



FIELDS AND MOUNTAINS —  
THE SNOW HAS TAKEN THEM ALL,  
NOTHING REMAINS.

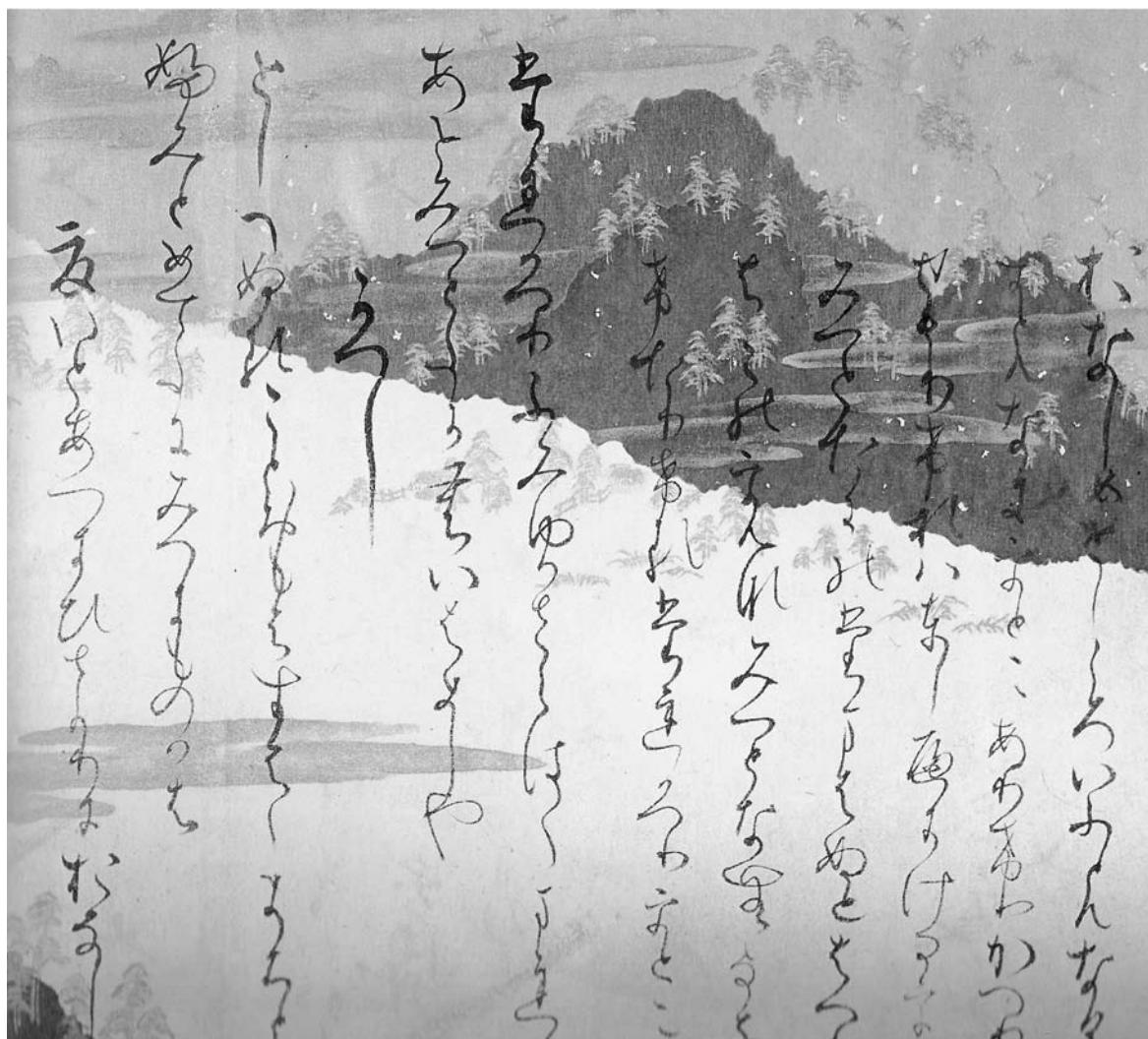
JOZO.

SHIKI

SURLY ZEN KUMOSO MONK, PROTECTOR  
OF PILGRIMS, FORMER RONIN.

AS CERTAIN AS COLOUR  
PASSES FROM THE PETAL  
IRREVOCABLE AS FLESH  
THE GAZING EYE FALLS THROUGH THE WORLD.

—ONO NO KOMACHI.



THE SLEET FALLS  
AS IF COMING THROUGH THE BOTTOM  
OF LONELINESS

# SHIKI THE KUMOSO

A destitute ronin, tortured by loyalty to his disbanded clan and the loss of his beloved lord, Shiki seeks enlightenment as a wandering zen monk (*komusō*), a protector of pilgrims. He is returning to the lands of his birth after years of exile.

Did you notice him, unspeaking, unmoving, in the corner shadows?

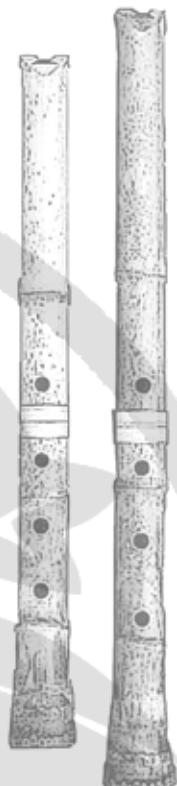
He is a small man, but solidly built, with full cheeks and strong, square jaw. His head is shaven, his tunic simple. By his feet there rests a great woven straw hood, a *tengai*.

When he chooses to move, he moves with purposeful dignity, a warrior, a man of noble birth.

When he speaks, he speaks softly, with authority and poise.

A quiet like the voice of the rain flows about him.

He raises a long bamboo flute to his lips. He breathes ... slowly, carefully and a haunting melody fills your ears.



AN AUTUMN EVENING  
IT IS NO LIGHT THING  
TO BE A MAN.  
ISSA.

Did you notice him, unspeaking, unmoving, in the corner shadows?

Beneath the impassive face of his basket straw hood, his eyes, unseen, glitter angrily.

When he moves he moves stiffly, haughtily, seeking to retain the dignity of some lost or imagined office.

His hands clutching the shakuhachi are white with the tension of his grip.

He breathes, slowly, mindful, seeking to control the omnipresent anger, the fear, the looming despair. *This man is afraid*.

Neither good nor evil, heroic nor timid, the warrior of courage can also be base and weak. He who yesterday crushed a hundred foes on the battle field may today be lashed by the fiends of hell, be they imagined or real.

We are all prisoners of our past, and hostage to our futures.

We are all less than we imagine.

Don't be overwhelmed by the Japanese terms used in this description. They are included for depth and colour, but are not necessary for play. Some key concepts are explored further in notes at the end of this character sheet.

## KARMA

It is beginning to look like snow, the end of the maple leaves.

The colour of evening has already fallen on the road to Koya-san, early buried in shadows. The distant mountains stand out in sharp relief, nearer than they should be. The shadows deepen; the sky over the snowy mountaintops is bathed in a soft wan light.

The wind sighs through the great pine trees, whispering in the long *suzuki* grass.

'Here in our mountains, the snow falls even on the maple leaves.'

The snow country surrounding Mount Koya is home to Shiki the pilgrim monk, home to his ancestors and his proud Momiji (Maple) clan.

The clan castle, Koyo-jo, stands high above Great Bodhisattva Pass on Horse Crown Mountain, an ancient bulwark against invading demons and humans alike.

Yet the snow has fallen on the maple leaves. The clan is no more, and Shiki returns to his homeland in secret.

When last he walked these roads, some ten autumns ago, he bore another name, the name of his birth—Momiji Sai, named after his grandfather, Lord Sai the Golden Eagle. It was a name of great substance, but one seldom uttered. He walked then as a ronin, landless but proud, a warrior, hunted and hated by the Kishu clansmen who had usurped his birthright.

The story is a shameful one. His grandfather, the Golden Eagle, was daimyo of the Maple clan during the first tumultuous years of the Tokugawa shogunate. Lord Sai supported the defenders of Osaka in their ill-fated stand against the Tokugawa. But the Maple clan castle, Koya-jo, was taken by stealth in a devastating night attack by a Kishu army.

Shame enough, but honour can withstand defeat. The unspeakable, burning, bitter dishonour is that Lord Sai and his senior retainer both disappeared during the attack, taking with them the Tama Yanagi, the Arrow Talisman of the Maple clan, its root and power, said by the priests to be carved from the living bone of a mountain kami.

Despite an unending search by friend and foe alike, no trace of them or their bodies were ever found, and the clan, humiliated by defeat and slavery, died a long slow death of mockery and shame. Cowardice! Humiliation!

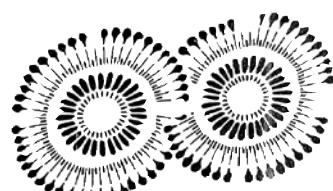
When the younger Sai was born, his father was already dead, having been granted the small honour of suicide. His mother, bitter and defiant, had fled into exile, and Sai was raised in proud poverty to bushi values by an aged band of retainers.

As he grew, the retainers dwindled, taken one by one by age or enemy assassins. Sai shared his mother's sense of purpose but not her bitter hatred, and with no effective means of continuing the struggle, they grew more distant with the passing of years.

With adulthood came a growing self-hatred at his own imagined failure: a bitter knowledge he would be unable to face his father and ancestors in the other world.

|| MOUNTAINS SEEN ALSO  
BY MY GRANDFATHER, LIKE THIS,  
IN HIS FINAL WINTER.  
ISSA.

|| THE LONG NIGHT:  
I THINK ABOUT  
A THOUSAND YEARS  
AFTERWARDS.



DETERMINED TO FALL  
A WEATHER-EXPOSED SKELETON  
I CANNOT HELP THE SORE WIND  
BLOWING THROUGH MY HEART.

Without a homeland, without strategy or purpose, Sai fell to become a mercenary ronin.

Many warriors had lost their clan or their cause at this time, and had fallen to wandering, doing what was necessary to survive. Most were no better than bandits, and Sai was no better than most.

In war one regards neither heat nor cold. The bushi drinks from the puddle on the field, and cooks the rice straw for food in his helmet. Honour and loyalty sustain him. But a ronin has neither, and the dark deeds of his daylight hours return to haunt him in the dark.

Sai slowly fell into dissolution and ruin. Anguish and shame directed his blade against friend and foe, innocent and guilty alike. He lived solely to put rice in his belly, gold in his grasping hand. He entered the lowest realms of hell.

Then came Ito Jiro, a mercenary captain and zen master.

Jiro-tono had a wife—whom he neglected. He also had an apprentice, Sai—whom he favoured. He nurtured the young bushi back from the edges of madness, and their loyalty to each other blossomed into *shudo*, the love between warriors.

It is said of Sai that he never had the vice of women. This was true, though he never regarded his indifference as a failing or absence. In his loyalty to Jiro-tono, Sai discovered for the first time emotions larger than himself. He slowly found a new sense of dignity and a measure of peace. Poetry and duty became one.

The Buddha teaches that no attachment can last forever. When the older warrior died, Sai's mind again returned to the riddle and shame of the Maple clan, to the identity he had to hide and disguise. Experience had burned the worst—though by no means all—of the rage and anger from his mind. But the hurt and shame remained.

To honour the memory of his master and teacher, Sai entered a Fuke Zen monastery, taking the religious name of Shiki. Though monastic life never came naturally to him, and the madness lingered always at the edge of his being, he persevered.

AFTER TEN AUTUMNS  
WANDERING, MY MIND  
LEADS ME HOMeward  
TO MY NATIVE PLACE.

As the poet said, it is easier to subdue a bandit in the mountains than to subdue the evil in your heart. But the compassion of the Buddha reaches across all worlds.

After several years, Shiki took to the road again as a wandering *kumosô*, a guardian of pilgrims.

And entered the realms of autumn.



AN AUTUMN NIGHT -  
DON'T THINK YOUR LIFE  
DOESN'T MATTER.

## PILGRIMAGE

In the cedar grove, the quiet seems to fall in chilly drops. Night is fast approaching.  
The broadsheet hangs leaden in your hand. *It conjures ghosts.*  
Phantoms long vanquished float up before you and vanish like foam on the sea... the smell of gunpowder, the sounds of muskets, trumpet shells, war drums and battle cries. The flashing of assassins' blades by moonlight. The cries of butchered women and children. The burning shame of dignity lost, of ancestors dishonoured.

**I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN  
THAT AT LAST I WOULD  
TAKE THIS ROAD, BUT YESTERDAY  
I DID NOT KNOW THAT IT WOULD  
BE TODAY.**

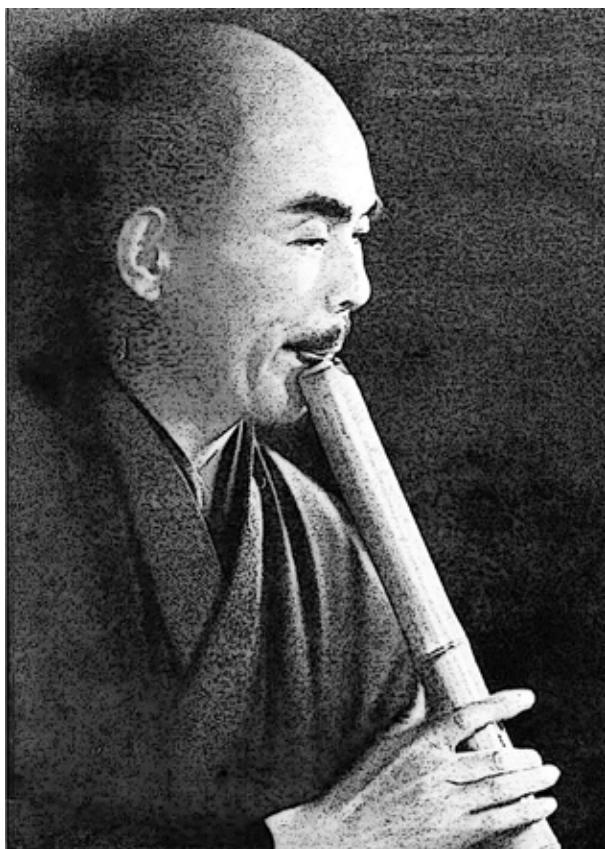
What gesture, however futile?

A samurai knows only one response.

You will commit seppuku before the new governor. You will die at Osaka, showing that the courage and honour of the Momiji can never be diminished.

That you might face your ancestors with dignity.

To be present at the ceremony, you must be in Osaka by the night of the full moon. That is three days. Luckily, the road from Koya-san to the coastal city is straight and broad.



The shame of the Maple clan.

A new Tokugawa governor is to be installed at Osaka. As part of his investiture, he will be gifted with the lands of the former Maple clan. The last legal vestiges of the clan's existence will be removed forever.

What can one man do, to rescue this clan from oblivion?

**THIS WORLD-  
TO WHAT MAY I LIKEN IT?  
TO AUTUMN FIELDS  
LIT DIMLY IN THE DUSK  
BY LIGHTNING FLASHES.  
MINAMOTO-NO-SHITAGO.**

**ONE DAY YOU ARE BORN  
YOU DIE THE NEXT-  
TODAY,  
AT TWILIGHT,  
AUTUMN BREEZES BLOW.**

In your shakuhachi case is hidden a *wakizashi*, an (illegal) samurai short sword. It will be enough.

Three days. You are afraid.

*How sweet the winds of autumn.*





## KOMUSÔ

A komusô is a wandering mendicant priest of the Fuke sect of Zen Buddhism. Komusô means 'priest of nothingness and emptiness'. They are characterised by wearing a straw basket hiding their head (a sedge or reed hood named a *tengai*), to symbolize their detachment from the world, and by the playing of the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute) for meditation.

The komusô practice *suizen* ('blowing Zen') meditation, playing solo shakuhachi pieces called *honkyoku* for alms, healing, and enlightenment. Playing the shakuhachi is considered a wordless form of sutra chanting.

Komusô are held in universal distrust by Tokugawa authorities, because it is suspected that too many ronins and spies have infiltrated the sect, merely affecting the appearance of shakuhachi-playing Zen monks for questionable motives. (The sect will eventually be banned).

No longer part of the samurai class, the komusô were forbidden to wear their swords, so these wandering monks redesigned the shakuhachi from the root of bamboo. By making it longer and stouter, the shakuhachi flute could also be used like a club.

The komusô centre their practice of shakuhachi on developing what they call their *kisoku* (spiritual breath) to such a degree that they can enter the state of *tettei* on (absolute sound) with the bamboo and everything else. Their goal is to experience enlightenment through the shakuhachi. This is perhaps best expressed in a komusô saying: 'Ichion Jobutsu' (become Buddha in one sound).

**SNAP YOUR FINGER  
STOP THE WORLD -  
RAIN FALLS HARDER.**

**ALL SOUNDS ARE THE SOUNDS OF THE  
BUDDHA.  
ALL FORMS ARE FORMS OF THE BUDDHA.  
HEKIGANROKU.**

**DO NOT FOLLOW THE IDEAS OF OTHERS,  
BUT LEARN TO LISTEN TO THE VOICE  
WITHIN YOURSELF. YOUR BODY AND MIND  
WILL BECOME CLEAR AND YOU  
WILL REALIZE THE UNITY OF ALL**

**FLUTE NOTES  
IN SPIRIT ROCKS  
ANSWERS**

圖之戰合之郊安拔大



## WARRIOR HOMOSEXUALITY IN EDO JAPAN

Unlike the West, in Tokugawa Japan sex was not viewed in terms of morality, but rather in terms of pleasure, social position, and social responsibility. While modern attitudes to homosexuality have changed, this is frequently true even today. Like the premodern West, only sexual acts were seen as being homosexual or heterosexual, not the people performing such acts.

Originally, *nanshoku* was one of the preferred terms to refer to male to male sex. This term did not imply a specific identity; but rather, a type of sexual behaviour.

Buddhist monasteries appear to have been early centres of homosexual activity in ancient Japan. It was popularly said that Kūkai, the founder of the Shingon Buddhist sect, introduced *nanshoku* into Japan after returning from Tang China in the 9th century. Mount Koya, the seat of Kūkai's monastery, eventually became a by-word for same-sex love.

Although chastity among monks is one of the precepts of Buddhism, this came to be understood, perhaps disingenuously, as sex with women. Because Japanese Buddhism often focused on the intentions or outcomes of acts, rather than the acts themselves, same-sex involvements could be identified as a way of communicating with the Buddha, and of creating deeper spiritual bonds.

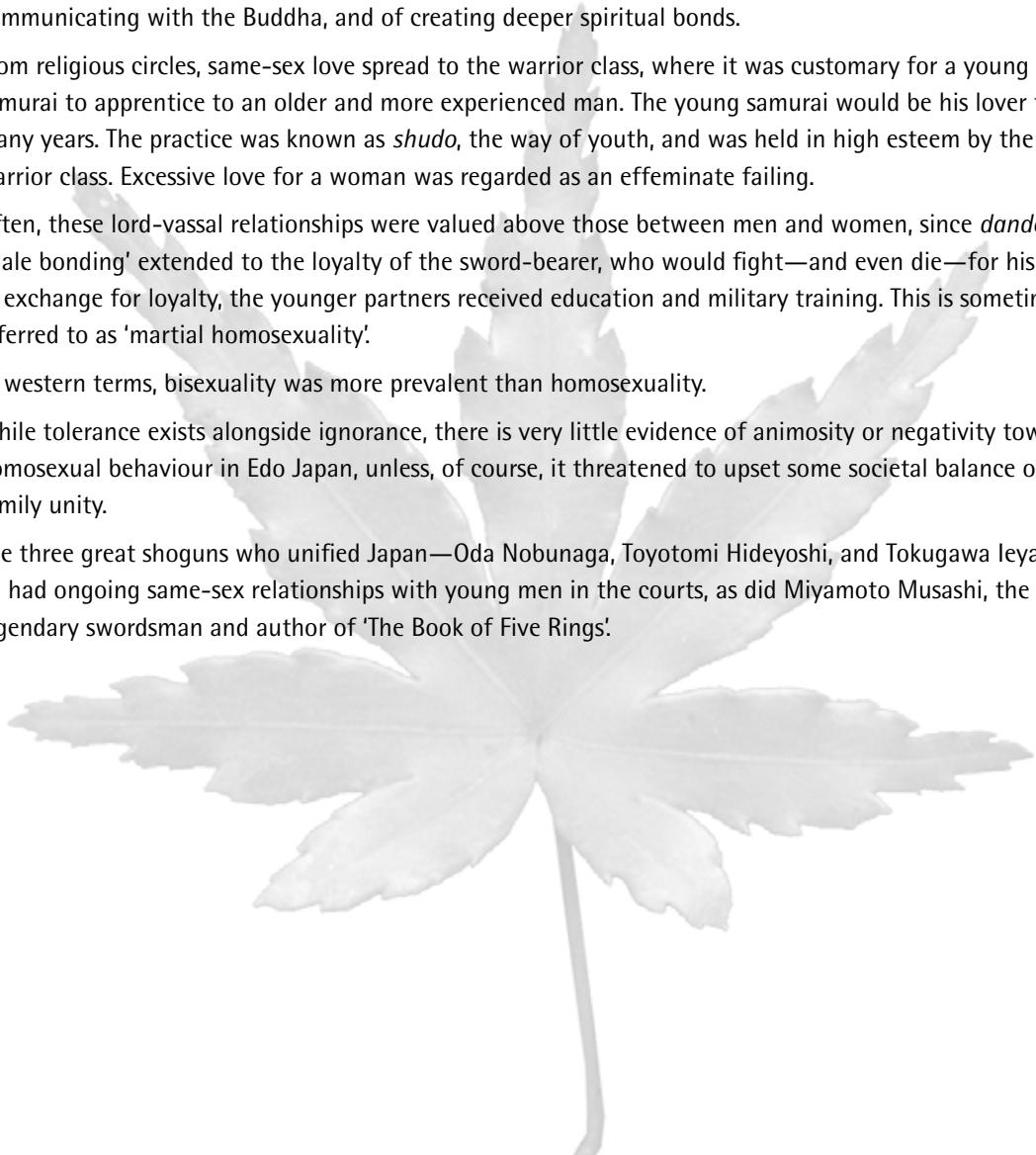
From religious circles, same-sex love spread to the warrior class, where it was customary for a young samurai to apprentice to an older and more experienced man. The young samurai would be his lover for many years. The practice was known as *shudo*, the way of youth, and was held in high esteem by the warrior class. Excessive love for a woman was regarded as an effeminate failing.

Often, these lord-vassal relationships were valued above those between men and women, since *dandoshi* or 'male bonding' extended to the loyalty of the sword-bearer, who would fight—and even die—for his lord. In exchange for loyalty, the younger partners received education and military training. This is sometimes referred to as 'martial homosexuality'.

In western terms, bisexuality was more prevalent than homosexuality.

While tolerance exists alongside ignorance, there is very little evidence of animosity or negativity toward homosexual behaviour in Edo Japan, unless, of course, it threatened to upset some societal balance or family unity.

The three great shoguns who unified Japan—Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu—all had ongoing same-sex relationships with young men in the courts, as did Miyamoto Musashi, the legendary swordsman and author of 'The Book of Five Rings'.





## A MOMENT

### A Note to the Player:

At a certain point in the module, there will be a moment of recognition, of utter transformation.

You will recognize a face, a face utterly familiar, yet one you have never seen before.

The moment and its accompanying emotion will be profound, shocking in its force. It will evoke feelings of great passion, and greater loss, an intensity of feeling and bewilderment that will leave you utterly breathless and uncomprehending.

The awakening will be all the more shocking because its source will be totally unfamiliar, its source a type of creature in which you have previously experienced extreme disinterest. It will test the very core of your being.

Prepare yourself for this moment. Listen for the GM's phrase, "as if you awaken from all the dreams of the floating world". That will be the moment.

||| WHEN THE MOON LOOKS DOWN  
ON OUR THOUSAND KINDS OF  
DARKNESS, THIS AUTUMN  
IN THE AUTUMN OF MY LIFE  
COMES NOT TO MY LIFE ONLY.  
OE NO CHISATO,

||| THE AUTUMN WIND IS BLOWING  
WE ARE ALIVE  
AND CAN SEE EACH OTHER,  
YOU AND I.

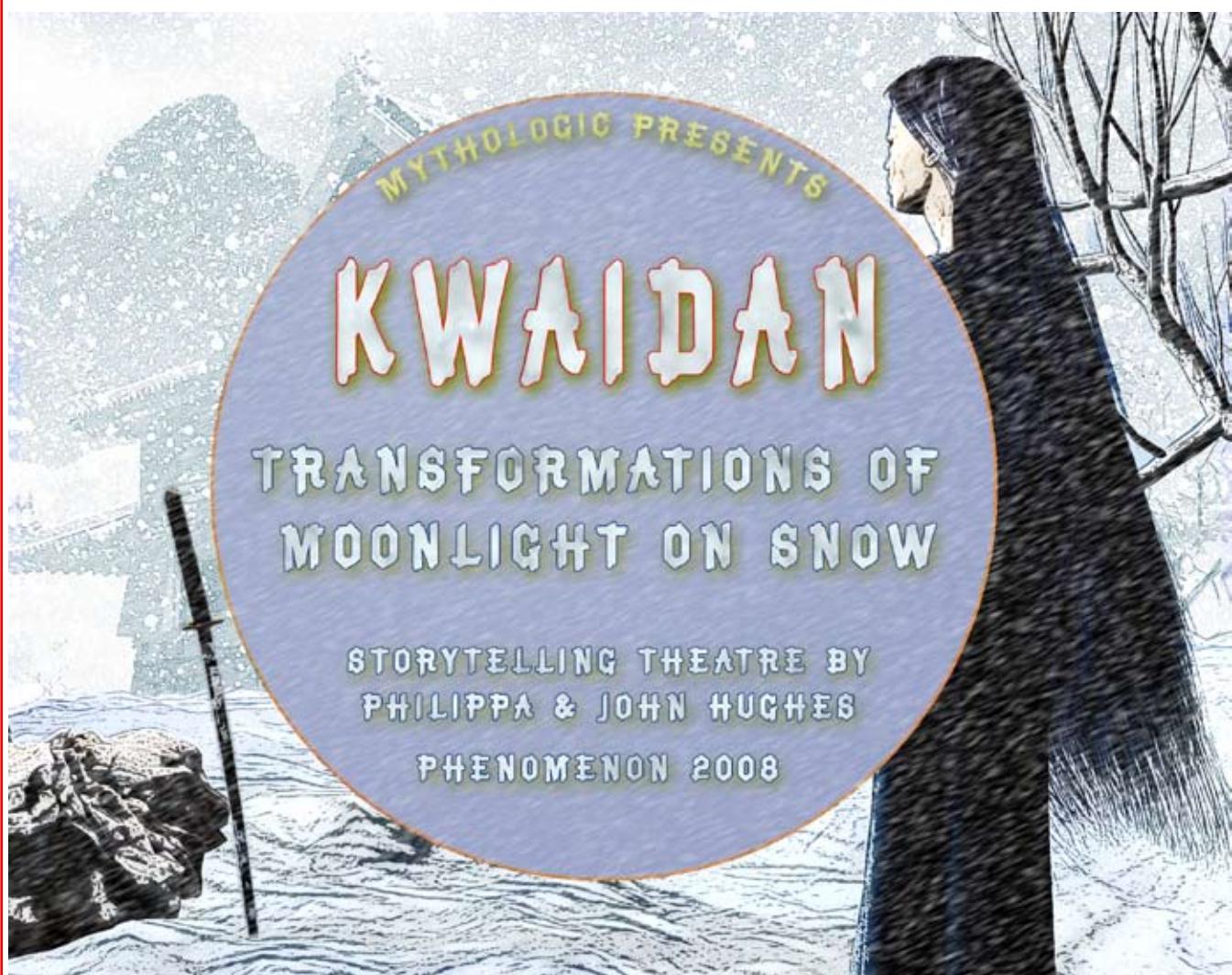


## A KWAI DAN FOR YOUR TELLING

The story below is one of Shiki's favourite *kwaidan*, or weird tales. Make an opportunity to tell the tale in character in the course of the module. Evenings before sleep are a perfect time to tell stories.

### YUKIONNA: THE SNOW WOMAN

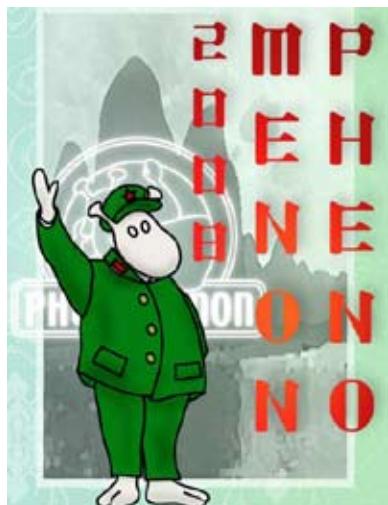
- In a remote village there lived two woodcutters who cut wood in a forest several *ri* from their village.
- Mosaku was an old man; and Minokichi, his apprentice, was a lad of eighteen years.
- One evening a great storm overtook them and they took shelter in an abandoned hut.
- Minokichi was awakened by a showering of snow in his face. A white- clad woman was leaning over Mosaku, sucking the heat out of him, leaving him a frozen corpse.
- She then turned to Minokichi, and bent over him until her face almost touched him.
- The woman took pity on him said that she would spare him on account of his youth, but if he ever told anyone about her she would kill him. Then she left.
- Minokichi survived the storm.
- The following year, he met a young woman called O-Yuki. Minokichi fell in love with her and the two were married.
- Oyuki was a fine woman and a good wife and bore Minokichi many children. Everyone loved her.
- One night, after the children had gone to sleep, O-Yuki was sewing by the light of a paper lamp. Minokichi told her the story of Mosaku's death and the woman of the snow.
- O-Yuki was this magical creature. After telling Minokichi that if he ever mistreated their children she would kill him, she left in a flurry of snow.



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LOYAL DEMOCRATIC RANDOM INC PRESENTS, A PEOPLES'  
PHENOMENON LABS SOCIALIST GAMES CONVENTION

## Phenomenon 2008

Queen's Birthday long weekend  
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