

Images of Jomon Hunter Gatherers Represented by Japanese Archaeology

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of modern nation building of Japan from 1868, archaeology has played an important role in the formation of national identity [BOND and GILLIAM 1994; FAWCETT 1995; HÄRKE 1998; HABU and FAWCETT 1999; JONES 1997; KOHL and FAWCETT 1995; SCHMIDT and PATTERSON 1995; OGAWA 2000a-d; VEIT 1989]. Images of prehistoric Jomon hunter-gatherers represented by Japanese archaeologists have changed in parallel with the social, political and international conditions that have evolved in the 130 years of history in modern Japanese nation building [OGUMA 1995]. In this parallel process, the images of Jomon hunter-gatherers have not always coincided with the image of the origin of the Japanese nation and 'people'. In the process of modern Japanese nation building, however, Japanese archaeologists have made every endeavour to harmonize the images of prehistoric Jomon hunter-gatherers with the conflicting image of homogeneity and continuity of the modern Japanese nation. In this paper, I will examine three different images of Jomon hunter-gatherers represented in the five different periods of the history of Japanese archaeology.

1. Image of the savage 'Other', that is non-civilized people, or non-agriculturists
2. Image of the natural conservator
3. Image of founder of "Japanese civilization"

And finally I propose that the prehistoric Jomon people as hunter-gatherers have never been accepted as direct ancestors of the present Japanese nation as they were not agriculturists, and thus not a proper 'civilized' progenitor.

This paper originated in my research on the prehistoric interdependent relationships between hunter-gatherers and farmers in the Northern Luzon, Philippines, and my interest in the production by archaeologists of an image of isolation and homogeneity in time and space imposed on Southeast Asian hunter-gatherer societies [HEADLAND and REID 1989]. These image productions reflect the peripheral position of hunter-gatherers in modern nation states and colonialism [OGAWA 1999; 2000a-d]. And for this paper, I will try to outline the images produced by Japanese archaeologists concerning the Jomon hunter-gatherer society.

To outline the background of Jomon, the Jomon Period is said to have begun in 12000 BP and lasted for 10000 years of the prehistory of Japan. Although the Jomon people had a

pottery making technology and a sedentary life style, their subsistence was based mainly on hunting and gathering. The Jomon people were believed to be the oldest occupants of the Japanese islands. This interpretation did not change until the discovery of Palaeolithic artefacts, after the end of World War II.

IMAGES OF JOMON PEOPLE

The First Phase: 1868-1900

At the beginning of the modern nation state of Japan in 1868, archaeology and physical anthropological research was initiated by Western scientists who were invited by the Japanese government. They revealed the Jomon archaeological culture, and based on the ancient mythological chronicles describing the history of the foundation of this country, they hypothesized that the Jomon people were the original aboriginal people of Japan [KUDO 1987]. Western researchers also postulated that a group of people migrated from the Korean Peninsula about 2000 years ago to conquer and drive away the Jomon to Northern Japan. They also postulated that those Jomon became the ancestors of the Ainu, the former hunter-gatherers now living in Hokkaido [HAYASHI 1987]. From the 1890s, Japanese archaeologists participated in Jomon studies and began the controversy on the Japanese ancestry, a controversy centered around the Ainu vs. Korpokunkur, who according to Ainu legend, were the original occupants of Hokkaido.

In this phase, both Western and Japanese scientists hypothesized that the progenitors of the modern Japanese were not the Jomon/Ainu people, but the group hypothesized to have migrated from the Korean Peninsula.

The Second Phase: 1900-1930

In the second phase, the Yayoi culture became clear. Yayoi pottery, associated with metallurgy and agriculture, indicated that the Yayoi people had a strong relationship with the Korean Peninsula. This advanced technology from the Korean Peninsula provoked archaeologists to easily connect the Yayoi culture to the migrant people, described in the ancient mythological chronicles and said to have become the founders of this nation. At this time, the Jomon people were still believed to be ancestral to the Ainu [KUDO 1987]. The prevailing model on the origin of Japanese nation at this phase was that the Jomon and Yayoi people belonged to different 'racial' groups and lived contemporaneously in different regions of the Japan Islands, and that the Jomon had been gradually conquered by the Yayoi.

In this phase, archaeologists discovered the prehistoric agriculturists who should be the 'proper' Japanese progenitors. Lacking the evidence of rice cultivation, the image of Jomon culture was equated with a 'non civilized' culture. This led to the interpretation that the Ainu, also relegated to a 'non-civilized' state, were the descendants of the Jomon people [HAYASHI 1987; KUDO 1987].

By the discovery of the 'migrant' Yayoi culture, diversity and a mixture of ethnic groups in the prehistoric Japanese Islands were recognized. Thus evolved the 'hypothesis on

the common origin of Japanese and Koreans', which was widely accepted by the establishment and the general public. This hypothesis was used to justify colonization and making colonized peoples the Emperor's subjects, and later for the aggression in Asia [OGUMA 1995].

During the first and second phases, the prehistoric Jomon people were assumed to be the progenitors of the Ainu, former hunter-gatherers, but not accepted as the ancestors of the modern Japanese. By the discovery of Yayoi culture, archaeologists were convinced that the Yayoi people were justifiable Japanese ancestors, because of rice cultivation. The evidence of agriculture confirmed direct ties or bonds with the modern civilized nation. Then Japan, newly participating in international society as a belated modern nation state, found a proper image in the history of Yayoi culture. Contrary to the Yayoi, the Jomon people were burdened with the 'non-civilized' image, that is, the image of the savage 'Others', because of the lack of rice cultivation.

The Third Phase: 1930-1945

During the third stage, Japanese archaeology took a course toward chronological studies. Archaeological data from stratigraphic excavations revealed the difference between Jomon and Yayoi cultures as a difference in time, not as an ethnic ('racial') difference [TAKAHASHI 1987]. Some physical anthropologists also presented the view of minor evolution from Jomon to Yayoi people [KUDO 1987]. They emphasized a direct continuation from the Jomon people to the Japanese nation. This signalled the birth of the 'homogeneous Japanese nation' hypothesis, which became the established hypothesis in the post-war era [OGUMA 1995]. It denied prehistoric ethnic diversity and the Yayoi conquest of the aboriginal Jomon. The homogeneous nation hypothesis was warmly accepted by Marxist historians as a scientific view that negated the 'homogeneous Japanese nation' interpretation depicted in the mystic ancient chronicles.

Thus, the origin of the Japanese nation was traced back to the Jomon period through the emergence of the 'Homogeneous Nation Hypothesis' [OGUMA 1995]. In order to relate the Japanese nation to the Jomon people, the tie with the Ainu, former hunter-gatherers, had to be broken off. However, this hypothesis was not popular with the belligerent and chauvinistic government of the wartime period. Thus, the diversity and admixture of prehistoric ethnic groups, once a national tenet, was minimized in government-designed textbooks during the last stages of the WW II [OGUMA 1995].

The Fourth Phase: 1945-1950s

After the war, the imperial, or Emperor-oriented view of history and supernationalism was criticized. With the restoration of Marxist historians, the 'hypothesis of a homogeneous Japanese nation', a most scientific theory, as they said, became the generally accepted view in the post-war era. The history of Japan was once again to be traced back to the Jomon period [KUDO 1987]. Conversely, the 'hypothesis of the equestrian conquest of Japan', presented after the war, was criticized as being colonialistic, because it had the same

characteristics of the 'hypothesis of the common origin of Japanese and Koreans' popular during the war [KUDO 1987; OGUMA 1995]. Post-war Marxist historians began seeking a new historical model to outline the development of a distinctive, monothetic Japanese nation. In the 'hypothesis of a homogeneous Japanese nation', they found that model. However, that model, used during the war to forcibly assimilate other Asian peoples, was used as a tool to oppress the domestic minority, the Ainu [MORRIS-SUZUKI 2000].

The Fifth Phase: 1960s-present

In contrast to the loss of self-confidence as a result of the war, in the 1960s, Japanese developed a new self-portrait, overflowing with self-confidence, based on the economic success in international society. As a result, in the 1970s, discussions of the uniqueness of Japanese society, culture and character became popular [OGUMA 1995]. Then the 'hypothesis of a homogeneous nation' was re-examined. There was also a big change in archaeology. When the administrative (or salvage) excavations began as a result of the rapid growth of the Japanese economy, an enormous budget investment increased the number of archaeologists and excavations [FAWCETT 1995; TSUDE 1995].

Then precise chronological frameworks were established for every region of Japan, based upon the huge amount of data collected through administrative excavations. In the course of comparisons of the chronological orders of artefacts among adjacent regions, a chronological framework was constructed in such a way that each period of chronological order was merged into a single homogeneity in time and space throughout the archipelago. In response, the 'hypothesis of the equestrian conquest of Japan' was re-instated and reevaluated [KUDO 1987].

In the 1980s, by reconstructing palaeo-environments and palaeo-diets using natural scientific methods and the influence of the Kalahari model, a new image of the Jomon people was introduced [HAYASHI 1987]. They were now depicted as an affluent, gentle and peaceful people, living in harmony with nature [SHOTT 1992]. This image of the 'noble savage' or 'natural conservator' imposed on the Jomon people was produced mostly by archaeological researchers.

Through the media, interpretations of the complicated archaeological data as applicable to modern problems, were presented to the public as the simplified essence of the latest results of Jomon archaeology [FAWCETT 1995]. The public is not only a consumer of images, but also a producer of images.

In 1990s, partially because of an eco-orientation, and the discovery of the Sannai-Maruyama site, the Jomon people's status has been promoted to the level of 'civilization' [YASUDA 1987]. Now, Jomon people are qualified as genuine 'progenitors' of the Japanese nation. However, this attribution of civilization to the Jomon period has only resulted in a new myth concerning the origin of the Japanese nation.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the time that Japan came to participate in international society as a modern nation state, national self-portraits have oscillated according to changing relationships with the world community. Archaeology has continuously provided a place where people can entrust the dream of national origin [ANDERSON 1997; BOND and GILLIAM 1994; DIAZ-ANDREU and CHAMPION 1996; HÄRKE 1998; JONES 1997; KOHL and FAWCETT 1995; OGAWA 1999; 2000a-d; OGUMA 1995; SCHMIDT and PATTERSON 1995; VEIT 1989]. The historical inquiry into national identity is synonymous with the creation of myths or traditions. The creation of myths is a premise that their present wish could be justified as having already existed in the past. And the images of the Jomon people have been produced in the place of the older creation of myths, referred to as 'discussions on the origin of the Japanese nation'.

In the process of modernization, Jomon images have oscillated from 'cruel savage' to 'noble savage', and finally promoted to a 'civilization'. Whatever image is represented, the Jomon people are always a battle ground for Japanese archaeologists holding ambivalent attitudes toward their origin. Civilization must be the starting point to trace back the past. Therefore, the 'savage image' must at all costs be avoided, if the Jomon are to represent the search for ancestors to the Japanese nation. Herein lies the dilemma of archaeology, a nationally institutionalised device indissociable from the search for national origins.

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