

Asia for Educators (AFE) Web site

Reviewed by James A. Anderson

With the recent proliferation of Web-based secondary materials and primary source databases pertaining to Asian Studies, both researchers and instructors are now freer than ever

to seek out information online. But, do these resources alone make one a more savvy consumer of this cornucopia of information on Asia? I would suggest that the opposite may be the case, particularly when we ask our students to do the searching. Raw data without contextual information can lead to ambivalent or misinformed conclusions. Moreover, the easy availability of primary source materials used to fuel research do not always serve the needs of educators, who may be lecturing on certain matters outside their areas of expertise, and therefore would benefit from the guidance and discernment of colleagues working in these other fields. As a promising solution to online “information overload” in Asian Studies, I would offer Columbia University’s Web site *Asia for Educators* (AFE), which draws on the expertise of researchers from various fields of Asian studies to provide detailed evidence and context for a wide range of topics covered in classrooms from secondary through post-graduate levels of instruction.

The overall layout of the AFE site is clear and easily navigable. I quickly intuited the site’s basic contents through its short headings and associated images. Digging deeper into its contents, I also realized that some elements of the site were still “works in progress.” Several links to lesson plans and central themes, for example, led to incomplete pages. However, the strength of the site as a teaching tool and as a source of information and structure for the development of new courses quickly becomes clear. From the array of lesson plans, timelines, and the currently featured course modules for a range of themes in Chinese history, the arrangement of the material linked to this Web site makes it easy for an instructor to conduct properly focused searches for information. When it comes to my own teaching, I find many applications for the material in this Web site. I now require that students in my large “East Asia to 1800” lecture survey class make frequent use of the timelines and featured modules on Chinese history and East Asian geography. I know that I will find the “Special Topic Guide” materials on the Silk Road to be particularly useful in my Silk Road survey course. Although I have in past courses created links to many of the Web-based sites referenced here, I found these materials to be conveniently arranged “one-stop shopping” for Silk Road images.

In terms of Web design, the site’s compilers have handled the matter of historical periodization adroitly. At the top of the main Web page one finds a section titled “Resources Organized by World History Time Period,” useful for both instructors of world history and teachers de-

signing regional Asian courses. Click on the link “4000 to 1000 BCE: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples,” and one is taken to a single site for East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia in this period. Here, the instructor can take a regional “snapshot” for a specific moment in history and comment on similarities and differences across Asia’s earliest centers of human settlement. For example, through this combined timeline I discovered a good deal more about the early Indus Valley than I have ever incorporated in my lectures, and I intend to pursue such regional comparisons in the future with the use of this combined timeline and its links.

ASIA FOR EDUCATORS
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resources organized by world history time period

to 4000 BCE		4000 - 1000 BCE		1000 BCE - 300 CE	
300 - 600 CE		600 - 1000 CE		1000 - 1450 CE	
1450 - 1750		1750 - 1919		1900 - 1950	
1950 - 2000		21st Century			

related resources

OMuRAA ONLINE MUSEUM RESOURCES on ASIAN ART	ELEMENTARY-LEVEL RESOURCES	TIMELINES
	LITERATURE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM	CENTRAL THEMES & KEY POINTS
	RECOMMENDED PRINT & VIDEO RESOURCES	PRIMARY SOURCES / DBQs
		LESSON PLANS

courses for educators

New ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN TEACHING CHINESE TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

related links

TRAVEL & SCHOOL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS	NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR TEACHING ABOUT ASIA
LANGUAGE NETWORK RESOURCES	ASIA IN THE CURRICULUM (AIC) BULLETIN
HOSTING TEACHERS	EDUCATION ABOUT ASIA MAGAZINE
LINKS TO OTHER ASIAN STUDIES RESOURCES	
LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR OTHER WORLD AREAS	

featured modules

- CHINA
- EAST ASIA IN GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE
- LIVING IN THE CHINESE COSMOS
- THE GRANDEUR OF THE QING DYNASTY
- CHINA & EUROPE: WHAT IS "MODERN"?
- THE SONG DYNASTY IN CHINA
- THE MONGOLS IN WORLD HISTORY

The *Asia for Educators* home page at <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>.

When accessing the individual country timelines separately, mustard-colored links provide more information about the four areas of Asia profiled on the site. The main Chinese timeline, when used in tandem with the auxiliary timelines for particular periods, is also very useful. Appended to the Chinese timeline, I’m certain that students will enjoy the mnemonic “Dynasties Song,” set to the melody of “Frère Jacques” if they wish to commit to memory the traditional periodization of Chinese history, the dynastic orders of Imperial China. I have a few changes to recommend regarding the individual country timelines. In the timeline for Vietnamese history, while most of the Chinese language terms are rendered in pinyin Romanization, the toponym for ancient northern Việt Nam is written as “Chiao Chih,” rather than Jiaozhi. This small change would make this otherwise extremely useful timeline wholly consistent. Moreover, the otherwise very clear Korean timeline could contain a bit more detail to better distinguish each historical period, but this is a small matter.

Considering the Web site as a whole, I have a few more miscellaneous changes to suggest. In the Elementary Level Resources section, I clicked on the link to a video demonstrating the use of chopsticks, but the video did not open properly in my browser, which is a common problem faced in using software across operating systems. Not being a technical guru myself, I cannot usefully suggest how one might avoid such glitches. In the section on Korea entitled “East Asia in Geographic Perspective,” some of the links to original sites are broken. This change in linked materials is inevitable, but perhaps more frequent link checks by the Webmasters would help to keep these materials current.

Providing all of this information in a single Web site is quite an achievement. I applaud the efforts of the AFE developers and all of the contributors for the creation of an excellent resource for use across a board range of topics in Asian Studies. Among the “Related Links” at the foot of the main page, I found information about travel, school exchanges, and even hosting teachers from abroad to be informative and even inspiring. Beyond its usefulness in the classroom, this site could be used to plan for other cultural activities on campus, and even for collaboration with Asian institutions to exchange teachers and foster institutional links for the benefit of students and faculty alike. In this way, the Web site furthers the goal of internationalizing education in an interconnected world. ■

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Asia for Educators in the High School Classroom

Reviewed by Ian Tiedemann

Columbia University’s *Asia for Educators* Web site is an invaluable tool for high school social studies teachers who want to incorporate East Asia into their curriculum. To say the least, the amount of information available to a visitor is staggering. The site includes maps, timelines, and primary sources from several East Asian cultures, as well as specific examinations of art, religion, geography, the humanities, literature, dynastic studies, and cross-cultural interactions. Navigating this labyrinth of resources will yield valuable teaching tools at every turn, so much so that it is easy to find oneself in a nearly infinite number of tangents. With this review, I hope to guide you to some of the many applications of Columbia’s impressive collection of materials.


The first step to enjoying the *Asia for Educators* site is to decide how you want to locate your information. You may search through the timeline sections, which will include resources from within your desired range of dates; these sections are also divided into five distinct Asian cultures. You may also search by type of resource; sections on the main page include timelines, central ideas, and primary sources. If you are looking for literature ideas, you can find suggested reading lists for each grade level based on Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese history. The site’s featured modules, each with their own units, lessons, and resources, are on the right margin of the main page. The bottom of the main page offers external links and teacher opportunities. Teachers interested in travel or online courses can start their education about Asia right here!

Teachers looking for primary sources can find selections from China, Japan, Korea, and Việt Nam/SE Asia. As I looked through the primary sources, I was impressed with their organization and breadth. Primary documents, each including introductory explanations and discussion questions, are sorted into chronological and thematic units. For instance, the section China 1950–2000 includes a subsection on “Socialism and Democracy after Mao Zedong” that neatly collects primary sources related to that theme. Some subsections develop their resources into teaching units with broader background readings and class activities. “China’s Political System since 1949” links documents to one another and sets up a comparative study of Chinese and American politics and culture. “The Atomic Bomb,” found in the Japan section 1900–1950, uses its primary sources to set up a class debate. Both of these units were accessible to my students. The sources themselves vary in difficulty (good for differentiated instruction); the questions, both for individual and collected sources, promote hypothetical thought, perspective, and persuasive reasoning.

“East Asia in Geographic Perspective” includes lesson plans by geographical themes and standards. This module uses seven essential units to explore the complex interaction between East Asian cultures and their environment. With every essential unit including lesson plans spanning a range of countries, one could incorporate this resource into any number of high school courses. The first unit, “The World in Spatial Terms,” includes an excellent introduction into reading different types of maps.

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