The Comic Artist as a Post-war Popular Critic of Japanese Imperialism
An Analysis of Nakazawa Keiji’s Hadashi no Gen

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Annika Bell
Thesis Advisor: Misuzu Shimotori
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Conventions
When using quotations I will use transcriptions and my own translations in brackets in the essay and have the original Japanese text in footnotes. The transcriptions will be in the form of the *Hepburn Romanization System*, although in this paper the long vowels are indicated with a circumflex instead of the more commonly used macron i.e. â, ü, ê and ô. Japanese names will be written in the Japanese order which places the family name first and given name after.

Although the Japanese word for comics – ‘Manga’ has become an internationally established genre in comics, I have chosen to omit it in this essay. In Japan the term *manga* may include all comics while internationally the word refers to comics of a certain style that often originate from Japan. For this reason I have chosen to use the word ‘comic’ rather than ‘manga’ so as to make it clear that the works under consideration in this research differ in many respects from what is generally considered to be Japanese ‘manga’ today.
1. Introduction
The semi-autobiographical comic Hadashi no Gen\(^1\) (Barefoot Gen) by Nakazawa Keiji, appears to have enjoyed continuous popularity both in Japan and, to an extent, internationally. While it is used to a certain degree within education in Japanese schools it has also been criticized for its views on the late emperor Hirohito and acts of the Japanese army during the Second World War. Of all the comics from Japan that I have read which deal with the Second World War and post-war Japan, the one that I have chosen to analyze is Hadashi no Gen, as its approach to the time period in question is unique in my view, in that it is both highly critical of the values that the government in Japan propagated during the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century and that it has also been a commercial success. The decision to focus my research on popular culture, in particular comics, is due to the fact it was what gave me my initial interest in Japan. By examining the differences in comics during the imperial era and in post-war Japan, a major shift in ideology becomes apparent, a shift which can be attributed to many different factors.

1.1 Objectives and Research Question
The focus of this research is to understand what changes took place in Japan after the Second World War during the years of 1945 until the 1980s, especially those changes which concerned freedom of speech and expression of thought and which created a culture where works that previously would have been viewed as controversial or even forbidden could be seen in mainstream media. It is my opinion that with the defeat of Japan in 1945, a significant percentage of the Japanese population blamed the wartime government for either pulling them into war or for surrendering. Although there was no longer any law holding people back from speaking out, the social structure of Japan may have caused many to keep their thoughts to themselves. Despite this, there were a few that decided to question the legitimacy of the empire and authority in published mainstream works. Hadashi no Gen is one example of such a work.

My research question will, therefore, be: What changes occurred after the defeat of Japan which led to Hadashi no Gen being able to be published and becoming a successful series of bestsellers?

\(^{1}\) はだしのゲン
2. Background

2.1 History of Imperial Japan

To be able to see in perspective the scale of the widespread changes which occurred in Japanese responses to Japan’s imperial past following its defeat in the Second World War it is necessary to have an overview of how Japan became an imperial state and to then examine the values and attitudes which the Japanese government sought to propagate by making them key elements of the imperialist ideology up until August 1945.

In order to catch up with Western industrialized nations Japan went through a rapid industrialization of its own from the 1880s to the early 1930s. This created an atmosphere where the rulers in Japan believed that they should create their own empire to secure the resources necessary for Japan’s economic growth and thereby gain recognition internationally for Japan as a powerful state in its own right. Towards the end of the 19th century Japan had managed to occupy the island of Taiwan during the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895 and their success in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 gave the rulers of Japan at the time an increased sense of their invincibility, in that they managed both to defeat a western power and gain parts of mainland China and the Korean peninsula. Another opportunity came as a result of the European nations being absorbed in fighting each other during the First World War, a war in which the Japanese joined the allied powers, giving Japan the opportunity to assume control of the German colonies in China and the Pacific with the defeat of central powers in 1919.

By convincing the population at home that Japan needed more living space and fertile land for its population, the Japanese military rulers were able to justify the expansion of their colonies in China further into the province of Manchuria during the 1930s and were later able to create the state Manchukuo that was, in theory, its own independent state with a local leader, although in practice all orders of any significance came from Tokyo. When the Chinese Communist and Nationalist fighting forces formed an alliance against their common Japanese enemy, hostilities between the nations grew and in order to be able to stabilize their position in the country the Japanese military relied on extreme violence towards the Chinese military and civilians. While several western nations deplored Japan’s actions in China, Germany was not as critical and in 1936 Japan, Germany and Italy formed an alliance known

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3 Ibid. 192.
4 Ibid. 192.
5 Ibid. 201.
as the Anti-Comintern Pact. When war broke out in Europe in 1939 and with the war in
China seeming unending, Japan needed more raw materials to be able to support its military
and imperial acquisitions and this in turn led to further Japanese territorial conquests
throughout Southeast Asia.

Back in Japan support for Japan’s imperial expansion was never questioned by the
population at large. This was not just due to Japanese attitudes towards the Emperor, but also
the censorship which the authorities practiced, which ensured that dissenting voices never
reached a wide audience. There are various factors that one should take into account when
examining the lack of press freedom in Imperial Japan. From the late 1920s censorship
against critics of the military state had begun to be implemented, and during the war years
intolerance of any expression of criticism which challenged the government’s message and
ideology grew significantly. As Marius B. Jansen states in The Making of Modern Japan:

After the outbreak of the China War [1937-1945] the opportunity for the free exchange
of ideas and speaking out on public issues diminished sharply. Those opposed to
national policy had a choice between silence and speaking in obscure indirection.

Enforcing this policy of censorship was the role of the Kenpeitai police force, particulary after
the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 which made the United States join the war. The
Kenpeitai was officially the military police and as the military gained more power in Japan so
did the Kenpeitai. They soon had the role of a secret police that had in the 1920’s the job of
finding leftwing sympathisers and silencing them. An example of this is an incident which
later became known as the Amakasu incident where in 1923, after The Great Kantô
Earthquake, the Kenpeitai became worried about anarchists that might try and influence
people in the ensuing chaos and seize power. To put a stop to this they arrested and executed
several well-known anarchists. But as the war progressed they not only focused on
punishing political subversives, but also on putting a stop to anyone with anti-war or defeatist
views.

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7 Ibid. 202-203.
10 Ibid. 203.
11 憲兵隊, Hunter, Janet. Concise Dictionary of Modern Japanese History. (Berkeley: University of California
12 Tipton.120.
With the capitulation of Japan in August 1945, the United States began its occupation of the country. Learning from the Treaty of Versailles, where all the blame was placed upon Germany and no help was given in regards to helping the people of Germany, the United States decided instead to not only help rebuild Japan, but also in no small measure to reconstruct the nation according to its (i.e. the USA’s) values and interests. To prevent any future expansionist ambitions Japan was not allowed to have a national army. Shintō was no longer the state religion, and the Emperor was forced to denounce his status as a deity, give up all political powers and was given the same function as modern European constitutional monarchs. Various human rights were written into the new Japanese Constitution, among others the freedom of speech and press:

Article 21. Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.

With the introduction of this article into the constitution, the censorship that previously had been there was disposed of, although at the time, this may not have been seen as a significant change for many, as coming to terms with economic instability and loss of homes and family would have been a more immediate issue for most Japanese civilians. Although the people of Japan were finally able to voice their opinions concerning e.g. the government, many did not take the opportunity straightaway. There may be several reasons behind this. One may be the fact that when a people has been oppressed and has not been allowed to voice opinions for a long time it may be hard to break the pattern. Another reason may be the Japanese reliance on the group. Sugimoto Yoshio states in An Introduction to Japanese Society:

Integration and harmony are achieved effectively between Japanese groups, making Japan a 'consensus society’. This is said to account for the exceptionally high level of stability and cohesion in Japanese society, which has aided political and other leaders in their efforts to organize or mobilize the population efficiently.

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14 The treaty between the Central and Allied powers that ended the First World War 1914-1918, signed in 1919. As Germany was forced to pay an unreasonably high debt to the allied powers, many consider this to be one of the main reasons for Adolf Hitler being able to come to power and thus starting the Second World War.
15 Collcutt, Jansen, Kumakura. 206-211.
16 Jansen. 666- 674.
In order, therefore, to leave the power balance undisturbed, many may have simply chosen to continue to keep their thoughts to themselves rather than question the government or authorities.

In summary, then, in order to not become another European colony the Japanese sought to catch up with western powers in the second half of the 19th century and it managed to become an empire in its own right through convenient alliances and by creating a strong military combined with a strong sense of nationalism. Despite the military state keeping its citizens under tight control, a large percentage of the population of Japan stayed loyal to the emperor and nation until Japan’s surrender in 1945. The Americans’ decision to make Japan a democracy in its own mould would eventually lead to the Japanese people being able to enjoy the freedom to express their own opinions.

2.2 Characteristics of Japanese Imperialism

The term “Imperialism” is defined by *Oxford Dictionary* as “A policy of extending a country’s power and influence through colonization, use of military force, or other means” and “Rule by an emperor”\(^\text{19}\). Although this applies to Japanese imperialism there are also characteristics that make it different from that found in other empires. Peculiarly Japanese features include the combination of state and religion and a Japanese version of Social Darwinism.

The state and the religion of *Shintō* became more closely intertwined in Imperial Japan during the war years\(^\text{20}\). The belief that the emperor was a descendant of the gods had long been established, but this notion was heavily promoted during the imperial years as a way to inspire devotion and loyalty in the population. In 1941, a pamphlet titled “*Shinmin no Michi*”\(^\text{21}\) (The way of the subjects) was handed out by the ministry of education in Japan, which instructed the Japanese population what was expected of them.\(^\text{22}\) It stated: “The way of the subjects is to be loyal to the Emperor in disregard of self, thereby supporting the Imperial Throne coexistent with the Heaven and with the Earth….”\(^\text{23}\) By combining state and religion the emperor and military were able to gain support for the “*Seisen*”\(^\text{24}\) (Holy war)


\(^{20}\) Jansen. Illustration nr. 42.

\(^{21}\) 臣民の道


\(^{24}\) 聖戦
among the people and thus created an absolute devotion towards the emperor. Although one can presume that people did not literally believe the Shintō myths in their entirety, the Japanese people’s devotion to this radical nationalism can be witnessed in the extreme acts of the Japanese army and Japanese civilians, where people were willing to literally sacrifice their own lives for the emperor.  

One aspect that played its part in convincing the Japanese public that the colonization of China and Korea was justifiable was the view of the Japanese being racially superior to their neighbours. An example of this can be seen in something as trivial as children’s songs, one of which includes the line: “Japan is a good country, a strong country. It is an admirable country that outshines others in the world”. This shows how widespread the state’s hold was in keeping the population in line with the values of the Japanese empire. The term “Kokutai” is useful in being able to understand the structure of pre-war Japanese society. It has been translated in Japan: An illustrated encyclopedia as “national essence” and basically adheres to the idea that the Emperor and the Japanese people are, to a degree, divine and it has, therefore, historically been seen, among many Japanese, as an honour for other nationalities to be ruled over by the Japanese. But this type of “Social Darwinism” was not only harmful for people outside of Japan:

[Kokutai] The constitution of the empire of Japan placed the emperor at the pinnacle of power; in his name every form of civil liberty, including freedom of thought and speech, was put under the constraints of the state. The constitution was based on the assumption that the state is more important than the individual.

This highlights the fact that many dissenting voices inside of Japan were not allowed to be heard in Imperial Japan. As Japan has predominantly been a group-oriented society and one which places great importance on honour, it meant that in order to avoid becoming an outcast or bringing shame upon one’s social group, whether it is one’s family, the army or the nation as a whole, the overwhelming majority of the population remained silent about expressing any unconventional views they may have held.

25 McKay, Buckler, Hill. 934-935.
27 国体
30 Campbell, Noble. 889.
The combination of religion, nationalism and a military state with the Emperor as its figurehead, created a society where Japanese soldiers were willing to sacrifice their own lives as kamikaze pilots and civilians were willing to go to extraordinary lengths, such as mass suicides, when Japan was beginning to lose the war, all in the name of the Japanese Empire and the Emperor. In combination with a sense of superiority towards the rest of the world, in particular, Asia, the colonization and violence were justified in official propaganda. This absolute and, at times, self-sacrificing loyalty is something that makes Japanese Imperialism different from the imperial ideologies of western nations such as Britain.

2.3 Role of Popular Culture in Japan

The word “popular culture” is defined by Collins English Dictionary as “the general culture of a society, including ideas, music, books, and the mass media, as opposed to high culture”. Popular culture could, therefore, be seen as a voice of a contemporary Japanese society. Popular culture is and continues to be an important part of Japanese culture of which comics play an important part. During the Imperial years popular culture was used to reinforce the ideals and values of the state. Artists that refused to draw, what could be deemed as propaganda or at least contained a message that coincided with the government’s values, were often forced to stop drawing and could even risk being arrested. In post-war Japan with the relaxation of censorship, a general change of style can be seen. With American influences, Tezuka Osamu, who is often nicknamed the “God of Manga” in Japan, created a style which can be seen as the blueprint of modern Japanese comics, both in the style of its art and storytelling. This meant that comics were no longer only mainly aimed at children as short comedy stories, but longer stories aimed at adults also grew in popularity.

The way in which the Japanese population has come to terms with the aftermath of the Second World War is in many ways reflected in the development of comics in Japan in the decades following the end of the war, a development which ranges from the 1950s comics’ heroic tales of soldiers during the war to the 1970s comics that openly questioned and

35 Ibid.68.
criticized it. As, Eldad Nakar, summarizes in *Narratives of the Second World War in Japanese manga*: “As a pop cultural medium, manga served as collective representations of how most Japanese perceived World War II in the postwar periods.” While it is important to emphasize the fact that popular culture is a form of entertainment above all else, popular culture, and comics can be seen to reflect the values of society as a whole.

### 2.4 Hadashi no Gen

_Hadashi no Gen_ is a popular comic, but it also, to this day, remains controversial in Japan. Throughout the story, both the acts done in the name of Japanese imperialism and the Emperor himself are openly criticized. One can assume that this comic may have struck a chord with a sizeable section of the population in Japan, as it has enjoyed continuous popularity since its publication and its very appearance can be seen as a noteworthy example of how fundamental the changes in press censorship were after the end of the second world war.

_Hadashi no Gen_ is a story, which was later printed in 10 volumes, about a young boy named Gen Nakaoka who lives in Hiroshima with his family. The first book basically covers various situations during the days leading up to the atomic bomb being dropped on Hiroshima, where we learn that Gen’s father is opposed to the war and both he and his family suffer because of this. When the bomb explodes over the city Gen survives by being shielded by a wall near his school. His mother miraculously also survives, but Gen’s father, older sister and younger brother are crushed under their house. Gen and his mother manage to escape the fires that are spreading around the city and Gen’s mother goes into premature labour. Although the baby survives and there is a glimmer of hope for the future, soon the harsh reality of their situation is starting to dawn upon Gen. From here on _Hadashi no Gen_ tells the story of Gen surviving in Hiroshima during the decade after the war. Through the various different characters Gen meets during these years we get to see different points of view and gain an insight into Japanese society and ideology both during and especially after the war. After he eventually loses several friends and his mother to the radiation sickness from the

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37 Ibid. 191.
39 _Hadashi no Gen_ has also been published into “bunko”(文庫), a more condensed paperback form consisting of 7 volumes.
atomic bomb, he decides to leave Hiroshima and goes to Tokyo in the hope of becoming an artist.

Nakazawa Keiji was a 6 years old in 1945 when the atomic bomb fell on the city of Hiroshima. He later moved to Tokyo to pursue his dream of becoming a comic artist and after seeing the discrimination of other A-bomb survivors, decided to conceal his own background and history. It was not until the death of his mother in 1963, caused by the radiation from the atomic bomb, that he became determined to make his voice heard concerning the war. He was offered the opportunity to create a short autobiographical piece for a monthly magazine, which would be part of an anthology where various comic artists retell their own memories from the war. Nakazawa’s editor decided that he had more of a story to tell than the short tale he drew, and thus the idea of Hadashi no Gen was born. It was published in the weekly magazine aimed at teenage boys, Shonen Jump, during the years of 1973 to 1985. It is in many ways an autobiographical work with the protagonist, Gen, as the author’s alter-ego. Nakazawa bases many situations on not only his own but also on other people’s experiences.40

Although the backdrop of the story is about the horror of the atomic bomb, it also works as a tool to educate people on the situation for the average Japanese during and after the Second World War. The reader is able to get a glimpse of what everyday life was like for various people of different ages in wartime Japan through the people Gen comes into contact with. Gen’s father can be seen as a symbolic character in the comic. This is probably something which is very close to Nakazawa’s own situation. Nakazawa said of his own father: “Dad’s influence on the formation of my thinking was strong.”41 Gen appears to be slightly embarrassed by his father’s views in the beginning, but as time goes on and especially after the death of his father, Gen learns to appreciate his views on imperialism and begins to become quite radical himself. Gen’s father is a constant source of inspiration for Gen during the whole course of the comic, in both ideology and eventually in his choice of career.

Directly after the war, comics that were about the atomic bomb often treated the dropping of the bomb as a tragedy rather than an act of mass murder as Masashi Ichiki writes in Embracing the Victimhood: A History of A-bomb Manga in Japan: “The A-bomb is not seriously viewed as a major element that creates tragedy in human lives, but rather as just

another natural disaster.”. At this point in time comics about this subject rarely went deeply into the causes and effects of the war. It was not until the late 1950s that the comics in this genre began to portray the horrors and social injustice of the war. But it was not until after Hadashi no Gen was published that these comics began to be referred to as Genbaku manga (A-bomb comics). Although Nakazawa himself says that it was his mother’s death that made him want to speak out, it is also true that the climate in which such criticism could be expressed was in many ways different and far more open than that of the previous decades. The American occupation had ended, the Korean War was over and the United States was once again embroiled in another conflict, this time in Vietnam. With the memory of the war still fresh in many people’s minds and with the modern technology of television making the horror of current wars enter average people’s homes, all around the world anti-war protests were held. Eldad Nakar states in Narratives of the Second World War in Japanese manga that:

A survey conducted in 1975, for instance, found that the number of people who discussed the atrocities committed by the Japanese army had increased significantly from previous surveys and that the number of those discussing the heroism of the Japanese soldiers had sharply declined. Hadashi no Gen can, therefore, be seen as a product of the time when it was created and may have inspired the creator to be as honest as he was in his depictions of the everyday life before and after the war and of the atrocities experienced on both sides during it. If this comic had been published earlier it may not have been as direct and graphic in its depictions and views.

Despite being a popular comic, Hadashi no Gen has become an educational tool and today it is used in elementary and middle schools in Japan to create interest in this era. It was created as an anti-war statement, but by examining it thoroughly it is possible to see not only the time which is portrayed in the comic, but also the era in which it was published.


3. Material and Methodology

The main focus of this research is based around the original comic, *Hadashi no Gen* and in particular its portrayal of Imperial Japan. Being semi-autobiographical it is highly subjective, and paints a personal, but honest view of the time period. I have also relied on previous research into both *Hadashi no Gen* and Japanese comics to be able to gain a general overview on the role of comics inside Japan. A book containing a collection of essays concerning *Hadashi no Gen* called, *Hadashi no Gen ga ita fûkei-manga ・ sensô ・ kikoku* is of particular interest as it contains analyses and research into various aspects concerning the comic, from its social impact to the language used in it. Another comic I have used to highlight the contrast between popular comics published during and after the Imperial years in Japan is, *Norakuro*. Like *Hadashi no Gen*, as a product of the time and society in which it was created it can be used to see the values that were considered important in Imperial Japan. The data used in this study to obtain an understanding of Imperial Japan is through several secondary sources including previous research in form of published books and articles concerning the subject. Marius B. Jansen’s book, *The Making of Modern Japan*, is frequently referred to in this research.

This research will be done by a qualitative, with aspects of quantitative analysis method. The qualitative part will be done by looking at previous research on this subject and analysing both the art and what is being said in *Hadashi no Gen* to gain an understanding of why this work was not, and would not have been able to be, published earlier. By also looking at other popular works such as *Norakuro*, that were published during the years of imperialist Japan, I intend to compare the contents, focusing on the ideology of the works. The quantitative aspect of this research will be conducted through looking at various statistics and surveys to be able to compare and come to a conclusion concerning such issues as publications and popularity of printed works during these years. By doing so, my aim will be to arrive at a conclusion that allows the comic to be seen in context as a legitimate work of criticism which achieved popular acclaim.

This research will, therefore, mainly be focusing on *Hadashi no Gen* and another popular comic in Japan published during the years of the 1930 to 1985. I have chosen to use the comic *Hadashi no Gen* for analysis, as I believe an examination of its style and content, particularly when compared to wartime comics, reveal much about the differing conditions which prevailed in publishing before and after Japan’s surrender and also how people who were critical towards Imperial Japan and its wars would be treated and silenced by the authorities.
4. Analysis

This analysis consists of three parts. The first part analyzes how Imperial Japan is viewed and discussed in the comic, in both depiction and words, and examines the reasons why it would not have been able to be published in Imperial Japan. The second part then compares *Hadashi no Gen*, as a post-war comic, with *Norakuro*, a comic which was published during the imperial era, and the comparison allows us to see the contrast in ideology and style from the times when they were published. The third part examines statistics concerning sales of *Hadashi no Gen* and other publications, whereby it is possible to see the popularity of the comic and other published materials. By studying this it is possible to shed some light on the changes in values which occurred amongst a sizeable percentage of the population in Japan following its defeat in the Second World War.

4.1 Imperial Japan in *Hadashi no Gen*

As mentioned previously, freedom of speech was not practiced in Imperial Japan and the *kenpeitai* made sure to silence anyone who disagreed with the imperial values and ideology. As this is a subject which is often brought up in the comic it is relevant to analyse individual scenes and characters in order to see how these issues are portrayed and why they would not have been able to be published under Japanese imperial rule.

As a critic of the Japanese Empire and the war, Gen’s father is a good example in *Hadashi no Gen* of how both the authorities and compliant public ostracized both him and anyone he was associated with due to this fact. In the beginning of the comic, Gen’s father, who had been forced to participate in a bayonet practice session, turns up drunk and ridicules both the exercise and reasons for it.\(^{45}\) The leader of the exercise who also happens to be their neighbour tells the police and Gen’s father gets arrested. The scene begins with the police asking: *kisama wa saikin sensô ni hantai suru yôna gendô o totteru sôdana, mitomeruka Nakaoka Daikichi* (You’ve been seen as being against the war recently, is this true Nakaoka Daikichi?).\(^{46}\) Gen’s father doesn’t answer and one of the policemen proceeds to hit him with a bamboo stick and says:

*Nihonkokumin ichioku sô hi no tama to natte sensô shôri no hantai suru iru noni kisama hantai suru to wa nani goto da, Nihonjin toshite hazukashii to omowannoka*


\(^{46}\) Ibid. 37, Original quote: きさまはさいきん戦争に反対するような言動をとっているそうだな、みとめるか、中岡大吉
Gen’s father proceeds to question why he is subjected to this as he and his family have cooperated with the war efforts despite his view on the subject. The policeman in charge of beating Gen’s father fumes:

Kono hikokumin no kokuzokume ga! Kisama no kangae wa kikenshizō da yurusen! Seishin wo tataki naoshite yaru! Kono bakamono! Nihonjin toshite kisama tennō heika ni mōshiwakenai to omowanai no ka haji o shire
(You unpatriotic traitor! Your views are dangerous! I’ll beat some sense into you! You fool! As a Japanese person you should beg for the Emperors forgiveness! You should be ashamed of yourself )

The way in which the police officers speak to Gen’s father is very crude. An example of this is seen in the use of ‘kisama’ as a pronoun as it is very hostile in the Japanese language and is considered an insult to the addressee. The last image of this scene takes place outside of the police building where the sounds of somebody getting beaten are portrayed graphically. After some time has passed, Gen goes with his younger brother and mother to visit their father in prison and they are shocked to see him bruised all over from all the beatings. When Gen’s mother asks why they have hurt him, Gen’s father replies: ima no gunkokushugi no nihon de sensō ni hantai suru to kōnarunda (This is what happens now if you oppose war in a military dictatorship). Despite putting himself and his family in danger, Gen’s father refuses to recant where his principles are concerned, an example of which Nakazawa had seen in his own father’s actions in a similar situation, and which proved a lasting source of inspiration for him. Another instance where the state’s brutality towards, in particular, pacifists and socialists, can be seen is a moment where Gen’s mother reminisces about Gen’s father, after his death. She mentions his affiliation with a left-wing theatre group when he was young, where a friend of his wrote plays opposing the war. He was eventually caught by the secret police and was tortured to make him renounce his views. The forms of torture included among other things,

47 Ibid.38, Original quote: 日本国民一億総火の玉となって戦争勝利の日までがんばっているのにきさま反対するとはなにごとだ、日本人としてはまずかしいおもわんのか
48 Ibid. 40, Original quote: この非国民の国賊めが！きさまの考えは危険思想だ ゆるせん！精神をたたきなおしてやる！このほかの！日本人としてきさま天皇陛下にもうしきけんないとおもわないのかはじをしれっ
50 Ibid.4, Original quote: いまの軍国主義の日本で戦争に反対するところなるんだ
tearing out fingernails, sleep deprivation and extreme beatings, all which eventually killed him. The decision to depict these forms of torture could be seen as the author’s way of showing how dangerous it was for people to be open about their views and the ones that did had to face the often brutal consequences.

Characters in authority are often portrayed as enemies of Gen and his beliefs. The Emperor, the military, police and teachers are all reoccurring characters that can be viewed as being in opposition to Gen and his family, both directly and indirectly. These tendencies are shown in the character in Gen’s neighbourhood who is simply known as the neighbourhood chairman. He first appears as the instructor where Gen’s father is forced to join the bayonet practice. He appears to already there harbour resentment towards Gen’s father’s attitude and when he and his practice are ridiculed by Gen’s father he appears to be after revenge. When the chairman’s son gets his fingers bitten by Gen, after he had been bullying Gen and his siblings, he decides to report Gen’s father as a subversive which leads to him being arrested. While Gen’s father is in prison Gen overhears the chairman talking to someone about what he did stating: izeren kara nakaoka mitai na dai Nihon teikoku no hajisarashi wa keisatsu ni shirabesasen to iken to omotte itan ja (I’ve wanted the police to investigate Nakaoka for a while for his opinions on the Empire of Japan.) The chairman is often portrayed as cruel as can be witnessed in the scenes in the direct aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima where Gen helps him and his son out from being trapped under their house. When Gen asks for their help in saving his family in return, the chairman runs away. Later on in the story he is seen as a hypocrite as he is advocating for peace to a crowd of people and claims to always have spoken out against the war. Gen happens to overhear this and calls him out on it in front of the crowd. This character is a good example of, presumably, Nakazawa’s own opinion on people in authority’s misuse of power. The character is not sympathetic and therefore the reader is not going to empathize with him.

The epitome of Gen’s and ultimately Nakazawa’s resentment toward Imperial Japan can be seen when Gen is graduating from middle school and becomes outraged when they are supposed to start singing the national anthem Kimi ga yo. This appears to be a tipping point for Gen. With everything he and many others have suffered due to nationalism and through blind faith in the Emperor, the fact that many things still continue as they were before, such as keeping the national anthem that praises the Emperor, causes Gen to react. During the

52 町内会長
53 Nakazawa. Vol. 1. 45, Original quote: 以前から中岡みたいな大日本帝国のはじさらしは警察に調べさせんといけんとおもっていたんじゃ
assembly Gen shouts for everyone to stop singing and stands up and walks towards the teachers. He states that he refuses to sing the *Kimigayo* and when one of his teachers tells him to be quiet he goes into a long rant:

\[
\text{Yakamashî tennô ga mubôna taiheiyôsensô o yare to gô no sain o dashita okage de Nipponrennô wa yakenohara ni sare. Kono Hiroshima mo Nagasaki mo gênbaku made kuratte (Shut up! It's all thanks to the emperor, who started the war which caused our cities to be burnt down and Hiroshima and Nagasaki being destroyed by the atomic bombs.)}^{54}
\]

Here the Emperor is not only getting the blame for the wars that were started in the name of the Japanese empire but also for the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The contempt that Gen has towards the Emperor makes him unable to even sing about him. An interesting point here in the use of language is the use of ‘okage de’, which can be translated as ‘thanks to’. In this context we can presume it is used in a sarcastic manner to emphasize the Emperor’s blame. Gen continues to summarize the millions of people that were killed in Japan and Asia during the war and then moves on to what the Japanese army did in Asia:

\[
\text{Kubi wo omoshiro hanbun ni kiriotoshitari, jûkenjutsu no mato ni shitari, ninpu no hara o kirisatte naka no akabô o hippari dashitari, josei no seiki no naka ni isshô bin ga dore dake iru ka tatakikonde kotsuban wo kudaite koroshitari (They chopped off people’s heads for fun. Some were used for bayonet practice. They cut open pregnant women’s stomachs and pulled out the child. They killed women by pushing sake bottles into their pelvises.)}^{55} \text{(See Image 2)}
\]

At this point these images that are described above are also depicted graphically, which is a first even for this comic which references the atrocities which the Japanese army committed in Asia on several occasions. By not only merely mentioning the acts but also showing them brings the atrocities down to a level where they no longer are merely statistics but seen as individual suffering that ultimately, although not personally executed by him, were done in the name of the Emperor. Gen continues:

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54 Nakazawa, Keiji. *(中沢啓治), Hadashi no Gen vol. 7, はだしのゲン vol.7, Bunko komikku 文庫コミック [Paperback comics]. (Tokyo: Chuokuron-shinsha Inc.). 151, Original quote: やかましい天皇が無謀な太平洋戦争をやれとゴーのサインを出したおかげで日本列島は焼け野原にされ。この広島も長崎も原爆までくられて。

55 Ibid. 152, Original quote: 首をおもしろ半分に切り落したり、銃剣術の的にしたり、妊婦の腹を切りさして中の赤ん坊をひっぱり出したり、女性の性器の中に一升ビンがどれだけ入るかたたきこんで骨盤をくだって殺したり。
Sono sù sen man nin no ningen de toru koto o yurushita tennô o wa sha yurusan wai. Ima made ni sensô sekinin o torazu ni funzorikaettoru tennô o washa yurusan wai. Kimigayo wara nanka dare ga utau mon ka kusokurae ja. Kimi ga yo wara nanka kokka jana i wa i.

(I will never forgive the Emperor for letting millions of people die in his name. I will never forgive him for refusing to accept blame for his actions during the war. I refuse to sing the Kimigayo! It is not my national anthem!)

With this speech Gen manages to rally others in the class who agree with him and they eventually ignore the teacher’s protests and sing another different song. Here Gen rebels against authority on a larger and smaller scale. He has not only spoken out against the Emperor but also the teachers in his classroom and questioned their authority. Gen’s actions can be seen as a turning point, where he may have simply reached a breaking point or alternatively may have acted due to it being his last day at school and he felt like he no longer had to please the teachers. Whatever his motivation, this act of rebellion can be seen as showing Gen’s and, ultimately, Nakazawa’s own position is when it comes to this period of history.

This is a poignant moment in the comic. Up until now Gen has been relatively casual and off-hand in his criticisms of the Emperor, the wartime leaders and the atrocities carried out by the imperial army, usually restricting his comments to a few, short words. In contrast with what he has said before he now gives vent to an articulate rage, which details their crimes and the accompanying images are shockingly graphic. For the reader, these images now assume a more vivid reality and the fact that this series presumably is aimed at children, as it is used in a large amount of middle schools in Japan, makes the images even more grotesque.

The portrayal of Imperial Japan as exemplified by previously mentioned scenes, show the author’s belief that the people who should bear the responsibility for the suffering of the Japanese people during and after the war are the Emperor and government of Imperial Japan.

4.2 Hadashi no Gen and Norakuro

Tagawa Suihô’s Norakuro is a comic that was aimed at children during the imperial years. Its protagonist is a dog who is called Norakuro who joins the dog army to fight against the monkey army. It was published during the years of the invasion of Manchuria and was created

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56 Ibid. 152, Original quote: その数千万人の人間でとることを許した天皇をわしゃ許さんわい’。今までに戦争責任をとらずにふんぞりかえっとる天皇をわしゃ許さんわいっ。君が代わらなんかだれがうたうもんかクソクラエじゃ。君が代わらなんかっ国歌じゃないわいっ
57 Fukuma, Yoshimura.157-158.
58 のらくろ
as a tool to get children behind the war effort. During its publication it was one of the most popular comics in wartime Japan and by it being able to be accepted by the authorities it can therefore be seen as a good example of the difference in ideology in comparison to *Hadashi no Gen*.

While *Hadashi no Gen* is a semi-autobiographical work with elements of other people’s experiences, *Norakuro* is fiction loosely based on the author’s experiences as a soldier in the Japanese imperial army. Due to this fact the army is portrayed with both honour and humour. While Norakuro believes in the values of the army, he is clumsy and often makes mistakes. This may have been implemented for the majority of Japanese children to be able to feel empathy with the character and also to understand the sacrifices their own families may have had to make due to the war effort.

The portrayal of other nationalities differs greatly in these comics. In *Hadashi no Gen* there are several instances where Gen is sympathetic to other nationalities. An example of this is Gen’s neighbour, who is Korean and one of the few people who continuously helps Gen and his family, both before and after the war. This is something that was different to Nakazawa’s own background, but can be seen as a way of giving Koreans a voice in the comic. It is often discussed how badly Koreans were treated during the imperial years throughout the story (See Image 3). By highlighting the poor treatment of populations under Japanese rule and being in favour of cooperating with neighbouring countries, *Hadashi no Gen* breaks the racial barriers without forgetting the historical issues.

In *Norakuro* on the other hand, the opposing army is depicted as monkeys. As this comic was written during the Manchuria campaign it was obvious at the time that the monkey, or *Gorira*, army were supposed to represent the Chinese even if it is not explicitly mentioned as such (See Image 4). This is derogatory on several levels. Historically in Japan the monkey has been known to be seen as something that represents the worst characteristics of human beings. Therefore by portraying the Chinese as such, it is implying that the Chinese may share these negative characteristics. Another factor is the way that the monkey army in *Norakuro* is often shown to be inept and is often tricked by Norakuro, who to all intents and purposes is often portrayed as the comic relief character in the dog army. The Monkey army and by association the Chinese are, therefore, considered weak and foolish. By doing so the idea of the reader feeling empathy towards the enemy army is unlikely.

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59 ゴリラ

The way in which the war is treated in each publication differs greatly. Much of this may have to do with the time in which these comics were published. While both comics were aimed at children, *Hadashi no Gen* is clearly anti-war and images are often grotesque and realistic and focusing on the individual suffering when depicting the war, while *Norakuro* portrays war in a comical, unrealistic way with cartoonish effects and deaths are never seen to occur. A stark difference can be seen in the images of bombings. In *Hadashi no Gen*, Gen speaks to an older woman who recalls an air raid in Tokyo. The focus of the woman’s story is shown when a mother, who throws herself over her children to protect them from the fire, is burnt to death together with her children (See Image 5). In *Norakuro* there is a scene where the protagonist has just saved his troops and after flying them to safety, flies back to the monkey army base to pour bombs over it. The picture shows one monkey waving a white flag in surrender and another hiding behind a wall. In the background there are a couple of monkeys fleeing. All while Norakuro shouts: *Banzai tōtō gorira mo kōsan shite shirahata o dashita yo yappari seigi wa tsuyoi ne, Kore de mō wareware mōken rentai wo horobozō nante mucha na kangae wa okosanaidarou, norakuro toshhintai banzai!!* (The Gorira have surrendered and justice is strong! We will no longer be seen as reckless, Hooray for the Norakuro corps!!). By showing acts of war in comical ways such as this, war become trivialized and simplified (See Image 6).

Despite *Norakuro* adhering to the rules on what the government deemed acceptable, it still got cancelled as some officials deemed it unsuitable as it appeared to mock the army, in itself a striking example of how strict the rules were when it came to publishing and how much power the military possessed over all industries. The fact that this popular comic, that is often looked back on as wartime propaganda, was deemed unsuitable shows how a comic such a *Hadashi no Gen*, that criticizes almost all aspects of Imperial Japan and is anti-war, would not have been able to be published during the Imperial era.

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4.3 Statistics

Hadashi no Gen has enjoyed a continuous popularity, mainly in Japan although it has been translated into several other languages. As can be seen in Graph 1, Hadashi no Gen sales started at a gradual pace, and in the last decade gained in popularity at a faster rate (See Graph 1).  

The recent rise in sales has been attributed to two recent events. The first is the death of the author of Hadashi no Gen, Nakazawa Keiji in December 2012, which was also around the same time that the comic reached over 10 million copies sold. The other was a controversy concerning the comic in schools. An individual in Matsue complained about the comic being in school libraries due to the comic’s depictions of Japanese war atrocities. The Matsue municipal board decided to limit access to the comic in school libraries, but this decision was soon taken back as there was a national outcry concerning the issue.  

The level of sales of the comic is merely an indication of the number of people who have read it as many may have borrowed and read it from libraries, especially as it is often used in education in elementary and middle schools around Japan. In 2005 Otaki Tomôri conducted a survey among university students concerning Hadashi no Gen. When asking the students who had read Hadashi no Gen about when they first saw the comic, more than 50 percent answered “gakkô no tōshōkan ni oite atta kara” (from the school library).

While published works in general seem to continuously be rising, the amount of copies sold appears to have reached its peak in the 1990’s. After 1945 until the end of the American occupation in 1952 both books and magazines popularity seems to slowly rise compared to the years between 1960 and 1990 where sales rise a large amount for every decade that passed (See Graph 2 and Graph 3).

There are several factors that may be the reasons for this, although these should be viewed as personal speculations rather than pure facts.

Firstly there is the economic situation during the American occupation years. Although the United States contributed vast sums of money for rebuilding Japan it was a period of struggle for many. For that reason reading materials were in effect luxury items which few

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64 Fukuma, Yoshimura. 157-158.  

65 学校の図書館に置いてあったから
ordinary Japanese could afford. When people’s living standards increased people finally were able to spend money on leisure items such as books or magazines. Another aspect to this was the role of American censorship. Although this was far more liberal and open than what people had experienced under Imperial rule, the mindset of the Cold War ensured that any writing sympathetic to left-wing or anti-war thinking was deemed subversive and may have led to publishers being reluctant to print material which could upset the authorities.66 Especially with several of Japan’s neighbours turning to Communism and the perceived threat of Communism in other parts of the world, the United States would undoubtedly have reacted negatively to the appearance in print of any publication which criticized their role in post-war Japan. When the occupation came to an end the Japanese were finally able to express themselves freely, and this and an increase in living standards contributed to an increase in the demand for books and magazines which led to a rise in the number of publications produced and sold.

5. Conclusion
When Japan surrendered at the end of the Second World War the United States imposed a new constitution on it which included freedom of speech and the press. This enabled the Japanese people to experience a freedom of expression which they had not previously enjoyed. It is my belief, that while there has historically been a tendency for the majority of the Japanese population not to voice their opinions, it does not mean that there were no dissenters or critics of Japanese imperialism. Hadashi no Gen highlights this fact through focusing on the people who spoke out against the war at several points in the comic. Directly after the war there were not many comics that approached the subject of the war in the critical way that Hadashi no Gen did, but by looking at the continued popularity of the comic and the fact that it is being used in schools to teach children about that time period, it is apparent that a large amount of people believe that the comic gives a fair view of this subject and are, therefore, also likely to agree with the critical attitude evident throughout Hadashi no Gen. This reflects, and can be seen to have contributed towards, a significant change in attitudes towards authority in Japan and a significant shift in people’s view of Japan’s social structure and hierarchy. By comparing Hadashi no Gen with Norakuro, which was published when Japan’s imperialist ambitions were in their most expansive phase, it becomes evident, that while Norakuro was a vehicle for supporting the war, Hadashi no Gen questioned it. The fact that

66 McKay, Buckler, Hill.963.
even Norakuro was eventually forced to stop being produced shows the importance the Imperial state attached to its image and the propagation of its expansionist ideology. That it would stop anyone from tarnishing it, even in the form of a children’s comic, highlights the stark contrast with the post-war period, when many of a younger generation that had grown up with an uncensored press and freedom of expression could respond positively to the publication of Nakazawa’s comic series.

I hope in the paper above to have highlighted the various factors which brought about a fundamental change in the way many Japanese came to view their imperial past following the end of the Second World War, and no less importantly, came to feel free to openly criticize in print the rulers and ideology of Imperial Japan, an action which would have been punishable before the end of the war. That such criticism as is found in Nakazawa’s Hadashi no Gen could also appear in a best-selling comic and be used for educational purposes in Japanese schools shows the enormous shift that has taken place in Japanese society and public attitudes since 1945.

6. Summary

This paper aims to show that the changes in censorship, implementation of freedom of speech and press, and a post-war generation in Japan that rebelled against their elders can all be seen as contributing factors which led to Hadashi no Gen being able to be published and enjoy popular success. This comic is a work whose publication is in itself evidence of the changes that took place in Japan concerning freedom of speech and the press.

The general consensus is that Hadashi no Gen is almost unique in that there are virtually no other popular mainstream comics in Japan that mention, let alone portray, the atrocities that the Japanese army carried out during the Imperial years in the way in which they are depicted in Nakazawa’s series. What can definitely be seen in this research is that there was absolutely no possibility of Hadashi no Gen or any other ideologically similar comic being able to be printed by mainstream publishers in Imperial Japan.

By showing honest and realistic depictions of atrocities carried out in the name of the Emperor and Japan as a nation, the previous view of the army as heroic was tarnished. While other comics may have mentioned these atrocities and even drawn them, Hadashi no Gen unequivocally puts the blame on the Emperor and the government which ruled Imperial Japan. The very act of doing so would have meant that it would not have been able to be published in Imperial Japan, as the author would have suffered and in many ways did because of his anti-
war views, something which the comic itself sheds light on e.g in the various persecutions of Gen’s father and his family.

Turning to look at statistical data, one can see that far more works started to be sold in the late 1950s, which would indicate that, in addition to increasing living standards and increased disposable income, the production and demand increased as a result of the greater freedoms which were felt by both publishers and readers, who did not have to fear prosecution for distributing or reading material that would have been forbidden during the Imperial era.

Although the United States introduced freedom of the press in Japan, there were still restrictions about what could be published about the Second World War and also an initial reluctance on the part of comic authors to be openly critical of Japan’s Imperial past. With the passage of time, the end of the American Occupation and the emergence of a younger generation, which had not been subject to the same pressures and ideology as their parents and grandparents, a more widespread critical appraisal of Imperial Japan became a possibility and Nakazawa’s comics can be seen as one of the most striking examples of such an appraisal.

The fact that this comic’s popularity is so widespread and even used within education shows that today a large number of people consider it a fair view on Imperial Japan and sympathize with the values expressed. The popularity of Hadashi no Gen can, therefore, be seen to reflect a change in the Japanese people’s view on Imperial Japan, something which has continued to this day.
7. Bibliography

Books


Comics


Websites


http://japanfocus.org/-Aniya-Masaaki/2629/article.html


Appendix

Image 1: Gen’s father being beaten by a Kenpeitai officer
Taken from Hadashi no Gen Bunko. Vol.1. 38.

Image 2: Gen speaking of atrocities carried out by Japanese Imperial Army
Taken from Hadashi no Gen Bunko. Vol. 7. 152.

Image 3: Gen’s neighbour speaking about treatment of Koreans in Imperial Japan
Taken from Hadashi no Gen Bunko. Vol.1.76.
Image 4: Gorira Army
Taken from Norakuro bunshô 1.9.

Image 5: Mother protecting her children during the bombing of Tokyo
Taken from Hadashi no Gen Bunko. Vol.1.201.

Image 6: Norakuro bombing an enemy camp
Taken from Norakuro bunshô 1.27.
Graph 1: Number of Hadashi no Gen copies sold

Graph 2: Number of new publication titles in Post-War Japan
Information taken from Statistics Bureau Japan, 26-1, Books and Magazines Published (1945--2005)

Graph 3: Number of Books and Magazines sold in Post-War Japan
Information taken from Statistics Bureau Japan, 26-1, Books and Magazines Published (1945--2005)