

## TAKOPI AS A TRAGIC HERO: AN ANALYSIS OF A FAILED HEROIC JOURNEY IN TAKOPI'S ORIGINAL SIN

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<b>Info Artikel</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
Artikel Masuk: 15 Januari 2026	Using the Hero's Journey framework and the concept of the tragic hero, this article analyzes the journey of the character Takopi in the manga Taizan 5 Takopi's Original Sin. The purpose of this study is to determine the phases of the hero's journey experienced by Takopi and the inner journey that shaped him as a tragic hero. The method used is descriptive qualitative, and the main source of data is the book of manga. Narrative and heroism theories are also supported by literature research. The results of the study show that, structurally, Takopi's storyline follows the Hero's Journey pattern, but with a significant difference in the resolution, where heroism is demonstrated through failure and self-sacrifice rather than victory. Another important finding shows that the tragedy in the story is not only caused by Takopi's stupidity and mistakes, but also because he does not perform the adult duty of protecting and guiding children. As a non-human figure, Takopi is forced to take on the role that should be taken by adults, even without adequate emotional understanding. Thus, Takopi's Original Sin is a critique of classical heroism and a social reflection on the role of adults in preventing the cycle of trauma in children.
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### Introduction

Manga is a Japanese book series, which often gets adapted into Japanese cartoon series, usually called anime (Albert, 2018). We can consider it one of the most recognizable types of art in Japanese popular culture. Characters like Doraemon, Sailor Moon, and Detective Conan are easily recognizable by the global market. Their popularity can also be compared to Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse, Rapunzel, and Pinocchio. Here, manga may seem like a relatively new form of popular culture, even long before manga became famous globally. (Wood, 2022) states that by the end of the 18th century, manga had become a major part of popular culture in Japan, and now, with the help of globalization, the popularity of anime and manga has increased significantly from year to year. Thanks to this growing global market, manga and anime are now leading scholars of comic and cultural studies to believe that Japan is capable of becoming another center of globalization.

This success can be seen from how popular manga is in Japan. According to statistics collected by a research institute in 2008, Volume 52 of the One Piece series, a manga that tells the story of a boy who dreams of becoming a pirate king, became one of the best-selling comic books, selling 2.5 million copies for publisher Shueisha Inc. Even in Shukan Shonen Jump, a Japanese weekly magazine containing various comic series titles, only 300,000 copies were sold (Matsutani, 2009). Manga here may have many genres, but most manga are categorized into two main marketing genres, namely Shonen,

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which is intended to be read by boys, and Shojo, which is intended to be read by girls. Comic titles such as Fruits Basket, Ao Hari Ride, and Sailor Moon fall into the category of the most popular shojo manga in the Japanese industry, while comic titles such as Naruto, Bleach, Slam Dunk, and One Piece fall into the category of the most popular shonen manga in the Japanese industry. Talking about the popular shonen manga titles above, they have one thing in common, which is that they take up the theme of heroism.

**Takopi's Original Sin:** *Takopi No Genzai* is a work that explores the theme of heroism with dark elements. This comic is in the sci-fi and dark fantasy genres, written and illustrated by Taizan 5 from Japan, and published in Shueisha's online web media and Shonen Jump+ app. *Takopi's Original Sin: Takopi No Genzai* falls into the Shonen category, even though the theme presented is a little darker than other shonen manga. This comic was published from December 10, 2021, to March 25, 2022, with a total of 16 chapters collected into 2 tankobon volumes. *Takopi's Original Sin: Takopi No Genzai* tells the story of Takopi, the main character, an alien who looks like a cute octopus mascot from the planet Happy, inhabited by "Happians" who live with one goal: to spread happiness to various worlds. One day, Takopi was stranded on a green and blue planet called Earth, where he experienced unpleasant situations such as being hunted by researchers and feeling hungry. However, in this situation, a girl named Shizuka Kuze helped Takopi by giving him a piece of bread, which made Takopi grateful and want to help Shizuka. When Takopi went to school with Shizuka, Takopi was still innocent and did not understand complex human emotions, which made Takopi wonder why Shizuka was being bullied by her classmates. Seeing this, Takopi helped Shizuka get along with her friends using a magic tool, but everything failed, which made Takopi swear to make Shizuka smile again no matter what happened. Last year, on June 27, 2025, the comic series was adapted into a 6-episode anime, which became very popular and received an extraordinary response from fans, mainly due to its skyrocketing ratings on online sites such as IMDb and MyAnimeList. The anime also became a trending topic on Google Japan in 2025, even though the series deals with dark and emotional themes, said (Astuti, 2025). It seems that what makes this series interesting and fresh is the way the storyline is presented. Even though it raises dark issues, this story can be accepted by adults who want to reminisce about the Doraemon series but with a darker version. (Silviana, 2025) Another interesting aspect is the development of Takopi's character. Initially, Takopi saw the world in black and white, where happiness was represented by the color white, something that could be obtained through magical tools. However, as time goes by, Takopi realizes that his magic tools do not bring happiness to Shizuka. When Takopi tries other ways to make Shizuka happy, but those ways require sacrificing other people, Takopi questions, "Why do good and bad things exist together?" In the end, Takopi realized that his mistake was not trying to fully understand and accept Shizuka's feelings. Shizuka is a human being who possesses both good and bad qualities at the same time, focusing on Shizuka's happiness is not the right thing to do.

(Mathews, 2018) states that character arc is a narrative theory that focuses on revealing character motivation through the emotional choices they make. According to

(BELL, 2004) The function of the character arc itself is to deepen the plot of the story because the events that occur in a story must have an emotional impact on the characters. According to (Batty, 2014), the plot is very important in a story because of the development of the protagonist, who represents the essence of the story. This captures the story behind the action, and the audience can only understand this essence when the development is complete.

While character arcs are only used to explain the emotional journey experienced by characters, the hero's journey theory is an analytical theory used to study the physical journey of characters from one event to another. The hero's journey theory was first created by (Campbell & En, 1949) and has become the core narrative structure that inspires many popular stories such as Harry Potter, Star Wars, The Lion King, and Finding Nemo. Narrative stories that use this theory can help the audience understand the actions of the heroes and characters in the story to focus on the journey that the characters undergo to change. Both theories are considered to be in line with the story of Takopi's Original Sin; Takopi no Genzai because the protagonist in this story experiences a journey throughout the story; a physical journey and an inner journey. Therefore, this study will focus on identifying the stages of the hero's journey in Takopi's Original Sin; Takopi no Genzai, as well as analyzing the inner journey experienced by Takopi while undergoing his physical journey.

## **Research Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the journey of Takopi as a tragic hero in the manga “Takopi's Original Sin; Takopi no Genzai.” This method was chosen because this study focuses on understanding the meaning of the story, the conflict, and the development of the protagonist in the story.

The main data source used in this study is a physical book of the manga Takopi's Original Sin; Takopi no Genzai created by Taizan5. This book will be used to analyze the text and illustrations that build the plot and character development. Supporting data sources include books and articles discussing the theory of tragic heroes and literary studies.

Data collection was carried out through literature study and in-depth reading of the manga. The researcher noted the dialogues, narratives, moral choices, and scenes that showed conflict and the suffering experienced by the character Takopi. The collected data will be analyzed descriptively by grouping the findings according to the stages of the tragic hero's journey. The results of the analysis will then be explained and interpreted based on relevant theories to obtain an overview of Takopi's tragic journey.

## **Result and Discussion**

In this analysis, we can see that the events experienced by Takopi are very much in line with the hero's journey structure described in Vogler's book (1998). Here, Takopi's story begins and ends in accordance with the hero's journey pattern, although there are some changes in the structural implementation.

### 1.1 Act I: The Introduction of the Two Worlds

Here (Vogler, 1998) presents Act 1 as the first step in the hero's journey. In the story *Takopi's Original Sin; Takopi no Genzai*, the first act begins with Takopi witnessing Shizuka committing suicide using a magical tool lent to her by Takopi, which triggers the "call to adventure" phase. This stage begins with Takopi stranded on a green and blue planet (Earth) and rescued by a child named Shizuka. We can find this first stage in the first chapter of the manga, where Takopi is rescued by Shizuka in a playground. This is the stage of introduction to the "Ordinary World" where he lives without realizing the adventures that lie ahead. After several days, Takopi offers Shizuka his magic tools, but she always refuses. However, among his magic tools, Takopi takes out a camera-shaped tool called the Happy Camera, which will become the object that leads Takopi into a special world of learning about humans. However, after many rejections from Shizuka, at a certain point Shizuka suddenly wants to borrow Takopi's magical tool. Takopi, who is innocent and naive, lends her the magical tool without thinking about the consequences that will occur in the future. One of the hallmarks of the "call to adventure" phase is a series of events and situations that guide the character.

Although the "rejection phase" is not clearly visible because there are no examples where Takopi shows signs of willingness to reject the call of adventure. This phase can be identified subtly. We can see this in the scene where Takopi sees Shizuka's lifeless body. Here, Takopi realizes that his action of lending his tools to creatures from another planet was wrong, which prevents the "rejection of the call" from materializing, but there is a slight doubt and regret as to whether Takopi will accept the call or not. In this story, there is no character who helps Takopi learn about complex human emotions, so Takopi learns on his own, even though it means going through a difficult path. Therefore, the "meeting with a mentor" phase is also not realized in the story of *Takopi's Original Sin*.

According to (Vogler, 1998), the "crossing the first threshold" phase occurs in this manga when Takopi begins traveling through time and interfering in Shizuka's problems to find out the cause of her death. Initially, Takopi thinks the cause is Shizuka's sadness over not doing her schoolwork, so Takopi tries to help her by giving her the answers to her questions. However, this action creates new problems, such as Marina Kirarazaka's (a classmate) dislike of Shizuka, which results in Shizuka being called to the back of the school. Seeing that Shizuka was reluctant to go, Takopi took the initiative to replace Shizuka and go meet Marina by transforming himself into Shizuka using a magic tool. Takopi, who at that time did not understand human emotions, went to the promised meeting place. When Takopi arrived, Marina suddenly slapped Takopi hard, which confused Takopi. Here, Takopi tried to convince Marina to stop and try to talk to each other, but it was futile. Marina even tried to finish Takopi off. If Takopi gave up here, Takopi would be considered unworthy of entering the special world. Therefore, this corresponds to the stage of "crossing the threshold," marked by the development of Takopi's character in understanding the complex nature of human emotions and the problems Takopi is currently facing, which are not trivial but profound.

Act 1 here serves as an intermediary between two worlds in the story. The ordinary world is introduced as the world seen by Takopi, who is still innocent and naive, where Takopi lives a normal life based on black and white, where happiness can be easily obtained with magical tools without realizing the adventures that lie ahead. With Shizuka's death, the concept of the Special World is introduced. This is a world where Takopi learns about human emotions, and it is here that Takopi begins to face major conflicts concerning himself. There are differences from the classifications in Vogler's book in the story of Takopi's Original Sin: *Takopi no Genzai*, such as the absence of the mentor meeting phase along with the hero's refusal of the call. However, this can be considered a minor difference, as it only consists of a few phases that are taken.

## 1.2 Act II: The Conflict and the Tragedy

In Act II, for Takopi, it begins with the “Test, Allies, Enemies” phase, where Takopi must face a series of problems to prove that he is capable of overcoming new challenges that he does not understand in the Special World. The first and most representative test is Takopi's lack of understanding of the complexity of human emotions, so that all the magical tools he uses to “fix” the situation actually create new problems. Based on Vogler's (1998) description of the Test, Allies, Enemies phase, this phase must show the contrast between the Ordinary World and the Special World. In Takopi's first test, he is forced to understand experiences he does not understand in the Special World, namely human emotions and psychology. Here, Takopi must find a way to prevent Shizuka and Marina from meeting each other on their way home to anticipate unwanted events. However, no matter how hard Takopi tries, all his efforts are in vain. Every time he repeats his actions, he always meets Marina, as if Marina is deliberately approaching Shizuka. Here, Takopi realizes that Shizuka is an ally he needs to save, and Marina is an enemy embodying pure hatred that disrupts Takopi's principle of happiness. However, this conflict is not as simple as a battle between good and evil, because each character is also a victim. Takopi's test comes not only from outside, but also from his own innocence, which causes him to misinterpret human suffering. Although it may not seem like a big challenge, it shows the contrast between Takopi's new life in the Special World and his previous life in the Ordinary World.

Following the relationship in the “Test, Allies, Enemies” phase, after undergoing her first mission, which took countless repetitions, and witnessing a series of unpleasant events, Shizuka gradually began to lose her morality, and rumors about her began to spread, making the bullying she experienced even worse. Marina, who saw that Shizuka was devastated, took her into the forest and admitted that everything that happened at that time was the result of Marina's plan. This happened because Marina was unhappy seeing Shizuka happy while her family was destroyed due to Shizuka's biological mother having an affair with Marina's father. At this point, Marina was about to finish off the devastated Shizuka, but Shizuka tried to defend herself. Takopi, who saw this, began to run fast and hit Marina on the head until she was unconscious. Takopi realized that he had killed someone and began to feel anxious and afraid, but that fear turned to confusion when he saw Shizuka smiling and thanking him, which would enter the “reward” phase. In this

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phase, Takopi experiences a false victory that makes her believe that her efforts have produced results when she sees Shizuka's smile as proof that the happiness Takopi desires has been achieved. However, this reward is superficial and fragile because it was obtained instantly and ignores the root of Shizuka's trauma and suffering. This happiness arises not from healing but from escape. This phase is very important because it helps to emphasize the main irony in the story: what Takopi considers a "success" is actually the beginning of a greater tragedy.

The next phase that can be identified is "Approaching the Innermost Cave," which brings Takopi closer to the core of his deepest emotional and moral conflict. At this point, Takopi begins to face the reality that human suffering cannot be simply erased and that all of Takopi's actions have triggered consequences that cannot be undone, such as when Takopi ignores the situation by hiding Marina's body and transforming himself into Marina so as not to arouse the suspicion of adults, all for the sake of Shizuka's happiness. However, this did not last long because Marina's parents realized the strangeness of Marina's current behavior and begged Takopi (in the form of Marina) to return their child. Takopi, realizing that his actions had crossed a line that should not have been crossed, began to cry and apologize to Marina for killing her. At this stage, the psychological pressure increases dramatically, and Takopi realizes that the human world cannot be "fixed" with instant tools and solutions. Vogler (1998) explains that the "approach to the inmost cave" phase serves to give the hero time to realize the situation, make plans, and strengthen the hero's relationship with allies. For Takopi himself, the "deepest cave" approach can be marked by Takopi's conscious choice to make extreme decisions based on innocence, not wisdom. The climax of Act II is reached when Takopi enters the "ultimate ordeal" phase, where he realizes that his ignorance has had a negative impact on Shizuka, making this moment the most painful and emotionally devastating situation for Takopi. In this phase, Takopi must face the worst consequences of his actions, where his good intentions lead to irreparable destruction and loss. This event does not only affect one character but spreads and leaves deep wounds for all parties. The next phase is "Seizing The Reward." In this phase, Takopi has obtained the "reward" he has always wanted, but in the form of a bitter understanding rather than natural happiness. Takopi begins to realize that human happiness is not something that can be forced with a magic tool or instant method, and that human suffering does not always come with a simple solution. In Takopi's story, this "reward" is tragic and ironic, as Takopi's understanding comes too late, after the damage has already been done.

It can be said that Act II is a series of important phases in the journey of the hero Takopi. This is the phase where Takopi finally enters a special world and faces many obstacles before finally facing his greatest enemy, namely his own innocence and inability to understand human emotions. This is also the longest phase of his journey, where he receives a lot of information about emotions and consequences while fixing many problems in the process. In Act II, the other phases seem to differ from the description in Vogler's book, thus in this manga Takopi needs a lot of time to gather experience and information in the Special World.

### 1.3 Act III: The Hero's Resolution

In Act III, Takopi has completed his heroic journey in accordance with Vogler's (1998) hero's journey structure. At this point, Takopi begins to realize that every attempt to "fix" the past with magical tools only deepens the emotional wounds of Shizuka and those around her. This leads the story to continue into "The Road Back" phase, which is marked by a change in Takopi's attitude from a creature who initially acted out of ignorance to a figure who reflects more and thinks about the consequences of his actions. Here, Takopi no longer focuses on simple happiness but thinks about the long-term impact of his own existence. According to Vogler (1998), the function of the "The Road Back" phase is to show that the hero is given a choice: whether to stay in a special world, return to the ordinary world, or start his adventure again from the beginning. In the manga *Takopi's Original Sin: Takopi no Genzai*, this phase occurs when Takopi chooses to fix everything by embarking on an adventure again from the starting point. As the journey through the "The Road Back" phase progresses, Takopi's inner turmoil grows stronger. He begins to study the patterns he has created in each altered timeline, such as the pattern of suffering that always returns regardless of the actions Takopi chooses. This realization became the starting point that pushed Takopi into the "Resurrection" phase. At this point, Takopi realizes that the main problem with what he has been through is not a lack of effort or tools, but rather that his very existence is interfering with Shizuka's natural healing process. This position highlights important things, such as Takopi stopping looking for simple solutions and starting to question the value and consequences of his existence.

In the "Resurrection" phase, it becomes an emotional moment and a symbol of the deepest change in Takopi. Here, resurrection is not considered a victory or salvation, but rather a final test that requires Takopi to make a difficult choice. This is the key to Takopi's decision that the only solution available to break the cycle of tragedy is to understand Shizuka more deeply by listening to her story in its entirety and erasing his own existence from Shizuka's life. This solution marks the "death of Takopi" as a being who believed that good intentions would produce good results. Here, Takopi is "reborn" as a figure who understands that empathy occurs when one places the needs of others above their own in order to become a hero. At this moment, we can see a complete moral transformation in Takopi's character, where he realizes that his existence is not the solution but part of the problem that needs to be eliminated. In the final phase of "Return with the Elixir," Takopi does not return with an elixir in the form of an object or magical power, but leaves a profound and human message. This elixir can be realized if Shizuka's future becomes better, where her life is no longer bound by cycles of trauma, guilt, and emotional abuse. We can see this in Shizuka's future condition, where she has the opportunity to grow up in stable circumstances, even though the scars of her past are not completely healed. Takopi's absence from this world is actually the key to this change. Thus, Takopi's "return" is not a return to his home planet, but rather his complete disappearance as a final sacrifice.

Act III serves as a conclusion to Takopi's journey. This conclusion explains how the story should end. Returning with the elixir should mean that the hero will live a

peaceful life in the ordinary world, but this cannot happen because the elixir in this comic has the meaning of self-sacrifice for others. Here, Takopi ends his journey by delivering an emotional message while saying goodbye to his friends. Although there are almost no cases where the relationship between Vogler's description is explained, the comic *Takopi's Original Sin: Takopi no Genzai* is a perfect work that explains human emotions in great detail, as well as the clear relationship between the phases described by Vogler and author Taizan<sup>5</sup>. The structural differences occur due to the combination of several phases, so they do not represent the creation of a new method of analysis. Through observation in Chapter II, it appears that recurring events occur due to the characteristics of manga, which is a medium that can contain several storylines depicting themes different from the main story. On the other hand, this analysis concludes that the structure of a hero's journey can be created within a manga.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that *Takopi's Original Sin* story reverses the idea of a classic hero. Takopi does not end up as a great hero who brings victory. Instead, he becomes a tragic hero who only realizes his mistake after failing to help Shizuka. Takopi's physical journey is similar to the structure of a hero's journey as described by Vogler, but in his emotional journey, we are shown that magical tools or instant solutions are not important; what is far more important is helping others with empathy, understanding their feelings, and accepting reality.

In addition, the tragedy that befalls the children in *Takopi's original Sin* manga did not happen suddenly, but was the result of the negligence of adults who imposed their heavy desires on children who should have been playing and laughing. The adults around Shizuka and Marina are portrayed as figures who failed to protect and guide them. Because their parents are indifferent to the problems that befall their children, this creates a “void” that Takopi then tries to fill. The problem is that Takopi is an alien creature who does not understand human psychology. So, this tragedy is not entirely Takopi's fault, but rather the result of a failed social system and irresponsible adults.

At the end of the story, Takopi realizes that his existence only prolongs the suffering of Shizuka, whom he wants to help. This manga has a very important message for all of us: “Good intentions alone are not enough without proper understanding; good intentions can turn into something painful.” Takopi's sacrifice at the end of the story is not a magical solution that makes everyone happy instantly, but rather a step to stop the chaotic cycle. The final “reward” in this comic is an opportunity for Shizuka and Marina to achieve happiness in the future without the interference of Takopi and his magical tools.

Thus, the story in *Takopi's Original Sin* is not just a story about a tragic hero, but a stern warning to society about the importance of the role of adults in children's lives. This comic emphasizes that healing childhood trauma cannot be done with instant solutions; rather, children need a real presence, parental love, and moral responsibility from the adults around them. This finding also opens up opportunities for further research on how the role of adults is portrayed in other dark-themed comics.

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