

COSMOPOLITAN GAMES

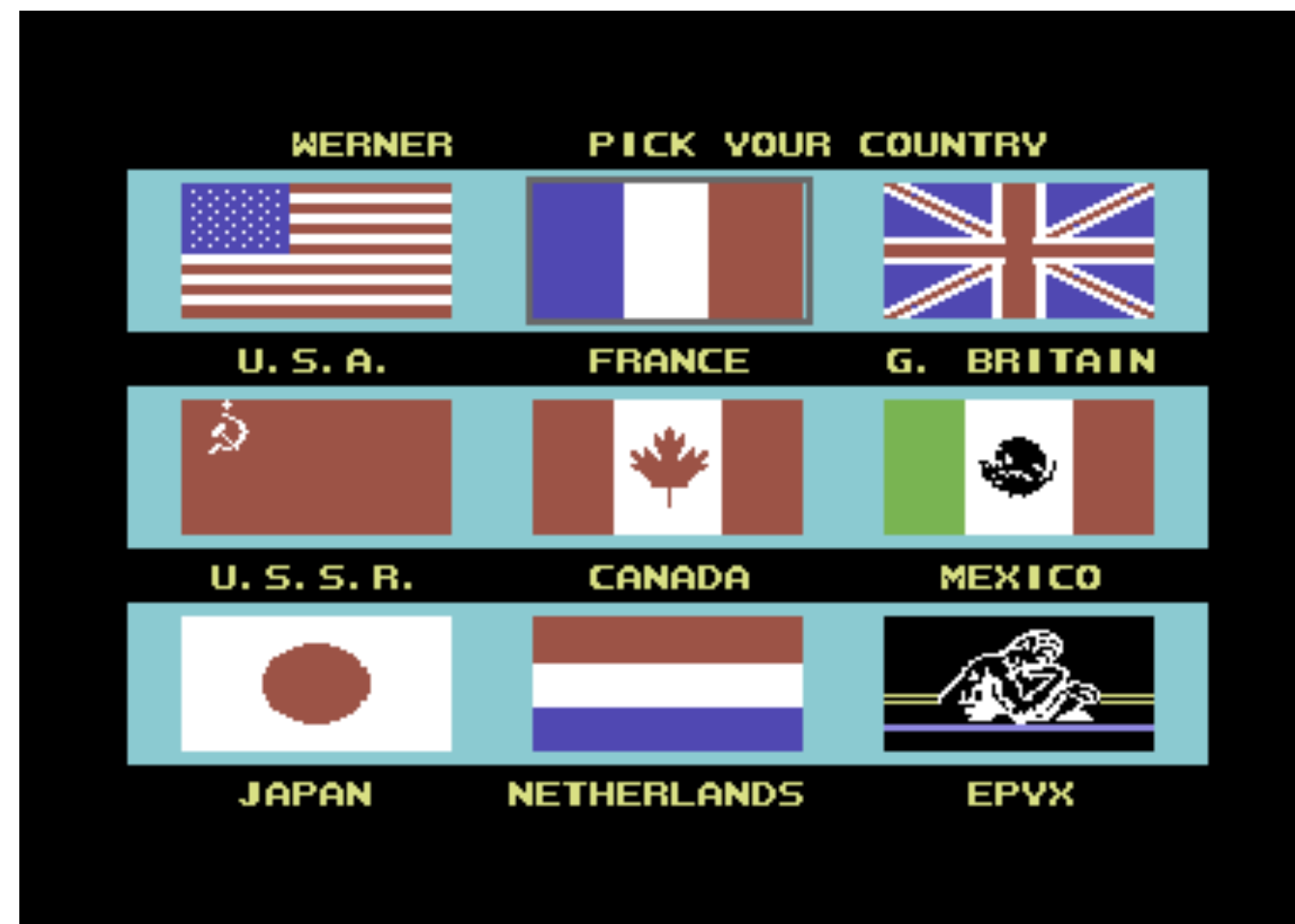
A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIGITAL GAMES

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STEFAN WERNING**

**COSMOPOLITAN CINEMA.
ARTS AND POLITICS IN THE SECOND MODERNITY
03.-05. APRIL 2014**



I. Digital Games and National Identity



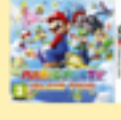



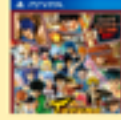
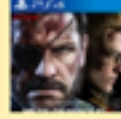

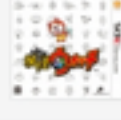


Winter Games (1985)

National Gaming Charts

<http://www.vgchartz.com/>

Pos		Game	Weekly	Total	Week #
1		<i>inFAMOUS: Second Son (PS4)</i> Sony Computer Entertainment, Action	77,405	77,405	1
2		<i>Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (PS4)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Action	34,585	34,585	1
3		<i>Titanfall (XOne)</i> Electronic Arts, Shooter	32,966	162,844	2
4		<i>Final Fantasy X / X-2 HD Remaster (PS3)</i> Square Enix, Role-Playing	25,403	25,403	1
5		<i>Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (XOne)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Action	11,799	11,799	1
6		<i>Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (PS3)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Action	8,828	8,828	1
7		<i>Minecraft (X360)</i> Microsoft Game Studios, Adventure	8,230	581,215	39
8		<i>South Park: The Stick of Truth (X360)</i> Ubisoft, Role-Playing	8,188	46,980	3
9		<i>Final Fantasy X / X-2 HD Remaster (PSV)</i> Square Enix, Role-Playing	7,547	7,547	1
10		<i>Dark Souls II (X360)</i> Namco Bandai Games, Action	6,855	29,323	2

UK: 14.-23.03.2014

Pos		Game	Weekly	Total	Week #
1		<i>Mario Party Island Tour (3DS)</i> Nintendo, Action	134,178	134,178	1
2		<i>Sengoku Musou 4 (PS3)</i> Tecmo Koei, Action	130,768	130,768	1
3		<i>Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (PS3)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Action	130,387	130,387	1
4		<i>J-Stars Victory Vs. (PS3)</i> Namco Bandai Games, Action	118,722	118,722	1
5		<i>J-Stars Victory Vs. (PSV)</i> Namco Bandai Games, Action	95,591	95,591	1
6		<i>Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes (PS4)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Action	95,232	95,232	1
7		<i>Pro Yakyuu Spirits 2014 (PS3)</i> Konami Digital Entertainment, Sports	66,299	66,299	1
8		<i>Yokai Watch (3DS)</i> Level 5, Role-Playing	46,549	617,368	37
9		<i>Sengoku Musou 4 (PSV)</i> Tecmo Koei, Action	40,843	40,843	1
10		<i>Dark Souls II (PS3)</i> Namco Bandai Games, Action	37,164	293,673	2

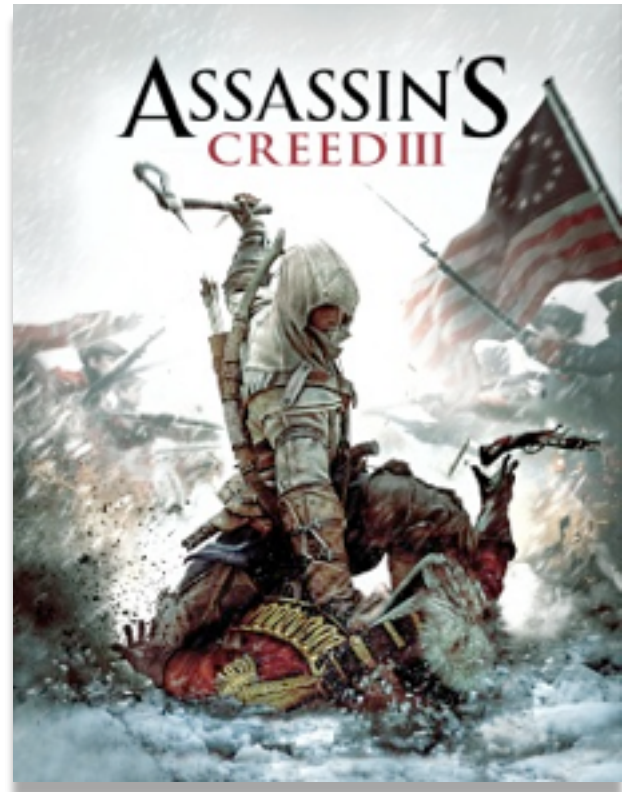
Japan: 14.-23.03.2014

International StarCraft 2 Ranking

#		NAME	TEAM	RATING↓	vP↓	vT↓	vZ↓
1.	▲	herO	CJ Entus	2076 ▼	2028 ▼	2063 ▼	2137 ▼ →
2.	▲	sOs	Jinair	2062 ▲	2007 ▲	2084 ▲	2096 ▲ →
3.		San	Yoe	2056 ▲	1962 ▲	1983 ▲	2222 ▲ →
4.	▼	jjakji	mYinsanity	2040 ▼	2044 ▼	2019 ▼	2057 ▼ →
5.	▲	ForGG	Millenium	2020 ▲	1873 ▲	2213 ▲	1974 ▲ →
6.	▼	Polt	CM Storm	2009 ▲	2064 ▲	1924 ▲	2038 ▲ →
7.		INnoVation	Acer	1988	1989	1909	2067
8.	▲	Life	StarTale	1981 ▼	1880 ▼	2020 ▼	2043 ▲ →
9.	▼	Mvp	IM	1968 ▼	1831 ▼	2013 ▼	2058 ▼ →
10.		PartinG	SKT T1	1956	2003	1955	1911 →
11.	▲	Rain	SKT T1	1951 ▲	1903 ▲	2056 ▼	1894 ▼ →
12.		StarDust	mYinsanity	1937 ▼	1936 ▲	1916 ▼	1960 ▲ →
13.	▲	Zest	KT	1924 ▲	2065 ▲	1803 ▲	1902 ▲ →
14.	▲	MMA	Acer	1921 ▲	1893 ▲	1913 ▲	1956 ▲ →
15.	▼	TaeJa	Liquid	1920 ▼	1860 ▼	1929 ▼	1970 ▼ →
16.	▼	HyuN	ROCCAT	1919 ▲	1835 ▲	1956 ▲	1966 ▼ →
17.	▲	Dear	mouz	1902 ▲	1819 ▲	1911 ▲	1976 ▲ →
18.	▼	Jaedong	EG	1889 ▼	1820 ▼	1826 ▼	2022 ▲ →
19.	▼	Classic	SKT T1	1873 ▼	1807 ▼	1922 ▼	1890 ▲ →
20.	▼	MC		1865 ▼	1703 ▼	1918 ▼	1973 ▲ →
21.	▲	Patience	Ai	1865	1803	1930	1860
22.	▲	Bomber		1859	1876	1903	1799
23.	▼	NaNiwa		1858 ▼	1738 ▼	2017 ▼	1817 ▼ →
24.	▲	Maru	Jinair	1846 ▲	1774 ▲	1967 ▲	1798 ▲ →
25.	▼	HerO	Liquid	1833 ▼	1704 ▼	1934 ▼	1861 ▼ →

National Developments

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Video_games_developed_in_Canada





Vander Caballero: *Papa & Yo*. Minority (CA), 2012

National Gaming Industry

<http://www.industriekompass-games.de/start>



Developer

Publisher

Business Service

Technical Service



Patrizier, 1492



Anno 1602, 1998



Fußballmanager

National Gaming Culture



Organisations

Festivals

Awards

Funding

Associations

Productions

National Discourses

German Angst

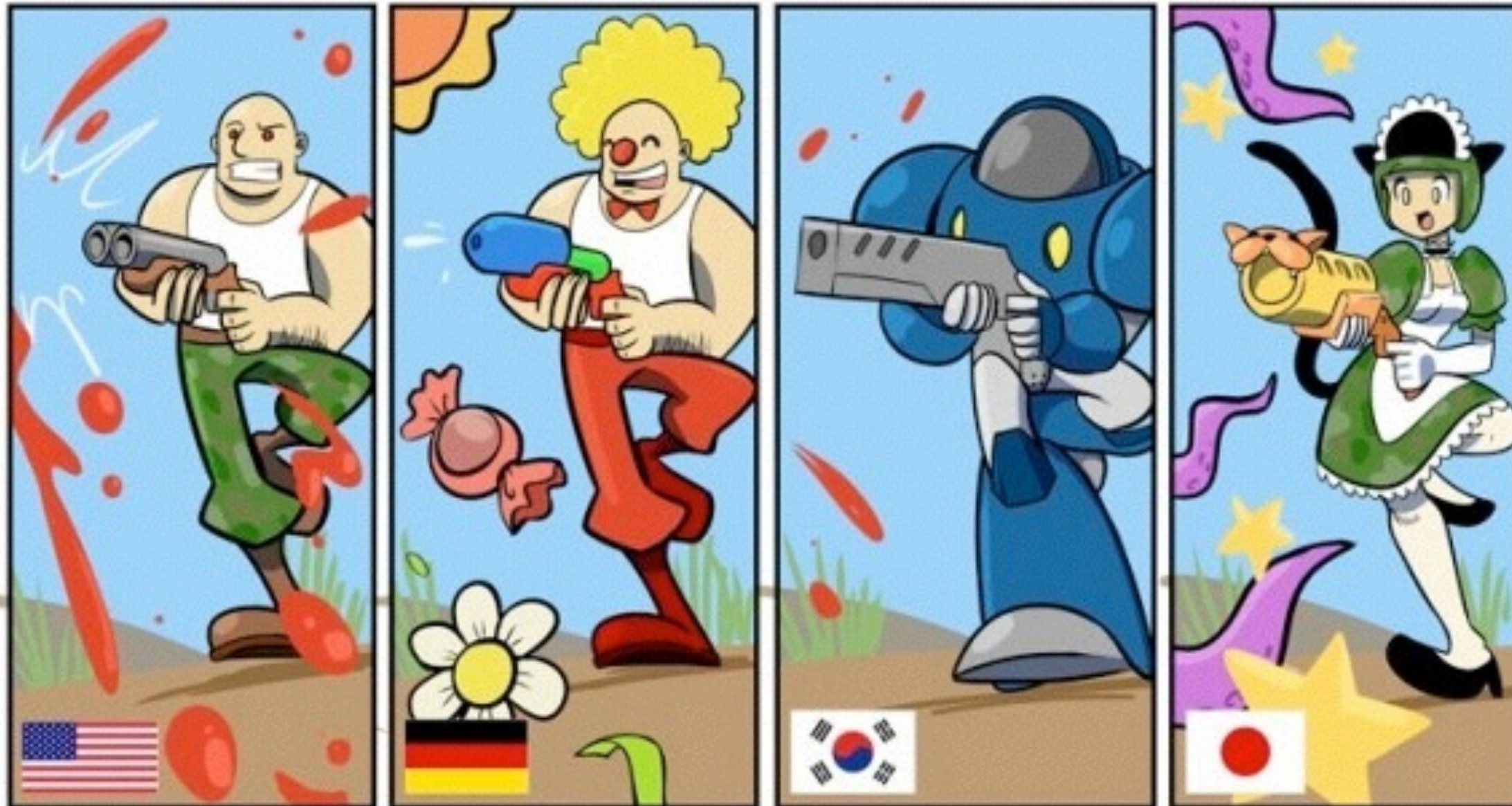


Localization

NERFNOW.COM

LOCALIZATION

SOMETIMES, SLIGHT CHANGES ARE MADE IN A GAME TO MAKE SURE IT WILL BE PROPERLY RECEIVED BY DIFFERENT CULTURES.



National Gaming Culture

„Consoles have been banned in China since the year 2000,“ Lisa Hanson from market researcher Niko Partners tells Kotaku. „The government thought that was the best way to protect Chinese youth from wasting their minds on video games, after a parental outcry.“ The following year, online gaming exploded, and the market size hit \$100 million. So the ban, Hanson says, „didn't stop the 'problem'.“

<http://kotaku.com/5587577/why-are-consoles-banned-in-china>



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8zVzws3lIY>

National Narratives



1984-95



2010



1996



1989



1999



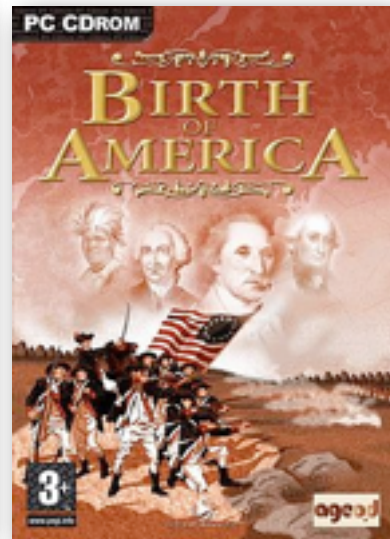
1999



National History



1492



1776



1863



1880



1915



1929



1937



1940



1944



1947



1957



1963



1967



1986



1990



20

National Images



1893 World Fair



2013 Bioshock Infinite

<http://games.parsons.edu/2012/02/the-shadow-of-the-white-cloud/>



Capcom: Ōkami (大神), 2006



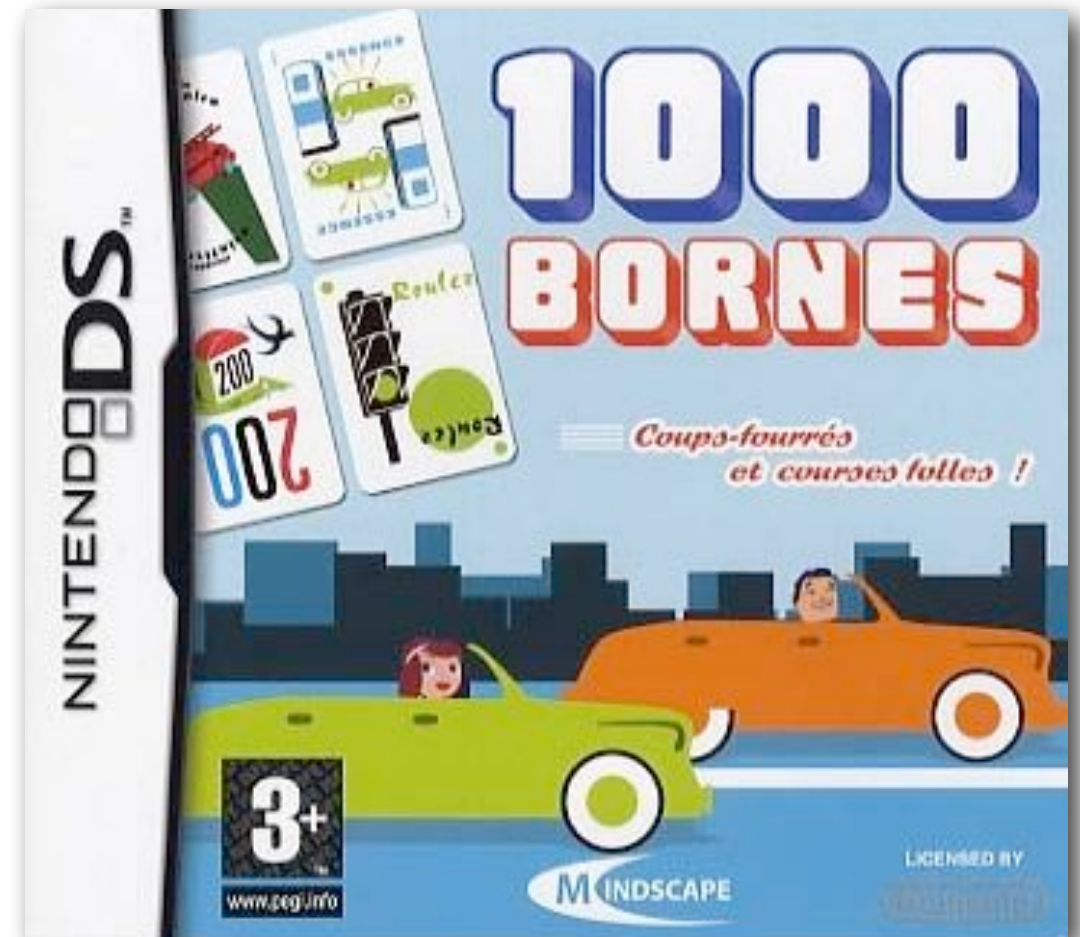
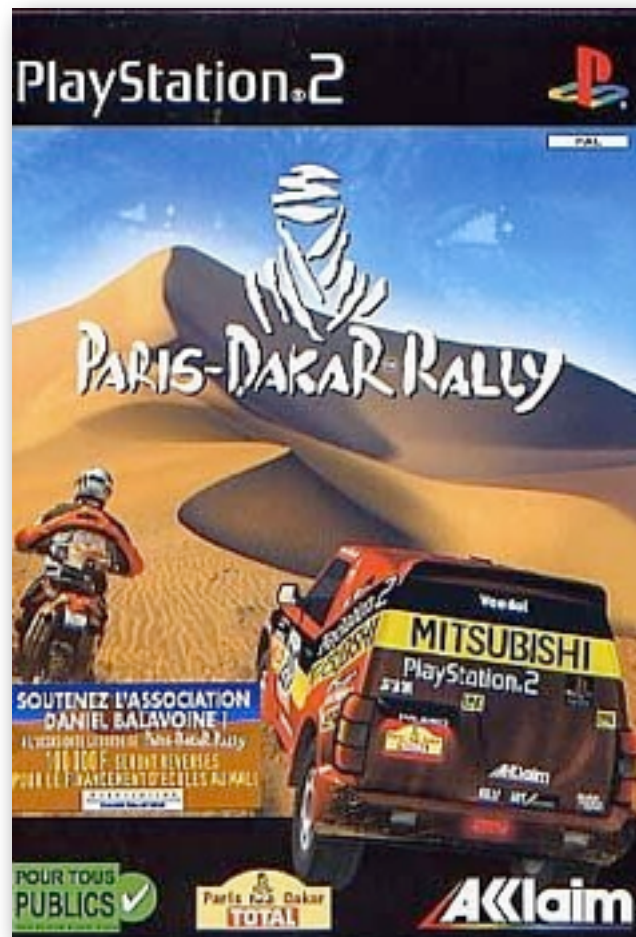
Vanillaware: Muramasa: The Demon Blade (隴村正), 2009



National Luditives

„Football and American Identity examines the social conditions and cultural implications found in the football subculture, represented by core values such as competition, conflict, diversity, power, economic success, fair play, liberty, and patriotism.“
Gerhard Falk: *Football and American Identity*.

National Luditives

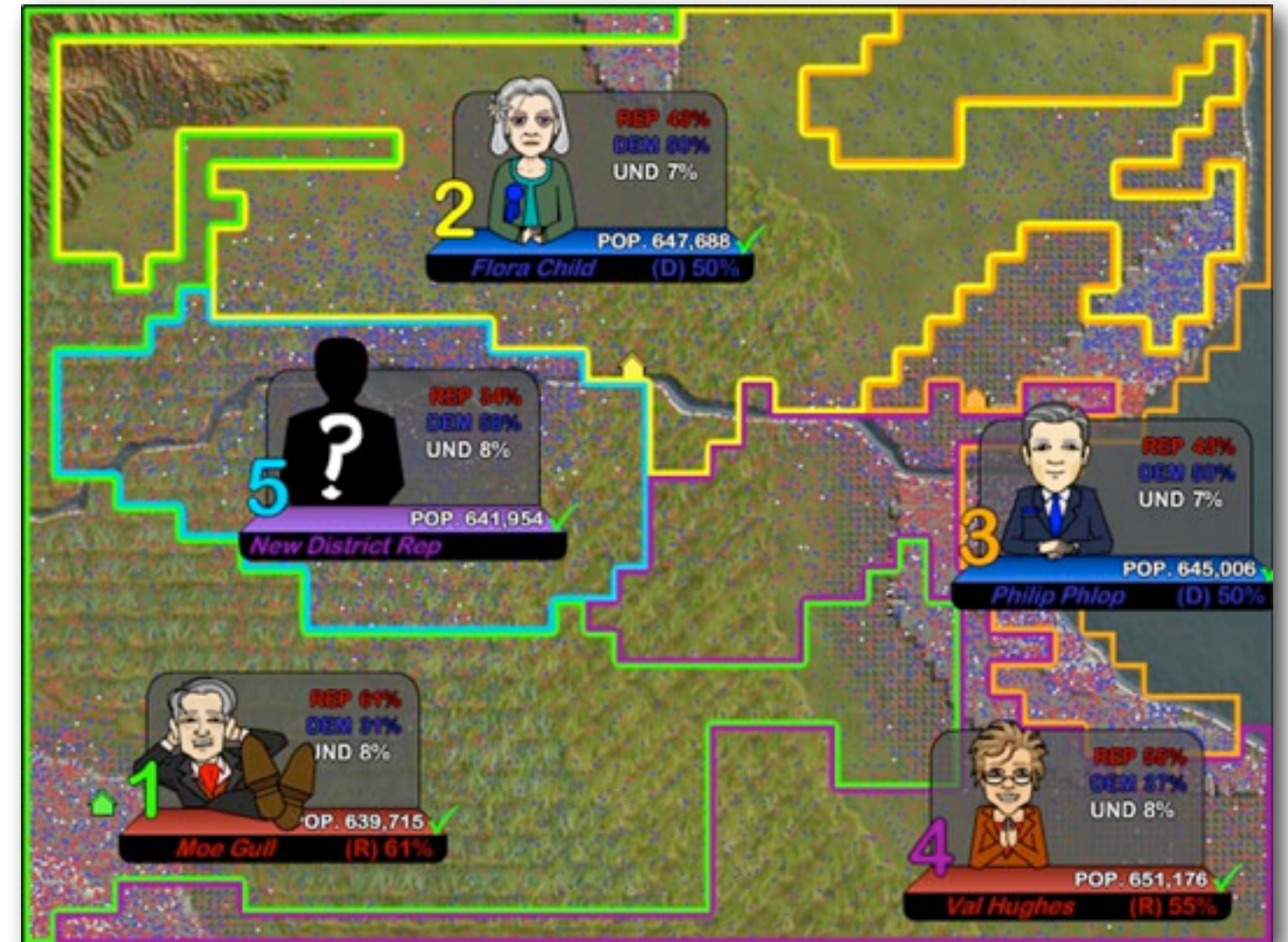


National Systems

Structures and Procedures



Narco Guerra (2013)



Redistricting Game (2007)

National stereotypes and clichés



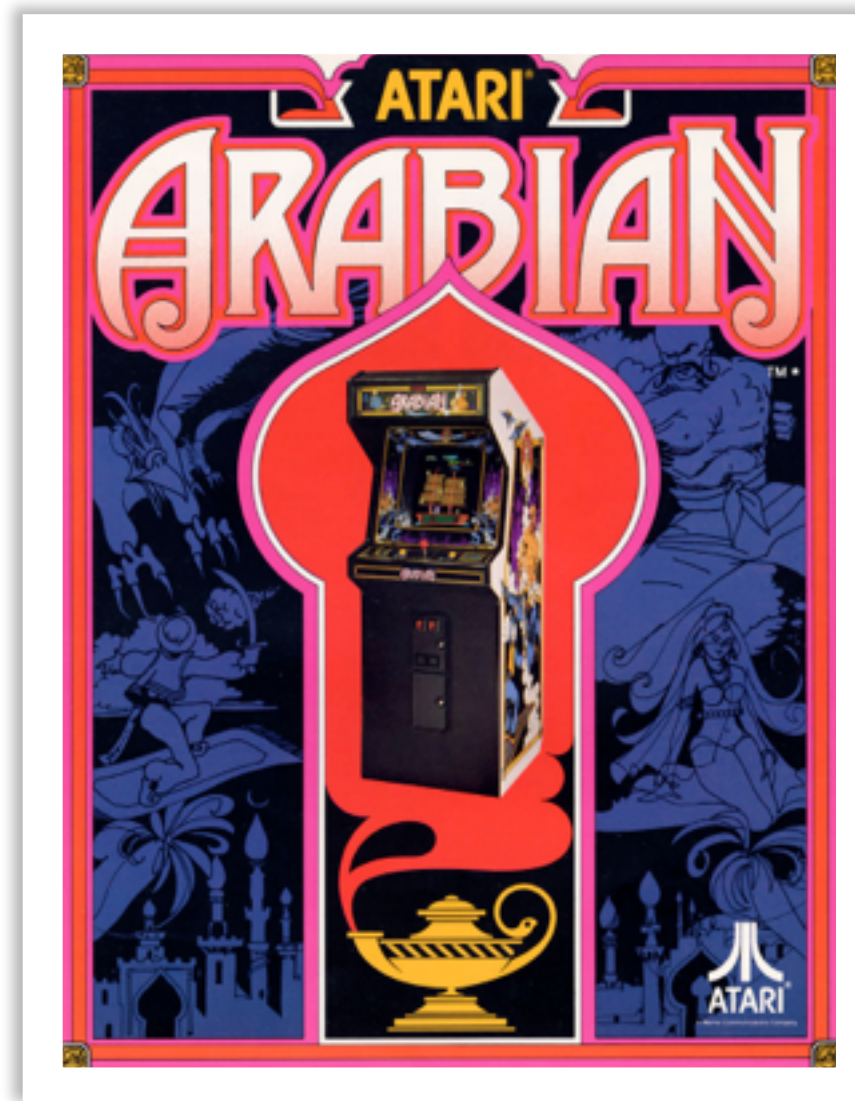
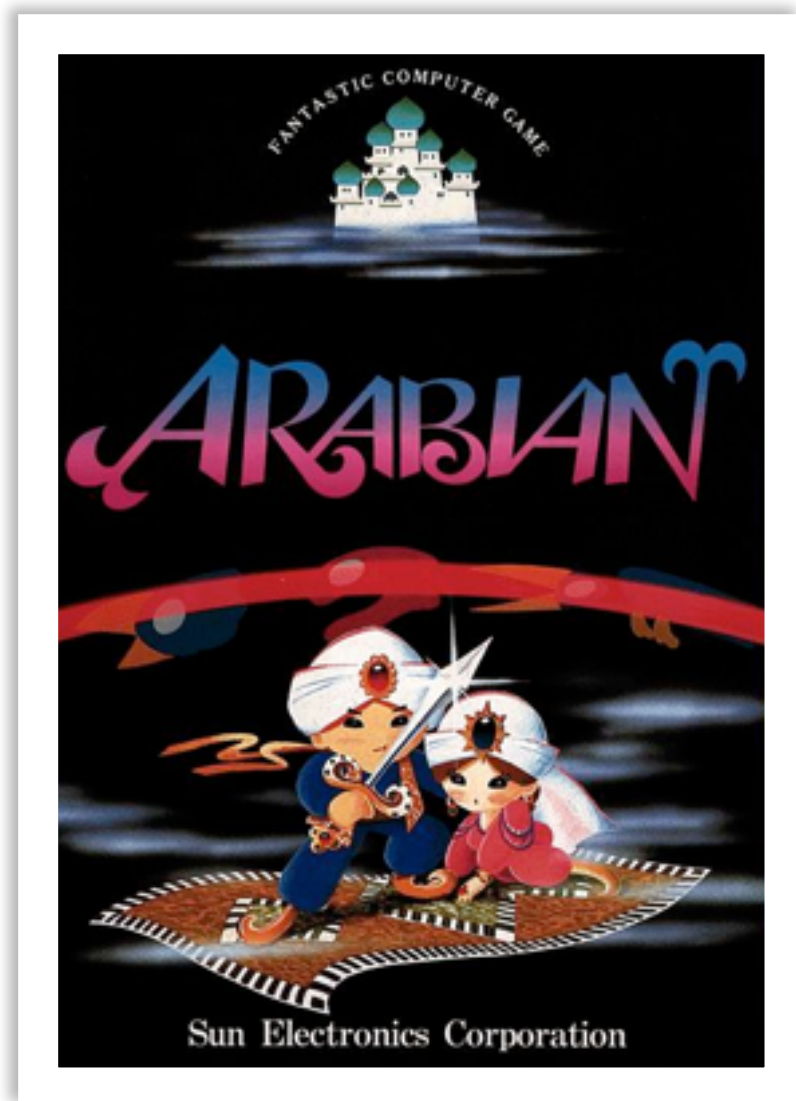
Cf.: Exotism

T2 NYHEDERNE

The image had been taken from YouTube, and was — somehow — believed to be a legitimate image of present-day Damascus. Those darned video games are just getting too darned realistic for reality to handle. But hey, everyone goofs, so we should just laugh and then we should move on. I'm hoping the *Assassin's Creed* artists, at least, are flattered by the error.

<http://www.geekosystem.com/assassins-creed-screenshot-mistaken-for-real-syria/>

II. Negotiating Cultural Sensibilities in Digital Games



Overview

1. Reassess traditional representational biases
2. Alternative functions of representing cultural diversity in games
3. Games as a medium of cultural expression?

Exotism

Exotism

The „representation of one culture for consumption by another“ (Alden Jones)

Theming

The separation of gameplay mechanics from aesthetics in (digital) games



Orientalism

Traditional functions

Essentialize cultural characteristics

Suggest structure and manageability

Impose categories of self-representation

Raise interest (and ensure continued funding)

Demonize oriental culture and iconography

Resident Evil IV (Capcom, 2005): door of the mosque
Masjid el-Nabwi

Devil May Cry 3 (Capcom, 2005): door of the Kaaba

Oriental settings in recent military shooters



Occidentalism

Onimusha 3 (2004)

鬼武者3 Onimusha Surī



Eternal Sonata (2007)

original title

トラスティベル ～ショパンの夢～

Torasuti Beru ~Shopan no Yume~

Trusty Bell: Chopin's Dream



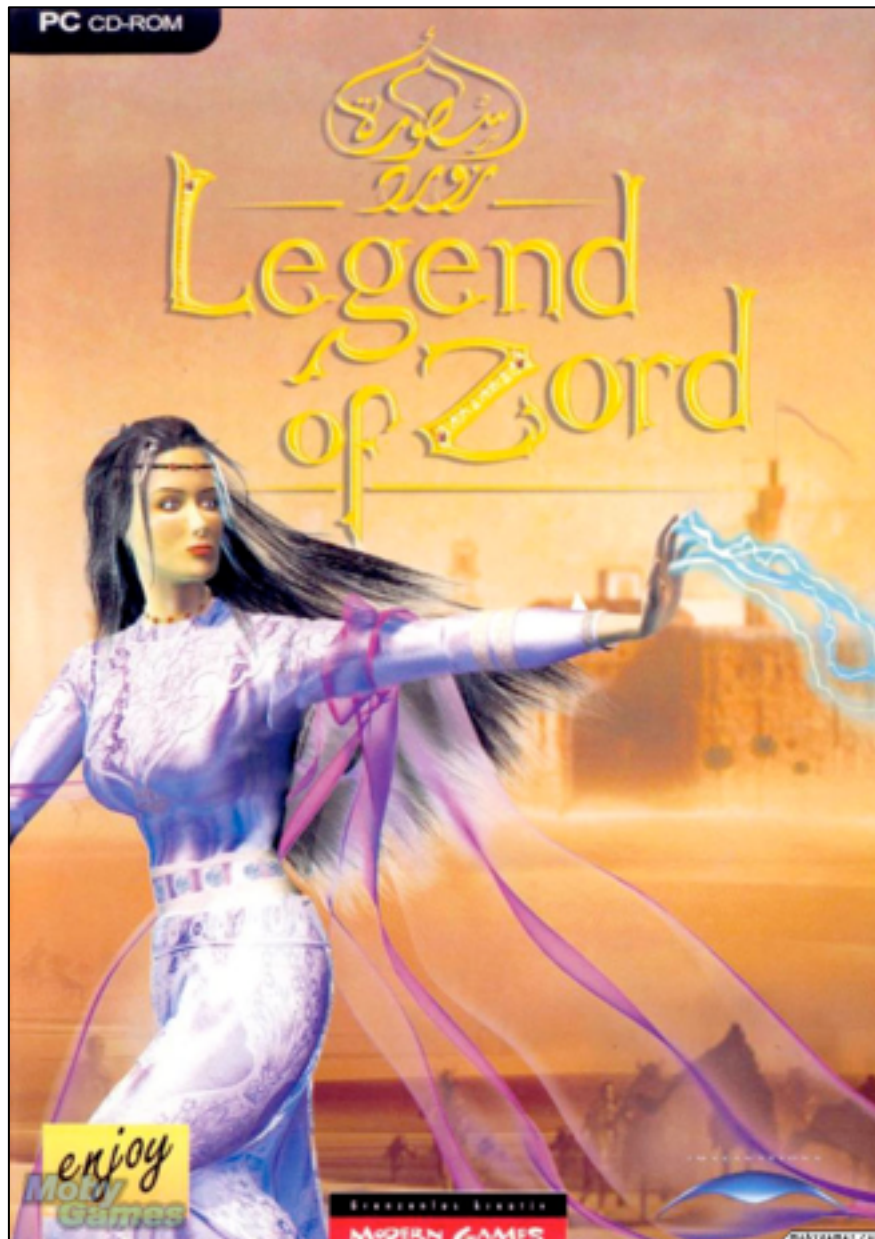
Shadow Hearts: From the New World (2005)シャ

ドウハーツ・フロム・ザ・ニューワールド

Shadōhātsu Furomu za Nyūwārudo



Second-Order Orientalism



Corresponding concepts

Ethno-orientalism (Carrier 1992)
Self-orientalism (Dirlik 1996)
Internal orientalism (Schein 1997)
Neo-orientalism (Boehmer 1998)
Re-Orientalism (Lau 2009)

Legend of Zord (2003)

Developed at Media City Dubai
Falcon and lion transformations
Soundtrack features Arab musicians and instruments

Difficult to differentiate between external and internal influences!

Expressive Processing

Oriental Despotism/hydraulic empires (Karl-August Wittfogel)



Civilization IV/V

Camel Archers (IV): do not require resources to build, have a chance to withdraw before defeat, move after attacking

Saladin (IV): no anarchy when changing a civic

Bazaar (V): increasing bonus for oases and gold deposits found in deserts
→ many settlements

All religions are structurally similar
every religion has a 'holy city' etc.

Religion as an information network

Direct 'line of sight' with all cities sharing the same faith

Maximum dissemination of religion as part of the rule bias

Environmental Storytelling

Precursor: orientalist designs in early pinball machines

Oriental environments in military shooter games



Exoticism in the context of technological constraints

Attempt to make characters and settings distinct
Generic ,desert' levels in many early arcade and video games e.g. ***Super Mario Land*** (1989)



Project Firestart (1989)

Ethnically diverse characters as a means of using the limited C64 color palette to best effect.



,The opulent Orient‘ as a showcase for new representational technologies



Prince of Persia: Sands of Time (Ubisoft, 2003)

Showcases the Jade Engine
Blur and Bloom Shaders



Prince of Persia (Ubisoft, 2008)

Demonstrates non-photorealistic rendering techniques
Showcases the adaptability of the Scimitar Engine originally designed for *Assassin's Creed*
Contingent world rather than discrete levels

Earlier examples: **Resident Evil IV** and **Devil May Cry**

Showcase high-quality textures that became technically feasible due to distribution on DVDs

,The opulent Orient‘ as a showcase for new representational technologies II



Orientalist painting in the 19th century

New types of colors for painting in different climates such as deserts or rain forests

Increasingly based on (amateur) photographs

Cf. e.g. Behdad, Ali, and Luke Gartlan, eds. *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. Getty Publications, 2013, p. 16/17

Behdad and Gartlan point out correlations between military technologies and colonial „technologies of visual control“ (p. 194)

Oriental scenarios and the 'ideal type' of the interactive movie



Video games expressly referenced iconic oriental scenarios familiar from movies to reaffirm their media identity

The Thief of Baghdad (1924/1940)

Sinbad films with visual effects by Ray Harryhausen (1958, 1974, 1977)

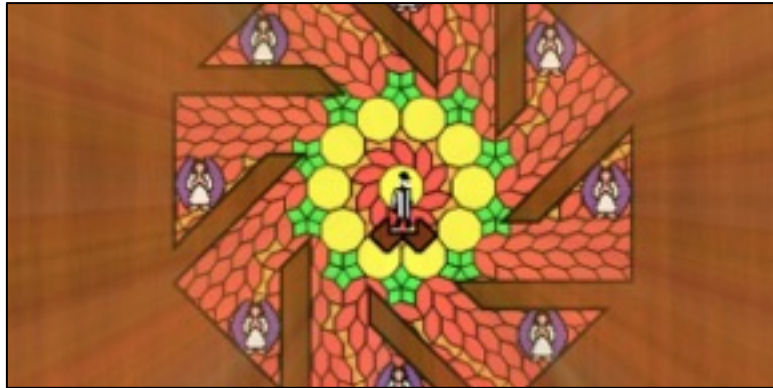
⇔ ***Karateka*** (Brøderbund , 1984)

⇔ ***Throne of the Falcon*** (Cinemaware, 1987/88)

⇔ ***Lords of the Rising Sun*** (Cinemaware, 1989)



Deriving new gameplay mechanisms from non-Western themes and iconography



Music of the Spheres (2013)



Farsh (2012)



The Cat and the Coup (2011)

The player impersonates the cat of prime minister Mohammed Mossadeqh

Semanticization of physical simulation
Usually a ,standardized' and unreflected technological feature of many digital game worlds

Indirect interaction

Counter-Games



Quraish (2006)

Counter game to the ***Age of Empires*** franchise (1997-), which focuses on historical contexts of Western military and cultural dominance

“Covers the rising questions around the world about Islam”
(official web site)

More personalized, i.e. portrays historical leaders



Special Force 2: Tale of the Truthful Pledge (2007)

Counter game to *America's Army*

Unlicensed use of the Cry Engine

<=> Appropriation of British film technology by early Indian film pioneers

Implemented by the Hezbollah

Games as a medium of cultural expression



Adventures of Niyangi (Kenya, 2007)

German economic simulations

Fugger (1988)

Kaiser (1984)

Der Patrizier (1992)



Tension between cultural specificity and ,patterns' in game design

[Egypt Game Jam 2014 prototypes](#)

The importance of online player discourse



PR issues

Resident Evil V controversy

Injustice: Gods Among Us

Proactively renamed as The Mighty Among Us for regional marketing

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (Favela map)

Religious slogan and picture of Allah in a bathroom

„Solved“ through a software update

Zack & Wiki

Muezzin chant as part of the gameplay system

Increasing „cultural literacy“ among players

Distributing „evidence“ via video sharing websites

Still mostly a discursive reflex

Thank You

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