Title: Representation and Self-Representation: Arabs and Muslims in Digital Games

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NATO COMMANDER, MicroProse, 1984

Overview:

1. Representation in digital games
2. Representation
   - Orientalism in the digital age
   - Representation of enemy
   - Introducing the other
3. Self-representation
   - Resistance and martyrdom
   - Digital dignity
4. Conclusion

Representation in digital games
1. The dominant discourses overwhelmingly present most followers of Islam as a threat (Hafez 2000; Karim 2003, Poole 2002, Richardson 2004).

2. Islam is most likely linked with terrorism (Karim 2006; Miller 2006; Manning 2006).

3. The representation of ‘ordinary Muslims’ is marginalized (Richardson 2006).

4. A conflictual framework dominates (Karim 2006; Manning 2006).

"Unlike narrative, simulations are a kaleidoscopic form of representation that can provide us with multiple and alternative points of view. By accepting this paradigm, players can realize that there are many possible ways to deal with their personal and social reality. Hopefully, this might lead to the development of a tolerant attitude that accepts multiplicity as the rule and not the exception."

Gonzalo Frasca, 2004

“Oh, I come from a land
From a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam,
Where they cut off your ear
If they don’t like your face.
It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home.”

Opening song to the Walt Disney’s movie Aladdin.

Iznogoud (Infogrames, 1987)
Prince of Persia (Broderbund, 1989)
The Magic of Scheherazade (Cultural Brain, 1989)
Arabian Nights (Krisalis, 1993)
Disney’s Aladdin (Sega, 1993)
Al-Qadim: The Genie’s Curse (SSI, 1994)
Beyond Oasis (Sega, 1995)
Saban’s Iznogoud (Microids, 1997)
Arabian Nights (DreamCatcher, Wanadoo 2000)
Persian Wars (Cryo, 2001)
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones (Ubisoft, 2005)
Orientalism in the Digital Age

PRINCE OF PERSIA: HAREM ADVENTURE, Gameloft S.A., 2003

Representation of enemy: Targets in War Games

“The desert is the country of the treacherous soldier Nomad. He is unreliable as the sand, as cold as the nights and as dangerous as the deadly scorpions that live there. His family is a gang of assassins and wandering thieves. They are men without honor, who use their knowledge of the desert to attack innocent villages.”

Description on the packaging of ‘Nomad’ figure
Caleco Industries, Inc.

Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

BATTLE IN SADR CITY, Kuma/War, 2005

Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

War in the Gulf (Empire 1993)
Delta Force (NovaLogic, 1998)
Delta Force: Land Warrior (Novalogic, 2000)
Conflict: Desert Storm (SCi Games, 2002)
Tom Clancy’s Splinter Cell (Ubi Soft, 2002)
America’s Army (U.S. Army, 2002)
Conflict: Desert Storm II: Back to Baghdad (SCi games, 2003)
Command & Conquer: Generals (Electronic Arts, 2003)
Delta Force: Black Hawk Down (NovaLogic, 2003)
Full Spectrum Warrior (THQ, 2004)
Kuma/War (Kuma Reality Games, 2004)
Conflict: Global Terror (SCi Games, 2005)

Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

COMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS, Electronic Arts, 2003

Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

SPRING BREAK FALLUJAH, Kuma/War, 2004
Representation of Enemy: Targets in War Games

ASSAULT ON IRAN, Kuma/War, 2005

Introducing the other:
Breaking the old patterns

Resisting and martyrdom:
Construction of heroes

SPECIAL FORCE
Solution, 2003

TAHTA al-RAMAD, Dar al-Fikr, 2002
Digital dignity:
Distinctive narrative and Islamic heritage

"Our goal is to address people in the whole world and to enable them to see the peaceful truth coming out of our civilization and religion and thus to stop spreading of the negative media image.

Our goal is to address Muslims and Arabs in a way respecting their cultural heritage. We want to help them to feel equal to the other nations so that they can develop into a civilization which will enrich the surrounding world and not only take from it."

Afkar Media, underash.net

Conclusions

1. Reflection: Understanding of symbolic and ideological dimensions of in-game representation
   Challenges:
   • Underdeveloped computer game industry in the Middle East
   • Methodology for the research of game consumption missing

2. Construction of serious and educational games
   Challenges:
   • Development costs
   • Competitive environment
   • Methodology for teaching missing
Video games research

Video games research


Thank you for your attention.