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### Cultural Features and Subsistence Strategies of the Jomon People

It seems as if despite being at least somewhat sedentary, that the Jomon culture of Japan never adopted agriculture. This is an interesting finding because it disproves a few subconscious biases that exist towards the development of agriculture- that agriculture was inevitable and “correct”, or that it was a better lifestyle. The truth is that agriculture, much like evolution, fills a niche. If a cultural niche does not require agriculture, it is not necessarily better than hunting and gathering which is what we see in the Jomon culture.

The Jomon people lived in a time that climatically very fortunate- the earth was warming, sea levels were rising, and Japan was (and is) endowed with many coastlines that are good for fishing. This meant that there were lots of plants and fruits to eat, along with many types of animal protein including deer, boar, hares, dolphins, and fish. We know that their diet consisted of these things because of the tools they left behind. There is evidence that the Jomon people used grinding rocks and slabs for processing grain, hand axes for digging up tubers, awls, fishhooks, and harpoons for catching fish, and spears for hunting forest animals. The harpoons are an especially interesting tool because of the innovative way that they are designed. When a Jomon harpoon would hit a whale or dolphin, the shaft would fall off and the harpoon would remain embedded with a line and float attached. This meant that the hunters could keep an eye on the target, and that the harpoon would not dislodge. The Jomon people were clearing iterating and developing subsistence strategies, they just were not agricultural strategies.

There is much proof that hunting and gathering were sufficient for maintaining a sedentary Jomon society. First, (and perhaps obviously) is that they never developed agriculture. Second, that the Ainu people of Japan have kept up this lifestyle to some extent. Third, that there are ancient pieces of pottery of considerable size. While it is possible that the Jomon people simply made pottery for the artistic aspects of the craft, it is more likely that they made pottery to save their food for later. And considering the quantity of earth ware that the Jomons produced, it is likely that their food sources were very prolific. For these reasons, we know that hunting and gathering was a possible and successful cultural style for at least a brief period of time in ancient Japan.

### The Spread of Rice in Southeast Asia

The story of rice in Southeast Asia actually begins more north, in modern China. Rice was originally domesticated on the banks of the Yangzi River, where it was able to thrive due to the proximity to water and warmth. Prior to rice (or rather, in conjunction with rice), foxtail millet was also domesticated, and consumption of these two crops determined one's social status. In the Dawenkou culture, for instance, only the upper class could consume rice because it was much harder to grow. Southeast Asia, however, is the perfect climate for rice, and it was grown there after the crop was introduced via colonization.

Farming is spread through two methods- diffusion, and colonization. Diffusion is when farming is adopted without the movement of populations, and colonization is when farming is spread with the movement of populations. There are a few pieces of evidence that suggest that colonization is how rice was spread to Southeast Asia, including DNA not previously found in the region and cultural breaks in tradition, particularly regarding burials. With colonization, these new farmers also brought rice-specific tools. Where Southeast Asian people used to develop tools for hunting and gathering, they instead began working on items like sickles. After moving down to Vietnam, rice continued to be spread to Malaysia and the Philippines. It would also later be cultivated in Korea and Japan. One interesting piece of evidence, however, suggests that there were places in Vietnam that rice could not be grown. In this area, the people went back to hunting and gathering as an alternative to growing rice. Much like the Jomon culture, this culture proves that agriculture is not always the right answer for a society's food needs.