



-DEVELOPMENT- WORKS

By LXGK

*The insights found throughout the Xenogears and Xenosaga sections are A.C.'s (webmaster and writer of The Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide)

!! (Last Updated:23/07/25 - XS1 Updated) !!

❖ THE XENOGEARS STORY [1994-1999].[XG]



[1] In **1994**, **Tetsuya Takahashi** and **Kaori Tanaka** (pen name **Soraya Saga**) had finished work on Final Fantasy VI. Afterwards Takahashi worked on Front Mission and Chrono Trigger, Saga worked on Romancing SaGa 3.

[2] Also in 1994, **Soraya Saga** wrote down the original concept for a story: "a young soldier of fortune with multiple personalities".

"A long long ago, back in 1994, I wrote a story about a young soldier of fortune with multiple personalities." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.25 (2005)

[3] **Tetsuya Takahashi** and **Soraya Saga** connected over their shared interests for philosophy and psychology.

"The works of Nietzsche, Freud and Jung happened to be part of common interests I shared with Takahashi." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya Saga on Xenogears and Xenosaga" by Siliconera Staff, siliconera.com (2010)

[4] **Saga** has a fascination in the power of people's beliefs, regardless of their religion.

"Regardless of differences in religion, I've always had a deep interest in the power of belief people have." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya Saga on Xenogears and Xenosaga" by Siliconera Staff, siliconera.com (2010)

[5] **Takahashi** and **Saga** got married in **1995**.

[6] **Tetsuya Takahashi** proposed the plan (**Saga's** story) to their boss. Originally as a pitch for Final Fantasy VII but was rejected for being too dark and complicated for a fantasy. Instead they were allowed to turn it into its own game.

"Takahashi proposed the plan to our boss." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.25 (2005)

"I and Tetsuya Takahashi originally submitted it as a script idea for Final Fantasy VII. While we were told that it was too dark and complicated for a fantasy, the boss was kind enough to give Takahashi a chance to launch a new project." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya Saga on Xenogears and Xenosaga" by Siliconera Staff, siliconera.com (2010)

[7] **Saga** came up with the idea of a feminine A.I. as the mother of humanity, and **Takahashi** refined it into a love story.

"Then I came up with an idea about a deserted A.I. with feminine personality who becomes an origin of new mankind in the unexplored planet. Takahashi refined the idea into more deeper and mystic love story." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.25 (2005)



[8] Began development around **1995-6**.

"The development of Xenogears took a little more than 2 years" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenogears: Perfect Works, p.288 (1998)

[9] During development it was known as "Project NOAH".

"Project'NOAH'(開発コードネーム。後にxenogearsのタイトルを冠する)" - Tetsuya Takahashi, 'Inside Stuff', playonline.com (2001)

[10] **Takahashi's** team was originally responsible for a Chrono Trigger 2 sequel, but **Takahashi** made changes because he wanted to create his own world.

"At the time the staff had assembled, the game wasn't called Xenogears yet. ... At the time the team was supposed to be responsible for a Chrono Trigger sequel; the 'Chrono 2' team. But Takahashi-san wanted to make his own world, so it wasn't going to be 'Chrono 2'." - Yasunori Mitsuda, Xenogears 20th Anniversary Concert Pamphlet, p.20 (2018)

[11] Supposedly there was a promo reel from Square in mid-1996 that displayed what looked like what would become Xenogears, but was in fact labeled "Chrono Trigger 2"; showing that even once they had begun development that the name "Xenogears" had not been decided upon. Around this time, amongst English speaking fans, the rumour of "Chrono Trigger 2" started to float around.

"Supposedly an old promo reel of Square's from mid-1996 contained footage of a 'Chrono Trigger 2' which showed early footage of Xenogears. If this is true, then development on the game had begun before they settled on the title 'Xenogears.' This would explain why the 'Chrono Trigger 2' rumor echoed among English speaking fans for so long even without access to translations of confirmed sources." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide



[12] **Takahashi** had a bad feeling from the beginning of development due to them being "squeezed" between two other titles being heavily promoted by Square at the time: "Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon" and "Parasite Eve".

"Frankly, I remember not having a very good feeling at the beginning of development. We were squeezed in between the two big titles Square were promoting heavily, Chocobo [s Mysterious Dungeon] and Parasite [Eve], so like water flowing from a high place, the world's attention was totally focused on them." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Message of 'Xenogears' Director, The Playstation Magazine (Mar. 1999)

[13] Initially they had planned for the game to be only a single disc, but **Takahashi's** vision kept growing and it became two discs. Though **Takahashi** wanted even more. The idea of splitting the game into part 1 and part 2 was even suggested.

"We had initially planned it as a one-disc game, but we ended up having two discs thanks to Takahashi-kun's ever-expanding world. Even with that, two discs didn't seem enough to him, and he wanted to separate it into a part one and a part two, it looks like." Hiromichi Tanaka, Xenogears 20th Anniversary Concert Pamphlet (2018)

[14] **Takahashi** wanted to tell a 6 episode saga, with part 1 being Episode IV set 500 years before part 2 being Episode V. However he was told by Square to bundle these into a single game.

"we had separated the events of 500 years ago as Episode IV, and the modern era as Episode V, with IV being Part 1 and V being Part 2, but the company told us to bundle it into one." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Hakoere Vol.20 Special Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi and Kunihiro Tanaka (~1998)

[15] Part of **Takahashi's** original plan was that Episodes II and III would have been told in another medium.

"I want to release II and III in a different medium. I don't care if it's a novel or a manga or an anime," - Tetsuya Takahashi, Hakoere Vol.20 Special Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi and Kunihiro Tanaka (~1998)

[16] Originally, the story was entirely sci-fi. However, due to changing over from FFVII and given the staff's tastes **Takahashi** decided to add fantasy elements.

"It was pure sci-fi for me at the beginning. But because of the change of course that I mentioned earlier, and considering the staff's own tastes and what they specialized in, I thought it would be better if we had certain elements from fantasy genres." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Hakoere Vol.20 Special Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi and Kunihiro Tanaka (~1998)

[17] The staff decided on the name "Xeno" because of it meaning "something strange/alien". **Takahashi** also explains further that throughout life you meet different people with different personalities and different backgrounds and it's the interactions between those people that create the drama of life. That's something he's wanted to implement into his games.

From the beginning, we decided on the word "Xeno" between the staff. In itself, that means/has the implication of "Something strange or alien", but what kind of title could we draw from that? So I made a few alternatives for things we could put after "Xeno". After that, we finally decided on "Xenogears". - Tetsuya Takahashi, The Men Who Made Xenogears (1998)

"I think in life when we're living you meet different people and they have different personalities, different backgrounds, and it's the interaction between those people that create the drama of life. And I thought that it would be great if I could drop that drama into video games, and that's why I add Xeno to a lot of my games." - [Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 E3 2017 Gameplay Demo, Nintendo Treehouse](#)

[18] The main script was written by **Takahashi**. **Saga** wrote the part of the script about Bart and his family, Billy and his family, and the former Elementals [Takahashi wrote Citan, Saga wrote Hyuuga]. **Masato Kato** wrote Maria, Chu-Chu, Lahan village and Shevat. **Takashi Tanegashima** wrote the part of Emeraldal, the Yggdrasil's crew and the Elemental girls.

"Gears? Mainly Tetsuya Takahashi did. I wrote the part of (the script about) Bart and his family, Billy and his family and the former Elements". (I like the Jesse's gun.) Mr. Kato wrote the part of Maria, Chu-Chu and Lahan village and Shevat. (Lahan village sequences are many Xeno fan's favorite, also Maria's sortie scene was very impressive.) Mr. Tanegashima wrote the part of Esmeralda, the yggdrasil's crews and Elements girls. (I love Esmerald's cuteness.)" - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.25 (2005)

[19] In 1999 on the Yggdrasil's Periscope Club BBS, **Soraya Saga** said that Karellen was the name of **Takahashi's** favorite character in Childhood's End. The title of "Guardian Angel," given to the character Citan Uzuki, was another reference. ["Guardian Angel" is the title of a short story that eventually developed into Childhood's End]

"according to Soraya Saga on Yggdrasil's Periscope Club BBS back in 1999, was the name of Takahashi's favorite character in Childhood's End. The title of "Guardian Angel," given to the character Citan Uzuki, was another reference." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide



[20] After the completion of the main story and side plots, **Takashi Tanegashima** applied a sense of humour to the story and his knowledge of science and military hardware.

"After the main story and integral sideplots were done, Tanegashima applied a sense of humor and his knowledge about science and military hardwares. Kato added a poetic and mysterious touch to Maria's story." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.25 (2005)

[21] The Xenogears team was staffed almost entirely with new and young staff members. Due to developing the game, teaching new staff members and the novelty of working in 3D, this caused delays. **Takahashi** says it wasn't possible to get it all done.

"Honestly speaking, what had happened is Xenogears as a project was staffed pretty much entirely out of new staff members, young staff members," said Takahashi, speaking through a translator. "Back then, we had the direction of, 'All projects take two years and that's when we need to get it done.' So on top of developing the game, we had to nurture and teach and grow these younger employees. Things like 3D were extremely new, which led to some delays in the schedule. It just wasn't possible to get everything done." - Tetsuya Takahashi, "The Real Story Behind Xenogears' 'Unfinished' Disc 2" by Jason Schreier, kotaku.com (June 15th 2017)

[22] During this time at Square Soft, there was a one and a half year cap on development. **Takahashi** and his team begged Square for more time and received an extension that took them to two years. However it still wasn't enough.

"During that time at Square Soft, there was a one year and a half cap on development. We begged them to extend it to 2 years for "Xenogears". Even with the extension, we weren't going to meet the deadline, and I was told to "just cut it off somewhere"." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

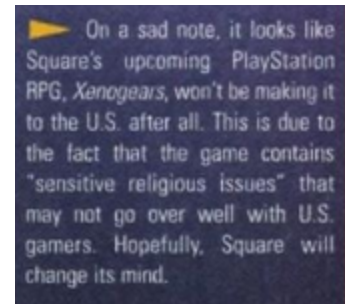
[23] Square suggested ending the game when Fei and Elly escape Solaris, however **Takahashi** thought this was a bad idea. Instead he suggested making Disc 2 the way it is now as consolation; to try and complete his story.

"It was a rough way to end it, and I felt like if we do that, then the players will not be satisfied, ... So we had a proposal—I proposed that if we do disc 2 in this way that it turned out to be, we can finish the game with the current number of staff and the current time allotted for the schedule and the remaining budget we have." - Tetsuya Takahashi, "The Real Story Behind Xenogears' 'Unfinished' Disc 2" by Jason Schreier, kotaku.com (June 15th 2017)

[24] Overseas it was being reported that Xenogears would never make it over state-side due to "sensitive religious issues". For a time this was stated by PlayStation Magazine and IGN/PSXPower.

"On a sad note, it looks like Square's upcoming PlayStation RPG, Xenogears, won't be making it to the U.S. after all. This is due to the fact the game contains 'sensitive religious issues' that may not go over well with U.S. gamers. Hopefully, Square will change its mind." - [PlayStation Magazine, Vol. 1 Issue 2](#) (October 1997)

"One of the biggest causes for a game not coming out here is themes. Case in point: Square's mech RPG Xenogears won't come out here because it has controversial Christian religious themes, something Square feels may cause problems in the US." - IGN Staff, PSXPower (September 1997)



[25] **Takahashi** had plans and ideas for the stories of Episodes II and III, so much so that Episode II could have been divided into four sub-episodes. However everything was eventually crammed into a single game (Xenogears). Meaning its story contains small details from Episode II and III.

"the second episode can be further broken up into four smaller sub-episodes. We originally intended to release these sub-episodes taking place in the various time periods of the second episode in several completely different forms, such as a simulation game, a novelization and so on, but in the end we crammed all of it into a single game. That means the game Xenogears consists of Episodes IV and V mixed in with bits and pieces from Episodes II and III." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenogears: Perfect Works~The Real Thing~, Director's Comment, page 3 (1998)



[26] During the development of Xenogears, **Takahashi** wished that their owner had more sensitivity so that members of their team didn't get ill from working.

"In that situation, if we'd had an owner who showed the proper sensitivity, we might not have fallen into a mental state where we were liable to get everything from stomach ulcers and twisted intestines to hernias and spot baldness." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Message of 'Xenogears' Director, The Playstation Magazine (Mar. 1999)

[27] **Takahashi** was aware that his aims and that of Square did not align and caused a divergence between him and the company that wished to push more titles like the Final Fantasy games.

"there was naturally a significant 'divergence' between the direction Square was aiming to take with their existing games as represented by FF and the direction I wanted to go in. ... I knew [about] that from the start---that is to say, I think they were aiming for that to a certain extent." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Message of 'Xenogears' Director, The Playstation Magazine (Mar. 1999)

[28] In **October 1998**, 8 months after the release of the game back in February (in Japan), Square released the book "Xenogears Perfect Works ~The Real Thing~". A book containing large amounts of lore about the story of Xenogears that the team had not managed to fit into the game.

[29] Even after development and cramming 4 episodes' worth of story and details into a single game, **Takahashi** felt like he had not told as much as he'd wanted to. He visualised Episodes I and VI being worth 4 episodes in of themselves. He wanted to tell a grand space opera spanning from the beginning of the universe to its demise.

"Episode I and VI were now visualized as being the size of the 4 combined episodes each, and the scale of the story and the Xenogears universe must have had expanded in scope. It was no longer just a story about a soldier with multiple personalities, or a 'mystic love story,' or even a story about the history of just one planet... It was a huge scale space opera that portrays the creation of the cosmos until its demise." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[30] In **1999**, concepts for prequel characters began to appear online via **Kunihiko Tanaka's** webpage and **Soraya Saga's** (named Harcourt Vega, later renamed "Ziggurat 9").

"A few characters would be conceptualized during this time (before the break away from Square)" - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide



[31] Among these concepts included a character who resembled Shion Uzuki (on [Tanaka's](#) webpage) and ones who resembled MOMO and Ziggy (on [Soraya Saga's](#) webpage). By this stage, Ziggy was known as "Vega" but was later seen in images renamed to "Otto" (meaning Eight in Italian).

"Shion Uzuki was one, and sketches of her preliminary design appeared as early as 1999 on Kunihiro Tanaka's webpage. Soraya Saga's webpage Harcourt Vega (later renamed "Ziggurat 9") had artworks for the early concepts of MOMO, later renamed to 'Pretty in pink,' and Ziggy, originally called 'Vega' and later known as 'Otto'." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[32] Xenogears only sold around **900,000 copies in Japan**. Due to it not reaching 1 million copies, **Square decided against greenlighting a prequel**.

"Unfortunately, while it had been decided that a sequel to Xenogears would be made if it sold 1 million copies, in the end it only reached just shy of 900,000, so the executives at Square resisted the idea of making the prequel." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[33] **Takahashi** wanted to create a series similar to Xenosaga but the Square executives said they **did not have the money to fund his ideas**.

"The reason I quit Square was that I wanted to make a series like Xenosaga and the executives claimed they didn't have enough money to realize my ideas" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga - The Power of Will, Super PLAY Magazine (2002)

[34] When asked what happened about the six episodes of Xenogears, **Takahashi** replies that he'd like to provide the answers someday.

"Hashino: "...I'm sorry that we've only been talking about "Xenogears", but my staff really wanted me to ask something. For "Xenogears", you've said before that the game is six episodes. What happened to that? This is just a question from a fan. (laughs)" Takahashi: "For as long as I'm alive, I want to release the "answers" someday."" - Katsura Hashino & Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

❖ FOUNDING OF MONOLITH SOFT [1999] [MSI-1]

[1] **Hirohide Sugiura**, another employee at Square, knew about **Tetsuya Takahashi** and thought his work was the most interesting at Square. He had played Xenogears himself and loved it, he discussed with **Takahashi** about the creation of a "Xenogears 2". Once he heard that **Takahashi** was having trouble making more games, **Sugiura** decided to talk with **Takahashi** and they decided to try and make games somewhere else.

"I always thought Takahashi made the most interesting games at Square, so when [I heard] he had trouble getting to make new ones, I wondered what to do and got talking to him, and it started from there. That was around October of the year before last. Even though his games had a lot of support from the users, he wasn't in a position to make any more. It was painful seeing that right next door from me. So he decided to try searching for a more comfortable environment where he could make games somewhere else." - Hirohide Sugiura, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)

"It all started when I played Xenogears back then. I was in charge of another game at the time, but Xenogears really stood out prominently among the rest, and I fell in love with it. Afterward, we put together plans for a Xenogears 2, but Square at the time had a lot of financial investment in their movie division, so it was extremely difficult to get things put into production internally. Despite that, I knew somehow I had to make something from these ideas, so I chose to go my own way." - Hirohide Sugiura, Monolith Soft co-president on the studio's origins, inspired by desire to make Xenogears 2 by Oni_Dino, nintendoeverything.com (28th May 2020)

[2] Initially they were concerned about the feasibility of starting a new company, however some of the best staff at Square agreed to join **Takahashi** and **Sugiura**. So they knew they would be fine.

"We struggled with the problem of how many people we'd be able to bring together, but [some of] the best staff approved. With so many people supporting Takahashi, we knew we'd be all right." - Hirohide Sugiura, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)



[3] Upon their departure from Square, along with **Takahashi** and **Sugiura**, a total of 29 Square members left the company to join Monolith Soft.

"Tetsuya Takahashi, Yasuyuki Honne and 27 others felt the same. So with the help of Masaya Nakamura (founder of Namco), we went ahead with establishing Monolith Soft." - Hirohide Sugiura, Monolith Soft co-president on the studio's origins, inspired by desire to make Xenogears 2 by Oni_Dino, nintendoeverything.com (28th May 2020)

[4] Monolith Soft was founded **1st October 1999** by **Tetsuya Takahashi**, **Hirohide Sugiura** and **Yasuyuki Honne** (another ex-Square developer). **Sugiura** became the **CEO and Representative Director of Monolith Soft**.

[5] Having founded Monolith Soft, **Sugiura** and **Takahashi** decided they **needed a publisher** instead of being a fully independent developer studio. However, many publishers they approached turned them down and suggested they should remain independent.

"Other publishers were talking about 'The independent company form'" - Hirohide Sugiura, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)



[6] Eventually, **Namco decided to invest in Monolith Soft** but having them become a subsidiary of the company. Namco sent an executive to discuss how their company would handle things such as marketing, management and production so that Monolith Soft's developers could focus on creating games.

"but only Namco sent an executive [to talk to us] about being a subsidiary company, included [our] management, and gave us full backup all the way." - Hirohide Sugiura, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)

[7] Namco, a company with great brand strength, and their offer gave much relief to **Sugiura** and **Takahashi**. It was decided that Monolith Soft would become a Namco subsidiary.

"That gave us the peace of mind to focus on development. The creators wanted to know who could provide us with the most time, money and personnel, and Namco gave the most ideal answer to that question." - Hirohide Sugiura, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)

[8] Not only this but the founder of Namco, Masaya Nakamura, shared many thoughts on creation with Sugiura and Takahashi and took good care of Monolith Soft.

"Namco founder Masaya Nakamura who took great care of us. Nakamura-san's thoughts on creation was very relatable, he treated us well, and talked to us about all kinds of things. After his retirement, there was a new atmosphere—which is a given, but I felt there was a change from Nakamura-san's grand ideas." - Hirohide Sugiura, Monolith Soft Executive Producer On Going From Namco To Nintendo, Siliconera.com (2017)

[9] Takahashi was quite open with the genre of games they would create as a new company. Even playing with the idea of making an **online game**.

"We might even make an online game..." - Tetsuya Takahashi, [The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play \(Dec. 1999\)](#)



[10] Takahashi wanted to build "goodwill" within the new company. Distancing from old structures where the company is mainly ruled by executives. He wanted to provide as many opportunities for new and younger developers to rise within the ranks.

"For example, large companies are often dominated by senior staff, so it's hard for younger talent to create their own projects. It doesn't matter how much talent they have if they don't have any political clout. Since I don't want to have that kind of organizational structure here, it should hopefully be easier for younger people to rise rapidly within the ranks." - Tetsuya Takahashi, [The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play \(Dec. 1999\)](#)

[11] Monolith Soft's offices would be located in Yokohama.

❖ THE XENOSAGA 1 STORY [1999-2003] [XS1]



[1] As early as **December 1999**, Monolith Soft had announced that their first game would be an RPG for the Playstation 2.

"You haven't announced anything other than the fact that your first game will be an RPG on the PS2, so we're wondering if it's a sequel to you-know-what." - Interviewer, The Play's Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)

[2] After the founding of Monolith Soft in October 1999, **Takahashi** states that they scrambled to hire new talent. Eventually they began development on Xenosaga around the **end of 2000**.

"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. So in actual fact, development began sometime around the end of 2000." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki Online (2001)

[3] Eventually Monolith Soft had a staff count of around **70 members**. 20 of whom had originally worked with **Takahashi** on Xenogears.

"GS: How many staff members are currently in the company? TT: Right now, about 70 members, including part-time and contract workers. GS: Among those members, how many have worked on Xenogears? TT: I think somewhere around 20. GS: So are all the current staff members on the development team working on Xenosaga? TT: Yes." - GameSpot & Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)

[4] Many of the new staff at Monolith Soft were "rookies", including newly joined **Koh Kojima** who had just graduated college. **Koh Kojima** became the Quest Planner for Xenosaga.

"The programmers and the planners were all rookies. At the time, the director of Xenoblade Chronicles and Xenoblade Chronicles X, (Koh) Kojima, had just joined the company right after graduating college." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[5] The first trailer for Xenosaga was revealed at **Tokyo Game Show Spring 2001**.



[6] Eagle-eyed Xenogears fans spotted terms from Perfect Works such as "Lost Jerusalem", "Miktam" and the "Pilgrimage Fleet". Indicating to them that this was what would've been the prequel to Xenogears.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[7] **Soraya Saga** explains that it did not take long to come up with the outline for Xenosaga's story as it was "born simultaneously with 'gears'". As can be seen by the conceptualisations from 1999 while they were still at Square.

"Not so long, technically vague outline was born simultaneously with 'gears.'" - Soraya Saga, Twitter (2013)

[8] Near the beginning of development, **Takahashi** expressed interest in graphical fidelity and the blurring of the line between video games and movies.

"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, Famitsu (2001)

[9] **Takahashi** wanted to explore characters' attitudes towards life and death. Again, reflecting his own observations and questions about death.

"I think living in a certain way is a painful thing. First of all, establishing a compromise between the ego and alter ego is difficult. Accordingly, if there are people that are living, then there are people that choose death."

Again, in contrast to a death that is vague...that is something you can only take at face value as a child, death gradually becomes something more familiar as you gain experience throughout life. Then the problem arises of how are you supposed to face that? I thought about it to myself, and wondered how others felt. I'm what you could call not very insistent regarding life, in that there's a part of me that doesn't care if I die. Especially when I was still single. Now, because I was able to start a family and have children, I can't just die anytime. Feelings about death can vary because of things like positions in society, individual ideologies, or your own surroundings. I thought it would be nice to give each character that part of "life and death" that exists in every person." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[10] One of the main themes of Xenosaga is fear, and how they overcome their fear.

"Fear is a main theme in the game. It's only by overcoming their fear that the game's characters can save themselves." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga - The Power of Will, Super PLAY Magazine (2002)

[11] Speaking further on this, **Takahashi** explains that the characters in Xenosaga have pasts filled with regrets and unavoidable destinies; the story will follow them as they find who they are as individuals and find the power to go on.

"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." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, video-senki.com (2001)



[12] At the beginning of development, **Soraya Saga** says that they all missed Xenogears but starting work on Xenosaga felt fresh and gave them hope.

"We missed Xenogears so much but overall Xenosaga seemed a fresh start full of hope." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya Saga on Xenogears and Xenosaga" by Siliconera Staff, siliconera.com (2010)

[13] In an interview before the release of Xenosaga Episode I, **Takahashi** states that Xenogears didn't come out how he envisioned it. Therefore Xenosaga was a better opportunity for him to execute his idea of a sci-fi saga.

"Xenogears ended up differently from how I envisioned it. So we have decided to hit the reset button and start all over again with a science-fiction," - Tetsuya Takahashi, We track down the latest info on Monolith Soft's upcoming Xenosaga by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)

[14] Once again, **Takahashi** planned to accomplish a **6-episode saga**. He had envisioned everything up until **Episode V**.

"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, We track down the latest info on Monolith Soft's upcoming Xenosaga by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)

[15] The plan for all the games was for KOS-MOS and chaos to star in **every game** and be the characters that players would recognise across the series. Spanning thousands of years, they represent the **Animus** and **Anima** respectively, mirroring the same with **Fei** and **Elly**.

"KOS-MOS and her antithesis Chaos will exist in all six games." - Martin Johansson, Xenosaga - The Power of Will, Super PLAY Magazine (2002)

[16] **Takahashi** was responsible for writing and creating the characters of: KOS-MOS, chaos, Shion and her family, Allen, Kevin, Andrew, Margulis, Pellegrini, Febronia, Virgil, crew of the Elsa, Miyuki, Nephilim, Abel, Sellers, T-elos, and Wilhelm.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[17] **Saga** was responsible for writing and creating Ziggy's family and enemy, the U.R.TV.'s, Helmer, Yuriev, the Mizrahi family, Lapis Roman, the Godwin sisters, concept of Realians, Life Recycling Law, the S.O.C.E. and more. She wrote half of the story and script for the original Xenosaga, which was **more than she did for Xenogears**.

"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 Realians, 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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide



[18] **Takahashi** enjoys inserting religious metaphors that are difficult to see. More obvious and visual elements are usually due to other staff members. He doesn't enjoy his metaphors only being hidden in surface level gameplay.

"I, myself, put in religious parodies and metaphors that are difficult to see, and the parodies that you can see and understand I left to the staff." ... "No, if you do that too much, I think you'll actually get the opposite effect. There might be a message you want to get across, and I want to avoid having it hidden inside surface gameplay. That's something that my staff also understood about this project." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[19] When writing dialogue, **Takahashi** tries to communicate messages and feelings that are reflections of his own life. He says you can't tell someone something by simply saying it.

"On one hand, you can't always tell someone something just by saying it. You have to think about how the other person is feeling or else it won't come across. The many messages in the game are also reflections of my own life. Having said that, I am a selfish human being and when I'm creating I only say what I want to say. There's a part of me that detachedly watches myself and thinks, 'Why do I always act like that?.' With those thoughts of self-admonition in mind, I wrote the dialogue for the characters. Every day was a continuous succession of regrets." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[20] Also when writing dialogue, **Takahashi** feels it's important to not forget the rhetoric communicated by the characters. They must speak like real people and avoid speaking without intention; becoming "poets".

"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?" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[21] **Takahashi** explains that chaos and KOS-MOS carry philosophical meaning related to the theme of the game. It is connected to Nietzsche's "will for power" but **Takahashi** clarifies that this was deliberately made to not be highly visible so as to not make it difficult for people to get into the game.

"Well, the 'will for power' is borrowed from Nietzsche, so these two characters, 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." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, video-senki.com (2001)

[22] **Takahashi** really wanted to accentuate the religious aspect of the game in its music and atmosphere. Something that **Yasunori Mitsuda** agreed with and requested.

"As for the BGM, we're including Gregorian chants, 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." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki Online (2001)

[23] **Takahashi** and **Mitsuda** also discussed how RPGs tend to repeat and loop music quite often and so they wanted to aim for having a large amount of original tracks for different moments.

"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." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki Online (2001)

[24] During the development of Xenosaga, Koh Kojima explains that Takahashi would tend to stay in his office as he worked and only communicated to others via email or through team leaders. He would avoid talking to other developers as he felt that they took his directions too seriously.

"Kojima: Exactly. Takahashi-san's style used to be 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. Takahashi: I made it my practice to speak directly to the dev team as little as possible as my comments had seemed to be taken too seriously by them." - Koh Kojima & Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)



[25] Because Takahashi is a big fan of movies, he would direct the camerawork of the cutscenes himself. Trying to achieve things that couldn't be done in real life, thanks to CG.

"Right. 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." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, video-senki.com (2001)

[26] Tetsuya Takahashi explains in an interview that Xenosaga is planned to span 6 episodes, all of which are divided into three major parts (story arcs).

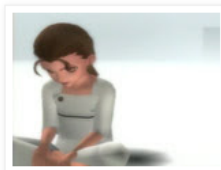
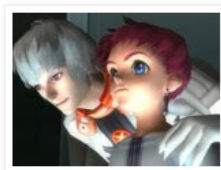
"There will be six episodes planned in all, all of which are divided into three major parts. I already have the story plotted until the middle of episode five in my mind, but certain ideas may be perceived as old-fashioned as time goes, so we'll try to be flexible to changes." - Tetsuya Takahashi, We track down the latest info on Monolith Soft's upcoming Xenosaga by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)



[27] On 8th July 2001, Monolith Soft staff, including Tetsuya Takahashi, held a conference on stage to discuss Xenogears and the new series "Xenosaga". This was very unusual as these kinds of conferences only happened for book authors and film directors, not game developers.

"An unusual 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). What was unusual about it is that in Japan, this kind of on-stage interview they made with Tetsuya Takahashi and others is something that a director for a movie or a writer for a book would do, not developers for a game." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[28] At the end of the conference a new trailer was played that showed a variety of scenes, many of which would not make it into the final game and instead be delayed to Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Böse; surprising for a game only 6/7 months into development. However it also included a collection of scenes that were removed entirely and do not show up in future episodes.



[29] It has been suggested that this may be due to the scenes not being developed chronologically. This would also explain images showing Shion walking around on Second Miltia, an area the players would not be able to visit until Episode II.

"At Monolith Soft, in contrast, they have developed games by starting from a broad, thin base and building on it over time." - Hitoshi Yamagami, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[30] When asked about familiar looking characters in the Xenosaga trailer and whether there was a solid connection between it and Xenogears, **Takahashi** explains that they are either “self-parodies” or similar to how a film director will feature a cameo from the friend of a leading actor. He asks **Xenogears fans not to overreact**.

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“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, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, video-senki.com (2001)

[31] The graphics engine for Xenosaga Episode I was only completed **six months before the release** of the game. Demonstrating how tight their schedule was.

“That’s right. And, it’s a bit embarrassing to admit, but the graphics engine was only completed six months before the development deadline. That’s the schedule we were on.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[32] In a GameSpot Japan interview, **Takahashi** is asked about what direction RPGs will take in the future. He answers that the industry is drifting towards **online gaming** (around this time franchises such as Phantasy Star and Final Fantasy had released or announced upcoming online games such as Phantasy Star Online and Final Fantasy XI), however Takahashi was more interested in pushing **graphical fidelity**, and he sees that advancing technology will lead to the line between games and movies/TV becoming blurred.

“Q: What direction do you think the RPG genre will take in the future?”

T: I think a lot of the industry is drifting towards online gaming, but 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. In my approach, though, I can’t help but have lots of different people’s viewpoints creep into the scenario, which complicates making the game truly interactive. I’ll need to work on fixing that in the future.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, GameSpot (2001)

[32] Many were concerned that perhaps there would be **issues with Square** concerning the nature of Xensaga. However, in a GameSpot interview on 8th November 2001 Yoshidumi Makoto (assistant manager for the CS department at Namco) stated that they were always in contact with Square. Namco’s alliance with Square and Enix meant there were talks between the top management groups on a regular basis.

“Well 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.” - Yoshidumi Makoto, Xenosaga Interview by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)

[33] In the same GameSpot interview, the interviewer mentions hearing about the **possibility of a Xenosaga Online game from an analyst report**. Yoshidumi Makoto replies that they may have plans for an online game and it’s something they’d like to do, however there were many uncertainties as they hadn’t started business with online gaming.

“GameSpot: We’ve heard from an analyst report about the possibility of Xenosaga Online.

Yoshidumi Makoto: We may have plans for that in the future, but we haven’t started business with online gaming, so there are still a lot of uncertainties. But someday we’d like to make an online game.” - GameSpot Interviewer & Yoshidumi Makoto, Xenosaga Interview by Ike Sato, GameSpot (2001)



[34] Xenosaga’s development lasted **one year**. **Takahashi** himself says that it was rather quick.

“As a consequence of that, the actual development time should be about a year, I suppose? 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, it was rather quick, wasn’t it?” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, Dengeki Online (2001)

[35] During the lead up to Xenosaga Episode I's release, it began to be referred to as a potential "Final Fantasy-Killer" by Namco.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[36] Xenosaga Episode I was released in Japan on **28th February 2002**.

[37] After release, reactions were mostly positive. Some said the game lacked realism. Fans who enjoyed discussing Xenogears said that the game didn't have much story, comparing it to a "prologue".

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

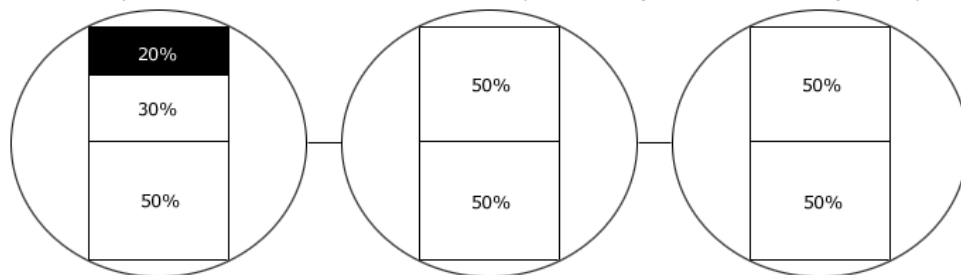
[38] Having played the game, fans were quick to notice many scenes featured in the trailer were not present in the main game. Not only that but entire characters, such as Jin Uzuki (whom many were hyped for as a Citan-lookalike) were missing from the game entirely. Names of certain songs included names of things that did not appear in Episode I such as: "Zarathustra", "Ormus", "Omega", "The Resurrection" and "The Awakening". Many keywords from the trailer also did not hold any relevance in Episode I, such as: "Proto Omega", "Ormus", "Rennes-le-Château", "Mary Magdalene" and "Eternal Recurrence". It was evident the game was incomplete.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[39] In a 2003 interview, **Tetsuya Takahashi** reveals that **Episode I only accomplished 20%** of "the complete scene". The back of the Episode I box even states the game as having "over 80 hours" of content, when in reality it was around 40 hours or less.

"With Episode I, we've only managed to show about 20 percent of the complete scene...." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Famitsu (2003)

[40] If both Episodes I and II composed the first story arc, the first "scene", then in terms of the entire scope of the series the game had only accomplished 6-7%. As visualised by the Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide:



[41] After the release of Episode I, neither **Takahashi** nor anyone else at Monolith Soft or Namco would come to refer to Xenosaga as a 6 episode saga ever again. It was basically impossible to squeeze that much remaining content into 5 more episodes. To do so would mean ditching many pre-rendered cutscenes and voice acting to fit the content onto the discs.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[42] However, the vision of a 6 part epic dwindled regardless of this as the game had **sold only half of what Xenogears did** in Japan. (Though it did become Greatest Hits worthy in the U.S. due to selling over 500,000 copies.) Nevertheless, the disappointing sales meant they would not be pursuing the original scope of the series. Instead they chose to **make sure they completed the story of Shion**.

"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." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[43] Although **Takahashi** had once suggested he was interested in exploring **other media for storytelling**, it appears he's fairly **set on video games being his primary medium**.

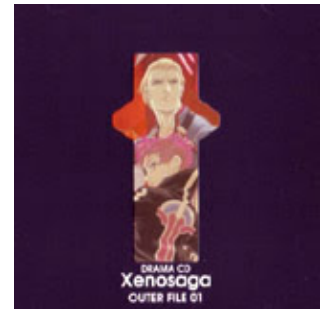
"Gamers are my number-one motivation and spiritual support; it's thanks to them that I was able to build Monolith Soft," - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, video-senki.com (2001)

[44] A Namco press release in early 2002 stated that they planned on releasing a new Xenosaga title **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." - The GIA (Gaming Intelligence Agency) (12th January 2002)

[45] On **11th October 2002**, Namco published the book "Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-"; similar to Perfect Works, it contained lots of unseen details of the Xenosaga story.

[46] Towards the end of 2002, Monolith Soft released "Xenosaga OUTER FILE"; 3 audio drama CDs telling the stories of the Elsa crew and their relation to chaos. It also introduced the characters Richard and Hermann. These stories were written by anime writer **Yuichiro Takeda**, his first collaboration with **Tetsuya Takahashi**.



[47] Fans began wondering when Episode II would be released, given the statement that there would be a new release each year. In May 2003, word began to spread that Episode II was only 40% complete.

"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?" - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[48] In lifetime sales, Episode I sold **439,775+ in Japan** and, while not giving exact figures, Namco said the game was a commercial success overseas (North America). In **July 2003**, Namco said the game had sold over **1 million** copies worldwide.

"これによると、まず『ゼノサーガ エピソード I』は、北米でも好調でワールドワイドでミリオンを達成したとのこと。" - (dengekionline.com) (21st July 2003)

[49] Later, on **20th November 2003** Monolith Soft released Xenosaga Episode I - Reloaded. A re-release of Episode I in Japan but this time featuring the English dub and a bit of extra content. (Though it appears to be an older version of the dub as Realians are referred to as "Synths")

[50] Xenosaga Episode 1 - Reloaded sold a further **14,078** copies in Japan.

❖ MOVING OFFICE [2002] [MSI-2]

[1] In **June 2002**, Monolith Soft moved from their old office in Yokohama to their new office in Meguro, Tokyo at the Nakameguro GT Tower building.

June 2002

Moved the office to the current Nakameguro GT Tower

❖ THE XENOSAGA 2 STORY [2002-2004] [XS2]



[1] In a Famitsu interview in May 2003, **Hirohide Sugiura** and **Tetsuya Takahashi** reveal that there have been **major shifts in structure in Monolith Soft**. **Sugiura** has **stepped down** as producer for Episode II and **Takahashi** has dropped the title of executive vice president of Monolith Soft; Sugiura describes the change for **Takahashi** as him being “free” of his old position and allowed to work more freely as a creator. **Sugiura** also says that **someone else will be taking over the direction** of Episode II.

“Well, first off, our roles will be very different from before. To be more exact, I’ll be stepping down from the producer role, Takahashi will drop the heavy-sounding job of executive vice president [of Monolith Soft], and another person will handle the direction this time.” - Hirohide Sugiura, Famitsu (May 2003)

[2] **Koh Arai**, previously the Chief Artistic Designer of Xenogears and Map Planning Director of Xenosaga Episode I, took over from **Tetsuya Takahashi** as Director. **Tomohiro Hagiwara**, previously a Production Manager at Namco, took over as Producer for Episode II. **Norihiko Yonesaka**, Episode I’s Quest Scenario Writer, returned and took over the position of Scenario Writer from **Tetsuya Takahashi**.

[3] **Hirohide**’s motivation for this change up was that he was beginning to notice that game producers and directors were becoming older and very rarely were these projects being led by young people. He felt “if this keeps up, we’ll never see a shift to a new generation”.

“This transition has everything to do with both Monolith’s structure and where we want to take the Xenosaga series in the future. I’ve begun to feel recently that game creators are getting older and there aren’t many younger ones coming out. You see developers in their mid-thirties to early forties in magazines all the time, even in the case of brand-new products. If this keeps up, we’ll never see a shift to a new generation, which I don’t think is very healthy from an industry standpoint.” - Hirohide Sugiura, Famitsu (May 2003)

[4] **Takahashi** then explains himself that spending **too much time on a single project** can make it harder to chase after new possibilities and therefore he didn’t want to limit the series.

“When you deal too long with a single project, I feel like it becomes harder to chase after new possibilities. I don’t want to limit the Xenosaga series to its current state; instead I’d like to explore other genres and other possibilities.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Famitsu (May 2003)

[5] **Sugiura** compared **Takahashi’s** new role to that of a General Director for an anime series. While other directors may be in charge of individual episodes, the general director oversees the entire series.

“You could compare this to producing an anime show for TV. Even if a series goes on for 26 episodes, it’s not like the same person directs every episode. There’s a general director, and then a different director builds the story in each episode.” - Hirohide Sugiura, Famitsu (May 2003)



[6] At the end of this interview, **Sugiura** goes on to mention Episode III and Episode IV. While it may no longer be a 6 part series, it appears they still plan to develop up to a 4th installment.

“Our plan is to continue with Episode III and IV later on” - Hirohide Sugiura, Famitsu (May 2003)

[7] After this mention of Episode IV, a rumour began online that Episode III and IV were in development at the same time.

[8] At this point, it had seemingly been decided that the remaining episodes would **focus solely on Shion's story arc** involving her, KOS-MOS and the Zohar. Meaning that instead of Episode I & II being the Shion arc of a larger 6 part story, Episodes I-IV would be exclusively the Shion arc. There would be no retelling of the Xenogears story arc.

"as far as the RPG Xenosaga goes, the story is mainly about KOS-MOS and the Zohars. ... We'll also probably explore the inner emotions of Shion as well." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Famitsu (May 2003)



[9] Production of Episode II began sometime during late Spring/early Summer of 2002, according to **Tomohiro Hagiwara** who says that the game took a full **2 years to develop**.

"The development period was a full 2 years" - Tomohiro Hagiwara, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[10] Around 60 people worked on Episode II internally, including external support the staff count becomes around 100.

"The internal staff was about 60 people. We had a lot of external support too, so all in all it was probably more than 100 people." - Tomohiro Hagiwara, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[11] Initially, the **first version** of the story for Episode II was written by **Tetsuya Takahashi** and **Soraya Saga**. It wasn't simply an outline but a complete script with characters' lines.

"A number of official comments from the new team mentioned Takahashi and I were marginally involved in the 2nd episode by contributing the first version of the script." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.9 (2005)

"It was not a plot outline but a complete script including actual characters' lines." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Ver.2 (2005)

[12] Reflecting upon the reaction for Episode I (play time being too short and too many long cutscenes), **Takahashi** stated that Episode II would fix these things.

"long load times, play time being too short and being forced to watch movies all the time. All of those will be fixed in "Episode II". This time, "pleasant play" will be the main proposition, and we will improve/increase the gameplay parts" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Famitsu (May 2003)

[13] During development, mostly in the first half, **Tetsuya Takahashi** would conduct study groups with everyone on the team to explain the intricate story.

"In order to hear everyone's [collective] opinion during development and to avoid fundamental errors, [Takahashi] held study groups with everyone" - Tomohiro Hagiwara, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[14] **Norihiko Yonesaka**, the new scenario writer, noted these study groups as being very important as it helped him in creating his interpretation of the story.

"Since it was necessary when I presented my own interpretation of the story and characters and my reconstruction of the world vision as the scenario, I often went to Takahashi's study groups in the early days of development." - Norihiko Yonesaka, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[15] **Yonesaka** also notes that he worries about his interpretation of the characters.

"Honestly, even now I still worry about my interpretation of the characters." - Norihiko Yonesaka, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)



[16] As early as 2002, it had been decided that backstory concerning Ziggy would be dealt with **independently**, either as a separate episode or outside of them. Because of this, **Soraya Saga** had to make **rewrites**.

"(I rewrote The Pied Piper free of charge.) I haven't heard from the team since October 2002." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.10 (2005)

[17] As early as 2003 **rumours** began to spread about **Soraya Saga leaving after Episode II**. Possibly originating from her website.

[18] On her website, **Soraya Saga** states "Soraya and Takahashi have been willing to help the new team if requested". This suggests that the changeover agreement must've meant **Takahashi** had no creative control and was only available upon request.

"Soraya and Takahashi have been willing to help the new team if requested," - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Ver.2 (2005)

[19] **Hiroshi Uchiyama** (3D Character Designer for Episode I) went on to work on *Baten Kaitos: Eternal Wings and the Lost Ocean* along with **Yasuyuki Honne** (Art Director for Xenogears & Episode I) and **Masato Kato** (previously the script writer for Xenogears, now working independently and worked alongside MSI for Baten Kaitos).



[20] **Yasunori Mitsuda** was **not rehired** for Xenosaga Episode II. **Mitsuda** would go on to state that his exclusion was “regrettable” but that he’d still **follow the series as a fan**.

[21] **Koh Arai** and **Tomohiro Hagiwara** explain that they chose **Yuki Kajiura** because they thought her mysterious and mystical sound fit the setting of Episode II perfectly.

“We chose Ms. Yuki Kajiura because we thought her mystical, mysterious sound was perfect for Episode II. We showed her the script and movies and let her use her imagination to freely create the music to fit. We really like what she came up with.” - Koh Arai & Tomohiro Hagiwara, Play Magazine (Nov. 2004)

[22] **Soraya Saga** was also **not rehired**, explaining in her 2005 FAQ that she works as a **freelancer** and the first version of the story apparently **didn’t appeal to the new team**.

“It is not my decision. Supposedly previous story I wrote in the first episode did not appeal to the new team’s taste. I’m working on freelance basis. If clients say they don’t need my work anymore, that’s all. No conflicts, no quarrels there were.” - Soraya Saga, “Soraya’s FAQs from 2005”, Q.2 (2005)

[23] **Yuki Kajiura**, **Shinji Hosoe** and **Ayako Saso** were hired to work on the music for pre-rendered cutscenes, interactive moments (such as battles) and real-time cutscenes respectively.

[24] Despite being credited (likely due to reuse of certain designs), **Kunihiko Tanaka** was also **not rehired** (implied by Soraya Saga’s FAQ page).

“Leaving was not Soraya’s decision. Soraya was told goodbye same as in the case of other Episode I artists including Mr. Yasunori Mitsuda, Mr. Kunihiko Tanaka, and the Mr. you-know-who. (Please do not ask Soraya who he is.)” - Soraya Saga, “Soraya’s FAQ: (Ver 2.)” (2005)

[25] **Koh Arai** and **Tomohiro Hagiwara** state in an interview that they thought making the characters **more realistic** would help them **break into the North American market**.

“We felt making the characters more realistic would help us break into the North American market. These changes also enabled us to create models with a wider range of emotions, allowing us to create cutscenes with expressions much richer than Episode I.” - Koh Arai & Tomohiro Hagiwara, Play Magazine (Nov. 2004)



[26] Newcomers such as **Koh Kojima** (Quest Planner for Episode I) remained and this time worked as Battle Designer.

[27] **Soraya Saga** would go on to say that someone at Monolith Soft pushed for lots of changes for Xenosaga, pointing specifically towards **Koh Arai** and the core of the new team. **Tomohiro Hagiwara** would then go on to say that he aimed for a “constantly evolving Xenosaga”.

“Whose idea is that changeover? ... Commonly it is for the game director to decide. New episodes after the first one have a new director as is officially known.” - Soraya Saga “Soraya’s FAQs from 2005”, Q.4 (2005)

“I think the staff always wanted to pursue new possibilities. We had to make some preparations to be able to do that, and that was my job. Rather than ‘An unchanging Xenosaga’, I wanted to aim for ‘A constantly evolving Xenosaga’. If you restrict yourself to one method, you’ll get worse results in the long run, so I also think it’s important to use a method where I do things I haven’t tried yet.” - Tomohiro Hagiwara, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[28] When asked about whether Namco was responsible for the changeovers at Monolith Soft, **Soraya Saga** clarifies and says “no”. She goes on to thank Namco for providing reasonable budgets and development time.

“No. The parent company has been kind enough to allocate reasonable budgets, development times, and promotional campaigns for the series. I’ve been grateful to them for their help.” - Soraya Saga, “Soraya’s FAQs from 2005”, Q.18 (2005)

[29] During a Monolith Soft conference in **July 2003**, Monolith Soft revealed that there were plans for [Xenosaga to be novelised and turned into an anime](#).

"Monolith soft also revealed that there are plans for the Xenosaga series to be novelized and also released as an anime. More details on the two projects will be announced in the near future." - GameSpot, Additional details on Xenosaga Episode II (22nd July 2003)

[30] On **14th October 2003**, it was being reported that the remaining Xenosaga titles would be "Jenseits von Gut und Böse" and "Also sprach Zarathustra". This confirmed that the series was now only 3 parts. "Episode IV" only ever being mentioned once by [Sugiura](#) in May 2003. This was also confirmed a while before this as messages on the Monolith Soft website stated that [Takahashi](#) only saw the series **lasting another 2-3 years**.

"On October 14, 2003, it was reported that the titles of Jenseits von Gut und Böse and Also Sprach Zarathustra would be utilized for the remaining games, indirectly confirming that the Xenosaga series had now been cut down from 4 episodes to merely 3." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[31] On the Monolith website, [Takahashi](#) mentions how he's **nervous** for what [Arai](#) has done with the story he had given him. Saying how he's now **anticipating the game more as a user than a creator**.

"I made the first draft of the script, but I get really nervous when I think about how Arai is going to use the abilities of the Monolith staff for the first time to cook that recipe into a delicious game. Unlike [last] time, when I've been so busy, I'll rather be enjoying the launch of Episode 2 more from a user's position." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga II "Who" (2003)

[32] [Takahashi](#) also ponders what he may do **after** Xenosaga. Saying that he might be interested in either tackling a **fantasy theme or modern day**.

"After that...hmm. There's been a marked decline in high fantasy-themed works lately, so I might want to try making something like that, or maybe something that takes place in the present day rather than SF...I feel like doing a variety of different things." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga II "Who" (2003)

[33] [Soraya Saga](#) talks about how, initially, she thought it was a pleasure to have brought out Episode II; however she eventually came to take this back.

"It was supposed to be a great pleasure in the beginning. Even now I wish it were." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.13 (2005)

=====CONTENT WARNING: Topic of Suicide=====

[34] In **November 2003**, [Soraya Saga](#) tried to hang herself due to the guilt she felt following the suicide of her brother. Thankfully her attempt failed. It left her bleeding from the nose and left eye; reasons for which she initially hid from readers on her blog. She still feels this guilt to this day, on her Twitter page in 2009 she wrote: "I still feel guilty about not having been able to save my brother's life, and wonder why I'm here without him." Soraya Saga's brother was also a game developer and worked with Takahashi on Chrono Trigger.

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[35] In **February 2004**, [Soraya Saga](#) saw a promotional video for Episode II thanks to another department and she said on her blog that "in April 2004, I learned what the adapted game was like." Out of frustration and disappointment, she claimed on her website that she had now "quit" the Xenosaga series. "The scenes for analyzing Momo in the UMN administration center, memories of Sakura in Momo ENCEPHALON are tolerably faithful to the original."

"And in April 2004, I learned what the adapted game was like." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.10 (2005)

"The scenes for analyzing Momo in the UMN administration center, memories of Sakura in Momo ENCEPHALON are tolerably faithful to the original." - Soraya Saga, "Soraya's FAQs from 2005", Q.11 (2005)

[36] On **28th April 2004**, Xenosaga Freaks was released in Japan. It contained Xenocomi which was written by [Norihiro Yonesaka](#) after being asked to do so by [Tomohiro Hagiwara](#).

"Before I knew it, it'd become something cool. (Laughs) It was [a result of] something I said myself, so I got what I deserved. It began with Hagiwara telling me to write an interesting story without minding if it was on the small side, but I just kept writing without thinking about it, and eventually it ended up at that size. I got carried away working all night, so I couldn't restrain myself." - Norihiko Yonesaka, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 1 (2004)

[37] Xenosaga Episode II was released in Japan on **24th June 2004**.

[38] In an interview with Satoru Iwata in 2010, **Tetsuya Takahashi** compares himself to a cricket from an old Japanese proverb: it talks about a cricket who tries to cross a river, it starts happily but halfway there it gives up. He says that up until Xenoblade that there were times where he had done the same. Given Episode I's underperforming sales and having to scrap 2/3rds of his planned story, it's possible **Takahashi** is referring to this. It's likely he gave up and decided to hand over the reins to the new Monolith Soft team to see what they would do with it.

"There's an old Japanese proverb about a cricket trying to swim across a river. At first it's swimming away happily, but halfway across, it just seems to give up. I'd worked on a lot of games up until [Xenoblade], and there were times when I've done the same." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks - Xenoblade Chronicles, Vol. 3: The Development Process, 1. Seeing it Through to the End (2010)

[39] In a 2006 interview, **Takahashi** explains that the original plot for Episode II would have contained 3 important elements: 1. All that is in Episode II currently, 2. Parts of what went into Episode III, 3. Ziggy's story which became Pied Piper instead.

"The original plan for Episode 2 can be roughly divided into three modules, with what we depicted in Episode 2 being one of them, and one of the remaining [modules] going into Episode 3. The last one is in Pied Piper, which while being Ziggy's story, is also important for giving valuable information on things like the Salvator and the Immigrant Fleet." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga I-II (DS) Interview, Bandai Namco (2006)

[40] After the release of Episode II, fans had mixed reactions to the new character designs and new composer **Yuki Kajiura**. They felt that **Kunihiko Tanaka** and **Yasunori Mitsuda** were irreplaceable parts of the Xeno franchise.

"When trailers and screenshots had been released people had mixed feelings about the redesigns and the two new composers Yuki Kajiura and Shinji Hosoe, feeling that Kunihiko Tanaka and Yasunori Mitsuda, who had been with the series since Xenogears, and in many ways defined the Xeno-verse's look and feel, were irreplaceable." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[41] **Soraya Saga** frequently updated her work profile to reflect **how little** her and **Takahashi** had to do with the game, stating that the game was **"heavily adapted"** by Monolith Soft.

"and even before the game was out she specified that the screenplay is "heavily adapted" by Monolith Soft." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[42] Many western fans wondered why there was so little talk about the newly released game in Japan. Unfortunately, it did not tie up Shion's story arc, it didn't answer any questions from Episode I and was in fact just 'the rest of Episode I'. After 2 years of development, it achieved even less progress than the previous game in terms of story.

"While the game was released in Japan, western fans started to wonder why there was so little talk about it, asking around if the game would be as intriguing as Episode I, or finally answer whether the series follows Xenogears: Perfect Works or not. But the truth seemed to be rather depressing for all Xeno fans. Episode II did neither wrap up Shion's arc nor give a satisfying continuation to the story. The game was much shorter than the first, had a rather poor sense of continuity, fans were again left with a cliffhanger" - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[43] In **July 2004**, Xenosaga: Pied Piper was released incrementally on Japanese mobile phones.

[44] **Soraya Saga** states that her and **Takahashi** had written the scenario for the game and it was only "mildly" adapted by Monolith Soft. At some point she listed a collection of scenes inserted by Monolith Soft that they had not written themselves; however, this list is no longer visible. A fan on the Zenosaga.com forum in 2005 states "These are consistant with some pretty random WTF events in XS Ep2 which made fans pretty pissed because of their poor implementation and writing."

"These are consistant with some pretty random WTF events in XS Ep2 which made fans pretty pissed because of their poor implementation and writing." - Duckroll, Zenosaga.com forums (2005)



=====CONTENT WARNING: Topic of Suicide=====

[45] After western fans had discovered that **Soraya Saga** was not involved in Episode II, she proceeded to receive lots of hateful messages via the email form on her website. This led to a controversial back and forth between her and the fans; eventually she released a message that mentioned the suicide of her brother and how she attempted suicide herself. This led some fans to becoming more angry at Monolith Soft and even **Takahashi**. Other fans believed she was being attention-seeking. Rumours began getting out of hand as some started to believe she attempted suicide **because** she was “fired” from Monolith Soft, and that she was fired due to her ‘emotional instability’. She tried to dispel these rumours by calling them “mistaken”.

"A perfect world

The world without me will be beautiful.

These days I feel that way. Like my brother did.

Actually, I tried to hang myself in November 2003. (Not literally but literally.) Unfortunately, it failed. I only bled from the nose and left eye. People asked me "What happened? Your eye is so red!". I said "Uh, it's...an accident."

In the past couple of months, I've been said as if I'm a traitor, a deserter, and a lame duck. A deserter? You can call me a garbage rather than a deserter. Please be patient awhile till a stain (=me) will be removed from the world." - Soraya Saga (12th March 2005)
"Young gentlemen.

Please stop spreading false rumors that I was kicked off because of a mental instability. You're getting it wrong way up. And please refrain from making mistaken assumptions.

No offense to anyone or anything. But you would know how it depresses your feeling, if you lost an egg you've been hatching for so many years. I had been really looking forward to see a flight of our dreams." - Soraya Saga (2005)

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[46] **Soraya Saga** then wrote another post listing a **collection of scenes** that were either **moved to Pied Piper** or **weren't included in Episode II at all**. However, once Japanese fans had caught wind of this post (as it was originally written in English), the post was removed as **many of these scenes would indeed make it into Episode III**. She most likely created this post as another jab at the new team.

"# The first version of the script by Soraya and Takahashi was not religiously or politically sensitive. It had just harmless chapters like:

- * Ziggy's past history (as seen in The Pied Piper)*
- * U.R.T.V.'s past history (as seen in the Episode II)*
- * Shion's past history with Febronia (removed)*
- * Jr's rapid growing (removed)*
- * Both juvenile and grown-up Jr. switching available in the battle (removed)*
- * The ghost of the old Miltia (removed)*
- * The death of Sakura (removed)*
- * Brief reunion with grown-up Citrine (removed)*
- * Gaignun vs Zohar emulators (removed)*
- * Jr.'s transformation/overdrive (removed)*
- * Jr. & Albedo vs U-DO vs KOS-MOS 3rd armament (removed)*
- * Shion's spiritual seeking/witnessing/awakening (removed)*
- * The truth about KOS-MOS (removed)*
- * Conversation between chaos and the red cloak man (removed)*
- * Conversation between Nephilim and the boy with the blocks (removed)*
- * An antimatter annihilation of Albedo (removed)*

Removed chapter/events were rejected/deleted subjects. It's highly unlikely to be shown in the future Episode." - Soraya Saga (2005)

[47] In **2004**, two DS titles were registered: “Xenosaga: Frontiers” and “Xenosaga: Exceed”. However, whatever these titles were is unknown.

"Apart from the Anime and the novel, MSI also registered titles such as Xenosaga: Frontier and Xenosaga: Exceed which were never realized." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[48] By **February 2005**, Xenosaga Episode II had sold approximately **280,000 copies in Japan**.

"Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Boese, PlayStation 2, 280,000 copies" - Chris Winkler, Namco Posts Third Quarter Results, RPGfan.com (14th February 2005)

[49] In Namco's Financial Report for 2004/2005, Xenosaga Episode II was described as one of the **biggest commercial disappointments** for that fiscal year.

"Selling just above 50% of the official sales target set by Monolith Soft's parent company Namco, the game was singled out as one of the biggest commercial disappointments in the company's financial report for the fiscal year 2004/2005" - Chris Winkler, First Look Preview, RPGfan.com (29th April 2006)

❖ THE ANIME & NOVEL [2005] [XSA]

[1] After their announcements at the Monolith Soft conference in July 2003, both a novel and anime series were produced in **2005**.

[2] The anime series was produced by Toei Animation and broadcast on TV Asahi from **5th January to 23rd March 2005** in Japan. It served only as a **retelling of Episode I** with significant changes such as the omitting of characters like Andrew Cherenkov or extending the screen time of Luis Virgil whose death now occurs much later in the story. **Yuichiro Takeda** (the writer of the OUTER FILE audios) was hired as the writer for the anime series.



[3] The soundtrack for 'Xenosaga: The Animation' would be done by **Kosuke Yamashita**.



[5] The novel was written by Tadashi Aizawa and only provided a retelling of the **first half** of Episode II until it was then discontinued.

[6] Both of these projects had **no involvement** from **Tetsuya Takahashi**.

[7] **Takahashi** states in an interview that he would prefer to keep his hobbies and work separate. Meaning that he'd rather not work on a novel adaptation as that would lead him to associate his hobby of reading with the researching of his work life.

"I've always preferred to keep my work and hobbies separate from each other. As a game developer myself, playing games is [naturally] one of my hobbies, but there are times when I really don't enjoy it and feel like I'm wasting my time. No matter what game I'm playing, when I get that realization, I find myself researching the game [instead of enjoying it]. So since I'd find it much harder to enjoy things like movies and novels if I were to turn them into my work, I'd rather keep my hobbies as hobbies and treasure them that way instead." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Website (2010)

❖ THE XENOSAGA I & II STORY [2005-2006] [XSDS]

[1] Production of Xenosaga I & II on Nintendo DS began sometime in **Spring 2005**, however it would have **originally started earlier than this**. Due to **Yuichiro Takeda** being occupied with 'Xenosaga: The Animation', **Tetsuya Takahashi** decided to halt production until **Takeda** was available.

"Takahashi wanted Takeda onboard for the DS game, so had to put the production on halt until the Anime was completely finished." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[2] **Tetsuya Takahashi** and **Yuichiro Takeda** had actually known each other for almost 10 years but had only collaborated properly on Xenosaga OUTER FILE and now Xenosaga I & II for the Nintendo DS. Otherwise they would casually email each other.

"Tetsuya Takahashi and Yuichiro Takeda had known each other for almost 10 years, but would not have a serious collaboration work until Xenosaga I-II for DS." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide



[3] **Yuichiro Takeda** was hired as the scenario writer for the game and was supervised by **Takahashi** who **inserted new details** not previously seen in the **PS2 Episode II**, including some details seen in the anime adaptation. However **not all the unused elements of the original Episode II script were restored**, such as Jr. growing up into an adult at the end.

"However, the original script/scenario for Episode II that included Jr. growing up, and other bits, were not restored." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[4] The Episode II half of this remake was now **focused on Shion instead of Jr**, making it more similar to Episode I. And it would fill in plot holes caused by the PS2 game and reduce the amount of answered questions by Episode III. *"expanding and enhancing the storyline to fill in some of the holes caused by Episode II, allowing for a better understanding of the plot and reducing the amount of questions that would otherwise be unanswered in Episode III." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide*

[5] To compose the music, **Kosuke Yamashita** would return after his work on the anime series.

[6] **Takahashi** was very thankful that **Takeda** was the one to take the job as **Takeda** had completed playing Episode I and Episode II before production and therefore had a good understanding of them. In addition to this, **Takahashi** says that **Takeda** has a **very good understanding of his likes and ideas** since "way back". **Takahashi** says that **Takeda** might be **the only one he could say that for**.

"The production period wasn't long at all, so it was invaluable that you'd already finished 'Xenosaga Episode 1' (hereafter I) and 'Xenosaga Episode 2' (hereafter II) and had an understanding of them. That way, you could treasure the original material while also adding some originality and good/hotter evolution in your writing. Also, you've understood my likes and ideas very well since way back. (Laughs) Takeda-san might be the only one I could say that for." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Interview with Takahashi and Takeda, on Xenosaga I-II for DS, Namco (2006)



[7] The plot for the DS game was based around the **original plot** of the PS2 version.

"First I wrote an initial outline for everything, based on the original plan for the PS2 version" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Interview with Takahashi and Takeda, on Xenosaga I-II for DS, Namco (2006)

[8] **Takahashi** mentions how **Takeda** respected his original plan, while he himself also respected **Takeda's** work (so long as it didn't cause problems with the setting).

"Just like Takeda-san kindly respected my original plan, I wanted to respect the parts he'd written and avoid interfering with them as long as there wasn't any

problems on the setting side of things. It all flowed together very seamlessly." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Interview with Takahashi and Takeda, on Xenosaga I-II for DS, Namco (2006)

[9] **Takeda** clarifies to an interviewer that people **shouldn't ignore the DS game** even if they have played the original PS2 versions. This wasn't a port, it was a **remake**.

"Even if they've already played Episode 1 and 2, people shouldn't think there's no point in playing this game. It's not just a port, it's a remake." - Yuichiro Takeda, Interview with Takahashi and Takeda, on Xenosaga I-II for DS, Namco (2006)

[10] Xenosaga I-II was released on **30th March 2006** on Nintendo DS in Japan exclusively.

❖ THE XENOSAGA 3 STORY [2004-2006] [XS3]

[1] Development of Episode III began in **2004**, after a short break since the completion of Episode II.

"and the upcoming "Episode III" that we've just started working on." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga Episode II - Weekly Vol.III: Act 4 (2004)

[2] During these very early stages in 2004, **Koh Arai** was already speaking about his desire to work on something very different after Episode III.

"Since I've been involved with this project for such a long time, I think I want to do something totally different after 'Episode III'... Of course I like this project and I enjoy working on it, but if you keep doing the same thing you can start getting dissatisfied with the monotony." - Koh Arai, Xenosaga II Weekly: Vol 3 interview (2004)



[3] Once again, the Director for Episode III was **Koh Arai** and the Scenario Writer was **Norihiko Yonesaka**.

[4] However, it appeared that **Tetsuya Takahashi** has a bit more control this time as he is credited as "Author" instead of "Original Author", as well as being credited as "Supervisor of Scenario and Database" and "Music Coordinator".

"At this point it seems that Tetsuya Takahashi had perhaps reclaimed some control. He would end up being credited as 'Author' and 'Music coordinator' for Episode III instead of merely 'original Author.'" - Xenogears & Xenosaga Study Guide

[5] After the backlash from Episode II, the new team and **Takahashi** clearly took steps to make Episode III **pleasing to fans**: bringing back cutscenes for more story, finding a middle ground between the Episode I & II artstyle to please everyone, bring back the database, and also inserting many Xenogears references.

[6] Although **Takahashi** may have had slightly more control, it is still poignant that he **wasn't the Director**. He didn't write the novelisation, he didn't get involved in the anime adaptation and he didn't write the DS game scenario by himself. From this, and future interviews, it's evident to see that **Takahashi** was trying to move on from this series.

[7] When Episode III was finally unveiled, it was advertised as the **end of the trilogy**.

"And so Episode III is finally unveiled and revealed to be 'the end of the series' with the selling phrase 'every single mystery in the Xenosaga series shall be unveiled...'" - Xenogears & Xenosaga Study Guide

[8] Due to not being able to fit most of the story into Xenosaga I-II (DS) and Xenosaga Episode III, a series of flash animations were made and **released in chapters in the weeks before Episode III's release**. This story, *Xenosaga II to III: A Missing Year ~A Fragment of Truth Sealed in the UMN~*, would cover the story of Nephilim and the Gnosis Terrorism in the year between Episode II and III.

"However, not all the story would fit into the DS game and Episode III, so MSI had to release the background story for Nephilim and 'The U.M.N. Gnosis Terrorism' as an event taking place between Episode II and III" - Xenogears & Xenosaga Study Guide



[9] Around **3 months before the release** of Episode III (6th July 2006), Monolith Soft released a demo for the game in Japan. In the demo you could find the database, but with only a few entries available; however, after some had datamined the disc they discovered that the entire database was on it. This led to the **entire story leaking** 3 months before release. Not all of it was translated for western fans, but enough important entries were for them to discover the truth behind chaos, KOS-MOS, Nephilim and so on.

"However, some snooping was done on the disc and the entire database appeared to be coded on it. By unlocking it from the code of the disc some major spoilerific material was found. Although nobody had time to translate the entire database to English, the fans who looked at quick translations would know the truth about Heinlein, chaos, KOS-MOS, Nephilim and Abel while Japanese fans had the entire plot spoiled three months before the game was even out." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[10] This blunder led to some fans complaining online about the failure to deliver on the **original vision** of Xenosaga.

"Some fans would scream 'MSI you lose!!' at MonolithSoft in a final cry of disgust at the painful 'epic failure' that was Xenosaga" - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[11] Sometime before the release of Episode III, **Tetsuya Takahashi** came up with the idea for Soma Bringer; an RPG game for the Nintendo DS. Monolith Soft hired **Soraya Saga** to write the story while **Takahashi** was a Character Designer and Producer for the game.

[12] During Soma Bringer's development, it inspired **Takahashi** to conceive of a story set on the backs of titans. He wrote a small design document for it and showed it to a number of people and received a positive reaction from it. He then asked **Yasuyuki Honne** (Xenogears & Episode I Art Director) to create a model for the **two resting positions of the titans**.



[13] **Yasuyuki Honne** finished the model in July 2006, the same month of Episode III's release.

[14] Xenosaga Episode III released in Japan on **6th July 2006**.

[15] Around and after the release of Episode III, interviews from **Koh Arai** or **Tetsuya Takahashi** were extremely rare or non-existent. Bandai Namco would conduct interviews for the game instead.

[16] Given **Koh Arai's** desire to move on from Xenosaga, it's possible that both of them simply wanted to move away from the franchise.

[17] After its release, some fans still had many complaints. Such as the inferior voice acting, mostly likely due to the unnatural sounding dialogue with the voice overs for the dialogue boxes. There were also complaints of oversexualisation in serious story moments that threw off the mood completely. This wasn't new but it was more prevalent than Episode I and Xenogears had the benefit of lower graphical fidelity.

"The dub was still inferior to Episode I, and perhaps because the voice acting was now being done over dialogue-boxes rather than full cinema as in the previous episodes, even the good actors like Crispin Freeman seemed to be unable to make it sound natural. The over-sexualized outfits for KOS-MOS threw the seriousness of the game off even moreso than Episode I. While Xenogears had had an equal amount of over-sexualized outfits they had been less in-your-face than those in Xenosaga because of the sprites and lesser graphics capabilities. The character designer for Episode II and III (as well as the original designer for KOS-MOS), Mugitani Kouichi (Choco), is in part a hentai artist with a sexual predilection for armed lolita maids." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[18] Among these complaints were also for the story. Some thought it was far too complex, even for a game that only managed to tell 1/3 of its story. It would appear that this game's sales came **mostly from hardcore fans**.

"However, despite it mostly being hardcore fans who played Episode III, a lot of gamers were not happy with how the last installment wrapped up." - Xenogears and Xenosaga Study Guide

[19] Xenosaga Episode III sold **122,556 copies in North America** and around **220,000 in Japan**, for a total of around **343,000 copies**.

[20] In a **June 2017** interview, **Tetsuya Takahashi** was asked, given Xenosaga was intended to originally be 6 episodes, if he would be interested in **"putting an end" to the series** were the opportunity to the present itself. **Takahashi** replied saying "If someone was ready to finance it certainly (laughs)".

"Xenosaga devait à l'origine se décliner sur six chapitres. Est-ce que vous aimeriez un jour y revenir pour y mettre un terme si l'opportunité se présentait ? 'Si quelqu'un était prêt à le financer certainement (rires)'." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade 2 : à la rencontre de son créateur, Tetsuya Takahashi, by Nicolas Verlet (Puyo) (22nd June 2017)

❖ LEAVING BANDAI NAMCO [2002-2007] [MSI-3]

[1] After Masaya Nakamura retired from Namco in 2002, relations between Monolith Soft and Namco began to deteriorate.

"he treated us well and talked to us about all kinds of things. After his retirement, there was a new atmosphere." - Hirohide Sugiura (2017)

[2] Once more, after the merger between Namco and Bandai, Monolith Soft began to feel their creative freedom was being restricted as the parent company didn't wish to take as many risks.

[3] After a consultation with Shinji Hatano of Nintendo who encouraged them to make something original that couldn't be found anywhere else in the industry, it was decided that they would become a subsidiary of Nintendo.



"That's when we received consultation from Nintendo's then-managing director Shinji

Hatano. Hatano-san told us 'just go out there and make something that can't be found elsewhere in the industry, something original with an independent spirit.' That was just the thing Monolith Soft looked to accomplish. And that's when it was decided that we would become a subsidiary of Nintendo." - Hirohide Sugiura (2017)

[4] On **27th April 2007** it was announced **publicly** that Bandai Namco would sell 80% of their shares in Monolith Soft to Nintendo. Bandai Namco said that they saw this sale as a **strengthening of relations** between them and Nintendo.

"Namco Bandai is considering the sale as a way to strengthen its relationship with Nintendo" - GameSpot Article (27th Apr. 2007)

Nintendo Co., Ltd.	1,920 shares
BANDAI NAMCO Games Inc.	400 shares
Hirohide Sugiura	30 shares
Tetsuya Takahashi	30 shares
Yasuyuki Honne	20 shares

[5] As 80% of the shares were sold to Nintendo, Bandai Namco maintained 16% of shares with itself. The remaining 3-4% were distributed amongst **Hirohide Sugiura**, **Tetsuya Takahashi** and **Yasuyuki Honne**.

[6] **Hirohide Sugiura** says that at the time they did worry about when they became a Nintendo subsidiary that they would only ever get to develop titles for Nintendo platforms and not others, for example on PC. But he says that Nintendo encouraged them to rise to the challenge of creating something that only they could do on that platform.

"There was the worry about only being able to make games on Nintendo's platforms after becoming a Nintendo subsidiary. ... However, after taking those feelings of uncertainty to Nintendo, they were very understanding, and challenged us with 'let's make something for this one hardware with only this much time and this many people.' I think only Nintendo would come up with something like that in today's industry. I believe that our mindset of 'let's keep thoroughly creating and see how far we can get' was made possible because Nintendo had our back." - Hirohide Sugiura,

❖ THE XENOBLADE 1 STORY [2006-2010] [XB1]



[1] The early concepts for the story were conceived **during Xenosaga Episode III's development**. After being inspired by Sora Bringer, **Tetsuya Takahashi** came up with the idea of a world where the beings lived on the **bodies of two dead titans**. He wrote down this idea and presented it to **Hirohide Sugiura** and the rest of the team to positive responses. **Yasuyuki Honne** then created 3D models of the titans.

"Yes. As soon as I was back to the office, I got the idea down on a piece of paper before showing it to (Hirohide) Sugiura and the others. They all thought it looked interesting, and (Yasuyuki) Honne was good enough to offer to turn it into a 3D model. So he rushed out and bought lots of materials for creating dioramas and made it." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[2] After the release of Xenosaga Episode III, the reception of the whole series wasn't good. Takahashi describes the feeling as "mortifying" and said not only did the developers feel that way but the leaders too. When starting on the development of Monado, the goal they decided on was "Next time we need to make a game that players will enjoy."

"We released three games in the Xenosaga series, but they weren't very well received. It was really mortifying. All of the young team members felt that way, not just the leaders. So we all decided, 'Next time we need to make a game that players will enjoy.' So that made the atmosphere during the Xenoblade Chronicles development very different compared to other games." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[3] After this, Takahashi thought of an unrelated story and tried to combine both his story and this setting into a single thing which he thought would make for a good RPG.

"I'd also had an unrelated idea for a story, and I thought that if I could successfully combine the two, it might well make for an interesting RPG. This is how the planning process for Xenoblade Chronicles got started." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[4] This had all happened before any official development had begun, which it eventually did later in 2006. It can be assumed the deal between Bandai Namco and Nintendo had officially happened behind closed doors by this point.

[5] **Hitoshi Yamagami**, Producer at Nintendo responsible for RPGs, spoke about **Takahashi's** titans idea to Satoru Iwata.

"Sure enough, Yamagami-san came to see me right after that and spoke about this plan with a peculiar passion, even though hardly anything concrete had been settled upon. (laughs)" - Satoru Iwata, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[6] **Tetsuya Takahashi** was the Executive Director of the game. To ease his workload and make things more efficient he decided to have **Yuichiro Takeda** join him once again to write the scenario.

"As I was Executive Director for this project, I knew that my workload was going to get pretty heavy. To make the development process more efficient, I thought it would be a good idea to have a partner with whom to collaborate on the scenario. That's when I got in touch with Takeda-san" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)



[7] The Producer for the game would be **Shingo Kawabata** (previously Director of Soma Bringer, and Battle & Menu Planner for Episode III) and the Director would be **Koh Kojima**.

[8] In the early stages of writing the scenario, **Takeda** suggested an idea of a main party member eventually **betraying the party and becoming a villain**; however this was decided not to be a good idea as players might see it as a betrayal for them to spend time levelling up a character who would only go on to leave and become a villain.

"For instance, when working on the scenario for Xenoblade Chronicles, I considered the idea of having one of the hero's allies, who had always stood beside him, becoming the enemy you face at the end. ... But when I floated this idea to Takahashi-san, he thought that it would be pretty galling in a game if an ally that you had been through all sorts of adventures with, and constantly worked on building up their experience, ended up leaving your party and becoming your enemy." - Yuichiro Takeda, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[9] At the beginning, **Takahashi** came up with the basic premise for the game. Afterwards, he and **Takeda** would bounce ideas between them until they came up with something more substantial. They would also involve **Shingo Kawabata** and **Koh Kojima** in this process for their advice from a **game design perspective**.

"(Shingo) Kawabata, the producer, and (Koh) Kojima, the director, also took part as it was important not to simply look from the viewpoint of the scenario writer, but also to see things from the dev team's perspective." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)



[10] Comparing this process to playing a game of catch, **Takahashi** says it's important that your partner(s) **is at least as experienced as you are**. He says that he's had previous experience where he'd throw the ball and someone else would throw it somewhere **he didn't expect**. This likely referencing how he gave the original plan for Xenosaga Episode II to **Norihino Yonesaka** and it went in a direction he didn't expect.

"Right. It would be something like: 'Where did you throw it!?' (laughs) That's why, when you play catch, you need someone who is at least as experienced as you are, otherwise it won't go according to plan." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[11] When developing the scenario they would then send it over to Nintendo for it to be checked over. Once returned they would **alter it according to feedback** and this back-and-forth would continue until they were happy with it.

"Yes, you're absolutely right. I think it's vital to have the more objective viewpoint of an editor when you want to make something that will appeal to a broad section of players, and not just a limited audience. In that sense, I was really grateful for Nintendo's input." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[12] The prototyping stage for the game began in **April 2007**.

"We started work on the prototype in April 2007." - Hitoshi Yamagami, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[13] Coinciding with this, **Hitoshi Yamagami** brought on two Nintendo staff members from the Software Planning & Development Department: **Genki Yokota** and **Yurie Hattori**. **Genki Yokota**, an RPG expert, was paired with **Koh Kojima** to lend his knowledge with game systems and general game direction. **Yurie Hattori** had knowledge in writing Nintendo game scenarios and oversaw that of Monado's.

"To coincide with that, I got Yokota-san and Hattori-san from the Software Planning & Development Department involved in the project." - Hitoshi Yamagami, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[14] **Yurie Hattori** notes how **Takahashi** seemed quite "guarded" when she first met him. **Takahashi** goes on to explain how that is the case when he first meets people and he eventually opens up.

"(laughs) That wasn't due to it being Hattori-san, or because it was Nintendo. I do actually tend to be rather guarded when I meet people for the first time. But as soon as I realise that I can work with this person, my attitude changes completely." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)



[15] When observing the scenario that **Takahashi** and **Takeda** were writing, she pointed out the ending and said that she **couldn't understand it**. **Takahashi** explains that while what they wrote made sense to them, it wouldn't make sense to players without **"previous knowledge"** and therefore made it sort of **pointless**.

"One case in point is the game's ending. Initially, we'd come up with what we felt was an ending with a rather explanatory feel. But in fact, she told us that even with this explanation, she couldn't really understand it. When she pointed this out to me, I could see what she meant. There were things that seemed perfectly clear to us, but which were actually tricky to understand for players who didn't have previous knowledge. If you're referencing things that people know nothing about, it's really a meaningless exercise, isn't it?" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[16] **Hitoshi Yamagami** and the other Nintendo employees essentially acted as **mediators** between **Takahashi's vision** and the **new future fanbase**. They made sure that players would easily understand the story and find it **accessible**.

"In that way, we gave Takahashi-san our objective take on the scenario, by being conscious of how the world which he had conceived could be made easier for players to understand." - Hitoshi Yamagami, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[17] **Takahashi** says he's grateful to Nintendo as he often **conforms to his own personal tastes** and Nintendo came in to fix these imbalances. Thanks to this process, he knew the game could be appealing to both RPG fans and a general audience.

"It's natural that when you are working on something by yourself, there will be parts which conform to your own personal tastes. Whether it was an emotional or structural aspect, all sorts of unbalanced sections like this were picked up on by Nintendo, for which I was really grateful. ... I agree. Thanks to this process, I believe that we've made a game that will be enjoyed by both RPG fans as well as a more general audience." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)

[18] When writing, **Takeda** decided to avoid any elements of surprise or "betrayal" coming from the main character's mouth. He felt that, unlike with TV and film, because you the player control the main character it feels like a betrayal when the character does something that you wouldn't. Instead, **Takeda** would incorporate the elements of surprise into the **surrounding setting**.

"I avoided using 'betrayal' and 'the element of surprise' in relation to the words and actions coming from the hero himself, and decided to use them only in the varying events that occurred in the exterior world." - Yuichiro Takeda, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)



[19] **Takahashi** further explains how they had discussed this very early on. He said that they wanted the main character to be a **"hero who isn't hated"**. **Takahashi** then says that hero who end up being hated is something that's happened in his games too, likely referencing Shion Uzuki from Xenosaga; opinions of Shion from fans tend to be quite **divisive**.

"It's something I've felt about my own games, of course, as well as games by other people. Essentially, the heroes and heroines in RPGs often end up being disliked. Naturally, there are well-loved characters too, but I'd say that in general, they end up being hated. I think it

comes from the huge emotional investment the player has made in the hero or heroine." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)



[20] The creation of the final scenario took **around a year** according to **Takahashi**.

"Well, it took place at the same time as the development of the game, so I'd say it lasted about a year." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)

[21] Some of the developers responsible for writing quests would take aspects of the main story and work upon them in their quests. **Takeda** was **surprised** to see this when he actually played the game. He notes how he discovered things about Xord by listening to people in the inhabited areas.

"Takeda: For example, in the previous Xenoblade game there was a boss called Xord, but in the main story that I wrote, it didn't go much into his background. But when I actually played the game, I was able to find out the shocking truth about Xord just by listening to people in the inhabited areas. I was stunned by how elements like this were expressed outside the main story, and how they could all be tastefully crafted to fit within the game. Iwata: So the developers at Monolith Soft had taken the nuggets you wrote and worked off of them to further expand the game. Takeda: That's exactly right." - Yuichiro Takeda & Satoru Iwata, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X* (2015)

[22] On the topic of development, **Takahashi** says that despite being their biggest project so far it also felt the **easiest**. Thanks to how much training the Monolith Soft staff have had on previous games, development for Monado felt like smooth sailing.

"it was fine to entrust tasks to individual members of staff, and there were plenty of times when I didn't have to look over their shoulders. Thanks to that, I was able to focus my energies where I'm most effective. So while this was a huge and challenging project, in terms of my feelings about it, I'd go as far as to say that it's the first time I've worked on something that proved to be such plain sailing." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)

[23] **Takahashi** says that the main theme of the game is 'embarking'. He wanted to follow these characters as they explore their world, as they grow and face the future in an unfamiliar world.

"We built the game world based on this, and what I really wanted to explore was how these tiny beings, the hero and his companions, would grow, and whether they would be able to embark on their adventure. That's why I think that if I were to sum up this title in a single word, I would say that it was 'embarking'. In the initial part of the game, the hero and his companions set out on their journey, facing the future in an unfamiliar world, and I wanted to describe the way they progress." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[24] Briefly, **Takahashi** and the team decided to **experiment with a turn-based battle system** with the Vision mechanic. However this didn't work well and they returned to a **real-time battle system** which **Takahashi** thought would be **more interesting**.

"I thought that it would be more interesting to incorporate the ability to see the future into the game using a real-time battle system. I did experiment with a turn-based system that included the ability to see the future, but it didn't go very well." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Tried Using A Turn Based Battle System For Xenoblade Chronicles, siliconera.com (2012)



[25] For the music of the game, **Tetsuya Takahashi** wanted to try something new and wanted to try and make a score that was **different from typical RPGs**. He brought on **Yoko Shimomura** (who would work on the main theme and opening song) and **Manami Kiyota** (who would work on event and field music).

"So I asked Shimomura-san to come up with tracks, including the main theme and the opening song. ... I asked Kiyota-san to work on songs for the event and field sections" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[26] **Takahashi** also asked Dog Ear Records to work on the music (Nobuo Uematsu's company) but instead they suggested to **Takahashi** a team they knew of. And so he hired **ACE+** (**TOMOri Kudo**, **CHiCO** and **Kenji Hiramatsu**). **ACE+** would be in charge of other parts of the music, including the battle music.

"I asked Dog Ear Records to work on the music this time round, and they suggested I try this really good team they knew." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)

[27] **ACE+** began production on the game's music in **March 2009**.

"I first participated in the production of the series with Xenoblade Chronicles, in March of 2009" - TOMOri Kudo, Xenoblade Original Soundtrack Trinity Box (2023)

[28] On the **last day of E3 2009**, Nintendo revealed "Monado: Beginning of the World" with a trailer containing early gameplay and cutscenes.

[29] Some time around the **first week of February 2010**, Monado's name had been updated to "Xenoblade" which caught the attention of many fans online.

"All it took was a 'Xeno' to get gamers everywhere talking about Monolith's new Wii RPG. Previously announced at E3 2009 as Monado: Beginning of the World, Nintendo, the title's publisher, gave the game the new name of 'Xenoblade' a couple of weeks back and had people wondering if this might be a new entry in the Xenosaga series." - Anoop Gantayat, First Details: Xenoblade, andriasang.com (17th Feb. 2010)

[30] Lastly, because the game had 'Xeno' in its title, **Takahashi** felt that the final song had to be composed by **Yasunori Mitsuda**. So he was hired to create the song "Beyond the Sky".

"That's right! (laughs) This title has 'Xeno' in its name and so partly for that reason, I got Mi-chan to work on the music for the epilogue. ... For that all-important final song, Mi-chan was the only man for the job. I've had a lot of opportunities to work with Mi-chan, and I've always felt that the music has played a really redemptive role. That's why I decided to ask him to work on this vital section." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles (2010)



[31] **Takahashi** mentions how after certain development troubles, and knowing that things would take too long if he did everything he wanted to, the game would miss its deadline. He was prepared to cut out parts of the game until **Hitoshi Yamagami** insisted that he continue with his vision and that he'd try and persuade Nintendo to provide more time. This was something that shocked **Takahashi**. This interview is when **Takahashi** would mention the Japanese cricket proverb and how he used to **give up on his visions in the past**.

"But at that point, Yamagami-san said: 'Look, you've come this far. You should see it through to the end. I'll convince the others at the company.'" - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)

[32] When working on Xenoblade, **Takahashi's** attitude in the workplace also shifted. Unlike when developing older titles like Xenosaga, **Takahashi** would now speak to many members of the development team to give them instructions. This took some employees by surprise.

"But with this project, things were different. He would come right into the dev team's workspace and give direct instructions to the members of the team. This was something I'd hardly ever witnessed before, so we'd say: 'Look, Takahashi-san has descended from the clouds...'" - Koh Kojima, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)

[33] **Tetsuya Takahashi** explains that when he was young he was quite reckless and was simply trying to express himself to those who would understand him. However, now being older and being a father, his recklessness has gone but his sense of creativity has expanded. He now wishes to resonate **with more people than before**, rather than a select few.

"When you're young, you're brimming with creative energy after all, and it is a path everyone goes through. Among young game creators today, there is no shortage of people with the same approach I had, making games solely for those players who will understand what you are trying to achieve. I think that this sort of game is necessary in the video game industry. But now, when I ask myself if I still have that drive, which was in a sense rash and reckless, the answer is of course that I don't. At the same time, I now have a better view of the overall shape of things, and I feel that my creative range has increased. Recently, especially since becoming a father of two, I've been thinking more and more about how to make a game that will be enjoyed by a large number of players and that will strike a chord with them." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles* (2010)



[34] During a Famitsu interview in **February 2010**, when asked whether 'Xenoblade' would **connect to previous 'Xeno' titles** **Tetsuya Takahashi** would clarify that Xenoblade was an **entirely new title**, new world, that had **no connections whatsoever**.

"The world setting, story and other elements have no relation, ... It's a completely new title." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Famitsu* (2010)



[35] Xenoblade Chronicles released on **10th June 2010** in Japan for the Nintendo Wii.

[36] When asked about his **vision** in video games and whether 'Xenoblade Chronicles' fills that vision, **Takahashi** replies that Xenoblade Chronicles itself was a 100% complete vision for that game; however, for **his vision of his ideal game it was still only 5%**.

"But in terms of my own personal goal-my vision of an ideal game-I'd honestly have to say that it's barely 5% of the way there. My goal is to re-create the world itself. I think it's valuable to always develop projects with such lofty goals in mind." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Sharpening the 'Blade - Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi* (2012)

[37] The interviewer from Nintendo Power then remarked that given the depth of this game's world, it left little room for a sequel. **Takahashi** replied "Do you think so? **I always build room for sequels into all of my games.**"

"Do you think so? I always build room for sequels into all of my games." - Tetsuya Takahashi, *Sharpening the 'Blade - Interview with Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo Power Issue 276* (March 2012)

[38] **Tetsuya Takahashi** reminisces how Monolith Soft have always been **focused on graphics in the past** and how, starting with Xenoblade Chronicles, they **changed their stance** and decided to **focus purely on the scope** of the game.

"But after a great deal of experience with it, I began to wonder if we could better distinguish ourselves with the exact opposite strategy-devoting the minimum necessary amount of effort to graphics, and putting the rest of our resources toward expanding the scope of the game." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Future Sight by Casey Loe, Nintendo Power Issue 276 (March 2012)

[39] Xenoblade Chronicles sold a total of **913,422 copies worldwide: 163,422 in Japan and 750,000 overseas**.

[40] **Takahashi** notes that after the release of Xenoblade Chronicles, there weren't that many negative comments about the game. He actually wanted **more negativity** so as to serve as a **personal drive for him**. Nevertheless, what he did take away was the **importance of appealing characters**.

"After Xenoblade Chronicles was released, there weren't all that many negative opinions that I encountered online. And, to be honest, I wanted more. I wanted more negativity that I could confront and use as a personal driver. One thing that I did take away is that people talked about the importance of creating characters that were very appealing. That's something that I kept in my head and also dogs my process as I was working on Xenoblade Chronicles X as well." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

❖ NEW STUDIO & SHARES [2011-2012] [MSI-4]

[1] Just after posting their job listings for the new project (Xenoblade X), Monolith Soft revealed that they had opened a new studio based in Kyoto. This is also where Nintendo's headquarters are based and it was said that the move was made to improve relations between Monolith Soft and Nintendo.

"Previously based only in Tokyo, Monolith Soft now have a new studio in Kyoto, which is where Nintendo's main headquarters are located. The move, Monolith reveal on their website, was taken in order to strengthen their relationship with Nintendo." - Ishaan Sahdev, Monolith Soft Open A New Studio Closer To Nintendo, siliconera.com (8th July 2011)

[2] **This new Kyoto-based studio** would be **led by Yasuyuki Honne** and would go on to develop assets for various Nintendo titles. Such as The Legend of Zelda and Animal Crossing.

[3] In **2012**, Bandai Namco's **remaining shares** in Monolith Soft were **sold to Nintendo**. Nintendo now owns 97% of Monolith Soft.

❖ XENOBLADE 3D [2014-2015] [XB3D]

[1] As Monolith Soft were developing their next game, Nintendo tasked **Monster Games** (a close partner who had also ported Wii titles like Donkey Kong Country Returns to Nintendo 3DS) to port Xenoblade Chronicles from Wii to the New Nintendo 3DS system.

[2] Satoru Iwata mentions how Xenoblade Chronicles is a very good fit as a **portable game** because it takes so long to complete. You can stop at any point.

"But it does take time to play Xenoblade Chronicles, which means that it's a really good fit for portable devices, because you can stop at any point." - Satoru Iwata, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[3] Xenoblade Chronicles 3D released worldwide on New Nintendo 3DS on the **10th April 2015**. The same month that Xenoblade Chronicles X would release in Japan.

[4] By 17th May 2015, it had been leaked that Xenoblade Chronicles 3D had sold under 75,000 copies in North America. However this is understandable due to the small user base of the New Nintendo 3DS system

"Thanks to 'creamsugar', who often leaks sales data, it's also now known that the game sold under 75,000 copies." - Brian(@NE_Brian), April 2015 NPd: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D sold under 75,000 copies (17th May 2015)

[5] By **June 2015**, the game had sold just over **78,000 copies in Japan**.

"Xenoblade Chronicles 3D [new 3DS] (Nintendo) {2015.04.02} (¥3.996) – 78.413" - Brian(@NE_Brian), Top 100 best-selling games in Japan during the first half of 2015 (5th August 2015)

❖ THE XENOBLADE X STORY [2010-2015] [XBX]

[1] After the completion of Xenoblade Chronicles, **Tetsuya Takahashi** approached the Nintendo Producer **Genki Yokota** and asked whether he could develop a **new sci-fi game** using **Xenoblade as a base**.

"After the completion of the previous Xenoblade, when I told [Hitoshi] Yamagami-san's team at Nintendo that I wanted to create something a little more sci-fi using Xenoblade as a base, they said it could be worth the challenge." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Twitter (2015)

[2] Discussions on how to realise the vision of Xenoblade Chronicles X on the new Nintendo console, the Wii U, went on for about **6 months**.

"So when we were first talking to Monolith about the technology, we spent about six months discussing how we were going to pull off creating a game that's going to be in HD and that's going to be an open world. We knew this was a really monumental task, but through the good cooperation with them we were able to succeed in finally making it." - Genki Yokota, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[3] Around **June 2011** Monolith Soft had advertised multiple roles on their website, such as programmers, planners, artists, and more specifically roles like motion designer for event and battle scenes.

"Monolith Soft didn't specify the project, but the recruitment page has a few hints. They're looking for an effect designers who can create map and battle effects. Monolith Soft also needs a motion designer for event and battle scenes. Sounds kind of like a RPG, huh? Another job is for an experienced 2D designer who can draw mecha." - Silicon Era Staff, Xenoblade Developer Monolith Soft Working On Wii U Title, siliconera.com (24th June 2011)



[4] Once again, for this game **Tetsuya Takahashi** would take on the role of Executive Director.

[5] **Koh Kojima** also returned as Director of the new game, along with **Genki Yokota** from Nintendo's SPD Department. And **Shingo Kawabata** returned as Producer along with **Hitoshi Yamagami** from Nintendo.

[6] This game would be Monolith Soft's **first HD game**.

[7] **Tetsuya Takahashi** decided **against using cutting-edge technology**. This was to help them cope with developing for a new High Definition game rather than rushing in with technology they were also unfamiliar with.

"As I said in the beginning, we decided not to use cutting edge technology. [...] were new experiences for us and rushing has no use. It's a bit similar to boxing: if you stand till the end, you will win. We faced the development with this in mind." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo assisted with Xenoblade Chronicles X's online functionality, nintendoeverything.com (2015)

[8] **Tetsuya Takahashi** mentions how he's always believed the **setting is important in RPGs**. He says he wanted a game that was **truly connected**, unlike the first game (talking about loading zones). A **real open world**.

"Well, I've always believed that the setting is important in RPGs. ... We worked on how the maps linked up so it feels like they're connected. This time, though, we all felt that we wanted to step it up, so that's where we started off. From there, the first thing we decided on was creating an environment where players can play in a completely open world, so that became our first pillar for this project." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[9] At the beginning of the project they even **considered creating an entire planet**.

"Yes, it's quite huge! (laughs) Well, when we started this project, we discussed creating a whole planet for this game." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[10] They even considered adding **multiple planets** that you could explore one after the other. However they thought **this would spread out the content thinly** and so they decided to remain focused on a single planet.

"So there was a time in development where we actually considered creating many different planets that you would be able to explore one after the other. Then we realized how limited the experience would be if we tried to spread out the content, so we decided to just focus on one planet." - Genki Yokota, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[11] For this new project, **Tetsuya Takahashi** wrote the initial concept for the game, but did not join the scriptwriter team. Instead, **Yuichiro Takeda alone** was the scenario writer.

[12] Unlike the first game where **Takahashi** only wrote a **bass** to work upon, this time he had written quite a **substantial amount for the initial plot**. Both **Takeda** and **Kojima** remark how it was a large amount of story, **Kojima** even saying that it was “like a novel”. Given that **Kojima** has worked with **Takahashi** since Xenosaga Episode I, his comment of this being the first time he’s seen **Takahashi** write so much is quite poignant.

“Come to think of it, Takahashi-san wrote a lot. I’ve worked with Takahashi-san for a long time, but this was the first time I’ve seen him write so much for a game’s plot. It was as if he was writing a novel.” - Koh Kojima, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[13] **Yuichiro Takeda** was then responsible for reading through the immense amount of story **Takahashi** had written and **picking out the stories** that would fit with the game’s content and scale.

“I carefully picked out the stories that fit with the game’s content and scale and turned them into scripts.” - Yuichiro Takeda, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)



[14] However, because this turned out to be so much work, **Takeda** contacted his friend **Kazuho Hyodo** (an anime writer) and **asked for him to join the project**. And so **Hyodo** became the second Scenario writer.

“I thought, ‘This workload requires two people, so I need to find someone I can trust,’ so I asked for Hyodo-san’s help.” - Yuichiro Takeda, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)



[15] Once again, after deciding on the setting the discussion about **the story came afterwards**. Just like Xenoblade Chronicles’ development, this involved the Scriptwriters **Takeda** and **Hyodo** and the Directors **Kojima** and **Yokota**.

“After we decided on creating an open world, we needed to begin creating a world that can withstand various situations, so we focused on creating the base of the story. From there, we had several meetings about the story with not only the scriptwriters, Takeda-san and Hyodo-san, but also with Kojima-san and Yokota-san.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[16] At some point in development, **Mamoru Ohta** (previously Cinematics Co-Director for Xenoblade Chronicles) was brought onto the writing team. Increasing the team’s numbers to 3.

[17] Because of the nature of creating such a big game, the writers would rarely be turned down when suggesting ideas for new characters or locations.

“In comparison to how it was with Xenoblade Chronicles and also other games in general, we did not have to be so restrictive about the places to appear in this game.” - Koh Kojima, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[18] **Takeda** explains that he and **Takahashi** enjoy writing **middle-aged male** characters and so he says that another reason **Hyodo** was a good addition to the team was because he could make up for **their weaknesses**. **Hyodo** said that he wanted to include **more women in active roles**.

“Takeda: Yes. I like including middle-aged male characters who play heroic roles in the story! (laughs) However, the audience will probably want young women to take on important roles, too, so in that way I was glad to recruit Hyodo-san. Hyodo: Honestly, I’m not a specialist in creating young female characters. However, from the audience’s perspective, I thought it would be nice to have more women with active roles in the story, so I put in a lot of effort writing their parts.” - Yuichiro Takeda & Kazuho Hyodo, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[19] The total time it took to develop the story, including side quests, took **at least a year and a half**. Longer than Xenoblade Chronicles.

“If you include the quests, it took at least a year and a half.” - Yuichiro Takeda, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[20] **Takahashi** clarifies that the main story for Xenoblade X is **shorter**, but the **quests have more depth**. **Yokota** says that there are as many quests in Xenoblade X as there are in the first game.

“Takahashi: Actually, the main story might be shorter than Xenoblade Chronicles. However, the quest stories are matched up with the open-world game design, so there’s more depth to the quests. Yokota: we ended up creating a similar number of quests as in the previous game. But we did put 3,000% of our hearts into creating them...” - Tetsuya Takahashi & Genki Yokota, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[21] **Returning** from having worked on Xenogears and Xenosaga Episode I, **Kunihiko Tanaka** was hired to be the **character designer** for the new title.

[22] Also **returning** from having worked on Xenosaga Episode II and Episode III, **Kouichi Mugitani (CHOCO)** was hired as the **designer of the mechs**.

[23] **Tetsuya Takahashi** insisted that they hire **Hiroyuki Sawano** (famous Japanese composer for anime) for their title as **he was a big fan of his work**.

[24] **Hiroyuki Sawano** began the creation of the soundtrack as early as **April 2012** (as far as we know currently), this we can know due to dates being contained in the names of some tracks: "z7b2012lp0427arr".

[25] At one stage in development, **Takahashi** had considered using **New York as the main setting** for the game but the team found this **difficult as there were so many tall buildings**. Instead they chose **Los Angeles**.

"[Laughs] Actually, much of the reason is because I do like Los Angeles. There was even a period in development where we thought about maybe using New York as the model for this future city. Then we realized that it was going to be very difficult and costly in development-terms to create all of those tall buildings." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[26] Producer **Shingo Kawabata** says that the game uses the Wii U's game discs to their very limit and at one point they even **considered the possibility that they might need more than one**. This goes to explain the reason for optional download patches to make game loading quicker after the game's release.

"Xenoblade Chronicles X almost uses up an entire Wii U disc's capacity to its limits. Really, it barely fits in (it got to the point where we were concerned that one disc wouldn't be enough)." - Shingo Kawabata, Yes, Xenoblade Chronicles X Will Have An Off-TV Play Option, siliconera.com (29th January 2015)

[27] **Michihiko Inaba** (with Monolith Soft since Xenosaga Episode III and lead programmer on most Xenoblade titles) says in an interview that **Monolith Soft wants to become the Bethesda Softworks of Japan**. This aim can be seen in the game's map size rivaling many western open-world RPGs.

"I'd like to make an HD game that will wow the players. I want to show that Japan can still keep up with the USA when it comes next gen technology. Our goal is to become something like the developers of the Fallout series, Bethesda Softworks." - Michihiko Inaba, Xenoblade Developer, Monolith Soft, Want To Be Like Bethesda Softworks by SATO, siliconera.com (14th December 2012)

[28] **Hirohide Sugiura** in the same interview says that the game's industry in Japan has **lost its touch** and they're going to try and change that.

"I believe that today's Japanese gaming industry has lost its touch, and we'd like to do something to change that." - Hirohide Sugiura, Xenoblade Developer, Monolith Soft, Want To Be Like Bethesda Softworks by SATO, siliconera.com (14th December 2012)



[29] First footage of the new game was uploaded onto Nintendo's YouTube channels on **23rd of January 2013**. Currently only known as 'X'. Drawing similarities to Xenosaga Episode I which was advertised as "Project X" before its final title of "Xenosaga" was made known.

[30] Many upon seeing the trailer **thought that it would be a direct sequel to the first Xenoblade Chronicles**.

"It does indeed look like a direct sequel to Xenoblade, though with the way that game ended, you could very easily have a direct sequel that doesn't require any knowledge of the first game, except for characters saying stuff like 'Remember when all that stuff from

the first game happened?'" - leahsdad, Nintendo World Report (23rd January 2013)

[31] When seeing the red 'X' it prompted many to draw **similarities to the logo of Xenogears**. Some perhaps initially imagined it as a reboot of that franchise, despite Nintendo not holding the rights to that series.

"I get a very Xenogears feel to it :)" - mysticgohan, Nintendo World Report (23rd January 2013)

"As a reader pointed out, that big red X might point to a new Xenogears title rather than a Xenoblade sequel ... Actually, Nintendo doesn't have the rights to Xenogears, so this is still probably a Xenoblade entry or some spin-off of Xenoblade or a sequel." - Erik Kain, Forbes (23rd January 2013)

[32] More footage of Monolith's new title was shown on **11th June 2013** in Nintendo's E3 2013 Direct. Satoru Iwata announced that it **would be released in 2014**.

[33] Halfway through development, it was decided that there would be a **course change to implement online features** into the game. **Genki Yokota** says they had a "mass construction" as they had to **scrap the main character** for a **customisable avatar** and they had to **make changes to the story to work around this**. Characters such as the **Black Knight were scrapped** and only made a small cameo in the after-credits scene.

"In the middle of development, we decided to make it compatible with online play, so we had a 'mass construction' to change the main character into an avatar and rewrite some of the story to match with the content." - Genki Yokota, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[34] **Takahashi** reiterates that the change to online meant that they had to **abandon a lot of things** they had worked on up until that point.

"We changed the main protagonist to an avatar, and had to abandon many of the things we had built up to that point." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)

[35] They originally hoped to have Xenoblade X release **early in the Wii U's lifecycle**, however due to these very large changes the game became delayed. **It would not be released in 2014** as Iwata said at E3 2013.

"But the development for Xenoblade Chronicles X was a little bit difficult, and that's why it ended up being released a little bit later in the Wii U's cycle." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Why 'Xenoblade Chronicles 2' Has a Character Designed by Tetsuya Nomura by Matt Peckham, Time (7th July 2017)

[36] On **10th June 2014** at E3, Nintendo presented a new trailer and revealed the name of the game to be "Xenoblade Chronicles X".

[37] On **12th June 2014** Nintendo held a Treehouse event to demonstrate gameplay of Xenoblade Chronicles X. In the livestream, **Rich Amtower** (NOA Localization Producer on the game) explains that the game is only a **spiritual sequel**. Resting some fans' expectations who thought that this would be a direct sequel.

"Xenoblade Chronicles X is sort of a spiritual sequel to the original Xenoblade Chronicles for the Wii; doesn't really touch on the storyline, but it does pick up on a lot of the philosophical ideas that you saw in that first game." - Rich Amtower, Nintendo Treehouse: Live @ E3 2014 -- Day 1: Xenoblade Chronicles X, Nintendo (12th June 2014)



[38] At some point during **June 2014**, **Takahashi** and Monolith Soft had already started planning and working on their next game, Xenoblade Chronicles 2.

"Plans for Xenoblade Chronicles 2 started back in July 2014. Monolith Soft was working on Xenoblade Chronicles X at the time, but began work on Xenoblade Chronicles 2 at the same time." - Hachima, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Devs Explain Why There Are So Many Female Rare Blades, siliconera.com (28th November 2017)

[39] **Genki Yokota** explains that the 'X' in the title was meant to **represent the unknown**. He says that they named it 'Xenoblade Chronicles X' in the west because the 'X' **represented alien life of the unknown** and exploring an **unknown planet**. In Japanese the 'X' would be referred to as a 'cross', meant to **represent a crossroads where people can meet each other unexpectedly**.

"Right, we also named the title overseas Xenoblade Chronicles X, and the X symbolized alien life of the unknown, and exploring an unknown planet. In the Japanese version, we refer to the X as 'cross,' as in a place that can serve as a crossroad where people can come across one another unexpectedly. The game has an online aspect, so there will be a lot of player interactions, as if they're meeting each other at an intersection or a crossroads. A lot of intelligent life from other planets will also appear, and interacting with them can be a lot of fun as well. For example, they won't come to your town unless you find a way to come across and interact with them." - Genki Yokota, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles X (2015)



[40] Xenoblade X was filled with many different game mechanics and **Takahashi** says that it was their aim to make it **complex from the beginning**. He says it was because they wanted to aim for the **“next evolution in JRPGs”**.

"Since we're aiming for the next evolution in JRPGs, I have to admit that our original goal was not to aim for simplicity, ... We were looking for new directions and so that means adding new elements to an existing structure that people might have an innate understanding of. As such, I have to be honest, there is going to be some complexity that comes in, but I feel that we've created a really compelling experience from that." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Designing Xenoblade Chronicles X by Alexa Ray Corriea, gamespot.com (24th November 2015)

[41] Xenoblade Chronicles X was released on Wii U in Japan on the **29th April 2015**.

[42] When asked about Xenoblade X's **connections to the first game**, **Takahashi** states that it may even be **more loosely connected to Xenoblade 1 than Xenosaga is to Xenogears**.

"Does Xenoblade Chronicles X have the same level of connection to Xenoblade Chronicles as say between a Xenogears and a Xenosaga? Takahashi: It's maybe even a little more loosely connected than that, but yes there are a few links that you might be able to pick up on." - Ben Hanson & Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[43] **Tetsuya Takahashi** reiterates that he **really enjoys the medium of science fiction for storytelling**.

"I do think that I can tell all of the stories that I want to in the medium of science fiction. But it's also just that I really like science fiction." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[44] When asked about online feedback, **Takahashi** says that, unlike some other Japanese creators, he enjoys **confronting criticism** as he derives a sense of power from it and **encourages him to work harder**. This kind of attitude could also be seen in their response to Xenosaga Episode II when they created Episode III.

"I feel the situation for a lot of folks who work on games in Japan is that they probably don't look at internet comments because people are too concerned about what kind of weird things might be written about them, especially if they're negative or critical. But, personally, I look at everything because I actually derive a certain sense of power from being able to confront criticism in that way. If you see anything negative about you, that drives you to work harder. Whether it's to disprove those people or just to put it out of our minds." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[45] **Takahashi** says that when it comes to knowing how much to bite off, how big of a project he can tackle, it's less of a lesson he's learnt and more that he has to **relearn it every time**.

"[Laughs] Rather than say it's a lesson I've learned over time, I think I have to relearn it every single time." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade's Director Talks Witcher 3, Zelda Wii U, And His Favorite RPGs, gameinformer.com (24th June 2015)

[46] When asked about Xenoblade being more traditional than some other RPGs, **Tetsuya Takahashi** counters by saying that people always get tired of the same experiences and that you don't want to make the same thing every time. He says that he just really enjoys many elements of Japanese game-making.

"I do have to say that you don't always want to do the same thing every time. People get tired of playing the exact same experience. You should treat every new development project as a new challenge." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles X's director on building an RPG for multiple audiences by Mike Minotti, venturebeat.com (22nd June 2015)

[47] **Takahashi** reiterates one poignant part of his personality which is that once he's completed a project he's immediately thinking about the next.

"Maybe it's just one of my idiosyncrasies, but as soon as I've finished a development project, all I can think about is the next one." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles X's director on building an RPG for multiple audiences by Mike Minotti, venturebeat.com (22nd June 2015)





[48] Xenoblade X received plenty of criticism from the cutscene music drowning out the dialogue, the HUD text being far too small, game systems being incredibly complex and, most of all, people were disappointed with the **lack of a rich story**. **Takahashi** had heard all of these criticisms and **agreed with fans**. He let people know that in their next game they would **return to the rich story** like they had in the first Xenoblade.

"While Xenoblade Chronicles was a true story-driven JRPG, we took a rather different approach with Xenoblade Chronicles X. You could say it doesn't really feel like a typical

JRPG: what really sets it apart from other JRPGs is that the game world - the planet Mira - is really vast. I've heard that some Japanese users who played Xenoblade Chronicles X said they enjoyed a more story-driven type of game. So if we have the opportunity to make another game in the series, I'd like to make another typical JRPG-style game like Xenoblade Chronicles again."
- Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi Talks Xenoblade Chronicles X by Mike Holmes, gamereactor.com (4th December 2015)

[49] In an interview, **Takahashi** says that so far the Xenoblade series has explored different genres with each game. Xenoblade being fantasy and Xenoblade X being sci-fi. He says **he'd like to continue this trend** of differing genres rather than being constrained to one.

"The Xenoblade series has always had a different genre for each game, with the previous game being fantasy, and now turning to science fiction. I hope we will be able to continue the series like this, exploring lots of different settings, rather than being confined to a specific genre." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi Talks Xenoblade Chronicles X by Mike Holmes, gamereactor.com (4th December 2015)

[50] Xenoblade Chronicles X's lifetime sales aren't fully known. In **Japan**, its lifetime sales reached **114,600** units. In **North America**, the lifetime sales aren't known, however we do know that it sold **200,000** units in its **opening month alone**. The sales data for other regions is not known. (VGChartz.com estimates the lifetime sales as being around 840,000 units, however this is unverified)

"Xenoblade Chronicles X sold over 200,000 copies in its opening month, nearly doubling the game's Japanese sales life to date." - Donald Theriault, Nintendo Sales Panic: December 2015 US NPD Group Results (14th January 2016)

Xenoblade Chronicles X sales were provided in Famitsu Weekly issue No. 1415 (14th January 2016)

❖ THE XENOBLADE 2 STORY [2014-2018] [XB2]

[1] Plans and development for Xenoblade Chronicles 2 began in **July 2014**, alongside Xenoblade Chronicles X **which had not yet finished**.

"Plans for Xenoblade Chronicles 2 started back in July 2014. Monolith Soft was working on Xenoblade Chronicles X at the time, but began work on Xenoblade Chronicles 2 at the same time."

- Hachima, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Devs Explain Why There Are So Many Female Rare Blades, siliconera.com (28th November 2017)

[2] Xenoblade 2 was proposed and submitted to Nintendo in **September of 2014**. They presented the concept along with some **objects** (possibly of the Titans around the World Tree? Similar to creating the Bionis and Mechonis statues before Xenoblade 1).

[Quotation Pending] - Tetsuya Takahashi & Yasunori Mitsuda Interview, Weekly Famitsu (14th December 2017)



[3] At the time they had **no idea about the specifications** of Nintendo's next console so they simply imagined what it would be like and worked from there. Eventually Nintendo Producer **Hitoshi Yamagami** informed them of the system.

"At the time, Monolith Soft had no idea about the specs of the Nintendo Switch, so they began working on its plans while simply imagining what kind of hardware it'll turn out to be. They got the green light after Nintendo producer Hitoshi Yamagami said 'This, this is it!'" - Hachima, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Devs Explain Why There Are So Many Female Rare Blades, siliconera.com (28th November 2017)

[4] **Yasunori Mitsuda** was contacted for the project in **December 2014**.

"高橋監督から最初のお話をいただいたのは、2014年の12月だったと思います。" - Tetsuya Takahashi & Yasunori Mitsuda Interview, Weekly Famitsu (14th December 2017)

[5] In **early 2015**, **Tetsuya Takahashi** requested that **Tetsuya Nomura** join to design the characters from Torna, and he accepted.

"お祭り感覚を強めるために、イーラのデザインは野村くんをお願いしようと決めていました。それで2015年の年明け早々、スクウェア・エニックスさんにうかがって野村くんをお願いしたところ、その場で快諾していただいて。" - Tetsuya Takahashi & Yasunori Mitsuda Interview, Weekly Famitsu (14th December 2017)



[6] **Takahashi** first conceived the new battle system before the world's setting. The idea of assigning the Arts to each button because moving and executing Arts in Xenoblade 1 and Xenoblade X was difficult.

"Takahashi answers that he thought of the gameplay system first before the world setting. Xenoblade Chronicles X had Battle Arts which use d-pad buttons to unleash techniques, but it would prove difficult to control these actions while moving. So to remedy that, considering the Switch has the Joy-Con that can be split in two, he assigned the buttons in a way so that players can feel like they have more direct control" - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)

[7] But he thought this change alone wouldn't make it that interesting, so he thought of the Driver and Blade system.

"But just simply doing that wouldn't make it interesting, so when he thought about adding more personality to the characters, he came up with the relationship between Drivers and Blades." - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)

[8] **Takahashi** says the Driver and Blade system is similar to an aspect found in **Ultraman**.

"Takahashi likens that to the protagonists of the Ultraman show where one who has power (Ultraman) gives some of the power to a human (Hayata) so that the latter can fight." - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)

[9] Early in development they tried to make a story where **Blades would be similar to Ultraman in size** (around 40 meters tall). However they found out **this wouldn't fit on screen so they made them human sized**.

"At first the team tried to make a type of story setting in which the Blade characters would look like Ultraman. But as they couldn't put a 40m-tall giant on the screen, they ended up reducing their sizes to be around the same as humans." - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)

[10] Due to 50-60% of Monolith Tokyo staff members working with Nintendo on The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, Xenoblade Chronicles 2's internal team consisted of **only 40+ staff members**.

"Monolith Tokyo has a little less than 100 developers. Of that group, between 50% to 60% was helping Nintendo with Zelda (Breath of the Wild). Of the remaining 40 to 50 people, several were part of R&D (Research & Development), and the Xenoblade Chronicles 2 staff was made of the remaining 40-plus members." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Boss Talks To Katsura Hashino About Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Development Struggles by SATO, siliconera.com (2nd February 2018)

[11] **Tetsuya Takahashi** was the Executive Director once again but also **returned as a Scenario Writer** alongside **Yuichiro Takeda**, **Kazuho Hyodo** and **Mamoru Ohta**.

[12] This time **Koh Kojima** would be **both the Director and Producer** for the game. **Genki Yokota** and **Hitoshi Yamagami** remained as Director and Producer respectively.

[13] Development of Xenoblade Chronicles 2 was **quite fast compared to previous titles** due to the fact it was **built on the same engine as Xenoblade Chronicles X**. The foundation was already there.

"The ease or speed of developing Xenoblade Chronicles 2 stems a lot from our having already created this architecture with Xenoblade Chronicles X. The game portion of Xenoblade Chronicles 2 is kind of overlaid on top of that fundamental architecture. I think that made the biggest contribution to why development went so fast." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Why 'Xenoblade Chronicles 2' Has a Character Designed by Tetsuya Nomura by Matt Peckham, Time (7th July 2017)



[14] **Yuichiro Takeda** says that **Takahashi** provided him and **Hyodo** a **rich plot right from the beginning**. He and **Hyodo** then **divided the script between them**: **Takeda** writing the even numbered chapters and **Hyodo** the odd numbered chapters.

"For this script, director Takahashi provided us with a rich plot right from the start, and Kazuho Hyodo and I split the writing in half. I worked on the even numbered chapters while Mr Hyodo worked on the odd numbered chapters." - Yuichiro Takeda, Find out more about the story writing process of Xenoblade Chronicles 2, Nintendo (24th November 2017)

[15] The three writers wrote the script simultaneously and reconvened at the end to **include each other's unique flares** into the story and also **carry out corrections from Takahashi**.

"At the same time, Takahashi was writing the whole story himself. Then, the three of us all came together when we had our scripts. We built the script by leveraging our unique personalities and adding in corrections and revisions from Takahashi. This is very similar to the screenplay technique used for movies." - Yuichiro Takeda, Find out more about the story writing process of Xenoblade Chronicles 2, Nintendo (24th November 2017)



[16] **Takeda** is particularly fond of the story with Tora and Poppi in Chapter 4 thanks to **his love for robots**.

"My personal favourite is the story about Tora and Poppi in Chapter 4. I love robots and I feel like this story fully reflects my infatuation with the Nopon. I hope that you all like it too." - Yuichiro Takeda, Find out more about the story writing process of Xenoblade Chronicles 2, Nintendo (24th November 2017)

[17] **Takahashi** wanted the story to **feel as if it was from Rex's perspective** and therefore what was considered too much detail about the warring factions and countries was omitted as it wouldn't be information known to Rex.

"The basic story of this game revolves around a feeling similar to a novel told in first-person. While many countries and factions appear in the game, information such as scheming between countries or political sagas have been omitted from the narrative as much as possible because this information is not directly available to the protagonist, Rex. We wanted to create a story that follows his perspective." - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 2 from director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (5th December 2017)

[18] **Takahashi** was concerned that now that he's older **he wouldn't be able to tell a modern story**, otherwise it would come off as awkward. He decided to bite the bullet and do it anyway, explaining that core human emotions should not differ that much between regions and eras.

"Even so, an old guy like me born in the Showa era can't possibly write a modern story, and it'd come across as awkward if I tried. So I gave up and decided to just accept the challenge with my outdated Showa sensibilities. I felt that, even if the tone is Showa and the plot points that players feel are sympathetic or moving may differ between cultures, the core of human emotion should not differ that much between regions and time periods. Because we're all Homo sapiens. And in that sense, I can say that the story direction is the same as that for Xenoblade Chronicles." - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 2 from director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (5th December 2017)

[19] Rex's characterisation revolves around his phrase "Let's go!". An individual who **keeps moving forward and doesn't look back at the past**. **Takahashi** says that this may come from him being born in the Showa era (1926-89) where many people worked hard despite living in gloomy times in hope of achieving a brighter future.

"For those who are already playing the game, you might have noticed that Rex's catchphrase is "Let's go!" As these words suggest, he will always keep moving forward. And he won't turn back to the past. His characterisation is probably due to the fact that I was born and raised in the Showa era. This is just the reminiscence of an old man, but I felt that it was a good thing that we always looked forward in the past. Even if there were individual differences in how well your life turned out, we had the hope of achieving a bright future so long as we worked hard for it. Of course the world around us was still gloomy, but society flourished because we could avoid looking at it. That is why we all worked hard and kept looking forward." - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 2 from director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (5th December 2017)

[20] Continuing with this theme, Rex isn't made to be anyone particularly special. Just a regular kid. And his reasons for fighting are personal, he fights for a girl and his friends. "If I can't fight for myself, can I fight for someone else?"

"Of course, he's not in the military either, so he won't be leading armies or fighting courageously against legions. His reasons for fighting are very personal ... But if a boy were to race to his limits for the sake of a single girl, what kind of future would await them? And even if I can fight for myself (to some degree), can I fight for someone else?" - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 2 from director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (5th December 2017)

[21] **Takahashi** says that while many people might expect hidden messages and themes in most Xeno titles, the themes of Xenoblade Chronicles 2 are **quite simple and straightforward**. The game walks well-worn territory.

"While most people probably expect many buried hints and hidden information from the Xeno series, the story for this installment is a lot simpler and straightforward, and covers more well-worn territory. And that's because this is Rex's story." - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 2 from director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (5th December 2017)

[22] Halfway through development, the team **loses 3 programmers**. Despite this they had to carry on with their remaining programmers. **Takahashi** says this is why the UI of the game **isn't as polished as it could have been**.

"things didn't go well with the UI. We lost three programmers in the middle of development. ... We had no choice but to do it with our remaining members, and we endured to the very end. The team worked hard, but that part was frustrating." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Boss Talks To Katsura Hashino About Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Development Struggles by SATO, siliconera.com (2nd February 2018)

[23] Halfway through development, they decided to come up with the Expansion Pass. In this they would be able to create the cut story 'Torna ~ The Golden Country'.

"The Expansion Pass was decided to be implemented during the middle phase of development. Monolith Soft would like players to be able to experience the world of Alrest a bit longer, so they wanted to add more content after release as well." - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)



[24] Because there were only around 40 Monolith Soft members working on the game, many other aspects of development would be outsourced. An example of this is the character art which involved many artists such as Tetsuya Nomura and **Soraya Saga**.

"However, we couldn't make it with just these members, so we outsourced then revised what we got, and that was the flow of things." - Xenoblade Chronicles 2 director on development, inspiration for the world and setting, upcoming DLC, more, nintendoeverything.com (30th December 2017)

[25] **Kunihiko Tanaka** (Xenogears and Episode I character artist) also joins as a guest artist for the game. However in a blog post **Tanaka** suggests that this will be **his last contribution to the Xeno series for the foreseeable future**.

"I'm doing an illustration for this [KOS-MOS] figurine. This is probably my final job for Xeno artwork." - Kunihiko Tanaka, dayvisions.exblog.jp (16th September 2019) [translated by Lugalbanda]



[26] On **13th January 2017**, during the Nintendo Switch Presentation, the first trailer for Xenoblade Chronicles 2 was released.

[27] On **1st December 2017**, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 was released worldwide on the Nintendo Switch.

[28] **In a month after release, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 had sold over 1 million worldwide.**

"According to Nintendo, eight Switch games have sold more than one million units in the fiscal year so far, including the four mentioned above and 1-2 Switch (1.88m), Arms (1.61m) and Xenoblade Chronicles 2 (1.06m)." - Matthew Handrahan, Nintendo's revenue rockets as Switch nears 15m sold (31st January 2018)

[29] **Takahashi** explains that **he can get bored quite easily and wants to try other things**. He believes that Gears, Saga and Blade are a manifestation of this.

"One other thing is that I get bored of things pretty easily and want to try other things. Looking back, "Xenogears", "Xenosaga", and "Xenoblade" all being different, as you said, are probably manifestations of me wanting to do something, then becoming bored of it." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[30] **Takahashi** greatly enjoys the making process of things, but **once he's finished making it he doesn't care for it much**.

"For example, when I write up the script, after I've written it, I just don't really care anymore." ... "I'm an otaku, so I like building model kits. Not just building it, but modifying it, coloring it, getting all of that and work on it hard, but once it's done, I feel like "Eh, I think I'm done with this". Sometimes I even give it away to people. It's fun when I'm making it. But once I'm done, I just don't really care anymore." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[31] Differentiating from his reply about Xenogears, **Takahashi** says that the inclusion of KOS-MOS in Xenoblade 2 was a **bit of fun**. Saying if they were going to do it, they may as well go the whole way. Even considering asking **Persona's Shigenori Soejima to design a Blade**.

"At that point, it's more just for fun than anything. If we're going to do it, let's go all the way. We actually wanted to ask Atlus for a collaboration, too. There are characters in "Xenoblade 2" called "Blades", and a lot of artists have pitched in to design them. I had always said to my staff that I wanted to ask Shigenori Soejima to design a Blade. I was actually told by my director before I came in today that it's not too late." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[32] **Takahashi** states the reason Xenoblade 2's style was so different from Xenoblade 1 was perhaps due to him getting **bored and wanting to try something new again**. He felt the Earth colours of Xenoblade 1 were getting old, so he decided to use colours that would make it pop.

"The reason why I went with the visuals I did in "Xenoblade 2" is just because I felt like the Earth colors of the original "Xenoblade" were getting old. I wanted to go with a pop look. I might unleash the fury of Nintendo onto me by saying this, but I kind of wondered what would happen if I went in the complete opposite direction from the last game. An experiment if you will. That's the main reason for the shift in art style." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[33] **Takahashi** and Katsura Hoshina talk about the philosophy of knowing **when something is too much** when creating art. **Takahashi** goes over how he often feels like **he tries to add too many things** and says that he knows he has to be careful; he claims that that is **still a work-in-progress**.

"We have to work with that in mind, but I used to work at Square Soft, so I often use addition too much.

But that addition risks losing the narrative we want to tell, and it becomes all messy unless we subtract. I'm always thinking about how I need to be careful, but it's honestly a work-in-progress. Works that really leave a lasting impression know how to balance the two, and the subtraction accentuates the overall narrative that they want to tell." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[34] On the **23rd May 2018**, the Xenoblade2 Original Soundtrack was released. With Type A and Type B editions of the soundtrack came a booklet containing an interview carried out with **Tetsuya Takahashi**, **Yasunori Mitsuda**, **Koh Kojima** and **Takako Shijō**. In this interview **Kojima** explains that they want to continue the numbered series of games (to make Xenoblade Chronicles 3), but they also **want to take care and create a sequel to cross (Xenoblade Chronicles X)**.

"We want to keep the numbering for the Xenoblade series going. So...The game before this one was Xenoblade X, and we want to take good care of that too. So we want to get Xenoblade 3 out, but also a 2 for cross (X)." - Koh Kojima, Xenoblade2 Original Soundtrack Booklet (23rd May 2018)

[35] **Kojima** also says that if they keep making numbered Xenoblade games then it will get "stale", so they want to make something **original** too.

"But if we keep doing numbered titles, it's gonna get stale, so we want to do something completely original too." - Koh Kojima, Xenoblade2 Original Soundtrack Booklet (23rd May 2018)

[36] **Takahashi** says that he would like to create something you'd see on an **American cable drama like ABC**.

"Me personally, I want to do something you'd see on an American cable drama like ABC." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade2 Original Soundtrack Booklet (23rd May 2018)



[37] **Takahashi** also says he would want such a project to be **"violet and erotic and heavy"** (he specifically says "violet" and not "violent"). He says he would like to aim for a **Z rating** (equivalent to a ESRB M rating or PEGI 18 rating).

"Violet and erotic and heavy. Something that there's no way we would be allowed to do it. ... Completely serious though, I would like to do a Z rated game, and just do whatever the hell I feel like doing." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade2 Original Soundtrack Booklet (23rd May 2018)

[38] Sometime in **May 2018**, the proposals for **Xenoblade Chronicles 3** and **Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition** were submitted to Nintendo.

"We put together the proposal for Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition along with the new game that our 1st Production Team is currently working on and presented them sometime in May of 2018." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition planning started at the end of 2017, was in the works alongside Torna and new project by Oni Dino, nintendoeverything.com (20th May 2020)



[39] Since even Xenogears, **Takahashi** says that **he takes most pleasure from creating the universe that characters live in rather than creating the characters themselves.**

"I would say so. I'm not much of a person to focus on characters, personally. I put more weight on the universe. That hasn't changed since "Xenogears". Of course, I'm not saying characters aren't important. We're making a game, so I want to please players as much as I can. But if I were to say which that I personally put more weight on, it's the universe." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

[40] Xenoblade Chronicles 2: Torna ~ The Golden Country was released on **14th September 2018** as both a physical release and digitally via the Expansion Pass.

[41] The last scene of **Xenoblade Chronicles 2 was originally going to end** with Pyra/Mythra's Core Crystal glowing in Rex's hand and that would be it. **Takahashi** says "an Inception-style" ending. However they decided, since the player had gone through this long journey, that it would be **better to leave it on a happier note.** So they brought back both Pyra and Mythra for the end.

"[Laughter] Originally we envisioned the ending sort of in an Inception-style where you would see a cutscene with Rex's core crystal glowing, and that would be the end of the game. But, while making the final scenes of the game, I really thought we should give players a clearer sense of closure, and I really started to come around to the feeling of ending the game on a happier note. The players have been through this incredibly long, trying the experience of completing the game, so why not give them a happier note to finish on? So we thought, "Well, okay, we'll bring back Pyra or Mythra, which one should we use? Or maybe we'll bring back—what's her name? The green-haired one." In any case, we thought about ending the game with one of these female characters joining Rex again, but I decided to roll with the feeling of a happy ending of sorts and thought as a bonus why not bring both Pyra and Mythra back as a bonus for the player at the end of the game?" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Feature: Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Team Talk Torna, Female Blades And The Ending That Never Made It, Steve Bowling (20th Sept. 2018)

[42] When asked about whether there would be a sequel to Xenoblade Chronicles 2, **Takahashi** says that while they're always thinking ahead they have **no firm plans to continue the series;** this is obviously **untrue** as they later tell us they had submitted the proposal for Xenoblade Chronicles 3 and Definitive Edition in May of 2018, **3-4 months before this interview was published.**

"Is there any message you can give to fans that want to see a sequel?"

Takahashi: At Monolith Soft we're constantly thinking of new things we want to create, and that, of course, includes the Xenoblade series, but at present, we have no firm plans for continuing the series." - Tetsuya Takahashi & NintendoLife Interviewer, Feature: Xenoblade Chronicles 2 Team Talk Torna, Female Blades And The Ending That Never Made It, Steve Bowling (20th Sept. 2018)

[43] As of **31st December 2022**, Xenoblade Chronicles 2 has sold a total of **2.70 million copies worldwide.**
2023CESAゲーム白書 (2023)

[44] In a **2019** interview, **Tetsuya Takahashi** explains that Monolith Soft have sent **many business proposals** to Nintendo, however the **only** project to be approved recently was Xenoblade.

“高橋氏：そうですね。良いアイデアや企画書があったらいつでも持って来いっていう。ただ任天堂さんの審査は相当に狭き門ですよ。それこそ何十本という企画を出していますが、その中で通ったのは、ここ最近ではゼノブレイドだけ。たまたま僕の企画が通ったに過ぎません。” - Tetsuya Takahashi, 「ゼノサーガ」の紆余曲折が「ゼノブレイド」を生んだ——不定期連載「原田が斬る！」, 第7回はゼノシリーズ総監督の高橋哲哉氏にモノリスソフトの今を聞いた, 4gamer.net (2019)

Monolith Soft has sent Nintendo 10+ business proposals for approval over the years, but the only one that has been approved recently was Xenoblade, says Takahashi. - Lugalbanda's Translation, The Tribulations of Xenosaga created Xenoblade. "Harada Breaks It Down" Vol.7, We Asked Takahashi Tetsuya About Monolith Soft [Summary], xenomira.wordpress.com (2019)

❖ MORE STUDIOS [2017-2019] [MSI-5]

[1] Around **2017**, Monolith Soft opened 2 new studios in Tokyo. Another one in Nakameguro (GS) and Iidabashi.

[2] Some time between 2018 and 2019 the Iidabashi studio is closed.

[3] After a great growth in profits (doubled since the year before), they started a new studio in Osaki, Tokyo in **2019**.

"That productivity is showing on the company's bottom line. Nintendo Everything sourced official financial data from Gamebiz.jp to show that Monolith Soft earned ¥274 million (\$2.5m) in the last fiscal year -- almost exactly double its profits from the year before." - Matthew Handrahan, gamesindustry.biz (10th July 2019)

❖ DEFINITIVE EDITION [2017-2020] [XBDE]

[1] Plans for a remaster of the first Xenoblade Chronicles game started at the **end of 2017**, just after the release of Xenoblade Chronicles 2. This was also the time that Torna was in development.

"Planning began sometime at the end of 2017; I recall it being pretty much right after the release of Xenoblade Chronicles 2. That's when Xenoblade Chronicles 2: Torna ~ The Golden Country was in development, so we worked on both at the same time." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition planning started at the end of 2017, was in the works alongside Torna and new project by Oni Dino, nintendoeverything.com (20th May 2020)

[2] The proposal for DE was given to Nintendo, along with the proposal of Xenoblade Chronicles 3, in **May 2018**.

"We put together the proposal for Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition along with the new game that our 1st Production Team is currently working on and presented them sometime in May of 2018." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition planning started at the end of 2017, was in the works alongside Torna and new project by Oni Dino, nintendoeverything.com (20th May 2020)

[3] Official production of Definitive Edition would begin in **August 2018**.

"We formally began work in August after post-production on Torna wrapped up." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition planning started at the end of 2017, was in the works alongside Torna and new project by Oni Dino, nintendoeverything.com (20th May 2020)

[4] Tetsuya Takahashi was Executive Director and both **Michihiko Inaba** and **Yuki Sakamoto** were the Directors for Definitive Edition.

[5] Responsible for Future Connected's scenario was **Mamoru Ohta**.

[6] Xenoblade Chronicles Definitive Edition was released on **29th May 2020** worldwide.



[7] When asked about the change of Alvis' key to a gemstone in the same shape as that of Logos and Pneuma's Core Crystals and what this meant, **Takahashi** explained that **from the beginning each entry in the Xenoblade series has been an episode within a wide time and space**. Essentially telling us that all the Xenoblade games are indeed connected, but only with Xenoblade 1 and 2 is it most clear.

"From the beginning, each entry in the Xenoblade Chronicles series has depicted a single episode within the flow of a larger time and space. So they are, at their roots, closely connected with each other, but we're flexible with changing the means and ways in which we depict this in each entry." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles interview: talking ten years of Xenoblade and Definitive Edition by Alex Donaldson (10th June 2020)

[8] As of **December 2022**, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition has sold a total of **1.88 million copies worldwide**.

2023CESAゲーム白書 (2023)

❖ THE XENOBLADE 3 STORY [2014-2023] [XB3]

[1] **Tetsuya Takahashi** says that the visual of the Mechonis sword inside the Urayan Titan was something they had conceived sometime **between the end of Xenoblade Chronicles' development (2010) and the beginning of development of Xenoblade Chronicles 2 (2014)**. Meaning that the idea for this game was generated during the development of Xenoblade Chronicles X.

"The key visual features a broken great sword of Mechonis and the body of the Urayan Titan with a gaping wound. I imagine everyone who saw the trailer was quite surprised by the final scene. What is this visual hinting at? I can't reveal that just yet. What I can tell you is that this visual was conceived quite some time ago. More precisely speaking, we came up with it sometime between the end of development of Xenoblade Chronicles and the beginning of development of Xenoblade Chronicles 2. So, it's not something we recently added to the series." - Tetsuya Takahashi, An introduction to Xenoblade Chronicles 3 from Executive Director Tetsuya Takahashi, Nintendo (9th February 2022)

[2] For this title, **Tetsuya Takahashi** would return as Executive Director and Scenario writer alongside **Yuichiro Takeda** and **Kazuho Hyodo**. **Genki Yokota** and **Koh Kojima** also return as Directors, although this marks the first mainline title without **Hitoshi Yamagami** as a Producer. **Tomohiro Hagiwara** (Producer for multiple Xenosaga titles) would instead return to take on the role of Producer, together with **Koh Kojima** and select Nintendo staff.

[3] **Mamoru Ohta** does not return to write the scenario for Xenoblade 3, perhaps they were writing the scenario to Future Connected concurrently. However they do return to work on Xenoblade 3 as Cutscene and Cinematic Director.



[4] During the first stages of developing the story, **Koh Kojima** notes that **Takahashi's** original story **didn't feel like Xenoblade Chronicles at all** and he felt **Takahashi** was **purposefully trying to do that**. **Kojima** thought this story was a lot more serious than before, but after trial and error they came to make a story that included more of that "Xenoblade-ness".

"Yes, I agree. At first, I thought it didn't feel like Xenoblade Chronicles at all... I think Takahashi-san was deliberately trying to remove the sense of 'Xenoblade-ness' of the series. The stories for the first and second games were completely different, but there was this 'Xenoblade-ness' that was common to both of them. I didn't feel that at all at the initial proposal stage.

And the reason for that is because this game's world is very serious. That is the world that Takahashi-san wanted to depict in this title, but I was concerned about whether it would be acceptable to deliver it to players of previous games in the series, for what it is. The design this time was also different from the previous games in the series. But after a lot of trial and error, we found a good balance, and in the end, I think we were able to create this 'Xenoblade-ness'." - Koh Kojima, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 1 (2022)

[5] **Takahashi** wanted Noah to be similar to a philosopher / poet.

"If a person who has his own beliefs, who has a somewhat philosophical view of the world or life encounters various changes and events throughout the story and faces problems that cannot be resolved by his own logic, what kind of answer will this person find? In this way, I wanted to portray the character as a philosopher or a poet." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 1 (2022)

[6] The idea behind merging to form Ouroboros links back to themes **Takahashi** presented through Xenogears with foreign things becoming one.

The Ouroboros system is implemented in this title as the symbolic form of "foreign things becoming one" ... This idea of "foreign things becoming one" is something we have been trying to express since the time of Xenogears back in the day. A person's life is basically built up of relationships with other people. A relationship with foreign things. I'm always conscious of this perspective when I'm making things. - Tetsuya Takahashi, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 1 (2022)

[7] The proposal for the game was given to Nintendo, along with the proposal of Definitive Edition, in **May 2018**.

"We put together the proposal for Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition along with the new game that our 1st Production Team is currently working on and presented them sometime in May of 2018." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade Chronicles: Definitive Edition planning started at the end of 2017, was in the works alongside Torna and new project by Oni Dino, nintendoeverything.com (20th May 2020)

[8] Once again, as with Xenosaga Episode I, the idea of having enough different music tracks comes up. [Koh Kojima](#) says that for the next game he hopes there are less tracks, even if [Takahashi](#) wants more.

"Well, I want to reduce the number next time... (laughs) But I do understand why Takahashi-san wanted more. A movie is only about two hours long, but a game takes a very long time to play. Even if the melody is the same, we want a slightly different sound in scenes where the emotions are different. To achieve this, we want to have more variations." - Koh Kojima, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 2 (2022)

[9] [Takahashi](#) remarks how [Kojima](#) always asks him to make the cutscenes shorter.

"Kojima-san always tells me to make the cutscenes shorter. (Laughs)" - Tetsuya Takahashi, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 2 (2022)

[10] Throughout the "Ask the Developer" interview with Nintendo, [Koh Kojima](#) regularly jokes about how he requests that they reduce the volume of content in the game but this never turns out to be the case. It's very much likely this won't be the case for their next title either as [Kojima](#) had these requests since after Xenoblade 2.

"Well... I'd like this third entry to be the last one with such a large volume of content!"

But didn't you think that for the second title as well?

Well, yes... That's right. (laughs)" - Koh Kojima & Interviewer, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 3 (2022)

[11] [Koh Kojima](#) says that after the first and second Xenoblade games, this third game is the one that probably best presented what [Tetsuya Takahashi](#) wanted to do.

"but I feel that this is the story where we could best achieve what Takahashi-san wanted to do" - Koh Kojima, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 3 (2022)

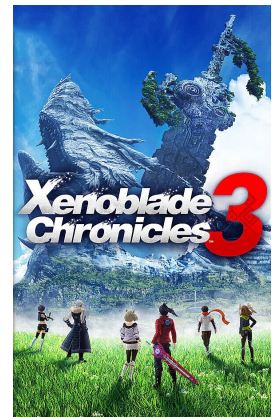
[12] Xenoblade Chronicles 3 was revealed on **9th February 2022** during a Nintendo Direct with a projected release date of September 2022.

[13] On the **19th April 2022** there was yet another trailer, however this one revealed that the release date had been brought forward to 29th July 2022.

[14] Xenoblade Chronicles 3 was released worldwide on **29th July 2022** for Nintendo Switch.

[15] [Takahashi](#) says that another way to enjoy Xenoblade 3 is to imagine what MSI's future games will look like after this one.

"I think imagining what MONOLITHSOFT's future games will look like while playing this title would be another way to enjoy it." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Ask the Developer Vol. 6, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 – Chapter 3 (2022)



[16] Xenoblade Chronicles 3 sold **112,728 physical copies in Japan** during its **first week of release alone**.

"Xenoblade Chronicles 3 for Switch was the top selling new release of the week, opening at 112,728 retail copies sold." - Sal Romano, Famitsu Sales: 7/25/22 – 7/31/22 [Update] (4th August 2022)

[17] As of **March 2023**, Xenoblade Chronicles 3 has sold **1.86 million copies worldwide**.

Financial Results Explanatory Material (Fiscal Year Ended March 2023), Nintendo (9th May 2023)

[18] On **19th January 2024**, it was announced that Xenoblade 3 would also receive an artbook similar to "Monado Archives" and "Alrest Records", called "Aionios Moments". Releasing on **1st April 2024**.

"【4月1日発売】ゼノブレイド3 オフィシャルアートワークス アイオニオン・モーメント" - @Dengekinintendo, Twitter.com (2024)

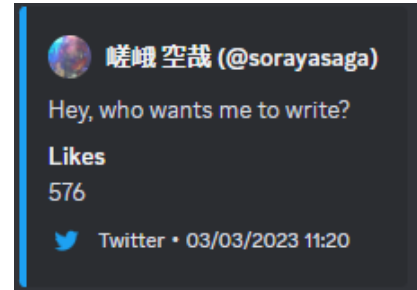
❖ KYOTO STUDIO RELOCATION [2022] [MSI-6]

[1] **Yasuyuki Honne's** Kyoto studio was relocated to the Kyoto City Waterworks and Sewerage Bureau building where Nintendo was also renting office space (floors 6 and 7) to house more game development. This only shows MSI and Nintendo's growing relations.

"2011年設立。メンバーの大半がデザイナー陣で構成されており、近年では『ゼルダの伝説』『どうぶつの森』『スプラトゥーン』シリーズなど任天堂オリジナルタイトルの部分受託開発に携わる。2022年10月に開発体制強化のため京都市上下水道局総合庁舎へ移転。" - *Monolith Soft Inc., スタッフインタビュー キャラクターモデラー編 (2023)*

❖ ONLINE SPECULATION [2022-2024] [MSI-7]

[1] On **3rd March 2023**, **Soraya Saga** tweeted asking people whether they would like to have her write again. **Soraya Saga** has not written for the Xeno games since Xenosaga Episode II and rewrites for Pied Piper. Whether this tweet is related to anything Xeno is complete speculation.



[2] In the Xenoblade 3 Special Edition Official Soundtrack booklet, a message from **Takahashi** speaks of striking a balance between taking on new challenges when making a game and also providing content that serves its fans; if one of those fails then the game fails. He connects this to one of Xenoblade 3's themes being "not be afraid of change and walk into the future". Furthermore, this links to his stance towards game development and writing: "**change rather than maintain**". He says that if there is another Xenoblade, it will be **very different in terms of style and music**; defying expectations, in a good way.

"It's a compromise between 'service' and 'goal,' but I think it turned out well, for a compromise. I'm sure some wish it was played a little more often, but considering that one of the themes of 'Xenoblade 3' is to 'not be afraid of change and walk into the future,' I think this is as much as you can do. Rather than playing on defense, going on the offense; change rather than maintain. This is a stance that I have continued to hold for thirty years. If there is another 'Xenoblade,' it will likely be something vastly different from what came before. In style and in music, I would like to make my next goal something that will betray everyone's expectations, in a good way." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenoblade 3 OST Tetsuya Takahashi Message, translated by Lugalbanda (2023)

[3] Prominent leaker Midori makes tweets about having heard of a project months ago called "Legacy" being worked on by Monolith Soft and published by Nintendo. Answering another user's question, Midori clarifies that it is an internal Nintendo title and therefore not Xenosaga.



❖ X DEFINITIVE EDITION [CURRENT] [XBXDE]



[1] On **29th October 2024**, Nintendo revealed Xenoblade Chronicles X: Definitive Edition by releasing the announcement trailer online. It appeared to be a remaster akin to the Definitive Edition of the first Xenoblade Chronicles for Wii. Details on the game include that this version would have “newly added story elements”.

“The visually enhanced edition of this open-world RPG contains newly added story elements and more.” - Nintendo Store Page (2024)

[2] This remaster was set to release **20th March 2025**.

❖ TETSUYA TAKAHASHI [T.TAKAHASHI]

[1] Tetsuya Takahashi was born on **November 18th, 1966**.

[2] As a child in the middle of a meeting with the chief priest of a Buddhist temple, Tetsuya Takahashi began having vague doubts and asking “what is religion?” From this point he gained an interest in researching religion.

“As a child, in the middle of a meeting with the chief priest of a Buddhist temple near my home, I began having vague doubts myself on, “What is religion?” That’s when I started having an interest in religion and I did research by reading various books. With religion there are many different denominations with many adherents. These people carry an ideological bias. The status quo is to ignore this bias, but ever since I was a student, I couldn’t be satisfied with that response.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, [Xenosaga -Official Design Materials-](#) (September 2002)

[3] Takahashi wanted to present these doubts he had as a child into the games he makes.

“I think there must be some young people who have the same kind of doubts, and this would be a part that they could respond to.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[4] Takahashi likes to idealise living carefree, ignoring social matters and not thinking too deeply about things; like a child. He’s tired of running from these things yet continues to do so anyway, and realised others must be thinking the same. Therefore he wants to communicate his message, using his stories and games to do so.

“At first glance, currently Shion’s reasons for acting seem positive. But, they actually come from a very negative place. There’s a reckless part of her that just continues on so that she can look away from reality and truth. I want to portray her looking back at herself doing this and wondering how she should live her life.” ... “It’s the same with me. I have this ideal of how carefree it would be to just ignore social matters and live like a child who doesn’t think too deeply about things. I’m going to go off topic, but my family was always full of intense competitiveness. That’s why I start to run away before I can realize it myself. Personally, I’m tired of running, but I’m always running before I know it. When I looked back at that, I realized there must be others thinking the same thing. So I wanted to put that into the game. 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, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[5] Takahashi says that games aren’t a good medium for telling stories, rather they’re better at telling narrative things.

“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. Take for instance, a novel. Even if there are 1500 pages of text, normally you will read it. However, if a game shows you 1500 pages of text, first of all, you wouldn’t play it. With movies or visual mediums the audience is in a totally passive posture, right? A game is bidirectional so it’s difficult to just show everything passively like a movie. So even as you’re telling the story, there’s a bare minimum of approaching it from the player’s perspective. If you think about it like that, of course you have to call it a “narrative thing.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga -Official Design Materials- (September 2002)

[6] As a hobby, Takahashi likes to collect Chogokin robots.



[7] In University, Takahashi would read lots of Friedrich Nietzsche.

“I read a lot of Friedrich Nietzsche during university” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga - The Power of Will, Super PLAY Magazine (2002)

[8] Takahashi is motivated when reading books and watching films and likes to be inspired by them. When making games he makes a collage of all manners of things, and makes notes on things he finds interesting from films and books.

“When I’m making a game, I’m the type to make a collage of all manner of things. Even if I’m reading a book, I’ll write down a line I find interesting, and I take notes of all kinds of things like that for later. That goes for [when I’m watching] movies too.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, The Play’s Crew at Monolith Soft, The Play (Dec. 1999)

[9] He is a big fan of science fiction and robots. He’s watched: Captain Ultra, Ultra Seven, Star Trek, Star Wars, Thunderbirds, Gundam. Even his son calls him a “Gun-Ota” or “Gundam Otaku”.

“Of course I was. My son calls me a Gun-Ota.” - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[10] Takahashi has always wanted to make the “masterpiece RPG”. Viewing gameplay as the x-axis and story as the y-axis. He’s noticed this being off-balance in other games, including his own; he wants to try and perfect this balance.

"Right. So the first thing I did when I was making Xenoblade Chronicles was to use my experiences to decide what a good balance was for the x-axis and y-axis, and structure it that way." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Iwata Asks: Xenoblade Chronicles 3D (2015)

[11] Tetsuya Takahashi has a greater affinity for Western media, including movies, TV, novels and games. He doesn't tend to play a lot of modern Japanese titles but he still loves ones from 30 or so years ago.

"Japanese tastes are unique compared to those in the West, so if you focus solely on gamers within Japan, you'll always find yourself running into this problem. (I think this is easy to see when you notice that FPS-style games sell only around 100,000 copies or so in Japan, as opposed to 10 million worldwide.) This may be a surprise to hear, but I don't have very much interest in "current" Japanese anime and games, and I don't play them, either. (I do get hands-on with them for future reference, though, and I still love older games that came out 30 or so years ago.) Most of the movies, TV dramas, novels, and games I pick up are made in the West. I don't do this deliberately; that just turned out to be the kind of thing I like. As a result, I've come to the realization that it's best to try and organically make the kind of things I like, or want." - Tetsuya Takahashi, 5 Things Xenoblade Chronicles X Director Tetsuya Takahashi Told Us by Matt Peckham, Time (16th December 2015)

[12] Takahashi states in an interview that he would prefer to keep his hobbies and work separate. Meaning that he'd rather not work on a novel adaptation as that would lead him to associate his hobby of reading with the researching of his work life.

"I've always preferred to keep my work and hobbies separate from each other. As a game developer myself, playing games is [naturally] one of my hobbies, but there are times when I really don't enjoy it and feel like I'm wasting my time. No matter what game I'm playing, when I get that realization, I find myself researching the game [instead of enjoying it]. So since I'd find it much harder to enjoy things like movies and novels if I were to turn them into my work, I'd rather keep my hobbies as hobbies and treasure them that way instead." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Monolith Soft Website (2010)

[13] This feeling carries through to his taste in video game genres. Because he develops RPGs, he finds it difficult to play them without analysing them. He can't play them as a user anymore. He says (as of this interview) that his favourite genre is FPS games. This also shows, again, his affinity with western titles.

"Actually, my favorite type of games are first-person shooters. Obviously, I like action games and strategy games. I like RPGs as well, but what happens is when I get involved in creating a game, it makes it hard to enjoy that game. For example, right now it's very hard for me to enjoy RPGs because my perspective becomes that of a creator and not a user, in that I would always think, "Well, why is it this way? They could have done this, or this could have been done that way to improve." It's hard to get back into the user perspective. Although I'm interested in it, if I were to make different genres, then I wouldn't be able to enjoy those." - Tetsuya Takahashi, A Peek Inside The Mind Of Xenoblade Dev's Legendary Leader by Peter Brown, gamespot.com (23rd June 2017)

[14] Takahashi gets bored of things easily and is always looking for something new or different. He says this has manifested through Xenogears, Xenosaga and Xenoblade; each is very different (though at its core still very much a work of Monolith Soft).

"The reason why I went with the visuals I did in "Xenoblade 2" is just because I felt like the Earth colors of the original "Xenoblade" were getting old. ... what would happen if I went in the complete opposite direction from the last game." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Tetsuya Takahashi and "Persona's" Katsura Hashino: What Does it Mean to Create? Creators of World Renowned JRPGs Discuss Their Philosophies, denfaminicogamer (2018)

"When you deal too long with a single project, I feel like it becomes harder to chase after new possibilities. ... I'd like to explore other genres and other possibilities." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Famitsu (May 2003)

"There's been a marked decline in high fantasy-themed works lately, so I might want to try making something like that, or maybe something that takes place in the present day rather than SF...I feel like doing a variety of different things." - Tetsuya Takahashi, Xenosaga II "Who" (2003)

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