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GAT211

Lab Report 4

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1. First Map – Creation

This map started out as a game project I started working on over the Winter break. In anticipation of taking GAT211 in the Spring, I decided I might want to try to work on some games, especially those with maps that I could potentially use during the second project. It also came out of a desire to make a compelling linear, 1D map. The one I made the last semester was embarrassingly simple and really not in the spirit of the assignment at all. The creation of the basic framework of the map came before anything else. It started out as a pyramid of blocks that I thought I might continue to build off of, but decided to make an opposing one. Seeing that, I thought there might be a way to use four pyramids all facing in on each other, resulting in the following sketch (this sketch also contains some later ideas I added in a bit later):

The next thing I thought about was what type of game might fit a map like this and for a reason I cannot adequately explain or even remember, I thought of the idea of a Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham’s famous prison design experiment in which there was one central guard tower surround by all the prisoner cells in a circle around it. The guards could see all prisoners, but the prisoners themselves would have no way of knowing if they were being watched at any given moment, thus causing them—at least so the theory goes—to act as if they are *always* being watched. The word “panopticon” can be broken down into two base words: “pan” meaning all-seeing and “optic” meaning eye—an all-seeing eye. The idea I took from this concept, then, was to try to make a game where the players felt like they could be thrown into battle at any given notice without forewarning.

The initial gameplay went something like this: players would move linearly along the pyramid of blocks towards the center of the board. After every player has made one move (by rolling a die and moving that many spaces forward), a four-pronged spinner in the middle would be spun—each prong tipped with an arrow—and when the spinner stopped, would point towards a line of squares on each player’s grid. If two or more players were currently on a square that the prongs pointed to, they would then be forced to fight. This was as far as I got in my original conception, the results of which can be seen in the picture above. I’ll now list the raw notes from the brainstorming session I had following this basic structure where I tried to flesh out the game a bit, giving it a system that would fit the map:

* Players start at the bottom right of their pyramids and move up towards the center, using a die roll (D4 maybe?)
* Would having the spinner move in a pre-determined format take away from the theme? Would it add any depth to the overall strategy that actually increased enjoyment? Probably not.
* If two or more players are in the “sight” of the eye at the end of the spin, they must fight. The loser(s) must go back to the start of their respective pyramids
* What about loot? Maybe a level up system? Dice upgrades? Battle avoidance?
* Certain tiles could have game-changing effects:
  + Upgrades and Downgrades of Dice
  + Switch direction of the eye (if moving in a pre-determined manner)
  + Gain fold for each row that is passed
  + One-time use benefits are granted that could be used in battle
* Hidden information? The theme is based on the panopticon so it would fit in well narratively speaking.
  + Players will not know where the eye will land until the end of each round when it is then spun.
  + Maybe look at the real models of panopticons for further inspiration here.
* Each different pyramid could be a different space/time period and the player plays as a warrior from a particular culture (Romans, Mongolians, Barbarians, Persians, etc…)
* “Loot” could also be based on the individual culture from whence the warrior comes.
* They are all trying to appease their own god, though this god is actually one “God”, Pan.

1. First Map – Lab Discussion

Unfortunately, since I was gone on Monday, and misunderstood the directions Prof. Holcomb sent me in an email, I did not bring any prepared maps to the lab. It was only until we had joined up in groups that I took out my notepad, remembered I had made this map and game, and realized this was something I could use. Upon showing it to my group (Dakota Galayde and Maddie Santino) and explaining the basic concept behind, their first question was what kind of loot was I thinking about putting into the game. I had showed the basic framework that is pictured above and had only taken the most cursory of notes on what type of loot, if any, I might in the game. I did tell them I had been thinking of the idea of having players be able to buy better weapons and armor every time they were “killed” and sent back to the bottom of the pyramid. Dakota said he really liked the idea of giving such players a tail wind such as this and told me he thought it would definitely work to keep players engaged even if they have just been beaten. I told them about the idea of gaining currency and they both agreed having certain tiles laid out on the pyramids that give player’s gold would add some flavor to the map itself. While I might also want to give out some loot and/or gold after winning a battle, the details of that isn’t necessary for this particular assignment.

While I definitely wanted to give currency out to players using these grid tiles, I also thought gold alone might be a bit dry and decided to start thinking of some other things to add, either as other tiles or other choices when landing on certain “reward” tiles. The result of these thoughts turned into what I called the “Three G’s”:

* Gold – a currency used to buy armor and weapons when defeated in battle and sent back to the start
* Gift from the God – a boost to the player in battle, usually some one-off effect that can be used only on the next time that player fights
* Genuflection – The player character “worships” the God, bringing them further along the path. This would be some boost like jumping ahead a few spaces

I wasn’t sure if this would work best as a choice player’s would make when they landed on certain tiles or if it should be random. Again, this isn’t that important given this assignment, but for the sake of of having something solid, I just decided to go with allowing player’s the choice of which of the three Gs they would take. And that sums up the work done on this first map, both in its creation, in lab, and its second iteration based on feedback after lab. This second iteration of the map, as drawn on large graph paper is presented here:

1. First Map – Intensity Curve