= Sword of Aragon =

Sword of Aragon is a turn @-@ based strategy and role @-@ playing game developed and published by Strategic Simulations , Inc. in 1989 . It is also considered to be of the 4X genre . Set in the fictional land of Aragon , the games casts its protagonist as the duke of a city named Aladda . After assuming rule over the city and avenging his father 's death , the protagonist embarks on a quest to unify the land through conquest . Accomplishing this goal entails developing cities , recruiting armies , and directing the troops on the fields of battle to victory . First published on the DOS platform during the emergence of electronic wargaming , the game was also ported to Amiga machines . Reception towards Sword of Aragon tended to be more positive than negative ; reviewers called it an exciting game , but criticized its method of copy protection and cited problems with its documentation . There were also opinions that the game was more of a niche product , catering to hardcore strategists .

= = Background = =

Sword of Aragon is a " strategic fantasy role @-@ playing adventure " video game published in 1989 . The game 's setting is the fictional land of Aragon . A powerful human empire once held sway over the land , but infighting and raids by monsters such as orcs , goblins , and titans have broken it apart . The protagonist is the son of the Duke of Aladda , ruler of a city that used to be glorious under the old empire . The duke died during a raid by orcs and tasked his son through his will to fulfill his dream of reunifying the land . To achieve this goal , the young duke builds up his cities and expands his army , conquering or allying with other cities and races . Furthermore , he recovers three artifacts required to claim the throne , slays a dragon , and destroys the strongholds of monsters that plague the land . Eventually , he deposes the ruthless Emperor of the Tetradan Empire , Lucinian IV , and assumes the Aragonian throne .

= = Gameplay = =

The player begins a game by choosing a character class for the protagonist . The choices are warrior , knight , mage , priest , and ranger . Each class has an affinity to a certain class of soldier ? warriors are more apt in leading infantry , and knights , cavalry . During battles , mages , rangers , and priests can also cast spells that damage foes , alter terrain , and heal friendly forces . The player can hire commanders of these classes to accompany the protagonist in his quest . After winning a number of battles , the player 's character might receive offers of service from such commanders as well .

The game is principally split between city management and tactical combat . Gameplay is turn @-@ based , alternating between player and computer , and much of the game is played on the World Map , a representation of the land of Aragon . Each turn on this map represents a month in the game . The map shows cities and the player 's units ; unexplored areas are blanked out until they have been explored by the player 's units . By using the keyboard and mouse , the player moves a cursor to select units and cities , and issue orders via keystrokes . Cities under the player 's control provide monthly income , which is supplemented by tributes from vassals and loot from battles . Income from a city is improved by expending funds to develop the city 's economic sectors , such as agriculture and mining , or by increasing taxation . Tax rates , however , affect the loyalty of citizens ; high taxes in a city lead to a decreasing population .

Armies are recruited in the cities , and their maintenance contributes to the monthly expenditure . Troops consist of infantry , cavalry , and bowmen . The game enters the tactical battle phase when enemies attack one of the player 's cities that is garrisoned with troops , and when the player 's forces move onto a hostile city . Encounters might also take place as the player 's forces move on the World Map . On such occasions , the game switches the display to a large @-@ scale map of the encounter . The battle maps differ from the World Map in that each spot has a limit on its number of occupants ? a stacking limit . The player and computer take turns to deploy and move their forces

. Units move at their standard pace or at a forced march to cover greater distances per turn in battles . Certain terrain gives defensive bonuses to their occupants , reducing the damage they suffer when coming under attack . Offensives take the form of melee , charges , missiles , and magic . The player has the option of letting the computer take control of his or her army to fight the battle . The game switches back to the World Map after a battle has concluded . Units that survive a battle gain experience points , improving their combat abilities on attaining certain amounts of experience points . They , with the exception of commanders , can also train in cities to improve their experience . Video games designer Alan Emrich considered Sword of Aragon 's gameplay typical of the " eXplore , eXpand , eXploit and eXterminate " nature of the 4X genre .

= = Development = =

 Sword of Aragon was developed and published by Strategic Simulations , Inc . , a video game company that dominated the 1980s market for digital wargames . Their products typically " copied the board game formula without adding revolutionary new elements . " Most strategy games at this time featured hexagon @-@ based maps and a sequence of turns among players . Sword of Aragon plainly exhibits the influence of traditional board games in its design . Its maps are laid out in hexes , and the concept of stacking limits plays a strong part in the game 's strategies . Written in Microsoft QuickBASIC and other languages , Sword of Aragon features a copy protection system that uses the game manual . On starting the game , the icon of an Aragonian city is displayed , along with a cue for a word in the manual 's description of that city ; a separate poster identifies the cities with their icons . The game proceeds only after the correct answer has been entered .

= = Reception = =

 Sword of Aragon was released when fantasy @-@ themed wargames were gaining popularity and computer wargames were starting to flourish as the rules of the board games grew in complexity . The digital versions were simpler in terms of their gameplay , as parts of the complex mechanics were handled by computers instead . Freed of dice rolling , complex calculations , and coordination of the sequence of play , casual gamers were more amenable to playing these games . According to Advanced Computer Entertainment 's John Minson , Sword of Aragon complied with part of this trend ; its huge complicated set of rules would have made it an unplayable board game , but by hiding its mechanics from the player , the digital version could be played by anyone . However , as Minson further explained , the scope of the game was too large for casual gamers to handle , overwhelming them with " the number of factors under their control " , and hardcore gamers are more likely to appreciate the game 's complexity .
 The Lessers of Dragon magazine believed that while the game was exciting , it suffered several design flaws that made the game too difficult for them . The computer @-@ controlled enemies constantly outpaced their economy and military might , and the game gave them no immediate opportunity to retreat their army when ambushed by superior forces , forcing them to suffer heavy losses . Conversely , Compute ! ' s Adam Starkweather found it too easy in later stages of the game , as his character 's well @-@ developed armies " steamroll " their way through the opposition . The Lessers and Amiga Joker 's Werner Hiersekorn felt the game ran slow on their computers , while Starkweather reflected that battles could take up to one and a half hours to complete . In 1990 and 1993 Computer Gaming World gave the game three @-@ plus stars out of five , stating that it had " high playability " .
 Several video game observers doubted the classification of Sword of Aragon as a role @-@ playing game . Science fiction and fantasy novelist Orson Scott Card and Amiga Computing 's Lucinda Orr considered it more of a strategy than a role @-@ playing game . Minson was of like mind , and further elaborated that unlike the Dungeon and Dragon series of video games , Sword of Aragon failed to inspire players to identify themselves with the characters , giving a " coldly mechanical experience " instead . Datormagazin 's Hans Ekholm thought otherwise . He said the gameplay did not require any strategy , and considered Sword of Aragon " a fantasy role @-@ playing / adventure

game and nothing else " .

Critics had minor criticisms with the game 's quality when comparing to its contemporaries . Minson called its interface " old @-@ fashioned " , and Computer Gaming World said it was " clunky " and " marginal " , a description it also gave the game 's graphics . Graphically , Orr and Zzap ! 64 's Phil King found the game " primitive " , though " adequate " . More troubling to several reviewers was the game 's copy protection system . Ekholm was not pleased that he had to unfold a flimsy poster to identify the requested city . His copy was falling apart after several identifications . The game further frustrated him when it failed to acknowledge the correct key . The provided hints were incorrect , a situation also experienced by the Lessers . The inaccuracies were not restricted to the copy protection . Starkweather pointed out discrepancies in the documentation ? several features of the game were either not explained or wrongly documented .

Ekholm dismissed Sword of Aragon for its flawed copy protection and perceived lack of strategy . Hiersekorn was more condemning ; rating the game poorly for its graphics and sound , and confused by its presented lists of military and economic data , he called the game a " cheap clone " . Regardless , such issues did not deter other reviewers from praising the game . Pleased with the large amount of options to manage their cities and to order their armies in combat , they felt the game was deep and offered many exciting moments ; Kritzen judged the system " challenging and ultimately rewarding . " According to Retro Gamer magazine , " Sword of Aragon is considered by many to be the best fantasy wargame ever . " Starkweather was equally pronounced in his opinion . He called Sword of Aragon addictive and was willing to overlook issues with the game , finding pleasure in formulating strategies and tactics to overcome the enemy .