

## **Editor's Preface**

Author: Sun Qi

One of the many ancient names China gave itself was Hua Xia. The Xia refers to the first dynasty from their written records. The acknowledgement of the Xia dynasty as their earliest dynasty has been at the heart of Chinese self-identity for millennia. The earliest analytic dictionary in China, *Shuowen Jiezi*, which appeared in the middle of the Eastern Han dynasty, defined Xia as “the people of the middle kingdoms” (中國之人也). However, with the collapse of China's dynastic cycle in 1911 and the introduction of Western social sciences, the nature and even the very existence of the Xia dynasty have been called into doubt. They have been hotly debated topics in Chinese academia for the last one hundred years, with no conclusion in sight.

The first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of the “Doubting Antiquity” intellectual movement, and the subsequent “Anti-Doubting Antiquity” movement. The second half of the century saw the commencement of two major projects on Chinese ancient history: the government-sponsored “Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project”, and the publication of *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*. Regarding the veracity of the Xia dynasty, these two important projects hold diametrically opposed views. This fact alone sheds some light on the complexity of this contentious debate, and the current issue of our journal attempts to shed a little more.

In recent years, debates around Xia have come into vogue again in China. There have been archeological discoveries of ancient sites, and Qing Hua University has begun to publish its redacted versions of unearthed Pre-Qin bamboo manuscripts. Both of these are important additions to the growing body of material on Xia studies, and they have become catalysts for new research and debates on the Xia. In 2018, the organizers of the Chinese government-sponsored “Project on the Origins of Chinese Civilization” announced their findings, reaffirming the Chinese belief that their civilization is five thousand years old. In the same year, Peking University professor Sun Qingwei published the monograph *An Archeological Reconstruction of Xia History*. In it he put forward his thesis that we need not debate whether or not a real Xia culture has been discovered, but rather the more important debate centers around what methods we use to identify it. Also in 2018, Professor Li Min of UCLA published *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China*, using archeological and textual records to recount the history of the Xia dynasty. All of these projects were quick to gain attention in scholastic circles. This clear resurgence of Xia dynasty research was chosen by the journal *Literature, History, and Philosophy* as one of the top ten topics of Chinese humanities studies in 2018.

This issue has chosen five representative articles with the intention of clarifying the history and parameters of the debates around Xia, and to show opposing viewpoints.

Chen Minzhen's "Faithful History or Unreliable History" divides the last one hundred years of debates into three phases, outlining the evolution of the arguments and lucidly placing them in the larger context of recent ideological trends. Sun Qingwei is an important figure in the third phase, and his article "Toward an Archeological Reconstruction of the Xia Dynasty History" again sets forth his argument on methodology. He actively abandons the method of "metropolitan conjecture", which attempts to describe the Xia dynasty based on the rise and fall of its major cities (preferably its capital cities). He instead advocates the method of "cultural comparison", identifying particular characteristics of the Xia by comparing archeological cultures located at its center with those at the periphery. Jia Hongbo's "An Alternative Chronology to the Xia Dynasty" summarizes recent archeological findings and sets forth a new and creative method of determining a timeline of the entire dynasty based on the accumulated life spans of its rulers.

To people familiar with research on Xia dynasty chronology, the debate between two prominent figures in the field, Ed Shaughnessy and David Nivison, is well known. Their debate centers on how to interpret and how to use the Bamboo Annals, a historical text originally compiled in the Warring States period, buried in the tomb of a feudal monarch from the state of Wei, and then rediscovered about five hundred years later during the Western Jin dynasty. In this issue, Shaughnessy reviews and analyses the main points of difference between the two, explaining how it is they use the same text to arrive at different conclusions.

As the head of the excavation team at the famous Er Li Tou site, which is considered by most Chinese scholars to be one of the epicenters of Xia culture, Xu Hong has repeatedly emphasized the limits of what we can know about Er Li Tou, the Xia dynasty, and their true relationship to each other. While many Chinese scholars see the discovery of Er Li Tou culture as proof of the existence of a Xia dynasty, because of its spacial and temporal correspondence to accounts of the Xia gathered from received texts, Xu warns us that we must not make hasty conclusions. His contribution, "An Archeological Proposal of the Origin of State in China", points out that factors such as national pride and ethnocentrism in China have influenced research; instead of assuming a linear evolution from disparate bands of pre-historic Chinese people into a mighty Chinese kingdom, he argues that we should widen our gaze and consider the dynamic and interconnected growth of all of east Asia when developing theories on the origin of Chinese statehood.

In schools of history and archaeology, debates around the Xia dynasty are long-standing and complicated. We do not presume to settle these debates, but we do hope to clarify them and push them forward.

This issue includes Uffe Bergeton's review of Phillip Ivanhoe and Sungmoon Kim's edited volume *Confucianism, a Habit of the Heart*. This volume brings together an international group of experts on Confucianism to discuss the viability of Robert Bellah's theory that Confucianism is best understood as a "civil religion", as opposed to the institutional or state-backed religions we are more familiar with in the West.

As has become custom, we are also publishing our annual list of Top Ten Developments in Chinese Humanities Studies. Every year Literature, History, and Philosophy and China Reader Weekly jointly select the top ten events and topics that have been the most influential in the field of Chinese humanities. We publish this list in English to provide our readers with a window through which they can see the changing landscape of Chinese academic thought.

### **David S. Nivison, the Bamboo Annals, and the Chronology of Xia: Personal Reflections on Historical Method**

Author: Edward L. Shaughnessy

Abstract: David Shepherd Nivison (1923-2014) devoted the last three and a half decades of his life to an attempt to reconstruct the original text of the Bamboo Annals and to use that text to reconstruct the absolute chronology of ancient China. Nivison's attempt to reconstruct that chronology involved astronomy; textual criticism, especially—though not exclusively—of the Bamboo Annals; and a considerable amount of historiographical conjecture concerning both the period of the Xia dynasty and of the Warring States period, during which, Nivison argues, the Bamboo Annals was undergoing multiple revisions. This attempt was also based on three major theses: (1) the Xia kings were named for the *tiangan* 天干 of the first day of the first year of their reign; (2) irregular gaps of zero, one, two, three, four, and even forty years recorded in the Bamboo Annals between the reigns of Xia kings should invariably have been two years; and (3) the final Xia king, Jie 桀, is completely mythical.

In this article, I first present Nivison's arguments and then present a critique of those arguments, based on my own study of the Bamboo Annals. My own study of the Bamboo Annals in turn has shown three points that are important for understanding its annals of Xia: that at least some of the manuscript was damaged or lost when it was taken from the tomb, that the Western Jin editors made some mistakes in their editing of the text, and that they added commentary

to the text. Based on this discussion, I conclude that Nivison's hypothesis concerning the chronology of the Xia dynasty remains just that: a hypothesis.

### **Toward an Archaeological Reconstruction of the Xia Dynasty as History: Delineations and Methods**

Author: Sun Qingwei 孫慶偉 (Translated by Ady Van Den Stock)

Abstract: In a broad sense, the term “Xia culture” means the culture of the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE] period. In a narrower sense, however, it refers to the culture of the Xiahou 夏后 clan of the mythical founder Yu 禹. In much of the contemporary research, the question of the primary ethnic affiliation of Xia culture is often overlooked and obscured, thus blurring the distinction between Xia culture in the broad and narrow senses. This has resulted in considerable conceptual and epistemological imprecision. Research on Xia culture can be conducted in two main ways: on the one hand, what has been called “metropolitan conjecture” and, on the other, cultural comparison. Departing from the method of cultural comparison and bringing together temporal, spatial, and cultural elements in our analysis allows us to distinguish a primary central area within the “region of Yu” that coincides with Xia culture in the narrow sense, as reflected in later phases of the Wangwan 王灣 and Meishan 煤山 regional subtypes of Longshan culture [Longshan wenhua 龍山文化], from the later phases of the various archaeological remains found within a secondary and tertiary central area, which can be included in the category of Xia culture in a broad sense. Erlitou 二里頭 culture should be regarded principally as part of Xia culture. As such, the Meishan and Wangwan subtypes of Henan Longshan culture, along with the first to the fourth phases of Erlitou culture, can be seen as making up a consistent Xia culture.

### **An Archaeological Proposal of the Origin of State in China**

Author: Xu Hong 許宏 (Translated by Zhang Yin)

Abstract: The abundance of classical literature and the conventions of historical studies have shaped the archaeological exploration of the origin of the state in China, starting with and centering on the identification of specific dynasties. The linear evolutionary account of the Chinese civilization, based on royal genealogies, has become mainstream. The emergence of the state has been continuously dated earlier. I argue that theoretical flaws, nationalism, and disciplinary limits have obscured the complexities of this research project. Drawing on archaeological findings, I propose a two-stage model regarding the origin of the state in East Asia.

## **An Alternative Chronology for the Xia Dynasty and Discussion on Issues Related to Xia Culture**

Author: Jia Hongbo 賈洪波 (Translated by Carl Gene Fordham)

Abstract: This paper proposes an alternative chronology for the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE] based on the respective year counts and generation numbers of the Xia, Shang [ca. 1600-1046 BCE], and Zhou [1046-256 BCE] dynasties. It argues that Qi 啟 founded the Xia dynasty midway through the twentieth century BCE and further discusses questions relating to the capital cities and culture of the Xia. By integrating archeological material, it further contends that the ancient city of Wangchenggang 王城崗 located in Dengfeng 登封 was Yangcheng 陽城, the capital established by Yu 禹. It also argues that the Wadian 瓦店 site in Yuzhou 禹州 may have been inhabited by Yu and Qi, that the ancient city of Xinzhai 新砦 was an early capital of the Xia dynasty from the reigns of Qi to Shao Kang 少康, and that the Erlitou 二里頭 site was the capital of the Xia dynasty during its middle and late periods after the reign of Di Huai 帝槐. Xia culture should be approached as a concept that blends the disciplines of archeology and history and defined as the Xia people and the Xia dynasty within its region of governance or a culture whose creators mostly consisted of the Xia people. Furthermore, the ruins of the Xinzhai period represent Xia culture during its formative period, while Erlitou culture represents Xia culture during its maturity.

## **Faithful History of Unreliable History: Three Debates on the Historicity of the Xia Dynasty**

Author: Chen Minzhen 陳民鎮 (Translated by Carl Gene Fordham)

Abstract: Three debates on the historicity of the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE] have occurred, spanning the 1920s and 1930s, the late 1900s and early 2000s, and recent years. In the first debate, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 [1893-1980], Wang Guowei 王國維 [1877-1927], and Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 [1888-1976] pioneered three avenues for exploring the history of the Xia period. The second debate unfolded in the context of the Doubting Antiquity School [Yigupai 疑古派] and the Believing Antiquity School [Zouchu yigu 走出疑古] and can be considered a continuation of the first debate. The third debate, which is steadily increasing in influence, features the introduction of new materials, methods, and perspectives and is informed by research into the origins of Chinese civilization, a field that is now in a phase of integration.

## **Book Review**

### **Confucianism, a habit of the Heart: Bellah, Civil Religion, and East Asia.**

Reviewed by Uffe Bergeton

### **The Top Ten Developments in Studies on Chinese Humanities in 2018**

Translated by Connie Rosemont