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THE QUINTESSENTIAL SAMURAI

Collector Series
Book Eleven

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Player's Handbook, Third Edition,
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The Quintessential Samurai

Sam Witt

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INTRODUCTION

Rising from humble beginnings, the samurai grew to become one of the greatest powers of ancient Japan. Combining viciousness and ruthless tactics with a rigid code of honour and indomitable willpower, these fabled warriors managed to transform themselves from elite combatants into a powerful social and political force. In this book you will find the information you need to follow the way of the sword and groom a samurai character of your own. Whether you choose to pursue the martial arts and become a master with the blade or engage in the tricky manoeuvrings of the Court with a tongue of acid and a razor-sharp wit, this book has the information you need.

The Quintessential Samurai is designed to allow players and Games Masters to bring the unique character of these ancient warriors into their campaigns. More than simply a fighter, the samurai plays a unique role within the campaign – he serves a lord and must work to further the ends of his master. The samurai is also bound by a code of honour, which is inflexible and demanding. Honour is a harsh taskmaster, forcing the samurai to hold himself to a standard of conduct many find too demanding. Though the sting of death is not as great in fantasy campaigns where life can be restored by the gods, many samurai find themselves unwilling to return from the land of the dead when they fail in life, preferring instead to remain far from the world – and their shame.

Despite their great responsibilities and code of honour, the path of the samurai can be very rewarding. Their unique sword schools teach them techniques envied by less disciplined fighters and their position near the ruling elite has its own perks. Though a warrior may lead armies, a disciplined samurai may very well come to rule an empire through strength of arms and clever political manoeuvring.

THE COLLECTOR'S SERIES

The Collector's Series is a range of class and racial sourcebooks from Mongoose Publishing, all designed to greatly widen a player's options for his character within the d20 games system. Slotting seamlessly into any fantasy-based campaign, each will give a comprehensive view of one class or race within the game, allowing both players and Games Masters the chance to present old character types in a completely new way without overpowering or unbalancing the

game as a whole. The Collector's Series will not necessarily allow players to create better characters, but they will be able to do a lot more than they ever thought possible before.

THE QUINTESSENTIAL SAMURAI

Within the pages of this sourcebook, players and Games Masters will find all the material they need to bring the legendary samurai into any campaign. Herein you'll find information on the context of the samurai lifestyle, the environment in which samurai thrive and, of course, plenty of systems to govern the martial schools that give the samurai their renowned fighting skills. But you'll also find rules for interacting with political forces and a system for tracking the honour of a samurai and his lord. As samurai were often charged with overseeing portions of a lord's holdings, you'll also find information on running such a domain and protecting it from harm.

The prestige classes presented in this book are designed to allow a samurai to adopt them as he progresses through his career. In conjunction with the teachings of his martial school, some of these prestige classes give the samurai unparalleled ability on the field of battle. Others, however, bring out the other aspects of samurai life, giving them greater skills in leadership, social manoeuvring, and even spiritual enlightenment. The Way of the Warrior is a complex path, and these prestige classes serve to portray the samurai's many steps on this journey towards perfection.

Once you've read through the material contained herein, you'll be ready to embark on your own journey, charting the course of a samurai character through the trials of his life, increasing his martial skill even as he moves toward his noble destiny.

FACT AND FICTION

Though much of this book is based on research into the actual culture, tactics and history of the samurai, there is a great deal that is purely fantasy. In order to have elven masters of the katana battling next to halfling samurai, there were places where the 'facts' of samurai lore were tweaked, nudged, or even completely altered. The goal of this book is to provide you with the information you need to portray a character who *feels* like a samurai in a fantasy setting, not to create a completely accurate picture of the ancient samurai. Fact is fact, and fantasy is fantasy!

Irizowa knelt before the shrine of his ancestors, his lips moving slightly as he whispered his prayers to those who had come before. The sounds of men on the move came to him from across the river, the rattle of mail and the nervous whinnying of horses carried well on the breeze which wafted up to his hilltop shrine. At his back, a small band of loyal samurai waited for him to finish his preparations and tell them of their roles in the coming battle. Irizowa did not wish to tell them their daimyo's orders but he knew he could postpone his duty no longer. He finished his devotions with a short prayer for wisdom and courage, then released his breath in a single long exhalation. Irizowa rose from his shrine with the smooth and fluid motions typical of students trained in the Falling Silk school and turned to face his companions.

'There is little I can tell you that you do not know, my friends.' Shielding his eyes against the rays of the setting sun, Irizowa directed his gaze down at the gathering hordes of barbarians across the river. 'Lord Azumika is not yet ready to face the half-beasts. His armies are gathering but they will not reach us in time.'

Aluthien, the elven samurai from the distant lands to the south tossed her head back and adroitly wrapped her hair around a pair of long jade pins, arranging it in an elaborate topknot. 'We have seen the writing, Irizowa. Our priests have warned of this time and it is the reason we sent the people of Akajini into the mountains, is it not?'

Haktan, the noble half-orc elevated by Irizowa after his honourable service at the Battle of Janyin Ford, hefted his massive katana and lowered his elaborate swan's crest helm over his head. 'We live to die, Irizowa, that is what you told me on the day you gave me this sword. Were it not for you, I'd still be a slave or, likely, dead at the bottom of the salt mines. Give me our orders so I may end my life with honour.'

The rest of the samurai nodded as well, a half-dozen strong men and women, trained killing machines with spines of iron and gossamer spirits. Irizowa bowed his head in gratitude and gripped the hilt of his katana with fierce determination. 'We will give a strong accounting of ourselves, this day. Though death waits with eager tongue to lap our souls from rivers of blood, what we do this day will make legends of us all.'

Wordlessly, the seven samurai turned and, as one, began their march down the hill, their blades hungry in their scabbards and their hearts filled with joy for the glorious deaths that waited for them. While they would certainly perish, they would live on as legends for giving their daimyo the time he needed to prepare his own armies. 'We live to die,' Irizowa murmured to himself. 'There is no greater honour than to die in service.'



CHARACTER CONCEPTS

It is truly regrettable that a person will treat a man who is valuable to him well, and a man who is worthless to him poorly.

Hojo Shigetoki

The samurai were a diverse lot and characters of this type should be, as well. From noble children born into families descended from dragons to loyal peasants elevated because of brave and devoted service, there are as many different backgrounds as there are samurai. The history of a character provides important clues as to why he chose to become a warrior destined for an early death and how he will react to the assignments and goals of the master he serves as a samurai. In this chapter, we will examine the possibilities found within



the background of those characters who choose to become samurai.

Character concepts are a core idea for the *Collector's Series* of sourcebooks from *Mongoose Publishing* and provide a range of templates for each character class that will allow a player to quickly and easily provide a ready background for every new character he generates. As well as providing both a small bonus and penalty to his character's capabilities, each character concept gives a ready base for role-playing, thus greatly shortening the time taken during character creation, as well as granting that oft-needed inspiration so important for a player to feel 'at home' with his new character.

Any one character concept may be applied to a character as it is being created. The listed bonuses and penalties are applied, any role-playing description modified and adjusted to take into account the template and then the character is ready to play! From this point forth, both the player and the Games Master should be aware of the character concept chosen and take steps to ensure the character is played accordingly. It must be stressed, character concepts are a role-playing tool, not simply a method to gain lots of new abilities!

ANCESTRAL HONOUR

The samurai take their families very seriously and believe a samurai's true potential can only be measured by a careful study of his ancestors. Some noble families have such exalted histories it is believed that any samurai who comes from their ranks must surely become one of the greatest warriors of all time. Such projections of ancestral honour may, ultimately, prove to be untrue, however, and a samurai who fails himself and his honourable family in this way may never live down his disgrace. Children who rise from such lines find their every victory lavishly praised, but their failures are loudly and universally condemned as horrible personal shortcomings. This leads many samurai into cycles of elation and depression as their families alternately praise or condemn their actions.

Adventuring: Samurai with families rich in honourable traditions must strive to prove themselves again and again. While other samurai are content to perform the occasional heroic deed or submit an honourable service to their daimyo, those with this character concept are in a race against time to accomplish more than the previous generation. This can lead to a dangerous tendency to overestimate the capabilities of an adventuring party and following a

'I am nothing.' Karizawa threw himself into the motions of the kata, his blade flashing through the night air as he funnelled the frustration of his days into the dance of steel. Deft motions kept the blade dipping and diving through the Lightning Storm routines and the concentration needed to keep his place in the turbulent kata drove his thoughts far away.

His father, a weathered samurai with a wall of trophies taken from the fields of dozens of battles, watched as his son threw himself into the steps of the ritualised training exercise. From his vantage on the balcony, the older samurai could see the mistakes brought on by the impatience of youth, the rush to complete a movement or the drive to eviscerate an imaginary foe. Shaking his head with disgust, the veteran warrior turned away.

Karizawa finished his kata, flying through the final movements with a fluid grace and surprised himself with the ferocity and accuracy of his own movements. A ball of fire blossomed in his stomach, a flowering of knowledge and power, which surged through his limbs and crippled his thoughts with its all-encompassing awareness. Visions flashed through his mind, leaving him gasping on his knees. In a flash of cognisance, he understood, he felt, what it meant to be samurai.

Wordlessly, he rose from the earth and carefully sheathed his katana. Without pause, he walked from his father's land, his footsteps measured and relentless. He did not know what his destiny would be, but he knew he would never find it here, in the shadow of his family.

samurai from this type of family can be extremely hazardous.

Role-playing: Desperate to prove themselves to a demanding family, samurai with this character concept are hell bent on proving their worth to themselves and their ancestors. Ready to accept difficult challenges without pause, this samurai appears brave and confident to everyone. Inside, however, there is always the fear of not measuring up, of falling short of what is expected by his family and himself. Where others fall behind and reconsider their options, this samurai presses on, battling his own fears for the chance to become worthy of his own name.

Bonuses: The first time each level that a character with this concept gains honour, he gains an additional 1 point of honour.

Penalties: The first time each level that a character with this concept loses honour, he loses an additional 1 point of honour.

ASHIGARU

In times of war, lords must often rely on less-than-ideal warriors, arming their peasants as best they can in the hope of protecting their territory or assaulting the nearby domains of their enemies. Known as ashigaru, these peasants are poorly trained and horribly equipped, often operating without armour and using only the crudest of weapons. Still, those who survive long as an ashigaru are able to distinguish themselves amongst their peers, standing out as capable combatants. A few of these survivors come to the



CHARACTER CONCEPTS

attention of their lord and, if they act honourably, become samurai. Hardened by the worst battle conditions and well aware of the contempt with which samurai and the nobles they serve view their social inferiors, ashigaru are often tough, cynical men able to do whatever their lord asks of them.

Adventuring: Former peasants can be an embarrassment to keep around the lord's court. As a result, many samurai elevated from the ranks of the ashigaru find themselves assigned to the hinterlands of their lord's estates. While all samurai are regarded as more valuable than a simple peasant, the samurai lifted up from such common stock may be seen as just a bit less vital to a lord than his noble-born peers. Because of this, these samurai are often given the most dangerous tasks and assigned missions that take them far from home. It is only natural then, that they fall in with common adventurers while pursuing other goals.

Role-playing: The ashigaru know exactly where they stand in the universe – somewhere just above dung beetles but far below the elite samurai and godlike nobility. When given the coveted position of samurai, former peasants often have difficulty relating to their former superiors and feel more comfortable around their old friends. Naturally, this association with other peasants does little to improve the standing of the new samurai amongst the courtiers of his lord, leading to a nasty cycle in which the peasant samurai doubts his

position and other samurai look down upon him for his choice in companions. This can lead to a former ashigaru severing all ties with his family and old friends as he struggles to become a member of the elite samurai cadre.

Bonuses: The samurai who rise from the ranks of the ashigaru are given a great deal more latitude in their actions than noble-born or more respectable samurai. Their assignments tend to be of longer duration and have less focus than other samurai, giving them the freedom to pursue their own goals and adventures. A samurai who comes from the ranks of the ashigaru need only render 3 services each year, rather than the more typical 6 required of other samurai.

Penalties: Coming from peasant stock, this samurai suffers a social stigma, which often leaves him excluded from the upper tiers of samurai society. The first time each level this samurai gains honour, he gains one point less than he would normally, to a minimum of zero honour gained.

DRAGON FAMILY

Amongst the samurai, dragons are sacred creatures. They represent the fierce warrior spirit, the indomitable samurai will and the wisdom that comes only with true enlightenment. In legends, the greatest of samurai are said to descend from the dragons themselves. Characters with this background come from families which, right or wrong, are believed to have draconic ancestry many generations in the past. Destined for noble fates and blessed with the powerful spirit of the dragons, these samurai are impressive figures.

Adventuring: Seeking a connection to their past, samurai from dragon families are often given leave to seek out the secrets of their ancestry. While the daimyo may not be entirely comfortable with allowing his samurai to leave for extended periods of time, the chance to gain an ally from the dragon families is a tempting lure. Adventuring bands find the company of a dragon family member quite pleasant as well – his noble standing and commanding aura can often handle problems with local authorities quickly and efficiently. Of course, outside of his own lands, the samurai may not be so ready to expose his true allegiances . . .

Role-playing: The dragon families believe strongly in their mystical heritage and do their best to make sure others believe as well. For the dragon family, the past is a glorious bridge to a future of honour and prestige and it is crucial to maintain contact with their heritage.



Most members of the dragon families have a superiority complex, believing in their own grand destiny and the power of their ancestral spirits. While this may not always be a wise belief, it gives the samurai a sense of self-assurance few can equal.

Bonuses: Samurai from dragon families carry a near-mythical aura of honour and prestige with them wherever they go. During social challenges, the samurai's honour is treated as if it were 1 point higher than it actually is. This bonus does not translate in areas where honour is unimportant or is simply measured differently.

Penalties: With such mighty boots to fill, the samurai hailing from a dragon family is judged much more harshly than others when it comes to matters of honour. Whenever a dragon family samurai loses honour, he loses one point more than normal. When the samurai is travelling through areas which do not consider honour important, or which judge honour differently, this penalty does not apply.

FIRST BORN

As the legitimate offspring of a noble father, you stand to inherit all the titles, property and responsibilities granted to your family by the local lord. On the other hand, you may find yourself at the centre of a plot to remove you from the running, especially if you have younger siblings or more distant relatives with an eye on your birthright. Still, there is something to be said for your position and your line of descent. Places closed to others open when your family's name is mentioned and even the most exclusive of martial schools are ready to accept you into their ranks in exchange for the favour provided by your family.

Adventuring: First born are rarely allowed to adventure openly. Those who do seek out such base pursuits must be careful never to reveal their true identity lest word of their exploits get back to their parents or guardians, who will surely do their utmost to rein in the rebellious nature of youth. Thus, many first born samurai travel incognito, disguising themselves as lowborn warriors or even pretending they are not samurai at all.

Role-playing: You are destined to rule over a small chunk of land, on which you will have absolute power. Sadly, it is still some time before you inherit what is rightfully yours and, as such, you spend most of your time wondering what it will be like to rule and contemplating clever ways to remove your father from his post before he is quite ready to turn over the reins of power. These thoughts lead you to more carefully



scrutinise those close to you, however, as you contemplate the dangers inherent in your position.

Bonuses: You are able to move in even the highest of social structures and any martial school to which you apply (and have the necessary requirements to enter) will automatically accept you as a student.

Penalties: The duties of your family impose two additional obligations on you each year. In addition, if your true identity is revealed to the public at large while you are adventuring (such as if you announce your presence in an inn or otherwise attempt to use your name to gain advantage or recognition), you will suffer an additional obligation every six months for the next two years.

ILL-FATED

There are some who are born with an aura of doom hanging around their shoulders. Every action they take is shadowed by the spectre of failure and their eventual demise looms large on the horizon. Yet,

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despite the certainty of their own failure and the knowledge that fate has decreed for them an untimely end, the ill-fated are able to commit acts of greatness, bringing to their lives a type of immortality. While they may spend their days grousing about ruined meals and stained clothing, the ill-fated are aware of the currents of destiny around them. When the time is right, they use this knowledge to their benefit.

Adventuring: With misfortune and bad luck slinking around their heels, the ill-fated are often given far-ranging, dangerous assignments. Most lords admire the honour of their unfortunate samurai but are wise enough to want the curse of bad luck far from their own courts. The ill-fated are often more than happy to take on dangerous missions for their daimyo, hoping to commit some glorious deed which will secure them a place in the legendary circles of the samurai. Though they do their best to hide their bad luck from any adventuring companions who take them in, it eventually becomes apparent that the samurai is carrying more than his fair share of misfortune. Still, the ability of the ill-fated to perform spectacularly in the clutch makes them a valuable, if often misunderstood, commodity.



Role-playing: To say an ill-fated samurai was pessimistic would be an understatement. Like all samurai, the ill fated know they are destined to die, but they believe their death could occur at any moment. They're also certain any plan they have any part of is doomed to failure, though they'll still give their best effort. Because they believe they are doomed, ill-fated samurai tend to take dangerous assignments and accept extreme risks, hoping to at least end their lives in a blaze of honour and glory. When push comes to shove, though, the ill-fated samurai is able to pull out all the stops and give his all in pursuit of his goal.

Bonuses: Twice per day, the ill-fated samurai may add +4 to any single roll. This ability may only be used for the commission of an honourable action.

Penalties: When an ill-fated samurai uses his bonus ability (see above), the scales of the universe tip away from his favour. For the next day, the samurai suffers a -1 circumstance penalty to all saving throws or ability checks.

LOWBORN

Some samurai are born into their position, members of a noble family with a tradition rich in the pursuit of elite combat skills and spiritual perfection. Others are elevated to the position for exemplary service, surpassing their position in life to walk among the powerful and gifted. Still others, however, buy their way into the ranks of the samurai, purchasing the title and the training from a daimyo in dire need of a cash infusion. These lowborn samurai typically come from merchant families, though a few have less savoury origins – more than one bandit tribe has purchased legitimacy for its members using their ill-gotten gains. Because of this, the lowborn samurai is often regarded as a lesser sort of warrior, someone who stumbled into the warrior life rather than earning the position by deeds or fortunate birth.

Adventuring: Lowborn samurai are free-spirited and ready to test their strength of arms and tactical abilities against anyone foolish enough to accept their challenges. Brash and headstrong, these samurai are prone to engaging in undisciplined actions, including exploring dungeons, looting ancient tombs and battling fell beasts on the borderlands. In addition to his formidable skill at arms, the lowborn samurai also has the benefit of a wealthy family and noble connections to assist himself and his companions on whatever adventures they undertake.

Role-playing: Most lowborn samurai comprehend just how far outside their culture they stand. Though

'Very well, then, my friends, let us see who is luckier tonight.' Kortan, a young half-orc samurai descended from a clan of merchants, clucked his tongue as he shook the dice in his massive fist. 'Which among us walks away with the money tonight, eh?'

He tossed the delicately carved bones onto the tabletop, howling with excitement as the dice bounced off the bamboo rail and tumbled to a stop. 'Ah, my friends, as you can see I win again!'

The other samurai grumbled and tugged at their topknots. 'You certainly have the devil's own luck, there, Kortan.' The others nodded their ascent and scowled at the half-orc. They all knew the truth about him, that his family bought their way into society and purchased his katana for him from an out of luck daimyo to the south.

'Ah, my friends, surely it is more honourable to be gracious when you lose, is it not?' Baring his tusks in a startlingly wide grin, the half-orc collected his winnings. 'Since you all seem to be a bit agitated, I'll just take my leave and -'

'Not so fast.' Young and hot-headed, Inkizomi jabbed her lacquered fingernail into Kortan's chest. 'I want my chance to win back what I lost.'

Throwing his hands up in exasperation, Kortan blew out a gusty sigh. 'Well, if you really think you want that, then I'll stay for a bit longer.' Though he sounded reluctant, inside Kortan was jubilant. He may have only recently become a samurai but he had been a gambler for many years.

they act as honourably as other samurai, it is almost impossible for them to ever be accepted within the close-knit ranks of the noble families and their warriors. Some see this as a challenge and attempt to increase their social standing through noble actions and honourable achievements. Others, however, accept their standing and use it to their advantage, enjoying the benefits of an elevated social stature and avoiding many of the responsibilities through judicious application of their wealth and familial ties. This latter type tend to be a jovial, though cynical, bunch who take every opportunity to poke fun at the established nobility and their rigid caste structure. After all, if the lowborn samurai could buy his way into their ranks, who's to say their ancestors didn't do the same?

Bonuses: Unlike other samurai, the lowborn may buy off his obligations to his daimyo at a cost of 1,000 gp per level per obligation paid off in this way during the current year. Thus, a 5th level samurai who has already bought off 2 obligations would owe his daimyo 7,000 gp (1,000 for each of the samurai's levels plus 1,000 gp for each of the previous obligations already paid off).

Penalties: The lowborn samurai has a difficult time rising in the eyes of his supposed peers. The lowborn samurai's maximum honour is equal to his current level +2, rather than his current level +3.

NAMELESS

Orphans are common in samurai society. With the number of battles and wars fought in the name of honour or for political reasons, entire families are wiped out regularly, leaving behind only those too



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young or too infirm to effectively fight. When a family is not of noble birth, these orphans and elderly are taken to monasteries where they can receive care and education, allowing them to continue their lives as best they can. Scions of noble families, of course, are most often put to the sword, killed mercifully to end their line before it can fall into shame.

As a gesture of goodwill to the monks of the land, daimyos occasionally take one of these orphans into their home, raising them as a member of their own noble house. This helps to cement ties to the monastery and the nobility, without the messy entanglements involving the child's parents and their own political or material aspirations. Known as the nameless, many of these children grow up to become samurai, leading a life in the pursuit of honour. Few, however, ever gain true acceptance amongst their adopted families and are often used as pawns in political or military manoeuvres.



Adventuring: Nameless samurai are an asset to any adventuring company. They have the benefit of belonging to a noble house and are seen, in the eyes of the people, as rightful leaders and rulers. Their ability to get assistance or advice on short notice is also quite useful and their connection to the local monasteries gives them access to the services of members of an established church. Uncertain of their own heritage, the nameless often wander, travelling far and wide in a secretive quest to discover the truth of their heritage.

Role-playing: Though raised as a member of the daimyo's household, the nameless cannot help but feel as if he might not belong. Still, samurai with this background do their best to accept their new role in life and fulfil their obligations as best they can. In the back of his mind, there may always be that niggling feeling that perhaps his relatives still live, leading to lengthy explorations for such survivors. The internal conflict of the nameless is great, however. If he finds his true parents and discovers they are lowly peasants, his own position in society will be in jeopardy but if he never seeks, can he ever truly find peace and the Inner Void?

Bonuses: Due to his connection to local monasteries, the nameless samurai absorbed many of their teachings in his early life. Because of this, the nameless may freely multiclass as a monk and may even return to that class after taking levels of the samurai class (though not the samurai prestige classes which require even more specialised training).

Penalties: The nameless lives in a state of uncertainty because he does not understand his heritage. When expending ki to fuel sword school techniques, the samurai's honour is considered two points lower than normal for purposes of determining when he begins suffering Wisdom damage each round.

SPIRIT TOUCHED

There are many creatures that roam the world, not all of which hold the best interests of mortals at heart. Legends speak of strange spirits who mingle their bloodlines with those of humans, producing offspring who are different from both parents, caught between the worlds of flesh and spirit. Though there is no overt stigma against children formed by such unnatural unions, they are often regarded with suspicion and possible fear.

Adventuring: Like all loyal samurai, the spirit touched adventure for the chance to better their lord's standing or to seek glory and honour for themselves. Their study into the nature of spirits and other strange

creatures stands them in good stead amongst adventurers and the chance to study these beings up close (though often at swords' point) is an irresistible lure.

Role-playing: Spirit touched characters know they are different but are unable to put their finger on just what it is that sets them apart from others. Their quest to discover the truth of their own being leads many to join monasteries or to seek out the disciplined training and spiritual refinement of samurai service in the hopes of discovering and understanding their 'otherness'. Despite their pre-occupation with their progenitors, the spirit touched are often down-to-earth and focused in their daily lives. When presented with an opportunity to learn more about themselves or spiritual creatures, however, the spirit touched can become obsessive and reckless in their pursuit of knowledge.

Bonuses: The spirit touched treat Knowledge (religion) and Knowledge (the planes) as class skills, regardless of the character's current class.

Penalties: Mundane teachings simply hold little interest for the spirit touched samurai. As a result, the samurai may not learn any other Knowledge skills other than those listed above.



untouchable knows the world is not fair and uses adventuring as another way to build up a buffer against any possible decline in status. If you've got a basement full of gold, what others think of you isn't nearly as important. Likewise, a samurai from an untouchable background may, over time, find himself respected despite this, if only for his skill in battle.

Role-playing: As someone who knows just how cruel the upper classes can be, samurai with the untouchable character concept are more concerned with the feelings and treatment of those below their station. They are also more concerned with managing their finances and are eager to find new ways to both create and sustain wealth for themselves. While noble samurai are willing to spend fantastic sums on furnishings for their home without a second thought, an untouchable is much more concerned with keeping his money than spending it. Their desire for new experiences, however, is one sure way to relieve them of their money – a former untouchable is certain to pay whatever it costs to see the world, one of the few luxuries he will indulge in.

Bonuses: Untouchables have worldly experience not normally found amongst the samurai. At 1st level, the untouchable samurai treats all Profession and Craft skills as class skills. If the samurai purchases any ranks in these skills at 1st level, the skills in which ranks were purchased are treated as class skills for the duration of the untouchable samurai's career.

Penalties: If an untouchable's past is ever revealed, the untouchable immediately loses 5 points of honour. In addition, untouchables must make a Will save (DC 15) to ever spend more than 1/10th of their current wealth on any single purchase. Their fear of returning to the lifestyle of their past is an ever-present spectre in their daily activities.

UNTOUCHABLE

There are tasks the noble samurai never stoop to perform and ways of life which the nobility find offensive in the extreme. From shovelling manure to handling dead bodies, these jobs are regarded as defiling to the body and spirit and those who perform them are seen as little more than animals and are regarded as untouchable. Despite this attitude amongst the upper classes, members of the untouchable are often able to work their way up through society, exchanging their shovel or butcher's knife for a merchant's stall and, if favour smiles, for a purchased title somewhere far from their original home. Though their ancestry is forever a source of shame, these untouchables are now able to start a new life and many even find their way into the ranks of the samurai.

Adventuring: To these characters, the world has just been opened for exploration. Given the slightest chance, samurai from an untouchable background will chase after any myth or legend that strikes their fancy. Eager to solidify their new social position, they are also ready to go on any reasonable mission to improve their social standing or increase their honour. The

THE SAMURAI AND PRESTIGE CLASSES

The flower of flowers is the cherry blossom – the samurai is the man among men.

Japanese Proverb

The fighter is a master at arms, a combatant who masters every weapon he comes across and adds it to his repertoire of deadly skills. The ranger is a warrior who stalks the wilderness, striking from the shade of trees and patrolling the lands he protects with a ready



bow and twin blades. And the paladin is a fighter with the spirit of a cleric, a man sworn to uphold the tenets of a religion while hacking his way through the infidels who oppose him.

The samurai is a bit of each of these. The samurai ideal holds the mastery of bow, blade and steed in high regard, so a samurai must become a martial artist of no little skill in each of these techniques. In addition, he is a soldier and guardian charged with protecting the lands of his people, patrolling his territory on horseback with his bow and blade at the ready. He is also bound to defend and obey his daimyo, the lord for whom the samurai is sworn to die. The samurai is a powerful warrior, but he is never fully his own man and, so the saying goes, he is dead from the moment he picks up his daisho – only by believing himself already dead may the samurai act immediately and without fear, no matter the situation.

In this chapter you will find all the necessary information about the samurai class. Information about the prestige classes normally associated with the samurai may be found here as well, offering new realms of advancement and customisation for each samurai character. Armed with this information, you can create a character ready to pick up the katana and wakizashi to live the life of the samurai.

THE SAMURAI

A samurai is a warrior with a purpose. His life is defined by three things – his skill in the martial arts, his service to his daimyo and his honour – and it is these things which the samurai class is designed to uphold and perfect. Like a warrior, the samurai is a skilled combatant and gains many combat-related feats. Unlike the fighter, however, the samurai is restricted in the types of weapons he can choose to master and the ways in which he can advance his fighting skills. The samurai believe strongly in tradition and their training methods have been proven and tested over generations. For a samurai, doubting what he has been taught is fundamentally impossible. He is, after all, the proof that his techniques work and the wisdom of his *sensei*. Though other styles may have their attractions, the samurai knows his techniques have been proven in combat, time and again. There is some comfort in knowing that the skills you are developing have stood other warriors in good stead, helping them to survive the rigours and horrors of the battlefield.

In short, a samurai is a fighter who is trained in one or more traditional fighting styles in order to perfect his martial skills and who is sworn to defend and uphold

The Samurai

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Sword School Feat, Exotic Weapon Proficiency
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Bonus Feat
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Sword School Feat
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	
6	+6/+1	+2	+5	+5	Bonus Feat
7	+7/+2	+2	+5	+5	
8	+8/+3	+2	+6	+6	Sword School Feat
9	+9/+4	+3	+6	+6	
10	+10/+5	+3	+7	+7	Improved Two-Weapon Fighting Feat
11	+11/+6/+1	+3	+7	+7	
12	+12/+7/+2	+4	+8	+8	Sword School Feat
13	+13/+8/+3	+4	+8	+8	
14	+14/+9/+4	+4	+9	+9	Daisho Fighting Feat
15	+15/+10/+5	+5	+9	+9	
16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+5	+10	+10	Bonus Feat
17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+10	
18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+6	+11	+11	Bonus Feat
19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+6	+11	+11	
20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+6	+12	+12	Bonus Feat

the rule of his daimyo in an honourable fashion. It is not a profession for the weak, nor is it a lifestyle suited to everyone. For those who are able to adhere to its rigorous requirements, however, the life of a samurai is a powerful, fulfilling existence.

Alignment: Any lawful

Hit Die: d10

Class Skills: The samurai's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Perform (Cha), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points: The samurai gains (4+Int Modifier) x 4 skill points at first level and 4 + Int modifier for each level thereafter.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: The samurai is proficient with the daisho (paired katana and wakizashi), all bows, all medium and light armour and shields.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency: The samurai begins play with an exotic weapon proficiency in katana, allowing him to use that weapon with one hand.

Granted Feat: The samurai gains a number of extra feats as he progresses in level and these are named in the table above.

Bonus Feats: At 2nd, 6th, 10th, 16th, 18th and 20th level, the samurai gains a bonus feat. These feats must be drawn from the following list: Ambidexterity, Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Inner Calm, Iron Will, Ki Activation, Ki Capture, Ki Channel, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Sunder, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus, Whirlwind Attack. In addition, the samurai may take a Sword School feat or any feat listed as a Samurai feat as a bonus feat, provided he meets the feat's prerequisites. Samurai may also take combination feats, as detailed in Chapter 8: Sword Schools, as bonus feats.

When taking Sword School feats, the samurai must alternate the schools for which those feats apply. For example, a samurai who takes his first Sword School feat in the Cleaving Thunder style may not take the second tier feat for the same style at second level as his bonus feat. He may, however choose a Sword School feat that applies to another school, if he is able to convince another school to take him on as a student.



Many of the samurai's available bonus feats require prerequisites; these are listed parenthetically after the prerequisite feat. Feats which are tied to a particular weapon (such as Improved Critical, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialisation, for example) may only be taken twice – once for katana and once for wakizashi. A samurai must still meet all the prerequisites for these feats before they may be taken.

Sword School Feats: At 1st level the samurai is granted a Sword Style feat in addition to any other feats to which he is entitled. The samurai may choose any single 1st Tier Sword Style skill in any publicly available sword school (as determined by the Games Master for each campaign) using this granted feat. The Sword Style Feats available at levels 4, 8 and 12 may only be used to take additional Sword Style feats within the same school. If they are not used for feats within the sword style chosen at 1st level, they may not be used for any other purpose.



BODYGUARD

All samurai are warriors and all are sworn to die at the command of their lord. The bodyguard, however, takes this fatalistic outlook one step further – he is a walking sacrifice, an expert martial artist trained as a living shield. Most often assigned to this duty by his lord, the samurai who takes up the bodyguard prestige class undergoes a rigorous indoctrination training that lasts several weeks. During this time, the samurai is introduced to his sworn charge (see below) and learns to fully sublimate his own fear of death. When the training is complete, the bodyguard is fully prepared to throw himself between his charge and death, regardless of the consequences.

The bodyguard is a highly prized member of any daimyo's court and samurai who excel in this prestige class are richly rewarded – though only the greatest among their number live long enough to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify as a bodyguard, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +10 or higher.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative.

Class Skills

The bodyguard's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the bodyguard prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: The bodyguard gains no proficiency in any weapons or armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Sworn Charge: When you take your first level in the bodyguard prestige class, you are given a Sworn Charge whom it is your duty to protect at all costs.

The Bodyguard

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Sworn Charge
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Reflexive Defence
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Screening Defence
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Undying Defence
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Acceptance of Pain

The majority of Sworn Charges are in no danger on a day-to-day basis, but are regarded as extremely important by the daimyo. Heirs to the throne, favoured mistresses, spy masters, influential merchants and other notable individuals who are important to the domain or its lord may all be assigned bodyguards. When a sworn charge must move or a threat to their lives is discovered, the bodyguard is called in to protect them. The most common duties involved in the bodyguard business involve transporting the charge across the wilderness, providing protection during tense negotiations and safeguarding the charge from assassins.

A daimyo may change the Sworn Charge for a samurai at any time. Most bodyguards receive a new charge every year, which prevents them from gaining too much information about the charge and, more importantly, is meant to thwart any burgeoning romantic feelings between bodyguard and charge.

Reflexive Defence: As long as the bodyguard is within 10 feet of the charge, he may voluntarily lower his own Reflex save bonus by up to one-half in order to provide a circumstance bonus to the Reflex save of his charge. This ability may be used at any time in response to danger posed to the samurai's charge when the samurai is within range and aware of what is happening. The samurai lunges into his charge, throwing himself over the target in an attempt to protect him. Use of this ability requires the expenditure of 10 ki, but may be used as often as the samurai can pay the cost.

Screening Defence: When fighting defensively, the samurai is able to protect five feet to his left and five feet to his right with a series of spinning moves and the wild flashing of his katana. Any attacks that must pass through these two protected areas, or targeted spells if their lines of sight must pass through these areas, are considered to have passed through 50% cover, +5% for every level of the bodyguard prestige class the character possesses. Use of this ability requires the expenditure of 1 ki point for every round during which it is active. If this ability is used to protect a Sworn Charge, it provides 50% cover plus

+10% for every level of the bodyguard prestige class the character possesses.

Undying Defence: This special ability is identical to the feat of the same name. The bodyguard gains this ability regardless of whether or not he otherwise fulfils the prerequisites of the feat.

Acceptance of Pain: The samurai is able to take any physical damage caused by melee attacks, targeted missile attacks (including targeted spells), or traps to his charge onto himself. The samurai is assumed to have interposed some portion of his body between the target and the attack – which means that any touch attacks or other spell-like effects triggered by a touch will affect the samurai instead of the charge. This ability requires 5 ki to activate and a single activation will persist for the duration of a combat. The samurai must be adjacent to the charge in order to use this ability, though the ability may be activated as a free action at any distance.

DELEGATE

In addition to their training as combatants, some samurai are chosen to represent their lord's interests to outsiders. These delegates travel far and wide to deliver messages, check in on business interests, inspect holdings and otherwise serve as the lord's presence away from court. The most trusted delegates are given the authority to deal with foreign or rival governments, speaking for the daimyo in crucial matters of state. Trusted and well trained, the delegates make excellent diplomats and are shrewd politicians in their own right.

Often seen as too valuable to squander on the field of battle, delegates spend a great deal of time at the court, discussing the state of the domain with their lord. As they grow in experience, many delegates return to the warrior lifestyle, pursuing a more visceral, physically challenging profession. Others remain within the confines of the lord's estate, building up a power-base of their own and learning the secrets of effective rulership.

Hit Die: d8.



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The Delegate

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Social Authority
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Command
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Perceptive Spirit
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Inscrutable Liar
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	Estate

Requirements

To qualify as a delegate, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +5 or higher.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Skills: Diplomacy 10 ranks.

Feats: Socially Graceful.

Class Skills

The delegate's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (Only languages spoken in the lord's domain or surrounding lands). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the delegate prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: The delegate gains no proficiency in any weapons or armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Social Authority: The delegate carries himself with an unmistakable aura of authority; confidence exudes from his every word and he appears noble even if he is not. When conducting a social challenge, the delegate's social rank is considered to be equal to his daimyo's rank -2.

Command: No daimyo can control all of the samurai and other staff under his control. Delegates are often placed in charge of a small contingent of the daimyo's staff, which the delegate may use as he sees fit. Provided the staff are never required to do anything that would endanger their service to the daimyo, the delegate's commands are followed to the letter. If a delegate does place his charges in danger, the lord will certainly be incensed over the situation and the delegate will lose this special ability and must perform a duty for the daimyo in order to continue advancing in this prestige class.

A command contains a number of Non-Player Characters equal to one-half the delegate's total characters levels. The command is composed of 1d3



samurai with levels equal to the samurai's character level -2 and 1d2 experts (most likely merchants, though scribes are common as well) with levels equal to the samurai's character level. The remaining members of the command are made up of loyal warrior Non-Player Characters with 1d3 levels each.

Members of a command will accompany a delegate on adventures if he gives the order. This type of dangerous activity must be monitored carefully however, as a delegate who loses his command through accident or negligence suffers the penalties as noted above. More typically, the delegate is instructed to use the members of his command to assist him in fulfilling his duties to his daimyo.

Perceptive Spirit: The delegate's eye for detail and knowledge of human nature provides him with a +2 competence bonus to any use of the following skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Innuendo and Sense Motive.

Inscrutable Liar: After learning how others lie, the samurai is better able to hide his own lies. When using the Bluff or Intimidate skill, the samurai receives a +4 competence bonus. If this skill is used against a loyal member of the delegate's domain, this bonus increases to +6.

Estate: After proving himself, the samurai is given a small estate within his lord's domain. The estate is not particularly large (it may not cost more than 5,000 gp) and has a very small staff (see Chapter 12: Strongholds) for more information about building sizes and staff) but it lies near an important trade route or hostile border. The samurai is expected to protect his land and ensure it operates efficiently. For his trouble, the samurai gains +1 honour every three months and is well-known in the estate of the daimyo.

INFORMATION BROKER

While warfare and expert fighters are an excellent defence for a daimyo and his domain, there are many times when a well-placed word or the advice of a spy can avoid a battle entirely. Those samurai with a penchant for guile and subterfuge are able to make a name for themselves by gathering such information through their network of informants. While this can be a difficult and dangerous task, the accomplished information broker is able to stay abreast of any significant activity in or around his lord's domain. For the adventurous, this has the added bonus of keeping in tune with any local legends, news of odd events or strange creatures and the opportunity to make a little

extra money through the competition between various merchants.

Information brokers have a tough time earning honour because it is crucial for them to remain unseen and unheard during their day-to-day operations. On the other hand, they have a tendency to become very influential behind the scenes and gain wealth at an alarming rate. Whenever a samurai with little prestige and a great deal of wealth is seen, he is most often either a relative of the daimyo or a successful information broker.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify as an information broker, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Skills: Gather Information 10 ranks.

Feats: Informants.

Class Skills

The information broker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (Only languages spoken in the lord's domain or surrounding lands). See *Core Rulebook 1* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the information broker prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: The information broker gains no proficiency in any weapons or armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

Extended Network: You may create a group of informants in a city without needing to be physically present. The cost is 1d20 + 300 gp and the process requires 2 weeks to accomplish. During this time, one city's worth of informants will also be unavailable as they are actually working to set up the new network. Members of the extended network do not know for whom they work - while they know who set up their original deal, they are unaware of the boss's identity.



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The Information Broker

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Extended Network
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Rumour Mill
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Nose for Gold
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Black Market
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	The Mark

Extending a network beyond the border of the daimyo's domain requires double the normal amount of gold for the first city. Additional cities have the normal cost as the broker's agents become better known. In any city in which the broker has established informants, he may put forth a Gather Information request. This takes twice as long to recover the information and three times the gold expenditure as for the use of the Informants feat. The



samurai must spend a great deal more money to grease palms between his location and the site from which the information must be gathered.

Rumour Mill: You have a direct line to the words of the common man on the street. It requires two days for information from the street to reach you if you are in the city where it occurs – otherwise, the information will not reach you for 1 day for every 10 miles you are from the location where the event takes place. Strange travellers, monsters, a sudden influx of treasure, or other such events will generate a rumour within 1d3 days of their occurrence. A successful Gather Information check (DC 15 + 1/day it required for the rumour to reach the broker) is required to determine the truth of any rumour which comes through. Failure on this check generates misleading theories about what the rumour means, or a possible misinterpretation of the rumour itself. Games Masters are encouraged to be creative in their creation of false rumours.

Nose for Gold: Keeping an eye on local markets and comparing the sale and purchase prices of various items is an information broker's key to wealth. Each month, the information broker is allowed to make a Gather Information check in order to ferret out a possible business opportunity. If the check succeeds, the broker discovers a buy low/sell high possibility in the cities in which his extended network operates. The broker must then determine how much of his current wealth to invest in the scheme. Use the following system to determine how much is gained or lost on this gamble:

- † The Games Master rolls d100 to determine the possible gain/loss percentage for the current opportunity.
- † The broker makes an Appraise skill check (DC 20 + 1 per 200 gp invested). The more money a samurai invests in one of these schemes, the more difficult it is to recover a profit without exhausting the local supply and demand equations.
- † If the check succeeds, the broker earns the percentage calculated above. If the check fails,

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however, the samurai loses the percentage amount determined above.

† It requires 1d6 weeks for the information broker to receive the money for the opportunity, regardless of whether or not he lost or gained money.

Black Market: There is an entire economy out there known only to those who live on the wrong side of the law. The information broker uses his informants to keep an eye on what passes through the market and to watch for items which simply cannot be allowed to move through the domain (for example, slavery may not be tolerated in one domain, while magical items may be forbidden in another). The samurai may also keep tabs on those who are purchasing items on the black market (counting as a mild to severe indiscretion, based on what is purchased). To find out if a particular individual is buying from the black market requires a Gather Information check (DC 20).

The Mark: In some cases, the information broker may not wish to uncover a rumour or item of interest.

Instead, he may want to start a rumour of his own or even arrange for evidence to appear in the possession of a particular individual. This is difficult and requires a great deal of money to accomplish. More importantly, planting evidence on a careful individual may endanger the informants in a given area.

In order to determine the cost and difficulty of incriminating the target, consult table below.

The information broker oversees the entire operation, providing the necessary evidence he wants planted or the details of the rumour he would like started. To determine success or failure, the information broker must make a Gather Information check against the Difficulty Class listed above. If the broker is successful, his spies manage to start the rumour or plant the evidence as requested. If he fails, however, then his target may discover him.

Whenever a Mark attempt fails, the Games Master should roll 1d20+1/2 of the DC that defeated the samurai's attempts. If this result is greater than the result of the samurai's Gather Information check, the samurai's network has been exposed. The samurai

Mark Difficulty Classes

DC	Category	Description
5	Peasant	This category includes villagers, farmers, beggars and any other low-income person without influence. Their homes, when they have homes, are simple, small and quite easy to penetrate.
10	Commoner	Commoners are typically innkeepers, owners of taverns and other citizens in the service industry. These individuals often live in average-size homes which have locks on the doors and windows, but little in the way of security.
15	Merchant	Wealthier than commoners, merchants tend to own several businesses. They are security conscious and their large homes often have several guards to supplement the locks on the doors and windows. These individuals have some influence and most have a spy or two of their own to keep an eye on things in their home city.
20	Lesser Noble	The lowest rank of the ruling class, the lesser nobility tend to have a fair amount of influence in their home region. A half-dozen or more men-at-arms, often with several samurai to oversee their operations guard their mansions. The doors and windows are locked and occasionally secured by magic and there are more than a few spies charged with keeping an eye on things. Lesser nobles are often embroiled in conflicts with one another as they squabble over their position and place in the kingdom's hierarchy.
30	Lord	The ruler of a large area, the lord typically lives in a fortress or castle of one type or another. Guards patrol the castle proper while others roam the surrounding land for signs of intrusion. Samurai are commonly stationed in the lord's home and counterspies spend a great deal of time scouting for trouble.
40	Emperor	Protected at all times, the emperor rules over a large area of land. His personal bodyguards are rarely more than a hand's breadth away and his lands are heavily guarded at all times. Marking the emperor is ridiculously difficult and failure carries with it an enormous price – often the death of the information broker and much of his extended network.

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immediately loses any informants in the city and may (percentage chance equal to the DC of the target who discovered the samurai's attempt) find himself discovered by his target. The penalties for discovery by the target vary according to his power and influence, and should be determined by the Games Master.

OVERSEER

While the delegate handles political responsibilities, the overseer is responsible for co-ordinating the military activities of several samurai. Charged with the leadership of a small group of samurai, overseers are often given assignments that rely on speed and careful execution. The overseer is given a great deal of freedom when pursuing such goals and is quite often encouraged to bring along his adventuring



companions or other allies if it will not compromise the honour of his daimyo.

The overseer is the field commander of the samurai – a resourceful individual with the expertise needed to lead his men on successful missions against the enemy. On the battlefield, his wits and experience allow him to keep his forces together and operating effectively. As his leadership skills increase, so too does the size of the samurai band he controls, allowing him to serve his daimyo on longer and more dangerous assignments.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify as an overseer, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +10 or higher.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Feats: Leadership.

Class Skills

The overseer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the overseer prestige class.

Five Samurai: The overseer gains a group of five samurai to lead on assignments for his daimyo. This number increases by 2 every time the samurai gains a level of overseer. While these samurai are always available to accept the overseer's commands, their lives belong to their daimyo. If any of these samurai die while on assignment with their overseer (either on a mission for the lord or on an overseer's personal mission), the overseer immediately loses 5 points of honour.

Battlefield Instinct: The overseer understands the nature of combat so well he is able to predict where his opponents will move. As a partial action, the overseer may survey the battlefield and direct any of one of his allies to intercept a target. When the overseer declares he is using this ability, the Games Master should begin

The Overseer

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Five Samurai
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Battlefield Instincts
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Skilled Guidance
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Co-ordinated Attack
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	Fight As One

describing the movement of the overseer's enemies. At any time, the overseer may give orders to one of his allies and, if the ally follows them, allow the ally to act immediately prior to the actions the Non-Player Characters or monsters just took.

Skilled Guidance: The samurai may, if he is within 10 feet of an ally, make a skill check or attack roll for that ally just as if he were performing the action himself. The overseer must be able to speak freely when this is done, providing encouragement and advice for his ally. This ability may be used as often as the samurai likes, but each use is a full-round action. In addition, the ally who is being guided may not act until after the lower of his own initiative or the overseer's initiative.

Co-ordinated Attack: As long as the overseer can speak freely and see at least two of his allies, he may guide them in making a co-ordinated attack. Not counting the overseer, up to five combatants may be involved in the co-ordinated attack as long as they can all reach the target designated by the overseer. Co-ordinated attacks may be either melee or missile attacks, but all attackers must use the same attack type and, if using a missile attack, be within 30 feet of the target. Each combatant, other than the overseer, involved in the co-ordinated attack must make an attack roll against Armour Class 10. Each combatant that succeeds at this attack roll provides a +1 circumstance bonus to the overseer's attack roll and increases the critical threat range of his attack by 1. Thus, if four of the combatants succeed at their attack roll, the overseer gains a +4 attack bonus and his critical threat range is improved by 4. When using this ability, the overseer may not take more than a single attack action each round and may not use the full-attack option.

Fight As One: While the co-ordinated attack ability allows the overseer to benefit from the support of his allies, this ability brings the overseer and his allies into a unified attack formation. Working as a team, they are able to complement and enhance one another's combat abilities to overcome their foes. Up to five combatants (not including the overseer) may be involved when this ability is used and each must take the full-round attack option targeted on the same

opponent. All of these attackers make their attacks simultaneously, at the initiative of the slowest of their number. These attacks are taken in the order determined by the overseer and each of his allies must take all of his attacks at one time, if he is entitled to more than one. Every attacker after the first gains a +1 bonus to his attack roll per attack which successfully injured the target during the round prior to his attack and a +1 bonus to his damage roll equal to the bonus to his attack roll.

PARAGON

From time to time, a samurai comes along who represents all of the virtues prized by the Way of the Warrior. An expert archer, masterful swordsman and horseman without peer, the paragon is also honourable and dedicated to his daimyo. His single-minded determination to better himself and his slavish adherence to the samurai code grants him a near-mythical status amongst his peers.

Where other samurai are content to do as they are told and gain the favour of their daimyo, the paragon does what he believes is right. His faithful devotion to his daimyo is never in doubt, but the paragon is more than willing to make known his displeasure if he believes someone is not acting in accordance with the Warrior's Code. Paragons often serve as teachers or advisors, offering their opinions to any and all who ask. Admired and feared by their peers, the presence of a paragon in his court is a sure feather in the cap of any daimyo.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify as a paragon, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +15 or higher.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Skills: Riding 12 ranks.

Feats: Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (longbow), Weapon Focus (katana).

Other: Honour 15+.





Class Skills

The paragon's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the paragon prestige class.

Bladeless Duel: Paragons are powerful figures – they are extremely skilled and self-confident, able to face any foe without flinching and with the sure knowledge that, regardless of how the fight goes, they lived a life of which they can be proud and intend to die honourably. When a paragon enters a duel, he may be able to stop the fight before it starts, cowing his opponent into surrendering before blood is shed. When this ability is used, each duellist must make a Charisma check with a DC equal to the honour of the opposing samurai. If the paragon's check succeeds by a greater margin than his opponent, that opponent immediately concedes the battle and sheathes his weapon. If the paragon fails his check, or does not succeed by a greater margin than his opponent, he must immediately make a Will save (DC equal to the opponent's honour) or suffer a –2 circumstance penalty on any attack roll made during the duel.

Action Without Thought: Having mastered the tenets of battle, the samurai is able to act instantly and without consideration of the consequences, confident his actions are correct. The samurai gains a +2 competence bonus to all Initiative rolls and may not be deprived of his Dexterity bonus in any circumstance.

Mounted Mastery: You are an expert in the saddle, able to control your horse with little effort. You gain a +5 competence bonus to any Riding check. For the cost of 5 ki points, you automatically succeed at any riding check you are required to make, though this ability may only be used once per round.

Zen Archery: Seeing a target is over-rated. With your bow, you are able to pick out targets which you cannot see, provided they are within 100 feet. You suffer no penalties when attacking these targets with your bow, but may only fire a single shot each round. For the cost of 5 ki, you may extend the range at which you can detect targets by 50 feet – this cost may be paid multiple times, out to a maximum of 300 feet.

Sword Saint: The katana is no longer simply a weapon in your hand, but an extension of your being. When you are not armed with a weapon, you may summon a katana formed completely of your ki, an

The Paragon

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Bladeless Duel
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Action Without Thought
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Mounted Mastery
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Zen Archery
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	Sword Saint

enchanted blade that is capable of causing grievous harm to your target. This weapon is considered a +5 *brilliant energy katana*. Maintaining the weapon requires the expenditure of 1 ki per round, and summoning the blade requires a full-round action.

PROTECTOR

Bodies aren't the only things a daimyo needs to guard. Territory and structures must be protected from the predations of enemies and, in monster-infested lands, there are any number of enemies which need to be evicted from the daimyo's lands. The protector is charged with beating the bounds of his lord's land, safeguarding the animals and natural resources there and slaying those who attempt to intrude where they do not belong.

Protectors have very challenging assignments and often operate far from any civilisation. Their rough-and-tumble lifestyle certainly leaves them a bit uncouth compared to those samurai who remain near the lord's estate and the comforts of the city. What they lack in civility, however, they make up for in their wilderness skills and survival ability.

Hit Die: d10.

Requirements

To qualify as a protector, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Skills: Handle Animal 5 ranks, Ride 5 ranks.

Class Skills

The protector's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the protector prestige class.

Detect Interloper: With a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) the protector is able to determine whether or not there is an intruder on his daimyo's land. To use this ability, the samurai must spend one



hour alone, meditating on the evidence his senses present to him: the sound of the birds singing, the smell of the wind, the feel of the grass beneath his hands. At the end of this time, the protector makes the Wilderness Lore check. If the check is successful, divide the total result of the check by 20 to determine the radius within which the samurai detects intruders in miles.

Track: The protector gains the track feat as a bonus feat.

Intercept: If an intruder is detected, the samurai may attempt to intercept the miscreant. The protector must make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10 + 1 per ¼ mile of distance between the protector and the intruder). If the check succeeds, the samurai may begin moving toward the intruder. Once per hour, the samurai is entitled to another Wilderness Lore check (DC as

THE SAMURAI AND PRESTIGE CLASSES

The Protector

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Detect Interloper
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Track
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Intercept
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Brush Shot
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Ki Arrows

determined above) – if the check succeeds, he gains a quarter-mile on the target. If the check fails, the samurai gains no ground on the target (unless his movement rate is naturally faster than the intruder's is). This ability may only be used on the daimyo's territory – if the target leaves the territory, the protector is unable to continue the pursuit.

Brush Shot: The protector suffers no concealment penalties when making ranged attacks at a concealed target within 30 feet.

Ki Arrows: The samurai charges each arrow with his own ki, increasing its ability to strike and injure targets. The samurai may infuse an arrow with up to 5 ki points (which are deducted from his total as normal). For each ki point charged into an arrow, the samurai gains a +1 bonus to both attack and damage rolls with that arrow. In addition, the attack overcomes damage resistance as if it were a +2 magical weapon.

RONIN

The samurai who serve a master are assured of food, lodging, a regular income and the respect of the residents of their land. While they obey their daimyo, they are tied to the master of the domain and have little to fear in their day-to-day existence. When this connection between master and servant is broken, however, the samurai find themselves adrift, cut loose from the support system they enjoyed for so long. These masterless warriors fall into two classes, then, the survivors and the defeated.

The defeated accept their fate and degenerate quickly, forsaking their old ways and descending into an honourless, pitiable existence. The survivors, however, become ronin. Adhering to the samurai ways, they continue to tread the Way of the Warrior. Without the support system other samurai enjoy, they must learn to survive on their own. Most become mercenaries, serving the highest bidder to keep their skills sharp and transferring their loyalty from one lord to another whenever their coin purse is filled. Though looked down upon by other samurai, the ronin come to enjoy their lifestyle and the freedoms it offers.

Hit Die: d12.

Requirements

To qualify as a ronin, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Special: The samurai must either be released from service or have suffered the loss of his daimyo to some other misfortune.

Class Skills

The ronin's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the ronin prestige class.

Liberated Loyalty: Many of a samurai's feats or other abilities are only useful when the samurai is directly engaged in protecting or furthering the goals of his daimyo. A ronin, however, is able to switch his loyalty whenever he accepts a new assignment, allowing him to move from employer to employer without suffering any decrease in his abilities. Whenever a new employer is accepted by the ronin, that employer is treated as the ronin's daimyo until the contract is complete.

A secondary effect of this ability frees the samurai from direct associations with his employers. Unlike a daimyo, changes in an employer's honour do not affect the ronin, and vice versa. The ronin's honour is his own and it is not tied to the reputation or actions of another.

Sword for Hire: The ronin is a talented warrior with a reputation for honourable duty and excellent martial training. Because of this, he is rarely at a loss for work and can often gain admittance with local nobles,

The Ronin

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Liberated Loyalty
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Sword for Hire
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Unfettered Ki
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Unlikely Allies
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Mixed Styles

criminal enterprises and other organisations or individuals in need of hired muscle. When this ability is gained, the ronin may approach any potential employer for an interview – getting past flunkies typically involves a successful Bluff or Intimidation check (DC 15) and allows the ronin access to the employer for a single visit.

Unfettered Ki: While the ronin does his best to work within the confines of samurai teachings, his isolation from mentors and others who are expert in the matters of the Way of the Warrior leads to an eventual divergence from the ‘true’ path. The ronin continues his training on his own, however, leading to discoveries about his spiritual essence and his own personality which might otherwise never be revealed through traditional training techniques. When this ability is gained, the ronin has learned the essential techniques for tapping into his own ki, allowing him to unleash his personal power with greater ease. The ronin may expend a number of ki points each turn equal to his current honour +5. Note that this ability does not stack with the Ki Channel bonus.

Unlikely Allies: The ronin have odd associations with various unsavoury individuals through their contact with their employers. From time to time, one of these acquaintances could prove useful, allowing the ronin to call upon a Non-Player Character with the resources or expertise lacking amongst his current companions. Though the cost is quite high, these individuals are often able to take care of tasks which more law-abiding professionals are not inclined to accept. Any time a ronin needs to locate a Non-Player Character for a particular task, he should make a level check (d20 + his character level) with a Difficulty Class of 20 to determine whether or not he knows anyone who is right for the job. The ronin may use this ability once per month without penalty but, after the initial use, the Difficulty Class of the level check increases by 5 for each additional use of the ability in the same month. Any ally uncovered through the use of this ability is of a character level equal to the ronin minus 1d4.

The primary advantage of these allies over the standard Non-Player Character hirelings is their loyalty – these are individuals who are reliable and honourable enough to protect their business partners. Unlikely allies will not undertake a job which requires

more than one week to accomplish and attempt to minimise their own risks whenever possible. They charge, on average, 50 gp per level per day. If apprehended by the authorities, they will not reveal who hired them, but will probably want a bit extra when they regain their freedom. If an unlikely ally is executed as a result of a job undertaken for the ronin, the ronin is unable to use this ability for three months.

Mixed Styles: The ronin, freed from the restrictive thinking of the sword schools, has learned to combine





THE SAMURAI AND PRESTIGE CLASSES

Goji was a powerful man. His mercantile empire stretched though a dozen cities, his informants extended into the very heart of the Imperial Court and his thugs were able to penetrate even the most elaborate defences. Though he was born a commoner, his vast wealth and burgeoning influence were quickly approaching the lower rungs of the nobility. This, most agreed, was a problem.

The slayer waited on the street, her left hand shielding her eyes from the noonday sun. The merchant and his entourage passed this way each day, slowly winding through the restaurant district where Goji owned one of every three businesses. The situation was intolerable. Several of the lesser daimyos had banded together to hire the slayer. Though they were impressed with the merchant's aggressive strategies and business acumen, he could not be allowed to continue expanding his grasp. He was, after all, a commoner.

Guards came first, a small band of ronin hired by Goji to serve as both a status symbol and protection. They stalked the streets with bared blades and the slayer shook her head in disgust – drawing their weapons without evidence of threat was evidence of their clumsiness and lack of tradition. They were pathetic creatures, these ronin, too free in their desire to do new things, to corrupt the old ways with pointless innovation. The slayer would end this now.

With a sketched salute with her left hand, the slayer drew her katana with a smooth motion of her right. The hands came together in front of her, folding like roses in the fading sun around the hilt of her ancestral weapon. 'Goji, I have seen your fate.' Her words echoed through the street, a near-visible wave of ki energy blasting out of her mouth, spearing toward the merchant with unerring accuracy. She rushed forward then, sliding through the steps of a defensive *kata* which carried her through the loose net of guards.

Goji bowed his head in resignation, the truth of his situation a weight too great for him to bear. 'I understand,' he whispered and waved his guards back with a weary gesture.

The slayer nodded and paused beside him. 'You accept your death honourably, Goji. Your ancestors are proud of you this day.'

She cleaned her blade of the merchant's blood and walked away, satisfied she had given the man the death he deserved.

techniques from different schools into a single *kata* without penalty. When designing a *kata*, the ronin no longer needs to worry about which school is the basis for the *kata* – all techniques the samurai knows may be worked into the *kata* at the standard ki cost, rather than the double cost other samurai must pay for techniques outside of the base school.

SLAYER

Like any noble, a daimyo accumulates enemies and threats to his rule. Over time, any of these enemies may become a very real, very dangerous problem which must be dealt with in as expeditious manner as possible. In cases where direct political overtures fail, there is often only one solution – the death of the offending party. Because most daimyo are adverse to direct confrontations with one another (both because it endangers their lives needlessly and because such actions tend to lead to wars), the tradition of slayer rose to fill a particular need. When a daimyo requires the death of another to be administered honourably, but anonymously, he calls upon the slayer.

It is important to note that the slayer is no mere assassin. His task is to find the target and deliver a swift, honourable death. In most cases, this means delivering the killing stroke with such speed and ferocity that the target has no ability to defend himself. If a target is defeated after he is given a chance to draw his own weapon, his defeat may end in his dishonour, a fate which the slayer wants no part of. The existence of a slayer is some cold comfort to politically active samurai who believe that their deaths, though they may not come on the field of battle, will at least be honourable. For his part, the slayer accepts the dishonour of his position – attacking from surprise without giving the defender a chance to respond – because he knows his service is crucial to giving samurai souls the peace they need in death.

Hit Die: d12.

Requirements

To qualify as a slayer, the samurai must fulfil all the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +10.

Alignment: Any Lawful.

Honour: 10+.

Class Skills

The slayer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Wilderness Lore (Wis). See *Core Rulebook I* for skill descriptions.

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the slayer prestige class.

Timeless Honour: When the samurai adopts the slayer prestige class, his honour becomes 'locked.' As long as he is a slayer, he is immune to the normal effects of his actions on his honour. Though he may behave in a dishonourable fashion, other samurai understand the sacrifices a slayer makes and the internal turmoil he must struggle with on every assignment.

See the Void: This ability allows the slayer to see and understand the looming demise of any target. In order to use this ability, the slayer must first expend 5 ki points and then make a successful opposed Honour check against the target. If the slayer is successful, he gains a +4 bonus on the next attack roll he makes against the target. If the slayer fails, his opponent feels the hand of fate passing over him and, though he is not aware of who has marked him, he is aware that his death is very near. Aware targets are much easier to pin down and the ability may not be used to discern their fate again until at least 24 hours has passed. Use of this ability is a full-round action.

Challenge of Destiny: Once the slayer understands the nature of a target's death, he may use that information to frighten the target. By proclaiming the manner of a target's death, the slayer opens a link between himself and the target. The slayer and the target engage in opposed Will saves (DC 15). If the



slayer wins, his target is considered stunned for a number of rounds equal to the slayer's Wisdom modifier. If the target wins, however, the slayer's predictions are thrown into disarray, making it impossible for him to use his knowledge to his advantage. Activating this ability is a full-round action.

Honourable Paralysis: After the Challenge of Destiny is issued (provided the slayer wins the challenge), the slayer may lock his target into grim acceptance of his fate. The slayer must make an Honour check (DC 10 + the target's honour) – if he is successful, the target is considered helpless for the remainder of this round. Honourable Paralysis is activated as a move-equivalent action.

Execution of Fate: When performing a coup de grace, the slayer may add his current honour score to the damage caused by the attack. When used against a target that is affected by Honourable Paralysis, the bonus damage is equal to double the slayer's current honour score.

The Slayer

Class Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Timeless Honour
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	See the Void
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	Challenge of Destiny
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Honourable Paralysis
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	Execution of Fate



SAMURAI FEATS

A person who is said to be proficient at the arts is like a fool. Because of his foolishness in concerning himself with just one thing, he thinks of nothing else and thus becomes proficient. He is a worthless person.

Tsunetomo Yamamoto (1659-1719)

While samurai receive a large number of feats, many of these are not simply focused on fighting. The samurai are well-rounded individuals who focus not just on martial pursuits but also on proper social etiquette and scholarship. The samurai also spend a great deal of their time mastering their internal energies, or ki, harnessing their spiritual power to perform fantastic deeds. Like other fighters, the samurai earn a large number of feats, giving them great flexibility and finesse on the battlefield and a large arsenal of techniques from which to draw. The samurai style is



more regimented, however, and it is more difficult for samurai to pick and choose his feats without considering how they will affect his potential advancement as a samurai. More than any other class, the samurai's feats provide a growing base of power from which to draw and it takes some care to avoid diluting or weakening that base.

The feats included in this chapter form the basis for many of the systems found later in this book. The sword school feats, for example, form the very core of the samurai martial arts system while the social feats allow samurai to engage in clever social battles for prestige at the court of their daimyo. As the samurai gains feats, he unlocks many new abilities, increasing his mastery of his katana, bow and spirit.

It should be noted that all feats marked here as 'general' feats may be taken by any character who meets the prerequisites. Those marked as 'fighter' or 'samurai' may only be taken by characters of the appropriate class who may also take them as bonus feats, as detailed in the core rulebook.

Ancestral Katana (Samurai)

Your katana has been handed down for generations, travelling through the hands of one samurai after another, all striving to honour the family name. Though you may not have known it at the time you began your career, taking this feat awakens the ancestors within the blade, allowing you to enhance the weapon as you gain experience.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +4 or higher.

Benefit: Ancestral katanas are more powerful than other katanas. An ancestral katana may contain 2 more special qualities than is normal.

Special: When this feat is taken, the samurai must divest himself of the majority of his weapons. He is allowed to retain only this katana, one bow and his wakizashi. The ancestral spirits demand respect and refuse to allow the samurai to use other, inferior weapons.

Daisho Fighting (Samurai)

With a katana in your right hand and a wakizashi in your other, you are able to attack more effectively or defend yourself more efficiently than if you were wielding but a single weapon.

Prerequisites: Ambidexterity, Improved Two Weapon Fighting.

Benefit: When wielding a katana and wakizashi, you are able to either enhance your offensive capabilities

or defend yourself with greater ease. During each round, you must decide if you are going to fight offensively or defensively and add the appropriate modifier to your attack rolls and armour class:

† **Defensive:** In addition to the adjustments gained by fighting defensively (+4 to Armour Class and -4 to attack rolls), the samurai fighting with a daisho increases his Armour Class by sacrificing an available attack from his wakizashi. For every attack which is sacrificed, the samurai is allowed to add $\frac{1}{4}$ of his base attack bonus as a circumstance bonus to his Armour Class.



as your training allows you to strike with startling precision.

Dead Shot (Samurai)

You are a master Bowman and are able to pierce the concealment that protects your targets.

Prerequisites: Blind Fight, base attack bonus +9 or higher.

Benefit: When firing a bow at targets within 30 feet, you may reduce their concealment modifiers by 1 category – Total cover becomes 9/10th cover, One-Half cover becomes One-Quarter cover and so on. This feat provides benefits even if you are blinded or otherwise deprived of your sight, allowing you to target your foes even in utter darkness.

Flanking Horse (Fighter, Samurai)

You are so well-trained in fighting from your horse that you are able to effectively flank a target while mounted – without the need for an ally on the target's opposite side.

Prerequisites: Mounted Combat, Riding Skill 10 ranks and base attack bonus +6 or higher.

Benefit: Whenever you are mounted, your horse is able to distract a medium-size or smaller opponent to such a degree that your target is considered flanked against any attacks which you or the mount make. Your horse may not move more than a 5 foot step during any round in which a target is virtually flanked in this way.

† **Offensive:** When fighting offensively, the samurai may sacrifice protection for additional attacks. For every five points by which the samurai voluntarily reduces his Armour Class, he receives an additional attack with his daisho. Note that no more than two additional attacks may be gained in this way and the samurai's Armour Class may not be reduced to zero as a result of using this ability. The reduction in Armour Class lasts until the samurai takes his first action in the following round

The daisho may be used in any kata, as long as use of the weapons alternates from katana to wakizashi.

Deadly Draw (Samurai)

You have mastered the art of iaido and are able to execute a powerful slicing attack as you remove your katana from its scabbard.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +7 or higher, Quick Draw

Benefit: If your weapons are not yet drawn you may, as your first action in any combat, draw your weapon and execute an attack action against any target within reach of you at the time you draw your weapon. In order to use this feat, drawing an attacking must be the first action you take in the combat – you may not move or perform any other actions until your use of Deadly Draw is complete. The attack executed with this feat receives a +5 insight bonus to the attack roll



Normal: A target is normally only flanked when two or more opponents are on opposite sides of the target.

Grateful Leader (General)

In return for an accomplished mission or favour performed for a noble, daimyo, or other important leader, the samurai has earned the ongoing gratitude of the leader in question. In effect, the leader views the samurai as a trustworthy individual and is willing to go out on a limb to assist the samurai in the future. This is not a one-time favour – the leader is so impressed by the samurai his feelings of respect and admiration continue, effectively, forever.

Prerequisites: Samurai must be involved in the successful completion of a particular mission for a noble or other important personage.

Benefit: The noble will not perform any favours for the samurai that would endanger his own position, but he is quite willing to do any of the following:

† Offer a loan worth 1,000 gp per level to the samurai. This is an interest free loan that must be repaid in one year.

† Offer to put in a good word for the samurai with other nobility.

† Allow the samurai and his companions to reside in one of the leader's estates (or even his own home) for a period of no more than ten days.

† Protect the samurai from local law enforcement until such time as a full inquiry can be arranged. In this case, the samurai will normally be kept under house arrest until his guilt or innocence can be ascertained.

As seen in the examples, any reasonable favour within the leader's power will be granted. While this feat cannot be 'lost' any samurai with a 0 honour is unable to receive further favours from the leader until the samurai restores his lost honour. Even those who admire the samurai can feel little but shame for a samurai who has fallen so far from his lofty goal.

Improved Horse Shield (Fighter, Samurai)

Unlike paladins, samurai see their horses as tools to be used. In combat, this sometimes means a horse must give its life for its rider, providing a shield of flesh and blood against foes upon the battlefield. With this feat, samurai learn to fight while hanging at an awkward position from their horse.

Prerequisites: Mounted Combat, Riding Skill 10 ranks.

Benefit: As a free action, you may drop low on one side of your horse's body in order to use the trusty mount as a shield against attacks. This requires a successful Riding check (DC 15) – if this check is failed, you gain no cover from your horse.

If you succeed at the Riding check, however, you receive 1/2 cover from any enemy attacks for the remainder of this round. You may make melee attacks requiring only one hand while using your horse as cover in this way, though all such attacks suffer a –4 circumstance penalty.

At the end of the round in which this feat is used, you may automatically return to the saddle or make another riding attempt to maintain your position and continue using your horse as a shield.

Normal: Riders are normally not allowed to make any attacks while using their horse for cover.

Improved Mounted Archery (Samurai)

Your skill with the horse-bow is legendary and you are able to fire your weapon from horseback with almost no disruption in your aim.

Prerequisites: Mounted Archery, Base Attack Bonus +10.

Benefit: The penalties you suffer for firing a weapon from horseback are greatly reduced. If your mount takes a double move, you suffer no penalty for ranged combat and if your horse is running, you suffer only a -2 penalty to your ranged attacks.

Informants (General)

You have a network of individuals in a given city who keep their ears and eyes open. When you're in the city, these informants make it much easier to find out what's going on.

Prerequisites: Gather Information 5 ranks; One Week spent putting together a network of informants in a city; 1d20 x 200 gold pieces.

Benefit: You receive a +5 circumstance bonus to any Gather Information checks made in a city in which you have informants. This feat may be taken once for each city you spend time in, but no more than once for each city. It is impossible to put together a network of informants in less than a week, which is the minimum amount of time you must spend in a city in order to establish your informants.

Special: Each Gather Information check for which this feat provides a bonus requires an expenditure of 10 gp times the DC of the Gather Information check.

Informants are willing to work for the character, but they require a bit of cash to keep their tongues loose and their ears open.



Inner Calm (General)

You are able to focus and remain calm in dire circumstances, reining in your fears and soothing your nerves even in the face of imminent disaster.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus to all Will saves when attempting to resist a spell or effect which causes fear or confusion of any type.

Juriki gnawed at her lip, her eyes darting nervously from side to side. Within the confines of the carriage, she was free to speak, but her nervousness dampened any desire she might have for conversation.

'Do not worry, little sister.' Amano smiled warmly at his sibling and hugged her close to his side with one large arm around her shoulder. 'I know people in Ping Yai. We will find the man you seek.'

Juriki leaned against her brother, but her doubts remained. 'I hope so, my brother. I can feel his poison working its way through me, even now.'

Though the assassin had not killed her, the envenomed blade with which he'd stabbed the young samurai left her weak and afflicted with strange pains and a growing sense of doom. Amano gently stroked her hair and soothed her with gentle words. While his sister studied the countless forms of the Dazzling Cascade sword school, he spent his time arousing and drinking with the soldiers in Ping Yai, much to his family's shame. Now, though, was his chance to shine. He knew men who listened and saw, men for whom he'd done favours in the past. Soon, they would tell him what he wanted to know, and the assassin would be found. And killed.

Ki Activation (Samurai)

By activating the flows of ki through injured portions of the body, a samurai can increase the rate of healing and help provide some resistance against future sickness or injury.

Prerequisites: Healing skill 5 ranks.

Benefit: Ki Activation is used to either restore subdual damage more rapidly or to provide a resistance against future damage. In either case, the samurai requires a solid hour of time with the subject, during which the samurai stimulates ki flows in critical positions on the subject's body.

To restore subdual damage, the samurai must make a successful Healing check (DC 15). If the samurai succeeds, the subject's subdual damage total is reduced by the amount by which the samurai's check exceeded the DC (that is, if the samurai's Heal check had a total result of 23, the subject's subdual point total is reduced by 8 points).

To provide resistance against future illness or injury, the samurai must make a successful Healing check (DC 20). If the check succeeds, the target receives a +1 bonus to any single Fortitude save made during the next 24 hours and ignores the first three hit points of damage caused by a single attack during the next 24 hours.

Ki Capture (Samurai)

You are able to see the ki flows in others and know how to extract a tiny portion of their essence when your own ki is in use.

Prerequisite: Ki Channel.

Benefit: Whenever you use a sword technique that requires ki, you may be able to recover 1 ki point at the end of that round. In order to recover the ki point, you must fulfil the following:

† Injure your opponent in the round. The injury does not have to occur as a result of the ki technique used in this round.

† Spend more than one ki point in the round. You are never able to recover an amount of ki equal to the amount spent in a given round.

† Make a successful Will save (DC 15).

If you fulfil all of these conditions, you recover one ki point at the end of the round. This feat may be used whenever you like as a free action.

Ki Channel (Samurai)

Your spirit is fluid and the energy within you flows easily. When others have difficulty drawing upon the power within, you rarely experience any problems in tapping into your ki energy.

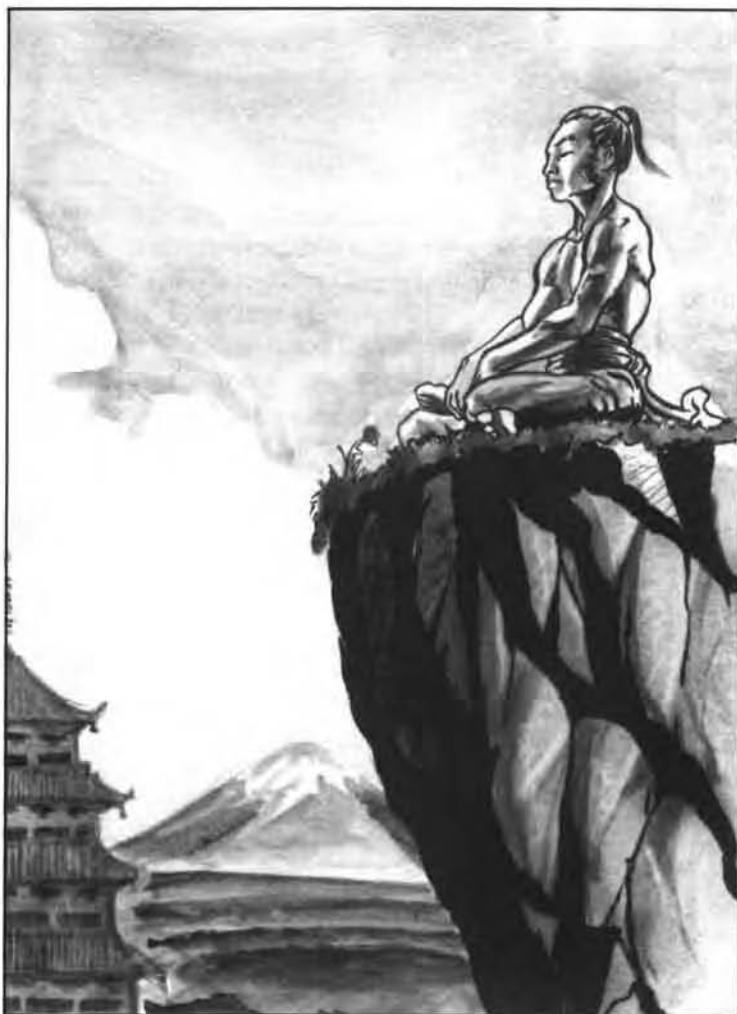
Prerequisite: Wis 13+.

Benefit: You are able to expend up to 3 ki points more than your current honour each round without suffering any injury to yourself.

Normal: Samurai normally suffer 1 point of temporary Wisdom damage for every 5 points, or fraction thereof, by which they exceed their honour in ki points spent in a given round.

Ki Harness (Samurai)

You are able to use the naturally occurring ki in the world around you to a limited degree. While you must still provide most of the ki energy



yourself, the small amount you siphon from your environment adds up over time.

Prerequisite: Ki Channel.

Benefit: You pay one ki point less for the first technique activated in a given round, with a minimum ki cost for this technique of 1 point.

Ki Healing (Samurai)

Owning mastery over your own internal energies and familiarity with their 'healthy' patterns, you are able to heal your ki more rapidly than others.

Prerequisites: Ki Channel feat.

Benefit: You regain three additional ki points for every hour in which you are able to meditate, undisturbed, in a peaceful location.

Normal: Samurai normally regain ki points at the rate of 1 ki point per hour per samurai level, or fully recover all ki points after eight hours of sleep (or undisturbed rest for races requiring less than eight hours of sleep each night).

Ki Reservoir (Samurai)

Your mastery over ki is so great you are actually able to use more ki than should be possible. While others are limited by their physical body, your ki knows no such constraints.

Prerequisite: Ki Harness.

Benefit: You gain a pool of ki points equal to your current level – these points do not add to your current hit points and may only be used to pay the cost for ki techniques. This reservoir refills after a full eight hours of rest.

Normal: Without this feat, a samurai's ki points are taken directly from his hit points.

Ki Survival (Samurai)

The universe around you provides all the energy you will ever need. So much so that, in times of great need, you can survive without food or water by fuelling your body with raw ki. Doing so prevents your own ki from replenishing, but allows you to continue on when others perish.

Prerequisite: Ki Activation.

Benefit: Each day you go without food and/or water, you suffer no penalties as long as you expend 1 ki point. Until you have proper food and water, however, your ki does not replenish when you rest. Feats that reduce ki costs may not be used to reduce the cost of Ki Survival.

Noble Birth (General)

Either you are born into a noble family or discover you have noble relatives who confirm your legitimacy as a noble later in life. Regardless, you are more privileged than most and adventure not because you must, but for the sheer excitement or challenge of it.

Prerequisite: —

Benefit: As a noble, you receive several benefits, including:

† You have enough wealth to live comfortably for the rest of your days. Though this does not directly add to your current wealth, it is assumed that you need never pay for things such as non-magical, personal equipment, horses, lodging, food, drinks, etc.

† Your nobility gives you a certain amount of protection from the local law. As long as you are not flagrantly violating any of the laws of the land (hacking up peasants or burning buildings, for example) you will not be arrested.

† You may consort with other nobles as equals and are privy to the councils held by the rulers of the land.

Lightning Mount (Samurai)

You are able to leap into the saddle of your horse without thought, landing in the saddle by instinct.

Prerequisite: Mounted Combat.

Benefit: Mounting or dismounting a horse is a free action for you, provided you start adjacent to your mount.

Normal: It normally requires a move equivalent action to mount or dismount a horse.

Retainers (Samurai)

Either as part of your heritage or as a gift from your daimyo, you control a small group of retainers (approximately 5). These men and women are non-combatants, but have 1d3 levels each in a given profession or craft skill. Retainers are most often used to run errands, manage a household, or otherwise tend to a samurai's mundane needs. If asked to fight, retainers will do their best, but their deaths will weigh heavily on the honour of the samurai. See Chapter 7, Master and Servant, for more information.

Prerequisites: Either Noble Birth or Grateful Leader feat.

Benefit: The samurai has 5 retainers, each of which is an Expert Non-Player Character with 1d3 levels. The





SAMURAI FEATS

samurai may choose the skills for his retainers at the time they are gained. As noted above, the samurai is responsible for the well-being of his retainers and allowing them to perish incurs an immediate 5 point honour loss per retainer. This feat may not be taken more than once.

Retainers do not count against the number of followers a samurai may gain using the Leadership feat and will not leave the samurai unless he releases them from their duty. Retainers gain one level in the Expert Non-Player Character class for every three levels gained by their master.

Socially Graceful (General)

Where others stumble over their words or become ensnared in the clever arguments of courtiers, you are able to retain your composure and protect your social standing with grace.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 11+, Charisma 12+.
Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus to your social defence in any social contest.

Stamp (Fighter, Samurai)

You are able to guide your horse's attacks much more effectively than other mounted combatants are. When engaged in melee, your horse may rear and smash its fore-hooves down upon a target which is medium-sized or smaller.

Prerequisite: Mounted Combat.
Benefit: As one of your attack actions for the round, you may order your horse to rear and slam its hooves into a target that is adjacent to the horse. If the attack succeeds, it causes normal damage and the target must make a successful Strength check equal to the horse's attack roll. If the Strength check fails, the target is knocked prone. If the Strength check succeeds, however, the horse is unbalanced and the samurai must immediately make a Riding check (DC 15) to remain mounted; in addition, the horse may not move for the remainder of this round and may only move one-half its normal movement in the following round.

Still Thought (Samurai)

You are able to isolate your thoughts, completely calming your mind in order to more rationally view your surroundings and contemplate the situation at hand.

Prerequisites: Inner Calm.
Benefit: If you fail a Will save when attempting to resist a spell or effect which causes fear or confusion,

you are entitled to another save in the following round to throw off the affliction of your mind. If you fail this save, however, you are afflicted for the duration of the effect.

In addition, this feat provides a +2 bonus to all Will saves made to resist making the first attack during an iaijutsu duel.

Sword School (Style), First Tier (Samurai, Fighter)

You have mastered the first tier of a sword school. This feat must be taken for the first tier of each sword school you wish to enter and may only be taken once the school accepts you as a pupil. Fighters may take this feat if they are able to gain acceptance by a sword school, a rare event indeed.

Prerequisites: By school, see table below:

First Tier Sword School Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Power Attack
Dazzling Cascade	Improved Initiative
Parting Waves	Dodge
Returning Fortunes	Quick Draw
Striking Spirit	Alertness
Trampling Dragon	Charisma 13+
Unwavering Strike	Weapon Finesse

Benefit: You gain access to all of the first tier techniques taught by your chosen school and may use them at any time.

Sword School (Style), Second Tier (Samurai, Fighter)

You have mastered the second tier of a sword school. This feat must be taken for the second tier of each sword school in which you train.

Prerequisites: By school, see table below:

Second Tier Sword School Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Cleave
Dazzling Cascade	Combat Reflexes
Parting Waves	Mobility
Returning Fortunes	Improved Initiative
Striking Spirit	Ki Activation
Trampling Dragon	Iron Will
Unwavering Strike	Weapon Focus

Benefit: You gain access to all of the second tier techniques taught by your chosen school and may use them at any time.

Sword School (Style), Third Tier (Samurai, Fighter)

You have mastered the third tier of a sword school. This feat must be taken for the third tier of each sword school in which you train.

Prerequisites: By school, see table below:

Third Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Sunder
Dazzling Cascade	Lightning Reflexes
Parting Waves	Spring Attack
Returning Fortunes	Combat Reflexes
Striking Spirit	Ki Channel
Trampling Dragon	Leadership
Unwavering Strike	Expertise

Benefit: You gain access to all of the third tier techniques taught by your chosen school and may use them at any time.

Sword School (Style), Fourth Tier (Samurai, Fighter)

You have mastered the fourth tier of a sword school. This feat must be taken for the fourth tier of each sword school in which you train.

Prerequisites: By school, see table below:

Fourth Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Great Cleave
Dazzling Cascade	Expertise
Parting Waves	Whirlwind Attack
Returning Fortunes	Expertise
Striking Spirit	Ki Capture
Trampling Dragon	Inner Calm
Unwavering Strike	Improved Critical

Benefit: You gain access to all of the fourth tier techniques taught by your chosen school and may use them at any time.

Undying Defence (Samurai)

Your determination is so great, even mortal wounds cannot keep you from protecting your master. When other fighters fall from their injuries, you continue to battle your enemies.

Prerequisites: Iron Will, Honour 10+.

Benefit: When you suffer an attack which reduces your hit points to zero or less, you must immediately make a Will save (DC 10 + number of negative hit points). If the Will save succeeds, you remain on your feet and may continue fighting as normal. At the beginning of each round and any time you suffer additional damage, you must make another Will save (DC as above) in order to remain standing.

This feat provides its benefits only when you are fighting in defence of your daimyo, his property, or a Sworn Charge (see the Bodyguard prestige class). When the current battle is over, you remain conscious for a number of rounds equal to your Honour, after which you suffer the full effects of your negative hit points, up to and including death.

Normal: When a character suffers damage which reduces him to 0 he becomes shaken, when he is reduced to negative hit points he is unconscious and when his hit points reach -10, the character dies.

Venomous Tongue (General)

Your insults are so rude others are often stunned by your vile words. Though not as useful for convincing a target to change his opinion, these insults are often excellent ways to provoke a target to take a specific action.

Prerequisite: —

Benefit: When you make an intimidation or bullying attempt during a social encounter, you receive a +2 competence bonus to your skill checks. If you exceed your target's Social Defence by 10 or more, the target must also make a Will save (DC equal to 10 + your Charisma modifier) or become shocked by your insults, suffering a -2 penalty to his next social attack action.



TRICKS OF THE TRADE

One should not be envious of someone who has prospered by unjust deeds. Nor should he disdain someone who has fallen while adhering to the path of righteousness.

Imagawa Sadayo (1325 – 1420)

The samurai have many rituals and traditions which are passed down from one generation to the next. Many of these traditions date back hundreds, if not thousands, of years and represent a grand chain of history which is carried forward by the honourable samurai. This pays respect to those who have gone before, providing a link between the modern samurai and his forebears, and also preserves the hard-earned knowledge of warfare gained by the samurai on the field of battle. In this chapter, many of these traditions are presented for use in your campaigns – from the iaijutsu duel to the removal and preservation of enemy



heads, this information opens up the activities of the samurai for your use.

ARTISTIC COMPETITIONS

The samurai are required to not only understand the art of horse, sword and bow, but also to pursue the finer arts. Poetry, painting, even tattooing, are all considered pastimes a samurai not only can engage in, but should spend a great deal of time mastering. For the samurai, all things in life are interconnected and a failure to appreciate beauty and craftsmanship may reflect poorly upon him in other areas, as well. This mindset has led to artistic competitions between samurai, the winners of which receive prestige and may even increase their honour in the eyes of their peers in the process.

The samurai do not differentiate between different types of art in these competitions. One or more daimyo call for a competition and all samurai who wish to attend may do so. Samurai who are not loyal to any of the daimyo sponsoring the competition may attend, as well, but only if they send a formal request for an invitation and are not known to oppose the will of the lords in question. While the ultimate decision is up to the Games Master, most samurai with an honour of 5 or more should be allowed to compete if they so desire.

Samurai are given a month to prepare their new artistic endeavour for the eyes and ears of the attending judges. During this time, samurai often spend their days in solitude, penning epic poems or sculpting fascinating statues. When creating a physical item, such as a piece of jewellery or a painting, the samurai uses the appropriate Craft skill. Pieces which rely on performances, such as a dance or poem, use the Performance skill both in their creation and their execution.

Creating a work of art is similar to crafting an item, though the value of a piece of art is irrelevant in regards to its completion. A block of rough sandstone can be fashioned into a statue every bit as artistically valid as one carved from purest marble and accented with thick gold leaf. What is important is the skill of the artist, not necessarily the value of his materials.

To create a piece of art, follow these steps:

1. Gather the appropriate materials. If the piece requires physical materials for its completion (stone for a statue, wood for a carving) the samurai must gather these together before work can begin on the art.

The base cost for most artistic pieces is 50 gp, with an additional 100 gp for a larger piece (such as a life-sized statue of a man or woman). Pieces composed of precious metals or gemstones multiply the cost of the item by 100 gp. Once the materials are gathered, the samurai may begin his work.

2. The first step in creating a piece of art is inspiration. The samurai must make a successful Craft or Performance check (DC 15) in order to visualise what it is he wishes to create. Once the initial plan is in place, the samurai may begin crafting his masterpiece. If the samurai fails, he is allowed another check (DC 15) after a week has passed to attempt to create the plans for another piece of art.

3. At the end of the first week, the samurai is allowed a Craft or Performance skill check (DC 15) as he completes the first stage of his art. If the samurai succeeds, record the result of his skill check for later reference. If the samurai fails, he must wait another week and attempt another Craft or Performance skill check (DC 15).

4. Once a samurai has succeeded in completing the first stage of his art, he is allowed to refine it, bringing it closer to the perfection he sees in his mind. At the end of each week, the samurai must make another Craft or Performance skill check – the Difficulty Class for this check is equal to the total recorded in step 3. If

the check succeeds, increase the Difficulty Class for the next check by 5. If the check fails, however, reduce the Difficulty Class by 5 (minimum of 15). A failure against a Difficulty Class of 15 indicates the work is flawed and the samurai must cease his efforts lest he damage it beyond redemption.

5. To determine the final quality of a work of art, subtract fifteen from the final Difficulty Class from step 4. Multiply the result of this calculation by the number of successful checks (not including the check for the initial creation or the first week). This represents the final artistic quality of the piece and will be used to judge the piece against others in the competition.

During the competition, each samurai has the chance to display and/or perform his art and the judges spend several days viewing all of the pieces and speaking to one another about their relative merits and flaws. Most competitions last somewhere between three days and a week, during which the samurai are allowed to socialise amongst themselves as the judges decide on the winner.

In most cases, the winner of the competition is the artistic piece with the highest quality. Games Masters are encouraged, however, to allow samurai to influence the opinion of the judges through social contests. Subtle samurai (those who do not attempt to strong

Larilis, the elven samurai, decides she would like to compete in an artistic competition held by her daimyo. As a talented dancer, Larilis will create an entirely new dance in honour of her lord and fellow samurai. On the first day, she makes a Performance (Dance) skill check (DC 15). Larilis succeeds and is able to fully visualize the steps of the dance in her mind. She dubs it the 'Floating Lotus Step' and begins choreographing its every detail.

At the end of the first week, Larilis makes another Performance (Dance) Skill check (DC 15) and succeeds once again with a total of 23. She records this number for use in later steps and continues her work.

With the second week behind her, Larilis makes yet another skill check, this time the Difficulty Class is 23, which is the total from her last skill check. Larilis succeeds yet again (with a total of 24) and her dance takes further shape.

At the end of the third week, Larilis must make another Performance (Dance) check, though the difficulty this time is 28 – the Difficulty Class increased by 5 as a result of her successful check during the second week. Pushing herself to new and more elaborate heights of elegant movement, Larilis presses on, gambling that she can improve the dance further despite the inordinate difficulty of the task.

When she completes her fourth and final week of preparation, Larilis must make her last Performance (Dance) check. The difficulty for this week is 33 as the DC has increased by 5 yet again, due to her successful check in the third week. Nervously, she puts the final touches on her dance, completing her work. Unfortunately, Larilis fails this check, which reduces the Difficulty Class by 5 back to 28.

To determine the overall quality of the dance, we subtract 15 from 28, which leaves us with 13. This number is multiplied by the number of successful checks (2 in this case, for weeks two and three), for a total of quality of 26. Satisfied with her work, Larilis heads out for the competition, confident she will take a prize.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

arm the judges and those who also do not fail their social skill checks) may improve the quality of their piece by up to 10% in the eyes of individual judges. For this to have any effect, however, the samurai must influence at least one-half the judges at the competition.

There are rarely prizes for second and third place amongst the samurai. The daimyo will purchase the piece which wins the competition, if it is a physical object, or pay a handsome fee for an encore performance of a piece. Winners receive an immediate 1 point increase in their honour as their well-rounded expertise impresses the rest of the court. A samurai who enters more than one of these competitions in the same level, however, may not gain additional honour, though they may still win. Winners from the prior competition at the same court, however, suffer a 10% decrease in the apparent quality of their work for their second competition as the judges become bored by their style.

HEADS AND OTHER TROPHIES

For the samurai, collecting trophies is part and parcel of their code of honour – how better to prove you bested a creature or opponent than by producing its head or other vital piece of anatomy. As with all things in the samurai culture, the process of collecting trophies became formalised over generations and developed into a specific type of art. More than simply proving dominance over an enemy, the gathering of trophies forged an animistic link between the target and the samurai who bested it, serving as a focal point of pride and power in the samurai's home.

Not every opponent a samurai defeats is worth the effort it takes to remove a trophy. A samurai will gain

no benefit from a trophy taken from a creature with levels or Hit Dice equal to or less than his own. Opponents more powerful than the samurai may provide some benefit, with more powerful creatures offering commensurately more impressive awards. In order to claim a trophy, the samurai must have caused at least one-half the total damage needed to slay the opponent – if he causes less than the minimum required damage, the samurai was not sufficiently responsible for the thing's death to receive any benefit from the trophy.

Collecting a trophy is a relatively easy task – the samurai need only make a successful Wisdom check to determine which part of the creature to remove (most often the head) and then spend a full round hacking it loose. Once removed, the trophy is useless until it is returned to the samurai's daimyo or home. Once returned, the trophy earns the samurai honour (for the opponent he defeated) as well as a special 'trophy bonus' which may be used once each day. The trophy bonus is equal to the amount of honour the samurai received for defeating the opponent and may be used as a bonus to any single roll.

A samurai may only claim one trophy per level – further claims earn neither honour nor trophy bonuses and may, if the samurai is not careful, result in an actual loss of honour if he is perceived to be a braggart.

IAIJUTSU DUELS

The art of the killing on the draw is a revered samurai tradition. Rather than duel using elaborate fighting styles and a lengthy bout of attacks and counterattacks, the samurai attempt to kill one another with a single, perfect blow. Though few duels end in death, it is very common for one or both of the duellists to suffer serious injuries and, in some cases,



The fiendish troll lunged forward, its eyes filled with murderous lust, and raised its axe overhead. With a deft sidestep, Lurg narrowed the front he presented to the creature and dropped into a defensive crouch. Both samurai and half-demon were wounded but, where the troll's anger clouded its vision and filled its spirit with confusion, the samurai remained as serene as the blanket of snow covering the ground. The axe descended, the wind screaming as the hell-forged metal ripped through the air.

Lurg dropped to one knee and rolled forward, trailing his katana over his shoulder so its exposed cutting edge became a rounded shield. In close to the troll, he thrust himself forward, leaping upward. The katana sliced deeply into the troll's arm and the creature howled as the force of its descending blow and the samurai's rising weapon severed its arm neatly below the elbow. Using the momentum of his attack, Lurg spun away from the troll, slicing his katana through the air around him in a vicious arc.

The troll roared its anger and pain and lashed out with its remaining arm, flailing its massive axe around in a clumsy, scything motion which Lurg easily avoided. Leaping high into the air, the samurai focused the strength of his spirit into a final attack and his katana sang in response to his ki and whipped through the air with stunning speed.

Lurg landed a dozen feet beyond the troll, his katana already halfway into its sheath. He turned calmly and snagged the troll's head from the air, twining his fingers through the greasy black top-knot. 'I have hunted you for many months, hellspawn. Your head will have a place of pride in my daimyo's shiro.'

permanent mutilation. When two samurai square off for an iaijutsu duel, both realise they very well may die – it is not a situation to enter into lightly.

An iaijutsu duel must be agreed to by both parties. If it is not, there is no duel – it is likely the party which does not consent will simply attack the other, disrupting his concentration and reducing the elegant duel to a simple combat. When both samurai agree to the duel, however, the following sequence of events is followed:

1. The samurai with the highest honour is given the advantage. This samurai has proven himself in the eyes of his peers and has a psychological and spiritual advantage over his less-honourable opponent. Samurai with the advantage may subtly influence the duel, though it is certainly possible for a disadvantaged samurai to win.
2. The duel begins and progresses round by round until one of the samurai draws his blade and attacks.
3. Each round, the samurai with the advantage is given the first opportunity to draw. If he does not wish to draw, he continues concentrating and his opponent is given the chance to draw. If neither samurai draws, the concentration phase of the duel continues into the next round.
4. For each round of concentration, a samurai suffers 1d4 points of ki damage and gains a +1 bonus to his next attack and damage roll. This bonus is cumulative and adds up until the samurai draws and attacks.

5. After each round of concentration, the samurai must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + the number of rounds of concentration passed so far). If a samurai fails, he immediately suffers a loss of 1d4 ki points. The struggle to maintain his focus can exhaust even the most powerful of samurai. If the Will save is successful, the samurai may continue concentrating and suffers no ki loss.

- a. If a samurai, at any point, is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, he must draw on the following round. His nerves are shot and his ki is wasted – if he does not act now, he knows he never will.

6. When a samurai draws, he makes an attack roll with all applicable bonuses gained from concentrating during previous rounds. If the attack succeeds, he rolls damage – including any bonuses gained from previous rounds' concentration.

- a. If the attack is a critical hit, the samurai also causes 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for every point of honour he possesses. If the reduction in Constitution slays his opponent (either as a direct result of reducing his Constitution to 0 or by indirectly lowering his hit points below zero), the duel is over and the attacking samurai has won.

7. If the attack does not kill or render the target unconscious, the opponent is allowed a counterattack. This counterattack includes the bonuses gained from concentration, but it also includes an additional bonus to the attack and damage rolls equal to one-half the



concentration bonus gained by the opponent. This represents the first samurai's failed attempt to end the duel – his eagerness to strike a fatal blow leaves him exposed to a brutal counterattack.

8. If one samurai dies and the other does not, then the surviving samurai is clearly the winner. If both samurai survive, however, the winner is the samurai who has the most hit points remaining.

As can be seen, iaijutsu duels are extremely deadly contests of concentration – only those with nerves of steel and the ability to accurately measure the strength of an opponent can hope to survive many duels.

MARTIAL INTIMIDATION

There are times when displaying one's martial prowess is enough to stop a fight before it can begin. Samurai, renowned for their discipline and fearsome training regimen, know well that it is better for an opponent to defeat himself than to risk crossing swords. Using this system, those who are skilled in the martial arts (of any type) may display their skills in such a way as to convince opponents that fighting is not in their best interests.

In order for martial intimidation to work, the samurai must be facing opponents who are not compelled to fight – attempting to convince a monster into whose lair you are intruding to surrender is impossible but it is quite possible to frighten off a group of bandits on the road. Though the decision is left in the hands of the Games Master, in most cases this system is useful against targets who are the aggressors in the situation, rather than the defenders.

To use this ability, the samurai must have one round free from attack in which to exhibit his supreme skill in combat. The samurai then executes an attack against an inanimate object, displaying his flawless form, smooth execution and general skill at arms. This attack may be made with a melee weapon or a ranged weapon, whichever the samurai chooses. The use of this ability is considered a

full-round action, though drawing or readying a weapon may be incorporated into the martial intimidation attempt.

To determine if the attempt is successful, the samurai makes an attack roll at his highest base attack roll – the Armour Class used to oppose this attack is always 10 +1 per hit die or level of the most powerful creature being intimidated. Increase the Armour Class by +1 for every 2 creatures being intimidated, beyond the first. If the samurai's attack roll succeeds, the amount by which he exceeded the Armour Class in the previous step may be applied as a circumstance bonus to his Intimidation check.

The samurai then makes an intimidation check, as normal – if the check succeeds, the opponents choose not to fight at this time and head off in search of weaker prey.

MOUNTED DODGE

Horses aren't inclined to run in a zigzag pattern in most cases. In battle, however, it is often necessary for a samurai to ask his mount to do just this in order to dodge attacks, particularly from enemy archers. Any samurai with 10 or more ranks in Ride may steer his horse in an erratic pattern which makes it much more difficult for enemy archers to target him. Using a mounted dodge may only be used in conjunction with a full-round movement action.

The samurai must make a successful Ride check (DC 15) to use this ability. If the check is successful both samurai and mount receive an additional +2 dodge bonus to their Armour Class against any projectile

attacks. If the check fails, however, the samurai must make another Ride check (DC 15) immediately to avoid pitching his horse over onto its side. A roll of 1 on this check indicates that the samurai not only tripped his horse up with his difficult manoeuvres, but he has also broken the horse's leg.

MOUNT ROLLOVER

Horses fall over in battle, whether as a result of an impact, tripping, or overly-demanding orders from a rider. In general, a horse that falls must expend a move-equivalent action to get back onto its feet, after which the rider must also spend a move-equivalent action getting back into the saddle. The mount rollover, however, avoids both of these problems as horse and rider tumble over and the horse rolls right back onto its feet. Difficult to accomplish and dangerous to attempt, this technique can save a rider's life on the battlefield.

To perform the mount rollover, the samurai must make a successful Ride skill check (DC 20). If he succeeds, both mount and rider suffer 1d4 hit points of damage from the strain and the horse immediately regains its feet. The rider remains in the saddle, but loses a partial action in organising the rollover. The horse immediately comes to a stop, but is on its feet and may resume normal movement in the following round.

If the check fails, however, the horse crashes down onto the samurai and both must rise normally in the following round. In addition, the samurai suffers 1d4 hit points of damage per hit die of the mount and must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or be stunned during the following round. When it works, the mount rollover is a lifesaver and, when it does not, it can become a life-ender.

THE VOID WITHIN

Samurai master the art of finding inner peace and clearing their minds from all distractions. The meditation style known as Seeking the Void is the

ultimate manifestation of this – when successfully performed, it allows the samurai to completely erase his consciousness for short periods of time. When he returns from his meditations, the samurai is able to see the world in a new way, for at least a few moments, as his mental energies return.

To use this meditation technique, the samurai must be seated and willing to block out the rest of the world. To enter a meditative trance, the samurai must make a Wisdom check, with a DC taken from the table below.

Meditation Difficulty Table

Conditions	DC
Quiet	10
Normal noise level	12
Noisy	15
Very loud	20

The DC is increased by 5 if the samurai is in very uncomfortable conditions (such as if he must sit in water). If meditating in a location is dangerous (such as in a dungeon) the DC is increased by an additional 5.

If the samurai succeeds with his meditation check, he falls into a deep trance which lasts 1d10 + 10 minutes. During this time, the samurai may be awakened (as if he were sleeping) but will be considered stunned for 1 round and dazed for 1d4 rounds as he attempts to regain consciousness.





TRICKS OF THE TRADE

If the samurai is allowed to complete his meditations, he emerges from his meditation re-energised and ready to see the world in a new light. He immediately regains d8 ki points and receives a +4 competence bonus to all Listen, Spot, or Search checks made during the next hour. After this time, the samurai's senses are dimmed by the mundane nature of the world again and the bonus is lost.

A samurai may only use this meditation technique once each day. Further meditations in the same day provide no additional bonus.

TATTOOING

Samurai often adorn their bodies with elaborate tattoos which display their status, their daimyo and intricate scenes detailing heroic moments in their lives. The body of a successful samurai is slowly covered with tattoos throughout his life until his arms, torso, hands and even legs are completely covered in colourful skin art. These tattoos are very useful during social conflicts, as they allow the samurai to display his own status without the need for boasting. When engaged in a social conflict, a samurai with visible tattoos is afforded a +2 morale bonus on all social attack rolls made.

The art of tattoo is not difficult to learn but it can take a lifetime to master. Samurai who wish to learn the art require the Craft (tattoo) skill. Most tattoos have a DC of 15 to complete artfully, with very large or detailed pieces increasing this DC by +2 to +5. A failure on a

Craft (tattoo) skill check results in a badly designed tattoo which affords no bonus to social attack rolls.

Most skilled tattoo artists charge 1 gp per rank they possess in the Craft (tattoo) skill. More skilled artists are highly sought after by the samurai who are leery of letting any amateur with a needle start drilling into their skin.

Magical tattoos exist (see Tools of the Trade), but are much more expensive and considerably more difficult to craft.

UNSPOKEN COMMAND

Samurai are master horsemen and a great deal of their skill is actually owed to the close communion they share with their mounts. The samurai does not train his horse to obey his commands, rather he teaches himself the cues his horse responds to. Because of this empathy with his mount, the samurai is able to control his creature with ease.

If a samurai has 10 or more ranks in the Animal Empathy skill, he receives a +2 synergy bonus to all Ride checks. The samurai also does not need to make a Ride check to guide the horse with his knees (see the Ride skill, *Core Rulebook I*). If the samurai also has 5 or more ranks in Handle Animal, this synergy bonus increases to +4.

The master samurai Aiki rowed her little boat in circles, heedless of the shouts coming from the shore. She knew all too well what waited her there, the upstarts and their endless challenges and boasting. Her agreement to duel one of them, any one of them, now seemed foolish. She hoped to teach them humility, but it did not seem her lessons were heeded.

The champion chosen by the students stood at the edge of the river dock, his arms crossed over his chest. He was strong and agile, a warrior who would one day become a great samurai. Yet Aiki could not get over her distrust of the young samurai, her displeasure at the way he flaunted his natural gifts and spurned so many of the traditional teachings. Watching him she could sense his eagerness for battle and an idea blossomed at the bottom of her mind.

She rowed in toward the dock, coming to within a dozen yards of it before turning away. She did not look at the students as they surged toward the boat and did not look at them when they groaned and hooted as she pulled away from the shore once again. A small smile twisted the corners of her mouth and she repeated her ruse, coming even closer to the shore. Again and again she taunted them with her patient rowing until, at last, she pulled up to the dock and swiftly clambered up the ladder.

The challenger raced forward, his eyes blazing and his cheeks as red as cherries with his rage. He drew his katana and dropped instantly into a fighting stance. But Aiki only shook her head and smiled sadly. As the realization dawned on the samurai, he sheathed his weapon and stalked away. She called after him, 'You know now - if you do not keep your temper, the duel is already lost.'

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The man whose profession is arms should calm his mind and look into the depths of others. Doing so is likely the best of the martial arts.

Shiba Yoshimasa (1350 – 1410)

The samurai travel light, carrying only what they need for a given engagement or what they believe they might need during an extended trip. The bulk of their gear is made up of their elaborate armour, as even their weapons are few in number: a bow, the daisho and perhaps a lance for mounted combat. In this chapter, we will cover the tools most often used by the samurai, from the signalling fan to the traditional armour and its individual pieces.

THE DAISHO

For the samurai, swordsmanship is a great measure of their self worth. Their weapons are not simply things of steel, wood and leather, they are living entities. More importantly, they are a connection between the samurai and the world around him, a physical representation of his skill, determination and courage in battle. Because of this, the daisho – the mated pair of a katana and a wakizashi – are not mass-produced. In lands where samurai are prevalent, only a member of this class may even carry the two weapons together, let alone wield them. Chapter 10 – Mythic Blades, presents the katana and its special capabilities in more detail.

Katana: The katana is more than a simple weapon, it is the mark of a samurai. All of these weapons are considered masterwork weapons (providing a +1 attack bonus) and are created specifically for individual samurai. The katana is a martial weapon when wielded two-handed but requires the Exotic Weapon Proficiency to use the weapon in one hand.

Wakizashi: The shorter of the paired daisho, the wakizashi is not regarded as highly by the samurai who wield it. The wakizashi is the more utilitarian of the two weapons and is worn when the katana is either too conspicuous or too threatening. The wakizashi is also the preferred weapon for committing seppuku (see Master and Servant).

ARMOUR

Like all men who go through life on the field of battle, the samurai rely on their armour to protect them from their enemies. For the samurai, armour is not only useful as protection in battle, but also serves as a way to display one's allegiance to a daimyo and prestige amongst other samurai. Elaborately decorated armour is very popular amongst the samurai, it is not unusual for noble samurai to purchase armour costing five times or more the base costs listed below.

Samurai armour is composed of many pieces, not all of which are worn by all samurai. For our purposes, the armour worn on the torso determines the base Armour Class for a samurai and the many extra pieces may be used to provide additional Armour Bonuses, though these often come at the cost of the samurai's dexterity bonus. Samurai may choose their armour as they see fit, tailoring the pieces worn to their outlook and personal tastes.

Do: Constructed of scales of lacquered leather or metal, this body armour covers the chest and lower torso of the samurai, its weight hanging across the shoulders with some supported on the hips. There are many different styles of do, though all offer similar protective capacities. The differences in many cases are minor. For example, the primary difference between the do-maru and the haramaki do are the openings in them – do-maru opens on the right-hand side and the haramaki opens in the back. Even more complicated types of do are sometimes crafted, such as the yokohagi ni-mai do gusoku (horizontally riveted clamshell cuirass armour), but all are variations on the basic style. It is important to note that the do may be magically enhanced but other pieces of armour may not.

Swords of the Samurai

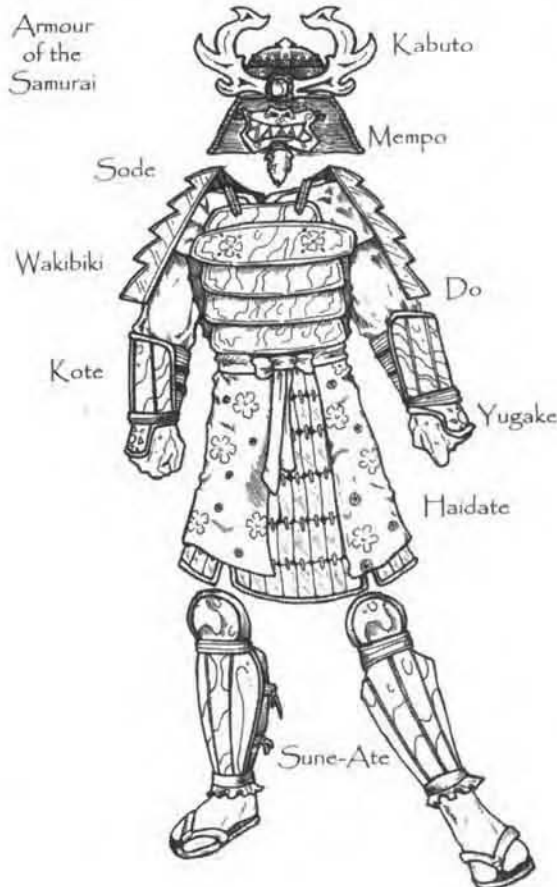
Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Size	Weight	Type
Katana	*	1d10	19-20/x2	Medium	6 lb.	Slashing
Wakizashi	100 gp	1d6	19-20/x2	Small	3 lb.	Slashing

*The katana is never sold in stores, but must be created for the samurai as detailed in Chapter 10 – Mythic Blades.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Armour of the Samurai

Armour	Cost	Armour Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armour Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft)	Speed (20 ft)	Weight
Do*								
Leather	10 gp	+2	+6	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	10 lb.
Metal	75 gp	+3	+5	0	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Haidate								
Leather	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	0%	25 ft.	15 ft.	5 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-2	-2	5%	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 lb.
Kabuto	50 gp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Kote								
Leather	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	5%	—	—	3 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-1	-1	10%	—	—	6 lb.
Mempo	25 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—	2 lb.
Sode	30 gp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Sune-Ate								
Leather	15 gp	+1	-1	-1	—	—	—	5 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-2	-2	—	—	—	10 lb.
Wakibiki	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Yugake	10 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 lb.



Haidate: Covering from the waist to the tops of the knees, the haidate are sometimes also constructed from scales of lacquered leather or metal. Few samurai wear them, despite the protection they offer, because they limit mobility and are uncomfortable while on horseback.

Yugake: These leather gloves are equipped with a hardened thumb and forefinger to assist in drawing the powerful dai-kyu.

Kote: These sleeves extend from the shoulders down to the wrists and often overlap the yugake by a significant degree to provide protection for the wrist and backs of the hand. The kote are either leather or chain, with splints of metal for added protection.

Wakibiki: Designed to protect the armpit area, these guards are made from leather with attached metal plates. The pair of armour pieces ties around the neck and across the chest, distributing the weight around the torso.

Sode: Constructed from laced-together metal plates and strips of lacquered leather, these shoulder guards are often large and ridiculously ornate. Laced across the shoulders and chest, the sode are quite large and extend a good deal above the shoulder and to either side of the arm as well as extending down almost to the elbow.

Mempo: These metal faceplates are often painted and otherwise decorated to give the face of the samurai a

Yu worked his way into his armour, one piece at a time. He fastened his sandals to his feet, then attached the sune-ate to his shins. Each piece had its own story, a tale it told him of the ways it would protect his body from harm. He worked the laces between his nimble fingers, forming the ritual knots as he had been instructed.

Turi stalked behind the samurai, impatient to be on his way. The barbarian had grown to despise the little warrior's fastidious attention to every detail of his equipment. 'Would you hurry it up?' With a disgusted snort, the half-orc whirled away to check his horse's pack for the sixth time this morning.

Shaking his head, Yu finished lacing up his do, working the tough rawhide straps through the elegant, yet sturdy, loops of iron along his ribs. 'If you paid more attention to your own gear, you would be much better off.' With a grin, Yu lifted his kabuto and rubbed a splotch of mud from its gleaming, black-lacquered surface.

'Is that so?' Turi stomped over to stand in front of the much smaller samurai. 'And why is that?'

'Because,' Yu began, strapping his helmet into place, 'of this.' He tapped the scar in the middle of Turi's forehead, a leftover from the glancing strike of an arrow. With a grin quickly hidden behind the leering face of his mempo, Yu rapped his own knuckles against the hard metal covering his own forehead. 'Treat your equipment well, my friend, and it will honour you in turn.'

Laughing, Yu leapt nimbly into the saddle of his charger and spurred it toward the road.

demonic, monstrous appearance in battle. They also hide the samurai's face, disguising any pain or emotional turmoil he might be experiencing.

Kabuto: These metal helmets are quite elaborate, with widely flaring neck guards in the back and curled-back sides which resemble wings. Decorative horns are commonly added to the helms, adding to the demonic appearance of the mempo.

Sune-Ate: Chain or hardened leather shin protectors, the sune-ate are often reinforced with short strips of iron or segmented metal slats. They provide protection from just below the knee to the ankle and are often attached to the waraji (sandals) of the samurai with leather ties to keep them in place.

The do provides the base armour class for the samurai - additional pieces provide an added Armour Bonus, but also add their modifiers to the Max Dex bonus, Armour Check Penalty, Spell Failure, and Movement of the armour. Thus, a leather do (Max Dex Bonus +6) worn with a metal haidate (Max Dex Bonus -2) has a Max Dex Bonus of 4 (6 for the do, minus 2 for the haidate).

TOOLS

The samurai did not bother themselves overmuch with mundane tools. They took great pride in their

weapons and armour, but there were only a few pieces of utilitarian equipment which were used with any frequency by these traditional warriors.

Armourer Kit: The armour of the samurai is a complicated affair with an inordinate number of straps, plates and flanges which are in constant need of repair. This kit also contains a number of bamboo slats and small steel panels to replace bits and pieces lost during battle. A samurai who does not have one of these kits will see his armour degrade over time, eventually becoming a useless weight upon his shoulders. For every month a samurai goes without an armourer kit (or seeking the services of a professional armourer who charges 20 gp for such a maintenance visit), the armour bonus provided by his equipment is reduced by 1. Repairing each point of armour bonus lost in this way requires either a Craft (armourer) check (DC 15) and 10 gp worth of supplies or a visit to the local smith (who charges 20 gp per point to be restored). Magical armour is immune from this degradation.

Battle Fans: The commanders of the samurai often found themselves unable to make their voices heard over the din of battle. As a result, samurai became confused or disorganized during the fray and well-laid plans became a brutal melee without any sense of organization at all. The battle fan was created to alleviate this situation and saw use in many samurai conflicts. When used, the battle fan allows any allies who can see the wielder to receive orders as if they could hear him communicate in two-word sentences. Combined with pre-battle planning, this allows



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

samurai to coordinate elaborate attacks while maintaining unit coherency.

Saddle, Masterwork: As mounted warriors, the samurai are quite fond of their saddles. Their traditional designs have been perfected over centuries of use, creating a light, flexible saddle which allows the horse maximum mobility while providing the samurai with a stable platform from which to fight. All Ride checks made by the samurai in combat or when attempting to remain astride his mount receive a +3 bonus when using this type of saddle.

Signal Mirrors: Used for communicating over long distances, these mirrors allow samurai to quickly relay messages from one encampment to another. From on foot, a samurai can create a flash of reflected light visible for a mile or so while a samurai on a hilltop (30 to 50 feet above the ground) could create a series of flashes visible for up to 5 miles. These handheld mirrors are generally made from polished steel and are ovals roughly 4" long and 3" wide. Samurai are only able to transmit simple signals (advance, retreat, wait, warning), but the speed with which they can issue

these messages gives them great manoeuvrability and rapid response times.

A variant of the signal mirror is often mounted on the outer towers of a shiro, allowing the denizens to transmit messages over a much greater distance. Often several feet in diameter, these mirrors are able to throw up flashes of light which are visible for a dozen or more miles. Naturally, both types of mirror are limited by available sunlight and even minor clouds reduces the signalling distance by half. On overcast days, the mirrors are completely useless and are replaced by signal fires on the towers of the shiro.

Tools of the Samurai

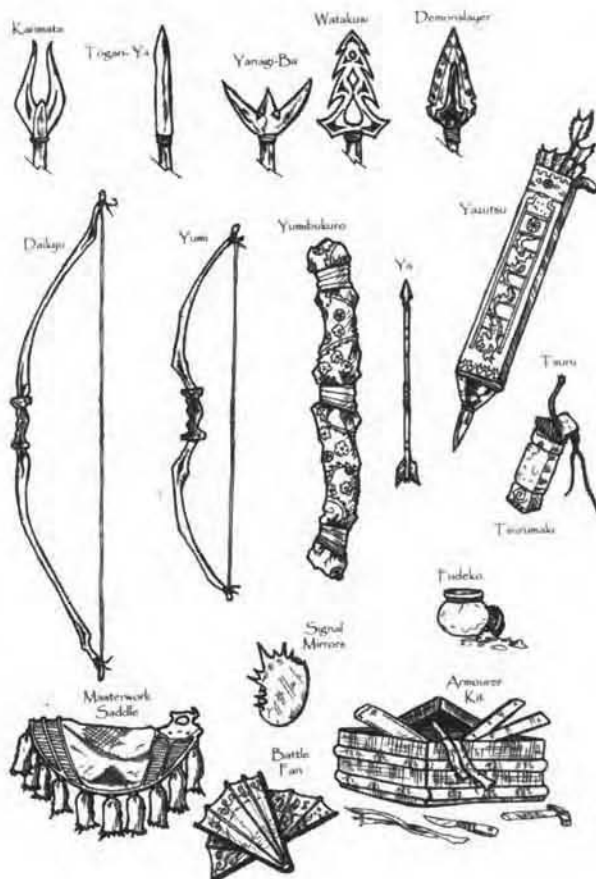
Item	Cost	Weight
Armourer Kit	50 gp	10 lb.
Battle Fan	10 gp	1 lb.
Saddle, Masterwork	100 gp	25 lb.
Signal Mirror, hand	5 gp	.1 lb.
Signal Mirror, tower	100 gp	20 lb.

BOWS AND ARROWS

While the samurai were best known for their use of the daisho, the art of the bow (kyodo) was considered an integral part of their training. As with all else in the samurai martial arts, the creation of bows, arrows, and even accessories like quivers, became a regimented, structured practice. The end result of these traditions were the powerful samurai horse bows and a variety of arrows useful in many different circumstances. This section covers the full range of samurai bows, arrows and archery accessories.

Daikyu: These extremely long bows (most were 7ft tall or more) are designed to be used from horseback and allow the samurai to fire his arrows a long distance while retaining great power upon impact. Though useless from the ground, in the hands of an archer trained to fight from horseback these bows are an extremely potent force on the battlefield. If a samurai is forced to fire his daikyu while standing, rather than mounted, he suffers a -4 circumstance penalty on all attack rolls and may only fire a single arrow each round. The construction technique of the daikyu allows the creation of mighty daikyu which allow the samurai to use his greater strength to inflict more damage with his bow. See the table below for more information about the range of mighty daikyu available for purchase.

Yumi: This traditional weapon was favoured more by the ashigaru foot soldier than the samurai, but sees a great deal of use amongst those warriors who spend a



Bows and Arrows of the Samurai

Bow/Arrowhead	Range	Increment	Adjustment	Damage	Cost	Weight
Daikyu	110 ft.			1d8/x3	100 gp	5 lb.
+1 Mighty					200 gp	
+2 Mighty					300 gp	
+3 Mighty					400 gp	
+4 Mighty					500 gp	
+5 Mighty					600 gp	
Yumi	70 ft.			1d8/x3	75 gp	3 lb.
+1 Mighty					150 gp	
+2 Mighty					250 gp	
+3 Mighty					350 gp	
+4 Mighty					450 gp	
+5 Mighty					550 gp	
Ya	—	—	—	—	1 gp/20 ya	10/lb.
Karimata	—	-20 ft.		1d10/x3 (-2 against foes wearing medium or heavy armour)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Togari-Ya	—	—		1d6/x3 (+2 to hit against foes wearing medium or heavy armour)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Yanagi-Ba	—	—		1d12/x2	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Watakusi	—	-10 ft.		1d10/x3 (on a critical hit, the arrow lodges in the target and must be removed as noted above)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Demonlayers	As arrowhead type			1d10/x3 (may affect Outsiders who are hit only by weapons of +2 or less)	+2 gp/arrowhead	*

good deal of time separated from their horses. Though not nearly as large as a daikyu, the yumi still provides a potent punch due to its asymmetrical design and the extremely springy laminate wood-and-bamboo construction. Like the daikyu, many yumi were built to take advantage of the greater strength of their wielders. See the table below for more information about the types of yumi available.

Ya: The arrows used with the daikyu and yumi are somewhat longer than traditional European arrows, giving them a bit more punch and stability. In addition, smiths serving the samurai created a wide variety of arrowheads, many of which are detailed below.

Arrowheads

As mentioned earlier, samurai are very fond of using different arrowheads for different purposes. In this section, several of the arrowheads used by the samurai are discussed, along with the benefits provided from using each.

Karimata: The forked arrowhead, also known as a rope-cutter, is most often used against unarmoured foes or when hunting large animals. The wide spread of this arrowhead allows it to cause a great deal of damage to the flesh and skin of the target but rarely penetrates deeply into the body.

Togari-Ya: Long, thin and extremely strong, this arrowhead is designed to pierce heavy armour. Though it causes less damage than a standard arrowhead, its ability to drive through thick protection makes it invaluable against the heavier armour often seen upon the battlefield.

Yanagi-Ba: Often referred to as a willow-leaf arrowhead, the yanagi-ba is another arrowhead designed to tear up flesh and create grisly wounds. Wide-bodied and razor-sharp, the yanagi-ba rarely penetrates deeply into the body but is well-known for creating long, ugly lacerations when striking a target.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Watakusi: Called the 'flesh terror' by its targets, this arrowhead is adorned with wickedly sloping sides which hook back towards the shaft to form jagged barbs. On a critical hit, this arrowhead lodges itself deeply into the target, creating a wound which is difficult to treat and which will quickly grow more severe if the arrowhead is not removed. Removing the arrowhead requires a successful Heal check (DC 15) – if the healer fails the check, the target suffers an additional 1d4 hit points of damage. If the arrowhead is not removed, the target suffers 2 hit points each round it remains in his body.

Demonlayers: The samurai believe strongly in the power of their weapons to harm outsiders. Arrowheads of this type are crafted from steel and inset with beads of jade which can harness the ki of the wielder – the arrowhead may be of any of the other types detailed in this section. When a samurai fires one of these arrows, he must pay 2 ki in order to ignite the power of the demonlayer arrow. Once ignited, the arrow is able to harm Outsiders with damage resistance. For overcoming DR, only arrows with this type of head are considered +2 weapons. Variants of the demonlayer



arrow exist for all elemental types and undead as well, and are available wherever magical weapons are sold.

All samurai arrowheads are works of art, with cut-outs in the surface of the arrowhead used to identify the daimyo of the samurai who fires the arrow. The largest arrowheads contain intricately carved scenes and are revered as treasures by the samurai who own them.

ACCESSORIES

The samurai believe in caring for their bows and treating them with the respect due any master-crafted weapon. The accessories in this section are commonly used by samurai as part of kyodo, the art of the bow,

Tsuru: The bow string of the samurai is crafted from natural hemp fibers and, more rarely, the hairs of mystical beasts. If hairs from monsters are used in the tsuru, the entire bow is treated as if it were of masterwork quality (+1 bonus to attack rolls), but only powerful monsters provide this bonus. To gather the materials for a masterwork tsuru, the samurai must kill a creature of at least 5 HD and medium size. Obviously, only creatures with hair may provide the components for a tsuru.

Tsurumaki: The string holder allows the samurai to keep his strings organized and free from the damp. Made from woven rattan treated with waterproofing sap, the tsurumaki is a crucial piece of gear for any archer.

Yazutsu: These arrow cases are crafted from woven rattan and narrow to a hard tip at the bottom end. These cases may be stabbed into the ground as a move-equivalent action, allowing the samurai easy access to his ya.

Yumibukuro: All samurai keep these wraps ready to protect the finish of their bows from scratches and dents. The colourful padded silk is also used to display the clan or unit symbol of the samurai.

Fudeko: Made from ash ground to a fine powder, this substance helps the samurai keep their hands dry and their grip firm while firing their weapons.

Item	Cost
Fudeko	2 gp / 8 oz.
Tsuru	1 gp (20 gp for a masterwork tsuru)
Tsurumaki	5 gp
Yazutsu	10 gp
Yumibukuro	20 gp

MAGICAL ARMOUR

QUALITIES

Though the samurai are not mages themselves, they recognize the benefits of wizardry in all its many forms. In order to take advantage of magic, the samurai work closely with court wizards and alchemists to perfect magical qualities which are most beneficial to the samurai. These qualities are not worked into weapons but are instead poured into pieces of armour. These enchanted pieces of armour are often given as gifts from daimyo to those samurai who serve them well and honourably.

Honorable: Armour of this type is typically very elaborate and decorated with thin golden braids at the shoulders and waist. When worn by a character with Honour of 10+, the armour provides a +4 deflection bonus to Armour Class against all attacks made by creatures or characters with less than 10 Honour.

Caster Level: 8th, *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Honour 10+; *Market Price:* +2 bonus.

Kata Memory: This suit of armour allows the samurai to execute one more technique in a kata than he is normally allowed. The samurai must know the technique – the armour simply allows him to exceed the normal limits for the number of techniques a samurai may perform in a single kata. Armour with this quality normally has a lightning or wind motif worked into its ornamentation.

Caster Level: 8th, *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armour, Honour 10+; *Market Price:* +2 bonus.

Ki Funnel: Suits of armour carrying this enchantment often have images of vortices or whirlpools worked into the chest and back. Any samurai who wears this armour recovers an additional 3 ki per hour. This suit of armour may not be worn while the samurai rests and provides its benefits for no longer than a number of hours equal to the wearer's current honour.

Caster Level: 10th, *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armour; *Market Price:* +2 bonus.

Ki Light: The power of ki is strange and works with magic in mysterious ways. The samurai and their allied wizards created armour of this type for samurai leaders so they could signal their troops from a great distance. To activate the armour, a samurai must expend a variable amount of ki determined by the effect they wish to achieve:

Cherry Blossom Flare, 2 ki. When activated, this ability sends a burst of light into the air over the



samurai's head. The light lasts but a moment and may be seen by anyone within 1 mile outdoors during the day, or up to 10 miles outdoors during the evening. The light may be of any colour desired by the samurai and is chosen at the time the ability is activated.

† **Sun Streamer, 5 ki.** This ability causes a streamer of light to extend from the samurai's palm to any point he can see within 500 yards of his current position. The streamer hangs in the air for up to ten minutes, during which time it is clearly visible to anyone within 500 yards of the samurai himself. The streamer may be of any colour desired by the samurai (chosen at the time it is activated) and is clearly visible during the day or night. Smoke or fog will obscure this light, however, rendering the ability useless.

† **Lunar Radiance, 5 ki.** A silver aura of light, 60 feet in diameter, springs into being around the samurai when this ability is activated. This light is equivalent to daylight, but has no ill effects on creatures which are sensitive to sunlight. The radiance lasts for 10 minutes and the duration may be extended by an additional 10 minutes for every 1 ki expended by the samurai. This ki may be spent at any time prior to the end of the lunar radiance duration.

Caster Level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armour, *daylight, flare, continual flame*; *Market Price:* +1 bonus.

MASTER AND SERVANT

One who is samurai must, before all things, keep constantly in mind, by day and by night... that he has to die.

Daidoji Yuzan (16th century)

Honour is, in many ways, synonymous with duty. A Samurai's entire life is bound to the duty he owes to his daimyo, the warrior exists only to carry out the orders given to him by his lord. In the same way, a master is only as powerful as the samurai under his control. If he dishonours himself or damages his relationship with the samurai who serve him, he is in great danger of losing not only his base of power, but his head as well. The training and philosophy of the samurai guarantees their loyalty to those masters who treat them with respect and bestow upon them their just rewards, though history has shown that they are a weapon quite capable of injuring the wielder.

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at the relationship between samurai and daimyo and explore what this bond of duty and honour entails. Along the way, we will examine honour itself and present a complete system for handling this concept that is so precious to the samurai.

THE RISE OF THE WARRIOR STATE

In order to fully understand what it means to be a samurai or daimyo, it is important to examine the situations in which the samurai class is allowed to rise to power. Samurai appear first in the most war-torn and desperate places, emerging from the mists of history as trained warriors. Most often, they are mercenary at the start of their history, fighting for whoever provides them with the largest share of loot, the most glorious battles to fight and the choicest rewards for their choosing during times of peace. As the efficiency and effectiveness of these mercenaries becomes more apparent, civilised nobility hire them to deal with local menaces or to fight regional battles.

The effects of more civilised areas is pronounced on mercenaries at this point. They are able to codify their training methods and combat styles, increasing their

effectiveness in battle by elevating the martial arts to an exalted position in their daily lives. The professional warriors begin to form philosophies around their particular styles of battle, creating a pseudoreligion that holds combat prowess in high regard. During this stage of history, the professional warrior begins to grow in the public eye, becoming a figure of legendary prowess and frightful bravery.

To protect themselves, the mercenaries develop a lengthy and revered code of honour. Designed to ensure the loyalty of all the members of a single band to one another, this eventually leads to the formation of a new philosophy and the first true samurai begin to appear. These warriors merge philosophy, religion and swordsmanship into a devastating whole, creating an entirely new class of combatant the likes of which has never been seen before.

As history rumbles forward, the samurai begin to use their military strength to carve out a niche for themselves. The first leaders of the samurai quickly advance through the political structure of their chosen lands to become nobles in their own right. Often their ascent to power is bloody and savage, leaving behind a trail of shattered noble houses and a legacy of military atrocity. Backed by their fanatically loyal bands of samurai, these new nobles thrive on warfare and spend a great deal of their time and energy in the attempt to consolidate and expand their base of power.

This, then, is how the samurai often rise to power – starting as warriors, emerging as philosopher-martial artists and then proceeding on up the chain of command to claim nobility for their own. To protect their own position, each daimyo does his best to instill in his servants a sense of pride and loyalty, binding them to him and further reinforcing the Way of the Warrior and its attendant philosophies. This creates an interlocking series of traditions of respect, duty and loyalty which all combine to form the core of samurai beliefs – the sanctity of honour.

THE DAIMYO

A samurai lord is traditionally known as a daimyo, though samurai uses the terms master and lord just as often and fantasy races will surely have names of their own. What is important is not the terminology, but the position itself. Most masters hold sway over a region ranging in size from several miles square to several hundreds of miles square. These lords of the samurai maintain their hold over their territory through their own, personal, strength at arms and through the

loyalty of their samurai. When either of these two begins to falter, the daimyo is sure to be deposed by his people or slain by a rival daimyo from a neighbouring territory.

ESTABLISHING TERRITORY – THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SAMURAI

In the early days of samurai history, any leader with a few dozen loyal men can set himself up as a daimyo – all it requires is the strength of arms to back up the assertion of nobility and the power to carve out a chunk of land and protect it as one's own. The difficulty, of course, lies in the fact that other daimyo in the area are not going to let prime chunks of real estate get gobbled up by upstart warlords and will respond with great force. A wise young daimyo will set himself up far from any other samurai and quietly build up his forces in his chosen locale before making a name for himself.

If a character in this time period wishes to proclaim himself as daimyo, he must possess the Leadership feat and have a Leadership score of at least 10. In addition, he needs enough men (samurai or simply hired mercenaries) to protect the land he claims as his own against the attacks of nearby daimyo or other noble landholders. See Chapter 11: Shiro - Castles of the Daimyo for information on the forces available to local daimyo and other nobles. Unless a character is setting up his domain in a very small, backwater area, it is certain he will be under attack regularly until he is established as a true daimyo.

In general, assume that each daimyo within 10 miles of the borders of the new daimyo's territory will make a single attempt to destroy the upstart noble. If the new daimyo's territory lies within the domain of another daimyo, however, the contested territory will be attacked at least 3 times and possibly many more times, depending on the resources of the offended lord. If the daimyo can fend off the attacks of all the aforementioned daimyo, he will rise in their esteem and be formally recognised as a true daimyo, with all the privileges and responsibilities the title entails.



ESTABLISHING TERRITORY – THE HEIGHT OF THE AGE OF NOBLE WARRIORS

When the majority of the area in which samurai exist is converted into territories held by established daimyo, the chances for a young samurai to carve out a chunk of land to call his own decrease dramatically. Established daimyo have powerful standing armies and fanatically loyal contingents of honourable samurai to defend their land against incursions by aggressive newcomers and to lay waste to those who would oppose their rule. Even the odd pockets of land which are not already claimed by other samurai are of such strategic significance that any attempts to bring them under the banner of any daimyo result in immediate retaliation against the presumptuous lord by all daimyo in the area.

During this period of samurai history, there are great developments in warfare, philosophy, weapon design and even the arts. With the position of the daimyo consolidated and relatively secure, the samurai are able to devote more of their time to inner study and contemplation rather than being constantly called upon to defend the land of their daimyo. It is during this time period that the sword schools rise to prominence and the bushi philosophy becomes firmly ingrained in the psyche of the samurai. Battles occur but most are fought over matters of honour or to prove the superiority of one sword style over another and are thus quite limited in scope. Territory rarely changes hands and a loss of honour and the possible loss of title rather than the loss of land and utter destruction of the samurai mark the ends of battles.

During this time period, the best a samurai can hope for is to be granted control over a portion of his lord's territory. Such fiefdoms are often a stepping stone to power, though the samurai are expected to govern them with the concerns and wishes of their lord first in their minds. Honour prevents many samurai from ever abusing their position though they watch with 'bated breath for the moment when their daimyo falters or is deposed. When such an event occurs, all the samurai controlling fiefs within the domain spring into action, doing their best to transfer the loyalty of the men assigned to them from the old daimyo to their current leader. This leads directly to the next phase of the samurai culture, The Age of Wars.

LOSING TERRITORY – THE DECLINE OF THE DAIMYO AND THE AGE OF WARS

While the height of samurai culture may last for hundreds, even thousands of years, it is a precarious stability based on martial strength and honourable conduct rather than strong alliances or over-arching governmental controls. Inevitably, as daimyo weaken or become dishonourable, their territory becomes contested either by formerly loyal samurai or outside forces. Regardless of the source of the predators, they arrive like eagles in search of fat, rich targets to pluck from the hands of the faltering daimyo. As the wars over territory increase, the samurai become more factionalised – established daimyo oppose the land struggles out of concern for their own position, but younger, hungrier samurai seek to increase their own status and establish themselves as daimyo.

As battles increase in frequency and brutality, all lords are pulled into the conflict. Resources are expended at a furious rate and the numbers of samurai dwindle with frightening rapidity as the battles grind the noble warriors into bloody mud. Large territories are divided again and again – the estates of the daimyo are subdivided into smaller and smaller fiefs by the warring samurai until the new daimyo find themselves controlling a small fort and some farm land for their troubles.

With their energy spent and their numbers winnowed down to a fraction of their glorious prime, the samurai eventually fall to the resurgence of the nobility they once deposed. The ancestors of those nobles who were cast down by the samurai rise up, with the full blessing of a populace weary of war, and the samurai find themselves enslaved or destroyed at the hands of the soft nobles they once usurped. This marks the end of the samurai era and the loss of most of the knowledge held by the samurai. Sword schools are outlawed and disbanded; while their masters live on, the skills taught by the schools are not passed on and eventually disappear altogether. With the break down of the honour system, the remaining samurai do not trust one another and, as a result, do not pass on their knowledge to their successors. The glory of the samurai fades into obscurity and their battle techniques become myths and legends – until the next cycle, when the samurai rise again.

ALTERNATE HISTORIES

The above information serves as a primer on the rise, glory and fall of a traditional samurai culture. As a guideline, this provides the very briefest synopsis of samurai culture and how it rises in a medieval world. While this is considered the default in this book, deciding that the samurai spring full-blown into a campaign will in no way hamper the usefulness of the material contained herein. The only constant supposition is that the samurai do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a larger social structure which supports their lifestyle and reinforces the systems of honour and loyalty, without which the samurai themselves cannot exist.

HONOUR – THE GLUE OF SAMURAI SOCIETY

The samurai culture of loyalty, glory, death and war is inextricably bound up in the concept of honour. Honour is what goads a samurai into suicidal battles at the behest of his daimyo. Honour is the source of

courage which allows a lone samurai to defend a bridge against an army, fighting them one by one as they attempt to cross past him. Honour is also what keeps a talented samurai from lunging at the exposed back of his daimyo, snuffing out the life of his master in a single stroke in an attempt to claim the throne for himself. Honour is the glue of samurai society, it binds the samurai to their daimyo and ensures the daimyo treats his samurai well.

In the early part of samurai history, honour is based almost entirely on martial prowess and loyalty. A samurai who is skilled with horse, bow and sword, and maintains a steady tie to his lord is regarded as honourable. In the middle era of the samurai culture, however, honour becomes a measure not only of piissance and loyalty but is also determined by the samurai's philosophical awareness and spiritual development. A samurai who is a master swordsman but does not understand the nature of the Void or the strength of Self is not regarded as particularly honourable in this era, nor are those monks who study spiritual discipline but lack martial skill. During most of samurai history, honour is a complex measure of a samurai's worth and is regarded with sacred awe by the members of this culture.

During the decline of the samurai, honour collapses upon itself and the samurai revert to their earliest ways, becoming simple warriors intent slaying their enemies without regard for their own spirituality or philosophical well-being. Samurai of the latter era are little more than standard fighters, unable to retain mastery over the powerful sword styles and ki manoeuvres perfected by the honourable samurai.

Measuring Honour

For our purposes, it is necessary to measure honour in a quantitative fashion. A character's honour is rated as a number from 0 to 20. Those characters with an honour rating of 0 are regarded as little better than animals, creatures who are not entitled to the conventions of samurai society and which are subject to extermination or humiliation at the whim of any honourable man or woman. Those with an honour of 20 are seen as beings only a short step from the gods themselves, exemplars of samurai society who are able to perform legendary feats and are renowned for their enlightenment. Most samurai have an honour score hovering around 10 and very few ever achieve honour of 15 or more.

There are several components of honour and each contributes to the overall score. While it is not

necessary to track individual sources of honour, doing so makes it simpler to make changes or adjustments based on the actions of characters. The following sections denote the various components of honour and the actions which raise or lower a samurai's honour.

Martial Prowess

As samurai are a naturally combative lot, this portion of their honour is usually quite high. Equal to one-third of the samurai's base attack bonus (minimum of 1), martial prowess is often the largest component contributing to a samurai's honour.

Bonus Increases: A samurai may gain honour in any of the following circumstances:

† If a samurai defeats a creature or opponent with a Challenge Rating (CR) 3 or more higher than the samurai himself, the samurai immediately gains 1 point of honour. Note that this increase is available only once each level.

† A samurai who wins a duel against another samurai of at least the same level as himself gains one point of honour – note that a samurai may not increase the honour provided by his martial prowess by more than 1/3 of his Base Attack Bonus in this way.

† A samurai who takes part in a formal battle (that is, a fight between two daimyo and their respective military forces) gains a point of honour.

Decreases: A samurai loses martial prowess honour in the following circumstances:

† A samurai defeated in a duel automatically loses one point of honour. If a samurai loses the duel to an opponent of a level or CR lower than his own level, he loses two points of honour.

† Any samurai who fights on the losing side in a formal battle (that is, a fight between two daimyo and their respective forces) loses one point of honour.

† A samurai who is defeated by a creature or opponent with levels or CR less than his own suffers an immediate loss of 1 point of honour.

Duty

A samurai must fulfil certain obligations to his lord every year. Typically, these obligations are fulfilled by the performance of a single assigned task once every three months. While this is the minimum





MASTER AND SERVANT

amount of service a samurai can provide to his lord, most voluntarily take on more assignments in an effort to improve their standing amongst the lord's court by increasing their honour.

Bonus Increases: A samurai gains duty honour any time he successfully completes an assignment for his daimyo. The Games Masters should take note of the following information on how much honour is gained for the completion of a particular assignment.

† An assignment which is easily accomplished by the samurai, such as one in which the average foes are considerably weaker (average Encounter Levels two or more levels below the average level of the samurai's party), earn the samurai a single point of honour.

† Assignments of average difficulty (where the average Encounter Level is equal to or one level lower than the average level of the samurai's party), earn the samurai two points of honour.

† Difficult assignments (where the average Encounter Level is one to two levels higher than the average level of the samurai's party) earn the samurai three points of honour.

While there are certainly more difficult assignments available for a samurai, most daimyo will not permit their samurai to undertake such missions unless dire circumstances prevail. A daimyo who sends a samurai on such a suicidal mission loses one point of honour, unless he has no choice – the squandering of a samurai's life is regarded as a shameful practice by other daimyo, who understand the value of a trained warrior. It is deemed necessary to send a samurai on such a dangerous mission only when there are no samurai available who are more able to undertake the mission and the daimyo and his holdings are in great danger if the mission is not accomplished.

There are other modifiers for duty, based on the length of the assignment. The above honour awards are based on the assumption of a mission consisting of no more than ten encounters and no more than four consecutive encounters. For every two encounters over either or both of these limits, the difficulty of the assignment is increased by one category.

Lord Tokagawa is faced with a dilemma – a pack of bandits has taken up residence along the southern shore of a lake within his territory. Even worse, the vile vagabonds are in residence in one of the daimyo's own forts! Clearly, this will not do.

The daimyo calls forth the noble samurai Ichijo and instructs her to proceed south and destroy the villains feasting on the lord's fish. With a curt nod and a sharp salute, Ichijo leaves the daimyo to gather her companions and proceeds south to exact justice from the bandits.

Ichijo and her friends end up fighting four battles with bandit sentries outside the fortress itself, each of which is of an Encounter Level equal to the average level of the group. The samurai and the other warriors rest out of sight of the fortress and tend to their wounds. In the morning, they rise before the morning sun and head toward the castle, using the fog rolling in off the lake as cover.

The battle for the fortress is brutal and there are far more bandits than Ichijo anticipated. After four battles with the bandits, the samurai realises there are still more of the miscreants. While attempting to retreat to gather their strength for another assault, the daimyo's loyal servants are set upon by an ambush. Though they fight their way free of the fortress, they are assaulted yet again by a returning group of bandits on horseback. All of these battles had Encounter Levels equal to the average level of the party.

When Ichijo returns to her lord to report her success, she (and those who travelled with her) receives the following honour award:

All of the Encounter Levels were equal to the average level of Ichijo's party. This puts the difficulty of the assignment at Average.

There were four encounters, then a rest period, which is also average. However, the second set of encounters contained six battles, which is two more than a standard mission would contain. This increases the mission to a Difficult assignment.

For this assignment, then, Ichijo earns 3 points of honour and the gratitude of her daimyo.

SHAME — THE END OF A SAMURAI

A samurai holds his personal honour dear. In fact, a samurai without honour is a dead samurai, as he will attempt to end his life as soon as possible. A samurai is considered shamed when his honour reaches 0. At this point, the samurai must retire to his daimyo's estate or a religious institution to which he belongs in order to contemplate his downfall and the source of his shame.

A shamed samurai teeters on the brink of oblivion. Honour is the underpinning of his life; all of his training is based on the sanctity of honour and its measure of his personal worth. Most daimyo are sensitive to the plight of a shamed samurai and provide a special mission which will allow the samurai to redeem himself in the eyes of his peers and, more importantly, in his own eyes.

This mission is often quite difficult, as a simple task will offend the samurai, insinuating that his daimyo does not believe in the samurai's ability to conquer a challenge. Though they are unable to use many of

their special abilities without the power of their personal honour, no samurai will reject such a chance at redemption. This leads many of these honourable warriors to perish in a valiant effort to reclaim their lost honour and some find in death what eluded them in life as tales of their honourable death spread throughout the land.

Should a samurai fail at an attempt to redeem himself, the only honourable solution is to commit ritual suicide, bringing an end to his shame along with an end to his life. Though the exact methods of this act vary from culture to culture, self-evisceration is a popular end — it shows the samurai's stoicism in the face of intense pain and displays profound self-control. In most cases, a second stands by to behead the samurai once the initial cuts are made, providing mercy in the face of such intense pain.

Should the honour of a samurai ever reach negative numbers, the samurai brings shame not only to himself, but also to his family and his lord. These disgraceful warriors are given the opportunity to end their own pitiful lives but, should they choose not to do so, they will be executed and their bodies displayed by their lord to prove his disgust with his former servants.

Death and Honour

In most fantasy worlds, death is hardly the end of a valiant warrior's life. With restorative magic available in most large cities, the standard fantasy world offers a plethora of opportunities for a samurai to reclaim his honour, even after a mandated ritual suicide. Though not all samurai allow themselves to be *resurrected* or otherwise returned to life, many daimyo will offer to restore life to their vassals who prove themselves honourable in death. A samurai with a zero or negative honour at the time of death will have 1 point of honour when they return to life. Other samurai have one-half the honour they possessed in life when they are the recipient of a *resurrection* or *raise dead* spell.

A samurai has a 10% chance per level +2% per point of honour (and -2% per point of negative honour) at the time of the samurai's death that his lord will offer to *resurrect* him or otherwise return him from the land of the dead. Though a samurai does not *have* to return to the world, most accept the offer as a chance to reclaim their lost honour or to complete a mission they failed during their first life. Whatever the case, when a samurai returns to the world of the living, he is immediately given a task by his daimyo. Failure at the task brings great shame upon the samurai — any



honour losses incurred during the mission are doubled. If the samurai's honour drops to zero or less due to a failure on this mission, the samurai must end his own life or have it ended for him. In this case, the samurai will not be *resurrected* or *raised* from the dead by his lord.

In no case will a daimyo pay for the raising of a dead samurai who committed ritual suicide (or was executed) twice in the same year. A samurai who shames himself, his family and his lord so thoroughly in such a short period of time is undeserving of any more chances at life and is forgotten as quickly as possible by those to whom he brought disgrace.

HONOUR AND THE MASTERLESS SAMURAI

A samurai without a master is known as a ronin, a free warrior, able to roam the land as he sees fit. In most cases, masterless samurai arise when a lord is no longer able to support them, or when his honour falls to such lows he no longer commands the respect of those he commands. In rare cases, ronin result from the destruction of a daimyo at the hands of an invading lord. Those samurai who fight valiantly for a losing cause are sometimes given the chance to go free, as long as they promise not to return to the land they once held and refuse to become a thorn in the conquering lord's side. Once oaths are traded, these samurai are free to pursue life as they see fit.

Ronin differ from traditional samurai in that they are responsible only for themselves. They have no ties to a daimyo and, while their ties to family and friends are still strong, they have no obligations to perform duties they do not wish to undertake. On the other hand, they no longer have the support of fellow samurai and are not protected by the influence and reputation of a lord.

An honourable samurai without a lord is able to continue along the path of the samurai, though he must still return to his sword school in order to master new techniques or learn new styles. There are some samurai, however, who are forced away from their lord because of transgressions, usually revolving around cases of honour.

On rare occasions, a samurai will reject the teachings of his master and eschew all notions of honour and nobility. When this occurs, the samurai loses all honour and is usually banished from the estates of his lord. Though these men and women are, technically,

ronin, they are not allowed to continue their advancement along the path of the samurai. While they retain their special skills and abilities, they are unable to use any of these which rely on honour and are unable to learn any new samurai techniques. Masterless, these dishonoured wretches are also despised by their family and often fall in with bandits and brigands. Their sword skills are useful to such criminals and there are many tales of fallen samurai who go on to become fearsome battle chieftains of outlaw bands.

It should be noted that the use of the term ronin here refers to the generic masterless samurai – those who undertake the ronin prestige class discard traditional samurai training for a lone wolf existence which has its own benefits and penalties.

The Ties That Bind

The honour of a samurai reflects upon his daimyo, and vice versa. If a samurai possesses more honour than his daimyo, he is regarded as a great asset and improves the honour of his daimyo by one point for every full year of service he provides to his master. When the daimyo's honour is equal to the highest honour rating of his most honourable samurai, he no longer receives any bonus honour in this manner.

If a samurai become shamed, his daimyo immediately loses one point of honour, as well. If the samurai later redeems himself, as detailed above, the daimyo regains this lost honour immediately.

A daimyo who acts in a dishonourable way can dishonour his entire territory, especially those samurai who serve him. Whenever a daimyo loses honour as a result of a violation of his personal code, all samurai under his control also lose the same amount of honour, though this may never reduce a samurai's honour below 5.

In most cases, the DM should determine the starting honour of any Non-Player Character daimyo in the campaign and then track changes to their rating throughout the campaign. However, if it is important to quickly determine an unknown daimyo's honour rating, simply roll 2d6 and add 5.



SWORD SCHOOLS OF THE SAMURAI

The man whose profession is arms should calm his mind and look into the depths of others. Doing so is likely the best of the martial arts.

Shiba Yoshimasa (1350 – 1410)

The samurai take their swordsmanship very seriously. Decades are spent mastering but a single aspect of swordplay and these techniques are handed down only to the most skilful and honourable of samurai. As years pass and more samurai learn the techniques, these skills become polished and codified, forming the basis of a particular style of sword fighting. If a style becomes successful enough, it eventually coalesces into a formal school in which masters of the techniques train deserving pupils in the intricacies of their chosen style.

The most successful schools have existed for generations, constantly honing the theory and practice of their techniques. Their secret methods are taught only to the most trusted and honourable of pupils, to ensure they never fall into the hands of another school or, even worse, to non-samurai who might use them for nefarious ends. Because of this secrecy, it is rare for a student to ever advance to the highest levels in more than one school and those who do must first prove themselves time and again to their suspicious masters.

In general, open hostilities between schools are rare. Each school does, however, rely on a steady influx of students to pay for its expenses and ensure its techniques continue on into the next generation. Because students tend to gravitate toward schools

which teach a style with proven effectiveness and some perceived superiority on the battlefield, schools are very protective of their most powerful techniques. Were a school to lose its exclusive hold on an exotic technique, it would be in danger of losing students and, in the end, of seeing its style die out altogether.

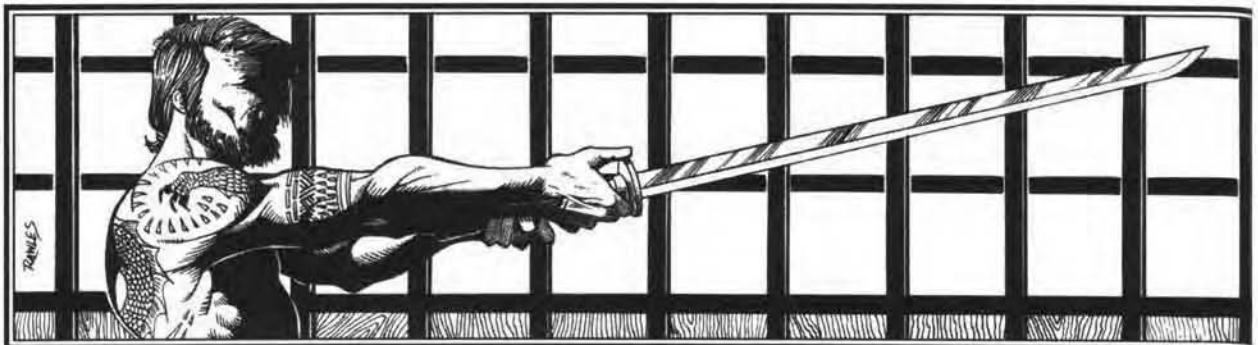
FINDING AND JOINING A SCHOOL

Though a few of the schools advertise their locations openly and often establish teaching centres near the estates of powerful daimyo, many schools prefer to remain hidden from all but the most diligent of searchers. Even schools with a public presence, however, do not teach all techniques in all locations. The powerful ki techniques and other secrets of a style are only taught in secluded locations which students must discover through their own research. These hidden schools are self-selecting: only the most dedicated students may ever find them and these dedicated students are then rewarded with enhanced skills and knowledge of their school's secrets.

The prevalence of a school and the availability of its locations is a campaign-specific matter which players should discuss with their Games Master. The following guidelines provide a starting point for determining how difficult it is to find a school for a particular style. By following the steps below, a Games Master can quickly decide how difficult it should be for a student to locate a school of his choice.

Step 1 – Available Schools

The Games Master must determine which schools to allow in his campaign. Though this book is based on the idea that the seven core schools are used in a campaign, the number and types of schools in a given world is the decision of the Games Master. If a school is available, proceed to Step 2, otherwise, pick another school.



Step 2 – Determine School

Availability

Every available school should fall into one of the following categories.

† **Ubiquitous.** The school is well established and even small towns will have a teaching location nearby. It is very rare for a school to ever reach such a level of acceptance, though a state-sponsored style is a possible exception. Attempts to find a school of this type automatically succeed and characters are never more than three days travel from such a school.

† **Common.** Any population centre with at least 5,000 people will have a school devoted to a common style. Most established schools will fall into this category, which is the default for the seven schools except for the Parting Waters and Returning Fortunes schools (both of which are Secretive). With a city of at least 5,000 people, finding such a school is automatic and only requires a few hours of checking around. Outside of the city, a successful Knowledge (Sword Schools) check (DC 10) is all that is required to remember that the school can be found in virtually any nearby city.

† **Uncommon.** Schools at this level of availability tend to be new schools or existing schools which have not been proven in any significant battles. They are generally found in very large cities in an attempt to drum up business, or may be located exclusively in a particular daimyo's territory. Schools native to a region are more likely to accept students from that region, though schools found only within the holdings of a specific lord will not accept students from outside the lord's service. Deducing a potential location for an uncommon school requires a Knowledge (Sword Schools) check (DC 15) and a successful Gather Information check (DC 10) to find the school in that location.

† **Rare.** These schools are difficult to locate and are often situated in remote wilderness areas or in the winding back-alleys of major cities. Schools of this type do not actively seek students and are unconcerned with expanding the number of schools teaching this style. To determine the starting point for a search for schools of this type requires a Knowledge (Sword Schools) check (DC 20). Characters will then have to question the locals to find the precise location of the school; the search requires a successful Gather Information check (DC 15). Schools in the wilderness take longer to find, simply because there are no locals

to interrogate. Searching the area requires 1d8 days and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 20).

† **Secret.** In some areas, sword schools are illegal and in others, the local daimyo wishes to restrict access to schools and permits only specific styles within his domain. Whatever the case, there is often a need for a school to keep its location secret. Students who wish to find a secret school must make a successful Knowledge (Sword Schools) check (DC 25) to even discern where a school *might* be located. Like rare schools, secret schools are most often hidden deep in a city or far from civilisation. Once a samurai knows where to begin his search, a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) is required to find a secret school in a city, while a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 25) is required to find a school in the wilderness.

If a school within a city is outlawed or otherwise restricted, the local authorities will certainly take an interest in anyone looking for the school. Characters who fail their Gather Information checks by 10 or more alert the city guard to their presence with their clumsy investigations. This may (at the Games Master's discretion) lead to all sorts of complications for the character, who will almost certainly receive a visit from the city guard for his troubles.

Step 3 – Joining the School

Finding a school is a good step toward joining that school, but it is not always certain. All sword schools test prospective students in order to determine whether or not the samurai will stand up to the rigors of training or be able to complete the training once it begins. From a rules standpoint, this is the simplest of the steps – if the character meets the prerequisites for training in the school, he will be accepted.

FIGHTING STYLES AND COMBINATION ATTACKS

All samurai train in one or more fighting styles, both to enhance their prowess and to improve their mastery over their own ki energies. Virtually all fighting styles use a variety of regimented kata, or forms, which train the samurai to perform a specific series of movements and attack techniques. As the samurai masters forms, they are able to execute their attacks with blinding speed and deadly precision. Though their adherence to a predetermined course of action can be limiting, the payoff is in the speed and deadliness of their attacks. A samurai who is caught in a situation in which his kata are useless may still use some of his



SWORD SCHOOLS OF THE SAMURAI

techniques, but he will not flow into the graceful and seemingly effortless ballet of death so characteristic of the samurai.

Learning a Fighting Style

Samurai train at one or more sword schools. There, they hone their fighting skills to a deadly edge, constantly working to improve every aspect of their martial technique until only perfection remains. In addition to the martial arts training offered by the sword schools, many also provide students with meditation techniques, medical training and the ability to harness their ki to perform amazing techniques.

A brief description of each fighting style may be found below, including a synopsis of each style's theory and goals. Because of the dedication required in pursuing a style, it is important for a samurai to choose his type of training wisely. Schools, too, are sensitive to the need for a good mesh between the student and his training and will not permit an unsuitable student to join.

The first sword school feat taken by a samurai (normally at first level) determines the first school to which the student is admitted. Unless otherwise noted, a samurai may choose any of the following schools for his initial training and is considered to have already completed his initiation and apprenticeship by the time he enters play.

For each school, there are twelve standard techniques. These techniques are divided into four tiers, with three techniques in each tier. The first sword school feat taken by the samurai allows him to use the three techniques found in the first tier of the school, but the samurai must take additional feats for the same school to acquire mastery over techniques found in additional tiers. As the techniques in later tiers build upon those found in earlier tiers, the samurai must take the feats for each tier in order and only one sword school feat is available at each level. Thus, a samurai may take one, and only one, sword school feat at 1st level, granting him access to all of the techniques found in the first tier of his chosen sword school. The samurai may take additional feats for his sword school later in his career, increasing the number of techniques he is able to use, but no samurai may take more than one sword school feat each level, even if he meets the prerequisites for each feat. Mastering these techniques takes time and may not be rushed.

Combination Attacks

In addition to the standard sword school feats, samurai are able to take combination feats. Each combination feat allows the samurai to string together a set of three techniques, rolling them into a single attack sequence. Which techniques are grouped together is decided at the time the feat is taken and may not be changed. Each samurai rigorously trains these combinations until they perform them by instinct, flowing through the movements as naturally as a stream flowing downhill. While this does allow the samurai to attack

very quickly and with no loss in skill, the samurai becomes a slave to his traditional techniques and, once a combination begins, the samurai may not deviate from the necessary steps until the combination is complete.

Though each combination is determined at the time the feat is taken, the samurai is allowed to create each of his combinations, following these rules:

1. A samurai may create combinations based



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upon his level. At second level, the samurai may create a two-technique combination. At every even level thereafter, he may add another technique to an existing combination or create an entirely new two-technique combination.

2. A combination must have a 'base school', from which at least one-half of all techniques derive.

3. The first technique used in each combination must be from the first tier, though it does not have to derive from the base school.

4. Each technique after the first must be no more than two tiers above the technique immediately preceding it. Thus, for example, a samurai could have a combination with a 1st tier technique followed by a 3rd tier technique, but a 4th tier technique can only follow a 2nd or 3rd tier technique.

5. A samurai may, if he chooses, include techniques from schools other than the base school. Each

technique added in this way, however, counts as two techniques when determining the length of the combination. A technique with two Cleaving Thunder techniques (the base school) and a single Dazzling Cascade technique would count as a 4-technique combination, since the Dazzling Cascade technique counts as two techniques.

6. A samurai may include special attacks made possible through feats (Whirlwind attack or Improved Trip, for example) in his combinations. These count as techniques from outside the school, unless they are required by the school to learn any of the Sword School feats.

A combination is executed as one or more full-round actions. A samurai may execute a number of techniques, in a combination, equal to his normal number of attacks (including those gained from two-weapon fighting and other feats) plus one-half of his Dexterity modifier. If the combination has more techniques than can be accomplished in this time, the

Pirin ducked his head and hurled himself into the kata. His feet left the floor in great leaps and his legs twirled around him in lazy loops as his katana dove and swirled around him. The edge of his blade slashed through the air with a hissing whistle and he snipped the blighted tips of the cherry blossoms from the tree next to him.

The techniques flowed through him, he was the riverbed and the ki was the river. Within minutes he was no longer in control of his actions but moved through them with the simplicity and elegance brought through decades of muscle memory. Though he was nearly as old as the tree he trimmed with the hissing edge of his katana, Pirin's motions were quick and certain.

The clang of metal on metal was a vague annoyance at the edge of his awareness, a buzzing bee that would not leave him be. Now, after so long, he could sense the Void beckoning, the ultimate nothingness waiting within to be unlocked by his awareness. Yet the ringing of steel against steel would not leave him and the air was suddenly too wet and too salty.

He chased it through his mind, his spirit loose in the space between heartbeats, the moment betwixt thoughts. It was a star at the edges of his vision and it was a burning star blazing between his eyes. If he could only lose himself in the moment, give in to the power within, then he would be complete.

A river of pain wormed its way into his consciousness, sliding like a snowflake down his spine. Pirin ignored it but now there was more pain, each more insistent than the last. The pain of releasing the ki seemed somehow worse, but he knew that he could ignore the needs of his body no longer.

Around him, a half-dozen bandits lay dead, their limbs neatly split, their abdomens and chests laid open to reveal the gobs and glistening treasures hidden within. With a sigh, Pirin cleaned the bloody edge of his katana on the grass. He glanced at his back and saw a trio of thin slashes where the last of them had gotten lucky. Not lucky enough, however, as the wounds were scarcely more than skin deep.

'When will they learn?' He whispered to himself as he made his way back into the weathered hut that was his home. Beside, a shogun's ransom in gold and jade lay strewn about in strange patterns. He crouched before the auguring stones and shook his head.





samurai continues the combination at the beginning of the following round, before any other combatants have time to act. The samurai *must* complete all techniques in a combination once the combination begins, regardless of changing circumstances. If the samurai's target is killed or moves away, the samurai must still continue moving through the combination until the last technique is executed. The wise samurai considers the situation before committing himself to a lengthy combination and will work with his allies to ensure his targets are not allowed to move away.

Movement and Combinations

Some techniques require movement to complete. When executed in a combination, this movement must still occur, but the requirement that such movement be toward a valid target is lifted. During a combination, the samurai need only move the required amount and

go through the motions of executing the technique – a target is *not* required. However, a technique that is performed without a valid target is considered a failure and all ki or other costs must still be paid. This can lead to some unfortunate circumstances, especially as the number of techniques in a combination increases. While it may be possible to unleash a series of three attacks without losing a valid target, each additional technique increases the likelihood the samurai will be unable to successfully connect with a valid target.

Unless otherwise stated, movement during a combination does not invoke an attack of opportunity, even if such movement in a single technique would provoke such an attack. The samurai's mastery over every aspect of a combination allows them to maintain a perfect defensive posture even while performing the intricate, dizzying steps of a kata.

KI AND THE SAMURAI

The sword schools teach the samurai to focus their internal energies, or ki, in order to achieve superhuman feats. Though very powerful, ki is also in short supply – even powerful samurai must take care to avoid overextending themselves as they utilize the techniques taught by their schools. As ki is depleted, it takes time to return and samurai who do not rest or meditate properly will find their ki reserves dangerously low. When drained of ki a samurai is weak and ineffective, unable to use his most powerful techniques and dangerously unable to resist physical damage.

Using and Recovering Ki

Samurai do not have ki scores – the force of ki is inextricably linked to their own physical well-being. When they are healthy, their ki is strong and they can draw upon the energy freely. As they become injured, or over-use their ki, however, the energy is weak within their bodies and they are unable to use it easily, if at all. In essence, a samurai's hit points are his ki, a powerful force of vitality and health he can draw on to perform amazing feats.

When a samurai uses a ki technique, he may have to pay a certain amount of ki as an activation cost. The amount of ki paid should be recorded and a running tally kept of all ki spent. If a samurai's current hit points are ever equal to or less than the total of the samurai's spent ki points and subdual damage, the samurai is rendered unconscious. A samurai who neglects to meditate and rest will soon find himself perilously weak and will likely be slain in any serious encounter. Any ki damage is treated as if the samurai

had expended the ki, in that it must be recorded separately and cannot be magically healed. Ki points are recovered at the rate of one ki point per hour, per samurai level. When a samurai awakens each day, after having slept (or meditated for those races requiring little or no sleep) for at least eight hours during the night (or whenever the samurai normally rests), his ki is fully restored.

Outside of rest, some ki focus techniques allow the samurai to restore some of his internal energies. While very useful, these techniques are no replacement for real rest and contemplation. There have been many attempts to magically restore ki, but so far, all have failed. The personal energy of ki is recovered at its own rate and no amount of arcane or divine meddling seems able to change this.

Ki and Honour

Honourable samurai are able to channel their ki with greater ease than their dishonourable counterparts. The self-discipline and dedication necessary for a high honour rating seems to translate directly into a greater facility for handling the mysterious ki energies. While samurai who are less than honourable may still use ki, they often find themselves unable to call upon it as naturally as others.

Mechanically, this translates into a limit on the amount of ki a samurai may expend each round. A samurai may only spend a number of ki points equal to his current honour rating. If a samurai exceeds this limit, he suffers one point of temporary Wisdom damage for every 5 ki points, or fraction thereof, used in excess of the limit. Like ki points, the temporary Wisdom damage is fully restored after 8 hours of rest but may not be otherwise healed, even with the use of magic up to and including a *wish* spell.

Chijo is backed against a wall by a group of spider goblins. Knowing he must decrease the odds against him, young Chijo gambles and launches himself into the Blade Among the Falling Leaves kata, a form he mastered during his training with the masters of the Dazzling Cascade school. With a shout, he launches into the form, his blade spinning around his twisting body.

During the round, Chijo is forced to expend 12 points of ki. Unfortunately, Chijo has a mere 5 points of honour. Chijo marks off the ki points, and then he determines how much temporary Wisdom damage he will suffer as a result of overextending himself. Chijo's player quickly sees he exceeded his per-round-limit of 5 points of ki expended (used upon his honour rating of 5) by 7 points. Thus, he suffers 2 points of temporary Wisdom damage – one for the first 5 points by which he exceeded his limit and one for the remaining fraction. Chijo staggers as his senses reel from the sudden loss of ki and he is reminded once again of just how important honour is...

THE SEVEN STYLES

There are seven core styles taught in the sword schools, each specialising in a particular aspect of swordsmanship. Other styles exist, but these are hybrids of the seven core styles which use adopted techniques to create a new style. Lacking in the more exotic techniques, these hybrid schools are well-regarded for their utility and versatility – a student of such a school will master many techniques and learn how to meld them together efficiently rather than focusing on a more limited number of powerful techniques.

The **Cleaving Thunder** style was developed as a counter to the heavily-armoured samurai of the day. Using strength and pinpoint precision, students of this style strike only when they are assured of doing tremendous damage to their targets. Useful even against inanimate objects or those creatures normally not subject to critical injury (such as undead and constructs), this style is very popular amongst samurai who are long on strength but short on finesse and those who find themselves doing battle with strange creatures on a regular basis.

The **Dazzling Cascade** style allows its practitioners to attack with stunning speed, delivering a blur of attacks designed to throw opponents off-guard. The style uses this furious attack speed to penetrate defences, not with accuracy, but by raining down blows until the opponent finds himself unable to counter every attack. This style tends to be very flashy and is favoured by samurai who prefer elaborate, impressive-looking techniques.

Valuing mental and spiritual discipline over simple physical ability, the **Striking Spirit** style trains its students in the art of delivering blows which bypass physical and magical protections. The masters of the Striking Spirit style claim to channel their ki through



their weapon, inflicting damage not with the weapon, but with thought alone. Regarded by some as witches or demons, the masters of the Striking Spirit keep their schools hidden and train only the most honourable of samurai in their techniques.

Trampling Dragon masters teach their students the power of personality, training them to demoralise their opponents and inspire their allies with a simple look or a well-timed *kiai*. By practising powerful visualisation techniques, these samurai project their desired future into their battle plans, winning their combats with precisely harnessed force of will.

Students of the **Parting Waves** school of sword techniques learn how to avoid attacks, using intuition and martial knowledge to provide a defensive edge. Masters of this style seem to briefly disappear when attacks seem sure to strike them, only to reappear to deliver attacks of their own. Though the majority of their techniques use simple misdirection and knowledge of fighting styles to protect the swordsman, their little-understood *ki* techniques are quite effective in defence or attack.

Unwavering Strike schools train their students to deliver precision attacks designed to not only damage a foe but also to disrupt the foe's natural energies and make it more difficult for their opponent to fight effectively. Though very difficult to master, the techniques used by this school are greatly feared by other samurai for their debilitating effects. In the hands of a master of the Unwavering Strike style, a simple sword's cut can lead to disruptions of internal *ki* and other serious complications.

Taught to accept a foe's attack as a natural part of combat, students of the **Returning Fortunes** style are able to use the force of an assault against their opponents. Trained for physical hardiness and resistance to pain, a master of the returning fortune style can turn what appears to be a fatal injury into the energy for a devastating retributive strike. Considered by many to be at least slightly deranged, those who master the techniques of the Returning Fortunes school are often scarred and maimed by the injuries they willingly suffer while fighting.

Though a single grand master of the style oversees each of the above schools, there are numerous physical locations for the schools. School meetings are scheduled on a yearly basis, at least, with many schools staging tournaments and expositions with other schools every few years. Students relish these

events, when they are able to test their skills against other schools and compare techniques with students from their school from around the world.

Descriptions of Schools and Techniques

Prerequisites for the sword schools can be found in the Samurai feats chapter and in the rules summary at the end of this book.

The following descriptions of schools all follow the same template and contain these areas of information:

Technique Progression: This diagram illustrates the various tiers of technique available in each school.

Where individual techniques are described, the following pieces of information are provided:

Name: This is the name of the technique, usually something descriptive or colourful.

Activation: Some techniques require the expenditure of *ki* or another price to be paid by the samurai. This price is listed in the activation section of the description.

Bonus: The benefit gained by performing the technique successfully is presented here, along with all relevant mechanical information.

Penalty: Most techniques have a downside to go with their benefit and this is described in this section.

CLEAVING THUNDER STYLE

Based on strength, this style is concerned with causing massive damage to opponents, be they living, undead or otherwise. Armed with a strong enough katana, a master of the Cleaving Thunder style can hack his way through virtually any material, carving it away with one massive stroke after another. The powerful techniques taught in this style do wonders to build up the bodies of its students, hardening their bones and enhancing their muscles. Recognizable not only by the massive katanas they wield, but also their increased bulk and prodigious strength, members of this style are imposing figures on the battlefield.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Cleaving Thunder Style:

Technique Progression Diagram

Cleaving Thunder - First Tier

Rising	Falling	Storm
Stroke	Thunder	Arc

Cleaving Thunder - Second Tier

Splintering	Flattening	Fist of
Steel	Stroke	Iron

Cleaving Thunder - Third Tier

Weight of	Focused	Death's
Heaven	Impact	Lever

Cleaving Thunder - Fourth Tier

Earth	Thunder	Ki
Breaker	Wave	Hammer

effectively defend himself for some time afterward.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is used, the samurai may add up to his Base Attack Bonus as additional damage. This damage is multiplied if the attack causes a critical hit.

Penalty: The samurai suffers a circumstance penalty to his Armour Class equal to the damage he added to an attack using this technique. On the round following the use of this technique and each round thereafter, the penalty is reduced by 2 until it reaches zero. This technique may not be used again until the penalty is removed.

Earth Breaker

While the master of the Cleaving Thunder style is able to easily rip through flesh and bone, this ki-fuelled ability gives him the power to hack his way through stone and earth with equal facility. Armed with this technique, nothing can stop a samurai from reaching his target.

Activation: 1 ki per point of hardness penetrated.

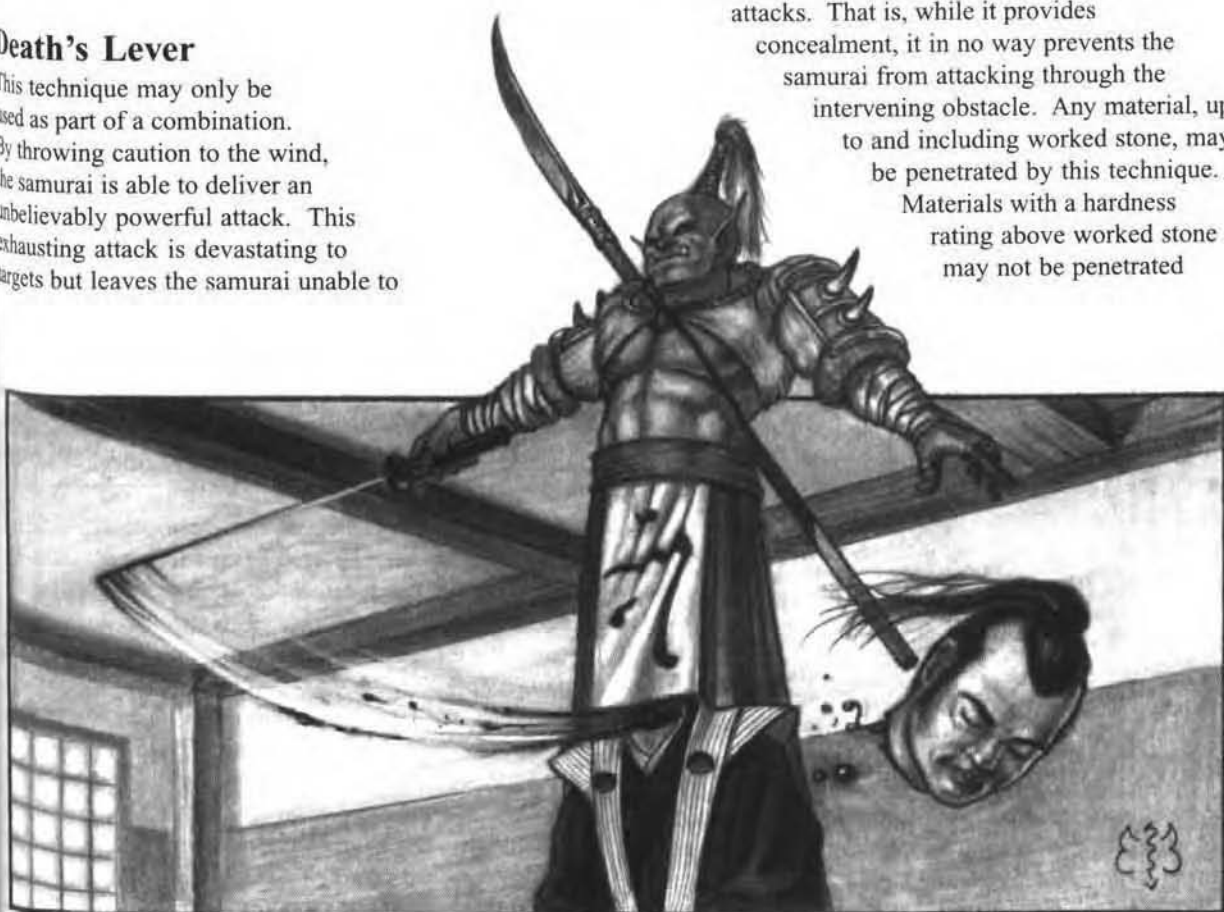
Bonus: When this technique is used, the samurai may treat any hard cover which is less than 1ft. thick as if it were soft cover for purposes of melee attacks. That is, while it provides

concealment, it in no way prevents the samurai from attacking through the intervening obstacle. Any material, up to and including worked stone, may be penetrated by this technique.

Materials with a hardness rating above worked stone may not be penetrated

Death's Lever

This technique may only be used as part of a combination. By throwing caution to the wind, the samurai is able to deliver an unbelievably powerful attack. This exhausting attack is devastating to targets but leaves the samurai unable to



using this technique and provide cover as normal.

Penalty: The attack requires the expenditure of ki power. The samurai must pay one ki point for every structural point of the material the attack penetrates as noted in the activation costs.

Falling Thunder

With a mighty shout, the samurai brings his katana crashing down atop the head or shoulders of his opponent.

Activation: —

Bonus: The threat range of the attack is increased by 1.

Penalty: The attacker suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to his attack as he focuses more on the force of the blow rather than its accuracy.

Fist of Iron

An unexpected fist to the head can make all the difference in a fight, causing that little extra damage that can swing the outcome in your favour.

Activation: —

Bonus: As part of a combination attack, you may make an additional unarmed attack against your opponent. If the attack directly preceding this unarmed attack damages your target, this unarmed attack does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Penalty: If this attack misses, you suffer a -2 circumstance penalty on your next attack as you attempt to recapture the flow of combat.

Flattening Stroke

Posture is crucial in a battle and this attack is designed to knock a foe prone, the worst possible position in a serious fight. The sheer power of the attack is used to force an opponent onto the ground, where he can be dispatched at the attacker's leisure.

Activation: —

Bonus: If this attack succeeds, the target must immediately make a Strength check with a DC equal to the attacker's strength bonus + the damage caused by the attack. If the Strength check fails, the target is immediately knocked prone.

Penalty: Concentrating on delivering the maximum impact with his attack, rather than his own defence, the samurai provokes an attack of opportunity when this technique is used.

Focused Impact

By carefully focusing his concentration, the samurai seeks to slash through a weak point in his target, putting all of his strength and skill into a single, powerful attack.

Activation: 2 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is used, any attack which hits the target automatically threatens a critical hit. In addition, the multiplier for any confirmed critical hit caused by this technique is increased by one (eg, A x2 critical multiplier becomes x3, x3 becomes x4 and so on).

Penalty: This technique requires careful concentration and patience to execute successfully. After it is completed, the attack leaves the samurai feeling somewhat out of sorts and weakened by his powerful exertions. In game terms, the samurai may make this attack only after spending a full round studying his target, during which he may take no other action other than a 5 foot step. The attack itself is treated as a standard attack action, but the round following the attack the samurai may only take a single partial action. If used in a combination, the samurai must spend time concentrating on his target the round before the combination begins and this technique must be the final technique in the combination.

Ki Hammer

When this technique is mastered, the samurai is able to destroy physical matter by channelling his ki through his katana. Though destroying a significant amount of material is very taxing, masters of this technique swear by its effectiveness.

Activation: One ki point per 2 points of damage caused by the technique.

Bonus: When this technique is used, the samurai focuses his willpower directly through his katana, destroying non-living material with the power of his spirit alone. Against inanimate material, this attack causes 2d20 points of structural damage. When used against undead, constructs, or other unliving creatures any successful attack made with this technique inflicts a critical hit automatically. Though these types of creatures are normally unaffected by critical hits, because this technique causes gross physical destruction, it can cause effective critical strikes. This technique may not be used against living creatures of any type, nor can it affect any equipment worn or carried by a living creature. The attack is powerful, but lacks the precision necessary for such targeted devastation.

Penalty: This destructive technique taxes the ki of a samurai greatly, draining the him of one ki point for every 2 points of damage caused by the technique, regardless of the type of target. More than one samurai has collapsed as a result of over-exerting himself while battling undead or golems using this technique.

Rising Stroke

The samurai swings his great blade up with all his might, twisting the weapon into his foe as he rips it across the target's body.

Activation: —

Bonus: The target suffers an additional amount of damage equal to one-half the attacker's strength bonus.

Penalty: The attacker suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to his attack due to the tremendous force he places behind it.

Splintering Steel

Destroying an opponent's armour is a sure way to remove him from a fight. With this attack, the samurai uses the force of his attack to destroy his target's protection.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai receives a +2 circumstance bonus on his attack and damage rolls against an opponent's shield or weapon. This technique provokes an attack of opportunity unless it is part of a combination.

Penalty: The samurai is unable to exert his full force into the blow while still maintaining a defensive posture. The samurai suffers a -3 circumstance penalty to his Armour Class during the round in which this technique is used.

Storm Arc

This mighty two-handed stroke brings the katana around in front and to the sides of the samurai in a fluid, powerful arc.

Activation: —

Bonus: Any opponent hit by this attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage caused) or be moved backward 5 ft. by the force of the blow.

Penalty: Designed to give the samurai breathing room, this technique focuses more on pushing opponents away than causing damage. The attack causes 2 fewer hit points of damage than normal, with a minimum damage of 1 hit point.

Thunder Wave

Transmitting the power of his attack through the very air around his target, the samurai who masters this technique is able to cause damage to multiple foes with a single attack. Though it is unlikely he will be able to kill targets in this way, the samurai is able to subdue many foes at once, greatly improving his own ability to survive against numerous opponents.

Activation: See penalty, below, for ki activation costs.

Bonus: This technique causes subdual damage equal to the real damage the weapon inflicted on its main



target to all enemy targets within 10 feet of the samurai using the technique. One-half this subdual damage is caused to all targets, not including the samurai using this technique, in the area, including friends.

Penalty: This is a ki attack, which uses a great deal of the samurai's personal power. The samurai must pay one ki point for every five points of damage caused by the initial attack multiplied by one for every target upon which subdual damage is inflicted.

Weight of Heaven

The master of the Cleaving Thunder style knows how to drive all of his strength through his katana and into his foe's armour, flesh and bone.

Activation: 2 ki.

Bonus: The samurai puts all of his strength into an attack in an attempt to punch through armour or, for foes who do not wear armour, to inflict grievous injury. When this attack succeeds against an armoured target, damage is calculated as normal. However, if the damage caused by the attack is greater than the target's

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Armour Class -5, the largest piece of the target's armour is destroyed and any additional damage carries through to injure the target. Against unarmoured foes, for this attack only, the samurai's weapon has triple its normal critical range.

If a target's largest piece of armour is destroyed by this attack, the target receives no further armour bonuses from the remaining scraps of armour, unless each piece of the armour specifically provides its own armour bonus. Once the largest piece of armour is destroyed, additional pieces that provide an armour bonus may be destroyed using this technique.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai's weapon suffers twice the samurai's strength modifier in damage as a miscalculation drives the full weight of the samurai's attack into a fortified portion of the target's armour.

DAZZLING CASCADE STYLE

Proponents of the techniques of this sword school praise the benefits of many, low-impact attacks over a single, powerful stroke. Masters of this style learn to attack suddenly and repeatedly, overwhelming their opponents with a furious succession of blows. The constant struggle of defending against this multitude of attacks leaves opponents weakened and fatigued, allowing the master to strike with a single, final stroke at the moment when his foe is at his weakest.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Dazzling Cascade Style:

Blood Bolt

When this technique is used, the samurai allows himself to flow with the currents of ki, bounding from place to place and striking at any who stand in his way. Though draining, this attack allows the samurai to slice his way through a number of foes, damaging each before whirling away to face another.

Activation: 3 ki + 1 ki per additional attack made.

Bonus: The samurai makes a normal attack at his current attack bonus. If the attack causes damage to the target, the samurai must immediately move 10 feet in any direction – this movement does not provoke an attack of opportunity under any circumstances. If this move places the samurai adjacent to an enemy, the samurai may immediately make another attack with a -4 circumstance penalty. The samurai may continue

moving and making attacks for as long as he continues to successfully attack targets.

Penalty: The samurai suffers a loss of 1d3 points of ki for every attack after the first. In addition, if the samurai misses an attack, his Armour Class immediately suffers a -6 competence penalty. The samurai's Armour Class remains penalised for the duration of the current round and the following round.



Blurred Blade

Another technique designed to weaken an opponent rather than cause physical injury, the Blurred Blade creates a confusing, disorienting attack pattern which hinders the target's ability to effectively attack.

Activation: —

Bonus: Like the Rushing Assault, the samurai uses this technique to hinder a target, this time focusing on crippling its ability to attack. The samurai using this technique makes a standard attack roll (at his current attack bonus, whatever that may be) and, if successful, inflicts a circumstance penalty to all of the target's attack rolls equal to the amount by which the attack roll exceeded the target's current Armour Class. Thus, for example, a target with an Armour Class of 16 would suffer a -4 circumstance penalty if the samurai's attack roll was 20. This circumstance penalty persists until the target's first action in the round after the round in which this technique was successfully used.

Penalty: The attack causes no damage, the samurai is simply using his own attack opportunities to limit the possible damage his opponent can cause. Against clearly inferior foes, this technique effectively cripples their ability to cause any harm at all.

Controlling Pattern

Keeping the pace of the battle in check is one of the skills a samurai of this school prides himself on. By varying the tempo and style of his own attacks, the samurai is able to limit the speed with which his opponent may counterattack.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai makes a standard attack at his current attack bonus, whatever that may be. If the attack roll succeeds, the target suffers no damage but his initiative is reduced by 1d6 at the beginning of the round following the round in which this technique is used successfully.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai's target reclaims control of the battle's pace and his initiative is increased by 1d6 at the beginning of the round following the round in which this technique fails.

Darting Jab

While most samurai focus on attacking with the blade of their weapon, it is sometimes useful to strike at an opponent with the hilt of the weapon as well. This technique allows the samurai to make a second attack in addition to his standard attack, using the hilt of the weapon.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai gains an additional attack at his base attack bonus. This attack causes 1d3 hit points of damage and represents a sudden poke in the face with the hilt of the weapon.

Penalty: The attack is fast, but weak. In addition, the awkward positioning of the weapon following the attack makes it difficult to follow through and all subsequent attacks this round receive a further -1 attack penalty.

Hurricane Blade

Marshalling his ki, the samurai hurls himself into a spinning attack in which his blade whirls around his body in a corkscrew of edged death. Though this



attack cannot be used to attack more than one target, it is deadly against a single foe.

Activation: 2 ki plus the ki paid for each attack – see the penalty section below.

Bonus: The samurai makes a normal attack. If the attack succeeds and the target takes damage, the samurai may make another attack with a -2 penalty. Every time an attack causes damage to the target, the samurai may make an additional attack with a -2 penalty against the same target.

Penalty: This attack is exhausting and dangerous. For every attack made after the first, the samurai suffers 1d3 hit points of ki loss. In addition, if the first attack, or any subsequent attack, misses the target, the samurai's Armour Class immediately suffers a -6 competence penalty. The samurai's Armour Class remains penalized for the duration of the current round and the following round.

Lightning Impale

The samurai attacks with sudden violence, as intimated by the name of this technique, driving his katana through the weak points in his opponent's defences. The attack is often so fast the samurai has time to impale the target again and again, severing arteries, tearing through muscle and snapping bones. This technique may only be used if all of the following requirements are fulfilled:

† The samurai must have a higher initiative than his target.

† The target must be suffering a penalty to its armour class or be deprived of its Dexterity bonus.

† The samurai must use the lightning impale as part of a combination attack.

Activation: 10 ki.

Bonus: The samurai makes an attack with a -4 circumstance penalty. If the attack succeeds, the samurai's katana rips through a weak point in the target's defences and causes serious damage. The target suffers 1d6 + the samurai's Dexterity modifier points of temporary Constitution damage. If the samurai rolls maximum damage with this attack, a second lightning impale is allowed with a -8 circumstance penalty, causing 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage. If this second attack also succeeds, the samurai may impale again, with a -12 circumstance penalty, causing another point of temporary Constitution damage. The samurai may continue attack in this way, with an additional -4 penalty for subsequent attacks, until an attack misses.

Penalties: If the samurai misses the attack, he suffers a 5 point reduction in his current initiative and forfeits any other attacks for the round. In addition, the samurai suffers a -5 circumstance penalty to his Armour Class until his next action.

Nailed Hem

Where the previous techniques in this style were used to cripple an opponent's ability to attack and defend himself, this technique is designed to limit the target's mobility. The samurai creates a whirling wall of steel which prevents the target from advancing further.

Activation: —

Bonus: By menacing the target with his blade, the samurai is able to convince his opponent not to move forward for fear of being impaled or torn asunder by the rapidly-darting blade. This technique does not work on unintelligent creatures, nor does it affect creatures which do not feel fear. The samurai makes a standard attack and, if the attack is successful, the target must immediately make a Will save (DC 10 + the amount by which the samurai's attack roll exceeded the target's Armour Class). If the target fails its Will save, it is unable to move toward the samurai at all and only moves at one-half his normal speed if moving away from the samurai.

Penalty: The attack causes no damage, the samurai uses his own opportunity for an attack to, instead, restrict the movement options available to the target.

Rushing Assault

This relentless attack is designed to drive foes back, not with force, but with the sheer number of blows hurled against their defences. While not terribly effective on its own, the attack opens the way for further attacks from the samurai or his allies.

Activation: —

Bonus: This attack represents several successive feints, wild swings and jabs committed by the samurai in a single flurry of activity. The samurai makes a single attack roll and, if successful, inflicts a circumstance penalty on the target's Armour Class equal to the amount by which the attack roll exceeded the target's original Armour Class. Thus, for example, a target with an Armour Class of 16 would suffer a -4 circumstance penalty if the samurai's attack roll was 20. This circumstance penalty lasts until the end of the following round. If the samurai uses this technique more than once against the same target, reductions to Armour Class are cumulative and persist until the end of the round following the last Rushing Assault attack.

Penalty: The attack causes no damage – the samurai is not attempting to injure his target, merely to create openings in its defences to be taken advantage of later.

Sudden Strike

The foundation of many other Dazzling Cascade assaults, this technique allows the samurai to make an extremely fast slicing attack. Because the focus of the technique is on speed, rather than accuracy or strength, blows delivered using this technique tend to be weak and wild.

Activation: —

Bonus: When this technique is used, the samurai may make a single attack before any other combatant in the melee. In the case of two samurai using this technique in the same round, the samurai with the higher honour will always go first. If the samurai are still tied, the samurai with the highest Dexterity is allowed to act first. If the samurai are still tied, they act simultaneously. If the samurai is able to take additional attacks in this round (such as those in a combination or for samurai with a high Base Attack Bonus), these attacks are made during his normal initiative order.

Penalty: The samurai's attacks are fast, but lack the discipline and strength of other styles. The samurai suffers a -2 penalty to all attack and damage rolls for the rest of the round in which this technique is activated. Note that this technique must be activated first in any combination.

Swift Step

Samurai with this technique are able to move much more quickly than other samurai, though only for a short distance. Doing so makes them much harder to pin down, but also makes it more difficult for them to strike their enemies.

Activation: —

Bonus: When this technique is used, the samurai is able to take a 10-foot step, rather than 5-foot step as a free action. This step may be taken regardless of other actions taken during the round, unless the samurai is prevented from making any movements at all by magical effects or the actions of other combatants. This step does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Penalty: The samurai suffers a -1 penalty to all attacks made for the remainder of the round, including any attack rolls made while this technique is active. This penalty stacks with all other penalties during this round.

Two-Headed Serpent

One of the few true attack techniques in this school, the two-headed serpent is an attack in which the samurai's katana darts high and low in an attempt to score two telling blows against his opponent. Though difficult to execute, this attack can end a fight if performed correctly.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai makes an attack at his current attack bonus, with a -3 circumstance penalty. If the attack succeeds, the target has been struck twice in rapid succession. The first impact causes normal damage and the second causes one-half normal damage.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai leaves himself open to attack. During the following round, the samurai suffers a -4 competence penalty to his Armour Class.

Wearying Weapon

Fighting a member of the Dazzling Cascade sword school can be an exhausting experience. The samurai expends much less effort in his feints and weak slashes than his opponent must use to defend himself against the attacks. Without knowing which attacks are real and which are merely set-ups for future attacks, the defender is eventually worn down until he is no longer able to defend himself at all.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai's initiative is improved by 1 at the beginning of the round immediately following the round in which this technique is used. The samurai makes an attack at his current attack bonus (whatever



that may be) and, if successful, causes subdual damage (rather than normal damage) to his target.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai suffers a -1 reduction in his initiative in the round immediately following the round in which this technique is used.

PARTING WAVES STYLE

Specializing in quick, virtually unseen motion, the school of Parting Waves trains its students to avoid attacks with such skill they are able to counterattack from unexpected angles at unpredictable times. Often referred to as Ghost Warriors, the students of the Parting Waves style have a reputation as untouchable killers with a sly sense of humour and more than a bit of mischief in their demeanour. Their tricky manoeuvres and almost playful spirit is enough to drive more staid samurai mad with frustration – which is, of course, precisely the point.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Parting Waves Style:



Darting Perch

Mimicking the fish of the seas and rivers, the samurai darts and weaves, moving erratically so as to avoid attacks of all types. The samurai is also able to make many attacks in the round, but each causes very little damage as he simply 'nibbles' at his targets in response to their attacks.

Activation: —

Bonus: This manoeuvre is activated as a free action and endures for one round, or until another technique is activated. The samurai must, in response to any melee attack, immediately launch a counterattack against his attacker. The samurai makes each attack at his full Base Attack Bonus but gains no benefit from his Strength or Dexterity bonus. A successful attack causes a meagre 1d3 hit points of damage (no Strength or other damage bonuses may be applied to this damage), regardless of the weapon used (unarmed attacks cause only subdual damage). Immediately after the attack, regardless of whether or not it succeeds, the samurai must take a 5-foot step in any direction (this step does not invoke an attack of opportunity).

Penalty: If the samurai misses an attack while this technique is active, all further attacks this round receive a -2 circumstance penalty on attack rolls. This penalty is cumulative - a samurai who misses a single attack has a -2 penalty, if a second attack is missed while the ability is active, the penalty increases to -4. One-half of this penalty carries over to ALL attacks made in the round following the round in which this technique is activated.

Fluid Disarm

Waiting for the precise moment to pounce, the samurai allows a foe to attack before attempting to disarm him, turning the attacker's momentum against him.

Activation: —

Bonus: This ability is activated as a free action and the samurai may not take any other actions until attacked. When a foe launches an attack at the samurai, the samurai may, if he so chooses, attempt to disarm the target. This intention must be announced before the target makes an attack roll.

Penalty: If the samurai is not attacked, his actions for this round are wasted. If the samurai fails to disarm the target, the attacker automatically gains a +2 circumstance bonus on the attack the samurai attempted to disarm.

Flying Fish

Mastery of the Flying Fish technique allows the samurai to use the surrounding terrain and the bodies of his foes as useful platforms for leaping from place to place. This rapid movement allows the samurai to move not only horizontally, but also vertically, jumping above the heads of his attackers or bouncing his way up the inside of a chamber.

Activation: —

Bonus: This technique gives the samurai the ability to jump from point to point as part of a full-round movement action. The samurai may move between any two points, provided they are no more than 10 feet apart horizontally and there is no more than a 5 foot difference in their respective heights. In addition, the two points must be opposite one another or at a 90 degree angle from each other - a samurai can leap back and forth between two walls at their corner, but he cannot simply run straight up a wall. See the diagram below for an illustration of valid and non-valid targets. The samurai must end his movement on a surface upon which he could normally stand without difficulty (he cannot, for example, stand upon the vertical surface of the wall or the head of an opponent) and may not make any attacks during the round in which this technique is used.

Penalty: The samurai may not make any attacks during the round in which this technique is activated. If the samurai suffers damage from a melee attack while using this technique, he immediately falls prone and loses any remaining actions for the rest of the round.

Incoming Tide

The tide often brings in all manner of detritus and the samurai mimics it with this technique, kicking dust, tossing pebbles and otherwise attempting to distract his opponent with bits and pieces of the environment.

Activation: —

Bonus: This ability is activated as a free action and is used as an attack action. The samurai kicks up dust or tosses some small clutter at his target, hoping to temporarily incapacitate his foe. This is resolved as a ranged touch attack against the target. If the attack succeeds, the target is allowed a Reflex save (DC equal to the target's attack roll) to avoid being stunned by the attack. Stunned opponents regain their senses at their Initiative in the following round. If this technique is used in the same round in which a target is disarmed, the samurai is able to flick the opponent's weapon back at him along with a bit of dust and grit. If the target is stunned, he also suffers 1d4 hit points of damage from being struck by his weapon.

Penalty: If the samurai misses his attack by 5 or more, he has managed to kick dirt up into his own face and must immediately make a Reflex save (DC equal to the failed attack roll) in order to avoid being stunned for the remainder of the round.

Riptide Slash

Emerging from a dodge into a sudden, brutal attack, can provide the samurai with a powerful way to turn the tide of a battle.

Activation: —

Bonus: This manoeuvre is activated as a free action and must be followed by a standard attack action. The samurai suffers a -4 penalty to his Armour Class while receiving a +4 bonus to his attack roll. In addition, if the samurai currently has a dodge bonus from a sword school technique, or had a dodge bonus from a sword school technique in the previous round, the value of this dodge bonus is added as a circumstance bonus to the damage roll of any attack which succeeds.

Penalty: If the attack misses, the samurai is thrown off-balance and must forfeit his following attack. In addition, if the samurai received a dodge bonus in the previous or current round, the sudden confusion over the missed attack leaves him nearly defenceless - on



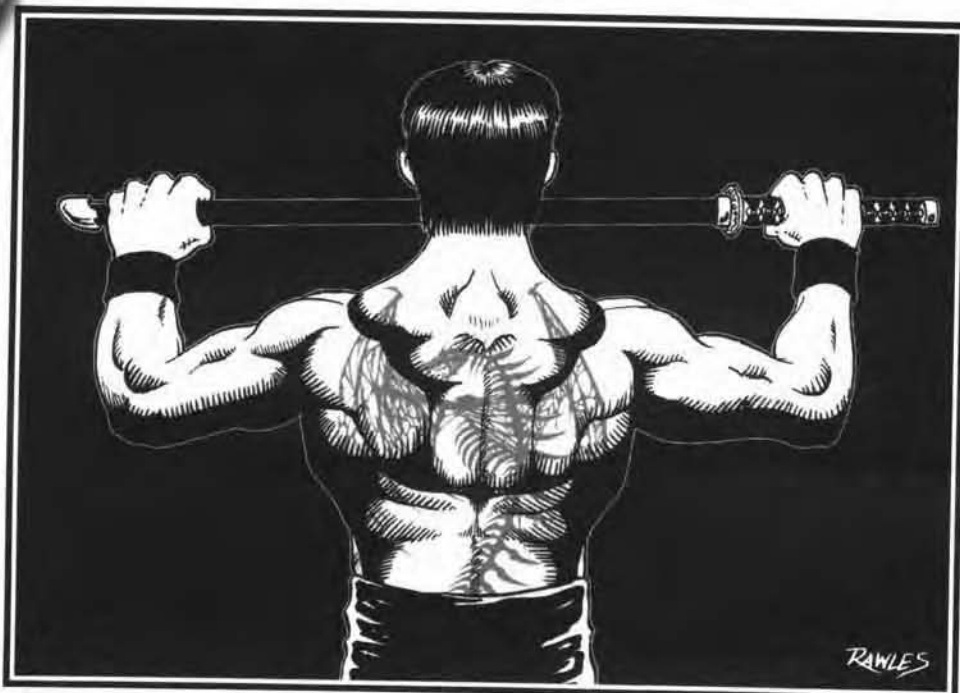
the round following the failed attack, the samurai suffers a circumstance penalty to his Armour Class equal to the circumstance bonus to damage gained in the previous round.

Stream of Death

With a quick slice of his katana, the samurai launches an attack against his foe designed to sever internal arteries and drown the opponent on his own blood. While certainly not an instantly deadly attack, it causes significant continuing damage to the target, weakening him as his life seeps away.

Activation: 25 ki.

Bonus: This ability is activated as a free action and is used as an attack action. The samurai suffers a -4 attack penalty on his attack as he strives to slice through crucial veins and arteries. If the attack succeeds, it causes one-half normal damage but the target begins suffering blood loss in the following round. Each round, the target suffers 1d4 hit points of



damage until a successful heal check (DC 20) is performed or the target receives magical healing. If the target was stunned when this technique is activated, the samurai suffers only a -2 attack penalty when using this technique.

Penalty: Using this attack requires an enormous expenditure of ki.

Submersion Defence

The samurai ducks low and uses the current of the battle to mask his own motions. As his opponents swirl in confusion, the master of the Submersion Defence glides through their ranks, hidden from view.

Activation: —

Bonus: This technique is activated as a free action and may only be used in a round during which the character takes no attack actions of any type. All of the samurai's enemies must make a successful Spot check (DC 20 + the samurai's Dexterity bonus) in order to attack the samurai. This includes attacks of opportunity and spellcasting – the samurai is so adept at using available cover that targeting him becomes quite difficult. If the samurai attacked in the round prior to the activation of this technique, the DC of Spot attempts to detect him are increased by +5.

Penalty: If a foe Spots the samurai, the samurai is in for a world of hurt. The samurai, believing he is able to move freely, is quite open to attack by those who are not fooled by his chicanery. Opponents who Spot the samurai are granted a +4 circumstance bonus to all attack and damage rolls made against the samurai.

These bonuses apply to all attacks and damage rolls the opponent makes against the samurai.

Surging Tide

Springing into action, the samurai launches a powerful attack designed to carry him past his target to safety. While risky, this manoeuvre allows samurai to slice at their targets as they move past, striking and fading away before they can suffer retaliatory strikes.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: The samurai activates this ability by making a standard attack action, which must come before any other movement

taken by the samurai, including a 5-foot step. This attack receives a +4 competence bonus to damage and after the attack is resolved, the samurai may freely move through any areas threatened by his current target without suffering any attack of opportunity. If the samurai currently has a dodge bonus, or had a dodge bonus in the previous round, he may move twice his normal movement as part of the standard action and will not suffer any attacks of opportunity from his current target.

Penalty: If the samurai's attack misses, the target of the attack may immediately take an attack of opportunity against the samurai. If this attack succeeds, the samurai may not take the movement normally allowed with a standard action and loses his Dexterity bonus until his next action.

Undertow

Sweeping his weapon and legs in wide arcs, the samurai attempts to trip his opponents or cause them to trip themselves while attempting to dodge the samurai's efforts. This technique works best when there are many foes near the samurai, all of whom can become entangled in the tricky movements of the Undertow technique.

Activation: 2 ki per trip attempt.

Bonus: When this technique is activated as a free action, the samurai is able to trip targets up to two sizes larger than his own size category, rather than only being able to trip targets one size larger. The

samurai is also able to trip more than a single target, provided he does not move in the round during which this technique is activated. The samurai makes a normal trip attack when this attack is activated – if the attack is successful, the samurai may make another trip attack, reducing his current Attack Bonus by 2. The samurai may continue making trip attacks and reducing his Attack Bonus by 2 until his Attack Bonus equals 1 or zero. If the samurai is tripped while using this technique, he forfeits all other actions this round. If the samurai did not make any attacks during the previous round, he also gains a bonus to each trip attack equal to the number of targets within 10 feet of his location as each of his targets stumble away from his attacks. Note that a samurai with the Improved Trip feat is not able to make attacks against tripped foes while using this technique – his attention is too focused on tripping his targets to be diverted in making other attacks.

Penalty: Using this technique requires the expenditure of 2 ki points for every trip attempt made during the round and the loss of 5 ki points if the samurai is tripped at any time during the round. In addition, the samurai is not able to make standard attacks during the round and may not move while this technique is active.

Vanishing Swipe

Using this technique, the samurai is able to step around an opponent's attack so swiftly as to seem to disappear from beneath the oncoming stroke. As an added advantage, this technique places the samurai in the perfect position to launch a counterattack.

Activation: 3 ki.

Bonus: The samurai receives a +4 dodge bonus against any single melee attack; this bonus must be declared before the attack is resolved and the samurai may take no action until after the attack resolves. If the attack misses the samurai, he may move up to 15 feet but must remain (or move into) melee attack range with the target whose attack was dodged. If the samurai received a dodge bonus in the previous or current round, his target is also denied his Dexterity bonus against any attacks made by the samurai in the current or following round.

Penalty: If the samurai is hit by the attack, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 + level or hit dice of attacker) or be stunned for 1d2 rounds.

Whipping Reed

Using their natural flexibility to amplify the leverage of their attacks, the students of the Parting Waves style are able to amplify the damage they cause from a

melee attack. Though such an attack is not terribly accurate, the samurai is able to continue through each motion to maximise his defensive posture along with his leverage.

Activation: —

Bonus: During this round, the samurai suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, but also receives a +2 dodge bonus to his Armour Class and a +2 circumstance bonus to all damage rolls made during the round in which this technique is activated.

Penalty: If the samurai's attack this round misses its target, the samurai is temporarily off balance and loses his Dexterity bonus for the remainder of the current round and until his next action in the following round.

Willow Branch Avoidance

Supple as a willow branch, the samurai bends away from attacks as if his joints were as pliable as rubber tree gum. While unable to attack when executing this technique, the samurai also becomes quite difficult to hit with attacks.

Activation: —

Bonus: While the technique is active, the samurai has a +8 dodge bonus against all melee attacks and a +4 dodge bonus against all missile attacks.

Penalty: If the samurai is injured while this technique is active, he is unable to reduce the damage caused by the successful attack. The samurai suffers double damage from any attack which causes injury while this technique is active. In addition, the samurai may not make any attacks during the round in which this technique is used.

RETURNING FORTUNES STYLE

The philosophy of this style is typical of the samurai mindset in which every action has consequences, often unintended and unpredictable consequences. By using the actions of an opponent to defeat that opponent, the samurai who studies the Returning Fortunes style of swordsmanship is able to redirect hostile energy into more beneficial actions. In particular, this style is based around inflicting damage to a target using that target's own attacks.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Returning Fortunes style:





Aversion to Pain

After suffering damage, you train your ki to avoid that kind of pain in the future. Though this grants you almost superhuman ability to avoid damage, your ability to cause damage is inhibited as well.

Activation: To activate this technique, you must expend 10 points of ki.

Bonus: This technique may only be used in a round following a round in which you suffered damage. When activated, this technique provides a dodge bonus to your Armour Class equal to the amount of damage you suffered in the preceding round. This bonus ends immediately if you suffer further damage.

Penalty: All damage rolls made while this technique is active suffer a circumstance penalty equal to one-half your Dexterity modifier.

Bouncing Stride

You put the energy you would normally use for attacks into moving faster than is normally possible.

Activation: —

Bonus: When this technique is activated, you are able to move an additional five feet for every point of your base attack bonus minus any armour bonuses you receive for armour currently worn. While moving in this way, you may leap over any gap of 10 feet or less without the need for a jump check. This movement is taken as a move equivalent action and provokes attacks of opportunity as normal.

Penalty: You are unable to take any attack actions during this round and you must move the entire distance granted by the use of this technique.

Deflected Motion

You are able to move much further than normal thanks to an attack which pushes you along on a wave of violence.

Activation: You must expend 5 ki when this technique is activated.

Bonus: You are able to move an additional number of feet this round equal to the amount of damage you received in the past round multiplied by 5. You may take no attack actions in the round in which this technique is used.

Penalty: Moving in this way is exhausting – you are unable to move more than one-half your normal movement rate in the round following the use of this technique.

Diffusing Parry

The samurai turns away an attack by deflecting it with his own weapon, turning aside the energy meant to harm him. The samurai uses his own weapon as a defence, rather than trusting his opponent to miss.

Activation: —

Bonus: To use this technique, the samurai must ready an action to respond to an attack made by a particular opponent. When the attack occurs, the samurai must make an attack roll of his own, using his current attack bonus. If the samurai's roll exceeds the attack roll of the incoming attack, the attack is turned aside. Note that the bonus and penalty for this technique apply only to attacks made by the specified target.

Penalty: If the samurai fails to deflect the attack, he suffers full maximum damage from the incoming attack, regardless of whether the attack would have hit him or not.

Fortune's Mimic

You place yourself into the position of your target, gaining any advantages he has and turning any of his shortcomings into your assets.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: Whenever this technique is used, you gain a circumstance bonus to your next attack roll equal to the sum of all modifiers currently affecting your opponent. When calculating your bonus, treat all negative modifiers your opponent is suffering as positive modifiers instead.

Penalty: If this attack misses, your next attack action suffers a -4 circumstance penalty as you misread the current combat situation.

Leapfrog Method

Rather than suffer another attack from a foe, you leap over him to put yourself in a better position to attack—or escape.

Activation:—

Bonus: When this technique is activated, you are able to move up to one-half your movement rate straight up (as a leap) or up to two-thirds of your movement straight ahead as a jump. When leaping straight ahead, you may move through any squares containing creatures of Medium-size or less, though creatures occupying these squares may make attacks of opportunity as normal. This technique may only be used during a round in which you have suffered damage, or immediately after a round in which you suffer damage.

Penalty: After this technique is used, you are unable to take any other actions this round.

Mirror Defence

You become a mirror-image of your target, making it virtually impossible for him to hit you, but restricting the types of actions you may take.

Activation: To activate this technique, you must expend 10 points of ki.

Bonus: You gain a circumstance bonus to your Armour Class equal to the Base Attack Bonus of any single foe currently attacking you. This bonus applies only to attacks made by that opponent and persist until you choose to end them. While this technique is active, however, you may only take attack actions your opponent takes and always act after this opponent as you carefully mimic his actions. If you ever take an action which your opponent has not already taken in the round, this technique ends immediately. Note that you must only take the same type of action, you do not have to take the exact same action—you may attack your opponent instead of yourself, for instance.

Penalty: You are restricted in the actions you may take while this ability is active.

Mirrored Movement

You respond unconsciously to the movements of your opponent, following him where he moves and preventing his escape.

Activation: 2 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is activated, you must select a single target you have made a melee attack against, or who made a melee attack against you, during this round. You are allowed to move as far as this opponent moves in this round, regardless of your previous movement in the round or your movement rate.

Penalty: If you move further than you are normally allowed to move in a round, you suffer 1 point of subdual damage for every 5 feet by which you exceed your normal movement.

Rebounding Slash

Following any attack made upon him, the samurai is able to turn some of the energy of that attack back into his own counterattack. Though an attack may damage a master of the Returning Fortunes style, he can always turn it to his advantage.

Activation:—

Bonus: This technique requires the samurai to either parry an attack or suffer hit point damage from an attack in the current round or the round immediately prior to the round in which this technique is activated. The samurai receives a circumstance bonus to his own attack equal to one-half the amount of damage he suffered from the attack which triggered the rebounding slash. If this technique follows a parry, the samurai receives a circumstance bonus to his attack equal to one-half the amount by which his attack roll exceeded his target's attack roll.

Penalty: If this attack misses, the samurai overextends himself and is unable to adequately protect himself from subsequent attacks. For the remainder of this round and the next round, the samurai suffers a -5 circumstance penalty to all parry attempts.

Reflected Hate

The hatred directed at you is returned doubly to your foes as your ki reflects their own in a mirror of the soul.

Activation: You must expend an amount of ki equal to the bonus damage this technique causes (see below).

Bonus: After suffering damage from an attack during the current or previous round, you activate your ki energy to return the hate of that attack back onto the attacker. If your next attack succeeds against a target which damaged you during this round, or in the round immediately preceding this one, your target suffers normal damage from your attack plus an amount equal to the damage caused to you by the attack.

Penalty: Using your ki in this manner is difficult and the strain leaves you unable to use your ki for two rounds, not including the current round.

Retributive Slice

You are able to use the force of an attack which injured you to damage your target more severely. Sadly, you are not yet skilled enough to return all of the energy used to damage you.

Activation:—

SWORD SCHOOLS OF THE SAMURAI

Bonus: When this technique is used, you gain a +2 bonus to the first damage roll you make during this round. This technique may only be used if you suffered damage in the preceding or current round, prior to your attack. This damage may be healed before you make your attack, as long as it was initially suffered.

Penalty: If your attack misses, you suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to your Armour Class against the next attack which targets you while you attempt to recover your balance.

Spinning Block

By rolling with an attack which damaged you, you are able to more effectively defend yourself against further attacks.

Activation: —

Bonus: After suffering damage from an attack, you spin away from the injury, becoming more difficult to injure for the duration of the current round. You receive a +2 bonus to your Armour Class for the remainder of the round in which you activate this ability.

Penalty: If you are hit while this technique is active, you suffer an additional 1 hit point of damage for every successful attack which lands as the force of your spin thrusts you into the attack.

STRIKING SPIRIT STYLE

Easily the most mysterious of all styles, the Striking Spirit school teaches its students to inflict damage through the strength of their will and the fierceness of their intent. As fear of its practitioners is a large part of the style's effectiveness, these samurai often wear demon-face masks and spread exaggerated tales of their own proficiency and the nature of their deadly practices. Despite this, the samurai who master the Striking Spirit style are amongst the most honourable of all samurai and understand the nature of the responsibilities which accompany their power. Focused as it is on ki attacks and supernatural abilities, this style is very draining to the samurai who practice it, making it less than ideal for dealing with many targets at one time.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Striking Spirit style:

Damning Vision

By channelling a spear of ki into his opponent, the samurai seeks to disrupt his target's spiritual energies.

This technique may only be used against targets which were previously opened to ki attacks.

Activation: 10 ki.

Bonus: The samurai focuses his mental and spiritual energies, directing a raw talon of his own willpower through his katana and into his target. If the next melee attack made by the samurai strikes his target, the samurai causes an additional 1d10 hit points of damage in addition to any damage caused by the attack itself. This damage is also doubled on a successful critical hit.



Penalties: The samurai must expend ki to activate this ability.

Demon Eyes

Rage is a tool used by the samurai to cow their opponents and send the dishonoured fleeing back into their rat holes. By channelling his rage through a filter of his ki, the samurai is able to transform his eyes into those of a fierce demon, flaring with unnatural flames. The weak-willed find themselves unable to approach the samurai, much less attack him.

Activation: 3 ki.

Bonus: In order to use this ability, the samurai must leave his eyes and face exposed, precluding the use of many full-face helmets. When the samurai expends ki to activate the technique, tongues of white flame to erupt from his eyes and lips. In order to attack the

samurai, foes must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + the samurai's Base Attack Bonus).

Penalties: The samurai must expend ki to activate this ability.

Ghost Heart

This technique temporarily infuses the samurai's vital organs with ki, making them insubstantial and impervious to attack. Though the effect is extremely short-lived, it can save the samurai from an otherwise fatal blow.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: The samurai suffers only one-quarter the normal hit point damage from all sources for the remainder of the combat round. This technique also prevents any temporary or permanent ability damage, though once it prevents the loss of ability damage, the technique ends immediately.

Penalty: The insubstantial nature of the samurai prevents him from taking any further action this round. If the samurai has any other actions remaining in the round, they are forfeited as soon as this technique is activated. In addition, the samurai is open to ki attacks and these attacks cause double normal damage during the time this effect is active.

Gossamer Defence

Sheathing his body in fluctuating waves of ki, the samurai seems to effortlessly float through the battle, avoiding attacks with fluid grace. While this technique is in effect, the samurai appears unnaturally supple, his body bending around attacks and his limbs extending at impossible angles.

Activation: 5ki.

Bonus: The samurai gains a Dodge bonus equal to one-half his honour rating for the remainder of this round and the following round.

Penalty: The samurai is unable to target his attacks effectively and those which do strike their targets are weaker than normal. The samurai suffers a -4 penalty to all attack rolls and a -2 penalty to all damage rolls. The samurai must also expend 5 ki to activate this ability.

Kiai

With a mighty shout, the samurai releases his ki, sending the power blasting into his opponents. Though not directly damaging, the kiai is capable of demoralising targets, filling them with a sudden shock of fear.



Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai expends a point of ki and shouts a word or short phrase in a fierce, angry voice. All targets within 10 feet must immediately make a Will save (DC 10 + the samurai's current Base Attack Bonus). If the save fails, the targets are rattled by the attack and may not attack the samurai this round. In addition, the force of the ki impact opens the targets to ki attacks in this and the subsequent round.

Penalty: This technique requires the expenditure of ki to activate. The samurai must open himself to ki attacks in order to expel his own willpower and use it as a weapon against his enemies. The samurai remains open to ki attacks for the remainder of this round.

Phantom Whirlwind

The samurai releases his ki in a powerful burst of energy which transforms his spirit into a whirling dervish of destructive power. The samurai himself grows translucent and seems insubstantial while this technique is active and bolts of ki energy leap from his body to strike at nearby targets. Though the effect causes no physical damage, it can prove extremely debilitating.

Activation: See below.

Bonus: All targets within 20 ft. of the samurai must make a Will save (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 hit points of ki damage.

Penalty: The samurai must expend 2 points of ki for every target within range of this effect, regardless of whether or not the target is affected by the technique. In addition, the samurai is open to ki attacks for the

remainder of this round and the entire following round.

Piercing Gaze

Masters of the Striking Spirit style are able to end duels and other one-on-one confrontations with but a glance. Their supreme confidence washes out to envelop their enemy, eroding his sense of self and revealing the weaknesses in his martial techniques.

Activation: 3 ki.

Bonus: In order to use this ability, the samurai must be able to see his target's eyes and must not have attacked the target in the previous or current round. The samurai locks gazes with the target and pushes his ki forward (requiring the expenditure of 3 points of ki), forcing his energy through his target's eyes. The samurai and his target must both make Will saves (DC 15). If both samurai and target fail their saves, neither combatant suffers any penalties. If the samurai succeeds and the target fails, the target immediately suffers a -2 morale penalty to all saves, and attack and damage rolls for the next 1d4 rounds. If the samurai fails and the target succeeds, the samurai is shaken and suffers the same morale penalty noted above. If both samurai and target make their saves, the combatant who succeeded by the smallest margin is considered to have failed his save and suffers penalties as noted above.

Penalties: The samurai must expend 3 ki in order to use this ability. In addition, the samurai may find himself on the short end of the stick if he fails his save, as noted above.

Soul Tremor

When this technique is used, the attack disrupts the ki of the target slightly, robbing him of confidence and ability.

Activation: 1 ki.

Bonus: The samurai expends one point of ki to activate this ability, charging his katana with a malevolent aura. If the next attack succeeds, the ki rushes into the target, sapping his willpower. The target suffers a -1 morale penalty on his next action. Creatures which are immune to fear effects are also immune to this ability.

Penalty: The technique requires the expenditure of ki in order to succeed. In addition, it opens the samurai to ki attacks by the same or other techniques.

Spectral Touch

The samurai's ki actually renders the tip of his weapon incorporeal, enabling it to attack a target's ki directly. Though difficult to execute, this attack can be crippling if used properly.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: This attack may only be used following a technique which opens a target to ki attacks. The samurai must expend 5 ki points to initiate the technique and must immediately succeed at a standard touch attack in order to deliver the technique's power to the target. This attack passes into the target's spirit with potentially devastating effects. The target must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + attacker's Base Attack Bonus) in order to resist the effects of the spectral touch. If the target fails, he suffers 1d4 points of temporary Wisdom loss as his spiritual essence is disrupted by the samurai's assault.

Penalties: The samurai must allow his own ki to mingle with the essence of his target, which may have unexpected repercussions. If the target succeeds at his Will save, the samurai is considered stunned for 1d4 rounds as his ki recoils in shock. Additionally, the samurai must open himself to ki attacks when this technique is used.

Spirit Blade

This attack is virtually useless against corporeal creatures, but is very effective when used against creatures which are, for whatever reason, immune to standard physical assaults. The samurai calls upon his own inner will and directs it outward, guiding his assault with his katana, but attacking with his spirit alone.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is activated, the samurai must pay 5 ki. Once the price is paid, the samurai's katana is enveloped in his own essence, giving it a spiritual component which is lacking in most blades. The samurai's next attack is able to injure creatures which are normally immune to physical attacks, though it does less damage and is less accurate than a normal attack.

Penalty: The samurai must expend ki to use this ability and suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to both attack and damage rolls on his next attack. Because this attack involves extending the samurai's ki beyond his body, it also opens him to hostile ki attacks.

Spirit Chills

This technique calls upon the dark fears of the samurai to create a chilling wind. Fuelled by ki, this attack can demoralise opponents, forcing their own weakness to lead to their defeat. Samurai who use this technique often leave themselves dangerously exposed to the ki attacks of other techniques.

Activation: 1 ki.

Bonus: The samurai must expend one point of ki to activate this technique and surround his katana with a

field of dimly glowing spiritual energy. If the samurai's next attack succeeds, the target must make a successful Willpower save (DC equal to 10 + the samurai's current Base Attack Bonus). If the save fails, the target is considered shaken for the remainder of the round and through the following round.

Penalty: This technique requires the expenditure of ki to activate. Because the samurai is using his ki offensively, he is left open to ki attacks by the same or different techniques.

Whispering Death

Preying on the weakness of his opponent, the samurai utters a condemnation so powerful it renders the target incapable of adequately defending himself against attacks. Wracked with self-doubt, the target becomes ripe for the killing.

Activation: 5 ki.

Bonus: The samurai and his target must be within 5 ft. of one another when this technique is activated. The target and the samurai must make a contested Will save (DC 20). If the samurai wins, the target suffers an immediate morale penalty to his Armour Class equal to one-half the samurai's current honour.

Penalty: If the samurai loses the contested Will save, he loses an additional 5 ki points and suffers a morale penalty to his Armour Class equal to one-half the target's honour, with a -5 penalty minimum, even if the target has no honour at all.

TRAMPLING DRAGON STYLE

Where other styles focus on the need for physical and mental perfection, the Trampling Dragon sword school instructs its students in the importance of willpower. To a master of the Trampling Dragon style, an opponent is defeated before the battle begins, it remains only to convince him of his own demise. Trampling Dragons are also fantastic leaders, inspiring others with their courage, positive outlook and phenomenal force of personality. On the field of battle, students of the Trampling Dragon style stand out immediately, both for the number of foes fleeing from them and the number of allies rallying around them.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Trampling Dragon style:



Assurance of Victory

This difficult-to-accomplish manoeuvre is so impressive the samurai's allies are filled with complete conviction of their victory over their foes.

Activation: 10 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is activated, the samurai's next action must be an attack action. If the attack succeeds, it causes normal damage to the target and all of your allies who witness the attack receive a +8 morale bonus to their next attack roll. If your allies were under the effect of a morale bonus during the round in which this technique was successfully activated, your they receive a +10 morale bonus to their next attack and damage rolls and you receive a bonus to your remaining attack rolls equal to the average level of your allies. Note that this bonus may not exceed your Base Attack Bonus.

Penalty: If your attack fails, your allies are so crushed they are considered *stunned* for the remainder of this round and the next round. Their lack of confidence in your abilities is so disheartening that you are shaken for the next 1d4 rounds.

Aura of Confidence

Belief in your own abilities permeates every fibre of your being and fills the air around you with the scent of victory. Seeing your skill and belief in victory invigorates your allies, giving them the confidence they need to fight more effectively.

Bonus: To activate this technique, the samurai must take a full attack action, even if he is normally entitled to a single attack. With a thunderous roar, the samurai strikes at his foe. If the attack succeeds, the target suffers only half damage but also suffers a -2 morale penalty to all actions and saving throws in the following round. All other enemies within 10 ft. of the target also suffer a -1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls and all saving throws in the following round. If the target of this technique was already suffering a morale penalty of any kind, he suffers normal damage from this attack and a -3 morale penalty to all actions in the following round. If more than one of the samurai's attacks hits while this technique is activated, only the first attack to cause damage is reduced to one-half normal damage and inflicts the morale penalty - subsequent successful attacks in the same round do not inflict a morale penalty, either.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai must immediately make a Will save (DC 15 + opponent's level or hit dice) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls during the following round.

Dragon Spirit

Your fierce demeanour and proud bearing immediately mark you as a samurai not to be trifled with. Your foes quail before your superior skill and your every attack condemns their weakness. This technique plants the seeds of doubt which will grow into the tree of defeat within the spirit of your enemies.

Activation: —

Bonus: When this technique is activated, you draw yourself up to your full height and present your fiercest visage to your opponents. To activate this technique, you must take a full attack action, even if you are entitled to only one attack each round. If the attack succeeds, it inflicts only one-half normal damage. However, the target you strike suffers a -1 morale penalty to all actions in the following round. If more than one of your attacks hits, all but the first to hit the target deal normal damage and do not cause a morale penalty.

Penalty: If the attack fails, the samurai must immediately make a Will save (DC 15 + opponent's level or hit dice) or suffer a -1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls during the following round.

Flawless Direction

Abstaining from all attacks, you guide your allies about the battlefield, instructing them in how best to manoeuvre through the ranks of your enemies. Due to your guidance, your allies are able to avoid the reflexive attacks of their enemies as they move about.

Activation: 15 ki.

Bonus: From the moment you activate the technique, your allies do not suffer attacks of opportunity which would normally be caused by their movements. They may still suffer attacks of opportunity from other actions they take in the round - spellcasting, for example. If your allies are receiving any morale or competence bonuses during the round in which Flawless Direction is activated, these bonuses increase by +1 until the end of this round.

Penalty: If you suffer any damage after activating this technique, but still within the same round, all of your allies within melee range of an enemy are subject to an attack of opportunity, provided those enemies have any such attacks remaining. In addition, any morale or competence bonuses enjoyed by your allies end the moment you take any damage in the round in which you activate this technique.

Grave Proclamation

After a successful attack against a foe, you are able to convince the target that the wound, no matter how minor, is actually a fatal blow. Though the technique is very difficult to master, when it is used successfully, it can destroy a target in very short order.

Activation: 25 ki.

Bonus: This technique may only be activated immediately after you make a successful melee attack. The target is allowed a Will save (DC 10 + the amount of damage caused by the preceding melee attack) - if the save fails, the target immediately suffers subdual points equal to his current hit points minus 1d10. If the save is successful, the target resists the technique.

Penalty: If the target succeeds at its Will save, the samurai is left vulnerable to counterattack. The target receives a +4 circumstance bonus to any attack it makes in the next round which is targeted on the samurai.

Inspiring Assault

Your technique inspires your allies as it displays your obvious superiority over your foes. Your strikes not only deal damage to your foes but serve as a guide for your allies, showing them how to best launch attacks of their own.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai's next action, after activating this technique must be a melee attack, either a standard or full-round action. If the attack succeeds, it causes normal damage to the target and all of your allies who can see the attack receive a +2 morale bonus to all attack and damage rolls made during the following round. If your allies are under the effect of a morale bonus during the round in which you perform this



technique, their morale bonus for the following round is +3, rather than +2, and applies to all actions.

Penalty: If your attack fails, your allies see you for the mortal you are and their own confidence is shaken. You and all of your allies receive a -2 morale penalty to all actions in the following round.

Rally Strike

The swiftness and style of your attack brings joy to your allies. With every successful attack, you raise the spirits of those who battle beside you, urging them on to a greatness that matches your own.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai's next action after activating this technique must be a melee attack of some type. If the attack succeeds, it causes one-half normal damage to the target and your allies receive a +1 morale bonus to all attack and damage rolls during the following round.

Penalty: If the attack misses the target, your allies suffer a moment of doubt, reducing their effectiveness. On the round following a failed attack with this technique, you and all of your allies suffer a -1 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls.

Untouchable Confidence

You stride across the battlefield with such confidence your foes are momentarily unable to take advantage of your lowered defences.

Activation: 1 ki.

Bonus: The samurai's next action after this technique is activated must be a move-equivalent action. If this

action would normally provoke one or more attacks of opportunity, the first attack of opportunity is prevented by this technique. Further attacks of opportunity occur as normal, however.

Penalty: This technique requires the expenditure of 1 ki point.

UNWAVERING STRIKE STYLE

The samurai who study the Unwavering Strike style are masters of the considered attack. Though their attacks typically take longer to execute than a standard melee attack, the masters of the Unwavering Strike take advantage of every opportunity to strike a telling blow, preferring to pass up lesser openings in favour of delivering a critical injury at the right moment. Perhaps more frightening than their studied mastery over delivering pain, the masters of the Unwavering Strike style pride themselves on their ability to deliver a truly crippling strike – even winning a battle with a samurai from this sword school may leave a swordsman debilitated for life.

Technique Progression

The following diagram illustrates the technique progression for the Unwavering Strike Style:



Buckle Cutter

Precision attacks are used to slice through crucial buckles on an opponent's armour. When executed properly, this turns the asset of armour into a hampering dead-weight.

Activation: —

Bonus: This attack targets an opponent's armour and, as such, causes no damage in and of itself. It does, however, open the target to all manner of trouble as it renders his armour useless. The samurai must make a melee attack against the target with a -4 penalty to the attack roll. If this attack causes damage equal to the weight of the targeted armour, an important armour buckle has been broken, reducing its Armour Class bonus by 2. Using this technique cannot reduce the bonus provided by armour to less than 0.

Penalty: This attack causes no damage.

Contemplated Thrust

After careful consideration, the samurai drives the tip of his katana into a weak point on the target. The power of the attack requires the samurai to centre himself to deliver the full strength of his body into the target.

Activation: —

Bonus: When this technique is activated, the samurai plants his feet and waits for his opponent to offer an opening. At the correct moment, the samurai lunges forward in an attempt to drive the tip of his weapon through his target. The samurai gains one of the following bonuses on the next attack he makes after the technique is activated:

† Convert any critical threat into a critical hit. Creatures not normally subject to critical hits are immune to this effect.

† +4 competence bonus to the first damage roll made this round.

Penalty: The samurai may not take more than a 5-foot step during the round in which this technique is activated.

Disrupting Dagger Stroke

Though any weapon can be used, this technique takes its name from its first use as a method to silently kill a target. By targeting specific points in the body, this technique disrupts the flow of ki through the target's body, leaving them incapable of using their own ki and inhibiting their ability to heal from other wounds.

Activation: 15 ki.

Bonus: When this technique is activated, the samurai must immediately make a melee attack. If the attack successfully hits, it causes normal damage, but also drains the target of the same amount of ki. In addition, if the target suffered ability damage of any type in this or the preceding round, another 2 points of temporary damage are applied to this ability by this attack.

Penalty: If the samurai misses this attack, he suffers 2d12 points of ki damage as his internal energies leak away without a target.

Dropping Defence

Attacking through damaged portions of the armour, this technique allows the samurai to inflict a more grievous wound than would otherwise be possible.

Activation: 15 ki.

Bonus: The critical threat ranges of any attacks made in the same round this technique is activated are increased by 1 and all critical hit multipliers are likewise increased by 1.

Penalty: —

Impaling Lotus Stem

This technique is designed to severely injure a target by directly attacking the structure of his body.

Though targets which are immune to critical hits are also immune to attacks made with this technique, those who are vulnerable may be crippled by the brutal attack.

Activation: 10 ki.

Bonus: The samurai must perform an attack action immediately following its activation. This technique allows the samurai to attack the target's joints, internal organs and blood supply in such a way as to do permanent harm to the target. Those who survive a fight with the samurai are often left maimed for life if they are unable to receive proper magical treatment. This attack causes one of the following effects, determined by a 1d6 roll after the attack succeeds:

† 1 – 2: 1 point of permanent Strength damage.

† 3 – 4: 1 point of permanent Constitution damage.

† 5 – 6: 1 point of permanent Dexterity damage.

If the samurai received a bonus to attack rolls against this target in the round in which this technique is activated, or the prior round, the samurai is able to choose which of the effects occurs on a successful attack.

SWORD SCHOOLS OF THE SAMURAI

Penalty: If the samurai misses with an attack using this technique, the flow of his assault is broken and his concentration wavers. Any further attacks in a combination are at a -4 circumstance penalty and the samurai suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to his Armour Class for 1d4 rounds.

Open Body Strike

Capitalising on previous attacks, the samurai rips open one of the target's previous wounds, digging deep to lay bare the bones and muscles near the wound. The injury is sometimes so severe it renders the target unable to continue fighting.

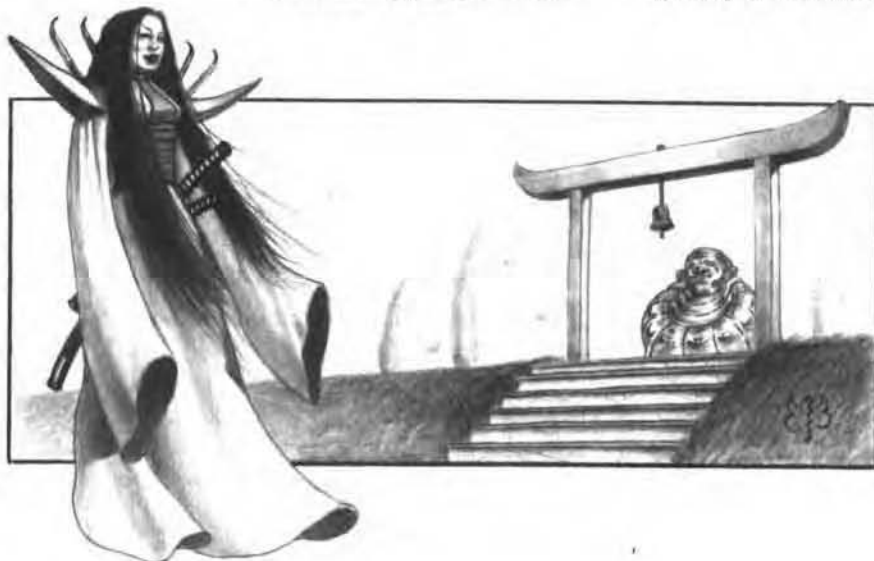
Activation: 15 ki.

Bonus: This technique is activated as a free action, but the samurai must take a full attack action immediately following the activation of the technique. This technique can only be used against a target which has been injured during the current combat and only if the target is vulnerable to critical attacks. The samurai simply carves away at the existing wound, providing a +10 damage bonus to the attack. If the target suffered a critical hit in this round, or the round immediately prior, any attack which causes damage is automatically considered a critical hit as well.

Penalty: This technique requires 15 ki points to activate. If the samurai misses an attack against this target, the target is immediately allowed an attack of opportunity. If this attack hits the samurai, the attack is automatically converted into a critical hit.

Precise Thought

Unmoved by the chaos of the battlefield, the samurai focuses on this technique to bring his thoughts to order and apply his martial knowledge to defeating a particular opponent. While



the samurai makes no attack when this technique is used, his analytical abilities and the pause for contemplation provide him with the edge he needs to bring his foe to his knees.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai must make a successful Spot check (DC 10 + level or hit dice of target) to pick out the weak points in one opponent's fighting style. If the check is successful, the samurai has determined where and when to best attack his opponent in order to deliver maximum damage. The samurai may choose either of the following on his next attack against this target:

† If the attack hits, it is automatically considered a critical threat. Targets normally immune to critical hits are also immune to this effect.

† The samurai receives a +2 competence bonus to the next attack roll against this target.

Penalty: The samurai is unable to take any other action when this technique is activated. If the Spot check fails, or the samurai suffers more than 5 hit points of damage while this technique is active, the samurai gains no benefit from using the Precise Thought technique.

Sliced Strap

This attack builds on the Buckle Cutter, further damaging the armour and possibly using the target's armour to hinder him during the fight.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai must make an attack immediately following the activation of this ability, with a -4 penalty to the attack roll as it is targeting a piece of armour rather than the opponent. If the attack causes damage equal to the weight of the armour so targeted, the Armour Class modifier for that piece of armour is reduced by 1 (this may cause the Armour Class modifier to become negative) and the target's movement rate is reduced by 5 feet. This technique may only be used once per piece of armour.

Penalty: This attack causes no damage to the target.

Studious Defence

Careful consideration of the target's attack style provides the samurai with a defensive bonus useful for avoiding attacks from that target. Though a samurai may only use this technique against a single target at a time, it makes it much easier for him to deal with threats from that opponent.

Activation: —

Bonus: The samurai spends this round studying the attacks of his opponent, looking for telltale signs of an impending attack and other signals which can be used to avoid assaults from the opponent. The samurai must make a successful Spot check (DC 10 + target's level) in order to pick up on these signals. If the Spot check succeeds, the samurai gains a +2 dodge bonus against all attacks made by that target for the rest of the encounter.

Penalty: If the samurai fails his Spot check, he suffers a -2 dodge penalty against all attacks made by the target as he misinterprets the target's intentions. This penalty remains in effect for the duration of the combat.

Unfolding Razor Petals

This technique is used to move from a defensive posture into an assault position to deliver a sudden, precise attack. When timed correctly, the attack punches through the target's defences with ease.

Activation: —

Bonus: This technique is activated as a free action and the samurai must perform a melee attack immediately following its activation. This technique provides the samurai with a +4 bonus to the first attack roll made after it is activated. If the samurai received a dodge bonus from another technique during the previous round, he may add this modifier as a circumstance bonus to the first attack made after this technique is activated.

Penalty: The samurai is only allowed a 10 foot move during the round in which this technique is activated to reflect the time required to transfer momentum from defence to attack.

Unwavering Strike

Following through on a successful attack, the samurai is able to deliver a devastating blow, driving his weapon into the most vulnerable portion of the target's anatomy. This deadly attack can cripple targets, leaving them unable to retaliate (or even fight effectively) until they have healed.

Activation: 25 ki.

Bonus: One-half of the damage caused by the first successful attack made by the samurai after this technique is activated is taken as temporary ability



damage to Strength (1-2), Dexterity (3-4) or Constitution (5-6) as determined by a random roll once the attack has resolved. If the target suffered a confirmed critical hit earlier in this round, or in the preceding round, the samurai making the attack may choose to which of the abilities the damage is applied.

Penalty: —

Widened Wound

The samurai attempts to deliver an attack into a portion of the target's body which has already been injured, increasing the severity of previous injuries while opening the wound for future damage. While most effective immediately after a critical injury has been delivered, this technique can also be used to attack natural weaknesses in a target's body.

Activation: 8 ki.

Bonus: This technique is activated as a free action, but the samurai must take a full attack action immediately following the activation of the technique. In addition, this technique can only be used against a

Social Combat Systems and Terminology

There are several terms used in social conflicts that are also used in physical battles. Each of these is described in this section, including information on how characters attack and defend themselves in social conflicts. Though this system is designed to take into account the importance of honour in samurai culture, notes have been included for those Games Masters who wish to use this system in a setting in which honour plays no crucial part. The purpose of this system is to provide socially adept characters with as many options and exciting challenges as those enjoyed by more physically-oriented characters.

Social Armour Class: A character's Social Armour Class is his ability to turn aside witty jabs or deftly avoid the logic traps set for him by his opponent. Like physical Armour Class, Social Armour Class is used to defend the character from attacks.

To determine a character's base Social Armour Class, add 10 to his Wisdom or Charisma modifier, whichever is higher. The tactics used by an opponent also

modifies Social Armour Class – each tactic lists a skill, the ranks of which are added to the Social Armour Class of the tactic's target.

Social Hit Points: There is a limit to how long any character can sustain a social challenge. When an opponent scores verbal jab after verbal jab against his target, eventually the target must admit defeat and accept his fate. A character's social hit points are equal to his honour plus his Charisma. In campaigns where honour is not a consideration, a character, Non-Player Character, or monster may substitute its level or number of hit dice in place of honour.

Base Attack Bonus: Unlike physical combat, there is no Base Attack Bonus in social conflicts. Instead, each of the opponents uses a specific skill when attempting to wear down the opponent. Depending on the tactic used, a different skill is used for each attack, allowing social characters the opportunity to exploit weaknesses or avoid strengths when engaged in social conflicts. In the following section, each of these tactics is described in detail.

Attacks of Opportunity: Just as in physical combats, when an opponent stumbles during a social challenge, his opponent may take advantage of the opening to launch a counterattack. In a social combat, whenever an opponent fails when attempting a tactic that is denoted as possibly causing an attack of opportunity, his adversary may immediately use a tactic of his own.

Goals: Every social conflict has a goal. Where the goals of a physical conflict are usually either the subdual or death of one or more opponents, social conflicts have a wider array of possible outcomes. Both defender and aggressor choose the type of outcome they would prefer from the following list:

† **Action.** If this is your goal, you wish to convince someone to commit (or *not* commit) to a course of action. This goal may involve trickery, coercion, seduction, or any other of the options outlined below, without concern for the long-term thoughts or feelings of the target. While this short-term goal is certainly not going to win many allies, it is the fastest way to get someone to do something *right now*. If a defender is caught unawares by a social attack, their goal defaults to 'action', with their desired outcome the cessation of social hostilities.

† **Sway.** More subtle than simply encouraging someone to do something, this goal involves changing their opinion through reasoned arguments and logic pitfalls. When swaying opinion is the desired goal,



the samurai must take great care in the methods he chooses to utilise in his pursuit of that goal. Coercive tactics may influence the target in the short term, but will do little to make the desired changes in the subject's opinion or feelings.

† **Prestige.** When a samurai wishes to improve his own prestige to the detriment of his rivals, this is the goal they strive toward. Social conflicts in which this is the goal tend to be rambling and circuitous as one party tries to trick the other into making a critical error. Unlike other goals, prestige requires an audience because the real target of the social attack *is* the audience – think of this as a sway goal directed at a group rather than an individual.

† **Consensus.** In this type of social conflict, a samurai is attempting to convince a larger group of people of his position on a particular topic. This is most useful when you need to get several individuals to agree with you – rather than deal with each in turn, if you can gather them all in one place and convince at least one of them, then you have effectively convinced them all. Think of this as a group effect of the action goal. When choosing this type of goal, the samurai must have all those he is targeting in range and must engage the highest level amongst them in a social conflict.

A character's goal may change during the conflict, either as a result of his own tactics or the tactics of his opponent. Using the blackmail tactic, for example, makes it impossible to attempt to sway a target, reducing the possible outcome to one of action or prestige.

WAR OF WORDS

Though samurai are encouraged to lay waste to members of another daimyo's court, crossing katanas with a samurai loyal to the same daimyo is highly discouraged. Thus, rather than duels to the death, allied samurai take their differences out amongst the courtiers, cutting one another with sharp tongues and poisoning public opinion with caustic remarks. In this way, a clever samurai can improve his standing amongst his peers and with the advisors to his daimyo.

In this chapter, the rules for social combat are covered, along with information on how the honour of those who win or lose these contests is affected. Though, in most cases, a single verbal sparring match will not end the career of a samurai, a succession of high profile losses can lead to growing disfavour and a shift in the

way the samurai is seen by others. The wise samurai knows how to remove himself from a situation rather than suffer continued losses – though living far removed from the estate of the daimyo is certainly not going to advance the career of a samurai, it does ensure that his actions will be judged by their effect on the lord's holdings rather than by arguments he lost with a courtier.

Mixed Honour and Honourless Characters

When a samurai engages a character to whom honour means nothing in social combat, the samurai uses his honour + Charisma modifier to determine his social hit points and the honourless character uses his Level + Charisma modifier. Note that a samurai with 0 honour is not an honourless character, as he still believes and understands the importance of honour – in this case, the samurai would simply have social hit points equal to his Charisma modifier. Characters with 0 honour firmly believe they are worthless and have little chance of winning any social engagement.

In general, the belief or disbelief in honour by an opponent does not affect the use of honour by samurai. The samurai, confident of his own ability to defeat the honourless scum does not suffer a reduction in his ability to persevere in an argument or other social conflict and, likewise, the honourless character is not overly cowed by the honour of the samurai in question. Each combatant simply relies on his own reserves of inner strength to withstand the social barbs of the other.

A Clear Objective

Simply throwing out insults or jibes at a fellow samurai is never going to accomplish anything. Before a social conflict is entered, a samurai should know what it is he hopes to achieve and have a plan for reaching this goal. In most situations, the goal is simple at its core and falls into one of the following categories:

- † Action
- † Sway
- † Prestige
- † Consensus

Once a samurai has a clear goal in mind, all that remains is to pursue that goal to the utmost, using his

wiles, wits and charisma to overcome those who oppose him.

Studying the Opponent

Just as a samurai would never think of rushing into combat without first performing some research on the lay of the land and sending his scouts out to assay the location and disposition of the enemy, so too does the wise social climber unearth the secrets of his opponents before engaging them. Samurai with a network of informants (as provided by the Informants feat) are able to use them to gather necessary information about their foes, but other samurai will need to take a more proactive approach. In this section, a variety of techniques for gathering information are provided, along with the rules for using them in a campaign.

Gather Information: This skill is very useful when attempting to uncover the dirty little secrets of your enemies. The downside, of course, is that it requires interaction with individuals who might just remember what you were asking about and warn the object of your inquiries before you can successfully launch your attack.

When attempting to use this skill in order to procure secrets or leverage to use against your opponent, you must spend at least one evening in the company of the enemy's acquaintances, servants, friends, lovers, or allies. During this time, you must use the utmost in discretion to avoid tipping your hand and yet be direct enough to elicit useful information. After at least four hours spent wining and dining the appropriate individuals (at a cost of no less than 20 gp), you must make a successful Gather Information check (DC 20) to uncover any useful dirt. The Games Master should make this check in secret in order to avoid tipping his hand as to whether or not a particular individual has any secrets worth uncovering.

If this check fails by more than 10, the targets of your subtle interrogation are aware of your attempts to uncover secrets and become increasingly uncommunicative. Further attempts to pump them for information automatically fail and, given the opportunity, they will report your activities to the subject of your investigation, alerting him to your coming attack.

A check which fails by less than 10 nets you nothing and does not alert the target to your intentions. However, if you wish to gain any information you will need to either seek out a new source or continue

plying your current sources for a few more polite interrogation sessions. In order to avoid rousing suspicion, you must wait at least a week before contacting your sources and making another Gather Information check. The DC of this check rises to 25 and any additional checks, should this check fail, require another week's wait and a +2 DC increase.

If the check is successful, however, you discover one of the following, at the discretion of the Games Master:

† **Minor Indiscretion.** Your target is guilty of a minor indiscretion, which occurred at some point in the past year, or a moderate indiscretion that occurred 2d3 years ago. Minor indiscretions include minor skimming from tribute collected for the daimyo, physically assaulting a non-samurai, non-noble individual and speaking ill of another samurai. The punishment for indiscretions of this nature is virtually non-existent, though there is a 1d2 point loss of honour for the target if the indiscretion becomes public knowledge.

† **Moderate Indiscretion.** Your target is guilty of a moderate discretion that occurred during the past year, or a major indiscretion that occurred 1d6 years ago. Moderate indiscretions include killing a non-noble, non-samurai individual, covering up (or helping to cover up) a crime committed by a samurai against another samurai, privately questioning the judgement of the daimyo. If this indiscretion becomes public knowledge, the samurai will most likely receive a fine (2d10% of his personal savings) and will be given a dangerous assignment by his daimyo as punishment. In addition, the samurai loses 1d3 points of honour.

† **Major Indiscretion.** Your target is guilty of a major indiscretion that occurred during the year, or a grave indiscretion that occurred within the past 2d6 years. Major indiscretions include duelling another samurai without permission, stealing more than 200 gp from tribute destined for the daimyo and avoiding (or helping others to avoid) an obligation of service to the daimyo. Samurai found guilty of such transgressions are typically heavily fined (5d10% of their personal savings) and are banished from the daimyo's estate for a period of no less than six months. There is a loss of 1d6 points of honour associated with indiscretions of this type.

† **Grave Indiscretion.** Your target is guilty of a grave indiscretion which occurred during the past 1d6 years. Grave indiscretions include the assassination of another samurai, stealing more than 1,000 gp from

Kuroji swaggered through the daimyo's estates, his richly embroidered kimono swirled and rustled around his feet with every step. His smile never wavered, even when he passed the lowly serving girl who smirked at his back and knew her revenge was nearly complete.

* * *

Crouched in the stinking alleyway, Iniki wiped her sopping hair away from her face and wrinkled her nose in disgust. Checking the wax seals on her katana's wooden sheath for the hundredth time, she hoped none of the foul stench in the alley would cling to the beautiful blue steel of her weapon. When she used it to hack off Kuroji's head, she wanted it clean and untainted; she would allow nothing to dilute the glory of that moment.

Right on schedule, the serving girl appeared, dropping lightly down from the sloped rooftop of the smithy. Iniki nodded curtly to the girl and presented her hand, palm up and fingers extended. The girl kept her eyes low and slipped the waxed roll of rice paper into the samurai's hand. Without a word, the child backed away from the warrior, hobbling over the unsteady ground as she made her way out of the alley.

Iniki caressed the scroll gently before sliding it into the tube she wore on a fine silver chain around her neck. With the precious cargo safely hidden beneath her shirt, she tossed her hair once more and stalked out of the alley. The tube felt hot between her breasts and its weight was heavy on the chain. What secrets it contained were grave indeed, she knew, and she had paid dearly for them. She only hoped they would be enough to bring Kuroji to the justice he so richly deserved.



tribute destined for the daimyo and activities detrimental to the daimyo or his family. This type of misstep is invariably fatal if it is discovered. The daimyo will definitely ask for the ritual suicide of the transgressor and, if the crime is personal enough, will also strip the samurai's family of their noble rank and confiscate their goods. Naturally, samurai asked to kill themselves for such crimes are not resurrected or raised by their daimyo. There is a loss of 1d8 points of honour associated with indiscretions of this type – the honour loss is applied not only to the samurai, but also to the members of his immediate family and any samurai who worked closely with him during the time in which the indiscretion occurred.

Once a piece of information is uncovered, that interrogation session is considered over. While small talk and idle chit-chat take place, the wise samurai knows not to press his informants for more information than they are comfortable providing. A future meeting may be scheduled with the source for three days later, at which time another Gather Information check (DC 20) may be made. As long as a sufficient amount of time passes between each Gather Information check, you may continue pumping informants for as long as you wish.

Selecting the Battlefield

Once the samurai has gathered what he believes is sufficient information for his current social battle, he must engage the target to begin the conflict. There are several arenas in which this type of engagement may occur and each is best suited to one of the goals.

Private engagements are best reserved for **action** goals, especially when coercive tactics of one kind or another are employed. While it is certainly dangerous to confront an opponent in a setting in which he may feel inclined to attack you, it is equally dangerous to attempt blackmail in earshot of a member of the daimyo's court. In this type of engagement, you must arrange to meet the target in a secure, often secluded, location. At the appointed time and place, ideally, the two of you meet to discuss items of mutual interest. A private engagement provides a +2 circumstance bonus to all rolls made during the ensuing social conflict, provided the ultimate goal is **action**.

A semi-public engagement is used for most **sway** attempts. For the best chance of success, your own allies should be present to reinforce your position with their own assent and agreement with your arguments. By arranging to meet your target in a semi-public place, such as a restaurant or a private lounge in the

daimyo's estate, you place yourself in the advantage as long as your allies outnumber any allies the target brings to the meeting. While with the advantage, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to all rolls made during the current social conflict, provided your ultimate goal is to **sway** your target's opinion.

Public engagements are reserved for conflicts centred on **prestige**. In these cases, you wish to bring the conflict itself to the attention of as many influential individuals or groups as possible. Conflicts of this type are almost always staged to occur within earshot of courtiers or the daimyo himself. Tournaments and banquets are the two most popular settings for this type of conflict, though it is not unheard of for cunning samurai to make their social attacks during the preparations for a battle or other high-profile situations. If your social standing is higher than that of your target (see Standing in the Court, below), you gain a +2 circumstance bonus for all rolls made during the current social engagement. If, however, your social standing is lower than your target's, you suffer a -2 circumstance penalty on all rolls made during the current social engagement.

Consensus goals are only achievable when many samurai are gathered together. Meetings to discuss political decisions, plans for war, or other situations in which many samurai are in the same place specifically to share their opinions and gather support are the natural locations for such social manoeuvres. Traditionally, daimyo hold such convocations at least twice a year, though lords of smaller domains will certainly seek the advice of their samurai more often. There are no modifiers for attempting to gain a consensus in an appropriate location and at the correct time, because attempting to do so at other times and places is doomed to failure.

Engaging the Target

Once the samurai and his target are in the correct place, the social conflict may begin. Based on the conflict's goal and the battlefield, the samurai may find one of the following engagement methods more or less useful. As in the study of *iaijutsu*, the wise samurai understands the importance of the opening attack and should choose his method of engagement carefully.

Brash Assault: This type of engagement is a simple declaration of the samurai's intent and the reasons why his opponent should simply capitulate the social conflict. This is most often used when you have sufficient evidence of your target's misdeeds to ensure his compliance with any scheme you may present.

The shocking boldness of this type of engagement provides a +2 bonus to all private engagements in which you have at least one piece of information about your target and are using it to actively coerce your target into acquiescing to your demands. Should your brash assault ever become public knowledge, you lose 1 point of honour.

Subtle Insinuation: Most useful when you are attempting to gain the trust of a target or are trying to change their opinion in some way, the subtle insinuation involves carefully-worded overtures designed to make the target feel as if he not only *should* believe the aggressor but it is imperative he do so. Though more difficult than a brash assault, the subtle insinuation brings no shame to the aggressor. You receive a +2 circumstance bonus to any rolls made while attempting to sway a target when using this type of engagement.

Needling Conversation: When attempting to gain prestige over a target, the aggressor begins a normal conversation, then steadily increases the aggressiveness of his words until the target is pushed into reacting. While this method works well when attempting to goad others into reacting poorly to your words, it carries a potential for significant backlash against you if the target is able to maintain his composure throughout your attack. You gain a +2 Circumstance bonus to any offensive rolls made while engaged in a social contest for prestige when using this type of engagement.

Bold Statements: It is a common gambit amongst public speakers to make a seemingly outrageous statement at the beginning of their oration and then explain the real meaning behind the words as their speech continues. This style is best used for attempting to gain a consensus as it displays the samurai's assurance of his right to victory and lays his arguments out in a plain fashion. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any offensive rolls made while engaged in a social contest for consensus when using this type of engagement.



Winning the Conflict

When an opponent is reduced to 0 social hit points or less, he has lost. Unable to mount an effective counter argument, the target gives way to the victor, whose goal is achieved.

SOCIAL COMBAT TACTICS

In this section, each of the common combat tactics is described, along with information on how a success or failure of the tactic affects the aggressor or defender. While these tactics represent the most common gambits used in social conflicts, players and Games Masters are encouraged to create others, tailored to the specific honour or reputation systems used in their games.

Tactic Description Format

Each tactic is described below in the following format:

Name: The name of the tactic.

Skill: The skill or skills used to perform the tactic. Unless otherwise noted, the skill used to perform the tactic is also the skill used to defend against the tactic.

Attack of Opportunity: Yes or no. If there is a yes, then the tactic instigates an attack of opportunity if it fails.

Goal: If the tactic has any effect on a goal, it is described here.

Description: A description of the tactic and its uses.

Blackmail, Implied

Skill: Innuendo.

Attack of Opportunity: Yes.

Goal: —

Description: This tactic is used to subtly insinuate that one of the target's damaging secrets will be revealed if the target is not more amenable to the aggressor's intentions. If this tactic is successful, the target suffers 1d3 + the aggressor's Charisma bonus in social damage. Targets who do not have any secrets to protect receive a natural +10 bonus to their Social Armour Class against this tactic. If the aggressor does not *know* a secret of the targets, the target receives a +5 circumstance bonus to their Social Armour Class, as well.

Blackmail, Direct

Skill: Intimidate (using Charisma, rather than Strength); Bluff is used for defence.

Attack of Opportunity: Yes.

Goal: When this tactic is used, the aggressor's goal immediately becomes an action goal.

Description: Rather than beating around the bush, the aggressor flat out states what will happen if the defender refuses to comply with his wishes. If this tactic is used where other parties may hear what is said, the aggressor immediately suffers 1d4 points of honour loss. Targets who do not have any secrets to protect receive a natural +10 bonus to their Social Armour Class against this tactic. If the aggressor does not *know* a secret of the targets, the target receives a +5 circumstance bonus to their Social Armour Class, as well. If the tactic succeeds, the target suffers 1d4+the aggressor's Charisma bonus in social damage.

Bribe

Skill: Innuendo; Will save bonus is used for defence

Attack of Opportunity: Yes. If the tactic fails, the target may immediately make an attack of opportunity, using one of the Blackmail tactics. In addition, the target who becomes an aggressor has the advantage of

knowing an indiscretion committed by the character (the attempted bribe).

Goal: If this tactic fails, it may only be attempted again if the initial bribe is increased by at least 20%. If it fails a second time, the target is not susceptible to bribes and the tactic may not be used again in this challenge. Whether it succeeds or fails, the goal of the conflict must be either action or sway. For sway goals the samurai must reinforce his bribe from time to time, typically once a month or more often. One-tenth of the initial bribe is needed to maintain the sway – if a payment is missed, the target is no longer swayed. However, the samurai automatically knows the target is guilty of an indiscretion (accepting the bribe), which can be used as an advantage in future social conflicts. Of course, the target knows the same about the samurai, which could limit the usefulness of that particular tactic.

Description: Offering money to a target is a powerful incentive to get them to see things your way.

Unfortunately, the more influential or powerful a target is, the larger the bribe must be to achieve the desired result. The following table illustrates approximate appropriate bribe amounts for characters of different levels:

The below figures assume the target has wealth comparable to an average player character of a similar level. If the target does not have this baseline wealth, adjust the figures accordingly; likewise, if you provide player characters with substantially lower treasure, these figures should be lowered.

The figures in the Bribery Table also assume the target is being asked to perform an action or be swayed to a point of view which is moderately detrimental to the target. A guard who is asked to leave a side gate open while he is on watch falls into this category, as is a bureaucrat who is swayed to hide the results of a tax survey. If the target is in considerably less danger (for example, a private security guard who looks the other way long enough for a character to get a good look at

a building), reduce the above figures by one-half. If the target is in no danger if he performs the action or is swayed to the new point of view (such as a guard being bribed to let the characters into an exclusive tea house), reduce the amount of the bribe by 75% or more. On the other hand, if the target is in much greater danger by accepting the bribe (such as a guard who will be executed if his actions are discovered), double the appropriate bribe amount.

Bribery Table

Level	Bribe	Level	Bribe
1	20 gp	11	6,500 gp
2	100 gp	12	8,000 gp
3	300 gp	13	10,000 gp
4	500 gp	14	15,000 gp
5	1,000 gp	15	20,000 gp
6	1,500 gp	16	25,000 gp
7	2,000 gp	17	35,000 gp
8	3,000 gp	18	45,000 gp
9	4,000 gp	19	60,000 gp
10	5,000 gp	20	75,000 gp

Offering a greater sum of money (or items – the bribe can just as easily be a magical item or gem worth the above amount) can improve the chances of a bribe's acceptance. For every 20% increase in the value of the bribe, the samurai receives a +1 bonus to his Bluff roll for this tactic. If the tactic succeeds, it causes 1d6 points of social damage to the target, +1 point for each additional 20% by which the bribe exceeds the standard amount. Thus, as a bribe's value increases, it becomes more likely that it will not only be accepted, but that it will bring the target that much closer to accepting the samurai's social gambit.



Flirt

Skill: Bluff, Will save bonus used for defence.
Attack of Opportunity: No.
Goal: —

Description: This tactic involves using sex appeal and suggestive language to fluster or temporarily confuse a target. This tactic may only be used against targets of the appropriate sexual orientation (that is, the target must be open to seduction by the samurai) and may not be used twice in succession. While sex can certainly help a samurai manipulate a target, overusing flirtation reduces its impact. If the tactic succeeds, the target suffers 1d4 + the samurai's Charisma bonus in social damage. If maximum damage is rolled, the target is also *shocked* by what has occurred and will miss his next action trying to recover his wits.

Logical Assault

Skill: Bluff, Will save bonus used for defence.
Attack of Opportunity: Yes.
Goal: —

Description: This social attack relies on a circuitous set of logical assumptions designed to lead the target into admitting his own ignorance or fallacies in his position. The logical assault can also be used to convince a target of a position's essential goodness or its universal benefit, regardless of the truth of the matter. If this social attack succeeds, the target suffers

1d3 + the attacker's Intelligence modifier in social damage. If the attack fails, however, the target gains 1d3 Social Hit Points and is allowed a social attack of opportunity.

Lure

Skill: Sense Motive, Will save bonus used for defence.
Attack of Opportunity: Yes.
Goal: —

Description: Samurai who use this tactic attempt to draw out their target, using clever words and honeyed phrases to lure the target down a particular conversational path in an attempt to reveal the target's feelings on a particular subject. While this is not particularly dangerous, it does give the samurai information he can use for his next tactic, should this tactic succeed. When this tactic is successful, the target suffers only a single point of social damage, but the samurai gains a circumstance bonus to his next tactic equal to his current Intelligence modifier. If this tactic fails, the target is aware of the samurai's tactic and responds by feeding him false information. The target gains an immediate attack of opportunity and a +2 circumstance bonus due to the misleading route he takes the conversation down.

Reaffirm

Skill: Sense Motive, Will save bonus used for defence.
Attack of Opportunity: Yes.
Goal: —

Description: This defensive technique allows the samurai to recover his confidence and remember his

original position in an argument. If the attack succeeds, the samurai regains 1d4 social hit points, but if it fails he leaves himself open for attack – his opponent gains a +2 circumstance bonus on his next social attack.

Threaten

Skill: Intimidation, Will save bonus used for defence.

Attack of Opportunity: Yes.

Goal: Use of this tactic destroys any chance of achieving any goal other than action.

Description: Use of this technique is a mark of desperation. Breaking the social convention of any meeting, it involves the direct threat of physical violence to be delivered at some later time. If successful, this tactic provides the samurai with a Circumstance bonus equal to his Strength on his next social attack. Note that use of this skill requires the samurai to change his goal to an action goal, regardless of how the conflict started. Note, too, that the samurai will suffer a loss of 1 point of honour if the target is of a lower level than himself as the rest of the court frowns upon his actions.

MULTIPLE COMBATANTS

When there is more than a single social combatant on a side, each side must select one of the battlers as its champion. The champion makes all attacks and is the

target for all opposing attacks. The allies simply assist the champions – during each attack, the allies all make the required skill roll against a difficulty of 10. For every ally who succeeds, the champion gains a +1 bonus to the current attack roll. Clearly, the side with the most combatants is at an advantage, though a charismatic samurai can overcome even a large disparity in numbers.

RUNNING THE SOCIAL COMBAT

Social conflicts are, by their very nature, open to some interpretation by the Games Master. The goal of this system is to allow a tactical, but still abstract, system for handling social conflicts. In this way, samurai can engage in political intrigues, contests of verbal wit and other courtly proceedings. The benefit lies in the way in which even players who are not skilled at verbal interplay can take on the role of a samurai glib enough to manipulate the nobles around him.

To make best use of this system, the Games Master should have some idea of how the various members of the daimyo's court get along and what their individual goals are. When in doubt – make something up and take notes! With this system you do not have to know the details, only the broad strokes are necessary. If the samurai are seeking permission to treasure hunt in the daimyo's territory, then they need to sway a local official of their good intent. Need to requisition a few extra horses for a trip? Engage the local stablemaster in a quick social conflict and with an Action goal.

Again, this system is designed to allow Games Masters and players a way to play out social interactions in an interesting, entertaining manner. Those characters with social skills will excel in social combats, while those who are more physical may find themselves out of their depth. This sort of interaction between different types of samurai is one of the key elements in samurai history – it was not always the strongest who won out, but those with the right connections and the ear of the daimyo.



MYTHIC BLADES — THE KATANA

For the samurai, his katana is much more than just a sword. It is an extension of his being, a metallic representation of his will and training. Treated as a living thing, the katana rewards its wielder with the ability to perform far beyond the capabilities of any mere sword. The oldest and most powerful katana approach the power of artefacts, but only in the hands of a talented, honourable samurai.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WEAPON

Few things evoke the essence of the samurai more than the katana. This weapon is not a simple sword, but a work of art crafted by the most skilful and honourable smiths in the land. For our purposes, the katana is a weapon with great spiritual significance – it becomes a channel for the samurai's ki and an expression of his very self. Because of this, each katana is forged for a particular samurai and no two are exactly alike. What they do share, however, are some traditional elements which are detailed below:

The Blade of the Katana

Typically, a katana has a curved blade, roughly 3 feet in length. For samurai of more diminutive stature, smaller weapons exist – halflings and gnomes both use blades between 18 and 24 inches in length. Formed through a long, convoluted process of folding and reforging, the blades of katana are quite strong and flexible, retaining an edge without succumbing to the brittleness seen in many other swords.

The basic parts of a katana blade are as follows:

Kissaki: The chisel-like tip of the katana. Though few samurai thrust with their blades (most fighting styles tend toward slashing or slicing actions), the point of the katana is quite capable of punching through the joints in most types of armour.

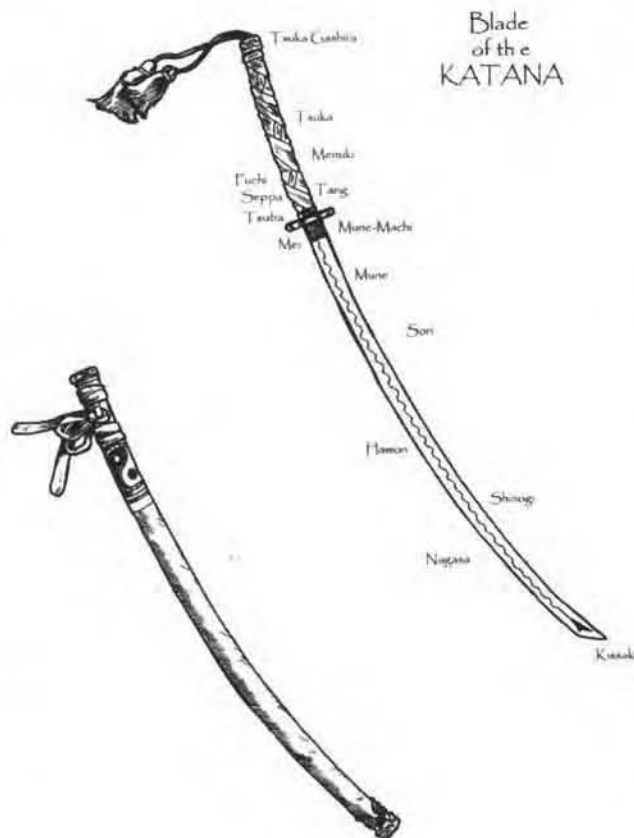
Shinogi: The ridgeline of the blade. This line marks the separation between the cutting edge of the blade and the rest of the blade (the shinogiji is used to refer to the portion of the blade above the shinogi).

Hamon: This is the hardened, cutting edge of the blade. The hamon is typically marked by a wavy or speckled pattern within the metal. This pattern results from the forging method of the katana and is often used to identify a blade as the work of a particular smith.

Sori: This is not actually part of the weapon, but is the measure of the blade's curvature. The sori of a blade is designed to allow the wielder to apply maximum force to each of his slashing attacks and is calculated by an arcane series of mathematics involving the height and weight of the katana's wielder and the length of the blade.

Nagasa: The length of the blade is determined by the height and strength of the samurai in question. The nagasa (or length) varies slightly, but critically, from katana to katana.

Mune: The hard back edge of the katana is known as the mune. This spine of the weapon is much thicker than the cutting edge and helps to give the katana its strength.



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Mune-Machi: The notch on the back of the blade which marks the beginning of the tang. Only the area from this point forward on the katana will be seen – the rest is hidden within the hilt.

Mei: The signature of the smith who created the weapon, found on the tang. Samurai, being a traditional group, prefer to have their weapons made by the same smith whenever a replacement is needed. In this way, successful smiths earn a reputation and are assured of repeat business from their customers. Dishonest merchants may attempt to forge the mei on a blade, using amateur smiths and giving them the signature of a master. Samurai who discover such forgeries often seek the death of the merchant to protect the reputation of expert smiths.

Tang: The tang of the weapon is the base of the katana around which the hilt is fashioned. Though hidden from sight, this piece of the blade is regarded as one of the most critical due to its proximity to the samurai's hand.

The Hilt of the Katana

As is befitting a blade of this style, the hilt of the katana is an elaborate piece constructed in several stages. The primary pieces of the hilt are described below:

Tsuka Gashira: This fitting is at the tip of the hilt and is used to hold the rest of the hilt together. Often very elaborate and crafted by a master artisan itself, the tsuka gashira is quite visible when the katana is in its sheath.

Tsuka: This is the handle itself. It is composed of two pieces of wood wrapped in a ray or shark skin, then wrapped again with silk, cotton, or leather ribbon. In areas where rays are not found, other types of durable, supple animal hide or used.

Menuki: These metal carvings are placed beneath the wrappings on the tsuka and provide a more stable grip for the samurai.

Fuchi: The second fitting for the *tsuka*, the *fuchi*, along with the *tsuka gashira* hold the hole handle together. The *fuchi* is found at the top of the hilt, just below the *seppa*.

Seppa: The *seppa* is a metal spacer which is used to ensure a proper fit between the *tsuka*, the *tsuba* and the blade of the katana.

Tsuba: The *tsuba* is the sword guard. It is typically a circular piece of metal which is treated as a work of art in its own right. Constructed most often from iron or steel, *tsuba* of adamantite, mithral and other exotic metals are very popular amongst the highest-ranking and wealthiest samurai.

FORGING THE KATANA

Creating a katana takes months of work for the blade and weeks longer to complete the finishing touches and construct the hilt of the weapon. In times of war, this can be accelerated somewhat, but the wise samurai takes pains to keep spare weapons on hand should he need another in a rush. Trying to get a replacement weapon forged in a rush is doomed to failure – the weapon would be an inferior piece at best and one which a master smith would be ashamed to allow into service. As with most things involving the samurai, planning ahead is the only way to ensure success. It is not at all uncommon for a samurai to have four or five spare weapons stored in his home, each forged by the same smith and waiting for its chance to be proven upon the battlefield.

The process for forging a katana is briefly examined below. While the entirety of the process is not described, enough is presented here to allow samurai who wish to forge their own blades (a not-inconsiderable number) to do so.



Materials of the Blade

The iron used in the construction of katana is gathered from black sand found along certain rivers and streams. The iron is extracted from this sand using magnets or magical means, resulting in a concentration of very fine, very pure iron. The same type of iron may be found in different locations in different campaign worlds: iron extracted by powerful magnets over running lava flows and metals pulled from the deepest caverns of the underearth are both good examples. The important factor is the rarity and purity of the metal as the harder it is to get the stuff, the more likely it is to be used by the samurai.

Roughly ten pounds of this special iron is needed to craft the weapon. The iron is then smelted using a charcoal fire. This process takes roughly two weeks, during which time the iron is strengthened by the gradual insinuation of carbon particles into the metal. This transforms the durable metal into steel which can hold an edge more easily than iron.

Refining the iron requires a Craft (weaponsmith) check (DC 20). The base price of the iron is 500 gp and a skill check is allowed only every two weeks, rather than every week. The rest of the Craft rules (found in *Core Rulebook I*) are followed. When the iron has been transformed into steel for a katana, the folding begins.

Folding

The steel created in the preceding step is flattened into squares and each square is then folded fifteen to twenty times. Folding is accomplished by heating the square of steel, then cutting it nearly in half and folding the two pieces together and hammering them flat again. This process strengthens the metal and creates the distinctive pattern found on expertly forged katanas.

As the folding continues, different strengths of steel are folded into the mass of the blade. The curved cutting edge is comprised entirely of a very sharp, very hard steel which is still light and somewhat flexible. The interior and back edge of the blade is composed of heavier, softer steels which provide the katana with a solid body and reduce the brittleness which would otherwise exist in the blade. The result, then, is a blade with a V-shaped cross section with the hardest metals on the point and ascending up the sides and the interior filled with a more durable, less brittle steel.

As with refining the iron, folding is a Craft (weaponsmith) skill use (DC 20). The base price of the weapon in this case is considered 1,000 gp and a skill check is again only allowed every two weeks. The rest of the Craft rules (found in *Core rulebook I*) are followed as per normal.

When this process is complete, the blade of the katana is finished and may be bound in a hilt.

The Hilt

A katana's hilt is almost as important as the blade itself. The standard rules for Crafting are used to create a hilt, which may be constructed using the Craft (weaponsmith) skill or the Craft (metalworking) skill. The DC is 20, as for the katana itself, and the base price of the handle is 200 gp.

Katanas are very difficult to make, not to mention extremely expensive, but they have benefits not available to other weapons, as can be seen from the rest of this chapter.

PROPERTIES OF THE KATANA

The katana becomes so much a part of its master it is able to transform the images in his head into combat manoeuvres in a way other blades can not. When used by a samurai, the katana is transformed and becomes less a weapon than a living spirit of battle which exists only to serve its master. In this section, the different ways a katana may be enhanced are explained, along with information on the bond between the samurai and his weapon.

Magical Abilities

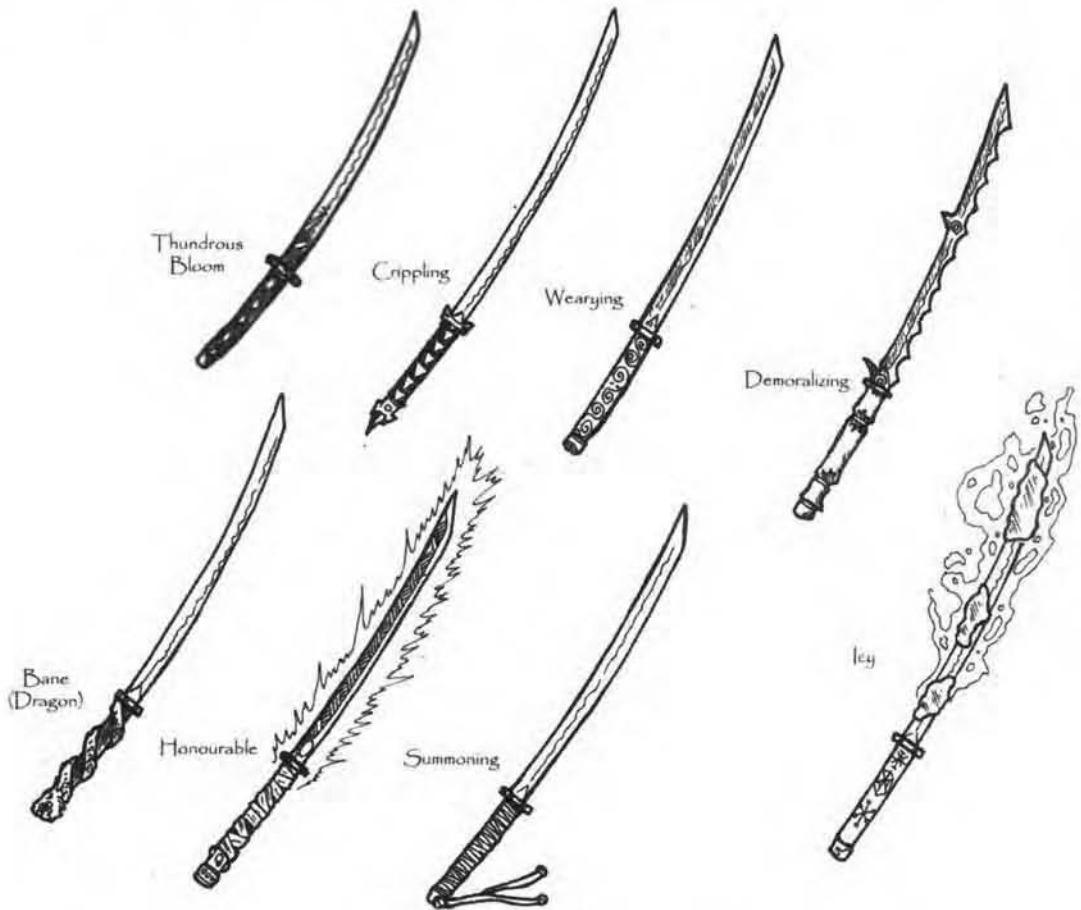
Because a samurai is forbidden to use other weapons besides his katana and wakizashi, it is necessary to introduce a way for the weapon to be enhanced rather than requiring the samurai to replace it. In this section, we explore the ways in which the samurai may increase the power of his katana, imbuing it with magical abilities powered by his own spirit. It is important to note that very few of these abilities are permanent. Rather, they are activated as they are needed by the samurai and remain in effect as long as he wishes to continue powering them through the power of his ki.

Enhancement Bonus

As the samurai increases in experience, his weapon must also grow in its ability to damage creatures which



MYTHIC BLADES - THE KATANA



are resistant to damage from mundane weapons. The table below illustrates the enhancements available to the samurai at each level and the ki cost for using those abilities.

Katana Enhancement Table

Samurai Level	Enhancement Bonus	Ki/Minute
1-3	0	0
4-6	+1	5
7-10	+2	10
11-13	+3	10
14-15	+4	15
16+	+5	15

Specific feats may be used by the samurai to increase the enhancements available at a given level, but the table above presents the basic enhancement bonuses the samurai may imbue his weapon with at each level.

To activate one of these enhancement bonuses, the samurai must spend a full-round action to channel his ki into the blade. Once the ki is paid, the katana gains the appropriate enhancement bonus (which applies to both attack and damage rolls), which persists for one minute. At the end of this minute, the samurai may use

a free action to pay the ki cost again and retain the bonus for another minute. If the samurai does not pay the cost, the enhancement bonus is lost at the end of the current round and the samurai must use a full-round action in the following round if he wishes to reactivate the bonus.

Katana Special Qualities

A katana may possess any of the special abilities found in other magical weapons and may even have a wider variety of different qualities than other magical weapons. The limitation, of course, is that the samurai must power his weapon with his own ki, a draining, potentially deadly, cost. Each of the special qualities available to a samurai's katana are noted below, along with their ki costs. As with the enhancement bonuses, a samurai must spend a full-round action activating each of the special qualities and must pay the ki cost for each.

A samurai is allowed to select a single special quality for his katana at 4th, 10th, 16th, 18th and 20th level. The katana may manifest these qualities, and no others, at the costs listed below. If the samurai wishes to purchase further special qualities for the katana, he

must either acquire them through the Ancestral Katana feat or by using the Related Powers feat. Unless the wielder also possesses the Ancestral Channel feat, he may never have more than one special quality active for every 5 character levels he possesses. If he activates another ability, the first ability activated immediately ends to give way for the new quality.

Acidic: When activated, this sheathes the katana in a highly corrosive layer of acid, which causes an additional 1d6 hit points of acid damage on a successful hit. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Acidic Burst: Once activated, this ability has no effect until a critical hit is scored. At that point, the katana causes an additional 1d10 hit points of acidic damage. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Acidic Bloom: When this ability is activated, it has no effect until a critical hit is scored. At that point, a sphere of acid bursts from around the wielder, causing an additional 1d10 hit points of acid damage to all targets within 5 feet of the katana's wielder. **Cost:** 15 ki/minute.

Bane: The type of creature against which this ability works is determined the first time this quality is used by the samurai. Thus, a katana which is given this ability for the first time when fighting skeletons would become an *undead bane* weapon. If more than one type of creature is available during the first activation, the samurai is allowed to select which creature type the weapon is most effective against. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Brilliant Energy: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 20 ki/minute.

Concealed: When activated, this ability reduces the katana to a simple piece of jewellery, typically a holy symbol of some sort. This ability persists until the samurai pays the activation cost again and the katana returns to its normal size and shape. **Cost:** 10 ki to conceal, an additional 10 ki to return to normal shape.

Crippling: Activating this ability imbues the katana with the deadly ability to reduce a target's physical attributes. When this weapon causes a critical hit, the target suffers the temporary loss of 1 point of either Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity for every 10 points of damage caused by the attack. Determine which of the three abilities is reduced by rolling 1d6: 1-2 is Strength, 3-4 is Constitution and 5-6 is Dexterity. This ability loss may be restored through normal rest or magical means. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute + 10 ki/critical hit.

Defender: This quality may only be activated if the katana currently has an enhancement bonus activated. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Daimyo's Honour: When this ability is activated, the katana receives an enhancement bonus equal to the samurai's daimyo's honour divided by 5. Note that this ability may not be used if another enhancement bonus is currently activated for the katana. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Demoralising: The injuries caused by this katana are horrible in appearance, though they are no more deadly than those inflicted by any other katana. All enemies above animal intelligence who see an injury caused by this weapon must make a Will save (DC 15 + level of samurai) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attack and damage rolls. A given creature may only be affected by this quality once per day and the effects persist until the combat in which the quality is witnessed ends. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Flaming: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Flaming Burst: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Frost: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Ghost Touch: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Honourable: This weapon uses the honour of the samurai to increase its ability to damage foes. When activated, the katana causes an additional 1 point of damage for every 2 points in difference between the honour of the samurai and the honour of the target. **Cost:** 20 ki/minute.

Icy: When this ability is activated, the katana is sheathed in an aura of frigid cold that adds +1d6 hit points of cold damage to the weapon's normal damage on a successful hit. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Icy Burst: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Icy Bloom: When activated, this quality has no effect until the samurai wielding the katana scores a critical hit. At that point, a sphere of icy cold blasts out from the katana, causing an additional 1d10 hit points of cold damage to every target within 5 feet of the wielder. **Cost:** 15 ki/minute.

MYTHIC BLADES - THE KATANA

Keen: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Mighty Cleaving: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Shock: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Shocking Burst: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute.

Shocking Bloom: When this quality is activated, it has no effect until the wielder scores a critical hit. At that time, a sphere of electricity radiates out from the wielder, causing an additional 1d10 hit points of electrical damage to all creatures within 5 feet of the wielder. **Cost:** 15 ki/minute.

Speed: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 20 ki/minute.

Stunning: Any critical hit caused by a katana with this ability activated requires the target to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + samurai's level) or be stunned for the remainder of this round and the entire following round. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute + 10 ki/critical hit.

Summoning: This quality prevents the samurai from ever permanently losing his weapon. As long as he is on the same plane of existence as the katana, paying the activation cost for the weapon brings it to his hand. This quality may be thwarted by antimagic fields or other means to prevent or restrict teleportation. This ability requires the permanent expenditure of 10 ki in order to activate the ability for

the first time. Future activations require 20 ki per use. **Cost:** 10 ki permanent/20 ki per activation.

Thunderclap: When activated, this quality grants the weapon an additional 1d6 points of sonic damage on each successful attack. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

Thundering: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 10 ki/minute

Thunderous Bloom: When activated, this quality causes no additional effects until the wielder inflicts a critical hit on a target. At this point, the attack causes an additional 1d10 hit points of sonic damage to all creatures within 5 feet of the katana's wielder as a blast of thunder roars outward from the point of impact. **Cost:** 15 ki/minute.

Vorpal: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 25 ki/minute.

Wearying: When this ability is activated, the katana does not cause normal damage. Instead, on a successful strike, the target must make a successful Fortitude Save (DC 10 + samurai's level) or become *fatigued*. If this weapon strikes a fatigued target again, no further effects are generated, unless the attack is a critical hit. On a critical hit, fatigued targets must make another Fortitude save (DC 10 + samurai's level) or become exhausted. **Cost:** 15 ki/minute.

Wounding: This quality works in the katana just as noted in *Core rulebook II*. **Cost:** 5 ki/minute.

As a guideline, other weapon special powers should cost five ki per minute per +1 of enhancement bonus.

Tulkas lowered his head and released a painful sigh. 'We are never going to get out of this mess.' The ranger had suffered the worst of the torture at the hands of the mind flayers. Though his companions were in poor shape themselves, his spirit seemed broken.

'To admit defeat is to be defeated.' Galis, the young elven samurai, shook her head at the ranger. 'These creatures are dangerous, it is true, but we are far from defenceless. We will escape.'

Spitting a phlegmy glob of blood into the corner, the ranger scowled at the samurai and her bound hands. 'You have no armour. Your precious katana -'

Then he stopped as the air inside the damp cell grew unnaturally still and a trembling wave of heat rose in a wavering pillar behind Galis. The sound of ropes being slashed through was abrupt and harsh in the silence. Galis smirked and removed her arms from behind her back, the glittering length of her katana lying across her palms. 'My precious katana, my friend, is right here.' She turned back towards the door and crouched into a battle posture, the blade curving back over her head in preparation for a vicious downward slash. 'Prepare yourselves. Our jailers come, and vengeance is close at hand.'

SHIRO — CASTLES OF THE DAIMYO

In samurai society, a leader cannot lead without a stronghold from which to proclaim his strength. Serving as a defensive structure, a beautiful estate, and the barracks for his loyal samurai, the daimyo's castle is a symbol of his prestige and power. Though all samurai yearn for a castle of their own, building such a structure is a certain way to draw the attention of other, more powerful daimyo. When a samurai builds his castle, he must be prepared to defend it against rivals who have no wish to see such a structure rising near their own lands.

The clever samurai seeks out an area isolated from other daimyo, preferably one with many geographical boundaries to keep hostile armies from his gates. Mountain-top castles are among the most easily defensible and their commanding view of their surroundings makes them very desirable as marks of prestige in addition to the tactical advantages they provide. To further protect their castles, the daimyos construct elaborate walled courtyards which are connected by gates and barred staircases and ramps. The bewildering array of walled areas make it difficult for intruders to find their way to the central keep of the castle and allow the daimyo to present different areas to his guests at different times and for different purposes. The most highly appreciated castles are those with many mysterious areas, which are revealed to the visitor over the course of many explorations and tours of the castle. A status-conscious daimyo must constantly update and reorganise the layout of his courtyards surrounding the keep, providing new and interesting spectacles for returning guests.

On top of all the elaborate designs and clever architecture, these castles must also serve a practical purpose. The people of the area come to rely on the samurai of the daimyo for defence and for employment. A single samurai can support many families of peasants through the services he requires, and an entire small town can survive in the shadow of a large castle simply by providing needed labour and other menial services for the lord of the castle. In this chapter, information is provided on constructing a castle similar to those built by the historical samurai

and those enhancements suitable for traditional fantasy campaigns.

PERMISSION

It's generally not a good idea to just hare off in search of a site on which to build a castle without discussing the proposition with your daimyo, first. While ronin are certainly capable of starting construction of their castles without input from the local leaders, doing so is bound to irritate the daimyos, most of which are going to have a large number of samurai at their disposal.

The wiser option is to consult with the local political powers and make your intentions known. For samurai with an established daimyo, this is a relatively straightforward process. In most samurai societies, a lord is only allowed direct control over a single castle — by allowing his subordinates to build castles along the edges of his territory, he increases the range of his indirect control and protects himself from his enemies. A samurai with honour of at least 10 will rarely be denied permission to construct a castle at the periphery of his lord's domain. Those with lower honour will likely need to complete a quest or perform some service for their daimyo before he allows them to build fortifications.

For a ronin, the situation is more difficult. Consulting with local daimyo is likely to result in, at best, a polite rebuff at his overtures for construction. The lords have no desire to allow another of their kind into the area, especially when doing so may curtail their own expansion at some later date. Any ronin who begins building within a day's travel (the actual distance varies by terrain) of another daimyo's borders is just asking for trouble. Roll once during each month of construction on the table overleaf to determine the outcome of this risky move.

LOCATION AND TYPE

Samurai constructing a castle prefer to do so in wilderness areas where they will not come into immediate conflict with rivals. As noted previously, mountainous areas are favoured for their isolation, rugged terrain, and ready supply of building materials. When mountainous areas are not available, for whatever reason, the samurai attempt to build on hills, or rarely, on the plains near a river or other defensible feature. The three most common types of samurai castle, or shiro, are:



Ronin Construction Events Table

D20 Roll	Result
1-5	No event.
6 - 10	Scouts. A group of 1d6 scouts (samurai of 1d3 levels each) arrive to take a look at what's happening near their territory. If these samurai are left to their own devices, there are no modifiers to future rolls. If they are attacked or killed however, apply +5 to any future rolls on this table.
11 - 13	Saboteurs. A group of hired thugs (2d4 rogues of 1d4 levels each) attempt to sneak into the camp one night and sabotage the workings. If they are not caught, they increase the construction time of the castle by 10% and the cost by 20%.
14 - 16	Fire Archers. A group of archers (2d6 samurai of 2d4 levels each) begin firing flaming arrows into the construction site in an attempt to set the infrastructure alight. For each attack of theirs which hits Armour Class 15, the castle's construction time is increased by 1% and the cost of construction is increased by 2%. If attacked, the samurai defend themselves as they retreat to their own territory.
17	Armed attack. A contingent of attackers moves to put a stop to the construction - permanently. 2d4 samurai of 2d6 levels each arrive and issue a challenge to the ronin in charge of the castle. He may choose to either fight their champion or may bring men of his own to meet them in open battle. If the samurai are defeated, the ronin will be allowed to continue building his castle (provided there are no other daimyo with an interest in stopping the project) but if he is defeated his foes will have him killed for his presumptions.
18	Offer of allegiance. The ronin is given the opportunity to swear allegiance to a local daimyo. If he agrees, the assaults will stop and the ronin must return to the core samurai class as soon as possible. If he declines the offer, however, next month's event will be an armed attack (17, above).
19	Assassin. An assassin (equal in level to the ronin) is dispatched to kill the upstart once and for all. Killing the assassin will give the ronin some respite (there will be one month with no events) but offers no protection against future attacks.
20	Subversion: A local daimyo uses political and economic pressure to stop the construction of the castle. In essence, he offers the workers who are building the castle more money to come and work for him. The ronin may keep his workers, but doing so increases the cost of construction by 20%. If the ronin decides to get all new workers, he will lose time finding those willing to work for him and will still have to pay 20% extra to keep them from deserting the project.

Once a samurai has secured permission (or is willing to accept the consequences for not getting the co-operation of other daimyos), work on the castle may begin. The first step is to find a suitable location.

† **Yamajiro:** This mountaintop castle is the favourite amongst the daimyo.

† **Hirayamajiro:** The main keep of this type of castle is constructed on a hill, with the rest of the castle built around the base of the hill and extensive moats are constructed for defence.

† **Hirajiro:** The least common type of samurai castle, this fortification is constructed on the plains. In most cases, castles of this type are built as mercantile and political centres first, and defensive structures second. Important daimyos, sheltered from attack by the placement of their allies' castles, are more likely to construct castles of this type as a sign of their confidence and as a way to encourage trade by offering ready protection to merchants.

Regardless of the type of castle being built, the samurai lays claim to all the area around it. To be precise, each shiro controls a circular area with a diameter equal to the samurai's current level or honour, whichever is higher. This territory is considered the sole province of the controlling daimyo and any infringement upon the territory can be viewed as an act of war. As a daimyo increases in level, his territory may increase as well, but it may not grow so large as to infringe upon the territory of another lord due to a level increase. Planning ahead is crucial for the samurai, who benefits most from selecting a wide open territory, empty of nearby samurai, in which to settle. The larger an area is, of course, the more difficult it is for the new daimyo to clear of hostile forces, which must be done before construction of the castle can begin.

CLEARING THE TERRITORY

Samurai cannot settle in an area overrun with monsters or other hazards. Before construction can begin, it is important to remove the major threats from the area to ensure the safety of construction workers. The table below presents the potential number of threats in areas of a given size.

Threats by Territory Size Table

Territory Diameter (in miles)	Threats
5	1
6	1
7	2
8	3
9	3
10	4
11	5
12	6
13	7
14	8
15	9
16	10
17	11
18	13
19	14
20	16

The exact nature of a threat is determined by the Games Master but should prove a challenge for the daimyo. In more civilised areas, the threat is likely to be bandits or perhaps a sinister wizard or cleric. In the more remote areas, more monstrous threats are common, such as reclusive dragons, bands of goblinoids, and other threats that rear their ugly heads.

In general, one-half of the threats in an area should have a Challenge Rating from one-half to three-quarters of the new daimyo's level. A quarter of all threats should range from three-quarters to equal to the new daimyo's level and the remainder should have Challenge Ratings equal to the daimyo's level or higher. In no case should a threat have a CR more than 4 levels above the daimyo's current level – threats of this nature are so dire even the most courageous samurai would be unlikely to attempt to construct a castle in the area.

Once a samurai has dealt with all the threats in his new territory, the construction process may begin.

THE VALUE OF LAND

When a daimyo controls a territory, he begins making income from those who dwell within his lands. The table below indicates the amount of tax income a samurai can expect from a territory of a given size and population in a given month. While the Games Master is the final arbiter of how much income a territory produces, the table below should provide a good beginning guideline.

CONSTRUCTION

The castles of the samurai are not the massive structures of stone favoured by other types of warlord. Instead, the samurai rely on a greater number of thinner, more flexible walls to protect their numbers. Because samurai are not prone to hiding behind castle walls, in any case, sieges are few and the castles are only rarely attacked. When a samurai becomes aware of an approaching army, his first instinct is to attack or negotiate, which removes the need for castles to be able to withstand siege engines. Instead, the shiro are built to confuse and discourage attackers and are constructed as much for aesthetics and prestige as physical defence.

Most samurai castles are constructed primarily of wood and plaster, with stone walls surrounding and supporting the central keep. There are several areas of importance to consider when constructing a shiro, each of which is discussed in some detail below.

Income by Territory Size

Radius (miles)	Heavy Population	Moderate Population	Sparse Population	Wilderness
5	3,000 gp	2,400 gp	1,200 gp	240 gp
6	4,200 gp	3,360 gp	1,680 gp	336 gp
7	5,700 gp	4,560 gp	2,280 gp	456 gp
8	7,500 gp	6,000 gp	3,000 gp	600 gp
9	9,600 gp	7,680 gp	3,840 gp	768 gp
10	11,850 gp	9,480 gp	4,740 gp	948 gp
11	14,250 gp	11,400 gp	5,700 gp	1,140 gp
12	16,950 gp	13,560 gp	6,780 gp	1,356 gp
13	19,950 gp	15,960 gp	7,980 gp	1,596 gp
14	23,100 gp	18,480 gp	9,240 gp	1,848 gp
15	26,550 gp	21,240 gp	10,620 gp	2,124 gp
16	30,150 gp	24,120 gp	12,060 gp	2,412 gp
17	34,050 gp	27,240 gp	13,620 gp	2,724 gp
18	38,100 gp	30,480 gp	15,240 gp	3,048 gp
19	42,600 gp	34,080 gp	17,040 gp	3,408 gp
20	47,100 gp	37,680 gp	18,840 gp	3,768 gp

SHIRO - CASTLES OF THE DAIMYO

Tenshu: The tenshu is the central keep of any shiro. Constructed of wood and plaster, the entire tenshu is constructed around a central pillar which extends upward from the foundation to the highest, central point in the keep. The central pillar is completely concealed once the tenshu is finished, though its location is most often discernible by the way in which the rest of the floors and corridors radiate outward from it. Secret doors and hidden passageways are crucial parts of a tenshu's structure and are factored into the cost. High gables

Construction List

Construction	Cost	Height	Width	Length	Structure Points
Yagura Mon	4,500 gp	30 ft.	20 ft.	50 ft.	300
Korai Mon	3,000 gp	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	75
Tenshu	80,000 gp	80 ft.	40 ft.	40 ft.	700
Hori	500 gp	20 ft.	20 ft.	100 ft.	-
Outbuilding	600 gp	10 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	-
Sumiyagura	8,000 gp	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	300
Underground corridor	150 gp	10 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	-
Ishikagi	4,000 gp	20 ft.	30 ft.	100 ft.	300
Dobei	100 gp	10 ft.	2 ft.	100 ft.	50

and crests are used to increase the height and grandeur of the tenshu, increasing its appearance of power and prestige.



Ishikagi: Walls are an important part of the shiro. Laid out in elaborate patterns, the walls formed numerous isolated compounds, each of which serves as a choke-point for potential invaders. The gates between each compound were always offset from one another at 90 degrees, preventing a concerted charge from one gate to the other. The invaders would, at best, have to make a right-angle turn after each breach and the ensuing confusion over which direction to turn gives defenders a chance to pummel the interlopers with arrow fire or magical assaults.

Ishikagi are constructed by first creating thick earthen ramparts which slope upward from a thick base to a thinner, flat top. Interlocking layers of stone are then seated in the dirt. Because mortar is not used, the walls are able to flex when stressed, which reduces the damage caused by siege engines or earthquakes by one-half. In general, Ishikagi are 30 feet wide at the base, 20 feet high, and 15 feet wide at the top. The natural slope of the walls is gradual at the base but approaches vertical very quickly.

Dobei: These walls are built by layering plaster over a framework of bamboo or bundled reeds. They are typically constructed along the outer edge of the tops of the ishikagi and serve as cover for guards moving between towers. Samas penetrate this wall at irregular intervals, providing oval openings through which defending archers may fire arrows down on the invaders. Dobei are also built inside the courtyards of a shiro to form mazes which confound invaders. A well designed series of dobei within a courtyard forms a gauntlet through which invaders must travel, being pelted from all sides by arrows fired and spears thrust through the samas.

Korai Mon: The most common gate within the shiro, this two-story structure is constructed of plastered wood. Bands of iron are used to reinforce the gate on both sides and the upper story contains a pair of samurai who may fire arrows through the samas in the floor to deter invaders.

Yagura Mon: The largest gatehouse in the shiro, this two-storey structure is wider and taller than the Korai Mon. The yagura mon is generally used at the main entrance to the shiro and where any gate faces the courtyard of the tenshu. As many as ten archers can be stationed in the upper storey of the yagura mon. Armed with bows, they can fire arrows down into the bodies of invaders in an attempt to slow or stop an invasion. The massive wooden gates are closed using a complex gear system and are bound in iron to further reinforce them. Thick layers of resin prevent the yagura mon from burning should intruders attempt that trick.

Sumiyagura: These corner towers are used by archers to pin down invaders and by watchmen to keep an eye on roads leading to the shiro. Where possible, they also serve as the home for large signalling mirrors, which are useful for sending messages between shiro where line of sight is not obstructed. Like the other buildings in a shiro, the walls and floor of a sumiyagura are constructed from wood. The walls are then plated with layers of plaster and reeds for fireproofing.

Hori: Moats are a popular part of samurai castles, not only for their defensive protection, but also because of their soothing effect on the inhabitants. Where possible, the shiro uses streams or rivers to provide fresh water for their moats, bringing a bit of comfort and serenity into the grounds of the shiro itself. Ornamental fish and water flowers are a frequent addition to the hori, which are also landscaping elements in the design of the various courtyards of a shiro.

Underground Tunnels: The samurai love surprises in their castles, especially those which serve a tactical purpose. Underground tunnels are especially prevalent in long standing shiro, where engineers can create elaborate subterranean mazes through which defending samurai may move quickly and quietly. More than one attacker has suffered a tragic loss when a contingent of samurai appeared behind them, thanks to the well-designed underground tunnels.



DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF THE SHIRO

The shiro is not merely a collection of walls and towers. The shiro serves as a vital cultural centre and entire cities spring up around it. Many daimyo, in fact, encourage the citizenry to build walls of their own, attaching them to the main walls of the shiro and extending the maze of courtyards, winding streets and open spaces for miles around the tenshu. When properly constructed, the shiro becomes a massive, sprawling structure which is difficult, if not impossible, to invade successfully.

The military centre of the shiro is the tenshu. When a shiro is first constructed, it is likely that the tenshu is the physical centre as well. The daimyo's tower sits atop the highest point of the shiro and is surrounded by an open courtyard bounded by ishikagi. In the most elaborate examples, sumiyagura rest inside this courtyard and are attached to the tenshu via ishikagi walls screened by dobei.

SHIRO - CASTLES OF THE DAIMYO

Surrounding the tenshu is the honmaru, an inner fortified compound. The compound is often composed of many courtyards separated by ishikagi, with access to each restricted by one or more gates. Hori cut through the honmaru at irregular intervals to create a confusing array of islands and dobei screens make navigating the interior even more difficult for outsiders. Wooden outbuildings are also found in the honmaru, with most serving as homes for the samurai serving the daimyo.

Outside of the honmaru, the ninomaru was another ring of defensive courtyards. The majority of these were left open with many pools, small shrines, and meditation gardens found within. Hori and dobei are the main defences here, with the reed walls used to hide the precise location of the ishikagi and the various gates.

The final perimeter of courtyards and walls is the sannomaru. When first constructed, this area is used to house favoured advisors and craftsman. As time passes, however, the sannomaru becomes a convoluted mess of interlocking courtyards and buildings. When the daimyo allows citizens to construct their own additions to the sannomaru, he both defrays the cost of adding to his shiro and creates a warren of defensible alleys and buildings.



Overall, the shiro is a larger and more defensible structure than its European counterpart. By including the peasants and merchants in the interior of the shiro, the daimyo is able to expand his castle very quickly and the use of less-expensive materials allows construction to proceed rapidly. Despite this, the shiro's individual components are considerably weaker than the stone and mortar constructions found in European cultures, which can be a definite drawback when facing siege engines or spells of mass destruction.

STAFF OF THE SHIRO

Unlike feudal castles, there are fewer positions of employment within the shiro. Samurai fill most of the military positions, with only the madoshi being granted to a non-samurai. On the other hand, civilian experts of all kinds are hired by the daimyo on an as-needed basis to fulfil roles within the shiro. Though there are no chefs, grooms, or other non-military tasks listed in the table below, these positions are still filled by individuals hired by the samurai to care for their needs. In this way, the daimyo is sure that the money from his samurai is making its way back into the community he oversees and the samurai are encouraged to deal more directly with the people of the shiro.

Staff Member	Cost per Month
Ashigaru	5 gp
Gusuko Bugyo	125 gp
Hihiiin Bugyo	100 gp
Hyubo Sho	2,000 gp
Kuni Bugyo	125 gp
Madoshi	800 gp
Yumi Ya Bugyo	100 gp

Ashigaru: These footsoldiers make up the bulk of the fighting force within a shiro. It is expected the daimyo maintains a force of these light foot fighters equal to 10% of the shiro's civilian population (roughly 100 civilians per mile of the daimyo's immediate territory live within the shiro).

Gusuko Bugyo: This man is in charge of all armour within the shiro. Though most samurai prefer to maintain their own equipment, the gusuko bugyo is responsible for ensuring a steady supply of replacement pieces and the armour worn by the ashigaru. One gusuko bugyo is needed for every 100 armed men within the shiro – if fewer gusuko bugyo are available, all armed men within suffer a -1 Armour Class penalty due to the poor repair of their armour until enough gusuko bugyo are hired.

Hihiiin Bugyo: This man is in charge of the horses within the shiro. One hihiiin bugyo is required for every 20 horses kept within the castle. When there are not enough hihiiin bugyo, all samurai suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all Ride skill checks until there are enough hihiiin bugyo to care for all the horses.

Hyubo Sho: The leader of the shiro's military forces. The responsibilities of this position are varied and require a great deal of versatility. From commanding the military defences of the shiro to overseeing the training of new samurai, the hyubo sho is expected to lead his men by example and is responsible for their every action. Few samurai last long in this office, most retire after a few years of loyal, if stressful, service. The hyubo sho is a samurai of level equal to half the daimyo's level.

Kuni Bugyo: Because the shiro is a city unto itself, there is a need for law enforcement. Younger samurai and those who are too injured to be of use in a real battle are often assigned police duty. The Kuni Bugyo oversees the operation of these units of samurai and is responsible for eradicating crime wherever it rears its head in the shiro.

Madoshi: The madoshi oversees the magical and alchemical needs of the daimyo. This wizard is able to create potions or magical items, at the discretion of the Games Master, but is most often charged with protecting the shiro from magical attack. A madoshi is always one-half the level the daimyo's level.

Yumi Ya Bugyo: This officer oversees the weaponry of the shiro - though his position does not include any responsibility for katana or wakizashi. The shiro requires one yumi ya bugyo for every 100 armed men within. Non-samurai troops suffer a -1

penalty to all attack and damage rolls during combat if there are not the appropriate number of yumi ya bugyo. This penalty persists until enough men are hired.

MAINTAINING THE CASTLE

Each month, the daimyo must spend 10% of the shiro's value for maintenance. When the cost of the staff is added in, it becomes apparent just how expensive maintaining one of these castles can be. Because a daimyo is responsible for the upkeep of his samurai, expenses creep ever higher (see Chapter 2: The Samurai, for information on the stipend of individual samurai). Offsetting these expenses is a prime function of the adventuring samurai who, in addition to not receiving a stipend, are also expected to donate a portion of their proceeds to their lord each month.

A castle that is not maintained is in danger of fire, collapse, and other unsavoury issues. For each month maintenance is not paid, the Games Master is encouraged to visit some problem or other on the shiro. Fire is by far the most common problem, but disease, social unrest, and other disasters are not uncommon.



Minori walked. It was her meditation, the time when she felt most in touch with the land around her and the needs of her position. For an elf, she was not old, a hundred and ten years, but she had spent nearly eighty years of that time as a samurai. When she walked, she did not feel the weight of the years upon her, nor the terrible burden of her responsibility.

While others of her kind danced and made merry, their hearts light with ancient songs and glorious wine, she walked. Her footsteps took her from the deep forest to the barrens, along the great river Byrindil and down the boundary between the elven lands and those held by the dwarven daimyos of the Bulaka Range. With every step, she thought of the dangers lying on either hand.

The river was home to a thousand spirits, most of which did not care for anything outside their selfish needs and desires. Given half a chance, they would tear the living heart from any elf who tried to cross the river, dragging them down to the watery depths for an eternity of torment. Minori sent her wizards against the spirits from time to time, driving them deep into the dark currents where they could harm no one. But every time she sent the wizards out, fewer returned. They were not replaced quickly enough by the arcane academies and her resources were growing thin.

She paused in her walking to take tea with Kulkuran, a minor daimyo amongst the dwarves. Though he was kind enough, his words were wary and his eyes betrayed not a hint of friendship or trust. Minori did her best to convince him she wished the dwarves no harm, but she could not see into the stones these miners used for hearts. She sensed another war brewing, a pointless conflict like the last. When she blinked, she could see the battlefields again, the stench of split entrails mingling with the screams of the wounded and dying. Her people would never survive another war. With a bow and a heartfelt salute, Minori left Kulkuran and continued her walk.

As she returned to the barrens bordering the lands of her people, Minori let her thoughts wander, stretching her ki thin over the land to feel what it had to tell her. In the trees, her people sang songs of ancient glory while hiding their faces from the new world growing around them. Her honour demanded she defend them, but they never wanted to pay for the defence. Mothers refused their children's request to enter the dojo to train, and Minori could no longer even stir the ancient samurai from their quiet reveries.

Clambering up a slope, Minori looked back to the great forest and her heart leapt into her throat. She could see the dwarven axes hacking through the trees already and hear the raging howls of the spirits as they surged from the banks of the river to take their vengeance after so many centuries of being held at bay. She wept, and her tears fell to the barren earth. The salty sorrow was gobbled by the land around her, but Minori felt it call to her as well. Her feet tingled with the knowledge of the roots beneath her soles, of the thousands of miles of tangled wildlife growing here, a great web of life that held strong even here, in the blighted barrens.

She lowered herself to the earth, then, folding her legs across her lap and digging her fingers into the chalky earth. This was her land, her responsibility. She was bound to her people and her lord by the strongest force she knew - her honour. Though the death of any one of her people would drive a spike through her heart, the pain would come not from sorrow but the knowledge that she had failed - that her honour was stained.

The elven samurai breathed in the scent of the earth, then, and felt the world rush into her. The strength of her ki and her honour swirled together with the tang of forest trees and blossoming fruit while her thoughts dove along the channels of the hidden springs and through the tangle of vines and roots of her land. A great wind blasted through her, and she saw herself in all places at once, a great spirit of honour and vengeance tied for eternity. A cloud of dust rose into the air around her, obscuring her. When it cleared, Minori was gone.

And yet, she was everywhere, waiting for the need of her people to call her forth, for the land itself to rise up with her and defend those without the honour to defend themselves.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

A lot of research went into this book and yet I still feel as if there is much more I could have learned about the samurai and their ways. There is something intriguing and horrifying about this type of warrior – a man who knows he is dead from the moment he accepts his position and yet continues, following a harsh code of honour that virtually assures his eventual failure. Though this book provides a fantastic version of the samurai and their techniques, anyone serious about running a samurai-based campaign could do much worse than to investigate some real history. Not only will it help to round out the corners of this book, it may also provide some interesting insights into the cultures of your campaign and how they are portrayed.

To that end, I've included a bibliography of the books I found most useful during my research into the way of the samurai. Most are approachable even to those who are not history buffs and some are simply fascinating: *Zen and the Way of the Sword*, for example, is filled with good role-playing material for samurai of all types, neatly capturing their attitudes and philosophies in a digestible format.

Daidoji Yuzan. 1988. *The Code of the Samurai*. Trans. A.L. Sadler. Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle.

Hawley, W. M. 1974. *Laminating Techniques in Japanese Swords*. Hollywood, CA.: Hawley.

Ihara, Saikaku. 1981. *Tales of Samurai Honour*. Trans. Caryl Ann Callahan. Tokyo: Monumenta Nipponica.

King, Winston L. 1993. *Zen and the Way of the Sword*. New York. Oxford University Press

Mishima, Yukio. 1977. *The Way of the Samurai: Yukio Mishima on Hakagure in Modern Life*. New York. Basic Books, Inc.

Mitford, A.B. 1966. *Tales of Old Japan*. Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle.

Miyamoto, Musashi. 1974. *A Book of Five Rings*. New York. Overlook Press; London: Allison and Busby.

Nitobe, Inazi. 1969. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle.

Obata, Toshihiro. 1985. *Naked Blade: A Manual of Samurai Swordsmanship*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Dragon Books.

Sato, Kanzan. 1983. *The Japanese Sword*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Turbull, Stephen. 1979. *Samurai Armies, 1550-1615*. London: Osprey.

Turnbull, Stephen. 1987. *Samurai Warriors*. New York. Blandford Press.

As students of Japanese history will no doubt notice, there are some historical inaccuracies in this book. My goal, overall, was to provide lots of playable information which would capture the feel of the samurai. In the interest of gaming fun, you'll find elements of armour from slightly different eras lumped together – much as *Core Rulebook I* contains items drawn from all types of sources, I've taken some liberties with the samurai armour styles. The mythology of ancient Japan and the samurai led to the information about the powers of ki and the many sword school techniques which are a staple of fantastic fiction related to the samurai.

Wound throughout the fantastic elements and the historical fudging, there is the core of the samurai belief: that life is pointless without duty and honour and that the greatest men live as if their life could end at any moment. Much like adventurers, the samurai philosophers accepted their fate and continued to strive despite the knowledge that they were, in the long run, surely doomed.

Sam Witt



GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Daimyo	The lord and master of a domain, the daimyo rules over all the samurai serving on his lands.
Kata	A series of martial movements against imagined foes carried out in a prescribed manner. The purpose of the kata is to hone the style of a samurai's attacks, while ingraining each movement into his memory so it can be enacted without thought.
Ashigaru	Peasants (typically farmers and labourers) pressed into military service during times of war. Often horribly supplied and under-equipped, the ashigaru serve with honour in the hopes the best among them will be elevated to the status of samurai.
Daisho	The long and short (katana and wakizashi) swords worn by the samurai. Not merely a weapon, the daisho is also a symbol of rank and authority.
Sensei	A teacher, often of the martial arts.
Ronin	A samurai without a master, who must wander the land in search of work to care for his needs.
Katana	The samurai long sword, normally worn with the wakizashi to form the daisho.
Wakizashi	The samurai short sword, normally worn with the katana to form the daisho.
Iaido	The art of drawing, cutting, and returning the katana to its scabbard.
Iajutsu	The martial art focused on iaido, more specifically related to a particular style of duelling in which opponents attempt to kill on the draw.
Do	Lacquered leather or metal armour that covers the chest and lower torso.
Haidate	A sheathe of lacquered leather or metal covering the samurai from the waist to the tops of the knees.
Yugake	A glove used to draw a bow.
Kote	Armoured sleeves extending from the shoulders to the wrists.
Wakibiki	An armoured guard designed to protect a samurai's armpits.
Sode	Armour worn on the shoulders and upper arms.
Mempo	Metal faceplates, often decorated with demonic visages.
Kabuto	Large helmet with flaring neck guards and wing-like side guards.
Sune-Ate	Armour worn on the shins.
Daikyu	A large longbow designed for use from horseback.
Yumi	An asymmetrical shortbow used by ashigaru and other footmen.
Ya	Elongated arrows favoured by users of the yumi and daikyu.
Karimata	A forked arrowhead.
Togari-Ya	A long, thin arrowhead used to punch through armour.
Yanagi-Ba	A wide-bodied, extremely sharp arrowhead designed to cause painful surface lacerations.
Watakusi	A jaggedly barbed arrowhead, greatly feared by even seasoned warriors.
Tsuru	The hemp bowstring favoured by the samurai.
Tsurumaki	A bowstring holder.
Yazutsu	An arrow case with a hard tip at the bottom, designed to be rammed into the ground to allow the samurai easy access to his ya.
Yumibukuro	A set of ornate wraps used to protect the bow from damage and weather.
Fudeko	An ashen substance used to dry the hands and aid in gripping the bow.
Ki	An internal mental, spiritual, and physical energy drawn upon to perform amazing feats.
Kiyai	Powerful shouts used to channel and arouse the ki of the samurai.
Kissaki	The chisel-like tip of the katana.
Shinogi	The ridgeline of the katana's blade.
Hamon	The hardened cutting edge of a katana.
Sori	A measure of a katana's curvature.
Nagasa	The length of the katana, tailored to the weapon's wielder.
Mune	The thick spine of the katana.

Mune-machi	A notch on the back of a katana that marks the beginning of the tang.
Mei	The signature of the smith who forged a katana.
Tang	The base of the katana blade around which the handle is formed.
Tsuka Gashiri	A fitting at the end of a katana's hilt, used to hold the rest of the hilt together.
Tsuka	The handle of a katana.
Menuki	Metal cravings held below the leather wraps of the hilt to provide a better grip;.
Fuchi	The second fitting of the tsuka, used to hold the handle together.
Seppa	A metal spacer used to ensure proper fitting of the rest of a katana's handle's parts.
Tsuba	The sword guard of a katana.
Folding	A smithing process in which the metal used in a blade is hammered flat and folded over itself again and again to strengthen the weapon.
Yamajiro	A mountaintop castle.
Hirayamajiro	A castle with the main keep built on a hill and the rest of the castle built around the base of the hill.
Hirajiro	An uncommon type of castle built on the plains.
Shiro	A samurai's castle.
Tenshu	The central keep of a shiro.
Ishikagi	The elaborate walls of a shiro.
Dobei	Castle walls of plaster over bamboo.
Korai Mon	One of the gatehouses of a shiro.
Yagura Mon	The largest gatehouse in a shiro.
Sumiyagura	Corner towers of a shiro used by archers.
Hori	A moat within a shiro.
Honmaru	An inner, fortified, compound of a shiro.
Ninomaru	A ring of defensive courtyards in a shiro.
Sannomaru	A courtyard within a shiro in which craftsmen and businesses are housed.
Gusuko Bugyo	The armourer of a shiro.
Hihin Bugyo	The position in charge of the shiro's horses.
Hyubo Sho	The position in charge of the shiro's military forces.
Kuni Bugyo	This position oversees the law enforcement within the shiro.
Madoshi	In charge of the magical and alchemical needs of the shiro.
Yumi Ya Bugyo	This position is responsible for the care and maintenance of all weapons in the shiro.



RULES SUMMARY

The Samurai

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+2	Sword School Feat, Exotic Weapon Proficiency
2	+2	+0	+3	+3	Bonus Feat
3	+3	+1	+3	+3	
4	+4	+1	+4	+4	Sword School Feat
5	+5	+1	+4	+4	
6	+6/+1	+2	+5	+5	Bonus Feat
7	+7/+2	+2	+5	+5	
8	+8/+3	+2	+6	+6	Sword School Feat
9	+9/+4	+3	+6	+6	
10	+10/+5	+3	+7	+7	Improved Two-Weapon Fighting Feat
11	+11/+6/+1	+3	+7	+7	
12	+12/+7/+2	+4	+8	+8	Sword School Feat
13	+13/+8/+3	+4	+8	+8	
14	+14/+9/+4	+4	+9	+9	Daisho Fighting Feat
15	+15/+10/+5	+5	+9	+9	
16	+16/+11/+6/+1	+5	+10	+10	Bonus Feat
17	+17/+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+10	
18	+18/+13/+8/+3	+6	+11	+11	Bonus Feat
19	+19/+14/+9/+4	+6	+11	+11	
20	+20/+15/+10/+5	+6	+12	+12	Bonus Feat

New Feats

Feat	Prerequisite
Ancestral Katana	Base Attack Bonus +3
Ki Harness	Ki Channel
Daisho Fighting	Ambidexterity, Two Weapon Fighting
Ki Healing	Ki Channel
Deadly Draw	Base Attack Bonus +5, Quick Draw
Ki Reservoir	Ki Harness
Dead Shot	Base Attack Bonus +9, Blind Fight
Ki Survival	Ki Activation
Flanking Horse	Base Attack Bonus +6, Mounted Combat, Ride Skill 10 ranks
Lightning Mount	Mounted Combat
Grateful Leader	Special*
Noble Birth	—
Improved Horse Shield	Mounted Combat; Ride Skill 10 ranks

Retainers

Improved Mounted Archery
Socially Graceful Informants
Stamp
Inner Calm
Still Thought
Ki Activation
Undying Defence
Ki Capture
Venomous Tongue
Ki Channel

Noble Birth or Grateful Leader feat

Base Attack Bonus 10+
Wisdom 11+, Charisma 12+ Gather Information 5 ranks, Special **
Mounted Combat
—
Inner Calm
Healing 5 ranks
Iron Will, Honour 10+
Ki Channel
—
Wisdom 13+

* Samurai must be involved in the successful completion of a particular mission for a noble or other important personage.

** One Week spent putting together a network of informants in a city; 1d20 x 200 gold pieces.

First Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Power Attack
Dazzling Cascade	Improved Initiative
Parting Waves	Dodge
Returning Fortunes	Quick Draw
Striking Spirit	Alertness
Trampling Dragon	Charisma 13+
Unwavering Strike	Weapon Finesse

Second Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Cleave
Dazzling Cascade	Combat Reflexes
Parting Waves	Mobility
Returning Fortunes	Improved Initiative
Striking Spirit	Ki Activation
Trampling Dragon	Iron Will
Unwavering Strike	Weapon Focus

Third Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Sunder
Dazzling Cascade	Lightning Reflexes
Parting Waves	Spring Attack
Returning Fortunes	Combat Reflexes
Striking Spirit	Ki Channel
Trampling Dragon	Leadership
Unwavering Strike	Expertise

Fourth Tier Sword School

Prerequisites

School	Prerequisites
Cleaving Thunder	Great Cleave
Dazzling Cascade	Expertise
Parting Waves	Whirlwind Attack
Returning Fortunes	Expertise
Striking Spirit	Ki Capture
Trampling Dragon	Inner Calm
Unwavering Strike	Improved Critical

Benefit: You gain access to all of the fourth tier techniques taught by your chosen school and may use them at any time.

Katana Enhancement Table

Samurai Level	Enhancement Bonus	Ki/Minute
1-3	0	0
4-6	+1	5
7-10	+2	10
11-13	+3	10
14-15	+4	15
16+	+5	15

Effect	Cost
Acidic	5 ki/minute.
Acidic Burst	10 ki/minute.
Acidic Bloom	15 ki/minute.
Bane	10 ki/minute.
Brilliant Energy	20 ki/minute.
Concealed	10 ki to conceal, an additional 10 ki to return to normal shape.
Crippling	10 ki/minute + 10 ki/critical hit.
Defender	5 ki/minute.
Daimyo's Honour	10 ki/minute.
Demoralising	5 ki/minute.
Flaming	5 ki/minute.
Flaming Burst	10 ki/minute.
Frost	5 ki/minute.
Ghost Touch	5 ki/minute.
Honourable	20 ki/minute.
Icy	5 ki/minute.
Icy Burst	10 ki/minute.
Icy Bloom	15 ki/minute.
Keen	5 ki/minute.
Mighty Cleaving	5 ki/minute.
Shock	5 ki/minute.
Shocking Burst	10 ki/minute.
Shocking Bloom	15 ki/minute.
Speed	20 ki/minute.
Stunning	10 ki/minute + 10 ki/critical hit.
Summoning	10 ki permanent/20 ki per activation.
Thunderclap	5 ki/minute.
Thundering	10 ki/minute.
Thunderous Bloom	15 ki/minute.
Vorpal	25 ki/minute.
Wearying	15 ki/minute.
Wounding	5 ki/minute.

RULES SUMMARY

Armour of the Samurai

Armour	Cost	Armour Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armour Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft)	Speed (20 ft)	Weight
Do*								
Leather	10 gp	+2	+6	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	10 lb.
Metal	75 gp	+3	+5	0	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Haidate								
Leather	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	0%	25 ft.	15 ft.	5 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-2	-2	5%	20 ft.	10 ft.	10 lb.
Kabuto	50 gp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Kote								
Leather	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	5%	—	—	3 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-1	-1	10%	—	—	6 lb.
Mempo	25 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—	2 lb.
Sode	30 gp	+1	—	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Sune-Ate								
Leather	15 gp	+1	-1	-1	—	—	—	5 lb.
Metal	50 gp	+2	-2	-2	—	—	—	10 lb.
Wakibiki	10 gp	+1	-1	-1	5%	—	—	5 lb.
Yugake	10 gp	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 lb.

Bows and Arrows of the Samurai

Bow/Arrowhead	Range	Increment Adjustment	Damage	Cost	Weight
Daikyu	110 ft.	—	1d8/x3	100 gp	5 lb.
+1 Mighty	—	—	—	200 gp	—
+2 Mighty	—	—	—	300 gp	—
+3 Mighty	—	—	—	400 gp	—
+4 Mighty	—	—	—	500 gp	—
+5 Mighty	—	—	—	600 gp	—
Yumi	70 ft.	—	1d8/x3	75 gp	3 lb.
+1 Mighty	—	—	—	150 gp	—
+2 Mighty	—	—	—	250 gp	—
+3 Mighty	—	—	—	350 gp	—
+4 Mighty	—	—	—	450 gp	—
+5 Mighty	—	—	—	550 gp	—
Ya	—	—	—	1 gp/20 ya	10/lb.
Karimata	—	-20 ft.	1d10/x3 (-2 against foes wearing medium or heavy armour)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Togari-Ya	—	—	1d6/x3 (+2 to hit against foes wearing medium or heavy armour)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Yanagi-Ba	—	—	1d12/x2	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Watakusi	—	-10 ft.	1d10/x3 (on a critical hit, the arrow lodges in the target and must be removed as noted above)	1 gp/arrowhead	*
Demonlayers	As arrowhead type	—	1d10/x3 (may affect Outsiders who are hit only by weapons of +2 or less)	+2 gp/arrowhead	*

Swords of the Samurai

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Size	Weight	Type
Katana	*	1d10	19-20/x2	Medium	6 lb.	Slashing
Wakizashi	100 gp	1d6	19-20/x2	Small	3 lb.	Slashing

*The katana is never sold in stores, but must be created for the samurai as detailed in Chapter 10 – Mythic Blades.

Tools of the Samurai

Item	Cost	Weight
Armourer Kit	50 gp	10 lb.
Battle Fan	10 gp	1 lb.
Saddle, Masterwork	100 gp	25 lb.
Signal Mirror, hand	5 gp	.1 lb
Signal Mirror, tower	100 gp	20 lb.

Ronin Construction Events Table

D20 Roll	Result
1-5	No event.
6 – 10	Scouts. A group of 1d6 scouts (samurai of 1d3 levels each) arrive to take a look at what's happening so near their territory. If these samurai are left to their own devices, there are no modifiers to future rolls. If they are attacked or killed however, apply +5 to any future rolls on this table.
11 – 13	Saboteurs. A group of hired thugs (2d4 rogues of 1d4 levels each) attempt to sneak into the camp one night and sabotage the workings. If they are not caught, they increase the construction time of the castle by 10% and the cost by 20%.
14 – 16	Fire Archers. A group of archers (2d6 samurai of 2d4 levels each) begin firing flaming arrows into the construction site in an attempt to set the infrastructure alight. For each attack of theirs which hits Armour Class 15, the castle's construction time is increased by 1% and the cost of construction is increased by 2%. If attacked, the samurai defend themselves as they retreat to their own territory.
17	Armed attack. A contingent of attackers moves to put a stop to the construction – permanently. 2d4 samurai of 2d6 levels each arrive and issue a challenge to the ronin in charge of the castle. He may choose to either fight their champion or may bring men of his own to meet them in open battle. If the samurai are defeated, the ronin will be allowed to continue building his castle (provided there are no other daimyo with an interest in stopping the project) but if he is defeated his foes will have him killed for his presumptions.
18	Offer of allegiance. The ronin is given the opportunity to swear allegiance to a local daimyo. If he agrees, the assaults will stop and the ronin must return to the core samurai class as soon as possible. If he declines the offer, however, next month's event will be an armed attack (17, above).
19	Assassin. An assassin (equal in level to the ronin) is dispatched to kill the upstart once and for all. Killing the assassin will give the ronin some respite (there will be one month with no events) but offers no protection against future attacks.
20	Subversion: A local daimyo uses political and economic pressure to stop the construction of the castle. In essence, he offers the workers who are building the castle more money to come and work for him. The ronin may keep his workers, but doing so increases the cost of construction by 20%. If the ronin decides to get all new workers, he will lose time finding those willing to work for him and will still have to pay 20% extra to keep them from deserting the project.

Once a samurai has secured permission (or is willing to accept the consequences for not getting the co-operation of other daimyos), work on the castle may begin. The first step is to find a suitable location.



RULES SUMMARY

Mark Difficulty Classes

DC	Category	Description
5	Peasant	This category includes villagers, farmers, beggars and any other low-income person without influence. Their homes, when they have homes, are simple, small and quite easy to penetrate.
10	Commoner	Commoners are typically innkeepers, owners of taverns and other citizens in the service industry. These individuals often live in average-size homes which have locks on the doors and windows, but little in the way of security.
15	Merchant	Wealthier than commoners, merchants tend to own several businesses. They are security conscious and their large homes often have several guards to supplement the locks on the doors and windows. These individuals have some influence and most have a spy or two of their own to keep an eye on things in their home city.
20	Lesser Noble	The lowest rank of the ruling class, the lesser nobility tend to have a fair amount of influence in their home region. A half-dozen or more men-at-arms, often with several samurai to oversee their operations guard their mansions. The doors and windows are locked and occasionally secured by magic and there are more than a few spies charged with keeping an eye on things. Lesser nobles are often embroiled in conflicts with one another as they squabble over their position and place in the kingdom's hierarchy.
30	Lord	The ruler of a large area, the lord typically lives in a fortress or castle of one type or another. Guards patrol the castle proper while others roam the surrounding land for signs of intrusion. Samurai are commonly stationed in the lord's home and counterspies spend a great deal of time scouting for trouble.
40	Emperor	Protected at all times, the emperor rules over a large area of land. His personal bodyguards are rarely more than a hand's breadth away and his lands are heavily guarded at all times. Marking the emperor is ridiculously difficult and failure carries with it an enormous price – often the death of the information broker and much of his extended network.

Income by Territory Size

Radius (miles)	Heavy Population	Moderate Population	Sparse Population	Wilderness
5	3,000 gp	2,400 gp	1,200 gp	240 gp
6	4,200 gp	3,360 gp	1,680 gp	336 gp
7	5,700 gp	4,560 gp	2,280 gp	456 gp
8	7,500 gp	6,000 gp	3,000 gp	600 gp
9	9,600 gp	7,680 gp	3,840 gp	768 gp
10	11,850 gp	9,480 gp	4,740 gp	948 gp
11	14,250 gp	11,400 gp	5,700 gp	1,140 gp
12	16,950 gp	13,560 gp	6,780 gp	1,356 gp
13	19,950 gp	15,960 gp	7,980 gp	1,596 gp
14	23,100 gp	18,480 gp	9,240 gp	1,848 gp
15	26,550 gp	21,240 gp	10,620 gp	2,124 gp
16	30,150 gp	24,120 gp	12,060 gp	2,412 gp
17	34,050 gp	27,240 gp	13,620 gp	2,724 gp
18	38,100 gp	30,480 gp	15,240 gp	3,048 gp
19	42,600 gp	34,080 gp	17,040 gp	3,408 gp
20	47,100 gp	37,680 gp	18,840 gp	3,768 gp

Staff Member	Cost per Month
Ashigaru	5 gp
Gusuko Bugyo	125 gp
Hihiiin Bugyo	100 gp
Hyubo Sho	2,000 gp
Kuni Bugyo	125 gp
Madoshi	800 gp
Yumi Ya Bugyo	100 gp

Construction List

Construction	Cost	Height	Width	Length	Structure Points
Yagura Mon	4,500 gp	30 ft.	20 ft.	50 ft.	300
Korai Mon	3,000 gp	20 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	75
Tenshu	80,000 gp	80 ft.	40 ft.	40 ft.	700
Hori	500 gp	20 ft.	20 ft.	100 ft.	-
Outbuilding	600 gp	10 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	-
Sumiyagura	8,000 gp	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	300
Underground corridor	150 gp	10 ft.	5 ft.	5 ft.	-
Ishikagi	4,000 gp	20 ft.	30 ft.	100 ft.	300
Dobei	100 gp	10 ft.	2 ft.	100 ft.	50

Iaijutsu Duels

- The samurai with the highest honour is given the advantage. This samurai has proven himself in the eyes of his peers and has a psychological and spiritual advantage of his less-honourable opponent. Samurai with the advantage may subtly influence the duel, though it is certainly possible for a disadvantage samurai to win.
- The duel begins and progresses round by round until one of the samurai draws his blade and attacks.
- Each round, the samurai with the advantage is given the first opportunity to draw. If he does not wish to draw, he continues concentrating and his opponent is given the chance to draw. If neither samurai draws, the concentration phase of the duel continues into the next round.
- For each round of concentration, a samurai suffers 1d4 points of ki damage and gains a +1 bonus to his next attack and damage roll. This bonus is cumulative and adds up until the samurai draws and attacks.
- After each round of concentration, the samurai must make a successful Will save (DC 10 + the number of rounds of concentration passed so far). If a samurai fails, he immediately suffers a loss of 1d4 ki points. The struggle to maintain his focus can exhaust even the most powerful of samurai. If the Will save is successful, the samurai may continue concentrating and suffers no ki loss.
 - If a samurai, at any point, is reduced to 10 or fewer hit points, he must draw on the following round. His nerves are shot and his ki is wasted – if he does not act now, he knows he never will.
- When a samurai draws, he makes an attack roll with all applicable bonuses gained from concentrating during previous rounds. If the attack succeeds, he rolls damage – including any bonuses gained from previous rounds' concentration.
 - If the attack is a critical hit, the samurai also causes 1 point of temporary Constitution damage for every point of honour he possesses. If the reduction in Constitution slays his opponent (either as a direct result of reducing his Constitution to 0 or by indirectly lowering his hit points below zero), the duel is over and the attacking samurai has won.
- If the attack does not kill or render the target unconscious, the opponent is allowed a counterattack. This counterattack includes the bonuses gained from concentration, but it also includes an additional bonus to the attack and damage rolls equal to one-half the concentration bonus gained by the opponent. This represents the first samurai's failed attempt to end the duel – his eagerness to strike a fatal blow leaves him exposed to a brutal counterattack.
- If one samurai dies and the other does not, then the surviving samurai is clearly the winner. If both samurai survive, however, the winner is the samurai who has the most hit points remaining.



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The Quintessential Samurai



CHARACTER _____ PLAYER _____
 CLASS _____ LEVEL _____
 CHARACTER CONCEPT _____
 SUBRACE _____ ALIGNMENT _____
 PATRON DEITY / RELIGION _____
 PLACE OF ORIGIN _____ FIGHTING STYLE _____

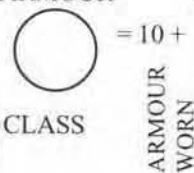
ABILITY SCORES

	TEMP		TEMP	
	SCORE	MODIFIER	SCORE	MODIFIER
STRENGTH				
DEXTERITY				
CONSTITUTION				
INTELLIGENCE				
WISDOM				
CHARISMA				

HIT POINTS

SUB	
DMG	
HIT	
DIE	
KI	
EXPENDED	
DAMAGE	
REDUCTION	

ARMOUR



ARMOUR

ARMOUR	SHIELD	DEX	WIS	SIZE	NATURAL	MISC

CLASS

MAX RANKS = LVL +3 (2) CROSS CLASS ABILITY KEY MODIFIERS TOTAL ABILITY RANKS MISC

ALCHEMY	Y / N	INT						
ANIMAL EMPATHY	Y / N	CHA						
APPRAISE ✓	Y / N	INT						
BALANCE ✓	Y / N	DEX *						
BLUFF ✓	Y / N	CHA						
CLIMB ✓	Y / N	STR *						
CONCENTRATION ✓	Y / N	CON						
CRAFT ✓ (	Y / N	INT						
CRAFT ✓ (	Y / N	INT						
CRAFT ✓ (	Y / N	INT						
DECIPHER SCRIPT	Y / N	INT						
DIPLOMACY ✓	Y / N	CHA						
DISABLE DEVICE	Y / N	INT						
DISGUISE ✓	Y / N	CHA						
ESCAPE ARTIST ✓	Y / N	DEX *						
FORGERY ✓	Y / N	INT						
GATHER INFORMATION ✓	Y / N	CHA						
HANDLE ANIMAL	Y / N	CHA						
HEAL ✓	Y / N	WIS						
HIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX *						
INNUENDO	Y / N	WIS						
INTIMIDATE ✓	Y / N	CHA						
INTUIT DIRECTION	Y / N	WIS						
JUMP ✓	Y / N	STR *						
KNOWLEDGE (	Y / N	INT						
KNOWLEDGE (	Y / N	INT						
KNOWLEDGE (	Y / N	INT						
KNOWLEDGE (	Y / N	INT						
KNOWLEDGE (	Y / N	INT						
LISTEN ✓	Y / N	WIS						
MOVE SILENTLY	Y / N	DEX *						
OPEN LOCK	Y / N	DEX						
PERFORM (	Y / N	CHA						
PICK POCKET	Y / N	DEX *						
PROFESSION (	Y / N	WIS						
READ LIPS	Y / N	INT						
RIDE ✓	Y / N	DEX						
SCRY ✓	Y / N	INT						
SEARCH ✓	Y / N	INT						
SENSE MOTIVE ✓	Y / N	WIS						
SPELLCRAFT	Y / N	INT						
SPOT ✓	Y / N	WIS						
SWIM ✓	Y / N	STR *						
TUMBLE	Y / N	DEX *						
USE MAGIC DEVIC	Y / N	CHA						
USE ROPE ✓	Y / N	DEX						
WILDERNESS LORE ✓	Y / N	WIS						
	Y / N							

SAVING THROWS

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	MAGIC	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
FORTITUDE (CON)							
REFLEX (DEX)							
WILL (WIS)							

COMBAT BONUSES

	TOTAL	BASE	ABILITY	SIZE	MISC	TEMP	MODIFIERS
INITIATIVE (DEX)							
MELEE (STR)							
RANGED (DEX)							

AC WHEN FLAT FOOTED	
AC VERSUS TOUCH ATTACKS	
MISS CHANCE	
MAX DEX BONUS	
ARMOUR CHECK PENALTY	
ARCANE SPELL FAILURE	
SPELL RESISTANCE	

WEAPON AND ARMOUR PROFICIENCIES

WEAPONS

WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								
WEAPON	ATK BONUS	DAMAGE	CRITICAL	RANGE	TYPE	SIZE	HARD	HPS
NOTES								

HEAL RATE PER DAY

--

SWORD SCHOOLS

DAZZLING CASCADE	✓	PARTING WAVES	✓	CLEAVING THUNDER	✓	HONOUR
Tier 1						
Tier 2						
Tier 3						
Tier 4						

UNWAVERING STRIKE	✓	RETURNING FORTUNES	✓	TRAMPLING DRAGON	✓	STRIKING SPIRIT	✓
Tier 1							
Tier 2							
Tier 3							
Tier 4							

COMBINATIONS

COMBINATION NAME					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
TECHNIQUE					
NOTES					

MAGIC ITEMS

--

KATANA SPECIAL PROPERTIES

--

HENCHMEN AND MERCENARIES

NAME	RACE	NUMBER	HD / LVL	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
NOTES														
NAME	RACE	NUMBER	HD / LVL	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
NOTES														

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	AGE	SEX
	HEIGHT	SIZE
	WEIGHT	HAIR
	EYES	HANDEDNESS

QUOTE / FAVOURITE SAYING

CHARACTER SKETCH

PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

ENEMIES, ALLIES, PAST ACQUAINTANCES

BACKGROUND & FURTHER NOTES

TRAINED ANIMALS

TYPE	HD	HP	INIT	SPD	AC	BAB	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA	TRAINING SLOTS	TRICKS AND ATTITUDES

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