

# Producing of Manga on the Colors of Horses and Armors Depicted in War Novels and Picture Scrolls of Japanese Medieval Times

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## Abstract

In the beginning of Kamakura period, 13<sup>th</sup> century, there described in war tales the colors of warriors' armors and horses. In fact, how exists these colors? We will research and reproduce the true colors by using some remaining materials, depictions in picture scrolls of that time represented by Heiji-monogatari-ekotoba, of course literal descriptions in the very war tales represented by Heike-monogatari, and from some photographs of real horses now exists. And we will introduce how appears the armor's color, and from which these choices of colors come from.

## Introduction

In Japanese medieval war tales, gunki monogatari, there are various description on the colors of brave riding warriors' armors and their fine horses' coats.

In this project, we will research on true colors in such old time and produce manga works and illustrations about these interesting matters.

## Description in war tales

For example, one of the battle scenes in Heike-monogatari describes famous warrior Kumagai Naozane who belongs to Genji group competing with his rivals to be the first rider in a charge at the attack on their enemy, Heike group. He wears a madder red armor with scarlet hood called horo, and inside blackish deep blue, kachi-iro hitatare clothes. And his horse's color is called Gonda kurige (a kind of local chestnut color).

As one clue, there are picture scrolls called Heiji-monogatari- ekotoba that were made in the nearest era of the Heike-monogatari's time. In that, they depicted many warriors wearing various colors of armors, and riding horses in colorful coats.

## Colors of Horses

There are more clues about horse's colors. It is presumed that the one of the ancestors of Japanese horses in old time is a Przewalski's horse that lives in the steppe of Mongolia today. But this horse's coat express only one color, dun (gray-brown). On the other hand, there appears in Heiji-monogatari-ekotoba various colors of horses. Probably at that time in Eastern Asia, horses already were considered to be cross-bred around wider areas of Eucasian continent



Dun coats of Przewalski's horses, one of ancestors of Japanese medieval horses. [1]



Variety of colors are used in depicting warriors' armors and coats of horses they ride, in Heiji-monogatari picture scrolls (ca. 13 century). [2]

**Colors of armor**

The warriors' armors are depicted by variety of colors. Not to mention noble red or white, deep blue or fresh green as the latest fashion at that time.

Actually, the colors of armors appear in the parts for protection from arrows, that cover warrior's shoulder, belly or waist. These consist of many small plates that are made of lacquered leather. And plates are combined together by the codes woven of dyed thread. The colors of armors mostly come from these codes' color. The method of binding plates is called odoshi. For example, above-mentioned Kumagai Naokane's armor is called akane-gawa-odoshi in Heike-monogatari, because its plates are bound by madder-red-lacquered leather codes.

These colors of armors originated from the noble class systems of Heian court peoples and their aesthetic senses. But it is clear that new senses of beauty belonging warrior's class had already risen.

**About Mis. Sano Eriko**

The Co-researcher and co-producer of this project, Mis. Sano Eriko, manga artist and illustrator, has some representative works about warrior's tales in late Heian period or early Kamakura period, such as Minamoto-no Yoshitsune or Minamoto-no-Tametomo.

**Reference books**

Eyewitness books HORSE, Juliet Clutton-Brock (DK Publishing, New York, U.S.A., 2008) [1]

Heiji-Monogatari-Ekotoba, Nihon-no-Emaki 12, Edited and introduced by Komatsu Shigemichi (Chuo-koron-sha, Tokyo, Japan, 1988) [2]

The History of Japanese Armor Vol.1, From the Yayoi period to Muromachi period, Text and Illustration by Nakanishi Ritta (Dai-nihon-kaiga, Tokyo, Japan, 2008) [3]

The Majesty of the Horse, Tamsin Pickeral, Photography by Astrid Harrison (Quintessence Editions Ltd., London, U.K., 2011)



So many patterns of colors and designs appear in shoulder parts of warriors' ooyoroi armors. [3]



One of Sano's representative manga works, Minamoto no Yoshitsune (2005, Leed-sha, Tokyo, Japan)