

# The Transmutation of the Manyoshu in Military Songs During 20th Century and Its Reasons

## -- With "Chibiki No Iwa" and " Umi Yukaba " for Example

Yuxin Jiang

Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, 310058, China

### Abstract

During 20th Century, the Manyoshu was used to adapt military songs, some of which have been widely distributed and are even still being played today. By analyzing the origin and meaning of two typical military songs, the extinct "Chibiki no Iwa" and the surviving "Umi Yukaba", we can conclude that the reasons for the many adaptations of the Manyoshu are: the "five" and "seven" syllable lines meet the requirements of military marching and are easy to be mass-produced. It was also adapted to meet the requirements of the Militarism and to facilitate mass production. Both adapted songs reflect the government's ultimate goal of brainwashing the masses, promoting orthodoxy, and presenting a false and superficial image.

### Keywords

Manyoshu; Chibiki no Iwa; Umi Yukaba; Military Songs.

### 1. Introduction

Recently, Japanese researchers pointed out that Japan's upper-generation songs are reproduced in various forms in modern songs. One of the oldest collections of songs in Japan, the Manyoshu, contains a variety of waka chanted by the emperor and nobles, officials, frontier soldiers, and peasants from the 7th to the 8th centuries AD. Hiroyuki Tamba has pointed out that military songs of the Meiji period were related to ancient Chinese poetry, especially for the lyrics of many modern military songs are derived from Chinese poetry. [1] In the same way, the classical essence of Japan, the Manyoshu, was also adapted into modern songs.

Yasuhiko Komatsu argues that "although the 'Kokubun scholars' theory of Manyoshu aims at deviating from ethics and scholarship, and leaps from the loyalty to the emperor expressed in the Manyoshu to the 'national' spirit of the era in which the Manyoshu was written This cultivation, however, is in line with the excellent "moral" qualities required of the 'nation' during the war." [2] It can be said that the Manyoshu "helped to strengthen militaristic thought control" during that time. It is no coincidence that Professor Etsuichi Shinoda of the University of Tokyo also points out that the Manyoshu "was placed on the throne of the 'classics of our country' and was used to shape the national consciousness and the spirit of 'patriotism'." [3] Thus, it is clear that the Manyoshu was used to strengthen the control of national thought during 20th Century, but these two scholars did not examine the relationship between it and military songs.

The song "Chibiki no Iwa", which was widely sung during that time, has hardly been found nowadays, while the song " Umi Yukaba", which is also from the Manyoshu, still has a high status today - it has been adapted as a naval ritual song and is still being performed, so it can be said that these two songs are typical of the extinct and the surviving wartime military songs. Therefore, this paper takes the two typical military songs, "Chibiki no Iwa" and " Umi Yukaba", which are both from the Manyoshu but have two opposite endings, for example to examine their

original meanings and the changes in their meanings over the course of time, as well as to analyze the reasons for their adaptation as military songs and how they were adapted. The purpose of this study is to show how Japan used the classical literature Manyoshu to create new military songs during 20th Century, the purpose and means of their adaptation, and the final results.

## 2. The Provenance of "Chibiki no Iwa" and "Umi Yukaba"

### 2.1. "Chibiki no Iwa"

"Chibiki no Iwa" was composed by Sakunosuke Koyama with lyrics by Kenki Owada. [4]Kenshu Owada is a famous lyricist who has collaborated with composer Sakunosuke Koyama on several occasions and had written the famous song "Japanese Navy" with him. He was also the lyricist of famous military songs such as "Japanese Army" and "Battle of the Yellow Sea". It is easy to conclude that Kenshu Owada, who was originally a scholar of Chinese literature and "worked as a lecturer of classical literature at the University of Tokyo and other prestigious universities"[5], drew inspiration for his lyrics from classical literature to compose "Chibiki no Iwa".

In the Manyoshu, Yakamochi, the great companion, writes about "Chibiki no Iwa" in a song to his wife Simone Sakagami: "My love is as heavy as hanging seven pieces of Chibiki no Iwa around my neck" (vol. 4-743). In this case, the word "Chibiki no Iwa" means heavy, and is used to describe love. Jun Nozaki examines the changes in the meaning of "Chibiki no Iwa" from the last to the modern era in Japan. [6]According to him, the local boulder was called "Chibiki no Iwa" according to the imagination of the whole country, so its original meaning of symbolizing the separation of love was gradually diluted, and the meaning of "huge" only remained. In the Middle Ages, the meaning changed once again. In the ninth volume of the Muromachi Period Monogatari Taisei, there is a story about a stone that was held by a spirit and could not be pulled by a thousand people, but was easily pulled by an honest woman with her own strength. Later, in the Dictionary of Japanese Folklore, the spirit in the stone was identified and deified as the "Chikinmeijin". Since then, "Chibiki no Iwa" has been quoted in various legends and spread throughout Japan as a divine image.

In summary, the meaning of "Chibiki no Iwa" in the stories of Waka and Monogatari has changed from the original "boulder" to "the spirit that resides in the stone" and finally to a god. The symbolic meaning of "Chibiki no Iwa" has also changed from "a barrier to love" to "the need for unity and integrity", and has gradually become known throughout Japan and has taken on a mysterious legendary character as a result of its transformation into a tale and legend.

### 2.2. "Umi Yukaba"

In the collection of wartime songs in the National Diet Library's digital archives, there are two versions of the lyrics of "Umi Yukaba," the difference being is the last line. The former is consistent with the thirteenth imperial edict of the Shoku Nihongi, while the latter is a stanza from the long poem "Song of the Imperial Edict of the Exodus of the Land of Austria" (Vol. 18-4094) by Ōtomo no Yakamochi, but both sources record that it was composed by Ōtomo no Yakamochi. According to Yo Nakajima, there are two versions of each of the two lyrics. The one ending with the lyrics "I will not live an ordinary life" is a naval ceremony song composed in 1880 by the musician, Sueyoshi Tougi, and the "Daito Military Song" in 1895 composed by the fourth army band leader, Hiromasa Furuya. The song ending with the lyrics "Only then can I turn back" is a nursery song composed in 1880, and a military song composed in 1937 by Kiyoshi Nobutoki, a teacher at the Tokyo Music School. [7]

Two of the above four versions of the song were the most widely distributed. One is the naval ceremonial song composed by Kiyoshi Nobutoki, and Hosokawa Syuhei notes that "both the

navy and the army customize the ceremonial song as the second numbered song after the national anthem 'Kimigayo'. [8] The song was included as a chorus in the "Warship March" composed by Fujikichi Setoguchi in 1900, and this version has since become an important ceremonial song for the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force until today. [9] The second song is "Umi Yukaba" composed by Kiyoshi Nobutoki. This song was designated as the "second national anthem" after the national anthem by the Taiseiyokusankai (an extreme right-wing political group whose first president was Fumimaro Konoe) as a "national song". [10] After the outbreak of the Pacific War, it was often played, and became a familiar and indispensable tune for the people during that time. It was used in cultural and entertainment events such as festivals and movies, and penetrated into the population with great speed. At the same time, "it was often played at the beginning of the broadcasts, creating a strong impression of the war." [11]

The reasons why these songs were adapted are explored next.

### 3. "Five-seven-seven" - A Rhythm That Fits with the Marching Pace

First of all, from the perspective of syllables, the songs of the last generation in the Manyoshu are easy to adapt. In waka, the syllables of "five" and "seven" are particularly favored, and they are the basic form of ancient poetic stanzas. Most of the waka in the Manyoshu are composed of five or seven syllables in a single line, and are arranged in the overall order of "five-seven / five-seven / seven". This style gives a sense of stability and a dignified and majestic atmosphere. Compared with the previous collection of songs, the style of Manyoshu is more heroic and majestic, so it is also more suitable for adapting to military songs that also need to raise the momentum and excite the fighting spirit.

According to the example in the "Newly Written Military Song" [12], the syllables of the military song should be adapted to the marching pace. The army's marching step, which starts with the first syllable of the left foot and ends with the step of the left foot, is the most suitable for the marching song with seven steps, or seven syllables. In addition, the "Regulations for the Collection of Military Songs" [13] also stipulates that "the lyrics should have the spirit of a soldier and the courageous and majestic momentum, and that four or six lines in the key of seven or five should be used as a stanza, and about ten stanzas should be appropriate for the whole piece." The ballad of Manyoshu, which has the same "five" and "seven" syllable stanzas, fully meets the above requirements for military songs and is therefore very easy to adapt.

Take the "New Collection of Military Songs" compiled by Kenko Gaishi in 1912 as an example, which contains 97 songs in total. The first 17 songs in the "national anthem section" all strictly follow the format of "five" and "seven" syllable phrases, while the "marching song section" is slightly different, with 19 out of 80 songs not meeting this condition. In the entire collection, 80.4% of the songs are in the "five" and "seven" syllable stanzas, which is the majority of the wartime military song format.

### 4. The "Orthodoxy" Represented by the Manyoshu

In addition to the rhyme aspect, the meaning of the lyrics themselves is one of the reasons for the adaptation.

First of all, the Manzai has an unshakable "orthodoxy". It is more unique to Japan to use songs that have been handed down since ancient times. In 1937, in order to suppress the ideological movements that had erupted in various parts of Japan and to strengthen thought control, the government published the "Kokutai no Hongi", which emphasized the dignity of the state and the oath of loyalty to the emperor as the basic philosophy of education. The Manyoshu then became a recommended book recognized by the military government as an intellectual property consistent with the embodiment of the great justice of the nation. It is also considered

to be a representative of the "essence of the national system" as it embodies the tradition of ancient Japan and has orthodox culture and thought. In particular, the bravery and loyalty expressed in the song was admired because the Sakimori-no-uta "has a glorious history of the national army" and was part of a song written by border guards who were sent to the Kyushu area in ancient times, the Manyoshu became a must-have item for soldiers when they went to war. According to von Luebke Runako, the "qualifications of the people" embodied in the Manyoshu in wartime education were abused by the political propaganda of the militarist state, especially the "loyalty and patriotism" and "respect for the gods" of the Sakimori-no-uta. In particular, the "loyalty and patriotism" and "respect for the gods" of the ancient anthem were exalted, and "self-sacrifice" in the war was glorified. [14]

As a result, the Manyoshu, which is firmly established as the "national orthodoxy," has been widely publicized and accepted by the public, and has a wide audience. This was evident in the school education of children at an early age. For example, in 1910, in lesson 27, time 5, "Umi Yukaba - Our Enlightenment," of the "Detailed Plan for Teaching the Language in Ordinary Elementary School(1910)" the emphasis was on the phonetic reading and training of "Umi Yukaba" and the spirit of "loyalty, courage, and faithfulness" rather than on the singing method of the song. In 1938, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) revised the "Common Elementary School Kokugo Reader Volume 12," which included a new unit called "Manyoshu" in which the contents of "Umi Yukaba" were used as a text. [15] This shows that "Umi Yukaba" was incorporated into elementary and secondary school textbooks in various ways, and was instilled into the consciousness of the people as a means of education.

It is obvious that familiar lyrics are more competitive than new lyrics that have no origin. Therefore, the original lyrics and their modified spiritual connotations are more valuable for adaptation, as they have been introduced to the people since the school education stage and have been memorized in the original language. Such lyrics are easy to remember and can quickly expand their audience in a short period of time, which is conducive to appealing to the same emotions. As a result, these songs based on the songs of the previous generation unknowingly penetrated into the minds of the people.

## 5. The Role of Adapting Manyoshu

The main use of military songs should be for the military, but the above-mentioned reasons for adaptation, the rhythmic aspect is indeed based on the actual needs of the military, while the reasons for "orthodoxy" are more oriented toward expanding the audience and facilitating dissemination.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze in detail the lyrical content and the meaning of the spirit contained in the song. In contrast to the meaning of "Chibiki no Iwa" described in Chapter 2, the military song "Chibiki no Iwa" makes use of the meaning of "weight" represented by it to compare the well-known and recognized "heaviest things" with "righteousness for the country. It compares "the heaviest thing" with "the righteousness for the country", and emphasizes the importance of sacrificing one's life for the country by highlighting the unshakable weight of "the righteousness for the country".

The "Umi Yukaba" has a much clearer purpose. Although the second chapter points out the differences between the lyrics of the two versions, the central idea is ultimately the same, that Ōtomo no Yakamochi clan's song expresses loyalty to and praise for the emperor and pride in their "historical association with the emperor" as nobles. The government at the time combined it with the "loyalty"[16] to get the nationals to join the army in order to wage war, and used the song extensively in wartime broadcasts to serve the "Gyokusai" action of calling for "great justice" and suicide for honor. In other words, while "Umi Yukaba" was adapted into a modern military song, the originally "fictional" or "exaggerated" death of "dying in the sea or in the

mountains" was replaced with the realistic "Gyokusai". As a result, the pride and loyalty of Yakamochi clan to the Emperor as a nobleman is changed to the "supreme honor" of calling on all Japanese people to join the army and to die in battle or commit suicide.

## 6. Conclusion

The meaning of "Chibiki no Iwa" and "Umi Yukaba" from the Manyoshu was changed to achieve the meaningless sacrifice of the Japanese people. The "five-seven-seven" stanza of the Manyoshu provided a convenient basis and source for the adaptation of military songs in wartime Japan. But time and development will prove that such songs with strong militaristic ideas will eventually be abandoned, and that peace and development will lead to a better future for humanity.

## References

- [1] Hiroyuki Niwa: A War Song and Chinese Song No.1, *Otemae journal of humanities* Vol. 1(2000), p31-49.
- [2] Yasuhiko Komatsu: The Man'yoshu and "Japanese Romanticism" : On Yojuro Yasuda's Man'yoshu no seishin, *Aoyama journal of Japanese and Japanese literature* Vol. 42(2018), p1-19.
- [3] Information on: <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASM4D0JGQM4CUTFL00H.html>
- [4] Information on: <http://www.noushofumiko.com/radio.pdf>
- [5] Information on: <https://kotobank.jp/dictionary/rekishijinbutsu/>
- [6] Jun Nozaki: Stone of Thousand Unmovable and Stone of Ascent to Heaven : Almost Forgotten Legend Stones, *Tohoku Gakuin University journal of culture*, Vol. 49(2017), p17-30.
- [7] Yo Nakajima: Umi Yukaba, *Journal of the Pacific Society*, Vol. 95(2005), p3-5.
- [8] Shuhei Hosokawa: Interpretations of Japanese Culture: View from Russia and Japan, *International Research Center for Japanese Studies*(2009), p247-260.
- [9] Information on: <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/tokyoband/gallery/download/gunkan.html>
- [10] Information on: <https://www.kingrecords.co.jp/cs/g/gKICG-3228/>
- [11] same with 13
- [12] Information on: <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/855448>
- [13] Information on: <https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=default&BID=F2006090102334635876&ID=M2006090102334935915&REFCODE=C01001136200>
- [14] Information on: [https://www.jpj.go.jp/j/project/intel/exchange/organize/ceeja/report/11\\_12/pdf/11\\_12\\_04.pdf](https://www.jpj.go.jp/j/project/intel/exchange/organize/ceeja/report/11_12/pdf/11_12_04.pdf)
- [15] Nobuyuki Kajikawa: Manyo-shu in High School Textbooks : The Danger of Receiving History, *Gobun. The journal of Japanese language and literature*, Vol. 155 (2016), p1-20.
- [16] Takashi Okabe: The mentality of memorials : The feelings evoked, *Journal of Kyoritsu Women's Junior College*, Vol. 58 (2015), p1-10.