

= Shin Megami Tensei : Nine =

Shin Megami Tensei : Nine (Japanese : ? ? ???? NINE , lit . " True Goddess Reincarnation : Nine ") is a Japanese role @-@ playing video game developed by Atlus and NexTech for the Xbox , and published by Atlus on December 5 , 2002 .

Forming part of the Megami Tensei series , Nine takes place in the period of time between Shin Megami Tensei and its sequel , with the survivors of Tokyo 's destruction sheltering in underground bunkers . Taking on the role of a debugger , the player navigates the Idea Space virtual world set up by the survivors of Tokyo 's destruction , which has come under attack by demonic beings called " noise " . The gameplay has the player navigating a customized avatar in third @-@ person through the virtual world of Tokyo , battling enemies using a real @-@ time command @-@ based battle system . The game 's title refers to the number of possible moral alignments available to players .

Shin Megami Tensei : Nine began development in 2001 , following staff discussions about how to make an online Shin Megami Tensei game . It was the first Megami Tensei title for Xbox , and the first to fully utilize 3D graphics . Established Megami Tensei staff worked on the project , such as producer Kouji Okada and demon designer Kazuma Kaneko . Newcomers to the project included character designer Yasuomi Umetsu , and composers Masaki Kurokawa and Takahiro Ogata . While Nine was originally planned as an online game , it was split into single @-@ player and online versions ; the latter was cancelled following development difficulties . The single @-@ player release met with mixed reception from critics , and sold below Atlus ' estimates ; its commercial failure coupled with development costs contributed to a financial loss . Development of the online version continued as a port for Microsoft Windows , which would eventually become Shin Megami Tensei : Imagine .

= = Gameplay = =

Shin Megami Tensei : Nine is a role @-@ playing video game primarily set in a cyberspace version of 1990s Tokyo , with players taking control of the silent main protagonist to explore various environments within Tokyo 's districts , along with switching between different districts with a dedicated fast @-@ travel menu . The player can adjust the protagonist 's name , gender , hair and skin color . Navigation through environments is presented through a third @-@ person perspective , with the player character being followed by one assigned demon . While navigating safe areas , players can enter shops to buy new equipment and items such as healing potions , and change their character 's clothing and hairstyle .

Combat is triggered through random encounters in environments such as dungeons . Combat in Nine plays out as a real @-@ time combat in an enclosed battle arena : while the battle continues automatically without direct interaction from the player , commands can be issued to party members to perform actions when their turn comes . In addition to specific commands , general offensive or defensive stances can be issued . Battles do not reward experience points as in other Megami Tensei games : instead , equipped jewels affect the protagonist 's strengths and stats . As with previous Megami Tensei games , players can negotiate with demons and get them to join their party . Demons can also be fused together to create more powerful demons . The attitudes of demons towards the player changes depending on the current moon phase . The number of demons the player can summon depends on the player 's and the demon 's " kilodevil " values : a player with 100 kilodevil can summon two 50 @-@ kilodevil demons . The player can compress their demons by visiting the Cathedral of Shadows , halving the demons ' kilodevil values and allowing the player to summon more demons .

At certain points in the game , the player also enters a " hacking " mode , which players out in a real @-@ time strategy simulation : the protagonist and their companions navigate within closed arenas along pre @-@ set pathways , knocking out nodes blocking the path , and defending against protection bots attempting to stop them . As the player progresses through the game , the character makes dialogue choices that are mapped across a three @-@ by @-@ three alignment matrix : three " down " (Law , Neutral and Chaos) , and three " across " (Light , Neutral and Dark) . The

protagonist 's current alignment not only influences the story , but also the loyalty and responsiveness of demon party members .

= = Synopsis = =

Nine is set in the year " 202X " , taking place during the latter half of Shin Megami Tensei and in the time leading up to its sequel Shin Megami Tensei II . In the wake of the ICBM attack on Tokyo , communities of survivors now live in underground cities . In the face of their predicament , the underground inhabitants create " Idea Space " , a virtual world based on Tokyo from the 1990s . The protagonist , named Kei Azuma by default , is exploring the virtual world when " Noise " , digitized demons hostile to humans , appear and begin attacking Idea Space players through their avatars . After fending off an attack , Azuma is employed by the Central Administration Bureau as a Debugger , a player who traverses Idea Space and repels Noise invasions . During their missions through Idea Space , Azuma meets with multiple characters : Baraki / Sumire , a childhood friend who represents " Chaos " , Mubiora / Miranda , a representative from the Central Administration Bureau who represents " Law " . While going through their duty as a Debugger , the events of the latter half of Shin Megami Tensei take place , which culminate in all parts of Tokyo being destroyed in a Great Flood triggered by the God @-@ worshipping Order of Messiah : Azuma survives due to their body being in cold storage , meaning that their mind becomes linked to Idea Space along with their Law and Chaos allies .

During a mission into the virtual Shibuya 109 against the Noise demon Abaddon , the true origins of Idea Space are revealed . Idea Space was created by humans tired of awaiting the arrival of their " Messiah " in the real world : hoping to bring about salvation through technology , the humans created the Idea Space , and generated Maria as its goddess and administrator to further the creation of Millennial Kingdom by manipulating its users . On their mission into Shibuya 109 , Azuma retrieves a Desire Disc , an artifact containing the saved desires of humanity that is the key to both side 's plans . Azuma is faced with choices about which faction to support . The Law faction , supported by Maria , wishes to bring peace to humanity along with releasing the Idea Space 's inhabitants . The Chaos faction , which can be led by Lucifer if he is freed from his prison within a metaphysical plain called the Expanse , intends to destroy the inhabitants of Idea Space and start anew with the chosen Adam and Eve : Azuma and the Chaos companion . To fulfill any of their chosen roles , Azuma must defeat Yaldabaoth , the controller of Idea Space who is keeping the system going and will not allow either Maria or Lucifer to carry out their plans .

In both the Law and Chaos routes , with the defeat of the Yaldabaoth , the entire Idea Space is emptied of avatars besides Azuma . Upon returning to the real world , they are on the surface with either their Law or Chaos companion , with the Messian @-@ built Tokyo Millennium in the background : depending on the alignment , Azuma either goes to reinforce the Law @-@ based regime , or to begin a new Chaos @-@ based humanity outside it . In the " Neutral " routes , Azuma performs tasks for a mysterious woman minding a store in Idea Space : the woman is the goddess Sophia , who was forced to reincarnate as a human for the sin of birthing Yaldabaoth : she has been helping Azuma towards defeating Yaldabaoth to atone for her sin and ascend . Azuma defeats both Yaldabaoth and Maria , allowing Sophia to become her true self and ascend , leaving the fate of those within Idea Space ambiguous .

= = Development = =

Shin Megami Tensei : Nine was primarily developed by Atlus , the main developer for the Megami Tensei series . The game received additional development help from NexTech , a company that would later be rebranded as Nex Entertainment and work on games such as Shining Soul and Children of Mana . The game 's CGI cutscenes were developed with help from Frameworks Entertainment . Nine was produced by long @-@ time Megami Tensei producer Kouji Okada , directed by Kazunori Sakai , and written by Nobutaka Shimizu . Kazuma Kaneko , a regular designer for the series , returned to design new demons for the title . Many of them , such as the character

Maria , proved challenging for him due to his past work mainly involving creating depictions of God and Lucifer as opposed to goddess @-@ like figures . He also found making them move convincingly in the new 3D environment problematic . Kaneko suggested that a new artist be brought on as a collaborator on the project , so Yasuomi Umetsu was hired to design the game 's main characters . This was part of an attempt to distinguish Nine from previous Megami Tensei games .

The concept for Nine originated during staff discussions about how Shin Megami Tensei would work as an online title . Development started at some point in 2001 , and was still in its early stages of development in October of that year . During its early stages , the game was known as Shin Megami Tensei Online . Although the team had the option of making NINE an online @-@ exclusive title , Okada wanted a single @-@ player mode to introduce players to the workings and world of the game . A part of the planned online component was teaming up with or fighting different players depending on their alignment . Nine is not the ninth game in Shin Megami Tensei series ; the title refers to the number of moral alignments that are available in the Shin Megami Tensei games . The decision to create a nine @-@ tiered alignment system was because Okada wanted to explore the original game 's moral alignments in more detail . This was also the reason why the game was set between Shin Megami Tensei and its sequel . The setting was directly based on Tokyo 's Shinjuku , Shibuya and Ikebukuro districts . The game was the first Megami Tensei title developed for the Xbox ; the first to switch over to a third @-@ person camera perspective from the first @-@ person perspectives of earlier Megami Tensei titles ; the first to feature a customizable player avatar ; and one of the first of Atlus ' titles to fully utilize 3D graphics , something previously accomplished to a lesser degree by Maken X for the Dreamcast and its PlayStation 2 (PS2) successor Maken Shao : Demon Sword . Okada described the development process as " challenging " , with developing the new real @-@ time battle system being a large part of that challenge . Two prevalent issues were adjusting the balance of the battle system , and incorporating the second tactical system for the hacking segments .

The game 's sound and music were handled by Takahiro Ogata , Masaki Kurokawa and Kenichi Tsuchiya : Ogata acted as sound director . To accurately create the sound of modern @-@ day Tokyo within Nine , Ogata and Kurokawa went to districts such as Kichijoji and Roppongi to make recordings of ambient sounds at different times of day . While there was a general theme for various city districts , the music subtly changed depending on the player 's overall alignment : for instance , to represent the Law and Chaos alignments in the game , piano was used for the former and guitar for the latter . Battle music also featured randomly @-@ generated soundtrack variations , with Ogata estimating somewhere over three hundred possible variants on battle themes . A major improvement enabled by the Xbox was the use of 5 @.@ 1 surround sound , which could enable richer use of both music and in @-@ game sound effects . According to Okada , this additional sound capacity would compensate for what could not be managed at a visual level . Maken X had already given the team a chance to use 3D sound , but Nine was the first title to make major use of 5 @.@ 1 , and implementing it alongside all the other features proved a challenge for the team .

= = Release = =

Nine was originally announced in August 2001 under the title Shin Megami Tensei Online . Originally rumored to be for the PS2 , its announced features included use of voice recognition and online broadband services . These features would later be clarified as being planned for online implementation rather than in development . After a long period of media silence , its official title was announced in February 2002 . Nine was heavily promoted at multiple Japanese gaming events throughout 2002 . The game released on December 5 , 2002 : it was celebrated with an official launch event attended by Okada and Kaneko . A Deluxe Edition released simultaneously with the standard edition , containing a figurine of Maria and a keycard related to accessing online content . The game was later re @-@ released as part of Microsoft 's Platinum Collection budget collection on October 23 , 2003 . A novelization , written by Takumi Miyajima and with a cover illustration by Kaneko , was published by Fujimi Shobo on March 25 , 2003 . A comics anthology was released by

Enterbrain on March 24 .

After the 2002 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) , it was stated by Atlus that while the small size of the game 's online component did not rule out a Western release , Atlus themselves were unable to finance a dedicated server and other companies such as Microsoft were unlikely to provide such funding . The following year at E3 2003 , Atlus responded with " no comment " when asked whether Nine would see a Western release . In 2006 , Atlus stated that there were no plans to bring Nine overseas , with their focus being on newer Megami Tensei titles .

The online functions planned for Nine were intended to be incorporated from release , but in August 2002 , Atlus announced that they would divide the game in two parts : one stand @-@ alone offline version , and one online version . The reason given for this was that the development team did not have enough time to integrate all online functions they wanted to include in the game , and that Atlus did not want to delay the game 's release . Atlus planned to release the online version in 2002 , but put development on hold due to the high costs of developing an online game , and postponed the release until 2003 . In August 2003 , they announced that they no longer had any plans to publish the online version for Xbox , due to problems relating to network @-@ based development and the profitability of online games . With the cancellation of the Xbox Live version , development continued on a version of Nine for Microsoft Windows personal computers (PCs) . This version formed the base for what would become Shin Megami Tensei : Imagine , a massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing game for PCs developed by Cave and released in Japan and Western regions across 2007 and 2009 .

= = Reception = =

Despite the heavy promotion it received , upon release the game only reached # 18 in the Dengeki charts with initial sales of 14 @,@ 000 units . Its sales continued to fall and within three weeks the game had dropped out of the Dengeki Top 50 . By the end of the year , Nine had sold just over 30 @,@ 000 . According to Atlus , the game 's sales by the end of the 2002 @-@ 2003 fiscal year had reached 45 @,@ 000 units : this fell below their planned sales number of 67 @,@ 000 units . In May , Atlus announced that the development costs and poor sales of Xbox games , including Nine , had resulted in a financial loss for that year .

The four reviewers for Famitsu gave it respective scores of 9 , 8 , 7 and 7 . On the positive side , demon fusion and negotiation being cited as " addictive " , and two of the reviewers lauded the shift into 3D graphics . On the negative side , aspects of the battle system was seen as convoluted or confusing , while other elements such as a confusing interface and the conspicuous lack of online functions brought the experience down . One reviewer also noted that the game was geared towards those who had already played Shin Megami Tensei . RPGFan 's John McCarrol was positive in his early preview despite not knowing much about the promised online functions , saying that despite some bland visuals Nine promised to be " one of the best Xbox games released in Japan and possibly North America " . Kurt Kalata and Christopher J. Snelgrove , writing for gaming website Hardcore Gaming 101 , had mixed feelings about the title , finding its visuals dull and gameplay system unimpressive . Due to the ultimate lack of online functionality , they also commented that Nine felt " weirdly incomplete " , saying that it was " not really worth tracking down " for series fans .