



JAPANESE HORSE HISTORY

by Ed Moreno

Above: The Japanese poet Sogi circa 1550.

January 31st, 2014 was the start of the 4712th Chinese New Year- a traditional day of merriment and celebration in Japan, to open the Year of the Horse-aka The Stallion. So... Again, best wishes for your Health, Happiness and Prosperity!

馬 *Uma* –The Stallion- is one of the twelve animals that came to visit The Buddha at the time when He was ready to go into eternal repose. The Lord named each of the visitors according to the order of their arrival, and *Umachan* came in seventh place— since the number *seven* is another lucky symbol, Uma and Seven improve the forecast.

How will the Year of the Horse behave according to the diviners? Those born in it are supposed to be cheerful; skillful with money; perceptive; witty; talented, and dexterous. Because the period is full of good turning points, Horse-year leaders who want to make a difference in the world have a great opportunity to create much betterment through grit, endurance and dedication. Horse-persons may succeed well as administrative assistants; bank or military officers; sales persons; magazine editors and publishers; and service-oriented business leaders. Boar, Tiger, Rabbit; Dog and Ram are their most compatible companions for marriage or liaisons.¹

But every rule has its exceptions. Not all Year-of-the-Horse males will behave wisely; some who, by ingenuity or chance acquired leadership may end up acting more like jackasses than horses. And since 馬 can also be pronounced '*ma*' and

¹ Sato San. *An Oriental System of Fortune Telling – JUNESHEE*. Los Angeles: Sato San Press.1971.

'ba', such clods may be called 馬鹿 *baka*-horse-deer, which also translates as 'fool.'² More distressing is that ladies born in a year when *Horse* is in conjunction with *Fire*³ (丙午 *hinoeuma*) have little chance of marrying happily; impetuous, unruly, mischievous, and unfortunate, they will quickly "burn" their marriages. For many women in Japan, in 1966 and 1978 that prediction sounded too scary. They avoided pregnancies for fear that their *hinoeuma* children would be seriously affected, and end up discriminated by others.⁴ Now, those of you born 12, 24, 36, 48, 60 or 72 years ago: does **any** of the above sound right?

Horsing around with History.

This beautiful animal has a rather important place in Japanese legend and culture. For starters, in Shinto the Stallion is a sacred creature. Shinto Shrines throughout the nation are dedicated to it, beginning with the most important at Ise where a white stallion is paraded before the Sacred Spirits, thrice monthly, to celebrate the ties between the Sun Goddess and the head of the Empire.⁵



White stallion being paraded before the Sacred Spirits.

Why? Let's start with the story about the Storm God 建速須佐之男命 *Takehaya Susanoo-no-Mikoto*, aka *Susano'O*. Young, impetuous, and a real pain-in-the-celestial-hind,⁶ not content with the power to create havoc- tempests, hurricanes, and fires, he became terribly jealous of his loving sister, 天照大御神 *Amaterasu*, the

² An unidentified Chinese Emperor once decreed that a stag could also be called *horse*, and vice-versa—a statement which didn't go too well among his courtiers, who considered it "the height of folly." See: Yamaguchi, H.S.K. *We Japanese*. Miyanoshta, Fujiya Hotel ;1950. p/101.

³ In addition to the animal signs, there is the philosophical concept of 厄年 *Yakudoshi* –momentous years by themselves, and years when the animal sign conjoins with an unfavorable symbol in the Five Element cycle. (*Fire, Water, Earth, Metal and Air*.) See: Ashkenazi, Michael. *JAPANESE MYTHOLOGY*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. p/120.

⁴ <http://www.berlin-institut.org/online-handbookdemography/japan.html>

⁵ In Ise, Mie-ken there is the Stall for the Sacred Horse where a living white horse can often be seen. Besides Ise's main sanctuary of Shinto's utmost sacred center, there are other shrines in Japan where the stallion is venerated, such as Takanomiya, Shimane-ken; Kazenomiya,, Shizuoka. Sacred stallions may be offered a carrot or a cube of sugar, but they are NEVER to be touched. See: <http://factsanddetails.com/japan/cat25/sub168/item974.html>

⁶ *THE KOJIKI –Records of Ancient Matters*. Basil Hall Chamberlain translator. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing. 1981.Sec.XV;p/64.

Sun Goddess, with whom he owned Cosmic Time. He vandalized the Goddess' rice fields; defiled with his own feces the floor of her Celestial Weaving Hall; climbed to its roof, made a hole on in, and pushed through the carcass of a horse he had brutalized, and which fell right on *Amaterasu's* loom; he also slaughtered one of *Amaterasu's* favorite Princess-Weavers. Until then patient and tolerant of his brother's petulance *Amaterasu* became furious; she ran away to hide inside the Heavenly Rock Cave, 天岩戸 *Ama no-Iwato*, swearing never to come out again. The world without the Light of the Sun became cruelly dark; however, the other *kami* tricked her out of her hiding place.⁷ After exiting, *Amaterasu* kicked her brother out of Heaven; and so ended the mutual ownership of time; the beauty and bounty of Day went to *Amaterasu*; the paltriness and mystery of Night to *Susano*.

Susano-O landed in Yamato; established himself there, to expiate his atrocities. A couple of eons after, the Goddess sent her grandson 瓊瓊杵尊 *Ninigo no Mikoto* to recover what *Susano-O* had appropriated, and to establish the Sacred Ruling Family in Japan.

Amaterasu, The Divine Spirit and direct link between Heaven and the Japanese Emperor,⁸ first appeared to humanity mounted on a horse. Sometimes, she manifested herself as the beast; while at others she appeared as just resting on the horse.

The accepted Shinto belief is that Japan's First Emperor, *Jimmu*⁹-- *Amaterasu's* great-great-grandson- was involved, like his grandfather, in struggles to conquer Yamato. However, I have not been able find any connection between him and the Sacred White Stallion, as his mount in military operations. The first connection between emperor and horse appears as a small paragraph in *The Kojiki*, Volume II, Section CX, about a couple of horses, a tribute from Korea to 応神天皇 *Emperor O-Jin*,¹⁰ the semi-legendary fifteenth emperor, son of warrior Queen 神功皇后, *Jingō-kōgō*,¹¹ (201-269 CE.) Perhaps some day we will know if O-Jin Tenno or any of his Court members ever rode the gifted horses. As Japanese History becomes firmer, some controversies about the link between the Imperial House and the symbolic White Horse make it appear weaker.

In 1967, Namio Egami, Japanese Professor of Asian History, at Tokyo University, 東大 Tōdai¹² -theorized that the Imperial lineage may have started when a band of continental warriors, Mongolian or Korean, invaded Japan in the 2nd or 3rd Century CE. Powerfully armed, and mounted on excellent horses, they became the ruling class.¹³ Of course, such theories are totally contrary to the 'divine origin' found in

⁷For how Amaterasu was tricked back, please see: "Hold the Breeze Gently" Part 4; *The Newsette* . Feb. 2014.

⁸ See: 2014 – Year of the Horse: <http://onmarkproductions.com/NY2014/>

⁹ Estimated date: 660-585 BC.

¹⁰Ojin is believed to have ruled between 269 - 310 CE at the Toyo-Akira Palace in Karushima, Nara. See:Kato, Genchi. & Hikoshiro Koshino. *KOGOSHUI Gleanings from Ancient Stories*. Tokyo: Meiji Japan Society. 1925.

¹¹ Papinot, E. HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF JAPAN. Tokyo: Tuttle.1990. p/478.

¹² Todai was formerly the Imperial University of Japan; and currently it is the most prestigious in all Asia.

¹³ See JAPAN- An Illustrated Encyclopedia. Tokyo: Kodansha. 1993;and

<http://heritageofjapan.wordpress.com/following-the-trail-of-tumuli/rebellion-in-kyushu-and-the-rise-of-royal-estates/in-the-news-ancient-horse-trappings-dug-up-at-burial-mound/when-did-horses-arrive-in-japan/horse-riding-warriors-they-came-they-saw-and-they-conquered-or-did-they/>.

both the *Kojiki* the *Nihongi*, the *Kogo Shūi*,¹⁴ and other ancient histories. J. Edward Kidder, an American archaeologist, a scientist with twenty years experience in Japan, eleven books on it, and no less than fifteen archeological excavations, prefers to stick to the more conservative theory of an internally developed Japanese Imperial structure.

According to Kidder and other more recent writers, Emperor O-jin was a farmer, and it wasn't until "much later" during the reign of Emperor *Keitai*, (507-538,) that Japan became as competent in horse-riding skills and technology as Korea.¹⁵

The wooden horse.

In the Japanese tradition, there is a very special place for 絵馬 *Ema*, the picture-horse, small wooden plaques on which Shinto worshippers write their petitions.¹⁶

The 日本紀 *Nihongi*-Chronicles of Japan, the second book of Japanese History (720BC) mentions that, up to the reign of 垂仁天皇 Emperor Suinin, the 11th Emperor, (29BC–70 CE?,) when a member of the Imperial Family died, his holdings, retainers and live horses were interred *alive* with him; the custom was known as 追腹, *oibara*. Suinin ended the practice, reasoning that it was more humane to use clay figurines representing the assets of the deceased than to bury the real ones.

Four years later, people began to offer live horses to the shrines, and that created a small social conflict: what could the priests do with the so many live horses--- and their by-products-- and how the rest of the devotees would anguish, unable to offer an expensive animal.¹⁷

Around the Eighth Century, instead of live animals, the faithful began using small tablets with a picture of a horse (hence 絵馬 *E*-picture-*ma* horse)¹⁸ as a votive gifts. With their traditional artistic spirit, *ema* makers refined their painting skills, and their creations evolved into a really beautiful art. Now, you could portray in the tablets what you really wanted, or express your petition in beautiful calligraphy.¹⁹ Many of the larger shrines had to build additional 堂 *do* halls to display the tablets.

¹⁴ The 古語拾遺 *Kogo Shūi*, written around 807CE by courtier Inbe no Hari may aid those involved in the study of Japan's early history find clarification for some of the statements in *Nihongi* and *Kojiki*.

¹⁵ Kidder, Edward. *The Making of the Past- Ancient Japan*. Oxford . Elsevier .Phaidon. 1977.

¹⁶ Most certainly offering votive plaques is done by members of other religions, too, more as a tradition than a Shinto prayer.

¹⁷ Offering horses to shrines was also an effort to control the rain-- white to trigger it, and dark to stop it.

¹⁸ JAPAN – p/33

¹⁹The word *gan'i* (願意), meaning "wish", may be written on the tablet or on its side along the figure the faithful has selected to express his petition.

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Horse offering made from straw.



By the famed Heian period, (794-1185) the horse was a favorite among the nobility, more as an elegant accessory than a war-tool. As for the commoners, the horse was more of an agricultural partner and travel companion than a weapon. 初午 *Hatsuuma* the First Horse-Day-Festival (often the second day of the second month) is probably one of the best examples of an association of the Divine Horse with the agricultural base of the nation. A 711CE legend says that, on the *Day of the Horse*, in Fushimi, Kyoto, the God of Agriculture, business and prosperity, Inari, descended from the mountain. Currently, all throughout the country, beginning with Fushimi, the god's devotees visit his shrines, to pay their respects. They come accompanied by horses elaborately decorated; or they offer *mochi* on top of straw horses.²⁰ After the ceremonies, the pilgrims feast on the local specialties, which include the famous 赤飯 *seki-han*- red rice.

Harnessing the Sacred Stallion.

At about the end of the Sixteenth Century, there was a rather large *Ema* painted by a famous Kano Master Painter at the 浅草寺 *Sensoji* (Asakusa Kannon Temple.) The villagers of the neighboring community came one day, very enraged, to complain to the Abbott that, every night, a horse came to their village to create mischief in the fields, and damage the crops: could the temple help stop the pest with prayers? One day, a temple guardian accidentally discovered that the horse in the large *Ema* had some green traces around his mouth, and visible mud and bits of greenery on his hoofs. The priests asked the famous sculptor 左甚五郎 *Hidari Jingoro*-aka *Itami Toshikatsu*- (1596-1644) to graphically rein in the horse; and that ended the villagers' problems. Now, since Hidari Jingoro is a little bit legendary, the story may be more fiction than reality.

Early horse trails.

Some anthropologists assume that the horse migrated to Japan from Continental Asia, perhaps Mongolia through Korea, around 35,000 years ago... or even earlier.²¹ One type we're told was a small animal, 3 or 4 feet high at the shoulders, similar to the ponies discovered in 1952 in the *Tokara* Islands, and another a medium-sized

²⁰ See: Hatsuuma. <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1067>

²¹ Bones of primitive horses have been found in excavations of Jomon sites. Please see: <http://heritageofjapan.wordpress.com>

animal, about 4-5 feet shoulder-high similar to the 木曾馬 Kiso *uma*; but other possibilities are also open.²²

Supposedly, the horse allowed our ancestors to harness it way back to around the 2nd Century CE,²³ when man made it his beautiful companion and beast of burden. Later, after being trained and equipped, the horse developed into a formidable weapon, as the old chronicles disclose. By the 古墳時代 *Kofun jidai* the tumuli-tomb period, the information about the horse becomes more solid.



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Japanese Packhorse 1890

The *Kofun* period (300 to 500 AD) is one of the most enthralling chapters of early Japanese History, when the political consolidation of the country began taking its baby steps under vigorous clan-kings and most compliant subjects; and when the construction of tumuli tombs, to honor the exalted chieftains, started too.²⁴ Found all over Japan,²⁵ except in the northernmost areas, these enormous mound-covered burial places have provided modern scientists a delectable throve of historical and folkloric material.²⁶

Characteristic to the tumuli are their 'remarkable uniformity in mound-form, burial chamber and equipment, and the placing of 埴輪 *haniwa*.²⁷ *Haniwa* are unglazed baked-clay figures, usually 40-50 centimeters in diameter- some up to 1.5 meters in length- used for guarding the surface of the mounds, to protect their occupants. The most primitive forms of the *haniwa* were very plain tubes, built layer by layer with

²² Ibid. See also: JAPAN Vol 1 p/564.

²³ There are significant differences of opinion as to when the horse began to be used in Japan. See: Kidder, Edward J. Jr. *Himiko and Japan's Elusive Chieftdom of Yamatai*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 2007. p/51

²⁴ However, archeologists have found some raised tombs since the preceding Late Yayoi Period.

²⁵ For a methodical and careful study of the area, see: Mizoguchi, Koji. *AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF JAPAN*. 30,000 BC to AD 700. Ch. 6.

²⁶ Exquisite in their simple forms, they trigger the legend (*Nihongi*) that, by replacing the live sacrificial victims formerly offered to the deceased, the *haniwa* were not simply hollow sculptures, but carried inside the very anima of the previous offerings. See *JAPAN An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. pp/498-9. Also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haniwa>

²⁷ Imamura, Keiji. *Pre-Historic Japan. New perspectives on insular East Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 1966.

coiled clay, and then fired.²⁸ As time passed, the figures became more elaborate, which allows us the joy of discovering exciting details about how the *Kofun* people- male and female- lived (houses, implements, ceremonial objects); what they wore in daily life;²⁹ and what animals (chicken, fish, even monkeys) were significant in their milieu. Also, how the horse had become an important part in their military procedures: how the warriors dressed- themselves and their mounts- and what weapons and techniques they employed. One of the most curious details in the fighters' attire is their conical hats, similar to those used by people of Continental Asia,³⁰ which has unleashed a series of additional controversies about the ethnicity of the tumuli residents.

There's a negative side to the *haniwa* horse: its association with Water,³¹ hence with disease and pestilence, which could decimate villages like an infuriated mounted trooper. Besides the tops of the tumuli, the beds of old streams or ditches in more than five hundred and fifty areas near Japan's capital cities Nara and Kyoto have rendered to archaeological excavators quite a number of miniature clay horses with their legs shattered. The academic interpretation of these finds is that the figures were thrown into the water with their limbs broken in 祓 *harae* the Shinto Rituals of Purification, to wash away the plague.³²

Besides the *haniwa*, the tombs have yielded a large number of bronze mirrors, as if to further bewilder History's disciplines.³³ But why bring that up here?

Found in tombs all over Japan, many of these mirrors appear, as 'cast in the same mold,'³⁴ regardless of where they were discovered; and many of them have been identified as belonging to the *triangular-rim* type.³⁵ And this begins a mysterious running course from horse-to-mirror-to-*Amaterasu*-and back to reality. Stay with me, please.

- 1.- The horse is sometimes identified as a direct descendant from the *Celestial Dragon*, but it's also portrayed as the *Sacred Stallion*, the image of *Amaterasu*, whose most significant gifts to the Nation is her *Sacred Mirror*.
- 2.- Because the oldest examples of the *triangular-rim*-mirrors are clearly identifiable, by date, as belonging to the era of 卑弥呼 *Himiko* aka *Pimiko* (170-248 CE), and could be part of the magnificent Chinese donation of one-hundred mirrors to her around 240CE, they could be linked to the mysteries of *Yamatai*- the roots of Yamato.³⁶

²⁸ The technique is known as *wasumi*.

²⁹ The 勾玉 *magatama* curved jewel symbolic of the Imperial dominance is also part of the *haniwa* finds. By the *Kofun* period they were made mainly of jasper, agate, onyx and jade.

³⁰ The previously cited *Nihongi* is an ideal instrument to learn more about the *Kofun* era. However, modern historians discredit the legend of live-victims ever being interred with their masters.

³¹ One of the Cosmic elements in Shinto theology.

³² Farris, William Wayne. *DAILY LIFE AND DEMOGRAPHICS in ANCIENT JAPAN*. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies. U. Michigan. 2009. p/14

³³ *Pre-Historic Japan*. See also: <http://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/english/publication/rekihaku/138witness.html>

³⁴ The first description, though heavily used before by academics is a virtual impossibility since casting then used sand molds. The current interpretation is "cast in same model/same pattern." Kidder.

³⁵ In the back of those mirrors, close to the rim are various circles made of triangles.

³⁶ HIMIKO;p/160

3.- To make things even more interesting, Anthropologist Ichimura Kisaburo asserts that *Himiko* was 神功天皇, *Jingu kogo Tenno...*³⁷

4.- ...and his contemporary Kujira Kiyoshi ventures that *Himiko* was none other than *Amaterasu*.³⁸

5.- One more little jump, please: how did those valuable mirrors come to be owned by the chieftains resting in the tumuli?³⁹ Were they considered an expensive reward for their loyalty, or used to influence them to help secure the unification of *Yamatai*-which in itself belongs in the realm of mysteries?

The horse, flesh, blood, mane and saddle.

兵 *Tsuwamono* –soldier, warrior, is a term whose original Chinese meaning was ‘weapon’.⁴⁰ It’s found in the extraordinary saga, the *Shōmonki*- The Story of Masakado’s Rebellion (940CE),⁴¹ to identify the mounted fighter and differentiate him from the 足輕 *lightfeet* foot-soldier The *Shomonki* opens the *Age of the Samurai*, which runs from the late Heian period, approximately, to the Meiji Imperial rebirth. It is also our initial source for knowledge about how important the horse was in the quest for national unification. Mounted on a faithful, agile and intelligent beast; armed mainly with his dependable bow and fast arrows; and guided by a deep concern about how his own behavior might honor or disgrace himself and his social group, the warrior was, exactly, a weapon for battle.⁴² And however romantic or illogical they may appear to our Western minds, the warrior stories and the samurai spirit of olden times are always mesmerizing.

³⁷ Tokyo: *Shin jinbutsu oraisha*. 1972. Please see also: Martin, Peter: The Chrysanthemum Throne. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press. 1997.pps/8;27.

³⁸ *Akita: Shoten*.1974. Prior to them there were similar claims : Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354) and Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725) claimed that *Himiko*, was actually *Jingu* the third century shaman-queen of Yamataikoku, and, because *Jingu* was a historical figure, she had to be included as a member of the imperial family.

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Varley, Paul. *WARRIORS OF JAPAN. AS PORTRAYED IN THE WAR TALES*. Honolulu:University of Hawaii. 1994

⁴¹ *Shomonki: The Story of Masakado’s Rebellion*. Trl. & Edited by Judith N. Rabinovitch. Tokyo: Sophia University Press. 1986. This a 16-page long chronicle about prominent nobleman 平 将門 Taira no Masakado, the first and one of the most dramatic Samurai of the Heian era; and of his attempt—historically the first—to gain control of all of Japan.

⁴² Varley; p/8.

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Samurai warrior with bow.



The samurai could own no more precious jewel than his horse,⁴³ which because of his speed, mobility, endurance and range of action often became dearer to him than his own spouse. Here's how the bonding sometimes went:

Matsudaira Mitsuhsa, a distinguished Toda Clan daymio was readying to return home after the mandatory 参勤交代, *Sankin-kotai* –alternate attendance- in the

Edo.⁴⁴ His horse 追風 *Oikaze*, Tailwind, faithful companion of long years, had become a *Senior Citizen*. The long trip back to the Matsudaira domain might cost the horse its life. So, the Mitsuhsa asked the retainer in charge of his stables to tell the horse that, however the Tono loved him, he was going to remain at Edo. The horse became so sad that he refused to eat and drink, and Tono-san was informed about the situation. So he went to the stable and visited with the horse:

-Oikaze-kun; I just don't want to tire you so much that you have to leave me stranded in the middle of the trip home. But wish to come? We'll go together, my friend.

Oikaze started acting as if he were just a young pony. So Mitsuhsa rode him all the way back home. A few days after, his stable master came to inform Mitsuhsa that *Oikaze* had returned to his ancestors.⁴⁵

⁴³ As the *Heike Monogatari* and other Samurai sagas amply prove it.

⁴⁴ *Sankin-kotai* was the mandatory –tributary- every-other-year trip to Edo and stay in the city, imposed by the Tokugawa Shogunate on the daymio, to maintain control over them, and to improve the economy of the shogunate's capital.

⁴⁵ Adapted from *WE JAPANESE*. p/556. Sacred or not, intelligent and beautiful to their riders, the Japanese horses never impressed the European visitors much. Bernardino de Avila Girón, a Spanish businessman who lived in Nagasaki for various periods between 1594 and 1619, referred to them as 'mishappen ponies,' perhaps for the characteristics inherited from their Mongolian steppes' ancestors.

IMPROVING HORSE GENETICS.

Masamune was not only a horse lover, but a real connoisseur. Friendly to the Christians, in 1613, at the urge of inveterate politician Franciscan Father Luis Sotelo, he sent his trusted retainer *Hasekura Rokuemon* at the head of the second Japanese embassy to the West. Sotelo hoped to convince Spain and Rome to send more missionaries at the time when Japan was increasing its intolerance. Through an alliance between Date and the foreign powers, Sotelo reasoned, Spain would conquer Japan, destroy the Shogunate, and choose him as Japan's bishop. The scheme failed miserably, and by the time *Hasekura* returned, Masamune had already agreed to let the Shogunate fight Christianity in his dominions.⁴⁶

The returning diplomatic mission brought a pack of quality stallions, in the hope of improving both the Japanese stock and Masamune-Shogunate relations. But, by then, Japan had closed its doors to foreign commerce;⁴⁷ and all of the *namban* culture—horses included—had become 'no-nos.' So, to remain in good terms with the Shogunate, Masamune ran the illegal-immigrant stallions into the adjoining territories of the 南部藩 *Nambu* clan, (Iwate)⁴⁸ where they became, legally at least, *wild horses*. Of course, the Nambu promptly captured the animals, and added them to their holdings. Did they share their captives with neighboring Sendai? One would easily assume so. In any event, that was, we are assured, the start of Nambu as the area that produces the best and most famous horses in Japan.

More easily demonstrable is the fact that the Dutch traders actually brought equine stock to Japan, perhaps of Arabian descent, as gifts to the Shogun.

FREQUENTLY ASKED EQUINE QUESTION

An FAQ in the blogs about Japan is: *Are there any horses now in your country?* Of course there are. According to the statistics published in 2008 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, the number was 83,129.

Even if you don't see Japan sharing the obvious passion that Britain and Spain display for the animal, the horse means a lot to the Japanese people. But you really have to get out of the Kanto metro area to see these animals more frequently. Then you'll find riding clubs, horning associations, and training farms such as those in Miyagi; Fukushima; Nambu or Iwate; or to watch the animals still involved in mundane chores, such as in Kyushu and other southern areas. A simple inquiry to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)⁴⁹ will let you know the best places to visit, to enjoy horse activities.

If you happen to be a *horse-race nut*, you'll surely drool at the knowledge that there are ten tracks operated by both the Japan Racing Association (JRA,) and fifteen by the National Association of Racing (NAR,) in cooperation with various

⁴⁶ Fujita, Neil S. JAPAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRISTIANITY. New York: Paulist Press. 1991. pp/154-6

⁴⁷ Except to the Dutch.

⁴⁸ See: <https://www.google.com/#q=Morioka%2C+Japan>. This part of the narrative is not easy to substantiate, since after the diplomatic fiasco, Hasekura remained for a while in the Philippine Islands, postponing his return to Sendai for a more appropriate time; and from then on the story of his life darkens a lot.

⁴⁹ www.japantravelinfo.com

municipalities.⁵⁰ More than twenty-one thousand western-style horse races occur yearly, between “flat, jump and ‘Draft’” events. The richest *flat race* in the world occurs in November at the Tokyo Race Course.⁵¹

RIDING AGAINST THE GODS.

A more traditional style of racing known as 流鏑馬 *yabusame*, -archery-on-horseback- is used to honor the past; to entertain the ancestral spirits watching over Japan, and to win their favor over land, people, and crops. Originated by Emperor Temmu, (631- 686) as a peace offering to the Gods, the ceremony was later adopted as a Court Art in the Heian Period. During the *Genpei War*, (1180-85) Minamoto Yoritomo, the first Kamakura Shogun, alarmed at the ineptitude of his mounted warriors, chose *yabusame* as the method to train them to acquire competence and confidence. The fact that the arrows were shot towards the Sanctuary of War Deity *Hachiman*, Yoritomo reasoned, should increase the fervor of the archer for hitting the target, and not something else in his path. The ritual began at the *Tsurugaoka Hachiman* (Kamakura) in 1187.⁵²

YABUSAME NOW.

Dressed in the hunting attire of medieval warriors, and mounted on horses similarly equipped, three experienced archers in sequence, gallop without holding the reins, over a cordoned course about 275-meter long. On the left side of the course, three cypress-wood targets, about 75 square cm. each, are placed at intervals of seventy meters. The purpose of the race is to shoot each target with 鏑矢 *kabura-ya*- ‘turnip-headed’ whistling arrows, similar to those used in the Eleventh Century. Behind each target, a group of judges dressed in ancient costume, experts in the art, assess the style of each competitor. The commands for each part of the ritual are given through the sound of drums; and although the event takes but about a minute, between the anticipation of waiting; the speed of the racers; the wondering about success or failure, and the drumming sounds, one goes through a most imposing and unforgettable moment.

In Iwanuma, Miyagi-ken, where I witnessed it long ago on a cold, wintry day, the event takes place, at the end of February, as part of the celebrations on the Second Horse Day of the Year, at *Chikukoma Jinja Shrine*.⁵³

Next, we’ll visit the most famous horse even in Japan, the Soma Noami Festival; and find some interesting tattling about equine invasions into language and custom.

The mukae-uma (‘greeting horse’) of the July 7 Tanabata Festival of eastern Japan is a straw horse hung from gates and trees and placed on rooftops, offered as a

⁵⁰ Western-type racing was introduced by the British in Yokohama, in the 1860’s, when the Yokohama Race Club was started in what is now Negishi Forest Park (1867.) Japan Racing Association. See also the online page of Yokohama Visitors’ Guide at

http://www.welcome.city.yokohama.jp/eng/travel/trend_reports/2008/07.html

⁵¹ JAR

⁵² Bush, Lewis. *JAPANALIA*. New York:David McKay Co. 1959.p/250. See also Kids Web-Japan *Yabusame*.

⁵³ Here is the location of an excellent little video about other aspects of the event.

mount to the visiting deity. The mukae-uma is also offered to visiting ancestors at Obon and to the rice-paddy deity at field-viewing time.

An ideological-archaeological obstacle course.

Archeology and Anthropology in Japan did not begin, seriously, until the time when American Zoologist Edward S. Morse, (1838-1925)-a guest professor at the Tokyo Imperial University, in the final decades of the 19th century, accidentally discovered that under tons of centuries-old trash lay the most exciting historical treasures he'd ever dreamed to see. Enthralled by them, he maneuvered to bring to Japan American Art Historian Ernest F. Fenollosa, (1853-1908), who, greatly aided by the distinguished Art Scholar Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913)⁵⁴ thoroughly lost his head to the beauty of Japanese Culture and Tradition,⁵⁵ and became their most dedicated curator. In 1888, Fenollosa was chosen to direct the Tokyo Imperial Museum, which he had helped establish. Later he organized the first inventory of 国宝: *kokuho*-Japan's National Treasures,⁵⁶ for which he earned the most distinguished Imperial honors.

Around the 1930's, in the early Showa epoch, Japan experienced a period of ardent jingoism; the government turned into a martial despotic organism which unleashed a nationalistic ballyhoo to control the political, educational and informational systems.⁵⁷ The initial enthusiasm for modernization and scientific discovery and through them better understanding of the Nation's glorious past, became strongly opposed.

Masquerading as restorers of Japan's Imperial glory, the new power-grabbers eliminated by murder or incarceration anyone⁵⁸ who opposed their theology. A strong new canon was concocted: unblemished Imperial Divinity mounted on immaculate Holiness.⁵⁹ History, Anthropology and Archaeology had to wait for freedom from those shackles until after the Macarthur Shogunate, (1945-52,) when Japan's intelligentsia re-energized them.

Hence, in dealing with the horse in Japanese History, old assumptions are going to be constantly challenged by the periodic appearance of new, more accurate information that will force jumps into new directions. Thus, be not baffled if throughout this series some statements seem to contradict others previously made.

As we've already seen, the lore of Japan is rich in horse stories where the animal is a flesh-and-blood character or a mystical being endowed with helpful or destructive powers. Here is a unique tale you'll enjoy.

⁵⁴ Yes, the same famous author of powerful books *The Book of Tea* and *The Ideals of the West*.

⁵⁵ Fenollosa converted to Buddhism, and obtained a new name. Totally involved in Buddhist culture, he rescued from destruction many ancient treasures which would have been destroyed by the ultranationalist movement which tried to convert Shinto into jingoism.

⁵⁶ *Kokuho* are 'Tangible Cultural Properties of artistic or historic value,' so designated by the Agency for Cultural Properties of the Ministry of Education.

⁵⁷ Lee, Khun Choy. *Japan: Between Myth and Reality*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.1995.p/185

⁵⁸ The Imperial restoration forced the former samurai to lose all their privileges and become *ronin*-unemployed samurai, some of whom grabbed the political power. Little by little the government became militaristic, autocratic and ideologically inflexible.

⁵⁹ The symbol was the Sacred Emperor mounted on the Sacred White horse.

Come with me to Sendai, (my favorite area in all Japan) and visit a very special place, in Aoba Ward, the repository for the remains of *Gotogo*⁶⁰ Lord Masamune's⁶¹ famous warhorse. 伊達政宗 Date Masamune is the most formidable figure in the juncture between the *Azuchi-Momoyama* and the *Edo* periods.⁶² Nicknamed the 独眼竜 *dokuganryū*, the "One-eyed-Dragon," he was the only daimyo who could bring umbrage on the Tokugawa splendor, and nonchalantly retain his head on his shoulders. As it was traditional in the Edo years, Date was called to Edo by Shogun *Iemitsu* (1604-1651), to spend some time in the capital, as his exalted hostage. Date-sama needed a good mount to cover the then horrendous distance between Sendai and Edo.⁶³ So he went to his stables to greet *Gotogo*, his favorite mount for more than thirty years.

Just the sight of the animal reminded him of the many campaigns they had fought together.

-Gotogo, my faithful friend, I so appreciate your services, your company and our many years as faithful partners! Had it not been for you, I don't know how many times I would've lost my head, literally. Arigataku gozonjimasu! Now, my boy, I have to go to Edo... just to waste money uselessly.⁶⁴ When will I return- if at all-, I don't know. You're old now, and I can't make you go through such a long trip. So stay in Sendai, and rest a lot for both of us.

Gotogo nodded his head as if having understood. But that night he managed to break out of the stable, and kicked to death his keeper-a not too gentle man with Date's horses. Date's original castle, *Aoba-jo* was in a tall hill with some nearly vertical sides. *Gotogo* jumped over the castle walls on the precipitous side of the mountain, and was killed.

Date Masamune was inconsolable. Grieving over the loss of his noble friend, he ordered that the horse be buried with full religious services, and that a stone monument be constructed in its honor.⁶⁵

I asked my friend Jennifer McDowell, who is in Sendai writing her thesis on kokeshi,⁶⁶ to locate the place for me. She replied:

February 3, 2014. - I went twice to the area where I thought this shrine was. I asked at the station information office, and I was the one who found it on the map. It is an unmarked shrine below the Sendai Castle site. All that is left are the gates and inari⁶⁷ She sent a couple of pictures, one of which, I'm sharing with you.

February 4, 2014.-I was aware of a tiny shrine, but after the earthquake they have really fenced off much of the area. They are currently working on fixing the

⁶⁰ In translating *Gotogo*—(perhaps 五島?) your guess maybe better than mine.

⁶¹ Sendai 1567 –1636

⁶² Meriwether, C. A Sketch of the Life of Date Masamune and an Account of his Embassy to Rome. *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*. Vol. XXI. Yokohama: R. Meiklejohn & Co. pp3-105.

⁶³ Over 75里 *ri*, more than three hundred kilometers.

⁶⁴ Remember the purpose of the Sankin-kotai?

⁶⁵ Adapted from 'Horse Stories'—*We Japanese*, cited above. pp556-7

⁶⁶ Kokeshi—also in Sendai parlance *kiboko* (wooden child) are the famous Tohoku turned-wood dolls.

⁶⁷ The guarding foxes symbolic of the Deity Inari..

infrastructure of the hill that shores up the Castle walls. I could not believe that there was no sign for this shrine. I can go back and try to find it again to take a photo of the actual shrine, but I wonder if there is access to it now.

Jennifer sent a new picture that faintly shows the little shrine, up on the unsafe hill. In turn, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO,) graciously provided me a moody, undated little video where you can see the narrow track running from the place where the horse fell to the little sanctuary honoring him.⁶⁸ When you compare the current status of that place with the magnificent mausoleum in Date's memory, your heart will sink. The first, reconstructed after the Pacific War is huge...colorful; the latter is small, glum ...an unkempt little corner in a hill, far, far away from reality.⁶⁹

If you were to sit down and squeeze the brains of the most daring Sci-Fi writer, you couldn't come up with a contrast as absolute as that you'll find, beginning Saturday, July 26, 2014 at 南相馬市 *Minami Soma*, South Soma in Fukushima Prefecture. The background will be *Daichi*, Nuclear Plant #1, the 'treasure' of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)-the same that devastated Fukushima and Miyagi- and the foreground, 相馬野馬追 *Soma-Noma Oi*,⁷⁰ an epic battle hand-fought along the military canons of the Sengoku period (1467-1568).

Described-correctly as *a pageant of splendid armor, banners, and formidable equestrian skills*,⁷¹ the *Soma Nomai* three-day festival at 雲雀ヶ原 *Hibarigahara*⁷², is the most significant horse event in Japan; and for long an *Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property* of the Japanese Administration of Cultural Affairs. But the entire tradition including 原町市 *Haramachi* City, where the event occurs, all nearly disappeared during the disasters that devastated Japan, beginning March 11, 2011, when 福島第一原子力発電所事故 *the Fukushima Daiichi genshiryoku hatsudensho jiko*. Japan's *Daichi* Nuclear Plant suffered a level-7 nuclear meltdown, after that scale-9 earthquake that triggered the most horrible tsunami ever experienced by Japan.⁷³

⁶⁸ Kakizakiinari daimyoujin Video: <http://nicoviewer.net/sm22264472>

⁶⁹ For Masamune's Shrine, the 瑞鳳殿 *Zuihoden Mausoleum*; visit <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e5153.html>;⁶⁹ or at get off at the fourth stop of the Loople Sendai Bus, 15 minutes away from Sendai station. *Japan Guide*. JNTO.

⁷⁰ Soma Nomaio, translates freely into 'Soma's wild horse chase.'

⁷¹ Japan National Tourism Organization

⁷² Hibarigahara is a large expanse of land, like a stadium, in the area of *Haramachi*, part of the small City of Minami Soma, (formerly Nakamura) in Fukushima-ken.

⁷³ Neither the intensity of the earthquake and the severity of the consequent tsunami, nor the number of victims resulting from the triple whammy set a top record in the disaster history of the world. That "distinction" goes to the 2004 Banda-Ace earthquake and tsunami which hit Sumatra.

Japanese horse bearing special brand showing it is radioactive



As results of such disaster, *Hibarigahara* became a pool of contaminated mud and debris; and everything other than rescue efforts (in Soma and everywhere else in Fukushima,) had to be put on hold.⁷⁴ Who would even think of participating in a horse festival, however ancient, when people were still mourning the loss of homes, and the death of children, relatives, and horses in what had always been one of the most fascinating areas of the entire Tohoku?⁷⁵

But in the true Japanese *Ganbaré* spirit, the annual festival was celebrated in July 2011, however restricted. The locals decided that, by going ahead with the event, Fukushima would take a gigantic, symbolic step towards healing. With less than one hundred participants, *Soma Nomaoui* that year became a memorial of faith and hope. At the opening ceremonies, direct descendant of the Soma Clan, *Michitane Soma*, addressed the eighty participants,⁷⁶ all dressed in samurai armor, and carrying a black arm-band.

However, soon thereafter, the entire area of *Hibarigahara* and surroundings began to be decontaminated, and laboriously readied for the next event, which was modestly celebrated in 2012.

You can thank—or blame-平 将門 *Taira no Masakado*⁷⁷, the 937 CE reputed founder of the 相馬氏 Soma Clan for the proceedings at *Hibarigara*. He and his councilors started *Soma Nomaoui* as a military exercise—disguised maneuvers, if you please—to annoy the Kyoto government, and to properly prepare for invasion of coveted

⁷⁴ You can catch a glimpse of the area within, and after the disaster in a short but rather gripping video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHwqKwzokc>

⁷⁵ Minami Soma is closer to Sendai, Miyagi-ken, than to any other major center in the Fukushima-ken, hence it shares the indescribable beauty of Miyagi: tall evergreen mountains; flat undulant plains; picture-postcard beaches, and the gentlest people in the world.

⁷⁶ This small contingent was about one-fifth of the regular number of participants over 400.

⁷⁷ Taira no Masakado (?-940) was a man of Imperial lineage, who in the Heian Period rebelled against the central government in Tokyo. His insurrection, based on a very ambitious search for power, lasted only about three years, but vigorously shook the governmental structure of those days. Masakada is considered the First Samurai in the History of Japan. Brinkley, F. *A History of the Japanese People*. New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica. 1915. Pp/253-5

territory.⁷⁸ The exercise, which involves the tutelary deities of three local shrines,⁷⁹ helped not only develop and test military stratagems heavily using cavalry, but also to acquire the horsemanship skills needed for success.⁸⁰ Slowly, since then, the region became one of the top horse raising (and-racing) areas of the country.⁸¹

This area is horse-country par excellence; *everyone* here thinks, raises, breeds, and talks horses, which are used for racing, shows, farming...and when old enough, even for the table.⁸² From their earliest years, the local children learn to handle-and love- horses; in fact, some of the riders in the parade are young children not older than eight; hence, the area is the ideal locale for a festival such as *Soma Noma Oi*.

Here's how the event goes. On the last Saturday of July, the current head of the Soma family visits each of the three tutelary sanctuaries in the *Haramachi* Ward. He greets the Spirits and offers a libation. After the third visit, he issues the order to 'March to the Front,' which is relayed to the mounted warrior dressed in the trappings of the age they intend to evoke. A loud blow on a conch-shell and drumbeats sound the call to action.⁸³ The ceremony is intended to raise the troops' morale. They will be undergoing a couple of busy days when not only morale, but stamina will be tested to the hilt.

A party of about one-hundred samurai leaves for the *battleground* at *Hibarigahara*. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, after a purification ceremony, there will be the 朝日新聞社 *Kacchu Keiba*- armored horse race, in which twelve samurai in full gear compete on a track of about one-thousand meters for various prizes.

Next morning, at 9:30, the Soma force, three separate contingents coming from five adjoining towns, join at marked stages in the route to the battle field, which runs through *Nomaoi Blvd.* in *Haramachi*. The entire area looks like a 時代劇 *jidaigeki* period-drama played within a provincial architecture stage.⁸⁴ According to the Japan National Tourist Organization, which lavishly provided the information on the event, most of the participants dress in centuries-old *classical* war paraphernalia. But, one can easily imagine that wearing *classical* battle gear recently made, is permitted, if it is exquisitely crafted to resemble the centuries' old armor.

You become mesmerized by the display of the rich uniforms, the colorful flags showing the participants' 紋 *mon*- family emblems; the katana; the lances; the

⁷⁸ The legend –history perhaps- goes that Masakado, surnamed Sōma Shōjiro, in his battle maneuvers used the wild horses roaming the plain of *Konegahara*, (Chiba-ken) in lieu of troops, to secure advantages over the enemy. See: Papinot, E. *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle.1972. – Also: Turnbull, Steve: *Samurai and the Sacred*. Oxford: Osprey.2006 pp/186-8

⁷⁹ The three shrines are the Odaka, the Oota and the Nakamura temples of the 妙見菩薩 *Myōken* Buddhist rite. 妙見菩薩 *Myōken* is the Nichiren bodhisattva of the North Star.

⁸⁰ Quite unfortunately, success never came Masakado's way. He was killed on the third year of his revolt.

⁸¹ The entire Tohoku's, Miyagi, Fukushima and Iwate included, was one of the top centers for raising pure-bred horses, only a little over than fifty years ago. While Hokkaido is now the center of activity, the Tohoku follows it in importance. *The Japan Bloodhorse Breeders' Association*. (2010)

⁸² Horse-sashimi is a local, rather expensive delicacy...perhaps 'communion' with a most beloved figure in tradition; lore and real life.

⁸³ In fact, two conch-shells sound one after the other, blend in an awesome two-note call, and end in single high note.

⁸⁴ Many of the town's buildings clearly show the efforts of their rebuilders to repair and improve them.

creativeness of the ornate helmets, and the elegant trotting of the well-dressed horses. Each participant and his clan are recognized when the warrior passes front of the center stand in the parade. The mind in reality-suspension is suddenly brought back to now when a child softly calls:

- *Neechan...neeechan...koronda...ano hito...kawaii so.* (Sister, sister!... he fell; that man... poor fellow!)

...as a younger, inept rider on a skittish mount lands on the road in the middle of the procession.

The parade, about 400 mounted samurai and retainers leads to *Hibarigahara*, where again, at 1 pm, at the sound of conch-shells and drums, and a cannonade of fireworks, a free-for-all begins. The participants will be trying to catch one of the red or white sacred flags that insure good luck for at least one year. Twenty fireworks, exploding one at a time, will carry the 神旗争奪戦 *shinki-sodatsusen* sacred flags, and each of the samurai lucky to grab one will race at top speed, to receive the awards for his catch.

The festival closes with the special ceremony known as the 野馬懸, *Nomagake*, held at the grounds of the Odaka Temple. Small groups of samurai, dressed in a white blouse and pants, the *okubito*, will vie to catch, barehanded, one of the wild horses brought in for the ceremony. When the *okubito* finally makes contact with the galloping horse, he grabs at his neck with both hands, and holds on to it, as if for dear life. Pony gives in, and *okubito* brings him at the temple's front to be decorated with a 四手 *shide*, a talisman of folded white paper, which marks him as the property of the temple.



(Minami Soma crest)

Many if not all of the participants have made *Soma Nomaoi* the soul-connection to their own hometown, by totally investing themselves in the event. Those whose horses were lost in the 2011 disaster found friends willing to lend them a mount for their participation in the event. Though still modest because of the lingering fears, *Soma Nomaoi* is the right vehicle to inspire the current youth about an area that vigorously refuses to die...Or as some of them say: "It's just the tradition." Fukushima's future is still on the weighing scale, and one's guess about the time when the region will breathe again the freedom of unconcerned peace is as good as anyone else's. Until then, *Soma Noma Oi* will remain as the symbol of reconstruction hope.



Many if not all of the participants have made Soma Noma-oi the soul-connection to their own hometown, by totally investing themselves in the event.

In this age of social media abundance, there is an enormous amount of visual information online that will allow you a good view of the entire area of Fukushima, and particularly *Soma Noma-oi*, from shortly after the disaster of March 2011 to the present. The collection includes more than thirty videos of different quality, and the entire program in English for the 2006 celebration. Simply *Google*: Minami Soma; Soma Noma Oi; or Fukushima, and you'll literally spend hours viewing the entire collection. Additionally, if you want the best factual work, try to get Yoju Matsubayashi's 2011 documentary: '*Soma Kanka Daiichibu: Ubawareta Tochi no Kioku*'- Fukushima: Memories of a Lost Landscape, or his more recent opus: '*Matsuri no Uma*' – The Horses of Fukushima.

Next we will deal with the legends about the White Stallion of the late Emperor Hihohito, and reveal further trivia about the horse in Japanese lore. *Mata, nee...*

*Soma Noma Oi- Armored Horse Race
Courtesy of the Japan National Tourism
Organization (JNTO)*



The invisible horse.

According to the *chambara* movies with which NHK often regales us, the horse has always been integral part of the development of Japanese history. A common sight during the 戦国時代 *Sengoku jidai*, (ca. 1467 – c. 1573,) the Warring States' period, the animal almost disappeared from the social scene at the close of the 徳川時代 *Tokugawa jidai* - Tokugawa era, (ca.1868.) When seen, it was mainly carrying rich samurai traveling to Edo; or, perhaps way out in the Tohoku boondocks, helping an aged laborer involved in field work. As we noted before in this series, according to some westerners who visited Japan, or established themselves there after the

country re-opened its doors, the horse *did not exist in Japan*; and those beasts that passed for horses were lanky, ugly and pig-headed oversize ponies, more at home in the Siberian steppe than in urbane Kyoto. Horses-*real horses mind you*, were introduced by the *gaijin*, who used them to deftly negotiate what the natives pretentiously then called 'roads.'

Lady on horseback.

Late nineteenth century visitors to Japan, Isabella L. Bird (1831-1904,) and Harold S. Williams (1898-1987,) both offer in their books very interesting but different perspectives of the equine situation in Japan, at the time of their visits. Bird was an English middle-class matron who, defying the standards of her days became an explorer, writer, photographer, and naturalist. She was the first woman elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Of course, feminine treading upon such a bastion of male chauvinism unleashed a grand-mal seizure among the British male intelligentsia...and for the next twenty years, no other woman was ever considered worthy of a similar honor.

Bird was the daughter of a Yorkshire clergyman, a sharp botanist who, in addition to his perennial health problems, had managed to raise a few blisters among his parishioners with his controversial- read *ethical*- views on labor.⁸⁵ Isabella was also an insatiable reader who, as a result, felt totally constrained by the Yorkshire social impositions on women's status and styles. For Bird, living among the *savage wilds*, was more interesting than embroidering samplers at tea time, or hosting meetings for the Parish's ladies. But she was totally unprepared for a life of adventure: delicate, nervous and insomniac, she also had serious spine problems. Because of her ill health, her doctors recommended travel overseas, a prescription to which she earnestly agreed. In 1854, she took her first dose of medically-recommended travelling. She went on to explore the American wilds, and began recounting her experiences on interesting correspondence, which in time became a well-selling book. The medicine must have been effective, because she continued travelling and writing successfully; she went to Hawaii, where her hosts taught to ride astride.

In 1878, Bird visited Japan, and began recounting her experiences in letters to her sister, blurbs which her lifelong friend John Murray collected and edited for a new book: *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*.⁸⁶ Not infrequently, however, Bird's mail reads like salon claptrap. Some of her remarks sound irritatingly *colonial*, agonizingly so when she rhapsodizes about *the Aino*—Ainu. Much of her travelling in Japan was on horseback,⁸⁷ though, in at least a couple of instances, it happened on the backs of young cows whose patience and tolerance merited a special mention.⁸⁸ Isabella wanted the *savage wilds*, and that she got... splendidly.

⁸⁵ He was adamant against having people work on Sundays.

⁸⁶ New York: Cosimo Classics.2005. See also <http://www.horsetravelbooks.com/bird.htm> and http://www.lrgaf.org/articles/sidesaddles_and_suffragettes.htm

⁸⁷ See, for example Letters IX, p/68; XI, p/85; XIII, p/105, & XXXIX, p/301.

⁸⁸ See Letter XVII, pp/129-31

"Much of her travelling in Japan was on horseback"

Foreign woman riding in Japan in the late 19th century.



The birth of horse-racing.

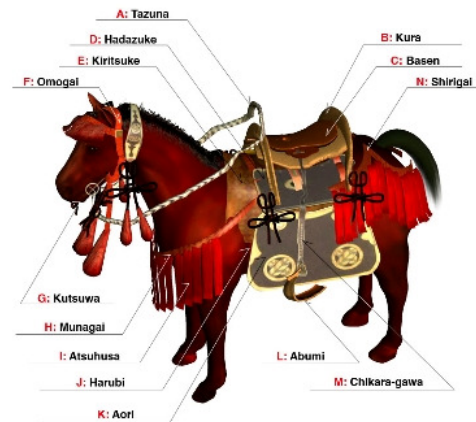
Harold S. Williams, a native Australian who had studied medicine, visited Japan at 21 to improve his knowledge of Japanese. The country so fascinated him that he chose to stay. He then became an inveterate collector of books, manuscripts, pictures, and other materials on the contributions of foreigners to the development of the country as a modern state. His vast holdings of Japan-related material helped him write extensively, and quite accurately, about the nation. Of particular interest was his serial 'Shades of the Past', for the *Mainichi Daily News*, a work which began in 1953 and ended, posthumously in 1987. In 1941, before the outbreak of the Pacific War; he left Japan, enlisted in Australia; distinguished himself there; served later in Africa, the Pacific and Burma; attained the rank of Major; and won the Order of the British Empire. After Japan's surrender, he served with MacArthur's General Headquarters, where his knowledge of the country and of its language and culture proved invaluable to that administration.

In his book *Foreigners in Mikadoland*,⁸⁹ a collection of superb monographs, Williams included one on horse racing, 'Horse Racing in the Old Days.' In it he recounts how many migrants to Japan decided to bring along their own horses, more valuable for them than beds or tables. Not only did horses ease the foreigners' ability to move around, they also conferred on them the prestige reserved for the Japanese military and the nobility. The newcomers quickly tried to demonstrate their own superiority, and that of their mounts, over the Japanese stock. And what better way to show it than by engaging in races on the primitive roads of Meiji Japan. Totally unconcerned about human safety, private property and community peace, the ad-hoc racing sparked off deep antipathy, not just among the 'native', but also among the diplomatic establishment of the culprits, under whose jurisdiction the racers were. Horse-racing, it was reasoned, could be held in more adequate facilities than public roads or cultivated fields; the racers would be happier and safer, and the sport might

⁸⁹ Tokyo: Tuttle. 1963.-140-152.

even attract local fans. In 1862, a makeshift track was created in the swampy area of Yokohama for an event which lasted two days; and horse-racing, as a sport, was now ‘formally’ established in Japan. In 1866, the Yokohama Race Club was formed, and from then on, little by little horse-racing grew steadily all throughout the nation. Currently, it is both a popular sport and a major industry, with more than 21,000 horse races held each year, and a multitude of local associations involved with the sport.⁹⁰

(Names of traditional Japanese saddle, bridle, etc., used before the 19th century introduction of foreign equestrian equipment,)



A lot of Bull.

The Pacific War was in its early months; everybody was certain that in a few more, the mess would be over. After all, didn't we have the most powerful military forces in the world, and, in them such titans as Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey, (1882-1959)? Halsey's slogan: *Hit Hard. Hit Fast. Hit often* was seen everywhere⁹¹ Through his own briny and hard-line words, the marine *Bull* would soon be parading on the streets of Tokyo amount Emperor Hirohito's 'pure-bred White Stallion'--Halsey's own pledge. And what a symbol of defeat would that be! Imagine: one of the most valuable Japanese propaganda tools, the deified Emperor atop his immaculate white mount, would be totally desecrated.⁹² So the Admiral's pledge was used as a strong motivator to 'win the war', and a very effective tool to sell war bonds.


⁹⁰ Source: Japan Racing Association.

⁹¹ Halsey is one of the most controversial military figures of the WWII period. Because of his aggressiveness, the Navy Department created a poster showing him in uniform surrounded by the slogan: 'Hit hard! Hit fast! Hit often!' For a complete biography of Halsey, please see: Barrett Tilman's: William Bull Halsey: Legendary World War II Admiral; originally published in the July/August 2007 issue of *World War II Magazine*.

⁹² Seeing "the despicable enemy" in full military regalia, atop an exquisite white horse--supposedly a full Arabian- was incredibly grating to the American eye. However, the emperor is seen riding a *California-bred stock horse*. www.thelongridersguild.com

Admiral Halsey's Horse ad

(Poster courtesy of Long Riders' Guild Academic Foundation)



LET'S GET THE ADMIRAL HIS HORSE!

Admiral Halsey has his eye on a fine white horse called Shiryaki.
Some time ago, at a press conference, he expressed the hope that one day soon he could ride it.
The day now in Shiryaki's saddle is Japan's Emperor—Hirohito.
He is the ruler of an arrogant, treacherous, and vicious bunch of scoundrels despite as this earth has ever seen.
The kind of emergency shown by Tokyo—who were going to donate ponies from the White House... remember? Well, it's high time we finished this whole business. High time we got the Emperor off his high horse, and gave Admiral Halsey his ride.
The best way for us at home to have a hand in this cleanup is to support the 7th War Loan.
It's the biggest loan yet. It's two loans in one. Last year, by this time, you had been asked twice to buy extra bonds.

Your personal quota is big—bigger than ever before. So big you may feel you can't afford it. But we can afford it—if American men, women, boys, and girls can afford to do.

FIND YOUR QUOTA... AND MAKE IT!		
IF YOUR AVERAGE WEEKLY QUOTA IS (CASH VALUE)	YOUR PERSONAL QUOTA IS (CASH VALUE)	SAVINGS VALUE OF 7TH WAR LOAN BONDS BOUGHT
\$100	\$147.50	\$500
\$100-200	185.00	750
\$200-300	231.25	1,000
\$300-400	277.50	1,250
\$400-500	323.75	1,500
\$500-600	370.00	1,750
\$600-700	416.25	2,000
\$700-800	462.50	2,250
\$800-900	508.75	2,500
\$900-1,000	555.00	2,750
Under \$100	18.75	50

ALL OUT FOR THE MIGHTY 7th WAR LOAN

This is an official U.S. Treasury advertisement—prepared under the auspices of Treasury Department and War Advertising Council.

To make the Admiral's ride more sensational, the Chamber of Commerce in Reno, Nevada, ordered a special saddle heavily decorated with silver. And the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe sewed him a pair of buckskin beaded long gloves, reaching up to the forearm. Because Halsey's pledge had been so strongly touted, the American public wouldn't easily forget it; and everybody expected him to fulfill it soon after Japan's capitulation. But weeks went by; the silver-laden saddle and the decorated gauntlet gloves began to gather dust, and still the admiral was running around in jeeps, in Tokyo, when necessary.

Finally, the glorious day came. Surely, the Admiral rode a horse in Japan; Major General William Chase, commander of the First Cavalry Regiment provided it, one from the 'First Cav's' own stock. Halsey reviewed the Regiment's Honor Guard, and then he followed with a short, rather cautious trot around the regiment's temporary camp, in one of Tokyo's suburbs.⁹³ The totally unplanned event didn't include either the showy saddle or the refined gloves. Reportedly, the Admiral commented: -Please, don't let me alone with this animal

And after the ride, he added grinningly: "I was never so scared in my life,"⁹⁴ a statement as veracious as the Admiral's original brag.

Shortly after the end of the war, Halsey was selected Grand Marshall of the New Year's (1946,) Pasadena Rose Parade. He would be up front in a beautiful car. News stories seem to indicate that a white stallion had been placed near the Grand Marshall's car, and that Halsey assumed that someone had brought the Emperor's White Stallion, for him to ride on the parade and redeem his still pending pledge. The Admiral made a dash for the comfort of a seat in the car, from where he "Grand-marshaled" the event. His behavior was noticed, and variously attributed to common sense, precaution or self-protection. But evil tongues concocted a different

⁹³ New York: The New York Times: September 17, 1945. Courtesy of The Long Riders' Guild Academic Foundation (LRGAF)

⁹⁴ Burlington, NC; The Daily Times News; Mon September 24, 1945; front page. (LRGAF)

motivation and attributed the man's decision to a sudden genetic retrogression from heroic oceanic bovine to common backyard avian. Then, on January, 2, 1946, "the other shoe finally hit the ground:" the American public was courteously, but clearly, informed that the Admiral would ride the Japanese royal mount, only when invited by Emperor Hirohito. Somehow, such invitation was never tendered. As for the gorgeous saddle and the jazzy gauntlets, one can find them securely housed at the United States Naval Academy Museum at Annapolis.⁹⁵

Halsey's unmet pledge became just the departure point for a larger tale of deception of the American public. The whole story, centered on one Joseph R. "Dick" Ryan, an Army Lieutenant during World War II, who claimed to have bought, brought to America, and trained for rodeo shows the Imperial Stallion, is the next topic. Based on the research material owned by Mr. O'Reilly and the Long Riders Guild, it promises to become an interesting surprise.

It's 1945. Despite the incineration of sixty-eight Japanese cities and the atomic annihilation of two more, it looks as if "Bull" Halsey's ride on the Imperial Stallion will be, for the American public, the real proof of our having won the war. For four long years, Halsey's petulant off-the-cuff remark has been deliberately converted into an incessant war mantra.

Now, put yourself in the large shoes of General MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Occupation in Tokyo. Far ahead of Ruth Benedict's theorizing,⁹⁶ and after many dedicated years of service in Asia,⁹⁷ the General knows *his Orient* and its peoples quite well. Although, there's little evidence that Halsey intends to fulfill his original brag,⁹⁸ the American public's urticaria about it has become a hurdle to the general's efforts to win Japan emotionally.⁹⁹

Perhaps remembering Sun Tzu's maxim "who wishes to fight must first count the cost,"¹⁰⁰ the Generalissimo knows that to win the victory, what he least needs is arrogance, or he may find himself involved in a beastly, interminable guerrilla-war. Wouldn't it be better if GHQ made no effort to urge Halsey to parade atop the sacred Imperial Mount?

⁹⁵ LRGAF

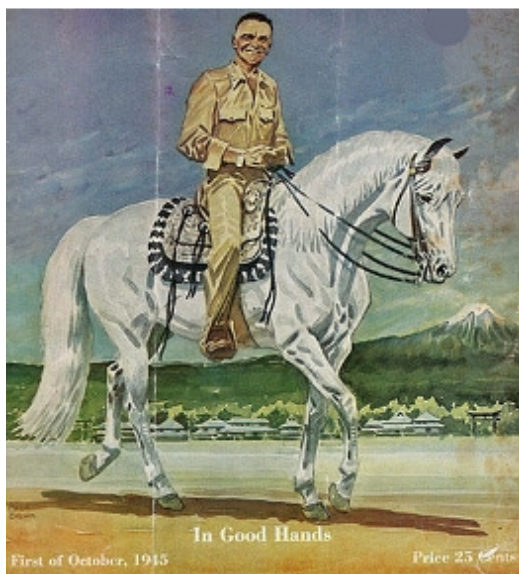
⁹⁶ Without ever having set foot in Japan, in 1946, American Anthropologist Ruth Benedict wrote the very popular book "The Chrysanthemum and The Sword. Patterns of Japanese Culture;" supposedly to help us better understand "the enemy."

⁹⁷ General MacArthur served several years in the Philippines in 1922; then, after his retirement, he ended there again as Military Advisor to the Commonwealth Government of the Philippines, from 1937 to 1941.

⁹⁸ September 8, 1945. – *Los Angeles Times*: 'Museum to get Halsey's Saddle. 'Montrose, Colorado – The fancy saddle presented to Admiral William (Bull) Halsey by the Montrose Lions Club will wind up on a museum wall instead of Emperor Hirohito's white horse. In a message today, the admiral informed the club he can't even ride a horse, and that he plans to give the saddle to the U.S. Naval Museum at Annapolis. (Source: The Long Riders Guild.)

⁹⁹ "it was MacAurthur (sic) who championed keeping the Emperor in place and using the power of the figurehead to facilitate the dismantling of the Japanese Armed Forces and the re-ordering of Japanese society. MacAurthur, (sic) for all his flaws, really did know the Orient and did understand that if we could "capture" the Japanese Imperium we could save ourselves a massive amount of effort in pacifying the country. Society of the Military Horse, First Cav. Tokyo, 1945 (Hirohito's Horse) Comment by Bill Kambic; March 21, 2008. Courtesy: The Long Riders Guild.

¹⁰⁰ <http://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html>



Glorified image of Admiral Bull Halsey supposedly riding the Emperor's white stallion.

But how about the American itch?

Almost providentially, certain Joseph R. "Dick" Ryan, a Lieutenant in the US Cavalry, comes forward and becomes a 'person of interest.' Having already staged several rodeos for American troops stationed overseas, in Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines, he's coming to Tokyo to put on a gigantic show.

Ryan needs good horses for a top display of pride; goes around looking for the best, and... miracle of miracles! in one of the stables of the Japanese Racing Association he finds a beautiful Arabian white stallion 初霜 *Hatsushimo*-First Frost- who, the stable manager tells him, belongs to the Imperial Family.

HIROHITO'S HORSE HANDED OVER.

TOKYO. Dec., 12 (A.A.P.).-The Japanese Racing Association ceremoniously transferred to Lieut. Dick Ryan. U.S. Army, today, a white Arab horse, which it described as Emperor Hirohito's own mount. Some sources challenge whether the horse is the same animal as was frequently pictured carrying the Emperor, but it is agreed that it came from the Royal stables.- If Army regulations relating to the shipment of pets can be overcome, the horse will be exhibited in the United States for charity.

The Sydney Morning Herald.--Thursday, 13 December 1945.¹⁰¹

In the best circus tradition, Lt. Ryan gives the horse—and himself—star billing in the coming rodeo. Over 50,000 people attend the event held at the Meiji Stadium, Tokyo. Ryan appears at the arena mounted on the white stallion; which he walks and gallops for around a half-hour. It is a thrilling moment; the best proof, finally, that the Japanese Emperor is no longer a god. And the rider is a mere Army Lieutenant! Even the newsreels, *British Pathé* included, are here to film the exciting moment.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/17962832>.

¹⁰² [http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675056158_rodeo-show_Meiji-Shrine-stadium_American-Occupation-Forces_GI-ride-horses.--See also: www.britishpathe.com/video/rodeo-tokyo-style/query/208005](http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675056158_rodeo-show_Meiji-Shrine-stadium_American-Occupation-Forces_GI-ride-horses.--See%20also:%20www.britishpathe.com/video/rodeo-tokyo-style/query/208005).

*Lt. Dick Ryan in the 1945 Tokyo Rodeo mounted on Hatsushimo.*¹⁰³



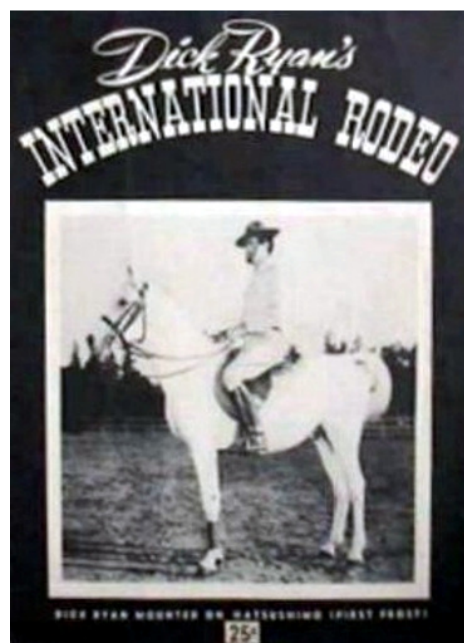
Shortly after the rodeo, Lt. Ryan acquires the horse for 1,000 yen. He reports that the horse first had been offered to General MacArthur who refused the chance to buy it. What could either do with it, anyway? The existing rules of the Agriculture Department forbade returning servicemen to import animals to the United States.

Curiously, the very day Ryan purchases the horse, with the stipulation that it cannot be further re-sold, significant changes in the import rules are announced. Now, Ryan can take home the 'Emperor's stallion,' display it around; show it at Veterans' hospitals; and raise money for charitable purposes. So, he manages to have the horse immigrated to the American soil, and uses it for shows and circuses, always claiming that the animal is *Hirohito's Horse*. Since facts are for historians, Lt. Ryan continues bamboozling the American public with the fiction that he "conquered" the Imperial Mount.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Photo courtesy of LRGAF.

¹⁰⁴ In time, Ryan managed to get into serious legal and economic problems, which forced him to sell the horse

*Programme for Lt. Dick Ryan's Rodeo
and Thrill Circus*



True White.

The above run of events is precisely the fungus from which “urban stories” such as “The Emperor’s Stallion” readily sprout. However, isn’t it also the right stuff to tempt an academician to meticulously analyze it, conduct deep research, and come up with surprisingly different conclusions? Let’s attempt to just start that ball rolling in that direction.

For several years, the emperor’s horse 白雪 *Shirayuki*—White Snow, a saddle bred horse acquired in California; and yes, not even a pure-bred Arabian, had been retired in 1942; it died later of old age. *Hatsushimo*, Ryan’s acquisition, had a gelded brother; 初雪 *Hatsuyuki*, the horse the Emperor preferred because of his gentle temper. Moreover, *Hatsushimo* wasn’t even owned by the Emperor.¹⁰⁵

On Tuesday, June 8, 1948, the Long Beach Press Telegram published, on page 9, the following dispatch from the Associated Press:

Horse Shown as Hirohito’s Wasn’t

Tokyo. June 8(AP) The Imperial Household said today it had received no offer from Fort Wayne, Ind, (sic) to purchase emperor Hirohito’s horse Hatsuyuki (First Snow). In fact, the imperial household said, the white horse Hatsushimo (First Frost) which was exhibited in the U.S. as the emperor’s former mount never belonged to him at all.--First Frost was put to death last week because of cancer. His owners Paul Brook and Charles McKinley said they had cabled an offer for First Snow. First Frost was taken to the U.S. by Lt. Dick Ryan and sold to the Ft. Wayne men.--The Imperial household said First Frost had been owned by Prince Ri, whose family was given royal Japanese status when Korea was taken over by Japan.

¹⁰⁵ *Hatsuyuki* died in 1957, at age 23, and was immortalized as a ‘Sacred Mount’ at Ise, the Sanctuary of the Imperial House. <http://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?f=65&t=174779>

Ryan Who?

Without his military serial number, it's very difficult to trace how or when Ryan entered the Army, and in what capacity he served. Apparently, all that can be found about him is an item in an obscure newspaper.¹⁰⁶ Apparently too, once in America, he became a circus rider, a Hollywood "double" and stunt man, and touted himself as a rodeo expert. He ended his overseas rounds with that major show in Tokyo, on Armistice Day, 1945.

Ryan's story about miraculously having found and cheaply bought the Imperial Stallion seems now very difficult to believe. By the farthest stretch of the imagination, one cannot conceive how just a few months after the painful defeat, any Japanese, woman or man, would be so ready to betray their Emperor as the manager of the royal stables apparently did. The emperor, the strongest symbol in the entire Japanese culture was also seen as he who had saved the country from annihilation.

Who guided Ryan to the prize stallion? How did Lt. Ryan, whose main interest seemed the rodeo, manage to come in contact with the Japanese *Racing* Association (emphasis mine); go to an isolated stable where he found his sacred treasure and its *Judas* willing to sell it at such a convenient time, before the grand rodeo in Tokyo? Who, in those times of hunger and need would sell a treasure like an Imperial Mount for miserly 1,000 yen to this insignificant person?¹⁰⁷ The whole story reads as a clever sham trying to demonstrate that Ryan was to ride the very stallion "Bull" Halsey had pledged to parade through Tokyo. That the events happened right around when Adm. Halsey had reneged on his pledge makes the issue 'curioser.' But then, again, it would save face all around: the Allied Supreme Command's; the admiral's; and the Japanese government's, as events had been left to happen without a word, but perhaps with a lot of connivance from everyone of them.

CuChullaine O'Reilly, Founder of the Long Riders' Guild, and a great source for the research used in this paper offers the following, and tempting thought

*"It was a brilliant deception, and I believe it is an example of how MacArthur and the Japanese Government worked quietly to resolve (that) embarrassing situation."*¹⁰⁸

What about Ryan, the hero of the glorious 1945 Tokyo rodeo? Apparently he wasn't able to handle his lucky strike too well; he frequently got into economic and legal problems and ended up selling the horse, perhaps to survive. By 1947, his name had disappeared from the papers. In the early 1950s, however, one *Dick Ryan* was found as a groom to a renowned California thoroughbred at Hollywood Park. Ideally

¹⁰⁶ **Tipton Tribune Indiana 1970:** "When 16, Ryan left Canada on horseback (1937). He dreamed of going into the great horse country of America, Texas. With \$17 in his pocket he rode and worked his way southward across the great plains to Texas. When he arrived in San Angelo, Texas months later he was greatly disillusioned. Many of the children there had never seen a horse. There were very few horses in the area at that time. He managed a chance to join a travelling rodeo and the first day as a bronc (*sic*) rider, he broke two ribs. In 1938 he continued his journey winding up in San Diego after a 4,400 mile trip which took him seven months, weeks and three days, (*sic*)".

¹⁰⁷ The value of the dollar at that time was \$.00982 hence, multiplied 1000 times, it equals =\$9.82

¹⁰⁸ . The Long Rider's Guild Academic Foundation has a plethora of materials related to the Emperor's Horse affair, available for in-depth academic research. Please contact: <http://www.lrgaf.org/>.

that would have been the best place for him to end up...in more ways than one. Anybody ready to begin digging deeply into the issue? It could make a formidable book.

Now, here's "the smoking gun:



Lt Russell Pierson (1st Cavalry) riding Emperor Hirohito's horse, in the Imperial Palace Gardens, to exercise it. The year is 1946.¹⁰⁹

The Mysterious Medal

"About ten years ago," Dick La Tondre tells me, "I attended a large military swap meet in San Jose, and wandered through the crowded aisles. As I was to ready to leave, I saw a vendor with a cluttered table on which was a cigar box marked: **Everything 50¢**. Always looking for a bargain, I saw an old medal, minus the ribbon suspension; picked it to examine it, and noticed in the back some Japanese characters, and "14,000 KM." in large numerals. I turned the medal over and saw a tired old man astride an exhausted horse, atop a high mountain pass or canyon. Intrigued, I asked the seller for information, but he knew nothing. I just got the medal and placed it in my pocket.

A few years later, at the Stanford University's Hoover Institution, I was cataloging and photographing, for the *Orders and Medals Society of America*, one of the largest Chinese medal collections in the U.S. I thought about my strange medal, and decided to take it with me and ask one of the docents for assistance. After inspecting it, he said that it was a commemorative Japanese medal, honoring Baron Fukushima's "Longest Journey" over a century ago. No one appeared to have any further information on that man; so I began my research, and thus the book was born."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ See: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wolfec/3459972895/--LRGAF> (<http://www.lrgaf.org/>.) has done every possible effort to track Lt. Pierson's son without any luck.

¹¹⁰ Verbatim from Mr. La Tondre to the author.

Japanese Medal created in 1893 to honour Baron Fukushima's ride from Berlin to Tokyo.



The book, Richard 'Dick' La Tondre's "The Golden Kite,"¹¹¹ chronicles one of the greatest adventures of the 19th Century: Major 福島 安正 *Fukushima Yasumasa's*¹¹² horse trek, from Berlin, Germany to Vladivostok, Siberia -14,000 kilometers long, and seventeen tormenting months.

Titan on horseback.

'Who in his sane mind?' you might ask... As the Meiji era¹¹³ dawned, an astonishing breed of men and women emerged ready to show the world their pride in being Japanese.¹¹⁴ Yasumasa Fukushima was an outstanding example of such magnificent cohort, which through learning, resolve and performance, aimed to surpass that world their country had eschewed for centuries.

¹¹¹ Santa Clara, CA. Chez de Press.2010, the MAJOR information source for this piece. *The Golden Kite* is also the name of the highest ever Imperial award. The design depicts a golden kite, the divine messenger which helped the first Emperor Jimmu win his battles. It was an 8-point star with 32 red rays, under which appeared two crossed ancient samurai shields in blue enamel, and two crossed swords with silver hilts, and with the blades enameled yellow. There was also a halberd in green; and red banners showing the 三つ巴 *mitsu tomoe* Shinto sign, perhaps representing Man, Earth and Sky. Maj. Fukushima was awarded it after the Sino-Japanese War. The award's reverse was plain. The exquisite badge was banned by MacArthur in 1947.

¹¹² Japanese order: family name preceding his own.

¹¹³ In the Meiji Era (1868 to 1912) Japan performed the most astonishing socio-cultural and political jump any nation has ever taken from feudalism to "civilization."

¹¹⁴ Motoyama, Yukihiro. *Proliferating Talent*. (J.S.A.Elisonas & Richard Rubinger, editors.) Honolulu: University of Hawaii.1997.Ch.8, 'Thought and Education in the Late Meiji Era.' pp/354-98

Fukushima was born in 1853, at Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture,¹¹⁵ the child of a samurai family. He began his military career by attending 講武所 *Kōbusho*, the Shogunate's military school for 旗本 *hatamoto*—*banner-men* to the local lords. After the Shogunate fell, Yasumasa began studying foreign languages, and mastered several, to obtain a position in the Judicial Department of the new Imperial Government. Because of his brilliance as translator, he was transferred as a clerk to the Army General Staff, where he concentrated on geography.¹¹⁶ In 1876, after several fast promotions, he was sent to the United States as Inspector of Military Affairs. In 1878, Prince Aritomo Yamagata, then Chief of the Army General Staff, chose him as Chief Intelligence Officer; ordered him to learn Chinese, and sent him to reconnoiter North China and Inner Mongolia. Fukushima would help determine the probable route which Russia, the country Japan considered its most serious threat, already might follow to conquer Mongolia, Manchuria and possibly Korea.¹¹⁷ In 1882, Fukushima went to Peking as Military Attaché, and served there until 1886; then after a six-month tour of India in 1887, he joined the Japanese Legation in Berlin as Military Attaché; he was now a Major.¹¹⁸



Portrait of Yasumasa Fukushima taken in the Russian capital before his departure to Siberia

福島安正 シベリア横断出発当時の記念写真

¹¹⁵ Then *Shinano* Province

¹¹⁶ "GEN. BARON FUKUSHIMA DIES." *The New York Times*. Feb. 21, 1919

¹¹⁷ The area was also coveted by several Japanese expansionist politicians.

¹¹⁸ Boyd, James. *The Life of Fukushima Yasumasa*. Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, AU. Paper presented at the Australian Historical Association Conference, Perth, July 2010

Under Frederick the Great, in the 18th century, Prussia had leaped in just a few years from agrarian nation to industrial-military power.¹¹⁹ Its relations with Russia - constantly under the Japanese microscope- appeared then quite chummy. Hence, Berlin was the ideal place for someone willing to sharpen his knowledge about Russia's and Western Europe's military and economic development. During his 5-year service, Major Fukushima gathered a large group of trusted friends and valuable acquaintances who helped his splendid mind grasp the extent of the European political inquietude. But, to design for his Emperor the best geopolitical and cultural scenario, about where the impending power-game might be played, he needed first-hand information. So, instead of returning home in the comfortable berth of a luxury vessel, he would "walk the walk." His superiors in Tokyo were delighted, and totally supported his decision. In 1891, the telegraphic lines between Europe and the island kept quite busy for the entire year while the Major and his superiors were planning his trip.¹²⁰

The idea of the trek enthused Fukushima's colleagues. What a 頑張れ *ganbare!* test;¹²¹ and who better than him to take it! ¹²²Even Kaiser Wilhelm II, became interested; and about a month before his departure, the monarch trying to figure Fukushima's intentions, awarded him the *Order of the Red Eagle, Third Class*. Then, on February 11, 1892, 紀元節, Japan's *National Foundation Day*,¹²³ the Major began his harrowing epic.

単騎遠征 Tanki ensei –Lone horseman's expedition. ¹²⁴

Win or lose

Live or die

Both depend on God

If my fate and luck are poor

*My body will be found in the field.*¹²⁵

With this simple poem, Major Fukushima started the first leg of his long ride, which would take him to Poland, then brutally 'partitioned'- occupied that is- by Russia. Because he had already developed quite a number of valuable contacts among

¹¹⁹ After its defeat of the French Army in 1870, Prussia became the ideal military model to follow. See: Scherer, James A.B., *YOUNG JAPAN*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.1905.pp 270-83.

¹²⁰ He planned the trip meticulously with detailed maps; instruments; letters of introduction; and a chain of potential human and logistical support, all which proved invaluable.

¹²¹ Also *Gambare!* Go for it!

¹²² Dr. Scherer's previous citation may add much understanding to the formation and character development of the youth selected to serve in the Japanese military.

¹²³ From 1872 to 1948, the day was known as *Kigen-setsu*-literally "era-ceremony". It commemorated the date when *Jimmu Tenno*, the first emperor of Japan, according to the *Nihon Shoki*, began his reign, in 660 BCE. On that day, also, in 1887, Emperor Meiji promulgated the country's first National Constitution. See Herbert, Jean. *SHINTO: The Fountainhead of Japan*. New York: Stein and Day. 1967.

¹²⁴ *Tanki ensei* is the title Baron Fukushima chose to document his journey. See: Ewa Palasz-Rutkowska: Major Fukushima Yasumasa and His Influence on the Japanese Perception of Poland at the Turn of the Century. *The Japanese and Europe: Images and Perceptions*. Bert,Edstrom, editor. Richmond Surrey: JAPAN LIBRARY.2000. pp125-33.

¹²⁵ La Tondre. "The Golden Kite." p/14.

Polish rebels opposing Russia's guzzling,¹²⁶ he was assured of an effective logistical and intelligence network. There are speculations that all through his service he had been meeting secretly with Russian revolutionaries and Polish patriots, from whom he obtained invaluable information.

As his traveling companion, he chose a beautiful English horse he purchased from a top riding Academy in Berlin, and named it 凱旋 *Gaisen* Triumphant Return.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, *Gaisen* was too urbane for the coming odyssey, in which the initial daily travel goal of fifty kilometers did quickly increase to 77. On the evening of February 24, 1892, Maj. Fukushima reached Warsaw, where he found accommodations that made that leg of the adventure more tolerable. Upon arrival to St .Petersburg on March 30, he received an invitation from Tsar Nicholas I for an interview. Upon advice of the local functionaries, he carried his voluminous papers expecting a tough grilling by the Russian autocrat; after all, by now, the Russian authorities knew, quite well, that the Major's intent was military reconnaissance. However the gist of the conversation with H.I.M. was: "What does it take to learn a foreign language?" Later that evening he attended a banquet in his honor.



*Fukushima and Gaisen
greeted by Hussars at
Kutno Poland*

Changing mounts in mid-trip.

Maj. Fukushima reached Moscow on April 24, and spent there a couple of weeks, to give *Gaisen* a well-deserved rest, improve his stock of provisions, and report to Tokyo. But the horse had developed serious symptoms, which projected its inability to keep going. On May 11, upon reaching Borodino, *Gaisen* could no longer function. Broken hearted, the Major left his beloved horse in charge of the Borodino Police Captain, and returned by train to Moscow, to get another mount, which he named *Ural*. He now had to train *Ural*; retool *Gaisen's* saddle to fit his new companion's anatomy; and prepare him for the long ride

On August 19, after speeding through a cholera infested region, he reached Presneya, where, after over 3,000 km. *Ural*, no longer could stand the trip. So the Major left him with the local chieftain, and purchased two new horses, one to ride

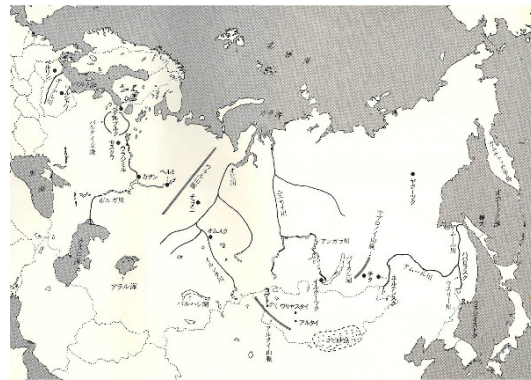
¹²⁶ Since 1772, when the First Partition took place, Russia had made every effort to eradicate Poland as an independent political/cultural unit. It was not until after World War I that Poland attained independence.

¹²⁷ The Major told the European press that he had been inspired by Colonel Frederick Burnaby, a legendary British officer, who in the 1870's twice rode all over Central Asia. Source: *Long Riders' Guild*.

and the other to carry his baggage. In September 17 he made it to Altai, where he got two more horses for riding: *Altai*, and *Xing An*; the previously acquired animals would be used as pack carriers. He also hired two guides to help him tackle the unpredictable weather and terrain of the Altai range, for his crossing into Mongolia. Since none of the guides spoke Russian, he taught them Japanese. And as he had anticipated, weather, land, health, food, water and culture, all became enormous problems for him to overcome.

On November 12, he reached Ulan Bator, a major Mongolian population center, from which he sent a report to his superiors and a letter to his wife Teiko. Painfully, but thoroughly, he reconnoitered and mapped the terrain and its infrastructures, and analyzed the local military conditions. On December 8, he reached the cultural and financial center of Siberia, the City of Irkutsk. The official of the bridge over the Angara River bordering the city recommended him a certain inn; he also made Fukushima realize that much information about his trip had already preceded him. He spent a lot of time reconnoitering the area, crucial in the plans of the entire Trans-Siberian railroad. Then, one day upon returning to his room in the recommended inn, he realized that Russian Intelligence agents had thoroughly “reconnoitered” his own luggage.

19th century Japanese map of Fukushima's route from Berlin to Tokyo



Although quite challenging, up to this point the trip had been rather tolerable; except for the loss of his beloved horses, some straying, and annoying digestive problems. On a regular map, a direct route from Berlin to Ulan Bator would measure some 7770 kilometers; but since the major had altered his initial route a few of times, or even gotten lost, his own route was much longer.

“Have a pleasant trip!”

The unknown paths, which frequently led to nowhere, helped the Major collect very valuable information, but those useless miles, too, helped make the going really harrowing.¹²⁸ He crossed into Siberia in the winter of 1892, and found it an endless, dismal sheet of ice, dotted here and there with filthy accommodations.

¹²⁸ He had been following a route which paralleled the Trans-Siberian railroad, then under construction.

*Japanese Long Rider Yasumasa
Fukushima crossed into Siberia in the
winter of 1892, and found it an endless,
dismal sheet of ice,*



New Year's Eve; ¹²⁹ midday; he finally reached Ulan Ude, where all he could see was the snow's blinding glare. He dismounted with his mind broiling with pining and nostalgia. The child his wife was carrying when he left for Berlin was already six; his family must be burning incense for his safety, now. Tonight, at midnight, they'd be slurping the traditional 策蕎麦 *zaru soba*, while counting the 108 rings from the temple's bell. ¹³⁰

And he? Here, at the flawlessly named "Siberia Inn," with a fantastic headache, the result of the carbon monoxide he had inhaled from the inns' improper heating systems. At least he was warm.

He fell in bed exhausted ...and slept for an entire day.

Mishaps in mid-nowhere.

On January 16, 1893, he reached Chita 'city': no agriculture; no industry; no banks; just land, land...frozen land. He called on the local Military Commander.

-For heaven's sakes...!

It was the same officer he had met at St. Petersburg, at the Tsar's reception. They embraced as trusted old friends.

¹²⁹ According to the Western calendar.

¹³⁰ At New Year, people eat a bowl of *Zaru soba*- buckwheat noodles- to prevent misfortune and keep families together. At midnight, Buddhist priests strike their temple bells 108 times- 策蕎麦 *joyanokane*-to atone for the 108 human follies, and attain rebirth. See: *Japan, an Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Tokyo: Kodansha. 1993. Vol 1.

Badly-limping Altai needed replacing; so the Commander asked his assistant to round up forty horses, and bring them for his own inspection; he selected six, and asked the Major to try each one. Finally, both agreed on a ten-year old white stallion, the tenth of the Major's mounts; they named it *Ussri*.¹³¹ Altai would remain at Chita.

As the Major and his guide readied their departure, the entire pack began braying incessantly, begging for *Altai*. Major Fukushima had no heart to break the tight bond the animals had formed.

- *O.K, tag along, Altai; after you heal, I'll use you again.*

On February 6, Maj. Fukushima arrived at *Gorvichia*, where the entire population¹³² was involved in a raucous drinking party. Not a drinker himself, the major remained circumspect.

- *A Japushka!* screeched a young drunkard, *like those that almost killed our Crown Prince! Welcome him? Nyet...Get him!*¹³³ With everybody agitated; the Major feared for his life.

Fortunately, the local Christian chaplain was also attending the party, and quickly intervened. Immediately, and despite the -40°C degree temperature, Fukushima and his guide fled towards the next stop, 300 kilometers away. Their *road* was the river bed, frozen more than one-meter deep. "Water holes" had been dug about every 20 kilometers;¹³⁴ and the Major and his guide chose that distance as their daily goal. Fukushima often dismounted to clear the accumulated ice from the horses' faces and gently rub their legs, which further slowed their pace.

A Day to Remember.¹³⁵

February 11: *National Foundation Day* again, and first anniversary of the trip. At early sundown, the Major stops to salute the Emperor; as he starts his third *Banzai!*, a wolf's howl rips the twilight hush. *Ussri* stampedes; the major tries to control it, but the horse lurches and forces him to slide halfway into the saddle. The saddle-belt slips, and with his left boot still inside the stirrup, the Major falls sideways, hanging "like a limp puppet." As he's being dragged over the frozen ground, his head strikes a jagged ice block; blinded by the blood from the resulting gash, he sinks into unconsciousness. The guide, way ahead, is finally able to grab and control *Ussri*; Dusk is fast waning; the guide meanders all over the wasteland searching for the Major; at last he finds him:... almost a frozen corpse.

Fortunately, the guide soon discovers a nomad's house, where after a long, anxious period, and under the din of excited voices around him, the Major opens his eyes.

¹³¹ *Ussri*: The Ussuri river.

¹³² Twelve thousand people.

¹³³ In 1891, Tsuda Sanzo, one of the Japanese guards escorting the Crown Prince Nicholas of Russia nearly killed him. As it happened in Otsu, near Lake Biwa, the event is called the *Otsu incident*. The prince survived, but he ended up with a nasty 9-inch long scar on his forehead.

¹³⁴ These were 1x5-meter deeply carved holes that allowed the local people to draw water for themselves and their animals.

¹³⁵ Condensed from pp/ 139-45 of "The Golden Kite" with the author's permission.

His cap and the collar of his tunic are soaked with blood; half-awake and panicky, he mutters:

-... *a doctor.*

- *A what?* Someone retorts.

Perhaps that nurse who lives eight kilometers away might help. But it takes an eternity to bring her. She inspects the nasty, deep wound, and after thoroughly cleaning and bandaging it, she sounds off:

-*No critical area has been affected; there is no major reason to worry.*

After a five-day rest, and with the wound still bleeding, the Major resumes the trip. He's fuming about losing six precious days, and the next stop being 620 km. away; however, he thanks the nomad profusely and leaves him a good gratuity.

-*You are my savior, sir,* he says graciously, *I thank you... immensely.*

Manchurian Murderous Meanderings.

Though sparsely populated, the next area the Major visited consisted of six segments, each equipped with a port, a village, inns, schools, and, best of all, mail and telegraph offices. On February 18, near *Ignashino* village, the Major, stopped to have a nurse clean and bandage the still oozing wound. On March 6, he finally reached *Blagoveschensk*, where he would spend ten days readying his coming entry into Manchuria. On March 11, he learnt he'd been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. On March 18, he left town, amidst the full honors that the local Commander rendered him. A military escort graciously accompanied him all the way to the Manchurian border. Though well aware of the Colonel's goal, his Russian hosts always treated him amiably. He would always remember Russia and her people fondly.

On March 20' Fukushima crossed into Manchuria. In his reports, he describes the region as one where inefficiency; greed; cruelty; banditry, and the local lords' arrogance have deeply cheapened life. He especially abhorred the people's constant use of opium, which he considered one of the most vexing and destructive burdens on the Chinese population.

Modern Google map shows route from Berlin to Tokyo, via Siberia.



But, was that all he experienced? Let's dig a little deeper.

From a gigantic chunk of slimy ice, the new Colonel slid into a verdant sea, where sometimes grass grew so tall that it felt like riding inside a well-supplied stream. On April 10, as he reached *Wulan Nuerh*, his faithful new guide directed his attention to the east, where an immense flock of white cranes¹³⁶ was feeding. As they approached it, the flock slowly rose in flight giving him the most spectacular sight of his entire trip. Tears of nostalgia flooded his eyes...if he could only fly to Japan like them!

Barely two months after his head-injury, he noticed a swelling under his right ear accompanied by generalized malaise, pain, high fever and blurring vision. On April 19, upon reaching his inn at *Hofu Hao Chung*, he fell from Altai and passed out; his temperature was 103°C. A doctor saw him and diagnosed the illness as *You Hou*.¹³⁷ With the weather at its worst, alternating rain and snow storms, he confined himself into one miserable, leaky room of the inn; his symptoms persisted for days, leaving him extremely weak. One morning he noticed his horses outside, unprotected from the weather. Livid at the carelessness of the innkeeper, he ordered a servant to immediately house and feed his animals; then, exhausted, he fell in bed again. After twelve days, the weather changed, and he decided to continue traveling.

On May 25 he reached *Ninguta*, where he was warmly received, but also warned that he was in "bandit territory." On the 27th, *Ninguta*'s vice-governor ordered a six-man military escort to take him to his next destination. At the end of a long trip, he gratefully offered compensation to the escort, but the commanding lieutenant, *Lou K'ou*, refused it saying:

-Accompanying you, sir, is the highest honor one could get.

Deeply touched, Fukushima offered the officer his personal watch.

-I'll treasure this forever!

On June 3, he arrived at *Hunchun*, China, a strategic spot bordering Russia and (North) Korea. The vice-governor, hosted him splendidly, and Col. Fukushima left greatly inspired by the honors received. On the 5th he arrived at the border with Russia, where a military party was awaiting him, and welcomed him enthusiastically.

As he crossed the border, Col Fukushima yelled at the top of his voice:

-Farewell to Manchuria; the land, its people... and particularly to those living on horseback.

On June 15 he reached Vladivostok, where after three days, he embarked for Japan. His odyssey had taken 488 days.

¹³⁶In Japanese folklore, 鶴 *Tsuru*, the crane is often associated with the *Seven Gods of Fortune*; it represents longevity; beauty; and good fortune, and is a **must** symbol on the bride's wedding kimono. See: Yamaguchi, S.K. *We Japanese*. Hakone: Yamagata Press. 1950.

¹³⁷ - *You Hou*: perhaps *qi gong deviation*.

Shortly after his arrival, Emperor Meiji awarded Fukushima the *Third Class Order of the Sacred Treasure*; and later invited him back several times to review the trip. At the Emperor's request, he donated his three horses to *Ueno Zoo*, in Tokyo, where they became a very popular attraction.



Fukushima and his horses - Ussri - Altai - Hsing An at the Emperor's palace

Months later, after further studies in the Imperial Army Academy, he went to Egypt; Persia; Arabia; Siam and Turkestan, and was later promoted for his service in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95.) He distinguished himself in the 'Boxer Rebellion'.¹³⁸

In 1902, he represented Japan at the coronation of English King, Edward VII; was involved in the secret negotiations for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance; and made *Knight Commander, Order of the Bath*. For his services in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905,) he was again decorated. He was promoted to Major General in 1906;¹³⁹ and elevated to 男爵 *danshaku*- Baron, in 1907.

From 1912 to 1914, he became Governor General of the Kwantung Leased Territory; and in 1914, he was promoted to full General. He died at 67, much too early for all his admirers, and was buried in the Aoyama Cemetery in Tokyo. By then he had accumulated over twenty-five national and international medals and awards, and earned the unofficial title of "Father of the Japanese Military Intelligence Service". Yet, despite all his priceless services to his own and other countries, the Baron's presence seems to have been laundered out of history.¹⁴⁰ However, *Matsumoto's City Museum*, in his native Nagano has a section displaying mementos of his career.

Thanks!

My deepest gratitude for the enormous help in preparing this article goes to two sources, both incredibly rich in information. The stories about Isabella Bird and William Halsey came from two interesting books recommended by Dr. Robert Morton, President Emeritus of the Asiatic Society. His comments and suggestions for this article, heretofore, have greatly enriched it, particularly in the area of readability.

¹³⁸ Harrell, Paula S. *Asia for the Asians*. Portland, ME: MerwinAsia.(sic) 2012. p/186.

¹³⁹ *The Japan Weekly Mail*. Jul. 14/1906.

¹⁴⁰ Perhaps the decision to underrate the Baron's historical importance was taken during the Occupation years, 1945-52. Even the distinguished Kodansha Encyclopedia, previously mentioned, gives the Baron a mere 11 lines

The story about U S Admiral William ‘Bull’ Halsey comes from the trove of historical materials owned by author-explorer-long rider CuChullaine O’Reilly, Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society; and the Explorers’ Club; and Founder of the Long Riders’ Guild.¹⁴¹ Mr. O’Reilly helped by providing excellent suggestions, ample permission to quote, and careful guidance through his vast collection of historical materials on long-riding. Almost by hand, he led me to explore the deepest recesses of Adm. Halsey’s bluff and its consequences.

My immense gratitude also goes to to Dick La Tondre and to James Boyd, Lecturer at Murdoch University, Australia, for their great help. Any and all mistakes are exclusively my personal goofs.

About the Author

*Ed Moreno, (97), has been an ardent Japanophile since his early teens. Except for his 9-years in the US Army as a Psychiatric Technician, Ed has spent his entire life in broadcasting; his last assignment, before retirement was as an executive officer at KCET, the leading Public TV station in the West, with which he served for 32 years. His interest in Japan began during the early Showa period (1926-1981,) when he became infatuated with the Japanese cultural artefacts, especially chiyogami art paper and incense. At age 30, he served for 3 years in Japan, with the US Army, and married Ms. Reiko Hiram, a lovely Japanese young woman, the oldest daughter of a former Japanese executive in the Meiji (Confectionery) Company. She became his mentor on Japanese arts and crafts. Exasperated by Ruth Benedict’s work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, he decided to start writing small pieces on his own Japanese realities. He began a monthly column for the West Covina East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center, and has ‘kept at it’ for over fifteen years. His work has been also published by the Tokyo and Daruma independent magazines. His current venues include www.discovernikkei.org the online site of the Japanese- American National Museum, and Transactions, the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Tokyo, the prestigious, earliest academic journal of Japan.*



In 2014, a Year of the Horse, (according to Japanese lore,) he decided to explore the role of the horse in Japanese culture. In his search for data, he sought the invaluable help of the Long Riders Guild, particularly for the sections on the gallant adventurer Baron Fukushima, and on the deceiving US Cavalry Lt. Joseph R. ‘Dick’ Ryan, who tried to bamboozle America with his story about Emperor Hirohito’s horse.

*After reading *Khyber Knights*, Ed created a piece of origami art to commemorate Shavon (left), the palomino mare who features in that book.*

¹⁴¹ <http://www.lrgaf.org/> The International Association of Equestrian Explorers.