

## Goal

In this prototype we look into the possibilities of turning Japanese myth/lore into valid mechanics and enemies for our concept and brief.

We are looking at this in relation with the core gameplay. Can we develop a game build on a core pillar of myth/lore where the strangest tales turn into valid, fun and original game design?

## How it was Prototyped

During a previous sprint the lore strike team landed on Osakabe Hime as a primary possible inspiration/vision for our concept.

We then build on that. We dissected the piece of folklore and brainstormed on it. Worth mentioning is that we used it as inspiration and did not attempt to directly translate the lore into game design.

To see the concept we ended up prototyping, follow this link (directs to team's one-drive and is therefore only accessible for members of the team and teachers).

# Analysis and Observations

## **Gameplay Purpose**

#### In Short;

The spirit animal prototype functions like 'alarm guards' seen in various other (stealth) games. It roams around the map searching for the player. Upon detecting you it will run towards the main enemy to alert it of the player's presence. This 'main' enemy will then proceed to attack the player. However, as the spirit runs to alert the main enemy the player can still attempt to stop it. Switching the slow and tense stealth for a high pace chase. This then turns into a risk/reward dynamic as the player might be able to fix their mistake and prevent the enemy from being alerted but might just as well stumble into the enemy around the corner.



Early on the concept was a lot of slow movement, I thought it was worth experimenting with fast paced movement as well as the quick decision making and reactions work well to create tension.

My main reasoning for the concept was to implement a change of pace. As described by Hideo Kojima when talking about MGS, he designed three game states for that game flow. Stealth. combat and evasion. Each with their own levels of tension and excitement as well as **challenging** the player in different ways. This was a response to that in a brief without combat. Instead of combat we have the 'Chase' state. Being detected results in the spirit running to the main enemy to alert it of the player presence. During which the player can attempt to **block it.** This results in the slow stealth not flowing into exciting combat but into a exciting chase dynamic. This also gives a risk reward dynamic as the player can attempt to prevent the enemy from being alerted while risking running straight into it. It contrasts the slow methodical stealth really well.

We then have an evasion phase as well. This occurs when the **spirit** successfully alerts the enemy. This enemy, who is now aware of the player's location, will then attack the player. As the player doesn't posses any combat abilities, as they are centered around distracting and deceiving, the player will have to evade and **hide**.

This also means the **player can choose** how to play. They could try to **stop the** spirit from alerting the enemy but using that time to set up traps or hide in anticipation of the evasion phase is just as valid.



If a 'Brazier' is lit by an alerted enemy, reinforcements will be alerted and support will be on its way. (Assassin's Creed Origins, UbiSoft 2017) (Content by 'TheGamesEntertainer') [Link]



Kojima on the three primary game design aspects to realize the concept of Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake. (GDC, 2009) [Link]



The 3 Alert Modes as designed by Kojima



## **Takeaways and Conclusions**

# **Decision Matrix Constraints**

## Setting: Island Fortress

Won't add nor subtract anything regarding this constraint.

# First Person Stealth w/o Combat

The enemy allows for the classic stealth game 'state' loop to be adapted to the non-combat brief. With the 'Chase' state the Spirit Animal creates possibilities for designers to control the flow and rhythm of the player's experience by being the state with the faster pace and more excitement.

The animal provides the need for the player to take risks in order to stop it from alerting the main enemy, something which is essential in stealth games. It solves the issue as it's currently the only risk-reward dynamic in the core game loop.

By creating a fuzzy phase between detection and directly going into combat the player is further encouraged to take risks. It also gives the player a way of correcting mistakes meaning the player has to deal with the consequences and mistakes within the 'magic circle'. Without this (and without the combat) any confrontation would be fa game over or result in a reload of a recent quick-save.

The prototype Spirit Fox therefore fits this criteria excellently as it not only fits within its constraints but contributes to filling holes in the design left by the removal of combat (from the conventional stealth game).

#### **Multiple Objectives Lead to Abilities**

The AI is able to move freely and always make itself relevant in the player's vicinity.

Its behavior is to search for the player. Abilities can be used to either limit or mislead it's senses.

The feature will work with the constraint in general but might not work with specific abilities that aim to counter an aggressive, attacking enemy.

## **Realistic Castle Architecture with Multiple Routes**

Spirit Fox design/movement rules shouldn't have any issues with traversing or searching through a realistic castle environment. Does not make or brake this constraint.

One **concern** is the **level design** to support this. We need it **open enough** to give the **player options** but not as much to the point where any **confrontation** can be completely **avoided**. As the spirit doesn't pose a threat by itself the player shouldn't be able to watch it run north and then go the opposite direction themselves to create a lot of distance in between them. Freedom of approach while still having thresholds to force the confrontation.

This chase also created a desired fuzzy bit regarding **detection**. Besides a detection meter building up instead of the AI directly seeing you as soon as you enter its vision this will allow for minor errors, favoring the player. Even after detection the player is able to regain control of the situation and isn't directly pushed into a combat phase. This could help with limiting the 'quick-save' gameplay where they save before every encounter and reload when detected. This way the **player** never **has to deal** with the consequences of failure/detection while with the **chase** phase the player is still able to right their wrongs within the 'magic circle'.

#### **Time Pressure**

The spirits successfully function into pressuring the player into moving about. As the **spirits roam around** the player they are sure to **find** him if he stays in a single positions for too long. That **doesn't mean** that the **player** is save when moving about as these spirits can originate from statues meaning they can teleport and 'materialize' at designated spots if the **player** is **too far** to reach. It does take a while for it to materialize and provides plenty of feedback for the player to react to (so they won't be detected by a spirit that just teleported into the room).

This was implemented after **issues** appeared on larger levels. As the distances got longer so did the time it took the AI to **complete** the tasks to travel there by which time the player would be long gone.

This would still need prototyping and testing. Specifically into how to make it fair and intuitive to the player.



The loop (of alert modes) adapted to our prototype and made to fit with a 'no-combat' creative brief. (Sprint 3 team presentation, 19/01/2021) [Link] (As detailed on concept board (Miro)) [Link]



"Fuzzy" detection abstractly visualized in the world. (Shadow Tactics: Blades of the Shogun, 2016) (Content by 'Game Maker's Toolkit') [Link]



Detection abstractly visualized on Spirit Fox body color. White=Default, Fade In Yellow=Fuzzy Detection building, Red=Alerted. (Strike 3 Spirit Animal Prototype)

## **Custom Rigs**

The Spirit Fox already introduces something unworldly by being a spirit. This should allow for heavily customized rigs that don't go look anything like standard bi- or quadrupeds (the spirit doesn't necessarily need to represent a fox).

Won't make or break however in its current design not a lot of varied rigs would be needed (2 spirits, 1 Osakabe (biped)).

#### **Confined Castle Environment**

Works sufficiently well within the constraint. As the Spirit roams around to player in its search the experience works best and is most intense in the confined environment.

As there's only two spirits roaming around in the current concept the spirit will be easier to avoid entirely the less confined the environment is. The spirit doesn't support this constraint but the confinement supports the fox as it can force the player into confrontations and the most tense encounters.

#### **Extensive Enemy Al**

The current concept is entirely based on Al. No tools such as spline paths or other tools are used. The enemy is dropped into the level and the Al will do the rest. No further set up or design needed.

This therefore fits this constraint excellently however the risk of designer control should be noted as level designer for instance won't be able to set up specific patrol paths or very precise thought out enemy encounters.

#### Sengoku Era Japan

The concept is inspired by the lore but not a direct adaptation.

It acts upon the lore of the Osakabe using spirit animals as her messengers. In this case the message is the presence and location of the player.

Fits excellently if era is used for inspiration but less so if the overall concept goes for a direct adaptation of

design allows for the conventional stealth

Secondly is to have **clearly defined rules** with **consistent results.** This should make it move naturally and not just stare into a random corner. This should then

research.

game's pace the scared player now has to make decisions faster which we we'll

solution for confrontation while remaining

such as the specific abilities the player uses. Won't make or break but as it's not the conventional game enemy it may not

intuitively allow the player to read the scene for hiding spots where the spirit won't look.

Many modern games create safe havens in bushes. If the player is in an undetected state they're insured to remain there as lock as the don't make the presence known otherwise. They're practically invisible. Other common hiding spots are containers and closets for example. (Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, 2013)