

DePauw University

Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University

Honor Scholar Theses

Student Work

4-2017

The Congregation of Heroes: A Skyrim Representation

Richard Smith 17
DePauw University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.depauw.edu/studentresearch>



Part of the [Chinese Studies Commons](#), and the [Computer Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Richard 17, "The Congregation of Heroes: A Skyrim Representation" (2017). *Honor Scholar Theses*. 77, Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University.
<https://scholarship.depauw.edu/studentresearch/77>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honor Scholar Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University.

The Congregation of Heroes: A Skyrim Representation

Richard Smith

Honor Scholar Program Senior Project 2017

Sponsor: Dr. Dave Berque
First Reader: Dr. Sherry Mou
Second Reader: Dr. Harry Brown

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
A Brief History	4
The Congregation of Heroes	6
Thesis Project	8
Skyrim and the Creation Kit	9
The Creation Process	10
Creative Decisions for the First Iteration	14
Technical Details for the First Iteration	18
The User Study	20
The Second Iteration	23
The Ethics of Translation	26
Conclusion	28
Acknowledgements	30
Works Cited	31

A Brief History

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms is a novel detailing the events during the final years of the Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period. This time period, approximately 169 AD to 280 AD (Luo), was notable for the constant power struggles between the three kingdoms in China at the time. They were the Wei, the Shu, and the Wu (Theobald). Part historical and part fictional, this novel contains many stories about the influential people and events that took place. These stories focus on the military and political aspects of the time period, detailing many battles and intrigues that made the period of the Three Kingdoms so interesting. It is regarded as one of the Four Great Novels of China and the magnitude of its literary influence in modern day China has been compared to Shakespeare's influence in English literature (Shoji). One of the chapters within this novel contains the story of Zhou Yu and his Congregation of Heroes (Luo), which is the story of focus for this thesis.

Zhou Yu was a general serving under Sun Quan (Luo). Sun Quan was the Emperor of Wu (The Editors ... , "Sun Quan") and ruler of Jiangdong in southern China. As the premier commander of Sun Quan's forces, Zhou Yu was the one to defend Jiangdong against Cao Cao's invasion from the north (Luo). He is famous for his defense of Jiangdong at the Battle of Red Cliffs ("The Battle of Red Cliffs") and a second defense at the Battle of Jiangling. By successfully defeating Cao Cao and the armies of Wei, he protected Sun Quan's rule and ensured that the state of Wu would survive to influence future events.

Cao Cao was a warlord from the state of Wei in north China ("Cao Cao..."), who hoped to take Jiangdong from Sun Quan. Cao Cao is usually regarded as a merciless ruler and shrewd

strategist and had many victories to his name (The Editors ... , “Cao Cao”), but ultimately failed in his goal to unify China under his rule. In spite of being depicted as a villain, Cao Cao was also regarded as an accomplished poet. “Cao Cao wrote a list of poetry anthologies, such as Haolixing, Duangexing, Guancanghai (The Sea) and Guisuishou (Though the Tortoise Lives Long)” (“Cao Cao ...”).

At the time of the Congregation of Heroes, Cao Cao and Sun Quan are at war (Luo). To learn more about the circumstances of the war, I spoke with my Thesis Committee member, Dr. Sherry Mou. Fights between the two navies were crucial in deciding control of the rivers that separated the two regions. The sailors of southern China were known for their ability to fight well on the river. Cao Cao’s northern forces had been defeated by them before. In response to these defeats, Cao Cao assigned two military strategists from the south, who had pledged themselves to Cao Cao’s service, to train his navy (Personal Correspondence). Their names were Zhang Yun and Cai Mao. These two strategists began training the navy of Cao Cao day and night. However, the fires from their camp were visible from the camp of Zhou Yu and he sent a boat to investigate. He discovered that Cao Cao had excellent naval strategists and knew if he did not prevent them from training the northern navy, he would not be able to defeat Cao Cao (Luo). This is where the story of the Congregation of Heroes begins. It is a tale of deception, intrigue, and cleverness. It is summarized below.

The Congregation of Heroes

In order to fully appreciate this project the readers need to be familiar with the story of the Congregation of Heroes. The remainder of this section summarizes the story's plot based on the English translation of the original text provided by Moss Roberts (Luo).

Cao Cao, after having his forces defeated in naval combat the day before and on the present day learning that the forces of Zhou Yu had spied on his camp, brought his commanders together to come up with ways to defeat their enemy. Fortunately, a member of his council, Jiang Gan, spoke up with a plan. He was an old schoolmate and friend of Zhou Yu and promised that he could persuade Zhou Yu to surrender. Cao Cao was pleased with this opportunity and sent Jiang Gan on his way (Luo).

When Jiang Gan arrived at Zhou Yu's camp, Zhou Yu was told an old friend had come to visit. It was at this moment Zhou Yu knew Cao Cao had sent a spy. It was obvious to him. He gave his soldiers orders and sent them away while he went to meet his visitor. Zhou Yu greeted his guest as "Cao Cao's spokesman," but Jiang Yu feigned hurt and pleaded that he had only come to visit with an old friend. Zhou Yu knew he would say this and apologizes and invites him in to visit (Luo).

Zhou Yu acted as a wonderful host and paraded Jiang Gan around to show off his soldiers and supplies to demonstrate the power of his army. Then Zhou Yu threw a great banquet in Jiang Gan's honor and performed a sword dance for Jiang Gan and the present soldiers. A large amount of wine was passed around during the festivities and Zhou Yu pretended to get excessively drunk. He invited Jiang Gan to stay and share a bed with him for the night, a

culturally common, non-sexual invitation for the time period. Jiang Gan was pressured into accepting and stays the night (Luo).

They both pretended to sleep, but during the night Jiang Gan got up and searched through Zhou Yu's papers, looking for information that would assist Cao Cao's forces. He found letters sent from Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, claiming that they were planning to betray Cao Cao and bring Zhou Yu his head. Jiang Gan hid the letters on his person and went back to bed. Later, Zhou Yu was awoken by his guards and left to perform his duties. Jiang Gan returned to the south before Zhou Yu came back, telling the guards that he had kept Zhou Yu from his duties long enough (Luo).

Upon returning to Cao Cao's court, he admitted he could not persuade Zhou Yu to surrender. Cao Cao was furious, but Jiang Gan told him that the trip was not a total failure and that he would like to speak privately with Cao Cao. He showed him the letters and Cao Cao is once again enraged. He called Cai Mao and Zhang Yun in and accused them of plotting against him. They were completely confused and before they could deny the accusations, Cao Cao ordered them both to be executed on the spot. The moment their heads hit the floor, Cao Cao realized he had been fooled by Zhou Yu. Cao Cao no longer had expert naval strategists to train his troops. However, Cao Cao, ever prideful, never admitted his mistake and lied about his reasons for killing the two. Later, Zhou Yu's spies reported the executions to Zhou Yu, who was most pleased with the outcome. He said that it was those two he feared the most, and with them gone, he was sure to find victory (Luo).

Thesis Project

My project is a retelling of the story of the Congregation of Heroes using the video game Skyrim as a medium. The goal of this project evolved over time. It began as a desire to utilize both my academic interests of Computer Science and Mandarin Chinese. This project provided a unique opportunity to join those two academic passions with my personal passion of video game design. In the Fall, the plan for this project was very different than what it became in February. The original plan was to take the existing game of Skyrim, which will be further explained later, and translate it visually and audibly into a Chinese game set in a Chinese environment. I wanted to change the look of the buildings and the language of the people that populated the game. I used the Skyrim Creation Kit, a program created by the developers for the game modifying community, to accomplish this. However, this proved to be too technically challenging and ultimately unachievable. This is because the Creation Kit was designed to create content that looked like Skyrim, which had a very Nordic atmosphere. My project wanted to create an environment that felt very Chinese. Using a tool meant for creating Nordic environments to create Chinese ones instead was unfeasible. The project had to be refocused on something possible, but still connected with my interests in Computer Science, Mandarin Chinese, and video game design.

I decided that if Skyrim could not be translated to Chinese, then perhaps a Chinese story could be translated into Skyrim. This was much more feasible from a technical standpoint. The first step of accomplishing this project was to pick a story. Considering the capabilities of Skyrim and the desire to create an interactive, engaging experience for the players, the story

needed to include some fighting and the characters should be warriors rather than scholars. The Congregation of Heroes, a story within *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, was chosen to be translated because of the familiarity and setting of the Three Kingdoms. The medieval settings meant that the people in the story had similar levels of technology as the people in Skyrim, such as swords and horses rather than guns or cars. This would make the translation much easier. There were only five notable characters in this story, which was also a benefit as creating unique characters proved to be time-consuming. Furthermore, Cao Cao ordering the execution of the two generals provided me with an opportunity. I took some creative license to change this event into a fight that the player participated in to create a more interactive game. More on the various creative decisions I made can be found in the “Creative Decision of the First Iteration” section of this paper.

Skyrim and the Creation Kit

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, commonly referred to as Skyrim, is an open world adventure game set in a medieval fantasy world with a nordic theme. The player controls his or her character from a 1st or 3rd person perspective and can perform actions such as talking, attacking, and running. I chose this game to be the medium for my story retelling because it can be easily modified through a program called the Skyrim Creation Kit. This program, free for owners of the game to use, allows users to change, add, and delete objects from the game itself. This is called “modding” the game which is short for modifying. The Creation Kit has considerable functionality. It allows users to recreate everything they see in the original game. I had previous experience using the Creation Kit, so I was comfortable using it for this project.

The Creation Kit's interface is pictured in *figure 1* on the next page. In the figure, the left side window contains all the objects that can be added to the game. The top right window is the render window which displays the area being edited. Finally, the bottom right window is the cell window that can be used to navigate to different game areas.

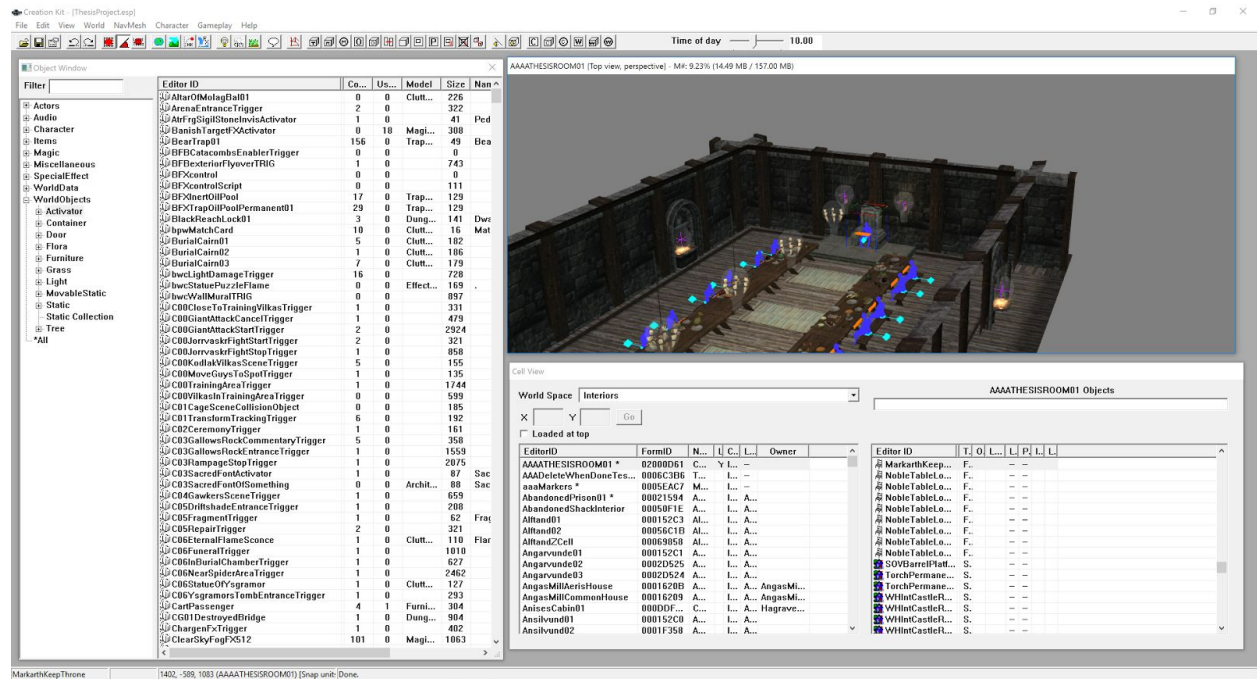


Figure 1: The Creation Kit interface

The Creation Process

While the Creation Kit makes modding Skyrim easier than modding games without a modification program, creating new areas and making them come alive is not a simple task. There is a 6-step process I used in creating my new areas in order to make them function as they should. This process is repeated, and sometimes slightly altered, for each new area depending on the circumstances. To clarify, in this project an “area” is any number of rooms that can be

travelled between without going through a loading screen. A loading screen signifies that the player has have left an area and the game is rendering a new one. The process, greatly summarized, is listed below.

1. The first step in the creation process was creating the physical space each area would inhabit. This involved creating a new “cell,” which is an empty void in which you can place objects. Each area has its own cell.
2. Once the cell was created, the borders of the play area were established by creating the environment. This step is where the floors, walls, and ceilings are added to the void to create empty rooms.
3. After defining the room parameters, the space was filled with objects. Furniture, people, and objects can all be added to the room at this point. The Creation Kit provides controls for moving, rotating, and resizing everything that is added to the room.
4. The next step is to add nav-mesh to the area. The nav-mesh is a layer of connected triangles that denote the area in the game that NPCs are allowed to move around in. This is done in two steps. The nav-mesh is automatically generated in the area then I edited it manually. The manual edits were to simplify the nav-mesh and delete unnecessary parts.

Figure 2 on the next page shows the interface for creating a nav-mesh.

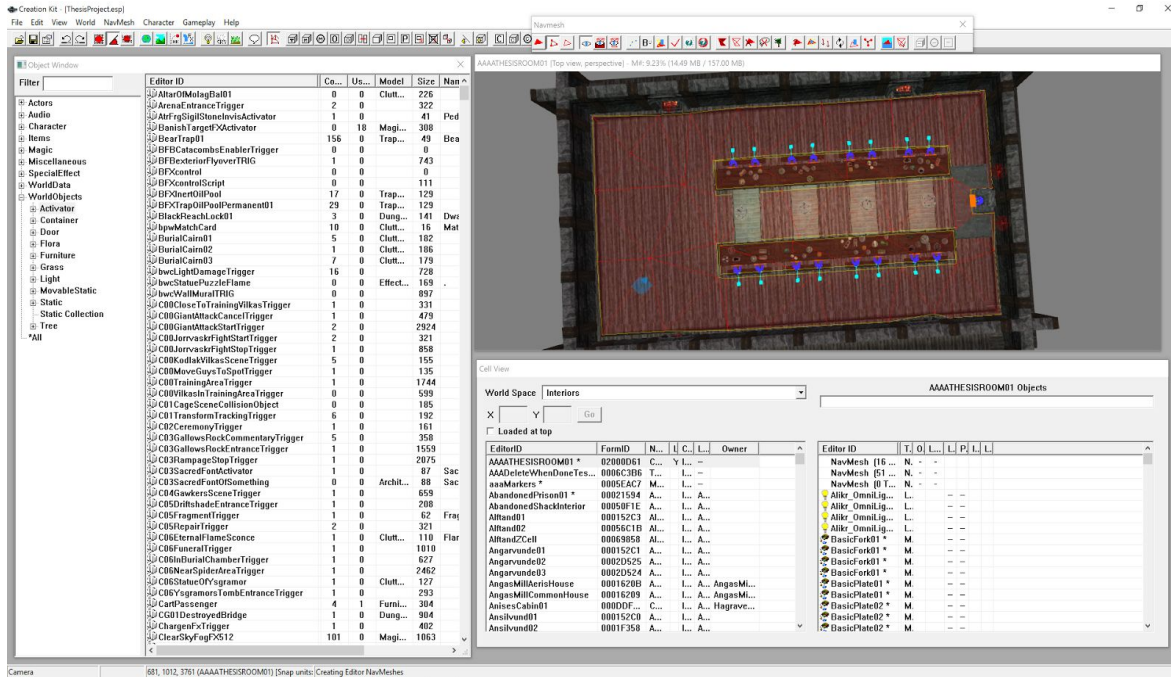


Figure 2: The nav-mesh

5. After adding the nav-mesh, game functions and object relationships were added. This includes adding doors to enter and leave the area and having the NPCs use furniture.
6. The final step is to optimize the level. This is done by boxing off different parts of the cell with the optimization tool. The purpose of this step is to increase the game performance while playing. It allows the computer to focus on rendering what the player is currently seeing rather than wasting resources on rendering something in a different area. This completes the physical area.

It is important to note that merely creating an area does not necessarily create a meaningful experience for the player. The player needs a goal to strive towards, to motivate him or her to continue playing. In the Creation Kit, creating a story for the player is done by creating

a “quest.” Quests in Skyrim are what control dialogue and objectives. Without them, the player cannot talk to anyone or accomplish anything. Creating quests involves another process done after the physical space is created. It also requires scripting, using the language “Papyrus.” Scripting allows game state changes to be triggered by events in the game. For example, if you wanted a person to become an enemy when you pick up a book, this is accomplished by adding a script to the book that runs when it is picked up. The process is:

1. Determining what the quest looks like, from beginning to end, comes first. Planning quests out before making them is critical and makes later steps easier.
2. The second step is creating the necessary objects and people. If your quest requires specific people or objects, they need to be created and added to the world.
3. The quest itself needs to be created in the “Quest” section of the left side window. From there, you can give the quest steps and dialogue options.
4. Once the quest is created, you can add the steps of the quest. What does the player do first? Next? You need to define all of this in the Quest section and create the required scripts.
5. Adding dialogue comes next. Almost all quests will have at least one conversation between the player and an NPC. In this step, all branches of the dialogue are added as well as details such as facial expressions and scripts. The dialogue menu can be seen in *Figure 3* on the next page.
6. The last step is rigorous testing. Many things can go wrong in a quest. Dialogue options might come out of order, scripts might not work as intended, or the dialogue just doesn't sound right. Testing is critical to finding all these things and fixing them. It is incredibly

important because quests are the main interaction the player has with the game world. If they do not work, the player does not enjoy the game.

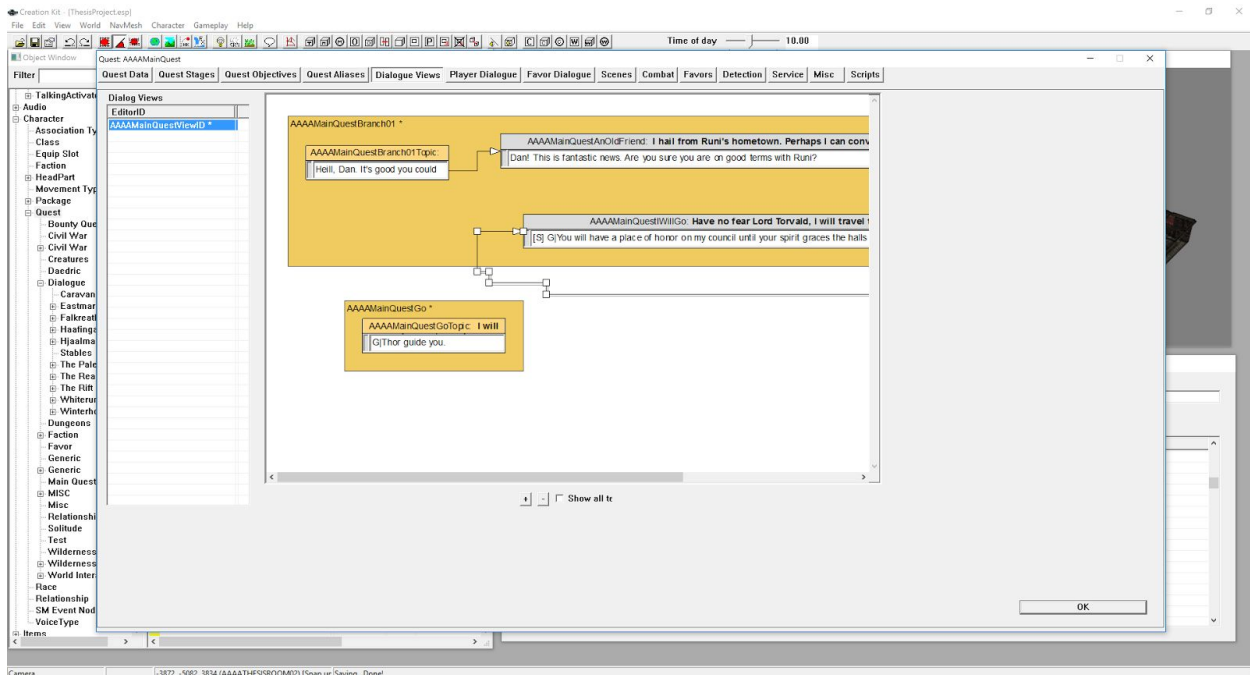


Figure 3: The quest dialogue menu

Creative Decisions for the First Iteration

In recreating this story in the first version of my project, I had to make some creative decisions about how I would portray the places and the characters, as well as portray the story itself. Some of these decisions remain in the second iteration of the project, but some were changed following the user test. The very first decision was to tell the story in English. While changing all the dialogue to Old Norse would have been the historically accurate change to make, it would have made the game unplayable to all but a very select few people in the world.

The most important quality in a game is that people can play it, so English was used for the dialogue. The next challenge I focused on was how many characters I wanted to create and how I would portray them. In my opinion, there were five people who could be considered “main characters.” They either played intricate parts in the story or were on some level notable characters in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, but often they were both. These five characters were Cao Cao, Zhou Yu, Cai Mao, Zhang Yun, and Jiang Gan. It is important to note that Chinese names begin with the family name and end with the given name. The first decision I had to make for this project was to translate their names. Because Mandarin and Old Norse, the language of the ancient vikings (the closest real life counterpart to the people of Skyrim), are so dissimilar, it was difficult to find translations that were recognizable. In the end, it was impossible to find authentic Nordic names that were very close to the Chinese names, so I prioritized authenticity over similarity. But even so, I did not wholly abandon similarity which can be seen in my decision making process below.

Cao Cao was translated to Torvald Sorensen. This was the name I put the most effort into. His name was the most dissimilar to Nordic names so I had to move beyond sound and look for a translation that made sense in terms of the name’s meaning. The sound ‘C’ makes in Chinese is most similar to the English ‘T’ or ‘S’ sound. After reviewing some recorded Old Norse, Norwegian, Finnish, and Swedish first names, I decided Cao Cao’s new first name would be Torvald, which starts with a ‘T’ and is a Norwegian name that came from the Old Norse name “Þórvaldr,” which means “Thor’s Ruler” (Campbell “Browse Names”). This is a name that implies leadership and power, which perfectly describes Cao Cao. To determine the last names of the characters in this story, I looked to the most popular surnames in the Scandinavian

countries and tried to match up meanings or pronunciation as best I could. Cao Cao was the son of Cao Song, Song being the given name. The last name Sorensen is not only a very common name in Denmark, but it also starts with 'S' as Song does and with the suffix "-sen" translated to "son of Soren" (Campbell "Meaning..."). Thus the translation of Cao Cao's name begins at "Cao Cao," becomes "Cao, son of Song," which in turn becomes "Cao Sorensen," and finally, leveraging Cao Cao's position of power as a base to find a logical translation for his given name, "Torvald Sorensen."

The other names were somewhat easier. They are created from a mix of Old Norse names and popular names from languages that are derived from Old Norse, such as Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Finnish. I chose each name based on how well I thought they sounded like their Chinese counterparts. Cai Mao became Magni Thomsen. Zhang Yun became Jarl Johnsen. Jiang Gan, the character the player plays as, became Dan Hansen. Zhou Yu became Runi Johansen.

The next translation I had to make related to the equipment these character had. The initial decisions I made regarding the equipment was one area that the user study particularly challenged. The evolution of my final decisions regarding the project are further detailed later in this paper in the section "The Second Iteration." But my initial decisions for the first version of my project were a result of the following decision making process. The weapons and armor of the Chinese would have been vastly different than those in ancient Scandinavia. I also had to take the limits of Skyrim into consideration. I was working with a limited collection of weapons and armor, I had to find the best fit for what the vikings actually used.

In my research, I found that armor and weapons were determined by wealth and status, with the most powerful and wealthy warlords possessing the best weapons and armor (Pedersen)

and the lowly grunt warriors rushing into battle with little more than an axe and shield (Vike). The wealthiest warriors had swords, spears, helmets, and metal armor. The lowest soldier had only an axe to fight with. However, every warrior, whether a warlord or a poor grunt, rushed into battle with a round wooden shield. This is translated into the game as wooden shields emblazoned with one of two designs (dependent on whether they are in Cao Cao's army or Zhou Yu's army), just as viking shields were often painted in some manner. Cao Cao would be the wealthiest man in his council, so naturally his translation would have the best equipment. Skyrim has the appropriate items, except for the spear, which was omitted in this translation. Therefore, Cao Cao was given a sword, metal armor, a helmet, and a shield. Beneath Cao Cao were Cai Mao and Zhang Yun. They were better equipped than the average foot soldier, but not quite so well equipped as Cao Cao, in order to accurately portray their position of power relative to Cao Cao. They were given war axes, the most common weapon of the vikings ("How the Vikings Worked"), as well as leather armor and wooden shields. Leather armor was not as good as armor with metal parts, but it was better than just clothing, at a higher monetary cost. The other soldiers were simply given hide armor, which in Skyrim is skimpy, accurately representing how little most vikings were protected in combat. The other soldiers were also given axes. Jiang Gan, the character the user plays as, is well-equipped. This advanced equipment was given to the player to assist them in the many battles they had to win in order to complete the project. Zhou Yu was given advanced equipment like Cai Mao and Zhang Yun.

Technical Details for the First Iteration

The first iteration, after it was completed, contained three areas. Cao Cao's council chamber, Zhou Yu's encampment, and Zhou Yu's personal quarters. The room layouts can be seen in *Figure 4* on the next page. Cao Cao's council contains two rows of tables filled with food and drinks. Cao Cao's seat is at the far right end. His generals sit at the tables. Zhou Yu's encampment is a more complex area. The first room at the far left room in Zhou Yu's encampment is bare, except for one guard to greet the player. Further in, the player goes downstairs to the largest room, where Zhou Yu waits at his seat on the far right side and his warriors feast at the tables around the room. The room is brightly lit and full of food and drinks for the party. There is another set of stairs leading up to Zhou Yu's personal quarters. In Zhou Yu's personal quarters, there is a bed and desk. On the desk is the secret letter that Jiang Gan brings back to Cao Cao.

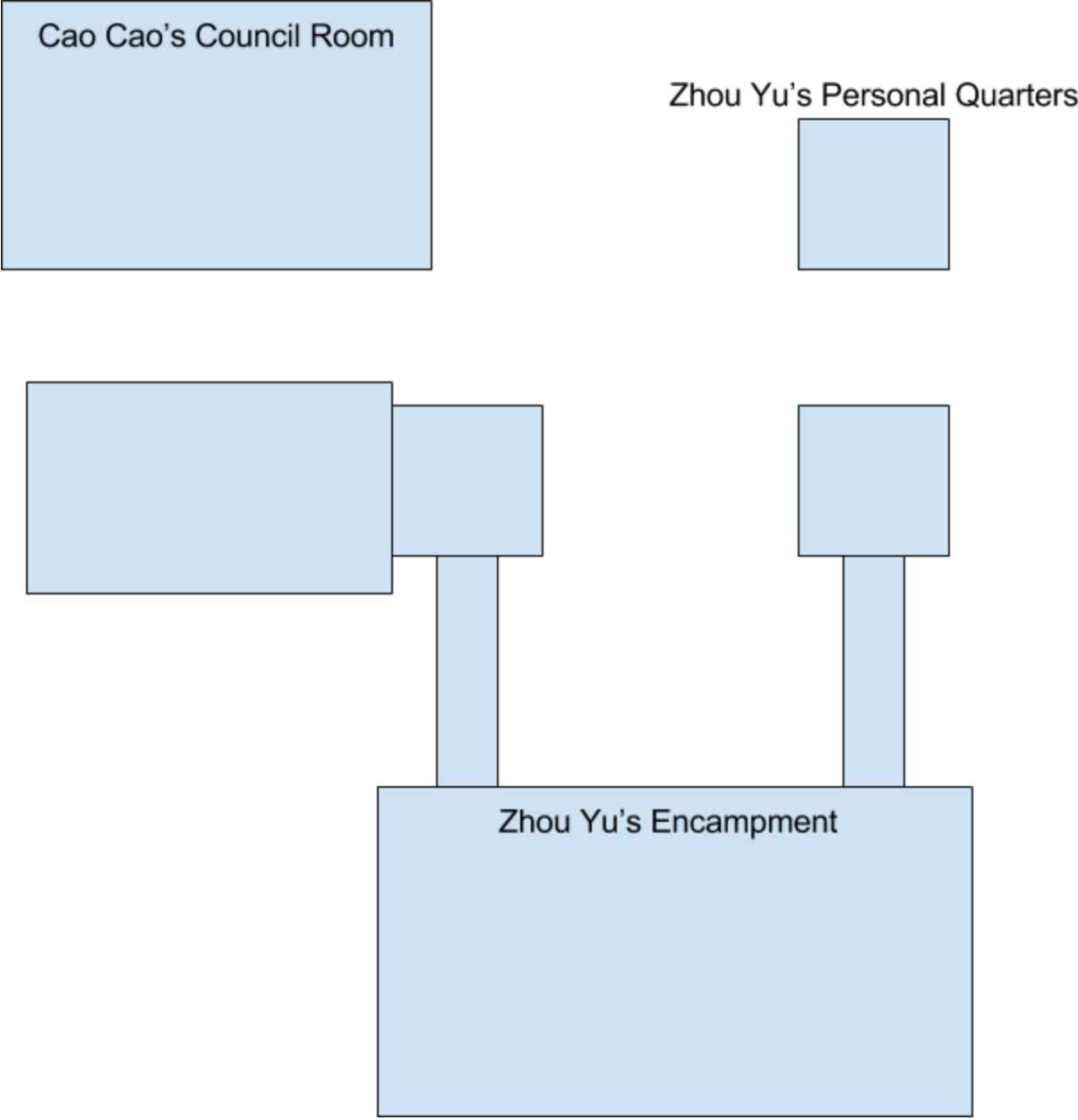


Figure 4: The layout of all three rooms of the project

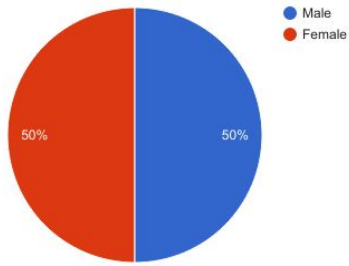
The User Study

The User Study took place on March 18th, from 12:00pm-1:00pm in Julian 278 at DePauw University. I expected each participant to take between 7-15 minutes playing the game, but I had the room reserved from 11:00am-2:00pm to give me time to set up and extra time at the end in case anyone took longer than I anticipated. The participants included both Chinese and non-Chinese students. This distinction was important because the original story is Chinese and I believe the Chinese students would be more critical of the story portrayal. Furthermore, if any of the content of my project was disrespectful to Chinese culture, Chinese students would be more likely to identify it as such and point it out. The procedure was:

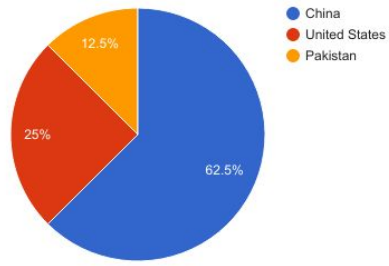
1. The testers were introduced to my project. (5 min)
2. A summary of the story of the Congregation of Heroes was verbally told to the participants. (10 min)
3. The game Skyrim and its controls were introduced to the participants. (5 min)
4. The participants individually played the game from start to finish. (10-20 min)
5. A feedback form to collect narrative and technical feedback was emailed to participants after they had completed playing the game. (1 min)

In total, there were eight participants who gave feedback. The details of the participants are shown on the next page.

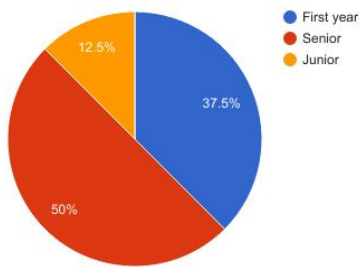
Gender of Participants



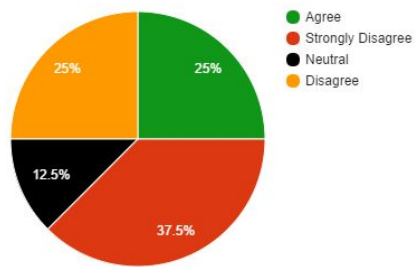
Nationality of Participants



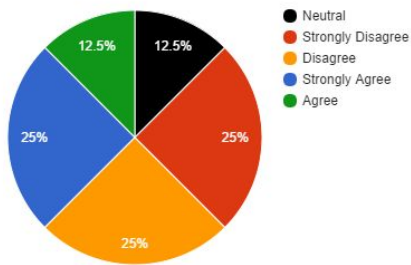
Class Year of Participants



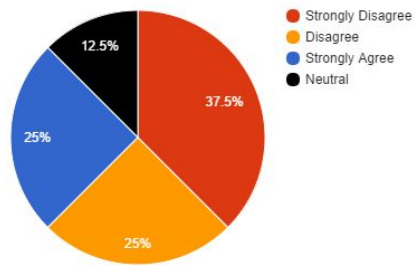
Prior to today, I was very familiar with the story of the Congregation of Heroes.



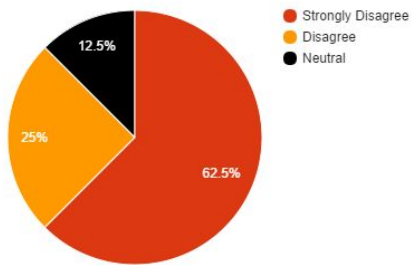
Prior to today, I was very familiar with video games in general.



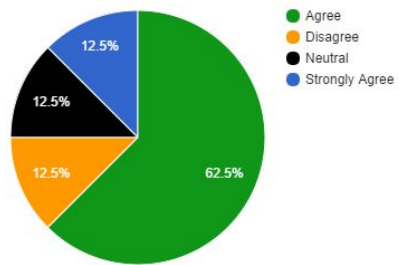
Prior to today, I was very familiar with Skyrim.



The battle at the end of the game was too hard



The battle at the end of the game was too easy



As shown by the data, there was an even distribution when it came to nationality, gender, and experience with the story and video games amongst the participants. This was reassuring because I wanted to get a variety of perspectives. It is worth noting that most participants were not familiar with the Congregation of Heroes (62.5%), half the participants were not familiar with video games (50%), and over half of participants were not familiar with Skyrim (62.5%). This was both a benefit and a detriment. It was a benefit in that they had no preconceived notions of what the story should look like or what playing Skyrim should feel like. They could experience my project for what it was. However, I found that the feedback from the participants who were more experienced with video games was the most helpful. They had fewer one-word answers to survey questions and identified more areas that could be improved. This leads me to believe that those more familiar with video games are better at understanding and conveying to others what makes a video game good or bad. The more detailed feedback about the game can be summarized as:

1. There were situations in which where the game did not work correctly. This was more often than not a fault of Skyrim itself rather than my project. For example, one user wrote “I couldn't sit on the throne when Torvald wasn't seated.”
2. There was a lack of content outside the main objective. For example, one user wrote “The backgrounds usually remain the same, and it will be better if there are more background changes.”
3. There were unintended consequences of the scripts running in the background. For example, one user wrote “the runi is missing, but I can't sit on the throne.” This problem was caused by a script intended to make the throne occupant leave.

4. The places looked too similar. For example, one user wrote “The two areas (king 1's dining area and king 2's party area) were very similar. I would like to change them.”
5. The fighting part and the conversation with Zhou Yu were the most entertaining parts of the project. For example, one user wrote “My favorite part is the killing part, because it is a very exciting experience for me.”

These would be the focus of the changes I made to create the second iteration of the project.

Users had identified these facets of the game as the most noticeable parts of the project. I also learned a few things by watching the users play that I did not expect. The users did not directly follow the quest as I thought they would. They enjoyed exploring the area and trying to interact with the people and objects everywhere. They also did not realize when they were done. I had to tell many of them that they had finished. This meant that the ending was not clear enough yet.

These observations also drove the changes I made to create the second iteration of the project.

The Second Iteration

The second iteration of my project increased the interactivity of the environment in order to create a more enjoyable player experience. Users had pointed out that of the dozens of people in Zhou Yu's encampment, they could only talk to two NPCs. The players wanted to talk to everyone, or at least get a few different dialogues here and there. They also wanted the places to feel different. In particular, Cao Cao's chamber and Zhou Yu's encampment felt too similar.

The changes I made are readily apparent when comparing the first and second iterations side-by-side. An example can be seen in *Figure 5* on the next page. I made the changes one room at a time, testing each to make sure each room remained functional.

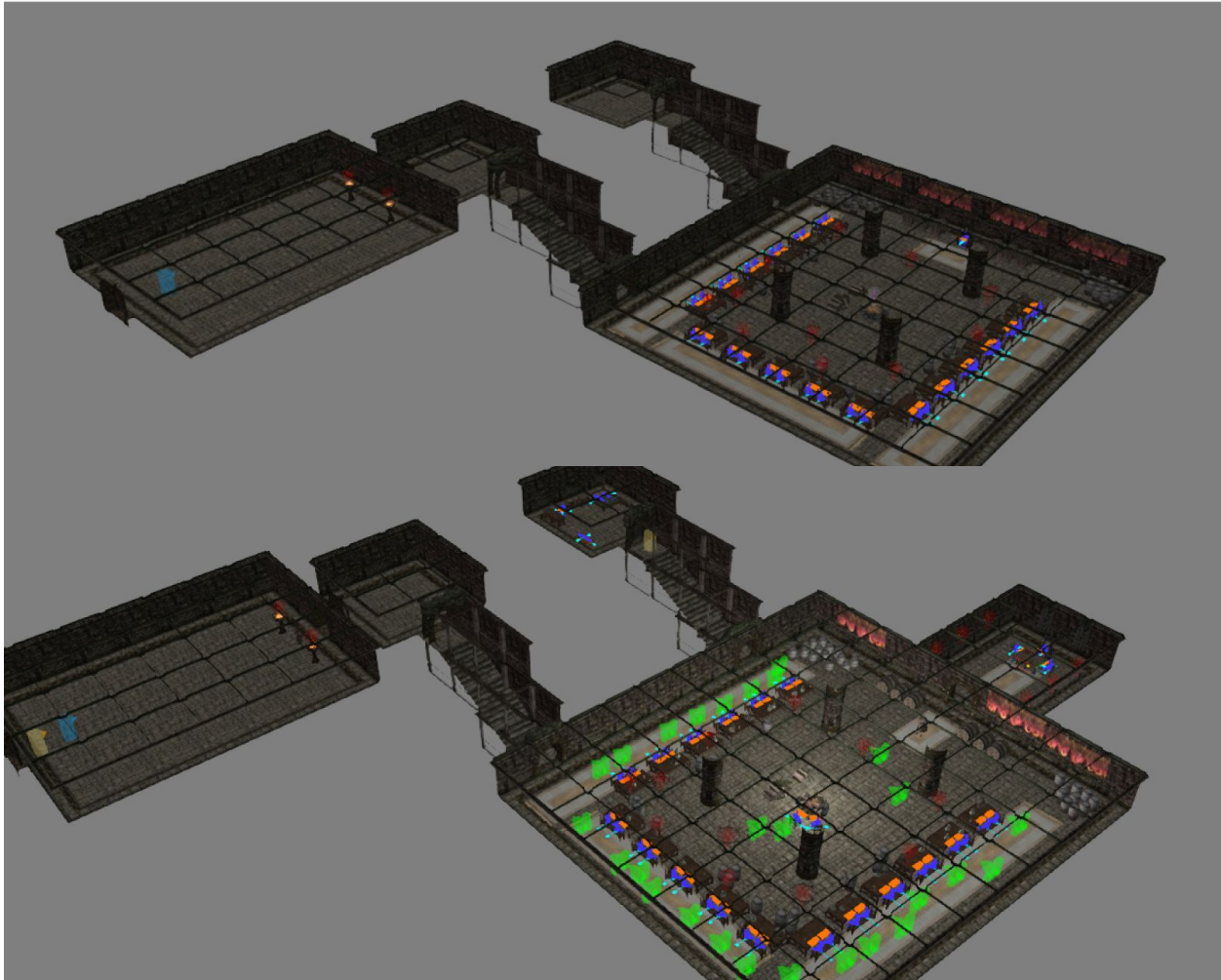


Figure 5: The old Zhou Yu Encampment (Top) and the new Zhou Yu Encampment (bottom)

The one change that was made to Zhou Yu's private quarters was the addition of a lute. Zhou Yu was a musician who played guzheng (Personal Correspondence). A guzheng is a Chinese string instrument. The closest Skyrim equivalent is a lute, which is also a string instrument, however it is smaller and handheld. Other than that one change, the room remained unchanged. The reasoning behind leaving the room mostly unchanged was because it was small and the player is not intended to stay inside long, since they are only there to find the secret

letter. Adding any more to the room will distract from that goal and possibly make it harder to find the letter.

The changes to Cao Cao's council room included a conclusive dialogue that can be had after killing the generals with Cao Cao. The intent was to provide players with a clear conclusion to the story because many missed it when playing the first iteration. I also added more decorations around the room, including a book of poetry written by Cao Cao to convey his cultural side, a side of Cao Cao I was made aware of by Professor Mou. The final change to Cao Cao's council was to increase the difficulty of the final fight. The two opponents have been made stronger and Cao Cao has been weakened. Before, the player did not have to participate in the fight at all as Cao Cao would kill both of them in just a few hits. Now the player must assist Cao Cao in order to be victorious.

The changes to Zhou Yu's encampment were more extreme. The first change was to alter the lighting in the room to make it feel brighter. That was the first design change of the room in an attempt to make it feel different from Cao Cao's council. I also made a creative decision to stray from historical fact a little more and give Zhou Yu's heroes better, more advanced armor. This was for two reasons. It makes them stand out more as strong heroes and it sets them apart from Cao Cao's soldiers more. Another room was also added to Zhou Yu's encampment, the throne room. Zhou Yu's seat was moved to this room and I designed this room to feel more regal and cleaner, which is a stark contrast to the room where the celebration is being held. This allowed me to create a throne room very different than Cao Cao's council room. I believe that the similarity that stuck out the most was the tables around the throne in each throne room in the first iteration. With the two rooms now very different, the areas should feel more separate than

before. Zhou Yu now can be found in the party room, instead of on his throne. He is after all, taking part in the festivities. I also added a part of the quest to enjoy the party and talk to people. There are two warriors at the party the player can talk to now before going back to check on Zhou Yu. The quest then continues as normal. These two warriors have unique names and each have completely unique dialogues with the player.

Lastly, in order to create a more obvious transition between Cao Cao's council and Zhou Yu's encampment, a cave system was added between the two. After exiting either location, the player must traverse through a cave to reach the other location. This cave has opportunities for the player to fight bandits and find better items. This was created with the intent of providing more exciting moments of combat (which were so highly praised in the user study) as well as reward the exploratory tendencies seen in most of the user study's participants.

The Ethics of Translation

One thing that I admittedly did not give too much thought as I created this project was the ethics of intercultural translation. However, as the project neared its conclusion, questions about how translations *should* be made began to replace questions about how translations *can* be made. The translating was already completed for the most part. But these new questions gave me a chance to reflect on what I had created. As I looked back on what I had worked on, I tried to evaluate how well I translated the Congregation of Heroes, not from a technical perspective but from an ethical perspective.

At first, I tried to take the opposite perspective. How would I feel if someone took a story from my culture and retold it in an entirely new cultural environment? What would I expect in a

cultural translation of an American story? Barring any insulting or insensitive content, I believe I would not care what the translation looked like. This serves as the baseline for creating an ethical translation in my argument: avoiding insulting or insensitive content. This baseline posed a few follow up questions, which turned into avenues to further explore the ethics of translation. How do I define “insulting or insensitive content?” Would other Americans have stricter criteria on how a translation of an American story *should* be made? And finally, do people of other cultures feel the same way as Americans do about cultural translations of their stories? Answering each of these questions could be an entire thesis on their own. This project’s objective is not to answer these questions in their entirety. But there is value in considering this topic if only for a few paragraphs. Because studying the thoughts and opinions of others requires test, surveys, or studies that I did not conduct, I chose to solely explore my definition of what makes a translation ethical and see if my project can be considered ethical based on that definition.

The first action I took in exploring what “insulting or insensitive content” meant was to define the words I used. According to merriam-webster.com, insult is defined as “to do or say something that is offensive to (someone) or to do or say something that shows a lack of respect for (someone)” (Merriam-Webster). Insensitive is defined as “lacking feeling or tact” (Merriam-Webster). With these definitions, I determined what content can be accurately described as “insulting or insensitive.” Using these definitions, I updated my baseline for determining what an ethical translation looks like to: a translation that does not include content that offends or disrespects the original culture. Offensive content is, by nature, subjective, so rather than list the infinite ways a project *could* be offensive, instead I chose to analyze my project’s content for anything that could be offensive.

The two parts of my project I specifically analyzed were the characters and the plot. In order to avoid offense or disrespect, the original plot should be identifiable within the translation and the characters should be somewhat true to their former selves within their new context. If these two guidelines are not met, it could be perceived that the translator did not respect the original story when he or she made the translation. Fortunately, both of these objectives are usually accomplished by creating a technically successful translation through a process that emphasizes constant reflection of the original story. By reviewing the story multiple times throughout the translation process to affirm the accuracy of the new product, oversights regarding the plot or characters are often avoided and the original story is respected. After reviewing my own work, I came to the conclusion that my project can be considered an ethical translation based on the above guidelines. However, I also understand that there are far more questions to consider in order to fairly label something ethical. The discussion of these questions and the studies that would help answer them are some of the many future possibilities of this project.

Conclusion

To conclude, this project set out to translate the Congregation of Heroes story into Skyrim using the Creation Kit. The process of creating new areas and quests in Skyrim was detailed and the story and its history was summarized. The goal and specifics of my project were also explained. The project itself took two forms: the first and second iterations. The first iteration was a product of my own creation. I made creative decisions that had to be leveraged against historical fact to find a balance that preserved the integrity of the story, the realism of the

translation, and the entertainment factor of playing the game. After finishing the first iteration, a user study was conducted and I recorded the feedback of eight testers. This feedback was used to create the second iteration, which was the original iteration enhanced with multiple changes based on the feedback received. The second iteration is the most recent version of the project. However in the future, with more time this project could be expanded. A second, larger user study could be conducted and the game could be changed to include a more dynamic world with far more interactivity. Every single person could theoretically be talked to and new areas could be added. In fact, with enough time and motivation, this project could be extended to include more scenes from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Dr. Dave Berque for sponsoring this project. He was a valued source of advice and guidance as this project evolved over the past year. I really appreciate the considerable time and effort he put into helping me finish this project.

Secondly, I'd like to thank my other two committee members, Dr. Harry Brown and Dr. Sherry Mou. Whether it was insight into Cao Cao's personal life, ethical questions about cultural translations, or one of the many other contributions they both made to this project, I really appreciate their help.

Lastly, I want to thank Dr. Kevin Moore, Amy Welch, and Peg Lemley for all the work they do for the Honor Scholar Program. They worked so hard to keep this program running smoothly and the constant help and encouragement they gave all the seniors working on their projects was greatly appreciated.

Works Cited

- Campbell, Mike. "Browse Names." Behind the Name. Mike Campbell, 1996. Web. 03 Mar. 2017.
- Campbell, Mike. "Meaning, Origin and History of the Surname Sørensen." Behind the Name. Mike Campbell, 2017. Web. 03 Mar. 2017.
- "Cao Cao - Emperor of Wei Kingdom." TravelChinaGuide. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Apr. 2017.
- "How the Vikings Worked". HowStuffWorks. 14 April 2008. Retrieved 07 April 2017.
- Luo, Guanzhong, and Moss Roberts. *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014. Print.
- *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 09 Apr. 2017.
- Pedersen, Anne. *Viking Weaponry*. The Viking World: ch 15. 2008.
- Personal Correspondence with Dr. Sherry Mou. DePauw University. Spring 2017.
- Shoji, Kaori. "War as wisdom and gore". *The Japan Times*. (2008-11-06). [Web](#).
- "The Battle of Red Cliffs." Cultural China. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Apr. 2017.
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Cao Cao." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 19 Aug. 2008. Web. 09 Apr. 2017.
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Sun Quan." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 14 Feb. 2011. Web. 09 Apr. 2017.
- Theobald, Ulrich. "Three Kingdoms 三國." Chinaknowledge.de. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Apr. 2017.
- Vike, Kim Hjardar and Vegard. *Vikinger i krig (Vikings at war)* (in Norwegian). Oslo: Spartacus. (2011).