

TSUKI NO YUME

Lore and Level

Olivia Jeremiah | 1607016



Level Idea

This level of gameplay occurs immediately after the narrative's main "trigger" - the sudden death of Suzuki's Emperor Zheng, and the subsequent moves made by two of Xin's corrupt noble houses - the Isin and Fujioka houses - to capture the Holy Monks and seize the throne for themselves in the absence of a legitimate heir.

The level follows the player character - Kiyoshi - and their fellow Holy Monks as they get ready to sneak out of Xin under the cover of darkness, in order to escape from the Isin and Fujioka families' Samurai warriors. The Monks are ambushed by Samurai whilst planning their escape and, as a result, those who survive the attack are separated and must make their way out of the city alone.

The gameplay for this section revolves heavily around stealth and exploration, with the ultimate goal being for the Monks to reconvene outside Xin's North or East city wall (as these two sides face towards Mount Shingetsu, the location of the Holy Monks' hidden sacred Temple) and flee.

Settings, Location, and Theme

The level takes place in Xin, the capital city in the heart of Suzuki. Xin is a large, square, densely-populated city; enclosed by towering stone walls. Its construction has been heavily rooted in the societal class systems, with the highest classes occupying well-developed and often opulent buildings in the centre, and the lower classes situated in poorer and increasingly crowded conditions towards the city's outskirts. The city districts are connected by wide, paved streets - patrolled by royal Samurai - and dark, winding back alleys.

Key Location(s)

- Temple
- The Emperor's Palace / Palace Court
- Markets
- Slums
- City Walls

Xin draws much of its theming from feudal Japan, particularly in its distinctive and separate areas for the various social classes. The architecture is also based that of traditional/feudal Japan - buildings are wooden, often elevated slightly off the ground, with tiled roofs and sliding doors. There is a strong religious/spiritual theme throughout the city and most noticeably in the central areas, especially where the Buddhist- and Shinto-inspired temples and monasteries of Xin's Holy Monks are located. Religious and astrological decorations are commonplace, and "storytellers" spreading the word of Lunoism can be found in the city's markets and poorer districts.

Features

Defining Features

- Largely separate class districts - player progresses from the central Holy Temple through the markets and slums on their way out of the city.
- Square layout of the city - various routes and strategies available to the player without their ultimate destination becoming unclear/convoluted (hard to get lost).
- Tall pagodas and sōrin on buildings provide vantage points for the player to determine their route out of the city.
- The cover of darkness and overcrowding of Xin's poorer areas - important for the player to keep a lookout for the lanterns of patrolling Samurai and hide from them.

Player Experience

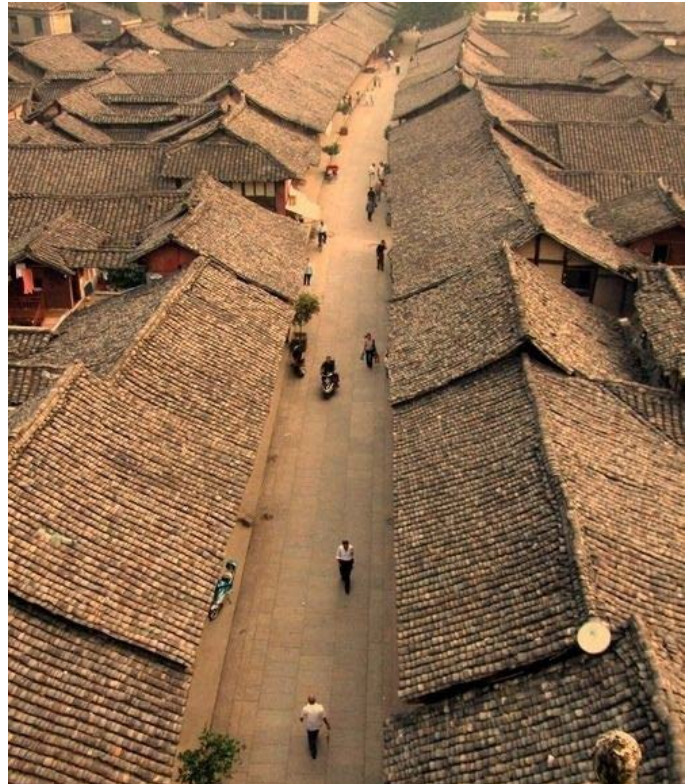
This level will force the player out into the game world on their own and unaided for the first time in the game so far - their previous exploration will have been limited to areas in the centre of Xin, and they will have been guided by their fellow Holy Monks (most notably their mentor, Tomomi).

The Samurai ambush on the Holy Monks at the very start of the level and the ensuing deaths of some Monks adds gravity and reality to a high-pressure situation; and makes quick reactions, strategic movements, and a constant awareness of their surroundings crucial to Kiyoshi's survival.

Reference and Research

Architecture

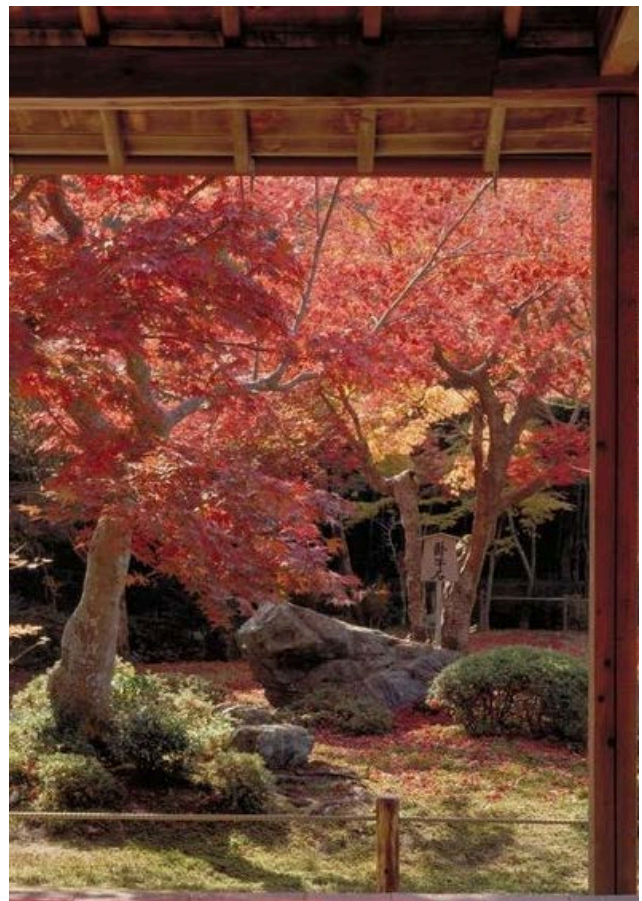
- Japanese (Buddhist and Shinto) inspired temples; sliding doors, roof sōrin, etc.
- Traditional Japanese architecture; wooden buildings, tiled rooves.



Reference and Research

Environment

- Temperate/springtime Japan - warm, some rain, blooming plants (cherry blossoms in particular).
- Mount Shingetsu and the adjoining mountain range are visible from within Xin.



Reference and Research

Light

- Daylight pours into the central, spacious districts of Xin; but rarely reaches the ground in the crowded slums and outskirts.
- At night, the city's main streets are illuminated by oil street lamps, and patrolling Samurai guards carry their own lanterns as well. Paper lanterns adorn central buildings like the Temples and Palace. Citizens' homes have their own artificial light sources, which get progressively less sophisticated towards the city's outskirts - with crude open flames often being used in the slums.



Reference and Research

Props

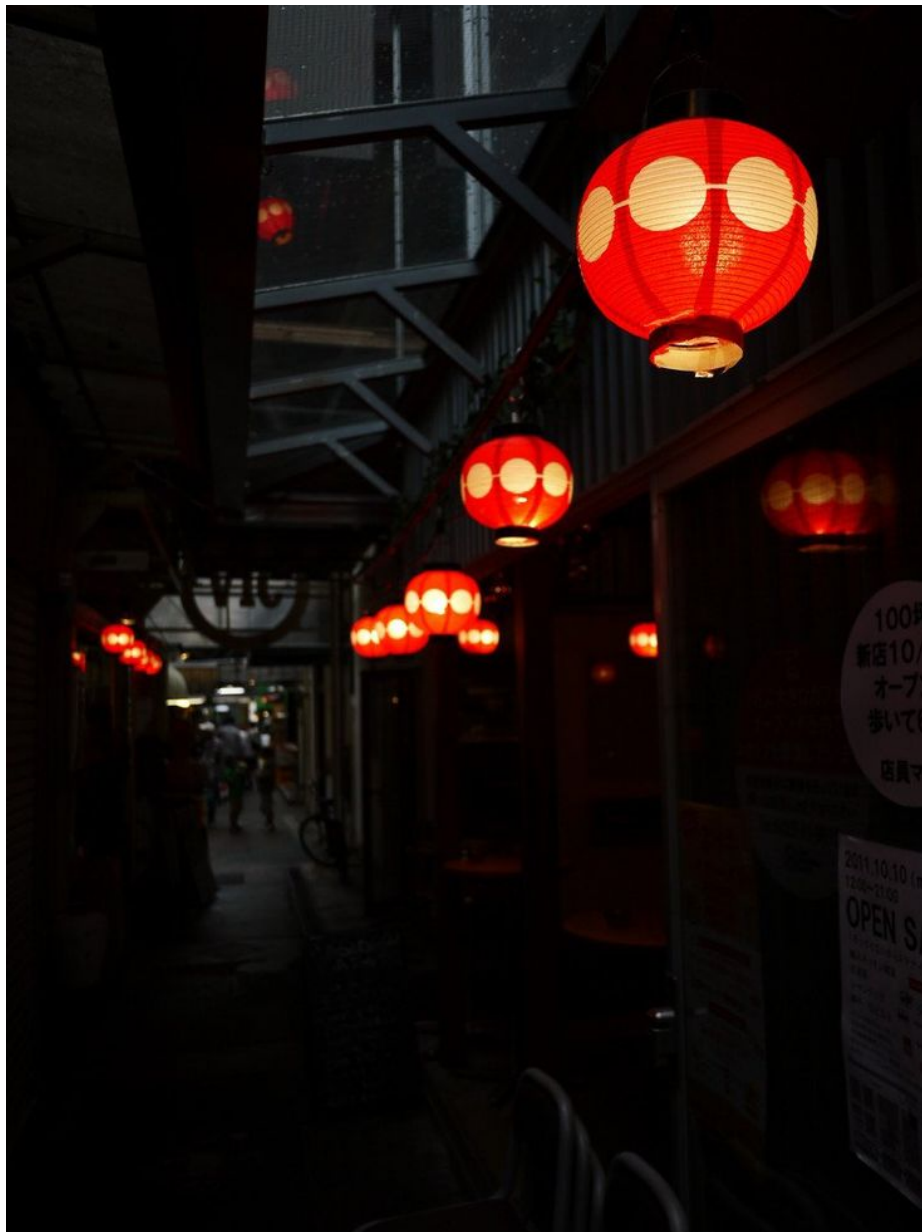
- Props around Xin reflect its main trades - the city is surrounded by farmland and home to multiple bustling market districts, and also deals with imports of metal from the Tuno Caves in the south, and bamboo from villages in the north.
 - Farming tools; market stalls; bamboo bundles and furniture; bars of metal ores; boxes and barrels of produce...



Reference and Research

Style

- The level – and the game as a whole – is a realistic 3D rendering of the game world.
- The most notable style point in this level would be the use of contrast and light, particularly in darker, smaller/narrower areas of the city. The darkness of the environment would be exaggerated to make the lights of the city stand out more. This encourages the player to use the lights of buildings as navigation/guidance, and, more importantly, means the lanterns of approaching Samurai guards can be clearly seen and used as a form of warning system for the player, alerting them to the approaching danger.



Story

What?

Prior to the level, the Holy Monks held an emergency meeting in their Xin temple to discuss the Emperor's death and the lack of an heir to the throne. They decided to go into hiding until a legitimate heir could be found. An ambush by Samurai guards sent by corrupt noble houses killed some of the Holy Monks and forced the others to flee.

In the level, Kiyoshi has been separated from their fellow Holy Monks and must make their way to Xin's outer city walls, avoiding the Samurai hunting them down, in order to escape with the others.

How?

How did the player arrive in this environment location?

Kiyoshi has been living and working in Xin's central Temple as a newly-ordained Holy Monks for the past couple of weeks. The player has been introduced to the game world and shown the basic controls of the game via Kiyoshi's mentor - Tomomi, an older Holy Monk - who has been teaching them the ropes of daily life.

Kiyoshi and the other Holy Monks have been fulfilling their duties to the Emperor and his Court; mostly liaising with Court officials, nobles, and Emperor Zheng himself, and offering advice using astrology. The Monks have also been carrying out their worship of the Luno, as well as studying, and training in martial arts.

How will you show what happened to the environment?

The Temple itself contains numerous documents, scriptures, astrological charts, and so on; all of which are indicative of the Monks' correspondences with Xin's Emperor and royal Court, as well as their studies of Lunoism. The Temple also has dojo-like rooms used for martial arts training. These features contribute to the player's sense that this location is where the Monks live and work, and add more context/believability to the work the Monks do.

How will the player navigate through the environment?

Kiyoshi navigates through the environment on foot, though the player is afforded a variety of routes out of the city. There is an overall emphasis on stealth and avoiding Samurai guards, e.g. by sneaking between cover and hiding places, or climbing over rooftops. The player can choose to engage in combat if they are taking a more direct route out of the city - e.g. along the main roads - though Kiyoshi will have relatively little health/defence and be unarmed, making this difficult.

Story

Why?

Why is the player in this location?

The player's goal is to escape Xin uncaptured, avoiding the Isin and Fujioka houses' Samurai, to reconvene with the other surviving Holy Monks outside the city so that they can seek refuge in their sacred temple atop Mount Shingetsu.

How will you tell the story of the environment to the player?

Following the death of Emperor Zheng, the hunt for the Holy Monks commences. This will be shown in the environment in a few ways:

Increased Samurai patrols - the player can also overhear conversation between the corrupt nobility's Samurai if they are close enough.

- A huge Samurai presence outside Xin's Temple following the siege on the Monks, making the location inaccessible. The Temple itself has been heavily damaged following the attack - walls/sliding doors have been broken, and objects and papers have been scattered around.
- Lots of commotion/lights on in the Emperor's Palace and Palace Court, which is uncharacteristic for the time of night. The increased presence of guards makes the areas inaccessible.
- Properties and homes closest to the Temple have had their doors broken in by Samurai in search of the Holy Monks.

Create a brief story, a description of your environment as the player participates and travels through it.

- Emperor Zheng's death sparks commotion in the Palace and royal Court.
- The player flees the Holy Temple as the Samurai - sent by the corrupt noble Isin and Fujioka houses - ransack it and attack the Holy Monks inside.
- The Samurai set up a guard outside the Holy Temple to capture any Monks attempting to return, and send other Samurai out on patrols to hunt down the escaped Monks.
- The Samurai patrols begin forcing entry to nearby properties in search of Monks who are trying to hide.
- The player makes their way through poorer and poorer areas of Xin towards its outskirts, avoiding Samurai patrols.
- The player must escape Xin's city walls to reconvene with the other Holy Monks.

Objectives, Obstacles, and Set Pieces

Objectives

In order to complete the level map, the player will need to:

- Escape the Holy Temple.
- Avoid being captured or killed by the Samurai.
- Find a way to sneak out of Xin.

Obstacles

Escaping the Holy Temple itself presents the following obstacles to the player:

- There are Samurai keeping guard very close to the Temple.
- The initial attack on the Temple has resulted in significant structural damage, for example; collapsed walls, and small fires.

When it comes to escaping the city without being captured or killed by the Samurai, the player will largely have to focus on finding ways to avoid or to hide from large groups of Samurai patrols. Players could potentially approach smaller patrol groups or individual Samurai with combat, or hide/avoid them as before.

Escaping Xin's city walls presents the following obstacles:

- Samurai outposts are located on the main roads out of the city, to keep an eye on the people entering and leaving Xin.
- The city walls themselves are considerably tall.

Set Pieces

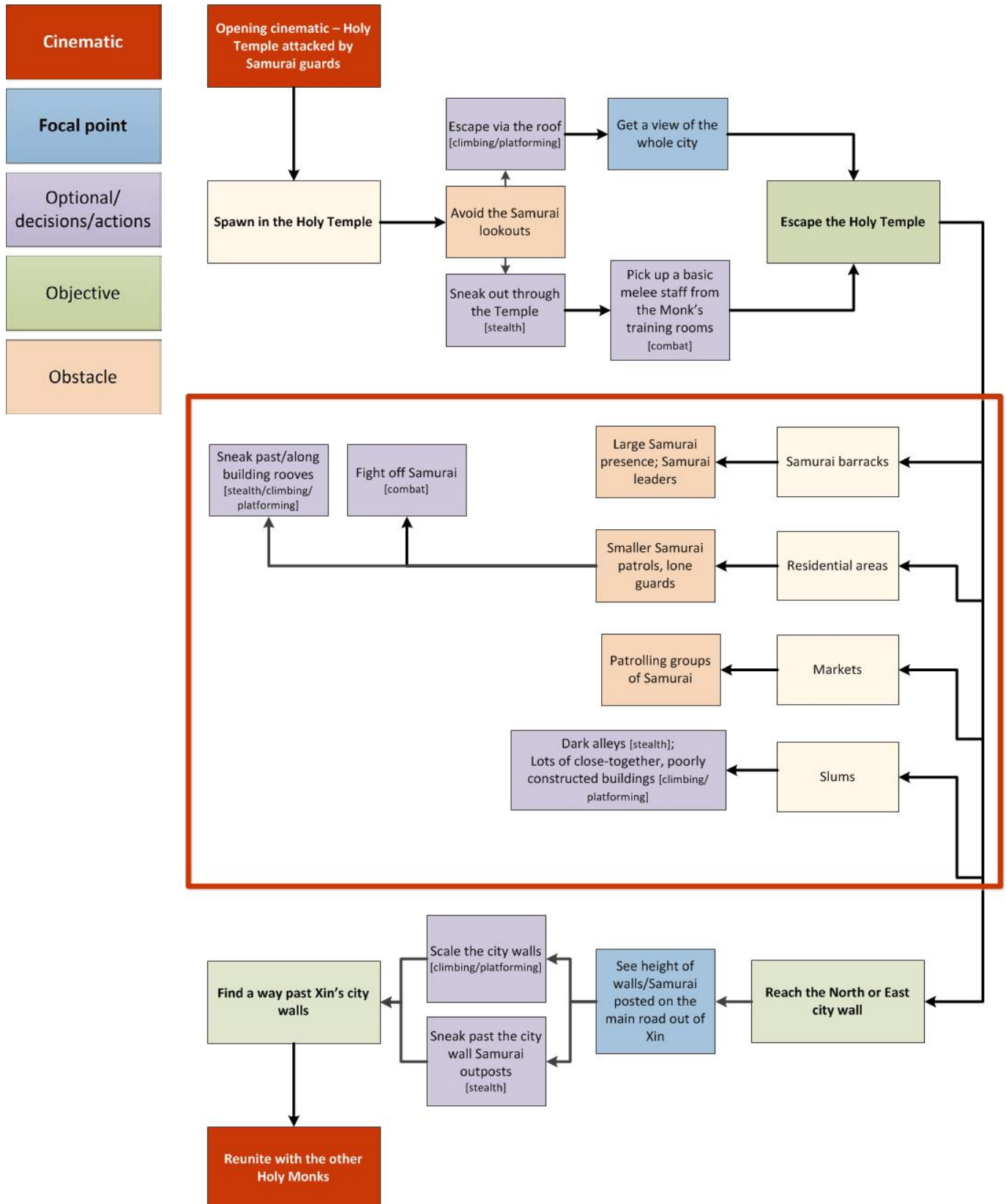
The most important set piece in this level is the cinematic scene that precedes the gameplay – this cinematic shows the player the Samurai ambush on the Holy Monks' meeting, and establishes the current objective; to escape the Temple in the wake of the attack.

The player character's presence in certain areas of the level – for example, a main road out of the city – triggers Samurai guards to block their path.

The player character's presence also triggers indirect pieces, for example, overhearing the conversation of a Samurai patrol group if the player is too close to them. This serves as somewhat of a warning/alert to the player, letting them know that guards are nearby if the player has not spotted them yet.

Objectives Progression Chart

Note: The area of the chart enclosed by a red box includes the different districts of Xin in general, rather than a specific route through the city, as the player is free to choose which route they take/which areas they pass through for the most part.

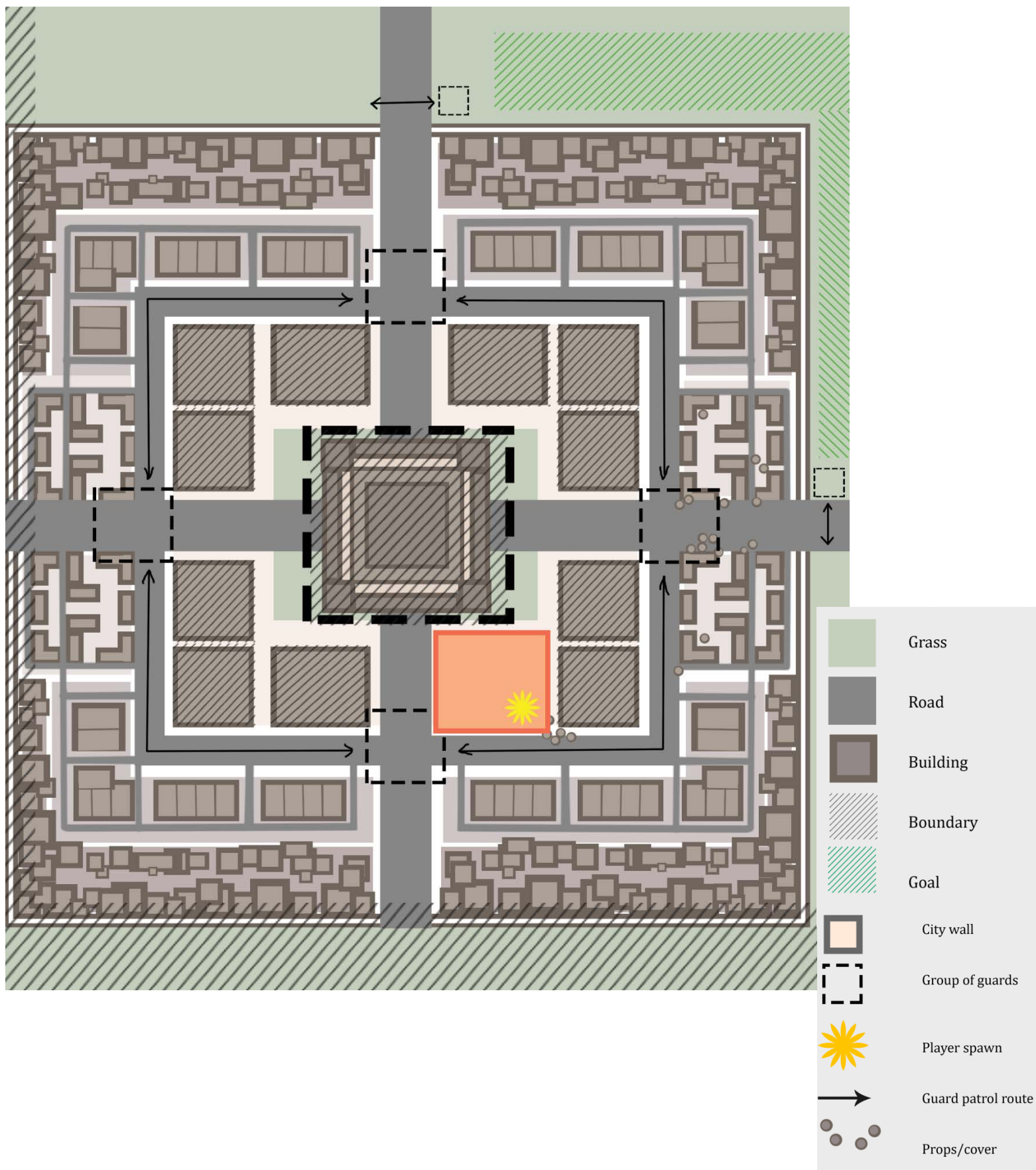


Focal Points

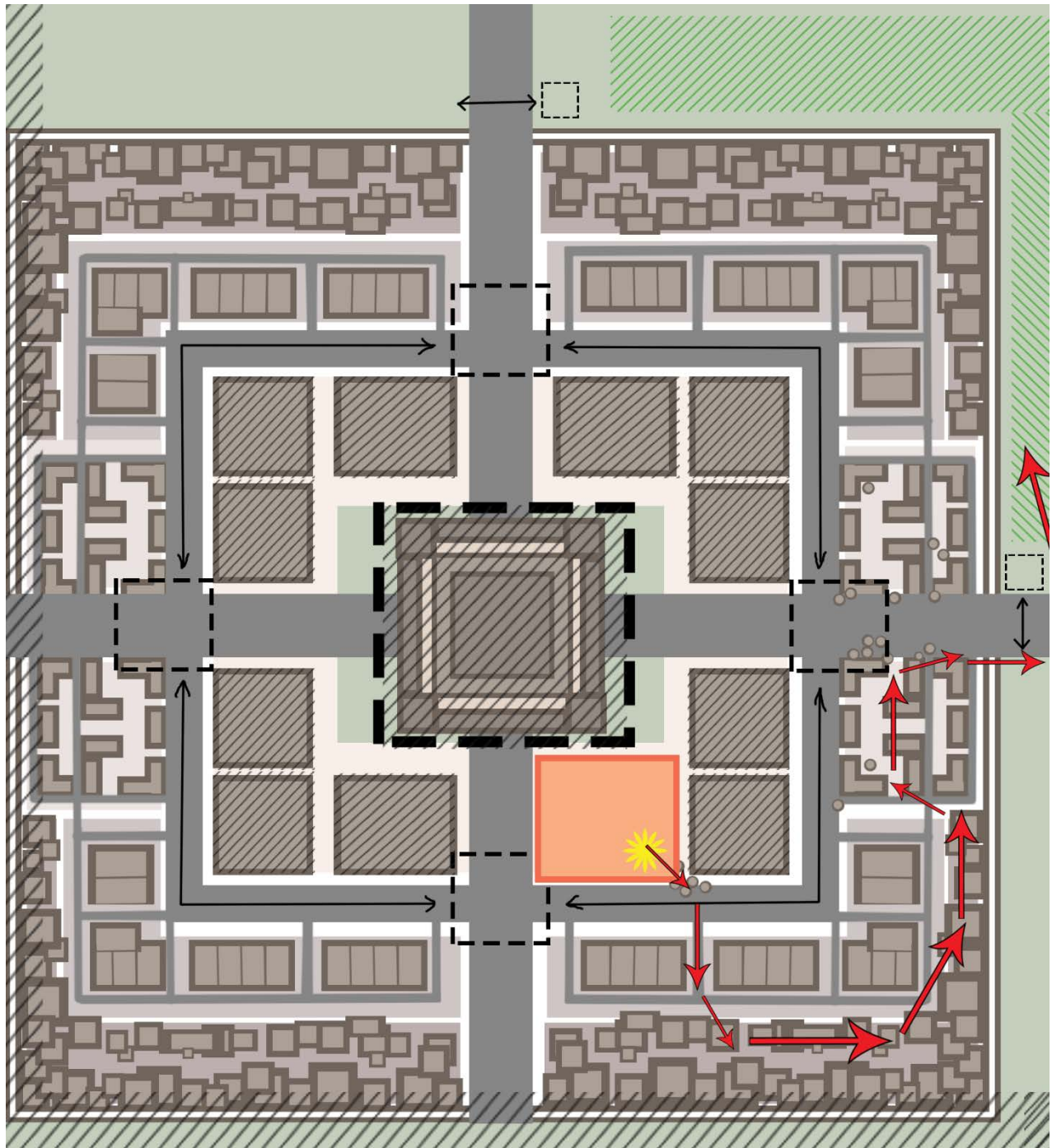
The focal points for the level are the following two locations:

- The Holy Temple itself – this is where the level starts, and, having acted as the home and workplace of the Monks, helps establish their place in the game world. When the player escapes the Temple, they get to see a view of the whole city for the first time, showing them their next objective – to escape the city.
- The city walls – these act as the final obstacle the player must overcome to complete the level, as the other Holy Monks wait to meet Kiyoshi on the other side of the wall.





Top-Down Layout – Player journey (example)

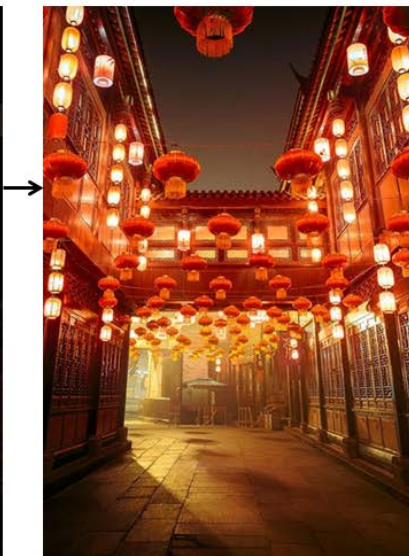


In this example diagram of the level, the player spawns in the Holy Temple and then sneaks out through the damaged walls, using nearby props to hide from the large group of Samurai, and timing their movements to avoid the smaller patrol groups. They cut through the residential area, avoiding lone Samurai guards on patrol, and then travel through the slums by climbing over the cluttered rooftops. At the outer edge of the slums, they climb down from the rooftops and sneak through the market area, using the stalls and other items as cover to hide from the Samurai group watching over the main road. At the edge of the market, they scale the city wall to bypass the Samurai outpost on the other side, and then reconvene with the other Holy Monks on the North-East side of Xin's outer wall.

Visual Progression Guide



HOLY TEMPLE



MAIN STREETS



RESIDENTIAL AREAS



MARKET STREETS



MARKETS



SLUMS



TOP OF XIN'S CITY WALLS

Image references

Cover image

<https://i.pinimg.com/564x/95/d3/68/95d36884b785273114231b1d960ca1c7.jpg>

Reference – Architecture

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Reference – Environment

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Reference – Props

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Focal points

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<https://i1.wp.com/www.uv-asia.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/0mizutori-Festival.jpg?resize=1024%2C683>

Visual progression guide

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