



Testing the Astolfo Effect on newly-released servants in *Fate/Grand Order*

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Back in 2021, we wrote an article defining the Astolfo Effect. That is what happens when a pop culture representation of a character (fictional or otherwise) becomes more popular than the original. We named it after Astolfo, one of Charlemagne's paladins and arguably an obscure character in the works that make up the *Matter of France* and in later literature related to it (such as *Orlando Furioso*, in which Astolfo plays an important role). Astolfo only achieved great popularity due to his incarnation in the light novel/manga/anime *Fate/Apocrypha* and the game *Fate/Grand Order* (henceforth FGO).

We won't explain what Fate is here because if you're reading this, chances are you are well-versed in this matter. If not, we'll refer you to our original article (Tomotani & Salvador, 2021), where you'll find the full story.¹

But to summarize the Astolfo Effect, we hypothesized that the most obscure characters (e.g., Astolfo and Bradamante) present in FGO would have more hits related to their Fate version on a Google Images search when compared to their original versions. Furthermore, those FGO-related

Google hits would appear sooner rather than later in the search. Conversely, widely popular characters (particularly in cinema and TV, such as Sherlock Holmes) would have fewer hits about their FGO incarnations and those would appear later in a Google search.

In our 2021 article, we have demonstrated that the Astolfo Effect is real. The article was well received on Reddit² and it was used as basis for a video on klidge's YouTube channel.³ As a result, we received several comments from our readers, some of whom proposed interesting ideas to further study this important subject. For instance, to verify how big and widespread the Astolfo Effect is and how fast it acts. So, this article, our dear reader, is one of such studies – a natural follow-up to our 2021 article.

THE ASTOLFO EFFECT IN REAL TIME

One of the suggestions we received⁴ was to investigate how fast Fate-related content would overtake the real deal in the results

¹ Really, it's a cool article, so go take a look: <https://jgeekstudies.org/2021/12/28/the-astolfo-effect-the-popularity-of-fate-grand-order-characters-in-comparison-to-their-real-counterparts/>

² https://www.reddit.com/r/grandorder/comments/rqsw6i/article_the_astolfo_effect_the_popularity_of/

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_TjFU33PRY

⁴ Thanks, Azzaciel!

of a Google Images search. To investigate that, we had to wait until new servants were announced for the Japanese version⁵ of the game (we accompanied the live broadcasts on FGO's official YouTube channel). Then, we ran a search soon after each announcement and several further searches at pre-determined intervals afterwards.

The core methodology of this study is the same as in our 2021 article: we ran the searches on Google Chrome, with clean cache, cookies, and history, using an Incognito tab with SafeSearch deactivated. Images of any size and publication date were allowed in the results. A VPN client was used to obtain an IP address from Michigan, USA. We used the Latinized version of the servant names as given by the Fate Grand Order Wiki (<https://gamepress.gg/grandorder/servant-availability>), with the

exception of Sen no Rikyū, for which we also included the spelling 'Sen no Rikyuu'. We only used brand-new servants, that is, excluding alternate versions (e.g., summer) and characters from elsewhere in the Type Moon universe. The following servants were used in this study: Kyokutei Bakin (a.k.a. Takizawa Bakin; Fig. 1), Minamoto no Tametomo, Xu Fu, Sen no Rikyū, Yamana Keisuke, and Iyo.⁶ Xu Fu and Keisuke already had official artworks from their previous appearances as NPCs in FGO, so their results need extra care to interpret (the situation is quite different for Tametomo, who had his first appearance in another event, but only one month before his official release as a servant, making this effect negligible). But the others are rather obscure, making them perfect for testing the Astolfo Effect.



Figure 1. Kyokutei Bakin in FGO and in real life. The resemblance is... nonexistent. FGO's official Stage 4 artwork by TAKOLEGS (2022); extracted from Fate/Grand Order Wiki (<https://fategrandorder.fandom.com/>). Portrait of Bakin by 長谷川雪旦 (unknown date); extracted from Edo Guide (<https://edo-g.com/>).

⁵ New stuff comes first to the Japanese game; the other servers are well behind it in content, so when things are released for them, they are already old news. Or, as the community puts it, North America has Clairvoyance EX.

⁶ We could not include Huyan Zhuo and Huang Feihu because we were both on holidays when they were announced.

After the search results were obtained, we counted the number of images (among the first 50 results) that were related to the FGO incarnation of the characters. Those images could be official artwork, fanart, memes, etc., as long as they were clearly related to FGO. We conducted the first search 3 hours after the announcement, then 24 hours, and then every 24 hours to a maximum of 552 hours (23 days). A table summarizing all results (from the present study and our 2021 article) can be seen in the Supplementary File to this article.

RESULTS

As expected, the results for Xu Fu and Keisuke did not change much (Fig. 2). They had already been released over two years ago as NPCs, so there were already plenty of Fate-related images out there. Also, they were quite popular in the Fate fanbase even as NPCs. There was a little increase in the number of hits, mostly due to the new arts for the ascensions but nothing expressive. Besides, as the other members of Shinsegumi, Keisuke has many representations in other media, like the otome game series *Ha-kuoki*.

Next, we have Kyokutei Bakin, in which the results were overtaken by Fate-related content (more than 50%). He is also known by the name Takizawa Bakin and, at the moment of writing, the Fate-related hits searching by that name make up less than half the search results (among the first 50 hits). On the other hand, Minamoto no Tametomo and Sen no Rikyū (both spellings) had only a modest increase of Fate-related content in relation to their real-world counterparts.

In these cases, we have a few complicating factors. Bakin the servant was a well-received character, while the other two had a more tepid reception. Besides, one can argue that Rikyū is the most famous person of the bunch, being the guy who most influenced the Japanese tea ceremony and having more content online about him in the West. Tametomo's search results were likewise not related to FGO, rather being famous ukiyo-e paintings (Fig. 3) – many of them based on novels written by Kyokutei Bakin, by the way.

Finally, there's Iyo. It is a very common name and one that can be used for anything. So, the search results were a mixed bunch, similar to what we had in our 2021 study for the servants David and Arash (both awfully common names) and for Paris (there is a

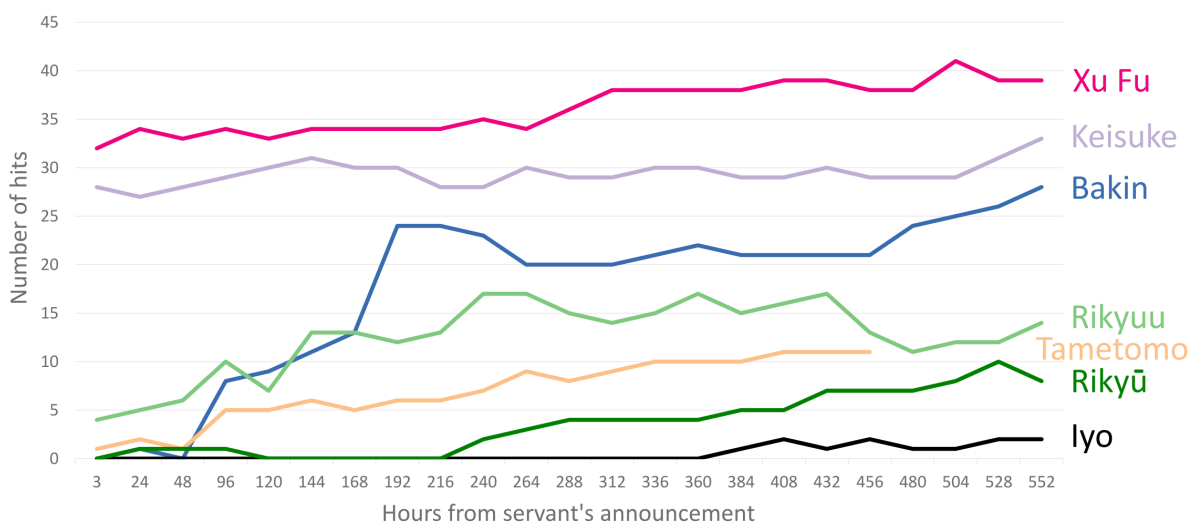


Figure 2. Graph showing the number of hits for each newly-released servant in Google Images searches. The searches for Minamoto no Tametomo stopped earlier than the rest due to reasons (we forgot to do them).



Figure 3. Tametomo, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1844); image extracted from <https://ukiyo-e.org/>, original at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA.

rather famous city with this name). Results included the wrestler IYO SKY, a band, and restaurants, so there was little space for FGO's Iyo.

FUTURE PREDICTIONS

We suspect that, as time goes by, more Fate-related results will accumulate for each of these characters (except Iyo). Thus, they will eventually achieve similar levels to what we found for other servants (Tomotani & Salvador, 2021). That means the Astolfo Effect will keep acting on them. Also, these more obscure characters are great in creating interest about their real-world counterparts (Salvador, 2019), which is always a good thing.

One bias of the present study is that all servants were Japanese (except Xu Fu). Thus, going forward, it would be interesting to analyze how the Astolfo Effect affects Western servants.⁷

Furthermore, we can say that the Astolfo

Effect (expectedly) works much faster for servants that are a success with the public, like Bakin. And it is slower for unloved servants. This is a new find (though rather obvious, in retrospect) and one that now becomes a corollary to the Astolfo Effect.

REFERENCES

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SUPPLEMENTARY FILE

Table S1. Results of the Google Images search per FGO servant (including the results from Tomotani & Salvador, 2021).

⁷ At the moment of writing, Britomart, a Western servant, has just been announced.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

João Tomotani, MSc., is an engineer and Rin simp since the 2006 FSN anime, who likes to make huge Excel spreadsheets to study stupid phenomena. After failing the first time for an Ereshkigal, he finally managed to get his NP2

Eresh, together with an Ishtar. He is currently saving for the Space Ishtar banner to add to his Rin collection. He also loved Xu Fu.

Dr. **Rodrigo Salvador** is a researcher at the Arctic University of Norway and a fan of the epics *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando Furioso*. He named one of the species he discovered after Astolfo: *Gallirallus astolfoi* or Astolfo's rail. He doesn't particularly care about any of the servants released after Roland (a.k.a. Orlando) and Charlie and would rather they be more characters from the Roland-verse.