

Origins of Yaponeseians from genetic and linguistic viewpoints

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We start a five-year project for elucidating the origins of people on Yaponesia (Japanese Archipelago; coined by writer Shimao Toshio in 1960s) by combining genomic DNA data of modern and ancient humans, those of non-human animals and plants, archeological data and linguistic data. Saitou is P.I. of modern human genome studies as well as general P.I. of this project, and Endo is P.I. of linguistic studies. One of main goals of this project is to examine the three-step migration hypothesis proposed by Saitou in 2015. It is possible that second step migrants introduced ancestral Yamato (Japanese) language. Saitou's group will determine genome sequences of 500 modern Japanese from 50 geographically scattered area, and will compare them with other modern and ancient genome data (members are Inoue Ituro, Yoshiura Koichiro, Kamatani Yoichiro, and Timothy A. Jinam). "Inner Dual Structure", found to exist in genomes of modern Yamato people who live on central part of Yaponesia, is compatible with three-step migration hypothesis. Endo's group will conduct both dialect studies of Yamato and Okinawa languages (led by Kibe Nobuko and Karimata Shigehisa) and comparison of many languages in and around Yaponesia (led by Endo, Nakagawa Hiroshi, and Kazama Shinjiro). Words denoting rice, millet, beans, and chest nuts in languages of East Asia are under examination. For example, the word for rice in Japanese, "kome," was previously thought to be borrowed from Austronesian. It is possible to divide the word into two components: "ko"(small in Japanese) and "me" (means rice, borrowed from Chinese). "Hie" (millet in Japanese) and "bjo" (dialect of northern Korea) both originated from "bài" (millet in Chinese), but

“bjo” denotes rice, probably because northern Korea is not suitable for rice cultivation and millet and rice were confused by ancient people in that area.