

## OPINION

### **Give the Hunter-Gatherers of the Philippines a Place for Peaceful Living**

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Do you know the Philippine aboriginal minority people known as Negritos? It is they whom anthropologists have long believed to be the oldest indigenous hunter-gatherers of South East Asia. Yet, now, the basis of their life is being threatened.

Last September in Surigao City of Mindanao Island, I was invited to talk in an international symposium "Dialogue with Mamanwas". The Mamanwa is one of the various tribes which together constitute the Negrito people among whom I have been studying to ascertain their origins through using genetic markers.

Currently, the majority of the indigenous peoples in the Philippines are descended from agricultural peoples who moved from East Asia in the Neolithic era after ~5000 years ago. The Spanish, who came to the islands in the 16th Century, noticed however that there were also people other than agriculturists in the mountain regions, people who were of very short stature, who had dark skins and curly hair. They called them Negritos (small negroes).

Later, anthropological, archeological and linguistic studies revealed that they are the descendants of hunter-gatherers who migrated from the Indonesian region in the late Paleolithic era (40,000~10,000 years ago), at a time before agriculture had started.

Until recently, and without agriculture, they worked to be self-sufficient through hunting, fishing and gathering plants, and also by bartering with neighbouring people. In my experience of and with them, I have discovered that they have a deep knowledge of and respect for nature. They are quick-witted, cheerful and kind. They hate a fight, yet have attempted to preclude, through avoidance, the expansion of agricultural people who have come to live in remote mountainous areas. But, they have been and are now suffering from prejudice against them and consequent discrimination.

We were, of course, all hunter-gatherers 10,000 years ago. Moreover, hunter-gatherers are the world's true indigenous people as also, I would argue, a living witness to the origins of humanity. Indeed we need to learn many things from them.

Over 30 years ago, in 1978, I visited some Negritos' living area whilst being guided by a young Mamanwa man who made me climb a mountain adjacent to a small village, Urbistondo, to the south of Surigao City. At that time the Mamanwa people did not build a village in which to reside. Rather, they lived scattered over a broad area in which men hunted wild boars and other animals and gathered mountain plants (such as rattan and orchid), bartering some with local agriculturalists for rice and miscellaneous goods at local markets. Women, on the other hand, raised children and gathered bananas, taros, and mountain vegetables. The Mamanwa indeed seemed to be well adapted to nature and their environment.

However, after attending an international symposium in Surigao City, I visited Urbistondo again to see the current situation of the Mamanwas. I was stunned to the point of having to

jump out of the car in which I was being driven. The forests had all gone from the mountains behind the town and dump trucks were roaring around in the dust that remained. The sandy beach that I had known had also disappeared to make space for a site where cargo vessels, a number of which I saw waiting to approach, might tie up. When I asked what had happened I was told that a big mining developmental project to extract nickel and other metals was underway, with a big Japanese enterprise playing a central role. A consequence was that Mamanwa people had been forced to move to a poor small village built near the coast and well away from the mountain area where they had previously lived and subsisted. One old man whom I interviewed grumbled sadly that he wanted to go back to the mountain.

Around the village my colleagues and I met a group of lowlanders all armed with guns. When I asked them why they carried guns, they answered that it was because the area had been attacked a few years previously by a group protesting against the mining project, and this is why they were now protecting the area.

I was so sad and ashamed as a Japanese to see all of this – to see that behind the prosperity of the modern civilization we enjoy is environmental destruction and infringement of the human rights of indigenous people, especially of the weakest-positioned hunter-gatherers. This is something of which we should all be aware.

Keiichi Omoto, an Honorary Member of IUAES, is a physical anthropologist who has carried out researches on the origins of the indigenous populations of Asia through using genetic data.

# 発言



## 比の狩猟採集民に安住の地を 尾本 恵市 東京大学名誉教授

フィリピンの先住・少数民族ネグリティをご存じだろうか。人類学者から彼らこそ東南アジア最古の先住民ではないか、とも言われる狩猟採集民の人々だ。そして今、彼らはその生活基盤を脅かされている。

現在、フィリピンにいる多数の先住民族は、ほぼ約5000年前の新石器時代以降に東アジアから渡来した農耕民である。だが、16世紀にやって来たスペイン人は、彼らとは別に山間部に非常に小柄で暗色の肌と縮れ毛の人々がいるのに気づき、ネグリティ(小黒人)と呼んだ。

そして後に、人類学や考古学、言語学などの研究によって、この人々が農耕の開始以前の後期旧石器時代(4万〜1万年前)に現在のインドネシア地域から渡来した狩猟採集民の子孫であるとわかった。

最近まで彼らは農耕をせず、狩猟と漁労、植物の採集などによる自給自足と近隣住民との物々交換に頼る生活をしてきた。私の経験によれば、彼らは自然への深い知識と畏敬の念を持っていて、俊敏で気立てがよく、親切だ。争いを嫌い、農耕民の進出を避け山間僻地に逃れているが、今も偏見と差別に苦しんでいる。

我がの祖先は1万年前まではすべて狩猟採集民だった。私は、彼らこそ真の先住民族でヒトの原点の「生き証人」であり、その生活から学ぶべき点が多々あると考えている。

今から30年以上前の1978年、私はスリガオ市の南にある小村、ウルビストンドからママヌワの青年の案内で山に登り、彼らが暮らす地区を訪れたことがある。ママヌワは村を造らず、広い地域に分散して住んでいた。男は弓矢でイノシシなどを狩り、籐やランなど山の幸を山麓の

マーケットで米や雑貨と交換する。女たちは子育てのほかバナナや芋、山菜などを集める。自然で環境に適応した生活と見受けられた。

だが、国際シンポジウム終了後、ママヌワの現状を見るため再びウルビストンドを訪れた私は車を降りて息をのんだ。背後の山並みから森は消え、土ぼこりが舞い上がる中をダンプカーが走り回っている。海岸の砂浜が失われ、何隻もの運送船が接岸を待っていた。いったい何が起きたのかと聞くと、最近、ニッケルなどの鉱山の大開発プロジェクトが始まり、日本の大企業が中心的役割を果たしているのだという。

ママヌワの人たちは、海岸近くに設けられた貧しい小村に移されていた。インタビューした一人の老人が暗い顔で「山に帰りたい」と言った。銃を持った低地民の男たちに事情を聴くと、数年前にこのプロジェクトに反対する勢力の攻撃があったため護衛しているのだという。

私は日本人として、暗たんたる気持ちであった。我々が享受する現代文明の発展の陰に、環境破壊と先住民、特に最も弱い立場の狩猟採集民に対するひどい人権侵害があることを多くの人に知ってもらいたい。

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1970年代から遺伝子データでアジアの先住民集団の起源を研究。