

Preface

The overarching theme of this volume is human interaction and its consequences for the human condition across the vast expanse of East Asia during the Holocene, examined through the lens of human remains. The volume is also an exploration of human interaction at an entirely different level, bringing together chapters written by scholars from several distinct academic schools of thought. The contributors stem from a range of culturally mediated scholarly traditions in biological anthropology that were isolated to varying degrees by the tumultuous politics of the twentieth century. Conceptual frameworks, underlying assumptions, goals, and even styles of presentation vary considerably among the chapters, reflecting our goal of creating a forum within which a highly diverse and international group of scholars could engage in their particular approaches to examining human skeletal remains drawn from archaeological contexts.

For a bioarchaeologist, East Asia presents a number of unique opportunities and challenges. First of all, human lives during the East Asian past were defined by complex population movements and contact among a variety of human groups. Starting with the arrival of fully modern *Homo sapiens* in East Asia and their interactions with older species of humans, these movements shaped morphogenetic variation, the ecology and subsistence networks of early communities, pathogen distribution, patterns of violence, and technological development. Thus, from the beginning of the previous century on, the analysis of skeletal remains from archaeological contexts in East Asia targeted reconstruction of the processes involved in the initial peopling of this part of the world, human expansion onto the Japanese Archipelago and Taiwan, along with later interactions along the northern Chinese frontier, among geographically remote continental groups via the trade routes, as well as between insular and continental communities. Considering the intensity of these migrations and other population exchanges, the large number of prior skeletal studies reconstructing population interaction and the biological roots of ancient peoples based on metric and nonmetric cranial and dental traits is not surprising (e.g., Yan 1962; Zhang et al. 1977; Han and Pan 1979,

1982; Han 1986; Turner 1987; Chen 1989; Brace et al. 1989; Zhang and Han 1998; Shang 2004, to name just a few).

Second, an array of subsistence strategies, not all of which were pursued in other parts of the world, resulted in somewhat unusual interactions between human communities and their local environments. In East Asia, at least four different prehistoric subsistence complexes can be identified: maritime sedentary populations with limited horticulture and arboriculture focused on nuts, as in the Jomon (縄文) tradition of Japan (Crawford 1983; Chisholm et al. 1992; Matsui 1996; Matsui and Kanehara 2006); wetland rice agriculture, with continued exploitation of marine resources in coastal areas, as in prehistoric Taiwan and during Yayoi (弥生) in Japan (Crawford and Lee 2003); a millet/pig agricultural complex with developed horticulture and limited farming of dry/wetland rice, along with continued hunting and inland fishing, as during Yangshao (仰韶), in the Yellow River basin of northern China (Yan 1992, 2005; Yuan and Flad 2002); and mobile pastoralism, with very limited farming of millet and symbiotic ties to sedentary farmers, such as on the Mongolian steppe (Xie 1972; Di Cosmo 1994). Chemical analyses of bone samples, as well as exploration of bone lesions and parameters of oral health, can contribute to our understanding of how these subsistence strategies became established and also test their effects on physical well-being and on the life histories of ancient East Asians.

The two-part organization of this volume provides a framework for presenting the results of bioarchaeological inquiry into both of the major topical issues summarized above. Chapters in the first part, "Biological Indicators of Population Histories in East Asia," address the effects of population movement in a broad sense. The contributions gathered together in this part of the volume not only reconstruct biological distances among populations and discuss morphological variation in cranial and dental samples but also explore the consequences of population movement in terms of patterns of the spread of pathogens across East Asia. Studies in the second part of the volume, "Community Health," are aimed at examining the effects of changing subsistence practices on morbidity, mortality, traumatic injuries, and oral health in relation to contact with neighboring communities.

The skeletal collections discussed in this volume are derived from a landscape spanning more than 8,000,000 km² and a time period extending from the Early Neolithic (c. 12,000 years ago) to the Iron Age (400 BC–AD 500). Collections from medieval cemeteries and data on modern populations are also used in some chapters for comparative purposes. Several studies in the volume are synthetic in scope, drawing on a large number of archaeological skeletal collections from across East Asia. Collectively, the chapters demon-

strate how research hypotheses of great value to archaeologists can be tested through examination and analysis of human skeletal remains. If only for that reason, we hope this volume will spark increased interest in the study of human skeletal remains among archaeologists working in East Asia. We also hope that this volume will stimulate further international exchange of ideas and promote collaboration among the very diverse group of biological anthropologists with research interests in prehistoric and early historic East Asia.

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