

## **Millet, Rice, Social Complexity and the Spread of Agriculture to the Chengdu Plain and Surrounding Regions**

**Jade D'ALPOIM GUEDES**

*Harvard University*

[jadeguedes@gmail.com](mailto:jadeguedes@gmail.com)

The area in and surrounding the Chengdu Plain of the Sichuan Basin, China, played a pivotal role in the spread of rice agriculture in Southwest China. This paper will present the archaeological and archaeobotanical evidence for the spread of agriculture to the Chengdu Plain. This paper will first discuss the finds in the mountainous peripheries of the Plain, where the earliest inhabitants practiced millet agriculture. Both archaeobotanical and archaeological evidence from recently excavated sites indicate that these millet agriculturalists occasionally moved down from the mountain corridors to occupy the Plain. Through interaction or population movement, these peoples contributed foxtail and broomcorn millets to the millet-rice complex which was later to characterize agricultural traditions in Southwest China. It is also clear that they played an active role in introducing millet agriculture to the Tibetan Plateau. Rice agriculture appears relatively suddenly on the Plain c. 2700 BC as a fully formed and domesticated package at sites of the Baodun culture. The appearance of rice agriculture on the Plain is accompanied by a number of socio-political transformations which include a settlement pattern hierarchy dominated by a limited number of large, central-places. These sites are surrounded by large walls and would have required considerable investment in terms of labor. Weed flora indicates that these investments in labor were not limited to installations on the site itself, but also would also have involved water management and the creation of rice paddies. This paper will discuss these finds in light of the hypothesis that sites of the Baodun-culture are related to population movement and spread from the middle Yangzi River valley.