

Warmaster Revolution Nippon (Army of the Samurai) Playtest List v 2.0

By Chris Orr and the Warmaster Rules Committee. Inspired by the Trial Armies list by Lex van Rooy but significantly influenced by Dave Susco's alternative version.

This list had Developmental status – i.e. it should be balanced for the majority of games and may be used in Tournament play at the discretion of the Tournament Organiser. Please give feedback / experiences / suggestions to Christopher Orr via the Warmaster Facebook group, Facebook message or via the Warmaster Experimental Board.

Background

Far to the east of the Old World, even farther east than the fabled lands of Cathay, lie the islands of the Nipponese archipelago. Inhabited by a sophisticated but stoic nation of humans, where warfare is common and honour is everything,

Nipponese society is highly structured and is based on feudal rule in a strict hierarchy from the Emperor, a semi-divine being who is rarely seen in public, down to the lowest peasants who tend the fields. There are many similarities between Nippon and Bretonian society, though Daimyo – the Nippon Lords – are even harsher and uncaring towards anyone they consider to be their inferior than their Bretonian counterparts. The strongest Daimyo vie for the position of Shogun – supreme military leader of Nippon, answerable only to the Emperor himself.

Each Daimyo maintains a standing army to defend his lands from neighbouring warlords and pirate raids. The army is mainly composed of Samurai, noble warriors who devote their lives to training in the art of war. The Samurai are supported by Ashigaru, soldiers drawn from his common subjects and given basic training and weaponry. More significant threats require several Daimyo to contribute forces to the Emperor's army, under the command of the Shogun.

The Nipponese islands are located in the Northern hemisphere of the world, on the same latitude as Ulthuan but the opposite longitude. Many of the magical lines of power which were harnessed into the Great Vortex of the High Elves connect through the planet to Nippon, drawing magical energy away. Thus the Winds of Magic are relatively thin in this part of the world, so wizards are few.

The Nipponese people are known as highly stoic people from whom expressions of emotion are rare. However this repressed spiritual energy builds up until it manifests itself in a physical form. Many Nipponese mythical creatures are a natural byproduct of unseen human hopes and fears which can manifest in physical form when emotions are strong or prolonged. Smaller creatures are often a nuisance in daily life, and are exorcised before they become too troublesome by a Shugenja, who sometimes draws energy from a magical shrine to assist him in the process.

Larger creatures tend to congregate near temples, drawn by the concentration of emotion and energy at these holy sites. In times of war they become more common and the Shugenja of the temple can marshal them into useful fighting forces but their control over them is limited and they can disappear back into the magical ether from which they came. The commonest forms are Oni (ogres) who are powerful fighters. If the Shugenja coalesces the energies together onto a physical object such as the Komainu (lion-dog statues) which guard temple entrances, the object becomes a living creature. Larger creatures can be created if the temple's Abbott coalesces the energies into larger objects. These colourful creatures bolster the Nipponese army against significant threats facing the whole nation.

Ashigaru are common foot soldiers with some military training and light armour and weapons. Some fight like standard infantry whilst have been trained in the use of bows to harrass the enemy from a distance. Firearms have become more popular in Nippon in recent years due to their ability to penetrate enemy armour, though their numbers are limited by the expense of the weapons.

Samurai are a class of noble soldiers and officers, drawn from important families in the service of a feudal Lord or Daimyo. Samurai undergo extensive training in all forms of martial arts and horsemanship and take an unbreakable oath of loyalty to their Master when they complete their training. Their lives are governed by *Bushido*, a strict code of honour and military prowess. Samurai would rather die than face the shame of breaking this code of honour. They prefer to fight on foot, but some choose to go into battle on horseback for a more mobile attack.

Ronin are former samurai who are prevented from serving a new master without permission from their previous Master by the Bushido code. If a Samurai's master was killed or disgraced, they could not be released from their oath to their previous Master and are forced to survive as mercenaries for Daimyo who needed to bolster their armies. The Daimyo generally does not care whether these masterless men survive the battle or not.

Ninja are clans of stealthy warriors, who specialise in all forms of espionage, deception and covert warfare. Their clandestine behaviour is considered dishonourable and thus beneath the noble samurai. However the Samurai lords treat them with a sensible level of respect, not wishing to turn them into enemies. They are often hired as spies and assassins. In times of war, bands of ninjas often infiltrate behind enemy lines to deliver surprise attacks.

Oni are heavenly ogres – a coalescence of large amounts of angry, hostile energy. Single Oni appear occasionally during peacetime, but in times of significant threat to the whole of Nippon, the large quantities of warlike energy makes it possible for a Shugenja to create whole units of them, which fight alongside the human troops. The magical energy used to bind them can prove unstable under battlefield conditions.

Komainu are large stone lion-dog statues usually seen guarding the entrances to Nipponese temples. In times of war, a Shugenja is able to coalesce aggressive energy onto the statues and create fighting troops as a result. The resultant creation is effective but sometimes short-lived.

Tengu are wood demons who frequently take a half bird, half human appearance. They are reluctant fighters so must be bound to the service of an army to defend their homeland.

Nippon (Army of the Samurai) Army Selector (v 2.0 Developmental)

Troop	Type	Att	Range	Hits	AS	Cmd	Size	Pts	Min/Max	Special
Ashigaru	Inf	3	-	3	6+		3	45	1/-	
Ashigaru Bowmen	Inf	3/1	30	3	-		3	55	-/-	
Ashigaru Teppo	Inf	3/1	30	3	-		3	65	-/2	1
Samurai	Inf	4	-	3	5+		3	80	3/-	2
Samurai cavalry	Cav	4	-	3	5+		3	110	-/4	2
Ronin	Inf	4	-	3	6+		3	60	-/2	3
Ninja	Inf	3/1	15	3	6+		3	70	-/2	4
Oni	Inf	4	-	4	5+		3	110	-/1	5
Komainu	Cav	3	-	3	5+		3	90	-/2	5
Tengu	Mon	2	-	3	5+		3	80	-/1	5,6
Shogun	Gen	+2				9		125	1	10
Daimyo	Hero	+1				8		80	-/1	
Shugenja	Hero	0				8		90	-/1	7
Shrine	Sp	-						30	-/1	8
Tatsu	Mount	+2						80	-/1	9

Army Rules

Feudal rule: Nippon armies are based on feudal rule — Nippon overlords tend to be as arrogant as their Bretonnian counterparts towards those they consider to be inferior classes.

To represent this, the Nippon army calculates when it must withdraw from the battle in a different way to other armies. Instead of counting all of its units at the start of the game, count only the number of units of Samurai and Samurai cavalry. Once the army has lost a half or more of its units of Samurai / Samurai cavalry, it must withdraw.

Special Rules

1. Handgunners

Armour piercing: enemy armour saves count as 1 less.

2. Bushido

Samurai live their lives by a strict code of honour and ideals. The troops do not like losing face, so:

- a, they cannot use Initiative to evade;
- b. they roll 1 less drive back dice;
- c. they must pursue if winning a combat.

They are not obliged to Advance if the enemy is destroyed nor must they Pursue if fortified.

3. Ronin

The Samurai Bushido (Code of Honour) prevents them from serving a new master without permission from their previous Master. Ronin are former samurai whose master was killed or disgraced, so they could not be released from their oath to their previous Master and often work as mercenaries for Daimyo who needed to bolster their armies.

They have not forgotten their martial arts training, but their armour is not as good as their former samurai days.

They are resentful of the Code of Honour that prevents them living a normal life, so are not concerned about losing face like their Samurai counterparts and tend to act as they see fit on the battlefield.

Because of this, Nippon commanders need to stay very close to any Ronin they have hired to ensure that they will follow orders. Ronin (or brigades containing Ronin) may only receive orders from a character within 20cm.

4. Ninja

Ninja are armed with throwing stars and darts, and are therefore allowed to shoot as if they had bows, but their range is reduced to 15cm. However, they may shoot from any edge without turning stands to face their target.

Infiltrate: Ninja do not have to be deployed before the game if the player does not wish to do so. Instead individual units can be infiltrated onto the battlefield once the game has begun. To infiltrate a unit, the Nippon player nominates the point where he wants the Ninja to appear and issues an 'infiltration' order from any character. The character does not have to be within his normal command range to issue an infiltration order - the character's command range is considered to extend over the entire tabletop when issuing an infiltration order. Treat the order as issued to the nominated point, and apply any modifiers for distance and proximity of enemy, but ignore penalties for dense terrain. The nominated point must lie either on the table within dense terrain or on any base edge other than the enemy player's own table edge. If successful, place one stand on the nominated spot and arrange the rest of the unit into formation around it. The infiltrated unit cannot be placed so that it touches an enemy unit. Once deployed, orders can be given to the unit by the same character that gave the infiltration order if he is within his normal command range, the infiltrating unit is considered to have used its first order to deploy. If the infiltration order is failed the unit is not deployed and cannot infiltrate that turn, it can attempt to infiltrate in a subsequent turn at the same or a different place.

5. Temple Daemons

Terror: Temple daemon units are immune to terror.

Daemonic Instability: At the start of the Nippon player's own Command phase, before making any initiatives moves, all Daemon units that have taken at least 1 casualty (i.e. lost at least 1 stand out of 3) must make a 'Daemonic Instability' test. Roll a D6. If the unit has lost 2 stands (i.e. has only 1 stand remaining from 3) deduct 1 from the roll. If a Shugenja is within 20cm of the unit, add +1 to the roll.

0-1 One stand is destroyed – the daemons fade away and are absorbed back to the heavens from which they came. Remove one stand from play. If a character is with the unit and the last stand is removed the character is destroyed too.

2-3 The unit becomes confused - if not already confused the stand becomes confused as it is torn between this world and the next.

4-5 No effect – unless the unit is confused in which case it ceases to be confused as it is favoured with the invigorating power of the Temple.

6 The unit is invigorated by the power of the heavens. As a result it attacks the closest enemy within initiative range. If there is no enemy in initiative range the unit ignores command penalties for the lost stand till its next turn.

6. Tengu

Tengu can fly. Tengu are an exception to the normal conventions for basing monsters in that they face the long edge of the stand in the same way as infantry rather than the short edge as most other monsters.

Tengu are affected by Instability and Immune to Terror like other Nippon Daemons.

7. Shugenja

Although they are not wizards and cannot therefore cast spells, Nippon Shugenja can combat the magic of their enemies. If an enemy Wizard who is within 50cm of the Shugenja casts a spell the Shugenja can attempt to 'anti-magic' it. Note that it does not matter what the spell is or where it is cast, the Shugenja can 'anti-magic' it so long as the caster is within 50cm. To determine if this works roll a D6 - on the score of 4, 5 or 6 the Shugenja has succeeded and the spell doesn't work, it is dispelled by the Shugenja's defiant efforts. If he fails, then the Shugenja's efforts come to nothing and the spell works as normal. A Shugenja can attempt to anti-magic any number of spells in a turn, but only one attempt can be made to anti-magic any individual spell - even if the army includes more than one Shugenja and several are in range of the enemy Wizard.

The Shugenja adds +1 to any rolls on the Daemonic Instability table if he is within 20cm of the affected Daemon unit. This benefit only applies when rolling on the Daemonic Instability table for friendly units.

Shugenjas may take a Dispel scroll.

8. Shrine

The army can only include a single Shrine and it is incorporated onto the stand of a Shugenja. If a Shugenja stand includes the Shrine, once per battle he can add +1 to his dice roll when he attempts to dispel enemy magic spells using the Shrine anti-magic ability (see Shugenja).

In addition, the Shugenja can invoke the gods using the Shrine during the Shooting phase of his own Shugenja. The shrine's invocation fills the Nippon army with even greater resolve! Roll a D6. On the score of a 4, 5 or 6 all Nippon units within 20cm of the Shugenja are unaffected by Terror for the rest of the Nippon player's turn. On a roll of less than 4 there is no effect.

9. Tatsu

Generals and Heroes can ride Tatsu, a kind of dragon native to Nippon. Tatsu can fly and cause terror in their enemies. An extra +2 Attacks are added to those of its rider.

10. Shogun

Only the boldest Daimyo can become Shogun. The Shogun is the Supreme General, answering only to the Emperor himself. Such is their exalted position, a sub-commander in the Shogun's army suffers a significant embarrassment if they make a mistake, which affects their standing in front of the noble Samurai troops.

If a Nippon Hero (Daimyo or Shugenja, not the Shogun) rolls a double 6 when issuing orders, the player must roll on the Blunder table with a -1 penalty on the result. If the table indicates a "You must be crazy" result, the -1 Command penalty must be applied to a Samurai or Samurai cavalry unit if a unit of these troops was being ordered, or was in the brigade being ordered. If there is more than one of these units present, the Nippon player may choose which is affected.

Updated Designer's notes

Refining this army list from the version in the Trial Amies book of 2009 to a balanced, playable WMR list was always going to be difficult. The previous list had many confusing elements, many of which related to the original designers' intention that it was really supposed to be two lists: Samurai and Temple. Lex van Rooy (part of the original Oriental Design Team) explained that the GW Studio's apparent insistence that it should be one list led to a huge number of list entries and a very confusing way of calculating the break point of the army.

In addition, many interesting but complicated ideas were added in the form of the General / Hero's Retinue.

Wizards were limited to one per army and could only know one spell, effectively rendering them useless.

To make matters more complicated, the Shrine caused a few concerns. Possibly inspired by Grail Reliquae, but it ended up as a supercharged version of the Dwarf Anvil. This needed to be toned down for the sake of balance.

Taking on board some of the suggestions made in the Warmaster Podcast and also some parts of the discussions online in its wake, we began to refine and simplify the list. Dave Susco's alternate list gave a good place to start.

Simplification of the list started with the idea that we should make the Samurai list the tournament-legal list, leaving the Temple list for now. This meant that the Monks and Imps will appear in a different list.

Break point

We liked the idea of the Bretonnian-style Break Point but wanted to limit spamming of troops which did not count towards the BP. Ninja were initially included with the units which count towards the Army's break point, but we realised that their off-table deployment could be exploited by keeping them undeployed and hiding some of the army's break point very effectively, so they no longer count towards break point.

Names & inspiration

Many names were altered to fit better with their historical or mythological equivalents to give a more Japanese feel to the list.

Minima / Maxima

We felt it was more important to have a larger core of Samurai than specify minimum numbers of expendable troops. Too many compulsory troops makes all builds very similar and limits player choice. In spite of reducing the compulsory Ashigaru, the Nippon army still has one of the highest compulsory troop requirements.

This list was designed to be an infantry-heavy army with a Bretonnian-style Break Point. Cavalry, especially expendable cavalry, were kept to a workable minimum.

Command

General (Shogun)

We debated different versions of the General at length. We considered a Command 10 General in a few different forms, maybe with the Dark Elf blunder rule to balance the command 10. The experienced players in the group were not keen on another command 10 general, even in a limited form, so we settled on a command 9 general and a mild penalty for blunders which fits with the fluff.

Hero (Daimyo)

Standard Human Command 8 Hero. With a penalty if they mess up in front of their troops.

Shugenja/ Shrine

Barry made good suggestion that wizards/spells be removed and that there should be an equivalent of a Dwarf Runesmith / Anvil. This became the Shugenja / Shrine. The Dwarf do not have access to a terror-causing mount, so we reduced the Shugenja's attack value to 0 but allowed him to ride a Tatsu.

The loss of only one wizard with a single spell from the army was not felt to be a major problem.

I made the Shugenja has a limiting effect on the unstable daemonic troops in the list to compensate for the lack of a spell to summon more daemons.

Shrine cost has been reduced for 2021 in line with the reduction to the Dwarf Anvil, which it is a direct copy of.

Tatsu

A Terror-causing mount with a more Japanese name and Griffon stats / points.

Core Troops (count towards BP)

Samurai

Saurus stats (extra attack to reflect their swordsmanship) but some special rules which makes them have some compulsory moves

Samurai cavalry

Same stats as Boarboys but with the same compulsory moves as their infantry counterparts.

A suggestion was made on the Warmaster Facebook group that the cavalry should be facing the long edge as in Warmaster Ancients, but we decided against this because long-edge facing cavalry does not exist anywhere else in Warmaster Fantasy, and also because the historical Japanese lists in Warmaster Ancients included only short-edge facing (Shock) cavalry.

Non-core troops (do not count towards BP)

Ashigaru

"Light of foot", lightly or unarmoured warriors. Non-noble expendable troops who match to the Empire Halberdiers / Crossbows / Handgunners.

Ninja

An obvious omission from the original list. Without Ninja, there can be no Skaven Gutter Runners. But Nipponese Ninjas are far less numerous than their Skaven equivalents.

Ronin

Possibly the most controversial part of the original list. Limitless troops with Samurai stats which did not count towards BP was excessive. They have been toned down and reduced in number. We settled on Orc stats and points, but with a command limitation to balance their expendability.

Daemonic troops (Oni / Komainu)

These are all immune to Terror and Unstable, to match with other Daemons elsewhere in Warmaster.

Oni translates variously as "Ogres", "Trolls" or "Daemons" so Black Orc stats and points were used, giving them the same stat line as Ogres but with a +5 points uplift to reflect the fact that they do not have the Ogre compulsory charges.

Koimanu are the Lion Dogs who guard Temple entrances. The original list had them with a higher armour save reflecting the fact that they are animated stone, but for consistency we used the Daemon Hounds points and stats.

Tengu

Some flyers fitted very well with the fluff, but they are Daemons so immune to Terror but also Unstable. They have identical stats and basing to Daemon Flyers.

In conclusion

As can be seen, some compromises have had to be made in order to make the list work as a whole, and to make it a unique feel that is different from other Warmaster Armies.

I hope no-one is too upset with the things we had to leave out. It would have been all too easy to have many more list entries but that would have over complicated the list as a whole. Warmaster has simplicity at its heart and we needed to respect that.

I am happy with what we have produced and really feel we have created a balanced list with a unique flavour.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of the Warmaster Rules Committee for their help, advice and playtesting of this list. Special mentions should go to Jim Beach for many well thought-out contributions, Alex Janaway for 'stress-testing' some of the first drafts, Kristofer Dingwell for keeping a sense of balance with all the tempting (and over-powered) special troops we could have had, and Barry Pittman for the idea to remove all the wizards, which gives another interesting twist to the list but took a lot of explanation in the army background!