

Close Encounter of the 3D Kind: Examining Constructions of the Foreign ‘Other’ in Japanese Videogames

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Abstract

As a relatively young medium, videogames have become an important part of global popular culture that cannot be underestimated. Due to rapid technological advances, the contents of today’s videogames are becoming increasingly complex. While games are publicly often denounced for causing aggression, violence, or even mental illness, game studies oppose such stereotypical views and seek possibilities to conduct research on digital games in a systematic and thorough manner. This paper draws on approaches from game studies to examine videogames from the perspective of Japanese studies. Assuming that videogames, like other mass media, take part in and shape socially relevant discourses, it will be analysed how the relation between ‘self’ and ‘other’ is constructed in Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki and Akatsuki no megami, Tales of Symphonia, and Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen. For this purpose, the games’ content and character design will be taken into account. Special emphasis will be placed on the question how the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’ becomes manifest in the relation between the player and the characters that is constructed during gameplay.

Keywords: videogame analysis, Japan, other, transculture, Fire Emblem, Tales of Symphonia, Zelda



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Introduction

Videogames have come a long way since they started to gain popularity in the early 1980s. While they were initially mostly played and consumed by children, digital gaming has found its way into everyday life. From playing casual games on the cell phone to recently developed virtual reality consoles or hard-core gaming—that might even involve participation in e-sport competitions—videogames are consumed today in many ways regardless of age, gender, or social status. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that videogames might influence our opinions and thoughts just as much as any other traditional medium such as books or movies. Yet only scarce academic research on this kind of transmitting information can be found—especially when it comes to Japanese studies.

Game studies consider videogames as artefacts that ‘represent symbolic cultural meanings and affect society at large through their production and consumption’ (Crawford and Rutter 2006 in O’Hagan 2013: 19). In this paper, I am going to show how four distinct Japanese videogames make use of their multimedia composition and emphasise matters of importance for society. The topic of the foreign ‘other’ was chosen as example, since Japan historically offers a broad variety of academic and popular discussion on how to distinguish the ‘Japanese’ from the ‘other’ and how to deal with foreign influences in Japanese society. However, it goes without saying that there are many more topics on which videogames express different kinds of opinions and therefore influence consumers. This analysis will make clear that videogames cannot be reduced to a product glorifying violence, as it is commonly believed, but may also adopt tolerant and pacifistic views. Therefore, I argue that videogames take part in discourses and reflect on all kinds of issues, thus making it even more important to understand how they transfer information and what kinds of messages they convey.

Why Study Videogames?

In comparison to other academic fields, not much attention has been given to research on videogames until recently. Game studies started to appear in the early 1990s and have gained more importance in the last ten years (Beil et al. 2015: 7). As an academic discipline, they are dominated by scholars from countries that greatly engage in game development and publishing, such as Japan or the USA. Noteworthy examples may be the Digital Research Association (DiGRA) established in 2002 in Finland which is also present in Japan since 2006 (DiGRA Japan), or the Computer Entertainment Supplier’s Association (CESA, Konpyūta entāteinmento kyōkai コンピュータエンターテインメント協会) established in 1996 in Japan. However, the first instalment of a chair for game studies at the Cologne Game Lab in 2014, or initia-

tives like [j]games at the University of Leipzig, show that the growing interest is not restricted to English- or Japanese-speaking areas.

There are numerous reasons for this increasing awareness towards videogames in academic discourse. First, aesthetic and technological progress allows game developers to experiment with a variety of stories, game mechanics, and artful arrangements, making gaming attractive to a broader audience compared to 30 years ago (Wolf 2006: 116). Additionally, players as well as observers have come to understand that games are affecting the world not only economically and technologically, but also in cultural and social ways (Yoshida 2016: 218). And, last but not least, many who experienced gaming in their childhood have become academics today, bringing along their very own and personal motivation on studying videogames (ibid.). Nevertheless, it might still be too early to speak of an institutionalised discipline, or as Benjamin Beil et al. put it: ‘In many cases, game studies remain an academic discourse for aficionados, a “second string to one’s bow”, coexisting with “official” research interests’ (Beil et al. 2015: 8).²

In Japan things are slightly different. Japanese videogames made an impact on the 1980s global videogame industry that should not be underestimated. While the videogame market—which had been primarily dominated by the US at the time—had crashed around 1983–1985, which is commonly referred to as the ‘videogame crash,’ Nintendo 任天堂 entered the stage with its first home console Famicom ファミコン in 1983. Due to rigorous licence restrictions, Nintendo could provide high quality games which made the console and its international version, Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), an immediate success (Seidl 2005: 19). Many of the game genres known today, as well as the commonly used design of game controllers, can be traced back to this early period of Japanese videogame development (Beil 2013: 9). It took almost 20 years for a non-Japanese company to successfully put another console on the market: Microsoft first released its Xbox in 2002 and can be seen as the only meaningful competitor to Japanese companies Nintendo and Sony ソニー. Without doubt, all three of them can be defined as the most popular console maker companies worldwide. Thus, Japan and the USA are considered to be the most dominant countries worldwide when it comes to videogame development (Consalvo 2006: 123).

As a result, game developing in Japan is not only considered a serious job opportunity that can be acquired through university courses, but also a precious and internationally marketable piece of Japanese pop culture just like manga or anime. Some scholars, like game designer Saitō Akihiro サイトウアキヒロ, even go as far as to link the global popularity of Japanese videogames with their cultural background (Saitō 2009: 18-19). Howsoever, it cannot be denied that Japanese videogames are

² Unless otherwise noted, quotations taken from literature in any other language than English have been translated by the author.

of high importance for Japanese studies because of their influence on global audiences and their omnipresence in Japanese society.

Studying Japanese videogames, however, has some difficulties. In comparison to other Japanese media, such as literature, movies, or comics, Japanese videogames stand out because they are not first and foremost released for a Japanese audience. In recent years, it has become common to release one videogame in different countries on the same date, no matter where it was originally produced. To accomplish this quite difficult task, teams around the world usually work together to translate and localise videogames for different areas (Colsalvo 2006: 118). This is by no means a recent phenomenon; even during the Famicom-era, international exchange had been an integral part of game development. Nintendo of America, for example, was already established as early as in 1980 and has been in charge of Nintendo's marketing in Western countries ever since (ibid.: 124). Keeping the situation of the international market always in consideration, today videogame developers notably try to design their games in a manner that allows for easy localisation and translation (O'Hagan 2013: 80). The end-product may be considered as capable of easily adapting to different cultural environments all over the world and can therefore take various shapes depending on the location it is purchased or its game language. Considering the fact that videogames did not originate in Japan despite of the heavy influences Japanese companies had and still have on the global market, it seems that cultural exchange and collaboration beyond national borders has always been a fundamental principle in game development.

Therefore, defining a game as 'Japanese' might already be a very difficult task. Some games might be perceived as 'Japanese', being developed and published by Japanese companies and not being sold overseas, like the first *Fire Emblem* games of the 1990s. Others such as *Life is strange* (2015) or *Banjo-Kazooie* (1998), might have been published by a Japanese company but were developed by studios located in other countries. Finally, those studios might employ developers of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds. And in Internet forums fans of different cultural backgrounds are arguing about a reputed 'Japaneseness' or 'Westernness' they claim to have recognised in certain games developed by Japanese companies, such as the *Dark souls* series (2011–) (Gamefaqs 2011).

These examples clearly show that there can never be a way to differentiate (however defined) 'Japanese' videogames from other game productions. As Mae Michiko (2013: 24) argues, culture shall be understood as a creative act that cannot be retraced to any national origin. Videogames seem to be a perfect example of this: with regard to the intercultural exchange explained above, they need to be defined as products that have been profiting from internationalisation from the very beginning. As such, they ought to be considered as a result of transcultural processes that allows them to be actively consumed and appropriated in different kinds of cultures, nations, and traditions.

As Japanese scholar Yoshida Hiroshi 吉田寛 (2013: 93) notes, videogames might be the most consumed cultural products worldwide: while many children might not realise that Super Mario is an originally Japanese character, he is still as well-known as Mickey Mouse. However, not being able to determine the cultural background of a specific videogame character, or in a greater context the ‘Japanese’ background of a certain videogame, does not mean that videogames cannot be of any interest for Japanese studies. On the contrary, this shows that globalisation, internationalisation, and ‘glocalisation’ bring about entirely new and unexpected ideas of how the word ‘Japanese’ can be attributed and thought of in a broader and non-national way—which could help opening up new academic research fields for Japanese studies. Furthermore, videogames can be considered to be a perfect example of how worldwide interconnectedness sometimes challenges regional studies to think outside the box in order to find new ways to examine transcultural developments that have already started to define the global media landscape. Therefore, videogames and their varying definitions of ‘Japaneseness’ hold wide possibilities for Japanese studies, as will be demonstrated through this research. They are the fresh breeze blowing through the academic field that may hold more significance in the near future.

An Approach to Newly Developed Methods

Game studies view videogames from an interdisciplinary perspective. This is closely related to the constitution of videogames, combining different kinds of contents. Some elements of videogames might be perceived to be quite similar to other media formats, such as film (e.g., the story or the visual representation of characters). Some other, however, like game mechanics, level design, and the amount of possible interactions within the game, require approaches that cannot be found in studies on literature, comics, or films. Besides, videogames can be arranged quite differently: the contents of a casual game, like *Minesweeper*, and a complex game more than 100 hours long, like *Final Fantasy*, might not have much in common, but both are still considered to be videogames. Such diversity makes game studies a multifaceted academic discipline. Uniting scholars from many different fields provides an assembly of countless ideas, methods, and theories that might cover several of the aforementioned components. Some of them might even seem to be opposing each other, such as positions on whether the focus should be primarily on games as one form of narration (next to others, such as literature and film), or rather on the specifics of videogames as playful and interactive technology (Beil 2013: 26). However, recent trends show that today game studies try to focus more on videogames as a whole, including all of their constituents and the ways they interact with each other (ibid.: 25). From this perspective, it can hardly be possible to develop opinions and meth-

ods that would be valid for all videogames. The methods of analysing videogames therefore always need to be adapted to the specific research interest and the characteristics of the respective videogame.

In addition to cross-media aspects of videogames, I would like to focus on another feature that can be considered as an essential element of digital gaming: players of videogames do not remain within the role of a viewer incapable of any form of action. While a movie might simply require its viewer to press play to start, videogames also need a certain amount of input given by the players. Thus, they can be simultaneously seen as both viewers and actors. If players refuse to give the input needed, the game itself might not necessarily stop; if they control a character, they might just stop moving while other events in the game keep on running. However, to play the game as it was designed, players will need to participate in the story as active actors. Mark J. P. Wolf describes interactivity in videogames as follows:

With the addition of interactivity, the image is not just a window but a tool that allows one to (metaphorically) reach through the window frame to find things and manipulate and interact with them instead of just viewing them (Wolf 2006: 117).

Yoshida Hiroshi even argues that

[t]his is not only what determines a game's nature as 'play', but also means that as media, games fiercely lead our ways of cognition, perception and behaviour (Yoshida 2013: 96).

Thus, it seems very likely that contents of videogames might be perceived at least equally if not even more repelling, exciting, or thought-provoking as it is the case with any other sort of media.

One phenomenon that is often seen in a negative light in this context is the immersion of the player, the experience of getting physically and emotionally involved in the game world. Usually, this comes with the concern that players might not be able to eventually distinguish between game and reality (Yoshida 2016: 220). In popular discourse, this view has been repeatedly linked to violent behaviour and certain criminal acts like school shootings.³ In most cases, however, game studies refuse to acknowledge videogames as violence-provoking media in the way they are often portrayed by media coverage (e.g., Beil 2013; Kringiel 2009). Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman for example argue that players get involved in games precisely because they are well aware that their actions are not real (Salen and Zimmerman 2004 in Yoshida 2016: 220). Approaches considering serious games—ones made for learning purposes—emphasise the possibilities of videogames to be used as solu-

³ Florian M. Kaiser gives a broad overview on the Japanese discourse concerning the pedagogical influences of videogames in his book *Videospiele in Japan: Pädagogisches Medium oder Anleitung zur Gewalt?* (2016).

tions for social problems (Fujimoto 2007: 6-7) and argue that even games that are not declared as serious ones may have a learning effect on their players (Fujimoto 2007: 20). Videogames can therefore also be considered as spaces where players strongly identify with the characters they control, enabling the players to relate to the messages conveyed by the game in a more profound way. As these spaces are not real, they can safely simulate actions they never had a chance or never would have dared to do in real life. In this context, it is crucial to question not only the messages provided by the game, but also the amount of interactivity and the freedom players are given while playing: assuming that there are games that address certain social problems, interactive elements might be reduced at fixed points in the story to lead the players into a certain direction. This way, whether they are intended as serious games or not, they may have an educational effect on their audience, make them aware of particular problems in society, and allow them to try out respective strategies.

As previously mentioned, constructions of the 'self', the cultural 'other', and the relationship between the two were chosen as the topic for this analysis. Considering the facts regarding videogames summarised above, this approach will not only give insight into images of the 'other' and how they are conveyed through videogames, but it will also show what methods developers use to make their games, how they take a clear-cut position to cope with the 'other' despite of interactive elements, and how they try to exert influence over their audiences' worldviews in a didactic manner. In accordance with the noted ideas on cross-media and interactivity, the method used in this analysis shall on the one hand concentrate on how various components of the chosen games work together to express their messages, while on the other hand also focus on the choices players are given during gameplay through interactive elements.

I consider Danny Kringiel's *Computerspielanalyse konkret* (2009) as an outstanding example on game analysis. Based on a list of questions, the videogame *Max Payne 2* is examined from different perspectives of game studies. Kringiel divides those questions into six fields, namely: ludology, narratology, cyberdrama, film analysis, architecture, and pedagogy. He thus manages to identify the different elements the game consists of as well as the theories that have been commonly linked to those contents. Since not all of Kringiel's questions might be of importance for this analysis, they were slightly changed and adapted. This way I intend to give a profound insight into the methods the examined videogames use to construct the 'other,' but not how they are arranged in general. With regards to content, I refer to Minako O'Hagan's *Game localization* (2013); it goes without saying that regarding the task of translating and localising videogames, one needs to understand which in-game components might be able to transport information relevant for playing and interpreting the games. Those parts in particular should be considered important for this analysis, as they can be helpful in identifying components that express ideas

about the ‘other.’ Like Kringiel’s list of questions, O’Hagan’s conception has also been adapted to the necessities of this analysis; for example, while printed material like manuals or walkthrough guides need to be considered during the localisation processes, they do not necessarily give any further information on the stories that are told or the messages conveyed by the games. On the other hand, graphics other than cinematic or art assets (which need to be translated because they contain spoken or written texts) do not usually require translation or localisation measurements as they are generally understood universally and are therefore not listed in O’Hagan’s definition—but can still convey information about the ‘other’. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, I differentiate between in-game text (which refers to every form of text contained in a game), art assets (graphics that obviously show some sort of linguistic information, such as a button that tells one to push ‘A’, or street signs), audio and cinematic assets (background music, sound effects, synchronisation, and cinematic strategies such as in-game movies), and what I provisionally call ‘other forms of graphic design’ (which is neither cinematic nor verbal graphic design but refers to any other sort of graphics in the games, such as character design, pictures, or maps that do not include language). The questions I formulated based on Kringiel’s analysis could be answered through the investigation of these components. As will be shown below, characterisations of the ‘other’ could mostly be found in the story and the characters’ ways of dealing with it, which led me to place emphasis on narratology and cyberdrama approaches first. Afterwards, I examined how cinematic, architectural, and game mechanical contents shape the views on the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘other’ in each game. As this analysis will show how videogames push their players into a certain direction of thinking about the ‘other’, reward systems were to be especially underlined when talking about game mechanics. Last but not least, special attention was paid to the potential of interactive elements.

What Videogames Teach Us About Intercultural Encounters

To understand how videogames represent ideas about the foreign ‘other’, one must first adequately grasp what is actually meant by the ‘other’. As it seems reasonable not to postulate concepts *a priori*, in order to elaborate how the selected games reflect on the ‘other’ a basic introduction shall be provided.

Typically, the ‘other’ is defined as a vague and uncertain entity that can hardly be described as a coherent phenomenon. Rather, it can be recognised through its relation to the ‘self’: based on Sigmund Freud’s concept of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ do not oppose each other but are interdependent. The ‘other’ is often linked to the ‘eerie’ and ‘strange’. In his introduction to theories on the ‘other’, Wolfgang Müller-Funk describes it as something ‘beyond understand-

ing', while the 'self' that seems to be familiar at first glance can 'suddenly turn into an enigmatic representation of ourselves when merged with the 'other' (Müller-Funk 2016: 15). In summary, the 'other' can usually only be recognised because one has an understanding of the 'self', while the 'self' is to be recognised only after an encounter with the 'other'. Also, the perception of the foreign component of the 'other' is highly dependent on the person in question, as the understanding of the 'other' might change with a shift on perspective: at home, one might view a foreigner as someone not belonging to one's own group, but one could also travel to another country and become a foreigner, someone belonging to the 'other'. The 'other' can therefore be considered a human construction (ibid.: 24-26). As phenomena like migration, cultural transfer, and global networking (enabled by social media) show, the relation of the 'other' and the 'self' is continuously constructed and re-constructed, and remains an actual and important subject (ibid.: 15).

While many videogames offer realistic settings, a huge number also provides detailed fantasy landscapes, where not only human beings but also fictitious creatures dwell. Mostly, those creatures can be defined as enemies who must be defeated, but, as examples like Toad (in *Super Mario*, 1985-) or Sonic (in *Sonic the Hedgehog*, 1991-) show, they can also take the form of supportive or even main characters. With the rise of complexity of the game world, the diversity of characters and groups may also grow. Especially RPGs (Role Playing Games) offer huge settings waiting to be explored by the players: usually, the protagonists travel from town to town and talk to residents to find out more about the world which might even lead them to hidden places that cannot just be reached during the main storyline of the game and requires the players to come up with alternative strategies.

In many cases, as to simulate cultural and ethnic diversity, all kinds of stereotypes are applied. For example, the world of *Ni no kuni: Shiroki no seihai no joō* (2011/2013; *Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch*) presents an 'Arabic'-style village in the desert, a hibernal town where residents live in igloos, as well as a tropical vacation paradise. Quite often the characters living in those towns are further exoticised by sometimes appearing as having creature-like attributes. Those depictions are of course not to be found solely in modern media; as early as in ancient Greek and Roman mythology, humanlike fantastic beings, such as centaurs or the Minotaur, have found their ways into narration (Ackermann 1994) and can be seen as early representations of the fantastic 'other'. Müller-Funk describes this shape of the 'other' as 'radically other', as animalistic hybrids that are perceived as obscure since they remind us of the human 'self' (Müller-Funk 2016: 299).

As Tzvetan Todorov stated already in 1970, fantastic elements in fiction function as a threshold between the miraculous and the uncanny, depending on whether they are understood as something that is 'real' in a respective setting, or as something that might exist only in the imagination of a character (Todorov 1992: 40). However, he also emphasises that fantastic literature must not be misunderstood as a mere form of

escapism; rather, it can be viewed as an opportunity to express opinions on certain topics that would otherwise be hard to talk about or constitute taboos (ibid.: 141). As Wilhelm Solms (1994: 17) states, fantasy can either present a ‘critical and distorted picture of reality’ or a ‘utopian counter image’. This way, the fantasy genre is to be understood as the opposite of ‘realistic’ descriptions, but not to ‘reality’ itself; although it might depict events that could never actually occur, it might still have the ability to deliver messages concerning reality (ibid.: 12).

As I mentioned above, in many videogames fantastic elements are used to describe cultural differences and ethnic diversity, which is why I will focus on fantasy games. With regard to Todorov’s view on fantasy, we may assume that through the use of fantastic characters certain sensitive matters, such as racism, xenophobia, or respective consequences like persecution, slavery, or even massacres, might be more easily and freely depicted as in a realistic mode of description. Especially if we take into account the global marketing strategies of the videogame industry, it seems very likely that developers try not to represent any one political opinion in order to please their audience all over the world; also, while a European character might seem quite foreign to a Japanese audience, it certainly would not have the same effect on a European player. The fantastic, humanoid beings in the games can therefore be defined as a sort of ‘otherness’ that is not directly tied to a certain cultural or ethnic background and can thus be understood and discussed worldwide. In this way, the games provide an understanding of the ‘other’ as a kind of abstract concept, and fantastic characters can be seen as place holders for whatever might be defined as ‘other’ in any respective cultural area where the game is played.

For the following analysis, a qualitative approach was chosen to understand how the four selected videogames engage in constructions of the ‘other’. Of course, the conclusions to be drawn from the analysis do not apply to videogames as a whole. However, the case studies show that there are definitely videogames that express strong and clear opinions on how to deal with the ‘other’ and the conflicts that might arise during an encounter. Thus, the following four videogames have been chosen as examples: *Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki* ファイアーエムブレム: 蒼炎の軌跡 (2005, henceforth *Sōen*) and *Akatsuki no megami* 暁の女神 (2007, henceforth *Akatsuki*), *Tales of Symphonia* テイルズオブシンフォニア (2003, henceforth *ToS*) and *Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen* ゼルダの伝説: ムジュラの仮面 (2000, henceforth *Mnk*). The *Fire Emblem* games consist of the same narration and can be considered as one game, which is why I will refer to three games below. All games have been ranked among the 100-bestselling videogames in Japan for their respective release years with *Mnk* being the most popular of the four, and the *Fire Emblem* games the least sold ones. They include characters that cannot be considered human, but nevertheless behave in a human manner; they interact through language, live together in social communities, and share historical or cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the playable character (avatar) is able to make direct contact with those characters

during the gameplay. The encounter between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ as well as the conflicts that emerge from it can be viewed as one of the main topics of the games. In this way, they share similarities with other videogames—especially when it comes to the genre RPG as was explained above. However, it must be noted that not all videogames focus on the relation between ‘self’ and ‘other’ in such a profound way as those examples do.

The questionnaire I used for an in-depth analysis of each game consists of ca. 100 questions; they all focus on how the games reflect on the ‘other’ and therefore participate in the respective discourse. They shall also answer the question of what kinds of methods are used to define the ‘other’ and the ‘self’. Regarding the content, I examined which settings the videogames provide, how avatars are positioned, and how the relation between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ evolves during the gameplay. In this respect, I also focused on the role of the avatars, since they are the characters that connect the players with the story. All games were played in Japanese in order to understand how their representations of the ‘other’ were designed for a Japanese audience.

Depictions of the ‘Other’

All games provide vast worlds that are to be discovered rather freely or at least during linear gameplay as in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki*. While all three main avatars are human, they encounter several non-human creatures during their journey and learn about the relation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

In *Sōen* and *Akatsuki*, the main protagonist Ike⁴ during his travels around the continent Teriusu テリウス discovers that other life forms exist as well; while he belongs to the so-called Beoku ベオク, there are several kingdoms that feature animal-like people called Raguzu ラグズ. They can transform themselves into animals for fighting purposes and also possess certain characteristics like cat-ears or wings while being in their human state. Feared by the Beoku for their claws and fangs, they are also described as wild and impulsive, while they avoid Beoku and criticise them for being deceitful. When Ike finds out that only a short while ago Raguzu were treated as slaves by the Beoku, he decides to fight by the side of the Raguzu for their rights. The game’s story revolves around a war between all people of Teriusu which eventually leads to the punishment of the goddess of order, who cannot watch over the ongoing battles anymore and decides to entirely wipe out all forms of life. With the help of the goddess of chaos, who was once one with the goddess of order, Ike and his companions can successfully avert the approaching danger. Thereafter, the people of Teriusu work together to form a stable society in

⁴ If names were to be clearly recognised as deriving from western languages, the respective transcription was used. Otherwise, Hepburn romanisation was applied.

which everyone can live peacefully, no matter where they come from or what they look like.

ToS provides a quite similar setting: long before the story of the game begins, elves (*erufu* エルフ) from outer space arrived on the planet. They brought mana with them, a sort of energy that brought prosperity to the world. After they united with the humans (*ningen* 人間) already living on the planet, the world was mainly populated by elves, humans, and so-called half-elves (*hāfuerufu* ハーフエルフ) who all look very similar except for pointy ears that elves and some half-elves feature. During a great war, however, the mana was used for magic and the energy needed to keep the planet alive was almost entirely consumed. This led to splitting the world into two parts called Shiruvaranto シルヴァラント and Teseara テセアラ. Both worlds continue to exist because they now share a mana pool. However, as the amount of mana is only sufficient for one world, they take turns in their use of mana which is why whenever one world is prospering, the other is withering. 4,000 years later, the people of both worlds have forgotten about this past. Half-elves and humans cannot manage to live in peace; in declining Shiruvaranto, humans have to endure a terror regime of half-elves, while in blossoming Teseara humans treat half-elves as slaves. Main protagonist Lloyd, who is born and raised in Shiruvaranto, begins his journey primarily to free humans from the domination of half-elves. When he learns more about the condition of the two worlds, he understands that half-elves cannot be blamed in general and that the imbalance pervading both worlds is the real problem. He and his friends accomplish to restore the world as it was meant to be. From that day on it shall be a place where humans, elves, and half-elves can live together in peace.

While the protagonists in both games might stand on different sides, the stories are quite similar: both settings depict a hateful relation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ that is gradually changed by the main characters. *Mnk* however illustrates a world in which people of different cultures and ethnicities peacefully coexist next to each other from the very beginning. Protagonist Link travels the world Termina タルミナ, that is entirely foreign to him, defining himself as a stranger in this setting. The world that is to be struck by the moon falling down to earth is inhabited by four peoples that can be distinguished through their looks quite easily: Deku-nuts デクナッツ are small and made of wood, which makes them weak in general, especially against fire; Goron ゴロン are tall and muscular and resemble stones, making them immune to fire and even lava; Zōra ゾーラ show fish-like attributes such as fins and are living in the sea; and, finally, there are humans like Link. All of them live in their respective areas, but sometimes individuals can also be found living in another area than their original habitat. All of these areas have tourist spots that invite people from all around to attend special events. Therefore, *Mnk* may show a very modern version of intercultural exchange, addressing phenomena like migration and tourism. During his journey through Termina, Link has to learn to adapt to the cultural differ-

ences at the respective spots to complete his adventures; he wears masks that make him change his bodily shape and turn him into a Deku-nut, a Goron, or a Zōra. He can be seen as a traveller who leaves Termina after saving it from the falling moon and continues his journey after the story has ended.

In summary, non-human or ‘other’ characters are differentiated from human characters through their appearance. They have special characteristics like a slower aging process and abilities like flying or breathing under water. Sometimes, those attributes are further highlighted through other game elements; for example, lion-like Raguzu in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki* seem to be even more tremendous if filmed from a lower perspective during movie scenes. Additionally, Raguzu are forbidden to use any weapons through game mechanics. Instead, players need to wait for a gauge to fill up steadily from the beginning of each level, signalling the energy they need in order to transform into their animal shape to fight. As in *Mnk*, the level design also is part of defining someone as ‘other’; as every single dungeon is designed to be part of one of the respective areas, they always involve certain components such as riddles that can only be solved if players use the right masks. This way they turn into a native to the respective area and become able to use their special powers to complete the dungeons.

As can be seen, videogames do not focus merely on the story to distinguish between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. They make use of all of their components to clearly inform their audience about the facts that are most important in the beginning of the stories: there are characters that are different from the avatar. Not only do they look different, but they also need to be played differently. And finally, as the story begins to unfold, those differences account for the tense relation between the group the avatar belongs to and the group of ‘others’. However, as will be explained below, this is only the setting the games start with. Let us take a look on how the avatars, or rather the players make a change in those environments.

Stressing Cultural Diversity in Hostile Settings

Overall, the *Fire Emblem* games and *ToS* share a similar story—the only difference might be that, as Lloyd, players begin their adventure on the side of the suppressed—while in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki* they join Ike and the group of the dominant Beoku. In *ToS*, half-elves or the ‘other’ are first perceived as an enemy that needs to be defeated for the sake of humankind: humans get abducted to so-called human ranches where they are dispossessed and tortured until they are eventually killed and processed to enriched mana. In *Sōen* and *Akatsuki*, on the other hand, Raguzu appear as victims of human action who need to stand up for their own rights; they are kept as slaves by the Beoku and although they established several kingdoms, they are hardly taken seriously by the Beoku-realms. A massacre that took place twenty years before the story of the game is described as a diplomatic crisis; a council of elders

killed their empress and blamed a peaceful and fragile Raguzu-nation called Sagi サギ / 鷺 for her murder. The Sagi were then almost entirely extinguished when an angry Beoku-mob supposedly avenged their empress.

While side characters constantly emphasise the difference between human and non-human groups, the protagonists slowly learn that they have more in common than might be expected. As Ike is not aware of the existence of Raguzu in the beginning of his journey, he approaches them rather unprejudiced and treats them fairly from the very beginning. As the story unfolds, Ike finds out that he was actually born in one of the Raguzu-kingdoms which encourages him even more to fight with them for their rights. Eventually, he becomes the general of an army that consists of both Raguzu and Beoku. While this frequently causes conflicts based on their different opinions about fighting, Ike and his Raguzu-friend Rai spare no pains to resolve those problems and persist with mutual respect again and again. Finally, Ike's army consisting of Beoku and Raguzu likewise stands out from the remaining setting where Raguzu and Beoku are clearly separated from each other: in *Akatsuki* it turns out that many members of the army are children between Raguzu and Beoku, but kept it a secret because they are usually rejected by both sides. In Ike's army however, they are not being discriminated. As Ike says as the story draws to an end, he does not care whether someone might have a tail or wings or none of them; at the bottom of their hearts, all people of Teriusu (who are at that point referred to as *hito* ヒト ['people'] by most members of the group) are equal. When the war is over and the nations of Teriusu begin to work in a more tolerant environment, Ike is remembered as the hero who brought together the people of Teriusu.

In contrast to Ike, Lloyd is initially part of the hostile setting surrounding him. As early as in the first scene of the game, players participate in Lloyd's class in school, where he learns about a certain group of half-elves called Dizaian デイズアイアン, who manage the human ranches and are responsible for the human's suffering and the withering of the planet alike. Lloyd's hatred against Dizaian is even more distinct because his mother was killed by them. He is, however, not aware of the fact that his teacher Refill and his best friend Genius, who pretend to be elves, are half-elves in truth. As only the players find out at first, they both despise the doings of the Dizaian, but keep their true identity secret because they are afraid of being thrown out of the village they are living in. Lloyd, Genius, and Refill eventually join the holy journey of *miko* 神子 Colette, which will supposedly end the reign of the Dizaian. During their travels, however, Lloyd begins to understand that not all half-elves are supporting the actions of Dizaian. When the group discovers that there is another world, Lloyd realises that the relationship between humans and half-elves can turn out completely different under other circumstances. When Genius and Refill finally reveal their identity, Lloyd's opinion on half-elves is already so sophisticated that he does not hesitate to keep them in the group anyway.

While Lloyd begins his adventure to free humans from Dizaian, this goal gradually changes into creating a world where anyone regardless of origin may exist in their very own way. This is further highlighted by the condition of the group, as every single member is in some way considered as different or even strange in their homes and was therefore forced to leave. The state of the two worlds is only one of the many cases in *ToS* where one side continues to exist while harming the other. As it turns out at the end of the story, a half-elf called Mithos is maintaining the state of the two worlds after losing his faith in the realisation of a world where everyone may be treated equally despite of their differences. He plans to abandon the two existing worlds in order to create an entirely new one, where the differences between elves, half-elves, and humans shall be eliminated. This way all would be made one and the same—which in Mithos' opinion is the only path to true equality. As this is not compatible with Lloyd's affirmation of diversity, he and his friends manage to merge the two separated worlds into one in the end. While the big tree that once provided the world with mana has withered, a new tree comes into existence that from then onwards shall protect all people. To emphasise this, Lloyd chooses an entirely new name for the tree.

In both games, players are set in surroundings where two entities battle each other. This situation has been going on for a long time, before the protagonists were even born. As they find out during their journeys, discrimination, oppression, and hate always leads to renewed discrimination, oppression, and hate. The fight that has been ongoing for several hundreds or even thousands of years seems to be unstoppable at first. However, as the avatars (and, along with them, the players) gradually find out, essentialist views on the 'other' and the 'self' can be easily deconstructed if one does not fear direct contact with the 'other'. While most of society in the games stress cultural and ethnic uniformity, the avatars and their companions form groups where everyone, regardless of their background, is welcome. In that respect they are unique within the game world; they are well aware of the differences between the 'self' and the 'other', they do not even want to deny them. Instead, they focus on the many similarities and see the differences as something from which they can learn. Regardless of how their adventure might have started, in the end it turns out to be a battle against xenophobia and intolerance. Their objective is not to make all people the same, but to spread the awareness that it is perfectly acceptable if somebody looks or behaves differently than oneself and that nothing about that is to be feared. By advocating diversity they also oppose the antagonists of both games: while Mithos and the goddess of order as well as their subjects pursue homogeneity, the protagonists build worlds in which no one has to fear discrimination or persecution because of their backgrounds and thus emphasise heterogeneity. After the players have been introduced to various ways of dealing with the 'other', only one option remains reasonable to solve the conflicts in the game worlds: in the end, the princi-

ples of diversity, acceptance, and inclusion win over homogeneity, intolerance, and segregation.

Intercultural Approaches and Culture Shocks

In contrast to *ToS* and the *Fire Emblem* games, *Mnk* tells a story about peaceful interchange and cultural adaption. At the beginning of the story, Link is mugged by a human-like creature called Skull Kid and falls down into a foreign world when chasing him. This scenario resembles that of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. All characters of Termina can also be found in the earlier *Zeruda*-game *Toki no ocarina* *ゼルダの伝説：時のオカリナ* (1998); however, they seem to have different personalities and cannot remember Link at all. As the Skull Kid is possessed by the mask of Mujura (Mujura no kamen *ムジュラの仮面*), his fondness for playing tricks on others increases without limit, leading him to cause several environmental disasters such as poisoned swamps. All of these cannot outclass his undertaking to let the moon fall down on Termina. It is presumed that it is also the mask's doing when the Skull Kid transforms Link into a Deku-nut. In this state, Link is unable to defend himself and is reliant on a salesman for masks, who is the only person in Termina who knows about Link's true identity. When he teaches him a certain song, the curse is sealed in a mask and Link is henceforth able to freely change his shape whenever he likes to. Subsequently, he manages to capture the souls of a Zōra and a Goron and becomes able to turn into them as well by wearing the respective masks.

During further gameplay, Link needs to use the abilities he gains through these masks; while Deku-nuts are able to fly, Goron can endure high temperatures and roll at a high speed. Zōra are able to breath under water and are good swimmers. To solve the riddles that are a crucial part of all *Zeruda*-games, Link needs to make use of all three masks and the skills that accompany them. This does not refer only to battling skills; Link's ocarina changes its form with him, turning into a trumpet for Deku-Link, a drum for Goron-Link, and a guitar for Zōra-Link. Only by playing songs he has learned from the people of Termina on the respective instruments Link is allowed to enter the dungeons that are actually temples of those people. He needs to engage in learning from and adapting to those people, and finally has to apply what he learned to progress in his adventures.

This process of adaption is anything but easy. When Link is turned into a Deku-nut for the first time, a movie scene shows how he is surrounded and pursued by a number of Deku-nuts until he is absorbed by an absurdly giant one. When he sees the reflection of his new face in a nearby puddle, he falls onto his knees screaming in horror. However, when he is turned back by the masks salesman, a movie shows Link happily waving to the giant Deku-nut who eventually vanishes into darkness. Having returned to his former self, he eagerly looks at all parts of his body, showing his relief with a gasp. The pain of adapting himself to something foreign and thus

changing his identity never dissolves completely; even when Link is using the masks, the transformation is always accompanied by a seemingly acute pain, causing him to scream and snap his eyes open. When he takes down the mask, however, his face is surrounded by a bright light and the moment the mask drops off is signalled by a high tone which makes one believe that Link is very eased when returning to his actual body.

In contrast to the other two examples, Link himself becomes part of the ‘other’; he and the Skull Kid are the only characters in *Mnk* who do not have a home in Termina and do not even belong in this world. To accomplish the goals of the game, Link needs to adapt himself to cultural differences even if this means to suffer. His experience can be taken as a culture shock, making it hard for him to move along on his journey. However, his continuous assimilation eventually affects his personal development: compared to others, Link is able to adjust to many different situations and is respected by members of different cultures and areas. Moreover, the fact that he uses the skills he acquires by wearing the masks during the whole game makes him a transcultural character.

As it turns out during the gameplay, a long time ago the Skull Kid was rejected by his friends, the four guardian deities of Termina, and was even exiled from Termina when playing several tricks on its residents in response. Mujura’s mask therefore may only have intensified the pain of feeling different and being refused as ‘other’. Although it might not be obvious at first, even in *Mnk*, where the relation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ appears much more balanced than in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki*, the reason for the protagonist and the antagonist to oppose each other can be traced back to a former conflict between the ‘self’ (the residents of Termina) and the ‘other’ (the Skull Kid). While Link does his best not to be overpowered by being different in this strange world, the Skull Kid gives in to his negative feelings due to the influence of the mask. In the end, Link helps him to take off the mask and see things differently. This way, it becomes clear that Link is actually fighting the Skull Kid’s confused thoughts and not the Skull Kid itself.

Mnk therefore provides a setting where players can give intercultural exchange a try. The opposing relation between ‘self’ and ‘other’ cannot be entirely resolved. However, as the game conveys, cultural adaption is a way to learn how to cope with this friction. In the end, Link remains a traveller: after freeing the Skull Kid from his curse, they become friends and Link departs for another journey. He takes the masks with him like souvenirs and emerges as an evolved and stronger being.

Interactivity and Reward Systems as Ways of Speaking Out

All three games feature mechanisms that involve players in the stories and even let them influence what is happening to a certain degree. As is custom in *Fire Emblem* games, characters in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki* cannot be revived once they have died

during battle. Additionally, sometimes certain conditions have to be met in order to add new characters to the protagonist's party, such as talking to them while fighting or not defeating them in a certain situation. This way the outcome of the story usually differs slightly depending on the players' abilities or their preferences regarding gameplay. However, *Sōen* and *Akatsuki* define several characters that automatically join the party and cannot die even if they are defeated in battle. For example, at a certain point in *Sōen*, the players can decide to bring the prince of the Sagi along or to leave him behind. As a result, he will either be added to the party as a playable character or not. Nevertheless, the prince does not leave the group of characters around Ike; if he is sent away, he will return a few chapters later, join the group, and simply stay with them as an unplayable character. If he joins the group and is later defeated in battle, he does not die like the other characters but simply retires from any further fighting. Thus, the prince cannot be kept from remaining part of the narration, and Ike will inevitably find out who is responsible for the massacre, which will be one of the main reasons for him to join the Raguzu in their fight. Players are thus not provided with the power to directly change how the story revolves around the relation of 'self' and 'other'. While they are seemingly given an opportunity to decide about the cooperation between Raguzu and Beoku, they cannot actually change the outcome. The ties between 'self' and 'other' are a necessary result players need to accept.

While this part in *Sōen* simply affects the storyline, later on in *Akatsuki* players are urged to not only view but also perform the concepts of tolerance in the same way as they are explained during the entire gameplay: on grounds of game mechanics, players certainly need to deploy Raguzu-characters in battles. Usually, *Fire Emblem* games allow the players to choose which characters shall join the battle except for the main protagonist. However, *Akatsuki* defines several characters whose death will automatically lead to game over. Those are Beoku and Raguzu characters who are actively involved in trying to improve their relation. Usually, the number of characters that implicitly need to be part of a fighting party is limited to one or two, but in the last chapter of *Akatsuki*, players have to take several Raguzu and Beoku characters with them who must not die during the last battle. Thus, there is no way for players to, for example, deploy only Beoku characters; in order to complete the game, players need to act just as tolerantly and open-mindedly to harmonious relations between Raguzu and Beoku as Ike.

ToS offers the possibility for players to regularly engage in dialogues and to make certain decisions. Most of the time players are given options on how to proceed or how to react to another character. Depending on the choices the players make, the other characters subsequently will either like or dislike Lloyd. This way, they can also directly influence the story, but like in *Sōen* and *Akatsuki*, the main story usually cannot be changed. For example, players may choose at the beginning of the story whether to secretly leave the classroom or stay; Lloyd will be liked by

either Colette or Genius, but the storyline showing how Dizaian attack the village will only change to a minor degree.

The players are also given the chance to decide whether a new character should be added to the party. Nevertheless, they actually have no influence on these decisions; Lloyd might be disliked by all the other characters, but the new character will inevitably join the team. This way, *ToS* makes the players believe that they have the chance to make a change in the story when they can actually do very little about the outcome. There is, however, one significant scene that is completely different from the others: as Lloyd finds out the truth about Genius' and Refill's identity, Genius asks Lloyd whether he will be fine if they stay within the group. Although players are always involved in the decision of allowing characters to join the team as described above, the game does not give any options in this case. This is the only situation where Lloyd decides himself whether a character is to be part of the party or not, preventing the players from rejecting Genius and Refill because of their ethnic origin.

In *Mnk* players will be confronted with the highest degree of freedom among the three games. As the masks can be worn and put down at any point of the game, players can try different combinations of cultural exchange. This way they will find out that members of a specific group mostly prefer talking to another member of their group over talking to a stranger. They will also discover that when wearing certain masks, such as the Deku-nut-mask, they will be dealt with prejudice in certain areas. Corresponding to the trial-and-error principle, players investigate what will happen when they take various shapes. While they experience many different responses by the characters they interact with, only one way remains suitable: if they want to proceed in gameplay, players will need to adapt to the cultural circumstances around them.

Those tendencies are even further highlighted through the reward systems used in the games. In *Fire Emblem* players are mostly rewarded with experience points that help them develop their characters. During most battles, players are given the opportunity to gain extra points for certain tasks. Although they may not be explicitly defined as goals by the game, hints about them are often given during a dialogue before a fight. For the most part, those points can be acquired if the players spare innocent bystanders attending the battles. This way the games make the players reflect deeply upon who is to be seen as an enemy and who is not. In *ToS* making certain decisions in dialogues is rewarded with friendship-points that may also be deducted through other decisions. Depending on the points gained, Lloyd will be accompanied by one character liking him the most at the end of the story. If players mostly choose tolerant and amicable options, Colette will be the one by Lloyd's side. This can be considered as the intended ending, not only because Colette and Lloyd form a hero-heroine-duo, but also because Colette is the only character who then gives Lloyd an item increasing his character stats. This way players are directly

rewarded for making open-minded decisions. Finally, in *Mnk* players are not directly compensated for good gameplay; if they put on the right masks, they are allowed to proceed. This, however, is the main intention of the game, making it hard to decide whether this is a form of reward.

As can be seen, the extent of how freely players may effectively interact with the games depends on the respective situation. Especially when clear opinions on the 'other' or the relation between the 'other' and the 'self' are to be expressed, interactivity seems to be minimised. This way, the games deter players from making choices linked to racism, discrimination, and exclusion. When, as in *Mnk*, those decisions are directly linked to gameplay, not going along with the intentions of the game results in losing the game, making them wrong decisions from the players' perspective. In the *Fire Emblem* games and *ToS* players do not even have a choice. Thus, they teach diversity on two levels: first, on the level of the story, where intolerant opinions are condemned through narration as well as the characters, and second, on the level of game mechanics, stressing that the game can hardly be won if one does not agree with the tolerant strategies it provides.

Conclusion: So What Can We Learn?

When research on the 'other' is carried out, it usually does not seek to understand what precisely the 'other' is or what it consists of. It is impossible to determine any characteristics of the 'other' as it constitutes a mere construction that only exists in conjunction with the 'self'. The 'other' is to be understood as a construction of human thinking, and as was discussed above, it is always constructed by its counterpart, the 'self', which helps to define it. Thus, examining constructions of the 'other' cannot give any insight into what the 'other' is—but rather into how it is perceived. Conceptions of the 'other' actually reveal much more about the 'self' than about the 'other' (Schaffers 2006: 340). As Griseldis Kirsch discussed by referring to the example of Japanese *dorama* ドラマ, depictions of the 'other' can be used to question the 'self', or in the case of Japan, to challenge views on the uniqueness and the homogeneity of Japanese society; this way, the 'other' can also be used to criticise the 'self' (Kirsch 2011). Uta Shaffers states that the encounter with the 'other' may not only be experienced face-to-face, but also through constructed images as they are provided in texts (Schaffers 2006: 341). As such, constructions of the 'other' in media can be considered as a 'pattern' that prepares us for real-life situations and provides us with 'schemata which help us to arrange and handle our confusing experiences' concerning the 'other' (ibid.: 344). This means that media representations of the 'other' can be understood as a mirror that reflects how images of the 'other' are perpetually constructed and reconstructed in a certain national or cultural context, while shaping the ways of perceiving the 'other' in those respective socie-

ties. As for the three examples that were analysed in this paper, all of them set their focus on points of friction between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’. The conflicts that need to be solved during gameplay, the views and motivations of the protagonists as well as those of the antagonists, and finally, the reason for the final battle can be traced back either to an unpleasant encounter with the ‘other’ in the past or to the experience of being different. The way of perceiving the relation between the ‘other’ and the ‘self’ distinguishes the protagonists from the antagonists. While the latter also deal with their experiences of the ‘other’ and might even wish to end the difficult situation, they pursue ideals that would only harm society, whereas the former act as the saviours of society, protecting it from any further harm.

The reason for the antagonists to follow their radical approaches lies within the composition of the game worlds; as they experience the conflictual situation of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, they decide to make a change. In contrast to the protagonists, however, they strive for homogeneity and try to eradicate the differences between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, or they even look for vengeance as in the case of the Skull Kid. These settings are explicitly shaped during gameplay. First, the games create discernible differences on various layers to make the players understand how to tell the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ apart. On the second step, however, they teach the players that there are much more similarities between the two than might be initially thought. This way, they construct and deconstruct the ‘other’ again and again. Partially through reward systems, but especially by restricting the potential of interactivity, they instruct the players to act tolerantly. While many different forms of dealing with the ‘other’ are introduced, only acceptance and the willingness to make compromises remain as a formula to success when a peaceful and fair environment is to be established. In a nutshell, the games examined here tell stories of tolerance and diversity fighting homogeneity and essentialism. Clearly, these games express distinct opinions about the ‘other’.

As Sugimoto Yoshio (2009: 2) states, the popular view on Japanese society as ‘egalitarian, equitable and relatively classless’ started to deteriorate in the early 2000s, which also led to a rising awareness that Japanese society has become a *kakusa shakai* 格差社会. This was accompanied by newly formed opinions on Japanese culture that has been perceived as multicultural rather than monocultural ever since (ibid.: 3). Although a lot of research is done to stress the multifaceted diversity in Japanese society, the idea of a homogeneous and unique Japan has not completely disappeared. This can be seen, for example, in the discourse on exophonic writers writing in Japanese, who still have to deal with the prevalent opinion that only those who were born Japanese are qualified to speak Japanese flawlessly (Inaga 2013), or even in ideas regarding the inseparability of Japanese videogames and Japanese culture (Saitō 2009). The games chosen for this analysis, however, disagree with such views; they see the potential for improvement and development—personal as well as societal—in the differences between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ and

avoid depicting any side as superior. It seems that those games openly criticise traditional ideas of a homogenous Japan. Especially in this context, those examples can serve as a starting point for further research concerning the construction of the 'other' from the developer's and publisher's viewpoint.

Just like the players are put into conflictual settings in the games, we ourselves cannot choose our own cultural backgrounds or the way we are taught about dealing with the foreign 'other'. In everyday life, one might even be confronted with similar views as those of Mithos or the goddess of order. However, as the games teach us, views concerning the 'other' are not inalterable. Just like when playing those games, it is up to us whether or not we can change the current situation; the cycle of conflict can be disrupted simply by the actions of a single individual. The impact of such an effort is described as something so powerful that it may change the whole world. In this manner, the games point out that the responsibility to change the relation between the 'self' and the 'other' lies not in one's surroundings but in oneself. If this responsibility is taken seriously, a peaceful and diverse world may be created, a world that could be filled with positive experiences to learn from. It seems quite adequate that, out of all things, videogames with their transcultural background are the media to tell those stories.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CESA	Computer Entertainment Supplier's Association
DiGRA	Digital Games Research Association
NES	Nintendo Entertainment System
RPG	Role Playing Game

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GLOSSARY

<i>Beoku</i>	ベオク	Beoku; term for humans in <i>Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki</i> and <i>Akatsuki no megami</i>
<i>Dekunattsu</i>	デクナッツ	Deku-nuts; characters in <i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>
<i>Dizaian</i>	ディザイアン	organisation of half-elves in <i>Tales of Symphonia</i>
<i>Dorama</i>	ドラマ	Japanese television drama (film or series)
<i>Erufu</i>	エルフ	elves; characters in <i>Tales of Symphonia</i>
<i>Faiā Emuburemu: Sōen no kiseki</i>	ファイアーエムブレム: 蒼炎の軌跡	<i>Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance</i> ; videogame (2005)
<i>Faiā Emuburemu: Akatsuki no megami</i>	ファイアエムブレム: 暁の女神	<i>Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn</i> ; videogame (2007)
<i>Famikon</i>	ファミコン	Nintendo Famicom console
<i>Goron</i>	ゴロン	Goron; characters in <i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>
<i>hāfuerufu</i>	ハーフエルフ	half-elves; characters in <i>Tales of Symphonia</i>
<i>Hito</i>	ヒト	‘people’ or ‘person’; neutral term for Raguzu and Beoku in <i>Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki</i> and <i>Akatsuki no megami</i>
<i>kakusa shakai</i>	格差社会	‘society with disparities’; addressing Japan as a stratified society
<i>Konpyūta entāteinmento kyōkai</i>	コンピュータエンターテインメント協会	Computer Entertainment Supplier’s Association (CESA)
<i>miko</i>	神子	‘shrine maiden’, ‘medium’
<i>Mujura no kamen</i>	ムジュラの仮面	Mujura’s mask; item in <i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>
<i>ningen</i>	人間	‘human’

<i>Nintendō</i>	任天堂	Nintendo
<i>Raguzu</i>	ラグズ	Raguzu; term for non-human characters in <i>Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki</i> and <i>Akatsuki no megami</i>
<i>Sagi</i>	鷺 / サギ	heron; characters in <i>Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki</i> and <i>Akatsuki no megami</i>
<i>Shirubaranto</i>	シルヴァラント	Shirubaranto; name of a world in <i>Tales of Symphonia</i>
<i>Sonī</i>	ソニー	Sony
<i>Tarumina</i>	タルミナ	Termina; name of the world in <i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>
<i>Teirusu obu shinfonia</i>	テイルズオブシンフォニア	<i>Tales of Symphonia</i> ; videogame (2003)
<i>Teriusu</i>	テリウス	Teriusu; name of the world in <i>Fire Emblem: Sōen no kiseki</i> and <i>Akatsuki no megami</i>
<i>Termina</i>	タルミナ	see Tarumina
<i>Teseara</i>	テセアラ	Teseara; name of a world in <i>Tales of Symphonia</i>
<i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>	ゼルダの伝説: ムジュラの仮面	<i>The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask</i> ; videogame (2000)
<i>Zeruda no densetsu: Toki no okarina</i>	ゼルダの伝説: 時のオカリナ	<i>The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time</i> ; videogame (1998)
<i>Zōra</i>	ゾーラ	Zōra; characters in <i>Zeruda no densetsu: Mujura no kamen</i>