

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Japan has so many traditions of folklore that had inherited for generation whether in story form or in tradition form. With some creativity and existing technology that they had, some Japanese filmmaker has succeeded by making some Japanese folklore into more interesting form and well known by people whether inside Japan or outside Japan. According to Kitayama “Folklore is a stories shared by folk people from the past and these stories are similar to myths, except that they are related more to human matters than to supernatural beings” (Kitayama 2005: 85) By this quotation the writer argue that folklore is cultural product which is produced by people in the past and it is contained of myth and usually, the society will connect the folklore to supernatural even more to human matters. As emphasized by Lindahl,

Although many people regard a “folktale” as a fictional form, I use the term here to apply to any traditional tale, whether its tellers consider it true, or false, or both. Thus, the scope of the tale extends far beyond fiction to encompass belief tales, personal experience stories, and accounts of major historical events (Lindahl, 2004: 200). Based on the quotation above, the writer argues that folklore acknowledges the practice of labeling narratives based on the element of belief, he also realizes the inherent story within each and the tendency of storytellers to use a little fiction and a little nonfiction in crafting their stories. Lindahl uses this terminology to put the focus on the storytellers themselves and help the reader to recognize the relationship between tale and teller. Folklore also reflects people and culture, how people lived and what they believed in the past. All cultures have mythology that has helped shape them. However, different cultures have their modern lifestyles shaped in distinct ways by their ancient mythology.

To help illustrate how this occurs, this thesis examines how traditional Japanese anime is heavily influenced by the Japanese mythology that preceded it. In turn, Japanese anime has been heavily influenced both by this mythology and the way that traditional Japanese anime presented this mythology. This is not an exclusively Japanese phenomenon, as other cultures often draw on the myths they have inherited for the purposes of modern entertainment.

Folklore in Japan began to be recorded in 1910 by folklorists or folklore lovers, and officially the first folklore in Japan was collected in 1910, in which *Yanagita Kunio* collected and published the book of folklore entitled *The Yanagita Kunio Guide to the Japanese Folk Tale*, the translation of *Nihon Mukashibanashi Meiji*, a literary work that is now classified as classic. By the time flies, folklore in Japan became a separate discipline, and folklore study was intensified.

As stated before that Japan has so many traditions of folklore that have been inherited for generations, like *Oni*. According to Takeshi and Belt (2007;45) *oni* is a spiritual possession by the spirit of a dog, widely known about in western Japan. The phenomenon of *oni* spiritual possession was a *kojutsu* (also called "kodo" or "kodoku," a greatly feared ritual for employing the spirits of certain animals) that was already banned in the Heian period that was thought to have spread throughout the population, and it was known to involve cutting off the head of a starving dog and burying the dog at a crossroads to inflame its grudges as people pass over its heads so that its spirit would turn into a curse that could be used. With some creativities and existing technology that Japanese have, some Japanese film maker has succeeded to make *oni* folklore into something more interesting form and well known by people whether inside Japan or outside. One of them can be found in Japanese animation *Inuyasha*.

Inuyasha is adopted from *Manga* created by Rumiko Takahashi; *Inuyasha* is the story of modern schoolgirl *Kagome Higurashi*, who travels back in time to Japan's feudal Sengoku period after falling into a well in her family shrine. There she meets the *hanyo Inuyasha*. Inuyasha is half-demon, his father is a demon and his mother is a human and he is bound in the sacred tree, then Kagome set him free. Then together both of them set off to search the *Shikon jewel*, a gem which grants great power to any demon which possesses it.

Since its premiere in weekly *shonen Sunday* on November 13, 1996 *Inuyasha* has earned a steadily increasing notoriety and popularity within Japanese culture, and become iconic *Manga* in Japan at that time. The show has record more than 167 episodes for the first series that is *Inuyasha : Feudal Fairy Tale* since October 16 2000 until September 13 2004 which aired on Yomiuri TV. The second series, called *Inuyasha: The Final Act*, began airing five years later on October 3, 2009 to cover the rest of the manga series and ended on March 29, 2010 after 26 episodes. Most recently Viz Media released 4 *Inuyasha* movies with subtitle and dubbed track in English, fourth movie installment has earned together over USD20 million in Japanese box offices.

Inuyasha has become a culture phenomenon in Japanese culture, because *inuyasha* give brand new sight of Japanese folklore through the visual media. With the creativity and high technology, Japanese Folklore (*Oni*) turn into a form that is more attractive and desirable by public (*Inuyasha*) which known as popular culture. In general exist throughout not only the *Inuyasha* franchise, but also popular culture. This research is readily drawn on these figures for their own creative works, encouraging them to borrow certain elements from folklore holistically or more commonly atomistic ally. As a result, many creatures may designate with the appellation of

folklore creature like *oni* because they share enough attributable characteristics to warrant the term as constructed among popular culture

According to Williams “popular culture as the culture actually made by people for themselves; it is often displaced to the past as folk culture but it is also an important modern emphasis” (Williams 1976:199) Moreover according to John G Nachbar “popular culture which refers to “the products of human work and thought which are (or have been) accepted and approved of by a large community of population” from those quotation , the writer argue that the words of popular culture is understood to be in the context for popular work among the society sometimes they are related to folklore because Japanese still believe in it till now, that is why the writer choose *inuyasha* in order to give further understanding about folklore and how to transform it into the media and became famous among the society and it is reflected in *inuyasha's series* that would be the main source of this research.

This anime is chosen as the object of this study because firstly it is contained theme Japanese folklore especially *oni*. Secondly, its because it is a successful anime and received by Japanese people and outside. Due to this research the writer decide to choose *Inuyasha's series* as the object of the study, in which the writer believe that the author of *Inuyasha* influence by traditional japanese folklore.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the explanation in the background of the study above, the writer formulate the problem into:

How is the representation of Japanese folklore (*Oni*) in popular culture as seen in *Inuyasha's series: English version*?

1.3. Research Objective

Based on the formulation of the problem that has been stated by the writer before, the purpose of this research are:

To describe how is the representation of Japanese folklore (*Oni*) in popular culture as seen in *Inuyasha's series: English version*.

1.4. Uses of the Study

This research is expected have a contribution of these two major uses : theoretical uses and practical uses.

1.4.1 Theoretical Use

Theoretically, this thesis is employed to expand and apply the field of literary study, so it will be useful not only for the next researcher of literature but also for the reader who interest with the same topic.

1.4.2 Practical Use

Practically, this thesis will help, enrich reader's knowledge and become the previous secondary data for other writers that do the same research topics, which is discuss about Japanese folklore in popular culture as seen in *Inuyasha's series: English version*. In spite, this research will be dedicated in the term of knowledge's development.

1.5 Scope of the Study

In order to limit this research, the writer only focuses on how traditional Japanese anime is heavily influenced by the Japanese folklore that preceded it. In turn, Japanese anime has been heavily influenced both by its mythology and the way that traditional Japanese anime presented this folklore as repressed in *Inuyasha's series: English version* through the text and signs inside the movie.