

Japanese Nationalism In Manga
マンガに見られるナショナリズム
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Background

Since the 1990's, there has been a rise in nationalism/neo-nationalism in Japan, and despite the deepening relationships between Japan and its neighboring countries, China and South Korea, many problems and issues occur that weakens Japan's bilateral relationships, all of which stems from a lack of consensus regarding war history in the Asian Pacific.

One of the major factors that aided the rise of right-wing thinking and deepening the lack of commonality in wartime histories was/is historical revisionism of Japan's military aggression and atrocities that they committed during the Sino-Japanese War and World War II. Another major factor that helped increase the gap of World War II history and memories is the consumption of manga (Japanese comics) by the Japanese general public and the rise and popularity of right-winged thinking manga from the late 1990's until now.

With my interest in manga and politics, I wanted to focus my research around how these two interact with each other. And so, I hypothesized

1. manga have influenced the increase of nationalistic feeling
2. nationalism influenced the surge of right-wing revisionist manga.

Political Issues facing Japan

After Japan's defeat in WWII, they were occupied by the Allied Forces, and were requested to change their constitution and introduce history textbooks that pushed for democratization. However, the Ministry of Education pushed for revising the textbook to whitewash some of Japan's actions in the war and, at the same time, included more detail regarding various battles Japan faced, and rose questions on war responsibility. This action ultimately lead to the historical revisionist movement, whose advocates opposed the current textbooks tendencies toward 'masochistic history' and attributed this tendency to the lack of national pride. As a result, many textbook reforms occurred that aimed at portraying Japan in a more positive light.

Revisionist history can not only be found in textbook reforms, but in various institutions that were geared towards academic scrutiny, such as the Yushukan Museum located at the Yasukuni Shrine.

Revisionist history also plays a part in the island disputes: between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and between Japan and South Korea over the Takeshima/Dokdo islands. For all three nations historical claims have no definitive basis for solving the issue.

Manga

Manga is a highly influential medium in Japanese popular culture/media. Manga utilizes soft power, which influences people without using cohesive power. It is an inexpensive and convenient way to read various types of narratives, including political and historical revisionist. It has been one of the primary sources for Japanese citizens to get a sense of what was happening around their community.

Shin-Gomanizumu Sengen & Kenkanryu

A rise in popularity for Yoshinori Kobayashi's *Shin-Gomanizumu Sengen* ever since its publication from the mid-1990's (and has been serialized until 2004), had a massive impact on nationalism and historical revisionism, especially among young university graduates at the time, whose initial encounter with WWII history was via Kobayashi's manga.

Within the last decade, another manga gained massive popularity due to the influence of many internet forums. Like *Shin-Gomanizumu Sengen*, *Kenkanryu* (Hating the Korean Wave), by Yamano Sharin, offered a xenophobic, nationalistic view towards history and the popular "Korean Movement".

Panels from Shin-Gomanism Sengen and Kenkanryu



Shin-Gomanizumu Sengen: Kobayashi's commentary on the "ianfu" (comfort women) issue.



Kenkanryu: A panel portraying a Taiwanese student stating she does not share the Koreans victim consciousness

Conclusion

My research has shown both my hypothesis to be true: manga, which the examples of *Shin-Gomanizumu Sengen* and *Kenkanryu*, have increased the nationalist feelings in Japan, with the help of popular internet forums such as *2channeru*, and *netto-ryu* (right-wing forums); and because of the increasing sense of nationalism among the youth of Japan, that has caused an increase in the publication of right-winged based manga.