

Becoming a Global Culture: An analysis of the *Manga* Industry and Its Diffusion in the US and Europe (Particularly in Spain)

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Keywords : Manga Aesthetics, Success, Diffusion, Western World

Introduction

If you ask anyone born around 1985-88 in France or Italy whether they have heard of the *Knights of the Zodiac* (*Saint Seiya* as it is known in Japan), they will answer that of course they know what series it is. If in Spain you ask not only those born in these years but also their parents who know Son Goku is, what is *Dragon Ball*, or if an animated soccer series called *Oliver and Benji* (*Captain Tsubasa* in Japan) sounds to them, their reply will undoubtedly be affirmative. And finally, if you ask anyone born in the early 70s in the United States what *The Battle of the Planets* is, they will even hum the opening music of the series.

All these animation series were created in Japan, based on homonymous manga (Japanese comic) works, and originally intended exclusively for a Japanese audience.

How can it be that media products of a culture and way of thinking so extremely different from the Western one, are known and enjoyed by such a high population segment in Europe and the United States?

How is it possible that today there are events about Japanese comics and animation in most European countries and in the United States, bringing together thousands and thousands of people every year who share their passion for Luffy, Naruto, Tanjirou, Usagi Tsukino or Asuna, to name some of the heroes and heroines of these Japanese stories?

Manga and anime is such a success in the Western world that the Japanese government has been convening the International Manga Awards in Japan since 2006, to enhance cultural relations with other countries using the popularity of manga as the main factor. The winners are invited to Tokyo for ten days where they will attend the awards ceremony.

In view of all this, it is necessary to look for reasons and explore the way in which this subculture born in Japan has crossed borders and is becoming an almost global culture (In Latin America and most of Asia the manganime also enjoys enormous popularity).

There have been works that have addressed this issue, as for example in the American case, with the essential work of Roland Kelts, *Japanamerica* (2006), in which he makes a deep analysis of how Japanese pop culture, especially manga and anime have "invaded" North American culture.

In the European, Spanish case we do not find many academic works in this regard, apart from the approach that Dani Madrid and Guillermo Martínez gave in their book *el manga y la animación japonesa* published by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

Although these works shed a lot of light on the phenomenon of manga and anime in the West, they need an update, and therefore my purpose is to give a current vision of the situation of this Japanese subculture in the West and to compare and contrast how Japanese comics and cartoons made their way into the European and American markets and what was the reason for all this success.

To achieve this, I will first make an explanation of what manga and anime in Japan entail and then make an analysis of the factors and processes that transferred this culture to the West. Finally I will try to arrive at the answers that I propose in this paper through an overview of the good health that manganime still enjoys in Europe and the United States today.

Made in Japan: a Subculture that Moves Billions of Yen.

Most manga experts, such as Susan Napier and Roland Kelts, place the modern origin of Japanese comics in ukiyo-e (portraits of the floating world) (Kelts 43; Napier 21). This type of art that had its heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in Japan consisted of woodblock prints or paintings that represented a wide variety of subjects: from female beauties and landscapes, kabuki theater scenes, sumo wrestling, and even erotic images, folk tales and historical accounts. It was the greatest exponent of this artistic expression, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), who first used the word manga to refer to his works in the *Hokusai Manga* (1814-1878) collection of prints. These engravings also covered a wide variety of subjects, from landscapes to scenes of everyday life, all represented with great artistic realism. It is certain that the subjects that appeared in these sketches were not to the taste of the Japanese upper class of the time, they were more for the populace. It is for this very reason that Hokusai referred to them as manga (a term he defines as the result of "the brush going wild"). And in a way it makes perfect sense because the literal translation of the term according to Schodt, is "whimsical sketches (34)" .

After the Ukiyo-e it is true that there were other antecedents that could inspire modern manga, such as various comics and caricatures published in satirical Japanese magazines (such as *the The Japan Punch*) after the opening of the country to the West in 1853. They were magazines that had great European and North American influence, and that is that Japanese manga is on the one hand the result of a mixture of foreign influences all combined with the Japanese imaginary. In fact, according to Kelts, Hokusai was already influenced by European art that was trickling down to the isolated Japan of the Edo era (1600-1853) (Kelts 42).

However, the true starting point of Japanese manga and anime as we know it today has a first and last name, Osamu Tezuka, the so-called god of manga (1928-1989). This doctor by training, and a mangaka by vocation, was the pioneer in making anime series for television (until then practically all anime was projected in movie theaters) and contributed novelties in the narration and style to the Japanese comics.

Tezuka since his childhood was in love with Walt Disney's and also Max Fleischer's (Kelts 58) work, and most of his characters are reminiscent of those in the house of mouse, with large eyes and rounded

faces. Although it is also true that they were not copies of the Disney characters, since those of Tezuka of course had their own personal stamp, their appearance being a hybridization that over time has become the characteristic visual style of most of manga and anime characters.

Another of Tezuka's contributions to the manga and anime that we know today is the implementation of cinematic vision in the action scenes of his works. Using a whole sheet with a single vignette in which the characters move freely, giving an emphasis never seen to this type of scenes in a comic. Tezuka was also passionate about cinema and therefore included this freedom of movement and dynamism in his comics, something that contrasted with the staticity of the manga characters published at the same time, as in his most famous work, *Tetsuwan Atom* (1951 -1968). All this is still preserved in the current style of the manga, reinforced by the great expressiveness of its characters, thanks to which sometimes it is not necessary for the character to say anything to know their mood.

Another of Tezuka's novelties was to focus on the stories on his mangas. According to Yoshihiro Shimizu, Tezuka's right-hand man for 11 years, "we didn't have enough money to compete with the American studios. So our character's mouths don't move as much, and the backgrounds don't change as often. But the stories are really good. The depth of character, the variety of subject matter. And we don't need to have happy endings (Kelts 58). " When he adapted his manga to anime, his devotion to making good stories increased even more, illuminating great classics of the genre such as *Jungle Taitei* (1965) or *Black Jack* (2004). And that is true, the drama and quality of manga and anime stories is one of the main attractions of this form of entertainment, although the animation itself is not comparable to Disney or other American studios.

All these novelties, the result of the creative freedom that Tezuka had after the relaxation of censorship laws in Japan after World War II (kelts 57), crystallized when Tezuka, as I previously pointed out, saw the opportunity to bring his works to the small screen. On January 1, 1963, *Tetsuwan Atom* premiered on the Japanese television network Fuji TV, being the first regular anime series on Japanese television and including all these novelties that Tezuka had captured in his works on paper. The aesthetic and manga style as we know it today, was presented in society that first day of the year 1963. This and the rest of the anime produced by Tezuka paved the way in terms of visual style, narrative, and business form of a subculture that today today moves billions of yen.

In addition, thanks to Tezuka and his most famous creation, the manga aesthetic was presented for the first time in the United States, as *Tetsuwan Atom* premiered in June 1963 on NBC. Although the Americans of that time had no idea what a manga or anime was, it is true that *Astro Boy* (as the series was called there) had a great success. It was a success that cannot be compared to the boom of *Battle of the Planets* at the end of the 70s (which we will delve into later), but it did serve to make it known in the United States that in Japan they made a totally different animation from what was known.

After Tezuka's death in 1989, other authors have taken it upon himself to continue his legacy and

further reinforce the characteristic style of manga and anime. Some of these authors are the award-winning director Hayao Miyazaki, creator of stories such as *Spirited Away -Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi-* (2001) or *Princess Mononoke* (1997); Masamune Shirow with his cyberpunk saga *Ghost in the Shell* (1995); Katsuhiro Otomo, who gave birth to essential titles such as the post-apocalyptic *AKIRA* (1988), or the SF feature *Steamboy* (2004); and Hideaki Anno with the philosophical action mecha (giant robot piloted by teenagers) drama *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-2021).

At present, those in charge of maintaining the good health of this industry would be Eiichiro Oda and his pirate manga *One Piece*, the best-selling Japanese comic book in history; Akira Toriyama and his legendary *Dragon Ball*; or Koyoharu Gotouge, Gege Akutami, and Kohei Horikoshi, authors of *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*, *Jujutsu Kaisen*, and *My Hero Academia* respectively, the new great hits of the genre. It goes without saying that all these works have their anime adaptation, also reaping a devastating success, being for example the anime film *Demon Slayer -Kimetsu no Yaiba-: Mugen Train* (2020), the highest grossing film of all time in Japan, unseating Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*.

There are currently more than 130 anthological manga magazines being published in Japan (www.ultimapopculture.fandom.com). In most of them around 19 series appear at the rate of one chapter per week or per month (depending on the periodicity of each magazine). So, doing a simple calculation there can be almost 2500 manga series being published at the same time right now in Japan (although this is an estimated amount, since not all magazines have 19 or 20 series to their credit). Of all these series, only the most popular ones receive their adaptation to anime (this is the most common process, although sometimes there are series that are first anime and then become manga), even so the number of anime premiered in a year in Japan is around 200 (not counting reruns, as we would be talking about more than 300). Unthinkable figures in the West.

Normally, anime are animated adaptations of a manga, although light novels are also a source of where animation studios have managed to create great successes, such as the virtual parallel world adventure-action saga *Sword Art Online*.

In 2020 the manga industry in Japan alone achieved profits of more than 612 billion yen (about 4.5 billion euros) (www.animenewsnetwork.com). To that we must add the 251 billion yen (about 1.5 billion euros) that generated the anime industry in the same year (a profit slightly less than the 255 billion it made in 2019, a decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic that kept the industry paralyzed for a few months) (www.japantimes.co.jp). But the economic performance of manga and anime in Japan does not end here, since the most successful series have endless merchandising, with video games based on these series and toys and collectible figures being the most popular. Therefore there are franchises of series such as *Jujutsu Kaisen*, or *Kimetsu no Yaiba* that alone represent about 15,000 million yen each (about 120 million euros). Series that are beginning to be successful such as *Tokyo Revengers* already has more than 3.5 billion yen of profit (about 25 million euros)(www.comicbook.com).

The Impressive Success of Manga and Anime in Europe and the United States

In most of manga stories there are references and behaviors typical of Japanese society, something that a priori would be an obstacle to enjoying them and therefore would make it difficult to spread them in the West, but this is not the case at all.

Eiichiro Oda's pirate exciting-adventure work *One Piece* has sold more than 490 million copies around the world, followed by the spy-thriller manga *Golgo 13* with some 300 million copies and the legendary *Dragon Ball* with 260 million copies, despite the series' original publication ending in 1995. To give you an idea of the popularity of manga and the money it generates also in the West, Batman has sold 485 million books worldwide (www.onepiecefandom.com), being surpassed by *One Piece* (and being close in number of sales the classic hitman created by Takao Saitou).

In Spain in 2019, for example, the figure of 838 manga titles published in the country was reached (www.mangaland.es). A figure very close to the 1078 American superhero comics published in the country in the same year (www.tebeoesfera.com). The figures are similar and even higher in other European countries such as France or Italy.

In the United States, manga book sales increased 16% in 2019, exceeding the 5 percent growth of the total adult-comic / graphic-novel category. In March 2019, a peak of one million copies sold per manga volume was reached, due to the strong sales of the title *Boku no Hero Academia*. These figures also show that in the US, the exporter of popular culture par excellence, manga is having quite a big success (npd.com).

Of course, most of the anime of the most popular series have also reached Europe and the United States, reaping overwhelming success. For example, in 2021 the anime movie *Kimetsu no Yaiba: Mugen Train* was the highest grossing in its first two weeks (it premiered on April 23rd) on the Spanish billboard, ousting Hollywood blockbusters like *Godzilla VS. Kong* or *Mortal Kombat*. In the United States, it also took first place on the chart on the weekend of May 1st and 2nd, 2021 (it was released on the same day as in Spain). *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train* (As the movie is known internationally) "was not just the biggest opening for Japanese animation, but for a foreign language film of any kind. What is more it is the highest grossing Japanese film outside its native country with \$423 million worldwide. Its continued success makes it the top grossing 2020 film globally, overtaking the Chinese war epic *The Eight Hundred* (www.vanityfair.com).” And all this in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from all this, another sign of the success of manga and anime in Europe and the United States is the organization of events focused on this type of entertainment. The Japan Expo held in Paris brought together 250,000 fans of manga and anime in 2019 in a fair focused on all Japanese culture in general and anime and manga in particular (www.lumica.fun). Another major European event is the Sal3n del Manga de Barcelona, in Spain, which was attended by more than 150,000 people in 2018 (www.eleconomista.es).

This fair held in the Catalan capital has performances by anisong singers (music from the anime series) or a Cosplay contest (costumes of the characters of the series) among others and many varied activities.

In the United States, manga and anime have a privileged position within the stands (with a panel dedicated exclusively to *Dragon Ball*, for example) (www.comic-con.org) of the Comic Convention in San Diego, California, the most important comics event in the world.

In addition, it goes without saying that thanks to the success of manga and anime in Europe and the United States, the products derived from the series are also arriving in a huge way, especially video games and ultimately collectible figures, something that was not even imaginable fifteen years ago.

One of the results of this success, especially in the United States, is that the culture of manga and anime has deeply penetrated the popular culture of the country. It is well known, for example that the Wachowski brothers were inspired by *Ghost in the Shell* for their hit series *The Matrix*. In the world of animation and American comics, this influence can also be seen, for example, in the manga aesthetics of series such as *Teen Titans*, *Amy Puff*, *Ayumi* or *the Powerpuff Girls*. Even the superhero comics giants Marvel and DC have collaborated with Japanese authors to manganize their characters (in fact, Marvel had a regular run of their manga-style characters, although it wasn't a huge success). Something that Disney is currently doing, publishing a series of manga based on its princesses. Another heavyweight in North American popular culture, Star Wars, is producing an anime series, the result of Disney's collaboration with some of the most cutting-edge Japanese animation studios such as Studio Colorido.

All this confirms the tremendous success of manga and anime in Europe and the United States. However, as I commented at the beginning of this section, how is it possible that stories based on such a different cultural background are so successful in the West? The answer to this question is not even known by Japanese authors, as evidenced by the surprise that the artist Kengo Hanazawa (author of the super hit manga *I am a hero*) got when he was told that he would be one of the invited authors to the XX Saló del Manga de Barcelona (2014): "the protagonist [of *I am a hero*], Hideo, is a very normal Japanese, so I believed that my work would not be successful outside of Japan (www.ramenparados.com).” And that is true, usually the authors manga and anime do not take into account the potential readers or audiences of their works abroad. They create their works for the Japanese.

Apart from the possible difficulty that western readers may have to fully understand the cultural context of manga works, there are other types of obstacles when publishing a manga in the West. For example, the fact that books in Japan are read from right to left, that is, the sense of reading is totally opposite to that of the West. At the first stages of manga editing in the West, the European and American publishers had to reverse the whole sense of reading of the original Japanese volumes to adapt them to Western standards, which was a time-consuming and costly task. Another problematic factor was the Japanese language itself, in which many words or expressions (especially onomatopoeia) were very difficult to translate into European languages or English. In short, it was an odyssey to initially publish a manga in the West, so

many publishers were reluctant to bring in titles from Japan. So, despite all these so-called difficulties, I once again pose the question, how was the success that manga and anime now enjoy in Europe and the United States came to be?

The Diffusion of Anime and Manga in the United States: From *Battle of Planets* to *Pokémon*.

When *Battle of Planets* (*Kagaku Ninja Tai Gatchaman*, in the original) hit American home screens in 1978 and became the first widespread success of a Japanese animated series in America, there was not a single American who was familiar with the term "anime" and much less with that of "manga." Until then, American society associated cartoon programs with a child audience. But the New York television producer, Sandy Frank, saw new possibilities in this type of animation that came from the East. A year before *Gatchaman*'s premiere on North American television, Frank attended MIP-TV (Marché International de Programmes), an international fair where new content was shown for television (Kelts 27). There, the North American producer met *Gatchaman* for the first time, a work produced by the legendary Tatsunoko Productions, creator among other successes of *Match a Go Go*, the exciting racing anime known in the West as *Speed Racer*. For Frank, *Gatchaman* was something that he had never even imagined doing with cartoons in America, it was totally different from anything that this veteran producer, who had worked at NBC and distributed series as legendary as *Lassie*, had seen (Kelts 27). In the words of Japanese culture expert Roland Kelts:

"Gatchaman's story and characters boasted fundamentals that spoke directly to Japan's cultural values: the "hero" is in fact a team, whose members must rely upon one another and not stand out as individuals; while there are distinct villains, a sense of evil tends to permeate the atmosphere, as though evil could emerge from anywhere, even from within the flawed and sometimes selfish heroes themselves; the ramifications of war are tragic (the father of one of the characters dies); and the heroes' ultimate mission, to defend the earth from complete annihilation and restore peace and stability, justifies their need to fight (···) Not to mention that *Gatchaman* also featured violence, blood, death, sexual innuendos, and morally questionable and sometimes visibly mortal heroes — which could all be found in the more daring and sophisticated American cinema of the 1970s, of course, but not in what mainstream Americans called cartoons. (26-27)."

When Frank was seriously pondering the possibility of bringing *Gatchaman* to American television, there was a fact that finally convinced him. In May 1977, the first movie in the *Star Wars* saga was released, which is known to be one of the biggest Hollywood hits in history, and Frank could not help but compare *Gatchaman* to George Lucas's movie: 'With *Gatchaman*, I'm looking at *Star Wars*. I'm looking at an animated version of *Star Wars*.' It just blew me away." (Kelts 30). In this way, and taking advantage of the

success of *Star Wars*, Sandy Frank premiered the series renamed as *Battle of the Planets* on September 12, 1978. Of course the American audience, much less children, were not yet prepared to assimilate violence and the topics covered by *Gatchaman*, so the version that was installed as a great success in American homes, was ruthlessly cut and censored by Frank's production company (even dialogues were rewritten and a new soundtrack was composed more in line with the tastes of American people) (Kelts 29). So many cuts were made in the series that of the original 105 episodes the English version only had 85. Even so, the children and young people of the time used to watching programs like *Tom and Jerry*, *Scooby-Doo*, *The Flintstones*, they discovered with *Battle of Planets* a new and fresh universe in terms of cartoons. Of course, the visual aspect of the anime was really shocking, nothing to do with the animal cartoons of the *Looney Tunes* or Disney. The expressiveness of the characters (despite the limitations of the animation of the time) was at another level and, according to Kelts, "the fact that each character was defined by personal dilemmas, tics, and shortcomings that made them feel more complex and less predictable. If they were not more real, perhaps, then at least they were more engaging (32)" than anything American kids had seen so far.

Following the great success of *Battle of the Planets*, *StarBlazers* (the American adaptation of *Space Battleship Yamato*) premiered on television in the United States. Once again the theme of wars in outer space attracted American producers who made this series created by Leiji Matsumoto a great success. Of course, the series suffered cuts and censorship (the violent tone, references to alcohol and sexual fanservice were lowered) and the series was a compendium of 77 episodes divided into 3 seasons. Apart from the visual aspect and the mature themes it dealt with, this series stands out because it was the first time that the American audience experienced seeing a cartoon in which the episodes had to be followed in order, since each of them was part of a general narrative. The Japanese animated series already followed this type of structure, but for the American kids of 1979 this was something new and innovative.

In the same year that *StarBlazers* came to an end, 1984, the American series of giant robots called *Transformers* (based on a line of toys from the American company Hasbro and the Japanese Takara Tomy) swept the American television grid. It was in this environment that the next success of Japanese animation in the United States occurred. The American production company Harmony Gold adapted three different but visually similar Japanese animation series of giant robots (*Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, *Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* and *Genesis Climber MOSPEADA*) into a single series of 85 episodes. Despite the fact that *Robotech* (as it is known in the US), which was once again adapted and censored to be liked by American viewers, was a hodgepodge of three different series, it was an immediate success that saw the commercialization of its toys and the creation of sequels for the American market. In this way, the success of mechas (giant robots) series was established in the United States, and further reinforced the acceptance and increased the fever for anime in the North American country. This of course, would pave the way for the landing of more ambitious and complicated productions that would mark the normalization

of manga and anime within American popular culture.

In 1988, the post-apocalyptic sci-fi anime film *AKIRA*, directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, creator of the eponymous manga, was released in Japan. The film was moderately successful in its home country, and American distributor Streamline Films quickly decided to bring it to the United States, even though Hollywood heavyweights like Steven Spielberg and George Lucas turned down the opportunity to distribute it stateside, because they thought it was an unprofitable movie (www.filmschoolrejects.com). And it is true that the film was not very profitable because it only raised a million dollars at the box office and had a limited release to art house theaters. Yet it became the quintessential cult anime film, upon its release on VHS, first to a limited extent in 1991 and then with wider distribution in 1993. *AKIRA* supposed people were talking about a new concept, adult animation. Thanks to the work of Otomo, the Japanese comic began to be defined as manga and its animation as anime in America. Until then, the Japanese series that had landed on American television, despite being different from Donald Duck or Yogi Bear, were considered for children, and many people did not even know at the time that they were series from Japan (for example in the credits of *Battle of the Planets* there is not even a Japanese name, so it could look like a series made in the United States).

AKIRA was something different from what American audience had seen in animation (including anime). In the words of Williams College professor anime expert Christopher Bolton, "it was just something on a bigger scale in every way: the huge picture on a theater screen, the length, the ambition and musical soundtrack," which featured a hodgepodge of influences including Beethoven and Bach, Indonesian folk, and prog rock. "I think it announced to the American public a kind of potential for this medium, which generated a lot of excitement and has played out in the last 30 years as this kind of anime boom (www.washingtonpost.com)."

Also, Otomo's movie has a great influence on American popular culture. The Duffer brothers, creators of the super hit Netflix show *Stranger Things*, claim to have been inspired by *AKIRA* to give life to Eleven, a girl with paranormal powers who escapes from a military facility just as Tetsuo in Otomo's work. It has also influenced current films such as the blockbuster *Looper* (2012), written and directed by Rian Johnson, in which a boy with telekinetic powers also appears (www.washingtonpost.com).

Cameron Stewart, Brenden Fletcher, and Babs Tarr, creators of the comic *Motor Rush* (Image Comics), admit that *AKIRA* was one of the biggest influences during the creative process of their work (www.pastemagazine.com). In American music you can also feel the influence of *AKIRA*, as stars of the stature of Michael Jackson or Kanye West have included references to Otomo's film in some of their video clips or even in the lyrics of their songs (www.washingtonpost.com).

Thanks to *AKIRA*, other Japanese anime franchises had it much easier than before to sink deep into American hearts, and that was the case with *Pokémon*, which would be released on September 8, 1998, along with the legendary Nintendo *Gameboy* games that are the origin of the saga. Since its premiere,

Pokémon has been a mass phenomenon, in fact the games have sold 55 million copies worldwide (screenrant.com). Merchandise for these adorable characters flooded the United States, and franchise-related events abounded in a number of malls from New York to San Diego. With *Pokémon*, the success of a Japanese anime film for the first time reached the American box office, as the first film in the franchise, released nationwide in November 1999, was a huge success, grossing \$ 10.1 million in sales on its first weekend on the billboard. This film also has the honor of being the highest-grossing animated film of any kind at the box office in Warner Bros. history. (the company that distributed the tape in the United States). And it is that November 12, 1999 fell on a Wednesday and a large number of children throughout the country missed school to see the film, what in the US media was called the Pokéflu. We do not know if it was the flu, what is clear is that the United States was experiencing a Pokéfever for Pikachu and its friends. A fever that is still alive today, with season 24 of the anime airing and more than 55 million games sold worldwide. With *Pokémon*, anime and manga and Japanese popular culture in general moved into the mainstream. The franchise in the United States is in such good health than in 2019 Warner Bros. released the franchise's first live-action movie, based on one of its games: *Detective Pikachu*. And of course it was an overwhelming success around the world.

The secret of the *Pokémon* success was simple, it was a combination of the characteristics of adventure games and RPGs like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest*, with the creation of their own world and characters, with the children's fondness for collecting things (in this case the *Pokémon*). This was the primary objective of the games and hence its slogan "Gotta Catch'em all!" In addition to this, the games offered battles between *Pokémon* in which to win you had to build a strategy in relation to the type of *Pokémon* you had and that of the opponent's *Pokémon*. The anime was a supporting material for the universe of the games (and card games later) in which various things were discovered and learned about each of the *Pokémon*, while intertwining with the story of the protagonist, Ash Ketchum (Satoshi in the original) who begins his adventure to become a *Pokémon* master. All this cocktail results in the most profitable popular culture franchise in the world, whose one of its largest markets is the United States.

With anime living a golden age in America thanks to *AKIRA* and *Pokémon*, it was time to introduce the American public to one of the jewels in the crown of Japanese animation: Studio Ghibli. The animation studio founded in 1985 by director, producer and animator Hayao Miyazaki, director Isao Takahata and producer Toshio Suzuki, had been delighting Japanese audiences for years with works that told beautiful stories that mixed fantasy with more mature themes. such as ecology, the horror of war, the value of friendship or human nature, all immersed in a precious and highly detailed manual animation. Almost all of the Ghibli films had been a huge success in Japan, and although they had not officially made it to the United States, they already had a large fan base. This was realized in 1999 by the Disney company that managed to sign a contract to distribute Miyazaki's films in America. The first of them was *Princess Mononoke*, which was a total failure at the US box office, because Disney did not know or did not want

to give it the commercial presence it deserved. The same happened with the following, *Spirited Away*, and *Howl's Moving Castle*(www.polygon.com), despite the fact that the first won the Oscar for best animated film in 2002, further proof of the great recognition that Japanese animation has in the United States. Although even the great Pixar directors John Lasseter (Toy Story) and Pete Docter (Monsters Inc), true Ghibli fans, were involved in making the English version of the films, almost all of Disney's Ghibli releases were a failure. Disney could not understand the more mature concept of animation of Miyazaki and his colleagues, because for them animated films were to be seen as a family, with children being their main audience (www.polygon.com). Of course both companies are no longer linked. However, despite the failure of Ghibli at the box office, the fact that Disney, one of the most important popular culture companies in the United States and the world, was interested in Ghibli's style confirms that not only the public but also the Components of the American animation industry took Japanese animation seriously, and believed that it was worth enjoying in America.

Ghibli movies right now are all cult in the United States and in the rest of the world and proof of this is that the streaming service Netflix has recently included them in its catalog (in the United States they can be seen through HBO Max).

Thanks to all this, we have reached the current situation of anime and manga in the United States, with hundreds of series being published by the more than six publishers that are exclusively dedicated to this sector. With the advancement of the internet and new technologies, now American fans can read the new chapters of their favorite manga almost simultaneously with their premiere in Japan, thanks to online reading services such as mangaplus from the publisher Viz media.

As for anime, it is also possible to see the latest hits almost at the same time as in Japan thanks to the streaming service Crunchyroll, the most important in the US and perhaps the world.

Therefore, manga and anime in the United States are now in their second golden age, with more possibility and access to series than ever.

The Diffusion of Anime and Manga in Europe: The Case of Spain

Due to space problems, I cannot deal with the dissemination of manga and anime in all European countries, so I am going to focus on Spain, which is one of the countries with the longest tradition in terms of publishing manga and broadcasting anime in Europe.

Although it is true that the first time a manga was published in Spain, as Marc Bernabé points out, it was in 1968, and it was a fragment of the work of Rakuten Kitazawa *Tonda Haneko-Jou* (1928) that appeared in the Catalan magazine *Cavall Fort* (mangaland.es).

Already in the late 1970s, in 1979, the Grijalbo publishing house released Junichi Matsuura's work *Mou-Takoutou-den* (*The Life of Mao-Tse Tung*) on the Spanish market. Both works had almost no impact (Madrid, Martínez 42).

The true boom of manga and anime came as in the United States through television. On May 2, 1975, *Heidi (Arapusu Shoujo Haiji)* was broadcast on Televisión Española (Spanish public television), a series based on a novel by the Swiss writer Johanna Spyri. It was originally broadcast on Friday afternoons but was so successful that it was rescheduled to Saturday afternoons after the newscast. It is even said that in a Spanish town hall routine meeting and in the country's own parliamentary courts, there were politicians who rushed to finish the meetings on duty to be able to go see *Heidi*. Due to the official mourning for the death (November 20, 1975) of the dictator and Head of State Francisco Franco, on Saturday, November 22, episode 26 of the series could not be broadcast, so it was rescheduled for Sunday 23 without prior notice. This made audience so angry that flooded with complaints to TVE, so the public channel had no choice but to re-broadcast that episode along with the next one on Saturday 29 (www.fotogramas.es). The success of the girl from the Alps, whose anime was directed by Isao Takahata, one of the founders of Studio Ghibli, caused Spain to suffer a barrage of merchandising in relation to the series, an unprecedented event in Spain at the time.

A year after the broadcast of *Heidi*, another Nippon Animation production would arrive, also directed by Takahata, *Marco (Haha wo Tazunete Sanzenri)*. He had a similar success to *Heidi*, with Marco winning the third most popular character position in the television ranking of the moment, a ranking created by *fotogramas* magazine (the most important magazine in Spain). Both series were a resounding success because they dealt with subjects easily understood by the Spanish and Western populations in general (in fact both works are based on juvenile novels written by European authors). This success also had its guarantees in certain aspects that were new for a cartoon series: a plot that followed for 52 chapters, allusions to the importance of caring for nature, the expressiveness and dramatic depth of the characters, and the praise of friendship and the value of family. Aspects that will later be transferred to the great hits of Studio Ghibli, but that in the Spain of the mid-seventies, accustomed to *The Flintstones* or *Top Cat*, had never been seen in children's programs, and this is a typical feature of anime Japanese. However, despite the great success of these two series, and the new concepts it introduced, no one related them to the Japanese manga and anime subculture.

In 1978 an anime series did arrive that made the characteristics of the genre easily recognizable, *Mazinger Z*. It was the first Mecha series that arrived in Spain, with all the violence, risqué scenes, expressiveness and of course dealing with more mature themes. and serious than those of the traditional western cartoon series, typical of Japanese anime. Televisión Española (TVE) bought 36 episodes of the original 92, but broadcast only 27 (www.culturaocio.com). The series was canceled due to various complaints from viewers and associations that accused the series of being too violent for a program intended for children.

The phenomenon of the success and popularity of manga and anime in Spain occurred when FORTA (the federation of regional television networks in Spain) bought the *Dragon Ball* series to broadcast it.

Although the dates are not entirely clear, it is estimated that this series based on Akira Toriyama's manga premiered in March 1989 on the regional channel of Andalusia. From there between 1989 and 1992 it would go on to the regional channels of Galicia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Valencia and Madrid, so the anime would have coverage of broadcasts almost on a national scale. The adventure of looking for the Dragon Balls, mixed with a martial arts theme and peppered with spicy humor, caused the series to become a smash hit, which even surprised the televisions that programmed it. The success was such that one of the most important publishing houses in the country, Planeta deAgostini, negotiated directly with the Japanese publishing giant Shueisha to publish the *Dragon Ball* manga in Spain. And that became a reality in May 1992. In fact, Spain became the first western country to publish Toriyama's work outside of Japan (www.yorokubu.es). All this, together with the success, as in the United States, of the anime film *AKIRA* (which caused her manga to also be published in Spain in 1990), caused people who saw these series to really care about her and want to everything that could be achieved in relation to them, the first manga and anime fan phenomenon was born in Spain. Until now the people who had seen Heidi or Marco had not had an interest beyond watching the series until the end to see what happens, but now that these animes are supported by their versions on paper, people already know what it is a manga and an anime and they are interested in everything that has to do with these series. In fact, in those days any item that had an image of a *Dragon Ball* character was sold out instantly, and the little merchandising that could be obtained was compensated by the piracy of objects from the series, including black and white photocopies of dubious quality of the characters in the series and which were exchanged in the schoolyards (www.yorokubu.es).

Taking advantage of the pull of the success of *Dragon Ball*, since 1990, the national television Tele5 began to broadcast a large number of anime within its children's programming: *Saint Seiya*, *Aishite Night*, *Captain Tsubasa*, *Attacker no.1*, *Kimagure Orange Road*, *City Hunter*, *La Abeja Maya* and *Jungle Taitei*, among others. All these series were also enormously successful and together with *Dragon Ball* they became part of the popular culture of the Spaniards born in the eighties. It must be said that most of these series came from the Italian version of them and therefore there was censorship and changes in the names of the characters and in the locations to adapt to the Spanish public (*Dragon Ball* was the exception).

The confirmation of the manga and anime boom in Spain came in October 1993 with the celebration of the first Manga Fair in Barcelona, the first event dedicated exclusively to this genre in particular and to Japanese culture in general that took place in Spain. Today it continues to celebrate and is a benchmark for fans of manganime in Spain. Over the years this type of events spread throughout the entire geography of the Iberian peninsula: Salón del Manga de Granada, Jerez, the Madrid Expomanga etc ... further increasing the success of manga and anime in Spain.

With the re-broadcast in 1997 of the entire *Dragon Ball* series on a national channel (Antena 3), the success of the series was strengthened, although already in the last years of the 20th century, there were ups and downs in terms of the popularity of anime and manga in Spain, with the cancellation of publications of

iconic series such as *Ranma 1/2*, whose anime had been broadcast by Antena 3 in 1993. Between 1998 and 1999, Japanese animated series such as the megahit *Rurouni Kenshin* were shown on Canal + Spain, *Reena and Gaudi* (*Slayers* in the original) on TVE, or *Pokémon* on Tele5, and although they were very successful, the fever that *Dragon Ball* started had dropped a few tenths.

But all this will change at the beginning of the 21st century, because in part thanks to the work of dissemination and dissemination of manga and anime that the magazine *Minami*, specialized in the genre had been doing since the end of 1998 since the Spanish fan of this subculture had evolved now demanding a quality product, the closest thing to the Japanese editions (not the comic-book format with staples of the early nineties or the censored animes and with substantial changes to adapt to the western public of the same time) made the Spanish publishers will begin to publish a large number of manga series with maximum respect for fidelity to the Japanese edition. Thus these editorials, among which Glénat, Norma and Planeta deAgostini, Ivrea and Mangaline stand out, published the most cutting-edge series of the moment such as *Naruto*, *Bleach*, or *Fullmetal Alchemist*, at the same time they rescued classics that had been editorially mistreated in the past such as the already mentioned *Ranma 1/2* or *Saint Seiya*. The Spanish comic book market had not seen such an influx of manga in its history, and the trend was increasing as video and DVD publishers such as the veteran Selecta Visión and the newly created at that time Jonu Media also began to bring anime in large quantities, including complete editions without censorship and without changes with respect to the original edition. With this new boom, specialized anime and manga stores flourished and now fans could have access to merchandise brought directly from Japan. At the same time Manga events multiplied, and the attendance of participants also increased.

This silver age of manga and anime continues today, since in 2019 864 volumes of different manga were published in Spain in 2020 (www.stats.com), a figure that triples the figure of the first decade of the 2000s. Of course, anime has also seen its presence increased in Spain today, since apart from DVD and BD publishers, streaming services such as Netflix and Crunchyroll offer an infinity of titles in their catalogs, making anime become mainstream in Spain as well. Therefore, both anime and manga are right now on the cusp of their success in the Iberian country, a success that is being replicated in other European countries such as France, Italy or Germany.

Recapping: The Reasons For the Success of Manga and Anime in the United States and Europe (Spain)

Until the mid-late 70s in the United States and Europe animation was considered as cartoons, that is, programs for children, whose sole purpose was to entertain and make the little ones smile. But when the first hit anime series reached both places in 1978 (US) and 1975 (Spain) all that changed. In these series from Japan, the narrative was not episodic like in Western cartoons, but the plot continued in each episode and they made use of cliffhangers at the end of each one of them to maintain the interest of the audience

(in the US this was particularly experienced since the broadcast of *Space Battleship Yamato*). The visual aspect was fresh, dynamic and impressive, and the expressiveness of the characters managed to convey emotions like never before. Besides, the topics covered in the anime were much more mature and, ranging from the horrors of war and colonization (as in *Battle of Planets*, *Robotech* and *AKIRA*) to exploring human nature from a philosophical point of view (as in *Evangelion*, *AKIRA* and *Ghost in the Shell*) with an environmental message (Studio Ghibli films) with melodramatic overtones (*Heidi* and *Marco*). In Japanese animation there was a creative freedom unprecedented in the West, because there was room for violence, scenes of sexual innuendo (*Battle of Planets*, *Dragon Ball*, *Naruto*, *Love Hina* etc.) and darkness, because in these series characters died (*Battle of Planets*, *One Piece*, *Naruto*, *Evangelion*), something unthinkable in a Western children's show, all cemented by a great sophistication in the storytelling.

The turning point of the popularity of anime in America and in Europe came on two different but very close dates. In 1989 the film *AKIRA* reached a limited number of theaters in the United States, and although it was not an overwhelming success at the box office, it became a cult film. This film with a very careful and superb animation for the time, with an impressive visual section mixed with raw violence, presents us with a post-apocalyptic, futuristic story with philosophical overtones on the consequences of war and on human nature. All this was an explosive cocktail for the American audience who had never imagined that a "cartoon" movie could offer all that, so anime began to be really recognized and taken seriously in the US, not in vain it was the first Japanese animated production to arrive without cuts or censorship. Moreover, without *AKIRA*, manga and anime might not have found their place in America, and their primary success would have remained an anecdote, as people did not even know that *Battle of Planets* or *Robotech* were Japanese animation.

On the other hand, in Spain, it was the animated version of Akira Toriyama's manga, *Dragon Ball*, the one which marked a milestone. This series that introduced new concepts such as martial arts coupled with a humor not suitable for children, topped by Toriyama's drawing that leaves no one indifferent, caused the first fan phenomenon for an anime series in the country. Like *AKIRA* in the United States, *Dragon Ball* made anime and manga recognized for the first time in Spain, and without it, perhaps no more Japanese productions would have reached the southern European country.

After this, a large number of manga and anime series arrived in both Spain and the United States, culminating in their success with the arrival of *Pokémon* in the North American country and with the evolution and sophistication of the "otaku" (fan of manga and anime) in Spain. giving rise to the silver age of the genus in the Iberian country.

Today that success has only increased, with hundreds of series being published in both countries a year and with access to them easier and faster than ever thanks to new technologies. In addition, that success is reinforced by the multiplatform nature of anime and manga, since each series of success has its version in video games, has its line of toys and specific collection figures, etc. so fans can continue to enjoy their

favorite stories even after the original series is over. To all this we must add that the events dedicated exclusively to manga and anime in both countries receive thousands of visitors every year, and that anime films such as the megahit *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba; Mugen Train* (premiered in April 2021) broke records at the box office in the United States and Europe since it was the most watched movie on its opening week. And it is that the formula of shonen (comics for kids between 9 and 18 years old), the genre to which *Kimetsu no Yaiba* belongs, in which the protagonist must overcome endless adversities to achieve a goal, be it to become a Hokage, become the king of pirates or return humanity to his sister, and that in the end he succeeds thanks to the invaluable help of his friends and to his courage and willpower that makes him never give up, is the most successful today.

For all this, manga and anime are becoming a global culture, and as the editor-in-chief of the digital service Shonen Jump Plus, Yuta Momiyama affirms, it will end up becoming completely international within ten years if everything continues as it has been until now (www.somoskudasai.com).

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