Kuzu people

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Abstract

Kuzu is one of autochthonic ethnic groups described in Nihon shoki. There is a rather detailed description of Kuzu people in 4th section of 10th (the scroll about emperor Ōjin) scroll and a short note in 3rd section of 3rd scroll (the scroll about emperor Jimmu). Kuzu seems to be a subgroup of Ainu because of the following: 1) Kuzu people lived alongside the river of Yoshino in mountain forest area; their food was: chestnuts, mushrooms, frogs and trout; 2) it is said that Kuzu people strike their mouth when they sing, that looks much alike description of playing a jaw harp (jaw harp has been well known in Ainu culture since long ago); 3) word Kuzu looks much alike Ainu word kur [kur] that means “human being”, “man” and that was widely used in self-namings by Ainu.

Keywords: Kuzu people; evidences of Ainu in Nihon shoki; Ainu history; Ainu; Nihon shoki

1. Introduction

In 4th section of 10th scroll of Nihon shoki (the scroll about emperor Ōjin) there is a description of Kuzu people (國樔). Also there is short note about Kuzu people in 3rd section of 3rd scroll of Nihon shoki (the scroll about emperor Jimmu). Kuzu obviously is one of autochthonic ethnic groups which lived upon Japanese archipelago before the arriving of Buyeo1 speaking people and before formation of Japanese ethnicity. Kuzu is generally considered as an ethnicity of unclear origin/genetic affiliation; however, there are some evidences that Kuzu could be a subgroup of Ainu.

2. The text of Nihon shoki about Kuzu people

2.1. The text about Kuzu people from 10th scroll of Nihon Shoki

The source of original Classical Chinese text is Emepror Ojin – Scroll 10 – The Nihon shoki Wiki.

2.1.1. 十九年冬十月、 戊戌朔、幸吉野宮。

In 19th year in winter, in 10th month, on the first day of the month (the day tsuchinoe inu/bojutsu)2 [the emperor] successfully dwelled in Yoshino3.

1 Buyeo is a conventional name of the group that includes Japanese, Ryukyuan and Korean languages, for more details about Buyeo group see: Akulov 2016. It is supposed that most of people speaking Buyeo languages came to the Japanese archipelago is the end of Yayoi (about 300 BC – 250 AD) and in the beginning of Kofun period (about 250/300 – 538 AD).

2 35th of Chinese sexagenary cycle – gānzhǐ (干支).

3 Yoshino is a region around Yoshino river (pic. 1, 2).
2.1.2. 時國懸人來朝之,

[In] that time Kuzu people came to get audience

Pic. 1. The scheme of Kansai region (source: Biobridge…)

Pic. 2. The map showing location of Yoshino river upon Kii peninsula (map source: Chiiki betsu ichiran)
2.1.2. 因以醴酒獻于天皇而歌之曰：

They offered sweet sake and sang the following song:

2.1.3. 伽辭能輔珥

\[ kasi no fu ni^4 \]

In the thicket of evergreen oaks

2.1.4. 豫區周塢苑區利

\[ yokusu o tsukuri \]

we made wide mortar.

2.1.5. 豫區周珥

\[ yokusu ni \]

In the wide mortar

2.1.6. 伽締蘆淤朋瀰枳

\[ kameru oomiki \]

brewed great sake

2.1.7. 宇摩羅珥

\[ umarani \]

with pleasure

2.1.8. 枳虛之茂知塢勢

\[ kikoshimochiose \]

taste [the sake] and listen [to our song]^5,

2.1.9. 磨呂俄智

\[ orogachi \]

our father!

2.1.10. 歌之既訖、則打口以仰笑。

When the song was finished, they struck their mouths, lifted their heads, and laughed.

2.1.11. 今國樔獻土毛之日、歌訖即擊石仰笑者、蓋上古之遺則也。

[And] now when Kuzu people bring products of their land [to the court], when they

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^4 The text of the song is recorded by Man’yōgana. In current paper the text of the song is represented in modern Japanese pronunciation written by Hepburn transcription.

^5 The song seems to be a late invention since it has actually no connection with life of Kuzu: the song is about sake, while Kuzu people definitely were hunters/forest gatherers and so they hardly cultivated rice and hardly produced sake.
finish singing, they strike their mouths, look up and laugh; this custom seems to be a remnant of ancient times.

2.1.12. 夫國樔者，其為人甚淳朴也。
The people of Kuzu are of single-minded character.

2.1.13. 每取山果食，亦煮蝦蟆為上味，名曰毛瀰。
Usually they eat fruits of mountains, also they cook frogs named of superb flavor which are named *momi*.

2.1.14. 其土自京東南之，隔山而居于吉野河上，峰嶮谷深，道路狹巘。
Their [this country] lies to the east and south of the capital, and is separated by mountains [from the capital], they live in the region of Yoshino river; peaks and rocks are steep, its valleys deep, and its trails are very narrow.

2.1.15. 故雖不遠於京，本希朝來。
Therefore even though [the region of Yoshino] was not far from the capital, from the very beginning [Kuzu people] seldom came to the court.

2.1.16. 然自此以後，屢參赴以獻土毛。
However later they started to come to the court regularly and offered products of their land.

2.1.17. 其土毛者，栗菌及年魚之類焉。
The products of land are the following: chestnuts, mushrooms, and trout.

2.2. The text about Kuzu people from 3rd scroll of Nihon Shoki

The source of original Classical Chinese text is Emperor Jimmu – Scroll 3 – The Nihon Shoki Wiki.

2.2.1. 更少進，亦有尾而披磐石而出者。
They went further and met a man who went out pushing the rocks.

2.2.2. 天皇問之曰：「汝何人？」對曰：「臣是磐排別之子排別。」此云。
The emperor asked: "Who are you?" and the man answered: "I am a son of those who move rocks". Thus he said.

2.2.3. 此則吉野國樔部始祖也。
This was the ancestor of Kuzu people of Yoshino.
3. Evidences that Kuzu people were a subgroup of Ainu

3.1. Name Kuzu

Name Kuzu looks much alike Ainu word kur [kur] “human being”, “man”, “person” that was widely used in self-namings by Ainu. Ainu /ɾ/ can be realized as [ɾ], [tr], [d], in final position Ainu /ɾ/ is especially alike [d]. Old Japanese tended to avoid [ɾ] as much as possible. Ainu /ɾ/ realized as [d] in Old Japanese and later became [z] in Modern Japanese according to the following scheme: /kur/ $\rightarrow$ [kud] $\rightarrow$ [kudu] $\rightarrow$ [kuzu]. A much alike example is conversion of Ainu word ramat “vital energy exists” into Japanese word tamashii “soul”, “spiritual energy” (Nonno 2015: 31).

3.2. Striking mouth

Kuzu people striking mouth when they sing or after signing looks suspiciously like playing jaw harp. In some cultures jaw harp is named mouth drum so striking mouth (playing mouth drum) seems to be a designation of playing jaw harp.
In Ainu culture there is jaw harp named mukkuri, it seems to be a very ancient instrument, and it is used mostly as an inseparable part of feasts.

![Pic. 3. Mukkuri (source: Mukkuri)](image)

3.3. The way of life of Kuzu people

Kuzu eating habits: chestnuts, mushrooms, frogs, trout (2.1.13, 2.1.17) correlate well with eating habits of Ainu/Jōmon people.
Also the region where Kuzu people live: alongside the river of Yoshino in mountain forest area (2.1.14) is very Ainu place for dwelling.

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6 Jōmon people are people of Jōmon culture that lasted from about 13000 BC to 300 BC. Jōmon people are direct and immediate ancestors of modern Ainu (Akulov 2015).
References


Chiiki betting ichiran 地域別一覧 (The list of region)  


