

The Humanistic Art Perspective: Ono Saseo's Portrayal of Indonesia

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Abstract

Ono Saseo was a Japanese cartoonist who was recruited as a member of the Japanese Army's Propaganda Division and sent to Java from 1942 to 1945. During his service in Indonesia, he created hundreds of artworks for both military and personal purposes. The purpose of this research is to explore Ono Saseo's views and humanistic values towards the Indonesian people. The research method used is qualitative research, examining Ono Saseo's writings and drawings to uncover the meanings contained within. Additionally, the researcher also examined the opinions of other artist who lived during the same period as Ono Saseo to gain a clearer depiction of Ono. The results of the research show that from more than 60 sketches in his collection pictures "Ono Saseo Jawa Jugun Gafu" (2012) shows that only 20 sketches depict the tensions of war, and the rest of them are portraying the joyful atmosphere and the harmony of the Indonesian people with the others. Furthermore, Ono's significant attention to the Indonesian society, natural environment, and other nations residing in Indonesia demonstrates his deep humanistic side, both as an intellectual and as a human being.

Keywords: *Bunkajin; Propaganda Division; Japanese Military Government; Pacific War*

1. Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is a crucial element of a nation's foreign policy. It should be perceived as a tool serving political interests and originating from the fundamental objectives of a state's foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy can be conducted through activities such as presentations, promotions, and the construction of a positive national image (Enders, 2005:176; Hubinger, 2006:85 in Patjinka, 2014: 99-100). This form of cultural diplomacy is applicable in various circumstances, including war.

In the context of the Pacific War (1941-1945), the Japanese military government also implemented a cultural diplomacy policy. They recruited, mobilized, and utilized thousands of Japanese cultural intellectuals (*bunkajin*), including writers, artists, professors, and musicians to 're-educate' the populace and bring them docilely into Japan's cultural orbit (Goodman, 1991: 2-4). Nonetheless, this policy, which was a continuation of similar strategies in Korea, Taiwan, Manchukuo, and some previously occupied regions in China, was poorly planned and *ad hoc* in nature due to the abrupt decision by the Japanese military to occupy Southeast Asia (Otmazgin, 2012:44).

Furthermore, these cultural figures were systematically structured into specialized propaganda units (*sendenhan* or *senden butai*) within the Army and Navy, deployed to diverse regions across Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, due to the limited understanding of Southeast Asian nations among a majority of these cultural figures, their mediation endeavors achieved

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only partial success (Ethan, 2010).

In this study, the focus will be on the cultural experience of an artist named Ono Saseo (1905-1954). Ono worked as a cartoonist for a magazine in Japan and received considerable appreciation from Japanese readers for his work. Like many other cultural figures sent to Southeast Asia, Ono's assignment to Java, Indonesia from 1942 to 1945 marked his first experience in the region. He was sent to the island of Java alongside fellow artist Yokoyama Ryuichi under the command of the 16th Army of the Japanese Military (Kimura, 1996:21). While Ono served in Java for over a year, Yokoyama Ryuichi's assignment lasted only five months. The reason for analyzing this particular artist in the research is due to the limited attention given to him in previous studies. The preference for Ono Saseo over Yokoyama Ryuichi is based on the former's greater artistic output and essays during his service in Indonesia. The researcher aims to explore Ono Saseo's perspective on Indonesia while serving as a member of the Japanese Army's Propaganda Division. Ono's thoughts can be discerned through his sketches, caricatures, and various essays written in different media during the Pacific War (1942-1945).

Research on Ono Saseo and his works has been relatively limited. Nevertheless, there are at least three preliminary studies conducted both in Indonesia and abroad. The first study, titled "The Meaning Behind Ono Saseo's Propaganda Cartoons" by Aprilyana Pratiwi. In this article, Pratiwi analyzed several cartoon illustrations by Ono Saseo published in *Djawa Baroe* magazine between 1943 and 1945. Pratiwi concludes that there are two implicit meanings in Ono's caricatures: a message conveying that the Japanese military is an unmatched powerful force, and a message to Japanese soldiers to be more enthusiastic and confident in carrying out their duties. The weakness of this research is that Pratiwi only highlights the meanings and messages intended for Japanese soldiers. However, the readers of *Djawa Baroe* magazine were not only Japanese but also Indonesians, as the magazine is bilingual in Japanese and Indonesian.

The second study is titled "The Role of Ono Saseo and Takahashi Kono in the Japanese Propaganda Magazine 'Djawa Baroe' (1943-1945)" by Fathla Aufa Syahidah. This study, which also focuses on the same object, the *Djawa Baroe* magazine, concludes that both cultural figures were Japanese military propagandists. Ono served as a cartoonist, while Takahashi played the role of designing the magazine covers for *Djawa Baroe*. Both the first and second studies only highlight Ono Saseo's role as a propagandist through his works, without delving deeper into his thoughts and distinctive characteristics, including its natural environment and the people he encountered during his service in Indonesia.

Lastly, the third study is titled "Material Women in War: Rethinking Ono Saseo" (*Senjika no Materiaru Gaarutachi: Ono Saseo wo Saikou Suru*) by Adachi Hajime. Adachi highlights the presence of women as the theme of Ono Saseo's artwork during the war. According to Adachi, the existence of these women in the paintings represents humanity and goes beyond the two symbols of 'luxury' and 'resistance'. Furthermore, Adachi finds that for Ono, it is more important to observe the 'desire' that emerges within them rather than focusing solely on the woman's body or material possessions. This orientation based on desire does not align with the oppressive nature of totalitarianism which stands against both communism and militarism. Additionally, this perspective is sometimes associated with a humanistic awareness that transcends racial discrimination. However, regarding Ono's statement about various images of women published in the *Unabara* Newspaper (Figure 4), where he states that he finds women of his own nation more attractive, Adachi considers this to be a facade or politeness to praise women of his own nation. Adachi believes that Ono actually intends to convey that women from every nation possess their own unique charm.

From the three studies mentioned above, the first two studies focus more on the meaning of the images written by Ono Sa seo as part of the Japanese Military Government's propaganda.

On the other hand, the last study emphasizes more on the meaning of the women depicted in Ono Saseo's drawing. These three studies examine Ono's images from different perspectives. In this research, the focus will be on Ono Saseo's drawings and writings about Indonesia in general during his time there.

The main source used in this research is a book of collections of drawings and sketches entitled *Ono Saseo Jawa Jugun Gafu* (A Collection of Drawings During Ono Saseo's Assignment in Java) published by *Jawa Shimbunsha* (Java Newspaper) in July 1945 and edited by the Propaganda Division of the Japanese Military Administration Office. The book was republished by Ryukei Shosha Publisher Tokyo in 2012. As the title suggests, the contents of this book are a collection of drawings and sketches of Ono Saseo while carrying out his duties in Indonesia from 1942 to 1945. There are more than 60 drawings and sketch titles inside. The book consisting of 20 illustrations related to war, 30 illustrations related to people's lives in Indonesia, the rest are related to politics (2012: 14).

2. Methods

The method used in this research is qualitative, with a focus on literature study, specifically analyzing the writings and drawings of Ono Saseo as the primary research object. The chosen approach is a general semiotic approach that views culture as a symbol or sign. Semiotics has the function of conveying information, which includes visual signs and verbal (2022: 88). By adopting this approach, the research seeks to explore how culture, including the artworks of Ono Saseo, can be interpreted and understood by the symbols and signs. Through this analysis, researchers will gain insights into Ono Saseo's perceptions of Indonesian society and nature, as well as how he conveys these perspectives through the use of symbols in his artworks. By examining the symbolic representations present in his creations, the underlying meanings and messages that Ono Saseo intended to communicate can be uncovered. This analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of how Ono Saseo expresses his views on Indonesian society and nature through his works.

In this research, the researcher will take examples of several written quotations and 6 illustrations of Ono Saseo. They are 1 illustration that represents an illustration related to war, 1 illustration related to politics, and 4 illustrations related to the daily lives of people in Indonesia. Through a semiotic approach, researchers will analyze signs that have meaning on both the denotative (actual meaning) and connotative (figurative meaning) sides of the illustration.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Ono Saseo and Java (Indonesia)

The following is a brief biography of Ono Saseo according to Akatsuka Yukio, a Japanese art critic, as quoted by Kimura Kazuaki in the introduction of the book "A Collection of Drawings During Ono Saseo's Assignment in Java" (*Ono Saseo Jawa Jugun Gafu*). Ono Saseo was a cartoonist. He was born on February 6, 1905, in Yokohama. After graduating from Akasaka Junior High School in 1925, he enrolled in the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (*Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkou*), choosing the Western Painting program. During his education, he began drawing erotic cartoons for the cover of the magazine "Tokyo Puck" which was a well-known cartoon magazine at that time. His ability to create new and fresh sketches attracted the attention of the magazine's readers. After graduating from school, he worked as a cartoonist for the newspaper *Houchi Shimbun*. In 1941, he was recruited into the military as a member of the Army Broadcasting Division (*Rikugun Houdou-han*). After the war, he returned to Japan and participated in the establishment of the Cartoon Division of the Nika Association (*Nikakai*), an

art association. He was more famous for his paintings of women, which left a strong impression, rather than his cartoons. In other words, he was renowned for his strong sense of painting. Ono passed away due to a heart attack on February 1, 1954, at the age of 48.

Quoting from the book *Ran-in Kouryaku Sakusen* (Strategy for the Invasion of the Dutch East Indies) compiled by the Defense Studies Center of the Japanese Ministry of Defense, Ono Saseo was a member of the Propaganda Division of the 16th Army, specifically dispatched to the island of Java. The division was headed by Lieutenant Colonel Machida Keiji. Within the division, there were 11 officers, 26 non-commissioned officers, 73 soldiers, 87 conscripts, and 48 support staff. Ono, along with other fellow artists (writers, painters, musicians, authors, etc.), was included among the 87 *chouyouin* (conscripts). Prior to their deployment on the mission, they underwent ten days of military training in Japan to acquire general knowledge of military affairs in the battlefield.

Ono arrived in Java on March 1, 1942. Upon entering Banten Bay, several ships carrying his group were sunk due to attacks by Dutch forces, but the ship Ono was on managed to land safely. He was then assigned to Bandung and in December, along with his fellow cartoonist Yokoyama Ryuichi, he was reassigned to Batavia (Jakarta). Ono served on the island of Java until Japan's defeat in 1945, while Yokoyama only served for a few months in Java before choosing to return to Japan. The story of his encounters with other fellow cultural figures is also recorded in the notes written by his colleagues, including Kitahara Takeo and Abe Tomoji.

During his service on the island of Java from 1942 to 1945, Ono had many profound impressions that were captured both through his writings and his sketches. In his book of sketch collections, he depicted Java Island as follows.

On the first day I landed on Java Island, my eyes caught the many colors of the island for the first time. The colors of Java... the crystal-clear blue sky and the green of the trees, all the original colors still in their purest form, as if they were splashed vigorously onto a canvas. It was a cross-section of strong colors. A striking visual experience. "Amazing!" I murmured. These are the colors that made Paul Gauguin leave his beautiful Paris without hesitation and migrate to Tahiti in the South Pacific, I thought. It must be because of these colors. Could these colors become my next obsession? Such thoughts crossed my mind, which had been numbed by the offshore battle the night before. (Ono, 2012:10)

That was Ono Saseo's first impression upon seeing the beautiful Java Island after landing in Banten. The night before, he had experienced a tough night due to the attacks by Dutch and Australian warships in Banten Bay. His fascination with the natural scenery of Java Island was likened to the experience of a famous French painter: Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), who willingly left the beauty of Paris in 1895 and chose to live in Tahiti in the South Pacific until the end of his life. In another part, he also wrote about the contrasting beauty of nature with other natural phenomena as follows.

Rice, rice, rice, like endless golden waves. Just as I saw the golden shimmer on the distant horizon, a storm suddenly approached and spewed out silver-colored foam, which was a heavy downpour. I was so mesmerized that I was late to take cover and ended up completely drenched. (Ono, 2012:11)

Through the quotation above, we can understand Ono's deep impression of the natural beauty of Java Island. Although blue skies and rice fields can also be found in Japan, the colorful blend of various natural beauties is very captivating. Compared to Japan, which has different natural scenery in each season, the natural beauty in Indonesia can be enjoyed all year round. However, behind that beauty, there are surprising phenomena, one of which is the sudden heavy rain. This was a new experience for Ono Saseo on a tropical island.

Ono Saseo named these various beauties as “Java's Colors” (*Jawa no iro*) or “Java's Beauty” (*Jawa no utsukushisa*), which left a deep impression on him. In another part, in the newspaper “Unabara” published on November 1, 1942, he wrote his impressions as follows: “Java is an island full of colors. Flowers, birds, soil, and sand. It's as if all the colors from a paint box are being released, it's truly captivating.”

3.2 Exploring Ono's Passion for Java: Perspectives from Others

In his book titled “Flower of Death” (*Shi no Hana*), Abe Tomoji wrote about his memories of Ono Saseo, his friend who was also known as Kibi, a painter. Compared to himself, who often fell sick, Kibi was described as a healthy, cheerful, and greatly enjoyed his work in Indonesia. In one particular event, Abe Tomoji wrote about Kibi's activities as follows.

Perhaps because it was still early in the morning, I saw a layer of mist swirling around the quinine field. I decided to paint. Around me, the blooming frangipani flowers spread out. I don't know why, but it reminded me of the mountains in Japan. On the way back, I circled around the cliffs on the other side. There, I found a garden filled with peach trees, bamboo, and wild grass. (Abe, 2009:4)

From the quote above, Abe Tomoji portrays Ono Saseo as a painter and his close friend named Kibi, who enjoys strolling around and capturing the scenery through his paintings. From the quote, we can understand that both Abe and Ono are deeply fascinated by the natural environment, to the point that they are reminiscent of the landscapes in Japan. For the Japanese, a love for nature is a common thing, as they have a concept that humans are part of nature itself (Watanabe, 1974: 279). Therefore, wherever they go, they always strive to harmonize themselves with the local life. In another part, Abe also describes how the character Kibi always encourages Hinobe (Abe Tomoji) not to be afraid of his condition because the people in Indonesia are very kind and ready to help him (2009:5).

Ono Kosei, who is the son of Ono Saseo, portrays his father's love for Indonesia. Kosei, who is also fascinated by his father's drawings of the Bogor Botanical Gardens (*Buitenzorg*), writes about his impression of his father, who frequently captured the beauty of nature and the Indonesian society through his artwork.

Ono left an incredible number of sketches depicting the natural beauty of Java. Almost all of his drawings were unrelated to military propaganda assignments. This indicates that he was deeply captivated by the people of Indonesia and their natural surroundings. (Ono, 2012:19)

In addition to his skill in drawing, Kosei also recounts that his father was someone who was adept at socializing with anyone. His empathy towards others left a profound impression on fellow artists who were sent to Java, such as Abe Tomoji, Yokoyama Ryuichi, Takehara Takeo, Takeda Rintaro, and others, as well as on other people (2019:19).

3.3 Indonesia Through Ono's Sketches

In this part, the researcher will discuss several illustrations that represent illustrations related to war, politics, and the atmosphere of life in Indonesia. Based on Ono Saseo's notes, Japanese army landed in Banten Bay on February 28, 1942, after carrying out a heavy naval battle the previous night. Compared to the other ships were on which sank due to being hit by torpedoes, Ono landed safely. Therefore, very soon after landing, he was able to immediately work on drawing illustrations of Japanese army activities.

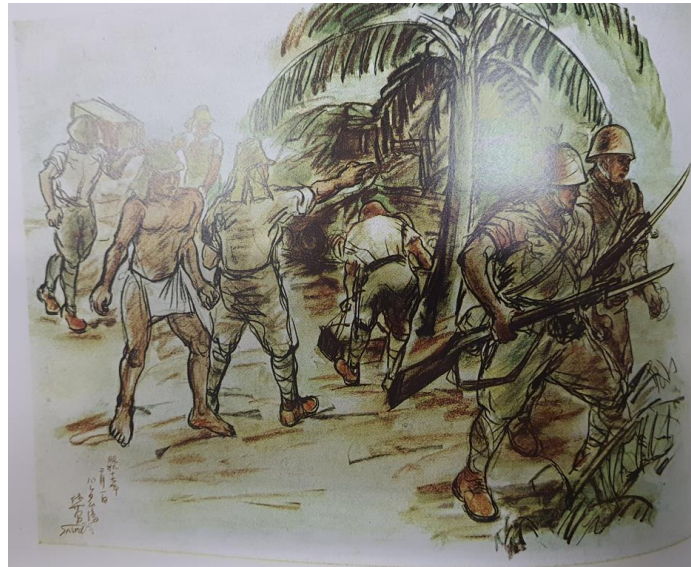


Figure 1. Landed to Banten Bay

In Figure 1 Landed to Banten Bay, we can see Japanese military activities in Banten Bay. The illustration of coconut tree which are often found on tropical beaches show the landing positions of warships. The soldiers on standby carrying rifles also showed that they were alert to enemy attacks. Meanwhile, there were also soldiers who carried ammunition crates and there were also other soldiers who gave orders to soldiers who only wore loincloths. This image of a soldier wearing only a loincloth can also show the hot air temperature, so he has to take off his uniform. In general, Figure 1 shows the activity of the Japanese army when they first landed in Java. This figure is represented to the war related illustration. In other words, from the semiotic approach, the landing of Japanese army in Banten Bay is denotative side, and the soldiers' vigilance and seriousness in fighting the enemy is the connotative side.

Illustration related to politics can be seen in Figure 2 The Power of Insecticides. In this illustration we can see people dressed in traditional Javanese clothing holding Japanese flags. They were happy because 2 mosquitoes wearing British and American flag hats were repelled by insect spray. The spray was held by someone whose sleeve had the kanji “Nippon” (Japan) written on it. On the right side of the image there is also a written caption: “The power of spray medicine”. Native people: “No longer will our blood be sucked by mosquitoes like this, we can sleep with comfortable...”.



Figure 2. The Power of Insecticides

The meaning of the illustration above is that the native Indonesian people were very happy and welcomed the arrival of Japanese army in Indonesia. Japanese army power was symbolized by mosquito spray. The American and British alliance (including the Dutch, which had been occupy the Indonesian people for hundred years) was symbolized by mosquitos. They were expelled by insect-spray (Japan). The illustration in Figure 2 is full of political messages from the Japanese military government. It was propaganda to support Japan. But, since the number of illustrations related to politics in this book is only around 10, in other way we can say that Ono's works on political related illustration is not much if we compare to the other illustrations (war and Indonesian daily life). In other words, the denotative part of this figure is a hand spraying mosquito and the people holding Japanese flags. Meanwhile, the connotative part is that the Indonesian people rejoice their victory because Japan succeeded in repelling out America and its allies.

As mentioned earlier, Ono was not only sensitive to the beauty of nature, but also paid great attention to the urban atmosphere, markets, cafes, and daily activities of the Indonesian people. In his sketches, he depicted the clothing of Indonesians and foreigner (including Westerners) in detail. One of his illustration can be seen in Figure 3 Waroeng Kopi di Malang (Café in Malang) below.

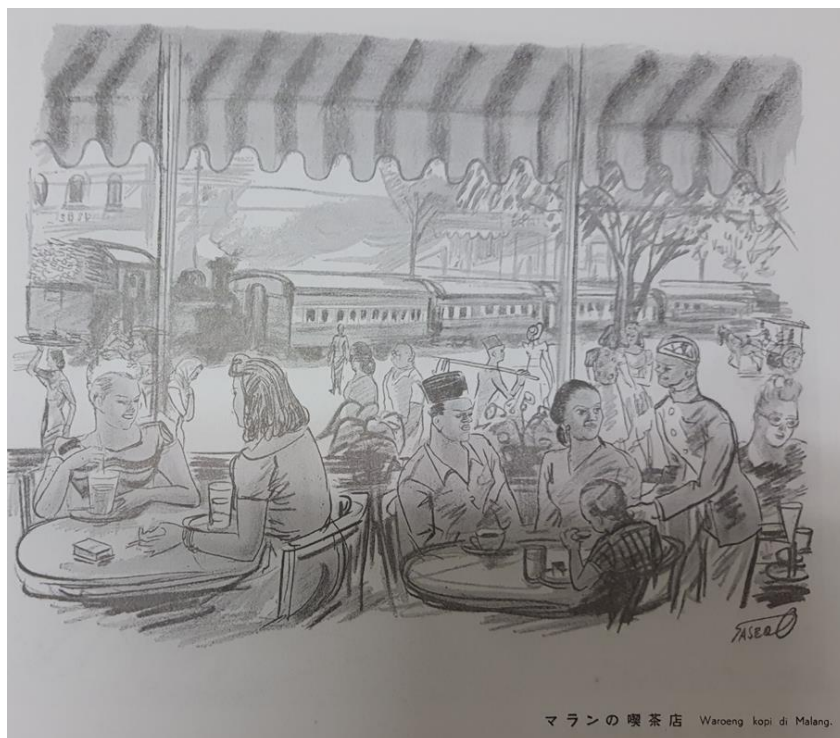


Figure 3. Waroeng Kopi di Malang (Café in Malang)

From the above, we can see a bustling coffee shop filled with visitors. Judging from their attire, there are both Indonesian and Western visitors enjoying their drinks. Indonesian men are depicted wearing long-sleeved shirts and traditional caps called “peci”, while women are dressed in kebaya with their hair styled in a bun. Western women are portrayed wearing Western-style clothing with their hair down, clipped, or wearing round hats. In the background of the coffee shop, people can be seen passing by, including vendors and pedestrians. They all appear to be smiling happily without any visible signs of worry or anxiety. Although the date of the drawing is not specified, the location of the cafe is near the train station in Malang.

The cheerful atmosphere and absence of worry or fear are distinctive features of Ono

Saseo's artwork. Another characteristic is Ono's skill in depicting detailed elements in his drawings. These details can include facial expressions, clothing, accessories, furniture, and the background of the illustrations. In other words, the denotative part of this illustration is a cafe visited by many people from various nationalities, while the connotative part is the atmosphere of peace and harmony among people from various nationalities in a small town.

Another example of a joyful scene can be seen in Figure 4 Hidoep Nippon (Long life Japan) below. In Figure 4, we can see a joyful scene depicting Indonesian children and Japanese soldiers. Even animals and the sun are depicted as being joyful. The word Nippon, both in Latin and Japanese characters, as well as the presence of the Japanese flag Hinomaru, dominate the image. This can be interpreted as Ono Saseo conveying that the Indonesian people are joyful with the presence of the Japanese military in their homeland. Moreover, the clear title of the cartoon drawing, "Hidoep Nippon" (Long Life Japan) can be understood as a form of propaganda by the Japanese military government in Indonesia. This image was published in the Djawa Baroe magazine on January 15, 1944. However, another aspect to note in the image is the presence of various animals and plants. The inclusion of these non-human objects also shows Ono Saseo's deep concern for the surrounding nature. In other words, the denotative part of this illustration is the activities of children and animals in a village, while the connotative part is the joy of the Indonesian people in welcoming the presence of the Japanese in Indonesia.

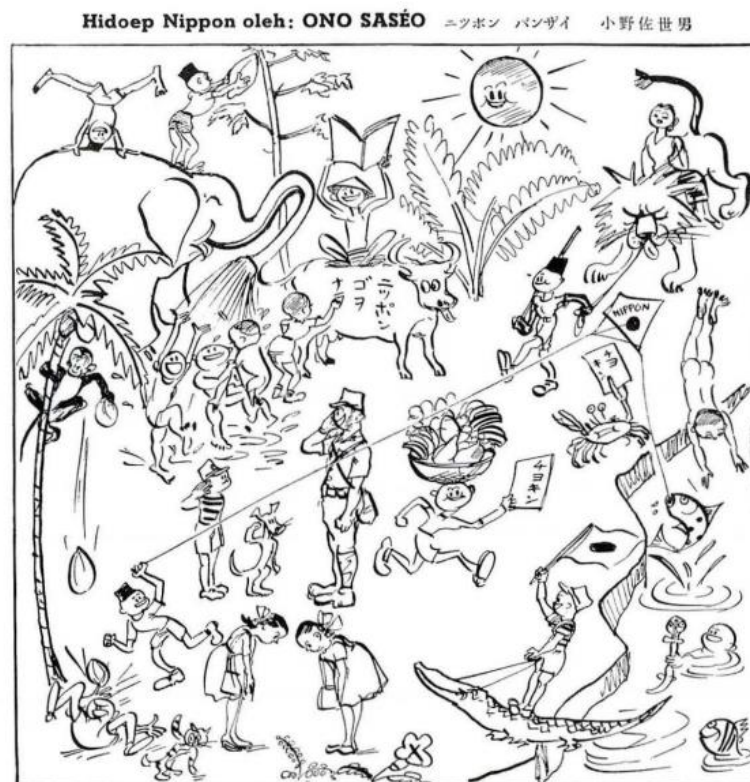


Figure 4. Hidoep Nippon (Long Life Japan)

The humanistic side of Ono Saseo can also be found in various other drawings. His attention is not solely focused on depicting the greatness of the Japanese army. He is also highly interested in nature, art, culture, and the Indonesian people. One of the drawings he completed towards the end of his assignment in Indonesia is about the warmth of a family of the Homeland Defense Army (PETA) soldier. In Figure 5: Hari Pertemoean (Meeting Day), we can see Ono Saseo's skill in portraying the happiness on the face of a PETA soldier who has been granted leave to visit his family. The characteristic of PETA soldiers is their dark green hats, while the

Japanese soldiers' hats are earthy yellow (2018, 92). Surrounded by his wife, parents, and siblings, he is carrying a newborn baby. Besides its literal meaning, which is the joy of welcoming a newborn baby, we can also interpret it as Ono Saseo conveying the message that the Indonesian nation should rejoice in welcoming independence, symbolized by the birth of a baby. In this illustration denotative part can be seen in family gathering surrounding a baby, but the connotative part is the joy of the Indonesian people at the birth of a new nation “Indonesia” symbolized by a baby. As we know, on September 7, 1944, the Prime Minister Koiso Kuniaki announced at the 85th *Teikoku Gikai* special session that Japan would promise independence to Indonesia (2018, 155).



Figure 5. Hari Pertemoean (Meeting Day)

Another characteristic of Ono Saseo is his fondness for drawing paintings of women. The sketches or caricatures of women that he drew adorned many magazines in Japan before he carried out his mandatory military service in Java, Indonesia. During his assignment to various regions in Indonesia, he made sketches of various types of women's clothing. Like in Figure 6 *Wanita Berdjenis-djenis* (Various Women), he depicted European, Chinese, Indian, Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, and Indian women's clothing in great detail. He wrote the following caption: “Each one gives a different impression. However, what is particularly interesting—in my opinion—is the women of our own nation. What do the readers think?” (Ono, 2012). The drawing was published in the *Unabara Newspaper*, which was a newspaper for Japanese readers under the supervision of the 16th Army in Java.

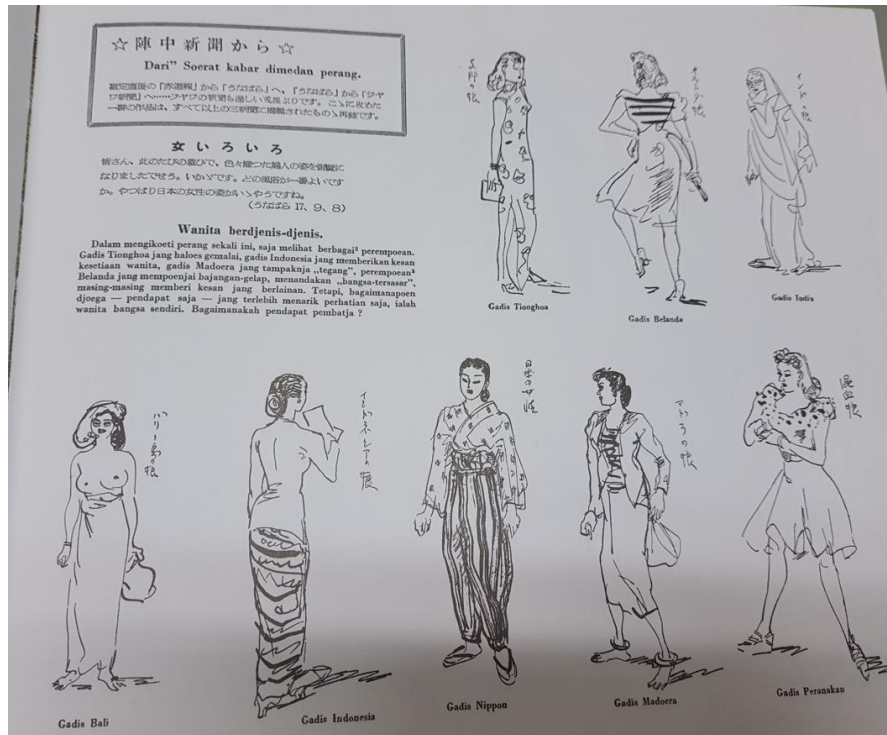


Figure 6. Wanita Berdjenis-djenis (Various Women)

An interesting aspect of the caption is that Ono wrote the sentence “However, what is particularly interesting—in my opinion—is the women of our own nation.” This sentence, when translated into Japanese, becomes *nihon no josei*. In other words, Ono is saying that among the various women depicted, Japanese women are the best. This statement is not intended to belittle women of other nations, but rather to show his love for the Japanese nation. Moreover, this newspaper was published during the war, so he was also expected to boost the motivation of Japanese soldiers to continue loving their nation. In other parts, Ono also drew sketches of various Indonesian women with their traditional clothing. This shows that he was impressed by women from all nations. The denotative part of this illustration is a sketch of 8 women in different clothes. Meanwhile, the connotative part is that although all women are attractive, Ono prefers Japanese women's clothing, which he draws in more detail.

The strong humanistic aspect depicted in Ono Saseo's sketches proves that he was an extrovert and loves people from all around the world. As reflected in Figure 3: Waroeng Kopi in Malang (Café in Malang), he depicted Indonesian and Western society sitting in harmony, enjoying a meal at a cafe. A similar perspective was also conveyed by Tsurumi Shunsuke (1922-2015), an intellectual who served as a translator in the Japanese Navy and was stationed in Java, Indonesia during the Pacific War. In a dialogue with Ono Kosei, a professor at Gakushuin University in Tokyo and the son of Ono Saseo, Tsurumi stated that although the Japanese army succeeded in defeating the Dutch and liberating the Indonesian people, none of Ono Saseo's sketches showed any disrespect towards Indonesians or hatred towards white people. Tsurumi saw that Ono actually shared the same feelings as the Indonesian people, as fellow people of color (2012:69).

Moreover, Ono's attitude of prioritizing humanistic values and harmony is also owned by most of Japanese people. The Japanese people in conceptualizing the nature of life, self-existence and all its problems is patterned by the values of collectivist philosophy, namely collectivistic and holistic (2020:70). This attitude has existed in Japanese life since ancient times and is a derivative of Shinto teachings. Shinto teaches about purity and sincerity of body

and mind and respects the universe since humans are part of it all (2017:7). Living in harmony with the universe is also a derivative of this teaching and Buddhism. Apart from the Japanese military government's decision to start a war in the Asia Pacific, Japanese people loves to life in harmony and peace.

4. Conclusions

Ono Saseo is one of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Japanese cultural figures selected by the Japanese military to serve on the front lines of the battlefield. It is undeniable that his acceptance of this duty is evidence that he also collaborated with the Japanese Military Government during the Pacific War. However, like other Japanese intellectuals, he was in a difficult situation to refuse such a task. He used his drawing skills to contribute to Japan's diplomacy during the war.

His artworks during the years 1942-1945 in Indonesia were indeed part of his duties as a staff member in the Japanese Military Government's Propaganda Division in Indonesia. However, upon closer analysis, most of his works focused on the lives of the Indonesian people and the natural environment. There were very few works that highlighted foreign political conflicts or Japanese military activities. This indicates that during his service, he tried to avoid tasks related to politics and the military. His interest in capturing the life of the Indonesian people in his drawings showcased his humanistic side, both as a Japanese individual and as an intellectual in general.

Through the citation from his writings and illustrations, researcher found that Ono feels peaceful in mind during his stay in Indonesia, which is reminiscent of the rural atmosphere in Japan. Through the illustrations he made, he depicted that Indonesians are friendly and full of joy and can live side by side with people from all nations. It is very near with Japanese people character that loves to life in harmony.

The humanistic principles possessed by Ono Saseo were influenced by his cheerful and sociable nature. His extensive education and deep knowledge of art, both domestic and international, gave him a deep sense of sympathy and empathy towards others. Furthermore, his love for the natural environment stemmed from the traditional concept of the Japanese people, who view humans as part of the universe and believe in living in harmony with it. All of these elements are intertwined to form the persona of Ono Saseo, who was easily accepted in any community throughout his life.

Acknowledgments

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