

Interviewer: In the new trailer, we were shown Dion, the prince of Sanbreque, and Barnabas, the king of Waloed. Would you mind sharing the concept behind these two?

Maehiro: The protagonist Clive lives a life saddled with many responsibilities, whereas Dion is sort of this perfect prince who wants for nothing. Clive is a prince, too, of course, but he casts a shadow. So I've sort of created this imagery of a prince of light and a prince of darkness.

The concept behind Barnabas is this ominous king about whom not much is understood. As the Dominant of Odin, he possesses incredible power, and is the king of a country ruled by war. He seems to have a streak of wickedness and is preoccupied with something or other. Moreover, he has this inscrutable expression on his face, which lends to his eerie nature. That's the sort of image I was going for when I made his character.

Interviewer: Dion is the Dominant of Bahamut, right? Historically with this series, Bahamut has a reputation for being the strongest. Would it be correct to say the strength of each Eikon is dependent upon the strength of their Dominant?

Maehiro: The strength of the Eikons essentially balances out. But at the core of those Eikons you of course have human beings, so naturally their fighting styles will change depending on the physical experience and acquired knowledge of the humans that harbor them. Some will push ahead with brute force while others will make skilled use of magic. I think you'll see strengths and weaknesses with each Eikon's power as they make the best of their unique characteristics.

Yoshida: For instance, the Gundam is a Gundam because Amuro is in the cockpit. If some ordinary soldier tried to pilot it, they'd be shot down in an instant. It's that sort of situation, if you catch my drift [smiles wryly]. In the same way, the power an Eikon demonstrates will vary dramatically depending on its Dominant's ability, mental fortitude, and familiarity with combat. There are size discrepancies that cannot be avoided, so it comes down to each one making good use of their abilities. These size differences mean they must be attacked in different ways, and then there are other discrepancies, such as Eikons that can fly and ones that can't.

Interviewer: Ah, okay, I get it.

Yoshida: So I'd like it if everyone would keep an eye out for how their experience varies depending on the unique attributes of each Eikon in the game.

Maehiro: And if I might add, there's also solid lore behind why these Eikons are balanced in terms of strength.

Interviewer: So Valisthea is the name of this world where humans are being punished for having challenged God. Is it safe to assume God and the Eikons are completely different entities?

Maehiro: That's a matter that's very much at the root of this story, so it's a little difficult to answer your question ... [laughs].

Yoshida: But I think that's a keen line of questioning, so please hold onto it. Why the world is the way it currently is—why Eikons regularly emerge one per element and who created Valisthea's current rules in the first place—are some very major points. I can't elaborate more

until we reach the finish line, but I hope you'll keep an eye on these things as they drive at the foundation of the story.

Interviewer: Have I perhaps touched on the “logic” of this world?

Yoshida: The logic of the world is something Maehiro has been very particular about from the beginning, and Valisthea has been constructed and animated based on this logic. I'm sure that if you play the game through to the end, you'll come to understand the logic by which Valisthea moves and was constructed.

So it's not simply that God and the Eikons are arbitrary backplot. What we have is a world Maehiro has devised with a solid structure in mind, and I think this is one of its pillars.

Interviewer: In the material we've seen so far, eight Eikons have appeared, yet there are only five nations. It would appear there's one Dominant per nation, but the numbers don't add up. Is this also touching too much on the “logic” of the world?

Maehiro: There's no rule that there has to be one person per country.

Yoshida: That isn't part of the logic of the world.

Maehiro: For a few minutes now we've had a couple of grown adults unironically saying “the logic of the world” over and over again. What a great gathering this is [laughs]. I'm listening on the sidelines here trying not to giggle.

Yoshida: But that's what you wrote here [laughs]. Well, anyway, a nation is something people gather together and choose to form, so it isn't really a rule of the world. And it's not like only five countries are allowed to exist—that's just the number of nations that humans, as living organisms, have decided to separate themselves into currently. In the past, there may have been seven or eight, or, conversely, there may have been some period when there were fewer than five.

Interviewer: Ah, okay, I see now.

Yoshida: There are rules regarding the birth of Dominants, but a Dominant may decide to move to some other country, or they may be forcibly captured and taken elsewhere. As such, there is no rule that there has to be one Dominant per country. That's how we think about it, at any rate.

Maehiro: Dominants possess incredible power, so in the eyes of their nations they're like treasures that can be used however they wish. They can be used as a deterrent or to wield influence. They're very important, and so the more of them a country has, the greater that country can become. So the numbers eight and five aren't related to any rule.

Interviewer: So you're saying you can have a country that's locked down several Dominants in its territory.

Maehiro: In terms of “logic,” that would just be humans being crafty.

Interviewer: Moving on, could you tell us about the role of the Mothercrystals in Valisthea? I'd also love to know what connection the Dominants have to them.

Maehiro: You can think of them as power plants. The idea is that the Mothercrystals emit aether, a familiar *FF* energy source with which they're brimming. And people cast magic by using smaller crystals carved from the Mothercrystals. It's kind of like having a power plant and a terminal to access it, and as you would imagine with electricity, this magic enriches people's

day-to-day lives. For that reason, countries have been built around these Mothercrystals. That's the basic concept.

All the inhabitants of this world live their lives founded on magic. Even making fires is accomplished by magic, and so people are oblivious about how to make fires the ordinary way. That's because magic is something that's there from the time they're born. Right now, I can't tell you how the Dominants tie into such a world, because it's too bound up with the logic of the story [laughs].

Interviewer: From what we've glimpsed in the trailers, it seems like the story will center quite a bit around the Dominants. Could you once again tell us how the protagonist Clive will play into all this?

Takai: At the beginning of the game, Clive himself isn't involved in the world all that deeply. He's living his life in pursuit of a goal, and the story unfolds around him achieving that goal. However, as we approach the midway point, he becomes entangled with the Dominants and swept up in the turmoil of the world at large.

Interviewer: The key phrase this time is the "War of the Eikons," and I feel the words themselves impart a real sense of climax. Is this War of the Eikons something that occurs frequently throughout the actual game, or is it more like an event that really only happens at the end of the game, when all of the Eikons suddenly clash at once?

Yoshida: With RPGs, you usually have a fitting boss that serves as a capstone for each area. I think you can safely assume that clashes between the Eikons will pretty much occur with that pacing.

Interviewer: But Clive isn't a Dominant, is he? Even though we have these Eikon-on-Eikon battles, Clive himself won't be turning into an Eikon, right?

Everyone: [Exchanges glances]

Interviewer: Oops... did I overstep there?

Yoshida: I'm sure the answer will come out as more promotional material is released, but for now I'd say people should just enjoy themselves by watching the video and wondering what kind of situations could give rise to these battles and the types of things they'll be able to do in them [laughs].

In any event, I don't think there's any point in controlling a character you can't empathize with, so we've made sure everyone will feel strongly enough that they grip the controller in their hands with a sense of excitement. So I hope you're looking forward to that experience. I think that sense of wonder at how things unfold is a pretty big highlight of the game.

Interviewer: Will this game feature any party members who are involved with the main story?

Yoshida: Yes, of course. This time, the action aspects are strong, and in the trailer so far, the action scenes with Clive, the main character, have been shot in a way that's easy to understand. This has made it appear that he's doing everything solo. However, for the majority of his journey, Clive is accompanied by teammates whom we can call party members.

Interviewer: It's been my assumption that even if we can have party members, they'll be non-playable characters.

Yoshida: As I just mentioned, Clive has teammates who participate in his operations. The characters who fight alongside Clive in these situations are called party members, and they're AI-driven, meaning the player need only focus on controlling Clive. Party members tag along with Clive and do all their fighting automatically while engaging in conversation.

Maehiro: In the very beginning of the game, you might even control a character who isn't Clive.

Interviewer: Kind of like the part with Reks in *FFXII*?

Maehiro: That's right. I think that's a good way of thinking about it.