



# RONIN

Skirmish Wargames in the Age of the Samurai

**Craig Woodfield**

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WARGAMES

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## SKIRMISH WARGAMES IN THE AGE OF THE SAMURAI



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# INTRODUCTION

*Ronin* is a small-scale skirmish game set in late 16th-century Japan in which small groups of warriors referred to as Buntai fight each other for honour or riches. Rather than just rolling a few dice, *Ronin* allows players to make tactical decisions about how the models that they control will fight – offensively, defensively, or applying special martial skills.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY *RONIN*

- A Buntai of at least 4 and up to 20 models.
- A table and a few pieces of scenery.
- A tape measure and a handful of six-sided dice (referred to as d6).
- About a dozen counters or tokens for each player in two distinct colours, shapes, or sizes.
- Markers to represent wounds (a total of 3 different types) and slain warriors.

## MODELS

These rules were designed and play-tested using 28 mm scale miniatures based on 25mm round bases that are referred to through these rules as Models. In *Ronin*, each model has the following Characteristics:

**Name and Type** – this describes the type of model.

**Rank** – the relative importance of the model:

- Rank 0 models are peasants and other civilian types with little combat ability.
- Rank 1 and 2 models are basic foot soldiers, well-trained and well-equipped.
- Rank 3 and 4 models are elite warriors with excellent training and equipment.
- Rank 5 models are the best of the best.

**Combat Pool** – the capacity of the model to make attacks in hand-to-hand combat, as well as defend itself. Rank 0 and 1 models only have a combat pool of 1, Rank 2 have a combat pool of 2, Ranks 3 and 4 have a Combat Pool of 3 and 4 respectively, whilst Rank 5 models have a Combat Pool of 5.

**Initiative** – the ability of the model to strike quickly, which will often be modified by the type of weapon it is wielding.

**Fight** – the model's skill with hand-to-hand weapons, ranging from 1 to 5.

**Shoot** – the model's skill with missile weapons, usually 1.

**Armour** – the type of armour the model is wearing (if any).

**Weapons** – the weapons carried by the model.

**Attributes** – special skills and abilities that the model has.

**Points** – the cost of the model when building your Buntai.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES

The following basic principles are applied when playing *Ronin*.

**Measurement** – any player is allowed to measure any distance at any time.

**Reduced movement** – a number of factors reduce the movement of models, but this can never fall below 1”.

**Reduced Characteristics** – a number of factors will reduce models'



Characteristics such as Fight and Initiative. Characteristics can be reduced to 0, but cannot be negative.

**D6 rule** – when in doubt or disagreement over a particular situation or rule, roll a d6 to determine which interpretation to use.

**Facing** – models do not have facing in *Ronin*, so models are not disadvantaged or affected by things that happen ‘behind’ them. Similarly, a model can be rotated on the spot at any time and any number of times, and this does not count as movement.

## BACKGROUND

### A TIME OF WAR

*Ronin* is set in the late 16th century near the end of the *Sengoku Jidai* or ‘Age of Warring States’ period, when feudal lords called Daimyos battled for control of Japan, fighting countless wars and skirmishes against each other. The Emperor of Japan had long been an impotent figurehead and true power was held by the Shogun, the greatest of the Daimyos.

It was during this time the elite warriors known as Samurai reached the peak of their martial abilities. The constant warfare against other Samurai, warrior monks, bandits and pirates produced a class of warrior that was devoted to warfare. Even as Japan was slowly unified under first Oda Nobunaga and then Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Samurai armies were re-deployed to Korea in a long and ultimately futile war of conquest against the Koreans and their Ming Chinese allies.

### WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

The weapons and armour of 16th-century Japan were diverse and complex. This section briefly explains the more common sorts used in these rules.

### WEAPONS

**Katana:** The katana has become one of the most famous weapons in history and is commonly known as the Samurai sword. Renowned for its cutting ability, the effectiveness of the katana is a result of its design, construction and the skill of the swordsmen that used it. A typical katana would have a blade length of 60–75cm. The single-edged, concave blade was usually