

## China

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The year 2021 has been a fruitful one for Japanese research into Chinese archaeology in both quantity and quality, in spite of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that continues to affect our lives. This was made possible by online meeting platforms that enabled academic conferences and international symposiums to be held even as barriers to international travel remained up. These travel restrictions are also likely part of the reason why there was an increase in research and publications focusing on Chinese archaeological artifacts owned by domestic museums and private collectors. If we consider long-term trends, however, it is possible to see this shift in research interest as an endeavor by Japanese researchers to discover how we may contribute to the field of Chinese archaeology, now that archaeological research is making rapid progress in China. In fact, most of the research into domestic collections had already begun, or was already being planned, before the pandemic hit.

Recently, many of our Japanese seniors in the field of Chinese archeology have announced their retirement. These are the researchers who had studied in China during the tumultuous period after the launch of the Chinese economic reforms in 1978 and, upon their return to Japan, laid the foundation for Chinese archaeological research. Their findings drew the attention of Chinese researchers and helped promote academic exchange between the two nations. In 2021, we saw the publication of a body of works that could be considered a culmination of their efforts, as well as significant findings by generations of researchers whom they have taught and influenced. This medley of publications by researchers across generations symbolizes both a collaboration and a handover. As successors, we must ensure that the flame lit by our predecessors continues to burn by keeping up exchange with researchers from overseas and other disciplines, updating our awareness about issues, and developing new methodologies. Promising endeavors include the discussion of sex and gender within the field of Chinese archaeology in Japan, albeit delayed, and studies that attempt to recontextualize Chinese archaeology within the history of the eastern Eurasian continent.

(translated by Rachel LAM)

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