

Rice cultivated in China 10,000 years ago

Rice, one of the world's most important staple foods sustaining more than half of the global population, was first domesticated in China about 10,000 years ago, according to a new study.

"Such an age for the beginnings of rice cultivation and domestication would agree with the parallel beginnings of agriculture in other regions of the world during a period of profound environmental change when the Pleistocene was transitioning into the Holocene," said Lu Houyuan, professor of the Institute of Geology and Geophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who led the study.

The research, published in the US Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, was done in collaboration with Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Relics and Archaeology and the Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Questions surrounding the origin and domestication of rice have led to a lot of debate in the last decade.

Rice remains have previously been recovered from a Shangshan site in the lower Yangtze River and recognized as the earliest examples of rice cultivation.

However, the age of the rice was derived through radiocarbon dating of organic matter in pottery shards, which can be contaminated with older carbon sources, Lu said.

Researchers developed new ways of isolating the rice from carbon sources, such as clays and carbonate, and dated the samples directly using radiocarbon dating.

It turned out that rice retrieved from the early stage of the Shangshan site was about 9,400 years old.

Further studies showed that approximately 36 percent of the rice at Shangshan had more than nine fish-scale decorations, less than the approximately 67 percent counted from modern domesticated rice, but larger than the approximately 17 percent found in modern wild rice.

That means rice domestication may have begun at Shangshan at about 10,000 years ago during the beginning of the Holocene, when taking into account the distance between samples and the lowest bottom of cultural strata of the site as well as a slow rate of rice domestication, Lu said.

The time coincided with the domestication of wheat in the Near East and maize in northern South America, both of which are also believed to have occurred at about 10,000 years ago, when the global climate experienced dramatic

changes from cold glacial to warm interglacial.

TCM's popularity growing abroad

Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine is cooperating with foreign institutions and training students to share traditional Chinese medicine—one of the world's most ancient therapies—with the world.

According to university president Hu Gang, more than 26,000 foreign students from about 90 countries and regions have majored and trained in traditional Chinese medicine since 1957.

“We have established traditional Chinese medicine centers in countries such as Australia, Switzerland and France,” says Hu. “It has gradually changed local people's opinion about TCM and more people are willing to accept it.”

Huang Guicheng, vice-president of the university, says that more than 10 countries have legally recognized TCM and more foreigners now use TCM.

“We have cooperated with a German medical center for 18 years,” he says.

“Local people visit the center and seek TCM treatments.”

He says TCM also can treat post-traumatic stress, which may lead to mental illness and insomnia.

A local doctor, who received TCM training at the Nanjing university in 2008, gave the refugee children in Munich the medicine that they later called “magical tea”.

“Many foreign hospitals even use acupuncture in surgeries,” he says.

Huang says that TCM is popular due to its effectiveness and minimal side effects.

“We have received invitations from many foreign institutions to co-found TCM research centers in their countries,” says Huang.

Belt and Road kids in Beijing

celebrate Children's Day



Some 150 children from more than 35 foreign countries gather with their Chinese peers for a grand celebration at the newly established China Soong Ching Ling Science and Culture Center for Young People on May 31, one day ahead of International Children's Day. [Photo by Chen Boyuan/China.org.cn]

Some 150 children from more than 40 foreign countries gathered with their Chinese peers for a grand celebration at the newly established China Soong Ching Ling Science and Culture Center for Young People on May 31, one day ahead of International Children's Day.

The celebration, themed "Dream of the Future Belt and Road Young Hearts," was organized by China Soong Ching Ling Foundation (CSCLF) in a bid to promote communication between young people from countries along the Belt and Road, a major consensus reached on the latest Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

Wang Jiarui, vice chairman of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and chairman of the CSCLF attended the ceremony along with foreign diplomats of Belt and Road countries and representatives from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and ASEAN countries, among other regional organizations.

The celebratory activities featured "children's own festival" where Chinese and international children staged their own performances – such as Peking Opera excerpts, conducted a formation flight of multi-rotorcraft drones, and painted out their own expectations of the future.

Children from different countries exchanged gifts bearing their own national

characteristics. They also wrote down their own "Silk Road Dream" on a prepared wishing wall.

Some of their casual wishes and ideas may turn out to be reality in the future, and this is the power of the dream as much as the Silk Road spirit, said Jing Dunquan, CSCLF's vice chairman.

He said that the international celebration for International Children's Day was an occasion for young people from different countries to enjoy the fun while knowing more about each other.

"In these activities, they obtain happiness and fulfilment; hence they will develop their interest and unleash their potential for their own dreams for the future," said Jing.

Salma Potts Vales is from Cuba. She was on the performance team for this celebration. She said that she liked China because she had lots of fun things to do. She particularly likes the good Wi-Fi connection in China so that she could "play games with friends."

"I wish that all kids are happy [on the Children's Day]. And if you are not good at math or others, just keep practicing," she said.

Tchiegeu Yvan is Cameroonian. Having a Cameroonian father and a Russian mother while attending an international school in Beijing, he can speak four languages: French, Russian, Chinese and English. He said it was not his first time to attend such international celebrations, as he was also in the performance team for the past Belt and Road Forum.

Chen Aimin, the chief of CSCLF's international communication said that serving young people's growth is one of the principal aims of the foundation. She said that such an international observation of Children's Day has been in place for many years, except that this year's was rather grander.

Boost set for privacy on internet

A fundamental new cybersecurity law, which will take effect on Thursday and is intended to safeguard sovereignty in cyberspace, national security and the rights of citizens, bans online service providers from inappropriately collecting and selling users' personal information.

China has more than 730 million internet users—more than the population of the European Union—and nearly 700 million mobile phone users, according to government statistics.

President Xi Jinping called in April for better use of the internet to benefit the people and the country. Industry insiders interpreted this as

indicating an integrated development of the internet and the economy.

According to a State Council five-year informatization plan, China will expand e-commerce transactions to more than 38 trillion yuan (\$5.5 trillion) by 2020, up by 16 trillion yuan over 2015.

However, internet-related scams and data theft began to abound as internet use made economic headway in China.

The new law, which was passed by the country's top legislature in November, makes it clear that no one can use the internet to conduct fraud or sell prohibited goods.

Those who violate the provisions and infringe on personal information will face hefty fines, it stipulates.

To protect individuals' privacy, internet service providers are forbidden by the new law from collecting user information that is irrelevant to the services provided, and they should handle the information they do collect in line with laws and agreements.

Moreover, users will have the right to ask service providers to delete their personal information if such information is abused, according to the law.

Additionally, the new law says, cybersecurity management staff members must also protect information that is obtained and are banned from leaking or selling the information, including privacy and commercial secrets, it said.

Shen Yi, deputy director of the Cyberspace Governance Study Center at Fudan University, said that the people's sense of benefit should be the evaluation criteria for cybersecurity and informatization, rather than simply technical indexes.

Last year, China conducted several internet-clearing campaigns that included checks on websites, search engines and mobile apps, previous reports said. Some live-broadcast websites were shut down after they were found to be hosting or streaming illegal content, such as pornography.

In March, China issued its first international strategy for cyberspace cooperation to improve such cooperation worldwide.

Several other regulations will also take effect on Thursday. A regulation on online news requires government permission before releasing news on instant messaging apps or social websites. Additionally, civilian drones weighing more than 250 grams must be registered under real names to improve civil aviation safety, and the use of highly toxic pesticides on edible agricultural products is banned.

Capital Markets Union: EU reaches agreement on reviving securitisation market

Late on Tuesday, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed on a package that sets out criteria for simple, transparent and standardised securitisation (STS). The deal is one of the cornerstones of the Capital Markets Union (CMU), the Juncker Commission's pivotal project to build a single market for capital in the EU. The swift implementation of the securitisation package could unlock up to EUR 150 billion of additional funding to the real economy.

Securitisation can allow diversification of funding sources and a broader distribution of risk by allowing banks to transfer the risk of some exposures to other institutions or long-term investors, such as insurance companies and asset managers. This allows banks to free the capital they set aside to cover for risks of those exposures, allowing them to generate new lending to households and SMEs. STS securitisations will also provide new investment opportunities for institutional investors such as pension funds and insurance companies.

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"This agreement marks another big step towards the creation of a Capital Markets Union. It will help build a sound and safe securitisation market in the EU, bringing real benefits to investment, jobs and growth. It will free up bank lending so that more financing can go towards supporting our companies and households."*

The new regulatory framework agreed by co-legislators sets out a risk-sensitive, transparent and prudential treatment of securitisation. At the same time, the package also ensures an appropriate capital treatment of securitisation instruments in general.

Next Steps

Today's political agreement will be followed by further technical talks to finalise the text. The Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) of the Council of Ministers is expected to endorse the agreement ahead of the European Parliament's plenary vote.

Background

In September 2015 the European Commission proposed new rules on securitisation as part of the Capital Markets Union (CMU) action plan ([IP/15/5731](#)). The Commission proposed a regulatory [framework](#) for securitisation which is simple, transparent and standardised and subject to adequate supervisory control. According to the Commission's estimates at the time, if EU securitisation issuance was built up again to the pre-crisis

average, it would generate up to EUR 150bn in additional funding for the economy.

Securitisation is the process where a financial instrument is created, typically by a lender such as a bank, by pooling assets (for example car-loans or SME-loans) for investors to purchase. This facilitates access to a greater range of investors, thereby increasing liquidity and freeing up capital from the banks for new lending.

The new EU legal framework provides a clear set of rules to ensure that STS benefits the real economy. It bears no relation to the securitisation of subprime mortgages created in the US that contributed to the financial crisis. The European Commission does not intend to go back to the days of opaque and complex subprime instruments. Instead, the new rules clearly differentiate between simple and more transparent securitisation products and other products which do not satisfy such criteria. This will restore an important funding channel for the EU economy without endangering financial stability.

More information:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/financial-markets/securities-markets/securitisation_en

MEMO: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5733_en.htm