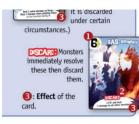# King of Tokyo

Rulebook Review

[This is a review of an earlier edition of the rulebook. Newer copies of the game have a substantially redesigned book.]

Before getting into my critique of how the rules are written (which is limited to just one specific part of the game), the layout of the rulebook has to be mentioned. Five columns with headers all at different positions makes for a very reader-unfriendly experience. The more recent edition replaces this with a more sensible 3 column design.

The heading fonts are also a problem. It's a fun font to use in the text of cards and other game components, but here it makes it a bit more difficult to quickly scan the page to look up specific rules for clarification.

Now, onto the rules, or in this case a single rule: How does Tokyo Bay work?

In games of King of Tokyo with 2-4 players, players compete in a king of the mountain style battle where one player occupies the mountain (Tokyo City), and everyone not in Tokyo is fighting to take it over. Moving up to 5-6 players expands the mountain from just Tokyo City to include Tokyo Bay as well. It becomes king*s* of the mountain, at least until players start getting eliminated and the count is back down to 4 or fewer.

The rules are a bit confused when it comes to the nature of this two-king mountain. On the one hand, Tokyo City and Tokyo bay are repeatedly treated as having no difference.

Tokyo Bay acts like Tokyo City.

• If the Monster in Tokyo Bay is attacked it can choose to abandon Tokyo Bay (still taking any damage dealt, just like Tokyo City). In this case the Monster that attacked must move in unless it is moving into Tokyo City, in which case Tokyo Bay becomes temporarily unoccupied.

• A Monster can never occupy both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay.

If a Monster is eliminated and that brings the number of Monsters below 5, Tokyo Bay can't be occupied anymore. The Monster in it must leave Tokyo.

Any card that refers Tokyo applies to both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay

The rulebook is trying very hard to drive home this lack of difference between being in Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay. "Tokyo Bay acts like Tokyo City," and "Any card that refers to Tokyo applies to both Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay."

At setup players are told Tokyo City and Tokyo Bay are "two distinct places." That implies some meaningful gameplay difference.

The rules also state that if there is a choice of occupying either Tokyo City or Tokyo Bay (if the occupants of both choose to vacate after an attack), Tokyo City must be occupied first. This again suggests some gameplay mechanic that distinguishes between them.

SETTING UP

Each player chooses a Monster, takes its figure 6, its Monster board 5 and sets its life Points to 10 and its Victory Points to 0.

Place the Tokyo board 1 at the center of the table, within easy access of every player. It represents the City of Tokyo divided into two distinct places: "Tokyo City" 1 and "Tokyo Bay" ⬤. Every time a card refers to Tokyo it refers to both places

[Someone missed a period. Oops!]

So, as far as gameplay is concerned, is there a difference between Tokyo Bay and Tokyo City? The rules keep saying to treat them the same while simultaneously saying that they are not in fact the same.

And indeed there is one mechanical difference. When the game is reduced from 5 to 4 players, if a player is in Tokyo Bay, they must leave Tokyo as the mountain can now only hold one king. They player in Tokyo city becomes the sole king of the mountain. That's it.

This one situation doesn't warrant the text and space spent explaining that the two areas are for almost every purpose the same. Just eliminate the individual spaces and call the entire board "Tokyo." Players are either in Tokyo or not. Then, add a short one-liner saying that if there's two players in Tokyo when the game drops from 5 to 4, the last one in must vacate.