



**Title of Project : Rice Farming and Chinese Civilization :
Renovation of Integrated Studies of Rice-based
Civilizations.**

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【Purpose of the Research Project】

The goal of this research project is to reconstruct the historical processes through which rice-based civilization arose in the Yangtze Valley in the late Neolithic, which has been important component in the development and growth of Chinese civilization.

The three central themes of this project are :

1) to precisely reconstruct the process of rice domestication in China; 2) to investigate the causes surrounding the rise and fall of Neolithic rice-based civilization in the Yangtze Valley; and 3) to clarify the vital role of rice agriculture in Chinese civilization since the Bronze Age. This research will identify the unique characteristics of Chinese civilization, which is the only ancient civilization based on rice farming, and gain new insight into the source of its remarkable resilience.

【Content of the Research Project】

This project develops an innovative approach to study Chinese civilization by mobilizing contemporary theory and scientific skills from an interdisciplinary group of scholars based primarily on archaeology but including fields of history, geography, anthropology, agriculture, botany, zoology, genetics, geochemistry, etc.

There are five research programs within this research project. The themes are : ①Change in Material Culture and Social Stratification, ②Paleoenvironmental Change and Stages of Plant and Animal Utilization, ③Investigation of Subsistence Activities through Chemical Analyses and Ethnoarchaeology, ④ Rice Cultivation and Development of Vegetable Food Resources, and ⑤High Precision Radiocarbon Dating and Evaluation of the Effects of Rice Farming Culture on Human Health.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Chinese civilization is the only one of the so-called four great civilizations of the world to continue to this day. In the past natural disasters in China were rampant and people suffered from widespread warfare and conflict.

Nevertheless, Chinese civilization persisted. The Yellow River Basin wheat culture and the Yangtze Valley rice culture characterize the “dual structure” of Chinese civilization and this is assumed to be the source of its remarkable resilience. In clarifying this mechanism, it should be possible to make proposals on the structure of a sustainable civilized society.

Amongst the ancient civilizations, Chinese civilization is the only one in which rice cultivation was an important component. As it can be dated back to the late Neolithic period around 3,000 BC, it shares a temporal depth with many civilizations including Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Indus Valley. In this point, the significance of Chinese civilization in world history is in its ability to revise a Western-centric view of the past.

This project will emphasize the importance of “wet China” in the Yangtze Basin, which is inseparably linked with rice and waterside. It will also try to trace the origin of the spatial distribution of political and commercial centers in China, e.g. Beijing in the north and Shanghai in the south. If the socio-economic factors such as labor practice have a profound effect on human personality, the differences in disposition between northern and southern Chinese may have originated in the “dual structure”. Examining these origins should be a significant contribution to the understanding of Chinese culture as a whole.

【Key Words】

Rice-based Civilization : Civilization based on rice farming. Formed in the Yangtze Valley around 3,000 BC and became an essential element of Chinese civilization.

【Term of Project】 FY2015-2019

【Budget Allocation】 364,600 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

<http://inasaku.w3.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/>