

The Classical Roman Reception in *Genshin Impact*: Within the region of the Sea of Bygone Eras

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on classical reception in digital games have flourished in academia over the past five years (Rollinger, 2020), including the use of classics in games produced and played in North America and Europe (Clare, 2021). For example, Ross Clare (2021) proposed a valid framework for understanding the vibrant mixture of classical Roman-themed games influenced by ancient and modern historical references and their receptions. Furthermore, Dom Ford (2025) suggested the concept of ‘mytholudics’ as an analytical structure to understand classical-related games as a type of mythology, along with their surrounding folklore. Recently, the Mythological Game Studies Conference (2025) featured more than thirty papers that explored transcultural narratives, including the tabletop role-playing game *Lex Arcana* (Colovini et al., 1993), set in the background of the Western Roman Empire.

However, previous research overlooked the classical Roman reception in East Asian games. A notable example of this is the immensely popular role-playing game *Genshin Impact*, developed by the Chinese studio HoYoVerse in 2020. In the game, the player assumes the role of a traveller looking for their lost sibling. The game takes place in the fantasy world ‘Teyvat’, and heavily incorporates classical cultural references within its storylines. For example, the Sea of Bygone Eras in *Genshin Impact* largely referenced the classical Roman cultures. While the classical Roman receptions have not yet been discussed within the game, apart from Paul Thomas’s (2025) work on the transcultural combination and Graeco-Roman receptions within the storytelling element in *Genshin Impact*; It has been scrutinised by scholars, especially in terms of those who focused on its portrayal of the ‘Chineseness’ (Li and Li, 2023), or the emergence of Chinese soft power demonstrated by the delicate multicultural representation within the game (Tang and Li, 2025).

Thus, this article will examine the use of classical Roman elements in *Genshin Impact*’s storytelling in the Sea of Bygone Eras, analysing its dynamic reimagining of the names, philosophy, and environmental design, and follows Rachael Hutchinson’s (2019)

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research framework to analyse the textual and visual representations in the game. For example, Boethius and Cassiodor, two principal characters within the Sea of Bygone Eras, were derived from two famous Roman politicians and philosophers, Boethius and Cassiodorus. Both of them lived in Rome during the late Antique period of the fifth to the sixth century, at the end of the political existence of the Western Roman Empire, and the cooperation of local Roman elites and the Gothic military aristocrats.

Apart from analysing the usage of classical Roman reception in the game, this article will also discuss the reason why developers of *Genshin Impact* weave the classical Roman cultures within its narrative. The depiction of classical Roman reception in *Genshin Impact* is influenced by the Japanese role-playing games' multicultural traditions, which have heavily received popularity in mainland China since the 1990s (Liao, 2016). Previously, scholars also discussed the multiculturalism traditions in the Japanese game industry. While Iwabuchi (2002) considered Japanese games using the 'cultural odourless' effects to achieve global success, Miyake (2015) argued that the Japanese creative cultural industry was also heavily based on Self-Orientalism and cultural stereotypes, employing parodies to soften strict themes and attract attention in the worldwide entertainment market. In *Genshin Impact*, compared to the previous passive Japanese cultural industry strategy, the depiction of diverse cultures originated from a more proactive multicultural approach nourished by the Chinese government's official cultural policies (Tang and Li, 2025). Overall, this essay aims to contribute to the research on classical reception and the influence of multiculturalism in East Asian games, bridging the current studies of *Genshin Impact* on its Chinese influence with the classical reception studies.

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