

Masculinity and Femininity in Question

Herlambang, P.¹ and Djundjung, J.M.²

^{1,2} English Department, Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University, Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, East Java, INDONESIA

E-mails: frederika.pauline@hotmail.com; jennymd@peter.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The character traits in *Shinchan* seem to be contrary to the structure of masculine and feminine traits. I am interested in discussing the feminine character traits that are adopted by the male characters and the masculine character traits that are adopted by the female characters in a patriarchal society in Japan. Under the patriarchal system, there are rigid segregation of gender roles and the expected feminine and masculine traits. The main purpose of this paper is that even though some of the male characters adopt the feminine character traits and the female characters adopt the masculine character traits, the gender roles Japanese patriarchal system remains unchanged.

Key words: patriarchal system, gender roles, masculine and feminine character traits

Crayon Shinchan is well accepted in some countries like in East Asia and has been translated into some languages. In China it is called “*La Bi Xiao Xin*”, in Taiwan it is called “*Tong Li Comics*”, in Malaysia it is translated into “*Dik Cerdas*” and in Indonesia it is translated into “*Komik Crayon Shinchan*”. In Indonesia, *Crayon Shinchan* is very popular. It is popular because the drawing is not too detailed and the language is simple and funny. The popularity of this comics can also be seen from what Gusmarinda, the manager of Gramedia Book Store Basuki Rahmat, Surabaya said. According to him, the demand of *Shinchan* was twice as much as other Manga comic books that are sold in Gramedia. The Public Relation of RCTI also said that the requests to lengthen the time of *Shinchan* show on RCTI increased (Wiguno, 2002). It is because of its popularity in Indonesia that I am interested to discuss *Crayon Shinchan*.

Crayon Shinchan is basically a story about the growing ups of a 5-year-old boy with his family, his neighbors, his friends, his teachers, and even with some strangers in the housing where Shinchan and the other characters live, in Kasukabe, Saitama Prefecture. Shinchan lives with his mother, Misae, and his father, Hiroshi, and he has a sister called Himawari and a dog called Shiro. What I find so interesting about this comic is that Shinchan is a stubborn, crude, and lazy boy whose attitudes often cause the anger from people around him, especially women and girls. However, the comic book does not stop just there. It also describes more about the life of Japanese society and how they feel about life in general. Besides Shinchan, there are other characters who actually play a very important role in the story such as his father, mother, teachers and the principal.

The way the mother and the teachers are presented as more aggressive than the father and the principal seems to be contrary to what I understand about the character traits which are based on gender roles in patriarchal system. In Japan, the society embraces the patriarchal system where men are more superior to women and they have full authority over women, children, and money. (Manga and genre, 2009). Patriarchal system is a system where men are the leaders of the family; thus, men are supposed to have more authority than the women. In this system, women are expected to embrace their roles as wives or if they work, as subordinates. It is also expected that they act in a feminine ways and the men in masculine ways. In this comics, the women seem to take a more aggressive and dominant roles than the men. Each sex seems to adopt character traits that are contrary to what is expected from them. Considering how the adoption of character traits in *Shinchan* seems to be contrary to the structure of masculine and feminine traits, I decide to discuss feminine and masculine character traits that are adopted by the characters.

This study is conducted to analyze the feminine character traits that are adopted by the male characters and the masculine character traits that are adopted by the female characters in a

patriarchal society. The word ‘patriarchy’ means ‘ruled by the fathers’, so in any patriarchal culture, the rules are set by men. (Johnson, n.d). In leadership positions, there are always more men than women. There is always a big difference in the work place between men and women, be it in position or salary. This system still exists and has a deep influence on modern life because some cultures and traditions still hold on the belief that men are born with the ability to control and women are born to be under the control and protection of men. Men usually function as the breadwinners and they are there to feed and to provide for the family. Under the patriarchal system, there are rigid segregation of gender roles and the expected feminine and masculine traits. Gender roles is a set of behaviors considered appropriate for one’s sex by the society. Gender roles are formed by many aspects, such as race, culture, and society and it is created or exist for one goal namely to direct how a man or woman should act, think, and behave to be accepted by the society where they live. Gender Roles itself does not exist naturally but is constructed by the society.

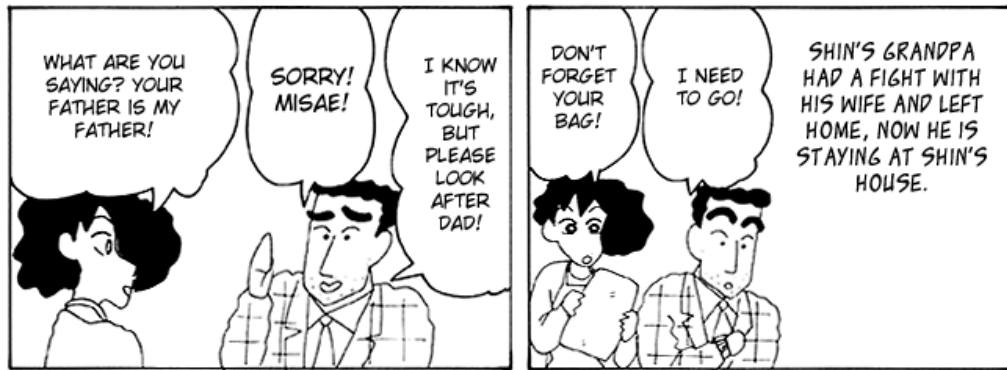
As one enters a social life, one will immediately begin to learn what is appropriate as a woman or as a man and one will also learn how to behave according to those expected character traits that is divided into masculine and feminine. One may also learn that to behave differently may risk not being accepted by the society and it is not a good thing for them because society is very important in life. Every race, culture and society has their own standard expectations. However, the way to behave based on patriarchal system in Japan, it is stated on the character traits that differentiate behaviors between men and women. Character traits are the aspects of a person's behavior and attitudes that make up that his or her personality. Someone who is born to this world does not naturally have the character traits, for it is something taught and created by the society. There are two kinds of character traits, which are feminine and masculine. Feminine is the character trait that is expected to be adopted by women and masculine is the character trait that is expected to be adopted by men (Planned Parenthood, 2014). Here is some of the character traits and gender roles that generally accepted by society to be adopted by men and women from three sources (Planned Parenthood, 2014; Boundless, n.d; Krienert, 2003):

Masculinity	Femininity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not cry in public • Dominant • Strong personality • Not-emotional • Aggressive • Forceful • Confrontative • Active • Strong • Defensive • Sexual-aggressive • Rebellious • Bold • Authoritative • The way of communicating: straight to the point and literally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subordinate • Pay attention about other people’s feeling • Shy • Emotional • Passive • Sensitive • Weak • Flirtatious • Nurturing • Soft • Sexual-submissive • Accepting • Patient • The way of communicating: superlatives, metaphors, and generalization • Childish

I will use the concept of masculine and feminine character traits to identify which feminine character traits that are adopted by the male characters and which masculine character traits are adopted by the female characters in *Crayon Sinchan*.

In Sinchan’s family, Hiroshi, Shinchan’s father, has the role as the breadwinner of the family and Misae has the role as a housewife who takes care of the family. They have taken the gender roles expected of them as a husband and wife, yet in some cases, Hiroshi shows more of the feminine characteristics and Misae shows more of the masculine characteristics in dealing with their everyday events.

Hiroshi’s role as a breadwinner and Misae’s role as a housewife is shown in the incident below:



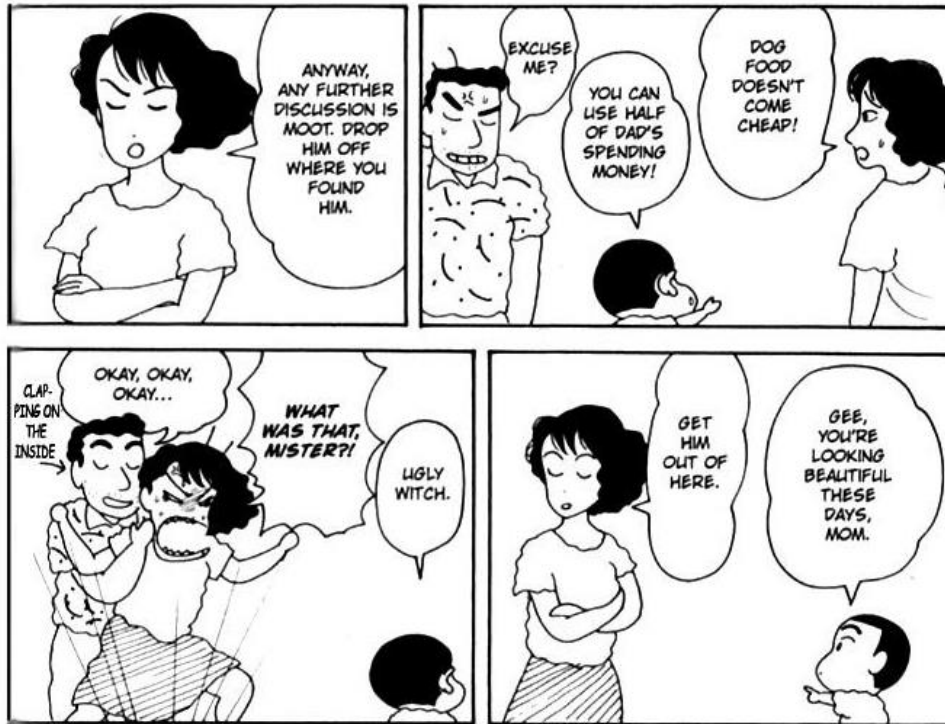
As expected, a husband is to be the breadwinner and provider for the family, and Hiroshi fulfilled that roles. On the other hand, Misae, as the wife, has taken the supporting role to her husband. When Hiroshi's father stays at Hiroshi's house, Misae ensures Hiroshi that she will take care of his father, so he does not have to worry about his father. This is stated by her supportive words, "your father is my father", and so she will take care of her father-in-law at home while her husband goes to work. By saying that, Misae takes her roles as supportive wife to her husband. She also wears an apron which shows that she manages the kitchen and the house.

In another scene, Hiroshi takes the role of a protector of Misae. In one incident, he has to protect Misae from a bad guy who wants to kidnap her. In order to protect his wife, Hiroshi has to confront the bad guy.



As the protector of his wife, he shows a determination that he will confront the bad guy with bravery and aggressiveness expected of him as a man. I can see that Misae naturally trusts him to be stronger than her and trusts him to be her protector. In the first and second panels, Hiroshi is pictured to be angry and ready to fight the guy. This can be seen from his facial expression that his eyebrows are squeezed together to form a crease, eyelids are tight and straight. Yet in the third panel, Hiroshi confronts the bad guy using a feminine gesture that is flirtatious and soft. This kind of character traits also shows that Hiroshi does not fulfill the expected traits as a man. Here, Hiroshi does not fulfill the expected traits as a man, instead he adopts feminine character traits that can cause the readers to laugh. The readers laugh because in the second panel, Hiroshi seems be boldly challenging the man which seems he is fulfilling the masculine character traits, yet suddenly end up with feminine character traits which are flirtatious and soft. I assumed that here the author put the element of comedy which is surprising because of the sudden of change. (Katherine, 2009)

This comic often shows how men are afraid of women for no reason, for instance, Hiroshi is afraid of Misae. In one example, in educating Shinchan, Misae advises Shinchan not to adopt a pet inside the house because Misae thinks that dog food is expensive. However, Shinchan who disagrees with Misae, solve his mother's concern with his idea to use Hiroshi's allowance to buy the dog food.



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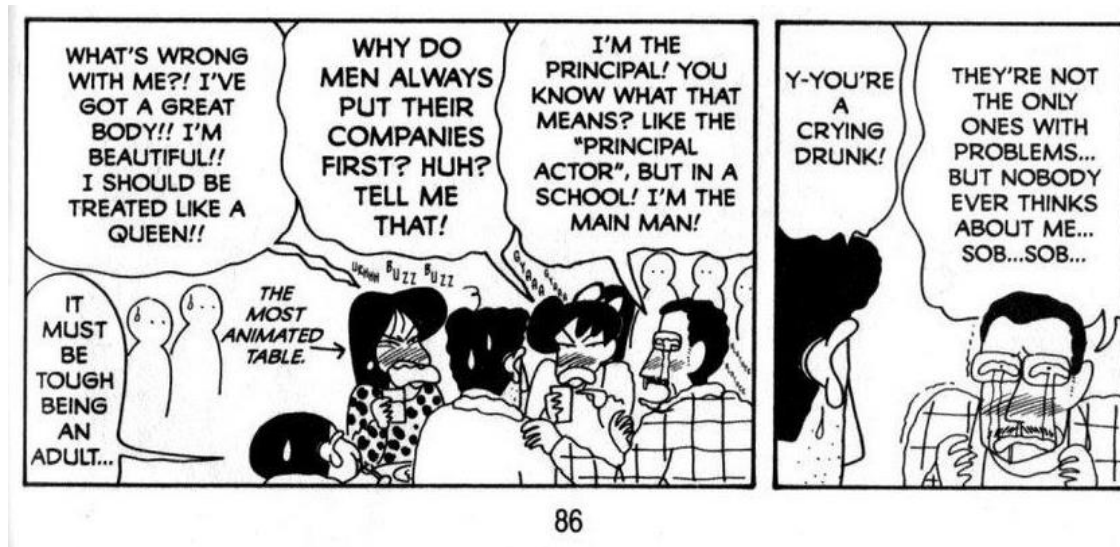
From the picture above, we can see that in educating Shinchan, Misae is more impatient than Hiroshi. The picture above is one of the pictures that shows a situation when Misae gets angry at Shinchan. Misae shows her anger from her physical strength and Hiroshi is the one who prevents her passively. In other words, Misae adopts masculine character traits by showing her physical strength that can be seen by everyone from her facial expression from the picture in the bottom left that is darker than her previous expression, her mouth is also widely opened as well, together with her body language that shows her powerful arms. In contrast, Hiroshi adopts feminine character traits that is passive towards the situation. It can be seen from how he can only answer Misae “okay, okay, okay..”, which shows that Hiroshi does not have the ability to stop the quarrel between Misae and Shinchan, and can only accept the situation even though he is the head of the family. His acceptance represents how he adopts feminine character traits which are patient and accepting. In addition, his acceptance can be seen from the last panel where his body language is calm and his face also does not represent any strain, unlike Misae who shows all her power by showing her muscles and strained face.

Misae is the one who adopts masculine character traits to speak authoritatively or straightly to the point and being rebellious while Hiroshi adopts feminine character traits where he speaks softly and carefully toward Misae’s feeling. Hiroshi shows his acceptance towards what Misae said to him. However, even though Hiroshi adopts feminine character traits such as flirtatious, soft, a crybaby and passive, Misae adopts masculine character traits such as impatient, speak loudly and so on, they still fulfill their traditional gender roles. Hiroshi is still the one who performs his duty as the breadwinner of the family and Misae is a good housewife who takes care of the children, husband, house, and so on.

In *Crayon Shinchan*, Shinchan spends most of his time in his house and kindergarten. The principal and teachers often discuss their problems in the school or outside, such as their love life. The first problem happens in kindergarten is usually among the principal and the teachers, then, the second problem usually happens between the teachers with their dates. The principal as the leader of the school is a man and the teachers who are subordinates are all women. However, the principal and teachers often show that men adopt the feminine character traits and women adopt the masculine character traits in several incidents.

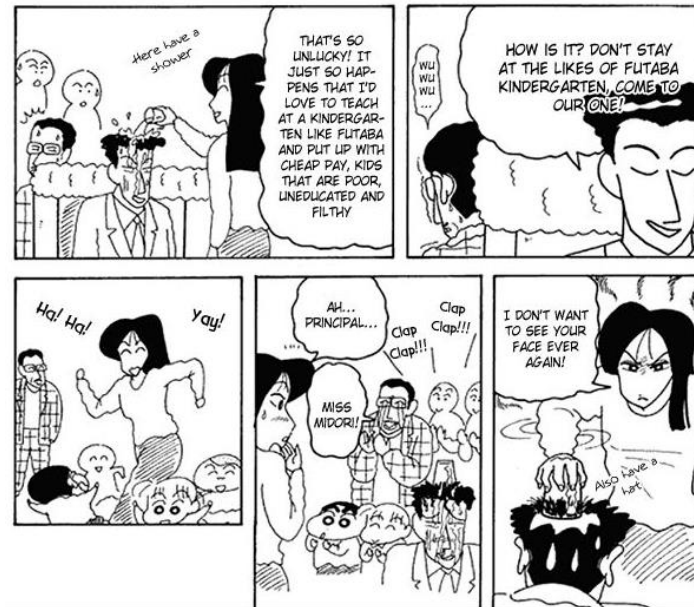
In one example, the principal and the teachers are celebrating teacher’s day in a restaurant. However, since the teachers, Midori and Matsuzaka, are not in a good relationship, the principal has no idea what to do to calm the situation. Coincidentally, Hiroshi and Shinchan pass by the

restaurant. Then the principal invites them to join him and the teachers to make the situation calmer.



The meeting ends up with the principal and the teachers get drunk. When they are drunk, they start showing their true feelings about their lives. In analyzing the expression from picture above, I find that the principal adopts the feminine character traits and the teachers are adopting masculine character traits when they are under the influence of alcohol. The first one, the principal is crying when he complains how he feels he is that ignored and is hurt because of it, whereas men are expected to have the masculine traits like strong, bold, and should not cry in public. However, the principal's tears represent that he is more sensitive than the teachers besides him. In contrast, the teachers that are also under influence of alcohol, act differently from the principal. They aggressively confront their true feeling about their love life. So, the teachers who are women act aggressively when actually a woman is expected to adopt feminine traits which are act passive, patient and soft. By seeing those three characters in adopting the masculine and feminine character traits, I am interested to analyze them more deeply from other incidents.

In the second example, Matsuzaka is persuaded by a man that comes from another kindergarten to work for him. The principal knows the man who walks beside Matsuzaka is, so, he decides to follow them. Matsuzaka meets the man from the rival kindergarten in one restaurant and the principal is there, sitting right behind their table. The principal is listening on purpose what the man says to her and he realizes that the man is persuading Matsuzaka to work for him by degrading her present working place and praising the man's kindergarten as comparison.



In this panel, I find two points that I would like to analyze. The first one is about Matsuzaka's response to the persuader. She responds strongly to the persuader that she is insulted by what he says about her workplace and mentions the low class kindergarten, the cheap payment, and the children who are said to be poor, uneducated, and filthy. She expresses her anger for the insults by pouring her drink on his head. Matsuzaka's words show her defensive towards the arrogant man. This action does not stop at that, for she continues and says: "I don't want to see your face ever again!" Here, I can see that Matsuzaka has the ability to be strong, shown both from her words and her action. Her aggressiveness in confronting the man belongs to masculine character trait. In contrast, the arrogant man, who acted cool and classy at the beginning, adopts the feminine trait which is passive. It is expected that men should act aggressively when someone or something is about to attack them, yet in this case, the man does not do anything at all and just sits at his seat and bears all the embarrassment. The second point is about the principal's action towards this incident. When the principal is listening on purpose the conversation between Matsuzaka and the man, he knows that the man is trying to sabotage the kindergarten and his body shakes out of anger. However, after he hears Matsuzaka's answer to the man, he becomes so shocked that he abandoned his anger. After seeing more of Matsuzaka's reaction to the man, he shows himself up to Matsuzaka with tears of joy on his face for what Matsuzaka has done. The principal is crying because he is emotionally moved by Matsuzaka's loyalty to the kindergarten. This trait of being emotionally moved by something is said to belong to the feminine traits. In contrast, even though the principal is crying because he is proud of Matsuzaka, Matsuzaka is not emotionally moved like the principal does to her by showing his proudness complete with clapping hands towards her action. Instead, she shows that she is not at all disturbed by the incident. It shows that she has strong personality and defensive. It can be seen from the last picture from the panel that she expresses her happiness by playing with the children and she forgets the problem. So, I conclude that in the kindergarten, the patriarchal system is applied by allowing a man to be the leader and women teachers are being the subordinate in the organization, but the principal is adopting the feminine character traits and Matsuzaka is adopting the masculine traits.

In addition, after analyzing the character traits that are adopted by principal and teachers, I find that the principal adopts feminine character traits such as crying, sensitive, emotionally moved, and childish. On the other hand, the teachers adopt masculine character traits such as aggressive, strong, impatient and passionate. As a matter of fact, they are similar to Hiroshi and Misae, because even though the principal adopts feminine character traits and the teachers adopt masculine character traits, they still accept the traditional gender roles that is expected by the society which allow men to be the head of the organization and women as subordinates. The principal is a man and the teachers are women.

In conclusion, what society expects in general based on the character traits are not applied in this comic. I found that the men are adopting feminine character traits and the women are adopting masculine character traits. Secondly, I find that the freedom to adopt the character traits by someone is not based on the type of sex possessed. This comic shows that even though the characters are men, they still can adopt feminine character traits and the women can adopt masculine character traits. Thirdly, I find character traits does not depend on gender roles and patriarchal system. Here, I find that the men are still running their duty as a breadwinner even though they are adopting feminine character traits. Fourthly, the unexpected characters cause this comic to become very entertaining and attract many readers. The writer creates the characters that act unexpected by the readers.

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