# COSMOPOLITAN GAMES
## A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIGITAL GAMES

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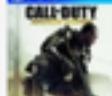
# I. Digital Games and National Identity
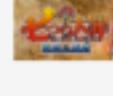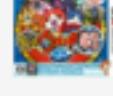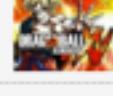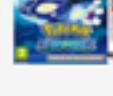


Winter Games (1985)

# National Gaming Charts

http://www.vgchartz.com/

| Pos | | Game | Weekly | Total | Week # |
|-----|---|------|--------|-------|--------|
| 1 | | The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Action | 67,256 | 67,256 | 1 |
| 2 | | Monster Hunter 4 Ultimate (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Role-Playing | 28,614 | 28,614 | 1 |
| 3 | | Evolve (PS4)<br>Take-Two Interactive, Shooter | 24,569 | 24,569 | 1 |
| 4 | | Evolve (XOne)<br>Take-Two Interactive, Shooter | 6,840 | 6,840 | 1 |
| 5 | | Pokemon Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Role-Playing | 5,939 | 530,176 | 12 |
| 6 | | FIFA 15 (PS4)<br>Electronic Arts, Sports | 5,116 | 532,423 | 21 |
| 7 | | Grand Theft Auto V (PS4)<br>Take-Two Interactive, Action | 4,842 | 314,980 | 13 |
| 8 | | Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare (PS4)<br>Activision, Shooter | 4,413 | 398,788 | 15 |
| 9 | | Tomodachi Life (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Simulation | 3,685 | 466,521 | 37 |
| 10 | | MineCraft (PS3)<br>Sony Computer Entertainment, Adventure | 3,348 | 185,183 | 40 |

| Pos | | Game | Weekly | Total | Week # |
|-----|---|------|--------|-------|--------|
| 1 | | The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 3D (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Action | 232,685 | 232,685 | 1 |
| 2 | | Samurai Warriors 4-II (PS3)<br>Tecmo Koei, Action | 45,546 | 45,546 | 1 |
| 3 | | The Seven Deadly Sins: Unjust Sin (3DS)<br>Namco Bandai Games, Adventure | 31,621 | 31,621 | 7 |
| 4 | | Youkai Watch 2 Shinuchi (3DS)<br>Level 5, Role-Playing | 23,549 | 2,479,567 | 10 |
| 5 | | Samurai Warriors 4-II (PSV)<br>Tecmo Koei, Action | 22,986 | 22,986 | 1 |
| 6 | | Samurai Warriors 4-II (PS4)<br>Tecmo Koei, Action | 22,136 | 22,136 | 1 |
| 7 | | Dragon Ball: Xenoverse (PS3)<br>Namco Bandai Games, Fighting | 16,698 | 59,102 | 2 |
| 8 | | Pocket Monsters Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire (3DS)<br>Nintendo, Role-Playing | 12,234 | 2,680,207 | 13 |
| 9 | | Dragon Ball: Xenoverse (PS4)<br>Namco Bandai Games, Fighting | 12,178 | 44,732 | 2 |
| 10 | | A Good Librarian Like a Good Shepherd: Library Party (PSV)<br>Kaga Create, Action | 9,962 | 9,962 | 1 |
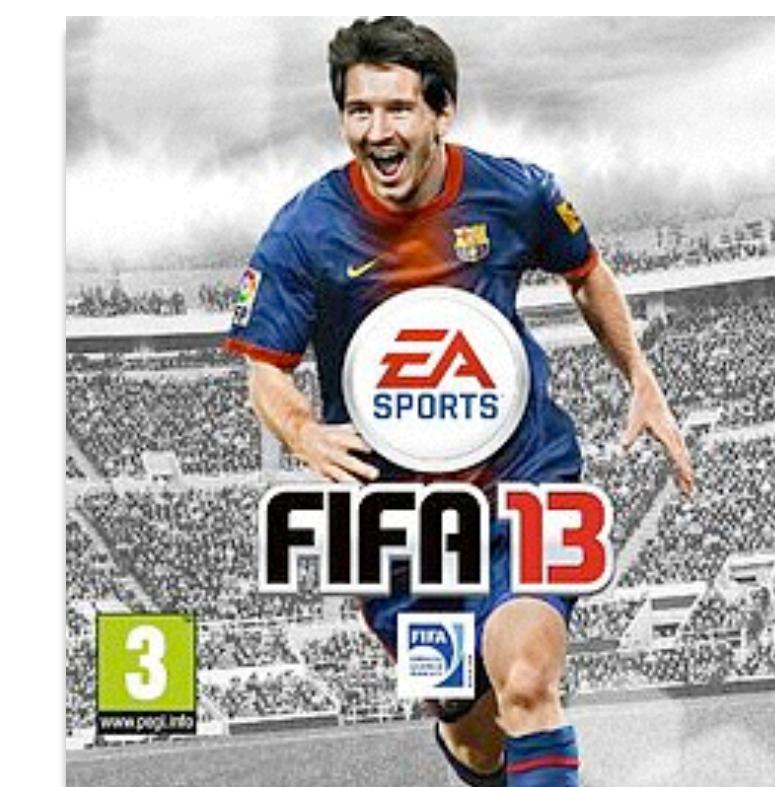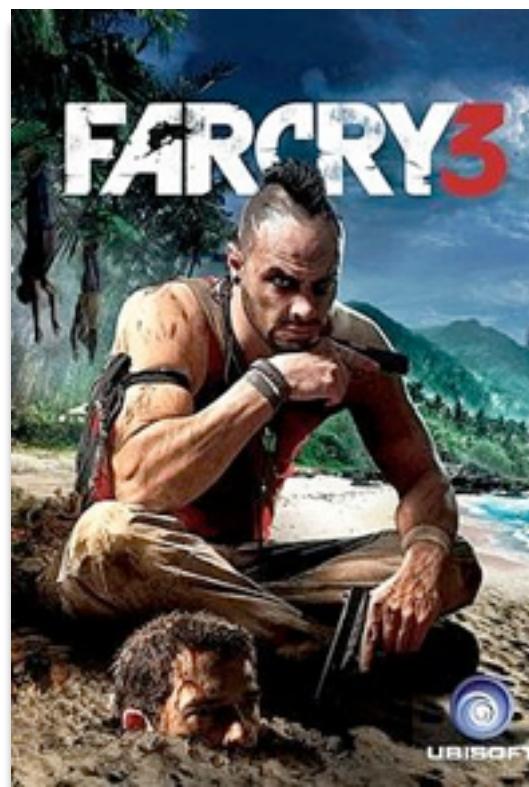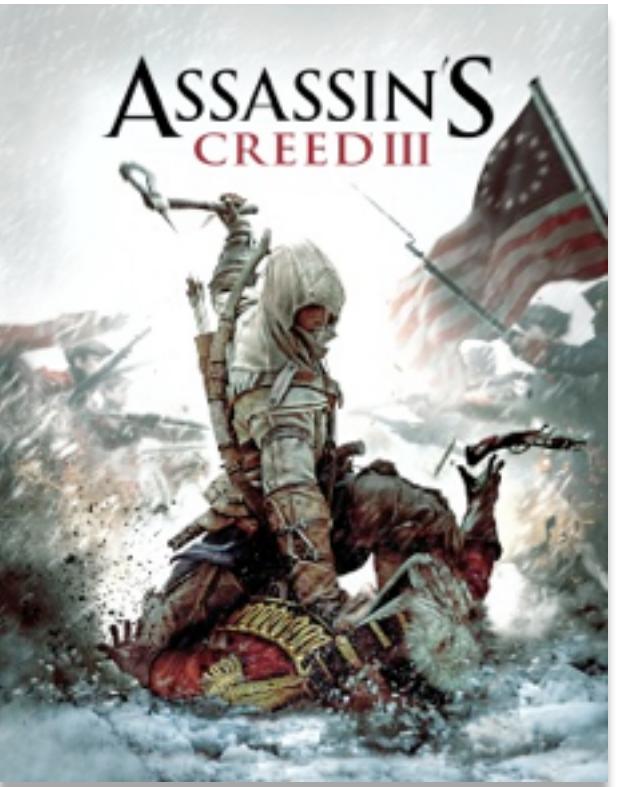
France: 08.-14.02.2015                    Japan: 09.-15.02.2015

# International StarCraft 2 Ranking

| # | | | Name | Team | Rating | | vP | | vT | | vZ | | |
|---|---|---|------|------|--------|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|---|
| 1 | 🇰🇷 | | Life | KT | 2308 | ▾ | 2231 | ▾ | 2353 | ▾ | 2341 | ▾ | ▸ |
| 2 | 🇰🇷 | | INnoVation | SKT T1 | 2252 | | 2264 | | 2209 | | 2282 | | |
| 3 | 🇰🇷 | | PartinG | Yoe | 2245 | | 2162 | | 2337 | | 2237 | | |
| 4 | 🇰🇷 | | ForGG | Millenium | 2227 | | 2131 | | 2405 | | 2144 | | |
| 5 | 🇰🇷 | | Maru | Jin Air | 2217 | ▴ | 2138 | ▴ | 2230 | ▴ | 2284 | ▴ | ▸ |
| 6 | 🇰🇷 | | herO | CJ Entus | 2208 | | 2013 | | 2285 | | 2326 | | |
| 7 | 🇰🇷 | | Trap | Jin Air | 2203 | | 2189 | | 2146 | | 2274 | | |
| 8 | 🇰🇷 | | Rain | mYinsanity | 2167 | | 2095 | | 2181 | | 2226 | | |
| 9 | 🇰🇷 | | Hydra | ROOT | 2165 | | 2134 | | 2169 | | 2190 | | |
| 10 | 🇰🇷 | | Solar | Samsung | 2127 | | 2230 | | 2047 | | 2104 | | |
| 11 | 🇰🇷 | | TaeJa | Liquid | 2104 | | 2125 | | 2126 | | 2060 | | |
| 12 | 🇰🇷 | | Bbyong | CJ Entus | 2097 | | 2130 | | 1954 | | 2207 | | |
| 13 | 🇰🇷 | | Dark | SKT T1 | 2082 | | 2071 | | 2097 | | 2077 | | |
| 14 | 🇳🇴 | | Snute | Liquid | 2081 | | 2182 | | 1934 | | 2128 | | |
| 15 | 🇰🇷 | | MMA | Acer | 2062 | | 2043 | | 2092 | | 2050 | | |

# National Developments

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

# National Gaming Industry

Developer

Publisher

Business Service

Technical Service

# National Gaming Culture


Patrizier, 1992


Anno 1602, 1998


Fußballmanager


USK Unterhaltungssoftware Selbstkontrolle


QUO VADIS Create.Game.Business.


DEUTSCHER COMPUTERSPIELPREIS


FFF Bayern


SPIELEN VERBINDET EINE INITIATIVE DER SPIELEINDUSTRIE


Rainbow Arts

Organisations

Festivals

Awards

Funding

Associations

Productions

# National Discourses
German Angst

# Localization

# National Gaming Culture
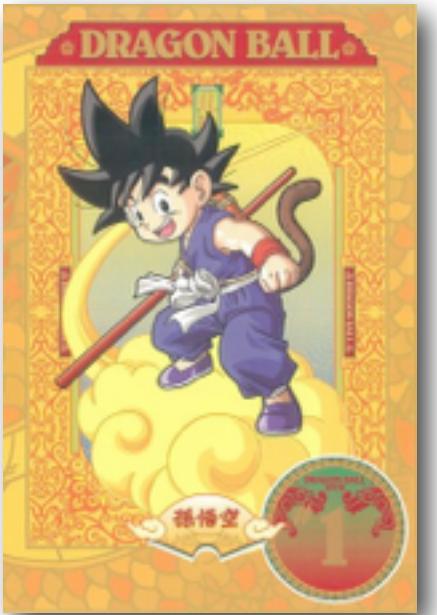
„Consoles have been banned in China since the year 2000," Lisa Hanson from market researcher Niko Partners tells Kotaku. „The government thought that was the best way to protect Chinese youth from wasting their minds on video games, after a parental outcry." The following year, online gaming exploded, 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
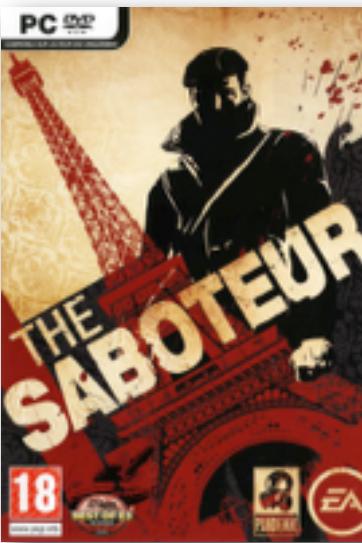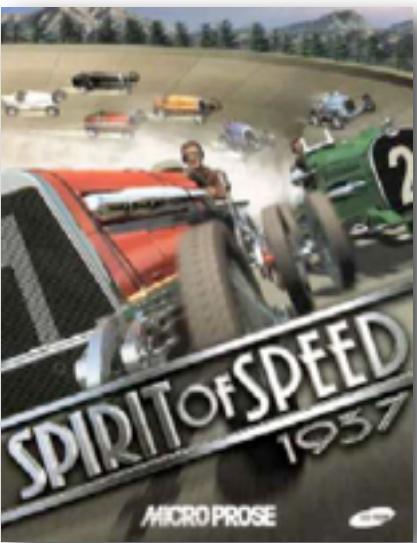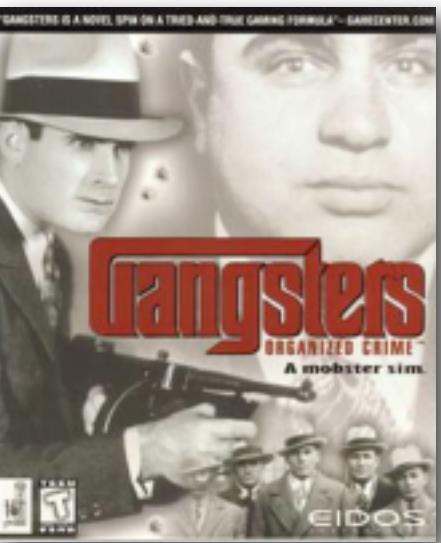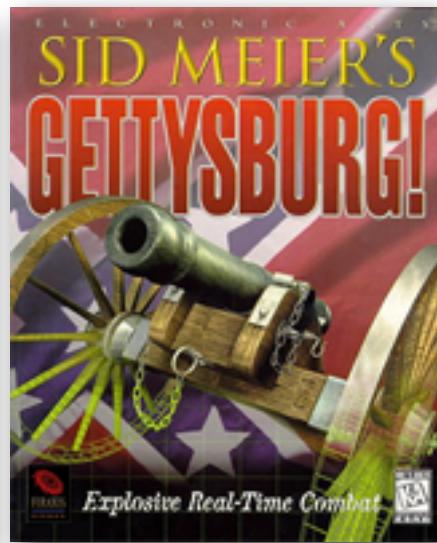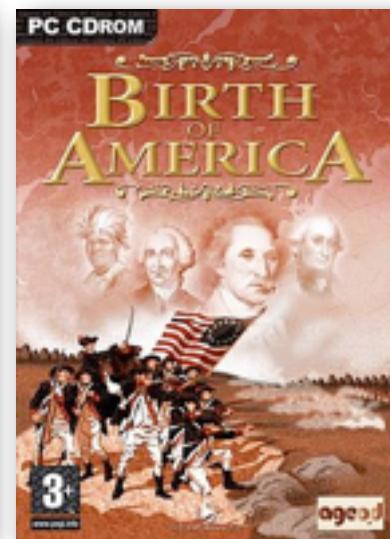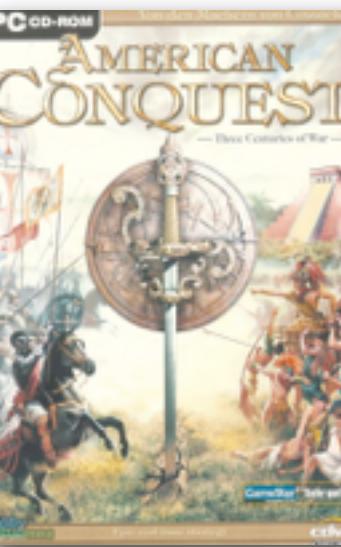

1999


1999

# National History



1492



1776



1863
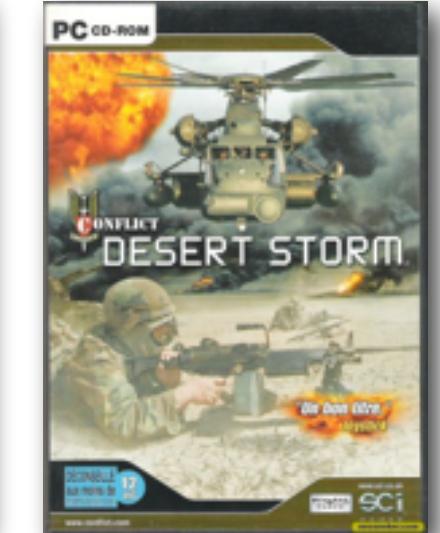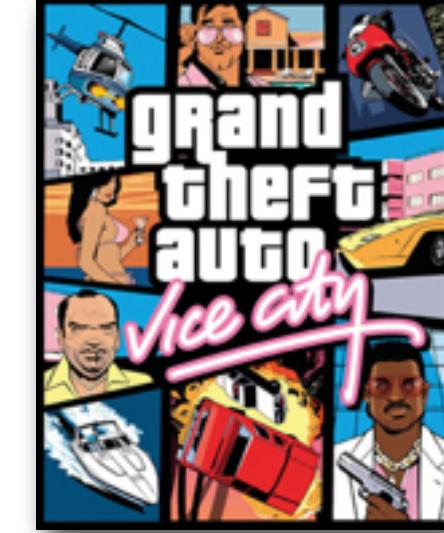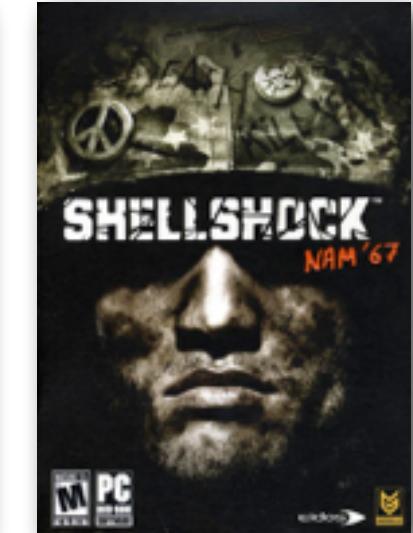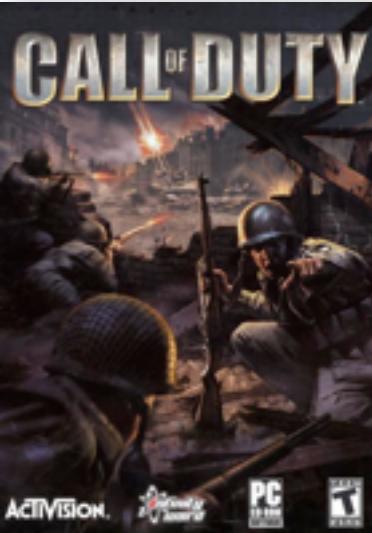


1880



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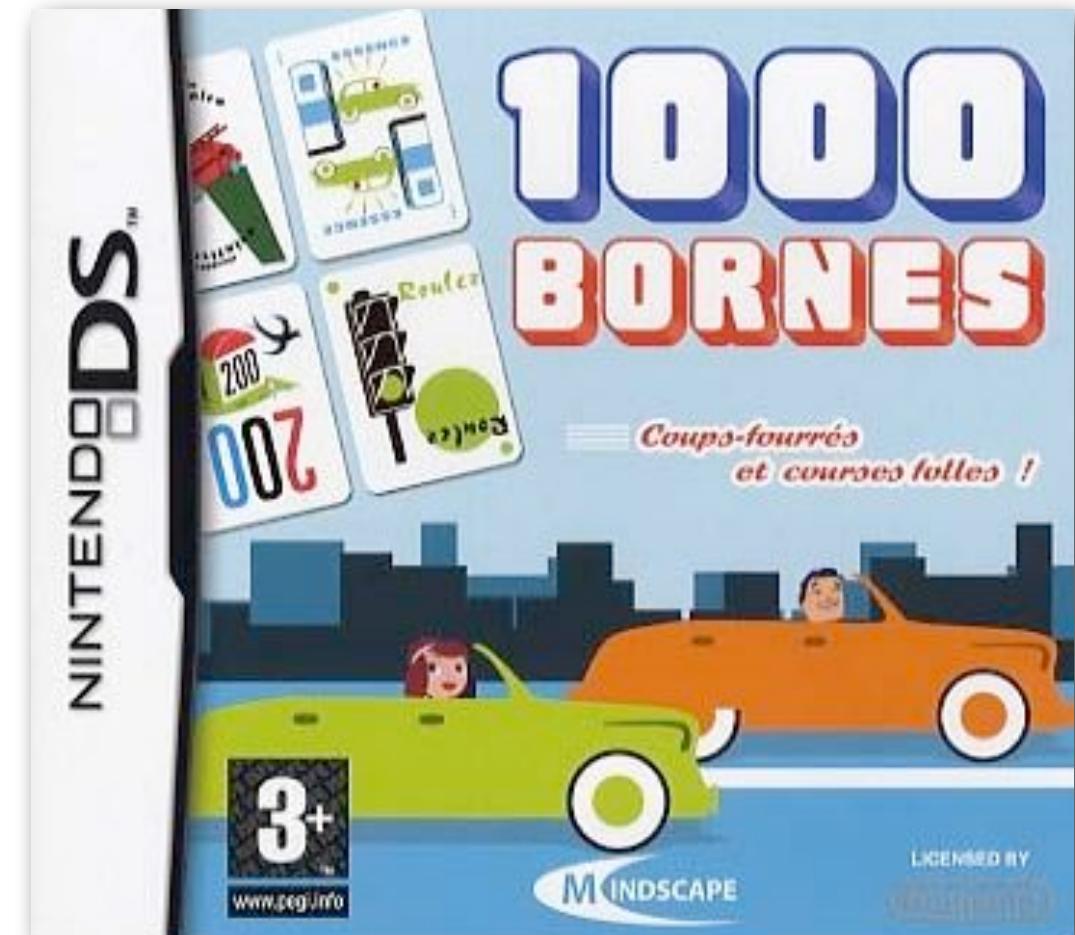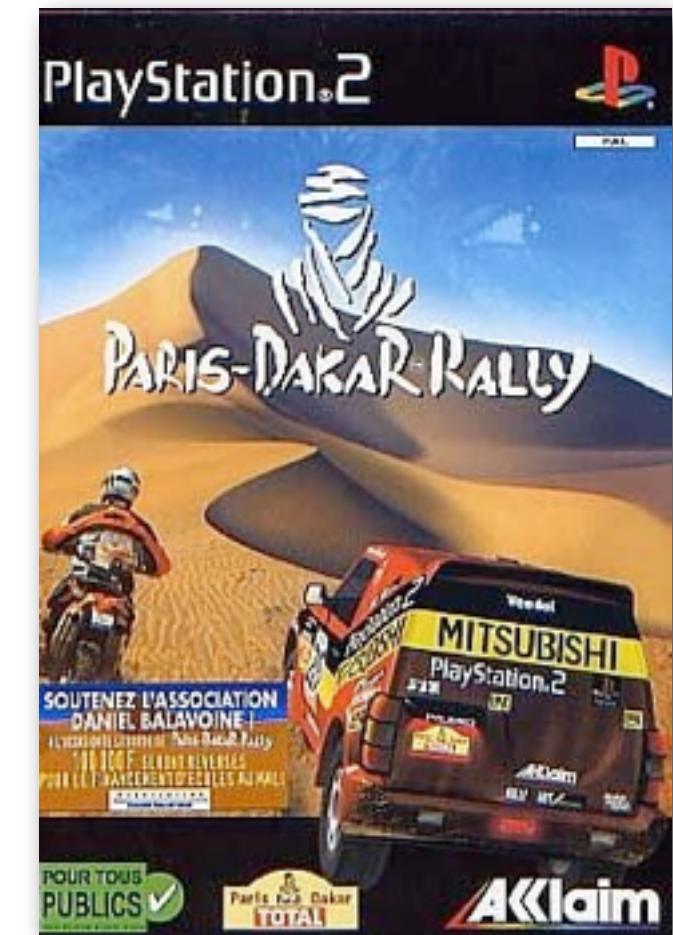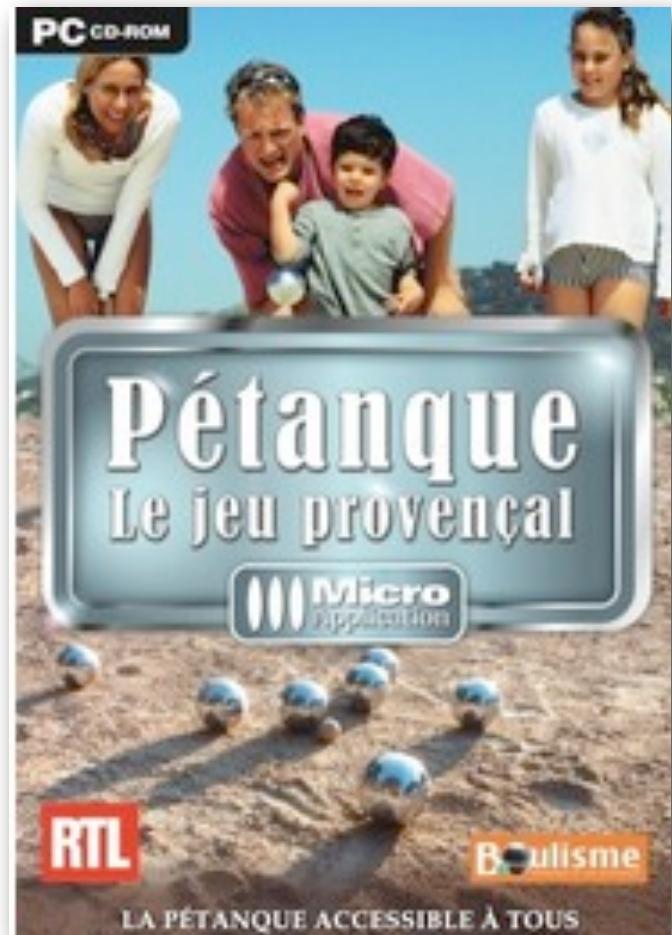
Vanillaware: Muramasa: The Demon Blade (朧村正), 2009

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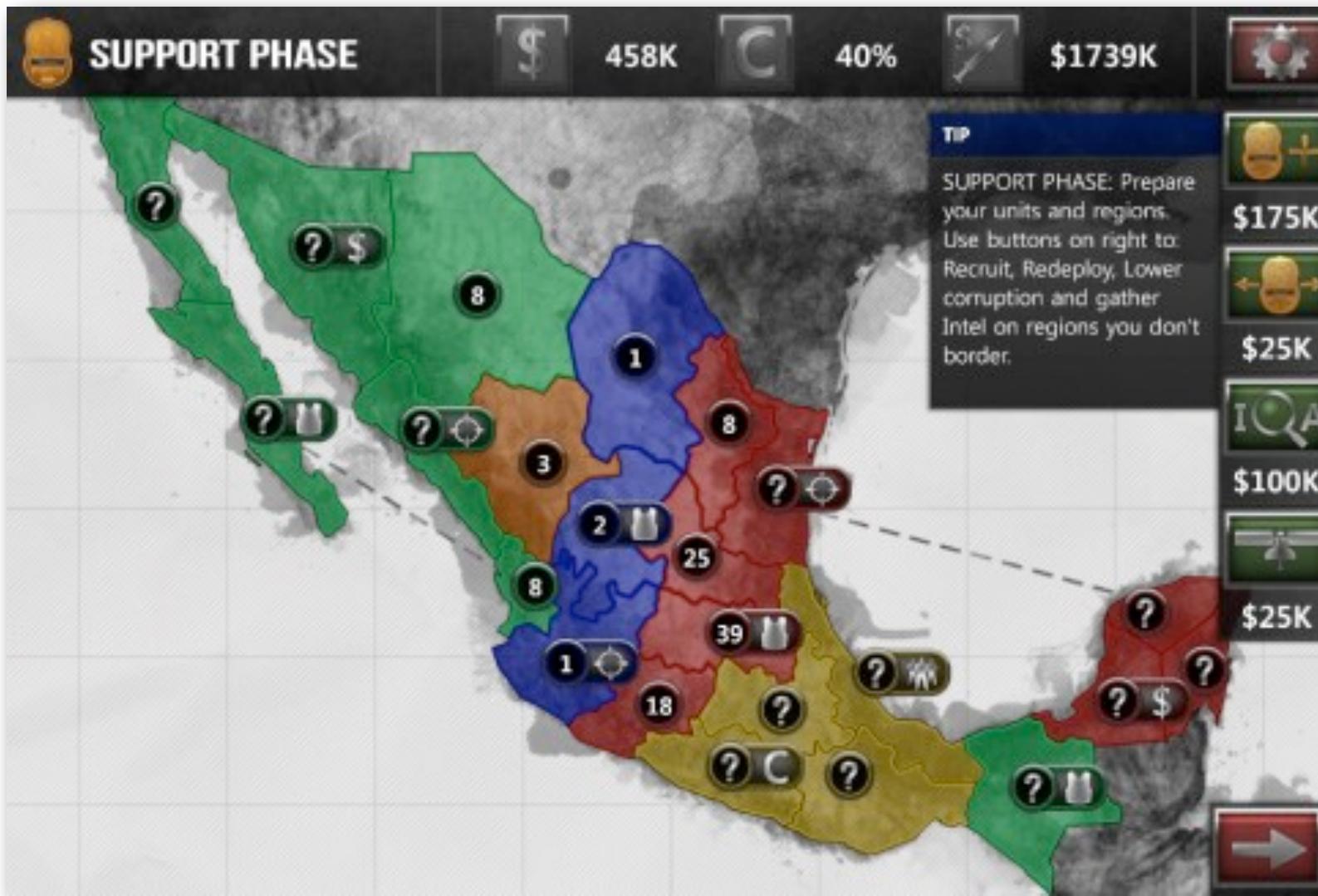
„Football and American Identity examines the social conditions and cultural implications found in the football subculture, represented by core values such as competition, conflict, diversity, power, economic success, fair play, liberty, and patriotism."
Gerhard Falk: *Football and American Identity.*

# National Luditives
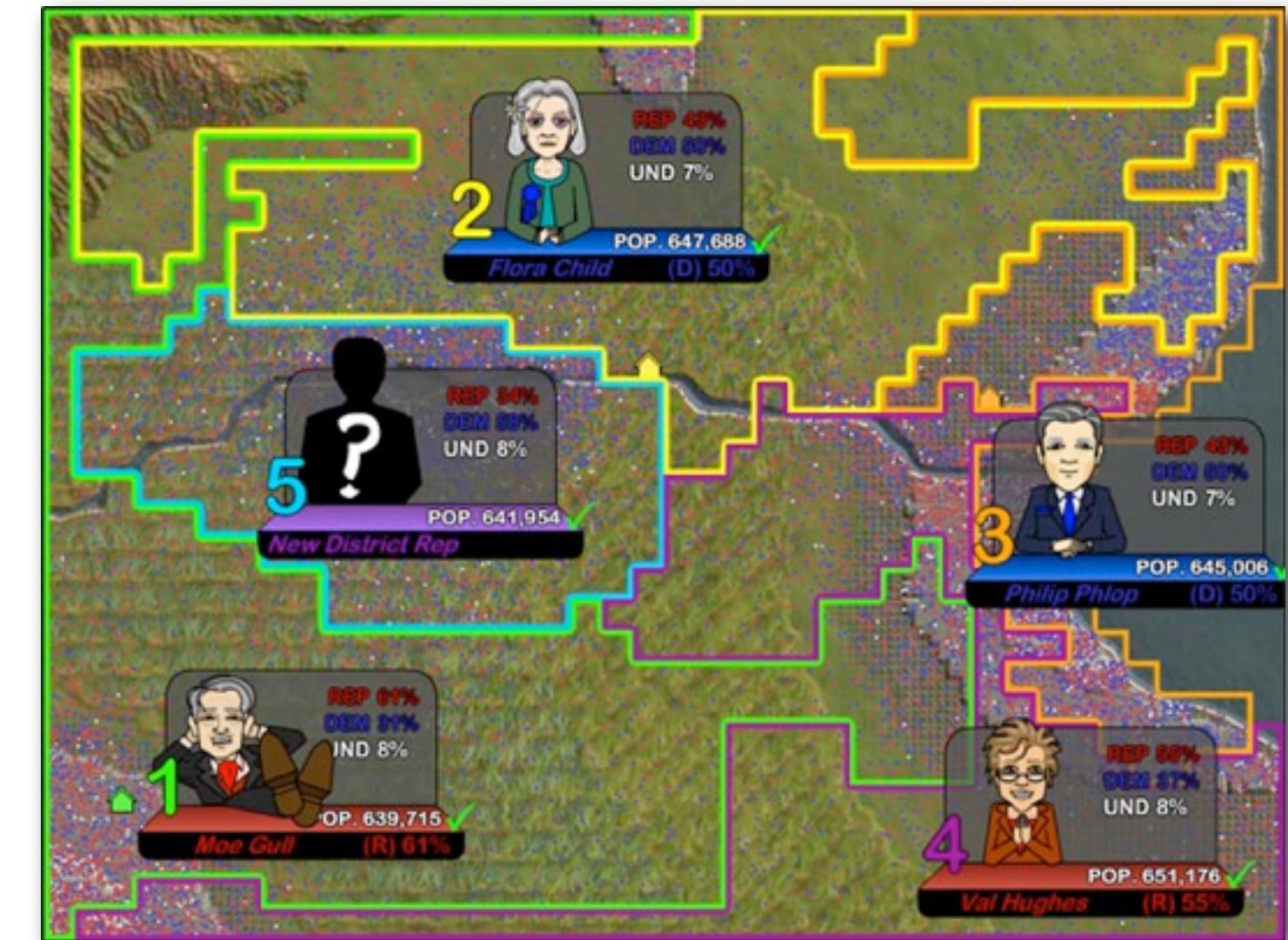
# National Systems
## Structures and Procedures



Narco Guerra (2013)



Redistricting Game (2007)

# National stereotypes and clichés

Cf.: Exotism

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/

# Resumée: Production des jeux vidéos

Producteur, Argent €, $

Concept: Game Design, Level Design

Graphique
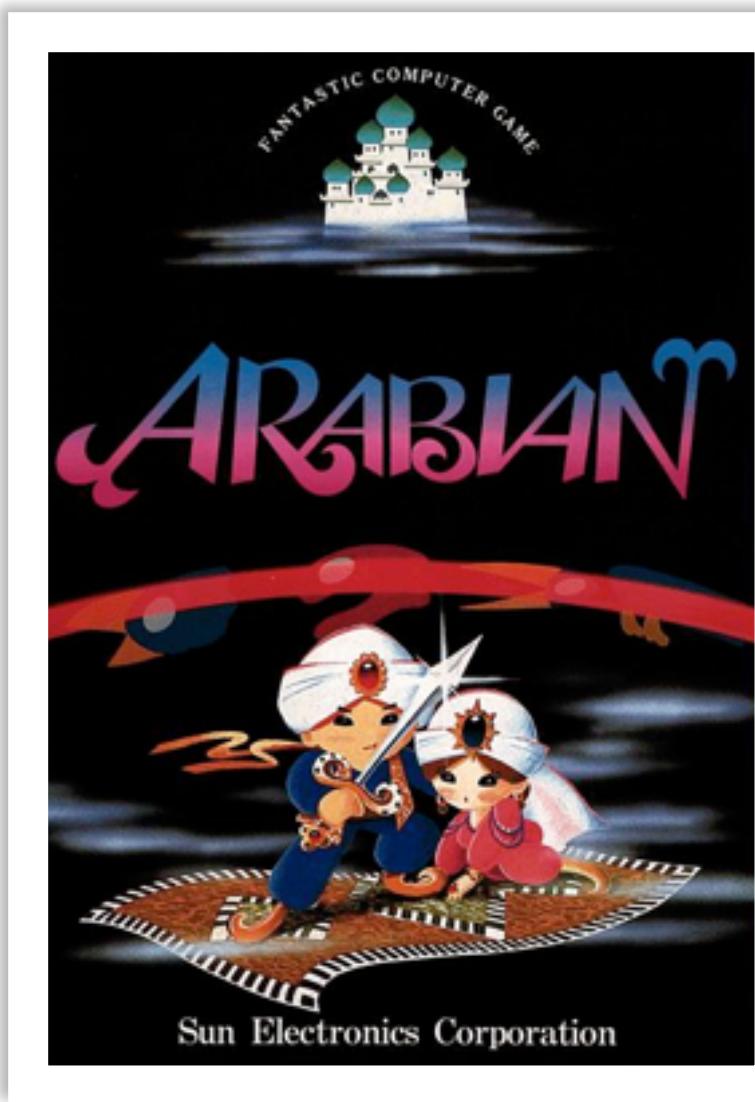
Règles: Algorithmes

Narration: Scénario, acteur, Traducteur
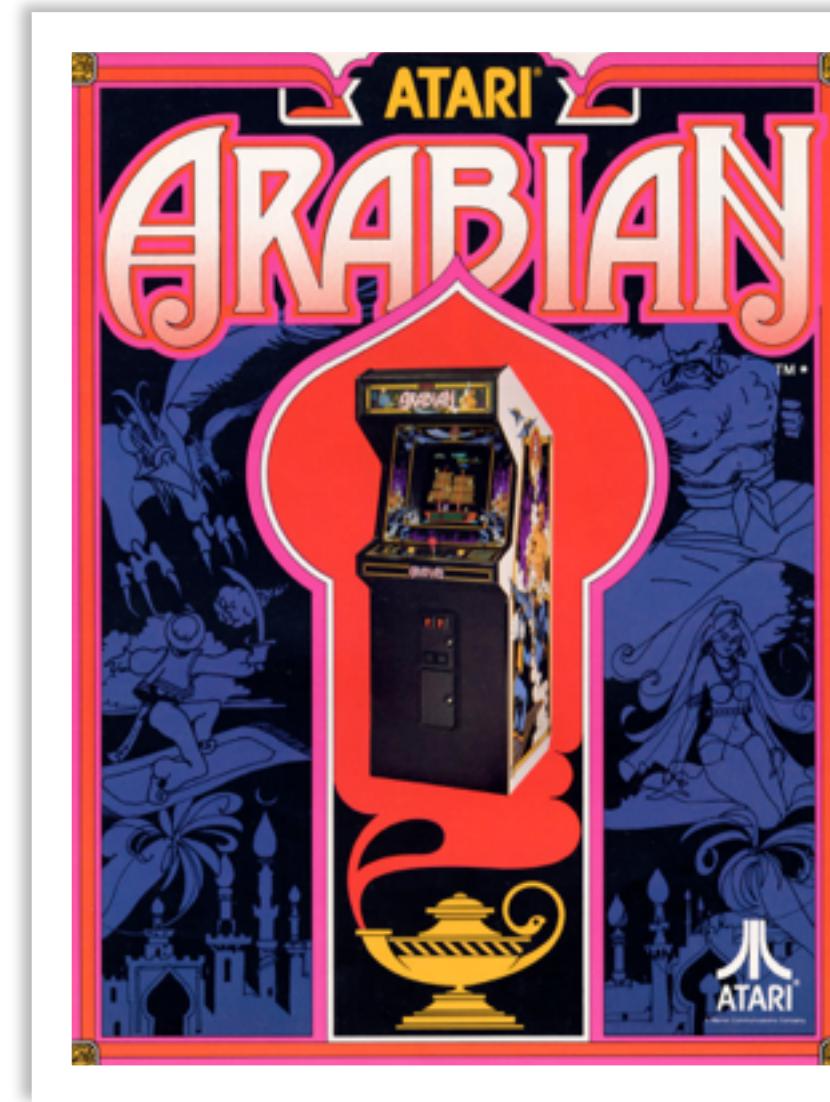
Joueur

Context

# II. Negotiating Cultural Sensibilities in Digital Games



1983

# Exotism

Exotism

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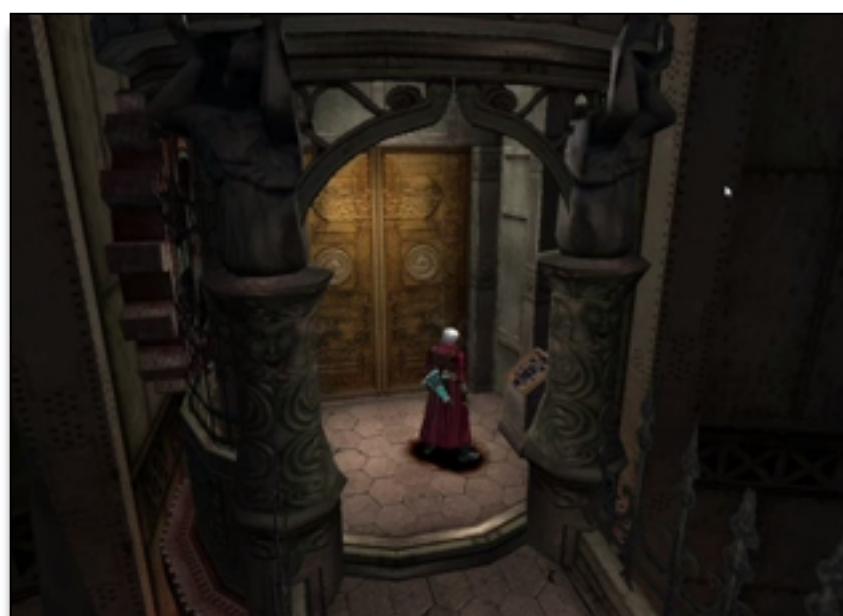
Theming

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

# Orientalism

the Arab world - twenty two countries, the locus of several world religions, a multitude of ethnic and linguistic groups, and hundreds of years of history - is reduced to a few simplistic images' (Wingfield and Karaman, 2002: 132)





## 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 Suri



**_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
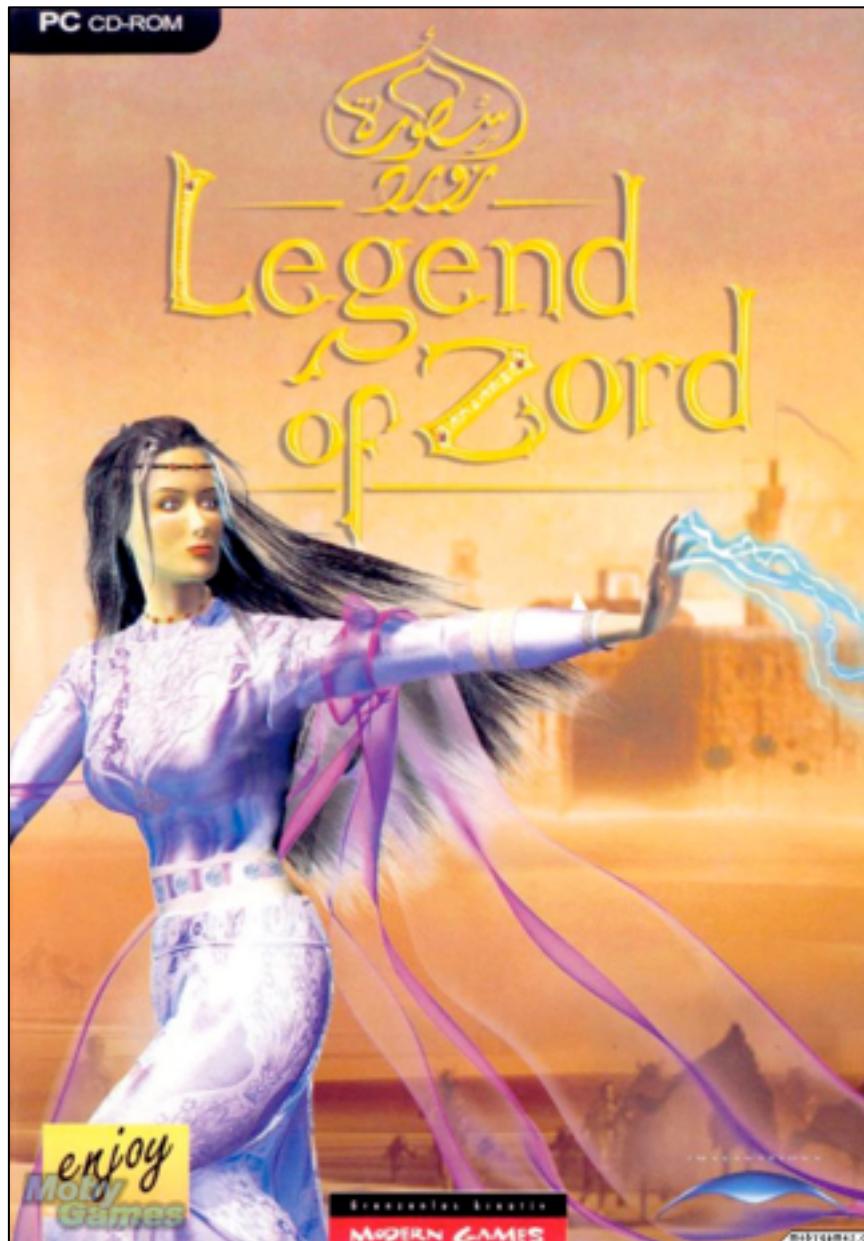


**_Shadow Hearts: From the New World (2005)_**シャ

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)

Incentives for adopting an „orientalist" gameplay



## *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, double production speed for temple

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

All religions ar 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
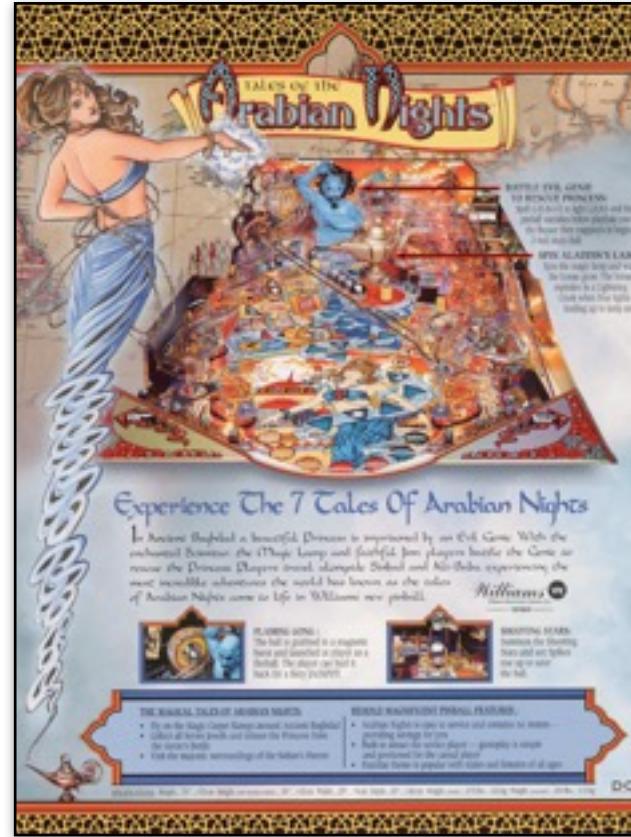
# Environmental Storytelling

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

Jean Leon Gerome: *Napoleon Bonaparte Before the Sphinx. 1867-68*
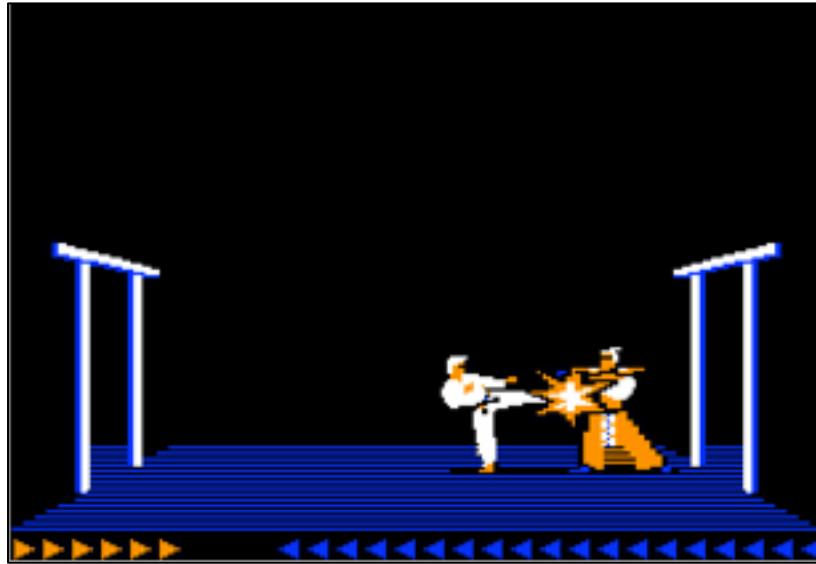
**Orientalist painting in the 19th century**

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

# 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)
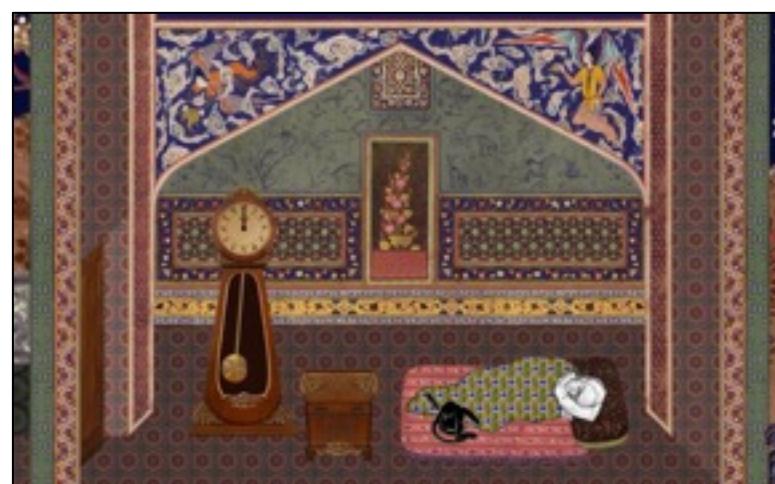
# Deriving new gameplay mechanisms from non-Western themes and iconography



**Music of the Spheres (2013)**

**Farsh (2012)**

**The Cat and the Coup (2011)**

The player impersonates the cat of prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh

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

    c.f. 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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