THE PALLADIUM BOOK OF

WEAPONS AND ASSASSINS

by Erick Wujcik

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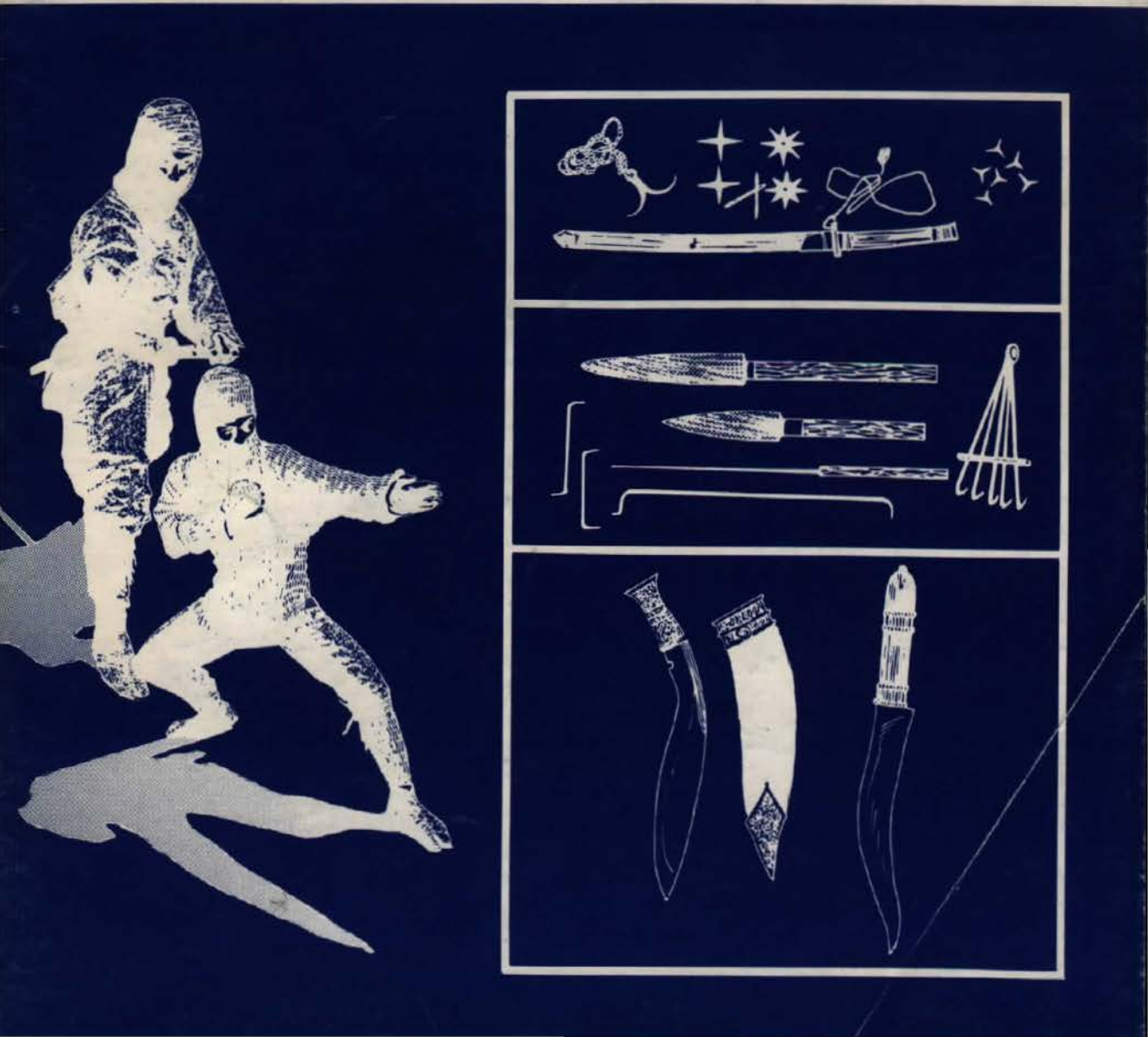

WEAPONS AND ASSASSINS

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Palladium Books, Publisher

Erick Wujcik, Writer

Paula Leasure, Editor

Michael Kucharski, Illustrator

Kevin Siembieda, Art Director

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INTRODUCTION TO WEAPONS AND ASSASSINS

History tells of innumerable assassinations from the earliest records at the dawn of history right through to today's newspaper headlines. No era has been spared the work of madmen and fanatics as they continue to attempt to change the path of history with singular acts. It is altogether too easy to track down biographies of the slain ones. Information on the slayers is usually sparse.

Over and over again history records that the captured asssassin was immediately put to death, executed, tortured, or simply escaped. Those assassins of our own age seem to fall mostly into the two catagories of madmen (who get some warped satisfaction out of killing a public figure) or conspirators (terrorists or fanatics who are far from professional in their pursuit of the victim).

History feels the influence of these individuals. For just one example, what might the world have become had not the father of Alexander the Great, Phillip II of Macedon been assassinated? If there had been no Locusta (the poisoner) might the Roman Empire have flourished under a good leader like Brittanicus?

Knowing that such change can be easily and quickly wrought in modern times it is no wonder that we often hypothesize conspiracies and plotters who are deliberatly attempting to influence events to suit some diabolocal plan. It is easy for terrorists and fanatics to get and use efficient killing weapons in the modern world. The historical assassin needed far more effort and training to perform murder.

Assassination has a direct and immediate effect. It is a simple and economical action compared to the difficult task of constructive political or social action. In order to disable a political body, it is simpler to remove the head than to destroy the entire body. To kill an idea by eliminating its foremost opponent - the cold logic is apallingly easy to understand. Governments often accuse each other of these tactics although successful agencies are known as executioners rather than assassins.

Before gunpowder made assassination a possible career for any lunatic there were many obstacles to efficient killing. This book describes the ancient methods and the secret arts of murder perfected by professionals.

"The man who kills for a price regards indiscriminate killing as foolish and unprofitable. He is as likely to kill anyone without getting paid for it as a banker is to lend money at no interest."
-B.J. Hurwood, Society and the Assassin

When speaking of organizations dedicated to the fine art of skillful murder there are really only three proper historical examples: The Order of Assassins, The Ninja, and The Thugs of India. In each case these groups were dedicated to training members in the precise techniques for quickly and silently dispatching their chosen victims.

Although no other historical examples are well-documented there may be a simple reason for this; success! We can easily imagine an efficient and dedicated secret group of Assassins living in Byzantium, Renaissance Italy, or sixteenth century Europe. No doubt there would be a sufficient demand for their services, but how would we know about the existance of any truly successful group. Consider that any such group would have to rely on complete secrecy in order to prevent their extermination by the lawful authorities. To take another point of view, it would be equally profitable to work for the established government, as innumerable government agencies have done (and, no doubt, continue to do).

The Western European hired assassins that history has described are usually amateur killers and known criminals. The assassination of Thomas Becket by a drunken mob of King Henry the Second's Barons was a typical medieval killing. Getting a few strongarm swordmen together and ambushing the victim was usually the height of technique.

So assume that other "Guilds" of Assassins existed and you'll find no real disagreement from the historical record. You'll simply find that there is no confirmation and that any details concerning them must be left to your imagination. Perhaps the methods of the groups described in this book will inspire that imaginative effort.

THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS

History of the Order of Assassins

After the death of Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, confusion over a proper successor led to the religion's separation into SUNNI and SHIITE factions. The dominant Sunni faction believed that the leadership or IMAN should fall to a qualified leader elected by the faithful. The Shiites believed that succession should fall to the family of Muhammed (specifically to Ali, the husband of Mohammed's daughter Fatima).

After Mohammed's death in 632 the succession became more and more a matter of contention between the mainstream Sunnites and the minority Shiites. Finally, in 765 Musa al-Kazim was recognized by the majority of Shiites as the seventh Iman or legitimate successor to Mohammed. However, Musa had an older brother, Ismail, who had been disinherited by their father. The Shiite extremests clung to the belief that Ismail and his descendents were the only true Imans that followed. These ISMAILIS became a strong secret sect and later established the Fatimid Empire.

In 1094 the Fatimid Khalif, Mustansir, died leaving behind three sons. Although the eldest, Nizar, was not successful in seizing power he was the inspiration for the Nizari Ismaili sect which came to be known as the Order of Assassins.

HASSAN-I SABBAH became the leader of the Ismaili movement in Persia and Iraq and created a well-organized underground of many followers. In 1090 he had himself smuggled into the formidable castle of ALAMUT. The former owner eventually realized that his fortress was completely infiltrated and was allowed to leave (with a draft for 3,000 Dinars in payment). Hassan spent the next thirty-five years in Alamut directing the Order of Assassins.

Having no organized army and no great wealth, Hassan was unable to fight an effective war. Assassination had a long history in Islam and Hassan had no shortage of fanatics willing to die for his cause. In 1092 the first assassination was completed and it set the pattern for all the subsequent acts.

Bu Tahir Arrani disguised himself as a Sufi holy man and approached the litter of the Vizir Nizam al-Mulk. On the pretext of presenting a petition Bu drew a knife and killed the Vizir. He was slain in turn after he tripped on the tent ropes while attempting to escape.

Hassan established the title of Fidais who were to be trained in the use of the dagger, in disguises, in languages and in court etiquette. These devotees were taught total obedience to the Master and were told that ordinary religious beliefs were for the masses and that only the Iman had true eternal knowledge. The Master demonstrated his power to the Sultan's emissaries by nodding to a young Fidai who immediately drew a knife and slit his own throat. This was followed by another Fidai jumping to his death from a parapet on command. In response to the ambassador's demands he explained that another 60,000 men would obey him with the same enthusiasm.

Hassan was just as ruthless in his personal dedication to his Order. He repelled invasions of Alamut by trickery, assassination, bribery, and out-and-out lies. He banished all women from the fortress in 1108 (including his wife and daughters). All three of his sons were executed, two for disobediance and the third for having a drink from a wineskin.

The largest threat ever faced by Hassan was the Seljuks led by Sultan Muhammad Tapar. His death led to a brief pause in hostilities and the removal of a seige at Alamut. As his successor, Sanjar, was proceeding to resume the assault he was delayed. One morning he awoke to find a dagger planted in his pillow and a note from Hassan offering peace. Sanjar found it convenient to agree.

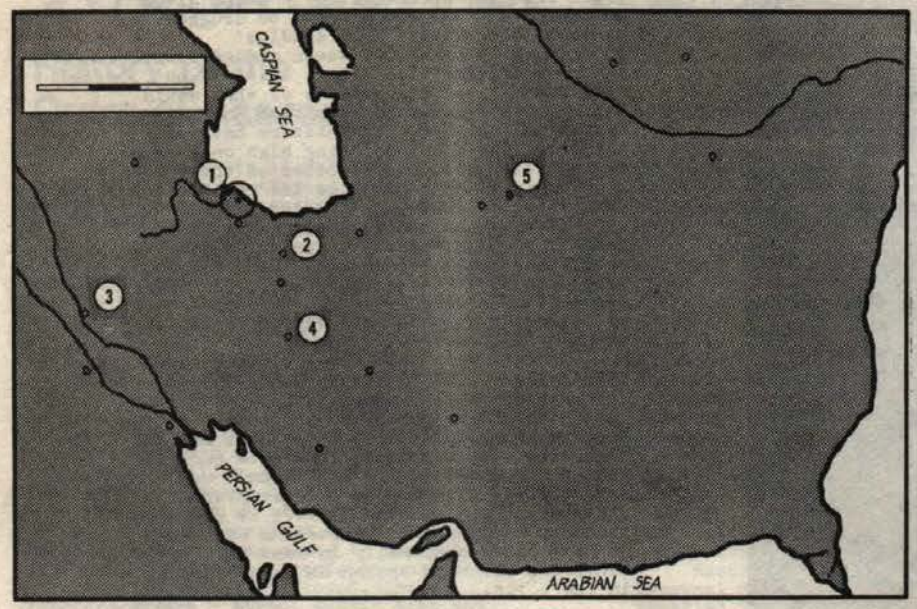
Hassan appointed Buzurg Umid to be his successor before his death in 1124. Umid broke with the will of Hassan by appointing his own son and creating a dynasty that lasted until 1256. Each of the seven members of the dynasty differed greatly in philosophy and their capacity to rule. It was probably the inconsistency of their various reigns that prevented a vast expansion of their faith.

Marco Polo described a training ground for the Assassins as a copy of Paradise taken from the Koran. Prior to being given an assignment the Fidai would be drugged. He would then awaken in 'Paradise' surrounded by beautiful women and gardens. After describing his 'dream' he would be told that it was a foretaste of what would happen to him after he committed an assassination. Many commentators have also described the Fidai as being high on hashish during thier assaults. Neither of these stories is as convincing as the real religious fanaticism exhibited by the Assassins.

Although Assassins would go to great lengths to hide themselves prior to committing their murders they were always very open about the crime itself. The Order seems to have used assassinations as a tool of terrorism as much as a way of eliminating troublesome persons.

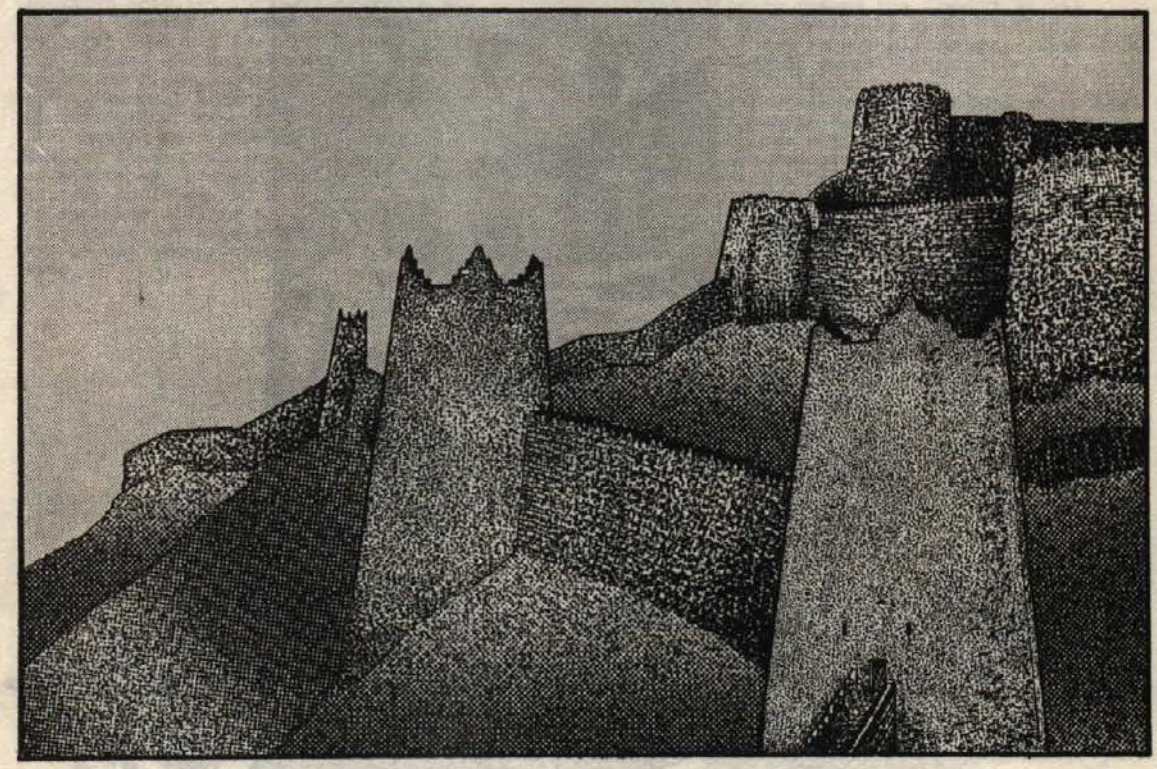
It is ironic that the Assassins were eventually felled by rotten leadership. Khurshah who had ascended to the Iman in 1255, decided to submit to the threat of the Mongols. Travelling with the mongol leaders he ordered the surrender of over a hundred Assassin fortresses. In 1256 Alamut was surrendered. Although it was recaptured by the remaining Assassins in 1275 it held out for only another year. Assassins continued in name and occasionally in deed for centuries but were broken as a major power in the world.

Map of the Middle East of the Order of Assassins



1. ALAMUT
2. TEHERAN
3. BAGHDAD
4. ISFAHAN
5. MASHAD

ALAMUT
STRONGHOLD OF THE ORDER OF THE ASSASSINS



KHANJAR
ARAB DAGGER

PESH-KABZ
A DAGGER COMMON TO NORTHERN INDIA.

ARABIAN DAGGERS

VARIOUS ARABIAN AND INDIAN KNIVES USED BY THE ORDER OF THE ASSASSINS.

HALADIE
DOUBLE BLADED KNIFE
COMMON TO BOTH ARABS AND INDIANS.

KRIS

AN ARAB THROWING DAGGER 13 INCHES (.3m) LONG.

ARAB DAGGER

SAMBIYA
ARABIAN KNIFES

DAMAGE RATING FOR ALL THESE KNIVES IS... ONE.

Mission of Assassination

Surrounded by bodyguards the Grand Vizir of Khurasan, Fakhral-Mulk, was approached by a lone begger holding out a petition. Allowing the begger to come forward he was just starting to read the petition when the 'begger', actually a Fidais from the Order of Assassins, brought out a dagger and fatally stabbed the Vizir.

Although immediately seized by the guards, the assassin was not through with his mission. Under tortured he revealed the names of twelve accomplices in his crime. He died with the satisfaction of having killed thirteen enemies of the Order of Assassins with a single dagger thrust.

Costumes of the Order of Assassins

Although the Order of Assassins favored the wearing of pure white garments they were trained in disguising themselves as any conceivable member of Islamic society. Training emphasized the use of the dagger and it was their exclusive weapon. In addition each Fidair was trained in speaking all the necessary dialects as well as how to behave in court and formal situations so as not to appear out of place.

SOUTH ARABIAN WARRIOR

S'YRIAN

BALLACHISTAN

AFGAN-BALLACH WARRIOR

AFGHANISTAN

the thugs

A GROUP OF TYPICAL THUGS

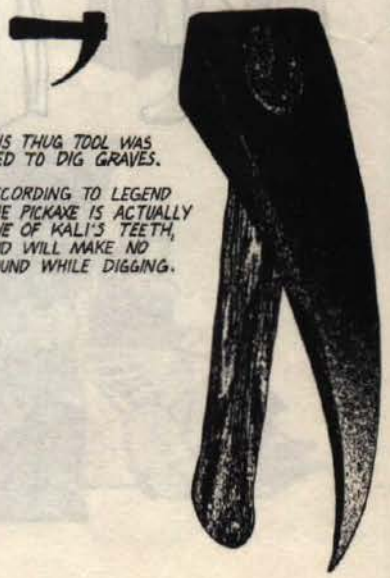
Thug History

As early as the eighth century there have been accounts of Islamic extremest groups engaging in ritual strangling. Although these early incidents may or may not have any connection with the nineteenth century Thugs it is certain that the Thirteenth Century saw at least a thousand thugs exiled from Delhi. No doubt the killings of the Thugs had been going on for centuries prior to the British crack-down in the early 1800s.

Thugs are worshippers of Kali, one of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. Kali thirsted for blood and her ugly black statue was often ritually coated in the blood of sacrificial animals. She is usually shown holding a drawn sword, a noose and a club and wreathed in human skulls. According to Thug lore she originally came to eat all the bodies of the victims. Unfortunately, one Thug violated her most sacred taboo - he looked back and saw her eating. As it was not a pretty sight she vowed that she would never eat that way again. But as compensation for her devout worshippers she gave them one of her teeth to be used as a pickaxe for the digging of graves.

The Thugs were also known as Thugees, Phansigars (the Hindustani word for noose is Phansi), Ari Tulucar (in Tamul) and Tanti Calleru (in Canarese). The word Thug means deceiver in northern India. In contrast with the extreme religious seperation that divides India to this day, the Thugs have always consisted of different proportions of Hindus and Moslems working together.

CEREMONIAL PICKAXE



THIS THUG TOOL WAS USED TO DIG GRAVES.

ACCORDING TO LEGEND THE PICKAXE IS ACTUALLY ONE OF KALI'S TEETH, AND WILL MAKE NO SOUND WHILE DIGGING.

THE TEMPLE AT KALI-GHAT, CALCUTTA.

STATUE OF KALI

Although some forty thousand people mysteriously vanished in India in a single year (1812), the British authorities did not have the slightest suspicion that the Thugs existed. Had the Thugs continued in their extreme ritual killing they might never have been discovered. According to tradition certain castes, disfigured persons, women and other people involved in activities like burial rites could never be killed.

The modernization of the Thugs lead to their discovery by the British General Sir William Sleeman. Through his dedication and careful investigative work the whole secret society of the Thugs was eventually revealed. By 1848 the extermination of the Thugs was complete. Sleeman was intelligent enough to provide alternative education and careers to the Thugs and their sons, thereby completing the elimination of the cult. The ritual strangulation persisted in Bengal and may still occur there from time to time.

Thug Background

At the age of thirteen or so the father of a young Thug would bring his son along on the yearly expedition. They would wait until the last rains of the monsoon season were over and venture out to the household of a respected Thug leader.

The gang would gradually drift in to the house of the leader. When all were present the ceremonies would begin. A priest of Kali and four of the Thugs of highest character would sit on a carpet reserved for the rituals. The others would sit around the room awaiting the results with some anxiety. After being handed a brass plate filled with rice, wheat and two silver coins, the priest would be asked what the day, hour and direction of the next expedition should be. The priest would contemplate and eventually supply the proper information and the gang would go back to their homes until that time.

On the selected day the previous ceremony would be repeated with a brass jug of water and a white hankerchief containg one silver coin, two copper coins, five pieces of tumeric and the consecrated pickaxe prepared. The priest would lead the group to a secluded place outside the village and the ceremony would begin. The leader of the Thugs would cry out to Kali asking for a sign. After engaging in group prayer all would wait for some kind of sign. If no sign was observed within thirty minutes or if a bad omen occured then the expedition was cancelled and the priest selected a new day.

Once a favourable omen was received the Thug leaders and the priest would remain and meditate on the goddess for the next seven hours. Meanwhile all the others would make all the preparations for the long travel. Even after leaving any bad omen before the next day's mid-day meal meant that the expedition must be cancelled.

After the second day of the journey the group would split up into small groups. A pair of Thugs disguised as beggers assigned to scout ahead might leave four or six hours before the rest. The next group of eight dressed as soldiers would then leave. Then larger groups posing as merchants or pilgrims would leave at intervals until the full 40 to 150 Thugs were in motion on the roads.

Whenever a group found an appropriate set of victims they would leave marks in the ground indicating when and how the other groups were to join them. A proper killing would not take place until the Thugs outnumbered their victims by at least three to one. Thugs were constantly on the watch for bad omens and were forbidden to kill a great variety of people including certain holy men, sweepers, maimed or sick people and women. There were a great variety of peculiar rules to be followed. People wearing gold ornaments could not be killed in the first week of an expedition, the braying of a donkey indicated a definite victim, and a rabbit running across the road from right to left meant that all currently marked victims were to be let go.

The new Thug recruit saw none of the murders. Having a fun time and riding on ponies while scouting he would always be in the company of other young Thugs. By the end of the first expedition he will only know that the Thugs engage in robbery. It won't be until the third expedition that he will be allowed to see an actual strangling.

Once exposed to the reality of the Thugs lives he will be allowed to dig graves and butcher the bodies. Even at this stage they are rewarded with a share in the loot. Eventually they are allowed to hold the feet of the victims being strangled. The rank of SHUMSEEA is given to someone who actually directs the victim before death and holds their hands while they are strangled.

TUPONEE is the ritual where the raw sugar GOOR is eaten after a murder is completed. No one but Thugs who have strangled with their own hands are allowed to eat the sacred Goor which represents the flesh of the tiger.

If a youth wishes to become a strangler or BHURTOTE then he must seek out a GURU or teacher and become an apprentice. If accepted there will be a period of years when he is taught the proper method of folding and knotting the yellow or white silk scarf. One end must be knotted around a silver rupee such that it is tight but withou an end showing.

When the young Thug has finally learned to use the RUMAL with speed and strength a victim will be selected. The first victim is usually an elderly traveller. Several older Thugs will observe the omens for a time while the victim sleeps. When Kali is believed to have given the proper signal then they will quickly shake the victim awake hold him for the killing. The youth now whips the Rumal around the victim's neck, catches it, twists and then turns his knuckles inward toward the neckbone until death arrives.

The first killing is a time of great rejoicing and ceremony. Delighted with his new status, the new Bhurtote gives a feast for his Guru's family and is accepted as a full member of Thug societv.

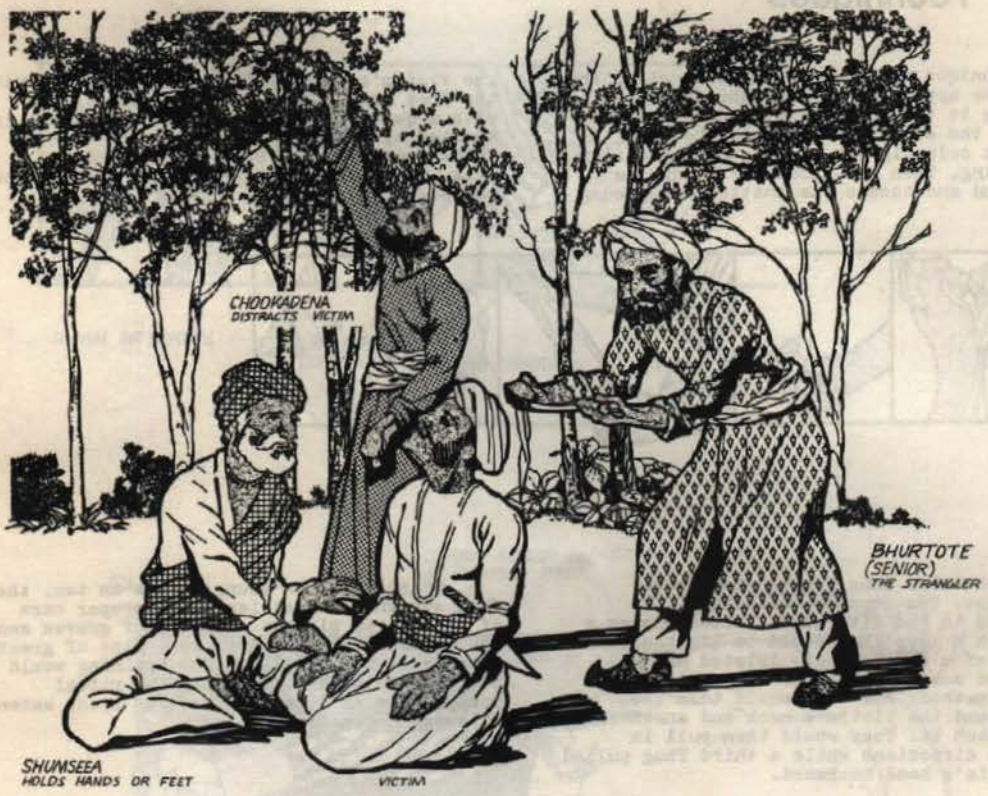
TRADITIONS OF A THUG

Thugs were often prominent or trusted members of Indian society. One elderly gentleman was chosen by a British Governor as a companion for the Governor's young children. Every year the old Thug would request a month off to 'visit his aged mother' and leave to commit dozens of stranglings. He was described as completely gentle and trustworthy by his employers.

Thugs engaged in their trade because of holy duty to Kali. As to their victims; "Thei destiny is written on their foreheads." Thugs were quick to defend themselves as upright members of society.

"A thief is a contemtible being, but a Thug...Never! If a banker's treasure were before me, and entrusted to my care, 'tho in hunger and dying I would spurn to steal," said one Thug. But he continued with, "But let a banker go on a journey and I would certainly murder him."

Thugs were persistant in pursuing a victim marked by Kali. One Muslim officer travelling from Punjab to Oudh with two servants was approached by Thugs in a variety of disguises. Warned about Thug activity he refused to travel with any of the various groups who approached him. Finally, in a remote location he found a group of soldiers wailing around a fresh grave. They explained that they had just buried their leader but, because they were not literate, they could not read the proper eulogy from the Koran. Would the kind officer help them? Yes, and when kneeling over the holy book for prayer the Thugs on either side of him found good use for the fresh grave.



A Typical Thug Killing

A group of prosperous Indian merchants is travelling on the long road from Dackar to Hindustan. The trip will take at least fifteen days and in many ways is dangerous and unpredictable. Naturally, meeting any other party heading in the same direction can be quite a relief - the more people in a particular group, the less chance there will be of bandits attacking.

This particular group of newcomers is welcome because they are of the same religion and caste. They also seem to be quite familiar with the road and can confidently give helpful directions. Within a day or two it is difficult to tell which individuals belonged to which group. The newcomers have been extremely friendly and helpful - surely a good sign that such comrades have been encountered.

Suddenly, one of their number yells out "Tombako kha lo", 'get out your tobacco'. Coincidently, each of the original party is seated directly in front of one of the newcomers and all are instructed to look upwards... Just in time to have a scarf thrown around their necks by the person behind them.

Strangled from the rear, their hands are seized by the one with whom they were just conversing. Their legs are pulled out by yet another of the thugs. Within seconds all the original party is dead. Their bodies are dragged over to a shallow grave where they are stripped and otherwise prepared. To assure that the grave will not be discovered deep slashes are made in the abdommen (to prevent swelling) and all the major joints are slashed (to prevent rigor mortis). A dagger is also thrust into each eye, thus guarantying the death of the victim.

Minutes after the fatal call the bodies are concealed and there is no trace whatever of the crime that has occured. The Thugs then continue their travels, looking for the next likely group of victims.

Thug Techniques

Technique is important. With most of the Thugs the apprentice spent many years learning to tie the perfect knot. After folding the scarf, one end must be tied around a coin tightly, yet without the end protruding. Then the strangler holds the other end and tosses the knotted end around the victim's throat. This knot is caught with the free hand, together the hands tighten with a quick twist and the final pressure is exerted by pushing the knuckles of both hands inward on the back of the victim's neck, preferable directly on top of the neck bones.

With other Thug groups there were variations. Two popular variations mentioned in the literature include using a cord with a loop that could be tightened and the use of a continuously twisted and tightened scarf. The River Thugs used another method; one thug would toss the cord around the victim's neck and another would catch it. They would then pull in opposite directions while a third Thug pulled the victim's head backward.

Starting at as young an age as ten, the Thug apprentice must learn the proper care of the sacred pickaxe. Digging of graves and the preparation of bodies were also of great importance. Finally, no Thug training would be complete without learning the ritual preparation of Goor, a raw sugar treat eaten at every ceremonial occasion.

KUKRI
A DAGGER COMMON TO NORTHERN INDIA.

DAMAGE RATING: 1

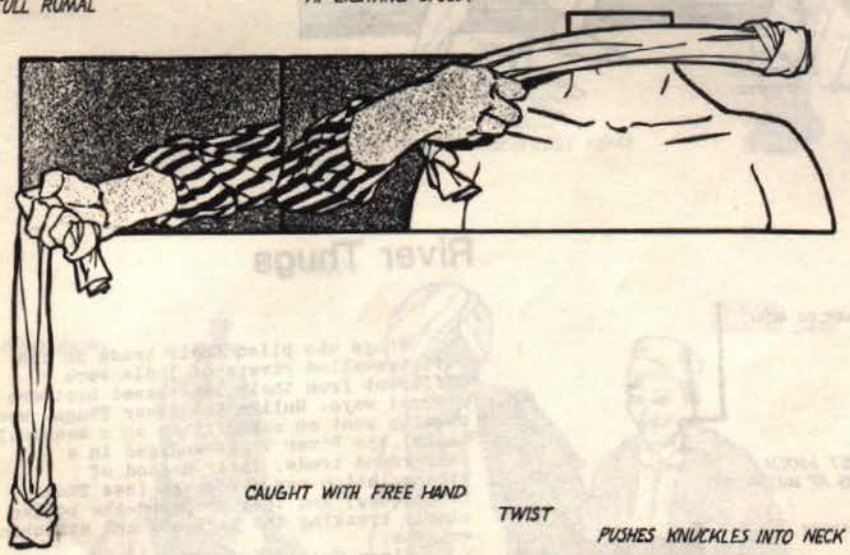
RUMAL OR RUHMAL

SILVER RUPEE TIED IN A TIGHT KNOT WITH END COVERED

PULLED TIGHT

FULL RUMAL

SWUNG AROUND THE VICTIM'S THROAT AT LIGHTING SPEED.



CAUGHT WITH FREE HAND

TWIST

PUSHES KNUCKLES INTO NECK BONES

ONLY A WHITE OR YELLOW SILK SCARF OR HANDKERCHIEF WAS USED BY THE THUGS.

River Thugs

Thugs who plied their trade on the well-travelled rivers of India were different from their land-based brothers in several ways. Unlike the other Thugs, who usually went on expeditions on a seasonal basis, the River Thugs engaged in a year-round trade. Their method of strangulation was different (see Thug Techniques) and they prepared the bodies by simply breaking the backbone and attaching weights.

River Thugs took great pride in their boat and travellers were often attracted to the superior quality and appearance of the Thug craft. These boats were also specially modified with concealed openings at the water line used for disposing of the bodies.

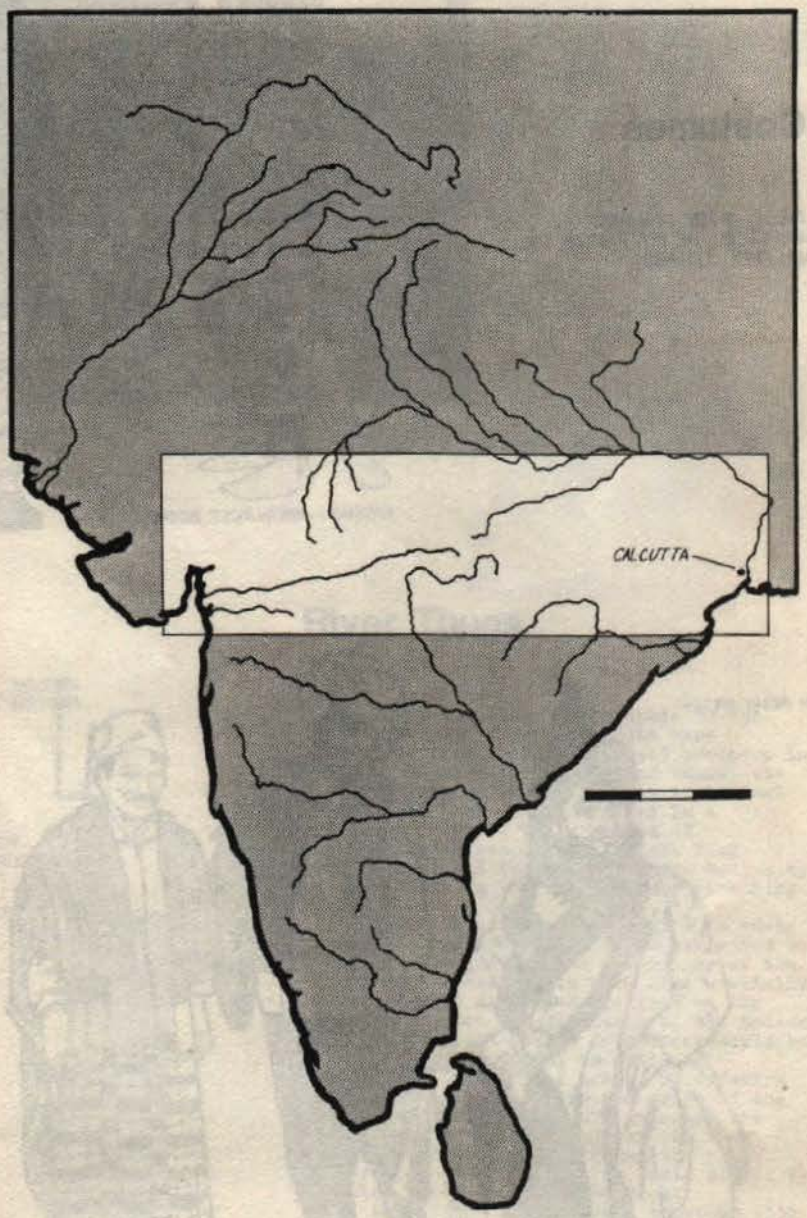
In addition to the crew there would be groups of Thugs posing as well-off travellers at the dock areas. By offering advice about the quality and price of the different boats they would persuade the travellers to take passage on the Thug craft. When the captain found the river cleared of other traffic he would signal by tapping three times on the deck.

Land Thugs often worked together with the River Thugs and used their boats in their expeditions. Because of the tight security of the River Thugs they might never have been detected had it not been for their relationship with the others.

Thug Costumes

THUGS OFTEN DISGUISED THEMSELVES IN THE OUTFITS OF THE VICTIMS THEY STALKED.

Map of Thugee India



THE NINJA

Ninja History

As is typical of many of the arts and traditions of Japan, the folkhero Yoshitsune is credited with starting the first Ninja school. Yoshitsune is also credited by some Japanese sources as being Gengis Khan. The truth of these legends is equally dubious.

During the long periods of turmoil and confusion between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries the Ninja were in real demand. Gradually over this time the lords of the Iga and Koga clans devoted more and more effort to training specialized Ninja. These agents could then be hired out profitably for espionage, assassination and military purposes.

The strongest of the Ninja lords were stationed in Iga Province and eventually inspired the wrath of the christian forces. In 1581 General Oda led a 40,000 man force to destroy 4,000 Ninja and all of their bases in Iga.

Ninja activity in Koga had always been far less organized (with up to 50 competing clans). Between the Iga refugees and the Koga clans numerous Ninja supplied the needs of the feuding lords. In 1637 the Ninja played out their last major war role when the Tokugawa Shogun's army defeated the rebel christians of Kyushu.

After Japanese society stabilized, the Ninja gradually drifted into civilian occupations. Many became law-enforcement and government intelligence agents. For several generations the 'gardeners' of the Shogun remained Iga Ninja.

Ninja

After travelling for weeks in a variety of guises ranging from itenerant soldier to wandering priest to simple peasant the time finally comes to don the black Ninja garb. Looming over the landscape is the local Daimyo's castle. Surrounded by a moat and high walls and guarded by ever present guards, it presents an imposing facade to anyone other than a trained Ninja.

The first step to penetration consists of crossing the moat. This is easily accomplished with the use of breathing tubes that leave only a tiny wake in the water indicating passage.

Long hours spent in learning to climb are profitably used to scale the first portion of the escarpment. The final high wall is conquered once a padded grappling hook has been secured to the edge.

A passing guard requires a few moments of the Ninja's time - not to attack but merely to assume the position of stillness and invisibility while he passes.

Moving silently through the inner sanctum, the Ninja finally locates his prey. Several bodyguards present little difficulty as the Ninja raises himself up above the ceiling beams and travels directly over the sleeping Daimyo. Once overhead a thin thread is lowered down to the sleeping man's mouth. Then small drops of poison are dribbled down the thread.

Unfortunately, the Daimyo awakes at this point. As he calls the alarm, the ninja must flee the awakening stronghold. Swiftly the Ninja moves to the opposite side of the castle. Caltrops are tossed on the floor behind him as he passes, either crippling or slowing his pursuers. When the enemy is actually in sight several Shuriken are swiftly tossed in their direction.

Once on the ramparts there are guards directly blocking the Ninja. Far from retreating he charges directly towards the obstacle. Just as he reaches sword range he dives forward into a roll that takes him behind the two guards. Drawing his short sword on rising, he dispatches one guard before he has completely turned around. The other guard is more cautious but is distracted by a handful of stinging dust pulled from a hidden pocket and thrown directly into his eyes.

Diving over the wall into the moat he seems to completely disapear. In spite of the earnest searching of guards no trace is ever found. Among the usual travelers yet another buddhist beggar-priest walks the dusty road towards the castle the next morning. At the castle gate he demands sanctuary in the name of the thousand eyes and arms of the merciful Kwannon dai-bosatsu. He is admitted when yet another batch of tired Samurai ride out in pursuit of the missing Ninja.

HOKKAIDO

TYPICAL JAPANESE WARDROBE

Teamwork was an important component in Ninja strategy. By using the best skills of each Ninja in seperate places the enemy was often intimidated with the feeling that all Ninja were superhuman. Ninja also liked using a team in such a way that it appeared that only one Ninja was responsible for a great deal of destruction. The use of Ninja agents already placed inside an enemy camp was also quite effective.

One effective Ninja tactic involved delivering a false message to an enemy lord. The message would call for a reply and the Ninja would wait for the response. He would then deliver the response or a careful substitute to the other enemy lord. Once the Ninja established himself as a messanger he might go on indefinitely while intercepting valuable information and creating misinformation or dissention between the enemy lords

MUGEI-MUMEI NO JUTSU refers to the Ninja tactic of anonymity. Every Ninja was supplied with at least two identities from childhood. This enabled a Ninja easily slip from one personality to another. Ninja typically maintained two or more seperate careers and families in order to provide safe retreats and better information on enemy actions. In several cases Ninja leaders actually set up imaginary competing Ninja organizations so they could be employed by both sides in a conflict. The most successful Ninja were so secretive that no one ever discovered their real identities.

Another Ninja technique involved the use of KUJI-KIRI, a series of finger movements with magical significance. Aside from helping the Ninja to concentrate or restore energy, it could also be used to hypnotize or stun an enemy into momentary inaction. The eighty-one finger motions could also be used as a kind of communication when silence was necessary.

Spiritually the Ninja were trained in SHUGENDO Buddhism that stressed using the inner resources of the mind and body. As with most of the Samurai Jutsu, practicioners of Ninjutsu felt that spiritua enlightenment was necessary for exceptional physical activity and awareness.

Ninja Winter Techniques

Changing from his typical black garb the Ninja could become an equally effective winter assassin or fighter. Every piece of the Ninja costume would be duplicated in white. Even the sword scabbard and hilt would be changed to pure white materials.

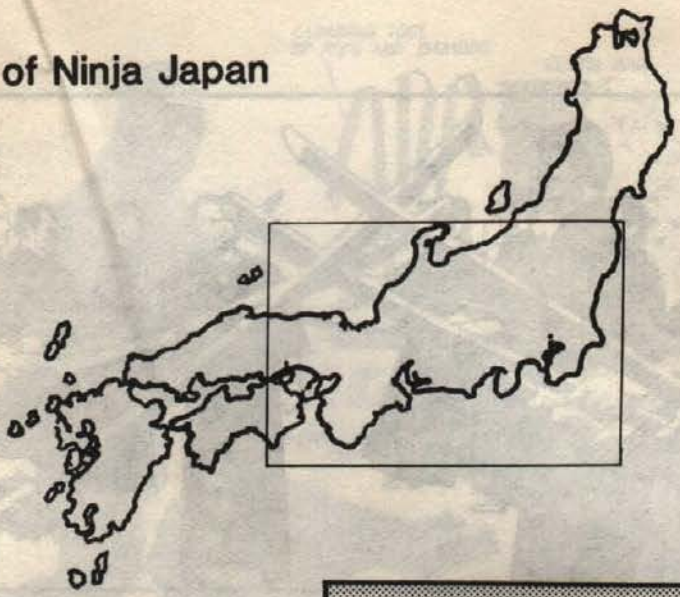
To walk on the surface of hard-packed snow or ice a device with five metal blades would be attached to the white tabi. After proper training a Ninja could run over the surface of the snow leaving behind only a set of puzzling paralled marks.

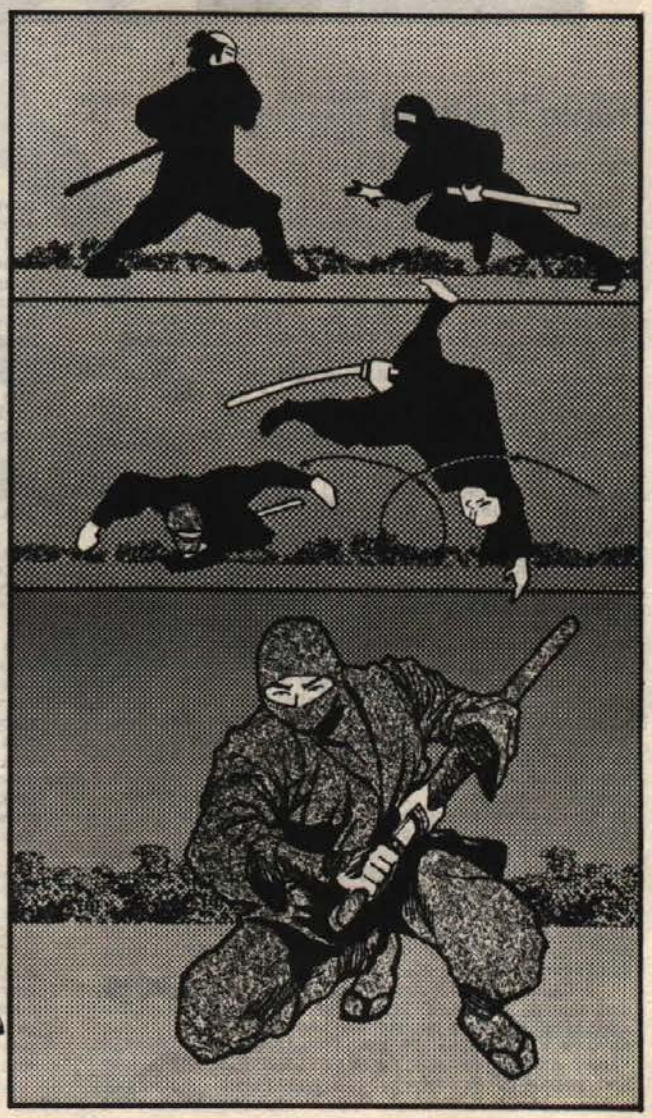
For travelling over ice-covered lakes rivers the Ninja used specially designed blades. The device consisted of two blades on each foot, one in the front near the toe and the other in the back near the heel. Wi these blades the Ninja had superb balance.

Training took place at every opportuni with the wearing of GETA or wooden clogs on the ice. Wearing these ackward and slippery shoes, the Ninja developed sure balance that served him well in a variety o situations.

The DOKA was a pocket heater made of an outer shell of metal. This was filled wi hot coals and made a convinient hand warmer. It was also useful for setting fire and touching off flame-arrows.

Map of Ninja Japan





Ninja Training

THE NINJA LIFELONG TRAINING

In order to become a Ninja one had to be born into one of the clans. Training began as soon as possible and very young children were taught how to dislocate bones in order to slip free of bonds.

Located in secret mountain locations, the Ninja conducted training away from society in general as well as from rival Ninja clans. As with any Japanese martial art form, the masters or SENSEI of Ninjutsu were accorded great respect. Training was also based on TORIMAKI, secret documents relating to the heritage and techniques of each Ninja family.

Training in the various fighting arts (JUTSU or JITSU means skill or art) was a life-long pusuit. KENJUTSU or sword-training; KYUJUTSU or archery; YARIJUTSU or spear-training; BOJITSU or stick-fighting; and IAIJUTSU or the art of quick-drawing the sword; were all part of standard Ninja training. Since a Ninja might be called on to serve as an spy in an enemy army for years it was necessary that he know all the skills of the various soldiers.

Sword training concentrated on the special Ninja short sword (similar to a Wakazashi). In archery the Ninja specialized in the short bow. Different RYU or schools had different specialties. The Kyushin Ryu was noted for BISENTO, or wide-bladed spear, techniques. In the Fudo Ryu, Iaijutsu, or fast-draw techniques, were used with swords and daggers to great effect.

The Ninja also had to learn horse-riding and a variety of courtly skills in order to pass for one of higher rank when disguised. A Ninja had to be more than simply literate, he had to be able to pass for different members of society and be able to forge different styles of writing.

Climbing was a seperate art for the Ninja and meant years of training and practice. In addition the Ninja had to learn to jump across wide gaps, to run for long periods of time, and to escape from various bindings and types of rooms.

A Ninja spent a lifetime learning new ways of escaping detection. Holding perfectly still for hours was mandatory. Hiding in gaps between large objects, in trees and roof spaces, and blending into shadows were all necessary skills. Imitating animal sounds and learning to distract attention by throwing small objects also helped in evading notice.

Disguising himself in a variety of ways meant that the Ninja must be well versed in the typical small-talk of those professions. In order to safely fit in the mainstream of Japanese society other skills like caligraphy, music-making, and art had to be learned. A Ninja had to be able to speak as a equal to merchants, priests, Samurai, and peasants in order to pass undetected.

Minor abilities like being able to hide small objects after being captured or being able to judge the authenticity and depth of a person's sleep by listening were important parts of Ninja training.

Unarmed combat was another specialty of the Ninja. Special techniques for striking an opponent (including the TOGADURE-RYU tactic of striking both ears with open palms) were continuously practiced. Methods of striking the enemy with feet, hands, knees and hips were all employed. Ninja also had special bone-breaking secrets. Rolling towards or aways from the opponent in unexpected ways saved many Ninja from the otherwise deadly swords strikes of the Samurai.

Strategy and tactics were essential to successful Ninja operations.
GOJO-GOYUKU was the study of the five feelings and desires of an enemy. Whenever a Ninja could detect sloth, lust, soft-heartedness, short temper, or the signs of a coward then he knew how to take advantage of it. Using bribes, threats, flattery or insults could either persuade or prod the enemy into favorable activity. By providing for the desires of an enemy they could be easily manipulated.

'HE NINJA COSTUMES:

The Ninja had a variety of outfits eveloped for special work. The basic ostume consisted of a body protector, a akama (loose pants), groin protector, belt, abi (socks with a gap next to the big toe), andals, and head-mask. For night perations the entire outfit would be in lack. Winter operations meant a completely hite outfit.

For fighting operations on the battlefield there were chain mail jackets and leggings. Chain mail guards for the wrists, hands and neck along with a metal chin guard completed the armor.

Every Ninja was trained in seven standard disguises. Each Ninja had to be able to dress, move, speak, and act in a convincing fashion in each of the disguises. Roles included that of monk, common peasant, Yamabushi priest, travelling magician, strolling magician, merchant and itenerant priest.

Ninja Equipment and Supplies

In order to travel alone through enemy territory for extended periods of time the Ninja developed a variety of special equipment and supplies. In order to carry the various weapons and devices all of the Ninja clothing was outfitted with secret pockets and compartments. Special pouches crried inside the clothing, next to the body, were also very useful.

A typical Ninja would carry a rope-with-hook combination, a slate pencil with rice paper, shuriken, spare hooks and nails, small metal weights and some kind of shovel or digging tool. His sword could be carried on his belt or concealed under his clothing on his back. A three-foot-long towel and a canteen of green tea were also standard.

TETSUBISHI, four-pointed caltrops, were essential for making quick escapes. They could also be scattered around a hall, path or doorway if the Ninja needed some kind of warning that his work was about to be interrupted.

Maps, a compass, and forged passes and documents were useful items on many of the Ninja assignments. Chainmail armour was usually only used when the Ninja was engaging in actions on the battlefield not during a secret infiltration or assassination. Poisons and healing potions were carried in hollow bamboo tubes or small ceramic bottles.

Typical food rations would consist of bleached rice, wheat flour, dried fish, dried plums and a powder made from pine trees. Other high-energy foods were a paste of soybean curd, a juice made from unpolished rice and a mixture of plums and raw bamboo. In addition various herbs were available to help curb hunger or thirst.

Other weapons might include a small quiver containing a small or disassemble bow and a number of arrows. A travelling staff could hide a fighting chain or blade. Small, easily breakable, egg-shaped containers would be filled with blinding powder for emergency escapes.

Finally, most Ninja always carried whatever clothing and equipment were necessary to slip into another role or disguise.

Ninja Weapons

The Ninja usually did not attempt to arm himself for face-to-face combat with the formidable Samurai. Rather his intention was to arm himself with many weapons of suprise and distraction. His primary weapon was a sword curved blade about twenty inches long. The relatively short length allowed for the weapon to be easily hidden. Because of the variety of odd places and postures where the Ninja fought the shorter blade was more flexible in its motions.

Staff weapons were also very popular with the Ninja. The Ninja's favorite weapon for open combat (when concealment was not necessary) was the broad bladed spear or polearm known as a BISENTO. Travellers in disguise carried a hollow bamboo staff. An opponent would be entrapped by a metal chain that could be released from one end and hit with the lead-filled opposite end. A SHIKOMI-ZUE was a staff or cane used by the Ninja when imitating a blind man. The cane became a deadly weapon when a spring loaded blade was released from one end. Some spear-weapons were designed to be assembled or even designed like a telescope for quick extension.

The Ninja bow was shorter than standard and could sometimes be disguised as another object or dissassembled into two or more pieces. Special fire-arrows were very useful in setting fires and distracting the enemy.

Other Ninja projectile weapons included blowguns (disguised as smoking pipes, sword scabbards or walking staves) and a large variety of throwing knifes, daggers and blades. SHURIKEN or SHAKEN had anywhere from two to ten points and were tossed like overhand, underhand or straight-armed like modern-day frisbees. The Ninja often carried a sling of five or more metal darts that could be thrown accurately or even tossed backwards at a rapid rate.

The class of chained weapons were also very popular with Ninja. Easily concealed, the KYOTETSU-SHOGE consisted of a metal ring at one end and a double blade on the other connected by a long cord of woven human hair. Metal chains with ends ranging from small blunt weights to heavy axes were used with great skill. A cord with a grappling hook attached was not only useful in combat but also as an effective climbing tool. Any of these weapons could be substituted for the garotte, another popular Ninja weapon.

Peculiar Ninja weapons also included sharp metal claws inserted in the finger and toe nails and used for slashing the enemy. The TEKAGI or SHUKO was a pair of metal bands worn around the wrist and palm. Four metal points in the palm could be used for striking or climbing. Connecting the two cricular bands was a metal bar that dropped down from the palm to the wrist across the inside of the arm. This bar could be used as a block against an enemy sword strike.

Another favorite Ninja weapon consisted of a blinding powder that could be thrown into the eyes of an opponent. This powder was made of a variety of ingredients including pepper, metal shavings, etc.. The blinding powder would be thrown directly from a hidden pocket or released by crushing a shell-like container.

With the exception of the sword, spear and chain weapons most Ninja weapons were used more to distract than to kill. Well-trained as the Ninja were, they were usually not willing to face an armed Samurai. The great Ninja used his mind more than his weapons. Most of the weapons pictured are typical Ninja specialties but there are hundreds of other Japanese weapons that a Ninja would be trained to use while in disguise or in emergency situations.

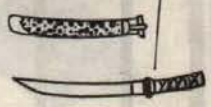
BELT USED TO WALK ON
ENABLED NINJA TO MOVE SILENTLY
ON BAMBOO OR STRAW FLOORS.
A ROLL WAS ABOUT 8 ft LONG (2.4 m)
MADE OF A SILK OR COTTON FABRIC.

NINJA SHORT SWORD

SIZE: .6m (20 INCHES)

DAMAGE RATING: 2

AIKUCHI
DAGGER WITHOUT HILT



SIZE: .25m

DAMAGE RATING: 1

TANTO
DAGGER WITH HILT

SWORD TANGS

ALL THESE BLADES ARE SINGLE EDGED.

DAMAGE RATINGS

THE HIGHER THE NUMBER THE GREATER THE DAMAGE.

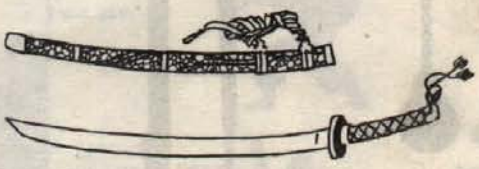
SUGGESTED EVALUATION:

1 = ONE 4 SIDED DIE
2 = ONE 6 SIDED DIE
3 = ONE 8 SIDED DIE
4 = TWO 6 SIDED DICE

WAKIZASHI
SHORT SWORD

SIZE: .6m (2 ft.)

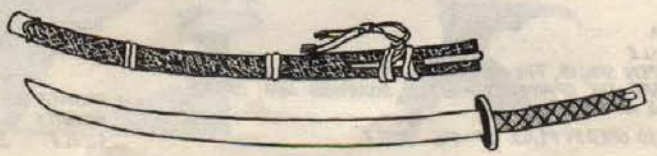
DAMAGE RATING: 2



KATANA
LONG SWORD

IZE:
m TO .9m (2 TO 3 ft) BLADE
DAMAGE RATING: 3

THE PAIR OF SWORDS
S CALLED DAISHO.



NAGINATA
CURVED SPEAR

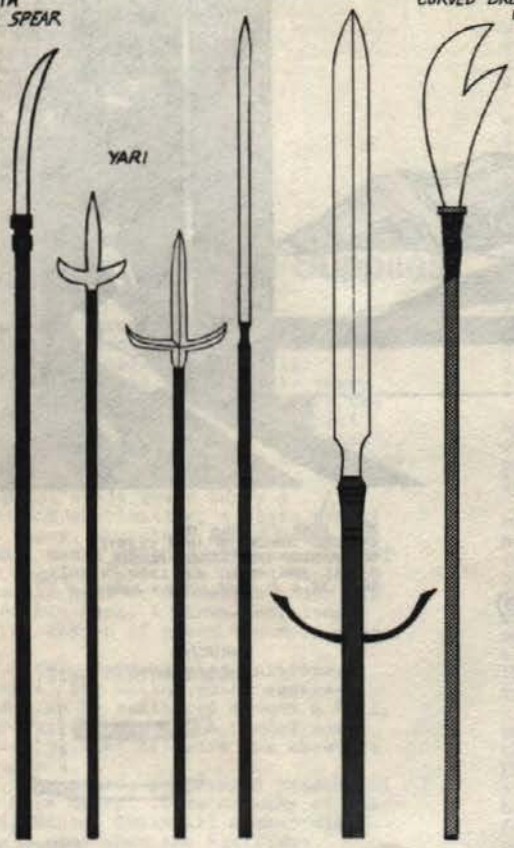
YARI
STRAIGHT SPEAR

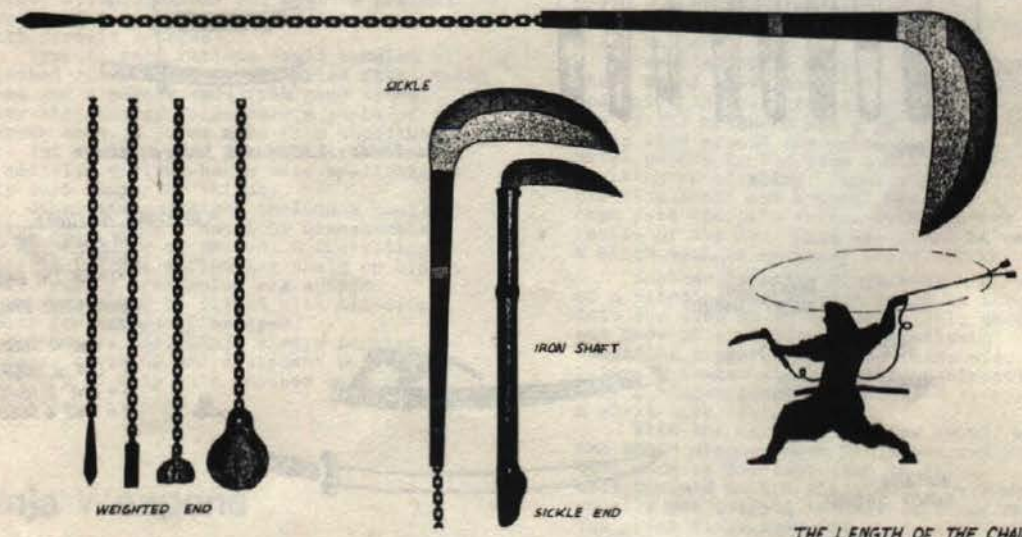
BISENTO
CURVED BROAD BLADED SPEAR
USED BY THE NINJA

YARI

DAMAGE RATINGS:

NAGINATA	3
YARI	2
YARI LARGE BLADE	3
BISENTO	3





KUSARI-GAMA
CHAIN AND SICKLE
EFFECTIVE IN OPEN SPACES, THE WHIRLING WEIGHTS AND CHAIN ARE USED TO ENSNARE THE OPPONENTS WEAPON DISARMING HIM, OR TO TRIP OR TOPPLE AN OPPONENT.

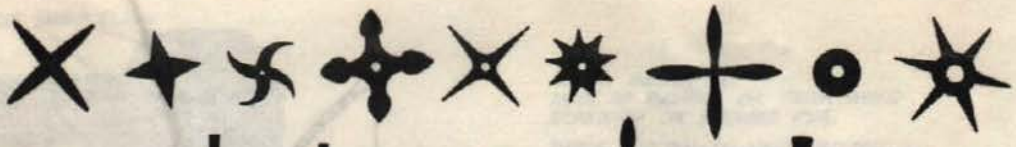
PICKS WERE ALSO USED IN PLACE OF THE SICKLE.

THE LENGTH OF THE CHAIN VARIES WITH EACH INDIVIDUAL WEAPON, FROM AS LITTLE AS .6m TO 2.7m.

DAMAGE RATING:

WEIGHTS	1
SICKLE	2

SHURIKENS OR THROWING STARS



THROWING SPIKES

SHURIKENS WERE USUALLY KEPT IN A BAND CONTAINING UP TO 5 DEADLY MISSLES.

DAMAGE RATING: 1

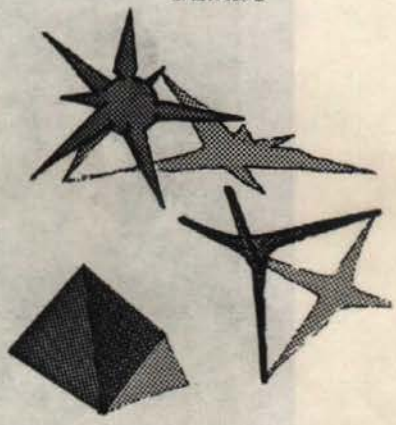
TETSUBISHI
CALTROPS: METAL BARBS THROWN ON THE GROUND IMPALING THE FEET OF THE UN-SUSPECTING. CALTROPS ALWAYS POINT UP NO-MATTER HOW THEY WERE THROWN.

THEY WERE DVNG OR POISON COVERED SOMETIMES.

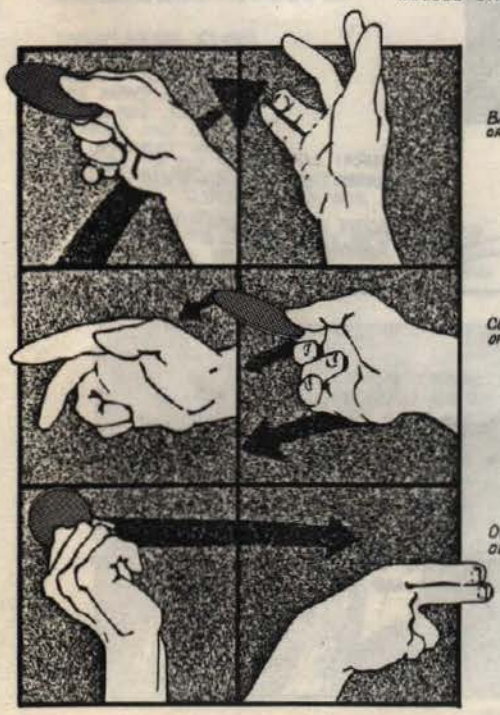
DAMAGE RATING: 1

CALTROPS

CALTROPS



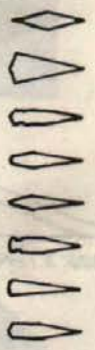
VARIOUS SHURIKEN TOSSES



BACKHAND
OR FRISBEE THROW

CURVE
OR INSIDE THROW

OVERHEAD
OR STRAIGHT THROW



THROWING SPIKES

NINJA WITH SHORT BOW
AND FLAME ARROW.

WHALE BONE BOW

RIMANKYU
LEATHER
QUIVER HOLDS
12 ARROWS.

SHORT BOW AND ARROWS
HELD IN ONE COMPACT QUIVER.
THESE QUIVERS WERE DESIGNED FOR
EASY CONCEALMENT.

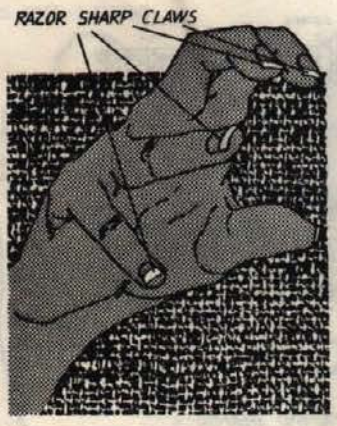
SAMURAI LONG BOW
THIS WAS THE MOST POWERFUL
LONG BOW IN THE WORLD.
EFFECTIVE RANGE: 120m
DAMAGE RATING: 2

SIZE: 2.1m TO 2.4m (7 - 8 ft LONG)

NINJA SHORT BOW
COULD BE DISASSEMBLED.
EFFECTIVE RANGE: 90m
DAMAGE RATING: 1

SIZE: 0.6m TO 1.2m (2 - 4 ft LONG)

BOTH BOWS WERE CONSTRUCTED OF
WHALE BONE OR BAMBOO AND WOOD.
MOST WERE COMPOSITE BOWS COMPOSED OF
SEGMENTS AND EASILY DISASSEMBLED.



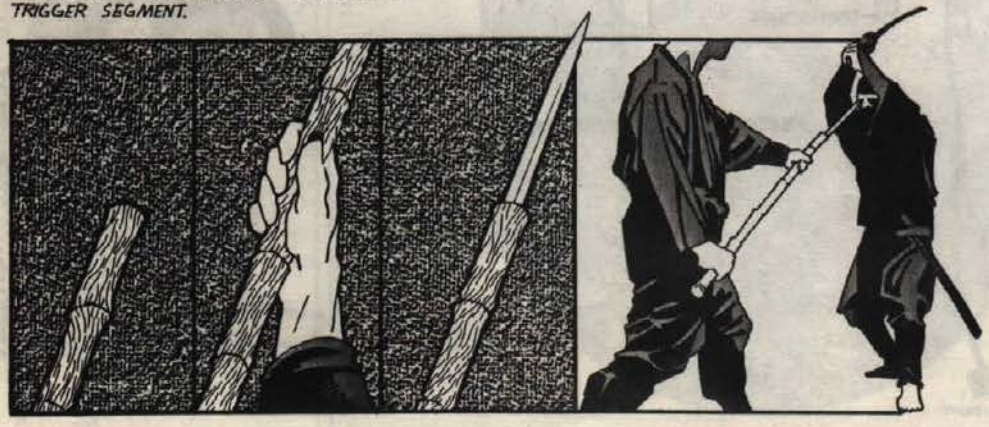
DAMAGE RATING: 1

SHARP METAL CLAWS INSERTED UNDER NAIL'S USED TO SLASH AN ENEMY. LIKE MANY NINJA TACTICS, THE CLAWS SERVE TO SURPRISE AND DISTRACT AN OPPONENT WHO IS UNAWARE OF THE TRUELY LETHAL ASSAULT ABOUT TO BE LAUNCHED.

NINJA BLOWPIPE
MADE OF BAMBOO OR FROM SWORD SCABBARD OR SMOKING PIPE.

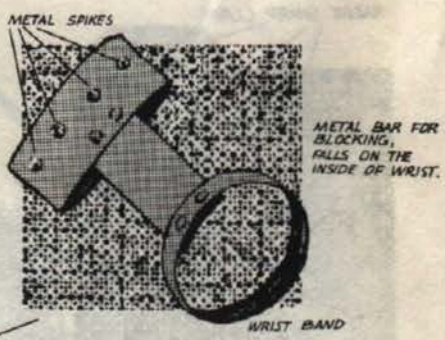
RANGE LIMITED TO ABOUT 30 FEET.

SHIKOMI-ZUE:
BLIND MAN'S STAFF WITH HIDDEN BLADE. THE BLADE IS SPRING LOADED RELEASED BY PRESSING THE TRIGGER STUD OR TURNING TRIGGER SEGMENT.



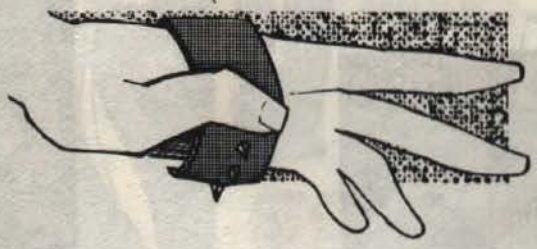
FALSE STAFF. RELEASE STUD. 6 TO 12 INCH BLADE. DAMAGE RATING: 2

METAL SPIKES FOR CLIMBING

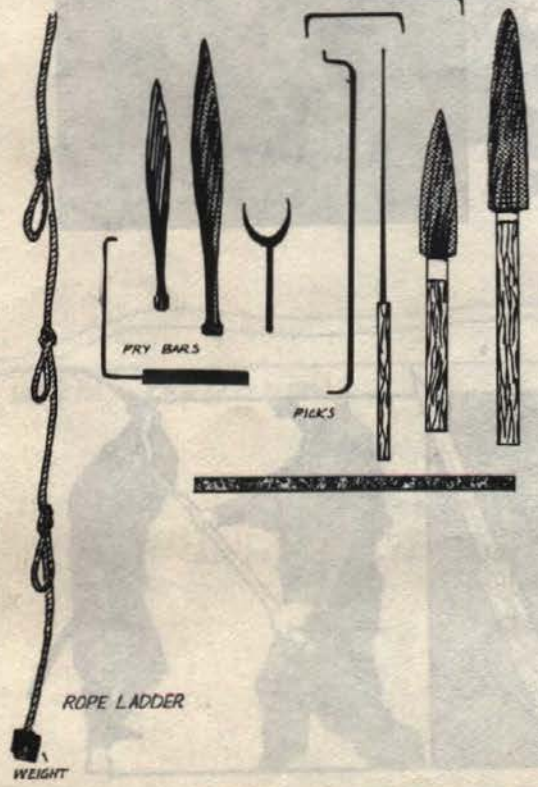


TEKAGI OR SHUKO

USED AS A CLIMBING TOOL AND WEAPON
DAMAGE RATING: 1



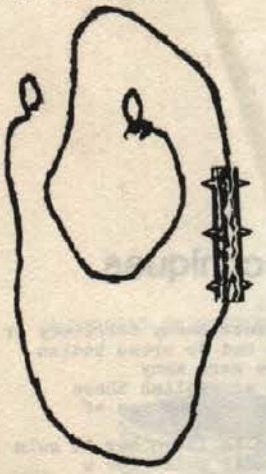
VARIOUS TOOLS AND PICKS
FOR BREAKING AND ENTERING



KYOKETSU-SHOGI

USED MUCH LIKE THE KUSARI-GAMA
DAMAGE RATING: 1

IPPON-SUGI NOBORI
FOR TREE CLIMBING

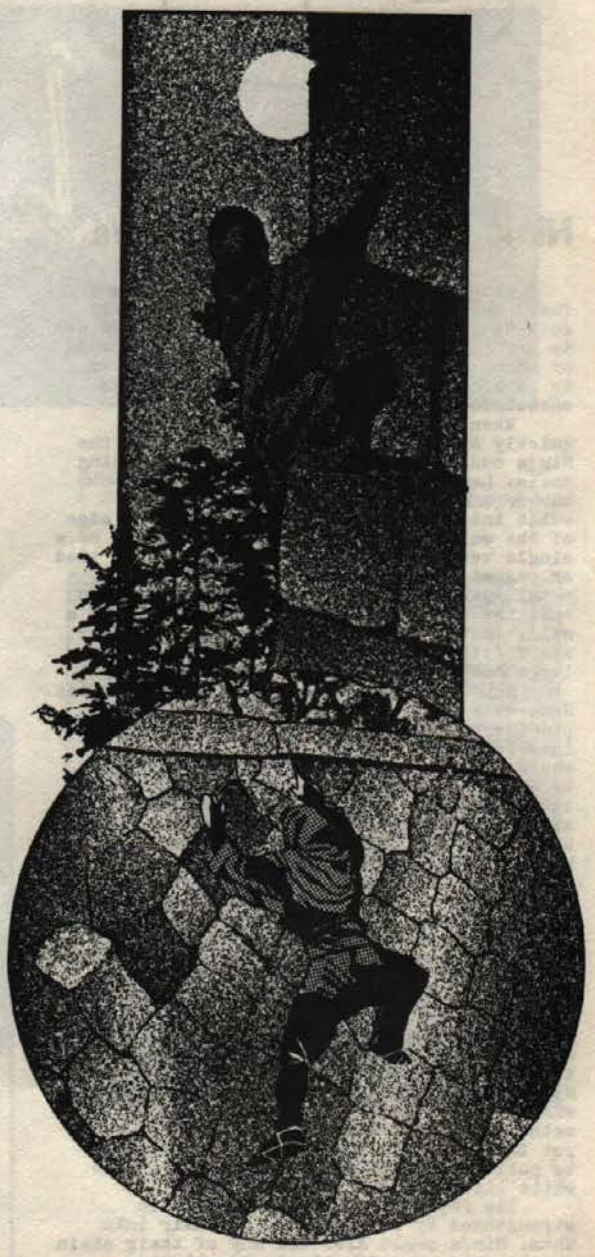


GRAPPLING HOOKS

ALL THE DEVICES ON THIS PAGE COULD BE TURNED INTO WICKED WEAPONS.

DAMAGE RATINGS: 1

THE NINJA WERE ADEPT AT CLIMBING WALLS.

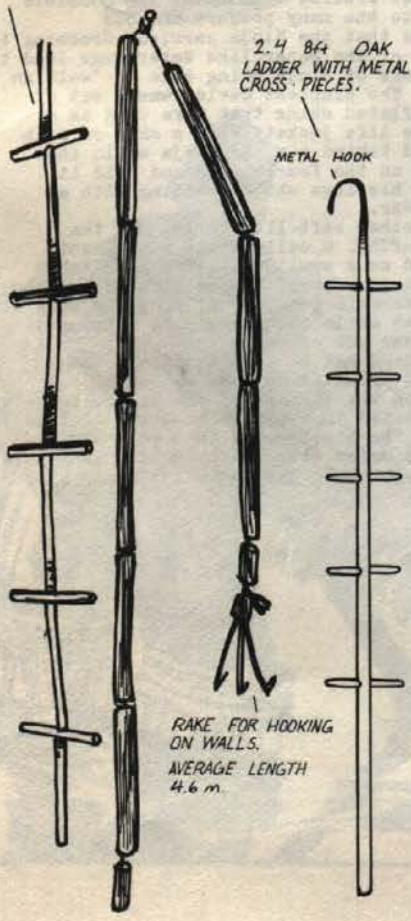


WALL CLIMBING DEVICES

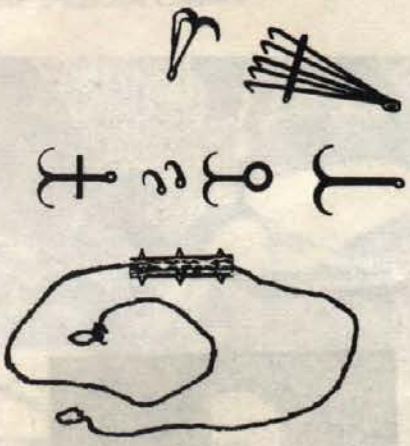
ROPE COVERED WITH BAMBOO SEGMENTS. KNOTS AT CROSS-PIECES. AVERAGE LENGTH 3 m (10 ft)

2.4 8ft OAK LADDER WITH METAL CROSS PIECES.

METAL HOOK



RAKE FOR HOOKING ON WALLS.
AVERAGE LENGTH 4.6 m.



Ninja Climbing Techniques

The primary assistance to the Ninja's famed ability to climb was the use of very soft Tabi (split-toed socks) that allowed him to use his toes and feet while climbing wood or stone surfaces. Each Ninja was expected to be able to climb a variety of surfaces unassisted.

When the climb was to be made very quickly or over difficult surfaces then the Ninja could his specially designed climbing tools. Ladders would be made of rope or bamboo and commonly had a hook or 'rake' built into the top for attaching to the edge of the wall. The ladders often consisted of a single vertical rod with the crosspieces tied or pegged in place. There were sometimes metal spikes attached to each crosspiece so that the whole ladder could be driven into a wall. Another device was an eight foot oak staff fitted with metal crosspieces and a large hook that doubled as a weapon.

Rope ladders came in a variety of styles. Some were simply knotted at intervals to provide handholds. Wood pieces could be inserted into loops or knots. Metal rings would be provided so that crosspieces could be easily inserted. Ropes could also be run through a whole series of hollow bamboo sections. These bamboo sections could then be grabbed and turned at a right angle to the rope to create better support.

Ropes were the main choice for Ninja working alone. At one end would be a grappling hook used to catch tree branches or the tops of walls. These grapling hooks could have one, two or three seperate hooks. Another type of grapple was the KUMADE or rake made up of four or five long metal pieces ending in hooks.

TEKAGI or SHUKO (see weapon descriptions) which were worn on the hands allowed the Ninja to climb otherwise difficult surfaces with ease. Another device was made of a spiked section of wood or metal with cord on each end. The Ninja would put this around a tree trunk or wood pillar to pull himself up and then 'hug' the base while lifting the spikes up further.

The ropes of the Ninja were often strengthned by braiding women's hair into them. Ninja could also use any of their chain or rope weapons effectively as climbing tools.

Ninja Water Techniques

In order to infiltrate enemy territory or castles the Ninja often had to cross bodies of water or moats. There were many techniques developed to accomplish these tasks including swimming and the use of water-crossing devices.

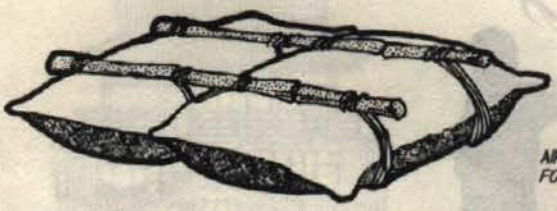
Ninja were required to learn how to swim well and could travel under water for a lengthy period of time. By using a hollow reed, sword scabbard or smoking pipe the Ninja could stay completely submerged and escape detection. Some authorities also claim that Ninja would take down an inflated animal skin in order to take occasional breaths while swimming a great distance. Another device to speed the Ninja's progress through the water was a MIZUKAKI or webbed flipper that could be worn on the feet.

Being totally submerged in the water was often not desired because of the possible damage to the many powders and odd supplies that the Ninja carried. Crossing the surface of the water like Water Bugs lead to the rumors of Ninja being able to "walk on water". The simplest device was a set of four inflated skins that were used as a complete life jacket. With a skin on each side and behind him the Ninja would then balance on the fourth skin and hold it between his legs while paddling with a bamboo oar.

Another raft-like device was the KYOBAKO-FUNE, a collapsible waterproof box used as a small boat. The KAMEIKADA was made of crossed bamboo floated on four sealed ceramic pots. By filling the pots with water the whole thing could be submerged and hidden out of sight.

Legend has it that the Ninja used MIZUGUMO or water spiders to actually 'walk' on the surface of the water. Each foot was inserted in a seperate barrel or floating device. The Ninja would then make his way over the water with the help of a long pole or flat-bottomed paddle used to keep his balance.

FLOATATION DEVICES



AIR FILLED SKINS
FOR FLOATATION.

MIZUGUMO OR WATER SPIDER

BREATHING TUBE
A SWORD SCABBARD OR REED OR SMOKING PIPE.

Feudal Japanese Castles

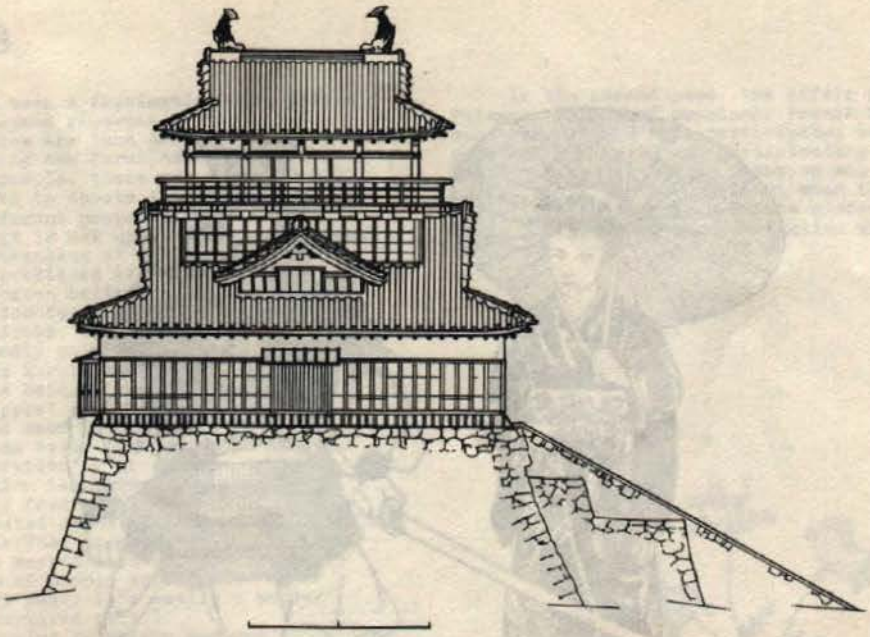
Sneaking into castles in Feudal Japan was far from easy. First the Ninja would have to make his way past a expanse of cleared land that was constantly under careful scrutiny by alert Samurai. This first obstacle could be avoided but only by going through sheer cliff faces, across ocean or river streches or over dense swamps because these were usually facing the 'back door' of a castle.

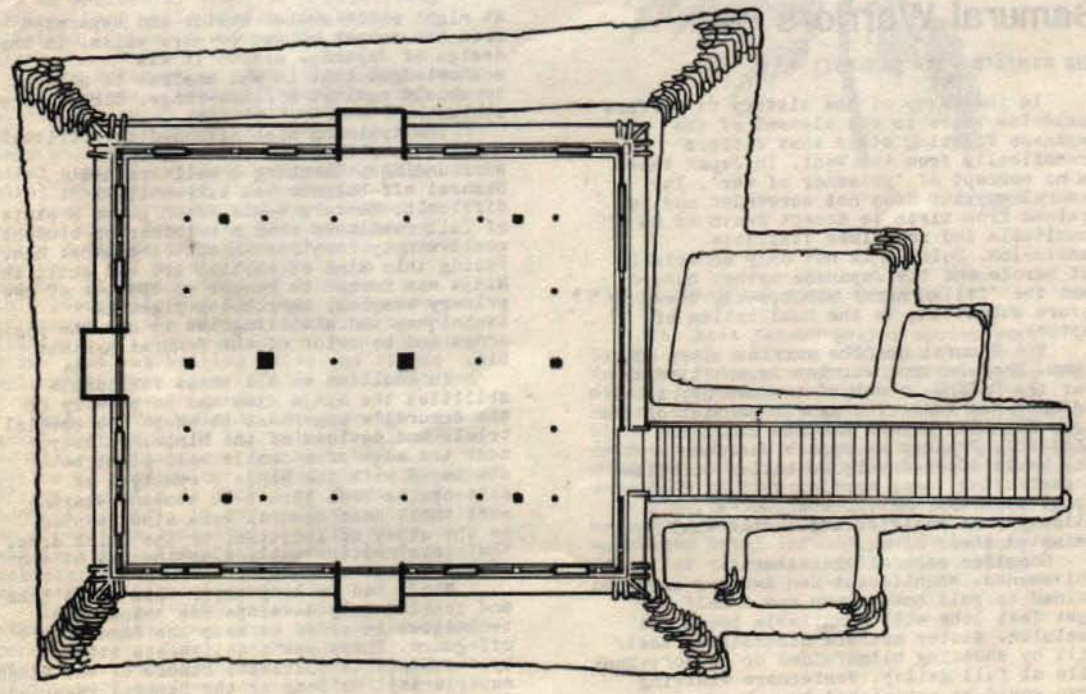
Once the Ninja reaches the actual perimeter of the castle he would have to cross a deep moat. The next step would be the outermost wall or rampart. Dividing this outside wall structure from the rest of the complex there were well-lit passages with regular guards on patrol. These passages would often be constructed in a bewildering maze and might be trapped in a variety of ways. There were arrow and balista openings to be avoided and deadly trapdoors that would release a torrent of rocks on the careless Ninja. This outside perimeter is known as the SANNOMARU and housed the living quarter of the garrison.

Now the Ninja was faced with another wall, much steeper and taller than the last one. Once over the second wall there would be yet another piece of open ground, sometimes supplied with an additional moat. This second section (the NINOMARU) contained the storerooms of the castle.

Next, the Ninja would have to climb the walls to the innermost courtyard - this one being the tallest and steepest yet. Inside this wall the elite bodyguard of the Daimyo were constantly watching. This third section was called the HOMMARU and held the main residence of the warlord.

Finally, the Ninja would be faced with the in YAGURA (tower) itself. This structure rose three or more levels up and was heavily fortified. As a further hazard the top level was an observation post that overlooked the entire complex. It is no wonder that the Ninja who penetrated a Daimyo's castle was credited with supernatural powers.





Samurai Warriors

THE NINJA'S FOE: SAMURAI!

In the study of the history of warfare worldwide there is one element of the Japanese fighting ethic that differs dramatically from the West. In Japan there is no concept of 'prisoner of war'. The Samurai warrior does not surrender and is trained from birth to accept death as an inevitable and sometimes desirable conclusion. Suicide is not only acceptable but heroic and the Japanese mythos honors most the 'fallen hero' who bravely dies before submitting to the humiliation of capture.

The Samurai are the warrior class of Japan. Each Samurai warrior is entitled to wear the DAISHO, a set of two swords, to indicate his rank. The swords consist of the large fighting KATANA and the smaller WAKAZASHI. Trained as superb warriors they would often devote an entire lifetime to perfecting their martial skills. Their strict code was that of BUSHIDO, a philosophy of behavior and combat that dominated their lives.

Consider some of the Samurai achivements. Magnificent Zen Archers were trained to pull bows seven and a half to eight feet long with remarkable speed and precision. Master archers demonstated their skill by shooting blindfolded or on horseback while at full gallop. Westerners visiting Japan would be astonished by a Samurai who could bring down a bird unharmed or shoot a cluster of arrows into a post across a yard at night while seated inside and seperated from the target by two or more walls. In the design of Japanese armour it was acknowledged that it was useless to attempt to shield against a close-range, direct arrow strike.

The training also extended to spiritual and philisophical awareness of one's surroundings. Catching a well-trained Samurai off-balance was extremelly difficult. Masters would often go to a state of full readiness when a retainer or student would simply consider an attack against him. Facing this kind of martial art and skill the Ninja was forced to resort to the use of two primary weapons, unorthodox fighting techniques and a willingness to use the rigid codes and behavior of the Samurai against him.

In addition to all these formidable abilities the Ninja also had to be wary of the Samurai's eagerness to adopt the special tricks and devices of the Ninja. Walkways near the edge of a castle wall might be scattered with the Ninja's own type of caltrops, a real threat to someone wearing soft tabi. Some Samurai were also devoted to the study of Iaijutsu, or the quick draw, that involved instantly slashing out at the first sign of danger.

Ninja had to keep their wits about them and continuously develope new tricks and techniques in order to keep the Samurai off-guard. There was a deliberate attempt by the Ninja to cultivate rumors of the Ninja superiority. So long as the Samurai regarded the Ninja as a dangerous foe they might more easily put them off balance and escape testing their fighting skills directly.

POISONS

There has been a fascination with poison that extends beyond recorded history. Primitive peoples are (and presumably were) constantly trying new formulas to effective poisons. For example, there are over 300,000 different plants to choose from and each have quite different properties.

However, it is not until recent times that any real understanding of either the function or ingredients of toxins came about. People often believed that a plant was poisonous for fanciful reasons like foul smell or evil looks. The tomatoe was regarded as deadly poison since being introduced into Europe in the mid 1500s. Tales of people being hideously murdered by a ripe 'love apple' or tomatoe introduced into their food seem pretty silly today.

Real toxins exist everywhere in nature. Before refrigeration or proper food-preservation techniques many people were done in by food poisoning. Bacteria and algae in untreated drinking water were often fatal. Improper food preparation and the use of risky herbs were also hazardous. Even today millions of people experience poisoning every year. It's really a wonder that anybody survived at all.

But attempting to poison someone intentionally is a difficult proposition. The toxicity of any plant or fungus can depend on when it is picked, what part is used and how it is prepared. Even when a sure poison is refined there is still the problem of delivery. Too much poison and there may be tell-tale flavors or severe rejection that will result in simple discomfort. Too little poison will not only cause no harm but may actually contribute to the building up of an immunity in the intended victim. To complicate matters it is impossible to predict how susceptible a person may be to a particular poison. Some individuals will die from an accidental trace of a relatively harmless herb while others can easily withstand pounds of supposedly deadly poison.

It's interesting that The poison that killed Socrates, hemlock, was also used as a suicide potion by certain American Indians. While this proves how effective it was, it seems unlikely that anyone could drink a lethal quantity without suspecting the lethal properties of the contents.

Rumors of poisonings were common in ancient Rome. According to some sources entire families were dispatched to assure they would not attain the position of Emperor. The poisonings of Renaissance Italy eventually had the rest of Europe defining a poison victim as having been 'italianated'. The punishment for poisoning at the time was boiling alive and it was implemented from time to time until the end of the seventeenth century.

Madonna Teofania di Adamo brought mass market techniques to the sale of poisons in the sixteenth century. She marketed a 'potion of succession' called variously Aqua Toffana, Aquetta di Napoli or Manna of St. Nicholas Di Bari. It was sold as a 'cosmetic' and directions indicated that it could be used as a cure for troublesome or unwanted husbands. The arsenic in the mixture eventually claimed 600 victims.

In 1676 and 1679 there were two celebrated poisoning cases that scandalized France. In the first the Marquise de Brinvilliers apparently used her hospital charity work as a way of experimenting with a variety of different poisons. She eventually killed both her father and her two brothers with her discoveries.

In the second case, the Affair of the Poisons, dozens of prominent French figures were rumoured to have participated in purchasing poisons and participating in Black Masses. Catherine Deshayes was burned alive for her part but when the investigation touched upon the mistress of Louis XIV the entire investigation was dropped.

HEMLOCK

POISON ARROW AND SPEAR POINTS:

The most famous poison arrows were tipped with a Curare mixture. The South American Indians would colect Strychnos and other plants and boil down a dark brown resin. This would almost instantly paralize birds or small animals. Humans required two or more shots for complete paralysis. Ninja used the body fluid of a blowfish for the same kind of effect.

Almost every warrior in the world knew enough to smear dung on a blade to assure sometimes fatal infections. Horse dung is known for transmitting Lockjaw through puncture wounds.

BELLADONNA
DEADLY NIGHTSHADE

POISON PLANTS

CHRISTMAS ROSE

Helleborus niger grows year-round in any high woodland area. Heart failure, hypertension and dropsy are treated with this plant. Used by Celts and Gauls for poison arrows.

Active Toxins: Cevadine, Jervine, Veratralbine and Veratridine.

Lethal Dosage: 2-4 leaves - 40% Fatality

DEADLY NIGHTSHADE

Atropa Belladonna grows wild all over woodland and meadow areas. Used as a medicine for eye disease, colic, ulcers, kidney stones and asthma. The effect of the plant is initially narcotic and leads to euphoria and hallucinations.

Active Toxin: Atropine.

Lethal Dosage: 1-4 berries - 85% Fatality

FOXGLOVE

Digitalis purpurea is found in loamy woodlands and is a very pretty and fragrant flowering plant. This is the source of the Digitalis drug used for heart attack victims. It is also a cure for dropsy (related to kidney disorders). One murderess killed at least eleven people with Foxglove in this century.

Active Toxins: Digitoxin, Digitalin and Digitonin.

Lethal Dosage: 2-6 leaves - 60% Fatality

HEMLOCK

Cicuta maculata is water hemlock found in damp meadows or marshes. Conium maculatum is poison hemlock and has a different poison and grows in drier ground. No curative value. It has been used as a suicide drug by the ancient Greeks and the American Indians.

Active Toxins: Coniine (in Conium)

Lethal Dosage: Powder made from the center of the stem mixed with water - 95% Fatality

HENBANE

Hyoscyamus niger is part of the nightshade family commonly found in garbage dumps and waste heaps. It is used as a medicine for asthma, bronchitis, nerve desease and rheumatism. An interesting use for the plant is as a crude 'truth serum'. This latter effect is created by inhaling the smoke of the roasting seeds.

Active Toxins: Hyoscyamine, Hyoscine and atropine.

Lethal Dosage: 20 seeds - 50% Fatality

MONKSHOOD

Aconitum napellus is also known as buttercup and grows everywhere - including in many ornamental gardens. It can be used to treat arthritis, fibrositis, and nerve problems. It has been used as a poison for spear and arrow points.

Active Toxins: Aconitine and aconine.

Lethal Dosage: A mouthful of any part - 90% Fatality

MONKS HOOD
ACONITE

CANNABIS SATIVA
MARIHUANA
USED BY THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS.

POISON CATEGORIES

The following catagories can be used in classifying toxins. Lethality of any toxin found in nature can vary tremendously according to local conditions. Local rainfall, temperature, season, and altitude can all change the toxic content of a plant. In many cases toxic and non-toxic varieties of mushrooms, plants, and animals are virtually identical. For example, in northern Africa there are varieties of non-poisonous snakes that 'mimic' their poison cousins exactly.

MINERAL POISONS. Natural mineral compounds containing Arsenic or other heavy metals were largely overlooked until recent years. One traditional Ninja poison was the green oxidation found on tarnished copper. Lead is extremelly toxic but was considered harmless enough for water pipes and drinking vessels in ancient times.

MICROBIAL TOXINS. Of course, infection with bacteria can be extremelly hazardous, but many microbes will produce toxic substances in water and food. Food not properly cared for can be deadly.

Blue-green Algae is a frequent killer of birds and animals. Found in standing water, it is identified by the unusual color. Other aquatic organisms are less common but just as deadly

FUNGAL TOXINS. A good example of a toxic fungus is the Ergot that grows on wheat and other grass-like plants. Medieval Europe would sometimes experience epidemics of this infestation.

Mushrooms come in over 30,000 different varieties and can be deadly. The main problem with their use as a poison is the difficulty in figuring out which ones are really poisonous. Although selecting safe mushrooms is a difficult and risky process it is even more difficult to absolutely identify a deadly one. Poisonous mushrooms are really relatively rare and readily confused with safer varieties. In addition even the worst of the poisonous varieties may contain no toxin at all in certain conditions.

PHYTOTOXINS or PLANT TOXINS. With over 300,000 different plant varieties it is no wonder that science still hasn't identified all the toxic varieties. The toxin can be located in roots, tubers, stems, leaves, berries, flowers or bark. Certain plants, like potatoes, tomatoes and rhubarb, have poisonous leaves but are otherwise safe. Other plants will only contain poison during certain seasons. Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac contain allergens that will affect some people more than others.

Recent studies indicate that leafy trees can produce a variety of toxins depending on the insects that are threatening them. These trees may also 'communicate' using specialized compounds released into the air. Their neighbors may then respond to insect threats that have not yet spread.

CHRISTMAS ROSE
OR HELLEBORUS

ZOOTOXINS or ANIMAL TOXINS. Insects like Wasps and Bees produce toxins that are not usually fatal in small quantities. However, a single sting can kill an allergic individual. The spider family, especially the Tarantula, the Scorpion, and the Black Widow, have evolved poisons that can be fatal even in very small quantities.

Toads and Salamanders secrete poisons on their skins. Simple contact with the skin of some toads can kill. Snake venom contains highly sophisticated nerve poisons capable of parlyzing or killing a human in minutes. Poisons are rare among mammals but some shrews have poison glands.

Sea and water dwellers have many different poisons. Another favorite Ninja poison source was Blowfish. As many as 100 people die every year in Japan from eating improperly prepared Blowfish.

NINJA POISONS:

Aside from the usual kinds of plants the Ninja relied on a number of other interesting poisons. Green tea mixed with soybean paste and buried for 40 days was supposed to kill any sick person within two or three days. Green, unripe fruits such as plums and peaches could be mixed into other foods and were rumoured to kill instantly.

Ninja also had recipes for two types of poison gasses. The first included newt, mole and snake. Paper was used to absorb the mixture and the burning of the paper produced sleeping fumes. The second witches' brew called for rats, tree leaves, a centipede, cotton seeds and cattle dung. When a ball made of the paste was burned it produced another sleeping gas.

Dictionary of Assassin Terms

ADHOREEA - Thug term for an escaped victim.
AIKUCHI - Japanese or Ninja daggers.
AISHA - Ninja trick of taking advantage of sympathetic feelings.
AMETORI NO JITSU - Ninja trick using a person's supposition that a raincoat indicates someone is present inside it.
BAJEED - Thug 'all clear' signal, called out when the murder site is safe and ready.
BANIJ - Thug merchandise.
BAROO - A Thug with either illustrious ancestors or one who is highly respected.
BELES - Thug burial groves.
BEYLHA - Thug who chooses the place of murder.
BHURTOTE - Thug's honoured rank of strangler.
BISENTO - Ninja broad bladed spear.
BISUL PURNA - Thug term for an incorrect strangling position, such as the Rumal missing the neck and getting around the head. This is cause for loss of Bhurtote rank.
BO STICK - A common Ninja or Japanese weapon.
BOJHA - Thug who takes the murdered corpse to the grave.
BOJITSU - Ninja training in the use of a fighting stick or staff.
BORKA - Thug who has been initiated.
BUNIJ - Thug term for merchandise or property, used to describe a person worth murdering.
BURGEELA - Thug accomplice from outside the group.
BURKA - Thug chief or leader.
BUSHIDO - The Samurai code of chivalry. Often used by Ninja in disguising their true nature.
CHAKUZEN NO JITSU - Ninja skill of hiding in an enemy camp prior to the start of a battle.
CHEEHA - Thug name for a cowardly or timid Thug.
CHIKAIRI NO JITSU - Ninja infiltration of enemy lines during a war.
CHIKYU NO JITSU - Ninja trick of pretending to betray his own lord after being captured.
CHOOKADENA - Thug term for the act of directing the victim's attention upwards, performed by pointing to the sky or some object above.
CHUNIN - A Ninja group leader.
DAIMYO - Term for a Japanese feudal lord.
DAIS - Ismaili missionaries or propagandists.
DHAGA - Thug term for negotiation, used either to find out information about travellers or when obtaining protection from local officials.
DHONKEE - Thug term for a guard or policeman.
DHURDALNA - Thug term for strangling a victim.
DINAR - An Islamic coin consisting of roughly four grams of gold.
DOKA - A pocket heater used by Ninja for conviniently setting fires. Made with a shell of iron and filled with burning coals.
DOONR - Thug term for a victim's scream for help.
DOSHA - Ninja trick of taking advantage of anger or short tempered persons.
EMIR - Islamic provincial governor.
ENNYU NO JITSU - Ninja skill of entering an enemy camp by trickery.
FIDAIS - Members of the Order of Assassins specifically trained for acts of terrorism.

FUKIYA - Ninja pins or poisoned darts shot through blow guns.
FUKUMI-BARI - Ninja darts concealed in the mouth and blown out at an enemy.
FUKURO-GAESHI NO JITSU - Ninja skill of double cross where the lord is betrayed and the Ninja joins the enemy as a double agent.
GAN KURNA - Thug technique where one Thug would pretend to be violently ill and the others would convince the victims that a special ceremony must be performed, all so that the victims could be properly positioned for murder.
GEINYU NO JITSU - Ninja skill of performing terrorist acts inside an enemy camp.
GENIN - A Ninja agent, the lowest level ranking Ninja.
GENMAI - Ninja rice drink.
GETA - Ninja wooden clogs used for walking on ice in order to practice balance.
GISHO-GIIN NO JITSU - Ninja art of forgery.
GOBBA - Thug circular grave where a central pillar of earth is left standing, around which the bodies are packed. The hole is actually doughnut shaped.
GOJO-GYOKU - Ninja philosophy of manipulation through the use of character flaws.
GOOKHEE - Thug term for a person carrying bones to the holy river and is therefore exempt from murder.
GOOR - Thug's ceremonial sugar to be eaten after every strangling.
GOOR GHAUNT - Thug's special knot around which the Rumal is tied.
GOOR PONCH - A Thug who is capable of tying the GOOR GHAUNT knot.
GONEEAIT - Thug term for a person who is disfigured by the loss of a hand, nose or other body part and is considered bad luck to kill.
GYOKURO - Ninja poisoned tea.
HAKAMA - Ninja/Japanese split skirt or loose trousers.
HENGEN-KASHI NO JITSU - Ninja skill of disguise.
HILLA - Thug title of honor for the three Thugs responsible for the Kusee (pickaxe), the goor (sugar), and choosing the murder site.
HOKA NO JITSU - Ninja art of arson. Sometimes involves the use of fire arrows.
HOTARUBI NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of allowing capture of a false or misleading secret message.
HUJJA - Islamic term for a person having a direct link to the Iman.
IAI JITSU - Ninja art of fast-drawing a sword.
IMAN - Islamic term for the rightful spiritual and temporal ruler of Islam. In the Islamic faith there is no division between political and religious leadership.
INPO - Ninja skill of hiding.
ISMAILIS - Islamic sect believing in Ismail (died 760) as the proper successor to Mohammad.
ITAK - Thug sign of good fortune.
JHIRNEE - Thug signal to kill.
JINN - Islamic creatures of magic.
JIRAI - Ninja land mine.
JOEI NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of enlisting in the enemy army and serving as secret agents.
JONIN - Ninja leaders.
JYWALOO - Thug victim discovered to be still alive after being strangled.
KALI - Thug god of death.
KALIF or KHALIF - Islamic term for the proper successor of the Prophet Mohammad.
KAMA - Ninja fighting scythe.

KAMEIKADA - Ninja one-man rafts made with bamboo or wood and watertight ceramic jugs.
KANKALI - Thug term for the god Kali.
KANTHUNA - Thug term for cutting up the body of the victim to prevent swelling.
KAWA-NAWA - Ninja fighting or climbing rope with a grappling hook on one end.
KEN - Ninja term for a sword or blade.
KENJITSU - Ninja art of swordmanship.
KINSHA - Ninja bribe that takes advantage of a known desire or weakness.
KITSUNE GAKURE NO JITSU - Ninja skill of hiding in water by imitating a fox.
KO-GATANA - Ninja knife.
KOMUSO - Ninja role of itinerant priest.
KOPPO - Ninja bone-breaking techniques.
KORAN - Islamic holy book written by the Prophet Mohammad.
KOZUKA - Ninja knife.
KUJI-KIRI - Ninja use of finger movements to hypnotize or confuse an opponent.
KUJJEE - Any non-Thug woman. Woman forbidden as a victim.
KUKI SHIN-RYU - Ninja techniques for the Bisento spear.
KUMADE - Ninja rake of hooked metal pieces.
KUMI-UCHI - Ninja martial art based on wrestling techniques.
KUNASHI - Ninja digging device.
KUNOICHI - Ninja female agents.
KUNOICHI NO JITSU - Female Ninja training techniques.
KUSARI - Ninja fighting chain.
KUSARI-GAMA - Ninja skill with the chain and scythe.
KYOTETSU-SHOGI - Ninja weapon made of women's hair with a metal ring on one end and a double-pointed knife on the other.
KYONIN NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of taking advantage of fear or superstition.
KYOSHA - Ninja tactic of taking advantage of cowards.
KYUJITSU - Ninja skill of archery.
LUGHAE - Thug position of gravedigger.
MAHDI - Islamic term for messianic Imans.
MAMELUKES - Islamic term for slaves raised to be warriors.
MANRIKI-KUSARI - Ninja techniques of fighting with a chain.
MAULEE - A Thug who takes money home to the families before the expedition is over.
MISO-SHIRU - Ninja food used to make soup.
MIZUGUMO - Ninja water-crossing device make of curved wood and cord.
MIZUKAKI - Ninja webbed foot-gear used for swimming.
MIZU-TAIMATSU - Ninja torch designed to burn in the rain.
MONOMI NO JITSU - Ninja skill of finding weak spots in enemy defenses.
MUFTI - Islamic official trained in Public Law.
MUGEI-MUMEI NO JITSU - Ninja art of secrecy.
MULLA - Islamic teacher of law.
NAGINATA - Japanese spear.
NAWANUKE NO JITSU - Ninja technique of escaping bonds by dislocating bone joints.
NINJITSU - The art of the Ninja.
NIZARIS - Islamic term for beleivers in the rightful succession of Nizar (died 1095) as Iman. Another term for the religious sect of Assassins.
NYUDAKI NO JITSU - Ninja skill of discovering an enemy weakness.
PHUR JHARNA - Thug term for cleaning the murder site.
POLA - Thug signs made in the road to indicate direction and urgency.
PUNGOO - River Thug of Bengal.
PUTORA - Thug term for a bad omen.

RAKUSHA - Ninja tactic of taking advantage of laziness.
RAMADAN - Islamic month of fasting.
RAMASEE - Thug language or dialect.
RONIN - Samurai who are without a lord, wandering warriors.
RUMAL or RUHMAL - Thug hankerchief or scarf used for a strangling cloth.
RYAKUHON NO JITSU - Ninja technique of infiltration by disguise.
RYOHAN NO JITSU - Ninja technique of kidnapping enemy officials for hostages.
SACCHI-JITSU - Ninja technique of using natural geography to advantage.
SAMURAI - Warrior class of feudal Japan.
SASHIMI - Raw fish, a main dish for the Ninja and all Japanese.
SATOBITO NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of inciting rebellion in the enemies camp among the dissatisfied.
SHIBA GAKURE NO JITSU - Ninja technique of hiding in or among common objects.
SHIKOMI-ZUE - Ninja sword-cane used when posing as a blindman.
SHINOBI-ZUE - Ninja staff with a chain hidden in one end and a lead weight in the other.
SHOGUN - Military ruler of feudal Japan.
SHUGENDO - A Japanese sect of Buddhism based in mountain monestaries. Closely affiliated with the Ninja.
SHUKA - Ninja device used for climbing and fighting. Consists of a metal band with four sharp spikes that is worn in the palm of the hand.
SHUMSEEA - Thug who holds the hands or feet of the victim.
SHURIKEN - Ninja throwing weapons.
SOON - Thug who is not yet a strangler.
SOTHA - Thug who convinces the victims.
SURBALUND KHAN - Thug leader's command for the assumption of proper positions.
TABI - Ninja or Japanese socks that have a split for the big toe.
TANAGOKORO-TAI MATSU - Ninja palm-sized torch.
TANIIRI NO JITSU - Ninja tactic where a team of Ninja pretend to betray their lord in order to join an enemy camp.
TANTO - Japanese dagger used by Ninja.
TANUKI GAKURE NO JITSU - Ninja technique of climbing trees.
TAQIYYA - A doctrine of Shiite Islam that makes secrecy and lies legitimate for the purpose of guarding the religion.
TEEKULA - Thug term for a stolen object from a victim which may be dangerous in that it may be identified.
TEKAGI - Ninja device used to grip walls or trees for climbing.
TETSU-BISHI - Ninja four-pointed caltrops.
TOFU - Japanese food made of soybean curd.
TOGAKURE-RYU - Ninja fighting technique of slapping both ears of an enemy simultaneously.
TOMBAKO KHA LO - Thug signal for murder, it means 'get out your tobacco'.
TONKI - Ninja throwing daggers.
TONPO - Ninja escape techniques.
TSUNE NO MIZU - Ninja food made from pickled plums.
TORIMAKA - Secret Ninja documents.
TUPPUL - Thug term for a path or side-road convenient for murder.
UKIDARU - Ninja water-crossing device made of waterproof reed pots.
USTAD - Thug term for a tutor or teacher.
UZURA GAKURE NO JITSU - Ninja technique of hiding in small gaps between objects.
WAKIZASHI - Japanese short sword.

YAMABIKO NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of joining an enemy lord after pretending to fight with his own side.
YAMABIKO SHICHO NO JITSU - Ninja technique for discovering an enemy agent by reavealing false information.
YAMABUSHI - A warrior priest from the mountains of Japan. A frequent Ninja disguise.
YARI - Ninja spear.
YARIJITSU - Ninja art of fighting with the spear.
YOJA NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of penetrating an enemy line by pretending to be a beggar or cripple.
YOJI - Japanese toothpick.
YOJI-GAKURE NO JITSU - Ninja tactic of distracting a guard by throwing a small object.
YOMOGAMI NO JITSU - Ninja practice of maintaining two seperate identities.
YOROI - Japanese chest protector.
YUBI - Ninja martial strike to an enemy's right kidney.
ZAGARASHI-YAKU - Ninja poison made of green fruit.

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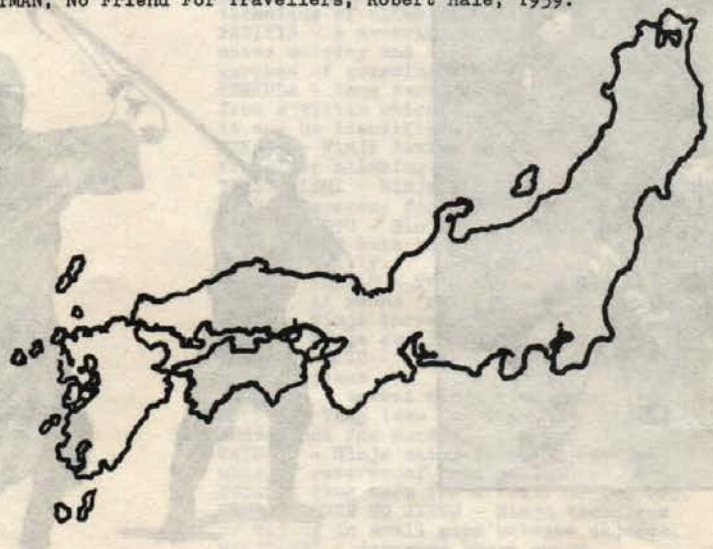

Chronology

CHRONOLOGY OF THE WORLD'S ASSASSINS

600 - Legendary beginning of the Ninja
632 - Death of Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam
760 - Ismaili Sect established in Islam
1090 - Hassan Sabah takes the Fortress of Alamut
1092 - Nizam al-Mulk is the first victim of the Assassins
1118 - Sanjar makes peace with the Assassins
1124 - Umid becomes the second Master of the Assassins
1138 - Muhammad becomes the third Master of the Assassins
1162 - Hasan II becomes the first Iman of the Assassins
1166 - Muhammad II becomes the second Iman of the Assassins
1192 - Yoritomo becomes the first Shogun of Japan
1210 - Hasan III becomes the third Iman of the Assassins
1221 - Aladdin becomes the fourth Iman of the Assassins
1252 - Imperial Prince Munetaka becomes Shogun, Ninja services come into great demand
1255 - Khurshah becomes the fifth Iman of the Assassins
1256 - Alamut is surrendered to the Mongols
1257 - Khurshah is put to death by the Mongols
1290 - 1,000 Thugs captured at Delhi
1304 - Gunpowder is introduced to the West
1338 - Ashikaga Shoganate begins
1581 - Destruction of the Iga Ninja by General Oda
1603 - Ieyasu becomes the first Tokugawa Shogun
1679 - French Affair of the Poisons
1812 - First British soldier killed by Thugs
1848 - Destruction of the Thug Cult in India

Dedicated to the memory of Dan LaFleche, the best warrior I have ever known. He would have enjoyed this...

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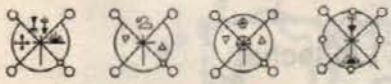

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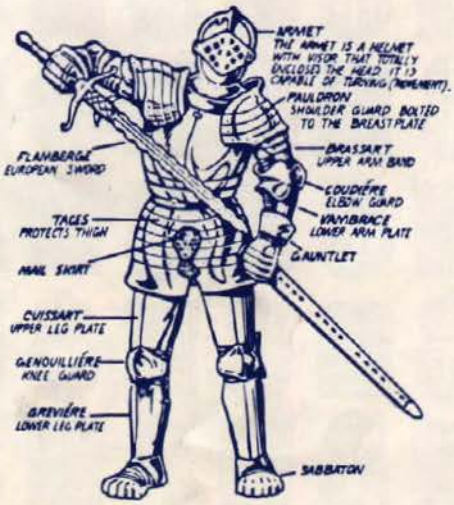

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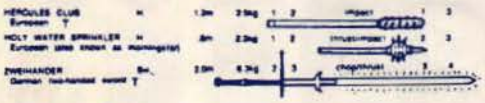

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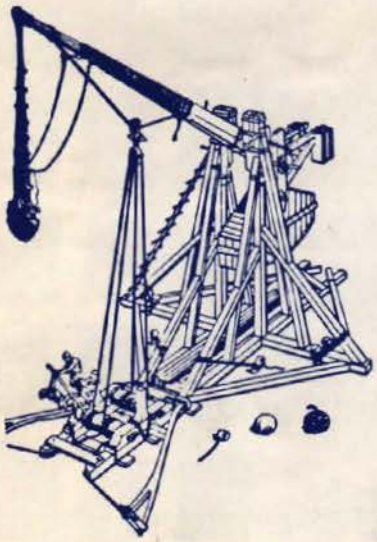

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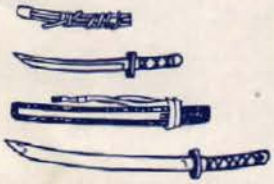

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