

公募論文

Reimagining the Space Beyond: Planet-Hopping, Occupied Japan, and *Adventure Tale of A-chan and B-ko-chan*

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要旨

本稿では、手塚治虫の初期作品である4コマ漫画『AちゃんB子ちゃん探検記』（1946年）の子どもの移動のナラティブを分析することで、占領期日本（1945～1952年）における空間の表象の転換を検証する。『AちゃんB子ちゃん探検記』は、占領期日本を舞台に、太陽系の惑星（太平洋核実験場の一つであるビキニ環礁に代表される地球、タコになぞらえた王とその兵士によって支配される火星、そして先住民族、女神、その他悪役キャラクターが住む土星）を飛び回りながら旅する、少年Aちゃん、少女B子ちゃんと一台のロボットの探検を描いている。「ロボット」という言葉が日本の文化史に登場するのは1920年代であり、手塚はロボットをテーマとした『鉄腕アトム』で海外に知られている。しかし、手塚の漫画家デビューがアメリカ占領期であり、初期の作品において、占領下の日本を舞台に「戦災孤児」のモチーフを用いて、宇宙空間の表象を転換させていた点はこれまでほとんど注目されてこなかった。

本稿は、『AちゃんB子ちゃん探検記』が手塚の想像上の空間としての宇宙への関心によるものであることを示唆し、宇宙という仮象空間がアメリカ占領下の日本を取り巻く国内外の社会的・政治的問題とイデオロギーの交渉の舞台となっていること、新日本のこどもとして「戦災孤児」が宇宙市民として書き換えられていることを論証する。具体的には、漫画のコマに描かれた絵、吹き出し、そしてナラティブを分析し、太平洋の「海」と連続して描かれる「宇宙」の空間において、帝国主義、民主主義、核兵器、環境汚染、疫病、飢餓等が問題系の軸として描かれていること、さらに戦争を前後に跨いだ過去から未来（敗戦・占領・復興）への時間と空間の連続性のなかで、宇宙市民としての「戦災孤児」の創出が、どのような視覚文化的様相によって行われているかを明らかにする。

Introduction

My story in this article begins with an obscure Japanese children's comic strip series in American-occupied Japan (1945–1952) titled *Adventure Tale of A-chan and B-ko-chan* (AちゃんB子ちゃん探検記, hereafter *Adventure Tale*), by Osamu Tezuka. It appeared in 73

installments in the *Shokokumin Shimbun* (currently the *Mainichi Shogakusei Shimbun*),¹⁾ a daily newspaper for children, in 1946, featuring the adventure of A-chan, a boy, and B-ko-chan, a girl. The *Shokokumin Shimbun* is one of the longest-running children's newspapers in Japan, and it is closely associated with postwar Japanese juvenile culture created by manga authors such as Fujiko Fujio (Hiroshi Fujimoto and Motoo Abiko), Shunji Sonoyama, Leiji Matsumoto, and others.²⁾ Tezuka's debut work *Diary of Ma-chan* (1946), a comic about a preschool boy and his daily life at home and in kindergarten, was also published in the same newspaper. The *Shokokumin Shimbun*'s editorial policy was to deliver the readers a tame story that was different from the wild and militant narratives informed by nationalism and ultra-nationalism in prewar and wartime Japan.³⁾ Despite this editorial objective, *Adventure Tale*, serialized only a few months after *Diary of Ma-chan*, was not any more different from a tame story, as it presented readers with an extraordinary fantasy and science fiction escapade for which Tezuka would later be known. Due to its unexpected popularity, *Adventure Tale* was extended by two months and ran for three months (from July 20 to October 20, 1946)⁴⁾ instead of the original plan of one month. Each comic strip consisted of four frames, typically following an episodic structure, but the comic also reads as a single continuous manga story.⁵⁾

The comic follows the journey of A-chan and B-ko-chan, children living in American-Occupied Japan, as they explore the underworld connected to the Japanese archipelago, the Pacific Ocean, and the outer world—represented as Mars and Saturn—by island-hopping/planet-hopping. The narrative unfolds as a diamond-seeking mission by the two children but eventually becomes an adventure tale involving the two children and a robot, who travel around the solar system by planet-hopping: Earth (represented by an ocean with Bikini Atoll as a nuclear test site), Mars (ruled by an octopus-like king and his soldiers), and Saturn (inhabited

¹⁾ The *Mainichi Shogakusei Shimbun* was born in tumultuous times, launching on December 22, 1936, under the name *Daimai Shogakusei Shimbun* by the Mainichi Newspapers Co., Ltd. As Japan plunged into war with China and later the Pacific, the newspaper's content shifted to provide its young readers with essential information about the conflicts. Renamed *Shokokumin Shimbun* (shokokumin—a term describing wartime children) in January 1941, the newspaper faced military censorship and continued to promote war-related content. However, due to the scarcity of resources during the Pacific War, the paper had to halt publication for seven months, from March 31 to November 1, 1945. It returned with a renewed mission to accurately report everything that a shokokumin needs to know, while also reflecting on the newspaper's past reporting. In April 1947, *Shokokumin Shimbun* changed its name to *Mainichi Shogakusei Shimbun*.

²⁾ The *Shokokumin Shimbun* is part of the Gordon W. Prange Collection, the most comprehensive archive of Japanese print publications during the early years of the occupation of Japan, 1945–1949.

³⁾ Following *Adventure Tale*, Tezuka published *Gu-chan and Paiko-san* (1948) and *Gut-chan* (1956) in the *Mainichi Shogakusei Shimbun*, both mangas depicting the protagonists and their family's everyday life in postwar Japan.

⁴⁾ These are the dates of the Kansai Edition. *Adventure Tale* was also serialized in the *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition) by the *Mainichi Shimbun Seibu Honsha*.

⁵⁾ In *Tezuka Osamu Debut Work Collection* (1991), Yasushi Watanabe points out that *Adventure Tale*'s manga structure is an extremely rare form for a serialized newspaper comic. Yasushi Watanabe, "A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki" in *Tezuka Osamu Debut Work Collection* (Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1991), 234–235.

by a native clan, a goddess, and miscellaneous villain characters).

The manga initially unfolds like *Diary of Ma-chan* in depicting the daily life of children in American-Occupied Japan, but unlike Ma-chan—who has a father and a mother—A-chan and B-ko-chan, who travel to space with a robot,⁶⁾ are marked by a conspicuous absence of adult guardian figures, and the relationship between the two title characters is left unexplained, which suggests that they are most likely war orphans. As Hiroshi Morishita⁷⁾ and Fujio Suga⁸⁾ write, orphans—a popularized motif before and during the war—are a recurring theme in Tezuka's works. Similarly, their fellow traveler, a robot, is also an orphan, both metaphorically and literally, as it is not “born” of woman. In fact, Suga observes, the idea for Tezuka's robot-themed work *Astro Boy* originated from the images of wandering war orphans of postwar Japan.⁹⁾ In light of this, one could safely say that *Adventure Tale* is Tezuka's first work to embody and reify the orphan motif.

In this context, this essay aims to explore the hitherto underexamined ideological link between the orphan theme and Tezuka's interplanetary imagination in *Adventure Tale*. In the manga, the story takes sudden spatial leaps from the ocean to outer space. On the topic of ocean/sky depiction, in particular Tezuka's chimera characters, such as bird people and mermaids, Osamu Takeuchi illuminates how the two realms of sky and ocean function as a place of transformation within Tezuka's works.¹⁰⁾ This theory can account for characters in *Adventure Tale*, such as Kingyohime (Goldfish Princess) and the Goddess of Saturn (who can turn into a bird). Yet it is limited in two specific ways: Tezuka's spatial dichotomy in *Adventure Tale* is not so much between the ocean and the sky as it is between the ocean and the outer space; moreover the two realms were rendered as existing in continuum.

This essay argues that the ocean and outer space in *Adventure Tale* function as a site for negotiating the themes of stateless-ness (a defeated, occupied nation) and parentless-ness (war orphans) in the postwar fall of the Rising Sun (Japan). While *Adventure Tale* manifests Tezuka's interest in astronomy as well as his earliest attempt at reimagining a space beyond Earth, the comic significantly reflects as well as refracts domestic and international sociopolitical issues surrounding orphaned children and American-occupied Japan—coupled together—through his

⁶⁾ Critic Anne McKnight observes that the word “robot” did not exist in Japanese cultural history until the 1920s, and Tezuka is known abroad for his robot-themed *Astro Boy*. Anne McKnight, “Future-Oriented Blackness in Shōwa Robot Culture—1924 to 1963” in *Traveling Texts and the Work of Afro-Japanese Cultural Production: Two Haiku and a Microphone* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 142.

⁷⁾ Hiroshi Morishita, *Sutorii Manga towa Nanika [About Story Manga]* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2021), 122.

⁸⁾ Fujio Suga, *Tezuka Osamu to Sensaikoji [Tezuka Osamu and War Orphans]* (Osaka: Nakai Shoten, 2015), 218.

⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁰⁾ In his essay, “〈空〉と〈海〉の想像力：鳥人と人魚の系譜 (The Imagination of ‘Sky’ and ‘Sea’: A Genealogy of Bird People and Mermaids),” Osamu Takeuchi refers the sky and the sea as “two sides of a coin,” and concludes the chimeras are the representations of Tezuka's desire for metamorphosis combined with a sense of floating in the sky and sea. Osamu Takeuchi, “〈空〉と〈海〉の想像力：鳥人と人魚の系譜 [The Imagination of ‘Sky’ and ‘Sea’: A Genealogy of Bird People and Mermaids]” in 月刊百科 [*Monthly Encyclopedia*] 345 (1991): 33–40.

spatial imagination. In the following sections, I examine the narrative based on pictures, speech bubbles, and narrative boxes in the comic frames, showing how the site of outer space, which is in continuum with the Pacific Ocean, emerges as a contested terrain, or rather a terrain that children and a robot make contestable—where depictions of postwar ideologies of imperialism, democracy, nuclear awareness, environmental contamination, diseases, and domestic hunger converge and intersect—within the manga. Thus, this essay aims to shed light on the thematic imbrication between the fictive adventure of orphans in space and the historical trajectory of a defeated, occupied Japan in search of its place on planet Earth.

1. Waterscape

Certain scenes in the manga clearly show that the comic reads as a rather transparent allegory of domestic and international sociopolitical issues surrounding American-Occupied Japan at the time. An example is the food crisis, a prominent subject on planet Saturn in the space saga and a disaster that American-Occupied Japan also faced. In episode 46, after arriving on Saturn, A-chan and B-ko-chan get tricked into going to Candy Land by some villains who plan to turn them into *oni* (demons) with candies.¹¹⁾ When they see a pile of all-you-can-eat sweets, B-ko-chan is surprised and says, “ドコニモ三ツ十円ナンテカイテナイワ (It doesn’t say three for ten yen [here]),” unlike in postwar Japan, where sweets were a rare luxury. One yen in 1945 was worth about 200 yen today, so from B-ko-chan’s line, we see that sweets were inaccessible for most commoners even at the black market.¹²⁾ In the succeeding sugar waterfall scene in episode 47, A-chan says, “オサタウナンカタベラレルノハライネンカラダトオモッテタヨ (I thought I wouldn’t be able to eat sugar until next year).”¹³⁾ Note that even in prewar Japan, the National Mobilization Law led to the introduction of a ration ticket system for 10 daily necessities, including sugar. Sugar rationing was implemented from 1940 until the end of the occupation in 1952, and children, even when they craved sugar, could not get their hands on it.

Food scarcity is also reflected in episode 62, in which a robot—different from the children’s space companion—transforms into an Intoku Bushi, a samurai who conspires to steal rice.¹⁴⁾ When the comic was published, rationed food was frequently hidden in warehouses and sold illegally at the black market for high prices. The Intoku Bushi is a parody of the “隠匿” (hiding) of “物資” (goods, which sounds the same as *bushi*). Indeed, the widespread hunger and suffering among the masses that Tezuka may have witnessed found expression in the manga.

¹¹⁾ Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimibun* (Seibu Edition), October 15, 1946.

¹²⁾ In episode 26, the word *yami* (ヤミ), referring to the *black market* (闇市), appears directly in the dialogue. *Ibid.*, September 15, 1946.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.*, October 16, 1946.

¹⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, November 8, 1946.

However, I want to highlight a different dimension found in *Adventure Tale*, which is the spatial dimension. The first half of the comic takes place inside a pond and then an ocean-like swamp, which is in continuum with the solar system, a changing space that A-chan and B-ko-chan eventually navigate. A-chan and B-ko-chan's diamond-seeking journey starts at a pond occupied by multispecies characters such as Kurohigedaïou (a giant catfish and a self-proclaimed king whose name translates as Blackbeard the Great) and Kingyohime (Goldfish Princess). In "Speciesism, Part II: Tezuka Osamu and the Multispecies Ideal," Thomas Lamarre highlights the importance of the multispecies theme in Tezuka's works and explains its relation to the Empire of Japan.¹⁵⁾ Speciesism, according to Lamarre, is "the translation of relations between races into relations between species," and by drawing attention to the association between multicultural ideas and the ideology of Pan-Asianism, the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, Lamarre describes the "imperial desire" in Tezuka's multispecies worldview.¹⁶⁾

Lamarre's interpretation of Tezuka's imperial desire has a measure of explanatory power. For instance, in the manga, A-chan and B-ko-chan encounter octopus-like alien species on Mars, an image that evokes imperial Japan's military regime. Since the 1898 publication of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*, Martians have been imagined as octopus-like creatures, and those in *Adventure Tale*—particularly the soldiers—have the façade of the imperial Japanese army. This is seen in their uniform cap, which has the same shape and star insignia as the peaked cap worn by the imperial Japanese army. However, I suggest that the subject of multispecies in *Adventure Tale* can best be understood as the defeated imperial Japan, specifically the postwar American-occupied Japanese archipelago populated by multiracial groups, which included not only white and black U.S. soldiers (and their spouses and children) but also children born to occupying soldiers and Japanese women called "GI babies," who were mixed-raced children whose appearance differed from those previously considered as Japanese. In *Adventure Tale*, Earth is represented by a pond and a swamp named Kuniyarinuma, which are spatially in continuum with Mars, a planet ruled by octopuses, sea creatures. A pond, a swamp, and Mars—which are inhabited by different species—are not well-governed planets.

All areas in the swamp are plagued with ecological and biological problems. In episode 22, A-chan and B-ko-chan's remarks regarding cholera and DDT (a pesticide) touch upon the health crisis taking place in American-occupied Japan.¹⁷⁾ Before entering the swamp, while going down a ladder into a dark and smelly hole, B-ko-chan voices her concern about being infected with cholera. In the next scene, the duo is greeted by a brown rat (that resembles Mickey Mouse, figure 1), and A-chan warns B-ko-chan against getting close as it could be carrying fleas. The talking rat reassures the two by mentioning that he had already sprayed DDT, a poisonous chemical that was sprayed on children to eradicate lice during the American occupation of Japan.

¹⁵⁾ Thomas Lamarre, "Speciesism, Part II: Tezuka Osamu and the Multispecies Ideal," *Mechademia: Second Arc* 5 (2010): 51–85.

¹⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, 55–56.

¹⁷⁾ Osamu Tezuka, "A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki," September 7, 1946.



Figure 1. A brown rat talking to A-chan and B-ko-chan. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition), September 7, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

Suddenly pushed by the rat, the pair falls into a swamp filled with polluted water, causing B-ko-chan to get sick, which A-chan speculates is due to malnutrition. How could Tezuka’s readers in 1946 have made sense of this strange phenomenon? This incident most likely alludes to postwar Japan’s water pollution detected in rivers, lakes, marshes, and oceans. In 1945, when the rivers were filled with debris from air raids and corpses of people who jumped into the water to escape the fire, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) enforced chlorine disinfection. Chemical compounds brought in by the U.S. military such as DDT—initially used to kill flies that flew over battlefield casualties—were sprayed over Japanese cities by U.S. military aircraft. As the comic progresses, we see the swamp becoming oddly similar to a sea near Japan, including the Pacific Ocean, with talking sea creatures such as octopuses and tunas. Episode 25 features some tunas from Bikini Atoll, blown up by an atomic bomb test, reflecting Operation Crossroads, a series of nuclear weapon trials conducted by the United States on the atoll in 1946 (Figure 2).¹⁸⁾



Figure 2. Injured tunas blown up by an atomic bomb on Bikini Atoll. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition), September 14, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

This waterscape of Japan as an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean is eventually likened to outer space, which is an ocean of air—if not water—dotted by islands that are planets. Certainly,

¹⁸⁾ Ibid., September 14, 1946. In July 1946, the United States conducted nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, which was occupied by the Empire of Japan from 1914 to 1944. Nuclear testing on the islands continued until 1958, during which the United States carried out both aerial and underwater experiments.

in postwar Japan, the images of the planets in the solar system became popular symbols.¹⁹⁾ Aircraft such as the Martin 2-0-2, which was used in the first Japanese commercial flight after the end of World War II, were named after the solar system.²⁰⁾ Children's magazines increasingly featured articles on the theme of the galaxy. For example, *動く実験室 (Moving Laboratory)*, a science magazine for both boys and girls, featured an article titled “原子力で天体旅行へ (Astronomical Travel to Celestial Bodies with Atomic Energy)” in October 1946, just over a year later after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.²¹⁾ It highlighted extraterrestrial space and its exploration to promote the possibility of the peaceful use of atomic energy, which had been a sensitive topic at the time.²²⁾

In a sense, Tezuka's use of outer space in his comic as a site of adventure involving Japanese children comes as little surprise. However, the galaxy depicted in the comic does not exist independently but is spatially adjacent to the Pacific Ocean. Just as Japan is an archipelago situated in the northwest Pacific Ocean, *Adventure Tale* transfers the setting to the broader expanses of the universe studded with island planets—invisible to the human eye just as one cannot see across the distant sea.

2. Ocean, Space, and Multispecies

Against this backdrop of the spatiotemporal intersection between the Pacific Ocean and outer space, we can better understand the intergalactic “voyage” in the comic. While fishing on a lakeside, A-chan and B-ko-chan find themselves descending into a pond, searching for a diamond in a manner reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. When A-chan catches a fish, a cat suddenly appears and steals it. Just as A-chan attempts to retrieve his fish from the cat (with B-ko-chan observing on the side), an older man approaches the children and

¹⁹⁾ Many of the stories in Tezuka's mangas feature the solar system, which comes from Tezuka's fascination with astronomy. In his autobiography *Boku wa Mangaka*, Tezuka recounts the time he built a telescope to observe the rings of Saturn, which is a key motif in *Adventure Tale* because the reason A-chan and B-ko-chan travel from Mars to Saturn is to borrow the latter's rings. Osamu Tezuka, *Boku wa Mangaka [I am a Manga Artist]* (Tokyo: Rittosha Bunko, 2016), 24.

²⁰⁾ The Martin 2-0-2 was an airliner introduced in 1947, designed and built by the Glenn L. Martin Company. After Japan's defeat in World War II, the Allies banned the operation of aircraft, both military and civilian, and it was not until 1951 that Japan Airlines (JAL, formerly Dainippon Airlines, a prewar company) began operating regular commercial passenger flights using Martin 2-0-2s. JAL operated five Martin 2-0-2s, each named after a planet in the solar system (Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn, and Mars).

²¹⁾ Rinjiro Nakamura, “原子力で天体旅行へ [Astronomical Travel to Celestial Bodies with Atomic Energy]” in *動く実験室 [Moving Laboratory]* 1 (1946) : 8-9.

²²⁾ In September 1945, the GHQ/SCAP issued a ban on atomic energy research and began censoring articles on the atomic bombings. However, discourse on the peaceful use of nuclear energy intensified in the media immediately after the war, and as the article title in *Moving Laboratory* shows, children's literature was no exception.

inquires about a certain fish that had swallowed a rare diamond. Just then, the cat spits out the jewel, only to let it fall into the pond. A-chan and B-ko-chan offer to help the older man by following the diamond into the pond, where they find a hole that leads to an underwater empire where Kurohigedaiou (Blackbeard the Great, a giant catfish and a self-proclaimed king) resides as the ruler with a crab, a turtle, a snail, and an eel as his underlings.

In *Adventure Tale*, the pond arc, which takes place between episodes 1 and 20, introduces two recurrent themes throughout the manga: multispecies and the water realm. When Kurohigedaiou captures A-chan and B-ko-chan and confines them inside a cell to take the diamond for himself, the duo discovers another cellmate, Kingyohime (Goldfish Princess), who used to rule the pond before Kurohigedaiou but is now imprisoned by him. She tells the duo that whoever wishes to rule the pond needs a jewel, and Kurohigedaiou needs the diamond to claim the throne. Shortly afterward, A-chan and B-ko-chan retrieve the diamond from Kurohigedaiou and his minions only to find that Kingyohime—who now has the diamond—has been caught by a human and put in an aquarium. This unexpected turn of events steers the storyline toward the surface world, where pitch-black villains (マツクロナワルモノ) steal the diamond from Kingyohime, and A-chan and B-ko-chan encounter another hole, this time a manhole, and go down chasing them (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Pitch-black villains stealing the diamond from Kingyohime. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition), September 5, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

Unlike *Alice in Wonderland*, the descent in the comic leads to outer space through the sea. Like the pond, the manhole is inhabited by multiple species, albeit not multicolored, because they are all black, such as the abovementioned villains and a rat who bears a resemblance to Mickey Mouse, who all work together to trap A-chan and B-ko-chan inside Kuniyarinuma, a swamp full of polluted waters that make B-ko-chan ill. From here, the water scene changes from a swamp to the ocean as A-chan finds an octopus-run hospital whose patients include sea

creatures such as tunas (blown up by an atomic bomb on Bikini Atoll) and turtles (infected with cholera for swimming in the ocean). The ending of this swamp–ocean arc (from episodes 21 to 30)—in which A-chan and B-ko-chan defeat the rat and his dark-colored accomplices by pouring polluted water on them, leading to the recovery of the diamond—overlaps with the beginning of the outer-space arc (which extends from episodes 31 to 72, discussed in the next section), in which Gari Gari Hakase, a scientist, facilitates the children’s journey to Mars.

The comic maintains a continuous narrative flow where the last frame of the comic strip is not an ending but rather a turning point. For example, A-chan and B-ko-chan’s first mission in the story is to find a lost diamond, and they eventually retrieve it at the end of episode 30; however, rather than a happy ending, it instead becomes a moment for change, setting in motion a new narrative sequence.²³⁾ The new outer-space arc starts with the protagonists hearing Gari Gari Hakase’s laughing voice. Impressed by the duo’s bravery in the previous episodes, Gari Gari Hakase requests A-chan and B-ko-chan to go to Mars to explore it. The Pacific Ocean is linked to outer space—a realm imperceptible to the senses and a new frontier for exploration, inviting the imagination of child readers to dive (into the ocean) and soar (into the ocean of air).

Tellingly, from episode 31, *Adventure Tale* begins to read like science fiction. The title, “Gari Gari Hakase no Maki,” evokes the 1920 German silent horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.²⁴⁾ After A-chan and B-ko-chan encounter the scientist, the water scene changes as Gari Gari Hakase invites the pair to his home (which initially appears as a painting but



Figure 4. A-chan and B-ko-chan and Robo-kun testing the rocket. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimibun* (Seibu Edition), October 2, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

²³⁾ Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” September 22, 1946.

²⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, September n.d., 1946.

becomes alive) and exhibits his inventions, including a rocket and a robot named Robo-kun. At the scientist's request, A-chan and B-ko-chan fly to Mars, riding on a junk rocket accompanied by Robo-kun as their fellow space traveler (Figure 4).

3. Planet-Hopping: Earth, Mars, and Saturn

In contrast to American-Occupied Japan, where U.S. forces implemented democratization and demilitarization, Mars is ruled by an octopus-like king and his soldiers, which to a degree harks back to prewar imperial Japan. In prewar times, the Japanese colonial empire was often depicted as an octopus stretching its tentacles around the globe like an alien species invading Earth.²⁵⁾ Since Mars is depicted as a homogeneous society, and the king and his soldiers are shaped identically, the soldiers' hats and the king's crown differentiate them. This depiction establishes Mars as a monoracial monarchy with a militarized hierarchical society that is increasingly reminiscent of the prewar imperial Japan myth of the pure Japanese race and national body. However, the comic does not develop into a story of galactic conquest or war involving Martians. Instead, Mars and Saturn (which I will discuss further below) emerge as a stage for negotiating and redefining stateless orphans A-chan and B-ko-chan's identity as space dwellers, not tied to the pull of gravity that holds them in a certain national group.

The first thing B-ko-chan observes upon arriving on Mars is its deserted plain that is almost devoid of vegetation, with only a few branches of trees standing in the background—a sight that evokes the burned-out landscape of a defeated Japan, or the fall of the Rising Sun. On the surface, Mars is an established kingdom as the trio is welcomed by the king and his soldiers, who throw a parade (Figure 5).²⁶⁾ Yet they learn that Mars is facing an environmental crisis of excessive heat, and soon after their meeting, the king asks A-chan and B-ko-chan, who now represent humankind or Earth people (地球星ノカタ), to go to Saturn and borrow its rings to protect Mars from overheating caused by sunspots.

The king deploys the pair instead of his troops to Saturn, not because the Martians lack

²⁵⁾ This can be seen throughout various magazine and poster artworks of the 1930s–1940s. For example, in 1935, the German magazine *Simplicissimus* included in its January 27 issue a satirical image made by Erich Schilling that reads “Der japanische ‘Gehirntrust,’” (The Japanese “Brain Trust”), which depicts the “yellow peril” of the Empire of Japan as a sinister-looking octopus clinging around the globe, threatening the rest of the world (Japan had annexed Korea in 1910 and had taken control of Manchuria in 1931). Another example is a poster/persuasive cartography by Pat Keely in 1944 (printed in London by James Haworth & Brother Ltd.) titled “Indie Moet Vrij!” (The Indies Must Be Free!) depicting Japan in a similar manner to Schilling except the tentacles of the avaricious octopus control the Dutch East Indies as the war continues in the Pacific Ocean theater of World War II.

²⁶⁾ The image of Mars in *Adventure Tale* was likely influenced by Fukujiro Yokoi's *Puchar in the Land of Marvels* (*Fushigi no kuni no Puchar*), as Tezuka was one of Yokoi's admirers. In *Puchar in the Land of Marvels*, much like in *Adventure Tale*, Martians appear as octopuses, but the former has a president as their leader, and they live in a high-tech futuristic society.

resources or technology (in fact, A-chan and B-ko-chan ride on a different rocket when they leave Mars—a rocket presumably made on the planet Mars), but because, according to the king, the Martians lack bravery. The Martians or the octopus no longer functions as a metaphor for the tentacles of the spreading imperialism of the Japanese Empire. The duo accepts the king's wishes and flies to Saturn. Thus, *Adventure Tale*, as a narrative of postwar orphan children's journey through the galaxy, transforms, undoes, or replaces the prewar narrative of the invincible Japanese military power sending soldiers out.



Figure 5. The king of Mars and his soldiers welcoming A-chan and B-ko-chan. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimibun* (Seibu Edition), October 9, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

A-chan and B-ko-chan's time on Saturn briefly touches upon their identity as children of Japan. Saturn and Mars are similar in that both are wastelands; unlike Mars, however, Saturn has a racially dynamic population, and among them is the Goddess of Saturn, one of the key characters in the story. With the help of the Goddess of Saturn, A-chan and B-ko-chan succeed in obtaining the planet's rings, ensuring the survival of the Martian race, and their encounter with the goddess reveals that they are *shokokumin* (少国民) of Japan (episode 51, figure 6).²⁷⁾ Historically, in Japan, *shokokumin* (little citizens) refers to young national subjects who were educated to serve the emperor father figure.²⁸⁾ If we interpret the king of Mars as a stand-

²⁷⁾ Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” October 24, 1946.

²⁸⁾ According to Wakako Suzuki, the concept of *shokokumin* was formed and cultivated in prewar children's magazines. Wakako Suzuki, “Children as Cultural Imaginary: The Making of ‘Little Citizens’ Through Shonen Sekai,” *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 21 (2020) : 121–134.

in for the Emperor of Japan, who is no longer a descendant of the sun goddess but who has renounced his divinity in his so-called “Declaration of Humanity” in 1946, the depiction of A-chan and B-ko-chan as shokokumin on Saturn seems to inform that they are now shokokumin of Japan under American occupation. But as we will see shortly, they discover that Japan has disappeared from Earth’s surface.²⁹⁾

A-chan and B-ko-chan differ from the traditional figure of Japanese children in that they are wandering orphans. Although they may look like siblings, a brother and a sister, their kinship is not initially indicated. In the aftermath of the war, the number of *furouji* (wandering orphans or street kids) increased in Japan, and Tezuka is known to have expressed great concern about the problem of orphans in Japan.³⁰⁾ Hence, at first glance it is unsurprising to find orphans who play protagonists in one of Tezuka’s early works. Yet, their nationality is not as transparent as we typically assume as their names carry English letters A and B. The duo is referred to as A-chan and B-ko-chan throughout the comic, and their parents are conspicuously absent. Therefore, the names “A-chan” and “B-ko-chan” are indicative of their anonymity, if not their individuality. Simply put, they are stateless orphans from the beginning of the story and are depicted as such.



Figure 6. The Goddess of Saturn referring to A-chan as shokokumin. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimben* (Seibu Edition), October 24, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

Tezuka did not depict children wandering the streets of burned-out landscapes of postwar Japan. *Adventure Tale* incorporates spaces beyond the Japanese archipelago, such as the Pacific Ocean, Mars, and Saturn, where A-chan and B-ko-chan are portrayed not as *wandering* orphans but as *traveling* ones who will become “little citizens” of the space community. After acquiring the rings of Saturn, A-chan, B-ko-chan, and Robo-kun encounter the natives of Saturn, called the Kamoshikans. In their village, where time is distorted and everything remains old, A-chan

²⁹⁾ One should note, that shokokumin is the name of the newspaper in which *Adventure Tale* appeared. While it is possible that Tezuka and the newspaper’s editors deliberately used the word shokokumin to appeal to young readers, both A-chan and B-ko-chan are far apart from the typical image associated with the term.

³⁰⁾ In his essay, Tezuka writes about how street orphans flooded train stations and streets in the aftermath of the war and how he felt ashamed and powerless as a children’s cartoonist watching them subjected to daily DDT dusting. Osamu Tezuka, *The Collected Essays of Tezuka Osamu Volume 1* (Tokyo: Tezuka Productions, 2015), 85–86.

gets a chance to observe the “real Japan of olden times (昔ノホンタウノ日本ノスガタ)” through a spyglass, only to find that Japan has disappeared from Earth’s surface (sunk into the sea but will reappear in a million years’ time), leaving the children stateless but at the same time, transforms them into space citizens whose identity transcends geography and political borders.³¹⁾

It is worth noting that A-chan and B-ko-chan are not little invaders of planets who reproduce the prewar memory of Japanese militarism, nor are they victims of the war and the occupation that rendered them parentless, homeless, and nationless. Instead, A-chan and B-ko-chan depict space-and-time travelers who function as interplanetary mediators in the sense that through their spacefaring, they not only negotiate multispecies tensions and ecosystems, in and between ponds, swamps, the Pacific Ocean, and outer space, but also negotiate the past and the future.

As if to reproduce the Japanese and American past of colonialism and occupation, the scenes in episodes 58 and 59 show A-chan and B-ko-chan’s attempt at modernizing/civilizing the Kamoshikans, which ends in failure.³²⁾ The Kamoshikans had been an indigenous people on Saturn for a long time, and they have a primitive appearance as everything has remained old in their village (クニ). When the duo witnesses the natives’ old and “backward-like” culture, they decide to improve the villagers’ lifestyle by teaching them a new way of living. For example, when B-ko-chan sees the half-naked village women, she teaches them how to make a dress—which women increasingly wore in postwar Japan—only resulting in the villagers wrapping the dress on their backs (Figure 7). Conversely, A-chan tries to educate the villagers on Japanese manners (礼) and fair rule-making as a signboard in episode 59 reads “Let’s decide the rules together (キマリハミンナノイケンデキメヨウ),” but the natives bow down too much that their heads stick to the floor (with some even looking backward between their legs, figure 8), and the despotic village chief, who greedily makes all the village decisions, remains unchanged. This instance—in which juvenile outsiders such as A-chan and B-ko-chan educate natives about progress and civilization—can be partially explained by Lamarre’s “imperial desire.” Changing an existing lifestyle is a form of slow violence, for it changes the ecology of the native collective (the Kamoshikans). More importantly, however, the scenes emphasize the ridiculousness of such actions and satirize the resulting miscommunications—driven by cultural differences—in a comical way.

³¹⁾ This narrative—where protagonists lose their original home (identity) while in space—is repeated in *Lost World* (1948), one of Tezuka’s early science fiction trilogies. While exploring Mamango, a planet once part of the Earth, Kenichi Shikishima, a young scientist boy, and Ayame, a young plant girl, who are left behind with no way to return to Earth, decide to become Adam and Eve of the planet. The dinosaur-inhabited planet Mamango is similar to *Adventure Tale*’s Saturn (Kamoshikan village) in that they are primitive and old.

³²⁾ Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” November 2–n.d., 1946.



Figure 7. The Kamoshikan women trying on dresses. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition), November 2, 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 8. A-chan teaching the Kamoshikans how to bow. Osamu Tezuka, “A-chan B-ko-chan Tankenki,” *Shokokumin Shimbun* (Seibu Edition), November n.d., 1946. ©Tezuka Productions. Reproduced with permission.

By incorporating elements of imperialism, democracy, nuclear awareness, environmental contamination, disease, and domestic hunger into the ocean–space continuum, *Adventure Tale* seemingly exposes the ordinary/extraordinary lives of the war orphans of American-Occupied Japan. However, as I have demonstrated, *Adventure Tale* is ultimately not about the Japanese orphans in search of nationality, or about the transformation of orphans who have lost a nation into “little citizens” of a new Japan where they can claim their citizenship. Through an interplanetary journey, the stateless-ness and parentless-ness that once informed the children’s deviance (as wandering orphans) are significantly redefined as mobility, and A-chan and B-ko-chan become what I heuristically call space children that go beyond the nation-state or nationalism. In other words, in light of Japan’s postwar period of turmoil and reconstruction, the manga’s ocean-space continuum serves not only as a site for negotiating Japan’s past imperialism and the social conditions of the U.S. occupation but also provides the reader with a new (interplanetary) perspective for rethinking about Japan and its future beyond the national unit.

Conclusion

As I have discussed, the story of *Adventure Tale* features orphans who embark on a journey of island-hopping or planet-hopping. In the manga, the two realms—ocean and outer space—

go hand in hand. In the aftermath of Japan's defeat in World War II, in the Pacific Ocean, islands that were once under Japanese rule, such as the Marshall Islands, Wake Island, and Saipan, went under the control of the United States, making Japan an island country rather than a maritime empire. Meanwhile, the United States militarized the Pacific islands and turned some of them into nuclear test sites, forming the Pacific Proving Grounds, where they conducted atmospheric and underwater nuclear tests that left many of the islands contaminated from nuclear fallout. Moreover, the United States also began experimenting on animals with outer space as the new frontier in the postwar period. In 1947, a year after the manga's release, the United States sent fruit flies as the first living species to outer space, which pointed to the presence of the United States spreading into space and beyond. In the end, against the backdrop of American-Occupied Japan, from ponds and swamps to the Pacific Ocean and outer space, *Adventure Tale* constellates the future (children) across the space-time continuum of the universe and its multispecies life forms. Juxtaposing imperial Japan and American-occupied Japan in the context of the nuclear space age, the ocean and outer space in *Adventure Tale* function as a terrain where the Japanese—as war orphans—are refashioned. *Adventure Tale*'s gripping and ever-evolving dynamic narrative is built around the orphaned children's motion in and out of Japan's past and the future, and significantly upends the editorial scheme of the *Shokokumin Shimbun*'s "tame stories" of the time, making it one of the most cosmopolitan comics in Tezuka's early works.