

Final Fantasy IX Plot Analysis

by Squall_of_SeeD

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Written by: Glenn H. Morrow/TresDias; formerly known as "Squall of SeeD"

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-----Suggestion-----

Before even looking at this FAQ, for a better understanding of Final Fantasy IX's story, first read these translations from the Final Fantasy IX Ultimania at TheLifestream.net:

<http://thelifestream.net/final-fantasy-ix-ultimania-translations/1921/final-fantasy-ix-ultimania-coverage/>

-----Spoiler notice-----

There will be massive spoilers for all Final Fantasy IX in this document.

The essay near the end of the FAQ, "Spirit Energy and Memories," will also include significant spoilers for FFs IV, VI, VIII, IX, X, X-2, X-2: International+Last Mission, Unlimited and The Spirits Within. There will also be speculative minor spoilers for Tactics, XI and XII.

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-----Update changes-----[1.0Up]

February 15, 2010

-Updated the section on Necron with observations by TheOnionKnight, a frequent poster at GameFAQs' forums, and one of my co-authors on the Time/Ultimacia Plot FAQ hosted on GameFAQs:

<http://www.gamefaqs.com/console/psx/file/197343/34215>

January 24, 2019

-To the end of the "Spirit Energy and Memories" article, I added a translation I just finished on the sources of magic in FF. The text from which it comes is the FF 20th Anniversary Ultimania File 2: Scenario

October 30, 2009

-Added "Update changes" section

- "Purpose" section revised

-Added important phrases such as "I think" and "I believe" throughout the entire FAQ

-Standardized the quote format throughout the document

-Added sources and references throughout the document

-Added "What is Ark?" section

-Updated the article on Necron to include information from official sources, as well as to streamline my personal theory about him, and to correct some inaccurate data -- namely, that he can turn red during the battle with him. That was a mistake on my part. I'd been told in an e-mail that he would do this but that you usually can't see it because he casts Protect on himself. As getting to the fight with him and then actually fighting him is a pain, I didn't check it out for myself at the time I included it in the article. I've checked since -- actually spending more than half an hour in a battle with him, preventing him from casting Protect on himself the whole time -- and he never did it. It doesn't happen. I apologize to everyone for this error. I should have investigated it from the start

-Streamlined the "Garland's plan to make Gaia into Terra," "Who is speaking during the ending," "Does Vivi die" and "Where did Vivi's sons come from?" sections

-Removed the utterly pointless "Did Kuja die"? article. He died. It's obvious. Move on

-Removed the "Did Kuja Shatter the Crystal?" article. He obviously didn't since the universe didn't end. I really don't know why I entertained such debates in the past

-Removed the "How Long After Kuja's Death Does the Ending Take Place?" article. It's unnecessary. For the record, though, the most the FFIIX Ultimania says about it is that a week passed between the time Zidane went back to the Iifa Tree for Kuja and the time that the tree stopped moving (pg. 46)

-Removed the "Quina: male or female?" article. It's obvious from the game itself that it's intended to be ambiguous. It's pointless to debate this. Personally, I think it might be possible that Quina's race -- the Qu --

reproduce asexually, like some species of frog are able to. Given the Qu's long tongues, amphibious appearances, and fondness for dwellings in marshes and near water, it wouldn't be all that surprising. At any rate, Quina's obsession with eating frogs definitely makes us think of those animals whenever we think of Quina

-Removed the "Four Jewels and their Purpose" article. Unnecessary. Just follow the link to the FFIIX Ultimania translations on TheLifestream.net for that. It's obvious from the game, anyway, that they're used to summon Alexander and were divided so as to prevent him from being summoned again

-Streamlined the Gulug Stone and "What is Ozma?" articles

-Removed the "Is There A Hidden Connection Between Eiko (or Dagger) and Amarant?" article. Pointless

-Removed the "Holy's Components" article. That whole thing was stupid. I don't know what I was thinking back in the day

-Removed "The Nature of Ultima" article. As with the section on Holy: dumb. Gone

-Removed "Elemental Properties of Magic" article. That one was really a waste of time and space. Why I thought it sounded good, I don't know. Must have been inspired by something I was interested in at the time

-Gave the "Spirit Energy and Memories" article its own section. Also updated it

-Updated the format of this document to match that of my FFIIX Plot Analysis

-----Purpose-----[2.0Pu]

When this FAQ was first written, its primary purpose was to provide fans an explanation for what was the most enduring mystery of Final Fantasy IX: the nature and role of Necron within the story.

There were a lot of theories about him. Some thought he was a cosmic being who just happened to notice what was going on and decided to get involved. Others thought he might be the core function of the Iifa Tree. That was the idea I went with.

Many, though, just believed he was a random final boss thrown in at the end of the game to provide the heroes -- and the player -- an enemy that would stand in opposition to life and need to be defeated for thematic purposes. Something that represented death or non-existence -- though I personally think Kuja served the role well enough on his own.

After all, Garland called him an "angel of death" and Kuja was trying to annihilate all existence for God's sake. Was it really necessary to drive the idea home any further?

See this FAQ's section on Necron for more about him.

Anyway, the FAQ as a whole evolved -- or devolved, depending on your point of view -- to include other things over time. Other theories and explanations, as well as some general musings -- a number of which were quite ridiculous now that I look at them today.

In all honesty, this FAQ kind of sucked. Looking at it now, it's my greatest embarrassment as a writer.

And that's why I'm here to fix it. Theories that were confirmed or refuted by Final Fantasy IX's Ultimania will be identified, and errors in general will be corrected. Finally, pointless things I'd once published here will be removed.

For notations on what changes are being made, check the "Update changes"

section.

Enjoy the new version of this document. I hope it's an improvement over the last.

-----In-depth analysis-----[3.0An]

1) Necron [3.1An]

I'd long believed Necron, the final opponent fought in Final Fantasy IX, to be the central function of the Iifa Tree -- the mechanism that interfered with the cycle of souls. In that respect, I believed he could be considered the true form of the Iifa Tree, that aspect that lay beyond the material plane and interfered with the cycle of Gaia's souls on the spiritual level.

Updating this document nearly four years after I had last touched it, I reported that it seemed this position was ultimately not supported by official materials touching on the subject.

In January of 2008, Square Enix released the first of three 20th Anniversary Ultimantias looking at the FF series as a whole. This first book, File 1: Character, offered the following information about Necron (pg. 301) -- and no more than the following information:

(Translation by hitoshura of TheLifestream.net)

"Eternal Darkness

Monster created by fear of death

A being awoken by the fear, despair, and hatred of Kuja, who discovered, with the fulfillment of his ambition near, that he had little time left to live. It rejects the cycle of life through the crystal and attempts to return every world, including Terra and Gaia, to nothing. The final enemy to confront Zidane's team."

That's it. That's the big official explanation fans waited seven and a half years for.

Given that this explanation seemed completely useless to us -- not to mention that it apparently did nothing to explain why the Iifa Tree died instead of carrying out the merging of Gaia and Terra, as Kuja had said it was about to do, nor did it seem to provide an explanation for why Memoria exploded at the same time that Necron and its surroundings were destroyed -- I decided to continue to let this article explore the idea that Necron is the core mechanism of the Iifa Tree.

I felt then, and continue to feel, that it doesn't matter whether the idea is official -- it makes the story better. It actually helps the story explain some things that otherwise go unexplained.

To tell the truth, these days I subscribe more to the school of thought which holds that once a body of work is revealed to the masses, it belongs to them as well. Each member of the audience will take away their own personal vision of what they've seen -- their own personal canon, if you will.

Ordinary canon -- the one based in authorial intent and extra textual readings; the official story -- isn't so important to me when it involves continuity contradictions, as with the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII, or when what was shown in the produced work doesn't match what was said outside of it, and when an ambiguous plot point makes more sense in the hands of the fans than in the hands of the authors.

Anyway, I'm getting off-topic.

After this brief passage of information about Necron was translated, it seemed to me that, at the time the developers of FFIIX included him, they must have had no plot-driven idea for what he was supposed to be. It seemed he was literally just there as a thematic device -- and a reference to the Cloud of Darkness from Final Fantasy III and Neo Exdeath from Final Fantasy V.

Essentially, I believed Necron was just explained to us as another agent of the Void -- and it took us nearly a decade to get that weak explanation.

For that matter, his role in that capacity -- as well as his role as an allusion to the final bosses of FFIII and FFV -- was obvious to begin with. The explanation provided by the 20th Anniversary Ultimania didn't seem creative in the slightest -- and I still hold that it wasn't.

That said, it's not necessarily useless to us, and doesn't necessarily contradict the notion that Necron is the core function of the Iifa Tree. For me to realize this, it took someone else pointing it out to me -- TheOnionKnight, a frequent poster at GameFAQs' forums, and one of my co-authors on the Time/Ultimania Plot FAQ hosted on GameFAQs:

<http://www.gamefaqs.com/console/psx/file/197343/34215>

I'll explain what he pointed out to me at the end of this article. For now, let's get to looking at why this guy makes more sense as the core of the Iifa Tree.

First, let's look at Garland's observations about and conclusions concerning life:

(In Pandemonium)

"But think for a moment... Isn't life death itself? It must kill other life-forms to survive..."

"Sometimes it even kills those with whom it shares blood..."

"To live is to give life meaning, yet one must take others' lives to survive..."

"A mature civilization becomes aware of this paradox..."

"Terra's souls will sleep until they forget such nonsense. They will begin a new life in a new dimension."

"It's a world in which life and death become one..."

"That is the dimension in which we are meant to live, as beings that transcend life and death!"

When he reveals himself, we find that Necron has drawn very similar conclusions:

(Above the Hill of Despair, Necron's battleground)

"All life bears death from birth."

"Life fears death, but lives only to die."

"It starts with anxiety."

"Anxiety becomes fear."

"Fear leads to anger... anger leads to hate... hate leads to suffering..."

"The only cure for this fear is total destruction."

"...Now, the theory is undeniable."

"Kuja's action proves it. All things live to perish."

"At last, life has uncovered this truth. Now, it is time to end this world."

...

"I exist for one purpose..."

"To return everything back to the zero world, where there is no life and no crystal to give life."

"In a world of nothing, fear does not exist. This is the world that all life desires."

With this in mind, recall next that Garland created the Soul Divider (confirmed on pg. 41 of the FFXIII Ultimania) -- the mechanism of the Iifa Tree which served to disrupt the cycle of souls. Garland being this entity's maker, it stands to reason that it may have been aware of Garland's views and may have sought its own conclusions on the matter.

The Soul Divider may have then observed the actions of its "brother," Kuja -- another of Garland's creations -- as part of this analysis.

Garland states that the Iifa Tree's true form was not the Tree itself -- the tree was only its material form:

Garland

"We must sort the souls."

"I want to disrupt Gaia's cycle and drain its souls, filling the void with the souls of Terra."

"To speed the cycle of souls is to speed the work as a whole. Thus, war..."

"And in time... Gaia's souls are gone, and Gaia becomes Terra."

Garland

"You saw it with your own eyes. You saw the Iifa Tree and the Mist it emits."

"The role of the Iifa Tree is that of Soul Divider. The Mist you see comprises the stagnant souls of Gaia..."

Zidane

"Oh yeah? But we stopped the Mist! So much for that!"

Garland

"All you saw was the back of the tree..."

"Even now, the Iifa Tree blocks the flow of Gaia's souls, while it lets those of Terra flow freely."

"Come and see for yourself. See the true form of this planet."

Zidane

"What is this?"

Garland

"Think of it as an observatory. A place to measure the radiance of Gaia and Terra."

Zidane

"What are you talking about? And what is this weird light?"

Garland

"That is the center of the planet. The end and the beginning of the cycle of souls."

"The light remains Gaia's, for now, but when the blue changes to crimson, all will belong to Terra, and its restoration will be complete."

"That is why I wrapped up the light in the Iifa Tree, to prevent the cycle of the judgement of souls on Gaia from inside the planet."

"Such is the Iifa Tree's true purpose, its true form. All you saw was its material form."

"The flow of Gaia's souls cannot be changed simply by stopping the disposal

of Mist."

This would mean that the mechanism of the Iifa Tree that interrupted the cycle of souls was something not in the physical world. Zidane and his team would have needed to be somewhere other than the physical plane to encounter Necron. They would have needed to die.

I would argue that Zidane and his team *did* die -- they were killed by Kuja's last attack.

Recall that when Kuja is defeated in the game's final battle with him, he says that he if he is going to die, he isn't going alone -- he intended to kill Zidane and the others with his final attack. He proceeded to blast them with an Ultima spell, leaving their bodies engulfed in flames and causing them to vanish.

Unlike the occasion on Terra where Kuja used Ultima on the party, their bodies were apparently destroyed here. During that previous battle, they had remained on-screen up through it fading out from the battle map.

Following the battle with Kuja in Crystal World, we find Zidane and the others laying defeated in an area that isn't the same place they had fought Kuja. Though the shockwave from his Ultima attack had sent him reeling off into the distance, the heroes' bodies had all remained in the same area -- and the Yan's "Snort" ability certainly proves that there were no graphical limitations that should have prevented displaying the characters being flung from the battle area.

For that matter, while the area in which Zidane awakens does bear a similar appearance to the area in which they fought with Deathgaze, and, thus, may have been an area in the clouds somewhere below the crystal of creation, there's a simple obstacle that makes it further unlikely the party members were launched here: they would have all needed to land together.

Given how Kuja was flung like a rag doll by the explosion -- despite how far from it he was -- for the spell to have landed in the midst of the heroes, they should have all been launched in different directions if they were truly thrown from the dais where the crystal of creation resided.

But they weren't. Their bodies were incinerated. The heroes were killed.

To summarize this matter thus far, the implication is that when Zidane and the others were hit by Kuja's Ultima, they died and came face to face with the Iifa Tree's true form on the spiritual plane, as so many other souls from Gaia had previously.

Unlike those other souls, however, Zidane and his team were able to defeat the enemy even as it tried to dismiss them from Gaia's cycle of souls and supplant them with souls from Terra.

Thus, Necron's form fell apart. It was destroyed, the area surrounding it was destroyed, the Iifa Tree it functioned as part of went into a state of frenzy and died a week later (the passage of a week confirmed by pg. 46 of the FFXI Ultimania), and Memoria -- created from the Mist being emitted by the Iifa Tree -- exploded.

At the same time, Kuja used his powers -- possibly stemming from a lingering connection to the crystal of creation -- to teleport the heroes' souls out of Memoria before the explosion, reconstruct their bodies, and then put their

souls back into their bodies as he'd done with the Chaos Guardians, who he had resurrected to fight the heroes in Memoria.

Necron being the core mechanism of the tree would account for the tree's death, as well as the destruction of Memoria, whereas Necron not being so would leave us to question why the tree died for no obvious reason -- first going into violent spasms immediately after Necron was defeated, and then dying within a few days.

Had the tree not been undone, Gaia's assimilation by Terra would have been carried out -- so something that happened during the ending killed it. Necron's death seems more likely to fit the bill than Memoria's explosion at any rate -- which itself needed an explanation that's provided by Necron as the Soul Divider.

Memoria's explosive end shouldn't have been enough to kill the tree on its own, despite its proximity to the large plant. The Iifa Tree seen on the surface is just an aggregate of a few roots according to the FFX Ultimania (pg. 41). The tree didn't appear damaged by the explosion, and even had it been, there were more roots all throughout the world.

Something else happened that killed the tree. What could it have been but the destruction of Necron?

There are two final points I believe that need to be considered in regard to this topic. The first is the similarity between the faces seen in Oeilvert and Necron's face:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/NecronandOeilvert.jpg

As Oeilvert originated from the planet Terra (confirmed on pg. 42 of the FFX Ultimania), this suggests that Terran technology was employed in Necron's creation as well.

A second similarity between Terran technology and Necron is found in the eyes embedded in the walls of the coliseum-like structure surrounding him. Eyes had been associated with Terra's technology on more than one occasion prior -- most notably on the airship Invincible, but also in a teleporter on Terra and in the controls for a gravity lift there.

In light of all this, I believe it makes a whole lot of sense that Necron would be the Iifa Tree's core mechanism.

Now, with all that addressed, let's return to the matter of the FF 20th Anniversary Ultimania File 1: Character's explanation of Necron. How would all of what we've discussed -- a theory which calls for Necron to have existed in some capacity prior to the final battle with Kuja -- fit in with a description of Necron that states he was born from Kuja's fear of death?

As it turns out, it fits quite nicely. I'll simply quote TheOnionKnight's explanation, and allow his musings to stand for themselves:

"Supposing that Necron *is* a 'cog' in the cycle of souls in the Iifa Tree, I imagine things happening in this way. He was built to divide them, to extinguish them, to sort them and replace them. But he would not have been built with the sentience and judgmental, moral ability to choose his own actions. The Tree was Garland's machine. Garland was operating it. But Garland dies. And perhaps a 'soul cycling machine' really is unique enough to be on some level conscious. After Garland dies, and the Tree keeps operating,

and when Necron appears (if Necron is connected to the Tree), then obviously the thing is on some level conscious. It has 'awoken' and decided for itself that it will not sort souls any more, but destroy them outright because that is what Kuja, and therefore humanity, presumably desires. It still isn't making its own choices. It's acting in accordance with someone else's wishes. But it's alive enough to make this motivational reversal.

If Necron is a component of the Tree, this is how I see his appearance as *needing* to unfold. So to call him, again, a 'being awoken' or to say that he's been 'born' or 'created' does not in any manner strike a blow against the theory. In fact those words gel rather easily with it. He came into existence as a 'judgmental entity' when Kuja snapped, but as a thing, as a process in the Tree, he was already there."

TheOnionKnight's explanation is cogent, easily synergizes with the theory I've held for so long, and just as easily reconciles that theory with the Ultimania explanation provided for Necron's existence.

Thus, we arrive at an explanation in which everything discussed up to now holds up to scrutiny. With the premise that Necron as a function existed within the Iifa Tree prior to his appearance in the story, and that his "birth" as an autonomous entity began with Kuja's nihilistic behavior, Necron's role in the story is explained in a manner that resolves all loose ends related to the Iifa Tree, while simultaneously incorporating the sole, scarce official information provided about Necron.

2) Garland's plan to make Gaia into Terra [3.2An]

With this article, I'm going to explain Garland's plan to make Gaia into Terra, detailing exactly what his intentions were and how he was going about it.

In Pandemonium, Garland tells Zidane that this was his plan for Gaia:

"I have no intention of destroying Gaia. I only wish to make Gaia into Terra."

What Garland was speaking of is replacing Gaia's Lifestream/spiritual energy with Terra's. As detailed in the "Spirit Energy and Memories" article further down in this document, and confirmed on pg. 40 of the FFIIX Ultimania, the Lifestream concept seen in Final Fantasy VII and Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within applies in FFIIX as well.

Similar to how the Phantom homeworld's Gaia was attempting to take over the Gaia of Earth in FF:TSW by overpowering it and converting its energy, Garland sought to encourage Terra's cycle of souls to overpower and dominate Gaia's.

To do this, he was weakening Gaia's Lifestream to the point that it could be easily assimilated by Terra's -- the older, weaker planet didn't have the strength to outright absorb Gaia's cycle of souls without assistance. This was achieved by preventing the souls of the dead from returning to the core of Gaia.

The Soul Divider of the Iifa Tree would block the souls of Gaia, discard them onto the surface of the planet as Mist, replace the lost souls of Gaia with souls from Terra, and incite further death among Gaia's life forms via the discarded Mist.

As the two worlds had already physically merged according to pg. 40 of the FFIIX Ultimania, all that remained was to bring about their spiritual union --

with only Terra's cycle of souls in place:

Garland

"We must sort the souls."

"I want to disrupt Gaia's cycle and drain its souls, filling the void with the souls of Terra."

"To speed the cycle of souls is to speed the work as a whole. Thus, war..."

"And in time... Gaia's souls are gone, and Gaia becomes Terra."

Zidane

"But...how!?"

Garland

"You saw it with your own eyes. You saw the Iifa Tree and the Mist it emits."

"The role of the Iifa Tree is that of Soul Divider. The Mist you see comprises the stagnant souls of Gaia..."

Essentially, the process at work here was identical to that witnessed in FF: The Spirits Within. The only real difference is that the Phantom homeworld's Gaia was strong enough in that film to assimilate Earth's without first weakening it in such a way.

For the official explanation of Garland's plan, read the following translation of pg. 40 of the FFIIX Ultimania:

<http://thelifestream.net/final-fantasy-ix-ultimania-translations/1887/world-establishment-development-materials-p-40-of-the-ffix-ultimania/>

3) Who is speaking during the ending? [3.3An]

A question that often came up at the time I originally wrote this document was "Who is the speaker during the ending of the game?" Some people concluded that it was both Mikoto and Vivi, while others thought it was just one or the other.

These are the lines in question:

"Kuja... What you did was wrong..."

"But you gave us all one thing... Hope..."

"We were all created for the wrong reason, but you alone defied our fate."

"We do not want to forget this. We want your memory to live on forever..."

"...to remind us that we were not created for the wrong reason - that our life has meaning."

"I always talked about you, Zidane. How you were a very special person to us, because you taught us all how important life is."

"You taught me that life doesn't last forever. That's why we have to help each other and live life to the fullest."

"Even if you say goodbye, you'll always be in our hearts. So, I know we're not alone anymore."

"Why I was born... How I wanted to live... Thanks for giving me time to think."

"To keep doing what you set your heart on... It's a very hard thing to do. We were all so courageous..."

"What to do when I felt lonely... That was the only thing you couldn't teach me. But we need to figure out the answer for ourselves..."

"I'm so happy I met everyone... I wish we could've gone on more adventures. But I guess we all have to say goodbye someday."

"Everyone... Thank you. Farewell."

"My memories will be part of the sky..."

The first set of text belongs to Mikoto -- indicated in large part by her being the only character on-screen at the time those words appear.

The second section belongs to Vivi. This is evident in several ways. For one, Vivi tells Zidane on more than one occasion that he learned a lot of things from Zidane throughout the story, and this speaker makes reference to learning from him. Even the last time Vivi and Zidane spoke, Vivi told him, "Zidane, you've taught me another big lesson in life."

Secondly, in the Japanese version of the script, Vivi uses the word "boku" in katakana as his word for "I" when referring to himself -- the same as the second speaker from the game's ending. None of the other main characters do this.

Zidane uses "ore" (katakana); Freya, Mikoto and Beatrix all use "watashi" (kanji); Quina also uses "watashi" (katakana); Dagger uses "watashi" too (hiragana); Amarant uses "ore" (kanji); Eiko refers to herself by her name; Steiner uses "jibun" (katakana); and while Kuja did use "boku," he used the kanji form, and it's obviously not him talking anyway since he's already dead, never went on an adventure with Zidane, and wouldn't be talking like this.

Even Vivi's son who talks to puck doesn't use "boku" -- instead, he uses the katakana form of "ore" like Zidane.

Third, Vivi's the only playable character who isn't shown during the monologue. It's definitely Mikoto and then Vivi talking during the ending.

4) Does Vivi die? [3.4An]

Given that the second speaker from the ending is undoubtedly Vivi (see the previous article for that subject), I'd say yes.

The manner in which he's talking suggests that he's anticipating his death is near at hand -- saying goodbye to everyone and thanking them for being part of his life:

"I always talked about you, Zidane. How you were a very special person to us, because you taught us all how important life is."

"You taught me that life doesn't last forever. That's why we have to help each other and live life to the fullest."

"Even if you say goodbye, you'll always be in our hearts. So, I know we're not alone anymore."

"Why I was born... How I wanted to live... Thanks for giving me time to think."

"To keep doing what you set your heart on... It's a very hard thing to do. We were all so courageous..."

"What to do when I felt lonely... That was the only thing you couldn't teach me. But we need to figure out the answer for ourselves..."

"I'm so happy I met everyone... I wish we could've gone on more adventures. But I guess we all have to say goodbye someday."

"Everyone... Thank you. Farewell."

"My memories will be part of the sky..."

The last two lines in particular indicate that Vivi was expecting to die soon.

We know that Black Mages had more limited lifespans than other races on Gaia, and it would seem that -- even as the Black Mage prototype (implied by a conversation during the game between Vivi and Black Mage No. 288, and confirmed on pg. 29 of the FFIIX Ultimania) -- Vivi was no exception.

5) Where did Vivi's sons come from? [3.5An]

One of the more enduring questions about Final Fantasy IX concerns the origin of Vivi's sons seen in the game's ending. Speculation has run anywhere from them forming from his spirit energy as it dispersed following his death to the idea that he might have used the machines in Dali to create more Black Mages like himself.

Drawing conclusions on this topic is difficult given that there's so little information about these Black Mages offered during the game, and -- as far as I'm aware -- none offered in the FFIIX Ultimania.

Given that Vivi's sons are Black Mages, it's safe to assume that they were also composed of Mist. That being the case, the easiest conclusion to draw is that Vivi made use of the machines in Dali to create more Black Mages, using the same prototype procedure that had been used in his own creation.

That's the most simple of explanations, as well as the one which requires the fewest assumptions.

Full credit for this suggestion goes to Tony Hilton (a.k.a. "Vir").

6) The Gulug Stone [3.6An]

1. Why Did Kuja Want the Gulug Stone? [3.61An]

A question I often used to see asked about FFIIX is why Kuja wanted the Gulug Stone. While he obviously wanted it for the purpose of entering Mt. Gulug, the question was pondered because -- once he got there -- he merely had Zorn and Thorn attempt to use the extraction circle there to take Eiko's Eidolons, even though he had sent Zidane out to retrieve the Gulug Stone before Zorn and Thorn even captured Eiko later.

Some fans attempted to explain this away as Kuja having intended to take Eiko to the Mountain all along to extract her Eidolons. However, this is unlikely given that Kuja had put Eiko's life in danger shortly before by leaving her in a room with a receding floor and lava below.

I believe a more simple and well-supported conclusion to draw is this: It's most likely that Kuja was seeking an Eidolon there. The belief that he might have been able to find one there isn't far afield in light of hints that the mole people who lived there in the past had Eidolons.

As suggested by the Eidolon Wall, other tribes probably had legends that gave birth to Eidolons -- or at least affected local appearances of the summon beings. The summoners of Madain Sari concluded, after all, that legends are what give birth to Eidolons, rather than the existence of such creatures giving birth to their legends:

(Inscribed on the Eidolon Wall)

"We discovered eidolons by researching legends documented from around the world."

"The Thunder God, Ramuh, is one of those legends."

"Some theorize that the eidolons were created from the legends, and not the other way around."

This concept is confirmed as correct on pg. 42 of the FFI Ultimania.

That in mind, an Eidolon had, indeed, been reported as seen in the vicinity of Esto Gaza -- the structure that sits directly in front of Mt. Gulug:

(Also inscribed on the Eidolon Wall)

"This information is yet to be confirmed, but there was an eyewitness account of a previously-undiscovered eidolon."

"It was witnessed in Esto Gaza."

"If there is an eidolon that can exist outside of our legends, our theory would no longer hold true."

"But maybe there are other tribes that have legends of their own."

As well, it was established by other information on the Eidolon Wall that the same Eidolon might appear differently to different people:

"The First Eidolon Discovered, Shiva"

"Shiva took the form of a young girl when she was first discovered. She now appears as a grown woman."

"Eidolons adapt their forms to the time and culture in which they appear. Shiva illustrates this theory."

"In certain areas, Shiva is depicted as a snow fairy. This cannot be verified, since the only written document that remains is in the summoner village."

"People associate Shiva with the snow fairy."

"Why she changes forms remains a mystery."

Furthermore, it's made quite obvious that Kuja was desperately seeking an Eidolon at that point in the story:

Kuja

"You two just don't get it!"

"I need an eidolon more powerful than Alexander!"

"An eidolon with the power to bury Garland!"

"His powers are so incredible; I cannot even come close."

"I must destroy him before Terra's plan is activated, or my soul will no longer be my own!"

"Who cares if she lives? I want that eidolon!"

In light of all this, the conclusion I would draw is that Kuja intended to go to Mt. Gulug to seek out one of the mole peoples' Eidolons -- but once Zorn and Thorn recaptured Eiko and Kuja sensed the power of Eidolons within her, he took further advantage of the situation and attempted to utilize the extraction circle within Mt. Gulug to obtain Eiko's Eidolons.

It wouldn't have been unreasonable for Kuja to assume there would be an extraction circle there, after all, in the event that the mole people did, indeed, have Eidolons -- the summoners who settled in Madain Sari apparently originated in Alexandira, and beneath Alexandria Castle was another extraction circle.

As for how Kuja may have known that the mole people had Eidolons, I believe he knew because Garland likely knew -- it may have even been Garland who sealed Mt. Gulug in the first place (for more on this, refer to the next article in this section of the document, "Why Was Mt. Gulug Sealed?").

2. Why Was Mt. Gulug Sealed? [3.62An]

In the story, we learn from the Bishop of Esto Gaza that Mt. Gulug had been sealed many years before the main events of the game:

Bishop

"They barged in, hundreds of them! So, that was the dreaded black mage army..."

"They headed straight for Mount Gulug without even looking at me."

Zidane

"Mount Gulug?"

Bishop

"An enormous volcano that went extinct in the days of old."

"Legend has it that a race of great moles lived within the caverns."

"But that was very long ago. No mortal has entered those depths ever since the entrance was mysteriously sealed."

Why was the mountain sealed? I believe the answer lies with Garland's fear of Gaia's Eidolons:

(Stated by Garland in Memoria)

"I feared Gaia's eidolons more than anything... However, I decided to deal with them before they became a major problem."

It is known, of course, that Garland orchestrated the destruction of Madain Sari, killing off most of its people and leaving the survivors without the means to repopulate. 10 years after the destruction wreaked upon the village, only Eiko and Dagger remained alive of Madain Sari's people.

It's not unreasonable that he may have sought to get rid of the mole people as well if they had Eidolons.

With this in mind, I would conclude that Garland used the powers of the Gulug Stone -- said to be a magic-controlling device when pressing Select in the Key Items menu ("'It must be a magic-controlling device, but the technology is completely out of this world' =Terra's Chronicles=") -- to seal Mt. Gulug, either with its people still inside or after killing them. He would have then placed the stone in Oeilvert, and used the stone's power to enable an anti-magic field around all of Oeilvert -- rendering the Gulug Stone difficult to recover.

Garland would have likely done this both so that the stone's magic-suppressing powers couldn't be used against him, and so that no one could easily access Mt. Gulug and recover the mole people's Eidolons.

3. What is the significance of the Gulug Symbol? [3.63An]

An often-overlooked aspect of FFIIX is the reoccurring appearance of the Gulug symbol that the Gulug Stone is part of -- that of an inverted triangle within an erect triangle within another inverted triangle. It also appears once as simply an erect triangle within an inverted triangle.

This symbol appears in no less than 10 locations throughout the game. They will be shown here in order of appearance, as well as with additional screenshots from corresponding battle maps where applicable.

-The Symbol's First Appearance-

The dungeon beneath Alexandria Castle where Zorn and Thorn extracted Dagger's Eidolons:

(Environment map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSA.jpg

(Battle map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSAB.jpg

-The Symbol's Second Appearance-

A platform that leads down inside the Iifa Tree:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSIT.jpg

-The Symbol's Third Appearance-

The doors of Oeilvert:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOD.jpg

-The Symbol's Fourth Appearance-

The floor in the first room of Oeilvert:

(Environment map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOF.jpg

(Battle map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOFB.jpg

-The Symbol's Fifth Appearance-

On the floor in Oeilvert within a hologram projection circle; this is in the room before the platform that leads down to the Gulug Stone:

(Environment map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOFH.jpg

(Battle map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOFHB.jpg

-The Symbol's Sixth Appearance-

On the floor in front of the Gulug Stone:

(Environment map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOBF.jpg

(Battle map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSOBFB.jpg

-The Symbol's Seventh Appearance-

The Gulug Stone itself and the surrounding containment device comprise yet another appearance of the symbol:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GStone.jpg

-The Symbol's Eighth Appearance-

The doors of Mt. Gulug:

(Environment map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSMD.jpg

(Battle map version)

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSMDB.jpg

-The Symbol's Ninth Appearance-

Within the extraction circle in Mt. Gulug:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSMEC.jpg

-The Symbol's Tenth Appearance-

On a wall in a room in Bran Bal:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/The%20Gulug/GSBB.jpg

All this begs the question: what does the symbol mean?

Is it a symbol representing Eidolons? After all, it's found in both Alexandria and Mt. Gulug, places where summoners have lived. Is it a symbol representing Terra or its technology? It shows up in many places related to Terra, and often when those places deal with Terran technology.

Is the symbol, perhaps, a magical seal? It's seen on a platform of the Iifa Tree, a place where the summoners of Madain Sari once attempted to summon Leviathan and failed, sealing entry to the area afterward. Or is it, perhaps, a symbol used as a focal point for spells?

These are all suggestions posed in the past by those aware of the reoccurring nature of the symbol -- and out of those suggestions presented here, I think the second and last are probably the closest to the truth.

Certainly the symbol seems to be connected to Terra, appearing not only on Terra itself, but in three locations that originated from Terra -- Oeilvert, Mt. Gulug and the Iifa Tree. All three places have been confirmed as originating from Terra on pp.40-41 of the FFIIX Ultimania.

While the mole people/summoners of Mt. Gulug may have placed the Gulug symbol there themselves, given the places' relationship with other Terran locations that feature the symbol, it's as likely that it was there all along.

In addition to its connection with Terra, the Gulug symbol is probably a transmutation symbol. Transmutation is the alchemic concept of changing one object into another, though it can also apply to the transfer or transformation of energy.

In ancient alchemy, the concept was strongly tied to the concept of harnessing and/or channeling life energy, particularly when binding it to inanimate objects, as in the legend of the Golem of Prague.

Thus, when Zorn and Thorn perform extraction spells on Dagger and Eiko, they say such things as "Eidolons of Eternal Life!" and "Let there be life!" -- and this may well explain why a successful extraction allows the Eidolons drawn from a summoner to be bound to physical objects.

The symbol being a transmutation symbol would also account for its presence on the Iifa Tree, known as "The Tree of Life" -- and a place where spirit energy is manipulated. With this, we can also explain why the symbol can be found in Bran Bal, a place where its citizens (the Genomes) were awaiting the day that they would serve as vessels for the souls of Terra.

Transmutation symbols frequently feature triangles, often erect or inverted, within other triangles, criss-crossing with other triangles, or with their points touching. For several examples, refer to this image by SerialCode of DeviantArt:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/TCs_by_SerialCode.jpg

(Here, by the way, is the URL to SerialCode's page on DeviantArt:
<http://serialcode.deviantart.com/>)

That still leaves us to wonder, however, why the symbol would appear under Alexandria Castle -- a place that didn't originate on Terra. While I don't expect to determine a completely satisfactory answer, I don't think it necessarily undermines any other conclusions drawn thus far.

Given that Kuja was awaiting Dagger's 16th birthday, he may have had the Gulug symbol added to the extraction room beneath Alexandria Castle -- or, when the fusion of Gaia and Terra was originally attempted, the process may have transported from Terra to Gaia a piece of architecture featuring the symbol -- only for it to be discovered by summoners later and incorporated into that room.

7) What is Ozma? [3.7An]

The enigmatic Ozma's origins have always been one of the bigger curiosities of FFX. The best we were offered in-game is that Ozma was residing in what Zidane thought looked like an "Eidolon Cave" -- that rock formation on the Chocobo's Air Garden.

My conclusion is that Ozma is a dead Eidolon. BradyGames' official Final Fantasy IX strategy guide refers to the rock formation on the Air Garden as an Eidolon grave (pg. 196), as does the Final Fantasy IX Ultimania (pg. 491).

So, why then does the creature not bear a more definite form, instead being a ball of swirling energy?:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/OzmaGIF.gif

The best explanation I can think of is, given that Eidolons are produced from legends and the collective memories of people -- and given also that the collective conceptualizations people hold for Eidolons give them their forms -- it may be that Ozma no longer has a form because those people whose memories gave rise to Ozma are all gone, along with all those who remembered

his original form.

Unlike the Eidolons featured on the Eidolon Wall in Madain Sari, Ozma may have had no physical record and no one alive who remembered the ball's previous appearance.

A potential counterargument to this, however, is that some beings were plainly aware of Ozma, such as the Yan of the Friendly Monsters. After completing the side quest involving them by giving the Friendly Yan a Diamond, it will say "Reach the round guy..." if you haven't already defeated Ozma, and "Reach the round guy... Huh?! You already beat him?!" if you have.

As well, if you've already defeated Ozma before fighting Hades, he will say "What? You defeated Ozma? ...I've come too far to retreat now!"). Also, though already dead, Regent Cid I of Lindblum left a message on one of the Chocograph Pieces saying, "There...danger in the sky. If you dar...to face it, use this rec...to find your way" -- suggesting that he knew of Ozma as well.

All that said, whether they knew of him before or after he became a ball of swirling energy is unknown, though I would hazard to guess that it was after, as the Friendly Yan knows of him as a round being. If either the Friendly Monsters or Hades had known of Ozma in its original form, it's possible that it would still retain that form.

Of course, it's also possible that Ozma was always a ball -- but, then, its formless state goes lengths toward explaining why Ozma could be considered a "dead" Eidolon to begin with.

8) What is Ark? [3.8An]

Another enduring mystery of the game, and one of the more frequently discussed.

While Ark was obviously at least an airship left in Oeilvert by Garland to protect the Gulug Stone, in-game, it's also an Eidolon. Given that Ark obviously originated on Terra, and given also that FFI's Ultimania said that Terra didn't have the means to make any Eidolons (pg. 42), this would seem to be a contradiction.

Not so.

Given that Garland's plan had been advancing for centuries, it's reasonable to conclude that there were enough souls from Terra added to the mix already. The memories of these souls, then, could have been used by Gaia's core to create a whole Eidolon based on memories of Terra.

-----Spirit Energy and Memories: The Magic of Final Fantasy[6.0Sp]
An essay that explains the origins of life and magic in Final Fantasy.

Foreword to the 10 billionth edition [6.1Sp]

Despite the shame and feelings of time wasted that ultimately drove me to abandon this FAQ, there are parts of it that I'm still proud of. This essay is probably the part of which I'm most proud.

I feel that way primarily because I came to the conclusions discussed here entirely on my own. I just noticed similarities between the various Final Fantasy titles over time and then investigated them.

Another reason I'm proud of it is that almost every detail has been supported over the years by various official releases from Square Enix, including the Ultimania guides and new titles. There were a few mistakes, sure, but none related to the concept discussed here itself.

The only mistakes I can remember off the top of my head from when this essay was first written -- mentioned now in the interest of full disclosure -- were thinking that Sin from Final Fantasy X was an aeon and forgetting that people could still use para-magic in Final Fantasy VIII even if they didn't have a Guardian Force junctioned.

If you ever feel interested in seeing an earlier version -- though I hope to God you aren't -- you can check out this version from May 9, 2005, over on RPGamer.com: <http://rpgamer.com/editor/2005/q2/050905gm.html>

Anyway, the earliest version of this article saw the light of day near the end of 2004 on Gaia Online's forums -- before I'd ever even seen the inside of an Ultimania. Another reason I can't help but smile when I think about how the ideas here have gained official support.

Anyway, I hope that all who read this essay will enjoy it, gain a greater understanding of some games they love, or both. I honestly had fun putting it together.

"And the cycle went on" [6.2Sp]

As this is a long essay, I will state its argument upfront: I believe that memories and their derivative, spirit energy, are the source of life and magic in many of the Final Fantasy titles. Furthermore, I believe that their worlds -- at the very least, the worlds of VII, VIII, IX, X/X-2 and The Spirits Within -- have a Lifestream.

In FFXVII, there is a concept that the souls of those who die return to the planet, then cycle back to the surface to live out another life:

Bugenhagen

"Well, let's get to the subject."

"Eventually... all humans die. What happens to them after they die?"

"The body decomposes, and returns to the Planet. That much everyone knows. What about their consciousness, their hearts and their souls?"

"The soul too returns to the Planet."

"And not only those of humans, but everything on this Planet. In fact, all living things in the universe, are the same."

"The spirits that return to the Planet, merge with one another and roam the Planet."

"They roam, converge, and divide, becoming a swell, called the 'Lifestream'."

"Lifestream... In other words, a path of energy of the souls roaming the Planet."

"'Spirit Energy' is a word that you should never forget."

"A new life... children are blessed with Spirit energy and are brought into the world."

"Then, the time comes when they die and once again return to the Planet..."

We're also made aware that the game's materia (the spheres through which people in this world access magic) are crystalized spirit energy that can be created through both natural and artificial means. In either case, it's created when energy from the Lifestream rises or is siphoned to the surface, combines with other physical materials there, condenses into mako, and then

crystalizes into materia.

We're also informed that when one has died and their spirit energy returns to the planet, it takes with it the knowledge (memories) of the individual that it had provided life for, and it is through these memories that the wielders of materia connect to the planet and call forth magic:

(Stated by Sephiroth on Mt. Nibel.)

"...the knowledge and wisdom of the Ancients is held in the materia."

"Anyone with this knowledge can freely use the powers of the Land and the Planet. That knowledge interacts between ourselves and the planet calling up magic..... or so they say."

The same concepts show up in *The Spirits Within*, in which it is said that the spirits of those who die return to the "Gaia" (the spirit of the Earth), taking with them the experiences (memories) of their lifetimes. These experiences then allow the Gaia to grow, with the implication offered that the spirit energy will be recycled back onto the surface world to supply another life form with spirit energy:

(Stated by Aki, quoting Dr. Sid's journal)

"All life is born of Gaia and each life has a spirit. Each new spirit is housed in a physical body. ...Through their experiences on Earth, each spirit matures and grows. When the physical body dies, the mature spirit, enriched by its life on Earth, returns to Gaia bringing with it the experiences, enabling Gaia to live and grow."

FFIX has this concept as well:

(Said by Mikoto in *Bran Bal*)

"Planets have a cycle of souls. Souls are born from the planet, and then return to it."

Though the source of souls here is only referred to as "the light" of a planet rather than "the Lifestream" or "the Gaia," it's made apparent that this "light" is at the center of the planet, as with FFXVII's Lifestream or TSW's Gaia.

It becomes clear, then, that these concepts are one and the same. Each of these worlds possesses the same spiritual properties of a Lifestream, Gaia or "light." The planet sends out bits of its spirit to give life to each living thing as it is born, and when those creatures die, this energy returns to the planet's core, enabling the planet to grow through the accumulated memories of each life form's lifetime.

Though I suspected this to be the case for several years after *The Spirits Within* was released in 2001, it was confirmed to be the case for *Final Fantasy VII's* Lifestream by its *Ultimania Omega* in 2005 (pg. 217). Even later I would learn that *Final Fantasy IX's* *Ultimania* guide confirmed the same thing to be true of the planets featured in its story as well (pg. 40).

What remains unclear, however, is whether all planets with a Lifestream also have a crystal at their core, governing their cycle of souls, as is the case with the worlds in *Final Fantasy IX* according to its *Ultimania* (pg. 40).

I personally believe it to be so. The already great similarities in play are emphasized further by another detail mentioned on pg. 40 of FFX's *Ultimania*:

when planets die, their crystal returns to the larger universe the same as the energy from a living creature returns to its planet's crystal at death.

Those who have played Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII will know that this same concept is part of the Final Fantasy VII mythos. When planets die, their remaining Lifestream departs for space.

Though I don't personally accept Dirge of Cerberus into my canon, I don't have to in order to recognize this concept. It was declared years before DC's release in an interview by EDGE magazine with Tetsuya Nomura and Yoshinori Kitase.

In the magazine's May 2003 edition (issue #123), the following statement was made by Kitase on pg. 111:

"Sakaguchi had a great vision of the force behind the universe. He wanted to explore the idea that planets and people share the same basic energy and so are, in some way, intrinsically linked. He developed this philosophy from drawing upon other cultures that stated when a planet disappears an invisible energy is released into space."

Of further significance, on the next page, Kitase made this statement as well: "Sakaguchi-san's main ideas for FFXVII and the world he imagined for the game (the creatures, etc.) were very closely integrated into the 'Final Fantasy' movie."

In said movie, Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within, while we don't see a cluster of energy flying off into space in the same fashion as in Dirge of Cerberus, we do see the Phantom homeworld destroyed while a fragment of it is ejected into space. This fragment, of course, carries the Phantom homeworld's own Gaia -- its Lifestream, which attempts to restart its cycle of souls by assimilating Earth's Lifestream.

If the idea sounds similar to Terra's attempted assimilation of Gaia in FFXIX, by the way, that's because it is. Terra's Lifestream survived by assimilating other worlds' crystals/Lifestreams, again confirmed on pg. 40 of that game's Ultimania.

In any event, what's most important to the topic at hand is this: We have all three of these titles sharing Lifestream concepts, right down to the idea that the worlds depicted return to space when they die -- as though there is a "universal Lifestream." Perhaps it's the "original crystal" seen in the final showdown with Kuja in FFXIX?

It is, after all, identified as having been there before space, and had Kuja destroyed it in the past, it was said that the entire universe would have perished.

That in mind, I believe the spiritual properties of the worlds in Final Fantasy VII, IX and The Spirits Within to be identical. Not only with a cycle of souls, a Lifestream and a return to the universe at death, but up to and including the idea that a crystal dwells at the utmost core of each planet, governing that world's cycle of souls.

Knowing also that FFX and FFXVII exist in the same universe, it stands to reason then that the world of Spira shares similar, if not identical, properties. Indeed, Spira seems to feature a cycle of souls -- or at least a belief in reincarnation -- as demonstrated by a Spiran mourning the loss of a loved one on the Farplane near the end of FFX.

When speaking to this individual, they will say to the apparition of their deceased loved one, "I hope you live your next life in a world without Sin. Do not return to Spira."

In addition, images of the dead like this apparition can only be witnessed on the Farplane after that individual's pyreflies -- their spirit energy -- have been returned to the interior of the planet.

Despite the Al Bhed theory in FFX that the dead seen on the Farplane were illusions created by one's own memories, the scholar Maechen states that no living person's image has been seen on the Farplane. For that matter, even dead, neither Lady Ginnem nor Seymour Guado's images appear until after Yuna has sent the two to the Farplane.

Though Seymour's image is never actually shown there in-game, Tromell is distressed by the fact that he doesn't appear until such time as he's been sent:

"I have prayed and prayed, yet Lord Seymour does not appear. Has he not reached the Farplane? Has he become a fiend? Oh, my poor Lord Seymour... Tell me, where do you wander?"

Afterward, Tromell speaks as though he sees Seymour's image in addition to Jyscal's, whose form is shown:

"Benevolent Lord Jyscal, and most wise Lord Seymour. The days spent in your service were the best in this old man's life. Those of us left behind will soon be destroyed by Sin and join you in the Farplane. I will serve you there as I have served you in this world, always."

It would also seem that a person's soul generally journeys to the Farplane after death without assistance -- a process greatly upset by Sin. Only in the cases of souls with powerful wills who died with unfinished business (unsent) or feelings of envy and resentment toward those still living (fiends) do we see an unsent or fiend emerge. Sin's activities contributed greatly toward the latter's numbers growing, but those who accept their death journey to the Farplane uninhibited, as was the case with Tidus' mother.

Similarly, on FFXIII's Gaia, we see unsent in the form of Sephiroth's shinetai in Advent Children, and the Cetra spirits guarding the Temple of the Ancients in the original game. As well, fiend-like creatures are represented by the Gi Tribe spirits found in the Gi Cave, malevolent beings who became such due to their resentment for the people of Cosmo Canyon.

Of further indication that there are similarities between FFXIII's cycle of souls and that of Gaia, we have the comments of Kazushige Nojima, scenario writer of both FFXIII and FFX, as well as FFXIII and FFX-2. In FFX's Ultimania Omega, Nojima said that he conceived the spiritual properties of Spira as identical to those in FFXIII, with pyreflies and FFXIII's Lifestream being composed of the same substance (pg. 191).

Furthermore, Nojima said that there's something like the Lifestream itself in FFX's world. Indeed, in FFX-2, Shinra of the Gullwings describes the Farplane -- which lay at the center of Spira, as with Gaia's Lifestream -- as housing "the life force that flows through our planet."

Now, with the understanding that FFXIII, IX, X/X-2 and The Spirits Within all feature this same concept, let's begin looking at how magic manifests in their worlds.

Probably most apparent is the already discussed materia of Final Fantasy VII. Crystallized fragments of the Lifestream, they grant their wielders a connection to the planet and the means to use its power in a variety of ways.

Similar ideas are abundant throughout Final Fantasy VII, including the infusion of mako into members of SOLDIER, the use of the Sister Ray to break Sephiroth's magical barrier around the Northern Crater, and the use of mako energy for electricity.

In all these cases, the spiritual essence of the planet is used to provide some form of power, whether it be obviously magical or a hybrid of magic and technology.

The same ideas -- though with a much greater magic-technology hybrid representation -- appear in The Spirits Within. There, the OVOpacks used to power everything were harvested from micro-organisms, their "bioetheric energy" -- spirit energy -- drawn out to be used as a power source. One of the Eight Spirits used to counter the Phantom homeworld's Gaia was one of these OVOpacks:

(In the battlefield wasteland of Tuscon, Arizona)

Aki

"We're very close."

Gray

"I don't see anything."

::The group spots a dead soldier::

Gray

"You're not gonna tell me it's him?"

Ryan

"That's impossible."

Aki

"It's not the soldier. It's his OVOpack."

Gray

"How do you explain that? Packs power the weapons, the barrier cities. I mean it's just bioetheric energy."

Aki

"And to create that energy we use living tissue; single cell organisms."

Gray

"You're telling me his backpack is the seventh spirit."

Aki

"Yes."

Again, spirit energy was the source of power. Used in this case to power the weapons employed against the Phantoms, the shields that kept them out of the barrier cities, and also -- in another striking similarity to FFVII -- the Zeus Cannon.

While not a source of power in this case, we see the influence of memories as related to spirit energy in another way in The Spirits Within. Aki Ross frequently dreams of the final moments of a Phantom who left a fragment of its

spirit energy within her.

Next, let's look at Final Fantasy IX. Here, we find the cycle of souls interrupted by the Iifa Tree. As a result, Mist covers much of one continent and later the whole world.

Black Mages -- beings with the inherent ability to use magic -- are created from this Mist, which Garland reveals to be the stagnant souls of the dead that were unable to return to the core of the planet. In other words, the Black Mages were composed of spirit energy that could not return to the core of the planet, was next siphoned into machines by Kuja, and then processed into Black Mages -- a procedure with overt similarities to the mako refinement process used in Shin-Ra's mako reactors in FFXVII.

In addition, the Mist was also harnessed as a power source for airships, just as mako was a power source for certain vehicles seen in FFXVII, such as those showcased in the Shin-Ra Motor Mobiles video in the Shin-Ra headquarters gift shop.

Spirit energy/memories are also revealed as the origin of FFXIX's Eidolons, that game's incarnation of summon creatures.

Consider the writing on the Eidolon Wall of Madain Sari:

(Some of this text is only accessible after performing the small Eidolon Wall sidequest)

"The Legend of Eidolons

We discovered eidolons by researching legends documented from around the world. The Thunder God, Ramuh, is one of those legends. Some theorize that the eidolons were created from the legends, and not the other way around."

...

"The First Eidolon Discovered, Shiva

Shiva took the form of a young girl when she was first discovered. She now appears as a grown woman. Eidolons adapt their forms to the time and culture in which they appear. Shiva illustrates this theory. In certain areas, Shiva is depicted as a snow fairy. This cannot be verified, since the only written document that remains is in the summoner village. People associate Shiva with the snow fairy. Why she changes forms remains a mystery."

The summoners of the village determined that the legends of Eidolons are what created them rather than the reverse -- meaning that the collective memory of these legendary creatures amongst the citizens of a village or tribe served as the basis for their creation. Indeed, the FFXIX Ultimania confirms that the Eidolons were born as guardians for the crystal at the center of FFXIX's world of Gaia -- created from an accumulation of memories (pg. 42).

As detailed by the Eidolon Wall, the pervasive influence of memories in the creation of Eidolons even determines their appearances. Local customs and conceptions determine the forms they take when manifest.

How the Eidolons came to be associated with the various objects that allow a summoner to call them, however, remains unknown. The only one known for certain is the ribbon that allows Eiko to summon Madeen.

It may well be that legends associating these items -- a garnet for Bahamut,

an aquamarine for Leviathan, etc. -- with the creatures led to that association becoming reality in the same way that the legends of Eidolons led to the creation of the creatures.

Essentially, a tangible case of mind over matter -- perception influencing reality.

Moving forward, in Final Fantasy X and X-2, we see spheres -- which bear the same shape as Final Fantasy VII's materia -- used as a source of power constantly, even in the playable characters' basic battle growth (the Sphere Grid and dressphere systems from FFX and X-2 respectively). The process of sphere creation seems identical to that of materia as well.

In Final Fantasy X, we learn that even the most simple audio and visual spheres are made when a special form of water absorbs and records people's memories:

(In Macalania Woods, at the lake where the Spherimorph was fought)

Tidus

"This place..."

"It's just water, isn't it?"

Auron

"This is what spheres are made of."

"It absorbs and preserves people's memories."

Then, in X-2, we're blatantly told that spheres are composed of pyreflies:

(In Cloister Infinity/Cloister 100 of the Via Infinito)

Rikku: "So what happened to everyone's Spheres?"

Trema: "Destroyed. Turned to pyreflies and scattered."

Detailing the matter further, Final Fantasy X's Scenario Ultimania guide explains that spheres are composed of water that contain a high concentration of pyreflies (pg. 59). It's also said that water and pyreflies combine with one another easily.

On FFXVII's world, materia form when spirit energy has risen to the surface and combined with some unidentified matter, creating a compressed, physical substance that flows like liquid. I would postulate that the substance spirit energy combines with to form materia is water -- making the process identical to the process of sphere formation witnessed on Spira.

Comparing the spring in Macalania -- where spheres were known to form -- with the mako fountain on Mt. Nibel in FFXVII -- from which materia were known to form -- there are obvious similarities:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/spherespring.png

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/MakoFountain4.jpg

Furthermore, as seen in Advent Children, water and the Lifestream do seem to mingle with one another quite well, as Aerith makes liberal use of such a combination. The rain she uses to heal Geostigma is made of such a mixture, Lifestream energy visible inside the water that first emerges from the ground in Aerith's church:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/LifestreamWater.jpg

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/LifestreamWater2.jpg

Of even greater similarity to materia, the dresspheres of Final Fantasy X-2 are demonstrated to be the crystalized pyreflies/spirit energy of people from the past. Lenne's memories were the basis for the Songstress dressphere, and her spirit even emerges from the dressphere after the final confrontation with Shuyin.

It is because this dressphere was formed from Lenne's spirit energy that Yuna often experiences Lenne's memories and feelings -- especially from the time of her death -- in much the same way as Aki in The Spirits Within has dreams of a Phantom's final moments. This dressphere is also the cause for Shuyin confusing Yuna with Lenne on several occasions:

Buddy

"Lenne, huh?"

Shinra

"Yeah, the girl from the Songstress dressphere."

Yuna

"That's Lenne?"

Shinra

"Sure. She wore that dress one thousand years ago."

Rikku

"Why didn't you tell us?"

Shinra

"No one asked. Besides, all I knew was her name. What's to tell?"

Yuna (narrating)

"What Shinra said surprised me, but only a little. So there really was a connection."

Rikku

"Okay, okay. So, the reason Shuyin keeps calling Yuna 'Lenne' is --"

Paine

"Because of that dressphere?"

Another striking example of pyreflies providing power occurs near the end of FFX-2, when Shinra makes observations that will eventually lead to the creation of mako reactors on FFVII's Gaia:

Shinra

"Aha..."

Yuna

"What are you looking at?"

Shinra

"Farplane data."

Shinra

"The more I study it, the more fascinating it gets. There's limitless energy swirling around in there."

Yuna

"Limitless energy?"

Shinra

"The life force that flows through our planet...I think."

Shinra

"With a little work, we could probably extract the energy in a useable form."

Brother

"Sweet!"

Shinra

"Of course, that'd take generations."

Brother

"That's no fun!"

Buddy

"Well, still, it is something worth shooting for."

Yuna

"Think how much Spira would change if we ever got it to work!"

Yuna

"Maybe one day we could build a city full of light, one that never sleeps!"

Shinra

"No doubt about it."

On another occasion, Seymour Guado uses the pyreflies of the murdered Maester Kinoc and several Yevon guards for power as he transforms into Seymour Natus. Perhaps the most frequent and overt example of pyreflies providing power on Spira, however, comes with Sin itself.

Yu Yevon formed this immensely powerful armor by gathering pyreflies around himself and holding them together with gravity spells (also confirmed on pg. 82 of the FFX Ultimania Omega):

(As Maester Mika turns to pyreflies and vanishes)

Rikku

"Wait, gramps! Who's Yu Yevon?"

Mika

"He who crafts the souls of the dead into unholy armor."

"An armor called Sin."

To summarize things thus far, we can conclude not only that the Lifestream of FFXVII, the "lights" of FFXIX and the Gaia of The Spirits Within are the same, but we can also determine that pyreflies and spirit energy are the same. Concordantly, we can also identify materia and spheres as the same.

Next, I would like to draw Final Fantasy VIII into the fold of FF titles that feature a Lifestream and utilize memories as magic. Here, we find less obvious but no less relevant examples.

Scattered across the world of Final Fantasy VIII are draw points, areas on the surface of the planet where tendrils of energy leak out and can be "drawn"

into one who is junctioned to a Guardian Force (Final Fantasy VIII's summons). This energy, which resembles Lifestream energy, manifests as a variety of magical spells at the world's many draw points, just as mako fountains on FFVII's world of Gaia produce a variety of materia.

Equally significant is the process by which people on FFVIII's world use Guardian Forces. Junctioning oneself to a GF causes memory loss over time, suggesting that the GF draws on the memories of its junctioned partner in order to supply them with its power:

(After Squall and the other main characters -- minus Rinoa -- discover that they grew up together, but that all of them except Irvine had forgotten)

Squall

"...Why is it that we forgot?"

"We grew up together as kids...How's that possible...?"

Irvine

"How about this?"

"...The price we pay for using the GF."

"The GF provides us its power."

"But the GF makes its own place inside our brain..."

Quistis

"So you're saying that the area is where our memories are stored?"

"No...! That's just a rumor the GF critics are spreading."

Zell

"So if we keep relying on the GF, we won't be able to remember a lot of things?"

Quistis

"There's no way Headmaster Cid would allow such a dangerous thing!"

Irvine

"Then how is it that I remember, while everyone else has forgotten?"

"Well...?"

"In my case, I hadn't junctioned a GF until recently."

"That's why I remember a lot more than you guys."

Quistis

"How about you, Selphie?"

"Your first experience with the GF was when you came to Balamb Garden, right?"

Selphie

"...Yeah."

...

Selphie

"I have a confession to make!"

Selphie

"When I was 12, I went on an outdoor training session."

"I found a GF inside one of the monsters I defeated..."

"I junctioned that GF for a while. So I have experience with GF, too."

"But...but, it's really weird! I can't remember the name of that GF!"

Quistis

"It must be the GF's fault..."

This process actually bears a great similarity to that which summoners use to access an aeon's power in Final Fantasy X. Summoners commune with fayth, statues in which spirits reside, in order to draw on surrounding pyreflies and form them into aeons. These fayth provide the summoner with the "blueprints," so to speak, for creating their particular aeon.

This is most obvious with the largest summon in Final Fantasy X: Dream Zanarkand, Tidus' home. The entire city is a summoned construct created from the memories of the fayth who were once the citizens of the original Zanarkand:

Bahamut's fayth

"Long ago, there was a war."

Tidus

"Yeah, with machina, right?"

Bahamut's fayth

"Yes. A war between Zanarkand and Bevelle."

"Bevelle's machina assured their victory from the start. Spira had never seen such power."

"The summoners of Zanarkand didn't stand a chance."

"Zanarkand was doomed to oblivion."

"That's why we tried to save it--if only in a memory."

Tidus

"What did you do?"

Fayth

"The remaining summoners and the townspeople that survived the war..."

"They all became fayth--fayth for the summoning."

Tidus

"The summoning... You mean Sin?"

Fayth

"No. I mean this place."

"A Zanarkand that never sleeps."

Tidus

"What?"

Fayth

"The dreams of the fayth summoned the memories of the city."

"They summoned all the buildings, all the people who lived there."

I would argue that the individual junctioned to a GF in Final Fantasy VIII acts as a fayth of sorts for their summon, though they aren't providing the blueprints for the summoning; they provide the power instead, with their memories.

The fayth of FFX, on the other hand, provide the schematics, while the summoner provides the power in a different way, drawing on surrounding pyreflies -- which are spirit energy, and, thus, grew from memories.

Both processes are similar to the use of materia on FFVII's world.

Materia connect their wielder to the Lifestream, and the memories within the

sphere provide the blueprints to a spell. The established connection is then used to manifest the spell with the Lifestream's energy -- the reason the heroes of Final Fantasy VII no longer use materia by the time of Advent Children, according to a comment from Tetsuya Nomura in the Advent Children Reunion Files book (pg. 87).

Based on what we've examined here, I would conclude that Final Fantasy VIII's world also has a Lifestream.

Now, let's turn our attention very briefly to Final Fantasy: Unlimited. Throughout this series, various types of sandy material -- more varied in color than even materia -- known as "soil" were the fuel for powering certain weaponry and many machines.

As you might expect by now, the revelation eventually comes that soil is the life crystals of the dead. In other words, soil is the crystalized spirit energy/memories of the dead.

This tendency for spirit energy to crystalize also appears in Final Fantasy VI, where dying Espers become crystals called magicite, and -- though only demonstrated as a gameplay mechanic here -- Final Fantasy: Tactics, where the spirits of warriors who die in battle also become crystals. In both cases, these crystals allow those who claim them to learn abilities that belonged to the deceased life form.

That said, the spiritual nature of the worlds featured in these three Final Fantasy titles are not elaborated on enough for me to conclude that they also must feature Lifestreams. In Final Fantasy VI's case, the Goddess Statues seem to be the origin of magic and a supernatural train carries away the souls of the dead.

That said, the Goddess Statues are spoken of in legend, and their role in magic could be yet another example of folklore influencing reality, as with the Eidolons of FFXIX. Even the Phantom Train could simply be a manifestation of a common cultural understanding, literally carrying the souls of the dead to the planet's core.

I won't venture to claim that it must be so, but I wouldn't throw out the possibility either.

In any case, spirit energy and, thus, memories are at the very least, *a* source of magic on the worlds of FFVI, Tactics and Unlimited, if not *the* source of magic.

Based on all that we've examined here, I believe we can confidently conclude that Lifestreams and their associated metaphysical phenomena -- memories as the source of life and magic -- are a presence in at least the worlds of Final Fantasy VII, VIII, IX, X/X-2 and The Spirits Within.

As well, the worlds of Final Fantasy VI, Tactics and Unlimited at least bear some of the associated cosmology, if not the entire framework.

This leaves us to ponder: Do all the Final Fantasy titles at some level involve memories as the source of life and magic? Having played Final Fantasy XII and Vagrant Story, I must admit that if the theme is present in either, I overlooked it. In addition, given that they take place in the same world as Tactics, that calls into question whether Tactics is part of this theme beyond a simple gameplay mechanic.

Also, having little knowledge of Final Fantasy XI's story, I can't offer much

commentary on whether the world of Vana'diel houses a Lifestream, though my understanding is that it does not.

Will we eventually see some retroactive plot development that encompasses all previous Final Fantasy titles that haven't already been included in this theme? Will Final Fantasy XIII be the next title to feature the concept? Or has it been laid to rest?

The answers to these questions will hopefully continue to come forth, even as the memories of these stories continue to grow.

[Addendum on January 24, 2010:

I now own the Final Fantasy 20th Anniversary Ultimania File 2: Scenario guide, which features a section on pg. 8 that talks about the origins of power and magic on the various worlds in the FF series. This section confirms much of my theorizing written above.

Please do enjoy this translation I've performed; I know I did:

http://img.photobucket.com/albums/v132/Squall_of_Seed/spiritenergyandmemories.jpg

SOURCE OF POWER

The world that serves as the stage of each work is supported by some great power. In the early works, the power of the 4 elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Wind serve this essential role, appearing alongside crystals they correlate with. On the other hand, with "VII" and onward, a worldview on life and death was introduced to fill the role, and the "power of life" became the essential factor. In addition, the works beginning with "VII" filled their worlds with many manifestations of this "power." They feature the crystalline objects of power named "materia," "spheres," and the like, and in each, they are deeply related to the story, being, for example, the means by which magic is used.

[Diagram at left]

Root of the world: "I", "III", "IV", "V"

Crystals<-->Power of the world (Earth, Water, Fire and Wind)

In "I," "III," "IV" and "V," the world is supported by the 4 cornerstone powers of Earth, Water, Fire and Wind. In "I," the crystals have the symbols of the four powers, and are the source of the 4 powers in the other 3 works as well; furthermore, in "IV," a set of these crystals exist in each of the following: on the terran level, in the underworld, and on the moon.

[Diagram in upper-right]

Wondrous powers that permeate the world: "VII," "IX," "X," "X-2," "XII"

Power of Life ["VII," "IX," "X," "X-2"]

Source of magical powers ["VII," "X," "X-2," "XII"]

"VII" - Spirit energy (mako)

Power of life. Returns to the planet to bring about new life, but the substance called "mako" is drawn out of the planet as a power source and for other purposes at an abusive rate.

Condenses as: Materia

"IX" - "Mist"

Residual element of the souls that should return to the planet, but are discharged into the atmosphere. While it can be harnessed as fuel for airships, it has a negative influence on living things.

"X," "X-2" - Pyreflies

An energy that resides in the atmosphere, in water, underground, and in the bodies of living things; when they gather in high concentrations, they become visible as clusters of light. When reacting to thoughts, they can assume substance.

Condenses as: Spheres

"XII" - Mist

Source of magical powers. When densely concentrated, it becomes visible as a fog. The stones called "magicite" hold mist within, and serve as the drive mechanism for airships.

Circle of Life

"After death, a life will circle the planet and be born again as a new life. Lives enrich the planet and make it grow" -- this worldview on life and death underlying "VII" is similar to ideas seen in "IX" and "X." In the story of "IX," it was defined by the idea that the crystals residing at the center of planets circulate life, and as the memories of living beings accumulate inside the crystals, the planets grow. In "X" and "X-2," a power of life equivalent to that called "mako" in "VII" is featured via the phenomenon called "pyreflies"; it is related to the underground "Farplane," where the dead reside -- and, so, the idea of "the power of life returning underground after diffusing into the atmosphere" takes form here as well. Also, though the concept isn't explicitly stated within the stories of "III," "IV" and "XI," as with the afore-mentioned works, it can be inferred that life circulates these worlds as well.

[Caption next to a screenshot of Anna's spirit talking to Gilbert/Edward in FFIV]

In "IV," Anna, who lost her life, speaks of "becoming one with the great spirit" before vanishing; a worldview on life and death like that in "VII" and the others can be inferred here.

[Diagram in bottom-right]

Stream of Life: "VII," "IX," "X," "X-2"

- 1) A new life is born
- 2) That life dies and its energy then disperses
- 3) The dispersed energy returns to the planet, and enriches the planet to grow

"VII"

Lifestream

A current of the power of life (spirit energy) that circulates within the planet. An enormous swell of knowledge is woven throughout, and, when in direct contact, can cause the mind of an ordinary person to collapse.

"IX"

Crystal

The object at the center of a planet which stores the power of life and makes the planet exist. Once a crystal has aged, it returns to the cosmos and becomes the source of a new crystal.

"X," "X-2"

Farplane

The place to which the deceased return. In "X-2," an enormous swell of energy is determined to exist in its subterranean depths.

As can be seen, this confirms a great many of the conclusions I'd drawn about spirit energy and memories in Final Fantasy. I even think that the diagram that talks about FFVII, IX and X/X-2's worlds appears to indicate that I may

have been right about a crystal residing within that sphere on Spira's Farplane -- which would also suggest that FFVII's world has one. Though some things were not addressed, I feel confident that the reasoning and conclusions were sound nonetheless.]

-----Other fans' theories----- [5.00t]

The following theories are the property of their respective authors, and I claim no ownership of them, nor are they necessarily -- and sometimes aren't -- indicative of my own ideas or beliefs. For that matter, the theories may not necessarily be indicative of the beliefs currently held by their authors.

While I claim no ownership of these articles, their works in this article will fall under the same general copyright as my own.

That said, enjoy.

1) Philosopher1701's Theories [5.10t]

(Philosopher1701 of GameFAQs' Forums; Favorite Quote: "The point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it. - Bertrand Russell)

1. The Purpose of Final Fantasy IX's Crystal [5.110t]

This is something I have been wondering about for a while, now. At the end of the game, right before the battle against Necron, Trance Kuja uses his Ultima spell and it hits Zidane's party and even Kuja. Immediately after this happens, Zidane thinks aloud, "What happened to the Crystal?" It seems that the Crystal might have been destroyed because we never see the Crystal again after this happens. This explains why Necron would appear and attempt to annihilate the universe because the destruction of the Crystal somehow summoned him. If this is true, what other effects would the destruction of the Crystal have besides the summoning of Necron? I have thought about this, and I have even come up with a strange theory that suggests that the destruction of the Crystal could be the equivalent of the Big Bang. This would mean that in Kuja's attempt at a complete annihilation of everything, he inadvertently causes a complete creation of everything. I love this irony, and I have been curious as to see what other people think about this. I know that it seems impossible for Kuja to be responsible for the creation of the universe (given the fact that Kuja is from the future, and the universe's creation would depend on a being that would have not existed unless the Crystal was destroyed, which would result in a timeloop) but we have to think about Memoria. It was created from all of the memories of every living thing (I think), and was a literal gateway to the past, even to the origin of the universe.

It is known that the Crystal itself has its own memories (this may be evidence that Memoria is some kind of distortion in space-time), and it could be possible that Kuja's attempt to destroy the Crystal was a memory that the Crystal had. If so, then could the Crystal have somehow "dreamed" up all of creation, the universe, and time itself and just needed something to initiate its vision? In some strange way, the Crystal might have been able to "call" Kuja from across time (which didn't exist yet. Yeah, weird), and allowed Kuja to destroy it and create the universe. The primary factor that brought the Big Bang idea to my head was the fact that the Crystal World contained the

primary elements of matter: Earth, wind, fire, and water. The annihilation of the Crystal might have blown the elements out into the Void and formed the earliest forms of matter (like the Big Bang).

Note: I have always rejected the idea that Necron was the Crystal. Actually, now that I think about it, I never really liked ANY explanations of the Crystal and Necron, and I am open to new ideas.

Before I end this, I do want to point out something. When the Crystal was destroyed (which would eventually cause life to form, according to this theory), Necron appeared. It could be possible that when the introduction to life was formed (the destroyed Crystal), the introduction to death was formed (Necron). It could be some kind of supernatural balance.

All of this may be completely wrong, and I really want people to analyze this, even disprove it, if necessary. I like the theory, but I don't have to accept it if there are a considerable amount of flaws.

2. All Planets Hold a Shard of the Original Crystal at their Center [5.120t]

I haven't thought about it that much, but a while back I had considered that maybe after the Crystal was destroyed, there were many shards from it that ended up somehow forming planets around them. This would explain how the Soul Cycle could exist. There could be a Crystal Shard at the center of planets with life on them. Terra and Gaia must have had one. The Crystal Shards would act as the preservers of life on the planets. The Soul Cycle would include the souls from the planet endlessly circling through the Shard and returning to the surface. Basically, the Shard IS the core of the planet, and all life on the planet would originate from it.

The way I understood the Iifa Tree, was that the roots from the tree would wrap around Gaia's and Terra 's Shards at the center of the planet (I think that maybe Terra might have been located within Gaia because of the previous attempt at assimilating Gaia, so maybe Terra's Crystal Shard existed within Gaia too), and would block Gaia's souls from continuing its cycle and draw Terra's souls from its own Shard and connect them with Gaia's Shard and Terra's souls would replace Gaia's souls. It is possible that the roots might have joined Gaia's and Terra's Shards together, which would allow the transfer of souls between the two worlds.

The reason I thought this up is because Garland explains to Zidane that when the people of Terra developed a way to become "immortal", their planet began to die. I concluded that their COULD be a Crystal Shard at the center, which would require the Soul Cycle so the Shard could continue to exist. Since the people of Terra stopped dying, the Shard began to decay because the Soul Cycle was halted. This would result in the planet beginning to die. Garland decided to try to somehow link Terra's souls with another Shard that wasn't old and dying, so he created the Iifa Tree.

I know this Crystal Shard theory sounds very far fetched, and there is really no way to prove it that I can think of. It was just something I thought up when I was thinking of a way to explain the Crystal.

Note: I want to clear something up so nobody gets confused. I know that I said that the pieces (I guess these are shards, too) of the Crystal that were blown into the Void when the Crystal was destroyed might have formed the early forms of matter, but there could have been different shards of different sizes. Some shards could have formed the elements or even stars and planets. The shards

that formed the planets are different versions of the pieces of the Crystal. This provides another way of understanding how the destruction of the Crystal would form the universe. The remnants of the Crystal basically formed, in one way or another, everything that exists. In this way, the Crystal itself really isn't completely destroyed, it is just broken into smaller versions of itself with each version having a different function. Some of those shards are what gives the planets life, while other shards might power the stars or something. You could say the Crystal still is the center and source of all life in the universe, just not the way you originally thought.

I hope this isn't too confusing, but I do want to remind you that it is JUST A THEORY. I'm not saying this is how it really is. I'm just providing another way of interpreting the function of the Crystal.

2) YamiBeowulf's Theories [5.20t] (YamiBeowulf of GameFAQs' forums)

1. The Veil Energy Used to Power Airships is Derived in a Manner Similar to the Process by which Mako Reactors in Final Fantasy VII convert Mako into Usable Forms [5.210t]

The airships in FFXIII uses the mist to fly, except for the Hilda Garde's of course. This type of engine's called a Myst Engine, yet if you read the specs of the Prima Vista when you first start a game. You will see that it uses something called "Veil Energy." Well since the Mist is Souls I believe that the Myst Engines are similar to a Mako reactor in FF7. Because somewhere in the game it mentions that mist engines are extremely dangerous. Though it could mean that it's because of the mist leaking out. But I believe it's due to the conditions the engine puts the mist through. I believe what a mist engine does is take the mist and refine it into the Veil Energy. From that state there it converts it into power. So it would reason that in order for an airship to fly it must:

- 1): Draw Mist in.
- 2): Refine the Mist into Veil Energy.
- 3): Convert Veil Energy into propulsion, etc.

This is my theory of course on the mysterious Veil Energy. I am incorporating the info you can find on the Prima Vista:

Prima Vista Theater Ship Info
Class Luxury Liner with Theater
Tonnage 8235 Tonnes
Guest Capacity 288
Propulsion Veil Energy
Ship Wright Zebolt Shipyards
Port of Registry Linbdlum

2. Zidane, Kuja, and the Others' Presence May Have Inspired the Crystal to Create the Universe [5.220t]

We know Zidane's party and Kuja went backwards in time. They brought memories from the future back with them. So when they were in contact with the Crystal it would in essence see what it had done and have gained memories from it's self through those that came back to it. So in a round a bout way, the Crystal showed the Crystal what it had to do and gave it memories. Another theory is that the Crystal naturally knows everything that is to come, like an

omnipotent god like figure. The crystal knows what choices are going to be made and what is going to happen, all the way down to it's own possible destruction. This would explain how Kuja was able to call forth the memories of the Four Chaos's. Another theory of mine is that the Crystal at one point just created everything because it saw it did create everything. I mean let's say you saw your self by a lotto ticket and lets say you won. Would you not go buy that ticket knowing that you would win? My this theory works with either of my Crystal Memory theories, since Zidane's group could have triggered it into creating everything right after Necron was defeated. Or the Crystal it's self decided to create everything. Or possibly even both. Since this crystal theoreticly knows everything, it knew Zidane would come back in time to trigger it into creating the Universe. This of course is a paradox.

That one that was created after the creator, created creation should come back to trigger the creation of the creation that would create him.

But in the end we must realize that paradox's are a common thing in Final Fantasy. Like in FF8 with the Time Compression.

The Crystal creating life is simply a mater of which came first, the chicken or the egg?

3. How the Black Mages of the Black Mage Village Reached the Outer Continent [5.230t]

Since it's obvious that airships wouldn't be able to reach that island since the Mist was contained to the Myst contenent (Actually it wasn't, I used a gameshark and got me a gold chocobo on the first disk. The whole world was covered in Mist. But I attribute this to game programing and not fact, though it might be an interesting theory right there...) But back to my new theory. I believe that the Black Mages didn't use fossil roo. For all those humans in there. The Black Mages when you meet them are terrified of humans, so they had to find a way out there. I believe that they used their magic to create an ice bridge. Similar to how humans migrated from russia into america, following their food. The reason I say this, is because they never mention using a ship. Another theory is that they slowly snuck on the Hilda Garde 1 and were getting free rides off the Mist contenent. I mean, Kuja had obviosuly possessed the Hilda Garde for a great deal of time, so I would only assume he would use it occasionally to transport supplies and such to his desert palace.

It's still very sketchy but they never did say how they got out there...

3) masamune1600's Theories [5.30t] (masamune1600 of GameFAQs' and EyesonFF's Forums)

1. Final Fantasy IX's Implicit References to Past Final Fantasies [5.310t]

Final Fantasy IX is well known for it's many and varied references to previous FF titles. Such references have been explicated before; they include the use of Garland and Marilith (Kary)/Tiamat/Kraken/Lich (FFI), the story of Josef (FFII), and so on. However, these are all examples of what I will refer to as explicit references; the connection to past Final Fantasy titles is immediately apparent, by name, form, or other blatant similarities.

However, in considering FFIIX, I have noticed that there seems to be a number of implicit FF references; these are not nearly so obvious, drawing on understated similarities to characters and the like in the preceding games.

Rather than being stated outright, such references can be identified only through inference.

-Part 1: Necron

Here's a theory, not about Necron's role in the game in terms of plot, but as a thread to other games. I don't, of course, refer to a literal connection, but rather to the myriad references to previous Final Fantasies that occur in FFIIX. While all the explicit references, in terms of name, story, and facility, have likely been identified and/or explored, there may be certain implicit references to previous FF's that are not so easily determined.

In my view (or at least for the speculative purposes of this article), I would interpret Necron as homage to the ideas of Zeromus and Neo Ex-Death. In previous contentions on behalf of Necron's role in FFIIX, similarities to the dialogue of Zeromus were pointed out:

(Zeromus' final words.)

Quote:

Zeromus: I will not...perish...so long as evil...dwells in the hearts...of mankind. G...gh... GRRRAAGH!

(Necron's final words.)

Quote:

"This is not the end."

"I am eternal..."

"...as long as there is life and death..."

Such a similarity should not be ignored, particularly in light of the multitude of clearly intentional references to previous Final Fantasies that were placed in the game. In fact, Zeromus' words could be Necron's: if evil exists in the hearts of men, then the possibility of one or more individuals seeking some ultimate destruction or negation also exists. Thus, as long as evil is perpetuated, so is the potential for Necron to see reason to perform his nullifying work.

Furthermore, in saying "nullifying", I suggest that Necron's purpose was more than to kill, to turn life to death. Rather, Necron sought something more profound and more horrible: the negation, the very dissolution of existence as we understand it.

(Necron): "I exist for one purpose..."

"To return everything back to the zero world, where there is no life and no crystal to give life."

"In a world of nothing, fear does not exist. This is the world that all life desires."

Necron, according to the dialogue, desires to return "everything" to the "zero world." Not only is this zero world a place with no life, it is also a place with no crystal. If the crystal, which gives life, disappears, then theoretically even the possibility of life also vanishes. Also, the crystal deals heavily with the idea of memory:

Voice of Garland: You have entered a new realm. There are no more words. There is no more space... Follow your memory, and march forth...

Zidane: Garland, what exactly is our memory!?

Voice of Garland:

Zidane: Why can I remember other people's experiences and events that happened before my time?

Voice of Garland:

Zidane: Garland, please! Tell me!

Voice of Garland: ...Do not limit memory to just one individual's experiences from birth. That is only the surface. Every life born into this world, whether natural or artificial, requires a parent. And that parent also requires a parent. Life is connected, one to another... If you trace the root of all life, there exists one source. The same can be said for memory. All life constitutes an intelligence that holds memory beyond experience. Memory is not isolated within individuals. It is an accumulation of generations of memories that continues to evolve. You can say that memory and evolution go hand in hand. But most life-forms do not understand the true nature of memories... ...which explains why most memories never cross paths.

Zidane: ...So, what am I gonna find by tracing back our roots?

Voice of Garland: ...A presence that presides over all life and memories. The crystal...

Zidane: Crystal...

There is clearly a difference between dying and having never existed. But if both life and memory are so intimately tied to the crystal, and memory is a quality that transcends individuals (for the purpose of the game), then eliminating the crystal obliterates all memory. Given that the crystal gives tangible form to life, this effectively voids everything that had ever happened.

As noted in a previous post, it's possible that the zero world doesn't necessarily imply total negation. However, it is a possibility. What's really relevant, however, is this: the idea bears striking similarity to a previous FF concept. Note that I managed to sneak in the word "voids." Clearly, negation and nothingness are not new concepts to the series. Neo Ex-Death, the final boss of FFV, is the very embodiment of the Void. Similarly, Necron can be interpreted as the embodiment, or more accurately the will, of negation. However, even if you find these ideas difficult to accept, the fact remains that Necron bears a clear resemblance to Neo Ex-Death.

Furthermore, "Necron" was not the original name for this entity. The Japanese version of the game calls it the "Darkness of Eternity", which still appears in the dialogue:

Zidane: U-Ugh... What happened to the crystal...? ...Where is this?

Unknown Voice: You stand before the final dimension, and I am the darkness of eternity...

Zidane: Wh-Who are you!?

Necron, the Darkness of Eternity, is just that. He is the force that would remove the light, the crystal, from existence. And who's to say that, at least in theory, the crystal is not responsible for time? If the crystal disappears, taking with it time, then the darkness of eternity (you can, for fun, compare this to Chrono Cross' Darkness of Time if you like) becomes a chilling reality. Neo Ex-Death, should it prevail against Bartz and company, would seem to signify the victory of the Void over that which currently exists. The Void is a plot device, and can be interpreted in different ways, but I don't think it's too great a stretch to compare the darkness of eternity idea.

Here, I've constructed a view of Necron as a force to essentially dissolve existence. That can be argued from a number of positions, but such a theory was not my main intent. Rather, I hoped to point out similarities between Necron and Zeromus and Neo Ex-Death. Necron is a plot element, certainly, but it is also more than that: Necron recalls FFIV and FFV, allowing veteran gamers to once more recall their past experiences.

While I still see implicit reference to Zeromus, that seems to be a secondary link. The reference to Neo Ex-Death already seemed stronger, and a couple new points of information add further support to the implicit recollection of Neo Ex-Death. The first is obvious: Grand Cross. This spell, first seen used by Neo Ex-Death in FFV, is arguably Necron's most feared attack. In both cases, Grand Cross can inflict a host of extremely debilitating status effects. This is not a move that is very common in the series, and I believe that Necron had a technique of this name primarily for the purpose of recalling Neo Ex-Death.

The second new link is much more subtle. We know that, preceding Neo Ex-Death (as stated before, the embodiment of the Void), Bartz and company fought it out with Ex-Death. After this fight is finished up, Ex-Death is absorbed into the Void. We see somewhat of a similar situation in FFIIX. Like Ex-Death, Kuja seemed a lock to be the final boss, as he (again, like Ex-Death) was the party's primary enemy heading to the final showdown. Also, like Ex-Death, Kuja is essentially doomed following his final confrontation with the heroes. Although Kuja blasts Zidane and company with Ultima following the fight. His time, like Ex-Death's, is up. Nevertheless, the game is not over: a new presence, alluded to if never actually stated, arises to confront the party. At stake in this final battle is existence as we know it: Neo Ex-Death seeks the perpetual nothingness of the Void, while Necron literally states a desire to return everything to the "zero world."

This idea, then, serves two purposes: we see yet another link between Neo Ex-Death and Necron, while also establishing an implicit reference to Ex-Death in the person of Kuja.

-Part 2: Beatrix

Next, let's turn our attention to Beatrix. Examining her, I saw possible reference to Cecil (FFIV), General Leo (FFVI), Celes (FFVI), and Orlandu (FFT).

Beatrix also closely resembles General Leo (FFVI), Celes (FFVI), and perhaps Cidolfas Orlandu (FFT), as well as Cecil. This is likely another example of implicit (as opposed to explicit) reference to past Final Fantasies.

While there are numerous differences between Beatrix and Leo, all that is necessary is the effect of recalling the fallen general. To this effect, certain similarities jump out at us. General Leo's special ability, in the short time he was playable, was called Shock. The best ability of Beatrix, in the short time she was playable, was also called Shock. General Leo was a man of firm moral convictions; nevertheless, he long demonstrated loyalty to

Gestahl's Empire. Similarly, Beatrix has clear positive qualities, yet remains loyal to Queen Brahne.

Beatrix also has ties to Celes, like Leo once a general of Gestahl. Beatrix's White Magic also recalls Celes' Esper-empowered abilities. Celes' love story is recreated in that of Beatrix and Steiner. Both worked on behalf of a corrupt figure of power, but both ultimately fought for the forces of Good.

Finally, Beatrix is also tied to Orlandu, another overpowered general. He maintained loyalty to Goltana out of a sense of duty.

The comparison to Cecil, of course, still holds.

Of course, there is the comment by Beatrix about the slaughter of a hundred men. However, this does not defeat the Paladin metaphor. Rather, it simply reaffirms the ties between Beatrix and Cecil. Cecil carried out repugnant acts on behalf of his King, though he questioned them the whole time. In becoming a Paladin, the former Dark Knight was able to essentially exorcise his demons by putting the burden of guilt and self-doubt behind him. Similarly, Beatrix might seem to be a Dark character when first you fight her. Nevertheless, as she and Steiner battle beside one another, we see her as a Paladin.

Ultimately, then, Beatrix recalls Cecil, Leo, Celes, and Orlandu, while maintaining her own character and adding to the rich world of FFIIX.

-Part 3: Amarant

Next, let's consider the character of Amarant. In him, I see perhaps the most obscure example of implicit reference. Though this example may be somewhat far-fetched, it seems to me that Amarant can recall the idea of Rubicant from FFIV. Consider the following:

Amarant is often described as the Flaming Amarant. Further, the bounty hunter Lani refers to Amarant as "Red":

Zidane: So, the tables turn! Now, hand over the jewel you stole!

Lani: What are you tryin' to do, Red!? I thought you're supposed to be the number one bandit!

Red-headed Man: I'm not here to help. I just want it to be fair.

Lani: What are you talking about?

Red-headed Man: Leave the jewel and get out of here.

Lani: What!? We're partners on this job!

Red-headed Man: I don't work with hostage-taking scumbags. Now, get lost. Or...would you rather fight me?

Lani: Mark my words! I'll collect the bounty on YOU someday!

and....

Zidane: What's your name?

Red-headed Man: Call me what you will.

Zidane: Hmm... Lani called you 'Red,' right?

Amarant: Some call me the Flaming Amarant.

The imagery of "Red" and "Flaming" obviously conjures up the idea of Fire, a link to Rubicant. Also, Amarant's name, from the Japanese, should be "Salamander." "Salamander" also implies fire (refer to summons in FFT and Chrono Cross).

Moreover, Amarant notes that he wants things to be fair. He immediately seeks to enter battle with Zidane; nonetheless he refused to resort to ambush or any sort of deception:

Red-headed Man: I'm not here to help. I just want it to be fair.

Lani: What are you talking about?

Red-headed Man: Leave the jewel and get out of here.

Lani: What!? We're partners on this job!

Red-headed Man: I don't work with hostage-taking scumbags. Now, get lost. Or...would you rather fight me?

Lani: Mark my words! I'll collect the bounty on YOU someday!

Red-headed Man: Now, fight me!

Zidane: Just a second here. What's going on?

Red-headed Man: I told you. I'm not here to help. I just want to level the playing field.

Zidane: Fair enough. Let's do it.

When, in FFIV, the party confronted Rubicant, he demonstrated an unexpected sense of honor, healing the party before beginning combat:

Rubicant: I shall restore you to full strength. Do not disappoint me.

After the party defeats Rubicant....

Rubicant: Though you are five, you have defeated me as one. I am most impressed. Still, you will never stop Master Golbez. 'Til we meet again...

Rubicant understands the value of unity and teamwork. This is something Amarant needs to learn, but eventually does. Interestingly, when the party confronts Rubicant the final time, he is joined by Milon, Cagnazzo, and Valvalis.

In any case, however, Rubicant fights the party first as an individual; later with help. Amarant desires one-on-one combat with Zidane, yet, after joining the party, eventually (after the incident at Ipsen's Castle) understands the greater power in working together.

We see this when Amarant and Freya fight the (ironic reference, perhaps?) Fire Guardian:

Fire Guard: Yes, we are the guardians of Terra. Filled with the power of Terra itself...

Freya: What is Terra!?

Fire Guard: We did not become guardians to chat with mortals... We derive pleasure from ending your worthless lives...

Amarant: Just to prove how powerful you are...

Fire Guard: So you understand. But will that knowledge help you?

Amarant: Foolish.

Fire Guard: What?

Amarant: Picking fights with strangers in a place like this... I used to know someone like that. He was a loser... He refused to find beneficial ways to use his power. Instead, he'd seek out people to fight...

Freya: Amarant...

Although they are obviously very different characters, I see, as noted through the preceding examples, evidence of Amarant as an implicit reference to Rubicant. Admittedly, Necron and Beatrix served similar roles to the characters they recalled; Amarant and Rubicant do not share such a similarity. Still, this may be a subtle attempt to again recall aspects of the older Final Fantasies.

In any case, I have constructed a thesis such that, in addition to the well-explicated explicit FF references in FFIIX, there are a number of obscured implicit references in the game as well. These serve to recall certain characters or entities in previous games.

-Additional Comments by masamune1600:

There does not seem to be a great deal of analysis concerning FFV, perhaps because the game was initially only released in Japan. However, yet another striking similarity between FFV and FFIIX exists: the idea of multiple worlds. In FFV, Ex-Death is sealed; he is trapped by crystals in a world other than his own. However, even sealed, Ex-Death is able to manipulate circumstances so that the crystals are shattered and he is freed. This leads the characters to journey to the second world, where Ex-Death returns. Similarly, the characters in FFIIX find it necessary to journey to a second world, Terra, where Kuja and Garland have returned. We learn in FFIIX that Garland seeks to assimilate Gaia into Terra; this is strangely reminiscent of FFV, where the worlds eventually do merge (creating a third map, that has transplanted locations from both). Ultimately, however, both the third world of FFV and (depending on your interpretation of FFIIX) are threatened by the Void, or a Void-like concept. Thus, while the Gaia/Terra plot intricacies of FFIIX are fascinating in their own right, they may also implicitly reference a similar (though, admittedly nowhere near exact) story element in FFV.

-----Acknowledgements-----[6.0Ac]

Thanking people, recognizing copyrights and some other boring legal stuff.

Thanks [6.1Ac]

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The "Spirit Energy and Memories" article is dedicated to him.

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An extra thanks goes to him for having invited me to Philosopher1701's thread on GameFAQs where we discussed much of Final Fantasy IX's plot.

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Resources used in the creation of this document [6.2Ac]

- Final Fantasy IX
- Final Fantasy VII
- Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children
- Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete
- Final Fantasy VI
- Final Fantasy VIII
- Final Fantasy X
- Final Fantasy X-2
- Final Fantasy XI
- Final Fantasy XII
- Final Fantasy: Tactics
- Final Fantasy: Unlimited
- Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within
- Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII
- Final Fantasy IX Ultimania
- Final Fantasy VII Ultimania Omega
- Final Fantasy 20th Anniversary Ultimania File 2: Scenario
- TheLifestream.net site and forum
- EDGE (May 2003; issue #123)

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