

**TRANSPLANTING ASIAN MOBILE GAME CONSUMER VALUES ONTO  
WESTERN AUDIENCES: THE CASE OF FATE/GRAND ORDER**

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## **Abstract**

The proliferation of Asian values in its various forms has certainly been greatly amplified during current networked era. In this case, one of the commonly known derivative form of Asian values are Asian cultural products, evolving in its deliverance and media following the advent of technology. Asian cultural products are usually represented in the medium of popular entertainment, such as mobile games. Fate/Grand Order in this case is one of such products with a case of success in Western audiences despite primarily rooted in Asian values. The researchers shall analyse its success in transplanting Asian consumer values onto Western audiences through both digitalization and cultural appeal. In particular, researchers noted that, despite differences in cultural composition and monetization options, Fate/Grand Order still thrives due to cultural translation and shifting consumer consumption pattern driven by digital globalization. In conclusion, the process of Asianization through transplanting Asian mobile game consumer values onto Western audiences with the case of Fate/Grand Order can be considered as a success.

***Keywords:*** Asian Values, Cultural Industries, Cultural Translation, Digital era, Digital Prosumption, Fate/Grand Order

## Introduction

Fate/Grand Order is an online Japanese mobile game. Based on the “Fate” franchise owned by Type-Moon, Fate/Grand Order is developed by Delightworks and published by Aniplex, the android version released in 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015, while the iOS version released in 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015. After the release, it becomes a quite big hit in the Japanese mobile game circles, and standing side by side with other mobile games from bigger franchise such as Pokémon GO, which is quite popular in Japan (Nakamura & Amano, 2016). It is then followed by the release of North American and Korean version respectively, which is also handled by Aniplex (or Aniplex of America for the North American version) in 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017.

Upon five years of release, the Japanese server now reaching it’s 200 million downloads on all platform according to official source (Fate/Grand Order JP, 2020), meanwhile the North American server reaching it’s 9 million downloads on all platform in the same interim (Fate/Grand Order US, 2020). The steadily increasing download data, shown by the in-game campaign they held, is one of the signs that the game is still actively being played and downloaded by its player all over the world. Moreover, thanks to the third-party store application, even people outside Japan can also download and play the Japanese server version, thus explaining the sheer amounts of downloads. Despite their two years content gap, the North American server still gaining quite amount of hype and downloads, specifically for people outside Japan simply because the North American server is using English language, which is favourable to them.

Data compiled by an online market insight and intelligence provider, Sensor Tower, shows that Fate/Grand Order is still counted as a popular and top grossing with a massive revenue of user spending in the end of Q3 of 2019, Fate/Grand Order positioned on number two with approximate \$265 million of user spending on that representing 2 percent year-over-year growth from Q3 2018 (Epstein & Inada, 2018). Over the course of five years, Fate/Grand Order has been one of the most successful mobile game, both in Japan or worldwide, surpassing the big amount of \$4 billion of player spending by early 2020(). The numbers gradually increase since the release of the game by 2015, while the expansion of the games also helps the sales spread across the worlds, thus makes Fate/Grand Order one of an example of successful mobile video games in the world.

By the sheer amount of revenues, Fate/Grand Order then became quite the hot topic in mainstream medias in much surprise, and the coverage is one of the key indicators of how well Fate/Grand Order were known outside Japan. In 2018 there is a coverage for Fate/Grand Order is the infamous Wall Street Journal interview of Daigo, a 31 years old Japanese who is claiming to spent approximately 70.000 USD to purchase the game’s currency (Epstein & Inada, 2018). This interview then drew a wide public attention towards Fate/Grand Order, a feat which is hard to achieve by its Japanese mobile game brethren outside Japan, while also highlighting Fate/Grand Order as one of the most prominent sources of income for Aniplex of America, the mobile game’s US publisher.

Twitter, one of the most prominent social media platforms in the world, also became a place where many gaming environments are gathering around, starting from the publisher, teams, players, and commentators interact. By the data from Twitter itself, in 2018, there were approximately 1 billion tweets about gaming globally. Fate/Grand Order, which goes by username *@fgoproject* in Twitter also become the most-tweeted games in 2019 (Chadha, 2019). The statistics shows that there's an intense amount of interaction recorded regarding Fate/Grand Order between the twitter users, such as discussions, which reflected towards the game's image and popularity in the social media.

Fate/Grand Order has now become one of the most intriguing mobile game phenomena in the world. Starting from the revenue, and how willing the markets accept this game and the thick 'Japanese cultural values' embedded inside the game system and trying to cope with it. Countless website and groups are served as a fan gathering resource such as translation, or game data, which is one of the most helpful community-project in gaming environments. By utilizing those sources, even the non-Japanese speakers can also enjoy or even plays the game in Japanese server without overcoming the language barrier. This is the main focus of the topic, on how well this game to be an example of a cultural translation done from a special culture towards a general or mainstream public. The very fact that difficult or exclusive words such as *gacha*, has finally reached and became a common creole in west is the proof of the existence of the cultural translation. On the further chapter, we will go deeper on how the culture is being translated and how much is it covers while taking account on how it is linked towards the current pattern of digital consumerism by the case of Fate/Grand Order.

### **Research Purpose**

This body of research is intended as a preliminary research towards the topics of Asianization through the scope of video game (specifically mobile games) as a case for study. The authors aim to contribute this research as foundation of future researches regarding Asianization through the lens of Asian cultural products, particularly video games.

### **Literature Review**

The success of proliferation and wide appeal or acceptance of Fate/Grand Order (FGO) in the digital Western demographic landscape must be attributed to the process of cultural translation and how such commodity transfer values from one civilization (in this case, Asia) to the other (West). As a cultural product as well as an economic commodity, Fate/Grand Order mobile game represent a cross-section output between culture and economy, a commercial and industrial undertaking of inherent civilizational values. This equates FGO into what is known as cultural industry, that of activities with primary aim to communicate to audience and create text in commercial applications (Hesmondhalgh, 2002 in Markusen et.al, 2008: 27).

The emergence of cultural industries of East Asian in 1990s onward in international market marked the development of various form and kind of cultural goods that rivals Western

cultural products that had been dominating the world before. As observed by Jin and Otmazgin (2014: 43-51), the countries of East Asia have their distinct cultural products that developed systematically through cultural policy and intended to be made and exported as global cultural products. While it was the movies, drama, and animation industries that had been highlighted as the notable cultural products in East Asian countries, it is mentioned that the development of cultural industries had grown to include broader sector of industries, including broadcasting, music, fashion, game, internet, and other related entertainment and fine arts.

In their examination of American movies market in the world as global cultural products, Moon et al. (2016: 78-97) measured and pointed out the influence of economic and cultural factors at consumer level in diffusion of cultural products in international market. Their research show that in economic factors, consumer capabilities to buy cultural goods and domestic market competition with other cultural goods become the driving force of customer preferences. In cultural factors, smaller and higher value of cultural distance or similarities between cultural goods and native cultural value held high amount of cultural goods consumption; Presence of cultural incompatibility brought smaller amount of cultural goods consumer, but high amount of said cultural incompatibility gave rise to cultural novelty as appeal to foreign culture. Applied in the distinctiveness of Asian cultural industries in global market, cultural distance became an important factor in its competition with other cultural products, especially western cultural products as it has closer cultural relation with other cultural market through westernization and more common understanding of English as global language and its main way of deliverance.

Being that a media product from cultural industry intends to communicate through text, such products from one jurisdiction requires a bridging attempt so it could be properly understood by consumers from another jurisdiction. One method to do so is cultural translation, defined as a hermeneutic attempt to understand and interpret foreign source texts that aim to impact specific audiences in specific ways (Maitland, 2017: 49-53). From cultural translation perspective, the act of translation between languages isn't necessarily just making an arrangement of words with similar or equivalent meaning in another language, but also to convey it in a way that is fit to the needs, knowledges, and expectation of its audience. This act of interpretative deliverance of meaning then involve the purposeful intention of translator to shape the meaning of a particular text for the audience. For cultural industries, the act of translation then isn't just about providing accessibility for its customer in foreign market, but also as a bridge the gap in cultural distance through more and better understanding of its cultural aspect.

## **Methodology**

This research uses qualitative analysis method, which is defined as cause-of-effect approach by examining a particular case and its outcome followed by working backward to its cause (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006:230). In this case, we analyse the case of Fate/Grand Order and its apparent success in Western audiences despite being primarily an Asian cultural product. We

determined the cause of this success by analysing it to the concept of cultural translation as well as digital presumption.

## **Results**

In regards to the apparent success of acceptance for Fate/Grand Order in Western audiences, that can be attributed to two primary means of deliverance. First is cultural translation and the status of cultural media product being a form of imagined commodity. Being a commercial product, mobile games such as Fate/Grand Order have its texts and values translated in order to sell the actual mobile game rather than other agendas. However, the cultural translation attempted isn't meant to produce a simple consumer attraction. Such 'static' impact fails to materialize due to the translated medium being that the global cultural-economy landscape being predisposed as an order that is overlapping, disjunctive and complex (Appadurai, 2006: 588). The landscape of global cultural-economy landscape is a fluid, perspectival construct that differs from one actor's perception to another. In this case, one cultural media from Japan to gain a mass appeal in the Western sense isn't simply due to a textual translation of its source material. Rather, its inherent values are being negotiated in a specific landscape called mediascape, of which its components and elements can construe imagined lives and helps the constituting narratives of its recipients (Appadurai, 2006: 591). This meant that by translating itself to a wider audience (in this case Western audience), Fate/Grand Order becomes entangled in the negotiating process of its inherent values in order to accepted in the wider foreign audiences.

It also helps to see cultural products such as FGO from its categorical foundation of being an electronic software of video game in mobile forms. Appadurai (1996 in Carlson & Corliss, 2011: 62-63) sees that massively distributed electronic media that is consumed by individuals and society forms (or become a part thereof) their imaginations and identities. Both individuals and society become the static entities affected by the circulation of text and electronic culture values, from which the newly-imagined identity emerges. The imagination run on course within a negotiated mediascape, in which transnational video game's inherent cultural content are being localized and adapted (Carlson & Corliss, 2011: 64). The process runs congruently so that translated values retains their original intended meaning and thus affected foreign recipient's imagined identities. In the case of Fate/Grand Order mobile game, such process not only nets consumer attraction, but also loyal fanbase within the context of imagined identities of one that ascribes to/ferverly entered the mediascape of Fate/Grand Order itself.

Second is the globalization of information and the rise of digital prosumer culture. The era of globalization has led to the fading geographical boundaries and increasingly intermingled socio-cultural phenomena in our daily lives. Both information and goods products are become easily mobilized. Scholte (2001: 14) stated that globalization has five possible meanings, there are internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, westernisation/modernisation and deterritorialization. Globalization often used to describe each and all of these phenomena. The fact that westernization became one of the terms that closely related to

the meaning of globalization shows how significant and dominant Western influence is. Yet as the phenomena develop, studies regarding Asianization comes up. It may imply that Asian cultures become more influential and significant for being part of the globalization.

In this manner, some might say Asian culture emerge as the Western culture dominancy challengers. But before that, we should first comprehend both Western or Asian have chances and possibilities to exercise their power and share their influence. Globalization could be account as platform which offered many things to utilize. Technological advancement and shift on production-consumption patterns are few of from many that globalization could offer. Technological advancement led to fastness and broadness of information distribution. It makes information being more accessible and multi-platform. Globalization also brings the rise of the prosumption that implies shift on production-consumption patterns.

Prosumption refers to the activities carried out by prosumer, while the word “prosumer” originally coined by American futurologist Alfin Toffler in his writings “The Third Wave” (1980). Toffler examined that the development of new technology seemed to blur the line between makers and users, he later argued that the roles of producer and consumer would soon fuse into one. Prosumption involves both production and consumption. It could happen when costumer not only consumes but also participate in the creation of products in an active way (Tapscott & Williams, 2008; 126). The “pro-” in “prosumer” can be understood as both professional and productive consumer. Being a professional consumer means consumers wishing to contribute to the production process that may be required them to invest their knowledge, time and money in order to contribute to the production of new consumer goods. Aside, being productive consumer means that they are willing to make a productive contribution to industrial and commercial processes (Bruns, 2016: 1).

The early conceptions of prosumption that focused mainly on prosumer concern in physical form has shifted since the late 20th century. The substantial shift indicated by the change on prosumers success in the production on non-traditional content. The prosumers are now able to make greater contributions. It was driven by the popularization of Web 2.0 as the new wave of Web-based platforms and services that allowed for user customization, interactivity, and participation (Bruns, 2016: 2). Along with its development, the definitions of prosumption become more broadened and blurred. Many scholars try to make their own alternative.

Bruns (2016: 2) later proposed the terms produsages that emphasize on user-led content creations. Produsage realizes that participants are relatively active users, not merely passive consumer. Their role being influential and greater, thus later they are even considered as on par with original producers or makers rather than simply being prosumers. Regarding to our research topics, produsage is a common process occurred in the landscape of mobile game users or fans. Mobile game content could later be adopted into new contents by their fans. It will later turns out being a completely new content but without completely erasing the original content alongside main characteristics of said mobile game compositions such as

character, items or plot. They will somehow relate the produsage of new content as the alternative and complementary to the original properties of the mobile games. The resulting interplay between cultural translation and digital produsage can be seen in two pictures presented below, showcasing how official material co-exist with fan-made works

Both instances show the co-existence between official materials and fan-works and the due diligence of Fate/Grand Order fans in making or conceptualizing new works based from official materials. Fate/Grand Order primarily existed in the form of a mobile game in Japan supplemented by some official publications. Accompanying these official publications are *doujinshi* or fan-works based from official materials of the mobile game, often worked by Japanese fans. Western fans in turn becomes the cultural translators as well as digital produsages by translating these *doujinshi* and hosting them internationally on fan *manga* hosting websites. The actions are motivated not only to satisfy demand for additional content aside from the original mobile game (in respect to both *doujinshi* and official *manga* publication) but also to ingratiate themselves further in the mediascape of Fate/Grand Order and understands the embedded (and intended Asian values) within it through mass fan collaborations. This in turn also helped the mobile game to sell more commercially, even in areas such as United States that is far from Japan.





Picture 1. Pictured here are a page from the original publication of official FGO comic book (*manga*) only available in Japan (left) and its English fan-translated page circulated on fan manga hosting websites (right)

(Source Wataru, Rei (2019))


MangaDex Manga Follows Community Info

Manga Quick search Guest

Announcement (May-20): Spread the Love: Contest Winner!

Announcement (May-19): New Feature: Data saver option

Fate/Grand Order - Snowflake (Doujinshi)



**Title ID:** # 33730

**Alt name(s):**

**Author:** Nina Pastime

**Artist:** Nina Pastime

**Format:** Doujinshi Oneshot

**Rating:** ★ 8.08 ★ 8.67 ▲ 15

**Pub. status:** Completed

**Stats:** 6,123 141 1

**Description:** A Fate/Grand Order: Cosmos in the Lostbelt Kadok & Anastasia doujinshi.

**Reading progress:** Volume 0/? Chapter 0/?

**Actions:** Upload chapter Follow Report


MangaDex Manga Follows Community Info

Manga Quick search Guest

Announcement (May-20): Spread the Love: Contest Winner!

Announcement (May-19): New Feature: Data saver option

Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant - Variant Singularity III: A Stage of Corpse Hills and Bloody Rivers - Shimousanokuni: Showdown with the Seven Swordmaster Heroic Spirits



**Title ID:** # 34870

**Alt name(s):**

- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant - Eirei Kengou Nanaban Shoubu
- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant - Seven Duels of Swordmasters
- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant - The Tournament of the Seven Blade-Master Heroes
- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant - 英雄剣豪七番勝負
- Судьба/Великий Приказ - Эпопея Остатка- Турнир Семи Героев-Мастеров Меча

**Author:** TYPE-MOON

**Artist:** Wataru Rei

**Genre:** Action Adventure

**Rating:** ★ 8.44 ★ 8.71 ▲ 117

**Pub. status:** Ongoing

**Stats:** 112,675 3,468 99

**Description:** The year is 2016 a.d. Some time ago, humanity had escaped the path to peril. This tale takes place after that period. This is the tale of a hero once again~

**Related:**

- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant: Pseudo-Singularity II: Women of Agarthra (Prequel)
- Fate/Grand Order: Epic of Remnant: Pseudo-Singularity IV: The Forbidden Advent Garden, Salem - Heretical Salem (Sequel)

**Official:** Raw

**Retail:** Amazon.co.jp Bookwalker eBookJapan

**Information:** MangaUpdates AniList MyAnimeList

**Reading progress:** Volume 0/? Chapter 0/?

**Actions:** Upload chapter Follow Report

Picture 2. Pictured here are a fan-made comic book (*doujinshi*) from FGO (top) and an official comic book (*manga*) of Fate/Grand Order (bottom). Both are hosted on a fan manga hosting website Mangadex.com

(Source Nina, Kamabokodokoro (2018) (top) & Wataru,Rei (2019) (bottom))

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the interplay of both cultural translation and digital produsage pattern of mobile game consumers over the case of Fate/Grand Order showcases a successful bridging of Asian values onto Western audiences. Fans of the game poured and worked (in their imagined identity as a fan after being exposed to the FGO mediascape of translated culture and context) to produsage new content from official materials not only to capitalize on the expanded capabilities provided by the digital globalization, but also to ingratiate themselves with the inherent values and cultures within the mobile game itself. As cultural translation negotiated the visage of elements of said game (its text, pictures, etc) while maintaining the intended meaning and values embedded within, Asianization from the case of Fate/Grand Order in Western audiences can be considered as a success. This proves that foreign cultural acceptance can be done given the form of cultural translation and digital prosumption as the starting base for cross-cultural attraction and understanding. The authors outline that both process of digital prosumption and cultural translation as the necessary steps for future Asian cultural products (and subsequently Asianization) to thrive in Western-dominated global cultural market.

## Limitations and Recommendation for Further Research

This study is limited due to its highlight of only one particular case of mobile game as a cultural product. This limited the scope and depth of this research. The authors recommend further studies to inquire further on the scope and depth of the topic regarding Asianization measured in the success of other Asian cultural product acceptance in Western market, as well as hoping that this study will become a stimulus or a stepping stone towards a further study with broader scope and depth in this field of interest.

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