= Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom =

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom , known in Japan as Ninja Ry?kenden III : Yomi no Hakobune (?????III ????? , lit . " Legend of the Ninja Dragon Sword III : The Ark from Hades ") is a side @-@ scrolling platforming video game developed and published by Tecmo . It was released in Japan on June 26 , 1991 (1991 @-@ 06 @-@ 26) for the Famicom and in North America in August 1991 for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) . The NES version was not released in Europe . It was later ported to the Atari Lynx by Atari and released in 1993 in North America and Europe , the European version retaining the North American Ninja Gaiden III title . It was also re @-@ released as part of its Ninja Gaiden Trilogy Super NES compilation in 1995 in Japan and North America . Long after , it was released for the Virtual Console service in North America on February 18 , 2008 (2008 @-@ 02 @-@ 18) for the Wii and in North America and Europe on November 28 , 2013 (2013 @-@ 11 @-@ 28) and January 23 , 2014 (2014 @-@ 01 @-@ 23) respectively for the Nintendo 3DS . It was designed by Masato Kato , who took over for Hideo Yoshizawa ? designer of the first two games in the NES series .

The game is the third installment of the Ninja Gaiden trilogy , in which the events take place between the first two games in the series , Ninja Gaiden and Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos . The player controls Ryu Hayabusa as he is framed for the murder of Irene Lew and investigates the circumstances behind her death . He eventually discovers a plan by CIA agent Foster and another person named Clancy to utilize an interdimensional rift to create and control a race of energy @-@ infused superhuman mutants . The game features similar gameplay from its previous two Ninja Gaiden titles and includes some new features such as the ability to hang overhead from pipes and sword power @-@ ups .

As with the previous titles , Ninja Gaiden III received mostly positive reviews from critics . Early reviews praised the game for its plot , gameplay , and difficulty ; later reviews criticized it for that plot being overly outlandish , inconsistent level designs , and the game 's difficulty level , in which the North American version was intentionally made harder than the Japanese version through limited continues , stronger enemies , and omission of a password system . The Atari Lynx port , while receiving general praise for graphics and controls , received poor reception for its sound and for the inability for players to see characters and items , attributing it to the Lynx 's small screen .

= = Plot = =

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom takes place between the events of the original Ninja Gaiden and Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos . The story opens with Irene Lew , one of the protagonists in the first two Ninja Gaiden titles , an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency on a mission called " Cardinal " . She gets chased to the edge of a cliff by a man who looks like Ryu Hayabusa , when the edge gives way , and Irene falls in the water to her apparent death . Ryu is accused of Irene 's murder but says it was not him , that it was somebody else who looked like him who tried to frame him . He first investigates a laboratory that Irene was investigating . After going through the laboratory , a mysterious man appears and tells Ryu to go the Castle Rock fortress , where he will give Ryu more information about Irene when he gets there .

On his way to the outer limits of Castle Rock fortress , Ryu encounters Foster , who was the head of the CIA 's Special Auxiliary Unit in the first Ninja Gaiden game , via a video image . After saying that nobody has ever made it through the fortress ' defenses alive , Ryu inquires about Irene , to which Foster replies : " I don 't know what you 're talking about . " Ryu vows to push on , Upon reaching the foundation of Castle Rock fortress , Ryu encounters his " original " , or a person designed to look like Ryu , and finds out that it was he who killed Irene . They both thrust themselves at each other , and afterwards look @-@ alike tells Ryu that he has gained all of his powers . The look @-@ alike flees , saying that Foster ordered him not to eliminate Ryu quite yet .

When Ryu reaches Castle Rock fortress , he encounters the stranger whom he met after his trip to the laboratory , who reveals his name as Clancy . He tells Ryu about a project he and Foster have been working on called the " Biohazard plan " . Clancy says that he can no longer work with Foster .

He said Foster was designing creatures called " bio @-@ noids " ? transformed superhumans that are infused with " life energy " that flows from an interdimensional rift that appeared after the demon from the first Ninja Gaiden game was defeated . He explained that this rift appeared at the site of the Castle Rock ruins , in which Foster rebuilt in order to harness this power . Clancy reveals that it was a bio @-@ noid that killed Irene , and that Foster controls the bio @-@ noids ; he pleas to Ryu to stop Foster . After making his way into the fortress , he encounters Foster and the look @-@ alike . Foster vows to eliminate Ryu and use the life energy from the rift and Ryu 's secrets of the Dragon Clan to make him into an all @-@ powerful bio @-@ noid . Just as Foster and the look @-@ alike advance on Ryu , Irene appears , to the amazement of both Ryu and Foster , and is armed with a machine gun ; she was working with the army with regards to Foster 's plan . The look @-@ alike then transmutes into a bio @-@ noid , which Ryu defeats .

After the defeat of the look @-@ alike bio @-@ noid , the door to the interdimensional rift throws wide open , and Clancy appears , telling Ryu , Irene , and Foster that they were all used as pawns in his plan to take over the ruins and claim all the life energy as his . Foster tries to follow Clancy through the door , but the energy tears him apart and is destroyed . Ryu instructs Irene to stay behind while he goes through the rift into the subspace , as he knows that he will be protected from the power that is inside . Ryu encounters the look @-@ alike bio @-@ noid again while inside the subspace , who was resurrected and transmuted into a super creature . After he defeats the look @-@ alike , Ryu is instantly teleported into a room , where he meets Clancy once again . He tells Ryu that he has already claimed the life energy as his and explains the truth behind Castle Rock ? that the ruins are a dimensional warship called the " Ancient Ship of Doom " . He says that " these super @-@ dimensional ruins are the foundation upon which a new world will be created " , and that it will now be where all new life will originate from . The ship reappears in the real world , and Clancy then fires a test shot from the ship into the distance to demonstrate its power , which Irene watches in horror . He then drops Ryu through a trap door to the outside of the ship .

Ryu fights back to the inner chambers of the Ancient Ship of Doom , where he prepares to engage in the final showdown against Clancy , who has now transmuted into a super bio @-@ noid . Clancy offers Ryu to have him and Irene work for him by his side wipe out the human race and usher a new age , but Ryu refuses and commences with the final battle . After transforming twice into progressively @-@ stronger versions of himself , Clancy is defeated by Ryu , and Ryu is transported outside the warship and back to Irene ; they both watch as the Ancient Ship of Doom is brought down and explodes , and they witness the crumbling of Castle Rock fortress . In the aftermath , Ryu tells Irene that Clancy 's and Foster 's plan have been foiled , and that mankind will live on and refuse to be part of anyone 's evil plans ; he adds that mankind would never stoop to a level in which they would completely destroy themselves out of mere ambition . The two watch as the sun rises and as a new day begins .

== Gameplay ==

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom is a side @-@ scrolling platform game in which the player controls the player character Ryu Hayabusa as he investigates the events behind Irene Lew 's death . In the game , Ryu can jump , hang , and climb up and down walls with the control pad ; pressing the jump button while holding the control pad the direction away from the wall causes Ryu to spring off the wall . Ryu is also able to attack enemies with secondary weapons while on a wall by pressing the attack button . A new feature introduced in Ninja Gaiden III is the ability for Ryu to hang overhead from pipes or ivy ; he can swing up on top or drop from them , and as with walls , he can only attack enemies while hanging with secondary weapons .

As with the previous Ninja Gaiden games , Ryu 's physical strength is represented by a life meter on the top of the screen ; it decreases when Ryu gets his enemies or other dangerous objects . Throughout the levels , the player can find " Recovery Medicine " bottles that partially replenish Ryu 's physical strength ; as with all other items in the game , they are located in crystal balls that Ryu must slash to open . The player loses a " life " when Ryu 's life meter runs out , he falls into a pit , or if the timer runs out . The game ends when players lose all their lives , but they can continue and

resume play at the beginning of the Act in which they have lost all their lives . However , in Ninja Gaiden III , players only get five continues total before being required to restart the game from the beginning .

Ryu can defeat enemies by attacking with his Dragon Sword or by using secondary weapons which consume Ryu 's " ninja power " ; such weapons include the following : " Windmill Throwing Stars " which move back and forth like boomerangs , " Fire Dragon Balls " which launch fireballs downward at an angle , the " Fire Wheel Art " which launches fireballs upward at an angle , the " Invincible Fire Wheel " that forms a series of rotating of fireballs around Ryu and destroys any enemy who comes into contact , and a new weapon in this series called the " Vacuum Wave Art " which hurls vacuum blades above and below Ryu simultaneously . Players can collect red and blue capsules to refill Ryu 's ninja power , and they can also collect " Scrolls of the spirit of the Dragon " to increase Ryu 's maximum ninja power level . Another new item in Ninja Gaiden III is the " Dragon Spirit Sword " that increases Ryu range of his sword . At the end of each Act is a boss which has its own life meter that decreases when damaged ; Ryu can defeat the boss by completely depleting its life meter . Ninja Gaiden III 's first four bosses consist of the " bio @-@ noids " ? super @-@ human creatures created and controlled by Foster to take over the world ; they each represent the four elementals : earth , wind , fire , and water .

= = = Tiger Handheld version = = =

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom was ported by Tiger Electronics as an LCD handheld game . This port features five levels in which Ryu must reach the end of each level by defeating various robots with his Dragon Sword and a " ninja weapon ball " . At the end of each level , Ryu fights a boss ; the first four levels ' bosses are the same bio @-@ noids from the NES version , while the fifth level 's final enemy is the " Giant Boss " , which must be defeated to beat the game . Gameplay is similar to the NES version , in that Ryu and the bosses have life meters and that they feature similar items . Features included built @-@ in sound which could be muted , battery backup high score , and an automatic switch @-@ off feature in which the device shuts off after three minutes of inactivity .

= = Development = =

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom was developed and released by Tecmo , who also did the previous two games in the series , Ninja Gaiden and Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos . It was released in Japan on June 26 , 1991 (1991 @-@ 06 @-@ 26) for the Famicom under the title Ninja Ry?kenden III : Yomi no Hakobune ; it was released in North America for the NES in August 1991 . It was ported to the Atari Lynx in 1993 by Atari , and then Tecmo re @-@ released the game as part of its Ninja Gaiden Trilogy Super NES compilation in 1995 . It was released for the Wii 's Virtual Console service in North America on February 18 , 2008 (2008 @-@ 02 @-@ 18) .

Ninja Gaiden III was designed by Masato Kato , who took over Hideo Yoshizawa 's main role in the game 's development from the previous two titles . In an interview with Kato , he said that Ninja Gaiden III needed " to go into a new direction " . The game was given more of a science @-@ fiction motif as opposed to the Cthulhu Mythos motif in the previous two titles ; the enemies changed to look more robotic than in the previous games . The original intent from the developers was to make the game easier than the previous titles , " to create a game a normal player can enjoy " . However , the perceived popularity of difficult video games in North America caused Tecmo to release the game for the NES with a much higher difficulty level than the Japanese version . They also decided to place the events of Ninja Gaiden III between the events of the first two titles in order to maintain continuity ; they figured that it was too difficult to continue the story after Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos , so they developed the plot sometime before the events of Ninja Gaiden II that revolved around the game 's main antagonist , Foster .

= = Reception = =

Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom received preview coverage in video gaming magazine Electronic Gaming Monthly , where it was displayed at the Consumer Software Group trade show in Tokyo on March 24 ? 25 , 1991 . They said that Ninja Gaiden III was the best Famicom game in display there , that it " easily walked away with the best for this system ! " The game was also previewed in the July 1991 issue of Nintendo Power . They said that the game contained all the old features of previous Ninja Gaiden games which included ninja arts (but they lamented at the lack of the " jump and slash " , absent from Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos) and similar usage of cinematic cutscenes that made the original Ninja Gaiden game popular . They also particularly praised the new moves Ryu had as well as an excellent plot . GamePro magazine previewed the game in August 1991 . They said that the game 's visuals were good and on par with the previous titles and that the scrolling was great .

The game was featured in Electronic Gaming Monthly 's July 1991 issue as an " EGM Exclusive " . They praised the game , saying " Ninja Gaiden gets better every time ! " It was also one of the featured games in the August 1991 issue of Nintendo Power , where it received 11 pages of coverage , which included a full walkthrough of the first four Acts plus a brief plot overview of the entire game . It was in this issue where Ninja Gaiden III was purported to be the final Ninja Gaiden game by Tecmo . As in their preview , they gave praise to the action , gameplay , elaborate plot , and difficulty . GamePro reviewed the game in its September 1991 issue . The magazine gave the game top ratings in all categories except sound . They noted the difficulty level as being dictated by the enemies ' strategic placements in the various environments ; they added that while Act 1 is easy , the remainder of the game is very difficult . The review praised the usage and usefulness of the secondary weapons , Ryu 's new ability to hang overhead , and the new addition of the sword power @-@ up , which it said bore resemblance to the game Strider . They slightly criticized the game for leaving out the " cloning " power @-@ up from Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos as well as the limited continues and lack of passwords . In March 1992 , Ninja Gaiden III received three nominations in the " Nintendo Power Awards ' 91 " in the following NES @-@ related categories : " Best Graphics and Sound " , " Best Challenge " , and " Best Overall " . It won in the " Best Challenge " category ; the magazine commented that " the game @-@ playing public knows a challenging game when they see one ! " It placed second in the " Best Graphics and Sound " category , finishing behind Battletoads for the top spot . It was the ranked as the third " Best Overall " NES title for 1991 , finishing close behind Tecmo Super Bowl .

The Atari Lynx version of Ninja Gaiden III also received coverage in various magazines in 1994 . In GamePro magazine , they criticized the fact that the Lynx 's small screen makes it difficult for players to see the various power @-@ ups and enemies and to use secondary weapons . However , they praised the good controls , and they said the sound was fine though " weird and spacy " . VideoGames & Computer Entertainment praised the game for being better than the arcade version that was previously ported to the Lynx , but they were disappointed that Tecmo did not port the first two NES Ninja Gaiden titles to the handheld , as well . Electronic Gaming Monthly praised Tecmo for a good translation of the game from the NES to the Lynx ? complete with good graphics , controls , and varied gameplay ? while saying that " Ninja Gaiden [III] is a game that the Atari Lynx has been longing for " . Despite that , the reviewers noted that the Lynx 's small screen made all the sprites too small for most players to see well , and the screen 's blurring makes it frustrating for players to track character movements . In a retrospective review , Allgame gave a mostly negative review , saying that the background makes it difficult to see foreground elements , that players cannot see their character or what power @-@ ups they are collecting , and that sound is very poor , saying " thirteen banshees all wailing different , off @-@ key songs would only begin to approach just how bad the music is " .

A few modern video gaming websites reviewed Ninja Gaiden III upon its release to the Virtual Console in 2008 . Nintendo Life 's Damien McFerran gave lackluster ratings , saying that the game " passed under the radar of many a videogame enthusiast " . He added that while the presentation was great , he pointed out flaws in the " silly " plot , the inconsistently laid @-@ out level designs , and frustrating difficulty in addition to the five @-@ continue limit . He said that many gamers would

prefer the previous two Ninja Gaiden titles over this one . IGN 's Lucas Thomas appreciated the improvement in Ryu 's ability to scale and climb on top of walls , his ability to hang overhead , good storyline , and the new items such as the Dragon Sword power @-@ up and the Vacuum Wave . His chief criticism was the game 's difficulty , saying that it 's not the " rewarding kind of difficult " but instead " the cheap , annoying kind of difficult that makes you want to throw your controller at the TV screen and just go read a book " . As with the Nintendo Life review , Thomas similarly criticized the inconsistent level design as well as a storyline which becomes progressively more bizarre , including " weird science @-@ fiction themes about bionics and clones " .

In a retrospective of the Ninja Gaiden series , Eurogamer said that Ninja Gaiden III was the only game in the NES trilogy not to make it to Europe . They made similar criticisms about the difficulty level , saying that the North American version was made more difficult than the Japanese version by utilizing limited continues , making the enemies much more powerful , and removing the password system present in the Japanese version . They said the story was too outlandish , calling the plot , of which a short @-@ lived anime Ninja Gaiden series would loosely be based , " a glorious load of old bollocks " . While the version from Ninja Gaiden Trilogy for the Super NES remedied most of their criticisms , they said that the game added new frustrations which included slower framerates , lower @-@ quality controls , and the omission and shuffling around of several tracks , which they said " is precisely the sort of thing that makes die @-@ hard videogame fans apoplectic with rage " .