

# The Boshin War

The Boshin War (War of the Year of the Dragon) was a civil war that led to the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of the Imperial rule in Japan.

The war found its origins in dissatisfaction among southern domains with the Shogunate's handling of foreigners following the opening of Japan during the prior decade.

In 1866, the southern domains of Satsuma and Choshu formed an alliance against the Tokugawa Shogunate which had ruled from Edo in the Emperor's name since 1603. The Satsuma and Choshu leaders sought to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogun and place the Emperor Komei into a position of true power. Through him, they felt that they could more effectively meet the foreign threat. However, Komei died in January 1867, and his teenaged son Mutsuhito ascended to the throne as the Meiji Emperor on February 1867.

It was clear that the Shogunate could no longer hold out against the pro-imperial forces led by the Satsuma and Choshu domains and on November 1867, Tokugawa Yoshinobu resigned his post as the fifteenth Tokugawa Shogun. His resignation officially transferred power to the young Emperor, but the Shogun wouldn't give up actual control of Japan easily.

On January 4, 1868, the Satsuma and Chosu forces seized the Imperial palace in Kyoto. The following day the Emperor Meiji with the consent of the Imperial assembly declared his own restoration to full power, the abolition of the title of Shogun and the confiscation of the Shogun's lands. The Emperor was now in control, and merely 15 years old. The Shogun had no choice but to resort to arms.

On January 24, 1868, the Shogun decided to prepare an attack on Kyoto, occupied by Satsuma and Choshu forces. In the Battle of Toba-Fushimi (January 27, 1868 to January 31, 1868) Yoshinobu's army clashed with the Satsuma and Choshu troops. The better organised Imperial forces, although outnumbered, defeated to Shogun's forces easily.

The Imperial troops with their more modern weaponry and tactics had the upper hand from the start.

While losing on land, the Shogun did win at sea chiefly, the Naval Battle of Awa. This battle occurred on January 28, 1868 and was a victory for the Shogun, who soon thereafter retreated to Edo.

Having commanded the Imperial forces at the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, Saigo Takamori (Satsuma) then led the Imperial army toward Edo, where, on May 3, 1868, he accepted the surrender of Edo Castle from Katsu Kaishu the Shogun's negotiator. Katsu Kaishu followed the last Shogun into exile in Shizuoka.

The Shogun had surrendered, but the resistance continued. Domains in northern Honshu formed a league, the Northern Alliance under the leadership of the Aizu domain, all to no avail the league finally surrendered on November of 1868 after the Battle of Aizu, which had been fought since this year's late summer.

A final centre of resistance was Ezo, where Enamoto Takeaki, after fleeing with his French military advisers on eight Shogunate warships and proclaimed a republic. After heavy attack, he surrendered in June 1869. With the conclusion of hostilities, the entire country came under the control of the pro-Imperial; this marked the *beginning of the Meiji era*.



## Imperial Forces

The Imperialist army was mainly composed of the troops of the south-western domains of Satsuma, Choshu and Tosa.

Satsuma began to modernize its military with Britain's help and soon took the lead in introducing Western technology and employing Western advisors to teach them how to apply it. They had access to advanced rifles like the British Snider-Enfield, which was a breech-loading rifle.

The Choshu domain was particularly zealous in developing a modern military force with in terms of training and doctrine. This ambition resulted in a good fighting force, even without French backers.

The Kiheitai or "Irregular Militia" was the primary military formation of the Choshu domain. Its members included samurai, but also peasants and almost everybody who wanted to join.

Imperials option I
Leader Status III Two Groups of 8 Chosu & Satsuma Regulars , Rifled Muskets
Leader, Status II Two Groups of 8 Tosa & Saga & Owari Regulars, Rifled Muskets
Leader, Status I One Group of 6 Kiheitai Light Infantry, BL Rifles
Point Value: 73

Imperials option II
Leader Status III Two Groups of 8 Chosu & Satsuma Regulars , BL Rifles
Leader, Status II Two Groups of 8 Tosa & Saga & Owari Regulars, Rifled Muskets
Leader, Status I One Group of 6 Kiheitai Light Infantry, BL Rifles
Point Value: 85

The principal reason for the enlistment of peasants appears to have been resistance to the adoption of firearms, which in Japan had become traditionally associated with the very lowest stratum of soldier.

The first unit to actually incorporate commoners and samurai side by side were the Mimpei or "People's Militia" organised by the Tosa domain of Shikoku in September 1854, to guard its coast.

Like Satsuma and Choshu, the other south-western domains were also quick to recognise the military advantages of western technology. Amongst the quickest was Hizen, which, because it included the Dutch trading station off Nagasaki, became the centre of Dutch learning in Japan. All Hizen samurai were required to train with firearms after 1857, as were all Satsuma samurai after 1854.



## IMPERIAL FORCES

<b>Chosu &amp; Satsuma Infantry with BL Rifle</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	16	<b>Weapon</b>	BL Rifle		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	Yes	2	2	2	Sharp Practice
<b>Chosu &amp; Satsuma Infantry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	10	<b>Weapon</b>	Rifled Musket		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	Yes	2	2	2	Sharp Practice
<b>Tosa &amp; Saga &amp; Owari Infantry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	8	<b>Weapon</b>	Rifled Musket		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	First Only	3	3	3	
<b>Kiheitai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Light Infantry
<b>Points Value</b>	19	<b>Weapon</b>	BL Rifle		<b>Size</b>	6
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	-	-	1	-	Sharp Practice, Good Shoots
<b>Tosa Cavalry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Impact Cavalry
<b>Points Value</b>	8	<b>Weapon</b>	Katana		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	-	-	-	2	3	Tally Ho!
<b>Imperial Artillery</b>					<b>Type</b>	Artillery
<b>Points Value</b>	7/8/9	<b>Weapon</b>	Gun		<b>Size</b>	5
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
No	Yes	Yes	-	2	-	

N.B. Artillery points values are for Light, Medium and Heavy Guns



## Shogunate Forces

Most military formations in Japan were made up of samurai retainers acting as officers and ashigaru (now technically considered low status samurai) as rank-and-file soldiers. The Tokugawa government began modernizing its forces in the 1840s, but many units, particularly those maintained by individual domains, still used weapons and tactics leftover from the Sengoku Jidai.

Armour had fallen out of use by the 1860s. Remember that Japan had seen nearly 200 years of peace and the samurai mostly served as police and ceremonial guards rather than battlefield soldiers. Once European muskets and rifles entered the scene, armour became significantly less useful. The overwhelming majority of soldiers going into battle in this period simply wore kimono and jingasa, even if they fought with traditional shock weapons such as the yari.

In 1841, the Tokugawa Bakufu imported military manuals and small arms from the Dutch in response to the Opium War in China. This marked the beginning of Japanese modernization. Many troops, especially those retained by individual domains continued to wear traditional clothing. Others began wearing more standard uniforms, influenced by European styles but made in Japan.

The majority of small arms were German smoothbore percussion cap muskets called "Gewehre". Later on, both the Bakufu and the domains imported more modern Minié rifles, which still were percussion cap muzzle-loaders, but had rifled barrels. The soldiers were still samurai and ashigaru, yet armed and trained with modern weaponry.

In 1867, the Second French Empire sent a military mission to assist with modernization. Chassepot rifles, the standard small arm of France, were introduced a very advanced weapon for its time. British Enfield muzzle-loading rifles were also popular. Uniforms were French-style, and included covered kepis like those used by the French in North Africa and Mexico.

The Tokugawa Bakufu ended in 1868. The last feudal military reign in Japan was responsible for its own decay.

### Shogunate option II

Leader Status III Two Groups of 8 Gakuheitai & Denshutai Regulars, BL Rifles
Leader, Status I Two Groups of 8 Shogunate loyal clans Regulars , Muskets
Leader, Status II One Group of 6 Yugekitai Skirmishers , BL Rifles
Leader, Status II One Group of 10 Shinsengumi Clan, Katana
Point Value: 88

### Shogunate option I

Leader Status III Two Groups of 8 Bakufu Regulars , Rifled Muskets
Leader, Status I Two Groups of 8 Shogunate loyal clans Regulars , Muskets
Leader, Status II One Group of 6 Yugekitai Skirmishers , BL Rifles
Leader, Status II One Group of 10 Shinsengumi Clan, Katana
Point Value: 72



## SHOGUNATE FORCES

### MODERNIZED TROOPS

<b>Bakufu Infantry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	8	<b>Weapon</b>	Rifled Muskets		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	First Only	3	2	3	Prominent Leader
<b>Shogunate Loyal Clans Infantry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	5	<b>Weapon</b>	Muskets		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	First Only	3	2	3	Prominent Leader
<b>Gakuheitai &amp; Denshutai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Regulars
<b>Points Value</b>	16	<b>Weapon</b>	BL Rifle		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	Yes	2	2	2	Good Shoots
<b>Yugekitai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Skirmishers
<b>Points Value</b>	16	<b>Weapon</b>	BL Rifle		<b>Size</b>	6
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	No	-	2	-	Good Shoots, Tactical, Weedy Coves
<b>Lancers</b>					<b>Type</b>	Scouting Cavalry
<b>Points Value</b>	6	<b>Weapon</b>	Lance		<b>Size</b>	10
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	-	-	-	2	2	Tally Ho!
<b>Denshutai Cavalry</b>					<b>Type</b>	Dragoons
<b>Points Value</b>	15	<b>Weapon</b>	BL Carbine		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	Yes	No	3	2	-	Tally Ho!
<b>Shogunate Artillery</b>					<b>Type</b>	Artillery
<b>Points Value</b>	7/8/9	<b>Weapon</b>	Gun		<b>Size</b>	5
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
No	Yes	Yes	-	2	-	

N.B. Artillery points values are for Light, Medium and Heavy Guns

**TRADITIONAL TROOPS**

<b>Shinsengumi &amp; Shogitai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Clan
<b>Points Value</b>	6	<b>Weapon</b>	*Katana		<b>Size</b>	10
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	-	-	-	1	-	Stubborn, Moveable DP, Aggressive, *Tomahawk
<b>Samurai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Tribe
<b>Points Value</b>	5	<b>Weapon</b>	Hand Weapons		<b>Size</b>	10
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	-	-	-	2	-	Stubborn, Moveable DP, Aggressive, *Tomahawk
<b>Ashigaru</b>					<b>Type</b>	Wallahs
<b>Points Value</b>	3	<b>Weapon</b>	Hand Weapons		<b>Size</b>	12
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
No	-	-	-	3	-	Moveable DP, Surly
<b>Mounted Samurai</b>					<b>Type</b>	Impact Cavalry
<b>Points Value</b>	9	<b>Weapon</b>	Hand Weapons		<b>Size</b>	8
<b>Formation</b>	<b>First Fire</b>	<b>Controlled V.</b>	<b>Crashing V.</b>	<b>Step Out</b>	<b>Drill</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Always	-	-	-	2	-	Tally Ho!, Aggressive, Stubborn, Tomahawk

\*The "Tomahawks" mentioned here are in fact Katana, but the effect is the same.

