

A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization

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This site is best viewed using Internet Explorer 4 or higher on an IBM compatible computer with a screen resolution of 1024 by 768. Alignment of images and text is sometimes irregular with other browsers and computers.

Purpose

The goal of this "visual sourcebook" is to add to the material teachers can use to help their students understand Chinese history, culture, and society. It was not designed to stand alone; we assume that teachers who use it will also assign a textbook with basic information about Chinese history.

Several pedagogical concerns shaped the design of this website. Although some topics (e.g. philosophy, religion, social distinctions, historiography) are best taught through written texts, many facets of Chinese civilization are more easily conveyed through images (material culture, technology, visual and performing arts, and so on). We have therefore not attempted to illustrate all the major themes of a course on China. Moreover, rather than give a few pictures of many topics, as illustrated histories often do, we have instead prepared substantial units on ten important subject areas spanning the length of Chinese history: geography, archaeology, religion, calligraphy, military technology, painting, homes, gardens, clothing, and the graphic arts. Students should be able to view these units before coming to class, much as they would read texts in a sourcebook of primary sources . This out-of-class preparation can provide the basis for classroom discussion, on-line discussion, or written assignments. To facilitate such discussion and analysis, we have included questions designed to make students think about the images they are viewing. To help keep the chronology and geography straight, we have included many maps and a timeline.

A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization

Geography



The photographs and maps in this unit show the physical conditions in which Chinese civilization developed and provide images of the people who live there today.

*Ancient
Period*

Ancient Tombs



This unit gives us a close look at five tombs, one each from the Neolithic period, Shang dynasty, Western Zhou dynasty, Warring States Period, and Former Han Period.

Buddhism



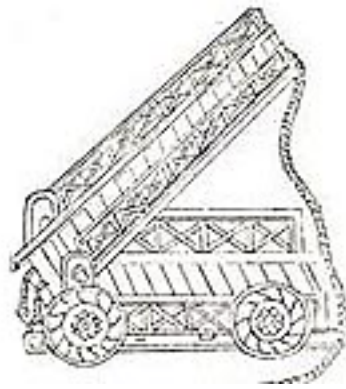
This unit offers evidence of how Buddhism changed China's visual culture, showing the evolution of images of deities, plus views of temples and people practicing Buddhism.

*Early
Imperial
Period*

Calligraphy



This unit examines the significance calligraphy has played in Chinese culture. It looks at the different forms of scripts and the aesthetic principles on which some calligraphy was highly valued.



Military Technology

Drawing on illustrated military manuals of the eleventh century and later, this unit looks at the weapons and equipment involved in sieges and other forms of warfare dominant in the Song-Yuan period.

Middle Imperial Period



Painting

This unit covers not only developments in painting as a fine art, such as the development of landscape painting, but also looks at paintings for evidence of social life, both the commercial life of cities and private life at home.



Homes

This unit looks at the homes people built as a way to learn more about the material circumstances of their lives and how geography affected daily life. After looking at how houses were built, it considers what was inside them.

Late Imperial Period



Gardens

This unit explores the private Chinese garden, the elegant paradises created by the well-to-do, especially in the Southeast. The unit includes a walk-through tour of one of the older surviving gardens of Suzhou, the Garden of the Master of Nets.



Clothing

This unit examines the messages carried by clothing, both in premodern times when they carried meanings of ethnicity and gender, and in modern times, when they have had added political meanings.

**Twentieth
Century**

Graphic Arts



This unit explores the private Chinese garden, the elegant paradises created by the well-to-do, especially in the Southeast. The unit includes a walk-through tour of one of the older surviving gardens of Suzhou, the Garden of the Master of Nets.

Timeline and Maps



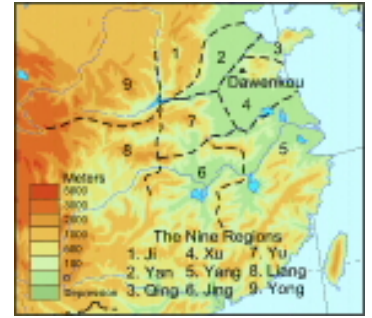
Neolithic tomb at Dawenkou

Shang tomb of Fu Hao

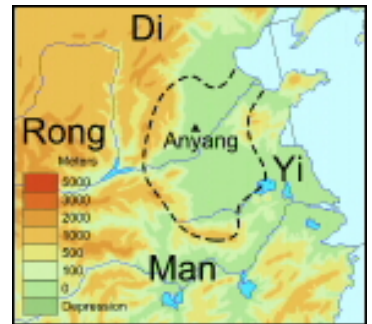
Zhou tomb of Count Yu

Warring States tomb of Marquis Yi

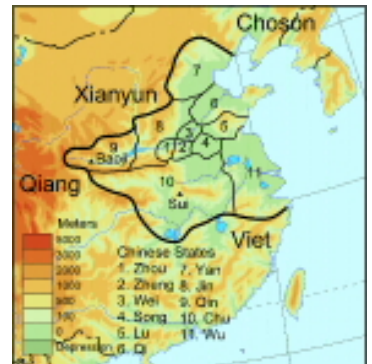
Han tomb of Liu Sheng



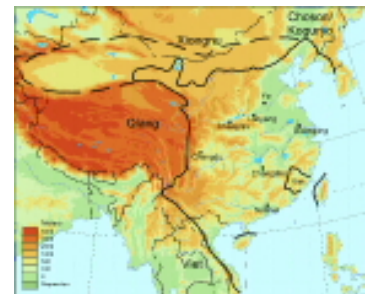
Neolithic China



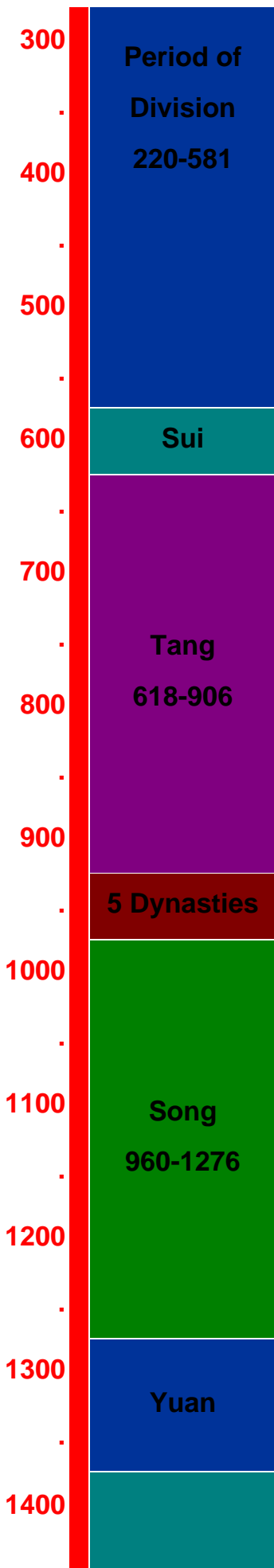
Shang Dynasty China



Zhou Dynasty China



Han Dynasty China



Famous calligraphers

Buddhist cave temples

Buddhist sculpture and painting

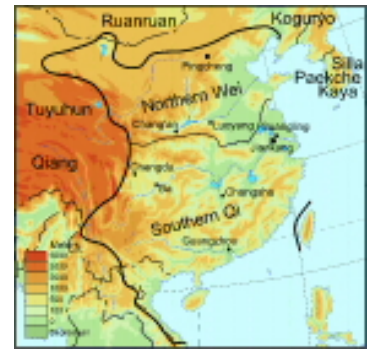
Buddhist images

Famous calligraphers

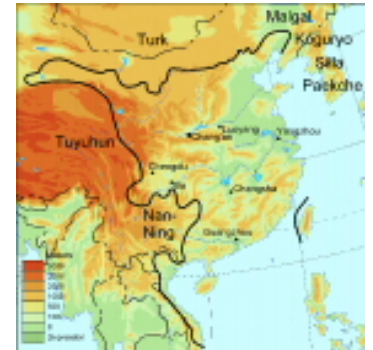
Military technology

Paintings

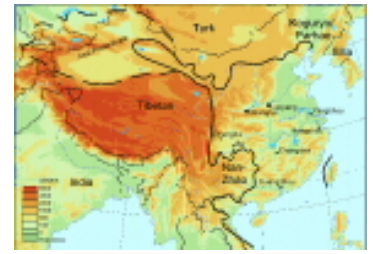
Paintings



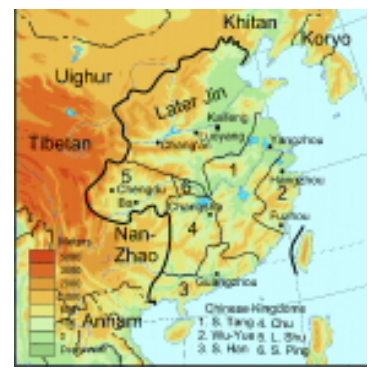
Period of Division



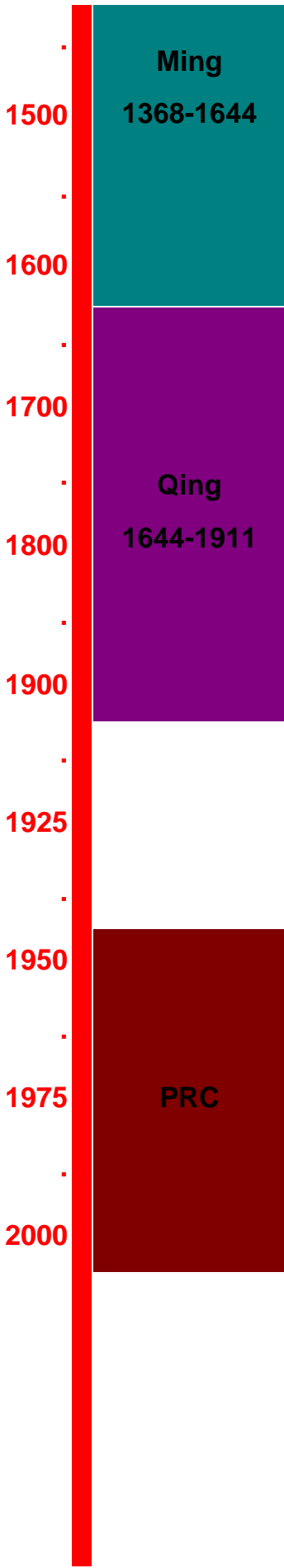
Sui Dynasty China



Tang Dynasty China



Five Dynasties China



Ming

1368-1644

Qing

1644-1911

PRC

Hardwood furniture

Elegant gardens

Clothing

Clothing

Advertising

Woodcuts

Buddhist worship

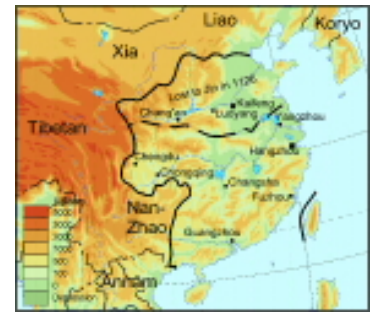
Ordinary homes

Political posters

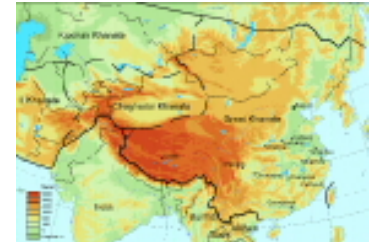
Fayuan temple

Minorities

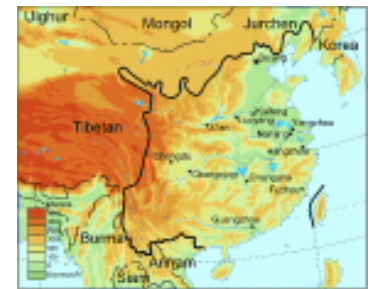
Modern Calligraphy



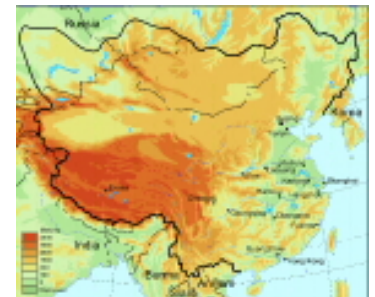
Song Dynasty China



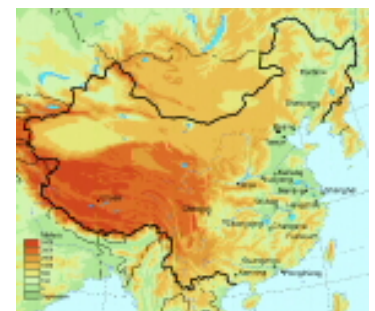
Yuan Dynasty China



Ming Dynasty China



Qing Dynasty China



People's Republic of China

More Maps: Click to see maps of contemporary China's [twenty-two provinces](#), [five autonomous regions](#), [four municipalities](#), and [two special administrative regions](#).

Site Map

It is generally easiest to navigate this site from [Contents](#) or the [Timeline](#), but there may be times when it is useful to consult a list of the main pages, which is given here. This list does not include the hundreds of pages that give source citations, nor the pages that extend the text by giving answers, thoughts, further comments, or enlarged details. It also does not list the separate pages of the Teachers' Guide or the Timeline and Maps.

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Teachers' Guide

Teachers who tested this website in their classes suggested that the most useful form of teachers' guide would be a printable version of the site, which would allow them to plan classes more conveniently. To make printing easier, we placed all of the sources, hints, answers, and further thoughts on the same page as the images and questions and removed the background images. We also added a brief introduction to each unit, identifying its objectives and discussing strategies for teaching it. These files, listed below, are in Adobe's pdf format; downloading pdf files requires [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).

As mentioned in the [Purpose](#), the design of this website assumes that students also have access to other information about Chinese history and culture, such as a textbook. Students with inadequate background may be frustrated by some of the questions, which we wrote to try to get students to pause to look closely at the images and think about them. In a minority of cases we have supplied answers or hints, but we did not want to offer answers to all questions, in large part because we feared that students would get in the habit of immediately hitting the answer button as soon as they had read a question. Many of the questions with no answers or hints ask students' their opinions on the images and therefore do not have a single correct answer. In other cases, the material needed to answer the question is found elsewhere on the page. Teachers who are venturing into material they have never taught before may therefore want to consult general introductions to Chinese art or history to be better able to help students with some of the more open-ended questions. Some recent works that can be recommended are Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (1997), Patricia Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (1996), Robert Murowchick, *Cradles of Civilization: China* (1994), Edward Shaughnessy, *China: Empire and Civilization* (2000), Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization* (1991), Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China* (2000), and Robert Thorp and Richard Vinograd, *Chinese Art and Culture* (2001).

Pdf files for individual units:

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[Teachers' Guide for Homes](#)

Teachers' Guide for Gardens

Teachers' Guide for Clothing

Teachers' Guide for Graphic Arts

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- James C. Schneider
- Jerome Silbergeld

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Linking to this site, of course, is completely acceptable and we encourage teachers and others to add links.