

Hierarchy  
Large Group Roleplaying  
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**What this game is about:**

Hierarchy is an engaging roleplaying game for groups of 8 to 15 people. It is set in a very pseudo-Japanese fantasy world where the Emperor reigns with iron authority, but is always in danger of being usurped. The key to Hierarchy is conflict. If you can overcome the obstacles you put before yourself, then you will advance and win the game. To win, you must become the undisputed Emperor of Fhen (the world in which this game is set). Conflict and contention are built heavily into this game. The player who helps you one moment, will turn on you the next. Danger and heroism lurk around every corner.

**What the characters do:**

Characters are divided into four castes. The first is the Emperor. There is one and only one Emperor. He is the supreme ruler, and the one who commands all the other characters. It is his job to eliminate outside hostile threats to his kingdom while keeping his lords and vassals too busy to overthrow him. The second caste is the Daimyo. There are two Daimyo. The Daimyo spar with each other to decide who will fulfill the wishes of the Emperor and who will overthrow him when given the chance. When the Emperor gives a quest, only one Daimyo may go. The third caste is the Shogun. There are only three Shogun. The Shogun are minor lords who serve the Daimyo. The Shogun are respected in their land, but always have the desire to move up and usurp their masters. While there are three Shogun, only two may go on a Quest. The final caste is the Samurai. The Samurai are the foot soldiers in the army. They are skilled with their weapons, but do not possess the prestige of the higher castes. All Samurai go on a Quest and there can be any number of Samurai in a session of Hierarchy.

**What the players do:**

Being a player in Hierarchy means taking responsibility. You are playing with a large group of people, so conflicts must be resolved efficiently but also with a personal touch. The Emperor is the closest thing to a GM in this game (explained later) but at some point in this game, every player will take on the GM role for someone else. Be prepared to generate NPC's, conflicts, and even entire scenes for your fellow players. Remember, always escalate the conflicts and drive as much gut wrenching power into your stories as you can.

**The Characters:**

Since character generation in Hierarchy is a bit more complex and ritualized than other games, both the characters' roles and generation will be discussed in this section.

The Talisman

Each character has a Talisman. This should be a noun (preferably not a person) that symbolizes what your character will be about. For instance, someone with the Tiger Talisman will be a ferocious warrior. Someone with the Snake Talisman will be wise and crafty. The

Talisman should reflect your character's personality and the style in which you intend to play him. Once you have decided what your Talisman is, draw it on a slip of paper and fold it in half. Everyone should do so.

### The Prestige of Noble Birth

In Fhen, one is born into one's caste. The Emperor inherited the throne. The Daimyo inherited their positions and so on. To begin the character-making process, put everyone's slip of paper that has their Talisman drawn on it into a hat or bag. Then draw them one at a time. The first one drawn will be the Emperor. The next two will be the Daimyo. The fourth, fifth, and sixth names drawn will be the Shogun. The remaining players will begin as Samurai. Once this has been decided, bow to one another and then begin generating your character.

### The Character Sheet

All character begin with five Stats. They are: Combat, Nobility, Subterfuge, Spirit, and Speech. These Stats are used to aid a character when he is faced with a conflict (explained later). Characters also have Tiles. Tiles are magic disks that grant the character the ability to do extraordinary things. These Tiles are kept on a sash worn by each character denoting what abilities he has. Feel free to draw representations of your Tiles in the spaces provided by your character sheet. All characters begin with the Sword Tile. Tiles are also used during a conflict to resolve the situation. As characters gain new Tiles they may choose a new idea for the tile to represent (such as stealth, wizardry, medicine, trapping, etc.).

Each point in a Stat grants the character the same number of dice to roll in a conflict. Similarly, the value of a Tile grants the character the same number of dice to roll. It is up to each player to decide which Stat and which Tile best fit the situation. When players face each other, they are not required to use the same Stats or Tiles. It is left up to the individual.

*EXAMPLE:* Masahoro is face to face with a lesser demon holding his sister captive. He chooses to Fight the demon using his Sword Tile and his Combat Stat. The combined value of each set the number of dice he gets to roll in the conflict. So if he had a Combat Stat of 2 and a Sword Tile of 1, then he would roll 3 dice (d10's) in the conflict. It is up to each individual player to choose and justify which Stat and Tile he will use to engage an enemy.

Characters also have Honor. Honor is used to both protect the character and increase his Stats and Tiles (explained later). All characters begin with 1 Honor except the Emperor who begins with 2.

Players should draw a representation of their character's Talisman in the space provided on the character sheet. Make it as simple or plain as you like. Remember, the Talisman represents who your character is.

Each character also has a Precious. The Precious is a person, place, or thing that is very dear to the heart of your character. It is also the source of many of the challenges he must face. Choose something that is unique to your character; something that he would die to protect and preserve. Then write it on your character sheet.

*EXAMPLE:* Masahoro's family was almost entirely killed in a fire. The only survivor is his younger sister Hi-shen. After his parents died, Masahoro promised to protect her and provide for her even though he spends most of his time at the royal palace. His sister, Hi-shen, would then become his Precious.

How the Precious is used in actual play is explained further in the Quest section of this book.

What follows below are individual descriptions of how a character in each class is made and a description of the roles they play.

### The Emperor

The Emperor is the most prestigious position in Fhen. However, it is also the most precipitous. The Daimyo are always nipping at his heels, trying to take his place as the rightful ruler of this world.

#### *Generating your Emperor:*

The Emperor automatically begins with the Cosmos Talisman. The Emperor is considered a god and therefore can command everything in the Universe. The Stars are always in his favor, and so the Cosmos Talisman is always considered "Discovered" and can always be used in a conflict for the Emperor (explained later). The Cosmos Talisman is not drawn on the character sheet. It is a bonus Talisman separate from the one you chose before the game started. It passes from Emperor to Emperor as you change places and positions in your ranks. Because it is always useable in every conflict the Emperor faces and adds additional bonuses to any other Talisman the character may have Discovered, the Cosmos Talisman is the most powerful and prestigious Talisman in Fhen. No other character may have one like it.

The Emperor's other Talisman (the one you created before names were drawn) is "undiscovered." It cannot be brought in or used in a conflict until it is Discovered.

The Emperor begins with 10 points you can allocate to his five stats. You may choose to put all 10 in one or spread them out however you choose. There is no minimum or maximum. The Emperor also begins with two Tiles in addition to the Sword Tile. Set his Honor to two, and you're all done!

#### *The Role of the Emperor:*

As the Emperor you have responsibilities to your Empire. It is always under attack, facing a famine, or in peril from a disease. It is up to you to send your Daimyo to halt the attack, solve the famine, or find the source of the disease. This is called Decreeing the Quest.

To decree a Quest, you must generate a Situation and a Boss. A Situation can be anything from a Dragon Attack to a River Has Gone Dry to A Plague Has Broken Out In the South Province. You then order your Daimyo to solve the Situation. The Daimyo resolve among themselves who goes; you do not pick.

The Boss is whoever or whatever is behind the Situation. In the Dragon Attack it might be the Dragon. In the Dry River it could be a Giant has dammed the River with a huge tree. The Plague might be caused by a Mad Priest. Whoever or whatever the Boss may be, it should be

an Entity the Daimyo can face by himself. This is explained further in the Questing section of this game.

During the Quest you will GM the Boss and any of his servants the Daimyo must face to overcome the conflict. You should take your cues from the Daimyo on just how the conflict will be resolved (negotiation, a Fight, a public debate, etc.). But don't be afraid to escalate the conflict to add more tension and impact to the story.

### The Daimyo

The Daimyo are powerful warlords in Fhen. They command the armies of the Emperor and personally face the dangers the he commands him to defeat. The Daimyo compete among each other for the Emperor's favor and the right to take his Quest. There is a fair amount of intrigue between them as they try to outdo one another and unseat the Emperor at the same time.

#### *Creating your Daimyo:*

The Daimyo begins with six points to allocate to his Stats. Arrange them however you wish, like the Emperor this are no restrictions. Each Daimyo also starts with four Tiles in addition to the Sword Tile. The Talisman of the Daimyo is considered "undiscovered" when play begins. He is free to Discover it at any time on a Quest (explained later). Daimyo begin with only one point of honor.

#### *The Role of your Daimyo:*

The Daimyo have many roles. First is to carry out the missions (called Quests) that the Emperor decrees. Only one Daimyo may go at a time, so each must outwit each other in a sparring session. The Daimyo can also Subvert each other as they try to complete a Quest. It requires stealth and subterfuge and putting your honor on the line, but it can make the difference between becoming Emperor or becoming nothing.

It is also the desire of every Daimyo to become Emperor. This means you will someday have to Fight the very one you protect and serve. However, that is the nature of Hierarchy in Fhen. No one is guaranteed their place in the palace. The Daimyo also choose which Shogun will accompany him on a Quest. It is an important and strategic decision- the Shogun will grow in power and try to unseat you, just as you try to unseat the Emperor.

### The Shogun

The Shogun of Fhen are local vassals that protect various portions of the empire. At any time a Daimyo will order them to accompany him on a Quest decreed by the Emperor. They are respected by the people, but not always liked. Often they are seen as lesser nobles who are discontent with their position in society.

#### *Creating your Shogun:*

Shogun are granted four points to spend on the Stats and six Tiles to add to their sash. Your starting Honor is one. Like the Daimyo, you must Discover your Talisman on a Quest. You do not receive its bonuses until then.

### *The Role of the Shogun:*

Only two Shogun go on every Quest, so one is always left behind. A Shogun may choose not to go on a Quest, but such occurrences will be rare. While on the Quest, the Daimyo expects you to help him defeat the Boss. That may or may not be in your best interest. You will some day have to face the Daimyo in combat to take his place in the palace. Earning his favor may get you selected to go with him on more Quests, but aiding him may keep him in power. For the Shogun, strategy is everything.

### The Samurai

The workhorse soldier in the Emperor's army is the Samurai. On every Quest all the Samurai accompany the Daimyo and Shogun. They are just one step above the peasants and do not live much better than they do. While generally liked by the commoners, they have a burning desire to move up in the world.

### *Creating the Samurai:*

Samurai start out with two points to distribute to their Stats and ten Tiles for their sash. Remember that you can stack Tiles to increase the bonus (for instance using one of your ten Tiles for another Sword Tile gives you a Sword +2 Tile. This is explained further in Advancement). Samurai also begin with one Honor.

### *Role of the Samurai:*

The Samurai are a part of every Quest decreed by the Emperor. They have no choice- they must go. Samurai are the most numerous caste in Fhen hierarchal society and therefore are constantly challenging the Shogun for their place in the system. The Samurai can pitch in and help the Daimyo defeat the Boss, and it is often in their best interest to do so.

### **Character Advancement:**

#### *Earning Honor*

Characters advance by earning Honor. This is achieved in one of several ways. First by successfully completing a Quest decreed by the Emperor. Every character who was on the Quest, if it was successful, earns 1 point of Honor. Also, whenever a character successfully Fights another character to take over his position in the hierarchy, then he also gains a point of Honor. Lastly, any character may grant 1 Honor to any other character of a lower caste for any reason ranging from "Helping During a Quest" to "I Want You to Knock Off That Annoying Shogun So Here's a Little Bonus." Lastly, a character can earn Honor by successfully defending or rescuing his Precious. This is explained in greater detail in the Quest section of this book.

#### *Losing Honor*

Characters can also lose honor. Any character who fails in his Subversion attempt (explained later) loses 1 Honor. Likewise, any character who fails when challenging another character for his position in the caste system loses 1 Honor.

### *Spending Honor*

Character can spend their honor to improve their traits and buy Victory Points. Below is a brief table charting the costs of buying these bonuses:

Adding a New Tile = 1 Honor

Adding a +1 Bonus to a Stat = 2 Honor

Adding +1 Victory Point = 3 Honor

When adding a new Tile, once may select a Tile already owned by the character. This gives that tile a +1 Bonus. Take the Sword Tile for example. Masahoro has spent a point of Honor and received a new Tile. He chooses it to be a Sword Tile. Thus he now has two Sword Tiles (or Sword +2). Anytime he uses his sword he will now roll 2 dice instead of 1. This is called “stacking” a Tile.

### **Resolving Conflicts and the “Fight”:**

In any conflict, whether between Player-characters or between PCs and NPCs, the Stakes of the conflict are agreed upon prior to any rolling. The person who is the aggressor (or the one challenging another character) initiates the Terms and the Stakes.

#### *Terms and Stakes*

The Terms are the methods in which the conflict will be resolved. For instance, a Samurai may wish to protect his childhood home by privately negotiating a price with the current owner. The Terms would *negotiation*. If the player playing the owner did not want to agree to those terms, he may say something like, “No we will debate the price in front of the town. I’ll not have you intimidate me just because you are a member of the court!” The aggressor (in this case the Samurai) must then accept the new Terms, offer a counter proposal for new Terms, or Surrender the conflict to the owner. Once terms are established, then it’s moved on to Stakes.

Stakes are what will be won or lost in the conflict. In the example above, the Stakes would be the price of the Samurai’s home. If the Samurai wins the conflict, the price will be whatever the Samurai decides. If the Owner wins, then the price is whatever he decides. Once a conflict is settled, the result stands and both characters live with the outcome.

#### *Subversion and Fighting*

There are two exceptions to the above rules. First is Subversion. When the Emperor decrees a Quest, the two Daimyo spar to see who earns the right to go. The loser of the sparring then has the chance to undermine the actions of not only the winner, but of all the characters who go with him on the Quest. The Terms for this contest are as follows: the losing Daimyo must use his Subterfuge Stat and the Stealth Tile if he has one. The winning Daimyo must use his Nobility Stat and his Stealth Tile if he has one. If the Daimyo who lost the sparring wins the Subversion contest, then **all** Player Characters subtract their highest roll for all conflicts on the current Quest and all NPCs roll one additional die. These are the Stakes of this specific conflict.

The second exception is the Fight. During a Fight, players must use their Combat Stat, however they are free to use whatever Tile they want. The Sword Tile will probably be the most common, but PCs are free to use an Axe Tile, a Wizardry Tile, a Rope Tile, a Cross-bow Tile or whatever else they care to come up with. Remember, this is hand-to-hand combat, so whichever Tile you choose, it should convey a sense of violence. The Stakes of a Fight are simply “who wins?” The details of how a person is wounded or killed are continued later in the Fight section of this chapter.

### *Rolling the Dice*

The default dice rolled by PCs in Hierarchy are d10's. If there is an exception to this rule, it will be noted in the appropriate sections. All 0's on a d10 count as a 10.

In a conflict, once the Terms and Stakes are set, combat follows a precise ritual. First, the two opponents bow (both the characters and the players). Next they each individually roll the combined total of dice from their own Stat and Tile. Next, the player with the larger pool of dice discards any results he chooses until his pool is equal to his opponent's pool. Then the players proceed to the Bid and Match phase of the contest (explained in the next section). Once a player runs out of dice, the contest is considered over and the winner is the player who scored the most Hits. If there is a tie, then both players roll repeat the above steps until one has scored more Hits than the other after a player's pool is emptied.

### *Bidding and Matching*

When in the process of Bidding and Matching, play proceeds as follows. If the contest is between a PC and a NPC, the NPC must bid first. To do so, the player playing the NPC chooses any number of dice from his pool and places them in front of the opposing player. That's his Bid. The opposing player must then Match that total. If the opposing player can match the exact same value, then the attempt was deflected and there is no effect. If the opposing player can exceed the total originally bid, he scores a Hit. If the total is less than the other player originally Bid, then the other player scores a Hit. After the first Bid is resolved, the order switches. The PC must then make a Bid and the NPC will have a chance to match.

*EXAMPLE:* Masahoro is in a debate with Yamachi the Sorcerer – a NPC. Masahoro has rolled a 8, 6, 5, 0, 9, and a 4. Yamachi has rolled a 3, 8, 4, 4,7, and an 8. Yamachi Bids first. He places an 8 and a 3 for a total of 11 in front of Masahoro's player. Masahoro then Matches with an 8 and a 4 for a total of 12. The total of Masahoro's die is greater than Yamachi's, so Yamachi has suffered 1 hit. Next, Masahoro places a 0, a 9, and a 5 in front of Yamachi's player. Who then matches with a 7, 4, and an 8. Yamachi's total is less than Masahoro's and therefore he suffers a second Hit.

If the contest is between two PCs, then the PC who initiated the conflict will first Match the Bid of the player who was challenged. Then the order will flip as per the rules above.

Any dice that are left over after a conflict are saved until the next conflict and rerolled. A player with these extra dice must still reduce his dice pool to be equal with his opponents, but he does receive the bonus of a broader selection of dice.

### *The Fight*

If two characters escalate a conflict into that of armed struggle, then the contest becomes a Fight. A Fight follows the normal contest rules outlined above with one additional component. Each time a character suffers a Hit, he receives a wound. Wounds are cumulative and potentially deadly. In Hierarchy there are five wound levels based on the number of hits a character has taken:

Winged (1 hit)  
Wounded (2 hits)  
Injured (3 hits)  
Incapacitated (4 hits)  
Dead (5 hits)

A character who is incapacitated loses the Fight and may not make any more rolls, Bids, or Matches. In order for a character to heal his wound levels, he must possess a Tile that would accomplish it (such as a Medicine, Healing, or Regeneration Tile) or choose sit out a Quest. If either of these methods are taken, the character is fully healed.

### *Using Multiple Tiles*

When in a contest, PCs may use more than just one Tile to aid them if they can justify it. For instance, say a Samurai wishes to use both his Lance Tile and his Horse Tile in a Fight. It makes logical sense, so he would earn the right to roll a number of dice equal to his Stat + Both Tiles. If he wanted to use his Sword and Paintbrush Tiles it would be harder to justify and therefore unlikely he would gain the extra dice.

### *Honor as a Defense*

Honor not only denotes the faithfulness and ability of the character, it protects him in combat. If a character takes a Hit during a Fight, then his Honor can absorb the blow. A character may absorb a number of Hits equal to his Honor per Fight. All hits that are absorbed in this way do not count towards winning the contest. It's as if they never happened. Honor is not lost in this way when it absorbs hits. A character with Honor points less than one cannot absorb any Hits in this manner.

### *Surrender*

At any point in a conflict a character may choose to surrender. If he does, he forfeits the Stakes to his opponent.

### *No Mercy*

If a PC is faced with an opponent in a Fight who chooses to Surrender he may continue the fight anyway- even against an incapacitated character. He immediately loses 1 Honor from his total and does not earn any Honor if he is involved in a Fight for a position in a caste (however if he was trying to move up, he still gains the position).

### *Character Death*

If a character dies during play, he is reborn as a Samurai. His Honor is reset to 1 and his Talisman is returned to being "undiscovered". He may continue to participate as normal from



then on. If a character death leaves a vacancy in a caste other than the Samurai caste, the Emperor chooses another character to fill that void.

### *Summary*

Conflicts can be easily resolved if the order of the steps involved are kept clearly in mind as play progresses. Below is a quick reference table to aid players in keeping the pace of contests as they come up:

- Step 1: Initiation – A player declares opposition to another player (if it is unclear which character is the initiator/aggressor then it is considered to be the character with the highest Honor)
- Step 2: Terms – Players agree to the Terms of the conflict
- Step 3: Stakes – Players agree to the Stakes of the conflict
- Step 4: The Bow – players bow to one another
- Step 5: The Roll – players roll a number of dice equal to the Stat and Tile they have chosen
- Step 6: Selection – the player with the most dice equalizes his pool to the other player's pool
- Step 7: Subversion – Subversion is applied (if necessary). PCs lose their highest die, NPCs roll 1 additional die and add it to their pool
- Step 8: Bidding and Matching – Players alternate Bidding and Matching their dice
- Step 9: Empty Pool – When one player runs out of dice, there is check to see if there is a winner. If not, return to Step 3
- Step 10: Winner – The winner gains the Stakes according to the agreement made before rolling began

### **Victory Points:**

Victory Points are the key to winning the game. A character earns Victory points in one of two ways. First, he is part of a successful Quest. If the Daimyo can defeat the Boss in battle, then everyone who was on the Quest gains +1 Victory Points. Also, if the Quest was successful, the Emperor gains +1 Victory Points. The second way to earn Victory Points is by moving up in the caste system. Every time a character moves up one place (from Samurai to Shogun or Daimyo to Emperor for instance) he earns +1 Victory Points. Moving down, however, does not cause a loss.

### **The Quest:**

The Quest is the portion of the game where the Daimyo, Shogun, and Samurai put their Honor and Lives on the line to protect their Empire as well as those closest to them. Conflict ranges from a scale of individual to collaborative and everyone takes responsibility for adding and resolving conflicts.

### *The Decree:*

At the beginning of each new round of play, the Emperor creates a new Quest. It is up to him to loosely describe the nature of the problem (as outlined earlier) and create the main opposing NPC(s). After the Emperor is finished describing the situation, focus then shifts to the Daimyo.

### *The Daimyo's Duel:*

The sparring between the Daimyo is a non-lethal combat using their Sword Tiles. Even though it is resolved like a Fight, no wounds are normally suffered unless one of the Daimyo chooses to escalate the conflict into a full-fledged Fight. If the conflict is escalated, follow the normal rules for a Fight. In any case, the Stakes for the duel are “Who gets to lead the troops on the Quest?”

After the winner is decided the Daimyo picks the two Shogun who will accompany him on the Quest. This is totally his decision, although the players are welcome to offer whatever assurances and bribes they like to try to curry his favor.

Following the selection of the Shogun, the Daimyo who lost the duel has the option of Subverting the Daimyo who won. This was described previously in the “Subverting and Fighting” section of the “Resolving Conflicts and ‘Fight’” chapter.

### *Seeking Your Fortune:*

Following the Subversion, if there is one, the group breaks up and forms pairs. This is where everyone becomes responsible for GMing conflicts for everyone else. In your pairs you will treat this as a miniature game. Each player that is on the Quest has the opportunity to complete a personal goal of some kind. For instance, a player could try to discover their Talisman, they could protect their Precious, or they could happen upon some other calamity facing a town or village in the empire and be forced to decide whether or not to deal with it.

If you are GMing for another player, you must be light on your feet. You will have to quickly create a scenario based on the goal the other player gives you. You will have to create the opposing NPCs, villages, terrain, and anything else you need to tell the story of how the PC overcomes or fails to overcome the challenge set before him. It is advisable that you do some preplanning before hand of classic NPC villains and unnatural beasts that the PCs will have to contend with. Be creative, and though you will want to escalate the conflict in most scenes, don't be too hasty to resort to violence. There are many other avenues to explore.

Players who are acting as GMs are free to create whatever in-game material they need (towns, people, monsters, etc.) It is up to the players to provide the focus for the mini-session. For example a player could say, “I want to discover my Talisman.” Something like, “I want to discover my Talisman while rescuing my sister (his Precious) and solving a murder mystery in the South Province” is far too broad for this single one-on-one session. One central conflict is all that needs to be resolved, although multiple contests between the PC and NPCs are possible and even encouraged.

To give everyone a chance to get to know each other (very important if this game is used to introduce large groups of gamers to each other) players are encouraged not to partner with a person two times in a row. This will give you a chance to become exposed to all the other players and their styles and get to know them on a more personal basis.

### *Discovering Your Talisman:*

Everyone has a Talisman, but only the Emperor begins with his (the Cosmos Talisman) being active. The rest must be discovered during play on a Quest. The rules for this are fairly simple. The player must overcome a significant challenge using only his Spirit Stat. The GM

should throw plenty of adversity his way, and it is not expected (though it is possible) that a player will succeed on his first try. As a GM, it is up to you to challenge the player to work and become clever to overcome whatever you put in front of him so that the Talisman has true value both to player and character. Only one attempt on the Talisman can be made per quest.

When a Talisman is Discovered, it offers a large bonus to the character. It grants up +1 to any Stat, +1 to any Tile, and gives him an additional point of Honor to his total. It also grants two extra bonus die during a Fight against another PC. Whoever gains their Talisman first will have a major advantage over the other players.

If an Emperor has both his Cosmos Talisman and his personal Talisman active, the bonuses stack. However, if he loses his position, he also loses the bonuses of the Cosmos.

### *Protecting Your Precious:*

A character's Precious is what drives him to climb the feudal ladder of Fhen. The Precious is always in danger and in constant need of tending. While on a Quest, a player may declare to his GM that he wishes to "Protect my Precious!" This sets in motion a certain chain of events.

First, the player must give his GM details about the Precious- what it is, the character's history with the person/place/thing, and what sort of dangers are likely for it. Then the GM should provide a context for resolving what happens to the Precious. He will create the necessary parts of the setting, significant antagonists, and a climax where the PC either rescues the Precious or fails to do so.

Success results in a +1 bonus to the character's Honor. Failure results in a -1 penalty to his Honor. Only one attempt to Protect the Precious may be made per Quest.

### *The Climax:*

After everyone on the Quest has had a chance to complete at least one goal (such as the two mentioned above) the Daimyo may call them to order. At this point, the focus shifts to him and the player of the Emperor takes over as GM. The Daimyo initiates looking for the Boss, or the person behind the problem that prompted the Quest.

Play begins with the Emperor setting the scene and the Daimyo engaging the story by specifically saying what he intends to do to discover the truth, who he plans to interrogate, where he intends to look for clues, and so on. The Emperor then assists that endeavor by providing narration, opposing NPCs, and story-progressing conflicts until the climactic confrontation with the Boss is reached.

The confrontation will often be a Fight, but does not necessarily have to be so. Whatever Terms are chosen, the other PCs on the raid may help the Daimyo. By choosing to aid, a Shogun adds 1d8 to the Daimyo's dice pool. Similarly, a Samurai who chooses to help adds a 1d6 to the Daimyo's Dice pool.

Follow the normal procedures for resolving a conflict including the equalization of dice pools. If the Daimyo wins the conflict, everyone on the Quest receives +1 Victory Points and +1 Honor. If he is defeated, they go home empty handed.

## **The Return Home:**

After a Quest, all the characters return to the royal palace. This is the phase of the game where they receive their rewards for the Quest along with the chance to relay their stories of what they did on their own during that time. Once the rewards are granted, the characters may proceed to Training. This is also in this phase that a winner is checked for (explained later).

## **Training:**

Training is the advancement phase following the Return phase of the game. This is the opportunity given to players to spend their Honor and take stock of what their chances are of moving up in the hierarchy. Be wise with how you spend your honor. It could give you that last Victory Point you need or that fast Tile bump, but you could miss it the next time you're in a Fight.

## **Winning the Game:**

A winner is declared when a character has attained the rank of Emperor, has Discovered his personal Talisman, and has more Victory Points than any other character has Honor during the Return Home phase of the game.

## **Uprising:**

After training, the characters are ready to challenge one another. This is always done in accordance with the rules of a Fight. Play begins with the Daimyo and works down. If a player loses a Fight, he changes position with that character. A character may challenge any number of other characters per Uprising.

A player-character who successfully challenges and defeats another character during the Uprising receives a Victory Point and a point of Honor. If he fails, then he loses a point of Honor.

## **Sunset:**

The Sunset phase of the game is where players reflect on what happened during the Quest and during the Uprising. Changes in seating arrangements and garb may be necessary (and the inclusion of such is encouraged for this game). Players may want to look over their character sheets and consider what areas they need to improve and what types of activities they may need to complete on the next Quest. After everyone is ready, the Sunset phase ends with everyone giving the Emperor a quick bow and play then returns to the Decree phase.

## **Game Phases:**

It may be difficult to keep strait all the phases of the game in Hierarchy. Below is a quick reference table to help players understand the order of operations in this game:

Phase 1: The Emperor's Decree- This is the beginning of each round of the game. The Emperor orders that a Quest must be completed.

Phase 2: The Daimyo's Duel- The two Daimyo spar for the right to serve the Emperor on the

Quest.

Phase 3: Selection of the Shogun- The winning Daimyo chooses which two Shogun will accompany him and all the Samurai are drafted to serve the Daimyo.

Phase 4: Subversion- The losing Daimyo may attempt to thwart the Quest.

Phase 5: The Quest- The Daimyo, his two Shogun, and the Samurai ride forth to slay the evils that have befallen the Empire and discover more about themselves in the process.

Phase 5b: Break-up- The group breaks into pairs and players who are idle (i.e. did not go on the Quest) as well as players involved with the quest GM conflicts and contests until everyone has had a chance to accomplish what they want.

Phase 5c: The Climax- The Daimyo, with the help of the others, faces the Boss and his minions in an attempt to free the land from their blight.

Phase 6: The Return Home- The Daimyo, Shogun, and Samurai return to the Royal Palace to receive their rewards. In this phase, there is a check for the winner.

Phase 7: Training- The characters may spend their Honor to gain bonuses to their Stats, Tiles, and Victory Points.

Phase 8: Uprising- The characters challenge and Fight each other for position in the Royal Palace of Fhen.

Phase 9: Sunset- Players trade places, garb, and reflect on their what happened during that turn as well as plan for the future.

This listing should be kept handy until you get used to the rhythm of how Hierarchy plays. It won't take long, but until you do it's always nice to have something to reference.

## **General Guidelines**

### *While GMing:*

When you are acting as a GM for another player, it is important to keep several things in mind to make it easier on your self. First, "say yes or roll dice"\* as the saying goes. This means that unless you really want to oppose what the player wants to do, just say yes, resolve it, and move on. If it is worth opposing in your mind (for story's sake) then be prepared to create an NPC and roll dice in an attempt to make it difficult for the player to succeed. Second, don't be afraid to escalate a conflict. The more tension and danger you put the PCs in the better. Third, you don't have to detail every village, prairie, or jungle. There is a point where color in a game or in narration ceases to add to the game and begins to take away from it. These one-on-one encounters are designed to be quick, 15-25 minutes at the most. Keep it simple, but keep it meaningful. Lastly, is basically the Golden Rule. Treat others how you would like to be treated in return. For more than likely, the person you are GMing now will be GMing you at some point.

### *Creating NPCs:*

Creating NPCs should focus on the character's personality and motivation- not his Stats and Tiles. Consequently I recommend that you use your character's Stats as a default for the NPC and quickly assign him anywhere between 5 and 12 Tiles. Unlike a player character, a NPC will roll d8's in a contest instead of d10's. It is therefore recommended that you insure that the NPC roll more dice than the PC will (probably through the use of multiple or stacked Tiles) even though the dice pools will be equalized in the future. This will give you wider choices when it comes to picking values for your final pool.

The characters you create should always be lively, extreme in personality, and sporting for a confrontation. You are guaranteed a boring session if you consistently do not push the envelope while GMing.

**\*Special Thanks:**

A big special thanks goes out to Vincent Baker and Dogs in the Vineyard from which this game drew a great deal of inspiration. DitV is an excellent and truly groundbreaking game and I am honored to have my game resemble it in some small way.

Character Sheet

Character's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Character's Starting Caste: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stats**

Combat: \_\_\_\_\_

Speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Subterfuge: \_\_\_\_\_

Spirit: \_\_\_\_\_

Nobility: \_\_\_\_\_

**Talisman:**

**Precious:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Honor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Victory Points:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tiles:**
