

Rice in ancient Korea: status symbol or community food?

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Abstrak

Rice has been an important cultivated crop in Korea since c. 1500 BC, but in historical times it was a luxury food too valuable for consumption by the farmers who produced it. It was widely used as a form of currency and for tax payments. Analysis of plant remains from Sangdong-dong and Songguk-ri, two Bronze Age settlements of the early first millennium BC, however, reveals that rice was not the preserve of elites in that period. The situation changed with the state formation during the first three centuries AD, when rice consumption became increasingly restricted. Thus in Korea rice was not initially cultivated as a luxury food, but became so through social and political change.