

Odyssey of the cultural narrative: Japan's cultural representation in Eiichiro Oda's *One Piece*

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Abstract

One Piece is a Japanese Manga series drawn by Eiichiro Oda and published serially in Shueisha's Weekly Shonen Jump magazine since July 1997 and continuing with the same popularity. It portrays the adventures of Monkey D. Luffy, who dreams to become the Pirate King. He gained the properties of rubber after eating a Devil Fruit and is exploring the Grand Line along with his crewmates(The Straw Hat Pirates) in search of the eponymous legendary treasure 'One Piece' left by the former Pirate King Gol D. Roger.

What makes this particular manga unique is Oda's representation of Japanese culture and tradition. He also uses some features similar to Ukiyo-e artworks, i.e., the woodblock art prints, which were targeted at the mass audience and also share thematic similarities. The influence of Ukiyo-e and Oda's love for Japanese art, along with its culture, folklore, and myths, is clearly seen in the ongoing Wano country arc. *One Piece* today has transcended the boundaries of manga, turning into a pop culture sensation in Japan.

In the research paper, to apply the analytical and descriptive methods to the research, the original work, as well as the secondary sources available in the form of criticism, will be used. In my research, I will also try to apply the perspective of Cultural Studies.

The paper will delineate with the available scholarship the subtle nuances of manga and its impact on Japanese culture. It will try to bring out the idea of cultural narrative and will focus on how the identity is shaped and defined by the memories, myths, and folktales associated with a country and its culture.

Keywords: Culture, Narration, Folklore, Ukiyo-e, cross-cultural literature

Most of the time, when we talk about stories, the plot, or even the famous characters, we usually tend to focus more on novels, movies, or even plays. You could be discussing Hamlet, the narrative of Great Expectations, but most often, we ignore a genre that is still not considered by many critics as a form of literature. Comics categorized by many as Popular Literature has not earned the same respect as other forms, but it has become a phenomenon all around the world. Comics have their own structure and their own technique, but they also weave a tale journeying the caricature of the world. Who has not heard about Captain America from Marvel Comics or Batman from DC Comics? While talking about the world of comics, both Marvel and DC Comics belongs from the U.S., but there also lies a world of excellent stories which can be found in Japanese comics or to use the precise term 'Manga'. You would have heard of Astro Boy, Naruto, Death Note, Tokyo Ghoul, or One Piece, but the question arises why they have become a global phenomenon and what makes these Manga stand out? Manga not only tell us great stories which are enjoyed by the readers of every age group, but they also present insight into Japan and its culture. Along with its growing popularity, readers all around are becoming conscious of the manga and anime of Japanese roots. This combination of the increased visibility and understanding of Japanese popular culture and foreign roots has prompted consumers to use the above-mentioned materials as a source of cultural data in Japan. People base their views on the images available to them of any particular culture and society: for Japanese culture, the most prominent images are anime, manga, fashion and other pop culture areas.

Looking at the history of Manga, it is said to have originated from scrolls dating back to the 12th century, but the word "manga" was not coined until the early 19th century with the publication of "Hokusai Manga." If you look at the individual kanji in the term 'Manga' (漫画), it can be translated into 'restrained images.' Katsushika Hokusai, a famous ukiyo-e painter from the Edo period (1603-1868) was the first one to use the word 'manga'. The Edo period's art left a rich legacy in Japanese comics. We see the rise of Otsu-e (大津絵) (folk art pictures) and Toba-e (鳥羽絵) (comical scroll pictures from the Kyoto region). Manga, according to Schodt (1991), could be looked at as a direct descendant of two more forms popularized during this period: Ukiyo-e (浮世絵) and Kibyōshi (黄表紙). Kibyōshi, identifiable by their yellow-backed covers, were popular mass-produced, inexpensive books. On the other hand, Ukiyo-e, or "pictures of the floating

world," is a Japanese woodblock print and painting type, as well as a genre of traditional folk art. During a period of repair in Horyuji Temple in 1935, etchings were found on the planks of the ceiling, which depicted "caricatures of people, animals, and grossly exaggerated phalli" (Ito). If you look at the way of storytelling in Japan, you will find the narrative structure focuses to a large extent on illustration. During the Edo period, Toba Ehan popularized the word manga, but the term was first used in 1798 to describe Santō Kyōden's picture book *Shiji no Yukikai*. Hokusai Manga, a fifteen-volume work by Katsushika Kokusai, popularized the term 'manga', but for modern readers, it would be difficult to realize it as manga. It gained fame for its humorous and sketchy style, narrating everyday situations with elements of satire. It was drawn in the Ukiyo-e style and differs from the wide eyes and eccentric hairstyles of characters in modern manga, but their realistic style was popular during the Edo Period. These works influenced other artists' depictions of Japanese culture and daily life. Dr Kinko Ito claims that "manga began permeating people's everyday lives, along with Giga Manga (funny picture ukiyo-e) and newspapers with illustrations" (Ito).

Manga's origins can be traced back to Japanese culture, but it rose to prominence in the post-World War II era, thanks in large part to the work of prolific manga artists like Osamu Tezuka, who created the manga series *Astro Boy*, which went on to become the first popular anime series, and Machiko Hasegawa, who created *Sazae-san*, which went on to become one of the most popular manga series (Schodt, 1986). Sharon Kinsella, author of *Adult Manga: Culture & Power in Contemporary Japanese Society*, argues that post-modern Manga growth was intensified after the 1960s as a result of political resistance and social opening. She also emphasised the effect of war experience and Manga use during the war on later Manga writers and readers. Osamu Tezuka revolutionized the art of manga by decompressing storylines. He was influenced by American animation, in particular, whose imprints are quite visible in his artwork. He started drawing mangas that were hundred or thousand pages long and incorporated different perspectives and visual effects, creating a 'cinematic technique'. Between 1950 to 1969, manga became a popular genre with a large number of avid readers, resulting in the creation of two marketing genres: *shōnen* manga for boys and *shōjo* manga for girls.

Before moving further, let us first understand the subtleties of manga and whether it is similar or different from comics. If we go through their definition, Cambridge English Dictionary defines comics as "a magazine or book that contains a set of stories told in pictures". It also defines manga as "Japanese comic books that tell stories in picture". So there could be a question of whether the only difference is their place of origin and language? But there are some profound differences. Manga is usually written and read from right to left in a vertical manner, while in comics it is

usually ordered from left to right. They are usually printed in black and white (with the exception of the cover art), containing more visual and fewer words as opposed to comics. They also have a longer storyline with a simplistic artwork in comparison to the comics, which have a more complex structure. Manga has a higher amount of 'aspect to aspect' and 'moment to moment' transitions creating a rhythm in the overall structure of the story. They tend to focus more on details making the readers read less in a way making manga faster to go through than comics. Every reader will see "a space that has been divided up, compartmentalized, a collection of juxtaposed frames," as Thierry Groensteen puts it when they open a comic or manga. Comic art's fundamental principle is the representation of its objects in sequences of fragmented images that are "separated ... and which are plastically and semantically over-determined by the fact of their coexistence in praesentia" (Groensteen 18). The cohabitation of pictures and texts, which is a key component of the medium's aesthetic appeal, shows this simultaneity of "wholeness" or spatial representation and "fragmentation" or sequential and segmented representation. To interpret the complete, possible meaning of the comic, the viewer can look at an entire page at once in a "synthetic global vision," but they must also perform a "moment-to-moment reading." (Groensteen 19).

Manga is particularly well-suited for an artistic response to and contemplation on the changes and problems that a modern, highly digitalized, and diverse world provides due to their extraordinary medial disposition, which is naturally defined by fragmentation. Since the "postcolonial shift," modern cultures have been regarded as hybrid and naturally fractured products rather than as sealed and homogenous national entities (Bhabha 1994). As a result, if we want to think of the modern world as "an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity," as Homi Bhabha suggests, a medium that can reflect on and perform the same kind of hybridity is required i.e., in the shape of a dynamic collage of various parts, a condition of intrinsic simultaneity of fragmentation and completeness.

It's nearly impossible to discuss the Japanese manga industry without discussing Eiichiro Oda, the creator and illustrator of the cultural phenomenon One Piece. One Piece is now one of the best-selling and most successful manga, and its success has earned Oda recognition as one of the manga artists who has added a new chapter to the genre's history.

Eiichiro Oda was born in the Japanese prefecture of Kumamoto in the year 1975. Dragon Ball by Akira Toriyama influenced him. He wanted to be a mangaka and earn money as, according to him, he would not be doing a "serious job." He was a big fan of the TV show Vicky the Viking, a European-coproduced anime that sparked his lifelong obsession with pirates, which he continued in

his most celebrated manga, *One Piece*.

He conceptualized a draft titles, ‘Romance Dawn,’ featuring the protagonist, Monkey D. Luffy. *Shonen Jump Summer Special* acknowledged its popularity leading to its publication. With positive feedback from fans, it led to the *Second Romance Dawn* draft which was published to critical acclaim. Oda’s *One Piece* was eventually serialized in *Weekly Shonen Jump* in May of 1997, and today it is one of the most popular manga with the sale of more than 470 million in print as of April 2020. Till today, it has been compiled into 97 tankobon volumes. Toei Animation adapted it into anime in 1999. Additionally, it has also been animated into fourteen animated films. Viz Media licensed the series for English language release in North America and the United Kingdom, while Madman Entertainment licensed it for release in Australia.

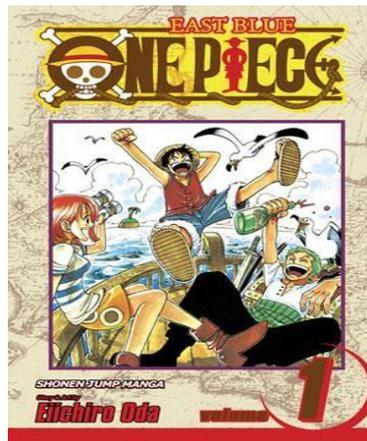


Fig. 1 Cover of One

Piecetankōbon volume 1

Veering from comedy to high-stakes drama, The plot revolves around an idealistic dreamer named Monkey D. Luffy, who leads the search for a legendary treasure known as the One Piece to become the Pirate King. The beauty of the narrative resides in its contradictions: exaggerated, cartoon-like graphics presents a complicated pirate world with its own myths, customs, and varied character. The novel incorporates fantasy aspects in addition to the well-developed characters and faux-historical plot difficulties filled with political intrigue: Luffy credits his piracy prowess to an unintentional intake of the magical Devil Fruits, which bestowed upon him the surprising ability to stretch his body like rubber. Influenced by the pirate Red Haired Shanks, he starts his journey to become the pirate king and find the titular treasure. The treasure ‘One Piece’ was left by Gold Roger, the greatest pirate who ever lived and the former pirate king. His last words, just before the execution by the world government, spurred the world of *One Piece* into an age of piracy, as

pirates from all around the world set sail for the Grand Line. "One Piece" is an unlikely mix of genres and techniques that come together to create something that is entertaining, engrossing, and much more than everything.

The series is not only recognized for its action sequences but also for its rich story and distinctive character designs. One Piece experiments with remarkable character and physical transformations, fantastic combat styles, and supernatural powers as a classic shōnen-manga aimed at young males. In this context, the so-called devil fruits play an important role in the story since they provide the eater with magical abilities, which often include a metamorphosis of the body's fundamental material. (Sasada 195-198). One Piece is a multidimensional case study in the art of the globalized age because of the combination of battle scenes, unique characters, and abilities that intrinsically suggest the aesthetics of cutting and fragmentation.

One Piece's plot is contained in a fictitious world, which includes its own geography, time, cultures and creatures. The reader follows Luffy as he grows into a hero and a famed pirate known for his distinctive straw hat, which also earns his crew the name "Straw Hat Pirates". Luffy and his motley crew demonstrate the classic shōnen themes of perseverance, victory, and friendship. However, it goes beyond traditional shōnen and tackles serious political issues by first using the series to create a massive planet ruled by a mysterious World Government. The Straw Hats face a variety of foes and difficulties while learning the secrets of the "World Government," its Navy, and the world's enigmatic past, not to mention the One Piece. During the Water Seven story arc, Luffy and his crew eventually face battle against the World Government, which is revealed to be a thinly camouflaged puppet for a small corrupt aristocratic clique whose forefathers ousted the previous empire. These lords allow slavery and exploitation of people under their dominion under the pretext of the World Government.

In the middle of this, the "Straw Hat Pirates," as well as other pirate gangs, scour the waters for opportunities to fulfil their ambitions. Despite the risk of being captured by the World Government, many in the One Piece universe believe the pirate lifestyle to be the most liberated because they are able to control their own means of subsistence rather than being forced to be a slave or live in poverty as a regular citizen. Despite the World Government's best efforts, a Golden Age of Pirates has formed, with resistance to oppressors at an all-time high.

Despite the fact that he calls himself a pirate, a moniker that conjures up images of violence and robbery, Luffy does not indulge in traditional pirate activities. He is not a murderer or a plunderer. He only steals when it's absolutely necessary, and he never does so violently. Luffy's main desire, aside from wanderlust, is for food. Luffy's driving force is the pleasure principle, according to

Freud. This is the driving force behind the Id, which means Luffy's need for pleasure is what keeps him going. His team exists not only to serve him but also to pursue their own personal goals.

"Luffy instructs one of his crew members to set fire to the flag hanging atop the courtroom tower" as an open declaration

Government as the Seven arc. This is revolutions and acts of Revolution in the late point, the World organization, with a



of war against the World series continues to the Water symbolic of real-world resistance, such as the French eighteenth century. Prior to this Political was mostly a good few exceptions, such as corrupt

military officers and government officials. Following this, it is revealed that in the world of One Piece, the World Government is effectively an authoritarian monarchy governed by the Five Elders, who report to a mystery entity who is later revealed to be *Im* but still shrouded in mystery. As the inner workings of the harsh and corrupt regime are revealed, the storylines of One Piece become "increasingly complex and political" from this point on. Organizations like the Shichibukai, a gang of seven known and powerful pirates given the privilege to "legitimate piracy" as long as they follow the World Government's commands, show how deeply ingrained corruption is.

Fig. 2 Wano, One Piece chapter 909 titled “*Seppuku*”

The Wano Country Arc is still underway and very significant. The Ninja-Pirate-Mink-Samurai Coalition trains for confrontation with Kaido, the Beast Pirates' Captain. We also see the tyrannical rule of the Shogun Orochi who has the backing of Kaido. Wano Arc has been set up closer to the cultural aspect of Japan with the structure of Kabuki Play. We get to know the back story of Kozuki Oden, the father of Momonosuke who is the only one to be able to injure Kaido.

There has also been a dramatic change in the world's power structure as we get to know that the Warlord system has been dissolved. The story is currently seeing the battle between the Beast Pirates and the alliance going on at Onigashima.

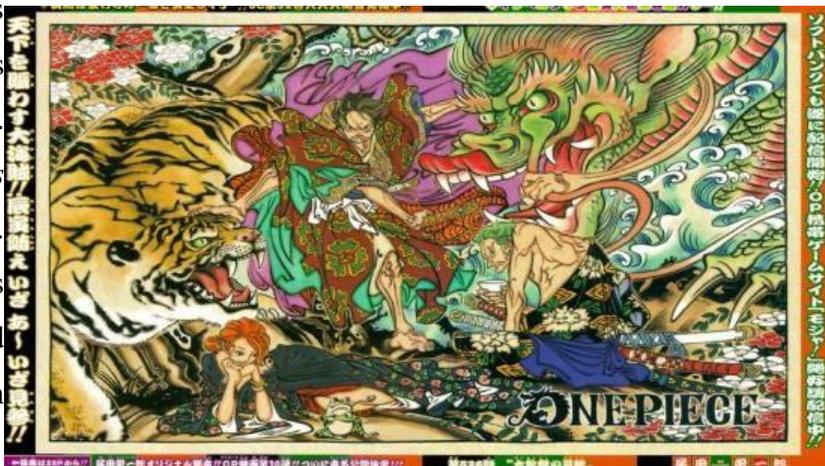
As the story has moved towards Wano arc, Samurai and swords comes in focus. Sword combat and swordsmanship are recurring and significant aspects throughout the One Piece series. Luffy's first companion, the swordsman Roronoa Zoro, who grew up mastering the art of sword fighting and has just one ambition in life: to become the world's finest swordsman, is featured prominently in the manga's first mini-arc. When Zoro appears in a combat scene, it typically means that there will be outstanding swordsmanship, cutting, and slicing. The character's design is based on the bushido, a prominent Japanese pop-cultural cliché depicting a disciplined, ambitious, and powerful samurai-warrior whose swordsmanship reaches otherworldly levels (Drazen 104-117). The manga provides a distinct discourse on swordsmanship via Zoro and other swordsmen, which mixes a theorization and aestheticization of sword-technique with societal issues like as moral ideals and gender definitions, among other things. This fundamental concept from samurai literature was adopted by Japanese popular culture, which produced standardized sets of traits that often identify "good swordsman" characters in manga, such as the conflation of cutting with awareness, virtue, and art production. In Nobuhiro Watsuki's series *Rurouni Kenshin*, the main character Himura Kenshin continually struggles with balancing the destructiveness and virtue of swordsmanship. Given Oda's previous work as Watsuki's assistant, it's possible that Zoro in *One Piece* is envisioned as a representation of the same discourse.

Oda uses the concept of the "writing sword" and indicates the media-reflective component of the sword aesthetic that he presents to the attentive reader by calling his principal warrior "Zoro." Samurai Kanjuro, an important character in Wano arc wields a sword that literally is a paintbrush that he can draw and create objects with. The significance of calligraphy as a manifestation of *bun* in the *bun-bu* dichotomy is alluded by this "samurai-artist." (Levine 168). Kanjuro is probably the most obvious embodiment of Oda's work's combination of swordsmanship and art, cutting and constructing, when combined with the primarily samurai-themed Wano arc. The dismemberment of objects is accompanied by their reassembling in space and the formation of new entities that, because to the infinite potentiality of Law's power, stay in a liminal condition between dismemberment and intactness. The paintbrush-sword alludes once again to manga's spatial and sequential art, which depicts disintegration while yet being complete.

Surrealism and its continual search for new methods of expression in a rapidly changing "mediascape" and socio-cultural reality are heavily impacted by One Piece's aesthetic of fragmentation (Harris). Manga has strong roots in Japanese society, so it's not unexpected that it has this effect on its readers. Folklore and history are frequently used as settings for stories or as narrative devices, not to mention the plethora of works that are distinguished by their focus on ordinary, daily life. Manga not only give a verbal model of Japanese society, but also a visual one, through forms of salutation and names. When it comes to Oda's writing, his strange sense of humour and mixing humour with drama are the distinguishing features of One Piece, which has captivated readers for decades. He has a unique art style with a lot of detail and intricate panels. He, like many other mangakas, dislikes using digital technologies. He also prefers to use black paint instead of grey bricks, resulting in art that is almost entirely black and white with no greytone. The graphic style of One Piece is recognized for a plethora of odd character designs that grew progressively bloated as the series proceeded.

Fig. 3 Colour spread pf chapter 526 of *One Piece* Straw HatPirated Monkey D. Luffy, Roronoa Zoro, and Nami are all included in this Yakuzzatattoo.

One Piece's building is both J.R.R. of the Rings George R.R. of Thrones. His his art and seen through incorporates



overall world-reminiscent of Tolkein's Lord of the Rings and George R.R. Martin's Game of Thrones. His dedication to his storyline can be seen through the way he incorporates

Japanese culture, folklore, and traditions in his work. As mentioned before, he also takes inspiration from Ukiyo-e, the woodblock prints which can be seen throughout *One Piece*. One can find many similarities between ukiyo-e and present manga works; both of them are affordable and targeted at the mass audience along with thematic similarities as both of them explores themes of violence, erotica, the struggle between power and powerless, supernatural phenomena and Japanesefolklore.



Fig. 4 Sakoku policy (“Closed Country”)

Oda's masterful use of Japanese art, as well as his ukiyo-e influence, can be seen in the ongoing "Wano Country Arc." ‘Wa’ is the oldest recorded name of Japan and Oda took inspiration from Japanese history. It is ruled by a Shogun and is separated from the rest of the world (Sakoku Policy) due to fear of false external powers and a desire to preserve the status quo, similar to Feudal Japan. He focuses his narrative on the key themes that are also found in ukiyo-e. We see samurai and their sense of humour, duty, loyalty, and swordsmanship; the beautiful oiran and geisha, the Japanese architectures such as Shinto shrines, costumes such as Kimono, samurai armor, traditional music instruments and of course mythologies such as Yamata no Orochi, an 8-headed serpent, ‘The Tale of Momotaro’ and natural landmarks like Mt. Fuji.

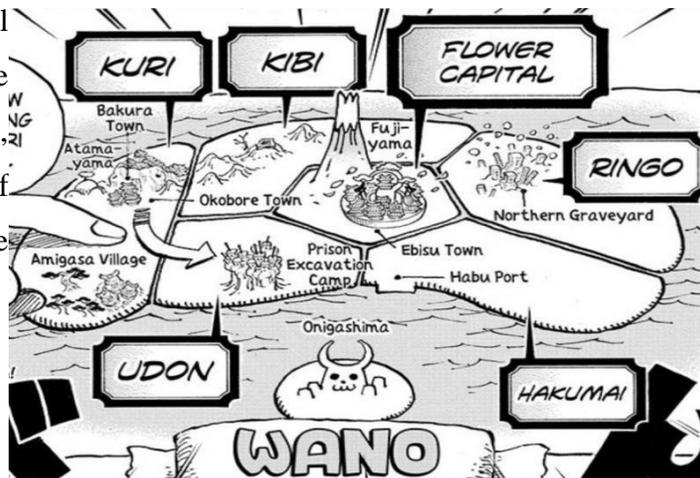


Fig. 5 Mt Fuji can be seen in the middle of this map of Wano's regions.

Oda discusses Wano's rare clouds in one of his SBS panels.:

“Those are clouds! The clouds are in the air! Wano’s atmosphere is very different from other places. I wanted that ukiyo-e vibe for Wano!” (SBS, volume93)

When Luffy and his crew attempt to reach Wano, they get drawn into a whirlpool in one of the first scenes of the Wano arc. It shows the influence of Hokusai's cherished masterpiece "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" and is reminiscent of it.



Fig. 6 Print at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig. 7 One Piece chapter 910 titled “Onward to Wano”

Oda has also been influenced by the traditional Kabuki play which forms the base of the Wano Arc. There is also a One Piece Kabuki show called ‘Super Kabuki One Piece’ which debuted in 2015. Oda's portrayal of Wano's natives is reminiscent of ukiyo-e prints portraying Kabuki performers. Oda also depicts the traditional bathhouses from feudal Japan which is still common in Japan. In chapter 935 titled ‘Queen,’ we see the main female characters Nami and Robin are washed by Octopi which once again reminds us of Hokusai’s masterpiece “The Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife” (Hokusai, 1814).



Fig. 8 One Piece Chapter 935 titled "Queen"



Fig. 9 concubine Okaru-Kunisada 1852



Fig. 10 O-Tsuru introduced in One Piecechapter

913 titled "Tsuru Repays the Favour"

Oda has constructed the Wano Arc based on the traditional Kabuki Play where the first act or *Jo* is a slow opening presenting to us different characters and the setting. The events speed up from *Ha* or second to fourth act with the third act ending up in a tragedy and the fourth being a straight-up battle. The fifth and final act, *Kyu* has a satisfying conclusion. Looking at Wano with the Kabuki structure in mind, the *Jo* or the first act starts with chapter 909 titled “Seppuku” where Oda introduces us to Straw Hats who are under cover in Wano but, in true essence, the chapter 911 titled “A Great Adventure in the Land of the Samurai” opens up the play. The *Jo* or the first arc culminates with Luffy alongside Kid, another prisoner of Kaido in the also lets us understand that about to begin. Now, the Oda reveals a lot of Wano, Oden, and how all ends with chapter 958 Port” beginning the third the alliance is on their way where the Fire Festival is act is ongoing and as the suggest that the third act ends up with a tragedy, many readers have assumed that the raid is going to fail. It will be futile to comment as it showcases the wizardry of Oda and his genius. As a writer, he holds on to the strings of each and every narrative of the story revealing smaller details to catch the attention of the readers.



CHAPTER 924: HA*



EIICHIRO ODA

T/N: THE TITLE IS LIKELY A REFERENCE WITHIN THE CHAPTER, BUT POSSIBLY ALSO A REFERENCE TO THE PHRASE JO-HA-KYU, WHICH ROUGHLY TRANSLATED TO "BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END". THIS IS A CONCEPT USED COMMONLY IN VARIOUS TRADITIONAL ARTS (INCLUDING KABUKI ACTS) WHICH SIGNIFY THE DIFFERENT ACTS/ACTS.

being thrown in a prison Supernova who is also the chapter titled ‘Ha’ which *Ha* or the second act is story moves quickly and background regarding it begins. The second act titled “The Promised act of the play in which to raiding Onigashima taking place. As the third structure of Kabuki Plays

Fig. 11 One Piece cover page chapter titled “Ha”

The masterful use of Japanese history and tradition along with weaving the cultural aspects of narrative shows the wizardry of Oda. He is able to weave the Japanese history and mythology together making the world of Wano feel quite similar to Japan but being different at the same time making it difficult to recognize at once. It's like he is leaving bits and pieces as small references for the readers so that they can connect it with Japanese history and culture and try to guess what's going to happen next?

If you look at the very conflict between Kaido and Momonosuke, it is inspired by history of Momotarō (桃太郎, "PeachBoy"), a famous Japanese folk hero. Oda has brilliantly weaved the folklore in the plot of One Piece. If we talk about this particular folklore, it's a story of a boy who was found by an old couple living in a small village. They named him Momotaro who grew up to become the strongest man in the village. He plans to go to Onigashima Island to scare away some oni (supernatural beings, ogres, or trolls in Japanese folklore) that are terrorising the local villagers. The oni is a huge, very strong creature having a humanoid shape and carries an iron club called Kanabo. His parents are terrified. He begs their permission to leave, so the old woman prepared kibidango (Japanese dumplings) for him to take on his trip. On his way, he meets a dog who agrees to help Momotaro in return for the kibidango. A pheasant and a monkey both do the same thing. After reaching the island and eating the kibidango, they grew strong and defeated the oni making them promise never to attack the village.

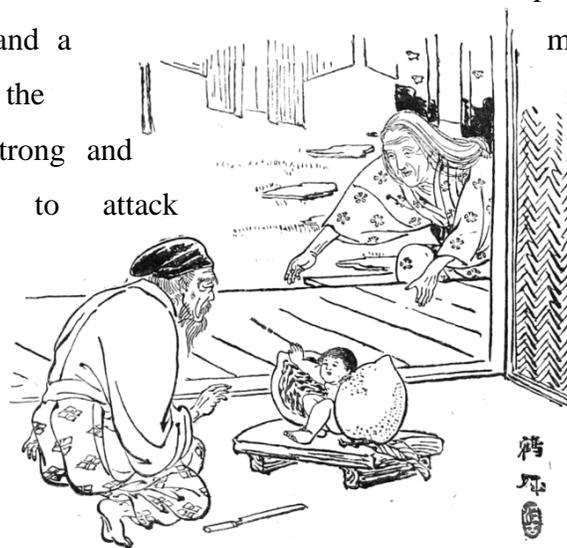


Fig. 12
emerging

Momotarō
from a peach

Fig. 13 Momotaro swinging the magic mallet (uchide no kozuchi),

with his animal companions.—Santō-an Kyōden (Santō

Kyōden). *Ehon takara no nanakusa* (1804)

Now, this particular folklore has been brilliantly used by Oda. If we compare the mythic element of the folklore with the tale, we can see Kozuki Momonosuke represents Momotaro, Kaido represents King of the Oni, Inuarashi represents the Talking dog, and Luffy represents Talking Monkey. Marco represents the Talking Pheasant. Similar to Kanabo, Kaido has a Mace. We also know that different characters in One Piece have the ability of the devil fruits, and O-Tama in One Piece has eaten an unnamed Paramecia-type Devil Fruit, which helps her to 'dango' from her cheeks.

Yamata no Orochi is a mythical Japanese dragon/serpent with eight heads and eight tails. Susanoo, the Shinto storm Deity, is banished from Heaven for deceiving his sister Amaterasu, the sun goddess, and sees a couple and their daughter weeping by the river. They express their sorrow to him by describing that Orochi visits them every year to devour one of their children. Kushinada, their eighth and final sibling, must be given up this year. Susanoo promises Kushinada marriage to save her. As she agrees, he turns her into a comb and tells her parents to make sake, refine it eight times, and build an enclosure with eight gates, each with a vat of sake. When Orochi enters, he is drawn in by the sake, and after drinking, he becomes helpless and disoriented, helping Susanoo to easily slay it. Susanoo finds a great sword, Kusanagi, as he cuts the beast and presents it to Amaterasu as a reward to end their conflict. Oda has once again used this particular myth where Kurozumi Orochi represents Yamata No Orochi (introduced in chapter 932 titled 'The Shogun of The Wano Country: Kurozumi Orochi'); Kozuki Hiyori represents Kushinada (introduced in chapter 928 titled 'The Courtesan Komurasaki Takes the Stage'). Oda brilliantly connects the small details and for the Japanese readers, it becomes easier to connect with their folklores.

In Japanese mythology, Hyakki Yagyō (literally, "Night Parade of One Hundred Demons") is an idiom. It refers to an uncontrollable army of mythical beings known as oni and yōkai marching through the streets of Japan at night, headed by Nuarihyon, a demon that cannot be captured. The Beast Pirates and especially the Numbers represent the riot nature of Hyakki Yagyō. Many stories related to Hyakki Yagyō originated in a Shinto Fire Festival about the Kumano Mountains. It is said that all the Gods are supposed to meet on this mountain once a year. Now, look at how Oda connects this myth with the raid on Onigashima. The Fire Festival is mentioned in chapter 958, titled 'The Promised Port'. The freed peasant Samurai marches during the Fire

Festival guided by Denjiro, one of the Nine Scabbards who disguises as Kyoshiro and gains the trust of Kurozumi Orochi, who in the end helps the alliance in raiding Onigashima.

Oda also uses the myth surrounding the two historical figures in Japan, Minamoto Yoshitsune and Benkei. The story spans the whole Ringo region becoming the source material for Onimaru and the Shimotsuki clan. Benkei was a twelfth-century Japanese warrior monk. There are many myths and legends related to him exaggerating his stature. On the other hand, Minamoto Yoshitsune, a brilliant warrior who lived from 1159 to 1189 is the best-loved historical figure in Japan. Yoshitsune's father, Minamoto Yoshishoma was killed by Taira Kiyomori in 1160 and he spared Yoshitsune putting him in a monastery in Kyoto. According to the legends, it was near this monastery on the Goyo Bridge where Yoshitsune met Benkei. The story maintains that Benkei would hide under the Goyo Bridge and challenge all who pass for a swordfight. He would keep the swords of those he defeated, letting him to collect more than 999 swords. He was in search of one-thousandth swords when he encountered Yoshitsune. These two characters' adventures have given birth to many myths and stories becoming part of folklore and Japanese culture which also formed the theme of Kabuki plays. Now, look at the recurring way in which incorporates this tale in the Wano arc. Onimaru/Gyukimaru represents Benkei (chapter 937 titled 'Gyukimaru on Oihagi Bridge') and Ushimaru Shimotsuki represents Minamoto Yoshitsune (mentioned in chapter 953 titled 'once upon a fox'). Now, Oda does not stop here and adds Onimaru transforming into Gyukimaru based on the fox spirits of Japanese folklore, which can shape-shift into human form among other abilities. The Nine Red scabbards have been inspired from the Forty-seven Ronin, also known as the Ako incident, where a band of leaderless samurai avenged the death of their master.

There are several other small details that, when looked at from a larger perspective, connect the cultural roots and tradition which Oda had incorporated into *One Piece* and especially in the Wano Arc. He is able to reflect the social and political world of Japan through the multi-layered narratives in Wano. He is able to construct a parallel narrative in regard to Japanese folklore and myths. The capacity of cross-cultural literature to transfer the reader to the work's original culture, allowing them to see and virtually experience the culture the text is founded in, in the hopes of improving awareness and knowledge of that society, is what distinguishes it. With readers all around the world, many young people are able to connect with Japan, piquing their interest in the history and the Japanese Language. We know that the cultural products are rooted in cultural contexts but transcend the cultural boundaries by incorporating global elements.

Manga has the potential to be a wonderful source of cultural information, both aesthetically and verbally. Its effect is ubiquitous, and it is already having a significant impact on pop culture and people's perceptions of Japan. "Instead, [they] will be increasingly more able to use the foreign culture as a frame of reference, that is, perceive and interpret it in terms of itself" (Witte 1994, 71).

If you look at the world of *One Piece*, you will find many inspirations and references from all over the world. The whole Dressrosa Arc is based on Spain, and the Corrida Colosseum is based on the colosseum from Ancient Greece. Let me give you another example. Law's first name 'Trafalgar' is a reference to the battle of Trafalgar, which took place in 1805. If we look at this full name Trafalgar D. Water Law, the last words quite resemble Waterloo and once again indirectly references the Battle of Waterloo in which Napoleon was defeated. Kaido could symbolically represent Napoleon, and Law will play a major role in his downfall. If you go through, you will find that he allied with Luffy in Punk Hazard to take down Kaido, one of the Four Emperors. Many characters in *One Piece* are named after (in) famous European pirates, which helps to create an internationally shared universal culture by connecting viewers and narratives across regional borders.

Literature is often consolidated in cultural contexts and refers, among other subjects, to folk stories, mythology, religion and history, which leads to a subtle yet vital rhythm of cultural material that supports the characters' main narrative and motive. Information on the structure, pressures and issues of society, literary works may also often be gained and are at times the main focus. Manga is like novels or short stories and is as ingrained in the cultural background of Japan. Manga is a kind of Japanese literature. Literature not only illustrates and reflects the culture from which it comes but also gives insights into the reasoning and belief systems of people whose outlooks and life experiences may be far different from our own" (Lo 2001, 84). It may be argued that manga provides cultural knowledge even more effectively, given that manga has a mostly visual description which allows the reader to study bodily language, mannerisms and the environment and popular locales, such as schools or streets. Today's students are of a different sort. They've grown up with *Pokemon*, *Naruto*, and *One Piece*, and their attitude toward Japanese culture could not be more detached, given that a desire to learn the language is frequently motivated by a desire to learn the culture. They are pop culture enthusiasts who are fascinated by Japanese media and want to learn more about the culture and language that surrounds it. (Manes 2005).

Oda's manga exhibits the aesthetic potential of an art form that utilizes multidimensional global cultural flows and defines meaning production as a dynamic process of creating and deconstructing fragmented components through its media-reflective discourse on cutting and fragmentation. Though *One Piece* contains unique characteristics which represent Japanese culture, but more than that, it becomes a mixture of both indigenous and global culture. In today's Japan, manga has become a phenomenon, and its impact could be seen in every sector of Japanese culture. The Straw Hat Pirates are an example of a community-centered culture in Japan, where people support others in order to improve society. Luffy's ambition is to become King of the Pirates, Zoro's ambition is

to become the best swordsman, and similarly, other straw hats have their own dream, but they are all together helping each other in achieving their goals. Oda's brilliance in storytelling not only entertains us but lets us find deeper meaning transforming the story as a puzzle. It helps us in understanding the Japanese culture and the cultural aspects that have remained over time. *One Piece* has evolved beyond the confines of manga to become a pop culture sensation in Japan, leaving its imprints all over the globe.

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