

5. The Ethnic History of Japan

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[The following statement by a distinguished Soviet physical anthropologist formed the concluding section of his paper entitled 'Nekotorye Problemy Etnicheskoi Antropologii IApoinii' (Certain Problems in the Ethnic Anthropology of Japan) which appeared in *Sovetskaia Etnografiia*, 1961, 2: 63-75. This latest contribution to the complex problem of Japanese origins is of particular interest since the author, who is Deputy Director of the Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., is an outstanding authority on the racial history of northeastern Asia. The data and arguments on which these conclusions are based are set forth in the original article—*Ed.*]

The formation of the anthropological type of the Japanese and its local variants can be properly understood only in the light of the data of palæoanthropology and archæology. Crania from Neolithic burials in Japan have been studied by various scholars, some of whom noted a great similarity between the Neolithic population and the Ainu; while others, on the contrary, rejected such a similarity and linked the Neolithic population with the modern Japanese. (K. Kiyono and H. Miyamoto were particularly vehement advocates of the latter view.) The available materials have enabled us to draw the following conclusions.

In spite of significant differences between individual series of Neolithic crania, the traits shared in common by all are conspicuous. This applies to the basic characteristics of the proportions of the face, the orbits and the nasal skeleton. Crania from Neolithic burials are characterized by a wide and very low face, low orbits and a correspondingly low orbital index, a comparatively short and wide nose and, consequently, a high nasal index. When compared with Ainu and recent Japanese skulls, the Neolithic crania reveal a more pronounced general prognathism. In all their basic features the Neolithic crania approach the Ainu and are far removed from the modern Japanese. Those theories which see a direct succession between the Neolithic population and the modern Japanese, or which hold that the Neolithic population was related neither to the Ainu nor to the Japanese, must be considered untenable.

Despite the frequent assumption of repeated migrations to the islands from Siberia at various stages of the Jōmon culture, there are grounds for asserting that the early population of Japan had links with southeastern and eastern Asia that go back to the time of its initial settlement.

Along with all the local diversity among Neolithic (Jōmon) cultures, with all the differences which show up between the cultures of various stages, it is on the whole possible to trace a successive development, a succession both in the main types of pottery and in the rest of the inventory. The bizarre, complicated pottery of the Middle and Late Jōmon—despite all its distinctive features—reveals deep roots in the pottery of the preceding period. This is true in still greater degree with respect to the stone inventory of the Japanese Neolithic. The stylized grotesque

sculpture of the late stages of Jōmon can, again, be traced back to the simpler forms of preceding stages.

Although the differences between contemporary Neolithic cultures in various parts of Japan are not inconsiderable, we must in this connection take into consideration the geographical separatism characteristic of the islands. Valleys suitable for settlement are shut off from neighbouring ones by mountain ranges, so that the populations of these valleys lived in comparative isolation even to later times.

An entirely new stage in the ethnic history of Japan is associated with the appearance of the Yayoi culture, the early remains of which are dated to the first centuries B.C. The island of Kyūshū is evidently the original territory of this culture in Japan. Archaeological materials make it possible to trace the advance of the Yayoi culture from south to north. Its closest parallels are to be found in Korea and China, with especially close analogies in southern Korea, where we find the most similar pottery, tool and weapon types as well as double burials in urns. Since we know that rice cultivation, stock-raising and metallurgy in Korea and China are considerably older than the earliest Yayoi remains in Japan, this can only be interpreted as evidence that contacts between the islands and the mainland were insignificant in the period preceding the first centuries B.C. Otherwise we could expect these cultural achievements to have reached Japan. The fact that the Yayoi occupation of Kyūshū and adjoining regions embraced a very small segment of time, comparatively speaking, and also that it is precisely on Kyūshū that sites of the 'purest' Yayoi culture are found, all speaks in favour of a settlement from the mainland in our opinion.

After penetrating the Japanese islands these newcomers mixed with the ancient population, partly assimilating it and partly being absorbed by it, evidently. These processes followed a different course in the various parts of Japan. We should state that we find it impossible to accept the point of view of those authors who see the Yayoi culture only as a continuation of the Jōmon, and who deny the significance of migration in its origin. Equally untenable is the old viewpoint which maintained that the appearance and development of the Yayoi culture in Japan occurred without any participation on the part of the old indigenous population.

For the history of the Yayoi period we also have at our disposal the evidence of Chinese documentary sources which tell about the Wa peoples living in northern Kyūshū who were related to the tribes of Korea. For the latest events—beginning with the 7th century A.D.—we have Japanese historical sources. The latter picture the struggles of the Yamato (the ancestors of the Japanese) with the Kumaso 熊襲 tribes (Hayato 倭 in later sources) who lived in the southern part of Kyūshū, and with the tribes of the north who go under the name of 'Ebisu' 夷. These sources enable us to trace the gradual displacement northward of these Ebisu, the ancestors of the Ainu. Simultaneously there was taking place a process of assimilation of the latter by the Japanese, which also had as a result a Japanese admixture in the composition of the Ainu.

The presence of a considerable Ainu component in the modern Japanese cannot be doubted. The increase in the tertiary hairy covering which is so noticeable in Japanese as compared with Koreans is in itself sufficient grounds for considering this as an established fact.

The theory of the southern origin of the Ainu, most fully set forth by L. Sternberg, along with the concept of their genetic kinship with racial types of the equatorial branch of mankind, seems to us to correspond best with the present state of our knowledge. It is a more complicated matter, however, to solve the problem of the routes by which the Ainu reached the Japanese islands. According to Sternberg's hypothesis they came by way of the Philippines, Taiwan and the Ryūkyūs. And since a significant increase of Ainu traits in the anthropological type of the Ryūkyū population is apparent in our materials, this can serve as an argument in favour of including these islands in the ancient migration route of the ancestors of the Ainu.

The problem of the Indonesian component in the composition of the Japanese is one of the most complicated and at the same time least studied questions in the ethnic history of Japan. Southern elements in Japanese culture are noted by every author who writes on this subject, but only a few of these can be ascribed to the Ainu contribution. Linguists, too, conclude that elements can be discerned in the Japanese language linking it with those far to the south—especially with the Austronesian languages. A southern Mongoloid or 'Indonesian' component is quite clearly apparent in the anthropological type of the Japanese. If we leave aside the Ainu admixture, we shall find that the Japanese occupy an intermediate position between the eastern and southern Mongoloid groups on the basis of a series of morphological characteristics.

In all probability, the penetration of the Indonesian component may be assigned to the period preceding the appearance of the Yayoi culture in the Japanese islands. As to the routes by which it reached Japan, we can only hazard guesses in the present state of archæological knowledge regarding eastern and southeastern Asia. It is possible that these routes led through the Philippines. Another hypothesis has been advanced by W. Eberhard, who links this component in the Japanese with the Yüeh peoples of southern China. The greater incidence of the Indonesian element among the population of Shikoku is evidently due to the fact that this island has for long lain to one side of the route along which the flow of new settlers proceeded, bearing the Yayoi culture. This circumstance favoured the preservation on Shikoku of more ancient features in the anthropological type of the inhabitants.

The spread of the Yayoi culture in Japan was linked with the migration of considerable bodies of people from the mainland. And it is with these groups that we must evidently associate that common substratum in the Korean and Japanese languages the existence of which is accepted by many linguists. In physical type these migrants undoubtedly belonged to the Far Eastern Mongoloid group. It is pertinent to point out that the brachycephaly which is so characteristic of modern Koreans evidently represents a comparatively late phenomenon, so that any groups migrating from Korea to the Japanese islands on the threshold of our era would not have possessed this feature.

On the basis of the preceding remarks we can therefore formulate the historical development of the anthropological type of the Japanese. The oldest stratum is represented by the Ainu; in our materials it is most pronounced in the northernmost and southernmost portions of the country. The Indonesian component shows up most clearly among the inhabitants of Shikoku, especially those of Kagawa Prefecture. The first appearance of types belonging to the Far Eastern Mongoloids

must be associated with the spread of the Yayoi culture. The protracted mixing of these components under conditions of isolation in the Japanese islands led to the formation of the rather homogeneous anthropological type of the modern Japanese, along with the preservation, however, of a series of local variants.