

# “Sport Guts” in Japanese Girl Anime

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**Abstract**—“Sport Guts” in Japanese anime developed not only to strengthen mentality but also to challenge for objectives. This paper helps to understand the development of Japanese girl anime, and its philosophical concepts of Japanese anime.

This paper focuses on girls’ sport anime “Sport Guts,” which is the major philosophy of Japanese girl anime and centers on a girl who is enthusiastic about volleyball and makes an effort to compete in the World Series by focusing on girl anime by Tezuka Osamu, and using the methodology of Buddhism.

To understand “Sport Guts,” the study of Japanese girl anime is significant because major findings of the study is to investigate changes of girl anime, and the philosophy of “Sports Guts,” which gives encouragement and strength in girls’ lives.

**Keywords**—Anime, Mentality, Sport Guts, Mentality, Strength.

## I. INTRODUCTION

MORE anime programs have been created by Japanese TV companies than those of any other country. In Japanese anime, many animated genres such as detective, cooking, mystery, love stories, and sports are broadcasted. It rapidly spread during the economic growth of the 1970s, a sport anime called “Supokon” or “Sport Guts” became popular [1].

Seeing the Japanese girls’ anime history, there is a pioneer creator, Tezuka Osamu. Tezuka, a well-known Japanese animator who published a girl’s story, casted females as lead characters in adventure, action, love, friendship, detective, comedy, and tragedy stories. Tezuka’s works have strength to change and give hopes to girls to think and live independently. Accordingly, Tezuka created interesting stories to encourage all females through stories which lead to popular sport animes in the 1970s.

The term, “Supokon” or “Sport Guts,” is largely flourished during 1960s and 1970s. The main storyline of “Sport Guts” is that the protagonist endures hardship and adversity, devotes himself/herself with training, and at the end, he/she gains victory against rivals. Such “Sport Guts” anime series place an importance on “Guts,” to make restless efforts and it connotes victory, and it does not transcend the efforts. In a narrow sense, “Sport Guts” is a new kind of genre which became popular during the economic growth in 1970s, and its popularity led the peak of “Sport Guts.” In “Sport Guts,” not only male protagonists but also female protagonists gained high popularity. These anime include a baseball anime, “Kyojin no Hoshi,” a soccer anime, “Captain Tsubasa,” a basketball anime, “Slum Dunk,” a tennis anime, “Tenis no Ojisama,” and a volleyball anime, “Attack No. 1.” Among them, “Attack No. 1” is a leading manga for girls.

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With the influence of girls’ anime, a sport anime called “Supokon” or “Sport Guts” became popular after the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. “Sport Guts” is a composite word of “sport,” and “guts,” and is a kind of genre in Japanese anime emphasizing the effort and guts to develop one’s skill and ability as a sport player by overcoming hardship, effort and adversity with effort rather than victory in games. The TV anime for girls called “Attack No. 1” by Urano Chikako tells about an animated character who establishes strength to endure hardship, so it is possible to adapt the theory of six practices in Buddhism. In “Attack No. 1,” the story centers a girl who is enthusiastic about volleyball and makes an effort to compete in the World Series. With her various interactions with her volleyball teammates, boyfriends, rivals, and supervisors, this aids in her mental and physical development to a physically and emotionally mature individual.

The popularity of animes such as “Sport Guts” represents one’s effort for personal and team accomplishment, and gives clarity and purpose to their daily lives when using the anime stories as examples or guides. People often empathize with the characters, and “Sport Guts” gives the average Japanese citizen the encouragement and motivation in their daily life to achieve their goals, objectives and ambitions despite hardships or challenges.



Fig. 1 Captain Tsubasa

## II. DEFEAT OF CINDERELLA LEGEND IN GENDER PERSPECTIVE

The girl’s characteristics of the Japanese girl anime history can be regarded in the gender perspective. Looking back at the anime history, it originated from comic manga. The first manga for girls, “Anmitsu Hime” in the magazine “Girls” was created by Kurakane Shosuke in 1949. It was one-panel food story of a princess who lives in a castle, and her subordinates had food names [2]. Soon, to counter “Anmitsu Hime” in the magazine “Girls” in 1953, the magazine “Girl’s Club,” started Tezuka Osamu’s “Ribon no Kishi.” Tezuka was a well-known animator who published a feature-length manga for girls for the first time. It was highly successful, and the animated version of “Ribon no Kishi” was created in 1967, while “Anmitsu Hime”

was made into anime in 1986. The first girls' anime was "Ribon no Kishi."

"Ribon no Kishi" is a story about a young princess, Sapphire, who was brought up as a boy in order to inherit the throne. However, Sapphire has not only a girl's mind but also a boy's mind since an angel, Chinku, gave her a boy's mind. The god was angry with Chinku and ordered her to take the boy's mind from Sapphire. Later, Chinku understands how much Sapphire needs to have a boy's mind to protect the country. It is a princess story, but it is totally different from the normal princess stories. Many princes stories have an innocent and lovely princess waiting for her prince to appear, but in "Ribon no Kishi," Sapphire has to act like a boy and fight with Duke Duralumon, her uncle who wants to become a king.

In many Disney princess stories, princesses are always obedient, modest, hard-working, honest, and beautiful, but Sapphire is strong-willed, proactive, decisive, and honest, and has blending of both the male and female psyche as one. Sapphire is also aggressive and very positive who gives hope and dream of strength to girls to live proactively instead of being passive. "Ribon no Kishi" is the first story to give a plot, continuous stories compared with "Anmitsu Hime." Tezuka's Sapphire is aggressive and very positive who gives hope and dream of strength to girls to express themselves instead of being passive. The critic, Jun Ishiko introduces women in old legends who live modestly, and obedient for men in society, but he cites that Tezuka's messages have strength to change and give hopes to girls to think and live independently.

Old days-

- Girls are told to be pretty
- Girls should be modest
- Girls should be a beautiful bride
- Girls should not do this and that
- Girls are prohibited so much

Osamu Tezuka who viewed them from the future wished it to come true as in Manga that

- Girls also want to take adventures
- Girls also want to be guys
- Girls also want to tell their opinions
- Girls also want to choose the ways to live
- Girls also want to watch interesting Manga

In the era of gender equality

- He broke an old spell which was casted on girls
- He released their limbs
- He encouraged them with Manga hard to quit.
- He made us realize that the half of the world is filled with women.
- He showed that they have the power to move the earth.

Shōjo Mangas that Tezuka depicted were Adventure, action, love, friendship, detective, music, era, folk, comedy, tragedy stories, which was new, sobering Manga [3]. Thus, Tezuka changed its concept to create new female characters in his works, which was opposed to the traditional way of women's living. Before that, girls were educated to be modest and obedient and were told whether they should do this and not that. In Manga and anime, Tezuka thought girls should change their attitude toward life by imagining that they can go on

adventures, challenge many different things, and live and express their thoughts freely just like the boys. In a world populated with 50 percent females, and the move towards gender equality, the traditional female taboo or stereotype was broken through manga. In this way, Tezuka casted females as lead characters in adventure, action, love, friendship, detective, comedy, and tragedy stories. Accordingly, Tezuka created interesting stories to encourage all females through stories and this unique anime character leads to have a sport anime spirit in the 1970s.



Fig. 2 Ribon no Kishi

### III. PREVALENCE OF "SPORT GUTS"

The term, "Sport Guts," is largely flourished during the 1960s and 1970s. The main storyline of "Sport Guts" is that the protagonist endures hardship and adversity, devotes himself or herself to training, and at the end, he or she gains victory against their rivals. Such "Sport Guts" anime series place an importance on "Guts," to make relentless efforts and if it earns victory, victory does not transcend the efforts. In a narrow sense, "Sport Guts" is a new kind of genre, which became popular during the economic growth in the 1970s, and its popularity led the peak of "Sport Guts." In "Sport Guts," not only male protagonists but also female protagonists gained high popularity.

According to statistics of "Most Effective Anime" (500 respondents from ages 20 to 60) researched by Nakasima Yoshihiro, respondents selected Hoshi Hyuma in "Kyojin no Hoshi," Ozora Tsubasa in "Captain Tsubasa," Ayuhara Kozue in "Attack No.1," and Oka Hiromi in "Ace wo Nerae". For example, a viewer of "Captain Tsubasa," Alessandro Del Piero, a professional soccer player, told that he was a great fan of Tsubasa, and he wanted to be like Tsubasa, and became a professional player. He discloses that he was happy to receive Takahashi Yoichi's signature, since he was a fan of Takahashi's comic "Captain Tsubasa," and he pretended to be like the protagonist, Tsubasa, who habitually rolled up his sleeves [4]. In fact, many players were inspired by sport anime. Focusing on a female "Sport Guts," this paper will analyze Ayuhara Kozue in "Attack No.1" in the animated version, since

this character faces much hardship and tribulation as explained in “Sport Guts.”

#### IV. STORY OF “ATTACK NO.1”

“Sport Guts” is clearly represents in the story “Attack No.1” as a theme of the story. It is about a girl who was enthusiastic about volleyball, and became a volleyball player. It was broadcasted from 1969 to 1971 with 104 episodes. The original Manga version was published from 1968 to 1970, and 1975. In the animated version of “Attack No.1,” there are two periods of time for Ayuhara Kozue [5].



Fig. 3 Ayuhara in “Attack No.1”

##### A. Junior High School Age

The story depicts Ayuhara as an average student playing volleyball in junior high school. She started to play volleyball when she was in the second grade (13-14 years old) of junior high school. The scene started when she moved to Fujimi Gakuen Junior High School. She was a strong character with self-assertion. Ayuhara sometimes argued and fought with other students who had different opinions from her. Firstly, she won the volleyball team in Fujimi Gakuen. Then, she became a captain after the dispute with a volleyball rival, Hayakawa Midori. Ayuhara repeated collision with other members of the team. Cooperation with the team member and hard training, their team became strong enough to win Spring Volleyball National Championship and National Tournament. Then, they played with Soviet Women's Junior Team, the strongest team. Since the team lost easily, Ayuhara turned to the very strict captain and led the team strong. However, she left the team since her strictness led the team's aversion. She joined the gymnastic club, but later, she returned the volleyball team. Hard daily practice brought their victory of Summer Volleyball National Championship, the second prize in the World Junior Volleyball Championship, and defeated the Soviet Union.



Fig. 4 Volleyball Game in Ayuhara and her team members

##### B. High School Age

In the first year of high school, Ayuhara had conflict with other elder members of the volleyball team at Fujimi High School. Later, she made a new volleyball team and won in the interscholastic athletic competition, and National Championship. She had a boyfriend, Ichinose Tsutomu, but he died in a car accident. Then, Ichinose's twin brother appeared, but he did not become a boyfriend, and stayed as a friend.

In the second year of high school, Ayuhara had an emergency surgery. She had her ovary and oviduct removal due to uterus adnexitis. She had a new boyfriend, Yushima Jiro in the hospital. Later, she broke up with him. Then, after practice, Ayuhara and her team won the interscholastic athletic competition, Spring and Summer Volleyball National Championships, but in World Championship in Bulgaria, they lost again a team of the Soviet Union and became the second prize.

Seeing Ayuhara's physical and mental growth, she worked hard for volleyball training. Although she had some circumstances that she could not continue volleyball such as surgery or conflict with other members, she returned to work for volleyball. Thus, her enthusiasm of volleyball leads win of tournaments. Now, let's see characteristic of “Attack No.1” more in detail.



Fig. 5 Ayuhara in Volleyball Game

##### C. Ayuhara's Mental Development

Looking at Ayuhara's story, she went through many interpersonal challenges, first with clashing with and later bonding with classmates, teammates, teachers and family members. She also experienced both positive and negative aspects of romantic relationships and her ability to recover. She also preserved through her medical condition, endured the



hardships during the volleyball practice, and overcome the intense pressure of actual games and to succeed culminating in a second place finish. Ayuhara's physical and mental growth helped her to endure for the difficult volleyball training. Although she had instances that she could not continue volleyball such as surgery or conflict with other members at times. Her love, dedication, and enthusiasm for volleyball resulted in many tournaments' successes. In this way, Ayuhara grew mentally and physically growth by confronting conflicts and hardship, with her strong characteristics and efforts. In "Attack No.1," team problems such as discord with Ayuhara were repeated before competition. In conflict, Ayuhara sometimes left the team though she returned the team at the end. She became to be aware of others' feelings and gradually developed relationships with others. Ayuhara, also, experienced romantic love with Ichinose Tsutomu who died in an accident, and Yushima Jiro who left her and returned to his fiancée, causing Ayuhara emotional despair which affected her playing ability, but she understood her condition and was able to recover. Interaction with her rivals was indispensable for Ayuhara's mental and physical maturation. Her rivals were mainly genius types, so Ayuhara had to strategize ways to overcome them in competitions. Ayuhara also had iron-hearted supervisors such as Hongo Shunsuke and Inokuma Daigo, who hurled balls at her and barked with thundering voices during daily training regiments. This molded her into a strong leader, to be able to withstand the tough pressure of practices and resulted in game victories.

Ayuhara is an ordinary school student who likes volleyball. In anime, she is depicted as an enthusiastic character, but she is strong, self-asserted, and jealous. However, she is not described as a good role model for students. In the beginning of the story, she sleeps during the class and her teacher tells her to leave. She also conflicts with others, but she reconciles, and becomes a captain of the team. With different experiences, she learns how to position herself at school and in the team, and cooperate with others in the team. Moreover, her great efforts and desire for victory develop her techniques, and we see her mental and physical development.

She develops special physical and emotional techniques which aided in the defeat of her rivals. As volleyball techniques, she developed a breaking balls called "Konoha Otoshi," and "Kaiten Receive" or rotating balls.

With her involvement with her volleyball members, boyfriends, rivals, and supervisors, she is able to overcome the obstacles and reconciled with others, which aided in her mental and physical development to a physically and emotionally mature individual. Accordingly, she strengthens "Sport Gut" by experiencing hard training, friendships, relationships with others, and her various life experiences.



Fig. 6 Ayuhara's Coach, Hongo Shunsuke

## V. CONCLUSION - JAPANESE STRENGTH OF "GUTS"

As seen "Sport Guts" which Ayuhara personifies the theoretical archetype. "Guts" means the will, strength or mentality to face and tackle difficult and challenging situations. With this theory, people can make more progress, and make it possible to attain difficult or arduous objectives. "Sports Guts" is also leads to the six observations for practice in Buddhism. In these observations, as a mental strength, there are six observations for practice in Buddhism: "Ofuse" (お布施), "Jikai" (持戒), "Ninnyoku" (忍辱), "Shojin" (精進), "Zentei" (禅定), "Chie" (智慧), and "Ofuse (お布施)" is voluntary service. "Jikai" is to keep rules with one's willingness. "Ninniku" is to be patient, which makes every effort to attain targets. "Shojin" is to improve one's mentality which promotes efforts and a sense of advancement day by day. "Zentei" is to keep calm. "Chie" is wisdom to transcend knowledge [6]. With these observations for practice in Buddhism, people are aware of enhancing their mental strength to challenge for objectives. It is necessary to develop techniques and strengthen mentally and advance toward objectives to gain goals. Thus, the observations for practice in Buddhism relates to "Sport Guts," and moreover, Tezuka's character's strength to challenge for objectives.

Considering these six observations, it is essential to create Japanese sport anime because viewers are better able to understand "Sports Guts." Tezuka Osamu's words for "a Message to Young Women" can explain his strong message for girls as follows:

I would like to discuss my woman figure in my work. There are two types: one has strength and guts to defeat men, and the other has kindness and love to others. Sapphire in "Ribon no Kishi" has both types, which are my ideal model [7].

Tezuka idealizes female characters not only as modest and obedient, but also as strong-willed and proactive. This idea has been succeeded to other anime creators as we have seen in "Attack No. 1." In this way, in girls' manga and anime, "Sport Guts" represents one's effort for personal and team accomplishment and gives clarity and purpose to their daily life when using the Manga stories as examples or guides. People often empathize with the characters and they give the average Japanese girls the encouragement and motivation in their daily life to applying these six practices and achieve their goals, objectives, and ambitions, despite hardships or challenges.



Fig. 7 Ayuhara in “Attack No.1”

#### VI. NOTES

Images of the paper are used from the related websites of Attack No. 1, Captain Tsubasa, and Ribon no Kishi, etc. respectively.

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