

Introduction

Anyone who has browsed the samurai archetypes know that they are desperately lacking in solid choices. Indeed, they are comparable to the Ninja which has only received two archetypes from Paizo. I say comparable, because while the Samurai has three archetypes only two are currently usable. The Sword Saint is a bad archetype, gaining scaling precision damage once per fight while slapping the Saint with a total of -6 to AC while replacing his Mount and Banner abilities. Functionally, the Sword Saint is a complete downgrade from the traditional samurai but represents a really neat concept. Rather than tying great fluff to bad crunch, for the purposes of my games the following archetype completely replaces the Sword Saint that Paizo has released. If you enjoy this concept, feel free to nick it for your own games or run it past your GM for approval.

Sword Saint Samurai Archetype:

Sword saints hail from lands where samurai are prevalent, and are often ronin who wander the world seeking new challenges to perfect their intricate style of swordplay called iaijutsu. Iaijutsu is a complex form of battle in which the action of drawing the weapon from its sheath is combined with a strike. Iaijutsu is regarded as much as a form of art as a combat style; and, a master of iaijutsu is capable of ending fights in a single fluid strike.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Sword Saints are proficient with simple and martial weapons, Katanas, light armor, and bucklers; but not medium armor, heavy armor, or other shields. This alters the Samurai's weapon proficiencies.

Class Skills: Sword Saints have no need for mounts, and rely instead upon their fast footwork to stride across the battlefield. Sword Saints lose ride as a class skill, and instead gain Acrobatics.

Dedication: While still nominally members of an Order, practitioners of iaijutsu give all of their attention to perfecting their particular style of combat. While a Samurai must still pledge their loyalty to a specific Order at level 1 and follow its code, they only gain the additional skills and challenge benefits from that order. This ability modifies Order.

Iaijutsu Style: Iaijutsu is the art of drawing your blade and striking in a single fluid motion. In order to perform any of the following Iaijutsu techniques you must have a one handed slashing weapon sheathed on your person, both hands free, the weapon may not be hidden, and must be visible for all to see. In addition, your target must be aware of you and the target of your challenge.

laijutsu Strike: At level 1, If a foe is within your reach, the Sword Saint may choose to issue a challenge against that foe as a Standard Action instead of a Swift Action. If she does, she may draw her weapon, wield it in one hand, and attack the target of her challenge as part of that standard action. If this attack hits, it deals an additional 1 damage per samurai level you possess (to a maximum of 20 additional damage at level 20). This damage is considered slashing damage and multiplied on a critical hit. This replaces Mount.

Unerring Accuracy: At level 2, When performing an laijutsu class ability, the Sword Saint may roll the attack roll twice and take the higher result. If one of these rolls is a critical threat, the other roll is used as their confirmation roll (your choice if they are both critical threats). This replaces the Order ability at level 2.

Perfect Calm: At level 4, A Sword Saint is as tranquil as a forest. Whenever she draws a melee weapon to attack an opponent within her reach she may attempt to feint as a Swift Action. Additionally, she gains +½ her class level on bluff checks to feint. This replaces Mounted Archer

Reflexive laijutsu Strike: At level 5, a Sword Saint can perform an laijutsu Strike against the target of their challenge whenever they would provoke an attack of opportunity. This ability replaces Banner.

Swift Sheathing: At level 6, whenever a sword saint performs multiple attacks during a full round attack they may choose to forego their lowest iterative attack in order to sheath their sword at the end of the full attack action without provoking attacks of opportunity. This decision must be made before the attack is rolled. You must have one hand free in order to use this ability.

Roaring laijutsu Strike: At level 8, a Sword Saint strikes with all the strength of a raging fire. He gains the feat Vital Strike as a bonus feat. If he already has vital strike, he may choose another feat from the list of Combat Feats. Whenever he performs an laijutsu Strike, he may choose to apply the effects of Vital Strike to that attack in addition to its other usual effects. If he possesses Improved or Greater Vital Strike then he may apply the effects of those feats instead. This replaces the Order ability at level 8.

Flowing laijutsu Strike: At level 12, A Sword Saint becomes as swift as a coursing river. She may choose to declare their challenge as a Full Round Action instead of declaring it as a Standard Action or as a Swift Action. If she does, she may perform a charge attack against their challenged target as part of that Full Round Action. In order to use this ability, the Sword Saint must have an uninterrupted line between themselves

and their target. If the Sword Saint would be prevented from finishing this charge, due to being tripped during an AoO or falling into a pit, they have still taken a full round action. This ability otherwise functions a combination of an Iaijutsu Strike and a charge, granting +2 to hit, -2 to AC, and dealing one additional point of slashing damage per Samurai level on a successful hit. This ability replaces the feat gained at 12th level.

Howling Iaijutsu Strike: At level 14 a Sword Saint may choose to perform a Howling Iaijutsu Strike. They can give up your regular attacks and instead make one melee attack at their highest base attack bonus against each opponent within reach. At least one of these opponents must be a valid target for an Iaijutsu Strike. Make a single attack roll, each target that is successfully hit takes damage as if hit by an Iaijutsu Strike. This replaces Greater Banner

Surging Iaijutsu Strike: At 15th level, a sword saint may perform an Iaijutsu strike as part of a full attack. This replaces 15th level order ability

Versatile Iaijutsu: At level 18, a sword saint may perform a deadly combo attack by combining the effects of two different Iaijutsu Strikes into a single decisive move. This allows them to combine a vital strike with a full attack, a vital strike and a charge, a vital strike and an attack of opportunity, or a full attack and a charge together provided they perform an Iaijutsu Strike during those actions. This replaces the feat gained at 18th level.

Heavenly Iaijutsu Strike: At 20th level, the Sword Saint may sheathe her sword as a free action even between attacks. Additionally, if her Iaijutsu strike confirms as a critical hit the target must make a save (DC = 10 + $\frac{1}{2}$ her Samurai level + her Strength or Dex modifier [whichever is higher]) or die. This ability is a death effect, and replaces Last Stand.