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## Editor's Preface

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.

*Sun Qi* 孫齊  
JCH Editor  
*sun\_qi@foxmail.com*