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# Towards a Graphical Representation of Japanese Society in the Taishō Period: *Jiji* Manga in *Shinseinen*

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Throughout Japan's period of modernization, graphic art in its varied manifestations played a critical role in enlivening the narration of Japanese history. In comparison to the global popularity of contemporary manga, the Taishō period had its own graphic mode known as *jiji* manga (satirical social cartoons), which drew on the pop-cultural legacy of Kitazawa Rakuten, Okamoto Ippei and Shimokawa Ōten. Influenced by these superstars of graphic art at the time, many magazines and journals began to espouse graphic literacy by means of satirical socio-political cartoons in order to attract a broader readership. This examination of the graphical representation of Taishō history and society focuses specifically on the first six examples of *jiji* manga published after the inauguration of *Shinseinen* in monthly instalments from January to June 1920. The discussion of *Shinseinen* is usually limited to its pioneering work in the genre of *tantei shōsetsu* (detective novel), but as the following examination of the journal's graphic material reveals, it also functioned as a vehicle for the propagation of a variety of sometimes conflicting discursive formations, such as imperialism vis-à-vis Taishō modernism and militarism versus democracy. Drawn by the relatively unknown artist Tsutsumi Kanzō, the *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* contain important contextual information about one of the most controversial periods of Japanese history, where a staggering variety of trans-cultural modes of representation clashed to reveal a composite picture of modernity.

**Keywords**: Graphic art グラフィック芸術, *jiji* manga 時事漫画, Taishō 大正, *Shinseinen* 新青年, Tsutsumi Kanzō 堤寒三, Kitazawa Rakuten 北澤楽天, Okamoto Ippei 岡本一平, Shimokawa Ōten 下川凹天, militarism 軍国主義, democracy 民主主義

> The early history of Japanese cartoon journalism reflects the internalization of imperialism in the social field.[1]

## Introduction

With the above citation, Han Jung-Sun explains how through the introduction of Western style cartoons the imperialist gaze of the Western powers was also transplanted to Japanese society. Han's theory of political cartoons asserts that during the culturally vibrant period following World War I in Japan, political cartoons played the role of criticizing government while diffusing the ideas of liberty and rights, but also were instrumental in grafting the Western imperialist gaze onto the Japanese consciousness. Han's analysis of cartoons pertains to the colonization of Korea, but Dower comes to a similar conclusion about the potential of political cartoons during the Asia-Pacific conflict to convey an agenda by means of symbolical representation. Dower suggests that the ideological hijacking of cartoons for the purpose of propaganda was evident in the socio-political discourse of both the United States as well as Japan.[2]

In the light of Japan's transition to ultra-nationalism and her gradual colonization of Asia, *Shinseinen* 新青年, the magazine under consideration here, was a preeminent urbane magazine that espoused the rejuvenating zeitgeist of Japan's Taishō modernism from its inauguration in 1920 until the 1930s, when, swept up in the Japanese ultranationalist discourse, it contributed propaganda to the empire's military expansion in Asia. The magazine continued publication until 1950, and its fluctuating ideological content serves as a valuable indicator of Japan's socio-cultural status quo throughout the Asia-Pacific War. During its early modernist phase, *Shinseinen* also served as a rallying platform for a generation of sophisticated intellectual youth in Japan. It is also well known for introducing the genre of the detective novel into Japanese fiction, and for promoting such detective novelists as Edogawa Ranpo 江戸川乱歩 (1894–1965) and Yokomizo Seishi 横溝正史 (1902–1981).[3]

In addition, the magazine also nurtured nonconformist writers such as Hasegawa Kaitarō 長谷川海太郎 (1900–1935), Yumeno Kyūsaku 夢野久作 (1889–1936) and Hisao Jūran 久生十蘭 (1902–1957).[4] These writers in particular added to the diversification of Japanese literature by introducing cosmopolitan concepts and a sense of international exoticism, which they had acquired through their personal travels overseas. Yet, besides its role in establishing these well-known literary trends, *Shinseinen* also pioneered socio-political representation in graphic art. Indeed, from its inception in January 1920, the first

1 Han 2006, p. 301.
2 Dower 1986, pp. 77–87.
3 The legacy of these writers nurtured by *Shinseinen* is still evident today. For instance, the Yokomizo Seishi Prize is a literary award established in 1980 by the Kadokawa Shoten Publishing Company and the Tokyo Broadcasting System in Yokomizo's honor. It is awarded annually to a previously unpublished book-length mystery novel.
4 In combination, those three writers almost single handedly changed the literary landscape of Japanese fiction by pioneering such concepts as black humour in literature (Jūran) and introducing early examples of avant-garde gothic literature (Kyūsaku).

six monthly issues of *Shinseinen* featured a one page *jiji* manga 時事漫画.[5] After only half a year, however, the magazine changed unexpectedly to photographic materials, and the six examples of *jiji* manga remain as the only trace of political cartoons pertaining to Taishō democracy in the history of the magazine. The specific historical importance of these *jiji* manga lies in the fact that they reflect common concerns about major political and social events at the time. Yet, the difficulty of interpreting such cartoons is considerable. According to Ibaraki Masaharu 茨木正治, their symbolic representation of contemporary society necessitates a detailed reproduction of the social context.[6] Peter Burke indeed suggests that "context" is the key to reading cartoons as a type of visual text that can unlock their so-called "evidentiary contribution," or the subtext beyond the written word.[7] Only by carefully exposing the cultural and political dimensions underpinning the *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen*, can we deduce the extent to which they may serve as a barometer of cultural and political society in mid Taishō (1912–1926).

*Jiji* manga were early predecessors of today's political cartoons and allegorically portrayed the historical circumstances of their era. The following close examination of *jiji* manga in the first six issues of *Shinseinen* investigates the socio-political dimensions, which they reveal. What can these portraits of an imperialistic Asian nation tell us about a magazine hailed by literary critic Nakai Hideo as the torch bearer of *modanizumu* culture?[8] How does the discourse implicit in the political cartoons of *Shinseinen* impact on our assumptions of Taishō democracy?[9] The eminent literary critic Katō Shūichi 加藤周一 long ago summed up the essence of one of the putatively most liberal periods in Japanese history:

> Despite universal male suffrage, cabinets of majority party leaders, and the important role of public opinion in political life, Taishō democracy in contrast with the Weimar Republic seriously challenged neither in action nor in ideas the basic legal structure of oligarchical powers which had operated and would continue to operate until 1945 under the cover of the absolute authority of the Emperor.[10]

In other words, Taishō idealism was only one dimension of a pluralist discourse that emerged in post-World War I Japanese society. In fact, Elise Tipton has pointed out that the asymmetry created by a party-dominated government vis-à-vis the military's policies of

5 *Jiji* manga refers to "cartoons depicting social circumstances" and the term is nowadays replaced by the more popular English equivalent 'cartoon.' Synonyms are *fūshi* manga 風刺漫画 (satirical cartoons) and *ponchi e* ポンチ絵 (satirical paintings). *Ponchi e* refers specifically to the cartoons created by the English artist and cartoonist, Charles Wirgman, who created *Japan Punch* in 1862, based on *Punch*, the famous British weekly magazine of humour and satire published from 1841 to 1992. *Jiji* manga are generally associated with the regular Sunday manga supplement inaugurated by the *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報 in 1921.

6 Ibaraki 2007, pp. 229–230.

7 Burke 2001, pp. 9–15.

8 Ōmori 2003, p. 51 who is quoting source in Nakai Hideo. "Otoko tachi o toriko ni shita *Shinseinen*" 男達を虜にした新青年. *Burutasu* ブルータス, no. 2, 1980, pp. 98–104.

9 For research that discusses liberal aspects of Taishō democracy in the sense that it favoured political or social views of reform and progress, see for example, Minichiello (1998, p. 12), who wrote: "In many ways, Taishō culture resembled that of Europe during *la belle époque* (the beautiful era), which flourished from the middle of the 1890s until the Great War." See also Wada-Marciano's (2008, p. 85) exploration of 1920s films, which outlines the ideological acceptance of Western liberalism and Japan's resulting feeling of inadequacy.

10 Katō 1974, pp. 225–226.

aggressive foreign expansion may even suggest that Taishō democracy was more myth than fact.[11] Similarly, Suzuki Sadami 鈴木貞美 has identified the emergence of what he calls *seimei shugi* 生命主義 or "vitalism" in Taishō. It is an amalgam of thought and artistic method that combines Eastern and Western attributes.[12] He locates the origins of this trend in the crisis of everyday living brought on by the Russo-Japanese War and the resulting rapid development of an industrialized civilization coupled with sprawling urbanization. A close examination of the social milieu depicted in the *jiji* manga of *Shinseinen* certainly reveals the prevalent nationalism that would propel Japan to increase its military involvement in Asia. *Jiji* manga or "cartoons about current affairs" were in the 1920s a relatively popular graphic media used for expressing socio-political caricatures in a prescient way. *Shinseinen*'s inaugural issue featured a *jiji* manga in the first few pages tucked away in-between advertising material. This was followed by five more issues with conspicuously socio-political content incorporated as single page satirical sketches. The *Shinseinen jiji* manga closely follow the satirical tradition of *Tokyo Puck* 東京パック, but are characterized by the propagation of the slogan *fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵 (enrich the country, strengthen the military), which reflected the changing circumstances of colonial Japan in a global context.[13] As a precursor of today's political cartoon, they were by no means limited to domestic issues in Japan but depicted Japan's status in the Asia-Pacific region.

The global concerns hidden in the allegorical penumbra of the *jiji* manga provide further evidence of the pluralism of Taishō democracy. As exemplified by the discussion of the cartoons below, the crucible of Taishō Japan contained many elements incongruous at first glance. Take, for example, Andrew Gordon's apparently contradictory notion of the period as manifesting a kind of "imperial democracy," which conveys the period's ideological belief that loyalty to a monarch and the pursuit of empire were compatible with the belief in a more democratic political order.[14]

On the opposite pole of the interpretative spectrum is the idea of Taishō Japan as a marketing term for the commencement of Japan's descent into what Takeyama Michio has described as "Japan's thirty years of travail."[15] Takeyama suggests that the traditional interpretation of the Greater East Asian War as Japan's fifteen year war, which is usually traced back to the Manchurian Incident of 1931, is not sufficient and that the descent towards militarism began during the 1920s and Japan's relatively brief and limited flirtation with Marxism. He identifies the primary cause of Japan's descent into the metaphorical "dark valley" of the Asia-Pacific War, as arising from the Communist threat rather than the presumption of domestic ultra-nationalism. This thesis is supported to some extent in the six *jiji* manga from *Shinseinen*, which depict Communism as the motivation behind Japan's policy of territorial expansion.

The symbolism and allegorical references in the *jiji* manga paint a picture of an entirely different, more unsettling and insecure Japan that destabilises the well-established pacifist connotations of this period. In an essay entitled "Taishō Democracy as the Pre-Stage for Japanese Militarism," Katō Shūichi similarly proposed more than a generation ago that "it

11 Tipton 2002, p. 91.
12 Suzuki 2002, p. 187.
13 For a detailed comparison, see for example the reprint of *Tokyo Puck* in Shimizu 1986.
14 Gordon 2003, pp. 161–2.
15 See Richard Minear's translation of Takeyama Michio 2007, pp. 173, 186.

was in the liberal 1920s, not in the militaristic 1930s, that the vicious circle of Japanese foreign policy started."[16] These supposedly new progressive trends of the 1920s were closely linked to Japan's industrial expansion, which arose from the international situation after World War I. Japan's status as a global power was enhanced, on the one hand, by the retreat of the European colonial powers from Asia in combination with Japan's entry into the League of Nations and, on the other hand, by the repercussions of the October Revolution in Russia, which marked the demise of the Russian Empire and its transformation into the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in the supposedly liberal environment of Taishō democracy, it is somewhat surprising for the first issue (January 1920) of the new *Shinseinen* to contain articles like "Sekai no owari" 世界の終わり(The End of the World), "Tsugi no sensō" 次の戦争 (The Next War) and "Sekai seisaku to Nichibei no shōtotsu" 世界政策と日米の衝突 (World Policy and the Collision of America and Japan ), all topped off with the first installment of a serialized long novel entitled *Nichibei sensō miraiki* 日米戦争未来記 (Chronicle of a Future War between America and Japan). These were apocalyptical premonitions that saw no possibility of a peaceful and harmonious Taishō period. The first issue of *Shinseinen* is striking precisely because it highlights the tension between Japan's appearance on the international stage due to large territorial gains in the aftermath of World War I and the accompanying increase in international exposure of Japan as Asia's first colonial power.

## Towards a New Mode of Socio-political Representation in Graphic Art: *Jiji* Manga in *Shinseinen*

The global rise of Japan was accompanied by a domestic crisis of artistic expression, triggered by the socialist repercussions of the Russian Revolution of February 1917. In terms of graphic art, Shimizu Isao 清水勲 has suggested that the Taishō period (he uses the cliché of Taishō democracy) might be characterized as a visual age wherein socially cognizant manga were created in response to specific historical incidents. Shimizu outlines the dramatic methodological changes occurring in this period as follows:

> Following the High Treason Incident at the end of the Meiji era, the freedom of the press entered a period when political and social caricatures were replaced by a paradigm of human satire that created a new style of manga.[17] However, once Taishō democracy gained momentum the world of manga once again revitalized and gave birth to story-manga that focused on children and proletarian motifs.[18]

By the time satirical depictions picked up again later on in the Taishō period, the newspaper reading public had increased dramatically due to the urban industrial middle-class spawned by the opportunities afforded by World War I. This conspicuous change in readership potential eventually led to a rapid increase in newspaper publications. As a result,

16 Katō 1974, p. 220.
17 The High Treason Incident was a socialist-anarchist plot to assassinate Emperor Meiji in 1910. It led to indiscriminate persecution of suspects, large-scale arrests of supposed leftists, and most conspicuously the swift execution of twelve alleged conspirators in 1911.
18 Shimizu 1999, p. 6.

there was fierce market-driven competition between newspaper companies to attract a share of the new urban readership. Success in the market place demanded innovation, and many newspapers and magazines chose manga. It was in response to the dramatic increase in social mobility that Japan's five great newspapers—with circulations of between 200,000 and 400,000—all decided to use special graphic supplements to increase their circulation.[19]

According to Shimizu Isao, the roots of the contemporary story-manga are to be found in these newspaper and journal manga, which proliferated after World War I due to developments in mass production and mass communication before finding their full potential among the middle classes emerging in the Taishō period. *Jiji* manga had in fact already made an appearance as early as the Meiji period in *Marumaru chinbun* 團團珍聞, which had published them as supplements at irregular intervals and on such special occasions as New Year.[20] However, it is commonly accepted that the first regular manga supplement, published every Sunday as a special service to its readers, was inaugurated in 11 February 1921 by *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報.[21] In fact, however, *Shinseinen* preceded this trend, but it was not until issue number five (in May 1920) that the title was changed to include the words *jiji* manga in brackets.

The *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* were drawn by Tsutsumi Mikizō 堤幹蔵 (1895–1972), whose professional name was Tsutsumi Kanzō 堤寒三.[22] Kanzō worked as a manga *kisha* (graphic reporter) for *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun*, *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 as well as *Asahi shinbun,* and he specialized in *jiji* manga. He also contributed to a variety of graphic magazines that played a pivotal role in the dissemination of information about Japan, including *Gekkan manga man* 月刊マ

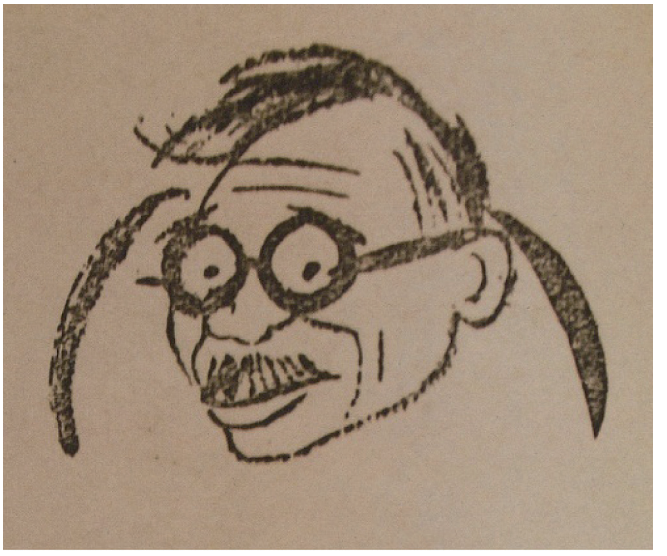

Figure 1. A rare self-portrait of Tsutsumi Kanzō published in *Manga nenkan* 漫画年鑑 (The Manga Almanac) by the Shin Manga-ha Shūdan 新漫画派集団 in 1933.

19 They were *Hōchi shinbun* 報知新聞, *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報, *Kokumin shinbun* 國民新聞, *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞, and *Tōkyō nichinichi shinbun* 東京日日新聞.

20 *Marumaru chinbun* was a satirical current affairs weekly magazine published from 1877 to 1907. During a time when the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動) was active, the magazine's biting social criticism played an important supportive function.

21 It was for many years one of Japan's most influential newspapers and served as a training ground for many liberal politicians and journalists.

22 Some doubt remains about the involvement of Tsutsumi Kanzō because sometimes the cartoons are either not labeled at all, or at other times they are signed "Ryū." See, for example, "Shiberia teppei mondai" シベリア撤兵問題, *Shinseinen*, March 1920.

ンガ・マン,[23] *Jūsannin* 十三人[24] and, notably, the overseas supplement of *Bungei shunjū* 文藝春秋 entitled *Japan To-day*.[25] Kanzō participated in a variety of manga organizations that were influential at the time, including the Shin Nihon Mangaka Kyōkai 新日本漫画家協会（Association for New Japanese Manga Artists）and its government-sponsored flagship magazine *Manga* 漫画,[26] the Shin Manga-ha Shūdan 新漫画派集団（Group of New Manga Artists）formed in 1932, and the Shin'ei Manga Gurūpu 新鋭マンガグループ（Novel Manga Group）formed in 1933. His widespread participation made Kanzō a member of an exclusive graphic coterie that redefined the status of graphic aesthetics in Japan.

In 1937, Kanzō founded the Hōkoku Manga Club 報国漫画倶楽部, which promoted manga as a vehicle for Japanese propaganda in Manchuria. Even though Kanzō's graphic work did clearly support Japanese imperialism, his early drawings in *Shinseinen* portray a surprisingly objective worldview. For instance, the parody of the Treaty of Versailles discussed below depicts a global, almost pacifist, outlook, whereas the February image entitled "Japan on the Road to Reorganization"（*Kaizō tojō no Nihon* 改造途上の日本), portrays a satirical, yet holistic image of the rival factions in Japanese society. One may discern here a certain cosmopolitanism that anticipates the later idealism of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. For instance, Kanzō's manga in *Shinseinen* were unusual examples of propaganda in Taishō popular cultural representation. He composed a series of innovative satirical cartoons for *Shinseinen*, which redrew the isolated archipelago of the Japanese nation in a global context. Kanzō utilized the satirical potential of *jiji* manga primarily to promote Japan's overseas military exploitations as an adventurous lifestyle to attract Japan's newly emerging urban youth and middle-class culture. His manga thus advocated the consumption of a hybrid discourse that combined imperialist expansion with popular culture. In the postwar period, Kanzō continued drawing political cartoons for the *Nishi Nihon shinbun* 西日本新聞.

However, Kanzō was not alone; he was indeed actively involved with the most influential graphic artists of his time specializing in satirical socio-political representation. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the unprecedented period of prosperity and cultural innovation, sandwiched between the social and political uncertainties that defined the early and mid Meiji periods and the militarism of ealry Shōwa, owed much to the dramatic changes in socio-political representation heralded by the emergence of 'graphic superstars' like Okamoto Ippei 岡本一平（1886–1948), Shimokawa Ōten 下川凹天（1892–1973), and Kitazawa Rakuten 北澤楽天（1876–1955).[27] The manga format used by these pioneers of

23 *Gekkan manga man* was a monthly magazine of the early Shōwa period published by Tokyo Manga Shinbunsha 東京漫画新聞社 from August 1, 1929. The magazine was well known, and had a significant impact on Japanese graphic artists because like *Asahi gurafu* アサヒグラフ and *Shinseinen* featured nonsense manga from the United States.

24 Published in 1919, this little known but influential literary magazine was led by Shimomura Chiaki 下村千秋 (1893–1955), and Kanzō was one of the thirteen people who made up the coterie that gave the journal its title.

25 For a complete collection and detailed examination of this multilingual overseas supplement, which was edited by Kikuchi Kan, see Suzuki 2011.

26 For examples and a treatise of this "government sponsored humor magazine," see Dower 1986, pp. 191–200, 210.

27 Kitazawa is regarded as the father of the modern manga because he coined the modern usage of the term "manga," and also establishment one of the first manga clubs (*Kōrakukai* 行楽会), which promoted young artists and taught them to draw manga in his own amalgam style—a combination of Western-style painting he had been taught by Australian born cartoonist Frank A. Nankivell, and *nihonga* 日本画 (Japanese-style paintings), which he learned from Inoue Shunzui 井上春水.

graphic art had already been in use since the Meiji period. Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉, for example, employed Kitazawa Rakuten in 1902 to create a single page manga supplement for his newspaper *Jiji shinpō*.[28] Kitazawa's genius speedily led to the increasing popularity of the single page *jiji* manga until, in 1921, the newspaper decided to produce a special four page Sunday supplement with the eponymous title. As the leading graphic newspaper artist of his time, Kitazawa's earlier work on political and social satire heavily influenced Kanzō, and both became responsible for the development of satirical manga in newspapers and journals specifically designed to attract Japan's growing urban middle-class.

Kanzō's style is quite similar to Kitazawa's invigorating graphic representation of cosmopolitan Japan in the Taishō period. Yet, Kitazawa's breakthrough came with the establishment of *Tokyo Puck*, where his modern transcultural manga style had been circulated in the full-colour magazine since 1905. Through their unique blend of the local with the international, both artists redefined the public iconography of the Taishō period. In many ways, Kanzō and Kitazawa's reimagining of Japan in a global context is later reiterated through Tezuka Osamu's 手塚治虫 development of postwar iconography, which combined American-style comic techniques with Japan's story manga tradition.[29] As these examples illustrate, major social upheavals are often followed by periods of heightened satirical representation in Japanese society. The work of artists like Kanzō, Kitazawa and Tezuka revolutionized the development of Japan's graphic tradition by amalgamating heterogeneous foreign styles with Japan's local aesthetic tradition. Kanzō's early *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* draw on the cosmopolitan motif developed by Kitazawa's socio-political discourse in *Tokyo Puck*.

## The First Issue of *Shinseinen* and the First *Jiji* Manga

Saitō Satomi has argued that the mission statement of *Shinseinen* was expressed through its title, and that the magazine essentially attempted to cultivate a stratum of "new [imperial] youths."[30] In the light of Japan's colonial successes, the magazine's initial editorial stance sought to impress upon the young imperial subjects the value of the colonial enterprise. *Shinseinen* was inaugurated during a time when the socio-economic background of its readership was fluctuating heavily. Ōmori Kyōko has observed that while the magazine was at first aimed primarily at youngsters in farming and fishing villages, it increasingly found a readership among urban youth.[31] As a result, it quickly became for young adult urbanites a leading disseminator of nationalism and colonial discourse.

In parallel with these dramatic social changes, the key political event coinciding with the inauguration of *Shinseinen* in January 1920 was the establishment of the League of Nations on 10 January 1920 and the Treaty of Versailles. This coincided with the first period of anti-communism, from 1917 to 1920, in the United States and Japan, and marked a phase of social radicalism which later became known as *akagari* 赤狩り (red scare). With the end of

28 As one of Japan's most influential political commentators during the Meiji period, Fukuzawa contributed to the efforts to reform Meiji Japan by institutionalizing Western media practices. He founded one of Japan's most influential newspapers *Jiji shinpō* in 1882, which developed into an important training ground for many liberal politicians and journalists.

29 In fact, Tezuka Osamu had been influenced by *Rakuten zenshū* 楽天全集 published before the outbreak of World War II. See, for example, Tezuka and Ishiko 1992, pp. 16–27.

30 Saitō 2007, pp. 27–28.

31 Ōmori 2009, p. 80.

World War I in November 1918, the industrialization and economic vitality generated by the Great War finally subsided in Japan, and by 1920 Japan's postwar financial panic (*sengo kyōkō* 戦後恐慌) had begun in earnest. On an economic level, also in 1920 the Hara Takashi 原敬 cabinet could no longer depend on floating new public loans to compensate for insufficient revenue caused by the economic stagnation.[32] The various opposition parties pursued the government over Korean rule, the dispatch of troops to Siberia and the Manchurian Railway Scandal (*Mantetsu gigoku* 満鉄疑獄). Apart from these domestic political turbulences, Japan also faced pressure on the international stage. At the Washington Conference, Great Britain, Japan, and France signed the Four Power Pact on 13 December 1921, which stipulated mutual respect for Pacific territories held by all signatories. But the agreements were too vaguely worded to have any binding effect, and their chief importance was that they abrogated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1911, which had been a principal means of maintaining the balance of power in East Asia. Japan in the 1920s experienced rapid urbanization, which resulted in the development of the aforementioned white-collar middle class that was enjoying an unprecedented level of prosperity.[33] It is this synchronicity between the domestic affluence on a national level that by-passed the working class, and the increasing instability of Japan's international position that is expressed through the media of *jiji* manga in the first issues of *Shinseinen*.


Figure 2. Title: "What kind of peace is this meant to be!" (*Nan no heiwa zo!* 何の平和ぞ).
Caption: The Five Great Powers (*Go dai koku*) in the so called Hall of Mirrors.[34] But look what's happening while they are celebrating with champagne with the Goddess of Peace …

32 Shimizu 1986, p. 6.
33 Tipton 2002, pp. 99–104.
34 The Hall of Mirrors or *Galerie des Glaces* refers, of course, to the central gallery of the Palace of Versailles chosen by the French Prime Minister Clemenceau for the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919.

This *jiji* manga appeared in the first issue of *Shiseinen* in January 1920 and satirises the socio-political milieu of the time.[35] On the left, clockwise from the right of the Goddess of Peace, the five great powers to emerge from World War I are standing around a table, raising a toast to the Goddess. They are represented by caricatures of the United States (Woodrow Wilson), Italy (Vittorio Emanuele Orlando), Japan (Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望),[36] France (Georges Clemenceau) and Great Britain (David Lloyd George). Other former stakeholders, including Germany, Austria and Russia (now isolated due to its Communist Revolution), can be seen squabbling around the table in a Japan-centric expression of the prevailing zeitgeist. On the periphery and surrounding the Great Powers of the time, the cartoon depicts clockwise from the upper left-hand corner Imperial Germany grabbing Poland by the throat while, just to the right, Japan pulls China's hair in a gesture of imperial aggression. Further to the right, radical factions are hitting the capitalists on the head while, below them, Greece and Turkey are engaging in a territorial sword fight. Further below, the British Empire is threatened by the Indian Tiger, and the Egyptian Crocodile.

These satirical depictions of the world in 1920 convey on the one hand the irony of the Paris Peace Conference at a time when the world at large was still engaged in territorial disputes, and on the other hand the frustration of the Japanese government towards its plenipotentiaries, Baron Makino Shinken 牧野伸顕 and Prince Saionji Kinmochi, who endorsed the Wilsonian ideal of international cooperation at Paris. In other words, Japan was at a crossroads with a choice between territorial expansion and alienating its allies and cooperating and working together for peace.[37] The international imperative combined with a number of serious domestic disputes, including the 1918 rice riots, high unemployment and a lack of housing for Japan's developing urban class. As a result, despite the still popular mythologies of Taishō democracy and Taishō vitalism, the allegorical *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* suggest a newly emerging Japanese worldview. It was one that shifted Japan's popular cultural imagination from an "insular cosmopolitanism," distanced from the rest of the world, to one that embraced the philosophy of modernity so repositioning Japan in a global context.

## Japan on the Road to Reorganization

Unlike the January political cartoon, the second cartoon, published in February 1920, depicts Japan's vacillating domestic circumstances through the major social groups swinging from a metaphorical maypole symbolizing the arrival of spring.

Clockwise from the right an unidentifiable figure is followed by a caricature of a Chinese with a bomb tied to his hair. Next in line is a drooling vagrant farmer, which could be a reference to the rice riots (*kome sōdō* 米騒動) of 1918. The rice riots brought about the collapse of the Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅 administration. Its aggressive foreign policy saw Japan join the Allies in the Siberian Intervention (1918–1922) in support of White Russian Forces against the Bolshevik Red Army. This is substantiated by the next two figures: a laborer (*rōdōsha* 労働者), identifiable by the patches on his pants, is kicking the capitalist (*shihonka* 資本家) in front of him, while the learned proletariat (*yūshiki musan* 有識無産) refuses to join the movement and

35 All six *jiji* manga discussed in this paper are reproduced with the kind permission of Hon no Tomosha 本の友社.
36 In 1919, Saionji led the Japanese delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, though his role was largely symbolic due to ill health.
37 Iriye 1974, p. 192.

clings fearfully to the maypole. Finally, the socialists are also swinging around in the Japanese political environment, with the military seen in miniature at the forefront.

The February *jiji* manga thus shifts the focus from international affairs to Japan's domestic stage. The title of this political cartoon, *Kaizō tojō no Nihon*, is indicative of Japanese social reorganization in the 1920s, which permeated all aspects of Japanese society. For example, in August 1918 rice riots broke out throughout the country. The increase in the price of rice came at the peak of a postwar inflationary spiral triggered by rapid growth during World War I, which also affected most consumer goods and rents; thus urban dwellers also had considerable grievances. The Siberian Intervention further inflamed the situation, with the government buying up existing rice stocks to support the troops overseas, which drove rice prices even higher. The government failed to intervene in economic affairs, and rural protests spread to the towns and cities. Some scholars, like Michael Smitka, have linked the rice riots to an increase in imperialism. Smitka argues that colonial rice production in Taiwan and Korea was intensified in order to alleviate the demand for rice, which exceeded the production capabilities of Japan at the time.[38] Furthermore, Ernest Best has indicated that during and after World War I the top 2% of Japanese society received 10% of the nation's total income, while 78% of the population (the farmers and working class) lived on one half of the national income.[39] As a direct result of the increase in social inequality, the Nihon Shakai Shugi Dōmei 日本社会主義同盟 (Japan Socialist League) emerged in 1921, only to be suppressed by the government in May of that year. This was followed in 1922 by the establishment of the Nihon Kyōsantō 日本共産党 (Japan Communist Party), which was formally dissolved in 1924. Note also that, although Japan had participated in negotiations at Versailles and won major concessions in the form of territories in China and the Pacific previously held

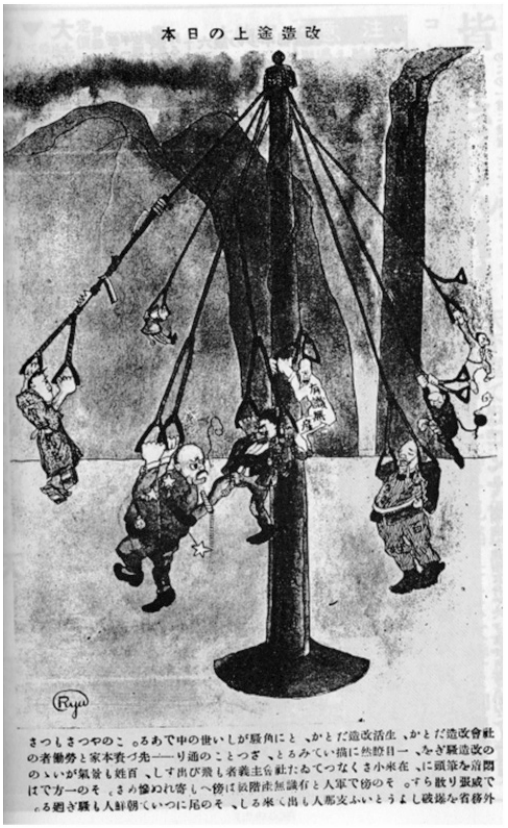


Figure 3. Title: "Japan on the Road to Reorganization" (*Kaizō tojō no Nihon* 改造途上の日本).
Caption: We talk about remodelling society and life, but we live in a tumultuous world. If we try to picture this tangle at a glance, it is approximately like this. The dispute between labourers and capitalists goes at the top of the list. Then the socialists, who are conventionally smaller, rush out and, because business is good, the farmers also throw their weight around. On the other side is the wretchedness of the soldiers and intellectual proletariat, who do not step aside either. Then the Chinese come along to try to blow up the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and at the tail end are the Koreans, also making a fuss.

38 Smitka 1998b, p. 192.
39 Best 1961, p. 24.

by Germany, Japan did not win a statement of racial equality with the West. The defeat of the "racial equality clause" arguably shaped Japan's turn from cooperation with the West toward more self-deterministic national policies.[40] As these dynamic political developments illustrate, Japan in the 1920s was a colonial power in a state of vacillating social flux that is not appropriately encapsulated by the term Taishō democracy. It is these uncertainties that were expressed clearly in the *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen*.

## The Problem of Troop Withdrawals from Siberia

*Shinseinen* continued publishing a conspicuous political one page cartoon under the rubric of *jiji* manga until June 1920, a total of six individual sketches, or one for each monthly magazine in its first half year. This graphic social commentary then unexpectedly disappeared. From the seventh issue in July 1920, cartoons were replaced by what were described as *jiji ga* 時事画 (current affairs illustrations), photographic collections presented on a double page spread. The first such photo montage in July 1920 was of sports images ranging from Japan's participation in the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp to the university baseball series in Japan. This was a sudden and radical change in editorial policy, and one can only speculate on the reason for the demise of the political cartoon. Yet, the fact that only six political cartoons remain in *Shinseinen* as a pictorial representation of 1920s' Japan makes them remarkable. They constitute allegorical representations of Japan that undermine the stereotypical perception of an overarching Taishō democracy as the dominant zeitgeist of the period. As these cartoons make clear, radical right wing elements in the Japanese oligarchy remained from the Meiji period, and were opposed to the prevalent Wilsonian idealism. The war in Europe had been very profitable to the Japanese economy, and the resulting European withdrawal from Asia meant that Japan's colonialism was unrivalled except by the presence of America. There was, however, considerable disagreement between the Japanese contingent to the Paris Peace Conference, which endorsed the Treaty of Versailles (ironically without the United States joining the League of Nations), and the Hara cabinet, which had difficulty accepting the rejection of the "racial equality clause," and was unhappy about the distribution of former German territories.[41]

That 1920 was a difficult year for Japanese international diplomacy is reflected quite clearly in the symbolism of the political cartoons in *Shinseinen*. The third cartoon, published in March 1920, depicts a Japanese Momotarō figure wrestling with a Russian (Siberian) soldier. The archetypal Japanese folk hero Momotarō, who went out into the world to free Japan from foreign, marauding devils (*oni* 鬼), was a popular symbol at the time. Momotarō featured in *Tokyo Puck* to depict Japan battling overseas, and would be deployed substantially during the Pacific War as well.[42] *Shiberia teppei mondai* シベリア撤兵問題 (The Problem of Troop Withdrawals from Siberia) is the title of the third cartoon to appear in *Shinseinen*, and it shows the United States abandoning Japan to wrestle alone with the situation.

40 It was primarily the Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes's campaigning, based on the then-current White Australia Policy, for the rejection of the racial-equality clause that led to the dismissal of Japan's demand. An intriguing "what-if": could the White Australia Policy (and, by extension, British colonialism) be blamed for the outbreak of the Pacific War? What would have happened had Japan's racial-equality clause been accepted? See, for example, Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2001.

41 Duus 1968, pp. 105–8.

42 Dower 1986, pp. 251–257.


Figure 4. Title: "The Problem of Troop Withdrawals from Siberia" (*Shiberia teppei mondai* シベリア撤兵問題 ). Caption: No matter how long you have gotten on well together making strict promises, America has now changed its mind and withdrawn, leaving Japan behind alone. It's not that we want to slander anybody in particular, but aren't the Americans thinking: "It would suit us better to just obtain the reward without going to the trouble of staying for a long time?" They are a disgrace to the samurai.

This cartoon deals specifically with the Siberian Intervention. The dialogue on the left-hand side reveals disappointment about the withdrawal of the Allies from Siberia, once they had reached their target, that is, the rescue of the Czech Legion, which was used as a pretext for dispatching troops assisting the anti-Bolshevik faction after the Russian Revolution. The Siberian Intervention took place between 1918 and 1922 and revolved around the dispatch of troops by the Allies of World War I to the Russian Maritime Provinces, where the Imperial Japanese Army continued to occupy Siberia even after other Allied forces had withdrawn in 1920. Japan's prolonged stay in Russia was subsequently regarded with suspicion by the Allies, but the cartoon expresses Japan's discontent at being left behind to fight alone, while its allies withdrew from the volatile situation.

In July 1918, President Wilson had asked the Japanese government to supply 7,000 troops as part of an international coalition of 25,000 troops, including an American expeditionary force, to support the rescue of the Czech Legion and secure wartime supplies. Japan had at first been reluctant to send troops to Siberia. However, after careful deliberation, the Japanese army saw military intervention as an opportunity to free Japan from any future threat from Russia by detaching Siberia and forming an independent buffer state. After heated debate in the Diet, the administration of Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake agreed to send 12,000 troops who were, however, to remain under the command of Japan, rather than be part of an international coalition. This number eventually swelled to over 70,000 and, as depicted in the cartoon, in

June 1920 the Americans, British and the remaining allied coalition partners withdrew from Vladivostok. The Japanese, however, decided to stay, primarily due to fears of the spread of Communism so close to Japan and the Japanese-occupied territories of Korea and Manchuria. After the defeat of the White Russians, Japan signed the Gongota Agreement in 1920 in order to evacuate her troops peacefully from the region. The bitter disappointment and accusations expressed in the cartoon concern the United States' suspicion that the continued Japanese presence in Siberia meant that Japan had its own territorial designs. Subjected to intense diplomatic pressure from the United States and Great Britain, and facing increasing domestic opposition on account of the economic and human cost, the administration of Prime Minister Katō Tomosaburō 加藤友三郎 (1861–1923) withdrew the Japanese forces in October 1922.


Figure 5. Title: "Dangerous Ideological Bugs" (*Kiken shisō to iu mushi* 危険思想という虫).
Caption: As the war ends, various mysterious bugs slowly come crawling out. All of them look quite dangerous, and whenever they see them government officials shudder with fear and busily spray disinfectant to repel them. In the end, they are thoroughly troubled…

## Dangerous Ideologies

The graphic trope of anthropomorphism enjoys a rich tradition in Japanese mythology. The vivid depiction of human "ideologies" as bugs approaching the Japanese mainland in the fourth *jiji* manga of the series recalls the Japanese tradition of *bakemono* 化物, readily found in the visual arts.[43] In the foreground of the picture, the Japanese government—seen wearing military uniforms—is depicted in April 1920 desperately trying to prevent the landing in Japan of the rogue "ideologies" emanating from the demise in Asia of Western colonial powers. Their concerns were not entirely misplaced. With the world in the grip of war, Communism began attracting large numbers following the success of the October Revolution in 1917, which abolished the monarchy in Russia. World War I ended with the signing of the

43 Often translated as "beasts" or "ghosts" these supernatural beings belong to the Japanese folkloric tradition of *yōkai* 妖怪, or beings that have the ability to shift shape.

Armistice on 11 November 1918, but the left wing Marxist revolutionary movement known as the Spartacist League attempted a revolution in Germany. In China, the anti-imperialist cultural and political May Fourth Movement erupted in Beijing on 4 May 1919, as a protest against the Chinese government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, by the terms of which all Germany's former territories in China were ceded to Japan.[44] Finally, the 1920s also saw in Europe and elsewhere the rise of the far right and fascism, which was perceived as a solution to the spread of Communism. The *jiji* manga in April portrayed the desperate attempt by the fledgling colonial power of Japan to curtail the rise of foreign ideology at home and in its occupied territories.


Figure 6. Title: "Mischief Makers and Cowards" (*Itazura mono to okubyō mono* 悪戯者と臆病者). Caption: There is a time and place for everything, but we do not understand the motivation of guys who commit such cheap tricks. And yet isn't it much more cowardly to scream about such trifling things as a wooden doll?

## Mischief Makers and Cowards

Unlike the previous *jiji* manga, which cites external socio-political circumstances and ideological issues, the fifth *jiji* manga in the series criticises Japan's timidity in the face of opposition to its territorial expansion into Russia. The metaphorical wooden doll symbolizes China as the innocuous sleeping giant. Much more dangerous than China, however, are the stratagems of the colonial powers, trying to out manoeuvre each other for territorial possessions. This *jiji* manga is difficult to interpret since it seems to criticize both a timid Japan—depicted by the scared character in wooden clogs on the left—and the sneaky way Uncle Sam hides behind Japan's enemies on the far right. The figure in the centre with the dragon motif holding a gun depicts China. Just behind China is the figure of a Korean wearing a

44 For a detailed analysis of the relationship between the May Fourth Incident and China's own version of the *Shinseinen* magazine, see Rosenbaum 2008, pp. 3–6.

traditional *yangban* long white tunic and distinctive 'gat' hat. This motif was a common way to symbolize Korea in political cartoons, dating back to at least the 1880s in *Marumaru chinbun* and was also frequently used in *Tokyo Puck*.[45] The Korean with a bomb probably represents unrest and independence movements that arose throughout the period of Japanese rule; he also highlights the rise of Korean national aspirations in 1920. For instance, widespread demonstrations for Korean independence were followed by the establishment of several newspapers such as the *Donga Ilbo* (East Asia Daily), the *Chosŏn Ilbo* (Korea Daily), and the *Kaebyok* (Creation) journal that became the arena for debates about a unique Korean racial identity in 1920.[46] May 1920 was also the inauguration date of the Korean People's Socialist Party founded by Yi Tonghwi following his move to Shanghai to live in exile.[47] Finally, the dark figure holding a kind of sword next to the White Russian is symbolic of Bolsheviks, who were also fighting for control over the country.

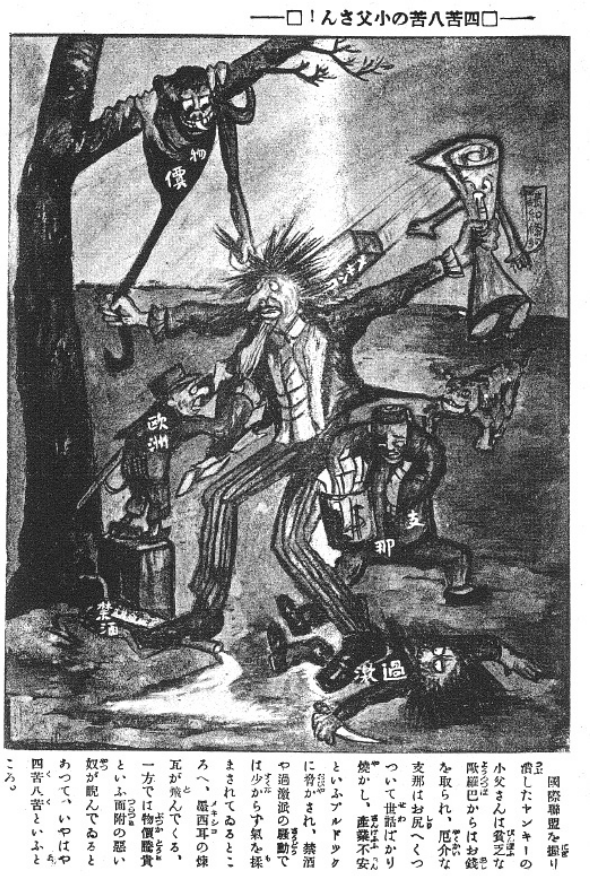


Figure 7. Title: "Uncle in Dire Distress" (*Shiku hakku no ojisan* 四苦八苦の小父さん).
Caption: Old Man Yankee has crushed the League of Nations, but is losing his balance and has his money taken by a hard-up Europe; troublesome China is stuck at his back and meddles in his affairs. He is frightened by the industrial insecurity of the bulldog, and just when he is a little anxious about the disturbances caused by alcohol prohibition and extremists, Mexico is throwing a brick. To make matters worse, he is also confronted by the threat of rising prices. Oh, no! What a struggle.

Behind the back of Japan's regional adversaries, the figure of a small-statured America cowers, waiting to seize future possibilities. The setting portrays the Japanese intervention in Far East Russia from just after the Russian Revolution in 1917 to Japanese withdrawal in 1922.

45 See Duus 1995, pp. 16, 242–244. I am indebted to an anonymous referee for identifying the significance of the Korean figure in this cartoon.
46 McNamara 2006, p. 20.
47 Pratt 1999, p. 243.

## Uncle in Dire Distress

In stark contrast to the caricature of Japan in May, the June edition shifts the focus to the international predicament of Uncle Sam. In this example of national personification, America's transnational struggle as a nascent international power broker is depicted as opposing Japanese interests. Europe is tugging at Uncle Sam's waistcoat, signifying that towards the end of World War I, even though Wilson's famous Fourteen Points established the base line for peace in Europe, America did not endorse the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson was a Democrat and the Republicans, who held the majority in Congress in the autumn of 1918, opposed Wilson's involvement in Europe. Congress refused to endorse his participation, thus preventing American participation in the League. Busy with European affairs in front of him, Uncle Sam is attacked by Mexico from behind. Mexico is depicted as an animated document with the words *kōwa jōyaku* 講和条約 (peace treaty), symbolizing the precarious position on the US-Mexico border due to US intervention in the Mexican revolution and the border attacks by Pancho Villa that followed.[48] As if Mexico and Europe were not enough trouble for the great power, China, which did not sign the Treaty of Versailles either, is depicted behind Uncle Sam consuming funds while the British bulldog tugs on his waistcoat. Further adding to the woes of the US, at its feet are radical elements and the new prohibition laws, while inflation is tugging at its hair. This final *jiji* manga in the series portrays the precarious international situation of the United States and reflects her increasing confrontation with Japan.

Even though manga did not completely disappear from *Shinseinen* making infrequent appearances throughout the subsequent history of the journal, they were no longer *jiji* manga. Six years after the first six cartoons appeared in 1920, the magazine began publishing manga again with the remark that "manga are more interesting than photographs, and therefore we have borrowed some from overseas magazines."[49] The implication is that photographs were not as popular as manga, with their potential for allegory, satire, cynicism and humour. Be that as it may, graphic pictorials in later issues of *Shinseinen* appeared either as simple humorous manga or amusing illustrations taken from foreign magazines. However, they generally avoided difficult social and political contexts, unlike the first few *jiji* manga of the 1920s. Possible reasons for the demise of political manga include changes in editorial policy as well as a change in readership, but also the change in social climate which saw Japan slide further towards the cataclysm of the Asia-Pacific war.

## Conclusion

It is argued here that the politically and socially sensitive commentaries portrayed in the *jiji* manga of the first six issues of *Shinseinen* were an expression of the birth of the international conscience of the Japanese nation. Against the backdrop of the mythology of Taishō liberalism and democracy, the *jiji* manga perspicuously reflected the social and political concerns of Japan as it entered ever deeper into the complex global arena as an inexperienced colonial player. As such, these *jiji* manga also convey the tension between Japan's domestic liberal socio-political landscape and the colonial empire founded by its powerful

48 Martel 1994, pp.75–77.

49 This explanation is published in *Shinseinen*, 1926, August, no. 9, with the manga *Sosokkashii ya no kyōjuren* そそっかしい屋の教授連 (Thoughtless Group of Professors). See also *Shinseinen*, 1926, September, no. 11 and the manga *Massāji* マッサージ (The Massage), borrowed from a German magazine.

military. Most manga discussed above contextualized Japan's global position as quite similar to that of the United States with its growing international influence. The aspirations of both nations as world powers, both vying for territorial gains, led them on a collision course that would result in one of the most devastating conflicts of the twentieth century. The *Shinseinen jiji* manga's satirical depiction of this rivalry gave readers a political and social commentary on where Japan stood in the world, not just in relation to its Asian neighbours, but also in juxtaposition with the major world colonial powers at the time. The *jiji* manga thus positioned Japan in graphic terms in specific relation to the great powers, and helped stir an international consciousness beyond the narrow confines of the Asian continent. Tsutsumi Kanzō's illustrations of a globally engaged Japan demonstrate that the *Shinseinen* discourse was at odds with the growth of Taishō democracy and, indeed, promoted colonial expansion and Japanese military hegemony through the ideal of a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. *Jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* endeavoured, often in radically provocative ways, to awaken Japan from its parochialism and attempted to foster a new "international" consciousness by way of political, social and cultural satire. The *jiji* manga enabled *Shinseinen* to combine complex political and cultural tropes in a satirical context, which fulfilled the dual purpose of entertaining and educating its newly formed urban readership. That is, on the one hand the magazine provided amusement, while at the same time culturally and politically inculcating its readers with a colonial and imperial sense of values. *Shinseinen* cartoons dispel assumptions pertaining to the Taishō democracy paradigm and constitute evidence, rather, of the melting pot of vibrant pluralistic discourses available for consumption in 1920s Japan. Even though the rhetoric of the *jiji* manga displays Japan's early colonial successes as a visual spectacle, imbued with an overriding sense of cultural superiority, they also portray a self-reflective criticism that invalidates stereotypical interpretations. In this respect, the *jiji* manga in *Shinseinen* are similar to other graphic representations of the time such as the cosmopolitan cartoons found in *Tokyo Puck.* In sum, the six cartoons published in the conservative magazine *Shinseinen* favourably depict Japan's colonial expansion and imperial aspirations, and are indicative of Japan's mercurial socio-political landscape during the year 1920, when the nation found itself at the crossroads of newly emerging ideologies in the amphitheatre of global colonial competition.

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