

Indonesian-published Japanese Graphic Narrative as a Media to Convey the Success Story of Japanese Corporations, in Order to Build Awareness and Understanding about Their World Recognized Achievement That Related to the Spirit of Bushido

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Abstract: Manga, known as comics from Japan, with its unique characteristics, it has become part of the graphic art heritage that accepted and influencing in many parts of the world, including Indonesia, which also available in both and digital medias. Manga is not only as a medium for conveying fiction and non-fiction. It has also narrating the traditional Japanese ethics and culture, which have been applied on the daily life including on modern organisation. The Japanese ethics and culture often found in a package of a story on graphic narrative, to build understanding and perception for the readers about this cultural-oriented approach that has been developed becomes part of management theory. This paper will discuss Biographic Manga in conveying information and its relation to the human factor, how human processing the information. Begin with a brief history of Japanese comics and the spirit and ethics of the Samurai that also known as Bushido, then will be discussed how the information delivered as an attempt to introduce or remind about the traditional culture that bring success to the Japanese industries.

1 INTRODUCTION

A picture is not only a two-dimensional form but also as a vehicle to convey information or visual content in complex meaning to the specific target audience. It is related to the human ability in processing the information in visual form that can be collected through direct observation, seeing them on printed, electronic, or digital media.

In the human information-processing system that consisting of three main structures: sensory memory, working memory, and long-term memory, the data obtained through senses is transformed into meaningful information. All data received through the eyes as external stimulus, such as colour and shape in an image, register in sensory memory. Then passes on to working memory where sensory information is combined with prior knowledge so that images can be interpreted and understood (Malamed, 2009).

However, working memory has a limited capacity that affects to the person's cognitive abilities. The new information can be quickly faded

away unless the information is manipulated (Malamed, 2009). For example, deliberately memorized or repeated until stored in long-term memory and can be retrieved by working memory and can be used as a prior knowledge to complement the next new sensory information.

The way delivering information through a particular approach regarding to the human factors can cause more effective results and accepted by the target audience. One of the approaches that used to convey information with complex meaning is through a graphic narrative. A significant feature of the narrative is its ability to captivate an audience, regardless narrating the true story as well as fiction, fact or fantasy (Malamed, 2009). The human ability to imagine what is narrated, both visual and verbal, in the working memory on the information-processing system can trigger an emotional reaction as if it were occurring in the physical environment. Looking at to that human factor, graphic narrative can be a vehicle for conveying information through both fiction and non-fiction. In a combined package of visual and narrative displays that evoke feelings

and emotions, in order to be interpreted and understood.

Graphic narrative, a term first introduced by David Kunzle in the book *The History of the Comic Strip*, as a combination of still image composition with narration to create a story (Darmawan, 2012). Referring to these definitions, the terminology with a similar explanation, in French called *Bande Dessinee* which means image in the sequence. The definition of Graphic Narrative, Graphic Novel, or Comic Art, in other parts of the world simply called Comic, Manga, and others (Petersen, 2011). Similar to the Kunzle's definition, Scott McCloud, a comic expert, define it as a series of pictures in deliberate sequence (McCloud, 1993).

Manga, the term for picture books or comics from Japan, with all its unique characteristics as a graphic narrative, it has become a graphic art that accepted in many places in the world, including Indonesia. In 1995, former Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa using *Manga* as a medium to express political and social opinions (Leung, 2005). Furthermore, in 2008, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Masahiko Komura, officially inaugurate the cartoon character, Doraemon, become the first "Animations Ambassador" as a Diplomatic Corp to promote Japanese popular culture (McCurry, 2008). In other words, modern *Manga*, including animation, not only as a medium to convey a fiction or non-fiction, but more than that, it can be as a propaganda or a medium to convey opinions.

The early period of Japanese Graphic narrative, along with the invention of printing technology in the Nara period (710-794), the Japanese was able to document and duplicate their traditional storytelling richness in the caricatural form known as *toba-e*. The graphic narrative has accepted by the Japanese people who were at that time had already familiar with reading and writing. The illustrated story was firstly introduced in Japan by Buddhist scholars from Central Asia, to tell a story about the journey of Buddha, on scrolls (*emaki*) that dominated with picture. This Japan's narrative art unique characteristic which emphasizes the expressive visualization detail on clothing, gestures, and show concern to the social customs are still survives as one of the Japanese comic books unique characteristics until now. One of the artists from Edo periods (1603-1868), Katsushika Hokusai, known by his dramatic depictions of Mount Fuji, The Great Wave of Kanagawa, also known as the artist who popularized the word Manga that derived from the Mandarin, *Manhua*, which has the meaning as "spontaneous sketches". The word Manga

popularized by through his book title, *Hokusai Manga*, which was first published in 1814 up to 12 edition contains caricatures and studies various poses of animals and humans in daily activities such as farming, hunting, sporting activities and games, including imaginative images of godlike and spirits (Petersen, 2011). The purpose of publishing the book is to promote his owns drawing style to a wider audience.

However, what does not exist on the Hokusai Manga is an attempt to tell a story. Although Japan has a long history in terms of storytelling through pictures, but none of these traditions in accordance with the definition of Manga in the 20th century. Osamu Tezuka, the creator of Astro Boy, who recognised as the father of modern manga since the comic become the "blueprint" of modern Manga. Tezuka was emphasizing in time frame movement on his comic that gives "filmic" feeling to the comic readers, as perceived when watching film. Visual language on Tezuka's comics similar to Will Eisner's definition of comic as "framing time" (Darmawan, 2012).

Manga are often portraying Japan in details in the package of simple fiction or non-fiction stories. Biographical manga, one of genre in the Japanese comic, become a media to deliver knowledge as well as to convey the value from world recognised organizations or people in Japan which are inseparable from the traditional Japanese ethics and culture. One of the ethics that has been embedded for a long time among the Japanese society is *Bushido* or the spirit and ethics of the *Samurai* (Bushi) which includes loyalty, willing to sacrifice, honesty, discipline, and Perseverance. The ethics and spirit of Bushido itself has been added by the doctrine of the mean from Confucius thought in the Edo period that ruled by the Great Generals (Shogun) Tokugawa family to foster the morals of Samurais to make them not to be tempted by materialistic desires or not to be used against the government. The doctrine teaches the equilibrium principle of the relationship between government and people that emphasizes in harmony and balance in various aspects of life (Sadono, 2004). After the government succeeded to indoctrinate the samurais, the Bushido ethic applies to all levels of society, thus Tokugawa succeeded in shaping the character of the nation in various fields and layers of society and community organizations adopted until today.

The combination of Bushido's spirit and the doctrine of equilibrium also generates basic values and work guidelines for many modern Japanese corporate managements that includes honesty,

discipline, loyalty, and maintaining harmonious relationships within the organization as well as among community. The Japanese management which adapting traditional cultural oriented has attracted western management expertise, since the country has managed to accelerate the economic growth, after the World War II, in a relatively short period. The cultural insight has been developed and become part of management theory (Sadono, 2004)

The value of the Bushido spirit is presented in the Manga that published in Indonesia, in this case the Biographical Manga about Japanese leading companies in which are also known by their continuous innovation. The biographic mangas which are also available in digital, as the media to convey information about the world recognise Japanese company and their achievement, at the same time, the Mangas have also tried to convey the richness of the traditional Japanese values and ethics that are applied and become the modern Japanese corporate culture. Regardless of there are any contributions from the Japanese government to the Manga industries, Manga has become a medium to displays Japanese culture and ethics in illustrated stories. It has been contributing to deliver the information to build awareness and perception among readers. The importance of knowing the traditional Japanese values that have been implemented and become part of today's daily life is as a comparative study of how the character of the nation is built and applied, since the process it is requires determination and certain amount of time (Benawa, 2012)

2 METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research approach in which conducting content analysis from the biographic manga that published in Indonesia relating to traditional Japanese ethics in society. Then, the data collection is associated with the human factor, how humans interpret the information conveyed through the graphic narrative so can be obtain a clearer picture about the role of graphic narrative in conveying certain values and ethics in order to create understanding among the readers.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Project X Challengers, created by NHK Project X Production Team, published in 2010 by Elex Media

Komputindo, biographic mangas about the success story of four world recognized Japanese company and product. The four biographic mangas are also available in digital since they have been officially published by Digital Manga Publishing, with titles *Shinkansen: The Tenacity of Shinkansen's Invention*, *Cup Noodle: The Miracle of 8.2 Billion Cups*, *Honda: Conquer the World's Top Race*, dan *Digital Camera: The Man's Consolation Match*. The four organisations that have been adapted by NHK Project X Production Team to the biographic manga, not merely because they want to promote the Japanese leading industry and the excellence of human resources, but also because they are pioneers in their respective fields, and their innovations has been beneficial to the Japanese community and as an inspiration to other community worldwide.

The first title, *Shinkansen*, tells about the efforts of post-World War II Japanese scientists to create a fast train in order to provide convenient transportation that would be useful in peace era. The second title, *Cup Noodle*, about the Nissin Food Company that create a fast food product as response to the modern lifestyle changes among Japanese urban society. The next title, *Honda*, is about Honda motorcycle companies which tried to win international racing competition in order to dominate the world motorcycle market, and the last title, *Digital Camera*, is about Casio's electronic product development team in creating digital camera that later change the way people doing their work and shift the camera industry to digital.

One thing in common from the four titles, they are narrating problems and failures that have to be faced by the team before achieving success even though it has taken few years of trying. All these efforts were complied with the perseverance, one of the spirits in Bushido's doctrines. As narrated on the *Shinkansen*, when the post-war world II scientists have taken more than 15 years to creating the train that finally breaking the train speed record in that time. Each book is also narrated that they have to face many problems to be solved before achieving the results as it was planned. As narrated in *Cup Noodle* where the product development process including packaging design, developing ingredients, manufacturing techniques, and selling the products, need to face testing and failures many times before finally accepted by the market. Even at the beginning of the story, it has narrated that the President Director of Nissin Food, has built the company after the failure from his previous business.

An effort to survive the world market competition has also narrated as in the *Honda*. When the company was trying to avoid bankruptcy, President Director Honda co. Ltd, Soichiro Honda, decided to join the world racing championship of the Isle of Man to prove the world market that Japanese motorcycles was not inferior to the European which has already known and won the race. The striving efforts are also shown in the Manga in title *Digital Camera* where the challenges that must be faced not only to create innovative product that match to target market, but also how to market the product and create new trend in urban society.

The similar things from the four stories are showing perseverance and teamwork, constantly trying to find solution in order to achieve the goals and contribute to the society in creating new cultures. In addition, there are similarities among the titles in which none of the four titles that narrating individual work. Even though the success was also due to the role of the corporate leader, the act of teamwork narrated in detail. As what it has illustrated, that each person on the team had an important role and each role contributes to the success of the project. Relating to the role of the leader, the four titles narrated the importance of the leader in making decision and determining the further steps to the project. It was required a harmonious relationship between members and their leaders, align with the spirit of Bushido and the doctrine of mean that generates basic values and work guidelines for many modern Japanese corporate managements which are includes honesty, discipline, loyalty, and maintaining harmonious relationships within the organization as well as with the society.

The most unique thing from these four titles is on the *Shinkansen*, which is narrating the scientists that formerly work and use their knowledge for warfare, creating weapon and warplanes, but soon after the war was over, the knowledge was actually has been used to develop a useful technology to improve the quality of social life. In this case it shows that one of Bushido's doctrines, loyal to the government, has been maintained in times of war and peace. It has been believed that creating weapon during the wartime was as their devotion and dedication to the nation, the same things when developing fast train in peacetime which both also made impact to the society.

Although it is not in written explanation about the value of the Bushido and the doctrine of mean in the four manga, it is obviously recognized through the narrated stories. For most of the Japanese

readers, what have been narrated could be as something that already as part of everyday life both in corporate and society.

For Japanese readers, the biographic manga can be as a reminder about the quality of Japanese human resources, so it does not need to be written and explained in detail about the traditional value because it has been applied in various layers of society for many years. The values are embedded in long term memory on human information-processing systems that obtained through everyday behavior, formal education, and social environment, all of them continuously as sensory information that is continuously manipulated in working memory. But for the Non-Japanese readers, in addition to fulfilling its function as a biographic manga that convey the success and achievement of the world recognized Japanese company, all information on the manga as a sensory information that passes on to working memory are still needs to be added with prior knowledge so that all of the information can be interpreted and understood.

At the end of each title, there are some important facts related to the story has narrated, such as related to the development process, characters, location, and product. These important facts are presented through photography, not in the form of manga, as addition to remind the reader, also complete the information that has already been delivered through typical manga-style illustration that simplifies the shape, including the faces of main characters in the narrated story. Visualization through photography will provide more concrete, convincing, and provide a clearer picture of the actual events. Through clear and repeated information delivery, the information has been manipulated, to make them not quickly fade from the working memory on human information-processing system. The information presented on the Biographic manga are to makes the target audience understand the narrated story, at the same time, recalling the value of Bushido, even though it has not been explained explicitly trough narrated text. This information can complement the prior knowledge that related to Japan, which has already stored in long-term memory.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the human ability in processing information, the biographic manga, both in printed and digital, becomes a medium that is able to convey the information about the success story of Japanese companies and the value of Bushido's spirit that

have been applied on Japanese society for many years. However, the four manga cannot be said as a media to indoctrinate the Bushido's value to the outside world. Very different thing happens to the Japanese readers where the value has already embedded and experienced on everyday life. However, what is illustrated through the biographic manga is an example on how knowledge and values can be delivering to the specific readers through popular readings, on graphic narrative approaches, which can be accepted by readers in many different cultural background and nationality. Moreover, since it has been officially published in digital, the information and message can even easier to distribute and collect by the target audience. The importance of knowing the traditional Japanese values that have been implemented and become part of today's daily life is as a comparative study of how the character of the nation is built and applied. In order to provide information and values into a media that easier to digest and easily understood as mentioned above, both on printed and digital. The graphic narrative has become one of solutions to delivering knowledge, in contribution to provide quality education, to improving people's lives and sustainable development.

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