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Shōnen Nyorai: How Tezuka Osamu reimagined Buddha for shōnen manga

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〈국문초록〉

이 논문은 소년 만화의 독자들을 위해 데즈카 오사무(1928~89)가 다시 쓴 부처님의 전기를 검토하고 있다. 데즈카 오사무는 유명한 일본의 만화가이자 작가, 만화영화 작가, 영화 제작자 및 활동가이다. 1972년, 그는 『붓다(ブツダ)』라는 제목의 모험만화 시리즈를 그리기 시작했다. 1983년에 끝난 이 시리즈는 일본에서 총 14권으로 출판되었고, 해외에서는 8권으로 재편집되어 번역되었다. 2004년과 2005년, 아이즈너 상(Eisner Award)과 하비 상(Harvey Awards)을 수상하며 비평가들이 극찬한 이 시리즈는 데즈카 오사무의 삶에서 가장 위대한 작품으로 간주된다. 이 시리즈는 지금까지 “붓다: 위대한 출발(2011, 데즈카 오사무의 붓다: 붉은 사막이여! 아름답게)”, “붓다2: 데즈카 오사무의 붓다-끝없는 여행(2014)” 등 두 편의 애니메이션 영화를 탄생시켰고, 세 번째 영화가 제작될 예정이다. 미국에서 가장 유명한 데즈카 오사무의 작품인 ‘우주수년 아톰(Astro Boy)’처럼, 데즈카는 그의 주변에 드리워진 정치적 음모와 제국주의를 거부한 순수한 소년으로 붓다를 묘사한다. 이러한 방법으로 데즈카 오사무의 붓다는 그의 마음의 본래의 순수함, 전후 일본의 이상과 일본과 세계의 잠재된 미래에 대한 낙관적인 묘사를 유지한다. 이 논문은 그의 다른 작품의 일부를 참조하면서 『붓다』가 부처님의 일대기를 말하는 것만큼이나 데즈카 오사무의 사상을 어떻게 표현하고 있는지를 서술하고 있다.

핵심어: 데즈카 오사무, 붓다의 삶, 망가, 일본만화영화, 코믹스

Shōnen manga

Shōnen manga (少年漫画) is a genre of Japanese graphic novels primarily aimed at a young male audience. The age group of the target audience varies but the stories are primarily intended for boys between the ages of 8 to 18.¹⁾ Between 1950 and 1969, an increasingly large readership for manga emerged in Japan with the solidification of its two main marketing genres, shōnen manga aimed at boys and shōjo manga aimed at girls.²⁾ Shōnen manga has become the most popular type³⁾ and is today one of Japan's most exported products. Japanese manga and animation are particularly popular among American high school and college students, so much so that *the New York Times* has created a special best-seller list for manga.

Shōnen manga is characterized by high-action humorous and/or violent plots featuring male protagonists. Camaraderie between boys or men on sports teams, fighting squads and the like is often emphasized. Attractive female characters with

- 1) See “What you need to know about the Shōnen genre,” Jappling University, February 23, 2009 (accessed March 9, 2015).
- 2) Frederik L. Schodt, “Foreword” by Tezuka Osamu in *Manga! Manga! : The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo, New York: Kodansha International, 1988).
- 3) Rubén García Cabezas and Akane, *Shōnen Manga* (New York: Harper Design, 2012), 8.

exaggerated features are also common. Such manga often portray challenges to the protagonist's abilities, skills, and maturity, stressing self-perfection, austere self-discipline, sacrifice in the cause of duty, and honorable service to society, community, family, and friends.⁴⁾ All of these characteristics are present and in the forefront of *Buddha* by Tezuka Osamu, who was strongly instrumental in defining the direction of the shōnen genre.

Historical changes to the Buddha as antecedents to Tezuka's treatment

Throughout the history of Buddhism, many changes have been made in terms of the Buddha's life stories and his teachings as well as how his physical appearance has been conceptualized. Some of the most significant among the changes in representations of his physical appearance can be outlined as follows.

1. Possible Change from Non-Aryan to Aryan in India

Some scholars, particularly Korean, Thai, and Japanese,⁵⁾

4) Robin E. Brenner, *Understanding Manga and Anime* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 31.

5) A British scholar (Vincent A. Smith), Japanese specialists (Nara Yasuaki, Iwamoto Yukata and Miyasaka Yūshō), Korean scholars (Yi Suchang Yi and Cho Joon-Ho), and a Thai expert (Chamnong Tongprasert) argue that the Śākya clan might be non-Aryan.

have held that the Buddha's Śākya clan was of non-Aryan descent while others argue that the clan was of Aryan descent. However, regardless of the Buddha's genealogy, the Pāli Canon, composed perhaps 400 years after the time of the Buddha, describes thirty-two major characteristics of a Buddha and eighty minor marks. Among these, we find numerous indications that the authors were Aryanizing the Buddha.

Likewise, Aśvaghōṣa's (c. 80 – c. 150 CE) famous life of the Buddha, the *Buddhacarita*, written in the first to the second century CE, further Aryanized the Buddha by giving him the appearance of Rama in the *Ramayana*. In fact, Aśvaghōṣa's text, important for Mahāyāna Buddhism, makes Buddha hereditarily related to Rama and the kings of the Solar Dynasty. Aśvaghōṣa's uses language from the *Ramayana* to win his Indian target audience over to Buddhism.

2. Change from Aryanized Buddha to Greco-Roman Buddha in Gandhara

The standing Gandharan Buddha has a European face and is dressed in Roman clothes. The origins of such Greco-Buddhist art are to be found in the Hellenistic Greco-Bactrian kingdom (250 BC – 130 BC), located in today's Afghanistan. Interaction of Greek and Buddhist culture flourished in the area of Gandhara. Many of the stylistic elements in the representations there point

to Greek influence including Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dressed in toga-like robes, halos, the contrapposto stance of the upright figures, and stylized Mediterranean curly hair and top-knot apparently derived from the style of the Belvedere Apollo (330 BC). There are also depictions of Greek mythological deities incorporated in Buddhist representations in Gandhara.

3. Change from Greco-Roman Buddha and Indian imagery to Turkish made Silk Road images

Missionaries and traders travelling along the Silk Roads transmitted Buddhist images to China. They carried Buddhist texts and illustrations, and made objects for worship. The earliest Chinese Buddhist images relied heavily on Indian prototypes, especially for the appearance of the face, robes, and body. A uniquely Chinese style of Buddhist art developed during the Northern Wei period (386-534 CE), when a non-Chinese Turkish people, the Tuoba, controlled north China. This dynasty sponsored the construction of huge image-filled caves that still survive today. Many Northern Wei figures are distinctive for their slender proportions and linear design. The fluttering scarf-like drapery seems in constant motion and there is almost no sense of a body underneath. This is characteristic of Chinese rather than Indian art.

4. Change to a Chinese Buddha, a reincarnated female Buddha in China and Tibet, and back to Indian Buddha

Chinese Daoists and rulers began to Sinify the Buddha. This first appears in writing with the *Laozi hua hu jing* (Classic on Converting the Barbarians: Unknown Teaching of Laozi) perhaps written between 290 and 306 CE, during the Western Jin dynasty. In one version of the text, Huaqing Ni's translation, there is a question-and-answer dialogue between a Prince disciple and his learned Master, interpreted as Buddha and Laozi respectively. Other versions claim that at the end of his life, Laozi left China and traveled to the west and that the Buddha was Laozi.⁶ This ideology was used by Daoist in debates against Buddhists and the distribution of the text was banned by Emperor Zhongzong (656-710) of Tang.

Later, in attempt to counter the Confucian aristocracy's opposition to having a female ruler, during the Tang Dynasty, Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) expanded state support for Daoism and Buddhism. Taking to the next level the ambitions of Aśoka with his pillars that spread his political influence along with Buddhism, as later did Japan's Emperor Shōmu (r. 724-49) with the large Buddha statue of Buddha in Nara, Empress Wu commissioned the carving of a colossal Buddha in the Longmen Grottoes baring what is believed to be the image of her own face.

During the Yuan Dynasty, China was ruled by Mongolians,

6) Annellen M. Simpkins and C. Alexander Simpkins, *Simple Taoism: A Guide to Living in Balance* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1999), 12-3.

considered foreigners by the former rulers, who were ethnically Han Chinese. As part of their justification of rule, which also opposed the Confucian ideal, the Khan Emperors overturned the Sinification of Buddha that began with the *Laozi hua hu jing*. Instead, they reaffirmed the Buddha's Indian origin in attempt to validate rule by foreigners.

5. Angry Tantric Buddhas

In tantric Buddhism there are two kinds of Buddhas, those that are angry and those that are peaceful. Accordingly, energy of sex and anger can be cultivated and transformed into powerful compassionate action. Therefore, Buddhas, including Vairocana central to tantric Buddhism, are often represented in iconography in their angry aspects. In the case of Vairocana, the fierce aspect is Acala, called Fudō-myōō in Japanese. Acala's face is wrathful, his brows are wrinkled and his left eye is squinting. He displays fang-like teeth, one pointing up and one pointing down. He is on fire and holds a sword and noose.

Tezuka's shōnen Buddha is like these violent Buddhas in the sense of attracting young people.

6. Modern representations of Buddhas with various ethnicities

In current times we see how Buddhism can be applicable to various ethnic groups. For example, there is a black Buddha

image in a mural at Fo Guang Shan Temple in Taiwan. In the movie *Little Buddha*, the Buddha is represented as Caucasian. Such modern examples extend the previous nationalistic developments of Buddhist iconography to the world stage.

Changes in representation of the Buddha's message

In regard to changes in the messages of the Buddha, it is well known that that Buddha spoke differently to people based on his understanding of what they needed. For this reason he is called the Great Physician, as Tezuka mentions in his manga. In East Asia, *panjiao* schemes, doctrinal classification systems, were created by sectarians intent on proving that their own focus on particular messages of the Buddha was superior to other messages. Of particular interest to scholars in recent years has been the East Asian preference for theories of Buddha Nature, critiqued by so-called critical Buddhists of Japan who consider the idea more akin to Hinduism than Buddhism. According to the theory, all beings are endowed with enlightenment possessed in an innate womb of Buddhahood or Tathāgatagarbha. This theory was particularly attractive to Buddhist who took a Daoist-related view of the basic nature of humanity as pure and wise as opposed to defiled and ignorant. Adherents to this view tend to see human problems as stemming from the social world rather than being innate. Critical Buddhists identified the belief in a womb of Buddhahood with the Vedantic claim of *ātman*, which the Buddha overtly rejected. As will become clear below, Tezuka is

a subscriber to a version of Tathāgatagarbha theory, further tinted in hues of theism.

Tezuka's Buddha, a mixture of classical characters and his own ideas aimed at shōnen

Tezuka adapts life stories of the Buddha to fit many of the characteristic elements of the shōnen manga genre. By so doing, the stories often deviate drastically from the corresponding episode found in the Pāli canon and elsewhere, while remaining vaguely reminiscent of them. One of the first of these elements we are likely to notice is that the Buddha remains very young throughout most of the series. Even after his enlightenment he appears to be a teenager. Only in the seventh of the eight manga volumes in English does he suddenly age visibly into an adult and only then as a result of a severe illness. But even when the Buddha is represented as an adult, the focus of the story shifts to teenagers, focusing in particular on the life of Devadatta.

In fact, Buddha does not appear in the first of the eight volumes, titled *Kapilavastu*, except as a young shōnen in previous lives. All eight volumes have a map at the beginning. Maps typically appear at the beginning of fantasy novels and can serve as markers to set the mood of the story as one of that genre.⁷⁾

7) For example, Murakami Haruki's 1987 novel *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* uses this device in such a way.

Volume One opens with a description of the Brahmin caste and a critique of the caste system. With an impressive drawing of the Northern gateway to the Great Stupa of Sanchi, the narration tells that the Brahmin created hardships for the people of India that endure even today. The theme of social equality was a popular one in Japan during the 1970s and early 1980s and Tezuka seems to have a goal of championing this cause. The struggle for social equality becomes a central theme of the entire series. By the time Tezuka completed the series, Japan was at the end of three-decades of its so-called "economic miracle" following WWII, and just beginning to enter the infamous "bubble economy" when real estate prices and the stock market soared wildly and eventually led to the "lost decade". With this in mind, we can see the thrust of Tezuka's social perspective in *Buddha*. At times subtly and at others overt and forcefully, the series warns against greed, war and even nuclear weapons, government corruption and oligarchy generally. It illustrates this by using the suffering of innocent children caught in such situations, as well as the harmony of nature and animals free from problems of corrupt human society, and the Bodhisattva ethic of selfless sacrifice for the wellbeing of others. To facilitate this message in a way that appeals to his young target audience, Tezuka uses a mixture of traditional life stories of the Buddha and standard elements of the shōnen genre by including episodes of young, sexy, and adventurous characters of his own creation.

In this way, Volume One illustrates the Sasa *Jātaka* that tells about how forest animals brought food to a hungry ascetic. Because a rabbit had nothing to offer, it jumped into the ascetic's fire to offer itself. But it does not burn and the ascetic places the rabbit's image in the moon in honor of its selfless act. This story repeats throughout the series, opening it and closing it again at the end of Volume Eight.

Because there is no young Buddha in Volume One, Tezuka centers the story on two other shōnen characters he creates. These are Chapra, the son of a slave mother who is bought and sold, and Tatta, a seven-year-old naked beggar and thief. We learn that Tatta has the supernatural ability to possess the mind of an animal and Chapra is an extraordinary rock thrower. These characters and their abilities appear to be exclusively introduced to appeal to the shōnen audience.

At first Chapra comes after Tatta seeking to recover his owner's stolen possession. But after being beat up by Tatta's street gang, the two socially oppressed boys become friends. Tatta uses his power to transform into a tiger and free Chapra's mother from an abusive slave owner. But guards catch them and line them against a wall for execution. Chapra throws rocks at the guards and the group escapes into the forest, where they meet an ascetic named Naradatta. In the Pāli stories of the Buddha, Naradatta is the nephew and follower of the sage Asita. Asita has a vision that the Buddha was born

and transports himself and his nephew to Kapilavastu with supernatural powers in order to observe the thirty-two physical characteristics that identify the baby as a Buddha. In Tezuka's story, Asita sends Naradatta to gather information about the birth. Because he teams up with Tatta, who possesses the minds of various animals along their journey and incidentally causes their deaths, Naradatta is punished by karma and master Asita, who condemns him to live the remainder of his life as a blind animal. Although this is meant to be a punishment, in keeping with the rather Daoist theme of the manga that animals live better than humans, in Volume Eight, the Buddha meets Naradatta, who can no longer talk, and oddly praises him as the greatest man he has ever met.

Volume One also illustrates Queen Maya's dream of a white elephant, her giving birth to Siddhartha, and her death. These stories are mixed with action-packed, magic-filled, and love-torn adventures of Tatta and Chapra and their fights with a new villainous character named Bandaka. The bully-like personality of Bandaka likely makes him an easily detestable character in manga, given Japan's persistent problems with bullying in schools. Bandaka is slightly older and larger than Tatta and Chapra, and is dangerously skilled in fighting. By the end of the volume, Chapra and his mother are killed and Tatta, who remains a character throughout the series, vows to take revenge on the kingdom of Kosala, rivals of the Buddha's Śākya clan.

In Volume Two, Tatta is a teenager living in the wilds and Siddhartha is a boy, bored while surrounded by naked palace women anxious to indulge any whim he may have. Bandaka shows up at the Śākya's palace and says he'll train the weakling Siddhartha for war. After being bullied by Bandaka, Siddhartha climbs out his window and runs away from home into the forest, again like a modern shōnen. There he meets Tatta, with whom he embarks upon an adventure in a canoe that includes being attacked by bandits. Tatta tells Siddhartha to throw his palace jewelry into the river to get rid of the bandits, and when they dive for it, the would-be thieves are attacked by crocodiles. Siddhartha begs Tatta to save a thief-girl named Migaila, which he reluctantly does, only to next have their canoe go over a waterfall. After the fall, Migaila finds her arms wrapped around Siddhartha, who she then falls in love with and kisses. After this, Siddhartha returns to the palace and meets Yashodara who has come as part of a prearranged marriage. Siddhartha responds in a way that would be funny to shōnen, "Marriage? I'm only 15 and still a student." The bully Bandaka decides he wants to marry Yashodara and steal the Śākya kingdom, and challenges the younger and weaker Siddhartha to a battle. The prince must also fight other suitors, as we are told is the custom, and Migaila comes to the castle disguised as a male suitor ready for battle. Using a series of animal possessions, Tatta is able to aid both Migaila and Siddhartha in defeating Bandaka. Nevertheless, Migaila's identity is discovered and, against

Siddhartha's protests, she is arrested for being of low caste and entering the tournament under false pretexts. She is then tortured and violently blinded by torches. This stark injustice furthers Tezuka's narrative about equality and the violence is likely meant to appeal to readers of shōnen manga.

Also in Volume Two, King Prasenajit of Kosala demands to be given a wife from the noble women of the Śākya clan, but is secretly sent a slave. While this is the basic story in the Pāli version,⁸⁾ Tezuka embellishes it in various ways likely to keep the attention of young readers. For example, King Prasenajit is a professional wrestler in the manga. In the Buddhist text and the manga, Prasenajit and his slave wife have a child who later kills most of the Śākya clan in revenge for the deceit regarding his mother.⁹⁾ Meanwhile, his father, Prasenajit, remains a devotee of the Buddha.¹⁰⁾ In Volume Two, Siddhartha sees the four sights, renounces the world, meets the five ascetics, and begins harsh austerities in the forest.

8) K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, ed., *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), 17.

9) H. C. Norman, ed., *Dhammapadatthakathā (The Commentary on the Dhammapada)* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1992-3), vol.1, 339ff.; J.i.133f.; iv.144ff.

10) William Woodville Rockhill, *Life of Buddha* (London: Kegan Paul, 1884), 49. The first meeting of Prasenajit and the Buddha also appears in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, i. 69. Prasenajit declares himself an adherent of the Buddha at the end of that meeting in the *Dahara Sutta*.

We see from these accounts that it is not that Tezuka introduces magic into a life story that has none, but that he changes the use of it to fit his purposes. Likewise, although he introduces unique characters, he uses others from the Pāli and Mahāyāna canons, again changing their stories to make his own points. For example, in Volume Three, titled Devadatta, he introduces Visākhā, who is described in the Pāli writings, as chief among the female lay disciples of the Buddha and the model for lay Buddhist women. While Tezuka's Visākhā rejects the sorted ways of Brahmin, which corresponds to the Buddhist writings, she instead falls in love with Siddhartha, rejects the possibility of happiness he describes, and takes drugs in attempt to escape her discontent. These changes in the story are almost certainly related to the lives of Japanese shōnen in the 1970s and 80s.

The character Bandaka appears to be based on Buddhist references to Paṇḍaka, whose name means eunuch. Buddhist texts describe Paṇḍaka as "great adherents to the pleasures of the world, rife with defilement, burning with desire, and without gender (napuṃsaka)"¹¹ This seems to apply to Bandaka, who Tezuka draws as not having pupils, perhaps implying his blindness caused by lust and selfish desires. Bandaka is later revealed to be the father of Devadatta. However, the Pāli canon says Devadatta is the son of Suppabuddha, the maternal uncle

11) See <http://buddhism.stackexchange.com/questions/11207/what-is-a-pandaka> (accessed May 2, 2016).

of the Buddha and that Devadatta is the brother of Ananda.¹² The Buddhist texts also says Devadatta had a sister named Yasodharā, who married Siddhartha. Some texts call her Bhaddakaccānā, an epithet implying that her body was a golden color. It is possible that the word Bhaddakaccānā is the source for Tezuka's name Bandaka.

Also in Volume Three, we are introduced to the humorous character Assaji, a dripping nosed child whose impoverished parents palm off on Siddhartha to take as a śramaṇa. In contrast, in the Pāli canon, Assaji was one of the first ascetic and therefore one of the first five arahants who first did austerities with Buddha.¹³ He is also known for his conversion of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana, the Buddha's two chief male disciples. Likewise, in the manga he attracts Sariputta and Mahamoggallana to the Buddha, but only by seeing into the future and naming them. Also in the manga, Assaji is a classic shōnen comedic figure, a slow walking, bumbling and babbling character who nevertheless keeps up with the protagonists and eventually even outshines them in virtue.

12) H. C. Norman, ed., *Dhammapadatthakathā (The Commentary on the Dhammapada)* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1992-3), vol. 3, 44.

13) See the entry "Assaji" in *Buddhist Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/ay/assaji.htm (accessed May 2, 2016).

Tezuka gives Devadatta an interesting backstory, understandable in light of the author's aim. Illustrated in the manga, Devadatta is beaten as a child by his stepfather, who is Ananda's father. He is also bullied by other children, who are later chased by a mad elephant. Devadatta and four other children run and fall into a hole, where they are lost for two weeks. In the hole, the other children continue to bully Devadatta and force him into dangerous situations. Finally, Devadatta turns against his tormentors, hoards some dripping water and kills the children when they try to take it from him. Upon discovering this, the adults tie him to a stake and leave him for a wolf to eat. But he has previously removed a thorn from the wolf's paw as in Aesop's Fable of the *Lion and the Mouse* and its Greek antecedent *Androcles and the Lion*. In all cases, the fierce animal befriends the meeker, soft-hearted protagonist. In the manga, Devadatta is raised by the wolf and even feeds on her milk. His time in the wild, observing one animal feeding on the other goes on for another twenty-five pages, showing that it is clearly an important theme for Tezuka. In the end of this section, Devadatta observes the mother wolf dying and is then taken in by Naradatta, the blind ascetic condemned to live as an animal. Naradatta teaches Devadatta that "The weak perish. The strong survive."¹⁴⁾ Next Devadatta meets an old haggardly woman who has been shunned by society. She dresses him as a girl and arms him with poison in attempt to

14) Vol. Three, 100.

exact revenge on those who have abused her. When the ruse is discovered, Devadatta has to flee with the now-ailing woman and ends up forcing her to drink the poison as euthanasia.

This treatment takes Devadatta's childhood in a different direction than found in Buddhist texts. It allows young readers to sympathize with the character, even if they cannot agree with him. This puts it in-line with the East Asian Mahāyāna idea that everyone is endowed with Buddha Nature and that there are no *Ichantika*, individuals incapable of enlightenment. Corresponding to this theory, in the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Buddha predicts that in a future life Devadatta will attain enlightenment. Although in the manga Devadatta's father is Bandaka, this is not why he eventually opposes the Buddha. Instead, he is portrayed as a soft-hearted boy who is abused. This theme that people are only evil in the degree that society has mistreated them, is central to Tezuka's message. It is also interesting to note the grounds on which Tezuka makes Devadatta oppose the Buddha. In the later volumes, not only does Devadatta want to become Buddha's heir as leader of the sangha, which corresponds to the Buddhist texts, but he also wants to make Buddhism into a business and bureaucracy. According to Tezuka's description, Devadatta believes the Buddha is incapable of running the sangha efficiently. If he is allowed to run the sangha, Devadatta claims he could take the small following in the forest and expand it to millions who would build lavish temples, establish parishes, and allow the sangha to

amass a fortune.¹⁵⁾ Clearly, the Japanese Buddhist establishment is the target of this criticism. This message corresponds to that found in the Korean movie released in the same time period, *Mandala* (1981) directed by Im Kwon-taek. Likewise, although in less harsh ways, Tezuka criticizes other rich Japanese institutions as well. In Volume Four, when Prince Ajatasattu admits a giant to the royal army the guards complain, “You can’t just let him in like that! The guards are the elite! We’re all graduates of Tokyo University!”¹⁶⁾ This is likely a general jab at elitism rather than a specific criticism of the famous Indian Buddhism program at that school. Tezuka earned a medical degree from Osaka University, the 3rd highest rated institution of higher education in Japan. He became a licensed physician, but chose not to practice medicine. His characters in several manga series, including *Blackjack*, criticize the modern medical establishment for being small minded and corrupt.

In other self-effacing humor to which shōnen might relate, Devadatta gets Prince Ajatasattu hooked on reading comics. When the five ascetics learn that Buddha is giving sermons to deer, one responds, “That only happens in comics.”¹⁷⁾ Many times throughout the series, the young Buddha teaches animals to love one another. There is reference to the Banyan

15) Vol. Eight, 233.

16) Vol. Four, 298.

17) Vol. Five, 261.

Deer Jataka, Crocodiles gather to protect the Buddha, and he explains that “Beasts don’t suffer from greed and confusion, which means they are closer to God.”¹⁸⁾

Readers who are surprised at the references to God will be equally astonished at the theistic message that runs throughout and is central to the conclusion of the series. In fact, “Pray Rightly” is found as one of the Eightfold Path according to Tezuka. Throughout the manga portrayal of his life, Brahman appears to the Buddha in the form of an old, bearded wise man in heaven. Brahman in the story appears to be God almighty, the intelligence and force behind nature and the universe. Brahman appears to Buddha and tells him all living beings are interconnected. He shows Buddha how to supernaturally enter the consciousness of a dead or dying person, and persuade that soul to reenter the body it has left. Not only does this seem to defy the Buddhist principle of anātmā, but it makes Buddha’s realization a part of Hinduism. In fact, Tezuka plays down the greatness of the Buddha’s enlightenment throughout the series. Even after enlightenment the Buddha is portrayed as fearing death, as crying over his failure to help others, even his own followers, including Tatta who, in the end, ignores his teachings and returns to violence against Kosala. Tezuka has the Buddha speculate about where such violence will lead in 2000 years, on a page illustrated with a nuclear bomb explosion.¹⁹⁾

18) Vol. Five, 236.

19) Vol. Eight, 235.

Conclusions

Tezuka focuses on tales of children and teenagers, using long portrayals of violence, bullying, comedy, and even sexuality in his retelling of the story of the Buddha. This appears to be done in order to attract the young male audience that read shōnen genre manga. Generally, Buddha is depicted as having a lot of teenage angst, such as on the cover of Volume Four. This is proven to be appealing to shōnen manga readers then and now.

In addition to human women and female devas being bare chested throughout the series, there are fairly graphic illustrations of sexual advances, such as Visākhā's attempted seduction or even rape of the Buddha.²⁰ Here and at other places, when the women are seductive, Tezuka draws their nipples with two circles each, one inside the other. For example, after Visākhā becomes a follower of the Dharma, her nipples become single circles or nonexistent. The same is true of the depiction of a naga deva that possesses Ananda and tries to convince him to kill the Buddha.

Tezuka also makes numerous intertextual references that only manga insiders are likely to understand, thereby providing them with a feeling of group acceptance as insiders. For example, Tezuka's character known in his other manga as Hyōtan-tsugi appears unexpectedly at numerous points throughout. Hyōtan-tsugi appears to be a poisonous mushroom

20) Vol. Seven, 276.

that looks like a beat-up pig with no pupils. Hyōtan-tsugi often appears to express other characters' frustrations. It also seems that Tezuka modeled Assaji after Hyōtan-tsugi, both short comic characters having x-marked bandages on their foreheads. In one panel, when Buddha says "In other words, I'm a doctor" he draws the Buddha with the scarred face and long hair of his main character from another series *Blackjack*. Black Jack in that series is a medical genius who does not have a surgical license. Like his 1970-1 manga *Ode to Kirihito*, *Blackjack* is a critique of what Tezuka saw as the ineffectual medical establishment.²¹ The *Blackjack* series won the 1st Kodansha Manga Award in the shōnen genre in 1977. In the Buddha manga, there is also an appearance of Dr. Jotaro Honma from *Blackjack* and Saruta from Tezuka's *Phoenix*. Dr. Red from Tezuka's *Metropolis* appears as Siddhartha's doctor and Shunsuke Ban or Dr. Mustache from *Astro Boy* is Detective Pampas in the *Buddha* manga.²² It is unlikely that the Dalai Lama or Robert Thurman, both known to have read Tezuka's *Buddha*, understood these references like young Japanese readers of the time would have and this is the point of being an insider and making the reader feel like one. Tezuka himself

21) See Cian O'Luanaigh, "Osamu Tezuka: Father of manga and scourge of the medical establishment" in *The Guardian*, Wednesday 21 July 2010, www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2010/jul/21/medical-manga-osamu-tezuka (accessed May 5, 2016).

22) Vol. Six, 46.

also appears here and there as a character in the series, humorously breaking the fourth wall with some impromptu comment. For example, at one point, Tatta takes off a battle helmet, commenting, "I don't need this. Tezuka says it's hard to draw anyway!"²³⁾

If we consider Tezuka's reworking of the Eightfold Path beside the Buddha's message, some general observations can be made about the differences. Side by side, they are as follows.

**The Noble Eightfold Path
taught by the Buddha²⁴⁾**

right view
right aspiration
right speech
right action
right livelihood
right effort
right mindfulness
right concentration

**Tezuka's retelling
of the Eightfold Path²⁵⁾**

see rightly
think rightly
speak rightly
work rightly
live rightly
strive rightly
pray rightly
stay rightly

Among these, the first two, which may be considered the wisdom portion are practically the same. Among the next three that comprise the morality section, Tezuka's work rightly and live rightly might be said to be in reverse order of the Buddha's right livelihood

23) Vol. Five, 134.

24) Nagara Sutta in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

25) Vol. Five, 289.

and right action. However, this is inconsequential. However, Tezuka radically changes the last three, which may be called the meditation section. In the Pāli cannon, this are right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration, all related to meditative practice that Theravada Buddhism considers necessary for overcoming dukkha. Tezuka's reworking replaces these with strive rightly, pray rightly, and stay rightly. This may correspond with both his positioning the Buddha's message in terms of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva values as he seems them and to appeal to shōnen readers who are unlikely to meditate. While we might argue that according to the Eightfold Path, wisdom, morality, and meditation are all necessary for overcoming dukkha, it is true of Pure Land Buddhism, the most popular branch of Mahāyāna in Japan, that morality and faith, not meditation are the most important qualities for Buddhists.

A final issue that should be considered in light of making the life of the Buddha attractive to readers of shōnen manga is the further recent transformation of Tezuka's story into the English language adaptation and 2007 translations by Yuji Oniki. This topic could be a study in itself, as Oniki uses current slang and heavy cursing to relate to English speaking kids. As with the intertextual manga references, these expressions serve to make young readers insiders, establishing the dialogue as language of their own and their friends as opposed to that of high literature and their parent's generation. In this sense, the story of the Buddha becomes one of young Americans and other English speakers.

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[Abstract]

This paper examines Tezuka Osamu's (1928-89) retelling of the biography of the Buddha to appeal to readers of the shōnen genre of manga. Tezuka is a well-known Japanese manga writer and artist, cartoonist, animator, film producer, and activist. In 1972, he began a series of manga adventures in Japan titled *Buddha* (ブツダ). The series ran to 14 editions in that country, ending in 1983. Subsequently, it was translated and reproduced in eight editions worldwide. This critically acclaimed series, which won the Eisner Award in 2004 and 2005 and Harvey Awards the same years, is considered the last great work in Tezuka's life. It has spawned two animated movies so far: *Buddha: The Great Departure (Tezuka Osamu no budda: Akai sabaku yo! Utsukushiku)*, 2011 and *Buddha 2: Tezuka Osamu no Budda - Owarinaki tabi* (2014). A third film is scheduled to be produced.

While *Astro Boy* is Tezuka's best known work in America, he equally portrays Buddha as an innocent boy who rejects the political intrigues and imperialism drawn around him. In this way, Tezuka's *Buddha* retains an original purity in his heart, a Japanese post-war ideal and optimistic portrayal of the future potential of the country and the world. With reference to some of his other works, the paper describes how Buddha represents Tezuka's own ideas as much as the canonical Buddhist telling of the life story.

Key Words: Tezuka Osamu, Life of Buddha, manga, anime, comics

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