

THE MANGA CULTURE IN JAPAN

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Many contemporary foreign visitors and observers have noticed the prevalence, ubiquity, and popularity of *manga*, or comics, in Japan. *Manga* is generally defined as:

- (1) "A picture drawn in a simple and witty manner whose theme is humor and exaggeration;
- (2) A caricature or a *ponchie* (*ponchi* picture), whose special aim is social criticism and satire;
- (3) That which is written like a story with many pictures and conversations." (Shinmura 1991: 24-34)

Manga as pictures and texts has traditionally been a significant part of Japanese popular culture, entertainment, art form, and "literature." Generally *manga* can be classified into many different categories such as editorial cartoon, sports cartoon, daily humor strip, advertising cartoon, spot cartoon, syndicated panel, magazine gag, caricature, comic strip, etc. (Mizuno 1991: 20-21) Being textual sources and a significant part of Japanese popular culture, *manga* can be an extremely important subject matter of comparative cultural studies, anthropology, and visual sociology.

A Brief History

Japan has a very long history of comics that goes back to ancient times. It seems that the Japanese have always enjoyed drawing and looking at pictures and caricatures. For example, Hōryūji Temple in Nara was built in 607 CE; it burned in 670 CE, and was gradually rebuilt by the beginning of the eighth century. It is the oldest wooden architecture in Japan, and probably the oldest in the world as well. Caricatures were found on the backs of planks in the ceiling of the temple during the repairs of 1935. These caricatures are among the oldest surviving Japanese comic art.

Chōjyū Giga, or "The Animal Scrolls," was drawn by Bishop Toba (1053-1140) in the twelfth century. The name of the scrolls literally means

“humorous pictures of birds and animals” and they depict caricatured animals such as frogs, hares, monkeys, and foxes. For example, a frog is wearing a priest’s vestments and has prayer beads and sutras, and some “priests” are losing in gambling or playing strip poker. The narrative picture scrolls are a national treasure of Japan. (Reischauer 1990; Schodt 1988; Shimizu 1991)

A style of witty caricature called *Tobae* (“*Toba* pictures”) was started in Kyoto during the Hōei Period (1704-1711). The name *Tobae* stems from Bishop Toba mentioned above, and it was used to refer to caricature. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, *Tobae* books, which were printed using woodblocks, were published in Osaka, a city center where publishing businesses were flourishing with a rapidly increasing population. From the Genroku Period (1688-1704) to the Kyōhō Period (1716-1736) so-called *Akahan* (a Red Book which is a picture book of fairy tales such as *Momotarō* (The Peach Boy) with a red front cover) was very popular, and *Tobae* books also became popular because they were like the variations of *Akahan*. The publication of *Tobae* books spread to Kyoto, Nagoya, and Edo, modern Tokyo. This marked the beginning of the commercialization of *manga* in Japan. *Manga* then became a commodity to be sold to the public whether it was hand-drawn or woodblock printed. (Shimizu 1991)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) started publication of “*Hokusai Manga*,” which became a bestseller. Hokusai was fifty-four years old, and he was the first to coin the term *manga*. He was a very famous artist who left many masterpieces of multi-colored *Ukiyoe* woodprints of sceneries such as “*Fugaku Sanjū-rokkei*,” or “The 36 Sceneries of Mt. Fuji,” prints of flowers and birds as well as drawings of beauties and samurai. *Hokusai Manga* consisted of fifteen volumes, and it started to permeate people’s everyday lives along with “*Giga Ukiyoe*” and newspapers with illustrations.

“Japan Punch” was created and published in Yokohama in 1862 by Charles Wirgman (1832-1891), a British correspondent for the “Illustrated London News” from 1861 to 1887. Wirgman reported on the Namamugi Incident where some British men were killed by the samurai from Satsuma near Namamugi in 1862, the Satsuma—British War in 1863, which was a consequence of the Namamugi Incident, the bombing of Shimonoseki by the fleets of Britain, the US, France, and Holland (1863-1864), Harry Smith Parke’s (the British ambassador to Japan) meeting with the last Tokugawa

Shogun Yoshinobu in Osaka, etc. The events mentioned above happened at the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the conflict among the three powers—the Tokugawa Bakufu Government, Anti-Bakufu and the western nations, was a very appropriate subject for Wirgman's *manga*.

"Japan Punch" continued for twenty-five years and two-thousand-five-hundred pages, and was very popular among the foreigners living in the foreign settlements as well as the Japanese residents. The term *ponchi* (stemming from the English word "punch") started to refer to what we call *manga* today, and it replaced terms such as *Tobae*, *Ôtsue*, and *Kyôga*. Wirgman's *manga* influenced many Japanese artists such as Kyôsai Kawanabe. (Schodt 1988; Shimizu 1991)

A French painter George Bigot started a magazine called "*Tôbaè*" in Yokohama in 1887. It was a bi-weekly French style humor magazine that satirized Japanese government and society. Both Wirgman and Bigot influenced the development of modern Japanese comics. According to Schodt, "Wirgman often employed word-balloons [sic] for his cartoons and Bigot frequently arranged his in sequence, creating a narrative pattern." (Schodt 1988: 41)

One of the most important functions of Japanese *manga* in its long history is satire, and the satire of authority was most dynamic during the civil rights and political reform movement known as *jiyû minken undô* ("the freedom and people's rights movement"). The popular movement started at the beginning of the Meiji Period (1868-1912). In 1875 Taisuke Itagaki, Shojiro Goto, Shimpei Eto, etc., submitted a proposal for the establishment of the National Assembly. They had been highly influenced by the European thinkers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau as well as the liberal British thoughts of the day. (Reischauer 1990; Shimizu 1991) The so-called "*Manga Journalism*" emerged at this time, and *manga* started to influence Japanese political scenes as well. There were various factors that contributed to the emergence of mass production of *manga* satire in a very short time, among which are the advent of the technology of zinc relief printing, copperplate printing, lithography, metal type, photoengraving, and so on. The development of infrastructures such as transportation and mail service, and heightening of the civil rights movement also contributed to the process. *Manga* became "a true medium of the masses." (Schodt 1988: 41)

The freedom and people's rights movement was an anti-government movement by speech, and *manga* played an important role as part of the

“speech.” The main media was a weekly magazine by Fumio Nomura. Nomura came from the samurai class from Hiroshima and he published “*Maru Maru Chimbun*,” a weekly satire magazine from the Dan Dan Sha Company. The objects of Nomura’s satire were not limited to the government. They included the Emperor and the Royal family, and the Japanese government often oppressed Nomura. The magazine increased its sales as the freedom and people’s rights movement became more popular. (Shimizu 1991)

It was the 1920s through the 1930s when the modern Japanese *manga* started to establish itself and blossom. It was Rakuten Kitazawa (1876-1955) and Ipppei Okamoto (1886-1948) who “helped popularize and adapt American cartoons and comic strips.” (Schodt 1988: 42) Kitazawa drew *manga* for “Box Of Curious,” an English language weekly published in the foreign settlements in Japan. It was Yukichi Fukuzawa who found his talent and Kitazawa started to work for the Jiji Shimpô Company in 1899. Kitazawa created “*Tokyo Puck*,” a weekly, color cartoon magazine in 1905. (Schodt 1988; Shimizu 1991)

As far as the story *manga* is concerned it is only after World War II that it started to blossom. American comic strips such as: Blondie, Superman, Crazy Cat, Popeye, and Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, were translated and introduced to Japan, a country that had been devastated by the war. The people craved entertainment, and they longed for the rich American lifestyle that was blessed with material goods and electronic appliances.

Starting in 1957, there appeared a new genre of *manga* called *gekiga*, or “drama pictures.” Artists such as Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Takao Saito started to refer to their art as *gekiga* rather than *manga* because their *manga* was much like a novel with pictures. *Gekiga* appealed to junior and senior high school students and later on university students as the readers aged. (Mizuno 1991; Shimizu 1991).

In 1959 Kodansha, one of the largest publishing companies, started to issue “*Shonen Magazine*,” the first weekly *manga* magazine, and in 1966 its circulation topped one million. Comics and television started to coexist in symbiotic relations, and many more weekly magazines followed “*Shonen Magazine*.” (Schodt 1988; Shimizu 1991)

Manga and its Popularity Today

In Japan, not only children but also many adults enjoy reading various kinds of comics at home, school, and work. People also read *manga* in public places such as in trains and subways as they commute to work, in the waiting rooms of hospitals, barbershops, and beauty salons, as well as in inexpensive restaurants and coffee shops as they wait for their orders.

Manga café's that offer many shelves of *manga* of various genres and a quiet space to read them for an hourly fee have been increasing in number in the last few years. According to Television Asahi's special on *manga* that was broadcast on 15 October 1999, there are about three hundred *manga* café's in Tokyo alone, and lately they have been replacing another type of popular Japanese entertainment establishment called "karaoke boxes" where people can privately enjoy singing with family and friends and order food and drinks.

There are two major types of *manga* cafes: a coffee shop type and a library type. In the former customers order drinks and food, and they can read *manga* for free. In the latter the café charges customers' hourly fees, and they can bring their own food or buy drinks in the vending machines in the café. Many big *manga* cafes have twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand copies of *manga*. ("T.V. Asahi" 27 March 1998)

So-called *Manga* Libraries are found all over Japan today, and many municipalities operate them. *Manga* museums and memorial halls of various *manga* artists are also very popular, and they are often one of the means for the villages, towns, and cities to attract tourists and make money.

Omiya in Saitama Prefecture has the municipal *manga* memorial hall for Rakuten Kitazawa, who became the first professional *manga* writer in Japan. It is the first publicly operated *manga* museum and opened in 1966. The admission is free. Kawasaki has a citizen's museum that exhibits many *manga* works. (Mizuno 1991)

The city of Takarazuka has Osamu Tezuka Memorial Hall that contains all of the comic works by Tezuka (1928-1989) who created such popular icons as Astro Boy, Phoenix, Kimba, the White Lion, etc. One of the characteristics of Tezuka's techniques was employing the same techniques used in the cinema for his comics. Tezuka, who gave up his medical training for *manga*, is considered the founding father of modern Japanese *manga*. He was born at the right time in the right place. In its first year of operation in 1995 the Tezuka Memorial Hall had five-hundred-forty thousand visitors, and two-hundred-fifty thousand people visited the

museum in 1996. (“T.V. Asahi” 14 October 1997; Schodt 1988)

Manga is often used as a facilitator for dissemination of information. Shin Fuji City government in Shizuoka created “*Manga Fuji Story*” that depicts and commemorates the city’s thirty-year history. (“T.V. Asahi” 7 October 1996) Many prefectural government such as Fukui used *manga* in order to explain their law of leaves for taking care of family members. (“T.V. Asahi” 17 May 1997)

Interestingly enough, comics are more than popular entertainment in modern Japan. So-called *kyôyô manga*, or “educational comics” are very popular among the Japanese. These are drawn/written with a specific educational purpose to teach the public certain subjects, technology, and information with *manga* drawings.

In 1977 Hanazono, a private university used Jyoji Akiyama’s “*Haguregumo*” as part of its entrance examination questions, and a public university also incorporated *kyôyô manga* in 1984. In 1985 works by Osamu Tezuka and Sampei Sato were also used in elementary school textbooks for the Japanese language. The publication of a book by Ishinomori Shotaro, “*Nihon Keizai Nyûmon*,” or “Introduction to Japanese Economy” followed. The book soon became a best seller, and this triggered publication of many more educational *manga*. “Introduction to Japanese Economy” was translated into English as “Japan Inc.,” and was published by the University of California Press in 1988, and its French version was published in Paris in 1989. (Shimizu 1991: appendix, 38-39) Interestingly the Ministry of Education established a prize for *manga* in 1990. (Mizuno 1991: 3)

There are different opinions about educational *manga*. Many lament the decrease of intellectual activity when people “read” *manga* while others say that *manga* does provide very important information, and it makes it easier to understand difficult concepts that are otherwise very hard to grasp. Pedagogically speaking *kyôyô manga* visually appeal to the comprehension of difficult materials, and when it works it is indeed a very effective and pragmatic teaching method. Many foreigners living in Japan and learning the language find *manga* a useful tool for studying reading and writing Japanese because of the use of *ruby*, notations of Japanese *hiragana*, a phonetic alphabet written next to the difficult Chinese characters. With or without *manga* Japan still boasts an illiteracy rate of less than one percent in the world.

Kyôyô Manga books are comparable to the “Beginners” series published in the US. They include many witty and comical drawings and explanations. The examples are “Marx For Beginners” (1976) by Rius, “Lenin For Beginners” (1977) by Richard Appignanesi and Oscar Zarate, and “Foucault For Beginners” (1993) by Lydia Alix Fillingham.

Western social scientists, psychologists, and journalists have pointed out some of the problematic areas of Japanese comics such as sexism, violence, adult materials, pornography, etc., that are not suitable for children. Many PTA’s (Parent Teacher Association) and other concerned citizen groups protested for the sake of innocent children claiming that some of the *manga* that are erotic, sexually explicit, and violent are educationally and morally inappropriate for minors. The Japanese government issued laws regulating the content and the ratings of comics in the early part of 1990s. (Ito 1994) Several regional Boards of Education established a rating system of putting “adult material” stickers for those *manga* appropriate for people over eighteen years old. These adult comics cannot be bought at a bookstore or a convenience store.

Some conversations, customs, life styles, and games from popular *manga* are used and imitated by the readers to spice up their ordinary every day lives, or to make them more humorous. However, some ended up as criminals. In 1997 some junior high school students started to engrave their arms with knives. This “game” came from a *manga* that depicted a boy who engraved letters on his arm with a knife. He then let a girl touch them, and she would fall in love with him. This game called *Inochi bori* (life-tattoo) was popular in the spring of 1997. The school prohibited their students from bringing knives to school, but a seventh grade student killed a female teacher with a knife in Tochigi in the same year.

An ex-employee of a loan company was arrested for extortion in 1999. He needed to collect money from his client, and he intimidated the latter by saying, “Sell your kidney. I think I can sell it for three million yen or something. Your eye can be sold for million yen.” The police found that the suspect got the idea from a scene in a *manga* called “*Minami no Teiô*” (“The King of Minami”). (“Yomiuri” 4 October 1999) The above cases testify that *manga* does have much influence on the social and cultural life of Japanese either positively as in the case of *kyôyô manga* or negatively as in the criminal cases imitating incidents from *manga*.

Manga as Big Business

Comic books and magazines are widely read regardless of sex, age, education, occupation, and social classes. *Manga* indeed is one of the most popular pastimes of people. Thus, the comics industry is one of the most successful and lucrative businesses in Japan today.

In 1998 the total number of comic magazines published in Japan was two hundred seventy-eight brands, and the number of the estimated copies published, including special and extra issues, was 1,472,780,000 copies. This was 2.8% less than that of the previous year. The estimated number of copies sold is 1,177,850,000, down 3.2% from the previous year (“*Shuppan Shihyo Nempo*” 1999: 223). T.V. Asahi Broadcasting Company in Tokyo quoted that the total number of publication in Japan is about 5.48 billion copies and the share of comics’ sales consists of about twenty-five percent, or 1.7 billion copies. This means 4,650,000 copies are sold every day. (“T.V. Asahi” 15 October 1999)

Weekly comic magazines in Japan usually have a few to several hundred pages printed on rather cheap, coarse, and poor quality paper. The magazines are easily disposable and recyclable. Japanese very rarely keep them stacked up in their small houses once ridiculed by a European official as the “rabbit hutch.” Some extra or special issues of *manga* magazines are as thick as the white pages of metropolitan cities in the US. The average weekly magazine has between eight and fifteen stories or episodes by various authors, and the cost is about two US dollars. The comic magazines in general also contain readers’ pages, advertisements of interesting goods, cigarettes, fashionable clothes, jewelry, shoes that make men three inches taller, etc. Adult comics also have advertisements for X-rated movies and videos as well as telephone clubs and “escort” and dating services. They may also have photographs of young, seductive, pretty women in scanty clothes or half-naked women.

The Japanese market for comics is indeed gigantic. Japan is a very rare country where comics are a major business. Weekly and monthly comic magazines sell millions of copies in a year, and so-called *mangaka* or comic writers are among the richest people in Japan whose annual income surpasses millions of dollars. The following lists the estimated copies published by the most popular magazines.

<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Brand</u>	<u>Readers</u>	<u>Estimated Copies</u>
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Kodansha	“ <i>Shukan Shonen Magazine</i> ”	boys	4,250,000
Shueisha	“ <i>Shukan Shonen Jump</i> ”	boys	3,600,000
Shueisha	“ <i>Young Jump</i> ”	adults	1,750,000
Shogakukan	“ <i>Shukan Shonen Sunday</i> ”	boys	1,700,000
Shogakukan	“ <i>Korokoro Comic</i> ”	boys	1,650,000
Shogakukan	“ <i>Big Comic Original</i> ”	adults	1,540,000
Kodansha	“ <i>Young Magazine</i> ”	adults	1,500,000
Shueisha	“ <i>Ribbon</i> ”	girls	1,350,000

(Nempo 1999)

Some famous *manga* artists are millionaires. In 1999 Goshō Aoyama, Fumiya Sato, Akira Toriyama, and Oda Eiichiro, all earned millions of dollars. (“T.V. Asahi” 17 May 1999) It is estimated that three hundred thousand to four hundred thousand people want to become *manga* artists. (Mizuno 1991: 75)

Manga is truly a popular culture not only in terms of its consumption but also in terms of the creation process. Unlike cinema and theater that require much capital and human resources to be popular and economically successful, *manga* does not require as much investment, formal education, good connections and so on. (Ishinomori 1998; Schodt 1988)

The tools necessary to draw *manga* are pencils, knives for sharpening pencils, erasers, pens, ink, brush, rulers, compass, white out, paints, paper, etc. *Manga* also is capable of depicting any scenes because its two dimensional format is capable of expressing anything a writer desires in his or her imagination even though it is really up to the ability of the creator to make it a masterpiece. The so-called “story *manga*” reads like a movie, which often was not made due to the lack of funds. (Ishinomori 1998; “T.V. Asahi” 1999)

Sexism in Comics

In Japan and elsewhere sexism, taxes, and death go together. Sexism in *manga* is no exception. Western observers, journalists, and social scientists have noticed that adult and youth comic magazines for men contain much male violence toward and maltreatment of women. (Bornoff 1991; Burma 1985; Ito 1994, 1995; Schodt 1988; Wolferen 1989)

Japanese women are depicted as having many Caucasian facial and body features that are exceptionally pleasing to Japanese aesthetics. They

have large, round, and shining eyes that usually take up one-third to a half of the face, long and thick eye-lashes, long noses, thin pretty lips, unproportionally large breasts, extremely small waistlines, and exceptionally long thin legs.

The weekly magazines for men often depict women as nothing more than commodities or sex objects, and sex appeal is a must in drawing these characters. They are often naked, but the frequent scenes of the process of undressing also appeal to Japanese male fantasy. (Ito 1995)

Nudity and sex sell very well in comics for men; voyeurism is also very common. Women must be seductive and close-ups of female bodies are very common: breasts, thighs, hips, crotches, bottoms, and vaginas that are often substituted with a picture of a clam or a flower. Interestingly, a snake or a turtle is often used to depict a penis in *manga*.

Interestingly enough Japanese men are depicted in two different ways: one type is those who have more good-looking Caucasian facial features with large, well-built bodies, long legs, and muscles that many young Japanese men desire. These male figures are *kakkoi*, or cool and sophisticated.

The ideal facial and body types are possibly a reflection of what Robert Christopher (1983) calls “the *Gaijin* complex,” which is an inferiority complex or very deep ambivalence that Japanese people feel toward foreigners (particularly Caucasians).

The other types of Japanese men depicted in *manga* are more true to their racial characteristics with small, slanted eyes, long trunks, slender bodies, and short, hairy, and skinny legs. The former type, the more ideal one, appeals to the fantasy of the readers who can vicariously experience the wonderful lives of those extremely handsome heroes. The latter type, which is more realistic, makes the reader identify with and relate better to the characters.

As in many popular storybooks, novels, and movies produced in Japan and elsewhere, men are often the main characters who are important to the story lines and women are often bystanders and cheerleaders. The men have unique, wonderful qualities—character, aspirations, dreams, goals, and careers in such occupations as sumo wrestling, boxing, baseball, golf, medicine, crime prevention, cuisine, cycling, and even crime (e.g., gangsters). The men occupy positions of power, privilege, status, and prestige. They are always in control. Women, on the other hand, are often

housewives, office workers, or girlfriends.

Many of the female characters play supportive roles at best. They do not show much personality and do not have their own opinions. If women are depicted in careers they are usually those in pink-collar occupations such as waitress, secretary, nanny, student, saleswoman, nurse, teacher, etc., even though many women in modern Japan are career women and are married to their occupations. The career women such as executives, detectives, photographers, spies, and television newscasters are often depicted as independent, intelligent, diligent, but also cunning, sophisticated, assertive, calculative, proud, and even violent.

Women in adult *manga* for men are depicted as having docile personalities. They are beautiful, innocent, quiet, obedient, kind, warm, and nurturing. They show much concern for their men whether they are their husbands, boyfriends, lovers, bosses, brothers, fathers, etc. The women accept their men as they are, respect them, and cater to their needs with much tolerance and patience. They want to help the men by all means when they are in trouble. At the same time some women are nothing but nymphomaniacs. They are sexually liberated, quite passionate and initiative when it comes to making love, and they may even engage in self-eroticism and sex with multiple partners. They are good at seducing men as if to test their feminine power, and of course a Japanese man loves to become her prey! (Ito 1994, 1995)

In sum, Japanese women are depicted in stereotypical gender roles that have two opposing sides. The angel type is soft, warm, and nurturing. The bitch type is intimidating, assertive, aggressive, cunning, and cold, yet they are very sexy.

Interestingly enough, there are many *manga* stories that are quite educational, informational, and beneficial for men. These include stories that revolve around the professional training, mental and psychological growth of the heroes, their lifestyles, philosophies, and dogged determination to be the best and win. The popular *manga* include occupations such as baseball player, brain surgeon, chef, serial killer, adventurer, sports-car driver, police officer, boxer, archeologist, etc. Many have few, if any, female characters in the stories, and the focus is more on the personality, psychology, learning, and socialization of the male heroes as they solve many problems of life.

Ladies' Comics

There is a genre of comics which is called *Redisu Komikku*, or "Ladies' Comics" that was established as a genre of *manga* in Japan in the early 1980s. Ladies' comics are very popular among women between the ages of fifteen and forty-four, and enjoy a wide market. The readers buy the *manga* in a nearby bookstore or convenience store, and usually they buy several different *manga* magazines at one time. The readers, however, do not read these comics as a hobby per se but mainly to kill time. (Erino 1993)

According to Erino (1993) who used to be an editor of one of the ladies' comic magazines, a typical heroine in these comics does not have a strong identity or the self as an independent individual. She does not value herself. She thinks she is not really worth anything, and she is not quite sure about the meaning of her life. However, sooner or later a prince charming will show up at her door and sweep her off her feet. Marriage and sex sell very well in Japan, too.

Many Japanese women love the unordinariness in an ordinary every day life in Japan that can be found in ladies' comics. The key words for their success are often marriage, hypergamy, and finding a good-looking, cool, reliable, kind, sensitive, and loving man with a very nice income and security that comes with his career. The man has money, fame, and social status that the woman can also enjoy once she marries him. She must remain beautiful and nurturing. He is the very reason why she exists in this world. The only requirement for her is to love her husband and children. (Erino 1993)

The stories almost always have a happy ending, and many are nothing but a Japanese version of Cinderella stories. Unlike Harlequin Romance novels that depict the ultimate in romance and the possibility of the impossible taking place in one's mate selection, the stories in Japanese ladies' comics are ordinary enough for the Japanese women to identify and relate to. The fiction is more realistic, down- to-earth, and the majority of heroines are so-called OL's, or "office ladies" who work for companies and do very menial jobs such as making copies and coffee.

The OL's who appear in ladies' comic are not satisfied with their current situations. Their lives are rather routine and boring. However, they do not have anything particular that they really want to do or accomplish, either. Their lives lack excitement. (Erino 1993)

As with comic magazines for men, the editors of ladies' comics' magazines are almost always men. Certain male bias always shows up in the stories. The messages carried in many *manga* are those that women are better off being married with children; women should go with the flow in a male-oriented Japanese society instead of against it; it is easier to rely on a man and belong to him; and so on. Much ambivalence is also found between too much expectation for the young women to be independent and at the same time marry and have children, and between working as hard as men and serving them by making tea or coffee in the office. Many heroines expect the role of a parent in men, and they often expect to be supported financially and emotionally.

Starting with the publication of "VAL" and "FEEL" in 1986, more and more erotic and sexual scenes were drawn, and the trend escalated for a long time. Ladies' comics were often associated with female pornographic comics then, but the frequency of sexual scenes subsided by the early 1990s. Today, the major publishers such as Shueisha ("YOU"), Kodansha ("BE LOVE"), and Futabasha ("JOUR") publish ladies' comics that focus more on the realistic everyday life stories, life-styles, careers, social problems, philosophies of life, and even compassion. Some stories that appeared in the ladies' comic that were published in the early part of 2000 are quite touching. They invoke much emotion and heightening of social and psychological awareness as if they are great novels. They are indeed simple enough for anyone to understand; yet some are quite powerful and touching as they invoke the reader's empathic understanding as well as love and compassion. They deal with topics such as abortion, career decisions, mother-child relationship, and entangled love relationships, PTA, sexism, domestic violence, divorce, traditions, sorrows of life, and injustice. Many stories have ordinary housewives, mothers, and office workers as their heroines, but many others also have professional women including doctors, nurses, cooks, attorneys, police women, teachers, and detectives who inform the readers of their professional knowledge and specialties that are very useful and practical in every day life. Some popular ladies' comics had been made into popular movies and television programs by the end of the 1990s.

Today's ladies' comics are divided into two categories. The first one is a socially conscious comic for general readers mentioned above, and the other one is a pornographic category where sex is the main course. In spite

of the frequency of the sex scenes, safe sex or concern for pregnancy is not a concern of a *manga* artist or an editor, and much dangerous sex goes on in these comics. (Erino 1993: 104)

Conclusion

Manga is one of the genres of the most popular entertainment, art, and cultural production of Japan. It has a very long history and consists of a major mass culture artifact as well as a huge successful business. The story *manga* category started to blossom after World War II, and it was Osamu Tezuka who established the art and influenced the development of Japanese modern *manga*. Today, billions of copies of *manga* are sold all over Japan, and many are translated into the world's major languages.

Just like other literature genres, *manga* carry much of cultural values, norms, and fantasies of the people. The un-ordinariness found in everyday life *manga* fascinates millions of readers every year. As an agent of socialization, *manga* often provides norms—what is appropriate and inappropriate in our social life. It is very influential for children and adults alike because it “teaches” the readers the roles, expectations, rights, duties, taboos, and folkways of Japanese society whether the reader is aware of it or not. Especially in the areas of sexual norms and relations, Japanese *manga* are often perturbing. Women are often exploited and oppressed sexually, economically, socially, and politically in many *manga* stories for men. (Ito 1994; 1995)

Manga is originally made up of two elements: play and satire. Modern Japanese *manga* have more “play” elements, and their function as “satire” is decreasing. A single picture cartoon seems to have lost much power over the years. (Mizuno 1991; Shimizu 1991)

The comics industry has entered a mature stage, and there have been demands for adult comics as the readers aged. Some *manga* series have been running for more than thirty years, and the readers first started to read them when they were in school; now they are middle-aged. (“Men’s Walker” 12 October 1999)

Animation of comics has been increasing yearly, and starting in October 1999, dramatization of comics is in. There are many new television drama series and soap operas that are based on the comics’ characters and stories. Many characters and personas found in the comics are imaginary, unique, individuals with strong characters, but with good casting television

stations are able to attract very good audience ratings. (Nempo 1999: 237) It is also less risky to dramatize if the *manga* had been very popular and successful, and other media such as the cinema, video games, radio, and theater are interested in broadcasting as well. ("Men's Walker" 10/12/99)

The animation films and movies are exported to East Asia, Europe, and the US-Japanese *Anime* (from the English word "animation") has also been very influential in the west in recent years. For example, the popularity of *Pokemon*, an abbreviation for "pocket monster," has become a social issue in the US in 1999 because many pre-teens are addicted to it as they go see the movie, watch the television series, collect cards, and trade them. "Time" magazine featured *Pokemon* in its November 1999 issue. Japanese *manga* has become a world phenomenon affecting many people in many countries.

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