

## Physical Anthropology in Wartime Japan

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journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Studies
volume	65
page range	143-150
year	2003-12-26
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15021/00002717">http://doi.org/10.15021/00002717</a>

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## Introduction

The research of physical anthropology is carried out with techniques of natural science. Therefore physical anthropology tends to easily accept a new technique. A good example is how DNA analysis reaches its peak in the physical anthropology of today. On the other hand, the purpose of physical anthropology in Japan has been consistent, even if it changes its method or analytical techniques. The purpose of physical anthropology is to investigate the morphology and physiological phenomena of human beings, to know the variation of them among each group and then to discuss the process of changing of human beings or each population in the past, present and future (HASEBE 1927: 7). Physical anthropology in Japan has progressed in line with this purpose and pursued a concrete issue. It is the origin of the Japanese race. When they refer to themselves, Japanese use various terms: *Nihon-jin* (日本人, the people of Japan), *Nihon-minzoku* (日本民族, the *minzoku* of Nihon), *Wa-jin* (和人, the people of Wa), *Yamato-minzoku* (the *minzoku* of Yamato), etc. All these terms seem to include a nuance of the Japanese as a homogeneous race.

When physical anthropologists try to know the evolutionary background of a particular group, they may compare it with its expected ancestors, living neighborhood groups and the expected ancestral neighborhood. Today, physical anthropologists advance such a study through genetic studies. They try to take DNA or protein from a living body or unearthed bones or teeth of human beings and analyze them. Morphology was the important and only method of investigating the relation between different populations before genetic sciences developed like today. Physical anthropologists had to observe and measure the living body or bones of human beings for their study. It is inappropriate to discuss the rights and wrongs of these methods in this paper. In order to understand the purpose and method of physical anthropology, this paper tries to discuss how the pursuit of the origin of the Japanese race was carried out and how the results of physical anthropology was used by others, especially those in political power.

## I. Development of physical anthropology in Japan from its beginning to the end of WWII

The history of Japanese anthropology has already been described by Kazuo TERADA (寺田和夫) in Japanese (TERADA 1975). I will try to write a brief review on physical anthropology, before and after WWII with quantitative data on the number of articles on physical anthropology while referring to TERADA's work. Figure 1 adds up the number of articles

every five years from 1885 to the end of WWII and later. The materials were a series of reports by Akiyoshi SUDA (須田昭義) (SUDA 1948, 1949, 1950a, 1950b, 1951, 1952, 1953b). It is pointed out that the number of articles increased suddenly from the end of the Taisho period. This is because the medical colleges of Japan were reorganized into universities by the University Establishment Ordinance in 1918. Physical anthropology became prosperous in the department of anatomy or forensic medicine expanded in this period. TERADA comments on the situation of these days as follows:

In the medical department, most graduates wanted a degree. It was the custom that they belonged to the department of basic medicine as postgraduates and did a study for a thesis to appear under a lesson of their supervisors. Most of the department of anatomy got many researchers in the making and conducted large-scale organized investigation.

(TERADA 1975: 191)

Japanese anthropology started in 1884 with Shōgoro Tsuboi (坪井正五郎) as the leader. He established the anthropological society of Tokyo with some scholars who specialized in various fields. Anthropology in Japan at that time contained physical and cultural anthropology, archaeology or prehistory, and ethnic study. A course in anthropology was established at the Imperial University of Tokyo in the early days. It, however, was not until the Showa era that the course accepted enrolled students to train as experts in anthropology. Accordingly, there were a few researchers who majored in anthropology in the early days, and the scholars from the medical departments or colleges did physical anthropological studies.

The origin of the Japanese race had already been an important theme. Anthropologists tried to investigate the relation between the Japanese people and others. The compared populations were different every time. We know that the Ainu were the first object of

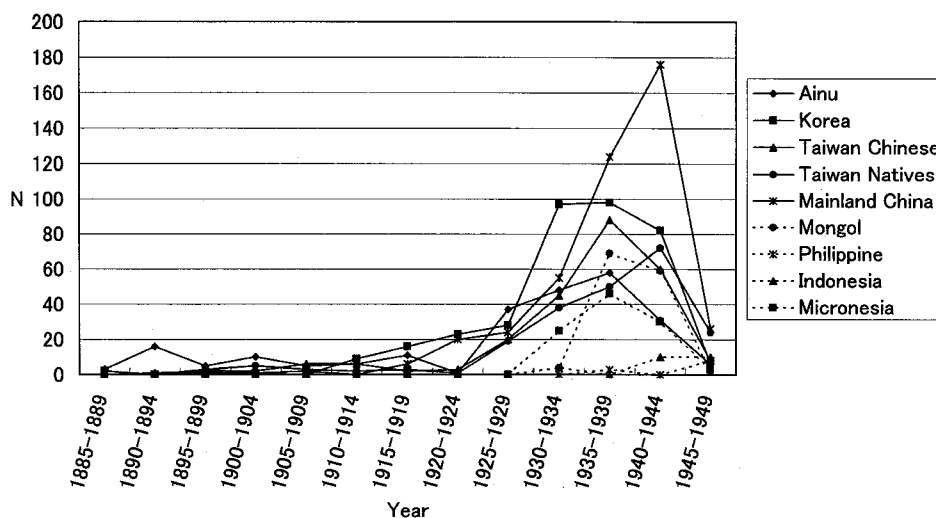


Fig. 1 The Number of Articles on Physical Anthropology in Japan

comparison with the Japanese. Most articles that appeared on this topic between 1880 and 1890 were written by Yoshikiyo KOGANEI (小金井良精). These caused the “Kolobokle-Ainu dispute” with TSUBOI.

Looking to Taiwan, investigations in physical anthropology was done from the early days in the colonial period. Ryūzō TORII (鳥居龍藏) principally did physical anthropological investigation in the early days. TORII received lessons from TSUBOI and practiced general anthropology. In Taiwan, where the political situation was still unstable, he conducted his research, including the morphological study of Taiwan aborigines. After 1920, the number of articles increased. From those days, the Governor-General could set their work on its way. It especially came to be able to control native Taiwanese according to its development policy.

There were more articles on Taiwan than other areas, after WWI. Takeo KANASEKI (金関丈夫) contributed to physical anthropology in Taiwan during the colonial period and after the war. KANASEKI graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Kyoto Imperial University in 1923, and was immediately appointed an assistant professor of the Department of Anatomy. The well-known researchers Buntarō ADACHI (足立文太郎) and Kenji KIYONO (清野謙次) belonged to the Department of Anatomy, and KANASEKI came to have interests in physical anthropology. KANASEKI published essays on the origin of the Japanese race later and was one of the researchers who dealt with the origin of the Japanese race. In 1936, KANASEKI was promoted to a new post at Taihoku Imperial University and advanced his physical anthropological investigation energetically in Taiwan, Hainan Island, south China and Indonesia. Even after the war, KANASEKI continued his work at the medical school of the National Taiwan University, which Taihoku Imperial University had taken over, according to the request of the Republic of China. KANASEKI continued his research with Naoichi KOKUBU (小久保直一) and Taiwanese staff members of the Department of Anthropology, which the Institute of Ethnology had taken over, until 1949. This was a unique phenomenon that was not found in other foreign areas.

Statistical techniques were introduced in physical anthropology before WWI. As statistical analysis was introduced, a change occurred in the methodology of physical anthropology. A large number of objects came to be needed to operate statistical analysis. Scholars were able to insist on a more persuasive theory with the result by statistical analysis if they secured samples. Tsunekichi UEDA (上田常吉) was a professor of the Department of Anatomy at Keijō Imperial University. He contributed mostly to the introduction of statistical techniques in physical anthropology. In an interesting episode, UEDA once pointed out a defect in KIYONO's statistical analysis, KIYONO then dispatched one of his students to Keijō to let him attend UEDA's lecture on statistics for half a year (TERADA 1975: 202). The Department of Anatomy at Keijō Imperial University, which was founded in 1924, became the center for the study of physical anthropology in Korea. The department conducted large-scale organized investigation. One of the most important research projects done was a somatological survey on living Korean people from 1930 to the year of the end of WWII. We can understand their attitude to physical anthropology from the article “A physical anthropological study of Korean peoples in Keiki province,” co-authored by five scholars including UEDA (UEDA et al. 1942).

Our department has already carried out an investigation measuring body sizes of Korean people until 1930. We published the result in the *Journal of medicine in Korea* in January 1934. We selected one group from each prefecture, did measurement of their body sizes and compared these results with the representative examples in each prefecture. However, we did not obtain enough samples and therefore we wanted to add more the new data. We did measurement of the body sizes of Korean people in Keiki-do, by family units, to inspect heredity in terms of quantitative hereditary characters or indexes. (UEDA et al. 1942: 4)

UEDA and his colleagues argued that the physical differences between the Koreans in the middle Korea and the Japanese in the Kinki area were less than those among the Japanese in different areas in Japan. Ironically, this fact was very convenient for the Governor-General of Korea to govern the colony with the assimilation policy. I do not have enough data to discuss the effects that the Governor-General of Korea gave to UEDA and his department. But I can say that the stability of public peace for the Japanese scholars in colonial Korea allowed UEDA and his colleagues to do the investigations with statistical analysis. It matured Keijō Imperial University into one of the centers for physical anthropology.

In this paper, it is difficult to refer to the results on Indonesia or Micronesia owing to the scarcity of materials. In conclusion, a trend of increasing number of papers on physical anthropology corresponded to the expansion of areas where Japan controlled.

## II. Homogeneous or heterogeneous

Physical anthropologists continued to pursue the origin of the Japanese race. The interest of physical anthropology, however, was also a very important issue to governing colonial areas. When Japan governed its colonial areas, especially under the *kōminka* (皇民化, Japanization) policy in the 1930s and 1940s, it needed the proper reason for governing others. It was true that the model of the formation of the Japanese race, which physical anthropology had formulated, supported the formation of colonial ideology for governing colonial areas.

At the Meiji Restoration, Japan was not politically or economically on equal footing with the Western powers. Academia was no exception to this rule. The Western scholars addressed firstly the origin of the Japanese race. Most of them regarded that the Japanese race had been formed as a result of mixed blood among different races. On the other hand, the origin of Japanese race has also been discussed for a long time in Japan. One of the earliest descriptions came from the *Hitachikoku fudoki* in the eighth century and Hakuseki ARAI (新井白石), who was a representative thinker of the eighteenth century in the Edo period, referred to the ancient stone tools. Western civilization, however, gave a strong impact on traditional values of Japanese. Japanese anthropologists were forced to begin their study with the outline set by Western scholars. Almost all Japanese scholars agreed that the Japanese race was heterogeneous. But some scholars and intellectuals insisted that Japanese people were and must have been a homogeneous race. Myths such as *Kojiki* sometime provided a basis for the homogeneity theory of the Japanese race. It advanced *Kokutai-ron* later (OGUMA 1995: 49-72). The two arguments later conflicted.

It was true that the Japanese colonial government of Korea and Taiwan adopted the policy of assimilation. Japan could not find the proper reason for expanding its territory and

admitting other nations as Japanese people, if they regarded Japanese as a homogeneous nation. Some people in the homeland, who believed in eugenics or racism, objected to the assimilation. Assimilation fundamentally permits racial mixture between the colonizer and the colonized. The Japanese colonial government encouraged the marriage between Japanese and colonial people, especially in Korea. The Governor-General of Korea positively adopted the reports of UEDA, which depicted that the Japanese and Korean peoples had common ancestors.

As with UEDA, Kotondo HASEBE (長谷部言人) and KIYONO brought new aspects to physical anthropology by introducing a statistical technique. At the same time, Tanemoto FURUHATA (古畑種基), who was a specialist of forensic medicine, had an effect on the academic world with his blood type study. The effect of their studies was not limited to physical anthropology, but extended to political circumstances. Their arguments were used by racists. The activities of racist were described by OGUMA (1995: 249-70) in detail. They had something to do with the association of ethnic hygiene of Japan. This association was established in 1930 as a bastion for racists and published the journal "Race hygiene." The association's platform was to exterminate the descent of those people who had hereditary diseases and inferior qualities, to encourage eugenic marriages and to increase the number of the Japanese race. (OGUMA 1995: 249).

FURUHATA insisted that the ratio of blood types differed between the Japanese and the neighboring populations and it meant that the Japanese race had been formed inside the Japanese Islands a long time ago (FURUHATA 1935). His argument implied that the Japanese race was homogeneous. FURUHATA's hypothesis suited eugenicists because they stressed that each race or ethnic group had their own ratio of blood types and it should be an index of the character or the ability of each population.

HASEBE and KIYONO got involved with eugenicists or racists in the process of pursuing the origin of Japanese race. HASEBE graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the Imperial University of Tokyo and then successively joined the staff of the Imperial Universities at Kyoto, Tohoku, and Tokyo. One of his most important contributions was that to the establishment of the Department of Anthropology at the Imperial University of Tokyo in 1939. His effort allowed physical anthropology to train specialists in the discipline. HASEBE considered that the Japanese in the homeland consisted of mixed blood of two different populations, the Ishikawa and Okayama types. The latter was similar to what he considered the Korean people in his early work (HASEBE 1917). He, on the other hand, suggested the continuity from the people of the Stone Age (comprising Jōmon and Yayoi periods) to the modern Japanese in the homeland (HASEBE 1917). KIYONO also made a similar argument to HASEBE. KIYONO especially referred to the relation between the Ainu people and the stone age people. KIYONO argued that there was an original population in the Japan Islands and it had revolved to the Ainu or the modern Japanese while mixing blood with neighboring groups in northern and southern areas (KIYONO and MIYAMOTO 1926). These hypotheses of HASEBE and KIYONO do not necessarily deny the heterogeneity of the Japanese race. They, however, devoted themselves to the homogeneous Japanese race before and after wartime. They, in their writings or lectures, insisted that the mixture of blood had hardly had an influence on the formation of the Japanese race.

### III. Physical anthropology in wartime

As far as I referred to the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Nippon, physical anthropologists did not focus on colonial peoples or other foreign peoples during wartime. They carried out physical anthropological and archaeological investigations in the main islands of Japan. In other words, physical anthropologists continued to investigate their main issue, the origin of Japanese people.

Most studies of physical anthropology in Japan had been conducted to determine the origin of the Japanese race. However, some investigations conducted during the war had nothing to do with that issue. Gorō UCHIDA (内田五郎) published a report of his research on the British and Australian prisoners of war (UCHIDA 1944a: 18-31; 1944b: 27-44). The investigation seems to have been done systematically in the prisoner's camp. There had been few physical anthropological studies on Western people. The war gave Japanese anthropologists an opportunity for their survey on other races. Western people were an obvious other race to Japanese people. Interestingly he reported the colors of the eye and hair and the blood types at first. Perhaps it should be important for him whether the objects were obvious others or not. If the objects were obvious others, the difference might be stressed.

The war also guided physical anthropology to be a practical science. Hisashi SUZUKI (鈴木尚) discussed the wartime project of trial manufacturing of gasmasks. Almost all ready-made garments tend to be made without knowing the body sizes or shapes of the supposed users. It is most regrettable that no one pays attention to such an issue, especially a loss on our social economy (SUZUKI 1948: 7). SUZUKI might have intended that this study should be made useful as a practical science. I once interviewed with SUZUKI about the background of this article. SUZUKI commented as follows:

This work was done in wartime. In those days, Japanese used gasmasks, which were designed in Europe. They were not necessarily fitted to Japanese people because the shape of face of Japanese people differed from that of European people. I, therefore, tried to design the mask fitting for Japanese. In wartime, gasmasks were used for pilots of high altitude airplane. The war was finished before completing this study and no gasmasks were made either as products or as a trial product. (SUZUKI, personal communication)

This kind of study may be interpreted as a by-product of the war. It, however, does not seem strange that almost all physical anthropologists, who were trained as doctors in the Faculty of Medicine, intended to apply physical anthropology to practical issues. This study was the first trial for practical science to Japanese physical anthropology. When most scholars concentrated their interest on the origin of the Japanese race, SUZUKI groped another direction of physical anthropology and his effort was tied to human engineering of later years in Japan.

#### Brief concluding remarks

It was true that the expansion of Japan gave physical anthropologists new fields for their studies. People of almost all areas where Japan controlled, were similar to the Japanese

peoples in appearance. It is important that Japan did not control remote areas as the West did. Therefore, physical anthropologists were interested in the relation between the Japanese people and neighboring peoples. It was an important key to discuss the origin of the Japanese race.

Physical anthropology investigated living bodies, and unearthed bones and teeth of human beings with natural scientific techniques. The results of physical anthropology are only the biological background of human population. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority of a specific group. On the other hand, it was true that the results from physical anthropologists were used by the various influences. The knowledge provided by physical anthropology has been based on the authority of natural science, and people are forced to accept them. It, therefore, may create a new myth regardless of the purpose of physical anthropology or the intentions of physical anthropologists.

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