= Megami Tensei =

Megami Tensei (Japanese : ???? , often translated as " Rebirth of the Goddess ") , commonly abbreviated as MegaTen (????) and marketed overseas as Shin Megami Tensei (originally Revelations) , is a Japanese media franchise created by Kouji Okada (credited as Cozy Okada in English) , Ginichiro Suzuki , and Kazunari Suzuki . It is primarily developed by Atlus and currently owned by Sega . The first entry in the series , Digital Devil Story : Megami Tensei , was released in 1987 and its success spawned one sequel , and later multiple subseries that form part of the Megami Tensei franchise . Aside from role @-@ playing games , the series includes examples of multiple genres such as tactical role @-@ playing , action role @-@ playing , and massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing . The first two titles in the series were published by Bandai Namco (then Namco) , but have been almost always published by Atlus in Japan and North America since the release of Shin Megami Tensei . For Europe , Atlus publishes the games through third @-@ party companies .

The series was originally based on Digital Devil Story , a science fiction novel series by Aya Nishitani . The series takes its name from the first book 's subtitle . Most Megami Tensei titles are stand @-@ alone entries with their own stories and characters . Recurring elements include plot themes , a story shaped by player choices , and game mechanics , the most notable being the ability to fight using and often recruit creatures (Demons , Persona) to aid the player in battle . Elements of multiple philosophies and religions , occultism , cyberpunk and early science fiction have all been incorporated into the series at different times .

Most of the early titles have not been localized , originally due to heavy religious influences then taboo in western video games . While not maintaining as high a profile as series such as Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest , it is highly popular in Japan and maintains a strong following in the west , finding critical and commercial success . Since the release of Shin Megami Tensei : Nocturne in 2003 , the Shin Megami Tensei moniker has been attached to most entries in the west to help with marketing . The series has become well known for its artistic direction , challenging gameplay , and music . The series has equally raised controversy over its mature content , dark themes , and use of Christian religious imagery . Additional media includes manga adaptations , and anime films and TV series .

= = Titles = =

= = = Games = = =

The first installment in the franchise , Digital Devil Story : Megami Tensei , was released on September 11 , 1987 . The following entries have nearly always been unrelated to each other except in carrying over thematic and gameplay elements . The Megami Tensei games , and the later Shin Megami Tensei titles form the core of the series , while other subseries such as Persona and Devil Summoner are spin @-@ offs marketed as part of the franchise . There are also stand @-@ alone spin @-@ off titles .

= = = = Main series = = = =

Two entries have been released for the Famicom : Digital Devil Story : Megami Tensei in 1987 , and Digital Devil Story : Megami Tensei II in 1990 . The two titles are unrelated to each other in terms of story , and each introduced the basic gameplay and story mechanics that would come to define the series . Two entries were released for the Super Famicom : Shin Megami Tensei in 1992 , and Shin Megami Tensei II in 1994 .

After a nine @-@ year gap , Shin Megami Tensei III : Nocturne was released in 2003 for the PlayStation 2 . Its Maniax Edition director 's cut was released in Japan and North America in 2004 , and in Europe in 2005 . The numeral was dropped for its North American release , and its title

changed to Shin Megami Tensei : Lucifer 's Call in Europe . The next entry , Shin Megami Tensei : Strange Journey , was released for the Nintendo DS in 2009 in Japan and 2010 in North America . Shin Megami Tensei IV for the Nintendo 3DS was released in 2013 in Japan and North America , and a year later in Europe as a digital @-@ only release . Another game set in the same universe , Shin Megami Tensei IV : Apocalypse , was released for the 3DS in February 2016 in Japan .

In addition to the main series , three Shin Megami Tensei spin @-@ off games exist . The first is Shin Megami Tensei If ... , released in the same year and on the same system as Shin Megami Tensei II . The second , Shin Megami Tensei : Nine , was released for the Xbox in 2002 . Originally designed as a massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing game (MMORPG) , it was later split into a dual single @-@ player and multiplayer package , and the single @-@ player version released first . The online version was delayed and eventually cancelled as the developers could not manage the required online capacities using Xbox Live . A true MMORPG , Shin Megami Tensei : Imagine , was released for Microsoft Windows in 2007 in Japan , 2008 in North America , and 2009 in Europe . Western service was terminated in 2014 when Marvelous USA , the game 's then @-@ handlers , shut down their PC Online game department . Its Japanese service is set to end in May 2016 .

= = = = Persona = = = =

Persona is the largest and most popular spin @-@ off from the Megami Tensei series . The first entry in the series , Megami Ibunroku Persona (originally released overseas as Revelations : Persona) was released in 1996 in Japan and North America . The first Persona 2 title , Innocent Sin , was released in 1999 in Japan . The second game , Eternal Punishment , was released in 2000 in Japan and North America . Persona 3 was released in 2006 in Japan , 2007 in North America , and 2008 in Europe . Its sequel , Persona 4 , was released in 2008 in Japan and North America , and in 2009 in Europe . A sixth entry in the series , Persona 5 , is scheduled for release in 2016 in Japan and 2017 in North America . In addition to the main Persona games are spin @-@ offs , so far focused on Persona 3 and 4 : the canon spin @-@ off Persona Q : Shadow of the Labyrinth , two fighting games Persona 4 Arena and its sequel Arena Ultimax , and rhythm game Persona 4 : Dancing All Night . While Persona 3 and 4 used the Shin Megami Tensei moniker , it was dropped for the Persona 4 Arena duology and Persona 4 Golden as it would have made the titles too long to be practical .

= = = = Other spin @-@ offs = = = =

Aside from Persona , there are other spin @-@ off series covering multiple genres . After the release of Shin Megami Tensei II , Atlus began focusing work on building spin @-@ offs and subseries that would form part of the Megami Tensei franchise . The Devil Summoner subseries began in 1995 with the release of Shin Megami Tensei : Devil Summoner . It was followed by Devil Summoner : Soul Hackers in 1997 , and two prequels set in 1920s Tokyo and revolving around demon summoner Raidou Kuzunoha : Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Soulless Army and Raidou Kuzunoha vs. King Abaddon .
Shortly after Nocturne 's release , a duology titled Digital Devil Saga (Digital Devil Saga : Avatar Tuner in Japan) was created based around similar systems to Nocturne , and was also intended as a more accessible gaming experience . Two tactical role @-@ playing games have been developed by Atlus for the DS under the Devil Survivor moniker : the original Devil Survivor and Devil Survivor 2 . Both have received expanded ports for the 3DS . Other subseries include Last Bible , Devil Children and Majin Tensei . Two notable stand @-@ alone spin @-@ offs are Jack Bros. , and Tokyo Mirage Sessions ? FE , a crossover with Intelligent Systems ' Fire Emblem series .

= = = Related media = = =

Several titles in the franchise have received anime and manga adaptations : Persona 3 received

both a four @-@ part theatrical adaptation (No. 1 , Spring of Birth , No. 2 , Midsummer Knight 's Dream , No. 3 , Falling Down , No. 4 , Winter of Rebirth) , and a non @-@ canon spin @-@ off series titled Persona : Trinity Soul . Persona 4 received two adaptations : Persona 4 : The Animation , based on the original game , and Persona 4 : The Golden Animation , based on its expanded PlayStation Vita port . A live @-@ action television series based on the original Devil Summoner was broadcast between 1997 and 1998 . Devil Survivor 2 also received an anime adaptation of the same name , while the Devil Children series received two anime adaptations . Multiple Shin Megami Tensei and Persona titles have received manga and CD drama adaptations . Action figures and merchandise related to Persona have also been produced .

= = Common elements = =

 Despite most games in the series taking place in different continuities , they do share certain elements . One of its defining traits is it being set in a contemporary urban environment , specifically modern @-@ day Tokyo . This choice was originally made to set the game apart from other fantasy @-@ based gaming franchises of the time , as modern day Tokyo was rarely seen in games as opposed to versions of it from the past . Shin Megami Tensei II is one of the notable early exceptions , as it is set in a science fiction @-@ styled future despite still including fantasy elements . Two more recent notable departures were Strange Journey , which shifted the focus to Antarctica to portray the threat on a global scale , and Shin Megami Tensei IV , which included a medieval @-@ stage society existing separately from a modern @-@ day Tokyo .
 The series title translates as " Rebirth of the Goddess " : this has carried over into the current Shin Megami Tensei series , which has been officially translated as " True Goddess Metempsychosis " . The word " Metempsychosis " refers to the cycle of reincarnation that ties into many Megami Tensei stories . The reborn goddess of the title has multiple meanings : it refers to a female character in each game that could be interpreted as the goddess , and is also representative of the drastic changes a location undergoes during a game . The concept of reincarnation was also included in narratives and gameplay mechanics to tie in with these themes . The series ' overarching title has been truncated to " MegaTen " by series fans . Originating in Japan , the abbreviation has become a common term for the series among its fans .

= = = Gameplay = = =

 The gameplay in the series has become notable for its high difficulty , along with several mechanics that have endured through the years . A key element present since the first Megami Tensei is the ability to recruit demons to fight alongside the player in battle , alongside the ability to fuse two different demons together to create a more powerful demon . Equivalents to these systems appear in the later Persona titles . The game 's most recognizable battle system is the Press Turn system , first introduced in Nocturne . The Press Turn System is a turn @-@ based battle mechanic governing both the player party and enemies , where either party are rewarded an extra turn for striking an enemy 's weakness . A Moon Phase System or equivalent , in which phases of the moon or changes in the weather affected the behavior of enemies , is also featured in multiple games .
 The layout of the first two Megami Tensei games were noticeably different from later games : Megami Tensei used a 3D first @-@ person perspective , while Megami Tensei II used a combination of first @-@ person 3D displays for battle and top @-@ down 2D displays for navigation . The change was suggested by staff members who did not want players getting lost in a large 3D environment . The 2D / first person viewpoint continued until Nocturne , which switched to a third @-@ person perspective . This was done due to a condition similar to car sickness called " 3D sickness " with first person shooters in Japan at the time : the developers wanted something for players to focus on . The first @-@ person perspective was reintroduced in Strange Journey , and incorporated into IV 's battles along with navigable 3D environments .

= = = Plots and themes = = =

Each title focuses on the extraordinary invading the ordinary world , though the two main Megami Tensei series focus on different things : Shin Megami Tensei focuses more on the main protagonist gaining the power needed to survive in a world ruled over by tyrannical deities , while Persona focuses on interpersonal relationships and the psychology of a group of people . That protagonist is generally male within the Shin Megami Tensei titles : while a female lead or the ability to choose a lead 's gender is not out of the question , many staff feel that Shin Megami Tensei lead roles are better suited to a male character . Throughout its lifetime , the series has incorporated elements of Gnosticism , various world mythologies and religions including Christianity and Buddhism , early science fiction , Jungian psychology and archetypes , occultism , punk , and cyberpunk . The science fiction and fantasy elements are brought together and unified through the use of philosophical concepts , enabling a blending of concepts and aesthetics that might normally clash .

The stories of the core Shin Megami Tensei titles frequently include fighting against a tyrannical God . The method of story @-@ telling in the series can involve traditional use of cutscenes and spoken dialogue (Persona , Digital Devil Saga) , or a text @-@ based minimalist approach that places emphasis on atmosphere (Nocturne) . A tradition within the core Shin Megami Tensei series is to focus on a single playable character as opposed to a group . A recurring character is Lucifer , the fallen angel who stands against God and is portrayed in multiple forms to represent his omnipotence . Since Megami Tensei II , the series has used a morality @-@ based decision system , where the player 's actions affect the outcome of the story . In Megami Tensei II , the alignments were defined as " Law " (the forces of God) and " Chaos " (the army of Lucifer) . In future games , an additional " Neutral " route was included where the player could reject both sides . Selected games have been thematically or otherwise linked to a particular alignment . Shin Megami Tensei II , due to events prior to the story , focuses on the " Law " alignment . For Nocturne , all the characters were roughly aligned with " Chaos " , which was done both to bring variety to the series and allow the development team more creative freedom . Shin Megami Tensei IV : Apocalypse is restricted to a " Neutral " alignment while still having multiple endings . The three @-@ tired alignment was used in Strange Journey , and continued into Shin Megami Tensei IV .

= = Development and history = =

= = = Origins = = =

The Megami Tensei series began life as a media expansion of the Digital Devil Story series , a set of science @-@ fantasy novels written by Aya Nishitani during the 1980s . The series ' creators were Kouji Okada (credited as Cozy Okada in English) , Ginichiro Suzuki , and Ginichiro 's son Kazunari . The first book in the Digital Devil Story series , Megami Tensei (???? , lit . " Reincarnation of the Goddess ") , provided the title for the original game , while the game 's story was based on both the first book and the third book Tensei no Shuuen (????? , lit . " Demise of the Reincarnation ") . The game was developed at Atlus and published by Bandai Namco (then Namco) . Although they wanted to incorporate as much of the original story as possible , the limited capabilities of the Famicom made this goal nearly impossible . The game proved popular in Japan , and effectively launched the Megami Tensei franchise , with its more ambitious direct sequel following in 1990 . During the development of Shin Megami Tensei , which was driven by the concept of a Super Famicom game with the company 's brand on it , the team slowly decided that they wanted to break the then @-@ current gaming status quo using its aesthetic and content . Despite this attitude , the staff considered Shin Megami Tensei to be a remake of Megami Tensei II . In many of these earlier games , staff members at Atlus had cameos . The majority of the Megami Tensei series is developed by Atlus ' R & D Department 1 . Other developers have been involved with the series : these include Multimedia Intelligence Transfer (Last Bible series) , Lancarse (Strange Journey) , CAVE (Imagine) and Nex Entertainment (Nine) , and Arc System Works (Persona 4 Arena) .

Most of the games up to 2003 were handled by Okada , but when he departed to form his own company Gaia , Kazuma Kaneko became the series ' creative director . There are two main writers in the franchise : Shogo Isogai and Ryutaro Ito . Ito first worked on Megami Tensei II , joining the team after development to write the script , along with working with the script and being part of the debug team . Isogai 's first work for the series was the script for Shin Megami Tensei II . The next entry If ... was also written by Ito , and designed as a departure from the grand scale of previous games , instead being set within a cloistered school environment . His final work for the series was the first Devil Summoner . Isogai also worked on Shin Megami Tensei II and If ... , and later worked on multiple Devil Summoner games , Nocturne and Strange Journey . The music for the first five main Megami Tensei titles was composed by Tsukasa Masuko . For Nocturne , Shoji Meguro , who had done work on earlier spin @-@ off titles , was brought in . He later became well known for his work on the Persona titles .

= = = Art design = = =

The Shin Megami Tensei and Persona art styles have been defined by two different artists : Kazuma Kaneko and Shigenori Soejima . Kaneko had a long history with the series , having done some work on the original Megami Tensei titles . His first prominent work for the series was on Shin Megami Tensei , who worked on both the sprite art and promotional artwork for the game 's characters and demons . He was also responsible for suggesting many of the game 's darker features , defining the series ' eventual identity . Before designing each demon , Kaneko looks up his chosen subject to get their mythological background , and uses that in their design . Many of Kaneko 's demon designs were influenced by both creatures and deities from world mythology , and monsters from popular culture like Godzilla . Alongside working on Shin Megami Tensei II , If ... and Nocturne , he also did character designs for the first three Persona games . Kaneko 's style has been described as " cold [and] stoic " , evolving into that state over time to keep the artwork as close as possible to the in @-@ game render .
Soejima 's first work for the series was as part of the digital coloring team for the first Devil Summoner . He later had minor roles in artwork and character design in the first Persona and Soul Hackers . He later did the secondary characters for the Persona 2 duology , and was also part of the team checking over the PlayStation ports of the first three Shin Megami Tensei games , as well as minor work on Nocturne . Soejima was chosen as the lead designer for Persona 3 by Kaneko , as Kaneko wanted the younger staff members to gain experience . Persona 3 proved challenging for Soejima as he needed to refine his drawing style and take the expectations of series fans into account . He would go on to design for Persona 3 FES and Portable , Persona 4 and Persona 5 . Soejima 's drawing style is recognized as being lighter @-@ toned than Kaneko 's work on the Shin Megami Tensei games .
Other designers have also worked on the series . For Nine , the developers wanted to have a new style to suit the game 's original vision , so the characters were designed by animator Yasuomi Umetsu . Another designer for the series is Masayuki Doi , who had made a name for himself with the Trauma Center series ; and designed the main characters for Shin Megami Tensei IV . Inspired in his work by Kaneko 's designs , he created the main characters ' clothing to be a blend of Japanese and western fashions while incorporating design elements from the Star Wars series . For the Devil Survivor games , Atlus were aiming to appeal to a wider audience and reinvigorate the Megami Tensei franchise , hiring Suzuhito Yasuda as character designer for this purpose . Some monsters in the second Devil Survivor were designed by manga artist Mohiro Kitoh .

= = = Localization = = =

For a long time , the Megami Tensei franchise was not exported to western territories despite there being a recognized market . The original reasons were the heavy religious themes and symbols used , which were considered taboo in western game markets , and Nintendo 's strict content guidelines for overseas releases . Later , many of these early works were prevented from coming

overseas due to their age , which would have put them at a disadvantage in the modern gaming market . Early entries on the PlayStation were also blocked by Sony of America 's then @-@ current approval policies . The first title in the franchise to be localized was the action spin @-@ off Jack Bros. ; the first role @-@ playing game in the franchise to receive an overseas release was the first Persona game . This was done to give Atlus ' North American branch a flagship RPG franchise that could compete with the likes of Final Fantasy , Suikoden and Breath of Fire . According to Okada , the naming of creatures and enemies was adjusted from the main series and original Japanese release of Persona to make it more acceptable for an overseas audience . Though it managed to establish the franchise overseas , the localization was a taxing task due to a small staff and the need to change multiple aspects to suit a North American audience , including removing references to Japanese culture and changing one character from a Japanese to African @-@ American . The first Persona 2 title , Innocent Sin , needed to be passed over due to shortage of manpower and the fact that development was focused on the second title , Eternal Punishment .

Nocturne was the first release in the Shin Megami Tensei series to be released overseas . After the release of Nocturne , Atlus ' overseas branches decided to add the Shin Megami Tensei moniker to future releases within the Megami Tensei franchise to help market the games . Despite many of the original games not bearing the moniker , it ultimately worked in Atlus ' favor as , regardless of title differences , the games chosen for localization were all part of the larger Megami Tensei franchise , and using the core Shin Megami Tensei moniker kept all the titles under a single banner . Before this decision was made , the series was given the localized title Revelations , used for the first Persona and the first Last Bible . Later , changes to titles were made to make them less unwieldy , such as with Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Soulless Army . Called Raid? Kuzunoha vs. The Super @-@ Powered Army in Japan , the title was altered as it sounded " goofy " in English . By the time Strange Journey was in development , the franchise had a strong presence overseas , so the team created Strange Journey with localization in mind : the two aspects actively linked with this were the game 's setting in Antarctica as opposed to modern @-@ day Japan , and the fact that it was not given a numeral . Starting with Shin Megami Tensei IV , the company decided to actively promote the franchise overseas to North America , Europe and mainland Asia . After 2016 , due to Atlus USA 's merger with Sega of America , Sega took over North American publishing duties , although the Atlus brand remained intact .

In general , Atlus publishes Megami Tensei games in Japan and North America , but as they lack a European branch , they publish titles in the region through third @-@ party companies such as Ghostlight and NIS America . Their latest partnership , after their deal with NIS America ended with the publication of Odin Sphere Leifthrasir , was with European publishing firm Deep Silver to publish multiple titles in the region , including Shin Megami Tensei IV : Apocalypse and Persona 5 . Atlus has occasionally published titles digitally in Europe .

= = Reception = =

Prior to its popularity in the west , the game was a major franchise in Japan , having sold over 4 million units by 2003 . By November 2014 , the series has sold approximately 13 million packaged units worldwide , with the combined series grouped within the Megami Tensei franchise accounting for 7 million and the Persona series accounting for 6 @.@ 2 million . Megami Tensei is one of Atlus ' best @-@ selling and most important franchises .

Japanese website 4Gamer.net referred to the series as one of Japan 's biggest role @-@ playing franchises . UGO Networks writer K. Thor Jensen cited the first Megami Tensei game as the first successful use of cyberpunk aesthetics in video games , saying that the series ' mix of science fiction elements and the occult " create a truly unique fictional cyberpunk world " . Nintendo Power has noted that Atlus always mixes " familiar gameplay " with surprising settings when creating games for the series , citing Persona , with its " modern @-@ day horror stories " and " teams of Japanese high @-@ school kids " , as the perfect example . The editor also added that Strange Journey followed a similar system , calling it a " science @-@ fiction makeover " of the series . In an article about the interaction of Japanese and Western gaming culture , 1UP.com mentioned the Shin

Megami Tensei subseries alongside Nippon Ichi Software 's Disgaea series . Kurt Kalata wrote : " [They] may not be big sellers , but they 've garnered underground success and attracted thousands of obsessed fans . " GameSpot writer Andrew Vestal referred to the series as the third biggest series in Japan after Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest . IGN 's Matt Coleman mentioned Nocturne in the article " A History of Console RPGs " , referring to its content as " challenging stuff for a genre that used to be all about princess saving and evil cleansing " .

Digital Devil Story : Megami Tensei II and Shin Megami Tensei both appeared on Famitsu 's 2006 " Top 100 Favorite Games of All Time " audience poll at No. 58 and No. 59 , respectively . RPGFan 's " Top 20 RPGs of the Past Decade " list was topped by the two Digital Devil Saga games , followed by Persona 3 in second place , while Persona 4 ranked fourth place . Kalata , writing for Gamasutra , referred to Nocturne as one of the 20 essential RPGs for players of the genre . GameTrailers cited the Press Turn system as one of the best JRPG battle systems in existence , with particular reference to the version used in Shin Megami Tensei IV .

Alongside its critical acclaim , the series has garnered controversy both in Japan and overseas . Amongst the material cited are its demon negotiation mechanic , depictions of suicide and cannibalism , religious criticism , its use and mixture of Christian and occult imagery , political references , depictions of homosexuality , and its sometimes @-@ strange demon designs . Specific examples have been cited by western journalists . The original release of Persona caused concern due to the title 's religious implications . 1UP.com 's 2007 game awards , which ran in the March 2008 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly , Persona 3 was given the " Most controversial game that created no controversy " award : the writers said " Rockstar 's Hot Coffee sex scandal and Bully 's boy @-@ on @-@ boy kissing 's got nothing on this PS2 role @-@ player 's suicide @-@ initiated battles or subplot involving student @-@ teacher dating . " GamesRadar included the series on its list of " Controversies Waiting to Happen " , saying that the lack of public outcry was due to its niche status when compared to other series with similar content . Writing for 1UP.com in a later article , Kalata traced this use of controversial content back to the Digital Devil Story novels , which depicted violence and rape committed by demons , and said that " Such violence is not particularly rare in the land of Japanese animation , but it became even more disturbing in [Megami Tensei II] " .