

Japan and Western Europe*

A Comparative Presentation of Their Social Histories

By FRANZ OPPENHEIMER

I. The Fundamentals

TAKAO TSUCHIYA'S BOOK ON "The Development of Economic Life in Japan"¹ begins with the following phrase: "One finds various peculiarities of the economic life of Japan as compared with that of European countries; there is very little difference, however, in their fundamental course of development."

In fact, the parallelism of their development is amazing—the same stages in almost the same lengths of time, frequently even at the same time. And this is extremely interesting from the point of view of universal history, because it proves as wrong nearly all the theories of history presented up to this time, *viz.*, those regarding as the decisive factor *climate, race, geopolitical situation*, or, finally, *technics*. The fundamentals of Japanese culture are, in all these regards, diametrically opposed to those of Western Europe.

I

TECHNICS IS THE EXPLANATION given by the "materialistic interpretation of history" of Marxist philosophy. Friedrich Engels' dictum is widely known, that the hand-mill means feudal and the steam-mill capitalistic economy. Technics is maintained to be the "substructure," the independent variable, upon which the "superstructure" of policies and ideas is dependent.

Japan's history proves this doctrine to be false. Up to the Meiji restoration in 1868, the foundation of the Japanese State and economy was, without any doubt, agriculture. *Technically*, however, Japanese agriculture was and is utterly different from European agriculture. Instead of the plough and stock breeding, we find here spade-culture and cattle-less management. Ryūzu Torii reports² that horses and cattle, although already imported in prehistoric times, were used economically neither for production nor for consumption. Murray finds³ that horses were exclusively

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¹ Tokyo, 1936.

² "Ancient Japan in the Light of Anthropology," Tokyo, 1937, p. 13.

³ "Japan, the Story of the Nations," No. 37, London, 1894, p. 14.

used as saddle- and pack-animals, and that cattle, possibly under Buddhist influence, were never eaten and milk, butter and cheese never consumed. Sheep were almost unknown until foreigners imported them. Goats were to be found here and there. Dogs, cats, and poultry were the sole domestic animals kept everywhere.

II

RACE-PHILOSOPHY as the popular explanation is just as incapable of solving the enigma. The population of Japan is as different as possible from that of Europe.

This divergence had its roots in the most remote prehistoric conditions. The "science of the spade" does not find in Japan the least trace of the "primal culture" of primitive hunters and gatherers which is uncovered almost everywhere in the world, and certainly in Europe.⁴ The group of islands seems to have been empty of human population during the whole paleolithic era, at least during its first stage, old-paleolithicum. Masai Oka, as cited by W. Schmidt, holds it to be not improbable that young-paleolithic remains might be discovered. Fossils of early types of men like the *Simanthropus Pekinensis* or the Neanderthalian have never been found.

Of even greater importance is the fact that the merging of the three "primary cultures," and most probably *races*, did not occur in Japan, because one of them, the "totemist culture of higher hunters," did not exist there alone and unmixed, but appeared merely as a component of a mixture, the other component of which was the "matriarchal agrarian culture," which, Schmidt notes, "manifestly is the oldest and original of the country," observing that "it developed gradually into a kind of higher village-culture under the pressure of Asiatic influences."⁵

This stage was reached when, in the "period of Migration and Conquest,"⁶ the third primary culture intruded upon that of the large "stock-breeders," the herdsmen. Its representatives, the Central-Asiatic nomads, Mongols, Altaians, etc., had been imprisoned as in a cage up to this time by the glaciers encompassing their homeland. During this isolation the riders of horses and camels among them had developed into the hardest and best disciplined warriors of the time. When the glaciers melted away they broke out in all directions, and either subjugated the groups they met or changed them into "secondary herdsmen"⁷ with the same warlike psy-

⁴ W. Schmidt, *Neue Wege zur Erforschung der Ethnologischen Stellung Japan*, Tokyo, 1935, p. 35.

⁵ Schmidt, *loc. cit.*

⁶ W. Schmidt.

⁷ *System der Soziologie*, IV, p. 18.

chology and driven by the same lust for conquest: Indo-germans, Semites, Hamites, Polynesians, Malays.

In this manner everywhere in the world the "State" was created, the historical State arranged in orders or classes, in which the conquering group takes the rank of a dominating nobility. Such a state is Japan.⁸

It is a moot question which "races" played the part of hammer and anvil in this historical process of welding.⁹ It is certain that the Ainu formed the main part of the subjugated group or groups, but it is not at all certain to which race the Ainu belong. Most writers count them members of the North-Asiatic race, together with the Tchouktches, Aleuts, Korjaeks and Eskimo.¹⁰ Baelz, however, believed them to be "Caucasoids"¹¹ because they have white skin, strong beards, non-slit eyes, and no Mongol stain, and look, as he maintains, all of them like the late Count Leo Tolstoi. The Mongol stain, however, is no longer regarded as a reliable symptom of racial identity, and Denikin reports that the Ainu are similar to the Toda of India and the aborigines of Australia.¹²

Some writers believe that the Ainu are not the oldest inhabitants of Japan, holding that they have been found exclusively in historical times in the northern parts of the main island and farther north in Hokkaido (Yezo) and in Saghaline and the Kurile islands. This opinion is untenable. The neolithic remains (*Kjoekkenmoeddinger*) are identical in the whole country and prove that "the culture was the same from the North of the Kuriles to the South of Formosa,"¹³ and that it was that of the Ainu.¹⁴ Chamberlain concludes from the geographical names that they originally inhabited the whole south.¹⁵ Baelz even states that the inhabitants of the Ryu-Kyu-islands in far south are physically very similar to the Ainu.¹⁶ Possibly they were remnants which, unlike the great bulk of the tribes, were dispersed southward instead of northward. Also, the warlike Hayato of Kyushiu island were possibly related to the Ainu.

The Ainu came probably from the north over Saghaline, which can be reached by canoe over almost its whole length.¹⁷ Near Norota, on the

⁸ Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁹ Katsurô Hara, *Histoire du Japon*, Paris, 1926. Cf. Munro, "Prehistoric Japan," p. 680.

¹⁰ Torii, *op. cit.*, p. 8. Murray (*op. cit.*, p. 28) counts them as belonging to the northern group of the Mongols.

¹¹ Nachod, *Geschichte von Japan*, Gotha, Vol. I, 1906, p. 33.

¹² Gowen, "An Outline History of Japan," London and New York, 1928, Vol. I, p. 27.

¹³ Koganei, quoted by Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁴ Gowland, quoted by Nachod, *ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁵ Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

¹⁷ Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

52nd parallel, the distance is only eight kilometers, and the sea is so shallow at ebb-tide that it is sometimes possible to cross dryfooted.¹⁸

The conquerors, however, assuredly landed in the South. They came either from the West over the narrow strait between Korea and the main island, with the islet of Tsushima in its midst facilitating the crossing, or they came from the South with the warm "Pacific Gulf-Stream" (Black Stream), which reaches the two great islands of Kiushiu and Shikoku and washes the eastern shores of the main island up to Tokyo.¹⁹ This Gulf-Stream brought "Vikings,"²⁰ probably crossbreeds of Malay, Indonesian and Polynesian elements,²¹ possibly with some admixture of Melanesian Negro blood, as Nitobe supposes.²² They brought with them the national light-built house, the like of which is only found in southern countries, as for example in Dutch-India, in the Philippines, and even in the South-West of the Asiatic continent.²³ They brought with them, furthermore, the most important cereal, rice. Neither of these could possibly have originated in Korea or North-West-Asia. This is confirmed by one of the earliest reports on Japan. In the Chinese "San Kuo Tche," written about 250 A.D., we read that the Japanese are very like in customs and morals to the inhabitants of the island of Hainan in South-West-China.²⁴ Gowen identifies these elements of Southern origin with legendary Komasu, a bear-like warrior-tribe in Kiushiu.²⁵ Nachod, however, sees no reason for this supposition, and believes the Komasu were Ainu.²⁶

Some other writers deny that strong Malay elements have entered the Japanese people. They appeal to the fact that not the slightest trace of Malay language and culture are found on the Ryu-Kyu-islands, which the Black Stream touches on its way to Japan.²⁷ This opinion, however, is almost without any weight before the strong arguments of Hara quoted above, and, as Kaji writes,²⁸ it has been generally relinquished. Likewise affected is the opinion that the "plebeian" type, with dark skin, broad face, flat nose and slit eyes (characteristics to be found also among the aristo-

¹⁸ W. E. Griffis, "The Mikado's Empire," twelfth edition, 1912, p. 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁰ By "Vikings" we understand not only the Scandinavian, but all conquering sea-tribes: Phoenicians, Hellenes, Malays, etc. Cf. *System der Soziologie*, II, p. 273.

²¹ Gowen, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²² "The Japanese Nation," quoted by Gowen, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²³ Hara, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁵ Gowen, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁶ Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁷ Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1.

²⁸ *Japan, ein Kultur-Ueberblick*, Tokyo, 1938, p. 8.

crats)²⁹ is caused by the mixture with Ainu blood, since it seems rather to originate in the southern elements.

Linguistic investigations are notoriously unable to solve questions of national origin or race, because the victors adopt the language of the conquered just as often as the latter take up the language of the conquerors.³⁰ They are of exceptionally little use in the case of the Japanese language because the linguists disagree completely on this. Hara believes it to belong in its bulk to the North-West-Asiatic idioms with little admixture of Pacific elements.³¹ Nitobe calls it next related to the Korean, but differing from this language more than the Mongol and Manchu dialects. He considers the Japanese neither "a lateral nor collateral with any other language."³² Von Wlislöcki, following the best European authorities, attributes the language to the Mongol family, as belonging to the one of its main departments, the polysyllabled, the other members of which are the "Touranians," embracing the Finns, Altaians, etc.³³

The origin and race of the invaders who came from the West are somewhat dubious as well. It is certain, however, that they were members of the great family of Mongol-speaking peoples. They are the ancestors of the "patrician type," the type of the "chieftain," slender, well-proportioned figures with light-yellow or white faces. How much of these differences rests upon real inheritance, and how much on influence of the social environment, is a moot question which we cannot discuss here.³⁴

These elements obviously landed in several, possibly in many consecutive bands. Even in historical times "Sushu," Vikings of the tribe of Tunguses, the ancestors of the Manchu, plundered the shores of Nippon. This lasted up to the eleventh century.³⁵ Similar raids must have occurred frequently in pre-historic times and have sometimes led to lasting settlement, just as in the case of all other seafaring tribes. Legends and prehistoric remains seem to be in favor of this hypothesis.

Murray supposes with Baelz that an earlier, more primitive immigration invaded the South of the main island, and a later, a more highly civilized band, the South-West in Kiushiu.³⁶ Clement reports, following Brinkley,

²⁹ Griffin, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³⁰ Cf. *System der Soziologie*, IV, pp. 18-172 ff.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

³² *Op. cit.*, quoted by Gowen, p. 32.

³³ *Donauvoelker*, (*Helmolds Weltgeschichte*), Vol. V., p. 367.

³⁴ Cf. *System der Soziologie*, IV, p. 182 ff., our important study concerning "mock-hereditary races." The American-born and *fed* Japanese appear to be a much more "patrician" type than the Japan-born. They are taller and possess better teeth, because they chew harder food than rice and fish.

³⁵ Gowen, *op. cit.*, p. 30; Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

³⁶ Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

that one branch of the ancestors of the present-day Japanese buried their dead in barrows, in which weapons and tools of bronze were found, whereas another band buried in "dolmens" in which only weapons and tools of iron were unearthed.³⁷ Torii, however, states that Japan never knew a bronze period, but that the iron period followed immediately the stone period.³⁸

More obscure still is the greatest of all prehistoric questions: that of the origin, location and social influence of the people of the megalith buildings. Besides the barrows and dolmens just mentioned there are, as Torii relates,³⁹ menhirs, tumuli, cairns, stone-circles, etc. Thus we meet here traces, if not of a *people*, certainly of a *culture* which is found on almost all the shores of the Old World—on the Baltic and the Northern sea, on the Atlantic, on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, in Syria, Palestine, Northern Persia, in India and the Sudan.⁴⁰

The very numerous Japanese dolmens—there are several hundreds of them—are said, it is true, to bear no likeness at all to those of the other countries.⁴¹ The present author does not possess the competence to decide this question, but believes it advantageous to place the description of a Japanese dolmen by Aston⁴² beside another given by Schuchhardt concerning the European dolmens. According to Aston the "Missagi" contain a sepulchral chamber, constructed of big stones fitted together without mortar. The roof is formed out of giant stone slabs. The entrance is a corridor covered by similar slabs of stone. Over the whole a tumulus of earth is heaped. Schuchhardt writes: "These big stone tombs are constructed on the natural soil. The walls of a rectangular chamber are formed out of cleaved erratic blocks, flat slabs are put on as roof, and a mound piled upon it."⁴³ The bigger and younger ones, which he calls long-beds or gallery-tombs (*Ganggraeber*), possess a lateral exit, the whole covered up by a long rectangular mound sometimes more than a hundred meters in length. Since Gowland himself states that the Japanese mounds had originally not two summits, as was first supposed from the appearance, but only one, the formation being caused by disintegration,⁴⁴ the difference seems not overwhelmingly important.

³⁷ Clement, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³⁸ Torii, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Much, *Die Heimat der Indogermanen*, second ed., 1904, p. 163.

⁴¹ Gowland, quoted by Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁴² Aston, quoted by Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴³ "Alteuropa, A Prehistory of Our Continent," 2nd ed., p. 123 ff.

⁴⁴ Gowland, quoted by Nachod, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

