

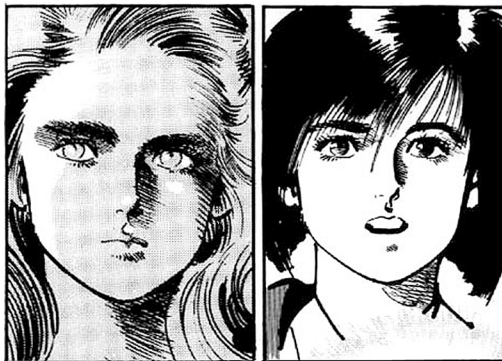
AT THE END, THERE'S ANOTHER SEGMENT, SOMEWHAT SHORTER, WHEN MAI IS FORCED TO FACE THE REMAINING CHILDREN WHO ARE UNDER THE CARE OR CONTROL OF THE WISDOM ALLIANCE. SHE FACES A KID FROM VIETNAM, ONE FROM MONGOLIA, AND A YOUNG AMERICAN - BLOND, HANDSOME, SELF-CONFIDENT, REMINISCENT OF ALL THOSE BOYS FROM MARVEL. I MUST ADMIT THAT IT'S THERE THAT THE ACTION FINALLY BECOMES VERY AMERICAN, ALTHOUGH PARAPSYCHIC MOTIFS - PSYCHOKINESIS, TELEPATHY - - ALL OF THIS WAS POPULAR IN JAPANESE COMICS AT THE TIME - AKIRA WAS AT THE TOP THEN, THEY ALSO HIT THE RIGHT MOMENT IN AMERICA, BECAUSE IT WAS THE PERIOD OF THE RISING WAVE FOR X-MEN, WHICH THEN COLLIDED OVER WITH THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF X-MEN BY JIM LEE AND CHRIS CLAREMONT.

PARTLY BECAUSE IT'S A SERIALIZED STORY, IT'S UNBALANCED. THE FIRST PART IS THE STORY OF HOW MAI AND HER FATHER FLEE FROM THE KAIEDA INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, WHICH IS TRYING TO CAPTURE THEM ON ORDERS FROM THE SO-CALLED WISDOM ALLIANCE. THE WISDOM ALLIANCE IS AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS ITS HEADQUARTERS IN THE SWISS ALPS AND HAS BEEN INFLUENCING THE FATE OF THE WORLD FOR CENTURIES. IN THE NEXT SEGMENT, THERE'S A FAIRLY WELL-DEVELOPED STORY IN WHICH MAI IS FORCED TO FACE ANOTHER GIRL, THIS TIME A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD GERMAN FROM EAST GERMANY NAMED TURN GARTEN. SHE IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM MAI - SHE REVEALS IN HAVING POWER, FOR HER, KILLING A PERSON IS NOTHING, FOR HER, KILLING SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, TURN GARTEN IS INCREDIBLY AMBITIOUS AND CONSIDERS HERSELF A GOD. SHE CHALLENGES MAI, SAYING THAT ONLY ONE OF THEM CAN BE THE BEST, AND LET'S SEE WHICH ONE.

REGARDING THE SCRIPT, THIS IS A STORY THAT ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN EPISODES IN WEEKLY SHONEN SUNDAY, AND AS SUCH IS DIVIDED INTO SHORT, TWENTY-SOMETHING-PAGE EPISODES, WHICH WORKED PERFECTLY IN AMERICA, WHERE THE TRADITION OF COMIC BOOKS IS VERY STRONG, AND IN THE 1980S WAS EVEN STRONGER. IT WAS PUBLISHED THERE IN ISSUES EVERY TWO WEEKS, SO THEY MANAGED TO PUBLISH THE ENTIRE WORK RELATIVELY QUICKLY.

"MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL" IS ONE OF THE FIRST JAPANESE SERIES TO BE PUBLISHED IN ITS ENTIRETY IN THE UNITED STATES. IT CAME OUT THERE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1980S AND WAS VERY WELL RECEIVED. APPARENTLY, IT WAS EVEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THERE THAN IN ITS NATIVE JAPAN. IT WAS AN ACTION-PACKED STORY, AND ACTION-ADVENTURE STORIES ARE VERY POPULAR IN AMERICAN COMICS, SO THEY WERE COUNTING ON READERS EMBRACING THIS CONCEPT. SECONDLY, IKEGAMI HAS A FAIRLY CONSERVATIVE, VERY REALISTIC ART STYLE THAT WAS SOMEWHERE HALFWAY BETWEEN WHAT THE JAPANESE WERE DOING IN THEIR COMICS AT THE TIME AND WHAT AMERICANS WERE DOING IN THEIRS, DESPITE THE ACTION FORMULA AND CLASSIC MOTIFS POPULAR IN MARVEL - THE TITULAR MAI KUJO, A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD JAPANESE GIRL, IS ESSENTIALLY A JEAN GREY FROM TOKYO - AT THE SAME TIME, THE JAPANESE LOOK AT THINGS A BIT DIFFERENTLY, AND MANY READERS PRAISED THIS SERIES FOR NOT HAVING THE CLICHÉS AND TROPES PRESENT IN AMERICAN SUPERHERO COMICS.

FROM A VISUAL STANDPOINT, "MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL" DOESN'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR SPECTACULAR REVELATIONS OR FIREWORKS - IT'S ALL VERY NICELY AND SKILLFULLY DRAWN. IKEGAMI CAN HANDLE ACTION, EXPLOSIONS, CARS, WEAPONS, AND EVERYTHING ELSE, AND HE CAN SHOW THESE THINGS QUITE WELL. IKEGAMI HAS A VERY NICE ART STYLE MAINTAINED IN A TONE OF ANATOMICAL REALISM, QUITE ECONOMICAL, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MOMENTS WHERE HE CAN GO WILD, BUT IT'S ALWAYS THE CASE THAT MOST OF HIS WOMEN BASICALLY LOOK THE SAME, AND HIS MEN ALSO NEED CERTAIN DISTINCTIVE FEATURES TO DIFFERENTIATE THEM FROM EACH OTHER.



#09 JUN 2025 I READ COMICS TODAY



PIONEERING MANGA IN THE WEST

BUT WHEN MAKING A MASS PRODUCT, YOU NEED TO APPEAL TO THE MASS AUDIENCE. OTHERWISE, YOU HAVE TO EXPECT FAILURE. "MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL" APPEALED TO THE MASS AUDIENCE VERY STRONGLY, AND THAT'S GREAT.

THERE ARE SERIES THAT ARE MUCH MORE EXCITING, ESPECIALLY FOR READERS YOUNGER THAN ME, BECAUSE I LIKE THINGS CREATED FOR AUDIENCES OF THE PAST. I'M NOT NECESSARILY CONVINCED BY THE IDEA THAT SOME CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE NEEDS SOMETHING. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE. EVERYONE JUST WANTS SOMETHING THEY'LL ENJOY, AND THAT'S IT.

HOWEVER, FOR CASUAL READERS, I DON'T THINK IT'S WORTH THE TROUBLE. IKEGAMI, I THINK IT'S WORTH PICKING UP IF SOMEONE IS MORE INTO COMICS. SOME PRETTY DECENT DRAWINGS, EXPLOSIONS, AND A FEW OTHER THINGS BY BUT DUE TO ALL THESE CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS, AND EVEN JUST TO LOOK AT INCREDIBLE POWERS, NEITHER BETTER NOR WORSE THAN ALL THE OTHERS.

"MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL" ENJOYED ENORMOUS POPULARITY IN THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MANGA PUBLISHED THERE. THE JAPANESE APPROACHED IT WITH MORE MODERATE ENTHUSIASM, AND I THINK I UNDERSTAND WHY. IT'S SIMPLY AN ORDINARY, SENSATIONAL STORY ABOUT A GIRL WHO HAD

I READ COMICS IS A SERIES OF SHORT PUBLICATIONS ABOUT ME AND MY COMIC READING. IN IT, I INTRODUCE MY FAVORITE CHARACTERS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ALBUMS, CREATORS, AND OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO THE BROAD CONCEPT OF COMICS.

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THIS PUBLICATION USED ART CREATED BY RYOICHI IKEGAMI