This conference brings together specialists in a variety of cultures to discuss methodological challenges involved in integrating material evidence in the reconstruction of the religious histories of South, Southeast, Central, and East Asia. By means of specific "test-cases," papers explore the importance of considering material and literary evidence in concert. How might iconographical, archaeological, and documentary sources push us to reevaluate historical narratives traditionally told from literary evidence? What untold stories might new and neglected sources disclose? And how might a focus on such sources help us to recover a visceral sense of manuscripts and texts as artifacts – as objects that formed part of a broader material culture?

Sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania’s Dept. of Religious Studies, Center for Ancient Studies, South Asia Center, Center for East Asian Studies, Mellon Cross-Cultural Diversity Fund, University Research Foundation, Penn Museum, and the Oriental Club of Philadelphia.
SUNDAY, March 21st 2010

9:00am – Welcome & Introductory Comments

9:20am-12noon – Session I: The Materiality of Writing: Text as Artifact / Chair: Paul Goldin (Univ. of Pennsylvania)

Dirk Meyer (Oxford University), "Bamboo and the Production of Philosophy: A Hypothesis about a Shift in Writing and Thought in Early China"

Jinah Kim (Vanderbilt University/Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), "Animating the Dharma: 3D World of Medieval Buddhist Books in South Asia"

Travis Zadeh (Haverford College), "An Ingestible Scripture: Early Debates on Touching, Dissolving, and Eating the Qur’an"

Benjamin J. Fleming (Univ. of Pennsylvania), "Buddhists and Brahmins under the Reign of Śrīcandra: New Evidence from Copperplate Inscriptions"

1:00-3:00pm – Session II: Rethinking Religious Histories / Chair: Deven Patel (Univ. of Pennsylvania)

Shayne Clarke (McMaster University), "Motherhood amidst the Sisterhood: Reading Inscriptional Evidence in Light of Buddhist Monastic Law Codes"

MONDAY, March 22nd 2010

9:00-11:40am - Session IV: Icon, Text, and Relic / Chair: Frank Chance (Univ. of Pennsylvania)

James Robson (Harvard University), "Things Inside of Things: On the Materials Found Inside of Chinese Icons"

Tamara Sears (Yale University), "Sculpting the Ascetic Body: Corporeality and Ephemerality in Early Medieval Śaivism"

All sessions will be held in Classroom 2 of the Penn Museum; please use Kress Entrance.

For maps, directions, etc., see http://www.penn.museum

For paper abstracts and further information, see http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~bfleming/material_culture

Questions should be addressed to Benjamin J. Fleming at bfleming@sas.upenn.edu

Hank Glassman (Haverford College), "Ninshô, Ryôhen, and the 25 Bodhisattvas of Hakone"

Gudrun Bühnemann (Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison), "On the Iconography and Date of the Golden Window in Patan"

Richard Mann (Carleton University), "The Rise of Mahasena: Skanda, Vishakha and Mahasena on the Gold Coinage of Huvishka"

Jason Neelis (Univ. of Florida/Ruhr-Universität Bochum), "Gandharan Materials and Manuscripts from Contact Zones between South Asia and Central Asia: Crucial Evidence for Patterns of Buddhist Transmission"

Annette Yoshiko Reed (Univ. of Pennsylvania), "Eurasian Trade and the Connections between 'West' and 'East': Reconsidering Early Christian References to Asian Religions"

3:15-4:30pm – Concluding Discussion – History and Material Culture within and beyond Asian Religions