

Onzaburō KUSUMI's Background and Contribution to Music Education: As a Member of the Committee of Primary School Songs

KITAHARA Kanako

Jinjō shōgaku shōka (the anthologies of primary school songs), published by Monbushō (the Ministry of Education), are representative anthologies during the Meiji Era. These anthologies contained popular songs like “Furusato” and “Oborotsukiyo,” which are still published in today’s elementary school music textbooks. These songs are often taken as “the hometown of the Japanese mind.” Despite their popularity, there is no much information about the songs’ lyricists and composers because the original manuscripts and records are either lost or unfound yet.

Onzaburō KUSUMI was a member of the committee of *Jinjō shōgaku shōka* and composed many school songs. However, he is rather unknown, not only as a composer, but also as a music educator during the Meiji Era. This paper shall clarify the background of Onzaburō’s life and his contribution to music education from newly discovered material, such as, his music composition anthology and documents of his family history in the Hirosaki domain, Aomori Prefecture.

Onzaburō was born in 1868 to the KUSUMI family, belonging to a senior samurai class who occupied important positions and carried on the tradition of Heike Biwa playing for generations. As the Hirosaki domain eagerly introduced Western learning in the early Meiji period, a protestant missionary Rev. John Ing was invited to the domain school as a teacher in 1874. Soon after his arrival, Rev. Ing started his missionary work in Hirosaki and Mrs. Ing taught students to sing hymns accompanied by her organ playing. It seems that Onzaburō had opportunities to learn the organ tunes and Western scales in his early age, despite growing up in a peripheral region.

After graduating from his music training at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, today’s Tokyo University of Arts in 1889, he began his teaching career at the Kagawa Prefecture Normal School. As a trained music teacher, he introduced the Western music education system to Kagawa. In 1893, he was transferred to the Kyoto Normal School, where he composed many songs for different purposes of school life around the 1890s. In 1902, he returned to the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō and taught as an Associate Professor at its Organ Department. He also participated in several national music projects which include compiling the *Jinjō shōgaku shōka* and preserving Japanese traditional music by transcribing the Heike Biwa melody into Western scores.

In his life, Onzaburō played the organ, composed school songs, and transcribed the Heike Biwa melody. His wide-ranging activities symbolize the musical scene of the Meiji Era when different music styles conflicted and integrated.

Key words: *Jinjō shōgaku shōka* (the anthologies of primary school songs), the Committee of Primary School Songs, Onsaburō KUSUMI, Hirosaki domain, western music, Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, Kagawa Prefecture Normal School, Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō