= Drakengard =

 Drakengard is an action role @-@ playing game developed by Cavia for the PlayStation 2 . It was published in Japan (on September 11 , 2003) and North America (March 2 , 2004) by Square Enix and in European territories (May 21 , 2004) by Take @-@ Two Interactive . A Europe @-@ exclusive mobile phone adaptation was co @-@ developed and co @-@ published by Square Enix and Macrospace for Vodafone devices in August 2004 .
 The game is the first installment of the Drakengard series and features a mixture of ground @-@ based hack @-@ and @-@ slash , aerial combat , and role @-@ playing elements which have become a staple of the series . The story is set during a religious war between two factions ? the Union and the Empire ? with the war tipping in favor of the Empire . The player controls Caim , a deposed prince of the Union , in his quest for vengeance against the Empire . Wounded in battle while protecting his sister Furiae , he is forced to make a pact with a red dragon named Angelus . As they journey together , they join with Hierarch Verdelet on a quest to prevent the Empire from destroying magical seals that keep the world in balance : Furiae acts as the central seal , and her death will drop the world into chaos .
 Takamasa Shiba and Takuya Iwasaki conceived the game as a hybrid between the popular Dynasty Warriors series and Namco 's aerial combat game Ace Combat . It was Shiba 's first project as a producer . The dark story was created by director Taro Yoko and Sawako Natori , who wrote the majority of the script . The music was written by Nobuyoshi Sano and Takayuki Aihara . Drakengard sold well in Japan and received mixed to positive reviews in the west : reviewers praised the game 's story and music , but were mixed about the graphics and criticized the gameplay for being repetitive .

= = Gameplay = =

 Drakengard is an action role @-@ playing game featuring three types of gameplay : ground missions , aerial missions , and Free Expedition Mode . The gameplay modes are called Ground Mode , Strafe Mode , and Air Mode . In some levels , players can switch between ground @-@ based and aerial combat . Ground @-@ based gameplay primarily has the player controlling the main protagonist , Caim . He has access to three types of attack : a standard sword @-@ slash , a magic attack and a dash attack that throws enemies to the ground . Additional weapons can be accessed and swapped via the menu . Weapons gain experience levels through use , dealing more damage as a result . Each has a four @-@ level cap . The player can access up to eight weapons during a mission . Pressing the attack button repeatedly while in combat with enemy units triggers combos , and pressing another button mid @-@ combo will trigger a special attack which will temporarily incapacitate enemy units in the immediate area . The player can also temporarily switch between Caim and an assigned ally , who shares similar attacks but deals more damage . These allies are gained in optional levels and can only be summoned a limited number of times .
 In aerial combat missions , players control Caim 's dragon partner Angelus . During these moments , players are directed against multiple aerial targets that must be destroyed in order to win . As Angelus gains experience points through combat , she levels up and is able to do more damage ? similar to the weapons used in ground @-@ based combat . Boss battles are all located in these aerial stages . Angelus has access to two types of standard fire attacks : a free @-@ aim blast that causes high damage , and homing bolts that can hit multiple targets but do less damage . Homing shots can be dodged or countered by some enemy types later in the game . Angelus can also perform a special area @-@ affecting magical attack that damages or kills multiple enemy units . She can be used to quickly traverse battle areas during primarily ground @-@ based missions . Players can summon Angelus during certain ground @-@ based missions and play her in Strafe Mode . Controls are identical to ground @-@ based combat . Pressing the select button causes Caim to dismount Angelus . Caim and Angelus level up during combat in different ways : as Caim levels up , their shared health meter grows , while Angelus ' leveling increases the damage her attacks do to enemy units .

Players can navigate the game world and select missions via a world map accessed between levels . While playing , a mini @-@ map allows the player to see enemy locations , and a full @-@ screen map can be switched to that covers the entire area and shows mission objectives . Drakengard 's levels are called verses , and the verses are grouped across thirteen chapters . Each level has a time limit of one hour for players to complete them . Normal levels are numbered , while additional levels are marked by Roman numerals . The game features five endings : the normal ending and four additional endings which are unlocked when certain conditions are met , such as completing optional chapters or obtaining powerful weapons .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Drakengard takes place in a medieval dark fantasy world called Midgard . The world is protected from falling into chaos by the Seals , objects magically linked to a woman chosen as the Goddess of the Seal . If the seals and the Goddess were destroyed , malevolent beings known as the Watchers would enter the world to destroy humanity . A key element of the world is the ability for a human and a beast to form a pact , a ritual that ties their souls together and grants great power . Their lives become bound by the pact , and the human pays a price for it in the form of some attribute (e.g. their voice , their eyesight or their ability to age) . During the events of Drakengard , the Union , which protects the Seals , is in the midst of a religious war with the Empire , a power led by a cult who believe that destroying the seals will bring them good fortune .
The main characters are Caim (??? , Kaimu) , a deposed prince of the Union , and Angelus (???? , Anheru , lit . " Angel ") , a red dragon . Joining Caim and Angelus are Leonard (????? , Reon?ru) , a hermit who loses his brothers in an attack by the Empire ; Arioch (?????? , Ari?shu) , an elf woman driven mad by the murder of her family ; Seere (??? , S?re) , a young boy from the Empire whose village was destroyed by their forces ; and Verdelet (????? , Verudore) , a priest in charge of protecting the Goddess Seal . Other prominent characters are Furiae (???? , Furiae) , Caim 's sister and the current Goddess of the Seal ; Inuart (?????? , Iuvaruto) , Furiae 's former fiance ; and Manah (?? , Mana) , Seere 's sister , leader of the enemy cult and the game 's main antagonist .

= = = Story = = =

Drakengard opens with Caim in the midst of a battle to protect his sister from the Empire . During the battle , Caim is injured , and going to Furiae 's castle finds Angelus severely wounded from torture . Despite their mutual mistrust , Caim and Angelus agree to make a pact and save each other . After repelling the attack , Furiae and Inuart go with Caim to find safety , encountering Verdelet on their travels . Eventually , Furiae and Inuart are captured by the Empire , and Inuart is tortured and brainwashed by Manah . Verdelet and Caim travel to each of the three Seals , but each time arrive too late to stop them being destroyed . Along the way , Caim and Verdelet are joined by Leonard and Seere , and take along Arioch to protect others from her madness . Eventually , the Union and the Empire engage in battle and the Union are victorious . After the battle , however , the Union 's surviving troops are decimated by an unknown force and the Empire 's troops return to life . Caim and Angelus travel to a fortress that has appeared in the sky , where they find that Furiae has killed herself , breaking the final seal . Inuart , seeing her body , is released from his brainwashing and takes her away . Returning to the Imperial capital , Caim and Angelus confront Manah , eventually doing battle with her . Defeated , Manah asks them to kill her , but Angelus declares that she must live with her crimes . Angelus then offers herself as the new Goddess of the Seal for Caim 's sake . As Verdelet performs the ritual , Angelus tells Caim her name before fading away .
Subsequent playthroughs and extra chapters reveal further details about the characters . Leonard 's self @-@ imposed seclusion is because he was trying to suppress his pedophilia , and the guilt at

his brothers ' deaths stems from the fact that he gave in to his cravings and left them unprotected . Arioch 's madness takes the form of cannibalism of children , in the belief that they would be safe from harm within her . Furiae is also revealed to feel romantic love for Caim , which led to Inuart becoming jealous and vulnerable to Manah 's influence . During the events leading to the third ending , Manah reveals Furiae 's feelings for Caim , who shows revulsion at the revelation : due to this and the Watchers ' influence , Furiae stabs herself . Manah was abused by her and Seere 's mother , but Seere was never subjected to the abuse , leading him to feel guilty . The abuse Manah received and her longing for love eventually drove her insane , and she was chosen to become the Watchers ' agent .

There are four possible alternative endings . In the second ending , Inuart uses a magical object called a " Seed of Resurrection " to resurrect Furiae : while successful , the Seed turns her into a monster , and she kills Inuart . Caim is forced to kill her , but not before clones of her are produced from other Seeds to destroy humanity . In the third ending , after Furiae 's suicide , Caim and Angelus stop Inuart 's attempt to resurrect her and confront Manah , who is killed by another dragon . With the dragons now being driven to destroy mankind , Angelus breaks her pact with Caim and fights him to the death . Caim then prepares to die fighting the other dragons . In the fourth ending , after the group save Furiae and see the extent of Manah 's madness , Seere has his Golem pact partner kill Manah . Caim , Seere , Leonard and Arioch escape from the collapsing fortress , while Inuart and Furiae are killed inside . With Manah dead , the Watchers descend on the Imperial capital , and during the fight against them , Arioch and Leonard are killed . A giant queen monster appears in the city that kills Caim and Angelus , and Seere uses his powers to seal the city and the Watchers in a timeless zone for eternity , nullifying their threat . In the fifth ending , Caim and Angelus attack the queen and the three disappear through a portal . After engaging the queen monster in a rhythm game in modern @-@ day Tokyo , the two destroy it , and are then shot down by a fighter jet . This ending leads into the events of Nier

= = Development = =

The original idea for Drakengard originated between Takamasa Shiba and Takuya Iwasaki when they were working at Cavia . It was conceived as an aerial battle game similar to Ace Combat . The four @-@ year development was Shiba 's first project as a producer . The team developing the game went under the moniker of " Project Dragonsphere " . As development progressed , ground @-@ based battles were also incorporated after the success in Japan of Dynasty Warriors 2 . Creating the change from ground to aerial gameplay was exceptionally difficult for the team as they encountered problems with the PlayStation 2 hardware . Jun Iwasaki , president and chief executive officer of Square Enix USA , described Drakengard as a " perfect hybrid of genres " , citing its story and gameplay as reasons why it would be enjoyed by players who wanted a " deeper action game " . Speaking in 2013 , Shiba commented that Cavia had been inexperienced in creating action games , and as such it was not up to the standards of its contemporaries . The game 's battle scenes were inspired by films such as the 1999 version of The Mummy and its spin @-@ off The Scorpion King , as well as films like Dragonheart and epic films from Asia . Iwasaki was unable to take up the position of director because of other projects he was involved with : the position instead went to Taro Yoko .

During production , the team were asked to make multiple adjustments and changes to its content by Drakengard 's advisory board . It was annoying enough for Yoko that he decided at the time not to make another Drakengard . Drakengard was first shown off to the western public at E3 2003 . It underwent multiple changes for its western release . The original title , Drag @-@ On Dragoon , was chosen for its sound , but was not considered right for the western market . Because of this , it was changed to Drakengard . In addition , some of the more mature themes , such as references to incest and sexual taboos , were censored in the western localization . It also underwent major debugging and an alteration in the angle of the in @-@ game camera before its European release . While Square Enix published the title in Japan and North America , Take @-@ Two Interactive was chosen to publish it in European territories . The mobile port was part of Square Enix 's plans to

branch out into the European mobile game market . It was co @-@ developed with London @-@ based mobile developer Macrospace as part of a collaboration between Square Enix and Vodafone , designed to function on the Vodafone live ! service . It was first released in Germany , then made available in the United Kingdom , Spain and Italy .

= = = World design = = =

The setting , mythos and landscape were primarily inspired by the folklore of Northern Europe , while other elements drew from Japanese @-@ style revisionism . According to Shiba , multiple elements of the story and world were created to be dark , sad and serious in tone , in contrast to the likes of Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy . One of the core narrative threads , involving romantic feelings between siblings , was inspired in Yoko 's mind by the anime series Sister Princess . Another series that inspired the team was Neon Genesis Evangelion , with a comparison being drawn between them due to a shared trait : while having standard premises , darker narrative elements were hidden in its content . The central narrative theme was " Immorality " , which was mostly demonstrated by writer Sawako Natori through the characters . Multiple endings were made because Yoko was told that the game would not have a sequel . The characters ' stories were created by Yoko and Iwasaki , who independently created the character backgrounds : Yoko took charge of Seere , Leonard and Arioch , while Iwasaki was involved in developing Verdelet , Inuart and Caim . In an interview concerning her role in the game , Natori admitted to feeling embarrassed by her writing when hearing Sota Murakami and Natsuki Yamashita , who voiced Seere and Manah , speak their lines .

Caim , the main protagonist , was meant to be an examination of the typical action game hero , which Yoko felt should not have a happy ending in a story focused on violence . The nature of Caim and Angelus ' relationship underwent changes during development : Yoko had conceived their relationship as a parasitic one , but Iwasaki wanted to create a different type of romance , and so wrote the love story for the two of them . The actor who portrayed the two was Shinnosuke Ikehata : though originally cast for the role of Caim , his versatility also got him the role of Angelus . Inuart was originally designed as the main protagonist of Drakengard , with him being a " useless hero " . A pivotal scene in the game , where he first clashes with Caim , became one of the ways Yoko was able to properly project his vision of the game 's world . Furiae was designed by Yoko as both an explanation for Caim and Inuart 's rivalry , and as a representation of his distaste for the kind of forgettable character she represented . The relationship between Caim and Furiae , as well as their ultimate fates , was Yoko 's response to the standard happy ending found in most role @-@ playing games at the time , which he felt did not fit in with a protagonist who had killed hundreds during their quest . Caim and Furiae were respectively based around Guts from Berserk and Rei Ayanami from Neon Genesis Evangelion , with Caim being codenamed " Guts " during development . Verdelet was portrayed as the " despicable elder " , who cared for no @-@ one except himself : his personality was intended to be both ineffectual and bossy , even in the face of catastrophe . Manah 's role in Drakengard was designed to represent unloved children . The second ending was principally inspired by this and his dislike for Sister Princess . The fifth ending , a boss battle in modern @-@ day Tokyo , was created as a joke ending in the same vein as the Silent Hill series and an unexpected twist for players who were expecting an upbeat tone after the previous endings . This ending 's title was also a respective tribute to The End of Evangelion .

Character designs were done by Kimihiko Fujisaka . Drakengard was his first job as a character designer : his designs were firmly seated within the Medieval European aesthetic . To achieve this , he imagined that he had been sent back to that historical period . His designs were inspired by the character designs of Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest . Caim was one of the earliest characters created for Drakengard . In Inuart 's design , Fujisaka incorporated heavy armor into his design to give a more forceful impression for players . His ultimate role and final design were based around the idea of him being Caim 's rival . The black dragons ' design did not impress Shiba , who considered cutting him from the final product . Manah 's red clothing was designed to evoke both its status as the game 's key color , and her status as the leader of the Cult of the Watchers . Shiba

approved of the design , feeling that it contrasted nicely with Furiae 's predominantly white design . Fujisaka also helped design Furiae 's monster form for the game 's second ending . In hindsight , Fujisaka was dissatisfied with his work on Drakengard , particularly his work on Caim . The game 's monsters were designed by Taro Hasegawa .

= = = Music = = =

The music was composed by Nobuyoshi Sano and Takayuki Aihara : the two used excerpts from pieces of classical music (selected by Aihara) , then rearranged , remixed and layered them . Their main objective was to create music that emulated the gameplay , as well as the story and general narrative theme of " madness " . The music was intended to be " experimental " and " expressionistic " rather than " commercial " . The theme song , " Exhausted " (??? , Tsukiru) , was composed by Sano , written by Natori and sung by Eriko Hatsune . The soundtrack was originally released in two volumes under the names Drag @-@ On Dragoon Original Soundtrack Vol.1 and Drag @-@ On Dragoon Original Soundtrack Vol.2 , released on October 22 and November 21 , 2003 , respectively . The soundtrack was re @-@ released on April 20 , 2011 , as a two @-@ disc set under the title Drag @-@ On Dragoon Original Soundtrack .

= = Reception = =

Drakengard sold more than 122 @,@ 000 units in its first week of release in Japan , taking Mobile Suit Gundam : Encounters in Space 's place at the top of the sales charts . By the end of 2003 , it had sold 241 @,@ 014 copies . Gaming magazine Famitsu ranked it as the 50th best @-@ selling title of 2003 , and sold well enough that it was made part of Square Enix 's Ultimate Hits series , re @-@ releases of popular titles . Its strong sales were attributed by the team to its cinematic story and similarity to the popular Dynasty Warriors series . In Europe , the game sold 110 @,@ 000 units by November 2004 .

According to GameSpot , Drakengard received favorable reviews in Japan . Famitsu gave it an overall score of 29 / 40 . After the game 's reveal at E3 , multiple video game publications , including Official PlayStation Magazine , IGN and Game Informer , praised its promising story and mixture of gameplay genres . The game received " average " reviews , according to video game review aggregator Metacritic .

The story received the highest amount of praise . IGN 's Jeremy Dunham called it the game 's " biggest strength " , praising the edgy themes explored and the balance between fantasy and realism . He also praised the multiple parallels with Neon Genesis Evangelion . The reviewer for Computer and Video Games (CVG) praised " the maturity and wit of the dialogue and unfolding plot " , noting that they stood alongside other Square Enix RPGs of the time . VideoGamer.com 's Adam Jarvis praised the game 's storytelling style , saying that while it became " a little bogged down at various points , it is deep enough to keep your interest throughout the game . " GameSpot 's Greg Kasavin said that " though the story itself is awkwardly paced and is sometimes difficult to keep up with , it becomes one of the main motivating factors for wanting to get all the way through to the end of the game . "

The graphics received mixed responses . Kasavin said the game " looks decent but , ultimately , not all that good " . He criticized the bland environments and awkward movements for enemy units and the playable character , but praised the design of the dragon . Game Informer was more positive , praising the graphical detail and cutscenes and the look of enemy units , despite finding pop @-@ up issues and framerate dips . Jarvis praised the design of the main cast , but cited the repetitive enemy design and dark environments as detracting elements . Dunham praised the character and monster designs as well as the full @-@ motion cutscenes , but was less impressed by the repetitive human enemy designs , bland environments and low draw distance . The full @-@ motion videos were also praised by the CVG reviewer .

Reaction to the sound design was mixed to positive . Dunham praised the majority of the British @-@ style voice acting , but called the music " disappointing " . Game Informer cited the low

number of background tracks and voice acting " straight out of a renaissance festival " as poorer parts of the game . Kasavin praised the voice acting and called the music " the most nerve @-@ racking and most intense aspect of the game . " Jarvis was also positive , praising the sound design for battles , most of the voice acting and the music , which " [helped] create a suitably dark atmosphere . "

Reception of the gameplay was mixed to negative , with Dunham saying it suffered the same problems as its derivative games despite its easy entertainment value , while Jarvis called the options in gameplay " fairly limited " . The CVG reviewer praised the aerial segments of gameplay , calling them the most entertaining , and found that the standard combat served to embellish the protagonist 's " kick @-@ ass persona , making him more than just another anonymous dragon rider " . The main criticism was repetition in the gameplay . Kasavin was exceptionally critical , saying that the gameplay both made the process of playing laborious and detracted from the main story . Game Informer called the gameplay " fun , but [lacking] any semblance of depth . "

= = Legacy = =

Drakengard received two novelizations by Emi Nagashima (writing as Jun Eishima) and Takashi Aizawa . The game 's events were retold again in a special story titled Drakengard 1 @.@ 3 , which followed on from the spin @-@ off manga Drag @-@ On Dragoon : Shi ni Itaru Aka . In March 2014 , Hardcore Gamer 's Jahanzeb Khan favorably referred to the game as a precursor to the TV adaptation of the book series A Song of Ice and Fire in its handling of taboo themes and violence . The game was considered successful enough in Japan by Square Enix that a sequel was commissioned . Drakengard 2 was again directed by Shiba , but Yoko was replaced as director by Akira Yasui , resulting in numerous thematic changes . The sequel takes place eighteen years after the events of Drakengard 's first ending .

An attempt to create another title in the series resulted in the spin @-@ off Nier , which retains links and themes from the main series . Nier takes place over a thousand years after the events of Drakengard 's fifth ending . When Cavia was absorbed by AQ Interactive after Nier 's release , a future attempt by Shiba to continue the series was unsuccessful . A prequel , Drakengard 3 , was released in 2013 , with multiple staff members returning to their original roles .