



Satsumadori

Also named Kagoshima Game

By: Wanda Zwart

The history of the breed

The Satsumadori originates from Japan. According to the Laboratory of Animal Breeding and Genetics of the University of Hiroshima the breed is originating from the Edo era (1603- 1867). Satsuma used to be the former name of the province of Kagoshima. In those times the breed was known as Ojidori ("large country fowl"). The present name (gotten in the 1920's) implies nothing more than "(country) fowl of Satsuma". It is sometimes referred to as Kagoshima game. In 1943 the breed was officially declared a protected cultural heritage by the Japanese Ministry of Culture.

薩摩鶏 (赤笹/雄)



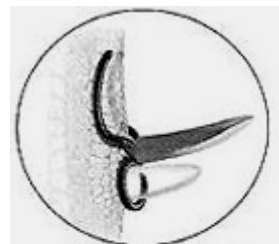
前川圭造

薩摩鶏 (赤笹/雌)



前川圭造

The Satsumadori has been developed by crossings with, among others, Shamo and Shokkoku (and some local breeds) and was a real game bird, a "knife bird". These fast fighting game birds fought with steel knives attached to their legs. Possibly, the Japanese copied the different game styles and use of slashers, like Philippine breeders.



薩摩鶏の闘鶏に
用いられた金距

The photos in this page are from a Japanese Poultry magazine, we gratefully acknowledge Julia Keeling for supplying the photos.

It lasted only a while before they were imported to Europe, since this breed has an attractive full long tail, like Sumatra and Yokohama. The Dutch and Belgian breeders were especially interested in it, and the German breeders were soon to follow.

Right: The bird in the photo, named Sakiyama, is an absolute top bird in Japan, owned by Mr. Uichiro Sakamoto. Photo courtesy of Marc King.



Below left: This is one of my young silver cockerels looking almost alike and I am curious to see if he will have the same flair as the Japanese one. Photo: Wanda Zwart.



Today good breeding stock is difficult to find in Western Europe. In Germany the breed is becoming more popular. Occasionally, the Satsumadori can be admired at shows. The stock, present in Germany nowadays, has presumably been built on about 14 birds, which had been imported from southern Japan in the 1970's.

Nowadays, an individual breeder might succeed in importing eggs (or takes them with him from Japan). On this basis, it is not surprising that breeders have to cope with serious problems, like inbreeding. As a consequence, breeders crossed the Satsumadori with other breeds; understandable, but unfortunately, one often chose breeds with dominant characteristics, which are difficult to get rid of after the crossings. One of those breeds, for instance, is the Kraienkoppe (Twente fowl). At first sight they have much in common, but the Kraienkoppe have strong genes, therefore typical characteristic features of the Satsumadori disappear.

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Left: An *akasasa* hen with her chicks. Satsumadori hens are good broodies.



The weight of a cock is roughly 3.5 kg and that of a hen roughly 2.5 kg. Satsumadori have, like the Sumatra, a fragile head and a pea comb. The comb should be as small as possible, like on the most of the breeds used in game fighting. A large comb is not desired, in order to prevent wounds.

The earlobes are red. The colour of the legs is yellow, with the exception for black birds. Also the fierce yellow eyes are much desired.



A typical feature of the Satsumadori is the robust, broad posture of the legs, long back with a turkeytail. Also the long broad sickles are a main feature. The tail might appear less full and broad when in rest, but when the cock is excited the tail will be spectacularly fanned.

A typical feature is also the slow growth. Growth only stops in the second year; especially the cocks need this time to "produce" some body-size. One - breeder and judge alike - must take that into account.

Left: A hen in the *Shirosasa* colour. Photo: Wanda Zwart.

As to the colour description, the Japanese nomenclature differs very much from the European terminology. Colour is of secondary importance, especially for game birds. They name the colour of the birds after the colour of the hackle of the cock. The colours differ anyway from what we are used to in Europe, although it does resemble what we know.

The Japanese colours

Shirosasa:

Means literally “white hackles” or “white decorated”. Shiro= white and sasa (also: zasa) = hackles. The birds seem to be silver partridge at first sight, but differ by, a.o., a grey breast for the hens.

**Right: A *Shirosasa* cock.
Photo: Wanda Zwart.**

**Below:
A ‘light’ *akasasa* cock;
Although sometimes birds in
this colour are also named
kisasa.
Owner: Frank Brusselmans.**



Kisasa:

Means literally “yellow decorated” or ‘yellow hackled”. It reminds me of the partridge-colour with deep yellow hackles.

**Right: A *kisasa* cock.
Photo: Wanda Zwart.**

Kinsasa:

Means literally “golden decorated” or ‘golden hackled”. As far as I could disentangle goldwing birds are meant.

Taihaku:

Means literally “white body”. It is pure white, both cocks and hens.

Akasasa:

Means literally “reddish decorated” or “red hackled”. Also, in this colour, the hens do not have the salmon-colour breast we know from partridge-coloured hens.



Soukoku:

Implies self black (although the term for black is usually "kuro" (think of, for instance, Kurogashiwa)



Above: A *Soukoku* hen. Photo: Wanda Zwart.

I found a translation of a Japanese professor in poultry genetics; he translates Shirosasa as "black breasted silver" and also as "silver-hackled". Akasasa was translated as "blackbreasted red" and Kinsasa as "blackbreasted golden".

The Japanese are perfectionists in everything. That also applies to their local breeds. The original Satsumadori was a delicate, high legged bird, which had to be swift. When game fighting was banned in Japan, heavier birds were created, in connection with meat production. Nowadays the breed is known as "the breed with the delicate meat".

The Japanese family of the breeder, with whom I am in contact, has been breeding the Satsumadori for over 90 years; this family wishes the European breeder to "understand" the breed.

I have been breeding the Satsumadori for seven years now and could not do without them. I hope that the breed will be standardized in the Netherlands. And that The Dutch Association (KLN) looks to the country of origin for the main characteristics and terminology.