

Critique of “*Manga Culture in Taiwan*”

John Tsuei’s paper “*Manga Culture in Taiwan*” provides an interesting overview of both the history of *manga* in Taiwan and the current scene. Tsuei does a good job of walking his readers through the different stages of the development of *manga* in Taiwan and does attempt to place the events within some historical context. He also presents the several aspects of Taiwan’s current *manga* culture clearly and provides readers with some interesting tidbits. However, his paper is not without its flaws.

Generally, Tsuei’s paper sometimes feels somewhat repetitive, especially when he is talking about Taiwan’s current *manga* culture. For example, the section on why *shōjo manga* was popular and prevalent despite its relatively poor sales felt a bit too long and it might have been helpful if he compressed some of the similar ideas he expressed and made his paper more compact. Similarly, while having more information is always a plus, it sometimes felt as if Tsuei would run on with his ideas and give more information than needed. Consequently, his various sections did not feel very balanced content-wise. His section on the places one could buy *manga* ran on quite a bit and was a lot more detailed than some other sections such as the dilemma Taiwanese *manga* readers faced. While it was interesting to see the many places one could buy *manga* in Taiwan, the reader probably does not need to know everything one can do at a convenience store or everything available inside a *manga* rental shop. One possible reason for this imbalance is that it also felt as if Tsuei was trying to do a bit too much in his paper, especially in the section about present-day Taiwanese *manga* culture. It sometimes felt like Tsuei was trying to present every single detail about every single topic; after he realized that he was

unable to do so, possibly because of space restrictions, he would end up following a detailed account of something with a series of brief overviews of other topics.

Another problem is that Tsuei heavily bases his analysis of the current *manga* culture in Taiwan on his own observations. While one can not say that his observations are wrong, one can not definitively say that something is a certain way based on person's analysis. Tsuei could have provided results from other research on Taiwan's *manga* culture to help his arguments. For example, Tsuei seems to think that the Confucian upbringing of most of the adults in Taiwan is the main reason why they are so against *manga*. While the argument sounds valid, there are also other possibilities that Tsuei does not explore and without some kind of confirmation, one can not be sure if his assertions are true. Citing existing research would have greatly help Tsuei's arguments. It would have also been helpful if Tsuei provided more statistics to support his claims about present day *manga* culture. The top-seller list example was very helpful in showing what types of *manga* were the most commercially successful and popular. It would have been interesting to see statistics on what percentage of the *manga* readership is below 22, what percentage of total books sales manga sales take up, the sales numbers of Taiwanese *manga* artists versus the sales numbers of Japanese *manga* artists, and how much the *manga* industry in Taiwan makes each year.

There are a few topics that Tsuei could have added or explored further that would have made his paper better. For example, Tsuei does not mention the role of the internet and its effect on both piracy and *manga* culture in general nowadays. Much like many other countries, scanlations are extremely popular in Taiwan. How has the availability of fan-translated *manga* online, which almost always come out before the official translations, affected *manga* sales in Taiwan? Are readers in favor of having electronic copies of the *manga* and what do they think of

this “second wave” of piracy? Turning from pirate to legitimate distributor, what actions have publishing companies done to safeguard their now-bought translation rights?

Another section that could have been explored further is the differences between the Taiwanese *manga* art-style and the Japanese *manga* art-style. What are the specific differences between the two styles? How much of the Taiwanese *manga* art-style is influenced by the Japanese *manga* art-style? Besides familiarity, is there anything else in these art-styles that make most Taiwanese *manga* readers prefer the Japanese style? Another topic to look at is the experiences of current Taiwanese *manga* artists. How and why did they become *manga* artists? Do they feel that they are underappreciated by society? What suggestions do they have for improving the support system for Taiwanese *manga* artists?

It would also be interesting to see how Taiwanese *manga* culture compares to other *manga* cultures besides Japan. Could one draw parallels between Taiwan’s *manga* culture and America’s such as the reaction towards the localization of *manga* terms? If so, what similarities do these cultures share and what differences do they have?

Even though Tsuei’s *manga* history of Taiwan section is one of the strongest in the paper, he really only utilizes one source. No matter how good a source may be, trying to put together an accurate history and timeline from only one source is close to impossible. The source could be biased or unintentionally have inaccurate information; with only one source, one is unable to cross-check facts with other sources. Despite the fact the section is detailed, with only one source, one can not confirm that everything truly happened the way it is portrayed. .

Overall, despite its various limitations, Tsuei’s paper is an adequate overview of Taiwan’s *manga* culture as it covers most of the basics: where it came from, what is read, where one can get it, what people think of it, and problems that it faces.