

The Dogs of Japan

by Fujino Junko

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Eyes are the critical point for distinguishing Japanese dogs from Western dogs. The eyes of a dog, irrespective of type and species, generally reflect a shade of appeal, fawning or plaintiveness. This is a shade especially evident in the Japanese dog.

Japanese dogs have almost triangular, recessed eyes under thick eyelids. Few of them have goggle-eyes like Pekinese, Maltese and Pomeranians. Looking lonesome and quiet, their small triangular eyes suggest the burning spirit within.

The first impression the Japanese dog creates is a lack of sophistication - a touch of nature that has escaped human forced breeding. Actually the Japanese dog has escaped much artificiality that accompanies improvement and fixation of species.

Toughness is another feature of the Japanese dog. Sturdily built, he rarely falls ill. He can live on coarse food and is not fastidious about meals. He can withstand both cold and heat well.

Amazingly fine dogs often seen on the dark earth floors of old farmers' houses in northern areas, such as Akita Prefecture, are mostly fed the family leftovers and hardly ever dog food that has to be purchased at stores.

The Japanese dog has his own mannerisms. As is often pointed out by dog trainers and Japanese dog fans, this kind of dog does little playing, in a way suggestive of the spirit of the tense, serious Samurai.

He rarely leaps at or gambols with people. Nor does he perpetrate mischievous deeds such as chewing and pulling things as an ordinary dog does. When other dogs frolic, the Japanese dog often stands back and watches them quietly with forepaws together as wondering what everyone thinks is so amusing. He seems to prefer solitude to merry-making in packs. This trait sometimes puzzles his man who does not know what the dog thinks and wants.

Calm and considerate by nature, the Japanese dog understands how man thinks; he remains good friends on tacit terms. His reliability and trustworthiness are attested to by the following story.

The name of Shibuya Station, one of the busiest centres of Tokyo, is immediately associated with a bronze statue of a Japanese dog. Nearly fifty years ago, a certain dog sent his master off at the station every morning and met him again each evening. In time, the master died. Unaware of what death meant, the canine continued its self imposed daily duty and waited for hours every day for the master who was never to show up. After the dog died ten years later, the citizens, moved by his devotion to his master, erected a bronze statue by the entrance to the station in the early 1920s, and admirably and affectionately called it Chuken Hachi-ko or Loyal Dog Hachi.

The Japanese dog offers numerous examples of such faithfulness and sincerity. Some continued to cover their dead masters in the cold until they died themselves from hunger and others obeyed their masters' orders at the cost of their own lives. They do not fall behind dogs anywhere else in the world.

Dog Meets Man

THE HISTORY OF DOGS in Japan is older than generally imagined; it dates back to the outset of Japan's recorded history. From the ruins of the Jomon Period (from 7,000 B.C. to the beginning of history), have been unearthed dog figurines and clay images, dog-patterned

earthenware and copper musical instruments as well as dog bones. These findings suggest that dogs co-existed with men as early as the stoneage.

The uncovered bones indicate that the dogs in those days were yellow or reddish brown or grey or of the Southeast Asian Pariah and Australian Dingo species, they stood 37 to 50 centimetres at the shoulder.

These dogs existed here even before men moved to Japanese land, which was then still connected with the Asian Continent.

Unlike other kinds of animals, dogs readily accustomed themselves to men and rendered services to them in hunting; both became domesticated.

Dogs accompanied every racial migration in history; as the type of dog varied with the race, the present distribution of dogs is said to offer a clue to ancient racial migrations. The modern Japanese dog has developed through repeated selection of the dogs that settled in Japan.

In the Yayoi Period when farming began, people who used bronze ware came to the Japanese islands. The dogs that followed them mixed with indigenous dogs and produced Pomeranian types such as the Spitz and Chow Chow.

Early Period

AFTER HISTORY BEGAN, Japan made cultural exchanges with the Asian Continent including China, Korea and other countries, and imported many dogs. The 30-volume *Nihon Shoki* (The Chronicles of Japan), Japan's oldest historical document and other literature record the importation of dogs on several occasions. Entered just as *koma* (Chinese name for dog), many of them were small lap dogs, hawk hunting dogs and big dogs from Ch'itan, China. These imported dogs, together with a number of unrecorded ones, must have affected the growth of the indigenous Japanese dogs.

Dogs on Record

THE OLDEST STORY of a dog on record appears in the *Kojiki* (Japan's oldest historical compilation; 712). Yama-sachi-hiko (Lord of the Mountain) was once in discord with his eldest brother Umi-sachi-hiko (Lord of the Sea), and appeased his brother's anger with the assistance of the God of the Sea.

In time, the elder brother was forced to swear to obey his younger brother. "From now on, I will serve you as your guardian day and night." The "guardian day and night" is recorded as *inu-hito* or dog-man in the *Nihon Shoki*. The chronicle states that Hayato, a descendant of the elder brother, serves the Emperor without leaving the Imperial Residence in place of the barking watch dog. The "dog barking" of Hayato is the stipulated ritual in which men imitate dogs barking on such occasions as the New Year, a Coronation or a foreign envoy's visit to Japan.

He Guarded His Master In Death

THE FIRST STORY OF a man keeping a dog that has a name appears in the *Nihon Shoki*. In the records of Emperor Sujin (10th Emperor), a dog named Ayuki kept by a man in the province of Tanba (Hyogo Prefecture) ate a badger; from its belly emerged *Yasaka ni no Magatama*, precious curved beads. This story indicates that from ancient times it has been custom to name dogs and use them for hunting. That is, at least after 58 A.D.

It seems that the Japanese dogs had formed their character and features in ancient times. The topography of the province of Harima states that Emperor Ojin's pure white hunting dog called Manashiro died in a fight with a wild boar in the fields of Toma, and the dog was duly buried in a tomb on the west hillside of Iyo. It is said that the name of Iyo no Oka or the Hill of Iyo came from the fact that Emperor Ojin issued the order "Iyo!" (Shoot!) during his dog's fight with the wild boar.

The name for another nearby place, Memaeda, is also said to originate in this same story the Emperor's hunting dog was shot in the *me* or eye. A small Japanese dog's undaunted fighting spirit in the face of overwhelming odds in compliance with his master's order - the features are already evident in this ancient story.

Rare and sacred, the white dog seems to have been especially favoured. As his name indicates, Manashiro was pure white. Indispensable to Japanese canine history, the dog kept by Totoribe no Yorozu appearing in the Chronicle of Sushun (521—592) was also white.

When Mononobe Moriya was defeated by Soga no Umako and Yorozu, retainer of Moriya, fled to the province of Izumi and then was killed, his white dog followed him and guarded his master's dead body. During a heavy thunder storm, the dog bit off its master's head and buried it in an old tomb nearby. The dog laid itself in front of the tomb and died from hunger. That was in the year 587.

The story of this dog's exceptional loyalty as recounted by the provincial governor of Kawachi (Osaka) deeply moved the Emperor. He exonerated Yorozu from the usual sentence of having his body broken into eight pieces to be exposed in eight provinces.

His commendations went further: "This is an exceptional dog, let it be known to future generations. Let Yorozu's family build a tomb and bury the dog there." The tomb of the dog, a mound 25 cm wide and one meter high, still stands on a hill in the west of Kishiwada, Osaka, with the inscription, "Dog Tomb of the Yorozu Family."

Even today, the Tsukamoto family, descendants of the Yorozu family, observe the annual festival for this, Japan's oldest dog tomb on September 26.

The Chronicle of Emperor Sushun relates another story of a dog which guarded its dead master's body. When many people were killed on the dry river bed of Kira in the province of Kawachi, Sakurai Tabe no Muraji Inu's body was easily distinguished from others because his dog kept solemn watch over him.

From these examples on record, the dog may be said to have remained loyal to man and gallant in saving his master even at the risk of his own life from ancient times. He has also been wise enough to be of help to man.

As the country was unified and ordered under a powerful Emperor system, the number of wild gods increased. Since they trespassed on the Imperial Palace, a record says, there were occasional hunts for wild dogs.

A Talented Lady Dislikes Dogs

SEI SHONAGON, a well known lady of letters, served in the court in the Heian Period. She excelled in scholastic accomplishments and had exceptional sensitivity and intuition. Her famous essay collection, *Makura no Soshi* (The Pillow Book; 1018) gives several accounts of dogs. A dog called Okina Maru chased a cat called Myofu no Omoto favoured by the

Emperor Ichijo (980-1011) and incurred his anger. A few days after the dog was abandoned on a remote island, he showed up at his master's house much to the surprise of everybody.

The dog was found staggering in the street with his body swollen from heavy beatings by two clerks until he was almost unrecognizable. Anyhow, the story indicates the dog's homing instinct and keen sense of smell. In her list of "unpleasantries," the lady writer included dogs barking in the daytime together with a delivery room where a baby has died and a fire grate in which the fire is put out. The dog's bark cutting through the bright atmosphere may have struck her as more befitting the dark of the night. A dog in slumber in a sunny corner looks lovely.

The Pillow Book also includes such remarks as: "Dogs' prolonged barking in accord sounds loathsome;" or "Dogs should be beaten or killed when they yelp at an acquainted person who secretly comes to see his lover." This talented authoress' strong prejudice against dogs must have developed from many unpleasant experiences with them. Her disfavour sounds a bit unfair because the dogs might have barked at her rightly by instinct and as a precaution to protect their masters.

By nature, the dog has a sharp nose - a fact few people deny. However, it appeared highly mysterious to Japanese in ancient times.

Supernatural Power

THE MAN WHO CALLED the world "my own," Fujiwara no Michinaga (966—1027), enjoyed a sumptuous life. Once when he entered Hojo-ji Temple, his white dog barked at him, and as if trying to draw him away, pulled on the skirt of his kimono; he was informing his master of a buried earthenware magic charm. In this story, referred to in several documents, the dog's instinct at work in locating the buried article is revered as something supernatural.

The *inugami tsuki* superstition concerning dog god possession still prevailing in the north-eastern part of Shikoku Island may be an embodiment of the mystique connected in men's minds with the dog's instincts. It is said that if dead dog is worshipped for its magical powers, it will serve its master for generations. The person possessed by the dog is loathed by his neighbours. Until recently villagers always checked before a marriage to see if the other party was possessed by the dog god or not.

This story was created from the loyalty and supernatural power of the dog.

Dogs play an important role not only in superstition but also in fairy tales.

"Dig Here and Bow-wow,"

ONE OF THE MOST popular old tales familiar to every Japanese child is "Dig Here; Bow-wow." A story with a moral purpose and better known by this than by its original title, *Hanasaka Jiji*, or Cherry Flower Blooming Old Man, the story has a dog in the leading role.

The story goes in gist: Many, many years ago, a kind, gentle old man kept a white dog. One day the dog yelled, "Dig Here, Bow wow." He dug in the ground where the animal had indicated and found a number of big and small gold coins. An ill-tempered old man living nearby dug the same way only to find ashes and dirt. The dog possessed the power to perceive what was right and just.

Dogs Destroy the Shogunate

JAPAN'S CANINE HISTORY has two notorious champions. One is the fighting dog possessed by Hojo Takatoki, Regent of the Kamakura Shogunate (1303—1333).

Pleased by the sight of a fight between dogs one day in his yard, Takatoki ordered his men to gather strong dogs and purchased them at the price of 30 to 100 *kan* (*kan*: 79.4 quarts of rice) per dog. He fed them with fish and birds and clothed them in brocade. Someone is said to have offered to Takatoki a dog attired in gold- and silver studded kimono and another a dog decorated with gems. Both men received an unexpectedly large remuneration. For such a deed a criminal received his freedom. Common citizens, if they encountered Takatoki's dog on the street, had to dismount from their horses, take off their hats and get down on their knees.

Dogs dressed in brocade and cloyed with meat swarmed the streets of Kamakura, in the number of some four or five thousand. In dog fighting contests held twelve times a month, Takatoki's family members and daimyo watched fights between the two camps composed of about two hundred dogs each. Their biting and howling raised the hushed indignation of decent people, who lifted their brows and clenched their fists.

Takatoki gave rewards to the winning dogs from public funds. His maniacal enjoyment of dog fighting cost him his reputation and set him on the path to destruction and ultimately to the downfall of the Kamakura Shogunate. Small wonder he is notorious in Japan's history for his untoward canine favouritism.

Dogs Rule the Country

NO LESS NOTORIOUS is Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709), the 5th Tokugawa Shogun in the Edo Period. This Shogun issued a law against cruelty to animals, designed to embody his Buddhist ideals of mercy. His love of dogs is accounted for by the fact that he was born in the year of the dog under the old calendar of the twelve horary signs. The law prohibited killing and injuring animals and demanded people to give them loving care. The law and punishment ignored human rights in favour of the rights of dogs. A Samurai was confined to his home for his failure to stop dog fights.

Overprotection made dogs hold and arrogant; to avoid possible injuries to dogs from accidental collisions, large carts were required to be accompanied by a man in charge of warning away dogs.

As the law became more and more severe, an increasing number of people discarded their own dogs to avoid trouble, and abandoned dogs increased. To house them, the Shogunate set up doghouses in spacious lots in many areas and in 1697 the number of these dogs totalled 48,748. Naturally the maintenance costs involved a tremendous sum.

As the law stipulated that sick and injured dogs had to be treated without fail, this period witnessed the development of the profession of dog doctors. In this period, dogs may be said to have controlled the country. The law also stipulated that the sex, colour of fur, and age be reported to a specially created office; *Inu-metsuke*, or dog superintendent officers, made a regular round of the streets. The dog registration from this period now provides a valuable reference concerning the shape and features of the dogs of the day.

Shogun Tsunayoshi was called the Dog Shogun for his exceptional preference. But his dog kingdom did not last long. Upon Tsunayoshi's death in 1709, the notorious law was rescinded, much to the joy and relief of the people, who had been tormented by dogs and punished for any retaliation (Innocent dogs may have been embarrassed.) Ultimately Tsunayoshi's favouritism toward dogs turned out most unfavourably for them.

Variety of Japanese Dogs

AFTER THE NATIONAL isolation policy during the 300-year Tokugawa Period was brought to an end, many kinds of dogs were imported from countries throughout the world together with foreign cultures.

The general trend was to respect things Western, and foreign canine species were highly valued. As a result, the indigenous Japanese dogs were gradually being mixed out of existence and the situation became serious in the later years of the Taisho Period (1912—1926).

The situation prompted some fans of Japanese dogs to move to protect them. Japan's Education Ministry, in full realization of the need to preserve the Japanese dogs, designated them as natural monuments - one of the valuable Japanese cultural properties. This action has greatly helped preserve the pure blood of Japanese dogs today.

Japanese dogs are classified by size, place of breeding and use. By use, they are wild boar dogs, deer dogs and so forth. The following explanation is based on the most popular classification.

Akita - Leader of Japanese Dogs

THE AKITA DOG gets his name from his home - Akita Prefecture on the northern Japanese main island. This is the most representative Japanese dog. Well-balanced in build (average height: 67 cm; weight: 45 kg), the Akita dog is believed to have been medium sized originally. The dog mated with the fighting dog of Tosa, Shikoku Island; when it was used for dog fighting in the Edo Period, and is considered to be a subspecies of the common Japanese dog.

It is just in the past few decades that this species settled into the present form. With upright triangular ears and recessed eyes, the Akita dog looks very clever. It's stout build, smart conformation as well as thick, forceful coiled tail and sturdy, alert legs add to the dignity and gracefulness of the dog. Originally white mingled with black specks, the dog now comes in a variety of other colours such as black, red and grizzled. Different colours produce individual effects. The popular colours vary with the time.

Some Akita dogs with red fur all over have a slight white marking like a touch of make-up on their jowls; such dogs are held to be especially beautiful.

The grey-haired Akita dog recalls the sober Samurai and is believed to be especially composed and dignified. He is claimed to possess the latent power suggestive of a master of kendo, the way of the sword.

Some black or red Akita dogs have white markings around their noses and legs; others have white tails. This variety of colouring adds to the impression of dignity, simpleness, steadiness and charm. Varied rich colours bring points to breeders of Akita dogs. The characters of these dogs suggest ancient Japanese people- austere, valiant, faithful, good-natured and gentle, highly affectionate and sensitive to the kindness of their masters.

The Fighting Dog—Tosa Dog

THE TOSA DOG WAS bred in the early Meiji Period (1868—1911) when dog fighting was popular in the province of Tosa, now Kochi Prefecture. This warrior is said to have incorporated the blood of big dogs such as the Bulldog, Mastiff and Pointer.

He looks like a Mastiff, but his ears hang down, his mouth is square and fur short. Mostly all brown, he is stout and strong and highly patient. An exceptional affection toward his master makes him valuable as a guard dog. He has long earned his scars fighting in the province of Tosa.

Dog fighting used to be merely a kind of entertainment; at present, the fights are held within a ring encircled by a one-meter among dogs that have undergone about twenty days' orderly training. The 5-square-meter ring is covered with matting. The fight proceeds rationally under direction of a referee. The entertainment feature has faded.

A dog is judged defeated the moment he gives a small bark or turns his tail toward his opponent. This action signals that he has lost the will to fight. Unlike the old mode of fighting seen in quarrels among dogs, the dog fight today is said to be a sort of sport performed by dog and man in unison, displaying the dog's servitude toward his master and fighting techniques.

Tosa dog fights are held through out Japan, and their fighting skills are given national ranking.

The owners of fighting dogs give their dogs rigorous training in preparation for the big day, and inspire them with an artistically refined fighting spirit in addition to fostering their natural wild characters. It is said that the owner himself must be upright in order to produce a fine fighting dog. An in experienced dog, each time he en counters something new, studies the reaction of his master. The movement of his master's mind is reflected in the action of the dog. If the master is hesitant and agitated, he cannot possibly produce a fine fighting dog. Too hasty aspiration for the prize or victory will disqualify the fighter. When the dog and the owner are in complete unison of spirit, the dog can step into the ring with dignity and with full qualification.

Bear-fighting Dogs of Hokkaido

AN ANCIENT SOUTHEAST Asian race, the Ainu lived in the northern through the middle Japanese main island in former days. But as the Japanese race extended its influence gradually to the northern regions, they withdrew into the northern part and finally settled in the island of Hokkaido. The dogs that accompanied them in this movement are presumed to be ancestors of the present Hokkaido dogs.

They are also said to have originated in Hokkaido disconnected from the movements of human in habitants. As the Ainu lived in groups, Hokkaido dogs may have formed their own species suitable to the various localities without mixing with dogs outside the villages. The use of Hokkaido dogs for bear hunting also contributed toward fixing their characters and shapes.

They have shorter ears and broader faces than the dogs in the southern and western parts of Japan. Their fur is closer, more suited to the colder and less humid climate of the island. Their facial expression is fiercer than any other type because of their use for hunting. They look as if they will hurl challenges at a bear when other dogs lift their hackles, tremble and hesitate at the mere scent of a bear's droppings or body.

The crudeness of Hokkaido dogs embodies the boorishness of indigenous Japanese dogs. They have an unsophisticated quality that results from their natural breeding. This characteristic is true to all kinds of Japanese dogs, but Hokkaido dogs are especially simple and primitive in appearance.

Their aspect is reflected in their disposition; they are valiant, wild and sometimes coarse. They are completely one-man dogs and remain faithful to their masters. They have a great homing instinct; the more they are loved, the more loyally they serve their masters. Of course they make fine guard dogs and irreplaceable friends.

Scarred Glory—Kishu Dog

THE KISHU DOG HAS gone through many vicissitudes since ancient times when he lived with the Japanese ancestors. This dog has displayed an unparalleled skill in hunting, especially wild boar hunting, and with his undaunted spirit has been popular among *matagi* or local professional hunters. No other type of hunting dog has greater glory or more scars.

The *matagi*'s weapon was the firelock, which, once fired, could be used no longer until reloaded. If the first firing failed to incur a fatal injury, the wounded wild animal might well charge the hunter in desperation. The role of the Japanese hunting dog was to fill up the vulnerable intervals, corner and fight down the enemy. The ban on the use of guns worsened the situation for hunters. Naturally they depended totally upon their dogs for the success of their hunting. Accordingly, the quality of dogs became so important that it controlled life itself as well as the means of providing food for the hunters. Dog and man staked their lives alike.

At the beginning of the Meiji Period, a new type of single-firing gun called the Murata gun was introduced, and changed the traditional pattern of hunting. Hunters depended less and less upon dogs and more and more upon their replacement, the gun. As time went by, the number of people who lived by hunting decreased, and the dogs they kept changed. Recently, dogs have almost disappeared from the hunting scene, and are loved by people more for their beauty and stoutness.

Matagi dogs also include the Kai dog and the Shikoku dog (Tosa dog) which have carried on the blood of the Japanese hunting dogs. They have well-developed shoulders and the inherited courage that will not concede a step before danger. They are *matagi* dogs fresh from the wild; they look curiously calm but their triangular eyes suggest a fierce and wild spirit inside.

Mostly white, the Kishu dogs tended to be lost from sight in snow, but they were especially favoured by hunters because their whiteness helped hunters distinguish them from the animals they fought with.

Another type of dog which has a wildness near that of the wild dog is the tiger-haired Kai dog, believed to be a crossbred offspring of dog and wolf. Relatively less known to men, the Kai dogs have a great number of fans who appreciate their simple, unartificial character. The Kai is a one-man dog with solid homing instinct; one Kai dog is said to have run 140 kilometres to the home of his former master. But the Kai is a little too rough to make a good pet.

A manager at the Kai Dog Club fears that the too great difference between the Kai and Western dogs makes foreigners feel they cannot do the breed. As the profession of hunting disappears, only a small number of people enjoy hunting in some seasons. Hunting as a sort of sport is still popular, and today's hunters prefer game where they can be assured of bringing home prey in impressively large numbers. They would rather hunt birds and hares using sharp looking Western dogs like Beagles which tend to move in packs. They don't have an eye for the less showy, wild boar hunt.

Boom of Small Shiba Dogs

IN JAPAN SMALLNESS supported by a sharp disposition and talent is generally compared to the Japanese pepper. This qualification may quite well be applied to the Shiba dog. Piquant though small, the dog is calm and doughty. The Shiba dog has been in great demand for the past few years, and has maintained the place of the Number One Popular Dog with its natural charm. Small wonder there are enthusiastic fans who love this kind of dog more than any other, bigger type.