Appendix

1

It’s hard to enter a discussion about the ethnicity of the Emishi. For the term Emishi I would take the neutral meaning of “Anybody who is not under the Yamato rule”; meaning a mix of people of Yayoi and Jomon culture descent. The matter about who was the main one is beyond my scope, but for the sake of this work should be understood that Kanto and Tohoku weren’t technologically very far advanced from the Kinai-based people, at least not enough to be an easy target for conquest.

The stout resistance the Yamato encountered suggests that the Emishi forces were well equipped and technologically quite close to the Yamato forces, having Tanko armor, steel weapons and an organized-enough society to allow them to be able to resist the conquest. The Kanto states were advanced and populous enough to lead the Yamato Court to use an indirect way to subjugate them. Alliances were formed between Yamato and key states in the Kanto, such as Kenu.

Balancing their support to different chieftains during internal wars the Yamato Court gained ascendancy in the region. A strategy that used the “Divide et Impera.” - or better "using the barbarian to subdue the barbarian", the Yamato saw the “Eastern Provinces” as a frontier, and its inhabitants not very far from the “barbarians” of the Tohoku.

These northernmost regions had produced burial mounds (some even very large such as the 168-meter Raijin Yama Kofun in present day Miyagi prefecture near Sendai ) in the fifth century prior to direct Yamato rule. To produce these large structures, a considerable amount of organization and centralization had to take place, so the level of social organization had to be quite complex, requiring agricultural cultivation able to sustain the density of population and hierarchy needed by Kofun society. Such burial mounds were likely made by people of Yayoi descent for some powerful local chieftain or family that held the local area under their control independent of the Yamato Court in the early stages of Japanese history. Later, smaller mounds are associated with the descendents of Jomon culture who seemed to have settled or re-settled in the same areas at the same time, coming from Hokkaido in which such smaller Kofun have been found as well.

Culturally, the Emishi of Yayoi descent were tied to the Yamato-Kofun culture and technology (explaining the presence of obsolete Tanko armor in the region when the standard in Kinai had already begun the Keiko). The Emishi of Jomon descent were less developed and heavily-influenced by northeast Asia and the peoples of the Amur River Valley. The reign known as Bokkai/Bohai/Balhae 1 provided them with many goods from northeast Asia. They of course traded with Yayoi-Emishi and Yamato.

Jomon-Emishi iron-working sites have been found recently. It is presumed that trade with Bokkai is a likely way by which central-Asian features are found in Tohoku, possibly explaining the shape of the handle of Warabite-To, due to close resemblance to the handle of central-steppe curved swords of Turkish provenance2.

After the ninth century conquest, the Emishi of both Yayoi and Jomon descent (or the mix resulted in previous times) began to be gradually absorbed into Yamato society, and their mounted warriors, via both local integration and forced relocation, this may have been part of the initial establishing process of the Samurai class, even including the armies of regional warlords like Abe and Kiyowara.
1) This was a sinified ethnic Tungusic state, initially known as Jin, founded primarily by the local Mohe ethnic group together with Koguryo people after the destruction of their state, located in northeastern China and lasting from 698 to 926 A.D. The second king Mu in 728 sent a mission to Japan to threaten Silla from the rear. Until its destruction, Bokkai/Balhae maintained diplomatic and commercial contacts with Japan. According to Balhae and Japan, Asian History Foundation, Balhae dispatched envoys to Japan 34 times, while Japan sent envoys to Balhae only 13 times. Because of its proximity to many powerful states, Bokkai/ Balhae became a buffer zone for the region.

2) Suenaga Masao, “Nihon Jodai no Buki”, pp.232-235

Sources:

Kenjiro Hakomori website: http://emishi-ezo.net/


Suenaga Masao, “Nihon Jodai no Buki”, Kyoto University Publishing, 1941