

Ei Ja Nai Ka (Isn't it good?)

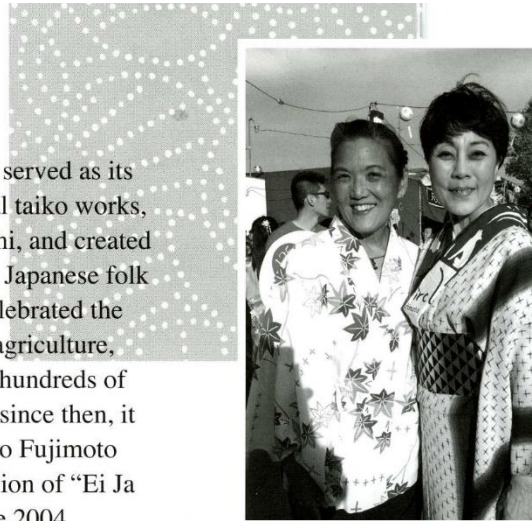
The information below is from the book – Joy, Remembrance, Death – Obon Music for North America by Wynn Kiyama, Rev. Masao Kodani, and Nobuko Miyamoto; Southern District Dharma School Teachers League, Los Angeles, CA.; 2016

Ei Ja Nai Ka? (1994/2001)

“Isn't it Good?”

P.J. Hirabayashi (m/l/c), Yoko Fujimoto (m/l)

P.J. Hirabayashi was a charter member of San Jose Taiko and served as its artistic director for nearly forty years. She arranged traditional taiko works, co-wrote new compositions with her husband Roy Hirabayashi, and created “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” in 1994. The piece was inspired by energetic Japanese folk dances like “Kokura Gion Matsuri” and “Awa Odori,” and celebrated the Issei through stylized movements depicting labor in mining, agriculture, and the railroads. In 1997, Hirabayashi shared the piece with hundreds of drummers at the first North American Taiko Conference, and since then, it has become a late-night conference ritual. Kodo member Yoko Fujimoto added four verses to the song in 2001, and this expanded version of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” has been performed as a bon odori in San Jose since 2004.



Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-IPKh3lp6Q&list=PLkeYL6A2MrBSVoMr2SShTA4C_sbfqvs_G&index=12

Lyrics:

Also from the book – Joy, Remembrance, Death – Obon Music for North America

1. Haa, yume wo kakaete. Haa, aranami koeta
A sora, ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, Grandpa, ei ja nai ka
Ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, Grandma, ei ja nai ka
Asemizu tarashite, honemi wo oshimazu
Ushiro sugata de oshiete kureta, nihon no kokoro

*Holding onto a dream, riding over rough waves
Grandpa and Grandma
Sweat dripping, working without sparing yourself
Watching your back, I learned the spirit of
The Japanese heart*

2. Haa, asamo hayo kara. Haa, kibako wo katsugi
Asora, ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, ichigo tsumi, ei jai nai ka
Ei jai nai ka, ei ja nai ka, hito hako nan sento
Makka na minori ni teyubi mo somaru
Senaka nobaseba yuhi ga akaku nakama wo someru

*Carrying your wooden box from early morning
Picking strawberries. One box, how much?
The red harvest dyes our fingers
The red sunset dyes our stretched backs*

3. Haa, kemuri hakidashi. Haa, unari wo agete
Asora, ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, railroad, ei ja nai ka
Ei ja nai ka, ei jai nai ka, steam engine, ei ja nai ka
Nishi kara higashi e nobiyuku senro ni
Kyo wo tsumikomi hakonde yukuyo ashita e mukatte

*Smoke puffs and roars
Railroad and steam engine
The railroad expands from west to east,
Carrying today's load toward tomorrow*

4. Haa, taiko tatakeba. Haa, ukitatsu kokoro
Asora, ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, don don, ei ja nai ka
Ei ja nai ka, ei ja nai ka, teretsuku ten ten, ei ja nai ka
Odoru ahou to iware tatte, ei ja nai ka
Kore ga yameraryoka yameraremashyoka
Odoru yo utao yo...Isshoni ni yuko yo

*Hearts are cheered with the sound of the taiko:
Don don teretsuku ten ten
Even if we are called dancing fools, it's fine
How can we stop? How can we ever stop?
Let's dance. Let's sing...Together, let's go.*