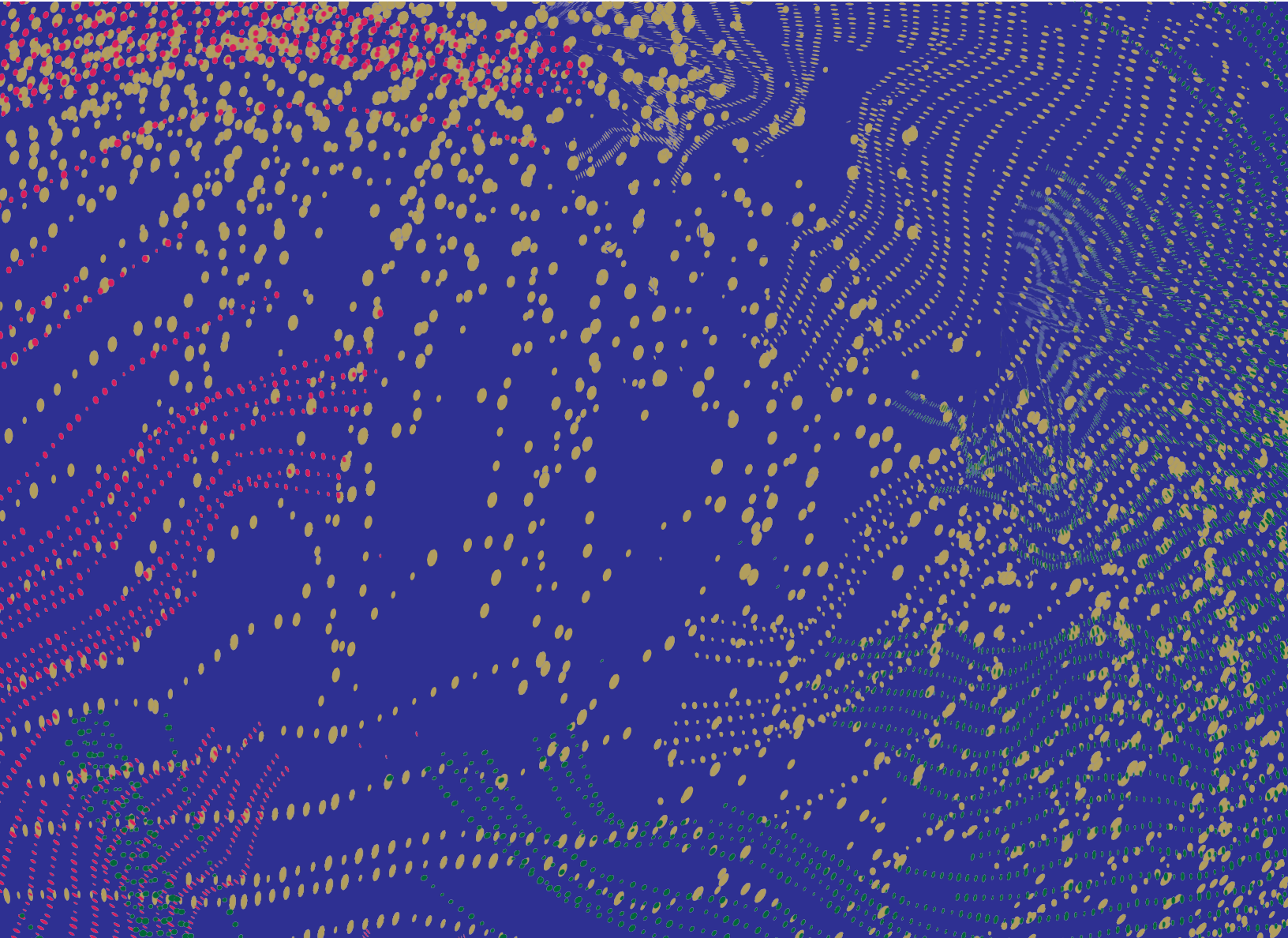


The World Humanities Report
**Historiography
in China**

Hou Xudong



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Historiography in China

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The study of history dates back a very long time in China, but modern historiography was born in the early twentieth century, when Liang Qichao published his article “New Historiography” in 1902, launching a revolution in historiography. With the creation of new universities in the 1920s, history as a discipline joined the modern humanities and social sciences and began to produce trained researchers through professional education in university history departments. As the university curriculum of history developed in the 1920s and 1930s, a division between Chinese history and foreign history (Western history and world history) was gradually established. Within Chinese history, a further three-pillared structure formed: (1) dynastic histories, which were delineated temporally (such as pre-Qin history, Sui-Tang history, Ming-Qing history, and modern histories); (2) thematic histories (such as political history, economic history, cultural history, social history, ethnic history, etc.); and (3) general history. Today’s historical classification system is a refinement and extension of this three-dimensional structure, the most prominent extension being the increasingly diversified contents of thematic history. This classification system has also become an unconscious support for the thinking of many historians.

University history education has been expanding in scale since 1990. Relevant data from 1990 and 2018 are shown in table 1. Between 1990 and 2018, the number of graduates with doctoral degrees in history increased nearly 23 times, with master’s degrees 5.9 times, and bachelor’s degrees 2.8 times. Currently, there are 210 mainland Chinese universities with history departments and 136 master’s degree-granting units in Chinese history, 53 of which are doctoral degree-granting units. In 2018 instructors and researchers in history totaled 16,816, including 3,185 professors (or equivalent rank) and 5,315 associate professors, with university instructors accounting for more than 95 percent.¹

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¹ *Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji nianjian 2018* [China education statistics yearbook 2018] (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 2019), 52. Data on degree-granting units were kindly provided by Fu Haiyan, Secretary of the Discipline Review Group of Chinese History.

Table 1. Number of graduates with BA, MA, and PhD degrees in history

Year	Number of BA recipients in history	Number of MA recipients in history	Number of PhD recipients in history
1990	6,394	790	34
2018	18,021	4,699	772

Sources: Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian 1991 [China education yearbook 1991] (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992); Zhongguo jiaoyu tongji nianjian 2018 [China education statistical yearbook 2018] (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 2019).

At present, there are more than a hundred active periodicals in China devoted to history. Those housed in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), a database of journal articles, include six on historical theory, twenty-six on premodern Chinese history, twenty-three on modern Chinese history, thirty-five on the general history of China, forty-five on Chinese ethnic history and local gazetteers, and twenty-two on world history. In addition, publishing houses produce many historiographical collections, and a large number of general-topic and social science journals also publish research articles on history, not to mention numerous English-language publications that have been established in China since 1986.

Various types of academic groups have been established since the 1980s. Today, in addition to the Association of Chinese Historians, many provinces and municipalities have their own organizations, most of which are specialized societies or research associations formed based on research areas, such as the China Society of Yin-Shang Civilization, the Historical Association of Wei-Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasty of China, the China Association for Song Dynasty Studies, the Chinese Society on Ming Dynasty History, the Chinese Society for Historians of China's Foreign Relations, the American History Research Association of China, the Chinese Korean History Association, and so forth. There are also groups established around even more specific research topics, such as the Chinese Society for Sun Yat-sen Studies and the Academy of History of Chinese Resistance against Japanese Aggression. According to the official website of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, there are 260 social groups

named “[blank] History Society [*shixue hui*].”² These groups generally organize conferences, edit collections of research papers, and sponsor academic publications.

Now I will turn from this broad institutional sketch of history in China to focus more particularly on its practice, specifically in the field of premodern history. From 1949 to 1980, Marxist thought dominated Chinese historiographical research. Most research pursued a holistic view of Chinese history through specific interest in economic history, ethnic history, peasant revolts, and so forth. Despite this narrowness, the period saw the completion of important document collections that would provide vital ongoing support for the study of premodern Chinese history. Prominent examples include: the Twenty-Four Histories, Chinese Historical Atlases, the Oracle Bone Collection [*Jiaguwen heji*], and the Turpan documents in Xinjiang.

As the process of China’s ideological liberation and reform unfolded, dogmatic understandings of Marxism were reconsidered. Western historiography and theories and ideas from the humanities and social sciences were introduced (or reintroduced) and became popular. Young historians who graduated in the early 1980s absorbed the theories and methodologies of Western historiography and began to develop a new Chinese historiography. At the same time, because rampant development brought a construction boom, archaeology saw tremendous growth as newly unearthed objects became available to researchers. New archaeological findings emerged from every era,³ not only bearing new fruit on issues such as the origin of *Homo sapiens* in East Asia and the origin and developmental path of Chinese civilization, but also advancing the study of historical periods. The excavation of materials bearing written script spearheaded developments in a variety of historical fields: oracle bones and the history of the Yin and Shang dynasties; bronzes and the history

² According to a search for the term *shixuehui* [historical society] in the database on the official website of the Social Organization Administration Bureau of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.mca.gov.cn/n155/index.html>.

³ See the published volumes of *Zhongguo kaoguxue* [Chinese archaeology], edited by the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, such as the *Jiushiqi shidai juan* [Paleolithic volume], the *Xinshiqi shidai juan* [Neolithic volume], the *Xia Shang juan* [Xia and Shang volume], the *Liang Zhou juan* [Western and Eastern Zhous volume], the *Qin Han juan* [Qin and Han volume], and the *Sanguo liang Jin Nanbei chao juan* [Three Kingdoms, Western and Eastern Jin, and the Southern and Northern Dynasties volume] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003–17); and “Zhongguo kaoguxue bian” [Chinese archeology], in *Xin Zhongguo lishi xue yanjiu 70 nian* [70 years of research in new Chinese historiography], ed. Bu Xianquan (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2020), 53–192.

of the Western Zhou dynasty and the Spring and Autumn period; bamboo and wooden slips and the histories of the Warring States, the Qin and Han dynasties; Chinese paintings and the history of the Han dynasty; stone carvings as represented by tomb records and the history of the middle antiquity;⁴ and written documents and history from the Song dynasty onward. Earlier unearthed or surviving materials have also been more finely sorted and published,⁵ and more historical materials that were rare in the past have been published in large quantities, such as several collections edited around the *Siku Quanshu*, an encyclopedia compiled during Qing dynasty, which provide rich materials for research on the history of the Song dynasty and onward.⁶ The emergence of these new materials has also provided a new standpoint from which to observe the past, helping to discover new angles of observation and analysis beyond dynasty-centered, top-down accounts of history.

Digital humanities techniques that use big data to process historical materials to open up new perspectives and methods have also emerged. Related courses have already appeared in the curriculum of many university history departments. Huazhong Normal University and Tsinghua University have held

⁴ Wang Yuxin, *Xin Zhongguo jiagu xue qishi nian* [Seventy years of new Chinese oracle studies] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2019); Zhu Fenghan, *Zhongguo qingtongqi zonglun* [An overview of Chinese bronzes] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009); *Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi zhengli yu yanjiu* [Ancient Chinese bronzes collation and research series], 17 vols. to date (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2015–19), published by category; Li Junming, Liu Guozhong, Liu Guangsheng, and Wu Wenling, *Dangdai zhongguo jianboxue yanjiu 1949–2019* [Contemporary studies in Chinese bamboo and silk manuscripts 1949–2019] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2020); Zhao Chao, *Zhongguo gudai shike gailun* [Introduction to ancient Chinese stone inscriptions], updated edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019).

⁵ From 1990 to 2015, the First Historical Archives of China compiled and published 140 titles of various Ming–Qing archives. See “Fulu liu: Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan dang’an chubanshu mulu” [Appendix 6: The First Historical Archives of China archival publications catalogue], in *Ming Qing dang’an shiye—Zhongguo diyi lishi dang’anguan fazhan licheng 1925–2015* [Ming and Qing archival work: The development of the First Historical Archives of China 1925–2015], ed. Hu Wanglin (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2016), 402–15; for more recently published materials, see the First Historical Archives’ homepage at <https://web.archive.org/web/20220606012233/http://www.lsdag.com/nets/lsdag/page/index.shtml>. In addition, the First Historical Archives systematically published Huizhou documents, Guizhou Qing Shuijiang documents, and the Southern County and the Ba County Archives of the Qing Dynasty, etc.

⁶ Liu Zhiwei, “Gage kaifang sishinian Ming Qing shehui jingjishi yanjiu de lujing yu fangxiang” [The path and direction of research on the socioeconomic history of Ming–Qing in the forty years of reform and opening up], in *Xipan dengwei: Shehui jingjishi yanjiu zatan* [Dim lights by the stream: Miscellaneous discussions on socioeconomic history research] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2020), 7–12.

several workshops around big data and quantitative research in history; the China Biographical Database (CBDB) and other content databases built collaboratively by Harvard University, Peking University, Academia Sinica in Taipei, and Tsinghua University are advancing; the National Social Science Fund of China is also actively supporting the development of various historical documents–based databases;⁷ and Tsinghua University has partnered with Zhonghua Book Company to establish the *Journal of Digital Humanities* in English and Chinese—the first of its kind—with the inaugural issue published in January 2020. These are all signs that digital humanities are expected to produce important new tools for historiographical research in the future.

Three factors have driven the development of ancient Chinese historical research in the past thirty or so years: the discovery, editing, and publication of historical materials; changing social realities; and stimulation from new historiography and social scientific thought from the West.

Macrohistorical explanations based on Karl Marx’s evolutionary model of five social formations (from primitive to slave to feudal to capitalist to communist society) have largely faded out of historical research, as new macro explanations are under exploration with some difficulty. Since the 1980s, an understanding of historical development as multilinear has been gradually accepted by many researchers of Chinese history.⁸ The academic history of the doctrine of the five social formations has been carefully sorted out, and the notion that the path of capitalist development is limited to Western Europe, as proposed in Karl Marx’s late correspondence, has also received increasing attention from the academic community. Although there are still proponents of the older views, these changes have shaken previously held theories and, as a consequence, liberated minds.⁹ The half-century discussion of Chinese society

⁷ Li Huafeng and Yuan Qinjian, “2004–2015 nian guojia shehui kexue jijin zhongda xiangmu lixiang xiangmu de jiliang yanjiu” [An econometric study of the major projects of the National Social Science Fund of China from 2004–2015], *Xiandai qingbao* 36, no. 11 (2016): 139. There were as many as twenty-eight historical database projects supported by the fund’s major projects in 2016–19, available at <http://www.nopss.gov.cn/GB/219469/index.html>; with thanks to Cheng Peng for helping to organize them.

⁸ Luo Rongqu, “Lun yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan” [On a monist and multilinear theory of historical development], *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 1 (1989): 3–20.

⁹ For a review of the debate in the 1980s, see Bai Yun, “Guanyu wuzhong shehui xingtai lilun de zhenglun” [The debate on the theory of five social formations], *Zhonggong Shanxi shengwei dangxiao xuebao*, no. 6 (1988): 39–43; for a review of recent studies, see Guo Zhendan, “Yindiao nanding de bentuhua—jinnian lai ruogan xiangguan wenti shuping” [The tonal instability of indigenization—a review of some related issues in recent years], *Qinghua daxue xuebao*, no. 1 (2019): 10–11.

around issues like the periodization of slave and feudal societies and the emergence of capitalism came to an end in the 1990s.¹⁰ The related issue of the long delay of Chinese feudal society also receded. Huang Xianfen's 1979 paper "A Discussion of the Absence of Slave Society in China's National History" and its sequel¹¹ were the earliest articles, followed by support from Zhang Guangzhi, Hu Zhongda, Shen Changyun, Chao Fulin, and other scholars.¹² In the study of early antiquity, this discussion gave rise to the view that there was no slave society in China and led to the formation of the Wunu School, which has been influential.¹³ In 2006, Feng Tianyu published a book titled *A Study of "Feudalism"* that systematically analyzes the origin in the Chinese textual tradition of using the terms *fengjian* to translate the English term "feudal" and *fengjian shehui* to translate "feudal society" and the problems that arise from understanding ancient Chinese society on the basis of these terms.¹⁴ The publication of this book accelerated the disappearance of the discourse on feudalism from historiography. *The General History of China*, edited by Bai Shouyi and published in full by 1999,¹⁵ is a landmark work in that it reverts to the use of the terms "remote antiquity," "early antiquity," "middle antiquity," and so forth, to distinguish between different eras, returning to the terminology of Chinese history in early twentieth century. At present, "slave societies," "feudal societies," and many of the concepts associated with those terms are

¹⁰ For a brief overview, see Tian Renlong, "Nulizhi yu fengjianzhi fenqi de taolun" [Discussion of the periodization of slavery and feudalism], and Xu Min, "Ziben zhuyi mengya wenti de taolun" [Discussion of the seeds of capitalism], both in *Ershi shiji Zhongguo shehui kexue: Lishixue juan* [Social sciences in twentieth-century China: History volume], ed. Chen Gaohua and Zhang Tong (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 138–53.

¹¹ Huang Xianfen, "Woguo minzu lishi meiyou nuli shehui de tantao" [A discussion on the absence of slave society in China's national history], *Guangxi shifan xueyuan xuebao*, no. 2 (1979): 71–79; "Xu" [Sequel to "A discussion on the absence of slave society in China's national history"], *Guangxi shifan xueyuan xuebao*, no. 3 (1979): 51–63.

¹² See also He Zhaowu, "Lishi yuanjiu zhong de yige jiawenti—cong suowei Zhongguo fengjian shehui changqi tingzhilun shuoqi" [A false problem in historical research—starting with the so-called long-term stagnation theory of Chinese feudal society], *Baike zhishi*, no. 5 (1989) (also in He Zhaowu, *Keneng yu xianshi: Dui lishixue de ruogan fansi* [Possibilities and realities: Some reflections on historiography] [Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2017], 16–21).

¹³ Chen Minzhen, "Nuli shehui zhi bian—chongshen Zhongguo nuli shehui jieduan lunzheng" [The slave society dispute—revisiting debates on Chinese slave society stage], *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 1 (2017): 159–78.

¹⁴ Feng Tianyu, *"Fengjian" kaolun* [A study of "feudalism"] (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2006).

¹⁵ *Baishou yi zhubian "zhongguo tongshi"*, 12 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1999).

rarely used in historiographical writing, although they still appear in secondary school history textbooks.

The changes described above resonate with trends in the Chinese humanities and social sciences to favor autonomy and localization, that is attempts to present new concepts, explanations, and theories based on Chinese experiences from the past instead of applying to the Chinese past the so-called general theories created by Western scholars. In May 2010 the journal *Wen shi zhe* [Literature, history, and philosophy] hosted a humanities forum “Qin to the End of Qing: The Problem of Chinese Social Formation,” devoted to so-called Chinese feudal society. The tone of the discussion was once again in opposition to the mainstream narrative of past feudal society. In 2011, the third issue of the *Shixue yuekan* [Monthly journal of history] organized a written colloquy [*bitan*] on “Methodological Issues on the Nature of Society from Qin to Qing,” which sought methodological breakthroughs in the study of social formations.¹⁶ Many noted the crucial role of political power in premodern Chinese history, echoing the views of Zhang Guangzhi from 1983.¹⁷ New studies on the origins of the Chinese state have also emerged based on archaeological findings, all of which note the significance of rituals (rites) and warfare in the formation of the Chinese state.¹⁸ Research on the paths of development in premodern China still attracts the attention of some scholars, who occasionally offer new insights.¹⁹

¹⁶ Related papers are collected in Fan Xuehui, ed. *Jiegou yu daolu: Qin zhi Qing shehui xingtai yanjiu* [Structure and path: A study of social formation from Qin to Qing] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2019).

¹⁷ See K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

¹⁸ For example, Wang Zhenzhong, “Jisi, zhanzheng yu guojia” [Ritual sacrifice, war and the state], *Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, no. 3 (1993): 57–69; *Zhongguo gudai guojia de qi yuan yu wangquan de xingcheng* [The origins of the state and the formation of royal sovereignty in ancient China] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013); Bu Gong, *Wenming qi yuan de Zhongguo moshi* [The Chinese model of the origins of civilization] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2007); Han Jianye, *Zaoqi Zhongguo: Zhongguo wenhuaquan de xingcheng he fazhan* [Early China: The formation and development of the Chinese cultural circle] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015).

¹⁹ For example, Wang Jiafan, *Zhongguo lishi tonglun* [General theory of Chinese history], rev. ed. (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2019); Chao Fulin, *Xian Qin shehui xingtai yanjiu* [Studies on the social formation of the pre-Qin] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2003); Zhang Jinguang, *Zhanguo Qin shehui jingji xingtai xintan* [New exploration of the economic formation of Warring States and Qin society] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013); Li Hu, “Zhongguo gushi fenqi ji shehui xingzhi lungang—jian lun Zhongguo chuantong shehui de zhuyao maodun wenti” [Outline of Chinese ancient history periodization and nature of society—also on the main contradictions of traditional Chinese society], *Wen shi zhe*, no. 1 (2020): 46–76.

However, due to shifting interests of the academic community, they rarely generate debate.

Relatedly, thinking popularized by the early twentieth-century introduction of evolutionary theory has led to the emergence of various new theories of dynastic change and periodization in historiography. A new trend is that some scholars have turned their attention from “change” [*bian*] to “constancy” [*chang*], focusing on the recurrence of mechanisms across different dynasties and how change emerges from constancy.²⁰ This perspective again echoes the discussion that emerged in the 1980s on the long-term continuity of feudal societies and inevitably raises concerns about whether it is equivalent to stagnation theory.

Although it is no longer possible to develop a new and unified view on macrohistorical issues, the spurt of empirical research has not, as a matter of course, produced new theoretical thinking. More intentional theoretization thinking by researchers is needed, especially with regard to modern Western scholarship, which cannot be avoided. Both modern Chinese intellectual history and Western history are embedded in our understanding of premodern China, and breaking through the boundaries between them is one of the prerequisites for generating vital theoretical interpretations.

The marginalization of traditional macrohistorical research questions has made room for studies on more specific topics and for fresh thinking, and yet the burgeoning of such research has raised concerns about “fragmentation.”²¹ In fact, the tension between the two has propelled the development of historical research.

In the domain of more specific research topics, a rather obvious trend is that as source material is continuously discovered and sorted, the object of research begins to shift away from the elite toward ordinary people, and thus research begins to break away from the court-centered, top-down approach that has lasted for thousands of years. More diverse viewpoints emerge, such as bottom-

²⁰ Yan Buke, *Fu Zhou zhi mian: Zhouli liumian lizhi de xingshuai bianyi* [Wearing the sacrificial dress of Zhou dynasty: The rise and fall of the sacrificial dress system in *The Rites of Zhou*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2009), 432–33; Hou Xudong, *Shenme shi richang tongzhi shi* [What is the history of everyday rule] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2020).

²¹ For an earlier discussion of this issue, see Xing Long, “Zhongguo shehuishi yanjiu xiang hechu qu” [Where to go in the study of Chinese social history], *Qinghua daxue xuebao*, no. 4 (2010): 12–14; for a more focused discussion, see Zhang Kaiyuan et al., “Zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu zhong the ‘suipianhua’ wenti bitan (shang, xia)” [Written conversation on the problem of “fragmentation” in the study of modern Chinese history (Part 1, Part 2)], *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 4 (2012): 4–33; no. 5 (2012): 4–31.

up approaches,²² human-centered perspectives,²³ or looking at China and Inner Asia from the periphery.²⁴ Using new material to supplement or justify the conclusions derived from classical Chinese texts, and fully exploring and displaying the unique value of the new material itself,²⁵ both rely on newly emergent materials as their foundation. In 1992 Li Xueqin proposed “to break out of the age of doubt,”²⁶ which stimulated a lively discussion in the field of ancient history²⁷ and aroused enthusiasm for a renewed understanding of early texts as well as the histories recorded in them.²⁸ Many scholars, aware of the limitations of the Western analytical frameworks and assertions introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century, began to explore and refine new

²² Zhao Shiyu, “Xushuo: Zuowei fangfalun de quyu shehuishi yanjiu” [Narrative: Regional social history research as methodology], in *Xiao lishi yu da lishi: Quyu shehui shi de linian, fangfa, yu shijian* [Small history and big history: Concept, method, and practice in regional social history] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2017), 4; and many works of scholarship in historical anthropology.

²³ Liu Zhiwei and Sun Ge, *Zai lishi zhong xunzhao Zhongguo—guanyu quyu shi renshilun de duihua* [Searching for China in history—a dialogue on the epistemology of regional history], mainland ed. (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2016); Lu Xiqi, “Ren wei benwei: Zhongguo lishixue yanjiu de yizhong keneng lujing” [Human as standard: A possible path for the study of Chinese history], *Xiamen daxue xuebao*, no. 2 (2014): 1–10.

²⁴ Ge Zhaoguang, “Predicting the Currents: New Perspectives on Historical Studies,” in *Here in “China” I Dwell: Reconstructing Historical Discourses of China for Our Time*, trans. Jesse Field and Qin Fang (Boston: Brill, 2017), 187–214; Luo Xin, “Neiya shijiao de beichaoshi” [An Inner Asian perspective of the history of the Northern Dynasties], in Luo’s *Heizhan shang de beiwei huangdi* [The Northern Wei emperors on black felt] (Beijing: Haitun chubanshe, 2014), 75–95.

²⁵ It is also reflected in the rethinking of the “twofold method of evidence” proposed by Wang Guowei in the early twentieth century.

²⁶ Included in Li Xueqin, *Zouchu yigu shidai* [Out of the age of doubt] (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1994).

²⁷ Yang Chunmei, “Quxiang kanyou de Zhongguo gudianxue—‘Zouchu yigu shidai’ shuping” [Chinese classics in a troubling direction—a review of “Out of the age of doubt”], *Wen shi zhe*, no. 2 (2006): 5–25; Lin Rushing, “Zhengai zouchu yigu shida ma?—dui dangdai Zhongguo gudianxue quxiang de kanfa” [Should we really break out of the age of doubt?—perspective on the current orientation of Chinese classics], *Shixue jikan*, no. 3 (2007): 3–8.

²⁸ For concentrated findings, see Li Ling, *Jianbo gushu yu xueshu yuanliu* [Premodern books and academic sources on bamboo and wood strips and silk manuscripts], rev. ed. (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2008); Li Rui, *Zhanguo Qin-Han shiqi de xuepai wenti yanjiu* [A study of the problem of schools [of thought] in the Warring States and Qin-Han periods] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011); Xu Jianwei, *Wenben geming: Liu Xiang Hanshu—Yiwen zhi yu zaoqi wenben yanjiu* [Textual revolution: Liu Xiang, *Book of Han—Treatise on Literature* and early textual studies] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2017).

understandings by honing in on specific dynasties, thereby contributing to the growth of autonomy of Chinese scholarship from Western general theories.²⁹

In areas that previously lacked coherent research, long-term efforts and cooperation in the academic community have laid the foundations for subsequent research. For example, in 2003, the Shanghai People's Publishing House [Shanghai renmin chubanshe] completed the publication of a series of Chinese dynastic histories from remote antiquity to the Qing, some of which are reprints of works written in the 1970s or 1980s, others were entirely new works, and others revisions of older works, which still have lasting value.

Political and institutional history hit a low after 1949, when the popularity of the doctrine of class struggle turned attention away from the study of emperors and generals and toward peasant wars. Interest was renewed in the 1980s, but the rise of social history soon overshadowed it. Although political and institutional history maintained its influence at a few institutions, such as the Department of History at Peking University, social history became broadly dominant. Tian Yuqing's research on the political history of middle antiquity transformed the former class-based analysis. Through careful historical examination and scrutiny of the relationship between emperors and imperial families, and the historical evolution of the Eastern Jin dynasty, Tian Yuqing provided a model of political historiography for many young scholars. In turn, a number of them produced influential treatises.³⁰ Zhu Zongbin's study of the

²⁹ For example, Wang Hui's magnum opus, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* [The rise of modern Chinese thought] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2004); Lu Yang, *Qingliu wenhua yu Tang diguo* [The culture of *qingliu* and the Tang Empire] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2016); Bao Weimin, *Zouxiang zijue: Zhongguo jingu lishi yanjiu lunji* [Toward self-consciousness: Essays on the study of imperial Chinese history] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019); Li Huarui, "Zixu" [Author's preface], in *Tanxun Songxing guojia de lishi* [In search of the history of the Song state] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2020), 1–5; Zhao Yifeng, *Ming Qing dizhi nongshang shehui yanjiu (chubian)* [A study of the peasant and merchant society of the Ming and Qing dynasties (preliminary edition)] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2017); Lin Wenxun, "Zhongguo gudai 'fumin shehui' yanjiu de youlai yu zhigui" [The origin and aim of the study of "prosperous society" in ancient China], *Hubei daxue xuebao* 47, no. 1 (Jan, 2020): 68–73.

³⁰ Chen Shuang, *Shijia dazu yu Beichao zhengzhi* [Great clans and the politics of the Northern Dynasties] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998); Han Shufeng, *Nanbeichao shiqi Huaihan yibei de bianjing haozu* [Powerful clans in border regions north of the Huaihan region during the Northern and Southern Dynasties] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2003); Chen Yong, *Hanzhao shi lungao—Xiongnu Tuge jianguo de zhengzhishi kaocha* [An essay on Han and Zhao history—an examination of the political history of the establishment of the state of Xiongnu Tuge] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2009); Qiu Luming, *Wei Jin zhiji de zhengzhi quanli yu jiazuo wangluo* [Political power and familial networks during the Wei and Jin periods] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012); Qiu

pre-Sui chancellorship systems³¹ is an early exemplar of “living institutional history,” as it integrates the political process into its description. Yan Buke, on the other hand, starts from the transformations of specific institutions and draws on the reflections of Karl Marx and Max Weber not only to reveal a transition from title-based to office-based systems of administration during the Qin and Han dynasties, but also to provide a systematic explanation of the evolution of the system of officialdom during the entire dynastic period through a series of analytical concepts. In so doing, Yan elevated the study of the premodern bureaucratic system from the part to the whole, thus proposing a view of institutional history on par with economic history and cultural history.³² Deng Xiaonan, on the other hand, advocates for a “living institutional history” that emphasizes integration between process, relationship, and behavior³³ and pays close attention to the complex relationships between institutional regulations and practice. The excavation of Qin and Han decrees and the discovery of new materials (such as the Tian Sheng decree in the Tianyi Pavilion in Zhejiang) have stimulated and advanced legal history significantly.³⁴ Reflections on the aforementioned studies have also emerged, along with new attempts to position

Luming, *Chang'an yu Hebei zhijian* [Between Chang'an and Hebei] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2018); Fan Zhaoifei, *Zhongguo Taiyuan shizu qunti yanjiu* [A study of the literati clans in Taiyuan during middle antiquity] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014).

³¹ *Lianghan wei jin nanbeichao zaixiang zhidu yanjiu* [Research on the prime minister system in the Han, Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990).

³² Yan Buke, *Cong juebenwei dao guanbenwei: Qinhan guanliao pinwei jiegou yanjiu* [From title standard to official standard: A study of the structure of bureaucratic rank in the Qin and Han dynasties] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2009); *Pinwei yu zhiwei: Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao guanjie zhidu yanjiu* [Rank and position: A study of the official bureaucratic system in the Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002).

³³ Deng Xiaonan, “Zouxiang ‘huo’ de zhidushi—yi Songdai guanliao zhidushi yanjiu weili de diandi sikao” [Toward a “living” institutional history: Reflections on the history of the bureaucratic political system in the Song dynasty], *Zhejiang xuekan*, no. 3 (2003): 99–103.

³⁴ Wang Zhenzhong, *Ming Qing huishang yu huaiyang shehui bianqian* [The Huizhou merchants of the Ming and Qing dynasties and social changes in Huaiyang] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1996); Liu Zhiwei, *Zai guojia yu shehui zhijian: Ming Qing guangdong diqu lijia fuyi zhidu yanjiu* [Between state and society: A study of the *lijia* household and the tax and corvee systems in the Guangdong region in the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe, 1997); Liu Houbin, *Tangdai zhongshu menxia tizhi yanjiu* [A study of the central secretariat system in the Tang dynasty] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2004); Lou Jin, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang lifa yu falü tuxi* [Legislation and legal system in the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern, Sui, and Tang dynasties] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014); Huang Zhengjian, *Tangdai fadian, sifa yu “Tian sheng ling” zhu wenti yanjiu* [A study of the code, justice, and the issues of the Tian Sheng decree in the Tang dynasty] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2018).

political and institutional history in the context of the new historiography of the twentieth century, as well as new experiments attempting to go beyond this framework.³⁵ In recent years, new research on premodern political culture can be seen as compensating for the neglect of the contemporary ideas and perceptions in this body of work.

The most widespread change in the last thirty years has been the rise of social history, which first emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. Its recent reemergence arises from both a rethinking of previous historical research and new post–World War II historiography in the West. Researchers founded the Center for Chinese Social History (presently known as Key Research Institute for Social History of China), which has organized annual conferences, numerous symposiums, and publications. Social historical research has expanded research topics from the state to villages, cities, marriage and family, clans, associations, religion, rituals, daily life, medicine, and more. It has also given rise to historical anthropology, the history of daily life, regional history, medical history, and other research directions, freeing scholars from narrow domains of the past and greatly expanding the scope of historical inquiry.³⁶ In this process, through repeated discussions of the meaning, objects, and methods of social history, a “bottom-up” perspective has also emerged. Historical anthropology has aimed to “enter the historical scene” in hopes of rewriting Chinese history with research on specific regions in the south,³⁷ extending to Jiangnan, as well as central, northern, and northwest China. Although there are concerns that regional history might dissolve Chinese history, this perspective and its practice have brought the study of history into an era of diversification and, in the long run, will help create useful dialogue in historical research. The study of social history has also attracted the attention of many young scholars.³⁸

³⁵ Qiu Luming, “Chen Yinjing fanshi jiqi tiaozhan—yi Wei Jin zhiji de zhengzhishi yanjiu wei zhongxin” [Chen Yinjing’s paradigm and its challenges—centering on the study of political history in Wei and Jin periods], in *Zhongguo zhonggushi yanjiu* [Studies in the history of Chinese middle antiquity] (Beijing: Zhonghua Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 2:199–220; Hou Xudong, *Chong: Xin-ren xing junchen guanxi yu Xihan lishi de zhangkai* [Favor: The confidence model of the ruler–official relationship and the unfolding of Western Han history] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2018); chapter 5 of Xudong, *Shenme shi richang tongzhi shi*, 152–215.

³⁶ For details, see Chang Jianhua, *Xin shiqi Zhongguo shehui shixue* [Social historiography of China in the new era] (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2018), 101–302.

³⁷ Chen Chunsheng, “Zoujin lishi xianchang” [Into the historical scene], *Dushu*, no. 9 (2006): 19–28.

³⁸ Su Quanyou and Zou Baogang, “Zhongguo jinxiandai shi zhuan ye boshi xuewei lunwen xuanti fenxi” [Analysis of topic selection for doctoral dissertations in modern and

In contrast to the revival of social history, economic history has suffered increasing neglect. Issues of land ownership and the emergence of capitalism, which were of great concern before the 1980s, have been marginalized due to waning interest in the problem of social formations. Under the broad scope of reform and opening up, as well as stimulation from Western economics and economic history, much attention has turned toward markets, technology, population, and the environment. Regional economies have also attracted a great deal of interest, with the continuous discovery of inscribed deeds and bills in various locations. These new documents have produced many localized areas of interest, such as Huizhou studies, the regional economies of Jiangnan and Pearl River Delta, impacts of the inflow of silver, and so forth.³⁹ Fiscal issues

contemporary Chinese history], *Hunan gongcheng xueyuan xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)*, no. 4 (2011): 58–61. For a detailed compendium of the development of Chinese social history, see Chang Jianhua, *Xin shiqi Zhongguo shehui shixue*.

³⁹ Wang Zhenzhong, *Huizhou shehui wenhua shi tanwei* [Exploring the social and cultural history of Huizhou] (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2002); Wang Zhenzhong, *Ming Qing yilai Huizhou cunluo shehui shi yanjiu* [Study of the social history of Huizhou villages since the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2011); A Feng, *Ming Qing shidai funü de diwei yu quanli—yi Ming Qing qiye wenshu, susong dang'an wei zhongxin* [The status and rights of women in the Ming and Qing dynasties—centering on Ming-Qing contract documents and litigation archives] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2009); A Feng, *Ming Qing Huizhou susong wenshu yanjiu* [Study of Ming-Qing litigation documents of Huizhou] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2016); Lu Xiqi and Lin Changzhang, *Hanzhong sanyan: Ming Qing shiqi Hanzhong diqu de yanqu shuili yu shehui bianqian* [Three weirs in Hanzhong: Water conservancy and social change in Ming-Qing Hanzhong region] (Beijing: Zhongguo shuju, 2011); Xing Long, *Shanxi shuili shehui shi* [Social history of water conservancy in Shanxi] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012); Fan Shuzhi, *Jiangnan shizhen: Chuantong de biange* [Jiangnan municipalities: The transformation of tradition] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2005); Wang Jiafan, ed., *Ming Qing Jiangnan shi yanjiu sanshi nian* [Thirty years of historical research on Jiangnan in the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Shanghai: Shanghai gujichubanshe, 2010); Li Bozhong, *Jiangnan de zaoqi gongyehua: 1550–1850* [Early industrialization in Jiangnan: 1550–1850] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2000); Ye Xian'en, *Zhujiang sanjiaozhou shehui jingji shi yanjiu* [Study of the social and economic history of the Pearl River Delta] (Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 2001); Huang Yonghao, *Tudi kaif ayu defang shehui: Wan Qing Zhujiang sanjiaozhou shatian yanjiu* [Land development and local society: A study of reclaimed farmland in the Pearl River Delta in the late Qing] (Hong Kong: Wenhua chuangzao chubanshe, 2007); Wu Hongqi, *Ming Qing Zhujiang sanjiaozhou chengzhen fazhan yu shengtai huanjin yanbian hudong yanjiu* [A study of the interaction between town development and ecological evolution in Ming-Qing Pearl River] (Wuhan: Changjiang chubanshe, 2014); Qiu Yongzhi, “*Baiyin shidai*” de luodi: *Mingdai huobi baiyinhua yu yinqian bingxing geju de xingcheng* [The landing of the “age of silver”: The formation of parallel structure of silverization of currency and silver money in the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2018).

related to economic history have also garnered increasing attention from academia. From studies conducted during the Han dynasty with the help of Han bamboo slips to the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties, a lot of relevant achievements have accumulated, and there is no shortage of work borrowing from the Western concept of fiscal states to analyze the history of the Song dynasty. Generally speaking, many new materials have been discovered relevant to economic history, and the methods of quantitative economics have been widely applied, with many microanalyses focusing on local issues. Nonetheless, development of new perspectives and new issues has been sluggish, primarily due to scholars not venturing beyond the problems and frameworks set by Western scholarship, which regard economics as an independent field, contemplate only the market, and ignore the characteristics of premodern China. What ends up being discovered is often a Chinese version of Western economic development. To date, not much economic history has been able to ground its analysis and thinking firmly in local concepts and behaviors. The “tributary economy” outlined by Liu Zhiwei is a direction worthy of further exploration.⁴⁰

In the early twentieth century, a focus on race or ethnicity developed in response to Western nationalism and evolved into ethnic history, which became an important object and branch of research. In the late 1980s, Fei Xiaotong’s theory of the pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation emerged as a masterpiece of reconciling history and reality.⁴¹ The last thirty years of research have seen the introduction of Western concepts of ethnic groups, repeated discussions of the concept of ethnicity, and newly formed ideas of where the focus of ethnohistorical research should be. The field moved beyond the simplistic theory of Hanization and integration and the overemphasis of racial differences and origins, beginning to take premodern classifications of human groups seriously.⁴² Some scholars have proposed examining premodern

⁴⁰ Liu Zhiwei, “Wangchao gongfu tixi yu jingji shi” [The dynastic tribute system and economic history], in *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu de lilun yu fangfa* [Theory and methodology in the study of Chinese economic history], ed. Lin Wenxun and Huang Chunyan (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2017), 416–38.

⁴¹ Fei Xiaotong, “Zhonghua minzu de duoyuan yiti geju” [The pluralistic and unified pattern of the Chinese nation], *Beijing daxue xuebao*, no. 4 (1989): 1–19.

⁴² Fei Xiaotong, “Zhonghua minzu de duoyuan yiti geju” [The pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation], *Beijing daxue xuebao*, no. 4 (1989): 1–19; Yao Dali, *Zhuixun “women” de gengyuan: Zhongguo shishang de zuqun ji guojia rentong* [Tracing the roots of “we”: Ethnic groups and national identity in Chinese history] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2018); Luo Xin, “Cong minzu de qiyan yanjiu zhuanxiang zuqun de rentong kaocha—minzu shi zuyuan

ethnicities from political angles,⁴³ broadening the scope of research inquiry. At the beginning of this century, scholars began to pay attention to Inner Asian factors in the development of Chinese history by referring to Altaic and Inner Asian studies, and refined the Inner Asian perspective, echoing new Qing history in the United States. Although there is considerable opposition to the latter among Chinese scholars,⁴⁴ such attempts to look beyond the Han Chinese center have broadened horizons and helped to recognize the complexity of Chinese history.

Ritual studies and scripture, which were rejected as representatives of tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century, have the scholarly field of vision in the last three decades, even becoming an area of intense interest. Chen Shouguo's *Zhongguo lizhi shi* [History of Chinese rites] (6 volumes, 1991–2011) and Yang Zhigang's *Zhongguo liyi zhidu yanjiu* [Studies on Chinese ritual systems] (2001) led the way first, followed by Wu Liyu's edited *Li yu Zhongguo gudai shehui* [Rites and premodern Chinese society] (4 volumes, 2016). Numerous thematic studies have also appeared: from ancestral rites of the Shang and Zhou periods to Qing rituals and ritual systems, with the formerly rather insular study of middle antiquity rituals producing the most outstanding results—from textual reconstruction to the implementation of the ritual code, as well as the impact of the ritual system on civil society, all achieving important advancements.⁴⁵ A number of specialized research institutions have been

yanjiu de xin fazhan" [From the study of ethnic origin to the examination of ethnic identity—new developments in the ethnohistorical study of ethnic origins], in *Wanghua yu shanxian: Zhongguo bianyi lunji* [Sovereignization and dangers of the mountain: A collection of essays on border descendants of middle antiquity] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2019), 157–70.

⁴³ Luo Xin, *Zhongguo beizu minghao yanjiu* [A study of northern names in middle antiquity] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2009); Hu Hong, *Nengxia zeda yu jianmu huafeng: Zhengzhi ti shijiaoxia de huaxia yu huaxiahua* [Huaxia and Huaxia-ization from the perspective of the political body] (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2017).

⁴⁴ See the discussion between Wang Rongzu and Yao Dali in *Shufang weiyuan: Gudai Zhongguo de jiangyu, minzu yu rentong* [Distant regions: Frontiers, ethnicity, and identity in premodern China], ed. Ge Zhaoguang et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 270–376; Zhong Han, *Chongshi neya shi: Yi yanjiu fangfalun de jianzhi wei zhongxin* [Reinterpreting Inner Asian history: Centering on the review of research methodology] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2017); Zhong Han, *Qingchao shi de jiben tezheng tanjiu: Yi dui Beimei "xin Qingshi" guandian de fansi wei zhongxin* [A reexamination of the basic features of Qing dynastic history: Centering on reassessment of the notion of "new Qing history" in North America] (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe, 2018).

⁴⁵ For details, see Yang Ying, "Gaige kaifang sishi nian lai de xian Qin lixue he lizhi yanjiu" [Research on Pre-Qin ritual and ritual system in the past forty years of reform and opening

established, such as the Institute for Chinese Classics Studies at Tsinghua University and the Center for Ritual Studies at Peking University, which have attracted the active participation of scholars outside of history⁴⁶ and which some scholars see as the key to understanding Chinese history. Beyond the ritual system, the study of the classics also began to break away from the modern veins of intellectual or philosophical history and to be reconceptualized through a return to the original texts and contexts. Specialized journals such as *Zhongguo jingxue* [Chinese classics] (2005–), *Jingxue wenxian yanjiu jikan* [Collected papers on the study of the classics] (2005–), and *Xin jingxue* [New classics] (2017–) have also appeared, and a considerable number of doctoral and master’s theses have also taken up topics in the study of the classics.

The rise of historical criticism and historiographical writing is another trend that deserves attention. At the beginning of this century, inspired by the research on “historical criticism” in Japanese academia, some young historians of middle antiquity began to experiment with historiographical writing and historical criticism, analyzing the structural arrangement of historical records, the modular writing in them, and discussing the contexts in which they were produced. They no longer treated historical records as transparent materials, but paid attention to the complex relationship between author, text, writing conventions, and time period, and extended this way of thinking to the analysis of stone inscriptions, images, and even literary history,⁴⁷ deepening their

up], *Gudai wenming* [Ancient civilizations], no. 3 (2019): 35–51, and “Gaige kaifang sishi nian lai de zhongguo lixue he lizhi yanjiu” [Research on ritual and ritual system of middle antiquity in the past forty years of reform and opening up], *Wen shi zhe*, no. 5 (2020): 99–113.

⁴⁶ Wu Fei, *Hun yu sang: Chuantong yu xiandai jiating liyi* [Marriage and mourning: Traditional and modern family rituals] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2012); Wu Fei, *Shensheng de jia: Zai Zhongxi wenming de bijiao shiye xia* [The sacred home: From a comparative perspective of Chinese and Western civilizations] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2014), Wu Fei, “Cong sangfu zhidu kan ‘chaxu geju’—dui yige jingdian gainian de zaifansi” [Seeing “chaxu geju” from the system of funeral attire—a rethinking of a classical concept], *Kaifang shidai*, no. 1 (2011): 112–22; Wu Fei, “Wufu tu yu gudai Zhongguo de qinshu zhidu” [The Five Garments and the kinship system in premodern China], *Zhongguo shehui kexue*, no. 12 (2014): 162–75.

⁴⁷ Xu Chong, *Zhongguo shidai de lishi shuxie yu huangdi quanli qi yuan* [Historical writing and the origin of imperial authority in middle antiquity] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012); Sun Zhengjun, “Zhongguo liangli shuxie de liangzhong moshi” [Two modes of Liangli writing in middle antiquity], *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 3 (2014): 4–21; Sun Zhengjun, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi yanjiu zhong de shiliao pipan yanjiu” [A critical study of historical materials in the study of the history of the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties], *Wen shi zhe*, no. 1 (2016): 21–37; Xu Chong, “Cong ‘yike’ xianxiang kan Beiwei houqi muzhi de ‘chansheng guocheng’” [Observing the production process of late Northern Wei tomb

understanding of the process of textual (historical) production and the subjectivity brought about by the interplay of multiple forces. These ideas have also spread to pre-Qin study and various fields of Ming-Qing studies,⁴⁸ providing insights to promote a more appropriate grasp of different types of texts. This trend can be traced to the “debating premodern history” movement in the first half of the twentieth century or to the pursuit of postmodernism more recently, and how to further develop it will be an important issue in the future.

In summary, the past thirty years of premodern Chinese history have seen many achievements in the collecting, sorting, and examining new source materials. Although it may be said that the trees appear increasingly distinct and the overall view of the forest has matured beyond rigid understandings of the past, new explorations have yet to think deeply about the gains and losses of twentieth-century historiography. Even though the desire to foreground China’s own subjectivity has become increasingly prominent, the specific path to reach such a goal remains unclear. Either they return to the tradition of the classics or explore new issues stimulated by the constant importation of Western academic resources, at the expense of the ancients or the Westerners. Perhaps only when researchers are more fully aware of their own situations will it be possible to create significant achievements through dialogue and refinement. This fuller awareness will require a number of things: a thorough reflection on the origins of the established classification structure, research ideas, and basic concepts; a systematic understanding of the historical roots and localities of

records through the phenomenon of “yike”], *Fudan xuebao*, no. 2 (2011): 102–13; Luo Xin, “Minzu qi yuan de xiangxiang yu zai xiangxiang: Yi Gaxian dong de liangzi faxian wei zhongxin” [Imagining and reimagining national origins: Centering on the two discoveries of Gaxian cave], *Wenshi*, no. 2 (2013): 5–25; Geng Shuo, *Cenglei de tuxiang: Pinqi zhuanhua yu Nanchao yishu* [Layered images: Piecing together brick paintings and Southern Dynasty art] (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2020); Sun Shaohua and Xu Jianwei, *Cong wenxian dao wenben: Xian Tang jingdian wenben de chaozhuan yu liubian* [From documents to texts: The transcription and flux of classical texts of the pre-Tang dynasty] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2016); Qiu shi, “Wenben shengcheng yu shiliao pian—gudian wenshi qingnian xuezhe yantaohui zongshu” [Textual formation and historical criticism—summation of the symposium for young scholars of literary history of the classics], *Wenxue yichan*, no. 5 (2017): 191.

⁴⁸ In the general repository of Zhiwang, there are 162 papers on premodern Chinese history with themes containing historical writing or historical criticism. Strictly speaking, there were only two before 2003, and the rest are concentrated in the decade or so thereafter, with 32 in 2019. For an example of systematic works, see Miao Runbo, *Liaoshi tanyuan* [Exploring the sources of the *History of Liao*] (Beijing: China Book Bureau, 2020).

Western theories; a bridging of the premodern/modern and the Chinese/Western dichotomies; overcoming field and disciplinary boundaries; and pluralistic research on the premise of an intimate understanding of the words and deeds of the ancients.

Translated from the Chinese

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