

## EMBRACING THE VICTIMHOOD: A HISTORY OF A-BOMB MANGA IN JAPAN

*Masashi Ichiki\**

Chikushi Jogakuen University, Fukuoka, Japan.

e-mail: jun@chikushi-u.ac.jp

### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the representations of the A-bomb and its victims in Japanese manga. While Keiji Nakazawa's *Hadashi no Gen (Barefoot Gen)* stands tall in this genre, the brief look at the history of A-bomb manga in Japan will reveal that the nuclear bombs that killed more than a quarter million people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been a popular topic in Japanese manga and has manifested in variety of manga genres. In overviewing the history of A-bomb manga in Japan, this paper aims to explore the social connotations of A-bomb manga. I wish to show that Japanese manga is a major vehicle in promoting and proliferating the *Genbaku Otome*, or A-bomb beauties myth. This myth lies at the centre of the Japanese imagination of the A-bomb victims and which contributes significantly to the establishment of the social notion of victimisation in post-war Japan.*

**Keywords:** manga, A-bomb, public memory

### INTRODUCTION

It is currently estimated that more than three-quarters of Japanese citizens do not have first hand experience of the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>1</sup> However, the majority of them do *know* something about it and have their own opinion about the war. As Tessa Morris Suzuki explains, our memory does not necessarily stem solely from what we experience, but rather it is made up of information from "variable sources" (2005: 2). In our everyday life, we

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\* Masashi Ichiki is a professor of English and Multimedia Studies in Chikushi Jogakuen University, Fukuoka, Japan. Among his publications are "Demystifying a Postwar Myth," *Dekalog 4* (Wallflower Press) and "Bo-kyo-suru Manga," *Ekkyo-suru Manga* (Sekai Siso Sha).

<sup>1</sup> As of October 2009, 75.5 percent of the Japanese population (96,456,000) were born in the post-war period. See the website of Japanese Statistics Bureau for details.

consciously or unconsciously digest information about the Asia-Pacific War, and this information accumulates within us to form our knowledge of that war. Thus we can see the significance of popular cultural media in considering our "memory" of the war. We are surrounded and constantly bombarded with images and information from popular culture in our daily lives, and therefore the impact of popular culture as a memory-shaping medium should not be underestimated. In other words, manga and other forms of popular media play a significant role in forming our sense of the past. Manga critic Jun Ishiko once stated that the history of manga testifies to the history of our involvement in the war. (Ishiko 1983: 11) Ishiko is right in the sense that the images of war depicted in manga have largely determined what we think of the war. In short, manga is a channel that connects us to our own past.

In the first section, I will go over the history of A-bomb mangas in post-war Japan, dividing it into four time periods. In the section that follows, I will turn my focus on the *Genbaku Otome* myth and discuss how the images of the A-bomb and its victims as depicted in Japanese mangas have made a significant contribution in forming and sustaining the social myth of victimisation.

## A HISTORY OF THE A-BOMB MANGA IN JAPAN

### Period 1 (1945–1954): The Emergence of the A-bomb Manga

In overviewing the history of the A-bomb manga in Japan, we can date its origin back to the immediate post-war period when Japan was still under Allied occupation. The first manga inspired by the A-bomb was Bontaro Jahana's *Pikadon Nii-san* (*Brother Pikadon*), published by Nakamura Shoten in 1951. This work is a comic strip written in a light-hearted, easy-going fashion. The protagonist is a careless, lovable young man nicknamed Pikadon Nii-san. Similar to Machiko Hasegawa's *Sazae-san*, *Pikadon Nii-san* is quite topical and filled the readers with mild chuckles. Content-wise, the strip made no reference to the A-bomb.

However, as irrelevant as this may seem, the protagonist is actually named after the bomb. The A-bomb is commonly

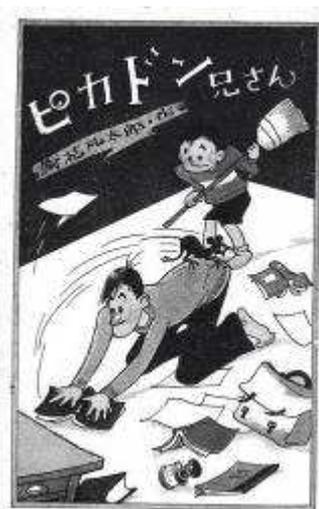


Figure 1: Cover of Bontaro Jahana's *Pikadon Nii-san*.

known in post-war Japan as *pikadon*; *pika* refers to the dazzling flash of light and *don* is the roaring sound of explosion. This nickname has often been used to realistically describe the devastating impact of the bomb, as eloquently illustrated in Iri and Toshi Maruki's picture book on the A-bomb, *Pikadon*. In his work, Jahana adopts this photographic description of the bomb to his protagonist, whose commotions draw comparisons to the impact of the devastating weapons of mass murder.

This comical or even insensitive use of A-bomb imagery can at least partially be explained through detailed damages caused by the A-bomb which were not disclosed to the Japanese public under the Allied occupation that lasted until April 1952. Unaware of the extent of catastrophe the A-bomb had actually done in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Jahana employed it to symbolically illustrate his slapstick comedy. Though insensitive, such use of the A-bomb had a certain appeal to the Japanese public, and this was evidence with creations of two more comic strips after *Pikadon Nii-san: Pikadon Musume (Pikadon Girl)* by Shosuke Kurakane's and *Pikadon-kun (Mr. Pikadon)* by Tunezou Murotani.

## Period 2 (1954–1973): The Golden Years of the A-bomb Manga

The year 1954 marked a significant turn in the Japanese perception of nuclear weapons. On 1 March 1954, a Japanese tuna fishing boat, Lucky Dragon No. 5, was exposed to nuclear fallout on the Bikini Atoll. The death of Aikichi Kuboyama, one of the fishermen on the boat, and the fear that the fish were nuclear-contaminated alerted the Japanese to the danger of nuclear weapons. As a result, massive anti-nuclear movements were launched in Japan. In this sense, it is no coincidence that the first manga that deals with the nuclear bomb as a social menace is Kaoru Hanano's *Bikini: Shino-Hai*, or *The Deadly Fallout in Bikini*, published in 1954 by Akebono Shoten. The A-bomb is no longer considered merely a part of daily commotion. Instead, Japanese illustrators begin to picture nuclear weapons as a social evil that threatens their daily lives. Of the 74 mangas that employ the A-bomb and its survivors as their theme,<sup>2</sup> 33 of them were produced during



Figure 2: An A-bomb victim with a horn in Yoshiyasu Ohtomo's *Anata-no Ban-desu*.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see appendix No. 1, the list of the A-bomb manga in Japan.

this time period. Therefore, quantitatively, this is the time period that can be considered as the golden years of the A-bomb manga.

However, while a number of mangas on the A-bomb and their victims were produced in this era, the A-bomb was treated less as a social menace to be protested than as convenient materials to dramatise their stories. Take, for example, Yoshiyasu Ohtomo's *Anata-no ban-desu (You Next)*, published in 1957 by Nakamura Shoten. In this thriller, Ohtomo writes about a mysterious, wealthy man in a derby hat. The man is of strange characteristics but nevertheless nice to Mary, the female child protagonist. He even invites Mari to his house and asks her to live with him. When Mari turns down the offer, he shows his true self. The man is apparently a serial killer with a devil-like horn on his head, and Mari is to be his eighth victim. Hungry for companionship in his solitary life, he abducts girls and then kills them to keep his secret about the horn. What is worth noting is that, the man explains that the horn on his head, which makes him a social outcast, is a result of his exposure to nuclear fallout. In other words, Ohtomo depicts A-bomb victims as social misfits, even freaks, who are alienated from normal life and stigmatised.

In Kazuhiko Tanigawa's *Hoshi-wa Miteiru (Stars are Watching)*, published in 1957 as a separate volume of *Nakayoshi*, we can see a similar, though less extreme, depiction of A-bomb victims. *Hoshi-wa Miteiru* is the story of an orphan girl who goes through a series of adventures she faces after inheriting a ring that her deceased mother willed to her. Every time Mayumi, the protagonist, is in danger, a mysterious man who covers his face with bandages rescues her. This mummy-like man turns out to be Mayumi's father, who Mayumi believes died in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. The father actually survives the bombing but suffers from keloid burns on his face. He hides from the public, believing that he cannot lead a normal life due to his looks but is secretly watching out for her daughter's safety. After killing the antagonists who keeps on chasing his daughter, he eventually commits suicide. Once again, the A-bomb survivor is imagined as a somewhat freakish, mysterious man because of his exposure to the A-bomb.



Figure 3: Cover of Kazuhiko Tanigawa's *Hoshi-wa Miteiru* (Togetsu SHobo Edition).

In both cases, Ohtomo and Tanigawa are well aware of the devastating impact the A-bomb causes to human lives. However, rather than imagining the A-bomb survivors as victims of a violent act of mass murder, both authors depict them as social outsiders, ignoring the social background of their plight.

Such illustrations of A-bomb survivors were soon replaced by what seem to be the opposite representations. A-bomb survivors came to be imagined as feminine and powerless, as undergoing tragic lives because of their experience. These A-bomb mangas flourished in the shojo manga genre. In this time period (1954–1973), 29 A-bomb mangas in the shojo manga style were produced, which made up 39 percent of all the A-bomb mangas published in Japan. Now, I will identify the common features among them.

First, shojo mangas are written exclusively for teenage girls. In the *kashihon* era—the period where paying a small fee to loan hardbound comic books was a dominant style—shojo mangas showcasing pictures of attractive girls on their covers has been a trademark. Figure 4 shows the cover of Riyoko Ikeda's *Yukio-kun* (*My Dear Yukio*), published by Wakagi Shobo in 1965. *Yukio-kun*, Ikeda's debut as a professional manga writer, is an adolescent love story between an active, innocent girl and a boy suffering from leukaemia. The cover, which depicts a boy and a girl and is decorated with flowers, is not illustrated by Ikeda and is irrelevant to the story



Figure 4: Cover of Riyoko Ikeda's *Yukio-kun*.

itself. Such stylish cover art is a common practice in *Kashihon* shojo manga, which aims to attract the attention of teenage girls. When buying manga magazines became common in Japan, the A-bomb mangas were featured in magazines for teenage girls, such as *Nakayoshi*, *Weekly Margaret*, and *Shojo Friend*. These magazines often had covers filled with stars and flowers and portrayals of beautiful, dreamy girls. These covers often kept male readers away from shojo manga. The manga critic Kotaro Iizawa once called shojo manga a genre "for the girls, by the girls, of the girls." (Iizawa 2009: 20) As a result, the majority of the A-bomb mangas carried in these media were more accessible to female readers.

As for the stories of the shojo manga, most of them follow a similar plot. Let us consider Chieko Hosokawa's *Ai no Hitomi* (*Gaze of Love*) as an example. This story was published in *Bessatsu* (*Monthly*) *Shojo Friend* in

1969. The protagonist is Yokko, an active and cheerful teenage girl. She meets a tall and handsome boy, Kenji and they instantly fall in love. The young couple makes a (childish) promise of marriage, but at the zenith of their happiness, fate intervenes. One day, during a medical check-up, the doctor tells Yokko that she will die within a month due to a disease related due to nuclear exposure. Her father was apparently an A-bomb victim, and she has been prenatally irradiated.<sup>3</sup> Desperate, Yokko runs away from home and turns to delinquency. Kenji chases her, finds her, accepts her fate and renews his proposal to her. The story ends at their wedding with Yokko, in a white wedding dress, on her deathbed.

This soap-operatic melodrama typifies A-bomb stories in the shojo manga style. The plot revolves around a beautiful girl living happily and peacefully. The protagonist's life takes a sudden turn when "the A-bomb disease" hits her. The subsequent turmoil she undergoes is the focal point of the story. The story often ends with the death of the protagonist, leaving behind a beautiful yet sorrowful memory.

It is worth noting that the stories in most A-bomb shojo mangas are set years after the war ended, as the scars of the war were not yet apparent immediately after it was over.<sup>4</sup> After some time, the post-war A-bomb disease, leukaemia, began to surface from seemingly out of nowhere and affect the people. While the A-bomb plays a significant role in the story, its background is seldom explained, and its social message is rarely heard. In shojo manga, the A-bomb is not seriously viewed as a major element that creates tragedy in human lives, but rather as just another natural disaster. A manga critic, Masato Kibi finds that shojo manga tends to romanticise death and that the A-bomb is rather conveniently used to dramatise the story:



Figure 5: In the last panel of Chieko Hosokawa's *Ai-no Hitomi*, the protagonist says she is very happy, though she has only a few days to live.

<sup>3</sup> Realistically, it is difficult to imagine that Yokko can be infected by the A-bomb disease because of her father's exposure to the A-bomb. Normally, prenatal irradiation is applied to those who are exposed to the A-bomb in their mother's womb.

<sup>4</sup> One notable exception is Sanpei Shirato's *Kie-yuku Shojo (A Disappearing Girl)*. The story is set in the immediate post-war period. Additionally, in Ken-ichiro Suzuhara's "Aa Hiroshima-ni Hana Sakedo (*Though the Flowers Bloom in Hiroshima*)," there is a lengthy depiction of wartime Hiroshima.

The A-bomb disease begins to be frequently depicted in Japanese shojo manga when TB and poverty, two major misfortunes shojo manga employs to dramatise the story, become comparatively "light." As the Japanese economy grows, they are not considered fatal any more. The A-bomb disease replaces them as the uncontrollable tragedy (Kibi 2006: 155–156).

Kibi's statement argues that in many shojo manga, the A-bomb is no more than a gimmick employed to entertain sensitive and romantic female readers. In short, the A-bomb mangas flourishing in this time period use A-bomb imagery for the sake of entertainment.

### Period 3 (1973–1999): The Birth of the Genbaku Manga Genre and Years of Silence

In 1973, what is seen as the most famous manga on the A-bomb, *Hadashi-no Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa emerged. First published in *Shonen Jump*, an entertainment manga magazine for young male readers, *Hadashi-no Gen* soon defined what would become the Genbaku manga genre. By 2010, Nakazawa's comics had sold more than ten million copies, been translated into eleven different languages, been adapted into TV dramas, movies, musicals, novels and so on. In addition, *Hadashi-no Gen* is considered a



Figure 6: Keiji Nakazawa's *Hadashi-no Gen* is known for its realistic description of ground zero.

canonised text and used to teach children about the A-bomb and its effects. According to Ito, of the 152 junior high school and grammar schools he interviewed, 89.5 percent own *Hadashino Gen* in their school library (Ito, 2006: 157–158). As Yoshiaki Fukuma states, *Hadasi-no Gen* is the text "which gives birth to the genre itself" (Fukuma 2006: 12).

*Hadashi-no Gen* distinguishes itself from the preceding A-bomb mangas in two ways. First, while many shojo mangas avoid graphic descriptions of the ground zero sites or the A-bomb victims, Nakazawa, an A-bomb survivor of Hiroshima, depicts what he saw as he saw it. Unlike the other shojo manga writers who employ the A-bomb as a gimmick for entertainment, Nakazawa regards manga as a means to educate its readers

about the atrocious nature of the A-bomb. Nakazawa once stated that he is against "the sugar-coated description of the bomb" which would let children romanticise it and that the more frightening the bomb appears in his manga, the more effective a tool it will be (Nakazawa 1994: 211).

At the same time, Nakazawa's masterpiece stands out from the other A-bomb mangas in the sheer anger he expresses against the weapon of mass murder. Nakazawa lost his family because of the bomb, and he expresses his resentment against the bomb in *Hadashi-no Gen* and other works. With the emergence of *Hadashi-no Gen*, gone was the ignorant and romantic imagination that viewed the A-bomb as a natural disaster, a view that had defined the A-bomb shojō manga of the preceding era. In other words, while the manga writers of the previous era viewed the A-bomb with a sense of "Monono Aware," or silent resignation, as Donald Richie stated (Richie 1996: 22), Nakazawa views the A-bomb with a sense of condemnation.

Other writers try to follow the path Nakazawa paved. Let us take Riyoko Ikeda as an example. As described earlier, Ikeda wrote *Yukio-kun* in 1965, and it is a typical romantic tale of love peripherally concerned with the A-bomb. Ikeda returned to the A-bomb manga in 1971 with *Mariko*, written for *Monthly Margaret*. The plot of *Mariko* is almost identical to that of *Yukio-kun*. The protagonist is an active and attractive teenage girl, Mariko. She meets and falls in love with a handsome young man, Okawa. As the love between the two develops, Mariko learns that Okawa is suffering from an A-bomb disease and eventually he dies. "Mariko" is different from her predecessor, the protagonist of *Yukio-kun*, because her lover's death leads Mariko to social awareness. The story ends with the moment Mariko devoting herself to the anti-nuclear movement. In the last panel, in which Mariko poses a question as to what she can do to end the war, the attitudinal change in the A-bomb shojō manga is obvious. Even the attractive, dreamy girl of the shojō manga world cannot escape facing the harsh reality of being victimised by the violent bomb. Consequently, she cannot escape becoming politically conscious. In short, A-bomb mangas become a medium used to send social messages rather than as a form of entertainment.



Figure 7: In Riyoko Ikeda's *Mariko*, the death of her boyfriend leads the protagonist to social awareness.

Overall, this social awakening is the era of Nakazawa and *Hadashi-no Gen*. Nakazawa has to date produced 22 mangas on the A-bomb experiences,<sup>5</sup> thereby becoming the majordomo of A-bomb manga in Japan. At the same time, the number of A-bomb mangas reduced drastically in this time period. Between 1954 and 1973, 24 writers produced 48 mangas about the A-bomb. In the 25 years that followed, 11 mangas were written, 5 of which were by Nakazawa. By the 1980s and 1990s, A-bomb mangas were seldom seen in commercial manga magazines. Simply put, the topic of the A-bomb was too socially and politically controversial and became an inadequate topic for entertainment.

#### Period 4: The Resurgence of A-bomb Shojo Manga (2000–)

The year 2000 marked the 55th anniversary of the dropping of the A-bomb. The A-bomb seemed an incident of the distant past, and as A-bomb survivors grew old, the question of how we could pass on the memory of the experience became an urgent issue. It was under these circumstances that the A-bomb manga, which had seemed almost extinct in the preceding decade, made a dramatic comeback. Fumiyo Kono's *Yunagi-no machi, Sakura-no kuni* (*Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms*), published in 2004, spearheaded the new trend. Kono's work, which depicts the death of an A-bomb survivor 10 years after the dropping of the bomb, was an instant success. Not only was it adapted into a movie in 2007, but it also received highly critical praise and won several prizes, including the Grand Prix at the 8th Japan Media Arts Festival in 2004. This manga has also been translated into English, Korean, French and Mandarin.

Kono's success paved the way for other A-bomb mangas. Within 6 years, 7 more mangas dealing with the A-bomb were produced. One notable example is Shiori Matsuo's *Kimi-ga Kureta Taiyo* (*The Sun You Gave Me*). *Kimi-ga*



Figure 8: Cover of Fumiyo Kono's *Yunagi-no-Machi, Sakura-no Kuni*.



Figure 9: Cover of Shiori Matsuo's *Kimi-ga Kureta Taiyo*.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see appendix No. 2, the list of the A-bomb manga by Keiji Nakazawa.

*Kureta Taiyo* was carried in *Be Love* in 2008. This was the first A-bomb manga to be serially published in a commercial manga magazine since *Hadashi-no Gen*. The commercial success of Kono and Matsuo attests to the renewed popularity of the A-bomb motif in Japanese manga.

It is noteworthy that the resurgence of A-bomb manga in the 21st century tells the tragic story of beautiful girls in the shojo manga style. The realistic, horrifying description of the A-bomb, along with the sheer anger towards it, that characterise works from the preceding era, such as *Hadashi-no Gen*, is once again replaced by beautiful, even romantic, portrayals of aesthetically pleasing characters. Let us take a page from *Kimi-ga Kureta Taiyo* as an example. This page describes the moments after the explosion of the A-bomb during which the protagonist, who is known for her beauty, realises that she suffers from keloid burns on her face. Her statement in the second and third panels (Figure 10), "I have lost my face," indicates that her beauty is eternally lost. However, in these panels the pictures refrain from showing the destruction of her beauty. In the top right panel, the protagonist's whole body is covered in dark shade. While this device shows how shocking her realisation is, it also obscures her and makes it virtually impossible to see her face. In the top left panel, which shows her face close-up, she covers her burn with her hand, and the reader cannot see her scars. While in both cases the reader is told that the protagonist lost her beauty because of the A-bomb attack, the author does not allow us to see this disfiguration directly. Needless to say, such manipulation is diametrically opposed to the artistic principle embraced by Nakazawa.

While the social implications of the resurgence of A-bomb shojo manga have yet to be explored, it is worth noting that the shojo-style A-bomb manga has reasserted its dominance in the 21st century.



Figure 10: In *Kimi-ga Kureta Taiyo*, the protagonist suffers a keloid burn on her face.

## THE A-BOMB MANGA, GENBAKU OTOME AND THE MYTH OF VICTIMISATION

This overview of the history of the A-bomb manga in Japan shows that the A-bomb manga in Japan has largely developed under the banner of shojo manga. Of the 74 mangas that feature the A-bomb as part of the theme, 41 of them tell the story of a girl's suffering in a particularly shojo manga style and are carried in shojo manga magazines exclusively marketed to teenage girls. In other words, from a quantitative standpoint, in *Hadashi-no Gen* and similar works, A-bomb mangas characterised by realistic description and strong social consciousness do not best represent the A-bomb manga genre.

Some may find it odd that shojo manga has been the major medium for A-bomb tales. Yoshihiro Yonezawa delivers a particularly harsh evaluation of shojo manga:

"Everything about shojo manga is horrible. Its female characters with ridiculously huge eyeballs, its meaningless stories about trifle love affairs, its panels filled with stars and flowers which are irrelevant to the plot, and its peculiar layouts which sacrifice the readability for the sake of emphasizing how beautiful the characters are." (Yonezawa 2007: 18)

Yonezawa criticises shojo manga for its mediocre stories, as well as being graphic-oriented and fantasy-oriented (and thus unrealistic). These shortcomings are closely related to the historical role shojo manga has played in Japanese society. Shojo manga has developed as an entertainment exclusively for Japanese teenage girls, who are doubly marginalised for being female and for being immature. Shojo manga has offered to Japanese teenage girls a dream world in which their dreams will be fulfilled. Thus, it has functioned, as pointed out by Yukari Fujimoto, as a form of "therapy" (Fujimoto 1998: 37–38). Briefly, the world of shojo manga has been an asylum for Japanese girls.

It is no surprise that shojo manga has been deemed inadequate to deal with a serious social issue, such as the A-bomb. While shojo manga tends to prefer fantasy tales that dreamy teenage girls would favour, the A-bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed more than a quarter of a million people in an instant, and many more have suffered since then. While shojo manga tends to emphasise the beauty of its characters, A-bomb destroyed human beings, leaving indelible scars on their bodies and minds. There is

nothing shojo manga-like in the atrocity of the A-bomb. When the manga critic Hiroshi Hashimoto states that depicting sex, the physically impaired, and the A-bomb was a taboo for shojo manga writers in the genre's early years (Hashimoto 2002), he reveals his bias that these topics are too serious for shojo manga to handle.

Thus, we appear to have a contradiction; while shojo mangas do not seem to be an appropriate medium for social issues, such as the A-bomb, they have nonetheless been a major medium in spreading the story of A-bomb. It is in this disconnect that we can identify the peculiar way the Japanese remember and imagine the cultural legacy of the A-bomb as Genbaku Otome, or the A-bomb beauties.

The term Genbaku Otome originally referred to the young female A-bomb victims in Hiroshima. In the 1950s, they received media attention, and with the help of an American journalist, nationwide fund-raising rallies were held to help them receive medical treatment on their burns and scars in the U.S. In 1955, 25 of these Genbaku Otome, then called Hiroshima maidens, left for the U.S. to receive medical care. So young and so tragic, the Genbaku Otome soon became a cultural icon in Japanese post-war culture. At the centre of the legacy of A-bomb beauties are young, lovely women whose peaceful lives have been abruptly disturbed and ultimately ruined by the disastrous A-bomb. Facing their cruel doom, Genbaku Otome often show incredible mental strength and continue to endure beautifully and bravely to the end. They remain spiritually untouched by the nuclear bomb that contaminates them physically.

Melodramatic though it may sound, the cultural legacy of Genbaku Otome is quite prevalent in post-war Japan. Popular cultural media, such as TV dramas, movies, popular novels and needless to say, manga, play a significant role in proliferating the myth. The myth constitutes such a strong undercurrent of post-war Japanese mentality that the critic Maya Morioka Todeschini calls Genbaku Otomes cultural heroines who symbolise the popular sentiments of post-war Japan. Furthermore, Todeschini's discussion helps us understand why the Genbaku Otome myth became so powerful in post-war Japan. In discussing *Yumechiyo Nikki (The Diary of Yumechiyo)* and *Kuroi Ame (Black Rain)*, Todeschini writes the following:

"The first obvious point to be made about the two films is that they both focus on a female leukemia victim. This is not a trivial issue, because, as I have mentioned earlier, they exemplify a larger tendency in Japanese fictional representations on the

bomb to focus on young, female victims and single them out as especially pathetic symbols of the horrors of the bomb and exposure" (Todeschini 1996: 228).

Todeschini argues that the Genbaku Otome narratives symbolise the social notion of victimisation. By imagining the A-bomb victim as an innocent and powerless female, the memory of the A-bomb experience is, in a sense, gendered. Japanese can place themselves at the opposite end from what the A-bomb stands for. Now let us take as an example *Kieyuku-Shojo* (*A Disappearing Girl*), one of the earliest mangas about the A-bomb.

*Kieyuku-Shojo* describes the tragic fate of a girl, Yukiko. Being an A-bomb survivor, she loses her parents and suffers from the A-bomb disease. She is rejected by others for being exposed to the nuclear bomb, and after several tragic events, she dies alone. In this manga, the author, Sanpei Shirato, clearly condemns the prejudice against the A-bomb survivors, a prejudice quite secretly yet commonly shared in post-war Japan. He skilfully constructs the story so that the reader regards Yukiko as an innocent victim who is unjustly tormented by the A-bomb. The protagonist's name, Yukiko, is a case in point. Her name is made up of two parts, *yuki* and *ko*. The former means "snow-white," and the latter means "girl" *Yuki*, or snow-white, stands in clear contrast to the black rain of nuclear fallout. At the same time, *ko*, which is a common suffix of female names in Japan, indicates her femininity and thus places her in an antagonistic relation to the bombs, each endowed with masculine names (Little Boy and Fat Man, respectively) that blasted Hiroshima and Nagasaki away. The two aspects of Yukiko's name show that she is the antithesis of the A-bomb. This dichotomy points to Yukiko's status as the powerless and feminine victim of the masculine and mighty bomb.

Why was imagining A-bomb victims as passive and feminine so appealing in post-war Japan? It is because in the image of Genbaku Otome, so feminine and so innocent, the Japanese found an image of themselves, an image that they desired to embrace in the socio-political circumstances of post-war East Asia. In a country protected by the nuclear umbrella of the very nation that dropped the bomb, remembering the A-bomb as a blameless



Figure 11: In Sanpei Shirato's *Kieyuku-Shojo*, white-skinned Yukiko is bullied by dark-skinned boys.

natural disaster was necessary to justify their own position *vis-à-vis* the Americans and the war. Later, the establishment of communist China and the Korean War significantly impacted the decision to excuse Japan from compensating other Asian nations for its wartime aggression. The rather convenient justification for Japan's excusal was this notion of victimisation, through which Japan could claim that they too were the victims of the war. In short, the images of Genbaku Otome are the mirror images of post-war Japan itself.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion of Genbaku Otome, it is clear why shojo manga has been the major medium in narrating the story of the A-bomb. Because shojo manga is more oriented towards individual rather than social issues and more interested in depicting the romances of beautiful characters rather than conveying social messages, it is an ideal medium to carry on the legacy of Genbaku Otome. In other words, with what is considered an apolitical medium, the Japanese imagination can transform what is fundamentally a social or political issue into a romantic tale, one that they can safely consume without feeling any sense of guilt or threat to their own being. The history of the A-bomb manga shows the process through which the Japanese came to terms with the A-bomb's historical impact and remember it in a way that is consistent with their present. In this sense, A-bomb manga testifies to a battle waged in the domain of memory.

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## APPENDIX

## 1. The List of the A-bomb Manga in Japan

Author	Title	Carrier / Publisher	Year
Jahana, Bontaro	<i>Pikadon Nii-san</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1951
Furusawa, Hideo	<i>Boken Gotto</i>	<i>Manga Shonen</i>	August, 1952
Kurakane, Shosuke	<i>Pikadon Musume</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1953
Harima, Shogo	<i>Genbaku 80 go</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1954
Hanano, Kaoru	<i>Bikini Shi-no Hai</i>	<i>Akebono Shuppan</i>	1954
Narumi, Akira	<i>Yuku-kumo Sabishi</i>	<i>Okan Manga-sha</i>	1955
Otomo, Yoshiyasu	<i>Kuroi Taiyo</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1956
Otomo, Yoshiyasu	<i>Hakucho-no Namida</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1958
Otomo, Yoshiyasu	<i>Anata-no Ban-desu</i>	<i>Nakamura Shoten</i>	1958
Tanigawa, Kazuhiko	<i>Hoshi-wa Miteiru</i>	<i>Nakayoshi</i>	1957
Tanigawa, Kazuhiko	<i>Hokuro-ga Mittsu-aru</i>	<i>Shojo</i>	1958
Takita, Hiroshi	<i>Aa Nagasaki-no Kane-wa Naru</i>	<i>Tokyo Manga-sha</i>	1958
Nakagawa, Hideyuki	<i>Yurusumaji Genbaku-wo</i>	<i>Tokyo Manga-sha</i>	1958
Shirato, Sanpei	<i>Kieyuku-Shojo</i>	<i>Nihon Manga-sha</i>	1958
Amezawa, Michio	<i>Banka</i>	<i>Hana</i>	1960
Kagemaru, Joya	<i>Kage</i>	Unknown	1960
Murotani, Tsunezo	<i>Pikadon-kun</i>	<i>Boken-O</i>	1960–1961
Maki, Miyako	<i>Maki-no Kuchibue</i>	<i>Ribbon</i>	1960–1963
Higashiura, Mitsuo	<i>Miyochan, Sinanaide</i>	<i>Shojo</i>	1963
Sinjo, Sachiko	<i>Ochiba-no Nikki</i>	<i>Hana</i>	1964
Ikeda, Rikoyo	<i>Yukio-kun</i>	<i>Wakagi Shobo</i>	1965
Ikeda, Rikoyo	<i>Yukio-kun Returns</i>	<i>Wakagi Shobo</i>	1965
Hanamura, Eiko	<i>Namida-no Oriduru</i>	<i>Nakayoshi</i>	October, 1965
Hanamura, Eiko	<i>Nagasaki-no Kane</i>	<i>Nakayoshi</i>	December, 1965
Suzuhara, Ken-ichiro	<i>Mama-no Nikkicho</i>	<i>Weekly Margaret</i>	1967
Nishi, Takero	<i>Genbaku Urimasu</i>	<i>Weekly Manga Times</i>	November, 1967
Shiga, Kimie	<i>Eien-ni Ikitai</i>	<i>Monthly Margaret</i>	July, 1968
Hosokawa, Chieko	<i>Ai-no Hitomi</i>	<i>Bessatu Shojo Friend</i>	January, 1969
Suzuhara, Ken-ichiro	<i>Aa Hiroshima-ni Hana Sakedo</i>	<i>Weekly Margaret</i>	1969
Asaoka, Koji	<i>Aru Wakusei-no Higeiki</i>	<i>Bessatu Shonen Magazine</i>	1969
Morita, Jun	<i>Kya Sensei!</i>	<i>Ribbon</i>	1970–1976
Tatsumi, Yoshihiro	<i>Jigoku</i>	<i>Weekly Playboy</i>	1971
Ikeda, Rikoyo	<i>Mariko</i>	<i>Monthly Margaret</i>	1971
Hosokawa, Chieko	<i>Sakura-mau Haru-no Hi-ni</i>	<i>Bessatsu Shojo Friend</i>	February, 1972
Asuna, Hiroshi	<i>Yama Yukeba</i>	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1970

Author	Title	Carrier / Publisher	Year
Asuna, Hiroshi	<i>Akai Tomato</i>	<i>Jogakusei-no Tomo</i>	1972
Sugito, Koji	<i>Heiwa-no Toride-wo Mezashite</i>	<i>Hibari Shobo</i>	1974
Hoshino, Yukinobu	<i>Yojigen-no Bakugekiki</i>	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1975
Yamagishi, Ryoko	<i>Natsu-no Guuwa</i>	<i>Seventeen</i>	1979
Kawasaki, Noboru	<i>Mokuto</i>	<i>Big Gold</i>	1980
Aoki, Tetsuo	<i>Akai-kutsu Haita</i>	<i>Sodo Bunka</i>	1991
Saegusa Yoshihiro	<i>2Hiroshima-no Shogen-sha2</i>	<i>Shonen Magazine</i>	1995
Ono, Eriko	<i>Kocchi-muite Miiko</i>	<i>Cho</i>	1995
Yamashita, Kazumi	<i>Fushigi-na Shonen</i>	<i>Weekly Morning</i>	2001
Kono, Fumiyo	<i>Yunagi-no Machi, Sakura-no Kuni</i>	<i>Manga Action</i>	2004
Goto, Kazu	<i>Ikirunda</i>	<i>Akita Shoten</i>	2006
Kono, Fumiyo	<i>Kono Sekai-no Katasumi-ni</i>	<i>Manga Action</i>	2007–2009
Matuo, Shiyori	<i>Kimi-ga Kureta Taiyo</i>	<i>Be Love</i>	2008
Nishioka, Yuka	<i>Natsu-no Zanzo</i>	<i>Gaifu-sha</i>	2008
Shioura, Shintaro	<i>Yaketa Rozario</i>	<i>Seibo-no Kishi-sha</i>	2009
Nishioka, Yuka	<i>8gatu9nichi-no Santa Claus</i>	<i>Gaifu-sha</i>	2010

## 2. The List of the A-bomb Manga by Keiji Nakazawa

Title	Carrier / Publisher	Year
"Kuroi Ame-ni Utarete	<i>Manga Punch</i>	1968
"Kuroi Kawa-no Nagare-ni"	<i>Manga Punch</i>	1968
"Kuroi Chinmoku-no hate-ni"	<i>Manga Punch</i>	1968
"Kuroi Hato-no Mure-ni"	<i>Manga Punch</i>	1969
"Aruhi Totsuzen-ni"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1970
"Kuoi Hae-no Sakebi-ni"	<i>Pocket Manga Punch</i>	1970
"Nanika-ga Okiru"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1970
"Chin Chin Densha-no Uta"	<i>Akahata</i>	1971
"Akatombo-no Uta"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1971
"Warera Eien-ni"	<i>Bessatsu Shonen Jump</i>	1971
"Kuoroi Tsuchi-no Sakebi-ni"	<i>Bessatsu Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Ore-wa Mita"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Ititama Ippon"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Tabidachi-no Uta"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Eien-no Anchor"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Hyoushigi-no Uta"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1972
"Kuroi Ito"	<i>Manga Punch</i>	1973
<i>Hadashi-no Gen</i>	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1974
"Eucalyptus-no Ki-no Shita-de"	<i>Shonen Jump</i>	1977
"Itsuka Mita Aoi Sora"	<i>Akahata</i>	1978
<i>Murasaki-irono Pika</i>	<i>Taihei Shuppan</i>	1981
<i>Kuro-ga Ita Natsu</i>	<i>Chobun-Sha</i>	1990