

# Epic Dice Battles: Japanese Warfare

by Konrad Anft

A Game for 2-5 Players    Playtime 60-90 Minutes    Ages 12 and up

## Background:

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan was in the grasp of countless wars between various warlords who tried to increase their influence and prestige with help of better fortified castles and armies of Sarumai. In this unsettling period of time, before Oda Nobunaga started to conquer most of Japan, the players have the chance to change the course of history and unify the country of the rising sun before the sword was replaced by the rifle. In 1543 Portuguese merchants introduced western firearms to Japan – it was by their help that Nobunaga conquered that much terrain, until he finally undertook a ten year siege to the temple in Osaka, after which the temple was rezed and replaced by the Osaka Castle – the biggest castle in all of Japan - by Nobunaga's successor Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the unifier of Japan.

## Game components:

36 same colored dice per player    1 playermat per player    tokens for rice, honor, and money, units, and armies  
16 region mini sheets    16 castle tokens    1 first player token    1 calender token    and the board.

## Goal:

Conquer and control the most regions in the given amount of time.

## Overview:

Over the course of this game, the players will build up armies, support them with food, field them in battle, and conquer regions a plenty. Who the most successful warlord is, is up to the players and the various strategies that they can apply. Three resources will support ones troops and plans: rice, money, and honor.

## Set up:

Each player receives his playermat and places eight dice of his color in the so marked locations -->

Each player sets the „First Army“ token next to his dice on the playermat.

Place the calendar token at the year 1523, 1530, 1533 or 1535 depending on the number of players.

Each player also receives three rice tokens, two money tokens and one honor token.

Next he chooses a starting position (depending on the number of players indicated by the amount of huts on the board), places his first castle there, marks it as his (put dice on top or beneath) and also places his army (a die showing one pip)

in the same region

The last player who has been to Japan starts - if no one has, **determine the starting player** randomly - give him the first player token.



## Gamerounds:

Each round (year) is divided in **four phases** – the seasons. Each season is conducted **by all players** until everybody had the chance to participate. In the game the flow of play is always in a **clockwise** direction. So the first player conducts his entire business in the active season and then it is the turn of the player to his left... and so on.

The only exception from this rule is the Autumn phase, in which each player moves only one army at a time and will not move his next army until every other player had a chance to move his own army.

## Regions:

A region counts as controlled, when a player has built a castle in it (**CCR- castle controlled region**), and no other army is in the territory. A region counts as lost, only when the castle is destroyed. But as long as foreign armies are in ones own territory the region adds only the ability to buy **one token** in this round.

## Winter:

action selection phase

In winter each player takes his three action dice and chooses which action he shall perform to support his army. The options vary from increasing ones economic (rice production) stand in the game to increase the tactical ability of ones armies, over simple trade in of resources to liberating occupied villages from the grasp of bandits.

Rice production: The player moves his **rice production marker** (the die placed on the right side on each players mat) up one step each for each action so spent in the rice production ladder.

Train officer: The player increases ones tactical ability in battles by training new officers. (place a die in the officer-box to indicate this action). This allows the player to either **open a new flank** in an existing army, or to **set up a new army** altogether.  
**In addition** one is allowed to **change the positions** of any or all **army tokens** (which lie face down, hidden from the other eyes) on ones player mat in order to create a better chance of a surprise attack. This action only comes in effect in the Spring, when new troops are purchased. Let the die (dice) lie in the officer box as a reminder.

Trade with merchant: The player **immediately** trades two rice for two money coin tokens.

Liberate village: In this time of upheaval it was not uncommon that disputes between warlords left room for groups of bandits to go unchecked for a while. They swept through the country side and destroyed villages. When a player choose his action, he basically engages in battle. He sends out a regiment to pacify a nearby village and to free it from its foul occupation. Let the die (dice) lie here until the end of the Autumn phase. At which you will roll a each die, lying at this action, and apply the regular rules of combat. If you are **successful**, the regiment returns, you get to **add the die** immediately to one of your armies, and you also **gain an honor** token. If the roll is a **draw**, the regiment is hold up longer on this undertaking than you planned, and can try again **next Autumn** (the die remains lying at the action). If you **fail** the regiment is lost, the die is **not** returned, and **no** honor gained.

**At the end** of the Winter phase players check if they have **lost regions** or **gained** new ones. (see Regions above).

Spring:  
add new troops phase

In spring new troops are hired and armies are strengthened. If you have chosen an officer action before hand, you are allowed to build up a new army or flank, if you haven't done that, you can only add dice (and tokens) to existing forces.

If you want to add troops to an army which is not currently at one of your castles you will have to pay for the support lines. **Pay one rice** per field which **separates** your **army** and a **castle** of yours. If you are in a field next to a castle you will have to pay one rice if you want to add any number of troops to this army.

You cannot buy an unlimited amount of unit tokens per round. **You can only buy** that many **tokens** as you have **castle controlled regions** (for each region which is entirely in your control you can buy two unit tokens, for each region which is partially under your control you can buy one unit token).

When you buy a unit token (price can be found on the playermat) you not only add the token to an army of yours, you also add a die. While you don't have to add the die and the token to the same army, you cannot add more tokens to an army than there are dice in it. You always put the unit token **face down** to your army.

Two exceptions are found in this game. If you buy a regular footmen regimen (for one rice) you only add a die and no token. – there is also no limit of footmen regiments which you can add per round, since they don't have a token of their own. The last exception is the body shield. You do not add a die when you purchase it, you also don't add this token face down to your army as it is not necessary and will not cost additional resources in the Summer phase.

**Spies and Assassins:** When you buy a ninja, you can force a player to reveal one army token (place face up) or its units.

You cannot add dice to a flank if you don't already have a die there, or if you haven't used an officer for precisely that reason in the action phase. Furthermore is it not allowed to have more dice in your flanks (combined) than you have in your main battle line.

Note: While dice are added to the main line or flanks, tokens go into a combined pool – you can choose where your units stand before each battle anew, but you have to determine the number before hand.

At the end of the Spring phase, you can **build a castle** in a regions in which there is no other castle yet and in which there is no army of an opponent of yours. This will cost you two rice. Add the castle to the same field as you army currently is (and use a die to mark its ownership).

Summer:  
army support phase

In the Summer the rice harvest is at its peak, which luckily coincides with the need to feed your armies. You will **gain** as many **rice tokens** as your rice production marker currently shows. Subtract from that number the amount of rice which you will need to feed your troops.

Give up (**spend**) **one** rice token per army of **up to 9 dice**. Give up **two** rice tokens per army of **10-12 dice**. In addition you need to pay **one** rice token for either **one or two unit tokens** in an army (body shields are not human units of the army, so they don't need to be fed).

For example, if you have two archer units, three footmen, and a cavalry unit in your first army, you will have to pay 3 rice (one for the army itself, and two for 3 unit tokens). If you have two ninjas, three footmen, and a body shield in your second army you will have to pay 2 rice tokens (one for the army and one for the two ninjas).

An army will required **one less rice token** if it is located at a **castle** of yours.

If you **cannot feed** your troops, you have to give up unit token and a die per rice token that you cannot pay.

Autumn:  
movement and battle phase:

The islands of Japan are the most beautiful in the light of the Autumn sun. Also... the last campaigns are concluded before the Winter covers the mountains with snow and ice – making further troop movement impossible.

Each player may **move each army** one field onwards. When it is a players turn he can either move an army, march an army and pass for the rest of the season.

Moving an army is without cost. **Move** your die, representing your army, one field further to a neighboring field.

When you want to **march** an army, you pay one rice token and can then move up to three fields with this army.

You may not pass opposing armies on the way, if you encounter them you must stop.

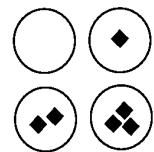
You may pass a castle of an opponent – but only when it has no army inside.

If an army moves into a **field** which is **occupied by an opponents army**, neither army may move any further – it does not matter if the other army has or has not moved yet in this year – a battle occurs.

Battles:  
There are two kinds of battles: open field battles, and sieges.  
Both work fundamentally in the same way.

The first player chooses which battle should be decided first. The player to his left then gets to decide the next battle, and so on until all battles are concluded.

Before each open field battle, you check the terrain of the field. A circle with one dot, indicates that the flank #1 is not able to move efficiently. A circle with two dots, indicates that the flank #2 is not able to move. A circle with three dots, indicates that the battle occurs in a narrow pass – neither force can use the bonuses of a flank attack. No dot means that a Standard battle can occur.



In a **siege** the defender chooses the terrain. He decides if and which flank is available for battle.

If a **flank cannot attack** from the side, the troops and dice can either be **added to the mainline** (no die maximum in that case) or to a different army altogether – players choice.

Ninjas cannot be added to the mainline – at least their token must be added to a different army. If there are no other armies your ninjas retreat (discard the tokens and/or dice). The same goes for **surplus dice and tokens**, if you do not have the space in your current armies you have to discard tokens and possibly also some dice.

Before the battle is conducted the players then **assign unit tokens** to their dice in the flanks and in the mainline.

A battle is separated in two sub-phases.

1. Shooting
2. Close Combat

In the **shooting phase**, each archer unit throws a die – on a result of 5 or more (5+) the opponent must discard a die

(and possible also a token from his mainline). Body shields can absorb two hits from arrows, They only work **once**, and then are **discarded**. If they are **not used** in this battle, they **remain** with the army (or the victor of the battle).

In the **close combat** phase each player rolls **all** his **dice** and adds the modifiers of his unit tokens **as he wishes**. Note: that no die can be affected by two unit tokens at once. You can also not apply a unit strength to two different dice.

Die result: In close combat each unit throws a die. On a **result of 1 or 2**, something went wrong, **the unit dies**. On a **result of 3** the unit doesn't effectively work – at least they don't harm themselves (they are **save**). On a **4 or more (4+)** **the unit kills** an opponents unit.

A force from the **flank** will additionally gain a +1 modifier each (in the **first round** of battle) when they engage the mainline of the opponent.

If a **flank force meets a flank force** of the opponent, they conduct one battle round. Ninjas may shoot first (hit on 4+) before close combat occurs. Any survivors then conduct a standard flank attack on the opponents mainline afterwards.

**Honorable Troops:** If a side with at least one samurai unit (samurai cavalry or just samurai) loses a battle (aka: loses the entire army), the player gains one honor token immediately.

Battle example1:

Player A planned on having two ninja unit in his #1 flank, and one ninja and a cavalry unit in the #2 flank, two archer and three more footmen units in his mainline.

Player B planned on fielding a samurai cavalry unit one samurai and one footmen unit in his #1 flank, no troops in his #2 flank, and 5 archer units in his mainline.

The terrain of the battle is a two-dot-field. The #2 flanks will not be able to engage in the flank of the opponents respective mainline. Player B has no problem there, Player A decides that he adds the cavalry unit to his mainline, but places his ninja unit (and the die) in a different army (a different battle will occur later in this round, in which he might need the ninja).

The players assign their troops as planned. In the shooting phase, Player A throws two dice for his archers in the mainline. One success (result of 5) – Player B loses a die (and a archer unit token). But since battles are simultaneous, the archer unit doesn't technically die until the shooting phase is over. Player B throws 5 dice and has also just one success (a 6). Player A removes a footmen unit.

In the flank the A's ninjas throw their ninja stars and have one success (a 4). Player B chooses his footmen unit as the victim. The close combat phase of the flank follows immediately. The Ninjas throw a 3 and a 5 (unmodified because they don't attack the mainline of the opponent yet) – which is one success and one save.

Player B throws a 1 and a 3 – but since he has samurai units, each gets a bonus of one. Which changes the result to a 2 and 4. Furthermore can all samurai units not roll lower than 3 total. So the end result is a 3 and a 4.

Player B chooses that the 4 was rolled by the samurai cavalry – which makes it count as two successes. Therefore both ninja units die, and Player B must choose one unit to die as well – he chooses the samurai unit and not the samurai cavalry.

In the main close combat Player A throws 5 dice (two archer and two footmen units and a cavalry unit), Player B also throws 5 dice (four archer units and one samurai cavalry unit). Player A gets a total bonus of +1 on one die (the cavalry), while Player B gets a bonus (of +2, double success, and min result of 3) for one die as well (the samurai cavalry). Both players roll their dice. Player A: 4, 5, 2, 3, 3 and Player B: 3, 3, 5, 1, 2.

With modifiers this comes down to 5, 4, 4, 3, 2 for Player A, and a 3, 3, 5, 1, 4 for Player B. Each participant thus loses one die automatically and produces three kills each. One die remains on each side of the battle.

In the next close combat phase, the samurai cavalry (SC) loses its flank bonus. The cavalry of Player A throws a 2 – the SC of Player B just a 1. With each modifier each has a 3 – nothing happens in this battle round.

In the last battle round each unit has a success – therefore both units kill each other. Player B gains an honor token.

Sieges:

Apart from the **choice of terrain**, has the defender an additional advantage: In sieges the **defender gets** to have (generally) **several shooting phases** (In the first shooting phase the opponent may use his archers as well, but they only hit on a 6).

After each shooting phase the attacker may send out one unit to break the gate. If it succeeds twice the gates are broken and a standard battle occurs. If the defender decided to have one or more flanks, those skirmishes occur after all the shooting phases.

#### Battle example 2:

Aforementioned Player B is the defender, Player C attacked a castle of his.

Player B has an army of 3 archer units and (now) two ninjas in the flank #2.

Player C plans on using two cavalry, two archer and two footmen units in the mainline, and one cavalry and one footmen unit in the flank #1 as well as one samurai cavalry unit in flank #2.

Player B decides that flank 1 is not part of his home terrain, therefore Player C adds both troops to his mainline instead.

In the (first) shooting phase, Player B has a 3, a 5, and a 4, Player C has a 5, and a 6. Therefore both only have one success (Player C only hits on a 6 because he attacks a fortified castle). Player B removes an archer unit, Player C removes a footmen unit.

Player C now gets the chance to attack the gates, he sends his a cavalry unit – the result is a 4 – the gates get their first damage.

Player B then gets to shoot for the second time, this time with two archer units – his results are a 2 and a 5. One more footmen of Player C goes down. Player C sends out one cavalry unit again – it rolls a one and is removed from the game. Player B shoots again: a 4 and a 5 – One archer of Player C dies.

Player C then sends his one cavalry unit out again to attack the gates – he succeeds, the open battle will follow.

Meanwhile in the flank the two ninjas quickly shot the samurai cavalry, and are now engaging in the battle at hand.

Player B will throw 4 dice (two with a modifier of +1 (for the flank attack) each, Player C will throw 5 dice (two with the modifier of +1 as well – cavalry bonus).

The result of the battle after three close combat rounds declares Player C to be the winner (The castle is destroyed).

He does not gain an honor token, since he has not lost the battle with the samurai... he merely lost the unit.

If Player B had chosen the flank #2 to be unavailable, would he have had two more dice in his mainline (since the ninja tokens would not have been able to join), but he also might only have had one shooting phase, because the samurai cavalry are able to break the gates in just one round.

#### No extra army in a castle:

If there is **no army in a castle**, it is not undefended. The two **castle reserve** dice on the playermat, stand for two archer units – which will be used in the battle as an army on their own.

#### Several armies in one field:

If there are **multiple armies in a field** two scenarios can occur: two or more armies belong to one player – he then simply adds all his dice and forms a **giant main battle line** as well as flanks. Or there are **several** different **players** in the region, then **each player attacks** only the player **to his left** (and thus will cause losses on the left side, but suffer losses from the right side). Two different players can not decide to turn one a third player with combined forces. There are no alliances in this boardgame.

At the **end of the Winter** phase players conduct their liberating villages actions (see under Winter phase), and the first player token is passed to the left as well as the calendar token moved one year further

#### End of Game:

The game ends, when the calendar token moves onto the „end“ field. Or when one player has eliminated all other players (they have neither army nor castle left).

The player with the **most controlled regions** wins (each CCR counts as **two points**).

**Partially controlled regions** (castle, but opponent has army in territory) count as **one point**.

**Each army** counts as **one point** as well.

The player with the best (highest) **rice production** gets **one point** (no points are awarded if there is a draw)

In case of a draw in points, the two (or more) players conduct a **final battle** with all their troops.

#### Rules 1.1

in March 2010

For the „Dicefest Contest – A tribute to Chessex“ Contest on [www.boardgamegeek.com](http://www.boardgamegeek.com)