GENERATIVE AI AND MANGA:

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF JAPAN'S STRENGTH IN REFINEMENT

Generative AI is a rapidly advancing technology. How will it impact such entertainment as anime, manga, and videogames, all of which represent Japan's soft power? The big question for creators is how to make the best use of AI.

Left: Sadoshima (far right) attends a meeting as a member of the Cabinet Office's AI Strategy Council. Right: Sadoshima, who used to work for a publishing company, brought the popular manga *Space Brothers* to the world as an editor. The manga's author, KOYAMA Chuya, is under an agency contract with Cork.

KOYAMA CHUYA, *SPACE BROTHERS*, KODANSHA

Japan's anime, manga, and videogames have global fan bases. Recently, generative AI, a product of remarkable technological innovation, has begun significantly impacting those kinds of entertainment. While the pool of potential creators is expanding, some have called for guidelines governing the use of AI across borders. In 2023, G7 leaders endorsed the Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework, the first international framework aiming to promote safe, secure, and trustworthy advanced AI systems.

How should AI be managed in the context of Japanese entertainment? "AI itself holds only potential. That's why it's important to know how to use and fine-tune it in a way that creates diverse, appealing kinds of entertainment, which is Japan's

forte," says SADOSHIMA Yohei, President and CEO of Cork, Inc., and a member of the Cabinet Office's AI Strategy Council. After working as a manga editor at a publishing company, he founded Cork, an agency for creators, putting him in a position to protect those creators' rights.

He says, "For example, the internal combustion engine was invented abroad, but Toyota Motor Corporation succeeded worldwide by improving its quality in the form of better automobiles. That shows how Japan excels at making products that are easy to use. In terms of AI, there is a good possibility that Japan can take a leadership role in various industries by providing unique services that can do subtle things in the form of fine tuning."

One positive outcome that AI will bring to Japanese entertainment content is the ability, in Sadoshima's words, "to break down language barriers." If AI could take on the task of translation, creators could distribute more of their works overseas, while fans worldwide could enjoy new releases without delay.

While some manga artists are starting to utilize AI, he says, there are still some things that AI cannot do. For instance, it can create the setting for science-fiction manga, and interacting with it is an effective way to "brush up" a work to make it more interesting, no matter what genre it is. However, AI cannot understand the subtle "waves" and changes in human emotions.

There is also the question of managing the copyright protections that AI might threaten. Sadoshima

thinks that copyrights are not about prohibitions and protections. "Rather, I believe that they serve to generate profit. In the future, I expect that the rules for how we manage copyrights will change rapidly, and that will be done in many ways. In our era, the question for the agents protecting authors' rights will be whether they have accumulated the knowledge to manage copyrights in various cases."

He also points out that "Japan has the advantage of being able to adapt quickly to the diversifying entertainment landscape." As a case in point, the world's first VTubers (virtual YouTubers) came from this country. Japan, meanwhile, continues to produce a wide variety of quality content that captivates the world, including anime, manga, and videogames, all of which are conducive to integration with AI. ●

SADOSHIMA Yohei, President and CEO of Cork, Inc. His agency has signed numerous creators, editing their work, creating their e-books, and managing their copyrights, fan communities, social media, character merchandise planning and sales.

CORK

Although not a work directly involving Cork or Sadoshima, *Cyberpunk: Peach John*, the world's first full-color comic drawn with an AI image generator, was released by Shinchosha in 2023.

ROOTPORT, *CYBERPUNK: PEACH JOHN*, SHINCHOSHA