

Aikoku Koushinkyoku Song, Japanese Heritage in West Sumatera Period 1943-1945: A Historical Record and in Memoriam

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Abstract

The arrival of Japan to Indonesia recorded by the history occurred in the year span of 1943-1945. In that period Japan also occupied parts of West Sumatra. The arrival of Japan decades ago still leaves memories for the people of West Sumatra. One form of memories is a song of Japanese songs that had been taught on the arrival of Japan in West Sumatra. After the search there are some songs that had been taught by the Japanese in the community of West Sumatra, but the most remembered one of them is a song called Aikoku Koushinkyoku. Aikoku Koushinkyoku's song is taught by Japanese to school students in West Sumatra. This song is sung before the class starts, some are taught and sung as part of the class. Aikoku Koushinkyoku's song is partly well remembered by the whole lyrics, but some can only remember the lyrics of the lyrics. This song is taught here, and it means in Indonesian language. According to the people of West Sumatra, this song is a song of joy and has a spirit when sung

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1. Introduction

The coming of Japanese troupe in West Sumatra was seen by the local people as an opportunity to fight Dutch colonialization. Japanese settlement which is around 3 and half year in Indonesia has left historical heritages which are important to be traced. Japan came to Indonesia in 1943 and choose Bukittinggi as the center of administration.¹ The remains of Japanese settlement in Bukittinggi are still existed, one of them is an underground tunnel which is named as “Lubang Jepang” by Bukittinggi’s local government.

Japan not only left the underground tunnel as the historical heritage, but also several physical objects that are collected on museums around West Sumatra. They are kept as historical artifacts that explain the recollection of Indonesia and Japanese relationship in the past. Besides physical objects that are collected on the museums, Japan also inspired the local people in West Sumatra to create their own stories about the Japanese arrival within their community; the stories are varied among the regions in West Sumatra. Some of them see Japan as enemy, while others believe that Japan is a comrade that help Indonesian to take their independent from Dutch colonialization. It is understood that the Japanese arrival in Indonesia begins with goodwill to motivate Indonesian revolutionists to against western colonialization in South East Asia .²

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The fact not only lies on the existence of Japanese stories in West Sumatra, but also on the memory of Japanese songs that are taught by Japanese settlers to the local people. They may only remember the title of the song or some parts of the lyrics, and amazingly there are songs are still perfectly remembered by the local people. One of the songs that is familiar by the West Sumatra people is Kimi Gayo which is known as Japanese national anthem; it can be easily remembered by the local people because the song can still be heard and sung to this day.

One of the songs that is remembered partially and even entirely is Aikoku Koushinkyoku. Although the song was introduced for more than 50 years ago, but the local people can still remember the lyric of the song. The local people not only remember the rhythm, but they can also memorize the arrangement of words and lyrics correctly. Their memory about the song can be regarded as historical facts that explains the influence of Japanese arrival in West Sumatra, it becomes the main reason why this research is important.

2. Research Method

This research is a qualitative research with descriptive approach. It is conducted within its natural setting as the data are collected in form of words instead of numbers.³ the data are gathered through interview and then classified into several criteria as follow:

1. Witness as the first hand the Japanese arrival in West Sumatra on 1943
2. Has direct contact with Japanese people
3. Remember the Japanese song until this day
4. Has good communication ability

The informants are gathered from 4 cities in West Sumatra including Solok, Padang, Padang Panjang dan Bukittinggi; the range of time span which is used in this research is between 1925 to 1936. The informants are believed to witness the Japanese arrival in West Sumatra, they do not only know Japanese song but also learn Japanese language during the Japanese settlement.

3. Discussion

The discussion is divided into 3 sub parts; 1st) Aikoku Koushinkyoku lyric which is written in Japanese and translated into Indonesia language, 2nd) identifying the Aikoku Koushinkyoku song to discuss the process of how West Sumatra native people understand Japanese song especially Aikoku Koushinkyoku, 3rd) the formalities of singing Aikoku Koushinkyoku to describe some of the rites that usually follow before singing Aikoku Koushinkyoku, 4th) passing down Aikoku Koushinkyoku to outline the process of teaching the song to the next generation.

3.1 Aikoku Koushinkyoku lyrics

From the informants that have been gathered for this research, only one informant who is named Hj. Dawamah that remembers the entire lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku. She was 10 years when she started to learn how to sing Japanese songs. As the information is gathered from several people, the lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku song among West Sumatra people can be written as follow:

Miyo toukaino sora akete
Kyokujitsu takaku kagayakeba
Tenchi no seiki hasuratsuto
Kibou wa odoru oyamashima
Ooseirou no asa gumo ni
Sobi yuru **kuchi** no **sogoto** koso
Kin ou **mugetsu** yuruginaki
Waga nippon no hokorinare

Aikoku Koushinkyoku is not only taught in Japanese but also in Indonesian language, the following translation of the song is written as:

Pandanglah langit fajar di laut timur
Matahari tertinggi bersinar-sinar
Semangatku gembira di dalam dada
Penuh-penuh harapan kepulauanku
Sebagai puncaknya si gunung Fuji
Pagi-pagi di atasnya berawan putih
Tidak ada cacatnya sedikit juga
Itulah kehormatan, Sejarah Nippon

As a comparison, the original lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku is written as:

Miyo toukaino sora akete
“Look above the eastern sea, clearly dawns the sky”
Kyokujitsu takaku kagayakeba
“Glorious and bright the sun, rideth up on high”
Tenchi no seiki hasuratsuto
“Spirit pure of heaven and earth, fill the hearts of all”
Kibou wa odoru oyamashima
“Hope abounding the spring of isles imperial”
Ooseirou no asa gumo ni
“Oh where the clouds of morning, shed a radiant glow”
Sobi yuru Fuji no sugata koso
“The highness of Fuji mountain”
Kin ou muketsu yuruginanki
“Fair of form without a blot, nobly doth it stand”
Waga nippon no hokorinare
“That is our Japan, be proud of it”

Compare to the original lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku, the lyric which is remembered by West Sumatra people is not an entire song, which means that the song was not taught as whole during the Japanese settlement in West Sumatra. The original lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku song is divided into 3 stanzas as each them consist of 8 lines. However, the song which is taught by the Japanese settlers to West Sumatra local people is only the first stanza that is 8 lines.

There are differences that can be found between the original song and the one that is sung by the informant, it may consider as common since the song is taught orally and not in written. The differences are showed on the changes of several words:

1. The word of “kuchi” on 6th line should be “Fuji” that refers to mount Fuji. As the song is translated into Indonesia language, the word is still pointed to “Fuji”. The mistake in using “kuchi” rather than “Fuji” is unconsciously made by the informant, although the translation version of the song directly refers the words as Fuji. It may imply that singing Aikoku Koushinkyoku is part of entertainment in enjoying the rhythm and lyric without paying attention to the meaning of the song.
2. The word of “sogoto” in 6th line should be “sugata” in the original lyric
3. The word of “mugetsu” in 7th line should be “muketsu”

Distinctions between the original song and the one that was taught to West Sumatra people only occur on pronunciation of words.

Displacement between line 5 and 6 on Aikoku Koushinkyoku lyric occurs in Indonesian translation version. In Japanese original lyric it is written as:

Ooseirou no asa gumo ni
“Oh where the clouds of morning, shed a radiant glow”
Sobi yuru Fuji no sugata koso
“The highness of Fuji mountain”

As the song is translated into Indonesia language, it change into

Sebagai puncaknya si gunung Fuji

“The highness of Fuji mountain”

Pagi-pagi di atasnya berawan putih

“When the morning comes, white clouds on the top”

Difference can also be seen on the meaning of the song on the last line in Japanese and in Indonesia translation. The line “That is our Japan, be proud of it” is written in Indonesia language as “Itulah kehormatan, Sejarah Nippon” which is understood as “That is honor, history of Nippon”. However, the modification is considered common during the translation process to maintain the harmony in lyric and rhyme.

Aikoku Koushinkyoku lyrics in both Japanese and Indonesia are taught by the Japanese. The informant said that a lot of Japanese youths are mingle with the local people to introduce Japanese song. The Japanese youngsters are mostly students and not the soldiers. Those students urge the local community to continue their studies to higher degree.

The melody of Aikoku Koushinkyoku song in both original Japanese song and Indonesia translation version is similar. The purpose of the song is to raise the spirit as well as to declare their pride as Japanese people. the lyric of the song consists of the description of the natural beauty in Japan, it describes the rise of sun as well as the beauty of Mount Fuji. the song is taught to the local people to introduce the natural beauty in Japan that is the source of their pride. Japanese people are known for their love to beauty, as they always express their gratitude to the nature.⁴

3.2 Identifying the Aikoku Koushinkyoku song

Generally, it is not all local people who live during the Japanese arrival on 1940ies got an access to study Japanese language and song. As most of the native people prefer to avoid any contact with Japanese people; only those who have power or higher position in community can afford to interact with Japanese people. The informants that are gathered for this research are mostly comes from well-known families that are local officials, aristocrat or noble family, as well as veteran families. Children whose parents are the local official are those who are fortunate enough to study at school. Their experiences in studying at public school also classify the process of leaning Japanese song based on the school level and how it is different from common people.

3.2.1 Classification based on Elementary School level

Children who took the elementary school during Japanese settlement in West Sumatra did not get Japanese language subject during their study. It happened because the Japanese government allows the students to study on public school which was previously built by the Dutch government. The transition between Dutch colonialization to Japanese settlement made the school runs without a proper educational system. As the result, students mostly spent their time by playing rather than studying at school.

Before coming to school, the students needed to collect *bungo rayo leaves* (*Hibiscus Rosasinensis*) that should be given to the Japanese to support their paper industry. The informant stated that during the settlement Japanese people had built a paper factory in Sungai Tanang Bukittinggi, collecting *Hibiscus Rosasinensis* as part of students' task was only occurred in West Sumatra. There is no record that support the argument that the Japanese government forbids the local people to study and to go to school. Although most of the schools were left by the Dutch, but it was still run by the local government.

During the Japanese arrival in West Sumatra, only children whose parents were the government officer or nobility could attend the elementary school. The records also show that there was also no Japanese teacher on elementary school who teach Japanese language during that time. There was no exact structure to run the school during the transition period, so students spent most of their time with agricultural activities to support their parents. While doing their job in the field, the students heard Japanese song through the radio. As the result, they became familiar with the songs that were played by the radio station.

Radio is seen as an important instrument to learn Japanese language, as Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI/ Indonesia Republic Radio) which is placed in Bukittinggi often played Japanese song during their air time. RRI was also the central radio in Sumatra which was named as Sumatora Tyou Hozokyoku (Somatora Chuuou

Housoukyoku) or the center radio office of the central Sumatra that airs the news of Japanese victory.⁵

Although the broadcasting office is the remains of Dutch colonialization, the local government still maintain the original function of the building as a broadcasting office and they even fix the radio transmitter to provide good radio frequency. The distance length of the radio broadcast was 30 to 50 km that reach cities around Bukittinggi, Payakumbuh, Padang Panjang dan Solok. The radio provided news and entertainment program such as music and song in Japanese. Today, RRI office in Bukkitinngi still keep the vinyl records of Japanese song which were used in the past. It has been RRI obligation to document and collect the record and it has been conducted since Dutch colonialization in West Sumatra, although poor documentation becomes the main threat that makes RRI lost a lot of collections. Only one vinyl record that is kept by the RRI that consists of Japanese song, it is noted as Sumatora Hozokyoku as it is pictured bellow



Picture 2. One side of vinyl record

On the vinyl record it is showed that the title of the song is その夜の朗唱 “sono yoru no roushou” which is sung by Hashimoto Kinuko



Picture 2. The other side of vinyl record

On the other side of the vinyl record, the title of the song is 戦線愛馬の唄 “sensen aiba no uta” which is sung by Kodama Yoshio

The radio broadcasting programs that were delivered in Japanese language was used by the elementary school student as an instrument to memorize Japanese song as well as Japanese words. It should be noted that not all of people can enjoy radio broadcasting, it was only part of noble and the public official family’s custom to enjoy radio broadcasting. Besides promoting Japanese song trough radio, Japanese youngster also mingled with the local people as well as elementary students. Those Japanese young men were not the soldiers but

educated students, they not only taught Japanese song but also simple Japanese words and expression.

3.2.3 Classification based on secondary school level

Secondary school students did not only learn Japanese song through radio, as they were also taught at school. A school in Padang Panjang was recorded to include Japanese language on their school curriculum. The teacher who teach the lesson was the local people who had learn the language from the Japanese. The Japanese language materials that were taught during that time include Japanese writing, katakana, hiragana, and kanji. As Japanese language became a required subject in secondary school, the students can speak Japanese language a lot better than those who did not take secondary school. Some informants that took secondary school during the Japanese settlement are still remembering Japanese language expressions which have broader meaning than general words.

Students who took secondary school after graduating from elementary school were still uncommon, only those who were born from the novel family can continue their studies to secondary school. The teachers were mostly graduated from school outside of the Sumatra Island and even from abroad. In addition, the teachers had varied language abilities depend on the education level that they have completed.

3.2.3 Classification on Common People

Common people on this classification do not refer to those who study at school, but those who came from families of Indonesian veteran. During Japanese arrival in West Sumatra, these veterans were around 20 years old and they joined Japanese soldier to cast out Dutch colonialization from West Sumatra. Japanese young people often collaborate with young native people in organization such as Heiho, Guyu Gun, Seinendan, Keibondan, and Bogondan. Each organization is designed for different purposes: while joining the organization, the local young men would learn how to communicate in Japanese with the guidance of Japanese settlers. The organization was not only mentioned for the young soldier but also their wife, they are gathered on Haha no Kai.⁵ Though organization, the women will learn how to interact with Japanese as well as learning Japanese song.

The interaction between Japanese people and the local youngster was not only limited within the organization. The Japanese settlers often held a party at night, the event is a non-formal event where the youngster dance together on the event; they also memorized Japanese song that would be sung during the event.

Japanese songs were also taught to local youngster, the Indonesian young soldiers as well as their family members during formal organization meeting. It may also be the reason why Aikoku Koushinkyoku song remains on their memory.

3.3 the ritual of singing Aikoku Koushinkyoku

During Japanese settlement in west Sumatra, the Japanese government allowed the children to study at school with the guided of Indonesian teacher who fluent in Japanese. During this period, the students began daily sport practice which is known as *taisou*, the students also encouraged to sing Japanese song and completed the daily formalities that were done around 06:30-07:00 WIB in the morning.

The local people were asked to line up with the Japanese soldier while facing the sun rise. The soldiers would give cues as follow:

- 1) “tennou haika ni saikerei” to command the people to give their homage the emperor. The greeting is conducted by bowing their back 90 degree which is known in Japanese as “ojigi”
- 2) “naore” is a cue to command the people to change their “ojigi” posture to stand up straight position
- 3) “yasume” is a cue for rest position, these formalities are conducted to honor the sun which is part of Japanese believes toward the God of Sun. Amatherasu or the God of Sun is the classified as the main god in Japanese belief.⁶

In 1930 japan had tradition to bow down to greet before starting their lesson at school. They bow down to the portrait of emperor that is hanged in a small shrine,⁷ this tradition is then taught to the native of West Sumatra. For the students, the bow down formality is part of their mandatory activities before starting the

classes. It is also done before the formal meeting or any other events. After the “ojigi”, Japanese song is sung including Kimi Gayo and Aikoku Koushinkyoku which are still memorize by the informants.

3.4 Passing down Aikoku Koushinkyoku song to the next generation

From the interview with informants, it can be assumed that female informants who life during Japanese settlement can sing the song, they also pass it down to the next generation as part of oral literary tradition. The song is sing as part of entertainment while retelling the story of the past. The song has its own place in the heart of West Sumatra people especially Aikoku Koushinkyoku song, since it is believed to escalate their spirit and excitement when it is sung. As the song passes down by their grandmothers as parts of oral literary tradition, young generations become familiar with rhyme of the song and even remember some part of the lyrics.

However, the male informants do not pass down Aikoku Koushinkyoku song as part of oral tradition. Their responsibility as the head of the family makes them rarely spend their time at home and to teach the song to the younger generation. Although they do not pass down the song to the next generation, they bear a deep impression toward the song especially Aikoku Koushinkyoku. As the rhyme of the song is easily remembered that makes Aikoku Koushinkyoku song remains on their mind for decades.

4. Conclusion

Generally, not all native people of West Sumatra have chance to learn Japanese language and song. Those who are fortunate enough to interact with Japanese people are local officials who has powers among the community as well as the noble family, since their family members could study at school where they learn Japanese language and song.

Outside of school, youngster who active in local organizations which were formed by Japanese learn Japanese language and song trough face to face interaction; these people include young people who is the patriot of Indonesia independency. The organizations were not limited to the young patriot but also their wife who also interacted with Japanese settlers; as the result, they considered learning Japanese language and song as necessary. The informants who are still alive at this moment and correspond with these two characterizations are then classified as the informant of this research.

Only one part of Aikoku Koushinkyoku song that was taught to the native people of West Sumatra, the song was not only taught in Japanese but also translated to Indonesia language. As the original song is being compared to the one that had been taught to the local people, it can be found that there are several distinctions in word pronunciations. It occurs since the song was introduced orally and not in written text.

Male informant does not pass the song to their children and grandchildren because of their obligation as the head of the family that makes them have no time to passing down the song; as the result, they can only remember some part of the Aikoku Koushinkyoku song. It is the opposite with the female informant, who mostly remember Japanese expression and even the entire lyric of Aikoku Koushinkyoku song that has been taught. The song remains within their memory for decades which is influenced by the practice of passing down the song to the next generation. It may be possible because the female informants have more time to spend with their children and grandchildren and they taught Aikoku Koushinkyoku song to the next generation. The younger generation’s knowledge about the Aikoku Koushinkyoku song is not obtained through direct interaction with Japanese people instead they know the song trough the informants who experience firsthand interaction with Japanese settlers. the process of passing down Aikoku Koushinkyoku song makes the informant remember the song easily compare to informants who do not pass down the song.

Although the informants learn Aikoku Koushinkyoku song in different way, but most of them share the same impression about the song. The informants believe that the song can escalate their spirit and excitement which become the reason why they keep the song on their memory.

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