

# Mounted Archery in Japan

## *Yabusame and the Modern Setting*

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# **Mounted Archery in Japan: Yabusame and the Modern Setting**

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# Summary

Described in a few words, *yabusame* is a form of mounted archery that in the modern period, and up until very recently, served exclusively as a shrine rite and warrior ceremonial, performed almost as exclusively by two famous mounted archery schools: the Ogasawara and Takeda schools. To put it briefly into historical context, *yabusame* was one of “three forms of ceremonial equestrian mounted archery” (*kisha no mitsumono* 騎射の三物 in Japanese).

Although *yabusame* was being performed in the late Heian period, it became more popular and formalized in the Kamakura period under shogunal patronage. It is therefore recognized as being both a shrine ritual and a martial art, strongly associated with the shogunate and the samurai of the Kamakura period in particular. According to the historical record, *yabusame* had disappeared almost completely by the seventeenth century and was later revived in the eighteenth century, when shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune ordered that the first of several performances be held in 1725. However, the convoluted reality of the *yabusame* ceremony’s existence is not only reflected in its lengthy history, but also within the changeable nature of its contextualization both past and present. It has long been an amalgamation of sport, shrine ritual, and warrior ceremonial, but in the last two decades, its contextualization has begun to change drastically once again. Within Japan and internationally, mounted archery both as a leisure and as a serious sporting activity has taken off with surprising momentum. This development is influencing *yabusame* practice to a far greater extent than any past event has ever done before, including its Tokugawa era revival. In present times, the Ogasawara and Takeda schools are popularly regarded as the preservers of a form of traditional culture (*dentō bunka*) and have had to assert their positions as guardians of an inherited tradition more clearly in the wake of the recent emergence of “sports *yabusame*” groups. These newer groups not only hold local competitive events, but also work with overseas organizations to host international competitions. The word *yabusame* has come to be understood as a general term referring to a Japanese-style of mounted archery by the public, and many mounted archery groups also employ this term to describe their modern secular sporting activities. To say simply that this thesis is about *yabusame* or, more broadly speaking, mounted archery in Japan is somewhat misleading. The aim of this study is to understand the way in which ideals concerning authenticity and tradition are negotiated in current manifestations of *yabusame* practice. By identifying some of these key areas of negotiation, I hope to answer the larger question of “How is *yabusame* conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?”



# Foreword

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my academic adviser, Marcus Jacobus Teeuwen, for his patient guidance and insightful advice. Writing and researching for this thesis has helped me improve upon many academic skills, and the credit lies firmly with Mark. Thank you for constantly taking time out of your hectic schedule to listen to my thoughts and help me organize my ideas into a more coherent narrative.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the many kind and generous individuals in Japan who contributed to the research that went into this thesis. Not only did they open their homes and their riding clubs to me, they patiently answered my questions, accommodated me at public events, and gave freely in all things, be it time or hospitality. Despite their busy schedules they made a constant effort to involve me, going so far as to let me ride their horses, shoot their bows, and even demonstrating how to balance in the traditional Japanese saddles. They went above and beyond any expectations I might have had prior to my fieldwork in terms of assistance, and both this thesis and myself are richer for the experience. In no particular order, I would especially like to thank the Ogasawara school; The Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine; Tim MacMillan; Deborah and Ian Hayden; “T-san” from the Kamiogino Riding School, whose generosity was limitless; the Yabusame kyōgi renmei; the Yamato Horse Park; the Tōyama School; the Aomori Riding Club; the Kōyōdai Kiso Uma Riding School; and “O-san” from the Nambu school, who let me borrow several of his most precious books.

Lastly, I want to thank my father, Thomas N. Wood. Continuing with master’s studies would never have been possible without his encouragement and support. Thank you for fostering my interest in history and inspiring me to study the subject I love. Having a parent as unconditionally supportive as you is a fortune beyond any other.

**Quick Reference List of Groups and Organizations Encountered During Fieldwork  
and/or Featured in This Thesis**

Nambu-ryū	南部流
Ogasawara-ryū	小笠原流
Takeda-ryū	武田流
Tōyama-ryū	戸山流
Aomori Bokujō	青森乗馬倶楽部
Kōyōdai Kiso Uma Bokujō	紅葉台木曾馬牧場
Yabusame Kyōgi Renmei	流鏑馬競技連盟
Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine	日光東照宮
Freedom Riding Club (FRC)	
Yamato Horse Park	
Towada Riding Club	
Kamiogino Riding School	
Kaminokawa Horse Park	



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# 1 Why Study *Yabusame*?

## 1.1 Introduction and Overview

To describe it in a few words, *yabusame* is a form of mounted archery that in the modern period and up until very recently served exclusively as a shrine rite and warrior ceremonial, performed almost as exclusively by two famous mounted archery schools: the Ogasawara and Takeda schools. As will soon become evident, however, the convoluted reality of its existence is reflected in its lengthy history and the many contexts of its performance that have emerged since at least as early as the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). Therefore, when I was initially asked about the topic of my thesis I discovered, much to my surprise, that it was a somewhat difficult question to answer. To say simply that this thesis is about *yabusame* or, more broadly speaking, mounted archery in Japan is somewhat misleading. Such an over-simplified answer on my part has often been met with a mixture of interest and skepticism, the general reaction being, “*Isn't that a bit niche?*” My response was often a perhaps slightly defensive attempt to explain the relevance of this topic of study in terms of its more broadly applicable social implications; first of all the way in which ideals concerning authenticity and tradition are negotiated in the modern setting and secondly, what happens to this negotiation of ideals when a wholly modern process such as sportification or globalization is suddenly imposed upon the popular discourse. This more often than not resulted in my argument becoming lost in an unstructured attempt at explaining what I meant by this and why mounted archery in Japan, or more specifically, *yabusame*, was the example of choice in highlighting these issues.

While I struggled to succinctly explain the exact nature of my proposed research, two things in particular became abundantly clear. First and foremost I had to recognize that there were a number of sub-issues requiring careful attention before they could later be connected to present an overall picture. These issues were not only pertinent to the narrow focus of *yabusame*, but also to broader discussions in anthropological and sociological theory. However, although they were all greatly interesting, some would have to be largely omitted due to the limitations of time and the maximum page-count of the thesis. The subsequent realization was that the onus was upon myself to selectively present a few of the most relevant issues so as to construct a clear narrative, which was not an easy task. While focusing on a very particular area of study, I have attempted to simultaneously recognize the more

encompassing arguments and theories that exist in tension, both within the Japanese *yabusame* communities and beyond them.

To paraphrase anthropologist Richard Handler, explaining anthropological notions of authenticity both in verbal discussion and in the course of writing this thesis has been an exercise in becoming aware of the “startling degree to which anthropological discourse about others proves to be a working-out of our own myths.”<sup>1</sup> Contrary to what at first seemed like a relatively straight-forward line of inquiry concerning how authenticity and tradition were negotiated by the individuals contacted during the course of fieldwork, the all-too-brief time spent in the field created questions that eventually led me further down the rabbit-hole of sociological and anthropological theory. This experience forced me to recognize and challenge the conscious and unconscious presumptions and conclusions I had initially brought to the project. In other words, it became necessary to critically reflect upon my own understandings of the various forms of *yabusame* I had come in contact with.

One striking parallel I noticed between the internal debates of present-day *yabusame* actors/groups, their dialogues with the general public, and the historical concerns of Tokugawa period actors at a time when the shogun was attempting to revive the *yabusame* ceremony, was the high degree of reflexivity. Reflexivity in anthropology, and most other branches of the social sciences, is a term that refers to self-referential acts of analysis and criticism. Maja Nazaruk describes it thus:

*Reflexivity is the process of reflection, which takes itself as the object; in the most basic sense, it refers to reflecting on oneself as the object of provocative, unrelenting thought and contemplation. Reflexivity makes a claim to self-reference (Davies 1998: 8)... [it] is a technical term that permeates critical literary discourse and social science research, as well as aspects of the autobiographical life of regular people; this has created a sudden, violent outburst of confusion regarding its everyday usage.*<sup>2</sup>

Despite this “confusion,” as I have come to understand it reflexivity is a process by which a person, or even a larger academic discipline (such as anthropology), investigating some object of study turns the focus back upon him/her/itself. The inquirer thereby becomes part of the line of inquiry, and is not only aware of this, but instigates it willingly. The above quote from Richard Handler elucidates this process perfectly. Reflexive analysis of the self can come from researchers who explore their own relationship with, and approaches to, their subject of

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Handler, “Authenticity,” *Anthropology Today* 2, No. 1. (February 1986): 2

<sup>2</sup> Maja Nazaruk, “Reflexivity in Anthropological Discourse Analysis,” *Anthropological Notebooks* 17, no.1, (Slovene Anthropological Society, 2011): 73

study; the “observer” comes to critically reflect upon their role as such, thereby “working out [his/her] own myths.” Reflexivity can also describe the ways in which cultural actors interact with and construct narratives within their culture. This is especially evident in the authentication processes of contemporary cultures. According to Filitz and Saris:

*...the idea of authenticity is embedded in the ongoing project of modernity... Above all, authenticity is a fundamental expression of reflexivity. The production of cultural stories for characterizing the authentic object, which, like its provenance are often manipulated by traders, consumers, craftsmen and heritage officials, are what Appadurai calls mythologies (1995: 48). The cultural adjustment of an individual’s lifeworld, following the experience of an unsatisfactory cultural situation (Warnier 1996: 17), counter-, or alternative movements, are all products of conscious reflections on the inappropriate character of the present dominant norms and values of social life.<sup>3</sup>*

I argue, therefore, that it is impossible to discuss how ideals of “authenticity” and “tradition” are negotiated by Japanese *yabusame* actors in the modern setting without acknowledging the reflexive nature of these negotiations. Although Maja Nazaruk describes reflexivity as “[an] ambiguous [term], poorly articulated...used as a *passee partout* tool for referring to auto-critical thought and works,”<sup>4</sup> I will outline here the exact meaning I wish to convey through its use in this thesis.

By observing the discussions of local *yabusame* actors, I became involved in the discussions myself. Engaging with my interviewees meant that I often asked questions that forced them to consider aspects of their activities they had never paid much thought to beforehand. However, other parts of these conversations indicated that the individual had reflected extensively upon certain aspects, particularly in terms of the historical context and accuracy, of what they were doing. They had come to some deeper understanding of their “role,” as one individual put it. While I realize that the personal element of my observations cannot be wholly removed from the research, I feel it is best to embrace certain aspects of it. For example, it was interesting to listen to the well-articulated and almost automatic answers from local actors on some topics, and then observe them become quickly reserved and cautious at a comment or question from myself that caused them to become intensely reflexive. It was during these times that areas of contention and negotiation within the *yabusame* groups were made most clear. At one particular question concerning tradition and its relationship with modern sports, one

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Filitz, Jamie A. Saris, *Debating Authenticity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 15-16

<sup>4</sup> Nazaruk, “Reflexivity in Anthropological Discourse Analysis,” 73

interviewee even asked if she could talk freely into my recorder, so as to have a kind of discussion with herself. She wished to organize her thoughts in order to better understand her feelings, so that she could ultimately give me a more accurate answer.

Often with great care, the interviewees considered what they are doing now in the present and how accurate, or “authentic,” a mounted archery performance is in relation to how it was performed at a precise point in the past. Or conversely, they looked back on an object of interest in the past and considered it within the criterion of how it is or how it should be manifested in the present. I found that the actors themselves may be aware or unaware of the extent to which their activities are a genuine aspect of present-day culture, but are conscious of the fact that the notion of “authenticity” is generally understood to mean “exact simulation.” They are also, of course, aware that exact simulations are nigh-impossible to achieve and that they must therefore negotiate constantly within the restrictions the modern setting imposes. In other words, they may well recognize that authenticity is an illusion and historical accuracy is inherently beset by compromise. Yet there is very often a tendency for individuals to be unaware of the freedoms the modern setting offers them, and of the fact that their activities are as much a reflection of the peculiarities of post-modern constructions as they are of those of the past.

Until about twenty years ago, reflexive discourse between members of the conservative *yabusame* schools appears to have had a tendency to revolve around such topics as reconstruction, presentation, re-enactment, revival, etc. There seems to have been very little talk of evolution of the activity at that time, it was all about maintenance and preservation, about inheritance and continuity; in other words, it was about survival. When an activity such as *yabusame* simply persists to ensure its continued existence, as an anachronistic practice that “a few people lovingly keep alive,”<sup>5</sup> this is indicative not only of a lack of interest from the wider public but also of any outside stimulus that may induce radical change. The involved actors look inward, focusing upon the (private) Self, unconcerned with the outward (public) Other. Unless something occurs to challenge the persistence of the activity or their own authority over it, there is perhaps little motivation to involve the public in their reflexive self-commentary to any great extent.

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<sup>5</sup> G. Cameron Hurst, III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan: Swordsmanship and Archery*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 170

So what happens when a sudden, arguably spontaneous development occurs which challenges the long-held status quo and forces all the participating actors to pay particular attention to the implications (and limitations) of the use of conceptual dualistic oppositions such as “authentic and inauthentic,” “traditional and non-traditional”? Actors who were previously so intent on looking to the past to regulate the activities of the present are now forced to look to the future, to consider their place in it and the possibility of a requirement to evolve. *Yabusame* is undergoing just such an experience. In the last two decades at least, within Japan and without, mounted archery both as leisure and as a serious sporting activity has taken off with surprising momentum. The Ogasawara and Takeda schools are popularly regarded as preservers of a form of traditional culture (*dentō bunka* in Japanese) and have had to assert their positions as guardians of an inherited tradition more clearly in the wake of the recent emergence of “sports *yabusame*” groups. These newer groups not only hold local competitive events but also work with overseas organizations to host international competitions. If this were not exciting enough for the mounted archery scene in Japan, there has also been a revivalist interest in Japanese forms of mounted archery for re-enactment and demonstrative purposes. Several individuals have founded new schools, or *ryū*, whose members perform at popular festivals such as *jidai matsuri* (era festivals) dressed in *bushi* (warrior) garb, and also enjoy the freedom to compete in events hosted by other sport groups.

The possibility to compete or perform in the events of another group is just one of the idiosyncrasies these more recent groups possess. Such groups have steadily amassed public attention since their emergence and their memberships are slowly but surely increasing. They attribute this to their flexible attitudes and more inclusive practices compared with those of the traditional schools. Members of the Ogasawara and Takeda schools are banned from entering competitions and so they remain, at least in theory, segregated from these developments. Even so, the conservative schools are not necessarily negative toward re-enactment and sporting groups. They appear to regard the increase in public interest as a positive thing, but in the case of the Ogasawara school this seems to have led to the realization that there is a need to engage and educate the public on the particular kind of *yabusame* they themselves perform. One could argue that this reveals a growing propensity to involve the general public in aspects of cultural negotiation that were previously closed to them. An increase in public interest does not, however, guarantee an increase in membership. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining potential students remains a grave concern of the two grand masters I spoke to, as well as the head priest of the Nikkō Tōshōgu shrine. One young

Ogasawara student said that he felt the practice “had stagnated,” and that this had nothing to do with the limitations set by rigid adherence to traditional and historical form, but rather was due to the old-fashioned hierarchical mentality that ultimately discouraged young people from joining.

Out of a growing necessity to self-promote, the Ogasawara school have turned to modern forms of discursive production such as social media and educational publications (including e-books), drawing on the historical significance of their ceremonial performances. This inducement to look outward at wider society and the accompanying need to educate the public as a means of capitalizing on growing public interest suggests a shift in authority. It begs the question of who exactly are the individuals or social groups with the authority to decide what is authentic or not, and then apply that decision to different *yabusame* groups. As an example, I was told that members of the Ogasawara and Takeda schools were initially critical (and some still remain so) of the choice made by emergent mounted archery groups to use the word *yabusame*. This was because these groups performed exclusively in competitive sporting contexts and were not participants in educational demonstrations or ceremonial shrine dedications.

However, such criticism requires one to then construct an argument as to *why* exactly it is erroneous to use the word *yabusame* to describe the sports oriented activities of these newer groups. There have been many such arguments; the main one, for example, is to draw upon the historical application of the word *yabusame* to denote a specific ceremonial form of *kisha* 騎射, the Japanese word for mounted archery. To apply the term *yabusame* to a sporting activity instead of using a more encompassing word such as *kisha* was therefore viewed as misguided. There have also been arguments that point to the alleged lack of competitive elements in Ogasawara and Takeda school *yabusame* practice as an example of correctness. There may even have been a suggestion that *yabusame* as performed by Ogasawara and Takeda is a part of Japanese traditional culture that these newer groups fail to represent, because tradition (i.e., documented long-term consecutive practice) is precisely one of the requisite elements these groups lack.

Even at a cursory glance we can identify several key issues at play here. First of all, we might investigate how the word *yabusame* was employed at any point prior to the contemporary period, only to discover that its application was debated already by Tokugawa historians and

members of the shogunate in the mid-1700s.<sup>6</sup> We might then look at its use by the general public today and find that the word *kisha* is largely unrecognized and that *yabusame* now appears to have absorbed its more general meaning. This suggests a contemporary shift in authority: it is suddenly the outside Other who has power to decide what may be called *yabusame*. Another angle could be to analyze competitive elements in *yabusame* as it is performed by the Ogasawara and Takeda schools, so as to determine the extent to which we may deny its involvement in any competitive context. And lastly, historical documentation of long-term consecutive practice lends weight to the argument that these schools are maintaining a tradition, but it simultaneously hints at the existence of a binarism of “traditional” and “non-traditional.” This can be problematic as it prompts one to infer that the “traditional” practice is “old” while the “non-traditional” practice is “new” or “modern.”

As the sports historian Lee A. Thompson says of Sumo – another prominent example of Japanese tradition that emphasizes continuity with the past and claims a long and unbroken history of practice – certain “traditional” aspects of an overall tradition often turn out to be largely modern.<sup>7</sup> Re-enactment or sports groups may take inspiration from the traditional schools of *yabusame*, yet they additionally do their own research and incorporate a mixture of old and new elements in a process of adoption and adaption to serve their own needs. An inquiry into what exactly are the traditional elements in the practice of these newer groups, and where that would place them on the traditional – non-traditional scale, inevitably leads us to the question of “*What precisely do we mean by ‘tradition’ anyway?*” This was the question that subsequently pushed me to ask the very thing that defines the research presented in this thesis: “*How is yabusame conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?*”

To reiterate the initial point, while *yabusame* as a subject of study might at first glance appear somewhat niche, I hope that this study contributes in some small part to a more general discussion in anthropological discourse concerning popular conceptualizations of authenticity and tradition. In the case of the Ogasawara and Takeda, negotiations concerning the modern setting are no longer solely reflexive in their focus upon the schools’ contemporary place in a past-to-present narrative. The processes of self-commentary and self-criticism now

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<sup>6</sup> Reinier H. Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer: Tokugawa Yoshimune Revives The Yabusame Ceremony,” *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* 4, no. 4 (1995): 43-48

<sup>7</sup> Lee A. Thompson, “The Invention of the Yokozuna and the Championship System, Or, Futahaguro’s Revenge” in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 174-175

increasingly involves an appeal for recognition and endorsement from the public. A documented history of consecutive practice in the past legitimates their actions in the present, which they then must market and present to the wider public in order to consolidate their authority as preservers of traditional culture in the future. All the while there is a drive to retain the distinct meaning of the word *yabusame* and to educate the general public on its historical application. When it comes to the newer *ryū* and sports *yabusame* groups, their narratives are still in their infancy compared to the two older institutions and their legacies unknowable, but their emergence may well herald a change in how *yabusame* is practiced and conceived.

## 1.2 Important Notes on the Term *Yabusame*

Some clarification is in order regarding the use of the English words “mounted archery” and “horseback archery,” the Japanese use of the same words *mauntedo ācherī* (mounted archery), *hōsubakku ācherī* (horseback archery), and the Japanese words *kisha* (騎射) and *yabusame* (流鏑馬)

I use the words “mounted archery” and “horseback archery” interchangeably throughout the thesis. Both refer to the general act of firing a bow from horseback no matter what form, style or technique is implemented to achieve it. Hence I use the expressions “Japanese forms of mounted archery” or “mounted archery in Japan” in a general and collective sense to refer to the various manifestations of *kisha* as they are practiced in the modern setting. *Kisha*, which I translate as “mounted archery,” is also used interchangeably with “mounted archery” and “horseback archery,” retaining the same collective meaning but with specific pertinence to Japan. In other words, “*kisha*” and “mounted archery in Japan” are used with the same meaning and all-encompassing nuance.

During the course of my fieldwork I discovered that there are, however, some individuals in Japan who use the expressions “mounted archery” and “horseback archery” in specific reference to either “Western” (U.S.A. and Europe) or all foreign styles of horseback archery. When talking to interviewees, I on occasion unconsciously used “mounted archery” or “horseback archery” (in both English and Japanese) in the collective context described above and used throughout this thesis. Once or twice this resulted in a misunderstanding and I was gently reproved. To those local actors, mounted or horseback archery represented the foreign

“Other,” which more often than not meant an aggregate categorization under which those overseas groups with a predilection for sport-forms of mounted archery fell. This was distinctly separate from the similarly aggregate category of the Japanese “self,” which includes *yabusame*.

*Yabusame* is now often affixed with the terms *kyōgi* (競技), meaning “competition,” *supōtsu* (スポーツ), which is “sport(s)” and *shinji* (神事), which I translate as “shrine ritual.” *Shinji* is more often used in writing and formal speech as a suffix rather than a prefix (i.e., *yabusame shinji* 流鏑馬神事). *Kyōgi* and *supōtsu* appear to be either prefixed or suffixed fairly interchangeably to describe the activity, although I noticed their use as a prefix was slightly more commonplace. Note, however, that in the case of the noun “*yabusame* competition,” *kyōgi* would be suffixed. In other words, the general rule is: *kyōgi yabusame* refers to “competitive *yabusame*” and *yabusame kyōgi* typically means “a *yabusame* competition,” but sometimes syntax is flexible and both can be used to describe the activity of competitive mounted archery.

*Kyōgi* and *supōtsu* being prefixed/suffixed with *yabusame* is somewhat controversial, however, and knowing when and when not to use them can prove tricky. To put it briefly into historical context, *yabusame* was one of “three forms of ceremonial equestrian mounted archery” (*kisha no mitsumono* 騎射の三物 in Japanese). The other two were *inuoumono* (犬追物) and *kasagake* (笠懸). *Inuoumono* was an elaborate ceremony codified in the Muromachi period. It was typically performed by members of the warrior class and involved chasing dogs inside a round pen on horseback while shooting at them with blunt arrows.<sup>8</sup> *Kasagake* was popular among warriors of the Kamakura period and is, in some ways, similar to *yabusame*, apart from the fact that one target is typically shot at instead of three. The targets were originally straw hats (*kasa*) but by Kamakura times the hats were replaced with hide covered wooden targets.<sup>9</sup>

Although *yabusame* was well known since the late Heian period, it became more popular and formalized in the early medieval period under shogunal patronage.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore officially recognized as being both a shrine ritual and a martial art, strongly associated with the

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<sup>8</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 116-117

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 116

<sup>10</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 115-116

shogunate and the samurai of the Kamakura period in particular. Outside of colloquial reference, the attribution of the word *yabusame* to an activity that is not the *yabusame* falling under the category of *kisha no mitsumono* was often considered problematic by the individuals I interviewed; more so than using it in conjunction with a term such as *supōtsu*. These affixes serve to indicate a contextualized form of *yabusame*, much in the same way as *shinji* has long been used to denote *yabusame* in the specific context of a shrine ritual. I also received the impression that refraining from advertising a sporting event simply as “*yabusame*” to the general public was done as much out of deference to the Ogasawara and Takeda schools as it was out of an urge to not mislead the public over what the performance entailed.

The absence of a contextualizing affix in a situation where it is deemed appropriate to distinguish the type of *yabusame* being performed has been a source of contention in the past. When a sports *yabusame* group recently organized a competition in the Hirosaki castle grounds<sup>11</sup> with the help of the local government, they were criticized by other groups (not only the notoriously conservative Ogasawara and Takeda schools), for using the word *yabusame* to describe the event in their advertisements. When discussing this with some of the interviewees, it appeared that the main reason for the criticism was that the event had been open to international competitors. It was one thing, I was told, to call it *yabusame* on the posters and pamphlets despite it being a sports competition, but it was completely erroneous to do so when there were to be foreign competitors shooting with foreign bows in foreign costumes. A performance could not be considered *yabusame* if a number of the competitors were not using the Japanese long bow and Japanese-style arrows. Even calling it sports *yabusame* seemed to sit uncomfortably with some individuals, who felt that the competition should have been referred to as *mauntedo ācherī* or *hōsubakku ācherī* due to the international element. In actual fact the pamphlets do say “international horseback archery competition” on the front, but the text is small and in English. A general Japanese audience was therefore unlikely to be able to easily interpret it. A copy of the pamphlet covers in chronological order from the years 2010<sup>12</sup>-2013 is attached on the page following this section for reference.

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<sup>11</sup> Hirosaki is a small city of around 180,000 residents in the southwest of Aomori prefecture

<sup>12</sup> The 2010 event is not held at Hirosaki castle and is advertised as “the 4th national *yabusame-kyōgi* Aomori meet” in Japanese (第四回 全国流鏑馬競技青森大会) but also as “The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Horseback Archery Competition 第二回 国際大会 (2<sup>nd</sup> International Meet)” in the two small brown triangles, indicating that the international competition is more recent than the Aomori national meet. Notice the distinction between

The members of the group behind this particular competition were aware of the controversy, and had had no intention of creating an upset with their advertisements. As it was explained to me, because it was held in the Hirosaki castle grounds with the permission of the local government and was not a well-known event, they had felt a need to appeal to local Japanese residents. There was perhaps an idea on the part of the local government to generate some revenue for the local tourism industry. In any case, *kisha* is an archaic word not recognized by the public, while *mauntedo ācherī* or *hōsubakku ācherī* was felt to sound too foreign. Ergo, to brand it as such was seen as atypical of an event involving the traditional Japanese long bow and kimono-style costumes, set to the archetypal Japanese backdrop of Hirosaki castle surrounded by the autumn foliage of its grounds. Although many of the organizers felt that using the word *yabusame* in this way was somewhat unfortunate, from 2011 the official title of the competition became “The Hirosaki Castle Yabusame International Meet” (*hirosakijō yabusame kokusai taikai* 弘前城流鏑馬国際大会).

It is important to note here that beyond the vocabulary explained above, such as *kisha*, it is common to encounter other terms in the Japanese language that refer to mounted archery. These words are heavily nuanced, often ascribed to a specific context or style. For simplicity’s sake they will not be used in this thesis unless it becomes appropriate or necessary to do so, at which point there will an accompanying explanation. That being said, I would like to take the opportunity to explain one word in particular, *kyūba* (弓馬), as it has repeatedly been present in conversations with local Japanese actors and in written Japanese sources. *Kyūba* (弓馬) and *kyūba no michi* (弓馬の道) are often translated as “way of the horse and bow.”<sup>13</sup> A term used to refer to the “calling” or way of life of the samurai warrior, it specifically pertains to a time when the bow, not the sword, was a warrior’s most important weapon.<sup>14</sup> *Kyūba* is also sometimes combined with the word *jutsu*, meaning “technique” or “art.” *Kyūba jutsu* (弓馬術) can be translated as “the art of the bow and horse” or “the art of mounted archery” and is again heavily associated with samurai, but nuanced in favor of a more ceremonial warrior tradition.

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*yabusame-kyōgi* and ‘horseback archery’ for the two different meets, but also note how the more generally phrased *yabusame taikai* (流鏑馬大会), meaning “Yabusame Meet,” is in large type so as to immediately catch the reader’s eye. It is this, and the later use of *yabusame kokusai taikai* (流鏑馬国際大会), or “Yabusame International Meet” that elicited some ire. There are two events held in 2011, one is at the same beach location as the previous year, and the other is the first competition held in the Hirosaki castle grounds.

<sup>13</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 112

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *Samurai: World of the Warrior*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 95-96



Figure 1: (top to bottom, left to right) the pamphlets referred to in the previous section, 2010 – 2013

### 1.3 A Note on the Terms “Modern” and “Premodern”

As the sports anthropologist Robert Sands put it, there is only the perception of how each culture and society “sees” their place in the world.<sup>15</sup> And so I, like Sands, do not assume that my observations are part of a science providing universal patterns or theory of human behavior. Therefore, while I have largely avoided using the word “postmodern” in this thesis, my understanding of the word is the same as Sands’; a demarcation of the breakaway from neocolonial rationale in academic thinking. Allen Guttmann and Lee A. Thompson argue that most scholars continue to believe that “modern” is an appropriate word to describe the present state of Japanese society.<sup>16</sup> As I have drawn heavily from their book *Japanese Sports, A History* (2001) in reference to *yabusame* in the context of sports practice, I follow their lead in this thesis in the consideration that Japanese history from 1868 to the present is an instance of modernization.<sup>17</sup> I do not assume, however, that the modernization of the West serves as any kind of standard for this instance. Likewise, I do not intend to impose an outline of historical development originally designed for Western Europe upon Japanese history.<sup>18</sup> I merely use the term to create a distinction between pre-1868 and post-1868 Japan. The word “premodern” is used in a similar way to how the historian Karl F. Friday uses “early modern,” as the starting point of both periods (after the end of the medieval) is in the late 1600s. However, it is important to note that the “early modern” period extends up until the early 1900s while my use of “premodern” does not.<sup>19</sup> I use “premodern” rather than “early modern,” therefore, because this periodization schema coincides with the division between pre-1868 (premodern) and post 1868 (modern) Japan.

### 1.4 Methodology and Summary of Fieldwork

For roughly six weeks from early October until the end of November in 2014, I travelled around the central Japanese island of Honshu in order to visit and talk with members of various mounted archery groups. While it was not possible to visit or talk with representatives

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<sup>15</sup> Robert R. Sands, *Sport and Culture: At Play in the Fields of Anthropology*, (Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing, 1999), 17

<sup>16</sup> Allen Guttmann, Lee A. Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 2

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Karl F. Friday, “Sorting the Past” in *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, ed. Karl F. Friday (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2012), 19

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 18

from every single active *kisha* or *yabusame* group due to their abundance, I was fortunate enough to encounter what I felt to be good range of them. I spoke with practitioners from twelve different groups and riding clubs in total, from as far south as the greater Tokyo area and Nikkō to Aomori prefecture in the north, and even one individual from Hokkaido. Some of these groups belonged to fairly new, larger and more collective local or national organizations, hence communicating and cooperating with one another through their mutual involvement. Others stood alone in their practice as they were well-established enough not to require involvement in these new organizations to promote or legitimize their activities. The various “*yabusame*” activities of these groups varied; from pure sports *yabusame* to the strictly ceremonial form of shrine dedication, or *yabusame shinji*. Words such as “living history,” “cultural heritage,” “traditional culture,” and “modern sports” were all used varyingly by local actors to describe these activities. I was able to speak with sports *yabusame* actors, re-enactors, and members of the Ogasawara school, who are largely considered to be the “official” preservationists of shrine ritual *yabusame* and other ceremonial forms of *kisha*. They are the self-described “inheritors” of a part of Japanese traditional culture (*dentō bunka*) that is so often associated with “the way of the bow and horse.”<sup>20</sup>

The groups I encountered were diverse in their histories, the “newest” among them having been established within the last decade. I was incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to talk with and follow members from the illustrious and conservative Ogasawara school for five days, from the 13<sup>th</sup> of October until the 18<sup>th</sup>. This was during their bi-annual (*shinji*) *yabusame* dedication at the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine. I was able to observe the official practice day prior to the ceremony, the day of the ceremony itself (16<sup>th</sup>), and the parade on the final day (17<sup>th</sup>). I was unable to set up a contact among anyone currently practicing with the similarly long-standing and conservative Takeda school. However, I did manage to speak with teachers and students from the recently founded mounted archery branch of the Tōyama school, where one of the joint grand masters is an ex-Takeda member (trained by them, he told me, for thirty five years). The Tōyama school likewise allowed me to observe their demonstrative performance at the Machida *jidai matsuri*, or “Machida Era Festival” held on the Serigaya park grounds in Machida, Tokyo.

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<sup>20</sup>小笠原清忠、小笠原清其〔共著〕”Ogasawara Yabusame”小笠原流 はースト婦人画法社;

第38回企画展、笠懸野：合戦と武技、2004 笠懸野 岩宿文化資料館 (*Dai 38 Kai Kikakuten, Kasagakeno: Kassen to Bugi*), 2004 *Kasagakeno Iwajuku Bunka Shiryō Kan* (Kasagakeno Iwajuku Culture Museum), 2004; Terry Sherwin, *Martial Arts And Letters - Yabusame*

As I have stated above, the aim of this project is to investigate how ideals of authenticity and tradition are negotiated within a modern setting, particularly within the contexts of sport and competition. It will discuss the extent to which tradition is created and sustained in both the sporting and anachronistic contexts of mounted archery as they exist in Japan today, and its interplay with notions of authenticity within local and national discourses. I will also discuss how such narratives are constructed, their confluence with the rule creation process of a modern sport, and the current obstacles and issues that arise as a result. I believe that shifts in Japan's political and societal values since the 1980s have led to the emergence of a spectrum of mounted archery with two extremes; modern sport at one end and cultural heritage/cultural preservation on the other. It is the objective of this study to discuss the extent to which sport forms of *yabusame* have influenced *yabusame* practice in recent years; for example, whether or not today's modern socio-political landscape has rendered it nigh impossible for modern sport and traditional culture (*dentō bunka* in Japanese) to share a mutual association within any of the distinctly exclusive or convergent forms of *yabusame* practice.

Due to the current and ever-evolving nature of this topic of study, I felt that the themes specified above were more suitably explored through qualitative methods of research. Of particular relevance to this approach is the parallel emergence of mounted archery as an international sport, a very recent development of the last twenty years or so. Members of sports *yabusame* groups in Japan use social media extensively not only to communicate with one another, but also to communicate with overseas mounted archery groups and competitors. They are also increasingly participating in international competitions abroad in addition to hosting them locally. However, much of the discussions and debates between these individuals and groups are either verbal or done privately through email, and postings via social media are notoriously scattered. There are numerous Facebook pages belonging to various interest groups and organizations, for example, making it difficult to keep track of all current discussions. Even if information is recorded, it is neither stored for long nor guaranteed to be made widely available to group members or the public. For this reason, I felt that an accurate representation of the overall state of *yabusame* in Japan, and the feelings of the actors involved with its recent development, would be best achieved through personal observation and interaction.

Prior conversations with a few individuals from various Japanese and international groups had led me to conclude that considerations of authenticity and tradition can be highly personal.

Thanks to the fortunate timing of the outset of this research, founding members of various local mounted archery groups, national and international organizations, and other persons of particular interest were available for direct comment. Qualitative data collection through interviews and observations of training and public performances, therefore, became the most suitable investigative methodology. This allowed me to develop a more intimate understanding of the contentions and concessions surrounding issues in highly visible states of negotiation. Through my interviews and conversations with local actors, for example, I became aware of the social and political influences on *yabusame* practice, opinions on the prestige and conservatism associated with the preservation of cultural tradition (*dentō bunka*), and issues surrounding the standardization of equipment in international competitions. The fieldwork component additionally allowed me to more effectively compare the negotiations of ideals concerning tradition and authenticity between actors.

In fact, it was through social media that the instructors and fellow students I met when participating in an international horseback archery competition in Oregon, U.S.A., helped me get in contact with mounted archers in Japan who they thought might assist with later research. It was thanks to such online communication that I was able to find the kind and accommodating people who were willing to not only participate in interviews, but to also host me, and allow me to ride their horses and help behind the scenes at their events. Hence, in addition to the analyses of academic texts, opinion pieces and online resources, fieldwork came to play an integral role to this thesis.

Interviews were conducted in both Japanese and English (mostly Japanese), and sometimes in a mixture of the two, depending on what I or the interviewee wished to express in the language we found easiest to express it in. I was also provided with a lot of private materials that I am unable to reference directly as they are both unpublished and contain some sensitive information. These include internal memos between organization members, meeting minutes, and membership lists. All translations of Japanese language sources referenced as such are my own. Any mistakes or misunderstandings contained within these translations, therefore, are also mine.

### **Anonymization**

The names of the individuals I spoke with and/or interviewed have been anonymized. Although I received express permission from all the interviewees to use their names freely, I

still thought it would be best to anonymize as a matter of sensitivity and out of respect for their privacy. All names have been replaced with an initial and the suffix *-san*, the Japanese equivalent of Mr. /Mrs. /Ms.), attached to it (e.g. “O-san”). This was done out of polite courtesy to the interviewees and also to further anonymize their identities as *-san* is gender neutral. Wherever possible, I have endeavored to eliminate the gender of the individual, except in such cases where it would be obvious; for example, only male Ogasawara members may perform at the Nikkō Tōshōgū *yabusame shinji* ceremony. Additionally, I have presented the ideas and opinions of many students and teachers in this thesis, but have singled out only a handful to whom I have assigned an initial. Everyone else has been anonymized in a more general sense, for example “a student told me...” or “One member of X riding club said...” etc.

I would also like to note here that all the photographs of individuals featured in this thesis were taken by myself and used with their consent.

## **Layout of the Chapters**

This first chapter has presented an overview of some of the issues I will explore in the course of this thesis. Chapter Two gives some historical context to the history of *kisha* and *yabusame* in Japan, and also provides some technical information on the Japanese bow. Chapter Three is a discussion on the academic theories behind the concepts of authenticity and tradition, where I introduce some of the issues that arise from their subjective nature and myriad conceptualizations/contextualization. Chapter Four applies this theory to four key areas of negotiation concerning the concepts of authenticity and tradition in *yabusame* practice today, as well as in Tokugawa times. Chapter Five looks at sport and explores whether traditional elements can be identified in sports *yabusame* practice, and whether sporting elements can be found in Ogasawara *yabusame*. Chapter Six looks at diversification and internationalization within Japanese mounted archery groups, and also contains my conclusion. Chapters Five and Six are more anecdotal than theoretical in their narrative. This is due to the fact that they draw more heavily from the interviews and conversations I had with local actors.

## 2 History

### 2.1 The Way of the Horse and Bow: Then and Now

When the historian G. Cameron Hurst wrote about the various forms of mounted archery as they existed throughout Japanese history in his book *The Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, he naturally stopped at the 1990s, the decade his book was published. He made no speculation as to their future, which I am sure is primarily due to the fact that ritual and ceremonial *yabusame* as performed by the Ogasawara and Takeda schools were the only conspicuous form of mounted archery extant in Japan at the time. When his narrative chronologically arrives at the martial arts of the Meiji period, Hurst's focus on ritualized forms of *kisha* has already waned in favor of the development of contemporary swordsmanship and *kyūdō*, and for good reason. Reading the works of Hurst and Reinier H. Hesselink, among others, it is apparent that by the 1990s the art of *yabusame* had long since stagnated, fading from the forefront of Japanese national consciousness. Hurst describes *yabusame* as “surviving” in the 1990s “as a quaint feudal custom...[that] is now performed on special ceremonial or ritual occasions at Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura, Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, and other major shrines.”<sup>21</sup> He also emphasizes that while the art is continued in its practice and taught to a few by the Ogasawara and Takeda schools, it is clearly anachronistic. Hesselink claims that certain anachronistic characteristics of the *yabusame* ceremony can be traced back to its revival in the Edo period by shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684 – 1751).<sup>22</sup> He states that since then, mounted archery has “become an art which is alive for its own sake only. And it may be that we glimpse here at something quintessentially Japanese.”<sup>23</sup>

Mounted archery is an activity that has been performed since the Iron Age.<sup>24</sup> In addition to its development as an effective means of hunting, mounted archery's most consistent utilization throughout history has been concomitant with the fomentation of war. The peoples who were historically able to found extensive empires through the conquering and subjugation of their enemies from horseback are some of the most well-known mounted archers today. Their

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<sup>21</sup> G. Cameron Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 170

<sup>22</sup> Reinier H. Hesselink, “The Warrior's Prayer: Tokugawa Yoshimune Revives The Yabusame Ceremony,” *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* 4, no. 4 (1995): 44-48

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

<sup>24</sup> David W. Anthony and Dorcas R. Brown, “The Secondary Products Revolution, Horse-Riding, and Mounted Warfare,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 24, no. 2 (September 2011): 131

likenesses consistently adorn anything from postage-stamps to cinema screens. What better example could there be than that of Genghis Khan; creator of a tribal federation unifying the various Turkic and Mongol tribes of the steppe, which led to the inauguration of the infamous Mongol Empire in the twelfth century. Japan's historical record stretches as far back as the fifth century A.D.,<sup>25</sup> and mention of mounted archers may be found among the pages of Japan's most ancient texts; references to their presence in 672 A.D are made as early as 720 A.D. in the *Nihon shoki*.<sup>26</sup>

The Mongol tribes consisted of skilled horsemen and women, with the men in particular being accomplished archers. Operating with a high level of sophistication and versatile functionality, the Mongol cavalry were a devastating force.<sup>27</sup> Aside from skilled field commanders and a battle strategy that involved never indulging in an immediate full-frontal engagement with the enemy,<sup>28</sup> such aptitude on the battlefield was owed in large part to their equipment. The composite bow used by the nomadic tribes on the steppes was a technological masterpiece of the time; a supple wooden core was reinforced with horn and sinew to aid with the stress of bending placed upon it. It had twice the range and pull of the English longbow, with a flatter trajectory and more regular release of tension.<sup>29</sup> This combination of a wooden core with horn on the belly of the bow to deal with compression and sinew on the outside to handle excessive stretching, created a bow more efficient than any other in the world at the time. Increased efficiency meant that the bow could be made shorter, and this shorter, highly recurved design made it faster and easier to handle from horseback.<sup>30</sup> Two, or even three bows tailored for both long and short-range fire were carried by each man, and as many as ninety arrows with as many as twelve different tips suitable for various specific tasks could be fixed into about three separate quivers. A thumb-grip (alternatively referred to as a thumb release) ensured a greater pull than could be achieved with the fingers. This strength in the

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<sup>25</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 1

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *The Samurai Sourcebook* (London: Cassel & Co, 2000), 121-122

<sup>27</sup> Michael E. Haskew and others. *Fighting Techniques of the Oriental World AD 1200 – 1860: Equipment, Combat, Skills, And Tactics* (New York: Metro Books, 2013), 74-76

<sup>28</sup> The preferred strategy was to encircle the enemy, firing constant and presumably seemingly endless volleys of arrows from a safe distance until the opposing army was forced into a huddle, gradually growing emotionally and physically exhausted from fending off the rain of lethal projectiles. The Mongol heavy cavalry would then close in with their lances, swords and maces; *Ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> Haskew and others, *Fighting Techniques of the Oriental World*, 74-76

<sup>30</sup> Lukas Novotny, "The Bows for Horseback Archery" in *Mounted Archery in the Americas*, ed. Lukas Novotny and David Gray (The Long Riders' Guild Press, 2007), 223-224

draw was further enhanced by using a thumb ring, which protected the skin of the thumb and allowed for a smoother release.<sup>31</sup>

The distinctive design of the traditional Japanese longbow (alternatively referred to in this thesis as the *yumi*) could not be more different, and the same can be said for the warrior tradition that went along with it. In lieu of utilizing the recurve design adopted by the peoples of North and Central Asia, the *yumi* resembles long bows used in the southern forest regions of Southeast Asia.<sup>32</sup> The design of the *yumi* necessitates such an extreme length in order to limit stress on its body when drawn.<sup>33</sup> Stephen Turnbull explains:

*To obtain the power needed in a war bow while retaining a cross-section of reasonable proportions, it was necessary to adopt a laminated structure. The bows of the Gempei Wars were of deciduous wood backed with bamboo on the side furthest from the archer. Later on, this performance was enhanced by adding an additional facing of bamboo. The rattan binding reinforced the poor adhesive qualities of the glue used to fasten the sections together, but as the glue could also be weakened by damp, the whole bow was lacquered to weatherproof it.<sup>34</sup>*

The bow used today by kyūdō practitioners is in fact the closest representation of the samurai's horse bow in use today.<sup>35</sup> Although its composite materials may have undergone some modification, the longbow's design has changed little. Commonly about two and a half meters in length, it is gripped in the same way as it was in Heian times. The arrow is drawn and released in the Mongolian fashion with the thumb wrapped over the bow string, and its extreme length necessitates an asymmetrical design where two-thirds of the bow's length rises above the archer's hand.<sup>36</sup> Such profound asymmetry is especially logical considering that the archer would have had to lift the bow clear of the horse's neck before lowering it while simultaneously bringing the weapon to a full draw. Its lacquered construction is well suited to the damp and rain typical of Japan's climate; better suited, one could argue, than the composite bows of central Asia. It is prudent here to acknowledge one observation made by William Wayne Farris concerning Hurst's comments on pre-Heian bows. Farris points out that Hurst underestimates the sophistication of the Jomon prototype, which predates the supposed Southeast Asian influence, and which could also be long in its design. The Jomon prototype was also at times made from composite materials. The Heian design was therefore,

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<sup>31</sup> Haskew and others, *Fighting Techniques of the Oriental World*, 74-76

<sup>32</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 104

<sup>33</sup> Turnbull, *The Samurai Sourcebook*, 121

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 125; Turnbull, *The Samurai Sourcebook*, 122

<sup>36</sup> Allen Guttmann and Lee A. Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 42; Stephen Turnbull, *Samurai Warfare* (London: Cassel & Co, 1997), 22

according to Farris, not much of an improvement.<sup>37</sup> However, both the annals of history and the first-hand experiences of present-day mounted archery competitors can attest to the fact that the *yumi* is less efficient in a number of ways than the Mongolian recurve bow.

First and foremost, maneuverability would have been restricted when wearing early samurai armor such as a *yoroi* or *ō-yoroi* (harness or “large” harness), making mounted archery much more difficult than present-day *yabusame*. This is due to the weight and design of the armor, and also in part to the top-heavy balance of the *yumi*, which is even more cumbersome when wearing such armor. The following description and image showing the effective angle of fire available to the armored mounted archer, presented by Stephen Turnbull in his book *Samurai Warfare*, illustrates this:

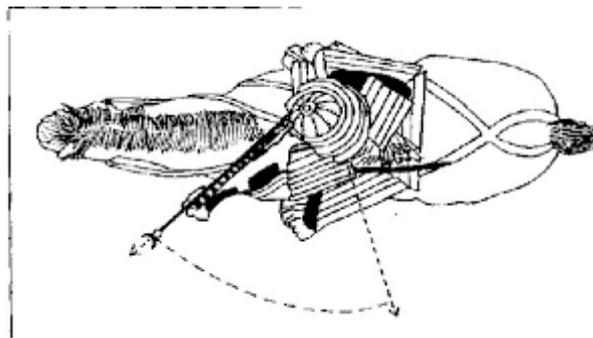


Figure 2: Mounted archery while wearing *ō-yoroi* must have been much more difficult than present-day *yabusame*, regardless of the fact that the target was not only moving, but also trying to kill you at the same time. The archer could only shoot on his left side, along an arc of about 45 degrees... The horse's neck prevented any closer angle firing. Certain accounts imply that it was the power of an archer's shot, rather than its accuracy, which most impressed commentators.<sup>38</sup>

In 1274 Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan made the first of two attempts to invade Japan. Until then, swords in Japan had always been an auxiliary weapon to be used in close-quarter combat for medieval warriors, who typically engaged in individual combat with bow and arrow from horseback.<sup>39</sup> Fighting the Mongols was initially cause for great alarm on the part of the samurai due to the invaders' vastly different style of warfare. The Mongols did not engage in individual combat but fired barrages of arrows *en masse* and attacked in legions of

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<sup>37</sup> William Wayne Farris, “Reviewed Work: *Armed Martial Arts of Japan* by G. Cameron Hurst, III,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May 1999): 520

<sup>38</sup> Turnbull, *Samurai Warfare*, 24

<sup>39</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 37

spearman.<sup>40</sup> While both invasion attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, in the post-Mongol period mounted warfare began to decline as armies grew in size and troops were increasingly employed in mass formation, using spears and halberds, and also swords. This reorganization of military formation and decline of the use of bows from horseback in favor of bladed weapons was most likely the result of fighting the Mongols in 1274 and 1281.<sup>41</sup> The foreign military technologies, particularly their bows and explosive bombs, had proven incredibly effective.

In the modern setting, the Japanese longbow has once again found itself compared with the Mongolian composite bow, in addition to the other “traditional” foreign bows used in competitive mounted archery. The general consensus seems to be that it is not as efficient or as practical to shoot the *yumi* from horseback in international competition. Many of the interviewees who had competed overseas lamented its comparative lack of speed and more unwieldy shape when facing foreign archers on foreign tracks, where the targets are typically placed farther away than on the Japanese sports *yabusame* tracks. They also felt that the ceremonial style of shooting had affected the form of sports *yabusame*, mainly because this was the only extant example that competitors had available to draw from when learning how to shoot from horseback. As one student who participates in *shinji yabusame* as well as sports *yabusame* put it, when asked what it was like to compete with the *yumi*:

*I feel at a little bit of a disadvantage with it, that you have to pull it all the way back as much as you do. The arrows are longer than with a recurve bow, so it takes a lot of time to pull the arrow out, nock it and draw it back. But I think that we can manage [in a competitive setting]. Maybe if I can practice a bit more I can better compete with the horseback archers from overseas. I think that we can learn a lot from foreign competitors in terms of techniques, sports techniques, even when using the Japanese yumi. For example, how to draw and nock the arrows quicker and handle the bow. But as a traditional yabusame ceremony, then this is a way that is [culturally] protected.*

Japan's history is of course very different from that of Central Asia. The brief comparisons made above are only intended to draw the reader's attention to two important points that will help contextualize the recent history and current state of *yabusame* as the narrative of this thesis progresses. First of all I want to elucidate the basic differences between the traditional Japanese long bow and the more typical recurve designs of the East Asian mainland, which

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<sup>40</sup> Turnbull, *Samurai Warfare*, 44

<sup>41</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 38

were part of the Asian composite bow tradition.<sup>42</sup> The most famous of these is the Mongolian composite bow, along with, perhaps, the Manchu bow, which became popular later during the Qing dynasty. Outside of the Asian mainland the Japanese *yumi* is one of the more famous and certainly more unique bows in terms of its design. Hesselink said of ritual mounted archery that "...it may be that we glimpse here at something quintessentially Japanese,"<sup>43</sup> and I believe that this statement extends to the sports *yabusame* groups of today. Their bows and stylized Japanese costumes, usually colorful kimono or *hitatare*,<sup>44</sup> certainly make them stand out at international competitions. Overseas horseback archery competitors mostly use recurve bows made from modern composite materials, such as fiberglass, that are modelled after the Asiatic horn bows described above.<sup>45</sup> While the number is still relatively small, sports *yabusame* actors are increasingly engaging in international competitions, and they often find their foreign peers have a lot of questions about *yabusame*. One such individual told me:

*I was more interested to go overseas because I love to travel and this is travelling in a little bit of a different way. You are going to see people and talk with people, like an exchange. And these people are very interested in yabusame and the Japanese bow. There isn't much difference between the European bows. They are all short and a similar shape. So we have something to talk about when I bring my long bow. It is easy to identify Japanese yabusame, because we have a long history, so we can talk about it [with others]. And foreign people are very interested in that. So that is one of the reasons to go to foreign countries: to talk with them and explain about yabusame too.*

The second point I want to make with the above comparison is one that is often a surprising discovery for many: horseback archery had all but died out in central Asia and was not revived in Mongolia until the twenty-first century, while Japan, on the other hand, has enjoyed a relatively uninterrupted history of constant practice (albeit in an almost exclusively ceremonial context) since the Tokugawa era. Both Genghis Khan's and Kublai Khan's legacies are highly visible in the popular culture of today, and popular opinion of the twelfth century Mongols and their Grand Khan remains divergent. Portrayals of Genghis across mediums of popular culture effusively encompass characteristics such as ruthlessness,

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<sup>42</sup> By this I specifically refer to the traditional composite bows comprised of horn, wood, and sinew. Aside from the Mongol and Manchurian bows mentioned above, they also include, but are not exclusive to, the traditional Korean, Scythian, Perso-parthian, and Turkish bows. I recommend *The Traditional Bowyer's Bible* series by Jim Hamm and Steve Allely for further information on bow design and composition throughout history.

<sup>43</sup> Hesselink, "The Warrior's Prayer," 41

<sup>44</sup> *Hitatare* is a two-piece form of attire historically worn by men, as opposed to the one-piece kimono, while riding a horse. The *yoroi hitatare*, which is less loose-fitting in order to be worn under armor, is today worn (or its design used for costuming inspiration) by both men and women doing different kinds of *yabusame/kisha*.

<sup>45</sup> Novotny, "The Bows for Horseback Archery" in *Mounted Archery in the Americas*, 226-227

brilliance, cruelty, bravery, and resourcefulness. By contrast, if one were to ask western contemporary laymen to name a famous Japanese mounted archer, it is quite safe to assume that the individual would be unable to answer. This would not be due to a lack of skilled or even legendary warriors throughout the archipelago's histories, however. The *gunkimono* (or "war tales") such as the *Heike monogatari* and the *Taiheiki* are full of their fantastical stories. The highly exaggerated yet no less fascinating accounts of incredible feats of strength and prowess with the bow from horseback are well-known among Japanese historians and amateur enthusiasts alike.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps no greater example exists than the tale of Minamoto Tametomo sinking an enemy Taira vessel with a single arrow during the Gempei wars (1180–1185).<sup>47</sup>

Both the Takeda and Ogasawara families achieved their extensive fame as archers as early as the latter part of the Kamakura period (1185-1333), becoming the most prominent archers of the Muromachi period (1336-1573).<sup>48</sup> Ogasawara Sadamune (1294-1350) is believed to have been an archery instructor to both Emperor Go-Daigo and Shogun Ashikaga Takauji. It was he who established the Ogasawara tradition of equestrian archery, passing it on to Takeda Nobumune. Thus the tradition of mounted archery ceremonial was shared by both families, who were pledged with preserving that tradition, and who later established the Ogasawara and Takeda schools (*ryūha* 流派).<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2 Mounted Archery and the Modern Setting

A few traditional mounted games have been intermittently extant throughout recent history across a limited number of countries, thus ensuring some preservation to varying extents of the activities. It is by no means an exaggeration, however, to say that until between two and three decades ago, mounted archery was largely extinct with the exception of a few rare cases. By the 1980s there was certainly next to no facilitation of communication between practitioners across different nations, and therefore no sense of solidarity or unity between these surviving groups on an international scale. Hesselink and Hurst published the works referenced in this chapter in 1995 and 1998 respectively. When Hesselink wrote that "Today,

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen Turnbull, "Reviewed Work: *Armed Martial Arts of Japan: Swordsmanship and Archery* by G. Cameron Hurst, III," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 222

<sup>47</sup> Turnbull, *The Samurai Sourcebook*, 122

<sup>48</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *The Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 118-121

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Japan is one of the few places left in the world where the art of mounted archery is still practiced”<sup>50</sup> this was principally true. But even by this time mounted archery groups in Japan and overseas had started to form, and the impetuses for change we can see the consequences of today were already underway. In the case of *yabusame*, the original history and significance of the prescribed costumes, track layouts, and other aspects of the ceremony were hardly common knowledge even to most Japanese. However, while doing fieldwork I spoke to at least three individuals who in the late 1990s had been in the process of forming a mounted archery interest group, with aspirations to found an organization (which they later accomplished in 2002).

I do not know whether Hurst or Hesselink were aware of these local actors and their objective to create a sport version of mounted archery based on the traditional Japanese style of shooting. I am assuming that they did not, and from these historians’ perspectives *yabusame* was indeed a “languishing art.” There is one somewhat cryptic sentence from Hesselink, in which he mentions “true *yabusame*,” but then he does not elaborate upon what is meant by the word “true”:

*Only those fortunate enough to have attended one of the rare occasions on which true yabusame is performed know something of the thrills of being a spectator and participant in this ceremony.*<sup>51</sup>

I assume, however, that he is merely referring to *yabusame* in the context of *shinji*, or ceremonial shrine ritual, performance and is not making a subtle reference to new groups. I assume this because he later states:

*The differences between [kisha and yabusame] lies in the supreme presence during the ceremony. In the case of kisha... the supreme presence was the shogun himself. When yabusame was performed, however, the shogun would not be present in person but be represented by one of his gosuku. The supreme presence in the case of yabusame, then, was the divinity of the shrine where the ceremony was held. It follows that we can only speak of yabusame when mounted archery is performed at a shrine.*

According to Hesselink, most places that had traditionally organized mounted archery ceremonies had ceased to do so by the seventeenth century.<sup>52</sup> Japanese sources indicate that until Tokugawa Yoshimune ordered the *yabusame* ceremony revived in the early eighteenth

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<sup>50</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 41

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

<sup>52</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 41

century, it was no longer performed at all (although it is difficult to determine if this is entirely true).<sup>53</sup> Since its revival, the *yabusame* ceremony continued to be relatively unfamiliar to the Japanese general public. In the mid-late 1990s it was perhaps viewed as "strange and incomprehensible" by many, in much the same way Dutch trader Hendrick Hagenauer described it upon witnessing a singular demonstration at Hirado in 1636:

*On the 18<sup>th</sup> [of October] the archery festival was celebrated [at Hirado] in the following manner: in the wide street in front of the house of the highest official, a screen was erected as a target. The Japanese appeared on horseback, armed with bow and arrow, as if they were going to war. They spurred their horses, and when they had reached the target at a distance of about one and a half fathoms,<sup>54</sup> they released their arrows. When they hit the target, they were honoured by the spectators with great acclamations. Each archer ran the track two or three times. It was strange and incomprehensible.<sup>55</sup>*

Mounted archery in Japan, like many things simultaneously placed in the realms of tradition and modernity, has had a somewhat transient status throughout history. This remains the case in its modern context. It has often been, and still is, manifested in a purely ceremonial form, as an amalgamation of sport (depending on how you define it), shrine ritual/dedication, and martial tradition. Consequently it is referred to as a martial art in many modern texts in much the same way *kyūdō* and *sumō* frequently are. Even before we consider the advent of the more recent sports and re-enactment groups, there is a high degree of complexity regarding an exact definition of *what it is*. To Japanese historians such as Hurst, *yabusame*, being one of the ceremonial forms of mounted archery, is a protean activity that is (in his words) “not really a sport, not quite a religious event, but part of a long tradition of archery in Japan with social, religious and military aspects...”<sup>56</sup> While its history is convoluted, often making it difficult to give a succinct definition of *yabusame* that is not over-simplified, the amalgam can still be separated and these individual aspects identified. To the local actors in 2014, what *yabusame* is, or has become, is similarly difficult to define. The amalgam, however, has become even more perplexing to disentangle, and new elements such as “modern (secular) sport,” “hobby/casual-pastime,” and “re-enactment” are now thrown into the mix.

While in-depth knowledge of *yabusame* and *kisha* might still be limited on the part of the general public, modern technologies and organizations have assisted in increasing awareness

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> One and a half fathoms is equal to 2.74 meters

<sup>55</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior's Prayer,” 41

<sup>56</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *The Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 170

of its existence (e.g., the internet, e-books, the tourism industry etc.). This investigation of how mounted archery in Japan has become part of both a national and larger global equestrian sport movement would never have been possible without the unique technological tools that the modern setting provides. Indeed, the very movement itself would not exist. So before continuing, I would like to draw attention to a subtle but integral point that I feel was encapsulated best by the comments of a student from the recently established Tōyama school:

*You know, these days people don't really know about horseback archery in Japan. So Japanese people think that yabusame is the only way of kisha... Then again, not many people understand the word yabusame [either].*

What do you think about sports *yabusame* and mounted archery becoming a sport?

*I think it's wonderful. It looks really cool, and it's fun to do [it] rather than just watch [it]! It makes people interested in horses and in horseback archery. It might also be important to Japanese culture, it raises awareness.*

Do you think that it helps promote traditional forms of Japanese mounted archery, then?

*Well for general people, I think it's hard for them to tell the difference sometimes between traditional mounted archery and sports. But if you start doing sports yabusame, or any other kind of horseback archery, then you're forced to look into the culture and history.*

First of all, an issue for many local actors is that the general public often has trouble distinguishing between traditional practice, sport, and demonstrative re-enactment. But this is still a step forward when one considers that Hesselink wrote in 1995 that “There are...relatively few people who have had the chance to observe [*yabusame*].”<sup>57</sup> He is of course speaking of purely ceremonial *yabusame*, which he states is “the most exclusive of the martial arts.”<sup>58</sup> However, the public presence of all forms of “*yabusame*” has increased, meaning that wide-spread recognition of equestrian archery practice has (to a moderate extent) already been achieved. The sense of exclusivity has diminished, and local actors are now more concerned with educating the public on the differences between their practices, rather than on the very idea of the practice itself. In the modern setting, cultural actors appear constantly intent on “awareness.” If an activity can in some way be considered “important to culture” by increasing public interest, this lends it a factor of legitimacy.

Furthermore, since 1995 it has become easier to join mounted archery groups in Japan. The emergence of sport groups and newly established/revived traditional schools has provided the

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<sup>57</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 42

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 41

public with more membership options than before, and the requirements for entry and participation are neither as costly nor as strict as with the Ogasawara and Takeda schools. With the internet being what it is today, potential students find it much easier to search for information about nearby groups. This particular Tōyama student told me that she was able to do extensive research and ask group members for information on their “type” of *yabusame* before making a final decision. With more students joining these newer groups, they often feel obliged to “look into” the history of their activity, which helps further disseminate knowledge on the history and cultural importance of ceremonial forms of *yabusame* and *kisha*.

### 3 Tradition and Authenticity

Both “tradition” and “authenticity” are abstract but prevalent concepts in discourses concerning *yabusame*. This chapter and the next aim to look at some of these discourses, to discuss the negotiations of authenticity and tradition that occur within them and to analyze how this affects *yabusame* practice in the modern setting, with particular attention to authority. While I have drawn attention to Fillitz and Saris’ assertion that “the idea of authenticity is embedded in the ongoing project of modernity,”<sup>59</sup> I also acknowledge that the recognition by actors of anachronisms in *yabusame* practice is not exclusive to the modern setting. Upon closer inspection of the historical record, it becomes clear that in the Tokugawa period there were concerns over whether aspects of a *yabusame* ceremony made it a “true” facsimile or merely a simulacrum. Back then there was a clear body of authority charged with making such a distinction, but the context of *yabusame* practice has changed in the modern setting, and this previous body of authority no longer exists. So how are the concepts of tradition and authenticity negotiated within *kisha/yabusame* practices today, and what do these negotiations tell us about who or what has power in the authentication process?

The obvious starting point is to define what is meant by the terms tradition and authenticity, yet it is imperative to appreciate that these definitions are not as straight forward in their construction as they might initially appear. Tradition and authenticity both mean different things to different people, and their conceptualizations often lead one into problematic and essentialist binarisms such as “authentic” and “inauthentic,” “traditional” and “non-traditional.” My understanding of the cultural phenomena of tradition and the myriad conceptualizations of the authentic are largely in accordance with the definitions put forward by Ton Otto and Poul Pedersen (tradition) and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (authenticity). It follows, therefore, that the arguments put forward in this thesis are done so based upon this understanding, and are set within the underlying theoretical parameters of the definitions given below.

#### 3.1 Tradition

Ton Otto and Poul Pedersen state that tradition’s primary meaning is “to capture continuity in human affairs, as it refers both to the activity of handing down cultural heritage from one

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<sup>59</sup> Fillitz and Saris, *Debating Authenticity*, 15-16

generation to the next, and to what is actually handed down: customs, beliefs, rituals, rules.”<sup>60</sup> The ways in which traditions support social and cultural processes are described as complex and multi-layered. Otto and Pedersen attribute particular attention to the aspect of agency in their development of a definition of tradition and understanding in its relationship to cultural continuity. Traditions, they argue, are much like customs in that they are repetitive practices, but their reoccurrence is more subject to conscious orchestration.<sup>61</sup> In order to further elaborate upon this distinction and refine their definition of the character of tradition, they adopt the perspective of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (*The Social Construction of Reality*, 1967). Berger and Luckmann have identified three levels of social processes that they argue underpin tradition. These are 1) “habitualisation,”<sup>62</sup> 2) institutionalization, and 3) legitimation, the last of which is where Otto and Pedersen claim tradition may finally be found.<sup>63</sup>

Legitimation is described by Berger and Luckmann as a “second order” objectification of meaning. It is this third process that “make[s] objectively available and subjectively plausible the “first order” objectifications that have been institutionalized.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, tradition is found in the legitimation process because the prerequisite process of institutionalized social order gives it justification through cognitive validity as well as normative authority.<sup>65</sup> For example, we could describe the Ogasawara school as an institutionalized body of authority in traditional *yabusame* practice, whose legitimation process in the modern period has its highly visible roots in the Tokugawa era. An extensive documented history in Japan’s most famous annals granted them the requisite historical qualification for endorsement by Tokugawa Yoshimune when he revived a mounted archery ceremony that “resembled *yabusame*”<sup>66</sup> in 1725 and then the “true” *yabusame* ceremony itself in 1728.<sup>67</sup> I would argue that the Tokugawa was a period of institutionalization for the modern incarnation of the Ogasawara school that we see before us today. Since then, in the modern setting the Ogasawara have

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<sup>60</sup> Ton Otto, Poul Pedersen, “Preface” in *Tradition and Agency: Tracing Cultural Continuity and Invention*, ed. Ton Otto, Poul Pedersen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 7

<sup>61</sup> Otto and Pedersen. “Disentangling Traditions” in *Tradition and Agency*, 28-32

<sup>62</sup> ‘Habitualisation’ is a term Berger and Luckmann themselves coined, the definition of which is the process of forming habits which all human activity is subject to. According to Otto and Pedersen; “...habitualisation provides predictability and a specialization of activity that is lacking in man’s biological equipment.” (*Tradition and Agency*, 26)

<sup>63</sup> Otto and Pedersen, “Disentangling Traditions” in *Tradition and Agency*, 26-32

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> This ceremony was called *kisha hasamimono*

<sup>67</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 44-45

already undergone the subsequent legitimation process, which is why they continue to be the officially endorsed body of authority on *yabusame* tradition.

This production of traditions as “second-order objectifications,” are developed and maintained through the cognitive investment of human actors and, as such, require a high level of conscious involvement in order to acquire authority. Levels of conscious involvement are subjective, and so traditions can thus be more or less elaborate, and relate to general social conduct by referring to norms and values, explicitly codifying rules of conduct or more implicitly serving as indicators of desirable social interaction. This engagement is the “foundation for the moral authority of traditions to enforce customary patterns or to legitimize new inventions.”<sup>68</sup> This also allows for the strategic use of tradition by interested parties.<sup>69</sup>

## 3.2 Authenticity

Richard Handler states that he takes “authenticity” to be a cultural construct of the modern Western world which is closely tied to Western notions of the individual:<sup>70</sup>

*That [‘authenticity’] has been a central, though implicit, idea in much anthropological enquiry is a function of a Western ontology rather than of anything in the non-Western cultures we study. Our search for authentic cultural experience – for the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional – says more about us than about others.<sup>71</sup>*

Along the same vein, Dimitrios Theodossopoulos concedes that, as a concept, authenticity is inherently essentialist but argues it is better to confront the particular and dichotomous ways in which the authentic is construed than to shy away from authenticity discourse altogether.<sup>72</sup> To embrace its contested nature and plural simultaneity is to liberate oneself from any expectation of a singular authenticity and to understand analytically how parallel claims of the authentic can function side by side.<sup>73</sup> Everyday negotiations of the authentic involve many authenticities in tension with each other. Authenticity is multidimensional and beset by polysemy. It cannot be ignored because both actors and the public engage with it conceptually

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<sup>68</sup> Otto and Pedersen, “Disentangling Traditions” in *Tradition and Agency*, 35

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-35

<sup>70</sup> Richard Handler, “Authenticity,” *Anthropology Today* 2, No. 1. (February 1986): 2

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, “Laying Claim to Authenticity: Five Anthropological Dilemmas,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 356

<sup>73</sup> Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, “Laying Claim to Authenticity: Five Anthropological Dilemmas,” 355

as an inherent quality in cultural phenomena, people, and things. Rather than dismiss it as artifice, we should rather accept that there is not one authenticity but many, and study how notions of authenticity are negotiated. Hence there is no unitary, fixed, or all-embracing anthropological definition of authenticity, only an acknowledgment of its multiplicity of meaning that resides within specific contextualization.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.3 Tradition and Authenticity in *Yabusame*

Theodossopulos introduces the term “trap of authenticity,” which he defines as “the contradiction emerging from deconstructing (analytically) the authenticity/ inauthenticity opposition, while at the same time having to (ethnographically) engage with its meaningfulness on the local level.”<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the ethnographer Christian Højbjerg describes constructivist approaches to anthropology as being prone to leaving out one side of the cultural equation; an intrinsic flaw that emerges from the close analysis of how science creates its objects (reflexivity) and how people produce culture in their pursuit of particular interests. He states that perhaps due to an inclination towards a sharp functionalist focus, and in their efforts to avoid essentializing culture, authors behind recent studies of the politics of culture and tradition have risked creating an ethnographic black hole.<sup>76</sup> I became concerned that I, too, might be at risk of leaving out one side of the cultural equation if I were to deconstruct traditional *yabusame* practice in search of sporting elements, and sports *yabusame* in search of traditional elements (not to mention deconstructing all the practices that fall somewhere between these two categorizations).

Of course, identifying these elements is a core approach within this study, and so I became conscious of the need to balance my own conclusions drawn from academic study and personal observation with the opinions and conclusions of local actors involved in these *yabusame* practices. I did not want to risk overlooking the “strong hold certain cultural representations may have on people’s minds.”<sup>77</sup> Thus I also placed a strong focus on what they felt were the traditional aspects of their particular style of *yabusame* practice, and the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 340-341

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 338

<sup>76</sup> Christian Kordt Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa: A Study of Loma Cultural Identity” in *Tradition and Agency*, ed. Ton Otto, Poul Pedersen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 87

<sup>77</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa,” in *Tradition and Agency*, 87

contentions surrounding the somewhat controversial use of this word to describe those forms that would historically have been referred to as *kisha*.

I likewise became aware of Theodossopoulos' so-called "trap" quite early on in the research process. Initially I attempted to simultaneously deconstruct the various activities and analyze traditional elements in various groups' practices, an approach that caused me to become further engrossed in the authenticity/inauthenticity opposition. This ultimately proved time consuming and conflicting. Theodossopoulos points out that while researchers may well recognize the problematic nature of the authenticity-inauthenticity dichotomy, efforts to explain local meanings and uses of authenticity naturally lead one into a comparison of objects, groups, or social phenomena in terms of the binary criteria one has previously rejected.<sup>78</sup> The realization that my research was heading for just such a trap consequently led me to abandon the initial deconstruction and adopt a new approach.

Using both the historical record and an anthropological approach in parallel, I attempted to sketch an overall picture of *yabusame* as it is contextualized in the present day and the negotiations at play in the modern setting. The goal of this chapter, and indeed the entirety of this thesis, therefore, is not to deconstruct the traditional or sporting practices of *yabusame* as they exist today, but rather to highlight the point that in the modern setting something has changed. I believe that the issue of authority, specifically, is a large part of this change. In particular, who or what are the authenticating bodies ultimately responsible for demarcating "statuses of authenticity" in traditional, re-enactment and sporting activities, and who those actors participating in processes of authentication may be. The authority debate is of additional significance to the chapters on sport (Chapter Five) and diversification/internationalization (Chapter Six).

Rather unsurprisingly, during fieldwork I found that local actors had differing ideas as to what could be considered traditional (*dentōteki* 伝統的) about mounted archery practices, or representative of traditional culture (*dentō bunka* 伝統文化). Some saw their own activities as strictly non-traditional even while they recognized certain characteristics and material elements as having a "traditional" origin. Likewise, different actors had different understandings of what "authentic" meant and how it should be defined. Their conceptualizations of the authentic were often not synonymous with one another, which made

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<sup>78</sup> Theodossopoulos, "Laying Claim to Authenticity," 344

it clear that within *yabusame* practice, there is not one kind of authenticity, but many. There was extensive discussion among actors concerning the word *yabusame* itself, particularly with regard to what kind of practice could or should be called *yabusame* versus how that term was employed in general usage.<sup>79</sup> Such discussions reflected a (conscious or unconscious) struggle for authority between mounted archery groups and the public, or even between groups and their individual members, over the question of what may or may not be classed as *yabusame*. Authority is just one area where processes of authentication and a negotiation of ideals can be easily observed.

Some actors I spoke with were aware of the varying extents to which their activities were ultimately a product of present-day culture, but there were also many aspects of the modern setting that were not recognized as such. Most, however, seemed to consciously perceive the notion of “authenticity” in one way or another as synonymous with “exact simulation.” Richard Handler and William Saxton made a similar observation when writing about “living history.”<sup>80</sup> The impossibility of achieving perfect simulations and the negotiations that therefore had to take place within the modern setting were universally acknowledged by the individuals I spoke to. In other words, many actors positively identified “authenticity” as “exact simulation” to be an illusion, rendering historical accuracy as inherently beset by compromise. This did not mean, however, that the traditional schools or local groups participating in “living history” type activities did not aspire to create these perfect simulations. Yet there was also a tendency for individuals to be unaware of the freedoms the modern setting provides. The fact that their activities are as much a reflection of the peculiarities of modern constructions, such as globalized tourism, “national culture,” and “national heritage,” as they are of those of the past, is sometimes unrecognized. However, I saw that at other times local actors and groups ostensibly used the idiosyncrasies of the modern setting to their advantage in order to ensure the success of their particular practice.

These observations were much more interesting than what a sole fixation on deconstructing the performances and activities of each group might have revealed. The interviews and conversations with the actors themselves disclosed how notions of such an abstract concept as

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<sup>79</sup> I refer the reader to the *Important Notes on the Term Yabusame* section of Chapter One for more details.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Handler, William Saxton, “Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in “Living History,”” *American Anthropological Association* 3, no. 3 (August, 1988): 242-243

authenticity were contextualized, especially in connection with tradition and cultural heritage. If one is to observe how notions of authenticity and tradition are negotiated in the modern setting, perhaps over-emphasis on the “invention” of *yabusame* tradition, with a focus on historical accuracies or inaccuracies, consistencies, and irregularities present in contemporary practice is not the way forward. Personal narratives are as equally vital to an understanding of “*How is yabusame conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?*” as historical narratives. Only by combining the two can an accurate representation of the overall picture be achieved.

That is not to dismiss a constructivist approach; on the contrary it has been an integral theoretical element. Constructivist theory is based on the argument that ethnic identities are “molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, ethnic communities are not “real” in the sense that they are a construct of humans and not an objective reality, therefore they are better described as “imagined.”<sup>82</sup> Three decades ago the constructivist approach to the study of culture and tradition was of immense academic interest. Otto and Pedersen describe the phenomenon thus:

*“...the idea that traditions can be newly constructed and serve political and social functions freed up an enormous amount of scholarly energy among historians, anthropologists, ethnologists and political scientists, and led to the production of a substantive corpus of literature on similar processes all over the world.”*<sup>83</sup>

Hobsbawm and Ranger’s highly regarded anthology *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) was arguably one of the most influential publications within this corpus. It is thanks to ideas and arguments first promulgated by the likes of Hobsbawm and Ranger that academic discourse centered on the “invention of tradition” has since been able to further evolve through reflexive analysis and criticism. The deconstruction of tradition thus led academics to deconstruct their own and others’ arguments and perspectives, recognizing the contradictions and complexities the constructivist approach had in turn created within itself. However, while the value of

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<sup>81</sup> Karen A. Cerulo, “Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 23, no. 23 (1997): 387

<sup>82</sup> Neal G. Jesse, “Ethnicity and Identity Conflict” in *Routledge Handbook of Civil Wars*, ed. Edward Newman, Karl DeRouen Jr. (Routledge, 2014), 95

<sup>83</sup> Otto and Pedersen, “Disentangling Traditions” in *Tradition and Agency*, 11

works such as *The Invention of Tradition* is undeniable, Otto and Pedersen remind the reader of the importance of keeping in mind some of the weaknesses in this body of scholarship.<sup>84</sup>

One such weakness is the conceptual confusion or imprecision surrounding the word “tradition” itself. It evokes a range of connotations due to its long history in Western thought and usage, which in turn has caused “theoretical hitches.” Playing on the fact that despite primary popular meanings of tradition refer to a continuity with the past, the provocative strength of the title “invention of tradition” appears antithetical in its suggestion of both innovation and continuity.<sup>85</sup> Theodossopoulos, too, draws attention to the inherent irony of the phrase “invention of tradition,” arguing that it is effective in demonstrating the constructed nature of authenticity in national(ist) narratives, but also offends the sensitivities of local actors or minority groups.<sup>86</sup> Theodossopoulos calls on us to recognize what he terms “authenticity’s simultaneity, its contemporaneous multiple conceptualizations in context.”<sup>87</sup> He “argue[s] for “a perspective on the study of authenticity that acknowledges the simultaneous co-existence of more than one parallel manifestation of authenticity in any given negotiation of the authentic.”<sup>88</sup> It was this point in particular which drew my attention to the depth of complexity which would have to be acknowledged if a substantive investigation into how the present-day negotiations of authenticity in *yabusame* were to be achieved.

To summarize, I could easily have become locked into an intricate analysis and deconstruction of the mounted archery practices observed during the course of my fieldwork, falling into the “trap” of making comparisons within the unfortunate framework of binary criteria. Most likely this would have deteriorated into an entanglement in the contradictions Theodossopolous mentions, with me trying to determine what practices are authentic or not. It is the contributions of personal perspectives from the mounted archers themselves which has proven invaluable in preventing such “thinning [of ] culture,”<sup>89</sup> to use a phrase coined by Højbjerg. The arguments of Theodossopoulos and Filitz and Saris were instrumental in drawing my attention to this “trap of authenticity.” Specifically, their acknowledgment that

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<sup>84</sup>Otto and Pedersen, “Disentangling Traditions” in *Tradition and Agency*, 12

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Theodossopoulos, “Laying Claim to Authenticity,” 338

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 337

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa,” in *Tradition and Agency*, 87

the peculiar history of the term authenticity itself has often left the debate stranded in “a series of hoary binarisms”<sup>90</sup> helped me avoid falling prey to it.

### 3.3.1 Yabusame as an Invented and Inherited Tradition

Just as Højbjerg observed in his study of Loma traditions,<sup>91</sup> *yabusame* is also simultaneously an inherited and invented tradition. “Inheritance” seems to imply the transmission from generation to generation of some inner essence, an unaltered hidden thing; as Højbjerg states:

*However...persistence of tradition need not be seen as problematic on these grounds. Since changes in such practices manifestly occur all the time, our focus should rather be on the context and the use of so-called traditional cultural phenomena, i.e. on tradition as a form of interaction. Insofar as a given cultural tradition remains stable or persists, this is due to the context and manner in which it is performed, and not to any first principle of essence.*<sup>92</sup>

Certainly, the mounted archery ceremonial can be described as an inherited tradition where the Ogasawara school is concerned. This is in a very literal sense too, as the position of familial head of the school is of course inherited by a son of the current head of the Ogasawara family. It is also true, however, that the Ogasawara school’s persistence is not due to any first principle or essence that has survived intact since the rise of the family’s political and social prominence after the Gempei War (1180-1185) and the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate in 1192.

It may be prudent here to recall Otto and Pedersen’s point regarding the subjective engagement of conscious involvement by human actors in “second-order objectifications,” cited at the beginning of this chapter. To reiterate the point in context; the high-level of conscious involvement by human actors provides a basis for the moral authority of traditions to enforce customary patterns or to legitimize new inventions, which also allows for the strategic use of tradition by interested parties.<sup>93</sup> While it is true the manner in which the (*shinji*) *yabusame* ceremony performed by the Ogasawara has remained a constant for long stretches of time over the course of its history (and especially since its revival in the Tokugawa period), its contextualization within the contemporary milieu at various points in the past has been subjected to more frequent changes. Context and manner, especially from

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<sup>90</sup> Filitz and Saris, *Debating Authenticity*, 4

<sup>91</sup> The Loma people are a West African Manden ethnic group

<sup>92</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa” in *Tradition and Agency*, 111

<sup>93</sup> Otto and Pedersen, “Disentangling Traditions,” in *Tradition and Agency*, 35

the premodern period and onward, have both coursed naturally toward episodes of negotiation and so do not remain wholly unchanged or stable.

Wherever and whenever such negotiations takes place, one must look at the forces behind them. Negotiation and adaptation to socio-political change for the purpose of ensuring continuity is a natural process of any long-standing traditional or cultural practice. A “traditional” practice, therefore, can be simultaneously inherited and imagined. In fact I would argue that there is simply no way it could be so long-standing otherwise. Højbjerg saw one process of invention or construction of tradition in Loma society as being represented by its use in political space. When tradition was used *instrumentally*, this objectifying practice was simultaneously a creative act that identified and highlighted certain aspects of Loma culture at the expense of others. Conversely, in the case of leaders of religious cults and rural peoples, there was no reason to invent something that already existed, and their practices represented persistent cultural phenomena which was inherited from former generations.<sup>94</sup>

Bearing in mind that it is still a matter of debate just how goal-oriented uses of tradition *actually* are, it is perhaps unsurprising that I found similar results during fieldwork; i.e., the ideal of “Japanese tradition,” in the same way as “authenticity,” was not clearly defined and was imagined in diverse ways within a multitude of contexts by the actors. Some of these individuals could likewise be said to use *yabusame* instrumentally, and these uses were not solely constrained to political spaces. Practices referred to as *dentō bunka* (traditional culture) or *yabusame* were used strategically in political and non-political spaces for a variety of reasons and purposes ranging from tourism, garnering favor with a local electorate, to aid in the preservation of a critically endangered indigenous breed of horse, and education of the general public among others. These negotiations are also indicative of who or what are the authenticating bodies behind a tradition or institutionalized practice (such as sport). By “authenticating bodies” I mean the organized groups or (unorganized) collections of individuals who have authority in deciding what is traditional, what can or should be called *yabusame*, and how traditional or “not-traditional” any one particular kind of *yabusame* practice ultimately is. While the existence of authenticating bodies prior to what is now referred to as “modernity” is well documented, modernity has changed the processes by which they are appointed and how they interact with tradition.

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<sup>94</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa” in *Tradition and Agency*, 111

According to Koji Mizoguchi, modernity can be understood as “a systematic whole constituted by a configuration of industrialization, rationalization, commodification, bureaucratization, citizenship, deconstruction of kinship/local ties, secularization, and institutional segmentation and specialization.”<sup>95</sup> Even though these factors came into existence at different points over a period of time rather than all together at once, they eventually became interconnected and mutually determinant, interceded by a new form of sociality.<sup>96</sup> By “sociality” Mizoguchi means the unity of customs and institutions, and I would argue that it is important to understand how this interconnectedness of institutions generates and reproduces sociality if one is to understand authority. He claims that the sociality we experience in the modern setting is characterized not by static institutional characteristics, but rather by dynamism and fluidity.<sup>97</sup> I mention this because in the case of *yabusame*, and as with other forms of mounted archery in Japan and the world over, this interaction between customs and institutions is inescapable. Institutions of the modern setting influence *yabusame* in Japan more than *yabusame* practice influences them. *Yabusame* is an activity that perhaps appears out of place in the modern setting once it is removed from the legitimating modern institutions of traditional culture or sport. However, one must not underestimate the immense importance of the individual in local impulses present in current *yabusame* habitus. The local actors I spoke with often placed a personal emphasis on an aspect of the mounted archery they performed that lay outside of the physical act of shooting a bow from horseback; be it in the name of tradition, sport, or otherwise.

As has been established, tradition does not necessarily entail the historical accuracy of all its elements. History enthusiasts and scholars seek to attain a thorough understanding of mounted archery's numerous transformations over the course of centuries within Japan by studying the historical record. They are aware of the modern constructs present within a tradition, but the majority of onlookers are not invested in extensive research. They rely upon popular, rather than academic, discourse in seeking a more general explanation as to what they are witnessing when observing a *yabusame*, or *kisha* performance. An appropriate example of this would be the announcements and commentaries over loudspeakers at public events, which provide audiences with a conveniently condensed backstory of *yabusame/kisha* in Japan. It is difficult to deny that an over-simplified explanation of the *yabusame* ceremony might lead to notable

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<sup>95</sup> Koji Mizoguchi, *Archaeology, Society and Identity in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

misconceptions in terms of historicity, but to assume that it leads to a misrepresentation of authenticity is somewhat erroneous. Expressions of ceremonial and ritualized forms of archery long ago diverged from martial practice to varying degrees, with anachronism and reinvention being a fairly common matter of course since the Tokugawa era.<sup>98</sup> To quote Stephen Vlastos; “even if one were to assume common knowledge of the comparatively recent origins of most modern traditions, establishing the fact of their invention is only the first step. The significant findings will be historical and contextual.”<sup>99</sup>

The above points will be elaborated upon in the following chapter, where I will seek to contextualize what I have determined to be four core areas of negotiation concerning tradition and authenticity within mounted archery practice in Japan today. To recapitulate the conclusion thus far; when asking the question “*How is yabusame conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?*” it is glaringly apparent that if an answer exists, ideals concerning authenticity and tradition are a large part of its makeup. It is therefore difficult to both ignore the accompanying questions of what is meant by the terms authenticity and tradition and to avoid a discussion on the vagaries and paradoxes that emerge from the use of these conceptual polysemes.

Addressing these questions and engaging in the resulting discussions is as problematic as it is necessary, first and foremost for the simple reason that an entire thesis could, and in all likelihood has already been, dedicated to this area alone. This thesis, however, seeks to address these questions in relation to mounted archery in Japan, or more specifically, the various forms of mounted archery that are popularly understood to fall under the increasingly contented category of *yabusame*. The resulting issues and discussions must therefore be limited to those that best highlight the arguments and theories that exist in tension, within and without, the specific focus on activities that are described by local actors as *yabusame*. Ergo, the logistical problem of deciding *which* issues, arguments, theories, and discussions are most pertinent to *yabusame* as the subject of study comes to the fore.

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<sup>98</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 44-46

<sup>99</sup> Stephen Vlastos, “Tradition” in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 5

# 4 Authenticity: Four Key Areas of Conceptualization and Negotiation

This chapter will discuss conceptualizations of authenticity within the frameworks of four interrelated aspects of the cultural phenomena of tradition. I have identified four key areas which are conducive in highlighting where authentication debates and interactions between tradition and (some) of the institutions of modernity in present-day manifestations of *yabusame* are most visually at play. They are: 1) Authenticity and Authority – because *who* is involved in the authentication process and has the authority to decide what is traditional or not about a practice or particular aspects of it is an undeniable reality of the debate; 2) Authenticity and Ethnicity – because national identity and sentiments of national belonging are a modern construct, therefore rendering “Japanese” traditional culture as representative of post-nationalist and modern constructions and institutions (which in turn suggests tradition is used instrumentally in political spaces); 3) Authenticity and Reenactment/Living History – because the cultural phenomena of historical simulation for leisure purposes is another modern construct (however it is important to note that anachronistic performance is not exclusive to the modern setting and anachronism can in fact be part of an inherited tradition); 4) Authenticity, Materiality and Horses – because the high-level of conscious engagement of actors in contemporary interpretations of their societies’ traditions are influenced, in part, by the objects they perceive as having place and value within them.

## 4.1 Authenticity and Authority

Hesselink gives an enlightening account of the issues Tokugawa actors had with the application of the word *yabusame*. He demonstrates how the official historians of the Tokugawa shogunate reflexively analyzed the mounted archery ceremony that shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune had attempted to revive. After the chaos of the period from 1467 to around 1570, known as the “Era of Warring States” (*Sengoku jidai*), the subsequent near three centuries of peace under Tokugawa shogunal rule (established in 1603) had a negative effect on mounted forms of archery in particular.<sup>100</sup> The early Ogasawara teachings had been lost during the Muromachi period (1336–1573), with the Ogasawara family since splitting into a

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<sup>100</sup> Allen Guttmann, Lee A. Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 51

number of collateral groups. This divided them into no less than five clans who held the Ogasawara name among the Tokugawa *daimyō* (regional lords),<sup>101</sup> which most likely exacerbated this loss. Yoshimune ordered his councilors to research old records concerning mounted archery,<sup>102</sup> collected *kyūjutsu* (“art of archery”) texts from throughout Japan, and then commanded the high-ranking *metsuke* (censor)<sup>103</sup> Ogasawara Heibei Tsuneharu to study them and revive the Ogasawara teachings of ceremonial equestrian archery.<sup>104</sup> As a result, Ogasawara Heibei became the founder of the modern incarnation of the Ogasawara school that today operates from its main headquarters in Tokyo.<sup>105</sup>

The shogun and his official historians were cautious in their choice of terminology. They appear to have been unwilling to claim that their initial recreations were anything more than anachronism. An entry in the *Teijo zakki* reads: “What we now know as *kisha* was first started in the Kyōhō period by lord Yutokuin...Ogasawara Heibei was ordered to organize the ceremony and teach it to various warriors. The ceremony resembled *yabusame*...”<sup>106</sup>

This entry refers to a mounted archery performance that took place on the last day of November in 1725. This same performance has elsewhere been called *yabusame*, but the *Teijo zakki* remains remarkably fastidious in its wording, even in a later entry which describes a second mounted archery ceremony in 1728:

*In 1728, a large-scale ceremony was held for the first time and forty-six archers participated...The ceremony, upon this occasion, was recorded to have been yabusame although the Teijo zakki calls it, puristically, kisha hasamimono, or “mounted archery of the wedged-in targets.” And an appendix to the reign of Yoshimune in the Tokugawa jikki has “...it is said that because the rules of the ceremony had not been transmitted as such, [Yoshimune] ordered it renamed as kisha hasamimono and not yabusame. This he did from extreme modesty.”*<sup>107</sup>

Tokugawa Yoshimune and his historians thus indicate an acute awareness that the ceremony had been recreation. Noting a difference in their shooting style and the fact that the characteristic cry of “*in-yo-in-yo*” was a contemporary invention, Tokugawa historians and

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<sup>101</sup> Shoji Yamada, *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 59

<sup>102</sup> Misa Tsuyoshi, “Japanese Traditional Horseback Archery – kyūbadō” in *Mounted Archery in the Americas*, ed. Lukas Novotny and David Gray (The Long Riders’ Guild Press, 2007), p.60

<sup>103</sup> A *metsuke* was a censor/overseer primarily charged with identifying corruption in the shogunal government. *Metsuke* was also an official position within the shogunal government.

<sup>104</sup> Shoji Yamada, *Shots in the Dark*, 59

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 45

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

the shogun himself did not consider it to be “genuine” *yabusame*.<sup>108</sup> There is an ironic parallel to be drawn here with the issues surrounding the more general use of the word *yabusame* today. The construction and application of appropriate terminology in the Tokugawa period provides us with an example of how the “correct” use of the word *yabusame*, conveyed in scholarly discourse at the time, was not reflected in the non-scholars’ understanding of the ceremony. The shogun and his official historians made the distinction between *yabusame* and *kisha hasamimono* based on which “supreme presence” (shrine deity or the shogun) was in attendance. As I have previously mentioned, in the case of *yabusame*, the ceremony was held on shrine grounds and the supreme presence was the divinity of the shrine itself. Out of respect, the shogun would not be physically present, but would send a representative in his place.<sup>109</sup> However, the record keepers of the Castle were not historians of the martial arts. They did not adhere to the official definitions and referred to *kisha hasamimono* as *yabusame*.<sup>110</sup>

So what does this tell us about authority groups in the modern setting? One must always be cautious when drawing parallels with social and political situations of the past in order to make a comparison with those of the present. The impetuses behind them differ greatly between contemporary settings, but I feel that in this case it can indeed be done. Despite what an authority group might decide what may or may not be called *yabusame*, the laymen will still create their own definitions and apply them. “Laymen” does not necessarily equate to the general public; I use the term to refer to anyone who is not an “official” authority on making these decisions. And these non-authority groups can indeed become authorities later on.

The Ogasawara family were not an authenticating body in terms of determining what ultimately could or should be called *yabusame* in the Tokugawa period, but they evidently had authority over how to conduct certain aspects of the ceremony. The Ogasawara contributions during Yoshimune’s revival were, according to Hesselink, likely more ornamental and ceremonial rather than in the form of formal training.<sup>111</sup> Hurst also recognizes that the Ogasawara had long ago diverged from martial practice and taught in a purely ceremonial capacity.<sup>112</sup> The association with the Ogasawara family was likely in part a

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<sup>108</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 45

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 47

<sup>112</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 122-136

stratagem employed by Yoshimune for attributing a sense of legitimacy to his revival of the *yabusame* ceremony. Yoshimune was a skilled horseman and so were a number of his retainers, they were passionate about hunting and were more than capable of doing mounted archery “for fun” by themselves. But Yoshimune loved horses and romanticized the warrior tradition, and he also appears to have genuinely believed in the magical properties of the *yabusame* ceremony.<sup>113</sup> He can be said to have used an inherited tradition strategically in his endorsement of Ogasawara Heibei.

Furthermore, in the creative act of reviving *yabusame*, Yoshimune was ultimately responsible for the invention of new aspects of its practice that would later be incorporated into the tradition we see before us today. The Ogasawara family had been models for mounted archery from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, and they had had close ties to the Ashikaga shoguns as their official mounted archery teachers.<sup>114</sup> And so, while the Ogasawara school did not have the preeminent authority to decide what could or could not be called *yabusame* in Yoshimune’s time, they were granted a specialized authority in presiding over matters of dress, order of precedence, and the behavior of the archers’ companions.<sup>115</sup>

The Ogasawara have a long tradition of secrecy which is evident in their practice of largely teaching through oral traditions. Long after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate, this has aided in the consolidation of their status as an authenticating body in matters of tradition and ceremony in the modern setting. Secret documents and the oral transference of teachings, combined with a long and relatively unbroken history of practice, has meant that up until recently the Takeda and Ogasawara schools have enjoyed a position of exclusivity. They are “official” in that they have received endorsement from the Imperial House of Japan. The Imperial House’s endorsement is the main agent of legitimacy in present day Ogasawara ceremonies, perhaps in much the same way that the Ogasawara name functioned as an agent of legitimacy for Yoshimune’s revival of the *yabusame* ceremony. The Ogasawara have since come to use the word *shinji* to contextualize *yabusame* practice. If *shinji* is added to the word *yabusame*, then it specifies a ritualized shrine dedication that correlates to the “genuine” *yabusame* as defined by the official historians of the Tokugawa period. But I have noticed that the Ogasawara use the word *yabusame* without the affixation *shinji* to describe shooting on the three-track course for demonstrative purposes or ceremonies that are not part of a shrine

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<sup>113</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 47

<sup>114</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 118-121; Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 47

<sup>115</sup> Hesselink, “The Warrior’s Prayer,” 47

dedication. For example, when the Takeda or Ogasawara schools perform for foreign dignitaries<sup>116</sup> (who may also be considered a “supreme presence”) or as part of opening a new area of a city.<sup>117</sup>

In the modern setting of our more secular age, I believe that new authenticating bodies of *yabusame* and *kisha* practice are emerging in Japan. As sports *yabusame* becomes more organized and systematized, and if these sports groups continue to take an initiative in cooperating and participating in the global mounted archery sports movement, its own process of institutionalization and legitimation will expedite. These groups and/or organizations will not replace the Ogasawara and Takeda schools as a body of authority, but they may become equally as influential in a different way. The Ogasawara and Takeda will always be the main body of authority when it comes to tradition. However, sports *yabusame* groups may create a new category of *yabusame* practice, where they may vie for position as the dominant force for authentication in the realm of modern secular sport. In addition, one cannot ignore the general public as an emergent force for the creation of legitimacy. They too wield a degree of authority in what may or may not be called *yabusame*, even if their understanding is viewed as ultimately incorrect by *kisha* and *yabusame* practitioners. Just as in Tokugawa times, but to a far larger national and even international extent, the laymen use terminology as they will, regardless of what “official” bodies of authority would otherwise wish.

## 4.2 Authenticity and Ethnicity

While Theodossopoulos argues for a perspective on the study of authenticity that acknowledges the simultaneous co-existence of more than one parallel manifestation of authenticity which exist in tension, Højbjerg argues that there are good reasons for going beyond the dichotomies of innate, artifact, primordial, and instrumental in relation to cultural phenomena.<sup>118</sup> This argument is framed against the ethnicity and ethnic identity debate. Transcending such dichotomies is sufficient in demonstrating the issues surrounding cultural tradition in a more general sense outside of the paradigm of nationhood. Just as anthropologists such as Theodossopoulos identify that authenticity means different things to

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<sup>116</sup> Misa Tsuyoshi, “Japanese Traditional Horseback Archery” in *Mounted Archery in the Americas*, ed. Lukas Novotny and David Gray (The Long Riders’ Guild Press, 2007), 62

<sup>117</sup> 小笠原清忠、小笠原清其〔共著〕”Ogasawara Yabusame” 小笠原流 はースト婦人画社; 31-59

<sup>118</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa” in *Tradition and Agency*, 110

different people in different contexts, Højbjerg found in his study of the Loma that “Loma tradition” was similarly divergent in its conceptualization and understanding in contemporary Guinea. This suggested that Loma tradition must be both *invented* and *inherited*.<sup>119</sup> Hence, some aspects of Loma tradition Højbjerg encountered predated the modern nation of Guinea, while other aspects were influenced by national ideologies, or were purely a product of them.

We have seen in the previous section of this chapter that many aspects of traditional *yabusame* ceremony predate the modern nation-state of Japan, and that anachronism and re-interpretation are a part of its inherited traditional practice. However, it is important to keep in mind that many aspects of traditional *yabusame* performance are a product of the modern setting and the (unconscious) national cultural ideological mindsets of its actors. I argue that with the national and ethnic homogenization characteristic of the modern setting, the context of traditional *yabusame* practice has changed. It no longer represents to present-day actors what Tokugawa period actors perceived it to represent almost three hundred years ago. In the same manner, Tokugawa *yabusame*, or *kisha hasamimono*, was not considered then (as it should not be now) to be representative of the mindsets of Kamakura period actors some five hundred years before that. In regard to the notion of authenticity as a part national cultural ideology, Richard Handler states that it is one of “possessive individualism,” which is a dominant variant of modern ideology.<sup>120</sup> The existence of a national collectivity depends upon the so-called possession of an authentic culture; i.e., one that is original to its possessors and exists only with them while asserting itself against other cultures.<sup>121</sup>

When “we” as the collective onlooker ascribe such a contemporary and homogenizing label as “Japanese” to *yabusame* and other forms of *kisha*, how exactly does this affect the way in which we perceive the tradition set before us? Referring back to the question “*How is yabusame conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?*” the accompanying question of whether an ethnic identity is something that is innate or an artifact, primordial or instrumental cannot be ignored. If one is to argue that physical, ideological, or historical aspects of a traditional performance enacted in today's age are spurious, should not one then also question whether the context of the modern setting is likewise so. In the case of something as subjective as the self-ascription of identity, the question of whether one can in fact label *yabusame*, or other forms of *kisha*, as intrinsically “Japanese” (in the way the word

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<sup>119</sup> Højbjerg, “Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa” in *Tradition and Agency*, 111

<sup>120</sup> Handler, “Authenticity,” 4

<sup>121</sup> Handler, “Authenticity,” 4

is largely understood to be a national and ethnic appointment) arises. Doing so would suggest that *yabusame*, being a warrior ceremonial historically associated with the *bushi* (warrior) elite and Shinto associated shrine rites, is somehow an inherited tradition of the Japanese people; i.e., all who claim Japanese ethnicity or identity may, in addition, collectively lay claim to a cultural tradition that is exclusively theirs by virtue of being social participants within the modern paradigms of nationhood and national identity.

The *yabusame* ceremony was an unshared appointment of the ruling warrior class and the shogunate in the medieval and premodern periods (at least in an official capacity), whose lifeworld and lineages were distinctively set apart from the other classes. In spite of this historical exclusivity based on class and social rank, under the more encompassing and inclusive social structures set within the modern mould of nationhood there emerges the idea of an inherent right of accessibility to the past on the part of their actors. Thus, the context of traditional (*shinji*) *yabusame* performance has changed contemporaneously in the modern setting with the shift that has occurred in the mentality of its actors. What is seen when one watches *yabusame* is as much a reflection of the modern world and the post-nationalist ideals buried within its social subconscious as it is a representation of Japanese cultural tradition or the legacy of pre-war nation building.

I found that there was a strong sense of national identity associated with *yabusame* on the part of local actors, particularly those who performed or competed overseas. Whether for traditional performances or sport competitions, all the interviewees who had travelled abroad had a heightened sense of the uniqueness of the Japanese style of archery compared to the styles of foreign Others. This would even affect their competitive attitude, as demonstrated by the response of one individual from the Aomori Riding Club to a question about bows:

I know that you go overseas quite often to compete. Do you only use the Japanese bow, or do you use foreign bows as well in overseas competitions?

*No, I only use the Japanese bow. Because that is my identity. Even though it's not really good for competition, because it's too long and you can't do [mounted archery] very quickly. In foreign countries they have things like the Hungarian style, Mongolian style, and the Polish style, and [with] the shorter [bows] it's much easier. For me, I don't really want to win. I just participate and communicate with foreign competitors for fun.*

As I have previously stated, *yabusame/kisha*, and international mounted archery in general, are somewhat idiosyncratic in the modern setting. When all forms of mounted archery practice in Japan and overseas are amalgamated and presented or viewed as a holistic,

interconnected body of activity<sup>122</sup> (as is so often the case at international competitions), there appears to be a need to symbolically evoke national sentiment through aestheticism.

According to Rupert Cox, when aesthetic forms are separated from the contexts and institutions where they are manifested at the level of regular practice, they become an idiom by which a national identity can be fostered and expressed.<sup>123</sup> In other words, the aesthetic elements of mounted archery such as form, costumes, equipment, etc. take on a stronger association with national identity when presented in public spaces to public audiences. The farther away the public space is from the center of regular contextualized or institutionalized practice, the stronger the association with national cultural identity becomes. Modern milieu that are familiar on an international scale (Cox's example was an airport) are "filled with the possibilities for the kind of mobile, small-scale exhibition of national identity."<sup>124</sup>

International mounted archery competitions serve just such a purpose for the exhibition of Japanese national identity, even when the mounted archery practice is not considered by participants to be wholly traditional, as in the case of sports *yabusame*.

Sometimes the Japanese mounted archer finds themselves associated with their presupposed national cultural identity when competing overseas, even before voluntarily exploring it for themselves. As one young woman confessed:

*T-san and I went [together] to the USA for the horseback archery camp, and I started practicing horseback archery there because there aren't so many places that I can practice horseback archery around me here... I started horseback archery two or three years ago and back then there was no place to practice [near me]. So I was just practicing archery and jumping around on the ground [to simulate movement on the horse]. All the people [I spoke to] in the USA knew about yabusame and were asking me about it. Things like, "what is it like?" and "how do you do that ceremony? What is the meaning?" But I didn't know about it. So then I started to think about practicing yabusame myself. I started searching for somewhere to practice when I came back to Japan.*

*Yabusame* was generally considered by the local actors I interviewed to be an embodiment of Japanese culture and tradition. In the case of sports *yabusame*, it was in many ways considered to be almost a legacy of traditional culture. But actors also stressed that it could be an incredibly localized practice with no clear standard between groups, or perhaps more

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<sup>122</sup> A discussion on the extent to which this occurs on the part of general audiences and just how erroneous it is to do so is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>123</sup> Rupert A. Cox, *The Zen Arts: An Anthropological Study of the Culture of Aesthetic Form in Japan* (USA and Canada: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 235

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

accurately, with several coexisting standards of technique and equipment that were in a constant state of negotiation and revision. The groups generally had their own individualistic ways of doing things, and sometimes the differences between groups' methodologies would create a degree of contention. However, there seemed to be an overall consensus that promoting "Japanese culture," (not only Japanese *traditional* culture), history, or simply a Japanese "style" by using the *yumi*, was something worth working together for. In other words, while strong feelings of local identity connected with regional history were prevalent among groups outside of the Ogasawara and Takeda schools, there was a common appreciation of being part of a greater national whole.

### 4.3 Authenticity and Re-enactment/Living History

Outside of authenticity conceptualized as perfect simulation, Handler and Saxton identify a second kind of authenticity that they claim permeates living history but is not consciously understood by practitioners as central to the task of historical simulation.<sup>125</sup> As opposed to the explicit conceptualization of authenticity as being indicated by the accuracy of a historical simulation, this implicit conception of authenticity "concerns the privileged reality of individual experience."<sup>126</sup> While exact simulations are conceptualized as "authentic representations" of past times and/or traditional culture, there is also an emotive conceptualization of authenticity as "authentic experience," which is realized through an individual's feeling that they are in touch with a realness of "self." This is achieved through the simulation of historical worlds, wherein which lies this opportunity to realize oneself.<sup>127</sup> In other words, when the re-enactor truly feels that he or she has made the intangible nature of the past tangible to themselves through their re-enactment, then *that* is considered to be an authentic experience.

Handler and Saxton's subject of study is slightly different from my own, and I am aware that the "living history" presented in their article is not quite the same as the "living history" presented in my study of *yabusame*. However, I did identify a number of areas where their theory is applicable, albeit the context of its application is rather different. The ways in which authenticity is negotiated and conceptualized by *yabusame* practitioners often involve the

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<sup>125</sup> Handler and Saxton, "Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity," 242-243

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

same (or similar) considerations concerning the realization of tangible authentic representations and intangible authentic experiences as those of the American Civil War reenactors observed by Handler and Saxton.

As I have previously mentioned, I came into contact with a school called Tōyama that often participates in demonstrations at cultural festivals, but also on occasion performs *shinji yabusame* at shrines around Tokyo (one of which was Ōkunitama Shrine in Fuchu). It was a peculiar school that combines traditional elements with superficial style, and their activities resemble those of a living history or reenactment group more than anything else. One of their instructors had trained with the Takeda School for thirty five years before teaming up with another Tōyama master. Tōyama-ryū is originally a swordsmanship school, but the ex Takeda student had joined them at the behest of his friend, and together they created the new *kyūba jutsu* branch. I was told that the style of shooting was therefore identical to that of the Takeda style, and other elements of their practice, too, were heavily influenced by the Takeda school. The Tōyama school draws from tradition but does not seek to maintain it in the same way as the Ogasawara and Takeda do. At the same time they do not seek to disassociate themselves from tradition as the sports *yabusame* groups do. Their demonstration at the Machida *jidai matsuri* was not a sport, and neither was it ceremonial. It lay more along the lines of a reenactment or living history demonstration. “S-san,” a Tōyama student who has also travelled overseas to compete in horseback archery competitions with individuals from a sports *yabusame* group, described the Tōyama school thus:

*Actually my school is kind of in the middle [between tradition and competition]. Because at the festival we are not doing yabusame. It's just for the general public, for show. So we're not actually doing it just for the shrines. But we still just call it yabusame and not kisha hasamimono. We are not competing, but actually even in the shrine we are happy if we hit all of the targets. We also compare each other. We are not actually competing, but on the inside we kind of are in a way.*

S-san had struggled for some time with feeling torn between a desire to continue travelling overseas for international mounted archery competitions (because the “people were friendly and they ride horses in a better way than in Japan”), and staying with Tōyama to continue having the “authentic experiences” as conceptualized by Handler and Saxton above. S-san continues to do both activities, but sometimes feels the grand master does not like it, although it was acknowledged that his skepticism was most likely due to not knowing much about foreign forms of horseback archery.

*S-san: We don't host our own competitions but we can go and compete at others' competitions. I don't know if my teacher minds...but one time I told him that I was going to Oregon before I went there for the international competition. I asked the others if they wanted to come with me, kind of as a joke, but then my teacher told them that they shouldn't go to this kind of competition. He said it was meaningless, or maybe a "weird" competition. I think it's because he doesn't understand what it is. But when I came back I told him all about it, how fun it was and even about some of the rules they had, like timing the runs up the track. And he actually seemed quite interested in the end. At first he thought that the sport "horseback archery" was a little bit obscure... He did yabusame with the Takeda school and [performed with them] in foreign countries. I think he's a bit proud of his background. He was a very high ranked student in the Takeda, and he's proud of the fact that he performed for the president of the USA and other important people. Maybe he's quite aware that the Takeda school were demonstrating traditional Japanese culture, and doesn't like Japanese people doing [yabusame] in a non-traditional way. But I can't say for sure, because I feel it's hard to ask him these things as my teacher.*

The rigidity of the hierarchical nature of relationships within the Tōyama school was the main reason behind S-san's dissatisfaction, and a driving force behind the desire to compete in the more relaxed competitions overseas. However, the pull of the authentic experience realized through the fulfillment of a "role" at Tōyama demonstrations and shrine ceremonies kept S-san from leaving:

*When I am performing, I feel it's really different from a competition. We're not competing, we're showing [something], whether it's to the god in the shrine or the people gathered to see the horses. Personally I feel really honored that I can perform at that traditional shrine. There's not much chance to ride a horse at a shrine and the atmosphere, the mood, is really serious. I strongly feel that I want to hit the target, and I'm actually more relaxed in competition. In a competition I am playing with the horses, but in a [shrine] performance I have a role to fulfill. I have to do well. I feel much more anxious and I think that the horses do to. But even if I feel I wasn't good, and I'm still not good, at yabusame, I still feel honored to perform at the shrine. Feeling this same atmosphere people felt a long time ago is really special, and I am really happy and honored to be doing yabusame at the shrine for shinji.*

S-san's emotional experiences with "living the past" are a good example of what Højbjerg describes as the strong hold cultural representations have over people's minds, discussed in the previous chapter. The dichotomy between a competition and a *shinji yabusame* performance for S-san did not only lie in the tangible differences between the activities' physical contexts, but also between the intangible differences conceptualized as a range of emotions that lent an atmosphere of seriousness and tension to the activity of *shinji*.

Sports *yabusame* groups were less concerned with perfect simulations and making the intangible nature of the past tangible. But again, personal considerations varied significantly between individuals over which, if any, "traditional" elements should be incorporated into

*yabusame*'s reinterpretation as a modern sport. For example, some did not want to do away with the beauty of form that they saw in traditional *yabusame* practice, although they also did not want to duplicate the formalized ceremonial methods of nocking and drawing, as they were considered to be too slow for use in a competitive sports context. The solution, it seemed, was to discard the ritualized aspects of mounted archery technique. Overall, this lack of concern over perfect simulation of the past meant that this second implicit conceptualization of the authentic Handler and Saxton identify was not aspired to, or even realized at all, by the members of sports *yabusame* groups. That is not to say, however, that simulations of aspects of the past were completely dismissed by competitors, or that the enigmatic allure of an intangible sense "pastness" present in mounted archery practice was lost on them. As will be discussed in both the next section and the next chapter, material objects that could be associated with the past were considered to have beauty, and therefore were desirable even in a competitive context.

#### **4.4 Authenticity and Materiality (and Horses)**

As I have stated previously, actors' interpretations of their societies' traditions are influenced in part by the objects they perceive as having place and value within them. There is no better forum for discussion than that of the material world when one seeks to identify key negotiations concerning authenticity within a traditional practice. The exploration of object authenticity is a large theoretical undertaking, and an exhaustive analysis of the factors that inform authentication of material objects and culture is beyond the scope of this thesis. The role of materiality in the authenticity debate is a core aspect of my study approach, however. And so although it is ultimately too extensive to be included in one sub-section of this project, I have endeavored to continue developing the authenticity and materiality theme by including it in the subject matter of the next two chapters. This section will focus on authority in relation to object authentication and horses in particular, while the following chapter on sport will discuss some of the material aspects of sports *yabusame*, and whether or not they can be considered "traditional" elements.

Handler claims that in modern society, the "temple of authenticity" is the museum, where objects and pieces of culture that stand for the cultures of their possessors-creators are

displayed.<sup>128</sup> Theodossopoulos also identifies museums as an authoritative body in material authentication. He argues that their signposting of authenticity impose social meaning through their (officially endorsed) material presence.<sup>129</sup> This indicates, once again, that the Ogasawara and Takeda schools are a main body of authority in authenticity discourse. It has already been established that they have the legitimizing (historically) documented connection with the past which forms a large part of the schools' identity in the modern setting. But they also have a comprehensive collection and supply of material objects at their disposal. Some of these material objects are national treasures fit for museum display cases, while others are made by a dying breed of traditional artisans, who one Ogasawara student described as "living national treasures." Indeed, this same student described the Ogasawara school as a "living museum" and this sentiment was echoed by others within and without the school.

As a living museum, therefore, the Ogasawara school lend enormous weight to their assertion that they are the official preservationists of equestrian archery as traditional culture. Furthermore, the fact that they are officially endorsed by the Imperial House of Japan grants them a special status as an authenticating force in traditional cultural practice. Declining membership numbers, new sports *yabusame* and *kisha* re-enactment groups competing for public recognition, and the logistics surrounding the consequent need to appear more accessible and inclusive to the general public are just a few of the issues the Ogasawara school is currently facing. Even so, their presence as an authority figure with respect to authenticity debates remains impervious to destabilization in the modern setting. I must admit that the Ogasawara school's material repertoire is convincing. As I was observing members preparing for the annual autumn *shinji yabusame* dedication at the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine, I was shown saddles and stirrups dating from the Tokugawa period. All of them were roughly between one hundred and two hundred and fifty years old and meticulously cared for. Most of them were endowed with intricate carvings and gold-leaf inlays, their repeated use in shrine ceremonies over many years indicated by marks of stress. They looked beautiful and impressive despite the wear and tear of centuries.

Many individuals unconsciously look to such signs of "pastness" indicated by wear and tear, decay and disintegration in material objects associated with traditions.<sup>130</sup> Pastness "liberates authenticity from the constraints of inherent material substance" and in turn inspires their

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<sup>128</sup> Handler, "Authenticity," 4

<sup>129</sup> Theodossopoulos, "Laying Claim to Authenticity," 353

<sup>130</sup> Theodossopoulos, "Laying Claim to Authenticity," 351

recognition as ultimate signs of authentic practice.<sup>131</sup> During my fieldwork I was able to speak with a non-Japanese individual who is in the unique position of being allowed to participate in the annual October *shinji yabusame* dedication at Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine, even though he is not an official member of the Ogasawara school. He had the following to say about material objects used by himself and the Ogasawara archers for the ceremony:

*There are not many places you can go in the world and participate in something that is a total physical and mental challenge but at the same time you're riding in saddles and stirrups that are Japanese national treasures. Some of the saddles here [at Nikkō Tōshōgū] are worth millions of yen. I once saw a set of stirrups like the ones we ride in for the performance go for 150,000 dollars. So you're actually riding in the same style, using the same form, in the same equipment, wearing the same clothes, shooting at the same targets at the same distances that people did hundreds of years ago. That in itself is beautiful and worthwhile.*

It is perhaps important to clarify here that the saddles and stirrups mentioned above are loaned to the Ogasawara performers by the shrine, although the Ogasawara school are of course in possession of their own “national treasures.” For this individual, the sense of “pastness” represented by the material objects enriched his experience of participating in a unique and “authentic” Japanese experience. Here we can see, yet again, that one of the many conceptualizations of authenticity prevalent in traditional and “living history” *yabusame* practice is the exactness of the simulation of performances that took place in the past. Even when objects wore down to the point they were no longer useable and required replacing, the authenticity of an “old” object could be transferred to a “new” one and therefore retained. Authenticity was conceptualized simultaneously as the exact simulation of past artisanal techniques and materials, and the recreation of an object according to the specifications of a prescribed style using said techniques and materials:

*This is also very much what Nikkō Tōshōgū is about. Because people come here to the shrine, and they see this amazing shrine with all the carvings and paintings... it is a world heritage site. But like everything, it wears out. But what they do here is that they support a huge pool of artisans, who are trained in the original techniques and styles of craftsmanship. So when things wear out or become too old, they can replace or repair it with new stuff, but new stuff that is done in exactly the same style and using the same techniques and materials that it was made with four hundred years ago.*

Sports *yabusame* groups had also experimented with using “traditional” objects, such as the *wagura* (Japanese saddle) and prescribed dress, albeit their rationale was characterized by a

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 351-352

more superficial objectivity. This will be elaborated upon in the next chapter, but here it will suffice to say that the actors behind the sports *yabusame* movement had initially been concerned with copying the traditional “style” rather than the tradition itself. Adopting an archetypical Japanese appearance was more a matter of aesthetics. Yet ultimately, the expense and general difficulty of duplicating the material aspects of traditional mounted archery meant that they had to be adapted and the original rules changed. One of the founding individuals in the sports *yabusame* movement (who will henceforth be referred to as “H-san”) told me:

*In my organization’s original rules, there was a rule that one should use the wagura and the yumi, and that the clothes should be in the Japanese style. But after starting sports yabusame, [eventually] all the different organizations had their own rules and some of them couldn’t get hold of things like the wagura because it’s hard to find them and they are expensive to buy, and maybe difficult to make. People started to change the clothes as well because it was a bit troublesome to ride on the horse with the traditional style kimono. And so there were arguments over the rules.*

H-san told me that it was better to have a standardized set of rules for equipment in competitions officiated by one of these organizations. In terms of training, though, the organizations could no longer expect the groups and schools under them to materially adhere to the competitive standard. In a local or national competition, equipment and horses could be shared, making it easier to standardize. During my fieldwork I was taken to a number of riding clubs that offer training in sports *yabusame*, two of which regularly loan and rent their horses out to other groups. Some of these other groups do re-enactment and/or *shinji yabusame* and are not necessarily involved with mounted archery as a sport. At these same two schools I was allowed to run the horses up the track and (attempt to) shoot the *yumi*,<sup>132</sup> and on both occasions I was given a choice between using the *wagura*, an American western saddle, or a British jumping saddle. While such a choice was not typical across all the schools I visited, it was demonstrative of the increased inclusivity of their training practices compared to more conservative (non-sports *yabusame*) schools. I could start training straight away in the saddle I was most familiar, and therefore most comfortable, with and run the horse up the track without the need to first learn the difficult posture and balancing techniques required to ride in the *wagura*.

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<sup>132</sup> I used to participate in horseback archery before moving to Norway. Some of the individuals I communicated with while I was doing fieldwork in Japan had also met my instructor. Therefore, it was neither dangerous nor unprofessional for them to allow me to do this. I was not accustomed to the length, weight, and balance of the *yumi*, and found it much more difficult to grasp the nocking technique than I had done when learning to use my shorter (and significantly lighter) Hungarian bow.

Horses also played a vital role in negotiations of the authentic. Referring back to the theory of the previous chapter, one good example of a non-politicized strategic use of *yabusame* would be the activities of an individual I will call “K-san,” whose primary objective is the restoration and survival of the Kiso horse (*kiso-uma* 木曾馬 in Japanese). K-san owns one of the aforementioned riding schools that loans/rents out horses to other mounted archery groups. A critically endangered indigenous breed native to Honshu, Kiso horses are small and relatively unknown by the average Japanese. This is because most of Japan’s population is urban (ninety-three percent in 2014),<sup>133</sup> rendering horseback riding an expensive and not particularly popular pastime. For those individuals who do ride, breeds of foreign origins (Japanese Thoroughbreds, Quarter Horses, Arabians, etc.) are much more popular because they are more readily available and better-suited to the average adult size. K-san’s riding school is also a dedicated breeding center for this little-known indigenous horse.

To boost popularity and awareness of the breed, K-san has undertaken two innovations. The first has been to refine the Kiso breed by introducing some Halflinger and Quarter Horse blood to the stock in an attempt to produce a horse with a more aesthetically pleasing build but that retains classic Kiso characteristics. The second has been to find these horses, as K-san phrased it, “a job,” or rather a *raison d’être* outside of them being slaughtered for meat as is the case with the Dosanko, another native breed. This was the reason behind renting the horses out to other groups; not only did it raise public awareness of the breed but, by promoting them as “traditional” *yabusame* horses, various *kisha* and *yabusame* groups could also add a sense of “pastness” to their performances. During our interview K-san often interjected my questions about *yabusame*, sports, and tradition, with comments such as “forget about tradition, okay? I just care about my horses, and this is a way that they can survive. The horses come first, *yabusame* comes second.”

A love for the Kiso breed was the drive behind K-san’s involvement with *yabusame*. K-san found the thought of breeding and selling Kiso horses for their meat deeply upsetting. The fortunate timing of a sports *yabusame* movement, and the concomitant rise of reenactment groups and revived traditional schools, provided an opportunity for the creation of “a job” for them. Foreign breeds are often used by the Ogasawara and Takeda schools in their ceremonies, and many audience members do not give thought to the fact that they are

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<sup>133</sup> “Japan Population,” World Population, last modified November 26, 2015, Last accessed 27/11/2015, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/japan-population/>

significantly larger and faster than the horses of previous times. A common complaint I heard from Ogasawara members was that these horses were too big for the centuries old *wagura* they used in shrine ceremonies such as the one in Nikkō. On the practice morning held one day before the ritual dedication at Nikkō Tōshōgū was to take place, I observed an assistant frantically sewing together blankets and towels for extra padding to go under the saddles. The layers of gel pads and saddle mats already being used were still not thick enough to make wearing the Tokugawa period *wagura* comfortable for some of the larger horses. Another common complaint concerned speed. Japanese thoroughbreds, many of which are ex racehorses, are the most commonly used breed in *yabusame* ceremonies and other mounted archery performances. They cover the track much faster than the smaller horses ridden hundreds of years ago would have done. This makes it far more of a challenge to nock, draw, and loose the arrows in time between the targets, which have not changed in their set distances along the track in *yabusame* ceremonies since medieval times.<sup>134</sup>

The Dosanko (道産子), alternatively known as the Hokkaido Horse, is another breed native to Japan and, as the name suggests, is commonly found in the northern part of Honshu and Hokkaido. As a result of their being bred for the meat industry, they are not considered to be endangered. H-san owns a breeding ranch in Hokkaido and is a friend of K-san. H-san also disliked selling Dosanko horses for meat and saw sports *yabusame* as an opportunity to redefine the breed as a modern sports horse:

*H-san: The Dosanko was used for things like farming, as a beast of burden. But now all these things are done by machines and there is no chance for them to work anymore... I was thinking of using them as a sports horse or something like that. Maybe you know about the Quarter Horse? They were used by the cowboys for cattle herding. There used to be a lot of them in the USA but nowadays there is no work for them. The value of the Quarter Horse went down, but then they began using [them] as a sports horse and they got their value back. They are worth more now than they were before when they were used by cowboys. The quality of the breed is really nice, this makes their value and price increase as a sports horse. So I was thinking about something similar for the Dosanko ponies. And I thought about what kind of sports we could do, and I came to yabuame. We have always used horses for yabusame, it is something that is still happening in Japan today, so why not use the native horses?*

Native Japanese breeds were consistently referred to as “traditional *yabusame* horses” by local actors belonging to both traditional equestrian archery schools and sports *yabusame* groups. This indicates an association of native breeds with a sense of originality on the part of

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<sup>134</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *The Armed Martial Arts*, 116

these actors. They were perceived to be more period-accurate and therefore better for exact simulations. Refinement of the breed through the mixing of some foreign blood did not detract from this perception, and in the case of the endangered Kiso horse it was a necessity to prevent interbreeding. Their being promoted as “traditional” *yabusame* horses, therefore, was suggestive of their conceptualization as an authentic element within traditional practice. As a further example of this, I was provided with a private (unpublished) manifest of sorts from an organization called the *yabusame kyōgi renmei*, or “Competitive Yabusame Federation.” It explained both the philosophy and technical details behind the federation’s origins and eventual establishment. Both H-san and K-san were among the founding members. It appears to be intended for the organization’s board members, and so I have chosen not to include a full translation as it contains some sensitive information. However, on the subject of horses it states:

*A change in quality can be seen in the equitation from ancient times because the yabusame that had [previously] been performed with Japanese horse breeds was changed by larger mounts...In that sense, traditional horsemanship has been marred.*

Native horses were also considered to be more temperamentally reliable and safer for use in mounted archery than the larger, faster, and more highly strung foreign breeds. I was taken on a ride through the forest on one of K-san’s Kiso stallions. The woman accompanying me would often drop her reigns and twist around in the saddle, either to talk to me or take pictures of the surroundings with her phone, all at the trot or the canter. She left her stallion to follow a narrow winding path through the trees by himself, without fear of him bolting or misbehaving. She told me that she could only do so because “Kiso [horses] have their own mind, they can think for themselves and make their own decisions safely.”

I admit that after watching one ex racehorse ignore his rider’s signals to slow down and crash through the barrier at the end of a *yabusame* track (and a few others nearly doing the same), I felt inclined to agree. The Kiso and Dosanko horses appeared to handle the tension and stress of public events much better than any other breed. The audiences too, while impressed with the faster thoroughbreds, seemed to delight in the smaller horses. When one especially petite Dosanko appeared to find the gallop up the *yabusame* track too tiring during the Ogasawara school’s ceremony in Nikkō, there were cries of “do your best!” from the crowd and a large round of applause when he made it past the last target.

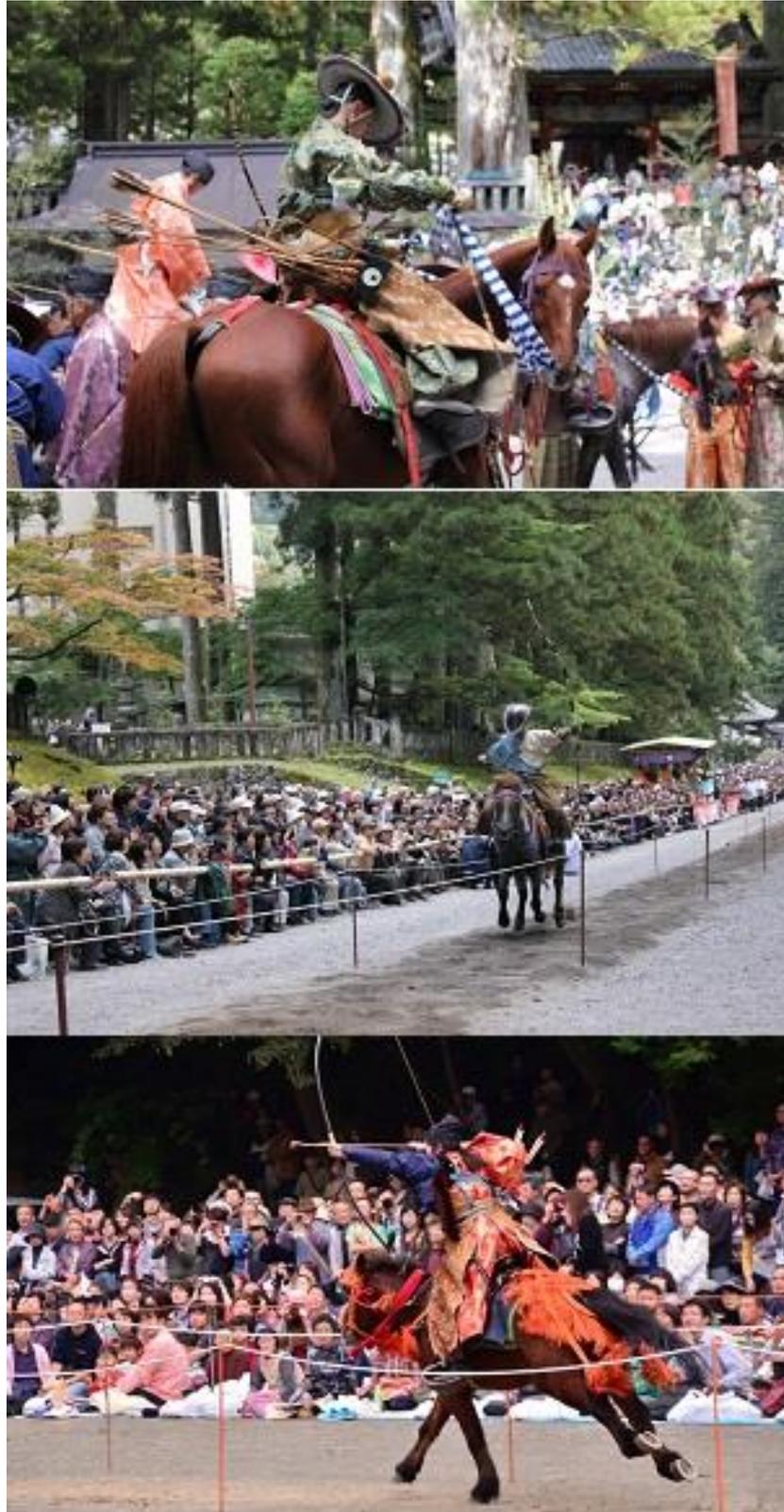


Figure 3: (From top to bottom) A top Ogasawara student dressed in Kamakura period hunting costume rides a Japanese thoroughbred in the yabusame ceremony held at Nikkō Tōshōgū, Autumn 2014; An Ogasawara master rides a Dosanko horse past the last target at the same ceremony; A Toyama school student rides a Kiso horse at the Machida Jidai Matsuri demonstration, Autumn 2014

THE WORLD HERITAGE NIKKO TOSHOGU SHRINE 400 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

# The First International Horseback Archery Competition

15th October, 2015



## Now Meet, East and West



UNITED KINGDOM



GERMANY



ITALY



SWEDEN



ROMANIA



POLAND



HUNGARY



TURKEY



MONGOLIA



SOUTH KOREA



CHINA



MALAYSIA



AUSTRALIA



UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA



JAPAN

Figure 4: The official English language promotional poster for the International Horseback Archery Competition to be held at Nikkō Tōshōgū in October 2015. The image of a Polish competitor is set alongside that of a Japanese sports yabusame competitor to emphasize the celebration of East-meeting-West in secular competition for the first time in the shrine's history.

## 5 Sport

### 5.1 Definitions and Relationship to Culture

I agree with Robert Sands' assertion that sports reflects culture; i.e., what is important and central to a culture is expressed in sport and games.<sup>135</sup> Jay Coakley has stated that as sports are also elements of a larger cultural whole, they have forms and meanings which vary over time and from one group and society to the next. It follows, therefore, that institutional, historical, and social differences are important to consider when analyzing sports.<sup>136</sup> This is of course pertinent to the study of sports/*kyōgi yabusame* in the modern setting. I have discussed in the previous chapter how the notion of authenticity – which is important to both Japanese national and traditional culture – has been reflected in *yabusame* practice, with special attention to traditional contexts and historical simulation. It is the aim of this chapter to discuss how cultural ideals of authenticity and tradition are reflected in (modern) sports and present day sport-like *yabusame* practices.

Cameron Hurst defines sport as “a physical activity involving competition between opponents under specific, mutually accepted rules and regulations for purposes at least symbolically separate from the serious aspects of life.”<sup>137</sup> However, he acknowledges that the high degree of diversity in the sporting traditions of societies far apart in time and space likely results in approaches to sports differing significantly.<sup>138</sup> Allen Guttmann defines sport as “playful” physical, non-utilitarian contests which include an important measure of both physical and intellectual skill. He also states that sports can become symbolic actions.<sup>139</sup> Kendall Blanchard and Alyce Cheska have acknowledged that in the history of anthropology, the treatment of sport has historically been included within the broader category of “games.” Their definition of sport is a game-like activity having rules, a competitive element and requiring some form of physical exertion.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Robert R. Sands, *Sport and Culture: At Play in the Fields of Anthropology*, (Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing, 1999), 11-17

<sup>136</sup> Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. ( McGraw-Hill Education, 2008), 4

<sup>137</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 1

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 7-12

<sup>140</sup> Kendall Blanchard, Alyce Cheska, *The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985), 14

As one can easily surmise from the above descriptions, similar to “tradition” and “authenticity,” the definition of “sport” is also subject to variation in its interpretation and conceptualization, albeit to a far lesser degree. Hurst, Guttman, Blanchard and Cheska, and many other historians, anthropologists, and ethnographers have all provided a clear description of their definition of sport. These descriptions are based on their individual approaches to the study of sport and are generally analogous. However, they are more often than not tailored to the specific research and findings they are themselves presenting, and are therefore not quite identical to one another. For example, in his book *From Ritual to Record*, Allen Guttman has dedicated as much as a chapter to the construction of a paradigm by which a series of dichotomies are presented and explained under the categories of Play, Games, Contests, Sports.<sup>141</sup> Blanchard and Cheska, on the other hand, speak of sport in terms suggesting it is an amalgamation of games, play, and contests. While these words are described and explained, they do not undergo such stringent categorization as in Guttman’s work. In fact the authors place significant emphasis on the appreciation of the play element in sport and argue that, ideally, its presence in modern sport should be considered important.<sup>142</sup> The focus of these studies are different and therefore the definitions of sport contained within them are likewise inherently so, even if these differences are somewhat subtle.

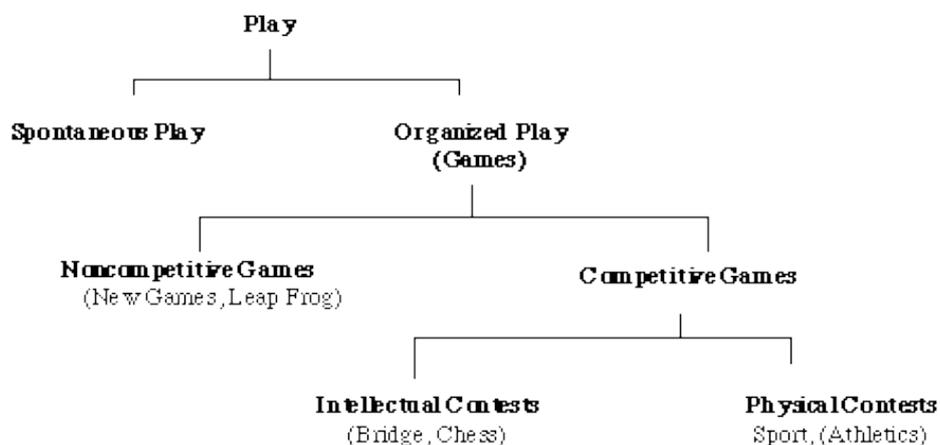


Figure 5: Paradigm demonstrating the dichotomization of “Play, Games, Contests, and Sports” from Allen Guttman’s book *From Ritual to Record* (1978), p. 9

<sup>141</sup> Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*, 14

<sup>142</sup> Blanchard and Cheska, *The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction*, 278-279

The approach of Blanchard and Cheska deals heavily with a range of anthropological theories and their application to a social scientific investigation of sport. For Guttmann's approach, it is more essential that these dichotomies are categorically explained and compartmentalized in as clear and uncertain terms as possible. Writing in 1978, he laments that sports remain among the most discussed yet least understood phenomena of his time. He cites two main reasons for this: the exclusive tendencies of scholars when communicating with one another and only rarely writing for the ordinary reader, and the familiarity of sports in societies that has made their significance appear obvious when in reality it is not.<sup>143</sup> Guttmann sought to offer a systematic and original interpretation of modern sports, specifically, speculations about what is and what is not unique about American sports. More relevant to this thesis, he attempts "to define the relationships that obtain among play, games, contests, and sports; to demonstrate what differentiates modern from primitive, ancient, and medieval sports; to interpret the social conditions that led to the rise of modern sports..."<sup>144</sup> These are essential dichotomies for understanding sports in the modern setting as opposed to sports or sport-like activities from past eras. He refers to his paradigm as a "necessary abstraction," particularly for aiding in understanding what is modern about modern sports, and what is not modern about those from earlier times.<sup>145</sup>

If one is to discern the extent to which sports/*kyōgi yabusame* is a modern sport and whether or not it can be said to contain traditional cultural elements, then such dichotomies are important. My own understanding and definition of sport is a mixture of those presented by Hurst, Guttmann, and Thompson. Hurst's definition is simple but adequate in describing what I mean when I refer to sports in a general sense. Guttmann's more complex paradigm of dichotomies are useful in differentiating between modern sports and those of earlier times. Thompson and Guttmann have together argued that modern sports are comprised of seven defining characteristics that they have identified (based on a previous list created by Guttmann in 1978),<sup>146</sup> and which are provided further on in this section.

According to Cameron Hurst, archery was the first of the traditional Japanese combat techniques to become modified into a sport form.<sup>147</sup> However, equestrian archery as a leisure

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<sup>143</sup> Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record*, 1

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 14

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 16

<sup>147</sup> G. C. Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 103

activity is referred to in some of the earliest court chronicles. In accounts from the *Dairishiki* (833) and other early compilations, it is clear that archery matches far outnumbered all other ceremonies.<sup>148</sup> The early nobility enjoyed hunting as a form of popular recreation, a love shared by later shoguns such as Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199) and, as we have seen, Tokugawa Yoshimune. Firing the bow from horseback had for a long time also been the most prevalent means of waging war.<sup>149</sup> As a weapon, therefore, the bow was most obviously associated with warfare and hunting, but it was in fact never exclusively assigned an association with bloodshed. Mounted archery was being held as offerings to ensure peace and bountiful harvests at shrines on sacred occasions, much as they continue to be held today, by at least the seventh century. As Hurst points out, Japanese archery exhibits both an intimate association with Shinto and incorporation into court ritual under the influence of the Chinese Confucian ceremonial; features which are retained in their present-day (ceremonial) forms.<sup>150</sup>

Perhaps this lack of exclusivity in the bow's associations and the diversity of contexts in which archery was performed in the medieval and premodern periods aided equestrian archery's development into its more recent sporting contexts. After all, competition within both mounted and ground archery is not a development unique to our more secular time. Archery was also transformed into a martial art with techniques codified and systematized upon the emergence of *ryūha* (schools) during the Sengoku period, for example.<sup>151</sup> As Guttman and Thompson have stated, implicit in the striking contrast between traditional and modern sports is the concept of modernization.<sup>152</sup> They assume that despite an ongoing debate as to exactly what the preconditions for modernity present in the Tokugawa period might have been, these preconditions, whatever they were, account for the fact that the Japanese people were more receptive to modern sports than other Asian peoples.<sup>153</sup>

*An array of sociological studies have discussed and debated the modernization of Japanese society. Most scholars continue to believe that "modern" is an appropriate word to describe the present state of Japanese society and one that must, therefore, consider Japanese history from 1868 to the present as an instance of modernization. It must be emphasized, however, that specialists in Japanese history no longer assume, if they ever did, that the modernization of the West is a standard... When the formal-structural properties of modern sports are contrasted with*

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<sup>148</sup> Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 43

<sup>149</sup> G. C. Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 104

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 2

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

*those of premodern sports, one discovers certain key characteristics that can be presented in paradigmatic form.*<sup>154</sup>

With modernization in mind, Guttman and Thompson go on to list the seven key characteristics that they argue distinguish modern sports from premodern ones. They stress that while premodern sports may have displayed one or more of these characteristics, they never exhibited a concurrent consistence of all seven:<sup>155</sup>

**Secularism;** even when ritualized, modern sports are not related to some transcendent realm of the sacred. While sports in premodern societies might have been included as an aspect of religious (for lack of a better word) observance, modern sports never are.

**Equality;** at least in theory, modern sports require that all participants be admitted to the game on the basis of his or her athletic capability. The rules remain the same for all contestants, with no restriction on social class or gender, as was the case with premodern *yabusame* practices.

**Bureaucratization;** currently, local, regional, national, and international bureaucracies administer every level of modern sports. Sports in premodern societies lacked such pervasive administrative structures.

**Specialization;** Guttman and Thompson point out that many modern sports have in fact evolved from earlier, less differentiated games, and therefore have a variety of specialized roles and playing positions. Premodern sports, including early forms of archery, evolved more often than not as a direct consequence of work or warfare. As a result, they exhibit less role specialization.

**Rationalization;** the rules of premodern sports did not change at as rapid a pace as they do in modern sports. The rules of modern sports are constantly scrutinized and revised from a means-ends point of view, and training is frequently scientific and employs technologically sophisticated equipment.

**Quantification;** typical samurai disliked the use of mathematics, which was associated with the mercantile class, and there was significantly less frequency in the use of

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<sup>154</sup> Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 2-3

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

quantification in premodern sports. (However both Hurst<sup>156</sup> and Turnbull<sup>157</sup> point out that the idea of a complete, or near-complete, lack of enthusiastic engagement with quantification by samurai in premodern archery competitions is a misconception.)

**Obsession with records;** unsurpassed quantified achievement is one of the most integral parts of modern sports. Records present a challenge to all athletes and the efforts to surpass them are often the catalyst for the development of new technologies and techniques.<sup>158</sup>

Sports *yabusame* in Japan and competitive mounted archery as it is practiced today at an international level does indeed fulfil all seven of these requirements. Thus, by Guttmann and Thompson's definition, this classifies it as a modern sport. Some of these key characteristics are still in a state of systematization and standardization, however they are conspicuous enough to be included. Sports *yabusame* also requires that some of the more premodern and traditional cultural elements able to coexist within this modern paradigm undergo a series of negotiations and revisions so as not to contradict or undermine modernized aspects of the sport. This often ultimately renders them unrecognizable as such.

The *yabusame* and *kisha hasamimono* ceremonies of the Tokugawa period, the (*shinji*) *yabusame* ceremonies of the Ogasawara, and the *yabusame/ kisha* events performed by revived *ryūha* (schools) all contain some of these elements, but never display all of them simultaneously. Even if all seven elements do appear to be present, I feel that not all of them are in a form concrete enough to be included in the final tally. For example, none of the actors I spoke with from traditional schools actually believed in the *shinji* aspect of *shinji yabusame*. They saw the ceremony as a dedication of respect to the shrine, its priests, and Japanese traditional culture (*dentō bunka*). But even if their modern mindsets were secular, the context of the ceremony was not. Participants adhered diligently to a set of prescribed behaviors and codes of conduct tailored to this non-secular context. Additionally, the characteristic of “rationalization” was conspicuously absent. Revisions to rules and other tangible and intangible aspects of the ceremony did of course occur, sometimes voluntarily and at other

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<sup>156</sup> G. C. Hurst III, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, 125-143

<sup>157</sup> Stephen Turnbull, “Reviewed Work: *Armed Martial Arts of Japan: Swordsmanship and Archery* by G. Cameron Hurst, III,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 222

<sup>158</sup> Guttmann and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 3-4

times involuntarily, but to nowhere near the same extent or with the same rapidity as sports *yabusame*.

## 5.2 Is there tradition in Sports *Yabusame*?

This is a question which predictably elicits subjective interpretations and varied responses. While I have discussed a theoretical framework concerning tradition in Chapter Three, it is appropriate here to briefly recapitulate before applying it critically in the context of this section. An appreciation for the subjective nature of the above question is critical in understanding how notions of tradition are negotiated in the modern setting. Rather than being problematic, its openness to interpretation by the interviewees proved revealing. This was especially the case in observing the contrast between actors' unconscious adherence to normative cultural definitions of tradition and their own personal conceptualization. Tradition means different things to different people and the ways in which it is expressed within societies are shaped by forces of agency and autonomy in individuals and groups. As we have seen, tradition's primary definition is "to capture continuity in human affairs, as it refers both to the activity of handing down cultural heritage from one generation to the next, and to what is actually handed down: customs, beliefs, rituals, rules."<sup>159</sup>

In order to answer the above question, the interviewee, in addition to definitions dictated by socio-cultural norms, would have had to draw from a personal understanding of what "tradition" meant to them based on their own experiences and inner judgments. The process of institutionalized social order provided the justification for *yabusame shinji* through cognitive validity as well as normative authority, and then the legitimation process sealed its status as a cultural tradition. Hence, when asked if sports *yabusame* was traditional, most interviewees said "No." This was because normative authority does not denote modern sports as tradition, and sports *yabusame* is still subject to the process of institutionalization which precludes that of legitimation (which is where tradition may be found).<sup>160</sup> When asked if there were traditional *elements* in sports *yabusame*, however, the intuitive understanding of tradition based on inner experience held more sway over the answers which were, predictably, less uniform.

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<sup>159</sup> Otto and Pedersen, "Detangling Tradition" in *Tradition and Agency*, 7

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

During my interview with two individuals, that I will refer to as “F-san” and “T-san,” at F-san’s ranch and riding school, a revealing discussion concerning their discomfort with using the word *yabusame* to describe their sport arose. I was told that they would prefer to use a term such as *kyūba (jutsu)* or *ba jutsu* (“the art of equestrian archery” or “equestrian art”) because they felt that *yabusame* as a sport will always be mixed with the *yabusame* that is “maintained” by the Ogasawara. While sports *yabusame* is obviously not shrine ritual *shinji*, the concern is that it will still be associated with this act of maintaining something from the past. The Ogasawara and Takeda schools do not exclusively perform *yabusame* as an act of dedication at a shrine (the *shinji*), they also perform for purely demonstrative purposes in Japan and overseas. As one practitioner said of the Ogasawara School, they are now the official repository of all court rituals, as the Imperial House of Japan uses Ogasawara etiquette in their ceremonies. Their expertise in traditional etiquette is of course not only restricted to *yabusame* and other forms of *kisha*, they hold a recognized and respected status within many areas of formal ritual and the aesthetic arts. As they are popularly perceived to be a “living museum,” their *yabusame* performances serve as an official representation of a very carefully maintained piece of cultural heritage. It was therefore uncomfortable for F-san and T-san to think that their activities might be mistaken for a genuine attempt at representing tradition.

Do you think that sport eliminates a need for tradition?

*F-san: Yes, as a sport continues to evolve, tradition becomes less and less present.*

*T-san: In my opinion, yabusame as a sport and yabusame as a tradition can go together. Yabusame as a tradition will continue. But to exist together within one practice is very difficult, almost impossible, because yabusame is just something for showing; it’s shinji, right? Shinji as a sports is impossible. In the case of the yabusame performed by Ogasawara and Takeda, they maintain [it].<sup>161</sup> Maybe they have maintained it for 800 years, and will do so for another 100, 200 years, but they just maintain [it]. And [yabusame] as a sports, this is new. So F-san and I, we are thinking to not use the name yabusame, otherwise [the two activities] will always become mixed up.*

That is the crux, it seems, of the issue with the use of the word *yabusame* by those who identify with the new sporting movement. The concern lies not in the sport being associated with *shinji*, because that difference is visibly apparent. Unease stems from the potential for confusion over a difference less obvious to the untrained eye of the average onlooker. A

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<sup>161</sup> The implication was that outside of the context of performing ritual dedication, the Ogasawara and Takeda schools are also maintaining tradition and heritage.

modern movement with foreign associations such as sports *yabusame* being presented, as T-san and F-san phrased it, with a “Japanese face,” might indeed look vaguely traditional to an ordinary bystander. A performance that superficially appears to convey a vague sense of “oldness” may be loosely associated with some sort of “maintenance,” or an attempted representation or simulation of an aspect of Japan’s past, and this is only exacerbated by its being labelled as *yabusame*.

You don’t use the word *kisha*, you use the term “sports *yabusame*.” Why use *yabusame* instead of *kisha*, *kyūba*, etc.?

*T-san: It’s a very delicate...a difficult question.*

*F-san: The very first reason is that kyūba or kisha are unfamiliar words for Japanese people. The second reason is that Japanese people may not even know what kyūba or kisha is, but every Japanese person understands yabusame; riding the horse, shooting the arrows, wearing the beautiful dress.*

Another interviewee, who I will call “N-san,” also acknowledged that the word *yabusame* had become associated with a more general “Japanese style” of equestrian archery:

I notice that you use the word *yabusame* more than any other to describe shooting the Japanese bow from horseback. How do you use the word *yabusame* and why do you use it that way?

*Because it’s much easier for people to recognize it. The people understand yabusame] much more easily. Even overseas they know it as yabusame... Some [foreign competitors] know the distinctions well, but most think of it as a style, a Japanese style of horseback archery.*

So I suppose it seems that more and more people are using the word *yabusame* to refer generally to a Japanese style rather than a specific practice or tradition?

*Yes, that’s right. When I explain yabusame to people I tell them that I am doing yabusame as a sports. I am doing sport, not yabusame as shrine ritual (shinji). I tell people that there is a big difference. I don’t know about the shrine ritual, I have never participated in it. I am only doing it as a sport. This is a little bit different but the style is similar to yabusame. Sometimes the clothes, and the bow and the arrows that you use.*

I became interested in the stress placed both implicitly and explicitly upon the difference between Japanese tradition and Japanese style (or “Japanese face”) by the people I interviewed. While all those members of the *kyōgi yabusame* groups I was able to engage with mentioned at one point or another that their hobby was in no way to be mistaken for tradition, their answers to a question such as “*Do you think there are traditional elements in sports yabusame?*” provoked a less uniform response. I began to ask this question to the interviewees belonging to sports *yabusame* groups after I noticed that in spite of expressly

denying sports *yabusame* was a tradition, they would often refer to the material objects they used or certain breeds of horses as “traditional.” Much of the time it seemed to be said unconsciously, but I came to wonder how strong these unconscious associations with tradition were and if indeed they were unconscious at all.

I found that some individuals saw a correlation between their equipment and tradition, for example the Japanese longbow was often referred to as a “traditional Japanese bow.” If an object (or horse) had an origin that was considered traditional, it would be accredited as such in terms of its physical form. But as it was not being used in a traditional way or within a traditional setting (e.g., at a shrine), it was not always thought to be traditional *in practice*. Others, such as F-san and one of the grand masters of the Nambu school (who was also a technical instructor to various *kyōgi yabusame* groups), did not consider specific material objects such as the *sangai* (三懸)<sup>162</sup> adorning the horses or the costumes/kimono worn by the riders to be traditional in any manner. This was due to the superficial objectivity of their presence in competitions. They were adamant that if it served a superficial purpose (to aesthetically please spectators, for instance) rather than a traditionally/historically utilitarian one, then it was divorced from tradition entirely; in both physical form *and* in practice.

Do you think that sports *yabusame* is traditional in any way?

*F-san: Not really...Sports is sports, tradition is yabusame, and sport is not tradition. So don't think about tradition. But sports yabusame looks at art, it looks beautiful [like yabusame shinji], and that face is important, but forget about [it being] tradition.*

What about the audience? Do you think it is important for them to see something that they can associate with tradition? (For example, *kimono* etc.)

*F-san: The dress must be maintained. It looks like old [style] dress. And the bow of course, is Japanese [and modeled on the old] style. Yes it is important for the audience to see the beautiful costumes. It's not really prescribed dress connected with a specific time period. It only looks like the dress from old times. It's just [maintained] as a Japanese appearance.*

I found that the following comment from N-san made an insightful point:

Do you think that *kyōgi/sports yabusame* contains tradition at all, or can contain it?

*N-san: Not all, but I think some parts are traditional. Because we are using similar equipment. For example, the form might be a bit traditional. The way of concentrating when you are trying to hit the target, sometimes you feel like you are experiencing some kind of spiritual spot. And it comes from Japanese culture.*

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<sup>162</sup> Yabusame horse decorations, or trappings, used in the Edo period-style harness

The sport form of *yabusame* takes inspiration from a tradition that already exists. It is in essence a *product* of Japan's *yabusame* tradition (and therefore a product of Japanese cultural tradition), despite the conglomeration of modern, secular, and foreign elements that make up its rule base as a sport. The origins of sports *yabusame* do not stem from western horseback archery influences, but are rather the result of local impulses. Interested parties were able to draw from a readily visible traditional practice that had extensive documentation within Japan's historical record. However, actors involved in a modern practice that utilizes a tradition as a resource for information and inspiration do not necessarily seek to maintain or promote that tradition. They may in fact make concerted efforts to distance or altogether disassociate themselves from the original practice and the concept of tradition.

Where tradition is suppressed in sport forms of *kisha*, it is replaced with "style." To a lesser degree style fills in for tradition when part of it is stripped away. One purpose of retaining or creating style is to aesthetically supplement visual/physical aspects of the practice when the traditional romanticism is dropped in favor of something more practical. For example, troublesome period-accurate prescribed costumes are replaced with a Japanese style kimono or *hakama* outfit because it is cheaper to produce and more practical for competition. It furthermore satisfies the audience's viewing pleasure and the participants' own sense of fun. For N-san, "style" is also a way of presenting an identity and creating a topic of conversation with foreign Others when competing overseas.

Interestingly, when asked to participate at the Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine's first international horseback archery competition on October 15<sup>th</sup> in 2015 as part of its four hundred year anniversary celebrations, N-san considered preparing a "real" costume; i.e., one that is period specific, or period accurate:

Do you wear a specific period's prescribed dress, for example Edo or Kamakura period?

*We wear kimono and hakama, but it's just a similar style and not from any specific period. But next year I am going to participate in the Nikkō Tōshōgū yabusame festival. They will have an international competition and I am going to participate in that. And so I am thinking to prepare a real costume. I am really excited about it.*

It is no coincidence that the urge to switch from a "Japanese style" of dress to a "real" (traditional) Japanese costume arose with the invitation to compete at Nikkō Tōshōgū. The Ogasawara School perform a dedicated ritual on the same grounds twice a year, and their *yabusame* ritual will take place the day after the international competition (on the 16<sup>th</sup> of

October, 2015). The competition is not traditional in the same sense as the Ogasawara School's performance, even though both will be displayed in front of a public crowd on the shrine's grounds. However, the *proximity* to tradition (i.e., the traditional setting of the shrine and the presence of the Ogasawara School) along with the magnitude of the event in national and international mounted archery circles, produce incentives to shed the more superficial notion of style in favor of traditional simulacra; or, at the very least a costume more inspired by traditional romanticism.

As I have discussed in Chapter Three, the reality of exactly how goal-oriented certain uses of tradition are is always subject to debate. As far as I was able to identify, objective use of tradition by the Ogasawara School and the sport groups I came in contact with during fieldwork did occur, albeit in very different ways. For example, the Ogasawara School uses its documented ties to the Imperial House of Japan and a long-standing tradition of ritual dedication and warrior etiquette in legitimating its claim as officially endorsed preservationists of traditional culture (*dentō bunka*). Their national and international recognition as a "living museum" has been instrumental in developing and retaining their status as a central authority on *yabusame* (*shinji*). Sports *yabusame* groups were able to tap into an abundance of information preserved within written and visual records of *kisha*, *yabusame*, and *kyūdō* in order to learn *how* to shoot the bow from horseback, among other things. This is indicative of a purely technical interest which is in many ways detached from traditional romanticism and nostalgia. The interactions of all forms of *yabusame* with the historical record provides a quintessential example of how tradition may be strategically used as a resource for the attainment of particular, individual or collective goals.<sup>163</sup>

Referring back to Højbjerg's arguments on invented and inherited traditions, it is entirely possible that group leaders may borrow heavily from a tradition, but then also distance themselves from traditional culture in order to perform their rationally planned activities. They can be said to use tradition instrumentally, and this objectification is in itself a creative act that may highlight certain aspects of culture at the expense of others.<sup>164</sup> In the case of individuals such as F-san, T-san, and other riding group/organization leaders, distancing themselves from tradition and ritual liberates their activities from the burden of maintaining something from the past. They are able to perform the more "rationally planned" activities of

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<sup>163</sup> Otto and Pedersen, "Detangling Tradition" in *Tradition and Agency*, 35

<sup>164</sup> Højbjerg, "Tradition Invented and Inherited in West Africa" in *Tradition and Agency*, 111

national competitive *yabusame* meets (*zenkoku yabusame kyōgi taikai*) and international competitions (*kokusai taikai*) without the unwelcome and misleading association with historical simulation. On the other hand, as F-san candidly pointed out, horseback archery stripped of the affluent Japanese style and bright costuming of horse and rider might not be quite as interesting to observe from the spectators' point of view. Furthermore, while sports *yabusame* is growing in popularity and recognition, it is still relatively unknown to the general public. While an association with the Ogasawara and Takeda Schools of *yabusame*, who maintain Japan's ritual traditions, may be unwelcome, an association with a distinct "Japanese style" is not.

I would argue that sports/*kyōgi yabusame* does in fact contain traditional elements, even if the activity itself is not traditional. As I have stated above, the *yabusame* tradition is used as a resource to inspire the form, technique, and eye-catching costuming of the sport. It can therefore be seen as a product of not only the *yabusame* tradition, but also of Japanese cultural tradition, inadvertent as that production may be. Traditional elements do not denote tradition itself, however, just as sporting elements within a tradition do not necessarily make it a modern sport.

Despite *kyōgi yabusame*'s beginnings from local impulses drawing upon an extant tradition that could be strategically utilized, the modern, secular, and foreign elements that make up its rule base decisively remove it from the realms of cultural heritage. The traditional elements we see are more often than not used instrumentally to give the sport an identity of sorts, a "Japanese face" that sets it apart from other foreign culminations of mounted archery and appeals to native audiences. It also allows for the easy interaction between competitive *yabusame* and *yabusame* for demonstrative and reenactment purposes (outside of the Ogasawara and Takeda demonstrative performances). This is because practitioners from both areas already possess the prerequisite skillsets and costuming capabilities to move flexibly between these two activities. That being said, tradition means different things to different people in much the same way as the word "sport" does. Not everyone will agree that traditional elements exist in sports *yabusame*, and the same is true for identifying competitive or sporting elements in traditional forms of Ogasawara and Takeda *yabusame*.

### 5.3 Competitive and Sporting Elements in *Dentō Bunka*

When speaking with members of the Ogasawara School, I was consistently told that the *yabusame* they performed, for the purpose of shrine ritual or otherwise, was in no way a sport or a competition. Even when I asked a question such as “*Do you think there are competitive elements in Ogasawara yabusame?*” the response from members was a uniform “*No.*” This was in direct contrast to the opinions of many sports *yabusame* actors, who were more flexible in their acceptance of the idea that traditional elements could be present within their secular sport. I was told that Ogasawara *yabusame* was an art, scores were not important and so it was neither competitive nor sport-like. While I share the opinion of Hurst and others who recognize that there are in fact competitive elements in Ogasawara and Takeda *yabusame*, I simultaneously understand the perspective of the Ogasawara actors. To them, some of the key features of a competition are competitive score-keeping, the presence of prize money (which some interviewees appeared to find distasteful), and the regular revisions of technique and equipment.

As established at the beginning of this chapter, these are in fact key characteristics of competition and sport, which are especially visible in modern sports. The objections against their presence in Ogasawara *yabusame* appeared to be based on the assumption that *yabusame* as *dentō bunka* is static, that it is something (often painstakingly) maintained and kept alive for its own sake rather than evolving in the modern setting and adapting to it. One Ogasawara student likened their *shinji* dedications to a “window” through which one could glimpse or experience the past, and said that in many ways they were resisting the present age. Yet I feel that the maintenance of traditional *yabusame* in the modern setting does not exclude the possibility for competitive elements to be extant in ritual performances, including shrine dedications.

For example, the Ogasawara School do retain the scores of their archers. This tallying of scores is not done in the name of competition, but one could argue that it encourages a competition with the Self. If archers perform poorly they will naturally wish to improve, and this sentiment was expressed repeatedly in my conversations with the students. It was also clear that students wished to ascend the ranks within the school, and that this desire to be a well-performing student went hand in hand with the subtle presence of rivalry. Finally, while

there is no prize money in Ogasawara *yabusame*, archers who successfully hit all three targets are publicly awarded a white ribbon of cloth as a sort of “prize” or favor by officiating judges. These are just a few arguments for identifying competitive elements in the Ogasawara School’s *yabusame* performances. However, I am well aware that different people have different definitions for what is meant by “competition.”

An individual I interviewed, who had served as an imperial groom and comes into regular contact with the Ogasawara School through his work at the Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine, told me:

*I think that in ritual, yabusame is a sport. [It's] partly riding, partly archery. They are both sports. Just because you perform in front of a shrine you call it ritual. But I think that in a way it is still a sport. You need to be a good sportsman, you need to have a good sports horse who is bold and not easily surprised, and also the rider needs to be disciplined well enough to hit the three targets from horseback. It's a good sport, ritual or not, it's a good sport. You need a lot of practice too.*

While this individual saw clear sporting elements in *shinji yabusame*, perhaps due to the fact that he was himself a big name in equestrian Olympics, one Ogasawara student had a completely different idea as to what constituted a sport. In fact he often said “arts turned sport” in reference to martial sports such as Judo, indicating that he had a heightened awareness of his own personal distinctions between martial arts and martial sports:

*I did other arts before, like Judo, which is one of the arts that became [an] Olympic [sport]. I'm personally not a fan of art turned sport.*

When you said you didn’t like martial-art-turned-sport, what did you mean by that?

*It lost its realism... I didn't like that it was more about scoring points, I didn't really care about the points.*

When asked what he meant by “realism,” the student elaborated thus:

*Arts turned sport, they don't originate that far back, they don't have heritage that came from the battlefield, for instance. Therefore they have techniques that don't make sense. Things that came from the battlefield have techniques that make sense.*

“Realism” as described by this student was akin to “authenticity.” The conceptualization of the authentic in this case was clearly analogous with the Ogasawara’s documented longstanding consecutive practice and an historical confluence between battlefield technique and formal ceremonies. I found this particularly interesting in light of the common criticism of Ogasawara and Takeda ceremonial styles of *kisha* by sports *yabusame* practitioners. It was

often argued that they had long ago lost any practicality associated with martial training, something I will discuss in the Chapter Six. For this student, the longstanding traditions of the Ogasawara school provided a direct association to the martial training of the past. He felt that the Ogasawara school's practice made sense, meaning that there was a logical and historically documented reason for every movement of the Ogasawara style of archery. This was, for him, the core difference between a martial art and a martial sport. For example, he stated that even though *kasagake* was "a form of sport between warriors," in his mind he did not imagine that *kasagake* was really a sport at all because the techniques were ultimately used on the battlefield.

It became clear from our conversation that the student felt that the "sportification" of mounted archery resulted in the loss of some kind of essence.

Do you think that sport strips away the heritage and tradition of the activity of mounted archery?

*Sort of, yes. But I don't disagree with the idea [of it becoming a sport]. I just think that it has to be made clear that it is a sport. Take Judo for example, see it now that it has become an Olympic sport. I think that is what the Ogasawara doesn't want to happen to their art. But as a sport, if it did develop as a sport and people did it as a sport [without claiming it to be tradition], then that is fine. If we didn't have a restriction on us, I would probably be competing somewhere, or trying to.*

His opinion reflected that of one of the Ogasawara masters I was able to interview, who I will refer to as "M-san." M-san was likewise not opposed to the idea of mounted archery becoming a sport, as long as people were "doing it safely and having fun." However it was emphasized repeatedly in our interview that clear distinctions had to be made between tradition and sport; that they could exist in parallel with each other but should avoid being mixed together or confused. While M-san told me that Ogasawara *yabusame* could in no way be seen as a competition, this definition was based on competitive rivalry between individuals. M-san acknowledged the existence of the competition with one's self, but did not feel that it was a competitive element.

*M-san: [Performing Ogasawara style] kisha in modern times is the same as budō. Hitting the three targets and then feeling that happiness afterwards, and the afterthought on whether you did well or poorly is there too. So with focus, self-discipline, and achievement – after hitting all three [targets] you can feel happy.*

I then asked for M-san's opinion on mounted archery becoming a sport elsewhere:

*In places where it has turned into a sport, well that has happened and it is an actual sport. But as long as people don't forget the actual tradition or the heart of what it is. The essence is what*

*matters. Having fun and enjoying [mounted archery as a sport] is good, as long as it is done safely and no one gets injured. But you should always think of the “why” or the reason behind it.*

Not all traditional schools had an “essence” that was purely ceremonial, and the “why” behind their practices were likewise not so heavily ritualized or formalized as the Ogasawara school’s. Much focus tends to be placed upon the Ogasawara and the Takeda in popular and academic discourses concerning *yabusame*. They are often viewed as a sort of standard for correct traditional cultural expression to which other traditional schools are held. This is primarily due their string of official endorsements from the Tokugawa period to the present day, in addition to high-profile public performances at some of Japan’s most famous shrines, and private performances for some of the world’s most powerful people.<sup>165</sup> As we have seen, this has endowed their ceremonial practices with both legitimacy and prestige.

The Nambu school was one such traditional school whose origins, like the Ogasawara’s own distant one, lay in the practical application of mounted archery in armed conflict. The school is named for the Nambu clan, who came to control the area that is now modern-day Iwate prefecture in the Tokugawa period. The Nambu school had never developed into an institution of formalized mounted archery etiquette as the Ogasawara school had done, however. One of the school’s grand masters, who I will refer to as “O-san,” loaned me the first volume of a book series entitled “An Illustrated Guide to 400 Years of Morioka”<sup>166</sup> (Morioka is the capital of Iwate prefecture). It describes the origins of Nambu *yabusame*:

*...it is known that the origin [of Nambu yabusame-shinji] is with the Shin (new) Hachiman rites and festivals. According to the Morioka Hachiman Shrine’s sources...it is recorded thus: “The Nambu yabusame shrine ritual” came to be a [ritual] offering at the Kushihiki Hachiman Shrine around the time that the Nambu House was based in Sannohe (a.k.a. Morioka), and has a long and distinguished history. The archers (ite) mounted on good horses, had three arrows each that they fired three times, and they competed over accuracy rates in this shrine ritual.<sup>167</sup>*

The book describes how the Kushihiki Hachiman Shrine’s *shinji yabusame* ceremonies allowed the Nambu style to survive even after mounted archery’s decline in warfare with the introduction of firearms, and the eventual near three centuries of peace under the Tokugawa shogunate (when “only one kind of *yabusame* <sup>168</sup>was revived”<sup>169</sup>). It states “...because it

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<sup>165</sup> Misa Tsuyoshi, “Japanese Traditional Horseback Archery” in *Mounted Archery in the Americas*, 62

<sup>166</sup> The translation of the book’s title is my own, as is the following extract

<sup>167</sup> 図説盛岡四百年 (上巻)、江戸時代編 (城下町—武士と庶民)、郷土文化研究会、(p.133)

<sup>168</sup> Referring to Ogasawara *yabusame*.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

seems that ancient tradition was inherited provincially, through their connection by horses the Nambu clan had handed it [Nambu-style *yabusame*] down to the Kushihiki Hachiman Shrine...”<sup>170</sup> The Kushihiki Hachimangū offerings continued during the Meiji period (1868-1912), however it was ultimately discontinued in its 40<sup>th</sup> year (1908).<sup>171</sup>

O-san had been instrumental in reviving the Nambu style of *kisha*, and in particular the *yabusame shinji* ceremony that was historically practiced at the Kushihiki Hachiman Shrine. Thanks to these efforts it is now performed there annually on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September as part of the shrine’s autumn celebrations. I was taken to O-san’s personal library, where over the years he had painstakingly collected books, old texts, and copies of shrine records concerning the Nambu Clan, their horses, and riding/shooting techniques. According to O-san, the Nambu and Ogasawara schools had once been “brother *ryūha*,” but they had diverged significantly after the Ogasawara *yabusame* ceremony was revived in the Tokugawa period. The Nambu *yabusame* ceremony was not as formalized as that of the Ogasawara and retained more martially viable elements. O-san told me:

*Nambu school yabusame is not just shrine ritual (shinji). Because it was performed as a competition where the skills could also be used in warfare. I think that it can be useful to people for doing present-day yabusame safely, and it is this mounted archery style that I am teaching at the [Towada] riding club. The Ogasawara school [yabusame] is a ceremonial that has always been purely about formal manners.*

O-san is not opposed to Nambu students competing in the competitions hosted by the Towada or Aomori Riding Clubs, where students who are interested in sports *yabusame* can learn how to ride and eventually shoot the *yumi* from horseback. O-san is a friend of the owners of both clubs, who had turned to the Nambu school when wishing to learn how to do mounted archery themselves. As horse riding is an expensive and not easily accessible hobby in Japan, I was told that allowing the Nambu students to compete in sports competitions was good riding and archery practice. O-san was not concerned that the Nambu students would pick up any bad habits as the Aomori and Towada students had essentially learned the same style of archery. After learning to shoot in the traditional fashion, the Aomori and Towada competitors had then modified the techniques to become more efficient in a sporting context. They had also developed their own distinct sets of rules and standards which, it must be noted, has led to a

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

degree of friction between the Aomori and Towada groups. Standardization of rules and equipment due to safety concerns was one large area of contention at the heart of this friction.

An interesting example that I observed was how members from one sports *yabusame* riding club were highly critical of another club for enforcing a rule that disallowed bows with draw weights over ten kilograms in their (shared) local competitions. One argument behind the creation of this rule was that bows any heavier than ten kilograms put women at a disadvantage. Many women involved with these competitions found the suggestion rather offensive.<sup>172</sup> This group had eventually succeeded in making the limitation a competition standard, and did so without drawing the amount of ire I had expected. There was of course some discontent among women from other groups, but within the group who had fought to enforce it, there did not appear to be quite as much. This was because it had also been argued that the rounder shape of the weaker bow at a full draw was not only more beautiful, but also safer and more period-accurate in appearance. The last point, I was told, became evident when one compared it to historical paintings of samurai warriors engaged in battle or hunting.<sup>173</sup>

I had noticed that sports *yabusame* actors often drew comparisons between their competitive practice and samurai “games,” which was a puzzlement to me at first considering so many of them had stressed that they did not want to be associated with tradition. I soon realized my misunderstanding, however, as seeking out a relationship with the past does not necessarily correlate to seeking out a relationship with tradition. As a means of distancing themselves from the conservative schools, sports *yabusame* actors often place emphasis on the perspective that competitive mounted archery is more practical than the ceremonial style of the Ogasawara and Takeda. They are partial to likening this practicality to the sort of martial objectivity the samurai would have held. In a sense it adds an aspect of legitimacy to their practice, suggesting that what they do is closer than the Ogasawara and Takeda styles to the martial mounted archery style of the *bushi* (warriors) of previous times. In addition, ritual-free martially objective competition (i.e., hitting the targets as accurately as possible as a training-exercise-turned-competition to refine skills used in warfare) is not something that is always visibly traditional despite being “old.” This makes a mental equation with the methodological

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<sup>172</sup> For reference, my own horse bows (Kassai Hungarian and Saluki Mamluk) have draw weights of between 30 and 35 pounds, which is between 13.5 and 15.8 kilograms. They are not considered particularly difficult bows to draw and I do not consider myself to be particularly strong.

<sup>173</sup> This is not to suggest that the samurai of the past carried weak bows. The point was that it was easier to achieve the beautiful appearance that a samurai with the strength to pull a powerful bow would have had.

practicality of modern sports *yabusame* much easier. The samurai had games to train them for warfare, but sports *yabusame* is not attempting to create exact simulations of those games. Simply put, competitors liken the practicality of training for competition to that of training for warfare because it sounds impressive. It also alludes to a connection with the past that conveniently does not require a commitment to an exact simulation.

A short explanation in Japanese inside the 2010 competition information pamphlet shown in figure 1. on page 12 of this thesis (entitled “Faster, More Beautifully, More Accurately, and Safer”), explains *kyōgi yabusame* thus:

*Yabusame*...is said to be part of traditional Japanese *kisha*, and is a skilled art, a form of training, and ceremony... The traditional world of *yabusame* is at once feudalistic and exclusionary, and so cannot be said to be an environment ordinary people can easily love. As it is mostly exhibited as an offering to shrines and temples, nowadays its practical essence has been diluted. More than accurately piercing the target, it is ceremony that is held in highest regard. *Yabusame* in the form of sporting competition is focused on competing through hit-rate. While continuing to protect tradition and extracting something of the heroically magnificent samurai of old, we are aiming to establish [*yabusame* as a] competitive sport along the themes of “faster,” “more beautifully,” “more accurately,” and “safer.”

This is particularly enlightening when compared with the following extract from an Ogasawara publication. It’s from a book of photographs that documents the Ogasawara school’s performances around Japan, and the foreword translated and presented in part below was originally written by the current head of the Ogasawara family, Ogasawara Kiyotada:

...in recent years sports *yabusame* has also flourished and those people who are the successors of *yabusame* handed down from the past have diminished. We decided to publish this collection of photographs so that more people may understand the Ogasawara school’s *yabusame*. *Yabusame* is a form of *kisha* which involves drawing a bow while dashing at full speed atop a horse, releasing a whistling arrow [and so] involves risk. One disciplines the legs and for ground archery one learns marksmanship as part of *reihō*.<sup>174</sup> And then as a natural result of such training one can draw the bow from horseback...<sup>175</sup>

It is implied in the original Japanese that performing *kisha* without undergoing the strict but professional training and discipline of a school such as the Ogasawara, might be dangerous for those trying to do it as a sports. Ogasawara Kiyotada also mentions the decline in the numbers of mounted archers performing with traditional schools, while newer sports *yabusame* groups have “flourished.” It is not a particularly critical piece of writing, but it does go on to place emphasis upon the fact that young people of our more secular age are not as

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<sup>174</sup> *Reihō* is often translated as “etiquette” or “(formal) manners,” and here refers to the physical discipline that Ogasawara students are expected to cultivate and demonstrate in their training and performances.

<sup>175</sup> ogasawara

interested in carrying on traditional customs such as *yabusame*. Ogasawara teachings are largely oral and are handed down from masters to students as part of the school's traditional style of teaching. It is indeed a dire situation for them if they fail to recruit and retain new students in the future. The Ogasawara school perhaps feels slightly threatened by the newer presence of sports *yabusame* groups, who claim to continue to “protect tradition” while “extracting something of the heroically magnificent samurai of old.”

The group responsible for the introduction in the above-quoted pamphlet are in fact not, I discovered, particularly interested in protecting *yabusame* as a tradition. They viewed traditional culture, or *dentō bunka*, as being firmly set within the realm of schools such as the Ogasawara. However, audiences expect there to be an element of “Japanese culture” when coming to watch these events, and to them, “Japanese culture” involves things like *dentō bunka*, samurai, and *yabusame*. Newer *ryūha* and living history groups also pose a threat to the Ogasawara in the modern setting and, most importantly, the threat does not concern the Ogasawara's authority over *yabusame*. The threat lies in the inclusivity of these newer groups' activities (both sports and schools such as Tōyama), because they better appeal to the “people of the current era who strive for individualistic realization,”<sup>176</sup> While an awareness of mounted archery and *yabusame* is increasing, the Ogasawara's membership numbers continue to dwindle. Re-enactment groups and sports *yabusame* groups can offer potential students a kind of instant gratification that the Ogasawara simply cannot. On the other hand, these sports *yabusame* and re-enactment groups have been openly criticized by traditional schools as being potentially unsafe. So it is perhaps with a degree of defensiveness that the above description of *kyōgi yabusame* was written,

As a final note to this chapter, I have included a copy of my translation of a short article that appeared on a local Tochigi prefecture news site below. The report states that the BBC were in the Tochigi area to film a show under the working title “Legends of Sport” which will possibly be aired sometime in 2016. Despite the Ogasawara students' and M-san's insistence that there was no sport or sporting elements in *yabusame*, they are still considered the authority to turn to when notable interested parties from overseas turn their gaze upon mounted archery in Japan.

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<sup>176</sup>小笠原清忠、小笠原清其〔共著〕”Ogasawara Yabusame” 小笠原流 はースト婦人画法社

[Beginning of Translation]

### **BBC Recording Program in Nasushiobara (Tochigi Prefecture), British Olympic Games Medalists Try Their Hand at Yabusame**

With the intention of experiencing and introducing the world of traditional sport through Japanese *yabusame*, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> [of this month]<sup>177</sup> three British (London) Olympic medalists tried their hand at *yabusame* at Senbonmatsu ranch's specially built riding ground.

Filming of the program was conducted for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), with British motorcycle racer James Toseland (34) who undertook the challenge in the role of reporter along with [fellow Briton] Iwan Thomas (41), silver medalist in the Atlanta Olympic Games men's 1600 meter relay, and Canadian shining star Donovan Bailey, who was the gold medalist in the men's 100 meter race at the Atlanta Olympics.

The film crew, including the three [Olympians], visited Japan on the 16<sup>th</sup> [of this month]. After learning about such things as the history and [rules of] etiquette of *yabusame* at the Ogasawara School Art of Archery and Horsemanship Etiquette Teaching Headquarters (*kyūba jutsu reihō ogasawara ryū honbu kyōjō*) in Tokyo, they received more training in the city of Nikkō. On the final day of filming, the last lesson took place at Sanbonmatsu Ranch where it was shown to/filmed before a public audience.

The program, under the working title of "Legends of Sport," is planned for broadcast in 2016.

Source:

[www.shimotsuke.co.jp/news/20150923/2090921](http://www.shimotsuke.co.jp/news/20150923/2090921)<sup>178</sup>

Shimotsuke Original Online News (SOON)

(23 September Morning Edition)

[End of Translation: Translated by Morgaine T. Wood]

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<sup>177</sup> 2015

<sup>178</sup> The link in the original source (last accessed 25/09/2015) no longer works, instead follow: <http://www.shimotsuke.co.jp/category/life/tourism/festival/news/20150923/2090921> (last accessed 27/11/2015)

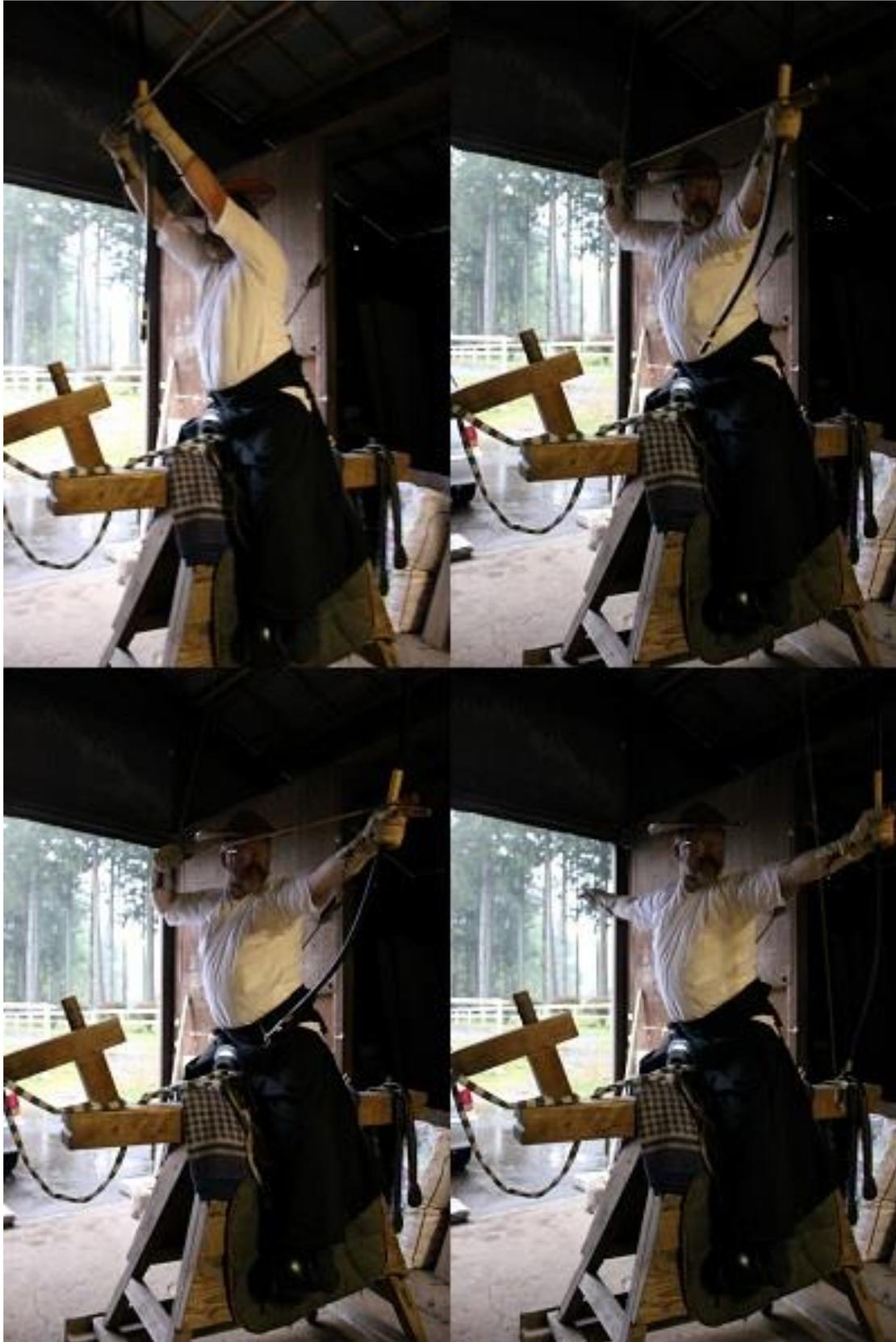


Figure 6: A student demonstrates the Ogasawara style of draw and release from a *moku-ba*, or wooden horse, commonly used for training purposes – note how the bow is lifted to clear the “horse’s” neck



Figure 7: (from top to bottom): A student from Tōyama-ryū and myself standing with the students' distinctive banded bows (*shigeto yumi*); N-san's unique Tsugaru-nuri bow and arrows – the alternating colors of red and black are intended to resemble the pattern of a *shigeto yumi*

## 6 Diversification and Conclusion

The emergence of sports *yabusame* has led to what can only be described as an effusion of creativity within the newly revitalized mounted archery scene in Japan today. I believe that they have aided in breaking down social and economic barriers that have in previous years discouraged the average Japanese rider from joining or creating their own *kisha* groups and organizations. For example, individual groups and riding schools lend a greater sense of legitimacy to their activities by coming together under larger organizations, participating in each other's' competitions, and travelling overseas to engage with the international horseback archery scene. Thus organizations such as the "Competitive *Yabusame* Federation" are quickly becoming, if they have not already become, new authorities able to stand alongside the traditional authorities that are the Ogasawara and Takeda schools.

Sports groups are generally more inclusive and therefore more popular with aspiring students by virtue of their being less costly in terms of both finances and time. The individual is free to invest as much or as little of either as they want or are able to, whereas an Ogasawara or Takeda school membership requires much more commitment in these respects. While the Ogasawara and Takeda schools have long been travelling overseas to perform for foreign dignitaries and audiences, in this final chapter of my thesis I am going to discuss how diversification and creativity among other *kisha* groups on a local level has helped paved the way for the internationalization of sports *yabusame* and reenactment activities.

### 6.1 Shrines and Castles as Spaces of Diversification

Recent manifestations and contextualization of *kisha* has suggested a blurring of lines. Diversification of mounted archery activities are concomitant with the increased fluidity of students' participation within different mounted archery practices. Members from recently revived or established *ryūha* (schools of traditional/ceremonial forms of *kisha* such as Nambu and Tōyama) can compete in sports *yabusame* competitions. Conversely, those who initially become involved with sports *yabusame* occasionally become involved with *ryūha* as well. Both sports *yabusame* groups and *ryūha* have been asked by local shrines to perform dedications for them. *Shinji* dedications are impressive and local shrines drastically increase their visitation numbers by hosting them at their festivals. These local shrines look to local or nearby sports and living history groups to perform the dedication because their members

already have the requisite skill sets to do so. These groups are almost always willing to participate, and so the number of *shinji yabusame* dedications have increased around the country within the last ten to fifteen years.

Politics do on occasion influence mounted archery events in Japan, just as it does overseas. One example I found was when I travelled to Aomori prefecture in the north of Honshu to visit N-san. I was first taken to see Hirosaki castle, where an annual competition open to *kyōgi yabusame* groups and international horseback archers has taken place three times; in 2011, 2012, and 2013.<sup>179</sup> I was told that in 2014 the mayor has been very keen to hold another such event in the park below what is left of the castle, but that due to mayoral elections being held the same year, he canceled it. N-san told me that part of the reason is political; some of his potential voters were unhappy to see horses galloping up and down a track created at Hirosaki Castle Park. The area was considered by some to be a place of national heritage and historical worth, and so there were fears that such an event might damage the grounds somehow. However, cultural events are often held around the castle area and N-san told me that the mayor was rather taken with the idea of a mounted archery competition becoming a regular fixture on the cultural events calendar. If re-elected, he would no doubt endeavor to achieve this.

After visiting Hirosaki castle, N-san and I then drove out to Takateru-jinja, a small and simple shrine nestled in the forest of the Mount Iwaki foothills bordering Iwakikōgen Prefectural Natural Park. There was no one else there, and with the worn look of the graves and the vermilion paint peeling off the Torii, it was eerily beautiful but rather somber. N-san said that the shrine had hosted its own *shinji yabusame* ceremonies more than a hundred years ago. The mayor had plans to revive it, possibly in 2016, pending the outcome of the 2014 local elections. As we were alone on the shrine grounds that day, we decided to see if we could determine where the old *yabusame* track had been. N-san had wanted to personally see whether or not the grounds might still be suitable to host a future ceremony. We were unsuccessful, however. After wandering for some time through the forest behind the shrine, we found two initially promising candidates that we ultimately deemed unlikely. Both paths were very old, at least two hundred years, and paved with stones now covered with moss which were very loose in places. Although they were the best candidates for the old track that we could find, they still seemed logistically problematic. Even if they had somehow been

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<sup>179</sup> I refer the reader to the pamphlets (Figure 1) on page 12

used over one hundred years ago (unlikely due to the short length of one and the sharp twists in the other), they were certainly not suitable now. Aside from being unsafe, there seemed to be no place for either targets or an audience, unless the audience were happy to sit among the trees and underbrush. N-san was concerned that it might not be possible for the mayor to fulfill his wish to host a *shinji yabusame* ceremony there after all.

N-san appeared saddened at this thought because it was apparent that such an event would bring the shrine some much needed income. But the example that the mayor's ideas provide us with, whether ultimately successful in their realization or not, is that *yabusame/kisha* may be used objectively by political bodies, and is already being viewed by some local governments as the source of a potential tourism-boost. These local *kisha* and sports *yabusame* groups, who are usually themselves non-political secular bodies, also seek to profit through this mutually beneficial strategic use and endorsement of their activities by local governments and non-secular bodies, such as shrines. As the manifest I obtained from the "Competitive *Yabusame* Federation" makes it clear, the advancement of sports *yabusame* as a legitimate national sport depends upon the diffusion of competitions and demonstrations across the country to increase public recognition. Newly established and revived traditional mounted archery *ryūha* also benefit from participating in these competitions, or seeking out endorsement by local governments and shrines themselves.

By the time this thesis is submitted, the international mounted archery competition to be held this year (2015) on October 15<sup>th</sup> at Nikkō Tōshōgū will have already taken place. The head priest has worked with T-san, H-san, F-san, and many other sports *yabusame* organization members and opinion leaders for well over a year now to make the event a reality. As part of its four hundred year anniversary celebrations, the shrine will play host to the competition the day before the annual ritual dedication of the Ogasawara school. The idea of a modern, secular, and not to mention international, mounted archery sports event taking place at the Nikkō Tōshōgū shrine's public grounds twenty years ago might not have been believable. T-san appeared particularly happy with this achievement, as it was demonstrative that (foreign) horseback archery and *sports yabusame* were being taken more seriously as sport in Japan. T-san also hoped it would encourage more foreign competitors to add Japanese international competitions to their event calendars.

The head priest of Nikkō Tōshōgū told me that he used to be an Ogasawara student himself, along with some of his colleagues. He said that there has been a continuous *yabusame*

performance at Nikkō Tōshōgū since Shōwa 28 (1953) and that annual performances have been regular for roughly the past forty years. An Ogasawara student told me that when he started participating at their annual October *yabusame* ceremony nine years ago, about half of the performers were priests. It was only as they had become older and achieved higher ranks within the shrine that they had stopped riding in the ceremony. The head priest remained passionate about *yabusame* and *kisha*, however. He hoped that the mounted archery competition at the shrine would increase the public's awareness of both the sport and the shrine ritual performed by the Ogasawara, and maybe even educate them on the differences between the two.

## 6.2 Conclusion

The research question put forward at the beginning of this thesis was: *How is yabusame conceptualized and contextualized in the modern setting?* The implied questions underlying this were then, perhaps: What is different about the modern setting compared to before? And: What has changed about the way in which *yabusame* is perceived by modern Japanese society? I sought to approach the research question by analyzing the ways in which ideals concerning authenticity and tradition were negotiated in the modern setting, as I believed that such an analysis would reveal the answers. There is no definitively right or wrong way to conceptualize authenticity and tradition, as both concepts mean different things to different people. The contexts of their conceptualizations can exist simultaneously, as we have seen, and I have endeavored to discuss a range of topics concerning them.

*Yabusame* in the purist sense of the term was seen by local actors as being an inherited tradition; i.e., a practice handed down through the ages from masters to students with roots in the historical processes that led to the emergence of the samurai class. It was sometimes associated with the warrior ceremonial of the Kamakura shogunate, and at other times more closely with its Tokugawa era revival. *Yabusame shinji* was also seen as having a lengthy, enigmatic and slightly ambiguous connection with Shinto. It was therefore on occasion thought to contain deeper, intangible spiritual associations, but (importantly) only ever in some small and largely superficial part in the modern setting. None of the actors interviewed considered current expressions of *yabusame shinji* to be anything more than superficially symbolic. It was most commonly regarded as an expression of traditional culture (*dentō*

*bunka*) when performed by the Ogasawara or Takeda schools – even when it was performed at a shrine.

*Kyōgi/supōtsu yabusame*, on the other hand, was generally not considered to be a representation of traditional culture, or even a form of reenactment, despite some actors acknowledging traditional elements within the practice. It fulfills all seven of Allen Guttmann and Lee A. Thompson’s list of required characteristics to be considered a modern sport. Reenactment was seen as belonging to the domain of public cultural events, which were considered to be less formal than shrine rituals. These cultural events involved things like *jidai matsuri* (“era festivals”) organized by the local government and/or tourism boards. It is imperative to note here that although the Ogasawara and Takeda schools disallow their members from participating in sports-forms of *yabusame* or any other mounted archery groups’ activities, the groups and actors involved in sports or reenactment/living history were not so mutually exclusive. The allowance for members of one group to compete or perform in the events of another is an idiosyncrasy concomitant with their recent emergence and rapid amassment of popular attention, but this popularity does not permit them status as representatives of *dentō bunka* and, more significantly, nor do they particularly aspire to gain it.

One question that has been asked to varying degrees of seriousness among local actors I spoke with was “*what does mounted archery mean to people today?*” by which is generally meant; is mounted archery to be viewed as “just” a sport, in a somewhat puritan sense of the word, or rather is its history important in the sporting context and, if so, is it possible to incorporate into a continuously evolving modern sport? Certainly, there seems to be a general consensus among practitioners that their pastime, and in many cases their livelihood, is traditional, but the word “traditional” itself is consistently used in the broadest of senses. As we have seen, tradition does not necessarily entail historical accuracy, nor does it in itself suggest an incompatibility with modern sport. Indeed, elements of some tradition or other can be arguably alluded to as the backbone of many a highly evolved sport. Take the equestrian sport of dressage, for example; it has evolved from the discipline of Classical Dressage, which in turn was born from a military tradition whereby riders in European cavalry were trained to perform precise movements that could be used to their advantage during battle. If mounted archery is to achieve anywhere near the same level of refinement and prestige that modern

dressage has in the future, then I do not believe that necessarily have to forgo its historical associations with military tradition, or even localized indigenous games.

I also argue that the public are an emergent legitimating body in the modern setting. What they consider to be *yabusame* ultimately determines how the groups and local actors describe their activities when appealing to their public audiences. However this goes both ways. Educating the public on what *kisha* is and what should or should not be called *yabusame* will also change the way that they perceive it. The first step in this educational process is to make the public aware that mounted archery exists in the first place outside of the highly formalized practices of the conservative Ogasawara and Takeda schools. I feel that this is being achieved already and that the next step will be to help the public understand the differences between ceremony, re-enactment, and sport. However the lines between these activities are sometimes blurred. The extent to which one considers ceremony and tradition to be part of a sport, and how many sporting elements can be identified in ceremony and tradition are ultimately individual considerations. But one thing is certain, the general public are engaged in these negotiations and have become a factor in *yabusame* actors' reflexive self-commentary in a way they never have before. This is a unique feature of the modern setting, the credit lying firmly with three of its characteristics in particular; 1) Modern technologies facilitating easier communication between local actors and groups ; 2) The fortunate timing of a global mounted archery movement which has seen the activity evolve and gain legitimacy as a secular sport with traditional associations ; 3) The upheaval of traditional and ceremonial norms by the emergence of sports *yabusame* groups (which encourages more creativity among individuals and groups)

N-san's bow provides an excellent example of the creativity and diversification of style that sports *yabusame* encourages. Although it is over two meters in length, it only has a ten kilo draw, so it can be used in the Towada Riding Club's competitions. It is a one of a kind bow and no other like it exists. N-san's partner specializes in creating Tsugaru lacquerware, and the bow is lacquered in the Tsugaru style, using real gold flakes for the mottling. This style of lacquerware is highly valued and originated in the Tokugawa era castle town of Hirosaki in Aomori prefecture. It is also the city where N-san was born, and so N-san felt strongly that it was representative of personal identity. The bow took two full months to lacquer and the alternating colors of red and black are intended to resemble the pattern of a *shigeto yumi*. N-

san's bow represents a beautiful example of an intersection of history, identity, and traditional culture with the modern setting.

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