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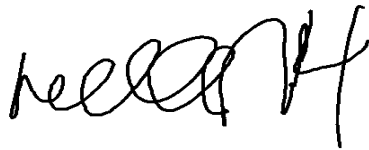
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Declaration By Candidate

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and has been submitted exclusively to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David for the purpose of being marked . All research, studies, quotes, and anything else from other people used in this dissertation have been acknowledged as the work of other people and referenced appropriately.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Heath' followed by a stylized flourish.

18/12/19

Abstract

This dissertation examines games in relation to how they represent history or myths from the past.

The main focus of the dissertation is in chapter three, which looks at three different periods of history and games that represent them. The first section discussed how Romans waged war and how the game *Rome: Total War* represented that. It revealed that there are misconceptions about Roman history in *Rome: Total War* such as scouting. The section concluded that this is due to the fact that the game designers made a choice to place fun before historical accuracy.

The second section highlighted how Greek myths are represented in the game *Age of Mythology*, such as the Greek myth about the siege of Troy. This section also examined the misconceptions in age of mythology about Greek myths. For example, characters from different Greek mythologies meet each other in the game.

The last, smaller section in chapter three discusses the samurai in Japan and how they are represented in the fictional game *Nioh*. This includes how honour is looked at as a big part of the samurai code, however in the game *Nioh* some samurai choose to fight with evil forces to win.

The dissertation concludes that games designers choose enjoyment over historical accuracy, which is positive for gameplay, but negative for the use of games as a learning tool.

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Introduction

Games borrow ceaselessly from the past to constitute themselves. This locates the medium at the heart of our contemporary obsession with how to engage the past and the 'real' (Hong, 2015, p. 35).

When games are based on and influenced by historical events, it is important they are as factual as they claim to be. This is because games will most likely be used to help teach in the future as games are a fun and interactive way for people to learn. Because of this, games will have a massive impact on how people see ancient civilizations as a modern-day society. Furthermore, with virtual reality (VR), games are getting more realistic and interactive, soon anyone will be able to walk the streets of ancient Rome or look through the eyes of a Roman soldier advancing on some barbarians (anyone who is not Roman). However, in the realms of the gaming world, it would be a shame if in that scenario, these barbarians had an army as well trained as the Roman army. Games usually depict barbarian armies as loud, aggressive and charging in, in contrast to the Roman army which moves quietly and in an organised formation. Games about war would be less interesting if both armies behaved in a functional manner as the Romans did. This is an example of how games need to balance fact with entertainment value.

When games re-appropriate historical event, they are more concerned with creating "a pragmatic pillaging of historical, mythical, and ritual element" than recreating an accurate account (Hong, 2015, p. 36). Historical events and ancient stories are then "fractured and reconstituted according to games' own technical, economic, and cultural imperatives" (Hong, 2015, p. 36).

The video games industry is massive for example in just America it was worth \$20 billion alone and because the games industry is so gigantic that it is bound to influence a lot of people with misconceptions about history due to game designers choosing to make their game being fun a priority over games being historically accurate .

For this dissertation I have decided to write about how games today fuel common misconceptions about ancient civilizations. For example, does the *Assassins Creed Odyssey* over exaggerate the battle of the three hundred Spartans? Does *Ryse: Son of Rome* portray Rome's enemies as overly barbaric? To answer this type of question, I will be investigating three ancient civilizations and the

games that represent them. The first will be ancient Rome where I will be looking at the misconceptions that some games have taught us about how Rome waged war. The second ancient civilization I will be looking at is ancient Greece where it will be interesting to see how games represent Greek mythology. There will also be a short section on ancient Japan and the misconceptions about the Samurai and in particular, the concept of honour.

Chapter One: Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the principal research about the topic being studied (Oliver, 2013).

The literature used in this dissertation comes mainly from books, journal articles and reliable websites. These are referred to throughout chapter three.

One journal article used for this dissertation was *The Way of Which Warriors?: Bushidō & the Samurai in Historical Perspective* written in 2018 by Karl Friday. This was a useful article because it gave insight of what samurai did in battle and how they showed honour. The battle about Yoshifumi, Mitsuru and their armies is useful for this dissertation. The author is a lecturer at Saitama University, which shows the article is credible and reliable. Friday states that “Samurai ethics and behavioural norms varied significantly from era to era”(Friday, 2018 p. 15). This is essential information for this dissertation as it shows how today’s definitions of honour and behaviour considered to be honorable is not always the same as it was in an earlier period of history such as the medieval period. Friday confirms this by stating that in most cases, the early samurai “bore scant resemblance to twentieth-century fantasies about samurai comportment” (Friday, 2018 p. 15).

A valuable website used was the Ancient History Encyclopedia which is partnered with The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This shows that it is a valid and academically credible resource. One article on that website that is particularly helpful is *Pertinax* written in 2013 by Donald L. Wasson. The author is a lecturer at Lincoln College, Illinois, and expert in ancient and medieval history. This website is helpful in terms of getting the information needed in the section for Rome. The article on *Pertinax* provides a helpful background into the Emperor of Rome who fell at the hands of the Praetorian Guard. “Pertinax was Roman Emperor for three months in 193 CE... as well as putting in order the affairs of state, also embarked on a series of state spending cuts which led to his general unpopularity” (Wasson, 2013). The articles on the website follow academic structure including citing where they got their information. As well as this, there are links throughout each article that can take the user to more detailed information.

For the gaming aspect of the dissertation, one useful resource was *Fundamentals of Game Design* written in 2006 by Ernest Adams. “Dr. Ernest Adams is a game design consultant, writer, and teacher. He has served in the video game industry since 1989, and is the author of six books” (Uppsala University, 2019). This shows that Adams is a credible author and an expert in his field.

This book is useful because it looks at the player's mental experience and the idea of game play being fun.

Chapter Two: Methodology

This dissertation mainly uses secondary research techniques. Secondary research is Research that's has already been written down for example books, websites however primary research is done by the person or persons first hand . research provided by a third party is normally analysed, this is known to be syndicated research .More examples of secondary research are associations , organizations . when doing research it is useful to have access to secondary research to save time and money. primary research tends to be expensive and take a lot longer to complete

Primary research will also be undertaken in the form of game play. This involves actively playing the games mentioned in order to get first hand experience. i played games such as Rome Total war 2, Age of mythology and Nioh.

The dissertation will use qualitative data rather than quantitative. This means getting numbers for values and counts.

Chapter Three: Results and Analysis

War and Rome as represented in games

This section will examine *Rome: Total War Two* to explore how games can represent history or create misconceptions.

An example of how games have created a common misconception about roman soldiers is the idea that the roman armies took care to scout wherever they were going as they had a very efficient army. This idea is reinforced by the game *Rome: Total War Two* because on the map the player can see all the armies from all factions that are known (Rome total war 2, September 3, 2013). However, the real Roman army had trouble with scouting as only the higher classes could afford horses and they thought scouting was beneath them. This would lead romans into ambushes; something that is not widely known about how the roman army operated and also gives insight on how the roman society functioned.

Roman soldiers used to recruit locals from conquered nations to join the Roman legion (Southern, 2007). Over the years, the legion in said conquered nations would only have a few Roman officers and mostly comprised of the native population (Southern, 2007).

Typically, games do not show this aspect of Roman history. It could be argued that this is due to the games' designers wanting to make clear the difference of factions on the game to the player in a visual way. Portraying the Roman soldiers with units from other nations could confuse players, especially if attacking armies from the same nations. For example, if the Roman Army is fighting an Egyptian army, it is clearer for the gamer if the Roman soldiers look typically roman and the Egyptian army look typically Egyptian.

Another explanation could be due the limitations of creating the game. To create an army made up of different ethnicities, the game designers would need to model soldiers with various skin tones and physical attributes. This would create extra work, without adding to the entertainment value of the game.

In *Rome Total War Two*, the best roman unit the player can get is the Praetorian Guard either in a unit protecting the general in battle that would have around sixty men or at the end once the player has researched the needed upgrades and built the necessary buildings. The player could buy a full unit of one hundred and twenty men. The Praetorian Guard can change the whole battle as they can

hold a line for as long as they need to because their morale in the game is very high. The armour of the Praetorian Guard is very clean and very decorated and they stand out on the battle field with a purple cape on as well. Because of this, the player could think that the Praetorian Guards are the best of the best and have a high amount of honour and respect for themselves.

However, the Praetorian Guard in Rome put their main purpose up for auction which was protecting the emperor at the time. The Praetorian Guard used to put the seat of the emperor up for auction and if the new emperor went against the Praetorian Guard they would assassinate him. Two good examples of this is the emperor Caligula and emperor Pertinax. In 41 CE the Praetorian Guard directed by Cassius Chaerea assassinated emperor Caligula due to being humiliated by him. Emperor Caligula was the first emperor to be assassinated by the Praetorian Guard the second was Emperor Pertinax. In 193 CE, the praetorian guard decided they had enough of emperor Pertinax due to his late payments for being made emperor of Rome and assassinated him.

In *Rome: Total War Two* this aspect of history is represented by allowing the player to assassinate members of his or her faction. For example, if the player is playing as Rome he/she can assassinate members of the roman political parties. This comes in useful if this character has higher Gravitas than the players political faction leader. Having a character with higher Gravitas than the players' party leader is a problem because this could lead to the player losing influence in his or her faction and that could lead to a civil war. However, to have a political opponent assassinated the player will need to spend money and the higher the gravitas this political opponent has the more expensive it will be. The only person a player is not able to have assassinated is the leader of the players political party. This is a good mechanic to have in *Rome: Total War Two* because if the player is paying attention to the in-faction politics, he/she could stop a civil war if the political opponent is getting too much influence. The political aspect for *Rome: Total War Two* makes the game feel more realistic and accurate. Where the game might be lacking elsewhere, the player can always keep an eye out to see if another political party likes them or not and by the number shown the player can also know to expect a civil war soon.

When making *Rome: Total War Two*, the games designers made a very important choice to have the units obey the order of the player straight away. We know this is a design choice because in real life there would be some sort of delay as the general of the roman army would give an order, then someone would play an instrument and if the general was lucky the unit that he wanted moved would hear over the sound of battle and start moving. This level of realism would not be fun for the player as they just want to lead an army into battle and have fun playing. Having a delay on unit

moving times, drastically increases the chance for the player to 'rage quit' the game because one of their units did not act quick enough to a cavalry charge, for example. Furthermore, this type of delay could lead to the player choosing not to play the game again. To be clear, the unit not moving straight after the player gives an order is different to how fast they move. The player still wants the game to be somewhat realistic and if the player sees the unit try but fail to turn around and meet the cavalry charge, it is a lot better than the unit just standing there oblivious to the fact that an enemy cavalry is charging at them from behind. When the player has giving them an order to turn around in this instance, not doing do this would cause the player to 'rage quit' if things go badly from there. *Rome: Total War Two* designers realised that the players of the game would need good feedback for every action they do. An example of feedback could be the visual aspect that the player clicks on a unit, under each man is a highlighted circle. An example of audio feedback in the game is when the player clicks on the 'Principles' and the words are repeated back.

Rome: Total War Two designers made another important decision that favours gameplay and takes away from the game being realistic and this is to have a turn-based mechanic outside of battle gameplay. This means that the player has as much time as they need to plan future wars or decide if their army can win a battle that would most likely happen next turn. The player also has time to check the politics of his/her faction. Additionally, where a civil war is about to happen, the player can also build or upgrade buildings, and depending on what building and what upgrade, the buildings will take a couple turns to be completed. If *Rome: Total War Two* wanted to be realistic, all factions would be making choices at the same time and the player would be overwhelmed by information. This could likely lead to players losing their starting territory as managing cities and the faction diplomacy will take away from managing the faction's armies and making sure it is safe to engage an enemy faction army. Taking all this into account, *Rome: Total War Two's* games designer team had no choice but to make the *Total War* series turn based games .

In conclusion, *Rome: Total War Two* designers designed the game be as realistic as possible while keeping the game fun. This involves many game mechanics already mentioned.

The Roman army tends to be portrayed in games as much more efficient than they actually were. For example, their method for scouting was different to how it is represented in games. This section has shown that In *Rome: Total War* the player can see any enemy army on the world map even if that army is in its own territory and the players army is not close to the boarder. As a player, that could be explained away with spies that the player does not directly control feeding back information to the players faction, however it could be argued that the games designers for *Rome:*

Total War Two decided that to make the game fun they would need to give the player more information than historically accurate.

Greek Myths

This section will look at ancient Greek myths, and how these are portrayed in games. Ancient Greece is well known for its myths about the Greek Gods such as Zeus, heroes such as Achilles, monsters such as the cyclops and mythical places such Atlantis. This section will explore how these myths and mythical characters appear in games, and how games can alter facets of well-known myths.

The game that will be researched in this section will be *Age of Mythology* (Age of Mythology, October 30, 2002) This is a good game to use for this section as it is was designed using Greek myths as its core inspiration. *Age of Mythology* has heroes from famous Greek myths such as Ajax a son of the king Telamon. Ajax played a major role in the great battle of Troy where he had two duals with Hector, one of them lasting the whole day. *Age of Mythology* also includes monsters for the player to control alongside the heroes. The most noticeable monster in the game would be the titans from the Greek myth Theogony which spoke about twelve original titans (Scully, 2015). The player spends all of the main campaign stopping the titans wreak massive destruction on earth.

In the main campaign, the player follows the fictional story of Arkantos who is sent to regain favour from the god of the sea and all Atlanteans Poseidon(Age of Mythology, October 30, 2002) This suits Arkantos' skill set well, because he as an Atlantean admiral. Along Arkantos' travels he ends up at the trojan war where he meets three individuals; Agamemnon, Odysseus and Ajax who he assists them to win the war. Once the war is over, Arkantos travels to Egypt accompanied by Chiron and meets a famous queen Amamra nicknamed the Mercenary Queen. Arkantos is asked to help the queen defeat an ally of Gargarensis, who happens to be the person Arkantos is pursuing. Arkantos agrees to help the Mercenary Queen but he finds out some bad news: In Egypt, Gargarensis is planning to free the titan known as Kronos and get immortality. In return, this leads Ajax to make the choice to turn north still in search of Gargarnensis (MacGamer.net, 2010). This shows how the game has blended Greek mythology with their own creations and altered the stories of well-known Greek characters such as Agamemnon, Odysseus and Ajax. It could be argued that including well-known heroes into the game is a way to make the player care for the characters making players more immersed in the game. Equally, it could be to add a sense of the familiar into the fictional game world.

Further along in the campaign, Arkantos arrives in the Norse lands where he meets Reginleif who is a Valkyrie (Age of Mythology, October 30, 2002) . Arkantos and Reginleif decided to team up and stop

Ragnarök from happening. While in the process of stopping Ragnarök, Arkantos and Reginleif come across Gargarensis who traps them in a small valley that seems to have no escape. While waiting for aid from Odysseus, Arkantos and Reginleif have to defend against waves of enemies sent from Gargarensis (MacGamer.net, 2010).

This further shows how the game blends characters not only from different myths but different cultures and characters from Greek mythology are interacting with characters from Norse mythology such as the Valkyrie Reginleif. In Norse extant myths the Valkyries are female warrior gods (New World Encyclopedia, 2016), whereas in the game, Reginleif is a standard warrior. This shows how the game has altered the character to fit in with the game world.

The last part of the campaign sees the end result for Arkantos. While Arkantos and the heroes he has gathered around him on his quest to please god of the sea and all Atlanteans, Poseidon are engaged in battle with Gargarensis' troops. Gargarensis settles himself in Atlantis where he imprisons the former leaders of Atlantis. For his final challenge, along his quest, Arkantos orders a march on Atlantis where Zeus himself decides to give Arkantos a blessing that allows him to defeat Gargarensis. Arkantos uses this blessing to defeat a statue of Poseidon. This makes Poseidon enraged and he destroys Atlantis as a result. In the end, Arkantos does not escape but he is made a god by Athena.

This campaign shows several mythological characters and creatures, but has altered their storylines to fit in with the game. In the campaign, Poseidon destroyed Atlantis. This could create a big misconception about Greek mythology because in the myths, Poseidon created Atlantis ref. Theories about the fall of Atlantis include flooding or destruction brought on by internal warfare (Fortune, 2000). The game differs from myth when it comes to the destruction of Atlantis.

An example of a mythical unit within *Age of Mythology* would be Minotaurs. These can be recruited by the player to fight for them, however the player will need to be playing as one of the Greek gods Athena, Zeus, or Hades. Minotaurs in *Age of mythology* are one of the strongest units. The player

can control when he or she is in the classical age. The game hints at the myth surrounding the minotaurs by letting the player buy an upgrade for the minotaur called labyrinth of Minos. This upgrade changes the unit name from Minotaur to Bull Minotaurs which have 40 percent more HP. Labyrinth of Minos (Athena): Upgrades Minotaurs to Bull Minotaurs, which are cheaper and have 40% more hit points (HP) and cost less resources to recruit. The myth that surrounds the Minotaur is called *Theseus and the Minotaur* (Luton & Morden, 2013).

Another example of a mythical unit in *Age of Mythology* is the cyclops; a twelve-foot giant with one eye and chooses a wooden club as a weapon. In *Age of Mythology*, the cyclops is only available to be recruited by those who chose Ares as a god. There are two named cyclopes in the game: The first is Polyphemus who is Poseidon's mythic age hero. Polyphemus is not a campaign unit and can only be used in single player or multiplayer matches. The second cyclops is Gargarensis who is a scheming chef antagonist in the campaign fall of the trident and in scenario sixteen Gargarensis is playable.

The last example of a mythical creature that is used is Pegasus. The Pegasus is a white horse with wings that can fly, and is best known for helping Perseus rescue his love Andromeda. In *Age of Mythology*, the Pegasus is best known for scouting as it has no attack points in the game. However, the Pegasus is the best scouting unit in *Age of Mythology* as it can fly over rivers, forests and cliffs and can only be attacked by ranged units and buildings. To recruit the unit Pegasus, all the player has to do is be a Greek faction and build a temple. Pegasus also has an upgrade called Winged Messenger, which removes the food cost and gives the Pegasus six line of sight while decreases training time by half.

In summary, the main misconceptions in *Age of Mythology* is that members from different myths can meet each other. For example, Ajax in Greek mythology meets Reginleif who is a minor named Valkyrie in Norse mythology. It could be argued that the games designers for *Age of Mythology* made the choice to do this to make the gameplay interesting for the player. This would be very interesting in the campaign for the player to see how different members from different mythology's interact with each other. The interest is reinforced once the game adds voice actors to bring the story alive. Some of the characters in *Age of Mythology* have been altered from their original myths. The game has given them more power to make better characters to play, and given them more skills to be able to continue playing. In a similar way to section one, this shows how game play is more important when designing games than accuracy.

Ancient Japan-Samurai

This section will move on to looking at the samurai in games. There are several misconceptions about the samurai including the idea that they shared the same sense of honour as people have today. This comes from popular culture such as games and films, that portray the samurai as an honourable warrior, protecting the villagers from attack. For example, films such as *The Last Samurai* (2004)

Despite the portrayal of the samurai in games, in fact they used to raid villages and murder innocents for whatever resource they. This section will explore how honour was viewed back in ancient Japan compared to present day under the lens of games such as *Nioh* (*Nioh* , 7 February 2017)

The samurais followed a code of honour called the bushido code. The bushido code, like any idea, evolved through time. For example, it would be slightly different in ancient Japan to medieval Japan. Because of this difference in perception of the code, the games looked at will need to account for the time period.

The bushido code is what most people think make the samurai so 'honourable'. However, this is a difficult thing to prove as the idea of honour is subjective. Because of this, as stated with bushido code, it will be different to time and cultures, and what beliefs are held at that time. "The specifics of what behaviours are and are not held to be 'honourable'—are peculiar to individual times and places" For example, it could be possible that in some cultures and times, being a pacifist is seen as honourable, whereas in a time and culture such as Britain during the first world war, it was more honourable to be fighting for your country. This shows how different times and different cultures have various perceptions of what it is to be honourable.

An example of a famous samurai battle which had involved Yoshifumi, Mitsuru and their armies. At first, they agreed on a time and place for the battle to begin, then when the two armies were facing each other they each sent one soldier to give-and-take a written challenge. Once the soldiers returned to the respective armies, Yoshifumi called out to Mitsuru and offered a duel between them so their men did not have to die. The duel ended up being a draw, however this seemed to end the disagreement between the two men for the rest of their lives(Friday.K. (2018). *The Way of Which Warriors? Bushidō & the Samurai in Historical Perspective*. 2018: Asian Studies.)

This story reflects the behaviour and wisdom of Mitsuru and Yoshifumi during warfare. This example of samurai behaviour is similar to a battle between Taira Koremochi and Fujiwara Moroto that took place in the tenth century.

The Game *Nioh* has many misconceptions about the samurai. The most obvious is that the samurai did not fight monsters or use magic as they do in the game. However, how the game shows honour is the main focus.

Nioh is a dark fantasy game that takes place in the late Sengoku period the 17th century when all of the clans of Japan were at war. The high death toll across Japan because of the fighting meant that Yokai started appearing and causing destruction all over Japan. According to Japanese folklore, the Yokai is a class of supernatural monster *Nioh*'s protagonist is called William, an Irish man with long blond hair who travels to Japan hunting an enemy. While William is in Japan, he forms an alliance with Tokugawa Iyeyasu and the ninja that serves him; Hattori Hanzo. The purpose of the alliance is to beat William's enemy and the yokai overrunning Japan. Whilst in Japan William is taught the ways of combat by Hōzōin In'ei, Yagyū Munetoshi and Marume Nagayoshi. The antagonist of *Nioh* is Edward Kelly, an Englishman causing the conflict in Japan under order from one of Queen Elizabeth's advisers. Edward Kelly uses his dark alchemical abilities to achieve his goal.

In *Nioh*, the player can fight other dead players who have died on the map before. These are called Revenants and are controlled by the in-game artificial intelligence (AI). Interestingly, 'revenants' come from European and American folklore about the undead. The word comes from the French word meaning 'returned' (Cusack & Murnane, 2012). Similarly to section two, this fuels a misconception about folklore from other cultures belonging together. After defeating a Revenant, the player gets an amount of glory depending on the level of said Revenant. The player can spend glory in the Hidden tree house shop where they can sell items, make transformations to the players appearance, and gamble to get rare equipment or buy some rare emotes. The player can also use glory in conjunction with Amana stones to re-forged gear (*Nioh* , 7 February 2017)

Nioh shows how concepts such as honour and glory are seen as important to the samurai, especially in dark times. The samurai in ancient Japan did protect people during times of war, but there was a lot of pillaging and needless fighting between different band of samurai. In the game *Nioh*, one band of samurai teams up with the dark forces in order to win the civil war instead of banding together to fight the mythical force. This portrays the samurai as unethical, as they are taking the help of an evil force for their own gain, instead of fighting it to help the wider population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, games designers know that to keep a player interested in their game and they will have to make said game fun. As stated throughout this dissertation, a game being both fun and one hundred percent accurate would be hard to create. For example, the player does not want to wait the full length of time for a castle to be built or for the time it takes a unit to train. The player wants and needs immediate satisfaction to stay interested in the game. Because of this, the game designers do tend to choose fun over being historically accurate. All of the games reviewed in this dissertation altered historical facts or mythical characters for the sake of game enjoyability. All of these games are highly rated within the gaming community, whereas games such as *Kingdom Come Deliverance* is more historically accurate and rated lower. This suggests that it is more important for games to be fun than to be accurate. Games have creative licence to make such changes in order to make them fun, but it does fuel misconceptions about history.

The positive impact of games fuelling misconceptions is that it creates good gameplay, as described throughout this dissertation. However, the negative impact is that if games are used as a tool for understanding history, they will be inaccurate.

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