

[Summer Special Exhibition]

Equipment and Attire of the Samurai Warrior

The Warrior's Companion: Horses and their Trappings

July 27 (Sat.) - September 16 (Mon.), 2024

Hōsa Bunko Gallery



INTRODUCTION

Horses have been an integral part of people's lives and culture since ancient times, and from medieval times onward were especially valued among the samurai class as mounts on the battlefield. Just as we see in the use of the term "heiba no ken" (the right of the cavalry) to refer to supreme military command and "kyūba no michi" (the way of archery and horsemanship) to refer to the martial arts in general, working with horses was a necessity for warriors and, as symbols of martial arts and military prowess, an exceptional horse became indicative of a warrior's status and prestige. The noble form of the horse, which was closely connected with various customs of the samurai class, was beloved by the warriors and appears as a motif in various arts and crafts. In addition, the types of trappings that connected people with their horses changed with the times and according to their purpose, and in the early modern period, they developed and took on a more resplendent and decorative quality. This exhibition untangles the history shared by people and horses, focusing on the relationship between horses and samurai society in particular.

Exhibit No. 1

A sculpture of a horse made in rosewood greets visitors as they enter the gallery. The horse's name was Ōtaku, and it was the favorite horse of the 14th lord of the Owari, Tokugawa Yoshikatsu.



CHAPTER 1

HORSES IN BATTLE

Exhibit No. 2 - No. 15

Endowed with powerful galloping ability, horses have been indispensable in warfare since ancient times. When horses were brought to Japan from the Korean Peninsula around the middle of the Kofun Period, they were bred mainly for the purpose of mobilizing troops for battle, and their numbers gradually increased. In the samurai society of the end of the Heian period and onward, horses became a symbol of the warrior class, and the martial arts as a whole were known as the, "Kyūba no Michi" (the way of the bow and the horse). Warriors sought out horses that were suitable for fighting, and such horses served to demonstrate the owner's military power, wealth, position, and refinement. This section explores the relationship between horses and warfare from the late Heian Period to the Middle Ages.



CHAPTER 2

SAMURAI FAMILIES AND HORSES IN THE EDO PERIOD

Exhibit No. 16 - No. 28

In the Edo period, the tensions of warfare gradually faded away, but the shogunate, in accordance with the norms of the old samurai society, regarded horsemanship, together with archery, as the most important martial arts for warriors. As a result, middle- and high-ranking samurai trained in equestrianism during peacetime in order to be prepared in case of emergency. At the same time, the appearance of the horse also grew in importance, and many schools of equestrianism appeared one after another, each with its own unique innovations. From the Muromachi period to the Edo period, numerous paintings were produced featuring warriors and horses, demonstrating how horses were closely connected with the customs of the samurai class. This section presents historical documents related to horses belonging to the Owari Tokugawa family and dissects the relationship between samurai families and horses in the Edo period.

CHAPTER 3



HORSES IN ART

Exhibit No. 29 - No. 35

The sturdy and beautiful figure of the horse has long been revered, and images of horses have been the subject of a wide range of arts and crafts, including paintings, stationery accoutrements, tea implements, sword fittings, and personal accessories. The iconography of these works varied widely, ranging from images of horses standing in fields and pastures or galloping, to scenes of figures riding horses. Please enjoy these works highlighting the vitality and auspiciousness of horses through their refined aesthetic sensibilities.

CHAPTER 4



TRAPPINGS CONNECTING PEOPLE AND HORSES

Exhibit No. 36 - No. 52

The term "equestrian trappings" is a general term for the various hardware components that are used both to guide and to adorn horses, and in Japan, a unique form of Japanese harness, unparalleled anywhere in the world, emerged and developed. Among equestrian trappings, the items required for riding on horseback are commonly referred to as saddle trappings, which in Japan are variously classified as *Kara* (Chinese) saddles, *utsushi* (courtier's) saddles, *Yamato* (Japanese) saddles, *suikan* (double-register pommel) saddles, *gunjin* (battle) saddles, etc. Since the Muromachi period, the Japanese have used saddles for riding horses in fierce battles. In the Muromachi period and later, the *gunjin* saddles were favored for use in battle and *suikan* saddles were favored for use in daily life, while in the Edo period luxurious saddles of the *Yamato* lineage were passed down. This section presents the Owari Tokugawa family saddle collection as the core of the exhibition and explores the appeal of saddlery with its superior design.



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