

## SHOGUN – THE DESIGN GUIDE

This guide is intended to explain what potential players should expect if choosing to participate in the LARP game, 'Shogun', by reference to the criteria set out in the framework adopted in the widely-circulated publication *'The Mixing Desk of LARP'*:

### **Openness (Transparency vs Secrecy):**

The game is entirely pre-written by the organisers and most characters will be provided with information which is not widely known, either to the players or other characters, in the game. Such secrets are expected to emerge during the course of the game and will likely be a surprise to most of the participants.

### **Character Creation Responsibility (Organiser vs Player):**

Players will be presented with their character in finished form. Players are not expected to attend workshops before the game to develop their characters into full form nor are players required (or permitted) to communicate with each other before the game in order to establish and/or discuss the relationships between their characters.

### **Scenography (360 Degree Illusion vs Minimalism):**

The organisers hope that the players will achieve as much immersion as possible. To this end, players will be expected to wear appropriate costume and the set will be decorated (so far as the budget will allow and the players assist) with appropriate scenery. However, no form of real or replica weaponry will be permitted at the game.

The game incorporates bespoke rules which have been designed to enable the players to simulate the impact of characters' skills, rather than adopt a 'what you see is what you get' (*'WYSIWYG'*) approach. The rules address every issue which the GMs have been able to forecast as potentially arising during the course of the game. However, where the result of any conflict only affects the characters involved, the players of those characters are at liberty to set aside the rules and negotiate between themselves the outcome of the conflict and then roleplay its enactment. If they are unable to reach an agreement then they can utilise the rules to determine the outcome.

### **Runtime Game Mastering (Active vs Passive):**

The organisers will, where necessary, step in to assist with the organisation of key game events, administer the main game mechanics and oversee the resolution of any conflicts. However, the majority of the game is expected to proceed without intervention from the game organisers. Players will be encouraged to follow the 'You are your own GM' (*'YayoG'*) system, where possible.

### **Story Engine (Collaboration vs Competition):**

Characters will each have pre-defined goals, some of which will be in direct competition with the goals of other characters. However, players are encouraged to collaborate in the creation of a compelling story narrative by adopting techniques such as *'Play to Lose'* and *'Play to Lift'* – for example, through their characters voluntarily releasing into the game information which is self-damaging, if necessary, so as to ensure the possibility of a dramatic confrontation with their nemesis at the end of the game.

### **Loyalty to Setting (Playability vs Plausibility):**

The game is inspired by the events occurring in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century in Japan and its neighbouring regions. However, the game incorporates some (but not many) fantastical elements, incorporates certain elements from other Asian cultures and permits female characters greater influence and involvement than women are likely to have had at the time. It is therefore not strictly loyal to the historical period.

### **Bleed-In (Close to Home vs Differentiation):**

Players are expected to set aside all elements of their real lives (such as their background and experiences), to establish a mental barrier between their own personal history and the experiences of their character, and to embrace the role of their character in full. Characters will be allocated to players on the basis of a casting questionnaire, rather than the player's familiarity with any specific skills or experience.

### **Communication (Physical vs Verbal):**

The game predominantly focuses on verbal interaction between players as the means by which characters communicate with one another. However, there is nothing to prevent (and the organisers would actively encourage) players adopting physical mannerisms as part of their character. In addition, certain physical interactions are encouraged where they are in keeping with the setting – for example, characters bowing to each other when first meeting in accordance with the established social conventions of the time.

### **Representation of Theme (Abstraction vs Simulation):**

The game is inspired by a specific historical period, but certain changes have been made to facilitate playability. It is not intended to be a historically-accurate simulation or re-enactment of actual events and the outcome is, in no way, pre-determined. The organisers therefore anticipate that the outcome of the game will probably predict a different future for Japan than that which actually arose.

### **Meta-Techniques (Intrusive vs Discrete):**

The game does not generally require or make express provision for the use of meta-techniques, either intrusive or discrete. Players are not expected to monologue their character's thoughts for the benefit of others and nor will there be a 'black-box' room for players to enact scenes from the past or future. If additional information needs to be communicated to players and/or characters during the course of the game then that information is set out in a contingency envelope which the player is given at the start of the game and expected to open as and when the relevant conditions written on the outside of the envelope have been fulfilled.

### **Player Pressure (Hardcore vs Pretense):**

The game is not fully immersive. Sexual contact between players is expected to take place off-scene and alcohol and/or drug consumption will be simulated. Gameplay will take place in a comfortable hotel and players are not expected to undergo physical hardship or deprivation. In order to ensure players have the opportunity to eat and sleep, gameplay is generally expected to take place within specific time windows, when the organisers are available. Whilst players can choose to continue play when the organisers are not available, no organised game events will occur at such times. The organisers assume that the players will want to socialise in the bar/restaurant when out of character (although this is, of course, not required).