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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUNTER-GATHERERS AND FARMERS

From the initial expansion of modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) out of Africa to the present, hunter-gatherers have been people who have been able to adapt to every environment on earth. While hunter-gatherer societies often changed their subsistence strategy or were assimilated with the expansion of food-producers, such as farmers and pastoralists, there are also regions throughout the world where the two groups have shared a symbiotic relationship for centuries, if not millennia.

Against that background, studies of the interrelationships between hunters and farmers or pastoralists from prehistory to the present provide extremely important clues for examining the processes of change from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural one. Moreover, if we take a long-term, historical perspective that employs archaeological, as well as historical and anthropological, evidence, then we can gain a much better appreciation of the overall diversity prevailing in the relationships between hunting-gathering and farming communities. This volume therefore draws together studies that examine not only how societies practising different subsistence strategies may coexist in the present, but also how huntergatherers established relationships with neighbouring, farming groups in the past and how such coexistence evolved from prehistory into the twenty-first century.

Both the Jomon culture of later Japanese prehistory (c. 14, 500–300 BC) (Habu 2004) and the Ainu of northern Japan and Sakhalin (Kodama 1970; Watanabe 1973; Peng and Geiser 1977) are world-famous as examples of hunter-gatherer cultures. In putting together this volume, then, we have also been interested in the changing relationship between the Jomon people and later Yayoi period (c. 300 BC–AD 300) farmers, and in that between the Ainu and Japanese farmers or settlers. For example, it is known that the introduction of rice farming into eastern Japan lagged by several hundred years in comparison with its introduction in western Japan (Akazawa 1979). Did a symbiotic relationship between rice farmers and hunter-gatherers exist at all in the Yayoi period in Japan and, if so, how might this have affected this temporal

difference? As we point out in more detail below, we believe that case studies from Japan can greatly contribute to our understanding of issues of continuity and change for hunter-gatherers throughout the world.

PREVIOUSE STUDIES OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HUNTERS AND FARMERS

The relationship between hunting-gathering societies and agricultural societies is an important and longstanding theme in both archaeology and ethnology. Numerous substantial studies have been undertaken to examine the relationship between the two. By way of background, we briefly divide such studies from the 1970s to the present into three phases.

Phase 1 (1970s): This was in many ways the classic period of hunter-gatherer ethnography, including studies of Pygmies in Africa (Turnbull 1973; Ichikawa 1978), of the Agta in the Philippines (Hutterer 1977; Peterson and Peterson 1977; Peterson 1978) and of various San (Bushman) groups in the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa (Lee and DeVore 1976). Typically, however, such studies did not have a strongly developed historical point of view, and models based primarily on a few Kalahari San groups, in particular, came to be widely applied by archaeologists, including to the study of the Jomon.

Phase 2 (1980s): This phase was marked by the development among anthropologists and ethnologists of a greater interest in cultural history, one consequence of which was that ethnology and archaeology became more deeply involved with each other (Gosden 1999). In southern Africa, the "Kalahari Debate" took shape between ecological anthropologists, historians and archaeologists over the history of Kalahari hunter-gatherers, and specifically their relations with Bantuspeaking farmers and Khoe-speaking pastoralists (Wilmsen 1988; cf. Solway and Lee 1990; Guenther 1997). In the Philippines, too, the relationship between hunters and farmers became a much-debated subject (Headland and Reid 1989; Headland and Bailey 1991), and the same can be said in a purely archaeological context for prehistoric Europe (e.g. Gregg 1988).

Phase 3 (1990s-present): This phase has seen continued work in this general area, with a key paper being that of Spielmann and Eder (1994), who brought together and reviewed the results of many different studies of the relationships between hunter-gatherers and farmers in both archaeology and ethnology. More than a decade on from the publication of their paper, however, have we made any progress at all in this area of study?

Southern Africa certainly stands out as one area of the world in which substantial accomplishments have been made, accomplishments that have introduced much-needed clarification and nuances to the "Kalahari Debate" (e.g. Sadr 1997; Ikeya 1998, 1999, 2005; Kent 2002) and now help situate the study of hunter-gatherer/farmer relations within a broader historical context (Mitchell 2004) (Photo 1). In Central Africa and the Philippines, similar study outcomes have also

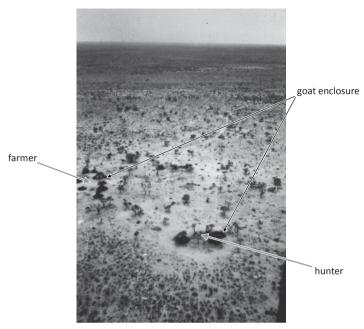


Photo 1 Nomadic hunter-gatherer and nomadic agro-pastoralist in the Kalahari.

begun to emerge (Terashima 1986; Junker 1996, 2002; Ogawa 1996, 2000; Morrison and Junker 2002), and in several regions of the world research employing mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and other genetic markers has begun to make important contributions to our understanding of the history of human populations. One result has been to draw attention to the cultural reversion by some farmers toward a hunting and gathering economy, something at odds with conventional evolutionary "logic" and exemplified by the Mlabri hunter-gatherer groups of Thailand (Oota *et al.* 2005).

PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS ADDRESSED BY THIS VOLUME

No matter in which part of the world they work, the various contributors to the present volume share a concern with discussing the relationships between huntergatherers and farmers with a comprehensive awareness of the diverse pathways along which many hunting-gathering societies have transformed themselves, or been transformed, into agricultural ones. No single volume can hope to cover all relevant archaeological research or all extant hunter-gatherer groups, and so we specifically emphasise prehistoric and historic coexistence and conflict between hunter-gatherers and farmers in three regions of the world, Southeast Asia (Chapters 4 and 8–11), Eastern Asia (southern China in Chapter 3 and Japan in Chapters 5–7) and southern Africa (Chapter 2)(Figure 1). We are, of course, aware that by drawing our studies from mostly tropical or sub-tropical environments, we are far from encompassing

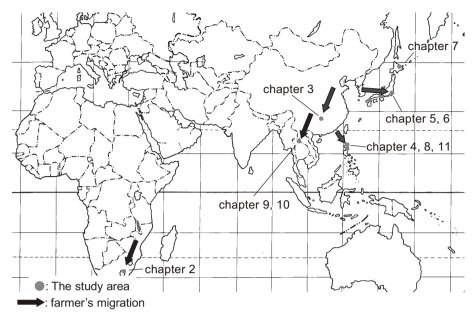


Figure 1 The study area in this volume.

the full diversity of hunter-gatherer lifeways, or of the possibilities of interaction between hunter-gatherers and farmers (cf. Lee and Daly 1999). Nevertheless, we feel confident that they exemplify something of the variety of relationships that can exist, as well as of the value of researching such relationships by using a variety of approaches, specifically including ethnography (Chapters 8–10), linguistics (Chapter 11), and archaeology (Chapters 2–7). Moreover, our three Japanese case studies (Chapters 5, 6, 7) help demonstrate the immense contribution that those working on the archaeology, history, and ethnography of the archipelago can make to debates in other parts of the world. Many reasons exist why this should be so, but suffice it to note here that Japanese case examples are typically exceptionally data-rich, that the time span they cover is very long, and that at least the later stages of the prehistoric Jomon culture and, in some ways, more recent Ainu communities, are widely understood as examples of a complex hunting-gathering society practising economies of a delayed-returns, rather than immediate-returns, kind (*sensu* Woodburn 1982) (Koyama and Thomas 1981; Habu *et al.* 2003; Habu 2004).

Three questions, in particular, are emphasised in the contributions that follow.

Question 1. Is it possible for hunter-gatherer and farmer groups to exist side-by-side in a symbiotic state in the course of the transition between a forager-dominated lifestyle and an agriculturally or pastorally dominated one?

More specifically, can we establish a framework for investigating this theme by looking at the transition phase from the Jomon period to the Yayoi period in Japan?

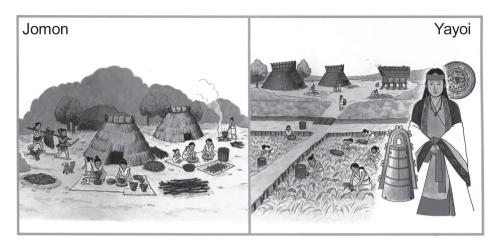


Figure 2 The imagined lifestyles of Jomon Hunter-gatherers (left) and Yayoi farmers (right). Source: Baba (2005).

(Figure 2) (Chapters 5 and 6)

Question 2. Where hunter-gatherers and farmers did engage in symbiotic relationships, what was the specific nature of the symbiotic state between the two groups? Was it, for example, equal or dependent?

Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 all discuss this question with reference to the settlement patterns of, and diverse interactions, between hunter-gatherers and farmers in Southeast Asia. A key theme, too, in this part of the volume is the consideration of the transition between hunter-gatherers and farmers in relation to diversity in contemporary, still-observable social systems. Subsidiary questions that arise include the following.

- Was the trade relationship between hunter-gatherers and farmers itself *equal* or *dependent*? Is it right to regard farming societies as being hierarchically structured, whereas hunting-gathering societies are necessarily egalitarian? Would it be empirically incorrect to envisage counter-examples, such as a hierarchically organised hunting-gathering society or a farming society practising egalitarian social relations?
- How should we perceive societies in which people continued to engage in hunting or gathering after they started farming, as indeed they did in Japan (Pearson 1992)? Did they undertake hunting and gathering because they could make a commercial profit from it, or was it the case that farming alone proved unable to support them?
- Was there any difference in the relationship between hunter-gatherers and farmers before and after the establishment of states? In addition, can we regard

exchange in the barter age in the same way as exchange after the establishment of commercial trade or the development of a market economy?

- What does *farming* mean for hunter-gatherers?
- Can hunter-gatherers convert easily into food producers?

Question 3. What is the relationship between archaeological remains and ethnographic phenomena?

How can we interpret the relationship between hunters and farmers in the past from an archaeological point of view? The existence of such a relationship may be inferred from the presence in archaeological deposits of tools or the remains of animals and plants, from the special distributions of archaeological sites (and changes in these over time), and from the reconstruction of prehistoric environments. But to make sense of these data it is necessary to have models that allow us to understand the past relationship between the two groups. Such models may best be based on data obtained through ethnoarchaeological investigations that infer past relationships from those observable in the present (or the relatively recent past where high-quality historical observations are available). Put broadly, we may identify three different kinds of relationship models: 1) exchange/trade relationships; 2) consignment relationships (e.g. offering labour); and 3) intermarriage relationships. But how can we verify the presence of one or other of these relationships by using archaeological evidence?

1) Exchange/trade relationships

Archaeological remains mainly consist of imperishable, inorganic materials obtained by excavation, although in favourable (for example, very dry or, alternatively, waterlogged) environments a wide range of organic objects may also survive. The artefacts people left typically include both *extractive tools*, i. e. those employed directly to obtain resources such as food from the environment, and maintenance or processing tools, employed to process food once acquired or to make or repair artefacts, including clothing and storage containers (Binford and Binford 1966). The remains of the plants and animals that people consumed constitute a further category of finds, and we can expect that the distributions of such resources, as well as of various raw materials (stone, pigments, salt, etc.), were unevenly distributed in space. Where this was so, the preconditions will have been in place for such resources to have been exchanged between hunter-gatherer and farmer societies.

In at least some cases such exchanges tied into much more complex and long-distance, international trading systems. A good example (touched on in Chapters 8, 9) is that of forest products (e.g. meat, honey, resins, and fragrant woods) gained from wooded areas of Southeast Asia that occupied a pivotal position in trading goods both inside and outside the region, notably with China.

A couple of caveats are, however, in order. First, to be recognisable archaeologically the items that were exchanged must survive, and many forest or

bush products of the kind mentioned above do not do so. We shall thus be on less firm ground if we merely retrodict their presence in long-past exchange systems from the fact that they have been observed historically or ethnographically. Secondly, just because artefacts unlikely to have been made by hunter-gatherers are found in certain sites does not necessarily imply the existence of past exchange networks, since such artefacts might also have been introduced had farmers visited, or occupied, the site in question. As discussed further in Chapter 2, careful attention to the context of the finds and the details of their manufacture is called for in such cases.

2) Intermarriage relationships

Intermarriage may occur in an intensified stage of exchange between huntergatherer and farmer societies, especially where the opportunities open to huntergatherers to maintain an independent way of life are diminishing and assimilation becomes increasingly attractive. However, there is no reason to think that it only occurs under such circumstances and, while the flow of genes is often from huntergatherers to farmers, cases are also known, or suspected, of farmers in marginal areas abandoning food production and themselves assimilating into forager societies; the "River Bushmen" of Botswana and the Dama of Namibia are two possible examples (Barnard 1992). Genetic studies of the DNA of contemporary populations now offer an increasing wealth of insights into such processes, documenting, for example, a strong contribution by women of Khoisan origin into some South African Bantu-speaking societies (Salas *et al.* 2002; Richards *et al.* 2004). Where suitable preservation conditions exist, we may also be able anticipate charting such relationships through the analysis of palaeo–DNA recovered from ancient skeletal remains.

One final point is worth stating, and that is that the most informative understanding of the relationships prevailing between hunter-gatherer and farmer or pastoralist communities will derive from making joint use of as many different data sets as possible. This requires not only the investigation of all three of the possible relationship scenarios that we have just sketched, but also the integration of archaeological, ethnographic and historical evidence with insights generated from still other disciplines, including linguistics and genetics. As we show in Chapter 2, for example, in southeastern southern Africa the genetic data for Khoisan/Bantuspeaker intermarriage are immeasurably strengthened by, and themselves reinforce, information to the same effect that comes from oral histories, linguistics, and the study of Nguni religious practices (cf. Hammond-Tooke 1998). Collectively, such evidence also helps to make sense of purely excavated, archaeological data. Separate investigation of any one relational model, or separate pursuit of any one discipline to the exclusion of others, would certainly produce far less convincing results. We hope that the case studies brought together both exemplify this conviction and, where they do emphasise one discipline rather than several, that they nevertheless provide new data that will be of general interest and relevance to the analysis of hunter-gathererfarmer relations

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