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# GHOST OF TSUSHIMA

Assignment 2 - Scene Analysis

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# Bushido

"Warriors only have one judge of honor and character, and this is themselves. Decisions they make and how these decisions are carried out is a reflection of whom they truly are." - Virtue of Bushido Meijo (Honor)

# Bushido

"Warriors have only one judge of honor and character, and this is themselves. Decisions they make and how these decisions are carried out are a reflection of who they truly are. You cannot hide from yourself."

In "Ghost of Tsushima," the concept of bushido, is central to the narrative and thematic structure of the game. Set in the late 13th century with the looming threat of the Mongol invasion, the game explores the complexities of honour, loyalty, and the moral dilemmas faced by the main character, Jin Sakai.



Bushido, the code of moral principles that samurai adhere to, is not a written code, but it consists of a way of life passed down from warrior to warrior. These principles shape the way Samurai make decisions in both on and off the battlefield. Due to this, the main character struggles with his identity and the expectations that befall his role as a samurai. This struggle also reflects the broader historical context of feudal Japan, where the samurai class are revered yet burdened by such code of conduct.

# Bushido



The Mongol invasion represents a critical turning point, forcing samurai like Jin to confront the **limitations of bushido**. In the game, traditional samurai tactics would prove ineffective against the Mongol army, leading Jin to adopt unconventional strategies, which are frowned upon by the code. As Jin goes along his journey, he embodies the adaptability required in the face of overwhelming odds, suggesting that **honour can manifest in many forms**, including the protection of one's people through unconventional means.





# Khotun Khan

"Do you know how I prepared for today? I learned. I know your language. Your traditions. Your beliefs. Which village to tame and which to burn." - Khotun Khan

コトゥン

# Khotun Khan



Khotun Khan is the main antagonist of the game. He is not just a warmongering warlord sent to conquer Japan, he also embodies the Mongol Empire's ambition and their brutal tactics; willing to do anything to spread their Empire.

He is **strategic, highly manipulative and extremely intelligent** in which he views the conquest of Tsushima as a stepping stone to greater Japan.

Khotun is a natural antagonist. His innate charm is a facade for the atrocities that he commits on his path to conquering Tsushima. He views people as tools, objects he uses to fulfill his **sadistic way of asserting his power**.





# Jin Sakai

"Honor died on the beach" - Jin Sakai

# Jin Sakai



Jin Sakai is the main protagonist of the game. Throughout the game, Jin struggles with his identity; a loyal vassal to his uncle, the lord of Tsushima and a warrior, a defender of his people.

Jin faces the harsh reality of war, an **unforgiving battlefield which has no rules**. The bushido code that has been ingrained into him hinders his ability to protect his people and he is forced to confront the **limits of his honour** in the face of an opponent who has no notion of one.



境井仁

# Jin Sakai



You are the Ghost.

Jin adopts the persona of “The Ghost”, an assassin like being willing to perform horrific acts towards the invading Mongol army to **sow fear** and discord among them.

However, even when his methods are effective in combatting the invading force, his years of training and teachings drilled into him by his uncle still linger in his head and stop him from too far. He **still tries to do what is right** under the bushido code but the following scene is the tipping point which pushes him over the edge.





Taka

"Taka. Be brave." - Jin Sakai

タカ

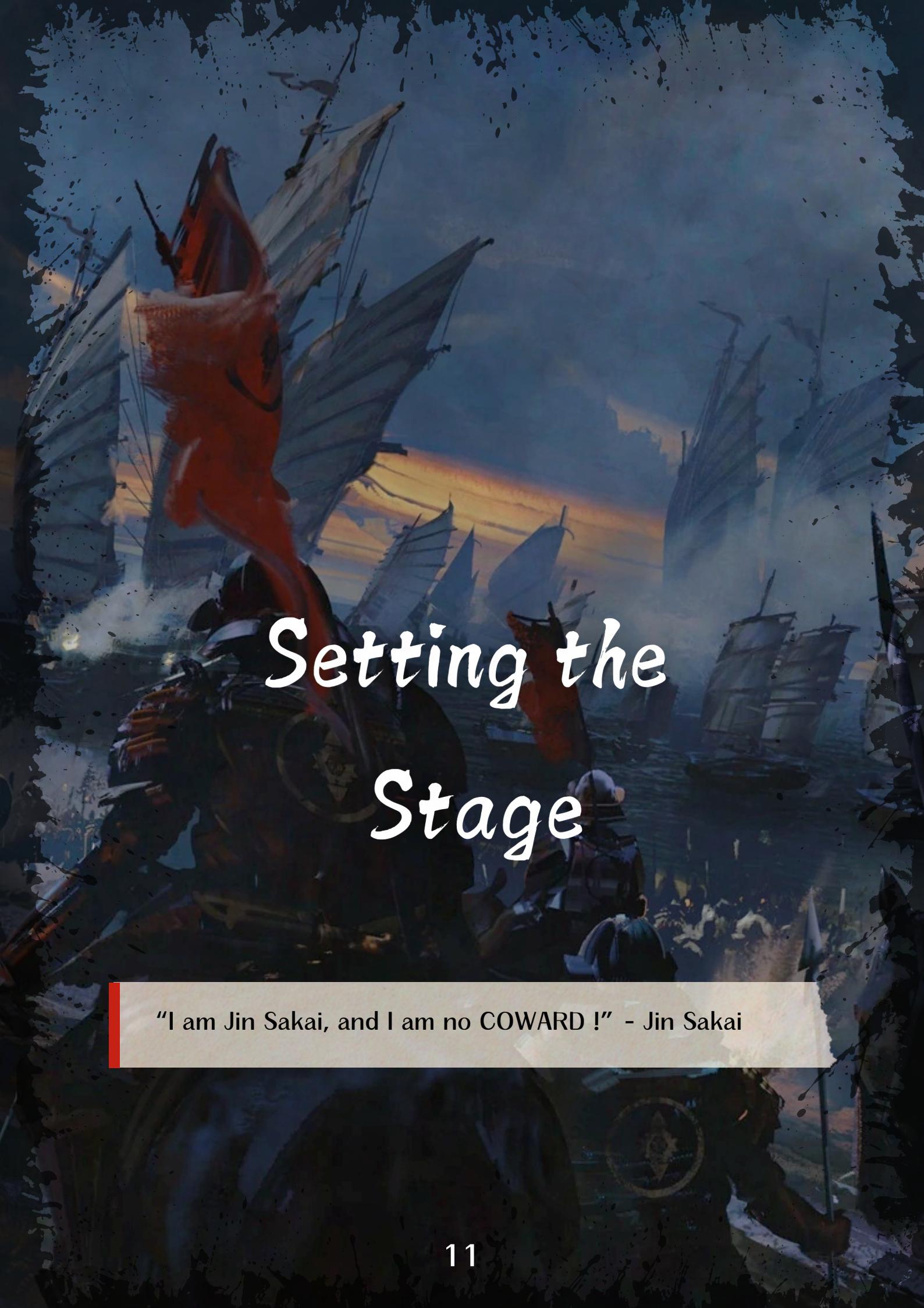
# Taka



Taka is a side character in the game. He was introduced to be what a normal citizen in Tsushima is like. However, through Jin's journey, he finds more about Taka and his struggles in this war-torn period. Naturally, Taka is a **cowardly person** whom struggles to stand up for himself, leading **Jin to convince him to fight** and take arms to protect and secure their home.

In Jin's journey, he is saved by Yuna, a thief and also Taka's sister. As the Mongol army invaded Tsushima, Taka was one of the citizens immediately affected as he was a skilled blacksmith, leading to his detainment and forced labour to create weapons for the Mongols. Yuna saved Jin under the condition of rescuing Taka from his captors. Due to this, **Taka views Jin not only as his saviour but also reveres him.**





# Setting the Stage

"I am Jin Sakai, and I am no COWARD !" - Jin Sakai

# Setting the Stage

## The story so far

The Mongols invaded Tsushima; a staging point for their further expansion into mainland Japan.

Jin of House Sakai is a vassal of the Lord of Tsushima, his uncle. He had been under his uncle's care since young, due to the **loss of his father** from insurgents in his youth.

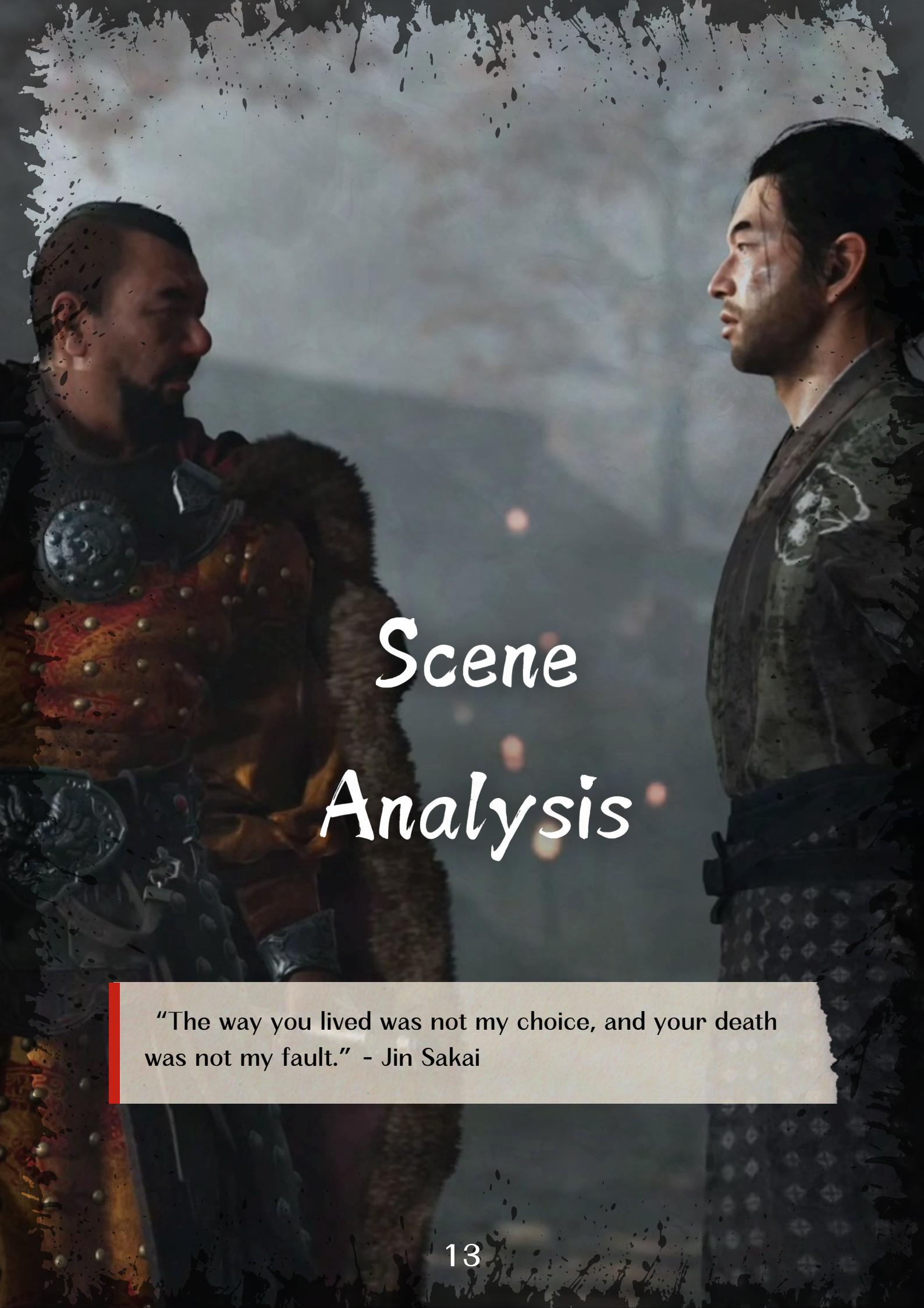


Jin's father pleading  
for help from Jin

Jin grew up under strict supervision from his uncle, learning the ways of the samurai and **adhering to the bushido code**.

As the Mongols invade Tsushima, the Samurai lose a big battle on the beaches and are mostly wiped out, with Jin suffering major injuries. He is saved and is taken care of by Yuna, a thief. Jin promised to save her brother, Taka, a blacksmith, from the Mongols, in exchange for her help. He succeeds and **strings along the blacksmith to aid him in his escapades**, unbeknownst to Yuna.

As Jin is confronting one of the Ronins whom betrayed them, he is ambushed and captured, along with Taka who is **following along** due to Jin's words and influence.



# Scene Analysis

"The way you lived was not my choice, and your death was not my fault." - Jin Sakai

# Scene Analysis

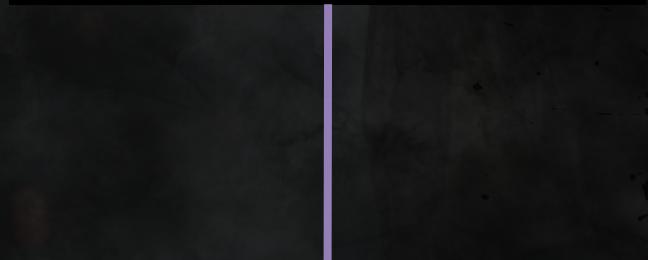
## Camera Work & Dialogue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoBVqRC8ZNY>

Scene starts at 1:03 and ends at 4:20

The scene starts with a medium close-up of Taka's face suddenly twisting and contorting with horror. This camera angle gives more depth to the emotion that Taka is letting on and the players are led to believe that whatever he sees behind Jin is utterly terrifying.

The scene then cuts to an establishing shot of Khotun Khan arriving behind them. This shows the dynamics between him and the two other characters, showing that he is fully clad in armour and has all the power. Furthermore, his placement in the shot, being in between Jin and Taka, further gives the players the feel that the only thing standing in the way of saving Taka is Khotun Khan himself.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene then cuts to the camera arcing around Khotun Khan from a lower angle, nesting to an over-the-shoulder shot of him and Jin. This camerawork emphasises the size and menacing figure of Khotun. However, he immediately undercuts this with supposed kindness, offering Jin a drink.

This shot signifies that not only is the Khan an imposing figure but he is also a manipulative one, feigning concern to his captives, to lower their guard.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene cuts into a **two-shot** of Jin and Khotun. With their characters largely being similar in size in the shot, it can be inferred that they are the current **driving force behind the unfolding narrative**. Furthermore, the light source behind Khotun shines a light in front of Jin's face while casting a shadow on Khotun's face. This portrays the **upright nature** of Jin to the players and the sick and **twisted nature** of Khotun. This gives Khotun a feeling that he has a very **shadowy personality**.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue

Khotun offers the drink to Jin



You must be thirsty.

Jin turns away his head in disgust and Khotun, whose face grimaces, is seething that he did not even get a reply.



Khotun's attention shifts and he drinks from the cup.



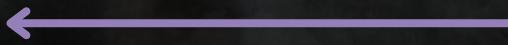
# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue

The scene then shifts into a trucking shot in which Khotun, shifts his attention from Jin to Taka, presumably trying to see **which one he can break first**. It can be interpreted that from the direction of the light source, the sun now shining on Khotun's face, he is trying to gain rapport with Taka, most likely to try and **manipulate him for one of his schemes**. This is substantiated by Khotun trying to offer the drink which he clarified was milk from his favourite horse.



End of Shot



Start of Shot

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



Again, the camera is in a **truckling shot** but rests on an **over-the-shoulder shot** where Taka can be seen in the background with Khotun separating the two of them. Khotun's focus shifts back to Jin, still probing him and trying to illicit a response from either men. This time, he is trying to **empathise** with Jin, trying to paint a picture that the two of them are alike.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue

This over-the-shoulder shot is repeated again and again, showing the emotions portrayed by each character. Khotun has finally gotten a response from Jin, with the latter seemingly enraged with the fact that Khotun had associated Jin with such a despicable man. However, due to this, Khotun has finally found the angle to pounce on; Jin's honour and his struggles with maintaining it.



I am samurai.



No. You are more than that.



You are the Ghost.



We will never serve you.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene then transitions into a **full shot**. This shot allows the players to see the **power dynamics between the three**, with **Khotun having all the power**. Furthermore, there may be symbolism shown in this shot, specifically Taka, fully wrapped in shadow, could be **foreshadowing his demise**.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



It then cuts into a **low-angle shot**, emphasising Khotun's power and now with a sword drawn out, Khotun **projects an aura of danger**, which was not present until now.

Furthermore, these two shots clearly defines that Khotun is not a **samurai** in the way he unsheathes Jin's katana and even the way he holds it. This further cements that he is **not like Jin**.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



Now that Khotun has Jin's mouth loose and is able to converse with him, he specifically knows where to target Jin, his family, and he tries to empathise with Jin being in the background of such a powerful one; Khotun being the cousin of Kublai Khan and Jin being the nephew of the Lord of Tsushima. He tries to **manipulate Jin through his words** to convince him to join his side and also lead his people to be conquered by the Mongols.

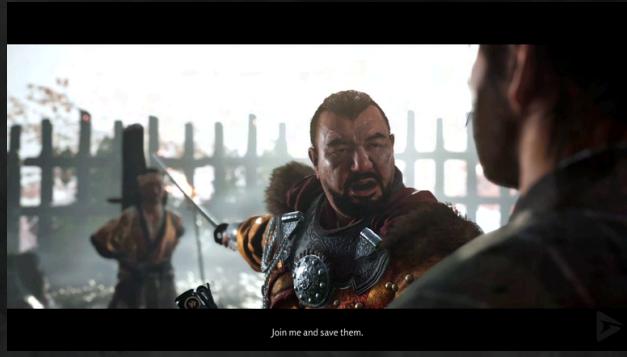
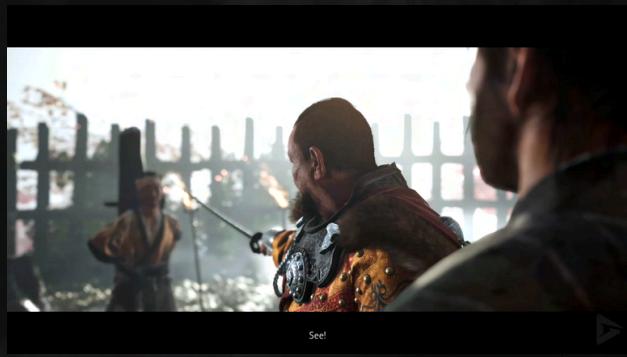


I too have pride in family.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue

The over-the-shoulder shot continues as Taka joins in the conversation, the camera panning to him. This shot is quite powerful in portraying the absurdity and the irony in Khotun's words. Khotun's words do not match the actions of his body and Jin sees right through it. He is pointing Jin's katana towards Taka while spouting the words "Join me and save them."



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene cuts into a two-shot, with Khotun taking up a majority of the frame, showcasing his power over Jin. However, Jin has seen through Khotun's manipulations and sweet-laced words and called him out on it. Khotun's body language wavers and his arms start to shake and drop in the disappointment of not being able to exploit Jin's weakness and it can be seen in his demeanour that he now plans to change the angle he was working on.

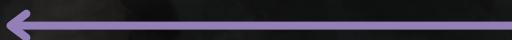
# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue

The scene transitions into a **truckling shot**, following Khotun walking towards Taka. His attention shifts towards Taka, with his **intentions unclear**. Khotun then cuts off the ropes tying Taka, presumably letting him go free.



End of Shot



Start of Shot

It then cuts into a **close shot** of Jin's face, extremely confused at what Khotun is planning to do with Taka. This shot fully explores the **emotions that Jin is feeling** at the moment.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene shifts into a **cowboy shot** between Taka and Khotun. Based on their body language, even though it can be presumed that Taka has the ability to take the sword and cut down Khotun, his **body language suggests that he has no courage or confidence**. In contrast, even though Khotun is giving away the only weapon he currently has, his posture and nonchalant way of giving away the weapon gives him so much **power in their position**. Furthermore, his honey-laced words; promising freedom to Taka in exchange for Jin's death from Taka's hands still dictate who has the power in this exchange.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene then shifts to an **over-the-shoulder shot** with it positioned over Khotun's shoulder. Taka's placement in the frame **highlights his vulnerability** to the player and his begrudging and shaky demeanor reflects his feelings. From this point, Khotun is currently blurred with the focus on Taka. This gives Khotun a **looming and intimidating presence** in the scene meanwhile Taka has finally started to steel his resolve. Furthermore, the subtle blurring can convey a sense of distance, as if Khotun's **true thoughts are incomprehensible**.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene changes to a medium-close-up of Khotun's face with Taka going across the frame. The camera focuses on Khotun's face, which captures his expression and the emotions within. His direct gaze, slightly narrowed eyes and faint smile convey extreme confidence and perhaps amusement. This framing emphasizes Khotun's control of the situation, with the shot never straying away from his face, while his gaze is focused on Taka for the entire shot. His expressions which show a smug look as Taka passes over him show a taunting or even a predatory look as his prey walks by. This further highlights his manipulative and sadistic nature.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The next two shots are close-up shots of Jin and Taka respectively. These close-up shots show the emotions held by both men, with Jin showing his hesitation and feelings of inadequacy; being powerless in this moment, which is contrasted by Taka's face of determination, letting go of his fears and finally having courage in his actions.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



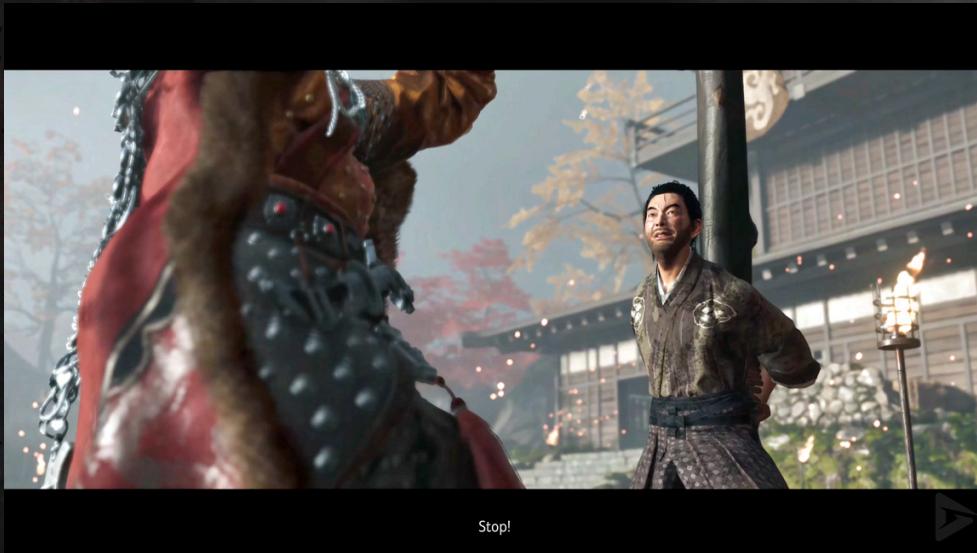
However, it is all for nought. Khotun being a trained Mongolian warrior, and a leader, sees through Taka's actions and is able to evade his attempt to attack him.

The following sequences of shots were of mostly full shots except for the **close-up** zoom of Taka on the ground. These shots were framed this way to fully show the action and the movement, Taka being unskilled at swordsmanship, him being a blacksmith and in contrast, Khotun being a warrior. The **close-up** of Taka then shows **his struggle and his emotion in the moment of failure**.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene cuts to a cowboy shot, with Khotun in the foreground and Jin in focus in the background. This shows Jin's vulnerability and helplessness to the current situation and further emphasizes Khotun's power and dominance with him on top of Taka who is out of the frame. Cowboy shots are useful as it shows the most vulnerable portions of the human body. Furthermore, Jin's pleading to Khotun is in stark contrast to his previous attitude towards the Mongolian which was disdainful with words filled with vitriol.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



It then cuts into a Dutch-angle shot of Taka getting decapitated. Dutch-angle shots are usually used to **create tension** and **create unease** in the mind of the viewer. The **extreme close-up** of his face shows the horror that is of the death of someone beloved in the game.

Taka, no longer with the same demeanour and bravado as before has **accepted his death** but has his sister in his thoughts. His words were unfortunately cut off abruptly with the katana decapitating him.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene cuts back to a **cowboy shot** with Jin's face utterly devastated by the death of his comrade with him being **completely powerless** in stopping it. For the rest of the scene, he is unable to speak, dealing with his loss. The **extreme close-up** of his face shows the **pain** that he is dealing with.



# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



It then cuts to an **over-the-shoulder** shot which transitions to a **frame within a frame** shot with Khotun rising from below with Taka's head decapitated, like a trophy. Jin's face doesn't show anger but more of a **deep sadness**, everything welling up inside of him. Furthermore, the **frame within a frame** shot suggests Jin's **feeling of isolation** at the moment. Furthermore, the shot elicits a response from the player, a **feeling of confinement**, with the player's focus being trapped onto a certain point.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



The scene shifts into a **pan** with the focus being on Khotun bringing the decapitated head of Taka closer to Jin's face, delivering a monologue worthy of a Dreamworks villain.



The scene cuts between the two of them in an **over-the-shoulder shot**. This shot focuses on the emotions and expressions that both are showing, with the fact that Khotun explains that the reason why **Taka is dead** is due to Jin failing to comply with Khotun's demands of subservience.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



Finally, we are left with a cowboy shot, with Khotun leaving the shot and the scene, the framing is focused on Jin and his sword, which was used by Khotun to kill his friend. The red maple trees in the background are often associated with both honour and bloodshed. This perfectly encapsulates Jin's journey and in the context of the scene, the sacrifice that Taka made. Furthermore, autumn leaves also represent change, which highlights the changes going on within Jin, he finally accepts what he needs to do to protect his people; foregoing his honour.

# Scene Analysis

## Camera Work & Dialogue



Jin taking a moment to process, speechless, even during Khotun's monologue, finally lets out a scream, all his emotions pouring out, his guilt overbearing. Taka, a friend, a comrade, someone he pushed out of their comfort zone to assist him in driving out the Mongols, is dead. His death, a result of Jin's **weakness and his persistence in maintaining his honour**, leads to the two getting ambushed and captured.

# Scene Analysis

## Audio

### Diegetic Sounds

The use of Diegetic sounds, audible elements within the game which the characters themselves can hear, heightens realism and grounds the players in the tragedy of the scene.



An example of a diegetic sound used was the sword drawing and the decapitation of Taka. The sounds were jarring and perhaps visceral, enhancing the brutality and the realism of the violence in the scene. This deepens the emotional blow to the players.



Another example is the ambient wind and sound of nature. The peaceful sounds heard in the background of rustling leaves, chirping birds and wind chimes create a serene atmosphere which is in contrast to the brutality ongoing not only in the scene but throughout Tsushima. These subtle diegetic sounds reinforce the setting and emphasizes that even in such a tranquil environment, violence can disrupt serenity.

# Scene Analysis

## Audio

### Diegetic Sounds

Another good example of diegetic sound is the thunderous rumbling which occurred at the start of the scene with the arrival of Khotun Khan.



The thunder was a sign of imposing power. It was used to signify the power, strength and the approaching force that was Khotun. The use of thunder emphasized his role as a formidable antagonist and an unstoppable force of nature.

However, the most impactful diegetic sound in the scene is still one of extreme pain; Jin's pleading and final scream of anguish.



These sounds contribute to the scene's sense of desperation and tragic realism. It is a stark contrast to the start of the scene in which Jin was unwilling to respond and when he did, it was of a rebellious tone. These vocal sounds anchor the players emotionally as Jin helplessly witness the death of his companion.

# Scene Analysis

## Audio

### Non-Diegetic Sounds

The use of Non-Diegetic sounds, the soundtrack, and generally sounds that only the players can hear, are used to shape the player's emotional response through audio stimulus.

One instrument used was the Koto, a Japanese plucked half-tube zither instrument. The quiet deliberate plucking sets a rhythm of grief. The Koto also subtly compliments the Shakuhachi, reinforcing the stillness and helplessness Jin felt.



The Shakuhachi is a flute made of bamboo. Its mournful tones served as a non-diegetic overlay which filled the scene with sorrow and despair that Jin could feel but not hear. Its breathy and haunting quality embodies pain and loss, making the moment feel even more tragic and isolating.



The Taiko drums is a percussion instrument that was used to emphasize the clash between Jin's inner turmoil and inability to act. In Japanese culture, they are generally used to signify war or impending conflict. Furthermore, they were used in tandem during the entrance of Khotun Khan.



# Scene Analysis

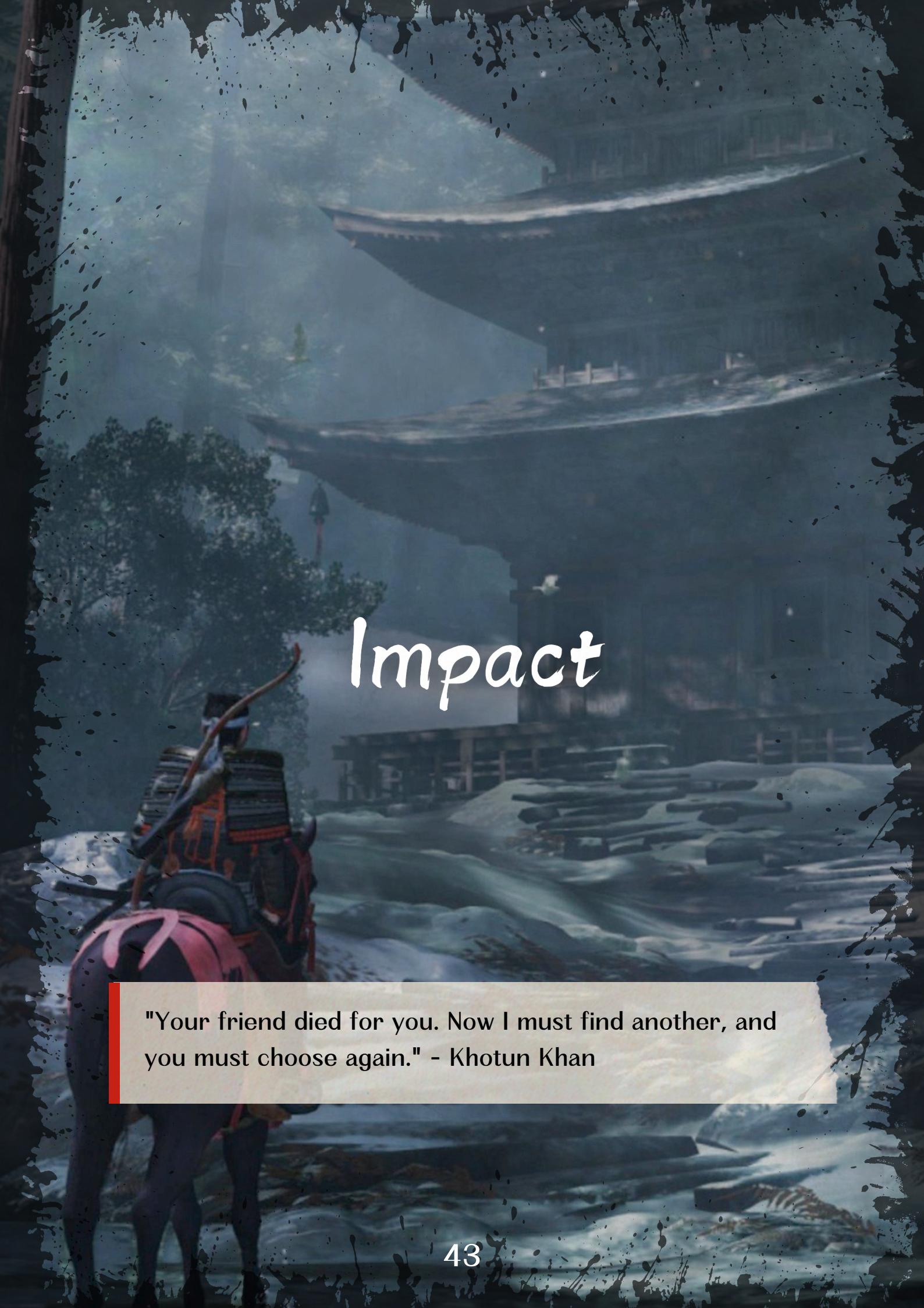
## Audio

### Overall use of sounds

The non-diegetic music and diegetic sounds worked together to emphasize the narrative and emotional weight of Taka's death. The traditional music channelled solemnity and grief to the players while the diegetic sounds grounded the players to the brutality of the moment.



Another point is at the end of the scene, in which Jin bellowed out in pain and grief, the silence before that was deafening. the absence of music and diegetic sounds forced the players to be in the moment with Jin, making not only him but also the players to confront the death of Taka. The silence, experienced by both Jin and the player, magnifies the tragedy that had befallen.



# Impact

"Your friend died for you. Now I must find another, and you must choose again." - Khotun Khan

# Impact

The scene had 2 major lasting effects not only on the game's narrative but also towards the experience of the player.

## Jin's Transformation into the "Ghost"

Taka's death was the breaking point for Jin. Before the scene, Jin struggled to balance his duty as a samurai with the ruthless methods he had to adopt to drive the Mongols out of Tsushima.

Taka's sacrifice pushed him to the edge, finally embracing the persona of the "Ghost", **fully committing to do whatever it would take** to stop Khotun Khan, even if it means foregoing the bushido code.



# Impact

インパクト

*Increasing the emotional stakes for the player*

The shocking and tragic nature of Taka's death elicits strong emotions from the player which in turn deepens their investment into the story. Taka was a character that would have captivated the player's heart with his simplicity, a blacksmith who wanted to do the right thing yet does not have the courage nor the power to. This impacts the player with the drive to see Jin succeed and avenge Taka, enhancing the narrative's impact.



Furthermore, the scene not only impacts the choices Jin makes but also the player. After the scene, it would be easier for the players to align themselves with the ways of the "Ghost". The scene reinforced the necessity of the tactics that are required to free Tsushima from the clutches of the Mongols. It also gives players a more visceral understanding of why Jin has to break away from his bushido code.



# Thesis

"To master your blade, you must first control your emotions." - Lord Shimura

# Thesis

## *Successes based on theme and narrative*

The scene's impact towards the overall narrative's theme is second to none.

The scene **challenges the traditional samurai ideals of bushido** as Taka an innocent bystander to the war pays the price for Jin's insistence on keeping his honour code.



Furthermore, the scene **furthered the narrative** along with Jin's journey of rediscovering himself as the "Ghost".

# Thesis

## *Successes based on imagery*

The scene made good use of imagery. In particular the use of Japanese imagery to convey the ongoing narrative.



The use of red maple trees symbolises war and bloodshed. Furthermore, the autumn leaves symbolise rebirth, a reference to Jin's journey of transforming into the "Ghost". Furthermore, Jin's katana on the ground and Taka being decapitated by Jin's katana symbolises that Taka's death is due to Jin's involvement with him.

The scene also invokes a sense of Deja Vu in Jin. This scene is similar to the traumatic experience he had as a child, being unable to protect his father.



# Thesis

## *Successes based on dialogue*

Overall, the scene showed a masterclass in manipulation. In particular, Khotun's actor delivered his lines masterfully, able to fully **convey the words of a master manipulator** at work. It also portrayed the savagery of Khotun.



Not only that but the emotions portrayed by Jin were shown from the visceral scream he had at the end. These dialogues were integral to **evoking certain feelings from the players**.





# Scene Improvements

"A samurai knows how to apply the right amount of force.  
Too little and you lose respect, too much and you lose  
opportunity" - Lord Shimura

# Scene Improvements

## Animations

While the set design of the scene was magnificent and the acting done by the actors in motion capture was excellent, the scene suffers a bit from certain animation imperfections such as clipping, not only with the characters and the ground but also their clothes. **More time could have been put into polishing the scene** going through the cutscenes in the game to fix such an issue.



# Scene Improvements

## Camera Work

While the camera work of the scene was overall of good quality, it is still in the end a game cutscene. The game studio has put in a lot of effort into the cinematography of most of the cutscenes in the game, allowing for a very enjoyable experience. However, more could be done.

In particular, **dutch shots** could have been employed more in the scene to evoke feelings of **tension between the three characters**. Most of the tension built up are from the players reading into the dialogue said by the characters in the scene.



Dutch shot from the film  
"Inglourious Basterds"

Furthermore, certain shots are a bit stale, and more impact could have been achieved with certain camera tricks such as **shaky, hand-held camera work** could have been utilized.

Similarly, more **POV shots** could have been utilised to give the players more of a first hand experience to the unfolding narrative, **amplifying empathy**.



# Scene Improvements

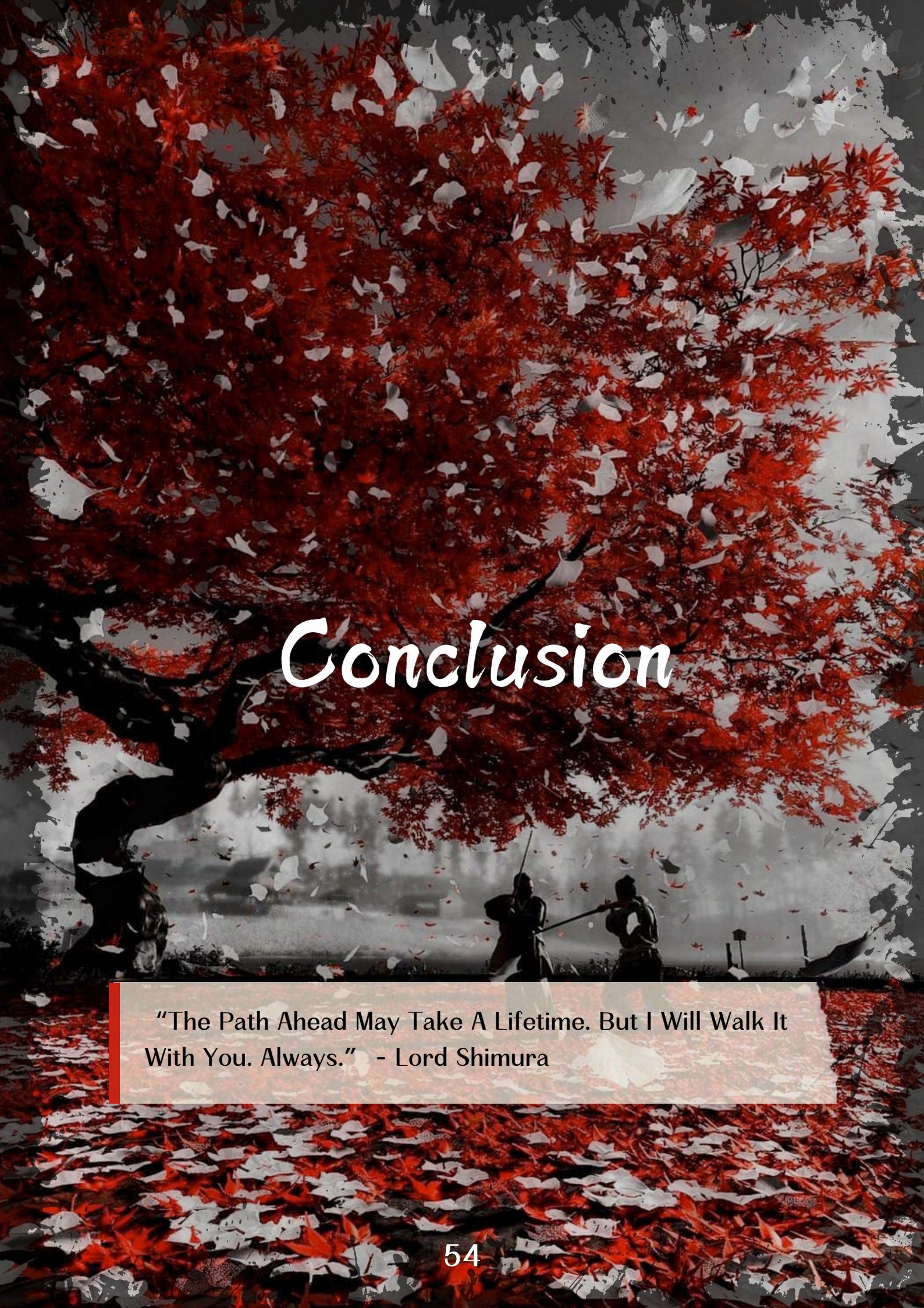
## Audio Design

While the music and sound effects were effective, they remain relatively minimalistic.



Adding in **subtle, layered sounds** such as a faint heartbeat, would have been optimal to **intensifying the psychological impact to the players**. An example to this is the use of heartbeats in the musical, “Hamilton”, in which Hamilton’s son’s death is accompanied with a non-diegetic sound of his heartbeat used as a metronome.

Furthermore, there could have been more expressive use of the score. While the Shakuhachi and the Koto were used well to convey the solemnity and tragedy occurring in the scene, the score doesn’t fully evolve as the scene progresses. An **intensifying or climactic cue** during or immediately after Taka’s death could have **given the players a cathartic release**, in alignment to Jin’s pain and grief. There could also have been a tonal shift used during the point at which Khotun gave the katana to Taka.

A traditional Japanese ink painting (suiboku-ga) depicting a landscape scene. In the foreground, two figures are shown from behind, walking along a path. One figure carries a long staff or spear. The ground is covered with fallen leaves, primarily red and white. In the background, a large tree with dense foliage dominates the scene, its branches reaching across the frame. The style uses fine ink outlines and washes of color.

# Conclusion

"The Path Ahead May Take A Lifetime. But I Will Walk It With You. Always." - Lord Shimura

# Conclusion

The scene of Taka's death in Ghost of Tsushima is a pivotal moment that succeeds in advancing not only the narrative but also the thematic depth of the game. Through Taka's loss, the scene reinforces the core themes of the game, the conflict between honour and survival.

This scene serves as a turning point in Jin's journey, being rebirthed from the death of Taka's death to be the embodiment of vengeance and the people's anger as the "Ghost".



From the atmospheric sound design and precise camera work to the dialogue and character dynamics, every element of the scene contributes to its emotional weight. It compels both Jin and the player to confront the harsh realities of his mission and the sacrifices it demands. Ultimately, this scene is a masterful exploration of the cost of freedom and the moral ambiguities of war, grounding Jin's transformation in a powerful, heartbreakingly loss that shapes his path forward.

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