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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The Historical Tradition and Mission of Chinese Archaeology

Abstract Chinese President Xi Jinping, gave an important speech describing the great achievements and significance of Chinese archaeology, pointing out the way forward for the development of Chinese archaeology in the new era. By reviewing the century-long history of Chinese archaeology, its historical tradition and the mission of the times are distinctive. Since 1949, under the guidance of archaeological culture theory and regional systems and cultural types theory, Chinese archaeology has made a series of significant achievements and taken up the mission of the times in inheriting historical traditions and exploring major issues including the origins of Chinese civilization. The current development of Chinese archaeology should further the historical tradition of Chinese archaeology under the guidance of the spirit of Xi Jinping's speech. From a longitudinal perspective, Chinese archaeology should strengthen the research on the origin of Chinese civilization and its characteristics, development trajectory, major landmark achievements, and the way of civilization inheritance after its formation, especially to strengthen the exploration of how the "5,000-year continuous unity" was formed after the unification of the Qin and Han dynasties. From a horizontal perspective, with the Belt and Road Initiative as the main thread, we should continue to strengthen archaeological research on cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, advocate mutual appreciation of civilizations, tell the Chinese story well, and contribute Chinese historical wisdom and experience to the world. On the whole, we should strengthen the theoretical construction and ability training of archaeology, strive

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to build Chinese archaeology with salient Chinese features, style, and ethos, and realize the historical mission of the new era of the Centennial "Chinese Dream."

Keywords Chinese archaeology, historical tradition, mission

Saving the Nation from Subjugation and "Rebuilding Ancient History": The Historical Choice of Early Chinese Archaeology

Chinese President Xi Jinping 习近平 made a powerful statement, "China is one of the four ancient civilizations in the world. The Chinese nation, with a long history and splendid culture, has contributed tremendously to the progress of human civilization. Throughout history, Chinese civilization, deeply rooted in the land of China, boasts its unique cultural genes and its development process. Meanwhile, it exchanges with other civilizations, keeps up with the development of the times, and demonstrates great vitality." [1] However, after the Opium War, with the aggression of Western powers, China was confronted "by a scale of change unseen in a millennium." Due to the backwardness of science and technology, poverty of materials, and the decline of national strength, China had been beaten and bullied by other countries and surrendered its sovereign rights under humiliating terms again and again. The rise and fall of the country and its survival of the nation became major practical problems that the Chinese nation had to confront. From the Westernization Movement, the Reform Movement, the 1911 Revolution, to the May 4th Movement, generations of progressives struggled in search of ways to save the nation and the learning of "science" and "democracy" from the West became the trend of the times.

For the historical background of the emergence of archaeology, Yu Weichao 俞伟超 said, "the need for understanding the basic principles of human society is the fundamental reason for the emergency of archaeology in all countries. Archaeology was introduced to China in the 1920s when the people

[1] Xi Jinping, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese Zhongguo Fengge Zhongguo Qipai de Kaoguxue, Geng Hao Renshi Yuanyuanliuchang Bodajingshen de Zhonghua Wenming," *Qiushi*, 4.

were breaking through the traditional outlook on the world, like what was happening in Europe in the mid-19th century."[2] Archaeology, which was introduced into China during the early 20th century, is not a coincidence. It is the result of both strong external pressure and practical internal needs of China. In the tide of the times, it became a step of vital importance for removing the shackles on the mind of the nation to change the mentality of cultural weakness and re-establish the cultural confidence of the Chinese people.

Facing the strong Western culture, the Chinese at that time, not only lost confidence in Chinese culture but also became skeptical and pessimistic about the origin of the Chinese race, "saying that Chinese civilization is inferior to the civilization of other countries." In the world today, compared to the Westerners, the Chinese are inferior and weaker in all aspects, such as crude daily life aspect, like horse, ship, vehicle, cloth, and food; slightly refined aspect in academic levels, like language, painting, arithmetic, and politics; and the most refined aspect in physical strength, like skin, hair, bone, and brain.[3] The theory that "the Chinese culture comes from the West,"[4] which had been popular among Western scholars, also emerged again. Even such leaders in the ideological circle as Liang Qichao 梁启超 and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 tried to trace the "ancestral origin" of the "legacy of the Yan Emperor 炎帝 and the Yellow Emperor 黄帝" to the "ruins of Kunlun" in the Western Regions or ancient Babylon in Asia Minor and prove that the Chinese share the same "noble" root with the ancient Babylon people and Europeans.[5] As Chen Xingchan 陈星灿 describes, "in front of the powerful Western capitalist civilization, a melancholy mood of intertwined patriotism and national nihilism dominated most intellectuals."[6]

China is an ancient nation with a 5,000-year civilization with orderly inheritance. President Xi Jinping emphasized in his speech, "the vast literature and classics in China record over 3,000 years of Chinese history. Meanwhile, more than 1,000 years of Chinese civilization and over one million years of

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[2] Yu Weichao, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme—Yu Weichao Kaoguxue Lilun Wenxuan*, 150.
[3] Zha Xiaoying, *Zhongguo Xiandai Kaoguxue de Sixiang Puxi*, 29.
[4] Representative theories include "Egyptian Origin," "Babylon Origin," "India Origin," "Central Asia Origin," and so on. See Chen Xingcan, *Zhongguo Shiqian Kaoguxueshi Yanjiu: 1895–1949*, 30–35.
[5] Zha, *Zhongguo Xiandai Kaoguxue*, 27–28.
[6] Chen, *Zhongguo Shiqian Kaoguxueshi Yanjiu*, 35.

human development before the invention of inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty are beyond written records." However, the existing ancient history system at that time was insufficient for finding historical evidence. Especially for the "Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors" 三皇五帝 in the myth and legend era, the historiography system as the traditional "old learning" of China has been strongly impacted and shaken by Western historiography known as "scientism." Kang Youwei 康有为 wrote in the book *Confucius as a Reformer* 孔子改制考, "there were no written records of history before the Six Classics. No proof could be found for the history of the Xia and Shang dynasties. The books in the Zhou Dynasty were also lost. The annals before the first year of Gonghe 共和 were not clear. Detailed records could be only traced after Qin and Han dynasties." [7] Therefore, when China faced Western civilizations with a history of 5,000 years, like ancient Babylon, ancient Egypt, and even ancient India, the history before the Shang Dynasty recorded in the "Annals of the Five Emperors" of the *Records of Grand Historian* 史记·五帝本纪 by Sima Qian could only be barely supported by mythology and legends. For other ancient civilizations, archaeological discoveries like characters, city walls, and metals around 5,000 years ago were used as evidence as early as the 19th century, 1,000 years earlier than the evidence for the history of the Chinese civilization.[8]

It was against this background that the "movement for distinguishing ancient history" emerged in the early 20th century. The main representative of the movement, Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚, put forward the famous concept of "stratum accumulation of ancient Chinese history," trying to distinguish the ancient historical materials with a critical spirit and scientific method, which destroyed the traditional view of ancient history dominated by Confucian classics. On one hand, it cleared the way for rebuilding ancient history, liberated the study of ancient Chinese history from the cage of Confucian classics, restored the true nature of historiography, and objectively created conditions for the rise of Chinese archaeology.[9] However, on the other hand, as some scholars have commented, the traditional understanding of ancient history had been

[7] Kang Youwei, *Kongzi Gaizhi Kao*, in *Kang Youwei Quanji*, 2.
[8] Su Bingqi, *Zhongguo Wenming Qiyuan Xintan*, 86.
[9] Dai Xiangming, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue Guannian de Huigu yu Fansi," *Dongnan Wenhua*, 18–24.

"vacuumized" because the school for distinguishing ancient history only "destroyed the old but not establish the new," it made "the society established, the country formed, and the culture created by the Chinese in a long period fall into hazy nothingness." [10]

Thus, the process from 1926, when Li Ji 李济 presided over the excavation of the Xiyin Village 西阴村 site in Xia County, Shanxi, to 1928, when the archaeological group of the Institute of History and Language of the Academia Sinica excavated the site of Yinxu 殷墟 in Anyang, Henan Province, is considered to mark the birth of modern Chinese archaeology. With a far-reaching influence and a clear academic goal, the excavation of Yinxu has undertaken the historical mission of "rebuilding the national history" from the very beginning. When reviewing history today, many scholars are convinced that the major reason for the founders of Chinese archaeology to choose the site of Yinxu in Anyang for scientific archaeological practice is the oracle bones unearthed there. Since modern times, such scholars as Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉 and Wang Guowei 王国维 have made fruitful research on oracle bones, revealing the fact that the lineage of kings in the Shang Dynasty recorded on oracle bones and the historical records such as "Annals of Yin 殷本纪" of the *Grand Historian* can be corroborated with each other. Therefore, the excavation of the oracle bones made it possible to confirm the credibility of the history of the Shang Dynasty through the excavation of the ruins. According to Zhang Hai 张海 , "the excavation of the Yinxu was not only for the sake of the oracle bones but also for the comprehensive recovery of the history of the Shang Dynasty through scientific and systematic archaeological excavation and research . . . . The early archaeological excavations represented by the Yinxu demonstrate to a great extent the clear academic mission and research goal of Chinese archaeology from its birth to rebuild the ancient history of China, which also determines the distinct historical research tendency of Chinese archaeology." [11] It is a very pertinent comment.

Regarding the historical choice made by early Chinese archaeology, Zhang Guangzhi 张光直 once speculated that "if this first large-scale state-executed

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[10] Du Zhengsheng, "Kaoguxue yu Zhongguo Gudaishi Yanjiu: Yi Ge Fangfaxue de Tantao," *Kaogu*, 335–46.

[11] Zhang Hai, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue de Lishi Zhuyi Tezheng yu Chuantong," *Huaxia Kaogu*, 137–45.

sustained excavation had been carried out to a prehistoric site, an independent branch of archaeology, oriented primarily toward social science, could have been born in China. However, Yinxu is a historical site where abundant written materials have been unearthed, including inscriptions on oracle bones and bronzeware." [12] The possibility could not be ruled out. However, it can be learned from the excavations at Xiyin Village presided over by Li Ji that the academic goals of the first generation of Chinese archaeologists may not be as they said, yet the results of their practice still make archaeology "a humanistic science and a branch of the renewed traditional Chinese history." [13] Although the Xiyin Village site happens to be a prehistoric site, the main purpose of Li Ji to excavate the site is to find archaeological evidence against the prevailing concept that "the Yangshao culture was introduced from the West" at that time, to find the true origin of the Chinese civilization. In his excavation report *The Prehistory Remains of Xiyin Village* 西阴村史前的遗存, he began by declaring that Johan Gunnar Andersson found a late Neolithic culture during an excavation in northern China, "the origin of the culture is the most important thing we need to know in terms of its relationship to Chinese culture during the historical period . . . . It is our motive for excavating the prehistoric site of Xiyin Village in Naxia County." [14] The reason for his choice to excavate Xiyin Village is also in part the geographical prestige of its linkage to "Puban, the capital of Emperor Shun 舜," so it is also a choice based on the clue in historical documents.[15] As Zhang Zhongpei 张忠培 commented in his article commemorating the 70th anniversary of Li Ji's excavation of the Xiyin Village site, "the goal of Chinese archaeological research is to reveal and study history and to study the remains of Chinese archaeology in a multidisciplinary way. Although it did not begin with Mr. Li Ji, he is the first Chinese archaeologist to approach Chinese archaeology in this way." [16]

As discussed above, around the May 4th Movement, when the country and the nation were facing a major historical turning point of life and death, the first generation of Chinese archaeologists had to focus on a core issue, namely the

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12 Zhang Guangzhi, "Kaoguxue he Zhongguo Lishixue," in *Kaoguxue de Lishi Lilun Shijian*, ed., Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 99.

13 Ibid.

14 Li Ji, "Xiyin Cun Shiqian de Yicun," in *Li Ji Wenji*, 170.

15 Li Ji, "Shanxi Nanbu Fenhe Liuyu Kaogu Diaocha," *Kaogu*, 759–66.

16 Zhang Zhongpei, *Zhongguo Kaoguxue: Zoujin Lishi Zhenshi zhi Dao*, 3.

origin of the Chinese culture and Chinese civilization, and answer for a series of questions, including why the ancient civilization of thousands of years had been left behind? what were the reasons for the backwardness? can the answer be found in history? how should China learn from the West? and so on.[17] Under such historical background and circumstances, to save the country and catch up with the West, the primary task of Chinese cultural progress was to restore the ancient history and inspire the current people, which became the ultimate goal of Chinese archaeology from the very beginning and indicated the distinctive "historicist character and tradition" of Chinese archaeology since its birth.[18]

In the beginning, archaeology was introduced to China as a modern scientific discipline characterized by field archaeological excavations and the basic theories and methods of stratigraphy and typology, which is different from the existing "ancient artifact study" or "epigraphy" in China. The vast majority of Chinese archaeologists today also agree with the definition in the *Encyclopedia of China·Archaeology* 大百科全书·中国考古学卷. To be specific, "epigraphy since the Northern Song Dynasty is the predecessor of Chinese archaeology, yet it was not until the 1920s that modern archaeology based on field investigation and excavation appeared in China." [19] However, does it mean that there is a clean break between the two?

Some scholars believe that modern archaeology is entirely "imported" from the West and must be viewed separately from the original Chinese "epigraphy." For example, Li Ji wrote in his preface to *Chengziya* 城子崖, "the interest of Chinese in archaeology could be dated back to 800 years ago, yet it is merely an interest. Without real methods, the interest had not brought equivalent achievements. If the present archaeology is put into the same school as the existing epigraphy in China, there is no difference from the trick of changing the surname by Hu people to pretend to be descendants of the Yellow Emperor." [20] However, some scholars with expertise in the "old learning" put forward the new concept of "Chinese archaeology" to integrate the traditional Chinese epigraphy into modern archaeology rather than completely separating the two. For example, Liang Qichao regarded the study of epigraphy since

17 Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 153.
18 Zhang, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue," 137–45.
19 Entry of "Archaeology" compiled by Xia Nai and Wang Zhongshu, "Kaoguxue Juan," in *Zhongguo Dabaike Quanshu*, 1.
20 Li Ji, "Chengziya Xu," in *Anyang*, 408.

the Song dynasties and the recent archaeological discoveries in China as the same kind of work of "Chinese archaeology" at the welcoming ceremony of the Swedish Crown Prince's visit to China in 1926 by saying that "archaeology has become a specialized subject in China since the Northern Song Dynasty." [21] In *A Brief History of Chinese Archaeology* 中国考古小史 [22] and *A History of Chinese Archaeology* 中国考古学史 [23] by Wei Juxian 卫聚贤 published later, traditional epigraphy is also considered an integral part of the new archaeology in the "excavation period." Later, it is agreed that epigraphy should be an important source of Chinese archaeology in such works as *Fundamentals of Prehistoric Archaeology* 史学考古学基础 [24] by Pei Wenzhong 裴文中, *Notes on the History of Chinese Archaeology* 中国考古学讲义 [25] by Zhang Zhenglang 张政烺, and *A History of Chinese Archaeology* 中国考古学史 [26] by Yan Wenru 阎文儒.[27] Some scholars also explicitly suggested that epigraphy should be an important part of Chinese archaeology. For example, when Ma Heng 马衡 opened the course on archaeology at Peking University, he pointed out in particular that "archaeology is an important supplementary discipline for the study of history . . . epigraphy in China is also a part of archaeology, so it is advisable to study it first." [28]

These academic opinions reflect from another angle that traditional Chinese academics did not break off from early Chinese archaeology when it emerged. The long-standing and unbroken lineage of Chinese historiography still has a profound and wide influence. It is of great significance to the formation and development of the historical tradition of Chinese archaeology after that. Meanwhile, it demonstrates that the concept of "Chinese archaeology" proposed at that time was not a simple "copy" or "replica" of Western archaeology but an archaeology with Chinese characteristics and historical tradition. In reviewing this history, Chen Xingcan commented, "with the spread of Western modern archaeological ideas and the archaeological

[21] Liang Qichao, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue zhi Guoqu ji Jianglai," in *Zhongguo Kaogu Xiaoshi*, ed., Wei Juxian, 9.
[22] Wei Juxian, *Zhongguo Kaogu Xiaoshi*.
[23] Wei Juxian, *Zhongguo Kaoguxueshi*.
[24] Pei Wenzhong, "Shiqian Kaoguxue Jichu," in *Pei Wenzhong Shiqian Kaoguxue Lunwenji*.
[25] Zhang Zhenglang, "Zhongguo Kaoguxueshi Jiangyi," in *Zhang Zhenglang Wenshi Lunji.*
[26] Yan Wenru, *Zhongguo Kaoguxueshi*.
[27] Zha, *Zhongguo Xiandai Kaoguxue*, 6.
[28] Ibid., 74.

activities of foreign scholars in China from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, epigraphy, which had been greatly broadened in scope since the reign of Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 of the Qing Dynasty, was further promoted. From epigraphy to antiquarianism, and then archaeology, epigraphy was finally integrated into archaeology, becoming a part of modern scientific archaeology." [29] Such a logic of the evolution from Chinese traditional epigraphy to modern archaeology is corresponding to objective facts.

In conclusion, the birth of Chinese archaeology is a product of the times, and it has been endowed with a historical tradition with distinctive Chinese characteristics from the very beginning and taken up the mission of the times. As time moves on, the discipline tradition has been passed down, becoming the lofty belief as well as concrete actions of generations of archaeologists.

From "Archaeology Culture" to "Regionalization System and Typology": The Exploration and Development of Chinese Archaeology

In 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. Since then, the Chinese people have stood upright and ended their suffering. With the opening of a new chapter in history, the development of Chinese archaeology also entered a new era. After the relocation of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, to the Taiwan region, archaeologists in China's mainland shouldered the mission of the new era. They not only set the academic goal of "restoring national history, opening up new chapters and building systems" [30] based on the work of their predecessors but also proposed to "build a Marxist, modern Chinese archaeology with distinctive characteristics of China that lives up to the demands of this great era." [31]

Looking back at the exploration and practice of Chinese archaeology since the founding of the People's Republic of China, as President Xi Jinping said, "with the continuous struggle of generations of archaeologists, China has

[29] Chen, *Zhongguo Shiqian Kaoguxueshi,* 52.
[30] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 16.
[31] Su Bingqi, "Jianguo Yilai Zhongguo Kaoguxue de Fazhan," *Shixueshi Yanjiu*, 9–14; Zhang, *Zhongguo Kaoguxue*, 40–41.

made great achievements in archaeology through extending the historical axis, enhancing the historical credibility, enriching the historical connotation, and activating the historical scene." [32] In particular, "the history of human origins in millions of years and the prehistory of human civilization in tens of thousands of years are mainly constructed by archaeological achievement." [33] This is a full recognition of the great achievements of China in prehistoric archaeology.

The development of Chinese archaeology also witnessed twists and turns. Marxist historical materialism and the social development history theory were once dogmatically interpreted, so insufficient archaeological data were used to directly match the "five social forms" put forward by Marx and Engels. Marxism was interpreted in a haste from some inherent "model" before analyzing and studying the specific and subtle archaeological data. "The law of social development put forward by Marx was considered as history itself." [34] The fundamental research of archaeology had been weakened and neglected. However, scholars with sober minds soon realized that China has a vast land, a long history, and a diversity of cultural relics, which require a huge amount of fieldwork, so a scientific understanding of archaeological excavations is necessary to avoid the "hollow" application of theories.

In 1959, Xia Nai 夏鼐 published the article "On the Naming of Archaeology Culture" 关于考古学文化的定名问题 , proposing the criteria for classifying and naming archaeology culture and providing a scientific definition for "archaeology culture." [35] Archaeologists throughout China began to take "archaeology culture" as a benchmark for constructing the "genealogy" of archaeological data and a sequence of prehistoric cultural development in different regions. After that, unprecedentedly fruitful archaeological achievements had been made across the country and a large number of important archaeological sites and corresponding archaeology cultures were discovered and identified one after another. The framework of archaeology culture was successively established in different places, becoming the most important scientific practice of Chinese archaeology in the 20th century and laying a solid foundation for further research on the origins of Chinese civilization.

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[32] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 6.
[33] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 5.
[34] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 16; Dai, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue Guannian," 18–24.
[35] Xia Nai, "Guanyu Kaoguxue Shang Wenhua de Dingming Wenti," *Kaogu*, 169–72.

In 1981, Su Bingqi 苏秉琦 published the article "On the Regionalization System and Typology of Archaeology Culture" 关于考古学文化的区系类型问题.[36] Based on a large amount of data and research achievements accumulated in Chinese archaeology, he proposed the "regionalization system and typology" theory for Chinese prehistoric archaeology and the exploration of the origin of Chinese civilization. He thought that the theory reflects the path of archaeology with "Chinese characteristics." "The 1970s and 1980s were a turning point in the maturation of Chinese archaeology. After the exploration and understanding in the 1960s, archaeologists finally found a development path of archaeology with Chinese characteristics and a fundamental discipline theory, which is the 'regionalization system and typology' theory for Chinese archaeology culture. 'Regionalization' refers to different regions, 'system' indicates different levels, and 'typology' means different branches."[37] Later, Su Bingqi supplemented and perfected the theory and proposed the following important academic viewpoints:

1. The prehistoric archaeology and ancient culture in China are divided into "six major regionalization systems" (including a. the north region centered on the Great Wall of the Yanshan area; b. the east region centered on Shandong; c. the Central Plains centered on central Shaanxi, southern Shanxi, and western Henan; d. the southeast region centered on the Taihu Lake ring; e. the southwest region centered on the Dongting Lake ring and Sichuan Basin; f. the south region with the Poyang Lake and Pearl River Delta as the central axis) to promote in-depth exploration of archaeology from the similarities and differences of cultural origin, characteristics, development path, and so on.[38]

2. He put forward the "starry sky" theory on the origin of Chinese civilization, holding that the Chinese civilization originated through three forms: The first is "fission," the second is "impact," and the third is "fusion." From 6,000 years to around 4,000 or 5,000 years ago, the sparks of various civilizations on the land of China, like stars all over the sky, finally spread across the entire country like wildfire.[39]

3. He proposed the "trilogy" and "three models" of the national origin of

[36] Su Bingqi and Yin Naizhang, "Guanyu Kaoguxue Wenhua de Quxi Leixing Wenti," *Wenwu,* 10–17.
[37] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 28.
[38] Ibid., 27–28.
[39] Ibid., 99–107.

China, namely, the evolution from "ancient culture, ancient city, to ancient country" and then "ancient country, federal country, to the empire." The ancient culture refers to the primitive culture, the ancient city refers to the city and town in the sense of the initial division of town and country, and the ancient country refers to a stable and independent political entity above the tribes. The "three models" of development include: the "primary model" represented by the Hongshan 红山 culture in northern China, the Xiajiadian 夏家店 lower culture, and Qin (6,000 years ago, 4,000 years ago, and 2,000 years ago); the "secondary model" represented by Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties in the Central Plains, Yao 尧 and Shun before them, and Qin after them; and the "continued model" represented by northern grassland nationalities, Xianbei, Khitan, and Qing dynasties entering the Central Plains after Qin and Han dynasties. He believed that "the trilogy and the three models show the general trend of China's historical development over the past 10,000 years, a systematic and complete concept of the origin of Chinese civilization and the formation of ancient states, and an attempt to summarize the discussion on the origin of Chinese civilization since the 1980s." [40]

At roughly the same time as the process, Chinese archaeologists Zhang Zhongpei,[41] Yu Weichao,[42] Yan Wenming 严文明 ,[43] and others have also discussed the rich data obtained from the field archaeological work of Chinese archaeology since the founding of the People's Republic of China, especially since the reform and opening up in the 1980s. Based on their specific practice, they elaborated on major theories like the theory of archaeological stratigraphy and typology, the application of the concept of "archaeology culture," and the path and characteristics of the origin of the Chinese civilization. It can be said that this is significant progress made by Chinese archaeologists in "Chinese practice" by applying the theory and method of archaeological stratigraphy and typology introduced from the West in modern times, and a "Chinese proposal" on the global issue of the origin of civilization.

Yu Weichao once confidently pointed out, "thanks to the continuous practice and summary of Chinese scholars over the past half century, especially

40 Ibid., 110–43.
41 Zhang, *Zhongguo Kaoguxue*.
42 Yu, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme*.
43 Yan Wenming, *Zouxiang 21 Shiji de Kaoguxue*.

in the past thirty years or so, they have already made special contributions to the international theoretical repository of typology. Now, Chinese scholars are still applying this methodology deepened by themselves to the study of Chinese archaeological materials." [44] It not only developed the methodology of Chinese archaeology in the context of modern archaeology but also followed the historical tradition of early Chinese archaeology. It is a big step forward toward the intended academic goal.

It is through the efforts of generations of archaeologists that a series of major achievements in prehistoric archaeology have not only confirmed the "million years of human history, 10,000 years of cultural history, and 5,000 years of civilization history" in China but also demonstrated scientific archaeological data the "historical lineage of the origin and development of Chinese civilization" based on "archaeology culture" and with "regionalization system and typology" as the branch. As Dai Xiangming 戴向明 said, when evaluating the contributions of previous generations of archaeologists at this stage, "these works have brought the construction of prehistory to a new height, marking the resurgence of the mission of 'reconstructing history' in all aspects advocated by Chinese archaeology in the early days as well as the beginning of the climb from the basic research of cultural history to the highest goal of comprehensive recovery of prehistory and exploration of the laws of Chinese historical evolution." [45]

Chinese prehistory, constructed mainly on archaeology, has made great achievements and surpassed its predecessors. Nevertheless, President Xi Jinping also pointed out, "Chinese archaeology has a long way to go because there are still many unknown fields in ancient Chinese history. For example, there is a large gap in the study of the history of the Xia Dynasty. Without sufficient written records, it is particularly important to confirm history through archaeological discoveries. For another example, the question of whether such prehistoric figures as "Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors" are fictitious in myths and legends or real people should also be answered through archaeology work. He encouraged archaeologists to "continue to explore the unknown and reveal the origin." [46] The two examples cited by President Xi Jinping are indeed

[44] Yu, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme*, 62–63.
[45] Dai, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue Guannian," 18–24.
[46] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 7.

the key points for future research in prehistoric archaeology and "protohistoric archaeology."[47] For the Xia culture and the history of the Xia Dynasty, the term "Xia" means at least "Xia Period," "Xia Dynasty," and "Xia People." The first is the "Xia Period" a traditional historical term that merely indicates a certain period in history, although the exact time is still controversial; the second is the traditional "Xia Dynasty," namely the federal country coexisting with the Xia kingdom; the third is the "Xia People" which is the narrowest definition.[48] Zhu Fenghan 朱凤瀚 expressed a comparatively objective view on the issue, "strictly speaking, the current archaeological research on 'Xia culture' is preliminary exploration. More efforts should be made to confirm the existence of 'Xia culture' and 'Xia Kingdom' by acquiring more archaeological data and doing more in-depth research on the remains that could be related to 'Xia culture.' Nevertheless, although 'Xia culture' is still at the exploratory stage, it should not be taken as the reason for simply denying the authenticity of the records about Xia in ancient Chinese literature."[49] Another example is such prehistoric legends as "Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors." Some scholars hold that "archaeological discoveries are revealing more and more clearly the background of the activities of 'five emperors' in legends of ancient history." To be specific, "the era of 'five emperors' could be divided into two stages with 5,000 years ago as the boundary. Major activities in the first stage, represented by the Yellow Emperor, were mainly around the Yanshan Mountains, which is corresponding to the spatial and temporal framework of the Hongshan culture. The second stage is represented by Emperors Yao, Shun, and Yu 禹, when the major focus was flood and flood control. According to historical records, the activities of Emperors Yao, Shun, and Yu were in southern Shanxi before the Xia Dynasty.[50] Some other scholars explored the existence of the era of "five emperors" and the relationship between the tribal groups represented by

[47] Interpretations of the term "protohistory" vary in Chinese and Western academic circles at present. In the West, the term generally refers to a transitional period between prehistory and history. Some scholars believe that there were written records in the protohistory period, yet the written materials and documents are very few, so archaeological materials are more important than or equally important to documentary materials for the study of this period. Quoted from Zhu Fenghan, "Lun Zhongguo Kaoguxue he Lishixue de Guanxi," *Lishi Yanjiu*, 13–22.

[48] Du Zhengsheng, "Xiadai Kaogu ji Qi Guojia Fazhan de Tansuo," *Kaogu*, 43–56; "Kaoguxue yu Zhongguo Gudaishi Yanjiu, 335–46.

[49] Zhu, "Lun Zhongguo Kaoguxue,"13–22.

[50] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 110–43.

it and archaeology culture in monographs.[51] All these are active research and explorations. It is expected that, under the guidance and encouragement of the spirit of the important speech of President Xi Jinping, the "puzzle" of the origin of Chinese civilization and the "bottleneck" of prehistoric research will be solved with the progress of archaeological work. New archaeological data unearthed continuously will make a unique contribution to the reconstruction of Chinese prehistory and pre-Qin history.

Telling the Chinese Story Well and Strengthening Cultural Confidence: The Historical Mission of Archaeology in the New Era

President Xi Jinping stressed once again in his speeches that "Cultural confidence is a more essential, broader, and deeper confidence, and represents a more fundamental, more profound, and long-lasting force that sustains a country" and "the confidence of China in the path, theory, and system is, in essence, the culture confidence established based on the 5,000-plus years of Chinese civilization." [52] As mentioned previously, archaeology has been inextricably linked to the survival of the nation since its birth in China, especially to cultural confidence which is the spiritual source that has enabled China to stand firmly among nations of the world. Archaeology has shouldered a noble historical responsibility and mission of the times from saving the nation from subjugation to national development and rejuvenation. Today, it is the most important historical responsibility and mission of Chinese archaeologists to strengthen cultural confidence and national pride in the era of socialism with Chinese characteristics when the Chinese nation is heading toward rejuvenation.

Archaeology is ultimately about answering philosophical questions involving the spiritual dimension of human beings. With an ardent passion for the country and people and a strong sense of historical mission, previous generations of archaeologists have never forgotten it. In the last moment of his life, Su Bingqi

[51] Guo Dashun, *Zhuixun Wu Di*; Xu Shunzhan, *Wu Di Shidai Yanjiu*; Han Jianye, *Zoujin Wu Di Shidai*.
[52] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 7.

thought the most about "what the soul of this nation with 5,000 years of civilization is, what its essence is, and what the spiritual pillar is. Everyone is considering these questions. Archaeologists should take them seriously with a strong sense of responsibility." [53] Yu Weichao also said, "Since archaeology was created to meet the needs of society and answer the questions raised under the spirit of the times at that time, the task in the future should naturally be 'for today and the future' to answer the new questions raised in the new era." [54]

For the new mission and new questions of archaeology in the new era, President Xi Jinping made a comprehensive, systematic, and profound exposition in his speech. He not only fully affirmed the great achievements made in archaeology after the efforts of generations of archaeologists but also pointed out the way forward for the development of Chinese archaeology in the new era. Based on the aforementioned development process of Chinese archaeology and focusing on telling the Chinese story well and strengthening cultural confidence, the paper will elaborate on the following three aspects:

1. From a longitudinal perspective, Chinese archaeology should strengthen the research on the origin of Chinese civilization and its own characteristics, development trajectory, major landmark achievements, and the way of civilization inheritance after its formation, especially to strengthen the exploration of the inner mechanism, "civilization gene," and external conditions of how the "5,000-year continuous unity" was formed after the unification of the Qin and Han dynasties.

Chinese archaeology is an integral whole, covering prehistoric archaeology, archaeology of Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, which can be classified into the stage of "protohistoric archeology," and archaeology in other historical periods. Prehistoric archaeology and the archaeology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties are of vital importance in searching for the origin of Chinese civilization. Chinese archaeologists have made great contributions to it, so it will not be repeated here. However, for different reasons, relatively little attention was paid to the archaeology of the historical period which archaeologists used to refer to as the "latter part." [55] Not only is there a lack

[53] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 154.
[54] Yu, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme*, 150.
[55] Huo Wei and Wang Yu, "Jianshe Zhongguo Lishi Shiqi Kaoguxue Xushi," Nanfang Wenwu, 75–77; Huo Wei, "Zhongguo Kaoguxue de Gudian Zhuyi Chuantong ji Qi Dangdai Yiyi," *Sixiang Zhanxian*, 69–78.

of major archaeological projects supported at the national level, but even within the archaeological community, the opinion that "it is not necessary to the period later than the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties in archaeology" still exists. One of the most direct reasons for this is the inherent opinion that ancient literature is sufficient to construct a historical framework, sort out historical lines, describe historical facts, and explain historical causes and consequences since the beginning of written records, so it can perform the duty without the intervention of archaeology. This is a misconception. "History" recorded in the literature (history in a narrow sense), and the "history" reflected in archaeological materials are like the two wheels of a cart and the two wings of a bird that construct the "overall history" together (history in a broad sense). This opinion has not only been shared by the majority of scholars but is also the essence of the historical tradition and academic characteristics of Chinese archaeology. Further discussion on it is not necessary, yet the key lies in how to implement it.

President Xi Jinping specifically pointed out in his speech that "even the history of civilization with written records should be referred to, corroborated, enriched, and perfected through archaeological work" and "archaeological results also illustrate the process of the formation and development of the Chinese nation and Chinese culture in its unity in diversity and integration of family and nation while revealing the values that Chinese society relied on for survival and development as well as the cultural genes that the Chinese nation practice every day without noticing. With great political, cultural, social, and historical significance, these major achievements provide us with first-hand materials for better understanding the history of Chinese civilization and shaping the historical cognition of the whole nation." [56] Currently, two key tasks should be implemented to understand the underlying message: One is to use the rich cultural relics and archaeological materials on the ground or underground to study the process of the formation and development of the Chinese nation and Chinese culture in its unity in diversity and integration of family and nation; the other is to reveal the values and "cultural genes" of traditional Chinese culture. Archaeologists have already made efforts to advance in this direction and gradually elevated the study of archaeology culture to the

[56] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 5.

level of understanding and summary of the inner development laws of society. For example, Su Bingqi has proposed a "trilogy" and "three models" of the development and evolution trajectory of the origin of the Chinese nation. According to him, the essence of the Chinese cultural tradition lies in three aspects. The first is that the Chinese are skilled in craftsmanship and creativity; the second is that the Chinese are extremely compatible and cohesive; the third is the worship and respect for "heaven, earth, monarch, parents, and teachers" in the core value and the ability to properly deal with the relationship between "heaven and man" (man and nature).[57] All these are very enlightening. For another example, Liu Qingzhu 刘庆柱 explored the major causes of the "continuity of Chinese civilization over five thousand years" as well as the formation and influence of national political concepts like "middle course" and "harmony" from different dimensions, including national sacrifice, "seeking the middle" and "selecting the middle" in the planning for ancient capital cities, the formation of the tradition of imperial mausoleum system and the "Chinesization" process, ritual architecture and ritual system, ritual objects, and so on.[58] It is also a new interpretation of archaeology in the historical period.

Several important historical links among them deserve further study. The first is how the reorganization of the "Yi-Xia Community" in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods and the formation of the diverse Chinese nation lay the foundation for the unification of the Qin and Han empires during the evolution from early "central plains" to the unified Qin and Han empires. The second is how to properly understand the long-term impact of several waves of great turbulence, major migration, and deep integration caused by the northern grassland nationalities who moved southward in nearly 2,000 years after the unification of the Qin and Han dynasties; how the Northern Dynasty established by the Xianbei, the Liao Dynasty established by the Khitans, the Yuan Dynasty established by the Mongols, and the Qing Dynasty established by the Manchu realized the ruling over the central plains by the nomadic people on one hand and successfully maintained the existence of the pluralistic and integrated national community of the Chinese Empire and

[57] Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 154–57.
[58] Liu Qingzhu, "Zhonghua Wenming Wuqian Nian Bu Duanlie Tedian de Kaoguxue Chanshi," *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue*, 4–27.

injected new vitality and creativity into the Chinese nation rather than cutting off the Chinese cultural tradition or being conquered by foreigners due to the so-called "barbarian invasion" like what had happened in European history on the other hand through ethnic integration and cultural identity. The third is why the cultural ties and civilization genes for maintaining the "continuous Chinese civilization over five thousand years" flourish despite the separation and unification between the west and the east or between the south and the north after the formation of the unified empire of Qin and Han dynasties and what is the source of the national spirit and strength for China to create a lasting glorious history that stands out among the ancient civilizations around the world. These topics are of practical significance in guiding the people, especially young people, to identify with Chinese culture, strengthen national confidence and pride, and forge a strong sense of community of the Chinese nation.

2. From a horizontal perspective, with the Belt and Road Initiative as the main thread, we should continue to strengthen archaeological research on cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, observe and understand the grand historical picture of the exchanges and integration of different civilizations through archaeological achievements, tell the Chinese story well, and contribute Chinese historical wisdom and experience to the world while absorbing the essence of foreign cultures.

The argument that "the Chinese culture comes from the West" was prevalent in the early years of Chinese archaeology. It was even believed that Chinese culture as a whole was transplanted from ancient Babylon and other foreign countries.[59] These arguments have been rewritten through the efforts of generations of Chinese archaeologists, and there is no longer a place for them in Chinese prehistory. Meanwhile, for a long time before the reform and opening up, archaeologists were afraid to discuss such issues as the cultural exchange between China and the West and the influence of foreign cultures on China, causing the enclosure of Chinese archaeology with a narrow vision. Except for major archaeological discoveries one after another in China which were not interrupted even during the Cultural Revolution and maintained the world's attention on China's archaeological achievements, academic research,

[59] Chen, *Zhongguo Shiqian Kaoguxueshi Yanjiu*, 31.

theoretical exploration, cooperation, and exchanges were once thrown into a deadlocked situation. Although the situation could be considered reasonable in terms of the political ecology of the time, the strong aversion of old generations of archaeologists to the cultural aggression of Western imperialism in old China, and their high vigilance against it, it should be recognized that it was not a normal state and could have greatly constrained the development of Chinese archaeology.

Today, the Chinese nation is undergoing changes of a scale unseen in a century and at the critical stage of national rejuvenation. China has also stood at the center of the world stage. President Xi Jinping emphasized in his speech that the Chinese nation has developed a great national spirit and fine traditional culture. It is important to make full use of archaeological achievements to recognize the splendid achievements of Chinese civilization. Meanwhile, we should show the world the significant contributions made by Chinese civilization to human civilization and tell the Chinese story well to the world. It also reflects the cultural confidence of China.

Chinese civilization originated and developed independently, which has been proved by several archaeological evidence. However, it does not mean that ancient Chinese culture was a closed and self-contained cultural system. Su Bingqi proposed from a broad perspective that China has the unique advantages of "two halves" in human geography apart from the characteristics of "the central region and four frontier regions." To be specific, the six regional systems of Chinese archaeology culture could be divided into three major regions facing the sea and three major regions facing the Eurasia continent. "We can understand China from a global perspective. In addition to looking at China from a regionalization system perspective, we can also look at the world from a regionalization system perspective. The result of such an analysis is that the two halves of China correspond with the two halves of the world, namely the continental culture and the maritime culture . . . . In traditional Chinese historiography, there is a distinction between *siyi* (four frontier regions) and *huaxia* (the central plains). From the perspective of the regionalization system of China and the world, *siyi* precisely connects the two major regions of China with the two major regions of the world, namely the old continent and the Pacific Rim. The ancient culture of the *siyi* region occupies a more prominent position in the comparison between China and

the world and its interrelationship." [60] It is not difficult to understand the formation and development of the Belt and Road in ancient China and the relationship between China and the ancient cultures of the world from such a perspective. After systematically sorting out the vast number of cultural exchanges between China and the West in archaeological discoveries of China, Su Bai 宿白 wrote, "No culture of any country or nation develops in isolation. It would absorb the cultures of neighboring countries and nations, and even of more distant ones, as a reference for its development . . . . The reason for the existence and development of any nation and state lies in its excellence and progress. Therefore, the cultural exchange between nations and countries is mutual and should not be one-sided . . . . The mutual influence and exchange merely within the Chinese nation are not enough and the direct and indirect long-term exchanges with other nations, especially Western nation-states with the earliest developed civilization, would promote cultural exchange in a wider range that is often beyond our expectations." [61] In recent years, many archaeological remains of these kinds have been unearthed. Both artifacts from or influenced by the West and artifacts that had spread overseas through the Silk Road since the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods and the Qin and Han dynasties, covering ceramics, lacquerware, bronze mirrors, silk, and so on, have been found.[62] They have opened up new horizons and broad space for further research.

In the new era, the development of Chinese archaeology goes step by step with international archaeology. With the efforts of generations of archaeologists, the gap between Chinese archaeology and international archaeology has narrowed rapidly (at the technical level in particular). Chinese and foreign scholars are cooperating closely on major issues related to the development of mankind, such as human origins, agricultural origins, environmental archaeology, zooarchaeology, phytoarcheology, metallurgical archaeology, and so on, which are not only international topics but also important topics of Chinese archaeology. As Yan Wenming said, "China boasts a vast territory, a long history, and so many ethnic groups. It is also rich

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60 Su, *Zhongguo Wenming*, 147.

61 Su Bai, *Kaogu Faxian yu Zhongxi Wenhua Jiaoliu*, 1–2.

62 Qi Dongfang, "Jiaoliu de Jiazhi—Wailai Qiwu yu Zhongguo Wenhua," in *Yibao Xi Lai: Kaogu Faxian de Sichouzhilu Bolaipin Yanjiu*, eds. Ge Yiyi and Qi Dongfang, 41–71.

in archaeological remains with complex types. Therefore, there are countless topics to be studied . . . . We can say that China is one of the best places to develop archaeological theories and methods and a place for the growth of archaeological masters. Meanwhile, China is a part of the world. It would be difficult to clarify the characteristics of Chinese culture, its place in ancient civilizations worldwide, the influence of Chinese history on the course of world history, and the influence of world history on China if we fail to look at China from the height of world history." [63] We are now standing at the forefront of the time and doing what our predecessors have never done. It is the historical mission given to the new generation of archaeologists by the new era to embrace the world and let the world know about China.

3. On the whole, we should strengthen the theoretical construction and ability training of archaeology, strive to build Chinese archaeology with salient Chinese features, style, and ethos, and realize the Centennial "Chinese Dream."

It is the first time in history for the top leader of the Party and country to personally point out the direction and set the goal for the construction and development of a discipline in nearly a century since the birth of Chinese archaeology. President Xi Jinping clearly stated in his speech that it is necessary to strengthen archaeological capacity building and discipline construction and "strive to build Chinese archaeology with salient Chinese features, style, and ethos, and enhance the influence and right of speech of Chinese archaeology in the international archaeological community." [64] The key and core issue is the construction of the theory of Chinese archaeology.

After the 1960s, with the development of archaeology in the world, especially in the United States, new theories and new trends emerged. The most influential was undoubtedly the "New Archaeology School." [65] The main theory of the school is that they believe that traditional archaeological research using mainly "inductive method" is at a lower level. To rise to a higher level of research, the "deductive method" should be used. The problem should be pre-determined according to a certain "model" and then verified by sampling and deduction based on archaeological materials. Following the "New

[63] Yan, *Zouxiang 21 Shiji*, 13.
[64] Xi, "Jianshe Zhongguo Tese," 9.
[65] Yu, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme*, 140–42.

Archaeology School," many new schools have emerged, including "Processual Archaeology," "Post-process Archaeology," "Ethnic Archaeology," etc. According to Chen Shengqian 陈胜前 , at least eight so-called "paradigms" have emerged, including cultural history, processual, post-process, ecology, evolution, dynamism, Marxism, and historical and artistic archaeology.[66] After the introduction of these numerous Western archaeological theories and trends to China, the opinions of Chinese scholars on them vary. Some agree with them while others are against them.

If we look at and consider these so-called new theories and paradigms with a calm and sober mind, we should admit that there are some reasonable elements. These new theories strongly criticize and reflect on the long-term lack of theoretical construction of "traditional archaeology," in particular the phenomenon of the lack of "middle range theory" (or "medium theory") from "things to people" and then the understanding of "universal and general rules (laws) of the society," which is of positive significance to a certain extent.[67] Nevertheless, we should further reflect on the historical background of the emergence of these theories and the objects of their research and consider whether they are suited to realities in China or not. The theoretical value and operational space of the "New Archaeology School" and other paradigms might be suitable for certain prehistoric cultures without written records or ancient cultural traditions (like the prehistory of the United States that was founded only a few hundred years ago), yet it may not apply to the whole world. Whether it has "universal value" or not needs to be further observed and verified through the data and information accumulated from the study of prehistoric archaeological cultures in different regions of the world.

As far as Chinese archaeology is concerned, it has a distinct tradition of historicism from the very beginning. Later, generations of Chinese archaeologists accumulated abundant archaeological data through continuous field investigation. On this basis, the "middle range theory" with Chinese characteristics has taken shape during the research of major topics like the origin, the evolution and development mode, and the characteristics of the Chinese civilization. Su Bingqi's "regionalization system and typology" theory as well as the "trilogy" of development and evolution from "ancient country,

[66] Chen Shengqian, "Kaoguxue Yanjiu de Wenti Laizi Nali," *Nanfang Wenwu*, 94–100.
[67] Yu, *Kaoguxue Shi Shenme*, 163.

federal country, to empire" and the "three models" of the development model of the origin of the Chinese civilization and nation based on the theory are active high-level theoretical explorations.

Since it is the case for prehistoric archaeological research, it is even more impossible for Chinese archaeological research on "the continuous civilization system over five thousand years" with a sea of literature records to completely follow the same path of Western archaeology and try to solve the problems in China and tell the Chinese stories with the theories of Western "New Archaeology School" or so-called paradigms, no matter it is the archaeology of Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties or the archaeology of the historical periods after the unification in Qin and Han dynasties. As a Chinese saying goes, a stone taken from another mountain may serve as a tool to polish the local jade. We should combine the general rules of world archaeology with the concrete practice of Chinese archaeology to start from materials rather than "models," [68] embarking on a path that carries distinct Chinese features of archaeology development and constructing an archaeological theory system consistent with China's realities.

In the early 1980s, the older generation of Chinese archaeologists proposed to construct the "Chinese School." [69] Later, Zhang Zhongpei further summarized the characteristics of the "Chinese School" as follows: Firstly, it starts from archaeological materials and applies archaeological methods to observe and analyze the social landscape and its development stages, including production and production relations, economic base, and superstructure, reflected by archaeological phenomena under the guidance of Marxism; secondly, it applies the archaeological typological method developed by Chinese scholars to study the development of archaeological cultures and the corresponding genealogy, the process of the formation of the multi-ethnic nation, and the interrelationship of different archaeological cultures, and the unbalance of their development on the basis of scientific excavation; thirdly, it aims to reveal the

[68] Zhang, *Zhongguo Kaoguxue*, 216–17.

[69] In June 1981, Su Bingqi officially proposed the view that the "Chinese School" had appeared in archaeological research in his report "The Development of Chinese Archaeology since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" 建国以来中国考古学的发展 at a lecture held by the Beijing History Society to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China: "A 'Chinese School' with its own characteristics appear in the international archaeological research." Ibid., 42.

original appearance of history "to promote the formation of a materialist view of history among the people and stimulate their patriotism, internationalism, and ideological feeling of ethnic unity." He also concluded that "the new 'Chinese School' is nurtured by arduous efforts of numerous people. It can be seen that continuous archaeological practice under the socialist system is the soil for the growth of the 'Chinese School' and the comparative analysis and comprehensive generalization from reality are catalysts for the emergence of the 'Chinese School.'" The characteristics of the "Chinese School" lies in the trinity of guideline, methodology, and purpose which covers theories and methods with a complete development process unique to the People's Republic of China.[70] When we are marching towards the lofty goal of "striving to build Chinese archaeology with salient Chinese features, style, and ethos" pointed out by President Xi Jinping, it is worthwhile for us to inherit and carry forward the rich spiritual heritage accumulated by our predecessors and make new contributions in the new era.

Conclusion

Over a century ago, "the salvoes of the October Revolution brought Marxism to China," ushering in the founding of the Communist Party of China. From then on, the Chinese people, who had struggled to find their way in the darkness, found a way to achieve national liberation and independence and move toward socialism. Almost in the same period, the disaster-ridden Chinese nation regained cultural confidence and introduced modern archaeology from the West to save the nation from subjugation, hoping to learn from history and move towards a modern, scientific, and democratic future. More than a hundred years have passed. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the great Chinese nation is on its way to national prosperity and rejuvenation amid "changes of a magnitude not seen in a century" and is realizing the "Chinese Dream." "We should review history in prosperity" and write a new chapter in archaeology. Chinese archaeology, with its century-old tradition, is also taking up a new mission in this new historical period.

[70] Ibid., 42–43.

The speech of President Xi Jinping reflects the unprecedented importance attached by the Party and the government to archaeology. While highlighting the importance of archaeology, it affirms the achievements of generations of archaeologists who stay true to their original aspirations and continue to forge ahead. Never before have Chinese archaeologists been so inspired, confident, and energetic as they are today. It has ignited great enthusiasm for them for exploring the unknown archaeological world from a higher academic starting point. It has been predicted that "China has created a fairly developed inland civilization with its own characteristics, complete process, and unity in diversity in ancient times. On the land containing this civilization, large-scale archaeological work has revealed rich and colorful remains with distinctive features which are coherent in time and space. As long as we work hard, we can certainly stage a good show in the field. As a nation adept at theoretical thinking, we should also make our due contribution to this end." [71]

Let us set sail for the bright future of Chinese archaeology under the guidance of the banner of President Xi Jinping's important speech.

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[71] Ibid., 293–94.

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