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An Analysis of *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night*

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Foreword: This essay is a part of a collection of undergraduate essays on videogames and interactive entertainment produced for the course NMED 3300--Theory and Aesthetics of Digital Games offered by Dr. David Clearwater at the University of Lethbridge. These essays represent the culmination of the course and build upon previous assignments (such as an earlier essay on genre) and therefore must fulfill specific research and analytical requirements. As such, they are very much undergraduate assignments but they also represent very interesting scholarly investigations of the interactive medium of videogames. By and large, these authors are young University of Lethbridge students who have grown up with the medium and want to understand its significance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Some may themselves want to pursue a future career in the videogame industry as designers, artists, programmers or writers. These essays have been selected for hosting at the GamePlay Archive because they contribute to the emerging dialogue on videogame research and because they offer interesting analytical and/or critical perspectives on an ever-evolving interactive medium.

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Imperishable Night[1] is a vertical-scrolling 2D shooter developed and self-published by Team Shanghai Alice.[2] It was released in 2004 for on PC for the then current Windows platforms. *Imperishable Night* marks the eight official submission in the Touhou Project franchise.[3] The Touhou Project is a long running series of danmaku shooters, a niche subset of the shoot 'em up genre, spanning sixteen years since its debut in 1996.

The Touhou Project franchise is set in Gensokyo, a fictional area of Japan that was sealed off during the Meiji era (1868 to 1912). The world of Gensokyo incorporates elements of traditional Japanese folklore and culture, and is is populated by a mix of humans and yōkai,[4] or mystical creatures. While these two distinct groups coexist, the yōkai prey on humans and the humans in turn exorcise the yōkai. The Touhou Project franchise revolves around the primary heroine Reimu Hakurei. She is a Shinto miko or shrine maiden who maintains the Hakurei shrine. The shrine acts as the barrier between Gensokyo and the outside world. Aside from this duty, Reimu takes it upon herself to investigate strange incidents that occur throughout the land and it is these 'incidents' that provides the impetus for each play session. Over the course of the series' history, other protagonists have been introduced but ultimately the choice of who actually investigates the incident is under the control of the player in the character selection screen **(Appendix: Image 1)**.

The story of *Imperishable Night* occurs on the eve of the Harvest Moon Festival or Tsukimi[5]. The celebration of the Harvest Moon Festival takes place on the 15th day of the eighth month of the

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1 *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night*, (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2004.

2 "Team Shanghai Alice," Official Site, http://www16.big.or.jp/~zun/top.html; also see: Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Team_Shanghai_Alice, (accessed 10th March 2012).

3 "Touhou Project," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Template:Portal/Games, (accessed 17th February 2012).

4 Yōkai is a term associated with Japanese folk creatures and especially ghosts. However the term can also apply broadly to anything that is a supernatural being or legend, from any culture. For the purpose of simplicity the term yōkai will be applied broadly to any character of a mystical origin.

5 "Tsukimi" Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsukimi, (accessed 11th April 2012).

traditional Japanese lunisolar calendar. The waxing phase of the lunar cycle is celebrated on the 13th day of the ninth month. These days normally fall in September and October of the modern calendar. The tradition dates back to the Heian era (794 to 1185). In the story, someone seems to have replaced the moon with a fake that is incapable of growing full. The human population is oblivious to this event but the various yōkai of Gensokyo are upset, fearing this event will alter their existence. The yōkai must investigate the nature of this lunar phenomenon but in order to do so require a human ally for help. Time is suspended by the yōkai such that the problem can be solved before the dawn of the next day. This story element provides the rationale for the list of four yōkai and human character pairings seen in *Imperishable Night* and from which the player selects which pair will assume the investigative role at the beginning of each game: Yukari Yakumo/Reimu Hakurei, Alice Margatroid/Marisa Kirisame, Remilia Scarlet/Sakuya Izayoi, and Yuyuko Saigyouji/Youmu Konpaku **(Image 2)**.

The Touhou Project is embedded in Japanese culture but restricted to the realm of the 2D shooter or shoot 'em up genre. The series of games has generated a loyal following, in part because the series allows fans to add their own content. The fanbase has generated multiple, derivative games in the 2D shooter genre but also has expanded upon the story and characters, even in other game genres such as role playing games, racing, and even platform games. Aside from the fan-created games, the Touhou Project has further expanded into other forms of media, including music animation, all created from its very active fanbase. Between the official releases and the fan-generated content, the Touhou universe has expanded greatly and while it is no doubt a fascinating developemnt, it is beyond the scope of this essay. Consequently, I have selected *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night* from the 19 official games in the series as the platform for the development of my discussion. This essay will examine *Touhou Project 08*'s narrative, aesthetics, and evolution, as well as the culture surrounding the game. I will also cover the role of the fans and how they have contributed to the franchise and to the shoot 'em up genre.

2D shooters, shoot 'em ups, or 'shmups' have a long history in Japan. Beginning with the 1978 arcade release of *Space Invaders*[6] **(Image 3)**, it soon became one of the industry's dominant genres until it began to decline in the early 1990s. Shoot 'em ups started out in the arcades, but as technology improved, game development expanded into the home console market. Traditionally shmups revolve around a lone protagonist progressing through a series of environments, confronting large numbers of hostile forces, and ending with a boss fight. As such narrative is often sparse or even nonexistent. Despite the gameplay becoming more sophisticated than that first seen in *Space Invaders*, it retains the same key elements. The importance placed upon the performance

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6   *Space Invaders* (Arcade) Taito Corporation/Midway, 1978.

of aiming, shooting and dodging remain consistent regardless of what era or subgenre the player is experiencing. In terms of gameplay, traditionally shmups are fast-paced and the emphasis is on quick reactions. Music most notably reflects this as it matches the tempo of the action onscreen. In a way the music acts as a guide to the player, indirectly informing players of shifts in difficulty, upcoming sections, or the initiation of boss fights.

Danmaku shooters, unlike traditional shoot 'em up's, focus on manoeuvring through complex patterns containing anywhere from dozens to hundreds of on-screen projectiles at any one time. These patterns can be extremely intricate and complex, giving the barrage a beautiful, if deadly, nature. Bullets in danmaku games tend to be slower, due to the increase in their numbers. Generally, traditional shooters use fast projectiles that are targeted directly at the player but are relatively infrequent in number. Bullets in danmaku games tend to be slower, but exist in much greater numbers. Depending on the attack, enemy bullets can be scattered all over the screen, covering the majority of the playing field. Projectiles can start with a "shotgun" styled approach then, as the player progresses, the frequency and volume of projectiles may increase and/or develop into spatial patterns or other arrangements where movement is severely restricted. The patterns themselves can be intricate, giving the barrage a beautiful, if deadly, nature. Player survival is enhanced with experimentation and variation on the size of the player-character's hitbox. Generally, danmaku games use small hitboxes, and variety is achieved from game to game through the use of specific gimmicks such as the polarity shift available in *Ikaruga*[7] **(Image 4)**.

Needless to say, pattern recognition and quick reflexes are essential for game progression and 2D shooters place almost an equal value on defensive positioning as they do on offensive action. The offensive capability of danmaku games is reduced compared to traditional 2D shooters as danmaku weapons are usually limited to two firing mode options: 'unfocused' fire which covers a large area but where firepower is limited to a lower calibre or more focused fire that offers the player more power and is often better suited for larger foes. Typically, focused fire is more limiting when it comes to player movement than unfocused fire, which makes for easier coordination of movement, allowing the player to more easily navigate through intricate bullet patterns. Not surprisingly, proper selection of firing mode in critical situations affects player survival and game progression.

Bombs are a common feature in 2D shooters occurring mostly as 'super weapons' however in Danmaku style games they play a more defensive role. Activating bombs nullifies hostile projectiles allowing the player to safely pass. Typically, the use of bombs handicaps the player's scoring potential and is seen by the fan community as an action of last resort.

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7   *Ikaruga* (Arcade) Treasure/Treasure, 2001.

Touhou Project incorporates the danmaku style gameplay into the narrative structure previously mentioned, meaning the conflicts in Gensokyo are resolved in the guise of a friendly competition. Both parties attack in full force, evading the other's attacks in hope that eventually one will be overwhelmed from the onslaught. Essentially then both the player and the in-game characters are undertaking a danmaku game. The duels also place participants on equal footing by making the conflict a mere game giving Reimu hope of defeating opponents whose powers outclass her own. With it being a game within a game, it avoids the appearance of bloodshed or violence, allowing those involved to leave on friendly terms.

It is not surprising that players of the genre, particularity those at the upper skill levels, often become 'hardcore' fans given the time that must be invested. Similar to fighting games, mastering a shump requires a deep understanding of the game and its dominant mechanics, dexterity, and practice. The fans of the danmaku subgenre are usually attracted by the inherent difficulty of the games, the beauty of the bullet patterns and character design, and the ability to show off ones skills **(Image 5-6)**. Often players have grown up with the genre and the niche appeal of shump games, combined with the difficulty of modern games in the genre, provide a sense of exclusivity. Due to the level of expertise that is required to excel at these games, there is a distinct spectatorship role. Knowledge is gained through observation, either live or through recordings of gameplay. In this way, strategy and skills are developed and shared. In Japan the dedicated arcade has persisted in modern times while it has virtually disappeared in North America. And the arcade is important to the 2D shooter genre where unwritten rules of game etiquette, for players as well as spectators, exist, largely to respect the players concentration.

Shmups occupy a niche market status, relying on fans that have a long association with the genre. The skill required to overcome typical difficulty levels is the greatest limiting factor for the genre's re-entry into mainstream prominence. While a niche market, the fanbase for the genre is very dedicated, particularity in terms of fan-created content. Dōjin or fan-create games favour the PC over home consoles for development as the approval process and associated developmental costs associated with consoles are beyond the limits of what is considered a hobbyist activity in Japan. Conversely key players in the industry are unwilling to risk resources on such a niche market. As such, the combination of independent developers, publishers, and amateur developers are very important to the genre, as are the various festivals around which fans congregate. The Comiket[8] **(Image 7)** festival functions as a trade fair to facilitate dōjin groups in marketing fan products. Dōjin game developers, unlike more mainstream companies, are not so pre-occupied about making profit, which allows for a greater degree of experimentation. Fan-created works are

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8   "Comiket" Official Comic Market Site, http://www.comiket.co.jp/info-a/WhatIsEng080528.pdf, (accessed 28th February 2012).

often seen as an infringement of intellectual property and subject to legal action. In Japan unauthorized uses by fans are not always seen as an infringement and more often encouraged as it is seen as contributing to the initial product. This is especially true of the Touhou Project. In fact, allowing fans to participate has been an important consideration for the original creator of the series. Known as ZUN to fans, he has admitted that fan-creation is essential to building a connection with fans:

> In fan games the distance between the player and the creator is extremely small, this is one of the most prominent features of dōjin works. With a fan game the player already knows the game world. You can make games where both the player and the creator share the same picture of the game world. When you do original games it's more that you want to create everything from the base of your own vision, without taking the vision of the player into consideration.[9]

Another aspect of the modern 2D shooter genre which is also crucial for the Touhou Project is the shift in the character of the protagonist from a soldier to a mahou shojou or 'magical girl.'[10] The mahou shojou genre has existed since 1962 in other forms of media; good examples being *Sailor Moon*[11] or the more recent *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha*[12] franchise. The magical girl character is a common feature in dōjin games like the Touhou Project franchise, but it's also encountered in mainstream shmup games like *Mushihime-sama Futari*.[13] This is probably related to the Japanese cultural phenomenon known as 'moé,'[14] which commonly refers to a cute but non-sexualized female character. Interestingly, Japanese marketing allows characters to compete against each other for popularity as if they were human. Selected characters of fan-run popularity polls such as Saimoe[15] benefit the copyright owner through revenues from advertising campaigns, promotions and merchandising. The dōjin scene provides another opportunity to expand the dimensions of a popular character. Aside from the use of licensed characters in fan works, original characters created by dōjin groups can cultivate a dedicated fanbase of its own.

Junya Ōta, better known as ZUN,[16] is the creative mind behind the Touhou Project. The appeal of project quickly spread to the point that it currently enjoys the distinction of being the world's "most prolific fan-made shooter series."[17] Festivals solely dedicated to the franchise and its

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9 "Interview in Swedish Player1 Magazine", Touhou Project Wiki,
  http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Interview_in_Swedish_Player1_Magazine, (accessed 21st February 2012).
10 See: "Magical girl," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magical_girl, (accessed 20th February 2012).
11 "Sailor Moon," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailor_Moon, (accessed 20th February 2012).
12 "Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha series," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magical_Girl_Lyrical_Nanoha_
  %28series%29, (accessed 20th February 2012).
13 *Mushihime-sama Futari* (Xbox 360) Cave/AMI Co., Ltd, 2009.
14 "Moé," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moe_%28slang%29, (accessed 20th February 2012).
15 "Saimoe" Saimoe 2011, http://www.animesaimoe.org/, (accessed 21st February 2012).
16 "ZUN," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/ZUN, (accessed 20th February 2012).
17 See: Guinness World Record, http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/records-8000/most-prolific-fan-made-shooter-
  series/.

derivative works occur yearly in Japan.[18] What makes the Touhou games so popular is likely the idiosyncratic nature of the series. Traditional shmups generally lack detailed storylines, relying instead on providing adrenalin-driven, non-stop action. Basically, the narrative structure is very simple, with sparse character development and a basic story outline featuring minimal dialog. The Touhou Project however is sort of a grand inversion of the traditional formula, where the story and characters appear more like those from a popular manga or anime series than a humble independent 2D shooter series. The Touhou fanbase has played a large part in the development of the characters since in the games ZUN basically defines the essentials of each of the character's personality and leave further development in the hands of the fanbase. Fan-created additions to the story/characters are in turn made canon in subsequent official releases, making the series into an evolving, additive process between ZUN and fans.

This is probably why the tone of the series is intentionally left ambiguous by ZUN in order to allow the fans freedom of expression in derivative works. These derivative works range from light-hearted and cute to dark, violence-filled gore fests. The storylines of the Touhou Project games tend to be self-contained rather than being a part of an intricate and larger overarching narrative. Continuity is established, however, by referencing events of past games or through appearances of previous characters (this is especially true with regard to characters that are allies).

The Japanese term 'Touhou' translates to 'eastern' and it is eastern culture and aesthetics that provide the setting. The series takes place in modern times but draws from the Meiji era (1868 to 1912). In this period, Japanese society moved from isolated feudalism to what it is today. Japan was accepting of some western ideas but remained cautious of foreign powers. And it is the guarded approach to outside cultures which informs many Touhou games. Globally the world is in a constant state of war, the United States is recovering from the ravages of civil war, emigration from Europe is common, and old imperial empires are competing and some declingin. Japan had missed the colonizal boat and is of minor global significance. The plots of the Touhou Project games explore this often by pitting the protagonists against a foreign antagonist. The villains can be derived from western folklore and undead spirits, or from the netherworld to aliens and divine beings. Essentially, the games' narratives revolve around outside influences changing the world of Gensokyo and the heroines fighting to maintain the traditional ways. The result is a contrast of eastern and western values and cultures, where the eastern culture is presented such that heritage and nationalistic values are of overriding importance. Nationalism in Japan and the recognition of their heritage is an important element of the psyche of a the average Japanese person and ZUN personifies this in his work.

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18 "Reitaisai", Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Reitaisai, (accessed 10th March 2012).

ZUN is not known for his ability to illustrate as the character designs lack the detail and nuance found in other popular franchises. Despite this artistic obstacle, the vast cast of characters in Touhou Project are distinct **(Image 8, 9)**, easily recognizable, and have become familiar to an audience outside of the game. This is because the of ZUN's use of the Lolita fashion style[19] **(Image 10)** characters. The style is based on the modernization of female dress from the Victorian and Rococo periods and has broad appeal in Japan. Due to this popularity it has expanded and evolved into many distinct subcategories, even those that combine traditional eastern dress with a Victorian-era aesthetic **(Image 11)**. Traditionally the term 'Lolita' refers to a sexually precocious young girl taken from the novel, of the same name, by Russian author Vladimir Nabokov (1899 to 1977).[20] In a fashion context it has a different connotation and is thought to have been partly created as a reactionary response against the growing exposure of the body and skin in modern society. Adherents dress in a manner that reflects modesty, presenting themselves as 'cute' or 'elegant' rather than 'sexy.' To slightly contrast the refined appearance of the characters, ZUN takes cues from Japanese Sukeban[21] or female 'delinquent' culture. The personalities of the Touhou Project characters are far from that of the stereotypical Japanese schoolgirl as overly submissive and polite mannerisms are mixed or replaced with those that are more confrontational in nature.

ZUN began work on Touhou Project during his days as a student at Tokyo Denki University. It was during this period that the first five instalments of the Touhou Project were created. At this point in time, ZUN a member of Amusement Makers,[22] a student club focused on the development of dōjin games. However, despite the availability of potential collaborators, ZUN handled every aspect of game development—from the programming to the music—himself. Upon graduation ZUN founded the dōjin group, Team Shanghai Alice, and ZUN acts as its sole member.

With the sixth official game, *Touhou Project 06: Embodiment of Scarlet Devil*[23] released in 2002, development shifted to the Windows 98 operating system and many of the previously introduced characters were dropped. This period was also somewhat of a revival as the obscurity of ZUN's efforts waned as success of the franchise dramatically increased. Fan-created works based of the Touhou Project universe started to appear around the debut of the seventh official game, *Touhou Project 07: Perfect Cherry Blossom*[24] in 2003. This led to the collaboration between Team Shanghai Alice and fellow dōjin group Tasogare Frontier[25] in 2004. *Touhou Project 07.5: Immaterial*

19 "Lolita Fashion," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lolita_fashion, (accessed 1st March 2012).
20 "Vladimir Nabokov," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_nabokov, (accessed 1st April 2012).
21 "Sukeban," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukeban, (accessed 27th March 2012).
22 "Amusement Makers," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Amusement_Makers, (accessed 2nd April 2012).
23 *Touhou Project 06: Embodiment of Scarlet Devil* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2002.
24 *Touhou Project 07: Perfect Cherry Blossom* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2003.
25 "Tasogare Frontier", Official Site, http://www.tasofro.net/; also see: Touhou Project Wiki,

and Missing Power[26] was the result of this first partnership. *Immaterial and Missing Power* is the first official spin-off in the Touhou Project series. What sets it apart from the previous official instalments is its hybrid combination of fighting and shump game mechanics. This hybridity also affects character development, as the traditional narrative structure present in fighting games allows for the relationships between characters to be further explored. ZUN would again work with Tasogare Frontier, further refining the fighter-shump hybrid experiment, resulting in the release of *Touhou Project 10.5: Scarlet Weather Rhapsody*[27] **(Image 12)** in 2007. Further refinement continued in 2009 with the completion of *Touhou Project 12.3: Hisōtensoku*[28] in 2009. These official spin-off games added dimension to the series, making the world of Touhou deeper and more interesting.

In 2004, *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night* was released. The eighth instalment featured a "tag-team" gimmick pairing humans with yōkai. Alternating between the characters effectively allows the player to maximize success. *Imperishable Night* saw ZUN step outside his usual role as a game developer. ZUN collaborated with three illustrators to expand on the narrative surrounding the aftermath of *Imperishable Night* in three literary works: *Silent Sinner in Blue,*[29] *Cage in Lunatic Runagate,*[30] and *Inaba of the Moon and Inaba of the Earth.*[31] *Touhou Project 09: Phantasmagoria of Flower View*[32] was released in 2005. Unlike the gameplay of previous Touhou games, *Phantasmagoria of Flower View* was structured with competitive multiplayer elements in mind. Two players control equally matched characters in an attempt to outscore the other.

The second official spin-off occurred in 2005. Unlike *Immaterial and Missing Power* it was not a collaborative effort with another dōjin group. Instead, *Touhou Project 09.5: Shoot the Bullet*[33] features the most interesting gameplay mechanic found in the series thus far. Rather than defeating a boss to advance in the usual shmup fashion, the player must take photos of the various bosses and their bullet patterns while evading the mayhem. The photography-based gameplay is revisited in *Touhou Project 12.5: Double Spoiler*.[34] In 2006, Touhou Project returned to a more

http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Tasofro, (accessed 10th March 2012).

26 *Touhou Project 07.5: Immaterial and Missing Power* (PC), Tasogare Frontier/Team Shanghai Alice, 2004.

27 *Touhou Project 10.5: Scarlet Weather Rhapsody* (PC), Tasogare Frontier/Team Shanghai Alice, 2007.

28 *Touhou Project 12.3: Hisōtensoku* (PC), Tasogare Frontier/Team Shanghai Alice, 2009.

29 "Silent Sinner in Blue," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Silent_Sinner_in_Blue, (accessed 23rd February 2012).

30 "Cage in Lunatic Runagate," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Cage_in_Lunatic_Runagate, (accessed 23rd February 2012).

31 "Inaba of the Moon and Inaba of the Earth," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Inaba_of_the_Moon_and_Inaba_of_the_Earth, (accessed 23rd February 2012).

32 *Touhou Project 09: Phantasmagoria of Flower View* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2005.

33 *Touhou Project 09.5: Shoot the Bullet* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2005.

34 *Touhou Project 12.5: Double Spoiler* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2010.

traditional danmaku game style. *Touhou Project 10: Mountain of Faith*[35] lacks the gameplay gimmicks found in *Imperishable Night*, *Shoot the Bullet* and *Phantasmagoria of Flower View*.

While the Touhou Project has expanded in many directions, it still honours the spirit of its creator's original intent. Despite its growing expansion and popularity, ZUN wishes to focus on appreciating the fanbase over making a profit. Interestingly, his wishes are respected both within the dōjin community and by the few corporations involved. Official merchandise **(Image 13-14)** is produced in limited numbers and is of high quality, both of which appeal to the more dedicated elements of the fanbase. Along with various merchandise, the Touhou universe is the subject of animated works.[36] The popularity of the series has attracted top seiyūs or voice actresses from the anime industry. The seiyu's involvement is pro-bono as being the voice of a Touhou character offers prestige; evidently, such honours are worth more to their career then money. In fact, Seiyu's will often voice a character until retirement, pointing to the importance of having Touhou Project on their resume and the recognition of fans.

When it comes to games in the Touhou Project, *Imperishable Night* is unique as it features one of the largest playable casts, including yōkai characters, which were previously relegated to performing roles as non-playable antagonists. This change allows for the personal relationships between the notable humans and yōkai of Gensokyo to be more fully explored. The relationships differ from pair to pair. Mere cooperation is the motive for Reimu Hakurei, a shrine maiden adept at exorcising yōkai, and Yukari Yakumo, arguably the strongest yōkai in the land. The motivation for other groups are more personal, as seen with the friendship between the human witch Marisa Kirisame and Alice Margatroid, an yōkai magician. Notable and intimate master/servant relationships include the vampire Remilia Scarlet and her loyal maid Sakuya Izayoi or the ghost princess Yuyuko Saigyouji and her faithful half-ghost protector Youmu Konpaku. Interestingly enough, with the exception of Reimu and Marisa, the other possible protagonists have all been villains at some point in the series.

The result is that there is a fairly well-developed narrative structure which is very unusual for the 2D Shooter genre. The contrast of western and eastern cultures is again echoed through the four pairs of characters as well as the story as a whole. The prospective teams represent the combined forces of Gensokyo's strongest inhabitants united against an unknown enemy. The origins of this new foe are made clear later in the story. The villain Kaguya Houraisan, along with the whole of *Imperishable Night*, is inspired by the Japanese legend of the Moon Princess, known as

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35 *Touhou Project 10: Mountain of Faith* (PC), Team Shanghai Alice/Team Shanghai Alice, 2006.
36 For example, see: "Musou Kakyou: A Summer Day's Dream", Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/Musou_Kakyou:_A_Summer_Day%27s_Dream, (accessed March 30th 2012).

Taketori Monogatari[37] or Story of the Bamboo Cutter. The game follows the story in a rather loose fashion as ZUN repurposes the folktale to fit his requirements. In *Imperishable Nights*, we learn that Kaguya was exiled from the moon due to her consumption of the Hourai Elixir, which renders the user immortal. During her exile Kaguya, renowned for her beauty, was visited by five princes seeking her hand in marriage. She spurred these advances by sending each of her prospective suitors on a series of impossible tasks while slyly agreeing to marry him if he brought back a requested item. Of course, being unable to fulfil her requests, all of the princes left humiliated. Word of her beauty reached the emperor of Japan but Kaguya rebuffed his advances as well, informing him that she was not of this world and was therefore unable to marry him. Eventually she was allowed to return to the moon but left a sample of the Hourai Elixir for the Emperor. It is here where the ending of the folktale was modified by ZUN. Rather than having the emperor burn the elixir it was stolen by Fujiwara no Mokou, the daughter of one the princes, who sought revenge for Kaguya humiliating her father. Little did Mokou know that Kaguya was unhappy with life on the moon and fled to earth arriving in Gensokyo.

In *Imperishable Night* the reason Kaguya replaces the moon with a fake was in order to sever the link between the earth and the moon, ensuring her pursuers from the moon would be unable to find her. Whenever she is defeated by the protagonists she challenges the heroines to assassinate her rival Fujiwara no Mokou. The relationship between Kaguya Houraisan and Fujiwara no Mokou is symbolic of the rivalry between that of the sun and the moon, with each possessing the power of immortality and carrying a deep hatred for one another. The two frequently fight to the death only to be revived a moment later. The story also affects the overall design of the game and sometimes in very subtle ways. When designing the later stage bosses, especially the primary antagonist, ZUN relied on the plot for inspiration when designing the attack patterns and music of specific characters. Mystia Lorelei, the stage two boss from *Imperishable Night*, is an example of this. Mystia's ability is to cause night-blindness. This ability is cleverly worked into the dominant gameplay mechanic as the player's field of view is obscured. Though simplifying the gameplay down to the primitive mechanic of the player's ability to process movement, it brings a new level of tension and excitement, especially on higher difficulties.

Due to the mysterious origins surrounding Kaguya and her subordinates, ZUN wrote a three part literary series expanding on events following *Imperishable Night*. The most notable of the three is *Silent Sinner in Blue* wherein Yukari Yakumo manipulates Reimu Hakurei, Marisa Kirisame, Sakuya Izayoi and Remilia Scarlet into invading the moon on the pretense of conquering it. However the true purpose was to steal advance technology from the lunar capital. The plot of *Silent*

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37 "Tale of the Bamboo Cutter," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tale_of_the_Bamboo_Cutter, (accessed 15th February 2012).

Sinner in Blue ties into the early history of the Touhou Project universe where the yōkai inhabitants previously attempted invasion of the moon. This however occurred before the time period the series takes place in and has only been referred to in passing by Gensokyo's older inhabitants. More interesting is that the story of *Silent Sinner in Blue* also shows evidence of the east-west symbolism mentioned earlier. A rivalry exists between Yukari Yakumo and Remilia Scarlet as the two yōkai engage in petty competitions to display superiority. Remilia was aware of Yukari's scheme and followed along regardless, as in the past Yukari failed to take the moon. This relationship between Remilia and Yukari strongly echoes the east-versus-west theme.

The Touhou Project, and *Imperishable Nights* more specifically, showcases what can result from the interactions of one man's vision with the Japanese dōjin culture. The dōjin scene provides for a hobbyist environment that allows fans to explore creative pursuits related to their favourite characters and stories. ZUN retains a design philosophy that is intensely personal and focuses on an individual's experience with the Touhou universe. As ZUN has said: "I'm going to keep making games that stand out, so if all my fans disappear I'm still happy I can keep doing the games I want."[38] It is perhaps ZUN's principal belief that makes the Touhou Project series appealing because it focuses on the enjoyment to be found within.

With each new instalment the franchise becomes more of a cultural institution than a simple game franchise. It is through this that, regardless of what directions Touhou Project takes in the future, it will remain a refreshing fixture in the game industry. Even though the games are rich in Japanese folklore and culture (not to mention the presence of themes pitting east against west), the series has attracted an active global fanbaseand this too should guarantee that the series will have a prosperous future.

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38 "ZUN," Touhou Project Wiki, http://touhou.wikia.com/wiki/ZUN, (accessed 20th February 2012).

Appendix 1: Images/Screenshots

Image 1. *Imperishable Night*'s character selection screen.

Image 2. Playable Yōkai/Human Teams in *Imperishable Night*.

Image 3 (left). *Space Invaders* (Arcade, 1978); **Image 4 (right).** *Ikaruga* (Arcade, 2001)

Image 5. *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night* gameplay showing danmaku bullet patterns.

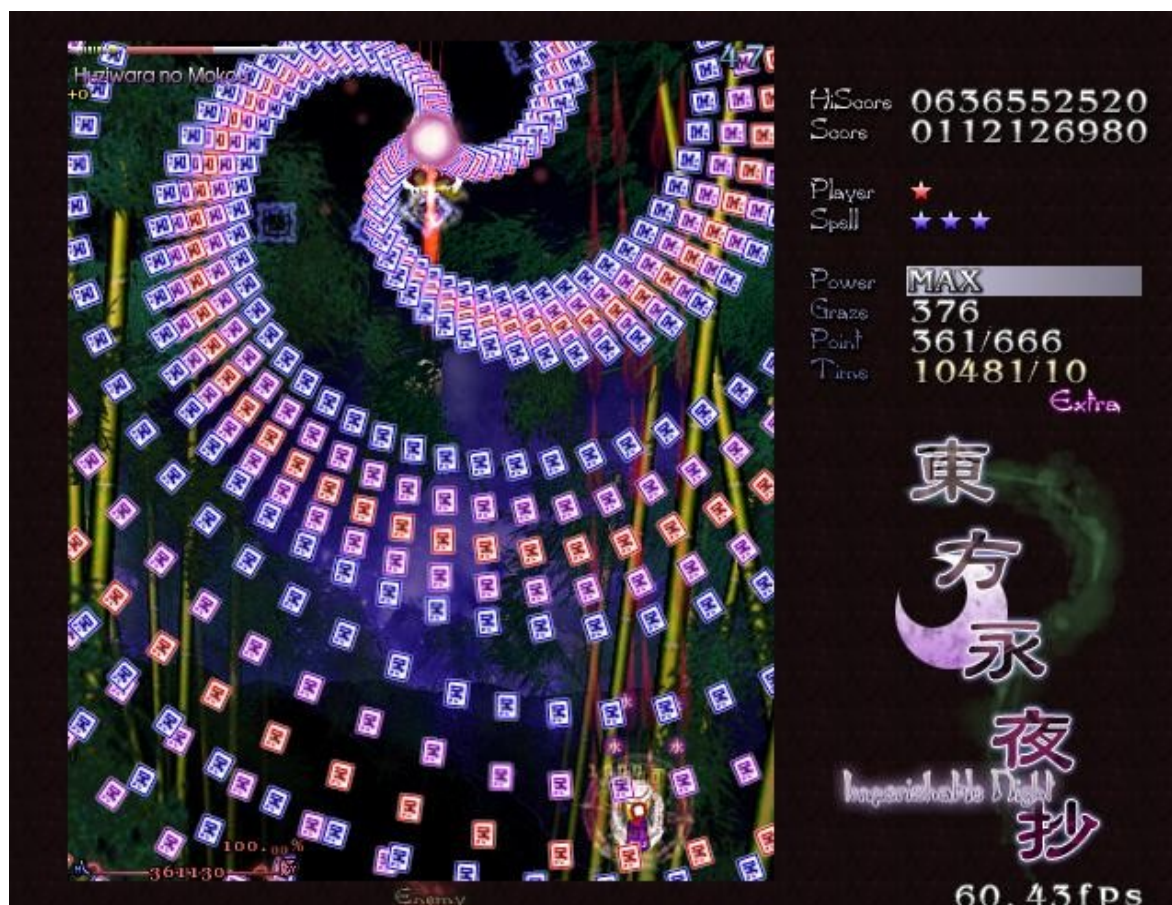**Image 6.** *Touhou Project 08: Imperishable Night* gameplay showing danmaku bullet patterns.

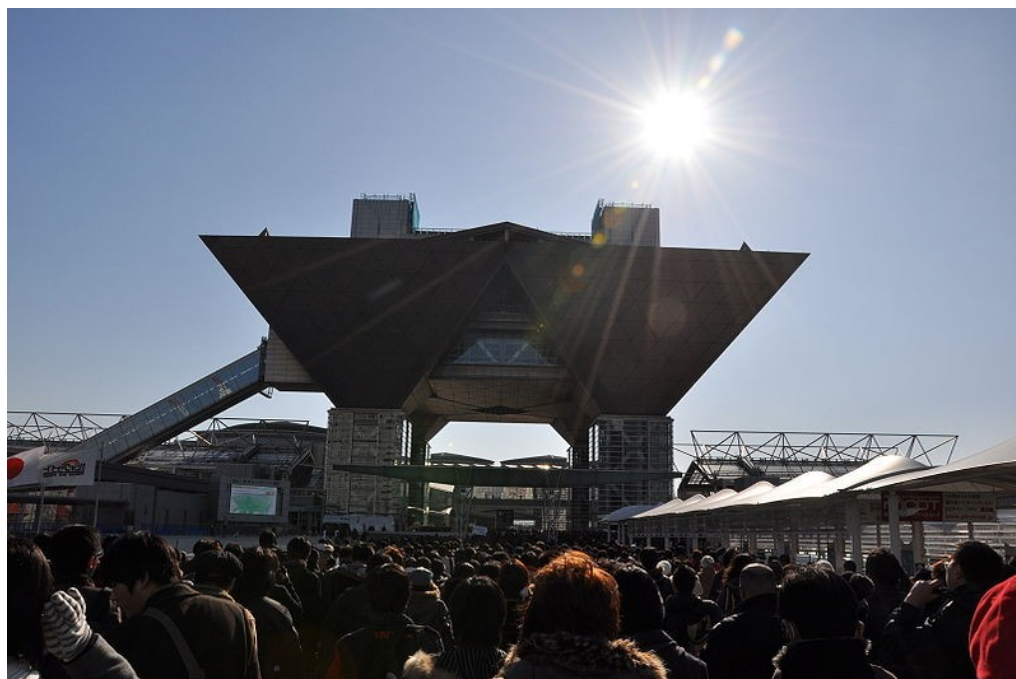**Image 7.** Crowds at Comiket 77 in 2009 (Image by Shiken, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Comiket77.jpg)

Image 8. Reimu Hakurei's design from Touhou Project 01 through 13.

Image 9. Touhou Project characters from games 1 through 9.
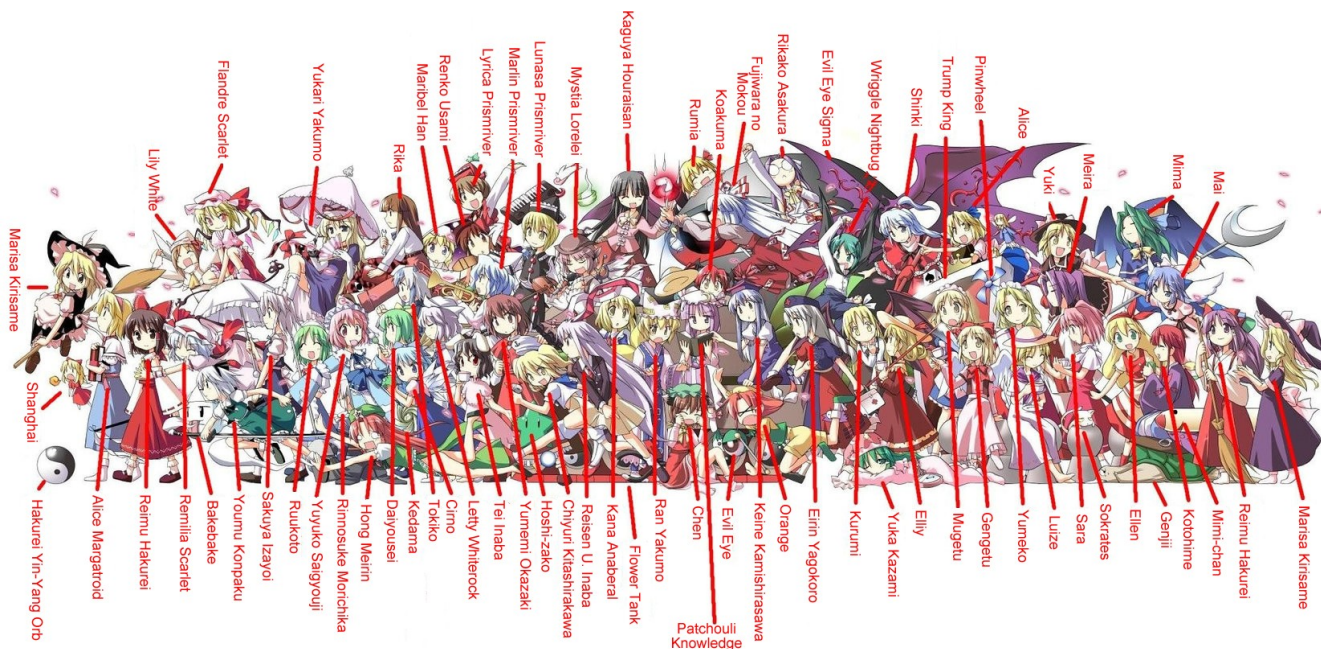
Image 10 (left). Example of Traditional Lolita Style (photo from WikiMedia Commons http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black_lolita.jpg);

Image 11 (right) Example of "Wa Rori" or Eastern (i.e. Japanese) Lolita Style (photo by iriseyes at WikiMedia Commons http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Waloli.JPG).

Image 12. *Scarlet Weather Rhapsody* gameplay.

Image 13 - 14. Official Touhou Project Merchandise.

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Touhou Project 10.5: Scarlet Weather Rhapsody (PC), Tasogare Frontier/Team Shanghai Alice/Tasogare Frontier/Team Shanghai Alice, 2007.

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