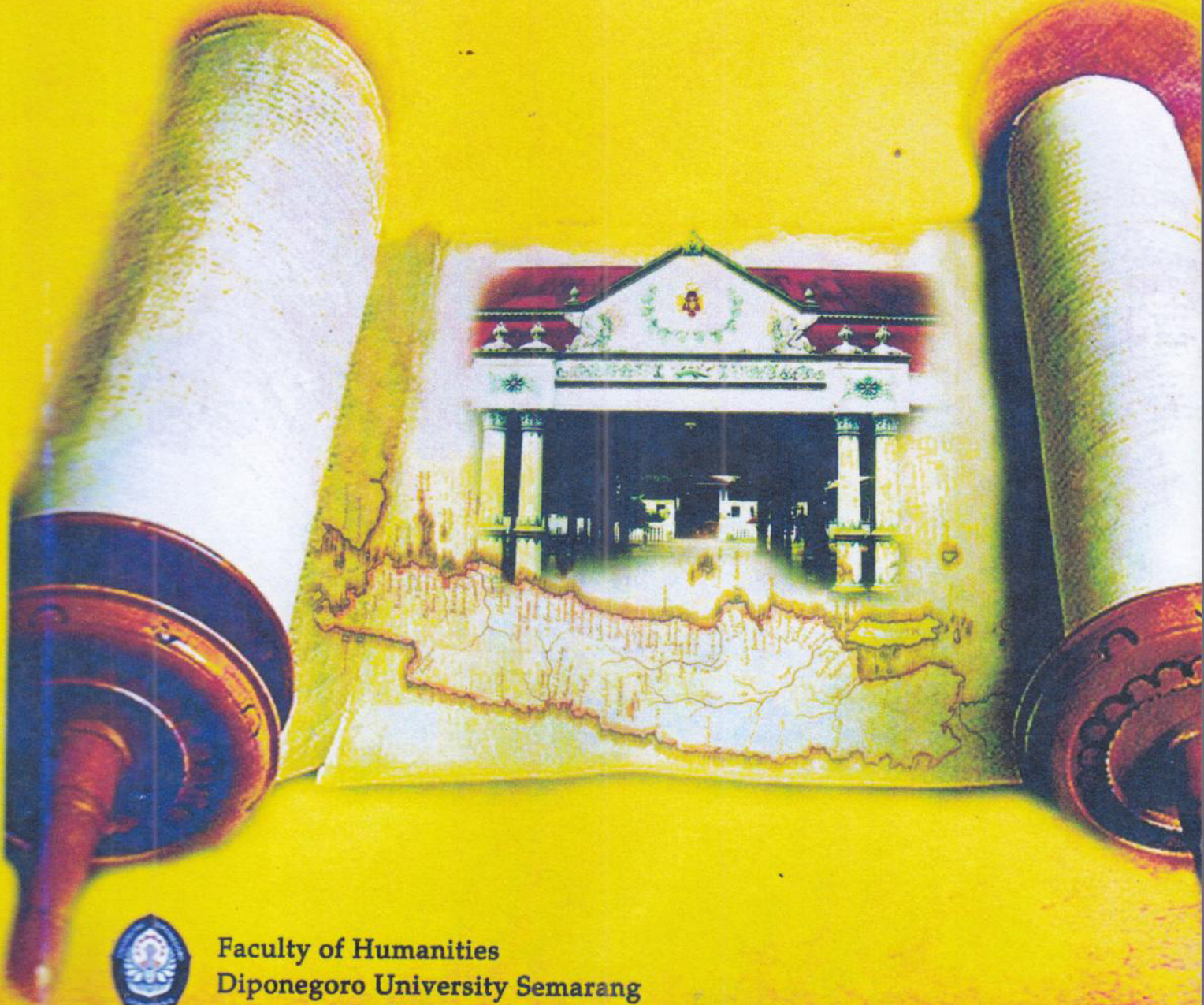


International Seminar Proceeding

*Strengthening National Identity
through
Language, Literature, and History*



Faculty of Humanities
Diponegoro University Semarang



Faculty of Education and Human Development
Nagoya University Japan

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ISBN 978-602-8726-08-5



Perpustakaan Nasional, Katalog Dalam Terbitan
International Seminar Proceeding 2013:
Strengthening National Identity through Language,
Literature, and History

1st Printed, Februari 2014

ISBN 978-602-8726-08-5

Published in Semarang

Published by Faculty of Humanities,
Diponegoro University Semarang

Cooperation between
Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University
Faculty of Education and Human Development,
Nagoya University Japan

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YOUTH MOVEMENT IN JAPANESE OCCUPATION, 1942-1945

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Abstract

The collapse of Dutch East Indies was a new chapter of movement history in Indonesia. Indonesian nationalism stream became stronger and Japanese government immediately took advantage by setting up various youth organizations which had a lower class-oriented. In general, at that time youth organizations could be divided into two groups. First, youth movement in semi-military field which was prepared for internal order tasks (Seinendan and Keibondan organizations) and external security (Heiho organization in the lower classes, and Homeland Defenders/PETA army for the commander position). Second, the youth movement in the social-politic field which initiated by students /learner (Indonesian students deliberation council/Baperpi) and the nationalists who are joined in central organization of people power (Putera).

Apparently the youth movement through the existing organizations was unable to move beyond the limit of Japanese government propaganda object, both in the military and socio-political, then eventually it strengthen the youth movement to declare independence which entrusted to Sukarno-Hatta as the representation of Rengasdengklok drama that ended with the proclamation text reading of Indonesian independence August 17th, 1945.

Keywords: *Semi-military movement, Socio-political movement, Rengasdengklok movement*

A. INTRODUCTION

Ruling in Indonesia for 3,5 years, Japanese fascist government faced with ambivalent political decision. The first six months of its authority in 1942 Japan was able to prove the strength and excellence of his army in every battlefield. His war improvement was incredible, amazing, his forces moved fastly as a storm swept the enemy defensive area. But the excellence did not last long, that was when the Japanese armada was beaten back by the allies in late 1942. Japan's defeat in many battlefields eventually led to the depletion of Indonesian confidence toward the Japanese government. Therefore Japan should have the ability to restore the Indonesian confidence toward the dignity of Japanese government.

How did the Japanese government politics in cooperating with Indonesian people? How is the Indonesian people reaction, especially the youth against the Japanese politics. This article give special attention to the youth movement during the Japanese rule in Indonesia since the fierce fighting occurred in the Java sea which brought the excellent Japanese fleet in early 1942 until Indonesia formed in mid 1945 that was marked by the Indonesia independence proclamation. This incident was interesting to be used to retrace the dynamic development of the nationalism of the youth nation. First, politically the youth

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movement at that time represented the political mixture of Japanese government which had a exploitative character with modern nationalism politics which was growing among the Indonesian movement. Second, youth stigma in the dynamical colonial history in Indonesia, during the youth movement emersion in organization, the Dutch East Indies government did not give a good occasion and reasonable place for the nationalists. Therefore, it can not be blamed if the youth and the nationalist in particular changed their political direction to be closer to Japanese authorities. The third, Japanese authorities who declared as “an older brother” at first, turn out to be a cruel and vicious brother. As the result, the youth moved and worked together to escape from the Japanese government shackles.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses historical research methods to understand the dynamic of youth movement during the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. The sources used in this research are books which spesifically reveals about the youth movement during the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. The next step is selecting the sources that were collected then it tested critically in order to obtain historical sources which are authentic and credible so that finally it will be obtained a historical fact. The historical facts are then analyzed in a systematic description and placed in historical context.

C. RESEARCH FINDINGS DISCUSSION

1. Military Movement

Since the beginning of his reign, Japanese authorities in Indonesia had planned to direct youth and students into semi-military movements. In the first quarter of 1943 Japan established the first youth organization in Java, named *Seinendan*¹. This organization was directly lead by *Syaiko Sykikan*, The Japanese army commander in Java that headquartered in Jakarta. *Seinendan* was an organization that aims to nurture the Javanese young people who had an awarness of the emergence victory in the Great East Asia war. This means that Japan's main objective in establishing *Seinendan* was to save Japanese troops that started wedged by allied forces in various front of Asia Pacific. Therefore the *Seinendan* presence directly held by *Gunseikan* or head of Japanese military government (Jakarta), and

¹*Seinendan* was a youth training organization in Java which similar to *Seinendan* that exist in Japan, *Seinendan* movement was a power source which expected by the military to assist in military activity. In this organization the young men and young women in Japan fostered to become fanatical younger generation and had an extreme stance by undergoing military exercises and effective indoctrination.

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structurally transmitted in the lower administrative region such as *Syu* (residency), *Koci* (Special region such as Yogyakarta), *Ken* (regency), and *Gun* (kawedanan).

The youth who were allowed to join *Seinendan* were young men aged 14-25 years. They were then introduced to Japanese culture particularly they were required to attend military exercises by using imitation guns and bamboo spears. The youth were introduced more to the harsh ways and situations. It is intended to familiarize discipline, so that the spirit of The Great East Asia war was slowly started to be injected to Indonesian youth.

The second semi-military youth organization was *Keibondan*, a youth organization (20-35 years) which the activities scope was helping the police's duties such as traffic maintenance, village security and tasks in security field and other public orders. The training given to *Keibondan* including surveillance and investigation of variety news in social life, aerospace area surveillance (air), coast guard, disaster relief and custody, as well as the village custody and security (Sihombing, 1962: 1933-1934). This organization was under *Keimubu* guidance (Police Department). Supervision toward *Keibondan* existence was done hierarchically down to the lower level by the regional police chief (Suhartono, 2001: 130).

With the increasing threat of war atmosphere between Japan and the allied forces cause *Keibondan* movement began misused for various purposes. It was often used as spies for peeking any symptoms and socio-political phenomenon that seem would be threaten the Japanese government's power. As the result false arrest was often happened, just because he suspected as a *spionase* or an enemy spies. In addition, *Keibondan* can also be used by those who are not responsible to destroy the opponents interests by making the same allegations. Thus *Keibondan* besides helping to strengthen public awareness and discipline, also could be trapped into divisive politics. Towards the end of 1943 there was not much differences between *Seinendan* and *Keibondan*, because both of them also got the basics of military training, so this two youth ranks movement could be used for defense purpose. Nevertheless the movement which was quite spectacular of *Keibondan* was that this organization conditioned far from the nationalist influence. In contrast the youth nationalist such as Sukarni precisely strengthen inside *Seinendan*.

The recessive defense position of Japanese forces from the allies led the Japanese government to give opportunity for the Indonesian youth to become Japanese forces helpers in April 1943 (*Heiho*). In contrast to *Seinendan* and *Keibondan*, the *Heiho* birth intended for the youth who prepared as ranks of army units, so that *Heiho* presence was intended as the part of Japanese army. Because of that, *Heiho* was often taken as labor who served the army forces activities such as moved the guns and bullets from the warehouse to the truck. In fact *Heiho* was not only in the ranks of Japanese army, but also on the navy. At that time,

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Indonesian regions controlled by three soldiers, they were the 16th army for Java island, the 5th army for Sumatra and fleet region for eastern Indonesia, then *Heiho* also exist on those three squads.

In some areas, Japanese army unit apparently had various requirements for *Heiho* member recruitment. In Sumatra, those who could be accepted in *Heiho* were the youth who had graduated from primary school and aged 18-30 years. Meanwhile the 16th army units in Java, those who accepted were the youth who had high school education and aged 16-25 years old.

The Japanese occupation government needs in the military field primarily to train the commissioned officer level among the Indonesian people was realized by establishing the Homeland Defenders Army (Peta). In an announcement on the PETA establishment it was stated that all members consists of the Indonesian people themselves. PETA armies formed in each Syu (residency) had a task to secure and maintain their respective area. News dissemination of PETA establishment and the requirement to be able to become PETA member surprisingly gained a great attention from the public, particularly in Java. It was because the requirement to be PETA members were not too concerned with the education level as in *Heiho* but prioritize the leadership management. Regarding to the age requirement it was just mentioned that the candidate for platoon commander should be under 30 years, meanwhile the candidate for group commanders and soldiers must be under 25 years old (Anderson, 1972: 14). Nevertheless those who accepted to become a battalion commander apparently consists of some figures such as teachers and religious scholars who had had a strong influence or as “*agent of change*” in the society. The candidates of PETA commissioned officer were divided into three groups, they were *Daidanco* (battalion commander candidate), *Gudanco* (company commander candidate), and *Syudanco* (platoon commander candidate). The commissioned officer candidates had undergone military training in Bogor since the end of 1943 to the mid of 1944.

PETA troops had a duty to prepare and compile the youth forces when the allied troops landed in Indonesia. Therefore, everything was done fast-paced because the war situation had been so concerned about Japanese government position. For the Japanese government itself, it was not so important whether the new officers had an enough skill in military field or not, because their existence were still under the Japanese army level itself (Sihombing, 1962 : 168). Japanese soldiers treatment against Indonesians officers frequently causes psychological distress. Even started from these such psychological problems among the officers, PETA rebellion in Blitar exploded on February 14th, 1945. The PETA rebellion soon could be extinguished by the Japanese army. Most of the rebellion figures were

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executed or sentence to prison. Whatever the consequences of a movement, evidently PETA rebellion in Blitar was a manifestation of Indonesian youth's feelings and togetherness who always wanted to break away from Japanese troops cruelty and bondage. At the time Japan surrendered to the allies in 1945, the officers came out of the PETA army. Based on this rational consideration, it was not too much if there was an argument stating that PETA army was not youth of Indonesian National Army (TNI), eventhough frequently the PETA army's members became TNI main character in the future.

2. Socio-Political Movements

The Japanese army defeat in the various battlefield causes the depletion of Indonesian's confidence to the Japanese government ability. Therefore Japan was determined to restore the confidence among the Indonesian people against the Japanese forces capability. Then Japan started to approach the Indonesian nationalist leaders. The Japanese government began to change its policy, that was embracing the ranks of Indonesian youth nationalist to gain victory on the Greater East Asia battlefield by establishing a youth organization named People Power Centre (Putera) which was pioneered by “four series” consists of Sukarno, Moh. Hatta, Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, and Haji Mas Mansyur. Originally Putera was used as the Indonesian youth actuators with the intent to persuade young people so they had a concern for Japanese government. Meanwhile the presence of Sukarno dan Moh. Hatta in Putera apparently ambivalent. On the one hand they worked for the Japanese interests, but on the other hand they had to realize their nationalist ideals that was developing Indonesian nationalism to their nation's independence. Therefore the national forces should stay strengthened and echoed by utilizing the nationalist forces of illegal/underground movements or organizations. The existence of underground organizations could not be separated with the youth dormitories existence as their movement centre.

Dormitories could be seen as an effective nursery for young people to prepare for Indonesia's independence. They formed some youth movements in the form of groups such as Prapatan 10 students dormitory group, Indonesian New Students dormitory group, Sjahrir group, Indonesian students dormitory group. Besides those dormitory groups there were also some non-boarding youth/ students organizations as led by Amir Syarifuddin.²

²Amir Syarifuddin was a former leader of Indonesian People's movement (Gerindo established in Jakarta May 24th 1937), a socio-political organization in the national movement era (Dutch East Indies) which was considered oriented to the left. Towards the Japanese authority in Indonesia in 1942, Amir Syarifuddin mentioned had a close relation with PJA Idenburg, Dutch Education Department leader, who gave financial aid to Amir Syarifuddin to organize the illegal/ underground movement/ organization against Japanese.

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Youth/students in Jakarta who were active in doing the movement centered in two dormitories, they were Ika Daigaku dormitory (at Prapatan road 10) and group at Cikini Raya road which at that time joined to Indonesian consultive body (BAPERPI). As a student they did not have long-term political, because their growth and dynamics movements were much influenced by the youth idealism. This attitude and behaviour was then led clash between them and the Japanese government.

The three youth/students leaders who stand out at that time were Sukarno, Moh. Hatta, dan Syahrir that they strategically selected the same movement target which reached Indonesia's independence. It was just that they were able to use assistance and facilities from Japanese government separately accordance with the conditions of each. When the military and semi-military organization formed by the Japanese was at its peak (*Keibondan, Seinendan, Heiho, dan Peta*), among them had managed to establish youth/ students organization cells/ branches in Java areas such as Surabaya, Cepu, Cirebon, Garut, and Semarang. One of these branches activity was listening to the allies radio secretly, then spreaded the news to all the youth movement branches. The radio station which became the news sources were Australian and BBC London. Through the radio news, the youth could monitor knew every defeat and progress experienced by Japanese army in various front. From the news source the youth movement could predict the situation and analyze the policy possibilities which would be decided by Japanese government in Indonesia.

3. Rengasdengklok Movement

On August 14th, 1945, when Sukarno, Moh. Hatta, dan Radjiman were in their way from Jakarta-Singapura-Dalat and back again to Jakarta, Most of the youth especially those who went underground had already known that Japan had surrendered to the allies after the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The news about the Japanese surrender to the allies was not only obtained from the allies radio but also obtained from *Hoso Kanri Kyoku* (Japanese radio in Jakarta). The news was soon spreaded to various networks of illegal youth movement.

Moh Hatta was surprised by the news that announce the Japanese surrender which was delivered by Syahrir. He agreed that the independence declaration was echoed immediately, but at the same time he doubted whether Sukarno could do it considering the time of his position as the leader of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesia Independence (PPKI). They agreed to meet Sukarno, but Sukarno himself on the contrary still doubted the news about the Japanese surrender to the allies.

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The next day, on August 15th two young people Darwis and Wikana delivered the youth meeting result to Sukarno. The meeting that was led by Chaerul Saleh decided that the independence had to be declared by the Indonesian people themselves, inviting Sukarno and Hatta to negotiate for proclaiming independence, preparing the youth, school and university students to face the new situation. Independence should be announced and conducted immediately by Indonesian people, and the appropriate people to echoed it was Sukarno and Hatta. Considering that the political and security situation was not conducive, then the youth decided to take Sukarno and Hatta out of town, Rengasdengklok, a district town in Karawang regency, West Java. Eventhough they had been secured to the outside of Jakarta, Sukarno and Hatta still remained in his stance that they did not believe the news from the youth, even the official news of Japan itself did not exist.

The next day on August 16th a national youth movement figure Ahmad Subardjo Djojoadisurjo headed to Rengasdengklok to persuade Sukarno-Hatta on strengthening youth movement to proclaim independence which entrusted to Sukarno-Hatta. Because of that, Sukarno-Hatta were taken to Jakarta. On the next morning, August 17th, 1945 Sukarno dan Hatta read the proclamation text of Indonesian independence.

D. CONCLUSION

To inngratiate Indonesian people, in the beginning of its rule Japanese government had been lenient and strengthen the cooperation with Indonesia, but in the end its attitude contrast to the reality and the sweet promises were forgotten just like that. Suffering and pressure from the Japanese government was felt too heavy and expected that the suffering end soon.

Jayabaya forecast said that the cruelty and suffering of the Indonesian people only “*whole corn*” was quite popular as an antidote to suffering and to welcome the coming new age that “*gemah ripah loh jinawi*”. The meaning behind the prophecy gave more strength for the cooperation in the youth movement. Even top of the struggle for independece was the cooperation result between the youth groups and students. Sharp political calculations combined with youth movement procedures which was developed with the togetherness value, ultimately the youth struggle was able to deliver Indonesian nation to the gate of independece.

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