

BY
CHARLES RICE

EDITING
CHRIS DAVIS

COVER ARTWORK
JEREMY SIMMONS

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.



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LEGENDS OF THE KORYO EMPIRE

This book provides the GM of a *Legends of the Samurai* campaign with information on the nearby Koryo

Empire, modern day Korea. The Koryo Empire was often caught between Japan and its mainland neighbors, serving as a staging area for invasions of Japan by the Mongols. The Koryo Empire was often the source of Chinese Emperors with designs on ruling Japan. This threat was best summarized by Shogun Hideyoshi who invaded Korea for defensive purposes to prevent it from being used as a staging areas by continental empires seeking to control Japan. The Shogun referred to Korea as “an arrow pointed at the heart of Japan.” The Koryo Empire would make for an exciting locale for Japanese adventurers or an exotic birthplace for a character adventuring in Japan itself. If the campaign takes place during the late 16th century the PCs could even be part of the invasion force attempting to add Koryo to the domain of Shogun Hideyoshi.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

Legends of the Koryo Empire is the third in our line of small legends books. These books aim to complement the GM running any *Legends* game by providing an overview of a region’s history. This history could serve as the background for a character from an exotic locale or provide the game master with a head start in conducting a more thorough search for basing a campaign or long term adventure in Koryo.

HISTORY

The history of Koryo during the period covered by *Legends of the Samurai* can be roughly broken into these periods: Go-Joseon, the Three Kingdoms, the Unified Silla, the Koryo Dynasty and Joseon.

GO-JOSEON

Go-Joseon is considered the first truly Korean state in history and is symbolically important to modern Koreans for this reason. Founded in 2,333 BCE this nation existed for over two millennia, not fading from history until the first century of the Common Era.

After Go-Joseon’s demise, there was a period of Chinese dominance over the Korean peninsula. The Han Dynasty, along with the later Yan Dynasty fought with the new Korean nation of Goguryeo for a period of three hundred years. Finally, in 313 CE Goguryeo destroyed the Chinese territory of Lelang, temporarily ending Chinese incursions on the peninsula.

It was only after emerging from this long, bloody conflict that Goguryeo realized it had lost control of the southern peninsula to two new nations. The Three Kingdoms era had begun.

THREE KINGDOMS (313-688 CE)

During this period the Korean peninsula is divided between three powers, all vying for control of the land. The three kingdoms are: Goguryeo, which controlled North Korea as well as areas of Manchuria; Baekje, which controlled the southeast of the peninsula and Silla, the smallest and least advanced of the kingdoms, which controlled the

southwest of the peninsula. As these three states fought to expand their territory each became highly sophisticated kingdoms, with governments modeled on the Chinese Confucian and Buddhist model.

Goguryeo was by far the most powerful of the three kingdoms but was constantly at war with China. Indeed in the 6th century Goguryeo repelled an invasion by China of one million men. Goguryeo used two alternating capitols, one in modern day Pyongyang and one in modern day Seoul.

Baekje was founded by a Goguryeo general and was very prosperous and powerful in the 4th century. Constantly at war, this kingdom had no fixed capitol, the location of its leaders changing constantly as dictated by the tactical situations of current conflicts.

Silla was the least advanced of the three kingdoms but protected by a fierce cadre of warriors. These warriors were called the Hwarang or “flower knights” and lived by a strict code of honor. Despite being the smallest and least technologically advanced of the three kingdoms, Silla forged an alliance with China and conquered Baekje in 660 and Goguryeo in 668. Despite its alliance with China the Silla then expelled the Chinese from Korea as well. The Korean people were now unified and under Korean rule.

UNIFIED SILLA

Silla was a nation of great scientific achievement and boasted the first astronomical observatory in East Asia. The Hwarang continued to protect the nation and provide peace and stability to the kingdom. The chief enemy of Silla during this period was Balhae, a nation that controlled areas of Manchuria and China formerly controlled by Goguryeo. Unified Silla lasted until the 9th century, when strongmen vying for power caused the government to collapse.

Silla was succeeded by a period of chaos, then a



later, brief Three Kingdoms period. In 918 a Balhae general traveled south and united Korea once again, founding the Koryo Dynasty, from which we get the modern name for the nation and the people, Korea.

KORYO

This period, which lasts from 918-1392 saw the development of the Korean state, as laws were codified and a civil service system introduced. The warrior class was de-emphasized in an attempt to curb a coup by the Hwarang. Scholars and government administrators were favored more by the new Korean state, which caused jealousy and unrest among the warrior caste.

In the 10th and 11th century Koryo found itself fending off more and more attacks from nomadic tribesman to the north. These attacks culminated in the Mongol invasion of 1238. Although the Mongols quickly conquered the country, Korean resistance to the occupation of their land never ceased and the Mongols burned town after town for a bloody 30 years. Despite this resistance Japan saw Korea as complicit in the two Mongol invasions of Nippon, causing future Shogun to see Korea as a threat.

In the 1340's, as internal dissent reduced the Mongols' capacity to hold onto their conquered lands, Korea once again gained its independence under the rule of King Gongmin. As part of his efforts to restore stability, he appointed generals to purge the land of barbarian invaders as well as regain control of the seas from the savage Japanese pirates, the Wako.

JOSEON

In 1392, General Yi Seong-gye, who had become a national hero fighting the Wako overthrew the last Koryo king and established a new Dynasty, the Joseon Dynasty. The capitol was moved to modern-day Seoul and close ties were established between Korea and China.

The close ties to China, which had long held

ambitions to control Japan only served to strengthen suspicions that Korea had been complicit with the Mongol invaders of Japan. During the 1500's Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi invaded Korea on two separate occasions. The fighting, which lasted over seven years laid waste both to Korea and China. Although the Japanese were repelled Korea was left crippled by the war and would remain weak until it was finally conquered by Japan in 1910.



HWARANG

New core class

The Hwarang, or "flower knights" were a society of young warriors and scholars in the ancient Korean kingdom of Silla. A combination social club for young gentlemen, scholarly discussion group and warrior society the Hwarang were a great influence on the fledgling nation of Silla and their values continue to resonate in modern Korea.

Adventures: Hwarang follow a strict code of ethics and are required to be men of spotless character. They are fanatically loyal to the nation of Silla during the Three Kingdoms period and after to all of Korea. Their adventures will usually be in support of their group, their individual honor or the security of their nation. Hwarang are also heroes of the common folk and can be found pursuing adventures on their behalf.

Characteristics: The Hwarang are consummate mounted archers and will usually be seen fighting on horseback, unleashing arrows into their foes with deadly accuracy. When fighting hand to hand they use their blinding speed and skill with the sword as well as their own secret martial art, Hwarang-do to defeat their enemies.

Nobility: The Hwarang follow a strict code of ethics centered around five principles: Loyalty to

one's country, loyalty to one's parents and teachers, trust and brotherhood among friends, courage to never retreat in the face of the enemy and justice to never take life without cause.

Religion: Hwarang follow a number of different religions based on the personal preference of their members although most follow the Buddhist faith. Even those who follow no particular religion tend to respect religious institutions.

Background: Hwarang are recruited as young men and are trained in several scholarly pursuits, including the vast body of knowledge from China, the most advanced civilization in the world. Since Chinese learning and culture also includes a great number of works on martial arts and warfare, the studies of the Hwarang allow them to pursue their studies into the martial realm if they desire. It is these individuals, steeped in the knowledge of Chinese martial arts and military learning that are represented by this class.

Bloodline: Most Hwarang are members of the warrior bloodline but all who meet the strict Honor requirements and adopt the code of the Hwarang may take levels in this class, regardless of birth. More important than bloodline is nationality. Only characters of Korean descent will be taught the secrets of the Hwarang. Any character of Korean descent could take the Code of the Hwarang allegiance and be a member of the brotherhood, regardless of class.

Other Classes: Hwarang work well with other classes but especially with those that have strong ranged attacks and outdoorsman skills, such as the Kenza.

Role: The Hwarang is a combatant specializing in ranged combat. Although he can adopt the role of a frontline fighter if needed, with his high BAB and hit points, many of his class abilities will not be useful in this role.



GAME RULE INFORMATION

Hwarang have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Dexterity is the most important ability to the Hwarang since it affects his archery, horsemanship and martial arts abilities. Constitution is also important to the Hwarang's role as a combatant.

Nobility: A Hwarang must have an Honor score of 50 or higher to take a level in this class. The character must also swear allegiance to the Hwarang and agree to uphold their principles. Should the character lose his allegiance to the Hwarang (or renounce it) or allow his Honor to drop below 50 he is expelled from the Hwarang and can no longer take levels in this class until he is accepted back into the company of his fellow warriors (this is up to the GM's discretion but will certainly require the character's Honor to be above 50).

Hit Die: 1d10

CLASS SKILLS

The Hwarang's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (calligraphy, history, nobility and royalty, religion, tactics) (Int), Ride (Dex), Survival (Wis) and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4+ Int. modifier) x4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4+ Int. modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the hwarang.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Weapon Proficiency (Bows, Knives, Spears and Staves, Swords), Armor Proficiency (light and medium).

Mounted Combat: At 1st level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat.

Beginning at 6th level the Hwarang receives a competence bonus on all attack rolls (melee or

TABLE 1: THE HWARANG

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Mounted Combat
2 nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Weapon Focus (Longbow)
3 rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Hwarang-do
4 th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Weapon Specialization (Longbow)
5 th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Ki 1/day (Lightning Strike); Mounted Archery
6 th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+5	Mounted Combat +1; Jump Kick
7 th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+5	Spring Kick
8 th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+6	Greater Weapon Focus (Longbow); Weapon Focus (Longsword)
9 th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+6	Flying Kick
10 th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+7	Ki 2/day (Lightning Charge)
11 th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+7	Rain of Arrows
12 th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+8	Mounted Combat +2; No Shadow Kick
13 th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+8	Greater Weapon Specialization (Longbow); Weapon Specialization (Longsword)
14 th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+9	Flying Leap
15 th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+9	Ki 3/day (Thunder Strike)
16 th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+10	Power Kick
17 th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Greater Weapon Focus (Longsword)
18 th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11	Mounted Combat +3
19 th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Power Kick
20 th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Ki 4/day (Lightning Storm); Greater Weapon Specialization (Longsword)

missile) while mounted equal to the amount listed on the class table.

Weapon Focus (Longbow): At 2nd level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat.

Hwarang-do: At 3rd level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat. This feat is described below.

Weapon Specialization (Longbow): At 4th level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat even though he does not meet the prerequisites.

Ki: At 5th level the Hwarang may use his Ki at the beginning of a combat to gain a bonus to Initiative equal to +1 per 10 points of Honor.

At 10th level the Hwarang can use his Ki twice per day and can use it to grant any mount he is riding a bonus to its movement rate of +10 feet per 10 points of Honor for one round.

At 15th level the Hwarang can use his Ki three

times per day and can use it to execute a thunder strike, adding +4 to the attack roll and +1 damage per 10 points of Honor if the attack is successful.

At 20th level the Hwarang can use his Ki four times per day and can use it to execute a lightning storm attack. This ability adds +2d6 lightning damage to every attack the Hwarang makes that round.

Mounted Archery: At 5th level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat.

Jump Kick: At 6th level the Hwarang receives this feat as a bonus feat. This feat is described in the Legends of the Samurai Bushido Handbook and is included below for convenience.

Spring Kick: At 7th level the Hwarang can execute a jump kick while mounted. The Hwarang can thus execute a series of unarmed attacks while mounted. After these attacks the Hwarang can either return