

SHANK

MANGAVERSE 5.2
SPECIAL **DEMON** ISSUE



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2

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BOOK-OFF



MANGA
ANIME

J-FILM
J-CULTURE

MANGAVERSE 5.2 Special ONI Issue! // 11-2021

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Cover art by patokon

Contents art by Yushi

Hail!

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An N3Fzine

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WHERE in the HECK Have We Been?

Hail, good people! What cheer with you?!

It has been several long, dreary months since I last contacted you across space and time. It is now October of 2021 (I started this intro in August, but here we are) and the first half of the Japanese college year is over. Grades have been turned in and summer vacation is halfway over. I've now finished teaching my first semester of Manga History to an eclectic group of future manga creators and I've learned quite a bit. The first lesson is the one I consider the most interesting as I focus on the influences that made Tezuka manga what it would become. TEZUKA Osamu had access to a wide variety of pre-war comics and cartoons including the satirical works of KITAZAWA Rakuten, the sublime artistry of Winsor McCay, and the comic genius of George McManus. The Disney (but not Disney) artistry of Barks, Iwerks, and Gottfriedsen and the combo of Segar and the Fleischer Brothers were on constant loop on the projector that Little Tez's father had procured. My main goal in this class was to connect these future creators to the wealth of comics history that Tezuka had at his fingertips and judging by the comments from students, of course many over-eager to tell me what I wanted to hear, were at least made aware that comics has a long history of innovation and subversion. Their biggest surprise seemed to be that early comic strip artists were just so damn good. More than one were enamored with Geo Herriman's masterpiece *Krazy Kat* and that, to me, means a job well done so I'll be patting my back. PAT PAT. But don't call me Pat unless it's part of the nickname of my youth, Pat Rat.

Also manga-related, after giving a presentation on reading manga through the lens of Monster Theory last year, I was interviewed twice about the oni of Japanese folklore as they appear in *Kimetsu no Yaiba: Demon Slayer*. Often translated as devils or demons, oni have a complex history, much of which is still being debated, and are still a very visible part of modern so-called traditional culture. As the articles were published to coincide with the *Demon Slayer* movie's breaking of the box-office record, I made it to the Yahoo! Japan news top page which sounds a lot cooler here than you might think. No, really. In relation to the same subject, I was invited to a round-table discussion which led to my second official academic article. Gotta pad that resume with writing credits if I'm gonna get more uni work, you know. Since I've mostly put the oni focus to

bed, I've been looking at mermaids in manga and this research has kept me occupied. Another project which has kept me busy but has been good in fueling further historical research is the GAIJINGUY YouTube channel (<http://youtube.com/c/gaijinguy>) which mostly focuses on Showa-era manga but which will have some Monster Theory thrown in as well. Alongside this, I've been co-hosting *The Law of Equivalent Exchange* podcast with *Deconstructing Comics*' Tim Young where we discuss in detail each chapter of the Fullmetal Alchemist manga.

In rat-related news, I'm now officially Rex Rodentia, a royal rat personage, a major mousey monarch if you will. I won't bore you with how I ascended to the throne of the sewer kingdom, it's mostly political conniving and many a lancet at whiskered throat, but I made my one and only appearance as the Rat King in Swan Ballet School's recital performance of *The Nutcracker* alongside my daughter. Let me just say that what I lacked in form and grace, I made up in rattiness. Performing on the same stage as my then-eight-now-nine year old is a lifelong dream come true echoing when I was a young beady-eyed rodent performing in community theater as Munchikin #11 with my mother as The Wicked Witch of The West. I guess there might be a villainous part in the future for my progeny as well.

This issue isn't as meaty as the last two perhaps, but it needs to be put out so I can break through the inertia. We've got part 2 of the Akihabara article and a manga reviews by regular contributor **Jim Reddy** (who also suggested the theme of demons for this ish). We've got some fantastic demon-related art from retro anime expert **Dave Merrill** and pro manga creator **Tomoko Hirabayashi**, plus some work from **Yushi Tabara** who always does solid stuff. We are especially excited to have contributions by **Shawn Honnold** who runs the IG and YouTube channel Koenji Shawn Reviews (@koenji_shawn_reviews; <https://www.youtube.com/c/KoenjiShawnReviews>).

That's it for now. Take it easy, sleezy.

—Patrick Ijima-Washburn
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Editorial

The end of a generation

As I'm writing this, I'm still reeling from the news that SHIRATO Sanpei (originally OKAMOTO Noboru), whom I've featured here in this zine has passed away on Oct. 8th from complications related to pneumonia. His brother OKAMOTO Tetsuji passed away just four days later from similar circumstances. I had just been thinking of which mangaka I'd like to meet that were still alive and he was my top choice, though at that time, unbeknownst to me, he had already shuffled off his mortal coil and whatnot.

I am deeply saddened by the loss and by the fact that he hadn't finished his magnum opus, *Kamui-Den* (Legend of Kamui, 1964~). He's an important creator, but he's mostly unknown by younger generations. I hope that more of his works get translated into many languages and waves of new fans are exposed to his genius.

2021 was a rough year for manga creators as we lost several legendary figures such as SAITO Takao, creator of *Golgo 13*, one of the longest-running manga series of all time and a key figure in the popularization of the *gekiga* "style." We also lost 70s-era mangaka and manga historian MINAMOTO Taro before he could complete the second volume of his manga history (one I was looking forward to as I use his very user friendly first volume in my Introduction to Manga History class. Both were getting on in years, but *Berserk* creator MIURA Kentaro was only 54 when he succumbed to heart disease also leaving his saga unfinished, though the news has been announced that there will be a next volume of *Berserk*. I would be remiss if I didn't mention SAEKI Kayono, creator of shojo hits like *Smash! Meg*, *Kuchibeni Konbatto* (Lipstick Combat), and *Akihi*. Both her and husband SHINTANI Kaoru appear in SHIMAMOTO Kazuhiko's biographical *Aoi Honoo* (Blue Flame).

Currently, of the foundational Tokiwa-So group that formed around TEZUKA Osamu, FUJIKO Fujio A is still around at 87 along with MIZUNO Hideko (82) and a few others. but with SAITO Takao's passing, YAMAMORI Susumu (86) is the only living member of the original Gekiga Kobo group, which was created as a response and an evolution of "Tezuka manga." Many of the Oizumi Salon group are still active in

creating comics, but the generation that were active previous two the appearance of **Weekly Magazine** and **Weekly Sunday** in 1959 and were instrumental in two manga revolutions that solidified what modern comics are now few and far between. There are still so many questions about that era and TONS of comics from those "golden" and "silver" ages that have yet to be rediscovered. One of the goals of **Mangaverse** under my stewardship will be to introduce some of these treasures as I myself learn about them and their creators. I hope you'll join me on this journey and put up with my spotty schedule as I adjust to some recent lifestyle changes.

Thanks for your support and know that we are always looking for contributors. In fact, I'd love to be able to have a readers page much like they had in the old kashihon books with comments, art, and news.

See ya when I see ya!



Go Nagai's Devilman
Manga (l) and TV (r) versions



Koga Shinichi (古賀新一) (born Koga Shinsaku [古賀申策]; 1936-2018) was a horror and occult mangaka who gained fame for his Hibari Shobou (ひばり書房) releases, and later, his most well-known series, *Eko Eko Azarak* (エコエコアザラク), which received numerous adaptations. He is considered by many to be a pioneer of Japanese horror and occult manga and stands amongst greats such as Hino Hideshi, Umezu Kazuo (Umez), Inuki Kanako, and Ito Junji.

As a young child, Koga and his family were living in Shanghai at the end of the war in 1945, but his father passed away from illness, so he, his mother, and three other siblings moved back to his hometown of Ōmuta in the Fukuoka prefecture of Japan. (Incidentally, this is the hometown of Hagio Moto, one of the Magnificent Forty-Niners which was a group of women mostly born in 1949 who revolutionized shōjo manga that was until then dominated by men.) Impoverished, he couldn't even afford shoes and recalled the pain of stepping on sharp rocks and the numbing cold of the winter snow under his feet. Despite being poor, in the 1950s the kashihon (貸本) system began to grow, generally referred to as the Rental Manga era, so anyone with ¥10-20 could get access to a manga or book, which typically retailed for ¥100-150 but were generally not sold to the public. This is how Koga likely stumbled upon Osamu Tezuka's *Lost World*

(1948) in the early 50s.

Lost World was so influential to young Koga that he set his sights on becoming a mangaka. (He even sent a letter to Osamu Tezuka to which Tezuka replied, but Koga's strict stepfather had opened the letter and burnt it before Koga had a chance to read it.) After graduating junior high



Koga probably teaching the parrot to say the witch's chant, "Eko! Eko! Azarak! Eko! Eko! Zomelak!"

school, he left home and worked in a candy factory, painted signage, and hauled ice to support himself while teaching himself the skills and techniques to become a manga artist. After saving money for three years he was able to move to Tokyo, and soon after that at age 21 (1957), he debuted in the early Hibari Shobō (ひばり書房) publication **Black Cat** (黒猫) with **The Shadowless Criminal*** (影なき犯人). In fact, he only approached Hibari Shobō because of the name—he was a big fan of singer Misora Hibari—and little did he know then that it would set him on his path to becoming one of the most respected mangaka in the world of horror and occult manga.

On a side note, while at Hibari, he worked alongside fellow horror master Umez, and in a recent interview, Ito Junji credited Koga as being one of his main influences in his early years—as many modern mangaka have.

Over the following seven years (until age 28) he produced nearly 50 stories for Hibari Shobou. It should be noted, however, that this was still during the Rental Manga era in which mangaka got paid very little. Koga received only ¥250 per page, so he and his wife could only afford a ¥10,000 per month apartment. However, in 1966, kaiki manga, or

bizarre manga, began to explode in girls comics anthology mag **Weekly Shōjo Friend** (週刊少女フレンド), so rival magazines were clamoring for weird, wild, and fantastical horror. Koga was finally hired to produce a running series for the weekly magazine **Margaret** (週刊マーガレット), his lauded **White Snake Castle** (白へび館), which added needed stability to his life as a struggling mangaka.



White Snake Castle

Then it all changed for him in 1973 with the release of the movie *The Exorcist*. Its huge popularity in Japan created a rising demand for occult movies, books, and manga. Koga was approached by Kabemura Taizou (壁村耐三), Chief Editor for **Weekly Shōnen Champion** (週刊少年チャンピオン), to create an occult series, and in 1975 **Eko Eko Azarak** was born. The manga series continued for 19 volumes (original run 1975-79) and was adapted into six movies, two TV dramas, an anime, two video games, and various CDs and books over the next three decades. During these years, Koga continued to release works through various publishers such as Hibari Shobō, Rippu Shobō, Akita Shoten, and Kodansha, among others.



An issue of mystery anthology Black Cat Bessatsu 7 from the late fifties, early sixties

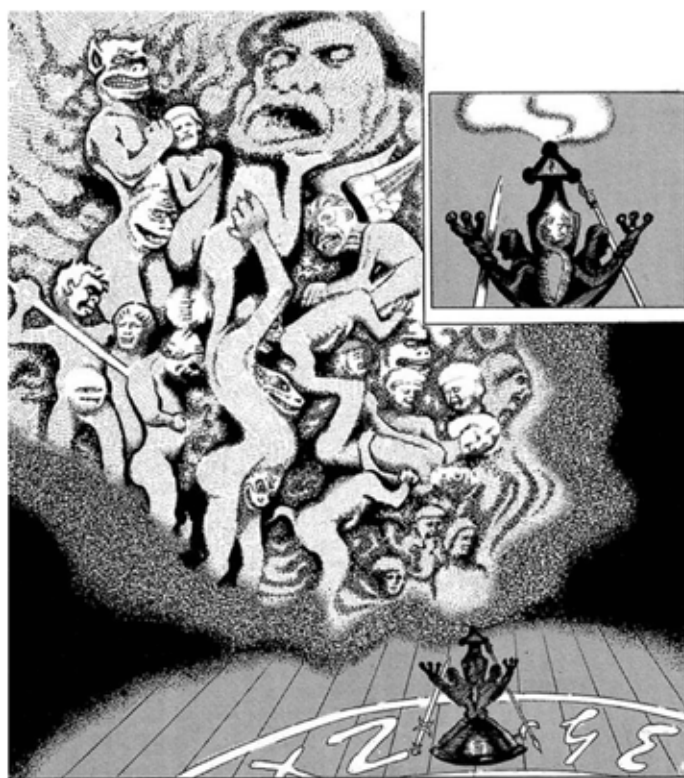


Eko Eko Azarak

Over the years, Koga Shinichi never forgot about his early influence, Osamu Tezuka, to whom he'd written the fan letter so many years ago. In fact, he had the chance to meet him at a **Shōnen Champion** party at one point, but he was so nervous that he froze up and wasn't even able to introduce himself. In his later years, Koga lived in Higashikurume, a suburb of Tokyo, where on his daily walks he would pass the Tezuka Estate, stop, and greet his then-already-passed idol with a smile. Koga passed away in March 2018 at age 81.

- Shawn Honnold

A gallery of Koga Shinichi covers from different eras and art from Eko Eko showing Koga's Umez-z-like texturing.

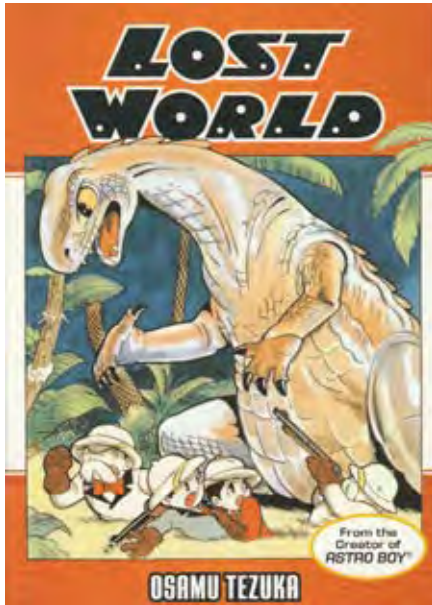


If you have any information to add to this article, please contact Shawn Honnold at koenjishawnreviews@gmail.com as it's truly difficult to find information on Koga!

Lost World by Osamu Tezuka

Translation by Kumar Sivasubramanian

Dark Horse Comics, 2003



Lost World (English ed.)

A mysterious planet approaches Earth so a group of scientists, a detective, and a talking rabbit journey there to investigate. The group has to deal with crooks and a secret society. Once they arrive on the planet they face new dangers.

Lost World is one of Tezuka's earliest works. While

most of the art isn't as detailed or as polished as it would be later in his career, there are innovative and somewhat detailed panels spread throughout.

The first half of the book deals with the discovery of the planet while the second half deals with the journey to the planet and what happens once they land. There's a lot going on. Besides the mysterious planet, we have talking animals, plant people, a detective, a secret society, and scientists with guns. The story tends to jump from one crisis to the next. It includes slapstick humor, disguises, secret passwords, and messages dropped on the ground. There's also lots of awkward exposition. Understandable considering Tezuka was only 20 when this was published.

Tezuka's love of American comics and animation is apparent throughout. The design of one of the characters is based on Popeye. Also on one double page spread there's a crowd scene which includes **Popeye, Blondie, Dagwood, Betty Boop, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, the Little King, Henry, and Jiggs and Maggie**. Japanese characters such as **Fuku-chan** and **Norakuro** also appear.

The afterword by Tezuka includes background

information about the book. The title **Lost World** has no relation to the novel by Arthur Conan Doyle. Tezuka says that he had not even read the novel but chose the name because thought it sounded cool. He says something similar about his other work **Metropolis**.

Another reason some of the art doesn't look so polished has to do with the printing process at the time. According to Tezuka, "To put it simply, a block copy artist would trace the original manuscript in order to make zinc plates for printing. So inevitably the "touch" of the original manuscript's drawings would be changed." That's for sure. Some of the characters look really wonky in some panels.

It was also interesting to read that **Lost World** was originally published in two volumes and that two different artists did the tracing. Tezuka says "...so the first and second halves have different touches, as if they were drawn by different people. Because the images were so different, Leiji Matsumoto and others said things like, "Tezuka Osamu is actually two different people," and I heard they seriously believed it."

Lost World is an important piece of manga history. Although it was created very early in Tezuka's career, it's a fun read and his talent really shines through.

- Jim Reddy

IG: @jimreddy Blog: <https://welearnbywriting.blogspot.com>



Tons of Tezuka's comic influences make a guest appearance

Kimetsu no Yaiba: Demon Slayer v.1

by GOTOGE Koyoharu

In Taisho-era Japan, young Tanjiro provides for his family by selling charcoal. His life is shattered when a demon slaughters his family. His little sister Nezuko is the only survivor. Only one problem. She's become a demon. But she's not quite like other demons and Tanjiro believes he can find a way to cure her.

A mysterious swordsman sends Tanjiro to an old man who wears a Tengu mask. After passing a test the old man agrees to train Tanjiro to be a member of the Demon Slaying Corps. Not officially recognized by the government, the Corps trains it's members in secret to fight against demonkind. Tanjiro's journey to avenge his family and cure his sister begins.

I've been reading manga for years. Before English translations were available in the U.S. I bought manga from a Japanese grocery store in Atlanta and just looked at the pictures. The first manga I got was **Lone Wolf and Cub**. Then I bought **Catseye**, **City Hunter**, and **Space Adventure Cobra**. When translations started coming out I bought **Area 88**, **Kamui**, **Mai the Psychic Girl**, **Lone Wolf and Cub**, and **Astroboy**. These are still some of my favorites.

I like early **Dragonball** but never got into the later version. A few years ago I tried **One Piece** and **Naruto** but they didn't grab me. As I was reading **Demon Slayer** volume one, my first impression was that it was just another *Shonen Jump* boys manga. But by the end of the volume, the characters, story, and art had me hooked. I couldn't wait to read the next volume. That didn't happen with those other titles. I kept reading and **Demon Slayer** is now one of my favorites.

I went into this blind. I picked it up in 2019 because I kept seeing a handwritten ad for it in the Shinjuku Kinokuniya bookstore. I hadn't read any manga in a long time and the cover looked interesting. At that time I had no idea how immensely popular it was, both in Japan and in the States.

Not long after I discovered how popular it was, I started noticing negative comments online. Some people were going on about it being just another standard manga, that it wasn't very good, that they

didn't understand why it was so popular, yada yada yada. The comments were coming from both manga fans as well people in the manga industry. Whether it's movies, books, or comics, it always seems to happen whenever something becomes popular. I understand not liking something. There's no rule that says you have to like everything. What I don't understand is taking the next step and complaining that there are others that like it.

Oh well. It's happened before, it'll happen again, and I'll keep reading what I like.



- Jim Reddy



Kamado Nezuko, Demon at Large

While a serial killer carries out his methodical murders of atonement, a detective races to save his family from the same fate.



Museum 1-3

Museum, which ran in *Weekly Young Magazine* (週刊ヤングマガジン) from 2013 to 2014, is a three-volume crime-thriller with psychological horror elements written by Tomoe Ryouyuke. Based on the success of the manga, it was made into both a movie (with Shun Ogura) and a spinoff TV drama (with Masaki Miura) simultaneously (2016).



French ed. T01

One part *Seven* and one part *Saw*, this short manga series was perfectly suited to be made into a movie and TV series. Although the concepts are somewhat unoriginal and feel all too familiar, the arrangement of them was done in a way that created tension, and kept me, the reader, anxious to find out what would happen next. Additionally, the artwork is gruesome in detail, and a frog-faced figure lurking in the rain is always creepy enough to make your skin crawl!

I do wish that there was a bit more continuity

to the story though. It seems to jump around from a detective-chasing-a-psychotic-serial-killer story to a psychological-torture-horror story—I found myself wishing that the author would just make up his mind. Either of those tropes would have been fine on their own, although they do add to the twists—they make you wonder where the story is heading.

Overall, I found **Museum** to be a fun weekend read. I would give it 4.1/5.0 if I had to put a number to it. Entertaining, but not so amazing that I would revisit it someday. One and done.

Museum includes two short stories—each at the end of volumes two and three respectively. The first one, **Girl and Killer**, is a short tale of a hitman that finds himself coming to the aid a young girl being held captive by a mafia boss to fulfill his sick fetishes. The second, *僕らは親友という体で* (**We Are Best Friends**),



Girl and Killer

follows a group of three friends on a mountain drive to find a dead body in a suicide forest. I enjoyed both of these shorts, but the second one stood out the most. The references to *Stand By Me* were nostalgic, and the story progression from happy-go-lucky recent graduates on a summer excursion to an all-out horror show was exciting—albeit predictable. These were fun little bonuses to an already worthy three-volume series.

Volume one of **Museum** is available for free in English on the Kondansha website—link below. As for the Japanese version, text isn't overly technical, so an intermediate Japanese learner could manage it fine.

Museum movie trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UC-5TixpHjY>

Museum manga online in English:

<https://kodanshacomics.com/series/museum/>

Koenji Shawn Reviews

<https://www.youtube.com/c/KoenjiShawnReviews>

- Shawn Honnold

IG: @koenji_shawn_reviews

I started visiting Akihabara regularly when I was living in Chiba, Japan in the late 90s. I'm back in the States now but I have fond memories of my visits. It was the place to go for video games, manga, figures, and toys. My first stop was usually the Akihabara Radio Hall (秋葉原ラジオ会館) located right next to the station. This building had a number of pc and electronics shops but among it's eight floors (ten floors in the current building) were a large number of hobby shops selling everything an otaku could ask for.

Once I exited the station I would turn left and see the building across the street with it's huge neon sight all lit up in red. At the time the building had a tiny elevator which took forever and a wide stairway. My usual plan was to wait for the elevator, take it to the seventh floor (the eighth floor had offices and a performance hall) and make my way down by the stairway. The stairway was really, really wide so it was easy to navigate even when it was crowded.

One time a group of guys having a conversation passed me and one guy said "Deculture!" to one of his friends. This is a phrase from the Macross anime aka the first part of Robotech. It's a phrase the Zentradi say to express shock or surprise. He may have been referring to me as I didn't see many non-Japanese in Akihabara in those days but it didn't bother me. I just thought, "I know that reference!"

My first stop on the seventh floor was the Volks rental case shop. It had rental cases where people rented plastic cases of varying sizes to sell their stuff. There were quite a few cases so it took awhile to see everything. If you found something you liked, you would tell a clerk, they would open the case, and bring your purchase to the register. You could often find rare items and deals on all kinds of things. Another nice thing was that they sold items from claw crane games aka UFO Catchers at the front of the shop. You could usually find things there a little while after they appeared in the arcades. Buying them here was a lot easier than playing the games.

The seventh floor also had the card and roleplaying branch of the Yellow Submarine hobby shop. I would stop in when I was collecting plastic D&D miniatures from blind boxes. I didn't collect for long, but the figures came in handy a few years later when some friends and I started a D&D campaign. Shout out to our Dungeon Master Jon, and that's right Jayvin, we stole your horse.

Next stop was the Volks Hobby Showroom on the sixth floor. This large shop sold model kits, garage kits, action

figures, and high end figures and dolls. I usually didn't get anything here but I liked visiting as they had lots of figures and statues on display. It was like walking through a museum.

The fifth floor had a lot of offices so I would head to the 4th floor next. This floor had the Yellow Submarine, Uchusen, and Kaiyodo hobby shops. They carried western toys and figures as well as Japanese. I picked up a number of things in my collection from these shops. For the longest

time a life-size figure of Kenshiro from the Fist of the Northstar manga and anime stood at the entrance of Kaiyodo. There was also a human-size figure of Eva Unit 1 from Evangelion. People often stopped to take pictures.

The next stop was K-Books on the third floor. This was a huge book shop filled with manga and anime art books. There was so much stuff. I spent a lot of time browsing. I bought more art books than manga though.

After finishing at K-Books I headed to the second floor to check out one more hobby

shop, Kotobukiya. I also stopped in at a shop called Import DVD Shop Sale. They had a large screen at the entrance showing clips from the latest US releases. The shop was popular as it took months and sometimes years for movies to make it to Japan. At the time I would usually buy DVDs during visits home but they also had DVDs from Hong Kong and other rare stuff. The Hong Kong DVD sets of Japanese anime were so much cheaper than the Japanese sets. Japanese DVDs and Blu-rays are often still super expensive. The shop had spring, summer, and winter sales though so I wound up picking up a lot of cool things. They eventually moved to a larger shop in a building a few blocks away but then went out of business in 2015.

I visited the old Radio Building once after the big earthquake in 2011. There were huge cracks in the walls of the stairway. The building was closed down pretty soon after and eventually torn down. A new Radio Building was finished in 2014. It has ten floors now and escalators. It still has hobby shops but the building is a bit different. The escalators are nice but really narrow. K-Books now sells new and used anime products instead of manga and art books. There's a convenience store on the first floor and a shop that sells Akihabara souvenirs.

After the Radio Hall, both the old and new versions, I would head back out into the daylight and check out more shops. But that's a story for another time.



Radio Kaikan at dusk

Akihabara Radio Kaikan Timeline

1950

Akihabara Radio Kaikan, a two-story wooden building, opens in front of JR Akihabara Station. Tenants are on the first floor, offices are on the second.

1953

Akihabara Radio Kaikan Annex, which is also a two-story wooden building, opens on adjacent land. Tenants are on both the 1st and 2nd floors.

1962

An eight-story Akihabara Radio Kaikan building is constructed on the south side of the existing two-story wooden two-story building. This new building was the first skyscraper in Akihabara Electric Town.

1972

Two wooden two-story buildings were demolished, and a new eight-story Akihabara Radio Kaikan was constructed.

The main building of Akihabara Radio Kaikan is completed by merging with the building on the south side.

1976

NEC opens Bit-INN Tokyo on the 7th floor, which sparks the “My Computer” boom.

1998

K-BOOKS manga shop, Kaiyodo hobby shop, and Volks hobby shop all open in Akihabara Radio Kaikan. The hobby shops carry a variety of model kits, garage kits, and figures.

2000

Yellow Submarine (hobby, game, and card shop) opens at Akihabara Radio Kaikan.

By December, manga, garage kit, and other specialty stores occupy half of the floors.

2001

A plate with the inscription “The Birthplace of Personal Computers” is installed on the 7th floor.

A “World Radio Kaikan Akihabara” neon sign is installed in front of the building.

2011 March 11 - March 18

The building is temporarily closed due to the Tohoku Pacific Ocean Earthquake.

Aug 4

Akihabara Radio Kaikan Building is closed for good. After being torn down, construction of a new building begins.

2014 June 20

New building opens



Akiba historical site, Radio Kaikan



retro oni by patokon

LEADERS MAKE IT HAPPEN

Senior leaders felt that a leader should have the desire to get involved and be able to express the ideas of the senior class. Senior leaders tried to shape the views and ideas of the other seniors into reality. They had the responsibilities of selecting a class color, theme, and flower. The leaders also got together and planned for such programs as Who's Who and Honors Day.



Student government allows the students and administration to interact and reach agreements quickly.

Education is a process of self-discovery and those who realize that will rise to the top. — *Chris Alington*

I like how everyone seems excited and gets involved.



In keeping with our oni theme, here's "Lum Yearbook Photo circa 198X" by Dave Merrill



About That Time for a Cat Girl

Welcome to a very special SHIRATO SANPEI article featuring **GARO** #1, the groundbreaking comic mag and home to many avant-garde comic artists who pushed the artform in new directions.

This is the very first issue of revolutionary comic mag **GARO**. The cover design is based on the design of the Asahi Journal, a very hip literary-leaning mag. On the cover it says **Gekkan Manga Garo** (Monthly Manga not Gekiga Garo) No.1 1964 September First Issue and that it was published 9/1/1964 and will come out every month on the first. It also lists a collection of 4 Sanpei stories which we will get to. Then it lists UCHIYAMA Kenji's **Doubutsu Hyakuwa** (100 tales of animals). We'll talk about him as well.



GARO #1

What does this cover tell you? You have to look beyond the dismemberment and disemboweling to see that you have 4 armored samurai being taken apart by a very determined old fellow. We've got a series of action lines which for the most part seem to be radiating from the old man. That's one quick old dude! It's based on the first story, **Zashikiwarashi**, which has been lauded for its depiction of disposable elderly. This theme along with the class depictions shows up again in other works as well. What this cover tells me, is that this magazine is not for the kiddies. The blood is right there in color for all to see.

Before we dig in, I want you to know that this is a printed copy from the Fujita collection (thanks as always to Mr. Fujita) and not an original. Also, I learned from manga scholar and archivist ASAKAWA Mitsuhiro that the copy was never authorized and so only a few copies were printed before it was pulled from production.

And now a little background about OKAMOTO Noboru aka KUROKAWA Tetsu aka KUROKAWA Shin aka SHIRATO Sanpei. His father was OKAMOTO Tohki, a painter and socialist who worked with

OKAMOTO Tohki's "Urbania" cover from *Tokyo Puck*

KITAZAWA Rakuten on *Tokyo Puck*, the legendary comic magazine that inspired many early 20th century mangaka and artists such as TEZUKA Osamu and others. Shirato also aspired to be a painter at first and so did manga under a different name.

He made a big splash with the kashihon (rental comic) **Ninja Bugeicho Kagamaru-den** (Ninja Arts Scrolls: Legend of Kagamaru), basically causing the ninja manga explosion that rocked the 60s and carried on in waves until the present.

The publisher for Bugeicho was Sanyousha started by NAGAI Katsuichi and he put out several kashihon hits by Shirato, MIZUKI Shigeru, and others who had made the jump from kamishibai (paper theater, see **Mangaverse 5.0** for more details) to kashihon. He left Sanyousha which folded soon after, and then he formed Seirindo and in 1964 created **GARO** to be a platform for what would be SHIRATO's life work **Kamui Den** (Legend of Kamui). A



Kamui-den #1

quick personal note: Kamui Den #1 also happens to be the first Japanese comic I ever bought. (This is a story which I plan to tell elsewhere.)

GARO was also a platform for several kashihon mangaka who were starting to lose their livelihood as kashihon's popularity waned. Mizuki Shigeru, TSUGE Yoshiharu, KOJIMA Goseki (as SUWA Sakae, a name he took as

he had an exclusive contract with Hibari Shobo) and others owed their rediscovery to Nagai, Shirato, and Monthly Manga **GARO**.

1964, when the first **GARO** issue was published, was a very busy time for Shirato.

The previous year he won the Kodansha Children's Manga Award for his work



MIZUKI Shigeru talking to NAGAI about the 500 yen per page rate, higher than he was used to.



Ninja Bugeicho #1

on 「サスケ」 **Sasuke** and 「シートン動物記」 **Seton's Wild Animals**. Both of these are advertised in **GARO**, as Seirindo was putting out kashihon versions of each.

Sasuke started in the monthly mag **Shōnen** from 1961 (the same mag where **Tetsuwan Atomu** (Mighty Atom) and **Tetsujin #28** (Gigantor) were serialized) and then was also serialized partly in pull-out furoku comics. Seirindo started publishing the kashihon version of **Sasuke** in 1962 and **Seton's Wild Animals: Grizzly Bear Tales** in early 1964.



Sasuke #7

Sasuke would get an animated version in 1968, but the very first ninja anime series was Shirato's **Shonen Ninja Kaze no Fujimaru** (Ninja Boy Fujimaru of the Wind) which started in June 1964, the story of which either came from **Kaze no Ishimaru** (Ishimaru of the Wind) (which itself is based on **Kōga Bugeicho** (Ninja Arts Scrolls of the Koga)) or **Ninja Senpuu** (Ninja Whirlwind) depending on what you read.

In the same month, Shirato established his production company Akame Production. Regarding Akame, Shirato tried to avoid the hierarchy of a master/apprentice-type situation, and in a 1967 interview he said that at that time, he had zero assistants, 7 collaborators, and 2 family members helping out (his two younger brothers Okamoto Tetsuji and Shin). Among those collaborators were Kojima



Ninpo Hiwa #26

Goseki, KUSUNOKI Shouhei, KOYAMA Haruo, TSUGE Yoshiharu, HIRATA Hiroshi and others. Also involved were his wife, LEE Haruko, and sister OKAMOTO Matsuko.

To keep **GARO** and Akame afloat, Shirato worked on several magazine stories. In 1964, he had one-offs in **Shōnen Book** (Shuueisha), **Shōnen Sunday** (Koubunsha), **Shōnen Magazine** (Shogakukan), **Shōnen Magazine** (Kodansha), **Bōken-Ou** (Akita Shoten). BTW, the **Bōken-Ou** story was one of a series of ninja stories by top mangaka and included in a collection **10 Ninja Battles**. Shirato's was battle number 7. This deserves its own review in the future.

At the same time, he was doing one-offs and short serials in Seirindo's monthly kashihon anthology **Ninpō Hiwa** (Secret Tales of the Ninja which I mistakenly referred to as Ninpo



Ninpo Hiwa #26



Seton's book and the award-winning Shirato adaptation

Hitsuwa in the last zine) in which he, Mizuki, Kojima (as Suwa). I'll talk about an interesting side connection between **GARO** and **Ninpō Hiwa** in a bit.

For a bit more extra context **GARO** came out in 1964 so we are still three years away from the first seinen magazine **Weekly Manga Action** and four years away from the very first issue of **Big Comic** started by five huge manga legends including Shirato, Tezuka, ISHIMORI (later Ishinomori), Mizuki, and SAITO Takao. After Saito passed, Shirato was the last living founding creator, but now he's gone too just last month followed soon after by his younger brother Tetsuji.

Okay! That's enough background. You ready to dig in? Let's do it. Let me say that I owe an enormous debt to the Shirato fan site asa8.com by blogger postother. The list of Shirato works with dates and reprints was invaluable for the research needed for this video/article.

The stories in this and the next two issues were previously published in mainstream manga mags and were used as filler until Shirato and crew had **Kamui-den** ready to go. We won't see the first chapter of that until issue four.

The first story is **Zashikiwarashi**, first published in a 1963 issue of **Boy's Life**, about an old ninja of the lower ninja class who fakes his death in order to escape his wretched circumstances, being used as trap fodder and about to be thrown away after losing a leg. It comments on class, but also on the treatment of seniors who have outlived their so-called usefulness. The opening is black and white here, but has been reprinted several times in color. **Zashikiwarashi** are a kind of *yokai*, sometimes mischievous but often helpful. Danzuri no Kosuke is the old man who decides to help out a young boy who is convinced that he must be a yokai as only he can see the old man (thanks to his stealth and dexterity). A really nice story. It's no wonder that Shirato had it reprinted so many times.

Next is **Akaitake** (Red Bamboo), first published in a 1962 ish of **Shōnen**, about a field of bamboo that bleed when cut. The story is that when the regional governor demanded more tribute after a plague of locusts had devastated the locals' crops, they planned a rebellion. Unfortunately, word spread to the governor who had scores of people executed in that field. It goes on to tell another version of the story. Kosuke, a young local samurai whose father and older

brothers didn't approve of his love of his puppy and wanted him to toughen up and take his swordplay more seriously. When they can't convince him, they stab his dog, but the boy nurses it back to health. Later they grab the dog and throw it off a cliff into the river, but Kosuke leaps after it. He lives in the woods, wild and free with a pack of dogs until the new vicious regional governor takes over. Kosuke's family try to fight back along with the peasantry but are all killed. Kosuke reluctantly takes the fight to the governor's men and leads them into a bamboo field where they think they have him trapped. They open fire on the boy, but he emerges from the field unscathed, while the army has been decimated. The trick was that the bamboo were so thick and hard that the bullets ricocheted and bounced back killing the whole army. Shirato loves giving scientific explanations for what appears to be mystical ninja powers. He also explains that the red bamboo is caused by a certain kind of bacteria. Way to kill the dream, man!

Following that is **Younin** (Sunlight Ninja), first shown in an April 1963 ish of **Shōnen Sunday**. It's about an assassination plot using the double of a trusted doctor to a lord. They kidnap the doctor and a ninja takes his place. However the ninja of the lord finds the kidnapped doctor and brings him in to foil the plot. The lord is somehow poisoned anyway as the doctor he brought in is a second double.

Kugutsu, first published in January 1964 in **Shōnen Magazine**. *Kugutsu*, also pronounced *kaidai*, means marionette. In this story, a samurai on the run is hidden by a puppeteer who trains him how to use a giant monkey puppet. The samurai does a show for the lord and his retainers and gets into the castle where he is able to get revenge by murdering that lord. The samurai never realizes that the puppeteer was actually pulling his strings by getting him to murder the lord for him as the puppeteer is a crafty ninja paid to kill that lord by a rival.

Next we have a serialized story by the previously mentioned Uchiyama Kenji with art by Suwa Sakae (Kojima), **Doubutsu Hyaku Monogatari** (slightly different than the listing on the cover, but it's the same meaning, '100 Tales of the Animals'. The story follows a young boy and girl and their encounter with a big-game hunter.

Next we have a Mizuki Shigeru story, **Furoufushi no Jutsu** (The Immortality Technique). Nezumi Otoko (Rat Man, from **Gegege no Kitaro**) is annoying a ninja telling him he doesn't know why he didn't pick an easier job. Later the ninja runs into some old fellers that said that they were young just a short while ago until they suddenly aged after seeing too many M. Night movies (no, I'm kidding.) The ninja is hired to get to the bottom of the sudden aging

and catches Rat Man inhaling the youth of others. He compliments the vain Rat Man on his beautiful voice and convinces him to suck in even more youth until the Rat Man reverts to a baby where he is easily captured by the ninja.

The last manga story is part one of a serialized story by Kojima as Suwa. **Unabara no Ken** (Seaside Sword) part 1. A wandering samurai sees a ninja attacking a girl and saves her killing the ninja. She asks the samurai to help her lord who is hiding in Amakusa, which is a beautiful port region of **Kumamoto**. If you've ever noticed the tall islands in **ONE PIECE** that poke out of the ocean, they are based on the actual islands of Amakusa. That creator, ODA Eiichiro is from **Kumamoto** and now there are several official **ONE PIECE** statues scattered around the prefecture. Anyway, the samurai refuses though he regrets it later. Also, later we will learn that the lord has left Edo to escape his enemies and that ninja assassins are scouring the countryside looking for him. In the last panel, the young lord is about to be bitten by a snake. TO BE CONTINUED!

Following that, we have **Mokichi**, a light-hearted story about a lazy, but clever country boy written by Lee Haruko, Shirato's wife and illustrated by his sister Okamoto Matsuko, a children's picture book illustrator. Then, in the Reader's Corner, readers are encouraged to send local stories, art, whatever and the editors will send readers a special something from Seirindo (probably comics or comic pages). The message from the editor is as follows:

"Just like it says on the cover, **GARO** includes a collection of Sanpei works and so there'll be over 100 pages of Sanpei story every month. And from issue 3, we're planning to start a new and ambitious long-form series so be sure to look out for that."

Of course, they are talking about the debut of **Kamui -den** which wouldn't actually begin until issue 4.

The next three issues follow a similar pattern with Shirato stories fronting the mag with the serial by Suwa, a short by Mizuki with his ninja character, the serialized prose by Uchiyama, and other one-offs and serials by lesser known creators.

The first few issues of **GARO** did not sell well and many were sent back. What Nagai and Seirindo did was to cut them up and repackage the Shirato content into a special **Ninpo Hiwa Bessatsu** (separate/special) issue which I tracked down immediately after learning this. Though it's not likely I'll ever own an intact **GARO** #1, I now own a some pages from that historic ish. In it you can see the stories from **GARO** #2, then #3, and finally #1 at the back. I hope you enjoyed this dive into **GARO** #1! **Abayo!**

-PatRat the History Rodent

Outro

This has not been any easy haul this time, but I'm glad I finally got this ish out! Happy to welcome some new and old collaborators and I really want to put these out more often so I'll focus more on the editing side while bringing in more new collaborators.

We don't get much contact from the people who read

Mangaverse so I don't really know if I'm giving you guys what you like, but until that changes, I'll continue to put out stuff that interests me and stuff that I'd like to show. I hope you stick around for the ride.

That's it for now! See you in the funny papers!

—PIW (patokon.com@gmail.com)



"One Bad-ass Oni" by Hirabayashi Tomoko (check out her homepage <http://beepbap.com>)