

【Grant-in-Aid for Transformative Research Areas (A)】

Section I



Title of Project : A New Archaeology Initiative to Elucidate the Formation Process of Chinese Civilization

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【Purpose of the Research Project】

The purpose of this project is to elucidate the process through which local civilizations that emerged in China in the late Neolithic period (late 3rd millennium BC) eventually converged into the middle Yellow River basin and bloomed as Chinese civilization in the early Bronze Age (early 2nd millennium BC).

The three main issues are as follows: (1) investigation of the role played by cultural hybrids during the formation of Chinese civilization, (2) restoration of human movement behind the movement of goods at the group / individual level, and (3) elucidating the actual conditions of foreign elements of early Chinese civilization and the Proto-Silk Road.

By achieving these goals, the traditional Chinese culture theory and civilization theory will be renewed, and the resilience of Chinese civilization, which is also called "the 4,000 year history of China", has the strength to think about the ideal future of human civilization. We will make proposals on the effectiveness of resilience and create new academic fields by passing archeology through the sciences related to it.

【Content of the Research Project】

It is an attempt to present a new strategy (= initiative) of archeology for elucidating the origin of Chinese civilization, and to solve the long-standing concerns and new problems of Chinese archeology at once through its practice. Specifically, archeology, which reconstructs human history from visible objects, and archeological science, which extracts invisible information from those objects, collaborate on an equal footing, and specify the production area and distribution route of the various prestige goods. And the movement route of humans will also be cleared at the same time. Our target prestige materials are jade, turquoise, cowry shells, crocodile leather drum, ivory, lacquer ware, special earthenware, mercury vermilion, etc. Regarding the movement of humans, we mainly deal with human skeletons that have met an unusual end, such as martyr and sacrifice, and explore their history. In addition, we will examine the impact from the west during the formation of Chinese civilization and the Proto-Silk Road as its propagation route from various directions.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Of the four major ancient civilizations in the world, only the Chinese civilization has maintained its lifeline to this

day. Natural disasters such as floods have often raged in China as well, and large-scale wars have constantly afflicted the people. Still, the Chinese civilization never stopped. The "multi-layered structure" that characterizes the Chinese civilization, such as wheat cultivation in the Yellow River basin (millet cultivation until the Neolithic period), rice cultivation in the Yangtze River basin, and livestock farming in the western and northern grasslands, is supposed to be the source of the resilience of Chinese civilization. We will clarify how such a "multi-structure" of Chinese civilization was formed, and as a result, how Chinese civilization acquired characteristics different from those of the early civilizations of the old continents such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Indus and the civilizations of the new continents such as Maya and Inca, and present new insights into the various formation process of civilization around the world.

The Bronze Age civilization was born in China in present-day Henan Province, which can be said to be a blank area of local civilization in the late Neolithic period. It can be rephrased as the process of turning the frontier into the center. The fusion of people, materials, and information, that is, the acquisition of cultural hybrids, must have played a major role in this. If so, the "heterosis" analogy of biology applies.

At that time, not only the fusion of each local civilization in China, but also the civilization elements (wheat, cow, horse, sheep, bronze, chariot, etc.) that can trace the origin to the Mesopotamian civilization or the Indus civilization far away via Central Asia, have not been fully discussed in Chinese archeology. It is also an important issue given to this project to properly position Chinese history in human history without being interfered by modern political, religious, and ethnic issues.

【Key Words】

Chinese Civilization : A Bronze Age civilization that emerged in the middle reaches of the Yellow River in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. With the Erlitou Site in Henan Province as the center of radiation, various civilization elements spread throughout China.

【Term of Project】 FY2020-2024

【Budget Allocation】 550,700 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】
[https:// www.chugokubunmei.jp/](https://www.chugokubunmei.jp/)