TEXT

The Adventures of Dankichi

SHIMADA KEIZŌ

CONTEXT

The South Seas/Micronesia, Taiwan, China, Korea

CRITIQUE

Popular Orientalism and Japanese Views of Asia

KAWAMURA MINATO

MANGA ARTIST Shimada Keizō (1900–1973) began his career as a political satirist, but turned to children's manga in the early 1930s, continuing to work in that field after World War II. Together with Tagawa Suihō's *The Soldier Dog* (*Norakuro*, 1931–1941), *The Adventures of Dankichi*, Shimada's best-known work, is generally recognized as the most popular manga before the appearance of those by Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989) in the postwar era.

Reflecting the diversity of manga art at the time, *The Adventures of Dankichi*, serialized in the *Boys' Club* (*Shōnen Kurabu*) magazine from 1933 to 1939, is written in the picture-story format in which each page is split into narrative and illustration sections. The story depicts the adventures of Dankichi and his mouse friend, Mister Kari, on a tropical island. Dankichi and Mister Kari fall asleep while fishing, drift to the island of dark-skinned "barbarians," and find themselves on the run. However, with his own quick wit and Mister Kari's resourcefulness, Dankichi beats back the natives and becomes their king.

Regularly calling himself a cultural critic (*bungei hyōronka*) rather than a scholar, Kawamura Minato writes on various genres of texts, including manga, and on a wide variety of subjects, often those that complicate conventional notions of Japanese culture. He is well-known for his pioneering works that examine the relationship between colonialism and modern Japanese literature, but this important contribution should be understood as only one expression of his consistent interest in defamiliarizing the familiar. His numerous publications include *Showa Literature as Literature of the Other* (*Ikyō no Shōwa bungaku*, 1990), *Japanese Literature of the South Seas and Sakhalin* (*Nan'yō/Karafuto no Nihon bungaku*, 1994), and *The Collapse of Manchukuo* (*Manshū hōkai*, 1997).

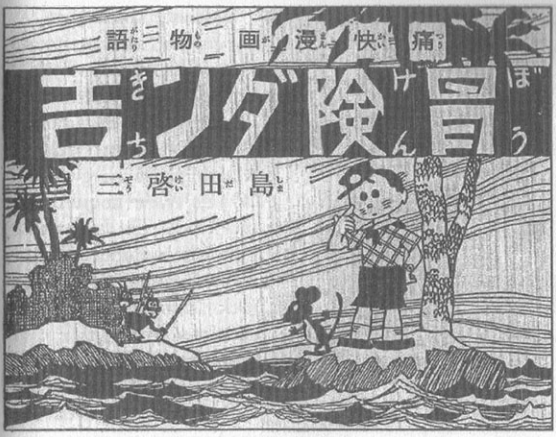
Kawamura's essay "Popular Orientalism and Japanese Views of Asia" (*Taishū orientarizumu to Ajia ninshiki*, 1993) offers a helpful synthesis of a number of crucial issues covered in this volume and reflects his ability to deftly navigate diverse genres and contexts.

Note Regarding Discriminatory Language and Imagery

The manga that follows, *The Adventures of Dankichi*, is included in this volume as a historical document. Its discriminatory language and imagery were typical of the time it was created and do not reflect the views and opinions of the editors or Stanford University Press.

Given that an overarching aim of this anthology is to consider the pervasiveness of imperial ideology, the visuals and wording of this manga, while disturbing and offensive to a modern audience, manifestly reveal the extent to which such ideas were naturalized at every level of Japanese society.

Permission to translate and publish this text was graciously granted on the condition it appear with Kawamura Minato's essay "Popular Orientalism and Japanese Views of Asia," which properly contextualizes its moment of production. We strongly advise against any unlawful reproduction of this work.



It was a bright, clear day. Until now, Dankichi had been fishing in his boat. Not catching a single fish, Dankichi became sleepy.

"Oh my gosh! Dan-chan, have you fallen asleep?"[1] Before long, the eyes of Dankichi's good friend, the black mouse Mister Kari also glazed over.[2] So the boat began drifting along with the waves and the breeze.

1. *Chan* is a diminutive suffix, which is attached to the end of names and indicates friendliness and closeness. Thus, Dankichi and Dan-chan are the same character.

2. In Japanese the mouse is called Karikō, *kō* meaning "Sir" or "Mister."

Suddenly Mister Kari awoke, and, looking around, he saw that the boat had drifted to a strange land; the scenery was unfamiliar. What's more, the boat was teetering atop a large rock. "Oh no! We're in quite a pickle here! The boat was pulled by the tide, and now it's stuck on top of this rock. Oh man, this is bad," exclaimed Kari.

Surprised, the ever-responsible Mister Kari looked at Dankichi, but the boy was still pleasantly snoring away. "Jeez, what a sleepyhead!"

Just then a strange wind started to blow from behind them. "Yikes!" When Mister Kari turned around, there was a strange and mysterious bird swooping down at Dankichi. "Holy smokes! Dan-chan, look out!"

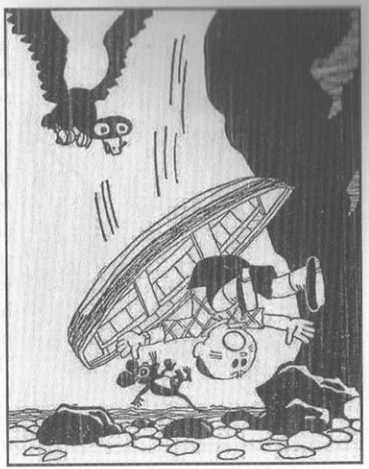
Dankichi opened his eyes at the sound of Mister Kari's absurd outburst, exclaiming, "What's the matter with you? You're so loud."

"I'm not loud! Look!"

When Dankichi looked, he saw a frightening and mysterious bird with its beak wide open, flying straight at him. "Oh my goodness! Th-this is so terrible!"

The boat was stuck on top of a narrow rock, so it shook with every move they made. "Aah! Oh gods, please help me!" Dankichi pleaded. Isn't it funny how people only ask the gods for help when they're in a pinch?

In a panic Dankichi and Mister Kari tried to hide in a corner. The boat, along with the two friends, fell from atop the high rock with a banging and rattling noise.



"Just as I thought, the gods are good for something," said Dankichi.

The boat had completely turned upside down during the fall, saving Dankichi from the sharp beak of the mysterious bird.

"In such a close call, it's amazing you remembered the gods," said Mister Kari with his heart still pounding and the overturned boat still covering Dankichi. "Dan-chan, the mysterious bird is not here. Come on out!"

Finally crawling out from under the boat, Dankichi carefully surveyed his surroundings. Dankichi said, "Hey, this is a tropical land. That's one big palm tree." While looking around restlessly at the surrounding area for strange things, Kari suddenly plunged into the forest and brought back a handy-looking branch and a piece of strong-looking vine. "Now Dankichi please make a bow with this. Nothing worries me more than being in a place like this without a weapon."

"I bet you're hungry, I'm pretty hungry myself. I wonder if there's any food around here," said Dankichi.

"The tropics are full of food! There are coconuts, bread fruit, pineapples, bananas, and various other things. Hey look, there're some coconuts. Let's eat 'em."

"But I'm not very good at climbing trees."

"Why not shoot it down with the bow we just made."

"Wow Kari, you really are smart!"

He took aim, released the arrow, and scored a splendid hit on the coconut. The coconut fell.

"Ouch! Who's there? What's the big idea hitting me with this in the middle of my nap?" came a roar from the jungle. Neither Dankichi nor Mister Kari could have known there were lions living on the island. Unaware of this, they had carelessly shot down the coconut.

"Oh no, Kari, this is bad. It's a lion!!"

Wild animals such as lions will usually run away from people, but when attacked they will fight back. The offended lion was angry. If you could understand lion-language, this is what you would have heard: "Wait 'til I get my paws on you, you rascal." The lion chased them.

"Aah. It's dangerous! Run! Run!" Dankichi turned to shout, already ten yards ahead.

Dankichi had the strong legs of a marathon runner, something that can't just be bought in a department store. Running around the mountains in confusion, they saw signs of people. "Kari, there are people! There are people! There are a lot of houses." They were ecstatic that this time they would be saved by people not gods. "Hey! Help us!" shouted Dankichi, making the biggest mistake of his life. Sure they were people, but they weren't helpful people. They were people who ate people.

"Aah, cannibals!" Even the athletic Dankichi felt his legs shake. "Kari, what should we do?"

"What should we do?? Stop talking already and run!"

"So... it's more running?"

"What choice do we have?"

Since they didn't have any weapons there wasn't much else they could do. Behind them, the lion! In front, the cannibals! They dashed to the right.

"Phew, we're finally in the clear," gasped Dankichi.

"What a shock! But we aren't out of the woods yet, Dan-chan; the natives know this area really well. They'll find us for sure. Hey! Why don't you use mud from this river to disguise yourself?" said Mister Kari.

"Disguise? But how?"

"Just dissolve some of it in the water and plaster it on your skin. Then you'll become a blackie!"

"Jeepers! Great idea Mister Kari!" Dankichi said as he set about applying his blackie camouflage.

"Oh wow, you did it!" cried Mister Kari.

"You think this'll be good enough to fool them? I bet I look like an honest to god blackie."

"For sure, you did a super job!"

"Well then, I think it's time to make an appearance over at the camp."

"You think it'll be ok?"

"Don't fret, it'll be fine."

Dankichi is a Japanese man, and on top of that, the "Dan" in his name stands for "danger," so he fears nothing.

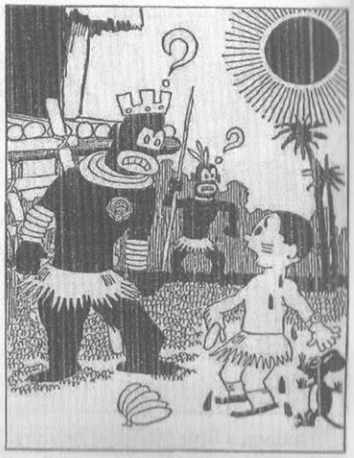
"Duuum, a little blackie is heading this way. Hey, little black boy, where are you going?" said a guard at the gate of the natives' camp.

"Do you know who I am? I'm the Chief's aunt's father's son. You lot are clearly inferior to me, so show me to the Chief," Dankichi proclaimed.

"Huh? Oh really…that's kind of weird, but okay," the guard said and proceeded to guide Dankichi to the Chief. He was able to hoodwink the Chief as well and a massive feast was brought out. Dankichi and Mister Kari proceeded to stuff themselves. As they feasted, the sky suddenly clouded over and it started to pour.

"Yikes! It's raining," said Mister Kari as he suddenly realized that they were completely wet. Dankichi's disguise had washed off, and he had returned to his original white appearance. Unaware, Dankichi continued to happily munch on his banana.

The Chief's suspicious face quickly melted into an expression of great anger. "Dummm. That's a white boy. He really fooled me," said the Chief.



Previously, Dankichi had disguised himself as a blackie and snuck into the natives' camp to have a feast. However, his identity was revealed when his disguise washed away in the rain. The Chief, realizing he'd been fooled, was so furious he looked like steam was going to shoot out of his ears.

"You rat! How dare you deceive me, the King!"

"Jeepers Creepers!" yelped Dankichi as he had only just now realized he had turned back into a white boy. But it was too late; the Chief was charging at them with a spear in hand. The two friends dodged the spear and ran off into the dense jungle foliage. Mister Kari began to scramble around for something to use and found a strong vine.

"Kari, we're in a quite a hurry here. What're you doing, picking that thing up?" asked Dankichi, a little worried.

"With this we'll capture the Chief. Now I'm going to make a loop, so please hold this over there."

As they hid in the shadows of the trees, the Chief ran up with puffs of steam shooting from his head. At that instant, his foot was caught perfectly in the loop the two had made and, like a football, he tumbled head over heels with a great *thud!*

It is true that savages are simply lacking in wisdom. After all, the Chief was caught alive.

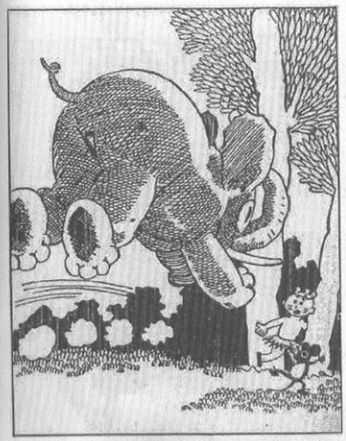
"Hey Mr. Barbarian, you can't match the wisdom of the white man. If you promise you won't eat us from now on, I'll forgive you."

"Yes! We most certainly will not eat the white master. We've had quite enough." Tears like great lumps of charcoal flowed from the Chief's eyes as he apologized. At this, Little Dankichi unfastened the vine, seizing the crown and spear.

"As usual, Dan-chan never fails to amaze."

"Kari, you yourself are quite amazing as well."

The crown Dankichi captured was the symbol of the king. With this crown he could rule over the savages. "Yahoo! From now on I am the King of this island, you know!" Lost in his happiness, Dankichi sang, "Yay! Yippee!" and celebrated with a native's dance. At that moment, a roar loud enough to topple a mountain came from behind them. Startled, Kari turned around only to see... trouble! It was an elephant! A most enormous elephant!



Of course the elephants found in zoos, circuses, and the like are quiet and rather tame, but as for the elephants of the wild, they are bad-tempered beyond belief. One will trample and crush anything that is in its path. Swinging a trunk the size of a chimney, it bounded closer, and the startled Dankichi was horrified. With a "Yikes!!" he suddenly made as if to run into the field, but Kari hastily shouted out, "Dan-chan, it's dangerous to run that way, escape this way between these thick trees!"

Following Kari's command, Dankichi dove between the two trees.

"Heyyy stupid Elephant, Hey! Over here." Kari, with the wisdom of a seasoned general, stood between the two trees and ridiculed the giant elephant thousands of times bigger than himself. In a rage, the elephant flew towards him. This was Kari's plan. The elephant was sandwiched between the two trees and was unable to move.

"Long live Dankichi… even the elephant was caught alive!"

Once again saved from a jam by the quick thinking of Kari, Dankichi returned to where he'd disguised himself as a blackie since he needed to get his clothes.

"Kari, it was just around here, wasn't it?"

"Yeah it was just by the stream over there."

When Dankichi looked forward, he was surprised by what he saw. It seemed that earlier, someone up in a tree had seen Dankichi in his clothes. Wobbling around and looking very odd was a monkey, wearing Dankichi's clothes and swinging around a pair of pants.

"What the heck!? What should we do, Kari?"

Unfortunately, because the monkey was quick, it was able to escape. "Hey, it's going over there!" squeaked Kari. Then the monkey stopped, not sure where to go.

"Alright! Let's catch him, Kari!" Dankichi jumped across with great concentration. The monkey was surprised. He had never seen a white person wearing the Chief's crown. He was bewildered and climbed up a tree to hop across the river.

"That darn monkey! But I can jump over that river no problem!" exclaimed Dankichi.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" asked Mister Kari.

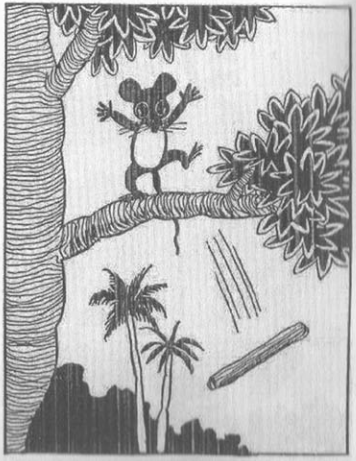
"Don't worry about it. Watch this!" Dankichi got on his mark. He started running. He made a splendid jump!

Usually Dankichi wouldn't have any problems with a jump like this. However, sometimes things don't go quite as planned. The spear sank into the muddy river bottom, and Dankichi was stuck hanging over the middle of the river.

"Dang!" cursed Dankichi, but saying that wouldn't be any help to him now. Hanging from the spear like a piece of laundry on a clothes- line, Dankichi looked down and saw that this time the danger was very real.

Below him was a huge alligator with its mouth open wide, waiting for Dankichi to fall. Surely if he had known there were alligators in this river, he might have reconsidered this plan. "Kari! I'm in real trouble now!"

Kari, observing the events, thought, "Hmm, what can I do?" Soon enough, the wise Kari had something in mind. He quickly ran up a tree, stick in hand, and threw it at the alligator.



Kari's aim was true and the stick landed on target in the alligator's gaping mouth. They had escaped that deadly situation by a hairsbreadth.

Dankichi's weight pulled him down towards the alligator's mouth at the same time as the branch landed. Naturally, the alligator, unable to close its mouth with the stick there, was frantic. In that instant, Dankichi and Kari crossed the river.

"Thanks, Kari, you saved me."

As the two friends searched here and there for the mischievous monkey, it started to get dark.

"Kari, it's getting dark, what should we do?"

"We don't have any choice but to sleep here tonight; but we're in the wilderness, so wild animals will probably come out during the night. We should make a fire to frighten them off."

Kari truly is a loyal friend. He gathered some branches together and made a fire.

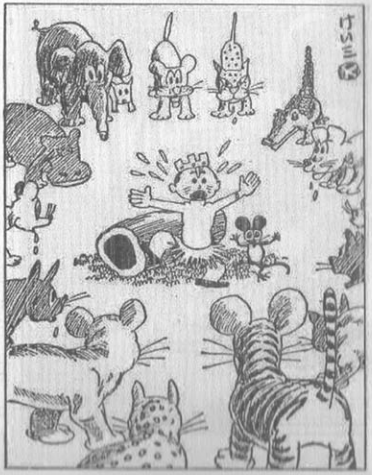
Gradually, the sun sank below the horizon of this untamed land. The awful shriek of a strange bird searching for prey and the howls of the wild beasts wandering through the jungle made Dankichi feel very uneasy.

"Kari, that was a horrible sound, wasn't it? I wonder if we'll be okay..."

"As long as we keep the fire going, we'll be fine. It'll scare away the beasts of this island."

These two had fought off danger all afternoon, so they were completely worn out, and they went straight to sleep.

As night fell, the crackling fire slowly burned down to embers, to the peril of Dankichi and Kari. You see, this is an island crawling with hungry wild beasts. When the fire went out all of the beasts that had been waiting gathered in close as a pack. Our heroes were awakened by a loud noise in the surrounding bush. They rubbed the sleep from their eyes only to see....



Our adventurer Dankichi, who had drifted ashore a barbaric tropical island and had gone on to have many exciting adventures, was now celebrating the New Year. You see, this land was so hot that all the people had been burnt black, so even when the New Year came they could still walk around naked.

"Ah, is everyone here?"

In the early morning on New Year's Day, Dankichi gathered all his men in the field in front of the palace.

"Today, I'm going to tell you about an interesting plan I've made."

The plan was to make an elite trooper corps from the ten strongest men, who could perform military duties from now on. The selection method was a strange form of sumo, in which the last ten men remaining would be chosen for the corps.

A sumo wrestling ring was made. At last, the ridiculous forehead sumo began. "In this type of sumo you can't make use of your limbs, only your forehead," said Dankichi.

"Come on Number Twenty! Pull yourself together!" cheered Dankichi.

"Looks like Number Eight also lost…"

You see, this is sumo where you cannot move your arms and legs. In this strange sport you can only move your head around blindly, like a cow.

THUMP!

The men were stubborn, so they continued to hit their heads together. Both contenders had lumps on their heads and were on the verge of tears. All throughout, the others cheered noisily and the fight continued.

"I want all ten champs to line up!" ordered Dankichi. On his command, the ten men got in a line.

"Men, from this moment forward, you will be known as the New Army Elite Troopers. You get the honor of wearing this cap," Dankichi proclaimed.

The caps that Dan-chan proceeded to proudly place on their heads were actually coconuts cut in half with a star insignia drawn on to show honor.

The natives were overjoyed. With their special caps and armbands, their loyalty to King Dankichi grew and their resolve strengthened.

"Our next mission is to raise our glorious Japanese flag at the highest point on this island. I know it seems like a difficult mission, but I'm asking you all to give 110%!" Dankichi declared.

The preparations were made.

"Alright, let's move out!"

Since becoming King of the island, Dankichi hadn't explored his territory at all. He had no idea where they were going. "Kari, is the flag safe?" he asked.

"For sure, I'm keeping it wrapped around me."

They walked for a while and ended up at a dead end where a river blocked their path. The current was strong and there was nothing to cross on.

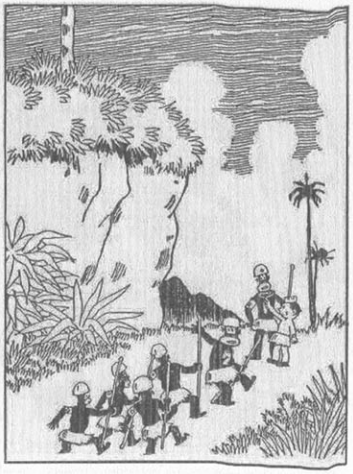
Dan-chan is an excellent swimmer, but it wouldn't do to get the Japanese flag wet.

"Your Highness! I've thought up a neat plan. Just leave it to us," said trooper Number One. After some discussion, the troopers leaped into the river one by one and grabbed on to each other. In the blink of an eye, a human bridge had formed.

"Gee whiz! These elite troopers are the cat's pajamas! Let's go ahead and cross," said Dankichi.

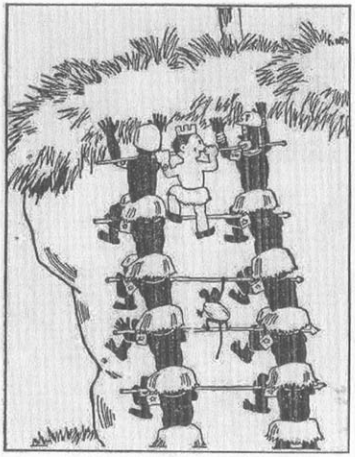
With Number One's valuable stroke of genius, they were able to cross the river without any trouble. The group had been walking along a difficult path and was now close to a mountain's peak. But then they arrived at a steep cliff and had to stop again.

"I aim to hang the flag on the tree at the top of that cliff, but it doesn't seem like we can get up there," said Dankichi. Of course, the cliff wasn't really that tall, but Dankichi was just too good to get dirty while climbing.



"Have no fear, Your Highness, we can surely be of use to you. We'll build a stairway that you can use to climb up," said Number One. He had received three stars on his gold stripe from Dankichi and was still giving it his all.

Number One yelled out a strange command. "Alright you lot, let's become a stairway for His Highness!"



Dankichi and Mister Kari watched as the natives climbed on each other's back one by one, gathering together into a jumble of black bodies and spears. Before long a ladder of black men was made.

"Wow, simply amazing! But the man at the very the bottom must be quite something. Well, Mister Kari, climb on up after me then!" Dan-chan began to climb up with ease.

"The distance between the spears is a bit too far, so I'm going to borrow your heads for just a moment," said Mister Kari as he used the heads of the natives as stepping-stones, climbing up the ladder with small hops.

"Wow, just as I'd expected of the highest point on the island! What a great view!"

Having reached the peak of the mountain, Dan-chan looked all around and let out an "Oh no!" when he looked at the base of a palm tree. There, napping lazily, lay an unbelievably huge lion!

"Mi...Mister Kari, it's a lion! Wha...what are we going to do?!"

"We're in a pretty tight spot, huh?"

Even the great Dan-chan, unable to approach any closer, was at a loss. If he could just call the natives to drive it away, all would be well. But if he raised his voice, the lion would awaken. It'd be perfect if it would just wake up and wander off, but if it were to chase after him, he would surely be lunchmeat.

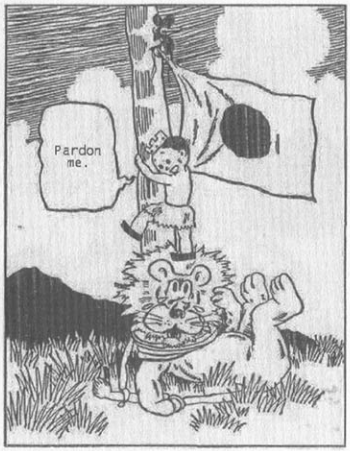
"Hey Dan-chan, I thought up something great." Mister Kari quietly whispered. Then, he quietly approached the lion holding a length of rope.

After attaching the rope to the lion's tail, Mister Kari tightly fastened the other end to the palm tree.

"Dan-chan, you're fast on your feet, so rouse the lion and run some laps around that tree!"

"Gotcha."

Dankichi understood Mister Kari's plan completely. He woke the lion right away and ran round and round the tree as the lion chased him.



Completely unaware that his tail was tied to a rope, the roused lion chased Dankichi around and around, only to be mortified to find himself immobile.

"Ha ha ha! Mister Lion, you've been beat after all, haven't you! Since you're there, allow me to borrow you as a foothold."

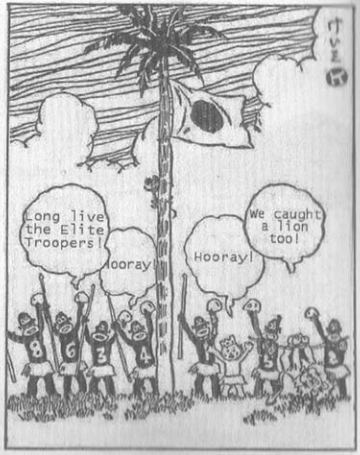
Having finally climbed to the top of the tall pine tree, Dankichi, along with Mister Kari, was able to unfurl the Rising Sun flag into the New Year's morning breeze.

Ah, the fluttering of the Rising Sun in the morning breeze, how nostalgic! The natives, who had climbed up as well, stood admiring Dankichi, whose eyes glistened with tears.

"Even after coming to this savage island, and becoming the King… in the end I'm still Japanese," thought Dankichi.

"Long live the Rising Sun!" Dankichi shouted out at the top of his lungs.

"Long live the Japanese Empire!"



Popular Orientalism and Japanese Views of Asia

KAWAMURA MINATO

TRANSLATION BY KOTA INOUE & HELEN J. S. LEE

I. Barbarity and Civilization

1. *ADVENTURES OF DANKICHI*'S GLOBE

Billed as a "delightful comic tale," Shimada Keizō's *Adventures of Dankichi* was serialized in the magazine *Boys' Club* for six years, from 1933 to 1939. While fishing in a boat, the young protagonist Dankichi falls asleep and drifts away to a tropical island thickly forested with palm trees—an "island of barbarians." The story develops around Dankichi's adventures as he, helped by the quick wit and wisdom of Karikō the black mouse, who serves as his judicious consultant, becomes king of the island. *The Adventures of Dankichi* was a very popular comic that mesmerized Japanese children at the time.

Adventures embodies possibly the best expression of images held by Japanese—in a general sense—of the "tropics," "blackies," "the South Seas," "the uncivilized," and "barbarians" during the 1930s (although adventure and expedition stories for boys set in the South Seas, such as Nan'yō Ichirō's *The Green Desert Island* and *The Roaring Jungle*, had been serialized in *Boys' Club* and other magazines since the late 1920s and were enthusiastically received). *Adventures*' frequent use of discriminatory terms that would be avoided in contemporary society, such as "cannibals," "blackies," "savages," "natives," and "cannibal-savages," only indicates the shallowness of social consciousness regarding racial discrimination in this period, and the use of those words should not be regarded as a sign of the text's particularly blatant prejudice. As the author himself admits, he had a preconceived idea that "the tropical region in the South Seas was a place where dangerous beasts and wild birds roamed in the jungle and where dark-skinned headhunters lived."[1] Reflecting this image, the story consists of a mishmash of animals from all over the world that would generate the image of the "tropics" and "uncivilized lands"—not only do African animals such as lions, elephants, giraffes, and crocodiles appear in the story, but so do animals such as orangutans, sea turtles, and camels from the Southeast Asian tropics, Arabian desert, South America, New Guinea, and India.