

## Game Review: Clarus Victoria

### An Archaeologically Informed Strategy Game About Ancient Egypt

By Elisabeth Koch

Ancient history is not only great to support new mythologies in video game anthologies such as the Elder Scrolls series, but also lends itself to more accurate depictions of the past in a non-RPG format. One such example is the round-based strategy series put out by Clarus Victoria, a Moscow-based (not so) newcomer in a contested market.

Established in 2013, the company has published video games based on ancient history and prehistory working closely with researchers in the respective fields. Its latest release, "Egypt: Old Kingdom" (2019), is a complex turn-based strategy game situated in Old Kingdom Egypt (ca. 2700-2200 BCE). The player tries to unify Egypt starting from the Memphite region (close to modern-day Cairo), warding off evil forces, both natural and supernatural.

In the beginning, the player is able to choose their settings that determine how difficult it is to remain in charge of the various natural resources (food, labor force, luxury products) and the advancing civilization through religion, culture, and military power. Along the way, the player interacts with neighbouring villages, establishes monuments and celebrates festivals, worships deities that return favors, fights wars, and has to monitor their population so that they do not revolt against their king. Eventually, the player is supposed to exercise control over the entirety of Egypt and develop its civilization and culture fully. If this is not enough of a challenge, fun(ny) settings can be adjusted before starting a new game such as more or less divine influence, the availability of resources, or the presence of aliens and invading mummies.

The game is based in economics but demonstrates how intertwined the different factors are in advancing a civilization and how power struggle shaped the ancient world. Important events and their dates are highlighted throughout the game, which makes it a true learning experience. Only if the player makes the events happen in a timely fashion do they win the game with the highest score. If this sounds too complicated for you, check out "Predynastic Egypt," *Egypt: Old Kingdom's* 2016 predecessor. It requires the player to handle less complex game dynamics, operates with fewer resources and is a little bit easier to understand - just as the prehistoric world seems to be more easily fathomable by us modern humans.

While a video game can never replicate all facets of research to 100%, Clarus Victoria's Egypt series does a fantastic job in the strategy game world. We are definitely looking forward to other releases!

<https://clarusvictoria.com>