

## **Bricks in Ancient China and the Question of Early Cross-Asian Interaction**

Although ceramic building materials had been known in East Asia from about 3000 BCE, it was only from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE onwards that Chinese builders began using fired bricks for building walls and ceilings. Mass-produced fired bricks were introduced during the construction of the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi, and craftsmen discovered the technologies necessary to erect bonded walls, barrel vaults and domes over the following centuries. This text traces the emergence and development of brick architecture in China between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, and places the development in the wider Asian context. It suggests that even if bricks and brick building technologies had been known in other parts of Eurasia earlier than in China, Chinese craftsmen discovered the material and the technologies independently.