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## Manga – from Center to Periphery, Back and Forth

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### Introduction

When forming a social group of any kind, human beings tend to create some type of core with a surrounding. In other words societies gather around a central core and the components tangential to the center form a periphery. The concept of the 'center', as for its social characteristics, what it consists of and so on, has been debated in sociology, on several overlapping, but not identical levels. Some have directed our attention to religious entities, maintaining that every religious 'cosmos' possesses a center, a place where the zone of the sacred – the absolute reality – resides (Eliade 1971: 12–17). Others took us a step further, maintaining that this center of a religious community, is not necessarily always geographically central to the life-space of the community, and as pilgrimages demonstrate, an ex-centric location could be as meaningful (Turner 1973).

Shils (1975) broadened the discussion. He argued, first, that the concept of 'center' in society should not be conceived in narrowly religious terms, and that every society – religious or secular – possesses a 'center', which partakes the nature of the sacred. As such, he made it clear, that the 'center' is not, necessarily a spatial phenomenon, but rather a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. To him, it is the zone of symbols, values and beliefs, which governs society. Secondly, he pointed

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out, that this central zone is at the same time a phenomenon of the realm of action. It is the locus of activities, roles and persons, within which the values, and beliefs, which are central to society, are embodied and propounded.

With Shils' arguments, then, sociology came to recognize that all societies comprise of some kind of central and peripheral zones, each housing different values, ideas, or beliefs and different social actors and institutions. Bearing this in mind, this paper is an attempt to look into the Japanese society and find out where the values and actions of reading and producing manga belong. The following text is an attempt to look at the cultural field of the Japanese society, and determine where the *modern* manga is / was located in the various phases of its *modern* development. Does Japanese manga – its production and / or consumption – belong in the cultural center or in the periphery? Is it located at the 'spiritual' locus / center representing ultimate ideas, values and beliefs, or is it located at the fringes demonstrating a peripheral, and even vulgar activity, not worth pursuing by respected members of society? With this in mind, I should like to review briefly some major historical points – frequently detailed by manga scholars and critics – and speculate the position of manga in Japanese society. The points I will refer to for making those assessments, will be: Who were the ones that were involved in the manga production in each period? Who were its avid consumers? and How was it regarded in society. Taking into account the fact that during the time-span pursued in this work, the Japanese society underwent a profound change, moving from a pre-modern to a modern state, and transforming, thus, the composition of society's center and periphery, these composition changes will eventually also be addressed.

## **Modern Japan – Modern Manga**

### **The Emergence of "Center" Manga – Journalism Manga**

What constitutes manga? What is the origin of it? How much of that medium is from a Japanese origin and what is the influence of Western comics on it, these are

tricky questions discussed by quite a few critics and manga scholars<sup>1</sup>. There are some scholars who argue that traces of what should be considered as manga are found back in the Heian period (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century), while other modestly trace it only to the early Meiji, or strictly confine what we know today as manga to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This study defines *modern* manga as a form of communication, comprised of visual elements and accompanied by literal expressions of some length, which is spread on pages of modern communication media such as newspapers, magazines or books. The modern start, by this definition, is the Meiji period (1868–1912). Modern manga then first appeared in Japan in newspapers aimed at the foreign-adult community in the form of social / political caricatures. An Englishman by the name Charles Wirgman (1835–91) and a Frenchman, George Bigot (1860–1927) are often mentioned as responsible for the introduction of this Western journalistic tool to Japan. At first, amazed by the new modern type of humor and art, Japanese, were made to put out even a translated version of Wirgman's magazine – *The Japan Punch*<sup>2</sup>. Yet, soon afterwards they began publishing their own humor magazines, among which the most famous, was Marumaru Chinbun, issued in 1877 (Shimizu 1999: 69). Among the famous artists in the history of manga are often mentioned writers like Rakuten Kitazawa (1876–1955), who drew manga from 1902 in the Sunday column of the Jiji Shinpo newspaper, and the cartoonist Ipppei Okamoto, who drew manga for the Asahi Shinbun from 1912.

Scholars agree, that at first manga drawing<sup>3</sup> was limited to the realm of journalism. 'Daily newspapers and regular weekly and monthly magazines used to be the primary outlet for comics' (Soeda 1981: 94), and people engaged in drawing manga were journalists in charge of the manga drawn in certain newspapers (Ichioku no Showashi No. 11, 1976: 224–225).

Furthermore, as Shimizu illustrates (1999: 74), manga, as a journalistic-expression-tool, from the start, was created in close relation to everyday life; it reflected events, directly mentioning and mocking them, and pointing out contradictions. In fact, the manga were social sketches, forming visual comments on social changes, which were also dealt verbally in the newspapers. The manga creators, like other journalists,

were assuming the role of reporters and social / political commentators using simply visual rather than literal means. It was a "*manga reporting*". The manga creators were dispatched to the streets of Tokyo to sketch their impressions of the ways of life in the city, or to the Diet, to report on the parliament sessions. They produced visual reports on current events such as sumo tournaments or the Emperor funeral, showing understanding of new trends of thought such as socialism or feminism, and taking political sides. At the turn of the century, when it became customary for newspapers to send journalists to the front-line to cover a war, manga journalists were also at the scenes. Some were mobilized as communication soldiers sketching scenes of the war, sending them back home accompanied by comments. One such example is Misei Kosugi, who sent his sketches with reports on the war with Russia (Ibid: 19).

"*Manga reporting*" it was, however, these reports were mainly concerned with the evolving of the modern society which concentrated in modern communities – namely the modern cities. In fact, if one looks carefully, a strong inclination to report on city life is evident. Even more, reports were mainly about some sort of modern development, modern experiences in thought and practice, rather than about the old Japan. It was thus, "manga's reporting of the modern". And as Kure (1986: 20–21) argues, at first, manga was a tool in the hands of modernists, serving to convey modernity and its important and new – yet at times complicated ideas – in a more relaxed way. Manga was, at the turn of the century, representing modernity and thus the new evolving central values of the Japanese society.

### **Manga Production – A Central Issue**

It appears, as well that manga writers, at the turn of the century, were young people – many of them at their early twenties – and the great majority of them graduates of the then Japan's art institutions. Manga was then also produced by aspiring modern artists, trained in Western and Japanese drawing techniques, indeed capable people, belonging to the newly formed high classes of Japan.

Although, Schodt (1983: 43) comments that until Kitazawa and Okamoto came along, cartooning, in general, was perceived as a side-job for those whose main goal

was to succeed as “serious” artists, it was nonetheless considered a respected and customary side-job among many of the young students attending art schools. For, by having their manga illustrations printed in newspapers or magazines, was a way of earning their daily expenses, using their progressive / modern knowledge (Shimizu 1999: 74; 143).

The following account about Rakuten Kitazawa illustrates further how much the production of manga was seen as a ‘central’ issue, worth mastering by educated youngsters. At the age of 20, Rakuten Kitazawa was reportedly told the following by Yukichi Fukuzawa, one of the leaders of Japan’s modernization drive: ‘In the West they have pictures that parody and criticize both government and society. These ‘cartoons’ are the only type of pictures capable of moving the world. If you wish to be *an artist*, you should pioneer this field’ (Schodt 1983: 42). Even Fukuzawa himself later on carried out his conviction about the importance of manga by establishing the Japan’s first manga supplement – the Jiji Manga<sup>4</sup>. In general, I believe, such attitude taken by modernists like Fukuzawa, in itself, promoted this visual medium and helped legitimized it further as a field worth to be pursued by educated youth.

### **Manga – A Literacy of Cultured Educated Adults**

To understand further the place of manga in the Japanese society at the Meiji era, it is important also to get a glimpse of the reality at that time. First of all, we should not forget that the Meiji period had started while the Japanese society was lagging much behind in its modernity, achieved much earlier by Western countries. The Meiji era was in fact a reaction to that wave of modernity, aiming to bring to Japan a similar level of it. For that purpose, a new social order was created, breaking away from the old rigid class structure. It was a new social order, which allowed a more flexible mobility and enabled more people to participate in public life. An important means of mobility, introduced by the Meiji restoration, was also the introduction of public education. By that Japan had turned into a meritocratic society – a society, with a social order, in which, at least officially, the elites could no longer perpetuate directly their exclusiveness, and people of modest origins had now a

potential of advancing themselves through education. The Meiji era thus produced a passion and eagerness for learning. Yet, this passion was directed at new ideas coming from the West, new ideas which represented modernity, and thus the future. Young men, eager and indiscriminate, learned whatever foreign language they needed to read whatever materials came to hand – medical texts, books on armaments, religious writings and so forth (White 1993: 41–45). Manga, which was considered of Western origin, was given as well a special attention. Famous Japanese manga artists occasionally traveled to the West bringing back on their return the latest innovations in the realm of comics, and intensifying the exotic image of the genre.

To climb the social ladder meant back then, that one had to be, first of all, able to read. To become modern – the highest goal of the time – one had first to master successfully the act of reading, the act of absorbing knowledge through the written word. The mediums of newspapers and magazines became therefore themselves a tool of modernity, conveying modernity in their contents, and making modernity by their very usage, namely by reading them. Yet, as Nagamine illustrates (1997: 21–34), at first newspapers were a medium consumed / read mainly by intellectuals, university graduates and the salary men class, who had the time, money, and proper education to engage in such activity, and who were still forming the small elite of Japanese society. In 1929, when looking back upon his long career in journalism during the Meiji period, Tokutomi Soho<sup>5</sup> for instance, wrote:...'*Newspapers once served a learned minority; today, they are for the masses. The newspaperman was once the leader of the masses; today, he provides them with one more source of amusements*' (Altman 1975: 66). This statement gives further testimony of the leading, and central roles which journalism occupied at that time. Being a medium of the newspapers – a serious tool handled with care by professional journalists-artists, who were part of the educated elite, and not arbitrary drawings made by anyone who wished to make a living (as were the 'pre-modern' independent *kamishibai* performers<sup>6</sup>) – has turned manga into a literacy of educated men – those occupying the central zone of Japanese society.

## A City Culture

Manga at that stage besides being exclusively targeted at adults (and not 'kids'), who were meant to acquire through it a new wittiness about life – a fact further implying on the importance the medium was taken with<sup>7</sup> – was also a medium mainly consumed in the cities and not in the countryside. It was then a medium further inferred with the aura of modernization / culturalism (*kyoyoshugi*), a medium of the new cultured man.

Like other places all over the world, cities in Japan, were the first to undergo modernization, and to be swept by many of the modern vogues. These were usually first consumed by the young and sophisticated urban people, creating within the cities themselves zones of high culture as well as some lower ones, like in the case of Tokyo, where a Yamanote culture - that of the urban elites – and Shitamachi culture – of those less able ones – were formed (Nagamine 2001: iv–v; Kenji 1994: 5). Yet, the big cities, for the many residing out of them, represented the locus of progress in relation to other places. Cities themselves were serving as mediums of communication, crossroads of modernity, passing on modern information to other places across the country, while being themselves the embodiment of modernity, holding modern institutions, modern goods and offering new experiences. The initial connection of manga with the modern written media of newspapers, which were first consumed mainly in the cities (Nagamine 2001: 3–4), and the new links between the act of reading and modernity, have thus further fortified the initial central position of manga in the newly created modern Japanese society.

## Taisho Manga – A Gradual Descent from Heaven

### Children's Manga

For many, the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s – the second part of Taisho period (1912–1925) and early Showa (1925–1989) – is the actual time of birth of modern manga, which has brought about the fermentation of new styles – later to be cropped

in the postwar era. Attention is most often given to the relatively large circulated comic strips, targeted at children, which began to appear in the newspapers. These have heralded a new development in the realm of manga – the employment of the medium to generate merely simple, even silly stories<sup>8</sup>.

The Taisho era was a time of a relatively carefree atmosphere, when Japan had already joined the ranks of the world's major powers (Hane 1986: 220). Taisho Japan is therefore, often characterized by a thriving popular culture. Popular novels, magazines, newspapers, and the new media of radio and motion pictures disseminated “culture” into the countryside and onto the lower levels of the cultural and intellectual spectrum. As Ann Waswo (1996: 63–4) puts it, in “the early 1920s the full impact of mass literacy was to be felt in both urban and rural Japan, and the written word began functioning as a tool of organization”.

This steadily growing literate populace has brought about, already in the mid-twenties, a fierce competition among newspapers to capture the subscription market, making newspapers increase entertainment features – adding the serialization of novels by well-known popular authors and thickening the share of manga as well. Offering readers independent manga supplement was one more service devised in order to attract new readers<sup>9</sup>. In that environment of media competition children manga have also begun to systematically draw attention<sup>10</sup>.

Till the end of the 1920s, however, manga – children's manga included – was still generally consisted of no more than four to eight frames on a page, serialized only in newspapers or their color supplements. In the 1930s, though, a further development came about. Established publishing companies such as Kodansha and Nakamura Shoten had shown new interest in children's manga, and actively began participate in children's manga production (Shimizu 1991: 145). From that point on, Schodt (1983: 51) reports that ‘fat monthly children's magazines like Kodansha's *Shonen Club* began including longer, serialized comics, where each episode often ran to 20 pages and formed a complete story’. What is known as ‘*Story manga*’ has thus emerged. Monthly magazines such as *Shonen Club*, *Shojo Club*, *Shojo no Tomo* or *Nihon Shonen* that were targeted at children till the age of 10 had gradually expanded their sales, arriving



at times at sales of 1 to 2 million copies all together (Akiyama 1998: 25).

### Central Roots Still intact

Yet, as Shimizu (1999: 95–7) emphasizes the Taisho era was still, at large, a time when manga was mainly perceived by its young artists as another field of fine art, allowing creators to freely express themselves. For that same purpose, artists have also established their own independent magazines, that were like a mini-media, separated from the big newspapers and in which they also staged their art, commenting about social affairs. Thus, we may see the publishing of special manga magazines established as research bulletins by manga-enthusiasts, collaborating in issuing their own magazines. The two magazines, one by the name *Manga* and the other by the name *Tobae*, which were first issued in 1918, were a reflection of this trend. On the other hand, there was also a tendency of ordinary magazines to issue special collections of some important manga – that is, foreign manga – that were considered a corner stones of that art, calling for their mastering by anyone aspiring to be seen enlightened / cultured / educated / westernized. Indeed, deep into the Taisho and early Showa periods the mass media often introduced American manga, issuing them in special volumes (Shimizu 1986). On the part of Okamoto Ippei, we may see the innovation of what he termed *Manga Manbun*, caricatures accompanied by short essays / comments allowing the manga journalist to expand his commentary power. By 1932, this style of *Manga Manbun* had become the main genre of manga expression, while still mainly operating within the journalism realm. This genre was especially acclaimed by intellectuals, who were still its major audience. The famous Japanese author Natsume Soseki is recorded to have praised this social commentary style created by Okamoto Ippei, with whom he was a close friend (Shimizu 1991: 122–3; 1999: 74).

### Manga – By itself a Center and a Periphery

As demonstrated above, the late Meiji, the Taisho and the early Showa eras, have expanded the realm of manga into two opposite directions. On the one hand there was the old artistic expression with its main outlets still in the daily newspapers, and magazines, which were now joined by few experimental types of research bulletins. On the other, there emerged a new line of magazines whose main goal was to produce manga for the youngsters. While the former were still aimed at adults, commenting about social affairs, the latter were forming a new readership – the children – making up stories, and paving the way for an entertainment manga.

As the above split of directions was detected, criticism from those at the center was soon at the door, forcing a divide of center and periphery in the medium of manga itself. At around Taisho 15 (July 1926), for instance, a union of manga artists, the *Nihon Mangaka Renmei* was formed. The union specified that its aim was to develop the medium of manga – only that of cartoons / caricatures made of one plate – and to bring it back to the artistic standard it deserves. An advertisement, which the union issued and included a call to other manga artists to join in, stated that ‘a certain dullness and stagnation at the manga medium has began, and some *vulgar* manga with no comment about society have recently seen light’. As a counter-reaction, ‘*so that manga would not be misjudged as a medium of the lower classes of society*’, they set themselves to cultivate the artistic aspects of the medium of manga and called others to join in. Elsewhere, Shimizu (1991: 148) records, that as soon as 1931, calls by some other manga artists associations – some aimed at introducing ‘civilized’ manga to elementary school children – expressed contempt towards the commercial children manga of the time, which were said to badly influence children.

As happens with any elite’s status symbol that is emulated by lower classes of society, here too, the medium of manga, which by now has become a medium of expression associated with the cultured classes – the intelligentsia – was forced to reshape itself. As upwardly aspiring people were attempting to emulate elite culture – consuming and producing their own manga – the elite, which felt dispossessed, reacted by refining their taste, criticizing the form of emulated manga, and describing it as

vulgar. This reaction of the elite / center was backed by the modern discourse of enlightenment, which since the Meiji era evaluated cultural products according to their fitness to assist modern values and beliefs. Manga was then a “good” product as long as it contributed in some way to the modern knowledge and modern education of society. Failing to do so turned it immediately into a “bad”, vulgar product undeserved the pursuance of modern civilized men<sup>11</sup>.

### **Manga still mainly a “Center” Culture**

Manga culture had indeed begun to be diffused in Japanese society, and with its descent a discourse / debate distinguishing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ manga had been evolved. Yet, in spite the existence of a gradual diffusion it seems that on the whole manga magazines and the reading of them was still relatively highly acclaimed. However manga has moved from the modern daily medium of the newspapers into specialized magazines, aiming at children and calling for criticism, as Berndt (1994: 35–7) argues, manga was still a high-brow culture, as its children-readers were still mainly from better-off families and few children of the periphery had actually a chance to enjoy them<sup>12</sup>. That manga had kept its high-brow image at that period is also testified in the fact that when manga stories were compiled, they were issued in attractive, clothbound, hardback volumes of around 150 pages, printed in color and sold in fancy cardboard cases (Schodt 1983: 51). It seems that there was an attempt to enlarge the circle of manga readers, yet without giving up its social symbol as a modern elite culture. As an art that evolved from newspapers / journalism – medium of the cultured people – it was sold as a highly valued literature, and was therefore introduced in an appropriate wrapping. Another point worth mentioning is that manga remained basically a city culture. The magazine *Shonen Club*, which was issued by Kodansha, could illustrate this point. This magazine, which by the 1930s is said to have enjoyed a great popularity among children, is often considered as one of the representatives of this children manga culture of the time. Yet, as Iwahashi (1988: 82–3) implies, though the readers of the magazine were spread across the country, the great majority of them were still located around Tokyo, and many others were in and around the modern cities

of Kansai area (Kobe, Osaka, etc), an indication that supports the argument that the manga was still mainly a city culture.

To sum up, then, throughout the “first half of its modern development”, manga seemed to be lying mainly in the zone of Japanese *society's center* – at the locus where only relatively few upward-aspiring elements were assembled. It was produced and mainly consumed by upwardly aspiring adults, people who comprised the then educated elite of the new Japanese society and were still a minority. Yet these people represented back then all that should be aspired to, the correct and proper way – the refined taste that should be emulated. And although the number of producers and readers was constantly enlarged, the producers and consumers were still limited in number, social status, class, and consumption space. We may therefore assume that manga remained basically a tool, literacy and a symbol of a social center for quite some time.

## **Postwar Manga**

### **A Thriving Peripheral Entertainment**

It was not until later – after the Second World War – that manga has indeed profoundly changed its status. From being mainly a form of art, of communication, and commentary – a medium of the elite and thus belonging to the center of society – it now turned to be a popular entertainment genre associated with the periphery and the uneducated masses.

Soon after the war ended, manga has reappeared, reinventing itself, in few other forms. There remained the old short comic strips in newspapers, and the independent adult manga magazines such as *VAN* or *Manga Times* (Shimizu 1985: 178–181), which as before, included serialized four-panel strips, and attempted mainly to make witty comments on the reality of the time.

The most important development, however, occurred in the children's comics, which were previously denounced as lighthearted. As Schodt points out, “the old-style

hardback comics that the traditional and powerful Tokyo publishers issued were too expensive for most children" (Schodt 1983: 62). This allowed peripheral streams within the manga industry, to prosper and take the lead. One such peripheral stream was the *akahon* manga. The *akahon* were manga books (manga *tankobon*) printed on a poor quality paper. They were the product of small and poor publishing firms situated in Osaka (Takeuchi 1995: 11–33). Osaka – the big city – it was, yet, these were poor manga books, which were not even sold at regular bookstores, but at cheap candy stores, or by street vendors (Shimizu 1989: 72–73). Despite all that initial marginality, this market caught the attention of many readers and producers at the time. Not only the consumers were all poor children, but also the artists were poor and young – the formers starving for some entertainment, and the latter for some income to make a living. It was here that the 'Story manga' style for children was nurtured and reached new heights with the stories of Tezuka Osamu.

There was another very strong peripheral competitor, which was operating and producing manga for some time in the 1950's. This was the *kashihonya* – professional book-lenders stores, which offered inexpensive entertainment and lent out both books and comics by the day. The stores were often situated at train terminals and street corners lending books and magazines at the rate of 10Yen per 2 days (Kinsella 2000: 24).

If the *akahon* is said to have refined the 'Story manga' form, the invention of the *gekiga* style is rather attributed to the *kashihonya*. The *gekiga* was a return to a more realistic and political form of manga oriented towards young adults. Early *gekiga* were characterized by themes related to society and politics, attempting to break away from the pattern of shallow childish stories with no relation to contemporary affairs, which was by that time customary in manga. As was the case of the *akahon* manga, the *gekiga* manga too was innovated by a group of poor artists in the Osaka area. Most of the *gekiga* artists were no more than teenagers. Born just before the war, most of the artists had only an initial education, and a coming of age during the war or in its aftermath. They did not any longer belong to the educated classes, as manga artists used to be before the war. Rather, they were "absolutely ordinary people" (Kinsella 2000: 106).

These peripheral manga forms were first gaining support only in the periphery, outside the center. Both styles, however, in due time have also dripped into the center of the manga magazines, gradually turning into another main possession of the center, and driving their original markets (*kashihonya* and *akahon*) to a slow death. This has happened towards the early 1960s as the Japanese economy was beginning its explosive growth. Young people were in possession of more money and could afford to spend more on comics. At that time the big publishing houses from the center – from Tokyo – started a new line of manga magazines, the weekly-issues<sup>13</sup>. This intensified the production pace, which suited the newly created television-based *information society* of the 1950s, and caused other slow information and entertainment fields, like *kamishibai*, *akahon* manga and *kashihonya* to deteriorate. By the mid-1960s, most of the artists which drew for the *kamishibai* and *akahon*, though, turned to draw for *kashihonya*, and the latter, with their decay, were recruited by the newly established weekly magazines of the center, transferring also their *gekiga*-style into the center and with them their adult readers, who were attracted to the *gekiga*-style.

### **Reemergence as a Peripheral Self-Expression Medium**

At around the mid-1960s, when the locus of manga production was firmly reinstated in the old industrial Tokyo center, the manga as a medium, which reappeared supported this time mainly by forces from below in society, has gained a low reputation. It was conceived as an element of popular culture and thus not much of a “culture”. It was all along criticized and bashed by social agents, like parents associations (PTA), teachers unions, conservative intellectuals or even some manga artists who were active before the war – all pretending to speak on behalf and to represent cultural institutions. They frequently condemned manga as a vulgar, tasteless medium, which was damaging to both, public morality and children’s education (Kinsella 1996: 106). Being dispossessed of their medium of expression of earlier decades, central elements in society, armed with their *enlightenment discourse*, positioned over and again the manga at the periphery. And when, towards the end of the 1960s, it became widely obvious that manga is popular not only among ‘kids’ but

also among university students – who are supposed to represent the arsenal of central values – a public debate ensued naming the phenomenon “a new social problem” (Takeuchi 1995: 121–29). Manga was blamed for inciting students to be involved in violence and anti-social activities; it became conceived even as a social threat. On the part of the many students who resented the political institutions of the late 1960s and were holding demonstrations against them there was indeed even a pride in reading manga. One very famous slogan of the students of Waseda in their demonstrations at the end of the 1960s, included references to manga. Intended to show manga as their medium of expression, they coined the slogan saying: “*Migite ni (Asahi) Journal, hidarite ni (Shonen) Magazine*” (on the right hand we have *Asahi Journal*, on the left hand *Shonen Magazine*). And when in 1968 the Japanese terrorist organization – the Red Army (*seki-gun*) – which comprised mainly of young Japanese adolescents (in effect students), hijacked a plane to North Korea, they simply stated in their press release – “we are Tomorrow’s Joe!”<sup>14</sup> (Kinsella 2000: 32), illustrating the bonds of manga with the radical elements, whom society would have liked to label as periphery and deviant.

Dissident intellectuals and disaffected urban youths indeed regarded manga to be progressive criticism and taboo breaking. It was almost a bizarre situation. An entertainment media – the manga – which was produced by established publishing companies of the center, companies that otherwise publish pure literature, became embraced by peripheral groups, and served as their own medium of expression. One cannot explain this, unless realizing that at that stage the manga was indeed a peripheral medium, recognized as a representation of all that was unorthodox, not only by its consumers. By now manga could have been a medium operated and controlled by industrialists, who belonged to the economic or cultural center, in practice, however, it was produced by artists emanating from the periphery. Being produced by artists from the periphery, manga has kept close contacts with the social realities of the periphery, reflecting its aspirations and attracting its support.

Indeed, as Kinsella (2000: 32) reports, commercial weekly magazines from the mid-1960s repeatedly sought to include political and social themes in their manga<sup>15</sup>. It is as if it was fashionable to make a statement, which was, at that point, largely an

anti-establishment one. It was a reflection, I presume, of the social elements at which manga addressed itself. These were the youngsters who at that stage were largely confronting / challenging the orthodox values of society, what was thought as the fundamental and sacred beliefs of the Japanese group, the values of progress in whatever cost. This overall inclination to what is conceived as "left", as opposed to the political, industrial and business centers, which were largely conservative, contributed further, it seems, to the negative image of manga, and to its continual association with the lower strata of society, outside the spectrum of "official" Japanese culture.

### **Contempt despite Continual Expansion**

The 1970s further brought expansion of the manga medium. It was in this decade that new magazines, wholly dedicated to adult readers, were established and new genres explored. As a whole, it was also throughout the 1960s and 1970s that the field of manga criticism, was actually established, yielding a harvest of at least eight different books which examined the different aspects of the field (Takeuchi 1995: 118–20). The more time passed by, the more manga had become diversify in themes, readers, and forms, making the discussion of it more complicated, and thus yielding a spate of books devoted to unlock the 'riddle of manga' – the phenomenon of its growing popularity. It was indeed throughout these initial decades after the war that the manga also made new approaches back towards mainstream adult readers. Yet, despite those new approaches towards central elements of society – manifested by the establishment of quality magazines such as COM and GARO which produced so called "difficult manga" – manga, as critics note, was largely considered a peripheral medium, deserved to be read by the less educated, a medium that basically had bad influence over children, and reflected poor upbringing in elder readers (Berndt 1994: 13–14; Kure 1986: 81). It continued to be marginalized and rejected by "respectable" Japanese cultural and social institutions. In other words, manga was out of the center.



## Manga – the 1980s

### Once Again an Acclaimed Art

From the mid-1980s on, there were soaring sales of manga books and magazines. There was also a transformation of the old demographic categories, which used to reflect the actual gender and age of readers of specific magazines, into stylistic categories describing the style and content of manga. And there was ever more diverse subjects and themes dealt by the medium. The most prominent transformation, however, was the change in the image the manga has gone through, becoming once again an 'art' deserving to be consumed and produced by elite members of society. From this period on, manga became recognized as a national culture, displayed even in museums. In 1988, manga items began to appear in art galleries, framed as works of art hanged on walls to be observed by visitors. Museums across the country began to almost compete over who holds unique and better manga exhibitions. Between 1990 and 1998 alone, Kinsella (2000: 95) reports, of no less than 12 museums displaying manga works of various individual artists. To name just a few, in 1990 it was the respected Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art that chose to display the works of Tezuka Osamu, and in 1998 it was the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, which held a general exhibition describing the postwar development of manga.

The acknowledgement of manga as an art was not confined to Japan alone. As early as 1983, the first comprehensive book in English, considering manga in its many aspects, by the famous American manga critic Schodt, was published, celebrating it as a unique Japanese medium of expression. In 1992, manga was also the focus of an exhibition arranged in the San-Francisco Cartoon Art Museum, where it was introduced by the exhibition's curator as 'fine art in making, just the way woodcut prints were and are' (Mainichi Daily 1992).

Manga's new direction and social status was repeatedly conveyed through various media channels. The new power of manga was spread in articles and books, in advertisements placed in newspapers or even in television documentary programs and radio broadcasts (Kinsella 2000: 70). Manga criticism was conferred with intellectual

respect, and books on manga by manga critics and scholars turned into hot commodities. Manga returned to be treated as a respectful medium of expression in which its artists, publishers and critics became once again a source of authority.

Manga had also begun to be approached by forces at the center that were previously either critical of it, indifferent to it or even against it. Politicians began airing interviews in manga magazines, or otherwise confessing of their habit to read manga at times of relaxation, as was in the case of the two former Japanese prime ministers Kichi Miyazawa and Ryutaro Hashimoto (Schodt 1996: 19). Government ministries began using the medium of manga for publicizing official documents. The Finance Ministry, for example, printed the Environment White Paper in the form of manga in 1994. In 1984, questions about manga were incorporated in the entrance exam papers to public university, and in 1985 works by Tezuka Osamu and Sato Sanpei were incorporated into sections of elementary *school textbooks on Japanese culture* approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ito 1994:81).

Manga has turned 'civilized', and by 1989 was considered by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (*bunkacho*) even appropriate for educational rewards (Kinsella 2000: 95). And if that was not enough, by 1997, there were already fourteen universities and colleges, which offered some form of teaching in manga studies, allowing a *scholarly peek* into this form of art. As a valuable and respected art, a *manga theory (mangaron)*, equivalent to literary theory was also developed, attempting to put some order into the field, as if there should be any. Past works were reevaluated and given the tug of manga classics, as in every respected art field. These early manga classics, began to resurface, newly packed in dust jackets, designed as novels or in small pocket-size books, more typical of literature than manga books, to which were often added some explanatory words written by some manga 'authority'.

### **A Search-Engine**

Amidst all those developments, as manga became more respectable, there started to appear new signs of content transformation as well. A new genre, widely known as Information Manga has emerged. These were manga works attempting to

assist modern adults in digesting by now excessive modern knowledge. The first of such works was the widely known work by Ishinomori Shotaro, *Manga Nihon Keizai no Nyumon* (Introduction to Japanese Economics in Manga), which was first published in 1986 by the serious financial broadsheet, the Nihon Keizai Shinbun, and was meant to help digest otherwise difficult economic material. Another famous work, worth mentioning is the 48-volume *Manga Nihon no Rekishi* (the History of Japan in Manga), which was also drawn by Ishinomori Shotaro, but commissioned this time by the serious magazine Chuo Koron beginning in 1989. It was an attempt to draw closer the otherwise remote historical knowledge. This work was later recognized by the *Monbusho*, for educational purposes. By now, then, manga has offered itself as another useful information search-engine, suitable for the Internet era.

Information manga, mainly targets adults and young adolescents. It is printed on expensive paper, sometimes in full or part-color, frequently bound in hard-cover with glossy high quality dust jackets, and often first published in serious adult magazines, some of which use the written word as their major method of commentary.

Praised for the educational merits it carries, manga for adults has gradually began to assume the characteristics of newspapers. And so, like newspapers, they became directly involved in actual matters preoccupying Japanese society, providing factual data, engaging in various topical discussions and providing social and political statements. Manga stories were said to become ever more political (Yomiuri Shinbun 1992, quotes in Kinsella 2000: 90). One prominent example of the politicization of manga is provided by the manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori, who as early as the 1990s inaugurated the popular political satire series, called *Gomanizumu Sengen*, in which he offered social and political commentary. It was, and still is, about actual topics such as social discrimination, religious sectarianism, and lately even the still highly controversial issue of WWII and its place in Japanese society.

### **A Shift in the Production Cycle**

Introducing / supporting again central values and beliefs – attempting to educate and pass on otherwise complex, communal, and central knowledge –

information manga, adult manga and manga in general was back at the central zone of Japanese society. To sustain that new social status, a rearrangement of the production cycle took place. In 1997, Kinsella (2000: 52) reports, that there were 4000 professional manga artists working for 273 manga magazines. The great majority of them, she attests, were not famous, and many were still coming from poor families, of working class origins, working for small publishers and minimal financial rewards. Based on a field work done in Kodansha, however, Kinsella reports, that a reorganization of adult manga's production cycle has taken place, at this point allowing manga editors – social elite by now<sup>16</sup> – to take charge of the themes, and the way of their depiction in journals. This in turn, she argues, has helped to sustain the new respected place of manga in society. As in this constellation, it was largely the editors' ideas, research and experience, rather than the social experience of the artists, which were transmitted to the readers. Adult manga stories, therefore, began to reflect the white-collar employees', and thus members of the social and cultural center points of view rather those of the periphery. Indeed she indicates, adult manga magazines since the mid-1980s feature many stories that revolve around scenes in board-meeting rooms, shareholders' offices, taxis, hotels, and elegant buildings. This is a great change from earlier adult manga stories that were concerned with matters of the man in the street. The focus was thus narrowed and shifted to the interests, values, beliefs and experiences of the center of the Japanese society, which now encapsulates the many middle class Japanese and their common 'normal' activities.

### **Concluding thoughts: manga – from center to periphery, back and forth**

As this review demonstrates, the appearance of manga at the central zone of society is not a new phenomenon. Manga, when first introduced in modern Japan, had actually started its way in the center of society.

Twice, in the center, manga inferred upon its producers an aura of social

importance, lending them social authority, and giving consumers a sense of participation in major / central processes taking place in society. Twice as well, while at the center, manga was an adult literacy, not a matter for 'kids'.

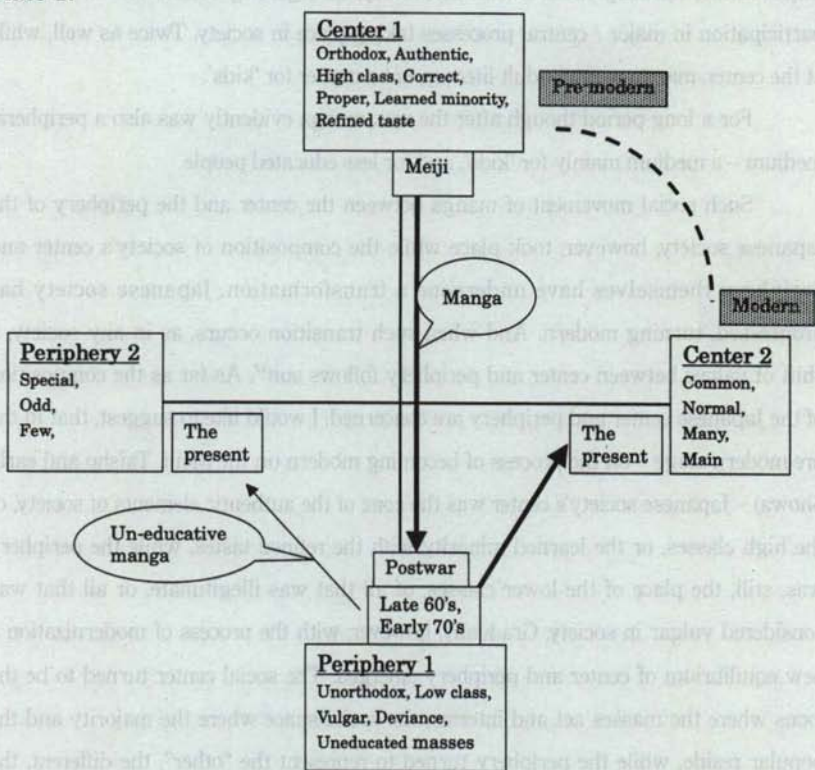
For a long period though after the war, manga evidently was also a peripheral medium – a medium mainly for 'kids', and for less educated people.

Such social movement of manga between the center and the periphery of the Japanese society, however, took place while the composition of society's center and periphery themselves have undergone a transformation. Japanese society has progressed, turning modern. And when such transition occurs, as in any society, a shift of values between center and periphery follows suit<sup>17</sup>. As far as the composition of the Japanese center and periphery are concerned, I would like to suggest, that in the pre-modern stage – on the process of becoming modern (in the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa) – Japanese society's center was the zone of the authentic elements of society, of the high classes, or the learned minority with the refined tastes, while the periphery was, still, the place of the lower classes, of all that was illegitimate, or all that was considered vulgar in society. Gradually, however, with the process of modernization a new equilibrium of center and periphery emerged. The social center turned to be the locus where the masses act and interact, the social space where the majority and the popular reside, while the periphery turned to represent the "other", the different, the odd, the exception, the minor streams, undercurrent in society<sup>18</sup>.

This move of manga from center to periphery and backwards to the center, while acknowledging the transformations those zones have undergone is illustrated in Plate 1. The first set of images for center and periphery (marked as Center 1 – Periphery 1' set), illustrates the pre-modern stage, while the second set (identified as Center 2 – Periphery 2' set) illustrates the modern stage<sup>19</sup>. The shift in the composition of center and periphery, which has been brought about by the modern era, is visualized in the diagram as a rotation of the vertical set of lines to the horizontal position. The movement of manga within the cultural field of the Japanese society, on the other hand, is pointed out by the bold-lined arrows.

The whole endeavor to call attention to such oscillation of manga in society

Plate 1:



was made in order to allow new ways of talking about manga, of discussing it. The recent inclusion of manga in the center of society, and again inferring upon it a status of art, have yielded somewhat a stiffness in matters of discussing manga, which this paper tries to overcome. The status of art, and the authority given to some of its famous producers have somehow eliminated from discourse a whole line of thinking and ideas that do not fit that status. Criticizing Tezuka manga, for instance, has become almost a heresy in present Japanese society. By raising this new line of arguments the paper attempts to generate new possibilities of talking about the subject.

Therefore, this study has entertained the possibility of discussing prewar

manga all together from the point of view of its merit in society, from the standpoint of the meaning it represented to society's members, arguing for more or less a continuous affiliation of manga with central values of Japanese society. It is not to suggest, though that changes in such affiliation did not occur. On the contrary, gradual changes and moves, as indeed the paper also demonstrated, were taking place all along. But on the whole these changes were meager leaving manga still associated with central elements of society. When examined from this prism, the postwar manga, then, demonstrates an interesting point. It was revived in the periphery and stayed there for quite a long time until recently embraced back to represent central values of Japanese society.

To sociologically comprehend the movement of manga between the center and periphery, I would like to refer for a moment to Bourdieu's analogy. The field of national culture, Bourdieu (1985) argues, is a space of identity positions, each occupied by a set of collective actors. Each identity position is taken by a specific variant of the national culture, whose believers and representatives continually struggle to gain recognition, legitimacy, and dominance. The issue at stake, in these struggles, is the repertory of practices, tastes sensibilities, elements of knowledge and canons of art forms and art works – or in short, the institutionalized cultural repertoire (Lamont 1995) that defines 'natural' membership in the given national culture, and is otherwise termed as the central values of society.

In light of this imagery, it seems that in the Meiji era, a time when the boundaries of Japanese national culture were newly created to encompass a modern pattern, the manga, which was identified as a modern variant, was taken by modern Japanese actors to represent the new national community. It was taken to represent the dominant national cultural capital and habitus – taken as an identity position representing the Japanese modern.

Gradually however, the association of manga with the modern – the modern as it was thought to be experienced in the West – began in itself to be eroded. The modern began to encapsulate many other things than manga, and the general definition of art started to shift away from comics<sup>20</sup>. In the struggle over recognition, legitimacy and dominance in the cultural field, which took place immediately after the

war, manga was then, removed from representing the national culture, and was left to act mainly in the periphery of society.

Yet, this as well was to change as society itself eventually changed. Since the 1980s 'the global flow of cultural materials has increased the amount of cultural materials, available in a given national cultural setting, for the construction of the contemporary sense of national culture' (Regev 2000: 226). This in turn, has meant also an erosion of the notion of national culture itself as this abundance of cultural materials also meant the blur of distinctions between nations. Under these conditions, however, the manga – now conceived as uniquely Japanese, something which does not exist elsewhere – was once again a proper component to represent the Japanese center, a proper element of central Japanese knowledge. At this stage cultural producers, which ordinarily are associated with other cultural variants, have embraced again manga as one of the representatives of the national culture<sup>21</sup>.

## Notes

- 1 For a glimpse at this matter see Miyahara and Ogino (2001: 132–3); Kure (1986: 113–120); Brendt (1994: 24–30) or Schodt (1983: 28–37).
- 2 In 1862, Wirgman is recorded to have inaugurated a British-style humor magazine, *The Japan Punch*, which was targeted at the foreign community in Yokohama. It consisted primarily of text, but contained also cartoons by Wirgman. These were mainly satirical drawings of the citizens of Tokyo. In 1887, Bigot had formed his own magazine by the name *Tobae*, cartooning both Japanese society as well as government members (Schodt 1983: 38–40).
- 3 Though it gradually and sporadically started to be in use, the word "manga" was not at first as widespread as one might think. Kure (1986: 20) points out that the manga supplement of the newspaper Jiji Shinpo (first issued in February 1921), which was called Jiji Manga had greatly helped to popularize the word manga among its users. At first, the words '*tobae*', or '*ponchie*' were rather in wider usage (Miyahara and Ogino (2001: 132) – imitating, it seems, the words pushed first by Bigot and Wirgman respectively.
- 4 It was a manga supplement of the newspaper Jiji Shinpo, which was also established by Fukuzawa himself (Kure 1986: 20, 79-80).



- 5 The founder of Minyusha publishing house, which issued the newspaper *Kokumin no Tomo* from 1887 to 1898. It was Japan's first general magazine and the most influential of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6 Narrators, using a sequence of hand-painted cardboard story sheets, would travel around neighborhoods and present stories – with sound effects – to local children. The genre enjoyed great popularity in early Showa, and then once again in the immediate postwar years. For more information on kamishibai see Yamamoto (1996: 252–279) or the Saitama-ken Heiwa Shiryokan catalogue *Senso to kamishibai* (1998).
- 7 Shimizu (1999: 164) also indicates that in the first stage of manga journalism, most of those engaged in the production cycle were males, a fact, he argues, was reflected in the overall negative image of women portrayed in manga. In addition, he points out that the great majority of manga readers at that time were adults, and more precisely male adults, a fact which has also most probably played a role in that negative tone.
- 8 In fact the first modern appearance of children manga, was even earlier – at the late part of Meiji, when some magazines began publishing adaptations of manga for children, or created new stories with an appeal to children. It is even customary to name the magazine *Shonen Puck* which was first published in Meiji 40 (1908), as the first manga magazine wholly for children. Nonetheless, despite all these early developments, it is customary to speak of Taisho as the time of birth of children manga (Shimizu 1999). The issue of the magazine called *Kodomo Puck* in Taisho 13 (1925), to which many famous manga artist / journalists contributed their works, is thus often considered as the actual start of children manga.
- 9 The inception of radio broadcasting in 1925 only intensified the competition among the various newspapers and magazines, which were the primary media until the 1920s.
- 10 In Taisho 10 (1922), a colored one-page children manga appeared in the Sunday supplement of *Jiji Shinpo*. In Taisho 12 (1924), both *Asahi Graph* and *Asahi Shinbun* serialized *Shochan no boken*, which soon became a big hit. In 1924, we also have the appearance of the story called *Nonkina Tosan*, in the evening newspaper *Yukan hochi shinbun*, a story which was so successful that it generated a separate production of best-selling booklets, wind-up dolls, puppets and towels, and was even dramatized on the radio and turned into a film.
- 11 In regard with the modern discourse of enlightenment and its effect on manga see the interesting discussion by Kure (1986: 19–28, 67–94).
- 12 A similar argument is being put by the Saitama-ken Heiwa Shiryokan catalogue (1998: 18).
- 13 First, in 1959, it was only Kodansha and Shogakukan, which issued the *Shonen Magazine* and the *Shonen Sunday* respectively. Yet, in a few years time they were followed by other established companies, such as Shonen Gahosha, which established *Shonen King* in 1963,

- Shueisha that issued *Shonen Jump* in 1966, and Akita Shoten, which published *Shonen Champion* in 1969.
- 14 *Tomorrow's Joe* is a manga story which was published in *Magazine* between 1968 and 1973. It is a story of a poor boy who becomes a boxer and fights his way to fame and honor. The story was blamed for inciting violence amongst students participating in street demonstrations.
- 15 Between 1969 and 1971 the *Sunday* serialized a historical drama by the artist team Fujio Fujiko about the Chinese Cultural Revolution titled simply *Mao Tse Tung*. In 1971, *Jump* carried a story titled *The Human Condition* (Ningen no Joken), a story about the treatment of Chinese prisoners of war in Manchuria by the Japanese army. *Jump* was also reported to have published encouraging photographs of political demonstrations, depicting students campaigning for B52 bomber planes to leave Japan's soil and go back to the US. Many top artists at this period are also recorded to have separately lent their talents to the production of political materials in manga form to organizations such as the Japan Labor Union (Nihon Rodo Kumiai) (Kinsella 2000: 32–34). Many stories detailing the tragedy of the Second World War, narrating its stupidity and refusing to gloss over war crimes made by Japanese soldiers, have also seen light during this period.
- 16 Editors in Kodansha, Kinsella (2000: 169) reports, tended to be bookish, opinionated, individualistic and sometimes eccentric. Manga editors in large companies, she adds, had all graduated from high-ranking universities. Succeeding in entering a prestigious publishing company immediately upon graduation, they further received social prestige and of course high salaries. Financially comfortable and highly educated, they firmly belonged to a social group rich in social capital.
- 17 While in pre-modern stages, central worldview, for instance, was determined by religious values and beliefs, which portrayed a world of the Bible and other sacred scripts, in the modern one, the central worldview is emanating rather from scientific and logical narratives, and the former pre-modern values are pushed into a peripheral status.
- 18 When a certain society is still in a pre-modern stage, which means that the political power is concentrated in the hands of few, (and this is the force to organize society), then center tends to reflect the elite, the educated minority, and the periphery, I believe, is mainly represented by the uneducated masses. In contrast, in the modern era, which presupposes equality and prerequisite free consumption for its sound development – the center, the locus, which symbolizes the ultimate meanings – shifts into the zone of the majority, where the “usual” and “normal” of that society is consumed. The periphery then turns to be all those who defy the previous main currents, the few that dare to do the otherwise.
- 19 The first set was deliberately drawn vertically to express the relatively wide gap between

center and periphery, and the grave situation in which a few wealthy ruled the deprived masses. The vertical line intends to create an illusion of upper layer marking the center, in contrast to a lower layer, which designates the periphery, suggesting the wide inequality that often existed in this equilibrium. The second set of images, by contrast, is symbolized by a horizontal line, suggesting on the fact that in spite of the gap which separates center and periphery, placing them on opposites sides of the social spectrum, they are often close to each other and in many cases approached as equals.

- 20 Interestingly enough also in the West at that time some productions of comics were criticized as improper. Immediately after the war, while a wave of criticism at manga, claiming it to be too violent and grotesque for children, was evident in Japan, in England, the U.S., and Canada, a sudden interest in comics and concern about its regulation was also in place, attempting to eradicate horror depictions in children media (Takeuchi 1995: 64).
- 21 There are many "morally irresponsible" (violence oriented) manga, which are considered still as raw entertainment of bad influence. The discourse (and deeds) maintaining the social elevation of manga, however, does not make this distinction, apparently deliberately ignoring these branches, attributing them to the periphery, and implicitly re-defining "manga" in general as a central medium. When put in the diagram above, these manga branches though should be positioned in periphery 2.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Global increases in problems of illicit drugs reflect and contribute to international tensions. The origins of some of these tensions are clear: rising changes in political alignment, reduced family and community cohesiveness, increased unemployment and under employment, economic and social marginalization and increased crime. At a time when dramatic improvements take place in some sectors, e.g. communications and technology, improvement of the quality of life for many people has often far short of the potential that exists and the rising expectations of people who know life can be better.

In recent years, the macroeconomic environment has fundamentally changed globally. World trade and investment have expanded and brought to some areas of the

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