

# Completion Report

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## **Research Report Inculcating Nationalist Sentiment: Documentary Films During the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia (1942-1945)**

This study aims to examine documentary films during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and to trace historical trajectories of documentary films during the World War II that led to the birth of Indonesian nationalism and national independence. Through visual modalities and narrative analysis of selected documentary films produced during the Japanese occupation, this study shows their various themes, styles and rhetoric which shaped the formative development of documentary films in Indonesia. Furthermore, an analysis of documents (including media reports) provides a socio-political context for documentary film production, distribution and exhibition.

Unlike the Dutch colonialism, the Japanese occupation had intensified the usage of film as medium of propaganda rather than entertainment. Established by the Japanese military government (*Gunseikanbu*), *Sendenbu* as semi-independent body was responsible for the Japanese propaganda activities where particular institutions designed for film production (*Nihon Eigasha* or *Nichi 'e*) and film distribution (*Eiga Haikyosha* or *Eihai*). Having closed down private film companies in Indonesia, the *Gunseikanbu* completely controlled film production and distribution. Most of the strategic positions of documentary production were occupied by Japanese, while Indonesians were the subject of film.

The documentary films produced during the Japanese occupation tackled various themes stretching from national issues to local and daily life such as: Japanese military power, national defense, Indonesian language, drafted labor (*romusha*), youth, neighborhood (*tonari gumi*), and personal hygiene. Those themes served not only the interests of the Japanese government during the war, but also the aspiration of Indonesian people for independence. Employing several visual strategies, the documentary films show the smiling faces of local people, innocence of children's expression, youth eagerness for action, enthusiasm of local politicians, benevolent of Japanese and the festive of parades in order to paint the bright prospect of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and to evoke the nationalist sentiment among Indonesians.

Indeed, those documentary films utilized a particular rhetoric complying to the Japanese military government policy in Indonesia. The rhetoric evolved around the Japanese as a savior of Asia from the ruthless imperialism of America and Britain. Consequently, the rhetoric was supportive to the national independence movement while offering economic advantages under the Pan-Asia ideals. Therefore, the Indonesian nationalism during the Japanese occupation was shaped by the larger interest of Japanese's war against the Western alliance.

It should be noted that the Japanese propaganda division employed Sukarno as a subject of most documentary films in order to appeal masses to follow Japanese military programs. Furthermore, in order to reach people living in the rural or remote areas, the Japanese film distributor operated mobile film screening. Therefore, the Japanese propaganda had deeply penetrated into people living in the rural area who did not have any access to a variety forms of entertainment. However, it is not easy to explain precisely the impacts of Japanese propaganda through documentary films due to the lack of any credible reports from the Japanese military administration in Indonesia as well as academic researches that investigate the real impacts of Japanese propaganda on Indonesian audience.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

On 31 March 2021 the results of the research have been presented by the researcher in an online seminar entitled “Under the Brightness of the Light of Asia: Documentary Films during the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia (1942-1945)” organized by the Department of History, Faculty of Cultural Science, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Not published yet (Journal)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

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