

THE FEATHERED SAMURAI FROM JAPAN

THE SHAMO



Chu Shamo

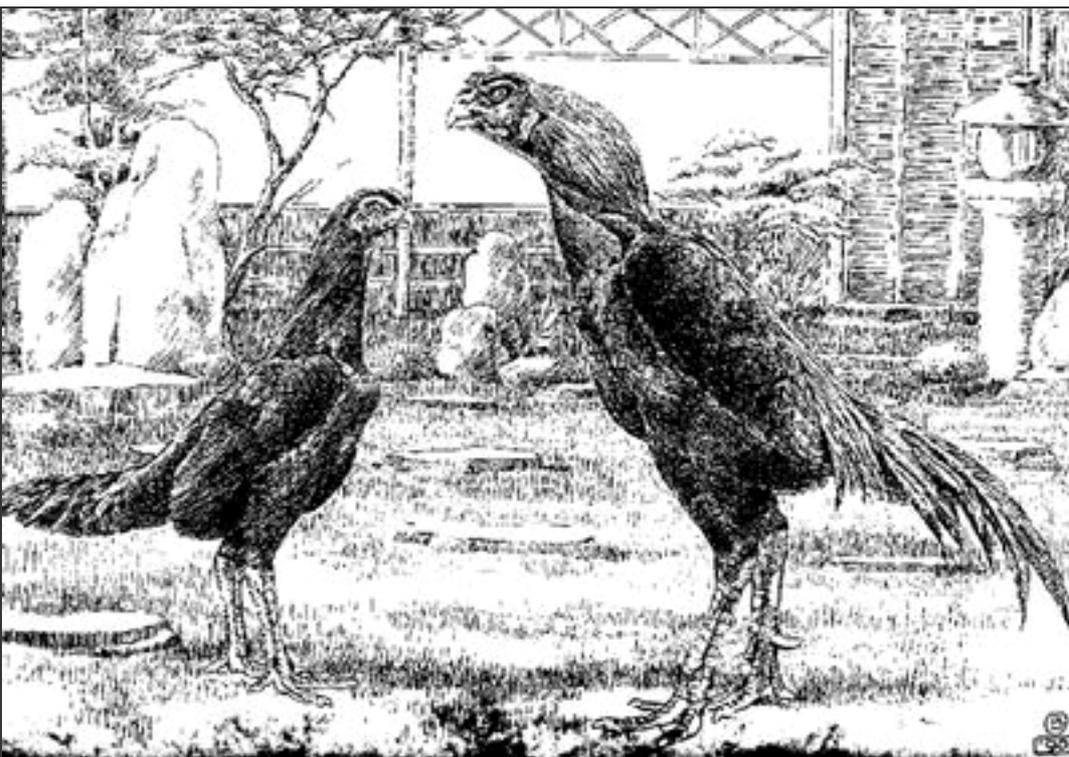
**A very typical Shamo representative.
Photo and breeder Julia Keeling (Isle of Man).**

By: Willem van Ballekom

The Japanese Shamo is an impressive gamefowl breed and today probably the most popular gamefowl breed in and outside Europe. A lot of stories are told about the origin and creation of the Shamo. The Japanese themselves are convinced that the ancestors of the Shamo have been imported into Japan onwards 1600. Historically this period was known as the Edo-period. Ieyasu Tokugawa was the first 'Shogun' (ruler) and gave traders and seafarers the official permission to develop trade with other Asian countries. About 350 Japanese ships received the so called "Red Seal" document and these took off to a variety of destinations in Asia. Very soon a network of trading posts was developed like Hoi An in Vietnam, Manila in the Philippines and Pattani in the south of Thailand (at that time known as Siam).

In 1632 the 'Shogun' recalled his trade permissions and all Japanese trade with the outside world was closed down. The Chinese, Portuguese and the Dutch were the only ones allowed to trade with Japan. Between 1600 and 1632 the Japanese imported a variety of poultry breeds. Due to crossing and extra-ordinary breeding skills the Japanese have created a scala of new breeds where under gamefowl, longcrows and longtail breeds; this in large and bantamized varieties.

One of the most impressing Japanese breeds is the Shamo, this impressive gamefowl breed catches the eye with some very typical breed features. According Japanese sources the name Shamo is a derivation of the name Sham which is the Japanese name for Siam (the old name of Thailand). Japanese DNA gene mapping studies proved that the oldest Shamo population is found on Okinawa Island (southern Japan).



**Left:
Shamo drawing
by Rene Johannes –
The Netherlands.**

The Japanese classify the Shamo family into the following breeds:

O-Shamo,
Chu Shamo,
Yakido,
Nankin Shamo,
Yamato gunkei,
Kinpa and last but
not least: the little
Ko Shamo.

In this article we
only stick to the O-
Shamo and Chu
Shamo. These two
varieties are also

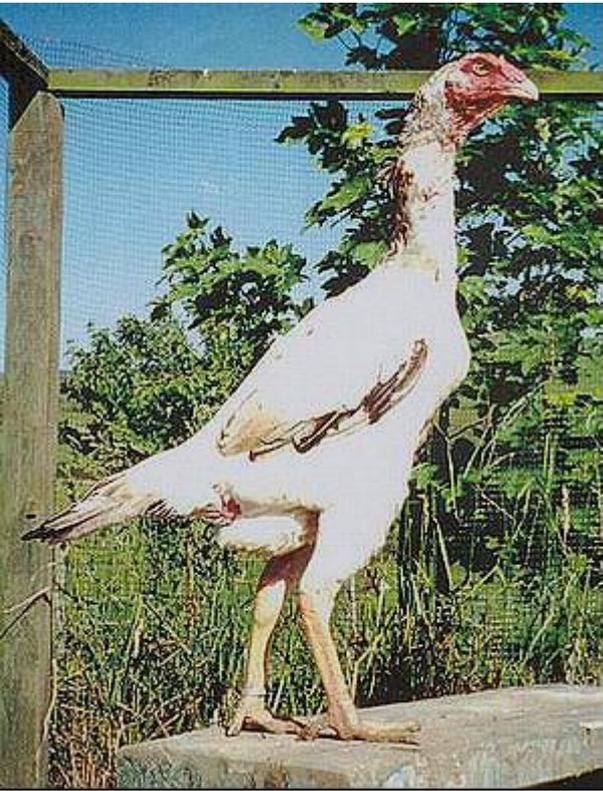
official recognized by the Japan Poultry Society (JPS), the one and only Japanese poultry organisation recognized by the Japanese ministry of Cultural Affairs.

**Right: Thai Game (Gaichon).
The origin of the Shamo breed - please
notice the resemblance with the profile
of a Shamo. (A stamp from Thailand).**

The O-Shamo and Chu-Shamo are identical concerning shape, form and breed features. The only difference is weight and size. The Japanese JPS gives us the following figures: O-Shamo (o means large) male 5.6 Kg female 4.8 Kg. Chu Shamo (Chu means middle-sized) male 4.1 Kg and female 3.0 Kg.

Source: Mr..Yoshihisa Kubota, the former Vice-President of the JPS. The Chu Shamo despite being standardized in Japan is not standardized and recognized in Europe. The only exemptions are the United Kingdom and Italy. Italy has taken





very progressive steps and today at an exhibition all Shamo's are being weighed before being penned. Why this procedure and what's the story behind it? It is common knowledge that large birds have an optical advantage. They simply catch the eye. Breeders and exhibitors of smaller Shamo although good representatives concerning shape, form and typical features have virtually no chance at all to win as they will receive comments from the judge like: not big enough, too small, more body mass, too light, etcetera. True or not?

Left: O Shamo hen. A nice example with a strong facial expression. Photo and breeder Julia Keeling (Isle of Man).

Right: O-Shamo. A good display of the breeds typical features. Photo by Taniguchi Morinobu (Japan).



The Shamo is a well balanced combination of size, weight, power, stamina, endurance and speed. For cockfighters the Shamo is a real all-rounder and also can be matched in a variety of fighting styles: natural spurs as well as artificial spurs. The Shamo however is also very popular with the exhibition breeder. Typical representatives of the breed are real eye catchers in every show, not the least by their impressive appearance, game expression and very typical physical features.



Left: Perfect head of a Shamo hen. A strong head, short beak, good eye and proturberant eyebrows.

Right: Perfect head of a Shamo cock. A short strong beak, a pearlwhite eye, proturberant eyebrowes and no wattles. Breeder August Daems (Belgium) Photos: Willem van Ballekom (Holland).



Left: Chu Shamo hen.

**A good shape and a fine body definition.
Photo and breeder: Willem van Ballekom
(Holland).**

Physically the Shamo is quite unique. The following physical features are typical for the breed: a very erect and upright stand, high stationed, a strong long slightly curved neck, the relative small but broad head with protuberant eyebrows and a short thick beak. The comb is a triple-peacomb, the eyes pearl-white or pale yellow-skull (for young birds). Wattles are absent. A medium-sized dewlap. The wings are carried off the body and the shoulders point up. The wings tips should touch the saddle. The wing rosettes and the breastbone show no feathering at all. The Shamo's most unique feature is the line of the back sloping down almost in line with the tail. According the Dutch gamefowl and Shamo authority Mr. A. van Wulfften-Palthe is an angle of about 15 degrees allowed for the transition between the back and the tail. The tail itself is long, drooping down but should not show too much feathering. The thighs of a

Shamo are very muscular and clearly visible.

The legs of a Shamo should show a 1.5 to 1 ratio concerning the length of the thigh and the shank bone. The colour of the shanks is yellow or yellow with black spots (for black colour varieties only). Olive-green and fully black coloured shanks are in European countries allowed but not in Japan (Source: Mr. Yoshihisa Kubota, JPS).

Right:

**A trio of silver-wheaten O Shamo.
A fine cock and strong hens.
Photo and breeder Stud Hamar (Holland).**



In Japan itself a large variety of colours is accepted. A pity that in Europe only a small selection of these are accepted despite the fact that the Shamo (like any other gamefowl breed) should be judged on form, shape and typical breed features.

The Japanese Shamo has also some 'blood brother' breeds outside Japan. These are the Shamo do Bresil (Brazilian Game -Shamo-type) and the Taiwanese Game (island of Taiwan). These birds are also quite popular in Europe and elsewhere and found in reasonable numbers in various countries. The Brazilian Shamo and the Taiwan are not standardized. The only exemption is Italy and again the United Kingdom.

**Right: A Brazilian Shamo.
Photo and breeder Kilson Lobao (Brazil).**

The Shamo is a very impressive gamefowl breed and these Japanese warriors always have the attention of a lot of people when exhibited on a poultry show. Concerning judging, the breed should be judged on type, shape, correct proportions and typical breed features. A game character cannot be judged in the pen but in my view a good bird should show a cocky attitude as these birds are still gamefowl! The breeding and judging criteria as used in the homeland of the Shamo, Japan should be implemented over here too. Colour in gamefowl is only a classification criterion and should have no effect on the final judgement of the judge. However some breeders and judges make this priority number one!



The popularity of the Shamo breed is still growing and the future of this feathered Samurai looks very bright.....Sayonara!

**Left: Taiwan Game.
A raw and coarse build version of the Shamo
Photo by Kim Sae Han (Belgium).**

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