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By: Tudor Stefanescu, Games Editor



## [Lineage II Chronicle 5: Oath of Blood](#)

*NCsoft's best selling title got its fourth upgrade*

Lineage II is a successful fantasy oriented MMORPG published and developed by Korean studios NCsoft. Since the October 1st 2003 release, the title rallied quite a lot of players on its servers, with more than 14 million subscribers worldwide. The game sees continual improvement through big patches, called chronicles, and on September 6th we could witness the online launch of Chronicles 5: Oath of Blood. The latest addition to the Lineage family brings significant gameplay improvements, a reworked clan system, never seen before raid bosses and new castles to siege. **Story**The world of Lineage II is ruled by three kingdoms that spread their influence over two continents. Although young, King Raoul put an end to the civil war and inner dispute for power establishing Aden, the newest kingdom. To the north lies Elmore, a traditional military colossus that inherited part of the ancient Elmorean kingdom. Westwards across the ocean we have Gracia, where the same bloodline fights for the throne, entangled in constant battle. Clans gain power in their own respect and, on occasions, challenge each kingdom's rule as castles are under siege and history is rewritten. **Gameplay**There are five playable races in Lineage II: Human, Elf, Dark Elf, Orc, and Dwarf. Starting as either a warrior or a caster type, classes are race dependant hereafter, with interesting specialization choices being made at levels 20 and 40. This raises the number of playable distinct classes to over thirty. A third class shift has been introduced recently. Each profession features unique spells and abilities with gameplay generally well balanced in this respect. New features native to Chronicles V bring about a change in level cap, from 78 to 80. Clans can have level 8 now, granting an impressive 140 player limit. Having a clan twice in size of its previous incarnation is good for the game as castle sieges are expected to become even more massive than before. It seems subclasses can also reach 80, gaining a third class transfer to become Noblesse and main classes can compete in the Olympiad games to become Heroes. Titles and their bonuses are a nice touch. Developers thought to make life easier for new players, thus hit points and mana recovery was significantly buffed up while sitting down for characters below level 40. We also see the introduction of additional teleportation possibilities, especially between starting cities for a better and faster leveling up experience. While exploring the land, you will find most interesting the addition of spiritshots and soulshots. These consumable items vary in strength and can be usually purchased from shopkeepers. By spending a moderate sum of adena, your next swing, spell or ability will do more damage than before. Up to double damage per hit can be attained, a great way to keep your mana and hit points levels high while playing. Reduced downtime is a plus, especially if the use of shots allow you to bring down more powerful monsters. Quests are not a main concern in Lineage II, as the ones that really matter are the scarce profession quests. Most players would rather endlessly grind creatures in search of a good loot drop, instead of running around and exploring the map for that particular quest beast. Since the main way to expose the game story is through the use of quests, I can't say the average player knows much about Lineage II lore. Fighting PvE is the main way to rise in level and the story is left to the bookworms brave enough to read it all directly on the official website. And here I stand, weapon in hand, skills learned and ready to run towards the questing site and slay everything in my path for a good old leveling session when ... I see quite a sizeable group of players attacking a city guard. I see their names are all gibberish, so I presume they must be alts, maybe a clan trying to make a point by taking down NPCs with level one characters. I soon enough realized they were in fact bots, third party programs scripted for certain tasks, while the "real player" is away from the keyboard. The use of bots is never approved for MMORPGs. At times, there are more

bots than players in Lineage II, although I was told the Game Masters are actively trying to do something about the problem. Eventually, they best the powerful guardians, and the resulting spawn time interferes with guards properly giving quests to new players. Close to the cities, popular creeping areas are furthermore swarming with bots bearing gibberish names. Bots are so evenly spread, that every once in a while you need to run quite a distance to find a good leveling spot. They are used to get free gold, for power leveling or to gather rare drops for crafting. Eventually, adena - the Lineage II in game currency - is sold for real world cash, granting buyers an unfair advantage and generally dealing significant blows to the game's economy as the more free adena is generated, the more prices rise.

**Concept** Lineage II's lack of instancing can be troublesome at times. For one thing this takes out a lot from the joy of leveling up in premade groups and secondly it encourages spawn camping. Just imagine you have two groups present at a location known for monsters good drop rates, maybe the final ingredient in the making of your A-grade weapon (the best available). It often enough results in arguing, trolling around or foul language, unless the groups are mature enough to take turns. PvP is not encouraged, but even if the groups feel warlike, reinforcements will be called in most of the time. PvP is neither fair, nor fun, while being outnumbered. I can't say the massive factor is that present in Lineage II. By nature of the wide array of materials needed in crafting better armor and weapons, you will always need additional help in order to get geared up at higher levels. This justifies the existence of clans and clan banks, where the said ingredients are being pooled. Several steps were taken to stimulate players into banding together for a greater goal with the introduction of new world bosses of all levels. In this respect, the most notable addition to Chronicles V is Frintezza. Four to five groups are allowed to enter his lair and eventually bring down the force fields protecting the sanctuary. Deep within his dungeon you'll find him playing the organ into a crescendo, eventually summoning a demonic minion to fight by his side. Each new verse, each new sound will boost the demon's abilities and resistances. At least 40 characters are needed to best the raid boss. Since you need to complete a quest, and a key to enter his inner sanctum, this basically introduces instancing and that 50 player limit to take up the fight. Lineage II does have the unique element of castle sieges. That was further expanded with the addition of Rune Castle and Schuttgart Castle. Clans can take charge of castles and on occasion must defend them against opposing clans. This is a great opportunity to show skill in your particular class, to get organized and act as a nicely oiled gear in a larger machinery of doom. Siege weapons are available and useful only on such events, where teamwork and coordination play key roles. There is always the dragon Antaras, he who requires almost one thousand players to defeat. It can't get any more massive than that, but while the encounter is realistic enough, I must notice that strategy and coordination are hardly decisive factors in such a large scale fight.

**Video** Although Lineage II has a disturbing likeness to most fantasy MMORPG games that came out of Asian territory, we must not forget this is the original title that inspired them all, the "crème de la crème" everyone tries to copy. Engine versatility is not something out of a FPS game, yet I didn't find any major glitches and annoyances. While the landscape won't disappoint anyone, the game's graphical strength lies in model design. I'm not talking just about your character, which looks very physically correct and has textures that can cope with the last month's game releases in terms of video proficiency, but also the various NPC encountered in the world. The higher they get in levels, the better they look, giving a real-like feel to Lineage II. Even so, manga influence is definitely present and not to be ignored so take that into consideration when considering Lineage II. You either love it or hate it at first glance.

**Sound** Good, albeit repetitive sound, you will soon come to enjoy the battle screams of your character, be it male or female. Unfortunately emotes are limited to reflect utility and never provide long winded in-character voice expressions. It's too bad the developers never bothered with extended voice-overs when it comes to NPCs either, being either silent or casually announcing various large scale triggered events. Neoclassic, soundtrack-like synth music with good samples presents great and varied compositions to the auditorium. I am

impressed of the complexity of composition, that although is not symphonic altogether, is goes way above the average MMORPG music. **Multiplayer** There are no notable differences between solo and team play in PvE since multiplayer usually implies benefiting from cross class buffs. While it's a significant power enhancement of offensive and defensive capabilities, this has little impact on gameplay. Often enough players are grouping with a buffer (healer usually) and a spoiler, in order to limit downtime as much as possible yet still reap the full benefits of looting monsters killed. Should instancing be available, there would be a perfect incentive for characters to play together in small and balanced group action. Unfortunately this isn't the case. You can still group, but it's just not that much fun. I find the PvP system too limiting for my taste. Although Lineage II promotes a free range PvP scenario, where players are free to attack one another at any given time, without any level range limitations, the ensuing complications following a kill usually discourage most players to actively seek PvP. Should you attack a white, no-PvP flagged, character without him retaliating, you will gain bad karma and eventually end up being a free target for anyone powerful enough to win over you in a fight. Not to mention you become kill-on-sight for guards and shopkeepers won't trade with you. Death while having karma often enough results in dropping one equipped object, lying there on the ground for anyone to pick up. Regardless of item, at higher levels it's a debilitating loss and it's avoided. Most of your PvP needs are taken care of during castle sieges, thrilling group action yet you can do nothing on your own. **Conclusion** The finest grinding oriented MMO is here. What Lineage II lacks in role-playing, quests and story implementation, it recovers through the grinding power trip and the achievement sense of owning rare player made high end items. It's not some uncanny boss that drops your armor; you actually get the materials yourself. While Lineage II may not be the first game introducing this kind of gameplay elements, it was the one to write history, pretty much like World of Warcraft did in its own department. The past few years saw a flurry of Lineage II clones and none managed to surpass the master. Chronicles 5 is basically "the clan expansion", further improving the existing elements to accommodate bigger castle sieges and larger raid groups. The brand new high end dungeon will have you spend hours upon hours with your friends, trying to best the game's greatest challenge yet. Basically, Lineage II Chronicles 5 brings a little bit of everything to its dedicated fan base, while its saga seems far from over.