champions that were released in that set, of which The Old Man of the Mountain is essential for Assassin decks (since he is the only way in which you can repeatedly force unrefusable duels). So in short, the availability of cards is not lacking, for either old players or new ones. This is accompanied by what is almost certainly the best LBS storyline to date from the pen of Patrick Kapera. Although no news of the next release has been forthcoming as of yet, there is no doubt that this set (and game) should do well if it is put to a large enough audience. It certainly has my backing.

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By Paul Norman

As promised earlier in the month, here is my take on the champions of each of the 12 factions in the Legend of the Burning Sands Collectible Card Game. I'll start with those released in the first expansion, and then work up to the Awakening set, including details of how each of the champions fit into the most popular deck strategies for their faction.

Despite the fact that with the Awakening release there are now other champions with higher Strengths and Kas, the Moto champion, Gaheris, remains many people's choice as the mightiest Hero in the game. Besides his still exceptionally strong stats and useful raid bonuses, his special ability to prevent opponents playing action cards in a battle is one of the most powerful abilities that you could



give to any Hero. This prevents your opponent from using all of those popular Strength boosting cards to take him down, although note that cards that are played before the battle - such as Attack at Dawn or Sudden Strike - can still be used against him. He forms an almost essential part of most Moto decks, although a well tuned raid deck can usually still decimate an opponent, even if he doesn't hit the table in a given game.

In contrast, the Senpet champion Hensatti tends to be rarely used in many of the most popular Senpet decks. True, she has reasonable stats, combined with a couple of good special abilities, but most of the current Senpet decks - such as Senpet crush - tend to rely on Heroes and Followers that have a similar Strength to her, but that are much cheaper and easier to play (such as Qer Apet, Abresax, or Elephant). Hensatti can certainly still be useful if you can get a number of Senpet Heroes onto the field of play, but with the current game environment tending more and more towards speed decks, it is unlikely that the game will still be undecided by the time you can get out that many Heroes.





Out of all the factions in LBS, there is probably none that has a strategy more reliant on its champion than the Assassins. With his ability to force repeated, irrefuseable duels, the Old Man of the Mountain forms a key part of almost any Assassin duelling deck. While other cards (such as Contest of Wills) can be used to force the occasional duel as well, it is the fact that you can keep using the Old Man's ability every turn that makes him so useful. While it's true that cards like Contest of Wills can be cycled back into your deck through use of other cards such as The Weight of Dreams, it is the guarantee that the Old Man gives you which is so much more powerful than hoping that a recycled Contest of Wills will come back into your hand in the next turn or two. The Old Man is also fairly cheap for a champion, which mean that you can quite possibly get him into play by the second turn if you have the right Holdings in your deck and a couple of Merchant Quarters among your city sections.

Another relatively cheap champion is the Qabal champion, Hekau. While he is not quite as essential to most Qabal decks as the Old Man is to an Assassin one, Hekau is none-the-less very useful for his ability to play two spells at once. Most people seem to regard the Qabal as the weakest of the current factions in LBS, and while I'm not sure I completely agree with that, there is no doubt that there are more powerful factions. The best means of attack for most Qabal decks tends to be to pump out as many Jinn Heroes as quickly as possible. One good means of doing this, is by using Sahir such as

Kurrat al-Ayn, because of the permanent Strength and Ka boost she gives to any Jinn that she casts (although admittedly this comes at the price of extra water). The other option is to try and get either Hekau or a couple of cheap Sahir out on the second turn, to double up the speed at which you can summon your Jinn. For this reason, Hekau is a useful addition to most Qabal decks.



The Ashalan champion, Anbari Khalil, seems to appear in a number of Ashalan decks, but tends not to be as key a player in them as the Old Man is in an Assassin deck, or even Hekau in a Qabal deck. This is because while Anbari has a fairly respectable 4 Strength, a much cheaper option is available to the Ashalan through use of Eyla the Protector. Eyla is normally 2S/2K, but gets pumped up to 4S/4K if she is your only Hero in the battle. She can be especially deadly if you can attach the Ashalan weapon known as "the Khadja" onto her early on, because as well as increasing her stats again, this lets you draw off any of your opponent's water that you destroy with her, and put it back onto your city sections at the end of turn. One interesting thing to note about Eyla, is that if she is in an army with another one of your Heroes, but then that Hero dies (through an engagement maybe) then Eyla will be pumped back up to 4 Strength, and so can absorb more



damage (although note that she won't be immune to the damage at that point, unless she was also immune to it with her reduced Strength when the opposing Hero engaged).

The Jackals are a faction that also have a fairly strong champion, in the form of Enala. Enala has a useful 5 Strength, although his Ka of 3 is the lowest out of any of the champions. With the Jackal Hero Yaminah having been most-recent-printed in the Awakening to only 1S/1K now, however, the Jackals have had a slight reduction in Strength to contend with - although this has been slightly countered by the addition of the Ma'ghul in the Awakening set as well. Along with the Ma'ghul, Seff Seven-Fingers tends to form a staple in most Jackal decks, although the extra beef provided by Enala tends to warrant the inclusion of one or two copies of him in the deck list.



The Ebonites have a fairly useful champion in the form of Judgement, whose special abilities tends to help the Ebonites many defensive strategies. Judgement was already a powerful figure before the release of the Awakening, but the popularity of the Awakening card War in the Streets has perhaps made him even more powerful. Because Judgement's special ability means that he engages from outside of the battle, he doesn't actually count as opposing for the purposes of War in the Streets, and so can't be targeted with it. As long as you can assign at least a small defender to each of your city sections, Judgement also helps to defend against those pesky fliers - since you can use him to deal a hefty 4 Strength engagement, even if



your actual defender is much weaker than him.

As far as brute Strength goes, however, there is no match for the powerful Yodatai champion, Aurelian. He has a higher Strength than any other champion, and has the same strength as the Giant from Episode 2. The Giant tends to be very rarely used in most decks though, because he requires you to destroy a Follower every turn to keep him in play, and is also vulnerable to Qolat Master. Aurelian has no such weakness (unless you dent his Ka with Wisdom of the Stars of course), and his attacks are even more dangerous than the Giant's, because they come complete with the Berserk trait, which makes his 7 Strength hits much more difficult to absorb. The only problem with Aurelian - perhaps not surprisingly - is that he has a high copper cost, and so you often have to make sure that you get out other Heroes such as Adrianna or Valeria in the early stages of the game (although Martyr is a useful card for helping you to get Aurelian into play).



So far, one of the few LBS factions that I've seen very few good deck lists for is the Ra'Shari, although I firmly believe that they are capable of having many good decks built around them. Perhaps their biggest strength comes through their card drawing, via their stronghold, the potent Hero Fazil, and their champion, the Living Memory - who lets you refill your entire hand. The Living Memory also has incredibly strong stats for his low copper cost, and another special ability that is the subject of some



rules debates at present (due to the fact that it could in theory be used to have two unique Heroes in play at one time). The Ra'Shari's card drawing should enable them to assemble some fairly useful duelling decks, particularly when combined with cards like Doctor, and other cards that can be used to dictate the course of duels. While the Ra'Shari don't actually have quite the same special abilities for duels that the Assassins do (by virtue of their stronghold and the Old Man, for example), card drawing forms a useful part of any duelling deck - as well as having more general applications as well of course.

The Ivory Kingdoms also have a champion who can benefit considerably by winning duels. While Kali-Ma requires you to destroy one of your Heroes to bring her into play, she does gain +2S/+2K every time she destroys an opposing Hero in a duel or through an engagement. Although she starts off with relatively weak stats for a champion, this does mean that she has the potential to become truly monstrous. For this reason she is a fairly attractive choice for most Ivory Kingdoms players, although in fact her own abilities tend to be slightly out of theme with many of the other (Archery oriented) cards that the Ivory Kingdoms have available to them.

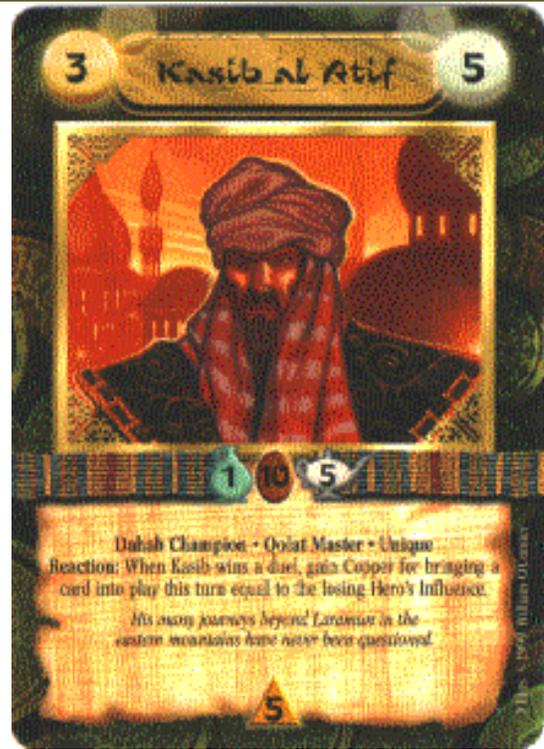




If you add up the Strength and Ka of each of the LBS champion cards (or any of the Hero cards for that matter), then all of them have at least two less points in total than the Celestial Alliance's champion, Lurza. More like a god than anything else, and complete with the flying trait, Lurza would be truly broken were it not for the fact that it can only be assigned to a battle that has a defending unit. While this means that in theory your opponent can completely stop Lurza by assigning no defenders, in practice they will eventually have to start assigning defenders - or risk letting your other Heroes run rampage. Of course with those stats, Lurza is fairly expensive to get into play, but this isn't necessarily a problem - since most Celestial Alliance decks look to drag the game out quite a bit, until both players are out of water (at which point the Celestial Alliance's stronghold prevents them from losing).

Finally, we come onto the Houses of Dahab champion, Kasib al Atif. Along with Lurza, he is the only one of the 12 champions who can be recruited by factions other than his own (probably by virtue of the fact that he is a Qolat Master!). If he wins a duel then he automatically generates copper equal to the opposing Hero's influence - which you can then use to bring a card into play before the end of turn. While this is a useful ability to be sure, Kasib doesn't tend to make it into the vast majority of Dahab decks, because they tend to rely on much cheaper Heroes - many of which are unaligned. These Dahab swarm decks seem to have set new levels of speed that other decks must contend with, and

I can see them dominating most competitive deck designs for some time to come.



*\*Add your comments and questions about the Champions on our [Legend of the Burning Sands Discussion board!](#)*

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By Bob Beverage

With the awakening basic set just released for Legend of the Burning Sands, the hot decks are quickly changing. Just a little rundown of some of the deck archetypes available for play today.

Senpet: Senpet Speed (Cheap Sahir and Jinn quickly)

Senpet Crush (Hensatti, Qer Apet, and Abrasax w/ followers, oh my!)

Senpet Undead (4 copper on your stronghold is a great kickstart. I haven't seen this deck for a while, it is rather outdated now)

Assassin: Dueling (hey, it's what they do)

Moto: Moto Raid (Kara, Argoun, Kiyoshi, and Peacocks)

Moto Power (Throw some heavy Cav. And Ele-fun on Gaheris, attack at dawn, ouch)

Ashalon: Water Mojo (Anbari Kaleel, blow up those holdings!)

Fate of 2 (Use all cards w/ a fate value of 2 and all the action cards that make use of your strongholds fate value, works every time)

Qabal: Qabal Jinn (Use the Ice Sorceress to bring out big Jinn, and your other sahir for any other jinn or spell you need)

Qabal Military (Lots of your heroes fly, so use this to your advantage in the early game)

Jackal: Jackal Undead (Hey, that's the whole story behind the jackal, their box is nifty too)

Ebonite: Defensive Military (Most of your heroes gain an advantage on defense, use this to your advantage. Conserve water and force your opponent to attack)

Dahab: I haven't really seen the Dahab in action yet. Most of their heroes have high influence though, expect to see plenty of council cards and Duel of Wits'

Rashari: Manipulator (The Rashari Manipulator is a viscous deck. Shagala the Damned can change the fate value of one of your heroes, which if done correctly, you can then play Waking the Beast to kill your opponent if they draw and discard a higher fate value. They can redraw fate values they don't like w/ Samand the quick, and recycle the cards they want at will w/ Melinda. The Grey Woman castes curses for free, and their champion fills your hand. This is one of the decks I expect to become very hot very soon)

Ivory Kingdoms: No idea whatsoever. Awakening is still very new, many deck ideas have not come full circle yet.

Celestial Align: Water Burn (anything and everything that causes your opponents to burn water is fair game for this deck. Sun's Anger, Wrath of the Black Stone, the Sultans Tithe. You live without water, they don't)

Khadi (the ability to pay 1 less copper for unaligned heroes is outstanding. As all Khadi are inherently unaligned, they are the perfect type of hero for this deck. Throw in the Eye of Night, some Strange Bedfollows, and an Al-Hazaad or three and you got yourself a deck!)

Yodaitai: Berserk Military (with most yodaitai heroes having the berserk trait, this is soon to become a popular deck. Attack at dawn and engage someone with a weapon, it's all over)

Now that we know some of the decks types that are out there, we want to know what is

hot! In my area, most people are playing anti-omen, anti-NoWaterAtTheEndOfTheTurnButIStillLive decks. Mainly because my Celestial Alignment: Khadi deck is undefeated as of yet. Barring the Khadi Deck killers, here's some of what has been played against me lately.

Senpet Crush – This is really the deck I see never going out of style. The Senpet like to unleash their raw strength on whoever they think is winning. And they are pretty much unstoppable UNLESS you know exactly how to beat them.

**HOW TO BEAT THIS DECK:** Sudden strike to remove their attack at dawns, Al Hazaad to throw Fireballs, Flying heroes to pick at their cities. In one on one, let them kill a city on turn two if it means getting lots of copper for guys on turn three. In Multi, hope that someone else will keep them in check in the early game.

Assassin – The assassins are experts at picking of characters one at a time.

**HOW TO BEAT THIS DECK:** Keep them in check with a semi strong military. Use sudden strike to keep their hand size down. Play what remains on their dueling characters, this will make them think twice about that tough duel. But the best way to win is simply refuse the knife fights and belly dances. That oughta piss 'em right off.

Moto Military – Once Gaheris gets the sword and a few followers, he becomes the broken character. Can't send him home, can't move around, really, you can't screw with him. I did see someone kill Gaheris w/ the sword by Old Man dueling him with haroun. It took three doctors and seventeen cards in hand to do so (Harems are great) but it was done. And Stories were told.

**HOW TO BEAT THIS DECK:** Fly around, trade blows, and duel the Khan. That omen that doesn't let big guys assign is nifty too.

I hope this article was informative and helpful to any who read it. Next time, I will go into more strategy detail, tell you how to beat 2 more decks, and provide sample listings Senpet, Moto, and Assassin decks I described above.

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by Paul Norman

A Legend of the Burning Sands Deck  
Design

The Assassins were probably the most popular faction at the very beginning of Legend of the Burning Sands' release. The very name conjures images of Ninja, and dark warriors stealthily traversing the night. Once players had been given enough time to build decks with them however, they found that the Assassins were very difficult to play with. This was primarily because the Assassins' strength - dueling - was something that was only rigorously supported by a few cards, and the only method of forcing repeated, unrefusable duels, was through the use of their champion, the Old Man of the Mountain (who also happens to be a rare card). Other rares, such as Haroun, Doctor, and Qolat Master tend to also be necessary for a good Assassin deck, and this is (at least partly) the reason that Moto and Senpet still seem to be the most played factions.

In many ways though, the Assassins make one of the most pleasant factions to play with. Their prowess at dueling is not a direct route to winning the game, because you must still find some way of destroying your opponent's Water (and possibly their City Sections as well). However, dueling does let you clear the board of your opponent's threats, and so can set you up for attacks and raids against undefended City Sections. As such, Assassin decks can have an element of a "control deck" feel about them, as you slowly try to gain control of the playing field, and shut your opponent down. The Assassins also have a couple of Heroes with reasonable Strength (giving you some ability to compete in battles), and they have access to a few cards that work well against raids as well.

So let's come onto the main deck design. As always, you may find the odd card that works better in your own particular play group, but in general this deck list concentrates well on the strengths of the Assassins that you will be trying to exploit. The Hidden Keep of the Assassins is of course the Stronghold to go for, and then we come to the following City Sections:

- 1 Shadows Within the Walls
- 2 The Merchant Quarter

1 Duqaq's School of Astronomy

1 Thieves Quarter

The last three of these have already featured in previous deck designs I've published on Azrael-Online! (see [archives](#)), and that is because they each have very clear advantages to any deck builder (The Merchant Quarter lets you produce extra Copper, Duqaq's School starts with a high number of Water tokens on it, and Thieves Quarter has a low cost in City Points). Shadows Within the Walls is the Assassin specific City Section, and is particularly useful against raiding threats, because no raids can be assigned to that City Section (although you will still have to defend it against attacks of course). Against raid intensive decks such as Moto, you should try and conserve your final Water supplies on this Section as best you can, because this obviously provides you with a limited measure of defense in such a scenario. A suitable replacement for Shadows Within the Walls would be The River Quarter, because although raids can be assigned to it, The River Quarter is one of the few cards in the game that can be used to recursively gain Water - a useful commodity in a game where Water supplies tend to inexorably dwindle as the game progresses.

As usual with my deck designs, let's move onto the Heroes next. From what I've told you, these obviously include the Old Man of the Mountain, but let's see the full list:

3 Old Man of the Mountain

2 Haroun

3 Sabina

1 Shala

1 Faida

1 Alhena

1 The Eye of Night

I'd recommend three of the Old Man, simply because you want to be fairly sure of being able to play him on the second or third turn. Once he is in play, your opponent's only real chance is to swarm you with so many Heroes, and with such speed, that you can't possibly stem the tide before being smashed. While a quick Senpet deck design - such as Senpet Crush - might do this, most other factions lack the speed to get the edge on you in this way (and even against Senpet Crush, you will find this deck is not without its defenses...). Being a champion, the Old Man of the Mountain also has pretty decent stats, making him a reasonable attacker, and also an excellent duelist if you can force a duel with him through action cards like Knife Fight and Contest of Wills. The Old Man's ability to force duels never actually puts HIM forward as the duelist, however (you bow him and nominate one of your other unbowed Assassin Heroes), so for this you need back-up from a couple of other

trusted Heroes. The Old Man's son, Haroun, probably makes the best of these. At 4S/5K for 9 Copper, he is even stronger in battle than the Old Man, and indeed his Strength will make most opponents think twice before attacking. His special ability also lets him destroy one of your opponent's Holdings each time he wins a duel - a useful ability in a deck attempting to establish control over the playing field. The Eye of Night also forms a useful attacker and duelist, and although he must use other methods of entering duels besides the Old Man's ability, he has zero Water cost, and his special abilities make him probably the best duelling Hero in the deck. While not quite as powerful as either Haroun or The Eye of Night, Safina makes a useful substitute for these two, and has the useful features of both costing less Copper, and also not being unique (ie. you can have more than one of her in play at the same time - unlike Haroun or The Eye of Night). It's also a good idea to have a few slightly cheaper Heroes, to speed yourself up a little if need be. For these, I've gone for one each of Shala, Faida, and Alhena, because they all have their own little advantages (Shala increases her Ka against high-influence Heroes and has a reduced cost if you already have the Old Man in play, Faida is useful against raids, and Alhena can be brought out with just your Stronghold). Now we come onto the Copper engine, which (as with many decks apart from Senpet) tends to have a familiar feel to it:

3 Safiyya's Sweetwater

3 The Scale Man

2 Wheat Fields

3 Gold Merchant

3 Belly Dancer

2 Doctor

1 The Royal Throne

The first four Holdings (and also The Royal Throne) tend to be useful in most deck types, because it's useful to have a number of "free" holdings that you can lay first turn, to back up a Holding you can play with your Stronghold (Burning Marketplace tends to be the other popular one here - but only for Strongholds that produce four Copper). So apart from these, the other two Holdings are Belly Dancer and Doctor. As might be expected, these are in the deck for their uses in dueling. Belly Dancer lets you bow and destroy it during the Night Phase to force a duel between two Heroes unless your opponent pays 3 Water. While a number of opponents will pay the Water cost, it's important to have as many pro-dueling cards as possibly, and Belly Dancer also serves as a reasonable Copper producer. Doctor is an excellent card in duels, because it lets you bow it and pay one Copper to reduce the damage caused by a thrust to zero. This is particularly useful if you make a bad parry, and combines well with Actions like A Handful of Sand. You also have the Assassin Stronghold which you can use to pull Assassin Heroes out of any duels they are

unlikely to win - so very few of your own Heroes should actually get killed in a duel. Another useful card in this respect is a follower that I include:

## 2 Bodyguard

Besides giving the Hero he is attached to +2K, the Bodyguard also lets you substitute failed parries from your deck with parries from your hand, and so can operate much like the Doctor does when you make a particularly bad parry. Ka boosting cards are very useful in this type of deck, because they reduce the need for you to play thrusts of your own (remember, if the duel ends with your Hero having the higher Ka, then your Hero wins - no matter whether you thrust or not). A couple of items also serve well for this purpose:

## 2 Dhul Fiqar Knife

Besides its storyline connection to the Assassins, the Dhul Fiqar Knives provide a +2K boost in the same way that Bodyguard does, and also provide a +1S Strength boost that can make your Heroes more powerful in direct battles. I also include an all new Pantheon card for this purpose:

## 1 The Will of Shilah

## 1 Vishnu the Preserver

The Will of Shilah gives all of your Heroes a +1K boost, and having zero Copper cost, it is something you can play first turn. The Assassins tend to have fairly good Ka scores anyway, but with plenty of Ka boosting through cards like this, along with Bodyguard and Dhul Fiqar Knife, your opponent will likely be forced to thrust at least several times in a duel, or be forced to concede it. Vishnu the Preserver can help to buy you a little more time to set up your dueling trap, and also helps to inhibit attack oriented decks like Senpet Crush. Be sure to really check that it's needed before playing it though, since it will restrict your own attackers as well if you have to start making attacks of your own (although you can of course remove it by playing the Will of Shilah later on, since any player may have only one Pantheon card in play at any time). With their zero fate value, these two cards also make dangerous thrusts in a duel (as does the Old Man, with his five fate value). The final cards that round off the deck are the Actions, which are:

## 2 One Dinari

## 1 Wisdom of the Stars

## 1 A Handful of Sand

## 1 Unbound

- 3 Unexpected Rescue
- 3 Knife Fight
- 3 Contest of Wills
- 2 Divided We Fall
- 2 Qolat Master
- 2 Faith

One Dinari tends to be a popular card in many decks, especially given the fact that, unlike a number of other top CCGs, you draw four cards at the end of every turn in LBS. There are many instances when its extra one Copper can be useful, including the fact that you can bring one of your Doctors into play with just a One Dinari. Wisdom of the Stars is useful for its surprise value among other things, and in a deck like this you needn't worry about the 1 Ka loss. Next we come to three cards that are useful in duels. A Handful of Sand gives you an unparriable thrust from the top of your deck when you use it as one of your own parries. Unexpected Rescue is an excellent card that gives one of your Heroes a further 2 Ka boost while they are in a duel, while also doubling up as a card that can reduce the strength of engagements. And finally, Unbound gives one of your Heroes a permanent +2S/+2K boost after they win a duel, effectively pumping your characters to make them even more dangerous. Knife Fight and Contest of Wills are your standard cards to force duels, and are similar to Iaijutsu Duel and Iaijutsu Challenge in L5R. Contest of Wills is probably the more rigorous of these, because although it requires you to be in a battle or raid, it creates an unrefusable duel (compared to Knife Fight, which can be refused by your opponent paying 3 Water). Divided We Fall combines well with Vishnu the Preserver when you are against heavy attacking decks. - It gives all defending Heroes +1S, and combined with Vishnu's -1S to attacking Heroes, this makes it much more difficult for your opponent to destroy your City Sections, and you can turn around such battles even further through clever use of Unexpected Rescue and Wisdom of the Stars. Divided We Fall also forms the token Omen in the deck, since its always useful to have at least two or three of such cards, even if it's just to counter your opponent's Omens. Qolat Master forms a nice card against a number of deck types, and again, can be useful against attacking decks that tend to have a lot of low Ka Heroes. Qolat Assassin has a similar effect, but kills the Hero instead of converting them to your side like Qolat Master does. This essentially creates a two Hero shift in the game, by removing one of your opponent's Heroes, and then bringing it under your control. The only disadvantage is that it's a Night action, and so your opponent may have already been able to use the Hero to some effect. Finally, as with the two other decks I've posted so far, I round the deck off with two Faith. As usual it is a very useful card if you have a bad draw, and can be particularly useful for ensuring that you have Heroes like Haroun or the Old Man in the first two or three turns when you need them. Although with all the Ka boosts

in the deck your opponent will be doing the Lion's share of the thrusting, Faith also lets you replenish your hand size later in the game if it gets depleted from your own thrusts and parries.

The Assassins were many of the players' first choice when Legend of the Burning Sands first came out, and with this deck you can make a real go of them. Even if you don't have some of the key cards at the moment, then you will find that most of them are available for dinari. So go on - send in those cut up packs and build yourself a dueling deck like no other. There are darker things than Ninja out there...

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by Paul Norman

A Legend of the Burning Sands Deck  
Design

The Moto are a popular choice for many Legend of the Burning Sands deck builders. Offering both a connection to Legend of the Five Rings through the Unicorn/Ki-Rin Clan, and also having some of the most interesting and intriguing characters such as Gaheris, Kara, and Kiyoshi, the Moto are already favourites with many players, even before the strengths and weaknesses of their cards are considered.

Like each of the other two factions released in Shadow of the Tyrant, the Moto has its own preferred path to victory. While the Senpet and Assassins have Stronghold cards and Heroes which give them distinct advantages in battles and duelling respectively, the Moto are masters of that other form of Hero interaction in LBS - raiding. A good Moto deck can steal Water from your opponent at an alarming rate, and this makes it more difficult for a quick attacking deck to smash your City Sections - because you are constantly filling them back up with THEIR water!! Raiding also has the advantage that it is done at the very end of the turn, and so you often have time to see where your opponent is committing his or her forces (for example, if they commit all of them to attack before the end of the day phase, then you might decide that some of your Heroes, such as Kiyoshi perhaps, are better off launching attacks of their own for that turn). Nobody can match the Moto when it comes to Raiding, so your opponent will usually be forced into action early in the turn against you anyway, rather than engage in a contest of Raiding from which there will be only one winner.

I obviously choose the Moto Stronghold, and then quite deliberately go for five completely different City Sections. The Moto are already restricted to only one of any type of Advanced City Section, so this doesn't really restrict you further by that much, and also combines very well with a certain Omen from the Awakening set, which I'll come onto later. I go for the following City Sections:

- 1 Duqaq's School of Astronomy
- 1 Secret Well
- 1 Jewel of the Desert
- 1 The Merchant Quarter

## 1 Thieves Quarter

These give a reasonable level of starting water, while at the same time giving you some useful abilities such as the card drawing of Secret Well, and the extra Copper production you can get with The Merchant Quarter. Jewel of the Desert is also a very useful section with this deck, because as long as it is in play you will always be able to find a place for Water you have raided from your opponent. There are also a few other tricks that can be done with it which I will discuss later.

Now for the Heroes, which obviously form a key part of a deck that relies on Raiders. I suggest something like these:

2 Gaheris

2 Kara

1 Moto Marik

3 Kiyoshi

3 Shu-kai

2 Adnan exp.

Gaheris is certainly one of, if not the most powerful Hero in the game. Up until the release of the Awakening, no character had a higher Ka or Influence than him, and only the Giant from the Secrets and Lies expansion had a higher strength (although he had certain problems associated with keeping him on your side and in play). To top off all those great stats, Gaheris also has one of the best abilities of any Hero - he stops your opponent using action cards from their hand during any battle that you assign him to. While this doesn't stop cards that are played just before a battle, like Attack at Dawn, it does crucially stop your opponent from springing any real surprises on you, and as such is useful in attack or defense. Gaheris even makes one of the best raiders in the game with his Raid+2 and Carry+1 bonuses, although there are obviously cheaper alternatives to him for this purpose. Kara and Moto Marik are your basic "Raid Masters" in this deck, with both being able to come away with 3 Water tokens from a raid, and their special abilities making it very likely that they will do so. With his Ka of 1, Marik is a little bit more vulnerable than Kara, so I'd probably go for one more of her in a deck. Then we come on to the deck's staple Heroes - Kiyoshi and Shu-kai. For 7 Copper, Kiyoshi is great value because he has 3 Strength to attack or defend with, and also has a Carry+1 bonus which lets him take 2 Water tokens from a successful raid. Shu-kai is incredibly cheap at only 4 Copper, and his ability effectively gives him an extra Raid+1 when you send him out to your opponent's City Sections. This, combined with the Stronghold's ability to give your Moto Heroes Raid+1 means that little Shu-kai will win you an incredible number of raids for his low Copper cost. Finally, the Experienced Adnan is useful on several fronts. Firstly, he is a cheap Raider, even though he will not receive the Stronghold's

bonus because he is unaligned. Secondly, he is useful at some battles where you want to have a Hero in order to be able to play a card from your hand (eg. Belly of the Desert), or even to use him to absorb engaging damage. He is also useful for his ability to bring him back into play from your Buried pile at the end of turn.

Experienced Jangir is yet another useful Hero you might consider putting into this deck. For Holdings I go for a pretty standard Copper engine consisting of the "free" holdings and some of the high Copper producing Holdings like Gold Merchant:

- 3 Safiyya's Sweetwater
- 3 The Scale Man
- 2 Wheat Fields
- 3 Gold Merchant
- 3 Trade Route
- 1 The Royal Throne

With a starting hand size of 9 cards, plus an extra card if you need it in the first turn through Secret Well, you should have a very good chance of being able to play at least one of these last three Holdings with your Stronghold in the first turn, and also having at least one of the first three "free" holdings to put down. Combined with The Merchant Quarter this would give you 8 or 9 Copper second turn - enough to play any of your Heroes except Gaheris, or maybe even two Heroes if these include Adnan and Shu-kai. This should be enough to set you up nicely for Raiding, and you can continue dropping any free holdings you draw in future turns without slowing yourself up in any way. You can also supplement your Raiding with Followers and Items. The Follower cards I would choose are:

- 3 al-Zhayn's Trained Peacocks

These are cheap, and let any Hero they are attached to carry off an additional Water token from a Raid. Followers also provide a certain amount of protection against abilities that target only Heroes without attached Followers. Moto Steeds is another useful Follower you might consider, although the Moto tend to have various decent Raid bonuses anyway - so the Steeds' Raid+1 bonus is in most cases somewhat less desirable than the ability to carry an extra Water from a raid. Cards with high Fate values also decrease the need for Raid bonuses, and beside Gaheris' Fate 5, the Ancestral Weapons with their Fate 4 are also worth considering:

- 2 Ancestral Sword of the Kirin
- 1 Steed of the Goddess

Besides their high Fate Values, these cards would make the deck in their own right anyway. The Ancestral Sword can let you make one character very big and difficult to take out in a battle or duel, and Steed of the Goddess makes one of your Heroes into

an expert Raider with Raid+2 and Carry+2. I would almost consider using another Steed of the Goddess, were it not for the fact that a number of other great cards that affect raiding exist in the Action cards in the deck. These are:

- 2 Nim Visits the Stranger
- 3 Hanif Escapees
- 1 Poisoning the Well
- 3 A Coming Storm
- 2 Routed
- 3 Unexpected Rescue
- 1 Wisdom of the Stars
- 2 One Dinari
- 2 Belly of the Desert
- 2 Faith

The first six of these cards are your basic cheap cards to enhance your raiding. Nim Visits the Stranger and Hanif Escapees can both be used to help you carry off more Water from successful raids, and the former even has an alternate use - to turn a tightly contested raid in your favour by adding 1 to your Raiding Fate Value after cards have been revealed. Hanif Escapees is probably slightly preferable because of its permanent effect, however. Poisoning the Well provides you with a potentially nasty surprise for your opponent, since instead of taking Water back with you, it lets you destroy double the Water you would normally steal from a raid. In a deck like this you can easily have a Hero who is about to steal 3 Water, and so this card will let you blitz 6 Water from even a well stocked up City Section. A Coming Storm then adds an evil twist to your Water stealing, because at the lowest level it offers you protection from your opponent's Omens, but at the highest level it can be a game winning card. It drains Water from your opponent for each copy of a (non-Jewel of the Desert) City Section an opponent has more than one of in play (so if your opponent is playing 3 Merchant Quarter and 2 Thieves Quarter then that is 5 Water they lose at the start of every turn!). The Omen is supposed to affect you as well, but since this deck has five completely different City Sections you never have to pay anything. Combined with all the Carry bonuses in the deck you should be able to strip the Water from your opponent's City Sections incredibly quickly if they are playing multiple copies of City Sections - and almost as quickly if they are not! While the Moto have solid, dependable Heroes, with average stats, they are not really experts (except for Gaheris of course) when it comes to battles or duelling. For this reason, Routed and Unexpected Rescue make useful additions to the deck, since it's always a good idea to devote a small batch of cards to stopped your opponent's strategy, rather than promoting your own. Both cards are ideal in this area, since Routed can be used to stop your opponent using Strength boosting cards in battle, or

to stop him or her from forcing you into a Duel with Contest of Wills in a battle. Likewise, Unexpected Rescue can be used to reduce the damage caused by an engagement (and thus often causes your opponent to miscalculate how much damage they can deal, and which cards they can destroy), or it can also be used to give you a temporary 2 Ka boost in a duel.

Wisdom of the Stars is also useful for concealing the amount of damage that you can deal in a battle, and although you want to be concentrating on raids rather than battles in most cases, it's still a useful card to include at least one of - even if it's just to put that seed of doubt in your opponent's mind about whether or not his or her attack is a good idea which is definitely going to succeed. One Dinari is a useful card in the deck if (as can often be the case) you need just that one more Copper to play a certain card, and in the specific case of this deck it gives you the possibility of a first turn Shu-kai, or you can even play Experienced Adnan with just One Dinari since his Copper cost is only one. Belly of the Desert gives this deck interesting options as the game wears on. Since it prevents any actions being made in a battle except for an action that destroys it, this Battle Omen effectively stops a battle dead. Because engaging is an action, you or your opponent will not even be able to deal damage for that battle as long as Belly of the Desert lasts until you both pass consecutively to end the battle. As you are concentrating on raids with this deck, this card can therefore effectively buy you an extra turn in many cases against battle oriented decks. One trick you can also use is to pour all of your Water tokens onto Jewel of the Desert in the end phase as the game wears on, and as your hand size starts to go down. This gives your opponent a dilemma - either attack the other City Sections where they can maybe take the Section down, but otherwise not accomplish much because of your already fairly low hand size - or otherwise go for the Jewel of the Desert which you can completely defend just by dropping Belly of the Desert for that turn. Gaheris can also provide good defense in these instances through his high strength and special ability. In contrast, your opponent has relatively few options with regards to Water token placement against your raids - if he or she spreads them out then that lets you pick off lots of Water, but if they try to hoard their Water on one Jewel of the Desert then they risk you using Poisoning the Well to smash a huge chunk of Water off in a single, devastating blow. Finally, two Faith round off the deck to help guard against a bad draw, and also to help you replenish cards after you've used up a lot of them for raiding with.

In Legend of the Burning Sands they say that Water is life, and since the Moto are masters of hoarding Water, why not give them a go? - You'll be drinking your own health long after your opponent has died of thirst.

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## THE - SENPET

### A Legend of the Burning Sands Strategy

by Paul Norman

The Senpet is almost certainly one of the most versatile and powerful factions in Legend of the Burning Sands deck building. Being able to call on both strong military power and cheap, efficient sorcerors (known as sahir), the Senpet offer decks which are easy to build, and quick and brutal to play with.

Legend of the Burning Sands is set in the same game world as Legend of the Five Rings, and indeed its storyline began with the arrival of the L5R Scorpion Clan, banished to the Burning Sands for the supposed abduction of Emperor Toturi the First. While Legend of the Five Rings focuses mostly on rival clans in an Empire not unlike Feudal Japan or China, Legend of the Burning Sands sports a much more diverse set of factions, many of whom have completely different goals in the storyline. The Senpet are perhaps most analogous to the Ancient Egyptians, and they are masters of the desert in which Legend of the Burning Sands is set. Lying deep within that desert, built about the banks of the one true river in this harsh land lies a single city - Medinat al-Salaam, also known as the Jewel of the Desert. None of the playable factions in Legend of the Burning Sands holds complete sway over the city, but all seek to control it, and thus the game begins, with each player controlling a small portion of the city. Partly because the Senpet's power base lies some distance from the city proper, they start with relatively few city points with which to choose City Section cards. Since it is usually an advantage to choose as many City Section cards as possible (because this affects your initial card draw and maximum hand size), the Senpet just about manage five City Sections. The five I go for are these:

2 Thieves Quarter, 3 The Merchant Quarter

Unfortunately, The Merchant Quarter happens to be a rare card, and so I recommend swapping some or all of these for Duqaq's School of Astronomy if players do not have enough to make up the numbers.

Now for the main deck itself. While most Senpet decks use either a completely military

theme or one based around sahir who are used to summon a horde of Jinn, my own deck utilises both in an attempt to gain the absolute maximum in quick, hard hitting strength. In L5R this would be the equivalent of a quick Lion deck, and a strategy that I have heard called "early Lion cheese" - no doubt because it smashes the opponent before they can muster sufficient defence. The Heroes I choose for this strategy are:

- 3 Nepherus
- 3 Keseth
- 3 Qer Apet
- 2 Abresax

The first two are quick, cheap sahir, ideal for summon Jinn in the first couple of turns of the game. The last two are powerful 4 Strength attackers, and while costing a little more, Abresax has the added advantage of boosting the strength of any followers attached to him. I recommend the experienced version of Qer Apet to any players who may not have Abresax. While Nepherus can be brought into play first turn with just your starting Stronghold, the others need some form of extra copper production to pay for bringing them into play. This is provided by three types of Holding cards in the deck:

- 3 Safiyya's Sweetwater
- 3 The Scale Man
- 2 Wheat Fields

The great thing about these Holdings is that they have no copper cost whatsoever, and so you can play as many as you have in your hand every turn. Combined with the Merchant Quarter City Section (which boosts copper production) you can start using these Holdings as early as the second turn to bring into play strong Heroes like Qer Apet and Abresax. Gold Merchant is another useful Holding, but its copper cost of 3 means that you will have to use your Stronghold if you want to play one first turn - and ideally you want to play one of those quick sahir like Nepherus or Keseth in the opening turn, so they can set about summoning Jinn to aid you. The great thing about Jinn is that they are strong militarily, while many of them have no copper cost, and thus can be played quickly and easily without Holdings (which can only be used the turn AFTER they come into play). The Jinn I choose for my deck are of the four types released in Shadow of the Tyrant, the first Legend of the Burnings Sands expansion, these being:

- 3 Jinn of Decay
- 3 Jinn of Desire
- 3 Jinn of a Thousand Midnights
- 3 Jinn of the New Moon

The first two types enter play unbowed, and so can be used to attack in the first turn if

you can summon them by using one of your sahir, while the latter two can only be used the turn after they enter play, but have greater strength to attack with. These Jinn also all possess the "Flying" trait, which makes it very difficult for your opponent to effectively block them.

While many of these attacking cards have sufficient strength to effectively deplete your opponent's City Sections with, one way of increasing the strength of your Heroes' attacks is to attach Followers to them. I choose two different types of Followers in my deck:

- 3 Elephant
- 2 Lakeisha's Sky Raiders

The Elephant is excellent because of its high strength and difficult -to-absorb damage, while the Sky Raiders have the same Flying trait as the Jinn - and so can be attached to them while still maintaining the flying status of the unit.

The final type of cards are actions, and these back-up the whole strategy of the deck. The usual tactic is to play a sahir and Jinn first turn, and back that up by dropping as many free holdings as possible, then going for another Jinn and a Hero like Qer Apet in the second turn. All of the other LBS factions struggle to play good Heroes in the first turn, and so tend to concentrate on playing either one big Hero or two smaller ones on the second turn. With this Senpet deck you can easily have three big Heroes in play on the second turn, maybe even four if you're lucky. The action cards in the deck therefore exploit this explosive start, and are:

- 3 Strange Bedfellows
- 2 A Commander's Courage
- 3 Wisdom of the Stars
- 2 Routed
- 3 Attack at Dawn
- 3 One Dinari
- 3 Faith

Strange Bedfellows is a special type of action, called an "Omen" card (of which only one can exist in play at any time - with a more recent Omen replacing a previous one). Therefore it can destroy your opponent's Omens, as well as use its own special ability - which increases the Strength of unaligned Heroes such as Jinn. A Commander's Courage and Wisdom of the Stars are basically strength boosters, used to temporarily increase the damage done to your opponent's City Sections when you attack. Routed and Attack at Dawn help you to push home your attack before your opponent can do anything - two deadly cards in a deck which starts so swiftly. Finally, One Dinari and Faith are used to mostly improve the consistency of the deck. One Dinari can be used to provide one copper

when paying a copper cost, and so is useful when you can only play Keseth instead of Nepherus in the first turn (normally Keseth would have to wait until turn two, but you can play him on turn one with the help of One Dinari). Faith effectively lets you draw a new hand, and so is useful both when you happen to draw a bad starting hand AND as a means of filling up your hand once it is close to being empty. A number of other great actions such as Unexpected Rescue, The Mark of Kali, and Meeting Your Destiny exist for those players who may like to do a bit of their own tuning to this part of the deck.

While pure Jinn decks have most often been called "Senpet Speed Decks", this deck type has earned the nickname "Senpet Crush" because of its quick and deadly means of destroying all of your opponent's City Sections to win you the game. What better way to Crush your opponent?

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by Paul Norman

The Qabal form one of the more interesting factions in Legend of the Burning Sands because, unlike most of the other factions, their members are not connected by race or religious creed - merely by their shared love of the magic that was banned under the undying Caliph's rein. Their sorcerers skills make them masters of Jinn summoning and, perhaps not surprising, this is the theme around which this month's deck design is based.

### **Stronghold:** Qabal Stronghold

### **City Sections:**

- 2 The Merchant Quarter
- 2 Duqaq's School of Astronomy
- 1 The River Quarter

### **Heroes:**

- 2 Hekau
- 2 Kurrat al-Ayn
- 3 Qamus
- 3 Raghib

Perhaps one of the things which is most difficult to get right with a deck like this, is the balance of cards. How many Heroes do you need? How many Jinn? How many Holdings? All these are valid questions, and here I'll attempt to answer them. First of all, you obviously need Heroes to summon the Jinn, but since (in this deck at least) the Jinns are designed to do most of the fighting, you'll want to keep the number of Heroes relatively small, while still being fairly sure of drawing one of two of them in the first couple of turns. In this deck I've gone for 10 such Heroes - and each with

**Jinn:**

- 3 Jinn of the New Moon
- 3 Jinn of a Thousand Midnights
- 3 Jinn of Desire
- 3 Jinn of Decay
- 1 Tahir
- 1 Afshin
- 1 Jinn of a Thousand Eyes
- 3 Gathriq

**Holdings:**

- 3 Safiyya's Sweetwater
- 3 The Scale Man
- 3 Wheat Fields
- 3 Jenna's Shop of Wonders
- 3 Gold Merchant

**Actions:**

- 3 Strange Bedfellows
- 3 Hisham's Healing Shop
- 2 Attack at Dawn
- 2 A Commander's Courage
- 2 Wisdom of the Stars

a good reason for choosing them. Qamus and Raghieb are chosen because they are the cheapest Sahir for the job, with each having a Copper cost of only 5 (O.K., so Nizam is a bit cheaper, but he is somewhat limited in the Jinn which he can summon). With a good draw of first turn holdings, you might be able to play two of these 5 Copper sahir in the second turn - meaning you can start pumping out the Jinn in turn two. Hekau offers similar options, because although he is only one Hero, his special ability to play two spells at once means that he can also be used to summon two Jinn in this way. Kurrat al-Ayn has no ability to summon multiple Jinn, but she does increase the Strength and Ka of the Jinn she summons by two points each. This means that the Heroes side of the deck is built for summoning Jinn as quickly, powerfully, and efficiently as possible. Some Qabal decks go for slightly different approaches to the pure Jinn military that I'm describing here, with the likes of Barda the Hawk tending to be popular for his flying and raiding abilities.

Once the Heroes have been chosen, the next part of the deck to look at is how many Jinn to include. You'll want plenty of Jinn to pump out in almost every turn except the first, so I've gone for a lot more Jinn in the deck than I have Heroes. The Qabal's special ability means that you save water on most of those Jinn as you're playing them, except for the ones summoned by Kurrat al-Ayn (but then they compensate for this by being much stronger). You can also look to conserve and recuperate water through such cards as The River Quarter, Safiyya's Sweetwater, The Scale Man and Afshin. And indeed such methods of water conservation are a vital part of playing most Qabal decks - especially against quick opponents like the Dahab, who might knock large chunks of your water away before you can retaliate. As far as quality Jinn go, the four types released in Shadow of the Tyrant form a particularly elite bunch as far as military prowess is concerned. Gathriq is also useful in this area - as is the mighty Tahir. With so many Jinn in the deck, you might also consider including a Jinn of a Thousand Eyes, which feeds off the strength of any Jinn your opponent may get into play as well. Although I haven't put him in the above deck list, the Jinn of Destruction is just about as good as most of the other Jinn in the deck, so you might consider adding him to the deck list as well if you like.

Holdings are especially necessary because of the fixed theme of the deck (ie. to play Holdings first turn, then play Heroes and summon Jinn in the second turn). For that reason, you'll want a fair few of them; with plenty of the usual "free" Holdings to speed your development. Sweetwater, Scale Man and Wheat Fields are the usual options here, with the Qabal specific Jenna's Shop and the popular Gold Merchant being other useful Holdings that you can play with the Stronghold. As usual, don't forget to use your Merchant Quarters to add to the copper production as well.

As far as Action cards go, there are less of them in this deck than in many other deck designs (simply because the large numbers of Jinn in the deck require you to shift the number of cards in other categories). I've tried to go for a dozen of the best and most useful ones for the Qabal in this instance though. Whenever playing large numbers of Jinn or unaligned Heroes, Strange Bed Fellows is a must. It helps keep a number of your Jinn out of Qolat Master range, while also increasing their Strength as well. Likewise, with Brass Lamp being played by a lot of decks out there, you'll want to include some cards like Hisham's Healing Shop - which prevents your Jinn from being destroyed by them, albeit at a slight cost. Attack at Dawn, A Commander's Courage and Wisdom of the Stars then round out the deck with a few military options to help give your Jinn further boosts when push comes to shove. Since your Jinn will usually only be opposed when they go up against the last couple of City Sections, you'll probably only need two copies of Attack at Dawn in the deck. A Commander's Courage and Wisdom of the Stars both have positive and negative points to them - the latter provides an instantaneous boost, but the Ka penalty it incurs means that A Commander's Courage is a better option in every way when you're unopposed in the battle (ie. just going for extra damage to topple an undefended City Section).

In most circles the Qabal are known as one of the weakest factions in Legends of the Burning Sands. They are, however, an intriguing bunch, with plenty of power when it comes to summoning Jinn. They may not be as quick and devastating as the Dahab, but you should find this deck design is competitive and fun to play against a number of different opponents. There's nothing quite like Jinn power!

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By Bob Beverage

### The Celestial Alignment

Merchant Quarter x 1  
River Quarter x 3

Heroes  
The Caliph x 2  
Indira x 2  
Ghivath x 2  
The Eye of Night  
Dairya  
San'a  
Tasir  
Emiral  
Marayid  
Al-Hazaad x 3  
Quashima

Spells  
Sustain Life x 2  
Dust to Dust x 2

Omens  
Strange Bedfellows x 3

Actions  
Sudden Strike x 2  
Attack at Dawn x 2  
Khadi Justice x 2  
Qolat Master x 2  
Qolat Assassin x 2  
Sound Planning (Old) x 2

Holdings  
Wheat Field x 3  
Scale Man x 3  
Saffivas Sweetwater x 3  
Den of Iniquity x 3  
Belly Dancer x 3  
Spices x 3

Curse of the Rot Within x 2  
Book of 9999 Pages x 2  
Ashim's Rainbow Shield x 2

Get your Khadi into play, and don't look back. Unless your opponent is playing something funky, try not to leave any water on any of your city sections. You don't need it. Make as needed with the river quarter, reduce water costs with the scale man, and blow up the sweetwater when you run low on water. All the free/chain holdings should get you going fairly quickly. Make Rainbow tokens like no other, use the sudden strikes to empty your opponents hand, and by all means, kill Hekau with Khadi Justice. I like to steal Abresax by Dusting him/Qolat Master. Whatever you do, have fun with it!

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By Paul Norman

In Legend of the Burning Sands, no factions are perhaps quite so popular as the original three factions that were released in the Shadow of the Tyrant set - where each faction concentrated nicely on one aspect of the game. With the release of the Awakening set, however, all of this is beginning to slowly change, with many new and interesting deck designs arriving on the scene. Perhaps the most interesting and deadly of the new factions is the Houses of Dahab - a hidden guild of merchants who hold much power within the city.

The deck I'll be presenting here comes from a combination of sources - namely various deck designs posted on the lbsinfo mailing list, decks sent in to Charlie Pierson's [LBS/L5R Archive](#), and also a deck I saw used to great effect at GenCon UK. I've looked carefully at all of these decks, tried to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of them all, and then marry them together as best I could to create what has to be one of the most devastating decks that I've seen so far for LBS.

So let's start out at the beginning. Straight from their stronghold (the Doomed City of Laramun) it is apparent that the Houses of Dahab have several great advantages. Firstly, they can have more city sections than any other faction (unless the rather dubious "The Last Stop" is used by the Ebonites or Qabal), and this also equates to more water in most cases. They also have no faction restrictions on those city sections, which means they can make use of sections like the powerful Secret Well (which is otherwise available to the

Moto only). These are the typical city sections I start with (although, in fact, you could easily swap one Merchant Quarter for another Secret Well if you prefer):

- 3 Secret Well
- 2 The Merchant Quarter
- 1 Thieves Quarter

This gives a healthy 27 starting water, which is difficult to reach with any other faction now that Duqaq's School has been most-recent-printed to 5 water.

It also gives 10 cards in the starting hand, and (most crucially) access to another three cards in the first turn through the Secret Wells. A high starting hand (and indeed small deck size of 55 cards) are essential for the consistency of the deck. The use of two Merchant Quarters also ensures that I have several ways of getting to a very valuable 10 Copper on turn two. Now on to the Heroes, of which I have a largely unaligned bunch:

- 3 Soraph
- 2 Adnan
- 2 Adnan Exp.
- 2 Effendi
- 3 Dharr
- 3 Eyeslicer
- 3 Hila

On the whole these are fairly cheap Heroes, of which I should be able to get several into play on the very first turn. Soraph in particular combines well with Eyeslicer, although Adnan is obviously good for this purpose too (if you can only get another Hero out first so that you can play him). The experienced Adnan is accessible first turn through the use of One Dinari, and either version of Adnan makes Dharr very easy to play. If you happen to have the Caliph's Blessing, then you can also play Effendi with just your Stronghold, and Hila will come out first turn with the Stronghold combined with either Goods from the East, or two copies of One Dinari. All in all, you should be able to get perhaps three of these Heroes out first turn, and since all but Hila are unaligned Heroes, you can boost their Strength and Ka nicely with Strange Bedfellows. This deck aims for maximum possible speed, and can in many ways be even a turn quicker than the speedy Senpet Crush decks - although, admittedly, the individual Heroes are slightly weaker. Therefore, don't be afraid to draw as many cards as you can first turn - there is great consistency with this deck - and use your speed to put your opponent on the back foot and force them to defend. Just like in my Senpet Crush deck, I go light on the Holdings, preferring only those which allow me to develop Copper whilst maintaining the essential speed of the start:

3 Safiyya's Sweetwater

3 Scale Man

If you can get two of these six into play on the first turn, then this gives you access to up to 10 Copper on turn two - provided your Merchant Quarters are still intact, that is. Goods from the East is also a useful way of adding three extra Copper, and we'll see that in the Action cards section in a moment. For Followers I go for the incredibly cheap:

3 The Qadaam

These come out for no Copper at all, and so can be played nicely on turn one to speed up your already rapid start. Through the use of these cards, your cheap Heroes, and the various Strength boosting actions, you can be looking at dealing around 10 damage on the first turn - which should be enough to take out about two City Sections (with a more unlucky draw it will take out one). If you have the Blessing on the second turn then you simply attack again straight away, and have a good chance of leaving your opponent with only one or two City Sections left standing - a situation that it's very difficult to come back from (and not easy to guard against unless you plan for it, since many factions struggle to play a Hero first turn - and if they do, then it only tends to slow them up second turn anyway). Once your opponent is down to their last one or two City Sections, they'll be forced to hold back and defend them - so push home your advantage with the various Action cards in the deck:

2 Lurking Shadows

3 Attack at Dawn

3 Wisdom of the Stars

3 A Commander's Courage

3 Goods from the East

3 Strange Bedfellows

3 War in the Streets

2 Blood of a Jinn

3 One Dinari

3 Qolat Master

Starting from the top, you can use Lurking Shadows to slow your opponent up even further by destroying their "free" holdings (like Scaleman and Sweetwater) on the first turn, therefore inhibiting their development on the next turn. Wisdom of the Stars and A Commander's Courage are your obvious Strength boosters, and cards like Attack at Dawn, War in the Streets, and Blood of a Jinn all help you to force through your attacks once your opponent can muster a measure of defense. Strange Bedfellows is also useful for

pumping up your unaligned Heroes, and the Ka boost can be especially useful if you want to play Wisdom of the Stars on Heroes that would otherwise have a very low Ka. Like all other omens, it also serves as omen defense, since you can play it to remove an opponent's omen as well. The same applies to Goods from the East of course, although its main bonus is in providing you with that extra bit of Copper needed to get added speed from the deck. For example, you might use it first turn so that you can access Hila, or (more preferably) so that you can play two of the medium cost Heroes, like Dharr, Effendi, or Eyeslicer. One Dinari is in there for the bit of speed it can give you to play several of your Heroes (eg. Dharr without an Adnan in play, or the Experienced version of Adnan, with his Copper cost of only one Dinari). You might also find yourself in situations (for example, if you lose a Merchant Quarter) where that extra One Dinari combines with other cards to give you access to the 10 Copper required to play the last card on the list - Qolat Master. This is a particularly nasty play on the second turn, since most current decks concentrate on using their Stronghold to lay a holding on the first turn, and then playing a medium sized Hero second turn. After a (usually devastating) attack of your own at the start of the second turn, you can therefore steal the one Hero your opponent gets into play like this, by using a Qolat Master. This tips the scales almost completely, since your opponent will be low on water, city sections, AND Heroes after you make this telling play. The true strength of the deck probably lies in other areas though - not least through the simple and quick development of the low strength (Soraph and the Adnans) and medium strength Heroes (Dharr, Effendi, Eyeslicer), and also the great consistency that is available with the use of three or four Secret Wells (you can have roughly half as many cards again as you opponent in the first turn, and can have gone through 20 cards or more in the second turn). Always try to use your Secret Wells early on in a turn before deciding what to do - because the extra cards you draw might influence that decision. Even with 13 or 14 cards in your hand first turn, it's still likely that you'll be able to play between 8 and 10 of them immediately, and then stock back up to roughly your maximum hand size at the end of the turn. It's this shear card advantage that is the overwhelming factor in the end, combined with the fact that the required Copper costs have been cut right down throughout deck.

In LBS storyline terms, the Houses of Dahab are Kings of the Merchants, but with this ultra-quick attack deck, you'll find that they are the Kings of speed as well.

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