SAMSARA: A BUDDHIST WORLD
GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

INDEX

INTRODUCING SAMSARA: A BUDDHIST WORLD
Vibrant Buddhist wonders await you on your journey.

What is Samsara: A Buddhist World?

Samsara: A Buddhist World is a third-person adventure game where the player takes control of a fox spirit who has found a personal interest in Buddhist art and visual culture. Taking their first steps away from an abandoned Buddhist temple the fox had called its home for many years, the player begins a journey which brings them to many iconic Buddhist monuments found in Edo, Bihar, and many places in between.

GAME DESIGN PHILOSOPHIES / CORE PILLARS

Keeping Things Slow: In centering a game around the appreciation of Buddhist art and its history, relaxed, slow gameplay is encouraged through the designs. In doing so, the player is provided time to appreciate the details and history of the art they acquire without the pressure or expectation of being forced to progress as soon as possible -- a relaxing escape from life's equivalent, if you will. Lacking any prevalent or immediate urgency allows for the player to continue their journey at their own pace, stopping as they wish, and learning as they go.

Rewards that Keep on Giving: Finding a hidden artifact or reaching the goal location should be satisfying for the player. Despite the slow moment-to-moment gameplay, acquiring collectibles or finding notable locations should still come at a challenge -- some proving harder and more rare than others. As a result, the sense of accomplishment a player may feel upon obtaining or finding a piece of Buddhist art or

documenting a famous Buddhist location would create a personal attachment to what had just been unlocked, thus increasing interest in the found objects even further. Supplementary information to these rewards should be just as rewarding as closely appreciating the piece of art itself upon acquisition.

Encourage Exploration: We wish to give players the initiative of searching and hunting for solutions or artifacts themselves. This not only reinforces the former two philosophies, but encourages a sense of exploration as the player is drawn to the prospect of scouring the streets of Edo for a missing artifact yet to be discovered in their artifact log, or navigate the grounds of the Longmen Grottoes in an attempt to complete a favour for a patron of the location. Because of this, basic navigation utilities are not included, but the need to keep each area entertaining is also a must in order to maintain interest in exploring and finding interesting segments of the level. Who knows what else is out there to discover?

TARGET AUDIENCE

Summary: Focusing on a vast, Buddhism-centric world, the target audience of the game are those who have a particular fondness for the appreciation of art -- no prior knowledge of Buddhism required! From the historical Buddhist settings depicted in the game to the interesting and beautiful art and artifacts found throughout, the art-enthusiast will find much to their liking, while the slow-pacing exploration-centric Game Design encourages the slow, appreciative approach towards the game world and its collectibles as well.

Geographical Target: Although set in East Asia and India, the game targets a North American or European audience with the intent of bringing awareness to the religious and historical aspects of Buddhism. Given the rising interest in Asian culture especially in the video game sphere, this game would serve to portray the cultural and historic side of the depicted regions uncommon in the western curriculum, and would serve as a fun way of introducing this culture, history, and visual art in an interactive way.

Demographic Target: While the appreciative and informational aspects are realistically open to any demographic capable of comprehension, the slow-paced explorative gameplay and low action levels target an audience who are likely to play this for relaxation purposes, while the numerous quests promote long play sessions. As such, the game targets an audience between the ages of 18-30 years old -- around the time where one might expect to find a piling amount of responsibilities unheard of during their school years, but would still have enough free time to spend collecting mandala pieces or exploring the Longmen Grottoes before any free time is effectively enveloped by one's later duties in life.

Behavioural Target: Long yet casual game sessions are the intended effect when playing this game. A player should feel the desire to explore, but should not feel pressured or forced into doing so. Exploration should feel enticing and fun, but not tedious or necessary.

FURTHER INFORMATION

What is the Story of Samsara: A Buddhist World
Samsara: A Buddhist World follows the story of a fox spirit who had formed a bond with a Buddhist priest that had moved into an abandoned shrine the fox spirit had been residing in. Following the priest's death, the fox sets out to finish a journey the priest had begun many years ago - travel to the Bodhi Tree. Resolute, the fox spirit utilizes its form changing powers as it journeys through Asia, completing favours for people and overcoming obstacles along the way. Whatever it takes, the fox will take the priest to see the Bodhi tree even in death, and will catalogue the Buddhist sites it has visited along the way.

Who Does the Player Control?

The player plays as the fox spirit, capable of transforming into several other animal forms as they journey onwards towards their goal. The fox, grown curious of what the Buddhist priest had referred to as *Buddhism*, seeks to learn more of the idea along the way, allowing the player to learn concurrently too.

While speaking no words throughout the game, the fox spirit's expressive reactions allow the character to come to life and communicate what it thinks or feels to the player.

What Makes *Samsara: A Buddhist World* Unique?

Thematically, *Samsara: A Buddhist World* draws upon elements of East Asian Buddhist history and culture. As such, it acts not only as a relaxing and fun explorative experience, but one full of learning with the ability to 'enlighten' the player regarding the true features of religious East Asian Buddhism. As they learn, real pieces of art will be available for view, hopefully creating a deeper appreciation for Buddhism in the process.

Samsara: A Buddhist World also promotes a relaxing experience of exploration-driven moment-to-moment gameplay while still providing a bit of excitement through its stealth segments. Paced to allow the player to choose quests at their own leisure, the player is able to select what to do and when to do it, with no rush, hurry, or unwanted haste.

The open world creates a sense of free exploration when moving around the cities or open fields, while the multiple methods of progression when in a stealth segment rewards those more tactically-inclined.

What Kind of World is *Samsara: A Buddhist World* Set?

*Samsara: A Buddhist World* is set in the late 17th to early 18th Century East Asia, spanning across cities located in the countries of Japan, modern-day South Korea, China, Tibet, and India. Players will be able to explore the historic yet fantastical world through the eyes of a fox spirit, providing further insight into the general cultures of the time as well.

PLAYER CONTROLS

Console Controller Mapping:
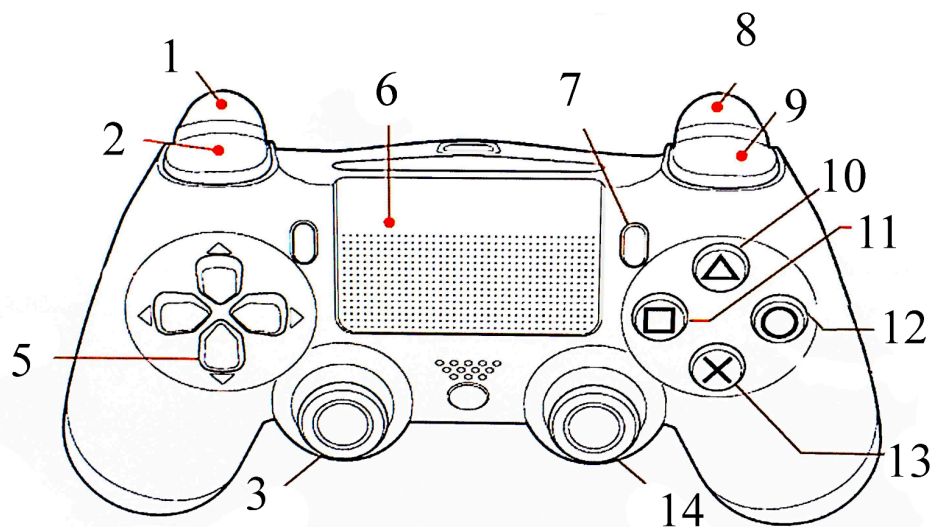
PlayStation 4 Controller Map
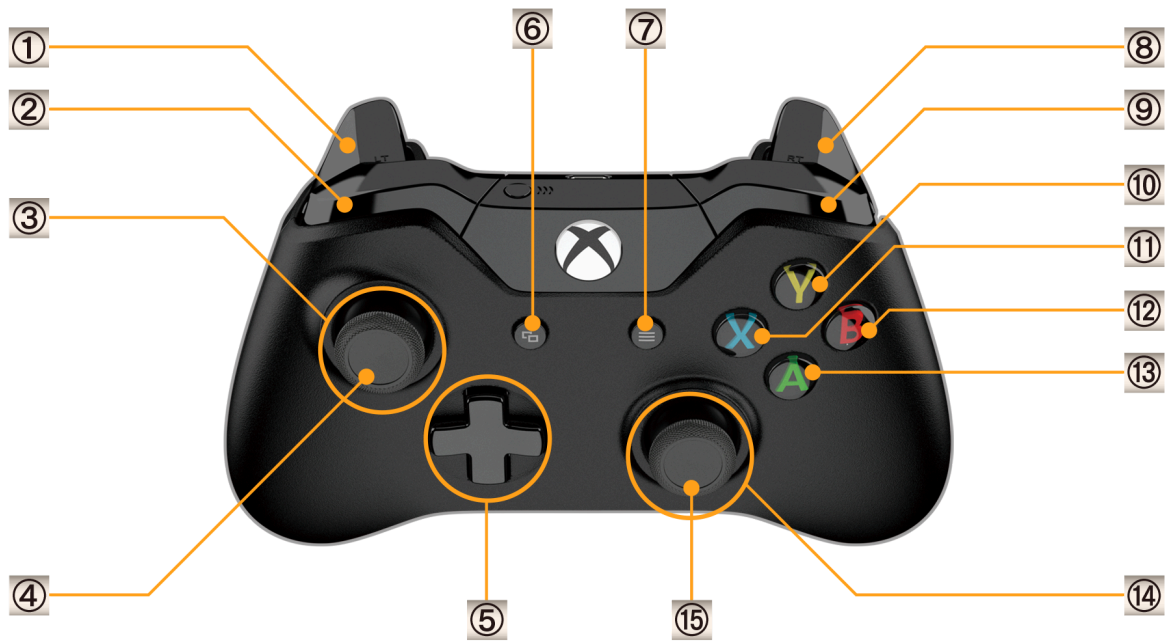
Xbox One Controller Map

Player Controls (Basic):

Action	Console	PC
Quick Change (Last Form)	1	Q
UI Information/ Focus/ First Person Camera	2 (Tap) / 2 (Hold)	F(Tap) / F (Hold)
Directional Movement	3	W, A, S, D
Human Skin Codex Menu	5 (Up)	H
Inventory/ Unequip	5 (Right)/ 5 (Right-Double Tap)	I/ R
Zen Riddle Codex Menu	5 (Down)	N
Mandala Pieces Codex Menu	5 (Left)	K
World Map	6	M

Pause Menu	7	Esc
Key Action	8	MB1 (Left Click)
Animal Selection Wheel	9	Tab
Meditate	10	T
Interact	11	E
Open Quest Journal	12	J
Jump	13	Space Bar
Camera Control	14	Mouse Movement
Fox Form Hotkey	N/A	1
Human Form Hotkey	N/A	2
Turtle Form Hotkey	N/A	3
Monkey Form Hotkey	N/A	4
Ox Form Hotkey	N/A	5
Dragon Form Hotkey	N/A	6
Rat Form Hotkey	N/A	7
Horse Form Hotkey	N/A	8
Koi Fish Form Hotkey	N/A	9
Key Buddhist Locations Codex Menu	N/A	B
Buddhist Texts Codex Menu	N/A	V
Art/ Artifacts Codex Menu	N/A	P
Quick Save	N/A	F5
Quick Load	N/A	F9

MECHANICS
and OTHER GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

Camera

The game will be played primarily from a third-person perspective. Using the appropriate camera input controls, players will be able to rotate the camera on all three axes with in-game objects acting as camera collision.

Focus/ First Person Camera

Holding the corresponding button shared by the **UI Information** input (see **Controls**), the player will be able to focus on *Objects of Interest* from a first-person perspective. *Objects of Interest* include major landmarks such as Key Buddhist Locations, Important Events, or Random Occurrences for the player to view and witness up close. Events might include a tea ceremony or an Imperial Parade. Random Occurrences might include unfortunate events happening to Daruma (see **Narrative Design Document: Any Daruma Side Quest**), or a Buddhist Priest foraging.

Holding the corresponding button while no *Objects of Interest* nearby will still allow the player to enter the first-person perspective and maintain free camera control, allowing the player to get a better view of anything which may interest them. Input is still possible while in First-Person mode, but using any KEY ACTION will revert the camera back to Third-Person Mode.

Meditate:

Upon pressing the Meditate Button (see **Controls**), players will be able to Meditate anywhere when not in a restricted area. A Meditate UI element will be brought up, and will suspend gameplay while the UI is visible. Players may select the length of the meditation session using Input 5 (Left and Right) on a controller, or drag a slider with the mouse. Meditation Sessions range from a minimum of 1 hour to a maximum of 24 hours. Players may choose to meditate to the nearest hour by holding the *Confirm Meditation Duration* button (*Interact)* before meditating. The same amount of time will elapse, but the first tick of the meditation countdown will set the time to the next rounded hour.

Meditation is used to quickly allow the in-game time to elapse, and is used by the player to experience the dynamic world during any chosen time of the in-game day. Once the selected meditation duration is chosen, the selected number of hours will begin to count down by 1 hour every 1 real-life second, causing 1 hour to elapse in game as the timer counts down. This countdown may be cancelled by the player at any point, meaning only the elapsed hours before the cancel will be taken into account.

Players may also choose to *Meditate* from the Main Menu, where Mediation duration can be set to changes in season (see **Dynamic World**). This meditation option allows the player to choose the time of year they wish to experience the game in, allowing them to play from the first day of a selected season. Seasonal Meditation may only be performed after the game's completion. Until then, seasonal changes will occur passively, and may be forced depending on mission requirements.

Interact:

Various objects in the game can be interacted with using the *Interact* button (see **Controls**). Such interactions include *Investigations*, which will bring up a dialogue box describing the interacted object to the player in text, opening doors, or initiating *Scripted Actions*. Scripted Actions are typically followed by an animation, and may sometimes affect the level following player interaction. Examples include pushing a potted plant from a window sill, grabbing an object and storing it in the player's inventory, or pushing/ pulling movable objects. Some interactions require the player to be holding a specific item (see **Inventory**).

Inventory:
Players are given an inventory which they may store key items they may have come across in the world or as a quest reward during their journey. Key Items can be equipped from the inventory menu and selected using the *Interact* button while hovering over the desired item. Some interactions require a specific Key Item to perform, but every interaction while an item is held will revolve around the held item. Unequipping an equipped key item is necessary to revert to regular world interactions, as all NPC's will reference their disinterest in the key item when applicable instead of initiating regular dialogue.

Some forms will be unable to equip some items, which will be communicated to the player via a **Dialogue Box** informing the current form's inability to equip the currently desired item.

Dialogue
Players may use the *Interact* button (see **Controls**) on Non-Playable Characters (NPCs) to initiate dialogue. Dialogue allows the player to gain new information or start/ complete quests, or allow the player to immerse themselves in the world through character interactions. Trading with a merchant (see **Merchants**) is also treated as dialogue, meaning the *Interact* button is used on merchants as well.

Animal Forms:
The player is given a selection of nine animal forms to utilize in order to progress through different obstacles in the game. Other than the differing visuals of each animal, each form also includes different statistics and abilities unique from one another, making specific forms preferable for specific situations. While control schematics are roughly the same across all forms, each animal is equipped with a different **KEY ACTION** to further separate each of the forms' utilities.

Fox Form:
Jump Distance: Medium
Jump Height: Medium
Acceleration: High
Top Speed: Medium
Footstep Noise: Low
Utility: Stealth

KEY ACTION**: Mischievous Shroud**
When holding the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**), the fox enters a stalking pose and covers itself in a shroud of shadow. This is referred to as being *Shrouded*. While shrouded, guards are unable to see the player, but only if shrouding had taken place outside of their **VISION CONE** (see **Enemies**). If a player is caught before shrouding and shrouds in front of the guards, the chasing guards will remain targeted on the player, treating them as if they were not shrouded. As such, players should use this KEY ACTION preemptively before they enter the guards vision range, or while outside of the guards' line of sight.
While shrouded, the player will be unable to jump or interact with objects. Interacting with objects will require the player to unshroud, leaving them vulnerable to enemy capture. The player's speed is also greatly reduced to that of the speed of the **TURTLE** form while shrouded.

Fox--Actor collision will NOT be disabled during shrouding, meaning that should the player collide with an enemy while shrouded, the player will be exposed and instantly targeted as if they were not in shroud form at all.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Mischievous Shift**
Prerequisite(s): Automatic (See **Narrative Design Document**).

After upgrading the fox form, the player is given access to *Mischievous Shift*. When tapping the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**), the fox enters a shadowy form and shifts from their present location to a few units in a target direction (player movement input direction). This shift ignores all collisions, and can be done to pass through thin walls or obstacles if the target location is open on the other side. While shifting, guard vision will not be affected, allowing players to shift over areas where guards may be watching astutely. The low cooldown on the shift also makes for decent traversal.

GAMEPLAY:
The fox form functions as the base form and the first form the player will find themselves as. Of the animal forms, the fox is utilized for its stealth, allowing the player to sneak past guards in order to gain access to restricted areas, and to traverse these restricted areas with ease. The fox's silent running provides the player free-reign to explore restricted areas with little fear of the possibility of patrolling enemies to hear their movement.

The fox's medium jumping height and distance allows it to traverse regular jumping segments and climb over objects that are not too high, while the fox's high acceleration allows for the player to make a quick getaway should they be caught in the act. However, the fox's medium top speed means that the fox will not gain momentum as it runs, instead hitting its top speed almost instantaneously upon player input. While this may be enough for players with quick reflexes or lucky hiding spots, a guard will almost always catch the fox during a prolonged chase.

Human Form:
Jump Distance: Low
Jump Height: Low
Acceleration: Mid - Low
Top Speed: Mid- Low
Footstep Noise: Medium
Utility: Camouflage

KEY ACTION: **Mime**
In order to lower the **SUSPICION METER** from hitting any *SUSPICIOUS* thresholds (see **ENEMIES: Suspicion Meter**) or to cease its continuous filling after a certain threshold when in human form , the player must perform characteristic actions to blend in. This can be done by pressing the KEY ACTION button at certain locations in the area, allowing the player to perform such characteristic actions (i.e. standing on guard, preparing a meal, admiring a piece of Buddhist art on the wall). The player must have a corresponding enemy skin for the area (i.e. monk, guard, etc.) for Mime to work, else the meter will rapidly fill should they perform an action with the wrong skin (i.e. guarding the guards' barracks as a monk, etc.)

Once Mime is activated, the player will be prompted to input corresponding commands which periodically and randomly show up above their head for as long as the player wishes to perform the action. The longer Mime is used, the Mime prompts will begin to grow faster, frequent, and more complex, but a larger portion of the Suspicion Meter will drop for each difficult prompt successfully input. Commands include pressing one of any buttons on their input device of choice, or tracing a shape with their mouse or analog stick, or a combination of a few. Any failed prompts will considerably raise any nearby enemies' Suspicion Meters by a large amount, increasing in amount as more inputs are failed. Upon failing an input for the first time during a Mime, the player must perfectly continue any further input for the next five seconds to reset their threshold of failure, also known as **Margin of Error**. If another input is failed while the Margin of Error is in effect, extra time worth twice the previous amount will be added incrementally for each failed input, with each failed input raising the Suspicion Meter level more than the previous time.

To reset the Margin of Error, the player must perform their inputs perfectly for the allotted time, or cease their current Mime action. However, Margin of Error will carry over if choosing to leave a **Mime** action to the next Mime action, only if the player should initiate another Mime action before the Margin of Error timer has elapsed. Margin of Error time will continue to count down when out of Mime action.

Should a player abandon a Mime action setting which has become too fast and complicated in favour of a new location, the new Mime action setting will start from scratch, resetting the speed and difficulty to its base values.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADED): **Mime Anywhere**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Royal Textile(See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**)

After upgrading the human form, the player will then be able to perform the Mime action anywhere, without the need to be at a specific spot. When the KEY ACTION button is held, the player will perform characteristic actions where they stand. They will be unable to move, but will arouse zero suspicion from any patrolling guards so long as **Mime** prompts are input correctly.

Upon performing an impromptu Mime action outside of designated areas, a lingering circle will be drawn from the spot of action. If the player cancels their Mime action and resumes it once again while inside this circle, the difficulty of their previous impromptu Mime action will carry over. To reset impromptu Mime action input difficulty upon continued use of this upgraded KEY ACTION, the player must begin a new impromptu Mime action outside of the lingering circle, or initiate a Mime action at a designated Mime action location.

Even if the designated spot lies within the lingering circle, difficulty will reset. However, the lingering circle will **NOT** disappear. Activating any Mime action when out of the circle is the only way to reset the circle's location.

GAMEPLAY
The human form allows the player to blend in with crowds and enter areas other forms may not otherwise have easy access to. It will also grant the player new dialogue with certain individuals depending on the human form being used.

The human form is unique in that there is no one base model for the human, but many possible humans for the player to unlock. Unlocking is done by gaining the trust of a human, allowing the player to unlock and transform into the humans the players have gained trust from. Which human the player changes into when selecting the human form can be set in the **HUMAN FORM** selection menu (see **COLLECTIBLES: Human Form Skins**).

The type of human model the player changes into affects gameplay. For the disguise to work, the type of human selected must correspond with the location the player is attempting to blend in with. For example, guards at a restricted area in India will only respond positively to likewise looking guards, and will treat a Chinese guard form as they would any other intruder.

The human form's relatively low jumping values make it less suitable for any platforming traversal, though certain jumps and obstacles can still be cleared. The human form is not subject to acceleration due to the acceleration and top speed values canceling each other out, while the medium-low speed makes it ideal for traversal within a small area.

Suspicious actions which include interacting with objects or performing strange, uncharacteristic movements (i.e. jumping, walking into other guards, etc.) will cause the guards to become suspicious and fill the **SUSPICION METER** (see **ENEMIES: Suspicion Meter**). When the SUSPICION METER is full, the player will be exposed and chased.

Turtle Form:
Jump Distance: Low
Jump Height: Low
Acceleration: Very Low (Regular)
Top Speed: Low (Regular)
Footstep Noise: Low
Utility: Defence

KEY ACTION**: Anywhere Shell-ter**
While holding the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**), the turtle quickly enters its shell. While in its shell, also referred to as being shelled, the player is unable to move, but can jump. Any damage from obstacles or environmental hazards which would normally damage and reset the player are mitigated.

Shelling of the turtle and its effects are instant, thus allowing the player to switch between a faster or more obstacle-appropriate form and the turtle to progress with the other form while periodically utilizing the turtle shell power when necessary. As a result, reactive-shelling obstacles utilized in the levels are present, and may require the player to concurrently manage the obstacle in front of them whilst paying attention to indicators that signal the player to switch to the turtle form and shell immediately.

Due to the occasional reactive use of the shell power, damage mitigation (i.e. invincibility frames) will begin upon player input even before the shelling animation has completed, and will linger for a fraction of a second after input has been released to ensure reactive smooth gameplay between the turtle form and other forms are possible.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Mobile Shell-ter**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Inscribed Turtle Shell Oracle Divination Artifact (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

After upgrading the turtle form, directional input is possible while shelled. Starting slow, the player will build momentum and reach a top speed value of: Medium. Unlike the non-upgraded shell version, the player will not slow down to a halt following downhill shelled movement, but will eventually slow down from a higher speed to medium provided directional input is applied. No other control changes are observed (see **Turtle Form: Gameplay** for physics-based shell movement and interactions)

GAMEPLAY:
The Turtle allows the player to mitigate any incoming damage via level obstacles, environmental hazards, etc. Although slow, utilizing the turtle's shell defensively provides opportunities for the player to access areas and progress through obstacles which would otherwise harm and soft-restart any other animal form.

When shelled, the player will be unable to move, but can jump a small distance. However, physics will affect the shelled turtle as it does any round physics bodies (e.g. rocks, tree trunks, etc.), meaning a player will be able to build momentum when rolling down a slope. The player may also be struck by another actor, allowing them to quickly gain momentum and continue for a fair distance until slowing down to their lowest speed. Top Speed when in shelled form depends on the source of the momentum or the length of the slope, meaning a player can reach up to the fastest possible speed when shelled if the opportunity presents itself.

When shelled and mobile, the player can momentarily stun a guard or break down a weak wall/ obstacle assuming the player has reached the minimum Top Speed required for the shell's momentum to have any

effect (Speed Req.: High). The player will have to find a source of momentum should they wish to utilize this mechanic towards level progression early on until the upgraded turtle form is acquired. Jumping values while shelled will also increase based on speed and momentum.

Monkey Form:
Jump Distance: High
Jump Height: Very High
Acceleration: Mid
Top Speed: Mid- Low
Footstep Noise: Medium
Utility: Platforming

KEY ACTION**: Monkey Palm**
While holding the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**) and near a grabbable object/ surface, the monkey form allows the player to grab hold of the object/ surface to aid in the player's progression. These grabbable objects are outlined for the player to discern what they can and cannot grab onto.

When grabbing a surface, the monkey attaches to the surface while the KEY ACTION button is held, and will let go should the player release the button or decide to perform a jump. Should the surface or ledge the player is holding onto extend past what the monkey is currently attached to, the player will be able to move within the confines of what is highlighted, unable to move outside the highlighted climbable area. Besides grabbable surfaces, objects may be grabbed as well. Although different types of objects may have different types of uses for the monkey, the most common object the player will encounter will often serve as rope for the monkey to swing on (e.g. vines, chains, etc.). When grabbing onto these objects, if input allows, movement will typically be momentum-based, and will aid in the player's traversal. The player may also climb up/down any such objects should they allow, but will affect the rope length of the swing.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Spider-Monkey**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Shakuhachi (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

After upgrading the monkey form, every smooth surface will become climbable. The player will be able to grab onto anything, though movement will be restricted to a specific predetermined angle of coverage. This will allow the player to scale almost anything, maybe even the Great Buddha of Nara itself. However, to ensure level bounds are not broken, limitations will be set on the bounds of the map either through specifically placed unclimbable angles, or by keeping the surfaces leading past the boundaries defined as unclimbable as they would have been pre-upgrade.

GAMEPLAY:
The monkey will serve as the player's go-to when traversing areas with long and numerous jumps. Functioning as the form utilizing traditional platforming controls, the monkey's main objective is to jump from one platform to another and reach areas otherwise unreachable by other forms. Even the dragon will have a hard time keeping pace, as the placement of strong wind currents will ultimately render flying through platform obstacles impossible.

Once upgraded, the monkey may be utilized to reach new views for the player to enjoy.

Ox Form:
Jump Distance: Mid
Jump Height: Low
Acceleration: Mid (Regular)
Top Speed: Mid- Low (Regular)
Footstep Noise: Very High
Utility: Heavy Lifting

KEY ACTION**: Ox Charge**
While using the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**), the ox begins to charge. Head bobbing up and down, the ox gains momentum and reaches a lightning top speed beaten only by the horse and upgraded dragon forms (see **Horse Form**). Directional movement of the ox is severely hindered the faster the ox goes, making turning and movement much more difficult when at top speed, but not impossible.

To fully gain momentum while charging, the player needs to time the tapping of the KEY ACTION button with the rhythmic bobbing of the ox's head. As the bobbing of the ox's head gets faster with speed, the player's tapping too should become faster. Should the player cease tapping the KEY ACTION button while the ox is at a speed, the ox will gradually slow down. The player may continue the charge at any moment after interruption.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Bull Rush**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Porcelain Pagoda Elephant Fragment (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

After upgrading the ox form, the player is able to perform a lunge in the direction of their input. This lunge will offer the same functionalities as an ox at mid-speed charge, meaning obstacles requiring this minimum speed before breakage will no longer require any momentum buildup for the player to perform. Following the lunge, the player may continue to tap the KEY ACTION button as before to achieve full speed, effectively cutting the charge up speed in half. Steering whilst at high speeds is also made easier.

GAMEPLAY:
The ox performs much of the heavy duty tasks the player will be required to carry out. Using the ox's charge, the player will be able to destroy specific obstacles and create a path of progression previously impeded by said obstacle prior. These obstacles might include trees, boulders, weak walls, or partially cracked stone walls to name a few. Certain obstacles will require a base speed for the player to reach to allow the ox to break the obstacle, with harder obstacles requiring higher speeds.

As the ox, simply walking into certain objects will also allow the player to push these objects and perhaps make progression possible for a different form where it was impossible before. Relocating and pushing these objects will have different functions depending on the quest. Feedback for when an object can be pushed by the player will be done visually as the ox will lower its head and look towards the object in question when near and when not in charge.

The player will also be able to tow carts or ploughs as an ox in order to assist with transformation or farming which will be required to complete certain favours or quests. While the horse form is also able to tow carts and carriages at a faster pace, some towable objects will be too heavy for the horse, meaning the ox is the only option until the upgraded dragon form is unlocked (see **Dragon Form**).

Dragon Form:
Jump Distance: Low (Ground); Flies
Jump Height: High (Ground); Literally Flies
Acceleration: Low (Ground); High (Air)
Top Speed: High (Air)
Footstep Noise: None, but easily noticeable (see **Dragon Form: Gameplay**)
Utility: Flying

KEY ACTION**: Tiny Wings, Tiny Terror**

When tapping the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**) once, the tiny dragon unfolds its tiny wings
and darts in a single direction with a quick burst of speed before continuing in the given direction with a
high rate of speed but low turning ability. This mode, which is referred to as fly mode, allows the player
to soar through the area quickly at the expense of turning. While turning is possible, it is fairly difficult
and will always be done extremely wide, similar to an ox at full dash (see **Ox Form**).

Tapping the KEY ACTION button once more reverts the dragon controls back to what is referred to as
hover mode. When in hover mode, the player can freely fly in any direction as they please similar to any
other character with the added up and down directions limited only by the ground or the upper limits of
the sky for the small dragon. While not as fast as fly mode, turning functions as normal.

Toggling between each mode allows the player to navigate the sky with speed and ease, but the quick
burst when activating fly mode is key to some obstacle progression.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Ancient Dragon**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and *Ancient Dragon Tooth* (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

The Ancient Dragon upgrade is the only upgrade mandatory for story progression, and is the only upgrade
rewarded for progressing through the story too. Upon unlocking the Ancient Dragon form, the player is
given the option to HOLD the KEY ACTION button where they are able to turn into an ancient Chinese
Dragon. This massive dragon utilizes the same controls as its smaller counterpart, and is considered the
fastest form in the game. This massive dragon allows the player to travel long distances quickly, making
the option to return to past locations possible.

When in 'fly' mode, the player as the dragon is transported to a 3D map of the portion of Asia depicted in
the game, and can fly from place to place quickly. Though considered the 'fly' mode, movement controls
remain the same as hover mode.

When in hover mode, the player may traverse the playable area as a large dragon, but will be unable to fly
any lower than the upper limit of the smaller dragon form.

GAMEPLAY:
The dragon form is primarily used to reach high grounds that no other form is capable of reaching, and is
also able to dash through weak objects with its initial speed boost when entering fly mode (see **Dragon
Form: Key Action**). While not necessarily mechanically complex, the dragon form offers the player a
chance to appreciate the beauty of some locations and scenery of the surrounding area from a new and
different perspective.

Although the dragon's footsteps are non-existent, this form is not recommended for stealth. When using
the dragon form in a restricted area, the dragon's peculiar colours, magical aura, and legendary status
make this form easier to spot. As a result of using this form in a restricted area, guard vision cone areas

are doubled, and their ability to spot the player is much more sensitive (see **ENEMIES** for how enemies deal with a flying dragon)

The upgraded dragon form allows the player to quickly traverse areas in the game, or travel from one city to another in an instant. When utilized in a local level setting, the player may fly no lower to the ground than the upper bounds of the smaller dragon form. This makes the ancient dragon form the most ideal for travelling long distances within a level quickly, but no more.

Mouse/ Rat Form:
Jump Distance: Medium (Relative to Smaller World Scale*)
Jump Height: High ("")
Acceleration: Medium ("")
Top Speed: High ("")
Footstep Noise: None (See **Rat Form: Key Action**)
Utility: Small World Navigation

KEY ACTION**: Little Pest**
Certain objects will be highlighted when in this form. Approaching said highlighted objects and rapidly tapping the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**) will allow the player to perform a form-related action at these objects. While performing an action, the player will be vulnerable to patrolling guards, and will emit a **noise** noticeable by guards at a certain radius. This radius will remain constant through all actions, but will not be depicted to the player in any way.

Actions include nibbling at a bit of rope to drop a suspended statue onto an unsuspecting guard, burrowing through rotted wood or dirt to create a new tunnel, or calling out to a rat army at predetermined locations and have them create a makeshift ladder for the player to platform up.

To complete an action, the player will need to fill a visual gauge. The gauge fills up via tapping the KEY ACTION button rapidly when near an object. When the gauge fills up, the action is completed, though some actions will take longer than others. If a player interrupts the action before the gauge has fully completed, progress will not be reset, and the player may return when they are free to continue. As for the rat army ladder, should the player stray a certain distance away from the rats or should a guard wander a predetermined distance (affected by walls) from the mountain of rats, they will all scurry off. In this case, the player would then need to call the rats back should they be needed once more.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Smart Pest**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Jiming Temple Meal (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

Upgrading this form will cut all action guage's in the game by half, and will reduce the size of the noise radius emitted by the player while performing such actions.

Should the player be chased, or if the player is feeling a little bit mischievous, the upgraded form also unlocks the ability to call upon an army of rats to trip and stun one enemy. When locked onto an enemy of the player's choosing (see **CONTROLS: Lock-On**), the player may hold the KEY ACTION button for a determined time to unleash this attack. The attack will then be placed on a lengthy cooldown to avoid spamming.

GAMEPLAY:

The mouse/rat form is used to navigate through the nooks and crannies of each area, often allowing the player to find hidden passages or alternate paths towards different goals and collectibles. When in this form, the player will see the world from the perspective of a rodent, crawling through gutters and cracks other forms are unable to access. Hidden rooms may be accessed this way, or new paths may be cleared as a result.

Horse Form:
Jump Distance: Medium (Scales Up with Speed)
Jump Height: Medium
Acceleration: High
Top Speed: Very High
Footstep Noise: Loud
Utility: Open Field Speedy Navigation

KEY ACTION**: Gallop**

Tapping the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**) to the rhythm of the horse's run, the horse form will enter a gallop. After a few seconds, the player will build up momentum and reach a top speed valued the fastest out of any early animal forms. To continue galloping as such, the player must continue to tap the key to the horse's running rhythm. Stopping KEY ACTION input will cause the horse to enter a gradual deceleration which may be continued again at any point. Holding the ACTION BUTTON while at a gallop will allow the player to perform an abrupt stop.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: Full Gallop**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and Kinkakuji Phoenix Topper (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

Upgrading this form will allow the player to reach the horse's top speed at a fraction of a second, essentially removing the need for the player to gain momentum. The horse's top speed too will increase, while the horse's passive speed (no KEY ACTION input, only regular movement controls) will also increase.

GAMEPLAY:
The horse form is ideal to navigate the open fields between areas, or any long streets of the cities. Other than a convenient method of speedy transportation, the horse form may also pull light carriages and carts, and will allow the player to provide transportation for Non-Playable Characters (NPCs) as an objective for certain quests.

Koi Fish Form:
Jump Distance: Far(Scales Up with Speed)
Jump Height: Medium
Acceleration: High
Top Speed: High
Footstep Noise: Loud
Utility: Water-based navigation

KEY ACTION**: Underwater Speed Demon**

When tapping the KEY ACTION button (see **CONTROLS**) once, the koi fish will dart in a single direction with a quick burst of speed before continuing in the given direction with a high rate of speed but

low turning ability. This mode, which is referred to as swim mode, allows the player to zip through the water quickly at the expense of turning. While turning is possible, it is fairly difficult and will always be done extremely wide, similar to an ox at full dash or the dragon's fly mode (see **Ox Form**).

Tapping the KEY ACTION button once more reverts the koi fish controls back to what is referred to as float mode. When in float mode, the player can freely swim in any direction as they please similar to any other character with the added up and down directions limited only by the body of water they may find themselves in.While not as fast as swim mode, turning functions as normal.

Toggling between each mode allows the player to navigate the waters with speed and ease, but the quick burst when activating swim mode is key to some obstacle progression.

KEY ACTION (UPGRADE)**: How Tough Are Ya?**
Prerequisite(s): Merit and *Vial of Purest Water* (See **Narrative Design Document** under **CODEX**).

Upgrading this form increases the speed of the koi fish's swim mode top speed and dash speed, and float mode passive speed. The player will now be able to swim against weaker currents in float mode without the need for swim mode, while stronger currents will require less jump-timing effort to progress (see **Koi Fish Form: Gameplay**) due to the higher base jump values. Currents previously impossible to go against are now unlocked for the player to explore as well.
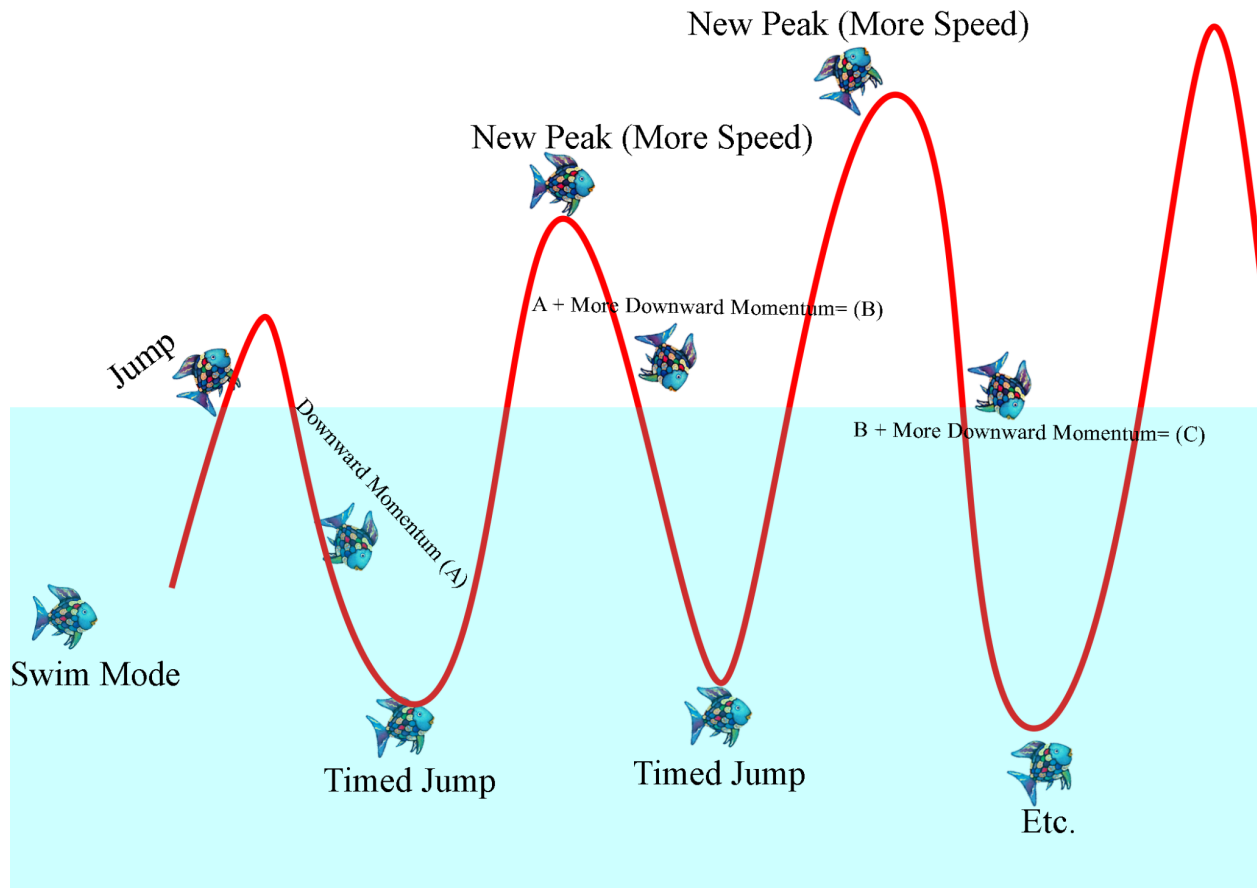Towing floating objects via the fish form are also made much easier (see "")

GAMEPLAY:

The fish form is used to navigate water terrains such as rivers, lakes, and basins. Sharing much of the controls of the **Dragon Form**, the Koi fish form functions much like the dragon form but in a water setting. Unique to the fish form's abilities are its ability to tow floating objects and the fish's need to time jumps to swim against strong currents.

Towing floating objects are done similar to how an ox or a horse can tow carriages. Any towable floating object will have a piece of rope floating in the water the koi fish may bite, allowing the player to drag the floating object along through the water and potentially set up new platforms for progression or as an objective to complete a quest (ex. Towing a rowboat to shore, towing a straw hat washed away back to its owner, etc.)

A Koi Fish may increase its top speed past the passive top speed achieved while in swim mode by utilizing downward momentum gained out of water and the following upward swing when plunging back into the water after a jump and into another, higher and faster jump.

New Peak (More Speed)

New Peak (More Speed)

A + More Downward Momentum= (B)

Jump

Downward Momentum (A)

B + More Downward Momentum= (C)

Swim Mode

Timed Jump

Timed Jump

Etc.

To summarize, while in swim form (see **Koi Fish Form: KEY ACTION**), the player may jump up and out of the water, mitigating the slower water physics and gaining more momentum while outside on the way down. The momentum gained while falling from the air and back into the water can be utilised by the player by tapping jump again when at the lowest point of the fish's re-entry arc, allowing the player to jump out of the water higher than before, therefore acquiring even more momentum than previously gained. Continuing this timed pattern will allow the player to build up a higher level of speed necessary to swim against stronger currents, tow heavier objects, or perhaps pull devious fishermen into the water after taking their bait. If the player messes up a timed jump, the koi fish's extra velocity will slowly decelerate before reverting back to its passive top speed.

The player may select the koi fish while out of water, but movement will be severely hindered and near impossible. The only inputs the player will be able to perform when in this form out of water are jump and movement input. When jumping, the player will flop around in one spot, while inputting movement will cause the koi fish to flop in a random direction.
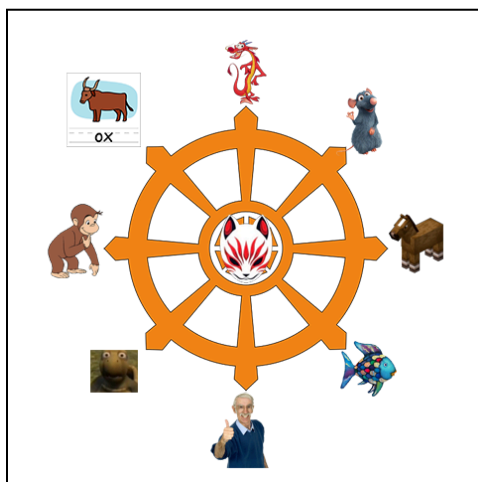
Form Selection Wheel:

Figure 1.0 Form Selection Wheel UI Mockup
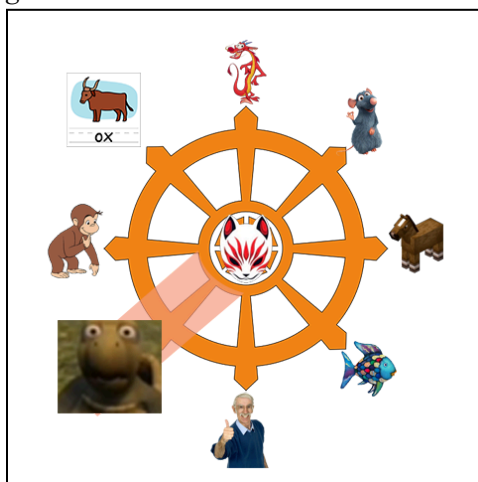

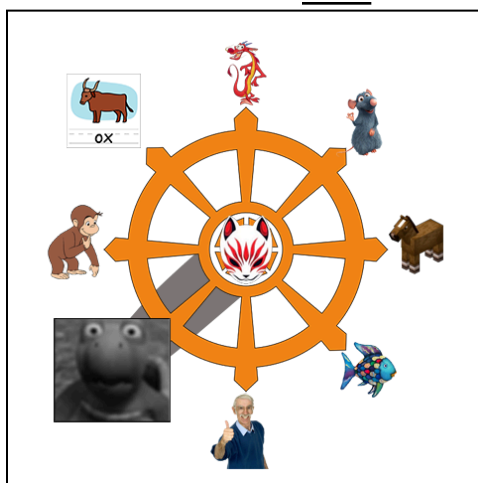*Figure 1.1 Form Selection Wheel Turtle Selection Mockup*

Figure 1.2 Form Selection Wheel Displaying Currently Selected Form (No Input)

Swapping between animal forms is key to game progression. In order to swap between animal forms, an *Animal Selection Wheel (Fig. 1.0)* is used. Holding down the corresponding *Animal Selection Wheel* button (see **Controls**) causes the wheel overlay to appear, dimming and blurring the screen instance behind it in order to focus attention onto the wheel. While the corresponding *Animal Selection Wheel* button is held, players are then able to select which animal they would like to transform into via directional input using the *Right Analog* stick on a controller towards the animal of their choice, or by pointing and clicking on the animal of their choosing when using a mouse on PC, highlighting the selected animal (*Fig. 1.1)*. Should the fox form be desired, the player must re-select the animal form currently in use (as shown in *Fig. 1.2)*, effectively de-selecting said form and allowing for the use of the original fox spirit form.

Quick Change:
Tapping the Quick Change Button will allow the player to instantly swap to their previously used Animal Form without having to open up the Form Selection Wheel.

Enemies:
The game will feature enemies patrolling restricted areas often in the form of monks, guards, or other appropriately themed human enemies. Outside of restricted areas, citizens sharing the models of such enemies will behave as regular citizens to allow free exploration of the overall level, but will act accordingly in defined restricted areas. Despite featuring differently themed enemies, all enemies will function the same, differing only in aesthetic and animation. Each enemy is equipped with a **Vision Cone** to define what lies in their field of sight as well as a **Sound Detection Radius** which defines the radius that they are able to hear any noises the player may emit either through actions or footsteps.

Should a player be caught by an enemy, they will be teleported to the outside of the restricted area and may try again. Upon capture and ejection, enemy states and Suspicion Meter in the restricted area will reset to what they were upon first entering.

Enemies may be stunned by any form whose KEY ACTION involves a quick dash or high movement speed up to High. Stunning an enemy will place them in a **Stunned** state, but will immediately alert any enemies in the vicinity, placing them at **Threshold 3** (see **Suspicion Meter, States, and Patrolling**) regardless of previous *Suspicion Level* unless higher. While stunned, the enemy will be unable to move and loses the ability to spot the player. However, after the stun duration has passed, the previously stunned enemy will regain control and be placed at Threshold 3 regardless of previous suspicion level.

Enemies Cont'd. **: Suspicion Meter, States, and Patrolling**:
When patrolling restricted areas, enemies will have four major states. These states are determined by the value of the **Suspicion Meter**, a meter located above a singular enemy's head which displays the level of suspicion that specific enemy may have towards the player and their actions when a player is trespassing in a restricted area. The meter is raised when an enemy spots the player in a restricted area or hears any suspicious noises emitted from the player either through their footsteps or through the performance of specific actions, and contains four thresholds of suspicion the enemy may reach, thus changing the enemy's state. The larger the animal form or the louder the footsteps, the faster the Suspicion Meter will rise.

The base state of an enemy AI is **patrolling** where they will move from one predetermined point to another, allowing the player to analyze their routine. When patrolling, enemies will be unaware of the player and will function as such. Duties may include standing guard at a door or polishing their weapon for guards, or reading sutras and meditating for a set amount of time for monks. Actions and patrol paths will also differ depending on the time of day, meaning a player may be in for a surprise should they

expect enemies to patrol the same way they had been observed patrolling in the morning as they are in the afternoon or evening; an empty dining room at night may be populated at lunch.

For Animal Forms:
Should an enemy hear the player or momentarily see the player and reach **Threshold 1** of their **Suspicion Meter**, they will move onto the second state known as **Suspicious**. When in this state, the enemy will continue on their predetermined paths, but will have an increased vision cone, larger noise-detection radius, and will be more sensitive to future disturbances from the player, causing the Suspicion Meter to fill more quickly. Once this threshold is broken, the Suspicion Meter will only decay until the minimum level of Threshold 1.

Once **Threshold 2** is broken on the Suspicion Meter, the third state known as **Investigating**, which is further divided into two sub-states, will be triggered. The first sub-state is defined as **Cautious Investigating**, and will be the one triggered when Threshold 2 is broken. During this state, the enemy will rely on AI-driven pathing, making their movement much more random and unpredictable. They will peak around corners, look under tables, or peer into cracks in the walls in an attempt to find the player. Enemy vision cones and noise-detection radius will also largely increase in size as a result, and the Suspicion Meter will fill even faster when detecting the player. Once this threshold is broken, the Suspicion Meter will only decay until the minimum level of Threshold 2.

Threshold 3 of the Suspicion Meter will set the AI to the second sub-state of **Investigating** which is **Frantic Investigating**. Here, the enemy's detection radius and vision cone size will further increase, and will cause the enemy to frantically run around the area in search of the player. Faster and more erratic searching means the player will have a harder time evading enemies while on the run. However, this state is not permanent as continued successful evasion from the player will cause the Frantic enemy's Suspicion Meter to slowly decay to Threshold 2, reverting their state back to **Cautious Investigating**. When in Threshold 3 Suspicion, any other enemy the frenzied guard nears(i.e. if the frenzied guard enters another guard's vision cone or noise detection radius), that respective guard's Suspicion Meter too will be set to Threshold 3 regardless of previous level of Suspicion, and will continue to act as such, decaying only to Threshold 2 upon successful player evasion. Enemies may also sweep their feet or weapon in a circle occasionally, which will detect a shrouded fox if contact is made.

The breaching of **Threshold 4** for any enemy indicates that the enemy has complete vision of the player, and will chase the player down in an attempt to eject them from the Restricted Area. This state is known as **Chasing**, and functions towards other lower-Metered guards the same way as **Frantic Investigating** does, where any vision cone or noise detection radius the Chasing enemy enters, that respective enemy will also be set to the Chasing state and join the hunt for the player regardless of prior Suspicion Level. Continuing to evade the Chasing enemies by breaking their line of sight and going into hiding will allow the Suspicion Meter to slowly decay down to Threshold 3, and eventually Threshold 2. Should the player be spotted before the meter drops below the Threshold 4 level and into Threshold 3, the meter will immediately fill up to its maximum value once more, thus forcing the player to hide out until the meter drops below Threshold 4 and into Threshold 3.
Should a player transform from any one form to another while in the presence of an enemy, the witnessing enemy's Suspicion Meter will instantly fill up to the maximum and begin chase.

The only way for the Suspicion Level to drop below Threshold 2 once this level is attained is through the use of the Human Form.

For Human Form:
The Suspicion Meter will function differently when in human form. When in human form, Suspicion will not be aroused while wandering around the restricted area. However, should an enemy catch the player

performing *Uncharacteristic Actions* often necessary for level progression, the Suspicion Meter will jump much more drastically than when being spotted as other, smaller animal forms. The jump in suspicion compares in value to the amount added when spotted in horse or ox form inside a restricted area. Uncharacteristic actions will include actions such as moving objects to create better platforming for the other forms or for the purpose of clearing or opening a path, or perhaps cutting a rope sealing off another area of the level, to name a few.

When in Human form, enemies will be highly conscious of the player's actions, meaning a base increase in enemy vision cone and noise detection radius size values will be applied, even when at **Threshold 0**. Their new base size values are the same values as when enemies are past Threshold 3 for any other form. Essentially, it will be at maximum size throughout to balance the freedom the players are given to explore, assuming an area-appropriate skin is chosen for the human form (see **Human Form: Human Skins**). Should an inappropriate human skin be chosen, any enemy who spots the player will immediately raise to Threshold 3, and the player's **Mime** actions (see **Human Form: KEY ACTION**) will be ineffective.

Being caught performing one *Uncharacteristic Action* from a clear Suspicion Meter will be enough to break **Threshold 1** of the Suspicion Meter for the witnessing enemy. When in this state, the enemy will continue on their designated patrol path, but will periodically look towards the location of the player, and might sometimes break off from their path to check up on the player.

 Getting caught performing another *Uncharacteristic Action* will shoot the enemy up into **Threshold 2**. The enemy, now set to **Investigating**, will abandon their designated route and will randomly patrol the area while continuing to spontaneously check in on the player. They may also peek around corners to spy on the player, or position themselves in a location where they may watch the player from afar for a randomly determined amount of time. Once Threshold 2 is broken, the enemy's Suspicion Meter will continue to passively fill, but further *Uncharacteristic Actions* witnessed will only increase the amount added to the meter half of what was added before. This is to put the player on the clock, but to also allow some leeway once the pressure of the gradual increase in suspicion level of Threshold 2 is activated.

Once **Threshold 3** is breached, the enemy will begin to frantically follow the player, shadowing them from behind boxes or walls, and will constantly attempt to keep the player in their field of vision. The gradual increase of the Suspicion Meter will also begin to increase twice as fast, and any *Uncharacteristic Actions* witnessed by an enemy at this Threshold will push the Suspicion Meter past **Threshold 4**, increasing it to its maximum value. Threshold 4 functions the same way for human forms as it does for animal forms, but, unlike the steady decaying of the Suspicion Meter when successfully evading in an animal form, the Suspicion Meter will not decrease at all while in human form unless **Mime** actions are performed. Should a player initiate **Mime** actions outside of any chasing enemies' line of sight, the chasing enemies will not interrupt or apprehend the player even if their Suspicion Meter is past Threshold 4, but will instead crowd and intently watch the player as they attempt to decrease the level of their Suspicion Meter(s) through **Mime** actions while the enemies watch. Should the player fail, the chase will resume, but the likely surrounded player will probably be caught, meaning **Mime** actions performed while at Threshold 4 should be done with the utmost precision, offering little margin of error.

Environmental Hazards

Various Environmental Hazards may occur during specific areas which may require the quick usage of a specific animal form to successfully survive. Environmental hazards would include thunder strikes, falling boulders, or flash flooding. In the case of the former two hazards, the player would likely make use of the **Turtle Form** KEY ACTION to survive the obstacles, while the latter would require a quick swap to the **Koi Fish** or **Dragon Form** to avoid. The required animal form needed to mitigate obstacles will require thinking from the part of the player, thus allowing them to apply logic or trial and error in the progression of certain obstacle areas.

Player Reset State
Reset occurs when players are struck by an **Environmental Hazard** while in a vulnerable form or caught by an enemy. Should the Environmental Hazard prove to be the player's undoing, the player will be teleported to their last checkpoint often placed right before the obstacle which caused them to falter.

If the player is caught by an enemy while in a *Restricted Area*, the player will be kicked out and placed by the door outside leading to the *Restricted Area*. Any progressions made in the *Restricted Area* before being caught will not be reset, meaning players need not go through any *Interactions* or set-ups a second time.

Dynamic World
A dynamic world means the game will feature a day-night cycle which naturally progresses as the player plays, or may be skipped forward at the player's discretion (see **Meditation**). The time of year will also affect the look of the world, as some areas will be covered in snow in the Winter months while trees will be bright red, orange, and yellow in the Autumn months. Players may skip to a specific season using the *Meditation* option from the menu too.

The game will also feature a dynamic weather system which is based on the season. Some days, the weather may be clear and sunny, while others dark and stormy. Spring may be more susceptible to frequent rain, while summer may see long draughts which affect the plants and dry out the grass. Winter may have snow storms, while summer might see flooding and typhoons. Weather is not only affected by season, but by location as well. As a result of the weather, road conditions will be affected, with muddy roads making cart towing much harder, while frozen rivers making swimming inaccessible. Players might even find themselves trapped under a sheet of ice in the water should they choose to meditate in such a place!

Dynamic NPCs
With a dynamic world also comes dynamic NPCs. NPC outfit and schedule will be affected by season, time, and weather conditions. Citizens may wear shorter sleeved garb or head coverings on a hot day, or be seen carrying an umbrella on rainy days. Some may even stay inside during the rainy days, while others might go outside and enjoy a cool breeze.
The dynamic schedule and outfits also extend to enemy NPCs. As their routine schedule activities the player may observe them doing while trespassing in a *Restricted Area* is affected by the time of day, the season and weather might change their behaviour too. For instance, a patrolling guard may stop at a campfire to warm up while making the rounds in the winter time, or might choose to sit in the shade for an extended amount of time in the summer. This dynamic schedule is up to the player to discover and play around.

Collectibles:
Throughout the world are places, objects, and clues enticing the player to explore and piquing their curiosity. Collectibles are not only optional objectives for the player to find, but will often be the primary goal in progressing through the areas and continuing the player's journey toward the Bodhi Tree.

Merit
Scattered throughout the world are floating orbs called merit. Simply walking close enough to the merit will allow the player to pick them up and collect them. Merit is very common, with the expectation players will see and collect them in abundance. Merit is also earned as a reward for completing quests, either exclusively or paired with a different reward - Merit will always be rewarded for completing any quests.

Collectible Merit placement will also be utilized in level layout for player direction. Often, merit orbs in an arched line over a gap will subliminally or otherwise indicate to a player a jump is possible or directed there, while main paths and directions will be lined with merit to indicate possible routes towards level progression. To see the uses for Merit, see **Merchants**.

Mandala Pieces

Players may stumble upon pieces of Mandala paintings during their journey, rewarding merit to the player as they are collected. Once enough pieces for a single mandala are found, the player may navigate to the Mandala Page from the Main Menu and begin to reassemble the Mandala piece (Main Menu > Codex > Mandalas). Upon the successful reassembly of an entire mandala, the player will be rewarded a large amount of merit, and the corresponding Mandala's Codex entry (see **Narrative Design Document: Mandalas**) will be unlocked.

Other than finding pieces throughout the world, some will be available as rewards for certain quests or by purchasing them from wandering merchants too.

Art/ Artifacts

Forgotten by history, players may stumble across various small Buddhist or historic artifacts on their journey. Upon finding an artifact, a large reward of merit will be awarded to the player, and the corresponding artifact's Codex page will be unlocked.

Artifacts may also be rewarded upon the completion of quests, or may be bought from wandering merchants.

Buddhist Texts/ Sutras

Buddhist Texts/ Sutras will be available for the player to find throughout the world. Each Buddhist Text will have a corresponding Key Buddhist Location where the player may "read" the text at the location. In order to "read" the text, the player must be in possession of the corresponding Text and find the **Mantra Recitation Location** hinted at by dialogue from certain people in the area. Dialogue will only be available once the correct text is found.

A player will know when they are standing at the location when the **Interact** prompt appears (see **Controls**) over their head, as well as the icon for Buddhist Texts/ Mantras directly above that. This icon will only appear when the player is in possession of the appropriate text.

Upon interaction, the player will enter a dreamlike gaze and peer back in time as they watch a key moment that had occurred at that location unfold in front of their very eyes. Once watched, the historic moment's Codex entry will be unlocked, and will be available for viewing again under the appropriate Codex entry in the Codex Menu (Main Menu > Codex > Buddhist Texts). See **Narrative Design Document: Codex: Buddhist Text Entries** for a list of events.

Unsatisfactory "Zen" Riddle Scribblings

Written by the great Bodhidharma himself, drafts of failed Zen riddles can be found littered throughout the world discarded by the Zen master. Unlike actual zen riddles which are typically considered illogical and emphasize the practice of solving as much as finding an answer, these zen riddles were deemed too logical and unfortunately have an exclusive answer. In short, they are just riddles.

Players may access any collected riddles from the Codex Menu (Main Menu > Codex > Daruma's Discarded Riddles) in order to read and solve these riddles. Each riddle will, when solved, point the player towards a certain location where they will find one or multiple collectibles to add to their Codex. In some cases, a Key Buddhist Location may be found too!

Any rewards related to a Zen Riddle will not be available for pickup before the associated Zen Riddle is acquired, even if the player has found the location of a Zen Riddle accidentally. Until the Zen Riddle is found, the associated Artifact will not be spawned in.

Key Buddhist Locations
Key Buddhist Locations are locations which the player may approach and be given a prompt to catalogue the location. At a certain location, usually the most grandeur, an **Interaction** prompt (see **Controls**) will appear over the player's head with the icon for **Key Buddhist Locations** directly above it, signifying the availability for the player to add the entry for the respective Key Buddhist Location to their **Codex** (see **Narrative Design Document: Codex**).
To catalogue a Key Buddhist Location in the codex, the player must play a mini-game where they will be tasked to trace an outline of a shape representing the area they wish to catalogue.
Each level's end goal will be to reach and catalogue a particular Key Buddhist Location, meaning certain locations are unavoidable. However, optional Key Buddhist Locations will be available for the player to catalogue as well, and will each have their own entry in the Codex catalogue too.

Human Form Skins:
Players will be able to collect human skins (not literally) throughout the game for human form usage. Any quests or quest lines the player successfully completes for a human quest giver will unlock the quest giver's model in the Human Skin Codex page (**Main Menu > Codex > Human Skins**) that the player may select to alter their human form and appear as the selected look. Unlocking a unique human form skin will also unlock the respective Codex entry as well.

Different Human Skins are required for free access into different Restricted Areas in the Human Form, meaning collection of different Human Skins is essential for the maximum utilization of the Human Form.

Merchants:
Players may spend any collected **Merit** (see **Collectibles**) at a merchant's shop to buy unique goods. Players will be able to purchase pieces from a Mandala painting, Art and Artifacts, and "Zen" Riddles from merchants not found anywhere else. However, merchants are regional, meaning artifacts sold from one merchant in a particular city will be completely different from what a merchant in another city or country is selling. Travelling merchants will also have an inventory of Buddhist artifacts from countries not featured in the game for sale (i.e. Middle Eastern, South East Asian, etc.)

Merchants can be found at every city, while travelling merchants have a chance of appearing on the roads or waters in the areas between cities.

Guan Yin Statues:
Guan Yin statues can be found occasionally throughout the world and, imbued with the spirit of Guan Yin or her regional equivalents, will function as a special merchant for the player to interact with.
At a Guan Yin statue, players will be able to upgrade any unlocked animal form provided the player has found the corresponding artifact needed to upgrade the selected animal form (see **Mechanics: Animal Forms** for animal form upgrade prerequisite), as well as a considerable amount of merit.

USER INTERFACE

World Map
Players will be able to view their current location on the World Map by opening the map using the World Map button (see **Controls**). However, the world map will be completely void of information at the start.

A radius around the player's representation on the world map will uncover any blank segments it touches, with these segments remaining visible for the remainder of the game. As such, players must journey into these uncharted areas to reveal the information to them on the world map. Discovering major locations such as cities or Restricted Areas will reveal the entire area of that location on the world map without the need for the player to uncover it for themselves.
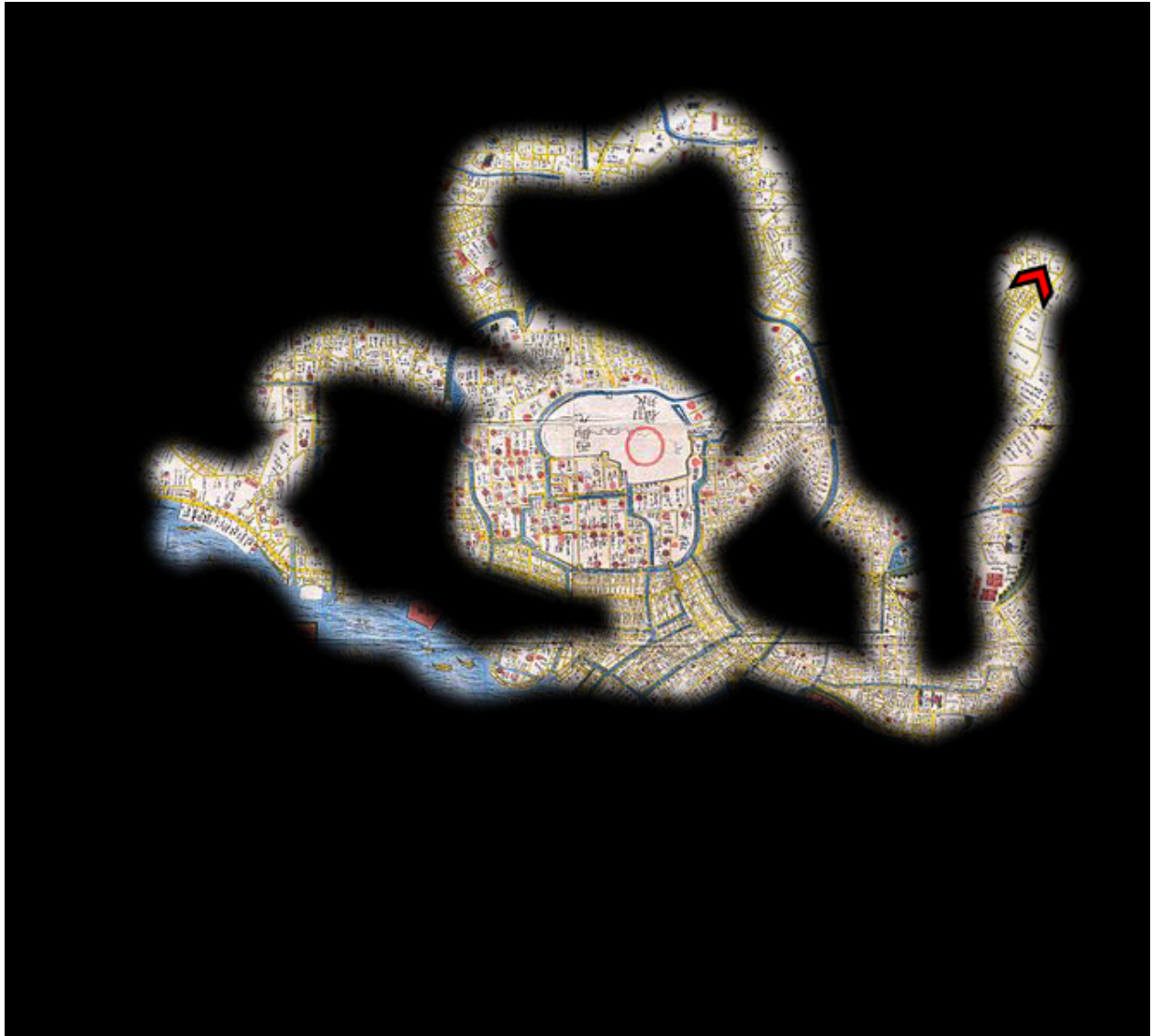
World Map Uncovering by Travel Mockup

Information shown on the World Map includes Locations of cities, towns, previously located Key Buddhist Locations, and potential quest givers. Any objectives for currently active quests (see **User Interface: Quest Journal**) will also appear on the World Map, and inactive quest objectives may appear too. Merchant and Guan Yin statue locations will also be marked. Restricted areas will appear as red on the map. Optional activities will also appear, as well as locations where the player can move from one level to another.

Mini Map:
The mini-map is a persistent UI element always visible to the player while in-game. The mini-map depicts a selection of the world map while keeping the player icon in the middle. The area of the world map the mini-map depicts is the same size as the radius which unveils uncharted sections of the world map, meaning the mini-map will always depict meaningful information to the player. Information shown on the mini-map is the same as the world-map, but will only appear when the information is in the depicted area of the mini-map.

Compass:
The compass is a persistent piece of UI always visible to the player while in-game. The compass reflects the current direction the player's camera is facing, and will rotate accordingly. The direction of any selected quest objectives or custom waypoints (see **User Interface: Quest Journal**) will also be reflected on the compass.

UI Information:
Tapping the corresponding button will bring up the User Interface for a few seconds before it disappears again. This allows the player to quickly receive progression updates without the need to open the main menu, while also decluttering the persistent User Interface.

Information reflected on the in-game UI includes the in-game time and month, the player's current location, weather status, and current merit count. The player's currently selected form is also displayed as a temporary UI element, as well as the objectives for the currently selected primary quest (see **Quest Journal**).

Pause Menu:
Bringing up the Pause Menu will suspend gameplay and allow the player to access various menus or options to compliment their gameplay. From the Pause Menu, the player will be able to save, exit, change any game settings or options, view the world map, view the quest journal, and access the Codex Menu leading to each Codex sub-category.

Quest Journal:
The Quest Journal is where any quests accepted, failed, or completed by the player can be accessed. Quests will be categorized as Main Quests, Side Quests, and Finished Quests in the journal, and can be filtered by each category. Players may select multiple quests that will appear on the world and mini-map, but only 1 quest can be selected as the Primary Quest.

The objectives of the Primary Quest will be reflected in text on the **UI Information** screen and World Map, while the directions the player needs to head to in order to complete the objectives of the primary quest will appear on the compass.

Saving:
Players may save the game from the Pause Menu. Saving the game saves the instance of the play session, meaning the player will resume at exactly the moment they had saved the game. Quitting the game via the *Exit Game* option of the **Pause Menu**, **Meditating**, or entering a new area will auto-save the game. Any major collectible found, often following a new Codex entry for said collectible, will also auto-save the game. Multiple Save files can be manually created, but auto-saving will create a maximum of three save files. Once three save files are created, the latest auto-save will always overwrite the oldest save.

Players may also use the quick-save function (Quick Save on the PC, Quick Save Option from the Menu on consoles) which will create one quick-save file. Everytime quick-save is used, the last quick-save will

be overwritten. Quick-Load (Quick-Load on PC, Quick Load Option from the Menu on consoles) will reload the last quick-save file.

Codex:
The Codex is an option in the menu leading to several sub-options the player may explore. Each sub-option is categorized by collectible type, allowing players to examine any collectibles they had previously found as well as read the corresponding entry associated with each collectible. Missing collectibles will appear in the Codex as blank, and will inform the player how many collectibles out of the total amount they are currently in possession of in each respective sub-category.

Each missing collectible's associated area will be provided to the player, allowing them some idea as to where they might begin their search for the missing collectibles.

Dialogue Box:
Upon initiating dialogue, a dialogue box will appear at the middle-bottom of the player's screen. The speaker's name will appear at the top left of the box, while the text reflects the dialogue the speaker is saying. Dialogue often reveals information to the player or provides them with a lead for their journey, and may initiate quests.
A dialogue box will also be used to show descriptions or outcomes of any interactable object the player interacts with.

REFERENCE IMAGE SOURCES

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