

Historical Representation of Kamakura Era Samurai in *Ghost of Tsushima*

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ABSTRACT

Through interactive venues like video games, the evolution of digital media has changed the perspective of history and culture. *Ghost of Tsushima*, a game set during the Mongol invasion of Japan in the 13th century, is a prime example of this. This study looks at how the game has shown the ideals and customs of samurai throughout time. Qualitative technique is used by the study to examine how stories, graphics, and symbols are utilized to demonstrate and explain ideas. Findings suggest the game emphasizes major ideals like honor, allegiance, and the difficult moral quandaries faced by samurai by blending real events with fictitious narrative to present Japanese history. Furthermore, the game enhances the player's storytelling experience by fusing philosophical ideas with natural imagery to use Japanese literary aesthetics. Though some historical features have been simplified, the game is still a well-liked method of presenting Japanese culture to people throughout the world. Thus, video games can be understood as a new medium for historical and literary representation in the digital era.

Keywords: *Historical Representation, Samurai, Japanese Literature, Digital Media, Ghost Of Tsushima*

INTRODUCTION

This occasion is a significant component of Japanese history from the Kamakura period, during which Mongol forces attempted to occupy Japanese territory (Turnbull, 2017). The game draws on this past to provide a narrative that combines actual events with compelling storytelling, hence facilitating modern players' connection with and grasp.

The protagonist of this game is shown as a samurai wrestling with a moral dilemma between following the samurai code of honor or using more practical battle tactics. This struggle is related to the idea of bushido, which was typically regarded as the moral code that samurais adhered to, emphasizing virtues like respect, loyalty, and bravery (Benesch, 2016). According to certain earlier research, the notion of bushido we know now largely originated from books published in current decades. It does not accurately depict what real samurai did during the Kamakura era (Ikegami, 2017).

In addition to historical components, the game includes a number of visual aspects of Japanese literature, including meditations on nature and haiku poetry. As Shirane observed in 2018, nature is frequently employed as a metaphor in Japanese literature to reflect profoundly on life and human experiences. Adding these components to the game's regulations allows *Ghost of Tsushima* to present a narrative about culture as well as combat.

Literary works are tightly linked to the social life of a community since the narratives they present typically reflect events occurring in society at the period. Therefore, literary works may be regarded as a reflection of the lives experienced by both society and the authors themselves (Lestari, Arianningsih, & Febrianty, 2017). The purpose of this research is to investigate how the digital game production of *Ghost of Tsushima* portrays samurai history and Japanese literary sensibilities.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodologies and a descriptive-analytical approach underpin this research. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to investigate the deeper meanings and symbols present in the game's narrative and images (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The video game *Ghost of Tsushima*, which came out in 2020, is the focus of this research. Close observation of the game, analysis of the dialogue and storylines, and investigation of books and publications on samurai history and depictions of Japanese culture in films, television shows, and other popular media yielded research data.

By first pinpointing the components of historical representation inside the game then contrasting them with pertinent historical sources, data analysis was carried out. The study also looked at the Japanese literary components used in the game's narrative, including the use of haiku poetry and nature symbolism.

DISCUSSION

Historical Representation of the Mongol Invasion

According to the analysis findings, the main narrative basis for the game *Ghost of Tsushima* is the Mongol invasion. The Mongol invasion of Japan in 1274 is a historic event mentioned in numerous Japanese and East Asian historical sources (Turnbull, 2017). This incident is shown in the game as a fierce struggle between Mongol forces and the samurai defending Tsushima Island. Though most of the game's characters are created, the utilization of this historical backdrop gives the narrative being presented a realistic environment. This shows how modern viewers may be introduced to history via video games, which is a common medium (Chapman, 2019). We can see at Figure 1 and Figure 2 to see a similarity between history and *Ghost of Tsushima*

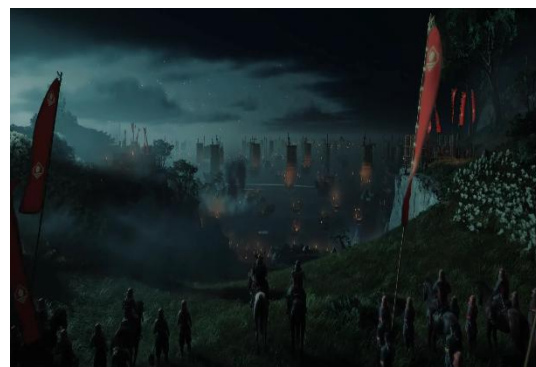


Figure 1. Illustration of the Mongol invasion of Tsushima Island. (Source: Wawasan Sejarah) .

Figure 2. The first time the Mongols landed on Tsushima Island. (Source: *Ghost of Tsushima*, 2020) .

Moral Conflict and Samurai Values

The main idea that comes up in the game is the struggle between old samurai ways and more practical approaches to fighting. The main character has to give up some old samurai beliefs in order to save his people from the Mongols attacking. This conflict highlights the debate over changing cultural values during a crisis. In historical

studies, it's clear that samurai values changed over time as Japan's society and politics evolved, as noted by Ikegami in 2017.

We can see at figure 3 and 4 to see how similar the game and the real one.



Figure 3. The main character (Jin Sakai) wearing the "Ghost" attire while performing stealth kills. (Source: *Ghost of Tsushima*, 2020).



Figure 4. Samurai ethics in a duel, specifically one-on-one combat. (Source: *Ghost of Tsushima*, 2020).

Japanese Literary Aesthetics in the Game

Besides its historical elements, the game also includes many beautiful aspects from Japanese literature. Players can choose elements found in the game's surroundings to write haiku poems. These features generate a pensive atmosphere typical of classic Japanese literature.

In the Japanese literary canon, nature is frequently seen as a catalyst for philosophical contemplation on human life. As Shirane noted in 2018, the game uses natural settings not just as a beautiful backdrop but also as a crucial component of a narrative linked to Japanese culture.



Figure 5. Jin Sakai reflecting to make and compose the haiku poetry when he surrounding natural atmosphere and medication. (Source: *Ghost of Tsushima*, 2020)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research demonstrates how digital media might help *Ghost of Tsushima* to portray Japanese history and

literature. The game integrates the historical background of the Mongol invasion with artistic representations of samurai ideals and Japanese literary sensibility. Although there are some historical simplifications, the game nevertheless presents a powerful and fascinating narrative that feels authentic and compelling. Sharing Japanese history and culture with people all around the world via video games is an interesting and engaging approach. Future research could explore more deeply the influence of video games on the next generation's knowledge of history and cultural identity.

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