# Dynasty Warriors: Origins is a refreshing take on the legendary series

In the doldrums of winter, I've reached for comfort media – which, for me, means Chinese historical dramas. And while the elaborate costumes and overly sweet romances are enjoyable, sometimes a girl wants something with a little more teeth. *Dynasty Warriors: Origins* has given me exactly what I needed.

*Dynasty Warriors: Origins*, developed by Koei-Tecmo's Omega Force, adapts the famous Chinese historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* into knock down, drag out, 1 vs 100 style battles. This is the tenth game in the series, coming at a time when the *Dynasty Warriors* franchise had gotten a reputation for being stale. After all, there's only so many times you can retread the same story with the same characters and the same general gameplay without getting one note. *Dynasty Warriors: Origins,* however, is a welcome refreshment over its predecessors.

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After releasing *Dynasty Warriors 9* in 2018, Omega Force took a break from the series to work on licensed games like *Hyrule Warriors: Age of Calamity*, *Persona 5 Strikers*, and *Fire Emblem Warriors: Three Hopes*. That detour through games that I felt were excellent applications of Omega Force's brand of hack-and-slash action gave the studio the new perspective it needed to come back to its signature franchise and shake shit up.

In *Origins*, instead of bouncing between different characters during certain battles as you had in previous games, you witness the story through a single character named the Wanderer. You have no memory of yourself, and as you progress, you slowly regain your memories and special powers. The Wanderer can use any type of weapon, which is another welcome change from previous games that locked weapons to a certain character. Each weapon has abilities you unlock through continued use, and the Wanderer himself has skills and perks he unlocks via skill trees.

Combat in *Origins* is simple to get the hang of. You have a light attack and a heavy attack that can be modified by using your dodge or jump. There's also a suite of abilities that consume a resource called "bravery" that you earn by landing hits on your opponent. Finally, there's block and parry mechanics and an ultimate ability called "musou" used when you're impossibly surrounded or need to put extra hurt on an enemy general.

While this all sounds like your standard hack-and-slash game, I was pleased *Origins* made me work for my victories. Even on the standard difficulty and with years of experience playing *Warriors* games, I couldn't just blindly hack my way through enemies. Generals hit surprisingly hard, and if I wasn't using my various abilities to mitigate or counter their attacks, they'd continuously generate shields I'd have to keep chewing through to take them down. Unfortunately, your allied generals, whose deaths can result in an automatic loss, are made of tissue paper, so the longer enemy generals are alive, the higher your chances are of losing a battle.

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Battles take place on large, winding maps stuffed with bases to take over and enemy generals to defeat. Even though

defeating the enemy leader while keeping your own leaders alive is generally the only win condition, I *loved* being a completionist. When I got a panicked cry for help from my allies, it was fun rushing to their defense even if helping didn't make the battle end sooner. It made me feel like a big damn hero. And isn't that the whole point of a game that lets you fight alongside the legendary characters of Chinese history?

Playing the hero is the best part about *Origins* and what's been sorely missing from the franchise. Earlier games were burdened with unnecessary systems like the atrocious, poorly-paced open world of *Dynasty Warriors 9* or the no-thoughts, head-empty button mashing of *Dynasty Warriors 8.* But in *Origins*, executing a special ability pulled you into an elaborate cutscene with animations that look like they were ripped straight out of a wuxia film. My choices in the game's story moments let me build relationships with characters I have loved so much across so many different mediums.

I do understand other reviews' criticisms of the Wanderer. As a character he has no personality to speak of, and his quest to regain his memories isn't compelling. But I can easily overlook that because this is *Dynasty Warrior*s. All I'm here for, and what this game has given me in spades, is to eat meat buns and pursue Lu Bu — and I'm all out of meat buns.

*Dynasty Warriors: Origins* is out now on PlayStation, Xbox, and PC.

https://www.theverge.com/2025/1/20/24346199/dynasty-warriors-origins-review-koei-tecmo