

The History of *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*



Part 2: *Xenosaga*

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Part 2: XENOSAGA

MonolithSoft's Project X

Without Namco, Monolith Soft would've had big trouble existing, and without Hirohide Sugiura the cooperation would've been impossible. Martin Johansson writes in his article, "It was the industry-veteran Sugiura who convinced the capitalists and Namco to invest in producer Tetsuya Takahashi's up-and-coming RPG project X, [...] And it was not an easy task considering that RPGs are one of the most expensive types of games you could possibly produce."



Monolith Soft's "Project X" promotional poster (2000)

Presumably the X in "Project X" was always symbolic of the *Xeno-* prefix, and that Tetsuya Takahashi intended to name it something as close to "Xenogears" as possible. It probably did not take long for Takahashi to settle on the "Xenosaga" title. "We created Monolith Soft in October 1999. At the same time, we began development on 'Xenosaga.' Or, that is what I'd like to say, but in the beginning we were scrambling to bring together talented people," says Takahashi in the December 2001 issue of *Dengeki PS2*. "So in actual fact, development began sometime around the end of 2000."

The flyer that appeared as work advertisement on the net had pictures of early skeleton computer graphics renderings of the interior of spaceships, and a character (chaos) who unmistakably resembled Kunihiko Tanaka's designs.



MonolithSoft's work advertisement (2000)

Although an odd caribbean-styled artwork by Yasuyuki Honne (later said to be a "joke," or promo for *Baten Kaitos*) had thrown some people off, a lot of *Xenogears* fans were thinking these posters evinced that MonolithSoft were working on *Xenogears Episode I*. Having to leave the company who held the copyright to *Xenogears*, however, meant that Tetsuya Takahashi could no longer tell the same story over again, or make a sequel to it, and fans were aware of this. The fans hoped for MSI to obtain the rights to *Xenogears* but it never happened, and it is unknown whether or not Tetsuya Takahashi and MSI even tried. But it remains clear that Tetsuya Takahashi had wanted to make a better saga anyway, despite the somewhat successful *Xenogears*.

Soraya Saga recalls in 2010, when asked how she felt about starting the *Xenosaga* series, "We missed *Xenogears* so much but overall *Xenosaga* seemed a fresh start full of hope." Tetsuya Takahashi stated in an interview with *GameSpot* in 2001 that "*Xenogears* ended up differently from how I envisioned it. So we [Monolith Soft] have decided to hit the reset button and start all over again with a science-fiction [story], which will be presented through a series of episodes encompassing the beginning to the end of the universe."

"There will be six episodes planned in all, all of which are divided into three major parts. I already have the story plotted until the middle of episode five in my mind, but certain ideas may be perceived as old-fashioned as time goes, so we'll try to be flexible to changes."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (interview with *GameSpot*, Jun 8, 2001)

Both the "6 episode" plan, and the concept of "3 major parts" expressed here, echoes what Takahashi had already stated in *Perfect Works*, and here was a chance to structure the whole thing more evenly. Each major part; the story of humanity in outer space; the story of Fei's planet; and finally the story that tells of what comes after, would now consist of 2 episodes each, (2, 2, 2) instead of 1, 4, 1, like in *Xenogears: Perfect Works*.



The six episodes divided into three major parts.

Perhaps now we should examine some of the changes that appears between *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*. Most notably, the story of Fei's planet would no longer be an unknown planet. The idea was re-conceptualized so that it would take place on Lost Jerusalem instead. This concept changes the premise very little, in fact, since Deus was already trying to reach Earth according to *Xenogears: Perfect Works* when it got forced to crash on "Fei's planet" before it could accomplish this aim. The reason for this change is not hard to understand, since a story arc that spans one third of the entire series on a single planet should arguably take place on the central, most important and enigmatic planet in this universe: Earth - the motherworld that was abandoned thousands of years ago and keeps a yet undiscovered secret.

Another change was Deus itself. Deus was originally not Takahashi's creation, but the combination of Soraya's original story ideas of a "female A.I. that gives birth to a new mankind" and a "terraforming weapon out of control." In the previously referred to *Super PLAY* article "*Viljans Makt*," Martin Johansson writes, "He [Takahashi] also tells me that the original idea for *Xenogears* was not his own, but that he had help from Kaori Tanaka [Soraya Saga]. Building *Xenosaga* from [his own] foundation seems to have increased his level of ambition and when I ask how many parts he can imagine *Xenosaga* to go on for he answers without hesitation: 'Six episodes'."

Deus, it seems, would've now been re-conceptualized into something that more literally alludes to "Yahweh" - the original name for Deus. It does not actually appear in *Xenosaga's* first story arc, (and thus not in the current *Xenosaga* trilogy), but the hints are strong that the many pieces and plotting of the "Deus System" were now incorporated into KOS-MOS and T-Elos as Animus; chaos as Anima; Omega as the potential defense system; the Collective Unconscious as a second allusion to the Gnostic Demiurge concept; and finally the consciousness of the being "Mary" as a new Miang - the will of Yahweh. In Western tradition, Yahweh/God is male, but in *Xenogears* it seemed that Deus, by proxy of Miang, acted as a "Mother God" type being, more akin to the Japanese goddess Amaterasu and the like, rather than a male deity, and this concept of a female deity appears to repeat itself in *Xenosaga* with Mary.

The Zohar, as has been mentioned, was reduced from its convoluted evolution from a mystery object with magnetic properties to a phenomenon alteration engine to simply be a "door" to the Higher Dimension for an access to infinite power. Finally, Elly and Fei were re-conceptualized into Nephilim and U-DO (Abel). In *Perfect Works*, while Abel is stated to be a "mysterious boy," he was most certainly still a human at that point, and not an extension of the Wave Existence. This is supported by the following line on page 158:

"The Wave Existence incorporated both Abel's human nature and his desire for a Mother in the lower dimension. For the Wave Existence to return to its own dimension, it must reverse this process; it must sort out those elements which belong to itself and those which are alien to it, expelling those foreign elements and returning them to their original source."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Xenogears: Perfect Works-The Real Thing-*)

The central, recurring characters in *Xenogears* had been Fei and Elly, but the two recurring characters in *Xenosaga*, it was said, would be chaos and KOS-MOS. Although many of these interviews have been lost, both I and many others remember this statement and Martin writes in the *Super PLAY* article, "KOS-MOS and her antithesis Chaos will exist in all six games." What had also been mentioned in the now lost interviews was that they would not necessarily exist in the same "forms" (and probably not playable in every story arc). chaos and KOS-MOS, being "Anima" and "Animus" respectively, would naturally exist in some form throughout the series.

But in hindsight this statement seems a little inconsistent. After all, if some form of chaos and KOS-MOS would exist in every episode, why wouldn't some form of Abel and Nephilim (Fei and Elly) still exist in every episode? The revelations at the end of *Xenosaga III* as well as the fact that Abel is U-DO gives even more support to the idea that they will continue to exist in some form in future episodes as well. One might suggest that Takahashi directed this comment towards a new audience who weren't ready to accept Abel and Nephilim as important characters yet, when they are not main playable party members in the first game. But it doesn't stop with just Nephilim and Abel, or chaos and KOS-MOS existing - through rebirth and reincarnation - in every episode. The Database entry under Jin Uzuki in *Xenosaga III* reads:

"Though his life was lost defending chaos in the Zarathustra battle, his spirit--his consciousness-- travels alongside Nephilim to the distant land of Lost Jerusalem. Perhaps his consciousness, like those of countless others, lies in sleep eternal, awaiting the appointed day. Until a time when all had gathered."

- *Xenosaga III* database

The last sentence here, could imply that possibly the entire cast - playable and non-playable character alike - would have taken part, with new identities (forms), in future episodes and story arcs. The statement that some

form of chaos and KOS-MOS would exist in every episode, then, loses its uniqueness. The most unique trait this pair possess is that they are complementary existences, perhaps more so than any other two characters in the *Xeno*-verse.

The evolution of the concept of chaos and KOS-MOS appears to have gone something like this: There were two opposing forces in *Xenogears*; Deus and the Ahnenerbe. And at the core of this; Miang (as the representative of Deus); and Emperor Cain (as the representative of the Ahnenerbe). This is the focus of the "After Word" in *Perfect Works* that was set up as a teaser for the story's progression in a sequel/prequel. It can also be said that the Ahnenerbe were similar to the civilization in outer space who was in opposition to Deus' aim and tried to seal Deus into parts. Thus we have one force that promotes unity and order (Deus) and another that promotes independence and chaos (both the Ahnenerbe and the civilization in outer space).

KOS-MOS and chaos, thus, represents re-conceptualized representations of these two opposite forces; order and chaos. chaos is the existence that the power of Anima had actualized from the Collective Unconscious. His existence is that of chaos; there is a separation between his own intention and his reason for existence as the Failsafe of the 4-dimensional universe that functions in order to protect the entirety of the universe. Like Emperor Cain he harbors hesitation towards his own reason for existence, and the consciousnesses of humans that wish dispersal, not unity, will directly act on the power of Anima - giving birth to the collapse phenomenon that will destroy the universe.

In a sense, the "will to power" theme of Nietzsche, the strength of the strong, rebellious and selfish individual, is what resonates with the power of Anima - the "shining will." On the other hand, KOS-MOS, or Mary, is the existence that the power of Animus had actualized from the Collective Unconscious, and holds the function of controlling Anima. Animus, thus, is something that can bring order to the universe, but only by suppressing the strong will and ego of mankind. Like Miang (Deus), she - Mary (KOS-MOS) - obeys the rules of order and takes control of Anima, wishing only to help humanity survive and could potentially keep them from growing selfish, perhaps ruthlessly.

With the Judeo-Christian allusions going in a more literal direction, the story's genesis scenario had to shift from the Eldridge origin to the original origin of humanity on Lost Jerusalem, and allude to the biblical and esoteric stories of genesis and the fall of man that way. This time "fear" was not only referenced, but was expressed as being the catalyst for the very fall itself:

DMITRI YURIEV:

"In ancient times, people used to be together with God. People loved God, revered and even feared God. Out of fear of the undying God, they sought divine power. This was a way for the ancients to resist Him. Eventually, they found a method to become gods themselves."

U-DO and Abel's Ark, from the very beginning of development on *Project X*, must have been the natural evolution of the Wave Existence concept from *Xenogears*, despite what some fans may speculate about the changes that occurred throughout the *Xenosaga* series. Other concepts that were in play and part of the plan from the beginning were Mary Magdalene, Rennes-Le-Chateau, Zarathustra and Eternal Recurrence as they appeared as keywords in the very first trailer when *Project X* was unveiled as "*Xenosaga*" in 2001, so none of those were additions or changes to the scenario either.

The "broken mirror" imagery of humanity was now expressed beginning with the Collective Unconscious concept and humanity's dispersal in the 4-dimensional universe's Imaginary number domain. The term "4-dimensional universe" was now abbreviated as simply "dimensional universe" or "lower domain."

Takahashi states further, in the *Dengeki PS2* interview, that as a consequence of the first game going into development first at the end of 2000 the actual development time of "*Episode I*" would be about a year. "The scenario, character design, mechanics design and aspects like that were given priority and put in first. It felt like walking a tightrope at times," he continues. Why they didn't take their time to work on the game further remains unknown, though a big possibility would be the lack of disc space since they wouldn't be able to add much more content even if they wanted to. In fact, a lot of scenes would be scrapped or saved for "*Episode II*."

Besides stating that "Fear" would be a main theme in the game, Takahashi also said that "The people in this game are all living with some past put upon them, filled with regrets and unavoidable destinies. They all need to find their own identity, and they all need to find the power to go on in life. That's the "desire for power" I wanted to show in this story. The villains in the story are exactly the same; as the game goes on, their wills begin to clash with those of other people."

Soraya described it even better in her interview with *Siliconera* in 2010, "We tend to depict human characters as a strong will in a fragile flesh and blood." KOS-MOS, in fact, was created as a contrast to this usual depiction in their characters. "So, we wanted KOS-MOS to be a complement to it by being the delicate pieces of soul in an unbreakable vessel." KOS-MOS was created and written by Takahashi, as was chaos, Shion and her family, Allen, Kevin, Andrew, Margulis, Pellegrini, Febronia, Virgil, crew of the Elsa, Miyuki, Nephilim, Abel, Sellers, T-elos, and Wilhelm.

Soraya Saga created Ziggy's family and enemy, the U.R.TV.'s, Helmer, Yuriev, the Mizrahi family, Lapis Roman,

the Godwin sisters, concept of Realiens, Life Recycling Law, the S.O.C.E. and more. Soraya Saga wrote half of the story and script for the original *Xenosaga*, which is even more than she wrote for *Xenogears*. She also worked as 2nd Unit Production Designer together with Tsutomu Terada and Tadahiro Usuda.



CG Supervisor Norihiro Takami and Programming Director Toshiaki Yajima (2004)

Non-*Xenogears* team ex-Square employees, Norihiro Takami and Toshiaki Yajima, worked as CG Supervisor and Programming Director respectively. Koh Arai worked as Map Planning Director, Yasuyuki Honne and Makoto Shimamoto served once again as Art Director and Battle Planner respectively, Hiroshi Uchiyama worked on 3D Character Design, and Tanegashima Takashi worked as one of the Quest Planners along with newcomers such as Koh Kojima. Another ex-Square employee, Norihiko Yonesaka, worked as a Quest Scenario Writer.

Kunihiko Tanaka, Yasunori Mitsuda, and Junya Ishigaki all came back to work on *Xenosaga*. "I had asked Ishigaki long before, but for this game I also asked a new designer, [Koichi] Mugitani, to help us out. He's doing all of the Vector designs. I've picked two designers because there are two specific design lines in the game -- the federation, and Vector, the group the hero is aligned with. The original KOS-MOS design was actually done by Mugitani, with Tanaka cleaning it up afterwards," Takahashi says in an interview with Famitsu.



Original KOS-MOS and T-elos concept art by Koichi Mugitani (2000)

Mugitani designed the VX units, and goes on to elaborate on his intent and process in the *Xeno Emission E1* book:

"What I intended to do with the design work for EP1 represented a breakthrough in terms of values. I like new things, and seen from the viewpoint of users playing the game Xenosaga, it's clear that the VX units designed by me are a really high-risk design lying on the outside of that value system. That's because what I wanted to present followed a plan incorporating the elements listed below.

1. Conditioning through authority

There was already a brand established by Xenogears, with its corresponding fanbase.

2. Conditioning through repetition

By their nature, RPGs are expected to span tens of hours, like it or not.

Also, this game has many female users, including fans attracted by the charm of the characters. Couldn't it be possible for us to open up a new fanbase by targeting this group of users who don't want adherence to classic robot designs, but rather hope for someone to see it from a neutral viewpoint as [merely] an extension of the product design we're all used to seeing? That's the possibility I was betting on.

[...] You'll see that the position of the VX units is in the far upper-right, quite far from the female users (included in the "light users" group) that we wanted to target. When I was doing design work for EP1, I didn't have this kind of positioning map in mind at the time, and decided on those positions based on my own preferences without being able to differentiate between myself and others. I thought it'd be a major breakthrough to let users decide their own position instead, through the methodology I described above."

- Kouichi Mugitani (Xeno Emission E1, page 53)

Regarding composer Yasunori Mitsuda's contribution, Takahashi says in a *Famitsu* interview, "Mitsuda's schedule was tight at the beginning, but we managed to get him into the game. As for the performance, we figured if we were going to do it, we might as well go with one of the best in the field [the London Philharmonic Orchestra]. I had some great expectations for them; I wanted to pull myself up to the huge amount of ability they have." Takahashi also says in the *Dengeki PS2* interview, "... for the BGM, we're including Gregorian chant, since religion is one of the fundamental aspects of the game, and I wanted to create that atmosphere. Of course, this is also something Mitsuda-kun requested. Between us, we agreed that in existing RPGs, the same music loops over and over during most events, so we tried to avoid that as much as possible. We decided to do our utmost to make unique music for every scene."

He goes on to speak about his approach: "I was in charge of the script while also serving as director, so naturally I began by deciding on the characters of Shion and KOS-MOS and working on the scenario. The characters have deeper personalities and more backbone than before. Basically, the story proceeds from main character Shion's point of view, but we will also get the chance to switch focus to other characters, which is good." Takahashi also says that he was careful about "not making a fuss over rhetoric or focusing on it too much." Since Takahashi felt there's sometimes a strong inclination towards that in games, he wanted to do it another way.

"Of course, intentionally using rhetoric isn't [necessarily] a bad thing, but one trend, at least in my opinion, is that writers just include cool-sounding or moving dialogue without really thinking about rhetoric, and somehow the means end up becoming the goal. The message they originally wanted to convey doesn't get across. All the characters just end up becoming poets. In actual fact, when we think about how we live our everyday lives, it'd be strange if the people around us were like that, wouldn't it? (Laughs)

Considering the situations they're placed in, what would be the most natural thing for the characters to say based on their personalities? I'm constantly thinking about that when I'm writing. Even language that is close to us can leave a strong impression if it fits the scene. That's the kind of dialogue I want to have my characters speak."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Dengeki PS2* interview, December 2001 issue)

Since a lot of characters appear in *Xenosaga*, and are characters who will be important to the coming story, Takahashi wanted players to start by getting a sense of their individual qualities. "I'd like [players] to enjoy the reflective parts before tearing into the gameplay parts. When I think about what else I want [players] to pay attention to, it would have to be the characters," he continues. "With this work, we've included foreshadowing and hints for the later story at every turn---from dialogue to character backstories to the setting, things that could be seen by a casual glance at the backgrounds---so as for what I'd like [players] to learn from this, the keyword would be to imagine how the near future might turn out. That would make me happy [if people would do that]."

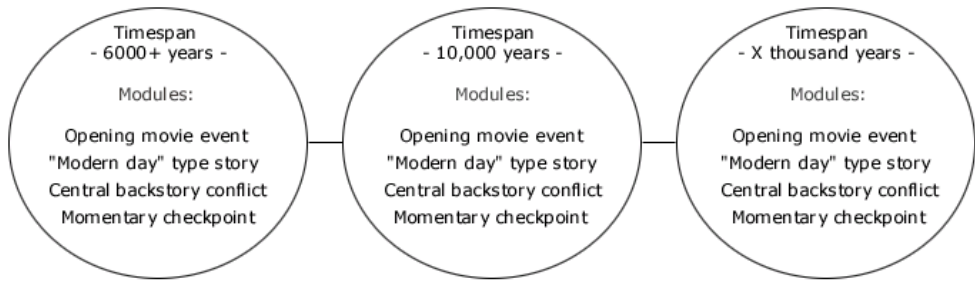


The Voice Actors reading lines for *Xenosaga Episode I*.

Considering how far along Takahashi must have been when it comes to the scenario, having basically worked on it since 1998 when it was still a *Xenogears* prequel, it makes sense that he would know what's ahead in great detail. *Xenogears* went from a conceptual idea to a full screenplay in about 2 years time (1994-1996), so it isn't hard to imagine Takahashi having already begun writing for the second story arc at this point. In an interview with GameSpot in 2001 Takahashi said "Though Monolith Software was established about two years ago, I already had some ideas in mind when I left Square, so [the planning stages for the game] would actually [begin] more like three years ago."

If Takahashi started planning for the game in 1998 then that coincides with the time Digicube released *Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~* where early ideas for *Xenosaga* were outlined as part of the *Xenogears* universe. And the scenario and characters would be the first thing he planned.

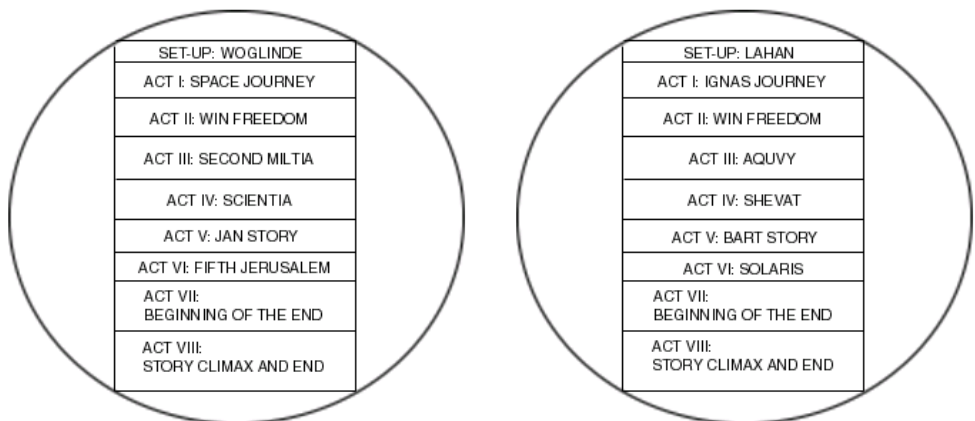
Let's take a look at how this process likely began by examining how a story arc by Takahashi in this series is structured. In an interview in the *Xenosaga II Weekly* magazine, he refers to the immediate drama of the games as "momentary checkpoints" in time with "important modules before and after" them.



The modules listed are as follows:

Opening movie event: Lake Turkana/Earth 20XX (*Xenosaga*), Eldridge crash/Abel's era (*Xenogears*)
"Modern day" type story: Pied Piper/T.C. 4667 (*Xenosaga*), Zeboim/Kim's era (*Xenogears*)
Central backstory conflict: Miltian conflict/T.C. 4753 (*Xenosaga*), Solaris War/Lacan's era (*Xenogears*)
Momentary checkpoint: Present day (*Xenosaga*), Present day (*Xenogears*)

I assume that a similar structure would be used for each story arc, though the events depicted in the "*Xenogears* reimagining" may be of a different nature depending on how much Takahashi decided to alter. For example, even if Zeboim was absent in the reimagining, I assume a different "modern day" type story would still appear as an important module sometime in the past of that story arc. Now let's "zoom in" on the structure of the actual screenplay for the "momentary checkpoint," i.e. the scenario in the present, by using *Xenogears* and the *Xenosaga* trilogy as examples:



The chart I drew is a very crude description of the story structure and its parts. You'll notice I haven't divided *Xenosaga* into episodes in the chart. Most likely the first episode was originally going to cover the first 4 acts, while the second episode was going to cover the rest. You'll also notice that *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* mirror one another in the structure. In fact, in a 2001 interview with GameSpot, Yoshidumi Makoto (assistant manager at Namco) would state that *Xenosaga* "...follows the direction and style of *Xenogears*."

For a more in-depth analysis of this mirroring between the two stories you should read [this article](#).

The same mirroring principle can be used to compare and examine the characters. For the sake of simplicity, I will only examine the main playable characters here. *Xenogears* had 9 playable main characters, and each, with perhaps the exception of Chu-Chu, had some part of the story devoted to them. The playable characters, in the order you get/encounter them, were as follows:

- Fei Fong Wong
- Citan Uzuki
- Elhaym van Houten
- Bartholomew Fatima
- Chu-Chu/Marguerite Fatima¹
- Ricardo Banderas
- Billy Lee Black
- Maria Balthasar
- Emeralda Kassim

¹ Margie was originally meant to be a playable character, and she still helps out in some of the battles with healing and weaker attacks, even if you don't control her. Chu-Chu is playable, but doesn't become a party member or playable until the end of the Shevat arc. For this

reason, and because Margie mirrors MOMO and MOMO's introduction, I decided to lump them both together at the time the heroes recover them.

From the beginning of planning in 1998, then, it would make sense that there would be 9 main playable characters in *Xenosaga's* first story arc as well, and, as we will discover, they each seem to play a similar role as well as borrowing traits from different *Xenogears* characters. To start with, the story - if it were to adopt the same style and feel like a sequel - would require a hero who was optimistic on the surface, but filled with pain and angst underneath; who has a painful past that he or she repressed, and who is responsible for horrific things happening to the world in the central backstory conflict that people continue to suffer from. The result was the character Shion Uzuki:

Shion Uzuki
(main character)

Shion Uzuki, rather than suffering from multiple personalities and destroying the world in a previous incarnation, was someone who had summoned the Gnosis as a child, and created a darker world that way. And like Fei she was oblivious to this fact. (In turn, the Fei/Id dynamic would be mirrored with the Jr./Albedo dynamic.) Next would require a character like Citan, a guardian or protector of the hero, who would be with Shion from the set-up, and who would sometimes converse with some mysterious figure. The result was KOS-MOS - who, like Citan, would become one of the more popular characters:

KOS-MOS
(2nd character: protector of hero)

Each character would also borrow traits from more than one character, as to make it less monotonous or predictable, and so Shion got martial art traits, glasses, and her name borrowed from Citan. KOS-MOS got to be a special, "self-sacrificing," woman in the past like Elhaym. And so on. The third character should be a mysterious character the hero had already met, like in a dream or a past life, and who would have a special body with god-like attributes. If Elly was God's body - Persona of Kadmoni - then this one would be male and made out of "Anima." The result was chaos:

chaos
(3rd character: his physical body is plot-relevant)

Next up would be Soraya's character. She had previously written Bart, who made a stealthy infiltration mission to rescue Margie in Bledavik. To mirror this, Soraya would reuse the infiltration mission and the rescue of a girl, but instead of a desert prince rescuing his cousin, this time it would be a cyborg rescuing an artificial girl with important data. The result were Ziggy and MOMO:

Ziggy and MOMO
(4th and 5th character)

And so it would continue, up until there were 9 characters created: corresponding to the 9 playable characters in *Xenogears*. However, in the end only 7 were used as main playable characters. We can determine, then, that something changed along the way, which resulted in two characters - who originally corresponded to Maria and Emeraldal - were cut out from being playable characters in the main games:

Fei Fong Wong -- Shion Uzuki
Citan Uzuki -- KOS-MOS
Elhaym van Houten -- chaos
Bartholomew Fatima -- Ziggurat 8
Chu-Chu/Marguerite Fatima -- MOMO
Ricardo Banderas -- Jr.
Billy Lee Black -- Jin Uzuki
Maria Balthasar -- ???
Emeraldal Kassim -- ???

Some might suggest that Allen and Miyuki were meant to correspond to Maria and Emeraldal, since they become playable, temporarily, in *Episode III*. But their introduction is very jarring with the mirroring as I examine in the [Mirroring article](#), and they were likely, at least in the case of Miyuki, added as fanservice by Arai and Yonesaka. My analysis of the mirroring between the two series has instead led me to the conclusion that Doctus was likely the 8th playable character, while Bugs may have stood in for Chu-Chu as a cute mascot type character and for Emeraldal as an artificial "person" with a child's persona. I don't feel confident enough to elaborate too much on Bugs, but I do believe that Doctus/Melisse Ortus had more of a presence in the original scenario, and that she was one of the early characters created, just like T-elos was conceptualized as early as 2000.

And so I don't think Shion's story arc was written chronologically, or was still vague and unfinished by the time *Episode I* was released. Rather, I think the story arc gradually took shape in the form of a whole. That is the way character-driven writers tend to approach their story. This also seems to be the approach the developers took with the actual creation of the game's cutscenes, as we will examine later.

Now, taking all this into account, as the revelations of the various modules are exposed later in the scenario, it makes sense for Takahashi to almost start writing backwards. In fact, on Twitter in early 2013, at least Soraya

Saga stated that when plotting "I usually come up with the ending first then details follow." ([screen](#)) But either way Takahashi probably kept an overview of the parts of the script, as well as the backstory and timeline, while writing the story and screenplay together with Soraya Saga. The complete screenplay for Shion's arc would be finished in first draft before October 2002, since that was the time of Soraya Saga's last contribution to the *Xenosaga* project.



Episode I storyboards (*Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-*)

Takahashi, being the fan of cinema that he is, naturally jumped at the chance to direct the cutscenes as if he was directing a movie. "Of course, this is CG we're talking about, so as a director I want to take advantage of the things you can't do in real life. The biggest difference is in the camerawork. Angles that'd be impossible to shoot from in real life are accessible in the world of CG. You can have the camera go into objects and still be able to shoot right through them."

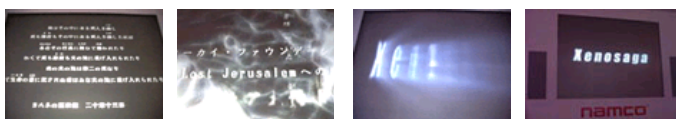
"The animation's become quite complex, since the enemies are right on the map this time. They've been given a fair amount of strategic AI -- some of them come right up when you get near them, and some you can tiptoe right past without them noticing. A side effect of that is that we had to include a fair amount of freedom in character movement as well. Technically [programming all of this in 3D] wasn't a problem, but the sheer quantity was a headache. The maps in Xenogears were done in 3D, so generally speaking it had three times the graphic data to deal with over 2D games. Xenosaga has about three times more data than that. In the beginning we had the mechs walking on the maps themselves, but the units are too big and the map data would've become too much to deal with. I hate randomly running into enemies while going around the map, so in this game, battles only begin once you get within a certain range of enemies you can see onscreen."
- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with Famitsu, 2001)

Koh Kojima, one of the Quest Planners, who later would serve as Director for *Monado: Beginning of the World*, stated in 2010 that at this time Takahashi's directorial style was "to work in his own office space and communicate his ideas via email, or speak to the team leaders, without coming into the development section."

Unveiling the XENOSAGA project

After "Project X" was revealed to be 'Tetsuya Takahashi's XENOSAGA', the first trailer (2001 Spring TGS 2k1 trailer) was shown to start building its momentum. It began with a passage from John's Book of Revelation, 12:13-15, and then moved on to show a number of quotes and keywords flying over a wavy background (similar to the dark wavy water surrounding the X in *Xenogears' Thousands of Daggers* album) that appeared and disappeared on the screen with background music 'Pilentze Pee' (A Little Bird Singing) from *Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares Vol.1* (a collection of Bulgarian music using the same female Bulgarian Chorus previously known as the *Bulgarian State Radio and Television Female Vocal Choir* that contributed to "The Beginning and the End" on the *Xenogears* soundtrack.)

You can read a translation of this trailer and the keywords [here](#).



The very first *Xenosaga* trailer (2001)

Hardcore fans were quick to recognize several words from *Xenogears: Perfect Works - The Real Thing*-, specifically from its History section on "EPISODE I" (such as "Lost Jerusalem," "Planetary disappearance incident," "Michtam04B" and "Pilgrimage Fleet") which seemed to suggest that *Xenosaga* was indeed a "prequel" to *Xenogears* that would follow the story as outlined in the book.

A Monolithsoft conference was held in the summer of 2001 where the developers talked about *Xenogears* and the new *Xenosaga* series (which is available on the *Xenosaga Special Fan book with DVD*). The following is a translation from: <http://game.watch.impress.co.jp/docs/20010708/namco.htm>, which also reports from that period:

The first to walk up on stage was Namco president Mr. Masaya Nakamura. He started off by saying "This tale, 'Xenogears', still has much more to be told even with 'Xenosaga'. With the strong support of the fans, we want to do our utmost to present further sequels," clearly very enthusiastic about it. "Until today, you haven't heard everything about 'Xenosaga Episode I: The Will to Power'. We want to share our happiness with the fans who have gathered here in the conventional hall [today]," he said.

Mr. [Nakamura] is also the president of Nikkatsu Film Corporation. "I've been talking about how films are [part of] this country's culture, and games are the same way," he continued. "I very much want films, music and games to be recognized as [examples of] excellent Japanese cultural products [lit: culture]," he concluded. (Translated by Gwendal)

Composer Yasunori Mitsuda was then revealed to be working with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.



Yasunori Mitsuda and Tetsuya Takahashi (July 8, 2001)

"The music is overpowering the graphics! This is what I realized after Mitsuda-kun returned from London and I heard the music recorded with the London Philharmonic during the mix-downs. He had already decided to go for a more cinematic style than he'd used in the past, but this music seducing my ears vastly exceeded my expectations. And already, a premonition formed in my mind: 'There are places where this music is going to save the game.' Mitsuda has achieved a complete revolution in his sound. The true highlight is 'Gnosis.' Many people probably heard it on the promotional DVD, but in the game it's used during the battle scene between the Federation Army and Gnosis - 'S27' as it was referred to among the staff. This piece, like a lot of the music in this game, was directly scored to the finished visuals; the visuals were certainly not subordinated to and edited around the music. However, this cue syncs to its scene perfectly. From Gnosis' appearance at the beginning, to the final fade to white, the two elements of pictures and sound achieve a perfect marriage of synchronization. Supported by this strangely and unexpectedly overwhelming music of sheer force, Xenosaga was made complete.

'The music is overpowering the graphics.' I would like you all to experience this same shock of mine with your ears and body - nay, with the mobilization of all your powers of perception.

Lastly, I would like to express some words of appreciation to Mitsuda-kun for composing this music for me under the ghastly pressures that my inhumanly tight schedule brought to bear. Thank you for supporting me to the end. Next time we'll reach even higher."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Xenosaga Original Soundtrack notes*)

The promotional DVD contained the infamous "8 min 8 sec" trailer which contained a lot of unused scenes, some of which were not seen until *Episode II* - which is pretty amazing when you consider the fact that *Der Wille zur Macht* at this point had only been in development for about 6-7 months. The trailer is included on the *Alle Spezielle* DVD that came as a preorder bonus with *Episode III*, which states:

"This was the last item shown at the Tokyo Exhibition (in July 2001). At this time, Xenosaga EPISODE I [The Will to Power] was still in development. This video includes unused scenes and events, which were delayed until Xenosaga Episode II [Beyond good and Evil].

The content in this video is the same content as was originally shown on July 8, 2001."

- *Xenosaga Alle Spezielle DVD, 2006*

A second trailer later on in 2001 would also feature a few scenes not used in the final product. A translation of the "8 min 8 sec" trailer transcript from the *Xenosaga Special Fan Book with DVD* can be found [here](#).



Three scenes from the trailers that never appeared in the game or the sequels (2001)

One can perhaps conclude from this that the cutscenes were not developed chronologically, and so there wouldn't necessarily exist a full "Episode II"-like game on *Episode I*'s engine at this time. More evidence of this is suggested from what was revealed during a *Xenoblade Chronicles* interview in 2010, where it was stated that MonolithSoft's approach is to develop games by "starting from a broad, thin base and building on it over time." Though, we do know that beta screenshots from Second Miltia in the original *Episode I* were shown on the net.



Early screenshot of Second Miltia city (unknown date)

Once *Xenosaga* was unveiled many *Xenogears* fans were rejoicing, and it started to build quite a momentum. Unlike with *Xenogears* there were now expectations, and the fact that Tetsuya Takahashi, now openly recognized as the mastermind behind *Xenogears*, expressed a clear desire to reboot and properly make the *Xeno* saga in his own vision simply made fans' expectations of the *Xenosaga* series rise even higher. After all, he had now established an entire company for the main purpose of telling this epic tale.

But being so similar to *Xenogears* fans wondered if Square wouldn't be concerned about *Xenosaga*, especially since around the time there were certain issues like the lawsuit between Nintendo and Enterbrain concerning the PlayStation title *Tear Ring Saga*.

"We're always in contact with Square, and we haven't had any problems at this point. Also, with the recent alliance between our company, Square, and Enix, there are talks amongst the top management group on a regular basis, so I think things are going smoothly," said Yoshidumi Makoto (assistant manager at Namco) in an interview with GameSpot on Nov 8, 2001.

When asked about whether or not *Xenosaga* was a direct prequel to *Xenogears*, the following was said:

"Though the development team is the same, they were previously working under Square for *Xenogears*, and now they have shifted to Monolith Software for *Xenosaga*. But with our relation between Square, I think it is difficult for us to say it is a direct sequel or prequel. It's probably more suitable to say that it follows the direction and style of *Xenogears*."

- Yoshidumi Makoto (Interview with GameSpot, 2001)

"Now that we are under a different company, we figured we should start everything from scratch all over again. Though there are familiar faces that serve as important characters in *Xenosaga*, others are more like self-parodies, so we don't really want *Xenogears* fans to overreact. Like movies, sometimes you have the director of the movie or friend of the leading actor appearing as cameos, so it's similar to that."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with GameSpot, 2001)

When asked about the new direction and a possible reimagining of *Xenogears* down the road, the following was said:

"This is something which won't happen for a few years--we haven't even decided if we're going to do it in order. (laughs)"

- Yoshidumi Makoto (Interview with GameSpot, 2001)

"Well, we have to make sure the first game sells. (laughs) But yes, when that time comes, we'd like to make sure it will be something worthy of presenting to the players."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with GameSpot, 2001)

The first Episode of *Xenosaga*, subtitled *Der Wille zur Macht* - a reference to German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche which translates to "The Will to Power," was greatly anticipated by the *Xenogears* community who had longed for a sequel or prequel to *Xenogears*. While Takahashi stressed that *Der Wille zur Macht* was the first part of a different conceived six-part epic than *Xenogears*, most fans were overjoyed that the 'Xenoverse' would essentially be 'remade' on the PS2 with a cinematic approach. Although a few were skeptical and complained about the key character KOS-MOS being an android, among other things, most people were optimistic and the thought of having a female lead in Shion was welcomed as a nice change of pace.

"The 'will for power' is borrowed from Nietzsche, so [the] two characters [chaos and KOS-MOS], each carrying a philosophical meaning, have a lot to do with the main theme. However, that's merely the way I think about the story. It was deliberately devised not to be highly involved, so anyone should be able to get into it easily," said Takahashi at the time. The 3D character design, however, was subject to some criticism as many fans didn't feel Kunihiko Tanaka's anime designs translated well to 3D.

"We used regular animation in the previous game [Xenogears], but around the point the 3D screens and maps were completed, I suddenly realized I really wanted to go for 3D instead. I didn't follow through with it back then, but this time around I managed to follow my desire. I've been blessed with some extremely talented people in the field of 3D animation as well."

I had Tanaka work on the design, giving him character descriptions and comparing the image I wanted with real-life actors and such. I tried to be as close to his designs as possible while modeling them in 3D. The toughest part was facial expressions. With the big-eyed characters he drew, the face can be completely destroyed depending on lighting and a thousand other tiny little balances. The knowledge base for realistic, smaller-eyed characters is much larger, so expressions are a lot easier for them."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview)

This difficulty with turning Tanaka's designs into 3D was also the reason why he had originally gone for traditional animation in *Xenogears*.



The *Xenosaga* promotional poster (2001)

Unlike its predecessor there was also a lot of merchandise surrounding *Xenosaga*, with it being the company's flagship series, and was soon referred to as a potential "Final Fantasy-killer" by their parent company Namco. Once *Episode I* was released in Japan the anticipation grew stronger, and while gaming sites criticized the game for having too many long cutscenes, a lot of *Xenogears* fans liked the sound of that. Western fans would soon get their first taste of the English dub, which would turn out to be a good job, but just like *Xenogears* this game would never be released in Europe.

Lia Sargent, the English voice of Shion, made some comments about working on the game in 2004, stating she was pretty indifferent about working on *Xenosaga*. "Doesn't excite me...it's a game...I don't follow games very well. Sorry. I love to play the characters, but...." She claims she didn't see the finished game and that she "felt detached from the process and the character."

"The way games are recorded is so different than a movie or a series. And as a voice talent one tends not to get very involved with the character. It's hard to, the pace is so fast and you never get to really connect with the other characters. It's more technical work than anything else."

- Lia Sargent (<http://www.animedream.com/ad/interviews/view/1808> - January 15, 2004)

In December 2001, once the roughly 7 hours and 30 minutes' worth of cutscenes were 99% completed and they were making the master, Takahashi stated that "Considering our capacity, there's no way we could just abruptly make [all the story right now]. So, I think we should do it gradually. But in any case, the scale of this work alone is suitably large. The staff played through half the content the other day, and it took them about 14 hours and 30 minutes. So the playing time for the full game should be about 40 hours."

Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht

Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht was something that felt completely new. It continued the style started in *Xenogears* with often using silence and sound effects instead of music - this time to give a feeling of the emptiness in outer space similar to movies like Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Indeed, Tetsuya Takahashi did not want *Xenosaga's* content to be associated with traditional Japanese animation, but rather with cinema. "It might look like anime, but if you look at the scenario, camerawork, and the clips you'll clearly notice that inspiration is borrowed from various existing movies," says Takahashi to *Super PLAY* magazine.

An obvious example of *Xenosaga* borrowing cinematographical inspiration from an existing movie would be the escape from a collapsing Proto Merkabah at the end of *Episode I*, in this case taken from the escape from the collapsing Death Star at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. In a 2012 interview Takahashi mentioned the 1983 movie *Brainstorm*, which opening scene appears to have inspired the opening scene in *Episode I* where Shion is preparing to dive into KOS-MOS' encephalon. *Blade Runner* was another influence, mainly felt with the Realian story angle, and referenced with "Nexus 6," the artificial dog that Jan bought his son. Jan, or Ziggy, in turn, was a reference to *Robocop*.

"Monolith Software and Namco have much to be proud of with *Der Wille zur Macht*. As the first episode to the six-part epic of *Xenosaga*, the game sets a new standard for RPG storytelling. By embracing Nietzsche's concept of "the will to power" as a central theme, they've managed to drive a stake through the heart of cliché and create something gloriously original. The depth of characterization and the degree of intricacy found in *Der Wille zur Macht* is simply remarkable compared to other contemporary RPGs. Namco and ZRO Limit are to be applauded for preserving the integrity of the script as well as the dialog during the game's localization. Although the adventure is a brisk one, drawing to a conclusion after roughly 40 hours of play, the experience is memorable."

- Stephen Harris (RPGFan)

The amount of drama and psychological exploration had also become larger than its predecessor, this time even focusing on supporting characters, and perhaps this was one of the reasons *Xenosaga* would attract a larger female fanbase compared to *Xenogears*, which had consisted in large parts of mainly guys doing translations of source books and maintaining fan sites. With *Xenosaga* the most prominent contributors would be female.

Xenosaga used a lot of minimalism and subtleties, focusing also on minor, detailed drama, such as exploring relationship issues, or having Jr. suddenly shout out at MOMO, for the purpose of displaying his wavering mind between the steadiness and the non-steadiness of his specifically appointed and unhealthy Ennea-type neurosis, which made some critics feel that "the story would genuinely appeal more to lonely housewives than gamers." Certainly, for anyone who wants to play a *game* - not watch so much drama - this is perhaps a valid criticism, and *Xenosaga Episode I* would not turn out to be too successful.

Initial reactions were mostly good, but the game was hardly considered perfection. Though most people simply enjoyed the game for what it is, others complained about things like the "lack of realism" while some fans tried to defend it. However, fans who enjoyed talking about and discussing the finer points of *Xenogears* soon realized that *Xenosaga Episode I* did not give a lot in the way of coherent story to discuss - comparing the game to that of a "prologue."

This resulted in attempts by almost every fan to try and use *Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~* in order to form a cohesive story that *Xenosaga* might be about. But *Der Wille zur Macht* did not flow very well with the story about Deus and the community got increasingly tired of these speculations and questions. Furthermore, hardcore fans were quick to pick up on the fact that the early trailers featured several scenes that were not in the game, and the database even apologized for not including Jin Uzuki, a Citan look-alike character that had been hyped up in the trailer. The official soundtrack featured tracks which had names that weren't in the game either; such as "Zarathustra," "Omega," "Ormus," "The Resurrection" and "The Miracle." And they were either barely used or left out from the game completely, even though they must have cost a lot to record with a live orchestra. It appeared as if *Episode I's* story was cut down due to time, budget, or disc space issues and never completed as originally intended. Players were robbed of the 'climax' of *Episode I* that would have rounded the game off and made it more self-contained in the larger saga.

Several of the keywords that appeared in the very first trailer were not in *Episode I* either such as "Proto Omega," "Ormus Society," "Rennes-le-Château," "Mary Magdalene" and "Eternal recurrence." And a few keywords would in fact never appear in the *Xenosaga* series at all, such as "Four Ancient Texts," "Book of Splendour," "Masochism," "T.C. 4775" (not the same as 4770 that was printed on KOS-MOS ver.4 without making much sense) and "The Last Sparrow," etc... or the quotes "Fill up my heart with you," "I always wondered... Why were we brought into this world?," "Then, you're carrying the burden of yet another sorrow,

aren't you...", "You will kneel before the power of Omega!", "It is... the Will to Power." and "Now, come... Our time is just beginning..." Also, the '04beta' term was removed from Planet Michtam.

"Many items and spells were dummied out in Xenosaga I. Most of which were uber powerful items that were probably required to beat the originally planned later portion of the game. Such items like agility boosting ones etc. I believe people also found fragments of maps, and character data on Jin as well, but not enough to put to use. (I did find that Jin had a data entry point along side the other PCs, but he had a null value)"

- Xenosaga Fan

Before *Episode I* had even been released in Japan, someone from MonolithSoft's staff posted spoilers on a Japanese *Xeno* forum. They were translated into English by someone and fans started to argue whether or not they were real or fake, and some people based their theories on them. Information about this leaked material can be found [here](#).

(I'm not going to examine that information in this article since most of it is pretty straight-forward (if awkwardly phrased/translated) spoilers, and the short, speculative inclusion of Raziel and the Eldridge were most likely empty guesses made by the MSI employee.)

Furthermore, a pre-order art book for *Episode I* showed a Realian tank onboard Proto Merkabah that was apparently removed from the game. A Realian called "Vwud Uzuki" was in the tank, featuring a U-TIC outfit that would not be seen until *Episode III* when Shion and Allen wears it.



Vwud Uzuki screenshot, from pre-order art book (2002)

The common theory is that Vwud was an Uzuki family Realian that they registered under the Uzuki name, since they may have wanted to expand the feeling of connection Shion has with Realians, but was ultimately not important to the story. She might've been like Febronia, raising Shion because her mother was ill. MOMO is registered as Mizrahi too, so it seems normal to register a Realian that some family "own" under their name.

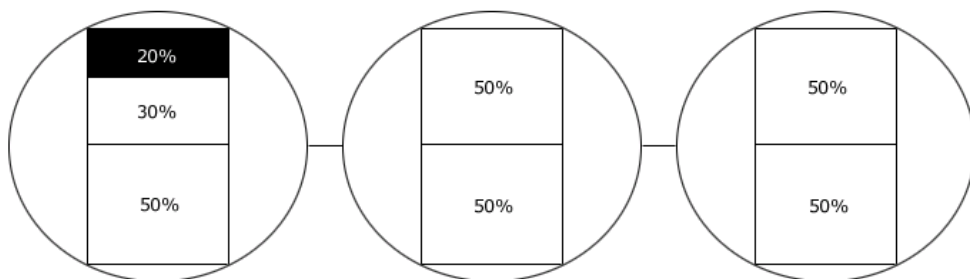
"There were many brutal scenes with Albedo appearing, so a lot of shots and lines got cut. Naturally I saw these scenes during the development process, before they were cut, and they were considerably shocking."

- Yasunori Mitsuda (Composer)

Episode I also dealt with the censorship of several cutscenes in the North American release of the game, all of which take place during a confrontation between Albedo and MOMO. This was done presumably to avoid any possibilities of the title receiving an ESRB M rating. A scene involving an arm being snapped was removed, the corpse of a kirschwasser being thrown away was softened, a knife that Albedo draws out and uses to cut off his arm and head was removed (although the sound effect is still heard), and the scene where Albedo draws out information by "reaching inside" MOMO was also altered so he simply puts his hand over her face. However the scene of Albedo's head talking on the floor was uncensored in the NA version.

Xenosaga Episode I: Der Wille zur Macht was released in Japan in February 2002. The game, it seems, was much shorter than originally planned. Namco had advertised the game as being 80 hours long on the back of the box, but the game was more like 35 hours. In a 2003 interview, Takahashi would state that "With *Episode I*, we've only managed to show about 20 percent of the complete scene...."

In other words, if *Episode I* and *II* were to cover a 100% of this scene (the first story arc), then *Episode I* should have covered at least 50%. This means that *less than half* of the intended scenario for *Episode I* actually made it into the first game. And in terms of the scope for the entire series the game was only 6 or 7 percent, when it should have been 16,5 percent at the very least.



In the above chart I have tried to illustrate how small the first game was in relation to the saga as a whole. Each block (with 50% story) represents each of the 6 episodes in the original plan.

If we compare the screenplay of *Xenosaga Episode I* to that of *Xenogears* then it becomes clear that *Xenosaga's* scenario mirrors that of *Xenogears*. It is therefore logical to expect that *Xenosaga's* first story arc (*Episode I* and *II*) would've been roughly the same size as the game *Xenogears* in content:

XENOSAGA Episode I:

XENOGEARS:

Opening movie - hook	Opening movie - hook
The discovery of Zohar before Earth was abandoned.	The dark dawn when mankind fell to Earth.
Act I - set-up	Act I - set-up
Woglinde	Lahan
Introducing the Hero: Shion Uzuki This is what Shion is doing before the story begins.	Introducing the Hero: Fei Fong Wong This is what Fei is doing before the story begins.
Foreshadowing Events to Come	Foreshadowing Events to Come
A storm is coming: Gnosis arrives	A storm is coming: Kislev gears arrives
Inciting Incident / Plot point one	Inciting Incident / Plot point one
KOS-MOS / Gnosis Story's primary conflict makes its initial center-stage appearance.	Weltall / Gears (Grahf) Story's primary conflict makes its initial center-stage appearance.
Shion begins her long relationship with the android KOS-MOS up until the end. What the rest of the story will be about is defined here.	Fei begins his long relationship with the machine Weltall from this point up until the end. What the rest of the story will be about is defined here.
Virgil dies from being gunned down by antagonistic force; KOS-MOS. Hero's importance is central to this action (protect Shion).	Timothy dies from being gunned down by antagonistic force; Gears/Grahf. Hero's importance is central to this action (awaken Fei).
Act II - response	Act II - response
Shion is now a wanderer, staggering through a forest of options and risks, not sure where to go or what to do next. Ambivalent towards KOS-MOS.	Fei is now a wanderer, staggering through a forest of options and risks, not sure where to go or what to do next. Ambivalent towards Weltall.
Shion's reaction to the new journey that's just been launched for her, and reluctance to accept it.	Fei's reaction to the new journey that's just been launched for him, and reluctance to accept it.
A central antagonist, already foreshadowed in the set-up, is introduced; Margulis. Pellegrini: <i>"They're innocents! Surely they deserve more respect."</i> Margulis: <i>"Respect? For what? Save your philanthropy for someone that cares."</i>	A central antagonist, already foreshadowed in the set-up, is introduced; Grahf. Fei: <i>"Why!? Why did the villagers have to die...?"</i> Grahf: <i>"Who cares why! It does not matter how many of them died..."</i>
New character is introduced: Ziggurat 8.	New character is introduced: Bartholomew Fatima.
Andrew is nervous around- and strongly dislikes KOS-MOS.	Old man Bal is nervous around- and strongly dislikes Weltall.
<u>Rescue of MOMO.</u>	Fei drinks Maison's tea in the desert pirates hideout.
Shion eats lunch with the crew of the Elsa.	<u>Rescue of Margie.</u>
Cathedral Ship.	Nisan and the desperate counterattack.
<u>Flashback of Andrew Cherenkov under spotlight.</u> <u>Psychological issues. Drama.</u>	Symbolic imagery with the two Angel statues in Nisan's cathedral that relates to the theme of the story.

Symbolic imagery with the beach of nothingness during Andrew's death that relates to the theme of the story.	<u>Flashback of Elly Van Houten under spotlight.</u> <u>Psychological issues. Drama.</u>
Pinch point	Pinch point
Back onboard Elsa / Durandal Reminder of the nature and intention of the antagonistic force; Gnosis, KOS-MOS "blue eye mode".	Yggdrasil in a pinch / Desert Reminder of the nature and intention of the antagonistic force; Grahf, Weltall, and psychology of Fei.
Change of scenery: Kukai Foundation.	Change of scenery: Kislev Capital.
Sub-story: Prisoners of the Federation. Quest for freedom. Encephalon Dive.	Sub-story: Prisoners of D-Block. Quest for freedom. Gear Battling.
Pinch point	Pinch point
Reminder of the nature and intention of the antagonistic force; Gnosis returns. Albedo is takes action.	Reminder of the nature and intention of the antagonistic force; Grahf returns. Gazel Ministry takes action.
Masked man with hidden identity appears in front of hero: Blue Testament: "You don't get it? Well, how about I show you..."	Masked man with hidden identity appears in front of hero: Wiseman: "You still do not understand do you? Then let me show you."
Song of Nephilim/Proto-Merkabah Factory.	Goliath Factory.
Escape Proto-Merkabah/Outer space and arrival at 2nd Militia.	Escape Goliath Factory/Ignas continent and arrival at Aquvy.
Xenosaga Episode I Ends	Xenogears continues...

Again, for a more in-depth analysis of this mirroring between the two stories (with pictures to illustrate) you should read [this article](#).

Once you realize that *Episode I* ends at what corresponds to Fei and his friends escaping Ignas and arriving at Aquvy, it becomes clear that *Episode I* doesn't have a lot of content. 20% of the complete scene sounds about right. Most fans would agree that *Xenogears'* half way point is probably once Fei and the others get a Limiter removed in Shevat before going for Nisan, which means that if *Xenogears'* story arc had been two episodes, the first one should have ended there and the second should begin with the liberation of Nisan and Aveh while getting the first Omnigear. One also has to take into account that *Xenogears* was abridged in the second disc, with many scenes and events being narrated rather than shown, which means that even placing the half way point after the Shevat scenario is ending the first half uncomfortably early. Takahashi had likely wanted to have a more involving experience with *Xenosaga*, which means that *Xenosaga's* scenario for the "true" *Episode I* must have gone at least past the point that corresponds to the Shevat scenario. However, as we will examine, not even by the end of *Episode II* had they reached this half way point.

It comes as no surprise, then, that neither Tetsuya Takahashi nor anyone else from Namco or Monolith Soft would refer to the *Xenosaga* series as a 6 episode epic ever again once *Episode I* hit the shelves. It simply would not have been possible to compress the rest of the series in merely five more episodes, unless those episodes covered at least 18,7% of the entire series each (in contrast with *Episode I's* 6 or 7 percent), and *Episode II* covered 80% of the first story arc. To accomplish this the series would have to ditch most of the the prerendered cutscenes and the voice acting if they even wanted it to fit on two or three discs.

But this wouldn't even become much of a concern, since *Episode I* would only sell copies up to half the number of what *Xenogears* had sold in Japan. It was more successful in the West, even "greatest hits" worthy - having sold 514,401 copies in the U.S. compared to *Xenogears'* 252,588 copies - but was not the hit that would justify pursuing the full scope of the series. In another *Dengeki* interview with the *Xenosaga* staff they said "Yes the sales have been disappointing, but we promise we will not forget the fans."

They owed it to the fans to at least finish telling the story of Shion, but they must have dropped the plan to make the other two story arcs at this point, even if it wasn't revealed until May 2003.

In a video interview with Takahashi and Battle Planner Shimamoto on, what appears to be the finished *Episode I*, Takahashi is supposedly saying there won't be a "six" at the present time. The interviewer asks "six?", and he clarifies by saying "Episode 6."



Writer, Director Tetsuya Takahashi and Battle Planner Makoto Shimamoto (unknown date)

A Namco press release in early 2002 had already stated that they intended to release a new game in the series every year:

"After the release of *Xenosaga Episode I* in Japan on February 28th, Namco intends to release a new game in the series every year. At present, there are six episodes scheduled. The game is scheduled for a fall release in the US; presumably, the series will keep a yearly schedule here as well."

- *TheGIA*, January 12, 2002

This was a fairly interesting announcement, especially in hindsight, and could mean one of two things. It could mean that MSI and Namco had, from the very beginning, intended to complete the saga on the PS2 console generation, probably by using the same engine for all the episodes. It would make some sense to plan it that way, since that would allow the saga to be consistent in style and presentation for its entire run, before gamers moved on to a new machine.

However, the proximity of this announcement to *Episode I*'s release is more likely to mean that with the game being shorter than expected, and already having more material to put in the sequel game (such as the 2nd Miltia parts and Jin's duel with Margulis in Labyrinthos as seen in the *Episode I* trailers), they might have intended to keep the ball rolling with a new, "shorter" game, every year, since they were already ahead. Of course, this would mean more than 6 episodes for the entire series, but we don't know what MSI were thinking when they released an *Episode I* that only covered 20 percent of the first story arc. (The "there are six episodes scheduled" assessment was certainly conjecture on the part of *TheGIA* based on earlier interviews, not on what the actual present situation was.)

But when the first game didn't sell, they hesitated, started pondering ways to "reinvent" the series once more, and consequently the whole engine they had going died. And if Takahashi knew that *Episode I* only covered 20%, which is 1/5 of the first story arc, then he may have decided to only make 5 "episodes," and these would now only cover the first story arc. Thus there wouldn't be an "episode 6" at this time.

So then, the plan to complete all three story arcs seems to have been aborted. We also know they had discussed not doing the episodes in order, possibly to postpone the "*Xenogears* remake" for last. At least this was their original response to a question about the issue:

***GameSpot*: We've heard that you already have the majority of the plot in mind. So, for instance, Square's *Xenogears* is technically the fifth episode in the story. Where do you intend to go from here?**

Yoshidumi Makoto: This is something which won't happen for a few years--we haven't even decided if we're going to do it in order. (laughs)

Tetsuya Takahashi: Well, we have to make sure the first game sells. (laughs) But yes, when that time comes, we'd like to make sure it will be something worthy of presenting to the players.

A reason for not wanting to do it in order could only mean that they wanted to postpone the "*Xenogears* remake," likely because they simply didn't want to remake a familiar story too quickly. Since the re-imagining would have begun at *Episode III* in the original plan it would've made the most sense for them to now focus on the arc at hand - Shion's arc - and put everything beyond that on hold, perhaps even cancel the two other story arcs as early as 2002. The series of leaked information on a Japanese board from a source within MSI that I referred to earlier had stated that Nephilim would grow into an adult in *Episode II*, which is what she does only at the end of Shion's story arc.

While starting work on *Xenosaga Episode I* with great gusto, Takahashi expressed his aim with the following optimism:

"I want to keep making games that toe the line of current graphic capabilities. If technology continues advancing as it has, the line between games and movies or TV will become more and more ambiguous. As the more "game-like" styles of expression fall out of fashion, I want to direct in a way that doesn't have to accept compromises and isn't beholden to any particular game style."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (Interview with *Famitsu*, 2001)

But already in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-*, released not long after *Episode I*, Takahashi lamented the fact that games probably are not a good media for telling stories:

"Being a sci-fi product exerts some influence [to get messages across to the audience], but there are things that even if you try to plan for you'll never be able to express. With games as a form of media, no matter where you set it you have to make towns and all the little accessories. With movies, for example, if it's based in present times you can just shoot on location. You end up doing annoying work with games. That's why I don't think it's a good medium for telling stories. I think it's better to call it a media for telling narrative things. Without a doubt, there are things you can't get across in a game."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Xenosaga* - Official Design Materials-)

So why didn't *Xenosaga* sell? Logically, it was for the same reason that *Xenogears* didn't catch on in the beginning. *Xenosaga* may have had a more compelling presentation and an original setting, but it was not produced by Square, so a few Square fans didn't even give it a chance. Those who had tried *Xenogears* and given up on the game early on or didn't like it had no interest in trying out another *Xeno* game. Neither were those who were generally not fond of JRPGs willing to spend time on a game that was hyped up as having more cutscenes than game play, even though this wasn't an entirely accurate statement. Many *Xenogears* fans were turned off it once they got wind of the fact that it wasn't actually a prequel, and a few were skeptical of a sequel altogether. For all they knew *Xenogears* could have been a one hit wonder from these guys, and Tetsuya Takahashi hadn't directed any other games apart from *Xenogears*. There existed no Takahashi or MSI brand yet. Since Masato Kato was still mistakenly assumed to have written the script for *Xenogears*, many were disappointed when they learned that Kato was still employed at Square (though he would team up with MSI later, but not for *Xeno*). The graphics designs also rubbed many fans the wrong way with CG instead of Anime cutscenes, and, as stated before, many fans didn't feel Kunihiko Tanaka's anime style translated well to 3D design.

Most importantly though, was that *Xenosaga* was still primarily a drama with a Character Emotional Driven story. Takahashi's flaw were still his plot holes, and it appears he still mostly used the plot elements as an excuse to explore drama and characters' inner emotional journeys. Some of the criticism even sounded like criticism such authors as Fyodor Dostoevsky has tended to receive - that Takahashi has interesting ideas but don't know how to write his work properly. D. F. Smith of *G4tv.com* wrote in a review of *Episode III* in 2006 that, "*Xenosaga* features a grand scale even by space opera standards -- kind of like a Russian novel for nerds. The cast is enormous, the plot threads are a tangled cobweb. Three or four storylines often take turns progressing, and rarely does the player understand what the hell is going on."

Charges of having chaotic and disorganized plots, lacking in polish, and even being obscure, pretentious, artificial, and sentimental have been leveled at Takahashi and Dostoevsky alike.

I would certainly say that the psychological depth in *Xenosaga* is on the level of Dostoevsky, and both have disorganized plots with multitude of minor characters and subplots, inserted anecdotes, philosophic dialogues, etc that isn't always "well structured." Considering they operate in different mediums and in very different genres, this is a little fascinating. The narrative disorganization of Takahashi fall well into criticisms of science-fiction literature and in turn videogames, which is quite different from Dostoyevsky, yet the linear view that tends to be adopted by action-driven expectations ignores what can often be a wealth of paradigmatic structures which can do quite as much to integrate the script to form an organic whole. For further understanding about this I suggest reading Victor Terras' essay on "Dostoevsky's Detractors" (<http://www.utoronto.ca/tsq/DS/06/165.shtml>).

Note that *Xenosaga* too uses plenty of paradigmatic structures such as leitmotifs (for example Gnostic Christianity), recurrent imagery (waves, ripples, beach, ocean), mirroring (in particular across the 3 parts of the overall series), doubling (the case of MOMO and the Kirschwasser's or Jr. and Albedo, especially when taken in concert, or MOMO and Sakura), symbolic foreshadowing (Jr.'s numbers, KOS-MOS' crucifixion), parallelism (Cherenkov/Albedo's different reactions to seeing themselves disappearing, Erich and Yuriev's similar yet different reactions to U-DO and becoming a "voyager"), situation rhyme (such as Albedo's yearning for U-DO's power vs. Yuriev's yearning for U-DO's power, etc), and other such devices.

Ultimately though, Takahashi has fairly little in common with Dostoevsky besides producing philosophical, psychological, and existential works. And there's not really any reason to believe that Takahashi has in any way been influenced by Dostoevsky (though the character Doctus using Latin phrases in *Episode III* is reminiscent of Dostoevsky). Since Dostoevsky did not base his characters on actual psychological studies, but more on his own mentality and having his own psychology projected onto those he observed, he has sometimes been charged with having faulty psychology in his works. Dostoevsky is known as "the Mad Russian" for having characters that are all "mad" and motivated by ideas instead of normal human drives. If Takahashi is similar to Kubrick and Anno in terms of style and psychology, then Dostoevsky is most similar to Ingmar Bergman. They both share this common trait of having "mad" characters who tend to constantly demonstrate their emotions and are driven by shame.

Takahashi and Dostoevsky also differ from an ideological standpoint. While Takahashi is nicknamed the "science and ideology" director, and can be a little preachy, he is actually objective and appears to be counter-ideology. He does not subscribe to an ideology that exists, instead making commentary on various existing ideologies and belief-systems and then picks them apart through more accurate human psychology, showing that for every person with a strong will and belief in something, another person will stand in opposition with an equally strong will and belief in something else.

On the other hand, Dostoevsky had some sort of religious experience while in prison, and his writings would

show a clear bias towards "rosy Christianity."

If you are interested in a science fiction version of Dostoevsky I suggest watching Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) which has a very similar feel to Dostoevsky with slow and odd pacing, the shame and the suffering, and the Christian symbolism. Tarkovsky even referenced Tolstoy and Dostoevsky's names in it, and so if there is a sci-fi link between Takahashi and Russian literature I think it may well have started with this film. After checking up on the book to see how much the movie differed from the source material, I came across an interview where the novel's author accused Tarkovsky of doing "*Crime and Punishment*" instead of "*Solaris*" when he made the movie, and I'm not surprised at this reaction. Since I do not consider this film inferior to Dostoevsky, I think it can be used to compare how the psychological depth of Dostoevsky would express itself in the cinematic medium. The style is notably different from Takahashi or Kubrick however, and the similarity in spirit between Dostoevsky, Bergman and Tarkovsky really evinces the idea that a lot of people share the same personality traits. (In the case of Dostoevsky, Bergman and Tarkovsky - probably enneatype 4.)

Still rooted in the "theory of neurosis" of Karen Horney and protoanalysis, one of the more interesting aspects in *Episode 1* was the commentary and criticism towards "the power wielded by psychologists" for the story of Andrew and Ziggurat 8 that was seemingly dropped in the sequels.

S.O.C.E. COMMITTEE MEMBER

"Advances in science have placed thousands of drugs on our shelves, and yet we still let psychiatrist wield their influence over us. They use these "assessments" to validate their existence. I don't believe them one bit."

Anyone familiar with Dr. Naranjo's work will recognize the validity of this criticism. In *Character and Neurosis* he writes that the lack of self-analysis in today's world "also constitutes an expression of the monopolistic attitude of psychoanalysis as an institution--which through each individual analyst is saying to the analysands, not only "don't go anywhere else for help," but also "don't try to heal yourself. I'll do it for you."

This is expressed exceptionally well through the sub-story of Andrew's "personality reconditioning," which is generally considered one of the better stories in *Episode 1* - if not in *Xenosaga* as a whole; it is relevant and powerful stuff, and I was disappointed to not see this commentary on the psychological institution, or other such detail, continue as the series progressed.

Further criticism towards *Xenosaga Episode 1* was that it was not a self-contained story arc and that it felt more like a prologue than a complete "Episode," which becomes understandable when you compare it to *Xenogears*' screenplay. The early part of *Xenogears*, exactly up till the escape on the Goliath, is usually considered, even by hardcore *Xenogears* enthusiasts, to contain the game's more tedious parts: Margie's rescue and Kislev's prison scenario. As with *Xenogears*, *Xenosaga* didn't start to become truly engaging until the sequels, where the story corresponded to *Xenogears*' post-Kislev parts and the meat of the story.

Also, perhaps because fans expected a truly "artistic masterpiece" now that Tetsuya Takahashi had the freedom of his own company to do what he wanted, the game was heavily criticized for having almost the same amount of kitsch and camp as *Xenogears* did. Scenes were cinematic, but not realistic. Tetsuya Takahashi may have wanted *Xenosaga*'s content to be associated with cinema, but *Xenosaga*'s cutscenes often had more of a B-movie feel to them, and the costumes of the characters felt more like they came out of a 60's or 70's sci-fi TV show like *Gerry Anderson's UFO* - complete with close-up shots on womens rear - or the original *Star Trek* with its scantily clad women and female officers with extremely short miniskirts. Japanese culture suddenly stood out so much more with the PS2's graphics capabilities when compared to *Xenogears* and fantasy RPGs. After all, *Xenosaga* is supposed to be not only Japan's future, but the future of the entire humanity, and Westerners do not perceive our advanced future the same way we did during the 60's anymore.

While on the subject of 60's sci-fi, it might be a good time to examine how *Star Trek* has influenced Takahashi, since he has compared *Xenosaga* to both *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* in interviews. Besides the female uniforms, there are similarities such as chaos, Wilhelm and Mary having eternal lives and having existed as famous people in recorded history. In the episode "*Requiem for Methuselah*" a character named Flint is an immortal that had been known as Da Vinci, the composer Brahms, as well as Solomon, Lazarus, Methuselah and Merlin, besides a hundred others. The holographic alien female projection in "*That Which Survives*" teleports to anywhere in space in what may be the original sci-fi "folding" effect that is almost identical to the way holograms and the Blue Testament appears in *Episode 1*. The idea of reviving human consciousness in robots is another theme seen in episodes such as "*What Are Little Girls Made of?*" and "*Return to Tomorrow*."

The highly cerebral and literary aspect of the original *Star Trek*, which was never really re-captured in the spin-offs, can be felt in both *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*, although the *Xeno* series is much darker. The plot-holes and inconsistencies in *Star Trek* were as common as they are in *Xenosaga* since they were never the point (although fans of both series tend to fixate on them anyway) and despite this *Star Trek* is still one of the best TV-series ever made - rivaled possibly only by *The Prisoner* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

It is difficult to say whether or not Takahashi is artistically inclined, but the question becomes irrelevant once you recognize that in Japan the line between art and commercial products is less defined, both by the culture and by the post-War economic situation. Japanese people accept that art and commerce will be blended, and

in fact, they are surprised by the rigid and pretentious Western hierarchy of 'high art.' In the West it can be dangerous to blend the two because people will throw all sorts of stones. As an example, a *Xenogears* fan - only 15 years old at the time of playing *Episode I* (which, when you consider the high level Japanese *Xenosaga*'s script was written in, should be the minimum age of the target audience) - expressed on the forum of *zenosaga.com* (a large *Xeno* community that existed at the time) his criticism of KOS-MOS' appearance and the "fanservice" this way:

"This can be demonstrated by observing the differences between Michaelangelo's David and the sculpture of the same figure by Donatello. (I give credit to my AP European History teacher for this explanation of the concepts.) Michaelangelo's David has an upright, heroic stride, and is completely without clothes. This makes logical sense: back in Old Testament times, people probably wore little, if anything. One could say that the sculpture's stylistic and media elements were all chosen with the plot in mind. His particular birthday-suit condition is called "nudity". On the other hand, we have Donatello's David. His posture is softer, more curved and relaxed, and far more sexually suggestive. He does not look much like he's just won a seemingly impossible battle against a monstrous opponent. Moreover, he is naked, not nude, for one funny reason: he retains his hat. Though people wore little back then, there would be no reason for someone to decide to wear a hat but nothing else. The nakedness comes from the suggestion that he had other clothes on, and has taken them off, leaving - in a display of sexual playfulness - only his hat. This is incongruous with the mythological David figure. Both sculptures are idealized conceptions of human beauty, and both have no doubt left equal numbers of elderly women a bit flustered during museum visits - but I'm sure you know which one is more famous."

- R.F. (*zenosaga.com* forum, 06-06-2004)

It appears though, as Takahashi later stated in a *Xenoblade Chronicles* interview in 2010, that his approach at this time was to simply make something in his own taste, rather than aiming for some kind of supreme artistic recognition:

"my sole aim was to express myself. If I enjoyed it, and could give the players a product that reflected my own taste, it was enough if it appealed to those players who understood what I was doing. I was compelled by the belief that this was where the appeal lay in an RPG."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Iwata Aks - Xenoblade Chronicles 2010, Vol. 3: The Development Process, 1. Seeing it Through to the End*)

Although many fans may want *Xenosaga* made to their own taste, ultimately the creator will make it in his own taste, and from a creator who has vintage Chogokin Toys in his room and wants a Chu-Chu stuffed animal, one should expect a certain amount of kitsch. If it helps fuel his passion for creating then an awkward product is better than nothing if it still gives the player an enriching experience, and *Xenosaga* did attract a fair number of fans who do love it deeply.

While Takahashi had expressed a desire to write novels, as mentioned in his profile in the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-*, he would also state in an interview at the time that "Gamers are my number-one motivation and spiritual support; it's thanks to them that I was able to build Monolith Soft," so perhaps he will always gravitate more towards gaming and game development than any other form of artistic expression.

Official Design Materials

About eight months after *Episode I* was released in Japan, MSI would release *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* which would serve as *Episode I*'s equivalent to *Xenogears: Perfect Works*. The ODM was a very cerebral book that allowed great insight into the minds of the developers. It also revealed things like how the Earth was lost, some notes on Zohar made by Joachim Mizrahi and other things the fans couldn't fathom why Takahashi would put in the book rather than in the game or its database.



The *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* is a book that gives a number of hints and even various in-game "hypothesis" on various phenomena and where the story was going. And fans tried to use translations of the *ODM* to try and figure out what it was all about. Reading through the *ODM post-Episode III*, one will discover a number of awkward suggestions in it, which may be due to either a change in scenario, a deliberate "red herring," a poor translation, or some confusion on the part of the author who transmitted Takahashi's ideas (the same problem that *Xenogears: Perfect Works* suffer from) since Takahashi isn't credited in the book as author. However, going into detail here is not something I'm too interested in at this time. So I will leave that untouched for now.

I just want to point out that I tend to disagree with the notion that "**Probability of unchanging corresponding phenomena...**", which is printed at the bottom of each text (usually fixed around 90%), was written by the developers as a way out for themselves in case they wanted to change anything later. The way I always interpreted the "Probability of unchanging corresponding phenomena..." detail was that it was more in-game related than developer/scenario related. The information stated has a 'X percent' chance of changing (from the perspective of in-game humans) if more information about the truth is unravelled. Another way to look at it would be something like what Wilhelm reads in the Compass of Order and Chaos. That is to say it isn't Takahashi's vision of his story that has 'X percent' chance of changing, but the in-game information and outcome that has 'X percent' chance of changing - which would be related to the current cycle of Eternal Recurrence and how identical the outcome will be compared to the previous one.

The Foreword in the *ODM* states the following:

6. The invariability of these materials

(1) Since the various phenomena were confirmed at the time when KOS-MOS and the others broke into the stratosphere of Second Militia, the contents of these materials are limited to describing what could be confirmed up until that point. Consequently, at that point the contents should be 100% trustworthy, but after that the various phenomena change, and there is a considerable risk of discrepancies between them and the descriptions.

(2) For the reasons stated in 6.-(1), at the end of the last sentence of the description of each phenomenon, there is a title called "Probability of unchanging corresponding phenomenon", recording the probability the described phenomenon won't change after this/ from now on. The [statistical] dispersion can also be seen depending on the phenomenon, with a majority being 90% the same before and after. Accordingly, these numbers also support the validity of these materials. Furthermore, the probability of every phenomenon being unchanging was 89.4099099% on average.

- Foreword, About "An analysis about all the matters"

The fan translator of this part also thought it was referring to in-game information:

"I tried translating it, but I'm not sure all of it makes complete sense. It seems a bit complex, and the language used is a bit formal and technical too. It seems to be talking about whether or not the text's description of the characters is reliable from an in-universe perspective."

- Gwendal, fan translator, 4-24-2012

In terms of how Takahashi approaches the writing, perhaps most revealing were the constant references to the Enneagram of Personality for characters; a dynamic psychospiritual *typology* (a model of personality types) often presented in ways intended to discover and develop higher states of being, essence and enlightenment. However, even among hardcore *Xenosaga* fans there were few who actually bothered to look into this typology. At best fans looked up the types on an online website, such as the *Enneagram Institute*, and took a test to know what type they were. But beyond identifying what basic type one had in common with what character from *Xenosaga*, the Enneagram remained a largely unexplored part of the characters, the series and its potential influence on Takahashi. At least until I wrote my articles on the series in 2009 and the creation of this study guide in 2010.

Two years before that I had wanted to study the Enneagram of Personality in order to get to the bottom of whether or not Takahashi had used it when writing *Xenogears*, and if so; what type each character was. Although I wasn't particularly interested in the Enneagram back in the days of *Episode I*, I had later discovered the Enneagram system to be something genuine and more complete than other psychological theories, and thus would be useful to learn more about. However, it took me more than two years to get a good grasp on it, and even then I made some errors in judgment when I typed a few of the *Xeno* characters and real life people. It didn't truly start to click until I got ahold of instinctual subtype descriptions, particularly those by Claudio Naranjo. It was then that I realized that not only were most of the online material pretty mediocre, but the portrayal of the characters in *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga* showed a rather amazing insight about Enneagram types.

Over time I have expected to find flaws in the characterization the more I would learn about the Ennea-types, but to my surprise it has mostly been the opposite: the more I learn, the more clearly I understand that the "anomaly" some characters display, are actually signs of deeper insight into the system than what I had

previously understood.

That's not to say that the characterization is beyond criticism simply because they were written with insight into the Enneagram system. But I've increasingly felt that it is harder to take people's critical opinions of the characters and the writing seriously if they don't understand the Enneagram system. The main issue I have with the characterization is that, for example, there are no male 2s or any female 8s portrayed by Takahashi and Soraya, even though it's true that most 2s are female. There are also almost no 4s. But this is merely nit-picking when considering how interesting a lot of the characters are portrayed compared to common writing.

I also expected to find some evidence that Takahashi's knowledge of the Enneagram had improved since the characterization in *Xenogears*, but his grasp on the system back then appears to have been as good as it was at the time of *Xenosaga*. This made me curious on how and when he even came across the Enneagram in the first place, and what the exact sources of his information that he based the characterization on were. And it became a bit of a mystery to me.

First, a little history on the Enneagram. The Enneagram itself is a nine-pointed figure contained within a circle. It made its first appearance in the West in the work of the Armenian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff, who claimed that it could be used to understand all processes in the universe. Its next appearance was in the work of the Bolivian mystic Oscar Ichazo in the 60s. He used the Enneagram to understand human experience both in an egoic and an enlightened state.

In 1969, Ichazo gave a series of lectures under the sponsorship of the Chilean Psychological Association, in which he presented for the first time the essentials of what he called "protoanalysis," drawing the attention of Claudio Naranjo, M.D. In 1970, Ichazo shared this information with a group selected by Naranjo, in the course of a communal spiritual retreat in the Arica desert. Over the following years, Naranjo developed this conception into what he called "the Psychology of Enneatypes," which included (among other things) the description of nine fundamental character types related to the nine "passions" of protoanalysis - which include the seven cardinal sins of the Christian tradition.

However, Ichazo felt that this information should not become public at the time, and, heeding Ichazo's notion, Naranjo asked of each participant in his own program to sign a written agreement to this effect. But this commitment to reserve was violated by some, who passed on their understanding to others, who in turn offered courses and workshops on "the Enneagram." This started a popular movement and a considerable literature, which Naranjo has regarded as his "bastard children" and generally criticizes them for inaccuracies, repetitiveness, and mediocrity.

So, what we're basically dealing with here, is a body of knowledge that is at its core 'secret knowledge', available only to those who attend Ichazo's Arica training, or Naranjo's programs. The popular authors, whom Ichazo has tried to sue and Naranjo criticizes, claim to have made their own contributions to create "the modern Enneagram." But while that may be true, after sampling the various versions of the Enneagram theory, I have to agree with Claudio Naranjo. There is an underlying subtlety about types that cannot be conveyed through using one particular word or descriptor, like many modern authors attempt. On the other hand, if these second rate authors *didn't* leak the knowledge, then it would probably still be a secret, so one can hardly blame them for going ahead with it. Once Helen Palmer, Don Riso and others started publishing books on the Enneagram in the 1980's, Naranjo started publishing his material as well as a response, which I can only consider a good thing. However, as of 2011 he still hasn't written a book that focuses on the instinctual subtypes or the virtues. There are still things only available at his programs, though some of it has spread on the net in recent years.

And all this, of course, brings us back to the question of what source Tetsuya Takahashi used to gain insight into the Enneatypes. So I started doing some research. I figured that whatever source Takahashi originally came across must have included good information on the instinctual subtypes, because the characterization of, for example, Lacan in *Xenogears* didn't make sense to me for a type 9 until I had come across a lot of information on the sexual variant type 9, which finally elucidated it. I also knew that Takahashi had to have read up on it before 1994 at the latest, when *Xenogears* was conceptualized, and that the material had to have been published in Japanese.

Claudio Naranjo's books are supposedly not translated into Japanese. But even if they were they don't include much in the way of subtype descriptions. At first this seemed to lead to the conclusion that Takahashi probably got his information from one of the "lighter" Enneagram authors, such as Don Riso or Helen Palmer. This seemed to be all but confirmed when I finally came across some excerpts from Don Riso's *Personality Types* published in 1987, and likely translated into Japanese by Tim McLean and Yoshiko Takaoka (of Riso's *Enneagram Institute* in Tokyo) not too long after that, featuring a passage that was remarkably similar to a passage from the *Xenosaga - Official Design Materials*:-

"The connection between genius and madness has long been debated. These two states are really poles apart, the opposite ends of the personality spectrum. The genius is someone who fuses knowledge with insight into the nature of reality, someone who has the ability to see things with utter clarity and with awe-inspiring comprehension. What separates the genius from the madman is that the genius, in addition to extraordinary insights, has the ability to see them correctly, within their context. The genius perceives patterns which are actually present, whereas the madman imposes patterns, projecting erroneous

perceptions onto every circumstance. The genius may sometimes seem to be out of touch with reality, but only because he or she operates at a more profound level. The madman, however, is truly out of touch with reality, having nothing but delusions to substitute for it."

- *Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery* (1987 / 1996)

"While the type of person like him who joins himself to the world through thought could potentially be called a genius, at the same time, there is also the hidden possibility that he could be called a fool. What is the difference between a genius and a fool? They both deviate from the beaten path, that is to say that they are unique. However, the direction of that uniqueness is very different. Geniuses have the power to understand the world through lucidity. On the other hand, fools try to force their own logic on to the world. They are both people who can talk about the world using a fundamental logic, but the former talks about theories based in facts while the latter twists it into facts based on theories. Which kind of uniqueness did Kevin really possess?"

- *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* (2002)

(Note that the passage I quoted from Riso's *Personality Types* is from the 1996 revised edition. I don't know if it was also in the 1987 edition.)

While I couldn't find any other content that was this similar, the talk of healthy and unhealthy "levels of health," along with a brief description such as "calm," "passive," and "makes other people relax" (for type 9 in this case), does suggest Don Riso's material as a primary source. However, I would soon learn that Don Riso's *Personality Types* did not include any descriptions of the instinctual subtypes. And apparently neither did Palmer's 1988 book, which supposedly only devotes a *very* short few sentences to each instinctual variants in all 9 types. Apparently Riso didn't offer descriptions of them until 1999's *Wisdom of the Enneagram*, and even then they weren't too long of descriptions. And 1999 was long after *Xenogears* was written.

In other words, I can find no source that gives good, if any, information on the subtypes until Katherine Chernick Fauvre's compilation in 1995, which would've taken at least a year or so to be translated into a foreign language and re-published. But even then I doubt that book was translated into Japanese or any other language considering its poorly organized and manual-like nature. And 1995 is still too late for *Xenogears*. So how does one make sense of it?

The fact that the *Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-* resembles Don Riso's material actually doesn't get us any closer to the truth, since by 2002 Riso's material would be the most common, especially in Japan. And if Takahashi held study groups on *Xenosaga* with the development team, then referring to the more mainstream Enneagram would be the simplest and most effective way to get the material across. The modern Enneagram is practically made to be easier for the layman to absorb, and Riso's material offer the kind of charts that would make writing the characters easier I imagine, so using that approach wouldn't necessarily be bad. Furthermore, the *-Official Design Materials-* is technically not written by Takahashi himself, since he is not credited in it. Instead someone must have been the transmitter and interpreter of Takahashi's ideas and study groups, just like Yugai who wrote *Xenogears: Perfect Works*. So the initiative to emulate Riso's material in the *ODM* could also be MonolithSoft, not Takahashi in particular.

By the time of writing *Xenosaga* Takahashi could probably get a lot of Enneagram material, such as on the internet. But that still doesn't explain how he got it before writing *Xenogears*. That's when I finally came across an interview with Helen Palmer who passed on the following bit of information:

"It [the Enneagram] used to be just a grassroots interest, especially in California. It became very attractive to the Jesuits, who used it in their seminary trainings because of the seven capital tendencies. The Jesuits moved it all around the world in their missionary "hotline," and the Californian people just kept teaching it to thousands of people. In August, I co-directed a conference at Stanford University that was co-sponsored by my organization and the Stanford School of Psychiatry that drew 1,600 participants. It was incredible. They came from all around the world. We discovered the Tokyo Enneagram Society..."

Did the Japanese have a different spin on the types?

No, they had the same spin. They had learned of it through the missionary "hotline." There's a book by a Catholic sister in Japanese on the Enneagram system. That's how they picked up the study. The only thing I could read on the gentleman from Tokyo's card was the Enneagram symbol."

- Interview with Helen Palmer

With this information, it suddenly makes more sense. A young Tetsuya Takahashi with an interest in religion, psychology and the esoteric - doing research by reading various books - would likely stumble across the Tokyo Enneagram Society and this book by the Catholic sister at some point before 1994. Perhaps this book is thorough enough that it's been more or less all Takahashi has needed from the beginning. It is also possible that Takahashi used his own personal experience with the types, once he nailed them accurately, to add his own insights when writing *Xenogears* and *Xenosaga*. At any rate, I can get no further in my research regarding this. It would be up to Japanese fans to check out that book and maybe ask Takahashi if they get the chance.

That said, the Enneagram doesn't appear to be more well-known in Japan than it is in the West, and despite the amount of Enneagram literature, it still isn't all that well-known in the West either. Among the organizations

making use of the Enneagram are the Walt Disney Company, Silicon Graphics, Kaiser Permanente Research Center, the Federal Reserve Bank, the CIA, and Rational Software. These and other companies and institutions use the Enneagram in the areas of communication skills, conflict resolution, coaching, leadership development, team effectiveness, strategic planning, and organizational culture change. However, in Japan the Enneagram reportedly has ended up being used to mainly type people, almost as a form of entertainment.

The reason for this is that in Japanese society overall, there's a tendency today to ignore spiritual interests. They have become more material. This was likely a concern for Takahashi as well, since the *ODM* states that he "indirectly cuts deep via entertainment aimed at problems facing individuals and society."

"I know that in real life, if Tetsuya Takahashi spoke directly to a bunch of young people they would never accept the message. So I use the story and the characters I've created to act as my spokespeople."

- Tetsuya Takahashi interview (*Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-*)

Another aspect that is tied to the Enneagram system, is the recurrent parallelism of 3, as well as the Grief theme for *Xenogears*, and the Fear theme for *Xenosaga*. There are 3 core emotions that give rise to the basic human ego defense, and these are Fear, Grief and Anger (though sometimes other words are used for them, such as "Sorrow" instead of "Grief"). These 3 core emotions are not exclusive to the Enneagram, but it was through the Enneagram system I noted the pattern and how they correspond to the 3 story arcs of the series.

Another thing I noted was a pattern to the characterization, for example in the main character of each story arc. Shion is a type 7, which is part of the "fear" triad, and "fear" is the main theme of the first story arc. Fei is a type 9, which is part of the "anger" triad, though "grief" is the main theme of the second story arc. I recently learned, however, that the 1-9-8 triad is associated with feelings of sadness in Ichazo's original system, while the 2-3-4 triad is the anger triad, associated with feelings of hatred.

It makes sense, then, that the main character would be from the 2-3-4 triad in the final story arc, regardless. And I think type 2 would fit Takahashi's pattern of using the most "distracted" hero from each triad, with a veneer of optimism covering great angst. Since Fei and Shion were both sexual subtypes, the third hero would probably be of the sexual subtype as well. And there are other such patterns.

I also find it interesting that when Nomura suggested "an Asian, tactician type of a character," Takahashi created Citan from a Social type 6 structure. According to the estimation of Enneagram authors, Japan is a very "type Six" culture. And again, in *Xenosaga*, we see Jin being rooted in Japanese tradition.

There are other sources of inspiration I'd also like to know more about, such as Takahashi's sources on Gnosticism and esoteric Christianity. In particular Takahashi's impression of the Garden of Eden story and any source that had inspired his idea of advanced ancient civilizations. Of course, not everything needs to have had a specific source, as Takahashi claims he mainly reads when he feels he needs to.

"As someone who writes for a living, I don't really think I read that much. When I need to read something, I do so. I read quite a few books on subjects such as science, technology and religion [among others]. I also read essays/articles from time to time. On the other hand, I probably don't really get to read novels very often."

"When it comes to books and movies, and games too for that matter, there's not really anything I'm too fixated on. I'm willing to try anything instead of dismissing things without giving them a chance. You could say I'm just not [picky]."

- Tetsuya Takahashi (*Famitsu Episode II Interview, 2003*)



Towards the end of 2002, MSI would begin to release a trilogy of Drama CDs called *Xenosaga OUTER FILE* which were intended to be told as sub-stories with the first one explaining the past of the Elsa crew and how they became friends with chaos. The Drama CDs also introduced Richard and Hermann into the story. These were written by Anime writer Yuichiro Takeda and would mark the beginning of a lot of collaboration between Takahashi and Takeda.



It would soon become apparent that Namco's plan to release a new game in the series every year was scrapped and after a whole year of waiting the only thing happening on the *Xeno* front was *Xenosaga Episode I: Reloaded* - the U.S. version released for the Japanese audience with Japanese sub and some new features. (The voice acting track, however, appears to have changes from the official U.S. version. The really noticeable thing is that all the lines with "Realian" have "synth" spoken instead. One theory is that this is an older version of the dub, and they had been thinking of localizing Realian as synth and then changed the decision for the final release.)

The question on every *Xeno* fan's mind was "where the heck is Episode II?" and the word would spread in May 2003 that *Episode II* was only 40% complete at this stage. Why not more after a year and a half had passed since the release of the first game? And with seemingly a big portion already completed on *Episode I*'s engine as evinced by the old trailers? What in the world were MonolithSoft doing? Fans were anxiously awaiting, what many thought would be (and what should have been) the conclusion of Shion's story arc, but big changes were coming...

Continue to [Part 3: XENOSAGA II & III](#)

Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide