

VIEWING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF CHINESE CIVILISATION

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In regards to Chinese history, the so-called Yellow River civilisation has always been considered as the birthplace of Chinese civilisation and the only core responsible for more than 4000 years of cultural development in the country. However, recent archaeological activities in the Yangtze River Valley have brought forth the strong possibility that the above-mentioned notion has been based on a virtual image. Evidence proves that the rise of Chinese civilisation took place in the Yangtze River Valley 5000 years ago and that the people in the valley enjoyed preeminence in China for more than 1000 years before the political center shifted to the Yellow River Valley. Thus, history is to be reversed in the coming 21st century and the result will definitely affect not only China itself but the whole world.

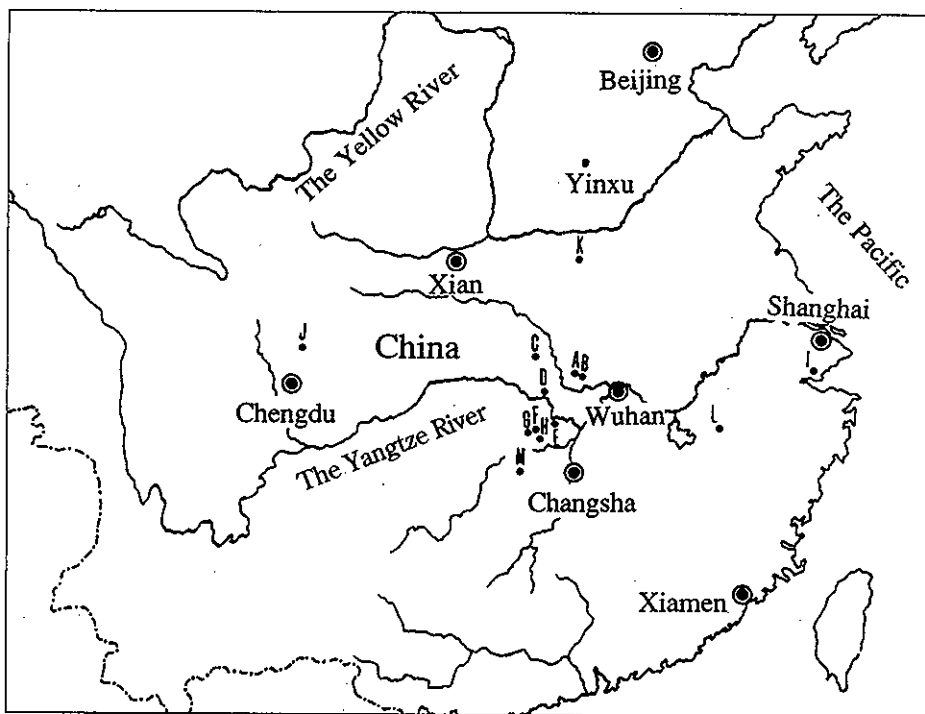
Key words: YELLOW RIVER CIVILISATION, YANGTZE CIVILISATION, LIANGCHU CULTURE, QUCHIALING-SHICHIAHE CULTURE, RICE CULTIVATION, JADE OBJECTS, HUGE PLATFORM, ALTARS, URBANISM, INTEGRATION, KINGDOM, THE FIRST STATE, SEVERE FLOODS, CATASTROPHE, XIA DYNASTY, RECONSTRUCTION OF CHINESE HISTORY.

Aiming at becoming a new superpower in the coming 21st century, China has been severely washed by the waves of market-economy under the policy of reform and opening pushed forward by the senior leader Den'xiaoping and his successor Jiangzeming. Watching this country closely, one may easily recognise that the surprising growth of the economy is led mainly by the south of China. An explosive rush in economy is witnessed everywhere in the major cities in the south such as Kuangchou, Shenzhen, Amoi, Shanghai, Nanking, Wuhan and Chengtu, and convulsive changes are shaking every stratum of the society. How could all this have happened in such a short time and why didn't people do it earlier, in the past long history, since they should have been able to do it well like they are doing it today? This is the initial question for those who have an interest in Chinese history.

Basically, China is a country which traditionally relies on agriculture for economy. While moving towards industrialisation, agriculture still has a decisive effect on the whole economy. The areas where the economic jump has been made successfully are those with rice production as the foundation of the agriculture, mainly in the Yangtze River Valley. The explosive growth in economy apparently has been brought about by the rich nature, the various resources, and the great energy of the people in the Yangtze River Valley itself. After all, the river of 6800 km is the longest in Asia, including a huge area more than 1,800,000 square km covered by the drainage system, an area about 4.5 times the size of Japan. It has provided a thoughtful environment and better living space for mankind ever since the paleolithic period from 300,000 years ago, and has helped the neolithic people in the valley to establish one of the leading food production systems in the world, namely the agriculture of rice cultivation. However, the most

surprising fact is that although everyone admits the overwhelming potentiality of the Yangtze River Valley in China, until recent times, with regard to the ancient civilisation, we were unaware that the cultural development based on rice agriculture in the valley had created the earliest urban civilisation in China 5000 years ago!

As a result of recent astonishing developments in archaeology, a complex of great cultures of 5000 years ago in the Yangtze River Valley (the 'Yangtze civilisation' as the author would like to call them collectively) began to show up in front of us with an unimaginable high level which most of us can hardly believe at first glance. Several epoch-making discoveries have demonstrated that in the 21st century B.C., when the first civilised state 'Xia (夏)' was supposed to have been established in the Yellow River Valley in north China, the Yangtze River Valley had already been enjoying a flourishing civilisation for more than a thousand years! The high point of the Yangtze civilisation is represented by the Liangzhu culture (良渚文化) in the delta region (TCRCS, 1986; Huang, & Zhang 1987; Huang, 1990, Che, 1994; Mu, 1994, Fei, 1995), the Quchialing-Shichiahe culture (屈家嶺-石家河文化) in the middle region of the valley (Joint Team of B,H,J, 1993; Zhao, 1994, Yan, 1995) and the newly-found cultural complex accompanied by a series of walled-cities such as Longma site (龍馬故城) or Mangcheng site (芒城) in the upper valley (report in press), more precisely the western Sichuan basin [see map below]. For a better understanding of them and their importance, a rough outline



Map showing the important archaeological sites in the Yangtze River Valley.

A. Shichiahe site B. Tucheng site C. Machiyuan site D. Yinxiangcheng site E. Zoumaling site F. Chengtoushan site G. Jijaocheng site H. Qiuqiao site I. Mochiaoshan site J. Sanxingdui site K. R'Litou site L. Dayangchou site M. Ningxiang site and Huangcai site

is given below.

The Liangchu culture flourished from 3300 B.C. to 2100 B.C. primarily in an area more than 50,000 square km with the Taihu lake (太湖) in the centre. It was the successor of the Machiapan culture (馬家浜文化, 5000~4000 B.C.), the Hemudu culture (河姆渡文化, 5000~3500 B.C.), and the Songce culture (崧沢文化, 4000~3300B.C.), all of which are known to have developed agriculture based on rice cultivation. The culture was first discovered in 1936 and has been investigated since then. The representative cultural materials are stone tools for rice cultivation, black polished pottery, jade objects, lacquer wares, silk fabrics, wood objects and bamboo works, etc. [Fig. 1]. From the cultural materials, we can see a highly developed culture which can hardly be grouped with any of the contemporary neolithic cultures throughout China.

The centre of the Liangchu culture seems to have been located in the northern suburbs of Liangchu town, north of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province (Fei, 1995). The area covers more than 34 square km with many archaeological sites distributed within. In the centre of the area, a huge rectangular platform, 680m in length from east to west and 450m in width from south to north, and 6~8m in height, rammed only by manpower and datable to the Liangchu period has recently been found [Fig. 2]. It is described as the largest man-made construction in East Asia of that period. Over the main platform, there are three smaller platforms, all rectangular in shape. Of the three, the largest is 166m long and 96m wide with a height of 2.3m [Fig. 3]. Next to this is a smaller one about 100m long and 63m wide, and the third one is in such poor condition that it cannot be measured precisely. Within the three platforms, some large holes that must have held



Fig. 1. An example of black-polished pottery of the Liangchu culture.

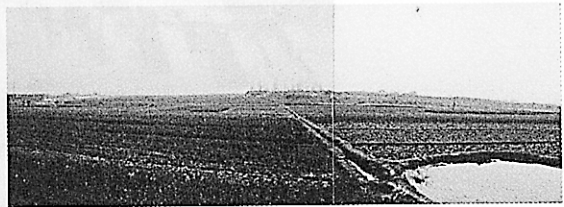


Fig. 2. The huge rammed platform of Mochiaoshan site (looking from east).



Fig. 3. The largest platform on the huge platform of Mochiaoshan site.

pillars with diameters more than one meter, have been unearthed. It is thought that there might have been some large complicated architectural structures over the pillars, possibly palaces or temples. All of these might have formed a group of important large-scale buildings, together with the three platforms which also seem to have had some large architectural structures over them, probably a political as well as religious complex. Located around this huge platform of over 30,000 square meters and within the vast area of 34 square km, were many settlements (archaeological sites) for the nobility or ordinary people, cemeteries of the rich and the poor and altars on the nearby mountains such as Yaoshan (瑤山祭壇, Fig. 4, ICRAZ, 1988) and Huikuanshan (彙觀山祭壇), which served as the cult centres for different groups of the Liangchu culture, respectively. About 2 km to the north of the huge platform, it is reported that there is another rammed wall which extends east-west for 3.5 km [Fig. 5].

Even though based on limited information from general surveys, we have some good reasons to believe the inference made by many archaeologists who say that this magnificent site (named Mochiaoshan site (莫角山遺跡)) was the urban centre of the Liangchu culture, which is supposed to have entered into urbanism as early as around 3300 B.C.

In addition to emphasis on the political characteristics of the Mochiaoshan site, one of the

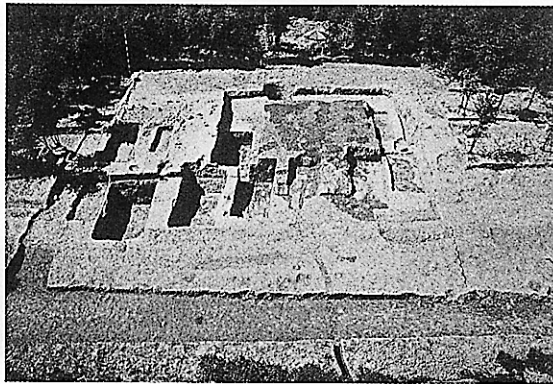


Fig. 4. The altar on the top of Yaoshan (after excavations).



Fig. 5. A rammed bank supposed to be a rampart of the Liangchu period.



Fig. 6. The cemetery of Fanshan after excavations.

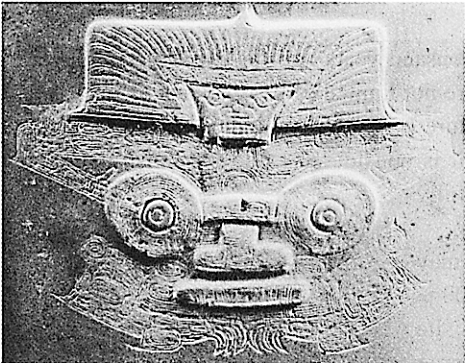
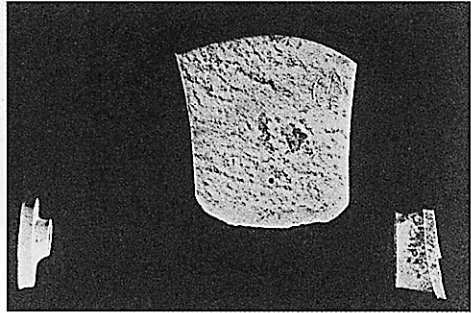
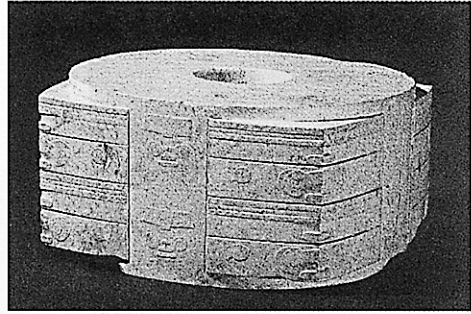


Fig. 7. The deity of the Liangchu civilisation carved on a jade *Tsuong*.

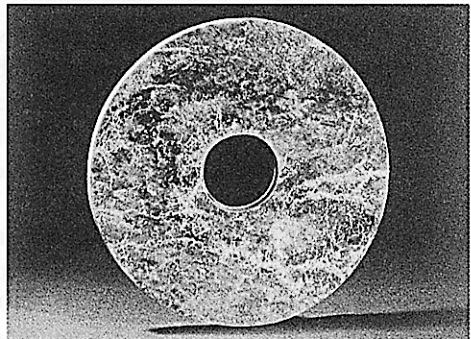


Fig. 8. Jade *Tsuong*, jade *Yue* and jade *Bi*, the most sacred three pieces.

important excavations in a related area deserves special mention. Near the huge platform on the northwest corner is a cemetery called Fanshan (反山) containing tombs of kings or nobles. When it was excavated in 1986, more than 3000 marvellous jade objects used as funeral goods were unearthed [Fig. 6]. This cemetery in turn proves that the huge platform of Mochiaoshan had an overwhelming position in the period of the Liangchu civilisation (Wang, 1989). Jades with extremely complicated forms are considered as the essence of the Liangchu culture, for they represent both the highest level in technology that the society could have reached several thousand years ago, and the maturity of the ideology that the people were able to create [Fig. 7]. Among the jades, '*Tsuong*', '*Yue*' and '*Bi*' were the most important, with special social values seemingly linked to political power and religious status (*Tsuong*), military power (*Yue*) and wealth (*Bi*) in the society [Fig. 8]. According to present-day experts of jade, the technology used

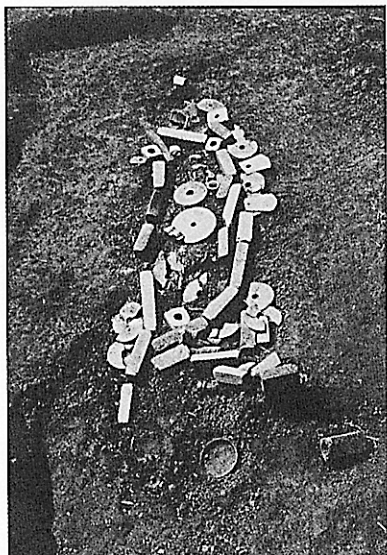


Fig. 9. The tomb of a noble buried with many jade objects at Sitou site, Jiangsu Province.



Fig. 10. Pengtoushan site with a moat surrounding it.

to make these unbelievable masterpieces several thousand years ago far exceeded the level of modern industry. Cemeteries for kings or nobles were not limited to Fanshan and can be seen at many sites within the territory of the Liangchu culture [Fig. 9]. This indicates that the culture developed in a very balanced manner. Therefore it is considered to be the most convincing evidence that qualifies the Liangchu culture as a fully established civilisation.

Going up to the middle valley of the Yangtze, we may see the earliest establishment of rice cultivation 8000~9000 years ago in Hunan Province (He, 1995). A site called Pengtoushan (彭頭山) — a considerably large neolithic village with a surrounding moat — is regarded as the earliest moated circular settlement in China [Fig. 10]. The existence of an established rice agriculture has been confirmed at the site mainly from pottery sherds [Fig. 11]. It is expected that this evidence may push back the time when rice cultivation was started to 10,000 years ago. The most recent investigations in the south of Hunan Province and the north of Jiangxi Province have confirmed the evidence for the earliest known rice cultivation around 11,000~13,000 years ago. Therefore, we have reason to believe that further fieldwork will pinpoint the middle region of the Yangtze River Valley as the earliest place for rice cultivation. Following this long fundamental process of probably some several

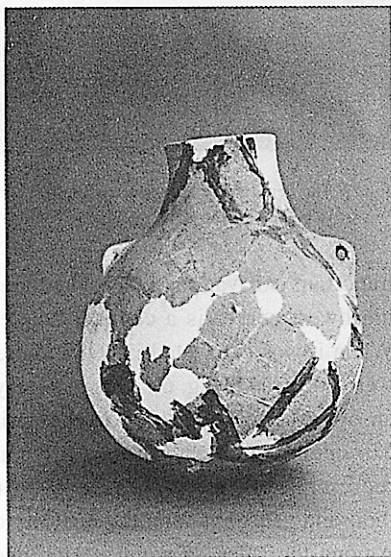


Fig. 11. An example of pottery of 8000 years ago unearthed from Pengtoushan site.

thousand years, there were two important phases which are named the Daxi culture (大溪文化, 6000~3200 B.C.) and the Quchialing culture (屈家嶺文化, 3200~2600 B.C.). These lasted less than 3000 years, with dynamic development reaching the stage of urbanism around 3000 B.C..

From the Quchialing period through the following Shichiahe period (石家河文化), several large settlements in the Jiangnan plain (江漢平原), the largest plain in the middle of the Yangtze River Valley began to expand with a steady growth of rice production and a rapid

increase of population (Joint T of B,H,J, 1993; Zhao, 1994). Those expansions eventually led the settlements to become political centres in that area. Each of these settlements was surrounded by a large rammed wall and a wide moat [Fig.12]. Inside there were large production sites located in different places and an area thought to include a palace or temple was located on a slightly higher tableland in the centre of the site. Earthen figurines for fetishism were found in great numbers everywhere and the mass-production of pottery was evident. In the cemetery outside of the 'city wall', jade objects were found in the tombs of the rich while nothing was found buried with the poor. Among these important sites, the largest site which is supposed to be the top political centre of the culture is called Shichiahe (石家河), located in Tian-men county of Hupei Province. The 'city' occupies a vast area 1.3 km from the north to the south and 1.1 km from the east to the west, with a huge rammed wall and a wide moat surrounding it [Fig. 13]. In terms of social structure, with this large 'city' on the top, several smaller cities having the same configuration were local political centres and together they formed the framework for the whole society of the Quchialing-Shichiahe culture. The walled-city might have been the result of the division in

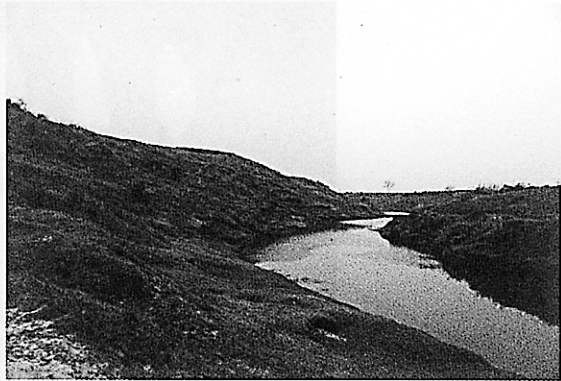


Fig. 12. Machiyuan site with a rammed wall and a moat in Jinmen county, Hubei Province.



Fig. 13. The wide moat of Shichiahe site, the political centre in the middle of the Yangtze River Valley during the third millennium.

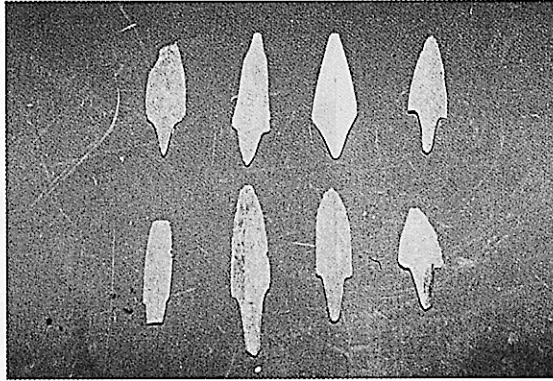


Fig. 14. Large arrow-heads found at Shichiahe site.

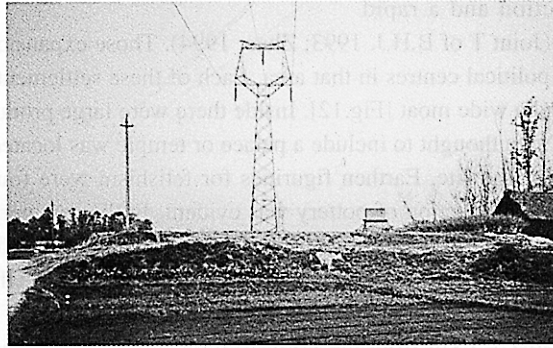


Fig. 15. A walled city called Gucheng in Chengdu plain, Sichuan Province.

specialisation of production, but the wars which seem to have frequently happened in that period also could have some connection with its appearance [Fig. 14]. From these facts, we can see a developed society with apparent factors of urbanism and civilisation.

Several walled-cities [Fig. 15] also have been discovered recently in the upper valley, mainly in the western part of Sichuan Province, which are thought to date back to the Long-shan period (龍山文化, 2600~2000 B.C.). These early 'cities' in the region share some outward similarities with those in the middle valley and also seem to have been based on rice production agriculture. Although we have to wait for the excavations to be carried out at those sites, they seem to indicate that the cultural development of this area was on the same track as those in the middle as well as the lower valley.

The period from 3000 B.C. to 2000 B.C. seems to have been the most prosperous age for the Yangtze River Valley, when it was renowned throughout China. It undoubtedly had already reached the stage of civilisation and had miraculously maintained this development for a very long time. However, as the archaeological evidence shows, from 2000 B.C. to 1000 B.C. there was a long and dark period in the valley whereby the leading area of cultural development in China apparently shifted to the Yellow River Valley in the north. It is clear there was a long

depression although there have been some magnificent discoveries in some parts of the valley, such as the buried bronzes of the Shang period in Dayangchou, Xingan county, Jiangxi Province [Fig. 16, 17; Peng, 1995] and the bronzes of the Western Zhou period in Ningxiang, Huangcai, in Hunan Province [Fig. 18, 19; Xu, 1994A]. However, in the upper valley, the situation was quite



Fig. 16. A bronze *You* unearthed at the Dayangchou site, Xingan county, Jiangxi Province.



Fig. 17. A bronze *Din* unearthed at the Dayangchou site, Xingan county, Jiangxi Province.



Fig. 18. A bronze *You* unearthed in the north of Hunan Province.



Fig. 19. A bronze *Zun* unearthed in the north of Hunan Province.

different from the middle and lower valley, for a great civilisation called the Sanxingdui civilisation flowered from around 1600 B.C. to 850 B.C., seemingly without having been affected by the depression that distressed the middle and lower valley.

The main site of the Sanxingdui civilisation is located in the north of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, and has been investigated since the 1930s. It was not until 1984 that the site was recognised to be a vast ancient city surrounded by a huge rammed wall [Fig. 20]. In 1986, an epoch-making discovery in Chinese history was accidentally made at the site, and two pits full of bronzes, jade objects, gold masks and ivories were unearthed [Fig. 21, SWG, 1987; 1989]. This shocked archaeologists and historians, because the types of bronzes, gold artifacts and jade objects unearthed from the two pits had never been known throughout China. The bronzes

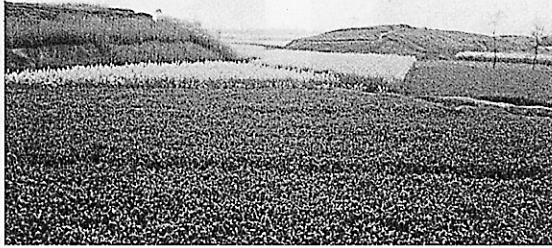


Fig. 20. The entrance of the Sanxingdui city wall.

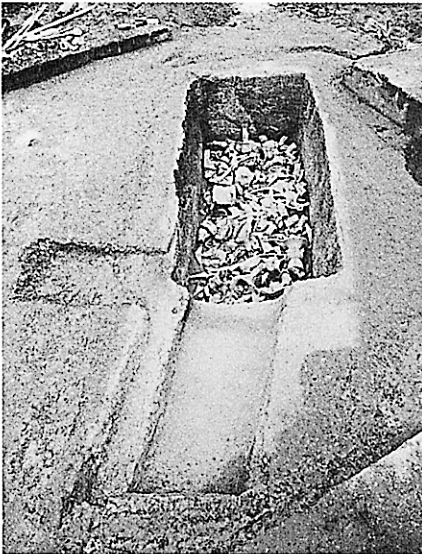


Fig. 21. The pit No. 2 full of bronzes, gold masks and ivories under excavation.

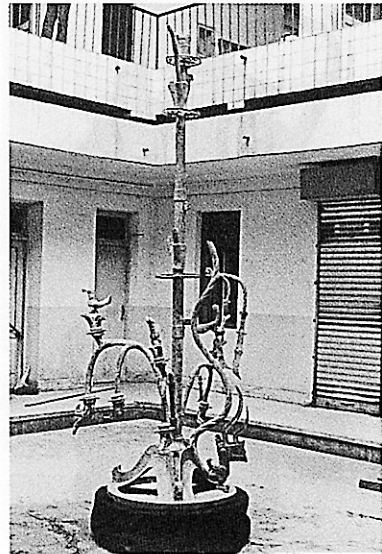


Fig. 22. The 'Deified Tree' made of bronze found at Sanxingdui site.



Fig. 23. The 'Shaman statue' made of bronze found at Sanxingdui site.



Fig. 24. The largest mask with projected-eyes.



Fig. 25. A bronze head with a gold sheet mask.

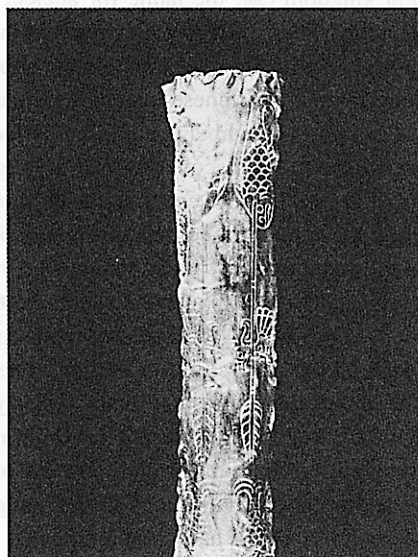


Fig. 26. The gold stick with motifs on the surface.

include the 'Deified Tree' (4m high, Fig. 22), the 'Shaman statue' (2.62m high, Fig. 23) and the 'Mask with projected-eyes' (138cm × 65cm, Fig. 24), which are the largest bronze relics of this period found in the country. Among the bronzes, which weigh over a ton, are large masks, statue

heads (some of them with a gold mask, see Fig. 25), animal figures and cult vessels, which together form a unique image very alien to us, while the gold objects, including a stick [Fig. 26], mask sheets, a tiger-pendant, etc., demonstrate that a high technology of gold-working was established in China more than 3000 years ago. The jade objects show some similarities with those found in the Yellow River Valley; however, the mainstream of the tradition seems to belong to the period earlier than the Yin Dynasty and lasted for a longer period in the region. These buried treasures not only indicate that a high-level civilisation flourished in the Sichuan basin, but they also clearly prove that the civilisation itself was neither a branch of the Yin or the Zhou culture nor a colony ruled by the dynasties in the Yellow River Valley. It had its own cultural tradition, political system, state territory, independent ideology, means of communication, etc. (Xu, 1995).

In general, this completely unknown civilisation had a huge walled-city more than 3 square km which is comparable to the contemporary capital of the Shang dynasty in the north. From the viewpoint of archaeology, the following should be emphasised: a unique bronze industry which is totally different from the Shang-Zhou bronzes, a gold-making technology representing the earliest invention of goldwork in East Asia and a sophisticated jade system showing clear variety in comparison to the Shang or Zhou. The studies of this civilisation have been continuing for almost ten years and are beginning to reveal the cover of this 'exotic' civilisation. It definitely has repudiated the old idea describing the upper Yangtze Valley as a barbaric area and has raised many new questions for us to solve. The great Sanxingdui civilisation was seemingly created by the 'Shu kingdom' (蜀, the name for ancient Sichuan) and represents the high level which the people in the Yangtze River Valley reached in that period.

Now let's get back to the issue of the rise of civilisation in China. We have believed in the traditional notion of Chinese history with the Yellow River civilisation in the centre, and now most of us cannot avoid being confused by facing the truth from present archaeology. Should we consider these great discoveries that belong to the pre-Xia period as a civilisation? This is probably the most controversial question in terms of explaining the rise of Chinese civilisation. To define these cultural complexes as a civilisation, we can list up the key factors as below: walled-cities rammed by mass manpower, huge platforms with palaces or temples on them, powerful leaders (kings?) and shaman at the top of the ruling class, a stratified society with rich and poor, an advanced jade industry representing the level of technology, etc.. However, some may insist on the necessity of a writing system by raising the counter example of oracle bones from the Yinxu site of the later Shang dynasty (around 14~13th century B.C.), which is used to define the Yellow River civilisation. We do not yet have any concrete evidence to indicate that the Liangzhu civilisation already has its own writing system. However, judging from the advanced aspects of civilisations in the Yangtze River Valley, it is hard to imagine that those mature societies could have communicated functionally and controlled efficiently without a writing system. A writing system may have existed in this period, but its style still needs to be properly understood in order to figure out its form. In fact, from the excavations and investigations carried out so far, plenty of evidence for proving the existence of a writing system is already in our hands and hints that it could have been quite different from that of the Yinxu site in the Yellow River Valley.

As mentioned above, the series of recent archaeological discoveries in the Yangtze River Valley clearly indicate that in the process of the formation of Chinese civilisation, the so-called

'Yellow River civilisation' did not always occupy the central position and act as the only hero on the stage from the beginning down to the present. Instead, it is the Yangtze River Valley which has stepped into the course of civilisation even 1000 years prior to the Yellow River Valley! This is an undeniable historical truth and it is about time for us to face it without any prejudice (Ji, 1990; Su, 1992; Mu, 1994; Nakamura, S, 1995). The discoveries of the Yangtze civilisation have therefore begun to challenge the traditional historical notion that regards the 'Yellow River civilisation' as the backbone and demands that we reconstruct the process of the formation of Chinese civilisation.

One may wonder why the 'Yellow River civilisation' became the backbone of Chinese civilisation throughout the whole history of China and for what reason the real forerunner, the Yangtze civilisation has had to keep silent for several thousand years up to present. This issue now is becoming a focus of discussion in the academic world in China and has even begun to affect the politics of the country. Based on recent progress in research, we will be allowed to have some clues to look into this most mysterious chapter in Chinese history.

The turning point was around 4000 years ago when the first dynasty — Xia — is said to have appeared in the middle of the Yellow River Valley. The true story behind this great event is tragic as well as dramatic. According to recent archaeological research, around 2200~2000 B.C., the Liangchu civilisation, which was enjoying the peak of its development, suddenly collapsed and disappeared from the delta region. A thick layer of mud (seemingly caused by severe floods), which covers the layers of the Liangchu period, has been observed at most of the sites in the area in which this culture existed. This suggests that the earliest civilisation in China might have been annihilated by floods, which were presumed to have been caused by a rapid change of climate. After this collapse, there was no evidence that the Liangchu civilisation ever revived in the region and the period of depression thus continued for more than 1000 years until the middle of the Western Zhou period.

Interesting enough, following the disastrous collapse of the Liangchu civilisation, a new culture called the 'R'e litou' culture was established in the middle valley of the Yellow River and rapidly changed the sluggish process of cultural development in that area. This culture recently has come to be considered as the culture of the so-called Xia dynasty (2000 B.C.~1600 B.C.). However, many elements clearly coming from the Liangchu civilisation have been observed within this new culture. It must be pointed out that the 'R'e litou' culture existed in the middle of the Yellow River Valley, which is more than 1000 km away from the Yangtze delta in the south! All of these related phenomena could hardly be a coincidence and naturally have made scholars link the two events as cause and effect (Xu, 1994B). At the same time, they have shed light on a new direction for searching for the true circumstances of the rise of Chinese civilisation. A hypothesis that the Xia dynasty was established by the initiative of the Liangchu immigrants has been proposed and has been steadily gaining support from the archaeological fields throughout the Yangtze River Valley. Archaeology is going to reverse history!

Besides archaeology, studies on historical records concerning this period have also begun to move in the same direction. For instance, if the Xia dynasty was really set up mainly by Liangchu immigrants who were ingeniously absorbed into the local cultures, then the strong relations with the Yangtze River Valley and the great Yu (禹), the founder of the Xia dynasty, who is documented in many historic records, would be easier to understand. In China, as almost every historian knows, it is believed that the birth, marriage, having a child, political gatherings

and even death of the great Yu, all occurred in the south — the Yangtze River Valley instead of the Yellow River Valley where he became the first ruler of China. These stories are amusing and inscrutable, for the first ruler of China in the sacred Yellow River Valley, the birthplace of Chinese civilisation, must not at all have had his experiences like those in the barbaric Yangtze River Valley. Under the name of the Yellow River civilisation, these records could have been intolerable and forbidden, but fortunately they survived and help to tell the truth about the real background of the rise of Chinese civilisation for our generation. Taking the present archaeological evidence into consideration, we may see some truth in these legends which were regarded as absurd for the past centuries. The truth might have been that Yu was a king or a leading group which originally came from the Yangtze River Valley (most likely from the Liangchu kingdom) and that the first dynasty in the middle of the Yellow River Valley may have developed as a consequence of the intermixing between the Liangchu immigrants and the local people. In a sense, we can even say that part of the ruling class of the Xia dynasty could be the successor of the Liangchu civilisation. Thus, the floods that damaged the earliest urban civilisation in the lower valley of the Yangtze, ironically stimulated the process towards the stage of civilisation in the Yellow River Valley and thereby the resulting cultural unity determined the later current of history with the 'Yellow River civilisation' as the core for some 4000 years!

Obviously, the idea that the core of Chinese civilisation lay in the Yellow River Valley was most likely formed intentionally by the rulers of China, probably since the Xia period, and we may consider it to be an artificial concept in a sense. It is worthwhile to consider why the rulers did this and for what purpose.

In ancient China, political power for ruling the country was not only gained through winning a war, but frequently depended on obtaining legitimacy from the cultural and historical tradition. This tradition can be traced back to the Xia period presumably 4000 years ago. When the first dynasty was established in the Yellow River Valley and the Yangtze River Valley fell into a long and dark age, as time passed, the land where the kings were ruling the country began to possess a sort of charisma and eventually became considered a sacred place linked with gaining absolute political power. Was the Yellow River Valley an attractive land in terms of nature, environment and living conditions for human beings? Actually, the Yellow River Valley was not fertile as imagined by most historians who believe in the notion of the 'Yellow River civilisation. In fact it was poor in comparison with the Yangtze River Valley in terms of environment and natural resources. Meanwhile, as history tells us, both the Shang dynasty and the Zhou dynasty completely relied on raw materials from the Yangtze River Valley for their bronze industry. In the Spring-Autumn period, Chu, Wa, Yue, the three superpowers rose suddenly from the long depression to threaten the states in the Yellow River Valley. Even in the united period, the Han empire could never have become that powerful without exploiting the wealth of the Yangtze River Valley. The same is true for the Sui-Tang dynasty. Despite the poor land, the rulers of successive dynasties would try their best to stick to it and never would move away. The point is that as long as one could gain the traditional political power to rule China by succeeding the former dynasties in the poor Yellow River Valley, a ruler would have no problem in gathering all the necessary wealth from the south or elsewhere within China by using the strong power in his hands. In other words, the land was thought to have a sort of divinity for acquiring power as well as wealth. Therefore, throughout history, this condition was attractive to all those ambitious power gamblers who dreamed of ruling China. To them, divinity meant the legitimacy absolutely

necessary for becoming the monarch of the country. While they eventually reached their goal, in order to maintain their power and continue to rule the country, they always tried to strengthen the image that the place was the centre of China and was prepared only for them to rule the country. Later, this image was amplified and penetrated deeply into the historic records from one dynasty to another, written by official historians under the order of the rulers. It is this tendency that gradually shaped the notion that 'Chinese civilisation started in the Yellow River Valley'. Obviously this notion was useful and important for rulers in terms of maintaining the power and unification of China. In a sense, we may say the situation remains unchanged even in modern China.

However, the times have changed and economy has become more important in the present world exerting a stronger effect over political affairs. Buttressed by their economic success, the confident people in the Yangtze River Valley began to look for their identity in the culture and history of their own land. They want to understand why their ancestors have had to look up to the north for several thousand years, even though they obviously possessed economic superiority. As a result, they roused the Yangtze civilisation from the earth. The great civilisation created by their ancestors made decisive contributions to the making of China, but it has been ignored for several thousand years by rulers under the name of 'the Yellow River civilisation'. What is most exciting is that 4000 years later, history is going to be reversed and the rise of Chinese civilisation will be pushed back to 5000 years ago, contemporary with other early ancient civilisations in the world. This revolutionary turning point is extremely important to China as it faces the 21st century. The result of the historical reverse will not only force Chinese history to be rewritten, but also will deeply affect China as well as the world in the years to come. Moreover, as long as the economic priority of the Yangtze River Valley continues, the people will speak out for political power against the north and it will certainly cause a major confrontation between the south and the north in terms of politics, economy, nationality, ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, etc. Now, Chinese scholars are passionately trying to reconstruct the process of the formation of Chinese civilisation by carrying out active investigations and excavations in the Yangtze River Valley. Whether they recognise it or not, their efforts will undoubtedly lead to shaking the traditional power structure in China severely and reshape Chinese society to an astonishing extent in the coming 21st century.

The dawn of the Chinese civilisation started in the Yangtze River Valley. This truth of history will definitely tell us much more than it means.

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中国文明構成の再考

徐朝龍

要約：これまで「黄河文明」が中国文明を語る時に常に中心として考えられてきたが、最近中国の長江流域における考古学の著しい進展が「黄河文明」とは虚像に過ぎないという驚くべき結論を出しつつあるのである。長江下流域では「良渚文明」という5300年前に出現した中国最初の都市文明が存在しており、長江中流域ではほぼ同じ時

期に巨大な城壁都市をもつ「屈家嶺＝石家河文化」が確認されている。そして、上流域でも最近大きな城壁都市の遺跡が複数に発見されている。これらの新発見された文化ないし文明はいずれも稲作を経済基盤にして栄えた高度なものであり、黄河流域より早く都市文明の域に進んでいたものと見られている。こうして、中国文明の起源は黄河流域ではなく、長江流域にあったという衝撃的な真実が明らかにされつつあり、歴史、文明史観、哲学、宗教など多くの分野で巨大な震撼がこれから起きることになる。中国の歴史が大きく書き換えられる日はもうそう遠くないのである。