

Teaching Premodern Asian History through Material Culture

by Yunxin Li

Abstract

To students who grow up outside of Asia and do not speak Asian languages, Asian history may seem distant and intangible. Premodern Asian history may seem even more elusive and disconnected to world history. Based on my experience teaching undergraduate Asian history courses, this article discusses the opportunities that material culture provides for instructors teaching premodern Asian history at the undergraduate or secondary school levels. It introduces five ways in which material culture informs teaching about premodern Asia: Using archaeological findings as historical evidence; facilitating cross-cultural comparisons with material culture; exploring the materiality of objects; teaching social history with objects; challenging the supremacy of the written word. Each section offers examples and pedagogical resources that are accessible and applicable to the classroom.



Set of Bronze Vessels, Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BCE). Metropolitan Museum of Art, CCO, via Wikimedia Commons.

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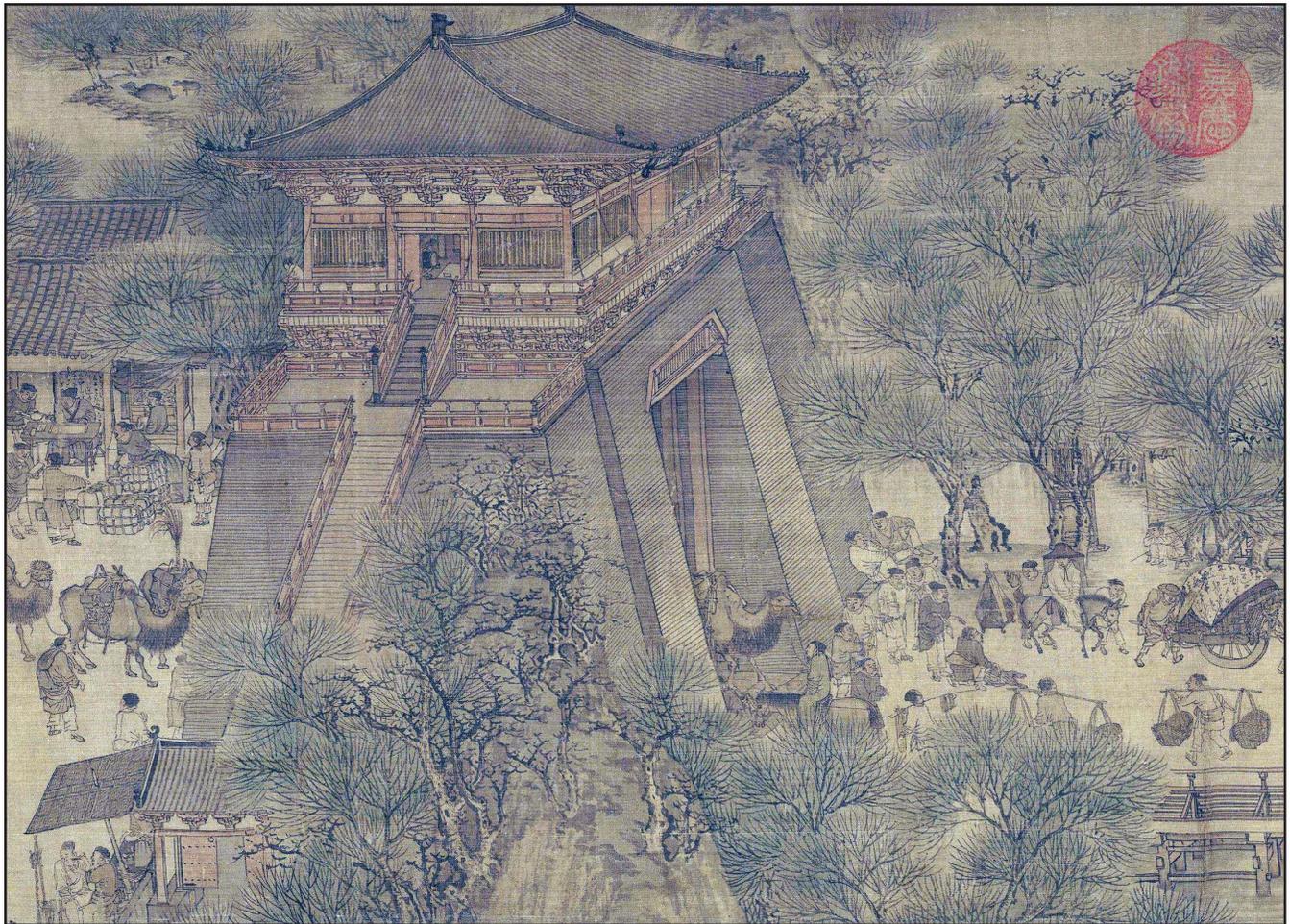


Figure 1. “Bianjing city gate in Along the River During the Qingming Festival.” Part of the 12th-Century Chinese painting *Qingming shanghe tu*. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Introduction

Material culture comprises art and other physical objects created and used by people. As a pedagogical tool, it addresses several problems for classes on premodern Asia. To students who have grown up outside of Asia and do not speak Asian languages, premodern Asia may seem distant and intangible. It can also be challenging to integrate premodern Asian history into world history.

While Asia is home to some of the world’s earliest civilizations, many existing world history survey courses still refer to the continent as an assembly of largely isolated cultures up to around 1000 CE. A major reason for this is that connections within Asia, or between Asian and other cultures in prehistoric and early historical times, were not always recorded in written sources.

In response to these challenges, this teaching resource introduces five ways in which material culture informs the teaching of premodern Asia at the undergraduate and secondary school levels: (i) taking material culture as historical evidence; (ii) teaching cross-cultural comparisons and interactions with material culture; (iii) exploring the materiality of objects; (iv) tracing the social history of objects; and (v) challenging the supremacy of written records.

Each section offers examples and pedagogical resources that are accessible and applicable to the classroom.

Taking Material Culture as Historical Evidence

Only a fraction of written sources from premodern Asia have been translated into English. Material culture and visual sources, such as archaeological objects, statues, paintings, and old maps, supplement these written sources as historical evidence. Integrating visual sources into lectures and classroom activities will enrich the course material and expand the questions that students can ask.

Archaeological Findings

First, archaeological findings provide evidence about prehistoric and early historical cultures that did not leave written sources. In lectures about early Asian cultures, teachers could show images of objects such as stone tools, pottery, bronze vessels and invite students to consider how those objects might have been used, how they might reflect tomb occupants' social statuses, and what they can tell about technological developments and social stratification. The first few chapters of Gideon Shelach-Lavi's *The Archaeology of Early China* provide a comprehensive guide to prehistoric material culture in China.¹ Archaeological studies of the ancient environment are also sources for early societies that left no written records. Teachers can engage students by discussing how geography, climate, and ecological conditions affected the emergence of farming, fishing, and herding in different parts of Asia; people's diets and lifestyles; economic developments; and patterns of settlement and interactions. A good resource for teachers is the *Cambridge Elements in Ancient East Asia* series. Several published pieces in the series are focused on archaeology and environment.²

Paintings

Second, by analyzing paintings from premodern Asia, students can learn about various aspects of social history, such as family life, commercial activities, social classes, gender, and age. Mural paintings and figure paintings from China's middle period, the Tang and Song dynasties (618–1279), are excellent resources for lectures and classroom discussions. A famous painting, "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" (*Qingming shanghe tu*), is a gateway into everyday life in Song China.³ Some possible discussion questions include:

- What does this painting tell us about urban life and commerce in 12th-century China?
- What are the people's and the entertainers' occupations?
- What are their means of transportation?
- How are age, gender, and class distinctions reflected in the painting?
- How do people associate with one another?

Teachers and students would notice that vibrant economic activities took place in the Northern Song capital: farmers and herders are coming from rural areas into the city; restaurants, shops, and peddlers fill the streets; some people are walking, some are riding wheeled wagons or sedan chairs, some are using donkeys and mules for transportation, and some are loading cargo onto a boat; there are people from all walks of life in different clothing styles, rich and poor, men and women, young and old, as well as people of various occupations such as jugglers, actors, monks, fortune tellers, and scholars. The painting thus indicates that medieval China's urban centers were highly commercialized and that various means of transportation were used in everyday life.

Maps

Third, old maps are evidence of people's geographical knowledge and worldview. Most maps from premodern times are not scientifically accurate, but they reflect how people perceived the world. Stanford Libraries' "[Maps 101](#)" website is a helpful introduction to finding, analyzing, and using historic maps,

especially for teachers who need to teach students how to read maps.⁴ Another useful teaching resource is the *Library of Congress's Maps Analysis Guide*.⁵ Teachers can invite students to compare and analyze maps from different parts of the world. In a Chinese map dating to 1663, China occupies most of the world, whereas Japan, Korea, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and imaginary countries from Chinese mythology are drawn as disproportionately small islands scattered at the corners.⁶ In a Japanese Buddhist map dating to 1710, India and Buddhist mountains occupy the center of the world and most of the map.⁷ A medieval Islamic map dating to 1154 looks upside down from a modern perspective—the south at the top, the north at the bottom—with Mecca top and center.⁸ Teachers can invite students to compare how the same continents, countries, seas, and mountains are portrayed differently in these maps and discuss why people of different cultures hold such different views of the world.

Religious Art

Finally, religious art serves as direct evidence for religious history. *The “World Religions” page under the “Resources” tab of the San Francisco Asian Art Museum* offers many examples of religious art that illustrate the spread of religions, including but not limited to Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Christianity, and Islam.⁹ Likewise, *the Asian art collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, contains religious sculptures and ritual objects from ancient times to the present, offering a window into the spread of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam throughout premodern Asia.¹⁰ For instance, a 12th-Century wooden sculpture of Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion, provides a good example of how Bodhisattva transformed in the Chinese context. In the classroom, teachers can play the video in which Nancy Berliner, Wu Tung Senior Curator of Chinese Art, explains the sculpture.¹¹

Teaching Cross-Cultural Comparisons and Interactions with Archaeological Findings

Comparisons between premodern cultures are often limited by the content and genres of available written records. By contrast, archaeological work in different parts of the world shares certain methods and subjects due to the nature of archaeological remains and archaeologists' disciplinary training. These common topics include, for instance, the domestication of plants and animals, technologies and craft specialization, the stratification of early societies, the emergence of cities and states, and early writing systems. All these themes facilitate comparisons across Asian cultures as well as those between Asian and non-Asian societies.

An important idea that teachers convey in Asian history courses is respecting cultural differences instead of taking one culture as a standard to measure others. Material culture provides rich cases that help students question uniform standards for civilization. In archaeologist V. Gordon Childe's 1950 article, he presented ten criteria for the urban revolution, seeing the emergence of cities as a result of economic and technological developments.¹² Later archaeologists have found that Childe's model, which was based on early cities in Mesopotamia, does not always apply to early cities in other parts of the world. For instance, K.C. Chang has noted that early Chinese cities were primarily built as political and ritual centers, not economic centers, particularly those of the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE). In ancient China, bronze metallurgy was applied to politics as ritual vessels and weapons rather than to food production. Oracle bone inscriptions, i.e. royal divination records on ox scapulae or turtle plastrons, and other findings from the Shang royal tombs show that the Shang rulers communicated with the gods through shamanism, indicating the importance of ideology in early state formation.¹³ Chang thus argues that the emergence of civilization in China was “a political achievement expressed through concentration of material wealth,” rather than “a technological achievement manifested in improvement of productive means.”¹⁴

Some edited volumes and websites offer resources for teachers and students to compare ancient cities and states in Asia and beyond. *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, edited by Michael E. Smith, includes methodological reflections and case studies on the comparative study of ancient complex

societies.¹⁵ The authors explore themes such as urbanization and settlement patterns, the political strategies of kings and chiefs, and the economic choices of individuals and households. The case studies cover a range of geographical settings, from the Andes to Southeast Asia. ***The Online Resource for Japanese Archaeology and Cultural Heritage by the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures*** is an interactive tool for teachers interested in incorporating archaeological findings of early Japan into history courses. It covers topics such as early agriculture, food, cities, villages, burials, religions, and architecture, with material evidence from archaeological sites and classroom activities for teachers.¹⁶

Material culture also facilitates the teaching of cross-cultural interactions in premodern Asia. ***The International Dunhuang Project's website*** contains links to several digital projects on cultural and religious exchanges in Central Asia, such as “Buddhism on the Silk Road” and “Medicine on the Silk Road.”¹⁷ These materials can enrich world history lectures with social history and individual experiences along the Silk Roads. A similar resource is ***Silk Road Seattle***, a public education project led by Daniel Waugh at the University of Washington. This site features cultural interactions across Eurasia from the beginning of the Common Era to the seventeenth century.¹⁸ It contains links to the websites of major art museums exhibiting objects of interest for the study of the Silk Road, photographic records of the cities and architecture along the Silk Road, as well as information about archaeological excavations that currently centers on Mongolia but is expanding to include other geographical regions. Teachers may also find useful links to resources on the ***“Asia in Art” resources page of the Asia for Educators website***, an initiative of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University.¹⁹

Exploring the Materiality of Objects

Material culture provides evidence of premodern exchanges of commodities, labor, and technology. Using interdisciplinary methods, archaeologists have been able to trace the geographical origins of materials in excavated objects, revealing ancient routes of material exchange that were not documented in received texts. For instance, jade objects found in early Chinese tombs attest to the persistent trade networks between China Proper (Inner China or Han China) and Central Asia since ancient times. A large number of the jade objects found in the tomb of Fu Hao, who was a Shang dynasty king's wife and a military leader, are reported to have come from nephrite quarries in today's Xinjiang.²⁰ Teachers can find more information about the material aspects of ancient Chinese jades from the website of the ***National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution***.²¹ This site also contains an Ancient Chinese Bronzes collection and a lesson plan, which aims at teaching students about the production process of bronze vessels.²²

This material approach could also be used to teach about writing and manuscripts of ancient and medieval times. While undergraduate and secondary school students may lack the linguistic skills required to understand a manuscript's content, teachers can draw students' attention to their material aspects— the paper; the binding methods; the exterior and interior designs; where the manuscripts were preserved, transmitted, and discovered; etc. This material approach allows students to learn important information about the manuscripts' historical contexts and the culture of writing in premodern times. A useful teaching resource for this purpose is ***the Digitized Medieval Manuscripts App***, which contains over 500 links to fully digitized manuscripts from institutions around the world, usually with descriptions in English.²³ Another digital resource for teaching premodern Asian manuscripts is ***the International Dunhuang Project***, which offers images of manuscripts and other artefacts discovered at Dunhuang, an important site along the Silk Road.²⁴ The Lotus Sutra manuscripts can be particularly useful, given the successful digitization and study of these manuscripts through the Lotus Sutra Project at the British Library.²⁵ Through classroom activities and assignments, such as comparing manuscripts in small groups and student presentations on their favorite manuscripts, teachers can introduce students to the world of digitized archives and teach students about premodern Asian cultures at the same time. ***The Library of Congress's Guide to Analyzing Manuscripts*** is particularly useful in the classroom.²⁶

Tracing the Social History of Objects

While objects are displayed in museums as static artifacts today, each object had its own journey of production and circulation before it was buried, discarded, or preserved. By tracing the objects' social histories, teachers can introduce students to the societies where they were actively used.

Historical objects offer excellent opportunities for students to ask questions and conduct research into everyday lives in the past. For example, an agate cup with an animal head was discovered from a storehouse in the Tang dynasty (618–907) capital, Chang'an, in today's Hejiacun, Xi'an, China. The design of this cup can be traced to Rhyton, a type of drinking vessel in ancient Greece. Scholars have argued that it may have been a tribute from Persia or a Tang artisan's imitation of Sogdian-style cups. The reason why the storehouse had been sealed was probably related to a military coup. According to the feasting scenes described in Tang literature, before the cup was sealed, it was likely used by an aristocrat to drink during feasts while watching dancing performances in Central Asian styles.²⁷ Objects like this cup can bring students into a world of vibrant cultural exchange and their owners' daily lives over a thousand years ago.

A classroom activity using this method is an "archaeology inventory project" after an in-person or virtual visit to a museum exhibition, as demonstrated by [*a curriculum unit on the San Francisco Asian Art Museum's website*](#).²⁸ In this example, the teacher shows students pictures of archaeological objects from the National Museum in Afghanistan, many of which reflect exchanges along the Silk Roads. The students are required to take notes on an object's size, shape, material, and date of the object; then secondly, make a detailed drawing, describe the artifact in words, form a hypothesis of its meaning and function; finally, write a story based on the artifact either individually or collaboratively.

In my "Asia to the Eighteenth Century" course at Simmons University, I adapted this activity to a mid-term research project. The assignment prompt is as follows:

After visiting the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, write a 800–1,500 word article on an Asian object, dating before 1800, of your choice. It can be a bronze vessel, painting, statute, ceramic, etc. In addition to describing its size, shape, and function, place it in its cultural and social contexts and show how this object tells us about the history of Asia. Do not simply copy the descriptions from the museum; do some research and provide an analysis in your own words. Consider how the object was made, what it was used for, how it was circulated and discovered, and what cultural background it reflects. This essay will be evaluated primarily according to the accuracy of information, the depth of analysis, and the connection between the object and its historical context.

The *Inquiry Design Model (IDM)* will be useful as teachers guide students through a project like this.²⁹ Teachers are recommended to provide students with specific questions before they visit a local museum, such as "Where and why was this object created?" and "How did the political context affect the design and usages of this object?" Teachers are also encouraged to introduce a collection of primary and secondary sources that offer context and additional evidence. After students visit the museum, they will be able to address the questions by writing an essay or doing a presentation on an object.

Challenging the Supremacy of Written Records

Traditionally, historians have relied mainly on written records to study the past. This practice inevitably marginalizes cultures that produced few written materials, societies for which written records have been mostly destroyed, and groups with low literacy. In fact, not every culture in history prioritized writing. Some cultures put heavy emphasis on oral traditions. Some cultures achieved high levels of social development and technological sophistication but left few or no written records. Under such circumstances, material

culture not only supplements written sources and uncovers hidden stories but also empowers students who are interested in those historical communities.

Sanxingdui is a Bronze Age culture unearthed from Sichuan Province, China. It has been identified with the ancient Shu Kingdom (dating to the third and second millennia BCE). While no writings have been found at Sanxingdui, the skilled bronze and jade ritual artifacts indicate technological sophistication as well as social and religious complexity, leading scholars to question the primacy of north China polities in the late 2nd millennium BCE.³⁰ Videos about the Sanxingdui archaeological discoveries produced by the CGTN and South China Morning Post may be useful in the classroom.³¹

Teaching the history of premodern South Asia has been challenging because written histories from this region and period are insufficient. It is particularly helpful to teach this history with archaeological findings such as inscriptions, monuments, sculptures, and coins. For instance, sculptures found in Indian temples document the rise and fall of religions and sects, as well as the propensity for religious synthesis during this period.³² Archaeological evidence illuminates the connections between ancient South Asia and other cultures for the period from ca. 500 BCE to 150 CE, especially a highly developed Roman trade with South India.³³

Many archaeological sources from South Asia have been digitized and are freely accessible. The American Institute of Indian Studies' photographic archive at its Center for Art and Archaeology in Gurgaon, India, contains over 125,000 photographs in the categories of architecture, sculpture, terracotta, painting, and numismatics (study of currency). It has been partially digitized for use by scholars around the world through the University of Chicago's Digital South Asia Library.³⁴ The Indian government's Archaeological Survey of India website is another resource for teachers who wish to stay current with the latest archaeological findings in India.³⁵

Conclusion

Material culture expands the content and modes of teaching and learning about premodern Asia. It fills gaps in written sources and illuminates cultures that attached less value to writing or produced fewer "historical texts." A material-based pedagogical approach has great potential to engage students by familiarizing them with Asia and inspiring them to do research. This approach is especially meaningful to students who have few opportunities to travel to Asia or read written sources in Asian languages.

Index of Teaching Resources

1. Gideon Shelach-Lavi, *The Archaeology of Early China: From Prehistory to the Han Dynasty*, Cambridge University Press, 2015. A textbook that provides a comprehensive survey of prehistoric and early imperial material culture in China.
2. Cambridge Elements in Ancient East Asia, a short monograph series published by Cambridge University Press, with several pieces on the archaeology and environment of ancient East Asia: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/publications/elements/elements-in-ancient-east-asia/listing>
3. A famous Chinese painting dating to the 12th Century, "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" (*Qingming shanghe tu*), depicting everyday life in the Northern Song capital: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival#/media/File:Alongtheriver_QingMing.jpg
4. Stanford Libraries' "Maps 101" website, an introduction to finding, analyzing, and using historic maps: <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/maps101>

5. The Library of Congress's Maps Analysis Guide: https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Maps.pdf.
6. A Chinese world map dating to 1663 (Japanese reprint, 1700): <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/tokugawa/items/1.0213167>
7. A Japanese Buddhist world map dating to 1710: <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/maps101/catalog/dp874jj6432>
8. A medieval Islamic world map dating to 1154: <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2021/08/the-islamic-world-map-of-1154/>
9. The "World Religions" page of the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, with pedagogical resources on religious art: <https://education.asianart.org/resources/?subject=world-religions>
10. The Asian art collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, including religious sculptures and ritual objects from premodern Asia: <https://www.mfa.org/collections/asia>
11. A video explaining a 12th-Century wooden sculpture of Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion, by Nancy Berliner, Wu Tung Senior Curator of Chinese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: <https://www.mfa.org/video/guanyin-bodhisattva-of-compassion>
12. Michael E. Smith (ed.), *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Offers methodological reflections and case studies on the comparative study of ancient complex societies. Accessible online through Cambridge Core: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/comparative-archaeology-of-complex-societies/A87CCF54D1264550CC668FFD70D0AC03>
13. The Online Resource for Japanese Archaeology and Cultural Heritage by the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, introducing archaeological findings of early Japan that can be incorporated into history courses: <http://orjach.org/>
14. The International Dunhuang Project, with links to several digital projects on the cultural and religious exchanges in Central Asia: <https://idp.bl.uk/discover/learning-resources/>
15. Information about the Lotus Sutra Project, including links to videos of a conference on the conservation, digitization, and study of the Lotus Sutra manuscripts: <https://idp.bl.uk/blog/the-lotus-sutra-project/>
16. Silk Road Seattle, a public education project led by Professor Daniel Waugh at the University of Washington, featuring cultural interactions across Eurasia from the beginning of the Common Era to the seventeenth century: <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/index.html>
17. "Asia in Art" resources page on the *Asia for Educators* website, an initiative of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University: http://afemuseums.easia.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/museums/search.cgi/topic?topic_id=148;page=1
18. A page on the material aspects of ancient Chinese jades, from the website of the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution: <https://asia-archive.si.edu/learn/ancient-chinese-jades/>
19. A page on the Ancient Chinese Bronzes collection and a lesson plan on the production process of bronze vessels, from the website of the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution: <https://asia.si.edu/learn/for-educators/teaching-china-with-the-smithsonian/lesson-plans/technology-and-production-ancient-chinese-bronzes/>
20. The Digitized Medieval Manuscripts App, which contains over 500 links to fully digitized manuscripts from institutions around the world, usually with descriptions in English: <https://digitizedmedievalmanuscripts.org/>

21. The International Dunhuang Project, with images of manuscripts and other artefacts discovered at Dunhuang, an important site along the Silk Road: <https://idp.bl.uk/>
22. The Library of Congress's Guide to Analyzing Manuscripts: https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Manuscripts.pdf
23. An agate cup with an animal head discovered from a storehouse in the Tang dynasty (618–907) capital, Chang'an, in today's Hejiacun, Xi'an, China, which attests to cultural exchanges in premodern Eurasia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaanxi_History_Museum#/media/File:%E5%94%90-%E7%8E%9B%E7%91%99%E5%85%BD%E9%A6%96%E6%9D%AF.jpg
24. A curriculum unit about an “archaeology inventory project” on the San Francisco Asian Art Museum's website: <https://education.asianart.org/resources/archaeology-inventory-project/>
25. Videos about the Sanxingdui archaeological discoveries produced by the CGTN and South China Morning Post: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYxfdX9gL_o, and <https://www.scmp.com/video/scmp-originals/3136649/ancient-sanxingdui-culture-challenges-traditional-narrative-chinese>.
26. The American Institute of Indian Studies' photographic archive at its Center for Art and Archaeology in Gurgaon, India, with over 125,000 photographs, partially digitized through the University of Chicago's Digital South Asia Library: <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aiis/>
27. The Indian government's Archaeological Survey of India website, with information on the latest archaeological findings in India: <https://asi.nic.in/>

Notes

¹ Gideon Shelach-Lavi, *The Archaeology of Early China: From Prehistory to the Han Dynasty* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

² [https://www.cambridge.org/core/publications/elements/elements-in-ancient-east-asia/listing?aggs\[productTypes\]\[filters\]=ELEMENT&sort=canonical.date:desc#](https://www.cambridge.org/core/publications/elements/elements-in-ancient-east-asia/listing?aggs[productTypes][filters]=ELEMENT&sort=canonical.date:desc#), retrieved 05/10/2025.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival#/media/File:Alongtheriver_QingMing.jpg, retrieved 05/10/2025.

⁴ <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/maps101>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

⁵ https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Maps.pdf, accessed 07/07/2025.

⁶ <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/tokugawa/items/1.0213167>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

⁷ <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/maps101/catalog/dp874jj6432>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

⁸ <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2021/08/the-islamic-world-map-of-1154/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

⁹ <https://education.asianart.org/resources/?subject=world-religions>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

¹⁰ <https://www.mfa.org/collections/asia>, retrieved 05/10/2025.

¹¹ <https://www.mfa.org/video/guanyin-bodhisattva-of-compassion>, retrieved 07/14/2025.

¹² V.G. Childe, “The Urban Revolution,” *Town Planning Review*, 21 (1950), 3–17.

¹³ Kwang-chih Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Kwang-chih Chang, “Ancient China and its Anthropological Significance,” *Symbols*, Spring/Fall (1984): 2–4, 20–22; Kwang-chih Chang, *Archaeology of Ancient China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

¹⁴ Kwang-chih Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual*, 124–125. For more discussions on this issue, see Li Liu and Xingcan Chen, *The Archaeology of China: From the Late Paleolithic to the Early Bronze Age* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 294–296.

- ¹⁵ Michael E. Smith (ed.), *The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Accessible online through Cambridge Core: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/comparative-archaeology-of-complex-societies/A87CCF54D1264550CC668FFD70D0AC03>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ¹⁶ <http://orjach.org/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ¹⁷ <https://idp.bl.uk/discover/learning-resources/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ¹⁸ <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/index.html>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ¹⁹ http://afemuseums.easia.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/museums/search.cgi/topic?topic_id=148;page=1, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²⁰ Wang Binghua 王炳華, “Xi han yi qian xin jiang he zhong yuan di qu li shi guan xi kao suo” 西漢以前新疆和中原地區歷史關係考索, in Wang Binghua, *Sichou zhi lu kaogu yanjiu* 絲綢之路考古研究 (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin, 1993), 167.
- ²¹ <http://asia-archive.si.edu/learn/ancient-chinese-jades/>, retrieved on 05/10/2025.
- ²² <https://asia.si.edu/learn/for-educators/teaching-china-with-the-smithsonian/lesson-plans/technology-and-production-ancient-chinese-bronzes/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²³ <https://digitizedmedievalmanuscripts.org/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²⁴ <https://idp.bl.uk/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²⁵ <https://idp.bl.uk/blog/the-lotus-sutra-project/>, retrieved 07/14/2025.
- ²⁶ https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Manuscripts.pdf, accessed 07/07/2025.
- ²⁷ Xiang Kunpeng 項坤鵬, “Hejiacun jiaocang chutu shoushou manao bei kaolüe,” 何家村窖藏出土獸首瑪瑙杯考略 *Wenwu tiandi*, 2021(03), 60–65. For a picture of this agnate cup, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaanxi_History_Museum#/media/File:%E5%94%90-%E7%8E%9B%E7%91%99%E5%85%BD%E9%A6%96%E6%9D%AF.jpg, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²⁸ <https://education.asianart.org/resources/archaeology-inventory-project/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ²⁹ <https://c3teachers.org/idm/>, accessed 07/07/2025.
- ³⁰ Ge Yan and Katheryn M. Linduff, “Sanxingdui: A New Bronze Age Site in Southwest China,” *Antiquity*, 64 (1990): 505–513.
- ³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYxfdX9gL_o, retrieved 05/10/2025. <https://www.scmp.com/video/scmp-originals/3136649/ancient-sanxingdui-culture-challenges-traditional-narrative-chinese>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ³² Dilip Kumar Ganguly, *History and Historians in Ancient India*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), 55–68.
- ³³ Romila Thapar, “Interpretations of Ancient Indian History,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1968), 318–335, p. 332.
- ³⁴ <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aiis/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.
- ³⁵ <https://asi.nic.in/>, retrieved 05/10/2025.