

Game Design Document

For the group of (Group 3)

Philip Waldron 14173026

David Vaughan 14155974

Thiago Dos Santos Sandi 14049791

Kaitsu

(Working Title)

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Overview

Story

The story takes place in a land known as Kaitsu, war torn with corruption and chaos spreading. The player will experience a deep story driven open world RPG adventure, where they take the role of a human amongst three other races; Elfs, Sheruk and Draelon locked in battle, Unknowing of another larger threat emerging.

The player will be subject to emotional turmoil from the beginning and should develop a feel for the way the world of Kaitsu quickly. After losing their home village, the player will be introduced to characters of the other races and is given the opportunity to begin developing their allegiance to each race. After a few fateful events, the player will have developed their party and the open world aspect of the game will become much more apparent, as they are given more freedom.

As the player learns more about the world, curiosities, problems and new developments emerge as the player will eventually discover the truth behind the war and corruption and their decisions will affect the outcome of the overarching storyline.

Aspects of Gameplay

As the game progresses the player will need to become adept at diplomacy as they will be pressured to diffuse tense situations amongst friends and others throughout Kaitsu, making tough decisions which may not always favour all parties involved. Many actions may lead to increasing their allegiance or fidelity with one race, but become more disliked by another. Other times the player will be pushed into making on the spot decisions which they may regret in the future.

In between the diplomacy and story, a large aspect of the game focuses on combat. The player must develop their own skill trees to suit their playstyle, only having a limited number of points to assign to many different skill trees. As the game progresses and the player levels up, certain enemies will begin to start noticing patterns and strategies the player is using, and will attempt to counter it. This forces the player to rethink their strategies and approach each situation with deliberation.

Conclusion

In the broad sense of things the mix of an intuitive allegiance system, the large open world, story rich region of Kaitsu, in depth skill tree development and intelligent machine learning; a huge world opens up to fully captivate the player with almost endless encounters and exploration. A different take on the open world RPG genre with inspiration from old Asian culture, gives the basis for a stunningly envisioned world.

Game Mechanics

Movement

The player will be able to have their character run or walk. There will be a button to allow the character to move forward, a backward button, a button to turn left, one to turn right, and buttons to strafe right and left. There will be a key to allow the character to sprint, and there will be a jump button.

The player can choose what character they wish to control. There will a specific key assigned to each part members position, and pressing them will allow the player to switch between them.

Combat

They player can draw and sheath their characters weapons. When their weapon is drawn, they can do basic automatic attacks by left-clicking with their mouse on an enemy. The player may assign certain skills or spells to their number keys on the keyboard. Skills and actions will cost the character stamina or mana.

They player will be able to dodge enemy attacks by double pressing their movement buttons. The player can assign specific potions to two keys, and may have health, mana, or stamina potions on them.

The player can give tactics for their party members that they are not controlling by interacting with their character page in the pause menu. They can set what skills they should use, and when they can drink a potion. They can also set them to attack certain enemies, such as those with the least amount of health, or the enemy that the player's controlled character is attacking.

Interacting With Environment

The player will have a single key for most basic interactions, such as looting defeated enemies or storage containers, like chests. The same key will allow players to pick up important items that are physically visible, and it will allow the player to open doors and read items they come across, such as letters, or inscriptions.

NPC Interaction

The player can make their character talk to non-hostile NPCs by pressing a key when they are facing them. While conversing with NPCs, the player can choose dialog options by clicking them with their mouse, or pressing their corresponding number. Some NPCs will allow the player to buy or sell items, and they player can select the dialog option to allow them to access the shop window. Some NPCs may offer the player quests, but the player can have the option to accept or reject them.

Character Animation

The player's characters will have specific animations for interaction with their environment and actions they carry out. Walking and sprinting will have the player's characters move in a realistic fashion. When the characters are traversing uneven environments, or moving up hill, their character

will slow down and their movement will seem more careful. If the player runs their character into a wall or physical obstacle, the character will raise their hand to guard themselves from running into the object.

When a character is in combat, they will have a different stance and will move more slowly. All skills and spells will have unique animations. Characters will bend down and outstretch their hands when they loot bodies or objects that are on the ground. When objects are on raised surfaces within reach of the controlled character, they will only move their hands, and won't bend down.

Artificial Intelligence

How the Game World Will React to the Player

When the player approaches various trees, rocks and other objects, those objects may glow; showing that they may be searched with the possibility of finding items or equipment (Ex: armor, shield, swords, etc.).

If the player approaches hostile animals or beasts of the world, these creatures will attack and follow the player until he/she reaches a certain distance from the creature's point of origin. Those creatures may attack physically or use arcane spells.

How NPCs Will React to the Player

When the player speaks to any NPCs (For example Faolin, Taevtr, Hyreshk, Grimoir, Shiro, Tatsuo or Frelchek), the NPC may offer a quest to the player, and the player will be presented with various dialog options. If the NPC Does not have any quests of important information for the player, they will only speak about current events, their location and their life.

Allegiance Mechanic – The player will start with a 50% fidelity with each race in the region, where 50% fidelity implies neutrality, Less than 50% fidelity implies negative likeness and greater than 50% fidelity implies positive likeness. As the player performs tasks benefitting, helping or hindering each race, the player's fidelity with that race will decrease or increase.

Certain races already dislike each other, so dependent on current party members and/or the fidelity the player currently has with a race, various NPCs may act negatively, positively or even aggressively (through combat) towards the player.

There are various NPCs that roam and live through the land of Kaitsu who are willing to sell goods and merchandise. The player may barter with most of these NPCs with items, equipment and gold.

The Decisions of the NPCs in battle will based on arbitrary data from input by the player through machine learning. The NPCs will attempt to analyse player actions and patterns, and with that, develop unique and increasingly difficult strategies and patterns to counter and combat the player. This will help develop and challenge with an evolving and dynamic difficulty curve.

Game Elements

Important Characters

Player Character

No set personality. Player will shape the player character to his/her liking. Will be a human, but player can choose gender upon starting the game, in character creation, along with their appearance. Player will make choices and choose dialog options for the player character.

Party Members

Lysa

An elven girl who has recently entered adulthood. She is a magic user which is a very rare trait and makes her very useful for the elven army. Despite having been involved in war, she has an energetic personality and is often ready to leap into action. She is tall and slender like most elves. She has long red hair and bright green eyes. Has a particular hatred for Sheruk. Is the adoptive daughter to king of the elves, Faolin.

Kirshval

Kirshval is of the Sheruk. Much like the rest of his race, he is very tall, broad and muscular, with a bone carapace plating covering a large portion of his body. He is scarred in multiple parts of his body, showing his battle experience. Kirshval is going to be a war-weary individual, having had his share of fighting an endless war. He made his decision to leave the Sheruk army a few years previously. He is very honour bound and will always stay true to his word. Has a strong prejudice against Elves. He believes in standing up for those who cannot fight for themselves. Kirshval was mentored by the commander of the Sheruk army.

Talon

Talon is of the Draelon. He is of similar height and build to an average human. Talon is covered in dark, iridescent, green scales, with yellow reptilian eyes. He is quite but has questions about many things in the world. Like all Draelon, he has a dragon bound to him since birth. His dragon matches his scales colour and goes by the name of Kevalth. Kevalth will allow the player and their party to fast travel to landmarks they have already been to.

Key NPCs

Faolin (Elves)

Faolin is the king of the elves, and the adoptive father of Lysa, which will be revealed to the player much later in the game. He is a king who is kind to his whole but is strong in his convictions against the other races. He took in Lysa after her parents were killed in a raid by a Sheruk group of deserters. He leads the Elves in the war against the Humans and the Sheruk with the help of his son, Taevtr.

Taevtr (Elves)

Taevtr is the son of the Elven king Faolin. He has all the prejudices many of his race do against the others, particularly the Sheruk. Was very close to his adoptive sister Lysa, until she showed magical aptitude, and gained more attention from his father. Taevtr is the lead tactician for the Elven army, and has a brilliant mind.

Hyreshk (Sheruk)

Hyreshk is the leader of the Sheruk people. She is a fearless warrior amongst her people, and is the wife of Grimoir, the commander of the main body of the Sheruk army. She leads her people with the intention of maintaining their dwindled population to the best of her abilities.

Grimoir (Sheruk)

Grimoir is the commander of the main body of the Sheruk army. Strongest warrior of his people, and is a fiercely proud individual. He thought Kirshval how to fight, and viewed him as a son until he decided to leave the Sheruk army.

Shiro (Humans)

Shiro is the Emperor of the humans. Is a power hungry individual, and cares not for other people. Greed and power are what drive him in this war. He will be an obstacle for the player character to overcome.

Tatsuo (Humans)

Tatsuo is the bastard of Shiro, but only heir to the human throne. Kind and generous individual, and looks out for those less fortunate than himself. Clever, but has no intention of taking the throne from his father, despite having a large following of people who would sooner follow his word than his father's.

Frelchek (Draelon)

Frelchek is the first of the Draelon. Has a certain connection to the magic lay lines covering Kaitsu. He is the only one of his people who does not age. Only speaks when it is necessary, and only when it is something worth saying. For this reason, he is known as an oracle of his people. He does not interfere directly with the warring races of Kaitsu.

Races

Humans

The most numerous of the four main races of Kaitsu. Rule the province of Chimaë.

Sheruk

A tall, strong race of warriors. They average at seven feet tall and are broad and well built, due to their fighting nature. They have a naturally growing bone carapace that covers a large portion of their body to protect them from a certain amount of harm. Of the four races they have the lowest amount of magic users in their number. They are also less numerous than the elves and human. Their shell on their outer body can sometimes grow excessively, and was once controlled by the naturally occurring magic that was once widely available to them. Since the magic lay lines were broken, they have lost that ability, and many of their kind can die due to their carapace affecting their breathing of movement if it over grows. This is the cause of the Sheruk having a particular hatred of the elves, who have more magic users than the other races. They rule the province of Watashu.

Elves

A tall slender race who rule the heavily forested province of Elywaer. Their race has the highest rate of magic users in comparison to others. They are a refined race who are less hardy than others, but make up for that in their magical potential and intelligence. They have a particular dislike of the Sheruk, as the Sheruk were particularly hostile towards them in the early years of the war.

Draelon

Draelon are the least numerous of all the races in Kaitsu. Each Draelon is born with a dragon, and maintains a unique connection with them. They are both always aware of each other and can communicate through telepathy. If either dragon or Draelon die, the other does too. This bond is called Setsuzoku. They are a humanoid race, with a similar build to humans. Most of their body is covered in scales, except for their stomach and chest, which match the colour of the dragon that they were born with. They have reptilian eyes, and small horns grow on their head. They also have a reptilian tail. Draelon have a certain degree of magic in them as they were a product of the breaking of the lay lines, but none have shown the ability to use it, except in their communication with their dragon. Each Draelon gains what they call their 'Fate' when they reach adulthood. This 'Fate' is a compulsion to do something in particular with their lives.

Items

Melee Weapons

Long sword: Single handed blade weapon with average attack speed. Medium reach.

Dagger: Short, single handed blade weapon with fast attack speed. Short reach.

Great sword: Large two-handed blade weapon with slow attack speed. Has a long reach and deals heavy damage.

Battle axe: Two-handed blade weapon. Slow attack speed but deals heavy damage. Has a long reach.

Great hammer: Large two-handed blunt weapon. Very slow attack speed but deals massive damage.

Bo staff: Two handed blunt weapon. Has average attack speed. Long reach.

Shield: Used in off-hand with single handed weapons. Raises defence and blocks attacks.

Ranged Weapons

Bow: Two-handed projectile weapon. Average attack speed. Fires arrows. Arrows can be treated to deal different damages types.

Staff: Two-handed magic weapon. Slow attack speed. Used by magic users. Channels magic and deals heavy damage. Wood used in staff affects strength of magic used.

Sceptre: Single handed magic weapon. Fast attack speed. Used by magic users. Fires magic projectiles for average damage.

Focus: Off-hand item used by magic users. Channels magic energy to make users magic more powerful.

Kunai: Throwing knives. Very fast attack speed. Can be treated to deal different types of damage.

Armour

Heavy Armour: Usually used by warriors. Provides very high defence, at the cost of mobility and magic abilities. The rarer the metal they are made of the better the armour gets. Example, iron is a standard low-grade armour, but steel is stronger.

Medium Armour: Usually used by rogues or assassins. Average defence. Mobility and magic are only slightly hindered. Different leathers make stronger armours.

Light Armour: Usually used by magic users. Provides very little defence. Allows for greater movement and does not hinder magic abilities at all.

Miscellaneous Items

Health potions: Restore users health.

Mana potions: Restore users mana.

Stamina potions: Restores users stamina.

Poison: Adds a temporary poison effect to weapons.

Fire oil: Allows weapon projectiles to be set alight to deal fire damage.

Torch: Goes in off-hand. Lights up dark areas.

Bomb crystals: Magic crystals which can explode if shattered and dealing different types of elemental damage.

Runes: Can be enchanted by magic users and then applied to weapons to give them a permanent elemental effect.

Story Overview

Game will take place in a fantasy world by the name of Kaitsu, with many characteristics of old Asian countries. World will be a war torn world, where three races have been locked in battle for nearing three centuries. The reason for fighting will vary from the opinion of each race, but the common element being that three centuries ago, someone trespassed in the halls of the gods, and broke the balance of the land, damaging it's abundance of magic by breaking the magic lay lines, and causing the gods to turn their gaze from the land forever. The three warring races will be humans, Elves, and Sheruk. A fourth race that will be found in every army will be the Draelon, a mysterious humanoid dragon species that appeared as a side-effect to the distortion of magic in the world. Each member of this race will have a dragon bound to them. They will be the only race involved in the war that does not have a definitive allegiance.

The player character will be a member of a small village in an out of the way area, nestled deep in a large mountain range. Life will be turned upside down, when war comes to their village, and destroys everything. Player character will find out in this chaos, that they have magic potential, which is extremely rare, and the driving force of the war. Soon after escaping the village, the player character will stumble across their first companion, an elf that needed help, and travels with the player character out curiosity and a need to repay their help. They player will then stumble across a Sheruk, who will accompany the player character, after they free them from a slaver. Sheruk and elves have a particular hatred for each other, and this will cause conflict in the party, and will require the Player characters attention to stabilise. The fourth companion will be a Draelon, who speaks seldom and follows the player, because they feel that they are 'destined to'.

The story will heavily revolve around character progression, as the mismatched group of companions get to know each other, and about each of their races. As their journey progresses, they will stumble upon evidence of what transpired three centuries ago. This will lead them to attempting to solve the truth behind what really happened, and who was truly responsible. This will bring them to attempt to try and make the world leaders of each race see reason, and eventually an end to the war. However, their job will be made much more difficult, by an evil entity called a Voidling, which has orchestrated the war from the very beginning, and goes out of its way to silence them. This evil entity is not belonging to any race, but is the reason magic has faded from the world, and why the gods have abandoned the people of Kaitsu. Player and companions will be the leading force to stop this evil, and attempt to bring an end to war in their ravaged world.

Game Progression

The game will begin with the player creating their character and starting in a small village in a large and usually quiet mountain range. The village will be quite simplistic with basic wooden houses and their own crops, and will convey to the player how uninvolved it has been with war. The player will be given the basic controls of gameplay and familiarised with some of the world's lore through conversation with NPCs. Player will be introduced to combat and basic party mechanics at this stage in the game by fighting wild animals with a friend from the village. When the player has learned all the basics, the village will get caught up in a battle because of the war. When fighting for their life, the player character will see their friend killed in front of them and the emotional strain will trigger the player character to unlock their magic potential. Their sudden use of magic allows them to escape the village alive. The player will be forced to leave the village alone, as their character's friends and family will have been killed. The skies will be smoke covered as the village is left burning behind the player character.

After spending a night alone, the player will stumble across Lysa, an elf and the player's first companion, who will be injured. The player will offer her aid. This will be the player's first opportunity to earn allegiance with another race. If the player chooses to remain civil or friendly to Lysa, they will gain allegiance with the elves. Gaining allegiance will affect the end game, so the player's choices here will affect the game's story later.

After another day of travelling and getting to know Lysa, the player and Lysa will come upon a group of slavers, delivering their 'merchandise' to a prospective buyer. Lysa becomes infuriated, and wishes to help. This will provide the player with another opportunity to earn allegiance with the elves, by sharing Lysa's views, and getting up to help. The player can choose to help voluntarily, or run after Lysa who will charge the slavers out of anger at the player if they say they won't help. After defeating the slavers, the player and Lysa free the slaves.

One of the slaves is a Sheruk called Kirshval. Lysa will be against freeing him, due to her hatred of Sheruk, but the player will be obliged to anyway, since they will have freed the other slaves already. It's at this point that Kirshval will offer a life-debt to the player for freeing them, and wishes to accompany them on their travels to fulfil his debt. The player can graciously accept Kirshval's companionship or agree with Lysa, and say no. Kirshval will follow either way, but if the player agrees to Kirshval coming along, allegiance will be lost with the elves, but gained with the Sheruk. If the player says no, Sheruk allegiance is lost, and elven allegiance is gained. This occurs so the player can now get a feel for consequences of their interactions with the world, and will teach the player that people have different views and opinions, and it will be up to the player to make, what they feel, is their best decision.

As the player and their companions reach the edge of the large mountain range, they will be ambushed by a very large group of slavers and bandits who are out to get them for their interference with the slavers a few days previous. The sheer number of enemies will be unmanageable for the player to defeat at this stage. It is at this point that a dragon will fly over-head and burn most of the enemies from above. A Draelon will drop from its back, and assist the player

fight the enemies that are immediately surrounding them. After the fight the Draelon will introduce himself as Talon. He will request to accompany the player as he believes it is his destiny to help him. At this point the player will unlock the ability to fast travel to landmarks that they have been to already, by using Talon's dragon, Kevalth.

Game play will now become more open for the player as they will be given access to the whole world of Kaitsu. The player character's new sensitivity to magic will now give them dreams to help guide the player. They will have a dream of old ruins and some landmarks near the ruins. The player character will feel compelled to find these ruins, and will head to the main city of Kaitsu, Leireng. This is the only neutral city in the game, and will be a very large, crowded city with all of the races interacting with each other. It will be in Leireng the player will look for information to figure out where their dream showed them. The player will work their way to this ruin, while doing side-quests that can help them gain allegiance for the different races.

The ruin will show the player evidence that it was not any member of the warring races that disrupted the hall of the Gods, but a nameless evil entity. This discovery brings the player's mismatched group together with a common goal, to find proof and stop the fighting amongst the races.

At this point of the game, the player must choose what to do and when to do it. The main story will progress as the player gathers proof of the evil committed three centuries. The player will be faced with many choices throughout the game. Some will be minor and will affect what factions they will gain allegiance with, while others will affect the lives of critical NPCs, and how they view the player character.

When the player has gathered proof, the time will come for them to approach the leaders of the races. How well this will go will be determined by how the player managed the allegiance gain and loss for the races. Each race will have unique situations and will react differently depending on how high the player's allegiance is with them. While the player character will be a human, the human emperor will be a corrupt person, and unwilling to cooperate, which will lead to a diplomatic approach to gain a new successor to the throne to help fight the evil feeding of the lands magic. For the other races, the player will have to sort out conflicts arising from their companions who follow them, providing the world leaders will listen to them.

Upon gaining all the evidence that the player requires, Talon will guide the player to Frelchek, an oracle of his people. Frelchek will provide more information about the way of the world, and what needs to be done, such as allying the warring races.

Lysa will be a runaway from the family of the elven leaders, and the player will have to work with Lysa to gain their favour and help.

Kirshval will be an outcast of the Sheruk, having decided he no longer wanted to fight in a never ending war. He will have once been close to the leaders of the Sheruk people, and he and the player will need to gain their allegiance.

As a group, the player and their companions will need to work and solving the problems among the human's and gain their allegiance through various means. The player can gain aid from Shiro, but at the cost of both races. Tatsuo can usurper the throne, and aid the player, but the human's military force will not be as strong.

The player can choose what races to approach when, keeping in mind that gaining alliance with one race will lower allegiance with the others, so the player will be forced to approach certain groups differently and under different situations.

Once all the races have given their decision on whether or not to ally themselves with each other, the Voidling will start to make itself known to others, and will start a war against the land with dark magical creations. The player will be made lead commander of whatever army they have, and be given a series of various tasks to complete, such as helping different people and fighting certain battles. The player's decisions on what they prioritise will affect the game outcome.

User Interface

System Menus

Main Menu

The main menu will present the player with a dynamic background of the various pre-rendered landscapes from in game locations, and in game region defined background music. The title of the game will be overlaid in the middle of the screen followed by 4 menu options hovering below; “Continue”, “New Game”, “Options”, and “Quit”. These 4 menu options will take on a brushed or painted aesthetic similar the overall artistic theme of the game. The player may highlight each individual menu option shown through a unique sound effect, animation and colour change.

While in each submenu, unless stated otherwise, there will be a “Return” button to return the player to the previous menu, and an “Accept” button to confirm their selections. These buttons will follow the same aesthetic as the menu options and will be positioned at the bottom of each submenu. When any button or option is selected a short sound effect will play confirming the player’s selection. There may be shortcut keys used instead of the return or accept buttons to speed up menu interaction.

Continue

The continue button will be greyed out if no save files are present. Otherwise, when selected, the player will be presented with a transparent window titled “Continue” allowing them to select a save file to load. Each save file will be represented by a small screenshot of the players POV when they saved their game. This image will take on an oil painting effect with light brown undertones to emphasis the feeling of an older era. Beside each image will show information of the save file such as the save file name, play time and date and time saved.

There will be no accept button below this submenu as it is implied when the player selects their desired save file. When a save file is selected, the screen will be darkened and another transparent interface will be overlaid, prompting the player to confirm their selection. The options “Confirm” and “Cancel” will be presented and function identically to the accept and return buttons.

New Game

When New Game is selected the player will be presented with a transparent window titled “New Game” prompting them to select their desired difficulty. The difficulties “Easy”, “Normal” and “Hard” should be available from the beginning as to not limit veterans of the Action Adventure RPG genre and those who would like to start with a challenge, while keeping the game accessible to newcomers and casual players. Before any difficulty is selected the accept button will be greyed out and cannot be selected. When a difficulty is selected, a unique sound effect should play and an outline should be displayed around the selected difficulty. The player can then select the accept button to continue to the next window.

After selecting accept, the previous window will disappear and the player will be prompted with another transparent window, requesting a character name. This will be the name used for the player’s character and cannot be changed after their name is confirmed. The possible input characters for the player name will be dependent on local supported region (English, Japanese etc.). If an invalid name is entered the player will be asked to re-enter their name, otherwise they will be

prompted to confirm their desired name with the buttons “Accept” and “Cancel”. If Accept is selected, the game itself will start.

Quit

When Quit is selected, the screen will be darkened and the player will be prompted with a transparent window inquiring if the player is sure that they want to exit the game. The options “Quit Game” and “I’ve Changed My Mind” should be available for the player to select. If the player selects quit game, the game application will close. Otherwise the player will be returned to the Main Menu.

Options Menu

When options is selected the Main Menu will fade into a new menu, similar to the main menu, with the options “Audio”, “Video” and “Controls”. This menu will have the same functional aesthetics as the Main Menu.

Audio

When the player selects the audio option, the menu will fade into a new menu displaying “Music Volume”, “SFX Volume” and “Speech Volume” options on the left side of the screen. There will be a slider bar corresponding to each option, depicting their levels; a full bar being maximum volume and an empty bar being no volume. While no changes have been made to the options, the accept button will be greyed out and un-selectable. When Changes have been made the accept button will become selectable, and once selected, will save any changes and return to the options menu. If changes have been made and the player selects return, they will be prompted with a transparent window asking if they would like to save their changes with the options of “yes” and “no”. Otherwise if no changes were made, the return button will simply return the player to the options menu.

Video

The video submenu will work identically to the audio submenu, displaying various options on the left side of the screen such as “Resolution”, “Texture Quality”, “Subtitles” and etc. as appropriate. Each option will have appropriate sliders or options such as “Low”, “Medium” and “High” or “On” and “Off” etc.

Controls

The controls submenu will work identically to the video and audio submenus, displaying actions on the left side of the screen such as “Jump”, “Attack” and etc. with the associated key on the right side. Each key can be edited by selecting the key the player wants to edit and pressing their desired key for that action, and if using a controller, key mapping will adapt to the input device (PS3 controller, PS4 controller, XBOX controller etc.)

Heads Up Display

Each HUD element (except for the navigation bar, to sport clarity) will adopt the same aesthetic as the Main menu with brush painted styles and Chinese influence while the player character is human. To enhance fidelity when the player swaps control to other party members, depending on their race, the HUD look and feel will be altered through artistic change.

When the player swaps out from a Human party member, the brushed paint on each HUD element fades away. When the player swaps into a human party member, the brushed design paints in again through a painting animation.

When the player swaps into a Sheruk party member, bone shards grow onto the HUD elements. When the player swaps out from a Sheruk party member; the bone shards crack and break away.

When the player swaps into an Elf party member, native Japanese or Chinese flowers and foliage grow onto the HUD elements. When the player swaps out from an Elf party member, the flowers foliage wither away.

When the player swaps into a Draelon party member, the HUD elements are engulfed in red or blue flames (If animated HUD elements turn out to be too distracting, a scale design may be more suitable). When the player swaps out from a Draelon party member, the flames are extinguished or the scales brake off and vanish.

This aspect of the HUD design furthers expressive play for the player, incorporating the HUD with their preferred character(s) and furthermore preferred playstyle.

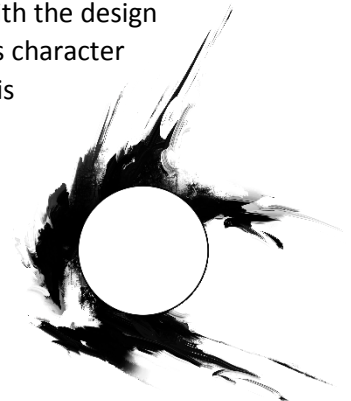
Navigation Bar

The navigation bar will reside in the top centre of the screen, unchanged by character swapping with a universal design. It will feature 5 selectable options: “Character Screen”, “Skills”, “World Map”, “Quest Log” and “Options”. Each of these options may be accessed through hotkeys, or if using a controller, a single key will bring up a menu with identical options.

Player Portrait

The Player portrait will sit at the bottom left had side of the screen, with the design adapting to character swapping. Inside a bounding circle will show the player’s character portrait, while beside it may show indicators such as ailments (poison, paralysis etc.) and a visual indicator informing the player if he is being targeted by an enemy.

Either above or below this data, the player’s current total gold (currency) will be displayed, with a floating + value or – value appearing briefly when the player acquires, loses or spends gold, adjusting their total gold value.



An example of what the human variation of the player portrait *may* look like

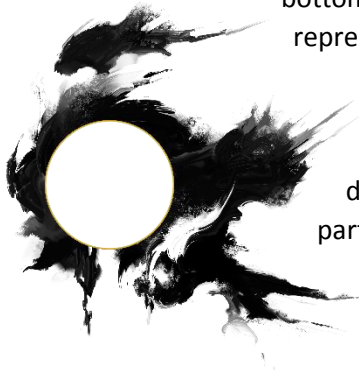
Party HUD

The party HUD will be positioned at the left hand side of the screen and will adapt with character swapping. This section of the HUD will be modular, with parts added and removed as characters join or leave the party. Each character here may have unique designs to distinguish them from one another, Similar to the HUD swap designs, but will otherwise function in the same way as the player portrait. In addition, there will be 3 visual bars beside each portrait to represent the characters current and maximum health (hit points), mana (arcane magic points) and stamina (energy or fatigue).

If a party member is defeated at any point, the HUD element will be greyed out and covered with red paint streaks.

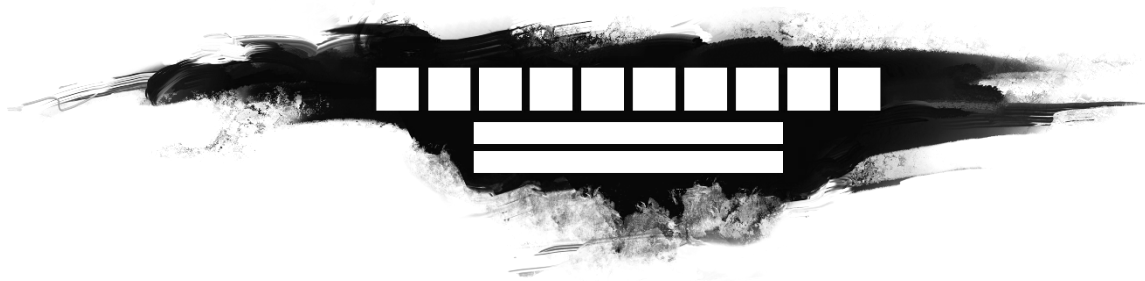
Mini Map

The mini map element, with an adaptable design to character swapping, will be placed at the bottom right of the screen and will display an indicator in the centre representing the character currently controlled by the player. An indicator representing north will gyrate around a circle relative to the camera angle to help the help with orientation. In the immediate vicinity, hostile characters will be represented on the map by red dots, yellow will represent neutral characters and green will represent party members. To further help the player remain fully aware of his/her location in the world, the map may be enlarged to a much bigger, transparent map taking up the centre of the screen.



An example of what the human version of the map *may* look like.

Skill bar



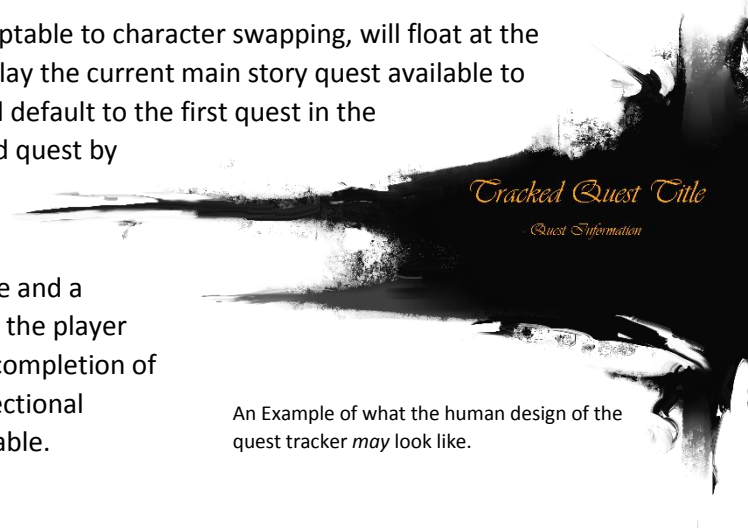
An example of what the base hot bar/skill bar *may* look like with a human character (missing a segment for stamina).

The skill bar element, which again the design will be adaptable to character swapping, will be positioned in the middle bottom of the screen, closer to the player's centre of vision as this displays key information that is vital in combat. The skill bar may hold 10 skills/items/spells relevant to the current controlled character, which may be added and rearranged through the skills menu. Under these skills, there will be up to 3 bars indicating the current and maximum health, mana and stamina through visuals and number representations.

Quest Tracker

The quest tracker, being the final element adaptable to character swapping, will float at the top right of the screen. By default this section will display the current main story quest available to the player. If no story quest is currently available it will default to the first quest in the quest log. The player may manually change the tracked quest by navigating to the quest log and selecting a quest to track.

The tracker will display the tracked quest's title and a short description of what the player must do or where the player must go. This information will dynamically update on completion of specific parts. The tracked quest will also display a directional indicator on the mini map to guide the player if applicable.



An Example of what the human design of the quest tracker *may* look like.

In-Game Interface

The in-game menus will be used mainly to further develop the player's characters and party, further evolving their expression and personal choice in relation to their world and story. Each menu may be accessed through a hotkey, or through the navigation bar.

Character Screen

The character screen should be extremely intuitive yet present the player with a variety of options and functions, most likely being the most accessed menu in the game. The core elements of this menu will incorporate an inventory, equip menu, character viewer and character statistics. While HUD elements change with each character, so will the character screen aesthetic similarly change, while not cluttering the menu or confusing the player.

When the character screen is opened, the background will be the current point of view of the camera, converted to a faded oil painting effect with light brown undertones; as to not overwhelm the important functions and visuals of the menu itself.

The inventory will be laid out on right hand side of the screen, being a grid of variable size, and the grid's size is dictated through the character's equipped backpack/storage compartment. Items are represented as squared off images in each compartment of the grid. Other party member's inventories may be accessed through tabs floating above the inventory grid, and items may be moved to other characters by selecting the item and dragging it to the desired character's tab.

Items may be equipped by selecting the desired item and dragging it over to the equip menu. The equip menu will be represented by segregated boxes surrounding the character viewer, which will be slightly off-centre. There will be equipment boxes for each article that the character may wear such as headgear, torso, leggings, boots, gloves, rings, braces and etc. Each box will be identifiable by a faded squared off image of default armour or accessories (e.g. the headgear slot may have a generic hat or helmet).

The character viewer will display the current character standing upright in a default stance with all equipped items. This character representation may be rotated by selecting the character in the viewer and dragging left or right.

When hovering over any item, a dialog box will be overlaid beside the item displaying relevant information on that item. For example a sword would display the damage per hit, attacks per second, type of damage and any other extra effects; while an armour piece would display an effectiveness rating, kinds of damage blocked/not blocked and any extra effects.

The bottom of this menu will display a pseudo skill bar, where the player may drag in items or consumables to be used more quickly and fluently as the character screen will not be accessible in combat.

To the left hand side of the menu, the current characters statistics will be displayed as a quick reference. This stats will calculate the character's health, damage per second, critical hit chance, energy, mana and health recovery per second, armour ratings and etc. with his/her current equipment. Above this the character's name will be displayed with his/her level.

The character screen may be exited by selecting a "Return to Game" button at the bottom of the menu, or by using a hotkey equivalent to escape.

Skills

When the skills menu is opened, the background will be the current point of view of the camera, converted to a faded oil painting effect with light brown undertones; exactly as the character screen is back dropped.

The skill menu will take two main sections, a skill picker and a pseudo skill bar. The skill picker will occupy the majority of the screen, while the skill bar will be positioned at the bottom of the screen, in the same position that it would normally lie. Above the skill picker there will be tabs representing each party member and a number representing the currently selected character's level, with a golden bar aside representing the character's current experience and experience required to level up.

The skill picker will contain tabs for each skill; "Destructive Arcane Magic", "Restoration Arcane Magic", "One-Handed Weapons", "Two-Handed Weapons", "Light Armour", "Medium Armour", "Heavy Armour", "Archery", "Speech", "Stealth" and "Survival". When any of these tabs are selected, a relevant tree progression archetype is displayed for the skill. In each tree two types of skills may be learned using character levels, passive and active skills. Active skills, when learned, may be selected and dragged onto the pseudo skill bar to be used in game. There will be a return button at the bottom of skill tab to return to the skill picker, and a "Return to Game" button at the bottom of the skills menu.

World Map

When the World Map is opened, a scroll will roll out taking up the entire screen with a painted map of the entire province of Kaitsu. On the right hand side of the screen, there will be a button to display the map key with symbol representations of towns, markers, NPCs, camps, transport and trade routes, caravans, traders, guilds and any other important or relevant locations and events. On the key, there will be a button to hide the key.

The map will have the regions of each race colour coded, with corresponding allegiance bars positioned at the top of the map. Each allegiance bar will have an animated visual representation as well as a percentage representation beside the bar depicting the fondness that race generally has towards humans/the player's main character, 50% being neutrality.

Locations and most markers will not be visible to the player until he/she has already explored that area or the event/location is near enough to the player.

Quest Log

The Quest log design and animation will be similar to the World map, embracing small differences in scroll design. There will be four sections to the quest log itself; "Current Quests", "Bonus Quests", "Completed Quests" and "Failed Quests". Each section will be titled with large bold painted writing, with each of their contents sorted with brushed bullet points. Each quest will have a selectable title, which when selected, will dropdown the relevant quest information. Selecting the title again or selecting another title will hide the dropdown information for that quest. Like the quest tracker, this information dynamically updates on completion of specific parts.

Current quests or bonus quests may be tracked by selecting the track button beside the quest title. Doing this will replace the currently tracked quest.

Current quests will display all ongoing accepted quests, with story quests explicitly labelled as such and sorted to the top of the list.

Bonus quests are temporarily available quests, either found through random events in the world or through exploration of optional and additional locations. These quests will either have a time limit for completion, displayed beside the title, or will vanish once certain areas are left or certain actions are done.

Completed quests will show all non-bonus quests that have been successfully completed, displayed as a greyed out title. The title may still be selected to produce a dropdown of the quest information.

Failed quests display all quests where the player has failed to complete the directions of the quest successfully. The titles of these quests will be struck through with red brushed lines, but like completed quests, these titles may still be selected to produce a dropdown of the quest information.

Options

When opened, the options menu displayed to the player here is identical to the options menu described under the section System Menus, adopting the background of the current point of view of the camera, converted to a faded oil painting effect with light brown undertones.