

# Early China to 600 BCE

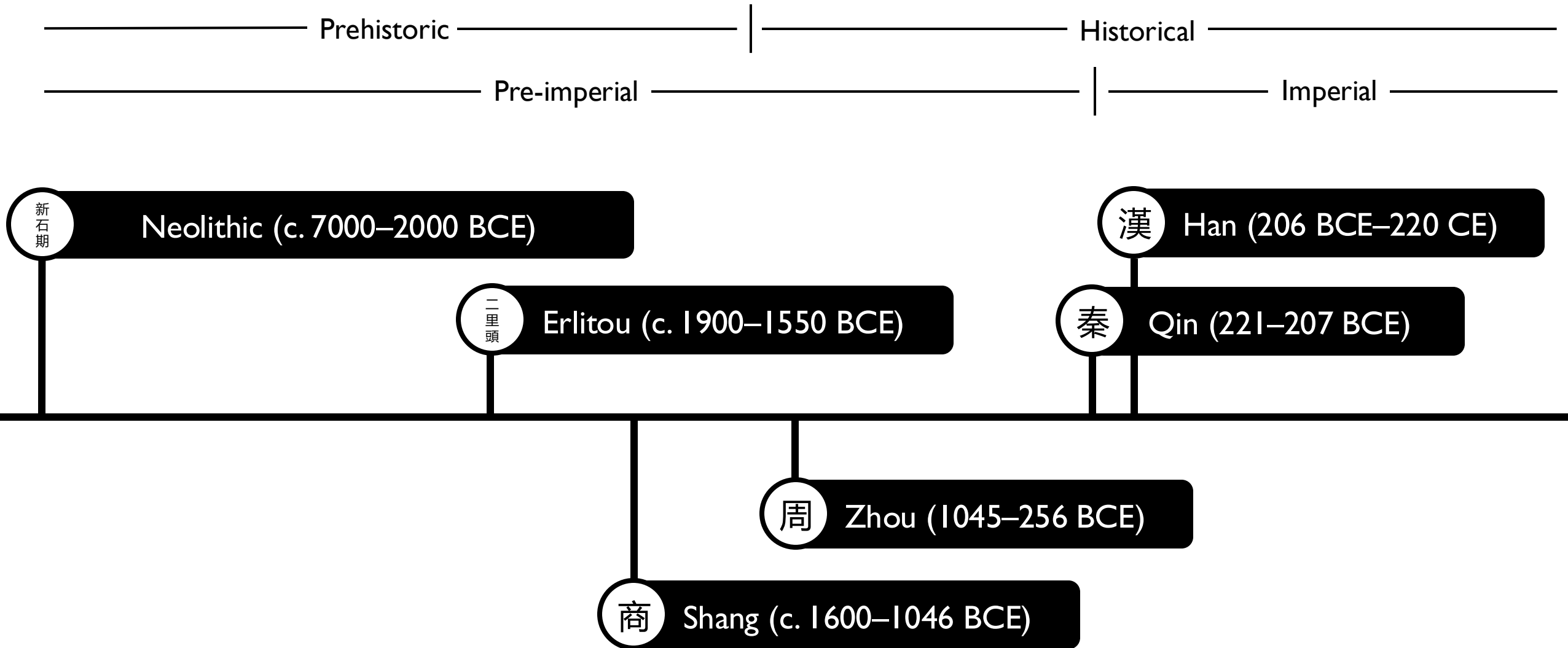
## Major Archaeological Discoveries



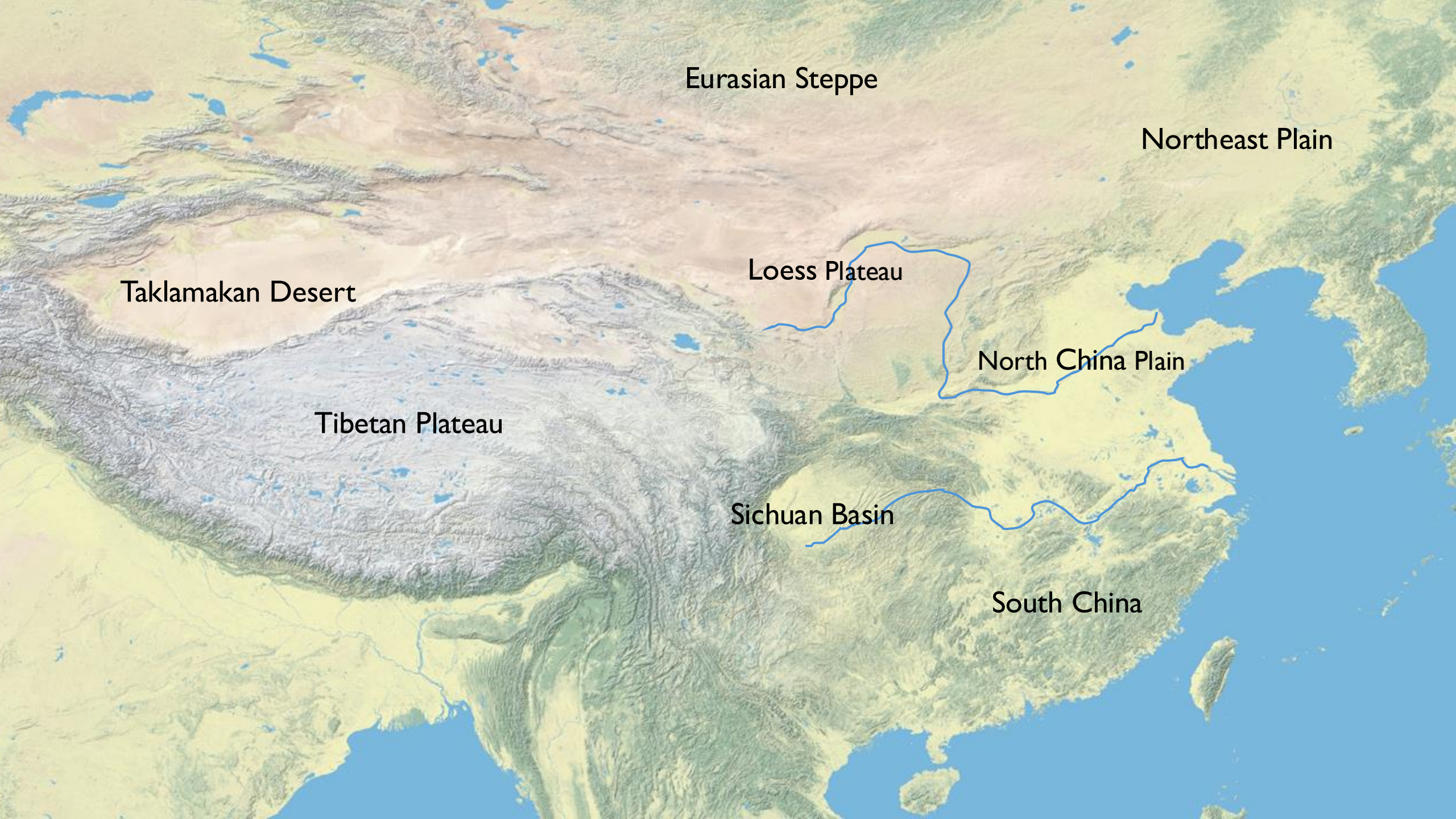
Asia for Educators  
Weatherhead East Asian Institute  
Columbia University

Christopher Kim  
New York University

# Chronology of Early China







Eurasian Steppe

Northeast Plain

Taklamakan Desert

Loess Plateau

North China Plain

Tibetan Plateau

Sichuan Basin

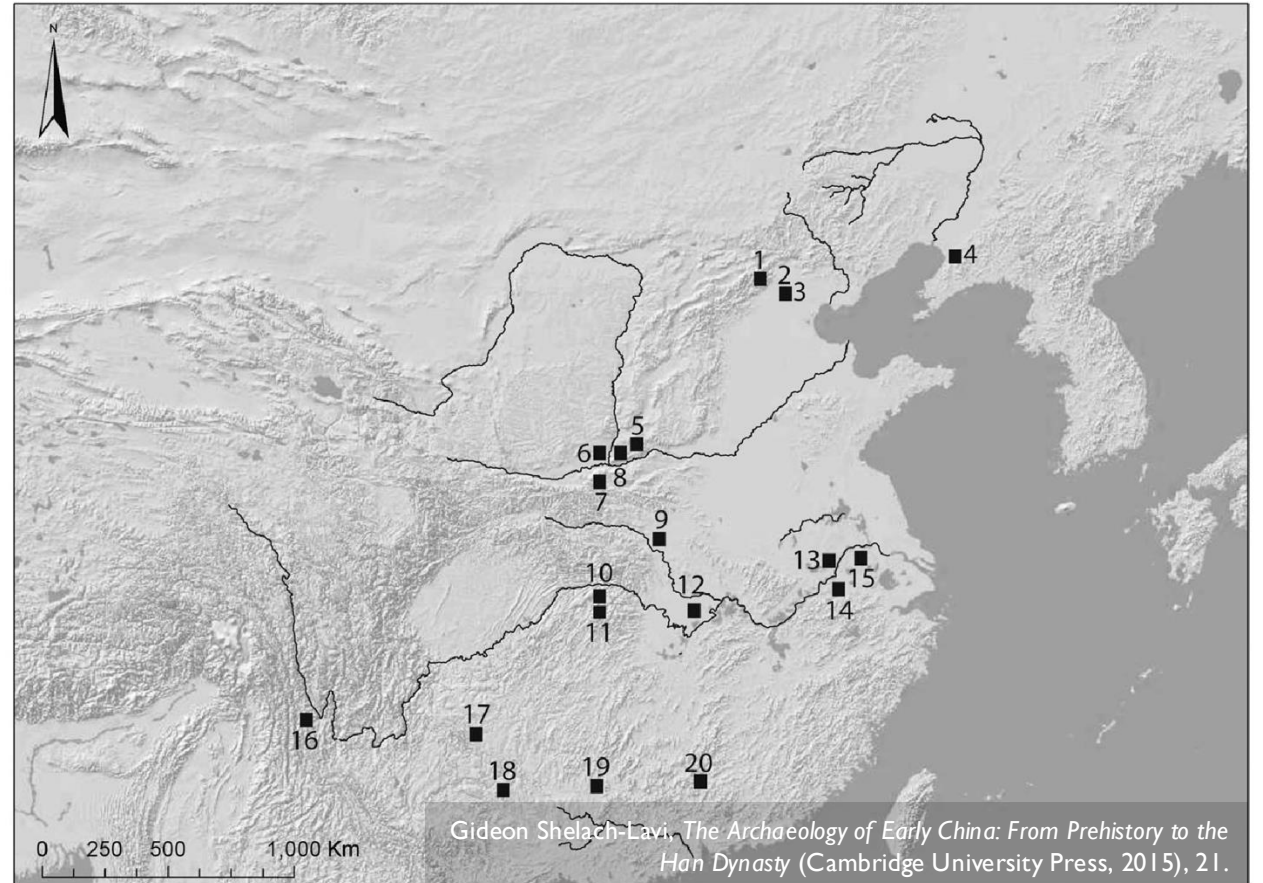
South China

# The Paleolithic



Photo: Yan Li

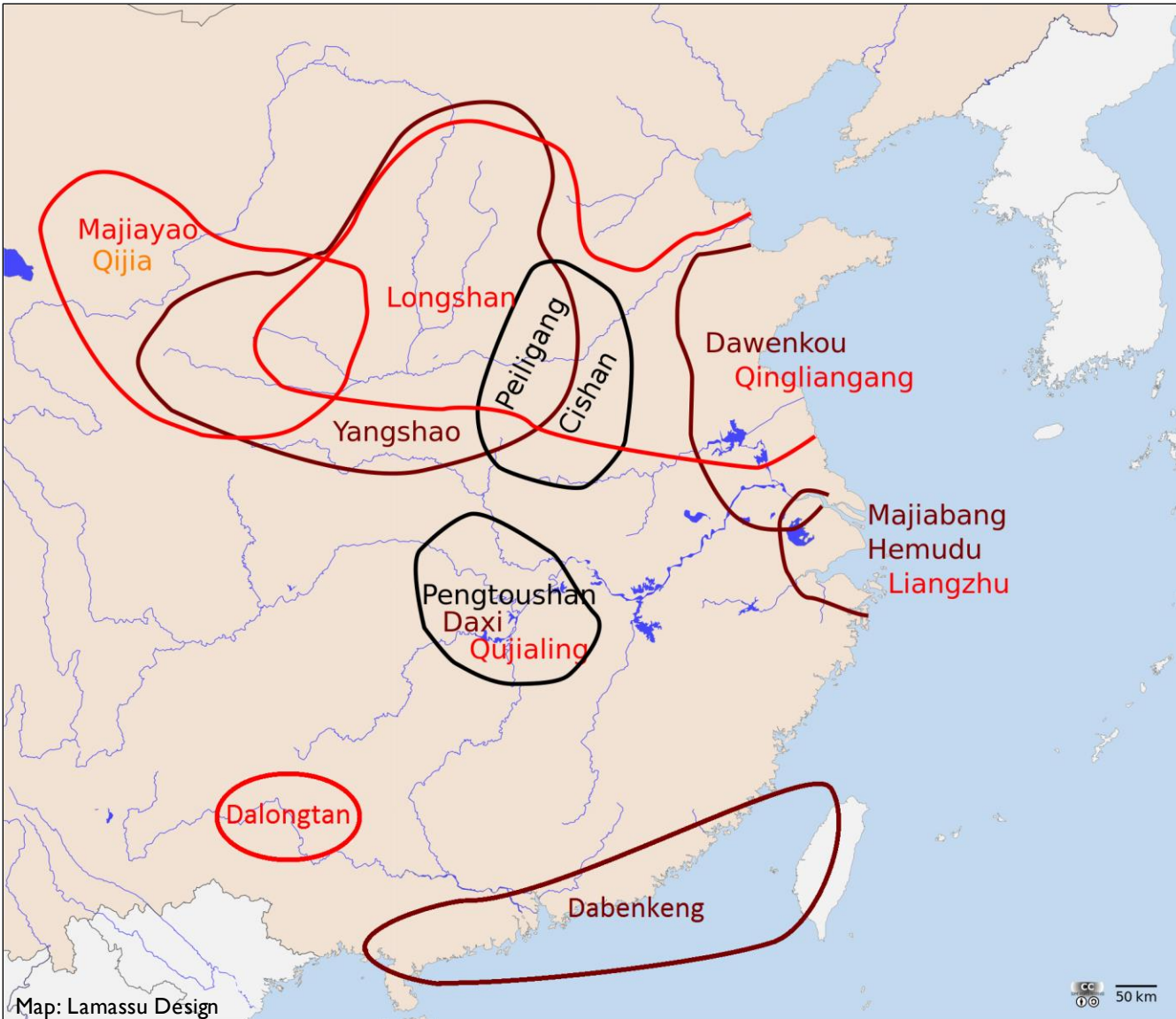
Peking Man (replica)  
Paleozoological Museum of China



Gideon Shelach-Lavi, *The Archaeology of Early China: From Prehistory to the Han Dynasty* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 21.

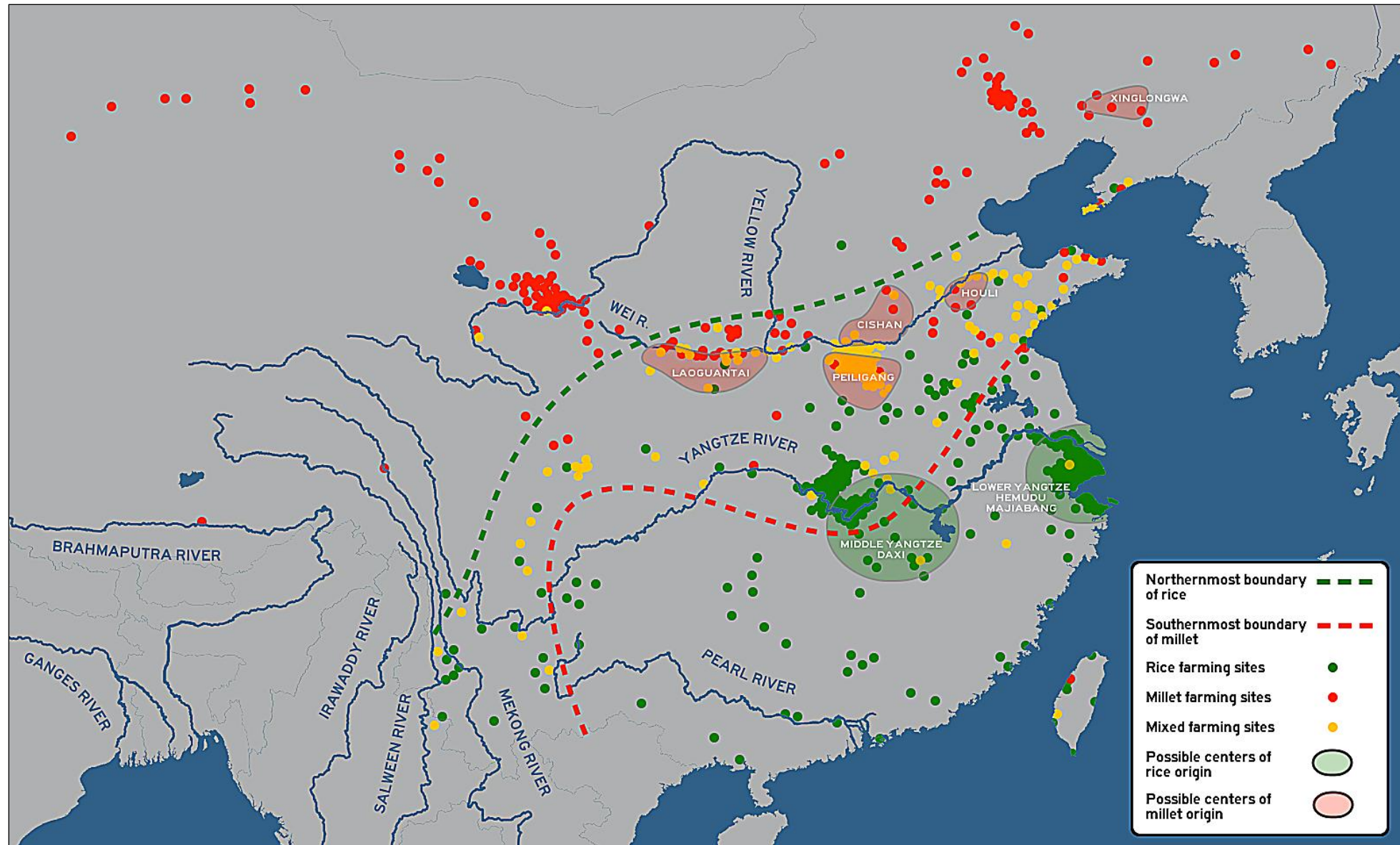
Paleolithic Sites in China

# Neolithic Cultures



Millstone, Peiligang (c. 6500-5000 BCE; top)  
Stone axe, Dawenkou (c. 4300-2600 BCE; bottom)

# Millet and Rice Domestication



# Animal Domestication



Pottery with image of pig  
Hemudu Culture (c. 5500-3300 BCE)

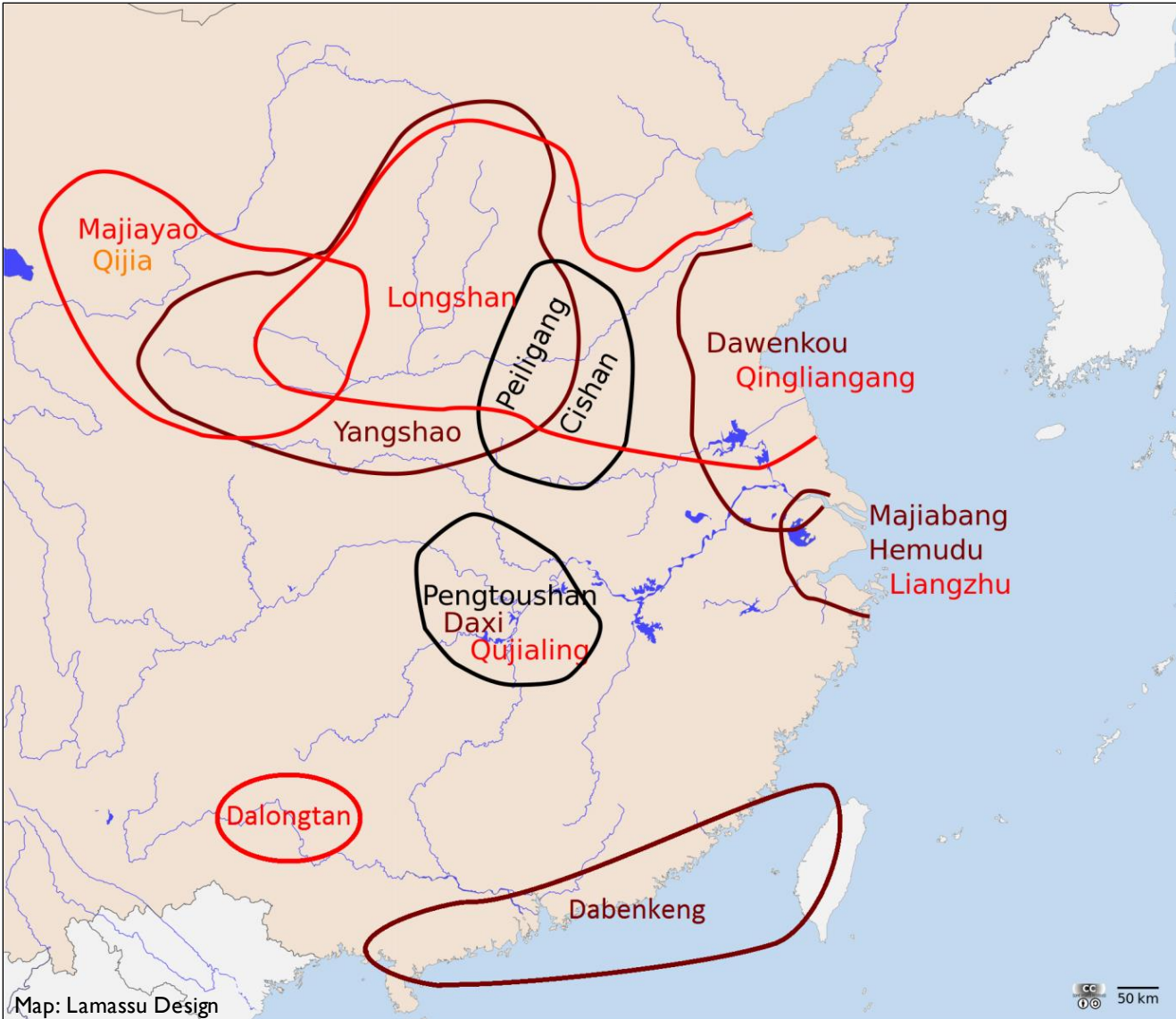


Dog-shaped pottery  
Dawenkou Culture (c. 4300-2600 BCE)

# Neolithic Cultures

## Select Archaeological Cultures (Neolithic)

Pengtoushan	c. 7500-6000 BCE
Peiligang/Cishan	c. 6500-5000 BCE
Hemudu	c. 5500-3300 BCE
Yangshao	c. 5000-3000 BCE
Hongshan	c. 4500-3000 BCE
Dawenkou	c. 4300-2600 BCE
Liangzhu	c. 3400-2250 BCE
Longshan	c. 3000-1900 BCE



# Yangshao Culture (c. 5000-3000 BCE)



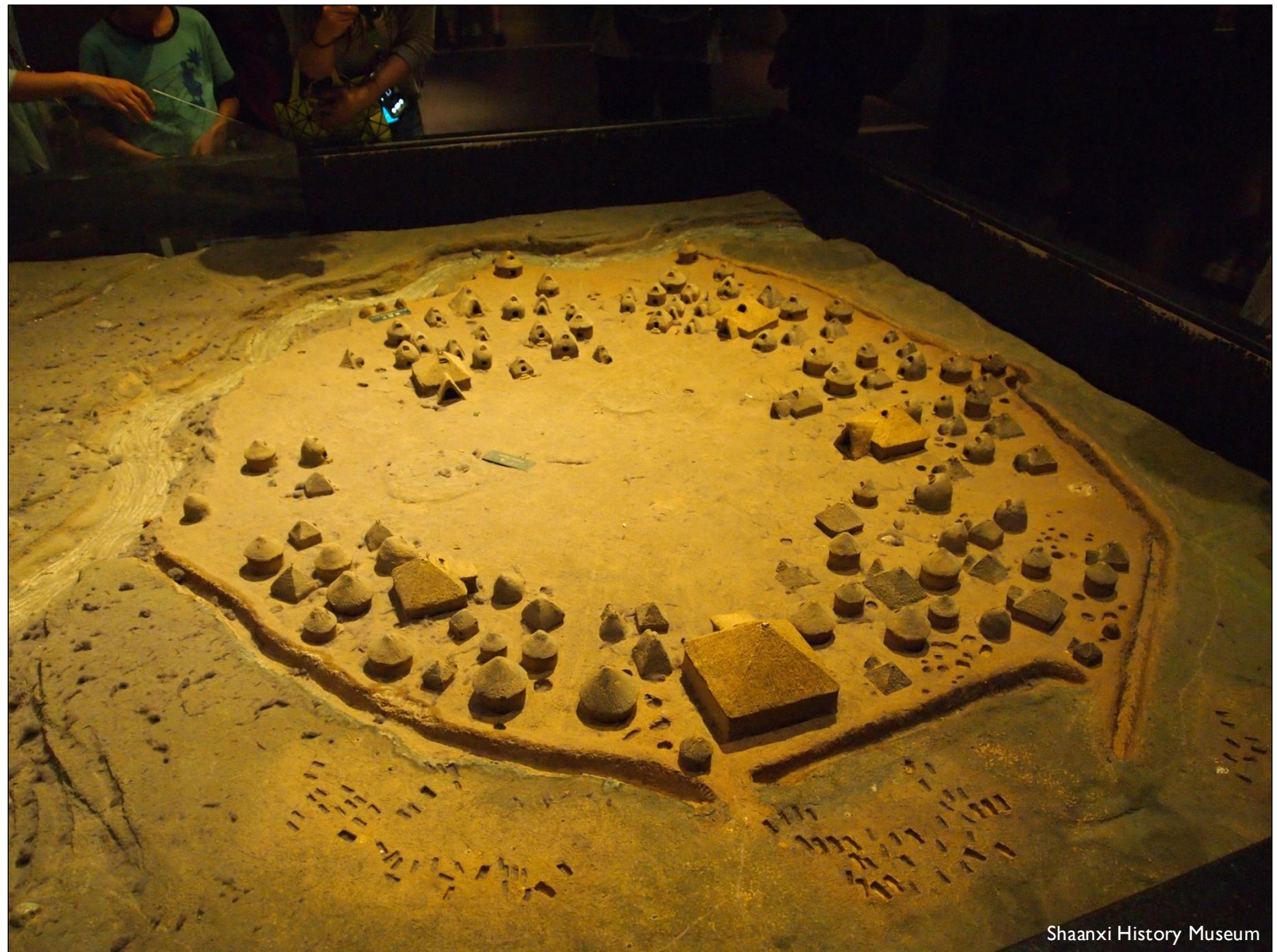
Yangshao painted pottery



Banpo Site Museum



Banpo house remains



Shaanxi History Museum

Reconstruction of Jiangzhai Village

# Liangzhu Culture (c. 3300-2100 BCE)



Metropolitan Museum of Art

Liangzhu jade objects (*cong* tube, *bi* disk, mask ornament)

# Sidun Tomb No. 3

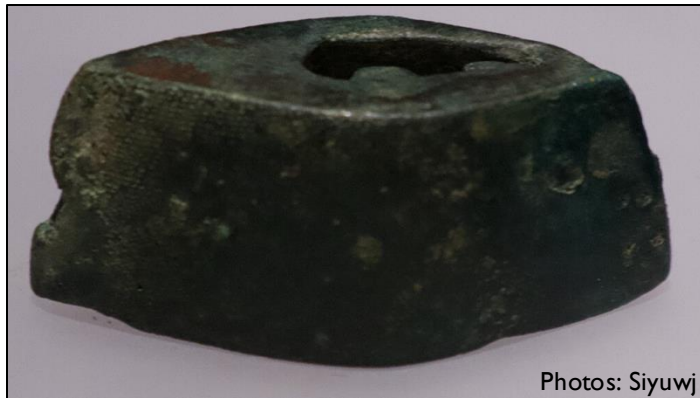


# Longshan Culture (c. 3000-1900 BCE)



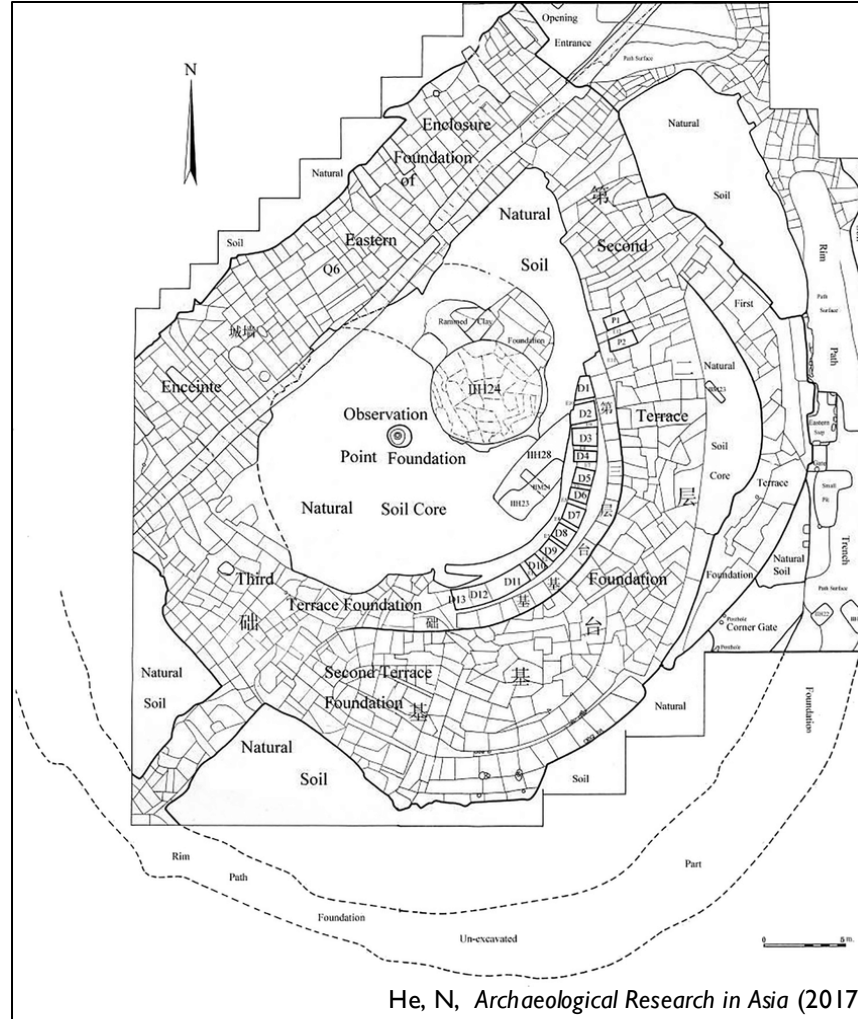
Longshan pottery

# Taosi (c. 2300-1900 BCE)



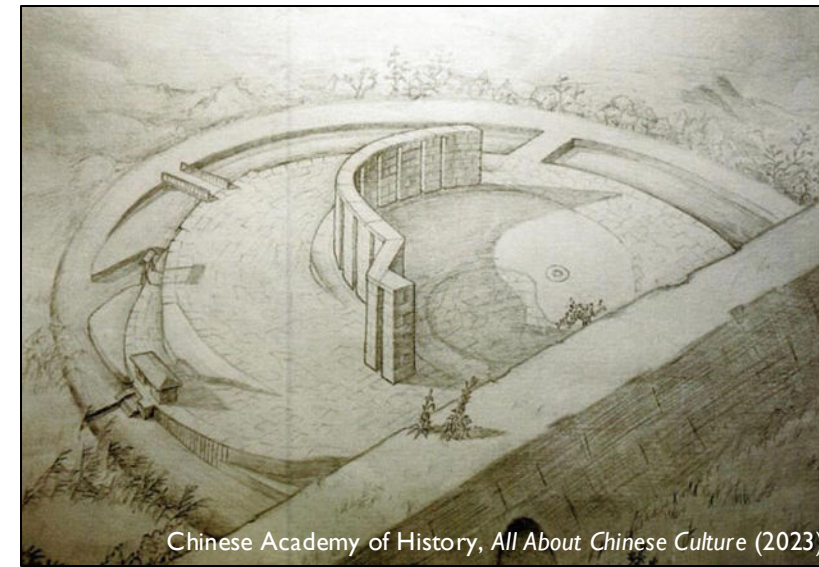
Photos: Siyuwj

Bronze ring (top), bell (bottom)



He, N, *Archaeological Research in Asia* (2017)

Plan of Taosi observatory



Chinese Academy of History, *All About Chinese Culture* (2023)

Reconstruction of Taosi observatory

# Shimao (c. 2300-1800 BCE)



Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology. "Smithsonian Learning Lab Resource: Closer look at the Citadel." Smithsonian Learning Lab. June 16, 2024.



Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology. "Smithsonian Learning Lab Resource: The North Section of the East Protective Wall." Smithsonian Learning Lab. June 16, 2024.  
Ibid., "Smithsonian Learning Lab Resource: Jade artifacts buried within the stone walls." June 9, 2024.

## Shimao Stone Carvings



# Xia Dynasty?



Han dynasty depiction of mythical figures  
including Yu the Great (second from left) and Jie (leftmost), first and last rulers of Xia

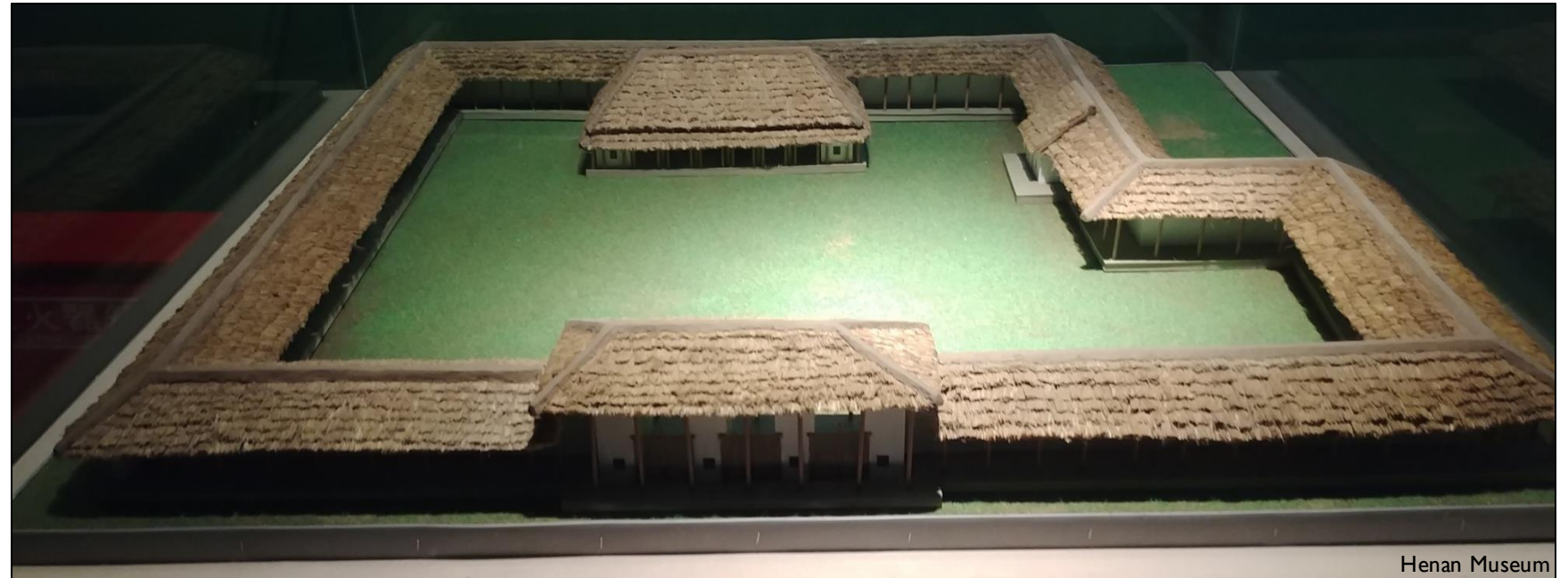
Wu Liang Shrine (151 CE)

# Erlitou (c. 1900-1550 BCE)



Cleveland Museum of Art

Bronze wine vessel

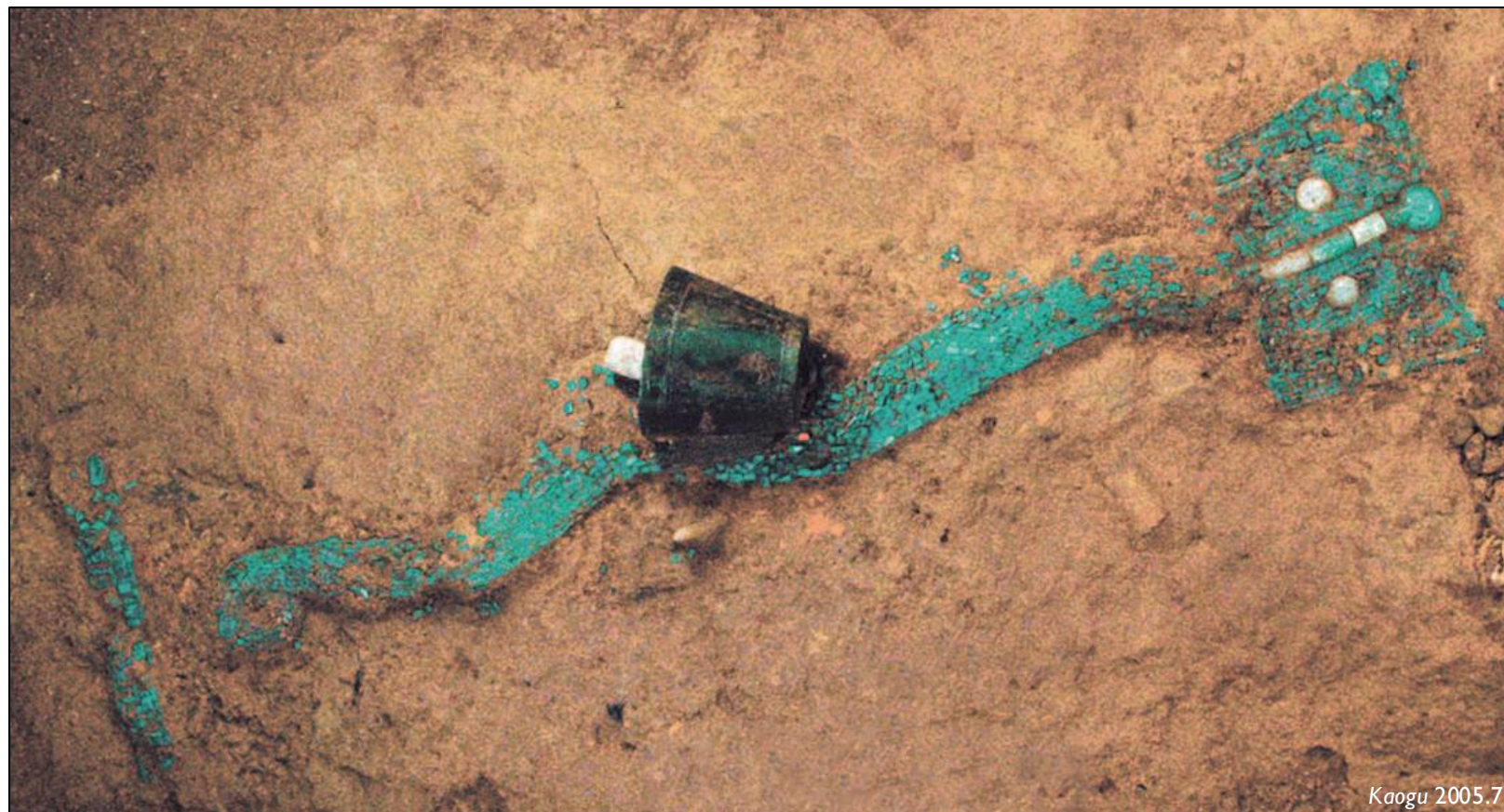


Henan Museum

Reconstruction of palace complex at Erlitou

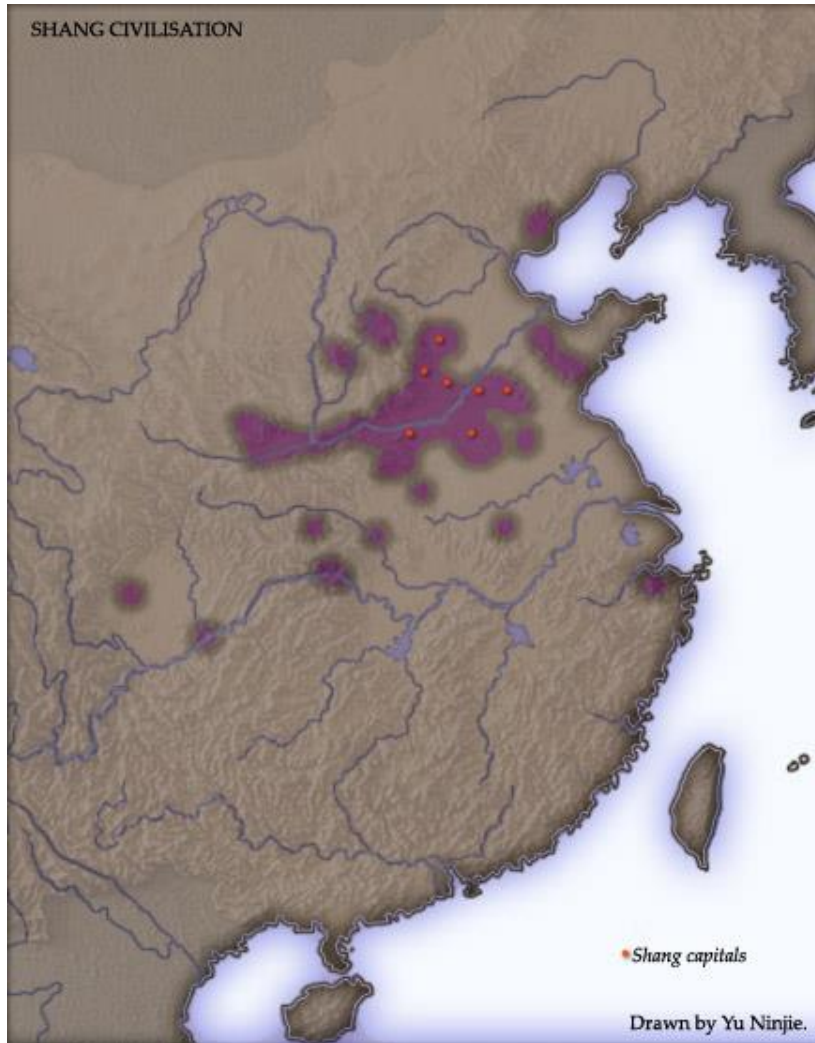


Turquoise-inlaid plaque



Bronze bell and turquoise "dragon"

# Shang Dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE)



Metropolitan Museum of Art

Shang ritual bronze vessels



National Museum of China



National Museum of Asian Art

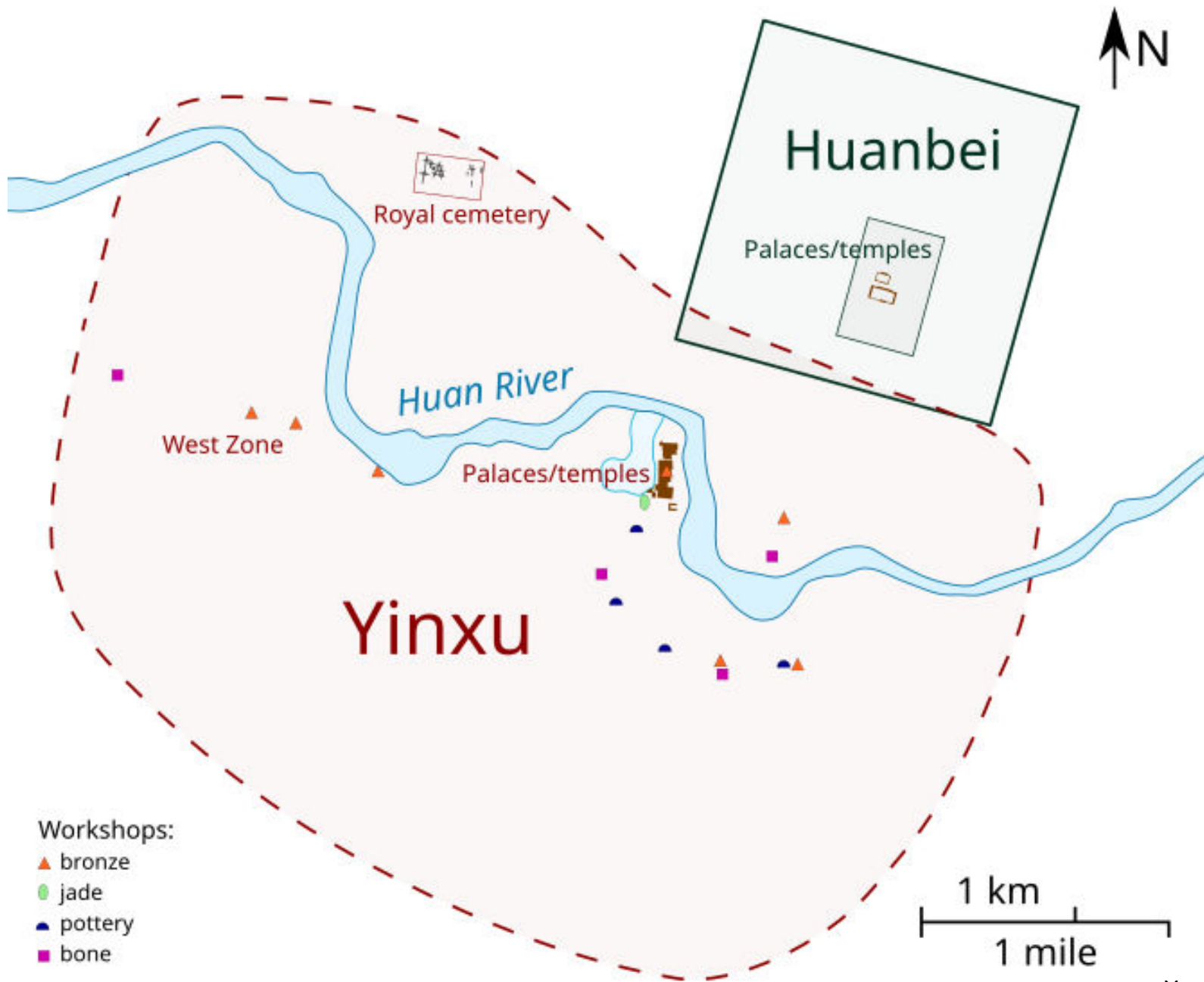


Musée Cernuschi



Shanghai Museum

## Shang oracle bone inscriptions and ritual bronze vessels



Workshops:

- ▲ bronze
- jade
- ▲ pottery
- bone

1 km  
1 mile

Map: Kanguole



Harvard Art Museums

Jade dagger-axe with turquoise-inlaid  
bronze haft



Photo: Gary Todd

Chariot



Photo: Dick Osseman

Bronze axe



Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bronze dagger-axe

# Lady Hao's Tomb (c. 1200 BCE)

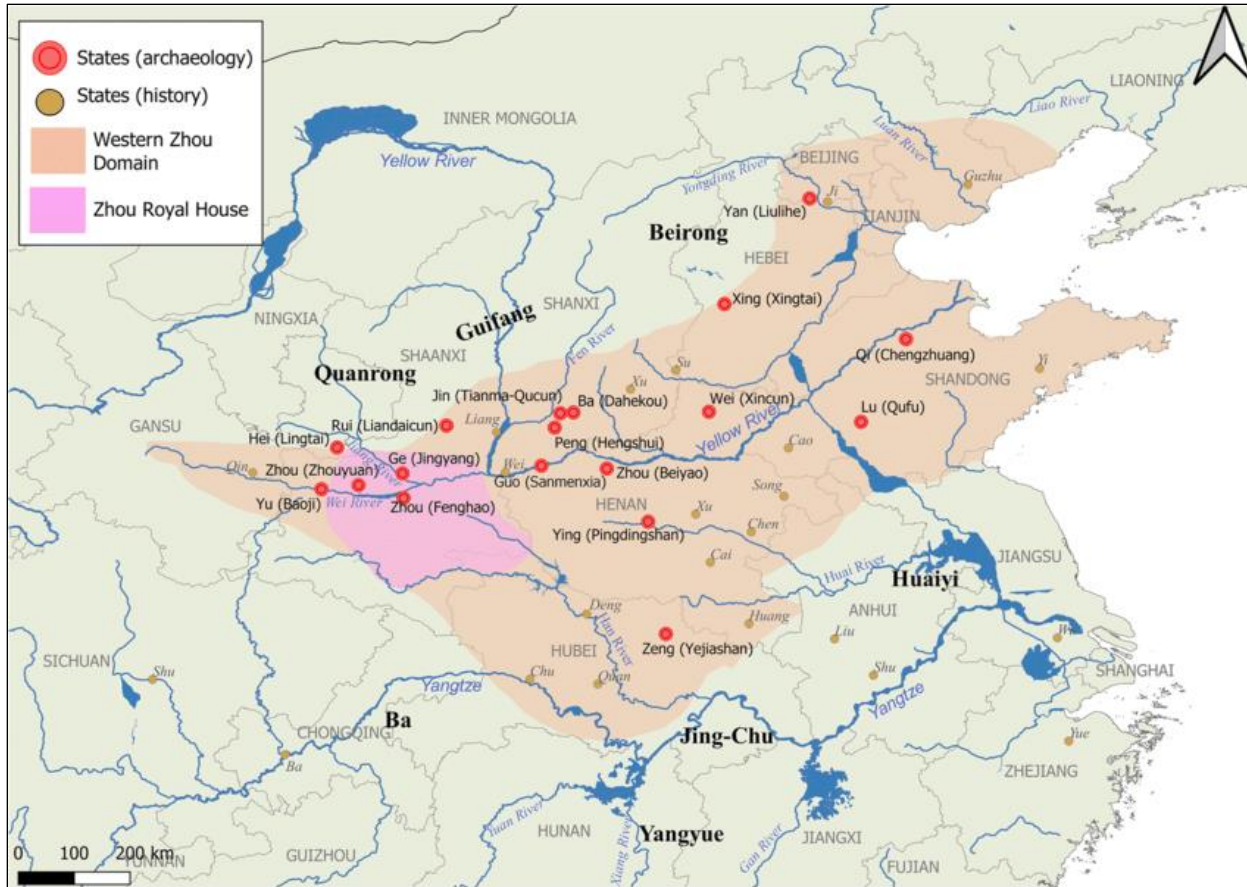


# Sanxingdui (c. 1700-1150 BCE)



Sanxingdui bronze mask

# Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE)



Metropolitan Museum of Art

Y. Hsu, R. O'Sullivan, and H. Li, "Sources of Western Zhou lead: a new understanding of Chinese Bronze Age supply networks," *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* 13 (2021): 30.

Western Zhou ritual bronze altar set



Bronze bell of King Li of Zhou  
(9th century BCE)



National Palace Museum

Royal appointment inscription  
(Song ding)



Map: Kanguole

Western Zhou Royal Domain (red outline)  
and Regional Domains (black square)



Zhuangbai Hoard (1976)



Yangjiacun Hoard (2003)



# Developments in the Warring States Period



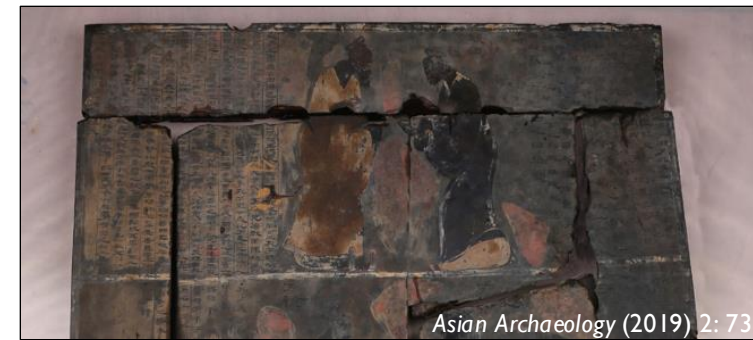
Iron plough



Bamboo slip manuscripts



Qin *banliang* coin  
(3rd century BCE)



Depiction of Confucius on Han  
(1st century BCE) Mirror