

Ninja action with Muskets and Tomahawks

WRATH OF HEAVEN

Venture into the world of feudal Japan, playing the role of Shinobi from the legendary Azuma clan. Take on spying, stealth and assassination missions for the Daimyo Lord. Do you have what it takes to be a Master Ninja?

I am one of those gamers who gets easily inspired by all manner of things. New rulesets can be modified to do more, a book suggests a scenario, a computer game could be something for the tabletop... Nostalgia suggested the Playstation game *Tenchu Stealth Assassin* might be combined with *Muskets and Tomahawks*. Soon, the basics of a cunning game began to take root in my mind. Thus was born *Tenchu*. (All dice used are D6.)

THE BASIC GAME

Tenchu uses a card-driven activation sequence. Cards are drawn in turn. When a card for a particular unit type comes up, all the units or models of that type are activated and may take one (or two) actions, depending on the card. There are the following cards:

- 4 Ninja cards with 1 Action
- 1 Bonus Action card, 'Banzai'
- 2 Samurai cards with 2 Actions
- 1 Ronin card with 2 Actions
- 1 Ronin card with 1 Action
- 3 Ashigaru cards with 1 Action
- 3 Civilian cards with 1 Action
- 3 Event cards, numbered 1, 2, and 3

When playing straight faction-versus-faction games, two sets of cards will be required. Use the relevant cards each force. For advanced Ninja mission games, take the Ninja cards from one set and the faction cards from the other set. Download a PDF of the cards at www.wssmagazine.com/tenchu

Event cards only come into play if they are in order. If '1' is drawn first, an event occurs and is rolled for. The Banzai card allows any Ninjas and heroes to take one action.

Actions

When activated, a model may do one of



Silence the courtesan!

four things:

- Move up to 6" (Ninja may sprint 9")
- Move into contact with an enemy model and attack in mêlée
- Shoot with a missile weapon (if not in mêlée)
- Perform another action (e.g. pass on a message or open a chest)

Model characteristics

Each model type is rated by its ability in mêlée ('Kendo'), its ability in ranged combat ('Kyudo'), and its level of armour ('Save'). A naked person has a 'Save' of 6+. Clothing gives some protection – thus, the villager's 5+.

Ninja and heroes will also have special abilities, listed separately.

Shooting

Models with missile weapons can attack at range instead of moving. They hit on a roll higher than or equal to their (modified) 'Kyudo' score as follows:

- 1 Over half range
- 1 Target is obscured

A hit requires the model to make a save or be removed from play.

Mêlée

The attacker and defender both roll against their 'Kendo' on a D6. Compare both scores.

If the attacker succeeds in his roll and the defender fails, then the attacker has hit and the defender must make a save or be removed from play.

If the defender succeeds, but the attacker fails in his roll, then the defender has parried the blow.

If both succeed in their rolls, then the lower score of the two dice wins.

On a tie (both rolling the same score), the weapon quality comes into effect to determine who won the combat.

Weapons (in case of tied mêlée)

- Katana beats Wakisashi in open spaces
- Wakisashi beats Katana in enclosed spaces (indoors or woodland)
- Swords beat pole-arms – the pole-arm is broken unless it 'Saves' on a 4+

Sample unit characteristics

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Samurai	4+	4+	3+	Katana, Samurai armour
Ashigaru	5+	5+	4+	Wakisashi, Ashigaru armour
Villager	5+	6+	5+	Improvised weapons
Ninja	3+	3+	4+	Ninjato

- Tetsubo Club beats swords – the sword is broken unless it ‘Saves’ on a 4+
- Any weapon beats Tanto dagger or unarmed models.

THE ADVANCED GAME

The advanced game sees a team of Ninja performing different missions against forces controlled by a referee (or other players). These forces of enemies and bystanders (known as NPCs) are, at first, rolled for randomly, and modified by the Ninja’s actions.

Stealth and movement

Ninjas are spotted in the open on a 2+, in cover on a 4+. Deduct 1 if the Ninja is on higher (or lower) ground than the spotter, and an additional 1 if he is over 12” away. Ninjas can hide and crawl up to 3”, reducing their chance of being spotted by 1. If the Ninja is using a disguise, the chance to spot is 5+, but this advantage is lost if the Ninja runs, enters combat or is spotted.

Ninja may run 9” but incur one Noise token for the turn they ran.

Once the Ninja is spotted, the NPC can ignore the reaction table and either move as directly as possible towards the Ninja to attack, or shoot with a ranged weapon. Point the model towards the Ninja to indicate that he has been spotted. The Ninja will have to break line-of-sight to shake off the NPC, at which point the NPC reverts back to the reac-

tion table for subsequent movement, and will have to spot the Ninja anew.

NPC action and reaction

Civilians and guards act randomly on a roll of a D6 when activated, unless they have previously spotted a Ninja and still have him in sight. This random roll (next page) will be modified depending on noise and the tension level (more on these later).

We only worry about NPCs who are close to the Ninja. Thus, we only roll for any model who is within 12” of the Ninja, who is in the same compound (if outside 12”), or who can potentially see the Ninja within 24”. All NPCs have an arc of vision of 90 degrees to the front. If a Ninja is within 24” and in this frontal arc, roll to spot.

An NPC only spots or moves on activation, or if a call of ‘Ninja!’ is made within reaction distance (12” or line-of-sight).

Once NPCs are activated, roll randomly to see what they do, modified by noise and the tension level. Deduct 1 if the Ninja has cover between him and the NPC, is over 12” away, or is at a higher level (people tend not to look up). Add any Noise modifiers. If the result is below the current tension level, modify it to equal the tension level.

Guards or civilians move logically and will not make suicidal moves (such as walking off bridges or cliffs). If they cannot move in one direction, they will turn until they can complete their move. Random moves to left or right can be diced for (odds = right; evens = left). Players and referees are welcome to make up their own stories to explain the actions of NPCs.

Ninja!

Each NPC rolls once per action - at any time - to spot a Ninja. If a Ninja is spotted, the NPC may use the rest of his movement to close on the Ninja and at-

tack or make a call of “Ninja!”, ending his activation.

Calling “Ninja!” gains the spotted Ninja Noise tokens (see below) and every NPC within 12” of the call or in line-of-sight (24”) is immediately activated.

“Ninja!” can only be called once per turn.

Noise

Noise is a key component of *Tenchu*. The more noise the Ninja makes, the more likely it is that the enemy will move in his direction and spot him.

A Ninja gains Noise tokens when:

Running / Climbing	1 Noise
Fighting	1 Noise
Falling (Climb failure)	1 Noise
Explosion	2 Noise
Shout of “Ninja!”	2 Noise / 1 Noise

Explosions are unique, as they’ll attract people to the source of the explosion, not directly to the Ninja, for one turn. The shout of “Ninja!” initially generates 2 Noise. This is reduced to 1 Noise on the Ninja’s next activation, but that Noise token remains until the end of the turn.

Unless otherwise stated above, Noise tokens are removed when the Ninja is next activated or at the end of the turn.

Tension level

Guards and civilians will react to their surroundings. If all is quiet, then the natives will be calm. However, if the ground is littered with dead bodies lying, smoke rises and explosions boom, they will become ‘edgy’ and are more likely to react.

The tension level starts at 1. Add the following modifiers:

- +1 Dead lying in the open
- +1 Smoke visible this turn
- +1 Fighting or call of “Ninja!” this turn

The tension level becomes the minimum reaction that NPCs will perform when they are activated (after modifications for noise). Ninja may be hidden, but villagers will still act erratically if half the village is burnt down... Clever Ninja reduce the tension by carefully hiding any corpses!



Two Ninja break into the Merchant’s house.

NPC REACTION TABLE

To determine the Guard's move, a D6 is thrown every action to see how they react.

- 1 Guard yawns and stretches. No movement.
- 2 Guard look around. Turn the model 90 degrees.
- 3 Guard moves 6" away from Ninja.
- 4 Guard turns 90 degrees and moves 6".
- 5 "Huh?" Guard moves 6" in the direction he is facing.
- 6 "What was that noise?" Guard moves 6" towards Ninja.

To determine a Civilian's move, a D6 is thrown every action to see how they react.

- 1 Civilian yawns and stretches. No movement.
- 2 Civilian look around. Turn the model 90 degrees.
- 3 Civilian continues current action.*
- 4 Civilian moves 6" away from Ninja.
- 5 Civilian continues current action.* Turn the model 90 degrees.
- 6 "What was that noise?" Civilian moves 6" towards Ninja.

* Continues current action: If the civilian is a porter, he will move 6" forwards. Other civilians are likely to stand around and stay put.



Christyami confronts the messenger before he reaches the castle.

1 the Ninja falls: he is now prone and generates an additional Noise token. A fall from more than one level will require a 'Save' per additional level.

Resilience. It takes two failed 'Saves' to remove a Ninja from play. The first failure only wounds the Ninja, and is curable with a healing potion.

Special Items

A variety of items may be found during a mission. A list can be found on www.wssmagazine.com/tenchu

The Ninja names for our Salute demo are, obviously, not strictly Japanese names, but tongue-in-cheek homages



A stealthy Shinobi clambers over the rooftops.

Example: A Shinobi had disappeared into the shadows and undergrowth, modifying the reaction roll by -1. However, he has left a dead body out in the open, and he was spotted previously in the current turn (a call of "Ninja!" was made). No matter how low the NPCs roll, their minimum reaction will be a 3, as they are still 'on edge'. Rolls of 1 or 2 are modified to 3.

NINJA SKILLS

All Shinobi have the following skills.

Silent Kill. If the Ninja approaches a target directly from behind (not to the side), they may make an unopposed Kendo roll (only the Ninja rolls). The target saves at -2. Heroes cannot be killed, but turn around and defend themselves!

Riposte. In mêlée, if the Ninja is attacked and the attacker misses (i.e. he fails his Kendo roll), the Ninja may make a Kendo roll to strike the attacker back.

Climb. A Ninja may climb one level on a 4+ (2+ with a grapnel). On a roll of

SAMPLE NINJA

Apart from the abilities listed here, each Ninja has the four skills of Resilience, Silent Kill, Climb and Riposte.

Jasparu – he is the Shadow!

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment and Talents
Jasparu	3+	4+	4+	Ninjato, 4 Items

Mito Gai – master of thrown weapons and bows.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment and Talents
Mito Gai	4+	3+	4+	Ninjato, 4 Items

Christyami – expert two-weapon Ninja.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment and Talents
Christyami	4+	4+	4+	Twin Ninjato blades + 4 Items

Two weapons. Christyami rolls two dice for her 'Kendo' and chooses which die she'll use.

Marku Yama – expert with the Kusari Gama.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Marku Yama	4+	4+	4+	Kusari Gama + 3 Items

Marku Yama's *Kusari Gama* counts as a Grapnel and two weapons. Marku rolls two dice for his 'Kendo' and chooses which die he'll use. Can carry three items.



Ninja break into the castle!

to various staff members of WS&S! My thanks to playtesters Eoghan Kelly, Pete Bowles, Paul Birkin, Roscco Watkins, Casey Vandenberg, Patrick Grinsell, Mark Backhouse and John McArdle.

THE NINJA ARSENAL

Each Ninja may carry a primary weapon (typically a Ninjato – treat as a Wakisashi) plus four items of equipment. Choose from the following list:

Grapnel. Ninja may climb levels on a 2+.

Poison. Useable on missile weapons or single use on bladed weapons. Reduces ‘Save’ by 1.

Smoke Bomb. Ninja can drop the bomb while moving or throw it 6”. Anyone in the smoke cloud (2” radius) can only spot the Ninja on a 6+. Lasts until the end of the turn.

Caltrops. Dropped while moving. Anyone passing over these *tetsubishi* will have to stop and remove them from their feet on a 2+. Removing the caltrops will take a turn.

Poison Rice. Thrown 6”. A guard or civilian who spots this (typically on a 2+) will eat the rice (no point wasting good food) and become incapacitated for the rest of the turn with stomach cramps.

Bomb. Thrown weapon. All within 2” save at -1.

Disguise. May pass Ninja off as a villager. Only spotted on a 5+.

Blowpipe. Poisoned ranged attack 6”. Three shots with -1 save.

Shuriken. Ranged attack 9”.

Bow & Quiver. Counts as two items. Ranged attack 18”.

Ninja Armour. Gives the Ninja a 3+ save, reduces speed by 1”.

Healing Potion. Grants one wound back to the Ninja.

NINJA MISSIONS

Here are six Ninja missions for the Shinobi to complete. They should be given randomly to players.

Punish the evil merchant

The merchant Echigoya has turned to extortion, bribery and murder. You must make him pay for his crimes with his life! You’ll find him in the merchant’s compound.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Merchant (Hero)	4+	4+	5+	Wakisashi
4 Thugs	5+	5+	5+	Wakisashi

Silence the consort

Lady Renko has been an evil influence on the local Daimyo, corrupting him to her own ends. She must be silenced! You’ll find her in the village store.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Consort (Hero)	5+	5+	5+	Tanto dagger, Poison (-1 save)
2 Ronin	4+	5+	4+	Wakisashi, Ashigaru armour

Retrieve the ancestral sword

Stolen many years ago, the ancestral sword of your Lord has finally been located in the castle. Break in and retrieve the sword! This has the same mission location and guards as ‘Rescue the hostage’. The sword can be found in the top level of the castle.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Samurai Hero	3+	4+	3+	Katana, Resilience, Samurai armour
4 Ashigaru	5+	4+	4+	Wakisashi, Ashigaru armour, Bows

Retrieve the stolen horse

Your Lord’s favourite horse, Aguro, has been stolen by Ronin! Retrieve this noble beast before they have a chance to sell or eat him! Aguro the horse and his captors can be found across the river from the village, next to the bridge.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Ronin Hero	3+	4+	4+	Katana, Resilience, Asigaru armour
3 Ronin	4+	4+	5+	Katana

Rescue the hostage

An important Samurai has been taken hostage. You must rescue him from his captors and return him to your Lord. This has the same mission location and guards as ‘Retrieve the ancestral sword’. The prisoner can be found in the lowest level of the castle.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Samurai Hero	3+	4+	3+	Katana, Resilience, Samurai armour
4 Ashigaru	5+	4+	4+	Wakisashi, Ashigaru armour, Bows

Stop the messenger

Prevent the messenger from reaching the castle and delivering the message! Retrieve the message and return it to your Lord. The messenger starts on the road at the end of the village, opposite the castle. He will move 6” each activation towards the castle, unless he is attacked or spots a Ninja (obviously out to steal his message). The garrison of the castle will assist him if they spot him.

Name	Kendo	Kyudo	Save	Equipment
Samurai Hero	3+	4+	3+	Katana, Resilience, Samurai armour