

The Changing Face of Samurai Warfare 1542 A.D.

1. The historical background

The classical age of Samurai warfare apparently saw a highly stylised form of combat. The Samurai warriors were first and foremost mounted archers, serving (supposedly) the Emperor via their service to their own Lords, quelling rebels and barbarians, generally doing good all over the place. But politics and greed merged with family ambitions that gradually saw the Samurai as a class emerge as the de facto rulers of Japan, the Emperor a mere puppet in the hands of the ruling clans of the day.

By the 1540s two powerful families were vying for supremacy, the Nobunaga and Takeda. Both families were descended from the Imperial Line, just to give their causes that added bit of legitimacy, and basically hated each others' guts. The war between the clans was to be the catalyst that was to propel the Samurai into limelight.

Most of the Nobunaga clan were sophisticated, well-bred chaps, skilled as much in the tea ceremony as in warfare. The Takeda, on the other hand, were hill-billies by comparison - rough mountain men from the provinces, more at home giving the saki a good hammering rather than sipping the ritual PG Tips.

On 11th February 1542, an incident would lead to a change in Samurai warfare. Three Portuguese traders became the first Europeans to set foot in Japan, when their ship was blown off course by a typhoon and stranded on the Japanese coast. They naturally enough aroused great curiosity in their appearance and dress, but what really made the Japanese sit up and take notice were their firearms. The arquebus was undoubtedly the first real firearm they had seen and the weapon's potential was immediately realised. Lord of Nobunaga purchased the two remaining specimen for an enormous sum and decided it would be a good idea to pass them on to his master swordsmith for copying and then arming his forces with this barbarian weapon technology to crush the Takeda. But Nobunaga did not reckon with the cunning of the Takeda clan....

2. The Game

The Portuguese captain Joao da Madeira and his two companions Pinzo and Santiago are quartered at the Nobunaga clan's guesthouse, well guarded by six of the best Samurai warriors, who are to be instructed in the art of firing the arquebus. Of course Takeda spies have informed their lord of the ongoings behind the walls of the guest house of their most hated enemies. Loud bangs are heard and strange smoke clouds can be seen. What have the white devils from across the sea brought to the Nobunagas? Lord Takeda is concerned and devises the plan to interfere and obtain whatever creates this frightening sound. However, he knows that a direct attack on the Nobunaga guesthouse would lead to serious retaliation. Therefore Lord Takeda purchases the services of six Ninja fighters (fanatical assassins all dressed in black and absolutely dedicated to complete an assigned task) to enter the guesthouse, kill the Samurai guards, kidnapp the Portuguese and carry away the two arquebuses. Nobunaga Samurai warriors will try to prevent this with all their powers or commit Harakiri. The Game is set at night with the Portuguese in the guest house and a number of Samurai on guard (determined by average dice)

3. The Rules

- All figures have equal points except for Ninjas operating in darkness (then +1). Ninjas cannot be seen when moving in darkness.
- Darkness is obtained if the lanterns on the premises are destroyed (total 4 lanterns each illuminating one quarter of the garden) by a direct hit (arrow, other missile) with a 6.
- Ninja with rope can climb any wall or building without reduction in move distance (20 cm per move) Otherwise climbing costs one move.
- To knock out enemy for 3 moves one of the Ninjas has a blow-pipe with special arrows.
- Ninja with smoke bomb creates invisibility for one move.
- Ninja can carry away stunned victim 10cm per move.

4. Victory Conditions

- Samurai

Defend the Portuguese and the arquebus weapons. Kill as many Ninjas as possible.

- Ninjas

Kidnap Portuguese, carry away arquebus weapons and kill as many Samurai as possible.

Points available

- 1) Each Ninja or Samurai killed = 10 points
- 2) Each arquebus captured/retained = 10 points
(must be carried over wall)
- 3) Portuguese saved or kidnapped = 10 points (except captain 20 points)
(must be carried over wall)

The game ends when either 4 Ninjas have been killed or Ninjas have succeeded with their task (then points are added and higher figure wins)