

# Re-thinking Jōmon and Ainu in Japanese History

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**Abstract:** For almost a century after E.S. Morse's 1877 excavations at Ōmori shell mound demonstrated the existence of a Stone Age culture in the archipelago, it was generally accepted that the Japanese people dated back only to the Yayoi period, the time when wet-rice farming was introduced from the continent. The Stone Age was associated with pre-Japanese peoples such as the Ainu. By the 1980s, however, the idea that the Stone Age Jōmon period formed a key component in Japanese culture became widely accepted in both academia and the popular imagination. 'Jōmon' became a household word for the first time. This essay uses recent interdisciplinary work in archaeology, linguistics and genetics to re-evaluate the contribution of the Jōmon to Japan. New genetic research has started to find significant Jōmon ancestry in ancient Korea, showing that Jōmon genomes were not limited to the Japanese archipelago. DNA studies have also concluded that Yayoi, Kofun and modern 'mainland' Japanese populations derive only around 10% of their ancestry from the Jōmon, a figure which rises to 25% for early modern and contemporary Okinawans. Such figures are comparable to reported levels of hunter-gatherer ancestry found in many European countries. Linguistically, with the exception of Ainuic in the north, Jōmon languages were replaced by the incoming Japonic family with, at best, limited borrowing. The idea that Jōmon culture has been a dominant factor in shaping modern Japan also requires reconsideration. Many 'Jōmony' traits in historic Japan reflect ecological constraints—there are only so many

ways to eat an acorn. Other such traits can be seen as part of a transcultural strategic resistance to Japan rather than as unchanging tradition. While the Jōmon has proven a fecund source of ideology in post war Japan, its actual contribution to historic Japanese civilisation has been small. This conclusion requires a re-evaluation of why the Ainu in Hokkaido were not absorbed in the same way as Jōmon cultures elsewhere and why they went on to make such an important contribution to the history of the northern archipelago.

**Keywords:** Jōmon, Ainu, Korea, palaeogenomics, language contact, forager-farmer relations

Over the past few decades, the idea that the prehistoric Jōmon period (ca. 14,500 - 1000 BC) formed a key component in modern Japanese culture has become widely accepted in both academia and the popular imagination. This valorisation of deep prehistory may seem an unlikely trend for a country with an ultra-modern society. Certainly, most scholars had previously associated the Stone Age with pre-Japanese peoples such as the Ainu, Emishi or Hayato. The 'Japanese proper'—Torii Ryuzō's *koyū Nihonjin*—began with rice and the Yayoi period (now dated ca. 1000 BC - AD 250). Although the historical position of the Yayoi was poorly understood by early archaeologists,

by the mid-twentieth century it seemed clear that since the Stone Age people did not grow rice, they could not be counted as real Japanese.<sup>1</sup> As late as the 1950s, the consensus was that Jōmon objects had no connection with the central tradition of Japanese art and culture.<sup>2</sup> The term ‘Jōmon period’ itself only became established in archaeological circles at the beginning of the 1960s and took about a decade to become widely accepted.<sup>3</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, many Europeans and Americans developed a fascination with the Ainu, the native people of northern Japan long associated with the Stone Age inhabitants of the archipelago. The anthropological ideas in common use at the time suggested the Ainu could be considered as a member of the Caucasoid or ‘white race’. If that were true, then ancient mixing between the Ainu and Japanese seemed to explain how the latter—a Mongoloid or ‘yellow race’—had managed to become the first nation outside western Europe and the United States to enter the industrial age. To this end, Western writers emphasised that the Japanese were a mixed or ‘mongrel’ people, a concept initially regarded with distaste or horror by the Japanese themselves. Given the prestige of Western science, however, most Japanese scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to accept some form of ‘mixed nation’ theory. Anthropologist Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863-1913) even argued that Japan’s mixed ethnic heritage made it—like Britain with its Angles, Saxons and Danes—a stronger country.<sup>4</sup>

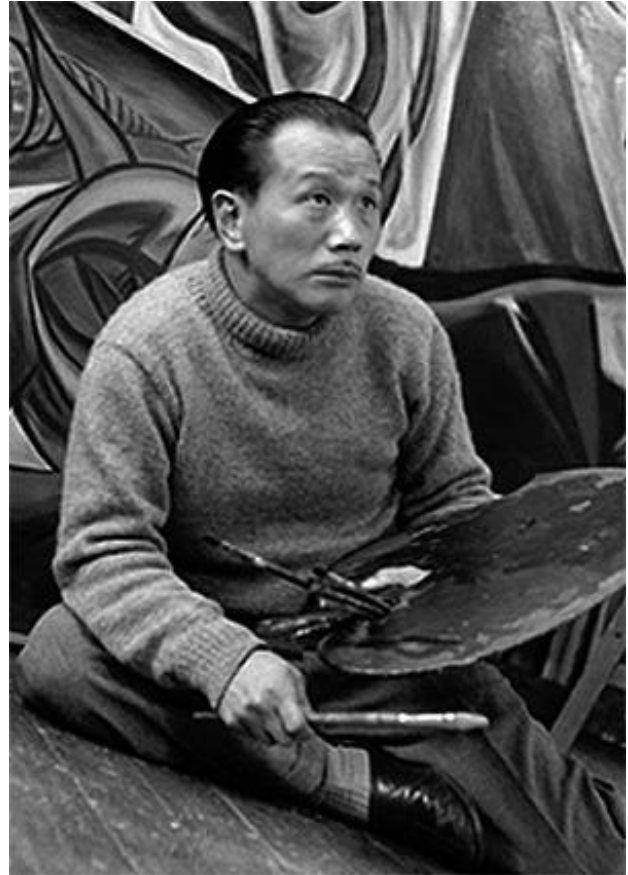
By the end of the nineteenth century, Japan’s victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) cemented a new national pride. The Meiji emperor bestowed cigarettes marked ‘imperial gift’ to the troops who were said to be ‘overcome with gratitude’.<sup>5</sup> A newspaper editorial opined that Westerners would now ‘call us as we call ourselves: Nippon, which has a meaning, the rising sun, and there will be no more “Japan” or “Japs” in the foreign press’.<sup>6</sup> It

was not until 1941 that the Anthropological Society of Tokyo changed its name to the Anthropological Society of Nippon. However, the embarrassment of being a ‘mongrel nation’ was initially overcome by the physical anthropologists of that society who used new scientific techniques to emphasise the ‘pure blood’ ancestry of the Japanese. Hasebe Kotondo (1882-1969) was appointed professor of anthropology at Tokyo Imperial University in 1936. In a radio lecture three years later, Hasebe expounded an extreme theory of Japanese origins wherein almost any migration from the outside was negated. ‘I believe’, he announced, ‘that soon after the birth of mankind, the ancestors of today’s Japanese occupied this island. So, leaving aside the birthplace of mankind, there is no homeland for the Japanese but Japan.’<sup>7</sup> Because of its scientific veneer, the work of both Hasebe and Kyoto University anthropologist Kiyono Kenji (1885-1955) received widespread support. Kiyono was sacked from Kyoto University in 1938 for stealing hundreds of old documents from Buddhist temples. During wartime, however, he was hired by the government to conduct research and later wrote two books on Japanese origins aimed at the general public. The work of Hasebe and Kiyono even garnered support from Marxist scholars who regarded their research to be ‘as scientific as the limitations of the bourgeoisie allow’.<sup>8</sup> In the post war era, the ‘pure blood’ approach of Hasebe and Kiyono was continued in the ‘transformation’ model of Suzuki Hisashi (1912-2004). Suzuki acknowledged that while there had been some immigration into Japan, ‘the number of migrants was probably so small that they had almost nothing to do with the genetic structure of the subsequent Japanese population.’<sup>9</sup>

## Jōmonesque Japan

The post war re-imagination of Jōmon culture

began with *avant-garde* artist Okamoto Tarō (1911-1996). A student in Paris in the 1930s, Okamoto attended lectures on anthropology by Marcel Mauss and developed an interest in primitivism, an aesthetic approach which idealised so-called primitive art. Returning to Japan just before the German invasion of France, Okamoto was called up to serve as an artist with Japanese forces in China. In February 1952, two months before the end of the American Occupation, he published an essay titled *Jōmon dokiron*, later translated as 'On Jōmon ceramics'. This essay provides one of the most important early post war discussions of Japanese culture and its future possibilities. Okamoto had clearly thought a great deal about the prehistoric mind and his writing is still of considerable anthropological interest seventy years after it was published. Okamoto used the Jōmon to critique elitist aesthetics of Japanese cultural production. Japanese culture had previously been appreciated in terms of 'elegance' and 'understatement'. Okamoto noted that 'Jōmon ceramics represent the antithesis of the harmony and refined elegance associated with Japanese tradition', lamenting that 'the aesthetes and the lovers of that tradition cannot accept' those ceramics. In what at the time was an original and controversial position, Okamoto's positive evaluation of Jōmon pots as *art* began to change what could be considered as authentically Japanese. For the first time, the Jōmon could be placed into the broad sweep of artistic tradition in the Japanese Islands.



**Fig. 1. Okamoto Tarō pictured in 1953.**  
Source: [Wikipedia](#).

The way in which Okamoto wrote about the Jōmon nevertheless contained an inherent ambivalence. His ideas could nurture a new critique of Japanese identity or they could renegotiate the old tradition that had been tainted by the war. As with all ideologies, both could happen at the same time. In the 1950s, architect Tange Kenzō (1913-2005) became the most influential public figure to build on the radical idea of Jōmon and Yayoi as two contrasting elements of the Japanese past, elements which could now be employed to shift the negative associations of Japanese tradition away from nationalism and imperialism. Tange's wartime projects had already attempted to go beyond Western modernism through the incorporation of classical Japanese

architecture. ‘We must ignore both Anglo-American culture and the pre-existing cultures of the Southeast Asian races’ he wrote in 1942, adding that ‘To admire Angkor Wat is the mark of an amateur.’<sup>10</sup> Tange won three architectural competitions between 1941 and 1943, including a design for a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere Commemorative Building at the foot of Mount Fuji.<sup>11</sup> While none of these projects was actually built, after the war Tange continued his interest in using Japanese traditional motifs in his architecture, though often in combination with a rehabilitation of international modernism under the particular influence of Le Corbusier. Cho argues that it was the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) who played a crucial role in Tange’s growing acceptance of ‘primitive’ Japan. During his visit to Japan from 1950-52, Noguchi placed a new emphasis on the aesthetic value of the country’s ancient roots. Noguchi proposed several changes to Tange’s plans for the Hiroshima Peace Park, changes which incorporated formal links with prehistoric artefacts such as *magatama* beads, *dōtaku* bronze bells and *haniwa* tomb sculptures.<sup>12</sup>

### **Nichibunken and the Hegemony of ‘Forest Civilisation’**

If Okamoto Tarō’s attention to the artistic aspects of Jōmon culture already gained supporters in the 1950s and, in the hands of people like Tange Kenzō, seemed to provide a path to new cultural production combining modern and traditional frames, there was still a need to account for how the Jōmon—previously relegated to the pejoratively primitive stage of Japanese history—had in fact contributed so much to the story of the nation. This at first seemingly challenging task was accomplished through narratives which managed to link European Romantic images of the tribal forest with new concerns over environmentalism and

the ‘limits to growth’. By the 1980s, an unrelentingly positive view of the Jōmon as a ‘forest civilisation’ was becoming hegemonic. The high priest of this hegemony was Umehara Takeshi (1925-2019), a former university lecturer in philosophy who became the first director of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies or *Nichibunken* in 1987.

There is no doubt that the establishment of the Nichibunken under conservative prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro was an attempt to build new official ideologies about Japanese identity. In a speech made in 1985, Nakasone stated that ‘Forty years after the war and sixty years into the reign of his majesty the [Shōwa] emperor, it is time to reconsider Japanese identity. While various ideas have so far intruded from foreign countries, the time has come for us to clear away all those ideas and to form our own conclusions.’<sup>13</sup> Umehara worked closely with Nakasone, even writing two books with him. Umehara’s voluminous writings—his collected works comprise twenty volumes—gave a new orthodoxy to the idea that Japanese culture can be characterised by a unique mixture of hunter-gathering and farming traditions. Umehara adopted this idea with little or no mention of the previous writings of Okamoto and Tange. ‘In Japan’, he wrote, ‘where the introduction of rice cultivation was comparatively late, its blending with the native forest culture and the hunting and gathering culture created an amalgamation unique to Japan.’<sup>14</sup> While Umehara’s explication of this thesis was almost entirely derivative, his influence lies in the way his position offered him the opportunity to expound this philosophy at a national level. Umehara was also instrumental in hiring the geographer Yasuda Yoshinori who had previously been a struggling teaching assistant at Hiroshima University and a suspect in the 1987 murder of the Dean of the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences. Cleared of any involvement in the crime, Yasuda moved to the Nichibunken in 1988 and went on to become the most vociferous

supporter of Umehara's ideas.<sup>15</sup>

While the term *goyō gakusha* (literally 'government scholar') dates back to the Meiji and did not originally have a pejorative meaning, writers such as Umehara and Yasuda can properly be considered as ideologues, rather than as academics who attempted to nuance or question existing narratives. In Umehara and Yasuda's writings, the link between the Jōmon and modern Japan is not mystical as with Okamoto but brought unhesitatingly to the front and coupled with the nation. Umehara wrote that 'Strangely enough, the distribution of Jōmon pottery corresponds almost exactly to the territory of Japan today.'<sup>16</sup> Yasuda was even more insistent that 'The area of distribution of Jōmon pottery is the unique territory of the Japanese *minzoku* [Volk]', arguing that, 'The area of distribution of Jōmon pottery means that a shared culture and language existed there.'<sup>17</sup> Few archaeologists have made this case in quite such extreme terms; nevertheless there is a broad if usually unarticulated assumption shared by the archaeological community that the Jōmon corresponded to the land of Japan and was not found outside that country, for example in Korea or Sakhalin. Kobayashi Tatsuo perhaps the leading contemporary Jōmon expert, claims that because the 'meaning' of Jōmon pottery was 'not understood' in Korea, there was no real population movement from Jōmon Japan to the peninsula.<sup>18</sup> In other words, Jōmon pottery was the unique cultural expression of the prehistoric Japanese nation. Archaeologist Fukuda Masahiro is unusual in arguing that northeast Hokkaido was not a major area of Jōmon settlement and in fact formed a boundary zone of that culture *within* the modern territory of Japan.<sup>19</sup> Extensive settlement of the Sea of Okhotsk coast of Hokkaido only developed with the medieval Okhotsk, Satsumon and Ainu cultures, perhaps because of the new importance of trade.

Within this framework equating the Jōmon with

modern Japan, the position of Okinawa remains especially ambivalent. During the Ice Age, it is possible that humans may have settled the Ryukyu islands from Taiwan sometime after 40,000 years ago, although the archaeological evidence tends to support movements from Kyushu. After the end of the Ice Age around 12,000 years ago, by contrast, it is clear from ceramic typology that Jōmon groups moved south from Kyushu to colonise the Amami and Okinawa archipelagos.<sup>20</sup> The Neolithic cultures of these islands are sometimes termed 'Ryukyu Jōmon', although the label 'Shellmidden period' is more widely used. 'Jōmon' is never applied to the southern Ryukyus since no evidence of Jōmon culture has been found there. However, the recent publication of Jōmon genomes from the Neolithic site of Nagabaka suggests that the settlement of at least Miyako Island also occurred from the north.<sup>21</sup>

New DNA evidence is also forcing us to completely reconsider the position of Jōmon people on the Korean peninsula. Of thirteen currently published ancient genomes from Korea, all but one has some degree of Jōmon ancestry. The samples date from the Neolithic to the Three Kingdoms period, a span covering roughly 6000 BC to AD 500. The reported degree of Jōmon ancestry ranges from around 10 to 95%. Furthermore, the sample without Jōmon ancestry (a Bronze Age individual from Taejungni) may lack sufficient statistical resolution to exclude a Jōmon component.<sup>22</sup> These findings are unexpected given that present-day Koreans have no Jōmon genetic ancestry reported in studies so far conducted. A new pre-print raises the possibility that Jōmon ancestry may also be present in modern Koreans but in a small quantity difficult to analyse with sufficient statistical rigour.<sup>23</sup> While further research will be essential to understand these results, two broad possibilities suggest themselves. The first is that Jōmon groups from Japan moved to Korea as part of trade or other activities and settled there in significant numbers. The archaeological evidence for such

trade is extensive<sup>24</sup>, although it is difficult to gauge the number of people involved. The second possibility is that genetically Jōmon populations have a deep ancestry in Korea. The second scenario is perhaps the more likely, though many questions still remain.

In addition to writing about the Jōmon, Umehara Takeshi also attempted a re-evaluation of Ainu culture. As noted above, the Ainu had long been seen as unrelated to Japanese culture proper, but Umehara proposed that the Ainu contribution had, in fact, been of great significance in Japanese cultural history. Given past colonial discrimination against Ainu people by the Japanese government, this sentiment undoubtedly resonated with many people. The problem with Umehara's argument was its assumption that certain 'primitive' or 'basal' cultural elements had been retained over time and transmitted from the Jōmon through the Ainu into modern Japan; studying the Ainu thus enabled scholars to reconstruct the 'original' or 'proto' culture (*gen-bunka*) of Japan.<sup>25</sup> Given the advances in biological anthropology discussed below, it was no longer possible to insist that Japan was an ethnically 'pure' nation. Umehara admitted that the Japanese were of 'mixed blood' but suggested that the 'maternal blood' came from native elements such as the Ainu and Jōmon, whereas the 'paternal blood' was Korean and Chinese. This formulation gained some nationalist acceptance since it emphasised the deep autochthonous nature of the Japanese people while nevertheless acknowledging that Japan had received many elements of 'paternal' political culture from China and Korea. For Umehara, there was nevertheless 'no question that the things that are native (*dochaku*) have a stronger influence than the things that came in from outside'.<sup>26</sup>

This type of sophistry was surprisingly influential in the context of arguments advocated by Umehara and his followers

regarding purported links between Jōmon culture, religion and environmentalism. Such arguments built on European Romanticism and Orientalism yet plugged into concerns specific to post war Japan.<sup>27</sup> Umehara's Jōmon-inspired concept of a Japanese 'forest civilisation' has been critiqued on many levels. His longings for a Japanese *Ur*-identity in the native forest paid no attention to the actual history of woodlands in the archipelago.<sup>28</sup> For Umehara, the Jōmon provided an original, native identity standing against modernity, the West and even Han China. The possibility of such an identity had earlier been imagined by the folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962) and others. Yet there was always a danger, perhaps even an inevitability, that this way of thinking about the world would become (re)-connected with imperial or *tennōsei* ideology. This inclination is clearest in the work of Yasuda Yoshinori, who laments the educational policy of post war Japan which 'does not allow his majesty the emperor—who views Amaterasu as the supreme deity—to attend the Diet'.<sup>29</sup> Despite the outlandish, often childish claims of Yasuda—who also argues that it was Japan which developed the first families some 16,000 years ago, in contrast to Europe where family life was absent until the fifteenth century AD—his unambiguous support for the emperor system seeks to enlist Japanese readers in the familiar aura of the imperial way.<sup>30</sup>

### Assimilating the Jōmon

Nineteenth century views of Japanese origins posited the conquest of an aboriginal race by superior immigrants. Over time, however, the idea that the first inhabitants of the archipelago were somehow primitive or inferior was gradually abandoned and the 'affluence' of Japan's Stone Age came to be emphasised by both Japanese and foreign scholars.<sup>31</sup> A broader tension remained with respect to the issue of how Japanese people should interact with

outsiders. In the early Meiji, this question was debated through the politicised lens of whether the mixed residence of Japanese and foreigners should be allowed in the interior of the country away from the treaty ports. The various arguments made for and against have been analysed at some length by Oguma Eiji.<sup>32</sup> A key issue was the extent to which the Japanese were considered to be able to naturally assimilate outsiders. Supporters of mixed residence pointed out that ancient Japan had received numerous migrants from Korea and China, people who had made important contributions to Japanese civilisation. Opponents stressed that the Japanese were such a ‘weak’ race that they would quickly be swamped by the ‘superior’ Europeans.

A particular feature of the ‘mixed residence’ debate was the question of whether the Japanese people would be forever confined to the Japanese Islands or would progress enough to ‘go out into the world and migrate abroad’.<sup>33</sup> At the time, this often implied whether the Japanese would ‘progress’ enough to secure their own colonies. The post war writings of Umehara and his followers shy away from any suggestion of actual colonial expansion.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the *insularity* of the archipelago is lauded as a way to preserve the true existence of the Japanese. Yasuda expresses his gratitude that the Japanese archipelago is ‘surrounded by water on all four sides’, while simultaneously claiming that ‘If anyone lives for ten years in this beautiful Japanese archipelago, speaks Japanese and eats Japanese food, then that person can become Japanese.’<sup>35</sup> This romanticised view of becoming Japanese ignores not only legal questions of citizenship but also the lived experience of non-Japanese people in Japan. Progress is blithely re-defined as keeping foreigners out of Japan and allowing only a certain type of assimilation to intrude into the body politic. At the same time, it is increasingly accepted by both scholars and the general public that the prehistoric Jōmon people played an integral role in the Japanese

nation. In the second half of this essay, I argue that there is now a need to re-consider that conclusion. I discuss and critique three aspects of the potential Jōmon contribution to Japan: language, genetics and culture.

## Language Contact and the Jōmon-Yayoi Transition

Most historical linguists agree that Japonic (the family comprising Japanese and Ryukyuan) first arrived in the Japanese archipelago during the Yayoi period. This dating suggests that Japonic spread in association with agriculture and Bronze Age population dispersals in Island East Asia, a conclusion supported by interdisciplinary research.<sup>36</sup> After the arrival of Japonic, however, all Jōmon languages were not necessarily immediately replaced by the new language. Both the *Manyōshū* and the *Tale of Genji* report rural people twittering ‘like birds’, assumed by Maher and others to mean they spoke a different language from standard, court Japanese.<sup>37</sup> While this remains a distinct possibility, it also reflects a literary trope: when a character in the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* compared rustic speech to the ‘chirping of birds’, he was deliberately recalling the words of the ninth-century Chinese poet Bo Juyi.<sup>38</sup>

Ainu, a language which almost certainly has a deep antiquity in the Japanese Islands, remained widely spoken across Hokkaido and the circum-Sea of Okhotsk until the nineteenth century. Some Ainu-speaking populations seem to have lived in the northern Tohoku until the Middle Ages or even later, although few details are available. We do not know for sure if languages or language families other than Ainuic existed in the Jōmon period, but consideration of common drivers of linguistic diversity suggests there was likely a considerable number of Jōmon languages. Neither can we necessarily assume that Ainuic

was the only language family found in Jōmon Hokkaido. Some degree of contact between Japonic and Jōmon languages is implied by the fact that the former appears to have spread in a geographically convoluted fashion.<sup>39</sup> That is, Japonic—and Yayoi culture more broadly—did not spread in a consistent ‘wave of advance’ from northern Kyushu; instead, a complex series of both maritime and inland movements suggests that expansion was in part affected by social interactions with Jōmon societies. Nevertheless, there is little clear evidence for sub-stratum influence on Japonic from preceding Jōmon languages.

Since the early twentieth century, some linguists have proposed that Japanese is a ‘mixed language’ or *Mischsprache*. Between the two world wars, the Soviet scholar Y.D. Polivanov argued that Japanese combined Altaic and Austronesian elements, an idea later taken up by Japanese linguists such as Murayama Shichirō.<sup>40</sup> Such a hypothesis would certainly mean extensive social admixture between ‘native’ and ‘incoming’ populations. However, these theories were popular when knowledge of the relevant archaeological evidence was poor and supporters of mixed language theories for Japanese have paid little attention to archaeological evidence for such admixture. In many cases, these theories represent a way to *avoid* acknowledging that Japanese is descended from an earlier proto-language following the standard historical comparative method. If one argues that the Japanese people have very ancient roots in the archipelago, then the assumption follows that the Japanese language must also be very old and therefore cannot be analysed with the classical methods used in historical linguistics for other language families such as Indo-European.<sup>41</sup> Sakiyama dismisses classical methods as the ‘old-fashioned genetic model’ and proposes the alternative that Japanese was formed as a ‘mixed language’. For such scholars, this approach has the advantage that Japanese can be regarded as an ancient

national language, maintaining its ethnic authenticity despite various miscellaneous additions made over the centuries.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout history, human societies have, with very few exceptions, been in contact with each other. The languages spoken by those societies also naturally come into contact. Yet, the concept of ‘mixed languages’—a concept which assumes a language could have two separate ancestors—has been controversial. Few examples of actual mixed languages have been proposed.<sup>43</sup> What happens when two or more languages come into contact is largely determined by sociolinguistic factors.<sup>44</sup> Linguists have classified various types of contact phenomena, including borrowing, pidgins, creoles and mixed languages; these phenomena are understood to occur under rather different sociolinguistic conditions. Unfortunately, the literature on Japanese as a mixed language has paid little attention to sociolinguistic theory. Two papers published in the 1990s by Sakiyama Osamu, an Austronesian specialist, illustrate some common problems. The most fundamental issue is the author’s *a priori* assumptions about the historical context of language contact in Japan. ‘It is reasonable to estimate’, Sakiyama writes with no supporting evidence, ‘that there were several waves of Austronesian peoples to the Ryūkyū-Japanese Archipelago.’ He goes on to state that, ‘Since the peoples who brought the word *hai* (*hae*) [meaning ‘south’ or ‘southern wind’ in Japanese and, according to Sakiyama, derived from Proto-Austronesian \**paRi* ‘sting ray’] were older Indonesians, the earliest migration might have occurred after the late Jōmon period.’ No explanation for this is provided, not least with respect to what might be meant by ‘older Indonesians’.<sup>45</sup> A second wave followed in the ‘terminal Jōmon - early Yayoi’ when Austronesians brought rice to western Japan via the Ryukyus. Sakiyama proposes yet another, third stage of Austronesian influence on Japan occurred during the Kofun period. These various



Austronesian migrations stemmed first from the ‘northern area of New Guinea’, then from the evergreen forest areas of East Asia, and then perhaps from the Yangtze basin.<sup>46</sup> Despite the broad chronological range of Sakiyama’s scheme—covering more than three thousand years—his proposed linguistic cognates are almost entirely with Proto-Austronesian, a language estimated to have existed on Taiwan more than five thousand years ago.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the most sophisticated sociolinguistic model for Japanese as a contact language is John Maher’s North Kyushu creole theory.<sup>48</sup> Maher understands the social conditions involved in the formation of pidgins and creoles. Yet he also makes unwarranted assumptions about migrations into the archipelago, while downplaying the social impact likely associated with the arrival of farmers in the Yayoi. Particular sociolinguistic conditions which might lead to ‘mixed language’ formation include multilingualism rather than bilingualism, a lack of intention by one group to adopt a specific target language, and occupational groups with more or less equal social prestige.<sup>49</sup> These conditions seem unlikely to apply to the Yayoi or Kofun periods.<sup>50</sup> The most likely location for the development of a trading creole in the Yayoi period is in Okinawa, where an extensive trade in tropical shells developed with Kyushu. There is, however, no linguistic evidence for such creolisation in the formation of the Ryukyuan languages.<sup>51</sup>

A more classical or conservative approach to language contact during the Jōmon-Yayoi transition is represented by research on borrowings between Japonic and Jōmon languages, the latter proxied by possible Ainu loanwords into Old Japanese, particularly in eastern Japan. Kupchik has even proposed Ainu loanwords can be found in the dialects of Hachijō Island in the Izu chain.<sup>52</sup> Chronologically, these proposed borrowings would probably date to the late first millennium

AD and would seem to relate to contacts with the expanding Yamato state rather than to forager-farmer interactions as part of the spread of agriculture. As an archaeologist, the regionally diverse expansion of Yayoi culture across Japan suggests to me that some degree of language contact, multilingualism and borrowing would be expected. The scarcity of such evidence so far proposed by linguists is therefore all the more striking.

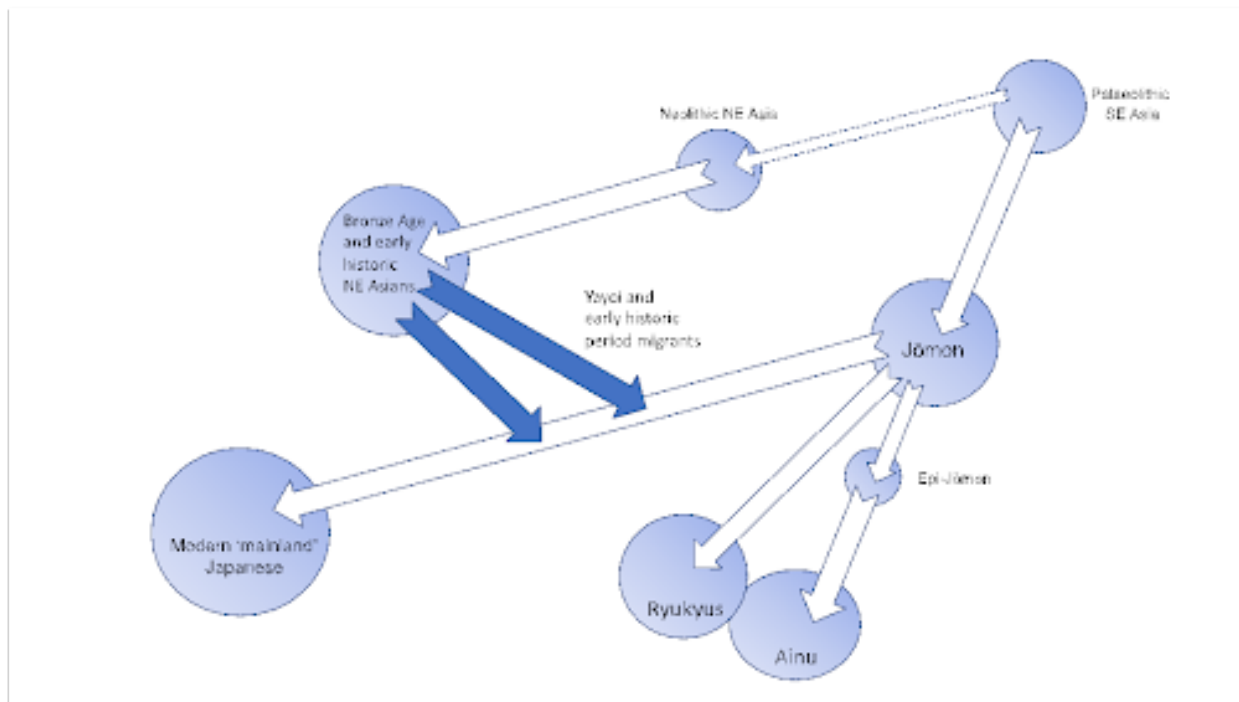
### **From Physical Anthropology to Ancient DNA**

Japan has a long history of research in physical or biological anthropology. While the methods used in the early days of this discipline are now out-dated, the field has changed over time, adopting new techniques and maintaining relevance to debates on Japanese origins. The 1980s, when I was beginning my own studies, were an especially interesting time with the introduction of non-metric cranial and dental analyses using traits considered to be less influenced by environmental factors, as well as early applications of ancient DNA.<sup>53</sup> While Japanese biological anthropology was slow to incorporate full genome analyses of ancient DNA, various international collaborations have worked to increase the range of genetic samples from Japan over the last few years.

Suzuki’s so-called ‘transformation theory’, which denied a significant role for prehistoric immigration, remained influential in Japanese anthropology until the 1980s when the role of population movements from the continent once again became widely accepted. Hanihara Kazurō’s ‘dual structure hypothesis’, published in detail in English in 1991 but building on earlier contributions in Japanese, quickly became the new orthodoxy (Fig. 2). Hanihara’s model argued that ‘admixture’ had taken place between Jōmon and Yayoi but left open the question of exactly what that involved. However, the name given to his model implied

that both Jōmon and Yayoi were of more or less equal importance in the formation of the modern Japanese: one could not exist without the other. When Hanihara published his 1991 paper—which according to Google Scholar had been cited 475 times by July 2022—he had retired from Tokyo University and moved to the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, then still headed by Umehara, who incorporated the model into his view of Japanese culture as a ‘harmonious’ integration of Jōmon and Yayoi. In recent publications I have discussed in some detail how Hanihara’s dual structure hypothesis came to be accepted as evidence for the ‘equal’ mixing of Jōmon and Yayoi.<sup>54</sup> This ideological dimension of the

hypothesis resulted from a complex discourse which still requires further analysis. For instance, German anatomist Erwin von Bälz (1849-1913) argued that physical differences amongst the Japanese could be attributed to class, an idea resurrected in a recent study which characterises Japanese populations as ‘central’ or ‘peripheral’.<sup>55</sup> However, Hanihara himself had supported a large number of migrants in the Yayoi period, estimating that over a million people had moved to Japan between the Yayoi and the seventh century AD.<sup>56</sup> In that same article, he proposed that the ratio of Jōmon to migrant lineages by the Kofun and early historic eras was 1:9 or 2:8.



**Fig. 2. The ‘dual structure’ theory of Japanese population history.**  
 Source: re-drawn by the author based on Hanihara, ‘Dual structure model’.

New genomic analyses of ancient Japan have vastly increased our understanding of the population history of the Islands.<sup>57</sup> These studies have confirmed that there was a large migration from the Korean peninsula into Japan in the Yayoi and that by the second century BC farming groups in northern Kyushu had less than 20% Jōmon ancestry. At the Kuma-Nishioda site (Fukuoka), Jōmon ancestry was only 10%, a figure equivalent to that of the modern ‘mainland’ Japanese. Although Hanihara proposed that Okinawan populations retained a high level of Jōmon ancestry, genomic analysis of an early modern cemetery on Miyako Island and of contemporary Okinawans finds only around 25% Jōmon ancestry, supporting a large-scale migration to the Ryukyu islands from Japan in the medieval period.<sup>58</sup> These studies show that even in Okinawa the genetic contribution of the Jōmon to the later Japanese was relatively small. By way of comparison, it can be noted that the hunter-gatherer ancestry of the modern Japanese is equivalent to or even lower than that estimated for many European countries.<sup>59</sup> The only Yayoi-period genomes so far published which have a significant Jōmon component are from Shimomotoyama cave in Sasebo City, Nagasaki. The estimated Jōmon ancestry for this population ranges between around 45 and 60%.<sup>60</sup> There is no evidence that agriculture had been adopted at Shimomotoyama. Nevertheless, despite the persistence of Jōmon lifeways and cranial morphology, at least 40% of the Shimomotoyama genome already reflected *non*-Jōmon ancestry by the first century BC. These genomic findings will no doubt be extended over the next few years and currently unexpected findings can perhaps be anticipated. Nevertheless, the study of ancient DNA currently supports only a minor

genetic contribution by Jōmon people to modern Japan.

### Jōmon Culture as Resistance/Social Critique

Even if the latest research in linguistics and genetics suggests that the Jōmon provided only a minor contribution to historic Japan, it could still be argued that the Jōmon had a significant *cultural* impact on later societies in the archipelago. The artist Okamoto Tarō was the first to position the Jōmon in terms of resistance to elite or reactionary elements within Japanese culture. An important study by Yoshida Yasuyuki and John Ertl, discussed in more detail below, provides further examples of the contemporary use of the Jōmon as social critique.<sup>61</sup> From an academic perspective, the question of Jōmon as resistance is taken up by archaeologist Segawa Takurō in his 2017 book *Jōmon no shisō*, a title which can be translated as the ‘thought or philosophy of the Jōmon’.<sup>62</sup> Born in 1958, Segawa specialises in the prehistory of Hokkaido and has published a number of books on early Ainu history. A graduate of the Department of Archaeology of Okayama University, Segawa’s body of work adopts a materialist, broadly Marxist perspective and, in that sense, his *Jōmon no shisō* at first seems to represent a departure from his earlier writings. The dust jacket of his 2017 book shouts ‘Ainu, sea people, southern islands... The Jōmon is alive!!!’ (*Ainu, kaimin, nantō ... Jōmon wa, ikite iru!!!*), suggesting an apparent similarity with Umehara’s writings. Segawa explains that ‘The Jōmon did not disappear 2000 years ago, but remained alive and breathing in our deep strata at the margins of the archipelago or while showing a different appearance.’<sup>63</sup> The word ‘deep stratum/strata’ (*shinsō*) was

especially favoured by Umehara who titled one of his best-known books *Nihon no shinsō* ('The deep strata of Japan'). As we read Segawa, however, it quickly becomes clear that his perspective differs from that of Umehara. For Segawa, the Jōmony people in historic Japan have been those who 'have a strong dislike of commercial exchange, an attachment to gift-giving, equality through re-distribution, a rejection of coercion and pressure, loose ties with others and with the land, and consensus-building without centrality.'<sup>64</sup> The Jōmon is thus important not as an original *Ur*-culture of Japan, but rather as a critique of a contemporary society which is characterised by 'a new system of slavery where capital is king'.<sup>65</sup>

Segawa uses a broad range of cultural production, including ritual customs, views of landscape, and myths, to support the claim that 'the Jōmon is alive'. Like Umehara, Segawa regards Jōmony elements as being primarily retained in the customs and world-view of the peripheral peoples of the archipelago, especially 'sea people', Ainu and southern islanders. An example given is tooth ablation, the ritual removal of healthy teeth. A 1972 account of a woman living on a house boat in the Gotō islands in Nagasaki suggests the custom still existed at that time. A similar report claimed tooth ablation was performed as part of a coming-of-age ceremony in Ōita.<sup>66</sup> The problem with these and other examples found in Segawa's book is that putative links with archaic tradition are privileged over any possibility of later culture change. Segawa's book is important for its insistence that many Japanese societies existed outside of or at odds with the rice-farming centre. Yet the spectre of 'Japanese tradition' so over-determines such classifications that it is difficult for Segawa to envisage the cultures of the archipelago beyond the binary boxes of 'Jōmon' and 'Yayoi'. Segawa is hardly alone

in this respect; in fact, almost all of the writers considered in this essay work with the same basic categories. Yet, as discussed below, there is a need to consider alternatives to this binary scheme.

A comparable dichotomy between 'Jōmon' and 'Yayoi' can hardly be imagined in Europe. Of course, European nations have a long history of valorising Romantic national identities such as Celtic, Gothic and Viking, to name a few. Earlier generations of historians emphasised a contrast between Roman/Christian and Germanic/pagan peoples in western Europe. Today, it is increasingly realised that the population history of Europe was considerably more complex than previously understood. The closest approximation to the Jōmon/Yayoi duality is perhaps found in countries with recent histories of settler colonialism where Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples are contrasted with new settlers—*whitefellas* to borrow the term used in some parts of Aboriginal Australia. The population history of Japan does not fit such a settler colonial model; that history is likely to be as multi-layered as that found in Europe—though we are still only beginning to understand the details.<sup>67</sup>

In short, I agree with Segawa that there were historically many 'multicultural' elements in Japanese society. Where I differ from his interpretation is in not regarding Jōmony features in historic Japan as traditional holdovers from deep prehistory. The society of the archipelago had changed so much that it makes little sense to speak of 'the Jōmon' with respect to, say, the Heian or Tokugawa periods. Furthermore, Segawa's Jōmon and Yayoi boxes focus almost entirely on 'native' identity at the expense of consideration of influences from outside Japan. For me, the post-Jōmon societies discussed by Segawa

are not Jōmon but something different again; even if they had a Jōmon ‘base’, they incorporated new cultural elements from Bronze Age and later Eurasia. As a result, those societies had strong *transcultural* features; they were not static boxes continuing unchanged over time, rather they were transformed by wider, ‘global’ connectivities. Those connectivities invited local yet creative *translations* of the meta-cultural beyond.<sup>68</sup> In Japan, such transculturality can be traced back to at least the end of the Jōmon period and continued thereafter in groups that are otherwise difficult to classify, for example the *wakō* pirates based across island and coastal East Asia.<sup>69</sup>

Seeing post-Jōmon societies as transcultural goes against an important strand of Japanese thought which, since the mid-twentieth century, has emphasised the co-existence of cultural layers in a stratigraphic relationship. For Watsuji Tetsurō, past experiences in Japanese history would always bubble up in the present; there was never a question of progressing towards a new historical synthesis.<sup>70</sup> It always appears easy to find elements of Japanese culture which have apparently survived for long periods, sometimes without much practical function. The emperor, of course, is one example, kimonos and *tatami*-mat rooms in Western-style houses are others. Watsuji and many other cultural historians have mis-recognised these as unchanged holdovers from folk tradition. The attraction here is that these ‘traditions’ appear to be a way of rooting Japanese culture in the face of the transformations of modernity, and the Jōmon has certainly been used in the same way. My argument, by contrast, is that each period of Japanese history saw a new series of cultures that were to some extent constructed from earlier structures of cultural and ecological

inheritance, but which always incorporated new elements and translated earlier traditions to match the historical moment.

As mentioned, an essay by Yoshida and Ertl goes beyond academic issues and examines the utilisation of the Jōmon in ‘counter-cultural’ social movements, including environmental conservation, rural revitalisation and anti-nuclear activism. The authors present three case studies in some detail: the activities of the NPO ‘Jomonism’, the *satoyama* conservation movement, and a discussion of the book *Jōmon seichi junrei* (‘Jōmon Pilgrimages’) by musician Sakamoto Ryūichi and ethnologist Nakazawa Shinichi. These examples are linked by desires to employ the Jōmon to re-imagine or *change* contemporary Japanese society and politics. Sakamoto and Nakazawa suggest the Jōmon is a way to think about what they call a ‘post-state’ (*kokka ikō*) society, although that term is not defined. In the tradition of Okamoto Tarō, these activities often involve art and artistic participation. In summarising these diverse Jōmonisms, Yoshida and Ertl explain that the Jōmon ‘has become a flexible symbol utilized in support of liberal ideologies and anti-nuclear activism, individual self-discovery and artistic expression, as well as rural-based revitalization and environmental movements.’<sup>71</sup> The relationship between the Jōmon people and the modern Japanese often remains ambivalent in these movements; yet the point is to borrow the Jōmon phenomenon as a discursive framework rather than to interrogate national roots.

### **Coda: Re-thinking the Ainu**

It is important to conclude this essay by emphasising that my overall argument—that the Jōmon contribution to Japanese culture

was small—does *not* apply to the Ainu. In fact, it encourages a complete re-evaluation of Ainu history. The Ainu (and post-Jōmon/pre-Ainu groups in Hokkaido and the northern Tohoku) were very much a part of the historical experience of the Japanese Islands; Ainu culture had many impacts on Japanese culture as a result. This might be regarded as a contradiction: if the Jōmon disappeared quickly and had only a minor influence on mainland Japanese culture, why did the Ainu remain so vibrant in the north? Assumptions that the Jōmon provided a major contribution to Japanese culture have prevented us from framing the question in this way. In Japanese Studies the Jōmon has been dominant and the Ainu only marginal, whereas this essay makes the opposite claim. The Ainu somehow managed not only to survive but, for many centuries, to flourish around the Sea of Okhotsk even in the face of the Bronze Age and later agricultural colonisation of the Japanese Islands. By contrast, that same colonisation rather quickly destroyed the Jōmon societies which had occupied mainland Japan for some 13,000 years. Explaining this difference is surprisingly difficult; in fact, few previous studies have considered things in this way. Part of the explanation may lie in attempts by the Ainu to escape the control of mainland Japanese states.<sup>72</sup> But a broader issue is how scholars have (mis)interpreted the history of ‘central’ versus ‘marginal’ societies in the archipelago.

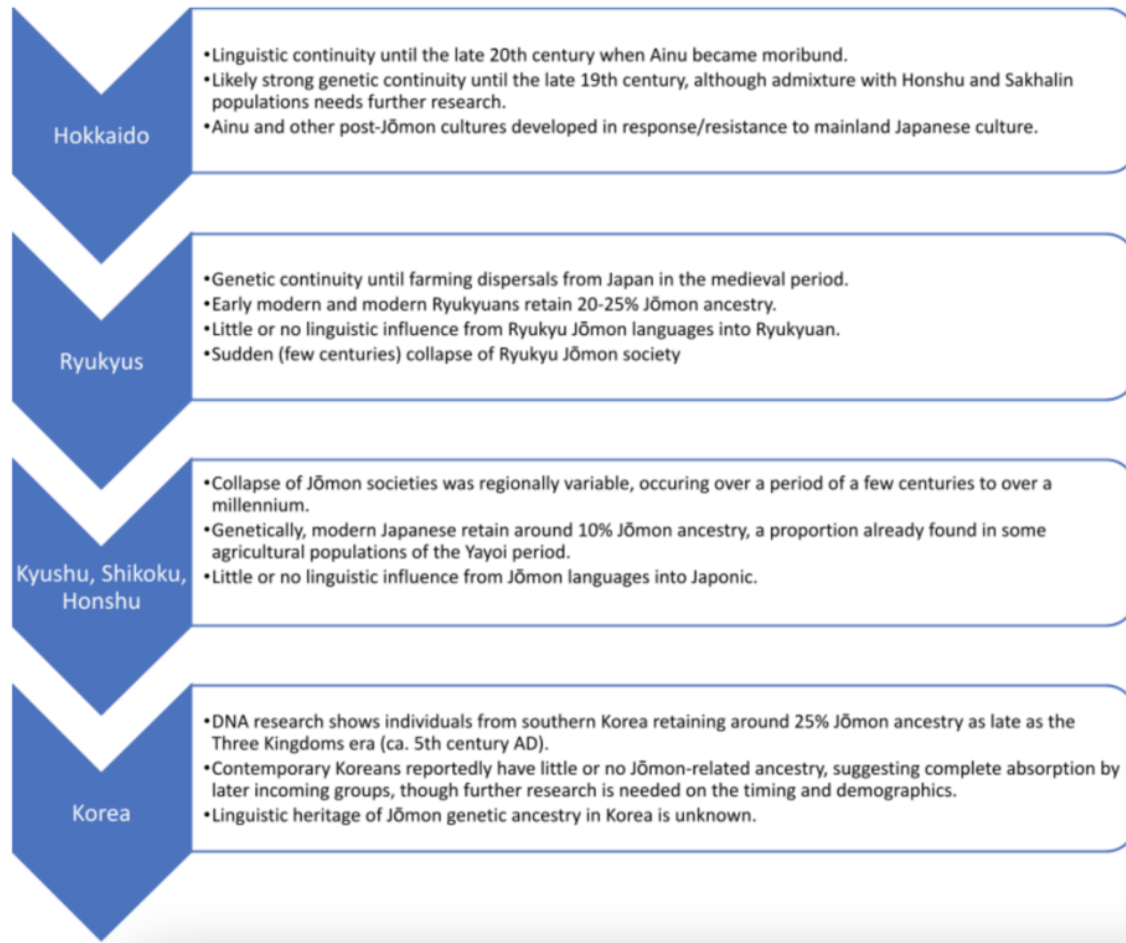
Premodern Japan is almost always classified around a ‘central’ culture based on wet-rice farming. The cultures of the north (Hokkaido) and the south (the Ryukyus) are different because they lacked rice. In his influential 1988 book *Mō futatsu no Nihon bunka* (‘Two Other Japanese Cultures’), Fujimoto Tsuyoshi accepted the northern and southern zones as part of a broad Japanese culture, yet still

regarded them as marginal due to their subsistence economy. More recently, another archaeologist, Fujio Shin’ichirō, proposed an even stricter definition of the central culture of the Yayoi period, one which combines irrigated wet-rice agriculture with ‘Yayoi rituals’.<sup>73</sup> In these studies, it is the isolation of the north and south from the central rice-producing zone that explains their different (read ‘backward’) historical trajectories. Emphasising the importance of rice farming in the central islands encourages a view which marginalises other aspects of the Japanese historical experience. In my opinion, there is a need to consider a completely different perspective with respect to the Ainu. Seeing the Ainu as isolated hunter-gatherers on the margins of the ‘central culture’ of Japan leads us to minimise the wider historical commonalities across the archipelago. While cereal agriculture was certainly important as a source of state power, since the Bronze Age the Japanese Islands were also home to numerous groups whose economy was based on trade—or a combination of trade and agriculture, a pattern recently termed the ‘maritime mode of production’. Since their livelihoods were based on long-distance trade, the geographic location of these groups *cross-cut* the three culture zones of Fujimoto and others.<sup>74</sup> We need new empirical research on the diversity of post-Jōmon societies, but we also need to consider again how various unwarranted assumptions about the past continue to impact the study of Japanese history.

Figure 3 summarises four patterns in the long-term history of the Jōmon in decreasing order of resilience. Of the four, the Ainu were by far the most resilient. As noted already, many questions remain regarding Jōmon ancestry in Korea. A recent study found that an individual from Three Kingdoms period

Kimhae possessed more Jōmon ancestry than a contemporaneous Kofun-period sample in Japan. Sometime thereafter, however, Jōmon genomes in Korea appear to have been

completely or largely diluted by mainland Northeast Asian populations.<sup>75</sup>



**Fig. 3. Post-Jōmon regional trajectories in decreasing order of resilience.**

### Conclusions

The link between modern Japan and the Jōmon made in many of the writings discussed above is essentially *mythological*. The ideology of the Jōmon employed in contemporary Japan combines mythological or narrative elements—using language that is

metaphorical and suggestive—together with more analytical or ostensibly scientific evaluations. The balance between these two approaches is always awkward and overwrought. In the mythological framework, ‘There is no logic to the connection, only the powerful force of tradition and habits of feeling and thought.’<sup>76</sup> From its beginnings, modern Japan has been haunted by a desire

to summon back traditional roots. Folklorist Yanagita Kunio searched first for those roots in communities he regarded as pre-dating farming or the alluvial state, before settling finally on a concept—the *jōmin* or ‘abiding peasant’—which denied the importance of non-Japanese elements in the national story. By the 1930s, the dominant ultranationalist strand in Japanese political thought made it almost impossible to debate diversity within an ethnic nation united by the emperor. As Japan recovered from the Second World War, finding new economic and social confidence in post war growth, it began to re-evaluate elements of traditional history. The Tokugawa was one beneficiary of this trend. As early as 1889, an association to preserve Edo culture had been established in Tokyo; its claims that the Tokugawa was ‘the period in which Japanese civilization achieved its greatest progress and development’ were already being made in opposition to views of early modern Japan as ‘feudal’ or ‘antiquated’.<sup>77</sup> Later, the Jōmon came to be lauded in the same way. Both Jōmon and Tokugawa were ‘isolated’ and therefore repositories of something that could be considered original to the Japanese condition. Yet there was a key difference: if the cultural significance of the Tokugawa revolves around the concept of ‘industriousness’, or working hard to make the most of scarce resources, the Jōmon is perceived as a time of ‘original affluence’ or, in American terms, a type of frontier ‘Cowboy Economy’.

In this essay I have argued that recent research in archaeology, linguistics and genetics suggests a need to re-evaluate claims that the Jōmon formed a major contribution to modern Japanese culture. This is not to deny the continuing ideological significance of the Jōmon. To strike a cautious note in ending, let us return to the

*avant-garde* artist Okamoto Tarō. Okamoto was a key figure in re-inserting the Jōmon into Japanese tradition. Yet, unlike Umehara and others, Okamoto stressed that tradition should be dynamic and contemporary. He wrote:

Whether or not our direct ancestors actually made Jōmon objects does not matter. To engage in the mystification of blood lineage based on feudal consciousness and custom and to think that that is the most important factor in determining its significance for us in the present is always utter nonsense. Our blood is a complex mix and it is not possible to determine who our direct ancestors were.<sup>78</sup>

Okamoto would likely have been unimpressed with the present essay, regarding it as missing the point entirely. The issue for Okamoto was to use the ‘primal passion’ of the Jōmon to form a new tradition. This argument was made against the background of the post war moment, a time when ‘Atomic bombs have been exploded, two worlds are in confrontation and wild economic fears have emerged.’<sup>79</sup> For Okamoto, traditional Japanese art had always been dissociated from such social realities. For example, the Buddhist art of the Nara period gave him ‘a bad aftertaste from the signs of the arrogance of that overripe, decadent, Continental culture’. In the earlier Kofun period, he found ‘in the extremely optimistic aesthetic sense of *haniwa* the same laziness of an island nation and the same formalism that has passed directly to the modern Japanese’.<sup>80</sup> Okamoto was noncommittal, even obscure about what this



might mean in practice, though he insisted that the Jōmon was ‘completely adapted to reality’ and lacked any ‘ideological utility’, comments which can perhaps be read as an attempt to distance Japanese art and culture from the emperor system.<sup>81</sup> Six decades later, another Japanese artist, Ōura Nobuyuki, stated more clearly that the ethnic identity of the Japanese does not lie in the emperor system but in the Jōmon and its open possibilities.<sup>82</sup>

Although the term ‘post war’ still retains resonance within Japanese Studies, the issues facing society today are not the same as those in 1952 when Okamoto penned his influential essay. Seventy years later, it is no longer possible to approach the Jōmon with the same distance and freshness, in part because Japanese society has become so different but also because of the heavy ideological baggage the Jōmon has accumulated in the meantime. If Okamoto was calculatedly vague about how to use Jōmon tradition, Umehara and his disciples have employed a tighter focus which attempts to integrate reactionary politics with contemporary concerns over environmental sustainability.<sup>83</sup> Yet Umehara’s project was naïve or more likely disingenuous about the role of capital; Japanese nature was extolled as the only way to resolve the contradictions of modernity. The contested relationship with the emperor system was

also never clarified; indeed, the emperor was held up as a way to promote sustainability. This unexpected move only makes sense against the background of earlier writings by Motoori Norinaga and others linking the archaic imperial way with a harmonious nation. Numerous scholars had long linked the unchanging folk identity of ‘archaic’ groups such as mountain and sea people with the emperor.<sup>84</sup> If the emperor already had an ancient history, the Jōmon could be considered as ultra archaic. At times, certain critics have posited the Jōmon as an alternative to the ‘harmony’ of the Japanese central tradition symbolised by the emperor. For the most part, however, the Jōmon has become normalised within familiar frames of social control centred on the emperor as archaic emblem. The new research summarised here makes that link ever harder to support, just as it is forcing us to re-think many aspects of the early history of Northeast Asia.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A position taken by, among others, Namio Egami, ‘The formation of the people and the origins of the state in Japan’, *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 23 (1964): 35-70.
- <sup>2</sup> Okamoto Tarō, ‘Jōmon dokiron’, *Mizue* February 1952. Translated by Jonathan M. Reynolds, ‘On Jōmon ceramics’, *Art in Translation* 1 (2009): 49-60.
- <sup>3</sup> Yamada Yasuhiro, *Tsukurareta Jōmon jidai: Nihon bunka no genzō o saguru* (Shinchōsha, 2015), p. 4.
- <sup>4</sup> Eiji Oguma, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-images* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002), p. 57.
- <sup>5</sup> Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 88. In 1989 or 1990, I attended the Imperial Household Agency’s annual presentation of its archaeological activities at the so-called imperial tombs, together with Professor Ueno Yoshiya, then head of Tokyo University’s Department of Archaeology. On the table in the waiting room, we were offered tea and cigarettes printed with the imperial seal. Though I had never previously seen him smoke, Professor Ueno took a cigarette and smoked it, though with how much gratitude I cannot say.
- <sup>6</sup> Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, p. 89.
- <sup>7</sup> Oguma, *A Genealogy*, pp. 229-230.
- <sup>8</sup> Oguma, *A Genealogy*, p. 236.
- <sup>9</sup> Cited in Kazurō Hanihara, ‘Dual structure model for the population history of the Japanese’, *Japan Review* 2 (1991): 1-33, p. 4.
- <sup>10</sup> Hyunjung Cho, ‘Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the making of Japanese postwar architecture’, *Journal of Architectural Education* 66 (2012): 72-83.
- <sup>11</sup> See Cho, ‘Hiroshima’, p. 74 for an illustration of this design plan.
- <sup>12</sup> Cho, ‘Hiroshima’, pp. 77-78.
- <sup>13</sup> Cited in Niuro Izumi, ‘Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā’ kōsō to ‘Umehara Nihongaku’, *Kōkōgaku Kenkyū* 33 (1986): 17-27.
- <sup>14</sup> T. Umehara, ‘The civilization of the forest’, *New Perspectives Quarterly* Special Issue (1999): 40-48, p. 47.
- <sup>15</sup> Yasuda describes the murder case, the suspicions raised against him and his subsequent head-hunting by Umehara in a work of autobiography: *Kankyō kōkōgaku e no michi* (Minerva Shobō, 2013), pp. 183-188.
- <sup>16</sup> Umehara Takeshi, *Nihon no shinsō: Jōmon, Ezo bunka o saguru* (Shūeisha, 1994), p. 16.
- <sup>17</sup> Yasuda Yoshinori, ‘Jōmon ga ichimannen ijō jizoku shita riyū’, in Hirano Hideki and Yasuda Yoshinori, *Ubawareru Nihon no mori: gaishi ga mizu shigen o neratte iru* (Shinchōsha, 2010), pp. 169.
- <sup>18</sup> Kobayashi Tatsuo, *Jōmon bunka ga Nihonjin no mirai o hiraku* (Tokuma Shoten, 2018), p. 98. This book is discussed by M. Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory: Landscape and the Archaic in Japanese Nationalism* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021), pp. 57-60.
- <sup>19</sup> M. Fukuda, ‘Hokkaidō to Saharin, Chishima: Nichiro nikoku no kōkōgaku kara mita Jōmon bunka no hokuhen’, *Kikan Kōkōgaku* 125 (2013): 62-65.
- <sup>20</sup> H. Takamiya, C. Katagiri, S. Yamasaki and M. Fujita, ‘Human colonization of the Central Ryukyus (Amami and Okinawa archipelagos), Japan’, *Journal of Island & Coastal Archaeology*

14 (2019): 375-393.

<sup>21</sup> M. Robbeets et al., ‘Triangulation supports agricultural spread of the Transeurasian languages’, *Nature* 599 (2021): 616-621.

<sup>22</sup> Robbeets et al., ‘Triangulation’; P. Gelabert et al., ‘Northeastern Asian and Jomon-related genetic structure in the Three Kingdoms period of Gimhae, Korea’, *Current Biology* 32 (2022): 1-13.

<sup>23</sup> D-N. Lee et al., ‘Genomic detection of a secondary family burial in a single jar coffin in early medieval Korea’, accessible [here](#) (pre-print not yet peer-reviewed).

<sup>24</sup> Ilona Bausch, ‘Prehistoric networks across the Korea strait (5000-1000 BCE): “Early globalization” during the Jomon period in northwest Kyushu?’, in T. Hodos (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization*, pp. 413-437 (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Umehara Takeshi and Kenji Nakagami Kenji, *Kimi wa Yayoijin ka, Jōmonjin ka: Umehara Nihongaku kōgi* (Asahi, 1984), p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Umehara and Nakagami, *Kimi wa*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>27</sup> A large literature on this topic includes Richard Reitan, ‘Ecology and Japanese history: reactionary environmentalism’s troubled relationship with the past’, *The Asia-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus* 15 (2017): 3-2; Aike P. Rots, *Shinto, Nature and Ideology in Contemporary Japan: Making Sacred Forests* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) and ‘Environmentalism’ in E. Bafelli, A. Castiglioni and F. Rambelli, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Japanese Religions*, pp. 65-72 (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); and Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*.

<sup>28</sup> Economic historian Saitō Osamu has studied deforestation in comparative perspective and noted the importance of market economies rather than cultural or religious factors in determining forest use: Saito, ‘Forest history and the Great Divergence: China, Japan, and the West compared’, *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 379-404. In modern Japan, forests were often the site of political resistance. Gluck describes long-lasting protests from 1881-1905 in the Kiso valley (Nagano) against the confiscation of farm and *satoyama* commons for the purpose of expanding imperial forests; similar land disputes occurred in other parts of Meiji Japan: Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, pp. 97-101.

<sup>29</sup> Yasuda, ‘Shift of the lifestyle: from the dry field farming with cattle breeding to the rice cultivating piscatory life style’, *Journal of Kyosei Studies* 7 (2016): 76-86 (Japanese with English summary). The original quote on p. 83 reads ‘Kokkai ni Amaterasu o saikō kami to suru tennō heika ga rinseki sareru koto o yurasanai’.

<sup>30</sup> On the family, see Yasuda, *Seimei bunmei no seiki e: ‘Jinsei chirigaku’ to ‘kankyō kōkogaku’ no deai* (Daisan Bunmeisha, 2008), p. 71 and ‘Gyoshoku no bunmei, nikushoku no bunmei’, *Nihon Kenkyū* 35 (2007): 491-525, pp. 511, 522. I have discussed these ideas in *Conjuring Up Prehistory*, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*, pp. 50-54.

<sup>32</sup> Oguma, *A Genealogy*, pp. 16-30.

<sup>33</sup> Inoue Tetsujirō writing in 1889, cited by Oguma, *A Genealogy*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> In a farcical re-imagination of the trope of an ‘advanced’ Japan helping a ‘backward’ China, Yasuda proposed that Japanese ‘eco-rangers’ be sent to clean out toilets in China: see Reitan, ‘Ecology and Japanese history’, p. 12 and Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>35</sup> Yasuda, ‘Shift of the lifestyle’, p. 84 and ‘Jōmon ga ichimannen’.

- <sup>36</sup> Robbeets et al., ‘Triangulation supports agricultural spread’.
- <sup>37</sup> John Maher, ‘“North Kyushu Creole”: a hypothesis concerning the multilingual formation of Japanese’, *International Christian University, Library Open Lectures* 6 (1991): 15-48, pp. 16-17. This ‘twittering’ could just have been a different dialect or sociolect.
- <sup>38</sup> David Pollack, *The Fracture of Meaning: Japan’s Synthesis of China from the Eighth Through the Eighteenth Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 68.
- <sup>39</sup> See E. de Boer, M.A. Yang, A. Kawagoe and G.L. Barnes, ‘Japan considered from the hypothesis of farmer/language spread’, *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 2 (2020): e13 and G.L. Barnes, ‘The Jomon-Yayoi transition in eastern Japan: enquiries from the Kanto region’, *Japanese Journal of Archaeology* 7 (2019): 33-84.
- <sup>40</sup> S. Murayama, ‘The Malayo-Polynesian component in the Japanese language’, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 2 (1976): 413-436. Polivanov was arrested and shot by the NKVD in 1938.
- <sup>41</sup> For an extreme example of this argument, see Kobayashi, *Jōmon bunka ga Nihonjin no mirai o hiraku*, a text discussed by Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*, pp. 58-60.
- <sup>42</sup> Osamu Sakiyama, ‘Is Japanese an isolated, or Altaic language?’, in Keiichi Omoto (ed.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Origins of the Japanese*, pp. 281-289 (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 1999), pp. 282-283.
- <sup>43</sup> Two examples are described by Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the Mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis* (Oxford University Press, 1997) and Pieter Muysken, ‘Code-switching processes: alternation, insertion and congruent lexicalisation’, in Martin Pütz (ed.), *Language Choices: Conditions, Constraints and Consequences*, pp. 361-380 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997).
- <sup>44</sup> There is now a very large literature on this topic. For influential overviews, see Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953) and Sarah Thomason & Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolisation and Genetic Linguistics* (University of California Press, 1988).
- <sup>45</sup> O. Sakiyama, ‘Formation of the Japanese language in connection with Austronesian languages’, in T. Akazawa and E. Szathmáry (eds.), *Prehistoric Mongoloid Dispersals*, pp. 349-358 (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 350. Japanese authors often fail to capitalise the sub-phases of the Jōmon period but we can perhaps assume Sakiyama here means the Late Jōmon. Likewise, the ‘terminal Jōmon’ of his second stage presumably refers to the Final Jōmon.
- <sup>46</sup> Sakiyama, ‘Formation of the Japanese language’, p. 357. While at first glance appearing to be totally arbitrary, Sakiyama’s scheme of population migrations derives from the *Kulturkreise* school popular with certain Japanese ethnologists in the mid-twentieth century.
- <sup>47</sup> A Bayesian estimate of ca. 5230 years ago is provided by R.D. Gray, A.J. Drummond and S.J. Greenhill, ‘Language phylogenies reveal expansion pulses and pauses in Pacific settlement’, *Science* 323 (2009): 479-483.
- <sup>48</sup> John Maher, ‘North Kyushu creole: a language-contact model for the origins of Japanese’, in D. Denoon, M. Hudson, G. McCormack and T. Morris-Suzuki (eds.), *Multicultural Japan: Palaeolithic to Postmodern*, pp. 31-45 (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- <sup>49</sup> Thomason and Kaufmann, *Language Contact*.
- <sup>50</sup> A point made some years ago by Martine Robbeets, *Is Japanese Related to Korean, Tungusic, Mongolic and Turkic?* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), pp. 37-38.

<sup>51</sup> Jarosz, M. Robbeets, R. Fernandes, H. Takamiya, A. Shinzato, N. Nakamura, M. Shinoto and M. Hudson, 'Demography, trade and state power: a tripartite model of medieval farming/language dispersals in the Ryukyu Islands', *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 4 (2022): e4, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> John Kupchik, 'Ainu loanwords in Hachijō', in J. Kupchik, J.A.A. de la Fuente and M.H. Miyake (eds.), *Studies in Asian Historical Linguistics, Philology and Beyond*, pp. 91-102 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

<sup>53</sup> An analysis of ancient DNA extracted from Jōmon skeletal remains was published as early as 1989: S. Horai, K. Hayasaka, K. Murayama, N. Wate, H. Koike and N. Nakai, 'DNA amplification from ancient human skeletal remains and their sequence analysis', *Proceedings of the Japan Academy Ser. B* 65 (1989): 229-233.

<sup>54</sup> See Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*; M. Hudson, S. Nakagome and J. Whitman, 'The evolving Japanese: the dual structure hypothesis at 30', *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 2 (2020): e6.

<sup>55</sup> von Bälz, 'Die Riu-Kiu-Insulaner, die Aino und andere kaukasierähnliche Reste in Ostasien', *Korrespondenz-Blatt der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* 42 (1911): 187-191; T.A. Jinam, Y. Kawai and N. Saitou, 'Modern human DNA analyses with special reference to the inner dual-structure model of Yaponesian', *Anthropological Science* 129 (2021): 3-11.

<sup>56</sup> Hanihara, 'Estimation of the number of early migrants to Japan: a simulative study', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Nippon* 95 (1987): 391-403.

<sup>57</sup> Robbeets et al., 'Triangulation supports agricultural spread'; C-C. Wang et al., 'Genomic insights into the formation of human populations in East Asia', *Nature* 591 (2021): 413-419; N.P. Cooke et al., 'Ancient genomics reveals tripartite origins of Japanese populations', *Science Advances* 7 (2021): eabh2419.

<sup>58</sup> Robbeets et al., 'Triangulation'; Jarosz et al., 'Demography, trade and state power'.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. W. Haak et al., 'Massive migration from the steppe was a source for Indo-European languages in Europe', *Nature* 522 (2015): 207-211.

<sup>60</sup> Robbeets et al., 'Triangulation' and Cooke et al., 'Ancient genomics reveals tripartite origins'.

<sup>61</sup> Y. Yoshida and J. Ertl, 'Archaeological practice and social movements: ethnography of Jomon archaeology and the public', *Journal of the International Center for Cultural Resources* (Kanazawa University) 2 (2016): 47-71.

<sup>62</sup> Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, pp. 7-8 notes that *shisō* was sometimes used as an alternative to *ideorogii* (ideology) which denoted a false consciousness in the Marxist sense.

<sup>63</sup> Segawa Takurō, *Jōmon no shisō* (Kōdansha, 2017), p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> Segawa, *Jōmon no shisō*, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Segawa, *Jōmon no shisō*, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Segawa, *Jōmon no shisō*, pp. 32-33, quoting Sakata Kunihiro, 'Gendai Nihonjin ni mirareta fūshūteki basshirei', *Kōkōgaku Jānaru* 89 (1973) and Harunari Hideji, *Jōmon shakai ronkyū* (Hanawa shobō, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> The modern history of Hokkaido can certainly be approached through a settler colonialism model, though the prehistoric settlement of that island was rather complex. Neither should we assume that native cultures were isolated or 'pristine', a premise in many writings about

the Jōmon/Yayoi dichotomy. The role of outside contacts on Aboriginal Australia is discussed, among many other works, by Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Australian Aboriginal Being* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) and M. Hudson, *Bronze Age Maritime and Warrior Dynamics in Island East Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 27-28. Recent research in ancient DNA is beginning to confirm enormously complex population histories for parts of Europe. For Britain, for instance, see an accessible essay by Ian Armit and David Reich, ‘The return of the Beaker folk? Rethinking migration and population change in British prehistory’, *Antiquity* 95 (2021): 1464-1477. Given the small number of ancient DNA samples so far published from Japan, it is too early to say whether or not the population history of early Japan was radically simpler than, for example, Britain.

<sup>68</sup> A key theoretical text to understand this process in prehistory is Helle Vandkilde, ‘Bronzization: the Bronze Age as pre-modern globalization’, *Praehistorische Zeitschrift* 91 (2016): 103-123. Serena Autiero and Matthew A. Cobb’s edited volume *Globalization and Transculturality from Antiquity to the Pre-modern World* (Routledge, 2022) provides another useful introduction to ideas of past transculturality.

<sup>69</sup> For the Late and Final Jōmon, see M. Hudson, I. Bausch, M. Robbeets, T. Li, J.A. White and L. Gilaizeau, ‘Bronze Age globalisation and Eurasian impacts on later Jōmon social change’, *Journal of World Prehistory* 34 (2021): 121-158. For non-farming groups in the Yayoi, see M. Hudson, ‘Dragon divers and clamorous fishermen: bronzization and transcultural marine spaces in the Japanese archipelago’, in Autiero and Cobb, *Globalization and Transculturality*, pp. 103-119. For pirates, see Peter D. Shapinsky, *Lords of the Sea: Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan* (Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> These ideas are discussed by H. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2000) and Hudson, *Conjuring Up Prehistory*.

<sup>71</sup> Yoshida and Ertl, ‘Archaeological practice and social movements’, p. 67.

<sup>72</sup> For this argument, see Hosanna Fukuzawa, ‘Ainu ethnogenesis and state evasion (12th – 17th centuries)’, *The Asia-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus* 20(13) (2022): e5719.

<sup>73</sup> Fujimoto, *Mō futatsu no Nihon bunka: Hokkaidō to nantō no bunka* (Tokyo University Press, 1988) and S. Fujio, ‘The frame of the Yayoi culture: is wet rice cultivation with irrigation system an indicator of the Yayoi culture?’, *Bulletin of the National Museum of Japanese History* 178 (2013): 85-120 (Japanese with English summary). These ideas by Fujimoto and Fujio have been discussed in English by Bruce Batten, *To the Ends of Japan: Premodern Frontiers, Boundaries and Interactions* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003) and M. Hudson, ‘Towards a prehistory of the Great Divergence: the Bronze Age roots of Japan’s premodern economy’, *Documenta Praehistorica* 46 (2019): 30-43.

<sup>74</sup> Some of this theoretical background is suggested by J. Ling, T. Earle and K. Kristiansen, ‘Maritime mode of production: raiding and trading in seafaring chiefdoms’, *Current Anthropology* 59 (2018): 488-524. For preliminary discussions of the archaeological evidence, see M. Hudson, *Bronze Age Maritime and Warrior Dynamics in Island East Asia* and ‘The Okhotsk culture and the formation of the medieval Ainu diaspora’, in G. Crawford, S. Kaner and G-A. Lee (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese and Korean Archaeology* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>75</sup> Gelabert et al., ‘Northeastern Asian and Jomon-related genetic structure’.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 24.

<sup>78</sup> Okamoto, 'On Jōmon ceramics', p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> Okamoto, 'On Jōmon ceramics', p. 59.

<sup>80</sup> Okamoto, 'On Jōmon ceramics', pp. 52-53.

<sup>81</sup> Okamoto, 'On Jōmon ceramics', p. 59 also made the following enigmatic comments: 'We must look directly at the place of the non-spiritualistic spirit of Jōmon culture's primitive art ... and we must seize this purposeless purpose and this meaningless meaning as our method.'

<sup>82</sup> *The Art of Taboo: Nobuyuki Oura*. Video interview with the artist, available [here](#). A transcript of this interview can be found [here](#).

<sup>83</sup> This was despite the emperor's fundamental association with Japan's capitalism, a link analysed by H. Harootunian, *Uneven Moments: Reflections on Japan's Modern History* (Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 350-351.

<sup>84</sup> Yanagita Kunio's link between the emperor and the 'mountain people' has been much discussed. Perhaps less well known is work by Senda Minoru connecting the *ama* sea people with imperial power: *Ōken no umi* (Kadokawa, 1998) and 'Japanese culture and the ocean people' in Omoto Keiichi (ed.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Origins of the Japanese*, pp. 335-338 (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 1999).