ISSUE 5

AUTUMN 2018

POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 5 – AUTUMN 2018

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

Previously published issues

POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI & HERB L. FONDEVILLA

Mutual Images

A Transcultural Research Journal

Mutual Images is a semiannual, double-blind peer-reviewed and transcultural research journal established in 2016 by the scholarly, non-profit and independent Mutual Images Research Association, officially registered under French law (Loi 1901).

Mutual Images' field of interest is the analysis and discussion of the ever-changing, multifaceted relations between Europe and Asia, and between specific European countries or regions and specific Asian countries or regions. A privileged area of investigation concerns the mutual cultural influences between Japan and other national or regional contexts, with a special emphasis on visual domains, media studies, the cultural and creative industries, and popular imagination at large.

Mutual Images is registered under the ISSN 2496-1868. This issue's Digital Object Identifier is: HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/5.

As an international journal, *Mutual Images* uses English as a *lingua franca* and strives for multi-, inter- and/or trans-disciplinary perspectives.

As an Open Access Journal, *Mutual Images* provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

DISCLAIMER ABOUT THE USE OF IMAGES IN OUR JOURNAL

Mutual Images is an academic journal: it is aimed to the scholarly analysis of ideas and facts related to literary, social, media-related, anthropological, and artistic phenomena in the Humanities. The authors of the journal avail themselves, for the contents of their contributions, of the right of citation and quotation, as in the Art. 10 of the *Berne Convention* and in the Title 17, § 107 of the *Copyright Act* (United States of America). The works hereby cited/quoted and the images reproduced—all of which include the mention of the creators and/or copyright owners—are aimed to validate a thesis, or constitute the premise for a confutation or discussion, or are part of an organised review, or anyway illustrate a scholarly discourse. The illustrations and photographs, in particular, are reproduced in low digital resolution and constitute specific and partial details of the original images. Therefore, they perform a merely suggestive function and fall in every respect within the fair use allowed by current international laws.

Mutual Images

A Transcultural Research Journal

Mutual Images

Issue 5

Table of contents

Repackaging Japanese culture: The digitalisation of folktales in the *Pokémon* franchise

Erika Ann SUMILANG-ENGRACIA **|** University of the Philippines, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The Pokémon *franchise is arguably one of the most enduring brands in pop culture. As of March 2014, the* Pokémon *video game franchise alone has sold more than 260 million games worldwide, while the trading card game shipped more than 21.5 billion cards to 74 countries in 10 languages. It fuses cultural elements in the creation of their individual and unique pocket monsters. Becoming new conduit by which these old folktales are revisited, revised, and ultimately renewed. Looking at how these pocket monsters inhabiting the world of* Pokémon *were created points to the importance of the folkloric inspirations behind the character designs, giving the franchise a taste of a cultural flavour that makes the experience more enjoyable. This study looks at how the franchise digitalised folktales and how these were incorporated into the* Pokémon *video game. Specifically, this paper traced the transformation of these folkloric images from the archetypal folktale characters found in Japan's folk literature to pocket monsters (Pokémon).*

Introduction

According to John Stephens and Robyn McCalum, the process of retelling is always implicated in the process of cultural formation (1998, xi). People, regardless of location, have an intrinsic capacity to produce beautiful, magical, and sometimes scary stories, spun from unknown hands that have been weaved intimately into the fabric of a populace's imagination. The *Pokémon* franchise on the other hand, is arguably one of the most enduring brands in pop culture. Tracy Lien, in her article posted in the gaming website polygon.com, notes that as of March 2014, the video game franchise alone has sold more than 260 million games worldwide, while the trading card game has reportedly shipped more than 21.5 billion cards to 74 countries in 10 languages.[1] The *Pokémon* series has been the most well-known game that was ever produced and

---

[1] Officially released figures for up to 2014 only (Bhat 2015).

marketed internationally for Nintendo's Game Boy line of consoles. John Kirriemuir, who wrote extensively on gaming, digital learning and education points out that the considerable revenue from this series and associated spin-offs such as the *Pokémon* trading cards, anime and movies, and the revenues from the Game Boy handheld itself ensures that Nintendo has financial security for the foreseeable future, irrespective of sales of their other gaming consoles like the GameCube (2002, 2).

Authors such as Bainbridge (Bainbridge, 2014) and Foster (2008) note that Pokémon, best exemplified by legendary Pokémon, is in some respect monsters in the *yōkai* tradition. How Pokémon data is organized using the Pokédex is also reminiscent of how *yōkai* has been classified using the *hakubutsugaku* style (Foster, 2008, 214). As an example, some of Pokémon's classifications include Pokémon of the mountain, Pokémon of the prairie, and Pokémon of the forest; this as Foster notes endows the Pokémon world with history and an academic discipline reminiscent of *yokaigaku*[2] or monsterology, whose counterpart in the Pokémon world is called Pokémon-gaku or Pokémon-ology (2008, 214).

Legendary Pokémon are very rare and powerful Pokémon that are also mentioned in ancient records and myths of the Pokémon world. They are game content inevitably encountered by players in the game. Some of these legendary Pokémon are believed to have been responsible for creating the Pokémon universe and in governing certain aspects of nature. The opposing game mascots of the paired game titles are often chosen from these new legendary Pokémon whose story arc will be made accessible through the new game cartridge. The author notes that every legendary creature featured as a game mascot are inspired by different folklores. Although not always from Japanese folklore, all of them have very distinguishable lore that ties them to existing myths. A strong example of this is Generation 2's game mascot Ho-Oh for *Pokémon Gold*. Ho-Oh is a direct reference to the Japanese folklore of a phoenix-like bird called with the same name Hō ō. This highlights the importance of folklore as an element used in creating *Pokémon*.

Clues on the inspiration of these characters even litter the *Pokémon* world. This may appear as entries in the Pokédex, information obtained from conversing with the non-playable characters or NPC in the game world, or a reference to the lore similar to it during an anime episode. Often, an exposition through an interview with one of the team

---

[2] This is a study of *yōkai* as creatures imagined by humans, it looks at the creation of these fantastical creatures as a cultural phenomenon. As such this is a study of people who have engendered *yōkai* (Komatsu 1944, 435-436).

designers, or holding of events that are connected to the game character's design are also practiced, further strengthening the conjectures of fans on connections of certain folklores and the new Pokémon designed. Information verified through this then becomes official data that are made readily available by fans for fans on a number of Pokémon dedicated websites. Keeping in mind Ken Sugimori's remark on his desire for players to identify what these characters are based on reflects why hints of folkloric inspiration are readily scattered inside the game[3].

This study is an examination of the transformation of folklore through the lens of games such as *Pokémon*. It looks at how these motifs are turned into game content and examines the effect of digitalisation on these folkloric themes. More specifically, this study looked at the game content pertaining to creatures that inhabit the Pokémon world to look at how folklore[4] is integrated in their character makeup through digitalisation in an attempt to answer the following question: How is Japanese folklore digitalised through *Pokémon*, and what are the implications of such digitalisation?[5]

Studies on Gaming and *Pokémon*

According to Koichi Iwabuchi, the global success of *Pokémon* is unprecedented (2004). The popularity of this consumer product is unmatched by any other Japanese anime or computer game character, and its success prompted Japanese scholars to look further into the appeal of *Pokémon* to their consumers. Iwabuchi refers to a US based sociologist, Kamo Yoshinori in his *Asahi Shinbun* article "*Pokémon ga yushutsu shita 'kuru' na nihon to nihonjin*" [Pokémon is disseminating "cool" images of Japan and the Japanese] (January 20, 2000) which looked at American children and their reaction to *Pokémon*. He notes that children who love *Pokémon* believed Japan to be a cool country able to produce such cool products as *Pokémon*. Sakurai Tetsuo's work *Sokudo no naka no bunka* [Culture in the

---

[3] From various interviews and transcripts of Iwata Asks episodes, archived at:
http://iwataasks.nintendo.com/

[4] For the purpose of narrowing the scope of the study, only contents pertaining to Japanese folklore were included. While the author acknowledges the proliferation of other folkloric motifs from other cultures, there is not enough space in this paper to extend the discussion to a more in-depth comparative mythology. A comparative analysis of other cultural motifs is planned to be the next installation of this study.

[5] This paper is an abridged version of a dissertation study that examined all Japanese folklore motifs found in Gen 1 – Gen 6 of the *Pokémon* franchise. Due to the limited volume requirement for this publication, only a select number of motifs are to be discussed in detail. The author's personal website is currently in progress where the full version of the research data will be available online. Copies of the full version can also be found at the Philippine National Library and at the University of the Philippines Library in Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

Speed] (2000) also points to the "cool" impact of *Pokémon* to Japan's image abroad, which surpassed any Japanese literature or film and government's public relations efforts overseas.[6] Some works also ascribe the success of Japanese consumer products to their culturally neutral nature –they are not easily recognizable as a Japanese product and are considered as culturally ambiguous. One such example is the success of the Walkman which, according to Colin Hoskins and Rolf Miru is due to its culturally neutral trait: the country where the product originated from has nothing to do with the way the product works. Its name and marketing are culturally ambiguous, and the satisfaction consumers derive from using the product is not directly related to its Japanese origin (1988, 503). But this view as Iwabuchi points out is problematic. He argues that the influence of products of different cultures on everyday life cannot be culturally neutral. Instead, they inevitably carry cultural imprints. Even if these are not recognized as such, they still do carry with them cultural associations with their country of origin (Iwabuchi 2004, 56-57). These cultural features, images and ideas associated with a consumer product, which are closely related with racial and bodily image of a country of origin is what Iwabuchi calls "cultural odour." Video games, anime and other consumer technologies (VCR, Walkman, karaoke) that contain no influential idea of Japan, (products do not try to sell on the back of a "Japanese way of life") are what he terms *odourless* products. In Japanese products, these can be tied to the concept of *mukokuseki* (literally stateless)*,* where characters in anime or games do not look Japanese. Perfect examples of these are anime drawings of characters with features and multicolour hair that effectively erases their racial or cultural context. This can also be seen in the creation of the characters and location of the *Pokémon* franchise. Ironically, these odourless cultural presences as he notes have also been increasingly recognized as Japanese.

At the peak of its popularity in the US in 1999 to 2001, there were articles that voiced negative reactions and speculations on how *Pokémon* may impact children who are at the throes of this mania (Elza 2009, 53). Cary Elza notes that at the height of the *Pokémon* craze in the US, there were an increase in differing and very subjective opinions on how parents should look at *Pokémon*: 1. Opposing the craze is the idea that children are being manipulated by advertising that forces parents to spend large amounts of money on the

---

[6] As cited in Iwabuchi, K. How Japanese is Pokémon? Dans J. Tobin (Éd.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 34-48; 60-61.

different *Pokémon* merchandise (Elza 2009, 66). 2. Another group criticized the inherent problems of consumption in a capitalist environment through acquisition of *Pokémon* products and the dangers of too much immersion in a fictionalized *Pokémon* universe (Elza 2009, 67). They criticize the world appearing in the *Pokémon* anime as lacking in authority figures, and the real-life negative behaviour of children obsessed with the merchandise such as bullying or theft. This, according to Elza, prompted schools to confiscate cards and later on ban *Pokémon* paraphernalia on school grounds at the threat of expulsion (Elza 2009, 68). On a positive note, 3. *Pokémon* was also lauded for helping children learn (Elza 2009, 69). With parental supervision, the game is noted to aid in boosting language skills, critical thinking, social interaction and math. Elza's study notes that for better or worse, the *Pokémon* world and its utopian society allows for children to free themselves from the burdens of authority but in exchange, burdens them with freedom of choice (Elza 2009, 71).

Anne Allison (2003) in her journal article "Portable Monster and Commodity Cuteness: *Pokémon* as Japan's new global power" points to the significance of the franchise's success in piercing the global children's entertainment industry previously monopolized by the US market. Until recently, she points out, only Hollywood and Disney had the worldwide reach and appeal that the *Pokémon* franchise has reached. The success of *Pokémon* has indeed put them in the running as one of the movers and shakers in the making of a global kids' trend. Although she is quick to caution those that haphazardly claim Japan as the new superpower in the global cultural industry for children, at the very least there is no denying that the rise in popularity and global reach of *Pokémon* and other Japanese children's products is a significant shift in the children's entertainment industry (Allison 2003, 381). Patrick Drazen also mentions that the success of *Pokémon* in the West (US) allowed for other similar Japanese products to be introduced in the market as well (2003, 14). Allison goes to argue that one of the keys to success of the marketability of the *Pokémon* franchise is the media mix platform configuration it pioneered. *Pokémon* has different types of derivative products that are ready for consumption: games, anime, movies, trading cards and so on. It is not a single product but a universe in itself marketed into different forms of play. It may be originally rooted in one medium, which was the game but the aura of *Pokémon* is said to extend outwards, encompassing the player in an entire world that is both imaginary (the *Pokémon* world with its creatures, places and characters) and real (real people connecting and battling together, trading, fans talking about and engaged in

activities together). The *cuteness* (*kawaisa*) that pervades in Japanese products was also a factor that enabled *Pokémon* to sell across genders and age. This idea of cuteness according to Allison involves some sort of attachment in an emotional level to imaginary beings that resonates with one's childhood and Japanese traditional culture. The power to attract older females that do not play the game but do find the *Pokémon* plush toys cute and affordable enough to buy is a demonstrative example of this (Allison 2004, 15). There is something distinctive about the cuteness of "made in Japan" characters according to Allison.

Jason Bainbridge's article (2014) on the other hand explored the different elements of the *Pokémon* franchise' form as objects that functions as social network constructs. Together with the brand, media platforms, the creators and fans, he considered some in-game elements such as the pocket monsters themselves as a part of this network that functioned as a gateway into Japanese culture (Bainbridge 2014, 1). Although the paper argued that Japanese culture is being transmitted through *Pokémon*, it did not look deeply into the robust cultural content inside the game that the gamers or Pokémon trainers are heavily exposed to. The *Pokémon* experience is unique in a way that one has an opportunity to revisit and engage with its diverse platform earlier on as children, and later on, as adults making the study of the narrative in the game content all the more important.

On Folklore Studies

A Linda Dégh's study on folklore espouses the idea of oneness of the lore and the folk in scrutinizing the relationship of folk and mass media. Advocating the idea pioneered by German folklorist Rudolf Schenda, she emphasizes that there is no assumption that oral tradition is superior to written text or folklore distributed through mass media and that there is no separation between the folk that produced the lore and the lore itself. Indeed, Schenda was wary of what Dégh comments as "euphoric enthusiasm and worshipful compassion for the folk that is so common in the works of professional folklorists" (Dégh 1994, 1). Using this idea, Dégh does not treat folklore as a rural isolated commodity heralded with preserving national values, but instead, recognizes its hegemonic tendencies, as a collaborative product of negotiations between different social classes, of ongoing historical processes where interaction of literary and oral, professional and nonprofessional, formal and informal, and constructed and improvised creativity takes place (1994, 1).

Dan Ben-Amos, on the other hand, highlighted the organic quality of folklore (1971). Folklore is a phenomenon that is integral in cultural formation and as such, is subject to social context, attitudes, rhetorical situations, and individual aptitude as variables that produce differences in the resulting folklore's structure, text and texture. This holds true regardless whether the product is produced with verbal, musical or tangible form (1971, 4). According to his study, the three basic distinguishable attributes of folklore is that 1.) it is a body of knowledge, 2.) a mode of thought, and 3.) a form of art. Other than that, it is hard to pin down a distinct classification of folklore. Previous attempts have highlighted how such changes in perspective can even bring about definitions of folklore that are in conflict with each other. Thus, he proposes a new way of looking at folklore – as a process, a sphere of interaction in its own right. By considering it as such folklore is lifted from confinement of what he calls "a marginal projection or reflection" of a mirror of culture and is thus elevated to an organic phenomenon that reflects better its hegemonic nature (Ben-Amos 1971, 5).

According to Barre Toelken, there are two qualities of folklore: it is 1.) Conservative— there are themes, beliefs, information, attitudes, etc. that are retained and are passed intact through time and space in all channels of vernacular expression; but at the same time, it is also 2.) Dynamic—there are elements whose function is to be altered. This may be in the form of changed content, meaning, styles and usage, whose changing may take place repeatedly through space and time (1996, 39). The process of telling and retelling is a give and take between retaining certain motifs and elements and renewing others to suit the audience.

To integrate the concepts, this study looked at *Pokémon* as a valid form of folklore where Japanese culture is actively repackaged. Using the conservative and dynamic properties of folklore, the study looked at the description, image and characteristics of the pocket monsters that inhabit the *Pokémon* world and identified the folkloric motifs present. The new form of folklore that is represented by these *Pokémon* creations are looked at as a form of folklore. The elements of continuity observed in the game characters were considered as part of the organic process of generating and proliferating folklore. Using Ben-Amos' idea, this study looked at the *Pokémon* franchise's integration of folkloric motif in its games as a valid organic process where new forms of folklore are created.

Pokémon Data Set

The two sets of data analysed in the study were: (1) texts on Japanese folklore, and (2) official information released by the *Pokémon* franchise in the form of:

- a. Information about the Pokémon available via the Pokédex, which includes text entries and images,
- b. The official creator's write-up about their created Pokémon; and
- c. Company's press releases and blog entries about their creation.

Also included are supplementary content from *Pokémon*'s official website, and *Pokémon* dedicated wiki and fan sites[7], particularly on articles discussing comments of Ken Sugimori, the designer of all Pokémon in Gen 1. Other official creators' thoughts, such as insights on certain Pokémon and the creation of the game world, were specifically taken from Junichi Masuda's company blog (Masadu 2015), as well as transcripts of Iwata Asks episodes, which are interviews conducted by the former Nintendo president and Chief Executive Officer Satoru Iwata with his colleagues (Iwata n.d.).

The official *Pokémon* in-game Pokédex entries were used for comparison with Japanese folklore texts. These entries are viewable via handheld consoles through playing the *Pokémon* game and are also compiled and archived completely per generation in a number of fans run websites such as the ones mentioned in the footnote 7. The official *Pokémon* website, which contains only the latest Pokédex entry of a Pokémon was regularly visited in order to check the latest information for the X and Y (Generation 6) releases.

Toriyama Sekien's (1712-1788) work, most notable of which is the *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō* (*the Illustrated Night Parade of a Hundred Demons*) published in 1776 and Takehara Shunsen's *Ehon Hyakumonogatari* (*Picture Book of a Hundred Stories*) published in 1841 was used in the study. Toriyama Sekien is an eighteenth-century scholar and ukiyo-e artist prominently known for his attempt at cataloguing all species of supernatural beings in his works. His *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō* series, considered as the single most influential monster catalogue produced during the Edo period (Yoda 2013, 1) was the main source for *yōkai* (monster) lore. Their English translations as written and illustrated by Matthew Meyer and more recent works of Shigeru Mizuki on the same subject were used as primary sources of Japanese folkloric motifs.

---

[7] Such as www.bulbapedia.com and www.serebii.net.

Yanagita Kunio on the other hand is prominently known as one of the main contributors in the establishment of Japanese folklore studies. His works centred on tales and the voice of the common man, coining the Japanese word *jōmin* to represent the common people such as illiterates, who prominently stood in the centre of his studies (1980, 90-91). His works such as *Tales of Tōno* (*Tono Monogatari*),[8] works of his students such as Keigo Seki and others, as well as English translations of Japanese folklore by Richard Dorson were used as the basis of Japanese folklore motifs such as folktale heroes, fairy tales and folk practices.

Results and Findings

There are 720 Pokémon spanning Generation 1 to Generation 6, 164 of which contained Japanese folklore motifs. This compromises 18.6% of the overall data. Looking at the breakdown of folklore inspired per generation, the number of added Pokémon per game release ranges from 14% to 25%.

Table 1. Category and Motif Count

Folklore Category	Gen 1	Gen 2	Gen 3	Gen 4	Gen 5	Gen 6	Grand Total
Buddhism	1				9		10
Mythical Beasts	2	2	2		2		8
Others	2		3	1		1	7
Shinto	10	5	6	3	9	3	36
Taoism					5	2	7
Yōkai	15	6	19	16	18	10	84
Chinese Classical Novel				4	3		7
Folk Heroes and Villains		1		1		3	5
Grand Total	**30**	**14**	**30**	**25**	**46**	**19**	**164**

---

[8] Some criticisms on his work: Some note how his works are used to feed into the concept of *nihonjinron* and the quest for a Japanese national identity. In his work *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement* (1990), Ronald Morse suggests that unlike other folklorists who toil in unknown regions with little or no recognition from the state, Yanagita Kunio was acclaimed in his own lifetime and became somewhat a cult figure that symbolizes admirable qualities of Japanese nationalism in his quest for the roots of Japanese culture (p. X). He was a poet, bureaucrat, journalist and a folklorist all rolled into one. His personality and literary style heavily influenced his work, at times adding doubts in the authenticity of the works itself. As Morse points out, Yanagita's training was from a literary standpoint and his works lacked the "purely" academic style demanded by folklore studies that seeks to be considered as a scientific discipline—works were often left unfinished and his terminologies remained vague (p. XVII).

The findings show a significant number of Japanese folklore-infused Pokémon created every time a new game is released. As there is not enough space in this paper to examine the findings in totality, only a number of motifs are discussed in the following section.

Raijū (Thunder Beast)

The Pikachu evolution line, Pikachu and Raichu are based on the thunder god's pet *raijū*. The *raijū* (Figure 1) is a thunder beast that is said to assume the shape of a feline—it can be in the form of a cat, a tiger, a lion, a fox, weasel or a wolf and can transform into a ball of lightning (Roberts 2010, 97).

Pikachu is the iconic Pokémon mascot sporting a black tail that is shaped like a thunder. When Pikachu evolves, it turns into Raichu, a bigger stronger Pokémon that is able to summon stronger thunder. The first part of its name "*rai*" also means thunder in the Japanese language.
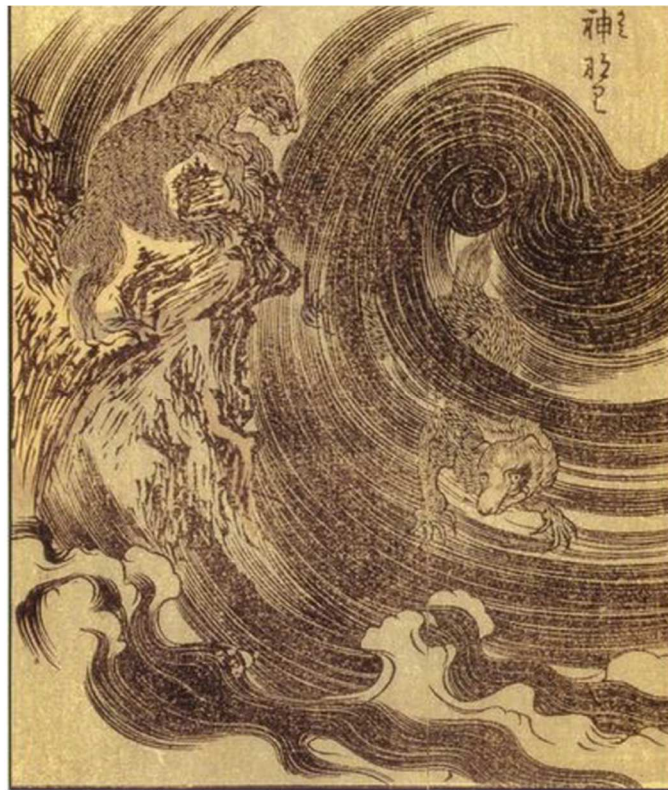

Fig. 1. Raijū image from the Illustration of Kaminari by Takehara Shunsen (1841).

Putting this radical as a part of the Pokémon's name looks to be a direct reference to the thunder beast of Japanese mythology. More importantly, Pikachu is the game mascot for the Gen 1 series. Currently, it is the mascot of the entire *Pokémon* franchise and as

such, is the most recognizable character of *Pokémon* worldwide. Pikachu is also considered as the signature Pokémon in the anime. It is a recurring character and serves as the protagonist Ash's main Pokémon that has remained outside the Poké Ball throughout the entire season.

Ryū (Dragon)

Early records of dragons (see Figure 2) can be traced back to Japanese ancient texts like the *Kojiki* or Records of Ancient Matter and *Nihongi* or Chronicles of Japan (De Bary *et al.* 2001)*.* Records of ancient texts state that certain ancestors of the purported first emperor of Japan Emperor Jimmu are actually water gods or water serpents. This narrative is also seen in folkloric stories where the Japanese imperial line is mentioned to have descended from dragons (De Visser 2008, 139). Literature on *Ryūjin* came to Japan from China. In Chinese Taoist astrology, the Azure Dragon of the east together with the Red Phoenix or Hō ō of the south, the White Tiger of the west and the Black Turtle of the north are the guardians of the four cardinal directions. In Japan they are usually referred to as Ryū or Dragon or as the more powerful and respected *Ryūjin* literally translated as Dragon God. It can cause rain, and is a symbol of royalty. It is considered as a being with infinite wisdom that can either act benevolent or malevolent towards people. According to Charles Temple, Asian dragons are drawn with a snake like body, a frowning countenance, long straight horns, scales, a row of rigid dorsal spines, with limbs and claws (see Figure 2) (2008, 28). Legend says that the dragon king rules the seas. He is able to control the tides using two pearls that are in his possession and lives in a beautiful palace in the depths of the sea. A Dragon can be ruthless if angered but benevolent and can grant great boons and assistance if approached the right way (Temple 2008, 179). Shintō folk religion also worships dragons as a *Kami* or Shintō god. According to Iwai Hiroshi, *Ryūjin Shinkō* is a religious thought and practice associated with the worship of dragons as a water deity or *suijin* (2006, par 1). Agricultural rituals such as prayers for rain were performed at rivers, swamp, and deep pools, the believed dwelling of the water god. As a sea god or *umi no kami*, fishermen also prayed to *Ryūjin* for good catch and for protection against the tempestuous sea.

Fig. 2. Ukiyo-e image of Dragon and Tiger by Utagawa Sadahide. Originally printed in Edo era, reprinted in the late 20th century from ukiyo-e.org.

Looking at the centrality of the narrative of the Dragon in Japanese culture, it is no surprise that a large number of Pokémon have been inspired by them. The Gyarados evolution line shows different degrees of association with this motif. In its weakest form, Magikarp is a fish-type Pokémon that can be commonly caught in bodies of water. Although the Pokédex notes that Magikarp's splash can make the Pokémon leap over mountains, it is useless in battle, as this is a non-lethal move that has no damage. The description of leaping over mountains looks to be in reference to a proverb about dragons. This proverb, which was Chinese in origin, tells of an industrious carp that leaps over the dragon gate, which after the ordeal is transformed into a dragon or *koi no taki nobori* [A carp's climb up a waterfall] (Garrison, *et al.* 2002, 345). Colloquially, this is used to refer to the rapid rise of a person's status or a person's smooth ascension up higher ranks.

Its own Pokédex entry makes fun of Magikarp by highlighting its incompetence but also notes its very hardy and tenacious nature. After diligently levelling up to level 20, it evolves into a powerful dragon Pokémon called Gyarados whose mere presence automatically intimidates foes. Different to its pre-evolved harmless stage, Gyarados has a scowling countenance and is extremely aggressive in nature. One of its abilities during a battle is intimidate,

a move that lowers the attack of opponents in the area. Gyarados is a representation of the devastating aspect of the *ryū*. It is widely reputed to possess a fierce temper and a tendency to wreak havoc and destruction in cities unfortunate to be near enough where it is angered.

Kitsune (Fox Demon)

The *kitsune* (fox demon) inspired Pokémon group has one of the most unchanged folkloric motifs in the *Pokémon* franchise. This is seen in the similarity in the Pokémon illustration and popular depictions of the creature in Ukiyo-e artworks (see Figures 3 & 4), the Pokémon naming and the Japanese folkloric name, and lore itself.

The *kitsune* is regarded as a highly intelligent creature. They are one of the few beings with the power to transform (*henge*) into human (Seki 1966, 25). They are very magical in nature and are said to live for centuries. The older and more powerful foxes obtain tails that signify their status and amount of power. The oldest and the most powerful fox is a nine-tailed *kitsune* also called a *kyuubi*, or a celestial fox. Other mythologies also consider the fox as Inari, the goddess of Food and Rice's messenger and aide. A statue of a fox is often seen guarding the temples dedicated to Inari (Dorson 1962, 128). At times, *kitsune* are also depicted as sly and deceitful. They would transform into beautiful women to lure men for devious purposes. Still others tell of a fox transforming into a human and choosing to live with humans that they have fallen in love with (Temple 2008, 41). They are also known to hold deep-seated grudges towards those who have treated them badly (Temple 2008, 42).

Fig. 3. Prince Hanzoku terrorized by a Nine Tailed Fox by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1855).

Fig. 4. From left to right: Flareon, Vulpix and Ninetails.

Flareon, Vulpix and Ninetails (Figure 4) are from the Eevee evolution tree that evolved with the help of a sunstone. In its final evolution, Ninetails looks to be a fully-grown fox with nine elegant long tails. Even its Japanese name, Kyukon is a combination of the word nine "*kyu*" and the onomatopoeia of a fox's sound in the Japanese language "*kon*." This Pokémon's appearance, name and disposition are also similar to those of the folklore of *kyuubi* or nine tailed fox. Interestingly, like the lore, comparing the number of tails possessed by these three different Pokémon can also be used as an accurate gauge on how strong they are in comparison to each other. Flareon, the Pokémon possessing one tail is the weakest of the three. It can store thermal energy inside its body, expelling it out as a fiery breath can reach up to 3,000 degrees. Vulpix on the other hand possesses only one tail during the time of its birth but has the ability to increase the number of its tails as it grows. As it gains experience, its single white tail gains colour and splits into two, until it reaches its peak growth with six tails. Unlike Flareon, that can only store heat inside its body through its flame sac, Vulpix's internal flame never burns out, allowing for a wider range of fire manipulation. Its evolved form Ninetails is known to be a highly intelligent and powerful Pokémon that can live for thousands of years. It can understand human speech, and its tails are believed to grant it mysterious powers. The danger level of this Pokémon is also increased compared to the previous cuddlier disposition of Flareon and Vulpix. A Pokédex entry notes that grabbing one of its tails can result in a powerful 1,000-year curse to those foolish enough to try.

According to Noriko Reider in her book *Japanese Demon Lore* (2010), there is an intrinsic relationship between a Japanese god called *Kami* and *yōkai*. While a *kami* is a spirit or supernatural deity worshipped by people, those that are not worshipped are called *yōkai*. If a *kami* is not worshipped enough or become displeased, it may turn into

yōkai and through rituals, may be appeased into turning back into a kami (Reider 2010, 1). Looking at it this way, the Mythical Beasts, as well as the *kami* motifs found in *Pokémon* can be thought of to belong to a similar overarching supernatural category. The proliferation of these supernatural motifs in Japanese culture points to a deep entrenchment of the supernatural in Japanese culture. Hideo Nakata, the director of *Ring* (*Ringu*) explains it as "awareness" in Japanese culture of a spiritual world. He notes that in Japan, there is still an inherent spirituality and belief that there is another world beyond the living, one that coexists, yet is unseen (Heinna, 2005, par 5). This mindset affects the kind of fiction and lore produced and the reception and consumption of the audience of these motifs.

Since bygone times, folklore has been used as tools for inculcating values. It is a tool used to pass on cultural practices and other forms of knowledge to the next generation in the guise of entertainment. In this respect, *Pokémon* is no different. The flavour text in the form of Pokédex entries serve as lessons that may give off warning or may impart knowledge about these magical creatures. It lets players see a little glimpse of what these folkloric motifs are about and how they have been altered. At the same time, these characterisations and how players may interact with them are not fixed and static. There is ample wiggle room given as to how the pacing and direction of the player and Pokémon's relationship may proceed. Resounding with Ben-Amos' idea of folklore (1971) as a sphere of interaction in its own right, these new folkloric motifs, much like how certain characters and folk beliefs can be expressed in dance, or a form of performance, folklore in *Pokémon* also have a performative nature. Individuals actively consuming folklore found in *Pokémon* are not in a passive and static state of just receiving information. They can direct movement and thought processes of these motifs, at times they can also encounter independent motifs and converse with them. These Japanese folklore characters can be talked to and interacted with inside the virtual playscape. Other in-game features even allow gamers to directly manipulate Pokémon as their character in order to play mini games. These gamers chose what folkloric character to control in order to perform tasks, indirectly giving a chance for the players to display and experience the power they manifest. Outside the virtual world found in the game, in our current reality, paraphernalia are also available in all shapes and sizes that enable the extension of this imaginary interaction into the real world. *Pokémon* has elevated the performative aspect of the folklores it encapsulates. Much like songs orally sung during festivals, or stories told by

elders to their children under the stars, the content and style of the performance changes depending on the participants. As such, interacting with and consuming folklore has become more open ended. The possibilities are as varied as the game makers allow them to be. A virtual meeting with *ryujin*-inspired Dragonaire may be as fleeting as meeting one on the battlefield arena, to purposefully catching one while exploring the seas it inhabits, or to receiving one through an anonymous trade with another gamer across the globe. The growth of this Pokémon and the strength of its bond with its trainer are highly dependent on the individual's preference. The trainer may choose to increase the Pokémon's friendship by giving it items such as candy or berries or by ensuring it does not faint as much as possible during battles, or build a cosy room where Pokémon can play or train. Incidentally, trainers can also decrease their Pokémon's affection by letting it haphazardly faint during a battle, or catch these folkloric characters in order to complete the Pokédex entries and thereafter shelve it in a virtual storage, never to be taken out again.

The path taken towards the completion of the game is fraught with contradictions. On one hand, the players are encouraged to collect Pokémon in the wild in order to increase their knowledge about Pokémon and to deepen relationships between humans and Pokémon, but at the same time, a player's storage space for the number of Pokémon they can carry is limited. As such, the majority of what they will catch will most definitely not be used throughout their journey in completing the game. For the majority of the Pokémon caught, a cursory glance as the Pokédex fills up with their information before shelving it into the players' virtual box is all that is afforded to them. As soon as some Pokémon deemed as weak or useless such as the heart-shaped fish called Luvdisc or the duck-like Farfetch'd are picked up, they are stored away. While Pokémon endowed with more powerful resistances in the form of their unique stats such as typing, overall fighting prowess, and those with functional skills such as HM (hidden machine) slaves[9], as well as those whose lore or appearances are to the liking of the player, are kept in the trainers' backpack and nurtured diligently through training and battling. As a gamer myself, even some of the legendary Pokémon that I have caught are just stored inside the virtual boxes and are rarely taken out during the whole duration of my gameplay.

---

[9] They are Pokémon with move sets learned from objects called HM or hidden machines. These moves are used to clear obstacles set in the games such as plant barriers and boulders. Their function in the party is to use these functional moves that help the player in navigating the game world. An example of this is a Pokémon that can learn cut will be able to help the players cut any vine that is blocking passages into other areas.

Depending on preferences, attitudes, individual aptitudes and situation of the player, the interaction between players and these digitalised folkloric motifs in the form of Pokémon vary. Thus, the interaction between players and folklore are not just unidirectional. The strongest Pokémon are not always picked as starter Pokémon, and strategies on how to counter different types of Pokémon combination in a team abound. The dynamic interaction between the player, Pokémon and the technologies that becomes their go-between is very organic in its give and take. As an example, Pikachu, the mascot of Pokémon, is not a good battle Pokémon, it has a lot of weaknesses easily overcome by a vast range of Pokémon during a confrontation, but despite this, a lot of players still choose to keep Pikachu in their roster, and a wide variety of merchandise are still generated and sold based on Pikachu. If done poorly, or not at all, a player will have a hard time accomplishing certain tasks but the game mechanics is also forgiving and as such, they may still be able to finish the game. But this ineffective use of the system becomes a different thing altogether in the player versus player (PVP) arena. Poorly composed teams and mismanaged stats translate into difficulty in winning battles fought between Pokémon teams controlled by another individual. There is a conflict between game lore and actual battle prowess. Some may be written off as weak but are actually able to fight toe to toe with legendary Pokémon. The cute and timid looking Mawhile, which was inspired by a *futakuchi onna* (two mouthed lady) has been revealed to be a fairy-type Pokémon. Despite fairy type's smallness in stature, they are the bane of any dragon type Pokémon. As such, even the legendary dragon Rayquaza and the powerful Gyarados will have a hard time facing it head on. This shows that although some lore are given more prominence in the form of assigning them to legendary Pokémon who are at the front and centre of the game releases, some Pokémon with rarely heard folkloric motifs are important and strong on their own, too. This process of taking in large amounts of information and filtering it down to one's preferred team inculcates the value of prioritizing functionality over appearance and profoundness of the lore.

Unlike folklore that is only read in texts, or viewed in print and TV, these folkloric beings are fleshed out in the *Pokémon* franchise. They are interactive, they rejoice after winning a battle, and feel overwhelmed when they lose. They are programmed to have a hint of memory, which may be good and bad, which the player can become privy to if they wanted. The player may not be able to know all about their Pokémon's memory, but they can have a glimpse of some of its emotion, and their attitude towards their trainer.

Coupled with this enhanced experience written in on the codes that make up the *Pokémon* world, a sense of involvement and ownership is fostered. This sense of involvement starts with the initial acquisition of the creatures that prompts trainers to name them and increases as the player trains and travels with these Pokémon in order to finish the game. The game emphasizes the bonds between players and their Pokémon in order to achieve success in the game.

Trainers who set out in the *Pokémon* world in search for an encounter and a chance to catch Pokémon elevates the experience of learning about folklore into an immersive, interactive learning experience. Much like the give and take of the performer in the form of grandma and the audience in the form of her boisterous grandchildren, the stories woven become a give and take reciprocal action. The storyteller is the game, the stories are the lore encoded into them and the characters fleshed out through programmed software into *Pokémon*, while the audience is the player, able to influence the flow, pacing and direction of the story. The goal of beating the villains inside the game and succeeding in the quest are laid out as concrete general goals that need to be triggered in the correct order in order for the players to proceed to the finish line, but how these goals may be accomplished are left up to the player. Tools are readily made available but up to a certain degree, how these tools are to be used, and which tools to use to weave in the story are left up to the free will of the players turned Pokémon trainers. Much like how a child can choose what fairytale character to inhabit their daydreams, players can choose a wide variety of Japanese (or other culture's) folkloric creatures to interact with.

As seen in the *Pokémon* character makeup, some aspects were highlighted while some were removed. Cuteness has been amplified, often resulting in a drastic change in the image of previously scary, deadly and evil monsters in order to render them harmless. Although some if not most retain their powerful abilities, such as *kitsune*, *raijū* and *ryū* inspired Pokémon, a lot of them have now been redrawn with an innocent atmosphere. The pairing of deadly lore and a cute countenance to balance out these fearful aspects fully manifests itself in the *yōkai* inspired Pokémon. While Pikachu maintain the fearsome power of thunder, their cute countenance, as well as their adorably choreographed dance moves, defangs them. The boogeyman and such other frightening creatures that scare children at night are now reinvented as a potential friend that a child can reach their hand out to. With enough dedication and hard work, they can even grow together in the pursuit of a unifying goal.

Conclusion

As seen in the previous section, flavour text based on the Pokédex and the official *Pokémon* images point to the use of Japanese folklore as inspiration for some of the new *Pokémon* released. *Pokémon* is a new medium where Japanese folklore has been appropriated and digitalised. In terms of cultural odour, this makes 18.6 percent of the total number of Pokémon Japanese in odour.

It is argued that aside from media such as television and movies, games are also twenty-first century conduits by which folklore thrive. Japanese folklore, whether in physical manifestation only, or just the lore itself was used as a backstory and inspiration for 134 out of the 720 Pokémon in the Gen 1 to Gen 6 series. Every generation released, more than ten percent of the Pokémon newly created has Japanese folklore as inspiration. The author sees this trend continuing for the next batch of *Pokémon* game releases. Indeed, Japanese folklore continues to exist in a digitalised form through *Pokémon*. This points to the *Pokémon* game as an avenue where the process of creating and recreating Japanese folklore takes place. As illustrated in the case of Darmanitan and Rayquaza, some characteristics of certain Pokémon even introduce Japanese culture specific terms to the players in the game such as the word *mikado*[10] and *Zen* via flavour text. At times, the Pokédex entries also pointed out similarities of the Pokémon to a Japanese folkloric creature, as in the case of Golduck and Froslass, which directly references their similarity to their folkloric counterpart *kappa* and *yuki onna*. Using Iwabuchi's idea of odour, this demonstrates that *Pokémon* is not culturally neutral as per his previous conjecture but actually contains Japanese fragrance. Inevitably, certain aspects were changed and amended in the character design but majority of those that had folklore motif still retained their distinct Japanese character. There were Pokémon that were easily discernible as strongly based on Japanese folklore such as the Vulpix evolution line. This was manifested in their overall look that was quite similar to Edo period illustrations of their folklore motif, their powers and name. There was also those whose artworks and power was not much changed from their folklore and those whose Japanese name is a direct reference to their folklore inspiration such as Ho-oh and the Japanese dragon or *ryū* inspired Pokémon lineup.

---

[10] Mikado is an archaic term for the emperor of Japan, which is now replaced as Tennō or "heavenly sovereign" (Asakawa, 1903, 25).

Pokémon is indeed a Japanese cultural product. The push and pull between what the makers design and the fan reception of it in the form of fan analysis of motifs it may have originated from, and the creation of fan terms in an attempt to define and understand these newly constructed folklore can be viewed as a part of the manufacturing and dissemination of folklore in the twenty-first century.

Japanese cultural global appeal has increasingly geared towards what is commonly termed pop cultural products, which Tim Craig terms as "ubiquitous, hot and increasingly influential" (2000, 5). Once routinely derided as a one-dimensional power, a heavyweight in the production and export of the "hard" of automobiles, electronics, and other manufacturer of goods but a nobody in terms of the "soft" of cultural products and influence, Japan now contributes not just to our material lives, but to our everyday cultural lives as well (Craig 2000, 5). William Tsutsui and Michiko Ito in their study of Japanese pop culture notes that in earlier times, the impact of Japanese culture on Western life has generally been limited to what he terms elite art forms. Ukiyo-e prints inspired French Impressionists in the late nineteenth century while the modern day big-city art houses showcased works of Mizoguchi, Kurosawa, and Miyazaki among others. But now cultural exports are not only limited to what is considered as "Japanese high art," but to those of "Japanese Pop" as well (Tsutsui & Ito 2006, 1). The popularity of these Japanese game brands such as *Pokémon* is a testament to how far has the Japanese children's consumers market has pierced global consumers, and with its multilayered merchandising strategy, other products and forms of gameplay from this world can be sold and consumed heartily. For those with background in Japanese culture and Japanese folklore more especially, these motifs invoke a sense of nostalgia, a taste of a deeply rooted cultural element that enhances the enjoyment of the product. Outside Japan, where knowledge of these motifs is minimal, some of this cultural information may be glossed over but the impression will definitely linger even after the games have ended. These children will grow familiar with creatures that litter Japanese folklore; to them the image of dragons will largely include serpentine dragons that do not breathe fire but can control water and command storms.

According to Thomas Looser, despite changes in the technology that relegated older forms of transmission of folklore such as oral storytelling as obsolete, this does not mean that the folk and folklore are no longer with us at all (2006, 85). He points out that just as analogic relations continue to be active within, instead of just simply being replaced by a digitalised world, it looks as if the folk still continue to have some role in the creation of an

identity, and ultimately in the manufacturing and repackaging of folklores (Looser 2006, 85). Looking at Japanese folklore and how it is being propagated and digitalised, one can see that there is a repositioning of folklore–the digitalisation of folktales resulted in a turning away from the countryside as source and locating the folk and folklore within the urban setting and in the hands of private institutions. Such repositioning of folklore can be seen in the *Pokémon* franchise. Folklores are now repackaged as part of game lore that are for the most part, created with and marketed in the global urban setting. They are not just relegated to relics of the past fondly perused in beautifully illustrated books but is reinvented and transmitted through different media appropriate for the needs of their time. By looking at folklore as an organic phenomenon, this development is then seen as an intrinsic part of the process that generates and proliferates folklore. More interestingly, privatisation now comes in as these newly digitalised forms of folklore are remade under a patent. But consumers become complicit in the proliferation of the narratives that were created by these companies as they transform, get transmitted into different media and spawn new and alternative narratives all on their own. Despite privatisation of these motifs, these stories and the narrative they carry are circulated around and remade in different forms of media available to consumers, feeding back into the lifeblood of these folklore itself to strengthen their hold into the new generation's consciousness.

Pokémon is not merely a set of objects that can be isolated for critical analysis in the characteristic mode of academic media studies. It might be more appropriate to describe it as a "culture practice" (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 2003, 379). Because of the nature of how the product is consumed, *Pokémon* is not just something one reads or writes about, but something one does. And although the parameters by which the act of "doing" is dictated by structures beyond the participants control —meaning the trading cards sold by the company as well as the video game cartridge and handheld console they buy from the company as well as tools that heavily facilitates their action and immersion in *Pokémon*, the use of these tools for interaction clearly requires active participation (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 2003, 279). In *Pokémon*, folklore has been digitalised by bypassing print text. It has become an interactive character the people can consume in different ways. They can consume it through the game itself, through printed *Pokémon* artworks released by the company and those created by fans, and even through toys and other merchandise available. Games are repository of cultural knowledge. Although marketed globally which sometimes glosses over their local content, it is not culturally neutral. In this case, traces

of similarity between Japanese folklore motifs and Pokémon characters makes the *Pokémon* franchise Japanese in odour.

While some scholars argue the advantage of digitalising folklore for posterity, along with recommendations on how to proceed about it (Blank 2009; Chowdhury *et al.* 2010), I argue that in a way, *Pokémon* has somewhat succeeded in serving as a lasting online digital archive for the folktales that have been used in its creation. By incorporating folklore, the *Pokémon* games from Gen 1 to Gen 6 can then be considered as a new form of folklore created through the organic process of redefining folklore in combination with the new technology where its narrative is disseminated, and through the participative interaction of players or gamers that consume the games. The centrality of the lore in the *Pokémon* video game, which is what is considered as canon by the fans, also points to the importance of information found and released through new content made available for it. This is the lifeblood that feeds into the creation of the different medium where these new forms of folklore are told in the form of movies, manga, anime, fan artworks and merchandise. The addition of how these products can be consumed in the form of movies, manga and the anime, while not included in the study can even add elements that enhances the entrenchment of these newly formed motif in the consumers' minds. The whole franchise is now a digital archive for these fantastical folkloric beings that influenced directly or indirectly their creation. *Pokémon* has fleshed out these folklore motifs and has put them at the front and centre through their games, allowing for players to interact with and bond with them in an ever-expanding virtual space called the *Pokémon* world.

Pokémon as digital products look to be living and breathing beings that inhabit an enchanted world. The folklore here is alive. Digitalisation has breathed in new life to folklore, enabling participative interaction between folklore and the audience, a previous component known to have died once the orality of folklore was reduced to print and media. Pokémon are programmed to exist in a virtual world that people can enter easily. These video games and the software encoded into the cartridge that contains these games are more than machines. These codes weave in a different high-tech powered lore unto itself. And although these creatures at times appear to have some form of personality, their makeup are contrived. These monsters move according to their program and as such are limited by the biases of their creators. They are filtered hegemonic lenses where the worldview of the employees of the *Pokémon* company (most especially prominent Japanese citizens such as Ken Sugimori and Junichiro Matsuda) at the helm is manifested.

More recently, the advent of *Pokémon Go* has put the Gen 1- Gen 4's original *Pokémon* characters at the front and centre of the current height of digital innovation. This new technology allows it to exist as moving figures inside a virtual reality, and more recently, has been able to cross over into our own reality. Using AR (augmented reality) technology, these motifs are made to look as if they appear in the real world and at the same time through smartphone cameras. In an era dominated by smartphones, the reach of folklores that have been imbibed in *Pokémon* have found a captive and participative audience in this century's young generation. Through their camera's lens, people are now able to see and catch Pokémon inside their homes, offices, and other real-life locations. More than sharing experiences and interacting with these motifs, individuals can now see a projected image of these folkloric characters through their phone's camera and take a picture with it not inside the game as a trainer but as their real-world personas. We may see an increase in the proliferation of these new forms of folklore in the future, these versions of the lore will last longer (at least physically through digitalisation) and despite geographical barriers, may reach much further remote locations. These new technologies that are able to digitalise and render folklore into beings that simulate life looks to be at the forefront of preserving and passing on this bit of cultural identity in the form of folklore in our generation. As there are different forms of technology and media wherein they can be made available, they also become more convenient and multidimensional tools for entertainment. The creation of these newly formed folklore is a dynamic interaction between Japanese cultural material, the technology they are coursed through and gameplay as performed by the consumers. Needless to say, these technologies flesh out these characters, giving us a new digitalised lens that we are now able to put on to experience folklore. Compared to other tangible, physical cultural products, these digitalised cultural products travel the wind (metaphorically and literally) around the world, appearing as pristine and detailed as the first day they were rendered by their illustrators and animators.

REFERENCES

Allison, A. (2003), Portable Monster and Commodity Cuteness: Pokemon as Japan's New Global Power. *Post Colonial Studies* 6 (3), 381-395.

— (2004), Cuteness as Japan's Millennial Product. In: Tobin, J., (Ed.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 34-51.

— (2006), *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, 234-270. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anon. (1997), *Nihon Mukashi Banashi.* Tōkyō: The Japan Times.

Asakawa, K. (1903), *The Early Institutional Life of Japan: A Study in the Reform of 645 A.D.* Tōkyō: Shueisha.

Atsunobu, I., Tanaka, N., (Eds) (1999), *Toriyama Sekien Gazu Hyakki Yagyō.* Tōkyō: Kokusho Publication Society.

Bainbridge, J. (2014), "Gotta Catch 'Em All!" Pokémon, Cultural Practice and Object Networks. *The IAFOR Journal of Asian Studies* 1, (1), 1-15.

Ben-Amos, D. (1971), Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context. *The Journal of American Folklore* 84 (331), 3-15.

Bhat, A. (2015), *Pokemon Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire: Samurott Event now in US; Sales Reach 9Mn.* 18 February. Available from: http://www.ibtimes.co.in/pokemon-omega-ruby-alpha-sapphire-samurott-event-now-us-sales-reach-9mn-623867 [Accessed 29 August 2015].

Blank, T. J., (Ed.) (2009), Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World. Utah: Utah State University Press.

Buckingham, D., Sefton-Green, J. (2004), "Gotta Catch 'em all: Structure, Agency, and Pedagogy in Children's Media Culture. In: Tobin, J., (Ed.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 12-31.

Bulbapedia (n.d.), *Pokémon.* Available from: http://bulbapedia.bulbagarden.net/wiki/Pok%C3%A9mon [Accessed 5 October 2013].

Chowdhury, G., Koo, C., Hunter, J. (2010), The Role of Digital Libraries in a Time of Global Change. Proceedings of the *12th International Conference on Asia-Pacific Digital Libraries, ICADL 2010,* Gold Coast, Australia, 21-25 June. Heidelberg: Sprinter.

Craig, T.J., (Ed.) (2000), *Japan Pop! Inside the World of Japanese Popular Culture.* Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

De Bary, W. T., Gluck, C., Keene, D. (2001), *Sources of Japanese Tradition: From earliest times to 1600.* Vol. 1. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

De Visser, M. W. (2008), *The Dragon in China and Japan.* New York: Cosimo Classics.

Dégh, L. (1994), *American Folklore and the Mass Media.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Dorson, R. M. (1962), *Folk Legends of Japan.* Tōkyō: Tuttle Publishing.

Drazen, P. (2003), Anime Explosion!: The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press.

Elza, C. (2009), We All Live in a Pokemon World Animated Utopia for Kids. In: West, M.I., (Ed.), *The Japanification of Children's Popular Culture: From Godzilla to Miyazaki.* Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 53-72.

Foster, M. D. (2009), *Pandemonium and parade: Japanese monsters and the culture of yōkai.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Garrison, J., Kimiya, K., Wallace, G., *et al.* (2002), *Kodansha's Dictionary of Basic Japanese Idioms.* Tōkyō: Kondansha International.

Heinna, S. (2005), *Interview with Hideo Nakata.* Available from: http://int.kateigaho.com/win05/horror-nakata.html [Accessed 20 January 2013].

Hiroshi, I. (2006), *Ryūjin shinkō.* Available from: http://k-amc.kokugakuin.ac.jp/DM/dbSearch-List.do;jsessionid=98AE85F115F6A58A38F0A67DD093F842?class_name=col_eos&search_condition_type=1&db_search_condition_type=0&View=0&focus_type=0&startNo=1&searchFreeword=Ry%C5%ABjin+shink%C5%8D&searchRangeType=0 [Accessed 5 May 2016].

Hoskins, C., Miru, R. (1988) Reasons for the U.S. Dominance of the International Trade in Television Programs. *Media Culture and Society* 10, 499-515.

Iwabuchi, K. (2004), How Japanese is Pokemon?. In: Tobin, J., (Ed.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon*. Durham: Duke University Press, 34-48.

Iwata S. (n.d.) Iwata Asks [Interviews]. Available from: http://iwataasks.nintendo.com/ [Accessed 5 May 2018].

Kirriemuir, J. (2002), The Relevance of Video Games and Gaming Consoles to the Higher and Further Education Learning Experience. *JISC.* 27 April. Available from:

http://jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=techwatch_report_021 [Accessed 5 October 2013].

Koichi, M. (1980), Yanagita Kunio: An Interpretive Study." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, (2-3), 83-115.

Komatsu, K. (2000), Yōkai: Kaisetsu. In: Komatsu, K., ed. *Yōkai*. Tōkyō: Kawade Shobō shinsha, 435-36.

Lien, T. (2014), How successful is Pokémon? Take a look at the numbers! [Online] Available from: Polygon.com, August 8, 2014. http://www.polygon.com/pokemon/2014/8/18/6030089/Pokemon-sales- numbers [Accessed 5 May 2018].

Looser, T. (2006), Media and the Folk. In: Baxter, J., Howell, D.L., (Eds), *History and Folklore Studies in Japan*. Kyōto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 77-89.

Masuda, J. (2015) No.244 [blog post]. 14 September. Available from:

http://www.gamefreak.co.jp/blog/dir_english/ [Accessed 5 May 2018].

McClain, J. L. (2002), *Japan, a Modern History.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

McGray, D. (2002), Japan's Gross National Cool." *Foreign Policy*,130, 44-54.

Meyer, M. (2015), *The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons: A Field Guide to Japanese Yokai.* Tōkyō: Matthew Meyer.

Morse, R. A. (1990), *Yanagita Kunio and the Folklore Movement: The Search for Japan's National Character and Distinctiveness.* New York: Garland Publishing.

Nintendo (2013), *Nintendo Company History: Nintendo Entertainment System [Online].* Available from: http://www.nintendo.com/amiibo/line-up#release [Accessed 5 October 2013].

Reider, N. (2000), The Appeal of Kaidan Tales of the Strange. *Asian Folklore Studies* 59, 265-283.

— (2003), Transformation of the Oni from the Frightening and Diabolical to the Cute and Sexy. *Asian Folklore Studies* 62, 133-157.

— (2010), *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni From Ancient Times to the Present.* Utah: Utah University Press.

Roberts, J. (2010), *Japanese Mythology A to Z.* New York: Chelsea House.

Rysan, J. (1971), Folklore and Mass-Lore. *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 36(1), 3-9.

Saito, T. (2000), Pikachu aruiwa kyaraka sareta seishinbunsekiteki kitai. *Koukoku*, 18-22.

Sakurai, T. (2000), Sokudo no naka no bunka. *Daikōkai,* 52-59.

Sefton-Green, J. (2006), Youth, Technology, and Media Cultures. *American Educational Research Association* 30, 279-306.

Seki, K. (1966), Types of Japanese Folktales. *Asian Folklore Studies* 25(25), 1-220.

Sekien, T. (1805), *Hyakki shūi/1.* Available from:
http://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/hyakkishuyiv1tori [Accessed 30 August 2015].

— (1805), *Hyakki tsurezurebukuro / 1. Smithsonian Libraries.* Available from:
http://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/hyakkitsurezurev1tori [Accessed 31 August 2015].

— (2005), *Toriyama Sekien Gazu Hyakki Yagyō Zen Gashū.* Tōkyō: Shoten Publishing.

Serebii.net (2018), Serebii.net [website]. Available from: https://www.serebii.net/ [Accessed 30 August 2018].

Shigeru, M. (2003), *Mujara 1: Kanto Hokkaido, Okinawa hen.* Tōkyō: Soft Garage.

Shunsen, T. (1831), *Ehon hyakumonogatari.* Edo: Kinkado.

Stephens, J., McCallum, R. (1998), *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature.* New York: Garland Publishing.

Stine, R. (2016), *The Pokémon Effect: How 20-Year Old Game Boy Cartridges Shaped a Generation.* 27 February. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rachel-stine/the-pokemon-effect-how-20_b_9303926.html [Accessed 10 May 2016].

Temple, C. R. (2008), *Traditional Themes in Japanese Art.* California: Regent Press.

Tobin, J., (Ed.) (2004), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokemon.* Durham; London: Duke University Press.

Toelken, B. (1996), *The Dynamics of Folklore.* Logan: Utah State University Press.

Tsutsui, W. M., Ito, M. (2006), *In Godzilla's Footsteps Japanese Pop Cultural Icons on the Global Stage.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yoda, H., Alt, M. (2013), *Yokai Attack!: The Japanese Monster Survival Guide.* Tōkyō: Tuttle.

Yoshinori, K. (2000), Pokemon ga yushutsu shita 'kuru' na nihon to nihonjin. 20 January. *Asahi Shimbun.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erika Ann SUMILANG-ENGRACIA *is currently working full-time for SGS GBS Asia as a Certification Business Enhancement Specialist for their Japanese clients. She graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines, with a BA degree in Speech Communication and a Masters degree in Asian Studies with Japan as a specialisation. Her fields of interests are on Pop Culture, Media Studies, Games, Intercultural Communication and the interplay of language and culture. This mix of diverse experiences (and hobbies) has enabled her to write and present a number of papers on the different fields that she is interested in.*