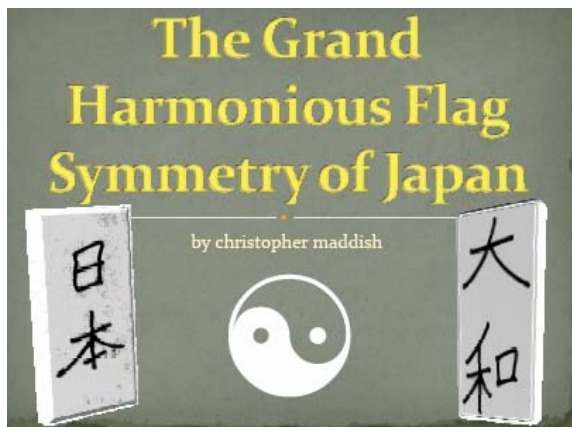


THE GRAND HARMONIOUS SYMMETRY OF JAPAN: An Investigation in Uncanny Flag Similarities

Christopher J. Maddish

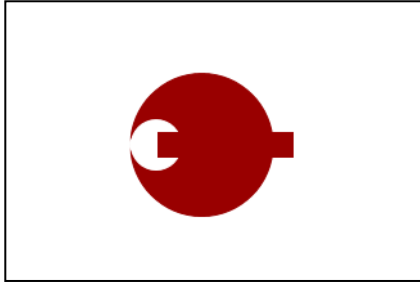
The 47 prefectures of Japan have unique flags, whose designs came from various sources. Many flags employ a stylized version of Japanese alphabet in either Hiragana or Katakana on a solid field. Like most sub-national flags, they are strongly influenced by the national colors and design. Conventional wisdom assumes this process of sub-national flag selection is a fairly random, yet attenuated to the cultural tastes the particular nation. The thesis of this paper is that a pattern can be found among the prefectural flags of Japan. The revolutionary and rather uncanny pattern is that each prefecture's flag has a kind of "harmonious twin". This paper will first describe the methodology of how flags are paired, followed by several illustrative examples. This is a new system of classification of flags based on groups limited to two.

This paper's title, the *Grand Harmonious Symmetry of Japan*, hints that the flags of Japan exhibit a certain degree of harmony and the title itself exhibits a subtle relationship to Japan. By way of uncanny historical, geographical, and cultural events a pattern of harmonious symmetry will be presented.

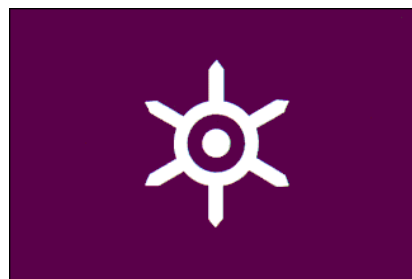
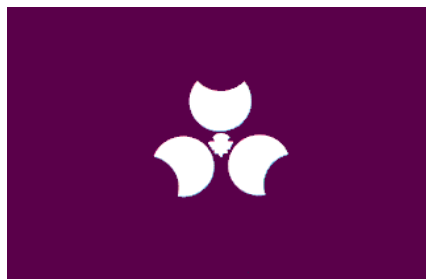


On the left is the name of Japan written in Japanese as Nihon, literally translated as Sun-Source. The upper kanji that looks like a digital eight means **sun**, the lower kanji means **source**, **book**, and **root**. To the right is the classical name of Japan, Yamato. The upper kanji means **grand** or **big**. The kanji on the lower right means **harmony**. A literal mispronunciation in Japanese would be 'Dai-Wa,' meaning 'Big-Harmony'. But this combination of kanji has its own special pronunciation as 'Yamato'. Aurally Yamato subconsciously suggests a secondary meaning, which is the 'Way of Mountain'. 'Yama' means mountain in Japanese and 'to' sounds like path, sort of like Bushido, the 'Warrior Path', or Shinto 'Spirit Path'.

Flag Symmetry is the idea that every flag has a complementary sibling. In this paper this is referred to as a "Partner" or "Harmonious Twin".



The first pair of harmonious twins is Nara and Okinawa Prefectures. Out of all the 47 prefectural flags these two flags most closely mirror the national ensign of Japan, a red disc on a field of white. Nara's color is a slightly darker wine red and it is a stylized katakana letter 'NA'. Okinawa's colors match the national flag, with a red disc within a red circle. However the letter is taken from the Roman alphabet 'O' because of the Roman letter spelling of Okinawa. The interesting cultural symmetry is that these two prefectures combine the inner core and outer reaches of Japanese culture. Nara was the original capital of Japan, and the original name was in fact "Yamato". Okinawa, on the other hand, is not a part of the main four-island archipelago. Nearly one thousand and one years after the establishment of Nara as the core capital of Japan in the 8th century, Okinawa was lastly incorporated into Japan. The southern feudal Japanese clans of Satsuma Domain annexed the Okinawa Kingdom in 1603. This only happened after first contact with the Western world and the introduction of firearms (The Portuguese made first contact with Japan in 1543.)



The second pair is Gunma and Tokyo. (Tokyo is the only prefecture with two official flags. The purple one is less common but older. The younger, more common Tokyo flag is more like that national flag of Japan, a white background with a light green ginkgo leaf in the center.)

The most important culturally harmonious dynamic between Gunma and Tokyo involves the first Japanese man and woman to go into outer space. They were from Gunma and Tokyo. The first Japanese man in space was from Tokyo, Toyohiro Akiyama. Toyohiro became the first Japanese in orbit in 1989. Toyohiro was launched into space from Khazakstan, when it was a part of the Soviet Union. The first Japanese woman in space was Chiaki Mukai, from Gunma Prefecture. Chiaki was lifted in the space by the United States from Florida, which was once a state in the Confederacy. This historical chance alignment of a person of Gunma and Tokyo and

the seemingly strange coincidence that their prefectural flags are both purple and white, is usually correlated in the intuitive sense as the evidence of providence. However from a fundamentally rational perspective this coincidence means nothing.

Three fundamental rules create the rubric of flag symmetry. Rule number one is flags should match within their own class. For example the 47 prefectural flags of Japan should only pair up with other prefectural flags of Japan. Likewise the 50 state flags of the United States would pair up only with flags of the 50 U.S. states, as would the 13 sub-national flags of Canada pair up only with the 13 sub-national flags of Canada.

Rule number two is that each flag gets one particular partner, in the phenomena of symmetry or cosmic harmony. Often it is that the universe is distilled into two complementary concepts that make up a whole. From China the philosophy of Daoism uses duality as one of its fundamental tenets. Daoism states that the universe is composed of two energies called Yin and Yang. They are complements of one whole. Yang energy is considered active while Yin energy is considered passive.

Daoists are aware of the apparent paradox between the two energies of Yin and Yang. It may seem contradictory to novices or persons who can only think unilaterally, but there is fundamental weakness within strong active energy as there is a great strength in weak passive energy. Because of this seemingly paradoxical conundrum, the Yin and Yang symbol has a white 'strong' dot within the weak black half, just as the strong white half has a 'weak' black dot within itself.

Most societies label several concepts as pairs. The first pair is that of the Sun and Moon. Nearly all civilizations have recognized them as complements, like Male and Female. Another complement is that of cat and dog. They are only two carnivorous beasts that have become domesticated and significantly cherished like children by people. Cats generally reflect our uncontrollable intuitive set of mind, while dogs reflect our domesticated rational side of mind.

On the level of chemistry the electrostatic forces that make up the chemical processes of life are divided into positive and negative energies and this flow through a system whether it is an organism or environmental complex. This flow of energy is like the dynamic of yin and yang.

On the mental level of existence, emotions always come in pairs. Common examples are hate & love, admiration & jealousy, fear & faith, and happiness & sadness.

Finally within music the harmonious blend of sounds creates music. What is the definition of harmony? Most people would say it is the subjective taste of the listener—one man's music is another man's garbage. Just as there is musical harmony, I contend that there is visual harmony, which is foundational for this research paper.

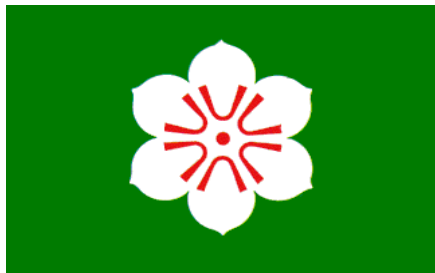
Rule number three of 'flag symmetry' is that you can break rules one and two only if you can justify and balance the situation.

Pairing flags is mostly an intuitive process but there are several aspects which must be interpreted before the pairing of two flags.

1. The first is color. It is essential that paired flags have all if not most of their colors in common.
2. Second is shape or design. Are they both letters? How are the shapes similar?
3. Third are historical and cultural factors. Are there any interesting historical coincidences?
4. Fourth are geographical factors.



Above are the meanings of Japan's classical name, Yamato.

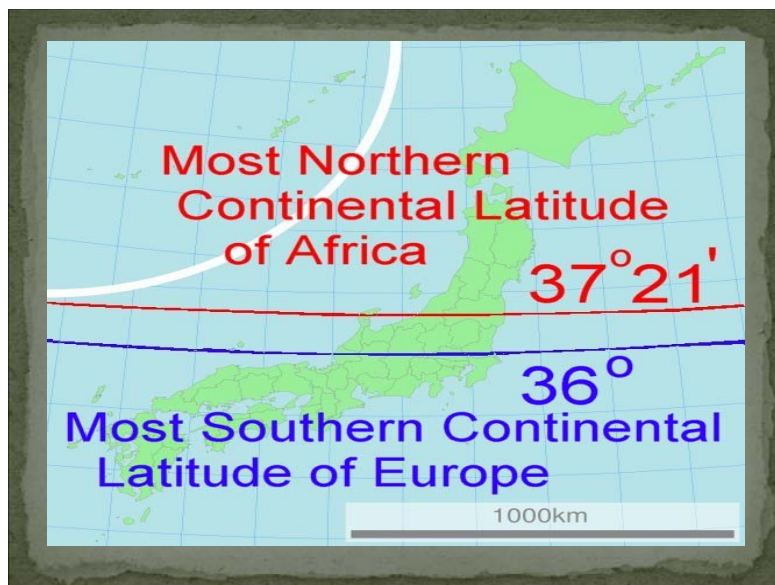


Saga is the partner to Kyoto, since both flags have a six-petal white flower. Both flags also have a very small red dot at the center reflective of the national flag. The main difference is that they contrast strongly with their background colors, green and purple-red. However the combination of colors is considered a harmonious blend, like the popular red and green combination in the West with Christmas. They are also the only flags with white flowers with tiny red dots in the center.

Saga and Kyoto represent Japan in its most refined and most bucolic senses. Kyoto represents the refined high culture of Japan, while Saga represents the simple country and beauty of Japan. It is a proverbial match of the Japanese princess with a Japanese country girl. Kyoto is where the things of classical Japanese culture are relevant. Kyoto has many famous temples and her historic streets shine brightly. Famous samurai, geisha, artists, poets, and emperors and empresses have made their homes in Kyoto.

Kyoto is usually at the top of the list of places to visit for most tourists in Japan, while Saga is usually just on the way to Nagasaki. However, Saga Prefecture has its share of national treasures. But it is also one of the most sparsely populated prefectures; it has fewer than a million people. What Saga lacks in high culture there is an abundance of natural beauty. Trees, rice paddies, bamboo groves, and quite streams flow in abundance. Very few tourists get to visit this off-the-beaten-path palace of simple wonders. However, I lived in Osaka on the border next to Kyoto and was able to intimately visit Kyoto, likewise I lived in Fukuoka on the border next to Saga and was able to intimately visit Saga on my many weekend day trips.

The Japanese are proud that they live in nation with four seasons. During my five-year stay in Japan many Japanese were amazed that other countries have four seasons as well. But more amazing is the geographical alignment of Japan. Japan sits in between the latitudes of Africa and Europe.

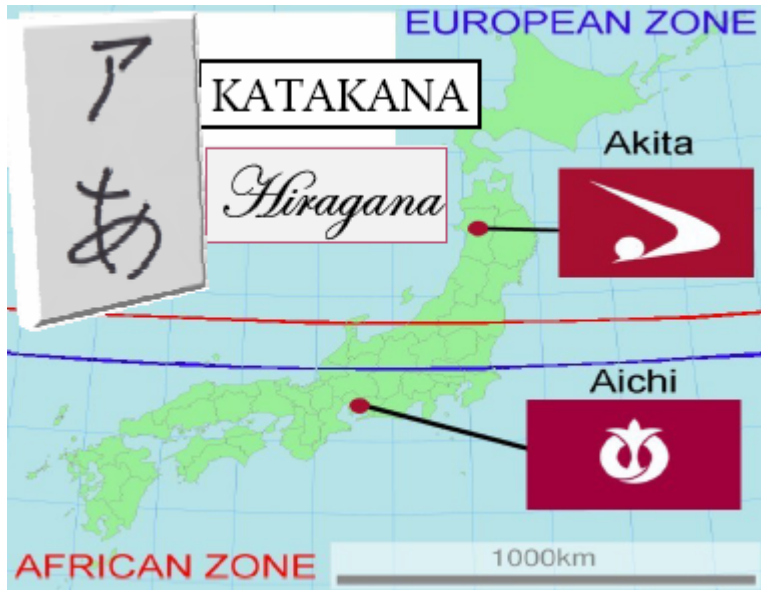


36° north is the most southern point of continental Europe, while 37° 21' north is the most north point of continental Africa. Between these two lines of latitude Europe and Africa are at the same latitude.

These lines of latitudes directly cross Japan, specifically the main island of Honshu. Honshu is the only island of the entire earth to cross completely in between Africa and Europe. In this great

geographical alignment, the region of Honshu at equal latitude with Europe runs north to south, while the southern half of Honshu runs on an east to west axis. The region of overlap between Europe and Africa is where Honshu bends from her east-west axis to her north-south axis.

Another providential geographic alignment is that the other three main islands of Japan are geographically balanced with Africa and Europe. The second largest island of Hokkaido is totally on par with European latitudes, equivalent with southern France, Italy, and Croatia. The third and fourth largest islands, Kyushu and Shikoku, align with African latitudes, equivalent with Libya, Morocco, and Egypt. Other nations cross over the three zones as illustrated above, but none does it so naturally. Honshu is the only island of the earth with this unique pan-continental placement. The gods blessed Japan with a serendipitous geographic alignment.



So are there any prefectural pairs that align along this African and European dichotomy? The answer is yes. Akita and Aichi make pair. Akita is in northern Euro-centric Honshu while Aichi is in southern Afro-centric Honshu.

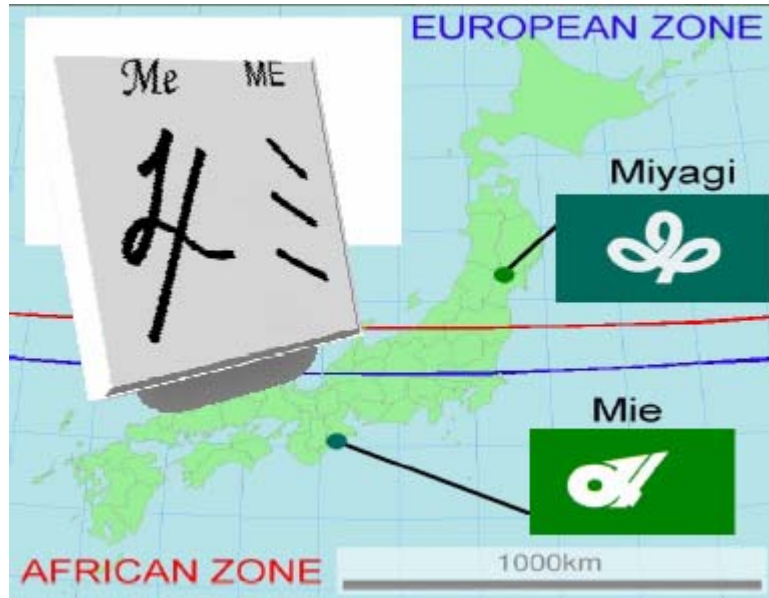
Furthermore the flag harmony is exquisite since both have similar maroon backgrounds and use the Japanese letter 'A' in the center. Akita uses a stylized Katakana 'A' while Aichi uses a stylized

Hiragana 'A'. Japan has two native alphabets Hiragana and Katakana. They are very similar but used differently. They are similarly analogous to cursive and print, but there is a difference in usage. Basically Hiragana is reserved for Japanese words while Katakana is used for foreign words that arose beyond Japan and China, although there are a few exceptions.



A great cultural dichotomous harmony between Akita and Aichi are two cultural icons that originated in these prefectures. The Akita Dog was bred in Akita, while the Toyota Car came to maturity in Aichi. The Akita Dog represents something living molded by Japanese hands, while the Toyota Car represents something man-made molded by Japanese hands.

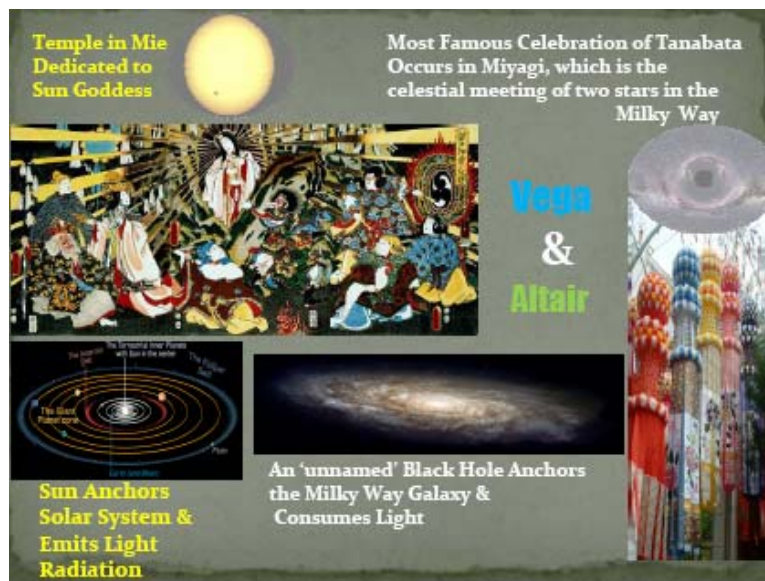
In the Japanese language this concept of living versus non-living is important in verb usage. There is a 'to be' verb-form reserved for living things (Imasu) and another 'to be' verb-form reserved to non-living things (Arimasu).



The geographical African-European Harmony repeats itself with Mie and Miyagi Prefectures. The central designs are even more harmonious as both employ the hiragana character for the sound of 'Me.'

The harmonious cultural dichotomy is between the Tanabata Celebration of Miyagi Prefecture and the Shinto temple dedicated to the Sun Goddess Amateratsu in Mie Prefecture. The

importance of this temple should be obvious as the national flag is called the 'Circle of the Sun.' In Japanese it is pronounced, "He no Maru" literally translated as "Sun's Circle". After all, Japan is called the Land of the Rising Sun.



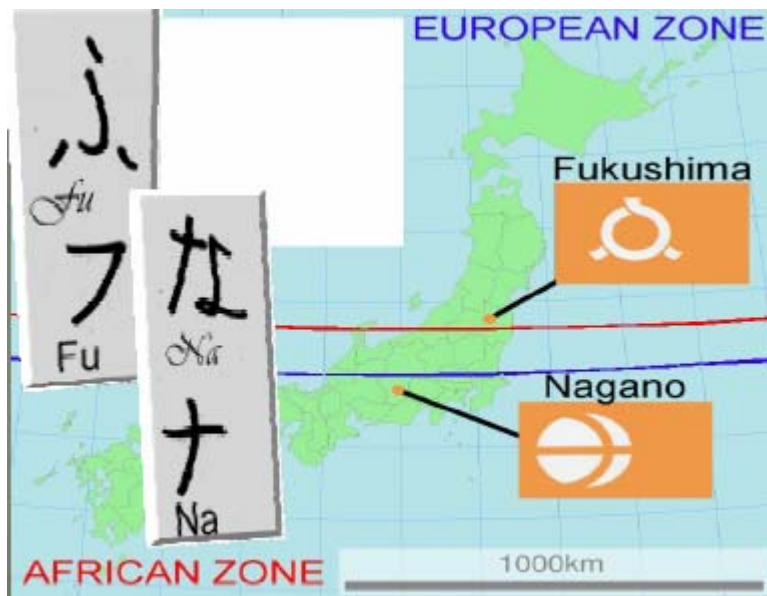
Miyagi is renowned in Japan for hosting the most spectacular celebration of Tanabata, the annual celebration of two particularly famous nearby stars in our Milky Way Galaxy, Altair and Vega. This celebration has its origins in an epic legend from China of two star-crossed lovers, an earthy farmer and the cosmic princess. This story had been modified in history as was its timetable. But today it is celebrated across Japan as is a

kind of wishing bamboo tree celebration. Japanese decorate bamboo bands with fanciful ornaments and colorful slips of paper that have wishes on them. It is held every July to August, depending on the city. And it is tied to the cosmic alignment of the stars Vega and Altair, when

they are visible for just a short time in the Milky Way Galaxy. Unfortunately, in the today's world of extreme urban development and light pollution, seeing the Milky Way Galaxy is rather difficult for most cities.

The coincidence between Miyagi and Mie Prefectures is that the story of the Sun Goddess Amateratsu, who represents the sun, has her primary temple in Mie Prefecture. Modern civilization has revealed a new dimension that the sun is also a star that is very close. If you travel far enough away from the sun it will look no different from other stars in the night sky. Since the sun is a star, you can think of stars as being very distant suns.

Even more recently, modern civilization has discovered that most galaxies have black holes in the center. Thus black holes are a kin' to conceptual complements to stars (or suns). A black hole is a cosmic body that consumes light via the force of gravity (a collapsed gravitational well). But suns (or stars) are cosmic bodies that anchor solar systems and release light by action of gravity (fusion). Our central Milky Way Black Hole, which has not yet been named, sits at the center of the Milky Way Galaxy. Likewise, stars sit at the center of Solar Systems. Suns like black holes support life, but if a star should get too close to a black hole it will be consumed, likewise if a planet should get too close to the sun it would be destroyed as well. In other words, both the Buddhist Sage and Goldilocks agree: that the 'middle path' is probably the best, or in Japanese the 'Chuudo no ho ga ii'.



Nagano pairs with Fukushima. They are the only two flags to use orange backgrounds. They also use a Japanese character centered to the left in the shape of circle. Nagano has a white disc with a Katakana 'NA' character cut into it, reflective of 'NA' in Nagano. Fukushima has a Hiragana 'FU' rounded out like a circle.

Geographically Nagano & Fukushima exhibit the complementary Euro-African

dynamic in a slightly different way. Both Nagano & Fukushima prefecture are mostly at latitudes in between Europe and Africa. However Nagano has a portion of land at completely African latitudes, below 36° north. While Fukushima's northern regions have latitudes above 37° 21' north, at completely European latitudes.



Interesting cultural aspects of Nagano & Fukushima recognized by the entire world are Japan's larger than life sumo wrestling and fictional character Godzilla. Wrestling is perhaps one of the oldest forms of fighting, most mammalian species engage in some form of male-to-male physical combat.

Anthropologically nearly all cultures had some form of specified ritualized wrestling

match. In Japan it evolved into sumo, refined into a martial art and national sport. Sumo intensely became famous during the Edo Period, and one of the grandest Japanese sumo wrestlers arose in that time was Raiden Tameemon. Raiden was born in Nagano in 1767 and died in 1825. Although he never reached the top class of supreme sumo wrestlers, he is considered the one of the early great ones.

Thanks to the special-effects and artistic talents of a man from Fukushima, Mr. Tsuburaya Eji helped create one of Japan's most famously recognizable legendary monsters, Godzilla. Eji is also responsible for creating 'Japan's Superman' known as *Ultraman*. Japan always had a strong folk culture rich with fanciful and supernatural creatures. But since the advent of film, Godzilla became the first widely known original Japanese monster unleashed upon the imagination of the world, thanks to Eji Tsuburaya. Generation-I (children born post-mainstream **Internet**, circa 1991) all across the world have been subjected the imagination of *Pocket Monster Mania*. A fad it may be for the young, but for the astute business executive it has been a solid investment. *Pocket Monsters*, better known as Poke Mon, is a franchise that reaped multi-billion dollar sales across the world via games, movies, trading cards, and television shows. But Godzilla is the original monster born of Japan's imagination most easily recognized by all generations from baby boomers to Generation-I.

Shimane pairs with Niigata. Both their backgrounds employ a crimson reddish-brown with yellow-gold central emblems. The emblem of Shimane is four-leafed. The emblem of Shimane is a golden semi-circle but near the crest is another four-lobed insignia.



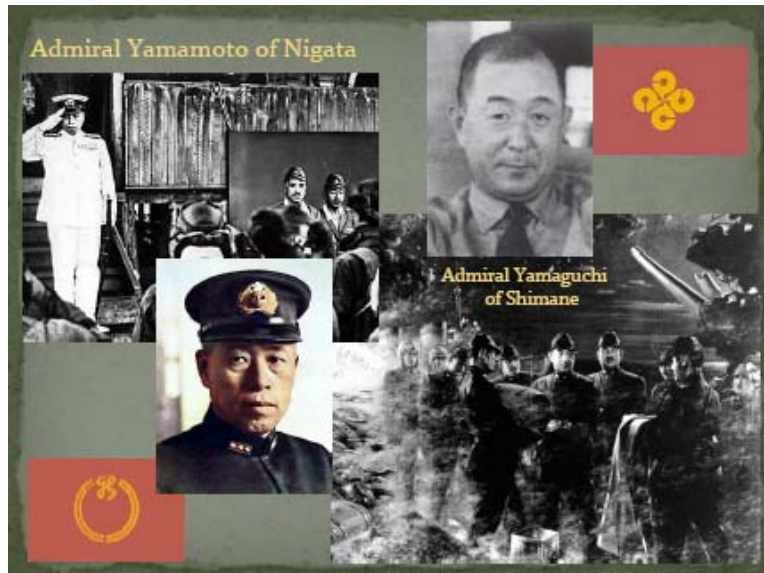
Geographically Shimane & Niigata Prefectures are similar to Fukushima and Nagano prefectures, but reversed in regards to dominance of the Afro-European Balance. Instead of having the majority of their land in the middle zone only a small portion of Shimane and Niigata are in the African-European Zone. Only the Oki Islands of Shimane and southern portion of Niigata are in the bilateral Afro-Euro zone. Most of Shimane & Niigata

Prefectures are tilted to the purely African or European geographic zones. Shimane is mostly in the Afro-centric, below 36° north. Niigata is mostly in the European Zone above 37° 21' north.



Another serendipitous geographic alignment is tied to Shinto teachings and involves islands that are a part of Shimane and Niigata Prefectures. The special islands are Oki and Sado Island. Both are on 'west side' of Honshu in the Sea of Japan. According to Shinto Tradition, in the creation story of Japan *In the Beginning* there were two divine spirits, the Goddess Izanami and God Izanagi. You can think of them as partially

analogous to the figures of Adam and Eve. According to this sacred teaching, the first eight islands of Japan fell into the ocean from the point of a divine spear tip. Oki Island and Sado Island are a part of the original sacred eight from the beginning. The number eight is considered lucky in China, more so that the number 'seven' in the West. Eight is an essential number in Taoism, and the teachings of Buddha follow the 'Eight Fold Noble Path' to enlightenment. The 'Eight-Fold Noble' path is akin to the 10 Commandments in the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).



Two important naval officers of the *Great Pacific War* were born in Shimane and Niigata Prefectures, Admiral Yamamoto and Admiral Yamaguchi. Yamamoto's name became familiar to the U.S. and international audiences after his appearance on the cover of *Time Magazine* on 22 December 1941. Admiral Yamamoto of Niigata was the chief battle planner for the pre-emptive strike at Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto died when his

plane was shot down in the Solomon Islands on 18 April 1943. Admiral Yamaguchi died at the transitional point of the war at the Battle of Midway in 1942, when the course of war shifted in favor of an American victory. Admiral Yamaguchi was serving under the chief naval commander, Nagumo. At a critical point of the battle, Yamaguchi's opinions were ignored by Nagumo. A few historians contend that if Nagumo would have listened to Yamaguchi the outcome of the battle may have been different.



During the Battle of Midway Yamaguchi served on the '*Flying Dragon*', the IJN *Hiryu*, the last carrier to sink. After attacks by air squadrons from the USS *Enterprise*, the IJN *Hiryu* sank near midnight after the battle. Yamaguchi had the opportunity to escape, however he decided to go down with the sinking *Flying Dragon*. Perhaps he knew it was futile to continue fighting after such a decisive defeat.

Coincidentally the Chinese Character or kanji for their names both use the same 'Yama'. This coincidence is fairly common, but 'Yama' already invokes a feeling of deep Japanese patriotism as it is the initial stem that follows 'Yama' of 'Yamato', the classical name of Japan. The variation between Yamamoto and Yamato is only slight.

These highly decorated military officers were both Ivy League alumni—during the 1920s Yamaguchi attended Princeton University in New Jersey, while Yamamoto attended Harvard University in Massachusetts.



Ishikawa pairs with Hyogo. Both flags have blue backgrounds and three white elements forming the core emblem. Hyogo has a central emblem that looks like a Roman numeral 'II' and two matching elements above and below that looks like a curvy mathematical equals sign. This is due to a geographic symbolism. Hyogo Prefecture has a coastline on the *Sea of Japan* and the *Inland Sea of Japan*. Ishikawa Prefecture also has

three elements of which two elements look like two backslashes or rather an equals sign turned ninety degrees. To the left of Ishikawa's 'rotated equals sign' is a larger element that looks like the outline of the number '6', but it is missing the bottom stroke. Just like Hyogo the larger element on Ishikawa's flag is reflective of geography. Ishikawa Prefecture juts out into the Sea of Japan from Honshu like Denmark's Jutland juts into the North Sea of Europe.

Another geographic symmetry is both prefectures have cupped islands. For Hyogo the island of Awaji (also one of the original sacred eight created in the beginning) is cupped by Honshu in the Inland Sea of Japan, while for Ishikawa Noto Island is cupped entirely Ishikawa Prefecture, within the Sea of Japan. Awaji is much larger and a part of the sacred original eight.



An intense cultural dichotomy between Ishikawa and Hyogo is related to two historical events, the tale of the *47 Ronin: The Chushingura* and *Ikko-Ikki Peasants Kingdom*. The famous tale of the *Loyal 47 Masterless Samurai* has become etched into the identity of Japan. Essentially the Samurai of a feudal domain in what is now Hyogo Prefecture became Masterless Samurai (known as Ronin) after their retainer was executed in Tokyo.

The lord from old Hyogo gained the ill will of a bureaucrat in Tokyo (Edo at the time) because he would not offer up a bribe. Harassed by the corrupt bureaucratic official, he unleashed his anger in the noble court and made an attempt on the bureaucrat's life, but such behavior was not tolerated and it was decreed that the lord from Old Hyogo would commit suicide. Once their lord was executed the Samurai of Hyogo became Masterless Ronin. They swore justice to their lord and conspired to avenge their master's honor, fearless of death. The leader of the 47 Ronin was Oishi, who was born in what is now Hyogo Prefecture. After they assassinated the bureaucrat in Tokyo they took their lives by committing seppuku, as it was the honorable thing to do. By coincidence the native Japanese alphabet only has 47 basic letters, likewise there are 47 prefectures in Japan, so 47 is a patriotic number for Japan in as much as 13 is for the United States.

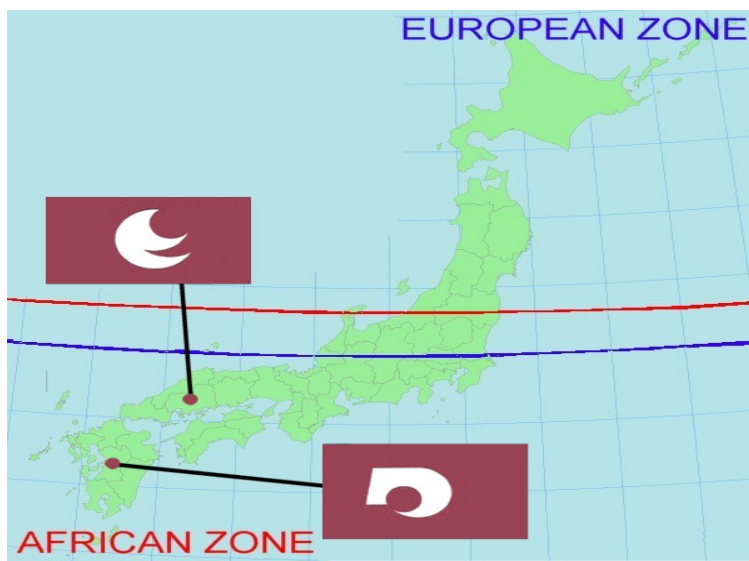
The Peasants Kingdom arose in 1488, at a time of intense fighting between the samurai and the nobles in Kaga Province (now a part of Ishikawa Prefecture). It was the first time that a domain in Japan was ruled without samurai. It occurred during the Warring States period, when no feudal domain held complete power over the others. Since the samurai were not doing their job effectively in this violent period, many innocent peasants and non-nobles were caught in the crossfire. Under charismatic Buddhist leadership a league of Buddhist priests and peasants organized for a short while in a kingdom with no nobles or samurai, the Ikko-Ikki Peasants Kingdom. Many times over peasants had revolted but never of this magnitude and for so long. Ikko-Ikki groups lasted until Japan was reunified by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the late 1500s.

The complementary dynamic of these stories is manifold. In Ishikawa's Peasant Kingdom the lower castes of feudal society, peasants allied to the religious caste, are the protagonists of this historical event. Of the 47 Ronin, the upper castes of feudal society are showcased, the

samurai and court nobles. The Peasants Rebellion occurred in 1488 just before Christopher Columbus became aware of the Americas (ironically, Columbus thought he might have been in Japan). The 47 Samurai story took place just before the genesis of the United States in 1703; Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706.

These two stories also reflect the religious dichotomy of Japan. Japan is dominantly and historically a nation of two separate faiths, Buddhism and Shinto. Most Japanese contend they are Buddhist at birth and at death, but Shinto in the middle. But as a general rule of thumb, the stronger a family leans towards the Shinto faith the more likely it comes from noble or samurai stock, and a family that identifies more with the Buddhist tradition is more likely of the peasant and lower castes of feudal society. These are only general rules, and there are many Japanese go against this grain and who do not identify at all with Buddhism or Shinto stereotypes.

In the post-WWII era these two stories have become political rallying cries of the left and right wings in Japan. The Ikko-Ikki Peasants Kingdom has been used by the left. An illustration exemplifies this point. The picture depicting the Ikko-Ikki Peasants Kingdom was taken from toy action figures manufactured in the Ukraine when it was a part of the Soviet Union. The specific toys are little red armed action figure peasants. On the other hand, the story of the 47 Ronin has been endlessly retold in plays and movies. In the West a similar phenomenon takes place with the story of England's Queen Elizabeth; every few years movie-makers retell the story of their Virgin Queen who stood up to the Catholics of Spain and started the thread of destiny that gave birth to the largest Empire the world has seen. In Japan it has become something of recent tradition in the month of December that television stations broadcast old versions the *Chushingura* to stoke the samurai spirit of post-modern Japan.



Kumamoto pairs with Hiroshima. Both prefectures use a brownish background and have stylized Katakana Characters. Hiroshima uses the Katakana 'HE' while Kumamoto uses the Katakana 'KU.' Oddly, both central white emblems seem to have a 'punched out' dot. Hiroshima's dot is incomplete on the upper right portion of the symbol. Otherwise it would have looked like a backwards apostrophe. Kumamoto's dot is on

the lower left, otherwise it would have looked like a boxing glove.

A geographical symmetry is both prefectures are internal and have long inland sea coastlines. Hiroshima has the largest inland coastline of the Inland Sea of Japan. Kumamoto Prefecture also has an inland coastline on 'Kyushu's Inland Sea', formally known as the Ariake Sea.

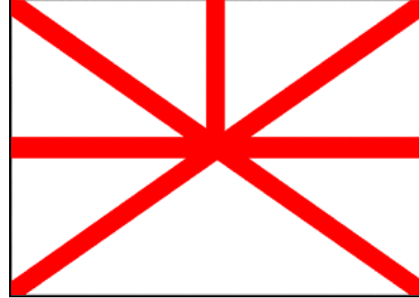
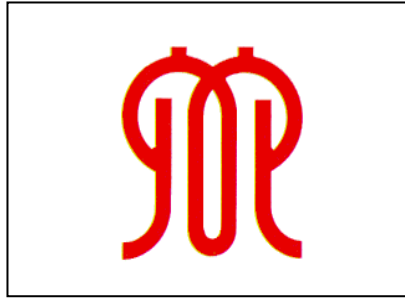


Hiroshima and Kumamoto also carry the deepest historical scars of the nation. Hiroshima was first witness to nuclear war on 7 August 1945. Kumamoto gave rise to the fanatical Buddhist sect known as Aum Shin Rikyo founded in 1984. The leader, Asahara Shoko, was born in Kumamoto in 1955. This group was responsible for the world's first domestic terrorist attack involving chemicals weapons against civilians in 1994. Eight

people were killed and over 200 were made sick in Matsumoto, Nagoya. The following year this group made international headlines in the 1995 Tokyo Sarin Nerve Gas terror attack that killed twelve and injured over one thousand.

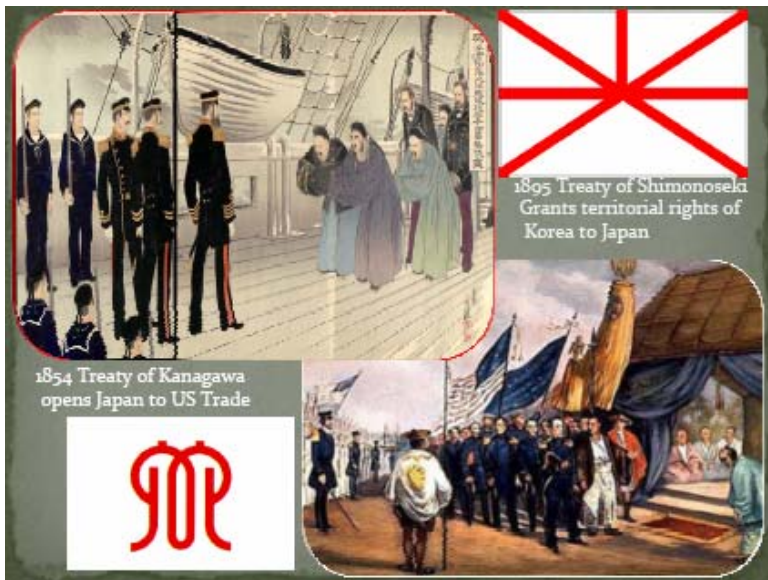
Kumamoto and Hiroshima Prefectures carry deep sorrows for Japan and the world. Beautiful life can be, yet sad moments are an unfortunate side effect and consequence of accidental and poor choices. It is a Buddhist notion that suffering can come from beyond as was the case in Hiroshima, likewise suffering can come from within, as was the case with a misguided soul from Kumamoto. The best a person can do with these stories is to remember—give them the respect they deserve and a moment of silence.

(A blank page as a moment of silence)



Two prefectures break rule number three: Kanagawa and Kagoshima. Both prefectures are paired with retired naval flags.

Kanagawa pairs with the Korean Lightship Flag. Both flags use the national colors of Japan and stylized versions of Kanji characters. Kanagawa's flag uses a stylized mish-mash of the prefectural name. While the Korean Lightship flag uses the single Kanji character for Light, the Korean lightship flag essentially represents Korea when it was a part of Japan.



Kanagawa Prefecture witnessed the landing of Admiral Perry in 1854. Perry's arrival heralded an end of one era and the beginning of another. Japan originally wanted to have nothing to do with West but only reluctantly opened her ports after a threat of war with United States. In the lower right is a wood block print illustrating the landing of Perry with his contingency in what is now Kanagawa Prefecture. The Americans are on the left wearing

western clothes, while the Japanese are wearing traditional robes of a bygone era as did the ancestors of America did in ancient Rome or during biblical times. In the right corner is a Japanese person bowing to Admiral Perry before he apparently enters the official's chambers. The landing of Perry eventually led to the genesis of Kanagawa and eventually to the creation of the Kanagawa prefectural flag in 1948 during, ironically, the U.S. occupation.

Forty-one years after Perry landed in Japan, the axiom was reversed. In 1895 Japan defeated China in the first Sino-Japanese War. Japan had enthusiastically adopted western technologies and philosophies, which gave her a certain edge over the technologically backwards Chinese Empire. In the ensuing treaty, China gave up territorial dominance of Korea to Japan. This led

to Japan colonizing Korea intensely, and eventually annexing it in 1910. During the occupation of Korea the Japanese government issued the Korean lightship flag. It was used until the surrender of Japan to the United States in 1945.

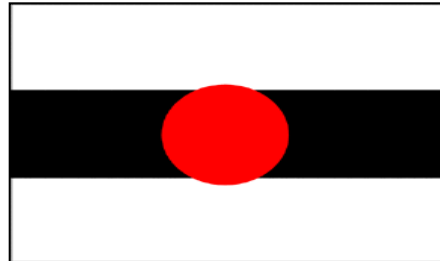
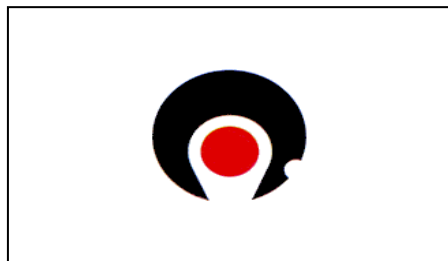


Another cultural dichotomy between Kanagawa Prefecture and the Korean lightship flag deals with two people who decidedly went against norm of their respective societies. From Kanagawa was Fumiko Kaneko, born in 1903 in Yokohama. She became an anarchist and after living in recently annexed Korea and spoke out against the Japanese government's

actions. She was a Japanese dissident who advocated Korean independence and other non-traditional Japanese ideas. She was labeled a radical, was jailed, and subsequently died in prison in 1926.

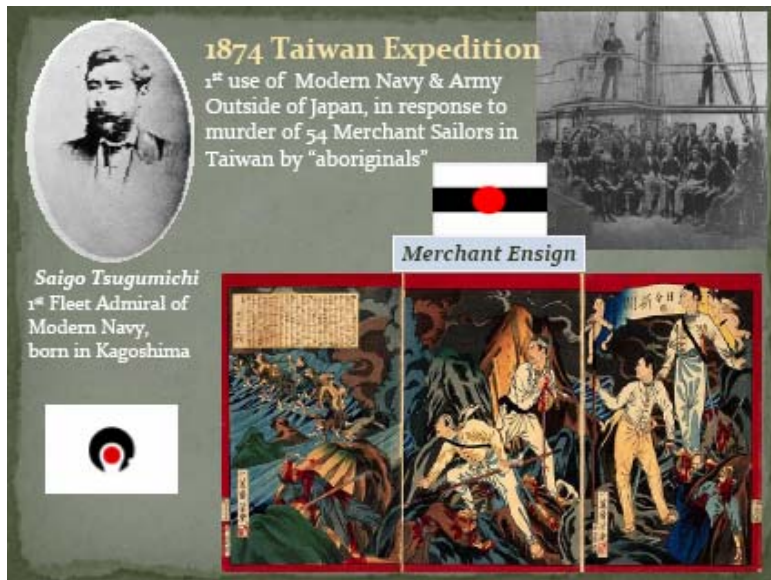
On the other hand, from Korea there is General Hong Saik. An ethnic Korean serving in the Imperial Army during WWII, General Hong headed the Japanese forces in the Philippines and was directly involved in the Bataan Death March. After the war, General Hong was among the very few Koreans executed by the U.S. government.

The symmetry and irony is that an ethnic Korean was executed for fighting in honor of the Japanese Empire is balanced with an ethnic Japanese woman who died for her political views and espousal of Korean independence from Japan.



Another prefecture is paired with a retired naval flag. Kagoshima Prefecture partners with the short-lived Meiji Era merchant ensign that flew officially between 1870 and 1875. The Meiji Era

is often thought of as an age of innocence. It was a time before the nuclear era, and before war with China, Russia, and the United States. It was a time when Japan only had herself to contend with as the miraculous technological world collided with feudal society. Several important and critical historical events unfolded in Japan. The new prefectural system went into effect in 1872. And in this era the first modern military sorties took place between Japan and her neighbors.



Japan's first use of western technologies in the international theater took place during 'Merchant Ensign Period: 1870-1875'. Modern arms were first directed against Taiwan, in a punitive mission that took place in 1874 in response to the murder of 54 Japanese merchant sailors. It was specifically directed against Taiwanese 'aboriginals'. Since China was not able to rectify the situation and discipline the responsible parties, Japan took

the matter into her own hands. Fatefully, the leader of the 1874 Taiwan Expedition was Saigo Tsugumichi, providentially born in Kagoshima. Oddly his name is somewhat ironic, since 'saigo' means 'last' in Japanese. Yet Saigo Tsugumichi was the first modern fleet admiral. Only 13 men have ever been honored with the title of Fleet Admiral, the highest rank in the Japanese Navy. (The most famous fleet admiral was Isoroku Yamamoto.)



The following year another military expedition took place, on 20 September 1875—the landing of the IJN *Unyo* on the Korean island of Ganghwa. This incident marked the first use of modern military arms against Korea. After this incident Japan was able to open Korea's ports. Before 1875 Korea like Japan had shunned trade and contact with the western barbarians from Europe

and America. Several Western nations, the U.S. included, had tried in vain to open Korea but they were all met with stiff resistance. It was not until after the Japanese-Ganghwa Incident that Korea opened her ports to the West.

The document that opened Korea to Western trade was the 1876 Treaty of Ganghwa Convention, written by Kuroda Kiyotaka of Kagoshima. Kuroda was of the samurai stock and pro-western. Ironically as Perry of the U.S. is to Japan at Kanagawa, Kuroda of Kagoshima is to Korea at Ganghwa.

Another amazing coincidence during the Japanese merchant ensign period (1870-1875) was that the United States, like Japan, conducted a punitive mission against Korea. In 1866 the United States had sent the USS *General Sherman* to open trade with Korea. The Koreans rejected the Americans' offer and bluntly asked them to leave. After the USS *General Sherman* stalled, the local Korean Government decided to attack the alien invaders and the crew was killed. In 1871 the USS *Colorado* was sent to rectify the situation and the first Korean-American War took place. Over 300 Koreans died, while only three American perished. The United States was not successful in opening Korea as she had been with Japan. Rather Japan would ironically open Korea to the West.

Kagoshima and Kanagawa both pair with retired merchant ensigns. The harmony of colors is perfectly balanced. Kanagawa has a white background with a stylized red kanjis as does the Korean lightship flag. Kagoshima has a white background with a red dot surrounded in black as does the merchant ensign. Both of the non-prefectural flags have their colored emblems extending across the flag.

Kagoshima and Kanagawa break convention since they are not aligned with another prefectural flag. They can 'break the rules' under the third rule, so long as it is justified and balanced. How is this unconventional assignment explained? Firstly, there are no satisfactory prefectural flags that neatly balance with the pattern of Kagoshima, a white background with black and red dot. Nor is there a prefectural match to Kanagawa, a white back ground with a stylized red kanji character. After an exhaustive search for a suitable prefecture, the possibility of uniting these 'left out' flags opens the door for a non-conventional partner. Preferably a flag created by the Japanese or deeply tied to Japan in some manner.

A subtle historical alignment becomes apparent with combination of these flags. Kagoshima and Kanagawa harmonize because both prefectures were witness to watershed moments in Japanese history. It was at Kagoshima, Tanegashima Island to be exact, where the western world accidentally collided with Japanese Civilization for the first time. Kagoshima was where a European nation made first contact with Japan—a Portuguese ship shipwrecked on Tanegashima in 1543.

Twenty-two years after Magellan's fleet sailed around the world in 1521, the consciousness of Japan was forever awakened to Far West European civilization. Appropriately, the Portuguese were at the very western tip of the continental European landmass.

Initially Japan was enchanted with these western hairy white barbarians with blue and green eyes. It was a first contact of civilizations from one end of the earth unto the other. Less than 101 years after the arrival of the white man, Japan's history was forever altered. After gaining firearms technology Japan was united under the Tokugawa Regime, and subsequently closed off to the West, except for the Dutch in Nagasaki where trade was strictly regulated. It wasn't until the arrival of Perry at Kanagawa in 1854 that another watershed moment in history took place. Thus both Kanagawa and Kagoshima are historic connection points to the outside world.



There is an interesting coincidence of Japanese and U.S. naval flags during the Great War of the Pacific. The ensign of the Japanese Navy used a rising sun with sixteen rays shooting out of the center, while the U.S. Naval Jack used a constellation of 48 stars. It was a proverbial clash of one flag that represented the day and another that represented the night. It was a proverbial battle of Yin and Yang: the Navy of the Day Flag versus the Navy of the Night Flag.



Today both navies get along harmoniously and also have matching naval colors. The Japanese Ensign is red and white. It was retired after the war, but later reinstated to fly on the Self Defense Forces ships. The U.S. Naval Jack was also retired recently. While the star field was used for most of the U.S. Navy's history, the thirteen-striped red and white serpent flag in was reinstated after the attack of 11 September 2001.



Among the most beloved naval ships of the U.S. and Japan are the USS *Enterprise* and IJN *Yamato*.

The *Enterprise* is a cultural flagship for the United States whose name illustrates what Americans hold dear to their national identity. American's love and respect business enterprises, whether to make movies, run a hotel, sell auto insurance, make dinners, or sell furniture. An entrepreneur with a successful

enterprise is held in high esteem according to traditional American values. On the other hand, Japanese people appreciate harmony. They often undergo a great deal personal suffering for the greater harmony of the group. Japanese love harmony and often incorporate it into every aspect of their business, life, and play. Thus the literal meaning of the Kanji *Yamato* is 'Big Harmony'.



These two culturally significant naval vessels of WWII gained lives of their own long after the war. Both of these ships had science fiction programs made about them. In the U.S. the Star Trek Franchise has been very successful while in Japan the *Uchuu Senkan Yamato (Space Battleship Yamato)* anime has developed a kind of sub-culture in the U.S. under its American title, *Star Blazers*.



Above is a roll call of 32 prefectural flags. Thirty-two is synchronous with the 32 rays (16 red and 16 white) emanating from the Japanese Naval Ensign. Nine new pairings are introduced here.

In order, following the typical Japanese reading style, the first pair in the upper right is Yamanashi & Okayama. This is a proverbial union of the Japanese 'Nashi' Pear with legendary peaches of Okayama. The next one down is Ishikawa & Hyogo, followed by Chiba & Shizuoka. Both were formed from three feudal domains and have peninsulas jutting into the Pacific Ocean. Next below is Iwate & Yamagata. They are both north in the mountains at the same latitudes of Europe. Next down is Tottori & Tokushima. Both of these flags use a stylized birds mixed with the Japanese character 'To'. Next below is Shiga & Fukui. They are in the middle of Japan in between the Kansai and Kanto regions. At the bottom of right hand corner is Hiroshima & Kumamoto.

The middle column shows pairs that are similar to the national banner. Up top are Kanagawa & the retired Korean lightship flag. Next below is Saitama & Oita. Next under is Nara & Okinawa.

Next below is Toyama & Aomori. And finally on the bottom are Kagoshima & the retired Merchant ensign.

In the last column on the left is Akita & Aichi. Next down is Tokyo & Gunma. Next down is Nagano & Fukushima. Next down is Miyagi & Mie. Next down is Osaka & Fukuoka, which are at the east and west ends of the Inland Sea of Japan from Kitakyushu to Osaka Harbor. Next down is Niigata & Shimane. And finally in the lower left corner is Yamaguchi & Kochi.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the genesis of a flag is thought to be a somewhat random yet structured process. Sub-national flags are often based on the national flag by colors and or pattern. This was certainly the case with Japanese flags, as most sub-national flags have a central icon and a monotone background. Four of the prefectural flags match totally by color with a red central emblem on a white background: Saitama, Nara, Okinawa, and Oita.

This paper aligns itself with the field of flag taxonomy. The two most common classification systems are color and ethno-political divisions. Many flags classification schemes list flags according to matching colors such as pan-African (red, green, yellow) or pan-Arab colors (Black, Green, White, Black). Usually this style of classification system is open ended and any number of flags can join a category or even belong to two or more. The flag of Ethiopia is Pan-African, and it also belongs to the horizontal tri-bar group. But the tri-bar flag group also includes Russia, Belgium, and Bolivia.

In this paper, flags are classified in an acute and limited system. The base of the system relies on a fixed binary format. One flag is paired with only one other. The process of aligning flags one to one has been articulated. It relies on serendipity or perception of a 'certain kind of harmony.' On the surface this 'certain kind of harmony' depends on a visual judgment that two flags seem like 'sisters' or 'close cousins'. Some pairs are obviously similar while others only become apparent when the rules are bent and some other kind of 'justifiable and balanced' harmony is discovered as is the cases with Kanagawa and Kagoshima Prefectures.

Beneath the visual aspects of color and design harmony, there are deeper levels of connectivity. The associations formed between a 'visually harmonious pair' are further reinforced by parallel histories, geographies, and uncanny cultural coincidences. Unfortunately harmony is largely based on a system of subjective clauses, as one man's wonderful music is another man's incomprehensible noise.

Flag Symmetry adds a deep undiscovered layer of ideas to Vexillology. This radically new idea can gain merit and a more solid base, if flag symmetry can be detected in the sub-national flags of another country. For the upcoming 43rd North American Vexillological annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, I will endeavor to reproduce similar results with the flags of the fifty U.S. States. Preliminary research indicates that the current sub-national flags Australia, Canada, and Russia also exhibit 'flag symmetry'. Finally the big question is, "Does this take place with the national flags of the world?" If so, then perhaps all world civilizations that evolve into nation states represented by vexilloids also exhibit some kind of uncanny 'flag symmetry'.



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Red stylized Kanji character of Ka of Kanagawa on white field. Kanagawa has famous sea port Yokohama which has been long used as a main entrance into Japan thus Japanese national colours red and white were chosen for a prefecture flag. Adopted 3 November 1948.
Nozomi Kariyasu, 6 May 1998

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Kagoshima merchant ensign http://www.fotw.us/flags/jp_cvlen.html

This flag was used between 27 Jan 1870 and 29 Nov 1875 as a civil ensign. The merchant vessels had to hoist state flag Hinomaru as well to show Japanese nationality. However in 1875 the civil ensign was abolished since most of merchant vessels began to hoist their shipping company flag which indicates clearly the vessel did not belong to navy.

Nozomi Kariyasu, 20 February 2000

Korean Lightship flag

http://www.fotw.us/flags/jp_krlts.html

This flag was used by navigation signal control vessels when Korea was a Japanese colony. The 6 red lines on a white field is the Japanese Kanji character of HIKARI, which means Light in English. The flag was used from 27 October 1871 until the end of World War II.
Nozomi Kariyasu, 23 February 2000

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