



Ronin - Skirmish Wargames in the Age of the Samurai (Osprey Wargames)

Craig Woodfield

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Ronin is a set of skirmish wargame rules set in late 16th century feudal Japan. Players build small warbands of models and battle each other as well as non-player factions in duels and skirmishes. *Ronin* is historically accurate, but also pays tribute to the films of Akira Kurosawa such as *Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo*.

Despite the enduring popularity of this period, there are very few widely available historical samurai skirmish wargames rules sets. Figures for the period are increasingly available, particularly from Perry Miniatures (very high quality 28mm metal), Wargames Factory (plastic 28mm box sets) and Zvezda (1/72 plastic). *Ronin* seeks to fill this void with an enjoyable system that is easy and cheap to take up. Gameplay is based upon a d6 system that forces players to make tactical decisions about attack and defence, simulating the cut and thrust of hand-to-hand combat.

There are numerous player factions, from Samurai and Ashigaru, the professional soldiers of the period, to Buddhist warrior monks, martial arts schools, and bandits.

There are also swords for hire such as Ronin and ninja that players can hire to augment their warband.

Players design their warband using a points system, and assign each model weapons, armour and martial skills. Weapons include the yari (pike/spear), naginata (pole arm), yumi (bow), arquebus and of course the katana and its variants. Specialist skills allow a model to undertake various special actions (for example, arrow-cutter provides additional defence against bow fire) or increases the proficiency of the model with a specific weapon.

As well as straight warband-on-warband battles, there are specific scenarios, some of them linked to provide a loose narrative. Gameplay is based upon a d6 system that forces players to make tactical decisions about attack and defence, simulating the cut and thrust of hand-to-hand combat. One scenario features the warband defending a notable person from attack by ninjas, another the defence of a village against bandits. There are also campaign rules that allow for the development of a warband in terms of gaining new skills and equipment and planning on-going battles against other players. Finally, very simple guidelines for running a tournament are included.

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