

The Ministry of



Gentlemanly
Warfare



Buntai Dojo

Creating your own Buntai in Daisho

Introduction

Medieval and mythical Japan has an enormous range of fascinating characters, never mind the many more provided by modern manga and anime. Many of these could be the inspiration for a new *buntai* and we could have filled a three hundred page book with such ideas.

Instead we have left it open for you to explore and create your own leaders and *buntai* using the rules in this modest tome. To assist you in doing so we have written this short piece showing you how to put together a balanced and playable *buntai*.

You will have noted that in the rules, as well as the full points system for designing new figures, there are far more weapon and equipment types, Skills, beasts, *Ki* Powers and Magical Powers than are used in the *buntai* in Section 10. This is because we wanted you to have all the basic information you need to build your own.

To begin you have three options:

The first option is the easiest. Take an established *buntai* and then choose additional items that are logical extensions of the *buntai*'s character.

For example, your *ronin buntai* has been commissioned to sneak into a *daimyo*'s castle and steal a scroll. You decide that it fits the narrative for your *ronin* leader to hire a couple of *ninja chunin* to act as scouts.

Under the second option you take an established *buntai* to act as your template and then add and subtract elements so it is more like the theme you want to achieve.

For example, you decide that you would like to replicate the **47 Ronin** from the movie. You decide to exclude any *ashigaru* and only take *ronin bushi* types, arm them with *tengu* blades and give their leader a number of Magical Powers and *Ki* Powers that replicate the *tengu* training he learned as a child.

The third option needs more work and is the subject of this chapter.

Note: Whatever you create, you should agree it with your fellow players before you play a game with it.

What follows is an outline, not a set of rules in themselves. It is simply guidance and should be taken as that. There are several steps we advise you to consider as you create your new *buntai*. To illustrate these steps we will walk you through the creation of a new *buntai*: The Iron Blossom *Geisha* House.



1. Core design principles

Whatever you create should be fun to play with and, just as importantly, against. Anyone can create an unbeatable killer force but these are rarely fun to play with and never fun to play against.

The core principle, as it is throughout these rules, is Keep It Short & Simple (KISS). A twelve page list is almost certainly a bloated monster, so look at the *buntai* in this book. Few are more than a couple of pages long and most of that is narrative background. The *buntai* itself is a table with a list of options.

2. The Theme

Every one of the *buntai* we created began with a theme plucked from history, mythology, literature, movies, etc. In some cases it was a fairly simple lift, in others we extrapolated from the real towards the fantastic.

Once you have a theme, flesh it out – give it a little life.

So, onto our example. We were interested in creating a more subtle force than most, one which relied on soft power, but that had a very sharp edge.

Many in the *samurai* and *ronin* classes enjoy the company of *geisha*. These skilled women sing, play instruments, dance, perform poetry and even massage their clients. They are often highly respected and are known for their discretion. Indeed their reputations depend upon it for many a foolish man will tell them secrets in order to gain their favours. The *geisha* houses have often been tempted to turn into spies or assassins but, to their credit, all have resisted the money and threats offered to them.

The *Shōgun* has given up trying to get them to do as he wills, so instead he has formed his own troupe of very special *geisha* codenamed the Iron Blossom. It is made up of fair-faced young men of slight build who dress and act as *geisha* in order to lure the foolish into their traps.

They are trained and run by one of the *Shōgun's* concubines, the cunning and deadly Miroko, a former *geisha* house owner who is committed to her master's service. There are rumours that Miroko may be a *kitsune* in disguise but if anyone has proof of this they have not lived to tell the tale.

3. Leaders and Heroes

Every force needs a leader, so who are you going to choose? It could be a historical or fictional character, or a typical leader of the time. For example, the Clan Patrol *buntai* can be led by a generic *samurai* leader or by Toyoda Hiroki, the Steel Fox.

By having a named character or two, and then creating some generic equivalents, you give other players the chance to create their own leaders for the *buntai*.

Remember that this is not one of those games populated by supermen who wander about the battlefield like demon kings. Creating a mega-powered leader is all well and good but he will cost so much that he will probably be outnumbered and killed by the end of turn three. He will also be very dull to play against.

One of things we do when designing a leader for a *buntai* is to write three or four short sentences they might speak to their allies or their enemies. It brings them to life and often then guides their design.

Miroko, mistress of the Iron Blossom Geisha house

"Torture a samurai and he will tell you very little. But ply him with strong drink and pretty women..."

"Nothing is more terrible than unrequited love, for it is the slowest death."

"Take away a samurai's katana and he is just a man who can dance."

So what shall we give her? For a start we want her to be Inspirational, how else does she hold her band of *geisha* and cut-throats together? She isn't fearsome or especially strong, so the *Inspirational* skill is a must. I also give her Leadership +2, a must for the leader of most *buntai*. As beauty is at the heart of her power we shall also give her the skill *Unearthly Beauty*.

Now let's look at her background.

Miroko was the youngest daughter of a *daimyo* and a woman who turned out to be a *kitsune*. When her mother was exposed the *daimyo* had no choice but to slaughter her and all of their offspring and then

commit *seppuku* to protect his clan's honour. However, he could not bring himself to kill his youngest and most beautiful daughter so he sent her away to a distant province to become a *geisha*. Miroko inherited her mother's unearthly beauty, and some of her powers, and thus quickly rose to become the a concubine of the *Shōgun* himself.

Now every *buntai* should have a second in command, another figure with a lesser Leadership skill, usually +1. They should have a range of capabilities that either complement the primary leader or relate to the troops they must lead.

Thus if your primary leader bites the bullet your troops are not immediately leaderless.

In the case of the Iron Blossom *geisha* this is Viper, a former *kabuki-mono* who had to leave her gang when her gender was discovered. She is a superlative swordswoman with serious psychopathic tendencies. Only Miroko can stop her when she tastes fear in her enemies.

Some of the house's teams are also led by Mistresses, more senior *geisha* who are trusted by Miroko.

So, let's put some flesh on the bones of our *buntai's* leaders:

Type	Karma	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Equipment
Miroko (samurai)	3+	+2	+2	+1	75	Lined Kimono, Tanto, Shuriken*
	Skills: Leadership +2, Inspirational, Rhetoric, Unearthly Beauty, Ki [2], Second Chance & Whirlwind Attack Magical powers: Mask of Terror, Possession					
Viper (ronin)	4+	+3	+1	+1	51	Lined Kimono, Katana, Shuriken*
	Skills: Leadership +1, Berserker, Fearless, Lightning Reflexes Ki [2], Second Chance & Swift Despatch					
Geisha Mistress (any caste)	4+	+3	+2	+1	32	Lined Kimono, Tanto, Shuriken*
	Skills: Leadership +1, Rhetoric Ki [1], Second Chance					

* These shuriken are held in the Geishas' elaborate hair-do's and look like hairpins.

4. The Poor Bloody Infantry

The rank and file, the men at your back, those loyal followers who fight and die for your leader and his or her missions. It can be hard to balance these so we recommend that you take the standard Ashigaru Spearman as your benchmark:

Type	Karma	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Basic Equipment
Ashigaru	5+	+2	+1	+1	17	Light Armour, <i>Jingasa</i> , <i>Yari</i>

The average *ashigaru* is trained and disciplined and fairly well-armed.

Look at the ordinary foot sloggers in your list and consider would they be better than, equal to or less capable than an *ashigaru*.

Although fairly simple the four basic attributes of Karma, Fighting, Shooting and Speed give you a pretty wide range of possibilities. Then, with the addition of armour and weapons, you can have everything from a nervous fishmonger with a sharp knife to a professional bushi from a *Daimyo's* elite guard in heavy armour and carrying a master-crafted *daishō*.

To be effective you will need at least five infantry in the average 250 point *buntai*, though a good balance is three men to each leader or specialist.

Here are the foot-soldiers of the Iron Blossom *Geisha* House:

Type	Karma	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Equipment
Geisha	5+	+0	+1	+1	21	Tanto, Shuriken*
	Rhetoric					

* These shuriken are held in the Geishas' elaborate hair-do's and look like hairpins

The *Geisha* are the young men trained and employed by Miroko as part of her spying activities. They are skilled in seduction and manipulation, but are not really competent combatants.

Note: 250 points is merely a recommendation; you should play games at a points level to suit yourself and your friends.

5. Specialists

Any good Buntai needs the ability to face a broad range of challenges. This is where the specialists come in. These are the troops who carry the special weapons or equipment, or have extraordinary skills or powers, but are not leaders.

In the *Geisha buntai* these are the Viper-girls:

The viper-girls are former female *geisha* who were broken or scarred by cruel mistresses and their clients. Miroko gives them a home and has Viper train them in every dirty trick and weapon that can give them an edge against the House's enemies and targets.

They usually wear masks or elaborate kabuki make-up to hide their scarring and injuries.

Type	Karma	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Equipment
Viper-girl	5+	+2	+1	+1	27	Light Armour, Tanto x2, Fanatic, Ni-To (Two-weapon Fighting)

6. Unique equipment

There is always a temptation to get very creative and begin churning out heaps of fabulous and utterly unique equipment for your *buntai*. Beware, for down that road lies Anime and complete madness(?).

Seriously though, when you come up with that good idea take a minute and look down the list of equipment that already exists. Is there something in them that actually produces the same effect?

Here's an actual example from the development of *Daishō*; the *katana*, despite its fame, was not the only sword used in medieval Japan. I wanted to produce stats for a range of swords including the quite common *tachi* to the much rarer *ninja-to*. In all I would have added six variants of the sword to the list. Then Charles picked up a hefty volume of **Jane's Daft Oriental Weapons (1678)** and gave me a sharp crack across the cranium. He reminded me of the KISS principle and told me to just make it 'a sword'.

The Iron Blossom Geisha have three specialist items:

1. The Lined Kimono is light armour concealed under their robes.
2. Their elaborate hairpins are actually shuriken in disguise, and note that these can be poisoned.
3. The Iron Fan is a unique item. It can either be held in the offhand and used to block blows, in which case it counts as adding +1 to the figure's armour, or it can be folded and used as a Club.

Unlike IHMN in *Daishō* we also have the opportunity to make a weapon or armour master-crafted or even legendary. This allows us to add a level of variation on top of the normal choices. Thus a *daimyo* is likely to have a very fine weapon and armour to match, whereas a poor ronin may just have the master-crafted *katana* entrusted to him by his father.

7. Options

Every buntai list has options. These are extra skills, powers, equipment that allow you to adapt your buntai to different situations, foes and challenges. When writing these it is easy to get carried away and include everything except the kitchen sink. Don't. Every option should be appropriate to the buntai's theme.

A good place to look for suitable options is in your buntai list. How many of the skills, powers and equipment you have written up for leaders, poor bloody infantry and specialists would be used in every single mission? Pare your list back to what that troop type could be expected to have should you bump into them in the street, then put everything you have taken off them into the options.

For example, with the Samurai Clan Patrol we originally wrote them fully accoutred for a major battle. Heavier armour, mounted bushi, ashigaru carrying teppō etc. But when we stepped back we realised this is the equipment they would only take to a major battle. For their daily patrols through the villages of their clan lands they would be mostly on foot, in light armour and carrying weapons suitable for taking on surly peasants or the odd bandit or two.

If you were wondering that the Iron Blossom Geisha looked a little under-armed take a look at their options list:

- Any Geisha, except a novice, can exchange 'her' Tanto for a Wakizashi
- Miroko and a Mistress may also take a Katana
- Any Geisha, except a novice, may take the skill Lighting Reflexes
- Any Geisha, except a novice, may take an Iron Fan
- Any figure may poison their Tanto or Shuriken
- Any Geisha may take the Skill Martial Arts 1, and a Mistress or Miroko Martial Arts 2
- A troupe may engage the services of a Hero of Nippon

8. Balancing it all out

At the end of the creative process you want to have a *buntai* that you will enjoy playing and that others will enjoy pitting their forces against. The infamous 'death-star' list has no real place in *Daishō* and will not earn you any friends (it may even cost you some).

The best way to check if you have a reasonably balanced force is to write up four 250 point lists. Make the first leader heavy, the second troop heavy, the third specialist heavy and the last as balanced as you can. Do these lists work? Do they make sense based on your theme?

A balanced force has a primary leader, and perhaps a second in command in case the leader falls. Then there are four to six troops and a couple of specialists. Note that some lists cannot be balanced like this because they rely on a mass of cheap troops led by a charismatic leader, or perhaps because they are an elite commando-style force. These still have their place.

9. Costing

We have created a Buntai cost calculator using an MS Excel spreadsheet. You can download this for free from the *Daishō* blog.

The Iron Blossom *Geisha* House

"Nothing is more terrible than unrequited love, for it is the slowest death."

Miroko, mistress of the Iron Blossom Geisha.

Many in the samurai and ronin classes enjoy the company of geisha. These skilled women sing, play instruments, dance, perform poetry and even massage their clients. They are often highly respected and are known for their discretion. Indeed their reputations depend upon it for many a foolish man will tell them secrets in order to gain their favours. The geisha houses have often been tempted to turn into spies or assassins but, to their credit, all have resisted the money and threats offered to them.

The Shōgun has given up trying to get them to do as he wills, so instead he has formed his own troupe of very special geisha codenamed the Iron Blossom. It is made up of fair-faced young men of slight build who dress and act as geisha in order to lure the foolish into their traps.

They are trained and run by one of the Shōgun's concubines, the cunning and deadly Miroko, a former geisha house owner who is committed to her master's service. There are rumours that Miroko may be a kitsune in disguise but if anyone has proof of this they have not lived to tell the tale.

Miroko was the youngest daughter of a daimyo and a woman who turned out to be a kitsune. When her mother was exposed the daimyo had no choice but to slaughter her and all of their offspring and then commit seppuku to protect his clan's honour. However, he could not bring himself to kill his youngest and most beautiful daughter so he sent her away to a distant province to become a geisha. Miroko inherited her mother's unearthly beauty, and some of her powers, and thus quickly rose to become the a concubine of the Shōgun himself.

Her second-in-command is Viper, a former kabuki-mono who had to leave her gang when her gender was discovered. She is a superlative swordswoman with serious psychopathic tendencies. Only Miroko can stop her when she tastes fear in her enemies.

The viper-girls are former female geisha who were broken or scarred by cruel mistresses and their clients. Miroko gives them a home and has Viper train them in every dirty trick and weapon that can give them an edge against the House's enemies and targets.

They usually wear masks or elaborate kabuki make-up to hide their scarring and injuries.

The Geisha are the young men trained and employed by Miroko as part of her spying activities. They are skilled in seduction and manipulation, but are not really competent combatants.

Type	Karma	FV	SV	Speed	Cost	Equipment
Miroko	3+	+2	+2	+1	75	Lined Kimono, Tanto**, Shuriken*
	Leadership +2, Inspirational, Rhetoric, Unearthly Beauty, Ki [2], Second Chance & Whirlwind Attack Magical powers: Mask of Terror, Possession					
Viper	4+	+3	+3	+1	51	Lined Kimono, Katana, Shuriken*
	Leadership +1, Berserker, Fearless, Lightning Reflexes Ki [2], Second Chance & Swift Despatch					
Geisha Mistress	4+	+3	+2	+1	32	Lined Kimono, Tanto, Shuriken*
	Leadership +1, Rhetoric Ki [1], Second Chance					
Geisha	5+	+0	+1	+1	21	Tanto*, Shuriken
	Rhetoric					
Viper-girl	5+	+2	+1	+1	27	Light Armour, Tanto x2,

	Fanatic, Ni-To (Two-weapon Fighting)
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* These shuriken are held in the Geishas' elaborate hair-do's and look like hairpins.

** These are master-crafted.

Options

- Any Geisha, except a novice, can exchange her Tanto for a Wakizashi.
- Miroko and any Mistress may also take a Katana.
- Any Geisha may take the skills Beneath Notice (*noh*) Lighting Reflexes.
- Any Geisha may take an Iron Fan.
- Any figure may poison their Tanto or Shuriken.
- Any figure may take a single Smoke Grenade each.
- A single Geisha in the buntai can take the skill Physician (*igaku*).
- Any Geisha may take the Skill Martial Arts 1, and a Mistress or Miroko Martial Arts 2.
- A troupe may engage the services of a Hero of Nippon, in particular the Noh Actor or a Kitsune.