CHAPTER 7

How Women's Manga Has Performed the Image of ASIAs, Globally and Locally

Fusami Ogi

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, manga turned into a global phenomenon, accepted by different cultures beyond Japan and inspiring non-Japanese participants. This expanded the scope of women's manga; since many cultures did not have a special market for female readers, one of the results of the globalization of women's manga had been to highlight the absence of women readers and authors in the field of comics, and to contribute to the production of a space for female participants in world comics.

At the same time, we should acknowledge another serious and fatal locus of absence, namely, Asia. More so than other genres of Japanese comics, women's manga has seemingly erased Asia from its representational universe. As is well known, feminized European appearance became one of the special features of the so-called shōjo manga style.[1] Even when the narrative is set in Asia, it often betrays its setting by making every ideal character look Caucasian, with long legs, round eyes, and a blond curly hairstyle.

F. Ogi (✉)
Department of English, Chikushi Jogakuen University, Dazaifu, Fukuoka, Japan
e-mail: fogi@chikushi-u.ac.jp

As famously noted by Keiko Takemiya, Asia was an untouchable arena for many authors of shōjo manga in the 1970s.[2] In this chapter, I will challenge this assumption by relying on the term "Asias" as used by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her *Other Asias*, where she observes that Asia, even though the name is laden with history and cultural politics, is not a place and that it cannot produce a naturalized homogeneous "identity," and therefore we must pluralize it.[3]

This chapter will explore Asian images that Japanese shōjo manga has historically employed as a genre, and consider how they exclude and include Asia by relying on the broader categories of the global and the local. In the first half of the chapter, I focus on an analysis of Asian images in early shōjo manga works, starting with the 1960s. In the second half of the chapter, I examine the works of a new generation of manga artists in the 2000s and explore the label of shōjo manga in its transnational context.

Feminization and Europeanization in Early Shōjo Manga

Having analyzed the representations of shōjo manga for 20 years, I have often noted that two images are crucial. They are feminization and Europeanization. For example, Fig. 7.1a and b show two girls drawn by the author Macoto Takahashi, who contributed to creating the typical shōjo style since the 1950s.[4] The characters' facial expressions are exactly the same, although we understand from their costumes that these two girls belong to different cultures. In shōjo manga of this early period, usually the reader cannot tell a character's nationality from their physical features and appearance, and in most cases, ideal characters look like feminized Caucasians regardless of their gender.

Let us trace a historical outline of shōjo manga, taking a few examples to explain each decade in turn. First of all, shōjo manga became one of the dominant forms of Japanese popular culture in the second half of the twentieth century. At the time, idealized Western feminine images like queens and princesses, including the actual royal families and even those of American presidents such as John F. Kennedy, were a staple of Japanese girls' culture.[5] It was not just a coincidence that the first works of manga and anime specifically aimed at a girl audience and written by renowned male authors presented their heroines as princesses. In 1953, Osamu
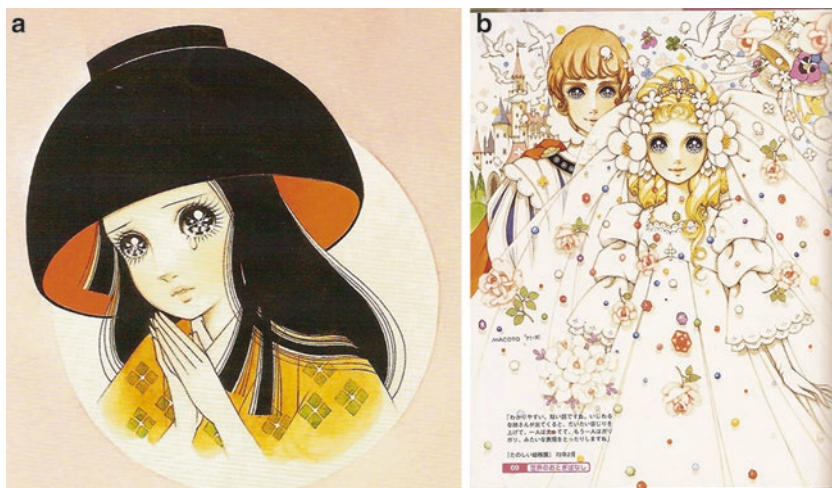
Fig. 7.1   (**a**, **b**) Macoto Takahashi (2001), *Macoto no ohimesama* [Macoto's Princesses], Tokyo: Parco: 69, 84, ©MACOTO GAROU

Tezuka began serializing the manga *Ribon no kishi* [*Princess Knight*],[6] which he himself regarded as the first story manga for shōjo.[7] Mitsuteru Yokoyama drew *Mahōtsukai Sally* [Sally the Witch] in 1966, which became the first TV anime series for shōjo. Tezuka stated in interviews that he had derived the theme of his girls' manga from Takarazuka theater,[8] which was famously performed in his hometown and was the sole world for girls he knew at the time. Yokoyama made even more interesting comments on his choice, stating that he had made his heroine a witch and princess as a result of the influence of American TV drama such as *Bewitched*, which was quite popular among Japanese TV audiences, and also noted that he thought that girls needed magical power to be strong.[9]

    These images of shōjo can be traced back to girls' culture of the early twentieth century, and the broader context of institutional and social reforms of the late nineteenth century, that included among other things a new education system that included girls.[10] The images of idealized Western girls appeared as illustrations of shōjo novels in magazines whose main readership was constituted by female students. Figure 7.2 shows a cover of *Hana monogatari* [Flower Tales] by Nobuko Yoshiya, published in 1939. It was illustrated by Jun'ichi Nakahara, one of the most popular illustrators for shōjo novels. The girl

Fig. 7.2 Nobuko
Yoshiya (1985), front
cover, *Hana monogatari*
vol. 1, Tokyo:
Kokushokankokai,
©Kokushokankokai

on the page is a Japanese girl with black hair, but except for that, her image lacks any Japanese features, and with a slender and tender figure, long curly hair, and cute round eyes, she looks very "European." Scholars have argued that the images of women found in postwar manga are inspired by these early illustrations.[11] In the prewar era, shōjo magazines were mostly devoted to serialized novels and short stories, and the manga culture itself was quite minor, although some important characters such as the namesake Kurumi-chan from *Kurukuru Kurumi-chan* by Katsuji Matsumoto, discussed by Ryan Holmberg in his chapter in this section, made their first appearance on their pages.

After the end of the Pacific War, manga developed into one of the dominant cultural genres in Japan. In the mid-1950s, manga began occupying half of all the pages in shōjo magazines, as exemplified by *Ribon* and *Nakayosi*, both of which are still major shōjo manga magazines.[12] Around the 1960s, one by one manga magazines became weekly and more authors were needed. In 1963, publishers began to issue weekly

manga magazines for girls too,[13] and more female authors started publishing on them.

This is also the time when the term *kawaii* became prevalent in Japanese girls' culture.[14] Cute images in the 1960s were overwhelmingly those of European princesses, and shōjo manga magazines often included photos of actual European girls, while *shōnen* manga magazines had contemporary heroes like baseball players and sumo wrestlers on their cover pages. Yet in the stories, Japanese girl characters were portrayed with black hair. Some special reasons were required to have fair hair color and those characters were often explained as mixed-race children.

In the 1970s, more shōjo manga characters began featuring colored hairstyles. It is at this time that the image of shōjo characters with round eyes and non-Japanese body shape, first seen in the 1920s illustrations and further developed by authors such as Takahashi, was crystallized and became standard. The world of shōjo manga became full of *kawaii* (cute) images of European characters with fair hair. At that time, something described as *ikoku settei* [setting in foreign countries] became popular in girls' comics. These foreign settings were mostly Europe and the US, although approximately two-thirds of the stories of each shōjo manga magazine were still set in Japan and most characters were supposed to be Japanese.[15] Therefore, their hair color was not necessarily linked to their biological origin. Especially on the front covers of magazines, or colored frontispieces,[16] more heads of Japanese characters became golden or other colors, even blue and green. In the story, they were presented as Japanese characters and their hair color was supposed to be natural black. In other words, the variety of hair colors functioned like figures of speech in literature, to symbolize a variety of meanings rather than portraying realistically the characters' ethnicity.[17]

In addition, another significant change occurred in the way of presenting the shōjo herself. Self-expression became one of key features of shōjo manga. The young female authors who debuted at that time were shōjo themselves, and most of them were in their teens. As a result, women's manga began presenting shōjo's lives and values from their own points of view. This also coincided with the rise of a second wave feminism in Japan.[18] Although many authors were not members of the feminist movement, their stories began to include elements that were subversive of the concept of gender itself. At the same time, fewer and fewer male authors engaged in drawing shōjo manga. For example, Macoto Takahashi men-

tions that one of the crucial reasons that he had to stop drawing shōjo manga was that he did not have a girl's point of view.[19]

On the surface, the world of shōjo manga in these years looked more diverse and equitable, and the scope of its contents and settings broadened as a result of the increased focus on self-expression of shōjo authors. However, this was not a reflection of the reality in which the shōjo authors and readers lived. Japanese society has notoriously been male dominated. Even at present, according to the global gender gap index in 2017 of the World Economic Forum, Japan is ranked at 114th.[20] After 1980, when the Japanese government participated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, women's social situation seemed to gradually improve; but even then, at first, the government mostly disregarded the convention. And in the 1970s, as Yayori Matsui, author of *Women's Asia*,[21] notes, the Japanese social and economic system was totally male dominated.[22]

In this respect, if we consider the overall conservative view of gender roles in postwar Japan, we come to see that the two ideal images, femininity and the West, in the representation of shōjo manga suggest more than the innocent longings of Japanese girl authors and readers. The conventionally feminine images of European princesses were not simply the kind of images that girls spontaneously chose. While the majority of authors may be women, publishers and editors of manga were almost all male.

In this respect, it is ironic that shōjo manga, written by and for women, created a style erasing masculinity and Japaneseness and replaced them with feminine, beautiful Westernized images. Considering that most of the characters whose hair color was not black but golden were also Japanese, we should note that the manga raised the question of whether this was a rejection of the characters' Japanese/Asian identity. In order for shōjo to express their own voices, they had to identify with Europeanized feminine images and erase Asian, patriarchal figures from the picture. Such a way not only bent the existing depictions of gender but also attempted to transgress them and subvert the conventional features associated with the label "shōjo."

Shōjo Manga Style Destabilizing Japanese/Asian Identity in the 1970s

Many critics agree that, in 1970s Japan, Asia was notably absent from public and media discourse.[23] Similarly, it is not easy to find any Asian character or setting in the early representations of shōjo manga. However, in rare instances, Asia in shōjo manga did exist. There were some master-

pieces that referred to Asia and Japan,[24] although the main focus of the story tended to be on the West, or to portray Japan from the viewpoint of Japanese or Western characters. In this respect, Kumi Morikawa's shōjo manga from the late 1970s to the 1980s are particularly interesting because they engage with both Asia and the West. Setting Asian backgrounds as *ikoku settei*, Morikawa uses Japanese characters as well. In this section, I will discuss two examples from her works.

My first case study is Morikawa's short story manga "Sentimental City" (Fig. 7.3). One of the author's earliest works, published in 1977, the story is inspired by *Madama Butterfly*, Giacomo Puccini's famous opera from 1910.[25] In Morikawa's manga, Pinkerton, upon returning to Japan, meets another woman who reminds him of his deceased wife, Cio-Cio-San. The woman, who looks exactly like her, is actually Pinkerton's son born after he left Japan. Here, importantly, what enables this plot development is a shōjo manga visual style which feminizes the ideal character. The boy is half American and half Japanese, but owing to the shōjo manga style, he looks like a typical "feminized European" character. In the story, Pinkerton ironically mistakes his son for Cio-Cio-san, a Japanese woman who once said to him that she was a daughter of a samurai, which lets readers imagine her identity as "traditionally Japanese." Yet interestingly, what allows Pinkerton to confirm the Japanese woman's existence is nothing but her "absence," represented by their son who has the same appearance as his mother's, owing to the shōjo manga style.

Let us move on to another of Morikawa's manga, *Nanjing Road ni hanafubuki* [Blossom Shower on Nanjing Road] (1981–1983) (Fig. 7.4). This manga is set in Shanghai right before the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). It could be considered quite unique because popular shōjo manga at that time were rarely set in China, let alone portraying Chinese culture and Chinese characters' views. The story gains further depth from the fact that one of the protagonists is half Japanese and half Chinese. His father is a Japanese military officer and his mother is Chinese. He looks cynically at Japan, his father's country, and feels more sympathy for China, his mother's country. As the story proceeds, he gets to know another protagonist, a Japanese journalist who came to the multinational concession in Shanghai as some kind of political refugee, although the details are left unclear. In a context of social unrest, going through upheavals and helping each other, they become friends despite their different (and rival) nationalities.

Fig. 7.3 Kumi Morikawa (1977), front cover, "Sentimental City," *Hana to yume LaLa* July 1977, Tokyo: Hakusensha, 305, ©Kumi Morikawa

The comics is closer to the style of *shōnen* manga, comics for boys, in its reliance on accurately researched historical record for its plot, while its gorgeous style with beautiful characters is consistent with the representational conventions of shōjo manga, which feminizes and Europeanizes appear-

Fig. 7.4 Kumi Morikawa (1982), *Nanjing Road ni hanafubuki* [Blossom Shower on Nanjing Road], Vol. 2, 98–99, ©Kumi Morikawa

ances. In this respect, the visual image of the half Chinese boy, who is supposed to be beautiful, is particularly complex. The shōjo manga style often uses Caucasian appearances as a marker of beauty by presenting a mixed-race character.[26] Yet this character might cause uneasiness instead in the expectation of shōjo manga readers because of the very fact that he is Asian, not Caucasian. Being a child of China and Japan itself would seem quite subversive to most readers owing to other shōjo manga's preference for European settings, which naturally regard Westernized appearances as ideal.

As beautifully feminized boys in shōjo manga often do, the half Chinese boy also cross-dresses. His hair color is not fixed. Such ambiguity in his appearance in terms of nationalities and gender would resonate with his inner conflicts caused by his double origins and his relationship with the West. First, his hair is in black, but later, it sometimes becomes white, which makes him look like a blond European boy. However, readers would

never imagine his hair to be actually white, because it is drawn in the shōjo manga style. Besides, the story already presents one European male character with fair hair, whose difference tells readers that the Chinese boy is not European. The unstable hair color of the boy, which fluctuates between black and white, rather suggests his equally unstable national/cultural identity. By refusing fixed national identification and revealing that he feels as though he belongs to neither Japan nor China, his undetermined appearance comes to symbolize his refusal to be confined by borders.

Representing Asias from Asian Points of View: Realistic Women's Manga of the 1990s

In the 1980s, more Asian settings began to appear in shōjo manga. These Asian contexts were well researched and their portrayal was of high quality, although the comics still to an extent retained the Westernizing style of their predecessors. For example, Tomoko Kōsaka's *Silk Road series*, set in Central Asian countries from 1981 to 1990, focused on ten gods protecting people there. The manga's detailed cultural descriptions, based on the author's actual trip and experience, fascinated its readers. At the same time, all the gods wore long golden hair and had white skin. Once again, on the surface, shōjo manga provided a multicultural world, but readers were sent mixed messages that both valorized and devalued Asian identity.

In the 1980s, shōjo manga also experienced another significant turning point as a genre. This was the emergence of a new genre for women, namely Ladies' Comics. In 1980, two manga magazines for female adult readers, *YOU* and *BE•LOVE*,[27] started publication. The number of women's magazines increased as if reflecting women's increasing awareness as citizens as well as consumers. There were only two such magazines in 1980, but the number went up to eight in 1984, 19 in 1985, and 48 in 1991.[28] Before then, shōjo manga was the sole genre aimed specifically at female readers. However, the contents of women's manga were no longer limited by the term shōjo and women could present various themes and issues relevant to adult women's lives.

As a case study from this genre, I will discuss a manga that portrays a young woman making a career in Hong Kong. According to Yuiko Fujita, from the 1990s to the early 2000s, as Japan experienced a long period of economic recession and rising unemployment, described by the media as the country's "lost decade," the image of Hong Kong became popular as a symbol of gender equality among Japanese young women, owing to popular films and songs from Hong Kong.[29]

Fig. 7.5 Junko Murata (1995), *Hong Kong Working Girl*, Vol. 1, 4–5, first published in *Monthly Young Rose*, November 1994, ©Junko Murata

Hong Kong Working Girl by Junko Murata (Fig. 7.5) was serialized as a women's manga in the middle of the 1990s.[30] The story focuses on a young woman who fails to find a full-time job in Japan after her graduation from university. At job interviews, she is asked sexist questions by interviewers who ultimately simply do not want girls to work for their companies. To survive, she decides to move to Hong Kong, where a female friend is working. Having left without any real preparation, she faces many difficulties as she adjusts to a different culture. However, she is determined to stay there and her new life begins with learning Cantonese.

This manga employs a typical shōjo manga style, presenting ideal characters with Europeanized *kawaii* features, whether they are Japanese, Chinese, or European/American. Interestingly, what the manga presents as most challenging for the protagonist is not the cultural difference she encounters in a foreign setting, but Japanese sexism, which almost killed her in her homeland. As Fig. 7.6 shows, the heroine and her colleagues in Hong Kong are drawn in a similar shōjo manga style, which makes them

Fig. 7.6 Junko Murata (1996), *Hong Kong Working Girl*, Vol. 2, 125, first published in *Monthly Young Rose*, October 1995, ©Junko Murata

look non-Japanese and more Westernized, but a Japanese man, who does not show any respect for her colleagues and Hong Kong culture, is drawn differently. He wears a suit and a tie, the classic attire for Japanese salarymen, and looks more Japanese.

In the 1990s, as Japanese relations with Asian countries at the social and political level began to change and Asian markets such as Korea and Taiwan officially started accepting cultural products from Japan, more women's comics began featuring Asian settings. However, rather than focusing on contemporary Asia, a large proportion of these used famous figures and episodes in history, adding a fantastic taste to the narratives, and the stories often featured princes and princesses.

Thus, for example, Keiko Takemiya famously wrote a historical fantasy series, *Tenma no ichizoku* [The Clan of Flying Horses] serialized from 1991 to 2000, focusing on a female protagonist from an imaginary country in Central Asia, reminiscent of Mongolian nomadic tribes. *Sora wa Akai kawa no hotori* [*Red River*, also known in English as *Anatolia Story*], a 28-volume series published by Chie Shinohara from 1995 to 2002, is also a historical fantasy. In the series, Yūri, a female junior high school student, time-travels to the Hittite Empire where she grows into a woman warrior admired by people and finally becomes "Tawana-anna," the queen of the Hittites. In *Aono maharaja* [Blue Maharaja] (1990–1993), Tomoko Kōsaka narrates the story of how a young Maharaja and his Maharani try to protect their domain in India before and after the Second World War, with historical details of the colonial background (Maharani is from England). Midori Suwa serialized historical manga set in classic China and Southeast Asia, including one about the historical Buddhist monk Xuanzang in *Genjō saiiki ki* [Xuanzang's Journey to the West] (1991–1994). Ancient Chinese settings also inspired some popular shōjo manga series such as *Karin* [Ring of Fire] (1992–1997) by Masumi Kawasō and *Konron no tama* [Bead in Kunlun] (1993–2003) by Tomoko Nagaike. While these stories expand their settings to include Asia, they are not significantly different from the exoticizing "foreign country manga" of the 1970s. But the direct usage of Asian countries and cultures had rarely been seen before.

We find a different approach in the 2000s in two popular manga series by Kaoru Mori: *Emma* (2002–2006),[31] set in nineteenth-century London, and *Otoyome gatari* [*A Bride's Story*],[32] set in nineteenth-century Central Asia. Interestingly, neither work was published in a magazine for women or shōjo. As a result, at first the author was thought to be a man, also because in the afterword of each work, Mori draws her image as that

of a man. What makes these two works fall into the category of women's manga, however, is their way of portraying impressive female protagonists and their lives. Furthermore, Mori's style is inspired by the shōjo manga I discussed thus far, that tend to detach nationalities from physical appearances. *Emma*, being a misalliance of a maid and a member of the gentry, involving various people from different cultures and classes, develops into an interesting love romance, carefully researched so as to adhere to Victorian history and social backgrounds.

What makes *A Bride's Story* fascinating is the way it deals with Asian culture and people's lives by including trivial daily scenes related to dining, clothing, and other forms of material culture. In its first volume, the front cover shows the female protagonist, while the back cover shows the family (Fig. 7.7). They are relaxing, chatting, and just doing ordinary things. This manga shows many scenes from ordinary day-to-day life such as hunting, cooking, and eating, which are rarely seen in *Emma*, although both try to present the contents faithfully to the actual histories and cultures.

We find a similar approach in an episode set in Korea in the series *Honya no mori no akari* [A Light in the Woods of Bookstores] by Yuki Isoya, serialized from 2006 to 2012.[33] In the story, the female protagonist, Akari, loves books and finally finds a job at a bookstore. There she meets Morizō, a man who loves books more than people. In a later episode, Morizō is transferred to the store's first branch in Seoul. Struggling with a different

Fig. 7.7   *A Bride's Story*, cover, Vol. 1, ©KADOKAWA

system of bookstores and more generally with a different culture, Morizō broadens his view that was limited to Japanese bookstores.

Thus in the 2000s, even if the sheer number of shōjo or women's manga set in Asia is still not very large, it is remarkable that more images of contemporary daily life in Asia begin to appear, replacing the portrayal of Asia as a land of ancient and exotic princes and princesses that characterized the comics of previous decades.

GLOCALIZING WOMEN'S MANGA IN ASIA

In the twenty-first century, owing to the global manga/anime boom, foreign publishers of Japanese manga started printing comics in the Japanese way, in volumes to be read from right to left, and more generally emphasizing the "Japaneseness" of the texts. At the same time, another effect of the global spread of manga was that young artists who had grown up with the transnationalized mixing of the manga culture in the 1990s outside Japan began producing manga-style comics in their own language and grounded in their cultural forms, thus leading to a generalized glocalization of the manga culture.

In this section, I will introduce three shōjo manga by Asian artists and examine the way they play with conventions of Japanese shōjo manga such as the feminization and Europeanization I have discussed thus far. Interestingly, most works by female manga authors outside Japan adopt the style of shōjo, but they have their own way of dealing with the label "shōjo manga" and imbue it with their own "cultural odor."[34]

Love Is in the Bag, a Filipino shōjo manga (Fig. 7.8), is an interesting example, as the work has been written, drawn, produced, and published by a group of men. The story is a typical shōjo manga romantic comedy. A shy girl Kate falls in love with a nice guy Calvin, a star basketball player. She turns into a bag when she cannot control her emotions. She loves Calvin very much and often turns into a bag, which gives a funny but fantastic tone to the story. Since the first publication in 2008, *Love Is In the Bag* continuously gained popularity and ended in five volumes. The work was nominated by Filipino comics awards several times. Ace Vitangcol, the writer for the series, said in an interview that he "felt no difficulties in drawing shōjo manga" as a male author.[35]

The comics intentionally uses a number of shōjo manga conventions, and its idealized characters always have round eyes and slender body

Fig. 7.8 Image for *Love Is in the Bag*, given from Ace Vitangcol on September 10, 2013, ©Alturia Hill Publishing

shapes. Their Westernized, cosmopolitan vibe is emphasized by their names, all taken from famous European and American bag designers. Thus, Kate is named after Kate Spade and Calvin, of course, after Calvin Klein. In its Europeanization and feminization of characters and settings, this work reads as a classic example of shōjo manga.

The art style for *Love Is In the Bag* is obviously inspired by Japanese manga, but according to Ace Vitangcol, the narrative style is more influenced by Western fiction. Significantly, the back cover of the book carries a label that reads "English Language Manga Graphic Novel." As Vitangcol notes, "This way is effective because bookstores here know that they can place our books in either the Manga or Graphic Novel sections."[36]

In Indonesia, shōjo manga had been very popular among local readers since 1989, when the first shōjo manga series, Yumiko Igarashi's *Candy Candy* (1975), was published in translation.[37] According to Azisa Noor, a young Indonesian comics artist, readers found in *Candy Candy* strong, determined girls who fought for things they believed in. Waki Yamato's *Haikara san ga tōru* [*Miss Modern*] (1975)[38] and Naoko Takeuchi's

Sailor Moon (1992) series also showed independent female characters that dealt with a personal as well as a more global struggle. Azisa Noor says:

> I think these mangas have definitely shaped my views on how I wanted to make comics that represent and bring the experience and personal struggles of girls and women as the center focus of the narrative.[39]

Women started writing their own Indonesian comics only in the 2000s. At the time, Tita Larasati and Sheila Rooswitha Putri led women's comics, inventing a new genre, Graphic Diary, in which they drew their daily lives and thoughts in their own way.[40] They inspired young female comics artists such as Stephani Soejono, Azisa Noor, Lia Hartati, Jho Tan, Adriane Yuanita, and many others.[41]

Mantra (2011) by Azisa Noor (Fig. 7.9) is a fascinating blending of manga style and Indonesian local culture. In it, Noor creates her own style beyond the Japaneseness of manga. In the story, Ratri, a promising female painter, is distressed to discover that her works are regarded as imitations of those by a famous artist, and struggles to find inspiration for a new work. One day, led by a mystical mantra, she finds herself somewhere unknown, where people used a different language from her own. There she meets a dancer practicing a traditional Indonesian dance, *topeng*. After returning to her world, she finally produces a new painting and becomes very successful and appreciated.

Focusing on an Indonesian traditional performance, this work adopts the flexible frames of manga style with effective use of watercolors. The mantra, which Ratri experiences, is a magic spell for astral projection, or out-of-body experience. Its power brings her to another world. The moment of the move is shown by two different colors: brown suggests the protagonist's present world and dark blue another world. After the move, as the landscape shows an Indonesian hut, house, clothing, and performance, readers guess that the world Ratri enters might mysteriously be connected to the place where she has been. People there speak in a language Ratri does not recognize, which suggests the multicultural and multilingual nature of Indonesian society. The language turns out to be Cirebonese, the dialect spoken in Cirebon, a city on the border between West Java and Central Java. There, Ratri also learns about the local traditional culture, especially the five masks for *topeng* (Fig. 7.10). One of them is called *Panji*. Because *Panji* designates unity and that is the most difficult part to perform, the dancer has been distressed, just as Ratri has.
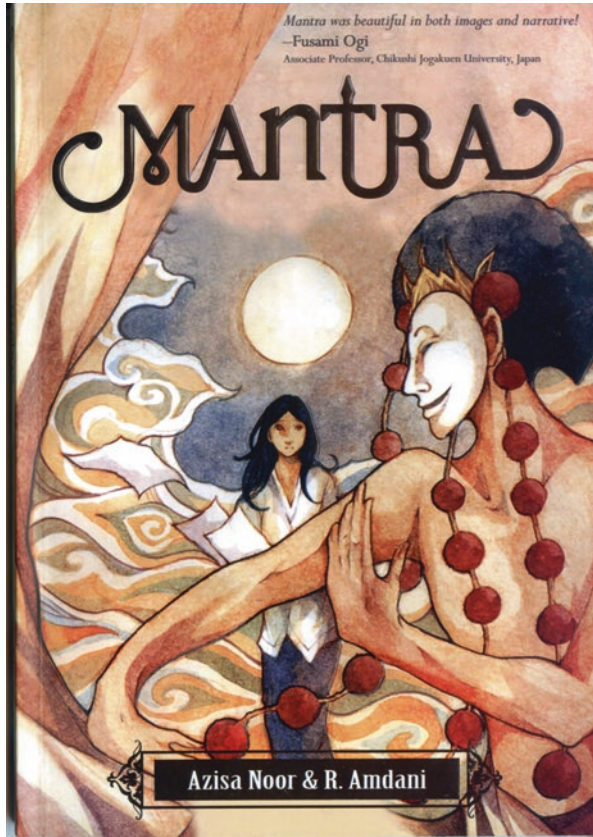
Fig. 7.9 Azisa Noor and R. Amdani (2011), front cover, *Mantra*, Bandung, Indonesia: Curhat Anak Bangsa, ©Curhat Anak Bangsa

Ratri feels uneasiness in her present world, but in another world, every-thing she meets calms her and she needs fewer words. A scene that is particularly revealing in this respect is one where Ratri and the dancer walk on the beach, talking about the serenity in the rumbling of the waves. From the sound of the waves, the dancer finally discovers the way of *Panji*, which also inspires Ratri to draw. No words are inserted for the dance performance (Fig. 7.11). Pages just convey the serenity the two characters feel and share. After Ratri returns to her world, she meets the dancer again. Their reunion proves that the two different places are not discon-

Fig. 7.10   Three masks for *topeng* from Professor Fumiko Tamura's collection at Chikushi Jogakuen University, October 17, 2013, ©Fumiko Tamura

Fig. 7.11   Azisa Noor and R. Amdani (2011), *Mantra*, 58–59, ©Curhat Anak Bangsa

nected. The two worlds are united, as the mask *Panji* means unity, but not assimilation, as demonstrated by the differences between the characters' languages and cultural practices. Thus the work uses the medium of manga to portray effectively its vision of the intrinsic plurality of Indonesian, and by extension Asian, culture.

Singaporean *mangaka* FSc's work also presents a fantastic world, portraying fashionable and slender characters with round and huge eyes that feminize the whole image. Such *kawaii* images have been integral to the representations of shōjo manga. Yet the *kawaii* used by FSc differs from the conventional depiction of cuteness of Japanese manga, inserting something grotesque and weird that somehow mirrors the uneasy feelings and entangled interiority of her characters. According to FSc, her art has been much influenced by Peranakan culture, although the culture is not her own. Peranakans are descendants of Chinese people who immigrated to Singapore or Malaysia and married local women and settled there in the fifteenth century, and their art is famous for hybrid decoration.[42] FSc, an admirer of Peranakan art herself, often uses Peranakan elements in her manga.

Clairvoyance (Fig. 7.12), serialized by Ohta Publishing in Japan in 2011 as web comics, is a good example of FSc's Asian hybrid narrative and visual style. In the opening scene, Pi, a girl, tries to take a photo of the male protagonist, RueRune, with her cell phone to capture his fascinating facial expression. The scene is portrayed in a comical way that reminds readers of ordinary Japanese school life and manga-esque moments. At the same time, what RueRune eats happily in this scene is Kaya toast, a Hainanese food, thus alerting us to the fact that we are not in Japan. More generally, the work is replete with Asian things. Thus, for example, in the same scene RueRune is wearing a skirt; at first, Pi thinks that it is "a bed sheet," but it is revealed to be an Indonesian sarong, a traditional garment for men.

RueRune has a special purple eye and can see fairies and spirits, which are invisible to other people. On the way from school, what RueRune meets is a huge tree spirit whose image comes from Singapore's lion dance (Fig. 7.13). A cute ogre appearing in the story as one of the main characters is called Thong based on Thailand's "Guman Thong." However, here, at the same time, we cannot just picture the characters in Thailand, because soon Thong flies, and the real Thong doesn't fly. In FSc's own words:

> Some of the goblins are based on Southeast Asian deities and ogres, although they look nothing like the real thing.
>
> im not peranakan.^_^| both my parents are 2nd generation chinese.

Fig. 7.12   FSc (2010), *Clairvoyance*, ©FSc

  i don't feel chinese though and i cant relate to it. I feel more southeast asian. No specific race or religion.#^_^#
  But i cant seem to fit into any culture or country. So i think i can identify more with the youkai and hippies. 0^◇^0)/.[43]

Thus, while the comics has a definite Asian flavor, it does not suggest one particular place. Rather, similar to Noor's work, it relies on a hybridized manga style to present an image of Southeast Asia as composed by a plurality of different cultural practices and traditions, both ancient and modern.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the historical development of the representation of Asia in women's manga. Japanese shōjo manga seems to have maintained the farthest distance among other genres of manga from the concept of Asia, due to its sustained focus on Western and feminized appearances. Before the late 1960s, when shōjo manga was led by famous male authors,

Fig. 7.13   A tree spirit in FSc (2010), *Clairvoyance*, ©FSc

the label shōjo referred to a passive, objectified role for girls and women. In the 1970s, as the number of young female authors increased, shōjo manga changed into a women-only arena where shōjo had increased agency. There, Western feminine images contributed to the typical style of shōjo manga, where European features did not necessarily express the nationality of the characters, but rather a generic shōjo style. Thus, shōjo manga created a style erasing masculinity and Japaneseness, and used the hybridity of characters as a challenge to male-dominant values of Japanese society.

In the early Japanese shōjo manga, Asian settings could rarely be seen and the main focus was on the West. However, gradually in the late 1970s and the 1980s, more Asian characters and settings began to appear. Finally in the 1990s, as Japanese relations with Asian countries at the social and political level started to change, shōjo manga experienced a turning point in representations of Asia and more women's manga presented Asian settings. If in the 1970s shōjo manga style functioned as a strategy to subvert the prevailing masculine values, in the 1990s this subversion also led shōjo manga to create hybrid and transcultural artistic expressions beyond Asia and Japan.

In the course of the research that led to the production of this collection, we met many young artists in various parts of Asia who had been inspired by Japanese manga to write their own comics. It was quite impressive that many women recognized shōjo manga style as a central part of their expressive repertoire. However, neither the term manga nor shōjo manga style is enough for them to cover what they are trying to draw. Their creations are varied, and their ways of relating the term and concept vary, too.

Can we describe their work as "Asian shōjo manga"? Even if we argue that to an extent these artists belong to the same culture, naturally each of them has a different approach and a distinctive narrative and visual style. To see manga as a possible glocalizing media and recognize the shōjo manga style as one of the distinctive features that helped open up a space for women's comics in Asia, we need to see what the media and the style create as part of a broader transnational manga movement. As I have shown in this chapter through a series of concrete examples from within and outside Japan, such a perspective will inevitably create differences within the broader globalization of popular culture, thus opening up a way to recognize these comics as the expression of a plurality of "Asias."

Notes

1. Ogi (2010, 2016: 463).
2. Ogi (2008a, b: 156).
3. Spivak (2009: 137).
4. Yonezawa (2007: 78–82), Fujimoto (2007: 64–91).
5. Ogi (2004).
6. Translated titles are shown in square brackets. Officially translated titles in English are shown in *italics*. Other translations are mine.

7. Tezuka (1979: 188).
8. Since its debut performance in 1914, the Takarazuka Revue, an all-female musical theater in the city of Takarazuka, in Hyōgo prefecture, has played one of the most popular and important roles in Japanese culture for women.
9. Yokoyama (2004: 346), Ogi (2008a, b: 172–174).
10. In 1899, the Japanese government made a law, *Kōtō jogakkō rei*, that encouraged female students to continue on to higher education after elementary school.
11. Aramata and Takahashi (1997: 186–187), Hata (2013).
12. Ogi (2004: 526).
13. In 1963, two major weekly shōjo magazines changed their titles and became shōjo manga magazines. *Shōjo Book* (by Shueisha since 1951) took the new title of *Weekly Margaret*. *Shōjo Club* (by Kodansha since 1923) became *Weekly Shōjo Friend*.
14. Miyadai (2010: 73–91).
15. Ogi (2004: 535–536).
16. Ogi (2010: 133). For example, among all 48 covers of *Shōjo Comic*, a shōjo manga magazine by Shogakukan, in the year 1976, 21 had a character with blond hair, 24 had a character with brown hair, and no cover had a character with black hair.
17. Cf. Ogi (2010: 121). The contrast of hair color between black and white often expresses each shōjo's character and sentiment rather than her ethnic identity. For example, in *Garasu no kamen* [Glass Mask] (1976–present, Hakusensha) the heroine, who is not beautiful and is born into a poor family, wears a black hairstyle, while her rival, born into a rich family, wears white long hair with gorgeous curls and her hairstyle lets readers imagine her nobleness like a Western princess. Both girls are Japanese.
18. The first socially noted event for women's liberation in Japan was a woman-only anti-war demonstration in October 1970 (Inoue et al. 2006: 134).
19. Takahashi, Macoto, interview, 2013.3.20.
20. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. According to *The Global Gender Gap Report 2013*, Japan was ranked 105th.
21. Matsui (1989).
22. Matsui (2003: 73).
23. Kang (1998: 196), Abe (2001: 77), Iwabuchi (2002: 9–10), Kang and Morris (2002: 48), Yomota (2013: 12).
24. The following are examples of shōjo manga regarded as masterpieces by young female authors in the 1970s: Tomoko Naka's *Hana no bijyohime* [Beautiful Princesses in Full Bloom] (1974–1976) presents twin brothers who come from France to Japan. They are admired as "Beautiful Princesses" for their beauty from their surroundings in the story; Waki Yamato's

Haikara san ga tōru [*Miss Modern*] (1975–1977) focuses on young women's lives from their teens to their twenties in the *Taisho* period (1912–1926) when Japanese women began to be interested in human rights, including suffrage; Toshie Kihara's *Mari to Shingo* [Mari and Shingo] (1977–1984) centers on friendship among male students in pre-war Japan; Machiko Satonaka's *Asunaro zaka* (1977–1980) portrays a woman's life of upheaval from her girlhood in the Meiji period to her death right after the Pacific War.

25. In the opera, a Japanese woman named Cio-Cio-San is waiting for her lover Pinkerton's return from the US. After she learns that he is bringing his American wife, and will not come back to her, she sends their son to the US and commits suicide.

26. In the examples of note 22, the twin brothers in Naka's *Hana no bijohime* have a grandfather who was born in the nobility in France, while their grandmother was Japanese; in Yamato's *Haikara san ga tōru*, the mother of the heroine's future husband is German; in Kihara's *Mari to Shingo* (1977–1984), Mari, one of the main characters, has a German mother, too; in Satonaka's *Asunaro zaka*, the heroine's granddaughter finds a Russian orphan, who becomes one of main characters of the story in the end.

27. In 1979, *BE•LOVE* was published as a special issue for manga of *Weekly Young Lady*. *Weekly Young Lady* was a women's magazine started in 1963. In 1980 when the new manga magazine for women started, its name changed into *BE IN LOVE* and it was monthly. In 1982, it began to be published every two weeks and the name became *BE•LOVE*.

28. The Research Institute for Publications (1999: 226).

29. Fujita (2008: 52–53).

30. *Hong Kong Working Girl* was serialized in *Monthly Young Rose* (Kadokawa shoten) from 1995 to 1996. "Working Girl" in the title does not have any connotation to or image related to comfort women.

31. *Emma* was serialized in *Comic Beam*, a monthly magazine for comics published by ENTERBRAIN.

32. *A Bride's Story* has been serialized in *Fellows!*, which became *Harta* in 2013, by ENTERBRAIN since 2008. Vol. 1 of *A Bride's Story* was published by HARTA COMIX of ENTERBRAIN in 2009. In 2013, HARTA COMIX changed into BEAM COMIX and KADOKAWA took over ENTERBRAIN.

33. This work was serialized in three magazines by Kodansha: *One More Kiss*, *Kiss*, and *Kiss Plus*. The final episode appeared in *Kiss Plus January 2013*, which was published on December 8, 2012.

34. Cf. Iwabuchi (2002: 24–28). Iwabuchi's argument for *mukokuseki*, cultural odorlessness of Japanese cultural products such as animation and computer games that promoted their globalization, inspired our project to find diverse cultural odors that have developed locally after the globalization.

35. Ace Vitangcol, interview, 2013.7.6.
36. Ace Vitangcol, interview via e-mail, 2014.2.5 and 2014.2.15.
37. Shiraishi (2013: 158).
38. See note 22. This manga, adapted into several anime and live action films since its publication, was turned into an animated film again in 2017: http://haikarasan.net
39. Azisa Noor, interview via e-mails, 2013.9.19.
40. Larasati (2011: 134–142).
41. These artists contributed to *Nanny* (Bandung: Curhat Anak Bangsa, 2011) and *Liquid City* (3 vols., Image Comics, 2008–2014). Both are anthologies of Southeast Asian artists. The second volume of *Liquid City* was nominated for the Eisner Award in 2011.
42. Lee and Iwanaga (2016: 3 and 6).
43. Foo Swee Chin, interview via e-mails, 2013.9.20.

Works Cited

Abe, Kiyoshi. 2001. *Samayoeru nationalism* [Wandering Nationalism]. Kyoto: Sekaishisosha.

Aramata, Hiroshi, and Katsuhiko Takahashi. 1997. *Gekiga no roots wa ukiyoe ni atta* [Gekiga Was Derived from Ukiyoe]. *Hermes* 64: 182–196.

Fujimoto, Yukari. 2007. Takahashi Macoto: The Origin of Shojo-Manga Style. *Manga Studies* 11: 64–91.

Fujita, Yuiko. 2008. *Cultural Migrants*. Tokyo: Shinyosha.

Hata, Mikako. 2013. An Exploratory Study on the Relationship Between Comics and Illustrations Appeared in Girls' Magazines. *Hanazono University bungakubu kiyou* 45: 25–38.

Inoue, Teruko, Yoko Nagao, and Kuniko Funabashi. 2006. *Woman Lib no shisou to un'dou* [Thoughts and Movements of Women's Liberation]. *Tozainanboku*: 134–158. http://id.nii.ac.jp/1073/00003339/. Accessed 17 Mar 2017.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. 2002. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kang, Sang-jung. 1998. *Nationalism o yomu* [Reading Nationalism]. Tokyo: Jokyo shuppan.

Kang, Sang-jung, and Hiroshi Morris. 2002. *Nationalism no kokufuku* [Overcoming Nationalism]. Tokyo: Shueisha.

Kelsky, Karen. 2001. *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Larasati, Dwinita. 2011. So, How Was Your Day? The Emergence of Graphic Diary and Female Artists in Indonesia. *International Journal of Comic Art (IJOCA)* 13 (2): 134–142.

Lee, Peter, and Etsuko Iwanaga. 2016. *Singapore, Sarong Kebaya and Style*. Fukuoka: Pub.

Matsui, Yayori. 1989. *Women's Asia*. London: Zed Books.

———. 2003. *Ai to ikari tatakau yuuki* [Love, Anger and Courage to Fight]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

Miyadai, Shinji. 2010. *Kawaii no honshitsu seijuku shinaimama sei ni noridasu kotono koutei* [The Essence of *Kawaii* Affirmation of Life Before Maturity]. In *Nihon teki souzouryoku no mirai Japanology no kanousei* [The Future of Japanese Imagination The Possibility of Cool Japanology], ed. Hiroki Azuma, 73–91. Tokyo: NHK Books.

Ogi, Fusami. 2004. *Shōjo manga to seiyou* [Shōjo Manga and the West]. In *Honyaku no ken'iki* [Arenas of Translation]*: Culture, Colonies, and Identities*, 525–554. Tsukuba: University of Tsukuba.

———. 2008a. Shōjo Manga (Japanese Comics for Girls) in the 1970s' Japan as a Message to Women's Bodies: Interviewing Keiko Takemiya—A Leading Artist of the Year 24 Flower Group. *International Journal of Comic Art (IJOCA)* 10 (2): 148–169.

———. 2008b. *Hana yori dango* (*Boys Over Flowers*) as a Trans-National Comics for Girls beyond Japan. *International Journal of Comics (IJOCA)* 10 (2): 170–185.

———. 2010. *Ekkyou suru shōjo manga to gender* [Shōjo Manga and Gender Beyond Borders]. In *Beyond Borders: The Transnational Power of Manga*, 110–134. Kyoto: Sekaishisosha.

———. 2016. How a *Shōjo* (a Japanese Girl) Transcends National Borders Through an Incestuous Body: Shōjo Manga from the 1970s to the 2000s. *International Journal of Comic Art (IJOCA)* 18 (2): 463–478.

Shiraishi, Saya. 2013. *Global ka shita nihon no manga to anime* [Globalized Japanese Manga and Anime]. Tokyo: Gakujutsu shuppannkai.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2008. *Other Asias*. Malden: Blackwell.

———. 2009. *Spivak nihon de kataru* [Spivak Speaks in Japan]. Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo.

Tezuka, Osamu. 1979. Afterword. In *Ribon no kishi Shōjo Club Version*, 188–190. Tokyo: Kodansha.

The Research Institute for Publications. 1999. *Annual Report on the Publication Market 1999*. Tokyo: The All Japan Magazine and Book Publisher's and Editor's Association and The Research Institute for Publications.

World Economic Forum. 2017. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf. Accessed 8 July 2018.

Yokoyama, Mitsuteru. 2004. Afterword. In Mahotsukai sari-i (Sally the Witch) Original Perfect Version, 346–348. Tokyo: Kodansha.

Yomota, Inuhiko. 2013. *Asia zen hou-i* [Asia from All Directions Papers 1990–2013]. Tokyo: Shobunsha.

Yonezawa, Yoshihiro. 2007. *Sengo shōjo manga shi* [The History of Shōjo Manga After the War]. Tokyo: Chikuma shobo.

CITED MANGA WORKS

FSc. 2010. *Clairvoyance*. Tokyo: Ohta Publishing.
Mori, Kaoru. 2009. *Otoyome gatari* [A Bride's Story]. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Enterbrain.
Morikawa, Kumi. 1977. Sentimental City. In *Hana to yume LaLa*, 305–336. Tokyo: Hakusensha.
———. 1982–1983. *Nanjing Road ni hanafubuki* [Blossom Shower on Nanjing Road]. 4 vols. Tokyo: Hakusensha.
Murata, Junko. 1995–1996. *Hong Kong Working Girl*. 3 vols. Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten.
Noor, Azisa, and R. Amdani. 2011. *Mantra*. Bandung: Curhat Anak Bangsa.