



AETERNA - GAMES

# BUSHIDŌ

*“A samurai could break an oath,  
but he could not escape the consequences of betrayal.”*

VERSION 1.0 · SEPTEMBER 2026

Working version. The core mechanics and iconography are documented for physical playtesting; values and balance adjustments may still change before the final edition.

## 01 THE GAME

# Loyalty. Conflict. Betrayal.

BUSHIDŌ is a tactical confrontation game for 2 or 3 players. Each player receives a secret Mandate, begins with a public Oath and takes part in six Conflicts between four clans. Strength decides the clashes; loyalty, betrayal and Events decide how much you are willing to pay for the outcome you want.

|         |       |       |           |            |
|---------|-------|-------|-----------|------------|
| 2-3     | 48    | 4     | 6         | 2          |
| PLAYERS | CARDS | CLANS | CONFLICTS | MAX. OATHS |

## OBJECTIVE

After the sixth Conflict, reveal the Mandates. The player who achieved the most favorable political outcome wins according to the hierarchy Principal > Ally > Rival.

## CENTRAL TENSION

**Your Mandate expresses what you secretly want. Your Oaths express what you have publicly promised.**

## CORE PRINCIPLE

Easy-to-remember rules. Difficult decisions. Hard-to-predict games.

## 02 COMPONENTS

# Five families. One deck.

BUSHIDŌ contains 48 cards. The entire game is resolved within the deck itself.

| FAMILY   | NO. | FUNCTION                                                     |
|----------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| MANDATE  | 4   | Secret. Defines Principal, Ally, Rival and Neutral.          |
| CONFLICT | 6   | All six possible pairings between four clans.                |
| OATH     | 12  | Three copies per clan. Public commitments.                   |
| STRENGTH | 24  | 18 normal + 6 historical special cards.                      |
| EVENT    | 2   | Assembly and Shogun's Edict. Played in addition to Strength. |
| TOTAL    | 48  | No auxiliary components.                                     |

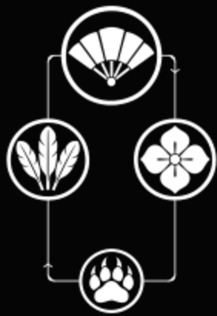
**HAND POOL**

The 24 Strength cards and 2 Events form a common 26-card hand pool. With 3 players, remove 2 unseen; with 2 players, use all 26.

03 CLANS AND MANDATES

# What you want remains hidden.

The fixed circular order is Fan > Four-petal flower > Bear claw > Three feathers > Fan. Each Mandate assigns the four clans to a secret hierarchy.



Fan



Four-petal flower



Bear claw



Three feathers

READING A MANDATE

|                  |                                                       |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PRINCIPAL</b> | Clan shown as the main symbol.                        |
| <b>ALLY</b>      | Previous clan in the cycle.                           |
| <b>RIVAL</b>     | Next clan in the cycle.                               |
| <b>NEUTRAL</b>   | Opposite clan; it does not enter the final hierarchy. |

EXAMPLE

If Bear claw is your Principal, Four-petal flower is your Ally, Three feathers your Rival, and Fan is Neutral.

#### 04 OATHS

# What you promise is public.

The 12 Oath cards contain three copies per clan. At the start, each player receives one random Oath face up. You may have at most two active Oaths.



Fan

×3



Four-petal flower

×3



Bear claw

×3



Three feathers

×3

#### THREE STATES



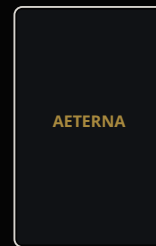
ACTIVE

Face up, vertical. Current commitment.



BETRAYED

Face up, rotated 90° into horizontal orientation. Pending dishonor.



RESTORED

Face down. Frees the slot; that clan is permanently barred.

#### PUBLIC INFORMATION

A restored card may remain face down, but the betrayed clan remains public information.

05 NORMAL STRENGTH

# Nine designs. Eighteen cards.

Each of the nine motifs appears twice in the deck. The printed values of the 18 normal Strength cards range from 1 to 4.



Gusoku

×2



Jinbaori

×2



Kabuto

×2



Menpō

×2



Mounted samurai

×2



Samurai with katana

×2



Samurai with yari

×2



Samurai with yumi

×2



Sashimono

×2

CURRENT PLAYTEST DISTRIBUTION

4 cards with value 1 · 5 with value 2 · 5 with value 3 · 4 with value 4.

## 06 SPECIAL STRENGTH

# Value or ability. Never both.

The six special cards represent historical events. Commit them face down like any Strength. After reveal, Events are resolved and sides are fixed, the owner chooses either its value or its ability.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>2</p> <p>桶狭間</p> <p>OKEHAZAMA</p> <p>1560</p> <p>If your side is losing after the Strength cards are revealed, add a normal of 2.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p>                                  | <p><b>Okehazama · 1560</b></p> <p>VALUE 2</p> <p>If your side is losing after Strength is revealed, it contributes 4 instead of 2.</p>                    |
| <p>1</p> <p>長篠</p> <p>NAGASHINO</p> <p>1575</p> <p>Choose an opposing Strength card played for its value. Its value becomes 0 for this Conflict.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p>                      | <p><b>Nagashino · 1575</b></p> <p>VALUE 1</p> <p>Choose an opposing Strength used for its value. Its value becomes 0 for this Conflict.</p>               |
| <p>1</p> <p>関ヶ原</p> <p>SEKIGAHARA</p> <p>1600</p> <p>Choose an opposing Strength card with a value of 1 or 2. Add its value to your side. This does not affect Oaths.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p> | <p><b>Sekigahara · 1600</b></p> <p>VALUE 1</p> <p>Choose an opposing Strength with value 1 or 2. Add its value to your side. It does not alter Oaths.</p> |
| <p>2</p> <p>大阪</p> <p>OSAKA</p> <p>1614-1615</p> <p>After the Conflict, choose an opponent. They discard 1 random card from hand.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p>                                     | <p><b>Osaka · 1614-1615</b></p> <p>VALUE 2</p> <p>After the Conflict, a chosen rival discards 1 random Strength from hand.</p>                            |
| <p>2</p> <p>四十七浪人</p> <p>47 RŌNIN</p> <p>1701-1703</p> <p>Recover 1 normal Strength card you used earlier.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p>                                                            | <p><b>The 47 Rōnin · 1701-1703</b></p> <p>VALUE 2</p> <p>Recover 1 normal Strength you used earlier.</p>                                                  |
| <p>2</p> <p>城山</p> <p>SHIROYAMA</p> <p>1877</p> <p>If your side would lose by 4 points or fewer, the result becomes a tie.</p> <p>STRENGTH / EFFECT</p>                                            | <p><b>Shiroyama · 1877</b></p> <p>VALUE 2</p> <p>If your side would lose this Conflict by 4 points or fewer, the result becomes a tie.</p>                |

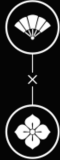
## RESOLUTION ORDER

If several abilities resolve at the same time, apply them chronologically from the earliest historical event to the latest.

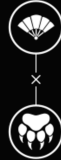
07 CONFLICTS

# Six pairings. Each happens once.

Shuffle the six Conflict cards to form the six rounds. Each clan appears in exactly three clashes.



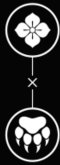
Fan / Four-petal flower



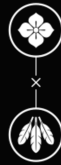
Fan / Bear claw



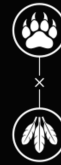
Fan / Three feathers



Four-petal flower / Bear claw



Four-petal flower / Three feathers



Bear claw / Three feathers

## RECORDING THE RESULT

If a clan wins, orient the Conflict card toward that clan and leave it visible. On a tie, leave the card unoriented and neither clan gains a victory.

## OATHS AND INITIAL SUPPORT

If one facing clan matches an active Oath, you must initially support that clan. If neither matches, choose freely. If both match your two Oaths, choose one as your initial support.

## 08 SETUP

# Before the first Conflict.

01

## Deal Mandates

Shuffle the 4 Mandate cards. Deal one face down to each player. Undealt Mandates leave the game unseen.

02

## Deal the initial Oath

Shuffle the 12 Oath cards. Deal one random Oath face up to each player. The rest form the public reserve.

03

## Prepare the hand pool

Shuffle the 24 Strength cards together with the 2 Events.

04

## Prepare Conflicts

Shuffle the 6 Conflict cards to form the six-round Conflict deck.

### 3 PLAYERS

- Remove 2 cards from the 26-card pool face down and unseen.
- Deal 8 cards to each player.
- Each Conflict: 1 Strength + up to 1 additional Event.
- Playing an Event reduces your total Strength contribution by 2, minimum 0.

### 2 PLAYERS

- Use all 26 cards: 13 per player.
- Each Conflict: 1 or 2 Strength cards + up to 1 additional Event.
- Maximum 1 special Strength per player per Conflict.
- Events do not reduce Strength.

## 09 RESOLVING A CONFLICT

# Eleven moments.

**01 Reveal the Conflict**

Show the next pairing of clans.

**02 Check Oaths**

Determine each player's public obligations.

**03 Restitution, if applicable**

A player with pending dishonor may declare restitution and sacrifice a Strength.

**04 Declare initial support**

Each player publicly declares the clan they support at the start.

**05 Commit cards**

Play the allowed Strength face down and, optionally, 1 additional Event.

**06 Reveal**

All Strength and Event cards are revealed simultaneously.

**07 Resolve Events**

Apply effects that occur before betrayal decisions. With 3 players, also apply the -2 penalty.

**08 Loyalty, betrayal or abstention**

With cards visible, confirm support, betray if allowed, or abstain when both facing clans match your two Oaths.

**09 Resolve special Strength**

With sides fixed, choose value or ability. Never both.

**10 Resolve the Conflict**

Add final Strength. Orient the card toward the winner, or leave it unoriented on a tie.

**11 Aftermath**

Resolve "after/end of Conflict" effects, Assembly, possible new Oath and discard.

## 10 OATHS IN PLAY

# Promises have consequences.

**LOYALTY**

If you support the clan of an active Oath and remain loyal, that Oath adds +1 to your side. If your two Oaths match both facing clans, after reveal you may abstain to preserve both: your committed Strength is added to neither side.

**BETRAYAL**

After reveal and prior Event effects, you may break an Oath and switch sides. You lose the +1 and the printed value of your Strength is also reduced by 1, minimum 0. Rotate the Oath card 90° into horizontal orientation. With 2 players, if you committed two Strength cards, both switch sides.

**RESTITUTION**

In a later Conflict, before committing cards, you may sacrifice one Strength to repair the dishonor. At the end of that Conflict, turn the betrayed Oath face down. The slot is freed, but that clan is permanently barred.

**RESTITUTION COST**

With 3 players, sacrificing the only allowed Strength means contributing no Strength to that Conflict. With 2 players, one of the two possible Strength cards may be sacrificed while the second is played normally.

**NEW OATHS**

After a Conflict with a winner, the player with the highest individual contribution to the winning side may swear to that clan if eligible. If the highest contribution is tied, no one gains an Oath. Pending dishonor blocks all new Oaths.

## 11 EVENTS

# They alter the Conflict.

Assembly and Shogun's Edict are part of the hand pool. Play them face down alongside Strength and reveal them simultaneously. Each player may play at most one Event per Conflict.



## Assembly

At the end of the Conflict, the player who used it must replace one active Oath with another valid Oath; then each rival may optionally do the same. The swap is not betrayal. It cannot be used merely to abandon an Oath. The two-Oath limit, bans on previously betrayed clans and pending-dishonor restriction still apply.



## Shogun's Edict

Current playtest rule. Resolve it before betrayal decisions. During that Conflict, no player may betray an active Oath. If your two Oaths match both facing clans, you must abstain to preserve both.

### 3-PLAYER COST

Playing an Event reduces your total Strength contribution for that Conflict by 2, to a minimum of 0. With 2 players, there is no reduction.

## 12 VICTORY

# Mandates are revealed at the end.

After the sixth Conflict, count each clan's victories and reveal the Mandates. Neutral does not enter the final resolution.

## 1 PRINCIPAL

Most victories by the Principal clan.

## 2 ALLY

If Principal is not enough, compare Allies.

## 3 RIVAL

If still tied, favor the player whose Rival has the worse result.

### FINAL TWO-PLAYER TIEBREAK

If exactly two Mandates remain equivalent after Rival, use the direct Conflict between their two Rival clans. Favor the player whose Rival lost that Conflict. If that Conflict was tied, the game ends in a tie.

### THREE-WAY TIE

If all three players remain exactly tied after Principal, Ally and Rival, the game ends in a three-way tie.

## 13 QUICK REFERENCE

# Everything essential on one page.

| CARD     | NO. | KEY RULE                                                |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------------------------------|
| MANDATE  | 4   | Secret: Principal, Ally, Rival, Neutral.                |
| OATH     | 12  | Public. 3 per clan. 1 initial. Max. 2 active.           |
| CONFLICT | 6   | Each pairing once. May end in a tie.                    |
| STRENGTH | 24  | 18 normal + 6 special. Special: value or ability.       |
| EVENT    | 2   | Additional to Strength. Max. 1 per player per Conflict. |

## ESSENTIAL REMINDERS

- Secret Mandate and public Oath are independent systems.
- Initial support is declared before cards are committed; Strength and Events are revealed simultaneously.
- Loyalty adds +1. Betrayal switches sides, loses that +1 and reduces printed Strength by 1, minimum 0.
- When you betray, rotate the Oath 90° into horizontal orientation. Pending dishonor blocks new Oaths.
- Restitution requires sacrificing a Strength; afterward the Oath is face down and that clan is permanently barred.
- A special Strength chooses value or ability after reveal and after sides are fixed.
- With 3 players, each Event reduces your total Strength contribution by 2, minimum 0; with 2 players it does not.
- A tied Conflict grants neither victory nor a new Oath.
- After a Conflict with a winner, the highest individual contribution may gain an Oath; if that contribution is tied, no one gains it.
- After the sixth Conflict: Principal > Ally > Rival; remaining ties use the Victory rules.