

BY
CHARLES RICE

ADDITIONAL DESIGN BY
CHRIS DAVIS

COVER ARTWORK
JEREMY SIMMONS

INTERIOR ARTWORK
JOSEPH WIGFIELD

LAYOUT
CHRIS DAVIS

PLAY TESTING
ED LEMMON, COREY
HODGES, PAULA RICE,
ETHAN RIPPLINGER, RYAN
KELLEY, JAY FITZLOFF,
CHRIS HOOVER, AARON
WIGGINS, PAUL KING, JOHN
ABBOTT, MATT ALLEN, ALAN
DUDINSKY.



Legends
of the
Samurai



THE BUSHIDO HANDBOOK

The 'd20 System' and the 'd20 System' logo are Trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast and are used according to the terms of the d20 System License version 1.0a. A copy of this License can be found at www.wizards.com. Portions of this work are derived from the d20 System Reference Document.

Copyright 2005 © RPG Objects. All rights Reserved.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a land that never was. A land of flashing blades, resolute honor and vile betrayals. A land where wandering ronin prey on helpless travelers... or seek a return to honor. A land where lone samurai undertake suicide missions to satisfy honor. A land ruled by a God but whose fate will be decided by steel. A land that has been the subject of poems, novels, films and video games. A land that has held the world in fascination for centuries.

A land of contrast: peaceful serenity and constant warfare, honor and betrayal. A land continually at war for centuries, where a martial ethos and devastating tactical prowess evolved that continue to shape modern combat philosophies to this day.

Japan, Land of the Rising Sun.

JAPANESE GAMING TRADITION

Over the years, there have been many roleplaying games set in Japanese antiquity. In fact, some of the earliest roleplaying games attempted to capture the mystique of the samurai and the ninja. Presented below are several conceptual directions in which you might take a campaign, each with a distinctly Japanese (rather than European) feel.

FANTASY OR HISTORICAL

This is the biggest consideration for a *Legends of the Samurai* game. Do you want to recreate the Battle of Sekigahara or defend a small, isolated town from a raging band of bakemono? Fantastic and historical settings each put different demands on the players and the Gamemaster, but both can be equally entertaining for a weekend pickup game or a lengthy

campaign. Although a campaign can be wholly one or the other—a completely historical representation or an anime-style setting with only the loosest historical basis—most campaigns will be a mix of each.

ACTION OR INTRIGUE

As with the question of a fantasy vs. historical setting, this is a major decision and one which needs to be considered (at least a little) before the campaign begins. If the campaign is going to take place at the Imperial Court, where the smallest breach of etiquette could mean the loss of a character's status (or head), then a hulking, illiterate samurai is not the best character choice. By the same token, if the campaign pits the characters against the vicious Aino (barbarians) in long bloody struggles for survival, then a group of nobles and geisha isn't going to last very long. As with the fantasy vs. historical question, some thought should be given to this issue before play begins, but most campaigns will include elements of both action and intrigue.

MARTIAL ARTS

Although this might seem to be covered by "action" above, "martial arts" is actually a genre all its own and one of the primary appeals of playing in historical Japan. In this sort of game, characters constantly seek to prove their martial prowess—wandering the land to build their reputations, challenging all comers to duels to prove who is the better swordsman or martial artist. Sometimes the characters will be teachers and sometimes students, but this sort of campaign could see the characters wander the entire length and breadth of Japan, interacting with characters from the lowliest eta knife fighter to the Emperor himself as they expand the scope of their skills.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

One of the goals for *Legends of the Samurai* was to make a purely Japanese setting for fantasy or historical adventures. This does not mean, however, that the game is meant to read like a history text. Liberties were taken with history whenever it seemed to get in the way of good gaming, and the classes were designed broadly to fit into the widest range of historical settings. Your mileage may vary, and it is hoped that the material found herein will prove solid enough to allow the strictest historical campaign to use these rules as its basis. The play's the thing, and I hope you will find these rules fun and playable above all else—everything else is in the back seat not wearing a seatbelt.





CHAPTER ONE: BLOOD AND HONOR



BLOODLINE

A character's bloodline represents his standing in society. This bloodline is not just an accident of birth (although a character's starting bloodline does determine the circumstances of his early life), but also a product of destiny and divine providence. Commoners can rise from the rice paddies to the Shogunate and mighty samurai may become desperate ronin wandering the countryside like wild men.

SOCIAL PROMOTION AND DEMOTION

Contrary to popular conception, Japan had a very fluid class system up until the Shogunate of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1590 CE). Indeed, both Hideyoshi and his predecessor Oda Nobunaga had risen from the peasantry to the highest post in the land. Therefore, a campaign that occurs before 1590 should allow PCs to rise from humble beginnings as far as their deeds and their honor take them.

Social Promotion: To be promoted to a higher social class, a character must have an Honor score higher than the minimum Honor of a character born into that bloodline. He must also be raised into that social class by a character that currently belongs to the samurai or daimyo bloodline. In return, such a character will typically demand that the character being promoted swear an oath of allegiance to him.

Social Demotion: It is possible for a character to move down in social rank, but demotions like this are much less common than promotions. Most noble characters would rather die than lose their status in society. Nevertheless, tales persist of ronin moving to

large cities, giving up their swords, and joining the merchant class.

If a character's Honor score ever falls below the minimum Honor for his bloodline for thirty days or more, any superior in the social hierarchy (a character of a higher-ranking bloodline than the character's) may strip the character of his rank. The unfortunate character must then choose between accepting the demotion or committing ritual suicide and dying as a member of his current bloodline.

Effects of Social Promotion and Demotion: A character promoted to or demoted from a bloodline gains or loses all the social benefits of that bloodline (such as the wearing of the daisho, or the privilege of riding on horseback). A character gains no other bloodline traits (such as ability modifiers or starting money).

Effects on starting wealth: In *Legends of the Samurai*, a character's starting wealth is determined by his bloodline, not by his character class. Each bloodline description lists a set number of dice to roll for starting wealth, the result of which is multiplied by the character's starting Honor score. Since both Honor and wealth are determined randomly, this leads to large variations in starting wealth—representative of the unsettled nature of medieval Japan. A samurai might be impoverished, his family decimated in a previous civil war, while a farmer might be quite wealthy, the son of a village headman.



OUTCAST (ETA)

In accordance with Buddhist concepts of cleanliness, only the lowest of the low can come into contact with a dead body or the blood of an animal. The eta—the lowliest people in society—handle the tasks that no one else wants to do. They serve as butchers,



TABLE 1-1 BLOODLINE

Bloodline	Honor	Abilities	Favored Class
Outcast	1-10	+2 Dex, -2 Cha	Touzoku or Ninja
Merchant	21-30	+2 Cha, -2 Int	Touzoku
Artisan	21-30	+2 Int -2 Cha	Shokunin
Farmer	31-40	+2 Con, -2 Int	Ashigaru
Monastic	41-50	+2 Wis -2 Cha	Yamabushi or Shukke
Noble	41-50	+2 Int and +2 Cha, -2 Str and -2 Con	Kuge
Warrior	51-60	None	Samurai

gravediggers, and executioners of commoners (only a samurai may execute a member of the upper classes).

Personality: Eta are well aware of their place at the bottom of the social ladder, and many refrain from even speaking to their betters (which is everyone except their fellow eta). An eta would be wise to never speak to a samurai unless directly addressed, since even this might be seen as an affront to the samurai's honor and addressed with deadly force.

Physical Description: Most eta are smelly, bedraggled, hungry, and unkempt. A lucky few—especially those skilled at the arts of the butcher, tanner or executioner—are much better off and can support themselves and their families in relative comfort.

Relations: Eta lie at the bottom of the social strata. Many resort to crime as a means of eking out their next meal; as such they are often the targets of police and samurai brutality on the assumption that they are dishonorable scum. Eta employed as executioners are often called in to hunt down their own, or to apprehend criminals who might be killed in the course of being arrested. In short, if it's a job no one else wants to do, it often falls to the eta.

Lands: Each city has a special quarter set aside for the eta. When not obviously engaged in work (ferrying meat or tanned hides, or in the company of one of his betters) an eta is expected to stay in these quarters and be as unobtrusive as possible. An unescorted eta, especially at night, can expect to be

stopped and returned to the eta quarter by the first guardsman he meets.

Religion: Despite their position in society and their performance of unclean tasks, many eta are religious. Because Buddhism has no regard for their professions and considers them unclean, the vast majority of eta are practitioners of the Shinto faith—if they have any concept of a reality beyond the everyday struggle for survival.

Adventurers: Eta are usually drafted into adventures instead of seeking them out. Their day-to-day life is exciting enough. During a war, eta patrol the battlefields to bury commoners killed in the fighting; in a city they might be called to perform an execution or help in the apprehension of a dangerous criminal.

OUTCAST BLOODLINE TRAITS

Bonus feats: You receive 1 bonus feat at 1st level. In addition, at 1st level you can choose an additional bonus feat from the following list: Agile, Alertness, Deceitful, Nimble Fingers, Stealthy.

Unclean: You are able to learn the Profession (butcher) and Craft (leatherworking) skills without suffering a loss to your Honor.

Lowest of the low: Your Reputation is always infamous (see the Reputation section for more information on the effects of an infamous Reputation).

Illiteracy: You must spend 2 skill points before being able to read and write all the languages you

speak.

Limited Resources: You begin play with 2d6 times your Honor in starting Toraisen. The minimum starting wealth for an Outcast is 2 Toraisen (2 x 1); the average starting wealth is 35 Toraisen (7 x 5); and the maximum starting wealth is 120 Toraisen (12 x 10).

Starting Honor: 1-10

Abilities: +2 Dexterity, -2 Charisma: You are quick, but your status as one of the unclean makes you despised.

Favored Class: Touzoku or Ninja.

MERCHANT

As trade grew throughout Japan, it was inevitable that a class of workers would become specialized in the sale of goods and services. Although a vital part of society, this profession is regarded as a necessary evil in a culture that venerates the warrior above all else. But despite this societal ambivalence, few clans could survive without a thriving merchant class. During turbulent times, when the clans go to war, these hardy folk not only send their sons to serve as footsoldiers but also provide the logistical support (trading for weapons and armor) needed to outfit those soldiers.

Personality: Merchants tend to be concerned with the bottom line. Regardless of the situation and whatever his loyalties, a merchant knows that if his family (and by extension, his clan) is to survive he must make a profit whenever he can. Still, most merchants are honorable and loyal and serve their family when called.

Physical Description: Merchants run the gamut in type and appearance from the hard-working (and smelly) fishmonger to the rich and affluent leader of a large city guild. In some city wards, merchants have gained so much power and influence that it's difficult to tell them apart from the samurai.

Relations: Merchants have a strained relationship with most of the other social classes, the merchant