

**[Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Innovative Areas (Research in a proposed research area)]
Humanities and Social Sciences**



Title of Project : Comparative Studies of Ancient American Civilizations

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【Purpose of the Research Project】

The objectives of our project are: 1) to conduct high-resolution reconstructions of environmental changes and establish refined chronological frameworks in Mesoamerican and Andean, 2) to make a diachronic comparison of societal changes of Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations based on a refined chronology, and 3) to investigate how both Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations have affected indigenous cultures in Latin American countries from the Colonial period to the present.

【Content of the Research Project】

Our project conducts a diachronic comparison of societal changes of Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations based on a refined chronology by examining empirical data related to environmental changes, kingship, agriculture, demographic changes, warfare, economic organization as well as ideology. We carry out LiDAR survey around the site of Ceibal, Guatemala, and Nasca, Peru, to provide a complete view of how the archaeological remains such as monumental architecture, roads, residential settlement, and agricultural terrace, were distributed over the landscape. We compare Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations to investigate when, why, how cities and complex societies rose and fell through time.

Our project provides refined chronological frameworks based on precise varve counting, high-precision C-14 dating, and dendrochronology. We reveal the interrelationship between environmental changes and the rise and fall of Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations. Our project studies not only Pre-Colombian civilizations but also how ancient American civilizations have shaped indigenous cultures in Latin America from the Colonial period to the present. We examine how both indigenous and non-indigenous populations have viewed indigenous cultures by assessing ancient American civilizations and their own past. Thus, we present a new perspective on how people have used ancient American civilizations as cultural resources and reconsider the concept of the demise of civilizations.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Our project carries out an innovative study on Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations by means of a collaboration between a variety of human and social scientists, including archaeology, history and cultural anthropology, and natural scientists. We conduct diachronic comparative studies in several regions of the ancient America, introducing a new perspective and methodology to the studies of ancient American civilizations. Virtually no comparative studies on Mesoamerican and Andean archaeology have been carried out in Japan and the rest of the world. Moreover, there is a particularly conspicuous lacuna in empirical studies dealing with the history of the Americas from the pre-Colombian times to the present.

Our project aims to fill that gap and compares Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations based on empirical archaeological and ecological data. We also establish new refined chronological frameworks for the ancient America. Furthermore, we study not only Pre-Colombian history but also how people have reinterpreted their past and ancient American civilizations.

The results of this innovative project will have important contributions to reconstruct not only non-western centric but also the more balanced history of mankind and lead to a better understanding of variability and important patterns among civilizations all over the world.

【Key Words】

Ancient America: American indigenous civilizations and cultures before Columbus.

【Term of Project】 FY2014-2018

【Budget Allocation】 561,300 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

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