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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

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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.

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

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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.

Keywords

Bamboo Annals – chronology – excavated texts – Xia dynasty – Yu the Great

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David Shepherd Nivison (1923-2014) was born in Farmingdale, Maine, on January 17, 1923. In 1940, he entered Harvard College, intending to study the classics. However, his studies were interrupted when the United States entered into war against Japan. Nivison joined that effort, learning Japanese while serving in military intelligence throughout the war. After the war concluded in 1945, he returned to Harvard, graduating in 1946 with a degree in East Asian studies, with a focus on Chinese history. In 1948, he began teaching at Stanford University, where he remained for his entire career and the rest of his life. Nivison's early work was on traditional intellectual history, from Zhang Xuecheng 張學誠 (1738-1801) going back to Song dynasty [960-1279] thinkers and then further to Mencius (ca. 372-289 BCE). By the 1970s, his attention had turned to still earlier times, with his first tentative steps to read the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty [ca. 1600-1046 BCE].

I first encountered Nivison in 1978, when I entered Stanford as a graduate student studying ancient China. A year later, I was a student in a class taught by Nivison on Western Zhou [1045-771 BCE] bronze inscriptions. Nivison himself subsequently recounted that one Sunday evening while preparing for this class, he came to the realization "that I was staring in disbelief at my major work for the rest of my life." This work, first focused on just the Wei 微-family bronzes that had been discovered just four years earlier at Zhuangbai 莊白, Fufeng 扶風, Shaanxi, but eventually expanded to involve two major discoveries: first, that "the *BA* [i.e., *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年)] thus was not a fake but a priceless historical source" and, second, that with it he could reconstruct the exact chronology of ancient China back to the beginning of the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE]. He claimed that, "the seminar the next evening was exciting."[1] The seminar was indeed exciting, and for those who appreciate explorations in ancient history, so too were the last thirty-five years of Nivison's life, during which he pursued these two tasks, as well as many other topics in the historiography and chronology of ancient China.

Nivison became known over these last three and a half decades of his life for his attempt to reconstruct the original text of the *Bamboo Annals* and to use that text to reconstruct the chronology of ancient China. In doing so, he anticipated by some fifteen years the work of the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project in China. In many ways, his own work was even more ambitious than that of the Chronology Project and in some ways has proven to be of more lasting value. He certainly pursued his research far longer and with greater

1 David S. Nivison, *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals (Taipei: Airiti Press, 2009), 8.

consequence than did that great state-sponsored project.[2] Nivison's work explored so many different aspects of ancient Chinese history that it would require another project to consider them all. However, it may be possible to consider just his attempts to reconstruct the chronology of that dynasty. Because I was personally implicated in much of that work, especially in some of Nivison's final reflections upon it, I also include some of my own responses to it.

Nivison recounted that he had been drawn to the question of the chronology of the Xia dynasty by early work of David W. Pankenier showing that there had been a conjunction of the five visible planets in February 1953 BCE. Assuming that this marked the beginning of Xia, he noticed that 1953 BCE was seventy-six years later than 2029 BCE, the date given in the *Bamboo Annals* as the beginning of that dynasty. Because in ancient Chinese calendrics seventy-six years was regarded as one *bu* 部, he assumed that an editor of the text had inserted seventy-six years of extra material into the text. He subsequently worked together with Kevin D. Pang, an astronomer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, and an amateur historian, identifying the famous Zhong Kang 仲康 solar eclipse recorded in the *Book of Documents* [*Shangshu* 尚書] with a solar eclipse that occurred on October 16, 1876 BCE. Beginning with these astronomical observations, Nivison went on to develop an extremely complicated argument for the absolute dates of the entire Xia dynasty. His argument is based on his own reconstruction of the *Bamboo Annals* and, in turn, on three major theses involved in that reconstruction: (1) that the Xia kings were named for the *tiangan* 天干 of the first day of the first year of their reign; (2) that irregular gaps of zero, one, two, three, four, and, once, forty years recorded in the *Bamboo Annals* between the reigns of Xia kings should invariably have been just two years; and (3) that the final Xia king, Jie 桀, is completely mythical.

The fullest exposition of Nivison's attempt to reconstruct the chronology of the Xia dynasty is in his book *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals.* The argument involves astronomy; textual criticism, especially—though not exclusively—of the *Bamboo Annals*; and a considerable amount of historiographical conjecture

2 Nivison's first major publication on these topics was his lengthy article "The Dates of Western Chou," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43, no. 2 (1983). Twenty-six years later, he published his most detailed study of the *Bamboo Annals*. A Chinese translation of this book was published posthumously: David S. Nivison 倪德衛, *Zhushu jinian jiemi* 竹書紀年解謎 [*Solving the Mysteries of the* Bamboo Annals] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015). Subsequently, a collection of unpublished papers was also published posthumously: David S. Nivison, *The Nivison Annals: Selected Works of David S. Nivison on Early Chinese Chronology, Astronomy, and Historiography,* ed. Adam C. Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

concerning both the period of the Xia dynasty and of the Warring States period [475-221 BCE], during which, Nivison argues, the *Bamboo Annals* was undergoing multiple revisions. Perhaps the fairest way to present his argument is simply to quote his own most succinct account of it, which he published in an article titled "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals."[3] In the following lengthy quotation, I delete only one short passage that strikes me as explanatory but not crucial to the explication and also four footnotes. The years mentioned are all BCE.

> How were Xia dates in the BA created, starting with what I assume to be the original dates? I assume that reign-lengths in the BA for Xia are accurate, and that interregnums between reigns were all two years each (for completion of mourning for the preceding king). At some time in Warring States, probably in the Lu 魯 stage of the text when the first year for Yao was being pushed back from 2026 to 2145 (a *bu*-1st-year for the ancient Lu intercalation calendar), and while the first year of Shang was still 1589 (back from 1554, but before the invention of the reign of Di Gui), the Xia chronology was altered so as to make the reigns of the original sixteen kings be exactly four hundred years, beginning with the de jure reign for Yu, 1989.
>
> The de facto beginning of Xia (Shun's transfer of power to Yu in Shun 14) was moved back one *bu*, seventy-six years, from 1953 (Pankenier's conjunction year) to 2029, giving Xia the 471 years in the BA summary for Xia. The first forty years (to Shun 50, then mourning for Shun) were counted as de facto years for Yu. Thus the beginning of Yu's de jure eight-year reign became 1989. (From here on, think of these dates as fixed.)
>
> At the same time, the [mourning periods] for the Class-A sage kings Yao, Shun, and Yu were increased from two years to three years. Since Shun died during Yu's de facto tenure, this was an increase of two years for Xia. To compensate for this, the two-year mourning-interregnum for the second Xia king Qi was (temporarily) reduced from two years to zero.
>
> The date of the fourth king Zhong Kang's solar eclipse had been put back one *bu* (seventy-six years, with the set-back for Xia 1). If the correct date of the eclipse—on the first of the Xia ninth month—was 1876, it must have been set back to 1952. But this needed to be a year when on the

3 David S. Nivison, "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals," *Journal of Chinese Studies* 53 (2011). This article was a rejoinder to a lengthy review of *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals* that I had written, as noted in n. 4.

shuo 朔 of the ninth month the sun was in Fang 房 (*Zuozhuan* 左傳, Zhao 昭 17.2).[4] The date was tested by subtracting one *ji* 紀 of 1,520 years, to 432, which failed the test. The first date that did pass the Fang test after 432 was 428, and the *shuo* of the Xia ninth month was day *gengxu* 庚戌. (There was an intercalary eighth month in this year; so Zhang Peiyu's twelfth month is the Xia ninth month.) So the date selected was 428 + 1520, = 1948, the day being *gengxu,* as in the *Annals*…. This four-year move down required inserting four years at an earlier point in the BA Xia chronicle. The "zero" interregnum after Qi's reign was used for this, giving the second king Qi an interregnum of four years—the only four-year interregnum in the BA Xia chronicle. (This calculation matches Kevin Pang's eclipse date, 16 October 1876.) The net ongoing set-back is now 76 minus four years = 72 years.

The forty-year Han Zhuo 寒浞 interregnum after Xiang 相 was invented, replacing a two-year interregnum. This filled in thirty-eight years of the remaining seventy-two- year set-back, cutting it to thirty-four years.

This made the period from the beginning of Yu's de jure reign through the end of mourning for the eighth king Fen 芬 be 202 years. So, Fen's mourning-completion- interregnum of two years was eliminated, increasing the set-back to thirty-six. Thus the first eight Xia kings were allotted two hundred years, so the last eight were allotted two hundred-years, making 1789 year 1 for the ninth king Mang 芒, and 1589 the first year of Shang.

A two-year interregnum was inserted after the reign of eleventh king Bu Jiang 不降, forgetting that he had retired. This moves the set-back down again to thirty-four.

Counting back from 1589, it was found that the last eight kings (Mang through Fa) had 201 years, including interregnums; so the interregnum after the ninth king Mang was reduced from two years to one year. This moves the set-back up to thirty-five.

It was then noticed that there ought *not* to have been a two-year interregnum after Bu Jiang; so this was eliminated, and the kings before and after (Xie 泄 and Jiong 扃) had their mourning-completions (i.e.,

4 Shisanjing zhushu zhengli weiyuanhui 十三經注疏整理委員會, ed., *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 [*Proper Annotation on the Zuo Commentary*], vol. 19 of *Shisanjing zhushu zhengliben* 十三經注疏整理本 [*Redacted Edition of Commentary and Annotation on the Thirteen Classics*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 1563.

> interregnums) increased from two years to three years, so as to keep the year-count the same as before.[5]

This "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals*" was provoked by a review I had written of that book and published in the same journal in which the "Epilogue" was published.[6] I began that review by evaluating his well-known thesis that Western Zhou kings routinely used two separate regnal calendars, one beginning the year immediately after the death of the preceding king (when the new king was "installed" [*li* 立]) and one to two years after this, when the king "assumed place" (*jiwei* 即位), perhaps having completed the required three years of mourning. I concluded that this thesis may well be the key to unlocking the riddle of Western Zhou chronology. However, I also went on to criticize Nivison for extending this thesis from the Western Zhou a thousand years back in time to the Xia dynasty, which was many centuries before the advent of written records.

> Unfortunately, in the case of the book presently under review, Nivison has taken a good idea and, in my opinion, tried to make it bear far more weight than it can. He believes that the origin of this calendrical practice extends back a thousand years before the Western Zhou to the very beginning of the Xia dynasty. Of course, there is no contemporaneous written evidence of this dynasty, and so the only evidence that Nivison has to support this assertion is the much-maligned *Bamboo Annals.* Given the evidence that he produces to show that portions of the *Bamboo Annals* are historically accurate, this might be persuasive—if the evidence were in fact in the *Bamboo Annals.* Only some of the reigns mention an interregnum at the beginning of the reign, sometimes of one, sometimes of two, and sometimes of three years—as Nivison notes, "about a third of them 2 years". From this, he asserts that, "it is reasonable to suppose that all of them ought to be just two years." Why is this "reasonable"? Indeed, it seems more reasonable to me that an earlier irregular practice might have become regularized, but only over time. In any event, the evidence, such as it is (the text of the *Bamboo Annals* as we have it), does not, it seems to me, support Nivison's hypothesis. Nivison argues that there is other evidence to support it—that these regular two-year interregnums are required by the chronology that he has reconstructed

5 Nivison, "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals,*" 17-18.

6 Edward L. Shaughnessy, "Of Riddles and Recoveries: The *Bamboo Annals,* Ancient Chronology, and the Work of David Nivison," *Journal of Chinese Studies* 52 (2011).

> for the dynasty. One might find this reasoning circular, even if it did not require Nivison to argue that the final king of the Xia, the infamous Di Gui 帝癸 or Jie, "is a fiction. There was no such king." The *Bamboo Annals,* again as we have it, includes annals for thirty-one years of this king, but Nivison states that his reconstruction of the text shows these to be a later insertion into the original text (apparently inserted at the court of King Xiang'ai of Wei about 300 BCE).[7]

Below I will say more about the *Bamboo Annals* in general. Here, I will simply address further the following two points regarding the interreign gaps in the text concerning the Xia kings and the annals for the last Xia king, Jie. From Qi 啟, the son of Yu the Great 大禹, through Jie, the *Bamboo Annals* includes sixteen Xia kings. The text does not state explicitly that there were gaps between the various reigns. However, by correlating *ganzhi* 干支 designations inserted in the text for the first year of each king and the reign year recorded for the death of the king, it is possible to calculate the following gaps between these reigns: 4, 2, 2, 40, 2, 2, 0, 1, 3, 0, 3, 2, 2, 2, and 0. Thus, seven of the fifteen transfers of kingship show a gap of two years, more than the "third" claimed by Nivison. Nevertheless, eight transfers involved either no gap at all (three cases) or one, three, four, or even forty years. I still see no reason for all these other transfers to have a gap of exactly two years; without any textual support for it, this strikes me as an arbitrary editorial decision by Nivison. As for the suggestion that Jie "is a fiction. There was no such king," this still strikes me as an even more arbitrary intervention by Nivison. I am prepared to believe that much of what little we know of Jie is the stuff of legend. But the annals for Jie in the *Bamboo Annals* are in no qualitative way different from either the other annals in that work or other mentions of Jie in other Warring States works. What basis is there for deleting the thirty-one years of his reign, other than that this is required to fit Nivison's chronology for Xia?

Nivison was clearly stung by this review. He concluded the portion of his "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals*" by detailing his direct response to my review with the following passage.

> So he says, "How is it that Nivison has been able to do so much, and yet still be so wrong?" (Review, p. 289). With this he grants himself the status of historical sage: he is "quite sure" of this, "quite sure" of that,[8] does "not

7 Shaughnessy, "Of Riddles and Recoveries," 274.

8 Nivison has added a footnote here (n. 26) that reads: "Shaughnessy insists that I am too sure of myself. I am too amused by this to be annoyed."

> believe" this, does "not believe" that, condemning my entire pre-Zhou chronology (with no criticism of a single detail of it), his only argument being that it must be wrong because I worked it out "[as] part of a complete system based on [my] reconstruction of the *Bamboo Annals*."[9]

This criticism addresses one paragraph on the next-to-last page of my review. I stand by it and am reasonably sure, if not "quite sure," that with it I do not grant myself the status of a historical sage.

> Despite all of these contributions, I have been quite critical—one might even say harshly critical—of *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals throughout this review. How is it that Nivison has been able to do so much, and yet still be so wrong? I think the answer is simply that he has tried to do too much. He has managed to convince himself that the text he has reconstructed for us is perfect (recall the words of his Introduction: "Now I know exactly what the first five-sevenths of the original looked like, 303 strips, word after word" [p. 11]). I myself have worked with the text of the *Bamboo Annals* almost as much as has Nivison, but I am as unsure of what the text looked like as he is sure. On the other hand, I am sure, or at least pretty sure, of some things, things that I think are pretty important. For instance, I don't know whether most of the commentarial material that Nivison includes as an integral part of the text was found in the tomb or not, and if it was, whether or not it was written together with the annals (in whatever format); the narrative portions may have been, but I'm quite sure that the explanatory commentary was added by the Western Jin editors. I don't know how much of the manuscript was damaged or lost, but I'm quite sure that at least some of it—including some of the five-sevenths that Nivison reconstructs—must have been. Finally, I'm also quite sure that the Western Jin editors made at least some mistakes in their editing; some of these mistakes were errors of omission, but others were errors of commission—designed to make the unearthed manuscript conform to their own understanding of early Chinese history. Given my own various uncertainties about the *Bamboo Annals* and how it has come to us, I simply don't believe that any reconstruction of any more than relatively brief, discrete passages of the text is possible, and I certainly don't believe that Nivison's reconstruction is tenable.[10]

9 Nivison, "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals," 15.
10 Shaughnessy, "Of Riddles and Reconstructions," 289.

The only claim to authority that I make here is that, like Nivison, I too have devoted considerable research to the *Bamboo Annals*,[11] on the basis of which I claimed certainty about three points concerning the text:

– "that the explanatory commentary"—such as "Mang is otherwise called Di Huang" (*Mang huoyue Di Huang* 芒或曰帝荒) for King Mang—"was added by the Western Jin editors"
– "that at least some of the manuscript was damaged or lost" when it was taken from the tomb, for which there is explicit testimony in the contemporary reports of the tomb's discovery
– "that the Western Jin editors made at least some mistakes in their editing," which can be demonstrated by the competing versions of the text quoted in various medieval sources.

Despite being chastised for doing so, I am still willing to claim that I am "quite sure" that these three points are true. As for my disbelief "that any reconstruction of any more than relatively brief, discrete passages of the text is possible," I would be delighted to be proved wrong, but I suspect that it is more likely that another manuscript of the *Bamboo Annals* will be unearthed than it is that a convincing reconstruction of the *Bamboo Annals* that was robbed from the tomb Jizhong 汲冢 in 279 CE will be reconstructed on its own.

According to Nivison, the disagreement between us concerning the *Bamboo Annals,* particularly the chronology of ancient China, including especially the chronology of the Xia dynasty, derived more from philosophical differences between us than from textual research. In his posthumously published *The Nivison Annals: Selected Works of David S. Nivison on Early Chinese Chronology, Astronomy, and Historiography,* he included a chapter titled "The Nivison-Shaughnessy Debate on the *Bamboo Annals*," at the beginning of which he states:

11 One of my first published studies was "On the Authenticity of the *Bamboo Annals*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (June 1986); this was published in Chinese as "Ye tan Zhou Wuwang de zunian: jianlun Jinben zhushu jinian de zhenwei 也談周武王的卒年—兼論今本竹書紀年的真偽 [Discussion on King Wu of Zhou's Death Year and a Secondary Discussion of the Authenticity of the Modern Version of the *Bamboo Annals*]," *Wenshi* 文史, no. 29 (1988). A more comprehensive study was "*Zhushu jinian* de zhengli he zhengliben 竹書紀年的整理和整理本[Collation and Collated Works of *Bamboo Annals*]," in *Chutu wenxian yanjiu fangfa lunwenji* 出土文獻研究方法論文集 [*Collected Papers on the Research Method of Excavated Literature*], ed. Cai Guoliang 蔡國良, Zheng Jixiong 鄭吉雄, and Xu Fuchang 徐富昌 (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2005), which was also included as a chapter in my *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 185-256.

> The conflict between us is actually quite interesting on a philosophical level. Ed (perhaps without realizing it) has a visceral commitment to a one-problem-at-a-time Baconian historical method, and has no patience with anything else. I am guided by "inference to the best explanation" of total evidence, by Collingwood's concept of "rethinking," and Popper's strategy of discovery by trying to refute far-reaching theories. Ed can't stand it, and can only see me as "getting ahead of my sources."[12]

In his "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals," Nivison had already called attention to his methodology of "inference to the best explanation."

> In my book (pp. 3-5) I replied that in the arguments to which he objected I was fitting together logically various items having low initial probability, and that it was the *coherence* of the whole structure (and the virtual impossibility of that coherence being accidental) that had proof value, provided that some elements were tied down empirically. But let me now focus attention directly on Shaughnessy's review. He objects that irregular breaks between Xia reigns seem more reasonable to him than the regular two-year breaks that I propose. His intuitions are relevant only in revealing that he doesn't see what is going on: my argument structure is *hypothesis* followed by *confirmation,* and the two-year interregnums are part of my *hypothesis*.
>
> Where, then, is the circularity that Shaughnessy saw as invalidating my work, two "unknowns" proving each other, the editorial process and the claimed true dates? I do *conclude* that I have proved them; but I begin by offering them as *hypothesis*. Each *must* assume the other; otherwise my hypothesis would be inconsistent, and therefore false before I had gone any farther. Shaughnessy has simply confused the *consistency* required in my hypothesis with a supposed *circularity* invalidating my whole argument.[13]

Returning to the question of the irregular gaps between the reigns of the various Xia kings, my objection to Nivison's proposal to emend them all to two-year gaps is not fundamentally about what is "more reasonable"; my objection is that the text of the *Bamboo Annals* that has come down to us has irregular gaps. If reading the text as it stands is "Baconian historical method," then I am happy to stand together with that bona fide sage. I know something about hypotheses,

12 Nivison, *The Nivison Annals,* 614-15.

13 Nivison, "Epilogue to *The Riddle of the* Bamboo Annals," 14-15.

but it seems to me that confirmation requires either new evidence not previously used in the construction of the hypothesis against which to test the hypothesis itself or, in the absence of such new evidence, reproduction of the same results by some neutral third party. As far as I know, no new evidence has yet been found against which we can test Nivison's hypothesis. And also as far as I know, no third party has come forward to replicate his results. Thus, Nivison's hypothesis concerning the chronology of the Xia dynasty—among other hypotheses—remains just that: a hypothesis. No matter how coherent it may be, that coherence does not rise to the level of confirmation.

To conclude this contribution to the *Journal of Chinese Humanities* special issue on the Xia dynasty, let me quote the last paragraph in Nivison's article "The Nivison-Shaughnessy Debate on the *Bamboo Annals*":

> Ed needs to count his costs. And he won't, because the cost of counting costs is to accept the principle that everything that could be relevant must be at least consistently explainable if not actually explained, and he won't do that, nor will he suffer anyone else trying it. Is this why he bridles at my offering him a brief note providing evidence for dating reigns in early Xia? And at my publishing a book daring to work out the changes in the chronology of Xia and Shang? These are things he just knows can't be done. So he asks, "How can Nivison be so wrong?"[14]

If I "bridle" at "a brief note providing evidence for dating reigns in early Xia," it is in part because I do not think that the evidence currently available supports that chronology or, indeed, any chronology of the Xia dynasty. It may well be that new evidence uncovered in the future will provide the key to unlock that riddle, and I very much look forward to that day—sorry only that David Nivison, who passed away in 2014, will not be able to contribute his very great passion to the effort.

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Toward an Archeological Reconstruction of the Xia Dynasty as History: Delineations and Methods

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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.

Keywords

Erlitou – evidentiary history – Longshan – Xia dynasty

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It has become clear that the previous ten years of archaeological study and research have failed to yield a scholarly consensus concerning Xia culture [*Xia wenhua* 夏文化]. Disagreements have steadily increased, to such an extent that some scholars have even begun to question whether the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE] ever existed at all. There can be little doubt that this situation is essentially the result of methodological flaws haunting research on Xia culture. As early as 1979, Zou Heng 鄒衡 (1927-2005) pointed out:

> It has already become rather unlikely that further discoveries of archaeological cultures still await us in the central region at the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, described in ancient texts and records as part of the domain of activity of the Xia and Shang peoples. At the same time, however, because the existence of the Xia dynasty is just as much an objective fact as that of the Shang, archaeologically speaking, Xia culture has to be located somewhere within the various stages of the cultural types from this period in history we have already discovered in the region in question. In this sense, the problem is not so much that Xia culture has not yet been discovered but, rather, which methods we should employ to distinguish and identify it.[1]

What Zou is trying to make clear in this passage is that, in researching Xia culture, methodology is more important than discovery. My article focuses on the problem of delineating the boundaries of Xia culture and the methods for researching it, thus critically outlining a path toward the archaeological reconstruction of an evidentiary history of the Xia dynasty.

1 Archaeological Perspectives on Xia Culture

"Xia culture" is an archaeological concept. It is related, but not identical to, the idea of the culture of the Xia dynasty period in the broad sense. Contemporary

1 Zou Heng 鄒衡, "Dui dangqian Xia wenhua taolun de yixie kanfa: 1979 nian 5 yue zai Chengdu Zhongguo xianqinshi xuehui chengli dahui shang de fayan gao 對當前夏文化討論的一些看法—1979年5月在成都中國先秦史學會成立大會上的發言稿 [Some Remarks on the Current Debate Surrounding Xia Culture: Speech at the Conference for the Establishment of the Association for the Study of Pre-Qin Chinese History]," in *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwen ji* (*xuji*) 夏商周考古學論文集(續集) [*Collected Writings on the Archaeology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties* (*Supplementary Volume*)] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1998), 24.

scholars have an ongoing disagreement concerning the notion of Xia culture, related to the methodological problem of how this culture should be researched.

In 1959, before embarking on a survey of the Xiaxu 夏墟 in western Henan Province, Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 (1890-1976) had already developed a clear understanding of the meaning of "Xia culture":

> If we want to resolve the problem of Xia culture, we have to emphasize that the term "Xia culture" can refer to two different things. Above, we used this term in a purely temporal sense, as referring to the culture of the Xia dynasty period. However, people formerly believed that China had been unified ever since the time of the Yan emperor and the Yellow emperor. There is no need for us to keep telling the same old tale. It is safe to say that in the Xia period, the end of clan society was already drawing near, while clans still held considerable power, and China remained divided. Therefore, it is quite possible to regard the term "Xia culture" as referring to the culture of one particular clan or tribe.[2]

According to Xu, then, the term "Xia culture" can refer to two different things: to the "Xia clan" [*Xia shizu* 夏氏族] or "Xia tribe" [*Xia buluo* 夏部落] collectively or, alternatively, to "the culture of the Xia dynasty period." Consequently, when Xu speaks of "Xia culture," he is speaking about the "culture of the Xiahou clan" [*Xiahoushi wenhua* 夏后氏文化].

In November 1977, Xia culture again became a prominent topic of interest for archaeology scholars at the Conference on the Excavation of the Gaocheng 告成 Site in Dengfeng 登封, Henan Province, which gave rise to diametrically opposed points of view.[3] For the sake of arriving at a consensus and facilitating further academic dialogue, Xia Nai 夏鼐 (1910-1985) provided the very first archaeological definition of "Xia culture" in his closing remarks at the conference, describing it as "the culture of the Xia people during the period of the

2 Xu Xusheng 徐旭生, "1959 nian xia yuxi diaocha 'Xiaxu' de chubu baogao 1959 年夏豫西調查 '夏墟' 的初步報告 [Preliminary Report on the 1959 Survey of the 'Ruins of Xia' in Western Henan]," *Kaogu* 考古, no. 11 (1959): 592.

3 On the importance of this conference, see Sun Qingwei 孫慶偉, "Kaoguxue de chuntian: 1977 nian Henan Dengfeng Gaocheng yizhi fajue xianchanghui de xueshushi jiedu 考古學的春天: 1977 年河南登封告成遺址發掘現場會的學術史解讀 [The Spring of Archaeology: Interpreting the 1977 Conference at the Excavation of the Gaocheng Site in Dengfeng, Henan Province' from the Standpoint of Intellectual History]," in *Zhuiji sandai* 追跡三代 [*In Search of the Three Dynasties*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015).

Xia dynasty."[4] Xia Nai's definition gained broad acceptance in academic circles and served as a point of departure for future archaeological research into Xia culture.[5]

When Xia Nai talked about the "Xia people" [*Xia minzu* 夏民族], he was probably referring to what Xu Xusheng had called the "Xia clan" or "Xia tribe" or, in other words, to what contemporary scholars commonly call the "Xia ethnic group" [*Xiazu* 夏族]. However, strictly speaking, no proof has emerged of the historical existence of a separate "Xia ethnicity" distinguished by ties of consanguinity. The "Basic Annals" [*Benji* 本紀] of the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shi ji* 史記] say that "after he had named the state Xia, [Yu] adopted the ancestral name [*xing* 姓] Si 姒,"[6] which suffices to make clear that "Xia" was the name for a territorial-political entity, not for a clan with a pure bloodline. If we focus exclusively on blood ties, only those clans during the Xia period whose ancestral name was Si might be seen as corresponding to the term "Xia ethnic group," which would have to include clans listed in the "Basic Annals of the Xia" in the *Shi ji,* such as Xiahou 夏后, Youhu 有扈, Younan 有男, Zhenxun 斟尋, Tongcheng 彤城, Bao 褒, Fei 費, Qi 杞, Zeng 繒, Xing 辛, Ming 冥, and Zhenge 斟戈. This implies that if we want to refrain from approaching the idea of Xia in ethnic terms, we have to conclude that, as some scholars have pointed out, "what is known as the 'Xia ethnic group' primarily refers to the clans that shared the same ancestral name with the Xiahou clan or were related to the latter through intermarriage and together made up the majority of the Xia state."[7]

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4 Xia Nai 夏鼐, "Tantan tantao Xia wenhua de jige wenti: zai Dengfeng Gaocheng yizhi fajue xianchanghui bimushi shang de jianghua 談談探討夏文化的幾個問題: 在 '登封告成遺址發掘現場會' 閉幕式上的講話 [On a Number of Problems Concerning Xia Culture: Speech Delivered at the Closing Ceremony of the Meeting at the Excavation Site of the First Capital of the Xia Dynasty]," *Henan wenbo tongxun* 河南文博通訊, no. 1 (1978): 32.

5 In recent archaeological studies on the Xia and Shang periods, the dominant opinion remains that "Xia culture refers to the archaeological cultural remains left behind by the Xia ethnic group (or a community dominated by the Xia people) within the territory controlled by the Xia dynasty during the length of its reign" (Gao Wei 高煒 et al., "Yanshi Shangcheng yu Xia Shang wenhua fenjie 偃師商城與夏商文化分界 [Yanshi Shang City and the Division between Xia and Shang Cultures]," *Kaogu* 考古, no. 10 [1998]: 66).

6 Sima Qian 司馬遷, "Xia benji 夏本紀 [Basic Annals of Xia]," in *Shi ji* 史記 [*Records of the Grand Historian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 102.

7 See Shen Changyun 沈長雲 and Zhang Weilian 張渭蓮, *Zhongguo gudai guojia qiyuan yu xingcheng yanjiu* 中國古代國家起源與形成研究 [*An Investigation into the Origin and Formation of the Ancient Chinese State*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2009), 214; Shen Changyun, "Shuo Xiazu: jianji Xia wenhua yanjiu zhong yixie jidai jiejue de renshi wenti 說夏族: 兼及夏文化研究中一些亟待解決的認識問題 [On the Idea of the Xia Ethnic Group: Including a Discussion of a Number of Epistemological Problems in the Research of Xia Culture That Require an Urgent Solution]," *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲, no. 3 (2005).

The real importance of emphasizing the precise importance of the term "Xia people" is making clear who counts as the main subject of research into Xia culture. Does "Xia ethnic group" merely refer to members of the Xiahou clan? Does it have a wider meaning, including all clans with the ancestral name Si? Or could we even include the culture of all the clans in the Xia period? If we look back at the research into Xia culture conducted over the past few decades, we find instances of all these approaches, each laying claim to the term "Xia culture," a situation that is clearly confusing.

Zou Heng was the doyen of twentieth-century Xia and Shang [ca. 1600-1046 BCE] archaeology. At the Conference on the Excavation of the Gaocheng Site in Dengfeng, Henan Province, Zou provided the first systematic account of his views on Xia culture:

> A comprehensive investigation into temporal and geographical elements, cultural traits, cultural origins, and phases of social development leads us to the conclusion that the archaeological culture of the Xia dynasty, or Xia culture, was part of Erlitou 二里頭 culture (including its two subtypes in their earlier and later periods, which add up to a total of four phases).[8]

Zou would later repeatedly express very similar views, for example, in stating that "the Xia dynasty is a historical category, whereas Xia culture refers to the archaeological culture to which the Xia dynasty belonged"[9] or that

> given the fact that Xia culture is the culture of the Xia people during the period of the dynasty in question, our primary focus should be on the Xia dynasty itself, that is to say, on a specific state, which obviously raises the question as to what the borders of this state were.... Analyzing the various archaeological cultures already discovered within these boundaries will ultimately allow us to determine which of these cultures might possibly be that of the Xia.[10]

Precisely by departing from this particular understanding of "Xia culture," Zou Heng engaged in a systematic analysis of the relationship between the

8 Zou Heng, "Guanyu tansuo Xia wenhua de tujing 關於探索夏文化的途徑 [Concerning the Path toward an Investigation of Xia Culture]," *Henan wenbo tongxun* 河南文博通訊, no. 1 (1978): 34.

9 Zou Heng, "Some Remarks on the Current Debate Surrounding Xia Culture," 27.

10 Zou Heng, "Guanyu tantao Xia wenhua de tiaojian wenti 關於探討夏文化的條件問題 [On the Problem of the Conditions for Research into Xia Culture]," in *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwen ji* (*xuji*), 35.

domain over which Xia culture was spread and the territory controlled by the Xia dynasty. In his research, the only criterion for the historical remnants left by descendants of the Xiahou clan—other clans with the ancestral name Si, as well as clans with another ancestral name—to qualify as "remnants of Xia culture" or "relics of Xia culture" was that they had to fall roughly within the time span of the Xia dynasty.[11]

However, in other studies, Zou seemed to treat the term "Xia culture" in a more restricted sense as referring to the culture of the Xiahou clan. In one of the texts that laid the foundation for research into Xia culture, "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture," Zou devoted an entire section, titled "Data and Methods," to the methodological problem of studying Xia culture. He writes:

> In the end, is Erlitou the culture of the Shang or the Xia dynasty? In order to resolve this problem, we have to start out from an analysis of Shang culture.... Only if we have successfully identified Shang culture through archaeological study can we distinguish Xia culture.... Any discussion of Shang culture has to begin by resolving the problem of the geographic location of the city of Bo 亳, the first capital of the Shang dynasty, founded by Cheng Tang 成湯. In my view, only after we have determined the location of this city can we further pursue our study of pre-Shang and early Shang culture, which will ultimately enable us to determine the identity of Xia culture.[12]

Zou mentions Xia culture together in one breath with pre-Shang and early Shang culture, while emphasizing the distinction between Xia and Shang cultures. However, the problem is that, chronologically speaking, Xia culture coexisted with pre-Shang culture during a certain period, meaning that, according to Zou's own definitions, pre-Shang culture should count as an integral part of "Xia culture," rather than being a culture in its own right. The only way to resolve this contradiction is to interpret Xia culture as referring to the culture of the Xiahou clan, or to historical remains of the Xia period that are unrelated to the Shang people.

However, the dominant tendency among scholars has been to define "Xia culture" as simply referring to the culture of the period of the Xia dynasty. As

11 See Zou Heng, "Xia wenhua fenbu quyu nei youguan Xiaren chuanshuo de diwang kao 夏文化分佈區域內有關夏人傳說的地望考 [A Topographical Study of Legends surrounding the Xia people within the Domain of Xia Culture]," in *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwen ji* 夏商周考古學論文集 [*Collected Writings on the Archaeology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties*] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980), 219-52.

12 Zou Heng, "Shilun Xia wenhua 試論夏文化 [Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture]," in *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwen ji*, 105.

Li Boqian, another important scholar in the field of research into Xia culture, points out:

> Erlitou culture, famous for the eponymous archaeological site in the city of Yanshi 偃師 in Henan Province, can be divided into two subtypes: Erlitou proper and Dongxiafeng 東下馮. Zou Heng's identification of Erlitou with Xia culture has currently gained wide acceptance among scholars.... The population of the Erlitou subtype would have consisted primarily of the Xia people, whereas the Dongxiafeng subtype was probably made up of a minority of Xia people who moved to the Dongxiafeng area, along with a majority of local inhabitants who took over Xia culture and were dominated by the Xia court.[13]

Because Li Boqian sees the Erlitou and Dongxiafeng subtypes as corresponding to the culture predominantly produced by the "Xia ethnic group" and "original inhabitants" respectively, he obviously interprets Xia culture as identical to the culture of the Xia dynasty in its entirety.

The various interpretations of Xia culture put forward by scholars such as Xu Xusheng, Zou Heng, and Li Boqian can be summarized as subscribing to either a narrow or broad understanding of the term "Xia culture." In a narrow sense, Xia culture refers to the culture primarily created by the Xiahou clan, whereas in a broad sense it coincides with the totality of the various cultures of all the different clans that existed during the Xia dynasty. Consequently, our research into Xia culture should begin by clarifying which of these two senses is the basis for how we understand the term.

The Xiahou clan was undoubtedly one of the most distinctive clans in the Xia period. This was the clan to which Yu 禹 belonged and that traced its lineage to the great Si family. In other words, it was the royal clan of the Xia dynasty. As such, the culture of this clan is probably the most representative of the Xia period. In the process of investigating Xia culture, many scholars have attempted to rediscover Xia culture by ascertaining the location of the capital of the Xia dynasty. In the process, the main body of Xia culture is identified as the culture of the Xiahou clan. The latter is presented as the main body because the inhabitants of the capital had very diverse origins, and their culture reflected different influences. In his research on the urban areas of the Three Dynasties, Lin Yun discovered that

13 Li Boqian 李伯謙, *Ganwu kaogu* 感悟考古 [*Understanding Archaeology*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), 138.

> a crucial factor in the transition from the concentration of the population in urban settlements to the formation of an actual state was precisely the fact that the state became a territorial form of social coexistence instead of one defined by ties of consanguinity. In other words, within the state as a form of social organization, we are no longer dealing with a multiplicity of urban settlements inhabited by different peoples who each claim descent from a particular ancestor but, rather, with a number of cities inhabited by people of different lineages within a given geographic area.... The mixture of various cultural elements from previous historical periods we find in the case of Erlitou culture should not only be understood as being the result of a community that was part of the same lineage absorbing cultural elements from surrounding communities but, rather and above all, as a fusion of the cultures of people from different lineages who inhabited the same area. If it is true that Erlitou culture counts as the historical remains of the "Xia people," this implies that the Xia consisted of different bloodlines.[14]

Obviously, what Lin calls the "Xia people" here is not the same as those people affiliated with the Xiahou clan but can only be understood as referring to the inhabitants of the capital of the Xia dynasty and thus to territorial relations, instead of blood relations. Therefore, instead of identifying Erlitou culture with Xia culture, it would be more accurate to say that Erlitou culture is the culture of the Xia capital. Only when we take into account the fact that the upper social stratum governing the Xia dynasty consisted mainly of descendants of the Xiahou clan can we could go on to argue that the "main body" of the culture of the Xia capital consists of the historical remains of the Xiaohou clan.

In discussing the complexity of ethnic relations in ancient society, Lin Yun writes

> Often when we discuss problems like these, we use the term "ethnicity" or "people" [*zu* 族], which is obviously a highly indeterminate concept. It can be used to refer in a very general sense to the various sorts of more or less unified communities that went by the same name described in ancient texts, the only criterion being that such communities have a smaller scale than do the tribes or tribal alliances in primitive society.

14 Lin Yun 林沄, "Guanyu Zhongguo zaoqi guojia xingshi de jige wenti 關於中國早期國家形式的幾個問題 [On a Few Problems Concerning the Formation of the Early Chinese State]," in *Lin Yun xueshu wenji* 林沄學術文集 [*Collected Papers of Lin Yun*] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1998), 98.

> These various communities had huge differences in their historical background and social reality.[15]

In Xia and Shang society, territorial politics had already replaced, at least to some extent, politics based on ties of consanguinity, which makes it hard to determine the domain of activity by one particular clan. In the "Basic Annals of the Xia" in the *Shi ji,* for example, we read that Xia people with common ancestry, such as the Youhu, Younan, and Zhenxun, "took the name of the state as a family name" [*Yongguo weixing* 用國為姓],[16] which means that these tribes were no longer of a single bloodline but part of a feudal state with a population of mixed descent. The point here is that it is difficult to distinguish the cultures of different tribes within the central area of Xia culture from one another.[17] Hence, in practical terms, we cannot realistically expect to study the distribution of the various clans (tribes) of the Xia period on the basis of the existing divisions between different archaeological cultures. This is why some scholars have opted, instead, to await the excavation of new textual evidence.[18]

Given the many complex problems of culture and ethnicity in the field of archaeology, we have to approach the study of Xia culture from two perspectives at the same time, by taking both the broad and narrow definition of Xia culture into account. In concrete terms, this means, first, we need to pay attention to the importance of the capital of the Xia dynasty. Understanding the

15 Lin Yun, "Kaoguxue wenhua yanjiu de huigu yu zhanwang 考古學文化研究的回顧與展望 [The Study of Archaeological Cultures: Retrospect and Prospects]," in *Lin Yun xueshu wenji*, 236.

16 Sima Qian, "Basic Annals of Xia," 109.

17 Bruce Trigger has pointed out that the concept of an archaeological culture is suitable only for small-scale, isolated, and sedentary prehistoric societies. By contrast, for more complex societies with greater cultural diversity as a result of social and economic differentiation, the notion of an archaeological culture is not a suitable analytical tool. See Bruce Trigger 布魯斯·炊格爾, *Shijian yu chuantong* 時間與傳統 [*Time and Traditions*], trans. Jiang Zudi 蔣祖棣 and Liu Ying 劉英 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1991), 126.

18 Chang Kwang-chih 張光直 has indicated the importance of textual sources in the study of Xia culture. In his opinion, "in the case of Erlitou culture, the correspondence between its geographical distribution and the location of the capital of the Xia dynasty recorded in legends cannot be entirely coincidental. Only the discovery of a text allowing us to identify Erlitou culture with one of the dynasties or peoples known to us from other written sources will enable us to resolve the problem of the relation between Erlitou culture and the Xia dynasty." However, at the same time, Chang also made the bold claim that "Erlitou culture is Xia culture, and not the culture of the early Shang dynasty" (*Gudai Zhongguo de kaoguxue* 古代中國考古學 [*The Archaeology of Ancient China*], trans. Yin Qun 印群 [Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2013], 376).

metropolitan culture comes down to understanding Xia culture in the narrow sense, as represented by the Xiahou clan. Second, we need to closely examine the main archaeological sites inhabited by the various clans of the period in question and coming to an understanding of each clan's culture by analyzing the archaeological culture found at these central sites. Third, we need to examine archaeological culture within its proper historical context, thereby establishing the basic features of Xia culture in the broad sense through comparison.

2 Two Methodologies: Metropolitan Conjecture and Cultural Comparison

Looking back on the trajectory of research into Xia culture, it is hard not to notice the prominent position taken up by the "method of metropolitan conjecture" [*Duyi tuidingfa* 都邑推定法].[19] We can distinguish between two different approaches to this method: The first is to directly identify an archaeological site as the capital of the Xia dynasty. A typical example of this approach is the identification of the Wangchenggang 王城崗 site in Dengfeng (Henan Province) with Yangcheng 陽城, the capital of the founder Yu, or of the Erlitou site in Yanshi with Zhenxun, the Xia capital during the reign of King Jie 桀. On this basis, one then goes on to infer that the later phase of the Henan Longshan 龍山 culture found in Wangchenggang coincides with early Xia culture, whereas Erlitou culture corresponds to the culture of the late Xia. The second starts by determining the location of Bo, the first capital of the Shang dynasty founded by Tang, to decide upon the location of early Shang culture and then working one's way back from there to reconstruct Xia culture. The subsequent identification of the Shang capital Xibo 西亳 with the Erlitou site and with Yanshi Shang City, which successively took a dominant position in research on Xia and Shang culture, both resulted from this line of reasoning.

The scholarly preference for the "method of metropolitan conjecture," which is not without some merit, can actually be traced back to an unconscious desire to find Xiaxu equivalent to the Yinxu 殷墟, the site of the Shang capital Yin. This also explains why the "method of metropolitan conjecture"

19 Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬 has distinguished three methods for researching Xia culture: comparative verification, the "method of metropolitan conjecture," and the analysis of cultural factors. See Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬, *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue yanjiu* 夏商周考古學研究 [*A Study of the Archaeology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties*] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2007).

makes sense only within strictly defined conditions and has to be backed up by ironclad proof, such as the discovery of royal tombs or solid textual evidence. If the royal tombs of Xibeigang 西北岡 at the Yinxu site, and along with it the oracle bone script [*jiaguwe*n 甲骨文], had remained undiscovered, many people would still doubt the existence of the Yinxu, and any evidentiary history of the late Shang would be severely compromised.

At first sight, a search for Xia culture grounded in the discovery of historical remains and artifacts, such as the royal tombs of a capital city or textual sources, comes down to a quest for scientifically reliable evidence. What is ignored in the process, however, is the fact that the painstaking search for such evidence already entails a departure from the proper path of archaeological inquiry, which has never taken, and indeed should never take, historical remains and artifacts as its primary research topic. In other words, it is worth asking whether the archaeological study of Xia culture really stands or falls with the discovery of such "ironclad proof." Needless to say, this question should be answered in the negative. As Zou Heng remarked long ago, some people "entertain the notion that the potsherds frequently found at archaeological sites provide us with a sufficient basis to conclusively determine the dating and cultural characteristics of the site in question" precisely "because they have not really understood what modern scientific archaeological study is all about."[20]

The popularity of the "method of metropolitan conjecture" has resulted in a situation in which scholars often limit themselves to one particular site or archaeological culture in the hope of finding a single clue that will resolve the entire matter. As a consequence, a flood of articles has appeared that deal almost exclusively with the Erlitou site and Erlitou culture and attempt to solve the problem of Xia culture by studying the characteristic traits of this site or the different phases of this culture. This in turn has led to a proliferation of pointless disagreements and disputes and even raised doubts concerning the existence of the Xia dynasty.[21] Concerning this phenomenon, Zou Heng made the following astute observations:

20 Zou Heng, "Some Remarks on the Current Debate surrounding Xia Culture," 24.

21 To this day, a small minority of Chinese and foreign scholars continues to doubt the historical existence of the Xia dynasty. A typical line of reasoning is the following: "The earliest records concerning the Xia date from the Zhou dynasty, whereas in the oracle bone inscriptions from the Shang dynasty, which is chronologically closest to the Xia, hardly any mention is made of the Xia. This raises the suspicion that this whole dynasty was a later invention" (Chen Chun 陳淳 and Gong Xin 龔辛, "Erlitou Xia yu Zhongguo zaoqi guojia yanjiu 二里頭、夏與中國早期國家研究 [Erlitou Xia and the Research into the Early Chinese State]," *Fudan xuebao* [*shehui kexue ban*] 復旦學報 [社會科學版], no.

> Ever since the end of the 1950s, the majority of research on Xia culture has focused on Erlitou culture. However, in doing so, most scholars have ignored the appropriate approach and methodology put forward by Xu Xusheng, and no one has bothered to engage in a comparative study of Erlitou culture. Until the beginning of the 1970s, the main approach remained focused on issues of chronology.... All these lacked solid evidence and were thus mostly guesswork that showed little or no genuine insight. In sum, these inquiries were conducted by a small minority of scholars who used it as a means to air their own views in a rather simplistic manner and did not have a great impact at the academic level.[22]

These seemingly heated debates then really amounted to much ado about nothing and were simply an opportunity for scholars to "air their own views in a simplistic manner." Zou's harsh and incisive critique should give us all pause for thought.

Xu Xusheng's status as a pioneer in the field of Xia culture studies is due not only to the fact that he was the first to embark on a survey of the Xiaxu. More importantly, he was the first scholar to identify what Zou Heng called an "appropriate approach and methodology."[23] Throughout the years, Xu consistently expressed his deep dissatisfaction with how the radical movement on "doubting antiquity" neglected the distinction between pure myths and

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4 [2004]: 83). In criticizing this line of reasoning, Shen Changyun points out: "A considerable number of foreign scholars still persists in maintaining a fundamentally dismissive attitude when it comes to the existence of the Xia dynasty. They are not acquainted with the historical documents of our country, do not understand the basic approach of Chinese scholars in researching Xia history, and are not even willing to carefully consider whether there might be new data and new points of view in Chinese scholarship on the Xia dynasty. Their denial of the existence of the Xia dynasty has remained grounded in the old arguments put forward by Yang Kuan 楊寬 and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家. What is even worse is that some of these skeptics reduce Chinese scholarship on the Xia to something purely motivated by political interests or moral preconceptions. At this point, the debate loses any semblance of objectivity." (Shen Changyun, "Xiadai shi duzhuan de ma: yu Chen Chun xiansheng shangque 夏代是杜撰的嗎? 與陳淳先生商榷 [Is the Xia Dynasty a Fabrication? A Discussion with Chen Chun]," *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao* [*zhexue shehui kexue ban*] 河北師範大學學報[哲學社會科學版], no. 3 [2005]: 90).

22 Zou Heng, "Xia wenhua yantao de huigu yu zhanwang 夏文化研討的回顧與展望 [Research into Xia Culture: History and Prospects]," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 2 (1990): 5.

23 On the background and intellectual development of Xu's research into Xia culture, see Sun Qingwei, "Wen Yu wei hewu: Gu Jiegang de Xiashi yanjiu 問禹為何物? 顧頡剛的夏史研究 [Who or What Was Yu the Great? Gu Jiegang's Research on Xia History]," in *In Search of the Three Dynasties*, 41.

traditional accounts in a "careless and indiscriminate manner," "made short work of the entire history before the Xia dynasty," and interpreted the "scant historical accounts of the Xia dynasty" as forgeries from the Eastern Han period (25-220), thus "turning the long historical period predating the Yinxu into a blank page."[24] This is the reason he engaged in a systematic and comprehensive reflection on the proper methodology for researching Xia culture.

Long before starting his search for the Xiaxu in 1959, Xu had decided upon a methodological procedure:

> If we can be sure that China was far from unified at that time, it follows that the sphere of activity of the Xia clan or tribe must have been relatively limited. As such, we can proceed by investigating the commonalities or similarities peculiar to Xia culture within its own boundaries and then going on to determine whether we can identify corresponding cultural differences in areas at a relative distance from the central Xia areas. Through a comparative study of cultural differences, we will gradually be able to identify the specificities of the culture of the Xia clan or tribe.[25]

Clearly then, Xu's methodological focus in researching Xia culture was "cultural difference," precisely that of engaging in a comparison of the archaeological culture of the Xiaxu with that of "relatively remote places" and bringing out the peculiarities of Xia culture through comparison. This is why the reconstruction of the Xia capital had little impact on his fundamental understanding of Xia culture.

The sort of research methodology adhered to by Xu Xusheng can be called that of "cultural comparison." For this methodology to be successful, two basic conditions have to be in place: first, a correct identification of the Xiaxu, and, second, an adequate understanding of these ruins as well as of the archaeological cultures outside this area. These two tasks were undertaken by Xu Xusheng and Zou Heng respectively.

In providing a definition for the Xiaxu, Xu argued:

> If we want to determine the sphere of activity of the Xia clan or tribe, we have to begin our search in legendary accounts handed down from antiquity, that is, by looking at the data contained in textual sources....

24 Xu Xusheng, Zhongguo gushi de chuanshuo shidai 中國古史的傳說時代 *The Legendary Era of Ancient Chinese History* (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue xuebao, 2003), 30.

25 Xu Xusheng, "Preliminary Report on the 1959 Survey of the 'Ruins of Xia'," 593.

> To make a rough estimate: there are around 80 passages in pre-Qin texts that provide us with historical information related to the Xia dynasty and also mention specific place names, of which about seventy have been preserved. Apart from this, in texts from the Western Han period [206-25 BCE], there are approximately thirty such passages. However, these are mostly reformulations of pre-Qin accounts, and very few of the place names mentioned fall outside the geographic domain of the immediate pre-Qin period.... The recorded passages that are of the greatest interest to us because they mention the capital of the Xiahou clan number no more than thirty, most of which can be found in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 [*Commentary of Zuo*], *Guoyu* 國語 [*Discourses of the States*], and *Guben zhushu jinian* 古本竹書紀年 [*Ancient Bamboo Annals*].... After a comparative study of the few remaining historical fragments, we can surmise that the following two areas are of particular interest to us: first, the Luoyang 洛陽 plain and its surrounding areas in central Henan, particularly the regions of Dengfeng and Yuxian 禹縣 at the upper reaches of the Ying 潁 river; and, second, the region around the lower reaches of the Fen 汾 river in southwest Shanxi Province (roughly south of Mount Huo 霍山).[26]

Although Xu Xusheng managed to correctly delineate the area of the Xiaxu, the utter lack of precise knowledge concerning the archaeological cultures of the Xiaxu and its surrounding areas at the time prevented him from adequately meeting the second condition for comparative research described above, which would have enabled him to come to a concrete and correct archaeological assessment of Xia culture. Afterward, when Zou Heng assessed the state of the field that confronted him, he took it upon himself to carry Xu's research further and make a decisive contribution to the study of Xia culture.

In describing the background of his own research, Zou writes:

> The reason that so little progress had been made in the field of research into Xia culture was that the objective preconditions for engaging in comprehensive comparative research had yet to mature. This mainly expressed itself in the very uneven development of archaeology and in the small number of new archaeological discoveries during the entire 1960s. The available archaeological data had not been sufficiently explored and existing research did not go far enough. Only with the arrival of the 1970s did this situation begin to gradually change. First, advances were made in the archaeological study of the western Henan region. Although

26 Xu Xusheng, "Preliminary Report on the 1959 Survey of the 'Ruins of Xia'," 593.

> Zhengzhou Shang city, for example, had already been discovered in the 1950s and a considerable amount of work had gone into studying this site during the 1960s, a number of crucial problems remained unresolved. It was only because of the further research done in the 1970s that the site was definitively confirmed as a Shang dynasty city. Another example is that of the Yanshi Erlitou site. The remains of Palace 1 had already been discovered long ago, but the excavation of the site was only completed in the 1970s, at which point a new chronological division of Erlitou culture was also introduced. Second, the Dongxiafeng and Taosi 陶寺 sites were discovered in western Shanxi Province. Third, on a broader national level, archaeological work in eastern China was now in full swing, so that the features and chronologies of the various cultures found there had been more or less determined. These conditions made it possible not only to continue the work of establishing chronological divisions but also to initiate research into a typology of cultures.[27]

We can also discern the following two steps in Zou Heng's research: first, determining the geographic reach of the Xiaxu and, then, going on to "tease out" Xia culture by comparing the cultures inside and outside this area.

Zou's "Topographical Study of Legends Surrounding the Xia people within the Domain of Xia Culture" contains the research he devoted to defining the reach of the Xiaxu.[28] As far as this problem was concerned, he came to roughly the same conclusions as Xu Xusheng and proposed that the Xia people were primarily active in the following three areas:

> First, western Henan, possibly extending to eastern Shaanxi and western Hubei Province, or even stretching as far parts of eastern Sichuan and other regions. Second, the southwest Shanxi area, whose influence might have extended to northern Shanxi or even Inner Mongolia. Third, eastern Henan, perhaps stretching to parts of western Anhui and eastern Hubei, a region whose influence may have extended to the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.[29]

However, given the enormous cultural diversity within the area outlined above, the crucial question became which cultures to single out for comparison. Zou's

27 Zou Heng, "Research into Xia Culture: History and Prospects," 5.

28 Zou Heng, "Xia wenhua fenbu quyu nei youguan Xiaren chuanshuo de diwang kao," 219-52.

29 Zou Heng, "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture," 138.

foremost contribution consists in having completed a task left unfinished by Xu Xusheng: providing a comparative study of the archaeological cultures within and outside the area of the Xiaxu, whose main results are concentrated in the two texts "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture" and "A Preliminary Investigation into the Neighboring Cultures of the Northern Regions during the Xia and Shang Periods."[30] Zou assessed the significance of these two studies as follows:

> "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture" provides a general account of the chronology and different periods of Shang culture by bringing together previous studies of the issues in question, while also putting forward a new periodization of early Shang culture. As such, it offers an overall clarification of the origin and development of Shang culture. The chronology and periodization of Xia culture is slightly less complicated than that of Shang culture. This work takes into account the results of all previous studies and puts forward a comparative analysis of the relations between the various periods of Xia and Shang cultures.... "A Preliminary Investigation into the Neighboring Cultures of the Northern Regions" is closely related to "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture" and can be seen

30 Although the major importance of the first text is generally acknowledged among scholars, the second has generally failed to attract much interest. According to Chang Huaiying 常懷穎, a young scholar who has devoted extensive study to Xia and Shang cultures in this region, "the most emblematic study into Xia and Shang culture in Hebei Province beginning in this period [i.e., 1977-1997] is Zou Heng's 'A Preliminary Investigation into the Neighboring Cultures of the Northern Regions during the Xia and Shang Periods.' In this text, Zou makes use of a limited amount of data to divide the archaeological cultures of the Xia and Shang periods in the area of Hebei Province into Xiajiadian 夏家店 culture, pre-Shang culture, and Guangshe 光社 culture and retraces these cultures to three subtypes of the Longshan culture in Hebei: Leishan 雷山, Jiangou 澗溝, and Xutan 許坦. After giving a detailed analysis of the chronological and geographic distribution of these three archaeological cultures, Zou provides a tentative discussion of their corresponding ethnic affiliations by connecting his data to textual sources.... After the appearance of Zou's study, not a single scholar tried to produce a survey of the Hebei region during this period on the same scale and with a similarly comprehensive orientation, although specialists of different areas during the Xia and Shang periods have provided us with more specific separate studies." (Chang Huaiying 常懷穎, "Xia Shang shiqi gu Jizhou zhiyu de kaoguxue yanjiu 夏商時期古冀州之域的考古學研究 [An Archaeological Investigation into the Region of Hebei Province during the Xia and Shang Periods]," PhD diss., Beijing University, 2010, 31.) See also Zou Heng, "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture," 95-182; Zou Heng, "Guanyu Xia Shang shiqi beifang diqu zhu linjing wenhua de chubu tantao 關於夏商時期北方地區諸鄰境文化的初步探討 [A Preliminary Investigation into the Neighboring Cultures of the Northern Regions during the Xia and Shang Periods]," in *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwen ji*, 253-94.

> as a supplement to this text. Previously, most historians and archaeologists had located the origins of the Shang people in eastern China. By contrast, on the basis of a large amount of reliable archaeological data, this text proves beyond all doubt that the Shang originated neither in the coastal region nor in the Northeast.... The text concludes that the historical struggle between the Xia and Shang peoples was simply a continuation of the competition between the Gonggong 共工 people inhabiting the region of Hebei and the Xia people who mainly occupied the Henan region.[31]

In sum, through a systematic study of the archaeological cultures from the Xia and Shang periods in the three regions mentioned above, particularly by distinguishing and analyzing the marked differences between the Erlitou cultural system in Henan and the pre-Shang cultural system in Hebei, Zou reached the conclusion that Xia culture coincides with the first to the fourth phases of Erlitou culture. As such, he provided the first complete archaeological description of Xia culture. With this, Zou Heng finally brought the research system and paradigm first put forward by Xu Xusheng to completion after more than twenty years of scholarly effort. Contemporary research into Xia culture continues to operate within the academic framework set by Xu and Zou and has not shown any signs of breaking out of it.[32]

3 From Longshan to Erlitou Culture: Deepening the Method of Cultural Comparison

In the autumn of 1930, the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica discovered the archaeological site of Chengziya 城子崖 near the town

31 Zou Heng, *Collected Writings on the Archaeology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties*, ii-iii.

32 Among studies in the field of Xia culture published in the wake of Xu and Zou, Zheng Jiexiang's 鄭傑祥 *Xiashi chutan* deserves special mention for its systematic approach. This book is divided into two parts: the first, "A Brief Survey of the History of the Xia Dynasty," provides a "brief study of the origins of the Xia people as well as their area of activity and the political rise and downfall of the Xia dynasty on the basis of textual records." Zheng Jiexiang 鄭傑祥, *Xiashi chutan* 夏史初探 [*A Preliminary Study of Xia History*] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1988), 4. The second part, "An Exploration of Xia Culture," is an analysis of the Longshan and Erlitou cultures in Henan. Its main focus argues that the Zhengzhou Shang city site was the first capital of the Shang dynasty to prove that Erlitou culture is identical to Xia culture. Both the formal layout and the content of this book faithfully follow the example set by Xu and Zou.

of Longshan in Licheng 歷城 District, Shandong Province, and identified a prehistoric culture characterized by its use of black pottery: Longshan culture.[33] As soon as signs of this culture were discovered, it was paired with Yangshao 仰韶 culture and its typical painted pottery as archaeological evidence of the thesis that "the Yi 夷 people came from the east; the Xia from the West."[34]

For a relatively long time afterward, Longshan culture remained synonymous with black pottery culture, such that all sites where black pottery was unearthed were associated with Longshan culture. Moreover, the introduction of terms such as Shandong Longshan culture, Henan Longshan culture, Shaanxi Longshan culture, and Hubei Longshan culture gradually made "Longshan culture" an extremely indeterminate concept, denoting an aggregate of archaeological cultures with their own particularities, cultural traditions, and geographic distribution.[35] In light of this, in the beginning of the 1980s, Yan Wenming drew attention to the necessity of distinguishing between Longshan culture in different regions and giving each regional culture a suitable name. At the same time, Yan proposed calling the entire period represented by these different cultures the "Longshan era," a suggestion that resonated with many scholars in the field.[36]

On the basis of results from radiocarbon dating available at the time, Yan proposed that the various archaeological cultures in the Longshan era be dated between the twenty-sixth and twenty-first century BCE, which is earlier than the chronological range for the Xia dynasty in textual records and corresponds more or less to the era of the sage-kings Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 in ancient legends.[37] However, more recent data has made it clear that the Longshan era falls between 2300 and 1800 BCE, which mostly overlaps with the traditional

33 See Li Ji 李濟 et al., *Chengziya: Shandong licheng xian longshanzhen zhi heitao wenhua yizhi* 城子崖: 山東歷城縣龍山鎮之黑陶文化遺址 [*Chengziya: Relics from the Black Pottery Culture Found in the Town of Longshan in Licheng County, Shandong Province*] (Nanjing: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1934).

34 See Sun Qingwei, "Youxin haishi wuyi: Li Ji Fenhe liuyu diaocha yu Xia wenhua tansuo 有心還是無意: 李濟汾河流域調查與夏文化探索 [Purposefully or Unintentionally: Li Ji's Survey of the Fen Valley and Research into Xia Culture]," in *In Search of the Three Dynasties*, 77-102.

35 For an overview of the development of archaeological knowledge concerning Longshan culture, see Liu Li 劉莉, *Zhongguo xinshiqi shidai: maixiang zaoqi guojia zhilu* 中國新石器時代: 邁向早期國家之路 [*The Chinese Neolithic: Trajectories to Early States*], trans. Chen Xingcan 陳星燦 et al. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007).

36 See Yan Wenming 嚴文明, "Longshan wenhua yu Longshan shidai 龍山文化與龍山時代 [Longshan Culture and the Longshan Period]," *Wenwu* 文物, no. 6 (1981).

37 Yan Wenming obviously meant this in a very loose and general sense, since if the Longshan era is dated from the twenty-sixth to the twenty-first centuries BCE, it cannot be encompassed by the era of Yao and Shun alone.

chronology of the Xia dynasty.[38] This makes it clear that, regardless of which dates we adopt, some form of overlap is bound to remain between the Longshan era and the reign of the Xia dynasty, meaning that early Xia culture has to be identified and analyzed within the context of the various archaeological cultures in the Longshan era.

If we look at the geographic distribution of urban settlements in the Xia dynasty, it appears that the Xiahou clan was mostly active in western Henan, in the region around the upper reaches of the Ru 汝 and Ying 潁 Rivers and in the region around the Yiluo 伊洛 River. However, at some point, its influence extended to parts of eastern Henan, northern Henan, and western Shandong. If we also take into account the domain of activity of the clans with which the Xiahou shared the same ancestral name or that of other clans to which they were closely related, the sphere of influence of the Xia dynasty can be further broadened to parts of the westernmost region of Henan, southwestern Shanxi, and northern Anhui. The archaeological cultures in the Longshan era found in these regions are listed in Table 1.

I have expanded the scope of my inquiry to Longshan remains found in the entire "region of Yu." I do this in the hope of making our search broad enough to find the missing pieces of the puzzle of Xia culture through a comparative investigation over a long period in a broad region. In assessing the identity of the various archaeological cultures in question, I have consistently opted for a statistical approach, first identifying and analyzing the makeup of the central artifacts at each representative archaeological site and then proceeding to determine the cultural identity of the historical remains on this basis. An interpretation of the various archaeological cultures listed in Table 1 yields the following results.

First, subtypes of Longshan culture, such as Meishan 煤山, Wangwan 王灣, Zaolütai 造律台, Hougang 後岡, and Sanliqiao 三里橋 [see Table 1], make up a relatively consistent culture. The most widely spread and commonly found artifacts in this sphere are deep-bellied jars [*jiasha shenfu guan* 夾砂深腹罐] with a gritty texture, which were used as cooking vessels. In this sense, we can speak of a "jar cultural sphere." Other commonly found objects include cups and bowls (or covers for bowls) used for eating and drinking, and containers such as double-bellied basins [*shuang fu pen* 雙腹盆] and high-necked jars

38 "Zhonghua wenming tanyuan" gongcheng xiangmu zhixing zhuanjiazu "中華文明探源" 工程項目執行專家組 [Specialized Research Group for the Project "Tracing the Origins of Chinese Civilization"], "Zhonghua wenming tanyuan" gongcheng chengguo jicui (neibu ziliao) "中華文明探源" 工程成果集萃(内部資料) [Compendium of Research Results from the Project "Tracing the Origins of Chinese Civilization," internal document], 2016, 5.

TABLE 1 Archaeological cultures in the Longshan era

Region		Historical remains
Primary central region	Upper reaches of the Ru and Ying Rivers	Meishan type
	Region of the Yiluo River	Wangwan type
Secondary central region	Eastern Henan, western Shandong	Zaolütai type
	Northern Henan, southern Hebei	Hougang type
Tertiary central region	Westernmost Henan	Sanliqiao type
	Southwestern Shanxi (Eastern part)	Sanliqiao type
	Southwestern Shanxi (Western part)	Taosi culture
	Northern Anhui	Huajiasi type

[*gaoling weng/guan* 高領甕/罐]. Contemporary scholars usually refer to this highly consistent cultural sphere as Henan Longshan culture. The geographic distribution of this culture basically corresponds to the central area described in the available textual evidence as falling under the control of the Xia dynasty, and its absolute chronology mostly matches the chronology of the Xia dynasty. This spatial and temporal correspondence should not be interpreted as mere coincidences but understood as implying that Henan Longshan culture, particularly in its later phase, represents the physical remains of the Xia dynasty.

Second, the cultural similarities among the three central areas described above progressively decrease from one area to the next. This means that the Wangwan and Meishan types in the primary central area are the most closely related, the main difference being the discrepancy between the number of *ding* 鼎 vessels found in their respective regions. By contrast, the differences between the Zaolütai and Hougang types and the Wangwan and Meishan types are much more marked, as is evidenced by the higher number of *yan* 甗 vessels, basins with a flat base, and a greater preponderance of elements from Shandong Longshan culture. That being said, the overwhelming dominance of deep-bellied jars with a gritty texture makes it abundantly clear that this area was part of "jar culture." The three types of historical remains in the tertiary central area can further be divided into two levels. At the first level, whereas the Sanliqiao type is part of the Henan Longshan cultural system, it is a highly

distinctive form of the latter and shows much clearer differences than those found between Zaolütai and Hougang, on the one hand, and Wangwan and Meishan, on the other, with many *ge* 鬲 tripods, single-eared jars, pottery decorated with cord marks [*shengwen* 繩紋], and only a small number of jars with a gritty texture among the cooking vessels. As such, the identity of Sanliqiao as part of "jar culture" is far from self-evident. The second level in this tertiary central area consists of Taosi culture and Huajiasi 花家寺 culture, which both represent independent archaeological cultures and only show signs of mutual contact and influence with Henan Longshan culture. Although the Huajiasi type seems to display slightly more similarities with cultural elements from Henan Longshan culture than with Taosi culture (with the latter showing signs of having actively rejected Henan Longshan culture), it is actually the *beihu* 背壺 pots distinctive of Taosi culture that can be found in Wangwan and Meishan archaeological sites. This means that Taosi culture and the Huajiasi type were completely independent cultural communities that existed side by side with "jar culture."

Third, if we look at the distribution of ethnic groups, we see that the primary central area identified above was mostly the home of the Xiahou clan and the Zhenxun and Fei clans with which the Xiahou shared a common ancestral name. In addition, we find members of the Luo 洛 tribe, whose ancestry is uncertain, and a small portion of "non-native" peoples, such as the Houyi 后羿 and Hanzhuo 寒浞. The ethnic composition of the secondary central area is the most heterogeneous, with a clear presence of descendants of the "eight surnames of Zhurong 祝融," the Youyu 有虞 clan, the Gaoyao 皋陶 clan whose ancestral name was Yan 偃, the Boyi 伯益 clan with the ancestral name Ying 嬴, and ethnic groups from eastern China such as the Qionghan 窮寒 clan. Among the ethnic groups already identified in northern Anhui in the tertiary central area is the famous Tushan 塗山 clan, which was most part of the Huayi 淮夷 cultural system. In the westernmost region of Henan, we find the Tongcheng clan with the ancestral name Si, while the basin of the Linfen 臨汾 and Yuncheng 運城 Rivers was the home base of the Taotang 陶唐 clan.

Combining the information we have concerning the distribution of ethnic groups with our knowledge of the extent of contact between the archaeological cultures in each area allows us to draw a number of conclusions, which are rich in implications. The Wangwan and Meishan types are highly uniform. This area was mostly inhabited by members of clans with the ancestral name Si, such as the Xiahou and Zhenxun clans, and it is quite normal for members of clans with the same ancestor to share a similar material culture. The correspondence between the Zaolütai and Hougang types in the secondary central area, on the one hand, and the Wangwan and Meishan types in the

primary central area, on the other, in all likelihood are the concrete reflections of an alliance between the Yi and Xia peoples (including the descendants of the eight tribes of Zhurong) mentioned above. Although certain portions of eastern Yi clans, best represented by the descendants of Gaoyao and Boyi, had been Sinicized [*huaxiahua* 華夏化], and their mode of existence did not differ from that of clans with the ancestral name Si such as the Xiahou, and since the *jiyi* 雞彝 (ceramic long-stemmed cups known as *gui* 鬹), which were crucial implements in the "Xia rites," were originally produced in eastern China, it is clear that Xia culture contained elements typical of eastern China.[39] We could even say that what is known as Xia culture is largely the product of the fusion of the Yi and Xia peoples, which means that Xia culture has no such thing as a "pure lineage." In southern Shanxi in the tertiary central area, the culture of the Taotang clan as exemplified by Taosi culture continued to offer considerable resistance after the founding of the Xia dynasty and retained control over large parts of the Linfen and Yuncheng basin. Only the Yuanqu 垣曲 basin and the area around Xia county might have belonged to an area where Xia culture was also widespread. In northern Anhui, because of the strong influence of an existing culture—Dawenkou 大汶口 culture—and the overpowering "burden of history" this placed upon the region, Xia culture as an external influence never managed to fundamentally alter the local cultural tradition. This gave rise to the formation of the Huajiasi type, as a mixture of elements from Shandong Longshan culture, Henan Longshan culture, and the local culture. Although clans bearing the ancestral name Si were distributed in the westernmost region of Henan, the Sanliqiao type found in this region is clearly distinct in its cultural traits from the Wangwan and Meishan types, which shows the complex nature of the relationship between archaeological culture and ethnic affiliation. As such, it was entirely possible for archaeological culture to transcend ties of consanguinity. The cultures of clans with the same ancestral name were not necessarily the same, nor were cultures of clans with different ancestors necessarily different. In the distinction between Hua and Yi people (or Chinese and "barbarian"), the fundamental criterion is culture, not blood ties.

To summarize the arguments presented above, in the later phase of the Longshan period, the Wangwan and Meishan types in the primary central area can be understood as Xia culture in the narrow sense—the culture mainly produced by the Xiahou clan. Together with the Zaolütai and Hougang types in the secondary central area, they constitute Xia culture in a broad sense—that is, the culture of the Xia dynasty as grounded in an alliance of different clans.

39 Zou Heng, "Toward an Analysis of Xia Culture," 149.

In the tertiary central area, the situation is even more complex. Although the main part of southern Shanxi and certain regions of northern Anhui were to varying degrees culturally connected to the Wangwan and Meishan types, we cannot include them in the Henan Longshan cultural system. Rather, these areas should be seen as independent cultural spheres. In terms of their political relations, however, the Xiahou clan, on the one hand, and the Taotang clan of southern Shanxi as well as the Tushan clan from northern Anhui, on the other, were very closely connected. As such, the Taotang clan (including the Yulong 禦龍 clan descended from them) and the Tushan clan were both integral parts of the Xia dynasty. Therefore, their historical remains should also be included as part of Xia culture in the broad sense.

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An Archaeological Proposal of the Origin of State in China

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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.

Keywords

academic history – Chinese archaeology – early China – nationalism – study of the origin of state

In the Chinese archaeological world, the concept of civilization is used not as a synonym of culture but as a term to designate a specific stage of social development. As Engels claims, "the state is the sum of the civilized society."[1]

1 Friedrich Engels 恩格斯, "Jiating, siyouzhi he guojia de qiyuan 家庭, 私有制和國家的起源 [The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State]," in *Makesi Engesi xuanji* 馬克思恩格斯選集 [*Marx and Engels Collected Works*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1995), 4: 172.

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The emergence of the state symbolizes that society has reached the stage of civilization.

The major strategy used in studying the origin of the state and the history of early Chinese civilization over the past hundred years is to make inferences from well-known characteristics of a mature civilization to the possible origin and formation of an early state. This strategy, coupled with an abundance of classical literature and historical knowledge, has made identifying specific dynasties the starting point and the central focus. In this article I draw from modern archaeology to enhance this research project.

1 Overview: From "Confirming the Classics and Complementing History" to a Linear Evolutionary Account

1.1 *From the 1920s to the Present: the Practice of "Confirming the Classics and Complementing History" and Royal Genealogies*

In the early twentieth century, Wang Guowei 王國維 [1877-1927] deciphered the oracle bone scripts unearthed from the Yinxu 殷墟 [Ruins of Yin] in Anyang. These earliest Chinese writings have verified the lineage tables of Yin-Shang emperors and the events recorded in the "Basic Annals of Yin" [*Yin benji* 殷本紀] in the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記].[2] This breakthrough encouraged historians and archaeologists to validate the "Basic Annals of Xia" [*Xia benji* 夏本紀] in the *Records of the Grand Historian* and descriptions of the Xia dynasty in the pre-Qin literature and to agree upon the existence of the Xia dynasty (ca. 2100-1600 BCE). This mode of inference has been widely accepted and highlights the role archaeological findings can play in "confirming the classics and complementing history."[3]

The excavation of the Yinxu in Anyang since 1928 has further verified the area as the capital of the late Shang dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 BCE).[4] With the excavation of Erligang 二里崗 culture and the Zhengzhou 鄭州 Shang city

2 Wang Guowei 王國維, "Yin buci zhong suojian xiangong xianwang kao 殷卜辭中所見先公先王考 [Study of the Ancestral Kings and Nobility Appearing in the Yin Oracular Inscriptions]," *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 [*Guantang's Selected Works*], part 1, vol. 9 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959); Wang Guowei, "Yin buci zhong suojian xiangong xianwang xukao 殷卜辭中所見先公先王續考 [The Second Study of the Ancestral Kings and Nobility Appearing in the Yin Oracular Inscriptions]," *Guantang jilin*, part 1, vol. 9.

3 Xu Hong 許宏, "Fangfalun shijiao xia de Xia Shang fenjie yanjiu 方法論視角下的夏商分界研究 [The Methodological Demarcation of Xia from Shang]," in *Sandai kaogu* 三代考古 [*Archaeology of Three Dynasties*] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2009).

4 Li Ji 李濟, *Anyang-Yinshang gudu faxian fajue fuyuan ji* 安陽—殷商古都發現、發掘、復原記 [*Anyang: A Chronicle of the Discovery, Excavation, and Reconstruction of the Ancient*

(culturally close to Yinxu) in the 1950s, the Shang dynasty was dated back to the period of Erligang.[5] In 1959, Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 [1888-1976] excavated the ruins of Erlitou 二里頭 in the exploration of possible "Ruins of Xia" [Xiaxu 夏墟]."[6] The lack of archaeological materials at this point has limited archaeologists to the imagination of Xia culture and the general demarcation of the Xia dynasty from the Zhou dynasty [1046-256 BCE]. The limited archaeological materials were later used to serve integrative historical research.[7] Experts in the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project, which was initiated in the 1990s, relied mostly on the classical literature as their argumentative basis.[8] Scholars wrote that the concept of the Xia was still an assumption yet to be corroborated. Archaeological fieldwork was limited to the Yellow River Basin until the 1970s. Consequently, Chinese archaeologists mostly held a Zhongyuan-centric model that upholds a monist origin of Chinese dynasties, regarding the Shang or Xia dynasty as the earliest state.

1.2 *From the 1970s to the Present: the Linear Evolutionary Account as Mainstream, with the Upper Limit Continuously Shifted Earlier*

Several models have been proposed to account for the concept of the civilization and the origin of the state in China. Other than the Zhongyuan-centric model [*xin zhongyuan zhongxin shuo* 心中原中心說],[9] we have seen the "starry

Capital of the Shang Dynasty], trans. Su Xiuju 蘇秀菊 et al. (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990).

5 Zou Heng 鄒衡, "Shi lun Zhengzhou xin faxian de Yin Shang wenhua yizhi 試論鄭州新發現的殷商文化遺址 [The New Discovery of Yin-Shang Cultural Site in Zhengzhou]," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報, no. 3 (1956); Henan sheng bowuguan 河南省博物館, Zhengzhou shi bowuguan 鄭州市博物館, "Zhengzhou Shangdai cheng yizhi fajue baogao 鄭州商代城遺址發掘報告 [Excavation Report of Shang Relics in Zhengzhou]," in *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 文物資料叢刊, vol. 1 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1977).

6 Xu Xusheng 徐旭生, "1959 nian xia Yuxi diaocha Xiaxu de chubu baogao 1959 年夏豫西調查'夏墟'的初步報告 [Preliminary Report of the Investigations into 'Xiaxu' in Western Henan in the Summer of 1959]," *Kaogu* 考古, no. 11 (1959).

7 Henan sheng kaogu xuehui 河南省考古學會, Henan sheng bowuguan 河南省博物館, *Xia wenhua lunwen xuanji* 夏文化論文選集 [*Selected Papers on the Xia Culture*] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985); Zhongguo xianqin shi xuehui 中國先秦史學會, ed., *Xia shi luncong* 夏史論叢 [*Collected Essays on the History of Xia*] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1985); Zheng Jiexiang 鄭傑祥, ed., *Xia wenhua lunji* 夏文化論集 [*An Anthology of the Xia Culture*] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002).

8 Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng zhuanjia zu 夏商周斷代工程專家組, *Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng 1996-2000 nian jieduan chengguo baogao jianben* 夏商周斷代工程 1996-2000 年階段成果報告（簡本）[*The Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project Report for the years 1996-2000* (*abridged*)] (Beijing: Shijie tushu chuban gongsi, 2000).

9 An Zhimin 安志敏, "Shi lun Huanghe liuyv xin shiqi shidai wenhua 試論黃河流域新石器時代文化 [Neolithic Culture in the Yellow River Basin]," *Archaeology*, no. 10 (1959); Shi

sky model [*mantian xingdou shuo* 滿天星斗說],"[10] the model of mutually influencing circles [*zhongguo xianghu zuoyongquan shuo* 中國互相作用圈說],[11] the Zhongyuan-centric model of double flowers [*chongban huaduo shuo* 重瓣花朵說] (otherwise known as the model of unity through plural societies) [*duoyuan yiti shuo* 多元一體說],[12] the Zhongyuan-centric model of historical trend [*lishi qushi shuo* 歷史趨勢說],[13] and the neo-Zhongyuan-centric model [*xin zhongyuan zhongxin shuo* 新中原中心說],[14] and so on.

All these alternative models can still be interpreted as variations of the Zhongyuan-centric model, albeit from a pluralistic perspective. The underlying tenet remains unchanged: all the pre-historical local cultures are relatively independent but intimately connected, each evolving without interruption, before merging into a single entity conceived of as Chinese civilization. Despite a general acknowledgment of inequities and imbalances in social developments, a striking silence loomed over the disparities and distances among different regions and cultures. Consequently, the heterogeneity within different regions and cultures in antiquity has been significantly downplayed, fostering a mentality that privileges a linear evolutionary account of Chinese civilization. This mentality has generated grand narratives of the origin and formation of Chinese prehistoric culture, which tackles historical periods with generic

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Xingbang 石興邦, "Huanghe liuyu yuanshi shehui kaogu yanjiu shang de ruogan wenti 黃河流域原始社會考古研究上的若干問題 [Archaeological Problems of Primitive Societies in the Yellow River Basin]," *Kaogu*, no. 10 (1959).

10 Su Bingqi 蘇秉琦 and Yin Weizhang 殷瑋璋, "Guanyu kaogu wenhua de quxi leixing wenti 關於考古學文化的區系類型問題 [Archaeological Culture: Region, System, Class]," *Wenwu* 文物, no. 5 (1981).

11 Kwang-chih Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). For an early Chinese translation, see Kwang-chih Chang 張光直, "Zhongguo xianghu zuoyongquan yu wenming de xingcheng 中國相互作用圈與文明的形成 [The Mutually Influencing Circles and the Formation of Civilization]," in Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwunian lunwenji 慶祝蘇秉琦考古五十五年論文集 [*A Collection of Essays in Celebration of Su Bingqi's 55-year Archaeological Work*] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989).

12 Yan Wenming 嚴文明, "Zhongguo shiqian wenhua de tongyixing yu duoyangxing 中國史前文化的統一性與多樣性 [The Unity and Diversity in Chinese Prehistoric Culture]," *Wen Wu*, no. 3 (1987).

13 Zhao Hui 趙輝, "Yi Zhongyuan wei zhongxin de lishi qushi de xingcheng 以中原為中心的歷史趨勢的形成 [The Formation of the Zhongyuan-Centric Historical Trend]," *Wen Wu*, no. 1 (2000); Zhao Hui, "Zhongguo de shiqian jichu—zai lun yi Zhongyuan wei zhongxin de lishi qushi 中國的史前基礎—再論以中原為中心的歷史趨勢 [The Prehistoric Foundation of China: Revisiting the Zhongyuan-Centric Historical Trend]," *Wen Wu*, no. 8 (2006).

14 Zhang Xuehai 張學海, "Xin Zhongyuan zhongxin lun 新中原中心論 [Neo-Zhongyuan-Centrism]," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 3 (2002).

labels such as "the late Neolithic" or the Chalcolithic.[15] The predominant concern remains how to trace the origin of a single Zhongyuan state, driven by the ideal of unity in contemporary China. Even Liangzhu 良渚 culture, which was located outside Zhongyuan and perished hundreds of years before the birth of Zhongyuan civilization, has been considered just an important component of the unfaltering development of Chinese civilization.

Even since the late 1970s, increasing archaeological findings have launched a reassessment of the ancient Chinese civilization with a focus on what is called the "proto-history" of the Xia era or even the "legendary time" of the five ancient emperors. Nonetheless, the extensiveness of the reassessment does not change the central question of how China emerged into the stage of civilization.

Drawing from research on the pottery scripts of Dawenkou 大汶口 culture, Tang Lan 唐蘭 [1901-1979] proposed in the 1970s that Chinese civilization spans over 6,000 years.[16] Discoveries in the 1970s and 1980s seem to show that Liangzhu culture had private ownership, arrived at the eve of civilization, or even entered the era of the state. Meanwhile, discoveries of Longshan 龍山 culture ruins, such as the Wangchenggang 王城崗 ruins in Dengfeng 登封 county in Henan or the Taosi 陶寺 ruins in Xiangfen 襄汾 county in Shanxi, cohered with legends of the Xia dynasty or countries in the era of the five ancient emperors. China, by implication, entered a primitive stage of civilized society still earlier.[17] Drawing on the discoveries made in Hongshan 紅山 culture in western Liaoning, Su Bingqi 蘇秉琦 (1909-1997) proposed in

15 Xu Hong, "Xin Zhongyuan zhongxin lun de xueshushi jiexi '新中原中心論'的學術史解析 [An Analysis of the History of 'Neo-Zhongyuan-Centrism']," in *Wuxian youyou yuanguqing—Tong Zhuchen xiansheng jinian wenji* 無限悠悠遠古情—佟柱臣先生紀念文集 [*Collected Essays in Memory of Tong Zhuchen*] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2014).

16 Tang Lan 唐蘭, "Zhongguo you liuqian duo nian de wenmingshi—Lun Dawenkou wenhua shi Shaohao wenhua 中國有六千多年的文明史—論大汶口文化是少昊文化 [China Has Over 6,000 Years of Civilized History: On How the Dawenkou Culture is Shaohao Culture]," in *Dagongbao zai Gang fukan 30 zhounian jinian wenji* 大公報在港復刊 30 週年紀念文集 [*Collected Papers for the 30th Anniversary of the Resuming Publication of Ta Kung Pao*] (Hong Kong: Dagongbao, 1978); Tang Lan, "Zhongguo nuli zhi shehui de shangxian yuan zai wu, liu qian nian qian—lun xin faxian de Dawenkou wenhua yu taoqi wenzi 中國奴隸制社會的上限遠在五、六千年前—論新發現的大汶口文化與其陶器文字 [The Upper Limit of the Chinese Slavery Society Is 5000-6000 Years Ago: On the New Discovery of the Dawenkou Culture and Its Pottery Scripts]," in *Dawenkou wenhua taolun wenji* 大汶口文化討論文集 [*Collected Essays on the Dawenkou Culture*] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1981).

17 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所, Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan gudai wenming yanjiu zhongxin 中國社會科學院古代文明研究中心, ed., *Zhongguo wenming qiyuan yanjiu yaolan* 中國文明起源研究要覽 [*A Survey of the Studies on the Origin of the Chinese Civilization*] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2003).

the 1980s that Hongshan culture inaugurated the period of "ancient states" in China. He further proposed the "starry sky model," according to which Chinese civilization consists of developmental stages that can be labeled "ancient culture, ancient city, ancient state" or "ancient states, regional states, and empire states."[18] But it is an open question whether a massive religious phenomenon and public social project such as Hongshan culture can prove the existence of an authoritative state power. The proposal of 5,000-year Chinese civilization, as influenced by the Zhongyuan-oriented view, nationalism, and interpretive changes brought by archaeological finds, prioritizes the long tradition and broad cultural identification. Yet many questions are left unanswered if civilization is to be defined from the perspective of the emergence of the state.[19]

2 Reflection: Theoretical Flaws, Nationalism, and Disciplinary Limits

Archaeology in China has downplayed the significance of theory. "Special attention is given to the obtaining and confirming of archaeological materials. Trust is not given to theories, often seen as stereotyped views. To force subjective theories onto archaeological materials is not considered rigorous work."[20] The theoretical work regarding the origin of the state is significantly lacking, which has directly affected the depth and quality of research. For example, Su Bingqi has defined an "ancient state" as "a higher form of social organization coming from yet going beyond community."[21] This definition is widely thought to be unclear in its intension and extension.[22] A publicly recognized discourse is hard to take shape, when disagreements abound regarding the most basic concepts and theoretical frameworks.

18 Su Bingqi, *Huaren-Long de chuanren-Zhongguoren—Kaogu xungen ji* 華人·龍的傳人·中國人—考古尋根記 [*Ethnic Chinese, Descendants of the Dragon, the Chinese People: In Search of an Archaeological Root*] (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1994); Su Bingqi, *Zhongguo wenming qiyuan xintan* 中國文明起源新探 [*A New Investigation into the Origin of the Chinese Civilization*] (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1999), 170.

19 Chen Xingcan 陳星燦, "Cong yiyuan dao duoyuan: Zhongguo wenming qiyuan yanjiu de xinlu licheng 從一元到多元：中國文明起源研究的心路歷程 [From Monism to Pluralism: The Study of the Origin of the Chinese Civilization]," *Zhongyuan Wenwu*, no. 2 (2002).

20 Kwang-chih Chang, "*Xuyan* 序言 [Preface]," in *Shijian yu chuantong* 時間與傳統 [*Time and Traditions: Essays in Archaeological Interpretation*], by Bruce G. Trigger 布魯斯·炊格爾, trans. Jiang Zudi 蔣祖棣, and Liu Ying 劉英(Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1991), 5.

21 Su Bingqi, *Ethnic Chinese, Descendants of the Dragon,* 81.

22 Zhu Naicheng 朱乃誠, *Zhongguo wenming qiyuan yanjiu* 中國文明起源研究 [*A Study of the Origin of the Chinese Civilization*] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2006).

The distinctive origin of the Chinese state has led many scholars to uphold the value of authenticity in historical literature. Although research on the origin of the state is a global project, Chinese and international scholars have had little communication and many barriers. It is not hard to notice the tendency to close the door and talk to oneself. Ill-defined concepts such as "ancient state," [*guguo* 古國] "regional state," [*fangguo* 方國] and "kingdom-state" [*bangguo* 邦國] have not been well integrated with Western concepts such as "chiefdoms" [*qiubang* 酋邦] and "primitive states" [*zaoqi guojia* 早期國家]. The concept of a chiefdom, for example, denotes a pre-state complex social interim from the primitive egalitarian society to the state-society. This concept has not been widely accepted in Chinese academia, and most hold a two-tiered view that sharply contrasts the pre-state society with the state-society.

Chinese literature can be dated back between Eastern Zhou [770-256 BCE] and the Han dynasty [202 BCE-220], when state-society took a mature form. When ancient events in pre-state societies were characterized, the political regimes were variously called a "country" [*bang* 邦] or a "state" [*guo* 國]. Contemporary scholars tend to read these terms at face value and exaggerate their significance in an attempt to date and locate the origin of state. Meanwhile, the origin of the state has been continuously shifted to an earlier point to match early civilizations globally. Some scholars have even asserted with a clear tone of nationalism that "the aim of modern archaeology is to revise the history of the state."[23]

The origin of civilization or the state predates the era when literature containing abundant historical information about local regions came into existence. Archaeology plays an important role in the research on pre-history. With respect to the question of the origin of civilization and the state, however, archaeology can only go so far to reveal, record, and observe the material embodiment of civilization. The definition and analysis of the state involves institutional theorizing beyond the domain of archaeology. On the one hand, the archaeological remains are fragmented, even piecemeal. On the other hand, the lack of textual support worsens the intellectual uncertainties.

Archaeological work has a strong interpretive aspect, given its effort to study the past through material remains. The archaeological materials do not speak for themselves, whereas the interpretations given by the archaeologists will inevitably carry their opinionated preferences. Problems of conceptual compatibility might also arise when archaeologists borrow from theories and methodologies in other disciplines. We shall keep in mind the relativity and unverifiability of any conclusion regarding the origin of the state.

23 Su Bingqi, *A New Investigation into the Origin of the Chinese Civilization*, 4.

3 Proposal: a Two-Stage Origin Model of East Asia

To distinguish the geological sense from the political sense, I shall refrain from using the word "China" in articulating this proposal. Instead, I shall use "East Asia" as a spatial category. Between 3500 and 1800 BCE—between the Yangshao 仰韶 and Longshan eras—numerous regions in the Yellow River Basin and the Yangtze River Basin underwent profound social changes. Ancient tribes or clans, relatively independent, coexisted in a conflict and contest for resources. That period in East Asia has been metaphorically characterized as an era full of "stars." The sheer number of tribes or clans was so striking that scholars have called that period "the era of ancient kingdoms" or, borrowing from Western parlance, "the era of chiefdoms."

The increasing population in that period witnessed the growth of class stratification and social complication. As communication and clashes across different regions became frequent, unprecedented cultural phenomenon emerged. The forms of tribes underwent fundamental changes. Prominent disparities were manifest everywhere in the relics of major social projects that required much labor and time, such as the ramparts and ditches, rammed-earth foundation platform, hall buildings, altars, graves, not to mention the grave scale, and the quantity and quality of grave goods. Groups of ancient people formed loose circles of mutual influence through communication and clashes. Nevertheless, they were independent from one another and dispersed geologically. These local cultures on the periphery of Zhongyuan later headed toward decline and eventually exited the historical stage.

Around roughly 1800 BCE, the remaining cities and central tribes in Longshan culture in Zhongyuan disappeared one after another. Replacing them was Erlitou culture in Mount Song 嵩 and Luoyang 洛陽 in Zhongyuan, quickly absorbing the cultural elements from local regions before rising to prominence. For the first time in East Asia, Erlitou culture spread beyond local geological units, occupying almost the entire middle reach of Yellow River. Erlitou culture then radiated to surrounding areas much farther. The culture and cities of Erlitou emerged, merging the societies then into a large territory royal dynasty from the coexistence of separate political entities. The Yellow River Basin and the Yangtze River Basin slowly developed from a pluralistic civilization of separate tribes to an integrated civilization of royal dynasties.[24]

24 Xu Hong, *Zuizao de Zhongguo* 最早的中國 [*The Earliest China*] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2009); Xu Hong, *Heyi Zhongguo—Gongyuan qian 2000 nian de Zhongyuan tujing* 何以中國—西元前 2000 年的中原圖景 [*Why Is It China: the Zhongyuan Landscape in 2000 BCE*] (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2014).

I propose that Erlitou culture, the earliest large territory royal dynasty around 1800 BCE in East Asia, demarcated the era of the Zhongyuan dynasty from the predynastic era, when great numbers of smaller political entities coexisted. This demarcation happens to match neatly onto the boundary between the Bronze Age and the Pre-Bronze Age in East Asia. Consequently, the origin of the states in East Asia exhibited discontinuity and disproportion. A number of ancient cultures, represented by Liangzhu, Shimao 石峁, and Taosi, completed the rise and fall of their developments. The bronze civilization in Zhongyuan after these earlier cultures had an indirect relationship to them, thus showcasing cultural fracture within continuity.[25] For example, the sorcery-filled Liangzhu culture perished early and exhibited remarkable differences in cultural identity from Zhongyuan civilization. The enormity and complexity revealed by archaeological findings in Liangzhu culture, along with its fracture from the civilization of royal dynasties in Zhongyuan in the Bronze Age, does not support the linear evolutionary account, in which East Asian civilization progressed from small to big one-dimensionally. To fully grasp the details of the complicated origin and development of the state in East Asia calls for more archaeological fieldwork and integrative research in the future.

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25 Xu Hong, "'Lianxu' zhong de 'duanlie'—Guanyu Zhongguo wenming yu zaoqi guojia xingcheng guocheng de sikao '連續'中的'斷裂'—關於中國文明與早期國家形成過程的思考 [The 'Fracture' within 'Continuity': Reflections on the Chinese Civilization and the Formation of Early States]," *Cultural Relics*, no. 2 (2001).

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

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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.

Keywords

capital city – chronology – Erlitou culture – Xia culture – Xia dynasty – Xinzhai period

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The increasingly optimistic period of Xia dynasty (ca. 2100-1600 BCE) research we now find ourselves in is foreshadowed by over half a century of archeological exploration.[1] It is now generally accepted among academics that the Erlitou 二里頭 culture, or most of it, is Xia culture.[2] However, disagreement remains on some specific issues, particularly as discoveries have come to light about important sites, such as Wangchenggang 王城崗, Wadian 瓦店, Huadizui 花地嘴, and Xinzhai 新砦, which have reignited discussion of Xia culture in its early period, a topic that remains divisive to this day. Xu Hong 許宏 [b. 1963] once stated that no research on the matter can be considered decisive without documentary evidence, and that no conclusion regarding Xia culture can be brushed aside.[3] This paper attempts to surmise a Xia dynasty chronology with an alternate rationale.

1 This article is a translated and edited version of the original, published in *Zhongyuan Wenwu* 中原文物, vol. 5, 2017.

2 See Zhang Zhongpei 張忠培, "Guanyu Erlitou wenhua he Xiadai kaoguxue yicun de ji dian renshi 關於二里頭文化和夏代考古學遺存的幾點認識 [Some Interpretations of Erlitou Culture and Archeological Remains of the Xia Dynasty]," *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物, no. 1 (2009); Li Boqian 李伯謙, "Qianyan 前言 [Foreword]," in *Zaoqi Xia wenhua yu xian Shang wenhua yanjiu lunwenji* 早期夏文化與先商文化研究論文集 [*A Collection of Essays on Early-Period Xia Culture and Pre-Shang Culture Research*], ed. Beijing daxue zhendan gudai wenming yanjiu zhongxin 北京大學震旦古代文明研究中心 [Peking University Zhendan Center for Ancient Civilizations Research] et al. (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2012); Liu Xu 劉緒, "Dui tantao zaoqi Xia wenhua de ji dian kanfa 對探討早期夏文化的幾點看法 [Some Views on Early-Period Xia Culture]," in *Zaoqi Xia wenhua yu xian Shang wenhua yanjui lunwenji*, 7-15; Chen Xu 陳旭, "Erlitou yiqi wenhua shi zaoqi Xia wenhua 二里頭一期文化是早期夏文化 [Phase I of Erlitou culture Is Xia Culture in Its Early Period]," in *Zaoqi Xia wenhua yu xian Shang wenhua yanjui lunwenji*, 16-25; Zhang Zhongpei, "Xu 序 [Foreword]" to *Erlitou wenhua shiqi de Zhongguo* 二里頭文化時期的中國 [*China during the Time of Erlitou Culture*], by Duan Tianjing 段天璟 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014); Xu Zhaofeng 徐昭峰 and Cao Rui 曹蕊, "Kaoguxue yu Xia wenhua tansuo 考古學與夏文化探索 [Exploring Archeology and Xia Culture]," in *Xia Shang duyi yu wenhua yi: Xia Shang duyi kaogu ji jinian yanshi shangcheng faxian 30 zhou nian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 夏商都邑與文化(一): 夏商都邑考古暨紀念偃師商城發現 30 週年國際學術研討會論文集 [*The Cities and Culture of the Xia and Shang Dynasties, vol. 1: Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Archeology of the Cities of the Xia and Shang Dynasties and the 30th Anniversary of the Discovery of the Shangcheng Site in Yanshi*], ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 [Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014). Many other scholars who hold similar views are not listed here. Although some scholars hold different views, the majority of academics contend that Erlitou culture is Xia culture.

3 See Chang Huaiying 常懷穎, "Zaoqi Xia wenhua xueshu yantaohui jiyao 早期夏文化學術研討會紀要 [Summary of the Symposium on Early Xia Culture]," in *Zaoqi Xia wenhua yu xian Shang wenhua yanjui lunwenji*, 250-58.

1 Defining Xia Culture

Before discussing Xia culture, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of the concept. Scholars have had different interpretations of what constitutes Xia culture. Some approach it from an archeological perspective, while others examine it through the lens of history or cultural anthropology.

Xia Nai 夏鼐 [1910-1985] first proposed that "Xia culture is the culture of the Xia people who lived during the Xia dynasty,"[4] and this view has been accepted by the majority of academics who believe that the Xia as an ethnic group was made up of the majority of the Xia people and various assimilated ethnic minorities. Some scholars disagree that Xia culture was none other than the culture of the Xia people, arguing instead that it was the culture created and used by the Huaxia 華夏 people during the Xia dynasty. Though larger in scope, it is essentially equivalent to defining the Xia as an ethnic group. However, proponents of this school of thought go one step farther, contending that "the Longshan 龍山, Xia and Shang [ca. 1600-1046 BCE] cultures in the Central Plain can be traced to the same origin." Huang Shilin 黃石林 [1922-2003] once stated,

> When we discuss the Xia culture, we can interpret it as either the culture of the Xia people or the culture of the Xia dynasty. When discussing the culture of the Xia people, we focus on the culture's defining and archetypal qualities in the context of its cultural landscape. When discussing the culture of the Xia dynasty, we focus on its synthesizing and diversifying qualities in the context of its cultural landscape.[5]

This explanation is perhaps more informed by the disciplines of history and cultural anthropology.

Some scholars make a distinction between dynastic history and archeological culture by considering the question entirely from an archeological perspective. Sun Hua 孫華 represents this particular approach. Sun argues,

4 Xia Nai 夏鼐, "Tantan tantao Xia wenhua de jige wenti 談談探討夏文化的幾個問題 [On Some Issues Related to Xia Culture]," *Henan wenbo tongxun* 河南文博通訊, no. 1 (1978), 32-33.

5 Huang Shilin 黃石林, San lun Xia wenhua wenti 三論夏文化問題 [Three Discussions on the Question of Xia Culture], in *Xiawenhua yanjiu lunji* 夏文化研究論集 [*Xia Culture Research: A Monograph Series*], ed. Zhongguo xian Qinshi xuehui 中國先秦史學會 and Luoyangshi dier wenwu gongzuodui 洛陽市第二文物工作隊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 17.

> Archeological chronologies are absolutely not equivalent to dynastic timelines. An archeological culture does not form suddenly because of the establishment of a particular dynasty, nor does it suddenly cease to exist the day a dynasty dies out and is replaced by a new one. Every culture goes through a process of formation, development, prosperity, decline and even destruction. If the Xia culture is the remains of the Xia people who, for the most part, established the Xia dynasty, it may have emerged before the founding of the Xia dynasty, and disappeared after its fall. It is evidently improper to use the timeline of the Xia dynasty to determine a timeline for the Xia culture.[6]

He went on to state,

> The Xia culture as it currently stands is merely a topic for research in Chinese archeology, and has not been confirmed as a designation of an archeological culture. Researchers can provide evidence to deduce that a particular archeological culture may constitute the Xia culture, however, it is inadvisable to designate an archeological culture as the Xia culture based on a personal belief.[7]

Yin Weizhang 殷瑋璋 shares a similar view, arguing,

> An archeological culture as a concept differs from that of a dynasty. The Xia culture already existed during the founding of the Xia dynasty. However, when the Xia dynasty started to decline, the material culture created by the people did not immediately discontinue or die out with it. On the contrary, the adherents of the former dynasty were still using and creating their culture, which allowed it to continue for some time.[8]

This archeological explanation seems reasonable, but it fails to take into account significant differences in the political landscape, social environment,

6 Sun Hua 孫華, *Xia wenhua tansuo zhong ruogan wenti de sikao* 夏文化探索中若干問題的思考 [*Reflections on Some Questions Encountered in Exploring Xia Culture*], in *Xiawenhua yanjiu lunji* , 36.

7 Ibid.

8 Yin Weizhang 殷瑋璋, "Guanyu Xiadai wenhua de tansuo 關於夏代文化的探索 [On Exploring the Culture of the Xia Dynasty]," in *Xin Zhongguo de kaogu faxian he yanjiu* 新中國的考古發現和研究 [*Archeological Discoveries and Research in New China*], ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1984), 215.

and lifestyle before, during, and after the establishment of the dynasty, not to mention differences in the cultural landscape. In addition, to speak of an archeological culture as concurrent with a particular dynasty is to speak in general and relative terms. It allows for a short buffer period and does not imply a specific day of sudden formation or termination. Rationales of this nature are too absolute.

Similarly, scholars considering the matter from an archeological perspective hold entirely different views. Wang Lixin 王立新 contends that Xia culture is an archeological culture created and used by the Xia people of the Xia polity during the Xia dynasty, which is equivalent to Erlitou culture, a structurally stable culture that gradually formed after Qi 啟 of Xia unified the areas north and south of Mount Song 嵩. Dating before the structurally stable Erlitou culture for the final period of the Longshan ruins, as well as the ruins of the Xinzhai period, may coincide with the Xia dynasty. However, a culture of the people of the Xia polity that is not structurally stable should not be generalized as the early period of Xia culture.[9] This is from a particular perspective of archeological culture that suggests that the formation of Xia culture should have lagged behind the founding of the Xia dynasty.

The author of this paper believes that, when it comes to using dynastic designations for cultures such as those of the Xia and Shang, the designations for sites of various prehistoric cultures, including those of the Xia and Shang periods, such as Erlitou, Erligang 二里岡, and Yinxu 殷墟 [Ruins of Yin] culture, differ in principle and significance. Moreover, one must take into account the disciplines of both history and archeology to understand this significance. The majority of prehistoric archeological cultures are distributed within relatively small and independent geographical units. Although adjacent cultures had some kind of impact on the level of exchange, it was limited by contemporary political conditions of time and space, and each culture displays strong independence. The same can be said for any of the other archeological cultures in the Central Plain during the time of Longshan culture. Furthermore, in manifesting a unified dynasty of unprecedented size and strength, dynastic culture had, by at least the middle and late periods of the Xia dynasty, overcome restrictions of natural geography to span the Central Plain of the original Longshan period, as well as many of its surrounding archeological cultures either partially or entirely. Thus, both dynasty and clan affiliation should be taken into account when defining cultures such as that of the Xia and Shang.

9 See Fang Yanming 方燕明, "'Zaoqi Xia wenhua xueshu yantaohui' jiyao 早·期夏文化學術研討會'紀要 [Summary of the Symposium on Early Xia Culture]," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 5 (2008).

From a chronological perspective, the Xia culture should be defined as being within the Xia dynasty, that is, from the founding of the dynasty to its fall. From a spatial perspective, Xia culture should be defined within the regions under the administration of the Xia dynasty. Otherwise, there is likely to be chaos and misunderstanding. Some scholars argue that Xia culture is not an official archeological cultural designation; thus it is inadvisable for researchers to equate the designation of Xia culture with an archeological culture on the basis of personal belief. However, use of the term "Xia culture" is unavoidable in the fields of history and archeology. As a result, the author supports the following interpretation of Xia culture, which takes into account the perspectives of both disciplines:

> Xia culture refers to the remains of the culture created by the Xia people or by an ethnic group made up mostly of Xia people, in the regions under the administration of the Xia dynasty. At its core, it refers to the historic site of the Xia dynasty or polity. Thus, it is limited to a certain time (the period of the Xia dynasty), a certain place (the regions under the administration of the Xia dynasty), and a certain clan affiliation (the Xia people, an ethnic group made up mostly of Xia people, or the people of the Xia polity). It does not include the remains of other peoples living during the time of the Xia dynasty but outside regions it directly administered, nor does it include the remains of the Xia people from their origin to their fall. The cultural remains of the Xia people before the founding of, and after the fall of, the Xia dynasty, may be referred to as pre-Xia culture and post-Xia culture (or the culture of the adherents of the Xia) respectively.[10]

In my view, the theory of a "pre-Xia culture" is untenable. If we claim there was a "pre-Xia culture," then it is none other than the late-period Longshan culture that existed before the Xia dynasty. However, Xia culture should be a culture that is completely new. Regarding the ancestors of the Xia, we are relatively clear on father and son Gun 鯀 and Yu 禹; however, our understanding becomes less clear the higher we ascend the family tree. Figures such as Zhuanxu 顓頊, the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, and Zhurong 祝融 are part of a mythology recorded by subsequent generations and thus lack credibility. For now, it can at least be said that "pre-Xia culture," that is, the era of Gun and

10 See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Zhongguo kaoguxue Xia Shang juan* 中國考古學·夏商卷 [*Chinese Archeology: The Xia-Shang Volume*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003), 24-25.

Yu, is none other than the late-period Longshan culture of the Central Plain. After Gun and Yu came the culture of the Xia dynasty initiated by Qi . This new civilization was qualitatively different from Longshan culture. At the same time, we acknowledge that it is not possible to link the late-period Longshan culture of the Central Plain entirely with Erlitou culture. This missing link can be filled by the "Xinzhai period" culture. The Xinzhai period culture can be considered the formative period of Xia culture, while Erlitou culture can be considered the mature period of Xia culture.

The imperial domains of the Xia and Shang kings, as well as their surrounding areas, made up the centers of Xia and Shang culture. Some local types, which were distributed on the peripheries of these centers, were largely consistent with the centers in terms of their cultural features, but with certain differences. While Xia and Shang culture were dominant, they assimilated some elements of the indigenous cultures. While some local types emerged simultaneously with the centers, most emerged later, which demonstrates that they are the outcome of the political power of the dynasty expanding to the localities.

2 An Alternative Chronology for the Xia Dynasty

Regarding who established the Xia dynasty, the traditional account since the Qin [221-206 BCE] and Han [202 BCE-220 CE] dynasties has been that it was Yu the Great 大禹. The reason that modern historians began to identify Yu and Qi as figures from different periods and that Qi was the official founder of the Xia dynasty is that Yu and Qi have entirely different social natures.[11] Fan Wenlan 範文瀾 [1893-1969] stated,

11 Apart from the explanation by Fan Wenlan 範文瀾 cited in this paper, see also similar views expressed by Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, "Yu Qian Xuantong xiansheng lun gushishu 與錢玄同先生論古史書 [Talking about Ancient History with Mr. Qian Xuantong]," *Dushu zazhi* 讀書雜誌, no. 9 (1922); Gu Jiegang and Tong Shuye 童書業, "Gun Yu de chuanshuo: Xia Shi Kao disi zhang 鯀禹的傳說: 夏史考第四章 [The Legend of Gun and Yu: Chapter 4 of 'Verifying the History of the Xia']," *Shuowen yuekan* 說文月刊, no. 2-4 (1939); Guo Moruo 郭沫若, *Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* 中國古代社會研究 [*Research into Ancient Chinese Society*] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1960), 337; Lv Zhenyu 呂振羽, *Shiqianqi Zhongguo shehui yanjiu* 史前期中國社會研究 [*Research into Prehistoric Chinese Society*] (Beijing: Renwen shudian, 1934), 195-203; Jin Jingfang 金景芳, *Zhongguo nuli shehui shi* 中國奴隸社會史 [*A History of Slavery in China*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1983), 20-28; Li Zhongci 李忠慈, ed., *Zhongguo lishi renwu shuping: gudaishi bufen shang* 中國歷史人物述評: 古代史部分(上) [*A Review on Chinese*

> According to the Liyun 禮運 chapter of the *Book of Rites* [*Liji* 禮記], before Yu there were neither social classes nor exploitation. It was a time of Great Unity [*datong* 大同] in which people shared their property. However, after Yu came the advent of private property and a class society. Yu never sought to abolish the abdication system and was the last great leader of the time of Great Unity. The time of Small Tranquility [*xiaokang* 小康] should have begun with Qi.... Texts written before the Warring States Period [475-221 BCE] never use the name Yu of Xia 夏禹 but, rather, Yu, Yu the Great, and Di Yu 帝禹, and referred to Qi as Qi of Xia 夏啟 and Houqi of Xia 夏後啟. This difference demonstrates that the two figures were not from the same period.[12]

This represents the views of most modern historians, yet there remain some academics who insist on the traditional account that Yu was the first king of the Xia dynasty and that the history of the Xia dynasty starts with Yu.[13]

The course of events in which Qi succeeded Yu has been described in various ways in documentary sources. The transformation from an abdication system to a hereditary system is a major historical transition during which conflict is inevitable, and thus the vying of the throne between Yi 益 and Qi may be more consistent with historical facts. That being said, it is not as if Yu passed on his throne directly to Qi. This is relatively consistent with various documentary accounts and should be factual. To conclude, during the time of Yu, the system of primitive democratic elections of the tribes and tribal alliance leaders played a certain role or at the very least was nominally maintained. Furthermore, successors required a certain amount of support from the people. In other words, they needed to have the prestige and ability to rally the support of their clan, tribe, or alliance. Without it, they would not be

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Historical Figures: Ancient History Volume, part 1] (Tianjin: Tianjin shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1990), 14.

12 Fan Wenlan 範文瀾, *Zhongguo tongshi diyi bian* 中國通史(第一編) [*History of China, vol. 1*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2009), 29, 32.

13 The Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project determined that 2070 BCE was the first year of the Xia dynasty and that reckoning for the first generation of Xia kings starts with Yu. See Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng zhuanjia zu 夏商周斷代工程專家組, *Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng 1996-2000 nian jieduan chengguo baogao jianben* 夏商周斷代工程 1996-2000年階段成果報告(簡本) [*The Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project Report for the years 1996-2000* (*abridged*)] (Beijing: Shijie tushu chuban gongsi, 2000), 86; Zhu Shaohou 朱紹侯 et al., ed., *Zhongguo gudaishi shang* 中國古代史(上) [*Ancient Chinese History, part 1*] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2006), 31; Zhan Ziqing 詹子慶, *Xiashi yu Xiadai wenming* 夏史與夏代文明 [*History of the Xia Dynasty and Its Civilization*] (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu wenxian chubanshe, 2007), 95-96.

able to achieve "the succession of the lords or the Son of Heaven that conforms with the rules of propriety."[14] And so the power of the state shifted from being public to being private and in the hands of the royal family.

In this way, it seems reasonable to incorporate Yu's reign into the primitive democratic system phase in the final period of primitive society, leaving us to conclude that Qi was the initiator of the Xia dynasty.

Regarding the first year of the Xia period, both traditional documentary research and contemporary, multidisciplinary research begin their calculations with the Zhou dynasty [1046-256 BCE]. The first year of the Xia dynasty is obtained by superimposing year counts for the Western Zhou [1046-256 BCE], Shang, and Xia dynasties on the first year of the Eastern Zhou [770-256 BCE] dynasty.

Documentary sources offer a number of year counts for the Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods. The Xia dynasty has five or six different ones, generally between 431 and 483 years. Two year counts are most commonly used by scholars. The first is 471 years, the count provided in the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals* [*Guben zhushu jinian* 古本竹書紀年]. The second is 431 or 432 years, which are the two most frequently quoted counts in ancient texts. Two explanations have been offered as to why these two counts have a 40-year difference. The first is that the count of 471 years includes the "kingless" period in which Hou Yi 後羿 and Han Zhuo 寒浞 represented Xia, which the count of 431 years does not include. The second is that the count of 471 years is reckoned from Shun's abdication to Yu, while the count of 431 years is reckoned from the first year of Yu's reign.

Despite inconsistency in the documentary sources, modern researchers can support their arguments by integrating archeological, oracle bone, and bronze inscription materials, as well as ancient astrological calendars, with the dating methods in modern physics.[15] They adopt the perspectives of their own disciplines or academic systems, with their own understanding and selection criteria, and thus hold a range of views when it comes to the year counts and first years of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties. Consider, for example, the dynastic year counts proposed by the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project. It did not adopt the explanation set out in the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals* regarding the

14 Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, annot., Kong Yingda 孔穎達, comm., "Liji Zhengyi 禮記正義 [Interpretations of the *Book of Rites*]," in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [*Commentary on the Thirteen Classics*], ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 1414.

15 See Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng zhuanjia zu, *The Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project Report for the years 1996-2000*; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, Zhongguo kaoguxue Xia Shang juan; Chang Huaiying, "Summary of the Symposium on Early Xia Culture."

year counts for the Shang and Zhou dynasties, instead adopting the following explanation of the Xia dynasty: "From Yu to Jie 桀, there were seventeen generations, with kings and without, lasting 471 years."[16] However, the project did not provide any rationale as to why it favored one explanation over the other. Regarding the first years of the Western Zhou dynasty, views among scholars do not differ very much, from a few years, to yingver ten years, to a maximum of approximately 100 years.[17] Regarding the first years of the Xia and Shang dynas-

16 Fan Xiangyong 範祥雍, ed., *Guben zhushu jinian jijiao dingbu* 古本竹書紀年輯校訂補 [*Supplement of Compiler on* The Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1957), 17.

17 See Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚 and Zhang Rongming 張榮明, ed., "Xizhou zhuhou wang niandai zhushuo yilanbiao 西周諸侯王年代諸說一覽表 [A Table of the Various Theories of the Chronology of the Kings and Lords of the Western Zhou Dynasty]," in *Xizhou zhu wang niandai yanjiu* 西周諸王年代研究 [*Research into the Chronology of the Kings of the Western Zhou Dynasty*] (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1998). Note that this table summarizes the findings of all research published before October 1997 by scholars in and outside China regarding the first year of the Western Zhou dynasty. Among these findings, the earliest first year is 1130 BCE, and the latest is 1027 BCE, a difference of 103 years. The most notable first years in order of publication are as follows: Shinzo Shinjo: 1066 BCE; see Shinzo Shinjo 新城新藏, "Zhou chu zhi niandai 周初之年代 [A Chronology of the Early Zhou Period]," in *Dongyang tianwenxueshi yanjiu* 東洋天文學史研究 [*Research into the History of East Asian Astronomy*], trans. Shen Xuan 沈璿 (Shanghai: Zhonghua xueyishe, 1933); Wu Qichang: 1122 BCE; see Wu Qichang 吳其昌, "Jinwen yinianbiao 金文疑年表 [A Table of Suspected Years in Chinese Bronze Inscriptions]," in *Jinwen lishuo shuzheng, juan 6, 7* 金文歷朔疏證(卷六、卷七) [*A Calendar Verification of Bronze Inscriptions, vols. 6, 7*)] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936); Ding Shan: 1030 BCE; see Ding Shan 丁山, "Wen Wu Zhougong yinian 文武周公疑年 [Suspected Years for King Wen, King Wu and Duke of Zhou]," *Zeshan banyuekan* 責善半月刊, no. 1-2 (1941); Dong Zuobin: 1111 BCE; see Dong Zuobin 董作賓, "Xizhou nianlipu 西周年曆譜 [An Annual Calendar for the Western Zhou Dynasty]," in *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan, di ershisan ben, xia* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊(第二十三本下) [*Academia Sinica, Research Department of History and Language, vol. 23, part 2*] (1952); Tang Lan: 1075 BCE; Tang Lan 唐蘭, "Zhongguo gudai lishi shang de niandai wenti 中國古代歷史上的年代問題 [The Question of Chronology in Ancient Chinese History]," *Xin jianshe* 新建設, no. 3 (1955); Chen Mengjia: 1027 BCE; see Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, "Shang-Yin yu Xia-Zhou de niandai wenti 商殷與夏周的年代問題 [The Question of Chronology in the Shang-Yin and Xia-Zhou Periods]," *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, no. 2 (1955); Rong Mengyuan: 1055 BCE; see Rong Mengyuan 榮孟源, "Shitan Xizhou jinian 試談西周紀年 [A Tentative Discussion on the Year Numbering System of the Western Zhou Dynasty]," *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢, no. 1 (1980); Liu Qiyi: 1075 BCE; see Liu Qiyi 劉啟益, "Xizhou jinian tongqi yu Wuwang zhi Liwang de zaiwei nianshu 西周紀年銅器與武王至厲王的在位年數 [Western Zhou Bronzeware Chronology and Reign Year Counts from King Wu to King Li]," *Wenshi* 文史, no. 13 (1982); Ma Chengyuan: 1105 BCE; see Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, "Xizhou jinwen he lishi de yanjiu 西周金文和歷史的研究 [Research on the Bronze Inscriptions and History of the Western Zhou Dynasty]," in *Shanghai bowuguan jikan*

ties, views among scholars differ considerably, from over 100 years to even 400 or 500 years. Take, for example, Zheng Guang 鄭光, who derived many of his views on ancient history from the *Triple Concordance System* [*San tong li* 三統歷]. Zheng used this book, which was written by the Western Han historian Liu Xin 劉歆 [50-23 BCE], as a basis for collating, differentiating, and analyzing chronological material available in ancient texts, ultimately determining that the Xia dynasty existed from the twenty-third to the eighteenth centuries BCE.[18] This chronology can be seen as an extreme example that places the Xia period relatively early in history.

An academic consensus has now been reached that Erlitou culture is the basis of Xia culture. However, differing opinions remain regarding the chronology of Erlitou culture. In the book *Chinese Archeology,* the carbon-14 dating result that had already been released was checked against the archeological culture chronological sequence.[19] The assessment was that the Erlitou culture periodic range was from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century BCE, a range commonly cited by academics. However, the dates determined by the Chronology Project based on the dating data for the late-period Longshan culture, the Xinzhai period, and Erlitou culture were much later than in previous chronologies. Xu Hong described the subsequent response from academia as "earth-shattering."[20] The new excavation report *Erlitou* concluded on the basis of new dating results that Erlitou culture existed from 1750 to 1530 BCE.[21] It pushed the upper limit back more than one hundred years and reduced its span to just over 200 years.

Because volcanoes in China are undeveloped, there are no geological formations that feature ancient ruins associated with volcanic ash coverage or volcanic rock formation. As a result, it is not possible to obtain relatively accurate dating based on the radioactive decay of minerals within volcanic ash. The margin for error in other dating methods is considerable. Historical periods in particular require more precise chronologies. However, a calendar chronology

上海博物館集刊 [*Periodical of Shanghai Museum*](Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982).

18 Zheng Guang 鄭光, *Guanyu Zhongguo gushi de niandaixue wenti* 關於中國古史的年代學問題 [*On the Question of Chronology in Ancient Chinese History*], in *Xiawenhua yanjiu lunji*, 284-301.

19 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Zhongguo Kaoguxue Xia Shang juan*, 24-25.

20 Xu Hong 許宏, "Erlitou wenhua juluo dongtai saomiao 二里頭文化聚落動態掃描 [Scanning the Dynamics of the Erlitou Culture Settlements]," in *Zaoqi Xia wenhua yu xian Shang wenhua yanjui lunwenji*, 30.

21 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Erlitou* 二里頭 (1999-2006) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2014).

adjusted according to carbon-14 dating often has a larger error than carbon dating alone, because a carbon dating error range of a few decades can be manifested as an error range of more than one hundred years on a calendar.[22] Although carbon-14 dating technology is constantly being improved, the problem of errors is unavoidable. During the Symposium on Early Xia Culture held in July 2008 in Zhengzhou 鄭州, many scholars called into question the use of carbon-14 dating to argue for a later chronology for Erlitou culture. Most scholars argued that data obtained from carbon-14 dating cannot be regarded as primary evidence for archeological researchers and should be used only for reference. They also argued that researchers should be wary of preconceptions that serve archeological views. A great deal of uncertainty surrounds carbon samples that lack cultural features in terms of their stratigraphic position, and chronological sequences obtained by a series of samples may not be entirely credible.

However, all the dating results showed that Erlitou culture was significantly later than the first year of the Xia dynasty as stated in traditional accounts, and it should be acknowledged that the basic chronological sequence for the late-period Longshan, Xinzhai, and Erlitou culture was verified by both archeological and dating methods. Thus many scholars believe that Erlitou culture is none other than the culture of the Xia dynasty during its middle and late periods.[23] At its earliest stage, Xia culture can be identified from the late-period Longshan culture in Henan Province. Some scholars believe that Phase III of Wangwan 王灣 culture is none other than the earliest stage of Xia culture.[24]

22 Zhang Xuelian 張雪蓮 and Qiu Shihua 仇士華 et al., "Xinzhai Erlitou Erligang wenhua kaogu niandai xulie de jianli yu wanshan 新砦—二里頭—二里岡文化考古年代序列的建立與完善 [The Establishment and Improvement of the Xinzhai–Erlitou–Erligang Culture Chronology]," *Kaogu* 考古, no. 8 (2007).

23 See Wu Ruzuo 吳汝祚, "Guanyu Xia wenhua ji qi laiyuan de chubu tansuo 關於夏文化及其來源的初步探索 [A Tentative Exploration of Xia Culture and Its Origins]," *Wenwu* 文物, no. 9 (1978); Xu Shunzhan 許順湛, "Xiadai wenhua de zai tansuo 夏代文化的再探索 [A Re-Exploration of Xia Culture]," *Henan wenbo tongxun*, no. 3 (1979); Li Xiandeng 李先登, "Erlitou yizhi yu Xia wenhua 二里頭遺址與夏文化 [The Erlitou Site and Xia Culture]," in *Erlitou yizhi yu Erlitou wenhua yanjiu* 二里頭遺址與二里頭文化研究 [*Research into the Erlitou Site and Erlitou Culture*], ed. Du Jinpeng 杜金鵬 and Xu Hong (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2006); Zhang Li 張莉, "Xiadai zaoqi ducheng yanjiu 夏代早期都城研究 [*Research into the Early Capital of Xia Dynasty*]," in *Research into the Erlitou Site and Erlitou Culture*.

24 See Zhao Zhiquan 趙芝荃 and Liu Zhongfu 劉忠伏, "Shitan Yanshi Shangcheng de shijian niandai bing jian lun Xia wenhua de shangxian 試談偃師商城的始建年代並兼論夏文化的上限 [A Tentative Discussion on the Founding Year of Shangcheng, Yanshi, and the Upper Limit of Xia Culture]," in *Huaxia wenming, diyiji* 華夏文明(第一集) [*Chinese Civilization, vol. 1*], ed. Tian Changwu 田昌五 (Beijing: Peking University

Others argue that the "Xinzhai period" site, which exhibits transitional qualities from the late-period Longshan culture to the Erlitou culture, is in fact the earliest stage of Xia culture.[25] However, some scholars still insist that Phase I of Erlitou culture is the earliest stage of Xia culture.[26] Longshan and Erlitou culture are intrinsically different and are not part of the same archeological culture. Moreover, the early stage of the Xinzhai period site in fact is part of the late period of Longshan culture, while the late stage is part of Phase I of Erlitou culture.

Although various explanations are in competition, their differences cannot be resolved. Thus, it may be constructive to consider them from a different perspective. Japanese archeologist Iijima Taketsugu 飯島武次 [b. 1943] performed

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Press, 1987); Zhao Zhiquan, *Lun Xia wenhua qizhi niandai de wenti* 論夏文化起、止年代的問題 [*On the Beginning and End Chronology of the Xia Culture*], in *Xiawenhua yanjiu lunji*, 277-83; An Jinhuai 安金槐, "Yuxi Xiadai wenhua chutan 豫西夏代文化初探 [A Tentative Exploration of Xia Culture in Western Henan Province]," *Zhongguo lishi bowuguan guankan* 中國歷史博物館館刊, no. 1 (1979); An Jinhuai, *Shilun Yuxi diqu Longshan wenhua leixing zhong wanqi yu Xiadai wenhua zaoqi de guanxi* 試論豫西地區龍山文化類型中晚期與夏代文化早期的關係 [*A Tentative Discussion on the Relationship between the Middle and Late Periods of Longshan Culture in Western Henan Province and Early-Period Xia Culture*], in *Xiawenhua yanjiu lunji*, 3-10; Wang Kelin 王克林, "Cong Longshan wenhua de jianzhu jishu tansuo Xia wenhua 從龍山文化的建築技術探索夏文化 [Exploring Xia Culture from the Construction Technology of Longshan Culture]," *Shanxi daxue xuebao* (*zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 山西大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), no. 3 (1980).

25 See Fang Yousheng 方酉生, "Luelun Erlitou yizhi diyi qi yicun yu Xiadai jinian: jian ping Erlitou wenhua yiqi yicun yu Xia wenhua chushi 略論二里頭遺址第一期遺存與夏代紀年—兼評〈二里頭文化一期遺存與夏文化初始〉[A Brief Discussion of Phase I of the Erlitou Site and the Chronology of the Xia Dynasty, with a Review of 'Phase I of Erlitou Culture and the Origins of Xia Culture']," in *Zhongguo shiqian kaoguxue yanjiu: zhuhe Shi Xingbang xiansheng kaogu banshiji ji bazhi huadan wenji* 中國史前考古學研究—祝賀石興邦先生考古半世紀暨八秩華誕文集 [*Research into Chinese Prehistorical Archeology: Collected Works Celebrating Mr. Shi Xingbang's Half-Century Contribution to Archeology and His 80th Birthday*] (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2004); Zhang Guoshuo 張國碩, "Xia jinian yu Xia wenhua yicun chuyi 夏紀年與夏文化遺存芻議 [My View on the Chronology of the Xia Dynasty and the Xia Culture Site]," *Zhongguo wenwu bao* 中國文物報, no. 20 (2001); Zhang Guoshuo, "Lun Erlitou yizhi de xingzhi 論二裡頭遺址的性質 [On the Nature of the Erlitou Site]," in *Erlitou yizhi yu Erlitou wenhua yanjiu*.

26 See Chen Xu, "Guanyu Xia wenhua wenti de yi dian renshi 關於夏文化問題的一點認識 [Interpretations of the Xia Culture Question]," *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao* (*zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 鄭州大學學報(哲學社會科學版), no. 5 (1980); Chen Xu, "Erlitou yiqi wenhua shi zaoqi Xia wenhua"; Li Weiming 李維明, "Erlitou wenhua yi qi yicun yu Xia wenhua chushi 二里頭文化一期遺存與夏文化初始 [Phase I of Erlitou Culture and the Origins of Xia Culture]," *Zhongyuan wenwu*, no. 1 (2002).

a year-count calculation based on various generation counts.[27] Liu Xu 劉緒 [b. 1949] discussed the issue further but rather incautiously. He examined the Zhou-dynasty male coming-of-age standard and, under the assumption that each generation lasted twenty years on average, proposed that the Xia dynasty had lasted 280 years. He then added the element of agnatic seniority (i.e., adding ten years for a generation in which a younger brother inherits the throne) to arrive at a year count for the Xia period of 310 years. Counting back from the first year of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, he concluded that the first year of the Xia dynasty was 1730 BCE. Considering that twenty-year-old married men may not necessarily produce offspring during the year of their marriage that after marriage men on average give birth to their first son within three years, and therefore reckoning each generation as twenty-three years long, he concluded that the year count for the Xia dynasty is 352 years and that its first year was 1856 BCE. If a generation is calculated as thirty years long, and agnatic seniority is not taken into account, then the year count for the Xia dynasty is 420 years, and its first year is 2030 BCE.[28] This conclusion is relatively close to that of traditional accounts with a year count for the Xia dynasty of 471 years, as well as the first year of 2070 BCE suggested by the Chronology Project.

If we assume that each generation is thirty years long, then it must be assumed that Xia kings married and had children at around the age of thirty and that the Shang and Zhou kings, like the Xia kings, must have married and had children later. This claim, however, does not stand up to reason, unless it can be argued that the account given in the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals* that the Xia dynasty had seventeen kings in fourteen generations is unreliable and omitted a number of generations. The lineage for the Shang recorded in the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shi ji* 史記] has been verified by oracle bone inscriptions. The lineage for the Western Zhou dynasty has been confirmed by bronze inscriptions. The lineage for the Jin 晉 has been verified by the cemetery of the Marquis of Jin [*Jin hou mudi* 晉侯墓地]. Therefore, the lineage for the Xia dynasty should be more or less credible. Even so, the first years of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties are not very late, and each reaches the earliest limit. For example, according to the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals*, the Xia dynasty spanned 471 years, and the average length of each generation was thirty-four years, so the Xia kings should have married and had children much later in their lives, at around age thirty or older.

27 Iijima Taketsugu 飯島武次, *Ka-In bunka no kōkogaku kenkyū* 夏殷文化の考古學研究 [*Archeological Research into the Culture of the Xia and Yin Dynasties*] (Tokyo: Yamakawa, 1985).

28 See Liu Xu, "Dui tantao zaoqi Xia wenhua de ji dian kanfa," 7-15.

Although this is mere conjecture, it at least proposes a possibility. The author believes that one can be more precise and that statistics can be collected on the year counts of monarch reigns after the Eastern Zhou dynasty to arrive at a generational average year count by excluding short-lived dynasties and including the Eastern Zhou, Western and Eastern Han, Tang [618-907], Song [960-1279], Ming [1368-1644], and Qing [1636-1912] dynasties. In the aforementioned dynastic year-count statistics, the Eastern Han dynasty, at under 200 years, is the shortest and has a slightly higher generational average year count of twenty-eight years, in comparison with the Tang dynasty generational average year count of 19.3 years. The generational average year counts for the other dynasties are more than twenty years on average and generally fluctuate around the twenty-five-year mark. The further one goes back in ancient history, the shorter is life expectancy. Thus, the generational year count for people living during the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties cannot possibly be more than thirty years. For example, a generational average year count is calculated (Eastern Zhou 25.8 + Western Zhou 21 + Eastern Han 28 + Tang 19.3 + Song 26.7 + Ming 23 + Qing 26.9 = 170.7 years, 170.7/7 ≈ 24.4 years), and the year counts and first years for the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou dynasties are deduced (see Table 1).

The first-year date of the Western Zhou dynasty proposed in this table is merely one year different from the Chronology Project's estimation of the year in which King Wu of Zhou overthrew the Shang dynasty. It also happens to be the year in which the Western Zhou 周武王 dynasty began. This demonstrates that the calculation method used in this paper has a certain degree of reliability.

Various dynasties have all had succession by brothers, even uncles and nephews. The Western Zhou dynasty was similar to successive generations and so need not be taken into consideration. Agnatic seniority was commonplace only in the Shang dynasty and so needs to be considered. Regarding the lineage of the Shang dynasty, according to the "Annals of Yin" [*Yin benji* 殷本紀] chapter in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, agnatic seniority was followed for nine generations, whereas, according to the oracle bone inscriptions, it was followed for only eight generations. Succession by the younger brother occurred in later generations. For example, it occurred for one generation in the Western Zhou dynasty. Thus, the difference between one and two generations can be disregarded. Assuming that agnatic seniority was followed for eight generations, according to Liu Xu, the year count for every generation on the basis of succession from father to son adds another ten years, adding a total of eighty years. In light of the fact that in later generations one brother succeeding the other was mostly the norm, whereas during the Shang dynasty three or four brothers succeeding one another also occurred, it is possible that the reign of

TABLE 1 Year counts and first years of the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou dynasties (deduced on the basis of a generational average year count of 25 years)

Dynasty	Year count	First year	Comments
Western Zhou	11 generations × 25 years = 275 years	1045 BCE (770 BCE + 275)	The Chronology Project deduced that King Wu of Zhou overthrew the Shang dynasty in 1046 BCE.
Shang	17 generations × 25 years = 425 years	1470 BCE (1045 BCE + 425)	Agnatic seniority is not taken into account.
	425 years + 130 years = 555 years	1600 BCE (1470 BCE + 130)	Agnatic seniority followed for 8 or 9 generations. 130 years is added. Chronology Project: The Shang year count adopted the theory of 29 kings over 496 years. It added Di Yi 帝乙 and Di Xin 帝辛, who reigned consecutively for 56 years, to obtain a year count of 552 years, determining the first year of the Shang dynasty as 1598 BCE and rounding it up to 1600 BCE.
Xia	13 generations × 25 years = 325 years	1795 BCE (1470 BCE + 325)	Agnatic seniority is not taken into account.
	345 years (325 years + 20 years)	1945 BCE (1600 BCE + 345)	Agnatic seniority is followed for three generations. By deleting an extra generation for the following generations, another 20 years was added. The Chronology Project adopted the theory that Xia began with Yu in 471, as stated in the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals*, obtaining a tentative first year of the Xia dynasty of 2070 BCE.

two brothers succeeding each other may have been longer. For example, the Chronology Project used its findings of parallelism in the sacrificial sequences [*sipu* 祀譜] of late-period Shang dynasty oracle bone inscriptions to determine that the generation of Zu Geng 祖庚 and Zu Jia 祖甲 and the generation of Lin Xin 廩辛 and Kang Ding 康丁 reigned consecutively for forty-four years with an average generation length of twenty-two years, which is close to the average length of twenty-five years. However, the three brothers Pan Geng 盤庚 (after moving the capital of the Shang dynasty to Yin), Xiao Xin 小辛, and Xiao Yi 小乙 succeeded one another to the throne, with a total reign period of fifty years, which is double the twenty-five-year average generation length. In other words, a further ten years is added to this generation, plus another fifteen years. However, if one takes into account the time before Pan Geng moved the capital to Yin and the reign of Pan Geng's brother Yang Jia 陽甲, then this generation may have lasted more than sixty years. Moreover, in three or four instances among the Shang dynasty kings, the throne was passed among three or four brothers. With this assumption, it would be reasonable to add another 50 years or so on top of the 80-year count for the Shang dynasty, and then add another 130 years or so without considering the possibility of agnatic seniority. This calculation is as follows: Year count for the Shang dynasty: 425 years + 130 years = 555 years; first year for the Shang dynasty: 1045 BCE + 555 years = 1,600 years.

Regarding year counts for the Shang dynasty, documentary sources record 629, 576, and 496, as well as approximations of 600 and 500 in sacrificial records. The *Collected Commentaries on the Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji jijie* 史記集解], quotes the *Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals*: "Tang was instructed by the heavens to destroy the Xia. [Altogether] there were 29 kings, with [the Shang] reigning 496 years."[29] It is a year count that spans twenty-nine kings, fewer than the thirty kings in the Shang stated in the "Annals of Yin" chapter in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, although if Tai Ding 太丁, who died before ascending the throne, is included, the total would be thirty-one. There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that they counted from Tang 湯 to Wen Ding 文丁 (King Wen of Zhou 周文王, as instructed by the heavens, proclaimed himself king) to arrive at twenty-nine to the exclusion of Di Yi and Di Xin. The second is that they counted from Tang to Di Xin ascending the throne to arrive at twenty-nine, without including Da Ding 大丁 and Di Xin. Based on parallelism in late-Shang sacrificial sequences, the Chronology Project concluded that Di Xin held the throne for thirty years and Di Yi for twenty-six years. Adding the reigns of the two kings together, that totals fifty-six years.

29 Fan Xiangyong, *Supplement of Compiler of* The Ancient Text of the Bamboo Annals, 24.

According to the first explanation, a year count for the Shang dynasty of 552 years is determined. The 1046 BCE date of King Wu of Zhou overthrowing the Shang pushed the first year for the Shang dynasty back to 1598 BCE. According to the second explanation, by merely adding Di Xin's 30 years, a year count for the Shang dynasty of 526 years can be determined, with its first year at 1572 BCE. The year count and first year for the Shang dynasty as determined by the first explanation differs only two or three years from the findings in this paper. The Chronology Project undertook a comprehensive analysis of various documentary theories, consulted relevant dating data, and determined 1600 BCE as an approximate first year of the Shang dynasty.

During the Xia dynasty, agnatic seniority was followed for three generations. By deleting the extra generation of later generations, then adding another twenty years, a year count for the Xia dynasty of 345 (225 years + 20 years) is determined, with its first year being 1925 BCE (1795 BCE + 130 years). This estimate puts the first year of the Xia dynasty, reckoning from Qi, in the middle of the twentieth century BCE.

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

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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.

Keywords

doubting antiquity – faithful history – unreliable history – Xia dynasty

The question of the historicity of the Xia dynasty [ca. 2100-1600 BCE] may be considered from two perspectives. First, did the Xia dynasty exist? Second, on the whole, are the accounts relating to the Xia dynasty as recorded in ancient texts reliable? This perspective tends to center upon the veracity of the historical events involving Yu the Great 大禹. Different people at different stages have placed different emphases on these two perspectives. With the increasing range of archeological materials currently available, the historical and archeological community in China generally no longer calls the existence of the Xia

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dynasty into question and acknowledges that the lineage and legends of the dynasty have a historical background, with the point of contention turning to a concrete understanding of Xia culture from an archeological perspective. However, there remain scholars in Europe and the United States who do not acknowledge the Xia dynasty as having a faithful historical record,[1] which affects understanding of the Xia dynasty by Chinese people both in and outside academia.

The debate surrounding the historicity of the Xia dynasty has unfolded in two major stages. The first stage involved the rise of the Doubting Antiquity School [*Yigupai* 疑古派] during the 1920s and 1930s, during which the veracity of historical figures in the Xia dynasty such as Yu the Great and other historical events became the main focal point. The second stage witnessed the publication of *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, the completion of the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project [*Xia–Shang–Zhou duandai gongcheng* 夏商周斷代工程], and the discovery of the Suigongxu 遂公盨 ritual bronze vessel, during which time the potential existence of the Xia dynasty and whether Erlitou culture [*Erlitou wenhua* 二里頭文化] was related to it became critical issues. The first debate accompanied the development of the Doubting Antiquity School and the advent of modern archeology in China, while the second debate accompanied a dispute between the Doubting Antiquity School and those who doubted the doubters. A third debate, which has taken place in recent years and is rapidly gaining momentum, is a miniature of the rise and fall in the ideological trend of research into ancient Chinese history. The differing views regarding the methods and historical records brought out in this debate are worth summarizing and reflecting on.

1 Different Avenues, Same Destination: the First Debate and the Three Methods

In 1923, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 [1893-1980] said in his letter "Talking About Ancient History with Mr. Qian Xuantong," "I believe Yu 禹 may have been a kind of animal that was cast on the Nine Tripod Cauldrons [*jiuding* 九鼎]…. [By the time the folklore] had been handed down to later times, Yu had morphed into a

1 B. Karlgren, "Legends and Cults in Ancient China," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 18 (1946): 199-365; S. Allan, "The Myth of the Xia Dynasty," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 116, no. 2 (1984); A. Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). The scholars in Europe and the United States mentioned here refer mainly to those in sinological circles. Although sinologists educate people in the West on all kinds of knowledge about Chinese, they do not represent the views of other Western academics, such as those in archeology and anthropology.

real human ruler."[2] This piece of correspondence marks the beginning of the first debate, and Gu joined the polemic with Liu Shanli 劉掞藜 [1899-1935], Hu Jinren 胡堇人 [1886-1935], Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵 [1880-1956], and others.[3] In the letter, Gu classifies Yu as a deified animal, taking the view that Yu as recorded in the history books of antiquity was a product of mythology. Gu later abandoned this notion, deciding to place the myth of Yu the Great in the context of the various southern peoples, arguing that the legend of Yu originated in the middle period of the Western Zhou [1046-771 BCE] dynasty. He went on to contend that originally Yu was unrelated to the Xia dynasty and that the link only formed midway through the Warring States Period [475-221 BCE].[4] He later placed Yu in the context of the western regions of the Central Plain. Although Gu changed his position on Yu's legendary origins numerous times, he insisted throughout that Yu was a mythological figure. Gu did not question the objective existence of the Xia dynasty; on the contrary, he argued that "the existence of Xia cannot be doubted"[5] and during his collaboration with Tong Shuye 童書業 [1908-1968] on *Verifying the History of the Xia*[6] argued that the history of the Xia dynasty is made up of a collection of myths. By making use of historical materials of and after the Warring States Period, Gu then

2 Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, "Yu Qian Xuantong xiansheng lun gushi shu 與錢玄同先生論古史書 [Talking about Ancient History with Mr. Qian Xuantong]," *Dushu zazhi* 讀書雜誌, no. 9 (1922).

3 Liu Shanli 劉掞藜 wrote "Da Gu Jiegang jun yu Qian Xuantong xiansheng lun gushi shu de yiwen 答顧頡剛君〈與錢玄同先生論古史書〉的疑問 [Responding to Questions Raised by Gu Jiegang's 'Talking about Ancient History with Mr. Qian Xuantong']" and "Taolun gushi zaizhi Gu xiansheng 討論古史再質顧先生 [Talking about Ancient History with Mr. Gu]," Hu Jinren 胡堇人 wrote "Du Gu Jiegang xiansheng lun gushi shu yihou 讀顧頡剛先生論古史書以後 [Impressions of Mr Gu Jiegang's 'Talking about Ancient History']," Liu Yizheng 柳詒徵 wrote "Lun yi *Shuowen* zhengshi bi xianzhi *Shuowen* zhi yili 論以〈說文〉證史必先知〈說文〉之誼例 [When Using the *Shuowen* to Verify Historical Records One Must First Know Some Relevant Examples from the *Shuowen*]," and Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 wrote "Da Liu Hu liang xiansheng shu 答劉胡兩先生書 [Responding to Letters from Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu]" and "Taolun gushi da Liu Hu er xiansheng 討論古史答劉胡二先生 [Discussing Ancient History with Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu]," and the response to it in "Da Liu Yimou xiansheng 答柳翼謀先生 [Responding to Mr. Liu Yimou (a.k.a. Liu Yizheng)]." All these articles were in Gu Jiegang, *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982).

4 Gu Jiegang, "Taolun gushi da Liu-Hu er xiansheng," *Dushu zazhi*, no. 12 (1922), 1-4.

5 Gu Jiegang, "Chunqiu Zhanguo shi jiangyi di yi bian (minzu yu jiangyu) 春秋戰國史講義第一編（民族與疆域）[Lecture Notes on the Histories of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, part 1: Peoples and Territories]," in *Gu jiegang gushi lunwenji 4* 顧頡剛古史論文集 4 [*A Collection of Gu Jiegang's Writings on Ancient History, vol. 4*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011): 114.

6 Gu Jiegang, *Gu Jiegang quanji yi 1* 顧頡剛全集 1 [*Complete Works of Gu Jiegang, vol. 1*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010).

summarized the changes that occurred in the mythology surrounding the Xia dynasty. Although Gu did not explicitly deny the existence of the Xia dynasty, he believed that the figures and events of the period referred to in available records were mostly fabricated by later generations, thereby implying that the history of the Xia is unreliable. Later, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 [1911-1966] in *The Mythology and Sorcery of the Shang Dynasty* stated that the Xia and Shang [ca. 1600-1046 BCE] dynasties shared the same lineage,[7] while Yang Kuan 楊寬 [1914-2005] in *On the Xia* contended that the history of the Xia dynasty was a fabrication of the Zhou [1046-256 BCE] people,[8] categorically stating that the history of the Xia is unreliable. Commenting on the views of Chen and Yang, Gu said,

> Taking note that the Xia and Shang periods are close to each other and that not one record of the Xia period has been found in the tens of thousands of pieces of oracle bone script available, the doubts of the two gentlemen are not unreasonable.... While I lack the evidence needed to confirm that the Xia period must have existed, it is difficult to assert that it did not exist.[9]

Thus, while Gu did not completely deny the Xia dynasty may have existed, he expressed understanding of the doubts held by Chen and Yang.

While the Doubting Antiquity School tended to concern itself with deconstructing historical materials, Wang Guowei 王國維 [1877-1927] dedicated himself to reconstructing methods and materials. In 1925, Wang taught a course at Tsinghua University called "New Criticisms of Ancient History" [*Gushi xinzheng* 古史新證]. Much of what he taught was deliberately directed at the Doubting Antiquity School. In his lecture notes, Wang argued that, although ancient Chinese history and legends are intermingled, "legends often form the basis of historical facts,"[10] and thus documentary records cannot be easily negated. Wang paid particular attention to analyzing the value

7 Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, "Shangdai de shenhua yu wushu 商代的神話與巫術 [The Mythology and Sorcery of the Shang Dynasty]," *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報, no. 20 (December 1936).

8 Yang Kuan 楊寬, "Shuo Xia 說夏 [On the Xia]," in *Zhongguo shanggushi daolun* 中國上古史導論 [*Introduction to Chinese Ancient History*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2016).

9 Gu Jiegang, "Anyu 按語 [Comments]," in *Gushi bian*, 291.

10 Wang Guowei 王國維, *Gushi xinzheng: Wang Guowei zuihou de jiangyi* 古史新證—王國維最後的講義 [*New Criticisms of Ancient History: Notes on Wang Guowei's Last Lecture*] (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1997), 1.

of historical materials and in his notes listed credible excavated and received texts. However, Wang's research methodology is more noteworthy. He proposed a "dual-evidence approach" [*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法] based on foundations laid by his predecessors in which excavated texts and received texts could be cross-verified and interpreted. Wang had previously argued for the credibility of the Shang dynasty lineage based on oracle bone inscriptions, suggesting that

> With the certainty of the Shang-Zhou lineage, it is in turn possible to infer the certainty of the lineage of the Xia dynasty.... That being the case, although some of the events in Chinese antiquity as recorded in the classics have not yet been subjected to the dual-evidence approach, we cannot simply erase them from the history books.[11]

Wang believed that the credibility of the Shang-Zhou lineage meant that the credibility of the Xia dynasty lineage could also be inferred. This inference, while not unreasonable, is methodologically lacking. Discussion on the Xia dynasty in *New Criticisms of Ancient History* is limited to chapter 2, "Yu." This demonstrates both a lack of supporting historical sources related to the Xia period and that Yu was a point of contention at the time. Wang also verified the credibility of the legend of Yu by examining the *gui* 簋 (a bowl-shaped ritual bronze vessel) of the Duke of Qin [*Qin gong* 秦公] and the *bo* 鎛 (a large bronze bell with a flat lip) and *zhong* 鍾 (another type of bronze bell) of the Marquis of Qi [*Qi hou* 齊侯]. He observed that

> There was an understanding that the lineage of the Spring and Autumn Period [ca. 770-ca. 476 BCE] was made up of the two major polities of Qi [1044-221 BCE] in the east and Qin [770-207 BCE] in the west. There was no disbelief that Yu the Great was a ruler in antiquity. Thereafter came Tang 湯 [ca. 1675-1646 BCE], and then the later kings of the Shang dynasty.[12]

Here one may see specifically how the dual-evidence approach may be applied.

In a similar disagreement over Gu's sympathy for the Doubting Antiquity School, Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 [1888-1976] took another route to investigate the history of the Xia. With the encouragement of Fu Sinian 傅斯年 [1896-1950], Li Ji 李濟 [1896-1979], and others, major archeological breakthroughs were made at the Yinxu 殷墟 [Ruins of Yin] site. It was a demonstration to the

11 Wang Guowei, *Gushi xinzheng*, 52-53.

12 Wang Guowei, *Gushi xinzheng*, 6.

general public about how ancient history could be reconstructed by means of archeology. Meanwhile, Xu began to examine the legendary period in Chinese history before the Shang dynasty. In his view, Gu "went too far and his views became less credible. As a result, I do not believe his conclusion to be correct."[13] Beginning in 1938, Xu endeavored to "complete a comprehensive collation of the legendary sources of ancient Chinese history," culminating in his renowned work *The Legendary Period in Ancient Chinese History,* in which he discussed at length the various methods and materials used in ancient history research and explained what he saw as the five serious offenses committed by the Doubting Antiquity School, including the misuse of arguments from silence (i.e., using an absence of data in documents as evidence for an argument).[14] In 1959, he proposed the areas of activity of the Xia people on the basis of ancient documentary sources in an attempt to fill in the gap of knowledge regarding their geographic location. This heralded the beginning of Xia culture archeology and may be seen as an extension of the first debate.

In the first debate, Gu Jiegang, Wang Guowei, and Xu Xusheng laid the foundation for three different avenues for investigating the history of the Xia period. Under the ideological influence of Gu's Doubting Antiquity School, the credibility of Xia history was subjected to unprecedented skepticism, which continues to this day. Wang paved the way for the study of new evidence—that is, making use of excavated texts to verify ancient history—and established the basic theme for pre-Qin history research in China at the time. Xu pioneered the use of archeological discoveries to investigate the history of the Xia period, and the Erlitou site that he discovered was acknowledged in the Chinese archeological field as the most important source for researching Xia culture. The avenues for academic research opened by Gu Jiegang, Wang Guowei, and Xu Xusheng did not develop one after the other but, rather, complemented and propelled one another, thereby laying the foundation for what would become a truly integrated field of research. In the end, their avenues led to the same destination, with a shared focus on using excavated texts and archeology to reconstruct ancient history. However, when it came to specific types of research, such as handling documentary sources and examining the link between ancient texts and archeology, the avenue that each of them pioneered developed different tendencies, whose divergences found their way into the second debate.

13 Xu Xusheng 徐旭生, *Zhongguo gushi de chuanshuo shidai* (*xiudingben*) 中國古史的傳說時代（修訂本） [*The Legendary Period in Ancient Chinese History*] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), 1.

14 Xu Xusheng, *Zhongguo gushi de chuanshuo shidai*, 23-27.

2 Antiquity—to Doubt or Not to Doubt: the Second Debate

In 1999, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China,* edited by M. Loewe and E. L. Shaughnessy,[15] was published, and it can be considered a summary of ancient Chinese history research as understood by European and American scholars. The book takes the position that the Shang dynasty was China's first dynasty. In response, Xie Weiyang 謝維揚 made the following statement:

> This position is not unusual in Western sinological circles. Indeed, we have heard it so often that we can practically recite it in our sleep. However, *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* adopted this standpoint with the promise of providing a commonly accepted synthesis based on an exhaustive discussion of the latest pre-Qin material available at the end of the 1990s. This is of extraordinary significance, because if this book aims to provide a commonly accepted synthesis, then the blood, sweat, and tears of Chinese scholars over the past decade that brought about countless achievements in Xia period research will become a joke, and many Chinese scholars in the field will lose all sense of direction and not know how to get back on the right track.[16]

The "blood, sweat, and tears" that Xie refers to here are the archeological findings arrived at via the avenue pioneered by Xu Xusheng. Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, field archeology achieved a series of breakthroughs, and with the support of Zou Heng 鄒衡 [1927-2005], Li Boqian 李伯謙, and other important scholars, mainstream academia in China gradually reached a consensus that the Erlitou site was the capital of the Xia dynasty, specifically even the Xia capital Zhenxun 斟鄩 as recorded in historical sources, and that Erlitou culture and the culture of the late Xia period are closely related, for a number of reasons. Part (at least Phases I and II) of Erlitou culture overlaps with the chronology of the Xia period, the dates being earlier than, and exhibiting a particular relationship of inheritance with, the Shang dynasty, mainly Erligang culture [*Erligang wenhua* 二里崗文化]. The culture also has a relatively expansive geographic reach, the basic elements of civilization, and the characteristics of a monarchy with a large area of rule. The Erlitou

15 M. Loewe and E. L. Shaughnessy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

16 Xie Weiyang 謝維揚, "Shui shi Lushan zhenmianmu: *Jianqiao Zhongguo shanggushi* duhou 誰識廬山真面目—〈劍橋中國上古史〉讀後 [Who Can Recognize the True Face of Mount Lu? Impressions on *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*]," *Wen hui bao* 文匯報, April 21, 2001.

site is located in the legendary area of activity of the Xia people and is laid out in a fashion that is typical of a royal capital. Based on this, sites such as Phase III of Wangwan culture [*Wangwan sanqi wenhua* 王灣三期文化] and the ruins of the Xinzhai period [*Xinzhai qi yicun* 新砦期遺存] were included within the scope of investigation. The recognition reached by the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project at the end of the twentieth century was largely informed by these understandings, and to some extent they may be read as a summary of the development of Xia culture archeology since 1959.

The summaries proposed by Chinese and Western academia at the end of the century sparked a new debate, and, upon completion of the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project, a serious of direct confrontations ensued. Unlike in the first debate, although the facticity of Yu the Great received attention from scholars,[17] the focal point of the discussion had already shifted to the question of whether the Xia dynasty existed. In the eyes of many scholars from Europe and the United States, significant doubts were raised as to whether the Xia dynasty had existed and whether Erlitou culture was intrinsically Xia culture, let alone deducing the chronology of the Xia period based on this. After the project was completed, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The New York Times* published commentary on it, along with the views of a number of sinologists. The commentary not only denied the feasibility of the project in terms of scientific principles but also criticized the project in strong terms, accusing it of being a product of government will and nationalism. The veracity of Xia history was the first contentious and critical issue in the criticism of the project. After the project was completed, discussion among Chinese scholars was mainly limited to the significance of Xia culture and the particulars of its chronology. The existence of the Xia dynasty and the close relationship between Erlitou culture and Xia culture were arguably points of consensus and presupposition, but Western scholars were still conflicted as to whether the Xia dynasty had even existed.[18]

17 See Tan Jihe 譚繼和, "Xia Yu wenhua de xin tansuo: jinnian lai Xia Yu wenhua yanjiu shuping 夏禹文化的新探索—近年來夏禹文化研究述評 [New Explorations of Xia Yu Culture: Reviews on the Latest Research on Xia Yu Culture]," *Zhonghua wenhua luntan* 中華文化論壇, no. 1 (2000).

18 See Liu Xing 劉星, "Quexi de duihua: Xia-Shang-Zhou duandai gongcheng yinqi de haiwai xueshu taolun jishi 缺席的對話: 夏商周斷代工程引起的海外學術討論紀實 [An Absent Dialogue: Records of Overseas Academic Discussion on the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project]," *Zhongguo wenwubao* 中國文物報, June 6, 2001, 5. See also Chen Xingcan 陳星燦 and Liu Li 劉莉, "Xia-Shang-Zhou duandai gongcheng yinqi de wangshang taolun jishi 夏商周斷代工程引起的網上討論紀實 [Records of Online Discussion on the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project]," *Gudai wenming yanjiu tongxun* 古代文明研究通訊 9 (June 2001).

Although it is often said that scholars outside China deny the existence of the Xia dynasty, sinologists cannot entirely represent the views of Western academics. What we call the field of sinology is not exactly a monolith either. For instance, a large number of Japanese scholars recognize the existence of the Xia dynasty and its relationship with Erlitou culture, and considerable divergence is seen in the views of Western sinologists. Upon completion of the Xia–Shang–Zhou Chronology Project, D. S. Nivison even quipped that scholars worldwide would want to see the report torn up.[19] This spirited attitude is mainly a response to differences in points of view, considering that, apart from suggesting that Xia Jie 夏桀 is a fictional figure, on the whole he acknowledged the existence of the Xia dynasty, even proposing dates from the Yellow Emperor [*Huangdi* 黃帝] to the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties.[20] On the contrary, Nivison appears to place excessive faith in the records of ancient Chinese history. In *Early China*, Nivison and K. D. Pang published an article in which they claim that it is possible that neither Yu nor Yao 堯 are mythical figures, and thus a precise chronological history can be determined.[21] As a former editor of *Early China*, Edward L. Shaughnessy expressed his opposition to the view in the article with its tentative acceptance of the veracity of Xia history, stating that he did not believe a chronology for the Xia period could be determined.[22]

The divergences in opinion on Xia history between Shaughnessy and Nivison took place at the beginning of the 1990s, more or less at the same time. At the International Symposium on Xia Culture held at the University of California, Los Angeles, in May 1990, the majority of non-Chinese archeologists acknowledged the existence of the Xia dynasty. However, S. Allan and M.V. Dryukov contended that the Xia dynasty cannot be verified.[23] Allan believed that records on the Xia from the Zhou period were derived from Shang binary

19 E. Eckholm, "In China, Ancient History Kindles Modern Doubts," *New York Times,* November 10, 2000.

20 D. S. Nivison, *The Riddle of the Bamboo Annals* (Taipei: Airiti Press, 2009), 45.

21 D. S. Nivison and K. D. Pang, "Astronomical Evidence for the Bamboo Annals' Chronicle of Early Xia," *Early China* 15 (1990): 95.

22 E. L. Shaughnessy, "Wo yu Ni Dewei jiaoshou guanyu zaoqi Zhongguo biannian de bianlun: Ni Dewei wenji xu 我與倪德衛教授關於早期中國編年的辯論—〈倪德衛文集〉序 [My Debate with Prof. Nivison on the Chronology of Early China: Foreword to the Nivison Annals]," trans. Cheng Yuhei 程羽黑, *Zhonghua dushubao* 中華讀書報, September 7, 2016, 9.

23 Wang Yuxin 王宇信, "Meiguo Xia wenhua guoji yantaohui ceji 美國'夏文化國際研討會'側記 [Notes on the International Symposium on Xia Culture Held in the United States]," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu dongtai* 中國史研究動態, no. 8 (1990).

myths, echoing at a distance the views of Yang Kuan and Chen Mengjia, and there is no shortage of sinologists who share similar views.[24] The differing views among overseas scholars such as S. Allan, D. W. Pankenier, and Ikeda Suetoshi were further expressed at the International Conference on Xia and Shang Culture held in Luoyang in September 1991.[25] Scholars who refused to acknowledge the history of the Xia mainly approached the issue from a sinological background; however, academics outside China with archeological expertise were more likely to accept the findings of Chinese scholars on the history of this period. The willingness of foreign academics to recognize research on the Xia by Chinese scholars depended not only on methodology and historical sources but also on how well they understood the development of archeology in China, which in turn was bound up with their academic background.

The debate regarding the history of the Xia period at the beginning of the century was not confined to interactions between scholars in and outside China but extended to Chinese academia. Acquainted with Western theories on archeology, Chen Chun 陳淳 wrote a series of treatises expressing his suspicion that the history of the Xia was fabricated by later generations and that because no writing from the Xia period had been discovered, preconceived notions on this issue cannot be tolerated. Instead, he argued that the issue must be investigated independently from an archeological perspective and that any archeological research from China that uses overstated sources, has a weak theoretical foundation, or persists with outdated archeological methods must be subject to severe criticism.[26] Academics such as Fang Yousheng 方酉生

24 D. N. Keightley, "The Bamboo Annals and Shang-Chou Chronology," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 2 (1978); S. Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991), 57-73; R. L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age: Shang Civilization* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 57-61.

25 Hu Zhenyu 胡振宇, "Shi nian lai Xia-Shang shi yanjiu de huigu yu zhanwang: Zhongguo Xia Shang wenhua guoji xueshu yantaohui ji 十年來夏商史研究的回顧與展望—中國夏商文化國際學術研討會記 [Looking Back on Ten Years of Research into the Xia and Shang Periods: Notes on the International Conference on Xia and Shang Culture Held in China]," *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊, no. 2 (1992).

26 Chen Chun 陳淳 and Gong Xin 龔辛, "Erlitou, Xia yu Zhongguo zaoqi guojia yanjiu 二里頭、夏與中國早期國家研究 [Research into Erlitou, Xia and Early Chinese States]," *Fudan xuebao* (*Shehui kexue ban*) 復旦學報（社會科學版）, no. 4 (2004); Chen Chun, *Wenming yu zaoqi guojia tanyuan: Zhongwai lilun, fangfa yu yanjiu zhi bijiao* 文明與早期國家探源：中外理論,方法與研究之比較 [*Exploring the Origins of Civilization and Early States: A Comparison between Chinese and Foreign Theories, Methods, and Research*] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2007), 504-509.

and Shen Changyun 沈長雲 issued prompt responses.[27] Shen then penned a number of articles attempting to prove the existence of the Xia dynasty,[28] arguing, "The Xia period is both legendary and historical fact."[29] Other academics such as Zhang Guoshuo 張國碩 and Du Yong 杜勇 subjected the theory that denies the existence of the Xia dynasty to a systematic discussion.[30] Chen Chun's denial of Xia history was mostly on account of his background in archeology and anthropology. His debate with Shen Changyun may be characterized as an interdisciplinary dialogue. Although Chen's focus on theory and reflection may overlook or even disregard the value of documentary sources, the issues he raised are worthy of consideration.

The discovery of the Suigongxu ritual bronze vessel in 2002 caused the discussion of whether the Xia dynasty existed to shift to the question of whether Yu the Great existed. Its inscription "the heavens instructed Yu to spread the

27 Fang Yousheng 方酉生, "Luelun Erlitou yizhi de wenhua xingzhi: Jian yu Zhongguo wenming yu guojia tanyuan de sikao deng wen shangque 略論二里頭遺址的文化性質—兼與〈中國文明與國家探源的思考〉等文商榷 [On the Cultural Nature of the Erlitou Site and 'Tracing the Origins of Chinese Civilization and State']," *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化, no. 3 (2003); Shen Changyun 沈長雲, "Xiadai shi duzhuan de ma: yu Chen Chun xiansheng shangque 夏代是杜撰的嗎—與陳淳先生商榷 [Is the Xia Period a Fabrication? A Discussion with Mr. Chen Chun]," *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao* (*zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 河北師範大學學報（哲學社會科學版）, no. 3 (2005).

28 Shen Changyun, "Lun Yu zhi hongshui zhenxiang jian lun Xia shi yanjiu zhu wenti 論禹治洪水真象兼論夏史研究諸問題 [On the Veracity of Yu's Taming of the Floods and Some Issues Pertaining to Research into the History of the Xia]," *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊, no. 6 (1994); Shen Changyun, "Guanyu Xiadai guojia chansheng de ruogan lilun yu shizheng wenti 關於夏代國家產生的若干理論與實證問題 [Some Theoretical and Evidentiary Issues Regarding State Formation in the Xia Period]," *Zhongyuan wenhua yanjiu* 中原文化研究, no. 1 (2015).

29 Shen Changyun and Zhang Weilian 張渭蓮, *Zhongguo gudai guojia qiyuan yu xingcheng yanjiu* 中國古代國家起源與形成研究 [*Research on the Origins and Formation of the Ancient Chinese State*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2009), 188.

30 Zhang Guoshuo 張國碩, "Zhoudai duzhuan Xia wangchao shuo kaobian 周代杜撰'夏王朝說'考辨 [Testing the Theory That the Xia Dynasty Was Fabricated in the Zhou Period]," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物, no. 3 (2010); Zhang Guoshuo, "Lun Xia wangchao cunzai de yiju 論夏王朝存在的依據 [Evidence for the Existence of the Xia Dynasty]," *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物, no. 4 (2010); Zhang Guoshuo, "Shixi Xia wangchao fouding shuo xingcheng de yuanyin 試析 "夏王朝否定說" 形成的原因 [A Tentative Analysis on the Contributing Factors behind Xia-Dynasty Denial]," *Huaxia kaogu* 華夏考古, no. 4 (2010); Du Yong 杜勇, "Guanyu lishi shang shifou cunzai Xiachao de wenti 關於歷史上是否存在夏朝的問題 [On the Question of the Existence of the Xia Dynasty]," *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao* (*shehui kexue ban*) 天津師範大學學報（社會科學版）, no. 4 (2006).

earth, collapse the mountains, and deepen the rivers"[31] reignited interest in the historical figure. If the *gui* of the duke of Qin and the *bo* and *zhong* of the marquis of Qi proved that "ordinary people living during the Spring and Autumn Period acknowledged that before the Shang there was the Xia and that Yu was the progenitor of the Xia,"[32] then the discovery of the Suigongxu pushes the widespread circulation of the legend of Yu the Great forward to the middle of the Western Zhou dynasty. Gu Jiegang once stated that the legend of Yu the Great did not form until the middle of the Western Zhou dynasty. The discovery of the Suigongxu called Gu's theory into question, because the legend of Yu the Great was already common knowledge among the people midway through the Western Zhou dynasty, and it had already circulated before this time. As pointed out by Li Xueqin 李學勤 [1933-2019], the Suigongxu provides the earliest evidence of a cultural object mentioning the legend of Yu the Great devising a flood prevention system,[33] while some scholars have deduced on this basis that Yu the Great was a real individual. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 has argued on the basis of the Suigongxu vessel inscription that in relatively early legends it is indeed said that Yu was ordered by Shangdi 上帝 (the sky deity in Chinese mythology) to tame the floods, supporting Gu's theory that Yu was a spiritual being that had little to do with Emperors Yao and Shun 舜,[34] a view that is somewhat similar to that of Huang Yongnian 黃永年.[35] Some scholars believe that *tian* 天 refers to Emperor Shun,[36] though Guo Yongbing 郭永秉

31 Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Lun Suigongxu ji qi zhongyao yiyi 論燹公盨及其重要意義 [On the Suigongxu and Its Significance]," *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 中國歷史文物, no. 6 (2002), 5.

32 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu Xia Yu de wenti 中國古代社會研究·夏禹的問題 [Research into Ancient Chinese Society: The Problem of Yu of Xia]," in *Guo Moruo quanji: lishi bian 1* 郭沫若全集.歷史編 1 [*Complete Works of Guo Moruo: History Volume, vol. 1*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 306.

33 Li, "Lun Suigongxu ji qi zhongyao yiyi."

34 Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, "Xin chutu xianqin wenxian yu gushi chuanshuo 新出土先秦文獻與古史傳說 [Newly Excavated Pre-Qin Texts and the Legends of Ancient History]," in *Qiu Xigui xueshu wenji 5* 裘錫圭學術文集 5 [*Academic Writings of Qiu Xigui, vol. 5*] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2012), 257.

35 Huang Yongnian 黃永年, "Ping 'Zouchu yigu shidai' 評〈走出疑古時代〉 [A Review of 'Departing from the Times of Doubting Antiquity']," in *Jinian Gu Jiegang xiansheng danchen yi bai yi shi zhou nian lunwenji* 紀念顧頡剛先生誕辰一百一十週年論文集 [*Proceedings of the Celebration of Mr. Gu Jiegang's 110th Birthday*], ed. Institute of History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Department of History at Sun Yat-sen University (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 130.

36 Jiang Linchang 江林昌, *Zhongguo shanggu wenming kaolun* 中國上古文明考論 [*Examining the Ancient Civilization of China*] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), 237.

has a different understanding of this.[37] However, it is not that the explanation proposed by Qiu is completely doubtless. As pointed out by Li Rui 李鋭, "*Tianming* is, at least from the point of view of the people who lived during the Western Zhou dynasty, only a kind of concept. It cannot be claimed that all those who carry out *tianming* are deities."[38] Scholars such as Xie Weiyang and Shen Changyun hold similar views.[39] Guo Yongbing believes that the legends of Tiandi instructing King Wen of Zhou 周文王 and Tiandi instructing Yu are essentially different, and thus a parallel cannot be drawn between them.[40] The issues associated with the Suigongxu vessel that began to surface during the first debate touched upon how to interpret the relationship between Tiandi and the images of figures such as Yu the Great and King Wen of Zhou.

The debate surrounding the potential existence of the Xia dynasty and that of the historicity of Yu the Great have similar points of contention, and it is unlikely that these issues can be reconciled. By comparison, the views of Chinese scholars during the second debate were more uniform, and the scope of the debate went global, reflecting a head-on collision between the different paradigms of Chinese and Western academia. Moreover, more materials were available for discussion during the second debate, mainly the findings of archeological excavations over the past half-century, which would have

37 Guo Yongbing 郭永秉, *Di xi xin yan: Chu di chutu Zhanguo wenxian zhong de chuanshuo shidai gu diwang xitong yanjiu* 帝系新研: 楚地出土戰國文獻中的傳說時代古帝王系統研究 [*New Research on the Lineage of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors: Using Texts of the Warring States Period Excavated from Chu Territory to Examine the Ancient Rulers of the Legendary Period of Ancient Chinese History*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008), 40.

38 Li Rui 李鋭, "Erchong zhengjufa de jieding ji guize tanxi '二重證據法'的界定及規則探析 [An Analysis of the Definitions and Parameters of the Dual-Evidence Approach]," *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, no. 4 (2012).

39 Xie Weiyang 謝維揚, "Gushu chengshu he liuchuan qingkuang yanjiu de jinzhan yu gushi shiliaoxue gainian: wei jinian gushi bian di yi ce chuban 80 zhou nian er zuo 古書成書和流傳情況研究的進展與古史史料學概念: 為紀念〈古史辨〉第一冊出版 80 週年而作 [Progress Made in Research into the Formation and Circulation of Ancient Texts and the Concept of Ancient Chinese Documentology: In Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the First Volume of *Gushi Bian*]," *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲, no. 2 (2007); Shen Changyun, "Suigongxu ming yu Yu zhi hongshui wenti zai taolun 燹公盨銘與禹治洪水問題再討論 [On the Suigongxu Inscription and Yu's Taming of the Floods]," *Guoxue xuekan* 國學學刊, no. 1 (2014).

40 Guo Yongbing, "Zhe shi yi ge genben de taidu wenti: Xin chutu xianqin wenxian yu gushi chuanshuo daodu 這是一個根本的態度問題: 〈新出土先秦文獻與古史傳說〉導讀 [All about Attitude: A Guide to 'Newly Excavated Pre-Qin Texts and the Legends of Ancient History']," in *Guwenzi yu guwenxian lunji xubian* 古文字與古文獻論集續編 [*A Continuation of the Collection of Works on Ancient Writing and Ancient Documents*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015).

been unimaginable during the first debate. If it can be claimed that the first debate opened three avenues for academic research, then the second debate can be characterized as a dispute between the Doubting Antiquity School and the Believing Antiquity School [*Zouchu yigu* 走出疑古]. Li Xueqin proposed a "departure from the Age of Doubting Antiquity" [*Zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代],[41] which was challenged by some academics.[42] It is noteworthy that scholars who supported the Doubting Antiquity School did not deny the existence of the Xia dynasty. This view is consistent with that of the Believing Antiquity School. On this point, the schools share common ground in facing opposition from academic circles outside China. However, they differ significantly in their positions on the question of whether Yu the Great was a real individual.

3 In the Ascendant: the Rise of the Third Debate

The first two debates on the historicity of the Xia period can be seen as manifestations of what Li Xueqin terms "the big rethink on ancient texts" or "the reconstruction of classical studies" as put forth by Qiu Xigui. Essentially, these two debates were a reassessment of method and material, while the third debate was a continuation of the first. Li Xueqin drew on Wang Guowei's research method, Qiu Xigui emulated Gu Jiegang's critical spirit, and the archeological field continued its exploration of Xia culture via the avenue initially opened up by Xu Xusheng. During the second debate, these three avenues became more integrated. The divergences had already been reduced, at least in the Chinese academic community. After the second debate, discussion on the historicity of the Xia period had subsided somewhat. Progress in this field would have been unlikely before the advent of new materials, methods, and perspectives. In fact, the third debate had already begun, and was accompanied by research into the origins of Chinese civilization, a field that had just begun its consolidation. Meanwhile, new materials, methods, and perspectives deepened the

41 Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Zouchu yigu shidai 走出疑古時代 [Departing from the Age of Doubting Antiquity]," *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化, no. 7 (1992).

42 Liu Qiyu 劉起釪, "Guanyu zouchu yigu shidai wenti 關於'走出疑古時代'問題 [On Departing from the Age of Doubting Antiquity]," *Chuantong wenhua yu xiandaihua* 傳統文化與現代化, no. 4 (1995); Lin Yin 林澐, "Zhen gai zouchu yigu shidai ma: dui dangqian Zhongguo gudianxue quxiang de kanfa 真該走出疑古時代嗎？ 對當前中國古典學取向的看法 [Should We Really Depart from the Age of Doubting Antiquity? My Views on the Direction Chinese Classical Studies Is Currently Headed]," *Shixue jikan* 史學集刊, no. 3 (2007).

discussion. It was not an after-effect of the second debate; rather, a more in-depth discussion came about in changed circumstances. Evidently, the third debate is in the ascendant and continues to deepen.

In 2016, *Science* published the report "Outburst Flood at 1920 BCE Supports Historicity of China's Great Flood and the Xia Dynasty," detailing the findings of a Sino-American research team headed by Wu Qinglong 吳慶龍.[43] The report attempted to verify the occurrence of major flooding during the age of Yu the Great from a geological perspective. It considered the Jishixia 積石峽 dam break on the upper reaches of the Yellow River in Qinghai Province the trigger of the event and sought to determine the chronological relationship between the flooding and Erlitou culture, with the aim of deducing the historicity of the Xia period. The report also returned scholarly attention to the major flooding during the time of Yu 虞 and Xia, and raised the issue of authenticity regarding the history of the Xia as a subject of discussion again. Although the report drew upon research undertaken by archeological workers on the Lajia 喇家 and Erlitou sites, archeologists in China were generally skeptical of the report, mainly because it overlooked new developments in carbon-14 dating and inferred that Erlitou culture is not the earliest form of Xia culture. Scholars such as Zhang Jingwei 張經緯, Shen Changyun, and Guo Jingyun 郭靜雲 made their own criticisms.[44] In the assessment of these skeptical academics, there can be no doubt that the Xia dynasty existed and that Yu the Great tamed the floods; what they take issue with is the space and time in which the flood taming occurred, as suggested by the article. Allan extends her argument, claiming that the Xia originated in myth, while acknowledging the indisputable possibility of a connection between the Xia dynasty and Erlitou.[45]

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43 Wu Qinglong, Zhao Zhijun, Liu Li, et al., "Outburst Flood at 1920 BCE Supports Historicity of China's Great Flood and the Xia Dynasty," *Science* 353, no. 6299 (2016).

44 Zhang Jingwei 張經緯, "Da Yu he qianli zhi wai de hongshui 大禹和千里之外的洪水 [Yu the Great and the Flood Thousands of Miles Away]," *Wenhui bao*, Aug 12, 2016, 2; Guo Jingyun 郭靜雲, "Jishixia hongshui yu Da Yu zhishui wuguan 積石峽洪水與大禹治水無關 [No Relationship between the Jishixia Flood and the Introduction of Flood Control by Yu the Great]," *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao* 中國社會科學報, November 8, 2016, 6; Shen Changyun, "Zai lun Yu zhi hongshui jian ji Xia shi zhu wenti 再論禹治洪水兼及夏史諸問題 [Another Discussion of Yu's Taming of the Floods and Some Issues Pertaining to the History of the Xia]," *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao*, November 8, 2016, 6.

45 S. Allan, "The Jishi Outburst Flood of 1920 BCE and the Great Flood Legend in Ancient China: Preliminary Reflections," *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2017); S. Allan [艾蘭], "Dui xiyuanqian 1920 nian jishixia hongshui yu gudai zhongguo hongshui chuanshuo de chubu sikao 對西元前 1920 年積石峽洪水與古代中國洪水傳說的初步思考 [The Jishi Outburst Flood of 1920 BCE and the Great Flood Legend in Ancient China: Preliminary Reflections]," *Wen shi zhe*, no. 1 (2018).

The report attracted such an immense response for two reasons: first, because of the particularly influential nature of *Science*; second, because the report adopted the methods of natural science, which undoubtedly would have been an avenue of considerable appeal for advocates of scientism. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that when documentary and archeological sources are interpreted in significantly different ways, the methods of natural or archeological science can be used to dispel doubts. Many scholars had already attempted to demonstrate the period and background of Yu's flood taming from the perspectives of climate and geography. Recently, some academics have argued that the background for Yu's flood taming was the extreme rainfall on the Loess Plateau circa 2000 BCE, not the collapse of a barrier lake as claimed by the report.[46] Other researchers completely refuted the theoretical underpinnings of the report. They contended that the formation and collapse of the barrier lake at Jishixia, the sudden deaths of ancient humans, as well as ancient earthquakes, all occurred independently of one another at different times, and that no major flooding took place circa 1920 BCE on the upper reaches of the Loess Plateau.[47]It is currently difficult to verify the historicity of the Xia period by archeological means to a standard that satisfies public expectations because of restrictions in subjective and objective conditions.

At around about the same time as the report appeared, Cai Zhemao 蔡哲茂 published the article "New Evidence on the Existence of the Xia Dynasty: Mentions of Xiyi in the Shang-Dynasty Oracle Bone Inscriptions," which integrated the "Yinzhi" 尹至 and "Yin'gao" 尹誥 passages in the Qinghua bamboo slips [*Qinghua jian* 清華簡], along with material from Shang-dynasty oracle bone inscriptions, to argue that Xiyi 西邑 was the capital of the Xia dynasty at the very beginning. However, in the oracle bone inscriptions, it had been transformed into a specter representing the former kings of the Xia dynasty, which demonstrates the existence of the Xia dynasty.[48] In the "Yinzhi" passage, the polity or capital of Xia was referred to as Xiyi, known in the "Yin'gao" passage as Xiyixia 西邑夏[夏]. Before this time, Cai had already

46 Liangcheng Tan, Chuan-Chou Shen, Yanjun Cai, et al., "Great Flood in the Middle-Lower Yellow River Reaches at 4000 a BP Inferred from Accurately-Dated Stalagmite Records," *Science Bulletin* 63, no. 4 (2018).

47 Dong Guanghui 董廣輝 et al., "Lajia yizhi shiqian zaihai yu huanghe dahongshui wuguan 喇家遺址史前災害與黃河大洪水無關 [Disasters at the Lajia Site Have Nothing to Do with the Yellow River Flood]," *Zhongguo kexue: diqiu kexue* 中國科學：地球科學 [*Science in China* (*Earth Sciences*)], no. 4 (2018).

48 Cai Zhemao 蔡哲茂, "Xia wangchao cunzai xinzheng, shuo yin buci de xiyi 夏王朝存在新證—說殷卜辭的西邑 [New Evidence on the Existence of the Xia Dynasty: Mentions of Xiyi in the Shang-Dynasty Oracle Bone Inscriptions]," *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化 [*Chinese Culture*] 44 (October 2016).

stated that in oracle bone inscriptions featuring worship of Moxi 妹喜 (the first wife of Xia Jie) and Yi Yin 伊尹 (a minister in the early Shang dynasty), 嬜 is read as *mò* 妹, which might refer to Moxi. Thus it can be verified that Moxi was a historical figure and that the Xia preceded the Shang.[49] Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 linked Xiyi with Xiyixia, as recorded in the oracle bone inscriptions in the Shang dynasty,[50] while Cai explicitly stated that Xiyi refers to the Xia dynasty. Regarding the geographic location of these two terms, Shen Jianhua 沈建華 believes that Xiyi refers to the settlement of Shangcheng at Yanshi 偃師, Xibo 西亳, and that Xiyi could not have gone beyond the Yi 伊 and Luo 洛 Rivers.[51] Although the mainstream view is that the capital of the last ruler of the Xia dynasty was located in the Yiluo 伊洛 region (and thus at Erlitou, Yanshi), this claim is particularly dubious in light of chronological, cultural, and documentary data.[52] The Xiyixia explanation originates in the "Ziyi" 緇衣 chapter of *The Book of Rites* [*Liji* 禮記], in which the "Yin'gao" passage is cited, and later annotated by late-Han scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 [127-200] as follows: "the capital of the Xia was to the west of Bo." In the "Speech of Tang" [*Tangshi* 湯誓] chapter in the *Book of Documents* [*Shangshu* 尚書], Kong Chuan 孔傳 says, "Jie's capital was at Anyi" [*Jie du Anyi* 桀都安邑]. In his work *Collected Commentaries on the Book of Documents* [*Shu ji zhuan* 書集傳], the scholar of the Southern Song [1127-1279] dynasty Cai Shen 蔡沈 [1167-1230] says, "The capital of the Xia, Anyi, was located to the west of Bo and thus was called Xiyixia." The theory that the ruins of the Xia are in southern Shanxi and that Anyi was the location of Jie's capital, though not explicitly supported by archeological evidence, is worth investigating.

The aforementioned newly excavated text *Shang Shu* 商書 part of the *Book of Documents* provides important clues as to the historical events that occurred during the Xia and Shang dynasties, while the "Houfu" 厚父 segment

49 Cai Zhemao, "Yiyin chuanshuo de yanjiu 伊尹傳說的研究 [The Study of Yi Yin's Legend]," in *Zhongguo Shenhua yu chuanshuo xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 中國神話與傳說學術研討會論文集 [Proceedings of Chinese Myths and Legends Symposium], ed. Li Yiyuan 李亦園 and Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 (Taibei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1996), 274.

50 Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, "Yin buci Zhong de shangdi he wangdi shang 殷卜辭中的上帝和王帝（上）[Shangdi and Wangdi in the Shang-Dynasty Oracle Bone Inscriptions, part 1]," *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, no. 9 (1959).

51 Shen Jianhua 沈建華, "Qinghua chujian yinzhi shiwen shijie 清華楚簡〈尹至〉釋文試解 [Explanation of the Yinzhi Article's Translation in the Qinghua Bamboo Slips]," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究, no. 1 (2011).

52 Chen Minzhen 陳民鎮, "Qinghuajian yiyin zhupian yu shangtang judi ji fajie luxian kao 清華簡伊尹諸篇與商湯居地及伐桀路線考 [The Study of Yi Yin Articles in Qinghua Bamboo Slips and Shangtang Residence and Attacting Jie's Route]," *Guangxi shifan daxue xuebao* 廣西師範大學學報, no. 2 (2018).

of the fifth edition of the Qinghua bamboo slips may be part of the *Xia shu* 夏書 [*The Book of Xia Dynasty*].[53] After the publication of "Houfu," some believe it is in the *Zhou shu* 周書 [*The Book of Zhou Dynasty*], others the *Shang shu*. Although scholars disagree on how the passage should be interpreted, it is nevertheless an important source on the history of the Xia. For example, the beginning of the text mentions the dredging of the rivers by Yu the Great, and this wording can be cross-referenced with the Suigongxu inscription. The passage also refers to Xia kings such as Qi 啟 and Kong Jia 孔甲, which is somewhat inconsistent with older interpretations, especially those pertaining to the image and position of Kong Jia.[54] Guo Yongbing has argued that "Houfu" is a relatively early ancient text that explicitly speaks of a relationship between the Yu and Xia periods, while Gu Jiegang once suspected that this relationship did not emerge until much later and thus needs to be revised.[55] However, Gu maintained that in this passage Yu tamed the floods under the instructions of the Emperor of Heaven and not Emperors Yao and Shun, while still receiving divine orders to pacify the people and establish the kingdom of Xia.[56] On this topic, Ning Zhenjiang 寧鎮疆 stated that if Yu and the Xia had a relationship, it should not be merely one of deification.[57] He went on to claim that, while the Suigongxu inscription indicates that the taming of the floods by Yu the Great was performed under divine instruction, the concept that the ruling power of a monarch is endowed by the heavens is peculiar to ancient China and cannot be taken as evidence that Yu the Great was a godhead and not a human ruler.

Both advocates and skeptics of the historicity of the Xia period believe their points of view are supported by concrete evidence, while holding particular prejudices of varying degrees and looking upon the argument of the other side

53 Guo Yongbing, "Lun qinghuajian houfu yingwei xiashu zhiyipian 論清華簡〈厚父〉應為〈夏書〉之一篇 ['Houfu' in the Qinghua Bamboo Slips Should Be Part of the *Xia shu*]," in *Chutu wenxian 7* 出土文獻 7 [*Excavated Texts, vol. 7*], ed. Qinghua daxue chugtu wenxian yanjiu yu baohu zhongxin 清華大學出土文獻研究與保護中心 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2015).

54 Zhao Ping'an 趙平安, "Houfu de xingzhi jiqi yunhan de xiadai lishi wenhua 〈厚父〉的性質及其蘊含的夏代歷史文化 [The Nature of the Houfu Article and Its Historical and Cultural Characteristics of the Xia Dynasty]," *Wenwu* 文物, no. 12 (2014).

55 Guo Yongbing, "Lun qinghuajian houfu yingwei xiashu zhiyipian," 118.

56 Guo Yongbing, "Zhe shi yi ge genben de taidu wenti," 340.

57 Ning Zhenjiang 寧鎮疆, "Qinghuajian houfu tianjiang xiamin ju de guannian yuanliu yu bingongxu mingwen zaishi 清華簡〈厚父〉'天降下民'句的觀念源流與豳公盨銘文再釋—兼說先秦'民本'思想的起源問題 [Origin of the Sentence 'Tianjiang Xiamin' in the Houfu Article in the Qinghua Bamboo Slips' and the Reinterpretation of Inscriptions on Suigongxu: Also on the Origin of 'People-Based' Thought in the Pre-Qin Period]," in *Chutu wenxian*, 7: 117.

with a certain amount of selectivity. The two sides are in a deadlock because neither has access to evidence that could provide a definitive answer. The main reason that the history of the Xia period has been so contentious is a lack of documentary sources. So, when new texts become available, they are naturally considered extremely valuable, with prime examples being excavated texts, such as the Qinghua bamboo slips. That being said, archeological science has provided new methods and data, and in the eyes of positivists, research findings arrived at using natural science methods would undoubtedly be more persuasive. Although new methods and historical materials contribute to the discussion of relevant issues, they cannot resolve the debate because of their respective flaws.

Although archeological science has provided new methods, and excavated texts have provided new materials, Li Min 李旻 has provided new perspectives. Since 2016, Li has published many important papers on the image of Xia in social memory,[58] as well as his recent treatise *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China*.[59] Li traced the history of the Xia from the perspective of social memory, emphasizing that descriptions of the space, time, and technology of the Xia civilization in pre-Qin records were heavily influenced by the political, social, and cultural transformations that occurred from the age of Longshan 龍山 to Erlitou. He also attempted to expand the scope of Xia culture research to provide more potential for exploring the history of the Xia from an archeological perspective. This may prove to be a more reasonable avenue of inquiry in light of the fact that breakthroughs in methods and materials are few and far between in this field.

Ding zhai yu ji: An Archeological Reconstruction of the True History of the Xia Period, by Sun Qingwei 孫慶偉, is yet another monograph published recently on Xia culture.[60] Sun's use of the term "true history" [*xinshi* 信史] in the work's title is a clear indication of his position. The work is a significant accomplishment in the field of Xia culture research and is the product of recent research

58 Li Min 李旻, "Setting on the Ruins of Xia: Archaeology of Social Memory in Early China," in *Social Theory in Archaeology and Ancient History: the Present and Future Counternarratives*, ed. G. Emberling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Li Min, "Chongfan xiaxu: shehui jiyi yu jingdian de fasheng 重返夏墟：社會記憶與經典的發生 [Returning to Xiaxu: Social Memory and Occurrence of the Classic]," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報, no. 3 (2017).

59 Li Min, *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

60 Sun Qingwei 孫慶偉, *Ding zhai yu ji: Xiadai xinshi de kaoguxue chongjian* 鼎宅禹跡：夏代信史的考古學重建 [*The Trace of the Yu in the Ding House: Archaeological Reconstruction of the True History of the Xia Dynasty*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2018).

on the origins of Chinese civilization, a field that has recently entered a stage of integration. Its publication has also prompted new discussions on Xia culture and garnered widespread attention among the general public. Sun provided a narrow definition of Xia culture as consisting of the Longshan culture in Henan Province, including the Meishan type [*Meishan leixing* 煤山類型] and Wangwan type [*Wangwan leixing* 王灣類型], and Phases 1 to 4 of Erlitou culture, a definition that represents the current mainstream view in academia. Although these publications by Li Min and Sun Qingwei differ in their viewpoints, both stress the validity of archeology as a means of exploring Xia culture, while scholars such as Xu Hong 許宏 contend that the mainstream view should be reassessed. In his recent reexamination of the Erlitou site, Xu argued that the fact that there has not been an excavation of written materials featuring a writing system similar to that of the oracle bone script means that issues of clan and dynastic affiliation cannot be resolved.[61] However, he did not simply designate the Xia period as referred to in the documentary sources as false history but, rather, proposed a number of reflections based on his understanding of the nature of the Erlitou site. In the view of Sun Qingwei, written material is not the only evidence that can verify the existence of the Xia dynasty. Sun believed that archeology has its own rationale in reconstructing the period and that the painstaking pursuit of evidence of a similar writing system reveals a lack of trust in, and understanding of, archeological research methodology.[62] Neither received texts nor excavated texts enable the history of the Xia to be either completely verified or negated. That being said, as archeologists explore the culture of the Xia, they find themselves on increasingly steady footing. With the third debate currently in the ascendant, the depth and breadth of Xia culture research is bound to reach new heights.

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61 Xu Hong 許宏, "Guanyu erlitou wei zaoshang duyi de jiashuo 關於二里頭為早商都邑的假說 [Hypothesis That Erlitou Is the Capital of the Early Shang Dynasty]," *Nanfang wenwu* 南方文物, no. 3 (2015).

62 Sun Qingwei, *Ding zhai yu ji*, 3.

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Book Review

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Sungmoon Kim, eds., (2016) *Confucianism, a Habit of the Heart: Bellah, Civil Religion, and East Asia.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 236 pages, $80.00, ISBN: 9781438460130 (hbk); $24.95, ISBN: 9781438460123 (pbk).

This well-edited volume is a succinct, multifaceted, and timely reflection on the role of contemporary Confucianism as a civil religion in East Asia. It weaves together various takes on Confucianism by Chinese academics at Western institutions, Chinese and Korean scholars in China, and Western scholars in China, the United States, and Europe, thereby elucidating the phenomenon of the recent revival of Confucianism from different vantage points. The ten chapters range from case studies of particular manifestations of Confucianism in individual countries, such as China, Japan, and South Korea, to discussions of Confucianism's potential role as a civil religion both in East Asia and globally. Given the high degree of conceptual coherence between the chapters and the relatively short length (only 236 pages), *Confucianism, a Habit of the Heart*, reads more like a monograph than many other loosely edited volumes of collected conference papers, which were presented at the conference "A Habit of the Heart: Confucianism and Contemporary East Asia" convened by the editors in 2011 in honor of Robert Bellah.

The book revolves around Robert Bellah's notion of a "civil religion," which the editors aptly compare to one of Alexis de Tocqueville's "habits of the heart," understood as "the underlying, unofficial, often unselfconscious assumptions, orientations, beliefs, practices, symbols, and styles of reasoning that inform, shape, and guide life in society" (p. 2). In this sense, a civil religion contrasts sharply with a state-sponsored religion, which tends to consist of self-conscious, institutionalized beliefs and practices mobilized for political ends, such as the formation of national identities and international deployment of soft power. To varying degrees, the ten chapters explore the extent to which

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revivals of Confucianism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries can be seen as manifestations of a "civil religion."

Chapter 1, "Confucianism as Civil Religion," by Fenggang Yang (a professor of sociology and director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University) places his discussion of Confucianism as a civil religion in the context of the revival movement in China sometimes referred to as neo-Confucianism. Although Yang considers himself a neo-Confucian, his emphasis on reviving Confucianism as a *civil religion* sets him apart from other self-proclaimed neo-Confucians whose aim is to establish Confucianism as a *state religion*. Instead, he argues that a civil religion based on elements from Confucianism and Christianity has the potential "to serve well not only China or the greater China but also much of East Asia, the Transpacific region, even 'all under Heaven'" (p. 26).

In Chapter 2, "The Revival of Confucianism in the Sphere of Mores and the Reactivation of the Civil Religion Debate," Sébastian Billioud (professor of Chinese studies at the University of Paris-Diderot) provides a two-pronged account of the current and future place of Confucianism in what he calls the "sphere of mores" in China. First, he uses case studies of individuals who are personally engaged in the revival of Confucianism at the grassroots level by organizing "classics reading sessions for children" or adult study groups of the classics that explore the Confucian tradition for individual moral and spiritual development. Second, he provides a brief intellectual history of the impact of the writings of Confucian revivalists, such as Mou Zongsan, Wang Caigui, and Jiang Qing, on the re-emergence of Confucianism as a source of inspiration for spiritual self-cultivation. He acknowledges recent politicized efforts by the Chinese government to actively promote Confucianism as a core element of national identity, but he concludes with the tentative prediction that Confucianism in the future may be most influential in China as a civil religion.

Chapter 3, "The Revival of Confucianism in Mainland China: The Vicissitudes of Confucian Classics in Contemporary China as Example," by Guoxiang Peng (Distinguished Professor of Chinese Philosophy, Intellectual History, and Religions, Zhejiang University), does not directly engage with the question of Confucianism as a civil religion. Instead, Peng explores the changing uses of and attitudes toward Confucianism from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the present day through an overview of the main shifts in the appraisal of the Confucian classics. Peng conveniently divides this period into three stages: (1) the Maoist period from 1949 to the 1970s, when Confucianism was repressed by the government as reactionary and Confucian classics could not be studied; (2) the period from 1978 to 2000, when "the government started to reassess Confucianism, and Confucian studies gradually became a major

field in the academic world" (pp. 72-73); and (3) the period from 2000 to the present, when the "fever for national learning" (*guoxue re* 國學熱) moved out of academic circles and finally gained popularity among a significant number of ordinary people. Peng observes that, at a grassroots level, an increasing number of parents make their children attend classes to recite the classics, and adults form Confucian reading groups devoted to the study of them. He concludes by assessing the extent to which the increasing commercialization and politicization of the classics may be harmful to a revival of Confucianism as a key element of Chinese culture.

In Chapter 4, "The Politics of Confucianism in Contemporary China," Anna Sun (assistant professor of sociology at Kenyon College) explores the question of whether Confucianism is a religion from three different angles before discussing the current and future status of Confucianism as a civil religion in the concluding paragraph. First, Sun cites an example of the Chinese government's incipient treatment of Confucianism as one of the "major religions" in China and explores the significance of classifying Confucianism as a religion. Second, Sun discusses the "politics of the religion question" with respect to Confucianism. She suggests that, after decades of repression during the Maoist era, beginning in the 1990s the Chinese government has "rediscovered Confucianism, with the hope that it is something that can be used and controlled at will, a perfect cultural symbol and political tool on the international stage, with an aura of 'religion' yet without any actual religious organization that the state has to deal with" (p. 90). Third, Sun analyzes the potential for "Confucian fundamentalist activists such as Jiang Qing and Kang Xiaokuang [who] insist on the necessity of installing Confucians as a state religion" (p. 91) to become a source of conflict with the state. In her study of Confucianism as a civil religion, understood as a "religious collective consciousness without the association with a specific religion" (p. 93), Sun provides a particularly useful survey of the views of Sébastian Billioud, Fenggang Yang, and Robert Bellah on this question. By integrating her article firmly into the context of the rest of the edited volume, she contributes greatly to the conceptual coherence of the volume as a whole.

Chapter 5, "Obstacles to the Globalization of Confucianism," by Richard Madsen (Distinguished Professor of Sociology, University of California, San Diego), is a brilliant study of three factors that have prevented Confucianism from reaching the same level of global influence as Buddhism and Daoism, which, unlike Confucianism, have large numbers of followers and practitioners in the West. First, the dominant modern conception of Confucianism as the national religion of China that emerged in the nineteenth century was consciously stripped of mystery and superstition in order to present it as a worldly

religion of the ruling elite. Making Confucianism both nationalist and elitist contributed to its subsequent communist vilification as a reactionary form of traditionalism from the May Fourth (1919) movement to the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Even after the Chinese government embraced Confucianism as a cornerstone of national ideology and international soft power, the "connection of Confucianism with Chinese nationalism will probably still continue to make Confucianism seem alien to non-Chinese" (p. 103). In contrast to Daoism and Buddhism, which have been indigenized by a large number of Western followers, Confucianism is often viewed as a marker of Chinese identity, both politically and philosophically, that "sets Chinese (and to some degree Koreans, Vietnamese, and Japanese) apart from Europeans" (p. 100). Second, the "communal Confucian ideology" (p. 104), which prioritizes the group (family, community, etc.) over the individual is often seen as incompatible with the "dominant culture of individualism" (p. 103) in the West. In contrast, "although neither Buddhism nor Daoism is fundamentally individualistic, certain aspects of both traditions can couple with Western individualism" (p. 104). Third, "in China and in other parts of Asia, Confucianism has … been transformed into a political ideology for authoritarian governments, who increasingly argue that their version of order-producing Asian values is superior to the democratic models of the West" (p. 107). Madsen's main argument is that these three factors demonstrate why Confucianism has not (yet) reached its full potential as a contributor to a global civil religion.

One of the main aims of Chapter 6, "Beyond a Disciplinary Society: Reimagining Confucian Democracy in South Korea" by Sungmoon Kim (professor of political theory, City University of Hong Kong), is to propose an account of "the sudden disappearance of the discourse of Confucian democracy in Korean academia and civil society in the early 2000s" (p. 115). The essay offers a critical analysis of the concepts of "postmodern Confucianism" and "Confucian democracy" as defined in the work of Hahm Chaibong, a prominent representative of Korea's neo-Confucians. Kim argues that Hahm's "overemphasis on self-discipline … made his vision of Confucian democracy less politically robust as democratic theory …, thus failing to come to terms with the active participatory citizenship and strong democratic civil society" already established in the Korean political landscape (p. 115). Hahm's "Confucian democracy" failed because he made it indistinguishable from "Confucian capitalism," which is more concerned with the "governability of individual subjects" (p. 129) than with protecting the rights of citizens. Kim concludes the chapter with a call for rethinking the idea of "Confucian democracy" in a way that is more consistent with the actual democratic practices of civil society in South Korea,

while still being grounded in "Korea's Confucian culture, in which Koreans are still deeply soaked" (p. 132).

Chapter 7, "The Experience of Village Leaders during the Saemaul Movement in the 1970s: Focusing on the Lives of the Male Leaders," by Do-Hyun Han (professor of sociology, Academy of Korean Studies), offers the most focused subject matter and, at thirty pages, is also the longest. This allows Han to place his case study of interviews with ten Saemaul movement village leaders in a specific historical context: the state-sponsored revival of Confucianism as a civil religion for political aims, such as building local infrastructure and improving the standard of living in the villages. Han argues that the success of the Saemaul movement "depended directly and critically upon the underlying traditional Confucian beliefs, commitments, and practices of those who carried it forward" (p. 139)—that is, on a distinct Korean manifestation of Confucian civil religion. Selected from among the common members of the village communities, the Saemaul village leaders underwent a two-week government-sponsored training program that transformed them into Confucian "gentlemen" [*junzi* 君子] who inspired "by deed, word, and personal example, a larger social transformation" (p. 147). The leaders generally connected "the cause of their commitment and sacrifice to the supportive leadership of President Park Chung-Hee" (p. 159). However, the vision of the Saemaul leaders "went beyond their village to the nation, which resembles the Confucian expansion from self-cultivation through governing the family to governing the nation and bringing harmony on the earth" (p. 159). In this sense, Han concludes, the Saemaul leaders can "be defined as incarnations of the spirit of community or priests of the Korean civil religion" (p. 162) in Bellah's sense of the term. Han's essay is a delightful and highly readable study of the manifestation of Confucianism as a civil religion in the Saemaul movement. However, the writing is at times repetitive and could be pruned down a bit so that the length of this chapter matched that of the others.

In Chapter 8, "Contemporary Japanese Confucianism from a Genealogical Perspective," Takahiro Nakajima (associate professor of Chinese philosophy, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia) provides a brief historical overview of what he calls "the Confucian boom in Japan" in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Most manifestations of contemporary Japanese Confucianism focus on the *Analects* and the idea that "a true Japanese 'national character'" can be found in the study of this text. A common theme is that in "the past" the Japanese possessed a firmer command of the Confucian spirit that has since been lost. Thus, many contemporary Confucian revivalists hope to restore this national Confucian spirit through various forms of *kyōyō-shugi*

教養主義, or *kyōyō*-ism (educationalism), either as self-cultivation projects or officially institutionalized in school curricula. Some thinkers, such as Shirakawa Shizuka, Katō Tōru, and Kaji Nobuyuki, propose making Confucianism a religion. In contrast, conservative nationalist thinkers such as Yasuoka Masahiro (1898-1983) see Confucian-inspired *kyōyō* 教養 more as a project aimed at restoring the true national spirit of Japan by curbing the corrosive influence of decadent, leftist trends. Nakajima ends the chapter by suggesting that the future of Confucianism in Japan lies in what he calls "critical Confucianism." However, because critical Confucianism is defined only as the attempt "to deconstruct the modern problematic of Confucianism and find a new approach to Confucianism" (p. 179), it is not entirely clear what such a project would entail.

In Chapter 9, "The Bildungsroman of the Heart: Thick Naturalism in Robert Bellah's *Religion in Human Evolution,*" Yang Xiao (professor of philosophy at Kenyon College) offers a succinct overview of the "general theory of human nature as 'habits of the heart' or culture" that forms the core of Bellah's seminal work *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to Axial Age* (2011). As summarized by Xiao, in Bellah's "nonreductive humanistic naturalism" (p. 186), civil religion should be understood as a "cultural system." He compares *Religion in Human Evolution* to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Both are universal histories of religion as culturally embedded systems in which "nothing is ever lost" (p. 192). It is in this sense that we should understand Xiao's characterization of *Religion in Human Evolution* as "a Bildungsroman of the human spirit on a truly global scale" (p. 194). By providing a succinct and enlightening introduction to the core ideas of Bellah's *Religion in Human Evolution*, this chapter connects the discussion of the contemporary Confucian revival in East Asia in Chapters 1-8 to Bellah's discussion in Chapter 10 of the possibility of a global civil religion and Confucianism's contribution to it.

The final chapter, "Can We Imagine a Global Civil Religion?," by the late Robert N. Bellah (who was Elliot Professor of Sociology at the University of California at Berkeley), explores the extent to which one could argue that the beginnings of a "global civil religion" already exist. In the process, he also touches on the role of "habits of the heart," derived from the Confucian traditions of East Asia, may play in such a global civil religion. The idea of a global civil religion may at first seem impossible to reconcile with the cultural and religious fragmentation of the contemporary world that political scientists such as Samuel Huntington have characterized as a "clash of civilizations." Nevertheless, as Bellah astutely observes, despite all the cultural variation, our increasingly globalized world is built on international networks and systems that can only function on the basis of globally shared values and practices.

Global trade and financial systems are based on a certain degree of shared respect for property rights and the basic rules of international law and the worldwide market culture. However, according to Bellah, the current global "worship of Mammon" (p. 208) is also the root cause of two of the biggest threats to humankind: increasing inequality and the destruction of the environment. To solve these problems, Bellah suggests that humanity needs to transcend the confines of nation-states in order to form a "global civil society with a spiritual dimension drawing from all the great religions of the world" (p. 219), which would be characterized by "an obligatory cosmopolitan solidarity" (p. 213). That is, the question we need to ask is: "Could we as Americans or Chinese accept the notion of a common global membership such that we would be willing to give up something of ours for the sake of Mexicans or Vietnamese?" Here is where Bellah suggests that Confucian notions of the communal self, where the individual is always defined in relation to a larger community (family, village, nation, world), can function as an antidote to modern Western individualism, which, according to Bellah is the cause of many problems facing contemporary humanity.

I have only two main criticisms. First, because this volume is based on essays collected to honor the work of Robert Bellah, it lacks a review or critical appraisal of his theory of religion. Second, the volume lacks chapter on Confucian revival and civil religion in Taiwan. Because Taiwan did not undergo the Cultural Revolution and suppression of Confucianism due to communist ideology, the trajectory of Confucianism as a civil religion in Taiwan has taken a path that differs from Mainland China. Although Taiwan is mentioned briefly in some of the chapters, the volume suffers from the absence of at least one chapter on the role of Confucianism as a "habit of the heart" there.

In sum, *Confucianism, a Habit of the Heart* offers a highly readable view of the role of Confucianism in East Asian civil societies. Its appeal stems not only from the quality of the individual chapters but also from the fact that some are by scholars who are also personally and professionally invested in the promotion of Confucianism as a civil religion.

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Top Ten Developments in Studies on Chinese Humanities in 2018

Translated by Connie Rosemont

Chinese humanities scholarship has been robust in recent years and is now going through profound changes. To stay abreast of these new developments and trends, and to promote continued flourishing of humanities scholarship and public awareness, the *Journal of Literature, History, and Philosophy* [*Wen shi zhe* 文史哲] and *China Reader Weekly* [*Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報] jointly hosted the selection of the "2018 Top Ten Humanities Study Topics" for the fifth consecutive year. This year's selection includes:

1 Humanities and Social Sciences Circles Solemnly Commemorated the Fortieth Anniversary of China's Reform and Opening Up. A Sense of National Self-Awareness Has Become a Common Starting Point in Recent Scholarly Pursuits

Since 1949, two paradigm shifts have taken place in Chinese humanities and social sciences studies. The first dramatic transformation began in 1949, when the Republic of China became the People's Republic of China. The second shift began in 1978, when the framework of modernization replaced the framework of class theory. In both scope and depth, the second shift can be considered a second opening up. In light of this consensus, the humanities and social sciences community solemnly commemorated the fortieth anniversary in a variety of ways, using the opportunity to review and summarize forty years of achievement across disciplines. At colleges and universities around the country, the departments of political science, economics, law, literature, philosophy, history, and so on convened their own thematic conferences. Many scholarly publications dedicated columns to the topic, and numerous scholars wrote special articles. Beijing University and the Commercial Press jointly produced a book series titled "Chinese Social Sciences and Forty Years of Reform and Opening Up."

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Academic circles widely consider the past forty years of Chinese scholarship and its trend toward opening up a period of great growth. After several decades of building knowledge systems, scholarly networks, and new academic disciplines, scholars have re-established an open-minded Chinese academic community that is integrated into international circles and moving forward as a group. More research has made increasingly clear the limits of Western-language interpretations of Chinese experiences and issues. The academic community thus is consciously exploring domestic phenomena with domestic theories. The logical next step for Chinese scholars is an evolution of this focus on a "Chinese subjective consciousness," allowing them to stand tall among their peers in global scholarship. Just as importantly, it provides solid academic support for the revitalization of Chinese culture.

2 Academic Circles Took the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of Marx's Birth and the 170th Anniversary of the Publication of the Communist Manifesto to Renew Conversations on the Significance of Marxism in Contemporary China and the World

The 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth and the 170th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* were in 2018. Using this occasion, Chinese scholars published a host of research from new vantage points and with greater dimensionality, showing that Marx's diagnosis of the pathology of capitalism and his prediction of the likely path and prospects for human emancipation created opportunities for us to consciously grapple with "world history" and to transcend a narrow vision of the nation-state.

Issues related to global environmental degradation and serious inequalities created by a wide gap between rich and poor have created unprecedented and grave challenges for human survival and development. How to treat and manage the duality of "capitalist power" and the paradoxical consequences of its shortcomings are some of the most pressing questions of our times. At the same time, new breakthroughs in science and technology continue to profoundly reshape how people live. The result of any one-time historical technological advance could introduce the possibility of an unprecedented transformation, which forces us to consider the future fate of humanity in terms of forming a new culture.

Faced with this unprecedented and rigorous test, the academic community has recognized that Marx's theories are still a guiding force: As part of the continuous process of explaining Chinese history and society, Marxist doctrine has shaped the course of China. It has changed the fate of the Chinese

people, creating socialism with Chinese characteristics. For the Chinese, this is undoubtedly of enormous spiritual value and constitutes an incisive and clear framework for understanding our history. It has also become an intellectual pathfinder with which to plan for the future.

3 Research into the Origins of Chinese Civilization Has Again Sparked Controversy. The Existence of the Xia Dynasty Was a Hot Topic

In May 2018, the State Council Information Office issued the research summary "The Project to Discover the Source of Chinese Civilization," in which it proposed that areas surrounding the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and the Xiliao River were already part of the ancient period of Chinese civilization before the establishment of the Xia dynasty. At the same time, important discoveries of early settlements, such as Lingjiatan in Anhui Province, Liangzhu in Zhejiang Province, Taosi in Shanxi Province, and the Stone Loess mounds in Shaanxi Province, have allowed archaeologists and historians to reconsider existing research perspectives on the origins of Chinese civilization. The question of whether the Xia dynasty existed again became an active topic of scholarly debate.

Sun Qingwei published a monograph, *Toward an Archeological Reconstruction of the Xia Dynasty as History*, in which he explicitly argued that research into Xia culture requires attention to the methodologies used to discern it and not to acts of "discovery." Using a comparative cultural archaeology approach, he argues that the existence of Xia culture can be assessed without excavating textual material. As soon as this theory was published, it caused immediate and widespread dispute in academic circles. Opponents maintain that an insufficient archeological record and data can only make the existence of Xia culture unverifiable; it cannot be proved one way or the other. Other scholars proposed that nationalist sentiments and strong notions of "making the past serve the present" lay behind the monograph, an approach that was not a neutral position of scientific inquiry. At the same time, some scholars argued that the standards used by Western scholars to determine the origins of culture—text and smelting technology—do not correspond to the facts of Chinese history. Probing Xia culture is a responsibility that Chinese archaeology must shoulder. What archaeologists must do is use the approach of "believing antiquity" to link and integrate special characteristics of remote antiquity, thereby "interpreting antiquity." Whether consensus on this issue will be reached in the near future remains to be seen.

4 Ethical Consensus in Science and Technology Developments Takes a Pounding: "Gene Editing for Infants" Gives Rise to Troubling Considerations about the Fate of Humanity

In 2018, the world's first "gene-edited babies" were born in Shenzhen. As soon as the news was announced, 122 scientists immediately published a joint declaration strongly condemning the project's lack of a proper biomedical ethics review. They pointed out that human experiments in gene editing risk "missing the mark" and could have a negative impact on society. They called on relevant departments and research units to quickly revise legislation and put into effect strict oversight regulations. The Ministry of Science and Technology, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the China Association of Science and Technology, and other organizations also responded, issuing a formal statement to ban such practices, expressing resolute opposition, and asking that the issue be addressed in accordance with relevant Chinese laws and rules.

The experiment was widely criticized because the current state of technology still has shortcomings and drawbacks, and any "improvement" in human genetics is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. Gene editing has an irrevocable quality. If an error occurred in which the editing "missed the mark," unforeseen danger is introduced for the object of the experiment and potentially for the entire gene pool, threatening all of humanity. When emerging technology is rapidly developed that can alter the human body, with the further possibility of reshaping human culture, only by reinforcing and safeguarding humanistic constraints and preserving sufficient awe for natural evolution can we maximize the ultimate goal of using technology to benefit humankind.

5 With the Deaths of Rao Zongyi and Jacques Gernet, France Loses Two Giants and Its Central Role in European Sinological Discourse

In 2018, the renowned sinologists Rao Zongyi and Jacques Gernet [Xie Henai] both died. Rao was the last of his generation of venerable classical Chinese scholars, with close ties to French sinological circles. Gernet was France's most authoritative sinologist, presiding over French sinology for a long time. In one sense, the passing of these two giants in the field represents the end of the central position that France has held in continental European sinology.

Since 1814, when the Collège de France established its first sinology chair, the French sinology world has produced generation after generation of exceptional talent. Primarily using philology and historical linguistics, scholars produced brilliant works on the history of Inner Asia, religious history, Dunhuang

studies, and numerous other topics. Early twentieth-century sinologists, such as Edouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot, have left colorful and vivid writings on the history of modern Chinese scholarship. Both Rao and Gernet carried on the efforts of Chavanne's disciple Paul Demiéville [Dai Miwei], to extend and deepen French sinological research. But after World War II, especially since the 1970s and 1980s, the purview of European sinology gradually narrowed, gradually ceding international leadership to the American social sciences approach to sinological studies. Rao and Gernet were the last blush of the sunset of exceptional European continental sinology. Their departure is not only a great loss to international sinology but also marks the fading of a once-brilliant tradition of continental European sinology.

6 The Twenty-Fourth World Philosophy Conference Convened in Beijing. International Philosophy Research Has Entered a New Realm of "Not Distinguishing between East and West" [wu wen xi dong 無問西東]

Western philosophy could be called the lead actor on the stage of world philosophy. In the seventeenth century, European Enlightenment thinkers had a brief fascination with Chinese culture, proceeding from a desire to find spiritual alliances and role models. But this situation did not last long, and soon after the Enlightenment had taken firm root, both [Immanuel] Kant and [G. W. F.] Hegel quickly concluded, "There is no philosophy in the East." Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, in the wake of the introduction of Western scholarship, the Chinese academic world adopted Western philosophy's methods of categorization and analysis for Chinese philosophy, which seriously altered traditional classical studies and their subfields. But voices of dissent persisted. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, with the rise of culturally subjective consciousness in China, the Chinese academic community has engaged in reflection and debate about the "legitimacy of Chinese philosophy." To safeguard the "special characteristics" of traditional Chinese thought, some theorists have advocated abandoning the entire structure of Chinese philosophy studies. The future relationship between philosophy and "Chinese studies" has become an important concern in the international academic community.

The twenty-fourth World Philosophy Conference was held in Beijing in August 2018, offering a rare opportunity to discuss that question. The conference put special emphasis on the globalization of philosophical research and the need to include multifaceted forms of philosophical inquiry from all types of thinkers from different cultures, past and present. Participants relied on the

Chinese tradition of "becoming a more complete person through studying" [*Xueyi chengren* 學以成人] to consider major topics in both Anglo-analytical and European continental philosophy. This approach injected new connotations of "multiculturalism and all traditions" into the discussions, with the suggestion that world philosophy research might enter a new realm of "[not distinguishing between] East and West."

7 The Mozi Satellite Quantum Experiments Set Off a Mozi Craze, Unearthing Ancient Chinese Science and Technology Traditions

The success of the Mozi satellite intercontinental quantum experiment mission attracted international attention. Mozi, a scientific genius who made remarkable contributions more than two thousand years ago to the fields of optics, acoustics, mechanics, geometry, and others, has once again become the focus of popular attention. When the National Library Press published the book *Mozi*, every domestic publishing house also promoted some aspect of Mozi's works, and Mozi Salons—a popular scientific lecture series—took off. The twentieth-century British scholar Joseph Needham asked, "Why didn't China have a scientific revolution in the modern era [given its ancient scientific accomplishments]?" Needham's question has long put China scholars through their paces and spurred deep reflection and sharp critiques of the relationship between Chinese tradition, its knowledge systems, and scientific culture. In the past forty years, giant strides in Chinese science and technology have permitted China's increasing prominence as an innovative country. These strides indicate the intrinsic power in Chinese culture and the reignition of its scientific spirit and craftsmanship, as represented in Mohism. Widespread interest has been reawakened in all parts of society about ancient Chinese science and technology traditions.

8 The Centenary of the Publication of "A Madman's Diary"; "the Political Lu Xun" Is Again Presented Before World Audiences

In May 1918, *New Youth* published Lu Xun's short story, "A Madman's Diary" [also called "The Diary of a Madman"], which was seen as a penetrating exposé of the "cannibalistic" nature of the clan system and its feudal code of ethics. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of its publication, academic circles organized numerous activities from diverse multidisciplinary perspectives and undertook a new assessment of the distinctively critical tradition of "literary

politics" pioneered by Lu Xun. The value of his political and literary legacy received new recognition and a fresh appraisal.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Lu Xun's image changed from the canonized "Lu Xun the politician" to the secular "Lu Xun the man." But since 2000, Chinese humanities circles have made a directional shift. A resurgence has occurred in traditional Chinese culture, most notably in the exploration of Confucianism. Against the backdrop of cultural regeneration and the fight to preserve tradition, research on Lu Xun is no longer solely the object of modern and contemporary literary studies. Academic circles refocused significant attention on "Lu Xun the politician," particularly on the multifaceted connections Lu Xun made between his thinking and social reality. This was the result of internal logical developments in Lu Xun scholarship, and it was also a sign of reflection in academic circles on the evolution of contemporary society. Conversations about "Lu Xun the man" and "Lu Xun the politician" present a more prudent and mature review of the coupling of our literary and political traditions and show the potential for reactivating Lu Xun's intellectual legacy in a new era.

9 Hou Xudong's New Work, *Favoritism: the Monarch's Relationship with Subjects Based on Private Trust and the Unfolding of Western Han History*, Challenges Existing Models. "New Political History" Research Is Flourishing

Political history and research on institutional systems have been the backbone of domestic ancient history studies for the past forty years. Study of the history of traditional political systems has emphasized the interpretation of political events and the reconstruction of underlying systems. Its tremendous achievements are accompanied by stereotypes. Times shift, and trends change, and with the recent popularity and prevalence of new historiographical research, the research orientation of the history of traditional political systems has run up against ongoing criticism and inquiry, to the point that the question "Does political history have a future?" has been raised.

In 2018, Hou Xudong published his new work, *Favoritism: The Monarch's Relationship with Subjects Based on Private Trust and the Unfolding of Western Han History* [*Chong: Xin-Ren xing junchen guanxi yu Xihan lishi de zhankai* 寵：信—任型君臣關係與西漢歷史的展開]. This book expounds the author's concept of "daily rule"—which draws on cultural anthropology methods and takes a "relationship cycle" perspective—to interpret Western Han political history. In the preface, the author explicitly says he wants to "say goodbye to the linear

historical view," pointing out that prior research has been oriented toward historical teleology, the use of a linear historical perspective that is essentially old wine in new bottles. He advocates that researching the complex interactions between individuals and institutions enables the surmounting of the "rules" and "inevitabilities" of outdated paradigms and escape the research confines of traditional political systems history.

The publication of this book comes at the same time as a recent vogue for other new directions in ancient political history research, such as "living institutional history," "political culture," and "historical criticism." This has all provided new models and examples for political history studies to dismantle old paradigms, indicating that new political history research might emerge from the great number of new cultural history studies.

10 The "Rural Revitalization Strategy" Comprehensively Begins. Liang Shuming's "Zouping Experiment" Again Receives Attention

The "rural revitalization strategy" was initiated in 2018, with the goals of building new rural governance systems, improving rural social organizations, and reforming rural customs. This coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Liang Shuming. His "Zouping experiment" [*Zouping shiyan* 鄒平實驗] and the theoretical concepts behind his rural reconstruction movement became a hot topic in academic circles. People hope that lessons and resources can be drawn from Liang's experiences that will be beneficial for today's rural revitalization.

Liang Shuming saw the collapse of village society as a microcosm of the collapse of Chinese civilization. The ultimate goal of rural construction was to revitalize Chinese culture. Revitalizing Chinese culture and rebuilding Chinese society required "putting effort into the countryside" and reviving rural education and customs. The Zouping experiment ended early because of the onset of the Sino-Japanese War, but its achievements and way of thinking inspired later scholars. Some scholars have said that Liang's rural construction experiment offered cultural self-salvation in the context of a traditional society on the verge of collapse. The context of today's rural revitalization, by contrast, is a vigorous promotion of the best of traditional culture. It is both cultural legacy and innovation, which share common approaches on how rural communities can be revitalized. We are eighty years away from Liang's Zouping experiment, and social structure has changed enormously. At the end of the day, his theories and practical applications still have reference value for us today, more yet to be explored.