Gourd Remains from Ancient Sites at Koshoku, Central Japan

TSUJI, Sei-ichiro

This study examines the occurrence and morphology of ancient plant remains, specifically, seeds and fruits of gourds (*Lagenaria siceraria*), fruits of hemp (*Cannabis sativa*), seeds of Fabaceae, and endocarp of peach (*Amygdalus persica*), from the Koshoku-Jori and Yashiro Sites in Koshoku in the southern Nagano valley. Results offered new insights into plant use and agricultural management in antiquity.

Gourd specimens were ninety in number and made it possible to plot a trajectory from antiquity into the medieval period. Furthermore, there was a diverse range of fruit and seed. Gourd fruits were divided into seven types (A through G), while seeds were divided into a number of strands. The study confirms the diversity both of uses of gourds in this region and of the *kinds* of gourd used. Many were processed for use. It is believed that rounder gourds were used as ladles and ceremonial instruments, while other kinds of gourd were processed depending on their shape to be used as containers. A pre-medieval specimen of the large-sized bottle gourd, used for food, was also identified for the first time.

The study also records specimens and yield conditions for the other three vegetables mentioned above. 1) Remains of hemp in pulp form substantiate the fact that *mashi* was a tributary item of Shinano province as recorded in *Engishiki*. 2) Carbonized fabaceous seeds identified with *Vigna unguiculata* are believed to have been carbonized when a house burnt down and therefore provide contextual evidence of how beans were stored at the time. 3) A processed endocarp of peach is believed to be a flute that was crafted with a blade.

Ancient Koshoku cultivated numerous domesticated plants as dry-field crops, the variety of its peaches and gourds indicative of its large matrix of production. This fact invites further study of the ways that production of these crops relates to agricultural management which is generally believed to have centered on wet paddy farming.