

Nokizaru

Game Design Document

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Table of Contents

[Brief](#)

[Backstory](#)

[Audience](#)

[Inspirations](#)

[Our Player Character](#)

[Character Progression](#)

[Player Equipment](#)

[Player Abilities](#)

[Enemy Types / Bosses](#)

[Environments](#)

[Mechanics](#)

Brief

Nokizaru (working title) is a ninja-fantasy themed *metroidvania*-esque game. The game will feature one cohesive map, and traversal and progression through this map will be enabled via upgrades. Some rooms / sections of rooms will only be accessible via upgrades that must be obtained later. This means backtracking by the player, made more tolerable both through differences in the environment art, and added mobility from the upgrades/equipment themselves. Players would fight various bosses across a variety of worlds, including a spider overridden village, a flooded fishing town, a palace filled with ghosts, and more.

Backstory

Our ninja hero is an apprentice within a prestigious clan in traditional Japan. ~~Then, everything changed when the Samurai Nation attacked. Now our hero must liberate the attacked dojo from the evil Samurai Emperor and learn the ways to become a ninja master.~~ Demons inexplicably burst into the world, destroying most of the clan and killing its inhabitants. Our hero flees for his own life, with nothing but the clothes on his back...and the rope dart he had been training with. You must fight for your survival, and for the liberation of the people you swore to protect. Kill monsters to gain their abilities, and learn the ways of the ninja through blood and bravery to take back your home!

Audience

Nokizaru is aimed towards the core players that enjoy Metroidvania-esque games. Speedrunning is also supported thanks to a constantly ticking timer. Those with speed and skill will find greater rewards for finishing the game quickly and efficiently.

Inspirations

- **Metroid Fusion:** The classic GBA game where many mechanics and enemy pathing are derived from.
- **Cave Story:** Simple game that highlighted the simplicity of platforming and pixel art.
- **Mark of the Ninja:** Superb platforming and for nailing the “feel” of being a ninja

- Smaller inspirations include *Dust: An Elysian Tail*, *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, *Bionic Commando*, *Okami* and *Ninja Gaiden*.

Our Player Character

- Ninja garb, with slight clues as to player equipment
 - Kunai knives on body, rope dart wrapped around waist or arms/body, etc
- A physics affected scarf to flow behind character would help give a distinct look to them.
- Suit changes color based on “mode,” or would change with acquisition of new player suits from pickups or defeating bosses.
 - Mode would also add particle effect to player. E.g., walking on water adds blue stream behind feet, and stealth adds transparent effect.

Character Progression

Nokizaru uses items and abilities that must be progressively acquired to move forward in the game.

Player Equipment

- **Rope Dart:** The main weapon the player has at his/her disposal from the beginning of the game. This weapon features large arcs around the player and a range attack. This weapon progressively upgrades to allow the player to access areas and fight harder enemies.
 - **Possible Modifications (effects stack or mode switch or different buttons?):**
 - **Hookshot:** Allows the player to grapple onto contextual hooks or enemies. Should allow the player to progress through the game in a more timely manner, as well as provide access to areas previously unavailable to the player. Could take inspiration from Kusarigama for looks.
 - **Disarm:** Removes an item from an opponent forcing them into melee, or perhaps removes the shield from shielded opponents to allow for easier damage with weapon. Could take inspiration from flying claws for looks.
 - **Area of Effect:** Small. Could take inspiration from meteor hammer for looks.

■ Knockdown (Sweep)

- **Shurikens/Kunai:** Player can use this range weapons to provide damage from afar.
- **Bow:** Longer range than shuriken / kunai, but travels in an arc instead of a straight line. Ammunition is also more rare, and it takes some time to draw. Player can provide damage from much longer range, however, and dish out more of it per hit. Can be used as hookshot with upgrade.

Player Abilities

- **Stealth:** Player becomes semi-transparent preventing enemies from seeing the player and allowing players to move through enemies. Activated with a **Smoke Bomb**, or through usage of a specialized “suit,” or through usage of a **Ninjutsu**.
- **Water Walking:** Allows the players to traverse on the water’s surface. Stopping causes the player to sink, but can resume water walking by jumping out of the water. Alternatively, the player can sink by pressing the “Down” button.
- **Ninjutsu:** Allows players to input certain button combinations in a separate mode to summon various powers. Uses a 3 or 4 button combination scheme with **LT** and face buttons. Possible usages include activation of special abilities (instead of the implementation of suits), or special attacks that could provide area of effect damage or knockdowns.
- **Suits:** As an alternative to **Ninjutsu**, the player could acquire different suits a la *Metroid*. The effects of these suits would stack to give the player special capabilities. Different suits would keep different color palettes, each kept distinct from background colours (even though this obviously isn’t “stealthy”).
- **Wall-jump:** Allows player to leap off wall in opposite direction, and between walls for added verticality. Granted at the start?
- **Edge grab:** Allows player to grab onto ledge and pull themselves up. Granted at the start?
- **Double Jump / Wave Jump:** Enables players to use timing/skill for more verticality. More utility than wall-jump, but would be granted later. Granted by control over air.

Enemy Types / Bosses

Giant Kitsune Demon: Large elemental fox with fire attacks. Slow and powerful, straightforward fight. Damage over time to player. Serves as boss to grant fire abilities to player.

- Enemies in this world include fire elementals, salamanders, and similar

- Alternatively, large fire-breathing bird, Onmoraki. Would only have windows of opportunity to hit with more effective rope dart, due to pattern of flight.

Giant Spider Demon: Large arachnid with slowing attacks. Quicker and more acrobatic? Harder to hit? Serves as boss to grant hookshot to player. Juro-Gumo inspiration.

- Enemies in this world include smaller spiders, large bats (maybe), and spider infested humans.

Giant Koi Spirit: Very large Koi spirit. Alternatively, macabre design and large teeth. Jumping attacks that break through the water beneath the player

- Enemies in this world include demons influenced by turtles, crabs, squid, eels, and fish.
- Giant Squid for boss, instead? Multiple tentacles that must be destroyed before attacking eye/head.

Giant Skeleton Demon: Gigantic skeleton occupying the palace throne room.

Alternatively, amalgamation made up of many skeletons/bones that moves almost amorphously. Far bigger than the player, you must destroy pieces and limbs before destroying its skull. Slow and powerful. Serves as boss to grant disarm to player.

Gashadokuro inspiration.

- Enemies in this world include slow-moving skeletons, flying skulls, and ghosts
- Samurai ghost for boss, instead? Fast moving, similar skillset to player? Corrupted ghost of ninja teacher?
 - Jump back and forth between modern fight and sparring flashback

Environments

- Flooded fishing village now filled with hostile ocean life. Player moves through chest high water that slows movement and prevents effective jumping. Crouching is still viable, as are attacks. Fire does not work on underwater creatures, but works if they are above water. Platforms remain out of player's reach until they gain the ability to run on water. Broken planks and destroyed huts define the aesthetics. Include swimming/diving? Air system?
- Burned/charred village now inhabited by fire elementals, like Kechibi (fireballs with faces inside), or flaming lizards/dragons. Fire takes the place of spikes, and rivers of lava flow through certain areas. Heat damage in this area? Thermal suit needed to progress safely?

- A forest village that has been overrun by spiders. Strong walls of web block certain areas from being accessed. After fireballs/fire kunai/fire rope dart are acquired, these webs can be destroyed during subsequent run-thrus of the area. Some webs slow or stop the player, though these also can be burned out later on.
- The Palace is a Japanese palace whose inhabitants have been replaced with vengeful spirits. Skeletons and ghosts abound, along with banshees and other malevolent, supernatural enemies. One of the last places the player visits before engaging with the demon overlord. Also the sensei bossfight in (obviously) a sakura garden.
- On top of the mountain lies the gateway to the demon world, and the source of this scourge that rains down on this land. Destroy it, and bring peace back to your home!

Mechanics

- **Save Points:** Shrines, similar to *Okami*, will be used as save points for the player to safely exit the game and return to later. All shrines are located in separated rooms. Meditating at a shrine replenishes life points and consumables before showing a save prompt.
- **Speedrun Timers:** An internal gameplay stopwatch times the player from start to finish keeping track of items and other activated game flags. Finishing the game under certain conditions results in better or more endings. This mechanic leaves room for friendly competitiveness.

Samurai Block?