

Tomasz Bazylewicz (*Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań*)

TRANSFER OF JAPANESE CULTURE PATTERNS
ON THE EXAMPLE OF A COMIC BOOK.
HOW MANGA CONQUERED THE WORLD AND BECAME
AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE POLISH PUBLISHING MARKET?

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The interest of Japanese readers in the comic book to this day shows a stable level, and the entire cultural industry there has grown into one of the most profitable in the world. It is not surprising that Japanese pop culture has begun global expansion, succeeding in its successful march in the West. In 2006, the *New York Times* wrote that the Japanese comic strip represents one of the better-growing publishing sectors in the US [Kelts R. 2006: 19]. The charm of the so-called *manga* has not been resisted even by Europe, becoming an equally lucrative market. Eventually, Polish society willingly joined the fascination with far eastern picture art.

THE JAPANESE SYMBOL

Will Eisner¹, who devoted many years to develop a greater understanding of his profession in American society, was shocked at the scale of the popularity of the picture medium in the country for many still a mystery. For years, the Japanese comic book remained a purely internal good, far beyond the interest of the global reader. Currently, however, together with the Japanese animation (the so-called *anime*), *manga* has grown to the

¹ Will Eisner (1917-2005): American comic creator, considered one of the most outstanding. He taught drawing illustration at the New York School of Visual Arts. Since 1988, the prestigious Eisner Awards for the most distinguished creators and their works have been awarded in the world of comics.

rank of a global phenomenon. Everywhere where manga managed to get, it took root almost instantly, gathering around recipients represented by various age, social and cultural groups. Therefore, it seems apt to say that understanding what manga is will allow us to get to know better today's modern Japan, but also today's globalized world, and thus us ourselves.

The main purpose of this publication will be to describe, on the example of manga, the transfer of Japanese popular culture patterns to the West, including Poland and their commercial use. It is an attempt to describe the role of the Japanese comic in the modern world and what should be understood under the notions of consumerism, globalism, individualism and popular culture, which in its context constantly intermingle with each other. The content of the article, through the use of various tools – from economic dependencies to cultural expansion – will allow shedding some light on understanding the manga (and the comic as a whole) and its positioning in global culture. Why, wherever it reaches – also to post-socialist Poland – can manga unify readers and gain a solid market position? At the same time, we will not achieve this without setting out a certain chronology of events and tracing the broader historical context from the first expansion of Japanese creativity to world markets and describing the specifics of the Polish comics market.

Satirical illustrations and picture stories made in the western style were already created in nineteenth-century Japan, thanks to contacts with European artists. This was possible due to the reforms of the Meiji period (1868-1913) held under the slogan of imitating Western countries representing modernity². Next, the Japanese comic writers visited America in the 1920s, succumbing to the influence of local art [Schodt F. L. 1997: 43-45]. However, for the sake of readability, we will focus only on the period after the Second World War, that is, the birth of a contemporary style of picture narration almost everywhere appearing under the name of *manga*.

This article should be treated as a kind of summary of the state of research on the selected topic. Over the years, the literature of the subject has been enriched with new, interesting positions by native authors, and the availability of foreign editions is no longer so big a problem. However, before we proceed to a broader discourse analysis, it is worth devoting a mo-

² During the Meiji reform, it was not uncommon to set up Japanese magazines run by Europeans. It is worth mentioning the "The Japan Punch" (1862) owned by the Englishman Charles Wirgman and "Tobae" (1887) belonging to the Frenchman Georges Bigot.

ment to set a strict terminological framework and theoretical foundations. This is all the more important because in the following parts of the work this procedure will be used to deepen the understanding of the issue that is undoubtedly the success of Japanese comics on foreign markets. In the final part of the considerations, the attempt to explain this phenomenon was divided into two pillars – cultural and economic. Both these blocks function in close coexistence, therefore thoughts on each of them will cross together in key fragments.

JAPANESE COMIC BOOK AND THEORY

The comic has always been considered a product of Western culture, and yet Japan also has a long tradition of storytelling. The genesis of the term *manga* should be combined with the name of the most outstanding Japanese painter of the Edo period – Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849). In 1814, the artist published a collection of fifteen volumes of illustrations entitled “Manga”, often translated, as “hastily drawn sketches”. However, “Manga”, as the name of the Japanese comic book in English, appeared in the early eighties of the last century through the publication *Manga! Manga!* Written by Frederik L. Schodt. He undertook, inter alia, attempts to explain the meaning of the new term, which is a combination of two ideograms: *man* – reflexive or involuntary, and *ga* – drawings. Schodt gave two interpretations of the new term. The first is *morally corrupt*, while the second, more popular, is *irresponsible pictures*.

This was not the intention of the author, but in some circles, both translations added bad fame to Japanese art. Essentially, the scope of this term is much larger, because technically *manga* equally well defines a caricature, a comic strip, a comic magazine, a comic book or even animation in some countries [Schodt F. L. 1996: 34]. According to the researcher Brigitte Koyama-Richard, the word *manga* in Japan in relation to the comic book is not used as often, replacing it with the term *komikku*, which is a direct adaptation of English *comic books* [Witkowska E. 2012: 65]. On the other hand, the authors of the *Reading Japan Cool* publication [Ingulsrud E., Allen K. 2009] state that *komikku* or *komikkusu* is a term for the so-called *tankōbon*, or volumes that capture previous episodes published in the manga magazine. In the publishing circle, Japanese employees use *komikkusu* not only to describe their profession but also the final effect in the form of a ready comic book, regardless of its form. This seemingly delicate language op-

eration was intended to give a more sublime character and a certain separateness of the comic industry in Japan.

Keeping a clear division, for the definition of Japanese animated films, it is better to use the term *anime*, which gained a well-established position among Polish recipients. Ultimately, the debate on the manga's definition framework does not cease in both academic circles and the fandom itself. Some want to see only Japanese art under it, while others perceive a specific aesthetics, which over the years has developed its own unique language. Western creators, however, also create comics maintained in *manga stylistics*³. For this reason, the term *manga* can be used to define the entire separate artistic style inseparably associated with Japanese roots [Cohn N.]. In a broader perspective, the manga industry is also a clear example of the *meta media* – a consumer chain of dependencies, where further comics and animations build demand for various consumer goods, from clothes, gadgets and ending with computer games.

Frederik L. Schodt pointed to the existence of two globally dominant forms of Japanese and American comics. They developed separate narrative methods, the format of publications, as well as distribution methods, the functioning of the market or even the publishing cycle [Schodt F. L. 1996: 22]. It seems, however, that this is a big simplification, because the “European school”, represented especially by the Franco-Belgian tradition, not only has a huge contribution to the development of the comic medium as a whole, but also a very absorbent market. It is also impossible not to mention the influence of British cartoonists and scriptwriters on the American comics in the 80s and 90s. This is, however, an issue for another occasion.

The biggest advantage of comic creations straight from Japan is its thematic selection. Probably, that's why many definitions had a problem with capturing the terminology of the *manga* core. In the older literature of the subject or some dictionaries, we will find the Japanese comic book assignment of interest only in *science fiction*. This is a far-reaching inaccuracy. While the American comic is mainly addressed to a young audience, where the majority of the market is made up of stories about superheroes, in Japan we see a much greater variety. The local line of business offers a much wider cross-section of positions for both sexes regardless of their age, often telling stories about ordinary people and their

³ The classic examples are *Dirty Pair* by Toren Smith and Adam Warren as well as *Megatokyo* by Fred Gallagher and Rodney Caston.

everyday struggles with adversities. Therefore, the statement that manga constitutes a certain “triumph of coarseness” seems to be the most adequate.

A SHORT OUTLINE OF THE SPECIFICS OF THE GENRE

Manga, before it appears in the form of compact volumes (so-called *tankōbon*), is issued in the form of collective magazines appearing quarterly, monthly, weekly or even fortnightly. The estimated annual comic book circulation in Japan can be estimated at over one billion copies, with a huge number of magazines being created for later recycling. In recent years, there has been a certain downward trend in manga consumption, but overall the market has been stable for decades. The total value of the comic industry in Japan exceeds \$5 billion. In contrast to the west, more than half of the titles are addressed to an adult audience – mainly older teenagers, young people studying and working [Briel H. 2010: 187].

In the past, the view that the Japanese comic is full of controversial content was strongly promoted. Today we know that Western media did not know the wider context and cultural capital of manga. It occupies a special place in the history of the newest Japan, beginning in the post-war economic recession. Based on strong roots in Japanese culture and tradition, it drew on Western cultural patterns at the same time. The birth of a new species should be attributed to one person – Osamu Tezuka, who was baptized *the god of comics* by his countrymen. During his forty-year career, Tezuka tried to create a universal medium, thanks to which he would be able to reach the largest group of recipients, regardless of age, sex or origin. He did not think about his work in terms of ordinary drawings – he saw in them a rather new language, where he wrote stories using a special type of symbols. He derived his original artistic inspiration from Walt Disney’s animated productions, which he delighted in his childhood. His debut took place in 1947 in Osaka – the media capital of post-war Japan, where Akahon (*Red Books*) enjoyed great popularity.

Classic American comics notebooks reached Japan after the end of the war through the army and the new administration. Initially, attempts were made to translate the most-sought-after titles into the native language, but ultimately the western comic strip failed to take root on the local market. The break with the pre-war isolation and the cessation of censorship had stimulating effects on the Japanese entertainment industry as a whole.

The subsequent releases boldly entered the market, while black and white printing and poor quality of paper resulted from the high price of the raw material, which was the result of the weakness of the post-war economy. The use of paper obtained from recycled paper and the use of black and white stylistics has remained up to modern times, becoming a recognizable mark of extensive manga publications. To this day, publishers want to keep the lowest possible price so that the potential consumer can afford to buy a large number of comic magazines.

IN THE BEGINNING, IT WAS ANIME: FIRST STEPS TO THE WEST

In the eighties, the whole world learned about manga thanks to the media giant that the United States was and still is. It was not a coincidence that manga conquered the hearts of Americans, because this process lasted from the sixties, where the starting point was the Japanese animated series. Essentially, in modern history, we can distinguish three waves of fascination with the Japanese culture. The first one took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when European artists discovered a unique Japanese aesthetics. The second stage dates back to the 1950s and 1960s when writers and poets became interested in the achievements of artists from Asia. The cinematography also played an important role. The third wave is the beginning of the 90s when the Japanese comic strip begins boldly breaking into the global mainstream [Kelts R. 2006: 5-16]. Three decades later, Japan is the most visible country in its region when it comes to cultural goods available in the west, although Korea is trying to keep up in the race for the recipients' hearts.

The Japanese comic book begins its expansion from the neighbouring countries in the sixties. Initially, it gained interest in Hongkong, Taiwan, and Korea influencing local artists, who, through a combination of Asian traditions with influences of the west saw in manga "the new face of Asia" [Siuyi Wang, W., 2006: 23-35]. In these countries, characters from the *Doraemon* or *Dragon Ball* series are as popular as in Japan [Schodt F. L. 1996: 305-307]. In the west, however, it appeared only twenty years later in the wider consciousness. After all, already in the 1960s Americans received the first reprints of Osamu Tezuki's works, but they did not get much interest. The main problem at the time was the specifics of the Japanese comics. Of course, this is about reading from left to right. Performing a mir-

ror reflection for the preservation of the western arrangement of frames resulted in reading dislike because they unknowingly influenced so negatively on the overall sense of the story. For a far-reaching interference in their work, the manga creators did not allow in later years. A great example is Akira Toriyama – the author of the iconic *Dragon Ball* [Goldberg W. 2010: 287]. The translation of the content was also a unique challenge, amongst others because of the context of the Japanese language. In the end, for some, the fact of a black-and-white formula that was the opposite of native colorful notebooks was also difficult to accept. Certainly, one cannot exclude a certain amount of market protectionism from local publishers.

The difficult role of the ambassador of Japanese popular culture initially fell onto the *anime*. In the 1950s and 1960s, American television stations acquired copyrights for series created by Osamu Tezuka. Productions like *Astro Boy* or *Jungle Taitei* (in Polish *Biały Lew Kimba*) quickly won the hearts of the young audience. At the end of the 1970s, the TV producer Sandy Frank saw in the Japanese animation unlimited potential, but before it could be presented to the youngest viewers, it had to undergo editing. The editing and application of dubbing turned out to be a less problematic process than the first attempts to adapt the comic books [Kelts R. 2006: 13]. Finally, the turning point in the history of Japanese animation turned out to be April 1977. The famous Cannes film festival since 1963 has been accompanied by the MIP-TV event (*Marché International de Programmes*). During the conference, the Tatsunoko Production company in Kyoto, managed by three Yoshida brothers, demonstrated the animation of *Mach Go Go*, a Western viewer later known as *Speed Racer*. The production was appreciated, and the positive reviews and reputation of the festival gave even more publicity. Later, thanks to the wider awareness of teenagers, the Yoshida brothers opened a completely new episode for Japanese pop culture [Kelts R. 2006: 11].

TIME FOR MANGA: IN SEARCH OF NEW SALES MARKETS

The first Japanese comic book published in the US using the original set of drawings was *Hadashi no Gen*, which was later published in Poland thanks to Waneko entitled *Hiroshima 1945: Bosonogi Gen* [Schodt F. L. 1997: 154]. The success of the manga hit on the American market turned out to

be published in 1987 (seventeen years after the original debut) series *Lone Wolf and Cub*⁴. In the literature of the subject, we find opinions that it was thanks to this saga that a real manga boom in the USA was initiated. Its release to the comic scene there was undoubtedly important. Frank Miller admitted that in the work on his *Ronin* the Japanese series by Kazuo Koike and Goseka Kojima was the foundation of inspiration. In next year Marvel begins publishing an even bigger hit – *Akira*, by Katsuhiro Ōtomo.

The manga procession to the West gained momentum. Consequently, at the end of 2005, the Japanese comics market in the US was valued at an astronomical amount of USD 180 million. Not only Americans, but the whole world is chasing Japan in the consumption of manga volumes. In Germany, ten years ago, fifty new items were sent to bookshops every ten months, accounting for 50% of the total comic sector there [Briel H. 2010: 188]. The trouble-free adaptation of the Japanese creativity took place in countries with a developed comic tradition. France is still considered to be the largest European market of pictorial history, demonstrating strong diversity and attachment to its own traditions. Despite the first resistance from various interest groups, manga managed to find about 38% of the market there [Bouissoou J.]. In Italy, the first manga appeared in 1962, but it settled in 1990 after the release of the aforementioned *Akira* [Bouissou J. 2010: 254].

Theoretically, European base seems easier to penetrate for Asian artists, because in contrast to the media giant behind the Atlantic, it does not require a time-consuming and expensive re-edition of manga and anime [Kelts R. 2006: 101]. Despite this, we see some exceptions in the past. In the UK until 2005, the internal manga market did not exist. The investors there did not see potential in it, and more interesting items were imported from the USA. Currently, things look completely different. Three factors could have decided about the overall success of manga reprints in Europe: unprecedented diversity, a unique way of narration, and a lower price for more pages compared to native art.

⁴ In Poland, published in the years 2006-2008 by the publishing house Mandragora, under the title *Kozure Okami: Samotny Wilk i Szczenię*. The first seven volumes have been published.

POLISH INTEREST IN MANGA

Currently in Poland, one can see a real boom on everything that is associated with the Japanese culture: film, books, culinary and of course, comic and animation. Cyclically organized exhibitions on Japanese culture and art that are not directly connected with widely understood pop culture are very popular. All that is Japanese has made a home in Poland, and publishers can only wish that the current trend will not lose its strength⁵. Unfortunately, the broader consciousness is still dominated by the images of Japanese society based on stereotypes developed in the past – hard-working, attached to tradition and closed to external influences by the nation at the end of Asia.

As in the case of previously mentioned sales markets, animations were the carrier of Japanese cultural capital in Poland. In the search for pioneer productions, we must go back to the 1970s, and thus the Edward Gierek⁶ era and the first such open acceptance of the West by the authorities of the PRL. Japanese art arrived at the cinema and on television. Perhaps the most striking example will be the children's series *Maya the Bee* (in Polish *Pszczółka Maja*) and films like *Puss in Boots* (in Polish *Kot w Butach*), which, moreover, was appreciated at the International Film Festival in Moscow in 1970 [Witkowska E. 2012: 27; Przewoźniak J. 2011]. In the memory of the current forty-year-olds, the series *Battle of the Planets*, better known to the Polish viewer as *Załoga G.*, was released at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. It was an imported American version of the series *Kagaku Ninjatai Gatchaman*, significantly different from its Japanese prototype. Many of the elements of the series were subject to far-reaching modifications: the credit titles were changed, the music was cut, the number of scenes was cut, the names of the characters were changed, etc. [Nawrot R.; Reczulski Ł., Gamus P. 2015: 30]. Viewers asked about the reasons for the popularity of this animated series were pointing to the gap separating it from native productions. The expressive silhouettes of the main characters and their enemies, as well as the battles that were to be fought pointed in favour of it. The first manga reprint in Poland appeared in 1986 in the magazine "SFera", published by the Polish Association of Fantasy Lovers in

⁵ The statement of Aleksandra Siemiradzka – secretary of the editorial office in the Waneko publishing house. Own conversation on November 9, 2018.

⁶ Edward Gierek (1913-2001): Polish politician, communist activist, in the years 1970-1980 the First Secretary of the Central Committee of PZPR.

1984-1988. Only four charts of *Black Knight Batto* by Buichi Terasawa, who once served as Osamu Tezuka's assistant, were published [Misióra 2010: 145-164]. In the following years, after the systemic transformation of 1989, when there was a full opening to the western markets in Polish television, there were plenty of new animations. Many consider the actual start of anime in Poland to be the date of March 7, 1993, when broadcasting began commercial TV station Polonia 1. In its roster there were, among others: *Tiger Mask* (*Tygrysia Maska*), *Sally the Witch* (*Czarodziejka Sally*), *Captain Hawk* (*Kapitan Jastrząb*), *The Mysterious Cities of Gold* (*Tajemnicze Złote Miasto*), *General Daimos* and *Yattaman*. In the first stage, these series were not commonly associated with Japan. In the background, the Italian language could be heard, although young people were well aware that they were dealing with something completely different than European art. The aroused curiosity urged us to seek answers for the original source of the viewed images.

The next serious step forward took place in 1995 thanks to the Polsat TV channel. The roster featured a series entitled *Sailor Moon* (in Polish *Czarodziejka z Księżycą*), based on the script of the comic of the author Naoko Takeuchi. In Japan, this title belongs to the *shōjo-manga* genre, so it is addressed to the female audience in the form of girls and teenagers. However, the phenomenon of *Sailor Moon* was to attract the male part of the audience, becoming a nearly uniting of the generation of the 90s production. The popularity of this series among Polish youth is to be seen mainly in an interesting plot and the way of constructing characters diverging from American patterns, encountered in mass-produced by TM-Semic⁷ reprints of Marvel and DC Comics titles. *Shōjo-manga*, similarly to *shōnen-manga*⁸, is based on fairly universal values, around which a superstructure story is created. These are successively: love, friendship, loyalty, and courage. This scheme was worked out many years ago and without any major changes, it has worked successfully until today. Years later, it was the '*Sailor Moon*' who attributed the creation of the native fandom of Japanese culture. Ewa Witkowska in her book *Japanese comics in Poland: history and controversies*, referring to external sources, also condemns the substantial educational load of *Sailor Moon*. The Polish viewer in an unob-

⁷ TM-Semic - Polish publisher of magazines and comic books, initially a branch of the international Semic group, specializing in American comics about superheroes. In the course of activity, TM-Semic published 930 publications, mainly titles from Marvel and DC universe.

⁸ Shōnen-manga - a kind of manga designed mainly for boys.

trusive way acquired information about life in Japan in the 90s. Numerous places shown in the animation are real, and the relations between the heroines very clearly illustrated the local social structure [Witkowska E. 2012: 32; Navok J., Rudranath S. K., Mays J. 2005].

However, we cannot attribute all merits to only one TV station and a single series. Japanese pop culture found another very effective media – computer games and magazines dedicated to electronic entertainment. In 1995, the first article about manga appeared in the “Gambler” magazine. Then, the “Secret Service” magazine showed the first manga illustrations in a box run by Robert Korzeniowski. In 1996, he founded the Planet Manga company dealing with the distribution of VHS tapes with anime. Over seventy items could be found in the offer [Przewoźniak J. 2011]. Subsequent texts regularly appeared in the next magazines for players, and their editors will in future lay the foundations for a completely independent movement of magazines devoted exclusively to Asian pop culture. For example, in June 1997, the first issue of “Kawaii” appears, and two months later, “Animegaido” debuts.

We did not have to wait long for the Polish manga publishing house in these conditions. In 1996, in the town of Olecko, the company Japonica Polonica Fantastica – abbreviated to J.P.F., was established by Shina Yasuna, who had lived in Poland for years. Initially, he did not intend to enter the comics market, because Yasuda only translated the first comic book *Aż do Nieba*⁹ as part of learning Polish. Only after persuasion did he take up the publishing challenge seriously. Soon afterward, J.P.F. will enrich his portfolio with *Sailor Moon*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Oh My Goddess*, *X/1999* and the cult *Akira*. After the TV success of the *Dragon Ball* series, broadcast on RTL7, J.P.F. also undertakes to publish this manga.

In 2019, Waneko will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. The founders, who speak about themselves in the categories of avowed fans of Japanese creativity, include Aleksandra Watanuki, Kenichiro Watanuki, and Martyna Taniguchi. The three of them had always been guided by the

⁹ *Aż do Nieba* (ang. *Borders of Sky – Poland’s Secret Story*): the comic shows the fate of Prince Józef Poniatowski – nephew of the last king of Poland – against the background of the turbulent fate of the fatherland at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The author Riyoko Ikeda did not intend to focus on historical facts, although the attachment to the architecture and period clothes is at a high level. For the purposes of the story, the comic book distorts various events: the prince has a brother instead of a sister, and to add dramaturgy he is a half-Russian. The story focuses on the intricate relationships between human beings.

idea of creating their own publishing house. When Waneko was founded in June 1999, the publishing house J.P.F issued youth manga, while Kenichiro Watanuki was keen to transplant manga for a more mature reader to Poland. Hence, the selection of not only the first titles but also their format. The idea was to provide small volumes that were comfortable to hold in one hand, which would make reading easier, for example in public transport. The first released title is *Cześć, Michael! (What's Michael?)*, *Tu Detektyw Jeż (Hello Harinezumi)* and *Locke Superczłowiek (Chōjin Rokku)*. As it turned out, however, there were more recipients of the youth manga, but the goal of giving the native reader the diversity of Japanese comics has remained to this day. Waneko began attracting the attention of readers with an intense advertising campaign in the form of posters hung at stops and mass communication media, which for the newly-built comic industry in Poland was quite an avant-garde approach.

Three years later, the Polish branch of Egmont became part of a group of Polish manga publishing houses. Its advantage was the possibility of getting help with the issue of licenses by turning to Western European publishing branches – mainly from Germany. Currently, it is no longer investing in this market segment, focusing on European and American reprints and supporting domestic creativity. Regarding the acquisition of the rights to publication, Aleksandra Siemiradzka from the publishing house Waneko mentions that there are certain rules that apply during the licensing process. In general, there are no major problems with obtaining a specific title, only by way of exception sometimes some authors are more demanding than others. The biggest difficulty for the Polish publishing house is the waiting time, whether for licenses or acceptance of projects from the Japanese side¹⁰. Nevertheless, Radosław Bolalek from the Hanami publishing house remembers at the same time that some Japanese authors or publishers attach great importance to working out long-term relationships¹¹. Hanami started its activity on the comics market in 2006. Previously, it dealt with various aspects of Polish-Japanese contacts with a cultural and economic background.

The next years bring more publishing debuts. Both in the segment of magazines treating about Asian popular culture and strictly manga pub-

¹⁰ The statement of Aleksandra Siemiradzka – secretary of the editorial office in the Waneko publishing house. Own conversation on November 9, 2018.

¹¹ Own conversation during the International Festival of Comics and Games in Łódź 2017

lications. Of course, not all attempts are successful, so some projects disappear in a very short time. Finally, the publishers managed to develop a solid position in the home publishing market. However, less than 3-4 years ago there was an unexpectedly sharp increase in interest in manga, but now the situation is considered to have stabilized¹².

For years, mainstream comics and manga have been following separate paths, working out their positions in complete isolation. On the one hand, this causes that potential perturbations of one segment do not affect the other. On possible breaks of the "classic" comic, manga comic has been very beneficial, which can be proved by irrefutable successes of the Hanami publishing house. What's more, native manga publishings do not compete with each other in a furious manner. Rather, they have quite clearly divided the market among themselves by managing various thematic areas and trying to obtain the widest possible reading group [Jaworki M. 2002]. In the past, the division of consumers into those interested in "Japanese creativity" and those standing in opposition to it was also noticeable. In other words, for the statistical reader of Marvel or the French comic book, manga did not appear as an integral element of the whole medium, but rather functioned in terms of a separate being. Currently, however, this narrative is less frequent.

MEDIA AND SOCIAL RECEPTION OF MANGA IN POLAND

When in the 1990s the phenomenon of Japanese popular culture appeared in the form of a comic and animation, the Polish press attempted to explain its causes. Publications appearing in the pages of the largest and most widely read newspapers tried to preserve professionalism, referring even to scientific authorities like Frederik L. Schodt. In Polish journalism, manga was generally perceived very differently. On the one hand, its visual qualities, the diversity of the genre and the often more complex narrative were appreciated [Chaciński M. 1997: 17-23]. It was also noticed that the Japanese comic book could be aimed at an adult audience. On the other hand, we have allegations of infantilism, a straightforward pattern of division into good and evil, and incitement to immoral behaviour. The

¹² The statement of Aleksandra Siemiradzka

source of such an extreme view of the Japanese comic was the fact that, in fact, it was not really known exactly what “manga” actually is. Sometimes the theoretical errors were even made. For example, it was stated that this is the name of an extremely popular comic book series associated mainly with erotica [Górski A. 1997: 66].

Negative connotations in the mainstream media resulted mainly from the complicated history of the entire comic medium in Poland. Although we have a long creative tradition dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, the communist period left quite a significant mark, as Professor Jerzy Szyłak mentions [Szyłak J. 2005: 13-45]. After the end of World War II, the comic book returned to the Polish press, but briefly, with the introduction of the hard Stalinist doctrine, obtaining the status of an ideologically hostile product, and thus, it became a symbol of the morally corrupted West. In later years, especially during the post-Stalinist thaw and the 1970s, the communist authorities found cheap educational and propaganda means in the comic book formula. Of course, it did not bother to shine a large group of authors, whose work was appreciated by the next generations, and for some – even Grzegorz Rosiński – to achieve a stunning career abroad. For almost 45 years, the comic book in Poland has been dragged between the entertainment that allows one to break away from everyday life and ideological engagement, hence there may be some problems in understanding the whole medium by the average Pole.

REAL MANGA IDENTITY?

Nowadays, the manga phenomenon does not diminish, entering into the issues related to popular culture. Researchers notice that the modern world resembles a shop window more and more, where next to each other we find a wide range of products from the furthest corners of the world. The technological progress in the form of the development of mass media is primarily responsible for this situation [Mathews G. 2005: 13-45]. At the same time, historians and cultural researchers have repeatedly pointed out that at its base popular culture is not something permanent, but it is still subject to modifications. In such a shrunken world, if we want to keep the recipient’s attention for long enough, it requires more and more unusual products. Nevertheless, the relationship between demand and supply does not fully explain the manga’s success. Let us remember that Japan has never had experience in the expansion of cultural goods. In this

field, we mostly observed a one-way pattern, where the Japanese adapted new ideas coming from the outside. Sometimes this process was peaceful and sometimes resulted from serious historical perturbations.

Jarosław Jurga, one of the authors of the anthology *Manga in Polish*, claimed that Japanese comics do not match the system of values in force in the West. In other words, he was of the opinion that the manga title would be understood only in the country where it was made. Jurga is right, Ewa Witkowska admits. According to her, manga, as a cultural product, does not function in a vacuum. It is immersed in a specific social context, including history, politics, language, economics, family, religion, education, and demography. Thus, manga reflects the reality of contemporary Japanese society by depicting a certain lifestyle [Witkowska E. 2012: 76]. This is the most correct assumption, but it should be emphasized at the same time that manga is no longer just a Japanese comic book. We find its readers everywhere. What is more, it is also created everywhere. Literally, anyone can become a Mangaka (the author of the manga comic), if they have enough enthusiasm. We do not have to live far in the east, and in Poland, you can try your hand and achieve international success¹³.

Manga creativity has become a thematically global product. After all, Osamu Tezuka from the beginning raised issues that bear universal values – technological progress, opposition to racism, the need for social acceptance, etc. In a way, manga will be understood in terms of social and economic conditions resulting from the effects of the end of World War II. Basically, it is at its bases a combination of Japanese tradition and the influence of American pop culture. Of course, it still has its own individual character and deep roots in Japanese tradition regarding the way of imaging, and even the choice or approach of various themes¹⁴. Nevertheless, the German comic writer Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff in his essay from 2006, devoted to the issue of “globalization of comics”, pointed to the intertextuality of manga, calling it a brief remix of various styles [Briel H. 2010: 188]. It is not that in this process manga has lost its “Japaneseness”. Nowadays, in a global village, it is only a construct based on history and tradition. It is enough to look at the process of manga formation to conclude that it is the accumulation of processes identical to the postmodern society. After all,

¹³ An example will be *Manga anthology in Polish* published by Kultura Gniewu in 2003. The comic on 100 pages collected the works of well-known Polish artists as well as novices who deal with the drawing in a hobby.

¹⁴ Among the researchers, such argumentation is presented by, among others, Frederik Schodt, Brigitte Koyoma-Richard, Jean-Marie Bouissou, and Kinko Ito.

we can express our firm opposition to this phenomenon, claiming that in a wider context it kills tradition and expresses cultural identity. The problem is that, for example, the young Japanese or Polish generation did not even have the opportunity to learn about this allegedly stolen identity. Globalization processes the local sense by mixing it with others, and that it is not an unconscious one does not even have to remember [Jankowski P., Bazylewicz T.: 2012].

The above reflections may sound like a summary of globalism in the negatives themselves, but there is also the other side of the coin. The phenomenon received its name in the twentieth century, although in fact, it is as old as our civilization. Under globalism, we should understand the diffusion of ideas and concepts, where only the scale of the phenomenon and the tools used have changed. Once the carrier of change could be wars, mass migrations of the population and eventually trade routes and expeditions of explorers. Today, a modern global media system brings changes about. The main question should be rather where do the abilities of a single entity to absorb new content end? At the same time, in a sense, a comic book is an example when globalism, by definition, does not have to exclude locality. In the form of a construct referred to as *glocal*, certain ideas and concepts that we have never heard before can be heard in a wider media discourse.

THE GROWING CULTURAL POWER OF JAPAN?

We still have not explained whether *manga* actually conquered the world? Are we witnessing the emergence of a new cultural hegemon, able to impose its own patterns on others, which will then be widely imitated? The question seems to be the most justified because we have been observing certain aspects of interest in these issues for a long time. A rather eloquent picture can be used, as an example, in a section of the American animation of *South Park*, where the fascination of the youth with the Pokemon phenomenon has been shown in a mocking or even caricature light [Siuda P., Koralewska A.: 2014].

Let me quote the considerations I made in the past with Przemysław Jankowski in the magazine 'Zeszyty Komiksowe'. Assuming that the conquest of the world would be a whimsical dependence, the Japanese comic definitely did not do it itself. The world sooner decided that *manga* would turn out to be a great business, so it is worth giving it a chance. The process

of integrating a particular good into a global cultural industry is basically quite simple. When consumers like something, it is necessary to make every effort to allow them access to it without problems. If we find the right time and tastes, the next recipients will appear very soon. When a given cultural good has sufficient capacity to smoothly adapt subsequent changes, this process will be long-lasting.

Manga, which the world allowed to conquer itself, is not the same *manga* that was born at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s of the twentieth century. It has been enriched and adapted to the requirements of the modern world. Also, it is hard to say with a stubborn insistence that *manga* is just a mixed creation. In the Japanese comic, historical images and fiction are synchronous. From manga, we are able to learn about contemporary and historical Japan, but appropriate competencies must be developed. The media are not only technical means of transferring various content but also have a specific impact on intellectual orientation, ways of describing reality and sensitize their users to the nature of public discourse.

The expansion of the Japanese comic book was also aided by a historical coincidence, having a significant impact on the perception of modern Japan, and unfortunately, it is often overlooked in various considerations. The post-war power of Japanese society was built on the basis of incredible mobilization capabilities, economic innovation, and inexhaustible production forces. Since the end of the 1960s, electronics and motorisation from Japan have become a symbol of quality. The country courageously chased the world's leading economies to eventually take the podium together with the United States in the 1980s. Despite this, Japanese society, being at the peak of its productive capacity, was neither strong enough nor culturally expansive to dominate the world with its cultural goods. By applying the then Japan to the then West and juxtaposing both entities under the same cultural denominator, Japan lost.

Simultaneously, we do not see broader desires of expansion. For the publishing houses, the domestic market represented sufficient absorption, and the anime productions or comics appearing in the West were not a wide coordinated action of the Japanese cultural industry. The changes would only be brought about by the 1990s when the Japanese economy would fall into a recession that continues to this day. At the same time, the successes of the so-called *Asian tigers*, where much earlier the Japanese industry made strategic investments due to significant budget surpluses. Currently, the Japanese are fully aware that they will not regain the economic position of the leader and innovator, therefore they are looking for

other solutions. Fortunately, the potential of *soft power*, and thus of cultural products, appeared on the horizon. With time, the government there supported the use of them to promote Japan, supporting various initiatives.

Of course, all processes cannot be explained by economics and the ratio of production forces to capital expansion. Much depends on the changes of the society itself, but rather the mentality of people. Earlier generations of Japanese were happy to acquire European or American goods, adopting Western standards as determinants of the proper direction of development. The current generation, especially people associated with the cultural industry, wants to be more creative and expansive with ideas outside of Japan [Kelts R. 2006: 18]. *Manga*, as the capital of the cultural industry, expanded into new areas by creating individual interest that was possible in a favourable post-modern era. At present, it is not a coincidence that the two most developed countries – the USA and Japan – now play the role of the largest exporters of cultural goods. While America has long felt perfectly in this role, for Japan this state of affairs is a complete novelty, where it has always perceived itself as the opposite of Western culture known as the universal pattern.

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