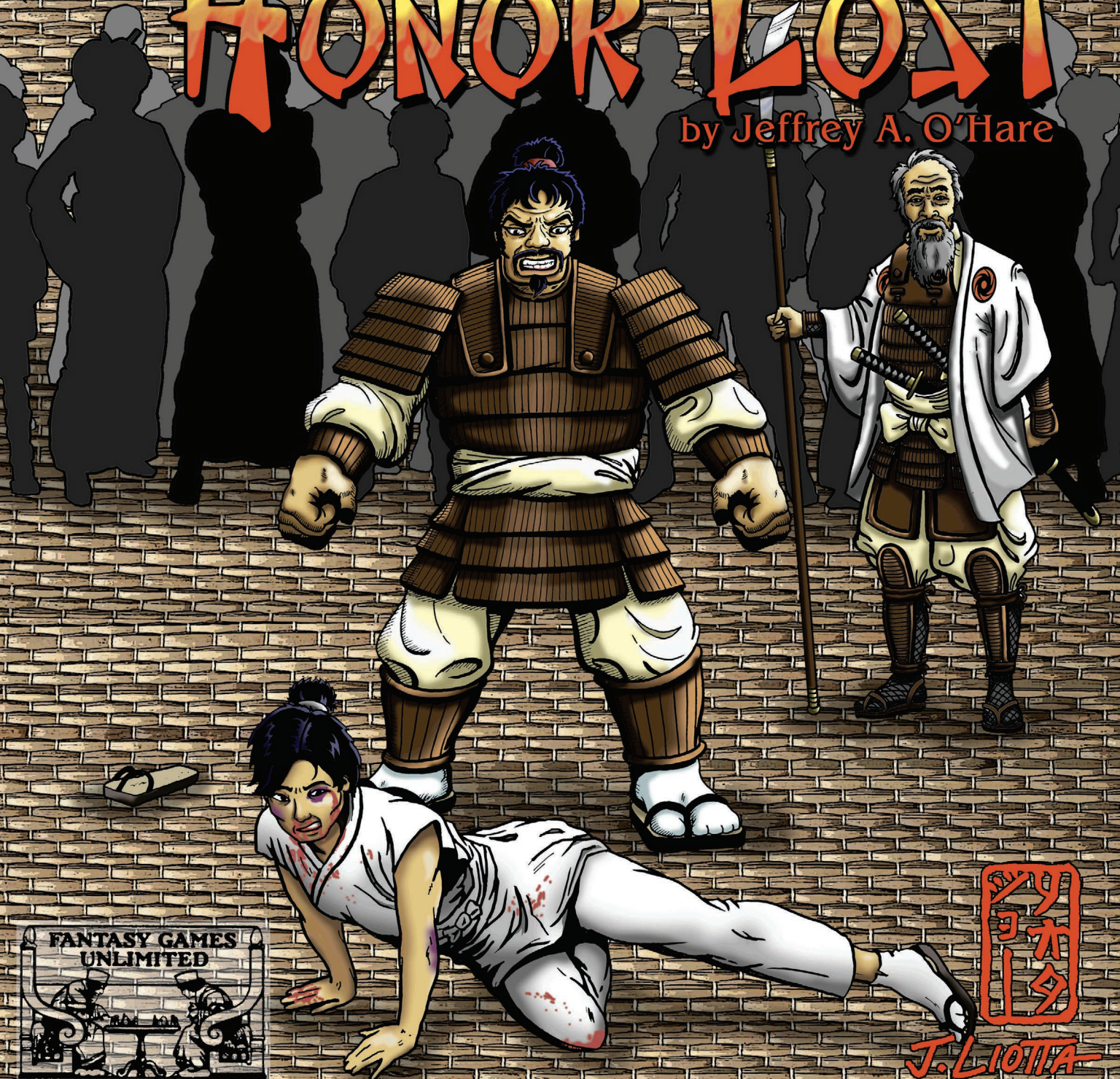


BUSHIDO™ Role Playing Adventure

A TALE OF HONOR LOST

by Jeffrey A. O'Hare



J. LIOTTA

A TALE OF HONOR LOST

In the far north of Nippon, in the Mutsu Province, one can find less-traveled and almost secluded areas. Such an area is found surrounding Tanomo, an agricultural area that has been ruled for many years by a much-respected and beneficent Daimyo.

But, over recent years, this highly regarded Daimyo has begun to behave in a rapacious manner and virtually loot his own lands and people. With the poverty and distant nature of this area, those outside are unfamiliar with the radical changes that have been taking place.

Player-adventurers have entered this region and will hope to discover what is going on and what is actually behind the strange behavior of the long-respected Daimyo.



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P.O. Box 1082, Gilbert, AZ 85299
www.fantasygamesunlimited.net

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

It is with great pride that we offer this adventure for the BUSHIDO game system. Jeff O'Hare is an old personal friend who has written several adventures for Villains and Vigilantes. He successfully made the move from writing game adventures to writing books (after time writing scripts for animated television and editing "Highlights," a national magazine for young readers). The largest number of Jeff's books are published by Scholastic, the American publisher of the Harry Potter novels.

Similarly, Joe Liotta began work with FGU as the writer of a Villains and Vigilantes adventure. He later decided to change careers and has worked as a graphic artist/designer and commercial artist. Joe has recently agreed to do occasional work for FGU (I suspect it is more of a favor for old times' sake than for any financial consideration).

Any time we can bring back original contributors to FGU's product line, it is a sought after pleasure. It is apparent that Joe Liotta's long fascination with Japan combines beautifully with his artistic ability and forms a perfect complement to Jeff O'Hare's vision for this adventure.

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A TALE OF HONOR LOST

GAMEMASTER'S INTRODUCTION

There are any number of reasons why the player-characters may be journeying through Mutsu Province. The choice of the actual reason is, of course, left up to the Gamemaster who may determine by which means this scenario may best fit into any existing campaign. One of these choices could be that the player-characters are unaware of the recent events in the province and are simply traveling through on their way to conduct business at some other point. Another option could be that, thanks to rumors and vague stories from other travelers, the player-characters are fully aware of what has been going on in the middle of Mutsu Province (all of which will be revealed in the text of this adventure) and the player-characters are specifically in Mutsu Province so that they might either help the people of the province or so that they might join the Warlord and profit from the people of Mutsu Province themselves.

In any case, the player-characters will be well within Mutsu Province (or some other province that better fits in a Gamemaster's campaign) when the events of this adventure take place.

It is a good idea for the Gamemaster to read through the entire adventure in order to familiarize himself with the total tale before running any single part of the adventure. As with all role-playing, the Gamemaster should feel free to change or adapt any part of this adventure to enhance the enjoyment of the players. However, this should only be attempted after becoming fully acquainted with the information already presented here.

ROADSIDE ENCOUNTER TABLE

(use percentile dice)

Dice Roll	Event or Encounter
01-09	A tiger, measuring ten-feet from nose to tail, jumps out at the player-characters. The beast is very hungry and has been driven into a rage by an unknown source.
10-18	A four-man patrol of warriors dressed in dark armor of Class 5 and showing the symbol of the Warlord, will bar the way of the player-characters. The party will be told to return the way they have come as the road has been closed to outsiders/strangers. The patrol will not react kindly to any arguments or discussion. The Patrol guards are all 1st Level Bushi.
19-27	A small family (one man, one woman, and one child) is hiding in the tall grass and will be spotted by one of the player-characters. Once they are seen, the peasant family will attempt to run away from the party. These peasants are all average in every way and have no weapons or items of outstanding value. This family will be very frightened and unsure of their situation. They are trying to flee the area and the terrorism of the Warlord.
28-29	The four-man patrol is encountered in the act of running down the peasant family when the player characters first see them.
30-40	A twelve-foot long Mukade attacks the party.
41-50	Three Katari-be (two 1st Level Entertainers and one

2nd Level Philosopher) are leaving this area. They will complain to the player-characters about what a terrible area this is and how even their best tricks have received no applause.

51-53 The Philosopher (from the above encounter) is actually a thief. He will try to steal whatever he can from the party members, whenever they are not watching.

54-62 A caravan of merchants is leaving the area after having been here for one day. The business in Tanomo is terrible. The main merchant in that town, they say, is a man named Asari and he refused to do business with them. Asari has said that he expects a new shipment of goods soon, but he won't say from where.

63-66 One of the merchants in the above encounter is really a 3rd Level Yakuza. He is carrying a message from Tatsuo, the innkeeper, telling of the recent raids. If there are any known Yakuza in the party of the player characters, he will try to secretly warn the Yakuza party member to be careful in this area.

67-75 A dozen hungry adult wolves will attack the party.
76-82 A woman will be seen crying over a dead female body by the side of the road. As the party approaches, no evidence of any accident or injury can be seen on the body. When the player characters finally get close to the women, both females will attack, revealing themselves as Mujina.

83-89 A Shoryo will attack the player-characters. It will lead them a short way off the road to where a body lies slumped behind some rocks. The dead man's skull has been bashed in by one of these rocks. This man was killed by some of the Warlord's soldiers. If the player characters give the body a decent burial, the Shoryo will leave them alone.

GM Note: In one of the tests of this adventure, the Shoryo showed up again later to exact his revenge on the Warlord. The player-characters were aided by the Shoryo in overturning Yamasatsu's plans.

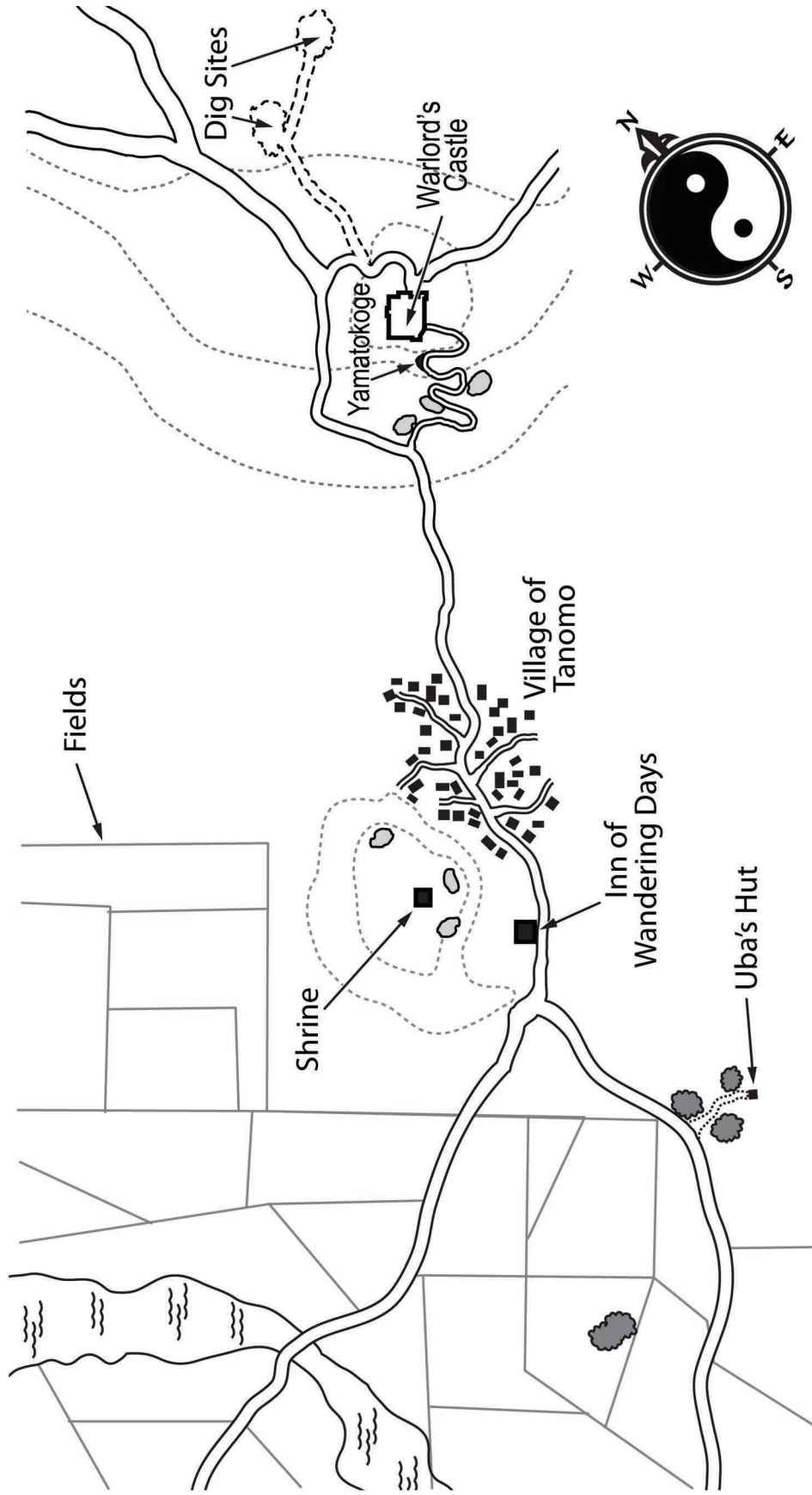
90-94 A seven-foot tall O-Bakemono will be lying across the road, blocking anyone from passing. He will demand an expensive tariff or toll in order to allow the player characters to continue on their way.

95-99 A Karasu-Tengu will bother the player-characters the entire time they continue on the road, scaring animals, playing tricks, and being a general nuisance. It will disappear into the trees once the player-characters reach the point of the rainstorm or any of the buildings of the town.

00 A 5th Level Samurai, dressed in armor of Class 8 and a long cloak, will be standing by the side of the road. He will not speak, but only watch calmly as the player characters approach. This samurai is actually the Usagi-Tsuki. He has come to this area to see what is causing all the fuss and disorder.

The Usagi-Tsuki's spells are left to the Gamemaster, so that they might best fit with the current situation in play.

THE AREA SURROUNDING THE VILLAGE of TONOMO



Map Key:



THE TALE BEGINS

The player-characters are traveling along a dirt road that runs through the low-lying hills of Mutsu Province. It is the late afternoon on what has, up to this point, proven to be a beautifully clear day. On either side of the roadway are fields that have obviously been only recently harvested. There are no kagas or other forms of advanced travel available on this route, which is actually little more than an upgraded path. The player-characters will have opted for this route by following an old, somewhat faded sign that offered a meal and shelter.

As the party travel along this road, the Gamemaster should consult the Roadside Encounter Table. There is a fork in the road at approximately the six-mile point, where the road branches off into a smaller pathway. Taking this path will lead to a small, weather-beaten hut that is the home of Sagi, an old woman who is nowhere to be seen. If the player-characters approach the hut, they will be greeted by a large black cat. The cat will rub against a character's legs, mewing to be stroked and petted.



Should that character bend down to touch the cat, the character will be immediately attacked. Sagi, the black cat, is actually an Uba of 3rd Level (see *Dramatis Personae*). Should she be bribed or defeated, Sagi will offer information in return for her life. She will warn the travelers not to go any further toward the village or the castle. There is bad magic at work there. She will tell them that no one can be trusted. If pressed for more information, she will focus one dark eye on the party and say cryptically "What causes some to grow will cause others to wither." That is all she will be able to say to the player-characters. Anything else will just be useless ramblings and noises.

Finding nothing more of interest, the party should then return to the main roadway/pathway and continue on toward the village (unless they place too much credence in Sagi's warnings and decide to go elsewhere). After they've reached the ten-mile mark on the road, the late afternoon sky will suddenly turn ominously dark. The sky behind them will still appear to be bright and blue, though tinged with streaks of the sunset. The sky before them will be cloudy and foreboding. If they continue to ride (or walk) forward, the player-characters will soon travel into a terrible storm. The howling winds and pelting rain will just "be there" and riding into it will be like piercing a heavy curtain. The party may turn around and try to leave the area of the storm if they

wish, but the rains will follow them all the way back to the fork in the road that led to Sagi's hut. The storm will not go any farther than the fork. If the party does turn back, the Gamemaster should use percentile dice to determine how many hours the rain will last before the skies clear again.

Should the party continue on its way into the storm, about another half-mile ahead they will come upon a small wayside inn. This inn will offer temporary respite from the storm. Even in the downpour, the player-characters can tell that this inn has seen better days and has fallen into some disrepair of late.

There will be a few sickly looking horses hitched to some empty carts in front of the inn.

The Inn of Wandering Days

Going to the door, the player-characters may hear heavy conversation and murmured curses coming from inside. However, as the party steps through the doors and are shaking the rain from their bodies and possessions, all talking will cease. The ten patrons of the inn will quickly examine the strangers before turning away to begin silently concentrating on their drinks. None of the regulars of the inn will offer to speak to the party or to buy a drink for these strangers (the player-characters), though none of these regular patrons will go so far as to be discourteous or attack any member of the party right away. If a player-character sits at a table with one of the locals, that farmer will quickly make an excuse to move to another table.

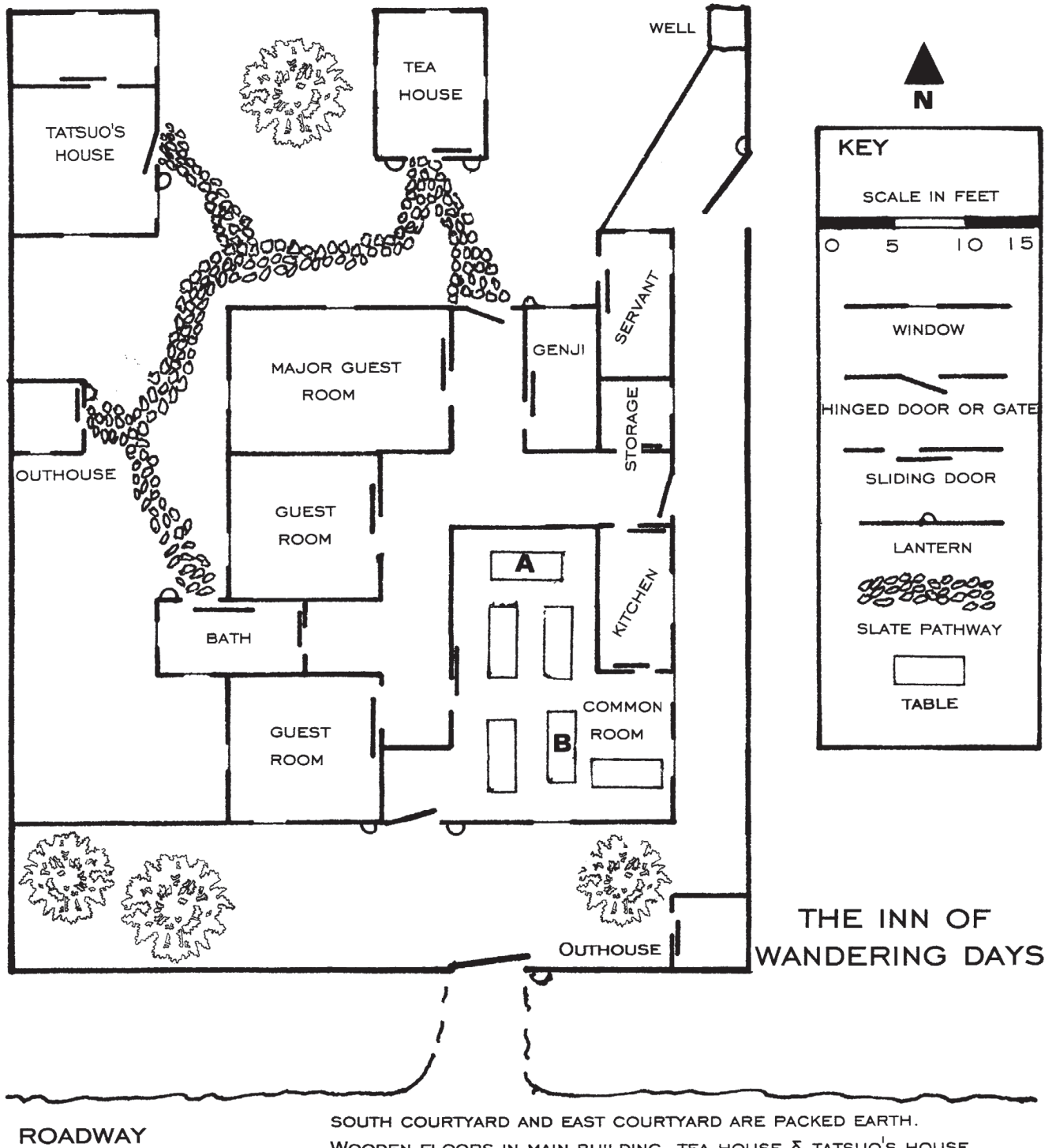
The owner of the inn, Tatsuo, will welcome the strangers to his humble inn. He will cheerfully lead them to a table and take their orders for food and/or drink. Tatsuo will be most willing to listen to whatever the travelers might have to say. He is a sponge for information coming from strangers, but he will not offer information about what is going on in this area or what has everyone so concerned. If any of these subjects come up, Tatsuo will simply smile and avoid talking about any touchy information.

Table A: In one corner of the bar, at a very small table, a local will appear to be asleep, his head resting in the crook of his folded arms. He will be easily awakened if anyone touches him, though he will not be awakened/raised by any amount of talking or loud voices. This man, Roki, is not actually asleep, but is only pretending to sleep. He is acting as a watchman for the Warlord. He will watch the strangers and get any information he can before bringing the information to the merchant, Asuri, later on.

Table B: One of the local farmers, who has obviously had too much to drink, will be seated at a table near the player-characters. At first he will not directly challenge anyone, but will continue to stare menacingly at the strangers while grumbling and loudly cursing all foreigners. He will rant about, "*more of the Warlord's lackeys who have come to steal our food and our children.*"

If any of the player-characters ask what his problem is, the drunk will hatefully say that he is sure they already know what he means. After all, aren't they just more of the Warlord's spies who have come to wreak more damage upon the village? Any protests of innocence from the player-characters will only be greeted with more scorn. The drunk will go on to sarcastically challenge that the group, of course, knows nothing of the Warlord's last raid; how he and his horde rode in and stripped the village like he does after every harvest. The drunk will go on to suppose, of course, that the party knows nothing about the storm and the goblins that always come in the Warlord's wake, to further decimate the village and to keep good honest men from following the devil back to his castle so they can seek justice.

With a final curse, the man will then hardly be able to stumble out the



front door, leaving the rest of the inn in stunned silence.

If the drunk is allowed to leave peacefully, the owner of the inn will come over with the filled orders for the party. Tatsuo, the innkeeper, will admonish the player-characters to write the peasant off as a lonely old drunk. Should any of the player-characters challenge the drunk or stop him from leaving the inn, the other local patrons will quickly jump to defend the drunken farmer. These regular patrons will not want to do battle with the strangers, but they are tired of being abused and will attempt to defend their own. Tatsuo will swiftly try to seek peace in his establishment.

Once again, Tatsuo, though always pleasantly charming, will avoid answering any question about the Warlord, what is going on in the area, the drunk, or his mumblings. To change the subject, Tatsuo will ask the travelers if they are associated with the young warrior who had ridden into town earlier that day. Here, since it does not directly concern his village, Tatsuo will freely dispense whatever information he has about this lone traveler.

"A young Ronin had come into the inn earlier that afternoon. He spoke very little, except to ask for a small room. He had then stood silently in the doorway watching the rain. Finally, he walked out, vowing to return when his room was prepared. After a little while, the Ronin did

indeed return to the inn. He took tea in silence, without speaking to any of the other patrons. He then left once again, traveling on foot to one of the major shrines in the hills. Since then he has not returned and is probably still praying at the shrine." That is all the information that Tatsuo has and he can share no more.

Though Tatsuo has a small house inside the grounds of the Inn (from the previous owner), he generally uses the smallest guest room at night to be available to his guests. If all guest rooms are full, or if a guest indicates limited funds, Tatsuo will rent that smallest room and make use of his house - as he has done for the young Ronin, Genji.

The player-characters will now be faced with the choices of what to do. They may continue with their original journey, leaving this place to its fate; they may try to get involved and begin investigating the Warlord; they may decide to take a room (or rooms) for the night in order to rest before making any major decisions; or they may go to the nearby shrine to see what this Ronin has to say for himself and what he has to do with the Warlord. No matter which choice they make, the player-characters will most likely (80% chance) be too busy to notice the sleeping figure at Table A suddenly wake up, slip away from his table, and exit out the back door.

THE TALE UNFOLDS

Here the choices made by the players allow several parts of the adventure to unfold. The options available to the player-characters will be discussed one at a time.

Continuing with their Journey

Should the player-characters leave the town to its own fate, they will again take to the road. They will be wished a good journey by Tatsuo. The patrons at the inn will not speak up or offer any assistance as the party heads out into the night.

A short distance outside of town, one of the player-characters will notice a rustling in the bushes to one side of the roadway. The noise is being made by a small boy, approximately ten-years-old, who has been following the party through the bushes. He wants to leave the village in order to become a brave adventurer. He is mad at the people in this province and disdains them all as cowards because none will stand up to the Warlord. The boy has no family as both his parents were killed in this last raid and his sister was taken captive. He feels he is old enough to live on his own and will leave the province whether the player-characters take him with them or not. Young Akani even offers to work as an attendant for the party if they will only take him with them.

Note to the GM: Of course, this encounter is designed to get the party to turn back and aid the people of this area. In role-playing Akani, the young boy, he should be a defiant, yet sympathetic character. The players should receive no bonus or On points for deciding to turn back to the village. After all, they should never have left in the first place. Deductions, however, should be meted out appropriately if the group ignores Akani or continues to leave the area. If such is the case, the Gamemaster should consult the Roadside Encounter Table once every half-hour of game time until the players get the message.

Should the player-characters kill Akani (accidentally or on purpose) while he is hiding in the roadside bushes, they will not know what he was after. They should, but may decide to not, return the child's body to the village and suffer certain punishments. A group of townspeople, actually Yakuza, will seek revenge against the player-characters in such a case.

As another alternative, the GM may have the player-characters pass by the Shrine on whatever road they leave by. See the section on the shrine to see how it fits into this adventure.

Investigating the Warlord

In the common room at the Inn of Wandering Days, the locals will remain silently finishing their cups of tea, saki, or rice wine. Unless confronted directly, the locals will not interact with the player-characters. If no action is taken by the player-characters, eventually all of the patrons will filter out of the inn, leaving the strangers at the inn.

There are two methods by which the player-characters can get information from the local villagers at the inn. The farmers, though unsure at first, will open up if the player-characters spend freely and buy them lots of drinks. If these drinks are offered in a spirit of generosity, the patrons will slowly begin to talk to the player-characters.

Another way that the villagers might accept the player-characters as real people, and not just more agents of the Warlord, is if the player-characters are carrying any "remainders" from their earlier encounters with the Uba or on the roadside. Any talismans that were gathered as victory totems after either of these battles will cause the player-characters to be viewed with awe and a new respect by the simple farmers.

Strength or a show of force against the locals is not going to be of any help to the party here. Such threats will only serve to further alienate the locals from the player-characters, causing the farmers to say even less. It may also result in some violent retaliations from the local peasants.

Of course, if the party returns to town after leaving, with young Akani, the local people will be far more open with the player-characters. This will have demonstrated that the player-characters are not agents of the Warlord in that they have shown decency to a poor peasant lad and member of the community. Once the player-characters get the locals to open up, they will hear a number of different views and opinions on the happenings in this area. Among these will be the following:

1. The Warlord's men always ride down and ravage the village after the harvest and then disappear into a storm of wind and rain.
2. The Warlord is the last in a long line of a well-respected family. It is rumored that he is distantly related to the Emperor himself.
3. These raids have been going on for three years.
4. The Warlord was not with his men the other day when they raided.
5. The raiders usually take a little more than half of the village's

harvest of food and grain, along with a number of people from the village, leaving the locals to struggle along with the remaining population.

6. The Warlord, once kind and benevolent, has been placed under a spell. Most people don't agree with this opinion though.

7. Monsters roam these hills, keeping the populace from leaving the area.

8. Every family in the area has had at least one person taken to work in the Warlord's castle.

9. The only one who never seems to suffer from the raids is Asari, the town merchant. He always gets in a huge shipment of goods a few weeks after the raids. He then charges the farmers exorbitant amounts for the things they need. Because of this, many families are in debt to the merchant and are unable to leave the area until they have paid back what they owe.

10. The location of the Warlord's castle is well known, but no one dares to go up there. No one who has ever attempted the climb has ever returned.

11. No member of the Warlord's family has been seen for some time. The Warlord himself is never seen except when he leads one of the raids. Even then he wears a mask so that no one has seen his face.

12. The Warlord's real name, spoken only in whispers, is Mutsu-no-Kami Tanomo Eagu.

13. Tatsuo, the innkeeper, is relatively new to this province. He may



Tatsuo

soon have to move on if things do not improve or if business does not get better.

14. A number of strange plants have begun growing in the area, interfering with some of the crops.

GM Note: All the above information is true to some degree. The Gamemaster should not give all the information out at once. Instead, force the player-characters to interview a good number of local peasants, or they might simply listen in on other conversations, so that the information comes from many different conversations with the locals. Additionally, the Gamemaster might wish to only give out any of this information in response to direct questions from the members of the party.

Additional Background

The Inn of Wandering Days is a simple establishment on the road to the village of Tanomo in Mutsu Province. It is run by Tatsuo, who is relatively new in the area, having been here less than two full years. He inherited the place from a great uncle. The local populace like and respect Tatsuo. He has shown that he can be trusted and will help with a problem when he can.

Unknown to anyone in the village, Tatsuo is actually a 4th Level Yakuza who has been sent here by a benevolent master to investigate what is happening in the province. At Tatsuo's word, a force of over fifty Yakuza soldiers will arrive in Tanomo within two days. He makes frequent reports to his lord, through messengers or by the use of trained birds. However, as of yet, he has been unable to find out what is behind the Warlord's raids.

Examining the Inn itself will be a fruitless endeavor. There is no treasure or anything of remarkable value here. The only thing that appears at all as if it might be worth something is an ivory pot. The pot is very small and holds only water. This pot is kept on a high shelf behind the bar. It is very ornate and looks almost out of place in these simple surroundings. It has great sentimental value to Tatsuo, who will kill to get it back if it is stolen. Other than that, it is really not worth much at all. GM Note: The water in this pot is actually from the shrine outside of town. Tatsuo will admit as to the water's origin if asked.

Having discovered whatever information they can at the inn, the player-characters may wish to explore further in the village. The next section provides information into the background of the village and this area.

Should the player-characters decide they've had enough and simply want to go to sleep, the Gamemaster should move on to the appropriate section of this adventure.

THE TOWN

Tanomo, a small E level village, was once a bustling D level city. But due to the recent changes in the economic balance of the region instituted by the Warlord, the area has deteriorated. Many farms and buildings have been left vacant as families have been forced to make their way to other parts of Nippon. Of course, some families were not so lucky. These people have had their homes and family members destroyed during the raids or by other attacks over the past three years. The abandoned buildings and fields are badly deteriorating and many buildings have simply collapsed.

For every family that has left, by one method or another, there are others still trapped in Tanomo, whether through fear, ignorance, or poverty. Many are afraid of what might happen to them out in the world. No help seems to be forthcoming from the outside either. The Warlord's men have often made threats as to what would happen to members of the remaining families if outside authorities were to be brought in.

Even with all of its setbacks, Tanomo is still a very active village. Life here, while especially hard during the winter and immediately after the raids, is not all destitution and hardship. The living is good enough most of the year. People run their own businesses and farms, leading productive lives. Some strong families still abide in the area, too proud to leave their ancestral homes, confident that the Kami will see to the

Warlord when the time is right.

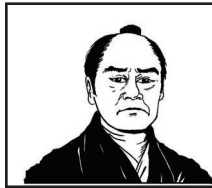
There are not many areas in the village that may prove interesting to a party of adventurers in Tanomo. However, there are plenty of buildings and places that the Gamemaster can use to enhance this village for the players. Primary areas of interest include:

1. The Inn of Wandering Days – the Gamemaster can see the information provided about this establishment in the previous section.

2. The Armory – Long since closed after having been determined as worthless in the battle against the Warlord, the Armory is a storehouse of finished and half-finished weaponry. There are tools, a forge, and an anvil here to allow for metalwork and other types of construction. Though none of the equipment here has been used for some time, there is a sixty percent chance that the player-characters will be able to find any sort of weapon they may desire. Of course, these weapons will all be of the normal variety and none will be enchanted. There is also a seventy-five percent chance that the characters can use the equipment present in the armory to create or repair any weapons they might need.

3. The Honored Blossom – This is a Merchant's Shop, or store, run by Tomaji Asari, a longtime leader in the village. The most important thing to know in dealing with Asari is that, above all else, he is a businessman.

Asari seems very loyal to the village and is always willing to help his fellows with extra goods or with extended credit. Money though will be behind his every thought. Asari will graciously and sympathetically listen to pleas, but he will refuse to allow anyone to be released from a debt or to leave the province until he has been paid off.



Paying back a debt, however, is almost impossible since the Warlord takes a hefty percentage of everything, while Asari continues to add interest charges to his loans. These charges are nothing exorbitant, but they are certainly enough to keep an honest farmer from ever paying them off. Though many find Asari an unsavory character to deal with, they do so out of necessity. Asari's uncle was once mayor of this village, so he tends to give himself an air of respectability to which he really isn't entitled.

While on the surface he appears to be genuinely concerned about Tanomo and its people, Asari is actually hiding a dark secret. For the past several years he has been working as an agent for a man known as Yamasatsu, who claims to be the Warlord's Shugenja. Asari is one of the very few people who know what is really going on in the province and up at the castle.

Asari has a deal going with the Shugenja where, under the disguise of a caravan carrying one of his orders for merchandise, Asari receives goods and grain. Actually, though, these products come from the Warlord's castle and are really an unused portion of the very produce that were taken from the village in the raids. Asari then turns around and sells these same things back to the farmers and peasants, splitting the revenue with Yamasatsu. The next shipment is due in about eight days.

Should this information ever be discovered, the villagers would quickly grab Asari and kill him.

Tatsuo suspects what may be going on, but he cannot prove anything as of yet. The innkeeper has even gone so far as to use a disguise in order to attack one of Asari's caravans. But this caravan proved to be legitimate (which it actually was) and gave Tatsuo no evidence. However, this attack on a caravan did help to further support the fear and stories of the local peasants.

That night, should the player-characters decide to take to the streets of Tanomo in order to do more checking, there will be a twenty percent chance per hour that the characters will discover Roki (from the inn) skulking about at one window or another. Should Roki see the player-characters, he will quickly duck into the shadows and make his way toward Asari's shop.

Inside the shop, Asari will be going over his records. He will be most

irate at Roki's carelessness. If Asari is captured or his true business is discovered, he will attempt to commit an unceremonious seppuku rather than face the wrath of the villagers or the Shugenja. Roki, on the other hand, will confess everything, until he gets an opening to attack the player-characters (see the Encounter in the following section).

Sleeping at the Inn

When the player-characters decide to finally retire for the night, Tatsuo (the innkeeper) will show them to two simple rooms at the rear of the inn. Some of the characters may be forced to share these rooms. These accommodations will be simple sleeping quarters, outfitted with only the bare essentials. They will, however, be very clean and the best that Tatsuo has to offer.

Sleep will come easily once the player-characters have made their preparations and take to their beds. Later that night, a shadowy round figure will quietly float about, making its way towards the guest rooms where the player-characters are sleeping. The floating figure will attempt to locate the room where the smallest number of player-characters, or the weakest looking of the characters, are currently sleeping.

If a guard has been placed on watch by the party, he will be most surprised by a face coming towards him. At first, the guard may assume that this face is that of a ninja or some other person dressed in dark clothing. The guard may, if someone noticed this person in the common room earlier, recognize the face as that of the sleeping villager, Roki. Should the guard attempt to speak with or approach the face, the head will swoop in to attack the guard. Another pair of floating heads will then jump out of the shadows to join in the attack. These heads are actually those of some Rokuro-kubi.

If there is no guard posted by the party, the heads will move on to attack the weakest group of sleeping player-characters. The other player-characters should quickly be roused from sleep by any screams or sounds of a great struggle going on in the next room. The Ronin and Tatsuo, if they are present in the inn at this time, will quickly come to the aid of the player-characters, once they are aware of the problem.

Confronting Tatsuo, the innkeeper, as to any hand he may have had in dealing with these creatures will quickly bring protests of his innocence or of his having any knowledge of the Rokuro-kubi. He will remember that Roki had been speaking with one of the town merchants earlier that evening and that was the last time Tatsuo had seen Roki. Tatsuo, in a show of consummate acting skills, will then beg for mercy and begin sobbing that this was just another terrible evil brought upon Tanomo and its people by the Warlord.

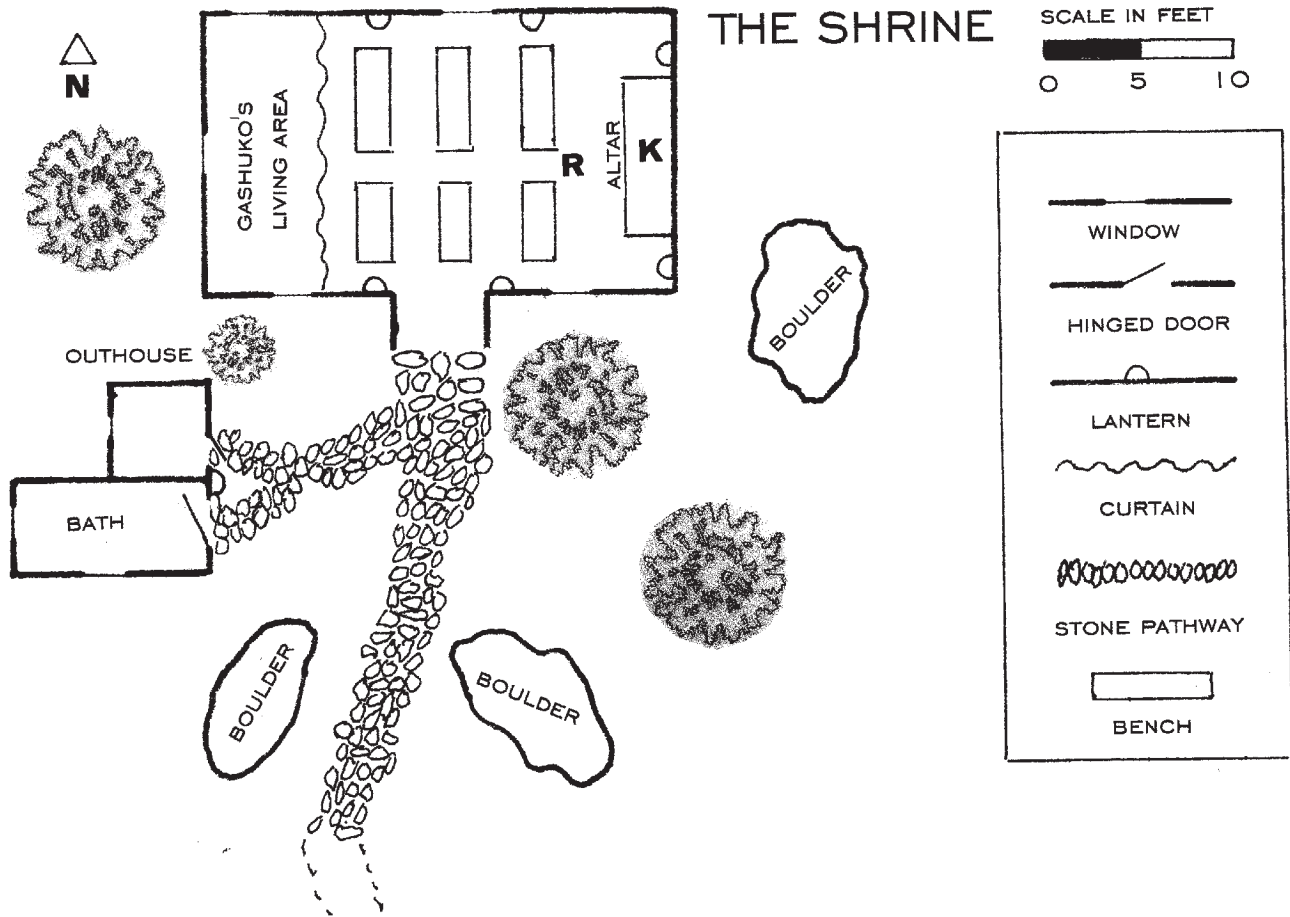
At the Shrine

The following outlines the Shrine and the Ronin who had arrived at the Inn shortly before the player-characters' own arrival. This provides information should the party wish to determine the role of the Ronin or simply wish to explore the nearest Shrine to Tanomo.

A short distance back in the low-lying hills above the village of Tanomo is a Shrine (Class E) dedicated to the Kami to ensure the growth of the crops and a good harvest. The player-characters must climb a short set of rocky steps to get to where the shrine is nestled in a vale. Turning around, they will be treated to this vantage point's excellent view of the farmlands below.

The pathway to the shrine has been swept clear of all debris and the bushes lining the trail have been trimmed back. The shrine itself is fairly simple. But what it lacks in lavishness or pomp is made up with simple cleanliness. The shrine is obviously well tended.

There are a number of simple benches inside the shrine. The interior of the small building is shadowy, as it is illuminated by only a few lanterns set along the walls. At the eastern end of the shrine stands a carved wooden figure, which is meant to be a representation of the Kami (letter "K" on the Shrine map). It stands on a small altar. Also on the altar is a small bowl filled with fruit, set before the idol as an



offering. Just below the altar, a small pool of water has formed in a natural bowl-like formation in the rock. There are four glass bulbs near the pool. Each of these bulbs has a simple cork stopper in a hole at the top.

Kneeling before the altar is the young Ronin (letter "R" on the Shrine map), deep in prayer. He is bent low over an ordinary kama, which he has obviously asked the gods to bless. He will be quietly chanting over the tool when the player-characters enter.

The Ronin will react violently to anyone touching him or otherwise disturbing his meditations. He will swiftly adopt a defensive position, with the kama at the ready. Once his mood of prayer is broken, he will be angry and not want to listen to anything the player-characters might have to say. The Ronin will not even accept their help against the Warlord, should they offer it. He will simply warn them only once to

leave this shrine and to never cross his path again.

However, should the player-characters reverently take a bench at the rear of the shrine and wait for the young warrior to finish his prayers, the Ronin will be most appreciative of their courtesy. He will then gladly sit down to speak with the party, sharing as much knowledge as he can. One of the pleasantries the Ronin will offer is that the player-characters should try a sip of the pool's water. He will claim it is delicious and that the water has restorative powers. The water is in fact cold and sweet, but does not normally have restorative powers. The Gamemaster may choose to give this blessed water the properties of a low level healing spell.

As an old 2nd Level Gakusho silently serves tea from a cracked pot, the Ronin will relate the following story:



THE RONIN'S PIECE OF THE TALE

Three years ago, a young boy worked at the harvest in the fields, alongside his family and the rest of the village. The crops were bountiful and the harvest had been going on for almost a week. No one gave any thought to defense since the people had always happily coexisted with the Warlord. But that would soon change.

One bright morning, the tranquility of the singing voices of the men as they gathered in the crops was broken by the thundering hoofbeats of a descending army. The Warlord's men had come to take their yearly toll of the village's meager wealth. But where in the past the village had given up a share of the harvest and been rightly compensated by the Daimyo, this particular year a new army of vicious thugs stormed in.

These fierce warriors on their massive steeds rode through the village like the wind, pillaging and raping as they pleased. The people tried to run and hide, but it was no use. The newly appointed Warlord had visited this village many times and knew to where people would run. The Warlord's men set fire to the fields and the houses, ferreting out the hidden populace like frightened mice.

As their village burned around them, the terrified villagers were brought before the Warlord. First, some of the men were chosen from the pack to be slaves at hard labor for the lord. Then, majestically, the Warlord singled out a few of the younger women from the group. These women would be taken away to serve in his court as playthings for his troops.

Then a certain young woman was chosen. She was a beautiful, kind young widow, who had only recently brought her son to live with her

father in Tanomo. Her small son broke the grip of fear that held the entire village and attacked the armored soldiers. The boy was smacked savagely to the ground. Bleeding, he jumped up again to defend his mother, but was held back by his grandfather. The old man quickly whispered in the boy's hot ears that violence now was not the way to handle such men.

Though members of an old and respected Samurai family, the grandfather and his family had fallen into poverty and were forced to live at an almost subsistence level with the local farmers. The old and frail head of the family could barely stand unaided and had learned to accept his new status fatalistically. The death of his son-in-law in a border skirmish forced his daughter and grandchildren into this same proud poverty.

The Warlord's warriors then mounted up to leave the village. They dragged their new captives along behind them as they rode off through the billowing smoke with sneering laughter, leaving a tear-stained young face staring after them.

That very night, the boy left his grandfather's house and ran away into the darkness. He vowed to never stop running until he could return strong enough to regain his family and his lost honor from the Warlord.

Now that boy is back, and he knows what the answer is for such men.

"I am that boy," the Ronin concludes. "My name is Genji Tiomoki"

Genji has no plans for his attack on the castle, hoping that the Kami will see the justice in his cause and be with him. He expects to simply

ride out to the castle the following day in order to challenge the Warlord to a duel. His greatest hope is that he will be able to use the kama, the ordinary tool of these victimized farmer peasants, to behead this evil man.

Genji's only shame is that he had hoped to arrive in Tanomo a few days earlier, in time to stop the latest raid. Unfortunately, he had been detained along the way and arrived too late to help the village or to rescue his youngest sister who has been taken in the raid. He will, however, make certain that these raids never happen again as he vows to rescue his sister.

Having overheard the story, the old Gakusho steps forward to give a package to the young Ronin as the party begins to depart the shrine. In the package is an ancient flask, now filled with sparkling water that had come from the pool beneath the Kami statue following the recent rains. Though he has no idea what it means, the Gakusho says that he had a vision compelling him to give this gift to the Ronin. If any of the



player-characters wishes to do so, the Gashuko will allow them to fill any vessel or one of the glass bulbs with water from the pool. The Gakusho then blesses the entire party and wishes them luck in the ordeal they are about to undergo.

The Ronin Genji and the player-characters should thank the old man and take their leave of the shrine. Genji will then return with the player-characters to the inn so that they may all discuss their options and get some rest before the morrow's trip to the castle. If the player-characters are very cramped in the two guest rooms of the inn, Genji will offer to share his own smaller room with some of them.

When the party goes to sleep, the Gamemaster should refer to the section on "Sleeping at the Inn."

THE CONFLICT OF THE TALE

Early the next morning, the party will arise to accompany Genji on the journey to face the Warlord. Most of the villagers will still be asleep as the members of the party prepare their mounts. If the player-characters had no mounts of their own when they arrived in the village, Tatsuo will gladly bargain a price for them to borrow some of his work horses.

Only a pitiful few animals and livestock will be out, roaming the streets in search of scraps. As the party rides off into the morning, one of them might notice Tatsuo standing in the doorway of the inn, watching them leave.

The roadway to the Warlord's castle is well-traveled and in good shape for approximately five miles, which is as long as it travels along the now harvested (or burned) fields. The party traveling along the road in this direction will be a strange sight to the few locals who are already at work tending to the fields. The farmers will stand and look as the player-characters pass by, but they will say nothing, offering no assistance or encouragement.

The road itself runs from Tanomo village directly to the base of the hills. Once here, however, the road forks off in two directions. To the north is obviously the road most traveled. This route stretches all the way around the hills and will lead directly to the front of the Warlord's castle. While it is the much smoother route, it is also the much longer and most direct one.

The other route from the fork runs into the hills eastward and it is little more than a broken and rocky path. It winds through the hills for a few miles until it breaks down altogether. No mounts or wagons will be able to continue on past this point since the path is too narrow and too steep. From here it is all uphill.

GM Note: The Gamemaster might wish to give the players information about these two routes before they actually arrive at the fork in the road. This information may have come from any villagers at the inn, from Tatsuo, or from Genji himself. On the other hand, the Gamemaster may simply describe this fork in the road and leave the player-characters to their own devices.

Going by the northern route, the party will find the road well-tended and wide enough for them to ride two abreast. Somewhere along this route, a small patrol of six heavily-armed riders will approach the party. This patrol obviously belongs to the Warlord's forces. These men are little more than glorified Sumotori, not at all like the proud Samurai that once wore the Warlord's uniform.

The patrol will challenge any strangers who are on the roadway. The patrol will take up offensive positions so as to form a ring around the party. The player-characters will then be ordered to accompany the

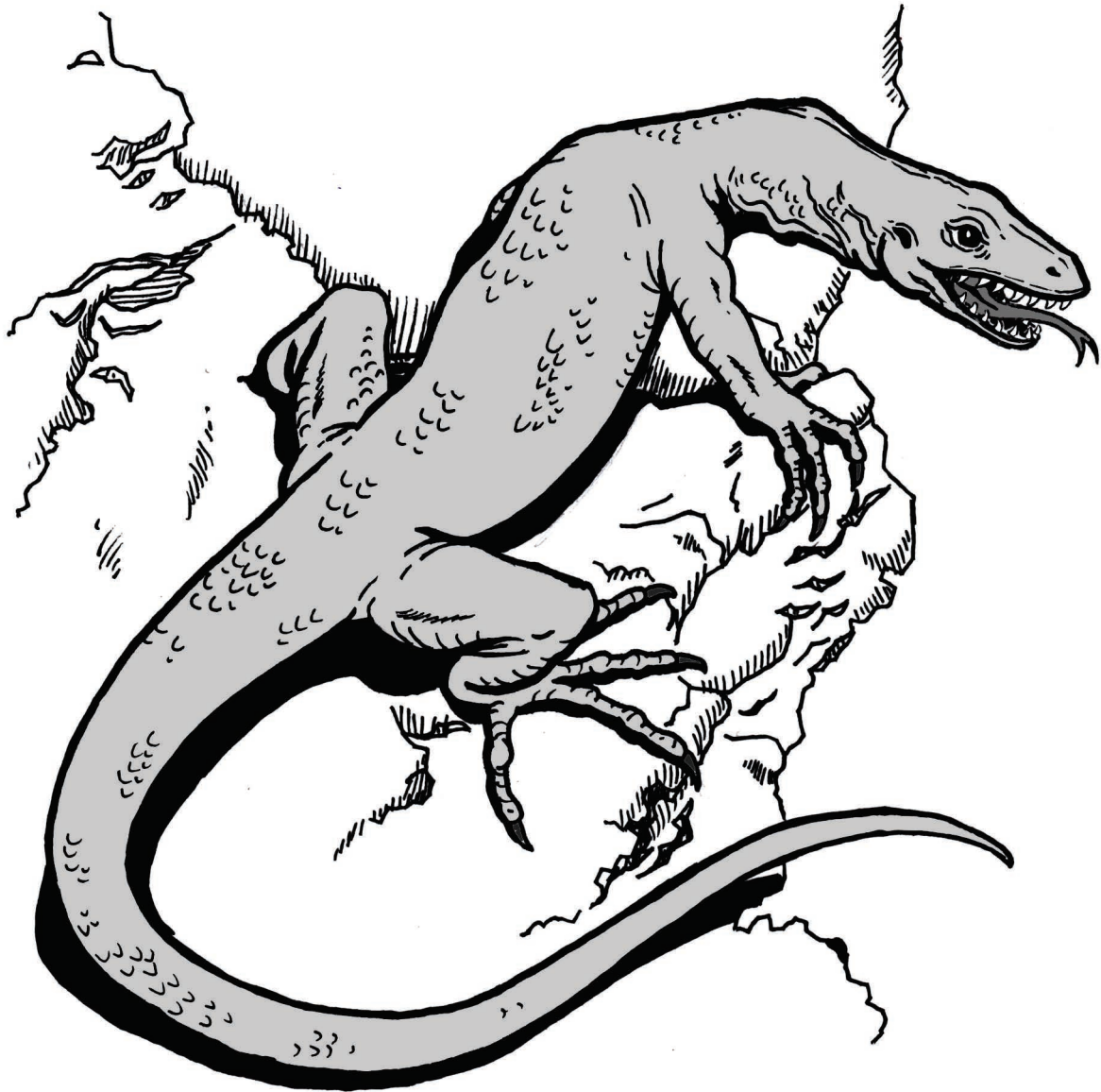
patrol, as all strangers must be taken before the Warlord and his Shugenja. The party will be ordered to throw down all weapons. If this order is complied with, the party will be escorted directly to the throne room of the castle.



The player-characters may, of course, choose to offer some resistance to the Sumotori's suggestions. Should they be successful in such opposition and overcome the soldiers of the patrol, the characters may then continue on to the castle themselves, without escort.

GM Note: The player-characters may decide to take the uniforms and weapons of any defeated patrols. This should be allowed. Also, if you feel that the patrol is not enough of a challenge for the player-character party, either add more soldiers to it or consult the Roadside Encounter Table.

Should the party choose to follow the eastward path, they will pass between two huge boulders that block the main road from sight. They will now be on a rocky and rough pathway. There are many loose rocks about. Passing over this broken terrain, there is a fifty percent chance that each mount may stumble and fall. This percentage increases if a mount is carrying more than one rider (15% increase) or an inordinately heavy amount of supplies (25% increase). The player-characters must exercise caution to ensure safe-going.



As the party is about to round a particularly sharp curve approaching the base of the castle, they will hear a loud shuffling noise coming from somewhere around them. The noise will be bounced around and echoed by the stone peaks around them, making it difficult to determine from which direction the sounds are coming. Actually, the sounds come from a cave directly around the curve. The large cave is the home of a Yamatokage.

Though none of the player-characters should get close enough to measure the lizard, it appears to be a little over twenty-one feet long. Its ferocity should make the party think twice about tangling with this monster. What the party will not know at first is that the Yamatokage has a long, steel chain attached to a steel collar around its neck. This collar is holding the creature to the wall of the cave along the left wall of the pass through the steep hills. The chain stretches far enough to allow the monster to effectively block the entire pathway. However, the lizard will move out of the way for anyone wearing clothing showing the Warlord's mon (such as the uniform of the Warlord's guards and soldiers).

Thus, if the party first encountered the Warlord's patrol and defeated

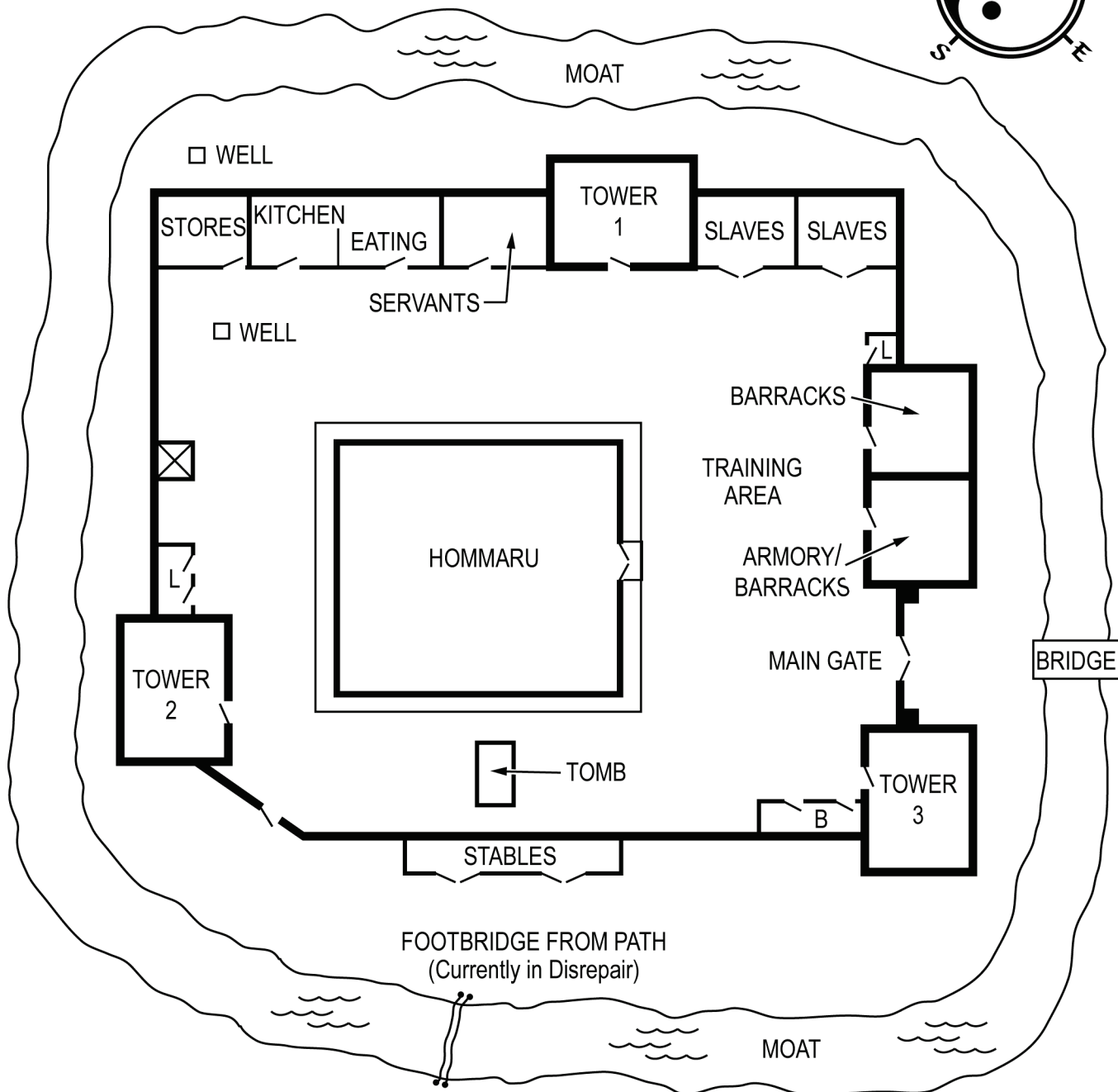
them, they might have taken the uniforms of those soldiers as a disguise for their approach to the castle. This would allow them to safely pass the Yamatokage and continue on the pathway to the castle.

THE CASTLE OF MUTSU-NO-KAMI TANOMO EAGU

The Warlord's castle is situated atop one of the highest peaks in the area. There is a magnificent view of the valley below from this point, and the main road can be seen clearly for quite a distance. There is one stone outer wall and two moats protecting the hommaru, or Warlord's house, from any outside attack.

A wide double-gate of dark wood is set within the stone wall, allowing access to the roadway for carts and wagons. A smaller doorway has been cut into one of the big gates to allow individuals an egress without having to open the large gates fully. There is also a secondary servants' entrance, no longer in use, on the far side of the compound. There are three tower donjons located about the castle. These are used as strategic overlooks in case of attack.

THE CASTLE OF MUTSU-NO-KAMI TANOMO EAGU



Map Key:

— Hinged Door/Gate

☒ Confinement Box

L Latrine/Toilet

B Baths

■ Lantern Tower

0 50

Scale in Yards

All troops present at the castle are Sumotori and Brigands in the service of the Shugenja, Mekei Yamasatsu. Though the local populace might believe that there are upwards of one hundred soldiers at the castle, the truth is that there are no more than twenty-five, including the six men out on patrol on the roadway. There will be five members of an advanced rank, while the others will all be Level 1 Bushi.

It is important to note that these men are in the service of the Shugenja, not the Warlord. In no manner do they resemble the proud Samurai troops that the Daimyo commanded in the past. Those men have long since left, allowing the Shugenja to hire thugs by promising them a share in the wealth of the province.

Important areas in the compound are:

1. The Barracks of the Guards – A large building where all of the soldiers maintain their living quarters. There are two of these buildings, allowing for a good amount of space for each man as these rooms were originally constructed to house a far larger (and more honorable) force. The ground floor of the barracks building closest to the main gate is the castle's armory and one guard will always be on duty at the entrance to this building.

2. The Kitchen – The main feeding hall and preparation area for food. The kitchen itself has a small cook area and a number of old, rusty or broken utensils. The cooking is all done by an overseer and slaves. The food is neither particularly fresh nor particularly good. The eating area consists of a number of benches and tables. Since the men often engage in fights and arguments while eating, this area is not very clean, despite the best efforts of the overseer and slaves. The kitchen is also responsible for the feeding of prisoners. The slaves who work here in the kitchen try to save the better food to share with their fellows.

3. Slave Quarters – This is not much better than a pit. It is the old stables (from the time when the Daimyo had legitimate retainers and troops) converted for the storage of captives taken in the annual raids. There are chains along the walls to handle those prisoners who may get too wild. Most often though, the prisoners are simply herded in and left to make their own decisions in the building. Though the slaves have tried to keep this area clean, it is overrun with dirt, garbage, and excrement. Both men and women are kept here.

4. Confinement Box – This is an actual pit, dug into the ground near the latrines. It is reserved for those prisoners who are difficult or who simply can't follow orders. The pit is filled with mud, worms, garbage from the kitchen and from the latrine, and anything else the guards feel like adding. When someone is in it, the pit is covered by a heavy sheet of metal.

5. Tower 1 – "The Geisha House" – The small barracks area, nicknamed by the guards, is where some of the better-looking female captives are kept. These women are totally at the mercy of the soldiers who often visit here. There are ten to twelve women kept here at any one time.

6. Tower 2 – The lower level was formerly the residence of the Commander of the Daimyo's troops. The levels above are part of the castle's fortifications.

7. Tower 3 – The lower levels of this tower are the Guest House for the Daimyo's important guests. The upper levels are part of the castle's fortifications.

8. Training Area – An open part of the yard where the soldiers can train, drill and work out. The men practice with all sorts of weaponry. These exercises include hand-to-hand combat and assaults from horseback.

9. Toilets – Small privy rooms which the captives try to keep clean, but which the soldiers leave dirty.

10. Armory – A large work/storage area manned by one soldier and one slave. All weapons are stored here when not in use. Armor of any thickness can be made on the forge, as well as different types of weapons. Though none of the soldiers is sure of what to do with the black grain/powder found here, there are two barrels of this gunpowder stored here. The armory is in the lower level of the Barracks building.

11. Large Bath – A bath area once used by the Daimyo's guests, as

well as the household staff. This area is now reserved solely for the soldiers. (Of course, slaves try to get assigned here to refill the baths with fresh water after the soldiers have bathed in hopes of having an opportunity to bathe after the soldiers.)

12. House Servant Quarters – Four captives, who comprise the entire staff used to work inside the Warlord's home (the hommaru), are kept here. They are treated much better than any of the other captives/slaves, so that the Warlord does not realize what is happening to his people. These servants are kept clean and decently fed.

13. Stable – A dozen horses are kept here. These are the soldiers' mounts. No soldier, excluding the Warlord of course, has his own mount. All must be shared between the men. These stables were quickly and shoddily constructed to replace the stables inside the castle (now used for prisoners and slaves).

14. Tomb – No one is allowed in here as entrance has been forbidden by both the Warlord and by the Shugenja. If anyone is caught disturbing this tomb, they are to be immediately put to death.

Inside, on a low slab, lie two female bodies. They are the wife and the daughter of the Warlord. The Shugenja is keeping them preserved in the hopes of bringing them back to life.

THE HOMMARU

This central structure is the keep and the actual quarters of the Warlord and the Shugenja.

1. Entryway – The main entrance into the Warlord's home is reserved for the soldiers or the august personages of the Warlord and the Shugenja. Guests entering the castle leave their footwear near the door, to the right. Guests carrying weapons are expected to check their weapons at the small weapons check-in to the left.

2. Receiving Area – Where the Warlord, or other members of his staff, once greeted guests and visiting dignitaries. None of the facilities of this house have been used for entertaining guests for quite some time. Once the Daimyo reverted to Warlord status and began his raids, his popularity, as well as his desire to see outsiders, waned. Visitors, especially those of honored status, are now very few and far between.

3. Meeting Rooms – Once the guest rooms of this castle. This is where the Daimyo would meet with his guests to discuss business or scholarly pursuits. Though meals were once served in these lavish rooms, such dinners haven't been served in some time. Many of the more elaborate items of finery (rugs, curtains, tapestries, etc.) have faded and dust lies over everything.

4. Kitchen – Now run by only one slave, this area once boasted the ability to serve the finest meals in the province and rivaled the finest dishes served anywhere in Nippon. The slave takes great pains not to anger the Shugenja, who he knows is the real master of this house. He takes great pains to keep this room very clean. The slave's cooking is not great, but he does the best he can.

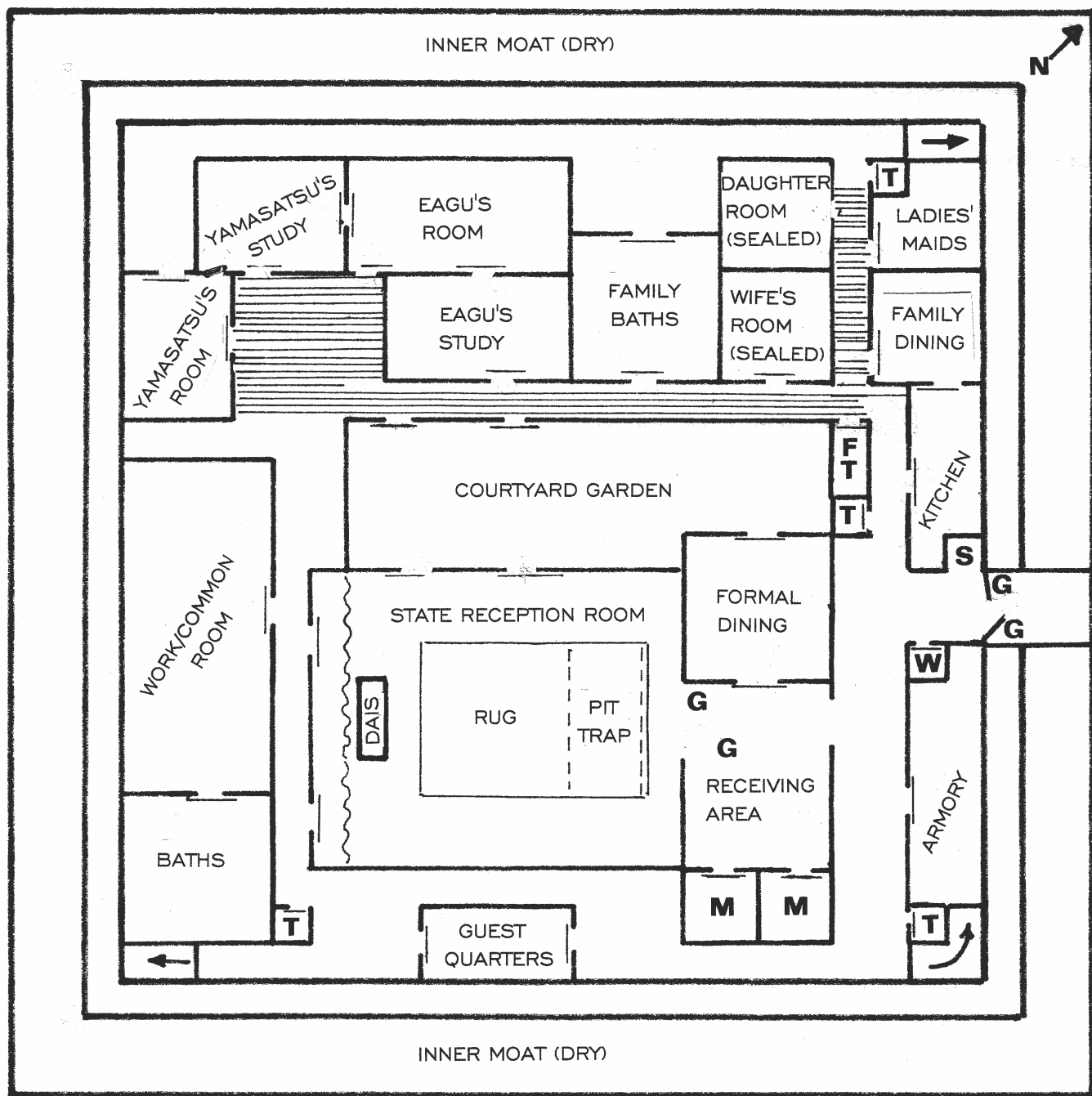
5. Work/Common Room – A large, open work area that was also used, at various times, as a training room for the Warlord's children or as a central banquet hall when affairs of state required that. At night, this room, as well as the meeting room in #3, can be easily converted into sleeping quarters for guests staying overnight.

6. Family Bath Area – A private and lavish washing/bathing area once used by the Warlord and his family. Houseguests and hommeru staff, including officials like his chamberlain, have a separate bath area near the work/common room.

7. Toilets – A bit more lavish than those in use by the soldiers as these are intended for the noble family of the Warlord and his important guests.

8. Warlord's Bed Chamber – This is still Eagu's main bed chamber. However, he does not spend all that much time here. If anyone should ever come looking for him, Eagu can usually be found in the state reception room or in his study. This bed chamber is simply furnished. The only things that might be of any interest are a pair of No-dachi swords hanging on one wall.

9. Warlord's Study – This is a solitary area that Eagu still thinks of with great fondness. It is his private library and contains some of the



FORTIFIED WALL



STAIRWAY

INTERIOR WALL

SLIDING DOOR

HINGED DOOR/GATE

NIGHTINGALE FLOOR

SECRET DOOR

CURTAIN

0 10 20 30 40 50



SCALE IN FEET

G = GUARD

T = TOILET/LATRINE

FT = FAMILY TOILET

S = SHOES/FOOTWEAR

W = WEAPON CHECK-IN

M = MEETING ROOM

THE HOMMARU
(DAIMYO'S MAIN HOUSE)

greatest writings in all of Nippon. Literature was once a great passion of Eagu's, even though he was never very good in composing writings of his own. Hanging on one wall in this room is a very expensive picture painted on rice paper. A small jar sits on the central table; inside of it are two idols of pure jade, carved with the finest craftsmanship.

10. Sealed Rooms – These were once the private chambers of the Warlord's wife and his daughter. They have been kept sealed since the pair passed away nine years ago. Only the Warlord occasionally enters these rooms. He would instantly snap out of his depressed reverie and kill anyone he saw entering these rooms. Inside, everything from the comb on his daughter's floor to the jewelry on his wife's table has been left intact and in place. Though nothing magical will be found here, nor any weapons, the Gamemaster should feel free to put in a few things that might appeal to the players.

11. Yamasatsu's Room – This private chamber has been given over for use by the Shugenja. This evil wizard has wormed his way into the

Warlord's house and has been here for nine years. His room is fashioned with all sorts of totems and magical idols/images. Books and scrolls of spells are scattered across his table. A skull sits to one side, next to some stuffed animals (real, not toys). No one, not even the Warlord or any of the soldiers, dares to enter this room.

12. Yamasatsu's Workroom – This is the area where the Shugenja carries out his experiments. Occasionally, the screams of some captive will echo through the hallways from this room.

Smoke and strange odors often issue from here, though no one questions what may be going on. Once in a great while, the Shugenja will have some soldiers bring one or both of the bodies from the Tomb, so that he can experiment on them. Should the player-characters make their way into this room, a young boy will be strapped into a chair. The boy has numerous cuts and bruises all over his body. He is dead, presumably from loss of blood, some of which has been drained into a bowl beneath the chair.

THE END OF THE TALE

GM NOTE: It is hoped that Genji, the Ronin, has been with the group for most of the adventure. At the least, he will have heard the player-characters getting ready in the early morn. He will ask where they are going. If he finds out that the group is going to face the Warlord, he will immediately attempt to join them. If the Ronin has not joined the group on the way here, he will either step out of the rocks as the group is about to approach the gates to the castle.

Once the party gains entry to the Hommaru part of the castle (provided, of course, they do), they will most likely attempt to seek out the Warlord. Any slaves they may come across will gladly tell the player-characters where they believe the Warlord might be found. Soldiers the party might meet will be a little harder to convince to provide such

information. At this time, there are approximately fifty slaves in various parts of the house and the castle compound. The Gamemaster should determine who these slaves are (just the barest background and sex/gender is necessary) and where they can be found.

Two guards will be stationed at all appropriate points throughout the castle. The Gamemaster should consult the maps.

The ornate doorway to the State Reception Room is certainly one of the points where two soldiers would be posted as guards. The party can either be escorted past the guards into the State Reception Room by members of the patrol, or else they will have to fight their way in. Escorted prisoners should have no weapons. There is a thirty percent chance that any guard will question prisoners who have somehow retained possession of their weapons. The patrol/escort will show the prisoners just inside the doors to the State Reception Room. The escorts will then exit, slamming the doors behind them.

Inside, the State Reception Room appears more like a long, shadowy hallway than a lavish room. Light filters in through small windows set high in the walls. A garden can be seen off to one side. Though it might once have been beautiful and well-tended, this garden has become overgrown and unkempt.

At the opposite end of the room from the party, an ancient warrior sits on a dusty, worn dais. He is obviously the Warlord, though nowhere near the picture of health and vitality the characters might have expected. From where the party first enter the room, they can see that the Daimyo has his eyes open and is staring at them. His chest rises with shallow breaths. He will neither move nor say anything to the characters.

Unless he is forcefully restrained, the Ronin will move forward to attack the aged figure. Genji will care nothing that the Warlord appears withered and enfeebled. Genji will only want to behead this evil man who has brought such pain and suffering to his people.

In the center of the room, beneath a still beautiful and richly colored rug, is a set of trap doors. When the majority of the party is on this rug, either standing or moving across it, the two trap doors will swing open, causing the characters to fall twenty feet into a pit. The edge of the rug will hang down into the pit, even though it is securely fastened to the floor. No movement or response will be visible from the Warlord on the dais, so he could not have sprung this trap in any manner. The trap is simply a holding room where, other than any injuries taken from the fall itself, the characters will be unharmed. The Gamemaster may, if he feels the player-characters have moved too quickly, line the bottom of this trap with bamboo stakes or other nasty things. At an appropriate moment, either when the party is trapped in the pit or just before they





are about to reach the Warlord's dais, they will be attacked by a Metal Storm spell. The spell will be of sufficient power to either fill the pit or bar the way to the Warlord.

Mocking laughter will be heard above the roar of the whistling blades. A strange, squat figure will step out of the shadows near the dais. Evil exudes from this man as he glares down at the party members, a maniacal gleam in his eyes. Though none of the party will know who this man is, his attire will make it quickly obvious that he is a Shugenja. The storm of blades will last for three to five full minutes, with all characters likely taking some damage.

Once he has the party at bay and the storm abates, the squat figure's laughter will drop to a low snicker. Without seeming to walk, he will move closer. With a leer, the Shugenja will quietly and succinctly begin boasting to the party.

THE SHUGENJA'S PART OF THE TALE

"Ha, More fools coming to save their pitiful little village. When will you simple little worms learn that death is all that awaits you here?"

"Is that fear I see on your miserable faces? Or is it surprise? You fools expected your precious Daimyo to be here, strong and strutting about like some rooster. But instead you find him to be a dried up, shriveled husk. Interesting, no?"

"But allow me to introduce myself. I am Medei Yamasatsu, the new Daimyo of this province."

"Oh, don't bother to argue. I assure you this is true."

Yamasatsu will smugly put his hands behind his back and sneer at the party.

"Certainly, at one time, Eagu was a powerful man in this district, strong in body and respect."

But then, one day, almost four years ago, during a very violent storm, a ragged, battered Shugenja appeared at the doorway of this castle, seeking refuge from the torrential downpour of water that was eating holes in my poor skin. I was destitute and searching for some shelter from my curse"

"This kind Warlord took my wretched self in and gave me a bed. Slowly, thanks to this Lord's kindness, the poor wizard healed. His sores from the rain soon closed and he was well again." "I then stayed on with the Daimyo and quickly became a trusted friend. I was frequently consulted on the politics of this area. Within a year, the brave and daring Eagu was afraid to make any decision without the aid of his faithful Mekei."

With a rasping chuckle, the wizard turns to the still, unmoving figure on the throne.

"When the snows came again that next year, the Lord's most

precious jewels, his wife and his daughter became deathly ill. I tried to help, but alas, my powers were too frail, while the ice and snow were too strong. The two women quickly lapsed into death."

"With great pomp, the Daimyo mourned and made ready to release the two to the Kami. But, as they were about to be entombed, I ran to the Lord's side. Through exhaustive research and calling upon all of my sorcerous knowledge, I determined that there was one thing that could possibly turn back the hand of death and save the pair. It was only by some miraculous intervention of the gods, I assure you, that this one amazing thing happened to be the same item I had originally been searching for in these hills. The ways of the Kami are mysterious, are they not?"

"But what is this wonderful talisman, you ask. I will tell you. It was a Plume of the Celestial Crane."

"Ah, yes, I see the awe and respect creeping into your eyes," Yamasatsu says to his captive audience. "But wait, that is not all. For this was not just any plume I sought. It was the Golden Plume!"

"The one plume that would serve its master faithfully, never disappearing from my hand, giving me absolute power over the forces of the dead! Ah, to own this thing would truly make one supreme. A true Lord, greater than even the Emperor!"

Yamasatsu's laughter cuts eerily through the stillness of the room.

"But to find this plume, which I was sure lay hidden in these very hills, I needed workers to dig for it. I told this mighty leader who sits before you that I had to have that feather if he truly wanted his loved ones to return. Thus, I drove this once kind leader to the first of his raids."

"It was wondrous to see! This man, whom so many revered, lead

his Samurai down to pillage the surrounding countryside. And he soon returned with all the workers I had asked for, along with plenty of grain and food to feed them all."

"Then the first year passed and many workers died. I still had not found the plume, but the work had to continue. So, again, I told the Daimyo we needed more workers."

"By this time, however, he had lapsed into a deep depression, convinced that his deed had brought disgrace on his family. And so he refused when I requested he go for new workers. He had just returned from the tomb where the two bodies were housed and said that it was no use, that the dead were best left alone."

"Can you imagine? Thankfully, though, with some powders, potions, and my superior intellect, I was able to convince him to raid anew."

"Ever since then, he's been under my complete control. Honestly, though, in recent months, I've come to think that the Golden Plume is but a story and no matter how many workers I kill, they will never find it."

Yamasatsu sighs. "But now," he says with a sudden smile, "I have something much better. I have power. I am the power in this province! The Daimyo is but a mockery of a man that I use and control like a shadow puppet. And, I must admit, I have come to enjoy my reign. I think the mantle of authority sits well upon my shoulders, don't you?"

"So, you see, there is no way that I can have anyone questioning my power. Thus, of course, I cannot allow you to leave this castle alive."

With an insane grin, Yamasatsu begins preparing another spell to launch at the party.

GM Note: The Gamemaster should feel free to shorten or edit Yamasatsu's boasting as needed. These rants are purposely designed to run long enough to allow the player-characters time to gather themselves after being surprised (and probably wounded) by the Metal Storm. All these boastings should be used sparingly, as responses to conversation or to spur on conversation if the player-characters are at a loss for what to do. Yamasatsu will do some outright gloating, but should not give a long speech revealing everything all at once. Once the party recovers and probably attacks the Shugenja, the Gamemaster should read the Conclusion to determine the appropriate course of action once the combat is resolved.



IN CONCLUSION

Should Yamasatsu succeed in releasing his next spell, the player-characters will almost certainly be killed. Those that might be unfortunate enough to survive will be taken away and staked out in the courtyard training area as an example to the prisoners.

If the fates smile on the player-characters and the party begins to gain the upper hand, Yamasatsu will never retreat. He believes himself to be unstoppable. He will, however, call for guards to come to his aid if the player-characters get too close. The men from the road patrol (if they are still alive) and the guards stationed outside the door to the throne room will instantly rush in. They are aware of the trap in the floor so there is only a slight (five percent) chance that any of them will accidentally fall into it. More guards, three at a time, will arrive every 1d10 basic action phases, until the entire complement of twenty-five guards (including the six from the original road patrol) is accounted for.

Should Yamasatsu win, life will go on pretty much as it has been. The farmers will continue to be victimized while the Shugenja continues to grow ever more powerful. Eventually the situation may become so desperate that the Emperor will intercede, but that won't be for some time yet. When the Emperor finally does take action, it may be too late.

However, this situation is not as hopeless as it may appear. There are a number of ways that the party may stall for time or put a stop to

the wizard's schemes.

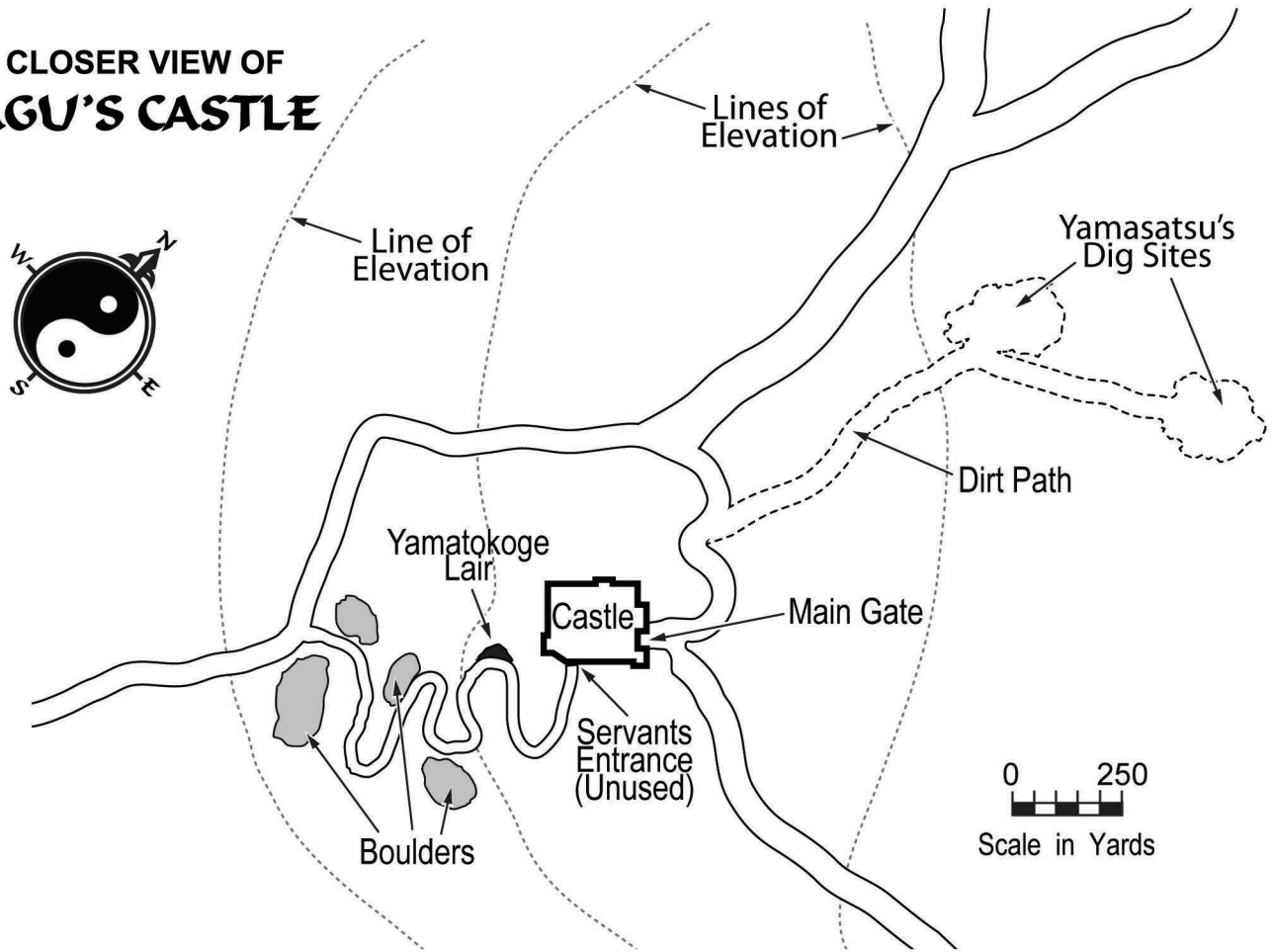
Yamasatsu is supremely arrogant. He will be in no hurry to kill the interlopers, preferring to toy with them for a while. He will also consider using them as slaves or as test subjects in his experiments. Yamasatsu will gladly answer any questions the player-characters may have about his plans. He loves to gloat and demonstrate how powerful he is.

The party may also have a secret weapon they can use against the Shugenja. It is the water given to them by either Tatsuo or the Gakusho at the Shrine. (Water from the Gakusho is, of course, preferred.) Water is also the solution to the riddle posed by the Sagi at the beginning of the tale. ("What causes some to grow will cause others to wither.")

By his own admission, Yamasatsu cannot stand being subjected to rain water. One can only imagine what would happen should he be doused with a quantity of blessed rain water. At the very least, his concentration will be destroyed, and his skin will begin to crack and bleed.

The Gamemaster should also take into account the large number of non-player characters available, which could influence the final outcome of the battle. The slaves may revolt, throwing off their chains and overpowering the guards. Tatsuo, Genji, or one of the player-characters, could raise a small army of villagers and lead them against the castle, a plan which has a better chance of success now that most

A CLOSER VIEW OF EAGU'S CASTLE



of the guards are busy in the State Reception Room. Any number of things could happen. The Gamemaster, however, should not turn this into an easy romp for the player-characters. He should only use these options where necessary and where logical.

A final card that could be played is the Warlord himself. With Yamasatsu's attention focused elsewhere, there is a ten percent chance that the Warlord (Eagu) could shake off his stupor and see what is really going on around him.

Will he help the party, remembering Yamasatsu's betrayal? Will he help the Shugenja, thinking the wizard is under attack from some brigands? Or, will he commit seppuku, searching for the rest he has been denied for so long? His actions are left to the Gamemaster, who should make this combat challenging, but perhaps not lethal, for the player-characters. In order for the party to be victorious, Yamasatsu must be killed or captured. Once the wizard's control is broken, the Warlord will awaken from his depressed stupor. Unfortunately, the years and the potions given him by the Shugenja will have taken a tremendous toll on him. He will be feeble and dying. Before he dies though, he will thank the player-characters, asking them to atone for his misdeeds by freeing all the prisoners and looking after the province. He will then leave his position and his castle to one of the party by adopting that character before passing away.

The GM should determine which character is most worthy of this

honor or which character will cause the most drama for the group if they are forced to accept this new role. Should the GM not wish to disturb the group, the honor could fall to Genji, the Ronin who came seeking justice. Genji will also seek to scour the castle in order to find his little sister who was taken in the last raid. Remember that Genji is heir to an old and honored name that would be known and recognized by the Emperor's own advisors.

AFTERWORD

In the campaign where this adventure was originally run, seven players started out, simply journeying through Mutsu Province. Of these, three were killed and one was permanently scarred.

The player-characters befriended the Ronin, after meeting him at the Shrine, and joined in his quest to free the province. The Ronin did manage to behead the Warlord while the player-characters were kept busy with the Shugenja, Yamasatsu. A last bit of assistance was given by Tatsuo, who had been following behind the player-characters. Thanks to him, the party never used the magical water in defeating the Shugenja. However, it is included here should the party have the opportunity to use it.

Entry into the Warlord's castle was gained after the party managed to overcome the road patrol. Donning the uniforms of the patrol, the player-characters were able to work their way inside the walls and into

the State Reception Room.

Unfortunately, before the assault on the castle took place, the boy, Akani, was accidentally killed on the roadside by one of the player-characters. Taking the body back to Tanomo, the party was forced to engage in battle with the enraged villagers. Finally, thanks to the intervention of Tatsuo, the locals ceased fighting and retired to privately express their grief. Also, though the Warlord was deposed, the merchant, Asari, was never exposed and he managed to leave the village with his ill-gotten loot.

When the adventure was finally concluded, and after a long period of traveling around to meet the major lords and clan leaders of the province, the Ronin became Daimyo in this area. The player-characters

are considered great warriors and are always welcome in the castle.

However, there is still the matter of Genji's sister, Misaki, who had been taken in the last raid. She was released after the fall of the Warlord. She did not know her brother had helped to defeat Yamasatsu and so took to the open road. Unbeknownst to the player-characters, she has been following them for quite some time. Perhaps the two siblings will reconcile in the future.

GM Note: The GM may wish to have the player-characters or Genji discover Misaki as they work through the castle after defeating Yamasatsu.

Also, Asari the merchant has sworn vengeance should the player-characters ever again cross his path.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following descriptions are only cursory glances of each of the main characters in the tale, along with the necessary statistics for these characters to function effectively in the scenario. Much more detailed background about each character is revealed throughout the tale. Again, the Gamemaster should read through the entire text in order to be familiar with the total picture.

AKANI

A young boy, anxious to join the adventurers so that he might leave the troubled province. He is ten years old and, with the assured wisdom of youth, looks on the rest of the village with contempt. He will offer to work for the party if they agree to take him along with them. Akani possesses no outstanding powers or abilities, weapons or armor. He is, after all, a child of a peasant farming family.



Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
6	5	8	10	4	7
DAM	BAP	MNA	ZAN	BMA	HPT
-1	2	1	1	3	10

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
3	5	5	6

Skills: None

Armor: Class 1, Regular Clothing

Weapons: Staff, though he does not know how to use it well.

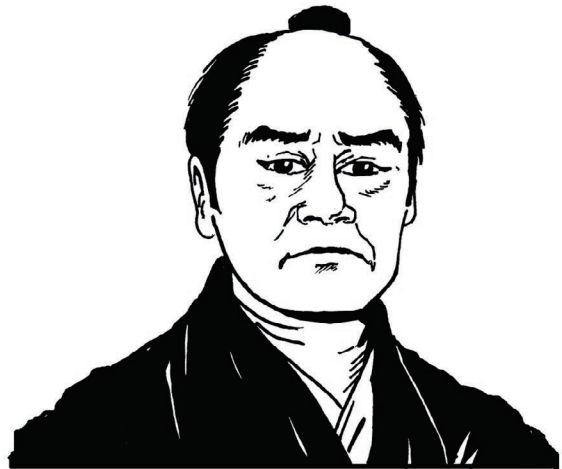
TOMAJI ASARI (Level 3 Merchant)

Asari is first and foremost a businessman. He is Tanomo's most successful merchant, and the only one growing fat in these dark times.

His emporium, which handles a bit of everything for the villagers' needs, has never lost profitability, even in the years of the Warlord's raids. It always seems that his store is empty when the raiding soldiers come, so that they often leave his business alone.

Almost everyone in the area owes Asari money. This is how he helps to keep the people impoverished and tied to the land (unable to leave the village or province).

Asari, though one of the village elders and one of its most concerned citizens, is actually working in tandem with the Shugenja, splitting the profits from the raids. If he is found out, he will kill himself rather than face the people of the village.



Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
10	12	10	9	14	12
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
0	6	1	3	2	25

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
3	6	5	3

Skills: Commerce (19), Tanto (6).

Armor: AC 4, under clothing.

Weapons: Tanto, carried. Various weapons are situated around his store.

Treasure: A cask containing 178 pieces of silver is hidden in his office. The store itself is fairly empty, though the Gamemaster should decide what items are, or are not, present at this time.

MUTSU-NO-KAMI TANOMO EAGU (Level 6 Bushi)

Once a just and proud Daimyo of the province, Eagu has fallen under the spells of Yamasatsu, an evil Shugenja, and has unwillingly relinquished all of his powers to this man. Thanks to the drugs and potions of the wizard, Eagu has since withered and will soon die. In the furthest reaches of his mind, Eagu looks forward to death and joining with his departed loved ones.

Though a proud force of Samurai once served the Warlord, they refused to serve the wizard. All have either been assassinated or have left the Lord's castle of their own volition.



Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
14	10	10	7	4	3
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
0	5	2	2	3	14

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
2	5	5	3

Skills: Kenjutsu (19) with piercing thrust (12), Kyujutsu (19), Naginatajutsu (19), Chikigo-Jutsu (19), Sojutsu (18), Senjojutsu (17), Ni-To-kenjutsu (16), Bajutso (16), Hojojutsu (16), Jittejutsu (15), Iaijutsu (15), Yari-nage jutsu (14), Bowyer (12), Tea Ceremony (12), Calligraphy (10), Poetry (10), Classic Literature (9).

Armor: Currently dressed in Class 8.

Weapons: Wearing a wakizashi and holding on to a naginata pole.

OLD GAKUSHO (Level 2 Gakusho)

This is the old man currently living at and maintaining the Shrine outside Tanomo. He has seen much of life, having tried many professions before joining the Gakusho. He has been blessed and often receives visions of events in the future. Though most of the villagers have ceased coming to the Shrine for religious purposes, many still come to the old Gakusho for advice. Gakusho sees the powerful possibilities of the water in the pool at the Shrine.

Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
7	10	10	10	20	25
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
-1	5	1	3	1	15

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
4	5	5	5

Magic	Power
11	37

Skills: Bojutsu (16); Jujutsu (14); Calligraphy (15); Japanese Classics (14); Meditation (12); Shinto Theology (18); Rhetoric (16); Herbalist (10); Karma-yoga; Raja-yoga.

Armor: Class 3, robes.



Weapons: A Bo staff, kept in his living quarters at one end of the Shrine.

ROKI (Rokuro-kubi)

Though what many would call "a monster," Roki has lived among the populace of Tanomo for many years, hiding his terrible secret. When his debt to the merchant Asari became too large, Asari had some of his "muscle" capture the little man after a night of gambling and drinking. Roki was then turned over to Yamasatsu, the Shugenja. A few nights later, Roki returned to the village, without anyone guessing what had happened to him.



Usually content with eating insects or some smaller field animals, Roki has been an excellent spy and assassin for Asari and Yamasatsu.

The other two Rokuro-kubi who attack the party at the inn are unknown to anyone in the village if they should be defeated and captured.

SAGI (Level 3 Uba)

Sagi is the old woman who lives in the forest. The locals avoid her glade as much as they avoid the Warlord. She is constantly at war with the Gashuko at the Shrine, always trying to get the better of him. So far, she has managed to sneak in and desecrate the Shrine, but has never managed to remove or damage the idol found there. Nor has she been able to take much of the water for her own. Sagi has also worked with the Shugenja a few times, in exchange for shiny weapons and other things that glitter.

BAP	MNA	ZAN	BMA	AC
12	2	2	5	3
HPT	BUDO			
19	5			



ATTACKS BCS DAMAGE

2 Talons	15	1d3
Tantojutsu	13	+1
Magic	17, Level 2 Shugenja, Power: 50	

Spells: Fire Eyes, Darts of Soil, Bar Men, Fireflesh.

Powers: Transformation.

Weapons: Tanto dipped in Level 2 poison.

TATSUO (Level 4 Yakuza)

He is the owner of the Inn of Wandering Days. A strong, capable man of about thirty, he hides behind the guise of a friendly, somewhat simple, host. Tatsuo lives at the inn by himself, having no regular servants. He did have one homely girl who occasionally came in to clean. Since the last raid however, the girl is afraid to leave her home. Tatsuo is very easy going. He can always be counted on for at least one free drink. Though he has only been in this district for a year and a half, the villagers like and respect him.

What the local residents don't know is that Tatsuo is actually a member of the Yakuza. The leader of a clan with relatives in this area has sent Tatsuo here to act as a spy, in order to determine what is really going on. The leader is a noble man who wants Tatsuo to help whomever he can. So far, Tatsuo has been unable to uncover the Warlord's secret, though he feels close to the answer to that mystery. Though the Yakuza leader has been informed of the last raid, he remains reluctant to interfere in the Warlord's affairs.



Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
14	20	15	15	20	10
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
0	10	2	5	2	37

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
5	10	8	10

Skills: Shinobi-jutsu (19); Bojutsu (19); Tantojutsu (16); Sumai (16); Kiserujutsu (15); Jojutsu (13); Commerce (19); Gambling (18); Lockpicking (15); Forgery (14).

Armor: Ninja Armor class 4 under clothing.

Weapons: A club at the inn. Other weapons (wakizashi, tanto) are hidden as Tatsuo tries to protect his identity.

GENJI TIOMOKI (Level 5 Bushi)

Genji was born to the Samurai class, though his family was reduced to poverty at the death of his father. He has since officially become part of the Buke as a grant from a Daimyo in the south.

As a boy, Genji ran away from Tanomo after one of the Warlord's raids. Since then he has lived mainly on his own. He has traveled extensively through much of Nippon. He would stay with one Sensei or another, learning as much as possible. He is a good student, a quick learner, and has become adept in many martial forms. He now travels about as a Ronin.

Through all of his travels, Genji has never forgotten his background. He can still clearly see the day the Warlord rode in and took his mother away. He remembers the simple farmers and the pain they suffered. He has sworn an oath to kill the Warlord and has returned to this area solely for this purpose.



Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
28	29	25	25	10	18
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
+2	14	2	8	3	52

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
8	10	8	12

Skills: Kenjutsu (19), with piercing thrust (17); Kyujutsu (19); Jittejutsu (19); Ni-to-kenjutsu (19) with Reverse Cut (18); Naginatajutsu (18) with Lightning Strike (14); Sojutsu (18); Iaijutsu (17); Hojojutsu (16); Yari-nage-jutsu (14); Senjojutsu (11); Bajutsu (9); Meditation (18); Hunting (17); Armory (13); Bowyer (13); Tracking (12); Hawking (11); Kamajutsu (19) with Lightning Strike (16) and Reverse Cut (11).

Armor: Wears Armor Class 6 Ashigaru Armor.

Weapons: Has a wakizashi and a nagamaki, but prefers to use a simple kama in close combat.

MEDEI YAMASATSU (Level 5 Shugenja)

A forty-five year-old madman who has quite a record of villainy behind him. He has used illicit means to control the Warlord and is actually the power behind the raids in the region. Yamasatsu is short, squat, and wears a long, thin mustache. Evil exudes from this man like the protective layer of oil he likes to wear on his skin. Mekei has an overpowering fear of natural rain water, which can cause his skin to erupt into boils that rapidly become infected. For more information, the Gamemaster should refer to the details provided in the tale.

Strength	Deftness	Speed	Health	Wit	Will
9	15	10	10	20	30
DAM	BAP	MNA	BMA	ZAN	HPT
0	7	1	3	2	23

CAPABILITIES

Brawling	Climbing	Leaping	Swimming
4	5	5	8
Magic	Power		
14	75		

Skills: All Schools of Magic (19); Rhetoric (19); Tea Magic (19) (see "Valley of the Mists"); Herbalist (19); Tea Ceremony (18); Atemi-Waza (18); Divination (17); Bojutsu (17); Class Literature, Japanese (17), Chinese (15); Tantojutsu (16); Go (15); Shurikenjutsu (14); Calligraphy (12); Meditation (11).

Armor: Class 4, Court Clothes with Ninja undergarments.

Weapons: Prefers not to use any, but keeps an Alguchi hidden (just in case).

Spells: Listed by school:

FIRE: Bind Fire 40; Fire Shield 50; Flaming Doom; Arrows of Fire; Fireflash; Fire Curse; Smokes of Nai; Road of Fire; Wings of Heaven.



WATER: Bind Water 30; Water Shield 60; Bursting Bonds; Watery Storm; Mirror of Deception; Mists of Illusion; Curse with Water; Dissolving Defense; Quagmire; Muscles of Water; Shadow Cloak. **WOOD:** Bind Wood 60, Wood Shield 50; Darts of Wood; Calling Beasts; Tongue of Beasts; Vision of Far Places; Spell of Sizes; Wooden Doom; Wood Curse, Scroll of the Mind; Wood Plague; Creeping Vine; Eyes of True Sight.

METAL: Bind Metal 50; Metal Shield 70; Bar Men; Metal Storm; Confusing Gaze; Conquering Gaze; Metal Curse; Mutability of Form; Arrows of Metal; Bar Spirits; Bar Missiles; Iron Doom.

SOIL: Bind Soil 20; Soil Shield; Soil Curse; Spear Against Spirits; Soil Storm; Soil Sphere; The End of Sorcery; Traitor Ground; Soil Doom; Darts of Soil; Armor Invincible.

EXTRAS

The Gamemaster should feel free to populate the village as necessary for running this series of tales. All people will be average and none should be unusual or outstanding, except in unique cases (perhaps to link them to the player's characters and tie the tales to an ongoing campaign). Even the drunk at the Inn of the Wandering Days should be treated as an average man.

There is a force of twenty-five warrior currently serving the Shugenja at the castle. Of this force, twenty will be Level 1 Bushi, with two leaders of Level 2 and three Leaders of Level 3. The

Gamemaster, remembering that these men are all ruffians and brigands, may equip them as needed. Such weapons may include blunt or dented swords, refastened spears, small knives, or rough farm tools. In any case, all will be dressed in dark armor of Class 5 which will be emblazoned with the Warlord's mon or symbol.