

Iwata Asks Interview on Awakening

An All-New Fire Emblem

Editor's note: This interview was originally published in Japanese in March, 2012.
Iwata

Today we're here to talk about Fire Emblem: Awakening, so I have gathered staff from Intelligent Systems¹ and Nintendo. One key point today is the number of people, so thank you for coming. 1. Intelligent Systems Co., Ltd.: A game developer who has developed Nintendo software, including the Fire Emblem series and the Paper Mario series, and development support tools for successive hardware. Headquartered in Kyoto. Nickname: IS, pronounced liked the word "is."

Everyone

It's a pleasure.

Iwata

Let's start with Narihiro-san and self-introductions, including what you worked on for this game.

Narihiro

All right. I'm Tohru Narihiro from Intelligent Systems. As with previous games in the Fire



Emblem series, I was development producer.

Iwata

Did your role change a little from before?

Narihiro

Yes. I wanted to try some changes, so I entrusted Higuchi-san with the actual work. At first, he wouldn't even let me touch the software! (laughs) Because of that I was in a somewhat removed position, which was very refreshing.

Iwata

Uh-huh. Okay, Higuchi-san?

Higuchi

Thank you for inviting me again. I'm Masahiro Higuchi from Intelligent Systems. I was in the same position on the last game, Fire Emblem: Shin Monsho no Nazo.² I was project manager.



². Fire Emblem: Shin Monsho no Nazo: Hikari to Kage no Eiyu: A simulation RPG released for the Nintendo DS system in July 2010. This was the thirteenth game in the series, and was not released outside of Japan.

Iwata

You say you were in the same position, but this time you were called upon to make decisions without relying on Narihiro-san.

Higuchi

Yes. In that respect, I had a big responsibility. I spent a long time worrying over the planning, so it's emotional for me to be here today.

Iwata

Okay. Maeda-san?

Maeda

Thank you. I'm Kouhei Maeda from Intelligent Systems. As with the previous game, I was director. This game isn't a renewal or sequel, it's a completely new game, so I gave it more than



ever before.

Iwata

Does whether you start with a base or make something completely new make a difference in the birth pangs associated with being a director?

Maeda

Yes. I learned a lot.

Iwata

And Kusakihara-san. This is our first time to meet.

Kusakihara

It's nice to meet you. I'm Toshiyuki Kusakihara from Intelligent Systems. I was involved with this game as art director. I determined the overall direction of the art. I also did quite a lot of the actual art, so I worked at it pretty hard from start to finish.



Iwata

You turned it around pretty quickly?

Kusakihara

Yes, that's right. And I really had Higuchi-san on his toes! (laughs)

Iwata

How so?

Kusakihara

Overall, I suppose many of the proposals were exorbitant. Higuchi-san has been involved with the Fire Emblem series since Fire Emblem: Seisen no Keifu³, but more than ever before, I think he was left speechless. (laughs) 3. Fire Emblem: Seisen no Keifu: A simulation RPG released for the Super NES system in May 1996. The fourth game in the series.

Higuchi

The staff has worked on the series for so long that when it comes to the "essence of Fire Emblem," there are certain tendencies, despite some ambiguity. This time, we wanted to make a different Fire Emblem game than ever before, especially through new visuals, so we made a point of bringing in Kusakihara-san, who had never been involved with Fire Emblem before.

Iwata

So Kusakihara-san brought new blood to the series.

Higuchi

Yes. But the changes were like never before, so I actually held my head, plopped down, and was like, "Are you sure we want to put that in?!"

Iwata

...That must have made you speechless! (laughs)

Kusakihara

I think I knocked the words right out of him about three times a week! (laughs)

Iwata

But with the history behind it, and all the fans, didn't you feel pressure when suggesting something new?

Kusakihara

Quite a lot of pressure, but it's always been my practice that once I determine a policy and start swinging the bat, a lot would be lost by changing course along the way, so I swing clean through.

Iwata

I see. And Kozaki-san, it's good to meet you, too. I've heard that we called on you a lot for character design.

Kozaki

I'm Kozaki Yusuke, i



ation. This time was...well, it was a

lot of work! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Kozaki

This was my first time to design a game with so many characters, so it was a challenge.

Iwata

How did that come about?

Kozaki

I got an e-mail through my homepage asking if I would do about 60 characters. I replied, "Is that for Fire Emblem?" and they were like, "I can't reveal the title right now." (laughs)

Iwata

Oh, so that's how it began. How did you come to ask Kozaki-san for his participation?

Kusakihara

I wanted this game to be something new and powerful. So when I thought about the conditions for the visual aspect, I was looking for someone with the skill to make a distinction between all the characters—from pretty girls to muscly older guys and monsters—as well as someone with speed.

Iwata

That's quite a lot of conditions.

Kusakihara

Yes. Then I hit upon Kozaki-san. Actually, this isn't his first contact with the series. He worked on illustrations for the Fire Emblem trading card game⁴, so it was a curious turn of events. 4. Fire

Emblem trading card game: A trading card game based on the Fire Emblem series. Six series were released in Japan.

Iwata

There were difficulties aside from the number of characters and their variety, weren't there?

Kozaki

Yes, and that was the biggest thing. The fans have raised the series this whole time, so simply designing as usual wouldn't appeal to new fans. For that reason, we aimed for design that would bring in new players. To be honest, in the past, I've tried Fire Emblem a few times but always stopped partway through. I didn't think it was boring, but it was difficult to come into the series in the middle. I was that kind of person, which actually inspired me to accept this job.

Iwata

When it came to the mission of spreading the game, you understood the motivation to which you needed to respond.

Kozaki

Yes, that clicked with me.

Iwata

All right. Yokota-san.

Yokota

I'm Genki Yokota from the Software Planning & Production Department. I was the director at Nintendo. I've always been a fan of Fire Emblem, so...uh, I feel like I'm saying the same thing as when we discussed [Xenoblade Chronicles](#)! (laughs) I really had a rapport with IS about changing the overall image, so it went really smoothly. But it isn't all that different. I think when people



play it, they will say, "Oh, this is Fire Emblem!"

Iwata

Okay. Yamagami-san?

Yamagami

I'm Hitoshi Yamagami, also from the Software Planning & Production Department. I was producer. I've had the same role throughout the series, but like Narihiro-san, my involvement



was less intensive than ever before.

Iwata

Because Yokota-san was out front.

Yamagami

Yes. At first, this project was bogged down for about one year. I was involved up until deciding on the current policy, but once it got running, I handed it to Yokota-san. In my experience, the more of a struggle it is to get something started, the more smoothly it goes once you start making it.

Iwata

That struggle at the start is important. So let's start with those birth pangs. Yamagami-san, who did you meet with first?

Yamagami

Mainly Higuchi-san. Ever since we made Fire Emblem: Shin Monsho no Nazo, I'd been proposing that we make a new game. The game would be Fire Emblem, but you could enjoy a different world, like—to take an extreme example—the modern world.

Iwata

Huh? The modern world? That's shocking... (laughs)

Yamagami

All sorts of ideas came up, but they were all going a little too far, so it was hard.

Higuchi

Yeah. We were groping around at one thing or another so that people who have played Fire Emblem until now would be comfortable picking it up, while new players would at least take a little interest. One of those things we were thinking about was a change in the way it looked.

Iwata



What kind of proposals were you making?

Yamagami

(laughs) A game called Fire Emblem 2011.

Iwata

2011?

Higuchi

Yeah. (laughs) We made proposals that were a complete departure from the medieval worldview so far—like Fire Emblem completely in the modern world or the one which has the sense of an fairy tale. But they were too far out, so we couldn't get started. (laughs)

Iwata

Maeda-san, do you remember what the other suggestions were like?

Maeda

One idea that came up within the team was, well, it was Mars.

Iwata

Mars?!

Maeda

Yeah. Fighting on Mars.

Iwata

Fighting on Mars?!

Kusakihara

Now I know why Yamagami-san was like, "That's too much!"

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Yamagami

I was like, "Is that even Fire Emblem?!" (laughs) In the end, such a drastic break didn't go very well.

Making the Ultimate Culmination

Iwata

So how did you find a solution?

Yamagami

Well, production of Fire Emblem: Shin Monsho no Nazo neared the end without us ever finding a solution and then it was time to determine the next story. I proposed to Higuchi-san and Maeda-san that instead of a complete departure, we could make a culmination of all the Fire Emblem games so far—and their eyes lit up. (laughs) The idea that resulted became the basis for this game.

Iwata

Are you aware that your eyes lit up?

Higuchi

Yeah. (laughs) A culmination was easy to think about, so the plan came together in about one month.

Iwata

But shooting for a culmination wouldn't solve everything, would it? I would think that when it came to what is good about a certain installment, opinions would diverge. Was that true?

Maeda

Yes. There were all sorts of opinions and we even performed a survey of all company employees. As a result, we focused on liking the characters as what's fun about Fire Emblem and



were able to combine the good parts of each product.

Iwata

Yokota-san, were you fairly involved since the process of pulling that together?

Yokota

Yeah. All of a sudden.

Iwata

When Yokota-san, a Fire Emblem fan, showed up, did you all think, "Now here's a director who knows his stuff!" (laughs)

Maeda

We were really thankful! (laughs)

Kusakihara

We were on the same wavelength. The gears synced up as soon as we started moving and turned right up to the end.

Maeda

He knows all the previous works, so it was great how we were able to easily share sentiments like "It would be cool if we combined this element with this one."

Yokota

It made an impression how we exchanged opinions in a positive way, so it was really enjoyable. (laughs)

Yamagami

I feel like once we got started, we did it all at once.

Narihiro

I suppose that's because what we made was the ultimate culmination.

Iwata

What exactly does the "ultimate culmination" mean?

Narihiro

As you pointed out, various opinions arose in pulling together a culmination, but we were like, "To achieve our goal, let's just put in everything!" And the power of the development team achieved all kinds of things. We hardly wavered, so we were able to surpass a culmination to



pull off the ultimate culmination.

Iwata

When you add lots of elements, you end up battling a lot of contradictory ones. Just putting them all into a single set of game mechanics multiplies the number of things you have to do. But the team cruised along as if that were nothing?

Narihiro

Yes. Because of that power, they were able to flexibly absorb all sorts of things.

Higuchi

For example, take individual on-map units.⁵ We assumed that it was enough to be able to tell what kind of fighter they were, but the section in charge of them had a strong opinion about it and said, "Since we've got a system in which you can be all kinds of different types of combatant, let me change the faces on the map for the characters!" Doing that alone would cause the amount of work to jump up, but we were like, "All right, let's do it!" 5. On-map units: Icons on the map that represent the various characters.

Iwata

You kept expanding the amount of work, but moved forward with a positive attitude.

Higuchi

Yes. Work kept bubbling up, but we had a kind of power and said, "We'll take it all in!"

Iwata

And that's why Narihiro-san, who was watching from the sidelines, thought it wasn't a culmination so much as the ultimate culmination.

Narihiro

Right. (laughs) Looking at it objectively, I was worried about whether they could pull off so much volume, but they got through it and achieved the ultimate culmination.

Maeda

Everyone on the team said, "I want to put this in!" and "If we did this, it would be more fun!" And they actually did it, so it rapidly grew in volume and enjoyableness.

Yokota

A big theme this time is love for the characters, so I'm glad we were thorough about it. We can't be certain that every player will see everything, but if some at least think, "Oh, they put in a visual for this, too," then their affection for the characters will increase.



Iwata

You were even thorough about places that a few players might pay attention to.

Maeda

Yes. Another theme this time is bonds, so we wanted to express the ties between comrades through the mechanics, and put in [a duel system in which you fight cooperatively with nearby comrades](#). At first, the two won't be very strong, but as they come to get along better, they'll get stronger.

Iwata

That didn't exist before, giving rise to a difficult problem with regard to overall balance.

Yokota

Yes. We wondered if perhaps two-on-one was taboo in Fire Emblem. But an opponent who doesn't have the concept of bonds can't team up with anyone, which works out well for the player, so we put it in. Besides, I think various styles of play will arise, with some finding it simply pleasing to have characters who get along well fighting alongside each other, while others may have them fight separately.

Yamagami

And the tempo of battle improves. I always attack upward, so I'm always in danger, but if you put a character beside me who's attacking on his own, I feel like I want to get along with him. You're conscious of such ties as you play, so I thought it was a great system.

Iwata

Oh, I see. The duel system strengthens your emotional involvement with the characters.

Maeda

And the characters talk during battle, which might give rise to greater attachment to them.

Iwata

Right, another characteristic of this game is the [voiceovers](#).

Yokota

We thought giving the characters voices would make them easier to imagine, and that having voiceovers was a matter of course, so I think we naturally settled on that. (laughs) But if you go with full voice, the volume increases a lot, and we wanted to pay attention to the pace of conversation, so this time we went for rapid-fire lines that would evoke an atmosphere.

Higuchi

Because it's an all-new game, we put in everything we could. We used some eminent voices, so players may think, "Oh, this character is performed by that one voice actor!"

Yokota

And [when comrades fight together, a heart appears](#).

Iwata

Even if it isn't a boy and a girl?

Maeda

Well, it's about love. (laughs)

Iwata

I guess the themes are love and bonds! (laughs)

Syncing with "Awakening"

Iwata

Yokota-san, you've been in charge of all sorts of games. What was characteristic of development this time?

Yokota

Maeda-san's toughness and his avaricious adoption of ideas and the way he thinks about things incredibly positively was characteristic this time. I've never seen him look tired. That's the most amazing thing.

Yamagami

Even though he looked on death's door when planning the new project.

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

Was it more tiring to think about Fire Emblem on Mars?

Maeda

Uh-huh! I was confused! (laughs)

Yokota

But piling up new things in a positive way resulted in a new style of play. For example, you can develop the characters endlessly, so even if your parameters don't rise much when you level up, you can play without worrying because you'll have plenty of chances later on. What's more, in Casual Mode⁶, even if a comrade is defeated, you don't have to hesitate in developing them. 6. Casual Mode: In this mode, when a comrade character becomes incapacitated, that character isn't lost and will be available for use on later maps. This mode first appeared in the previous game, Fire Emblem: Monsho no Nazo.

Iwata

Is there still a controversy over Casual Mode?

Higuchi

No, it's all right now.

Yamagami

I'd like to hear what you really think.

Higuchi

No, no! It's really all right! (laughs) A lot of people even at the company play casually.

Iwata

Some people think Casual Mode is heresy, while no doubt some would say they only discovered the enjoyment of Fire Emblem because of it.

Higuchi

Yes, there are quite a few of the latter. Especially among team members who played it for the first time, some said it was difficult without casual play, so I thought Yamagami-san had shown foresight. Sorry for getting huffy about that on the phone. (laughs)

Yamagami

No, no. But that was a surprise. It really was!

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Yokota

I was totally against it from the start, too. But after coming to work on it, I thought Casual Mode was great! (laughs)

Iwata

There are different ways to play and enjoy it—stoically or adventurously in various ways.

Yokota

That's right. There are two modes and three difficulty settings, so it was difficult volume-wise. (laughs) If you combine Normal with Casual Mode, it could be a little easy.

Maeda

But when we had new employees test play it, I realized there was a value to having various modes, because if it was too difficult on Classic Mode, they could play to the end in Casual Mode. I think a lot of people will play all the way to the end.

Yokota

And we can't go without mentioning how Higuchi-san and Maeda-san applied themselves to adjusting the difficulty so their wives could play it. (laughs)

Higuchi

No, no...let's leave that out! (laughs) The three difficulty levels are Normal, Hard and Lunatic⁷, and they each play a certain role. Normal is recommended for people who regularly play RPGs, and we can recommend it to beginners. On the other hand, we want true masters of Fire Emblem



to play in Lunatic!

⁷. Lunatic: The highest difficulty setting in Fire Emblem. This mode first appeared in Fire Emblem: Shin Monsho no Nazo. Enemy capabilities are higher across the board and enemy weapons are all advanced-class.

Iwata

It's a challenge from the developers.

Kusakihara

Maeda-san cleared it.

Maeda

Yeah. I did clear it on Lunatic—and the difficulty was incredible!

Narihiro

(laughs wryly)

Iwata

Narihiro-san seems perplexed.

Narihiro

Lunatic is beyond me.

Iwata

Narihiro-san says it's impossible. (laughs)

Maeda

There are hidden elements above that, too.

Iwata

The challenge from the developers is itself an ultimate culmination.

Narihiro

When it comes to the roles they each play, I think Hard is just about right, but—no, Hard is pretty tough stuff. But Lunatic just isn't right!

Iwata

Like the difference between plenty stoic and simply masochistic? (laughs)

Narihiro

Yeah! (laughs) This time, I think people who play it once on Normal will then want to play it on Hard.

Iwata

Ah. If that's true, then you've polished up the difficulty perfectly.

Narihiro

Yes. It's seasoned just right. I was keeping an eye on the progress this time from a stance similar to that of the general player, but after I finished playing it comfortably in Normal, I wanted a little more and felt like taking it on in Hard, and I thought that might have been something missing from recent Fire Emblem games. I don't know if it's what they were really aiming for this time, but in the end, I thought it was made with a great amount of variety. So while it's cast in terms of difficulty settings, I think players will be able to enjoy various slightly different kinds



of gameplay.

Iwata

I feel like that can't be described simply as "difficulty."

Narihiro

Right. But I'm praising it, you know. (laughs)

Maeda

Yeah. (laughs)

Narihiro

As mentioned earlier, including the initial conception, it took a long time, but if we had been shooting for a culmination from the start, I don't think it would have turned out this way. In the end, it turned out as a culmination precisely because we overcame that period of difficulty.

Iwata

That's right. Starting by trying to change it—even going so far as to consider Mars and 2011 versions—led to this culmination. Some kind of essence from those discussions over expanding and changing it is surely included in this culmination.

Narihiro

Yes. I think that dark time we passed through led to good results.

Iwata

What Narihiro-san just said is suggestive of the title. The subtitles in Japanese and the logo have always adopted a certain form. Changing that for a traditional series takes some courage. Who opened the way for that?

Yokota

As for the title, IS and I wanted to change it and put forth various ideas, but none seemed to fit, so we came up with one following the usual convention and showed it to Yamagami-san, who said it wasn't right.

Iwata

From the same kind of title, you couldn't sense your determination to change the game.

Yamagami

Right. Then I just tossed out, "We need something that hits with impact! Like 'Awakening'! And



he was like, "Oh, that might work..." (laughs)

Yokota

That word really struck home. At that stage, no ideas came up that could beat it, so in one shot we decided to call it Fire Emblem: Awakening.

Yamagami

As for changing the logo, we would be putting the name "Awakening" in it, so it just followed from wanting a logo that would fit that.

Yokota

We all agreed that we wanted the overall design to be more stylish, so we decided on it relatively quickly.

Iwata

Were you nervous when you released it to the fans?

Higuchi

Yes, but instead of having them think it was the same ol' same ol', I wanted to make an impact, so I wanted to know as soon as possible what everyone's impression was. I thought it would be better that it generate rumors.

Iwata

The word "Awakening" synced up perfectly with your determination to make the ultimate culmination of Fire Emblem.

Yokota

I suppose so. So we should talk about the game mechanics we put in by unanimous consent so as to definitely not depart from that ultimate culmination. But Yamagami-san should talk about that...

"I Want to Get Married Again"

Yamagami

When I originally talked about a culmination of Fire Emblem, I said, "I want to get married again." (laughs) Within the Fire Emblem series, what has left the greatest impression on me was the marriage system.⁸ 8. Marriage system: It was introduced with the fourth game in the series, Fire Emblem: Seisen no Keifu, released for the Super NES system in May 1996. During the game, characters fall in love and that pairing causes their children's abilities to change.

Yokota

This time, a big theme is love for the characters, so I also definitely wanted to put in the marriage system, and IS agreed.

Iwata

And that proceeded smoothly?

Yokota

The concept went smoothly. We wanted to increase the number of variations in marriage and couple pairings and make it so you could become involved with anyone in your unit, so there was a time problem, though.

Maeda

You can marry any of your comrades. So this time, we were like, "I want a [special graphic](#) for when you get married," and "I want voiceovers for when they confess their feelings," and we ended up preparing that for everyone! (laughs)

Kozaki

At first, Kusakihara-san even said he wanted to put in everyone kissing!

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Kozaki

We were totally against it, though! (laughs)

Yokota

Well, there's something similar to it, so be sure to check it out.

Kusakihara

I thought it would add to the experience. That was another "speechless point."

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

But this time, despite putting in so much more than planned, you didn't miss the due date that was originally agreed upon. What was the secret behind that?



Higuchi

Hmm, that's a difficult question. (laughs) If I think about it, I don't really know. But we did put in a lot more than planned, so we decided on a deadline and were prepared to give up if it didn't work.

Iwata

Oh, I see. The ship would have sailed even without all this cargo. Everyone somehow shared that attitude, so you helped each other out and loaded up the ship as hard as you could.

Higuchi

Yes.

Yamagami

Everyone really wanted to put those things in.

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

Maybe I'm exaggerating, but I sense that for the most part, there is a pile of work to be done on a desk, and everyone took care of one by one without any instruction, which is the ideal way to carry out a project. The energy behind your desire to make an ultimate culmination of Fire Emblem pushed everyone along.

Higuchi

Yes, the target was easy to see. A big reason we could determine a deadline and plough ahead was that theme of a culmination.

Iwata

Kozaki-san, it must have been hard for you to get pulled into this.

Kozaki

Yeah. (laughs) No matter how I looked at it, the schedule they sent overlapped other jobs. In any case, the enthusiasm of the team was incredible. As I worked, I thought, "I admire how they

encourage each other."



Iwata

When the energy is massive, do you sometimes start moving as if dragged in, even from a different place? When we do something and get a big response from elsewhere, we're pleased.

Kozaki

Yes. The people working on this project are longtime fans of Fire Emblem, so I wanted to make something that hard-core types as well as new players would accept. After receiving the job, I went around the fan sites, checked out their illustrations, and analyzed them, like, "What does everyone like about Fire Emblem?" and "What's missing?" Then I aimed for designs that would be neither too new nor too old.

Higuchi

He was in touch with Kusakihara-san, and if any trouble arose, Kusakihara-san would go visit him.

Kozaki

Yeah. He would sit at my assistant's desk and work together with me from the time I got up until I went to bed.

Kusakihara

About three times, we went on a stretch for five days and four nights. When I would finally get back, I felt like Taro Urashima! (laughs) (Editor's note: Taro Urashima is a Japanese folklore, a telling of a young man who thought he traveled for only three days to an undersea palace, but upon his return to shore he finds out that time had past 300 years.)

Iwata

Even during several days, if you make quick progress, the contents can change quite a lot.

Kusakihara

For sure. I was so busy with actual work that my head was spinning, so I didn't get to sit down and play it until the end, and I was surprised at how much we'd made. Sometimes I would play

for a bit with Kozaki-san drawing away beside me. (laughs)



Kozaki

I was surprised at how quickly they were implementing what I'd drawn.

Kusakihara

As for the character graphics implemented in the game, Kozaki-san made most of the main characters. There were a lot of characters, and the deadline was pretty tight. Some regular manga work came in at the same time, so Higuchi-san and I were at our wits' end! (laughs) But the data that came up was amazing. As we were going through that, the data came together, and he saw it through to the end without any trouble.

Yokota

We were able to include a lot of Kozaki-san's particular tastes.

Kozaki

Yes, that's right.

Yokota

It made an impression on me how when we first discussed character design, he wasn't crazy about green hair. Fire Emblem traditionally has green and pink hair and so forth, but that's up to the creator's taste, so we were like, "Oh well..." and accepted it.

Kozaki

Yeah, they were fairly flexible.


Everyone

(laughs)

Yokota

But later he said green hair would be okay where it was important.

Kozaki

As I was drawing it, I thought, "Hey, that's not so bad!" (laughs) Princes are central to the game this time, so we made sure to put in  [princely elements](#) (like in parts of Chrom's costume) that has been around since the Sixties.

Yokota

With Kozaki-san's taste in there like that, it makes quite a fresh impression!

What Is the "Essence of Fire Emblem"?

Iwata

This will be the first packaged title from Nintendo to have additional content become available.⁹ We imagine that the ultimate culmination concept and additional content may be well suited to each other. I feel as if the main game itself may not exhaust the potential of the mechanics. 9. Additional content including new maps and episodes not included in the packaged game will become available for purchase and download in sets. The first installment of additional content in North America is TBD.

Yokota

Yeah. The additional content idea came up toward the end of development, and just putting in a mechanism for downloading and running additional content made us uneasy with regard to the schedule, so instead of being all for it, we weren't sure what to do and consulted IS.

Higuchi

Huh?! No, no... You impressed us that it was already decided. We were taken aback, but... we did it. (laughs)

Yokota

S-Sorry! (laughs) That was another time when Maeda-san put forth a very positive opinion.

Maeda

When that came up, most of what was going into the software was done, and it was the greatest volume ever, but I thought it would lend a new enjoyment if we could add a different episode in

addition to the complete main game. Besides, production of the main game would end, but we



could still make additional content.

Iwata

After making all that, you wanted to make more!

Everyone

(laughs)

Maeda

Yeah. (laughs) There was still a lot we wanted to put in, so I thought, "It's a good thing we can still add things like that."

Kozaki

He was so excited that I wondered if maybe he thought this would be the last game! (laughs)

Maeda

Well, there would be concern that some might wonder if the game content was a little thin without buying the additional content, so a big assumption was that we had to make the main game solid.

Iwata

At the same time as making it compatible with additional content, the task arose of polishing up the main game so as not to fall under criticism that the game is lacking unless you buy the extra content.

Yamagami

When the additional content idea came up, the main game was almost complete, so we couldn't take anything away from the main game's story or change it. We got into it because if we just made a loader for downloading additional content, we could make all kinds of stuff later.

Iwata

So it was perfect that this came up just when you wanted to make more. I have to ask, but...weren't you tired?

Everyone

(silent)

Iwata

Um, what does this silence mean? (laughs)

Maeda

In all honesty, I was overjoyed!

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Yokota

I knew it!! (laughs)

Maeda

I'm actually still in the middle of making the additional map. I thought a mechanism for being able to make a bunch more stuff from now on would be a great...uh, what's the matter?

Yokota

I was worried about the game mechanics.

Yamagami

We were worried about conflicts arising, like if you hadn't bought the additional content, how would we display as-yet unpurchased items?

Iwata

It was a challenge with few previous examples. When you make an ultimate culmination like this, does your understanding change of what the essence of Fire Emblem is?

Narihiro

This may just be my own opinion, but I think this game represents that well. Fire Emblem has always been discussed in terms of the tension of a sim and the story, but particularly in the

simulation part, the element of enjoying the story and relationships was really big. This time, that is directly included in the mechanics through the duels and marriages, so the relationships



between units are portrayed particularly well.

Iwata

Despite the increase in work due to the large scale of the pairs.

Narihiro

Yes. As relationships develop between characters, history arises along with the number of people who play, so I was reminded of the essence of Fire Emblem in how much you can get into the game. I think that's why we polished up the gameplay so that players will feel "bonds" that aren't visible to the eye.

Iwata

What do you think, Higuchi-san?

Higuchi

I think the essence of Fire Emblem is in how the ties between characters—the character's conversations and worldviews, the friends and lovers and parents and children—connect and form a big group, and you sense how all the characters are living and participating in the game. As the bonds between the characters form and the conversation increases, you want to have more and more conversation. On the other hand, I think the essence of Fire Emblem is how you can enjoy a game with the tension of a sim.

Iwata

Yes. How about you, Maeda-san?

Maeda

I think the essence of Fire Emblem in this game is love. You love the characters, the images, the dialogue, and the characters playing an active role and getting stronger, as well as the friendship, romance and familial affection between certain characters. I realized all over again how those elements are incredibly fun. Another form of love toward the characters is how you can show characters you're proud of to each other through [StreetPass Team](#) via StreetPass¹⁰ and through

[cooperative play with other people](#). 10. StreetPass: A feature that allows users who enable it to walk around with their Nintendo 3DS system turned on to exchange certain game data with other Nintendo 3DS users whom they pass on the street that also have StreetPass enabled. Players of Fire Emblem: Awakening will be able to use StreetPass to send each other teams they have developed.

Iwata

Right. And you, Kusakihara-san?

Kusakihara

I loved the first Fire Emblem: Ankoku Ryu to Hikari no Tsurugi¹¹ and Fire Emblem Gaiden¹² and played them all the time, and if I look back at the way I felt then, I played as if there was really a world there within the NES. While recalling that feeling this time, I gave shape to the scenery that unfolded within my head back when I used to play and tried to make visuals that would make players today feel that gameworld. So with regard to the essence of Fire Emblem, I think it lies in how you feel like there are people actually alive inside that rich world. And I also put effort into making Maeda-san's ambitions come true. 11. Fire Emblem: Ankoku Ryu to Hikari no Tsurugi. The first game in the Fire Emblem series. It was a simulation RPG released for the NES system in April 1990.

12. Fire Emblem Gaiden: A simulation RPG released for the NES system in March 1992.

Iwata

I see. Kozaki-san, did your impression of the essence of Fire Emblem change?

Kozaki

Yes. I think simulation RPGs are easier to get absorbed in for people who are comfortable with connections and conversation between people in the real world. The players will connect emotionally with lots of characters, but as for creation of the visuals, I intended to design with a mindset that said, "If any of the characters were in my class, I would like them."

Iwata

That's similar to what Maeda-san said. And now Yokota-san, who's been a fan forever.

Yokota

To me, the essence of Fire Emblem is the multitude of options. For example, choosing which characters to develop, or which ones to pair up, or which weapon to give them, or how to clear a certain chapter. There are lots of options.

Iwata

It truly becomes your own adventure.

Yokota

That's right. It's fun to talk about your adventures with your friends. That's the appeal of Fire Emblem. I don't think that attraction will change this time, so now that we're dealing with a culmination, I think it would be great if that strengthened further.

Iwata

Yamagami-san?

Yamagami

The usual RPG is a story about the main character and a few other people. But Fire Emblem doesn't mind which of the many characters you feel for. Fire Emblem is about raising that character as much as you can and spinning out your own story. But until now, however far you went, you had to complement some parts with your imagination. The most pleasing thing this time is how the mechanics and gameworld are more fused. In other words, if you want this character you've lovingly developed and another character to get close, they'll fight together via the duel system, and the deeper their bond, the better they'll fight together, so the game responds to your hopes.

Iwata

That's right.

Yamagami

In other words, the more you nurture those feelings, the more that character develops the way you want. Truly, that emotional part is clearly reflected in the game. I think the players will be able to feel that essence of Fire Emblem.

Iwata

All right, thank you. You each expressed it a different way, but I think your ideas about the essence of Fire Emblem are very similar!

"What Enthusiasm!"

Iwata

Lastly, I'd like to ask what it is, from your own standpoint, you'd like to draw the players' attention to most. We'll start with Nintendo and Yamagami-san this time.

Yamagami

All right. It didn't come up earlier today, but we put a lot of effort into the cutscenes. In order to make cutscenes that match the large image of Fire Emblem this time, we produced them with the concept of a grand spectacle like the opening of the Taiga Drama historical television series. Not only are they thoroughly appealing as 3D movies, but I think players will really be able to feel



the worldview of this game.

Iwata

We showed some in [Nintendo Direct](#)¹³ on February 22, 2012. 13. Nintendo Direct: Nintendo Direct is a series of Internet presentations in which Nintendo directly delivers the latest Nintendo information.

Yamagami

Yes. While we captured the atmosphere of the story with the cutscenes, I think it would be great if the players can fully enjoy the greatest appeal of this game, which is how it develops in line with everyone's playing.

Iwata

All right. Yokota-san?

Yokota

Okay. We've talked a lot about the mechanics, but we've thought a lot about the story, too. We wanted to make a slight change and included elements that didn't exist in previous Fire Emblem

games. Within the traditional story regarding the nations, I hope players will sense a new kind of



Fire Emblem.

Iwata

Kozaki-san, if you would please?

Kozaki

With regard to the visuals, the fastest way would be to take a look, but I think the facial expressions are the richest ever. Each character expresses a full range of emotion, so it's easier to



get into the dialogue scenes.

Iwata

And Kusakihara-san?

Kusakihara

As mentioned before, everything miraculously went the same direction, and it's the result of everyone racing at full speed, so I think those who pick it up will be able to sense that enthusiasm. Take the fighting scenes, for example. In many of them, the characters move far better than we expected in the design phase. I think how the characters appear to have life

breathed into them is worth seeing. I definitely hope people won't turn off the fight animation.



Iwata

Why do you think the movement turned out so well?

Kusakihara

Hmm...it's a mystery to me.

Yokota

Perhaps it's love.

Kusakihara

That's it! (laughs) It even surprises me.

Iwata

When development is infused with energy is when it's surprising to see the parts you yourself have designed. Maeda-san?

Maeda

About SpotPass¹⁴, I wanted everyone to connect every day for new fun, so in the form of what we call a [▶ Bonus Team](#), a team of characters based on past games assembles about once a day and you can become comrades and fight and buy items. But altogether there are about 120 teams! (laughs) So after release, I hope people will enjoy it little-by-little for a long time.



14. SpotPass: A feature in the Nintendo 3DS system that when activated receives various information and content when near a wireless LAN access point.

Iwata

This time really has momentum—as if the brakes are broken! (laughs)

Kozaki

It's just like the [▶picture on the package](#). Everyone is advancing in the same direction.

Iwata

Yes, that's right. The package illustration and mood on the development team are in sync. Higuchi-san?

Higuchi

This time, a lot is represented in 3D, but in addition to the regular viewpoint from the side, we added a [▶first-person perspective](#). You can look each other in the eye as you fight, but I hope people will also enjoy the 3D. We also put more into the sound than ever before, with real violin performances and so on. We tried a lot of new things, so I hope people will listen to it in a good



sound environment.

Iwata

Well, Narihiro-san, what did you think as you listened to today's conversation?

Narihiro

There was more enthusiasm than I expected.

Everyone

(laughs)

Narihiro

Watching from the side, I was pretty worried, but the excitement of the core developers is clearly reflected in the final product. It has more elements than we could possibly enumerate, so I think

it turned out to be a very concentrated game. Also, for the first time in a while, we put in a lot on



the theme of one generation taking over for another.

Iwata

That's part of the culmination we spoke of.

Narihiro

Yeah. And continuing from last time, you can make your own unit, in which your own avatar participates. The first time, I played as a boy, and the second time set it to a girl, but partway through, I realized I better not let her get married! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Iwata

I suppose you felt as if she were your daughter? (laughs)

Narihiro

Yeah. Rather than my own unit, I treated it like my daughter.

Kozaki

You wouldn't want her to fall for the wrong type of boy! (laughs)

Narihiro

That's right! (laughs) Like, "Only someone worthy can marry her!"

Everyone

(laughs loudly)

Narihiro

Assembling the essence of a culmination like that gave rise to new emotions, which was incredibly refreshing. Even having played it for so long, I still make new discoveries, and the story truly encompasses a lot, so it was really refreshing to play.

Iwata

It truly does feel like more than an ultimate culmination over and above a mere culmination.

Narihiro

Yes. It's more than I expected. I suppose they overcame everything I was worried about.

Iwata

Narihiro-san, are you a little jealous?

Narihiro

Yeah, it's a bit galling. (laughs) I also think it's good that I could see it from a slightly different position. I realized there was still a lot we could create, so I thought it would be good if it led to something different.

Yamagami

Next to Yokota-san, I kept saying I was jealous, too. If Yokota-san hadn't joined, we couldn't have made it like this, so I'm happy, but also jealous. (laughs)

Narihiro

In a good way, it's a change of generations. I think we've been able to pass the baton little by little. And bringing in Kusakihara-san and Kozaki-san for a new and fresh perspective was great. I learned from them.

Iwata

All right, thank you. I knew this game was a culmination of the Fire Emblem series, but listening to you today, I thought...what enthusiasm!

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

It started coming together with a concentration that would normally be impossible, and the developers sensed that and caught fire. What began as a culmination born of selecting the good

parts transformed, due to your enthusiasm, into something greater than imagined. And the new people added to the team exerted themselves as if dragged in by that enthusiasm and fought as if battling it out on their own turf. I'm looking forward to release even more now. Thank you for today.



Everyone

Thank you!