

Tentacle Hentai is just one of those things that really defines the negative image of Japan in the minds of many people in the United States. In order to understand tentacle hentai you need to place yourself in a completely different cultural context. To achieve that end, here is an article on the origins of tentacle hentai in Japan. Enjoy.

Shunga and the “Pornification” of Pop Culture



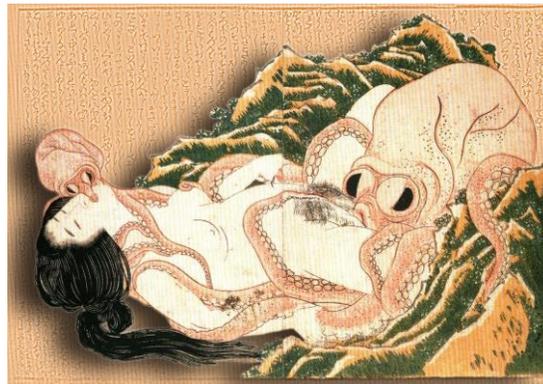
The Great Wave off Kanegawa
Famous Ukiyo-e woodblock print by Hokusai in 1829

Ukiyo-e was an art style popular during the Edo period in Japan (17th-19th century). Shunga was the erotic version of ukiyo-e. Shunga was also used as sexual education for new wives. Many artists dabbled in Shunga as it was not stigmatized in a way modern "cartoon porn" is. The connection with modern doujinshi is the subjects eroticized. Popular anime such Naruto, Bleach, etc. is “pornified” in many doujinshi. This “pornification” of pop culture is not a new expression either. To have an Edo-era example I will use the popular artist Hokusai. Hokusai did many Ukiyo-e pieces as well as many shunga pieces. One piece “The Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife” would have been interpreted in the minds of its intended audience as “pornifying” the story of Princess Tamatori which was popular during the Edo Period.



Princess Tamatori being pursued by a dragon
Utagawa Kuniyoshi

It tells the story of a woman who marries Fujiwara no Fuhito who is searching for a pearl stolen by Ryujin, dragon of the sea. She obtains the jewel and escapes through Ryujin's army of sea creatures including octopi. In the image, big Octopus says "he will bring the girl to Ryūjin's undersea palace."



The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife
Hokusai 1814

Modern Origin: Dream Hunter REM

If we are looking for a modern beginning to tentacle hentai in animation, we need to look at an anime that came out in the mid 1980's. Dream Hunter REM tells the story of Rem Ayanokouji who works as a "dream hunter," a person capable of entering the dreams of sleeping people and fighting the demons causing nightmares. The first OVA came out as a hentai but the creators decided to reboot the series as a regular anime. The tentacle dream monster raping the girl in the hentai OVA is the first example of tentacle hentai. However, the popularity, and infamy, of tentacle hentai has roots in the animation Urotsukidoji (1989) because of its darker themes.

Censorship: Why Tentacles?

Contemporary censorship guidelines in Japan have origins in the Meiji Period during the late 19th century. In order to westernize, and therefore modernize, the Meiji Government began to adopt western influences into their system of government. A borrowed system brought in by the new leaders of the Meiji Government were issues of censorship. Sexual censorship in terms of a European Victorian era style are not flexible in their application. They focus on traditionalist views toward sexual acts which meant showing genitalia or a “sensual” scene in a bedroom. These specific depictions become flagged by censorship authorities. After WWII, the same traditionalist censorship standards continued and much to today still hold strong. To really look at this phenomenon, we have to consider the section above. The traditionalist views towards sex made a “typical” sex scene “obscene” and of course showing genitalia was a no go. So, people still want pornography right? People who sell pornography want to push the boundaries while still staying out of the eyes of the censorship authorities. Therefore, many artists in manga and anime began looking at ways to circumvent censorship guidelines. To look at a personal opinion let’s take a look at the animator Toshio Maeda. He stated:

“At that time pre-Urotsuki Doji, it was illegal to create a sensual scene in bed. I thought I should do something to avoid drawing such a normal sensual scene. So I just created a creature. His tentacle is not a penis as a pretext. I could say, as an excuse, this is not a penis; this is just a part of the creature. You know, the creatures, they don’t have a gender. A creature is a creature. So it is not obscene - not illegal. (“Manga Artist Interview Series (Part 1),” 2002)”¹

The way to circumvent a strict traditionalist approach to pornography is to remove the sensual interactions between male and female. If one of the partners in the sexual scene has no gender then there is no attack on specific social norms for interactions between males and females in Japanese society. Thus, tentacle monsters are created from a creative approach to pornography that both takes inspiration from shunga and from the repression of modern censorship.

Modern Relevance of Tentacle Hentai

Tentacle rape or shokushu goukan (触手強姦) is focused on monsters having sex with female characters. The sex is usually forced but can be considered consensual in some hentai. In looking at data on tentacle hentai, I used Google Trends in my research. Google is the second most used search engine in Japan so I felt its results would be relevant for this article.² Looking at search data for “tentacle hentai,” it has been steadily increasing reaching its highest point in August of 2014.

¹ "Sake-Drenched Postcards - Manga Artist Interview Series (Part I)." Sake-Drenched Postcards - Manga Artist Interview Series (Part I). Accessed March 20, 2015. <http://www.bigempire.com/sake/manga1.html>.

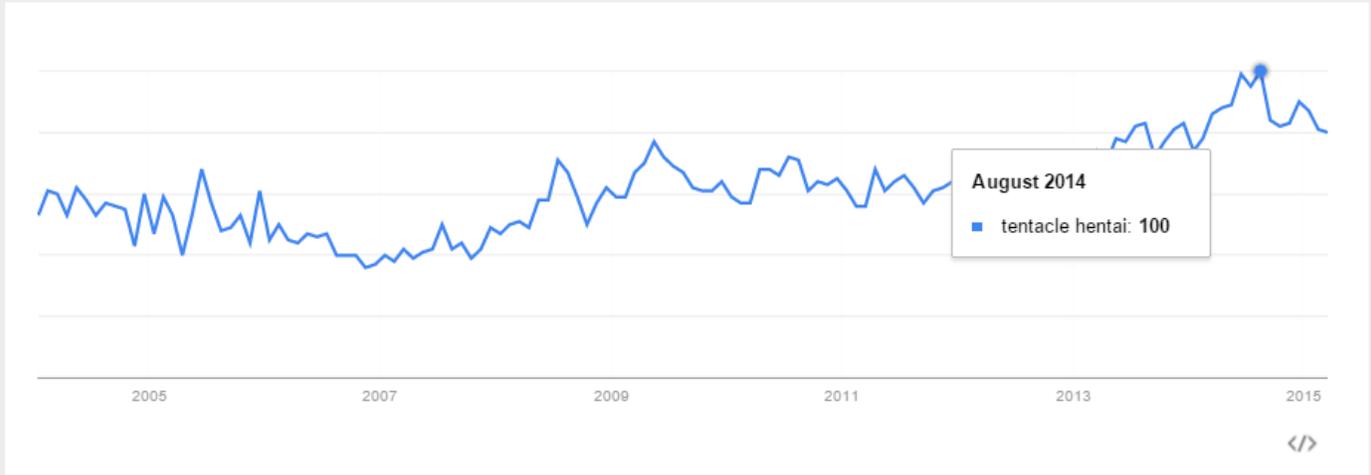
² Mokoto, Hunt. "Google Japan Gains Market Share and Narrows the Gap with Yahoo - Multilingual Search." Multilingual Search. November 8, 2005. Accessed March 20, 2015. <http://blog.webcertain.com/google-japans-growing-japanese-search-market-share/08/11/2005/>.

tentacle hentai
Search term

+ Add term

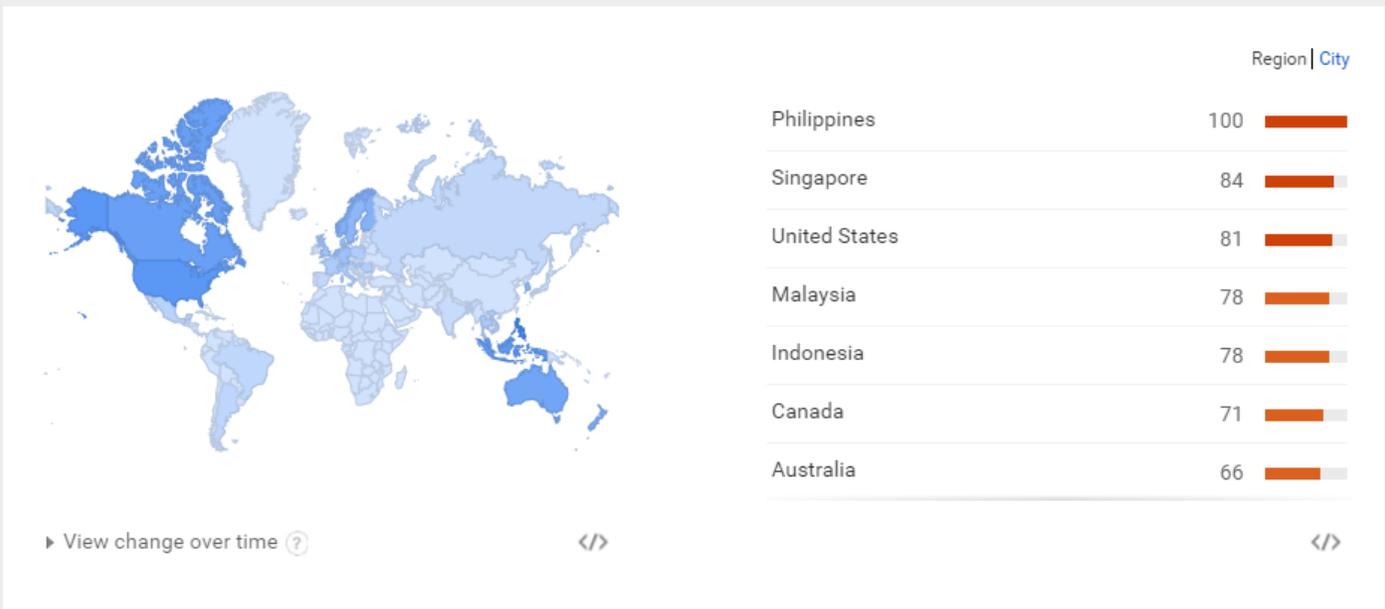
Interest over time

News headlines Forecast

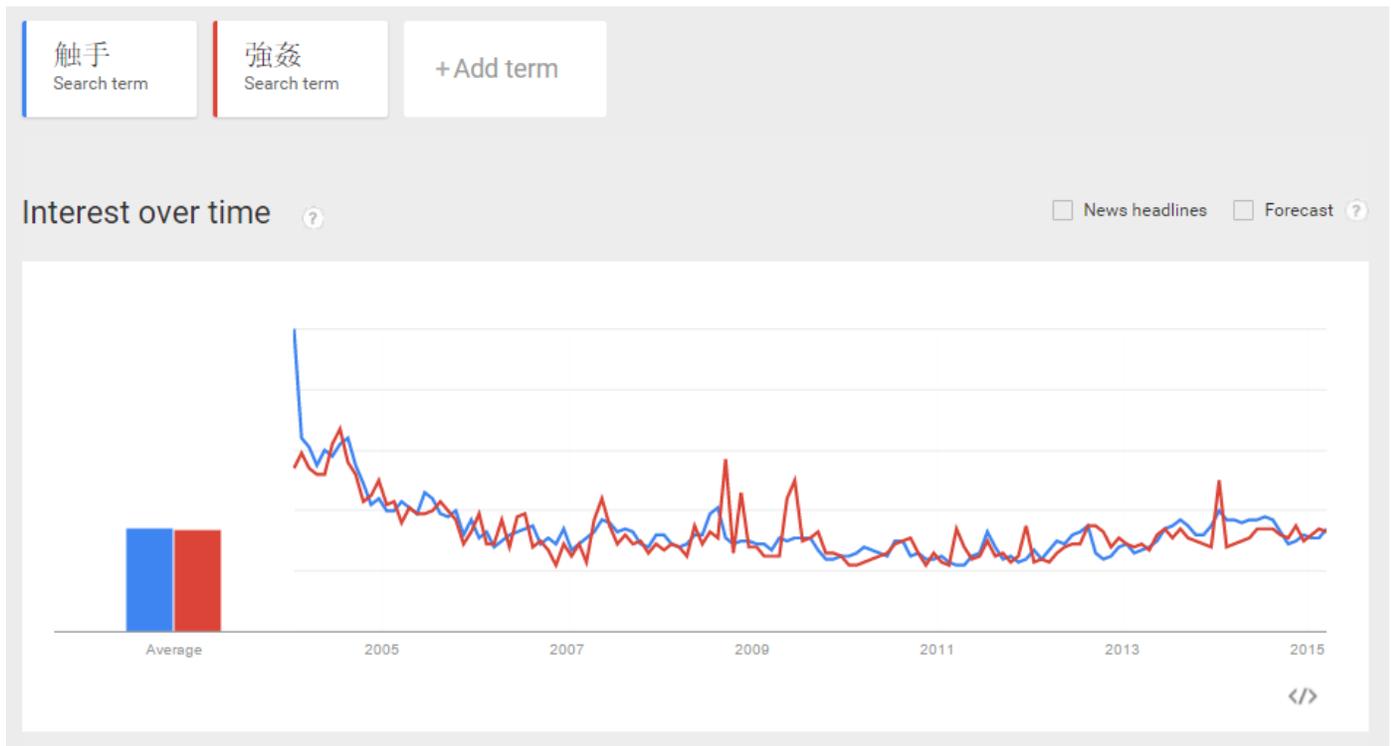


United States is third in total searches for tentacle hentai while the Philippines and Singapore are first and second.

Regional interest



In Japan, there is a strong correlation between searches on “触手” (shokushu) and “強姦” (goukan). However, the search data obtained is steadier reflecting a continued interest rather than a rising one.



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