Critical Reconsideration of the Criticism on the Historical Perspective
of Japanese History Centered on the Rice Cultivation Culture

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In the last quarter century, the critical view on the historical perspective centered on the rice cultivation culture was one of trends in the study of Japanese history. Starting when some researchers of cultural anthropology and Japanese folklore proposed questions, the trend spread out to the Japanese historical document study and archaeology. This was a movement to criticize the historical and cultural interpretation centered on wet rice farming and work toward the establishment of a multifaceted history containing viewpoints of other subsistence such as dry field farming. Whereas such studies provided various arguing points, they exhibited a strong tendency to regard the Japanese culture as a complex of multiple cultures and try to understand the establishment of the value system centered on rice cultivation from the viewpoint of connections with the state authority after the Ritsuryo period. This trend was also profoundly related with findings of archaeology on the Jomon and Yayoi cultures.

Described by the above studies, the history of the confrontation and composition of multiple cultures was confusedly established on inadequate concepts of culture. Moreover, research results about the farming of the Jomon and Yayoi cultures were not always based on reliable materials though they should have played a role as a basis for those studies. The proper arrangement of concepts of culture and thorough criticisms over the farming-related materials revealed the necessity of radical reconstruction of the history established by the critical view on the historical perspective centered on the rice cultivation culture.

On the other hand, rigorous critical stances and wide variety of viewpoints associated with this critical view have diversified research materials and analysis methods and have shown possibility to enable researchers to establish thick and multifaceted histories. But because of a lack of discussion about the theories related with from concepts of culture to each observed facts, and partially because their critical attitude toward the historical perspective centered on the rice cultivation culture was excessively strong, researchers tended not to make fully critical or reflective reviews of their own studies. As a result that they were not able to make good use of the diversity of viewpoints and multiple disciplines were depending on each other, they have established problematic histories.

Based on the above-mentioned merits and demerits of the critical view on the rice cultivation-
centered perspective, researchers should proceed with historical studies which involve thorough mutual and self-reflection and work together with theory construction from a broad perspective to interpret a wider range of phenomena.

Key words: Historical perspective centered on the rice cultivation culture, Jomon culture, Yayoi culture, Critical attitude, Theory