Paizomen: A Database of Classical Antiquity Games

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It is a great time for gamers who love to immerse themselves in Greek and Roman antiquity. The year 2020 marked the release of the latest entry in the widely acclaimed *Total War* series, which went further back in time than any other entry in the series so far. *A Total War Saga: Troy* (2020, Creative Assembly, Feral Interactive) was released on August 13th and offers a strategical simulation of the Trojan War that is playable from both the Danaan and Trojan point of view. The game is inspired by the *Iliad* and features many references to Homeric literature and language: loading screens oftentimes feature Iliadic quotes, the game's main characters are addressed with heroic epithets (e.g. 'Agamemnon, wide-ruling lord' after εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων)[1], and the map's fog of war is designed in a specific style informed by Greek pottery containing multiple words in (Homeric) Greek, such as names of the gods (Ποσειδάων, Ἀφροδίτη, etc.) or the traditional Greek names of the Iliadic books (λοιμός, μῆνις, ὄνειρος, διάπειρα, κατάλογος νεῶν, Διομήδους ἀριστεία, etc.).[2] The spelling of these words follows the early (epigraphical) Greek script: for instance, μῆνις is written as ⌐ᛊᛍ Ⅰ ⌐ and Ποσειδάων is written as ⌐ΟᛊᛊⅠ ΔΑΟ⌐. Also, the player is guided through the game's tutorial by none other than Homer himself.

Apart from *Troy*, gamers still have quite a lot to be excited about this year: the dungeon crawler *Hades* (2020, Supergiant Games) has delivered a divinely inspired trek through the Greek Underworld, similar to an upcoming game called *Persephone* (forthc., Momo-pi) that will have players overcome various puzzles in order to meet up with the god of death. The team behind *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (2018, Ubisoft Quebec) is working on *Immortals Fenyx Rising*, also set to be released in 2020, which will include battles with multiple mythological monsters in a mythology-inspired setting. On a less fantastical note, a gladiator game called *Gladiux* (forthc., Starcaster LLC) is planned for a 2021 release, and a historical game set during the first years of the Peloponnesian War called *Siege of Plataea* (forthc., Antiquity Studio), from the studio behind *Aeschines: Glimpse of Adulthood* (2018, Antiquity Studio) and *Theseus: Journey to Athens* (2019, Antiquity Studio), has also been announced.

The amount of academic inquiry into video games and their reception of the ancient world is increasing at a steady pace, as well. Apart from the game releases listed above, 2020 also saw the publication of the second international collection of essays solely devoted to the relationship of video games and classical antiquity (edited by Christian Rollinger; the first was edited by Thea Selliaas Thorsen in 2012). The online Oxford Classical Dictionary entry for ['popular culture, modern'](#) by Gideon Nisbet was also "greatly expanded to reflect recent scholarship" (June 30th) and video games featuring classical antiquity were the subject of two discussions in the first ArchaeoGaming Con, hosted on Twitch from July 30th to August 2nd (i.e. Daniele Salvoldi and Kate Minniti's 'AC Origins' Alexandria: Between Greeks and Egyptians' and Tisa Loewen's 'The Bioarchaeology Mission: AC:O').[3]

Greek and Roman inspired video games are therefore gathering a lot of attention on all sorts of fronts, and many fascinating pieces, scholarly and otherwise, have already been published. When I

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[1] At the time of release, players could experience the game's campaign from the perspective of eight distinct heroes (four Danaans and four Trojans): Achilles, Agamemnon, Odysseus, Menelaus; Hector, Paris, Aeneas and Sarpedon. The epithet εὐρὺ κρείων for Agamemnon is found at *Il.* 1.102, 1.411, 3.178, 7.107, 7.322, 11.107, 11.238, 13.112, 23.887 and *Od.* 3.248. With the *Amazons* DLC pack, released on September 24th 2020, the game added Hippolyta and Penthesilea as playable characters.

[2] 'Fog of war' is gaming jargon for the symbolic 'fog' (here represented by Homeric words) that covers the areas on the map that the player has not discovered yet.

[3] 'AC:O' stands for *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. Both streams can be accessed on the YouTube channel ArchaeoRPG.

created *Paizomen* in the summer of 2020, I was unaware of any attempt to catalogue all existing video games set in classical antiquity. Similar efforts had for example been undertaken in the neighboring field of antiquity receptions in film (see e.g. Verreth 2014 or Dumont 2015) and with these in mind, I created a work-in-progress database that provides the user with an overview of videogame receptions of Greek and Roman antiquity. However, since *Paizomen*'s release, I have been made aware of the French website *HistoriaGames* (www.histogames.com) that not only lists historical video games set in classical antiquity but also in prehistorical times, the middle ages, modern times and the contemporary age. It is a useful tool for a French speaking audience interested in the intersection of video games and history. However, *HistoriaGames* and *Paizomen* function rather differently. To name but a few examples:

- *HistoriaGames* takes a more open approach and includes video games set in various historical periods, while *Paizomen* exclusively focuses on Greek and Roman antiquity;
- *HistoriaGames* also functions as a news site, as opposed to *Paizomen* which (as of now) is still purely a database;
- *HistoriaGames* and *Paizomen* vary in the information that accompanies the game entries and how this information is presented (*HistoriaGames* for example includes DLC packs as separate game entries, whereas *Paizomen* lists DLC packs within the entry of the base game);
- *HistoriaGames* does not include academic bibliography, whereas *Paizomen* does feature a (work-in-progress) list of academic sources with each entry (if possible).

I believe that both websites are effective and that they complement each other. The co-existence of both websites is a beautiful example of the existing and increasing enthusiasm for the discovery and study of video games that simulate history.

In this document that accompanies *Paizomen* and that serves as an introduction to it, I will elaborate on how the database works and how it was created. Yet before we turn our discussion to the database itself, I first wish to draw attention to the terminology that is used within the database and that I hope will serve as a useful foundation for further research into antiquity in video games.

(Classical) Antiquity Games

Despite the fact that the study of antiquity in video games is over a decade old, practical and concise terminology for the 'video game set in (classical) antiquity' is still lacking. Various terms have been used interchangeably and usually without much terminological reflection. Some English examples, taken from Lowe (2009) and Rollinger (2020a-b), two of the most important authors in the field, include "classically-themed video games" (Lowe 2009: 69), "classical video games" (Lowe 2009: 70), "classical computer games" (Lowe 2009: 72), "ancient historical video game" (Rollinger 2020b: 3), "video games inspired by the classical world" (Rollinger 2020b: 12) or "games set in antiquity" (Rollinger 2020a: 287; Rollinger 2015: 7, n.23 has the German "in der Antike angesiedelte Spiele"). In French, André & Lécole-Solnychkine (2013: 87) use "jeux vidéo antiquisants", "pour designer les jeux vidéo de notre corpus qui traitent de l'Antiquité sous quelle forme que ce soit"[4] (André 2016: 14, n.2).

Some of these terms could cause confusion: even video games that are not set in classical antiquity can be 'classically-themed'[5] and the adjective 'classical', if used without 'antiquity', does not

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[4] "to designate the video games of our corpus that deal with antiquity in any form whatsoever".
[5] For instance, *The Talos Principle* (2014, Croteam) is an example of a 'classically-themed game' that is not set in classical antiquity itself. The game has the player traverse many settings that look like Roman ruins and often show Roman artwork and architecture (columns, theatres, etc.) but it is set in a futuristic, post-human environment: in these (empty) ruins, the player plays an android guided by a god-like entity called Elohim and is tasked with solving science fiction puzzles that feature robots, shields, turrets, etc. in order to progress the story.

necessarily denote 'Greek' or 'Roman' (e.g. in 'classical music' or 'a classical education'). Similarly, the word 'historical' in "ancient historical video game" used by Rollinger for "video games which are set in, or use to a significant degree themes or features from, ancient history and classical civilization" (2020b: 3) seems to exclude games set in ancient mythological settings. The French "jeux vidéo antiquisants" is also problematic, which might be understood in two ways: 'antiquisant' exists as an adjective (-ant, -ante) and is explained by the online Larousse dictionary as "se dit d'un artiste, d'une œuvre qui s'inspirent de l'Antiquité gréco-romaine".[6] Here, we might utter the same critique as we did against "classically-themed video games" above. On the other hand, 'antiquisant' also exists as the gerund form (gérondif) of the verb 'antiquiser', which is not found in the online Larousse but is explained as "transformer en antiquité"[7] by Cordial or "donner un caractère antique à"[8] by Wiktionnaire. It translates more difficultly into English than it does into German ('antikisieren') or Dutch ('antiquiseren'). Merriam-Webster has 'to antique' as "to finish or refinish in an antique style: give an appearance of age to"[9] and Google Translate translates 'antiquiser' into the English 'antiquate', which is defined by Dictionary.com as "1 to make obsolete, old-fashioned, or out of date by replacing with something newer or better, 2 to design or create in an antique style; cause to appear antique".[10] Evidently, only the second definition applies in this case. Despite the semantic difficulties involved in translation, the term 'antiquisant' also seems insufficient to accurately describe video games set in the ancient world. These games do not just 'make' something 'antique' or 'old' but instead offer a virtual simulation of the ancient world as a setting that they use for various purposes.

For these reasons, I used the simpler term 'antiquity game' (AG) for 'all video games set in any ancient civilization or a mythological storyworld based on the stories of these cultures'.[11] The term 'antiquity game' can be used for video games set in Ancient Greece or Rome, but can also be applied more widely to all sorts of games that are, for example, set in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ancient China, and so on. Since a specific term to talk about video games set in Ancient Greece and/or Rome would of course be useful, I use 'classical antiquity game' (CAG) for 'any game exclusively set in Ancient Greece and/or Rome, or a mythological storyworld based on the stories of these cultures'. This term brings with it several problems, primarily as to how we define 'Greece', 'Rome', 'classical antiquity', etc. in time and space. 'Rome' in the 1st century BCE is of course radically different from 'Rome' in the 1st or 2nd century CE, and a game that is set, for example, in Gaul during the conquests of Caesar (e.g. *Hegemony Rome: The Rise of Caesar* [2014, Longbow Games]) could be perceived as eligible for a different notion of 'classical' than a game set in Gaul during the rule of Hadrian (e.g. *Chariot Wars* [2013, OM Entertainment]).[12] 'Greece', however, is still harder to delineate: once an amalgam of city-states scattered across the Aegean (and the Mediterranean), later a driving and thriving cultural force from Egypt to India, Greek culture has spread throughout a large area of the world without these areas necessarily having to be typically thought of as 'Greece' (as opposed to the Roman Empire, for example). Further still, one could object to a game that features Alexander The Great (a Macedonian, after all) as its main protagonist being classified as a classical antiquity game. For the purposes of the database, I considered 'classical antiquity' as the civilizations of the Ancient Greeks and Romans during

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[6] "is said about an artist or oeuvre inspired by Greco-Roman antiquity". *Larousse.* Online French dictionary, larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais [20/08/2020].
[7] "to transform into antiquity". *Cordial.* Online French dictionary, cordial.fr/dictionnaire/ [20/08/2020].
[8] "to give an ancient character to". *Wiktionnaire.* Online French dictionary, fr.wiktionary.org/wiki/ [20/08/2020].
[9] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary.* Online English dictionary, merriam-webster.com [20/08/2020].
[10] *Dictionary.com.* Online English dictionary, dictionary.com [20/08/2020].
[11] I understand a 'storyworld' as the "diegetical world, that is, an imaginary or fictional world in which game events take place, and where the game's characters live and exist" (Wolf [2014] 2016: 125).
[12] At this point, one might counterargue that we should look at the chronology of the game in order to classify it as a classical antiquity game or not. The fact remains, however, that not every game is transparent in its chronological setting, nor factually correct in its dating of certain events, buildings or characters.

the historical period of time between the Minoan culture of Crete and the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 in whatever shape these civilizations may have taken on during this period. I understand 'Rome' as both the city and, at its widest, the sum of Italy and the Roman provinces. By 'Greece', I mean the various regions of the Greek mainland (e.g. Peloponnese, Attica, Boeotia, Thracia, etc.), the Greek islands, colonies and the parts of Asia Minor that can be considered Greek (e.g. Ionia, Aeolia, etc., although these change through time). While I am aware of the great cultural influence that Greece has had beyond these borders, I considered games set in the kingdoms of the Diadochi as different AG traditions and did not include them in the database (except if these kingdoms interact with, or exist next to, in-game representations of Greece and/or Rome, cf. *infra*), primarily because I believe it would be more worthwhile to, for example, list games set in Hellenistic Egypt in a separate database of 'Egyptian antiquity games' where they can be compared to one another, studied in their own right and analyzed with respect to their shared characteristics. I did, however, consider Alexander The Great himself as a part of classical antiquity, and in cases such as the Caesar-Gaul example, I looked at the game's narrative focalization and included the game as a CAG if the game was to be played from the perspective of the Romans.

Further problems still arise. For instance, many games (primarily belonging to the strategy genre) feature a large world-map where classical antiquity is depicted next to other, neighboring civilizations. For these games, I use the term 'extended antiquity game' (EAG), since they 'extend' their scope beyond the borders of one antiquity. EAGs might exist at the intersection of various cultures (e.g. *Imperator Rome* [2019, Paradox Development Studio]) or offer the player different experiences while playing as different cultures (e.g. *Sid Meier's Civilization VI* [2016, Firaxis Games]). The same can also be true for non-strategy games that, for instance, feature characters from different mythologies, such as *Smite* (2014, Titan Forge Studios), a third-person multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) with gods from a variety of pantheons[13] or *Loki: Heroes of Mythology* (2007, Cyanide), a dungeon crawler in which the player can choose to play as a Greek heroine, an Egyptian sorcerer, an Aztec shaman or a Norse warrior in individual campaigns. So, despite the fact that the database is called a 'Database of Classical Antiquity Games', I have also included EAGs that feature classical settings. They are indicated with an asterisk* in the database.

Some games that are set in locations that are not Greece or Rome (as delineated above) and/or focalized from non-Greek or Roman characters might still engage with the classical past and therefore be valuable additions to the database. *Assassin's Creed Origins* (2017, Ubisoft Montreal), for instance, is set (almost) exclusively in Ancient Egypt and is focalized from the perspective of the native Egyptian Bayek. This would mean that the game belongs to the category of Egyptian antiquity games. However, the game does include Caesar as an important character and has the player partake in Caesar's murder in 44 BCE (in a short, isolated scene near the end where the setting briefly changes to Rome). Consequently, it would be odd to leave the game out of consideration in the database. I have included *Assassin's Creed Origins* as an EAG (notwithstanding the fact that the label of 'Egyptian antiquity game' applies equally, if not more), as it presents the interaction of multiple ancient civilizations. Similarly, the latest *God of War* (2018, SIE Santa Monica Studio), not to be confused with the 2005 game of the same title, is the first within the *God of War* series to place its main character, Kratos, in a fantasy storyworld based on Norse mythology, but it still features characters like Athena and Zeus from Kratos' Greek past, where Kratos met (and beat) the gods in battle. In the *God of War* series, the Norse

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[13] At the time of writing, *Smite* features playable gods across fifteen pantheons: Arthurian, Celtic, Chinese, Egyptian, Great Old Ones (inspired by the works of H. P. Lovecraft), Greek, Hindu, Japanese, Mayan, Norse, Polynesian, Roman, Slavic, Voodoo and Yoruba. Out of the 111 playable characters, 31 (= 27,9%) stem from classical (Greek and Roman) mythology: Achilles, Aphrodite, Apollo, Arachne, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Cerberus, Chiron, Chronos, Hades, Hera, Medusa, Nemesis, Nike, Persephone, Poseidon, Scylla, Thanatos, Zeus, Bacchus, Bellona, Cupid, Discordia, Hercules, Janus, Mercury, Nox, Sylvanus, Terra, Vulcan.

storyworld therefore exists next to the Greco-Roman storyworld, which makes the game eligible for the label of EAG. These special kinds of EAGs are indicated with a dagger† in the database.

Certain games have modern characters engage in time travel to classical settings, such as various games in the *Serious Sam* franchise (2001-2019) but also the more recent *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4* (2018, Treyarch). These games were included as EAGs in the database but received the abbreviation 'TT' (time travel) in superscript. Games that "portray people in the modern era interacting with past cultural material (sometimes these people are 'archaeologists,' sometimes not)" (Gardner 2012: 40), such as *Tomb Raider* (1996, Core Design), do not count as antiquity games and were therefore not included in the database. (The *Assassin's Creed* games were not seen as time travel games, since the in-game Animus technology does not allow the user to actually travel through time. Instead, the Animus allows the modern-day user to "read a subject's genetic memory and project the output onto an external screen in three dimensions".[14] Also, especially in the cases of *Origins* and *Odyssey*, the present-day storylines featuring Layla Hassan are very limited, even up to the point of being ignorable, as opposed to earlier entries in the franchise that implemented larger modern set pieces revolving around Desmond Miles. The main attraction of both *Origins* and *Odyssey* is the material set in the ancient world and as such, these games were not included as time travel EAGs.)

Ultimately, whether a given game is better classified as a classical antiquity game, an extended antiquity game or something else entirely is sometimes up for debate, and it is perfectly possible to disagree on the categorizations that were made in the database. This possibility for debate and/or disagreement should, in my mind, not be seen as a defect of the terminology but rather as a further stepping stone towards constructive conversations about how we think about these games.

The Database

The website *Paizomen* is powered by Wordpress. The project was created independently and has not received any funding. The current domain address is paizomen.wordpress.com, but I hope to change this to a custom address in the future. The name *Paizomen* derives from the Greek verb παίζω (*paizō*), 'to play'. The verb παίζομεν (*paizomen*) literally translates to 'we play', but if we were to elongate the *o* and pronounce the transcription as *paizōmen* (παίζωμεν), in the subjunctive form, the translation changes to 'let's play'. The title of the database is therefore set up with both translations in mind, and it is as much an observation of the increasing dominance of games and play in our culture (see, for example, the process of 'gamification'), as well as an invitation to explore these games together, academically and otherwise.

The website aims to provide a useful overview of all existing CAGs and EAGs that feature classical antiquity. As of this second update (Nov 29, 2020), the database includes 219 video games from the early 1980s up until 2020. Some of these games were later discontinued or cancelled (e.g. *Roma Victor* [2006-2011, RedBedlam] or *Ben-Hur* [2016-2018, Krome Studios, Float Hybrid Entertainment]), rendering them unplayable today. These games were included in the database, but indicated by a 'D' (discontinued) in superscript. However, games that were once in development but cancelled before their release were not included.

Paizomen is not set up as a 'static', unchanging website. Instead, it is imagined as a work-in-progress, ever-evolving project with room for discussion and conversation (one day, perhaps, the site might also feature a forum; although I believe the comment sections will do for now). There are still many games that have not been listed, as well as certain references and pieces of information that are still missing from the database, but I believe that the database in its current state already gives a useful

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[14] https://assassinscreed.fandom.com/wiki/Animus [21/08/2020].

overview and description of the games and thought that this was a good time to share (the present state of) the project.

As of now, *Paizomen* lists:

1. *alternative titles* for games that are known under multiple names (e.g. a different name in a different country).

2. *the 'status' of the game as an antiquity game*, i.e. whether the game classifies as a classical antiquity game (CAG) or an extended antiquity game (EAG).

3. *the (initial) release date*, as accurately as possible (in case of multiple releases on different dates in the same year, the earliest release date is listed; releases in later years receive explicit mention).

4. *the game publisher(s)*, i.e. the game company responsible for releasing and distributing the game.

5. *the game developer(s)*, i.e. the game company responsible for creating the game (the developer can also be the publisher).

6. *the platform(s)* on which the game is released, in alphabetical order (if the game was released on different platforms in later years, then these newer platforms are listed after the original platform(s) in chronological order with the year of release).

7. *the mode*, i.e. single-player and/or multiplayer. At this time, 'multiplayer' encapsulates every form of 'playing with someone who is also playing', from local co-op to massively multiplayer online games. This might receive further detailing in a later version of the database.

8. *the genre(s)* to which the game belongs. As genre classification is often a problematic business, I have chosen to keep these descriptions rather vague instead of using more 'technical' gamer jargon. For example, I have refrained from using the term 'hack and slash' too often (in a sense, almost any game where the main character wields a sword could be considered hack and slash), except in those cases where, to my mind, the term really applied (e.g. *Warriors: Legends of Troy* [2011, Koei Canada]). More in-depth gamer terminology (such as 'roguelike', 'turn-based', 'side-scrolling', etc.) might be listed in the additional keywords at the bottom of every entry. Also, just because a game features a mechanic that is inherent to a specific genre does not mean that the game fully belongs to that genre: for example, just because it is possible to engage in chariot races in the Lageion hippodrome of Alexandria in *Assassin's Creed Origins*, does not mean that *Origins* itself is a 'racing game'. As the majority of the game is spent outside of the hippodrome, I have not included the label 'racing game' in this case.

The database also distinguishes between the useful classifiers 'hero-based' and 'empire-building' coined by Dunstan Lowe in his seminal and by now perhaps classic study on antiquity and video games. An empire-building game, Lowe (2009: 68) says, "tends to be open-ended (like a board game) and focuses on dynamic interaction between peoples and nations, usually in a historical or pseudo-historical context." Examples mostly belong to the genre of the strategy or city-building game. A hero-based game "is typically more narrative-driven and focuses on an individual protagonist, usually in a mythological or fantasy context" (*ibid.*). Lowe adds that the latter category is "far more diverse" and comprises "platformers, Role-Playing Games and arcade-style "action" games among other styles of play" (*ibid.*).

While perhaps not fully 'genre' classifications, Lowe's practical terms do allow for a representative categorization of the large variety of classical antiquity games as they exist at this time

of writing. A remark that could be made is that Lowe's distinction does not mention some important genres like the fighting game or the sports game, both of which best fit the description of the hero-based game. Also, there have been various hero-based games that are set in a historical context (e.g. *Ryse: Son of Rome* [2013, Crytek]), although these 'historical' contexts are indeed often full of fantastical elements. A hero-based game is also not always narrative-driven: *Smite*, for instance, which would classify as hero-based since it revolves around (semi)divine characters in inter-mythological clashes, is not in itself a narrative game.[15] Finally, Lowe's terms need not be mutually exclusive: *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, for instance, an action-adventure role-playing game, has the player take up the role of either Kassandra or Alexios during the Peloponnesian War. The game is narrative-driven and revolves around Kassandra's/Alexios' voyage throughout Greece, so we would therefore rightly call it a hero-based game. The game does, however, also allow the player to engage in large battles between the Spartan and Athenian factions. These conquest battles become available when the player has successfully destroyed the dominant faction's support in any of the game's many regions (e.g. Phokis), by burning war supplies, stealing from the faction's treasury and killing the faction's soldiers and leader. As a mercenary, the player might then choose to support or attack either faction in the battle that follows, and the outcome of that battle will determine the dominance of either Sparta or Athens in the respective region. As such, it is possible to 'build' an Athenian or a Spartan 'empire' throughout Greece, which means that 'empire-building' is an equally applicable term for this game.

These terms are used in a mechanical, rather than narrative sense. For instance, *Alexander* (2004, GSC Game World) is a strategy game that simulates Alexander's conquests (the game is a tie-in to the 2004 film directed by Oliver Stone). Alexander could be said to be the narrative 'hero' of the game, but there is no mechanical or ludic justification to call *Alexander* a hero-based game as the game revolves around defeating Alexander's opponents through tactical mobilization of troops, and 'building an empire' through settlement construction and resource management. On the other hand, calling sports games such as the racing game *Chariot Wars* hero-based is perhaps a bit of a stretch; yet, since these racing games revolve around an individual character defeating several other contenders, I thought the term was appropriate. I have refrained from using Lowe's terminology in time travel EAGs.

9. *the setting of the game*, ranging from large-scale representations of entire nations to classically inspired backgrounds in fighting games such as *Fight of Gods* (2017, Digital Crafter), which has gods from different pantheons/religions fight each other in places like 'Olympus' or 'Athena's Chamber'. If possible, the database mentions the setting in both space and time. Specific events are mentioned if possible (e.g. 'Punic Wars'). For the sake of remaining descriptive, the database does not indicate or correct anachronisms. In EAGs, only the classical settings receive possible elaboration. The 'setting' section itself often gives only a larger impression of the game's setting (e.g. Ancient Greece), but in future updates I will add more specific settings (e.g. Athens, Sparta, Corinth) to the database.

10. *various notable characters* (if possible), i.e. in-game representations of historical or mythological characters from classical antiquity. Characters are only listed if they can be identified convincingly with their ancient counterparts. In *Ryse: Son of Rome*, for example, Emperor Nero has two sons, despite the fact that the actual Nero never had any children (French & Gardner 2020: 65). One of these sons is called Commodus and serves as a Roman General, but he is eventually captured by Britons led by Boudica and her father 'King Oswald'. This entirely fictional character has been criticized (French & Gardner 2020: 65-6) and explained as a reference to the film *Gladiator* (2000, Ridley Scott) that had

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[15] While *Smite* does have a certain lore, this narrative frame is unaffected by the player's gameplay and mainly serves as the backdrop for in-game seasons and events. The game primarily consists of multiplayer arena battles across mythologically inspired locations.

made audiences familiar with the actual Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius and Emperor from 177-192 CE (Nichols 2014; Beavers 2020: 80). As there is no historical truth behind *Ryse*'s Commodus and since the inclusion of this Commodus in the database would only cause confusion, the entry for *Ryse* does not mention the character. Characters that seem to be inspired from ancient mythology but have a different in-game name, such as the serpent Hewdraw (resembling 'Hydra') in *Kid Icarus* (1986, Nintendo R&D1, TOSE) and *Kid Icarus Uprising* (2012, Project Sora, Sora Ltd.) were not listed. In EAGs, only classical characters are listed. I have used the in-game typography of characters throughout the database (i.e. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*'s version of Socrates is listed as Sokrates, Herodotus as Herodotos, and so on).

11. ***downloadable content or DLC*** (if possible), i.e. additional game content released after the release of the original game that might be added to the game through downloads (additional payment is often required). DLC is only listed if it was released in a separate expansion pack with textual content: automatically integrated updates (e.g. patches, software tweaks, themed seasons, but also, for example, newly released gods in *Smite*, which are added to the game instantaneously and can be unlocked with either in-game or real-world currency), as well as non-textual content (e.g. wallpapers or soundtracks) are not mentioned in the database. Some games only qualify for inclusion in the database because of their DLC, such as *Chivalry: Medieval Warfare* (2012, Torn Banner Studios), which is set in a medieval world but received DLC (*Chivalry: Deadliest Warrior*, 2013) that included a Spartan setting as well as playable Spartan soldiers.

The database provides a (work-in-progress) bibliography on each entry (where possible) and also lists some additional keywords to facilitate the site's search function. Right now, the bibliography primarily consists of articles, chapters and books that explicitly deal with antiquity in video games instead of other, non-antiquity or non-historically related game scholarship. Certain cases (e.g. *Rome: Total War* [2004, Creative Assembly] or the 2005 *God of War*) have already spawned considerable scholarship, while others have not received academic treatment yet or are mentioned only briefly in studies about other games. Academic sources were only listed if they referenced the game specifically (instead of the larger series) and if they provided a substantial discussion of the game (e.g. mere mentions that a certain game exists, without any comment on its content or context, were not included). Each entry also contains a trailer for the game in order to provide the user with a visual image of the game, complementary to the written information. I included gameplay videos, longplays or walkthroughs if a trailer could not be found. In some cases (such as the three early CAGs by M.C. Lothlorien, all released in 1982: *Tyrant of Athens*, *Peloponnesian War* and *Roman Empire*), I also included a link to where the game can be played. More often than not, this link will lead to an emulator where a game originally released for currently discontinued hardware can be played.

In order to find the games, I conducted internet searches and consulted the reference lists of academic literature, such as the extensive ludography of Rollinger (2020a). The references of Lowe (2009) and Lowe (2012) also proved to be heuristic goldmines for antiquity games from earlier periods (primarily the 1980s to the early 2000s). The sources for the information in the database entries include both playing and non-playing research (Aarseth 2003). In various cases, I was able to draw upon my own experiences with the games, which I then used to fill in certain categories such as 'genre', 'setting', 'notable characters', etc. However, since I by myself have not had the time, means, or the required hardware to play all of these games to completion, I also consulted online encyclopedias, reviews, game store pages, gameplay videos or fan-made wikia pages. As such, like I have said above, I am aware that certain information in the database may be incomplete (especially in the 'notable characters' section, which is why these sections are marked with a 'B' in superscript, as they, more than the other sections, are still in their unfinished 'beta' phase), and I therefore welcome all corrections or suggestions for

further modifications. (All included suggestions will of course receive due credit on the site, either on the game entry pages themselves or in the update notes.)

Apart from the Homepage, the user will also find the **news** page, where notes will be published concerning updates on the site; the **database** page, which contains a list of all abbreviations and the links to the actual databases where all games can be consulted in both chronological and alphabetical order; the **search** page, where the user can roam the database looking for specific elements; the **about** page, where extra information on the database and its author can be found; and the **contact** page, where I can be contacted for corrections or further suggestions.

Work in progress

I wish to stress again that the current state of the database is still very much a *work in progress.* This means that some of the points that were made in this document may change in the future (all changes will be published on *Paizomen*'s news site) and that the database is far from finished and will continue to be updated. In order to give an impression of what still needs to be done and to provide transparency into some of the website's current features, a list of items that need further refinement, as well as some ideas to further increase *Paizomen*'s quality, is included here. The items' order does not necessarily mark priority and does not indicate the exact chronological sequence in which future updates will be added to the site. Some of the items below overlap with what has already been said above.

- The list of games is not yet complete. I already have a separate list with games that need to be added, and am working towards fitting them into the database. For example, I still need to include many games in the *Asterix* series, as well as the entire *Glory of Heracles* franchise.
- As was already mentioned, the 'notable characters' sections are still in their beta phase and still need considerable work. The 'setting' sections, too, need further elaboration in some cases. The idea in both cases is to work towards a website where the user can for example type in 'Athens', 'Sparta', 'Caesar' or 'Hadrian' and acquire a list of all games featuring those places or characters. Right now, the search function will list some games but the results are not exhaustive just yet.
- The webpage lay-out is perhaps still rather simple and currently displays some Wordpress features that I would like to get rid of, but that I cannot delete in the current Wordpress plan. Examples include the 'previous page' / 'next page' feature at the bottom of every database entry, which leads to the page that I added right before or right after the page at hand (e.g. the last entry I added before *Imperator: Rome* was *Smite*, and I added *Assassin's Creed Origins* first afterwards), but since I generally did not follow a specific entry order the 'previous page' or 'next page' do not have any particular meaning relating to the game displayed and might only confuse the user.
- The 'additional keywords' sections still need to be expanded and streamlined.
- As was indicated above, the 'bibliography' sections need considerable expansion and at this time mainly list research specifically focused on the reception of antiquity in video games. Wider sources on history in video games or on video games in general need to be added, especially in certain EAG entries like the *Civilization* series, which has already received considerable scholarship.
- I am also planning to place more hyperlinks in the bibliography. That would mean that the bibliography does not only name an academic source but also provides the link to that source.

It is apparent that a large amount of work still needs to be done, but I hope that *Paizomen* might already prove useful at this time. It is an evolving project and suggestions are always appreciated. With *Paizomen*, I wish to contribute to the on-going study of antiquity in video games and, using an especially appropriate game metaphor, to propel this study to the next level.

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