= Castlevania : Dawn of Sorrow =

Castlevania : Dawn of Sorrow , known in Japan as Akumaj? Dracula : S?getsu no J?jika (???????? ?????? , literally Devil 's Castle Dracula : Cross of the Blue Moon) , is an action @-@ adventure game developed and published by Konami . It is part of Konami 's Castlevania video game series and the first Castlevania game to be released on the Nintendo DS . The game is the sequel to Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow and incorporates many elements from its predecessor . Dawn of Sorrow was commercially successful , selling more than 15 @,@ 000 units in its first week in Japan and 164 @,@ 000 units in the United States three months after its initial release .

Dawn of Sorrow continues the story of Aria of Sorrow , in which Dracula has been completely defeated , and his powers assumed by his reincarnation , Soma Cruz . With the help of his allies , Soma avoids becoming the new dark lord . A cult forms to bring forth a new dark lord by killing Soma . Soma and his allies move to ensure that a new dark lord is not created .

Dawn of Sorrow incorporates many features from previous Castlevania games : the combination of elements from platform games and role @-@ playing video games , the " Tactical Soul " system featured in Aria of Sorrow , and a dark , gothic atmosphere . Dawn of Sorrow also introduces new gameplay elements , such as the " Magic Seal " system , which requires the use of the DS stylus to draw a pattern in order to defeat powerful enemies , a distinctive anime character design , and a multiplayer mode , where two players compete for fastest times on a prerendered level . The game received high scores from many video game publications , and was considered one of the best games on the Nintendo DS for 2005 . The game was re @-@ released in Japan on June 29 , 2006 and later in North America during 2007 as part of the " Konami the Best " line .

= = Gameplay = =

During the game , the player controls the onscreen character from a third @-@ person perspective to interact with people , objects , and enemies . Like previous games in the series and most role @-@ playing games , characters level up each time they earn a set number of experience points from defeating enemies ; each level gained increases the character 's statistics , thus improving their performance in battle . Statistic examples include hit points , the amount of damage a character can receive ; magic points , which determine the number of times a character can use magical attacks ; strength , the power of a character 's physical attacks ; and intelligence , the power of a character 's magical spells . Upon encountering an enemy , the player can use a variety of weapons to attack and defeat the enemy . Despite the game being set in 2036 , the weapon choices are largely medieval , including swords , axes , and spears , although handguns and a rocket @-@ propelled grenade are available . These weapons differ in their damage output , the range of the weapon , and the speed of the attack .

Dawn of Sorrow , similar to most games in the Castlevania series , is set in a castle , which is further subdivided into various areas . Areas of the castle differ in their composition , including monsters and terrain features . In addition , each area has its own unique piece of theme music that plays while the player remains in that area . The character moves around the environment based on the player 's choices ; however , the areas the character can move into are restricted based upon the items the player has , similar to most platform games . Progression , however , is not linear , as players are free to explore the parts of the castle they have access to , and can backtrack or move forward as they see fit .

= = = Tactical Soul = = =

The primary method for the player to gain additional abilities in the game is the absorption of souls via the Tactical Soul system , which was originally featured in Aria of Sorrow . Except for human enemies and the game 's final opponent , all enemies ' souls can be absorbed by the player . The chances for absorbing a soul varies on the enemy , as certain enemies will release souls more regularly than others . The player can absorb multiple copies of the same soul ; many of these souls

will increase in effectiveness depending on the number of the same soul a player possesses . Souls provide a variety of effects , and are separated into four categories : Bullet , Guardian , Enchant , and Ability souls . The player can only have one type of Bullet , Guardian , and Enchant soul equipped at any given time . However , when the player acquires the " Doppelgänger " soul , the player can have two different weapon and soul setups , and switch between them at will . Players can trade souls wirelessly using two Dawn of Sorrow game cards .

Bullet souls are often projectiles , and consume a set amount of magic points upon use . Guardian souls provide continuous effects , including transforming into mythical creatures , defensive abilities , and the summoning of familiars . The movement and attacking of familiars can be directly controlled with the stylus . Guardian souls continually drain magic points so long as they are activated . Several Guardian souls can be used in conjunction with Bullet souls to execute special attacks called Tactical Soul combos . Enchant souls offer statistical bonuses and resistance against several forms of attack . They are passive , and require no magic points to remain active . Ability souls give the player new abilities and are required to move into certain areas of the castle . They are always active , and therefore not equipped , nor do they consume magic points . Some examples include the ability to break ice blocks with the stylus , and the ability to double @-@ jump .

Souls can alternatively be spent to permanently transform a character 's weapon . At Yoko Belnades ' shop , the player can remove certain souls from their inventory in order to change their weapon into a stronger form . Certain weapons can only be acquired through using souls to strengthen a lesser form of the weapon . Souls are also used in the " Enemy Set " mode , where a player builds a custom scenario . The player can place monsters inside rooms if the player has acquired the monster 's soul in the main game , but boss enemies cannot be added to any scenario , even if the player has the boss ' soul . Two players , using two Nintendo DS consoles , can compete in these scenarios , with the winner being the one with the fastest time in completing the course .

= = = Magic Seal = = =

The Magic Seal system is a new feature introduced in Dawn of Sorrow , and makes use of the DS touchscreen . Once the player reduces the hit points of a " boss " enemy to zero , a circle will appear , and the game will automatically draw a pattern connecting any number of smaller circles on the circumference of the larger circle . After this , the player is prompted to draw the same pattern on the touchscreen in a set amount of time . If the player fails to draw the pattern accurately within the time limit , the boss will regain health and the battle will resume . If successful , the boss will be defeated . More powerful boss enemies require higher level Magic Seals , which have more intricate and complex patterns as the level increases and are found over the course of the game .

= = = Julius Mode = = =

After the player completes the game with either the bad ending or the best ending , Julius Mode is unlocked , similar to the Julius Mode in Aria of Sorrow . Julius Mode , in storyline terms , follows the assumption that Soma succumbed to his dark power , and became the new dark lord . A new game can then be started from the main menu in Julius Mode . In Julius Mode , the playable characters include Julius Belmont , Yoko Belnades , and Alucard . Each character has a weapon and an assortment of abilities unique to them , and although these abilities remain static throughout the entire game , the characters ' statistics can improve by acquiring enough experience points to level up . The castle layout and enemies are the same , with the exception of the final battle , which is against Soma .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

Dawn of Sorrow is set in the fictional universe of the Castlevania series . The primary premise of the series is the struggle of the vampire hunters of the Belmont clan against the vampire Dracula and his legacy . Before the events of Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow , Dracula was permanently defeated and his castle sealed within a solar eclipse . With Dracula dead , a prophecy relating to who would inherit his powers drove the events of Aria of Sorrow , with the protagonist , Soma Cruz , realizing that he was Dracula 's reincarnation . Soma manages to escape his fate of becoming the new dark lord with the help of his allies . Dawn of Sorrow takes place one year after the events of Aria of Sorrow , where Soma believes that his inherited powers have been lost . The majority of the game is played inside a copy of Dracula 's castle , which is further subdivided into several areas that the player must venture through over the course of the game . The future setting of both Aria of Sorrow and Dawn of Sorrow , as well as starting a storyline after Dracula 's defeat , was a result of Koji Igarashi wanting to take a " different route " with Aria of Sorrow .

= = = Characters = = =

The primary playable character in Dawn of Sorrow is Soma Cruz , the reincarnation of Dracula , the longtime antagonist of the Castlevania series . He is supported in his quest by Mina Hakuba , the daughter of the priest of the Hakuba shrine ; Genya Arikado , a mysterious government agent dealing primarily with the supernatural ; Julius Belmont , the latest member of the Belmont clan of vampire hunters featured in the series ; Yoko Belnades , a witch in the service of the Roman Catholic Church ; and Hammer , a vendor of military material who retains a large information network .
A cult , dedicated to the resurrection of the dark lord , serves as the game 's antagonists . Celia Fortner is a shadow priestess at the head of the cult , and seeks to revive the dark lord in order to prevent the loss of her magical powers . Dmitrii Blinov and Dario Bossi are Celia 's primary lieutenants , the former a ruthless manipulator and the latter a vicious firebrand . They are the " dark lord 's candidates , " born on the day Dracula was slain , and thus can assume the mantle of dark lord by destroying Dracula 's soul , which is present in Soma Cruz .

= = = Story = = =

One year after the events in Aria of Sorrow , Soma is living peacefully , and believes that his powers have been lost . A woman who identifies herself as Celia Fortner , appears and summons several monsters . Arikado arrives to help Soma defeat the monsters , after which Soma absorbs their souls . Celia retreats , proclaiming that she will destroy Soma . Soma expresses disbelief at the return of his powers , but Arikado reveals that his powers were never lost , only dormant . He informs Soma that Celia is the head of a cult that seeks the resurrection of the dark lord . He leaves , instructing Soma not to pursue Celia .
Soma , however , uses information acquired from Hammer to locate the cult 's base , a facsimile of Dracula 's castle . Hammer arrives , and as he has left the military , agrees to help Soma by opening up a shop in the castle . After entering the castle , Soma encounters Yoko and Julius Belmont . As Julius leaves , Soma escorts Yoko to a safe location . During this time , she instructs him in the use of a Magic Seal , which is necessary to defeat certain monsters in the castle . As Soma travels farther into the castle , he meets Celia , who is flanked by two men , Dmitrii Blinov and Dario Bossi . Celia explains their nature as the " dark lord 's candidates , " who can become the dark lord by destroying Soma . He later encounters Dmitrii and is able to defeat him . Soma gains dominance over his soul , although he acquires no abilities . As Soma travels further , he comes upon Dario . Soma bests him , and Celia teleports Dario away from harm .
Soma meets Arikado , who is initially angered by Soma 's presence , but accepts the situation . He gives Soma a letter and a talisman from Mina . Soma briefs Arikado on the current situation , and Arikado leaves to locate Dario . Soma comes upon Dario and Julius , with the latter defeated due to his inability to use the Magic Seals . Dario retreats , instructing Soma to fight him in the castle 's

throne room . Soma does so , lambasting Dario for only desiring power , and promising to defeat him . Before the battle begins , Soma uses one of his souls to transport himself into the mirror in the room , revealing Aguni , the flame demon sealed within Dario 's soul . Soma defeats Aguni , leaving Dario powerless . As Dario flees , Celia arrives , and instructs Soma to come to the castle 's center . Upon arriving , Soma is forced to watch Celia kill Mina . Furious , he begins to succumb to his dark power . The talisman that Mina gave Soma is able to slow the transformation , enabling Arikado to arrive in time to inform Soma that the " Mina " that Celia killed was a doppelgänger . This aborts the transformation , but a soul exits Soma and enters the doppelgänger , which takes on the appearance of Dmitrii . Dmitrii states that when Soma defeated him he allowed himself to be absorbed , wishing to use his powers to copy Soma 's ability of dominance over the souls of Dracula 's minions . He then leaves with Celia to absorb the souls of many powerful demons and monsters in an attempt to increase his power . Soma and Arikado chase after the two , and find them in the castle 's basement . Dmitrii , using Celia as a sacrifice , seals Arikado 's powers , and engages Soma . However , his soul is unable to bear the strain of controlling the demons he has absorbed , and they erupt out of him , combining into one gargantuan creature called Menace . Soma manages to defeat it , but the souls that composed the demon begin to fall under Soma 's dominance . He becomes overwhelmed and rejects them , fleeing from the castle with Arikado . Soma is conflicted over the present situation , as he believes that it was his responsibility to become the dark lord and that the events of the game were a result of him not accepting this responsibility , but Arikado convinces him that his fate is not fixed . Soma then shares a tender moment with Mina , much to the amusement of his onlooking friends .

= = Development = =

 The production of Dawn of Sorrow was announced on January 6 , 2005 as the first Castlevania game to be released on the Nintendo DS . Longtime Castlevania producer Koji Igarashi was in charge of the production . The choice to use the Nintendo DS in favor of the Sony PlayStation Portable was due to Aria of Sorrow 's success on Nintendo 's Game Boy Advance , and Igarashi 's observations during the 2005 E3 Media and Business Summit of both consoles . Igarashi felt that the storyline with Soma Cruz and the Tactical Soul system were a waste to only use in one game , contributing to his desire to make a sequel . The original design team from Aria of Sorrow , as well as numerous new additions from Konami Tokyo , was involved in the production of Dawn of Sorrow . Igarashi intended to include a white collar Japanese worker in the game . This worker would be a manager in a Japanese firm and have a family as well . However , the development team 's opposition to this idea forced him to drop this prospect .
 The use of the technical features of the Nintendo DS was one of the production team 's principal concerns during development . The DS touch screen was a primary point of interest , and several functions , such as picking up items on the screen and moving them , were originally intended to be incorporated . However , scheduling problems forced the development team to abandon many of these ideas . Igarashi 's primary concern with using the touch screen was that it would detract from " the Castlevania pure action gameplay , " in which the player would have to slow down play in order to use the stylus . The DS microphone was looked at during development , but Igarashi noted that although he found humorous uses for it , it was never seriously considered for inclusion into the game .
 For the graphical representations of the numerous enemies in the game , Igarashi had sprites from previous Castlevania games such as Castlevania : Symphony of the Night reused , and the development team redesigned them for use on the Nintendo DS . Unlike most recent Castlevania games , Ayami Kojima did not participate in the character designs for Dawn of Sorrow . Instead , the characters were drawn in a distinctive anime style . This was done due to influence from producer Koji Igarashi , who wanted to market the game to a younger audience . Aria of Sorrow 's sales figures did not meet expectations , and as a result , Igarashi consulted Konami 's sales department . The staff concluded that the demographics of the Game Boy Advance did not line up with the series ' target age group . Igarashi believed that the Nintendo DS inherently attracted a younger audience ,

and he was working to court them with the anime style . Furthermore , Igarashi considered the anime style a litmus test for whether future Castlevania games would incorporate it . Kojima 's hiatus was also to allow her to concentrate upon her character designs for Castlevania : Curse of Darkness .

= = = Audio = = =

The game 's music was composed by Michiru Yamane and Masahiko Kimura . Yamane , a longtime composer of music for the Castlevania series , had previously worked on the music of Castlevania games such as Symphony of the Night and Aria of Sorrow , while Kimura had developed the music for Castlevania on the Nintendo 64 . In an interview , Yamane noted that she made the music " simple " and " easy to recognize , " similar to her work on previous Castlevania games , and she specifically drew a parallel between her work on Castlevania games for the Game Boy Advance and her music in Dawn of Sorrow . Igarashi , present in the interview , asserted that making music for handheld game consoles , regardless of the type , is largely the same , although he accepted that the DS 's sound capabilities were much better than those of the Game Boy Advance 's .

= = Reception = =

Dawn of Sorrow has received critical acclaim from many video game publications , with several hailing it as the best Nintendo DS game of 2005 . In Japan , the game sold over 15 @,@ 000 units in its first week , acquiring the number ten slot in software sales . The game sold over 164 @,@ 000 copies three months after its release in the United States . The game was later re @-@ released in both Japan and North America as part of Konami 's " Konami the Best " line .
Many reviewers noted that despite being highly similar to Aria of Sorrow , it managed to define itself as a standalone title . GameSpot commented that Dawn of Sorrow succeeded in continuing 2D games as a definite genre , and that it " keeps that flame burning as bright as ever " . In addition , GameSpot considered it for the accolade of best Nintendo DS game of 2005 , with the prize ultimately going to Mario Kart DS . Editors at IGN awarded Dawn of Sorrow the prize of best adventure game on the DS for 2005 .
The gameplay , the Tactical Soul system in particular , received praise from reviewers . The sheer depth of abilities from the numerous souls found in the game was lauded , and IGN believed that the ability to have two customizable " profiles " of different abilities was " an extremely handy idea " . The relative difficulty of the game and its length was also brought into question , with GameSpot noting that the game could be finished in five hours and " is fairly easy as far as Castlevania games go " .
GameSpot extolled the game 's animation and graphics , describing the backgrounds as " intricate and gorgeous " and the individual animation , especially of enemies , as one of the game 's " highlights " . IGN echoed this assessment , calling the animation " stunning and fluid , " and noted the differences in graphics between Aria of Sorrow and Dawn of Sorrow , stating that the latter was on a " broader and more impressive scale " . The utilization of an anime style of drawing the characters , as versus the traditional gothic presentation of illustrator Ayami Kojima in previous Castlevania games , was lambasted by reviewers . GameSpy deplored the " shallow , lifeless anime images " used for the characters and Kojima 's absence from the production . IGN believed the new images were " down to the level of ' generic Saturday morning Anime ' quality " . The audio by Michiru Yamane and Masahiko Kimura was highly regarded , with GameSpot stating that it was " heads and shoulders above [Aria of Sorrow] " . IGN noted that the DS dual speaker system presented the audio " extraordinarily well " . In the review from 1UP.com , the game 's score was compared to the soundtrack of Symphony of the Night , and the sound quality and compositions considered " excellent " and " exceptional " respectively .
The functionality associated with the Nintendo DS , namely the use of the touch screen and the Magic Seal system , was subject to criticism from reviewers . GameSpot noted that it was difficult to use the stylus immediately after the game prompted the player to draw the Magic Seal , thus forcing

the player to use their fingernail on the touch screen . Other functions using the touch screen , including clearing ice blocks , were viewed as trivial , with GameSpy labeling it as a " gimmick " . However , IGN dismissed the lack of DS functionality as a major issue , claiming that it " doesn 't hurt the product in the slightest " .

 In 2010 , the game was included as one of the titles in the book 1001 Video Games You Must Play Before You Die .