

The Possibilities of Manga

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1. Introduction

1.1 Manga across borders

One day, when I was talking with my friend about manga, a foreign friend joined the conversation and talked knowledgably and passionately. It was a surprise to me, so I asked a question them how they knew of this Japanese comic. They answered "This book is popular in our country too."

This was a wonderful shock for me. My favorite manga is loved by all over the world. I was deeply moved. If the manga is known across borders, we can talk about knowing a common work. I had a lot of questions. "How do Japanese manga cross over to other countries?" "How was the story?" "How much do foreign countries and regions read Japanese manga?" "Do different countries have different popular manga?" "When the Japanese manga at the first started and spread to the world?" I have more questions. Which Japanese manga are recognized and read by a lot of countries?

I believe manga is an artform that can evoke emotions and response in its readers. Sometimes we hold the books with sweaty hands, sometimes we laugh out loud, and at other times cannot read without shedding teardrops. You might say that, manga can feed our hearts and souls. Since I found about the worldwide appeal of manga, I have though about common values and interests from there.

In this paper I would like to investigate how Japanese manga is read by Japanese and people in other countries, and what its future might hold. How many Japanese people read a manga?

How often Japanese people read manga? I think that manga always give me a hope, impression and courage. Why do they experience such emotions?

In our current information technology age, the amount of printed media is declining. Will manga be all right? I like manga very much, and I am not alone. Can manga remain alive in this age for sure? These days, even in the train, people are not reading manga but everyone fiddles with their mobile phone. But it's not only manga that are disappearing. Newspapers, books and magazine are seen in fewer hands. It might be because we receive more of our information from the data in a smartphone.

1.2 Importance of this study

I am anxious about the above trends. I grew up with manga. I always read manga when I before going to bed, riding on the train, studying in my study breaks and in my free time. There are genres I like and dislike. At that time there was too much erotic manga, and for that reason I feel the story in those manga is too light. There was too much death in manga, and for that reason I believe we have a generation of kids thinking lightly of death. But it's not only kids; it seems all Japanese people changed their way of thinking about death. For that reason, most parents don't want their children to read the manga. This is not what manga is about. I believe that manga is one way of learning about common knowledge and society. They should be of value to Japanese culture. Thus I want to include in this essay my feelings about manga writer and readers.

2. The Possibilities of Manga

2.1 History of Manga

The first manga were simply defined as funny or foolish cartoon art. However, this definition doesn't cover all of its use today. The wider definition of manga is not simply to make readers laugh. Its scope also includes cartoons, stories, scribbling and anime. Manga is just the generic name for all of these types of drawing. It is said that the original Japanese manga would be the *Chōjū-giga*.

The *Chōjū-giga* is a long picture scroll that belongs to a temple in Kyoto's Ukyo-ku. It's a Japanese national treasure. This picture scroll is drawn in the expressionistic style of modern manga. The hero of the story succeeds in passing gas, shown by the lines drawn beside the character, very much like a modern manga. The other one has including to a constituent look like a technique. However, picture scrolls were not accessible to common people at the time. In the eighteenth century, cartoons began to be distributed in the form of the commodity that we call manga.

In the nineteenth century, Japanese woodblock prints influenced by manga began to appear. They has a advantage of being reasonably-priced, made possible by development in engraving's printing technology. In this way, engraving helped influence the development of manga as well. In the Edo period, engraving and printing developed even further. Japanese woodblock prints began to permeate society as a form of mass entertainment.

It was at this time that Hokusai Katsushika's "Hokusai manga" trend arrived around the whole country. It is said that this art had a huge effect on European art. Just this "Hokusai manga" is textbook wrote for Katsushika's disciples, so this book wasn't available to the general public. However, his pupils drew manga to make samples of his work. And not only them,

many other Japanese woodblock print artists drew caricatures to express manga. Only the manga written by them was not to be sold as a product, so it is simply a form of entertainment for them.

A picture book of yellow backed novel is humorous reading material what is drawing the painting with a sentence. One of them, there is *Kinkin Sensei Eigano Yume* (1775) by Harumachi Koikawa. Out of Those, scene of the seeing dream is used an effusion. Contemporary manga's techniques were already being used in these days. At the time, Jippensha Ikku, famous for *Tokai Douchu Hiza Kurige*, was the first artist to draw pictures with written words. However, since he is devoted to the writing of original work, the responsibility for drawing pictures would come to be entrusted to another artists. In other words, it was a complete relationship between original author and manga artist in the same way as today's manga.

In the Late Edo period, Japan's first comic magazine was published for the first time. Its title was *Japan Punch*. Its publisher was an Englishman named Charles Wirgman, who published it at the Yokohama foreign concession. However, it was not written in Japanese, but English. Just the same, both engravers and sliding nurses were Japanese and also, Japanese paper was used. At the start the firm published and circulated comic magazines.

Kyosai Kawanabe and Robun Kanagaki published the satirical paper *E-shinbun nippon chi* influenced by *Japan Punch*. Furthermore, *Kisho Shinbun* were published and this was followed in 1877 by *Dandan Shinbun*, a representative publication of the Meiji period.

This magazine was the first to start serial comics in Japan. The piece of writing was *Enoshima Kamakura Choutan Ryokou*, by Beisaku Taguchi. It main characters were Cho ('Long') and Tan ('Short'), and it was a comic story about a sightseeing trip. In 1915,

Ippei Okamoto established what was the first cartoonist association in Japan. Its name was the Tokyo Comic Party, later renamed the party was renamed the Japan Comic Party. Ippei Okamoto started to publish the written serial *Game of Life* in the Tokyo Asahi newspaper. This is said to be the prototypical story manga. In 1923, *Sho-chan's Adventure* and *Easygoing Father* were released. Later the segmentation of manga segment became established as representative techniques of manga. And in the same year, a new comic faction group was created by a young member of cartoonists such as Hidezo Kondo, Yukio Sugiura and Ryuichi Yokoyama. These cartoonists created work but not with writing brush, so they used a pen for drawing manga. This style brought Japanese original nonsense manga to a major style, which was influenced by European comics.

2.2 Manga in Japan

As we have seen, Japanese manga has quite a long history. But, how do Japanese people feel about manga nowadays? What is it that Japanese people see in manga? There is some interesting data, based on the results of a survey by Culture Convenience Club Inc. It posed questions such as "Is manga a good influence on your life?" "How many manga do you read?" and "What do you think about when you are reading manga?"

The first question is about how manga are a good influence on readers' lives. This topic is a so good topic for this thesis because it is linked to the idea of possibilities of manga. Fiction and non-fiction manga are created in a wide range of genres, for example history, love story, human drama, sports, fantasy and science fiction. In this environment, it seems reading manga is good influence on Japanese people. Eighty-one point seven percent of people responded that manga are a good influence. After there was little difference across age and sex for this response. For the most part, generation has no effect on

this answer. Surprisingly, it seems that manga has quite an effect on our quality of life.

Next, we should think about what exactly this good influence is rooted in. Most people answered that they had a positive influence from manga. What exactly is this? There are positive effects much as widening social circles through reading the shared literary work. Having a common topic to talk about is enjoyable for people. *A good influence* seems to be the most popular reason (44.2%). The second most popular reason (14.2%) is changing their view of life and sense of values. Unquestionably, characters in manga display a variety of lifestyles. After that, readers answered that they gain some knowledge through reading manga. This is another positive effect of reading manga. Sometimes manga are written with great detail of information. Some manga are used as a form of mass media. In this information society age, manga are used as another form of collecting information, rather than simply entertainment. Looking at responses by age, 12.3 percent of male readers in teenagers to twenties answered 'to meet people' 12.5 percent of reader in their thirties to forties answered 'to start a lesson', while 24 percent of females aged in their 50's to 60's answered that reading was a way 'to start a journey'. It seems then, that manga contribute to taking a step of opportunity for their new life.

The next question in the survey was *How often do you read manga?* The above data say a good influenced for many people. Thereupon, there is a question what how much is you usually reading a manga. 40.8 percent said that they read once a month. There are 57.3 percent people who answered once a year. In the age range of teens to twenties, 18.7 percent of females read two to three manga every month. In the thirties to forties, 14.7 percent read one to three a week, while a similar number read two to three a month. In the age range 50's to 60's, 11.3 percent read a manga twice a year or read

every month. Males and females read a manga as they aged.

The next question was *What is your image of reading manga?* For the most part, it seems Japanese people read a manga once a year. The most common answer (41%) was that readers don't feel anything special about reading manga. This result hints that manga is now a part of usual, everyday culture for Japanese people. The second most common response (19.8%) was that manga are Accessible. Other answers about the image of manga-reading were (1) that they have abundant topics, (2) they are fun, and (3) they are nerdy. So relatively, most respondents had a positive image. After that there are many people who say that their humanity has been improved through reading manga.

What is the most popular genre of manga in Japan? The most common response (39.7%) was comic strip and comedy. The next most popular genres were, in descending order, sports (32.5%), battle/fighting (28.6%), romance (27.2%) and fantasy (26.2%). These results hint that despite the variety of genres, Japanese readers still surprisingly like manga's traditional and original genres.

2.3 Manga around the world

We have seen that manga have overwhelming popularity in Japan. But how are manga appreciated overseas? An interesting survey conducted by Soshio Corporation in August 2012 to report absurd and interesting facts to public. It gives us some hints about manga readership.

The first question was *What is a manga's good point?* There are heard to foreigner what do you like part of Japanese manga? A twenty-six-year old German said that he liked the stories used in Japanese manga. "For example, *Dragonball* is based in Chinese stories. The mythological and historical base of Japanese manga is so good." A twenty-two-year old Estonian said that he replied that they learn about Japanese society from

manga. A twenty-year old American said that she said that overseas manga is for a general audience, but Japanese manga is for a specific one, and they liked this about it. She continued by saying that she like the drawings in Japanese manga. Even if it the manga narrative is not completely interesting, the reader can still enjoy the excellent artwork.

Another respondent, a twenty-five year old male from Australia, replied that he liked the fact that manga has a lot of genres. There is only really the super-hero, so few genres in American comics. A twenty-four year-old Australian said that while comedy comics only have a comedy angle, there are serious comics is too. But Japanese manga mixes comedy and serious stories very well. And he also likes that fact that everyone read it, not just young people. A twenty-four year old Frenchwoman said that drawing a process what character learn a new skill, and she is studying Japanese by manga from reading *furigana* on the side of kanji. A Canadian man said American comics realer than Japanese manga about picture and story. But Japanese manga is more imaginary than American, and he likes that about it. Another Canadian man said Japanese manga has a character what is a boy and girls near us. He can project himself into the story, and get a sense of familiarity from the character.

On the other hand, there were a number of comments about the negative points of Japanese manga. A twenty-six year-old German woman replied that she doesn't like BL manga. 'BL' stands for 'Boy's Love' - a genre of romantic manga depicting gay relationships. It is very popular in Europe, but this respondent didn't like it. An Estonian man (25) said that he didn't feel positively about either BL manga and harem genre manga, saying there was too much sexual description and they are too fan-oriented. Another twenty-five-year old man said that in some manga, the story features numerous

girls in love with a single boy. This narrative is becoming a pattern and even a parody. And twenty-five-year old French man said that he didn't like manga featuring robots and magical girls.

It is also true that there are some manga which have changed genre from gag to serious. A good example is *Silversoul*, which is serious with some comedy. Its narrative has an uneven pace, so its readers get tired. Most Japanese people say that American comics are based on superheroes. But what is Japanese manga? Japanese manga has many genres, and it seems that foreign readers have picked up on this fact. It also seems there are many opinions with regards to Japanese manga, and not all manga are equally popular across all readerships.

3. Conclusions

3.1 The Future of Manga

As we have seen, Japanese manga has some good points and bad points. With regards the former, it is true that maybe paper medium will be lost in a few years. These days we are in an age called the Information Technology age. In the near future, publishing will be changed to electronic medium from paper. Electronic medium is a better medium than paper for several reasons. First of all, the electronic medium is good for the environment; the paper medium uses vast amounts of paper and ink, but electronic media uses next to none. Another reason is that it's easier to carry. The paper medium is bulky, and many people agree on this. However, electronic manga only requires a smartphone or PC, and can store a huge amount of manga in data form. Some fear that the paper medium will be lost for reasons like this.

What is the future of manga? We have seen that Japan is a one of the major powers in producing manga. Its number increase and publication speed is quicker. But like there

is in a bad point what violence and obscene is centered. In the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese manga such as *Dragonball*, *Slam Dunk* and *Detective Conan* gained great success all over the world, with their main themes of friendship, effort and victory. However, more than half of the serials in popular weekly comic *Shonen Jump* are now discontinued or striped to the buff. This is because of changing mores and rules regarding the depiction of violence or obscenity these days. The slightly gentler *Shonen Sunday* and *Shonen Magazine* are facing difficult conditions in their business. How did Japanese manga get to this point? Since about ten years ago, the Japanese manga market has been in disorder. Since that time there was an excess supply of content, which gave rise to a kind of malignant competition. Having a hit product for a few years is seen to be better than write a great literary manga for many years.

In Japan, manga are published one after another and pushed to the marketplace. However, this stream of new manga inevitably resembles the already published ones. However, readers are always on the watch for something fresh. They are deferent age and also school career, so to attract more readers, the publishers create more content and to prosecute instinct. Recently, too many similar manga are published, and originality is at a premium. I believe that this mindset must be thrown away and new ideas must be published. If not, manga will be in danger of going out of fashion. Many readers will give up on manga when they get tired of similar stories.

Whenever possible, writers of manga should thoroughly understand readers and manga, including the history of manga, and how manga has been developed and published. It is also important for writer to avoid writing rambling and arbitrary stories. Of course there are writers who come up with the same idea. But the writer should always be celebrated and

developed, otherwise Japanese manga culture will reach its limits. If the industry only creates similar manga, they will be of lower quality. Let us hope that original Japanese manga continue to spread to many other countries.

It is certain that the medium of manga will evolve from paper to electronic devices. Even after this happens, the delights of manga will still reach the readers' eyes and hearts. So, in a way, the situation might not change much. Manga has given us enjoyment, dreams and hope. I believe that manga will continue to give us much more from now on.

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