

Official Roads and Post Stations in Ancient Harima

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Ancient official roads (*kandō*) in Harima

In Hyōgo Prefecture in ancient times there were the main official roads of the Sanyōdō, San'indō and Nankaidō,¹ and the branch road called the Mimasakadō: these were all called *ekiro*, or 'post roads'. The Sanyōdō was the only one of the country's 'seven roads' that was classified as a *dairo*, or 'great road'. Its route was researched by historical geographers Ryō KINOSHITA [1922–2015], Masahiro YOSHIMOTO [1953–] and Kenryō ASHIKAGA [1936–1999]. They proposed three different theories about its route between Suma and Akashi: a coastal route, a route via Tainohata Yakujin and Shioya, and a route via Shirakawa and Ikawadani. But its route has been determined west of Akashi as the belt of land called *michishiro* that was left over after dividing up the land for the *jōri* system.² If you climb the terrace from Kanigasaka in Akashi-shi, it runs in more or less a straight line for 22 kilometres to Uohashi, Amida-chō, Takasago-shi; and apart from being the longest stretch of straight road on the Sanyōdō, there are traces along it here and there of an old road with national prestige more than ten metres wide, such as at Fukusato Archaeological Site in Futami-chō, Akashi-shi, and the Orochi Hattantsubo Site in Kamigōri-chō, Akō-gun. The construction of the Sanyōdō goes back to the seventh century, and it is noteworthy that the division of the land under the *jōri* system was also standardised to match road measurements.

By contrast, the Mimasaka Road is believed to have been fully constructed and provisioned only after the formation of Mimasaka Province in 713 CE. Its route has been largely identified, but it has not left such clear traces as the Sanyōdō. It appears to have been well used, since there was a great deal of traffic going to and fro between Inaba, Izumo and Iwami Provinces, which were all along the San'indō, and the capital; and the Mimasakadō avoided having to use the San'indō, which wound round some precipitous cliffs.

The Post Stations (*Umayā*) of Harima

Horses were used for official traffic along official roads (*kandō*). Only foreign diplomatic missions, and aristocrats and official messengers such as provincial governors (*kokushi*) who had been issued with 'post bells' (*ekirei*)³ were allowed to travel by horse. There were post stations (*umaya*) where they could change horses or rest them, and be provided with overnight accommodation. There are few entries concerning such government facilities recorded in *Harima Fudoki*, but there are entries for three post stations, at Kako, Ōchi and there is a third in the fragment (*Fudoki itsubun*) for Akashi *Kōri*. According to *Engishiki*, which was compiled in 927, there were nine post stations in Harima at that time: at Akashi, Kako, Kusakami, Ōchi, Fuse, Takada, Yama, Koshibe and Nakatsugawa. Of these, Koshibe and Nakatsugawa were the post stations on the Mimasakadō. We also know that there were once two more—Ōmi and Satsuchi—between Akashi and Kako and between Kako and Kusakami respectively, which are thought to have been disestablished in the Heian Period. Whereas the post stations in Settsu Province were located 30 *ri* (approximately 16 km) apart, as stipulated in the relevant civil law code, those in

¹ Translator's note: Sanyōdō, along the Inland Sea coast, literally 'road on the sunny side of the mountains'; San'indō, along the Japan Sea coast, 'road on the shaded side of the mountains'; and Nankaidō, from Nara across to Shikoku Island, 'southern sea road'.

² Translator's note: The *jōri* system enforced the division of arable land into a grid pattern in the sixth and seventh centuries, with plots numbered in a boustrophedon fashion (similar to ox-ploughing).

³ Translator's note: travellers on official business under the *ritsuryō* codes were issued bells to ring in order to summon ostlers and call for horses.

Harima were only about half that distance apart, 8–10 km, and it is assumed that there were about double the number because of the high frequency of their usage. On the other hand, that would also account for why some of them were the first to be abolished. So saying, those that were disestablished had offered only basic facilities. Their post horses and the *ekiko* (post station workers' households) who maintained them, and the *ekiden* (untaxed paddy fields allocated to provision the post station) that supported them, all seem to have been shared half each with the post stations to either side of them. The number of horses stipulated for a *daïro*, 'great road', such as the Sanyōdō was twenty per station (it had been twenty-five to begin with), but at Akashi and Kusakami it was thirty, and at Kako it was forty. Judging by the number of horses maintained there, the Kako Post Station must have been the largest in the country.

The structures of the post stations

Research into the Harima post stations was energetically undertaken by Ikuji IMAZATO [1919–2017] and Yoshikuni TAKAHASHI [1944–2006], with the result that their sites became clearer in the 1970s. Excavations by archaeologists of the Hyōgo Prefectural Board of Education from 1982 onwards meant that the first of the remains to be verified was the Koinumaru Site in Tatsuno-shi. The (then) Tatsuno-shi Board of Education excavated within the walled compound of official post station buildings (*yakkan'in*) in the 1990s, and the structures and setup of the post station were thoroughly investigated. Within the compound 80 metres square and surrounded by a tiled *tsukiji* wall, there were more than seven tile-roofed buildings with foundation stones, each measuring about 2 *ken* (3.6 m) by 5 *ken* (9 m); tiles painted with white kaolin and a red substance were excavated along with a vast quantity of roof tiles. The central buildings are believed to have been a *narabidō* comprising two adjacent halls, 2 *ken* by 7 *ken*, fore and aft, which enclosed a single large space. And in 1990, an archaeological dig conducted by the Kamigōri-chō Board of Education at the Orochi Hattantsubo Site found remains of the ancient Sanyōdō, and the remains of structures dating from the seventh century. There was a gate by the side of the road. The compound faced the road, within a stockade that measured 30 by 23 metres. Three buildings were arranged as three sides of a square, each measuring 2 *ken* by 4 *ken*, with central king pillars. This is thought to have been one of the earliest post stations.

Then excavation at the Itasaka Site in 2003 found the remains of six buildings, including a main hall that is thought to have been the *narabidō* at the centre of the buildings for official purposes; and on the west side facing the Sanyōdo there was an eight-pillared gate (*hakkyaku mon*) with sturdy foundation stones in the style known as *karajiki* (Chinese-style paving). The whole was surrounded by a rectangular tiled wall that ran as far as the bottom of the hill at the back, measuring 94 metres north–south and 68 metres east–west. This is unlike the square Koinumaru Site, but the overall area of about 6,400 square metres is similar, so it seems that these post stations were laid out to a set size in area. In the entry for the fourth month of 729 in *Shoku Nihongi*, it says that 'Fifty thousand sheaves of rice were granted for establishing post stations in all provinces along the Sanyōdō'. It is thought that substantial renovations were carried out to them in 740, such as adding roof tiles, vermilion pillars and white plastered walls for the buildings. In the entry for 807 in *Nihon Kōki*, it records 'Tiled roofs and white walls were requested to cater for guests to the *han* (fiefdom)', so they seem to have embellished them to welcome emissaries from Tang and Silla. However, *Harima Fudoki* was probably compiled before post stations were roofed with tiles.

Excavations by the Prefectural Museum of Archaeology

Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Archaeology was opened in 2007, and it undertook further research to clarify the situation regarding ancient post stations. What it started on first was the Furu Ōchi Site in Kakogawa-shi that is thought to have been the site of the Kako Post Station. There they were able to confirm that the Sanyōdō passed by its northeastern side, and that it had a road facing the eastern side of the office buildings. They also discovered two sets of *karajiki* paving in the same style as that of the Orochi Site, in the grounds of a shrine within its compound.

Next they worked on the Chōhanji Site in Akashi-shi, which is thought to have been the site of the Ōmi Post Station. They found that although its southern side had been levelled, it had the remains of a tiled wall with ditches on either side, and on its western side they found a gap in the ditch which they thought was a gateway. They estimated that the official buildings were approximately 80 metres square.

The Mukaiyama Site in Himeji-shi is thought to have been the site of the Ōchi Post Station, and there they discovered the remains of the road along with foundation stones in a different

place from where it had previously been surmised to have been located. Like the other post stations, they were able to confirm that it was more or less adjacent to the road.

The Takada Post Station had long been assumed to have been at the Jimyōji Site in Kamigōri-chō, but there they found the foundations of the central pillar of a pagoda, so that site was most likely a Buddhist temple. Excavations carried out in 2020 at the Tsujigauchi Site only 1.2 km to the east confirmed the existence of an area surrounded by a tiled wall, so it became clear that actually this was the Takada Post Station site.

The locations of the post stations sites

Through these excavations, the locations of six of the nine post stations on the ancient Sanyōdō within Harima Province have been confirmed. The Ōmi and Kako Post Stations were both located where the Sanyōdō rose up an incline at the tongue-shaped ends of terraces. This can only be said of eastern Harima where the terraces commence. As far as the locations of the post stations in western Harima are concerned, Takada's does resemble those of eastern Harima, being on a terrace that extends out from a ridge, but Ōchi, Fuse and Noma are all characterised by locations on slightly higher alluvial fans surrounded by mountains behind them. What they all have in common is that they more or less abutted the Sanyōdō, that they all had good water supplies, and that they were all in places suitable for pasturing horses in the surrounding valleys.

Where were the post stations that have not yet been confirmed?

The locations of the post stations in Harima that have not yet been confirmed include three on the Sanyōdō: Akashi, Satsuchi, and Kusakami; and two on the Mimasakadō: Koshibe and Nakatsugawa. It is difficult to verify the sites of the latter two because they would probably not have used tiles. On the other hand, it is highly likely that Satsuchi Post Station on the Sanyōdō was at the Kitajuku Site in Himeji-shi. The Kitajuku Site is right in the middle of the plains. Its location appears at first sight to differ from the other post stations, but if we look more closely, it is on the end of slightly higher ground between marshy land to the north and south that was under the sea during the Jōmon Period, so although there is little difference in elevation, its location is similar to that of Kako and Ōmi. It would have been adjacent to the western side of the Sanyōdō.

The watchtower of Akashi Post Station where SUGAWARA no Michizane (845–903) composed a Chinese-style poem was probably where there was a good view out over the Akashi Straits in the vicinity of present-day Uenomaru.

Lastly, where could the Kusakami Post Station have been located? There have been several sites proposed, including the Honmachi Site that is also assumed to have been where the Harima Provincial Office (*kokufu*) stood; somewhere near Tsujii Haiji temple; and the Imajuku Chōda Site. To be sure, if it was somewhere near the Tsujii Haiji Site, it would have been near the putative route of the Mimasakadō, but then it would have been a fair distance from the Sanyōdō. The Imajuku Chōda Site is alongside the Sanyōdō, but is inappropriate since it is too far west, and would also have been too far away from the Mimasakadō. So the most plausible is that it was somewhere alongside the Senba River in the southwestern part of the central enclosure of Himeji Castle, which corresponds with the western side of the ancient Provincial Office. In that case, its site would not yet have been found since it would doubtless have been filled in long ago.