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Toshio's Movie Castle: A Historical Overview of Studio Ghibli's Collaboration and Promotional Strategies

Shiro Yoshioka

I believe that the uniqueness of Studio Ghibli lies in the fact that it is successful in maintaining both 'quality of the content [of its films]' and 'commercial success.' However great works one continues to create with great ambition, in a country like Japan where the government is not particularly interested in protecting film industry, by simply doing that [creating good films with high ambition], one cannot keep creating films for a long time due to financial difficulties in maintaining the business.

— Toshio Suzuki, Producer, Studio Ghibli
(Suzuki 1996: 130)

Why are 'Ghibli films' so popular both in and outside Japan? One very simple possible answer to the question is: the films are aesthetically and thematically superb. That may well be true. However, at the same time, it is only half true. As Suzuki Toshio, the producer for Studio Ghibli says in his essay quoted above, however great 'Ghibli films' are, they did not become Japan's, and even the world's, favourite simply because of their aesthetic and thematic splendour. Unlike typical TV animation that is often created under strictly restricted schedule and budget, films created by Ghibli are high profile, high stake features that are prepared over years and with a budget of hundreds of millions of yen. As such, the films, just like any other products, need to be promoted and sold so that the studio can make profit and keep the business running. There also have to be sponsors. We have to note that the studio has its own mechanism to finance, promote and sell its films, and that there is a man by the name of Suzuki Toshio who is responsible for that mechanism. As discussed throughout this article, it is not that Suzuki developed some kind of revolutionary mechanism to sell films or he is the only person responsible for making important decisions on the studio. However, he did play crucial role at key moments of the studio by establishing connections with companies and people in and outside the film industry. He asked for and/or followed their advice and as discussed in detail below, that greatly contributed to commercial success of Ghibli films. Therefore, it hardly is an overstatement to say that without Suzuki, the studio would not be as successful as it is, or it might not even have come into existence because as

detailed in the next section of this article, he is the person who played a crucial role in founding the studio by liaising between the creators and the sponsors as well as undertaking practical work for establishing the studio as a company.

This article will examine how Suzuki developed promotional strategies for Studio Ghibli. Knowing about his strategies as well as his background, especially his link with publishing house Tokuma shoten, will enable us to understand key factors that contributed to current fame of the studio, besides the quality of its products. Suzuki has spoken and written extensively about history of Ghibli as well as himself. This article will follow Suzuki's career chronologically, mainly using his interviews and essays few of which are available in English. This approach will allow us to only look at 'official' history as it is presented by Ghibli and Suzuki. However, due to paucity of materials by Suzuki in English, at this stage I believe it is important for those who do not read or speak Japanese to have access to such 'official' history so that it can be developed into further research on the subject. The article will consist of three sections: the first one will overview Suzuki's personal background, how he came to work with Miyazaki and Takahata, and his contribution to founding of the studio. The second section will be on his early days at Ghibli up to *Majo no takkyūbin/Kiki's Delivery Service* (Miyazaki, 1989). It is in this period that Suzuki learned significance of marketing as a way to allow creators to continue to create films and built up the system of promoting the studio's films by active use of tie-in campaigns and association with other media companies, especially television station Nippon terebi hōsōmō (Nippon Television Network Corporation, hereafter NTV). The third section will focus on development in the 1990s. I will argue that the phenomenal success of *Mononokehime/Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, 1997) owes much the massive promotion campaign and strategic 'occupation' of cinemas all over Japan planned by Suzuki.

The early days

Suzuki's link with anime/manga as well as film in general began in his childhood. His love and knowledge of these media would eventually lead him to Ghibli as seen in brief description of his life below. He was born in Nagoya in 1948. His family owned a business that produced and sold clothes. The family was upper-middle class. The Suzukis were the second family to have a TV set in their neighbourhood. Suzuki's parents liked films, and they often took him to cinema. While his mother preferred western films, father liked Japanese ones. His father was also good at drawing pictures and liked manga. Suzuki recalls that his father bought many manga magazines and piled them up in a room, so Suzuki often got into the room since when it was still dark and

spent the whole day there. (Suzuki 2011: 227-230)

After graduating from Keiō University, Suzuki joined publishing house Tokuma shoten in 1972. He wrote various articles about topics ranging from gossip and scandals to social and political issues for weekly magazine *Asahi geinō*. He was also involved in a short-lived manga magazine *Komikku & komikku/Comic & Comic*. As an editor, he worked closely with many manga artists and also film directors who wrote plots for some of the manga in the magazine. Although he enjoyed writing for the weekly magazine, he was forced to leave the editorial office after he had a personal conflict with his boss: he and Suzuki often had conflicts and one day, he told Suzuki to interview eight people with the deadline on the next day. Suzuki told him that it was impossible to finish in time by himself and asked for an assistant. The boss simply said ‘Okay, so you cannot do this by yourself’ and stopped asking him to do any work since then. (Suzuki 2013a: 65-82)

He then joined editorial board of a magazine *Terebi rando/TV Land*. The magazine was for children mainly featuring heroes of TV shows and anime, but it was not selling well. Hideo Ogata, the chief editor of the magazine, tried various ways to boost the sales. One of them was to publish a series of extra volumes focusing on a single anime series targeting slightly older readers. The series was titled *Roman arubamu/Roman Album*, and the first volume was on the hugely popular anime franchise *Uchūsenkan Yamato/Space Battleship Yamato*. The series turned out to be successful, and still continues today. (Ogata 2004: 13-15, 23-24, 44-47) Having realized how popular anime was, Ogata decided to publish a magazine specializing in anime, which would be later named *Animage/Animēju*, and Suzuki embarked on the project. However, although he liked manga, Suzuki had no knowledge of anime. To write articles for the inaugural issue of the magazine and learn about anime, he met three high school girls Ogata knew. The girls told Suzuki about anime including popular works at the time and also classics. One of the classics they mentioned was Isao Takahata’s *Taiyō no ōji Horusu no daibōken/Horus: Prince of the Sun* (1968). Before he could see the film, he decided to interview Takahata as well as Miyazaki, who also worked on the film, because very little time was left before the deadline for the article. Suzuki’s first impression of the two men was that they were ‘weirdos’: Takahata, talking for an hour over the phone, told Suzuki why he did not want to have the interview, and Miyazaki, on the other hand, insisted that he have sixteen pages for the interview. (Suzuki 2013a: 92) Upon seeing the film, however, Suzuki was captivated. He later said that the film changed life. (Suzuki 2013a: 94) He recalled that he was surprised because Takahata had created a cartoon film with the Vietnam War in mind. (Suzuki 2013a: 93) Thus, the long

association between Suzuki as well as Tokuma shoten and the two directors began. As a consequence, the August 1981 issue of *Animage* became the first magazine to feature Miyazaki. The issue sold 320,000 copies while the average of issues up to July in the year was 270,000. (Ogata 2004: 147) Furthermore, the manga version of *Kaze no tani no Naushika/Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* by Miyazaki began in the February 1982 issue of the magazine. Miyazaki has jokingly recalled that he was persuaded into serializing the manga after repeatedly talking with Suzuki and Mitsuru Kameyama, another editor of *Animage*, because he felt obliged for the coffee they bought for him at every meeting. (Miyazaki 2013: 92)

The manga turned out to be very popular. The sales of the issue of *Animage* in which *Nausicaa* started jumped up by 20,000 copies from the previous month. (Ogata 2004: 163) Encouraged by the reaction, Ogata began to think of the possibility of making the manga into a short film. Yasuyoshi Tokuma, the president of Tokuma shoten, was keen to expand his business beyond print media by collaborating with other audio and visual media companies, so he supported the project. Eventually the project grew into a feature film and was released in 1984. Ever since, Tokuma shoten has continued to be involved in production of films by Miyazaki and Takahata, and once Ghibli was established, maintained close link with the studio by publishing various print and audio materials. While it was Ogata and Tokuma who actually made decisions, the link between Takahata, Miyazaki and Tokuma shoten would have not existed unless Suzuki ‘discovered’ them in the first place.

Suzuki played some important roles in the production of the film version of *Nausicaa*. For example, Miyazaki insisted that Takahata be the producer of the film, but Takahata kept on refusing. Since Suzuki followed production of a film by Takahata in 1981 for *Animage*, Suzuki basically ‘met him every day.’ (Suzuki 2013a: 106) Seeing Miyazaki burst into tears one evening saying that while he had devoted everything to Takahata in his youth when they were colleagues at Tōei animation studio, Takahata did nothing for him, Suzuki did something he never did again: he, shouted at Takahata, blaming Takahata for deserting his best friend when Miyazaki needed help. As a result, Takahata finally agreed to be the producer. (Suzuki 2013a: 114-115) Suzuki also helped Takahata as the producer in finding animators and asking Tokuma shoten for more funds. (119)

Additionally, Suzuki influenced the content of *Nausicaa*. In Miyazaki’s original story board, the ending of the story was different from what it is now in the film. Instead of Nausicaa being hit by rampaging Ōmu, the story ends abruptly when Nausicaa lands in front of them. Suzuki found the ending unnatural and discussed it with Takahata, who agreed with the view. Eventually they concluded that the ending should be changed to

what it is now, and persuaded Miyazaki. (Suzuki 2014a: 48) Suzuki continued to have some influence on the themes and content of the studio's films, especially those by Miyazaki and Takahata, including Miyazaki's *Kaze tachinu/The Wind Rises* (2013). It was Suzuki who persuaded Miyazaki to create a film on the Zero fighter and its designer. (Suzuki 2014a, 213-214) In the case of Miyazaki's *Mononokehime/Princess Mononoke* (1997), Suzuki even changed the title of the film from *Ashitaka sekki* as originally proposed by Miyazaki without his consent. (Suzuki 2014a: 86-87; Miyazaki 2002: 169; Miyazaki and Yōrō 2002: 38-39)

The completed film of *Nausicaa* brought 915,000 audience members to cinemas earning 742 million yen. (Kanō 2006: 65) However, at this stage, Suzuki claims he was not interested in commercial success of the film because all he cared about was to simply create the film. (Suzuki 2013a: 124) As discussed in the next section, his attitude remained the same until he actually confronted the possibility that Miyazaki and Takahata could no longer create films due to their lack of commercial success. He was not active in promoting the film, either. Promotion and advertising were left for advertising agency Hakuhōdō, which funded the project together with Tokuma shoten, and Meijā, an agency specializing in promotion of films. It was from *Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta/Castle in the Sky* (Miyazaki, 1985) that Suzuki began to pay more attention to promotion and funding.

Foundation of Ghibli and strategies for promotion

The next film Miyazaki created was *Castle in the Sky*. Tokuma shoten was eager to fund the project. However, the problem with the film was that there was no animation studio which Miyazaki could use as his base. The studio that had created *Nausicaa* was no longer in business. Takahata, who agreed to be the producer again, and Suzuki asked various studios they knew for cooperation, only to be rejected. Eventually, Takahata decided that the best solution would be to found a new studio to be owned by Tokuma shoten. (Suzuki 2013b: 55-56; Studio Ghibli 2013a: 33) Suzuki, representing the editorial board of *Animage*, proposed Takahata's decision to Yasuyoshi Tokuma. Tokuma approved the proposal, and Suzuki undertook the practical work for founding the studio, such as converting a company owned by Tokuma shoten that only existed on paper into Studio Ghibli, and finding an actual building to be used as the studio. (Studio Ghibli 2013a: 33; Suzuki 2013b: 56-57) Again, it was Takahata and Tokuma who made the actual decision. However, had there not been for the connection between them, which owes to Suzuki, in the first place, Studio Ghibli as we know it today may not have existed at all.

It was since *Castle in the Sky* that Suzuki began to be involved in the process of promotion and negotiation with sponsors. Working together with Takahata, Suzuki recalls learning tips on dealing with tie-in partners. One particularly important lesson was that the rights to use materials from the film including the characters in advertisements and other materials for tie-in should be strictly under control of the studio and creator rather than the partner companies. For *Castle in the Sky*, Toshiba and food company Ajinomoto became tie-in partners. Toshiba produced a ‘*Rapyuta* [the original Japanese title of *Castle in the Sky*] version’ hi-fi system and Ajinomoto sold a juice drink named ‘*Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*,’ exactly the same as the title of the film. In the first contract they presented to Takahata, these companies had the rights to use any materials from the film freely in their advertisements. Takahata, however, did not accept the item in the contract. Instead, he only allowed them to use the logo of the film. Suzuki later recalled that ‘that was the first time that I learned what a contract is all about.’ (Suzuki 2013a: 133) The actual advertisements for the juice drink featured live-action footage or photographs with two actors in outfits resembling the main characters’ sitting in a flying machine that, again, was similar to the one seen in the film.

Another lesson Suzuki learned through the experience of working with these companies was that he should not accept any funds from tie-in partners. For *Castle in the Sky*, the two partners also paid part of the production cost of the film when Tokuma shoten fell short. However, as Suzuki sees it, depending on these partners as sponsors can compromise the authority of the creator and the studio over the use of materials in advertisements and lead to a risk of advertisements that are totally different from the actual film being made simply for promotion of the tie-in products rather than the film itself. Actually in the case of *Nausicaa*, promoting the title of the film was prioritized, and as a result, there were a number of collaborations that had nothing to do with the actual content of the film. For example, advertising agency Hakuhōdō organised a campaign titled ‘Nausicaa Girl.’ This was a public audition for a young female *aidoru* who would sing the theme song of the film. Out of 7,611 applications, Yasuda Narumi was chosen, but her song titled *Kaze no tani no Naushika/Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* was never used in the film. (Kanō 2006: 63) Takahata was disdainful about the campaign because it totally ignored the actual content of the film. (Komatsubara 1984: 66) Takahata’s rejection of the contract for *Castle in the Sky* can be because of this previous experience.

The decision not to allow the tie-in partners to use materials from the film, however, was problematic because it curtailed the possibilities regarding the promotion of the

tie-in products and the film. The juice drink did not sell well even though it was released in summer, the best season for sales of soft drinks. (Suzuki 2005: 92) The film itself was not as successful as *Nausicaa*, either. The audience numbers and revenue fell to 775,000 and 583 million yen respectively. (Studio Ghibli 2013a: 46) The experience left strong impression on Suzuki. Later when Suzuki began to establish strategies for promotion of films after establishment of Ghibli, he made it clear that tie-in projects for Ghibli films would not involve any exchange of funds, and while the tie-in partners are allowed to use materials from the films, the way they are used is strictly controlled by the studio. (Studio Ghibli 2013a: 46) In the next section we will see how that works, using *Kiki's Delivery Service* as an example.

Establishment of the 'Ghibli method': *Kiki's Delivery Service*

The double bill of Miyazaki's *Tonari no Totoro/My Neighbor Totoro* and Takahata's *Hotaru no haka/Grave of the Fireflies* (1987), the second project by the studio, was marginally more successful than *Castle in the Sky* with audience figures of 801,000 and 588 million yen of revenue. However, the figures account for two films rather than one. (Studio Ghibli 2013b, 37) One significant development for *Totoro* was the creation of character merchandise. The popularity of *Totoro* surged after the screening was over. One of the reasons was the stuffed toys of the main character Totoro, which were first sold in 1988. These were originally displayed in cinemas before the film was released. They turned out to be popular, and a division of Tokuma shoten mass-produced them. (Kanō 2006: 125) In 1989, the film was shown on TV for the first time as a part of promotion for *Majo no takkyūbin/Kiki's Delivery Service* (Miyazaki, 1989), as discussed in a moment. In the programme, thirty stuffed toys of Totoro were given to the viewers after a draw which attracted more than 300,000 entries. (Anon. 1989: 38) The merchandise contributed to popularity of the film, but it was not an integral part of promotion campaign. Although these toys helped to ameliorate the deficits from the production, Suzuki was, and still is, determined that 'the film comes first, then the merchandises' and 'the content [of the film] should never be changed for the sake of [selling] merchandise.' (Suzuki 2014a: 84) He even says that he was careful so that the sales of merchandises stay within a certain limit of overall sale of products of the studio because Ghibli is a company made to sell films more than anything else. (Suzuki 2014a: 243)

As a result of continuous decline in audience numbers and revenue at cinemas across the first two projects by Ghibli, by the time the studio embarked on its third project *Kiki's Delivery Service*, there was scepticism within the film industry on the outlook of

the studio. As Suzuki famously and repeatedly recollects, one producer at the distributor Tōei told him that *Kiki* would be the last film for Miyazaki, and the company agreed to distribute the film only because Japanese logistics giant Yamato un'yu was backing the project. (Kajiyama 2004: 30-31) Even after *Totoro*, Suzuki 'did not care even if [the film] did not attract the audience as long as we could make something confidently.' (Suzuki 2013a: 158) However, the remark by the Tōei producer upset and infuriated him. Suzuki was now determined to make the film commercially successful. He turned to TV station Nippon terebi hōsōmō (NTV), asking for sponsorship because he simply believed that involving a TV station would make the film more successful. (Suzuki 2013a: 158)

NTV already had a link with Tokuma shoten. In the early 1980s the station bought the right to broadcast Miyazaki's first feature film *Rupan III sei: Kariosutoro no shiro/Lupin III: Castle of Cagliostro* (1979). Whenever the film was shown on NTV, the viewing rate was always over 20 per cent, which is remarkably high for Japanese television programme. Later, Tokuma shoten, under initiative of Ogata, negotiated with NTV for the exclusive rights for broadcasting *Nausicaa* and also *Castle in the Sky*. NTV agreed to buy both films, and they boasted high viewing rates once put on the small screen. (Yokoyama 2004: 289-290) One important reason for Tokuma shoten to approach NTV for broadcasting rights for *Nausicaa* was that, unlike other stations that insisted the films be shown from 7pm assuming that the main audience would be children, NTV offered to show the film from 9pm. The decision was right because when the film was broadcast, it succeeded in appealing to adult audiences, and the viewing rate of the first broadcast was as high as 16 per cent. (Kajiyama 2004: 33) The convention of broadcasting Ghibli films from 9pm still continues today. Based on these successes, NTV readily accepted the sponsorship proposal for *Kiki*, joining Tokuma shoten and Yamato un'yu. It still remains as one of the sponsors and an important player in promoting Ghibli films to this day.

The first thing Suzuki did at NTV, prompted by Seiji Okuda, the man responsible for promotion of the film at NTV, was to meet various directors and producers within the station, giving away merchandise from previous Studio Ghibli films. At the time, within the TV station, it was only young directors who knew Miyazaki's name. Therefore, it was necessary to promote the film to various other people within the station so that they would cooperate in promoting the film during their programmes. (Okuda 2015a: 53)

The strategy for actually promoting the film on television devised by Okuda was simple but extensive and rigorous. The campaign was mainly three-fold:

- Continuous exposure: Having a girl dressed as Kiki, the protagonist of the film, stand behind the broadcaster in the station's daily live morning show *Zūmu in!! Asa!/Zoom in!! Morning!* for six months up to the release of the film¹
- Special programmes on the film and Miyazaki: A programme consisting of interviews with young girls of the age of the protagonist including Suzuki's daughter, to find out what they feel about their lives, as well as a fly-on-the-wall documentary about the production of the film
- *Denpa jakku* (Hijacking of the airwaves): Promoting the film in every possible programme all day as well as showing past films by Miyazaki.

(Okuda 2015a: 52)

In addition, Miyazaki appeared on NTV's news shows for interviews. Campaigns were also held outside Tokyo, where the station is based, because as with all other Japanese TV stations, NTV has a string of *keiretsu* or affiliated TV and radio stations all over the country. For example, Miyazaki, along with Suzuki and Okuda, did a tour of Nagoya, Osaka and Fukuoka, wherein Miyazaki appeared in regional programmes for TV and radio as well as having interviews with newspapers and magazines. He also appeared in *Zūmu in!! Asa!* while he was in Fukuoka. (Okuda 2015a: 52-55)

The tie-in advertising was further developed from *Castle in the Sky*. Unlike the previous film, advertisements for *Kiki* did feature screen captures from the film. The advertisement by Yamato un'yu, for example, carries a picture captured from the film where the protagonist Kiki and her cat Jiji are looking out of a window. However, the accompanying text makes no direct reference to the film apart from the very last sentence that says '*Yamato un'yu wa Majo no takkyūbin no seisaku ni sankā shite imasu* (Yamato un'yu sponsors production of *Kiki's Delivery Service*).' At the bottom of the advertisement are the title of the film and credits for the director, the author of the original book and sponsors placed side by side with corporate logo of Yamato un'yu. The main copy at the top as well as the rest of the text emphasizes how caring and humane the services provided by the logistics company were, as if a mother cat cares for her kittens, alluding to the logo of the company featuring a black cat carrying its kitten and also Jiji the black cat in the film. In *Castle in the Sky*, the title of the film was given to the juice drink and used simply to publicise the name of the film and also to boost the sales of the drink if the film turned out to be popular. However, the content of the film was not reflected either in the product itself or advertisements. In *Kiki*, on the other hand, at the nexus of the advertisements was the image – caring and warm – associated with the logistics company and the film.

This type of campaign became a regular feature of ensuing Ghibli films. Suzuki states that the tie-in partners are willing to run campaigns that actively promote the fact that the partners are in support of Ghibli and its projects rather than simply promote their own products using the film as a catalyst. According to him, that is because the general public in Japan has a very strong positive image about the studio's films, and by announcing that they are in support of the films, the tie-in partners can also associate themselves with the image of the films and the studio. (Suzuki 1996: 130) *Kiki* became the most successful film of the year earning 2.17 billion yen with audiences of 2.64 million. (Studio Ghibli 2013c: 45) Together with *Totoro*, whose popularity surged after TV broadcast as a part of promotion for *Kiki*, the success of *Kiki's Delivery Service* firmly established the reputations of Miyazaki and the studio.

The 'Suzuki theory': *Princess Mononoke*

During production of *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Miyazaki was thinking about closing Studio Ghibli once the project was over because in his view, in three years after foundation or after completing three projects, members of staff at animation studio begin to lose passion for their work and 'enter a lethargic stage,' making both the studio itself and its creations become conservative. (Miyazaki 2014: 89) Hearing the idea, Suzuki opposed. After discussions, they decided that the studio would continue by employing animators as full-time employees of the studio rather than on contract only for the periods of production. To fully support the studio, Suzuki quit Tokuma shoten and joined the studio as the producer. (Studio Ghibli 2014: 49-50, 52) As a result, Suzuki now began to fully and solely engage with the studio rather than a go-between for the studio and Tokuma shoten.

The strategies for promotion developed for *Kiki* were further enhanced in the films that followed. By the time of Miyazaki's *Mononokehime/Princess Mononoke*, Suzuki came to believe that the revenue from a film equals the amount of budget for publicity. (Okuda 2015b: 92) For the studio, *Mononoke* was a high-stakes and high-risk project because of its large budget of more than 2 billion yen. The break-even-point of the film was estimated to be at least 3.6 billion yen, which was well beyond 2.7 billion yen, the highest revenue for the studio's films made by Miyazaki's *Kurenai no buta/Porco Rosso* in 1992, thanks to, among other factors, extensive promotional campaign involving NTV, Tokuma shoten and the sponsor of the film Japan Air Lines. The campaign included an airship featuring the logo of the film and the sponsor as well as an image of the protagonist of the film flying over the Greater Tokyo area. (Studio Ghibli 2015: 30; Anon, 1996: 49) Suzuki decided to set a bold target. Before eventually raising the bar to

6 billion yen with an ambition to break the record of most successful film shown in Japan (5.7 billion), he was aiming at 5 billion yen and planned to run promotional campaigns that were worth the same amount. At a 'gasshuku' (training camp) in which stakeholders of the film stayed in accommodation owned by NTV for two days, Suzuki presented the details of his plan, indicating the breakdown as follows:

- Funds for publicity paid by the distributor Tōhō: 500 million yen
- Funds for publicity paid by the studio and other sponsors: 200 million yen
- Tie-in projects with Nippon Life Insurance Company: an equivalent of 1 billion yen
- Promotion of *Totoro* and *Mimi o sumaseba/Whisper of the Heart* (Kondō, 1995), two previous works of the studio sold by Buena Vista Home Entertainment as VHS/DVD
- Collaboration with newspapers the *Yomiuri shinbun* and *Sports Nippon*
- TV programmes on NTV and its regional associates as well as Japanese public broadcasting station NHK
- Collaboration with Tokuma shoten [to publish books, magazines and other print materials promoting the film, the studio and Miyazaki]
- Previews organized by another publishing house, Kōdansha, inviting 10,000 people through twenty seven magazines published by the company
- Publicity campaigns in music stores by Tokuma Japan Communications, the company responsible for selling CDs related to Ghibli
- Events at Takashimaya department stores
- Other publicity campaigns (Okuda 2015b: 91-92)

Under Suzuki's leadership most of these were materialized together with conventional promotional strategies including broadcast of past Ghibli films on NTV, a documentary following the production of the film which was eventually made into a programme to be sold as VHS/DVD and a promotional tour by Miyazaki and Suzuki to no less than 20 destinations around Japan. Newspapers and magazines carried numerous advertisements and feature articles during the period leading to the release. (Kanō 2006: 210) The total number of pages of magazine articles featuring the film reached 109. (Anon. 1997: 22) Suzuki was actively involved in the production of these advertisements by deciding the overall layout of the advertisements especially the size and position of the main copy. (Studio Ghibli 2002: 344)

While many of these promotional ideas began with *Kiki*, one notable addition is the

previews in association with publishing house Kōdansha. These were first organized for *Porco Rosso* by JAL, NTV, Tokuma shoten and Kōdansha, having no less than 32 previews in fifteen days in cities all over Japan. (Anon, 1996: 49) In an interview, Suzuki has explained that these previews were doubly effective because the audience would spread positive word of mouth and because they would function as publicity when the previews were announced on NTV programmes. (Suzuki 2014b: 54) For *Mononoke*, 130 previews were planned, but due to delay in production, there actually were 70. (Kanō 2006: 210) At the ‘camp,’ Suzuki also explained that if the distributor Tōhō cooperated so that *Mononoke* could be shown at its ‘best cinemas,’ that is to say prestigious, larger and conveniently located ones all over Japan, then the revenue would reach the target of 5 billion yen. (Okuda 2015b: 92)

Through the experience with *Porco Rosso* and Takahata’s *Heisei tanuki gassen ponpoko/Pom Poko* (1994), Suzuki became aware that besides promotion, the choice of cinemas and the duration of exhibition were essential factors for success of the studio’s films, especially when they were in competition with major foreign films. For example, the releases of both *Porco Rosso* and *Mononoke* coincided with the Japanese releases of Steven Spielberg films *Hook* (1991) and *Jurassic Park* (1993) respectively, and *Pom Poko* with Disney’s *The Lion King* (1994). In all cases, the Ghibli films beat the American ones. One significant factor for the victory was that the Ghibli films were shown at more prestigious cinemas for longer periods than their American competitors. Japanese cities outside Tokyo in the early 1990s often had two cinemas at most where films distributed by Tōhō were shown. One of them tended to be less prestigious and smaller than the other. Thanks to Fumio Nishino of Tōhō, who began to work closely with Suzuki in the late 1980s, from *Porco Rosso* onwards, Ghibli films were shown at the larger cinemas. (Suzuki 2013a: 176-177, 182-183) For *Mononoke*, Suzuki again asked Nishino whether it was possible to show the film in best cinemas in Japan, many of which had already been booked for *Jurassic Park*. The executives of Tōhō were skeptical about *Mononoke* because of its grave and complicated theme that was totally different from previous Miyazaki films but Nishino persuaded them to make a special arrangement for *Mononoke*. (Suzuki 2015: 69-70) In addition, by the time of *Mononoke*, cinema complexes were sprouting in Japan. The managers of these newer cinemas offered to show Ghibli films because the reputation of Miyazaki and Ghibli had already been firmly established. (Ichikawa, Ise, Okuda, Takai and Suzuki 2015: 13) Eventually, the film was opened in 260 cinemas in Japan out of 1,800 in total. (Kanō 2006: 211)

By the time the film was released, interest in *Mononoke* in Japan had already surged, also helped by Miyazaki’s suggestion that this would be his last film. Mieko Hara, a

designer at Tōhō working on newspaper advertisements for the film, recalls that she received phone calls from cinemas the evening immediately before the opening saying there were long queues outside the cinemas for advance tickets, even though the box offices were to be closed at seven, and that was something that had never happened before. (Studio Ghibli 2002: 345) The revenue for *Mononoke* easily achieved the target of 6 billion yen and eventually reached a staggering 11.3 billion yen to be the most successful film released in Japan at the time. (Studio Ghibli 2015: 49) The way *Mononoke* succeeded – a massive campaign making the full use of tie-in projects, previews and media coverage before release of the film leading to the heightening of interest for people for whom the names Ghibli and Miyazaki were already synonymous with high-quality animation features – indicates that the success of the film was not simply due to its content or technical achievement, but also to the success of previous Ghibli films and the massive promotional campaign that led to swelling expectation to the film.

Conclusion

After phenomenal success of *Mononoke*, Suzuki continued to coordinate promotion for Ghibli films as well as those from other studios such as Mamoru Oshii's *Inosensu/Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004). Miyazaki's *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi/Spirited Away* (2001) earned no less than 3.04 billion yen to be the most successful film shown in Japan as of 2016. Other Miyazaki films such as *Mononoke*, *Hauru no ugoku shiro/Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) and *Gake no ue no Ponyo/Ponyo* (2009) were among the ten most successful films shown in Japan until *Ponyo* was pushed out by another anime, Makoto Shinkai's *Kimi no na wa/Your Name* (2016) in 2016, and other Ghibli films such as *Kaze tachinu/The Wind Rises*, *Karigurashi no Arietti/Borrower Arietti* (Yonebayashi, 2010), *Gedo senki/Tales from Earthsea* (Miyazaki Gorō, 2006) and double bill of *Neko no ongaeshi/The Cat Returns* (Morita, 2002) and *Giburīzu episōdo 2/Ghiblies episode 2* (Momose, 2002) are among the 100 most successful films shown in Japan as of 2017, each ranked at eighteenth, 41st, 66th and 95th. (Kōgyō tsūshinsha, 2017) We should note that films by young and lesser known directors are also successful in terms of revenue, although not to the same degree as Miyazaki.

These films, however, were not necessarily well-received. For example, *Gedo senki*, the first film directed by Miyazaki's son Miyazaki Gorō, was severely criticized both in and outside Japan. A newspaper and two magazines in Japan (newspaper *Supōtsu hōchi*, weekly magazine *Shūkan bunshun* and film magazine *Eiga hihyō*) named the film as the

worst one shown in Japan in that year. Ursula K. Le Guin, the author of the original novel, also commented that the film was ‘quickly made,’ ‘exciting’ but ‘incoherent,’ ‘[t]he imagery is effective but often conventional’ and ‘does not have the delicate accuracy of "Totoro" or the powerful and splendid richness of detail of "Spirited Away."' (Le Guin, 2006)

These examples indicate that current ‘popularity’ of Ghibli films in Japan is not necessarily and simply owing to their quality as film but the name of Ghibli as a brand. As I attempted to show in this article, the brand was established not solely by excellent works by Miyazaki and Takahata as auteurs *per se*, but their commercial success that owes greatly to the strategies to sell films devised by Suzuki since the 1980s as well as the quality of the films. Suzuki, as much as, or in some aspects even more than, Takahata and Miyazaki, contributed to building and developing Ghibli, the castle in ‘The Kingdom of Dreams and Madness,’ as Sunada Mami (2013) called it.

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¹ For more details on this programme, see A. Painter (1996), "Japanese daytime television, popular culture and ideology". John Treat (ed.), *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.197-234.