Manga, anime and visual art culture

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CRAIG NORRIS

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Manga, anime and visual art culture

Introduction

Manga and anime are at the centre of significant innovations and cultural debates in Japan. While manga and anime are not identical fields – manga can be loosely defined as Japanese comic books, while anime encompasses the breadth of Japanese animation – they have become synonymous with a distinct Japanese contemporary visual culture and aesthetic in the eyes of many media and culture scholars and commentators around the world. While this chapter will refer to both mediums interchangeably to reflect their mutual contribution to Japan's contemporary visual culture, it is important to distinguish between them and acknowledge their differences as well as their similarities. Many consider manga to be the origin: the creative vitality that spawned anime, and later video games and merchandising spin-offs. In many cases manga defined the template for the key genres – *shōjo*, *shōnen*, *gekiga*, and so on (see Table 13.1) – which have come to dominate the wider popular culture of Japan today. However, while manga established the roots of this style during the postwar period, it was through anime that a broader global audience became aware of a distinctive Japanese visual culture. Japan's anime industry is large and continues to grow overseas. The scale of the industry varies according to how one defines anime's breadth; for instance revenue earned from film, game and merchandise agreements alone has been estimated at more than ¥20 billion per year.[1] However, at its core anime consists of three major forms: (1) feature-length films; (2) TV shows; and (3) video and DVD versions of anime shown on film and TV, and produced only for video and DVD formats.

In 2003, the broadcast of TV anime programs in Japan increased to 2850,[2] making TV the main platform for anime consumption. There has

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also been some growth in anime and manga consumption through handheld mobile devices such as mobile phones, laptops and personal digital assistants (PDAs). This trend in new media is sure to continue as wireless media develops.

The significance of manga and anime to Japanese visual culture is more than economic: it has increasingly been related to Japan's culture and national image. Academics and critics have connected manga and anime to various aspects of Japan, including architecture,[3] motherhood,[4] social life and customs,[5] homosexuality,[6] gender,[7] history,[8] popular culture[9] and religion.[10] As Douglas McGray observed:

> Japan is reinventing superpower – again. Instead of collapsing beneath its widely reported political and economic misfortunes, Japan's global cultural influence has quietly grown. From pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and animation to cuisine, Japan looks more like a cultural superpower today than it did back in the 1980s, when it was an economic one.[11]

Advocates for Japan's recent cultural resurgence, such as the previous Minister for Foreign Affairs, Taro Aso, and the Japanese Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, Tamotsu Aoki, point to the concept of 'soft power' in relation to the popularity of Japan's visual culture.[12] This refers to the possibility of a new cultural renaissance of increased artistic freedom for Japan and a level of respect, admiration, and interest in the culture and history of Japan's visual art both domestically and internationally. Joseph Nye, Jr, who coined the term 'soft power', sees manga and anime as ideal soft power products – claiming they are 'immediately recognised and widely admired' everywhere.[13] He notes the global success of anime such as *Pokemon,* which 'projects a soft and friendly image' that appeals to children all over the world.[14] Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) itself has identified anime as having an important impact on Japan's image overseas, as well as being at the centre of technological innovations and global media trends through increased overseas investment and collaboration.[15]

Critics of this boom, however, express concerns about the narrow image of Japan these texts convey: the violence and sexism of some titles – particularly violence towards women[16] – and the alienation and obsession of some readers/viewers.[17] While these themes are important I raise them only to indicate the broader social context that manga and anime are often placed within. I will sidestep a more detailed discussion of manga and anime's

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effects on society, as these debates are mired in the unsolvable problem of how to prove claims of 'media effects' (i.e. a convincing causal link between consuming or circulating a media text and changes in audience behaviour). In addition to concerns around 'media effects' Japanese critics have expressed worries over new stereotypes of Japan appearing today. In particular, this group accuses Western advocates of manga, animation and visual art of Orientalism, or of promulgating the reduction of Japanese culture to a series of binary opposites vis-à-vis the West. They argue that reducing manga, animation and visual art to cultural stereotypes is a convenient way to claim some authority and dominance over these forms, and avoids more complex questions of the diversity and variation within Japan. These scholars[18] have criticised this 'essentialist' approach by highlighting manga and anime's transnational virtues and arguing that anime's popularity overseas is caused by its softened Japanese presence, making it an easy art form to domesticate. Further, authors such as Kinsella[19] and the Japanese Economy Division[20] have pointed to various areas of concern within the industry, such as the working conditions and stress levels among manga and anime creative talent, and the challenge of funding anime productions and expanding into overseas markets.

In this chapter I examine the history of the manga and anime industries, with particular reference to the transformations it has experienced over time. I begin by focusing on manga, as this art form established the basic styles and genres from which anime developed, and it is through manga that various scholars[21] have articulated a distinct Japanese aesthetic. I discuss the cultural associations between Japan and manga/anime pointed to by key scholars, and observe how certain images and information dominate the translation of manga and anime into national (Japan) and hybrid (Western appropriation and collaboration) environments. I conclude with some consideration of future changes in the industry and culture of manga, the new issues being raised by global or OEL (Original English Language) manga, and the Western communities based around manga culture, as well as looking at the work that maintains the evolution of the global manga market.

Manga demographics

While manga is popular throughout all segments of Japanese society, there have been significant demographic trends and developments identifiable its recent history. As shown in Table 13.1, even a small cross-section of some of

Table 13.1 *Typology of six key manga forms*

Types of manga	Description	Major examples	Major consumption groups	Initial publication form	Prevalent period
Yonkoma (four cell) manga	Four cells, typically of equal size. Usually gag or nonsense stories	Sazae-san (1946–74), Nono-chan (1991–97)	All readers, originally adult and young adult	Newspapers and magazines	1920s to today
Story manga	Longer, novelistic format using 'cinematic techniques' e.g. close-ups, various angles, etc.	Popularised by Osamu Tezuka's work e.g. Buddha (1974–84), Adolf (1983–85)	All readers, originally children	Cheap akabon (red books) in the postwar period	Postwar to today
Kodomomuke manga	A 'cuter' graphic style, initially influenced by U.S. Disney comics and cartoons distributed during Allied Occupation (1945–51)	Popularised by Tezuka's work e.g. Shin Takarajima (New Treasure Island) (1947), Tetsuwan Atomu (Astro Boy) (1952–68)	Children	Cheap akabon (red books) in the early postwar period	Postwar to today
Gekiga manga	More mature, serious drama, depicted in a more realistic and graphic style. The principal graphic contrast to the cuteness of children's manga	Ninja bugeichō ('Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja') (1959–62), Kamuiden (1964–71)	Working class youth, and later High School and University students	Book rental shops (kashihonya)	Emerged during the 1950s, peaked in significance during the late 1960s and early 1970s.
Shōnen manga	Broad variety of genres, commonly associated with action-based plots with male protagonists	Dragon Ball (1984–95), Slam Dunk (1990–96), Rokudenashi Blues (1988–97)	Boys (under 18)	Serialised in manga magazines (Shōnen Jump), reprinted in tankobon from 1970s	Became dominant from the 1960s on
Shōjo manga	Covers all genres, but commonly associated with slender elegant male characters and romantic, fantasy-based plots	Sailor Moon (1992–97), Attaku Nambaa Wan (Attack Number One) (1968–70), Nana (2000–continuing)	Girls (under 18)	Serialised in manga magazines (Ribon). reprinted in tankobon from 1970s	Boomed in the 1970s

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the more popular and influential manga genres shows niche areas within the broader manga reading public. This typology of manga is significant because it reveals the diversity of manga content and readership, extending across layout and composition (*yonkoma* compared to story manga), graphic style (the cuter style of *kodomomuke* compared to *gekiga*'s graphic realism), and gender (the segmentation of the manga market into *shōnen* (boys) and *shōjo* (girls)). As will be discussed below, each manga type has distinct cultural and historical roots. While an overall trend of manga's content 'growing up' with its readers from the 1960s onwards has been discussed elsewhere[22] this table helps show that the different origins of manga, such as *gekiga* in the rental market appealing to a working-class and counter-cultural youth demographic of the 1950s and 60s, reveal that there has always been a more mature, adult content linked to an older demographic sitting parallel to the more mainstream success of children's manga.

Manga history

The term 'manga' can be traced back as far as the 1770s[23], and has been used to describe the wood block prints of Katsushika Hokusai, such as his caricatures (*Hyakumensō*) in 1819. However, while the term 'manga' may have been coined in the past it did not attain widespread, popular usage until the 1930s for two reasons. First, the popularity and national circulation of newspapers modelled on Western layouts brought serialised *yonkoma* manga into homes and workplaces throughout Japan. Second, the growing job market for *manga-ka* (manga authors) – another term which attained widespread use from the 1930s – fostered a sustainable manga industry.

One of the difficulties that arises in both academic and journalistic writing about the history of manga is the dominance of dualistic thinking. Much of the literature on manga is framed by the question of its origins – is it located within Japan's past and therefore a distinctive Japanese aesthetic, or is it a contemporary phenomenon influenced by the West? Those arguing for manga as a continuation of earlier forms of Japanese graphic art point to stylistic similarities between past and present graphic art, citing the similar 'dynamic effect'[24] that manga and anime share with narrative picture scrolls (*emaki-mono*) from the 9th century. Critics of this continuity express two concerns with this focus on the past. Firstly, they claim that it sidelines or ignores the very contemporary nature of this form[25] and the important influence of Western artistic styles. Secondly, they argue that it has less to do with art history and more to do with responding to current political and

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popular concerns of manga's negative effects on youth and culture – that is, linking manga to the past is a defensive argument that hopes to prove manga is part of traditional Japanese culture and thus circumvent attempts to censor or ban it as trash culture.

This tension created by asserting a resiliently particular image of *Japanese* manga and anime at the expense of acknowledging the significance of foreign influence is a key problem when surveying manga history.

Prewar

Paving the way for the widespread acceptance of manga in the 1930s was the establishment of two types of comic strips in the 1920s:

1. Comic strips for children published in newspapers and journals bought by parents. These publications were heavily influenced by United States newspapers and contained United States comic strips translated into Japanese, such as George McManus's *Bringing up Father* and Pat Sullivan's *Felix the Cat*, as well as Japanese original comic strips based on the US/European template, such as Suzuki Bunshiro's *The Adventures of Little Shō*.
2. Short political cartoon strips for adult readers. These included cartoons influenced by ideologies such as Marxism appearing in publications like *Workers' News* and *War Banner*.

This division between mainstream children's manga and alternative/political adult manga would remain a lasting feature of the manga industry. The industry experienced a downturn in the 1930s, partly triggered by the changing political environment as increased media regulation and censorship narrowed content to conform to national political objectives.

Postwar

In the early postwar period, manga succeeded as a form of cheap entertainment for an impoverished, war-weary Japan. The development of manga during this time felt the impact of US comics, as Japanese translations of well-known titles such as *Blondie*, *Popeye*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Donald Duck* and *Superman* appeared.[26] These comics, along with Disney animation, came to have a significant impact on the style of manga created for children. Writing on the translation of these United States comics into Japanese, Ito suggests that an important reason for their success was that 'the [Japanese] people longed for the rich American lifestyle that was blessed with material goods and electronic appliances'.[27]

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In the early postwar period, manga appeared in three main forms: picture card shows (*kamishibai*); rental manga (*kashihonya*); and manga booklets (*yokabon*). 1946–48 saw a boom in storytelling (*rakugo*) and picture card shows performed in theatres and outdoors throughout Japan. The picture card shows would use cheaply produced picture cards that the storyteller would speak to, performing a miniature theatre play. The popularity of these shows endured until the early 1950s, with eager crowds of up to five million people entertained by these lively performances.

The second factor that supported the growth of the manga industry was the emergence of the book-rental shop. Artists would write manga for books and magazines that could be rented out at as cheaply as ¥10 for two days. This trend peaked during the mid-1950s as book-rental outlets appeared at train stations and street corners, totalling around 30 000 outlets. The *gekiga* (dramatic pictures) style was developed primarily in rental manga. As opposed to the cuter, anthropomorphic characters that filled many children's manga, the *gekiga* style contained more mature, serious drama, depicted in a more realistic and graphic style that reflected the tastes of its older readers during the 1950s. However, *gekiga*'s major impact lay not in its graphic style, but in its popularity amongst poorly educated young urban workers and, during the 1960s, university student activists, where it became part of the anti-establishment politics of the time. Sanpei Shirato's *Ninja Bugeichō* (*Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja*, 1959–62) was influential in this regard. Many critics saw this story of peasant uprisings as reflective of student and worker anger over current issues such as the Japan-America Security Treaty.

The third form of manga that flourished in postwar Japan was published in small books (*yokabon*) sold directly to the public. These manga books were priced between ¥15 and ¥20 and sold in discount book shops (*zokki*) and children's toy shops, with deluxe higher-quality manga albums priced between ¥70 and ¥90. The initial high cost of these manga is a partial explanation for the growth in the rental manga market, a preference which lasted until prices decreased in 1959 when two of the largest publishers of manga, Kōdanasha and Shōgakukan, produced cheap weekly manga anthologies for retail sale. In the Osaka market, small manga books know as *akabon* (red books), due to the red ink they were printed in, attained wide popularity through the phenomenally successful *New Treasure Island* (*Shin Takarajima*), which sold 400 000 copies from its launch in 1947. Tezuka Osamu, author of *New Treasure Island*, quickly became one of the most significant figures in manga. Through the enormous popularity of his work, serialised

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in children's manga magazines such as *Kimba the White Lion (Janguru Taitei)* and *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*), a dominant 'cute' manga style was established. As opposed to the gritty realism and overt politics of *gekiga*, Tezuka's manga founded an archetypical manga style featuring cute characters with large saucer eyes. This style was influenced by Disney animation and US comics, which had flooded Japan during the Allied Occupation between 1945 and 1951.[28] Tezuka also incorporated cinematic techniques inspired by French and German movies: 'I experimented with close-ups and different angles, and instead of using only one frame for an action scene or the climax (as was customary), I made a point of depicting a movement or facial expression with many frames, even many pages'.[29] Tezuka's manga became epics – often spanning thousands of pages – and popularised a longer, serialised form of manga known as 'story manga' which would become a standard format evident in today's manga industry.[30] Primarily read by children and regarded as cute, wholesome entertainment by their parents, these 'story manga' were an innovative break from the rigid layout and brevity of the 'gag manga' genre and four-panel (*yonkoma*) comics popular in newspapers and magazines of the time. The development of the manga industry from picture card shows to rental manga and finally to the manga magazine industry is reflected in the employment history of significant manga artists such as Mizuki Shigeru (who created the popular *Ge Ge Ge no Kitarō* manga series) and Shirato Sanpei (creator of *Ninja Bungeichō*). These artists both worked their way up through picture cards, rental manga, and then the manga magazine industry during the 1950s and 1960s.

The 1950s established manga as a lucrative and popular element of Japanese entertainment through the success of children's titles such as Tezuka's *Astro Boy* (1951) and the first weekly comic magazine for boys, Kodansha's *Shōnen Mangajin* (1959). One of the dominant divisions in the manga market is the split between male and female demographics. Critics have suggested that this division may have become entrenched through the segregated school system in Meiji Japan and the launch of early children's magazines such as *Shōjo kai* (Girls' World) in 1902 to raise literacy rates.[31]

Manga such as *Astro Boy* became typical of the trend for original manga to lead to various spin-offs in other media, becoming one of the first children's TV cartoons in 1963, with various remakes since (1980 and 2003). *Astro Boy*, broadcast in the United States from 1963, also launched the trend for the global export of popular TV anime.

During the 1960s manga broadened its content to include popular genres such as sport. Two important early sports stories that helped establish the

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genre in weekly comic magazines for boys and young adults were the boxing story *Ashita no Joe* (1968) and the baseball story *Kyojin no Hoshi* (1966). The 1960s also saw the steady maturing of the manga market and titles which reflected this expansion beyond the children's audience. Young adults, who had read manga as children, began demanding more sophisticated and adult material. This included not only stories set in the adult workplace and the world of leisure but also avant-garde manga such as the alternative manga magazine *Garo* (1964–2002). *Garo* serialised the popular peasant revolt story *The Legend of Kamui* (*Kamuiden*) and became an important platform for alternative 'art' manga in Japan.

The 1970s were marked by a group of female manga artists who pioneered a new approach to *shōjo* manga. *Shōjo* can be narrowly defined as manga aimed at girls less than 18 years of age, but is often more broadly applied to manga aimed at a female readership. While *shōjo* includes a range of genres such as sport, horror, science-fiction and historical drama, it is commonly associated with slender elegant male characters and romantic, fantasy-based plots. Matt Thorn estimates that today 'more than half of all Japanese women under the age of 40 and more than three-quarters of teenaged girls read manga with some regularity'.[32] The *shōjo* artists are mainly female and the market is a lucrative one, with *Ribbon*, a popular manga magazine for girls, reaching a peak of one million sales per month during the late 1990s.[33] Successful *shōjo* artists such as Takeuchi Naoko (creator of *Sailor Moon*) have also become millionaires through the popularity of their manga. While initially dominated by male authors,[34] by the 1970s a group of female artists known as *Nijūyonen Gumi* (Year Twenty-Four Group) pioneered a new approach to *shōjo* manga introducing new themes and approaches such as homosexual love.[35] These artists, all born in the 24th year of Showa (1949), depicted themes such as romantic love between beautiful young boys, for example, Keiko Takemiya's *Kaze to Ki no Uta* (*The Sound of the Wind and Trees*, 1976) and Moto Hagio's *Tōma no shinzō* (*The Heart of Thomas*, 1974); while Yumiko Ōshima's short manga *Tanjō* (*Birth*, 1970) depicted teen pregnancy and abortion. These titles helped broadened the audience and content of *shōjo* manga.

As shown previously in Table 13.1, developments in manga's layout and composition, graphic style, and gender-specific formats had become firmly established by the 1970s. The following six illustrations represent key aspects of these developments.

Risu Akitsuki's *OL Shinkaron* (Office Lady Theory of Evolution) (Figure 13.1), published in Kodansha's comic magazine *Morning* from 1989,

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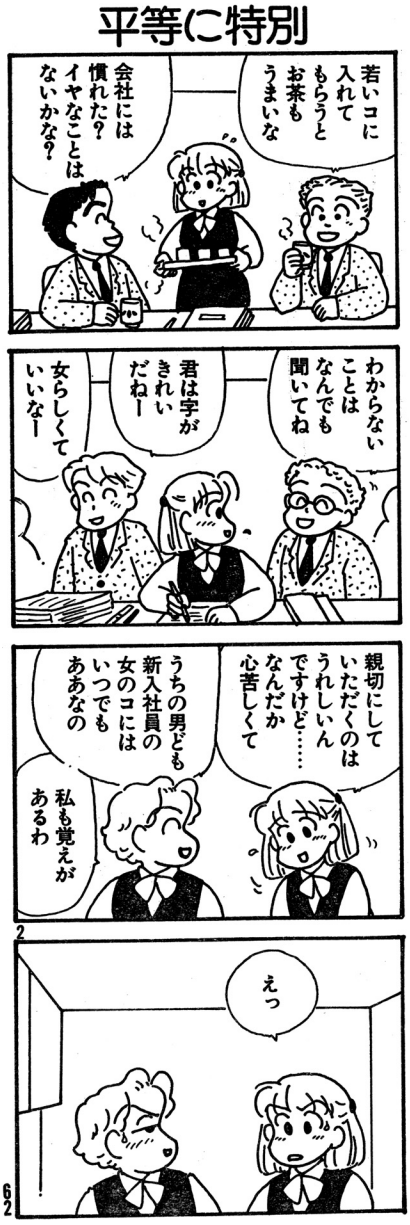

Figure 13.1 *OL Shinkaron*'s simple four-panel layout and gag structure is typical of the *yonkoma* manga form.
Source: Risu Akitsuki 'O.L. Shinkaron' ('Office Lady Theory of Evolution') *Shūkan Mōningu*, (18 April 1996) p. 62 © 秋月りす/講談社 © Risu Akizuki/Kodansha Ltd.

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demonstrates the *yonkoma* convention of a short, self-contained gag delivered in four panels. Most content is drawn from everyday observations, as in this example, where a new female employee misunderstands the special consideration she receives from her male colleagues, as emphasised by the title of this manga *byoudou ni tokubetsu* (equally special). The humour draws upon the stereotype of the male-dominated workplace where the female employee has received kindness from the male workers (the first two panels), however her senior female colleague dismisses this kindness as being only a temporary male prerogative for patronising new female employees. This simple four-panel layout worked perfectly for the newspapers and magazines that often carried *yonkoma* manga, as they had limited space and fixed measurement requirements. However, the story manga form reacted against these limitations, offering epic narratives with an equally epic diversity of panel sizes and dynamic graphics. Tezuka's *Buddha* (Figure 13.2) is representative of this approach. In this example we see the main character, Siddhartha, disarming Bandaka – a scene that is comprised of many frames, in contrast with *yonkoma*'s format where one scene equals one frame. The tension and drama is carefully developed and prolonged through the use of close-ups and variations in panel size. Tezuka's *Buddha* also offered a novelistic approach to manga, telling the story of the historical founder of Buddhism spread over fourteen volumes.

Tezuka was also significant in popularising the cute graphic style often associated with *kodomomuke* manga. *Jungeru Taitei* (*Jungle Emperor* – or as it became known in the West, *Kimba the White Lion*) portrayed cute, humanised animals while also offering humanitarian principals to its audience. This style is evident in Figure 13.3, where the recently orphaned Leo assumes his role of Jungle Emperor after contemplating the fate of his father. While Tazuka is also notable for responding to changing political and cultural sentiments of the 1960s and 70s through his *gekiga* manga such as *Bomba!* and *Song of Apollo*, one of the best examples of this form is Shirato's *Ninja bugeichō* (Figure 13.4). As this example shows, *gekiga*'s graphic violence offered a grittier 'realism' than the cuter style of *kodomomuke* manga. *Ninja bugeichō*'s portrayal of the harsh conditions faced by peasants in feudal Japan also offered a more dramatic theme for an older audience that resonated with post-Occupation issues such as criticisms of the Japan-America Security Treaty.

While *gekiga* reflected political and cultural concerns of the time, as already noted, it was in *shōnen* and *shōjo* manga that the biggest market for manga was to be found. These two examples (Figures 13.5 and 13.6)

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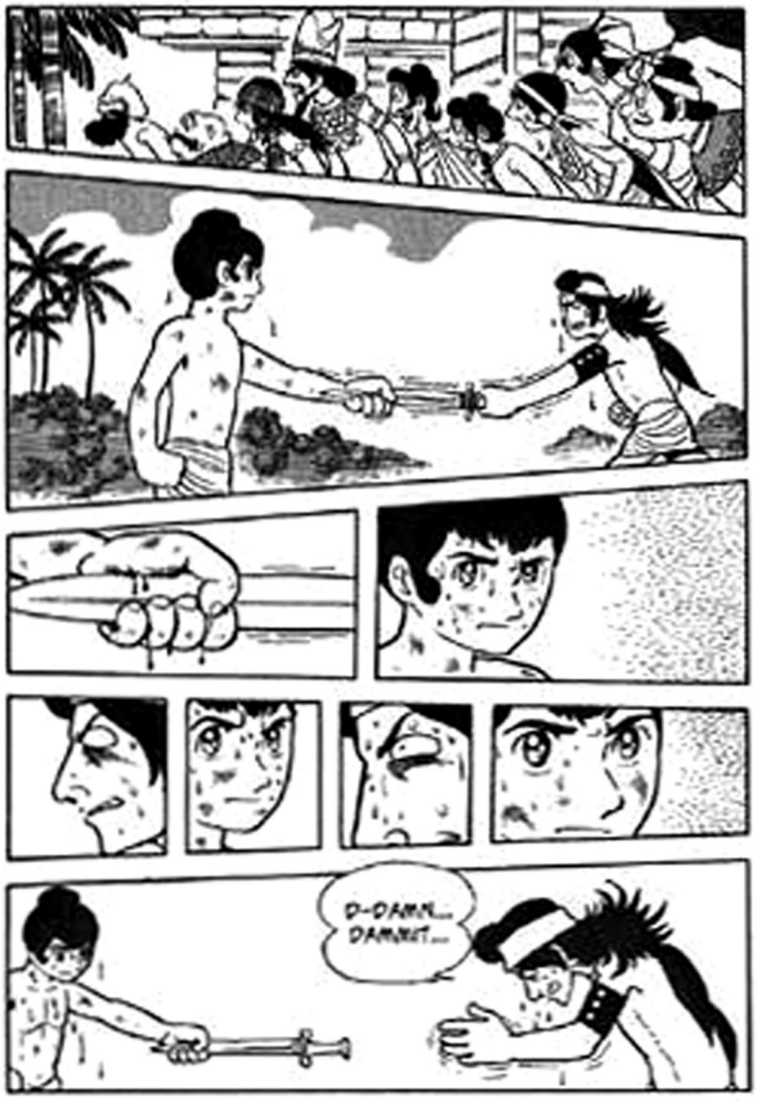

Figure 13.2 Siddhartha's disarming of Bandaka in Tezuka's *Buddha* shows the greater layout complexity of the story manga form.
Source: Osamu Tezuka *Buddha* (US reprint) Vertical: 1st American edition (11 July 2006) *Buddha* vol. 2, p. 339 © Tezuka Productions.

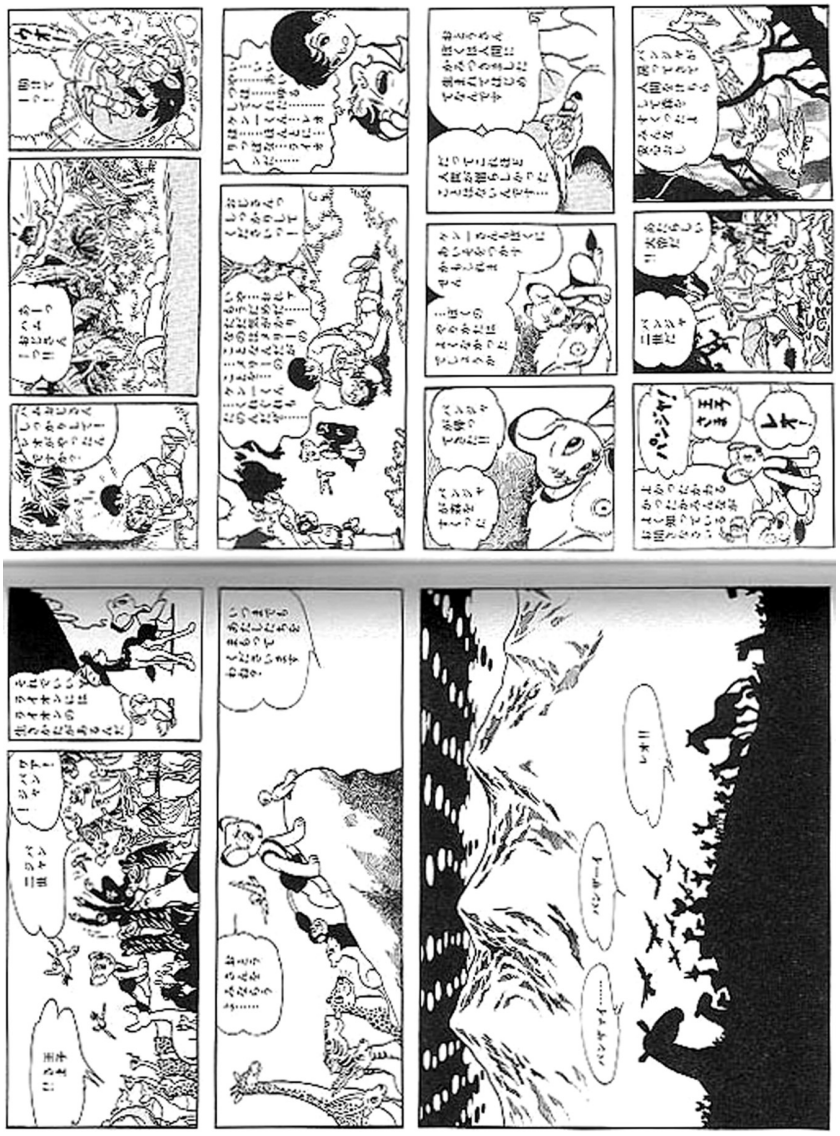

Figure 13.3 Cuteness and melodrama combine in Tezuka's *Jungeru Taitei*.
Source: Osamu Tezuka *Jungeru Taitei*. © Tezuka Productions.

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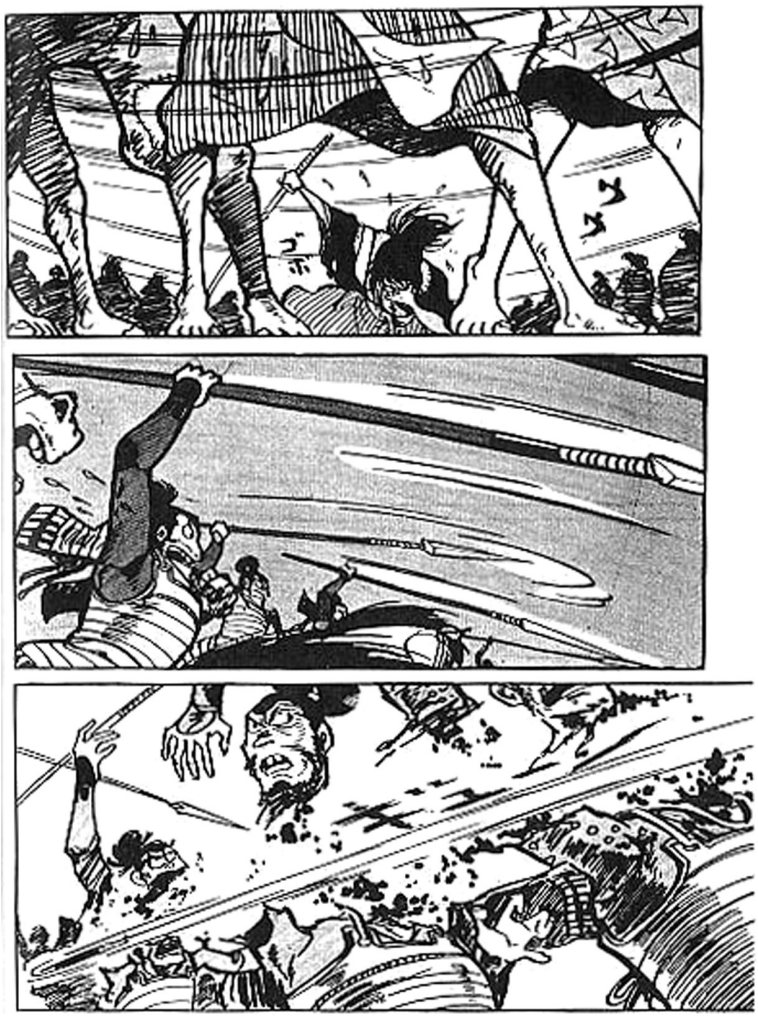

Figure 13.4 Shirato's *Ninja Bugeichō* conveys the darker adult themes of *gekiga* manga. *Source*: Sanpei Shirato *Ninja Bugeichō* (*Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja*) 1959–62 (1997 reprint) vol. 3, p. 388. © Sanpei Shirato/Akame Production.

exemplify the different approaches associated with *shōnen* and *shōjo* manga. Son Goku's battle in *Dragon Ball* (Akira Toriyama, BIRD STUDIO/Shueisha) (Figure 13.5) conveys *shōnen* manga's greater emphasis on action-centred on male protagonists. This page from Tachikake's *Hana buranko yure te* (Figure 13.6) demonstrates *shōjo* manga's more creative

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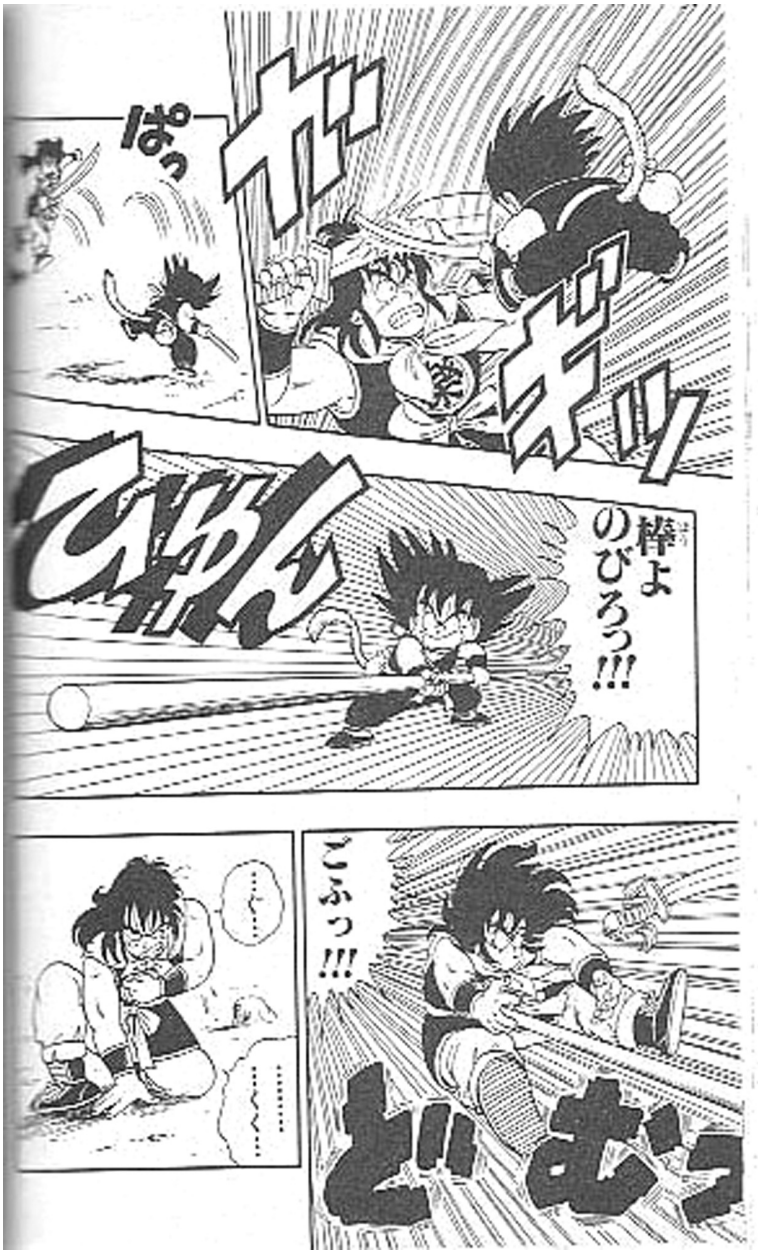

Figure 13.5 Toriyama's *Dragon Ball* is an excellent example of *shōnen* manga's ability to do action and adventure perfectly.
Source: Akira Toriyama *Dragon Ball* (1985) vol. 1, p. 124 © Akira Toriyama, BIRD STUDIO/Shueisha.

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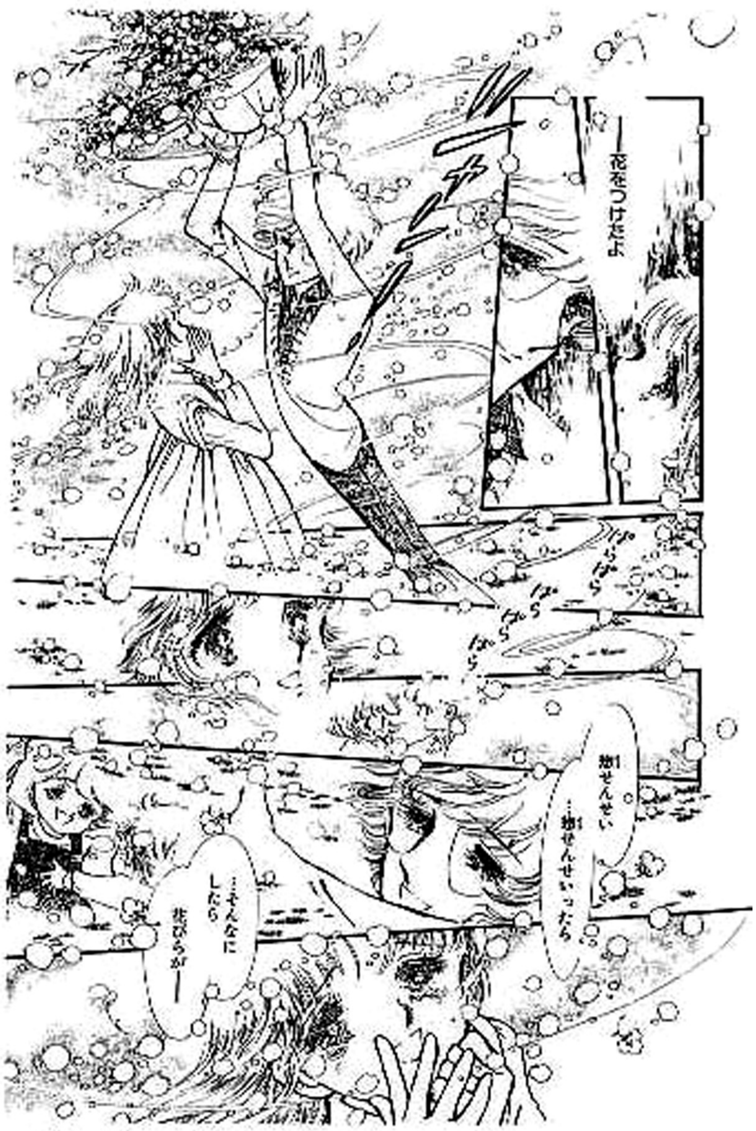

Figure 13.6 The story of a young girl coping with the divorce of her Japanese and French parents forms the emotional nexus typical of *shōjo* manga in Tachikake's *Hana buranko yure te*.
Source: Hideko Tachikake *Hana buranko yure te* (1978–80) © Hideko Tachikake/Shueisha.

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page layout, reflecting the internal emotional intensity of the main character. While these examples illustrate manga's key changes since the postwar period, manga's development did not end in the 1970s.

A further significant innovation was to occur in the 1970s with the popularisation of the *tankōbon* (paperback) format for manga. Popular manga previously serialised in weekly and monthly magazines were compiled in a higher-quality paperback more portable for commuters and more attractive for collectors. The *tankōbon* soon replaced manga magazines as the main revenue stream for manga publishers.

By the 1980s sales of manga had peaked, but continued to do well into the 1990s. Even after the collapse of Japan's bubble economy in the 1980s manga sales still totalled ¥586 billion in 1995.[36] By the 1980s and 90s manga had become mainstream and were read by nearly everyone of all ages. *Kyoyo Manga* (academic or educational manga) is an example of the mainstream appeal of new forms of manga as they were used to inform and educate readers on a range of topics from history and annual festivals to cooking and other DIY areas.

Manga changed again in the 1990s as editors asserted a stronger role in the creative processes of manga production. Kinsella[37] argues that because most editors were more wealthy and educated than artists, adult manga in particular was reformed around their more privileged tastes and interests. This move away from the working class, artist-created, counter-culture stories of the 1960s and 1970s such as *Ninja Bugeicho* (Secret Martial Arts of the Ninja, 1959–62) and *Garo* can be seen in the more factual and niche-interest manga such as the political and economic series *Osaka Way of Finance* (*Niniwa Kin'yudō*) and the extensively researched nuclear-submarine story *Silent Service* (*Chinmoku no Kantai*). This period also saw the expansion of the global market for manga. Manga began to gain a stronger foothold in the US, long a niche market for Japanese popular culture. With the release of *Akira* (1988 Japan release, 1989 US release) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995 world-wide release), both based on original manga, Japanese manga and anime began to attract greater international attention than ever before. These titles were much more 'adult' that the standard animation of the time, and their dystopian, cyberpunk themes came at a time of great interest in the approaching millennium. In 1998, *Ghost in the Shell* reached number one on Billboard's video chart in the US.

By the early 2000s, the manga industry had broadened beyond the familiar Japanese publishers (Kōdansha, Shūeisha, Shōgakukan) to include a smaller number of transnational manga distributors and publishers

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(Tokyopop, Viz Media and Seven Seas Entertainment) and achieved a globally dispersed audience, a trend discussed in more detail in chapter 19. For companies such as Kōdansha, manga was still an important generative source for other media platforms – TV animation, video games, merchandise and so on. While there are current concerns that the Japanese manga market is becoming stagnant and its fortunes are declining – the circulation of weekly manga magazines have been in steady decline for the last decade – many of the most successful anime, videogames and merchandising lines began as manga. *Naruto* began in the comic magazine *Akamaru Jump* (1997) and has gone on to become a world-wide hit through anime, card-game, video game and merchandise spin-offs. The enormously successful *DrangonBall* franchise likewise began as a manga series in 1984. In addition to these manga-inspired titles, the 2000s have been dominated by the growth of large, globally successful brands that exist across various media platforms. *Power Rangers* adapted from the live-action Japanese TV show was broadcast in the US in 1993, and by 2007 it had expanded to 15 television seasons, 14 series and two films. Its success was overshadowed by the greater popularity of *Pokemon*, produced by the video game company Nintendo and created by Satoshi Tajiri, which became a successful video game, anime, and character-related business franchise.

Shogakkan's *Pokemon*, the animated version of Nintendo's portable game software, was the first huge success by a Japanese anime overseas. Released in 45 countries and regions around the world, as of the third instalment of the series it had generated overseas box office revenue of ¥38 billion, double its earnings in Japan. *Pokemon*'s gross global earnings, including related products, are estimated at ¥3 trillion.[38] *Pokemon*'s global success has helped establish the enormity of Japan's character-related industry, and has maintained Japan's contribution to the global children's entertainment sphere.

Manga has also moved into online environments, with both Kōdansha and Shōgakukan offering online manga content and various downloads that extend the audience's access to manga in a more interactive online environment. Mobile phone manga is also available through companies such as Toppan Printing, allowing readers to enjoy manga without worrying about weight or bulk. This move away from print media to digital formats is extended even further by hand-held video devices such as Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP) and Nintendo DS which offer a number of titles based upon popular manga (*Dragon Ball, Naruto*) or drawing upon the manga style (*Cooking Mama* and *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*).

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Manga industry

Manga's development and distribution over varied media platforms reveals shifting relationships between the industry and audience. In recent times, manga's development has been impacted by the rise of OEL (original English-language) manga, which straddles the Japanese/Western divide. OEL manga involves taking the 'design engine' of Japanese manga and using it to tell stories created by non-Japanese artists for a non-Japanese audience. An essentialised 'manga style' of big-eyes, cute girls, beautiful boys and dynamic action that was used as the engine to create the OEL manga stories and art represents a move to standardise the manga product.

Central to the sustainability of the manga industry are the artists and writers involved in the creative work and the larger production team employed in the creation of related media spin-offs such as anime, video games, and merchandising. Criticism of the pressures and stress impacting on manga artists and those in related industries such as anime is growing,[39] and low wages have resulted in an exodus of talented young artists to other creative industries such as the video game industry.[40]

A recent report into the Japanese animation industry[41] identified the following significant trends in the globalisation of anime:

1. Japan is the largest provider of animation worldwide, with approximately 60 per cent of animation shown around the world made in Japan.
2. Japan is struggling to monitor and enforce intellectual property rights (IPR) with a shortage of skilled personnel familiar with international legal affairs related to IPR. Bandai Visual has measured its lost royalties in overseas markets in the tens of millions of yen annually.
3. Japan is actively targeting the foreign market with new anime, as opposed to the past where only titles which had first become popular in Japan were exported. Examples of the trend include the *Ghost in the Shell* movies.
4. The co-production and co-financing of anime by foreign businesses has increased.

The last of these factors is particularly interesting, as it suggests that anime and manga are representative of the shift occurring within Japan's visual culture from a national to global market. The implications of this global manga trend are discussed further in chapter 19, however it is worth briefly noting that manga's influence and 'brand recognition' has helped open up a global market for manga-style work including South Korea's *manhwa*, China's *manhua*, France's *la nouvelle manga*, and manga-like comics in the

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US going under various labels such as Amerimanga, world manga or OEL manga.

One key trend not mentioned in the industry report is the growing impact of the *dōjinshi* (fan or amateur manga) community. The *dōjinshi* community has matured in Japan to become strongly integrated within the overall industry, with an 'unspoken, implicit agreement' (*anmoku no ryōkai*) between *dōjinshi* and publishers allowing fans to produce parody-manga based on copyrighted content and characters as this maintains and revives interest and sales in existing titles and sustains a talent pool of manga artists.[42]

Manga cultures and manga studies

As manga and anime have become more popular, involving more people in the various industries that produce and distribute them, Japanese visual culture has become an increasingly important area of scholarly analysis. Early manga studies debates revolved around explaining the mechanics of manga through reference to Japanese culture, society and aesthetics.[43] These articles and books written during the 1980s define a Japanese visual culture that was different and confronting for the West, particularly in its depiction of sex and violence towards women.[44] In this body of work, written well before the current interest in anime, manga is described as being violent and aggressive. However, the focus on manga in the 1980s and on anime in the 1990s shared a number of similar discoveries and problems: both defined manga or anime as having a distinctive Japanese aesthetic, and both engaged with the debate over the sensationalist reporting of manga or anime as being shocking sites of violence and titillation.

Later developments in this field have included a growing analysis of the political economy of manga and anime production. Kinsella[45] pays close attention to the economic dynamics of manga production in Japan, while Allison[46] discusses the global merchandising and anime industry as it has changed and developed since the postwar period. Further, Napier[47] provides an analysis of some of the key anime motifs which have become popular in Japan and around the world.

In Japan, there has been a significant expansion in manga studies through Japanese University programs such as Kyoto Seika University's Faculty of Manga, which opened in April 2006. In addition to the extensive analysis of manga and anime within Japan, these media have become a fast-growing field of study in the West through specialist journals such as *Mechademia*[48]

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and texts such as *Dreamland Japan: writings on modern manga*,[49] *Adult manga: culture and power in contemporary Japanese society*,[50] *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: experiencing contemporary Japanese animation*,[51] and *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*.[52]

To conclude this analysis, two recurring issues illustrate the significant innovations and cultural debates manga has been part of in Japan: the effect of manga on society and intellectual property rights management. Both address the conflicted status of the manga consumer as someone either to be embraced by industry as passionate proponents of the manga form or to be policed as potential deviants and criminals.

Manga's effect on Japanese society

Critics of manga include a range of groups such as parents, women's associations and PTAs concerned over school children reading vulgar and sexually explicit manga[53] and scholars concerned over the sexism and violence directed towards women in manga[54]. At the most extreme, critics of manga claim that it can have a negative effect on society, making people less informed and more violent.

There are three broad areas of concern identified. Firstly, that too much information, from driving manuals to business information, is being conveyed through manga – a form of caricature that inevitably distorts, simplifies and exaggerates. These critics suggest that the complexity or depth of an issue cannot be conveyed through manga in the same way as prose or film documentary can facilitate. Secondly, critics claim that the increasing popularity of manga as an information tool reflects a broader trend in politics, religion and education where the entertainment value of information is highlighted in order to create appeal. Additionally, further concerns exist that information that is too complex to be compressed into manga will be ignored.

A final concern is that violent and sexually explicit manga may cause more violent behaviour, particularly amongst younger readers. This issue came to public attention after several sensational 'moral panic' controversies from the late 1980s where manga readers were portrayed by the media as either threats to social stability and order, or at risk of becoming corrupted through their manga consumption. The case with the highest profile in this regard was the trial of Tsutomu Miyazaki in 1989 for the murder of four young girls. He became know as 'The Otaku Murderer' due to

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the large collection of porn videos, including anime, which police found in his apartment. While incidents of moral panic generated by concerns over manga's effect on society have achieved great notoriety in Japan, it is usually simplistic and unrealistic to isolate one factor – such as manga – as the sole cause of behavioural problems in an individual. Other factors may include mental illness, family dysfunction, poverty, or drug addiction while an increasing body of research such as Hugh McKay's work[55] attempts to broaden the debate beyond an exclusively media-effects framework.

Fan-generated content and Intellectual Property Rights management

Manga and anime should be understood as exemplar products within Japanese visual culture. One thing that makes manga culture important in Japan is its penetration into nearly every facet of Japanese life and culture today. Manga are read in many different private and public settings and consumed by a broad segment of the community. Further, manga and anime have become increasingly popular around the world. Networks of Japanese and overseas fans are translating and distributing manga, both original and commercial works. The manga style provides an engine for various fans to depict their own stories and relate to each other through this world. There are online communities such as *Wirepop.com* that assist fans in developing their art style, allow them to socialise with others who share similar interests and provide a platform for amateur artists to be noticed by industry. The manga 'text' is added to and changed by the audience through these fan-art productions, and existing characters are parodied or re-written into *yaoi* stories where previously heterosexual characters are, for example, re-imagined as gay lovers. As noted earlier, within these communities manga is no longer finished by the publisher or original artist, and publishers increasingly rely on fans to continue the awareness of and interest in existing titles. One implication of this is that these fan-producers have become an important part of manga's development cycle, some becoming 'scanlators' – people who scan and distribute their translations of Japanese manga online – such as the Australian-based *LostInScanlation* community, who scan underground Japanese *dōjinshi* bringing it to a broader audience, or the anime music video (AMV) artists who 'mash-up' anime sequences with alternative music. These fans have become an important part of the process of adoption of new manga styles and narratives, leading to further innovation and investment in this area.

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Today, industry members are faced with choices about the extent to which they embrace the fan creators as part of their structure. Some within the industry openly encourage such communities, allowing them to produce fan comics and anime based on characters and settings from copyrighted work, thus using fan creativity to further research and development and recruit new talent. Others employ heavily enforced and policed copyright laws which criminalise the creation of derivative works by fans, continuing an older approach to intellectual property rights (IPR) regimes and production. These choices are not restricted to manga and anime, but are part of general shifts occurring in the management and regulation of media such as video games. The more global and interactive the manga culture becomes the more issues of ownership and regulation will arise and require new approaches based on the interconnected nature of today's visual culture and media texts.

The choices facing the manga and anime industry today reveal innovative new industry opportunities. The online, networked community of fans raises questions such as how to embrace the passion and creativity of *dōjinshi* communities while maintaining IPR. Further, the rise of non-Japanese manga such as OEL manga or *manhwa* raises questions as to how Japan can maintain cultural ownership or develop a 'soft-power' advantage through the popularity of these increasingly hybrid goods – is this model of ownership and control even the most appropriate to use?

The global market and *dōjinshi* communities face the challenge not only of resolving issues of manga and anime's continued success and popularity, but of Japanese approaches to community management and globalisation. To return to an earlier point, while the anime industry may turn a blind eye to its local *dōjinshi* community, Bandai Visual's determination to secure lost overseas revenue 'aiming to expand its overseas sales from ¥7000 million to ¥2 billion in a three-year plan'[56] suggests their main goal is the generation of profit rather than social equity or community collaboration. This apparent contradiction between a flourishing local fan-market re-imagining copyrighted content, and the threat of an increased enforcement of IPR in global markets suggests that the major debate ahead will be over an appropriate model for IPR management that balances the demands of industry and fans. These issues of IPR management and fan-production will rise in importance as more and more people actively engage with copyrighted goods and contribute to existing media narratives and franchises.

Manga and anime are successful entertainment products within contemporary Japanese visual culture. They have shown the way forward – during

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the 1920s manga comic strips were part of the political and cultural ferment of the time as alternative political organisations were established and overthrown. During the early postwar period manga provided cheap and exciting reading for poor workers and children. In the 1960s it was at the forefront of counter-culture thought. While its working class origins and radical counter-culture politics of the 1960s may have diminished from the 1980s, it remains an innovative element of Japanese visual culture today. Through manga's influence on anime and appearance in the digital world it continues to identify where change, negotiation and controversy arise in Japan today. The issues pertinent to manga and anime today are well worth consideration: the cultural and social changes that underpin its use and popularity; the globalisation of media content and the impact on industry; the change in the role of consumer as active fan; and the impact on intellectual property are just some areas that have wide significance for Japan and justify further attention.

Notes

1. Japan External Trade Organization (2007: 4).
2. Japan External Trade Organization (2005: 8).
3. Nitschke (1994).
4. Allison (1996).
5. Gill (1998); Poitras (1999); Kinsella (2000a).
6. McLelland (2000).
7. Allison (2000b); Buckley (1991); Imamura (1996).
8. Schodt (1983); McCarter and Kime (1996).
9. Standish (1998).
10. Levi (1997).
11. McGray (2002: 44).
12. Tamotsu Aoki (2004: 8–16).
13. Nye (2004: 3).
14. Nye (2004: 4).
15. Japan External Trade Organization (2005).
16. Darling (1987); Ledden and Fejes (1987); Hadfield (1988).
17. For a critical analysis see Kinsella (1996; 1998; 2002b).
18. Kenji Sato (1997); Ueno (1999); Iwabuchi (2002a).
19. Kinsella (2000a).
20. Japan External Trade Organization (2005).
21. Schodt (1983); Loveday and Chiba (1986); Lent (1989); Schodt (1996); Yaguchi and Ouga (1999).
22. Thorn (2005).
23. Isao Shimizu (1991).
24. Loveday and Chiba (1986: 162).

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25. Kenji Sato (1997); Ueno (1999); Iwabuchi (2002a).
26. Kinko Ito (2005).
27. Kinko Ito (2005: 466).
28. Kosei Ono (1983).
29. See Schodt's discussion (1983: 63) on Tezuka.
30. Schodt (1996: 234); Thorn (2001).
31. Thorn (2001).
32. Thorn (2001).
33. Thorn (2001).
34. Tezuka's *Ribon no Kishi*, ('Princess Knight', 1953–1956) is an early example of this.
35. Thorn (2001).
36. Schodt (1996: 20).
37. Kinsella (2000a).
38. Japan External Trade Organization (2005: 13).
39. Kinsella (2000a); Japan External Trade Organization (2005).
40. Japan External Trade Organization (2005: 9).
41. Japan External Trade Organization (2005).
42. Pink (2007).
43. Schodt (1983); Buruma (1985); Loveday and Chiba (1986); Kato, Powers and Stronach (1989).
44. Darling (1987); Ledden and Fejes (1987); Hadfield (1988).
45. Kinsella (2000a).
46. Allison (2006).
47. Napier (2001).
48. See http://www.mechademia.org.
49. Schodt (1996).
50. Kinsella (2000a).
51. Napier (2001).
52. Allison (2006).
53. Kinko Ito (2005: 469); Kinsella (2000b: 139–61).
54. Buckley (1991: 163–95); Kuniko Funabashi (1995); Kinko Ito (1995); Newitz (1995: 2–15).
55. McKay (2002).
56. Japan External Trade Organization (2005: 14).

Further reading

Allison, Anne (2006), *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kinsella, Sharon (2000), *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society*, Richmond: Curzon.

Napier, Susan Jolliffe (2001), *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*, New York: Palgrave.