

Comparing and Contrasting the Samurai Gintoki and Hijikata Personalities from *Gintama*

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ABSTRACT

The mask or persona will be discussed in the first subchapter. Gintoki and Hijikata both have a mask that they wear to show to other people or society. Gintoki's persona is lazy, childish, and cowardly since his motivation is to live a carefree life, free of obligations, and to project an image that others will not hold high expectations of him. Behind every façade is their genuine personality, which they prefer not to project. The shadow will be discussed in the second subchapter. Their repressed feelings and flaws are contained in the shadow. I will also go through how each character's shadow works. Gintoki's shadow is his guilt about killing his own teacher as a result of being forced to make some difficult decisions. Whereas Hijikata's shadow is regret of being unable to save his brother. The findings are that a human psyche is complex, and each has his different causes and outcomes.

Keywords: samurai, persona, shadow, anima, animus, personality

INTRODUCTION

The word anime is a word used to describe Japanese animation works. Anime is an animation with a combination of vibrant colors, bright graphics and fantastic themes (Macwilliams, 2008). It represents Japanese history, hidden gems, and culture. The audience learns something about Japanese culture and worldview through anime. According to Roesch (2009) Japanese used anime to promote their homeland to the world by using some criteria which are identifiable (showing Japan's culture), well-known locations that have been shot in the anime itself (reachable to tourists). The popularity of the anime has been rising since the early 20s. Anime has established itself as a mainstream genre of its own and has secured a place on the global stage. Some of the giant streaming services have already invested in broadcasting anime such as Netflix, HBO max, and Crunchyroll (an anime streaming service based in the US). According to Jozuka (2019), the writer of the article from CNN, a total of 100 million households worldwide watched at least one anime title on Netflix from October 2019 to September 2020, and it has increased about 50% between 2019 and 2020. The attention garnered by anime has resulted in a renewed interest in the Far East, and it makes Japan a popular tourist destination.

When we are talking about Japanese anime, we cannot ignore Hideaki Sorachi, an author and illustrator who is well-known for his work entitled *Gintama*. Hideaki Sorachi has illustrated a lot of anime series and titles such as *Dandelion*, *Bankara*, and *Shirokuro*. Unfortunately as I research further, Hideaki Sorachi is an introverted person. He is really good at making one-shot manga or comics but his most famous work of all time is none other than *Gintama*.

Gintama is an action, science fiction, and comedy Japanese manga and anime series illustrated by Hideaki Sorachi. Set in Edo era, which has been conquered by aliens named Amanto, the plot follows life from the point of view of samurai Sakata Gintoki, who works as a freelancer alongside

his friends and Hijikata Toshiro the chief of the Shinsengumi or the police department. At first *Gintama* was rejected and canceled, but because being a manga artist has been his passion since fourth grade of elementary school, Sorachi developed a new set of characters in *Gintama*. So Sorachi began to improvise the manga version of *Gintama* because it is actually the shorter version of the anime version to match both storylines. As of 2016, *Gintama* was sold for almost 55 million copies in print making it the biggest sales of a comic book in Japan at that time. As the popularity continued to rise, Sorachi still continued to create *Gintama* manga and anime versions from 2006 until now.

The anime takes place in an alternate-history of the Edo era or Samurai period in Japan where Japan was still ruled by Daimyo or a Shogun at that time. Amanto (an alien race), has invaded planet earth and Japan was taken over by the aliens. The shogun makes a deal to stop this war, to ban swords on earth and allow aliens to enter Edo city. One man, Sakata Gintoki, the main character of the series, still has a heart of a samurai although he has some other personalities that are different from the samurai values. Gintoki runs the "Yorozuya" which means a freelance jack of all trades job or people usually called it odd jobs. With the help of his two subordinates and an oversized dog, even bigger than Gintoki, his business flourishes because of many reasons. Other main character is the vice-commander of the police department or usually called "Shinsengumi" and also a samurai, Hijikata Toshiro. Hijikata is pictured as a handsome man with gunmetal styled eyes and short dark green hair. Gintoki and Hijikata later often clash with each other due to their similar personalities but when they get serious, it can cause some big outcomes.

Gintoki's first main persona is lazy. This is what makes him and the series so popular, his laziness sometimes leads to something humorous, often spending his free time lounging on a couch while reading a comic named "jump" or sometimes doing nothing. Combined with poverty, he is always late to pay his rent to his landlady and often spends his money on his oversized dog and gambling. When the landlady comes to him and collects the payment, he usually runs off. Despite being 27 years old, he has many childish personality traits, and has even called himself a "child in a man's body." One such trait is his insatiable love for sweets, which has placed him at risk of getting diabetes several times. He loves alcohol, but his tolerance for sake is not high. At one point, his tendency to act like a complete idiot while being completely smashed by some major female characters. He's also sarcastic and unattached but he values connections more than anyone in the series. The other trait is he is afraid of ghosts and other supernatural beings, but he often denies their existence to make him not look like a loser. His fear of the supernatural is shared by Hijikata and usually results in quite a few comic interactions between the two.

Different from Gintoki, Hijikata Toshiro or usually called Toshi is feared by both his enemies and his underlings. Hijikata, typically known as the Demonic Vice-Commander, is very strict and dedicated to his work. Due to having to endure being hated by his other family members for being an illegitimate son, being indebted to his older brother, and having no place to belong, Hijikata was an outsider. Despite this, he never stopped moving forward and aimed to become stronger because of the deep regret stemming from his being unable to save his brother and protect the ones he loves. Hijikata has a strong sense of pride, often seen from the series that he is trying to cover his mistakes with something else. Above all he is a samurai judging from his outside, he also has some minor traits that Gintoki has.

Since Gintoki has his laziness and Hijikata has his diligent, strict, and fierce personality, the anime adapted samurai as one of their themes and the character that I am going to analyze to prove that samurai must act in a certain way. They have some sort of image that they put in people's minds.

According to Kenneth G. Henshal (1999), samurai of the past are popular for its image of loyalty and courage. He also mentioned that samurai are also called “Koha”. “Koha” was the Japanese term for samurai male in the past. “Koha” should portray *gaman* (endurance), *makoto* (sincerity), *isshin* (single-minded commitment), and selflessness when carrying out their responsibilities (Henshal, 1999). According to those requirements, most people imagined as a “Koha” or male samurai traditionally could bear hardships, should show action instead of talking and thinking, and focus on doing their duties (Henshal, 1999). These are several samurai characteristics that were implemented on samurai in the past.

In this research, I want to compare and contrast both Gintoki and Hijikata from the Gintama anime series because I notice they both have a different dark past, background, and they both are samurai, but they live a different life from each other. Gintoki lives a carefree life while Hijikata is a more brave, risk taker samurai.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of this chapter, I will discuss the analysis and the findings of Gintoki and Hijikata personalities using the persona and the shadow. Gintoki’s persona is lazy, childish, and cowardly because his motive is to live a carefree life, not tied to everything, and put an image to other people not to think of high expectations of him. Hijikata is built differently, he does not put on a certain persona but he is projecting his true self, which is a diligent and brave person. His motive is that he is actually a self-centered person.

The shadow contains their repressed feelings and shortcomings. I will also discuss the effect of each character shadow. Gintoki’s shadow is his guilt of killing his own teacher, due to being given some difficult choices. The effect made him become an alcoholic maniac and gambling addiction, in order to forget his guilt. Whereas Hijikata’s shadow is his regret of being unable to save his brother due to some bandits killing his brother.

Gintoki’s Persona

Gintoki’s persona that can be seen from the outside is that he is very lazy, often seen in the series that he is lounging around even when he works. This laziness of Gintoki is one of his personality traits that makes him very funny in the series. One scene in the series shows him sitting in a bench park alone while he is on a voluntary job and picking his nose like a boss in front of a lot of people. This shows that Gintoki is lazy even when he does his job.

In society, he is also described as childish. He likes chocolate and even eats it everyday. Gintoki calls himself “A child in a man’s body”. He really loves sweets which sometimes risk him getting diabetes. His neighbor also calls him “the sweet man” because he is often seen eating some candy while sitting on his front porch. Gintoki chose to live a carefree life, to forget his dark past, and to die in peace one day.

Gintoki chose to live a carefree life because he wants to die in peace one day. He already experienced a gruesome war in his past and did not end up like those who fell during the war. He wishes to die in peace, surrounded by his loved ones. By living a carefree life, by the time he dies, he is not tied to anything, for example duties and responsibilities. In the end he can die with a happy

smile after he lives the way he wanted to live. Gintoki shows his carefree lifestyle because he does not want to lose his freewill. Gintoki acts carefree so that he is not given duties and responsibilities by people around him. People around him know and judge him as a child and immature person so that they are afraid of giving any responsibilities and duties to him. He wants to live a carefree life, therefore he chooses to put a lazy and childish persona so that other people do not have high expectations of him and give him responsibilities that he might not be able to fulfill.

Gintoki on the outside may act like a carefree person, but he is actually doing his job properly. It means he does the job in his own style because that way he can also enjoy doing his job. Gintoki is a person who does not like being tied to anything in the world. He just likes to live the way he wants to live. The carefree persona of Gintoki is just a diversion so that people know or look at him as a lazy and carefree person, but on the other side of his carefree personality is the act of doing his duties whether as a samurai or duty as a person doing his job and doing it his way.

Another personality that he shows as his persona is that he is a coward. He presents his persona as a coward in the scene to avoid casualties and also as a way of showing to show the bad guys that he is only a normal person. Gintoki also put a coward persona to hide his brave personality. Gintoki's cowardice is his way of showing that he is just a normal person, afraid of being killed. Thus, Gintoki is showing a cowardly persona to avoid any casualties when dealing with something dangerous. On the other side of his cowardice, he is actually brave when he finds injustice among people, like the examples previously mentioned.

Hijikata's Persona

Hijikata shows his persona as a diligent person (Sorachi). This is shown often in the series when he usually comes first to his workplace before everyone else, even his superior. He is not just diligent in arriving early, but he is also working his hardest to finish the job that was given to him. The reason why Hijikata is very diligent is because he has a self-motivation toward everything that he does, to become stronger. A diligent person always takes initiative to finish the task that was assigned rather than being told what to do, and he rather chooses to strive to achieve his goal than to take shortcuts. A diligent person also likes to learn new things along the way. This characteristic is also shown in Hijikata. For example, in episode 174 when the police department was chasing a group of drug dealers that escaped, Hijikata, as a police officer, diligently tried to get any information to catch them. The police department lost track of the drug dealers and Hijikata, as the leader of the search group was asking around the town searching for a lead. Since Hijikata was a diligent person and did not like any shortcuts, he asked every person that passed him one by one because he thought that it was the most reliable option at that time.

The contrast of Gintoki where he wants to live a peaceful life, Hijikata's motive in using a brave and diligent persona because he is actually a self-centered person. He put on those persona to show other people that he is a figure that everyone must follow, likes to give examples, like the term influencers in our world. He also has a high sense of pride, he likes to receive any compliments from other characters, but denies his own mistakes. He also has a feeling of being better than others.

Unlike Gintoki who shows a cowardly persona, Hijikata is a brave person. In this aspect, he is brave in every aspect of his life. In episode 92 in *Gintama* series when Hijikata fought against a group of ninja in the Tendoshu (ninja homeland), they were famous for their brutality and had been a fugitive for many years. Other Shinsengumi members were unable to track them down, but Hijikata managed to track down the group of ninja that wreaked havoc in his city and fought the leader of

the pack, Oboro. Hijikata also eliminated the other ninjas but before killing Oboro he was covered in bruises and slices. Hijikata bravery can be seen in knowing and taking responsibilities in what he does. He knows the consequences of his act, whether it's dead or blood. He knows that he will be getting slashes and bruises when fighting the leader, but instead of running from it he takes actions, which is to kill the leader whatever the cost.

His reason for being brave is to overcome any challenges, he knows that life is full of obstacles and with being brave, he rather chooses to take actions than just sit around. He believes that the key to success is to take chances and actions or else he loses an opportunity. In the end, this is what gives him a sense of pride and self-respect. The courage that he brings to his work that makes him successful and not just the fact that his job is to destroy the opponent. This is also resulted in his diligent persona, where I mentioned he likes to strive and does not like taking any shortcut. Even when he is faced with an obstacle or challenges along the way, he quickly thinks of a solution and a way out as part of his brave persona.

Another reason that Hijikata put on a brave persona is to erase the source of the problem. By being brave, searching for the source of the problem and killing that person sometimes needs courage to do, although it often leads to regrets in the future. However, Hijikata is presented differently, namely his persona is shown to be a brave person even to kill someone. Because Hijikata thought that by killing the sources of the problem, it ended the problem so that it would not happen again. He thinks further ahead not just for himself but for the sake of other people that suffer because of the source. By killing those sources of the problem, many people who get the impact would be free.

Gintoki's Shadow

Gintoki's shadow takes the form of guilt because killing his own teacher. Because of what he did to his teacher, he was left by his friend who fought with him during the war. During the war his teacher, Katsura, and Takasugi were captured by the terrorists. Gintoki eventually met up with them and negotiated to save the three of them. However, he was forced to kill his teacher or his two friends by the terrorists. Previously, Gintoki's teacher had asked Gintoki to save his friends if he had to choose to kill his friends or his teacher. Gintoki had promised to his teacher that he had to save his friends. between his own teacher and his friends (Takasugi and Katsura) to save, otherwise they would both be killed by the terrorists. So, to keep his promises to his teacher, his final decision was to kill his own teacher in front of his friends.

The act of killing his own teacher leaves a deep feeling of guilt in Gintoki. This guilt caused negative consequences that built up his shadow. The consequences of the guilt were in the form of depression, detachment, nightmares, and demotivation. The negative consequences were materialized in self-destructive habits. His bad habits ruined his life. He turned into a miserable person who did not have a purpose in his life.

Gintoki's bad habits were the effect of his shadow. He became an alcoholic maniac. He usually drank until he got wasted. Sometimes he got drunk and in the morning he forgot everything that he did before. For example in episode 239 where he drank with his friends to celebrate new year eve, he drank until midnight and ended up sleeping next to a woman in the morning. He also gambled until he forgot to pay his rent and his co-workers' salary.

The outcome of all that bad habits is he usually pushes people away when he hits his bottom point. Many of Gintoki's childhood friends during the war rarely kept in touch with each other, especially

Katsura. Gintoki pushes him away because of ashamed of what he did in the past, killing his teacher. Katsura in the series often went to Gintoki's place to meet him, but Gintoki always refused to meet him. Katsura was ready to accept Gintoki's apology for killing his teacher because he knew that it was not on purpose, but in Gintoki's unconscious mind he felt regret for what he did.

Hijikata's Shadow

Hijikata's shadow mostly consists of his regret of being unable to save his brother from the bandits. Deep in his unconscious, he was actually a weak person when he was a teenager. Mostly he was protected by his older brother who became a father figure to him. His dark past occurred when the bandits killed his brother, and it became his shadow. His next dark past was due to the fact that he was rejected by society. In the following paragraphs, I am going to analyze Hijikata's shadow that was buried inside his unconscious mind.

Hijikata's first shadow grew from his dark past when his brother was assassinated by some bandits. Hijikata's inability to save his older brother when he was a kid was still intact in his mind. Hijikata was deeply feeling indebted to his older brother for raising and taking care of him after their parents died. Because of his strong bond with his brother and of his inability to save his brother from the bandits, Hijikata's shadow grew. This shadow was in the form of fear that the criminals might kill his close friends and the ones dear to him.

The effect of Hijikata's fear of bandits is building a close relationship between other characters, namely he feared of building close relationships especially with those dear to him. He had many friends at the police department, but he was actually very selective towards making friends due to his shadow. For example, a girl tried to confess her feelings to Hijikata. However, Hijikata rejected her due to his shadow. He was afraid that her life would not be the same, and there would be danger everywhere around him because he was a police officer. He was also told that she would live a normal life rather than having him around and live a happy life while she still could without him.

CONCLUSION

People's psyche is very complex and difficult to understand. Metaphorically, it is not just a layer of thin paper but it is a bulk of books that consists of heavy reading and we must understand it in order to understand ourselves. The conscious and the unconscious of a person is also a complex thing, and if we dig deeper into that psyche, we find our true selves. It lies in the deepest unconscious where we do not realize it was there from the start. Jung's concept of archetypes explained that our personality is built on a group of layers or parts. From the outside we know it as persona, moving a little bit deeper is our negative side which is the shadow, and lies under the shadow is our counterparts personality, the anima and animus.

The contrast of Gintoki and Hijikata personalities showed us that people have different sets of personalities. Their backgrounds also influenced their personalities too, dark past or happy past each comes with a different result. Many elements of human personality are hidden in the psyche. A human psyche could be either excellent or terrible. Personality can be pleasant or unpleasant depending on the circumstances. The readers will develop a greater understanding of how the unconscious in people's bodies functions and how it impacts their true personalities or psyche. Based on my investigation, I discovered that, despite being samurai, distinct personality types are

widespread in people's lives, just as Jung predicted. People have their unique histories and backgrounds, which define who they are now and in the future.

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