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The Key Attribute of *Shinme*

Sacred Horses Dedicated to Ise Jingū since 1865

This paper examines the attribute of “maleness” found in the sacred horses dedicated to Ise Jingū since 1865. Called *shinme*, horses kept at the Shinto shrine (*jinja*) are signified as mounts for the kami. Among the Japanese it is an ancient custom to offer horses to kami in return for asking blessings that their wishes come true. Previous studies highlight the whiteness of the horse. However, by analyzing records of *shinme* kept in Jingū I prove that maleness takes precedence over whiteness. I suggest that the concept of *tane* (seeds) informs the choice of male horses as *shinme* because the Shinto rituals strongly relate to Japanese agricultural traditions. As such, *shinme* may signify the embodiment of vigor. In light of the long-standing relationship between Shinto rituals and horses, I contend we should examine the underlying significance of horses in the Shinto tradition.

KEYWORDS: Horse—Jingū—*jinja* (Shinto shrines)—kami (deities)—*shinme* (sacred horses)—*tane* (seeds)

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IN JAPAN TODAY, horses are rarely seen. If you want to see a horse, you have to go to a zoo or a racetrack. Horse riding is not a popular sport. However, it is a different matter at *jinja* 神社 (Shinto shrines). There you often encounter horses. Most are not living animals but rather images of horses on wooden votive tablets that hang in *jinja*. The votive tablets are called *ema* 絵馬, meaning “a picture horse.” This is an ancient custom among the Japanese to offer horses to kami (deities) in order to ask that their wishes come true. There are about eighty thousand *jinja* in Japan and many of them provide *ema* for worshippers to offer to kami. People write their wishes on the back of *ema* which now include images other than horses. Wishes seem more personal these days, but in older days when national matters were a concern, devotees made offerings of living horses. The custom of horse dedication dates back 1,300 years. Back in the seventh century, there was a practice of dedicating a black horse when asking for rain and a white horse when praying for the end of rain to certain *jinja* housing kami believed to control water (SATŌ 1969).

The established explanation for the practice of dedicating horses to *jinja* is that the horses provide “mounts for kami” (SATŌ 1969). This explanation is understandable in relation to the speed and power of horses; because horses run very fast they serve as the driving force of kami. The traditional view of why horses are dedicated to *jinja* is best summarized in a paper by Nakamura Naokatsu. Observing that horses serve as mounts for kami, he writes, “cows are too slow, dogs are too small, deers or wild boars are useless. The best for a ride is a horse” (NAKAMURA 1932). While his view is correct that horses are the animals most suited for riding, I believe there are deeper meanings of the sacred horses presented to kami. To consider this question, I examine the actual record of the sacred horses presented to Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮 to determine the characteristics of the horses.

The sacred horses kept at *jinja* are called *shinme* 神馬 (kami’s horse). Some *jinja* keep a living horse or a horse sculpture representing the kami’s mount. For example, Kamigamo Jinja 上賀茂神社 keeps a white horse as their *shinme* for the ritual of purification at the beginning of a new year. Also, Fushimi Inari Taisha 伏見稲荷大社, which represents the Inari faith, has a white horse sculpture decorated with special ornaments of gold, silver, and jewels. At Shimogamo Jinja 下鴨神社, the adorned *shinme* is carefully prepared for its most important ceremony to welcome the birth of kami (ARAKI 2009). The *shinme* is treated with utmost care due to its role in the coming of the kami.

There are various Shinto rituals using horses that are most often white. It is suggested that the reason for using white horses is that they accord with Shinto rituals. For example, there was a ritual called *aoumano sechie* 青馬節会 (The Annual Banquet of the White Horse). It used to be held on the seventh of January at the Imperial Court. Yamanaka Hiroshi explains that the ritual was for the purification of the New Year (YAMANAKA 1951). Nakada Takeshi presumes the ritual was created in the eighth century with the old belief of expecting good luck and a long life when seeing white horses (NAKADA 1998). Kojima Yoshiyuki points out that the horses have been used as symbols of purification in Shinto rituals (KOJIMA 1998). He also observes a correlation between the kami of the sun and white horses behind the sacred power upon rice production (KOJIMA 1992, 24–25).

Most of the white horses are classified as *ashige* 芦毛／葦毛 (grey). An *ashige* horse does not have a white coat when born but becomes white through growth. *Ashige* horses have been popular as *shinme* for a long time. For example, they appear in the ancient sacred songs called *kagurauta* 神楽歌. A sacred dance is enacted when a *kagurauta* is sung about feeding a dappled grey horse in a certain Shinto ceremony of the Imperial House (ĪJIMA 1998, 46–47). Here we see the relationship between Shinto tradition and horses. To understand Shinto, we cannot avoid studying *shinme* because they are considered the traditional mounts for kami. In Shinto rituals, a kami's presence is often signified by the appearance of their mounts. *Mikoshi* 神輿 (portable shrines), as well as horses, serve as their conveyances. Previously the trait of whiteness has been highlighted since white horses are often used in Shinto rituals. However, we maintain that another feature is more significant, namely the maleness of the horses.

The Shinme

The classic study of *shinme* is Satō Torao's *Shinme no kenkyū* 神馬の研究 (A Study of *Shinme*) (SATŌ 1969). He found alternate ways to interpret the expression *shinme*. One refers to the horse itself. Such a horse is of a rare color or has other qualities that embody and express divinity. A second meaning refers to its dedication. When a horse is dedicated for the kami's ride it becomes *shinme*. This second interpretation is understood widely when one talks about the practice of keeping *shinme* at *jinja*. Satō pointed out that the practice of horse dedication came from Japan's agricultural past. He observed that "because Japan was an agricultural state, people prayed to the kami of the water, kami of the river, and a dragon king for rain" (SATŌ 1969). In his study he catalogued the horses (and the color of their coats) that were dedicated to the *jinja* in the seventh to ninth centuries when praying for rain. Satō gave us the historical study of *shinme*, but did not give us the religious significance of why *shinme* were found in *jinja* and

treated with reverence. For example, is it significant that horses are often used in Shinto rituals to pray for a good harvest? Do horses convey other meanings important to Shinto thought? Those are the questions I address here.

At present there are four living *shinme* in Ise Jingū. Ise Jingū (officially called “Jingū”) is the central Shinto shrine in Japan. Jingū includes 125 *jinja* centered in Kōtaijingū 皇大神宮 (simply called the Naikū; the inner shrine) that is dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神 (often translated as the Sun Goddess), and Toyōuke daijingū 豊受大神宮 (simply called the Gekū; the outer shrine), dedicated to Toyōuke no Ōmikami 豊受大御神. The sacred area of Jingū is about the same size as Paris and more than 1,500 Shinto rituals are conducted yearly (Ise Jingū) there.

Horse dedication at Jingū has over 1,200 years of history. The first record appears in the *Shoku nihongi* 續日本紀 which is the second imperial chronicle of the Japanese nation published in the eighth century. Two *akage* (chestnut-colored) horses were dedicated on 1 August in 770 AD. The next record appears in the *Nihon Montoku Tennō jitsuroku* 日本文德天皇実録, which contains the veritable records of Montoku Tennō (Emperor Montoku). Five fine horses were presented on 11 September in 850 AD. In the *Engishiki* 延喜式, which detailed the laws and regulations in the tenth century, two horses each should be kept in Naikū and Gekū. The horses were traditionally dedicated by the Tennō 天皇 (the emperor), though in some instances the dedication came from the Shogunate. For example, Minamoto no Yoritomo in the twelfth century and Tokugawa Iemitsu in the seventeenth century dedicated horses to Jingū (ŌNISHI 1960, 101–102). In principle, however, the Tennō is the agent who offers the horse, following the understanding that he is a descendant of Amaterasu.

The horse dedication ceremony is solemn and once a horse is dedicated, he will no longer be ridden (OZU 1976, 80). If and when the horse is bred, it will be done with utmost care. When the *shinme* dies, he will be moved immediately from Jingū and buried with appropriate ritual propriety (OZU 1976, 79). Then, a new horse is prepared for the kami. According to Ōnishi Gen'ichi, the practice of the horse dedication at Jingū continued from the eighth century to today with the periods of decline and subsequent revival (ŌNISHI 1960, 97–103). The *Kanname-sai* 神嘗祭, which thanked the kami for the good harvest of 1865, presented the opportunity to revive the horse dedication by the Imperial Family after a period of lapse (JINGŪSHICHŌ 1929, 494). Since 1869, the custom has been that a new horse should be dedicated on the occasion of the *shinme*'s passing (JINGŪSHICHŌ 1929, 495). The most recent consecration was held in 2011 (JINGŪSHICHŌ 2011, 13) and currently Jingū keeps two living horses, one each in Naikū and Gekū.

These horses are used for the *shinme kenzan* 神馬牽参 ceremony which is held in both Naikū and Gekū. It is practiced every first counting day during the

month, that is, the first, the eleventh, the twenty-first, but not the thirty-first. The ceremony involves a Shinto priest bringing the *shinme* to the kami's residence. The first *shinme kenzan* was held in 1916 (JINGŪSHICHŌ 1986, 73) so it has a history of over one hundred years. On the counting day, the *shinme*, or sacred horse, is adorned with a robe bearing the Japanese imperial crest. The horse is then led from its stable by a stableman. A Shinto priest joins them and leads them to the gate in front of the residence of the kami. At the site of the kami, the priest bows deeply. Then, when the presentation is done, the horse is undressed and led into his stable. It is significant that this ceremony is done on the first counting days. As we remember, the first record of horse dedication was on 1 August in 770 AD and the second was on 11 September in 850 AD. It can be assumed that there was an underlying belief associating those days with the kami's state of being. Bringing a horse to the kami effected a change in stasis, from that of quiescence to action.

I observe that the concept of *hatsu* 初 is shown on the ceremony days of *shinme kenzan*. For Japanese, *hatsu-mono* 初物, which means the things regarding *hatsu*—the first, new, start, begin—is a very important idea. For example, we go for *hatsu-mōde*, the very first visit to *jinja* or temples on the day of a new year. Or if we have a newborn baby we go to *jinja* for *hatsu-miyamairi*, the first visit. If you go to *jinja* and ask for a blessing, you offer money called *hatsu-ho-ryō*, which refers to the fee of the first ear of rice or any other items, presented to kami in gratitude. *Shinme kenzan* could be understood as leading a mount ceremony on the days of *hatsu*.

Documentation about the recent *shinme* of Jingū is recorded in a study by Ozu Shigeo 小津茂郎 (1904–1987). Ozu worked for the department of horse policy in the Imperial Household Ministry and later became the legal counsel of Jingū. We are fortunate to have the horse records of Jingū preserved by Ozu who was well acquainted with the horses and various affairs of the Imperial Household. His study, *Shinme retsuden* 神馬列伝 (A Series of Biographies of *Shinme*), is especially valuable as it provides records of the horses drawn from the consecration documents from 1860 to 1975. He provides clear data on the horses kept in Jingū (Ozu 1976). However, his records stop in 1975. The year 2014 marks the 150th year since the revival of the practice of horse dedication at Jingū. To extend the study of *shinme*, I brought the information up to date, and in so doing have gained some insight into the choice of sacred horses. I now turn to the records of these *shinme* to examine the characteristics of the horses.

Characteristics of Shinme

According to my research based on Ozu's work, a total of fifty-seven horses have been presented to Jingū since 1865. List 1 and List 2 show the horses dedicated to

List 1: The *shimme* of the Naiko

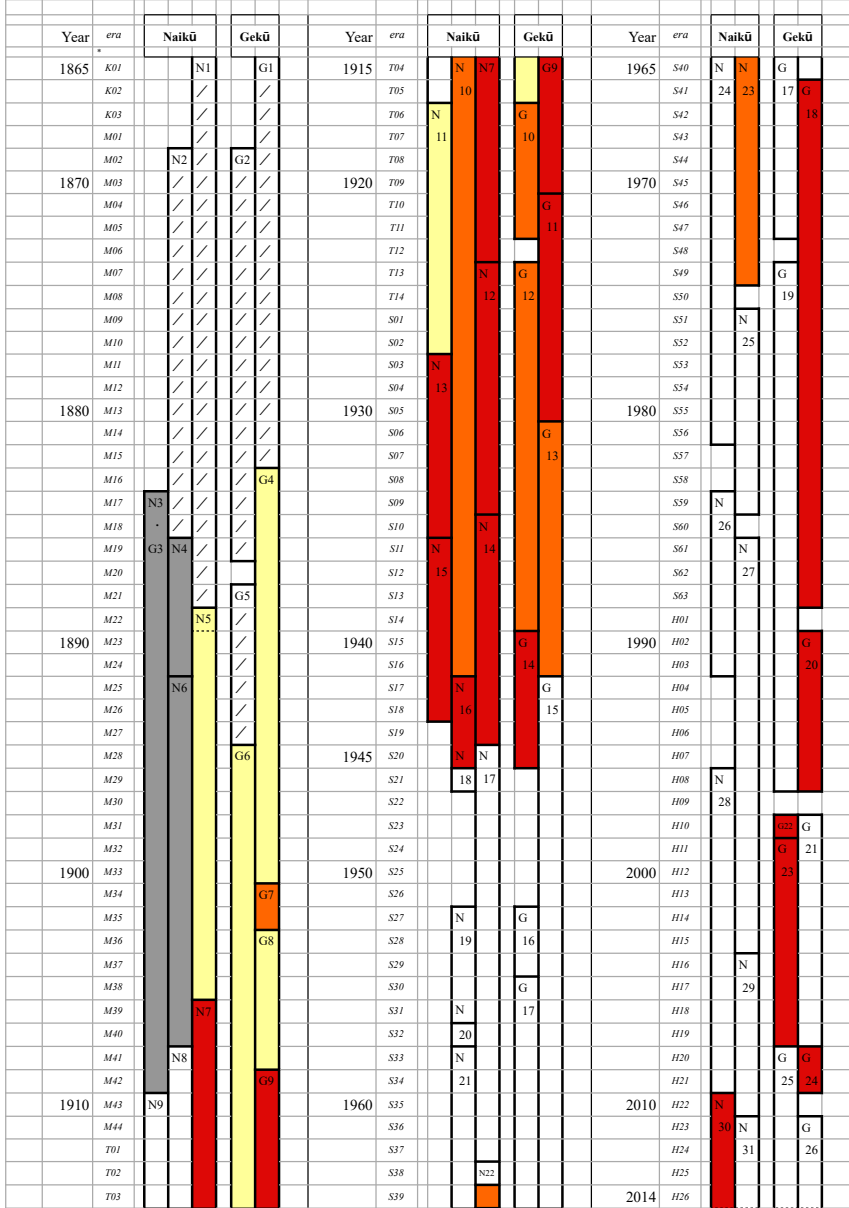
ID	Name	Breed	Birthyear	Birthplace	Imperial S. Farm	Sex	Color	Dedicated	Age	Ended	Age	Served
N1	Unknown					Unknown	Unknown	1865/9/17		1890/9/4		24yr. 11mth.
N2	Unknown					Unknown	Unknown	1869/3/16		1886/7/21		17yr. 4mth.
N3	仲春 Nakaharu	Domestic	1880			Unknown	Age (black)	1884/2/16	4	1910/3/21	30	26yr. 1mth.
N4	岩川 Iwakawa					Unknown	Age (black)	1886/10/5		1892/5/19		5yr. 7mth.
N5	騎鞍 Okinadake					Unknown	Tsukige (palomino)	1889/10/?		1906/3/2		16yr. 5mth.
N6	驪圃 Rēen					Unknown	Age (black)	1892/10/7		1908/9/24		15yr. 11mth.
N7	初花 Hatsuhana		1902	Miyagi	-	Unknown	Kage (bay)	1906/5/12	4	1924/9/27	22	18yr. 4mth.
N8	星月 Hoshitsuki	Mixed	1888	Chiba	○	Stallion	Ashige (grey)	1908/10/29	20	1915/1/17	27	6yr. 2mth.
N9	成澄 Narusumi	Mixed	1894	Chiba	○	Stallion	Ashige (grey)	1910/4/24	16	1916/12/6	22	6yr. 6mth.
N10	幸敏 Kōbin	Mixed	1911	Hokkaidō	○	Gelding	Kurige (che-stnut)	1915/5/22	4	1942/3/29	31	26yr. 10mth.
N11	深雪 Fukayuki	Mixed	1897	Hokkaidō	○	Unknown	Tsukige (palomino)	1917/1/25	20	1928/8/23	31	11yr. 6mth.
N12	朝子鳥 Asachidori	Mixed	1905	Chiba	○	Gelding	Kurokage (dark bay)	1924/11/22	18	1935/6/30	29	10yr. 6mth.
N13	三欣 Sankin	Mixed	1910	Aomori	-	Gelding	Kage (bay)	1928/9/21	18	1936/10/19	26	8yr.
N14	千本松 Senbonmatsu	Foreign breed	1919	Tochigi	-	Gelding	Kage (bay)	1935/9/15	16	1945/3/8	26	9yr. 5mth.
N15	香蓮 Kōkin	Mixed	1921	Hokkaidō	○	Gelding	Kage (bay)	1936/11/18	15	1944/11/12	23	7yr. 11mth.
N16	黒江 Kōkō	Orlov-Rostopshin	1921	Hokkaidō	○	Gelding	Kage (bay)	1942/5/21	21	1946/7/16	25	4yr. 1mth.
N17	牛霜 Toshishimo	Anglo-Arabian	1940	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1945/5/10	5	1963/5/18	23	18yr.
N18	神雲 Kamikumo	Anglo-Arabian	1938	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1946/9/26	8	1947/3/14	9	5mth.
N19	初雪 Hatsuyuki	Anglo-Arabian	1934	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1952/12/18	18	1957/5/28	23	4yr. 5mth.
N20	松天 Matsuten	Mixed	1954	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1957/7/9	3	1957/11/24	3	4mth.
N21	初霜 Hatsushimo	Anglo-Arabian	1937	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1958/11/7	21	1967/3/7	30	8yr. 4mth.
N22	白松 Shiramatsu	Anglo-Arabian	1953	Hokkaidō	-	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1963/7/3	10	1964/2/2	11	7mth.
N23	高陵 Takayū	Anglo-Norman	1958	Chiba	○	Gelding	Kurige (che-stnut)	1964/4/26	6	1975/10/16	17	11yr. 5mth.
N24	五十鈴 Itsuzu	Anglo-Arabian	1952	Hokkaidō	-	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1967/6/20	15	1982/5/24	30	14yr. 11mth.
N25	種霧 Tanetaka	Thoroughbred	1962	Gumma	-	Stallion	Ashige (grey)	1976/10/27	14	1985/11/1	23	9yr.
N26	鉄霧 Sagiri	Anglo-Arabian	1962	Chiba	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1984/6/6	22	1992/8/24	30	8yr. 2mth.
N27	桜鈴 Sakurasuzu	Anglo-Arabian	1980	Tochigi	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1986/6/6	6	2004/3/10	24	17yr. 9mth.
N28	橋澤 Hashisawa	Anglo-Arabian	1982	Tochigi	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	1996/7/4	14	2009/11/27	27	13yr. 4mth.
N29	晴勇 Hareisamu	Anglo-Arabian	1989	Tochigi	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	2004/12/8	15	2011/4/?	22	6yr. 4mth.
N30	国春 Kuniharu	Anglo-Arabian	1988	Tochigi	○	Gelding	Kage (bay)	2010/7/2	22			
N31	空勇 Soraisamu	Anglo-Arabian	1993	Tochigi	○	Gelding	Ashige (grey)	2011/9/27	18			

List 2: The *shimme* of the Gekū

ID	Name	Breed	Birthyear	Birthplace	Imperial S. Fann	Sex	Color	Dedicated	Age	Ended	Age	Served
G1	Unknown					Unknown	Unknown	1865/9/16		1883/8/2		17yr. 11mth.
G2	Unknown					Unknown	Unknown	1869/3/16		1887/10/11		18yr. 6mth.
G3	Unknown					Unknown	Aoge (black)	1884/2/?		1910/3/21		26yr. 1mth.
G4	桜川 Sakurakawa		1877	Aomori	-	Unknown	T sukage (palomino)	1883/10/3	6	1901/4/24	24	17yr. 6mth.
G5	百石 Hyakkokoku					Unknown	Unknown	1888/2/16		1895/4/17		7yr. 2mth.
G6	初城 Hatsushiro	Mixed				Stallion	T sukage (palomino)	1895/10/3		1917/11/28		22yr. 1mth
G7	真龍 Shinryū	Domestic				Stallion	Kurige (chestnut)	1901/6/26		1903/5/14		1yr. 10mth.
G8	白雲 Shirakumo	Mixed	1890	Kagoshima	-	Stallion	T sukage (palomino)	1903/6/6	13	1909/5/23	19	5yr. 11mth.
G9	大桜 Daō	Mixed	1893	Chiba	○	Stallion	Kage (bay)	1909/6/14	17	1921/11/18	28	12yr. 5mth.
G10	蝦夷 Ezo	Mixed	1903	Hokkaidō	-	Stallion	Kurige (chestnut)	1917/12/25	14	1923/12/7	20	5yr. 11mth.
G11	藤園 Fujizono	Foreign breed	1900	Australia	-	Stallion	Kage (bay)	1921/12/27	21	1931/3/31	31	9yr. 3mth.
G12	連風 Rinpū	Foreign breed	1913	Iwate	-	Ceiling	Kurige (chestnut)	1924/2/18	11	1940/5/13	27	16yr. 2mth.
G13	群玉 Gungyoku	Mixed	1914	Gumma	-	Ceiling	Tochikunige (dark chestnut)	1931/4/24	17	1942/6/20	28	11yr. 1mth.
G14	仲明 Nakaaki	Foreign breed	1921	Hokkaidō	○	Ceiling	Kage (bay)	1940/7/1	19	1946/4/21	25	5yr. 9mth.
G15	神雪 Kamiyuki	Anglo-Arabian	1938	Chiba	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	1942/7/25	4	1966/8/6	28	24yr.
G16	西徳 Nishitoku	Mixed	1933	Aomori	-	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	1952/12/17	20	1955/10/9	22	2yr. 9mth.
G17	朝義 Asayoshi	Anglo-Arabian	1951	Chiba	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	1955/12/8	4	1973/9/12	22	17yr. 9mth.
G18	益央 Masuō	Mixed	1955	Hokkaidō	-	Ceiling	Kage (bay)	1966/10/6	11	1989/12/8	34	23yr. 2mth.
G19	山勇 Yamaisamu	Anglo-Arabian	1963	Chiba	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	1974/5/29	11	1997/7/5	34	23yr. 1mth.
G20	星勇 Hoshiisamu	Anglo-Arabian	1969	Chiba	○	Ceiling	Kage (bay)	1990/5/18	21	1997/12/30	28	7yr. 7mth.
G21	勇 Okaaki	Mixed	1979	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	1998/7/2	19	2008/4/28	29	9yr. 9mth.
G22	坂霜 Sakasurimo	Anglo-Arabian	1976	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	K.umokage (dark bay)	1998/7/2	22	1999/5/21	23	10mth.
G23	桜澤 Sakurasawa	Anglo-Arabian	1980	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	Kage (bay)	1999/10/8	19	2008/1/29	28	8yr. 3mth.
G24	踏新 Michishin	Anglo-Arabian	1985	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	Kage (bay)	2008/10/1	23	2010/7/?	25	1yr. 9mth.
G25	草音 Kusao to	Anglo-Arabian	2001	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	2008/10/1	7			
G26	突智 Emitomo	Anglo-Arabian	2006	Tochigi	○	Ceiling	Ashige (grey)	2011/9/27	5			

Source: Data N1-N25 and G1-G19 are based on Ozu Shigeo, "Shimme reitsuden" (1976). Others are based on Jingushicho, *Mizugaki* (1984-).

Figure 1: Service period of the *shinne*



* K=Keio, M=Meiji, T=Taishō, S=Shōwa, H=Heisei

Color: Aoge (black), Tsukige (palomino), Kurige (chestnut), Ashige (grey), Kage (bay), Unkwon

Note 1: Service period is determined from year of dedication to the *shinne*'s penultimate year.

Note 2: G3 is placed with N3 because they seem to be the same horse.

both Naikū and Gekū shrines. The sources are of the data compiled in *Shinme retsuden* and the updated data refers to the back numbers of *Mizugaki* 瑞垣, the seasonal publications of Jingū. Accordingly, Naikū has had thirty-one and Gekū has had twenty-six horses. One horse might overlap in the record of Naikū (ID=N3) and Gekū (ID=G3) because they have the same end date (21 March 1910) and the same color (*aoge*; black). Figure 1 indicates the period of service of the horses along with their color, and suggests that Naikū kept three horses until the middle of the 1940s while Gekū kept two. We see that the number of horses decreased during the Second World War and in the postwar period. The regulation of two horses each in both shrines seems to have been fixed in 1952 and continues to stand in 2017. It appears that the fixed number is drawn from the regulation found in the *Engishiki*.

Upon examining List 1, List 2, and Figure 1, it seems that *ashige* horses were most popular as *shinme*; however, this trend is limited to the postwar period. Earlier data suggest another quality is paramount.

A. COLOR

The most popular color among horses dedicated to kami was *ashige* (grey, which is often recognized as a white horse). Since 1865, twenty-two *ashige* horses were dedicated to Jingū. Of the total number of *shinme* or fifty-seven horses, twenty-two were *ashige*, five *tsukige* (palomino), fifteen *kage* (bay), six *kurige* (chestnut), four *aoge* (black), with five of unknown color (See Table 1). When I categorize them into three colors, the numbers are twenty-seven whitish (*ashige* and *tsukige*), twenty-one brownish (*kage* and *kurige*), and four black (*aoge*). It is possible to say that horses with a whitish color are more popular than other colors statistically.

Table 1. Color of the horses.

Color	<i>ashige</i> (grey)	<i>tsukige</i> (palomino)	<i>kage</i> (bay)	<i>kurige</i> (chestnut)	<i>aoge</i> (black)	Unknown	Total
Naikū	15	2	7	2	3	2	31
Gekū	7	35	8	4	1	3	26
Total	22	5	15	6	4	5	57
	27 <Whitish>		21 <Brownish>		4 <Black>		

Although many *ashige* horses have been consecrated, the trend is limited to recent decades. Only four *ashige* horses appear in the count before 1945, but the number increases remarkably to eighteen after 1946 (See Table 2). The dedication of *ashige* horses has risen since the war period.

Table 2. Dedication of *ashige* (grey) horses.

Color	Before 1945	After 1946 (postwar)	Total
Naikū	3	12	15
Gekū	1	6	7
Total	4	18	22

It is possible that the increase of *ashige* dedications after World War Two is related to the Shōwa Tennō (Hirohito)'s horse. The most famous riding horse for the Shōwa Tennō was an *ashige* horse named Shirayuki 白雪 (White Snow). At official events such as military reviews, the stallion Shirayuki often served as the Tennō's mount (OZU 1987, 98–121). In the wartime, the Tennō was the commander-in-chief of the army and navy (OZU 1987, 99), and was regarded as a kami appearing in human form. In other words, the white horse Shirayuki was a mount for a human kami. Shirayuki was not dedicated to Jingū, however, and Ozu recorded that the Imperial Stock Farm was trying to produce more *ashige* horses for the imperial mounts. Shiramatsu (ID=N22) was one of them and later became *shinme* (OZU 1976, 87). It is plausible that Shirayuki's color established the trend of the *shinme* of Jingū.

B. BIRTHPLACE

Many horses came from the Imperial Stock Farm, but the ranch alone is not definitive. There are forty-five horses whose birthplaces are clear; thirty-one of them were produced at the Imperial Stock Farm. There were fourteen *shinme* produced at private ranches. They were born in Hokkaidō, Aomori Prefecture, Iwate Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture, Gunma Prefecture, Tochigi Prefecture, Kagoshima Prefecture, and overseas (see Table 3). The present Imperial Stock Farm is located in Tochigi Prefecture, but in the past the farms were located in Chiba Prefecture and in Hokkaidō. The Imperial Household Agency explains that “At the farm, the main activities are arable farming and stock breeding, which includes rearing of riding horses and carriage horses for the Imperial Family and for court functions, raising other livestock and poultry, and producing milk, meat and eggs for the use of the Imperial Family and domestic and foreign guests” (KUNAICHŌ). This does not mention *shinme*.

Table 3. Birthplace of the horses.

Imperial stock farm (31 horses)				
	Hokkaidō	Chiba	Tochigi	Total
Naikū	4	10	5	19
Gekū	1	5	6	12
Total	5	14	11	31

Others (14 horses)									
	Hokkaidō	Aomori	Iwate	Miyagi	Gunma	Tochigi	Kagoshima	Overseas	Total
Naikū	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	6
Gekū	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	8
Total	4	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	14

C. IMPERIAL MOUNTS

Some horses (although not all) were the Imperial mounts or property used for the Imperial Family (See Table 4).

Table 4. Imperial mounts (examples).

Dedicated to	Name	ID	Color	A mount for
Naikū	Sankin	N13	<i>kage</i> (bay)	Taishō Tennō
Gekū	Gungyoku	G13	<i>tochikurige</i> (dark chestnut)	Shōwa Tennō
Naikū	Senbonmatsu	N14	<i>kage</i> (bay)	Shōwa Tennō
Naikū	Kōkin	N15	<i>kage</i> (bay)	Shōwa Tennō
Naikū	Kokkō	N16	<i>kage</i> (bay)	Shōwa Tennō
Naikū	Hatsuyuki	N19	<i>ashige</i> (grey)	Shōwa Tennō
Naikū	Takayū	N23	<i>kurige</i> (chestnut)	Present Tennō (Akihito)

Source: Data based on Ozu Shigeo, “Shinme retsuden” (1976).

D. BREED

Various breeds of horses have been dedicated as *shinme*; most were not native to Japan. There are forty-six horses whose breeds are identifiable (See Table 5). Anglo-Arabians have become popular since the World War and four horses today at Jingū are all Anglo-Arabian.

Table 5. Breed of the horses.

Naikū (25 horses)
1 Domestic, 8 Mixed, 1 Foreign Breed, 12 Anglo-Arabian, 1 Orlov-Rostopchin, 1 Thoroughbred, 1 Anglo-Norman
Gekū (21 horses)
1 Domestic, 8 Mixed, 3 Foreign Breed, 9 Anglo-Arabian

As an aside, I refer to Yamaisamu (ID=G19), a horse of outstanding pedigree. In May 1975, Queen Elizabeth visited Jingū and hoped to see a *shinme*. Ozu was selected as an interpreter to show the horse. He detailed the pedigree of Yamaisamu and the Queen was impressed (Ozu 1987, 231–37). It appears that Ozu believed that the Queen’s reaction was due to the horse’s lineage. However, it is possible the Queen was impressed the willingness to keep a foreign breed as the sacred horse of the central Shinto shrine. One thing is clear—horses dedicated to Jingū have not been chosen by breed.

E. AGE

The ages of the *shinme* at dedication vary from three to twenty-three years. At dedication, age is not a factor (See Table 6). For example, Hatsuhana (ID=N7) was dedicated at the age of four to Naikū and he ended his service at the age of twenty-two. Sakashimo (ID=G22) was dedicated at twenty-two, and ten months later his service ended.

Table 6. Age at dedication.

	under 6	6–10	11–15	16–20	over 21	Total
Naikū	5	4	5	8	4	26
Gekū	3	2	5	6	4	20
Total	8	6	10	14	8	46

F. SEX

Of all these factors, the deciding attribute of *shinme* is their sex. There are the records of forty-four male horses (stallions and geldings), but no single mention of a mare (See Table 7). To qualify for dedication to Jingū a horse must satisfy the condition of the appropriate sex. The horse to be chosen for kami must be a stallion or a gelded male.

Table 7. Sex of the horses.

Sex	Stallion (male)	Gelding (gelded male)	Mare (female)	Unknown	Total
Naikū	3	20	0	8	31
Gekū	6	15	0	5	26
Total	9	35	0	13	57
	44 <male>		0 <female>		

The list includes thirteen horses of unknown sex leaving a question as to whether or not mares were present. However, Ozu was emphatic that this was not the case. He stated “There are no female horses for dedication but only male horses. Later geldings are used which is a result of the improvement by the stud-horse control method aiming at the proper temperament through castration” (Ozu 1976, 78). Because of this statement, it is scarcely possible that a female was included among the thirteen horses whose sex is unknown. Using the records of forty-four male horses and Ozu’s statement, one can safely conclude that no female horses have served as *shinme* since 1865. Only male horses qualify.

The Significance of Maleness

The records demonstrate that “maleness” is the key attribute of the *shinme* dedicated to Jingū. To probe why, I turn to an analysis of the import given to *shinme* in Japanese culture. In the study of religious meaning, the significance of sacredness can never be fully explained by a single interpretation. That said, I nonetheless suggest the concept of *tane* たね (seeds) informs the choice of male horses. As such, *shinme* may signify the embodiment of vigor. Only male horses, even if they are gelded, can fulfill this role because male—and not female—represent the role of seeding. Several observations lend themselves to this conclusion. I explain by correlating three areas of evidence.

The first observation comes from the name “Tanetaka 種貴” (ID=N25) of one *shinme*. *Tane* means seeds and *taka* means precious. Ozu left a note that stated the name Tanetaka was inspired by the poem composed by the Empress Kōjun (Ozu 1976, 88). The poem is about the soil and the celebration of growth every spring. In it, the words “planting” and “seeding” appear. As seen from the catalogue of the horses’ sex in List 1, Tanetaka was truly exceptional. Most of the horses dedicated after 1924 were geldings; however, he was a stallion. From the meaning of the poem it is clear that Tanetaka was named for his sexuality. His name recalls an expression, *tane uma* 種馬 (a seed horse), used to refer to a

stallion. The idea of *tane* relates to the importance of rice-making traditions in Japan. Kojima Yoshiyuki examined the rituals of Jingū and placed Jingū as the kami's residence of the sun and the rice (KOJIMA 1999). He insists that Jingū's rituals are undertaken mainly for rice production. If we review the revival of the practice of horse dedication to Jingū, it stemmed from the 1865 rite of *Kanname-sai* which thanked the kami for a good harvest that year (JINGŪSHICHŌ 1929, 494). In the ritual of *Kanname-sai*, the new ears of rice produced from all over Japan are brought to Jingū and dedicated to the kami. In the sense that rice is indispensable for Japanese (ASOYA 1994), "seeding" and "harvesting" rituals are very significant. Here, new rice which has not been threshed but is still in the ears is presented, and this act underscores the concept of dedicating newborn seeds to the kami. Male horses represent this power because they themselves possess seeds containing the origin of life. The implications are strong: it is not the passive but rather the active power of giving new life that informs the characteristic of the male horses.

The second observation is the appearance of the strong maleness shown in the horse-related traditions in other *jinja*. We offer three examples. The first is the male horse rite, *ageuma* 上げ馬, held in Mie Prefecture, the area surrounding Jingū. Performed in Tadotaisha 多度大社 and Inabe Jinja 猪名部神社, the *Ageuma* rite prognosticates the coming year's fortune by having a horse mounted by a young male ride up a steep slope. It is believed that if the rider reaches the top, a good harvest is promised for the year to the rider's village. According to my research and an interview with a spokesperson of one village,¹ once the riders are selected by sacred lots, a strict purification process begins. They leave their family and live with other riders in their village office during the purification period. Since this is considered a male rite, females are strictly excluded. This rule also applies to the sex of the horses. They have to be stallions, never mares. The villages preferably get new horses to run each year to show their appreciation for kami. It seems that the people of each village entrust their hopes with the riders and the horses are seen as the carriers of their prosperity. To put it another way, the strict maleness is essential for *ageuma* and the horse literally shoulders the responsibility for good fortune.

For the next example, I offer the tradition of Kamigamo Jinja which keeps a *shinme* and the traditional horse race during the boy's festival. For years, they have bred their *shinme*, a male white horse named Kōyama. Kōyama is led for the ritual of *Hakuba sōran* 白馬奏覧 which is considered the purification at the beginning of the new year. I have visited the *jinja* several times to have inter-

1. Mr. Ōta Fumihiro of Tōin chō kindly helped my research on the *ageuma* rite in 2009 and 2010. I would like to thank him for welcoming me to his village to show me the items for the rite.

views with the priests over the last decade.² They have never had any female horses as *shinme*, not even a perfectly white mare. The tradition handed down from ancient times is that the *shinme* has to be a stallion at their *jinja*. Now, however, they have a gelding because most horses are castrated today.

In another rite, one different than the ritual of the white horse, they convene traditional horse racing named *kamo kurabeuma* 賀茂競馬 presented by the local male riders. This rite is done for the boy's festival of 5 May. The race horses are gathered at the *jinja* for the day and the *jinja* lists the horses by their breeding place, color, or age but not sex because it is not necessary to do so. One priest explained, "A stallion is respected because it is 'the gold owner (the testicles holder)'. When we priests refer to a horse, it definitely means a male horse so there is no need to record its sex." It is presumed that the gold owner symbolizes a provider of riches or a carrier of prosperity.

The last example comes from the traditions observed at Inari *jinja*. At Inari *jinja*, the *hatsu-uma* 初午 festival is often held on the first Day of Uma (the horse, the seventh sign of the Chinese zodiac). On the *hatsu-uma* days or the other seasonal occasions of the *jinja*, horse-related festivals such as traditional horse archery like *yabusame* 流鏑馬 or taking decorated horses to *kami* can be seen. I could not confirm the sex of the horses used in the *yabusame* ceremony at Kasama Inari *Jinja* 笠間稲荷神社;³ however, I was able to visit the Fushimi Inari Taisha's stable. If we take a close look at the sculpture of the *shinme* in the stable, we see the decorated horse is indeed one of "the gold owners." Inari *jinja* is thought to control the food or agriculture that brings prosperity. When we take note of the role of the horses in those traditions, we find them sharing the same significance as *shinme* at Jingū through the key attribute of maleness.

The third observation is in ancient times, those who were recipients of horses embodied femaleness. I presume that a sacred horse (*shinme*) was originally a male horse given to a female *kami*, an act consecrating fruition. In the ancient Shinto literature of the *Kojiki* 古事記 and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, the first appearance of a horse occurs when the dappled horse Amano-fuchikoma 天斑駒 was given to the female *kami* Amaterasu. In the *Nihon shoki*, the first record of a human recipient of an adorned horse was Aomino Ōtoji Magariko 青海夫人勾子, the female Imperial envoy of Kinmei Tennō of the sixth century. This horse was an offering by Ōtomo no Ōmuraji Kanamura, the male subject of the Tennō, to show his appreciation for her kind visit. Recipients of the decorated horse extended beyond the female envoy to other women. The top priestesses in the

2. I would like to thank Mr. Tanaka Yasuhiro and Mr. Fujiki Yasumasa of Kamigamo *Jinja* who gave me useful information about their *shinme* and the Shinto rituals.

3. I would like to thank Mr. Hanawa Haruo of Kasama Inari *Jinja* for inviting me to the *yabusame* ceremony in 2014.

nation were known to keep a painted clay horse. Known as Saiō 齋王, in older days these women were selected as the top priestesses from among those who were appointed to serve Jingū. The custom of Saiō started in the seventh century and lasted until the fourteenth century (EMURA 2004; SAIKŪ HISTORICAL MUSEUM). The vermilion-lacquered clay horse, which has a pictorial representation of spots (ca. eighth century), was found during an archaeological excavation at Saikū 齋宮.⁴ Saikū was the sacred palace of Saiō who was selected from unmarried female members of the imperial family. The site of Saikū was identified with the painted clay horse and other items belonging to the successive priestesses, indicating that the recipients of horses embody femaleness. As we know, in the seventh to ninth centuries there was a practice of dedicating a black horse when praying for rain and a white horse when praying for the end of rain to certain *jinja* housing kami believed to control water. One of the most famous *jinja* where horses were often dedicated is Nyūkawakami Jinja 丹生川上神社 which enshrines a female kami named Mizuhanome. Orikuchi Shinobu remarked on the deep relationship between kami of the water and women (ORIKUCHI 1965). Many kami (but not all) who control water are considered to be female kami. I suggest that water control, and hence the control of auspiciousness or life-giving power, might be symbolized by females.

Returning to the dappled horse in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, the account depicts the horse as aggressive in the story of Susanō, a kami and younger brother of Amaterasu. Susanō tried to disturb the rice production in the sacred rice field of his sister. He prevented a good harvest by an unusual seeding pattern or by letting the dappled horse lie flat on the rice field, and so on. In the story, the horse is described as a nuisance in the sacred area. In the ancient chronicles the stallion is associated with the wrong production here. In my view, this horse symbolizes excessive maleness through the rougher sex of Susanō acting against the female kami. Left unchecked, excessive maleness can be disruptive, a reminder of the need to rein in the full potency of such power.

Since agriculture is an essential component of Japanese life, it is understandable that people have placed special value on seeds which possess the power for all creation. I observe that the horse dedication to kami connotes the practice of conceptual seeding for fruition. In my view, Shinto stems from the Japanese respect for the workings of nature. Both in animals and plants, the seed has the power to start new life. The habits of male horses (TAKARA 1988) may demonstrate this power and signify its embodiment. The ancient practice of dedicating a horse to a kami can be understood as a ritual that asks for auspiciousness by presenting *tane* possessed of great vigor.

4. The Saikū volunteer guide Mr. Watanabe Yukihiro and his wife Hisako kindly took me around the Saikū and Ise areas. I would like to thank them for their interest in my fieldwork.

Shinto has no dogma, no doctrines, no founder. I believe its religious import is found in its practices; Shinto rituals themselves express Japanese attitudes toward and understandings of kami. For that reason, we should carefully observe the unverbilized practices found in rituals as well as any written explanations. As we can see dozens of dedicated picture horses hanging at certain sites within *jinja*, we realize the custom of the horse dedication still stands today in Shinto tradition. The reason *shinme* are found at *jinja* and treated with reverence is that they are symbols, indeed, vehicles that convey the preciousness of life.

Conclusion

We have confirmed the key attribute of the *shinme* dedicated to Jingū is their intrinsic maleness. The data reveal that the sex of the horses takes first priority over color, birthplace, Imperial mount, breed, or age. Some Shinto priests recognize that only male horses qualify as *shinme*, but this fact is generally unknown and few documents specify this criterion. For as long as records have been kept at Jingū, one defining characteristic is paramount: *shinme* must be male. While the whiteness of the horses has been discussed in previous studies, these studies have overlooked the key attribute of the maleness. When Japan was an agricultural state, I suggest that the concept of *tane* could be a clue for the choice of male horses. As an analysis of the key attribute, I propose that *shinme* may signify the embodiment of vigor.

Since Jingū is considered the caretaker of the Shinto tradition, an understanding of its practices can give us insight into the Shinto faith. Further study of *shinme* may shed light on under-explored areas of Japanese culture.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Dr. Kay Koppedraye, who helped with refining the English in my paper.

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