

Remediations of Japanese Cinema and History in *Ghost of Yōtei*

Michael Pennington

Bath Spa University
Newton St Loe Campus
Bath, BA2 9BN
m.pennington@bathspa.ac.uk

Corine Gerritsen

Leiden University
Rapenburg 70, 2311 EZ Leiden
c.t.gerritsen@hum.leidenuniv.nl

ABSTRACT

This paper offers an early exploration into how *Ghost of Yōtei* represents Japanese cinematic history and indigenous Ainu history. Building on the established scholarship of remediation, the paper deploys close reading and paratexts to understand how the game's mechanics, aesthetics, narrative, and advertising convey reflections of Japan's feudal past as recontextualized and remediated from film and history. The analysis examines the influence of twentieth century Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa to the game, situating the developer's reverence to the director through the dual inclusion of Kurosawa Mode as a prestige summation of his distinct filmic style, and frequent reference to Kurosawa themes of morality and nature. In contrast, the game's depiction of the Ainu indigenous people, native to Hokkaido, is parsed through their own history and customs, but also simultaneously through a remediated understanding of native American peoples and western expansionist frontier history.

Keywords

remediation, Japanese history, cinema, Kurosawa, Ainu, representation

INTRODUCTION

Ghost of Yōtei (Sucker Punch Productions 2025) is a recently released action-adventure game set in Hokkaido, known by its historical name – Ezo – in 1603. The player follows Atsu in her quest for revenge against the infamous Yōtei Six: a violent gang who have brutally murdered her family. The title is a spiritual sequel to *Ghost of Tsushima* (Sucker Punch Productions 2020), but *Ghost of Yōtei* represents an interesting new expression of cultural history. In a video advertising the game before its release on 2 October 2025, the developers define the game experience as “stepping inside...classic samurai films” (PlayStation 2025). This sets the connection between the game and *jidai-geki* productions: mid-twentieth century Japanese films set during the Tokugawa period from 1600 to 1867 (Anderson 1973, 1).

Proceedings of DiGRA 2026

© 2026 Authors & Digital Games Research Association DiGRA. Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

It would be tempting to view *Ghost of Yōtei* as only a piece of playable cinema. However, in a blog post discussing the developer’s field research, game co-director Nate Fox (2025) highlights two central influences: “I had primarily seen the country through the lens of beloved classic samurai movies...meeting locals is deeply inspiring...[we] came back to the studio with a driving passion to bring a sense of authenticity to our fictional depiction of these real life places”. In this statement, *Ghost of Yōtei* offers a dual ludic remediation of cinema, and Japanese and indigenous Ainu history. This paper stands as a significant early contribution to understanding how *Ghost of Yōtei* portrays the past, exploring its unique identity as a digital mosaic of cinematic and historical depictions of feudal Japan.

The paper begins by outlining existing research into the series and discourses of representation in historical games. The paper then presents its methodology, using the concept of remediation – how representations of the past are filtered through prior forms of legacy media (Bolter and Grusin 2000) – to frame its analysis of game text and paratext. The paper focuses on two core arguments. Firstly, it examines how the game conveys aesthetic and thematic influences from renowned twentieth century Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa, who held a career that spanned six decades between 1943 and 1993. In its creation of ‘Kurosawa Mode’, *Ghost of Yōtei* links itself to the prestige legacy of the director, while offering a narrow understanding of his filmic style that excludes important titles. However, in the game world and mechanics of *Ghost of Yōtei*, reflections and remediations of Kurosawa are present, such as using the natural world to convey meaning, and the thematic refrains of memory, revenge and violence that characterize Kurosawa’s output. Secondly, the paper investigates how the game represents the history of the Ainu, an indigenous people native to Japan’s northernmost island of Hokkaido. The paper explores the presence of a mythical remediated frontier in *Ghost of Yōtei* that calls upon aspects of both Japanese and American contexts of expansionist history against native peoples. While the developers make significant strides in representing the Ainu people with respect, many of the game’s thematic representations of the Ainu are also borne through popular western conceptions of native Americans the history of the American West. The Ainu are also shown to be experiencing the mass migration of mainland Japanese settlers; the paper explores how *Ghost of Yōtei* portrays historic remediations of colonial practices that occur against the Ainu across centuries. Ultimately, the paper argues that the game has deep potential for future research, particularly in its representations of evolving Japanese feudal structures, and its remediations of contemporary cultural forms such as anime and hip hop.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The paper’s value is reinforced by the lack of academic literature on *Ghost of Yōtei* (Pennington and Gerritsen, 2025). In contrast, journalistic accounts are plentiful (Higham 2025; Ramsey 2025). This is unsurprising; the game was launched in October 2025 with barely three months passing since its release at the time of writing this piece. This article stands among the first historical game studies research to interrogate the title’s representations of history. However, as a sequel, *Ghost of Yōtei* continues themes and game systems that emerged with *Ghost of Tsushima*. There is also little mention of this title in game scholarship. It is occasionally invoked as a passing comparison to describe the popularity of open-world games (Evans 2024; Fizek 2024; Vandewalle et al. 2022). In contrast, Pablo Fraile-Jurado’s (2023) study investigating the geographical accuracy of fifteen open-world games includes *Ghost*

of *Tsushima* meaningfully, highlighting its use of wind as a “a fundamental element of the landscape” due to its function as a directional guide. The title is also a significant focus of Koyama Yuhsuke and Li Jiaxin’s (2025) study of Steam reviews and perceived disseminations of culture, arguing that Japanese players on Steam found the game to present respectful depictions of Japanese culture. This scholarship demonstrates that there is a small amount of research that evaluates the *Ghost* series’ portrayal of Japanese culture and history.

In contrast, this paper is aligned to a groundswell of historical game studies research that explores representations of the past (De Groot 2016; Kempshall 2015; von Lünen et al. 2019). This research is influenced by media scholarship that examines cinematic portrayals of history (Elliot 2010; Richards 2014; Rosenstone 2006). Similarly, with its focus on the cinematic influence of Akira Kurosawa, this work is also keenly connected to film studies scholarship that discusses the aesthetic and functional nature of Kurosawa’s output (Prince 1999; Richie 1996; Yoshimoto 2000). However, identifying methodological frameworks for studying history in games is a key aspect of current literature. Adam Chapman (2013; 2016) argues that games represent history through visuals, rules, and opportunities for player action, distinguishing game systems as unique platforms for transmitting history. While the limitations of representation in games have been identified (Uricchio 2005), and recent developments interrogate its usefulness (Matei 2025), this paper views historical representation as an instructive approach in determining *Ghost of Yōtei*’s remediations of Japanese cinema and history.

FRAMING AND METHODOLOGY

In understanding *Ghost of Yōtei* as a platform for presenting Japanese cinema and history, the paper is framed through the concept of remediation. Conceived by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000), remediation describes the process by which new media forms retain and project influences, styles, and visual languages inherited from legacy media. Remediation emphasizes that *Ghost of Yōtei* is influenced by a combination of audial, textual and visual references that are themselves defined by forms of influential popular media. Through remediation, history itself becomes a remediated construct, allowing us to better witness how games reuse media and history to portray an imagined past. An established range of research recognizes the usefulness of remediation of cinema and history in digital games (Chapman 2016; King and Krzywinska 2002; Papazian and Sommers 2013; Wright 2017; Żmuda 2024).

While this paper finds remediation to be a convincing methodological framing, other competing theories are available. From historical perspectives, scholars have argued that all history is mediated, understood as “verbal fictions” (White 2014) or ideological constructs (Jameson 2002). The concept of a ‘media’ or ‘ludo’ mix (Nakamura and Tosca 2020; Chiapello 2019) offers a related understanding of the distribution and formation of Japanese franchises, discussing the ways in which Japanese popular media, such as anime and manga, interact with one another. However, unlike remediation, these concepts do not account for the recursive loops of influence from media and history that characterize historical digital games.

Through remediation as framing, this research uses a mix of known methodologies to explore the historical and cultural representations within *Ghost of Yōtei*. Primarily, this paper examines in-game content through close reading and textual analysis. This work

understands close reading from its roots in literature studies as “a detailed examination, deconstruction, analysis of a media text” (Bizzocchi and Tanenbaum 2011, 289). Close reading provides an opportunity to critique how games create historical and cultural meaning. Similarly, in their mapping of game studies methods, Jasper van Vught and Joris Veerbeek (2025, 217) define studies of the representational layer of games as “game text analysis”. This forms a complimentary approach with close reading, allowing an examination of both diegetic and non-diegetic text as sites of symbolism with intersecting and contrasting representations of Japanese cinema and indigenous Ainu history.

Paratexts are also sites of knowledge regarding *Ghost of Yōtei*'s remediations of the past. Defined by Regina Seiwald and Ed Vollans (2023, 3), paratexts are a network of things connected with a game that exist outside of it; these materials allow us to understand how to make sense of a game. Paratexts are a diverse range of materials including online wikis (Pennington 2023) and fanvids (Stevens 2023). However, this paper examines “top-down corporate paratexts” (Caldwell 2011): promotions, trailers, and interviews produced by developers and publishers. Scholarship into corporate paratexts has focused on game trailers functioning as promissory products (Vollans 2023) and examines how developers use film to advertise game experiences as recognizable forms of playable history (Wright 2017; 2022). The developers of *Ghost of Yōtei* have created many public trailers and interviews, leaving a significant trail of sources that discuss the role of cinema and history within the game (Fox 2025).

REVERENCE AND LIMITATIONS OF *GHOST OF YŌTEI*'S KUROSAWA MODE

Film is a defining characteristic of *Ghost of Yōtei*. Its ties to Japanese film are evident from the start of a playthrough. Among the first required actions is the selection of a Cinematic Mode. These three modes, Kurosawa Mode, Miike Mode, and Watanabe Mode, represent filters which change the title's audio and visual properties. Each mode is named to evoke the distinct filmic or audial style of Japanese directors across both the twentieth and early twenty-first century: Akira Kurosawa, Takashi Miike, and Shinichirō Watanabe respectively. Miike Mode and Watanabe Mode are new additions, deserving of scrutiny in future scholarship, yet Kurosawa Mode has been imported from *Ghost of Tsushima*. As such, Akira Kurosawa holds a significant influence over the series.

Kurosawa Mode (Figure 1) digitally renders *Ghost of Yōtei*'s visuals in high-contrast black-and-white, adding film grain texture and a soft 35mm focus to mimic the physical characteristics of film stock in the late-1950s and early-1960s (Pennington and Gerritsen 2025). In addition to this visual reimagining, the audio palate is compressed and distorted to imitate the mono sounds of the period. Kurosawa Mode conforms to the affordances and limitations of film technology at the time. As the developers argue (Museum of the Moving Image 2020), Kurosawa Mode is an explicit attempt to recreate the “authentic” visual and sonic conditions of Kurosawa's mid-century samurai movies, particularly *Seven Samurai* (1954), *Sanjuro* (1962), and *Yojimbo* (1961). This ambition speaks to the influence of Kurosawa on *Ghost of Yōtei*, realized by the developers working with his estate to endorse the mode as an authentic replication of his style (PlayStation Access 2025)

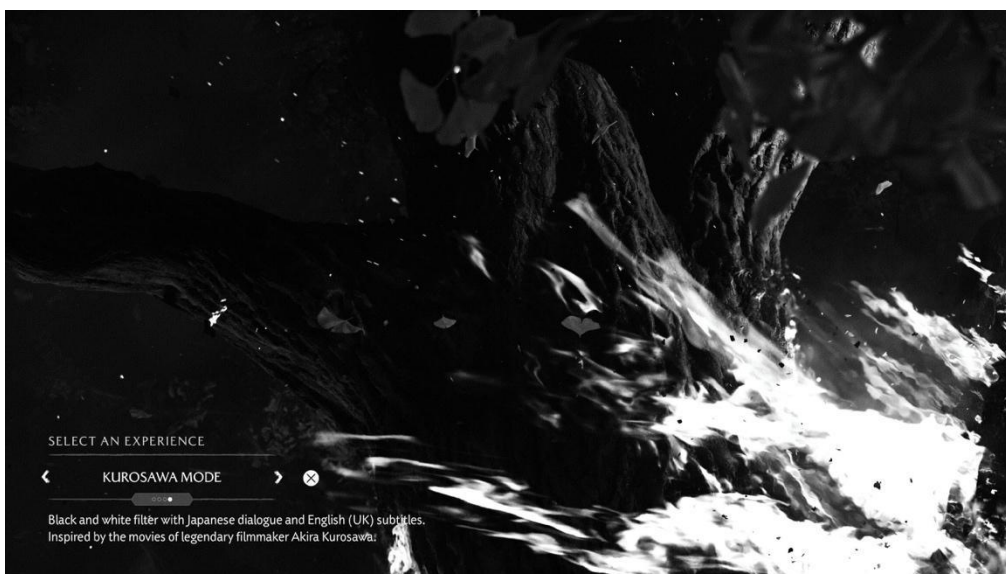


Figure 1: *Ghost of Yōtei*'s visualization of Kurosawa Mode.

This endorsement should be seen as a strategic attempt by the developers to link the game to the prestige of Kurosawa. The developers join a long chorus of creators who regard Kurosawa as one of the most influential directors of the twentieth century (Burnett 2018; Pearce 2003). This is an acknowledgement of the role that Kurosawa plays in the remediated cinematic identity of *Ghost of Yōtei*. Historical game series such as *Assassin's Creed* frequently make deliberate attempts to position their offerings as authentic depictions rooted in research (Cole 2022). Similarly, first-person shooters series such as *Medal of Honor* offer the supposed "unprecedented authenticity" of the Second World War through the vague implementation of research during development (De Groot 2016, 153-154). In contrast, the developers of *Ghost of Yōtei* celebrate the game's overt ahistoric pastiche of Kurosawa's cinematic output concerning Japanese feudal history. This marks a decisive shift; instead of rooting their game within detailed historical research that purports to present an authentic historical vision, they situate the game within a remediated reflection of Japanese cinema that was created and mythologized during the mid-twentieth century. While Cinematic Modes can be changed at any time, it is striking how the title showcases this specific aesthetic experience at the forefront of the game, and how it is explicitly attributed to a singular figure of Japanese filmmaking. Kurosawa Mode remains the most overt and visible example of *Ghost of Yōtei*'s remediation of cinema, suggesting that, as Mark Burnett (2018, 55) argues, Kurosawa is the preeminent emblematic figure of Japanese cinema to Western audiences.

And yet, in emulating the high contrast monochrome aesthetics of Kurosawa pictures during the 1950s and 1960s, Kurosawa Mode constitutes a significantly restricted reading of the director. This limited framing is highlighted when considering the breadth of the director's contribution to cinema, directing over thirty films between 1943 and 1993. Kurosawa Mode's emulation of high contrast monochrome visuals overlooks work that was created with a full range of colour. Historical action drama *Ran* (1985) represents a compelling movie to be excluded from Kurosawa Mode's definitional limitation. The vibrant use of colour is a distinct storytelling device deployed throughout the film's reimagining of King Lear. Colour conveys the

character's evolving emotive states and signifies the vivid descent into violence and chaos. During the film's large-scale battle sequences, bold primary colours are used to distinguish between warring armies (Catania 2006; Goodwin 1994; Hapgood 1992). In recognition of its thematic use of colour, Emi Wada's work on costumes and set design secured the film an Oscar for Costume Design in 1986 (Oscars 2014). The parameters of Kurosawa Mode in *Ghost of Yōtei* simply do not account for the visuals attached to popular examples of Kurosawa's late-career work, such as *Ran*.

Thematically, *Ghost of Yōtei*'s Kurosawa Mode also presents a simplified vision of Kurosawa as concerned only with *jidai-geki* productions that typically begin during the seventeenth century and end with the 1868 Meiji Restoration (Anderson 1973, 1). Undoubtedly, Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), a modernist fable of contradictory perspectives of a murder and rape told through feudal Japanese settings, was a defining picture that gave the director international acclaim and success (Kermode and Jones 2022). But even by the mid-1960s, Kurosawa's filmography was not solely concerned with portrayals of samurai (Higham 1965, 737). Kurosawa was interested in making films that portrayed modern and contemporary society, confronting corruption in bureaucracy and the absurdity of Japanese face-saving (Burnett 2018, 55-56; Higham 1965, 737). Kurosawa's reflections on Japan's relationship with nuclear war are also a significant recurring theme within his work. For instance, *Rhapsody in August* (1991) presents a familial drama that reflects on the legacy and memory of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki on 9 August 1945. Similarly, *I Live in Fear* (1955) features a central character – played by regular Kurosawa collaborator Toshiro Mifune – so fearful of the possibility of nuclear war that he endeavors to move his entire family to Brazil to evade the apocalypse.

Therefore, while Kurosawa Mode is intended to be a reverential homage that imbues cinematic prestige on *Ghost of Yōtei*, it is a limited framing of Kurosawa's contribution to cinema that focuses on the popularity his *jidai-geki* films from western, typically American, audiences (Museum of the Moving Image 2020). By excluding broad aesthetic and thematic links across much of Kurosawa's work and instead privileging and promoting Kurosawa's movies concerning samurai, Kurosawa Mode forms selective boundaries and presents a reductive homage to what constitutes a Kurosawa picture (PlayStation 2025).

GHOST OF YŌTEI AND KUROSAWA: PLAYING REMEDIATED FILM

Away from Kurosawa Mode, the playable experience of *Ghost of Yōtei* contains dual remediations of Japanese and Western films. In considering the aesthetical dimensions of the world, Kurosawa's "exciting, inventive and accomplished" cinematography looms large (Burnett 2018, 54). *Ghost of Yōtei* often remediates Kurosawa's use of pathetic fallacy – the visual use of weather to convey subtext – to achieve significant tonal texture and offer additional layers of thematic meaning (Frost 2020; Wijeratne 2011). In early cutscenes when entering the area of the Yōtei Grasslands, the game's use of a green and gold colour palate demarcates the natural landscape and represents a remediation of Kurosawa's "painterly visual elegance" of natural landscapes within *Ran* (Gazetas 2008, 172; Hapgood 1992) (Figure 2). Kurosawa's signature use of the movement of nature is also frequently present in-game. The 'The Old Inn' mission takes significant visual cues from a key scene in *Rashomon* (1950) featuring an "austere beauty of rain sweeping down from the gunmetal sky" falling on a dilapidated Torii gate (Higham 1965, 739). Similarly, in

Ghost of Yōtei, this darkening grey skyline when introduced to the mission signifies both a moment of stark nature and illustrates to the player the portents of a conflict to shortly come (Kermode and Jones 2022).

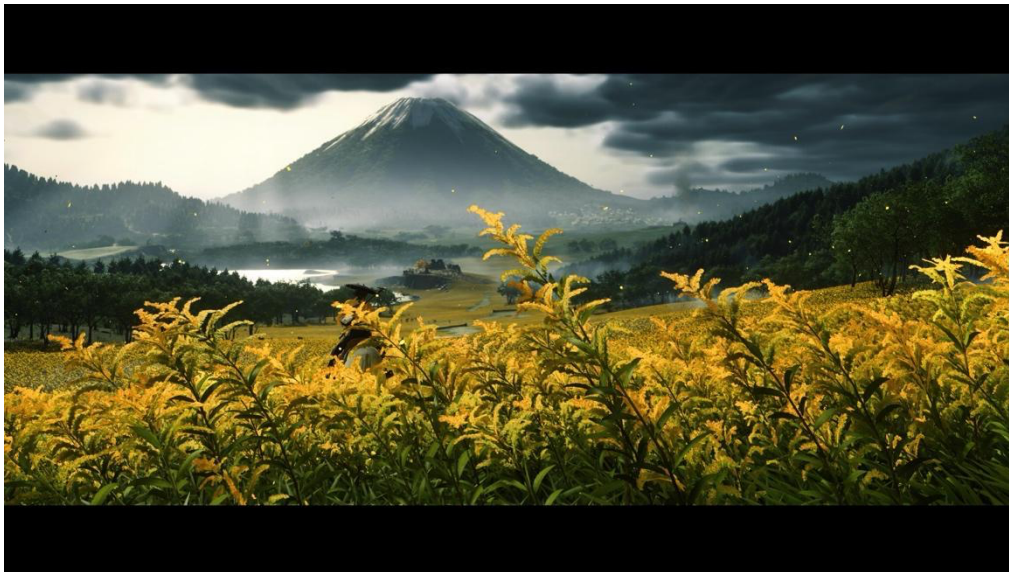


Figure 2: *Ghost of Yōtei*'s vivid use of colour in the style of late-career Kurosawa.

Ghost of Yōtei also remediates central thematic threads of Kurosawa's work concerning human nature. For example, the altering mirage of memory that is a central theme in *Rashomon* (1950) permeates throughout the game. While *Rashomon* focuses on relitigating a violent murder and rape from ambiguous perspectives, the entire experience of *Ghost of Yōtei* is focused on interrogating a childhood memory of hyper violence: the brutalized murder of Atsu's family. As the story progresses, and as Atsu returns to that infamous night through flashbacks, the player finds that fragments of that memory are unreliable and have shifted to tell new stories that make us reconsider who perpetrated that crime.

Similarly, revenge is a crucial aspect of the game that is significantly remediates from film and popular myth across Japan. The developers have been open in discussing their desire to create a revenge ghost story with Atsu as the onryō (PlayStation Access 2025). The use of the onryō as a narrative device mixes historical and modern Japanese mythology. The onryō originates from the Heian period between 794 to 1185; courtiers in Kyoto, fearful of treachery, wrote of aggressive and violent human spirits who had been betrayed and bore a grudge against other living beings (Frydman 2022, 114). This mythology has been reinterpreted in modern urban legends, captured in a global popular imagination by the twentieth century Japanese horror film *The Ring* (1998), featuring a vengeful onryō spirit trapped in a video tape.

At its core, violence is crucial to the tale of the onryō; these mythical beings are generated after a violent death, or by the stirring of violent emotions in someone who is still alive (Faure 2016, 140). In *Ghost of Yōtei*, Atsu's narrative is born through significant cataclysms of violence. The player's hunt for the first member of the Yōtei Six results in the gory resurrection of Atsu, formally embodying the onryō in the minds of the Ezo's people. And while the onryō is a general term denoting an evil spirit

(Frydman 2022, 115), it is interesting that the game position's Atsu as our protagonist with empathy due to this violent opening scene. Violence is an inescapable theme within *Ghost of Yōtei*. The player is frequently confronted with small scale, but emotive scenarios that speak to Kurosawa's own portrayals of "greed, fear...the desire to kill" (Higham 1965, 739). Atsu has frequent clashes in the open world with wandering bands of rōnin. These become captivating remediations of violent scenes of finely choreographed multi-person combat as seen in Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) and *Sanjuro* (1962), or witnessed in the remediated influence of George Lucas's choreographed lightsaber duels in the *Star Wars* franchise that took direct inspiration from Kurosawa (Alt 2020, 200). These interactions cannot be resolved with wit or conversation; the only diplomacy here is at the violent end of a katana.

The 'The Old Inn' mission again conveys remediated themes of violence found both in Kurosawa films and within the Western genre. The opening cutscene includes a tense prelude to violence as Atsu strides into an inn filled with hostile enemies loyal to the antagonist. This is a playful reimagining of a dime novel or Hollywood imagining of a tense saloon shootout; itself a product within a long tradition of remediated influence between Japanese samurai films and American westerns (Anderson 1973). While Japanese samurai movies in the mid-twentieth century are greatly influenced by American westerns, in turn, several of Kurosawa's pictures have also been remade as westerns (Nolley 1976, 232). Through this ongoing process of remediation, *Ghost of Yōtei* possesses a series of mixed cinematic remediations that create a simultaneous homage to cinematic history in the twentieth century in both Japan and the West. The developers use remediation to link *Ghost of Yōtei* to the mythologies of Japanese film and the American West in its vibrant and dangerous world of "wonderful heroes, overly evil villains and excessive violence" (Nolley 1976, 231). This constitutes a unique ahistorical, but cinematic, portrayal of Japan that is itself a remediated world of an imagined Japanese and American frontier past.

GHOST OF YŌTEI AND THE AINU: REMEDIATING AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Early in *Ghost of Yōtei*, the player encounters NPC merchants from the indigenous Ainu group, a native people who live across Hokkaido and the northern far east of Russia (Cornell, 1964). The player has frequent interactions with Ainu culture, such as visiting an Ainu settlement (*kotan*) and searching for Ainu cultural objects. The presence of the Ainu in the game is remarkable as they are rarely portrayed in media, with exceptions including the *Golden Kamuy* (Noda, 2017) manga, and the *Europa Universalis* (2013) series. With a dearth of previous representations of the Ainu, it is vital to interrogate and explore how the developers depict this indigenous group.

Ghost of Yōtei presents overlapping reflections of the Ainu people that draw on their own history and culture while simultaneously offering remediations that can also be closely associated with native American history. For example, the developers repeatedly foreground the fundamental relationship between Ainu culture and society and the natural world. The Ainu are shown to gather 'sticky bark' to turn into fabrics, highlighting their command of the local environment. This is a direct representation of attush, a traditional weaving practice that uses fibers derived from tree bark (Liverani 2019), and is a strong example of the game portraying an authentic element of traditional Ainu culture linked to nature. Similarly, at the *kotan* and at various sites across the game, the Ainu are presented as skilled hunters and fishers,

accompanied with a reverence for the animals they pursue. This portrayal considers the Ainu as living innately and peacefully within nature, while a wave of mainland Japanese settlers exploit natural resources (Figure 3). This depiction represents a remediated perspective of American frontier history; in English language sources of the American West, native populations are often characterized by their respect for the natural world, in contrast to the destructive tendencies of white European settlers (Brown 1970; Huhndorf 2001). Therefore, *Ghost of Yōtei* creates this remediated vision of the Ainu that situates their own distinct relationship with nature in Ezo, but remediates this simultaneously through recognizable historical perspectives of native American contexts familiar to audiences in the west, particularly the United States.



Figure 3: *Ghost of Yōtei*'s depiction of the Ainu and nature at the *kotan*.

This dual remediation can be found in other aspects of the Ainu's portrayal in *Ghost of Yōtei*. Connected to their relationship with nature, the Ainu demonstrate an innate spirituality. During the game, the Ainu frequently refer to the 'kamuy': revered spirits that exist in all aspects of the natural world and hold importance to both nature and humanity (Frydman, 2022). An overt example of spirituality can be found in a cutscene during the 'The Heart of an Ainu' quest with huci, an Ainu elder woman. While in conversation with an unknown Japanese settler, huci states that "your wife is with child", adding that they will have a girl – a revelation that startles the settler. When the player asks how huci knew, she replies cryptically with, "the signs are there"; this portrayal aligns with media motifs found in western depictions of native Americans as possessing a deep, otherworldly wisdom that enables them to access hidden knowledge or predict future events (Huhndorf 2001; Cotton 2008; Knopf 2008). These reductive media representations are built upon popular historical accounts of native American feats of the supernatural, such as Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull's significant visions of destiny when performing the Sun Dance (Utlely 1992), or his later association with the Ghost Dance, where dancers were able to descend into a hypnotic trance and supposedly see the spirits of the dead (Johnson 1956). In huci's apparent spiritual link to nature, *Ghost of Yōtei* directly remediates these accounts of indigenous peoples.

The “The Heart of an Ainu” questline is also interesting because it characterizes the Ainu through compassion and honour. During the quest, Atsu is asked to help huci find thieves who have stolen from the *kotan*. When confronted with the thief – the Japanese settler brandishing a knife – huci resolves the confrontation through dialogue and forgiveness, inviting the settler to the *kotan* for medicine and food. This entire interaction underscores the game’s enduring representation of the Ainu as a steadfastly kind and peaceful people. This portrayal links directly to revisionist remediations of indigenous Americans as inherently peaceful and self-sacrificial; this work was built to contrast opposing narratives that previously depicted native American people as violent barbarians standing in the way of American civilization (Brown 1970; Berkhofer 1978; Huhndorf 2001; Aleiss 2005). These revisions take significant influence from groundbreaking works such as *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Brown 1970), that depict a native perspective of American western expansion and suggest that native Americans were faced with hostility from white American settlers and governments who consistently broke treaties and promises of land.

As evidenced through in-game content, the portrayal of the Ainu in *Ghost of Yōtei* is a dual rhetorical construction built upon the Ainu, and a remediation of western accounts of native American history and culture. In pre-release promotional material, the developers state their intention to respectfully depict the Ainu (Playstation 2025b). An example of this portrayal is evident in the game’s use of lowercase naming practices, rather than using traditional Western naming conventions. However, in total, the developers often present a reductive remediated representation of their identity and culture. A significant cause of this portrayal is the lack of Ainu authored sources. The Ainu did not develop their own writing system and transmitted knowledge orally between generations, so surviving records of their history and culture are recorded through the perspectives of Japanese or Western ethnographers and anthropologists (Iewallen 2014; 2017; Phillipi 2016). This lack of self-authored documentation means that objects, oral traditions, and cultural practices are often mediated through external Japanese or western lenses (Bukh 2010). Consequently, the remediation of these perspectives are also informed through remediations of American native cultures that were encountered, understood and disseminated by western settlers (Aleiss 2005; Knopf 2008; Hearne 2012). *Ghost of Yōtei* partly represents a continuation of this remediation.

Ultimately, in privileging the Ainu as compassionate and mystical people concerned with the natural world, the developers create a version of the Ainu that resonates with global audiences largely familiar with indigenous American representations, presenting an ‘indigenous other’ people who are both idealized and vulnerable (Bataille 2001; Spiers 2021). However, while the game distances itself from a discriminatory portrayal of the Ainu in contrast to the mainland Japanese population (Siddle 1997; Nakumura 2007), the developers cannot escape the constraints imposed by scarcity of indigenous sources. A telling example of this is the game’s frequent use of ‘Mount Yōtei’ – a Japanese name for the mountain – rather than the Ainu ‘Makkarinupuri’ or ‘Machineshir’ (Fusek 2025). Consequently, *Ghost of Yōtei*’s portrayal of the Ainu is limited by remediations of history and culture.

JAPANESE COLONIALIZATION AND THE AINU

With a dual depiction of the Ainu through their own history and an association with native American people, *Ghost of Yōtei* also represents the Ainu within a fused

colonial borderland frontier setting that evokes the historic idea of the frontier. Instead of the “Wild West”, Ezo is viewed as Japan’s “Far North” (Kamusella 2014). This is visible throughout the game. As the player traverses the world on horseback, the landscape is conjured as a unique mix of a Japanese and American frontier, featuring dense mountainous forests and expansive stretches of sparse plains where herds of wild horses roam freely. This visual iconography is a remediated view of the American West as seen through the paintings of George Catlin (Hight 1990) – understood as a frontier yet to be conquered (Slotkin 1992; Simmon 2003).

Colonization is evident in the game’s text from the very beginning. From the moment the player takes control of Atsu, the first NPC characters that are encountered are ‘Settlers’. In fact, throughout the game, any NPC that is not directly linked to the narrative is named as a ‘Settler’ in English subtitles. This definition frames Ezo as being actively occupied, colonized, and transformed by mainland Japanese state influences and authority. This is reinforced in an early-game conversation between Atsu and Ainu traders; when discussing survival, one of the indigenous characters glibly states: “My people were here first, weren’t we? You will have to forgive my rudeness”. At another point in this interaction, Atsu states that “the Ainu are losing a lot in these times” in reflecting on the presence of the Yōtei Six. This observation is astute. Ezo is beginning to undergo a transformation under what David Day (2008, 6) describes as “supplanting societies”, with Japanese settlers and Tokugawa-associated state actors such as the Matsumae Clan being shown to be colonizing Ezo across the course of the game. Another example of this is the existence of a Shinto complex located in the Teshio Ridge northernmost area of the game, suggesting a deep Japanese presence already existing within traditional Ainu areas (Blaxell 2025). This environmental design emphasizes a distinct link of Japaneseness on the island that anticipates the later colonization of Ainu lands.

This depiction in *Ghost of Yōtei* sets colonization as a contest between the Ainu and the Matsumae as an expansionist state power. The Ainu were undoubtedly a familiar historical adversary to Japan in its struggle to pacify the north, and “since the sixth century at the latest, had been a prime calculation in military planning” (Cornell 1964, 288). As a feudal vassal of the Tokugawa shogunate, the Matsumae represent the emerging power of the Japanese state in Hokkaido. However, this view of colonization is an anachronism that presupposes the eventual subjugation of the Ainu, featuring themes of assimilation and annexation that do not occur for at least another one hundred and fifty years (McCurry, 2020). For instance, it is not until the later stages of the Edo period, that the Ainu people were forbidden to learn the Japanese language and practice agriculture (Howell 1994). Instead, Japanese expansion accelerated during the late-eighteenth century; in the first years of the Meiji Restoration, imperial measures were passed to assimilate the Ainu and annex Ezo. In 1869, Ezo was renamed as Hokkaido, and between 1871 and 1876, legislative policies forced the Ainu to be known as Japanese without consent and placed bans on hunting, fishing, and plant-gathering (Cornell 1964; Kamusella 2014). These policies led to the repression of Ainu language, traditions, and material culture (Howell 2005).

Relations between the Ainu and the Japanese state are still defined by historical marginalization and limited recognition (Coterill 2011). The Ainu were only officially recognized by the state of Japan as an indigenous people in 2019 under the Ainu Policy Promotion Act (Komai 2021). This late recognition underscores the enduring limited visibility of Ainu culture within Japanese society (Siddle 1997; McCurry 2020). Within

the context of the historic assimilation of the Ainu people into Japan's sphere of influence, it is interesting that *Ghost of Yōtei* appears to make stronger invocations to this later history, than the early co-existence between Japanese and Ainu peoples on Hokkaido during the early seventeenth century (Cornell 1964). By emphasizing the increasing number of Japanese settlers and noting signs of Ainu decline in 1603 that would not rapidly arise until the nineteenth century, *Ghost of Yōtei* presents Ainu history on an inevitable path towards forced assimilation (Walker 2001). This broader trope of a "vanishing" people (Hearne 2012) points towards a future in opposition to the Japanese authority. This passive attitude to disappearance partly obscures their history; while *Ghost of Yōtei* makes deliberate attempts to show the Ainu as inherently peaceful – as huci explains to Atsu, "to hurt others is forbidden among the Ainu" – the Ainu people did rise up in armed revolt against the growing expansion of the Matsumae on the island in 1669 (Cornell 1964, 289), over sixty years on from the 1603 setting of *Ghost of Yōtei*. This revolt was a failure, and inspired tighter Matsumae controls over land which saw private Japanese entrepreneurs obtain exclusive rights to operate in the estate from its feudal holder (ibid). But it is important to note that many of the early changes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were non-violent and primarily economic in nature, driven exploitative trade practices, leading to debts, which deeply impacted Ainu communities (Siddle 1997). The game, although positioning the Ainu as a trading people, makes little attempt to depict these economic pressures.

Ultimately, the consequences of the historic marginalization of the Ainu are significant. Few Ainu artefacts remain intact today, as centuries of assimilation and colonial collection practices displaced and diminished much of the Ainu's material heritage and culture (Dubreuil 2004; Palomino 2024). In conjunction with this material dimension, these trends have erased large portions of Ainu linguistic and cultural knowledge (Kitahara 2018). These factors complicate *Ghost of Yōtei's* noble and respectful digital creation of the Ainu, as a native peoples facing the expansionist pressures of the Japanese state, that stems from an incomplete range of Ainu sources and remediations of a fictional fusion of the American West and the Japanese North.

CONCLUSION

In this early exploration of a newly released digital game, *Ghost of Yōtei* stands as a unique case study of historical representation and remediation. In its reverence to the films of Akira Kurosawa, *Ghost of Yōtei's* game world possesses a definitive cinematic identity. Far from a strict historical depiction of feudal Japan, the game openly remediates Kurosawa themes and cinematic styles. While Kurosawa Mode is an impressive rendering of the visual and sonic technologies associated with mid-century Japanese samurai films, it is undoubtedly a reductive vision of the director that excludes his full-colour pictures and many films concerned with settings and themes within contemporary society. In contrast, Kurosawa's recurring themes of memory, loss, violence, and revenge are significantly present throughout *Ghost of Yōtei's* game mechanics and narrative. Regardless of whether the player chooses to use Kurosawa Mode to visually change the game, any playthrough of *Ghost of Yōtei* is a decisive, playable interaction with the influential and lingering library of Kurosawa.

In its remediations of history, *Ghost of Yōtei* offers genuinely important reflections on the history and culture of the Ainu people. The Ainu are scarcely present in many global media products; their inclusion in this game marks a significant moment of truly global visibility. The game crafts an image of the Ainu that captures their own unique

histories and heritage and respects their use of language. However, in thematically linking the Ainu to nature, honour, and mysticism, the game makes dual inferences that link the Ainu to native American populations. This link is further strengthened by the game's narrative and thematic direction that positions the story of *Ghost of Yōtei* as a Japanese and Western fusion of a historical frontier tale. In its view of Japanese expansion and colonialization, *Ghost of Yōtei* portrays the Ainu as being subject to significant marginalization in contrast to a large, emerging Japanese settler population that is being spearheaded by the mainland influence of the Tokugawa fealty, embodied by the Matsumae. This portrayal is instead a remediated reflection of later portions of Ainu-Japanese history in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century that see the repression of Ainu languages and customs as Japanese reforms and centralization in the Meiji period takes effect. While these events serve to marginalize the Ainu and turn the island of Ezo/Hokkaido towards a longer-term association as a core part of Japan, these events are not concurrent to *Ghost of Yōtei*'s 1603 setting.

Ultimately, writing this only a few months after its public release, *Ghost of Yōtei* represents fertile ground for further historical games study. The game invites further exploration through the concept of remediation, as feedback-loops of reference get continuously more complex and overlapping between media forms and history. For example, the game possesses remediated visions of contemporary culture through 'Watanabe Mode', named after Shinichirō Watanabe, the director of popular anime series *Samurai Champloo*. Watanabe Mode changes the soundtrack of the game to a curated collection of lo-fi instrumental beats that – much like *Samurai Champloo* – blend aesthetics of feudal Japan with underground hip hop, electronic music, and urban culture from the early 2000s (PlayStation 2025a). In this regard, the game becomes another significant instance of cultural remediation, where the aesthetics of the early 2000s and the emergence of the internet are re-understood through the cultural maturation of video games in 2025. With these threads of scholarship still left to examine, it will be fascinating to see future research further explore *Ghost of Yōtei*'s diverse and rich links to Japan's cultural history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Corine Gerritsen wrote this publication under the project Playful Time Machines with file number VI.Vidi.211.249 of the research programme Vidi SGW which is financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

REFERENCES

- Aleiss, A. 2005. *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies*. Westport, CT, USA: Praeger.
- Alt, M. 2020. *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World*. London, UK: Constable.
- Anderson, J.L. 1973. "Japanese Swordfighters and American Gunfighters." *Cinema Journal*. 12 (2), 1–21.
- Bataille, G.M. 2001. *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. Lincoln, NE, USA: University of Nebraska Press.
- Berkhofer, R.F. 1978. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York, NY, USA: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

- Bizzocchi, J., and Tanenbaum, T.J. 2011. "Well read: Applying close reading techniques to gameplay experiences." In *Well played 3.0: Video games, value and meaning*, edited by D. Davidson, 289-313. Pittsburgh, PA, USA: Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press.
- Blaxell, V. 2012. "Designs of Power: The 'Japanization' of Urban and Rural Space in Colonial Hokkaidō." *Asia-Pacific Journal*. 10 (2), 7-25.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466012024618>
- Bolter, J.D., and Gruisin, R. 2000. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA, USA: The MIT Press.
- Brown, D. 1970. *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. New York, NY, USA: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Bukh, A. 2010. "Ainu Identity and Japan's Identity: The Struggle for Subjectivity." *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*. 28 (2), 35-53.
- Burnett, M.T. 2018. "Akira Kurosawa." In *Welles, Kurosawa, Kozintsev, Zeffirelli*, edited by C. Lehmann et al., 54–91. London, UK: Bloomsbury.
- Caldwell, J.T. 2011. "Corporate and Worker Ephemerality: The Industrial Promotional Surround, Paratexts and Worker Blowback". In *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, edited by P. Grainge, 175-176. London, UK: BFI Books.
- Chapman, A. 2016. *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*. New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Chapman, A. 2013. "Is Sid Meier's Civilization history?." *Rethinking History*. 17 (3), 312-332.
- Chiapello, L. 2019. "Ludo Mix as an Aesthetic Experience: Designing Games for Franchises." *Proceedings of DiGRA 2019*.
<https://dl.digra.org/index.php/dl/article/view/1819/1819>.
- Cole, R. 2022. "Mashing Up History and Heritage in Assassin's Creed Odyssey." *Games and Culture*. 17 (6), 915–928.
- Cornell, J.B. 1964. "Ainu Assimilation and Cultural Extinction: Acculturation Policy in Hokkaido." *Ethnology*. 3 (3), 287-304.
- Cotterill, S. 2011. "Ainu Success: the Political and Cultural Achievements of Japan's Indigenous Minority." *Asia-Pacific Journal*. 9 (12).
<https://apjif.org/2011/9/12/Simon-Cotterill/3500/article>
- Cotton, L.N. 2008. "American Indian Stereotypes in Early Western Literature and the Lasting Influence on American Culture." Master's thesis. Waco, TX: Baylor University.
- Day, D. 2008. *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- De Groot, J. 2016. *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Dubreuil, C. 2004. "Ainu-e: Instructional Resources for the Study of Japan's Other People." *Education about Asia*. 9 (1), 9-17.
- Elliot, A.B.R. 2010. *Remaking the Middle Ages: The Methods of Cinema and History in Portraying the Medieval World*. Jefferson, NC, USA: McFarland and Company.

- Europa Universalis IV*. 2013. Paradox Development Studios. Directed by Johan Anderson. 13 August [Windows PC].
- Evans, M. 2024. "Too Afraid to Go Deeper: Creating Pervasive Dread Through Blended Design Structures in *Subnautica* and *Subnautica: Below Zero*." *Game Studies*. 24 (4). <https://gamestudies.org/2404/articles/evans>
- Faure, B. 2016. *Gods of Medieval Japan, Volume 1: The Fluid Pantheon*. Honolulu, HI, USA: University of Hawaii Press.
- Fizek, S. 2024. "Nature Playing: On the Experience of Contemplating Technologically Mediated Nature within the Game World of *Riders Republic*." *Games and Culture*. 0 (0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120241273329>
- Fox, N. 2025. "Ghost of Yōtei: How Sucker Punch chose Hokkaido for the game's setting." *PlayStation Blog*. 15 May. <https://blog.playstation.com/2025/05/15/ghost-of-yotei-how-sucker-punch-chose-hokkaido-for-the-games-setting/>
- Fraile-Jurado, P. 2023. "Geographical Aspects of Open-World Video Games." *Games and Culture*. 19 (7), 872-896.
- Frost, O. 2020. "Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985): An Appreciation of the Cinematic Spectacle." *Medium*. June 5. <https://owenfrost.medium.com/akira-kurosawas-ran-1985-an-appreciation-of-the-cinematic-spectacle-8afa9ab8f1a5>
- Frydman, J. 2022. *The Japanese Myths: A Guide to Gods, Heroes and Spirits*. London, UK: Thames & Hudson.
- Fusek, A.P. 2025. "Will Ghost of Yōtei Tackle the History of Ainu Discrimination." *Unseen Japan*. 7 October. <https://unseen-japan.com/ghost-of-yotei-ainu-history/>
- Gazetas, A. 2008. *An Introduction to World Cinema*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, NC, USA: McFarland.
- Ghost of Yōtei*. 2025. Sucker Punch Productions. Directed by Nate Fox and Jason Connell. 2 October [PlayStation 5].
- Ghost of Tsushima*. 2020. Sucker Punch Productions. Directed by Nate Fox and Jason Connell. 17 July [PlayStation 4].
- Goodwin, J. 1994. *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema*. Chicago, IL, USA: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hapgood, R. 1992. "Ran from Screenplay to Film." *Shakespeare Bulletin*. 10 (3), 37–38.
- Hearne, J. 2012. *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western*. Albany, NY, USA: State University of New York Press.
- Higham, M. 2025. "Ghost of Yōtei Review." *IGN*. 2 October. <https://www.ign.com/articles/ghost-of-yotei-review>
- Higham, C. 1965. "Kurosawa's Humanism." *The Kenyon Review*. 27 (4), 737–742.
- Hight, K.S. 1990. "'Doomed to Perish': George Catlin's Depictions of the Mandan." *Art Journal*. 49 (2), 119-124.
- Howell, D. L. 2005. "Ainu Identity and the Meiji State." In *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, edited by D. Howell, 172-196. Oakland, CA, USA:

- University of California Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520240858.003.0008>
- Howell, D.L. 1994. "Ainu Ethnicity and the Boundaries of the Early Modern Japanese State." *Past and Present*. 142 (1), 69-93.
- Huhndorf, F. 2001. *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*. Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press.
- I Live in Fear*. 1955. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 22 November. Toho.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/subscription/film/watch-i-live-in-fear-1955-online>
- Jameson, F. 2002. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a sociality symbolic act*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Johnson, D.M. 1956. "Ghost Dance: Last Hope of the Sioux." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. 6 (3), 42-50.
- Kamusella, T. 2014. "The Making of Modern Japan." *The Antioch Review*. 72 (1), 28-43.
- Kempshall, C. 2015. *The First World War in Computer Games*. New York, NY, USA: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kermode, M., and Jones, E.E. 2022. "Rashomon." *BBC Radio 4 - Screenshot. Apple Podcasts*. December 30.
<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/screenshot/id1597470341>
- King, G. and Krzywinska, T. 2002. "Introduction." In *Screenplay: Cinema/videogames/interfaces*, edited by G. King and T. Krzywinska, 1-32. New York, NY, USA: Wallflower Press.
- Kitahara, J. 2018. "Current status of Ainu cultural revitalization." In *Being Indigenous: Perspectives on Activism, Culture, Language and Identity*, edited by N. Greymorning, 245-260. New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Knopf, K. 2008. *Decolonizing the Lens of Power: Indigenous films in North America*. Leiden, NL: Rodopi.
- Komai, E. 2022. "The Ainu and Indigenous politics in Japan: negotiating agency, institutional stability, and change." *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*. 7 (1), 141-164. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2021.16>
- lewallen, a. 2014. *Beyond Ainu Studies: Changing Academic and Public Perspectives*. Honolulu, HI, USA: University of Hawai'i Press.
- lewallen, a. 2017. "Ainu Women and Indigenous Modernity in Settler Colonial Japan." *Asia-Pacific Journal*. 15 (18). <https://apjif.org/2017/18/lewallen>
- Liverani, L. 2019. "Dream weavers : the indigenous Ainu people of Japan." *The Guardian*. 30 April.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2019/apr/30/dream-weavers-the-ainu-people-of-japan-in-pictures>
- Matei, Ș. 2025. "The Technological Mediation of Collective Memory Through Historical Video Games." *Games and Culture*. 20 (4), 477-498.
- McCurry, J. 2020. "Tokyo Olympics dance by Japan's indigenous people dropped from opening ceremony." *The Guardian*. 21 February.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/21/tokyo-olympics-dance-by-japans-indigenous-people-dropped-from-opening-ceremony>

- Museum of the Moving Image. 2020. "Building the World of Ghost of Tsushima." *YouTube*. September 11. <https://youtu.be/FKGfKH7pK7E?si=w95MOSJYwX6thHC9>
- Nakamura, N. 2007. "The Representation of Ainu Culture in the Japanese Museum System." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*. 27 (2), 331-365.
- Nakamura, A. and Tosca, S. 2020. "The Origin of the Media Mix in Japan in a Media Ecological Perspective: Examining the Situation from 1915 to 1945." *Ritsumeikan Imaging Science*. 13 (14), 31-45.
- Noda, S. 2017. *Golden Kamuy, Vol. 1: Volume 1*. San Francisco, VIZ Media.
- Nolley, K.S. 1976. "The Western as 'Jidai-Geki'." *Western American Literature*. 11 (3), 231-238.
- Oscars. 2014. "Ran Wins Costume Design: 1986 Oscars." *YouTube*. June 27. https://youtu.be/A5JgtJwQUMk?si=Fqy3sb0Oa0VDow_h
- Palomino, E. 2024. "Weaving Nature: The Flow of Ainu Elm Bark Fibres Through Hokkaido's Ecosystems." *Fashion Highlight*. 4, 26-39. <https://doi.org/10.36253/fh-2929>
- Papazian, G. and Sommers, J.M. 2013. "Introduction: Manifest Narrativity – Video Games, Movies, and Art and Adaptation." In *Game On, Hollywood! Essays on the Intersection of Video Games and Cinema*, edited by G. Papazian and J. M. Sommers, 7-18. Jefferson, NC, USA: Macfarland & Company.
- Pearce, C. 2003. "Game Noir – A Conversation with Tim Schafer." *Game Studies*. 3 (1). <https://www.gamestudies.org/0301/pearce/>
- Pennington, M. 2023. "Histories of Hearts of Iron IV: Understanding the past(s) through HOI4 Wiki." In *(Not) In the Game: History, Paratexts, and Games*, edited by R. Seiwald and E. Vollans, 101-118. Berlin, DE: De Gruyter Brill.
- Pennington, M. and Gerritsen, C. 2025. "Hamburger Samurai Part 2: Electric Boogaloo." *Interactive Pasts*. 21 October. <https://interactivepasts.com/hamburger-samurai-part-2-electric-boogaloo/>
- Phillipi, D.L. 2016. *Songs of Gods, Songs of Humans: The Epic Tradition of the Ainu*. Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton Legacy Library.
- PlayStation. 2025. "Ghost of Yōtei – State of Play Gameplay Deep Dive | PS5 Games." *YouTube*. July 10. <https://youtu.be/cgM6poO2JmY?si=sAoDio6k6IWEQL6T>
- PlayStation. 2025a. "Ghost of Yōtei – Wander in Watanabe Mode." *YouTube*. October 3. https://youtu.be/4_EoEz8oFso?si=Phvfy42xoa1FNGu4
- Playstation. 2025b. "Cultural Lessons for Ghost of Yōtei." *Playstation Blog*. June 18. <https://blog.playstation.com/2025/06/18/cultural-lessons-for-ghost-of-yotei/>
- PlayStation Access. 2025. "Sucker Punch Creative Director Breaks Down the Studio's Most Iconic Games." *YouTube*. October 4. https://youtu.be/2ZOEIq7JWYk?si=XnHR_7wcJUo4zxhE
- Prince, S. 1999. *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa*. Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press.
- Ramsey, R. 2025. "Ghost of Yotei Gets a Near Perfect Score in Japan's Most Famous Gaming Magazine." *Push Square*. 1 October.

- <https://www.pushsquare.com/news/2025/10/ghost-of-yotei-gets-a-near-perfect-score-in-japans-most-famous-gaming-magazine>
- Ran*. 1985. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 31 May. Toho.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/rentals/film/watch-ran-1985-online>
- Rashomon*. 1950. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 25 August. Daiei.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/subscription/film/watch-rashomon-1950-online>
- Rhapsody in August*. 1991. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 25 May. Shochiku. DVD.
- Richards, J. 2014. *Visions of Yesterday*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Richie, D. 1996. *The Films of Akira Kurosawa*. Berkeley, CA, USA: University of California Press.
- The Ring*. 1999. Directed by Hideo Nakata. 31 January. Toho. DVD.
- Rosenstone, R.A. 2006. *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Sanjuro*. 1962. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 1 January. Toho.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/subscription/film/watch-sanjuro-1962-online>
- Seiwald, R. and Vollans, E. 2023. "Introduction: Video games as networked texts." In *(Not) In the Game: History, Paratexts, and Games*, edited by R. Seiwald and E. Vollans, 1-14. Berlin, DE: De Gruyter Brill.
- Seven Samurai*. 1954. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 26 April. Toho.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/subscription/film/watch-seven-samurai-1954-online>
- Siddle, R.M. 1997. *Race, Resistance and the Ainu of Japan*. New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Simmon, S. 2003. *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Slotkin, R. 1992. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-century America*. Norman, OK, USA: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Spiers, M.C. 2021. *Encountering the Sovereign Other: Indigenous Science Fiction*. East Lansing, MI, USA: Michigan State University Press.
- Stevens, C.E. 2023. "Video game fanvids as paratexts and as texts." In *(Not) In the Game: History, Paratexts, and Games*, edited by R. Seiwald and E. Vollans, 119-138. Berlin, DE: De Gruyter Brill.
- Uricchio, W. 2005. "Simulation, History, and Computer Games." In *Handbook of Computer Game Studies*, edited by J. Raessens and J. Goldstein, 327-340. Cambridge, MA, USA: The MIT Press.
- Utley, R.M. 1993. *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull*. New York, NY, USA: Henry Holt.
- Vandewalle, A. et al. 2022. "Enjoying My Time in the Animus: A Quantitative Survey on Perceived Realism and Enjoyment of Historical Video Games." *Games and Culture*. 18 (5), 643-663.
- Van Vught, J. and Veerbeek, J. 2025. "Video or Digital? Exploring the Use of Terminology and Connected Approaches in the History of Game Studies." In *Historiographies of Game Studies: What It Has Been, What It Could Be*, edited by A. Karabinus et al, 195-226. Santa Barbara, CA, USA: Punctum Books.

- Vollens, E. 2023. "Artefact, advert, or advertising? Getting to grips with game trailers." In *(Not) In the Game: History, Paratexts, and Games*, edited by R. Seiwald and E. Vollans, 161-176. Berlin, DE: De Gruyter Brill.
- Von Lünen, A. et al (eds.) 2019. *Historia Ludens: The Playing Historian*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Walker, B.L. 2001. *The Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800*. Oakland, CA, USA: University of California Press.
- White, H. 2014. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th-Century Europe*. Baltimore, MA, USA: John Hopkins University Press.
- Wijeratne, D. 2011. "Robert Altman on Rashomon by Kurosawa." *YouTube*. January 23. <https://youtu.be/oYWQa0GExt8?si=ePajUKvxUntg3nVW>
- Wright, E. 2017. "Marketing Authenticity: Rockstar Games and the Use of Cinema in Video Game Promotion." *Kinephanos*. 7, 131-164.
- Wright, E. 2022. *Rockstar Games and American History: Promotional Materials and the Construction of Authenticity*. Berlin, DE: De Gruyter Brill.
- Yojimbo*. 1961. Directed by Akira Kurosawa. 25 April. Toho.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/subscription/film/watch-yojimbo-1961-online>
- Yoshimoto, M. 2000. *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema*. Durham, NC, USA: Duke University Press.
- Yusuke, K. and Jiaxin, L. 2025. "The Role of Games in Cultural Dissemination: A Comparative Analysis of Multilingual Reviews." *Proceedings of DiGRA 2025*.
<https://dl.digra.org/index.php/dl/article/view/2466/2459>
- Žmuda, M.D. 2024. "Historizing Remediation: How Games Represent History through Media." *Rethinking History*. 28 (1), 130–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2024.2313809>