The origin of the media mix in Japan in a media ecological perspective: examining the situation from 1915 to 1945

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Abstract

The present study examines the origins of the phenomenon called media-mix in Japan. Instead of focusing on the 1980s and later years, when Japanese media publishing and entertainment companies consciously use this term, the present study focuses on the early stages of evolution of both comic and animations industry. We propose a holistic approach inspired by media ecology theory, in order to verify how the strategy of companies taking their IPs across multiple media platforms and merchandises changed during these eras. By closely examining five cases, namely, *Imokawa Mukuzo* (1915), *Sho-chan no Boken* (1923), *Nonki na Tosan* (1923), *Norakuro* (1931) and *Fuku-chan* (1936), this paper traces the changes of the media environment as these IPs are taken across different media platforms and merchandises. Furthermore, the sentiment and regulations toward these media significantly affect the outcome and transmedial strategy adopted by these IPs during this era. Moreover, we argue that part of the transmedial strategy for intellectual properties that emerged in the 1930s, such as the *Norakuro* and *Fuku-chan* series, resemble today's Japan's media mix.

Introduction

Thus far, transmedial phenomena in Japan have been scrutinized either as a single case study or as comparative case studies of related intellectual property (hereafter called IP) mostly focusing on modern days, except for Otsuka's research on such practices in relation to war propaganda during World War II (Otsuka, 2018). A majority of this research has preferred the term 'media' mix', since it is extensively used by both Japanese industrial practitioners and scholars alike to describe Japanese IPs transmedial phenomena.

These works have an inductive approach to the interpretation of transmedial phenomena (aka media mix, henceforth called media mix) in relation to Japan's socio-political and cultural characteristics. Moreover, the media mix conversation is often centered around anime, which was understandably linked to the time when the term was becoming widespread in the 80s. In this article, we argue that we can look even further back in time to gain some insight into media mix phenomena. To our knowledge, there has not yet been a holistic approach to analyzing these phenomena by closely examining the environmental changes in the media industries since the Meiji Restoration, when modern printing technologies, as well as a range of new products/services were introduced from the West. Here, we understand the media environment as the sum of media technologies available at any given time. Looking at the introduction of new media and the modifications in how old media are used is thus crucial to understanding the evolution of the media industries and their cultural impact. This perspective is often illustrated by pointing to Walter Ong's study of the impact of the introduction of written culture on orality (1982), and Elizabeth Eisenstein's analysis of the literacy explosion that followed the introduction of the printing press (1979). Both authors are often considered founding figures of the media ecology perspective, which inspires us here to ask questions as to the very early media changes and cultural innovations that eventually gave way to the media mix phenomenon.

In Japan's case, media environment changes have been deep and had an international impact, particularly during the last century or so. With the acceleration of globalization in the media landscape, Japanese IPs have become more widespread among people as they can be distributed across multiple media platforms. Thus, it is essential to know how media mix practices emerged and developed in today's media environment. Therefore, we propose to examine the origins of the Japanese media mix in relation to the modernization of media in Japan. We are by no means the first to suggest that an ecological perspective might be helpful in this endeavor, as several scholars have begun thinking in this direction in relation to Japanese media. For instance, Steinberg and Zahlten note in their recent edited volume on *Media Theory in Japan*, that "media make us think about more than classically conceived modes of communication— they force us to examine the context and environment in which they not only operate but also cocreate" (Steinberg and Zahlten, 2017). The approach and the cases we present here contribute to this emerging field.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK-TRANSMEDIALITY

We understand the concept of media mix from within the more overarching theoretical category of transmediality. The idea of transmediality has been examined in multiple disciplines since 2003 when Jenkins coined the term'transmedia storytelling' (Jenkins,2003). In the meantime, several scholars have examined the characteristics of the media mix in Japan to determine the similarities and differences between the features of these two terms (Steinberg 2012; Otsuka, 2014; Nakamura and Tosca 2019).

In our previous work on media mix in Japan, we have focused on the emergence of media mix franchises, mainly through the examination of the Gundam franchise (Nakamura and Tosca, 2019). Even though we haven't previously worked from an explicit ecological point of view, our analysis was very much focused on finding points of inflection or change in the evolution of the franchise, as various products were adapted to different platforms. In particular, we have interrogated the idea of consistency in the overall narrative universe as a defining point in transmedia storytelling practices. We found that in many cases, the strategic degree of freedom in Japanese media mixes is much more significant than in Western transmedial franchises. A multiplicity of stories develops within the franchise, only retaining consistency in relation to a basic archetype such as the designs of characters, naming etc. (Nakamura and Tosca, 2019). By so doing, the IP holders intend to retain enthusiastic fans as well as gain newcomers simultaneously. Moreover, we concluded that the perspectives of transmedia storytelling and media mix should not be isolated as belonging to either Hollywood productions or Japanese ones. Still, the story development approaches are selected as a strategic choice and thus complement one another. Our framework builds upon Steinberg's distinction between convergent and divergent media practices. The term 'convergent' is used for the methods which extend the media franchise based on coherent additive complexity within a story universe and 'divergent' for those approaches that create new products to expand the boundary on which the franchise unfolds. The ultimate purpose of both approaches is the same: to extend the longevity of the franchise. The means of achieving this purpose, however, are different. Convergent approaches are deployed to enrich the story experience and enhance spectators' engagement and immersion into a unified and coherent fictional universe.

On the other hand, divergent approaches are intended to provide more entry points of the franchise to potential spectators while providing more variation to the existing fan base. Various studies revealed that both approaches had been implemented in media franchises from Hollywood as well. For instance, the Star Wars franchise, particularly in those eras before the involvement of Disney, is not "a unified and cohesive storyworld" (Guynes and Hassler-Forest 2018, 12), but "the product of constantly shifting creative, industrial, and reception practices" (Ibid). They share their insight as follows.

These essays illustrate that "Star Wars, "and "transmedia storytelling" must be understood as *complex and contradictory* terms that are undergoing constant redefinition (Guynes and Hassler-Forest 2018, 12).

In our common project, we would now like to build upon our earlier content-oriented approach to investigating change in transmedial franchises/media mixes from a more holistic perspective. As Lamarre notes in *The Anime Ecology*, it is not enough with a combinatory perspective that deals with mobilizing components (Lamarre 2018, 26). He proposes to use a media ecology framework to deal with the different energies and flows that affect media, "it becomes clear that something like media mix depends on a site of encounter between polarized infrastructural tendencies, which makes for a charge running through the components and provisionally ordering them" (ibid.). We also think that it could be advantageous to go back in time before the term "media mix" was widespread and investigate media environment changes. This article will pay particular attention to prominent intellectual property that emerged from Japan, since the current status of Japanese media franchises are unique enough to coin the term "media mix" to describe their practices. Japanese games and anime and their global presence are thought to be alternatives to Hollywood models (Jenkins 2003; Allison 2006), but their origins can be traced far back and in interplay with Western formats, as we will see. The idea of tracking changes is here a lens to become aware of the tensions between the different platforms, the audience reactions, and the industry.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK-MEDIA ECOLOGY

To interrogate the origins of the media mix in Japan, we will closely examine the environmental revolution surrounding early media in Japan, applying the conceptual framework of media ecology. This term had been used before, but it was Neil Postman who clearly articulated a definition as "the study of media as environments" (1970, 162). It became consolidated in the seminars regarding media ecology that were offered at New York University in 1976-1977 (Levinson, 2000). The concept, then became subject to serious scrutiny during the time of media convergence. Such endeavors are represented by the establishment of the Media Ecology Association, "dedicated to promoting the study, research, criticism, and application of media ecology in educational, industry, political, civic, social, cultural, and artistic contexts" (The Media Ecology Association, hereafter the MEA) in 1999. Media ecology is not a homogeneous school of thought, but rather an overarching metaphor that can cover a rather diverse body of work preoccupied with the cultural impact of media in society, which can also be traced back to the works mentioned earlier by Eisenstein and Ong. It is impossible to do it justice here, but there are extensive compilation works that offer a good overview (see Lum 2006, Cali 2017). Together with Postman, the founding of this paradigm can also be attributed to Marshall McLuhan, (inspired by Innis, Ong among others). Both researchers were preoccupied with the specificity of media practices, with how each medium shapes a particular form of communication and cultural reality. This has been both inspiring and controversial, as the same framework that has allowed scholars to focus on the possibilities and limitations of

each media format can, when taken to its extreme, encourage different forms of technological determinism. However, if we make an effort to always consider media practices in their wider context (political, economic, human, artistic etc.), the media as environment metaphor can be a powerful heuristic tool to describe the origins and evolution of Japanese media franchises from 1915 on, when the first Japanese comic character, which was adapted to animation short film, was born, to 1945 at the end of World War II.

Scolari has, in recent years, updated the metaphorical approach to the discussions about media environments. In his view, communication technologies create environments (2012, 207) that can be studied for their structure, content, and impact on people. Media can be understood as species that "live in the same ecosystem and establish relationships between "them (Scolari, 2012, 209). Of course, he is not talking about actual living beings. Still, the idea of species can also be productive in terms of platform and genre variations, where we could, for example, talk about family relations. This interpretation of the definition is also crucial, considering that the present study also tries to clarify how one IP is expanded, acting upon a given culture and the socio-political context in Japan. Thus, our focus for the cases we have chosen is naturally inclined to examine how the differences in communication technologies that create media environments impact how products are conceived and distributed, and how IPs released in multiple media platforms establish relationships. The advantage of the ecological perspective is that it allows us to lift us from the individual text/content analysis and focus on the relationships.

While we take a starting point in the fundamental definition of media ecology as "the study of media as environments", further clarification is necessary to operationalize this conceptual framework and apply it to the media franchises in Japan. Many of the writings in this field remain at the theoretical level, as it is difficult to operationalize these metaphors beyond considerations about affordances. However, it is necessary to become more concrete. We have therefore been inspired by Cali's mapping of themes in media ecology (consciousness, technology, change, balance, environment, culture, interconnectedness, species, evolution, interface, hybridization) (Cali, 2017) to thematize the kinds of changes in the media environment related to our exemplary cases. The catalyzer behind our analysis is the idea of change, central to a media ecology understanding, because every time a disruption occurs, the system becomes visible. Our intention here is to throw light upon the communicative affordances of each medium, the status of the wider ecosystem of creative industries and their working practices, the links to audience behaviour (not always predictable) and the role of the distribution channels or even the legal system, (where issues such as censorship can be of great significance to how media evolve).

CASE ANALYSIS METHOD

We will attempt to trace the early phase of Japan's media mix from the era when two essential medium expressions entered the scene: comics and animations. We will zoom into a few critical cases of media franchises, which were released from multiple media platforms, described in chronological order until 1945, along with the trace of

changes in the media ecology during these periods. Our analysis, for the present study, attempts to scrutinize how changes in the media ecology caused the management side of the IP holders to shape and present the media franchises in their attempt to meet the needs and wants of potential viewers amid changing times. Thus, we hope to reveal some clues to Japan's media ecology''s role in creating the transmedia strategy which shaped today's Japan's media mix.

ANALYSIS
EMERGENCE PERIOD: USING COMIC CHARACTERS FOR EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION DEVELOPMENT

In Japan, the large-scale transfer of Western culture and technology after the Meiji Restoration took place with the slogan "*Bunmeikaika*" (meaning 'Openness to Civilization'). Various media technologies were also transferred and adapted to Japanese society, starting with the reintegration of western printing technologies, which had been initially banned due to the isolation policy during the Edo period. This went hand in hand with the slow decline of traditional woodblock printing. Western-style newspapers also became prevalent throughout Japan, starting with *Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun*, which was first published on January 28th, 1871 **★¹**.   In the meantime, western-style comics were introduced by the publication of *the Japan Punch* in 1862 at Yokohama Foreigners District, which were aimed at foreigners living in Japan. Both the format and content of the new publications adapted Western standards. The comic medium was thus swiftly adopted by the emerging journalism in Japan, eventually leading to the rise of comic satiric magazines such as *Eshinbun Nihonchi* (1874), *Marumaru Chinbun* (1877) among others. One of the prominent comic artists was Rakuten Kitazawa, who learned the western comic style from Australian comic artist Frank A. Nankivell. He taught many pupils and led the way as the main artist for the influential satirical magazine *Tokyo Puck* (1905).

While the newly emerged field of journalism gradually adopted comics, early animations such as *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* were imported by Yoshizawa Commerce in 1907, and the various animations that followed it, were received positively by the audience. Eventually, various theaters began to hold short animation-only sessions called *Dekobo Taikai*, attracting children to flock to theaters (Watanabe 2020). Being enticed by rising opportunities, Nippon Katsudo Shashin Co., Ltd (hereafter, Nikkatsu), Tennenshoku Katsudo Shashin Co., Ltd (hereafter Tenkatsu) and Kobayashi Commerce (hereafter Kobayshi) were determined to create animation in Japan. These companies sought painting and drawing experts to research animation technologies, and as a result two companies, Tenkatsu and Kobayashi ended up recruiting comic artists who had been pupils of Rakuten Kitagawa: Auten Shimokawa (Tenkatsu) and Junichi Koichi (Kobayashi). Both had adapted various techniques used by the comic medium. For instance, among these early works, *the Dull Sword* released in June 1917 (or *Namakura Gatana*) by Junichi Koichi, depicted a speech bubble or sound spark. The semiotic conventions to represent a variety of sound effects emerged as communicative affordances for silent media such as comic, and were

★1—— The archive of the 1st issue can be seen in the following link from Yokohama Keizai Shimbun <https://www.hamakei.com/photo-flash/4702> (accessed November 16, 2020).

transferred to the silent film era of Animation short films. But the fact that the tradition of using sound effect semiotics from the comic medium stayed with animation even after sound track technologies were added to cinema is an interesting phenomena worthy of further investigation from a communicative affordance perspective. As for Auten Shimokawa's work, there is no way we can examine the techniques he used, as the actual work is no longer available. However, according to Watanabe, Shimokawa's first animation short *Imosuke Inoshishigari no Maki* (Mukuzo Imosuke's Pig Hunting) released in January 1917, was likely to be based on a comic, "*Imokawa Muzuzo To Buru*" featured in the October 1st, 1915 issue of *Tokyo Puck* (Watanabe, 2020: 45-46). Shimokawa continued to create animation shorts based on this character (Ibid, 47-49). Unfortunately, Shimokawa created animations only for one year and a half due to an eye illness caused by the animation creation process. He resigned from Tenkatsu and went back to being a comic artist for newspapers (Animage 1989, 4). In this case, however, there is no evidence as to whether this was done with collaborative efforts between organizations. But it is vital to point out that transmedial strategies were implemented even in the infant era for the Japanese animation industry.

COMIC CHARACTERS BECOMING ICONS of JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE
THROUGH THEIR TRANSMEDIAL RECEPTION

A series of what we would call media mix practices today were more broadly implemented in later works, namely *Sho-chan no Boken* (*Sho-chan*'s *Adventure*, henceforth, *Sho-chan*) and *Nonki na Tosan* (*Easy-Going Daddy*, hereafter *Non-To*) by Yutaka Aso. Both works were published in 1923; Daily Asahi Graph published the 1st episode of *Sho-can* in January, while the 1st episode of *Non-To* was released on November 26th, 1923, by The Hochi Shimbun. By this time, western journalism had been established as a prominent way for the Japanese people to access news and information. In terms of circulation of daily newspapers, the numbers went from a daily circulation of 1.64 million in 1904 to 6.25 million by 1924, making daily newspapers circulated by one in every two households. Furthermore, several periodical magazines achieved millions of circulations per issue. In other words, the beginning of the 1920s was the time when printed media became 'mass media' in Japan (Tsuchiya 2006). During this time, comics were used to either depict an event to supplement the text in a news article or to express social satire, following the role model beset by western predecessors such as Charles Wirgman and Georges Ferdinand Bigot (Shimizu 1991, 1999; Kawasaki City Museum 1996). What set *Sho-chan* and *Non-To* apart is that their works went beyond comic as social satire and became popular culture icons in Japan.

Insert 1. An Example of *Suiyobi no Sho-chan (Sho-chan no Boken series)* by Katsuichi Kabashiba and *Shosei Oda (1924): Public domain*

Sho-chan is known as the earliest serial story comics and one of the earliest works to include speech bubbles (Hidaka 2004, 379) in Japan. This work depicts *Sho-chan* visiting various exotic places with his sidekick, a squirrel. The places he visits not only include ordinary places in Japan like cities and mountains but also deserts, palaces, and even dreamworlds, meeting various creatures from mythologies both from the East and the West. Thus, the series was aimed at younger audiences. The series continued to be featured in Daily Asahi Graph until Daily Asahi Graph was discontinued due to the Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1923. *Sho-chan* moved to Asahi Shimbun from October 20th, 1923. When the comic was featured in Asahi Shimbun, the titles were changed several times until May 18th, 1926, when the last episode was published. When Weekly Asahi Graph was published, *Sho-chan* was also featured with an alternative title "*Suiyoubi No Sho-chan*" (*Sho-chan on Wednesday)* from March 15th, 1924 issue until August 27th, 1924. Although the exact year is unknown, *Sho-chan* was adapted as a short animation once (Akita, 2005, 104). Furthermore, *Sho-chan* was more broadly adopted and got popular in other platforms. For example, *Sho-chan* was adapted as a theatrical play by the Takarazuka Revue in October 1924 (Yoshioka 1933 179). It was also compiled as a hardcover *Sho-chan* only book and a separate picture book (Nakano 2020). *Sho-chan* related merchandise became popular as well. For example, *Sho-chan* dolls and Beanie, worn by *Sho-chan* in the comic, were renamed as *Sho-chan* hat and became a popular fashion item at the time. There were other items such as *Sho-chan* being used for packages of Meiji milk caramel ★2, vending machine for Glico products ★3, and traditional Japanese playing cards Karuta (Toy Journal 2003). There is also evidence that *Sho-chan's adventure* became popular in Korea at the time (Yang, 2007). *Sho-chan's* popularity leads to having various non-licensed goods as well. One of the prominent works being a live black and white silent film by Toua Kinema in 1926 This work is considered a non-licensed film and therefore was delisted as a Japanese film made based on a comic (Akita, 1994, 163). In this way, *Sho-chan* is a very early example of a diversified ecology of media products around the central IP.

★2——These objects were listed as one of the merchandises introduced in the official site (now it is closed but archived as of September 28th, 2014 in the internet archive < https://web.archive.org/web/20140928160430/http://www.shochan.jp:80/Goods/ > (accessed November 16, 2020).

★3——The actual object is shown in Nihon Gachagacha Kyokai (2019)

Insert 2 An example of *Nonki-na Tosan* by Yutaka Aso (1923): *Public domain*

Nonki na Tosan by Yutaka Aso, on the other hand, was one of the earliest works to standardize the four-scene comic strip (*yonkoma*) in the newspaper in Japan. Jyo's research clarifies its historical significance. *Non-To* initially started as an eight-scenes comic strip on Sunday comic pages on the Houchi Shimbun. It only used a speech bubble to drive the narrative, which was unconventional at the time when using short text supplements, along with speech bubbles, was common. This technique was utilized even when the scene was shortened to six scenes. Even when *Non-To* was transferred to the daily newspaper section instead of Sunday comic pages, and it was, even more, shortened to four-scenes, Aso only used speech bubbles to drive the overall narrative. Thus, by 1923, Non-To established the daily feature of the four scenes comic strip in Japan. The four scenes comic strip allows for very compressed storytelling, with a clear arch and punchline, which would also extend to the West later. According to Jyo, among all of comics featured in the daily newspaper from 1923 to1937, out of 138 works, 103 or 74.6% occupies four-scene comics. Among these, 92 comics or 89.3% are featured in the daily newspaper (Jyo, 2009).

Non-To depict the daily life of Easy-going daddy, his friends, and his family. The series started a few months after the Kanto Great Earthquake. However, the comic did not hide from this reality, but rather depicted it with a sense of humor with a cheerful spirits. It was intentionally done so, since the editor of the Hochi Shimbun, Tomoichiro Takada had requested Aso to create a comic that would comfort those who suffered (Shimizu, 1992). Thus, from its beginning, the conceptual heart of this work was deeply anchored in the context of real world Japan and the crisis following the earthquake. It is a good example that in a media ecological perspective, works cannot be seen as isolated from their surrounding world. We have here reflected upon technological and genre-related innovations, but the social and political contexts are just as important.

★4——Based on official home page <https://opmh.iri-project.org/chronology/> (accessed November 16, 2020).

★5——Soganoya Gokuro's background can be found in the following link < https://kotobank.jp/word/%E6%9B%BE%E6%88%91%E5%B-B%BC%E5%AE%B6%E4%BA%94%E4%B9%9D%E9%83%8E-168147 > (accessed November 13, 2020).

★6——Even today, the town hold one day festival called Gokuro festival to commemorate the works of Soganoya Gokuro. Those who lead the parade even put cosplay of Non-To (The Yoshinokawa Chamber of Commerce 2020)

Non-To was featured for about three years★4. The story was adapted to three animation short films, which were produced in 1925 and 1926 (Akita, 2005, 104). but the work was first adapted as a theatrical play in 1923, with Soganoya Gokuro playing the role of the main character (Matsumoto and Higano 2004, 27). Then, two live feature comedy adaptations were released in 1924, with Soganoya playing Daddy for the film as well★5. These two live film adaptations made Soganoya a popular comedian at the time, leading him to become a sort of heroic figure at his home town, Kamoshima in Tokushima prefecture★6. Other than these, there were also a *kamishibai* (Picture-Story Show) adaptation and a song *Nonkibushi* (Easy-going song), that was distributed through an analog record. Various goods from menko, mud dolls, and mechanical dolls (Toy Journal 2003, 33) became popular products. *Non-To* had broader appeal, as the name of the character was used in the realm of politics. A politician from Akita Prefecture, Choji Machida, was fondly nicknamed *Nonki na Tosan* for his resemblance to the character. During a much-heated debate between Diet member Machida and his opposition, a diet member from the opposition party shouted, "*Nonki na Tosan*"! Everybody from both sides bursted out laughing, and the debate had to be put to rest. Thus, Mr. Machida was fondly called by this nickname by everyone until his retirement (Fukaura 1963). When a comic is created, it is often the case that the cartoonist draws a character which resembles a politician to make it as an inevitable punchline of the satire, but in this case, the politician happened to have a similar appearance to the character, which made the general public feel a sense of familiarity to him. The work becomes a repository of tropes that can be applied to real life issues, again showing the complex entanglements between art and society.

These two cases demonstrate that comics and the characters created can become not only popular among people, but also influence their lifestyle in such diverse areas as popular fashion styles, the likeability of the entertainers who impersonate the character, and even increase the positive impression of the politicians who resemble the characters. Furthermore, the comics popularity eventually propitiates a variety of peripheral products. From a communicative affordance perspective, *Sho-chan* was more dynamic in storytelling, traveling around the world and beyond. This is also related to the dynamism of the comic frames as a majority of the scene had supplementing text. Also, even though each segment was featured in four scenes, the story itself continued. *Non- To*, on the other hand, stayed with depicting a simple but humorous daily life of regular people in the Japanese society at the time. Thus, it was possible for the story to develop with the daily feature of only four scenes with speech bubbles. Eventually, it became a widespread communicative affordance to depict simple daily life using the four-frame format for the comics featured in daily newspapers regular day edition.

Regarding the career of both artists after their major works, Kabashima mainly worked on illustrating various books. Finally, from 1950-1951, Kabashima and Oda collaborated and created two volumes of the book "*Emonogatari Sho-chan no Boken*" (Picture Story: Sho-chan's adventure) published by Kodansha (Kajishima and Oda, 2003). On the other hand, Aso Yutaka eventually was hired by Asahi Shimbun where he drew a direct sequel to *Non-To*. "*Tadano Bonji: Jinsei Benkyo*" (*Bonji Tadano: Life is*

Learning), a tale about a son of Nontou was first released in 1933, and ran for a year and three months (BAHAN 1992, 8). *Tadano* also was adapted to a live comedy film adaptation in 1934, and the film was even used as the opening act of renewal opening of Nichigeki Theater- one of the major film theaters at the time. However, in terms of merchandise, there were fewer items, as *Tadano* seems to be targeted toward older audiences. This case illustrates that within a few years, there were important media ecological changes within the Japanese market, which will be expounded in the subsequent section.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT DURING THE 1920s AND THE 1930s

The 1920s and the 1930s are the eras that see the growth of various media platforms in Japan. Kase, for example, considers the 1920s and 1930s as the era of further growth for newpapers, whose circulation reaches 10.13 million in 1930 and 13.27 million in 1937 (Kase, 2011). This is more than double the number of 6.24 million in 1924, based on Tsuchiya's data (2006). A substantial growth can also be observed in magazine data. The aggregated circulation of magazines being 40.1 million in 1927 eventually reached 93.39 million by 1940. The magazines issued for the youth and children followed a similar trend. For youth (including both male and female), the aggregated circulation was 7.1 million in 1927, and increased to 13.91 million in 1940; for children's magazines, the circulation increased to 14.865 million by 1940 from little over a half million in 1927 [7]. This points to a whole new world of possibilities in relation to content development, as an ever increasing pool of media educated readers kept growing. This is represented in Graph 1.

[7]—— Data retrieved from Shuppan Nenkan Showa 13th (p. 187) nd 16th issues (p. 181)

(In Million)
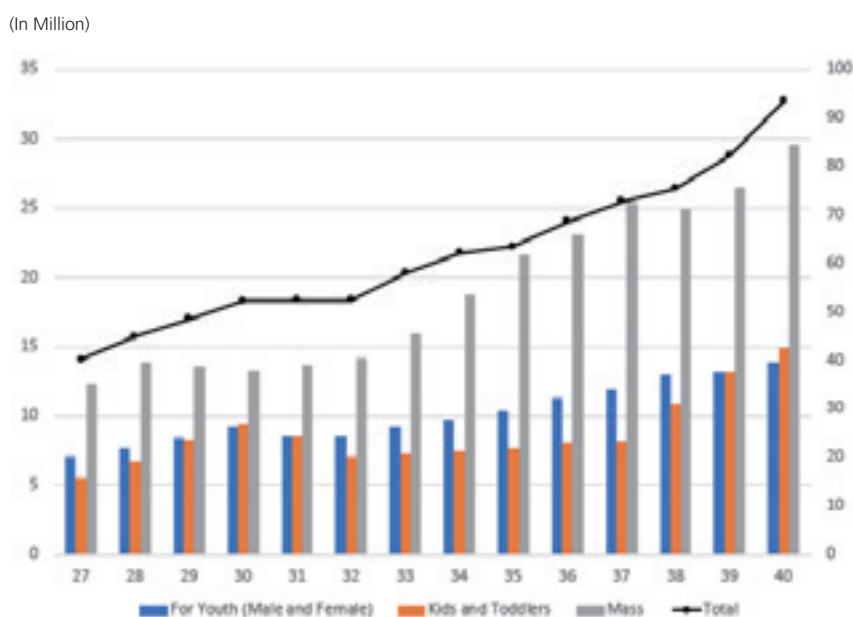
Graph 1 Number of circulation magazines for Youth, Kids, Mass (Adult) and Total
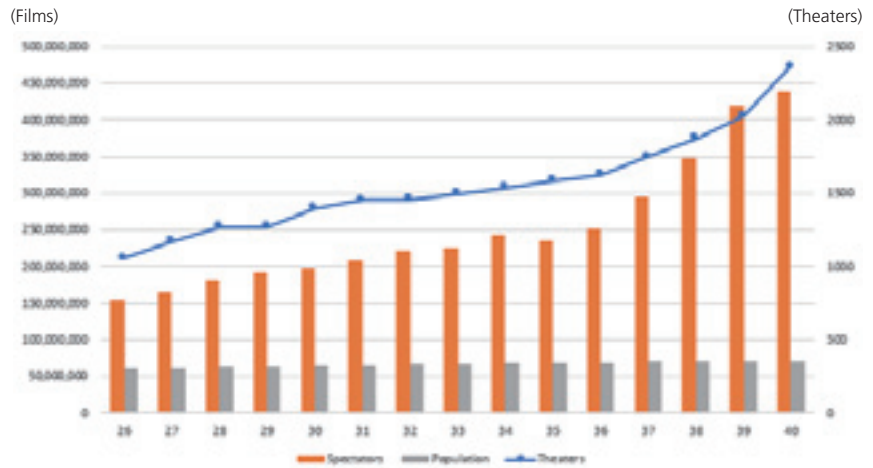
Graph 2 Number of Movie Spectators, Japan's population and Theaters ★8

★8—— For the data for the Japan's population is based on Japan's database for statistics e-stat < https://www.e-stat.go.jp/>. For number of spectators and number of theaters is based on the study by Inoue (2002) (accessed November 16, 2020).

★9—— (Kawasaki City Museum 1996, 95)

★10—— In Shochiku's official home page, this film is credited as a landmark that gives a dawn to the talkie in Japan <https://www.shochiku.co.jp/cinema/history/archive/shochiku-history4> (accessed November 16, 2020).

Although there had been dedicated comic magazines for children and youth such as Shonen Puck (1907), and then Kodomo Puck (1924)★9, by this time, most major publishers tended to publish youth and children dedicated magazines as compilations of various kind of fun and educational readings. That is, comics were treated as 'supplement' materials. Other changes in media platforms took place during the 1920s and the 30s. As Graph 2 shows, by 1926, the number of movie theaters went over 1000, with the number of annual movie spectators growing to 2.5 times the population. The numbers continued to expand, so by 1934 to 1935 the number of movie spectators was 3.6 for 1934 and 3.4 times for 1935, respectively, and by 1940, number of movie theater went over 2000 while the number of spectators was 6.1 times the population (Inoue, 2002). During this time, a major technological change took place in Japanese theater: the introduction of the *talkie*, as movies with sounds were called. In 1931, with *Madamu to Nyobo* by Shochiku★10, the Japanese film industry also entered the era of the talkies. Furthermore, the first News Movie Specialized Theater was opened in January 1936, and many similar type of movie theaters followed throughout Japan. With no other mean to access moving image journalism, the number of spectators grew and thus by 1940, the number of movie spectators reached 440 million a year or 6.1 times the population. Despite the popularity of the theatre, animation was in a turbulent time due to the entrance of animation coming from foreign countries, Disney Animation in particular. Disney quickly adapted a mass-producing system, used division of labor among animators and adapted celluloid for creating each animation frame. They had already created and exported talkie animation since 1928, starting with *Micky Mouse's Steamboat Willie*. And the possibility of mass distribution to the world made the cost of the film much cheaper. The regular costs for Japan's domestic animation at the time was twice as much as the price set by Disney's short animation films. Thus, Japanese animation was not so popular at the time (Yamaguchi, Watanabe, 1978 27). Graph 3 represents such situation. During the 20s and the 30s, when popular animation had some kind of film adaptation, it was more popular to be adapted to live film than animation.
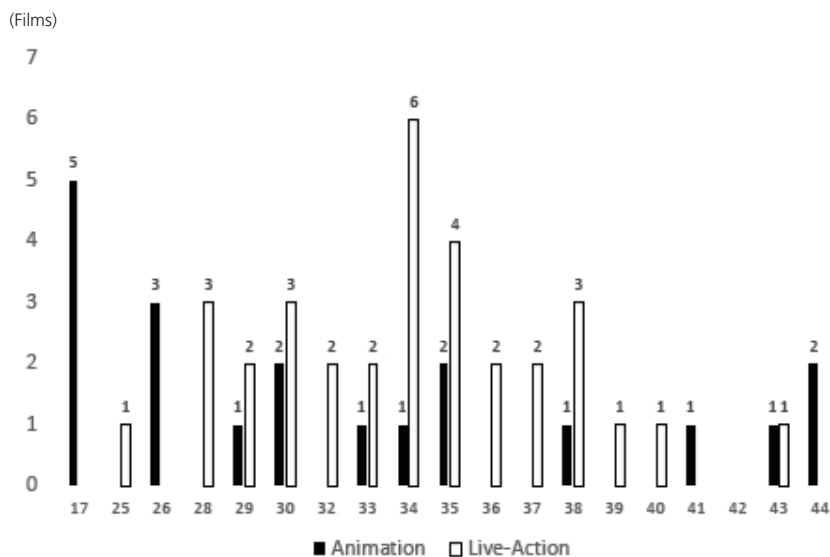
Graph 3 Number of Comic's Live Film and Animation Short Film Adaptation ★11

In other words, the adaptation of two comics to live films *Nonki na Tosan* and its sequel, *Tadano Bonji*, which was discussed in the previous section, were entirely natural, considering their popularity and the financial feasibility of the production costs, as these are comedies only depicting daily life in Japan. In the meantime, comics' adaptation to animation is still rare at this point. In contrast, animation adaptation was rarely produced except for the early stage when the Imokawa series was created as an experimental base.
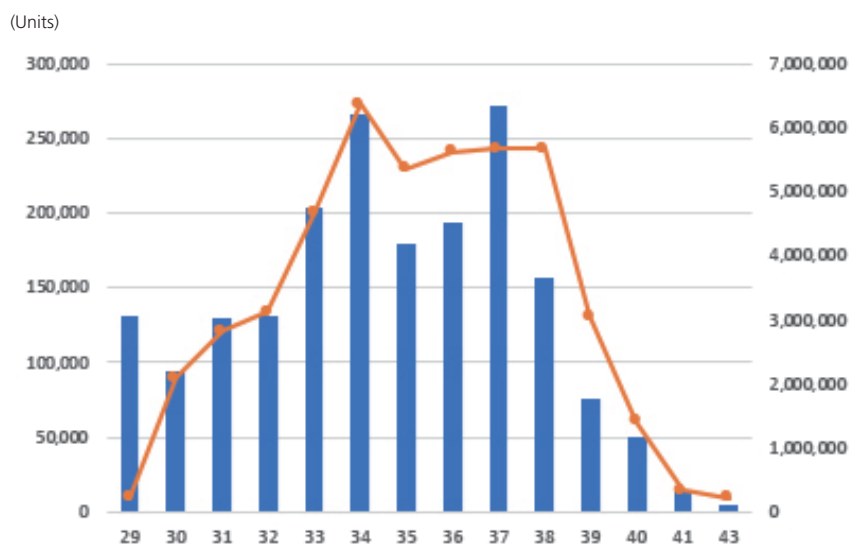
Graph 4 Number of Record Player and Analogue Record Production based on Okubo (2015)

And finally, the 1920s and the 30s were also the era of music entertainment. As the number of analogue recorders and records grew steadily, over 6 million of records were manufactured in 1934 and 1937. The trend continued until Japan went into wartime, starting with the start of the Second Sino-Japanese war in 1937.

The origin of the media mix in Japan in a media ecological perspective: examining the situation from 1915 to 1945

NORAKURO, FUKU-CHAN AND THE FATE OF POPULAR IPs DURING WARTIME

Photo 1 *Norakuro-Jyotohei* (privately owned and photo by Akinori Nakamura)

★12—— The company name, Kodansha will be changed to Nihon Yuben Kodansha from 1925 to1957. But for present article it will be notified as Kodansha

★13—— He was initially called called Mizuawa Taka and the Chinese character representing his name was also different. Initially it was 田川水泡 but it was changed to田河水泡 in 1930.

★14—— Norakuro implies Nora (Strayed) Kuro(Black) thus Black Strayed Dog

During this time, some of the prominent intellectual properties that emerged from comics, with series that even continued after the war, are *Norakuro* and *Fuku-chan*. In this section, both cases are discussed in detail, starting with *Norakuro*'s case.

Norakuro was created for the Shonen Club by Kodansha★12,   At the beginning, the Shonen Club is just like any other magazine for youth, focused on interesting and educational readings. In fact, there were no comics in the magazine for the 1st issue of the Shonen Club in November 1914 (Miyahara, 2005, 141-142). The content mostly consists of interesting articles targeted toward the young, specifically 5th and 6th-grade students. When Kodansha added a new magazine dedicated specifically to the 3rd and 4th-grade students: the Yoji Club (meaning Younger Kids Club), Kenichi Kato, the chief editor of the Shonen Club, aimed to stay competitive by adding more interesting serial stories. But when Kato asked Koroku Sato for advice, as one of the prominent contributing authors for the magazine, he suggested adding comics to the portfolio. The addition of comics, Sato believed, would "add brightness to the overall magazine, and every member in the family can enjoy them" (Kato, 1968 179). As a result, the artist, Suiho Tagawa★13 was recruited to the magazine in 1928. After Suiho Tagawa worked on several small projects, Kato asked Tagawa to work on a longer serial comics, with dogs doing pretend play battles as soldiers. When Kato suggested this, Tagawa immediately responded, saying, "good idea !" (Kato, 1968 100). Tagawa had been drafted to the army as a Private Junior grade in 1919 and then promoted to Private. He, then had worked as Pigeon correspondent (Kato, 1968 99). Thus, he understood both the life of being in the infantry and animals, a suitable premise for developing the story. That was how the *Norakuro*★14 series was created. Kato only anticipated the series to continue for two years, like most of the serial comics did at the time. However, the *Norakuro* series became the longest serial comics in the Pre-

War period, whose first episode was featured on the January issue of Shonen Club in 1931, and lasting until the October issue of 1941, or 10 years and ten months. The story started from Norakuro's enlistment, beginning from a rank of a Private 2nd class. Then, he was promoted to a Private First Class, and from the succeeding year on, the title changed with each new ranking. Norakuro continued to climb the ladder of the army until the rank of Captain. After Norakuro retired from the army, he went on an expedition to a "big continent" to explore. Their strategy of showing the growth of the main character worked effectively, since *Norakuro* series quickly became phenomenally popular. For example, when Norakuro was promoted to Private from a Private Junior grade at the end of 1931, a flood of telegraphs was sent to the editors congratulating Norakuro as if they were embracing the excitement as their own promotions. The editor believed that such an emotional reaction to the character's advancement would motivate readers to read more (Kato, 1968, 101). Furthermore, these ideas came from the editor's side, rather than the author's. Kato recalls that when he talked to Tagawa, and he said, " applying the military's promotion system was a brilliant idea," Tagawa replied, "No. That was the idea suggested from your side." (Ibid). Thus, the editor had contributed to the initial concept as well as the key elements to drive the popularity of Norakuro. This was one of the earliest incidents that shows a characteristic trait which is prevalent among today's editors in Japanese comic magazines. Another aspect of the editorial role that has been handed down to the present day was their strategy of promoting Norakuro itself and the magazine as interdependent, using Norakuro as prominent means to do so. In this way, the character's popularity contributes to strengthening the brand of the magazine. Editors at Shonen Club passed down Norakuro stickers and cards with catch copies such as "Shonen Club's Norakuro is fun! Everybody read it" on the backside, every time they saw kids on the street. Fan letters were all replied to with postcards with Norakuro characters. For sweepstakes included in magazines, any items that had many winners such as postal cards, bookmarks, or badges, were sure to feature Norakuro. Sometimes, the editor made Norakuro the focus of entire sweepstakes. As for bookshops, the editors supplied them with promotional banners, flyers and prefabricated bookshelves with Norakuro characters throughout Japan. With all these efforts, all of the streets in town were filled with Norakuro (Kato, 1968, 103-104). The editor not only promoted Norakuro itself, but also used Norakuro as a mascot for promoting Shonen Club magazine. Norakuro was likewise used as mascot for various promotional items distributed to bookshops and other outlets such as banners, hanging banners as well as newspaper advertisement, (Kato, 1968, 105). Norakuro also contributed greatly to the popularity of the magazine when an entire booklet of Norakuro 24 two-colored pages was included with Shonen Club in the February 1933 issue. This special issue had a spectacular circulation of 411,140 copies, with only a 3.8 % return rate (Kato, 1968, 107). Creating comic only booklets as supplements to the magazine eventually became the standard model for many of the youth and children's magazines.

Kodansha also compiled all the episodes featured in the magazine into independent hardcover comic books, starting from December 1932. The 1st book sold 134,000 issues, while the 2nd one reached 125,000, both of which were recognized by Kodansha as best sellers (Tagawa, 1988a). In total, ten hardcover Norakuro books

sold millions of copies (Kato, 1968). Overall, a series of strategic decisions as depicted here (such as a major roll out of popular comic to bookshop and other outlet as well as selling compilations as independent hardcover books) also reflect today's media-mix strategies in relation to major rollouts of the media franchises in Japan.

READERS PARTICIPATION

Reader participation has always been an important part of Shonen Club (Kato, 1968, 21). According to Suzuki's study, after Norakuro began to be featured, the readers comic submission section went from irregular inclusion to a regular monthly appearance. In May´ 1931 issue, reader comics depicting Norakuro began to appear; only a few months after Norakuro was first featured in the magazine. After the September issue, the readers' comics using Norakuro continued to be featured practically every month. Furthermore, it seems that the editors encouraged the readers participation movement by featuring a lesson on how to draw Norakuro, with a step by step process drawn by Suiho Tagawa himself in the September 1932 issue. Model pictures of Norakuro and the flag of the Fierce Dog Regimental Commander also appeared in Tokyo Tsushin, a Kodansha's promotional magazine, as the editors were convinced that the secondary creation of comics by readers lead to the promotion of both Norakuro and Shonen Club (Suzuki 2019). Besides promotion, reader participation culture nurtured the talents of the next artist generation such as Kazuo Inoue and Tadashi Hayashida (Kawasaki City Museum, 2019). Thus, a product ecology system where reader participation is high has also been a trademark of Japanese media mixes from the beginning. This offers also a glimpse of how contemporary forms of fandom have their beginning.

NORAKURO ACROSS MEDIA AND MERCHANDISE

With its enormous popularity, *Norakuro* series expanded across various platforms. First, an analogue record was recorded by a group division[15]. Kodansha, anticipating an increasing demand for the music entertainment market, established Record Division with King Record brand in 1930 (Okubo 2015). The content was musical: songs with lyrics roughly based on the story from the comic. After the record was released in 1932[16], the editors sent out the records to bookshops. Thus, analogue records were also used for further promoting Norakuro in various street bookshops (Kato, 1968, 103-104).

Animation short films, for example, were also created five times from 1933 to 1938. This was quite unusual at the time, considering the fact that domestic animation was unpopular due to a strong rivalry with Disney animation. Furthermore, all titles were produced by top talents in the industry at the time. The first two films, *Norakuro Jyotohei* (*Private Junior Class Norakuro*) in 1933 and *Norakuro Gocho* (*Corporal Norakuro*) in 1934 were animated by Yasuji Murata and distributed by Yokohama Cinema Shokai as silent black and white animations. When Mitsuyo Seo created *Norakuro Nitohei* (*Private Junior Class Norakuro*) and *Norakuro Ittohei* (*Private*

★15——Kodansha established analogue record in October 1930 with brand name being King Records based on official home page of the company <https://www.kingrecords.co.jp/cs/info/company.aspx> (accessed November 13, 2020).

★16——Based on the artifacts depicted in Norakuro exhibition for Kawasaki City Museum (2019)

Norakuro) in 1935, and *Norakuro No Tora Taiji* (*Norakuro's Tiger Hunting*) in 1938, they were black and white talkie films. Yasuji Murata was one of the most productive anime artists at time. Seo, on the other hand, had already built his reputation from the early career and eventually created one of the most highly regarded animation films during this era, *Momotaro To Umi No Shinpei* (*Momotaro, Sacred Sailors*) in 1945.

A Magic performance team also performed using a Norakuro theme. Tenkatsu, known as the Queen of the Magic, asked Kodansha for permission to wear a Norakuro costume for a magic show performed at Kabukiza. Norakuro was also used in the various exhibition. A huge Norakuro statue was constructed to commemorate the Military Frag Festival for the Infantry´s 1st division. The tower of Norakuro was also built for the museum exhibition in Shibaura in 1933. Norakuro was also used as a mascot character for kids' parks located throughout Japan (Kato, 1968, 104). There were few 'official' merchandises products also used for Sweepstakes for Shonen Club magazine. These were mostly created for promotional purposes. The items included postal cards, bookmarks, badges, money boxes, medals, a paperweight, a pen case, a toy piano, and even a small analog record player, a xylophone, and a clock[17]. During three to four months from 1933 to the new year season of 1934, approximately 5 million Norakuro's masks were sold. Among these masks, 3 million were manufactured in Nagoya; and two million were manufactured in Tokyo and Osaka combined. The mask became one of the top-selling character toys along with other foreign-born characters such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Betty Boop and Popeye (Toy Journal 2003, 33-34)[18]. Unfortunately, a majority of merchandises were unlicensed. Kato recalls the following items were unlawfully distributed, pencils, fountain pens, lunch boxes, hats, pencil cases, bags, handkerchiefs, sandals, inks, erasers, and harmonicas (1968, 104). Knock-off comics whose story, setting, names, and characters resembled Norakuro were abundantly created[19]. The media mix strategy conceived and implemented by the editorial teams of Norakuro was also adapted by other comics such as *Boken Dankichi* by Keizo Shimada, *Hinomaru Hatanosuke* by Kikuo Nakajima, and *Yaji-san Kita-san Kokkei Dochuki* by Eisuke Ishida (Kato, 2002). While *Norakuro* series, since its birth in the youth-targeted magazine, had been able to achieve sustainable popularity among the youth for over a decade (which was unprecedented at the time in Japan), its ultimate fate was suddenly determined by the abrupt changes of the government's attitudes toward readings and comics for children. This will be discussed in later sections, along with the other media franchise's fate, *Fuku-Chan*.

FUKU-CHAN: A SIDEKICK BECOMING THE MAIN CHARACTER

Following *Nonki na Tosan, Edokko Ken-chan* is the four-scene comic strip that depicted the daily life of *Ken-chan*, his family, and friends, created by young comic artist, Ryuichi Yokoyama. The series first appeared in the January 25th, 1936 issue of the Asahi Shimbun Tokyo regional edition[20]. "Edokko" implies a child of Edo or Tokyo: in other words, it means Ken-chan from Tokyo. Fuku-chan began to appear

★17——Based on recollection by Kato (1968, 103) the artifacts depicted in Norakuro exhibition for Kawasaki City Museum (2019, 37)

★18——Based on the assumption that those items appeared in sweepstake of Shonen Club or those in appeared in Toy Journal are legitimate products

★19——Based on Miyabara (2005, 161) the artifacts depicted in Norakuro exhibition for Kawasaki City Museum (2019, 38)

★20——For historical time of Edokko Ken-Chan and Fku-Chan, it is based on the official homepage of Ryuichi Yokoyama <http://www.bunkaplaza.or.jp/mangakan/index.html> unless additional information is provided (accessed November 13, 2020).

from episode 14th of *Edokko Ken-chan*, and became enormously popular. Thus, when Asahi Shimbun Osaka asked to feature the comic for the Kansai edition of Asahi, the title was changed to *Yoshi no Fuku-chan* (*Fuku-chan: the Adopted Kid*) and the protagonist switched to Fuku-chan. In the meantime, the live adaptation of *Edokko Ken-chan* was featured at theaters in December of the same year. The Hardcover issue of *Edokko Ken-chan* was also published by Chuokoron-Shinsha, one of the oldest publishing houses in Japan around the same time. *Fuku-chan* moved newspaper several times while slightly changing its title and continued until 1945. Several dolls and other types of toys and merchandise were sold during this time, but it is unclear whether these merchandises were entirely unlicensed products or official ones. *Fuku-chan* was also taken to other media platforms such as radio programs, live-action featured films, and TV animation after the war. But this will be discussed in subsequent sections.

DRASTIC CHANGE IN THE MEDIA ECOLOGY AND THE FATE OF NORAKURO AND FUKU-CHAN

Despite the on-going and sustainable popularity of *Norakuro* and *Fuku-chan* series, these franchises' fate was drastically altered by how authors and editors respond to the new government regulations. On October 25th, 1938, the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Empire of Japan promulgated the "Guidelines for Improving Children's Reading". These Guidelines prohibited magazines for the youth and children to have sweepstakes aimed to be used for promotion, self-advertisement, or announcements of the next issues.

All of these were applicable to Shonen Club. The governmental Guidance for target readers of 10 year and above suggested to abstain from long serial works, to regulate genres (novel, comics and articles) by a certain ratio, and to limit the fictions to 50% of the contents. Furthermore, the permissible topics among these fictions were also regulated. The adventure genre needed to be turned to either exploration or discovery tales, and others needed to change their theme to instead depict the daily life of regular people[★21] or Japanese history. As for the space created by this adjustment, the Guidelines encouraged to publish articles about scientific knowledge, particularly the engineering technologies behind weaponry such as explosives, tanks, airplanes and such (Sato, 1993, 116-118). During this time, Tagawa felt that he could not let Norakuro be promoted to Shosa (Major). He was afraid that if the character made humorous errors in the comic, the Imperial military might consider it an insult and, therefore, deem the comic unwholesome. During this time, Tagawa was dispatched to Manchuria as a commissioned officer of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs to comfort the Manchurian Youth Volunteer Army. This experience led him to conceive the idea of Norakuro retiring from the army to become an explorer in 'a big continent '(Tagawa and Takamizawa, 1991, 169). Thus, the title was changed to *Norakuro no Tankentai* (*Norakuro's expedition*). Although the changes in the genre and the titles seemed to be coincidental, this allowed *Norakuro* series to comply with the new guidance. However, the officers from the Ministry of Army, Information Bureau were

★21—— A small citizen (小国民) is the term used during to those who are minor during Asia-Pacific War time to visualize their responsibilities as the people of Empire of Japan, serving the Emperor

not satisfied. They came to the editorial office and told them:

> We can't allow spending precious paper to put dumb materials like comics in this time of emergency. Print as many heroic tales on military and heartful wartime stories as possible, instead of such non-sense (Kato, 1968, 109)

Thus, the editorial staff could not do anything but abruptly stop featuring *Norakuro* series from the November 1941 issue of Shonen Club. When a *Norakuro Anthology* was published in 1969, Tagawa wrote the following in the postscript:

> Wars sacrifice the people of the nation. So, the ban on drawing my comic was also a sacrifice caused by the war, just as so many people made various sacrifices. They just ordered us to discontinue this month and that's it. The story had to be stopped like a snap of the fingers, without delay. That was the sole reason why the final episode of *Norakuro* was almost as if it was an unfinished ending (Kato, 1968, 109)

Fuku-chan series, on the other hand, had a quite different fate. Just as Suiho Tagawa, Ryuichi Yokoyama also tried to comply with requests from the government. Despite the fact that *Fuku-chan* was a serial comic that depicted Japan's daily life and therefore had already been complementary to the guidance, Yokoyama more actively complied with the suggestions proposed in the guidance. Before the guidance was promulgated, the comic series title was changed to *Fuku-chan Butai* (*Fuku-chan Troop*) from January 1938. The content, however, was not drastically changed as it depicted the daily life of Fuku-chan and related people. But from July 1939, the title was changed to *Arakuma Dojo*, and the content was more focused on training given to Fuku-chan and his friends by their home teacher, Mr. Arakuma. Then both *Susume Fuku-chan* (*Advance! Fuku-chan*), and *Aruke Fuku-chan* (*Walk! Fuku-chan*), which succeeded *Arakuma Dojo*, depicted the daily life at wartime from Fuku-chan's (or children's) perspectives, and finally in 1942, Ryuichi Yokoyama was requisitioned to be dispatched to Jawa as one of the members of the Imperial Army's Propaganda Troops. Among the troops, there were journalists and painters. While he continued to draw a comic, he was also assigned to draw Kamishibai (a picture-story show) about Japan to show to the native people in Jawa. He was responsible for drawing pictures of stories written by the other members. The expedition continued on to the southern islands, where Yokoyama contributed to drawing illustrations. Fuku-chan was also "mobilized" for an animation short film adaptation. *Fuku-chan no Kishu* (*A Surprise Attack by Fuku-chan*) released on March 15, 1942, was directed by Kenzo Masaoka who later directed one of the best Japanese animation at the time, *Kumo to Chūrippu* (*Spider and Tulip*). This was followed by *Fuku-chan no Zoen Butai* (*Fuku-chan's Reinforcement*) in 1943, and *Fuku-chan no Sensuikan* (*Fuku-chan's Submarine*) in 1944. All three animation short films are no doubt considered as propaganda films because of their plot and title perspectives (Yamaguchi and Watanabe, 1978). As previously mentioned, Ruiyich Yokoyama was dispatched to Jawa and the Southern Islands to be a member of the Imperial Army's Propaganda Troops. Thus, he was not involved in the production of these animations. Yokoyama even admitted during an interview that he

was only involved in creating a plot and character designs for these works (Yokoyama, 2004). As for the original *Fuku-chan*, the series was eventually discontinued sometime in 1945. It appeared, however, that the discontinuation was due to an extreme shortage of resources (Yokoyama, 2004, 57). The fact that the *Fuku-chan* series was exploited as propaganda during wartime is proof of the communicative affordances of comics in Japan, with their notable accessibility and familiarity to the young and the children: a perfect way for launching soft propaganda. In fact, the comic medium's communicative potential is further investigated in the critical evaluation of Yokusan-Ikka (the Yokusan Family): the media mix project implemented by The Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Otsuka, 2018).

These are clear examples that regardless of the general conditions of the media environment, an intervention from the government can have an everlasting impact on the creative projects which spread across multiple media platforms and other forms of entertainment. In fact, besides the fates of intellectual properties being mentioned in this article, approximately 30 comics and 3 picture books for children were discontinued (Sato, 1993).

AFTERMATH

Immediately after World War II ended on August 15, 1945, Yokoyama returned to his work, starting with *Fuku-chan ABC* in Nagano where he was evacuated (Yokoyama 2004, 58). Then, *Fuku-chan* series was featured in 16 regional newspapers distributed by Manga Genko Haikyu Kumiai (Comic Manuscript Distribution Union). In 1950, *Densuka to Fuku-chan* started from Sunday Mainichi. *Fuku-chan* also reappeared in the Asahi Shimbun and then finally became stable content at the Mainichi Shinbun from 1956 on, as Yokoyama continued to draw *Fuku-chan* until the final episode, episode 5534 in 1971. During this time, Fuku-chan was adapted to a radio program (1957), animation short films (1962), and colored TV anime in November 1982. *Fuku-chan* also became the official mascot for a sake (rice wine) brand and a chewing gum pack. Furthermore, *Fuku-chan* was used by Waseda University as a mascot character roughly from the 1950s until 1999. It was done so without Yokoyama's permission, but Yokoyama granted them to use the character, saying, "Waseda has extraterritorial rights, and thus copyrights do not apply". In 1999, Waseda University awarded Yokoyawa an honourable mention as a person of outstanding artistry[22]. Finally, Asics, a sportswear company, released a licensed Fukucan-Waseda T-shirt at ASCIS campus store Waseda in 2016[23].

The *Norakuro* series also continued after the war. Initially, several side stories were featured in various comic magazines. Then, he wrote a novel about the life of *Norakuro* as a Norakuro's autobiography in monthly MARU, one of the few monthly magazines dedicated to war and military from 1958. Following this novel version of the past Norakuro's story, the sequel continued with *Norakuro Shoshu-rei* (*Norakuro Convocation Order*) and finished with *Norakuro Kissaten* (*Norakuro Café*) in the December 1980 issue of this magazine; Suiho Tagawa was 81 years old at the time. In

★22—— Based on the list of those received the award from 1984 to 2013 posted in the Waseda University <http://www.waseda.jp/kyomubu/new/geijutukourou.pdf> (accessed November 13, 2020).

★23—— Based on the entry posted at Yokoyama Memorial Manga Museum <http://www.kfca.jp/mangakan/?p=951> (accessed November 13, 2020).

the meantime, Kodansha compiled all of the works featured in Shonen Club and published it as *Norakuro Anthology* in 1969, which eventually sold over 50,000 copies (Tagawa, 1988b). This was followed by a TV anime series adaptation in March 1970. In 1987, Kodansha became an agent for Norakuro property and signed with Takara for merchandise[24]. Norakuro Rock, a stuffed doll with mechanical components by which Norakro dances, for example, sold over a half-million units[25]. There are other Norakuro officially licensed merchandise such as stationaries, blanket, backpack, shirts, and apron (Tagawa and Takamizawa, 1991). But Norakuro never captured the enthusiasm the series received during its peak time.

In the meantime, Kato Keiji the former chief editor of Shonen Club, who played the pivotal role of developing Narakuro as a media franchise was promoted to be an executive at Kodansha. The Supreme Commander for the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers (henceforth GHQ), however, hold him and others in top positions as partially responsible for causing a war due to the influence they had as mass media and thus he was expelled from Kodansha. Kato, with all his know-how and the network he created during his time at Kodansha, decided to focus on the potential of manga and thus published a monthly comic-focused magazine, Manga Shonen starting from the December 1947 issue (Kato, 2002). For this magazine, Kato not only employed some of the comic artists he was associated with at Shonen Club, but he also implemented magazine promotional campaigns using the techniques and reader participation system in which many new comic artists were recruited, building the foundation for the comic creation system we see today.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES OF INVESTIGATION

In this article, we have attempted to illustrate how the media mix strategies of today can be traced back to an early period in time. Likewise, we show that media products are integrated in complex relations that transcend content considerations or media platforms. A media ecology perspective allows us to identify relevant changes and to track their progress as media are affected by (and affect) other parts of society, such as industry regulations and practices, technology and infrastructure, as well as legal and political issues. The cases we have zoomed in demonstrate how creative innovations are built upon existing artistic traditions that get revamped by the introduction of foreign technologies and distribution models, which in their turn get adapted and generate new business innovation of their own, that can later be exported. Moreover, the context of the war exacerbates the usual tensions coming from the political and legal systems, affecting publishers, editors, and creators alike, as well as generating specific frameworks for product reception. Based upon our findings here, we consider that some previous research´s claim about Kodansha being less considerate about the importance of the character and intellectual property (Suzuki, 2018, 237) due to Kodansha's disability to protect Norakuro's intellectual property from unlawful and unlicensed merchandise, is yet premature. We found that the transmedial strategy developed with the Norakuro franchise was a key to unravelling the missing link

[24]—— A new Norakuro stuffed toy was announced on November 12th, 1987 by Takara. The merchandise rights were singed with Kodansha- the agent for Norakuro specifically the ones which featured in Shonen Club (Nikkei Sangyo Shinbum, 1987, 4).

[25]—— Nikkei Marketing Journal (1989) Takarahati Jigyo honbu —Tebyoshi Ongaku ni Han'no shi Odoru Gangu 50 Shurui (Hitto Sozo-tai) (December 02nd): 13

between the transmedial practices done during pre-war and post-war periods. Additionally, closer examination of the work of Kenji Kato – the former chief editor of Shonen Club, (who played a vital role in taking the initiative for Norakuro transmedial projects- for the creation of Manga Shonen as well as the transmedial strategy adopted by post-war Kodansha) is also required.

Furthermore, since our focus for the present study was the transmedial practices of commercial products, we were unable to closely examine the claims by Otsuka et. al. that consider most of the elements that constitute essential aspects of Japan's media mix to have originated from the development and execution Japan's propaganda, *Yokusan Ikka* (*the Yokusan Family*) (Otsuka 2018).   Our present study found that since Ryuichi Yokoyama was heavily involved in this project, we can assume that some of the principles nurtured in the Yokusan Family project were adapted to his transmedial approaches for the Fuku-chan francise. Further examination is needed to clarify the Yokusan family's influence on those who were closely associated with their succeeding projects.

In order to continue investigating the underexplained elements of the transmedial practices in Japan, we would like to propose a concrete template in order to operationalize the media ecology metaphors introduced above. We believe that answering these questions can lead to a more holistic, systemic view of the study of media-mix. We are well aware that not all questions are relevant for all cases (and some will be impossible to answer in specific situations, for example if documentation is lacking). If we can adopt the analogy that a specific media-mix is a living species, we could potentially ask the following questions as to its lifecycle:

1. Environment. What did the media ecosystem look like when the new species is born? What is the environment like? This category is about identifying the status quo which the birth of the new species will upset.

2. DNA. What traits (affordances) is the new species born with and how can it be described in terms of content, interface and technology? Does the convergent-divergent analysis apply? What are its family ties? what are the divergences?

3. Balance. Did the new species upset the general balance? Did other species die? Did it begin to reproduce itself across the whole environment? Were hybrids born?

4. Food chain. Who consumes the new species? How do audiences receive it and does the introduction of the new species mean that others stop being consumed?

5. Interconectness. What were the repercussions in nearby systems (for example distribution, legal, political, etc.) Were the systems modified by the birth of the new species?

6. Evolution (if relevant). How and why did the species evolve? Did it die out? Was it merged with others? Here, we can also consider transnational influences.

We believe that as Otsuka (1989), Steinberg (2012), and numerous others have pointed out, media mix practices are quite diverse. Simultaneously, through our studies, we have come to realize that such diversity leads to some of the Japanese intellectual properties being able to gain competitive advantages over other intellectual properties, all existing in a universal media environment both in terms of system and accessibility perspective. The fact that media mix projects were virtually unknown to

the Western scholarly community until very recently shows a unique aspect of how Japan's media ecology evolved over the years. Thus, integrating the examination of media ecologies and transmedial studies is particularly vital when examining Japan's media situation.

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