

Japan's attitude towards the reconstruction of the past: A study of the historical accuracy of the '2016 Sekigahara Battle Festival' Reenactment

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Abstract

This paper discusses the 2016 Sekigahara Festival Reenactment battle and analyses its historical accuracy. The annual reenactment sees dozens of people dress up in samurai armour and perform a choreographed performance following the events of the historical battle of Sekigahara, a decisive event in Japan's history that ended the Warring States period and unified the country for over 200 years. Before the analysis of the reenactment, there is some discussion regarding the Japanese government's policy of protecting cultural properties, the concept of Soft Power, the value of a country's cultural exports as a form of influence and Sekigahara's sister city relationship with Gettysburg as these various factors may have influenced the design of the reenactment.

The paper analyses the reenactment battle in comparison to historical accounts, both modern and contemporary. The measurements of accuracy are the location, the deployment of troops, the course of events, the apparel, the weaponry and various forms of identification, such as banners and famous samurai accessories, with photographs of the reenactment being compared to a historical account from a first-hand witness and various modern academic studies of the battle by historians and epistemologists.

The paper then compares the reenactment battle's historical accuracy with a number of examples from Japanese period films as they share similarities regarding thematic design and production and can provide insight into the decision of whether or not to embrace historical accuracy. These Samurai films depict contemporary military engagements and follow similar guidelines regarding the choreography, the outfits and the weaponry. The paper concludes by explaining what the degree of historical accuracy can show us about Japan's motives for and attitudes towards reconstructions of the past.

Keywords: reenactment battle, historical accuracy, Sekigahara, Samurai film, cultural properties, soft power

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Japan's medieval history is known for its many wars and conflicts. Before the mostly peaceful Edo Period, Japan was in the Warring states period (*sengoku jidai*). In this period, many feudal warlords (*Daimyo*) fought for supremacy. The period of constant conflict ended with Tokugawa Ieyasu's unification of Japan after the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the largest battle in Japanese history, with nearly 200,000 combatants. Today, the battle is celebrated at the annual 'Sekigahara Battle Festival', where a reenactment of the battle occurs. I intend to compare the reenactment to the actual battle and evaluate the historical accuracy. I will then determine what the degree of accuracy tells us about Japan's attitude towards reconstructions of the past. Before discussing this, one must be familiar with various external factors which explain the motives for reconstructing the past and potentially affect the historical accuracy.

1.2 Cultural Properties

For context regarding Japan's attitude towards reconstructions of the past, one must understand Japan's attitude towards its own history. The Japanese government has designated various objects and locations around the country as cultural properties. Within this broad term, some of these properties are labeled as monuments. Of these monuments, the properties are further categorised as 'Places of Scenic Beauty, Historic Sites and Natural Monuments'. Regarding the historic sites, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan (2009, p8) states that "after ensuring that Historic Sites are preserved in such a way as to maintain their value as cultural properties various means of utilization are then planned in order to deepen understanding of history and culture among the local people". As there are over a thousand of these historic sites in Japan, the government ensures they are protected by the 'law for the protection of cultural properties'. The national and local government contribute to upholding this law through various methods, such as; the "establishment and operation of facilities open to the public (such as museums and theaters) and of research institutes for cultural properties" and the "promotion of local activities to promote the protection of cultural properties, such as activities for the study, protection, or transmission of cultural properties" (Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, 2009, p35). These methods can help explain why

the reenactment battle occurs each year, because the battlefield of Sekigahara is one of these protected historic sites of Japan. Therefore, the primary objective of the reenactment battle is to educate the audience on the history of the battle. The law also affects the accuracy of the reenactment battle as it places constraints onto the organisation of the reenactment. For example, the location of the reenactment cannot take place on one of the protected sites in Sekigahara, because the participants and audience would cause erosion to the soil and could accidentally damage the structures. It instead takes place on a designated patch of land which is not prohibited by the law.

There are a number of reasons why the government protects these cultural properties, such as Sekigahara. Predominantly, there are two perspectives, domestic and international.

1.3 Tourism And Patriotism

The domestic factors; tourism and patriotism, are promoted through things like reenactment battles. Tourism generates money from visitors and because, during the rest of the year, Sekigahara is usually a quiet town, when the reenactment battle occurs, there is an influx of tourists, small businesses can flourish, sustaining the economy, at least at a local level. Patriotism, however, is more complex. While there are benefits to globalisation, chiefly economic prosperity and improved geopolitical cooperation, these are offset by the fear that a country can lose its own national identity. This fear is held by people with traditional mindsets who, in the context of the Westernisation of Japan, may believe the cultural values and traditions are being threatened. In such a case, they may become committed to maintaining national identity and national culture. The reenactment battle helps reaffirm national pride, and although it is on a much smaller scale than the Olympics, for example, it has the advantage for this purpose of being inspired specifically by Japanese History. There is also an argument for education being a factor, though this is difficult to quantify on the basis of a reenactment battle.

1.4 Soft Power

To understand the international factors, one has to first understand the concept of soft power. As opposed to military or economic strength, known as hard power, soft power is the value of a nation's cultural image to the outside world. Nye (1990, p27) refers to it as “when one country gets other countries to want what it wants”. He continues, stating

that this “might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants” (Nye, 1990, p27). McGray (2002) concurs, describing it as “the non-traditional ways a country can influence another country’s wants, or its public’s values”. In recent years, Japan has moved up the rankings of the Soft Power 30, an index by the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy. In 2015, Japan was 8th in the world, then in 2016 it rose to 7th. In 2017 it reached 6th, behind France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and Canada (McClory, 2017, p43).

1.5 Cool Japan

Cool Japan is an example of Japan promoting its image in order to increase its soft power. McGray (2002) describes how Japan has moved towards soft power, stating that “Japan is reinventing superpower again” and that “instead of collapsing beneath its political and economic misfortunes, Japan’s global cultural influence has only grown”. He explains why this is the case; “Japan has been perfecting the art of transmitting certain kinds of mass culture” (McGray 2002).

In regards to how diplomacy is affected by soft power, one could look at Aso Taro, former Prime Minister of Japan, who states; “What is the image that pops into someone's mind when they hear the name 'Japan'? Is it a bright and positive image? Warm? Cool? The more these kinds of positive images pop up in a person's mind, the easier it becomes for Japan to get it's views across over the long term” (Tsutsui, 2010, p62). Aso concludes with; “Japanese diplomacy is able to keep edging forward, bit by bit, and bring about better and better outcomes as a result” (Tsutsui, 2010, p62).

1.6 Economy

Soft power is also subject to the economy as Tsutsui (2010, p61) states; “commerce has had an important role; many successful Japanese pop forms have gone global”. This means that the various cultural exports, including the reenactment, must be entertaining. Soft power also helps fuel the economy. As Japan's international profile increases, global demand for Japanese popular culture (anime, manga, etc.) increases. McGray (2002) summarises this by stating that Japan “has succeeded not only in balancing a flexible, absorptive, crowd-pleasing, shared culture with a more private, domestic one but also in taking advantage of that balance to build an increasingly powerful global commercial force”. The Samurai is one of the more popular images of Japan, as

evidenced by cinema, anime, manga, video games, etc. Being able to sell this image increases soft power and consequently helps the economy. While some foreigners may see Japanese popular culture in their own country as a novelty, those within the specific industries have some knowledge of Japan's soft power in action. Therefore, the amount of soft power Japan can have is dependant on the foreign popular culture industries being able to profit on the absorption of Japanese culture.

However, it is likely that the reenactment battle does not contribute to Japan's soft power, for various reasons. Firstly, the knowledge of the event is severely limited outside of Japan, with almost no promotion, besides the odd website. Secondly, as the Sekigahara reenactment battle is not within a major international tourism destination, it is difficult to attract foreigners to travel so far. Soft power is also likely to not have much, if any, impact on the Sekigahara reenactment beyond the small economic boost from history enthusiasts and coincidental tourism. Nevertheless, it is worth understanding Japan's soft power policy because it can provide some insight into the motivations behind reconstructions of the past. It should also be noted that the government's protection of cultural sites and promotion of soft power might not be dichotomous. These two factors, soft power and international economy, are intertwined and their relationship is symbiotic; promoting one improves the other.

1.7 Sister Cities

Another international factor regarding the reenactment is that Sekigahara recently became a sister city to Gettysburg and Waterloo, both sites of equally decisive battles. In the battle of Sekigahara museum, there is an exhibition dedicated to the history of the battles of Waterloo and Gettysburg. In the same year as the 2016 Sekigahara reenactment battle, Sekigahara and Gettysburg became sister cities. On this collaboration, the governor of Gifu, the province which Sekigahara is located in, states that between the two cities, “there is a very strong commonality” (Hale, 2016). This view is shared by the Gettysburg Borough Manager, Charles Gable; “Sekigahara is to Japan what Gettysburg is to the United States of America” (Hale, 2016). Gable then explains what this relationship does for each site, stating that Gettysburg is “able to assist their counterparts in creating a destination” (Hale, 2016). Gable does not elaborate further, but one can infer that the connection between Sekigahara and Gettysburg promotes economic and cultural cooperation between the two cities. It is unclear if this relationship affects the reenactment battle. As the 2016 reenactment was being planned

around the same time as the sister city relationship, it is likely that there was no effect, a further indication to the limited impact of soft power. However, it is possible that in the future, the reenactment may be altered in some way to appeal to international tourists, detracting from historical accuracy for the sake of entertainment.

The government initiative to protect and promote historical sites and the various domestic factors determine that the reenactment must educate spectators about the past and therefore be historically accurate. The international factors, meanwhile, determine that the reenactment must entertain, must be 'cool' and profitable, and to achieve this, may have to sacrifice historical accuracy.

2. Reenactment Battle Analysis

I will now analyse the reenactment battle and how education and entertainment determine the historical accuracy. I will be discussing the following factors; Location, Troop deployment, Course of Events, Apparel, Weaponry, and Identification (Banners, emblems and famous Samurai accessories).

2.1 Theme

First, it should be noted that, each year, the festival has a specific theme revolving around one or two key figures from the battle. This affects both the accuracy of the reenactment in terms of the course of events and the deployment of each army. As this year's theme focused on the western army, specifically Ishida Mitsunari, the leader of the Western Army, and Otani Yoshitsugu, a Western Army general, it too would give more emphasis to some of their closest allies, Shima Sakon, Ukita Hideie and Konishi Yukinaga. Mitsunari and Yoshitsugu were known for their friendship as Oneda (2016 p66) states that "Yoshitsugu and Mitsunari were close friends" and "thinking of the importance of the Toyotomi family, the determination to pursue Mitsunari's righteousness was strong and Yoshitsugu, having received a request from his friend, was willing to sacrifice his life". The reenactment emphasises this relationship within the narrative as Yoshitsugu, having done all he could for Mitsunari, eventually kills himself. Consequently, there was also a focus on the Eastern army warriors who fought these western generals. As such, we do not see much of Ii Naomasa, save for his opening

salvo, or Honda Tadakatsu, the legendary warrior who was never wounded in battle and was famous for his antlered helmet. On the Western side, we do not see Shimazu Yoshihiro as he takes part in the battle after Mitsunari flees and the reenactment ends on Ishida and the futility of his situation, therefore, viewing Shimazu's escape would diminish this ending. This does not detract from the accuracy of the reenactment's narrative, but the omission of it is an indicator that entertainment was a key factor in the reconstruction of the battle. However, including Shimazu's escape would be difficult to do due to the constraint of the location; there was not enough space to include the Shimazu contingent. As with every incarnation of the reenactment, Kobayakawa Hideaki receives focus as his part in the battle effectively decides the outcome. Shima Sakon, who we see in figure 1, was Mitsunari's field commander and tactician and thus plays an important role in the Ishida-Otani centric battle. Ukita Hideie, seen in figure 1 led the vanguard and saw the fiercest fighting. Konishi Yukinaga was one of Mitsunari and Yoshitsugu's strongest allies. He was also famously Christian, as noted by the crucifix he wore (Figure 1). Some Eastern Army generals can be seen, among them Fukushima Masanori, Hosokawa Tadaoki, Kuroda Nagamasa and briefly, Ii Naomasa. Tokugawa Ieyasu and Honda Tadakatsu can also be seen, though they do nothing in the reenactment. While this is accurate for Tadakatsu, Ieyasu did move closer to the frontlines and order his troops to fire blanks at Kobayakawa. The theme is evident in the promotional poster (see figure 2). Figure 3 contains examples of previous themes. 2011 saw a focus on the Eastern army, particularly, Tokugawa Ieyasu, Honda Tadakatsu and Ii Naomasa. The 2013 reenactment focused on the Shimazu family and their actions in the battle. From these it can be inferred that the reenactment would have been slightly different as the story would be shaped around the specific theme. It is unlikely that the annual shift in focus causes inaccuracies, but it appears to be a method of diverting the audience from noticing the limitations of the reenactment; the space in which to perform, the limited time available. It may also be another indicator that entertainment was, at times, more important, as having a different theme each year provides a unique experience for the audience, bringing them back for something new the next year. This also allows concentration on a specific narrative thread, which in turn ensures that the audience will easily be able to follow the story without having to be aware of every single character in the battle.

2.2 Location

The reenactment occurs in the village of Sekigahara, roughly in the centre of the

battlefield. The actual battle spanned across the entire town with generals posted at various mountains. Oneda (2016, p46) states that Ii Naomasa was “the commander of the vanguard”. The reenactment takes place just north of the Ii base camp, which can be seen in Figure 4 which shows the location of Ii Naomasa (井伊 直政), just north of the train line. Kasaya (2016, p201) states that Ieyasu “marched along the Nakasendo and was informed that the Western Army was waiting for him near Mt. Sasao.” They continue, stating “Ieyasu then stopped marching and sent one of his generals to see how the Western Army had deployed and declared Mt. Momokubari would be his basecamp” (Kasaya, 2016, p201). Bokusai (1882 p5) corroborates this, noting that Ieyasu considered it “auspicious, as Mt. Momokubari itself was a historic site well before Sekigahara”. The distance from Mt. Momokubari to Mt. Sasao (Mitsunari’s basecamp) is about 3KM and the reenactment location is in between them, approximately 2KM from Momokubari and 1KM from Sasao. The accuracy of the location is more important than one would initially assume. Being near the centre of the battlefield immerses the audience and inspires a feeling of being at the actual battle. Despite the limited international audience, this is also potential evidence of soft power; Japan can sell immersion in its culture to the international community, much like the tea ceremony being used in diplomatic proceedings. This profitable immersion can be seen in various hotels and restaurants offering a traditional Japanese experience.

2.3 Troop Deployment

There are a number of maps that show the formation of each army; figure 4 was taken from the Oneda guidebook. There was no map of the troop deployment of the reenactment, so, using my photographs, I constructed one (Figure 5). One can see that this mostly corresponds to the actual battle. Besides the missing generals, the reenactment was relatively close in accuracy, considering the limitations on space to perform and the number of participants. It should also be noted that these limitations meant that the ratio of troops in the reenactment to those in the historical battle was inaccurate. For example, in the actual battle, the bulk of the Western Army fought under the Ukita banner, and Yoshitsugu only had a small number of troops. In the reenactment, each general has roughly the same number of troops. Apart from the limitations, this could have also been influenced by entertainment and to not take focus from the protagonists. Figure 6 shows the empty reenactment battlefield. Mitsunari was situated in the north-west Mt. Sasao (right side of photo), Ieyasu made his base camp on the eastern Mt. Momokubari (left side of photo) and Kobayakawa was on Mt. Matsuo

(center of photo). Turnbull provides a map identical to the guidebook and he also describes the deployment. For the Eastern Army he states that “Kuroda Nagamasa held the right wing, Hosokawa Tadaoki stood next to him” and “his left flank was Ii Naomasa” (Turnbull, 1977, p240). Kasaya (2016, p201) describes Ieyasu’s tactics here; “he placed his allies at the front and himself and his strongest forces at the rear to prepare for an attack from the Western Army”. These forces include Ieyasu's most trusted general, Honda Tadakatsu, and agree with accounts of many of his battles, highlighting his famous cautious nature. In regards to the western army, Turnbull states that “Mitsunari established his headquarters in a clump of trees on top of a low hill” (1977 p238). This presumably refers to Mt. Sasao as Bokusai (1882 p9) states it was “Mitsunari’s vantage point and the Western forces headquarters, with the troops of Shima Sakon below it”. Turnbull continues his description of the deployment, stating that “the center of the Western armies comprised the two large divisions of Konishi Yukinaga and Ukita Hideie” (1977, p238) and “on top of Mt Matsuo was Kobayakawa Hideaki and at the foot of the mountain stood Otani Yoshitsugu” (1977, p240). These descriptions correlate to the reenactment battle and the high degree of accuracy here is significant because if the characters begin in the correct place, the course of events should be more accurate.

2.4 Course Of Events

A difficulty of looking at historical events is determining whether the information given is actually accurate. Not satisfied with historical textbooks and modern scholar's works, I looked for a source as close to the battle as possible. When at the Sekigahara museum, which stands on part of the battlefield, I inquired as to where they obtained the information they used in their leaflets and exhibitions. Their source was a book named Keicho Nencho Bokusai Ki (慶長年中卜齋記), written by Bokusai Itasaka, Tokugawa Ieyasu's physician, who was present at the battle and tended to Ieyasu afterwards. Ieyasu was known for his desire to record history and may have told Bokusai to write his account. There may be some bias as the Eastern Army, having won, would not be adverse to a narrative depicting them as heroes, however, the other sources corroborate his account.

The battle begins with two separate attacks occurring contemporaneously. Ii Naomasa led his soldiers to shoot at the Ukita army, while Fukushima Masanori’s forces charged at the Ukita as well. Bokusai (1882 p2) states that “Ii attacks the Ukita, commencing the

battle” while Oneda (2016, p64) states “Fukushima first attacked Ukita, this battle was really intense”. Turnbull (1977, p241) somewhat corroborates this by stating “the tension was broken as Ii Naomasa led thirty samurai forward” and “simultaneously Fukushima launched his men across the Nakasendo on to Ukita”. The reenactment began with gunfire from the Ii troops in red; firing at the Ukita soldiers (Figure 7). It was immediately followed by the Fukushima attack (Figure 8). While the reenactment was accurate here, there are a few reasons why the two forces did not attack at the same time. While the limitation on space may have prevented the two groups from being able to attack together, the concern of safety was also important. Naomasa's troops fire guns at the Ukita troops and even though they were blanks, having more people around them could be dangerous, due to the effects of firing blanks; the loud noise, etc. Also, being the opening scene, it could detract from the cinematic nature of having Naomasa's distinctly armoured soldiers shout and fire guns. The next part of the reenactment was the joint attack from Kuroda and Hosokawa on the Ishida troops led by Shima Sakon (Figure 9). Bokusai (1882, p2) states “Kuroda and Hosokawa attack Ishida Mitsunari’s base on Mt Sasao” and “Shima struggles to keep it from being overrun”. At this point, both sides are evenly matched. In the reenactment, Koboyakawa Hideaki enters the battlefield and attacks the Otani troops (Figure 10). Nakano (2016, p464) states that “during the battle, Kobayakawa betrayed the Western Army and descended Mt Matsuo, surrounding Yoshitsugu”. The reenactment then shows Yoshitsugu committing suicide (Figure 11). Nakano (2016, p464) concludes; “from this point on, the Otani army collapse and Yoshitsugu commits suicide”. In fact, if one looks at Figure 11, it shows one of his soldiers assisting him. Turnbull (1977, p244) corroborates this, stating that “Yoshitsugu asked a retainer to put an end to him”.

Before the end of the reenactment battle, there is one more fight scene, which warrants attention due to the inaccuracy it highlights. In the historical battle, Shima Sakon was shot by an unknown soldier, but in the reenactment, his death comes as a result of an inaccurate two on two fight with Mitsunari and against Kuroda and Hosokawa. We may relate this to Silver's observations about the samurai film, in which he states “the climactic duel between masters often receives a very particular and highly stylised visual treatment.” (Silver, 2005, p43). This fight scene is the penultimate scene in the reenactment (Figure 12) and while the four participants would have been in the same vicinity, there is no historical evidence that they personally fought each other. This is an indicator that, at times, entertainment was more important than accuracy. The reason for doing so is that ending the reenactment with a well choreographed fight gives the audience a lasting impression of an action packed spectacle. With the Western Army

destroyed, the reenactment then draws to a close with Mitsunari alone (Figure 13). Bokusai (1882, p2) concludes his account of the battle, stating “only Mitsunari remains on the field” and “facing defeat, Mitsunari flees”. There are a few instances where accuracy does not seem as important as entertaining the audience with spectacle, but for the majority of the events and the overall narrative, the reenactment is accurate.

2.5 Weaponry

It appears that, while for safety reasons, the weapons should not be real, they have still been made to look realistic. In a discussion of the accuracy of a reenactment battle, the safety of the participants should be discussed. Even though they have practised and rehearsed the reenactment, there is always a possibility for accidents to occur. The organisers must weigh up the safety concerns of the participants and the desire for historical accuracy. It appears that they were able to find a compromise. The guns used were real and live ammunition was replaced by blanks. Before the battle began, there was a show introducing the various participants and a demonstration of the actual guns, known as Tanegashima, with the actual ammunition. Afterwards they were switched with blanks. These made the same sound and released the same amount of smoke. (Figure 14) The swords were the main weapons used in the reenactment. Wooden swords were used, with authentic looking hilts and the blades were wrapped in a form of aluminium foil (Figure 15). This gave the appearance of authenticity during the fighting, as the way the sun reflected off them gave a facade of steel. The problem of the distinctive sound from two wooden swords clashing was allayed by an underlying music track, a few authentic instruments (drums and conch shells), the shouts of the participants and the general excitement of the crowd. Even then it could still be heard but the audience would be expected to suspend disbelief and to ignore that inaccuracy, as other solutions would be unfeasible or further highlight the inaccuracy. In modern martial arts that teach the use of swords such as *kendo* or *iaido*, the wooden swords provide a similar noise and perhaps with their use being commonplace in Japan, they would still give an authentic 'samurai sound'. Spears were also made in the same way as the swords (Figure 15). Bows and arrows, which would have been used in the battle were not in the reenactment as there was no way to prevent them from causing harm and still being viable in the battle. The accuracy of the sword, and its accompanying 'samurai sound', is important because it is an extension of the samurai, one of the images of 'cool Japan' and a device for promoting soft power.

2.6 Armour

I discussed the armour with the staff that worked in the costume department. The Dou, equivalent to the European Cuirass, was historically made of connected plates of iron and leather as Robinson (2013, p190) states “the plates of the Dou were made of iron”. The Dou used in the reenactment was visually accurate, yet, in regards to the materials, plastic was used as a coating over the iron or a replacement for iron, as it allows for easier paintwork and was softer in case of collisions. It is also worth mentioning that another reason for the use of plastic is that it is lighter to wear and easier to move about in. Other parts of armour also usually followed this pattern such as the helmets and gauntlets. The leather and cloth parts of the armour and the use of silk for the fastenings were also accurate (Figure 16). The use of plastic was subtle enough to not be obvious in the battle due in part to two reasons. Firstly, the plastic, while used a lot, was made to look like the lacquer work on the historical armour that can be seen in museums. Secondly, the battle focused on a number of main characters, some of which had unique armour, while others wore clothing over their armour, and these would attract the attention of the audience (Figure 17). The armour, like the weaponry was made to both look accurate and maintain safety standards. In comparison to its historical counterpart, the reenactment's armour was close in accuracy due to similar materials used and perfect visual replication. The inaccuracy of the plastic can be dismissed due to the valid reasons for its use. The visual replication is important as, much like the sword, the armour is part of the samurai image and contributes to 'cool Japan' and the soft power factor.

2.7 Identification

Each Daimyo, or warlord, had their own personal *kammon* (emblem; equivalent to Western coat of arms) and *nobori* (banner); the latter of which would be carried into battle to identify the army. Often, the *kammon* would be featured on the *nobori*, as is the case of the Tokugawa three hollyhock emblem, which is still commonplace in Japan (Figure 1 shows the banners and figure 5 shows the emblems). Some families had a number of *nobori*. Ishida Mitsunari had the Ishida clan emblem and his own personal emblem. The latter was more widely used and is featured prominently in the reenactment. It was commonplace in the battle as evidenced in woodblock prints of the battle of Sekigahara. It has also become the symbol of the Western Army, as the alliance was led by Mitsunari. As mentioned earlier, Ii Naomasa and Honda Tadakatsu, among

others, had distinct armour and were easily identifiable in battle, as Turnbull (1977, p244) states Ii Naomasa was “a conspicuous target in his brilliant red armour surmounted by gold horns” and that Honda Tadakatsu was “a particularly flamboyant character who wore a helmet ornamented with wooden antlers” (1977, p149). These descriptions match the outfits worn in the reenactment battle, as seen in figure 17. There is physical evidence to support Turnbull's description, at least regarding Ii Naomasa, whose armour is on display in Hikone Castle. Other identifiable samurai can also be easily seen, such as; Otani Yoshitsugu, plagued with leprosy, had covered his entire face in white and Hosokawa Tadaoki, as Turnbull (240) states, wore a helmet “decorated with a pheasant's tail”. Most of the famous samurai in the reenactment battle can be seen in figure 1. For example, Kuroda Nagamasa wore a large square shaped helmet, seen in Figure 1, though the participant removes it during the reenactment as it would have been difficult to participate in his fight scene and Konishi Yukinaga, who was famously Christian, can be seen in Figure 1 wearing a cross.

Having analysed each aspect of the reenactment, it is now possible to determine the degree of historical accuracy. Some aspects are more significant than others, most notably, the course of events. This warrants the most attention as it is the focus of the reenactment. Due to the area of the location and the timing constraints, not all of the events could be reenacted. The major events that were featured occurred the same way they had in the actual battle. The previous reenactments would also contain most of these events and apart from different thematic choices, would have had a similar degree of accuracy. The other factors were all mostly accurate and together all these aspects form a reenactment similar to the historic battle.

3. The Samurai Film

As there is little academic writing on reenactment battles, in order to understand how historical accuracy affects and is effected by the narrative of the reenactment, one can compare it with something similar, specifically, the *jidai-geki*.

3.1 Jidai Geki

The popularity of the *jidai-geki* (Japanese for period drama) genre of film is evidence that history is still important to Japan, as Thornton (2008, p3) states “there is a

relationship between past and present in the narrative tradition of this nation”. These films consist of a fictional narrative set in a historically accurate time period. While many use the time period to discuss present day issues, the films to compare the reenactment battle to are those that dramatise a historical battle of similar magnitude. Two examples of this are the battle of Kawanakajima in *Heaven and Earth*, by Kadokawa Haruki, and the battle of Nagashino in *Kagemusha*, by Kurosawa Akira.

3.2 Haruki’s Heaven And Earth

Heaven and Earth revolves around the battles of Kawanakajima between the Takeda and Uesugi clans, most notably the fourth battle. This battle is one of the more famous Samurai battles: Turnbull (1987, p7) refers to it as “one of the most cherished tales in Japanese military history, the epitome of Japanese chivalry and romance, mentioned in epic literature, woodblock printing and movies”. The modern day location of the battle has been modified for tourism, but by comparing the geographical features with that of the fight scene on the river, there is attention to accuracy there, although events in the film are altered to make the film more entertaining. For example, the famous confrontation between the two warlords is inaccurate as they did not meet on the river, instead, Kenshin Uesugi breaks through Shingen Takeda's defences and enters his camp. The film corresponds with Silver's (2005, p39) view that “a considerable number of samurai films involve actual figures fictionalised to varying degrees”.

3.3 Kurosawa’s Kagemusha

Another film that conforms to this is *Kagemusha* which “although it deals with Takeda Shingen, the famous warlord of the sixteenth century, and his brother, focuses on a fictional character, his double” It is a different type of film as it revolves around a fictional character whose narrative occurs parallel to the historical battle of Nagashino, which is accurate in terms of the troop deployment and course of events. Thornton (2008, p124) describes Kurosawa as “an educator”, because he “not only demonstrated the ideals of the way of the bushi but was accurate in presenting the details he used to do so.” and “even had his actors speak in the manner of sixteenth century bushi”. Despite these efforts, *Kagemusha* is more tilted towards entertainment as it features a dream sequence and bright bold colours from modern lighting, both of which effectively add emphasis to the protagonist's inner turmoil, but detract from historical accuracy. The reenactment battle plays out much like the films, including “the obligatory scene of the

carnage left in the aftermath” (Thornton, 2008, p93), as evidenced in figure 12.

3.4 NHK Taiga Drama

There are also television shows that portray samurai battles much like the *jidai-geki*. The yearly NHK Taiga Dramas conform to Silver's view, yet they more closely resemble the reenactment battle as each year follows a different historical figure's narrative. The battle of Sekigahara is not the focus on all of the stories, but if the protagonist of the drama fought in the battle, it would show the battle from their perspective.

Heaven and Earth, *Kagemusha* and the NHK Taiga dramas are visually realistic, in regards to the armour, weapons, banners, locations, etc. Thornton (2008 pp123-124) states that, Kurosawa had a “passion for physical realism in his sets and costumes.” and he “went to museums to research costumes and props for *Seven Samurai* and *Throne of Blood*”. The narrative thread is also accurate, though the issue with the specific perspective is that it is not a universal truth, the battle occurs with a bias towards the protagonist. One example of this would be in *Heaven and Earth*, where Kenshin is able to wound Shingen in their duel. This did not happen in real life, but because Kenshin is the heroic protagonist, the film highlights his martial prowess. Like the reenactment battle, the films and television dramas attempt to educate the audience on the historical events without making it less entertaining. A problem with this comparison is that the films and television shows require some form of payment for admission, whereas the reenactment battle was free to view. The consequence of this is that the reenactment battle does not need to achieve a specific monetary value in the form of cinema tickets, television ratings or home media (DVD, Blu-Ray) sales, requiring entertainment, and critical acclaim, to be at the forefront of the filming. However, they also receive more funding, allowing a greater degree of accuracy if they desire. This means that the reenactment is free to decide the degree of historical accuracy, barring the various constraints discussed earlier.

3.5 Harada's Sekigahara

It is worth mentioning that there have been few attempts to recreate the battle of Sekigahara in film, as “generations of filmmakers had balked at the challenge” (Schilling, 2017). The first of Inagaki's Samurai trilogy briefly deals with this, but in

2017, Masato Harada's *'Sekigahara'* portrays the battle to a much larger extent. Schilling (2017) describes the difficulty with tackling a battle of this scope, stating that “the complex lead-up to the battle and the massive conflict itself, with the two armies totaling almost 180,000 men, hardly lent themselves to the simple good-and-evil binary of popular cinema”. *Sekigahara* is closer to the reenactment battle, than the other examples, in regards to education being more prominent than entertainment; Schilling (2017) states it is “a version of the battle on the screen that aims for authenticity, whatever its concessions to audience-pleasing drama, and achieves it more often than not”. He also notes that it is “faithful to the real thing, but somewhat baffling to watch”, however the accuracy is detrimental to the entertainment value, stating that “the film buries the uninitiated in a blizzard of information about the era’s politics and personalities, cutting rapidly from scene to scene at a pace meant to be dazzling, but often ends up dizzying” (Schilling, 2017). The reenactment battle does not suffer the same problems as the constraints of the event prevented a large scale conflict. The film has trouble portraying the battle as it gives screen time to many characters, whereas the annual theme of the reenactment follows a smaller, more manageable and more understandable narrative.

3.6 Celebrity Influence

There is one more piece of information about the reenactment which warrants discussion. Yamamoto Koji, who played Ishida Mitsunari in the 2016 NHK Taiga Drama *Sanada Maru*, appeared at the event, dressed in his character's outfit, and gave a speech about the importance of the battle in Japan's history. This is similar to the 2015 Kenshin battle festival, reenacting the battle of Kawanakajima, which featured the famous musician Gackt, who played the role of Uesugi Kenshin. Gackt also played Kenshin in the 2007 NHK drama, *Furin Kazan*. The inclusion of celebrities brings more people to the reenactment as evidenced by the Joetsu Times, (2015) in regards to Gackt's involvement, stating that “thanks to his participation, the festival in 2015 reached record high attendance of 243,000 people”.

4. Conclusion

The reenactment battle, much like the samurai films, is a dramatic retelling of a historical event, where accuracy is important enough for the overarching narrative but

for the sake of entertainment and grandeur, is sometimes abandoned. This occurs less frequently than in the films, with the exception of *Sekigahara*, which suffered from leaning more towards education. Therefore, historical accuracy of the reenactment battle is important to achieve as long as it does not compromise entertainment and vice versa. With the Sekigahara site being a cultural property and Japan's desire for gaining soft power, plus the myriad of domestic factors, the fact that the reenactment battle has a high degree of historical accuracy is evidence of the value of history and tradition to Japan, regarding both the national identity and the international image.

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Appendix

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Figure 1

Participants of the Reenactment (Daimyo in foreground)

L-R: Fukushima Masanori (Gold Horns), Hosokawa Tadaoki (Pheasant Cap), Kuroda Nagamasa (Square helmet), Tokugawa Ieyasu (Behind him are Ii Naomasa and Honda Tadakatsu), Kobayakawa Hideaki (Red Jacket), Otani Yoshitsugu (Covered Face), Ukita Hideie (Gold Pointed Helmet), Konishi Yukinaga (Green Trousers, Cross on chest), Shima Sakon (Red Horns). Ishida Mitsunari is off screen



Figure 2
2016 Reenactment Battle Poster
Foreground: Otani Yoshitsugu
Background: Ishida Mitsunari



Figure 3

Previous Themes, 2011: Eastern Army, 2013: Shimazu Clan

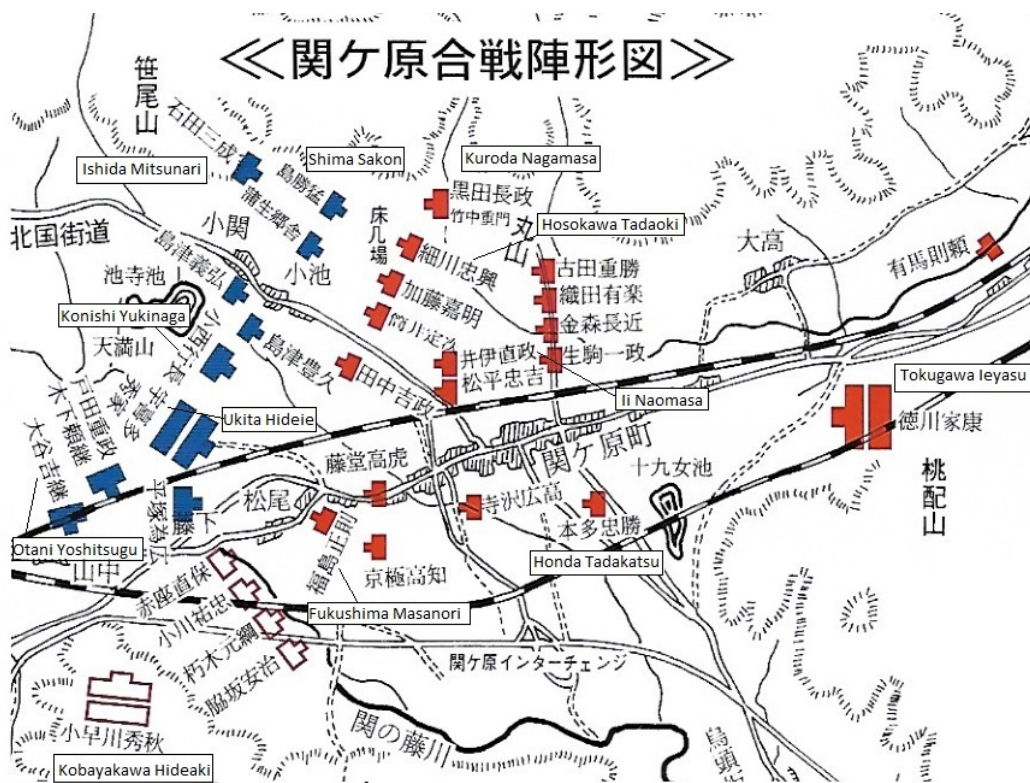


Figure 4

Historical Battle Troop Deployment

Ii Naomasa 井伊 直政 stood near reenactment site

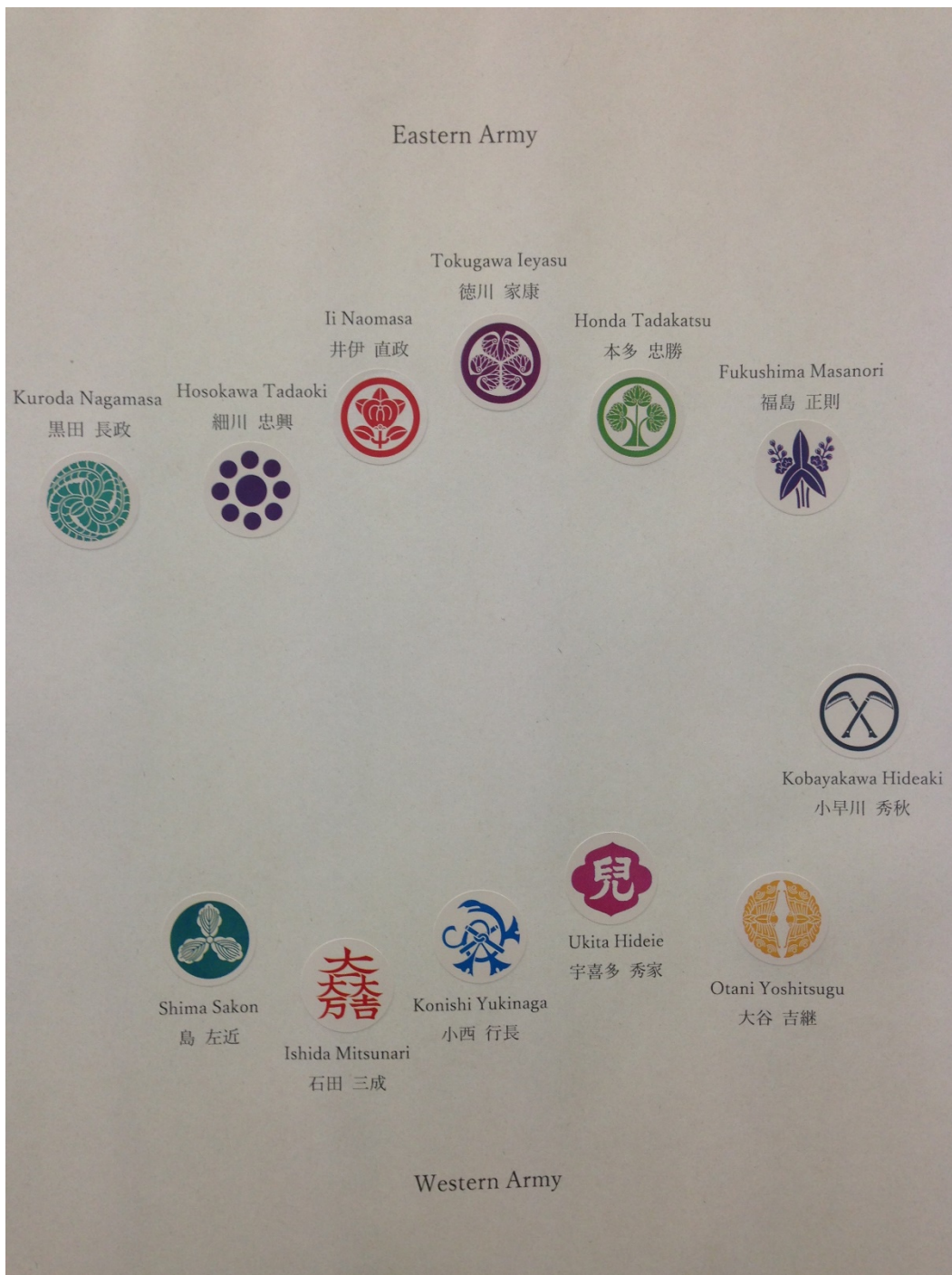


Figure 5
Reenactment Battle Troop Deployment



Figure 6

Reenactment Battlefield

Hill on left is Tokugawa basecamp, center (in front of building) is Kobayakawa basecamp, raised platform on right (with black fence) is Ishida basecamp



Figure 7

Ii Attack (Battle commences)

Ii troops in red, Ukita troops off screen



Figure 8

Fukushima Attack

Fukushima troops in brown with black and white banners
Ukita troops in black and blue with blue and white banners



Figure 9

Kuroda and Hosokawa Attack

Kuroda and Hosokawa troops on left, Ishida troops, led by Shima Sakon on right



Figure 10

Kobayakawa Betrays the Western Army

Kobayakawa (black sickles on white) attack the Otani forces (Blue and white banner)



Figure 11

Otani Yoshitsugu Commits Suicide

Yoshitsugu (in orange) having removed his face cover, prepares to commit suicide



Figure 12

The final fight. Ishida Mitsunari and Shima Sakon of the Western Army battle Kuroda Nagamasa and Hosokawa Tadaoki of the Eastern Army (L-R: Kuroda, Shima, Ishida, Hosokawa)



Figure 13

Ishida Mitsunari is defeated

Ishida (in gold) is the only remaining Western commander and the reenactment ends



Figure 14

Tanegashima Rifles



Figure 15
Spears and Sword



Figure 16
Armour Used in Reenactment



Figure 17

Eastern Generals

L-R: Ii Naomasa, Tokugawa Ieyasu, Honda Tadakatsu