Manga in China’s Reform Era: Transformation, Assimilation and Imagination of Popular Culture

Danhui Chen
Bard College, dc5322@bard.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2019

Part of the Asian Art and Architecture Commons, Asian History Commons, Asian Studies Commons, Chinese Studies Commons, Communication Technology and New Media Commons, Critical and Cultural Studies Commons, Cultural History Commons, International and Intercultural Communication Commons, Japanese Studies Commons, Mass Communication Commons, Modern Art and Architecture Commons, Publishing Commons, and the Social Media Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.
Manga in China’s Reform Era:

Transformation, Assimilation and Imagination of Popular Culture

Senior Project Submitted to The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

By
Danhui Chen
Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2019
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my utmost gratitude to my advisor, Professor Robert Culp, for always being so patient and supportive to me. Without him this project would have been impossible. I also want to thank Professor Nate Shockey and (our lost unicorn) Mika Endo for supporting my Japanese study during the past several years. To all my dear professors and language tutors, I want to use a famous quote from One Piece to express my deep appreciation:

“.....長い間！くそお世話になりました！”

Thanks to you all.

I would also like to thank all my dear friends, Corrina Gross, Crystal Wu and Ziyan Wang for your care and support during those sprojing days. These are my most treasured memories that I will keep forever in my heart. No matter how far (in distance) we may have become in the future, please don’t forget that day when we had,

大型白板艺术表演之早安RKC

Your guys are the BEST.

Finally, I will give thanks to my endearing family members, Shang Jun, Chen Bin and Chen Haoqi for just being there. Special thanks to my mom for her kind hearted suggestion,

“不要在读书啦”

I deeply appreciate it.
To Haoqi
PREFACE

The Japanese Heisei Era ended on May 1st, 2019, the day when I finished my senior project on writing about the history of manga in China. I never have such a strong feeling that manga I read during my childhood, were already part of the history in the past tense. I have been engaging in manga reading from a young age. My identity as a manga reader, a fan and an Otaku have always played big roles in shaping me as an individual. Manga is my teacher, my friend, and my lover. I was very glad that I choose manga to write about, even though the process of writing was painful.

My reason for choosing manga was very simple and emotional. I just said to myself, “I love manga so I will write about it.” For some reasons, I was not confident with this project when I first started it. Compared with my strong passion, my confidence was weak. Can I do it? I asked myself multiples times. The moment before I began this project, I still doubted whether I should really write about manga. Even though I always knew that manga are more than just comic books. Manga are more than that. At that time, I had a wrong impression to believe only those big, serious social problems are important to people and society. I was fortunate for having professors who supported me to learn and realize the value and significance of manga and popular culture as a whole. This whole year of researching and writing about manga and popular culture turned out to be unexpectedly interesting. This senior project helped me to rethink about social value of manga and popular culture by looking at their stories in historical context. Popular culture, like manga, are more than just a term or an item. They are alive expressions of human values. Although keep changing in form and content, jumping around here and there, popular culture is always there with us because they are part of us.

Manga, the legacy of Heisei will continue its journey in the future.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: ...........................................................................................................................................1

Chapter 1:  *Running into Politics:* ........................................................................................................12
Transformation in Manga Form and Content in the Early Reform Period

Chapter 2:  *Testing the Market:* ........................................................................................................49
Expansion of Manga Publishing in the Magazine Phase

Chapter 3:  *Imagining Communities:* ...............................................................................................84
Virtualization of Manga Culture in the Digital Era

Conclusion: ...............................................................................................................................................127

Bibliography:.......................................................................................................................................131
INTRODUCTION

Popular culture is an expression of individual freedom, allowing people to have autonomous control over the means of production and distribution over products they produced, either in material or spiritual form. The achievement of such autonomy usually originates from a community that is based around horizontal interconnections of people through media, which allows and promotes popular consumption of certain products or ideas that contribute to a mass circulation of value and meaning that are shared amongst this community. The horizontal community is a space where information is shared between the producer and the consumer, (on a horizontal axis), where both consumer and producer influence the formation of a cultural product through co-production. A horizontal community is an “individualized collective” where the collective encourages individual expressions and individual contributions to the community through cultural activity.

Forming a horizontal community is not a easy task, it requires a favorable social environment where neither politics nor economy dominate cultural production and distribution. Since political and economic influence impose outside pressures, it alienates mass cultural products to turn its focus onto political or economic interests. The core of popular culture is the shared value bestowed upon it by the masses. A key factor that contributes to the formation of popular culture is the sense of belonging and interconnection that is fostered between the individual self-identification with the shared value of the collective. Therefore, the horizontal community that I defined is an essential part of what I refer to as the individualized collective community.
In the Mao era (1949-1976), culture was closely associated with political interest and centered around Mao’s political ideology. In accordance with Maoism, the cultural community was to be constructed as a collective, where everybody was uniform and lacked individual identity and personal freedom. Such collectivism of the mass mobilization left little room for personal development and individual expression — core values of popular culture. In the Reform era (1978-present), under foreign influence, modern ideas that emphasized individual freedom, personal expression and subjectivity had emerged and became prevalent in China. The circulation of these new ideas amongst people caused ideological conflicts with the mainstream Maoist collectivist ideas. Thus, many of the modern ideas that emphasized individual freedom were taken in a form of popular culture as commercial products, imported from foreign countries, and circulated in China for entertainment and consumption purpose. Japanese manga was one of the cultural products that has undergone these social changes starting in the late 1980s. The form and the content of Japanese manga has been greatly influenced by those who have control over the media’s means of production and distribution. One of the purposes of this project is to trace what forces have influenced popular cultural production and consumption over the last four decades. I will examine the following questions:

1) Who has control over the media and what interests have those products served?

2) How has manga, as an expressions of popular culture, changed over time in form and content?

3) How open and free is this media in allowing people to express and display their individuality and subjectivity?
The presence of Japanese manga and the modern ideas and format that the Japanese manga introduced have shaped and affected Chinese manga’s form and content, but they have also changed over time due to shifts in China’s economy, politics and culture.

**Historical Background and A General Problem**

In December 1978, the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held in Beijing, led by Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) and his supporters. In this conference, Deng initiated the Economic Reform project, a policy of “Reform and Opening up,” in which market principles were introduced with a series of agendas to decentralize state control and encourage privatization and entrepreneurship. During the economic reform period, China had become actively engaged in global markets, opening up to international trade as well as foreign investment which marked the starting point of China’s gradual rise as a world power within the global economy in the next few decades. Deng’s economic reform not only affect China’s economy, it had also contributed to the construction of a diplomatic relations between developed countries like Japan. Deng’s visit to Japan in 1978 gave rise to a long term political, economic and cultural exchange between China and Japan. During this period, many Japanese products were imported to China and introduced at a local level. Japanese cultural products that expressed value and meanings of the ideas of modern capitalism, consumerism and individualism were widely consumed in different forms, such as books, films, televisions, videotapes, LP records, and so forth. Foreign products brought new ideas, media forms, and industrial structures, commercial infrastructure to the Chinese cultural system which triggered transformations in China’s cultural production, such as the organization of publishing houses and new social relations. This project will focus on the transition that occurred in the Chinese cultural
industry under the influence of commercialization and globalization. Foreign products could easily attract public attention because of its modern form and fashionable content, thus becoming a popular culture. The attractiveness of foreign products may cause people to turn away from their local products. In the early 1990s, we have seen a trend that many urban people, especially the youth stopped consuming and appreciating local products. This mass consumption of foreign products resulted in a transition of social behaviors and gave rise to the formation of new, modern identities of individuals, distinct from the original culture. For instance, a youth who frequently consumed foreign cultural products would generally associate himself/herself with this type of culture and identify himself/herself less with his/her home culture, causing a sense of disconnection and dissatisfaction within the individual’s sense of cultural recognition and identification. In the era of globalization, cultural disconnection created a crisis in cultural recognition, identification, and association. A threat of cultural invasion had been created in this process of globalization, with an increasing international communication, which has continued to expand its influence and challenge the domestic culture. Popularizing foreign culture generates a cultural problem of disconnection in which people are estranged from their domestic culture. It has become a social phenomenon which is an inevitable outcome of the process of modernity.

**Popular Cultural Theory**

Culture is about circulation of meanings. Cultural disconnection prevents a cultural, social, political meanings from spreading to new audience from the previous audience, who feel isolated from such a culture thus become reluctant to share. Actively participants on sharing value, meanings and information are essential to a popular cultural development. Then what
exactly does “popular culture” mean and why is it special? In this section, I will introduce popular culture theory to define what do we mean by saying a culture is popular.

Popular culture is commonly defined as a type of mass culture that is widely consumed and favored by many people and is usually related to consumerism and mass industrial production. Raymond Williams, an English cultural theorist proposes four characteristics of popular culture: “well liked by many people”; “inferior kinds of work”; ”work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people”; “culture actually made by the people for themselves” (Raymond 1983) Speaking of simple terms, popular culture is the culture of the people: it is produced by the people, consumed by the people and favored by the people. Furthermore, popular culture reflects, expresses and sustains the meaning, values, and identities that are commonly shared by the people. Williams’s definition of “culture” also builds on a similar idea that culture is people sharing in common with meanings. “A culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of a man’s whole committed personal and social experience.” (Raymond, 1958) Popular culture is a type of culture but it is defined as “popular” which makes it special and complex, especially in modern time. The definition of popular culture becomes complex when we think about what is “the people” referred to here. Fiske defines that society consists of the people: a mix of complex social groups, defined by social difference, like gender, class, age, race and what have you. (Fiske 1989) Each society and nation has its own culture. The people who live there with different identities are the producers of this culture, which is shaped by a common history, language, art, institutions, and so on. And culture connects them as a whole. Williams describes,
Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. (Raymond, 1958, 2)

Such common meanings and values could be limited to a certain land, group of people, a social structure and a country. People outside this cultural realm who have little knowledge of this country, history, language, and art could rarely process such an “established” culture. The magic of popular culture is the fluidity and the capability to spread out its meaning, value, and influence to a mass of people, even to those outside its original founding culture. As a culture becomes popular, it creates a mediated community that allows people to step out of the normal, logical, social structure and construct a new structure.

When media scholar John Fiske claims “popular culture contradicts itself” (Fiske 1989b), he refers to an ongoing process of popular culture as being constantly involved in a different power relation between superordinate and the subordinate, taking a form that may struggle against itself. Fiske’s statement about the contradiction of popular culture reveals its complex nature. Historically speaking, culture has a close relationship with the power structure of a society. For instance, Confucianism in China has been used as a political ideology to construct and rationalize a power structure and social hierarchy by setting rules, rituals and social norms to regulate people’s social behavior and mind. In such a context, popular culture can be a power bloc forming outside the system that escapes and opposes social control, creating a
platform that aggregates people from various social groups and re-invents new social relations and personal identities outside the hegemonic power structure. Fiske argues popular culture is in a constant conflict power struggle and between the dominant and the subordinate groups. (Fiske 1989a)

Popular culture is made by subordinated peoples in their own interests out of resources that also, contradictorily, serve the economic interests of the dominant.

Popular culture is made from within and below, not imposed from without or above as mass theorist would have it. There is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control, that escapes or opposes hegemonic forces.

Popular culture is always a culture of conflict, it always involves the struggle to make social meanings that are in the interests of the subordinate and that are not those preferred by the dominant ideology. (Fiske 1989a)

The confrontation between the dominant and the subordinate is a historical process. The dominant group operates power to impose its interests and ideology on the those who are in the subordinate position, which resists this imposition and thirst for asserting autonomous power on themselves. The specific form of what we call the “group” could be varied. It could appear as a charismatic leader, a monopoly company, an dominant ideology, or rich elites. In general, however, by saying something as “dominant”, we are referring to a hegemonic force that is forcibly transferred from the top to the bottom, usually attached to a particular interest and goals. It is a force that is applied from outside and from above. Culture and popular culture is not immune to such influence, on the contrary, it is intrinsically fragile. It is fragile because, in most of the cases, the dominant group has power and control over information dissemination, content
censorship, communication technology, and means of production. The form and content of a cultural product can be changed, manipulated, controlled and directed under forces like political ideology, economic interests, foreign invasion, industrial production. Because of that, culture can stray from its original meanings and values so that people are alienated from the culture, and culture is alienated, by force from its people. Culture and people, in their original state, are in a one-to-one relationship, and horizontally interacting. Power interests shift this relationship to be vertically oriented, which happens in all societies. Producing popular cultural products is a complex and active process of generating and re-inventing meanings and values in a material form under the influence of the economy, politics, media, industry and other cultural influences.

**An Overview of Manga as Research Object**

In this project, Japanese manga is the target object of analysis, to examine the emergence and development of cultural adoption and adaptation in the context of China is Economic Reform Era. During the period of intensive cultural exchange, Japanese manga was one of the many products that was introduced as a medium of entertainment into China. Japanese manga has been the heart of the Japanese entertainment culture industry during the postwar period. It is essentially a cultural product that reflects the social, political and economic landscape of Japanese society postwar as well as a representation of the values of Japanese postwar culture. In Japan, the recognition and appreciation of manga culture have led to the formation of a massive industrial system specializing in manga production and consumption. Manga’s influence is not only limited to Japan. Manga is a product that has been extensively spread around the world, and has exerted influence in various countries. Popular manga series, like *Astro Boy* and *Doraemon*, have become recognized as global cultural icons representative of Japanese culture.
As the number of manga reader has increased, promoted by the trend of globalization, and with the global spread of modern capitalism and consumerism through the explosion of communication media, manga culture has become a popular culture that is consumed massively and intensively globally. In the late 20th century, Japanese manga was introduced into China and started to exert influence on the local Chinese lianhuanhua/comic culture. In the Mao era, the Chinese publishing industry was largely under control by the state, so cultural products like lianhuanhua (Chinese picture books), were produced as a mouthpiece for political propaganda. In the early phase of economic reform, Mao’s legacy of using culture as for politics still influenced the comic books produced in this period. Later, when the economic reform developed further, publishing houses began to shift emphasis from politics to profit making, with the economic influence beginning to replace politics as the dominant power in the cultural industry.

Japanese manga came from outside China, free from the direct influence of the party, and it soon caught popular attention and affections. As manga won more favor from readers, dominant state forces started to take advantage of manga and inserted their influence into its form and content to serve their interest. Many changes were made such as the organization of the book, the composition of pages and stylistic expression. In terms of content, changes are made to storytelling, character design, and use of language. For instance, artists from publishing houses under pressure for both economic profit and political requirements, would adapt famous Japanese manga characters, make them the main characters in a story that was designed to publicize and applaud the party’s rule. In the next few decades of development, the influence from politics continued to decline and the emphasis of profit-making on cultural production increased. So that many Japanese manga were published by second-channel publishers. The
increasing number of second-channel publishers who produced Japanese manga, signaled an age of cultural domination, incentivized by economic profit.

The boom of Japanese manga in the late 1990s and the publication of the first Chinese manga magazine, *Hua Shu Da Wang*, were a result of mass consumption on Japanese manga culture in which we saw that people had discovered and embraced manga’s value in their own life, value and meanings. This was also a golden age of manga production. Many new manga artists began to create manga out of their own interests and motivations. The byproduct of this boom in both manga production and distribution resulted in an upsurge of manga’s economic and social value. The party reacted to the boom of Japanese manga rigorously and asserted its dominant control by banning Japanese manga publishing business in 1994.

Moving into the Digital era, the production and distribution mode of manga again has been fundamentally changed by the invention of the internet and online communities. The online manga business started to prosper. As the Internet creates a tremendous profit for online manga business, we are seeing formation of a cyber community that is centered on manga and formed by manga readers, which is considered a much freer space for individual expression. The online community nurtures a modern fan culture of manga so that a new mode of social relation between the producer and consumer of manga is also emerging in the internet, connecting people horizontally.

Overall, this project, by looking at the historical development of manga as a communication media and cultural product, is composed of three chapters in chronological order.

1) The early reform period from 1978 to 1985;

2) The mid-reform period from 1990 to 1995;
3) The digital era from 2000 until now.

In each chapter, I will use a case study of manga published in this period to demonstrate their characteristics in terms of form and content. The first chapter primarily discusses the relationship between politics and manga. The second chapter focuses on economic influence and manga, and the third chapter emphasizes manga on the internet. This project will use manga, both textual and digital, published in all the listed period. Many of the textual manga I brought from old bookstore located in Guangzhou, Guangdong and some of them, like *Hua Wang* magazine, were purchased from Kong Fuzi Old Bookstore, an online shopping website.
CHAPTER ONE

Running into Politics:

Cross-Cultural Transformations of Manga in the early Reform period (1978-1989)

Introduction

In the Mao era, intellectual life, as well as culture-related activities and products, were under the political control of the party, leaving little room for individual expression. The types, kinds, and genres of comic publications in this period were restricted by Maoist ideology that restricted content deemed politically incompatible with the Party’s goals. During the Economic Reform era, state-owned publishing houses were marketized and began to massively introduce foreign art and literature to China. When Japanese manga were first imported to China, at this time, they brought modern forms and ideas that challenged the traditional art forms and structures in China. There was an interesting transition between lianhuanhua (Chinese mass comics) and Japanese manga. Lianhuanhua adopted Japanese modern drawing styles while some Japanese manga were re-made in terms of characters and stories to better fit into the Chinese context and its readers. Such transformations in form and content, however, have an intimate relationship with political influence imposed by the party. In this period, although political control over cultural production was challenged by economic reform of the overall publishing system and the influence from foreign culture, the domestic picture books like lianhuanhua still operated as a form of political propaganda where there were few inter-communications happened between readers and authors.

What is Japanese manga
Japanese manga refers to comics created by Japanese artists and language with Japanese-style compositional format. Japanese manga is famous for its wide range of genre, drawing styles, and storytelling techniques. The influence of the Japanese manga industry nowadays has spread globally and become a crucial part of the global economy. Generally, Osamu Tezuka was considered to be as the father of modern manga which he invented during the 1950s. Tezuka Osamu published a manga called *New Treasure Island*, the first modern Japanese manga. Tezuka introduced modern cinematic ideas and techniques like zoom shots, and tracking shots to manga and created a new way of organizing panels to do storytelling. (Schodt 1983) The picture below is part of the *New Treasure Island* manga and we can see Tezuka applied cinematographic techniques to advance the story.¹

¹ *New Treasure Island*, by Tezuka Osamu. 新寳島(Shin Takarajima), 1947 April 1st.
This way of using multiples panels, like shooting from different angles, to develop the movement of the story was a revolutionary invention at the time. This new technique allowed artists not only to tell story in single panel but also to tell story with multiple panels in a single page.

Japanese manga has become one of the most widespread and influential worldwide popular cultural products since the 1970s. Because of its innovative style, manga expanded in the Japanese domestic market quickly, and attracted readers from different classes, genders, ages, and became many people’s daily entertainment. Many social factors have contributed to the popularity of manga in Japan. Manga was consumed as a cheap, easily accessible and entertaining comic book to read by the people who were exhausted by the war so that there was an urgent need of entertainment to relieve them from the war trauma. (Atkins 2017) Thus it has created a large readership bases on manga consumption. Japanese manga readers were mostly middle-class, who usually had a stable job with extra money to consume manga in their leisure time. Likewise, most manga artists were also from the middle-class, and they created manga from their real-life experience which resonated with a lot of middle-class readers. For instance, the picture presented on the right is a four-panel manga

---

from Sazae-san in which the main character was an ordinary housewife, Sazaze. Most of the stories were centered around her stories with family, neighbors, and friends. Manga could be viewed as a product that originated from the Japanese middle-class culture (Atkins 2017), which expressed common feelings, emotions, values shared by the middle-class group. Despite the fact that today many people consider manga a representation of postmodern youth culture, many early Japanese manga were created for common people to consume. Sazae-san, KochiKame: Tokyo Beat Cops, and many of Tezuka’s early works were stories that depicted the daily life of ordinary people, so they were relatable to readers’ life experiences, responding with their feelings and values.

In addition, early Japanese popular manga depicted issues associated with life, death, war, and social relationships, expressing deep concern about humanity and society. Tezuka’s famous works like Astro Boy, BlackJack, and Phoenix were exemplars of this type manga, in which he displayed universal humanistic values were and discussed them in his manga as social, political and philosophical inquiries. Manga were taken as a form of literary expressions for individuals to share their value and meanings. Postwar Japanese manga not only were an entertainment product that people consumed to relieve themselves from pressure, but it was also taken as a platform to display individual and shared values, pursuits and ideas, and a demonstration of social, political, and cultural concerns.

Expansion of Japanese Manga in East Asia

Japanese manga began to expand their influence on a global scale around the 1960s. Most manga published in other East Asian countries were pirated in the early phase. Countries and areas in East Asian like Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore were among the first group that
published pirated Japanese manga on a considerable scale. East Asian countries, historically have a regular exchange in terms of culture and economy, thus they shared a similar culture. During World War II, East Asian areas that were previous Japanese colonies, including Taiwan and Korea, were influenced a lot by the Japanese culture. After World War II had ended, Japanese social and cultural influence still remained in many of these East Asian regions. The cultural similarity contributed to the massive expansion of Japanese manga to these areas after 1960. In Fusanosuke Natsume’s essay “East Asia and Manga Culture: Examining Manga-Comic Culture in East Asia”, he suggests that everyday life manga is more popular among Asian readers. “In terms of manga types, humorous Japanese works based on everyday life such as Doraemon and Crayon Shin-chan enjoy tremendous popularity.” (Natsume 2001, 96) For example, Doraemon³ was very popular in East Asian countries. Its story is about the everyday life of a Japanese elementary school boy and his future cat-shaped robot friend. The main character, Nobita Nobi is bad at studying and often worries about his

³ Doraemon. Chapter. 17 by Fujiko F. Fujio (Hiroshi Fujimoto and Motoo Abiko), page 4 (Translation published on https://www.mangapanda.com/doraemon/17/4) last visited on April 29th, 2019
grades at school. For instance, the picture presented above is a page from *Doraemon* chapter 17, about “the copying toast,” which is a tool of Doraemon to help Nobita remember test answers from the textbook. Readers living in East Asian countries like China and Korea, which historically shared a similar educational system and lifestyle to Japan, are most likely to resonate with Nobita’s story. Historically similar culture provided a language’s facilitated for the expansion of Japanese manga in East Asian countries and regions. For instance, Chinese and Japanese language share similar writing characters and it helped Chinese publishers to publish manga with less difficulties in understanding their language.

Japanese anime was also introduced with the manga and enlarged manga’s influence. As the economy continued to grow, many households in East Asia began to own televisions which introduced Japanese anime on the local level. People who watched Japanese anime on television later became interested in the original manga and most likely began to read manga. The introduction of Japanese anime through television accelerated the spread of Japanese manga and created a larger readership for consuming Japanese content. It contributed to the local publishers to use Japanese manga content as a source to create their local manga. Natsume in his essay proposes that manga-comics in East Asia exist as a dual-structure industry, suggesting that, “In East Asia, a dual structure exists, with Japanese manga on one hand and local manga-comics on the other.” (Natsume 2001, 98) It demonstrates the coexistence between Japanese manga and local manga. For instance, Japanese manga came to Hong Kong during the 1960s and took over Hong Kong’s comic market very fast, where Japanese manga were localized in language usage and at the same time Hong Kong artists emu Japanese style to produce manga in Japanese style.
Chinese local cartoons: Lianhuanhua and Manhua

Japanese manga was first introduced to China around the end of the 1970s after the 10 year long Cultural Revolution ended. Before Japanese manga got widely read in China, lianhuanhua was one of the most popular and common read comic book. Lianhuanhua, in Chinese means serial drawings: “连” (lian) and “环” (huan) mean serial, continuous and “画” (hua) means drawing. Similar to Japanese manga, lianhuanhua also tells stories via using a series of continuous drawings. Picture I presented on the right is from the “Water Margin” (水浒传)\(^4\) lianhuanhua.

Drawings and descriptions are the two important elements of a lianhuanhua, which visually displays story settings, characters, and behaviors. At the same time, a short caption presented below or next to the drawing, explains in detail what this drawing is about, points out information like character names, story

\(^4\)“Water Margin” in Chinese Outstanding Lianhuanhua selections, (水浒传: 中国连环画优秀作品读本) Author, SHI Nai’an - 施耐庵, Illustrator, Chen Danxu- 陈丹旭; Editor Shanghai renmin Meishu Publishing House上海人民美术出版社, 2010-4-01
background and the content of the conversation and so on. Such description is usually short, about 40 to 60 characters. This composition separates drawings and texts, which is different from the Japanese manga, which usually both of them are used complementarily in a panel. Another difference between the Japanese manga and lianhuanhua is the structure and organization of panels. In lianhuanhua, panels are uniform in order and shape, which makes lianhuanhua a stationary art. In contrast, Japanese manga, applies western cinematic techniques, so each manga panel is like a camera having its own movement and stories. By putting multiple panels together on a single page, Japanese manga seem more kinetic.

Lianhuanhua originally were developed and popularized in Shanghai in the early 20th century as a lithographic form of art for mass entertainment. (Shen 2001) Since then lianhuanhua has become one of the most popular commercial arts in China. Lianhuanhua, usually called as “小人书” (xiao ren shu), meaning “little people’s book”, were a cheap and easy-accessible comics to read. At that time, most lianhuanhua were printed and distributed among cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and so on. Lianhuanhua were often used as a mass media for political purpose. For example, during the wartime lianhuanhua used stories to educate people to become involved in the national salvation project. Traditional Chinese stories like *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (三国志) and revolutionary stories about the Communist Party’s heroic fights against the evil Japanese or American, were popular titles of lianhuanhua.

The publishing industry in China was damaged extensively during the Cultural Revolution. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, lianhuanhua published political stories in a large quantity. “Because of the need from politics, lianhuanhua were transformed in terms of story content and stylistic form. “Lianhuanhua were created solely for the Cultural Revolution,
published few in kinds but many in numbers.” (Simran Kaur Khaira 2012, 15) This act pushed the development of lianhuanhua and helped lianhuanhua publishing to reach a peak in the early 1980s, when they were sold more than 8 hundred million. Lianhuanhua were considered a multipurpose media that could be used as a propaganda, educational and entertainment tool.

Beside traditional lianhuanhua, China also had its own type of manga (manhua 漫画). The manhua presented below was made by the famous Chinese manhua artists Zhang Leping (张乐平). Chinese manhua created in the early 20th century was more like a modern type of lianhuanhua where the artist put several, unusually uniform and still panels together and labelled them by number in order. Similar to lianhuanhua artists, we found the early manhua artists also shared ideas about the political and social utilization of cultural products. Hua Junwu (华君武), an early famous Chinese manhua artist (漫画家), was a famous for his satirical manhua and active participations in the communist party. Hua was known for creating satirical manga about society, war and foreign imperialism. During the Sino-Japanese war, Hua joined the communist party

---

5 由于政治方面的需求，连环画在故事内容以及艺术表现形式方面有了大的转折。连环画创作完全为文化大革命服务，作品种类极少，但印数非常多。
against the Japanese invasion. The experience in the communist party deeply influenced his manhua.

The first characteristic of Wu’s manhua was the relationship with society. Wu believed manhua should display the complexity and contradiction of real life and express them in an understandable way to the audience. Hua says, “At my time, manhua has always associated with social life, unlike leisure manhua nowadays. Manhua at my time had to reflect contradictions found in reality and allowed readers to see some problems from it. That is what is called manhua’s subject matter.” (Pengpai New: Interview of Hua Junwu) For Instance, the manhua presented below, on the left, it criticizes the act of “speed research” (遗产研究) which was a term used to describe an academic trend where people would quickly apply the traditional knowledge, without consideration of whether it is good or bad. And on the right, it criticized the Japanese Ministry of Education for re-making imperial history in textbooks.

Another important characteristic of manga in Wu’s period was the idea of popularization.

Wu suggests in his interview that the popularization (大众化) and nationalism (民族化) have been the two most important goals during his career as a manhua artist.

My manga later pursued nationalism, and popularized it, which intrinsically means to let the people understand. Only elites read the manga I drew in Shanghai. These manga were not popular among the common people in Yan’an, which needed to be changed so that the common people would like them. This was what Chairman Mao told me. I need to go into common people’s lives. This is what I pursued later. If I don’t have these the common people’s life stories, my manga wouldn’t be like that.⁹ (Pengpai New: Interview of Hua Junwu)

Like Hua, other manhua artist from his time were also worked towards popularization and nationalism regardless of art kinds, types and forms. Art in order to be considered as “good” manhua, was expected to use ideas and feelings drawn from the people. Yet there was a clear definition of who counts as “the people”. In term of “the people”, Hua and other artists in his time, mostly referred to farmers and low-status workers. Thus it required artists to “localize” their art to meet the taste of the common people, mostly from the lower-classes. The artwork created under this experience was essentially the art of these low-class people and some middle-class people.

During the Cultural Revolution, many comic books were banned, the number of prints was decreased dramatically and there were few publishing companies and editors who worked in the industry. Furthermore, book content was regulated strictly during the Cultural Revolution meant so that there were a few kinds, types and amount of books circulating in the market.

⁹在这种情况下，我的漫画本来就往民族化、大众化这方面追求。所谓民族化、大众化，其实根本是让农民看懂。我在上海画的漫画，是高级知识分子看，这种画到延安去，老百姓不喜欢看。那么你要转变，这就是毛主席说的，要到生活里头去。这也是后来我追求的一个方面，假如没这些东西，我的漫画也不会这样。
Because of this, after the Cultural Revolution, book stocks emerged as a social and cultural problem. The Party decided to set up and supported publishing companies to publish various kinds of books to meet the increasing demand. In the early Reform period, the Chinese publishing industry quickly developed under state support and more books got published. However, many artists, editors, and authors were criticized and disappeared during the Cultural Revolution. Even though the post-Mao publishing industry had Party support, there were insufficient cultural producers to create and edit new books in such a short period of time. Thus, a lot of foreign books were translated and imported during this period to fill demand for books, which also allowed foreign culture to have a chance to spread in the Chinese context.

**Politicized Publishing Industry in Marketplace**

The Chinese publishing industry began to marketize in the 1980s, but political influence still strongly penetrated publications during this period. Before the 1980s, the publishing system in China was different from the Western publishing mode, which was based on the free market and profit incentives. At the early stage, socialist China operated under a planned publishing mode similar to the Soviet model, where most publishing houses were owned by the state and regulated under strict rules. Publications under the state control were taken as implements for political propaganda dissemination, especially during the Mao era. Before the 1980s, Kong explains that the state took full control of publishing houses in order to ensure every process was completely guided by the government for political function.

To enforce the political function of publishing houses during the socialist era, the state took control of various aspects of the publishing business, from the rationing of paper to the allocation of specific subject matter for publication; from
censorship of publications by the Propaganda Department to ‘guidance’ of publishing staff by in-house party committees; from a strict book-licensing system to a complex approval system involving three administrative levels. (Kong 2005, 38)

Under strict administrative systems of publishing, editors, writers, publishers, and other cultural workers in the publishing industry complied with government instructions and rules for licensing. In this period, most publishing houses were state-owned enterprise, and big publishing houses like Xinhua bookstore (新华书店), controlled almost 95% of the market. The monopolization of publishing houses enabled the state to apply its political ideology in the cultural field effectively. As the whole publishing industry was extreme politicalized, it forced most cultural workers to focus attention on achieving political goals. Kong argues such political pressure caused Chinese editors and publishers to lose control of their works and thus became passive and conformist.

For several decades Chinese publishers and editors had to be both extremely politically aware and at the same time professionally very conformist and passive. Ultimately, they were just state employees, assigned to their positions by government ministries, overseen by the party, and expected to produce works to order that would benefit the masses.” (Kong 2005, 38)

The ultimate goal was to “benefit the masses”. Books produced in this period shared common functions as the educator of the mass. Writers were responsible to write and revise publications to meet the specific directive from the top leadership. Kong suggests that those authors were assigned from the top leadership, as writing was a sort of “cultural mission”. (Kong 2005)
Likewise, many cultural workers were party members who were educated with Mao’s ideology, which enhanced this sense of mission to use writings as a way to educate the masses.

During 1980s and 1990s, important transitions happened in the Chinese publishing industry: there were less political pressure imposed on the cultural content production by the state and more chances and space for individual expressions. In the early 1980s, Deng promulgated deregulatory policies in favor of economic development which led to the transition and development of the Chinese publishing industry. Naughton suggests that the early reformers lowered standards and regulations in the system, which allowed individuals and private entrepreneurs to participate in economic activities and meet the market demand.

Chinese reformers lowered barriers and gradually opened to their system, giving individuals and groups the opportunity to act entrepreneurially and meet market demand…As the result, early reforms almost never reduced or eliminated distortions; instead, they loosened control over resources so that those distortions encouraged resources (people, money, initiative) to flow into these less regulated “pocket”. (Naughton 2007, 87-88)

With the help of the government’s deregulatory policies, many state-owned publishing companies were able to have a certain level of autonomous control over book production, title selection, price, and distribution. Such policies also allowed and encouraged private and second-channel publishers to share the market. Starting from the early 1980s, private publishers started to emerge as main forces in book publishing, gradually replacing the state-owned enterprise and challenging their monopolization over the market. Kong describes this market transition from state-owned houses to private enterprises.
In 1979, state-owned Xinhua bookstores controlled 95% of the book retail market; by 1988, private and collective stores gained control of nearly two thirds of that market. The government-controlled postal system’s monopoly on the distribution of newspapers and magazines fell to 42% by 1988 as private newsstands gained market dominance. (Kong 2005, 71)

The emergence and market domination of private enterprises was caused by the inability of state financial support for state-owned publishing houses. In fact, one of the purposes of the deregulatory policy was to release the party from financial pressures and cut the budget that used to spend to assist the state-owned publisher houses. Kong explains that “A rising budget deficit obliged the government to cut funds for publishing houses and tax them at 55% of their profits. Making publishing houses responsible for employee’s salaries and benefits and still make a profit.” (Kong 2005, 40) Heavy taxes and labor salaries put publishing houses in a situation where they have to consider how to make a profit from the market by selling books, and to become financially independent from the state. The major concerns generally shifted from politics to profit. The Party introduced new systems to help publishing houses function towards market demand. For example, in 1984, publishers were able to establish “cooperative publishing arrangements” (协作出版). This policy enabled private book dealers to work with publishing houses to publish books cooperatively. Benefiting from this policy, a lot of popular reading material, even include some “pornographic and other politically incorrect materials” was published (Kong 2005, 40). Furthermore, in 1988, the government introduced a system called the “responsibility systems” (责任制), in which editorial staff would share the exceeded profit from books they published. It meant that you would earn more if your books were sold well in the
market. This further encouraged publishers and publishing staff to participate actively to produce bestsellers, which become their main goal.

But political influence was still present since in this period the Party assigned publishing missions to each publishing house and company, and ordered them to publish specific types, kinds, and genres of books. Each publishing house and their publications served a larger social purpose, thus inevitably being politicized. In terms of the relationship between the Japanese manga and Chinese lianhuanhua, a transition to the lianhuanhua form was not only made because of pure economic reasons, which were that the lianhuanhua form was more well-known among the people thus able to attract potential readers. Further, there was a political concern that publishing houses were publishing these Japanese manga as one subject to fulfill their publishing mission assigned by the state, so that using the lianhuanhua form proved to be more consistent with the Party’s instruction. In this section, I will use “Historical Data of Chinese Communist Party Publishing Industry (1976 October to 1978 December)” and its related data and documents to outline this connection between the political instruction and publishing activities.

The Party set up the big directions for book publishing and gave each publishing house tasks and assignments in publishing specific kinds of books and regulated how many copies they needed to publishing during the year for their assigned category. Publishing houses then had to publish books that belonged to the category assigned by the state and to meet the standards in kinds, genres and numbers. Many Japanese manga were imported as “multi-functional” publications which could be classed in various categories at the same time so that publishing houses published them as part of their assignments to meet defined requirements, such as the volume and copies line of the year.
I will take Science Popularization Publishing House, which published the 1981 *Astro Boy*, as an example. It was responsible for publishing books that related to science and modern technology, and the Party gave very specific assignments.

Science Popularization Publishing House must published a series books, lectures and picture manuals for party members and common people.

1: The ‘Industrial modernization Series’ targets readers middle school graduates and above. Each book should have thirty to fifty thousands words, published by Science Popularization Publishing House. This goal must be met before 1982.

2: ‘Agricultural modernization Series’, targets readers middle school graduates and above. Each book should have thirty to fifty thousands words, published by Science Popularization Publishing House. This goal must be met before 1982.\(^\text{10}\) (Liang, 2013)

From here we can see, Science Popularization Publishing House was assigned as :1) the specific topics of publications; 2) the targeted readership; 3) the length of its books; 4) deadlines for publishing. In order to meet these requirements, publishers would publish books from other categories, such as art, literature and other genres, whose content may have related to science, technology and modern industry.

Japanese manga were categorized under the Chinese term “manhua,” which was under the general instructions for artworks. 漫画 (manhua) was among the book genres that promoted by the state for publication. The Publishing Bureau’s Initial publishing plan for 1978 to 1985”,

---

\(^{10}\) 一、以广大干部和群众为对象，编辑出版下列各套丛书、讲座和画册。
《工业现代化小丛书》以具有初中文化水平的广大读者为对象，每种三至五万字。由科学普及出版社编辑出版，一九八二年内出齐。
《农业现代化小丛书》以具有初中文化水平的广大读者为对象，每种三至五万字。由科学普及出版社编辑出版，一九八二年内出齐。
Artworks: we need to publish images of our great leader Chairman Mao...Published artworks and photographs that expressed admiration for Chairman Hua Guofeng and Proletarian revolutionaries...and we need to published artworks like traditional Chinese paintings (山水花鸟), manhua (漫画), calligraphy, indigenous arts, etc. which have been banned for a long time by the Gang of Four. We should publish these books in various topic, genera, forms, and styles to meet multiple needs from readers and for the purpose of promoting global cultural exchange. (Liang 2013)

The term “manhua” (漫画) referred to both Chinese manhua and lianhuanhua. Many Japanese manga and other foreign comic were categorized under the “manhua” type and most of them were published in lianhuanhua form as a typical Chinese manhua by outlook.

For the Party, in general, foreign artwork that did not violate Maoism or proletarian ideas, which were fundamental ideologies of the rule of the Party, were encouraged. Building on to this, publishing houses could expand the topic, titles, forms, and types to publish artwork within the...
categorical type. The publishing houses were encouraged to publish artwork that contributed to international cultural communication and exchange. It enlarged the scale of books that could be published. In sum, artwork was encouraged as long as it: 1) contained information or images that did not violate the Party’s political ideology; 2) promoted international exchange that benefited China’s globalization; 3) involved topics that benefit society overall.

In sum, during the in 1980s, the publishing industry and its cultural products were involved in a industrial and ideological transition from being politically oriented to being economically oriented, in which the Party’s control still surpassed the economic purpose. The Party has its presence and control over the publishing houses by assigning publishing missions to each house and regulating the general ideology of these publications.

**Emergence of early Chinese popular culture**

Although in the last section, I argue that the political influence was still dominant the publishing industry, the early-marketized publishing industry exposed China to foreign popular cultural productions and media that triggered a cultural transition. The 1980s the industrial transition brought back popular literature consumption which had disappeared during the previous three decades. All of a sudden, there was a sharp decline in serious literature publishing and the rise of popular literature. This explosion of the popular literature market can be explained by several reasons. First, according to Kong’s arguments, there were more cultural workers who produced popular literature that was embedded with their personal values and ideas. In the 1980s, a new generation of Chinese artists, who were influenced by the 1985 avant-garde art movement, announced the idea of regaining artistic autonomy. Kong suggests, “...A new generation of avant-garde writers was turning to modernist experiments with hermetic personal
writing; others were simply ignoring contemporary issues in favor of exploring their cultural roots” (Kong 2005, 15) The 1985 Art movement advocated Western modern art and opposed left-wing political art, in which young artists and writers desired a freer and were autonomous art environment for individual creation. This promoted advancement in Chinese contemporary art and literature where young artists and writers were advocating more modernization and individualization of cultural products. Thus traditional and serious literature and art, especially those related to politics, were criticized by artists and writers. It created a ideological base for young artists to appreciate Japanese manga, in contrast to the old and traditional lianhuanhua and manhua. And we will see later, Chinese publishers were trying to reform the lianhuanhua format and combine it with modern Japanese manga format, which was considered to be an art experiment that reflected this idea of rejecting the old and welcoming the new.

Secondly, based on Kong’s argument, the explosion of mass media and mass entertainment also influenced readers’ taste and choice of titles, which produced an extensive readership in popular culture consumption. Kong indicates,

Second, the explosion in mass media and other forms of popular culture distracted many readers. Video halls, dance clubs, karaoke bars, and popular music concerts, and of course pirated videos and the growing variety of television channels and programs, offered entire new worlds of entertainment to ‘starved’ Chinese audiences. (Kong 2005, 15)

New media and popular culture began to enter China during the 1980s, especially television which became very popular among people, especially in urban areas. Television contributed a lot to the successful introduction of Japanese manga at the early stage. For instance, many Chinese
readers first learned about Tezuka’s *Astro Boy* from watching television. Many readers read the original manga after they watched *Astro Boy* on television. The spread of new media, technology and popular culture resulted in an increasing readership and created a large number of consumers along with a new market and industry of popular books.

Last but not least, the mass introduction of foreign translated books came to the Chinese market to meet the demand of starved readers. Although this happened in the literature area, the threat from popular reading could be seen as one of the reasons that manga got so popular in the late 1980s. In the mid-1980s, many foreign books were introduced and translated from various genres, languages, and types from different countries. Kong gives some examples, “By the mid-1980s, a huge market for popular literature had been created, dominated by translations of foreign fiction, from Sidney Sheldon potboilers to Japanese pop fiction by Watanabe Jyunichi and Nishimura Toshiyuki.” (Kong 2005, 120) This period became the first time Chinese readers offered a variety of books other than serious and traditional Chinese books which created a huge market in the light entertainment industry. Popular foreign books usually sold millions of copies since there wasn’t a strong competitor from the local Chinese market.

The massive consumption brough huge profit in publishing foreign popular books. Japanese manga one of the popular products introduced by many publishers. In July 1980, a Japanese manga, *Finpi and I* (フィンピーとボク) by a distinguished manga artist, Shotaro Ishinomori, was published by People‘s Fine Arts Publishing House of Tianjin. (天津人民美术出版社) It was the first Japanese manga published in China. It was categorized as a kind of lianhuanhua by the publishing house. Starting from then, Japanese manga began to be massively published. The unregulated mass publishing of manga created diversity in kinds, forms, and
contents. But since most publishers and editors had no prior experience in publishing manga, many changes were made in manga form and content to adapt to the Chinese context and its readership.

**Mutual Adaptation in Forms: A Case Study of Early Astro Boy Manga**

When Japanese manga was first introduced, few Chinese readers knew about it, thus publishers and editors modified them into the lianhuanhua format which most Chinese readers were familiar with. Publishing foreign stories in lianhuanhua was a common practice among Chinese publisher at that time where many foreign comics, movies, and stories were also published in lianhuanhua. I will use a case study from early 1981 and 1989 *Astro Boy* manga to explain in detail how publishers turned them into lianhuanhua style.

Manga presented above are two different *Astro Boy* publications I will use in this section.\(^\text{12}\) The one on the left was published by Science Popularization Publishing House in 1981 and the one on the right was published by Tomorrow Publishing House in 1989.

In 1981, the first unlicensed *Astro Boy* manga was published by the Science Popularization Publishing House (科学普及出版社). This 1981 volume of *Astro Boy* sold for about 0.31 yuan, and it was published according to the original Tezuka story. There are about 200 pages in this small book. The format of the 1981 version was based on the lianhuanhua format, which is 787^1092 mm horizontally. The editor added a note in the front to say that “this book is organized in the Japanese reading order and please read from right to left and from up to down”. *(Astro Boy 1981)*

Since the Chinese lianhuanhua format was different from the Japanese format, the original panels and manga were change to the lianhuanhua format. The Chinese editor broke the original Japanese manga page published two different pages on the lianhuanhua format. Moreover, they even deleted and redrew the original manga, since there was a space conflict. For example, I present the original panel in comparison with the 1981 one.

---

13 注：读图时请按原文习惯，自右往左，自上而下
14 *Astro Boy*, Tezuka Osamu, (Chinese translation published on Manhua Ren (漫画人)
https://www.manhuaren.com/manhua-atongmudanshang/ last visited on April 30th, 2019)
可是不久，天马博士发现了一个重大的失误。这个飞雄永远也长不大。

你这个木偶，畜生！

你不是我儿子！

滚出去！你这个怪物！

天马博士的心情平静了。这一段时间，他和飞雄过得很幸福。
Compared with the original manga by Tezuka, in the 1981 *Astro Boy*, the panels were separated in two pages. The shape of the panels that Tezuka originally used were irregular and dynamic. Yet the 1981 version adjusted these irregular panels to regular, rectangle panels. The large panel was condensed to small panel condensed in the space it occupied. This change in panel structure resulted in many re-drawings of background, speech bubbles, and characters. In the 1981 *Astro Boy*, the head of Doctor Tenma was clearly redrawn and Astro Boy’s body was completely redrawn and appeared wired in body structure.

Japanese manga artists like Osamu Tezuka also made effort in this transformation process. In 1981, Tezuka Production received a copy of *Astro Boy* published by the Science Popularization Publishing House. According to Yoshimoto Koji and Miyazaki Ko’s manga, “Tezuka and his career”, Tezuka looked at this pirate copy of *Astro Boy*, said “This kind of drawings is not interesting. I have to re-make this for Chinese reader to enjoy (this manga)”¹⁶ (Koji and Ko, 2011). Since many of the panels were deleted, redrawn and broken into small pieces to accommodate the lianhuanhua format, he could not bear for Chinese readers to read a bad quality manga like this. As a result, Tezuka, known as a perfectionist at heart, insisted on redrawing and modifying his *Kimba the White Lion* in Chinese lianhuanhua style and sending it to a Chinese company to publish. The series *Kimba the White Lion* was published by China Broadcasting Publishing House (广播出版社) in May 1982. Even though the manga was provided by Tezuka, this book was a pirate copy since the China Broadcasting Publishing House did not get license from the Japanese publisher. Although the introduction page of the manga, stated “This manga is provided by the Japanese Xiangyang Publishing House and Chinese

¹⁶ 面白くないんですよこんな絵じゃ!!ちゃんとした絵で中国の人にも楽しんでもらわないと!!
Television Service Company”, I couldn’t find any information about the “Xiangyang Publishing House”, and the copyright of Tezuka’s manga were all reserved for Tezuka Productions, which did not appear on the 1982 *Kimba the White Lion*. Yoshimoto Koji and Miyazaki Ko point out, Tezuka’s Tezuka simply sent the revised copy to the Chinese company without licensing it.

Tezuka's effort to modify the 1982 *Kimba the White Lion* to accommodate lianhuanhua style was clear to see. In comparison with the *Astro Boy* manga, where panels were placed poorly, in the 1982 *Kimba the White Lion*, panels were ordered and organized, adjusting to the lianhuanhua format. There is a good example with Page 32 from the Kimba the White Lion and page 154 from the *Astro Boy*. As we can see from picture below, the panels of the 1981 *Astro

---

Bottom: *Astro Boy*, by Tezuka Osamu, Science Popularization Publishing House, 1981,
Boys were chaotic in organization. The blank space between panels were asymmetrical with irregular spacing. This was especially presented in fighting scenes where the panels’ sizes were usually cut through the middle of the page with sharp lines. Tezuka adjusted the size of each panel and restructured them according to the size of the lianhuanhua page without losing the essence of Japanese manga style. There were usually many lines for panels that explained the background story. In the original Tezuka manga, captions were placed inside the drawings as part of the story. In the 1982 version, Tezuka separated the captions from the drawings, and placed them under the panel in a traditional lianhuanhua style, with the picture presented below.  

The sense of motion in manga was created by the arrangement of lines and drawings. And even panel arrangement directed the way readers to move their eyes, creating rhythm when reading. The skill of arranging panels to create motion was different from lianhuanhua style whose expression was close to a static painting.

But Japanese manga exerted influence in the later Chinese manhua in terms of panel organizations. For instance, the 1989 Astro Boy, published by the Tomorrow Publishing House

---

(明天出版社) displayed a combination of both lianhuanhua style and Japanese style. The picture presented below is an example this style which I refer to as the “combined style.”

---

This *Astro Boy* volume was one volume from the series of “Famous Story of Anime Characters.” What the editor did was take the characters and parts of their stories to redraw the characters and retell the story by themselves. The artists used panels in lianhuanhua style. The panels were organized in orders, marked by numbers presented on each caption. A page was a combination of many “small lianhuanhua” where drawings and captions were separated. However, the Chinese-published *Astro Boy* manga was not totally in the traditional lianhuanhua style. It made use of the modern Japanese manga panel but the publisher modified the way panels were ordered to adopt the lianhuanhua book format so it was not like a traditional lianhuanhua or a typical Japanese manga, rather it was a hybrid product. The drawings looked more dynamic using the Japanese style. Unlike most Japanese manga, the whole book was colored and it was very short, containing only 15 pages.

The increasing popularity in anime in the 1980s caused many publishing houses like the Tomorrow Publishing House to publish sets of popular stories for children, like *Black Cat Policeman* (黑猫警长), *Monkey King* (孙悟空), *Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck* (米老鼠和唐老鸭), and *Astro Boy* was one of them. Most of the stories were drawn originally by Chinese artists, probably those who worked for the publishing company. Those manga were introductory books for children to learn these stories. It required artists to condense long stories like *Monkey King* and *Astro Boy* in one short volume. Therefore, in this 1989 version of *Astro Boy*, we saw the whole story was changed and redrawn by the Chinese artist and disconnected from the original manga. Moreover, the whole book was colored and very short, only 15 pages. The artist who redrew this and made a lot of changes to the story and characters. It was possible that Chinese cartoonists who redrew the manga reinterpreted the story and characters themselves and
added original characters into the story, who often seem more “Chinese”. For example, *Astro Boy* in the original manga only has a father, but in the 1989 version, the artists gave him a mom, who was a typical Chinese housewife. The role of Chinese mom was not fitting to the story, but the drawing style made her look less isolated from the story content. Moreover, the presence of a Chinese mom changed way how the story developed later, which influenced the way how reader perceived it. Reader who knew *Astro Boy* would recognize him as a Japanese character, but for readers reading it for the first time, the presence of a Chinese mom would create an impression that this is a Chinese manhua.

The Chinese drawing style to some extent was a way of adding Chinese elements into a foreign story so that it sinicized foreign manga’s content at the same time. In sum, Japanese manga published in lianhuanhua style lost their Japanese-ness in the process, becoming like a Chinese manhua. Tezuka's effort in modifying *Kimba the White Lion* could be seen in both ways: on one hand it was an act of restoring Japanese-ness of his manga in the lianhuanhua style by re-organizing and modifying manga panels to re-create a sense of which was unique to Japanese manga; on the other hand, he also conformed to the lianhuanhua style by shortening the dialogue, adjusting the size of panels and positioning captions under drawings, which is very much like lianhuanhua. Likewise, Chinese artists adopted the modern Japanese manga technique but they added many Chinese elements which made them distinctive. Therefore, even though they were using Japanese manga techniques and drawing Japanese stories, Chinese artists applied lianhuanhua-style panels and added Chinese elements into their drawing style which sinicized the Japanese manga style and content.
Exchanging content between Lianhuanhua and Manga

In the last section, I showed that changes in form and style influenced the content of manga products. The changing in forms was related closely to the requirements of the content, with artists and publishers choosing styles that best fit the content. Lianhuanhua forms were usually related to traditional literature, such as Romance of the Three Kingdoms (三国演义), historical anecdotes, like Twin Dragons (双龙会), communist narrative, like the Red Detachment of Women (红色娘子军), famous western literature like Gorky’s My childhood, or famous foreign children stories, like the Wonderful Adventures of Nils etc. Most of the stories were old and had been published for several decade thus were already known to readers. Chinese editors took advantage of this popularity and added new, modern elements to traditional stories to make them seem modern and new. Thus lianhuanhua published in the early 1980s were diverse in their genres.

Many traditional stories with new modern elements were published in lianhuanhua format. The old book store in Guangzhou, called HaoTian’s Old Books has lots of lianhuanhua from the 80s. These lianhuanhua were very diverse, including foreign translated comics from Sweden, Belgium, Japan, propaganda comics, and traditional remade Chinese manga. In this section, I will use two lianhuanhua I found in the bookstore, both of them were called “New Journey to the West”, “西游新记” which shared similar characters, lines and stories. Originally, New Journey to the West was a novel created by Tong Enzheng, a famous Chinese historian and science fiction author. New Journey to the West introduced modern Western knowledge to the readers at the same time it criticized modern capitalism by making a story about Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing’s experience in the United States. In this story, we
have traditional characters Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing from the *Journey to the West*, being depicted in a modern environment. A picture presented below\(^\text{20}\) is Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, dressed formally walking around probably New York’s Chinatown for food.

\[^{20}\text{New Journey to the West. Yu Qun, People’s Fine Arts Publishing House of Tianjin, 1988}\]
In this story, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing represented three types of people: Sun is treated as a movie star and gains significant social recognition; Zhu is obsessed with material processions; and Sha devotes himself to academia and Western philosophy. In these lianhuanhua, we saw Sun Wukong dressing formally and behaving like a civil person, which was inconsistent with his monkey-face, recognizable as the Monkey King from classical literature, with traditional features in a modern drawing. This signaled the idea that the Chinese and West could co-exist with one another, with China adopting Western dress as a way to express China’s modernization.

The third type of manga were Chinese remade Japanese manga. Popular Japanese manga characters and stories were adopted and sinicized by Chinese publishers. One example provided previously was the 1989 *Astro Boy*, the story and characters were changed and redrawn by the Chinese artist. For example, Astro Boy’s father, Doctor Tianma was borrowed from the original story, however in the Chinese version, he was changed from a scientist to a company manager and behaved differently than the original story. The story happened in China where Astro Boy was born in a typical nuclear family and lived in a modern city. This family structure corresponded to the One Child Policy that government had promulgated since 1979. Political propaganda was not a surprising element found in many comics published in this era. Although in the late 80s the government did loosen its control over the publishing industry, political propaganda was still a major concern in book publishing.
For example\textsuperscript{21}, a picture presented above was one part about one robot named Beili who made great efforts to get a “户口” (hu kou) which referred to Chinese residence cards, and was eventually killed by those foreign-look people who were against robot rights. Beil was designed like a buddha in the story: he didn’t have hair and there are scars on his head looking like a migrant worker. The language he used is also interesting, with lines like “All robot brothers of the world, we have become human and have the right to be human!”\textsuperscript{22} His revolutionary language functioned as political propaganda, which was one of the main focuses of these manga.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Astro Boy}. Tong Tong, Hanwu, Wang Qifan, by Tomorrow Publishing House, 1989

\textsuperscript{22} “全世界的机器人兄弟们，我们已经成了人，有了做人的权利!”
This resembled Mao’s idea of using art as an educational tool for political influence. Taking advantage of the original story, Chinese editors could use parts that they thought to be valuable and add their own interpretations. The old lianhuanhua and revolutionary manga had declined since China opened to the global market. The mindset of the early publishers was not to think about how to adapt Japanese manga’s style; rather, they stuck to the popular lianhuanhua format and kept the old way of designing comic books. There was an economic concern prompting the use of the lianhuanhua format since it used less paper than Japanese manga, thus helping publishing companies to save money. There was also a concern for preserving lianhuanhua as a traditional art form. The 1989 Astro Boy represented a cross-cultural production between two cultural forms.

**Conclusion**

In this early period of manga development, we saw a strong connection between cultural product and political influence. Some of the influence came from senior lianhuanhua and manhua artists who shared belief with Mao’s ideology thus their products reflected such value in politics. In China’s “寓教于乐” (Yu Jiao Yu Le) tradition of books functioning as entertaining educational tools, lianhuanhua was an example that served this purpose. Without talking about the translated Japanese manga, other manga or lianhuanhua that published by the Chinese, them were educational, but in different ways. The example of New Journey to the West I gave in my case study involved a critique of modern capitalism, material desire, social fame and etc. Lianhuanhua publishers made such educational purposes very direct and clear to the reader, which can be seen by looking at the language these lianhuanhua used: straight, direct and politized. In fact, many Chinese manga, were either remade from Japanese modern manga, or
from the Chinese traditional manga. They all, to some extent, carried characteristics, which were similar to early lianhuanhua and manhua, which was the expression and demonstration of some sort of the political ideas and thoughts.

In general, Japanese manga were introduced and categorized according to their content under other three big categories, 1) Children’s book; 2) Science’s books; 3) Foreign Cultural Books. Children’s book were among the most important categories of publications, which the state put major focus on its publications. Children were considered as important successor of the Party and the future of the country, so that children’ education was essential to the Party. In “The speech of Liao Jindan vice minister on the topic of publishing a national children’s literature in October 1978”, Liao pointed out:

Children’s literature should serve for the Proletarian politics. It serves the four modernizations. It serves to improve the average quality of children’s understanding of science and culture. It should help to cultivate our children to be successors of Chinese communism. (Liang 2013)

Therefore, the Party pushed to publish children books. The Party recommend that cultural workers do research on children’s preferences and needs for books and produce according to this. In “Opinions on how to strengthen Children’s Book Publications” (关于大力加强少年儿童读物发行工作的意见) announced in November 1978 declared,

We need to do research and publish books that children like to read under the current situation. We need to publish those that could educate children

---

23 少儿读物为无产阶级政治服务，就是为实现四个现代化服务，为提高全国少年儿童科学文化水平服务，为把少年儿童培养成德、智、体全面发展的共产主义事业接班人服务。
ideologically. At the same time, we need to publish books about science, culture, and education. ²⁴ (Liang 2013)

For Chinese editors, Japanese manga popular among children could be used for educational purposes. In previous examples, we saw now the 1989 *Astro Boy* manga was redrawn by the Chinese artist, who introduced many Chinese elements to make the story setting closer to children's daily lives. Like the invention of Astro Boy’s mom and the nuclear family, Astro Boy’s outfit and so forth. Later in 1989, we saw original stories about Beili, a buddhist-looked robot trying to fight for his human right against the evil foreigners. This way of changing, adding and re-interpreting the original Japanese story gave cultural workers in the state-owned publishing industry a way to fulfill ideological requirement from the state in children’s books by using Japanese characters and stories to induce and educate children with politically favorable ideologies, since children were fond of manga, or manhua stories and characters, which were entertaining at the same time easy to read. Therefore, political influence did not only shape in the domestic Chinese lianhuanhua, it also shape the way that foreign manga were adopted into the Chinese context. In the process of sinicization of the foreign products like manga, Chinese publishers could change the form and content of the original foreign manga to politicize it while keeping some entertainment elements attractive young readers. But readers and publishers hardly communicated with each other. During this period, lianhuanhua and other types of manga were finished independently and have left no space for public communication and opinion exchangement, which were factors that could help to form a urban popular cultural platform.

²⁴ 要适应形势发展的要求和少年儿童的特点及喜爱，满足少年儿童多种多样的需要。要发行好对少年儿童进行思想教育的读物，同时要特别重视适合少年儿童阅读的科学文化知识读物的发行。
CHAPTER TWO

Testing the Market:


Introduction

At the end of chapter one, I showed that although the economic reform contributed to the modernization and marketization of the Chinese publishing industry to develop their popular comic book business, most of the comics, however, were still imbued with political messages. These messages were 1) imposed by the Party and 2) shared value of senior artists who identify themselves with Maoism. Old political ideology kept influencing publications, making them a political and social implement. Starting from the early 90s when the reform policies transformed the political and economic landscape, the political influence generally declined and had less impact on cultural products, enabling books such as manga to be commercialized on a large scale. In this chapter, I argue that the liberation of the market contributed to the extensive consumption of Japanese manga in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, the mass consumption of Japanese manga helped spread the influence of manga culture among the common people as seen through the example of a growing manga culture community centered on manga magazines. This period was known as the golden age of the development of Japanese manga business in China, where the market economy played a significant role in popularizing Japanese manga at the local level.

However, this golden age was ephemeral, just like a meteor quickly shooting across the sky. In Li Chang-qing and Zhang Jie-qi’s essay “A Discussion of Japanese Comic Book Publishing in China,” they provided a graph, presented on the right which shows the number of
kinds and Japanese manga volumes that were published from 1980 to 2013. There was a great decline between 1994 and 1995. In 1994, about 854 volumes per manga (卷册数) were published and Japanese manga constituted almost 90% of the Chinese comic book market, with over one hundred million manga got published. However, at the end of 1994, suddenly, we see a rapid decline of Japanese manga publishing.

![Graph showing the number of Japanese manga volumes published in China from 1980 to 2013](image)

**图1 日本漫画出版概况**

An overview of Japanese Manga Publishing in China from 1980-2013

In the 1994, the Party started to regulate Japanese manga publishing and limited its import and restrict its local distributions. Japanese manga that was once spread extensively in the publishing market was now restrained by governmental regulations. This phenomenon provides an interesting question for us to ask: Why did the government suddenly denounce manga businesses at their economic peak? Why, and in what way, did the Japanese manga become a “problem” in the eyes of the Party and what kind of power dynamics are shown here? In order to answer these question, I will use a comparison between the development of Japanese manga in Hong Kong and mainland China to show the relationship between popular culture, the economy, and potential problems in politics. In general, I will argue the significance of economy’s role in support of the popularization of the popular culture, and I will argue that the commercialization of popular products and the mass consumption in the market are prerequisites for formation a popular culture.

**Facts Behind the Booming of Japanese Manga Business in China**

The liberation of the marketplace during the early 1990s changed the publishing industry and contributed to the explosion of manga business in three major ways: 1) Decrease of governmental interruption; 2) Rise of private and second-channel publishers; 3) Lack of copyright system. First, as I mentioned previously in Chapter one, under the influence of economic reform, the party applied a deregulatory policy and encouraged publishing houses to be financially independent from the state. The ideological pressures and requirements that the Party used to impose on publishing houses now were declined and replaced which gave autonomy to publishers over their publications. In China's “Publishing Industry: From Mao to
the Market”, Qidong Yun suggests the one important results of the economic reform was the replacement of old political agenda of “class struggle”, which was the dominant ideology used during the Mao era, and the transition of publishing houses’ interest to economic development, “When the economic reform was started in 1978, economic growth replaced ‘class struggle’ as the key focus of the party-state. Following this significant shift, political propaganda ceased to be the primary task of book publishing.” (Yun 2018, 97) Relieving ideological pressure, gave more freedom to publishers on topic choice, allowed diverse arts, poetry and fiction that were banned previously during the Cultural Revolution to be re-published.

The decrease of governmental control on publishing industry led to the rise of private and second-channel publishers who were the main force that imported Japanese manga to China. Within this free-market-based publishing system, the main players were active traders, not the government. Kong shares a comparison to demonstrate this point, “In 1979, state-owned Xinhua bookstores controlled 95% of the book retail market, by 1988, private and collective stores gained control of nearly two-thirds of that market.” (Kong 71) Improving the accessibility of books production and distribution gave rise to the increasing number of private publishers. In the early 1990s, the Party dismantled the Xinhua (新华) system which controlled distribution channels starting in the 1950s and allowed local publishers to open bookstores and to sell books at a price they set. Hence, operational autonomy expanded among publishing houses, which soon led to the emergence of second-channel publishers and private book distributors. At the same time, not only the publishing industry, the printing and paper supply industries were also commercialized, which provided paper resources and printing equipment to private publishers. Yun further points out this commercialization of the printing and paper industry offered a
foundation to the rise of private publishers, “The printing and paper supply industries were also commercialized and opened to private capital. Taken together, commercialized book distribution, book printing, and paper supply provided essential resources for the rise of private publishers.” (Yun 2018, 102) Because of this, local small private publishers could have chances to compete with state-own publishing houses and involve in the marketplace.

This economic phenomenon is in contrast to the Mao era when under the planned economy, the Party had controlled over book prices and set them as low as possible to encourage political knowledge to spread as widely as possible. The lower price caused the government to become the only subsidizer of national publishers since political books usually did not sell well in the market, and later it became an obstacle to against the development of printing technology. For instance, Yun points out that “The low-price policy may have impeded the improvement of printing technology and papermaking technology, as publishers, faced with the price control on their books, had needed to exercise stringent control over their production costs.” (Yun 2018, 102) The result of this was that books published in that period usually used low-quality paper, and printed badly since the technology of lithographic has not been applied yet. The undeveloped printing technology became a problem in the 80s when new titles increased rapidly and the old printing machines were unable to produce prints efficiently to meet the necessarily variety of books, especially popular books such as popular novels and comics. The old book publishing system of the state was unable to support quantitatively and qualitatively the growing book demand from the market which created a hole in book supply in the late 80s. This was where private publishers could step into. Yun suggests, “Private publishers, which ran much more efficiently and were out of the control of government regulation, were usually willing to offer
much greater payment in order to attract talented authors. Publishers had to ‘break government regulations and pay under-the-table fees’ (ibid) to authors in order to acquire their book drafts.” (Yun 2018, 103) The state-run publishing houses, due to its low price policy, could hardly provide attractive working environment to new publishers, editors, and authors, who usually were young and looked for a freer environment to publish books. Moreover, political books rarely sold well in the late 80s, a many the political books were kept in the storehouse and never be sold, creating an image that the state-run publishing houses had gloomy futures and a narrow range of genres.

Because private publishers could run not only efficiently but also operate without government regulation, they attracted many talented authors to work with to produce the best selling books to accumulate profit. Another advantage of private publishers was that they could publish books that were sensitive for the mainstream publishers to publish. Kong points out that the private publishers, by publishing culturally sensitive and challenging books, filled the gap of the mainstream publishers and diversified the market.

The second channel has brought out many culturally challenging books, some of very high quality, that would otherwise have remained unpublished; it has also published general entertainment books and works of fiction that have enriched the book market. Furthermore, it has filled the huge gap left by the main-channel publishers, which have failed to satisfy the huge public demand for books. The rise of the book dealers, their growing influence over all stages of publishing during the 1990s. (Kong 2005, 66)
As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the state-owned publishing houses, under political supervise, could only publish some part of the popular books which belonged to the publishing category that the Party assigned to them. Regardless of these ideological and political restraints, the private publishers could produce high quality, diverse books that the mainstream publishers couldn't do.

An underdeveloped copyright system and lack of legal consciousness of book copyright were reasons behind the rapid rising of second-channel publishing, and it contributed to the growth of Japanese manga. In the 1990s, first, the Chinese publishers generally had little knowledge of modern patent and copyright, and the government had not yet developed sufficient legal system to protect copyright. In addition, since the Chinese legal system was weak at that time, Chinese publishers had few regulations and restrictions imposed on them, which allowed massive, pirated publishing to be possible. Private publishers focused solely on the economic return from publishing Japanese manga regardless of potential copyrights problems. Moreover, on the Japanese side, Japanese publishers and editors and artists also lacked understanding and knowledge of the Chinese market and its legal system so that the Chinese market could publish pirated manga on its own without pressure from the Japanese. In addition, in the 1990s, Japan had already become one of largest economic powers in the world, whose major focus was not on book publishing industry. Rather than they were focusing on consumerism and modern technology. Japanese publishers disregarded the dissemination of pirated manga published oversea and they were satisfied with the domestic market, and few of them thought about manga’s growing international market. In “Globalizing Manga: From Japan to Hong Kong and Beyond,” Wendy Siuyi Wong describes this situation,
Japanese manga publishers enjoyed huge domestic successes throughout the decades after World War II. They, therefore, had little incentive to develop international licensing systems for their manga. The successful exportation of manga within Asia first started in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and other Southeast Asian countries, and black markets operated in individual locales to distribute pirated copies. (Wong 2006, 29)

Because of both overactive Chinese publishers and inactive Japanese publishers, manga were recklessly exported without license during the 1980s and the 1990s. Until the 1990s after the Japanese economic bubble collapsed, causing the national economy to decline, Japanese publishers began to pay attention to copyright licensing problems of manga overseas for expanding new market. Wong points out, “It was not until the domestic market for manga started to decline in the mid-1990s that publishers began to search for a new market…Japanese publishers finally organized and made international licensing a part of their business with Asian partners in the late 1980s.” (Wong 2006, 29) Although the licensing problems of manga overseas began to attract more attention from the Japanese side, in many countries and regions like Hong Kong and Taiwan where the pirated manga was already widely circulated, thus re-organizing the market became harder. Publishing manga with an official license required time and money which was a disadvantage in a competitive market where speed was the main aim. Ironically, the act of pirating enabled a large amounts of Japanese manga to circulate in foreign markets in a short period of time in a cheap price.

All the features that I described above, like the deregulatory policy, rise of second-channel publishers and pirated manga, contributed to the publishing of Japanese manga,
and they were also presented in Hong Kong as well. Hong Kong also engaged intensively in Japanese manga publishing. Although its domestics manga were influenced by the Japanese manga, Hong Kong manga have developed its own style that distinct to other type of manga.

**Popular Manga Cultural and Market in Hong Kong**

First In the late 1970s and the beginning of 1980s, when Japanese manga started to disseminate in the Asian market through massive pirated printing, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea were among the first three to begin to develop the manga business with the help of black markets. Frederik L. Schodt points out, it is because the cultural proximity shared between Japan and these three countries and areas, made the dissemination spread in a short span of time, saying “The cultural proximity of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea has made it easier for Japanese comics to catch on, and since the language of those nations can also be written the same way as Japanese--right-to-left and top-to-bottom--only translation is required.” (Schodt 1983, 157) Hong Kong opened to Japanese manga influence much earlier than Taiwan and Korea. Unlicensed Japanese manga spread first in Hong Kong, and then through Hong Kong, manga publications went into mainland China. Hong Kong became a gate for importing foreign cultural products, so Hong Kong became the first area where people began to know and consume Japanese manga, inspiring the emergence of Hong Kong manga. Hong Kong manga artists learned from Japanese manga and American comics, began to develop their own works. Wendy Siuyi Wong explains Hong Kong’s openness to manga, “Hong Kong became the earliest outlet of the global flow of manga from Japan….Hong Kong also benefited from being a British colony after the war; free of political turmoil, capitalism was able to flourish.” (Wong 2006, 30) The quick spread and wide reception of Japanese manga in Hong Kong was caused by the fact that Hong Kong was once a
British colony and there was less censorship, political restrictions towards foreign cultural products like Japanese manga. There was a long history of reading comics in Hong Kong. Before the Japanese manga cast influence on it, there had developed a substantial comics market in the 1960s. According to Wong’s research, local bestseller manhua included “Chak’s Master Q (1964), Hui Guan-man’s Uncle Choi (1958), Ng Gei-ping’s Boy Scout (1960), and Lee Wai-chun’s 13-Dot Cartoons (1966)” and so forth (Wong 2006, 30). These local Hong Kong comics published in the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s built a basic structure of the domestics comic market, thus when Japanese manga were introduced, readership in Hong Kong was already familiar with this art form and products, easily embracing Japanese manga. Moreover, Wong also points out that the boom of this first comics market was led by “This first boom was led mainly by local artists previously trained in mainland China and influenced by the United States and Europe.” (Wong 2006, 30) The artists who had prior knowledge of foreign culture acted as intermediaries who introduced famous Japanese manga into the market, like “Tezuka Osamu’s Astro Boy, Princess Knight, and Phoenix, as well as Mochizuki Mikiya’s Wild 7, Yokoyama Mitsuteru’s Tetsujin 28-go” (Wong 2006, 31) Most of them were first published as pirated manga. The pirated publishers edited and changed manga to accommodate the local culture. For example, many of the characters’ names were replaced by a local Chinese or Cantonese name and some of the content was completely redrawn by the local artist, and Like Fujiko Fujio’s Doraemon was translated into “Xiao Dingdong” or “Dingdong” according to the Cantonese pronunciation. The localization of foreign terms like local-pronounced names, brought local readers closer to the manga content.
The adoption of Japanese manga in Hong Kong changed the local industry in many ways in terms of mode of production, marketing and form of cultural activities. In “Japanese Elements in Hong Kong Comics: History, Art, and Industry,” Wai-ming Ng points out, “Elements of manga penetrate different forms of the comics industry of Hong Kong, strong in character goods and comics rental and publication.” (Ng 2003, 190) Japanese manga characters were very popular and Hong Kong companies used these characters to create character goods, similar to what Japan has been doing, creating a culture and market for public consuming character goods. According to Ng, “The success of Japanese character goods companies, such as Sanrio and San-X, has stimulated Hong Kong businessmen to establish their own brands, among them, McMug, Pork Chop, and Friends, Kawaii Tenkoku (Lovely Paradise), and Codebar.” (Ng 2003, 190) These Hong Kong companies were under Japanese influence and to an extent, they were Japanized by including Japanese-like names, models, designs etc. The success of these Japanized companies allowed Japanese culture production to expand further and deepened Japanese cultural influence in Hong Kong.

Secondly, the mode of publishing in Hong Kong was also influenced largely by Japanese culture. Ng points out,

Hong Kong comics are usually published once a week, about 30-40 pages printed colorfully on B5 size paper. In recent years, however, some Hong Kong comics have adopted the Japanese comic book format, published once a month with about 200 pages black and white on B6 size paper (about half the size of B5 paper) For example. Freeman Publisher publishes most of its comics in the Japanese format.
Many other publishers use the Japanese format in the publication of special collectors’ editions of Hong Kong comics. (Ng 2003, 191)

Before Japanese influence was widespread, Hong Kong comics mostly used the American format, printing on A4 size paper with color. This is because Hong Kong comics, in its early development in the 1970s and 1980s, received more influence from the West, especially from the American and from the traditional lianhuanhua. The increasing publications of various manga inspired young Hong Kong artists to involve in manga productions. Famous manga artists such as Huang Yulang, Ma Rongcheng absorbed Japanese manga drawing technique, expression skill, and storytelling strategy and applied them into their manga.

Thirdly, Japanese manga culture gave rise to a large demand for book rental which allowed various Japanese manga to be read and share among young readers. Ng points out, “Comics rental business emerged in the 1980s and now Hong Kong has more than 200 comics rental shops, carrying mostly Japanese comics” (Ng 2003, 191) In the 1980s, Hong Kong had a lot of privately-owned bookstores, many of them were located near schools, streets, commercial centers and other places where people flowed. Bookstores provided book rental service to allow the common people to access to the Japanese manga, especially for students who usually rent instead of buying the books. This book rental culture later spread to other parts of China such as Guangzhou. Sellers tended to open a business since their primary customers were students. The prevailing influence of Japanese manga also encouraged the emergence of fan art, which usually referred to as Dojinshi, and cosplay. According to Ng, he suggests

...Dojinshi and cosplay appeared in Hong Kong in the 1980s and early 1990s, respectively, and have become popular activities among comics lovers. Every
year, hundreds of *dojinshi* artists and cosplayers participate in comics conventions and festivals such as Comic World, and Comic Market. Like Japanese publishers, Hong Kong publishers also look for talents in *dojinshi*. (Ng 2003, 191)

These by-products appeared during the dissemination of process of Japanese manga, like *dojinshi* culture and cosplayer culture promoted public acceptance of the Japanese manga and increased its popularity, giving birth to many new cultural, social, public activities in Hong Kong. These new social activities form a chain of cultural exchange, building close relationships among the individual reader, artists, and publishing companies, forming the phenomenal success of Japanese manga culture in Hong Kong in terms of cultural dissemination, economic benefit, and social influence. In sum, the popularization of manga in Hong Kong was carried on by economic incentive and market demand. After entering into the market, Japanese manga was assimilated into local culture and provided modern drawing skills to Hong Kong manga. Centered on manga culture, *dojinshi* and cosplayer culture created a new type of popular and social activities where we see consumers of popular manga products becoming a producers and activists participating actively in this cultural activities. In sum, in Hong Kong, we see manga products surpassed itself to being only a commodity, and becoming a type of culture that could influence people’s social behavior, creating a sharing community based on the norms of these cultural activities. Culture self-motivated activities like cosplaying and making self-published *dojinshi* created a transition of which readers and consumers of popular manga products later become active producers of this culture and contributed back to this community, which affected and shaped the styles and forms of Japanese popular culture by local characteristics of Hong Kong.
An Introduction to Hua Shu Da Wang: The First Chinese Manga Magazine

The introduction of Japanese manga as commercial products in Hong Kong led to the formation of a horizontal cultural community of which were first originated from mass consumptions of manga products and later became sources of ideas and behaviors, transformed by local people into a new type of popular culture and activities which eventually contributed back to the mass consumption. The prosper manga market in Hong Kong made many people in mainland China to rethink about the value of manga and the function of its manga. Wang Yongsheng, a famous lianhuanhua artist, also started to think about the difference between Hong Kong manga business and Chinese manga business, who later became the founder of China’s first manga magazine. Wang had a discerning mind. He requested many foreign manga from Japan, America, Taiwan and Hong Kong from his two friends, one was the manager of Hong Kong Sanlian bookstore and the other was a Japanese who worked in China. Reading these manga, Wang realized new manga (Xinmanhua 新漫画) from other countries had developed into a totally different media than mainland China, and he believed China needed a platform for the spread and development of new manga. Wang mentions in his essay saying, “We need a gate and mouthpiece for our new manga, that is manga magazine.”26 Wang was inspired by the Japanese manga industry which manga circulation relied heavily on production and distribution of manga magazines. In the early 1990s, manga readers from mainland China were lack of resources and access to update the latest manga chapters since there were no existing of a manga magazine. One of the advantages of having a magazine was to keep the readers waiting for the manga so

26 启动和推行新型漫画，首先需要一个窗口和喉舌——漫画杂志。” (《画书大王》20年祭 王庸声, (xw.qq.com/comic/20130828010245/undefined. Last visited 30 April, 2019,
that they would consume manga regularly. Having China’s first manga magazine thus become what Wang believed to be a critical point to spread new manga culture and business in mainland China.

Thus, *Hua Shu Da Wang* (画书大王), the first Chinese manga magazine published in 1993 and soon became tremendously popular among manga readers. At the first, *Hua Shu Da Wang*, (hereinafter referred as Hua Wang) published mostly long series of popular Japanese manga like *Dragon Ball, Knights of the Zodiac (Saint Seiya)* to attract readers. In “Media Institutional Contexts of the Emergence and Development of Xinmanhua in China”, Chew and Chen describe the popularity of *Knights of the Zodiac* from an online article, “The Real Cause of Huashu Dawang's Demise” (画王消失的真正原因)²⁷.

“Between 1990 and 1991, more than six million pirated volumes of *Saint Seiya* were sold [...] and orders for printing factories grew exponentially. Take for example this large, state-owned printing factory. Japanese *manga* books composed all of its orders in 1991. It had to operate for 24 hours every day so that some machines broke down. Additionally, it had to outsource a part of its orders to smaller factories.” (Chew and Chen 2010, 173)

The selling of massive volume of manga created a large audience base for Japanese manga to develop, and at the same time more and more readers desired more manga to read. *Hua Wang* took advantage of this, published hot Japanese titles, and filled this demanded gap. It caused *Hua Wang* to become extremely popular from the time when it was first published, and it kept attracting more readers extending its influence, selling nearly five hundred fifty thousand copies

²⁷ <https://www.douban.com/group/topic/1379298/> Last Visited on April 30, 2019
of its issued vol.17 in early 1994. For readers who lived in the 1990s, reading manga on Hua Wang was one of their childhood memories. Yet unlike Japanese magazine where a page of manga takes a whole page of magazine, HuaWang published four pages of manga in one magazine page, which enabled them to publish a lot of manga pages. There is roughly 70~75 pages per volume (standard is 72 pages) and about 8~10 manga works printed. HuaWang did not only publish manga. They also published information and articles like a manga artist introductions, lessons on how to use screentone, lectures on how to draw manga etc. The magazine served an entertainment and educational purpose at the same time. For Chinese manga readers in the 1990s, Hua Wang allowed them to enjoy various types of manga including daily stories, mysterious stories, fighting stories, learning manga skills, and understanding current trend in the manga world.

**Hua Wang’s distinct features**

*Hua Wang* was published weekly to keep readers updating on the latest manga chapters from the Japanese manga magazine, that is different from lianhuanhua, which are usually short or finished series stories. Japanese storytelling manga are usually unfinished and continuous. Thus readers normally need to wait for artists to create an new chapter that is published in a manga magazine, which stimulates consumer demand. This industrial system was borrowed from Japan. For example, *Shōnen Jump*, a Japanese magazine, holds many famous manga series has becoming one of the bestsellers from the 1950s. *Shōnen Jump* was published every week, and if readers wanted to read the next chapter of their favorite manga, they had to buy manga magazines. It was a big difference between lianhuanhua and Japanese manga. Lianhuanhua were usually based on some famous, finished stories like *Water Margin* (水浒传), *Romance of the
Three Kingdoms (三国演义), and so forth which people already knew, thus there was no need to purchase a weekly magazine like Shōnen Jump to keep reading the story. Manga was not only about the story but also about how to publish, how to circulate in the market, and most importantly how to keep readers reading. Hua Wang magazine learned this publishing mode from Shōnen Jump that published famous manga series and new chapters each half a month and then each a week. For instance, Dragon Ball, one of the most popular Japanese manga during that time, was published on the Hua Wang as a magnet to many manga readers. Dragon Ball might have been the only manga that was published throughout the Hua Wang series. In early Hua Wang, issues it published more Japanese manga than the Chinese original manga, but on volume 20, we see the number of Japanese manga decreased and the Chinese original manga increased. Some Japanese manga published in the early phrase of Hua Wang did not appear in later Hua Wang; Dragon Ball was the only Japanese manga left from the early Hua Wang. Each Week Shonen Jump published two chapters of Dragon Ball and each chapter was about 16 pages. Since Hua Wang was a half-month magazine in each volume it could publish 2~3 chapters of Dragon Ball. It means that Hua Wang had to condense the pages it published Dragon Ball. Thus, as I mentioned before, in order to publish as many pages as possible in one volume, Hua Wang abbreviated the space, allowing it to publish four pages of manga on just one page. With the help of this strategy, Hua Wang could publish a lot of manga in a single volume. Moreover, the title of Dragon Ball was always put on the cover of Hua Wang which shows that the Dragon Ball series really was one of the most important manga to Hua Wang and also to readers.

Hua Wang provided a passage for sharing manga and created a platform that cultivated many young manga artists. Chew and Chen points out this transition, “...xinmanhua artists of this
early period were mainly manga fans, white-collar workers, and students without any education in the fine arts or professional training in the comic arts.” (Chew and Chen 2010, 174) The producers of manga shifted from the state-own publishers in the 1980s to amateur artists who were fond of Japanese manga. Young manga author like Yankai (颜开), published his first manga work, Xue Ye (雪椰), in 1993 to Hua Wang at the age of 18 which late was considered as one of the most finest and influential early Chinese manga. Xue Ye’s first tankōbon sold more than five hundred thousands after it published in 1996. Young manga authors like Yankai were influenced largely by Japanese manga thus their borrowed many popular elements to their stories to make it look attractive. For example, a well-known element of popular manga at that time was a female character

29 単行本: a individual volumes of a single manga
with large and sparkling eyes and long legs. The use of camera in xinmanga creates a sense of motion and the use of manga effect lines, speaking bubbles, emotion expression enhance its comical effect. As Chew and Chen mention, “Because most of the xinmanhua artists took popular manga as their models, they tended to produce fictional stories, love fantasies, and fairy tale-like contents; their drawing style tended to be less realistic and more embellished than that of lianhuanhua.” (Chew and Chen 2010, 175) Likewise, Xue Ye was a science fiction story of a normal high school boy travelled through space-time to against evil criminals with a foreign girl who comes from the future. Chinese manga artists also copied or imitated famous Japanese character design to draw their characters in a similar way. A famous example is Diary of Shan30, (小山日记 Xiao Shan Ri Ji) by Chen Xiang, in which the main character and the manga style

---

were similar to Akira Toriyama’s style. On the picture presented above, on the left is *Diary of Shan* and on the right is Akira Toriyama’s *Dr. Slump*. For authors like Yan Kai and Chen Xiang, adopting Japanese manga style was not just because it looks superficially good, but also because it was a representation of modernity. In essay “Moe and Internet Memes: The Resistance and Accommodation of Japanese Popular Culture in China” Saito mentions the reason why young manga artists favor Japanese manga style is because , “...it appeared to be modern, was more action oriented, captured the changing cultural trends in China.” (Saito 2017, 140) Adopted Japanese style differentiated these young artists from their lianhuanhua seniors. Young artists used it as a modernized expression to display characteristics of their youthness.

Furthermore, using Japanese manga style also demonstrated artist's desire to become successful in their lives. An idea similar to the “American Dream” was prevailing in the manga industry around areas near Hong Kong where foreign trade prospered, telling youth a story that if you tried, and tried hard, you will succeed and be known. The rising manga or comics market brought hope to artists that if they worked hard they would have a chance to succeed and end up with a better life. Individual artists worked near the coastal urban area, especially around the Pearl River Delta region next to Hong Kong where Japanese and foreign manga were exceedingly accessible. They were inspired by reading manga, developed great interested in manga, and eventually became self-motivated to participate in manga’s creation and trade. In an article published in Vol.8 of *Hua Wang* titled “Created Legend—Rong Cheng Ma”, Ma was described as one of the most successful Hong Kong manga artists in the 1990s. The article basically introduced and advertised his success as an inspiration for another manga artists. This article emphasized Ma’s personal effort that contributed to his success, though he was neither
literate or ever received formal artistic training at school, all of these did not become a problem on his way to success. *Hua Wang* introduced Ma in the following way, “Making manga for Ma is a job but also a interest. Now Ma has a manga studio that is more than 800 square meters large, with 40 staff worked for him. He lives in a 1500 square meter big mansion, has two trailers and two fancy cars: these are what he has earned by working hard all these years.”³¹ (Huang Hanwei 1993, 16) This reflects one reason why the manga business was so attractive to young people, who seeing themselves in Ma’s background story. The experience of Ma transited a message to youth telling that you do not need to do a very good job at school, follow the old routine, find a job you don’t like. Rather you can do what you want to do, based on your interest and become rich by doing what you like, and it will fulfill both the material needs and spiritual needs of an individual. The popularity of a manga work was supported by the mass market and thus it made manga artists think about how to create a work that met both readers’ taste and their taste. Manga made under such consideration can either be an entertainment for mass consumption or a work expressing personal value, and this creative work combined material, economic benefit and a spiritual stratification. Although manga was made for the masses and read by the masses in fact, it was a very personal product. It was created by an individual with his/her personal interests and desire, which may reflect other people’s thoughts and feelings that resonate with them. Individual manga artists did not require readers to read. Instead, readers found manga and the relationship between mangaist and readers was always based on a mutual selection. The job of an individual manga artist was similar to that of a freelancer. They did not have a settled work

³¹ 马仔的成功实在得来不易，他读的书既不多，也未曾受过很正统的美术训练。但他却能成为香港漫画界中公认的风云人物，这与他的努力与专注是分不开的。...漫画对马仔而言既是工作又是兴趣，他能够做到“娱人娱己”的地步，并不是旁人想象的那么容易的。...今日的马仔已拥有一间四十多人800多平方米的漫画社；住在一所高三层1500多平方米的郊外别墅，拥有两部房车、两部跑车。他拥有的都是他多年来的心血、努力和不断创新的精神换取得来的。
schedule or work space. Many of them work at home, and they control when they work. All they need to do is to meet the deadline. This sounds very attractive to young people who fear of going out to work, favoring a free lifestyle. In addition, manga artists’ wishes are simple, they just want readers to read and appreciate their manga, characters, and stories. People who decided to devote themselves to making manga always mentioned how much they loved manga, and this love for manga is always one of the most important reasons for manga artists to draw manga. Sometimes it is separated from economic interests. This was what motivated Tezuka Osamu to revise his manga to lianhuanhua style even though he knew he couldn’t make any money from it. Tezuka is a typical manga artist who shows that manga is a very personal product, and although it can bring economic benefit, but making manga for an artist is actually a really private and personal decision.

*Hua Wang* mostly attracted young readers, such as children and students, although it also reached some adults. One reason is that children and students who were born after the 80s tended to have a more open attitude toward foreign products like Japanese manga since it was fun for them to read to relax from schoolwork. Even so, in the 80s and 90s, school education was limited to passing examinations, education resources like gender knowledge which rarely taught in both school and household. The school taught students Chinese traditional culture which made gender education very sensitive to touch upon. Wang points out,

In the early 90s, however, the knowledge of gender and sex is still scarce in the public resource...Besides a whole new world of interesting stories in manga books, boys and girls in their growing up ages have, for the first time,
encountered a heap of nude and curvaceous human body which they could never see from their education. (Wang 2005, 25)

Manga allowed teenagers to approach to taboo things such as the human body, especially the female nude. Gender education has generally been ignored in China, but in Japan, there had been an aesthetics history of the human body. This appreciation of the human body was reflected in manga in the form of girls with big eyes, long legs, and a perfect figure. Wang points out, “But for many teenagers in the 1990s, reading manga can be an exciting adventure to approach taboo subjects, for instance, to understand the secrets of human body.” (Wang 23) The drawing of a beautiful human body of fictional character provides another way for children to learn and appreciate knowledge they couldn’t learn from school and home. Like Wang mentions, “Chinese manga readers are not the intended audience of Manga producers, yet the underlying culture presented in Manga can be understood in China through a cultural transnationalism course, in which human-culture interaction is reflected.” (Wang 2005, 23) This later triggered the central government’s attention to Japanese manga for its potential of being a form of “cultural invasion”, as young Chinese children and students became a direct receivers of these foreign cultural products. Japanese manga and its attached Japanese culture also influenced Chinese manga and its perspective on culture. Hua Wang was a magazine that published both Japanese and Chinese manga at the same time, which allowed Chinese manga authors to absorb some Japanese techniques used in their manga. For example, a Chinese original manga, Pantao Hui (蟠桃会) was made based on traditional Chinese stories and the characters are designed according to mythology figures like YaoJi (瑶姬). Pantao Hui refers a grand convention that all gods gather together to celebrate the birthday of Queen Mother of the West (西王母) where the saturn peach
(蟠桃) will be served as the main dish. In this scene, Zhu Bajie, a major character from *Journey of the West*, accidentally saw goddess bathing in the holy river and he thought there was somebody drowning thus he sent his sea-tiger to save the drown person. But Zhu Bajie was misunderstood as a voyeur by the goddess and they reported this to the Queen Mother of the West. The artist Tan Xiaochun openly drew goddess’ nude body which seemed to be striking. Usually, artists were required to cover the female nude scenes at least with some clothes. The way of drawing female nudes may have been influenced by the Japanese manga artists, like Rumiko Takahashi who also drew female nudes in a similar style, and whose works like *Mermaid saga* were popular in China in the 90s.

*Hua Wang* magazine had an important feature, the reader’s corner, where allowed readers to share their opinions, feelings and suggestions to *Hua Wang* with *Hua Wang* artists and editors. This was an essential part of *Hua Wang*’s structure because it emphasized on readers’ reaction to manga and

---

highlighted communication between readers and editors and even manga artists. Readers could even suggest manga to the editor that they could publish in the next volume. Publishers welcomed readers sending their opinions, comments, and suggestions to them, and they published those comments on the Reader’s Letter corner. It is usually located on the edge of a page. The picture on the right shows one example of readers’ comments.

Many readers have a great expectation of *Hua Wang* as the leading force of Chinese manga. There are tons of comments like “*Hua Wang*, I didn’t expect you to carry such heavy responsibility. You know the development of Chinese manga business now counts on you. You have to seize the chance! By Wangyi from Jiangsu.”³³ (*Hua Wang* Magazine 1993, 58) And comments like “I will support you like the way I support China’s bid for the Olympic Games. *Hua Shu Da Wang* is another door to know the world. By Jin Xunfeng from Hunan.”³⁴ (*Hua Wang* Magazine 1993, 60) There are tons of comments like these. One can state a great excitement and expectation from those readers. People not only wait to see more manga but what they really want from the magazine is to encourage the local development of Chinese manga. And *Hua Wang* did it. The magazine encouraged Chinese readers and artists to produce original Chinese manga. In volume 8, they announced a manga competition, “Call participants for 94-short-manga competition(“94漫画超短篇”有奖征稿启事),” and it ignited enthusiasm among Chinese manga readers and artists. In Vol.20, many readers’ comments praised the competition, and many of them believed it would have a positive effect on influencing and encouraging young

---

³³ 画王，没料到你小小年纪就出此大任。要知道中国漫画事业的发展，全压在你的脑袋上，你可要好好把握啊！（王毅/江苏）
³⁴ 像支持申办奥运一样的支持你—画王。《画书大王》是认识世界的又一个窗口。（金旭峰/湖南）
artists to produce high-quality, Chinese original manga. The following are some comments from the Vol.20 in translation. These are comments show excitements in the future of Chinese manga. I feel gratified to see great works published in the 94 Short Manga Competition.

Only did I started to realize we have so many talented Chinese manhua artists. I love <Fengyun Lu> a lot since it has a nice story with dynamic and beautiful drawing. By Xie Yanyan from Fuzhou.³⁵ (Hua Wang Magazine 1994)

One comment shows future expectations for the art, “After reading works published in the 94 Short Manga Story Competition, I feel Chinese manga has a huge potential for further development. I hope Hua Shu Da Wang can cultivate more rising art stars. By Huang Xiuqing, from Shaoguan.” ³⁶(Hua Wang Magazine 1994) And there is a comment that probably came from teachers, “My students were excited to read manga published in the 94 Short Manga Story Competition since they are done by our Chinese children. By Chen Weimei and Jin Junli.”³⁷(Hua Wang Magazine 1994)

There are also Comments from potential manga artists, “After reading works published in the 94 Short Manga Story Competition, I feel excited, but it also arouses our enthusiasm about learning how to draw. We should consider them as competitors, and we will work harder to exceed them. By Dong Jun and Wu Hongmei from Xi’an.” ³⁸(Hua Wang Magazine 1994)

One thing I noticed from reading these comments is that there were a great number of adult readers. Comments from students are usually related to school life. Adult readers talk about how manga has a positive influence on their lives and also on children and

---

³⁵ 看到94超短篇刊登，真感到欣慰。现在我才发现咱们中国也有这么多的漫画人材。我挺喜欢《风云录》的，它故事内容好，画的动感很强，画面优美。（谢艳燕/福州）
³⁶ 看了《画书大王》选登的超短篇，我觉得我国漫画潜力极大，前途无量。希望《画书大王》培养出更多的画坛新秀。（黄秀清/韶关）
³⁷ 同学们看到「超短篇」选登后，非常兴奋，因为这是我们中国孩子的作品呢！（陈魏妹，靳君莉）
³⁸ 看了超短篇选登，兴奋之余又激起了我们学画的热情，我们要以他们为竞争对手，努力追赶并超过他们。”（董军，吴红梅/西安）
teenagers, their opinions on developing the manga business, and criticism of existing manga stories.

The Readers’ Letter Corner builds a mutual communication bridge between the publishers, readers, manga artists, and even foreign readers. In Vol.20, HuaWang published a comment by a Japanese girl who traveled with her father to live in Nanjing: “Two years ago, I went to China with my father. As a Japanese girl, I love China and also Hua Wang. By Chiyoko Kitahara from Nanjing.” 39(Hua Wang Magazine 1994) This comment demonstrates Hua Wang’s potential as an international communication platform between China and Japan. Publishers further solidified this possibility by replying to readers with generous comments. For example in Vol.8, a reader asked whether the magazine could introduce new manga artists, and Hua Wang editors replied in the affirmative. Next time, Hua Wang published a work by a English manga artist and briefly introduced this story. This is another example showing how much Hua Wang’s publishers cared about readers’ opinions and response. They wanted to make an outstanding Chinese manga magazine with the hope of developing new manga culture in China. But we need to consider that publishers naturally selected and published positive comments rather than negative comments. The editorial department of Hua Wang received more than fifty readers letters every day from October to December in 1993, and very few of the letters were published in the magazine. Therefore the selectivity of the letters needs to be considered. Despite this Readers Letter’s Corner definitely shows the importance of the audience’s voice to Hua Wang’s publication. Publishers judge from readers’ feedback to choose manga published in the magazine. Hua Wang and its readers’ corner’s presentation and exchange of audience’s opinions

39 两年前我随父亲来到中国。身为一个日本女孩，我热爱中国，也爱《画书大王》（北原千代子/南京）
and reactions on a open platform was in fact ahead of its time. Later, after the 2000s, the internet also became a space where people could exchange ideas openly and directly. *Hua Wang*’s mode of interaction with readers was very similar to the mode on the internet, with an emphasis on individual reactions and investment in its readership. *Hua Wang* demonstrate an emergence of a horizontal community based on manga magazine at which allowed readers to express their personal opinions and feelings on manga.

**The shutdown of Hua Wang and failure of the 5155 Project**

Started in August 1993 with only a one-year run, *Hua Wang* was forced to shut down in August 1994 by the government’s direct order. From August 1993 to August 1994, a total of 24 volumes of *Hua Wang* magazines were published. This magazine exerted significant influence at the early stage of the development of manga in China. Although *Hua Wang* had great popularity and large potential to extend its influence, some manga content alarmed the Party, and they decided to shut down the magazine down. The first concern had to do with education, especially sexual images. *Hua Wang* was criticized by the Party for its inappropriate content involving sexual implications. Saito mentions Wang Yongsheng’s experience, saying “Yongsheng Wang, its editor, describes the incident that appears to have served as a catalyst for the closure of the company, suggesting that a government official unfairly labeled a particular manga series as inappropriate reading material for children.” (Saito 2017, 140) Yan Kai, the author of *Xue Ye*, in his essay reflected on the failure of *Hua Wang*, and pointed out inappropriate reading material, especially the target picture which was probably an illustration from Tsukasa Hojo’s *City Hunters* series 40. Wang Yong Sheng argues that if people read this story and have a background

---

idea of the main characters and what they are doing in this illustration, people would not connect this image with erotic expression. Wang also points out the shutdown of *Hua Wang* did not go through any legal procedures but simply decided by an oral order from a government officer, which seemed to be unfair.

A more pragmatic explanation of the late 1990s prohibition of Japanese manga concerns global copyrights and publishing market regulation. In addition to the anxiety prevailing in government and society, Japanese manga publishers noticed the prevalence of the unlicensed manga industry in China, and began to take action requiring the Chinese government to control the situation. *Hua Shu Da Wang* was on top must-ban magazines of the list. According to Chew and Chen,

Japanese manga publishers complained to the Chinese government in 1993 and 1994, leading the state to take action against the pirates. Sichuan Xiwang Shudian was sued by Japanese corporations and was forcefully closed by joint efforts of Chinese and Japanese law enforcement. Authorities were shocked when they discovered the huge quantity of pirated manga in storage and a large number of orders from all over the country. The government promptly banned the magazine *Huashu Dawang* and broadcast several high-profile reports on CCTV about this event. (Chew and Chen 2010)

*Hua Wang* was published by Ning Xia Renmin Publishing House, but the scale and distribution was through Sichuan Xiwang Shudian. Sichuan Xiwang Shudian was one of the most successful pirated publishers of new comics. According to Chew and Chen’s research, Sichuan Xiwang Shudian had an extensive distribution network and a comprehensive translation and retail group
to publish new comics, *xinmanhua*, and *Hua Wang* was one of their most bestselling magazines. Since *Hua Wang* after being issued became extremely successful, a lot of other manga magazines were also launched in the market by pirated publishers. According to Wang Yongsheng, five to six manga magazines copied *Hua Wang*’s style and published Japanese manga. The publishing market was out of government control and thus it needed political involvement to issue restrictions regulating the market.

On the ideological side, the prevailing Japanese manga may have become a form of cultural invasion in the eyes of the government. In Chew and Chen’s essay, they point out that it is not only that the Chinese government regarded manga content to have negative social influence. Also, some conservative Chinese manga fans also complained that Japanese manga violated Chinese social norms. “A controversial aspect was the prevalence of teenage love affairs in Japanese manga storylines. Morally conservative fans disliked teenage love affairs in manga because of its breach of contemporary Chinese social norms.” (Chew and Chen 2010, 177) Many Japanese manga frankly depicted scenes like sex, violence and teenager love, and homo-sexual relations. Topics like these were considered to be unhealthy in terms of negative social influence on children education. Interestingly, Chew and Chen point out that in fact, manga fans themselves were a the major group asking for manga regulation instead of government officials. Fans sent letters to official comic magazines asking manga artists to respect moral traditions when they created manga and not simply copy those from American or Japan.

Certain [morally desirable] phenomena may be quite common in American or Japanese high school but do not happen in Chinese ones. Why shouldn't we draw comics on something that happen around us? [...] A good artist should balance the
educational and entertainment content in his/her works. (Chew and Chen 2010, 178)

The complaints from readers have a lot of to do with the modification of inappropriate scenes of the early manga. One example is Tsukasa Hojo’s *City Hunters*. The main character of *City Hunter*, Ryo Saeba is a non-traditional hero, a brave and strong gunman, assassinating bad guys and saving lives. But he is also erotic, having relationship with different girls. Hence, Hainan Photography and Art Publishing house, (海南摄影美术出版社) cut and changed lines and scenes that involved sexual depiction so that the character of Ryo Saeba seems completely different from the original manga. In the\(^{41}\) series of City Hunter, the “clean” version, in which many inappropriate scenes were deleted or changed, became very popular in China. In 1993, it was turned into a film and acted by Jackie Chan and other famous Hong Kong actors, which further increased its popularity. Therefore, *City Hunter* was again published by many other private publishers but without modifications, since it required a lot of works and many private publishers did not have time or money to do what the Hainan Photography and Art Publishing house had done, and the private publishers just wanted to make quick money from the manga. The prevalence of the original City Hunter manga made a lot of readers confused about which was the true Ryo Saeba, and they felt “shock”, finding it hard to accept after his original character design is revealed.

An interesting dynamic happening here is that the regulation of Japanese manga and the shutdown of *Hua Wang* could be resulting directly from both the government and the audience, who both think Japanese manga contains inappropriate content and that it should be regulated.

---

and even censored. Bringing back the idea of intended audience and unintended audience, Chinese audiences are an unintended audience for Japanese manga, and ideological conflicts emerge when the audience realizes that Japanese concepts and ideas speaking of culture, morality or society are different from Chinese perceptions of culture, moral and society. Imported cultural products, not originated from the local culture, face the risk of not being understood and even being misunderstood by the local audience since they shared a different culture. China, historically, has valued moral performance and social regulation, a opposed or limited individual freedom and subjectivity. Japanese manga, a cultural product from outside Chinese society, was created by Japanese authors carrying Japanese culture. However, the cultural boundaries or differences were blurred because of manga’s modern form and storying telling skill made people easily accept it. However, as Japanese manga kept expanding its influence, people who first were interested in its superficial form began to also be interested in Japanese culture, which is totally foreign. Thus the government anticipated that manga may have a potential to become a form of cultural imperialism. In order to maintain China’s political and cultural purity and for the sake of protecting local cultural from potential foreign cultural imperialism, the party decided to limit Japanese manga to protect the domestic comics. Saito points this out as well, “Once this view had been established in the official mainstream discourse, severe restrictions on imported manga were introduced to counteract this ‘Japanese invasion’ and manga publishing businesses closed rapidly as a result.”(Saito 2017, 140) Especially, after the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, the Chinese government become more sensitive about free speech and press freedom. Hua Wang, published by a pirated book company, was not under state supervision. In addition, the manga artists were young, and it was also hard to regulated their
works, unlike the lianhuanhua artists who had worked in a group and most of them received educations from the Party.

**Conclusion**

In the period, we saw an emergence of popular manga culture in both mainland China and Hong Kong under the influence of Japanese manga, but they ended differently. In Hong Kong, Hong Kong manga developed its own unique style and culture that was distinguished from that of the Japanese manga. In mainland China, the shutdown of *Hua Wang* magazine by the government signaled a failure of forming a popular community. The sudden shutdown of *Hua Wang* caused the Chinese manga industry to lose a golden chance of development of Chinese popular manga culture and market like Hong Kong.

However, the Party knew the Chinese manga industry had a large potential but it had to be totally Chinese and under the Party’s regulation. In 1995, the Party launched a project called, the 5155 project to support the Chinese manga industry. It established, like lianhuanhua, state-owned and state-sponsored manga publishing houses. This allowed the party to supervise manga content. Saito states, “The 5155 project allowed the government to police the content of Chinese comics and ensure that they adhered to Chinese morals and social norms.” (Saito 2017, 141) The 5155 project completely eliminated Japanese manga and only allowed Chinese original manga get published in the magazine. Because of this, Chinese readers lost official access to Japanese manga; the manga that gets published are now all Chinese originals. The idea is to eliminate the Japanese manga influence and establish Chinese nationalist content in manga. As Saito points out, “Non-Japanese styles and nationalistic content were encouraged and, at least in part, the project aimed to minimise the impact of manga on its impressionable viewers.” (Saito
In the late 1900s, technological innovations like the internet became widespread in China, and Japanese manga readers then turned to the internet to read pirated manga. The original Chinese manga magazine lost a lot of Japanese manga readers and experienced a financial crisis in the 2000s. Chew and Chen state, “As direct affiliates to the state bureaucracy, these magazines were hardly motivated to respond to market forces or labor demands.” (Chew and Chen 2010, 181-182) Again we see a trend that xinmanhua under the Party’s followed the same path as lianhuanhua. Once the state exerted its control and pressure on cultural creations, the product no longer belonged to either market or reader, but was oriented the state, causing xinmanhua to become like political tool again. In addition to the spread of the internet, Chinese manga readers turned to the internet looking for more interesting manga instead of consuming original Chinese manga under state supervision. The 5155 project eventually collapsed in the early 2000s due to financial crisis.

From this chapter, I showed that popular consumption lead to the formation of a popular cultural community where consumers, or readers who shared similar interests, values and ideas to come together as a collective group in which people are active participants and producers of this culture. The power of mass consumption of a product could become a social power that invents new type of social norms, behaviors and relationships. However, I am not saying that popular culture is intrinsically commercial, which is a statement that some cultural scholars are arguing for. In other words, through the act of consuming cultural products, people are inspired by its embedded value and meaning and becoming a producer of this kind of value and meaning expressing in their own terms, which provided a foundation for the emergence of a popular culture. From the story of Hua Wang, we still need to acknowledge that cultural product was not
completely free from political influence and in fact the Party still functioned behind the curtain of marketplace but it did provide a chance for the market to become more free and open to individual expression.
CHAPTER THREE

*Imagining Communities:*

Virtualization of Manga Culture the Digital Era (2000-present)

*Introduction*

After 30 years of development, a profit-oriented cultural industry began to develop and it led to the formation of many online original manga websites in the early 2000s. The manga production in the new era was carried on via the internet. At the end of the 1990s, the Party launched the 5155 Project that aim to support original manga in China. But as a result, the magazines produced under the 5155 Project did not achieve the same level of popularity, economy of scale, and social impact as *Hua Wang* did in the mid-1990s. Internet invasion was considered as one of the most important factors that caused the failure of the 5155 Project. Government interference and the attempt to exert control of manga publishing starting in 1994, the golden period of comic magazines, led to an industrial disintegration of production and distribution. By the early 2000s, the arrival of the internet alleviated this shortage of manga and re-established a platform for manga production and distribution. In 1994, China had set up its permanent internet service and joined the global network with the slogan “Across the Great Wall, we can reach every corner in the world”. Periodically, the number of manga websites and the internet users increased dramatically and it substantially jeopardized the traditional publishing industry by providing an open and free platform for consumption of popular culture products. The internet emerged as a new type of communication media, boosted the across-cultural exchangement and enhanced the domestic market transformation to modern consumer
capitalism. The internet has contributed to the growth of popular culture centered on manga, like fan culture and Otaku culture, promoted and expanded the circulation of manga products in the marketplace. The web-based publishing in China created a horizontally circulating fan culture which was powered by the internet, and the market economy became a driving force to produce a large online based collective manga community in a unique way. A new mode of social interaction has been constructed through the internet of which by allowing fans to communicate with others and giving them space to display individuality and participate actively on online community, influencing the process of production and consumption of cultural products in a unique way.

The Internet as a revolutionary communication media

Modern manga culture has been deeply influenced by the internet, partially because it provides a large public and private space for manga dissemination. The internet liberates manga’s production, publications and distribution allowing normal people to utilize for their own purposes. One of the most profound achievements behind this liberation is the debilitation of political influence on cultural product by inventing a revolutionary virtual cyberspace opened to public, and increased pluralization of the media. Liu Kang in “Globalization and Cultural Trends in China”, proposed three aspects of Chinese internet development. Kang first claims the internet is functioning as a new form of press by creating a worldwide information-sharing network. Compared to traditional print media, the online network was more powerful for information distribution, “The Internet creates a new press, which links to the global communication network. It trespasses the boundaries between the state-owned, centralized press and the commercially oriented local press, and between the international press and national press.”
The network on the internet was able to cross boundaries and transmit information on a large scale in a short period of time, which connected users from different social groups together. Information could be directly shared through the internet without a second agent. It challenged China’s media structure and simplified the publishing process by providing an opening space for messages to travel under fewer restrictions and rules. Kang claims this to be the second advantage of internet service as it provided a virtually “open space” which allowed various kinds of discussions and debates to be posted including even those that were rarely allowed by the state in the mainstream media. Most of the debates were holding privately thus hard to be monitored. In the sense, we see a trend of a declining presence of the state online. by providing “limitless” access to the public, liberating the people, the internet’s role in this public sphere made it a contentious place in the eyes of the party. Formerly, the Party used to control both the production and distribution of publications, which played a role as a message translator between the state and the civil society. The traditional role that media played previously was partially restricted by the internet since there was a new and a safer public platform to express it. Because the internet was open to public access, it gave individual’s autonomy to express their ideas and opinions anonymously, including those that were not allowed or had been banned on the mainstream media.

Media diversity and pluralism has violated government’s control over information production and distribution on the internet since the early 2000s. For the Party, the wide use of the internet had both positive and negative sides. On the one hand, the internet brought a large profits by creating new modes of business, as seen with famous companies like Taobao. Many individuals began to start private businesses online which resulted in a formation of a
considerable internet market. Nevertheless, the internet had the potential to cause social problems if none of the proper regulations was imposed to regulate and censor information. Before the era of digitalization, at that time, the Party imposed censorship on publishing houses, which were usually owned by the state who has direct control on them as the mouthpieces of political propaganda. The party could either support or ban a magazine with its authoritarian power to decide a company’s fate. The way of regulating seemed very simple and effective in the pre-internet period and it became difficult to do the same thing in the digital era.

The first disadvantage for the government was the spread of information and debate from those people who expressed opinions too quickly for the Party to respond. Hence public opinions were much easier to create through circulation of information on the internet, which put the Party at a disadvantage. The Great Firewall thus was operated by the Bureau of Public Information and Network Security Supervision to clear out ideas that were not wanted or harmful. Thus corresponded to one of Deng’s famous sayings, “If you open the window, both fresh air and flies will be blown in.” One contradiction was to what extent the party should impose its regulations and limitations on internet communication. The tension had always existed as to whether China should open up to the world and to what degree for the overall stability of the nation, especially after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. Kang argues that in this tension between national preservation and globalization trend, the internet is a “dynamic force” that brings new energy to transform old ways of public participation, that inherited from the Mao era, and it brings about new possibilities for modern urban culture.

China’s specific issue, however, lies in the tension between needs for normative regulation and for democratic participation of its vast population. In the domains
of ideology and values—especially in the news media, the public political forum, and literature and the arts—the Internet has become perhaps the most dynamic force. It has been active in dismantling the discursive, institutional infrastructures of the state inherited from the Mao era. In the meantime, it serves effectively to disseminate global consumer culture to the Chinese urban youth. (Kang 2004, 161)

Kang further argues that the internet represents a transition in society and culture, as Chinese people tried to redefine identities, positions, and subjectivities in a time dominated by global capitalism and consumerism. Although we already witnessed the expansion of the urban culture during the 1990s, that influence was kept spreading during the 2000s under the influence of the internet. The Party’s influence on cultural production kept declining since the early 2000s when the Internet generally became a necessary part of people’s daily lives. Given a trend of producers who think less and less of politics, more emphasis has been put on self-expression and personal freedom. The Internet created a multi-purpose cyberspace that was allowed people to do things like send messages, chat, enjoy entertaining, reading etc. Such features of the internet gave birth to new forms of urban activity that were usually performed by young, middle-class people who lived in urban areas.

During the mid-2000s, the increasing internet users were name “netizens” by the mainstream media. Modern urban youth’s online activities became one of their social labels, drawing a distinction with the older generation and became “interest in new possibilities” such as foreign films, tevelsions, food, fashions. (Clark 2012). Young generations who grew up in urban areas have been influencing by television and other forms of modern technology. Urban youths
were familiar with modern communication technology like the internet which had provided favorable platforms for them to expressing their concerns and interests publicly. The internet has contributed a lot to the formation and promotion of a new urban youth culture. Kang suggests, “Primarily as a medium for urban youth, the internet has become a major venue for self-expression for the younger generation. As the same time, it is a force that helps to shape their values and lifestyles...The internet provides visual and audio materials as the dominant forms of popular culture, flowing mostly from the USA, Japan, and Western Europe.” (Kang 332) Reading online expanded people’s choice of titles, offering different kinds, types and forms. Fiction, art, and video coming from overseas now were available to be seen online. For example literature, once it had been digitized and uploaded online, didn’t need to be carried around as with a printed copy. Reading now became more convenient and easy to access. Traditional paper publishing has been profoundly challenged as more and more people began to read online, abandoning the paper press. This transition of reading habits influenced on modern literature and art. Kang articulates that, “an Internet literature has emerged, serving as the aesthetic representation of the urban youth generation, largely born in the 1970s and 1980s.” (Kang 128) Literature and art were two important categories of human spiritual consumption. Compared with traditional ways of reading, fewer people go to the library and more people, especially the young generation use modern technology like smartphones and computers, to get information online.

The internet is not simply an source of information but also a creative space in which popular culture trends. Young urban netizens creating and posting their works online has become a social, popular activity. For instance, in the field of literature, cyber literature (网络小说)
caught the public popularity very quickly on the cyberspace. This kind of literature was influenced by the entertainment industry and modern consumerism, aiming at providing pleasure and entertainment, which made it different from traditional serious literature, reflecting a pleasure-seeking tendency of the urban youth. Such transmission of literature due to the changing public taste was also reflected in the comic genre, showing how lianhuanhua, the serious literature of comics widespread by Japanese manga and Chinese xinmanhua.

This transformation wasn’t limited to only literature or comics. A deep and fundamental change in terms of popular consumption fed by globalization has happened in the whole cultural industry, including movies, animation, and TV shows. Introduction of a capitalist market mode of globalization engenders new forms of social and cultural interaction. The internet contributes to a process of self-identification. Manga as a form of print art and literature are challenged by the internet by changing the traditional relations between media and readers: the audience begins to take a dominant role in media manipulation, making choices of format and creating new content. The internet produced momentum in the process of manga’s globalization and transformation by expanding the scope beyond a single country and culture.

**The Japanese manga industry**

Manga in Japan has already developed as a form of industry with an professional industrial mode of production, publication and distribution. Japan has enormous resources for both print and online reading, while most Japanese still prefer to read a printed book. Several factors make Japanese readers relatively reluctant to read online. I acknowledge the complexity of Japanese publishing industry, but since it is not the major focus of this project, I will just briefly introduce some of the factors that are important in comparison to the Chinese manga
industry. First of all, Japanese manga and magazines have divided into wide categories to meet a comprehensive range of readers. Andrew T. Kamei-Dyche introduces,

There are over fifty regular mainstream manga magazines, ranging from Shūkan Shōnen Janpu (週刊少年ジャンプ, Weekly Shōnen Jump) with a circulation of some two million, to magazines with figures around just ten thousand. These magazines are divided into broad categories based on the target gender and age of their readers. Popular stories are often republished as collectible volumes for fans to purchase, and there are publishers that specialize in precisely this market. (Kamei-Dyche 2017)

In Japan, starting in the early 2000s, the market share of E-books kept rising in the manga market. Jaqueline Berndt in her article, “Magazine and Books: Changes in the Manga Market” provides market share data for the Japanese manga publishing industry, which is presented below

Compared with manga tankōbon, manga magazines were more directly impacted by the...

42 Berndt 2015
43 単行本: a individual volumes of a single manga
E-comics, with its annual sales continuing to decline started in the 2000s. Books have widely been digitized and uploaded online for wide sharing, and this trend of digitizing books exerted a negative influence on traditional publishing business, since people can read online for free without buying actual books or magazines. Basically, there are two major ways to digitize manga. For the Japanese, the most common way is to transcribe existing manga to digital forms. Berndt points out that

At present, the digitalization expedited by major manga publishers takes mainly two forms: on the one hand, re-utilization of already published works (the major challenge being the adjustment of pages, especially verbal parts, to the smaller smartphone monitor), and on the other hand, the publication of newly produced manga online with a view to subsequent tankōbon (単行本) editions. (Berndt 2015, 236)

According Berndt’s comment, the first characteristic of digitalization is to transform published manga into digital forms and re-publish them online. Since manga that were not adjusted could not fit the size of a computer or smartphone screen, it creates difficulties for the reading experience. Manga, a product of print culture, needs to be readjusted for the new internet platform, which arose discussions on the possibilities of manga on its form and its feasible adjustment on a new media platform. The second way is to publish the whole tankōbon edition online but this only applies to those finished manga, not for those of which still continue in series. In Japan, the manga industry was already mature by the time the internet came and exerted influence on the market. The grounding basis of the Japanese manga industry is magazine-based production. Artists have a contract with a certain manga magazine company,
like Shueisha, Shogakukan, Kodansha. Artists usually work in an independent manga studio which help them to maintain control over their works. Editors from the publishing houses are responsible for discussing manga plots with the artists and making sure that the artist can finish a new chapter before the deadline. The emergence of the internet in Japan influenced the role of the magazine editor in traditional manga company. The Internet gives those editors, who want to work outside a big company another place to work in the industry. As more manga artists, usually young authors, who either feel tired of giving works to the big companies, or find it difficult to catch attention from the mainstream, free online editors could work with them and publish online magazines.

It is also worth mentioning Japanese reading culture. It may be strange for foreigners in Japan to see people reading manga in public spaces, like on a train. Japanese people have an attachment to paperback books and paper media generally. It is easy to find bookstores, magazines, and comics in Japan. There has been a prevalence of book reading culture in Japan, and even after the internet has been introduced, many Japanese still love paperback books since they can touch, smell, hold, and collect them, which gives a sense of ownership over the book. It is the same with manga. Japanese manga mania loves collecting manga collections and preserve them like a treasure. Even though the internet provided a free and open channel to read manga, this culture caused Japanese manga readers to continue to buy the actual manga magazines and tankōbon.

Japanese fan culture has made a significant contribution to manga culture. Fans produce fanfiction, fan-art and self-published manga, called dōjinshi (同人誌), usually featuring existing characters from the mainstream manga in their own creations. Fan culture encourage individual
to produce and share their works with other on social media, online website. For instance, *Pixiv* is a Japanese online community for fan artists, where millions fan art and fiction are publishing and sharing monthly. Andrew T. Kamei-Dyche discusses the phenomenon in his essay talking about reading culture in Japan, mentions, “While this is a worldwide phenomenon in popular culture, the enormous size, and range of print works produced by Japanese fans is staggering. There are both local and national conventions held for these independent creators to showcase and sell their material, often generating still smaller readerships in the process.” (Andrew T. Kamei-Dyche 2017) In most of the cases, fans are using social media to inform their followers about upcoming *dōjinshi*. Fan artists publish *dōjinshi*, post samples pages to publicize online and attend *Dōjinshi* conventions to sell their works. The business model of *dōjinshi* is building on the appreciation of printed media and fan works.

In Japan, the introduction of the internet has created a new channel within the traditional manga publishing system by providing new platform for manga dissemination and fan-art circulation. It is because the Japanese manga industry has a deeply rooted reading culture which is supported by the publishing industry. Manga magazine production has been efficient in meeting market demand. The fundamental mode of Japanese manga industry remains stable. Japan’s distinctive reading culture of celebrating the printed book as an artistic subject creates a fair amount of readership that supports such print culture. In the end, we see a combination of the internet with the old print business, and they help each other maintain the manga industry and produce new cultural forms.

*Chinese manga industry*
Generally speaking, the Chinese manga industry was divided into two periods of development: the magazine era (纸媒时代) and the Internet era (互联网时代). The graph presented below shows these two stages of development of manga business.\(^4\) Influenced by the Otaku culture and the spread of manga online community, the Chinese manga industry shifted from printed media to internet platforms very quickly in the 2000s.

In the magazine era, Chinese publishers have tried different methods and business modes in the manga industry. At first, they tried to replicate *Hua Wang* in the Japanese magazine mode.

It caused a lot of new Chinese original magazines to emerge from the 2000 to 2012. Chinese manga magazines in the post-\textit{Hua Wang} era experienced a quick market expansion while stimulating a boom in manga genres and kinds. There are different kinds of manga magazines. Some magazines published only manga like the Japanese manga magazines, while others also published the latest manga and anime information and trends, including topics like which are the most popular manga at the time, interviews from popular manga artists, a ranking of the most popular female and male characters and etc. We also see a similar ideas and business modes inherited from the \textit{Hua Wang} era, for it encouraged interaction between readers and authors. Like \textit{Hua Wang}, later manga magazines also emphasized “readers’ reaction”. Publishers want to know the readers’ taste and desire for them to select information and manga to publish. However, one thing worth noting is that most of the readers of the manga-anime magazines were school students, usually elementary, middle and high school. Those students often didn’t have a smartphone since most Chinese parents worried that smartphone, computers and the internet were negative influence which may distract students from studying in the early 2000s. Ten years later, when those students have grown up and most of them have smartphone and are using the internet more often, manga magazines again experienced a decline in readership. Unlike magazines in Japan that penetrated every small corner in society, Chinese manga magazine don’t have this kind of distribution power so that some magazine was hardly available in some regions and areas, thus the readerships is also limited to this areas. China also has a long history of reading printed books like Japan, but the Culture Revolution seriously disrupted China’s print culture, thus creating ten blank years in the publishing industry. In addition, the Chinese business chain of manga is rather new and undeveloped compared to that of Japan, thus there hasn’t been
a solid readership for print manga. Thus when the internet came to China, it inevitably caused a much more profound influence in the new industry. The Chinese manga culture, production, and publishing are also experiencing a transition in the internet era.

Moving to the 2010s, printed magazines lost priority as manga media. Audiences began to read free manga online, which lead to the shutdown of most manga magazine before 2010, and only a few of them survived. Starting from 2013 and 2014, social media and online manga website provided a new platform to enjoy online entertainment which attracted capital from 2015 to 2017 that has greatly expanded the market scale. Some of young manga artists chose to stay in the printing industry while many others were turned to online business. During the transition period between the magazine and internet, there was a divergent mode of manga production and publishing: one was based on traditional printing industry with a professional group of manga production, collection, publishing, and distribution; the another was based on internet networks, usually undertaken by individual artists and without a professional group of editors for publishing. In “Cultural Industry Series-2nd: Research theory and the case of supply-side reform of cultural industry”, Qi Ji argues that the internet integrates trends of market competitions and has caused manga websites, which were originally fan-run and interest-based, to turn into a small commercial enterprises. Qi suggests that this transformation is happening in three different perspectives in the areas of manga creation, transmission and business. In terms of creating manga, the internet opens up possibilities that work created by amateurs and artists can be seen and shared. Qi mentions that internet forums discussion sites, and BBS in some ways lower the standard for manga production.
Market competition causes a lot of manga platforms which were initially set up by fans for the purpose of fan communication and sharing to become systematic and marketized which is different from the traditional manga business mode. Compared to print media, this manga platform is closer to the market and reader. Moreover, based on the expansion of internet information, the production mode also transformed from general production to customized production; the center of production also shifted from author to readers, which means production of a work in terms of content is more decided by the reader and the market. In addition, as the internet is lowering the threshold of manga production, it is dividing the market into different genres, kinds, and types which satisfy different tastes from different readers.\(^4\) (Qi 2017)

Online websites allow fans, amateurs, and small studios channels to publicize their works. Thus it highly increases the number of published manga works online. This is also similar to what is happening in Japan, where the internet stimulates more fan productions. Social media contributes to the accessibility of online manga while publicizing manga to let more readers know. Moreover, social media allows manga to “travel” like on Weibo, good manga usually has thousands or even ten thousand shares by both manga fans and common netizens. Additionally, on a social media platform, readers can retweet, share, comment, and interact with manga

\(^4\)而经过多轮自然淘汰和市场竞争，最早出于爱好者交流性质的网络漫画平台开始向专业化、企业化，市场化转型，从而形成了有别于传统纸质媒体的新型漫画发行体系，并且比纸媒更加贴近市场、贴近受众需求。而基于互联网大数据的广泛拓展，以往规模化生产的创作方式也逐渐向定制化转变，生产中心从创作者逐渐转向受众，即更多地由受众、由市场决定生产、创作什么内容的作品。此外，互联网在极大降低动漫创作门槛的同时，还进一步对市场进行细分，形成了多样化的类型、题材、属性、的漫画类别，满足了不同漫画读者的偏好。
Compared with Hua Wang and the magazine era, the interaction between artists and fans have become closer and more spontaneous. They can jump around to different manga websites, social media, and blogs, surrounded by an enormous amount of information, waiting for consumption. This causes producers or other online businessmen to think seriously about how to snatch readers. Qi suggests it is an important point for the transition of the online website to be commercialized as they begin to take a reader as a customer.

Qi uses a word, “定制化” (ding zhi hua), which means “customization” in English to describe the changing features. She argues that the emphasis is moving from the author to the audience and there is a tendency of letting the audience and the market to decide on production content. Fans’ comments and “critique” will influence how artists create manga, and thus encourage authors to produce more good and popular works. In addition, we also see a transition in the role of the artist, who are which starting to become multi-functional producers of commercial products other than drawing manga. For instance, some influential artists will consider putting an advertisement in their manga or working with a food company to produce manga for propaganda and commercial purpose. Compared to the 80s, the main difference is that this time, it is not for politics. Additionally, many artists have personal accounts on Weibo, which is a Chinese version of Twitter, which helps a lot of manga artists become an “internet celebrity” (漫画家网红). A typically internet manga celebrity gains popular attentions and followers by posing their fanwork like manga online. Fans can read the latest manga by following the artists’ blog. On the artist's side, because of these fans, they can sell goods like umbrella, clothes, books with their manga characters to make extra money. Therefore, a manga artist has become more

---

46 漫画读者的“吐槽”和“留言”又能反向影响动漫创作行为，从而催生出更多贴合市场、贴近读者的优秀作品。
than an artist for manga, but also for extra commercial products. Compared with early manga artists, like Yankai from *Hua Wang*, the new internet artists, have the advantage of getting more instant information from their customers, so it drives them to pay more attention to how to best serve the market, even to a degree of sacrificing distinguishing features of their artwork to meet the needs of the market.

The internet provides all kinds of resources that assist manga reading, production, and transmission, which makes the production process accessible and not only limited to professional manga artists. They differ from magazine, in which works’ titles are established and limited in page numbers. In this sense, the reader doesn’t really have the choice to select. Readers can only read those which get published. Moreover, each chapter is published individually in the magazine. The reader doesn’t have another way to read chapters that were published beforehand unless they wait until the tankōbon of the target series is published. In other words, in the Internet era, readers have freedom and opportunity to choose which manga to read and decide whether they should continue to read it or not. Fans, artists can get access to an online platform to publish their works. On the distribution level, the internet breaks the traditional manga publishing mode and puts an end to publishing house’s monopoly. The trend of marketization leads to a more systematized industry, thus forming a new business model in terms of manga production, collection, and distribution.

**Forming individual identity and value: Fans and Otaku Culture**

In Japan and later China, the manga industry and culture are closely associated with fan and Otaku culture in which they depend and contribute to one another, thus together they construct a horizontal value circulation system that is able to maintain its cultural originality in
relation to the economy and political influence. The manga industry produces original material texts, which carry potential meanings and values that can be structured and re-interpreted by fans. Through performing fan activities both online and in real life, fans constantly produce more meaning and value out of the original material texts which are eventually feeding back into the creation of other manga and to the whole popular culture. Fans are both the audience and the producer of these circulating meanings and values. Fans and Otaku are active participants in the activity of producing fan art, fiction, and video in which they persistently draw more meaning from the original text based on their personal understanding while actively sharing these meanings in the fan community, which also influenced other fans. In the process, fans and Otaku culture defines, preserves and expresses fan’s individuality as well as forming a fan community with a shared value and identity.

Otaku, “おたく” is a word in Japanese that literally means “your home” or “your house”. In popular usage, it means people obsessed with Japanese manga, animation, and other popular culture products. As Japanese popular culture was spread, the “Otaku” culture has been introduced and recognized as a cultural phenomenon. Otaku culture was introduced to China, during the 1980s, and it has become a part of popular culture, especially among children and teenagers, the main consumers of manga and anime. A more specific definition of Otaku is introduced by Lin in her research, “Yuzhaizu: A study of Otaku Identity in Mainland China” as having the following characteristics:

(1) at least be obsessed with the consuming of Japanese animation, manga/comics and game (ACG for short); (2) identify with these genres of popular culture and the activities of the fandom community and are willing to devote themselves to
learning more about the culture; and (3) perform (in the case of activities like cosplay for example) the culture through interactions with fellow fans or attending activities held by the community. (Lin 2012, 61)

In China, the word Otaku is not directly translated into Chinese. Instead “Yu Zhai zu”(御宅族), means “people who stay at home”, has introduced from Taiwan and widely used among Chinese manga and anime fans. Chinese Otaku has contributed greatly to the building of an online community, producing fan products and spreading fan business. In order to understand Otaku and Fan culture’s development in China, a brief review of concepts of popular culture, subcultural culture and youth urban culture and their characteristics in Chinese content are essential. Popular culture is generally defined as a type of mass culture that is created and favored by many people, and it is a process of generating meanings and value shared by a particular group of people within a particular social, cultural system. Fiske defines cultural production is a active, not passive activity. “Culture is a living, active process: it can be developed only from within, it cannot be imposed from without or above.” (Fiske 1989, 23) In a process of producing a culture, the people are producers as well as consumers. Popular culture produces a horizontal space where the people are no longer defined by a particular sociological terms; rather, in such a community, social categories and identities are ambiguous. It does not matter if you are a mother, a civil servant, a teacher or a student, as long as you are in a fan community, and producing fan works, you are a fan. Thus, a popular culture includes values generated from people with different social identities, values and status. Since they all contribute to the community, members could associate themselves with (even part of ) the shared, collective value since everybody is free to contribute. This is a moment where a “collective social
understandings are created”, similar to what scholars call shared values, beliefs and identities among the people as group.

Popular culture is fluid that can be adopted, changed and transformed depend on its cultural consumer and the producer. Each culture may have diverse cultural norms, content, and forms, but many of them still can be understood and appreciated by people from other cultures due to commonalities shared universally. Universal values are always the prototype and source of any type of popular culture because it is “popular” in the first place. Such features determine that culture is a transmittable value and could be re-interpreted and re-invented in another culture with changed form and content. The emergence of a new popular culture always began with an “old” popular culture form, influenced by a “new” popular culture. For instance, lianhuanhua culture in China was influenced by Japanese culture and evolved to become a Chinese manga culture due to China’s distinctive context, culture and history. The introduction of foreign popular culture created the first group of cultural transmitters and supporters of this culture. With support from the initial readership, the cultural circle started to grow bigger and more influential and started to have its own characteristics which resulted from both the previous domestic culture and the introduced new culture. After forming this new culture, with the effort of cultural activities and producers, the new culture started to develop on its own, generally and consciously departing from both the foreign culture and traditional culture. Popular culture is never defined by one category, or readership, but rather since it represented a collective consciousness, it naturally will have many subcultures created by different readers and fans. One standard to tell whether a culture will become popular or not depends on how many people want to participate in
such cultural activities, and to what extent, people embrace such culture and activities in their daily lives.

Producing popular culture is a process of construction associated with people’s daily life as well as a process of finding individual identity, personal meaning and social value in the cultural products. Storey summarizes these cultural activities in sociological terms, pointing out that culture stands for a particular way of life, an expression of a particular life and a method of reconstituting a particular lifestyle, meanings and individuality. Although I just mentioned that popular culture is a collective representation of a cluster of group of people with a shared value and belief, yet the essence of of popular culture is expressive of individuality and subjectivity. The nature of fan production is to produce meaning related to an individual life. Fiske states the relevance of daily life is a central focus on popular culture production.

The aim of this productivity is, therefore, to produce meanings that are relevant to everyday life. Relevance is central to popular culture, for it minimizes that difference between the text and life, between the aesthetic and the everyday that is so central to a process- and practice-based culture. Relevance can be produced only by the people, for only they can know which texts enable them to make the meanings that will function in their everyday lives. (Fiske 1989s)

Fan production is essentially an extension of their daily life, expressing fans’ social identity and beliefs, which is what makes them who they are. For instance, a fan or Otaku who produces fan art of his/her favorite manga character is not only an expressing affection toward this particular character but also reflecting a deep connection between him/her and the character, and a desire to be assimilated into and associated with the character and the story. Essentially these are moral
tales that show, rather than tell morality. Fans may take a character as a life guide, observing, learning and appreciating values from their actions and words. The morality, value and meaning they learned from the story and character will become part of their self identity.

I can take my personal experience as an example. Manga I read in different ages are indication of my. One Piece I read in elementary school, Fullmetal Alchemist in the middle school. And Attack on Titan during my senior year. One thing I found important to manga reading experience is the personal identification with the character, which is similar to novel reading too. For instance, One Piece is a story about adventure of dreams. The main character,
Luffy wants to become the freest person in the world, the Pirate King, thus he goes out to the sea, makes friend and travels around the world. This story looked very attractive to a 10-year-old me to imagine a myself also, like Luffy going out to a bigger world for his dreams instead of staying in my little house. Manga reading reflected a person’s psychological needs and fulfilled it through an artificial story. In elementary school, I was not very fortunate to have many friends, so *One Piece* looked appealing to me since the main character Luffy has a lot of friends. Furthermore, Main characters pursuing of their dreams and freedom have a magic that attracted me to go with them in the story and transform myself to be a person like them.

Manga is chosen by the reader and could build close association reader’s real life experience. In middle school, I began to learn chemistry, physics and other sciences, so the *Fullmetal Alchemist* inspired me to think about what makes this world and what is the truth behind the universe. A famous sentence I have always remembered is “All Is One, One Is All.”\(^48\) which inspired me to start reading philosophy in high school. Going to college, I started to read some classical manga like *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure series*, *Phoenix series*, *Astro Boy series*, *Attack On Titan*, and many others. All these manga are very insightful and influential. When I read them, I usually will adopt what I have learnt from class to do some analysis on the story and character content, and share my thoughts on my personal blog. The meaning and values I learned from these manga are continuous and always relevant to my real life experience and learning.

\(^{48}\) “The Universe is the All, and you are the One. All's existence and ability to move forward is dependent on this law. The universe is might infinite, but little things like structures, planets, people and animals are what keeps it going: If you die, the world continues on, you will decompose, became nutrients for plants, herbivores eat those plants, and carnivores eat the herbivores, they die, and life starts over. The Universe always moves forward, a constant cycle. It is the one thing that binds All together... That it is alchemy itself... *One is All, All is one.*”
Fullmetal Alchemists Vol.6

49  *Fullmetal Alchemists*, Vol.6. page 32, by Hiromu Arakawa
(http://www.dm5.com/m3965/#itop) Last visited on April 30th, 2019)
"He’s already great."

"Because he was born..."

...into this world."

---

Attack on Titan. Chapter 71. Bystander

---

50 Attack on Titan, Vol.18, Chapter 71, page 49, by Hajime Isayama
These manga are essentially stories that are open for imagination and interpretation so that it could be personalized depending on individual. Like many other fans, I apply what I have learned from the stories and the characters to my real life experience and sometime it influenced me to take certain actions, like a very personalized ideology and sometimes I did not even realize it is working underneath me. These manga has become part of my identity because I constantly try to connect myself with these manga symbols. Thus manga fans inheritably generate a desire in manga consumption. Fans usually go to store to consume “character goods” and decorate their personal belongings, space and themselves with these character goods. For example, I will decorate my room with anime-manga posters, figures, manga and other character goods. When I was in Japan, I immediately went to manga-anime stores to buy some stickers, little goods so that I could decorate myself with these characters. For a fan like me, buying character goods is not only is a act of consumption, but also it represents a way to express personality and mark individuality. Therefore, when consuming these character goods, many fans do not consider themselves to be consumers spending money but rather fans buying these goods to express love for both the character and for themselves. Buying characters goods later become a source of inspiration for creation of fan work. The more a fan consume, the higher the possibility of a fan to produce fan art, fiction and other type fan work. For a fan, consumption has close related to production. For myself, I consumed character goods that produced by manga-anime industry, other fans, and artists and used them as a creative inspiration. After that I share my work to the manga community and it could inspire other fans to create their works.

In the internet era, fans are both the consumer and the producer of information. Especially in fan culture, producing new content is highly valued by other fans. In general, fans
have their own creative ways of interpreting original manga texts. Fan products are going to be consumed by other fans and influence them to produce more fanfiction, art, videos, and other products. After putting energy and time into production, fans tend to share them with other fans in online communities. For instance, TalkOP, homepage presented below, is a fan-made nonprofit online BBS of One Piece, a famous Japanese manga. It was founded by a One Piece fan, and now it has become one of the biggest online communities for One Piece fans to do analysis, discussion, and communication. Fans read texts not only for fun but also to discover something they did not notice from previous reading. For example, it has become a trend for

---

51 Homepage of Talk OP Haidao (海道) BBS (http://bbs.talkop.com/ Last visited on April 30th, 2019)
manga fans to constantly re-read manga very carefully with a focus on small details and they may discover hidden storyline and share their discovery as an article. Some manga artists intentionally draw interesting details in their manga, encouraging readers to find them out. Eiichiro Oda, author of *One Piece* is famous for his attention to detail. Oda from the very beginning created a character, called Panda Man⁵², and drew him randomly in the manga. Usually is very hard to find, like the one on the picture presented below. Comparatively, more fans prefer to re-read and express opinions on long manga like, *One Piece, Naruto*, which cover a wide range of characters with a complicated story.

---

⁵² “Pandaman invaded One Piece?”
(https://www.taringa.net/+manga_anime/pandaman-invade-el-mundo-one-piece-megapost_i8py0) Last visited on April 30th, 2019.)
Unlike comments that are short and non-analytical, hardcore fans who are the main producers of fan comments, prefer a site where they feel surrounded by fans who love doing analysis too and they really go very deeply into the analysis. Like the picture presented below is a fan trying to apply Marx’s philosophy to examine the story and character’s development throughout the story. Storey in his discussion of fan culture called this an “intensity of intellectual and emotional involvement” (Storey 2006) type of reading, which require a fan to

53 Marx’s philosophy a d Individual development in the world of One Piece by Yue Luo. (基于马克思主义哲学浅谈海贼王世界 I——个体的发展 http://bbs.talkop.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=25081&highlight=%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D Last visited on April 30th, 2019)
engage intensively with materials, finding out meanings and inventing new meanings through re-reading the material. Storey points out,

Fans do not just read texts, they continually reread them. This changes profoundly the nature of the text-reader relationship….Reading in this way thus shifts the reader’s attention from ‘what will happen’ to ‘how things happen’; to questions of character relations, narrative themes, the production of social knowledges and discourses.” (Storey 2006, 163)

This type of fan readings becomes common online as they get more involved in the discussion, which stimulates their enthusiasm and thoughts. Communication among fans is the basis of this fan and otaku culture, because this kind of collective reading and community all depend on information sharing. This public circulation of information is highly depended on the internet. Lawrence Eng, in his essay, “Strategies of Engagement: Discovering, Defining, and Describing Otaku Culture in the United States”, argues that information is essential for the Otaku fandom. Eng suggests, “...Otaku view information as having relative (as opposed to intrinsic) value, and otaku are most concerned with information that is valuable.” (Eng 2012, 97) It means that if a fan knows information that other fans don’t know, it increases an Otaku’s value as a hardcore fan. The information has a strategical value in the Otaku community. As more “hidden” information is discovered or interpreted by an Otaku, it will be circulated and distributed widely, as a sort of “currency”. However, Eng points out that Otaku culture by no means is a kind of shopping culture, with an Otaku selling the information like merchandise. Otaku has formed its own community for information consumption and distribution. Eng argues,
Although otaku is not a free-information-sharing culture, they are not a shopping culture bound to mainstream markets and channels of consumption. Otaku does not rely on authorized sources of product information and distribution but has established their own self-defined networks of information and trade, placing value on products independently of “suggested retail price. (Eng 2012, 100)

The unauthorized sources of product information and distribution can be achieved only through the internet, which is the ideal platform for information circulation and distribution. We have seen the authorize sources could be very problematic for the formation of fan and otaku culture. In Chapter one, the commonly used media was print media, lianhuanhua and pirated comics book, which were viewed as isolated information carriers and hard to be shared due to the physicality of the print. In addition, print media was usually under the government’s supervision and maintenance, which means the information published in public is very selective, and communication is highly limited. In Chapter two, the boom of manga magazine was seen to be a free-sharing information platform that played a role in the early activities of fans and otaku. Yet magazines are a relatively insecure platform for cultural activity. Magazines are an authorized sources under the state’s direct regulation, which means it is easy for them to be interrupted, changed or even stopped. Before the internet era, besides print media, animation and manga shops which allowed people to rent and buy pirated manga or anime magazines were another way for fans and Otaku to acquire information. (Lin 2016) However, the non-virtual platform always involves material challenge of space and time: a shop may be too far to reach or information may reach the intended audience very late. In addition, the magazine as a traditional information holder is naturally a commodity and its distribution requires capital, printing time,
transportation time and a lot of other real-life problems. Fan and Otaku culture essentially is a postmodern popular culture and the backbones of this culture and related community are the accessibility of the information. It is a culture that builds on information sharing and inventions that put forward by the internet.

The Internet has increased fans' online activities by encouraging them to submit content on the internet for widely sharing. Storey highlights this importance of sharing between fans and considered it to be a transition from traditional solitary reading to a collective practice.

Whereas most reading is a solitary practice, performed in private, fans consume texts as part of a community. Fan culture is about the public display and circulation of meaning production and reading practices. Fans make meanings to communicate with other fans. The public display and circulation of these meanings are crucial to a fan culture’s reproduction...Fan culture are not just bodies of enthusiastic readers; they are also active cultural producers. (Storey 2006, 163)

Storey emphasizes fans as “active cultural producers” in which we can see a parallel between Japanese fans’ online activities and Chinese fans’ activities. Many Chinese social media like Weibo, Renren, Zhihu, and other websites are very supportive of individual participation and contribution to content submission. Historically reading novels has been part of the solidarity reading and is part of the interiority that is important for them. In manga online reading, there is a display of personal affiliation and identification with the manga in the fan community. Fan creates and contributes to this a collective community as a distinct individual. This way of interaction between fans and manga, produces a horizontal interconnection between fans which
helps to produce more derivative art, story, fiction to the community. This co-production of fan creating derivative works together is one of the distinctive feature of online manga reading nowadays than traditional novel reading. Manga website like You Yaoqi is very much constructed and built on this culture of sharing where we see fan community is emerged and promoted by its distinct functions. In next section, I will use You Yaoqi as a case study to demonstrate how online manga website constructs a horizontal interconnection community that advances this culture of sharing and co-production, which distinguish manga reading from traditional novel reading.

**A Case Study on You Yaoqi: Forming a Community of Co-production**

In 2006, a young 25-year-old manga fan, Zhou Jingqi, registered a Xiaozhan, which means small site, u17.com.cn, for sharing Japanese and other foreign manga he collected personally. Zhou was doing work like maintaining the website, uploading new manga, and writing down some ideas, thoughts, and feelings about his experience related to manga. Gradually, more and more fans began to join with Zhou, and the website grew bigger. In 2009, Cl oudary Corporation invested in You Yaoqi, and the site started commercial operations. Nowadays, You Yaoqi has become one of the most popular Chinese manga websites. Manga websites like You Yaoqi are an aggregation of heterogeneous manga in terms of both content and form, which allows them to attract audiences from various ages, genders with distinct taste and preference. The idea of dividing manga into different categories is inherited from the Japanese magazine model. As I have mentioned before, Japanese magazines are very specialized and divided into two major categories, targeting separately male reader and female readers. Likewise, each Chinese magazine also has its emphasis, some focus on shaonian (boy’s) manga and some focus on shaonv (girl’s) manga. Shaonian manga derived from the same character of Japanese
Shonen manga, which is equivalent to boy’s manga, and shaonv manga is equivalent to girl’s manga. In the past, with a different focus on manga types, each manga magazine has different reader preferences, for example shaojian magazines will target young male readers and shaonv are for female readers. This result is in a distinct fandom culture for each magazine. And then moving to the internet era, online manga websites generally includes all kinds of manga including shaojian and shaonv, which means readers are mixed on the website. This is the homepage of You Yaoqi website presented above54.

From the image, we can see manga are categorized according to genre and kinds to meet audiences’ tastes. The two basic categories are shaojian manga and shaonv manga. But there are also other categories like romantic manga, school manga, Gu Feng manga (historical manga), scientific manga, etc. And beside each column, there is a rank of the top trending manga of each

type. Besides the inclusivity of readers of all ages and genders, websites also accept manga drawn in different forms and styles. In terms of manga format, there is a difference between page manga and scroll manga. In Chinese, we use Ye, which means page, and Tiao, which means scrolling, to define these two types of manga. In addition, there is also a difference in terms of drawing style, categorized by traditional black-and-white manga and colored manga. The artists and editors can choose which forms and styles best fit their media and audiences. For instance, the traditional Japanese-style manga is usually black-and-white page manga, because it depends on the magazine. Japanese manga magazines use cheap paper, thus black-and-white is the best choice for published manga. The black-and-white manga style was the main manga format in Japan and China in the late 1990s. Starting from the 2000s, Chinese magazines tend to use colored manga, which looks vivid and appealing to attract young readers. But these manga are still created in the Japanese storytelling format that is divided by pages. Each page has panels to describe the story. In most cases, a magazine cannot publish black-and-white manga and color manga at the same time. A magazine has to insist on the continuity of manga format and be consistent with manga content. Scroll manga, also called vertical manga, is a format invented to read on the smartphone. When people read page manga on a smartphone, because screen is vertical and small, usually it is harder to read page manga because it has a lot of panels and conversation bubbles in separate space. Panels are organized according to right-to-left or left-to-right-order, thus the reader needs to zoom in and use their fingers to move it right to left and up to down to read page manga. Scroll manga allows readers to read on a continuous page. (图) Scroll manga is easier to read on a smartphone than page manga. Manga websites usually accept all types of manga. For example, You Yaoqi, you can find black-and-white page manga or colored
scroll manga, whatever you prefer. Websites are not limited or defined by one type or form of manga; instead, it is like a melting pot of all kinds of manga. The direct effect of this diversity is that it allows people with heterogeneous tastes and preference to find their “best” or “favorite” manga at a single website, which is a demonstration of marketization.

As I have mentioned before, most manga websites’ main emphasis is the reader. The website encourages readers to present their comments, opinions, ideas, and discussion online. There are two major ways for the reader to state their comments on You Yaoqi. First, under the homepage of a manga, there is a space called the “Reader’s Column” (读者评论) where most of the readers will leave their thoughts and reactions in this way. In general, there are two types of comments: analytical comments and general comments. Analytical comments usually will have a little mark on the right, as “essence”, which is analysis of the story, characters, and predictions for the next chapter. This kind of comment encourages thinking about the story after reading the manga and re-reading the previous chapters. The general comments include praise for the author, manga and some expectations on the further story development. The author can interact with fans on the comment column.

Now, a new way of commenting is through Danmu. (弹幕) Danmu in Chinese is called “Bullet screen” in English. It is a new feature of commenting on Japanese and Chinese video websites. Danmu originated from a Japanese video website and was adopted by Chinese website in the 2000s. This function allows real-time comments sent from viewers across the screen like a bullet. Originally it is a feature widely used on video playing website, but recently manga website also began to use this feature to allow readers to share their real-time reactions,
comments, or even complaint about manga. The picture presented below\textsuperscript{55} is a page from manga, “镇魂街”, \textit{Street of Guardians}. On the center, readers’ comment are displayed as \textit{Danmu}.

Danmu appears on specific panels that are chosen by the readers to show their commentary on the scene and on the characters.

Moreover, \textit{You Yaoqi} not only introduce this \textit{Danmu} function. It also launched another new function which is a dubbing feature that allows fans to record their voice to become a “voice actor” of the manga. On the right of the picture, there is a box of dubbing which displays voicing record by different fans. Fans can click the line and then listen to the dubbing, and the most well-done dubbing will be “liked” (点赞) promoted to the top of the list. Silent manga becomes dubbed manga and in that way, it is closer to animation. This new function and other features greatly improve readers’ interaction with the manga, so that to some extent, readers are

\textsuperscript{55}Street of Guardians, Chapter 1, by Xu Chen. (\url{http://www.u17.com/comic/3166.html} Last visited on April 30th, 2019)
becoming part of the manga and helping to create content for manga. With the Danmu system and the dub feature, readers’ comments pop out like bullets on the screen while their voice could be heard, which immediately provide “products” of fans becoming part of the manga’s content. From this cause, we may see a phenomenon of co-authorship whereby the reader is both a reader as well as a author.

The reader-centered and the market-oriented policy also is present with Yue Piao system, which is an important feature of You Yaoqi. This system was invented to encourage readers to contribute, which means “pay” for their favorite manga but not directly using actual money. A picture of Yue Piao is presented below\(^5\). Yue Piao, or the “monthly ticket”, is basically a type of internet money. Only VIP users are able to receive Yue Piao each month. Each Yue Piao is equivalent to 0.5 yuan. VIP users can donate this Yue Piao to their favorite manga. Each month You Yaoqi will make a ranking of manga based on the number of Yue Piao each manga received. This ranking displays the number of Yue Piao each manga received from readers as well as the

\(^5\) Homepage of Yue Piao, You Yaoqi, [http://www.u17.com/z/zt/zhexian/](http://www.u17.com/z/zt/zhexian/) Last visited on April 30th, 2019)
amount of actual money the author earns from *Yue Piao*. The *Yue Piao* system demonstrates the popularity of each manga. Audiences are given the choice and opportunity to determine the fate and income of the manga. For fans, *Yue Piao* system stands for a type of support for the artists, and a way to express affections for the manga. Moreover, *Yue Piao* also motivates authors to keep close touch with their audiences while the audience’s response encourages authors to improve the quality of manga. The *Yue Piao* system is borrowed from the Japanese manga’s voting system. Famous Japanese magazine like *Shonen Jump* holds monthly voting on popularity and rank works according to the number of readers’ votes. The editors and publishers then use it as a standard to decide which work can stay in the magazine and continue its ongoing series. Thus compared to print media, artists and authors today are more likely to be influenced by their audiences. It is not surprising that in some cases audience comments are even going to directly impact the design of the story, character, and lines in which the audiences are taking a role like an editor or acting like an second author, by commenting and participating in the process of manga creation.

**Conclusion:**

*You Yaoqi* is organizing and functioning based on reader-centered and market-oriented policies which are associated with commercial activities in modern capitalist society in which products are made as commodities circulating in the market that target interests of consumer groups to maximize profit. Similar to Japanese magazines, *You Yaoqi* and other manga websites divide manga into specific categories based on gender, age and genre difference to advertise to readers from particular social groups. This way of advertising manga has developed along with the market. We did not see the same categorization of manga in *Hua Wang* magazine in the early
reform period. The role of which is being strengthened and exaggerated on the internet, is its identity of not merely as a culture product but as commercial merchandise for entertainment and consumption of the mass. In a consumer society, it is commonly that a cultural product like manga is being taken as a commodity, a product that can be sold for profit, then the artist who produce manga is a manual labor worked according to the procedure to manufacture a manga. *You Yaoqi* and other manga platform act like an online shop and factory presenting manga to reader to consume while artists are laboring to meet the needs of market trends and demands. The ramification of this industrialization and marketization is causing an alienation of product that is estranged from its producer as well as cultural meaning and value that produce this product at the first place. Meanings and values in an estranged cultural product are established as a sort of social pattern that are imposed from outside or above this cultural realm. Chinese manga fans and artists realize it has becoming a noticeable problem when more homogeneous and de-individualized manga have been published extensively with similar stories, identical characters and low-quality drawing. Manga artists and readers criticize that readers, with generally low-taste and low appreciation of manga as a literature and art, bring down the overall quality and diversity of Chinese manga as the internet exposes and empowers comments from these types of reader online. Giving readers a dominant role in the manga business inevitably leads to mass production of popular topics that are widely read among most readers of the latest trend. The internet brings all kinds of readers on the same platform regardless of gender, age and identities. A work becomes good when readers demand high-quality works. In China, a reader culture just started to form and it is insufficient to provide high-quality readers. A comment, “readers are ruining Chinese manga” is a prevailing criticism. I once had a discussion with a
manga editor and at that time I believed manga, in order to be popular, must draw from the reader’s interest and reflect their value. But the editor pointed out that internet introduces a lot of new manga readers who not yet developed a taste on manga and the reason they consumed manga is just for entertainment and sensual excitement, which they will never read again. Manga for them is disposable. But, can we blame readers to be responsible for causing more manga produced as cheap commodities? Can we hold for sure that cultural product is essentially an outcome of consumerism thus the alienation of culture is inevitable?

I argue, following Fiske’s discussion of popular culture, what in a consumer society, all commodities have two values, a functional value and a cultural value. Fiske points out when a commodity circulates in the cultural economy, it is not just commercial but it is also a circulation of meaning and pleasure. (Fiske 1989) As in the example of my own experience that I discussed, the reason why I consumed character goods was not for the use of money. Rather the goods were a symbol of meanings through which I could express my individuality while I was enjoying it. As Fiske points out, the significance of this kind of consumption is to circulate meanings. “If the cultural commodities or texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular.” (Fiske 1989, 2) Also in You Yaoqi, we see a similar mode of readers contributing to the circulation of meanings. Readers are not just consumer that consume manga; they also contribute content to the manga through Danmu, commentary corner or on other online communities. The growing roles of readers play in manga creation can to be considered an expansion of fan culture that spreads on different online communities and platforms. Centered on manga, people in these networks are tied together through readership.
There are not necessarily sociological terms to define or assume an identity of those people who participate in online social networks and communities, who might come from different parts of the world, different in ages, genders, and classes. The meaning of popular culture exceeds economic benefits and become people’s identities, senses of self. Characters and stories embody certain values, and fans affiliate and associate themselves with these values and identify with them. The identity of self is demonstrated, expressed through fan products that one produces as a value expression.

This leads to another important feature of popular culture. Popular culture like fan and Otaku culture which have deep connections with personal expression is intrinsically a form of resistance to the mainstream, dominant culture that is imposed on the people from the outside.

Popular culture is structured within what Stuart Hall (1981) calls the opposition between the power-bloc and the people...Theories of ideology or hegemony stress the power of the dominant to construct the subjectivity of the subordinate and the common sense of society in their own interest. Their power is the power to have their meanings of self and of social relations accepted or consented by the people….Semiotic resistance results from the desire of the subordinate to exert control over the meanings of their lives, a control that is typically denied them in their material social conditions” (Fiske 1989a, 10)

Because of this, popular cultural participants to some extent, are evading and hiding away from the mainstream media which is always controlled by those who have power. A mainstream culture presents a hegemonic, united stable but vertical cultural dynamics. It is usually reaches people from top to bottom rather than popular culture, which is ideally horizontal expanding,
involving less power and social hierarchy. Within a mainstream, or dominant cultural realm, meaning and value is passed down from the outside in the interest of the people. The dominant force behind the mainstream culture could be politics, economic, religion or other forces. Each force has very specific interests and ideas about the utilization of culture. Politics combined with culture is often serving the unification of the state, so the state needs a strong, prevalent culture to set its rules to unify people’s ideology and mind, which is a kind of culture we have seen during the Mao era. In the Reform Era, we are seeing a trend where central power that has been shifting from politics to economics. Although too much economic emphasis on could distanced popular culture from its readers in terms of production and consumption, the internet and social networks expand the scope of popular culture, which could alleviate such pressure by having numerous communities. We definitely see China having a more active online communities, like Weibo and Zhihu, where people produce fan works with less interest in either politics or economics, Thus, in this way, China is definitely on the way to have a popular culture operating along the lines of a freer and more open society.
CONCLUSION

From a historical perspective, the internet has created a web-space that empowers individual expression through the production of a virtual community of a horizontal interaction between individuals and a reading community, which has grown through individual contribution to the development of popular culture made possible by these online communities. The internet has allowed for popular culture products to be liberated from the state’s control and freeing them from the association with national economic goals. In the Mao Era and the early Reform Period, popular culture was under political control, serving as a party mouthpiece to mobilize and educate the masses. There was less emphasis on individual expression. Communication was mostly happened through vertical relations where information was transferred from the state, who positioned itself on the top, to the people in the bottom. In the early 90s, the popularization and consumption of foreign popular products, like Japanese manga, has formed a new type of popular culture based on modern consumerism and individualism.

During almost 40 years of development, the transformation of manga reflects a liberation of popular culture in China that began from the late 1990s and extended into the internet era. Manga has gone through a series of social, political and economic changes under the influence of China’s economic reform policies. Japanese manga has constantly transformed in form and content, and its way of being distributed has also changed through different types of media—from lianhuanhua to magazines, and comic books and to digital comics. Each form represents a different type of social interaction and media expression. Lianhuanhua artists created works based on traditional fiction, wartime tales and political stories which were all very politized. In the early 1980s, lianhuanhua began incorporating modern elements by emulating Japanese
manga. Japanese panel organizations, cinematic techniques, and storytelling skills influenced many Chinese artists to create manhua in the Japanese manga style. During this cultural exchange process, lianhuanhua also sinicized Japanese manga’s form and content to make it look “Chinese” in adherence to state regulations. Overall, the focus on lianhuanhua and manhua artists in this period was still on political contributions and influence, with few artists creating their own stories or expressing individuality.

Lianhuanhua and other politically oriented manga dramatically declined and almost disappeared from the market in the later reform period, as economic influences kept growing within the publishing industry. Deregulatory policy and the application of a market-orientation economic focus during the early period of reform era started to expand its influence on the publishing industry and increase market competition. The prosperity of the the private publishing business contributed to the boom in Japanese manga in the mid-1990s. Cultural producers became interested in learning market trends and demand to create publications that meet these needs. The commercial market in this period became the driving force for the emergence of the private publishers who extensively published pirated manga, introducing them to the market. The massive Japanese manga boom became an incentive for readers and Chinese artists to create Japanese-modern style Chinese manga. They desired and needed a platform to express individual ideas and share manga culture. Hua Wang provided such a community in the form of a magazine, where readers, artists and editors connected horizontally, giving them a chance for personal expression and creation.

The shutdown of Hua Wang in 1994 made people realize the limitation and fragility of print media as a base for a horizontal interaction community. The state could always exercise its
hegemonic power over print media since it had control of both the media production and distribution. The introduction of the internet in the early 21st century changed this power dynamic. The internet provided a virtual web-based community that was freer from state control than print media, as networks expand the scope allowed to individuals to produce and distribute content that could surpass the range of control of government’s censorship. This imagined community granted the creators autonomy and control over their works. Increased social interactions online transformed manga, where it became a collective activity based on co-production. For instance, online manga websites like You Yaoqi provided features and functions that allowed manga readers to participate and interact with the manga and its author. It opened possibilities for forming a new type of relationship between the producer and the reader. Manga and other cultural products became more than an exciting entertainment tool for. More individuals began to get involved in manga-online-activities as part of their daily life, with manga also becoming a way to display personal identities and express individual value and meaning. A new type of manga reading online demonstrated a bigger picture of the social transition in Chinese society, representing a shift from a uniform and collective society of forced conformity to a more diverse and free society, starting from the internet.

In sum, manga platforms that are the developed from the internet form a virtual community different from that of the magazine, expanding and actualizing the ideas of horizontal community by bringing cultural consumers and producers onto the same space, creating new types of social interactions. It empowers individual to be more free in expressing themselves. The internet brings people who share similar values, beliefs, and interests together as a collective group of individuals, endowing them with certain social power. Popular culture that circulates
around the internet should be viewed as a form of resistance against the mainstream culture and the hegemonic state power, which challenges the existing social norms and encourages the value of personal freedom.
Bibliography


Chew, Matthew M., and Chen, Lu. “*Media Institutional Contexts of the Emergence and Development of Xinmanhua in China*.” Int J Comic Art 12 no2/3, Fall 2010


Raymond Williams, “*Excerpts from Raymond Williams, Keywords*” (Rev. Ed, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 87-93 and 236-8)


Manga reference and Internet based sources

Akira Toriyama, Dr. Slump (阿拉蕾), Chapter 1. 1st edition. 1981

https://tw.manhuagui.com/comic/29/436.html#p=3 Last visited on April 30, 2019


http://www.dm5.com/m3965/#itop Last visited on April 30th, 2019


http://www.199it.com/archives/542501.html Last visited on April 30th, 2019

Anonymous. “Pandaman invaded One Piece?”

https://www.taringa.net/+manga_anime/pandaman-invade-el-mundo-one-piece-megapost_i8pv0 Last visited on April 30th, 2019.


Talk OP BBS, Homepage of Talk OP Haidao (海道) BBS. http://bbs.talkop.com/ Last visited on April 30th, 2019

Tong, Enzheng. New Journey to the West (新西游记), edited by Yu Qun. People's Fine Arts Publishing House of Tianjin, 1988

Wang,Yongshen.,and Tan, Xiaochun, Meeting of the Saturn peach (蟠桃会), Hus Shu Da Wang Vol.8, Hua Shu Da Wang Publishing House, 1993. pp. 2

Xu, Chen. Street of Guardians (镇魂街), Chapter 1, 2012 http://www.u17.com/comic/3166.html Last visited on April 30th, 2019


Yan, Kai. Memory of Hua Wang. (<画书大王>20年祭之二-那一年，阳光炙热)
https://www.weibo.com/1808735245/Aotxvv4F0?type=repost#_rnd1556645428277
last visited on April 30, 2019)


http://www.u17.com/z/zt/zhexian/ Last visited on April 30th, 2019

Yue Luo. *Marxism and Individual development in the world of One Piece.* (基于马克思主义哲学浅谈海贼王世界——个体的发展)
http://bbs.talkop.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=25081&highlight=%E9%A9%A2%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D Last visited on April 30th, 2019

Zhi Feng Zhi Yu, *Answer on “How to view Tsukasa Hojo's manga ‘City Hunter’”* (如何评价北条司的漫画《城市猎人》? 听风听雨的回答 - 知乎)