

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 3

Narrative Analysis by Arthur Protasio

"IN ESSENCE, IT IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT ALLOWS THE PLAYER TO EXAMINE HIS/HER OWN VALUES BY TAKING PART IN THE PROCESS OF NARRATIVE REINCARNATION"



THE SAMURAI'S PATH

Way of Samurai 3 is, by industry genre definition, an action-adventure game. However, it is best described as a unique Kurosawa-esque hybrid of action based samurai simulator with role-playing elements and moral choices.

CLANS AND CHARACTERS

In Amana, there are three main factions: the Fujimori Clan, Ouka Clan, and the Takatane villagers. Whilst offering a blank slate for the player's avatar, the game features at least three main characters for each faction and all of them can be interacted with in order to mold narrative branches based on these relationships.

THE SAMURAI'S STRENGTH

By allowing the player to tread a variety of short narrative paths, the developers created a game that can last a couple or dozens of hours and be enjoyed by players wanting to play it only once or many times.

THE SAMURAI'S WEAKNESS

If a particular player cannot overcome the difficulties offered by the confusing user interface, clunky controls, stubborn camera, poor graphics; then the rewarding narrative experience can be easily dismissed.



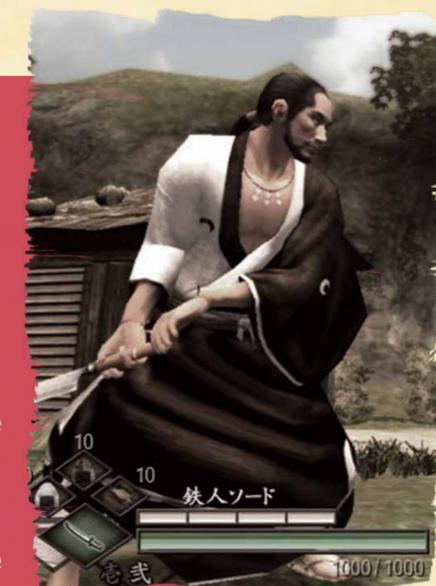
THE SAMURAI'S TECHNIQUES

The game is so resolute on the idea that the player is living one of many different stories (and lives), that elements from the game illustrate this, such as a woman who breaks the fourth wall and asks the player avatar if he has been in that world before.

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SUMMATION

The game delivers an experience drenched in cultural influence, ranging from cinema, history, and religion. This defines the game as a work of expression capable of conveying powerful and meaningful messages, especially ones referring to the freedom of living different stories. Choice and consequence serve as the structure of narrative and ethical testing grounds.



LESSONS

VARIOUS SHORT STORIES CAN BEST A SINGLE NOVEL

Instead of offering a single story, the narrative experience is grounded on the concept of narrative reincarnation or, in other words, the exploration of the game world through the subsequent reliving of many lives.

PRODUCTION VALUES MATTER, BUT ARE NOT THE ESSENCE

It is hard to believe in a samurai game with clunky swordplay and this definitely plays against the series' reputation – not to mention the graphics and translation. However, the narrative experience is so unique that it is able to salvage the whole.

ALWAYS INTEGRATE THEME, STORY AND GAMEPLAY

Using a theme as the core concept for the development of a game's narrative is crucial to having a cohesive design. Once the theme serves as bedrock for the plot, players will feel engaged and notice a harmonious meld between embedded and emergent narrative elements.

EMPOWER PLAYERS, BUT SHOW THAT FREEDOM COMES WITH CONSEQUENCE

Players like when they are empowered and given the opportunity to make important narrative decisions. Way of the Samurai 3 does this well by revealing the protagonist initially as a simple and unknown character, but later as a hugely influential figure capable of determining the fate of the region of Amana. However, the greater the power, the greater the expectations become.

