

Informal Strategies for Learning History in Japanese Mass Media Visual Culture: A Case Study of the Mobile Game *Fate/Grand Order*



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Abstract This article examines the potentials of learning history through the consumption of the Japanese mobile game *Fate/Grand Order*. The nature of historical representation in the Japanese videogame industry tends to differ significantly from the logics found in Western digital entertainment products. The former constitutes an integral part of the Japanese media mix, typified by the spread of franchises and narratives through multiple visual commodities that include manga and anime. First, we examine the role they play in the social and cultural specificities of contemporary Japan. Furthermore, these commodities are specifically targeted at a body of highly engaged fans generally known as *otaku*, who become affectionate with the characters that populate these products. *Fate/Grand Order* features legendary figures drawn from history, folklore, and myth that are reshaped under the aesthetic patterns of the *media mix*. Players actively engage with these characters, constantly reproducing them through illustrations, comic strips, original stories, and discussion. This also opens a gateway for independent research about the historical figures they embody. Finally, we examine the digital community dedicated to *Fate/Grand Order* on Reddit, a website that encourages the sharing of content of specific topics and fanbases, to comprehend how historical discourses are shared, shaped, and developed by the online interaction of the videogame's enthusiasts. Results show that, despite the content mainly addresses the franchise's fictional universe and the playful interaction with its characters, there is room for the active discussion of history and the further knowledge of the past.

Keywords Japanese video games · Media mix · Otaku · Moe · History learning

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Introduction

Fate/Grand Order is a Japanese mobile game released in Japan in 2015 for Android and iOS, later released globally in 2017. The game, developed by Delightworks and produced by Aniplex, is the most successful iteration of the *Fate* franchise (Nasu & Takeuchi, 2004), a trademark that includes a myriad of spin-offs featured in a range of media that include manga, anime, trading cards, action figures, and a plethora of merchandise. *Grand Order*'s popularity in Japan is only surpassed by its profitability, reporting more than \$4 billion in revenues by the end of 2019. Worldwide, it has been downloaded to approximately 32 million devices (Chapple, 2020). Players assume the role of a young magician embarked on a time-traveling quest in search of “singularities”: alterations in the natural course of history that, unless fixed, will result in the extinction of humanity. As magicians, players summon “servants”, powerful spirits that embody the essence of heroes drawn from history, literature, and myth. In terms of game structure, *Fate/Grand Order* combines two of the quintessential Japanese game genres: the story is told using the visual novel style of static images and text, while the turn-based combat system and the leveling up mechanics are drawn from Japanese role-playing games. These traits, with the addition of manga and anime-like characters, give the game a clearly recognizable Japanese identity (Navarro-Remesal & Loriguillo-López, 2013).

Servants are the main appeal of the game, adding up to more than two hundred in the current Japanese version. Some examples of historical figures included in the game are Alexander the Great, Joan of Arc, Oda Nobunaga, and Florence Nightingale. These characters are designed to look cool and charming, and their historical authenticity is limited to easily recognizable elements. Japanese artists and developers tend to turn national and foreign culture and tradition into successful media franchises that appeal to contemporary interests (Wai-Ming Ng, 2013, p. 234). While some of these characters are unlocked as the player advances through the game's storyline, the vast majority become available through a random lottery mechanic known as “*gacha*”. Users must spend an in-game resource (named ‘saint-quartz’) that can be obtained either by completing a series of quests or by purchasing it with real-world money, to roll the lottery and obtain random servants. Many players are willing to pay real money to obtain their favorite characters, especially in the rare occasions their drop rate is slightly increased (Cabrera, 2018). An extreme case is a Japanese man called Daigo who spent roughly \$70,000 on saint-quartz. When interviewed, he claimed that he felt a strong connection with *Grand Order*'s characters, spends almost all his waking time playing, and is deeply moved by the game (Epstein & Inada, 2018). This attitude toward *gacha* is not limited to Japanese audiences, as Western ones are willing to spend their hard-earned money for the tiniest chance to draw their favorite characters, sometimes reaching borderline cases of gambling (Cabrera, 2018).

In this article we will examine the dynamics established between *Fate/Grand Order* and its fan community to shed light on the role certain types of Japanese digital games play in the independent process of history learning. First, we will address the problematics of history education in current Japan. Next, we discuss

how video games share narrative traits and aesthetic elements with manga and anime, especially in their inclusion of eye-catching characters. We move on to examine the relationships established between fans and characters, in order to understand the motivations for learning history. Finally, an internet-based fan community will serve as an example of how users engage in exchanges of information that often involve the independent research and creative interpretation of the past.

The History Problem in Japanese Education and Collective Memory

Contemporary manifestations of popular memory in Japan are intrinsically linked to the end of World War II. The triumph of fascism and the wars of imperial expansion have shaken the core of the nation and its identity. These two subjects have been explored and revisited during the American occupation, the postwar years, and the last decades of the millennium (Conrad, 2010, p. 49–74). Currently, Japan's historical consciousness is governed by the logics of the selective historical gaze, a set of strategies that determine how different groups "are adept at focusing on the events and interpretations of war history that are most compatible with their contemporary identities and political priorities" (Seaton, 2007, p. 135). This is not limited to the relative recent events of the twentieth century, both the imperialistic turn of the Japanese state and the reconstruction of the Japanese institutions and society during the Cold War. The revision of the nation's past was extended to encompass the Meiji Restoration, the revolutionary process by which Japan became a modern nation, and the pre-Modern Edo period. In the postwar decades, Japanese historiography embarked on the journey to revise the nation's history that often led to discourses about the uniqueness of the Japanese culture and self-identity (Conrad, 2010, p. 67–69).

In Japan, current debates on history, polarized in the decade of the 1990s, revolve around Japan's wartime atrocities and events such as the Nanjing Massacre, the human experiments performed by Unit 731 in Manchuria, and the forced prostitution of Korean comfort women (Conrad, 2010, p. 256–257). Leftist academics and activists claim that Japan indeed performed those atrocities and its government has still not fully apologized to the victims. On the other hand, die-hard neo-nationalists deny those accusations and interpret Japan's expansion as an effort to liberate its Asian neighbors from Western colonization. However, the most widespread conception is that, although Japan fought a war of aggression, most of its citizens were victims of both a military dictatorship and the Allies' indiscriminate attacks against civilians, as exemplified in the dropping of the A-bombs (Seaton, 2007, p. 18–22). Lastly, a conservative view widespread among bureaucrats and government officials stresses the tragic martyrdom of Japanese civilians and soldiers as a way of promoting a proud and "healthy" nationalism to overcome the masochistic view of the past imposed by the international community and the Japanese left (Conrad, 2010, p. 248–251).

These controversies have a noteworthy impact in high school history education, that became the battleground between progressive-leaning and leftist teachers, and the conservative Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*). The latter has had control over the planification of history education curricula since the postwar, promoting a positivist and empiricist narrative based on the chronological enumeration of data without explanation or interpretation (Dierkes, 2010, p. 102–156). Furthermore, *Mombushō* exerts its control over the content of history textbooks through a screening and certification system that prevents the publication of content that deviates from the official interpretations of Japanese history (Arai, 2010; Dierkes, 2010, p. 108–120). In other words, “the screening system is a government device for educating people about national memory and creating national identity” (Oshiba, 2006, p. 286). On the other hand, the oversimplified understanding of historical processes is further encouraged by an education culture that focuses on memorization and the instrumental acquisition of knowledge. This system of evaluation, built around multiple-choice questions and very short responses, plays a decisive role in the academic future of students. A study of the reception of textbooks and the history education curricula among college students in Japan has shown that, as a result, most of the high school students prioritize the memorization of information over the understanding of historical processes. Therefore, they articulate their historically situated identities through other channels that include sharing experiences and ideas with family and friends, building relationships with foreigners, and consuming historical content through a variety of media that include newspapers, magazines, blogs, documentaries, TV dramas, and films (Fukuoka, 2011).

The Past as a Mass-Consumption Commodity

The problematics that cross current Japanese identities, divergent in their evaluation of history, stem from their inability to successfully come into terms with pre-1945 realities. Popular media has played a key role in this process of redesigning the past, informed by political trends and the audience’s interests (Shimazu, 2003). As Rachael Hutchinson (2019) argues, Japan’s inclination for transmedia storytelling produces a kind of fragmentary narrative, that comes together through the combination of media and artistic forms and that is representative of how contemporary Japanese society views their past and, therefore, their identity (p. 1–6). Moreover, media discourses on history have a strong impact on younger generations, since the vacuum left by their poor formal education can be filled with easily packaged and ideologically charged discourses (Shimazu, 2003, p. 113–115). The role of manga in the creation of historically situated identities has been exhaustively examined because of its widespread readership. The division of manga in genres that appeal to defined gendered and demographic target audiences further shapes the way history is represented and interpreted, therefore conveying a specific sense of history (Rosenbaum, 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, manga stories set in the past are shaped by the author’s opinion and experiences, who selects which historical

elements and details to include and uses combinations of text and images to create a personalized narrative. Artistic licenses are not only allowed but also encouraged and offer gateways for exploring the past alternative from official sources, challenging mainstream conservative discourses (Nakar, 2008; Penney, 2007). Finally, the collective effort established between authors and audiences in mapping Japan's controversial past allows us to interpret manga as a form of banal memory, this is, "the unnoticed dynamics of the involvement of social agents in producing and reproducing remembrances" (Otmazgin, 2016, p. 12).

What role do video games play in the configuration of Japan's banal memory? Digital entertainment products are part of a wider ecology of media that includes manga, anime, arcade machines, light novels, and a plethora of collectibles and toys. The Japanese *media mix*, as this phenomenon has been labeled, represents a specific cultural instance of Henry Jenkin's theory of convergence culture (Consalvo, 2016, p. 92–93). Moreover, the development of the Japanese video game industry in the 1980s, a period that includes its expansion to foreign markets, was heavily influenced by the narrative and aesthetic traits of manga and anime, especially in the design of colorful and eye-catching characters (Picard, 2013). Contemporary Japanese video games still present a unique cultural imprint that not only responds to the tastes of the local market but is perceived as cool and interesting by Western players that are also avid consumers of manga and anime. The influence of the *media mix* in their narrative structures, game design, cultural references, and aesthetic trends play a key role in how history is presented, received, and learned through the consumption of its contents (Navarro-Remesal & Loriguillo-López, 2013).

Nonetheless, manga, anime, and video games constitute different platforms with specific methods and strategies in the process of meaning-making of the past. For example, since the end of the American occupation, war-themed manga has experimented a series of transformations, from sanitized adventures aimed at young boys to personal recollections of the conflict's tragic consequences for Japanese common soldiers and the civil population (Berndt, 2008; Nakar, 2008; Penney, 2007). Ideological approaches to history in manga also became polarized, with authors denouncing the atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese army in occupied territories (O'Dwyer, 2013; Ropers, 2013), while others took revisionist approaches that negated Japan's guilt and tried to promote a proud nationalism among their readers (Shields, 2013). In gaming, on the other hand, the player's direct agency made it more difficult to address the highly controversial topic of the Pacific War. Instead, developers tend to place the action in conflicts that have become part of the mythical origins of the Japanese nation, with a special emphasis on the glorified *Sengoku* period (Hutchinson, 2019, p. 185–189). Other idealized periods that have been translated to the video game medium are China's period of the Warring States (Wai-Ming Ng, 2013) and the convulsing times that ended with the modernization of Japan and culminated in the Meiji Restoration (Hasegawa, 2013). The few instances of games set in World War II use strategies to avoid or blur the more distasteful aspects of the conflict. *Kantai Collection*, a game that reimagines the Imperial Japanese Navy ships as young girls, adopts two of the most common strategies: placing the action in an alternative reality and sexualizing the characters (Hutchinson, 2019, p. 189–202). The latter reflects a

trend that has been on the rise in Japan since the last decade of the millennium, this is, the widespread and centrality of *moe-kyara*.

Moe-Kyara, Otaku, and an Emotional Approach to History

In recent years, there has been a paradigm shift in the content of the *media mix*, “from dramatic stories to that of a game-like settings and cute characters, so-called *kyara*” (Berndt, 2008, p. 297). Characters have been an integral part of the Japanese visual popular culture since the success of the TV anime *Tetsuwan Atomu* in 1964, a phenomenon that proved the ability of static images of 2D characters to spread among different media and even populate the material world (Steinberg, 2012). The popularization of young and beautiful female figures of manga and anime among hardcore fans dates to the decade of the 1980s (Kinsella, 1998), but it reached major audiences during the closing years of the millennium. The economic stagnation and following recession of the Japanese economy, combined with the gradual erosion of the postwar social order, left the Japanese with a sentiment of social malaise (Yoda, 2006). Furthermore, an increasing disregard for traditional family values and the rising dissolution of gender roles left many Japanese lacking emotional solaces. In a society where communication between individuals has become more difficult than ever, cute and sexy characters have filled the vacuum of real relationships, acting as shadow families and imaginary romantic partners (Allison, 2006, p. 66–92; Galbraith, 2009). Among *otaku*, a term that describes hardcore fans of the *media mix*, intimate affection is sought in *moe-kyara*.

The concept of *kyara*, a contraction of *kyarakutaa* (the Japanese translation of the English word ‘character’), “suggest archetypes not tied to identifiable historical or political contexts that can be easily transferred from one marketable backdrop, genre, or medium to another” (Penney, 2013, p. 146). *Kyara* predates the design of specific characters, this is, serves as a blueprint of different aesthetic elements and personality traits that are combined in almost unlimited ways to create new characters (Condry, 2013, p. 63–65). When a character gains popularity among *otaku* it is disassembled into its constitutive components, which are integrated in an abstract database of elements that have been proven to be remarkably attractive to the audience. These elements are systematically recycled in the creation of new characters, the latter becoming simulacra (Azuma, 2009, p. 39–47). At the same time, *kyara*-based characters become the quintessential commodity in a mass-consumption driven society with emotional needs since they “serve as screens for projections (or various desires) rather than as representation, offering symptoms instead of symbols and, thus, furthering easy consumption while resisting intellectual information” (Berndt, 2008, p. 297). Due to the limited nature of the high-context media of manga, anime, and video games, the character personalities tend to be extreme and unbalanced in order to transmit its narrative messages in a direct and effective way (Saito, 2011, p. 135–146). Under these circumstances, historical figures adapted to the *media mix* environment become personifications of limited archetypes, populating stories that

selectively use historical elements to add flavor to fantasy landscapes and supernatural environments (Napier, 2005, p. 275–278; Ruh, 2014).

In the 1990s, *moe* became a buzzword used in early Internet *otaku* chatrooms and forums to communicate their preference for cute characters. This term derives from the verb *moeru* (that loosely translates as ‘to get fired up’) and was used to express the intense emotional attachment between the viewer and their fictional object of desire (Galbraith, 2014, p. 5). It points out to an “affectionate longing for 2D characters or, more accurately, a reference to an internalized emotional response to something, generally with no hope for a reciprocal emotional payback” (Condry, 2013, p. 187). Sexuality has been described as the key factor of the *otaku* identity, who become aroused by fictional characters and can use them as sexual aids. The constant production of derivative works is fueled by the unresolved trauma of being excited by a drawing and the inability to physically consummate the sexual act with the object of desire. Therefore, *otaku* needs to create images that themselves lead to new images. This repetition, and the expression of longing for these characters, is the core of the *otaku* identity (Saito, 2011). It is important to point out that the majority of *otaku* tend to move between a normative intimate life grounded in reality and the *queer* expression of sexuality in the realm of the imaginary represented by these fictions, and only a few completely disregard human sexual partners in what is called a complex for 2D characters (Morinaga Takuro, as cited in Galbraith, 2014, p. 126–135). Some have been very vocal about these practices and consider them a revolutionary form of love (*ren'ai kakumei*) against the backdrop on unbalanced relationships that leave unsuccessful men outside the love market (Honda Toru, as cited in Galbraith, 2014, p. 116–125).

Community-Based History Learning: *Fate/Grand Order*'s Online Fan Networks

The phenomenon surrounding *Fate/Grand Order* presents a perfect case study of the realities addressed in this article. It is a Japanese fantasy game that selectively appropriates elements from the past, in this case historical figures from all around the world, while avoiding controversial topics of the nation's past. In addition, these individuals are imagined as handsome and beautiful characters using *kyara* archetypes as their blueprint. Third, a globalized fanbase constituted by both male and female players has established strong relationships of affection with the game's servants, demonstrating that the logics of *moe* affect not only Japanese *otaku*, but also foreign ones. Lastly, each character's profile includes a short explanation of their historical context and their deeds, resembling the historian and positivist approach in history education taken by Japanese high schools.

It has been stated that *otaku* privilege an encyclopedic approach to knowledge. These fans, driven by their obsessive interests, gather a large amount of information to expand their knowledge on a very specific subject (Tsuji, 2012, p. 18–19). However,

for *otaku* data has no intrinsic value. Any information's worth is closely linked to its availability: the scarcer the information is, the higher its value. As Lawrence Eng (2012) puts it, "their focus on information value means that otaku care about trivia that others would ignore, and they create value where it did not previously exist" (p. 98). Additionally, highly valuable knowledge is traded between otaku in exchange of other obscure information, material rewards and/or prestige and reputation among their peers. These types of relationships based on the exchange requires the creation of networks, and the popularization of the internet has therefore spawned multiple *otaku* online communities (Eng, 2012, p. 97–101). Many members of the *otaku* community use this information creatively by engaging in activities that reproduce or modify the content of their favorite franchises. Some of the most widespread engagements are cosplay (Okabe, 2012) and *dōjinshi* (written and illustrated derivative works), which are displayed, shared, and sold in dedicated conventions or through digital networks (Kinsella, 1998; Tamagawa, 2012).

What implications do these dynamics have in a digital game with selective historical elements? Content featured in the Japanese *media mix* is not isolated but is linked to a wider set of landscapes that also address the past. Nissin Otmazgin (2016) argues that the intertextual resonances established by these commodities and other cultural forms are "an important starting point for the later contextualization of historical events and to the level of involvement and interest of the students toward certain historical events" (p. 11). In gaming, Stephanie Fisher (2011) has pointed out the potential of digital entertainment for tangential history learning. Players tend to perceive the historical content presented in games as cool and entertaining in contrast with the dry explanations given by their teachers or featured in textbooks. This positive encounter familiarizes players with past events and encouraged them to pursue independent learning (Fisher, 2011, p. 77–78). Pieter Van der Heede further explores these dynamics to establish the concept of ludic titillation, "where existing game conventions (...) are used to attract players, who are subsequently invited to explore the historical lexical layer of the game through forms of integrated contextualization" (this volume).

For the purposes of this article, we have explored the strategies of informal history learning in *Fate/Grand Order*'s dedicated forum on Reddit: r/grandorder. This is not the only place for uploading and discussing original content, since there are other communities such as r/FGOfanart and r/FGOcomics. However, r/grandorder has the highest number of subscribers, a total of 197,740.¹ Furthermore, while other communities focus on the exchange of illustrations and comic strips, r/grandorder is organized in different categories according to the nature of the content: news, strategy and lore discussion, guides and tips for players, comic strips, official and fan-made illustrations, and cosplay. Here we can see an example of *otaku* sharing information, channeled through the common interest and affection for characters, and how it serves as a gateway for learning history. In a series of posts, user "Shiro_Kuroki" expresses his love for Joan of Arc by drawing comic strips in which his avatar engages in a romantic relationship with the historical figure, now turned a servant. One picture

¹ As for September 9, 2020. <https://www.reddit.com/r/grandorder/>.

shows him reading a book to the Maiden, and after another user asked for the title of the book “Shiro_Kuroki” answered the following: “Well..I’m reading Personal Recollection of Joan of Arc by Mark Twain right now. But I think she would definitely be super embarrassed/awkward if we read a biography of her” (Shiro_Kuroki, 2020).

The fact that this player started gathering information about Joan of Arc after spending hundreds of gaming hours with her digital alter-ego shows the importance of the ludic titillation and *moe* affection as a motivation for learning history. Furthermore, we can see how this community engages in acts that can be read as a form of collective historical memory. On May 30, 2020, user “removedquasar” made a post to commemorate the date when Joan of Arc was executed, accompanied with a picture of the adaptation of said event in one of the many *Fate*’s TV shows (2020). This act of remembrance spawned a discussion between several users around the morals and social customs of the Late Middle Ages, touching topics like the age of maturity in the fifteenth century, the power of the Church, and the political intricacies of the Hundred Year’s War. Another post encourages users to imagine new servants based on historical characters from their home countries (The_Kebe, 2019). The entry spawned interesting exchanges of information between users of different nationalities. Proposals always followed the rules of *Fate*’s fictional universe, conditioning the nature of the characters chosen. For a character to manifest as a servant, their legend must be widespread enough and their physical manifestation would be closely linked to their fame. Therefore, most of the historical proposals were well-known leaders, warriors, scientists, writers, and intellectuals. For example, many Filipino users suggested José Rizal, who became the father and martyr of the Filipino nationalism. By discussing and posting in online forums with other fans all around the world, players learn about historical processes and prominent figures of countries and regions that don’t show up in their schools’ curricula.

The curiosity and the thirst for expanding their encyclopedic knowledge among the *otaku* can also be detected in *r/grandorder*. For example, one post asks for interesting facts about servants, which led to debates about history and mythology (Fatire, 2020). Most of this thread is comprised of users commenting bizarre, curious, or funny anecdotes drawn from literary and historical sources. Although most users do not cite their sources, some comments feature links to Wikipedia and even digitalized primary sources, for example, fragments of the Arthurian cycles or the Epic of Gilgamesh. Discussion about the different interpretations and versions of myths is frequent and serves as an indicator of fans researching exhaustively *Fate/Grand Order*’s historical references. For example, on a comment explaining the importance of Quetzalcoatl in the development of Mesoamerican societies over the centuries, one user states the following:

I never really had much of an interest in Aztec/Mayan/Mesoamerican culture or history or mythology before (...) But I absolutely loved Quetz’s character in FGO and that got me to read a lot about it and I’m glad that was the case, because like I said I personally find it fascinating. (NuclearPasta, as cited in Fatire, 2020)

Willing to go deeper on these practices, we asked r/grandorder users two questions: first, if players got into the game because they had a previous interest in history and, second, if the game made them learn history on their own (Machangofio, 2019). The thread was answered by 27 users with a total of 74 comments. Some participants were already interested in works like King Arthur's legends, Hinduism's Mahabharata, and Norse mythology. In most cases, research was motivated by certain characters that players found cool or attractive. Most of the research was done by browsing Wikipedia articles and watching YouTube documentaries, but many users claimed that they often browsed other websites and consulted books to contrast information. One user acknowledged using search engines like Google Scholar and JSTOR and consulted peer-reviewed articles. They also liked servants whose design and characterization were consistent with their real counterparts. As a certain user put it, "all you can really do is keep researching until a narrative shines through that you can believe" (Ars-Tomato, as cited in Machangofio, 2019). Fan-based research also modifies the view players have of the game developer's narrative choices. One user stated that "The more I read, I can be either impressed or absolutely pissed over the Type-Moon portrayals" (SubconsciousLove, as cited in Machangofio, 2019), a statement that indicates a certain level of critical approach to the game's version of the past based on independent research. Furthermore, two users responded that their love for *Fate* characters partially influenced their career choices and are using undergraduate courses to learn more about their beloved servants.

Conclusions

Fate/Grand Order offers a perfect example on the increasing trends of history representation and storytelling in current Japanese visual mass media. Furthermore, it raises questions on how Japan, since the closing years of the last millennium, has dealt with its historical consciousness and how public debates about the nature of its past have shaped the way history is taught and learned at a high school education level. Although Japanese videogames share many traits with manga and anime, the central position of the player takes in relationship with the content makes it difficult to address controversial historical events. *Fate/Grand Order* thus follows a trend established in mass-consumption media by sanitizing the past and transforming history into a romanticized commodity. It is an example of how fantasy, science-fiction, and history collide in current entertainment, in which contemporary hopes and anxieties are channeled into a fictionalized and selective past. Moreover, the game's focus on visually compelling characters with attractive personality traits and the devotion showed to them by established fans has proven the role that affection to fictional characters plays in the motivation for learning history. These fans do not keep these emotions to themselves. On the contrary, the tendency to express their love and desire and share their interest with their peers has contributed to the formation of communities both offline and online.

The analysis of *Fate/Grand Order* and the fan community it has spawned in the five years since its launch sheds light to the dynamics of history learning in videogames, entangled with identity issues linked to fictional love and affection. The electronic entertainment industry is a global one, and it has been like that since its popularization in the last quarter of the twentieth century. International trends have shaped the form and the content of its products; however, specific cultural trends have defined videogame genres that are consumed because of their familiarity or foreignness. This is the case of Japanese games that rose in a domestic market that privileged specific gaming platforms, creative practices, entertainment trends, and aesthetic tastes drawn from deeply established media such as manga and anime. These inherent traits also served games to be consumed abroad by carrying a sense of exotic Japaneseness that many Western players find appealing. In representing the past, these commodities also differ from their Western counterparts. If American and European games tend to seek authenticity in their construction of historical narratives, Japanese games disregard accuracy and reshape the past under the logic of postmodernity. *Fate/Grand Order* draws from historical figures to configure a complex and fantastic universe populated by recognizable, yet original characters designed to establish a deep emotional connection with users.

Servants play a central role both in community building, as seen by the endless process of creating, sharing, and consuming illustrations and comic strips, and in the sexual and romantic identity of users, who constantly express their love and affection to characters (represented on Reddit by comments, upvotes, and trophies). Although the focus of the game is to create an interesting and complex fictional universe populated by attractive characters, constantly updating the ludic features and including more servants to make profit of them, fan activities show us that there is potential for learning history. At a first glance, most of the knowledge is drawn from easy to access sources and dissemination websites, blogs, podcasts, and videos. *Fate/Grand Order*, as many *media mix* franchises who make use of the past as background, flavor, or ambience, promotes an encyclopedic approach to history. This resonates with *otaku* obsession with data and trivia that does not reach beyond the accumulation of information to a critical use of it. However, by engaging in endless communication with their peers, committed players have the potential to develop skills that allow them to go beyond the historical master narratives included in the game. In their quest for acquiring more knowledge about their favorite servants, they develop a creative vision built from hours of reading, cross-examining, and discussing historical discourses. This process of information gathering may lead to a deeper understanding of former cultures and societies, but its goal is the accumulation of knowledge about the servants. Here we can see how historical facts, myths, and folklore are remembered by players and repurposed to fit the logics of the game by a process of epistemological resignification and commodification.

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