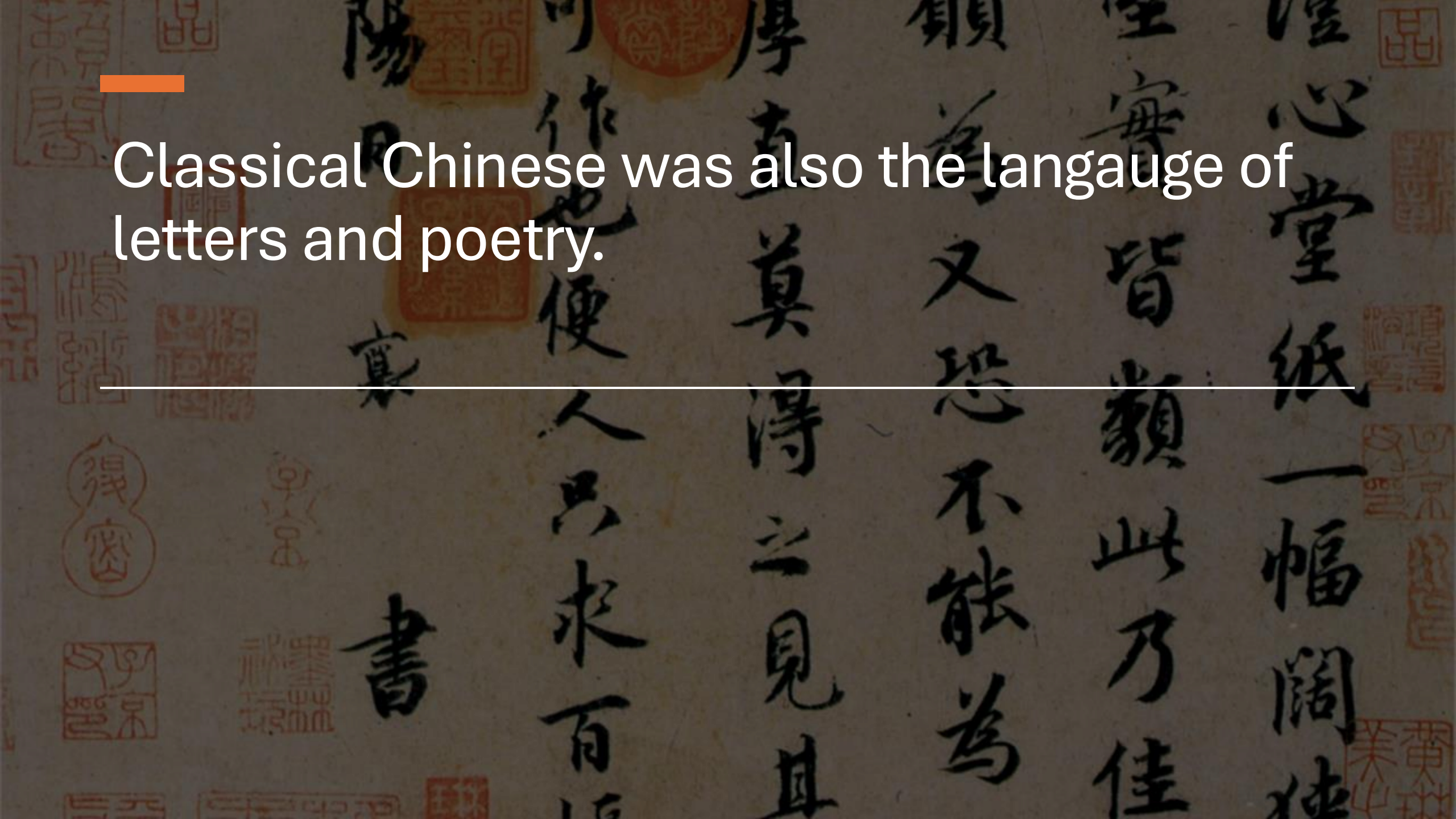
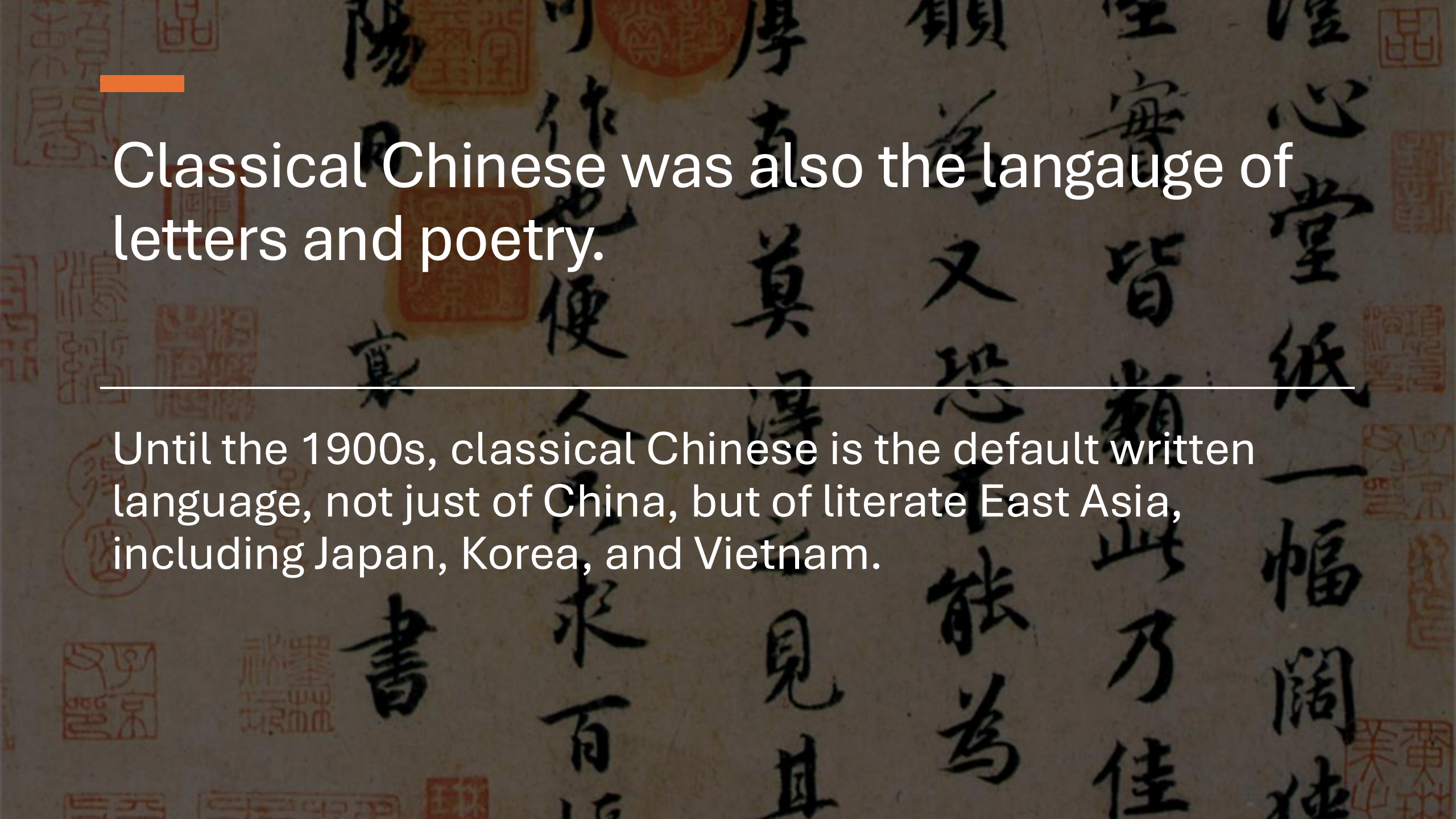


An Introduction to Vernacular Fiction

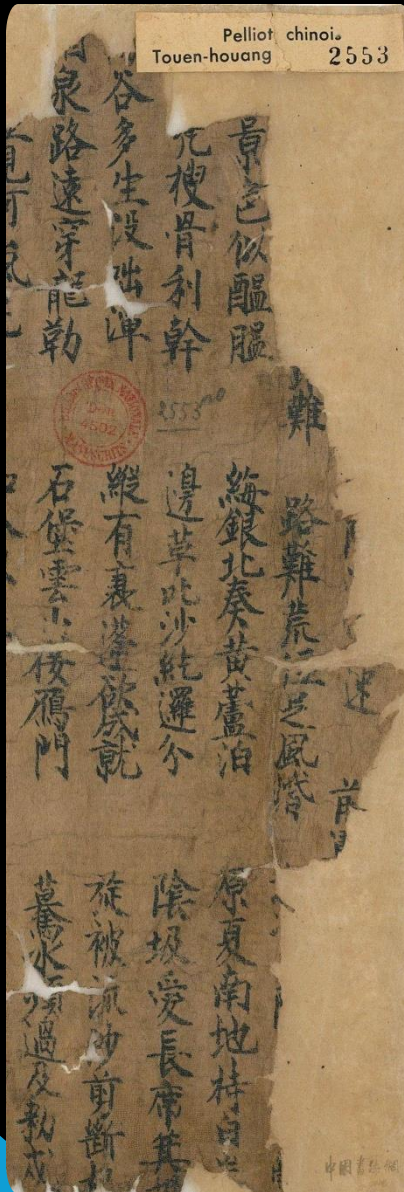


Classical Chinese was also the language of letters and poetry.



Classical Chinese was also the language of letters and poetry.

Until the 1900s, classical Chinese is the default written language, not just of China, but of literate East Asia, including Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.



Here's a manuscript fragment of something from the 800s, written in a kind of spoken Chinese.



But it's really only in the middle of the 1500s that vernacular fiction began truly to thrive.

Why then?

The rise of Jiangnan, the Yangzi River Delta

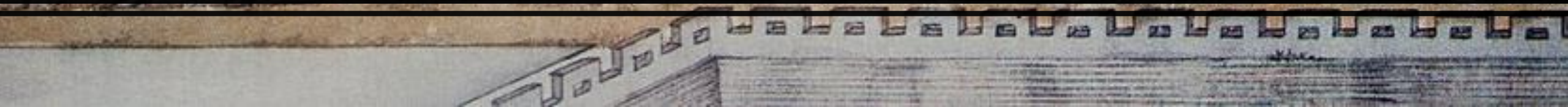


These are the cities at the end of the Grand Canal that delivered grain and supplies to the capital, Beijing.





Suzhou, one of the greatest of early modern cities



Suzhou was important *only* for commercial and cultural reasons.





In these cities, consumer culture—and the performing arts—flourished.





Suzhou's most lavish consumer item of all: the private garden.

Printed
books of
many kinds.

五倫喜
明刻本

錢起詩集
明刻本

明刻本

禮記集說大全
明刻本

Reprinted classics, with commentaries.



中庸第三十一 朱子
表記第三十二

子言之歸乎。君子隱而顯，不矜而莊，不厲而
不言而信。子曰：君子不失足於人，不失色
於人，不失口於人，是故君子貌足畏也，色足
信也，言足信也。甫刑曰：敬忌而罔有擇言在躬。
曰：褻褻之不相因也，欲民之母相濟也。子
祭極敬不繼之以辨，朝極辨不繼之以倦。
曰：君子慎以辟禍，篤以不掄，恭以遠恥。子
君子莊敬曰強，安肆曰偷。君子不以一日使
躬儻焉如不終日。子曰：齊戒以事鬼神，擇
月以見君，恐民之不敬也。子曰：狎侮死焉
不畏也。子曰：無辭不相接也，無禮不相見
欲民之母相襲也。易曰：初筮告，再三瀆瀆則
告。子曰：言之仁者，天下之表也；義者，天下之
也；報者，天下之利也。子曰：以德報德，則民

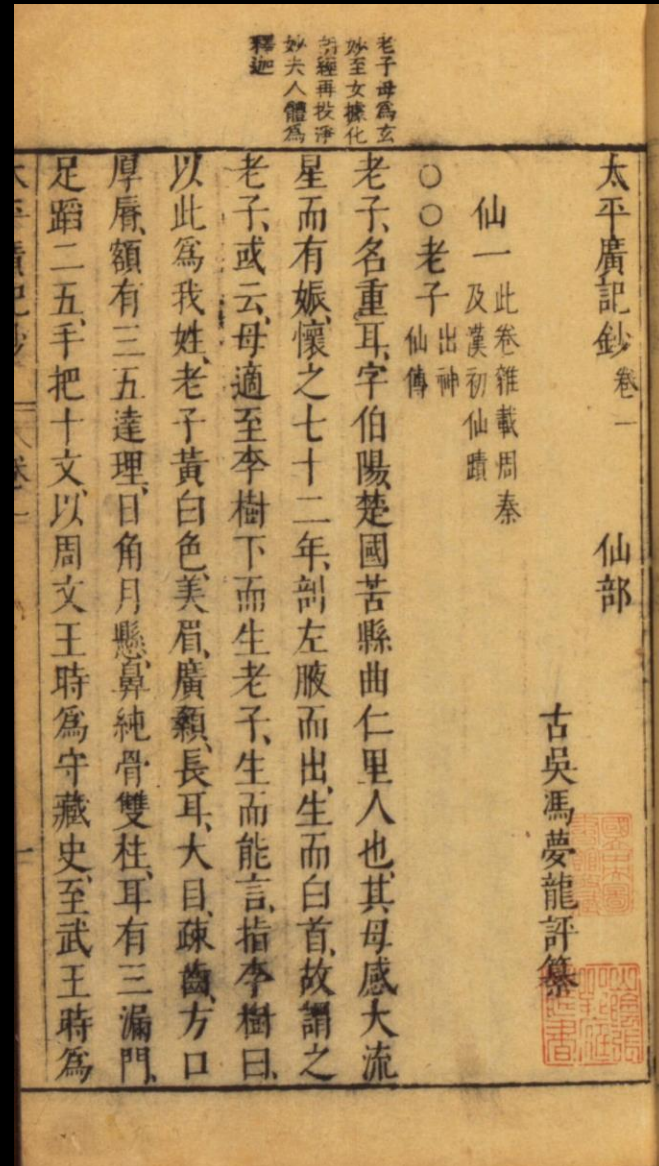
在木天子乃齋，立春之日，天子親帥三公九卿
諸侯大夫，以迎春於東郊，還及，實公卿大夫於
朝，命相布德，和令行慶，施惠下及兆民，慶賜遂
行，毋有不當。乃命大史守典，奉法司天日月星
辰之行，宿離不貸，毋失經紀，以初為常。是月
也，天子乃以元日祈穀于上帝，乃擇元辰，天子
親戴耒耜，措之于參保介之御，間即三公九卿
諸侯大夫躬耕帝籍，天子三推，三公五推，卿諸
侯九推，及執爵于大寢，三公九卿諸侯大夫皆
御，命曰勞酒。是月也，天氣下降，地氣上騰，天
地合同，草木萌動，王命布農事，命田舍東郊，皆
備封疆，審盪經術，善相丘陵阪險原隰，土地所

何孔子曰：以上牲祭於宗子之家，祝曰：孝子某
為介子某薦，其常事若宗子有罪，居於他國，庶
子為大夫，其祭也，祝曰：孝子某使介子某執其
常事，攝主不厭祭，不旅，不假，不綏，祭不配，布奠
於賓，賓莫而不舉，不歸肉，其辭于賓曰：宗兄宗
弟宗子在他國，使其某辭。曾子問曰：宗子去在
他國，庶子無爵而居者，可以祭乎？孔子曰：祭哉
若宗子死，皆於墓而後祭於家，宗子死，稱名不
諱，身沒而已。子游之徒有庶子祭者，以此若
義也。今之祭者，不首其義，故誣於祭也。曾子
問曰：祭必有尸乎？若厭祭，亦可乎？孔子曰：祭成
喪者必有尸，尸必以孫，孫幼則使人抱之，無孫
則取於同姓，可也。祭殤，必厭，蓋弗成也。祭成喪
而無尸，是殤之也。孔子曰：有陰厭，有陽厭。曾子
問曰：殤不祔祭，何謂陰厭？陽厭？孔子曰：宗子為

Histories (also with new commentaries)

通鑑卷一百一十一 唐紀七
於便橋之上突厥引兵退謂突厥結紉九勿翻
突厥至渭水橋控弦四十萬太宗初親臨政驛召衛
公問策時發諸州軍未到長安居人勝兵不過數萬
胡人精騎騰突挑戰日數合帝怒欲擊之靖諸領府
庫路以求和潛軍邀其歸路帝從其言胡兵遂退於
是據險邀之虜奔老弱而遁獲馬數萬匹金帛一無
遺焉今據實錄紀傳結盟而退未嘗掩襲小說所載
誤蕭瑀請於上曰突厥未和之時諸將爭請戰陛下
不許瑀音禹厥九勿翻臣等亦以為疑既而虜自退其
策安在上曰吾觀突厥之衆雖多而不整君臣之志
唯賄是求當其請和之時可汗獨在水西謂渭水之西可從刑
入聲汗 達官皆來謁我突厥言達官稱我若醉而縛
之因襲擊其衆勢如拉朽拉虛又命長孫無忌李靖
伏兵於幽州以待之幽州當作涿州自涿北
開元十三年以幽字類幽改虜若奔歸伏兵邀其
日亦州則當時亦病此大軍躡其後覆之如反掌耳所以不戰者吾即位日
淺國家未安百姓未富且當靜以撫之一與虜戰所
損甚多虜結怨既深懼而修備則吾未可以得志矣
故卷甲韜戈啗以金帛卷讀曰倦彼既得所欲理當
自退志意驕愴不復設備復扶然後養威伺釐一舉
可滅也豐許將欲取之必固與之老子曰將欲奪此
之謂矣卿知之乎瑀再拜曰非所及也言非已之智

And lots of re-
edited older
compilations.



A Ming anthology of Tang poetry



松陵集卷第一

往體詩一十二首

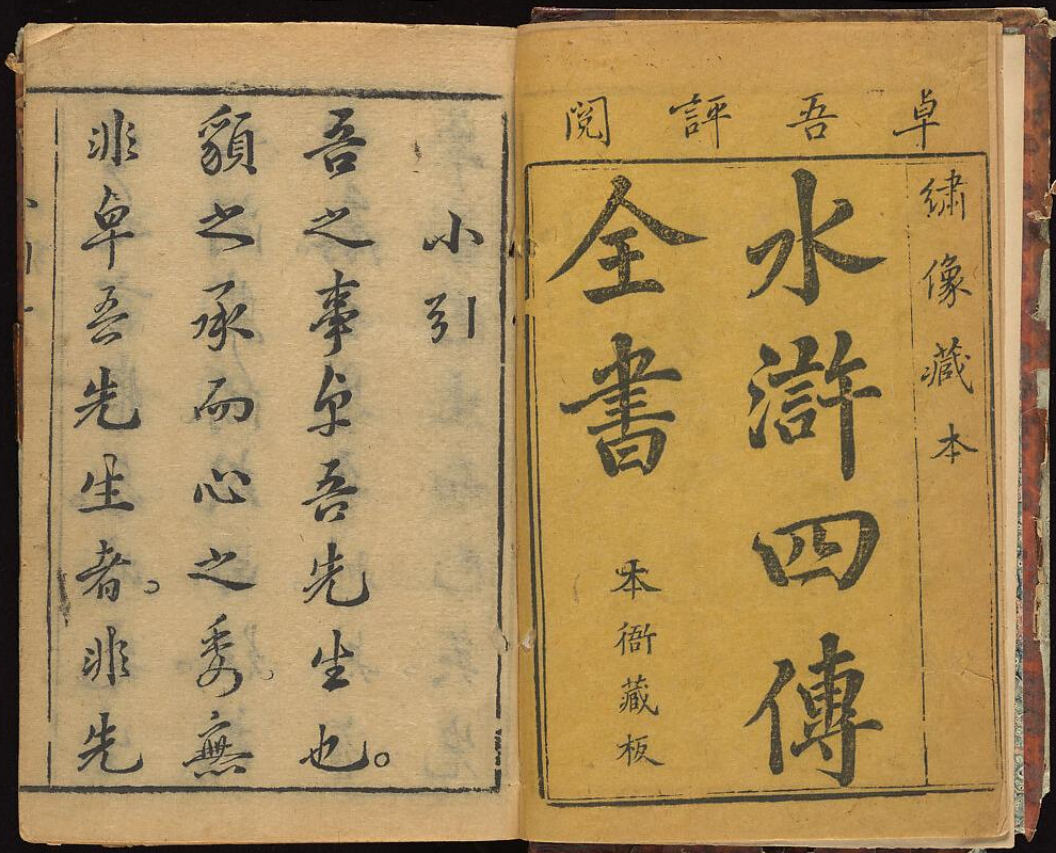
讀襄陽耆舊傳因作詩五百言寄皮襲美

鄉貢進士陸龜蒙

漢。臯。古。來。雄。山。水。天。下。秀。高。當。軫。翼。分。化。作。英。髦。
囿。暴。秦。之。前。人。灰。滅。不。可。究。自。從。宋。生。賢。特。立。冠。
耆。舊。離。騷。既。日。月。九。辯。卽。列。宿。卓。哉。悲。秋。辭。合。在。
風。雅。右。龐。公。樂。幽。隱。辟。聘。無。所。就。祇。愛。鹿。門。泉。冷。



And here is a beautiful
edition of a novel.
Check out the quality of
the illustrations. This is
The Water Margin.






A carver took a plank of wood....



How to
understand
formulaic
elements like,
“Dear Audience,
let me tell the
story of....”



A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hand on the left is wearing a gold watch. The hand on the right is wearing a blue and white striped sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

The relationship between “popular” and “elite”

It's complicated

Wang Shouren
王守仁
(also known as
Wang Yangming 王
陽明)

1472 – 1529



A version of Confucianism that emphasizes “personal moral transformation”




If you learned about filiality but didn't practice it, you didn't really learn it.

If this heart-mind is completely free of human desire and is pure Heavenly principle, then one has a heart-mind that is sincere in its filial piety toward one's parents. In winter, it will naturally think about one's parents being cold and explore ways to provide them with warmth; in summer, it will naturally think about one's parents being hot and explore ways to provide them with cool comfort.

Record for Practice



Two consequences of
this kind of thought



The relationship
between “popular” and
“elite”

It's complicated

Thanks for listening!
