

# **The Translation of Japanese Manga into Bahasa Indonesia and Manga Mania among Indonesian Youth**

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## **Introduction**

The translation of Japanese comic books (manga) into the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) became popular during the 1980s and reached boom proportions during and after the '90s. For example, both "Doraemon" and its animated version "Shinchan," made for television, captured wide audiences, not only among high school students, but also among younger university students. It is primarily through translated manga that Indonesian youth come to understand Japanese culture and social life and the dynamics of the Japanese people.

Given the popularity and influence of these translations, their quality and accuracy are a matter of interest. If the translations are bad, problems arise: the meaning and "message" of the original cannot reach the reader. As high school and university students are still at a formative stage of the character building process, and tend to be full of imagination, creativity, and inner innovation, what they read can have a powerful impact. In this connection, good and valuable stories in manga could be "a second teacher" and motivator in building their personality. The quality of manga translation is thus an important topic, and it is revealing of the perceptions of Indonesian youth concerning Japanese culture, social life, and new trends in Japanese popular culture.

Here I will examine the Bahasa translations of manga from the point of view of sociolinguistics and the theory of translation. I consider the titles or subjects of comic books" translated into Bahasa Indonesia during the years 1990 through 2003, the motivation of young Indonesian consumers of Japanese comics, and, last but not least, also the perceptions of those young readers concerning Japanese culture and social life.

Study of comic books in Indonesia became popular in the 1990s. Research has been done into trends of domestic comic books, analyzing their history, style, content, and influence on the young generation. The Association for Comics Studies, under the chairmanship of Dr. Rahayu Sutarti Hidayat, Associate Professor of French Literature in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Indonesia, has made a major contribution to this research through the seminars and workshops it has organized. My own work on the translation of Japanese comics, reported on in the present chapter, is the first study concerning Japanese comics in Indonesia.

## **Globalization, Cultural Nationalism, and Youth**

Many experts have offered theories of globalization and cultural nationalism, and it is necessary here to state some essential elements of definition. Terminologically the term

“globalization” focuses on an ongoing process, and the very word “globalize” has come to have an ideological tinge. The opposite of globalization is localism, which is assumed as ideological practice in a synergic, dynamic, and even antagonistic context.<sup>1</sup>

“Culture” in the context of globalization is assumed to reflect values as they emerge in behavior, and are actualized in a dynamic, synergic, and even antagonistic global interaction. “Cultural nationalism” emphasizes the ideological comprehension in culture formation in the scope of nation-state and that of regionalism or localism. The concept of culture in the nation-state can be based on the formation of local culture (local genius) or the assimilation of elements from various cultures into a local mix.

This research does not argue the concept of culture in theoretical and terminological contexts, but rather draws on some existing definitions and terminology concerning the popular culture.<sup>2</sup> In Japan the term *taishū bunka* (mass culture) or *poppyurā karuchā* (popular culture) have been commonly used since the 1970s and 1980s. Avoiding exhaustive debate, let me say that it is the products of culture or culture dynamics in the mass context, as distinguished from high culture, that will be set as the parameters in this research. Without any doubt literary works, music, and performing arts that are being consumed collectively and massively through media such as newspapers, magazines, television, or digital electronic technology are considered to belong to this definition. The comic book, which is a combination of the art of illustration and narration brought forward in the form of a book, serialized comics in newspapers and magazines, and even stories and illustrations in the form of animated films, are parts of popular culture.

“Youth” are taken in this study to be those who have graduated from junior high school and are aged between fifteen and twenty-one years old. They are senior high school students and first-year and second-year university students or young adults. This age group is seen by experts in psychology as being in the formative phase, in their thought and behavioral patterns, developing toward maturity. It is this age group that is the most active in participating in popular culture activities—as subjects, as consumers, or as objects of mass culture. Youths comprise the group that is dominant as comic readers both in Japan and Indonesia, and they are the object of this research.

### Reception of Japanese Popular Culture in Indonesia: Manga Mania

The term manga mania requires a definition. *Manga* is the Japanese word for what is called a comic book in English and *buku komik* in Bahasa Indonesia. *Mania* is a Latin word which means extreme interest toward something. Manga mania is a condition exhibited by someone who is extremely interested in—very enamored of or “crazy about”—the

1 See my comment on globalization, “National Policies and Globalization,” *TELSTRA*, no. 32 (January, February 1995).

2 David Manning White, in “Popular Culture: The Multifaceted Mirror,” *Popular Culture, Mirror of American Life* (1977), and M. Thomas Inge, in *Concise Histories of American Popular Culture* (1982), offer thorough discussions of various theories and concepts concerning popular culture. Although my own research does not engage in the debate over theories and concepts of popular culture, I take the books by White and Inge as primary references regarding such theories and concepts.

activity of reading comic books. In this research<sup>3</sup> I classify comic book readers into three groups: (a) those who like reading comic books, (b) those who like reading comic books very much, and (c) those who excessively read comics and mania comics.

The acceptance of Japanese popular culture in Indonesia is indicated by a number of signs or phenomena. More and more Indonesians, especially teenagers and youth, are attracted to Japanese animated films (*anime*),<sup>4</sup> Japanese pop music, and Japanese fast food (*hoka-hoka bentō*).<sup>5</sup> Karaoke music, television films, industrial products such as automobiles, cameras, wristwatches, household appliances, and toys, and information technology products such as computer electronics products and video games are all well recognized and commercially successful in Indonesia. These even become symbols of pride for Indonesian families who can afford them, not only urban residents but also people who live in villages. Lately, specifically since the late 1980s and 1990s, products such as electronics, automobiles, and motorcycles made in Taiwan, Korea, and China have gained favor, but Japanese products still rank at the top among the competitors.

## Methodology

The work reported on in this chapter has two main components, library research and fieldwork. The objective of the library research is to collect and evaluate data on manga translated into Bahasa Indonesia during the fourteen years from 1990 through 2003. The commercial publisher Gramedia Group continuously translated and published Japanese comics, and then distributed them to Indonesia's big cities. A large firm, Gramedia has a wide network and operates many big bookstores around the nation. Most of the comics collected for this project were put out by Gramedia. For the present analysis I selected a

3 I would like to express my gratitude to the Sumitomo Foundation for funding this research. I also would like to acknowledge Ms. Hartiningsih for giving me data and examples of comic books translated by Gramedia publishing house. To Putu Ayu Wulansari for helping me outline the questionnaires and process the data on which this essay is based, I wish once again to say thank you.

4 Japanese animated films such as *Shinchan*, *Pokemon*, *Doraemon*, *Saint Seiya*, *Samurai X*, and *Detective Conan* were aired in Indonesia by private-owned television stations (RCTI, SCTV, ANTEVE, INDOSIAR), which boomed in the 1990s. Those television stations also aired Japanese drama series such as *Tokyo Love Story*, *Just the Way We Are*, and *Long Vacation*. Japanese cartoons such as *Voltus*, *Goxicma*, *Gaban* and *Zabogar* were broadcast by the state-owned TVRI in the 1980s (Made Gede Windu Saskara: 2002). And of course, we should not forget the drama series *Oshin*, the most popular program in TVRI in the 1980s. *Oshin* was the pioneer in the success of other drama series aired on TV.

5 "The World Popular Song Festival" held in Tokyo in 1972 significantly influenced more and more Indonesians' appreciation and enjoyment of Japanese popular music. Indonesia has participated in this kind of festival since 1973. Notable Indonesian composers and bands who took have taken part in the festival include Guruh Soekarno Putra (Renjana, 1976), Anton Issoediby, Elfa Secioria, Adjie Bandie, Harvey Malaiholo (the best singer in the World Pop Song, 1986), Band Indonesia 6, and Kahitna. Yamaha, the biggest producer of musical instruments in Japan, frequently held music festivals in Indonesia; what started with Yamaha sponsorship as "Light Music Contest" has changed its name into "Band Explosion" and "Music Quest." In addition, pop and pop rock songs, in the form of film soundtracks for movies like *Voltus* and *Goxicma*, and *jazz fusion*, which was introduced successfully by the Japanese jazz group Casiopea, contributed in making Japanese pop music known among Indonesians. One evidence is of Indonesian interest in Japanese pop is that an album by Hikaru Utada sold more than 20,000 copies, and Kitaro, Hamada Mari, and Ueda Masaki, among others, are very popular among youth in Indonesia (Made Gede Windu Saskara: 2002).

large number of comics representing different themes and then checked the accuracy and quality of the translation. Any mistranslation or inaccuracy in translation was observed, and notes or comments were recorded; the appendix to this chapter offers excerpts of the results.

I conducted field research in six cities: Padang city in West Sumatera, Jakarta, Bandung (West Java), Yogyakarta (Central Java), Surabaya (East Java), and Denpasar (Bali Island). Each of these cities has a large university and each of the universities has a Japanese Language and Japanese Studies Department. For the fieldwork, I designed a questionnaire to elicit students' perceptions. I distributed this questionnaire at twelve universities and twenty-four high schools. In all, I distributed 300 questionnaires in Jakarta and 500 in the five other cities (100 questionnaires each). Jakarta, it may be unnecessary to remark, got the largest number of questionnaires because it has the biggest population and is the most multicultural of the cities studied here. In each city I engaged two university students and four senior high school students to assist in collecting data; I also enlisted the help of one young lecturer in each university and one teacher in each high school. The students made lists of the comic books sold in each city, and bought many rare comic books to add to my data sample. Many of these comics were purchased at Gramedia bookstore and Gramedia Publishing house. I also benefited from the cooperation of many of my former students, graduates of the University of Indonesia and the University of Darma Persada, who have become employees of PT. Elex Media Komputindo, a unit of the Gramedia group that publishes comics.

### **Population of Manga Readers in Six Cities<sup>6</sup>**

The response rate for the questionnaire was quite high, 91.5%. Out of the 800 questionnaires distributed, there were 732 answered. In Jakarta, 252 answered (84%); Bandung yielded 101 answers (101%, i.e., plus one additional respondent); Yogyakarta 94%; Surabaya 100%; Denpasar 97%; and Padang 88%.

To know the background of the population of the comic book readers, several questions were asked, including the occupations of the reader's parents, the name of the school/university attended by the reader, the kinds of reading material the reader favors, the kinds of comic books the reader reads, the amount of money spent to read the comic books, the particular features of comic books that the reader finds attractive, the lessons learned by the reader from comic books, and the relation between reading comic books and the study program the readers choose.

From those questions an analysis regarding the impacts on reading comic books among the youth in Indonesia will be produced.

On the question regarding preferred reading material, almost two-thirds (65.16%)

6 Cities chosen as research sites are Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar, and Padang. In these six cities there are universities which have Japanese Departments, each with its different characteristics. Jakarta represents metropolitan cities, while other cities like Bandung and Yogyakarta represent national cities with quite strongly preserved local cultural traits. Surabaya represents semi-metropolitan cities in which inherited local culture remains strong. Denpasar is a city where people from many different countries meet, yet whose local culture (Balinese culture) continues to be prevalent. The last city is Padang. Padang is chosen because it has special characteristics as a city which is "rather" isolated from the influences of foreign cultures and is which perpetuates its local culture.

of the respondents answered comic books. With multiple responses allowed, comics were followed by magazines, 56.96%; science books, 25.68%; newspapers, 24.72%; tabloids, 24.34%; and others, 14.48% (Table 1).

By region, the youth of Bandung (76.23%) and Denpasar (72.16%) are most likely to choose comic books as their favorite reading material. Compared to the youth of Jakarta, 64.28% of whom say that they prefer comics, Yogyakarta (68.08%), and Padang (65.90%), youth of Surabaya are the lowest ranking, 46.00%. But youth of Yogyakarta and Bandung are also very attracted to science books, 52.12% and 28.71%, while youth of Padang are the lowest (14.77%). And youth of Jakarta, Denpasar, and Surabaya take approximately the same moderate position (23.80%, 19.58%, and 18.00%, respectively) with respect to reading about science. It can be inferred that young people in Padang are very interested in following the spread of mass culture, but rather undeveloped when it comes to acquisition of scientific knowledge. It is possible that ethnicity is relevant in interpreting these figures. The Minangkabau are the predominant ethnic group in West Sumatera, for example, where Padang and Bukit Tinggi are the two most important cities; this area is the place of origin of many prominent intellectuals such as Mohammad Hatta, the first Vice President of Indonesia, and many leaders of the Indonesian Independence movement elite, such as Haji Agus Salim. Yogyakarta, where the biggest national institution of higher learning, Gajah Mada University, is located, is the place where my survey finds the most youths who designate science books as their preferred choice of reading, although they also read comic books. In the Yogyakarta case comic books and science books have the same importance.

Japanese manga are overwhelmingly the most popular comic books in Indonesia. My questionnaire results indicate that by country of origin, Japanese manga, at 78.68%, are the number one preference of Indonesian students, followed by Indonesian comic books (13.79%), American (6.25%), Korean (2.86%), Chinese (1.91%), British (United Kingdom, 1.63%), French (0.54%), and others (0.95%). While 86.61% of the respondents read comic books translated into Bahasa Indonesia, only 12.97% of them read comic books in their original language (Table 3 and Table 4).

Only in Yogyakarta did a majority (73.40%) of readers state that Indonesian comics were their first choice, and even they are also readers of Japanese comics in translation. Youth of the other five cities did not select Indonesian comics as their favorites: Jakarta (1.19%), Bandung (9.90%), Surabaya (8.00%), Denpasar (8.24%), and Padang (5.68%). It is also interesting to point out that youth of Padang and Denpasar—the two regions that show the greatest continuity with their traditional culture and way of life—are now very actively reading comics. This seems to show that the youth of both regions are also actively involved in popular culture activities, although there are striking contrasts between the two cities. Denpasar is the site of the regional government office and a center of higher education, the economy, and tourism, and it offers many opportunities for absorption of foreign culture, unlike Padang, which remains quite isolated from foreign tourism. In all big Indonesian cities, however, the influence of television broadcasting and good distribution of reading material (books, comic books, newspapers, magazines, etc.) in promoting popular culture seems significant.

Analysis based on classification of themes and stories reveals the following: teenage romance was the main theme, or one of the main themes, of 52.59%, while 43.57% could be classified as detective stories, 35.92% as adventure stories, 29.50% as mysteries, 20.90% as children's stories, 14.61% sport, and 7.92% science fiction (Table 5). In no region did respondents read science fiction comics more than love stories or stories with detective and adventure themes. The question is why the Indonesian youth do not favor scientific theme as their leisure reading. Is the content of science fiction comics less interesting than romance love stories, detective or adventure stories? The answered should be yes or no, because most of the respondents are students in senior high school and university social sciences, humanities, and language departments.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they are very attracted to Japanese manga because of good illustration or drawing (64.34%). Other reasons they like manga are: neat story line 46.85%, theme of the story 40.71%, the language 9.69%, and other considerations such as size and type of paper 3.14% (Table 6). For the respondents of all regions the "interesting points" of Japanese comics are illustrations, stories, and theme. The language of the comics ranks lowest, only 9.69% of all respondents' answers.

From data I have compiled on mistranslations (see the List of Errors or Mistranslations in the appendix), I conclude that mistranslation of texts in some scenes or episodes has a big impact on readers. It appears, however, that the readers read texts by skimming and concentrating on the image or expression of the characters in the story or on what is in the illustration surrounding those characters. For this reason, it could be deduced that the illustrations in manga are more interesting to Indonesian youth than the texts. But mistranslations distort the information and messages of the stories in the manga and miss the meanings intended by the authors. For this reason, the translated comics are a highly imperfect medium through which to understanding Japanese culture, society, life, and language. One cannot but conclude that the translated manga leave a very important task undone, a duty that must be performed by educational institutions, most of all by the Japanese Studies Departments at Indonesian universities. Exhibitions and exchanges of cultural and arts activities are also very important for mutual understanding.

### **Volume of Comic Book Consumption**

Per month, on average, over half of the respondents (52.59%) said that they read between one and five comic books. A breakdown of more frequent consumers shows that 18.16% read six to ten comic books a month, 12.34% between eleven and twenty, 4.37% between twenty-one and thirty, 4.03% between thirty-one and forty, and 0.68% between forty-one and fifty. Nearly one in twelve, 7.65%, said that they read more than fifty comic books a month (Table 7).

From the data it could be assumed that about half (52.60%) of respondents in all regions read one comic every week, and by region, respondents of Surabaya took the top position (71.00%); unlike in the other five cities, however, no Surabaya respondent read at least one comic every day. Manga maniacs (people who read more than two comics daily) can be found in Jakarta (9.52%), Bandung (4.95%), Yogyakarta (7.44%), and Denpasar (10.20%), but the top spot is occupied by respondents of Padang (14.77%). Does this

mean that comics mania exists in a “traditional city,” or is this more a reflection of a high rate of reading in Padang? If the latter is the case, we might say that Padang is still a city with an intellectual atmosphere, but there has been a change in kinds of readers in recent years, from scientific readers to nonscientific readers.

Three-quarters (75.40%) of the respondents spend between Rp. 10,000 and Rp. 50,000 per month to buy comics. Readers spending between Rp. 50,000 and Rp. 100,000 a month made up 10.38% of respondents, and 2.18% reported spending more than Rp. 100,000 a month. A sizable number, 11.88%, did not disclose the level of their spending (Table 8). If the average living cost for a student in all six cities averages Rp. 500,000 per month, this means that “manga maniac” students (those spending upwards of Rp. 50,000 a month) are allocating more than 10%, sometimes even more than 20%, of their living expenditures to comic book purchases.

Asked what they get from reading Japanese comic books, a plurality (39.89%) of the students in my survey cite entertainment. Information about culture, such as lifestyle and language, is mentioned by 29.78%, slightly more than knowledge about Japan, cited by 27.45%. Other students like attractive illustrations and interesting stories 6.42% (Table 9). By reading Japanese comic books, the respondents get exposure to Japan lifestyle, language, and culture. It might be supposed that reading Japanese comics should increase their knowledge about Japan, but critical question must be raised, “It is true that Japanese comics are a part of culture and life style, or is the promotion of Japanese economic interests through comic books the important point?” The present research has not yet come to a conclusion about this issue, and additional research concerning the relationship of Japanese comics and promotion of economic interests should be done in the future.

### **Problems concerning Translation of Manga into Bahasa Indonesia**

According to its own report, PT. Elex Media Komputindo published Bahasa Indonesia translations of 556 Japanese manga titles between 1990 and 2003. Just over half (52.69%, 284 titles) of these are series (or serialized stories); 255 titles (47.30%) do not belong to series. The number of comic book series published reaches 2323. On average, a comic book that is not part of a series is printed about 2000 copies, and the total number of copies is about 510,000. Of the serials, every individual episode or volume is printed in about 2000 copies, and the total number comes to approximately 4,646,000 copies. PT. Elex Media Komputindo’s total printing during the period under study was thus 5,156,000 copies, or 396,615 copies per year, or 33,051 copies per month, or 214,833 copies per week, or 812 copies per day.

Translated manga can be classified into nine groups, by theme. In order of number of titles, the themes are: teenage romance (265 titles, 49.16%), mystery (97 titles, 17.99%), heroic theme 29 titles (5.38%), adventure (26 titles, 4.82%), sports (19 titles, 3.52%), children (12 titles, 2.22%), science fiction (7 titles, 1.29%) comedy (6 titles, 1.11%), and detective stories (3 titles, 0.55%).

In interviews with the translators and the publishers of comic books, I was informed that the main technical problems they face are a layout constraint and a translation (content) constraint. Manga in the original Japanese read from top right to bottom left. In

Indonesian, as in Western languages, people read from top left to bottom right. The order of illustrations in manga which is from top right to bottom left has to be adjusted into the order of comic books in Indonesia that is from top left to bottom right. If the layout were simply reversed, illustrations facing left in manga would have to be put facing right in the translated Indonesian versions. However, by agreement between the publishers, this problem can be overcome with advanced printing technology; illustrations facing left in manga can remain facing left in the layout of the Bahasa Indonesia version, even though there will be a change in the mood.

The space provided for the dialog also poses difficulties for translators and publishers. Japanese, using kanji and the two kana syllabaries, needs a relatively narrower space than is required to print the dialog in Bahasa Indonesia. Minimizing the illustrations, including the close-ups of characters' faces, can solve this problem. Such a change does not disrupt the essence of the comics so long as the content of the source language does not diverge in the target language translation.

*Linguistic constraint.* The sentence structure of Japanese is different from the sentence structure of Bahasa Indonesia. Typically, manga language is informal spoken Japanese, depending on the discourse. Abbreviations and slang are frequently used in Manga. The vocabulary used in manga does not always appear in Japanese dictionaries. This is because slang language can be created anytime by a certain group of language users, and the new terms (initially) only apply to the activities or sensibilities of a particular group. Youth create slang language easily based on their own common experience, exclusive of others, and discourse that are only employed in a limited group of youth, usually in their peer group, because there are some hidden meanings that other people outside the group should not know. However, many peer groups, the usage of this language even expands, as it becomes a limited lingua franca, eventually uses such a slang language widely.

One of the characteristics of manga language is the prevalence of slang, which in its formation often disregards the standard structure of Japanese. Manga translators who were not brought up with manga language face major difficulties in the process of translating manga into Bahasa Indonesia. It is because manga language has to be translated into comic language and slang in the source language has to be translated into slang in the target language.

Those were the problems I encountered when checking the manga translation into Bahasa Indonesia. For this research the translation of eight titles of manga will be checked. The titles includes several themes, namely, sports (two titles) teenage romance (two titles), mystery (one title), detective (one title), and adventure (two titles) Those titles are chosen because it is assumed that through a variety of titles findings in the accuracy in translating and in the errors and inappropriateness in translating in quite broad fields will be produced.

There are some errors or translation distortions which are rooted in the structure of slang language. Misperception often happens in the process of translating manga. As a result, the meaning and message conveyed by manga are different from the one appear in its translated version. In addition, frequent occurrences of the changes of text dynamics, contradictions between the situation and the atmosphere of the discourse due to errors



in using the vocabulary in the target language, also happen. For example, a phrase that represents stammering in the original manga is translated into words that do not indicate stammering, as in this example: *O . . . o . . . ore wa . . .* (that is, *ore wa*, meaning *saya* in Bahasa Indonesia) is translated simply as *Saya* when it should be *say . . . say . . . saaya . . .* The translation should show the condition of stuttering, but it fails to do so.

### Impacts of Manga Mania

From the data obtained from the questionnaires, the impacts of manga mania on young adults can be classified into three groups, namely: the impact on the formation of personalities, attitudes and manners in daily interaction among their age group; the impact of mistranslation of manga message from the source language to the readers of the target language which results distortion on message information and message content. Another impact is that there is a correlation between manga mania and Japanese study program, which the readers choose for their undergraduate study in university.

*Impact on the formation of personalities and attitudes in daily life.* By observing the attitude of young-adult manga mania, it can be assumed that they have developed a lifestyle whose characteristics are in accordance with popular culture behavior (*poppyura karucha*). For example, they like to wear T-shirt, jeans, snickers, and backpack and hand phone. They also like short and long hair do and highlight their hair. The girls like to wear accessories in their hair, accessories they can attach to their bags, notebooks with the logo of their favorite comic books characters, etc. With such a fashion style it is as if they really live in the manga community and such a fashion style represents their identity, which is cosmopolitan.

Judging from their attitude toward books or reading material, the data shows that they prefer reading manga to reading scientific books. Nowadays not many youth in this age group like read scientific books, compared to youth at their age in the 1950s, or the previous generation. The data samples of this research on manga mania were collected from respondents born in the 1980s.

As manga maniacs, they would rather read textbooks, which have multi-media layout—relatively little textual material, many illustrations/drawings. For example, in their answers some respondents suggest that textbooks in fields such as history, culture, economics, and politics should be presented in the form of comic books. In Indonesia, textbooks in comic book form are still rare. By contrast, Japan has published scientific textbooks in manga style. The stories of Karl Marx and Malthus, for example, and accounts of many eras of history have been published in the form, layout, and language-style of manga.

Quite a few respondents to my survey showed themselves to be quite smart and rich in information regarding many things, especially things related to the development of popular culture, such as information about trends in fashion, music, film, and performances of music bands or film stars, or singers. With such a lifestyle, they are very unlikely to discuss, visit, or even feel attracted to traditional cultural activities.

*The impact of translation inaccuracy.* The problem in translation inaccuracy lies in the fact that it causes information distortion. Generally, manga is translated well enough

so that the synopsis of the content of the story hardly undergoes any deviance. From the fourteen manga observed, the quality of the translation is fairly good.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, in some scenes in scenario, there are many inaccuracies in the translation. Apparently, the root of the problem lies in the translators' manga mastery, which is still imperfect. This can be understood based on two reasons. First, the translator, who in general learns Japanese in Japanese Department in a university, never gets the subject on the language of Japanese comic books. They learn only standard Japanese (*hyōjun Nihongo*) which is used in textbooks with formal language.

Second, the manga translators are those who are unexposed to or even never experience life in Japanese youth society. Therefore, they do not monitor the development or trends on slang vocabulary commonly used in manga language. Eventually it results distortion on communicational constraint among the characters in manga, or inconsistency of discourse. For instance, a character that stammers does not stammer when it is translated into bahasa Indonesia. Harsh and informal utterances of a character are translated into formal and polite and it distorts the characteristics of a particular character.

There are also times when it is the facial expression of the character from the illustration which is translated, rather than the manga text, which the translator disregards. Mistranslation also happens in which the expression of a character is different from his/her utterances in the text.

*Manga readers and Japanese study.* In Indonesia there are 51 state universities and 1164 private-owned universities. From those figures, there are 26 Departments of Japanese Study: there are 12 in State Universities and 14 in Private-owned universities. The number of lecturers of Japanese and Japanese studies according to the data in 2001 is 334 and the number of students is 4950. This study program includes 17 undergraduate programs and 9 diploma programs.<sup>8</sup>

Data from questionnaire shows that most students of Japanese Department are devoted manga readers and most of manga translators are graduates of Japanese Department. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum of Japanese Department in Indonesia only emphasizes the teaching of standard Japanese. Therefore, translation error is a reasonable consequence from the background of the translators' Japanese education. Thus, besides standard Japanese, manga language is necessary to be included in the curriculum of Japanese Department

The manga readers believe they get some knowledge regarding various things about Japan such as culture and youth lifestyle. Nevertheless, there are some things that need serious attention: Is it true that manga pass on the real Japanese culture? Is it true that the lifestyle of Japanese teenagers represented by the characters in manga reflects the real cultural and social phenomena of contemporary Japanese society? If it is true, then, through reading manga, manga mania will get the knowledge like what they expect. If it is not, reading manga will only distort their comprehension about the facts and the real

7 Translated manga which are chosen as data are (1) *Shoot Ao Meguriai*, vol. 1, (2) *Nanto Magoroku*, vol. 46, (3) *Kaze Hikaru*, vol. 12, (4) *Mou Hitorino Marionette*, vol. 6, (5) *Ninku*, vol. 4, (6) *Tonarino Scramble*, vol. 3, (7) *QED 1*, (8) *RSR*.

8 See my paper titled "Indonesia ni okeru Nihongo Kyōiku to sono Mondai," which was presented in the International Seminar *Vision and Experience Exchange of Japanese Language Teaching in ASIA*, organized by The Old Japan Students Association, Thailand (OSJAT), October 20–21, 2001, Grand Pacific Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

socio-cultural phenomena that develop in Japan nowadays. For this issue experts and the education institution on Japanese and Japanese studies in Indonesia have to observe and find the solution.

## Conclusion

Clearly the translation of Japanese comic books into Bahasa Indonesia had great impact on young Indonesians, especially the youth between secondary high school and the early years of university.

This research is still in progress, and all of the assumptions explained are still temporary. Based on tabulation of the data from my questionnaire I found that reading Japanese comic books is one of the favorite activities of Indonesian youth, and in many cases it has become habitual, or even a mania.

The impact of Japanese popular culture on Indonesian youth has increased as Japanese popular music, comic books and animation, fashion and TV programs concerning the life style of Japanese youth have been widely distributed. Most of the respondents in my survey indicated that they are attracted by the illustrations and the story of the Japanese comics they read, and they also get a lot of knowledge about culture and life-style of Japanese youth.

Most students of Departments of Japanese Language in Indonesian universities say they chose that department because they want to read Japanese comics in Japanese, not in Bahasa Indonesia translation. For this reason, the correlation between reading Japanese Comic books and their major in university has a significant meaning for their choice.

It must be said, however, that there are many faults, inaccuracies, and mistranslations in the Indonesian versions of the comics, and bad translation has a significant impact on the stories and also leads to misinterpretations of Japanese culture and society.

Students of the Japanese language department—especially students of Japanese comics mania—in my class, for example, sometimes misunderstand my lectures, but sometimes they have knowledge concerning Japanese society today, even if it is not so deep and comprehensive. My research shows that it is indeed possible to gain some understanding Japanese culture and society through reading comics. Manga are tools that provide a stimulus, and they can be used as educational materials in cultural and social studies. It can be assumed that the more Indonesian youth become “friendly” with Japanese daily culture and life, the better the chances for good relationships between Japan and Indonesia.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1: What kind of media do you prefer? (%)**

Media	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Comics	162 (64.28)	77 (76.23)	64 (68.08)	46 (46.00)	70 (72.16)	58 (65.90)	477 (65.16)
Magazines	151 (59.92)	67 (66.33)	64 (68.08)	41 (41.00)	43 (44.32)	51 (57.95)	417 (56.96)
Tabloids	64 (25.39)	24 (23.76)	32 (34.04)	14 (14.00)	18 (18.55)	26 (29.54)	178 (24.34)
Newspapers	46 (18.28)	28 (27.72)	41 (43.61)	31 (31.00)	17 (17.52)	18 (20.45)	181 (24.72)
Science books	60 (23.80)	29 (28.71)	13 (14.77)		19 (19.58)	13 (14.77)	188 (25.68)
Others	37 (14.68)	11 (10.89)	27 (28.72)	14 (14.00)	10 (10.30)	7 (07.95)	106 (14.48)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 2: On what occasions do you read comics? (%)**

Time to read	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Free time	117 (46.42)	40 (39.60)	59 (62.76)	60 (60.00)	60 (61.85)	55 (62.50)	391 (53.41)
Anytime	98 (38.88)	64 (63.36)	42 (44.68)	33 (33.00)	35 (36.02)	33 (37.50)	207 (28.27)
Holidays	9 (3.57)	5 (04.95)	7 (7.44)	2 (2.00)	1 (1.03)	5 (5.68)	29 (3.96)
Weekend	7 (2.77)	3 (02.97)	13 (13.82)	4 (4.00)	0 (0.00)	5 (5.68)	32 (4.37)
Others	9 (3.57)	2 (01.98)	8 (8.51)	7 (7.00)	5 (5.15)	9 (10.22)	40 (5.46)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 3: Where do your favorite comics come from? (Country of origin) (%)**

Country	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Japan	237 (94.04)	95 (94.05)	85 (90.42)	92 (92.00)	91 (93.81)	41 (46.59)	576 (78.68)
USA	21 (8.33))	5 (4.95)	9 (9.57)	4 (4.00)	2 (2.06)	5 (5.68)	46 (6.25)
Korea	10 (3.96)	5 (4.95)	5 (5.31)	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	21 (2.86)
China	4 (1.58)	5 (4.95)	3 (3.19)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (2.27)	14 (1.91)
Indonesia			3 (1.19)	10 (9.90)	8 (8.24)	5 (5.68)	101 (13.79)
UK	2 (0.79)	0 (0.00)	4 (4.25)	2 (2.00)	3 (3.06)	1 (1.13)	12 (1.63)
France	1 (0.39)	0 (0.00)	3 (3.19)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	4 (0.54)
Others	0 (0.00)	3 (2.97)	3 (3.19)	1 (1.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (0.95)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 4: In what language do you read comics? (%)**

Language	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Native	37 (14.68)	13 (12.87)	7 (7.44)	12 (12.00)	14 (14.43)	12 (13.63)	95 (12.97)
Translations	215 (85.31)	91 (90.09)	83 (88.29)	83 (83.00)	86 (88.65)	76 (86.36)	634 (86.61)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 5: What is the theme of your favorite *manga* (Japanese comics)? (%)**

Theme	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Love story	131 (51.98)	60 (59.40)	50 (53.19)	40 (40.00)	50 (51.54)	54 (61.36)	385 (52.59)
Detective	102 (40.47)	62 (61.38)	58 (61.70)	38 (38.00)	30 (30.92)	29 (32.95)	319 (43.57)
Adventure	88 (34.92)	50 (51.54)	31 (32.97)	26 (26.00)	26 (26.80)	34 (38.63)	263 (35.92)
Mystery	72 (28.57)	40 (39.60)	32 (34.04)	25 (25.00)	27 (27.83)	20 (22.72)	216 (29.50)
Sport	41 (16.26)	26 (25.74)	21 (22.34)	8 (8.00)	5 (5.15)	6 (6.81)	107 (14.61)
Children	36 (14.28)	30 (29.70)	30 (31.91)	12 (12.00)	28 (28.86)	17 (19.31)	153 (20.90)
Science fiction	18 (7.41)	11 (11.34)	11 (11.70)	3 (3.00)	4 (4.12)	11 (12.50)	58 (7.92)
Others	19 (7.53)	0 (0.00)	7 (7.44)	7 (7.00)	2 (2.06)	0 (0.00)	35 (4.78)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 6: What is interesting in Japanese comics? (%)**

Item of interest	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Illustration	162 (64.28)	69 (68.31)	75 (82.97)	51 (51.00)	47 (48.45)	57 (64.72)	471 (64.34)
Story	101 (43.65)	66 (65.34)	41 (43.61)	27 (27.00)	59 (60.82)	49 (55.68)	343 (46.85)
Theme	89 (35.37)	61 (60.39)	49 (52.12)	36 (36.00)	29 (29.89)	34 (38.63)	298 (40.71)
Language	20 (7.92)	15 (14.85)	15 (15.95)	5 (5.00)	8 (8.24)	8 (09.09)	71 (9.69)
Others	7 (2.77)	3 (2.97)	8 (8.51)	2 (2.00)	1 (1.03)	2 (2.27)	23 (3.14)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 7: How many comics do you read every month? (%)**

Numbers	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
1-5	132 (52.38)	53 (52.47)	47 (50.00)	71 (71.00)	39 (40.20)	41 (46.59)	385 (52.59)
6-10	41 (16.26)	20 (19.80)	20 (21.27)	13 (13.00)	22 (22.68)	17 (19.31)	133 (18.16)
11-20	34 (13.49)	15 (14.85)	12 (12.76)	6 (6.00)	15 (15.46)	9 (10.22)	91 (12.43)
21-30	11 (1.98)	4 (3.96)	7 (7.44)	0 (0.00)	5 (5.15)	5 (5.68)	32 (4.37)
31-40	7 (2.77)	4 (3.96)	4 (3.96)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.03)	2 (2.00)	15 (4.03)
41-50	3 (1.19)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.99)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.03)	0 (0.00)	5 (0.68)
>50	24 (9.52)	5 (4.95)	7 (7.44)	0 (0.00)	10 (10.20)	13 (14.77)	56 (7.65)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 8: How many rupiahs do you spend for comics? (%)**

In rupiahs	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakarta	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
<50.000	182 (72.22)	82 (81.18)	72 (76.59)	61 (61.00)	72 (74.22)	83 (94.31)	552 (75.40)
<100.000	41 (16.26)	12 (11.88)	3 (3.19)	6 (6.00)	12 (12.37)	2 (2.27)	76 (10.38)
>100.000	8 (3.17)	2 (1.98)	0 (0.00)	2 (2.00)	2 (2.06)	2 (2.27)	16 (2.18)
No answer	21 (8.33)	5 (4.95)	19 (20.21)	31 (31.00)	11 (11.34)	1 (1.13)	87 (11.88)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Table 9: What is your expectation in reading comics? (%)**

Expectation	Jakarta	Bandung	Yogyakar	Surabaya	Denpasar	Padang	Total
Entertainment	107 (42.46)	36 (35.64)	55 (58.51)	32 (32.00)	41 (42.26)	21 (23.86)	292 (39.89)
Culture/lifestyle	82 (32.52)	24 (23.76)	31 (32.97)	30 (30.00)	32 (32.98)	19 (21.59)	218 (29.78)
Knowledge	48 (19.04)	33 (32.67)	23 (24.46)	28 (28.00)	31 (31.95)	38 (43.18)	201 (27.45)
Others	8 (3.17)	12 (11.88)	4 (4.25)	10 (10.00)	3 (3.09)	10 (11.36)	47 (6.42)
Total rspdt	252 (100)	101 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)	88 (100)	732 (100)

**Notes: Entertainment:** good illustration, funny behavior, fun and light dialog

**Culture/life-style:** popular culture transmitted into comics

**Knowledge:** information about Japanese culture, history, society