The Emishi and Physical Anthropology

One of the foremost questions that have been examined, who are the Emishi?, is dealt with by Hanihara Waro, a physical anthropologist, in *Emishi to wa nanika?* (What are the Emishi?) edited by Nakanishi, who studied nearly a thousand skeletal remains from various settlements throughout the prehistoric and proto-historic periods from the Kanto and Tohoku (1993). Essentially, his conclusion is that they are neither Ainoid (Jomon) or Japanese: that their skeletal remains are midway between both groups of people. His study further clarifies the existence of different types of historical populations in Japan in that time period, but has its limitations which I will examine here.

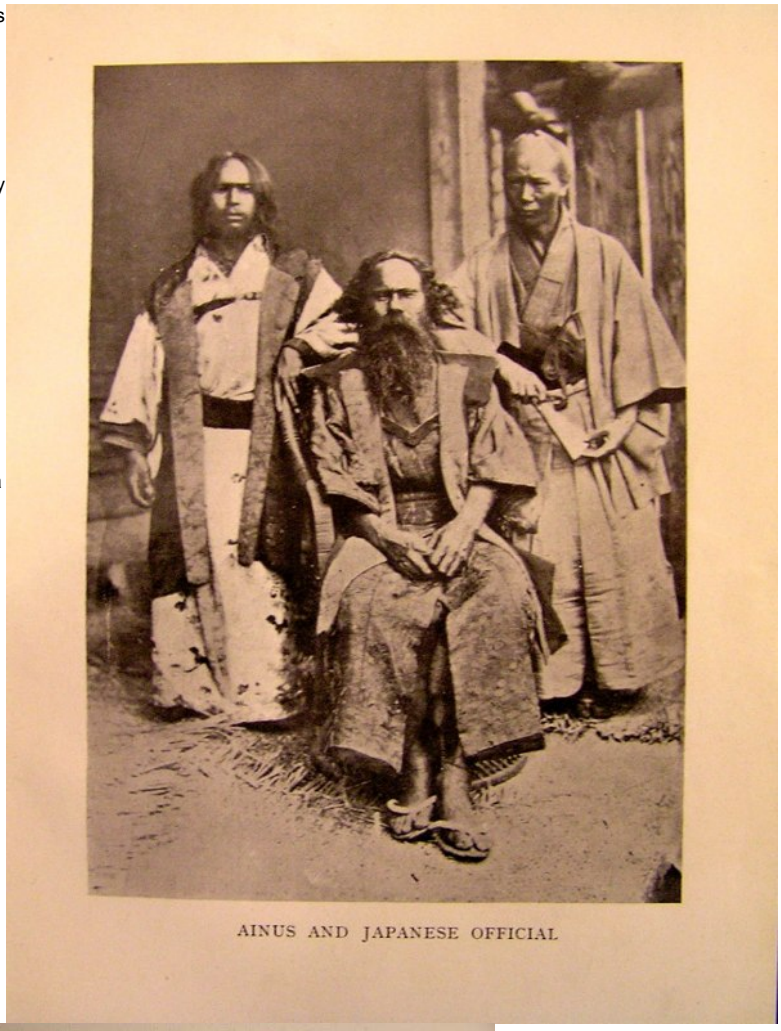
The author argues that the Kofun population have characteristics of both Yayoi Japanese and Jomon peoples. The Kofun skeletons are taken from both the Tohoku and Kanto, and surprisingly, they show that the Kanto Kofun are closely matched to the Tohoku sample, though the Tohoku sample from Miyagi prefecture veers a little more towards the Jomon than the Kanto sample; however they form one group.

The conclusion from this study is that the Emishi were related to both the Ainu and the Japanese, but were neither. The weakness of his conclusion is that he fails to address the Jomon population in relation to the Emishi, and simply concludes that the Emishi were equivalent to the Kofun population. The skeletal remains are of known kofun sites not Emishi sites such as those from *Ezo ana kofun* (a recent study does include remains taken from these types of tombs, see link below to Tohoku Kofun Population). His study succeeds in furthering our understanding of the Japanese population of the Kofun Age, but not necessarily the make-up of the Emishi population. To conclude that the Kofun population is equivalent to the Emishi population is not substantiated. However, this does not mean that the Kofun population did not have an effect on the Emishi.

The Emishi were ancestral to the Satsumon Culture that developed in Hokkaido centuries after the conquest of the Emishi heartland in northern Honshu by the Japanese. Many Emishi migrated to Hokkaido during the seventh and eighth centuries AD bringing with them dry agriculture and other technologies from Honshu and settled among the existing epi-Jomon population. It is not known if this Emishi migration was peaceful, or whether conflicts with the existing population occurred in southern Hokkaido. There is little doubt that conflict with the very different Okhosk Culture further north occurred. What is known is that by the ninth century the Satsumon Culture emerged, a culture that was directly ancestral to the later Ainu culture.

The photo (right) is a rare image of early twentieth century Ainu man and perhaps his son in comparison with a Japanese on the right (1912 by Charles Scribner's and Sons). Note the different hairstyle of the Ainu and Japanese, the latter with a topknot and shaven forehead. The Ainu show typical Jomon characteristics, however, with one important difference. Though the Ainu are closest to the Jomon in many important ways, such as skeletal and dental morphology they were not exactly the same. The Jomon were even further removed from modern Japanese than the Ainu. Ainu characteristics show many Jomon traits, but the Jomon had even more pronounced differences when compared to Japanese today. Also the differences between Ainu and Jomon reflect an ancestral/descendant relationship such that depending on where the Jomon resided the population history produced local variations, so that those in the Tohoku were different from Hokkaido. Hokkaido Ainu are known to have some admixture from the Okhosk whom they are thought to have conquered (Shigematsu, et.al. 2004:161). And Tohoku Jomon had varying degrees of Yayoi mixed in. Though the Jomon may have looked Caucasian in some instances (see engraving on the Emishi to Ezo page) this is based on Ainu features from the nineteenth century when Americans, such as John Batchelor, began to have contact with them. As we go further back in time the Ainu population was closer to the ancestral Jomon.

Older Jomon populations had even more pronounced differences (bottom right) as reflected in the photo from Batchelors book (1892:17) showing features that reflect Austronesian roots. They were an old Asian race that separated from the Asian line before the latter began to develop modern East Asian characteristics. Aside from the usual hirsute appearance they had kinky hair. The photo below left from H.C. White Co. (1922) shows Happukonno, an Ainu hunter with two other Ainu. Happukonno has a strikingly Austronesian appearance.



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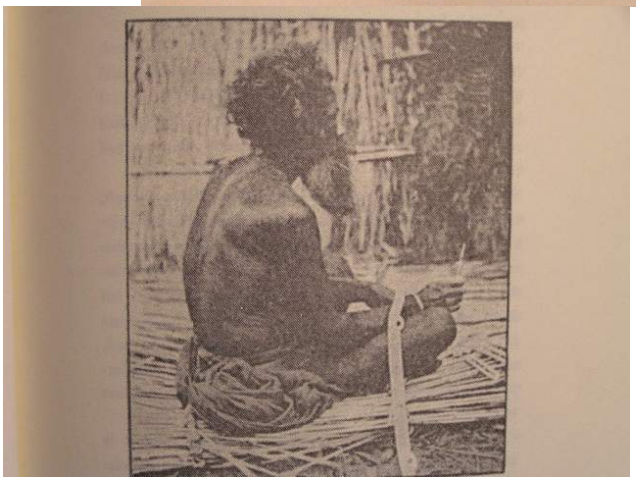


Below is a rare photo of mostly Ainu women and two men in the foreground that is hand-tinted from the 1930's.

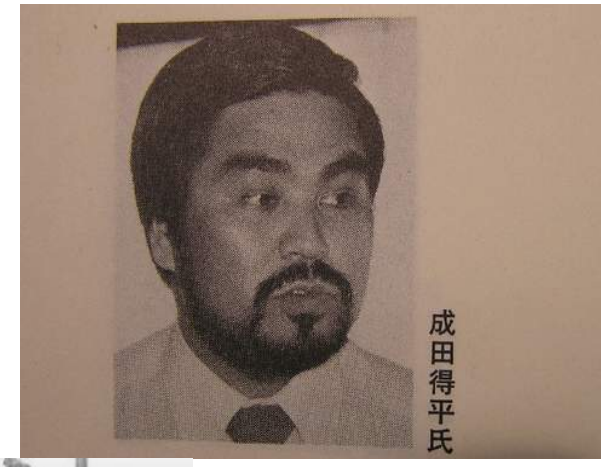
H.G.P.

HAPPUKONNO, THE HUNTER (IN CENTRE), AND TWO AINU FISHERMEN

The " Ainu " aborigines living is Hokkaido

Below is a lithograph from 1902. Interestingly, the young man on the far right (seated) is most likely the same man pictured above right thirty years later. Along with the photo above and the engraving on the Moving Frontier page it is not surprising that European travellers mistook these people for being a Caucasian people.

The photo below left is of the late great actor Toshiro Mifune who was from an area of the Tohoku where Emishi were known to have had a strong presence in the past (here he appears in the Akira Kurosawa classic, Red Beard by Toho Productions, 1965). His family came from Akita prefecture. He shares definite Jomon and by extension Emishi traits, though the two were not exactly the same it is thought that the Jomon are their ancestors (compare with the Ainu photos above). There are many who are partial descendants of the Emishi who make up part of the population that resides in the Tohoku region of Japan even today. The photo below right is of Narita Tokuhei, whose mother is Ainu and father is Japanese. He was a participant in the Ainu Symposium, the series of lectures published in 1982 (Egami, et.al.). He is representative of many of the modern Ainu who have mixed Ainu heritage. His features are shared by a segment of the Japanese population today, and though not the same as the Kofun population are similar. The Kofun were not a separate ethnic group, rather they were a historical population, a snapshot if you will, of the people living in Japan near the kofun when they were being constructed.



Kofun population

Modern Japanese are grouped together as mainly Yayoi as a whole (that is, a population that originated and identified with the Yayoi culture) though the population gradient shows closer affinities to the Jomon as one travels northeast. However, the Kofun are a separate historical population from the modern Japanese. They represent the population at a particular time period just as modern Japanese represent the population of most of Japan today. To complicate matters, the Kofun type may have represented a pre-Yamato Japanese population that had representatives among the Emishi as well.

This means that a population had developed in the historical period that represented pre-Yamato Japanese settlements centered on rice cultivation in the Kanto speaking an ancient Japanese dialect who were conscripted by the Yamato state, as well as people who may have been either conquered or settled among the Emishi who joined the latter in their battles against the Yamato. However, both populations were not that distinguishable from each other. There is also a distinction between a particular Yayoi people and Yayoi culture; for example, the Yayoi culture spread among indigeneous Jomon people as they adopted agriculture. So we speak of a definite Ainoid culture such as Satsumon as having had pre-Yayoi roots, and there is the Yayoi culture of the Tohoku that was adopted by indigenous Emishi. Yayoi is a type of culture not an ethnic group, but Jomon culture points to a particular population. In other words, though we can speak of a Jomon people having particular physical characteristics we cannot speak of Yayoi people in the same way. Though, it is thought that the culture first emerged among the

Japanese speakers, and is mostly associated with them it is not limited to them alone. The problem boils down to a classic case of cultural diffusion versus migration.

What Hanihara seems to explain is that the agriculturally based Emishi and the pre-Yamato Japanese were a blend of Yayoi Japanese and Jomon, and provides evidence of early Yayoi Japanese infusion into the Tohoku as much as the Kanto. One would think that the Tohoku was less intermixed at this early age than the Kanto but this is not true according to the author. This corroborates the above page (Latter Jomon Culture and the Emishi) that the Yayoi Japanese and Jomon populations merged together through local alliance rather than one population supplanting the other, at least in the Kanto and southern to central Tohoku. This indirectly tells us that the Jomon population was quite dense in these areas, and rather than being absorbed by the Japanese settlers, were able to absorb them. This clearly fits the transformation theory of Japanese physical anthropology where an older population, the Jomon, was transformed by the newer population represented by the Japanese.

According to Hanihara the skeletal remains from the Kofun states of the Kanto show that they and the Tohoku Kofun were of one group. The Tohoku people living near kofun were like other contemporary Kanto people, but were unlike the Kinai Japanese. There were then three distinct populations at this time: Kinai Japanese speakers (Yayoi Japanese) who were the creators and inheritors of the Yamato state; the Kofun population, both under Japanese rule in the Kanto, and under Yayoi cultural influence in the Tohoku, who may or may not have been under direct Yamato rule, and some of whom may not have identified themselves as Japanese; and finally the indigenous Jomon who were non-Japanese who still lived in much of the mountainous interior in northern Honshu and Hokkaido.

The author does not explain this relationship between the Kofun and the existing Jomon in regards to the Emishi. There were areas still dominated by the *san-I*, the mountain barbarians, which the *Nihon-shoki* identified as *the* Emishi. These peoples who lived by hunting, gathering and dry agriculture were no doubt the core component of those who made their way in the eighth century to Hokkaido to eventually become the Ainu ancestors known as Satsumon. These mainly non-Japanese people continued their dominance in areas of the Tohoku where rice could not be grown, and they flourished well into the Medieval era in the northernmost areas of the Tohoku.

Emishi Migration in the 3rd through 5th centuries

It is clear that in the northern Tohoku region where rice cultivation was not practiced the Jomon population had a resurgence. In fact, the Latest Jomon population may have re-settled areas of the Tohoku abandoned or taken over earlier by the proto-Japanese (see The Emishi, Kofun Culture, and the Expansion of Yamato). In fact, the latest evidence is for a movement of Jomon peoples from southern Hokkaido into northern Honshu during the third through the fifth centuries AD which is quite late, and fully into the Kofun period of Japanese history. This late migration may point to the historical population that became known as the Emishi in later Japanese history. This may have been caused by an environmental shift in weather that made it difficult to grow rice in the Tohoku, and thus caused the decline of Yayoi communities. What is known is that in northern Honshu areas which saw to early rice cultivation no longer produced rice, and this is known from archeological sites (Kumagai 2004:22-25).

Therefore, the Kofun population is confirmed to have been living in areas of the Tohoku that became contested during the phase of Yamato expansion in the seventh century AD. However, there was a resurgence of Jomon people in the same area along with a different economy. Namely, hunting, gathering and dry agriculture which took over former areas that had seen Yayoi settlement. What does this mean? It could mean that former areas of Yayoi settlement had been abandoned due to external attack, or it could mean that these settlements reverted back to a reliance on hunting and gathering as the climate changed. That the Yayoi Japanese settlers came into the Tohoku is evident, but there was a counter movement of Jomon settlement back into the Tohoku as well aided in part by a minor cold climate period which rendered rice cultivation impractical.

I would then argue that this counter-migration would explain the rise of the Emishi power as an independent development in the Tohoku that challenged the Yamato state's expansion into this very same area. So though the Kofun types may have had an effect on the population of the Tohoku, by and large the Emishi peoples were of Jomon extraction which would contradict Hanihara's view. Two different cultures clashed over

the Tohoku during the expansion phase of both peoples. It is this group that the historical sources identify as the Emishi.

Contrary to a number of modern revisionist accounts, the Emishi were not seen as being composed of disparate ethnic groups in alliance with each other. One revisionist account sees Tungusic Emishi in alliance with Ainu, a total fabrication (2002:42). Also, there is no evidence that the Emishi was a competing Japanese state that combined the Jomon people who were lead by the Mononobe clan who fled the Kinai after their defeat. This theory has been totally discredited as have other similar ones. The problem is not just lack of evidence for these scenarios, but actual fabrication (such as the forged documents about the *Go-O* or "Five Kings" of the Tohoku). The Emishi population was changing through the close settlement of Yayoi Japanese, but nevertheless was basically a Jomon population with non-Japanese cultural roots.

Epilogue: The Impact of Kofun Culture on the Emishi

Though it is not possible to make a definite conclusion regarding the exact make-up of the Emishi population, indirect evidence points to the Emishi as a mainly Jomon with the addition of Kofun represented by the pre-conquest Japanese settlers who joined them. However, even given the probable re-migration of a Jomon population back into the northern and central regions of the Tohoku, the true nature of the great families (*gozoku*) who created Kofun tombs in the Tohoku and their relationship to the Yamato both politically and culturally is not known--whether they saw themselves as part of Yamato's Empire or as a competing power. Also, we don't know if they spoke a Jomon language, and thus had adopted Yayoi culture, or spoke an early form of Japanese--a critical point. Whether they were themselves originally of Jomon descent or not is of prime importance in interpreting who they were (in this scenario their population changed as they took in Japanese migrants). If so, it is not difficult to conclude that they made up a good proportion of the Emishi population. If not then they were Japanese speaking frontier families and their descendants. The findings presented by Kumagai tend to point to the Kofun culture in the Tohoku as having been the work of pre-conquest Japanese migrants from the Kanto distinctly different from the mainly Jomon Emishi, but whose development took place alongside them. A recent study may help clarify this relationship further (see Tohoku Kofun Population:sixth through eighth centuries AD).

A great deal of trade took place between the areas of Kofun culture and the regions of the existing Jomon, traceable by different pottery traditions that differentiated the migrant's method of making pottery as opposed to the native Jomon. This is not Jomon pots versus Yayoi pots, but rather between different Yayoi type pottery traditions (that even Jomon peoples adopted). By the time of the Kofun tomb building period Jomon pots were no longer being made anywhere--even in Hokkaido. Where the evidence stands, the scenario is most likely that the Kofun centers were areas of an early Japanese migration from the Kanto (traceable to the same style of pottery from that region) that were surrounded by Jomon peoples.

With Kofun development came rice cultivation. Areas where rice growing was marginal the Jomon hunting and gathering lifestyle was still dominant. Areas of Japanese settlement was not south of a clear line, but rather in the fertile plains and areas near rivers. The Jomon re-migration into areas further south was also not characterized by conquest north of a particular line, but rather by penetration into areas further south that once grew rice. There were many pockets where communities of migrants lived side-by-side with the Jomon.

This picture is also complicated because a proportion of Jomon Emishi began to settle in larger communities and began to cultivate grains, including rice, though their dependence was never to the extent as that of their Japanese speaking neighbors. We know from the *Nihon Shoki* that Japanese speakers (called "captives of the Emishi" most likely from these Kofun settlements) joined in their resistance to the Yamato court, and sided with the Emishi in their conflicts. They probably did not become central to the resistance evident from the language difference.

The contribution of Kofun culture to the Emishi is unmistakable as evidenced by their burial goods. Emishi tombs have iron implements such as agricultural tools, *warabite-to* swords, horse equipment and armor of Japanese manufacture. This is evidence of not just transfer of military technology, but also of a burgeoning trade and cultural influence between the Kofun settlements and the Emishi.

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Contemporary Illustrations of Emishi

Back to Main Menu

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