

THE ACADEMY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

TOUR OF TIBET LANZHOU XIAN 1997

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2. China Trip Tibet Lanzhou Xian 1997

The China trips are initiated and led by Professor Wong-Lun, and organised by Glenys Savage, respectively Principal and Vice Principal of the Academy of T.C.M. Australia (now closed due to Professors retirement at 88 years of age) to assist the ongoing work of contributing to the standard of T.C.M. (Traditional Chinese Medicine) in China and the world. A further purpose is to deepen perspective regarding the origins of knowledge and the circumstances from which knowledge evolves. This can properly be achieved by a study of the culture from which knowledge evolves. Is the region historically sophisticated, intellectually wealthy or simply subsistent, were the people healthy and happy or aggressive and short lived. Realisations regarding the way of life for people and societies become apparent after exploration of the places and texts of historical significance, for example, the wealth of learning emanating from the land of the Yellow Emperor *Huang Di*. This kind of study is the study of life itself. The best of what has unceasingly continued to pass through countless lifetimes; is worthy of a clear historical perspective in order to discern the depth of its true value. Upon recognition of that value, we transcribe known truths to meet the demands of our modern society. This way of viewing life is what Professor Wong has tried to share and impart to his students.

Tibet, Xizang Autonomous Region

Tibet covers an area of 1,200-000 square Kilometres and its size is around one-eighth the total area of China. Being the highest plateau in the world Tibet averages 4,000 metres above sea level and is well known as the roof of the world. Lhasa, the capital of Tibet is enclosed by tremendous wind swept rolling mountains with snow-capped peaks - one rising higher than the other. Rivers often in torrent flow, criss-cross over the rough boulder and stone terrain, lakes are scattered high in the mountains.

Our intrepid team of 16 arrived by air from Hong Kong to be greeted with the dry thin atmosphere of the high plateau. We needed to rest and move slowly to assist our bodies; most were affected by headache and nausea. First impressions were of a timeless land completely closed in by vast mountains seemingly never ending. Wherever the eye was cast, steep slopes were present reaching upward through the cloud cover and we understood how intrepid and tenacious the people who live here must be. The region is sparsely populated; throughout history the people have been nomads or simple villagers. Yaks, sheep,

goats and horses are the major livestock. Barley, wheat, buckwheat, peas, broad beans and a wide variety of fruits are the main agricultural produce.

Religious belief is Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism disseminated through Tibet around the seventh century and since this time, much of village life and celebration revolved around the monasteries. Tibetan Buddhism divides into two main sects, the *Ningma* and *Gelu*. An emphasis of belief is Lamaism, Lama means super master. Each family was required to offer a child to train within the monasteries as a Lama.

Highlights of Lhasa were many. The vast **Potala Palace, palace, fortress and dungeon with 1000 rooms and home to the Dalai Lama**, is built into a mountain perched high above Lhasa overlooking the attractive city. Here we strolled through the once private quarters of the Dalai Lama, including his audience rooms and where he was once tutored by all manner of distinguished teachers, also where he played as a child atop the flat roof of the palace, here he enjoyed viewing the city through his telescope. We passed through the multi tapestried ceremonial rooms and the final resting places of past Lamas and teachers.



Potala Palace, palace, fortress and dungeon with 1000 rooms and home to the Dalai Lama

Our primary purpose for being in Lhasa was to visit the **Tibetan Medicine Hospital**. A senior physician warmly welcomed our group. He led us through an extended introduction of the hospital and the history of Tibetan medicine. Origins of Tibetan medicine were in the seventh century when the founding father travelled many times to Nepal, India and China in the pursuit of medical knowledge. He studied both Indian Aryvedic and Chinese medicine and lived to the age of 125 years. Tibetan doctor *San Yi Ga Sou* ministered to the 5th Dalai Lama; he wrote many commentaries and constructed the first college hospital in 1696. Today this same college hospital teaches over 300 students for a 5-year course.

A highlight of this day was the viewing of the **80 Tankas of Tibetan medicine**. A Tanka is similar to an elaborate medical chart drawn in symbols. These illustrate the foundation principles of the medicine, for both students and doctors alike. They take the form of 80 beautiful embroidered tapestries and paintings, all of which hang from the four walls of the Tanka room. As we viewed these marvellous works of art our host described some of their meaning, they are in picture form and as Tibetan medicine is around 75% Chinese medicine, we were able to understand most of what he conveyed. We saw texts compiled in the eighth century detailing herbal and folk remedies; these were revised again four hundred years later and are still employed today. The Tankas detail diagnostic principle's including urine analysis, pulse, complexion, tongue, eye and syndrome explanation. They showed acupuncture meridian charts and descriptions of internal and external causes of disease.

We were shown through the hospital wards. In one room a doctor was treating a man for a shoulder and arm problem. The patient had strong pain and could barely raise his arm, and this condition had persisted for the last three years dramatically affecting his ability to work and support his family. Professor Wong Lun was invited by the man's doctor to examine him and was invited to offer treatment. Utilising methods from the **ancient martial arts medicine Wu Yi**, he manovered the man's back, shoulder, neck and arm executing a serious of masterly manoeuvres. He then applied acupuncture in and out at various points then asked the man to raise his arm. To the surprise of all watching he did so and he did so without pain. Word spread quickly and instantly the room was filled with doctors and staff, much discussion took place and with smiles all round, we gathered for group photos.

Another visit was to the **Tibetan Buddhist Da Zhao temple**, located in the centre/heart of Lhasa. This temple is one of the oldest examples of traditional Tibetan architecture in *Xi Zang* province.



Etching carved into copper and figurine; forming part of the artistically ornate furniture piece located within the private reception room of the Tibetan Medicine Hospital, Lhasa,

Its location was selected by and declared a sacred place by the Chinese Princess *Wen Cheng* in the time of the Tang Dynasty. Large numbers of pilgrims come to kowtow, burn incense, and perform traditional religious rites. The *Da Zhao* temple houses valuable relics, including a figure of Sakyamuni (the Buddha) and the twelve golden lanterns presented as a gift from *Chang An (Xian)*, the ancient capital of China) by the Chinese princess *Wen Cheng*. A special stone tablet commemorates *Tang* and *Tufan* (Tibet and China) – the uncle and nephew alliance, a symbol of significance and historical evidence of the cultural exchanges and friendship between the *Hans* of China and the *Zang's* of Tibet.

The *Da Zhao* temple is a profound place of worship for the people. Quite apparent were people visiting from distant places that had obviously undertaken for the most part a **hazardous and dangerous journey of pilgrimage**, mostly they had walked the distance. So many strong and timeless faces, the passing of the seasons etched into their forms. Here at their place of devotion they were gracious towards us. We were all packed in and mixing closely as we passed

through the sacred rooms. Some people looked very old, some had tears of joy – probably here for the first time in their hard lives - they had made it here at least once. I felt very humble as they made space and accepted us without question; in that moment I understood fully why people say Tibetans are welcoming and warm hearted.

Surrounding this place was a large bustling market where all manner of goods are for sale. We happily wandered through viewing the cream of Tibetan handicrafts, marvelling at the variety and skill of the hand made craft ware.



Tibetan Buddhist *Da Zhao* temple

Our next venture was a seven-hour drive through a winding valley between vertical mountains. The “road” cut into the mountain and dangerous due to rockslides, followed the path of a wild and freezing cold river and is the ancient route from Lhasa to Tibet’s second largest city, Xigaze. **Xigaze is home to Tibet’s second highest-ranking Lama, the *Pancha Lama*.** His monastery is vast both in physical size and history. Our local guide led us through showing us the shrines of past *Pancha Lamas*; we saw large meditation halls and ceremonial rooms. At the height of power this place housed 3,000 monks. Social, political and agricultural life always revolved around the monastery.



Tibetan Buddhist *Da Zhao* temple

Chengdu, Sichuan Province

Chengdu is the provincial capital of Sichuan province and is a centre of politics, science, technology and culture. Sichuan is the most populous province in China with a population over 100 million, it is large in area with very rich resources. Chengdu plain is known as the land of abundance and has been developed since early in China's history. Paddy rice, wheat, corn and sweet potatoes are the chief produce. Sichuan leads the country in major commodity grain production and pork, silkworm cocoons, orange tangerine, rapeseed and tung tree oil. There are also major forest regions.

Our first stop was the **Wang Jiang Lou** or river-viewing pavilion, located in a park along the banks of The Jin (Brocade) river. We were told over 100 kinds of bamboo grow in this park. We perceived a wonderful example of Chinese aesthetics with pavilions and towers, rock gardens, ponds and shady paths.

The Chinese literacy pilgrims amongst us enjoyed the **Thatched Hut of Du Fu**, a shrine, museum and park on the site where *Du Fu*, the great poet of the Tang Dynasty lived for several years. He lived from 712 to 770 and wrote more than 1,400 poems, often presenting insightful commentary on the society of his day. Some poems have

been published in 15 languages; they are still widely loved and read today. The thatched cottage itself is a fine example of the carpenter's craft; mastery entwines simplicity with only wooden pegs and the art of joint cutting for structural strength. This building still stands strong today.

In the 3rd century and during the historically significant **Era of The Three Kingdoms**, Chengdu was the capital of the feudal kingdom of *Shu*. We made a visit to the principal monument of this momentous time, **Temple of Marquis Wu**, a complex of halls and gardens commemorating the kingdoms Prime Minister, Daoist *Zhuge Liang*, (181 to 234 AD). He was post humorously ennobled for his role in unifying the regime and for developing it's economy and culture. The halls contain gilt statues and statements about leading events and figures of the time. Close by lies the burial site of King *Lui Bei*; aided by his chief advisor and military tactician, *Zhuge Liang*, King *Lui Bei* gained victory and united the three kingdoms after generations of warfare, thus finally bringing peace.

Of particular interest to the Academy practitioners and students, and the reason for coming to Chengdu was our visit to the **Chengdu University of TCM**, founded in 1956. This campus is one of the four earliest TCM colleges initially set up when China made the decision to fully support Chinese medicine as an adjunct to western medicine. And in 1985 was officially listed as the key provincial school of higher learning. The university offers Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Degrees in TCM. The campus college's are of medical science, clinical medicine, Chinese pharmacology, acupuncture and moxibustion, dept of western medical sciences, and research and development. There is an affiliated hospital and 18 associated hospitals for interns. The President of the university, Professor *Li Mingfu* and senior staff greeted us and they took time to educate us about the university and its work. We were taken on a tour of the facilities while President *Mingfu* and staff invited Professor Wong and Glenys Savage to accompany him for an extended discission and exchange of ideas. Our tour included the museum of TCM medical history, which displayed many relics from the past that included stone and brass acupuncture needles, a 1000 year old life sized ebony figure of a man with the 12 main meridians and points etched into its form, classic texts and pictures and bust drawings of the great practitioners of the past and stating their contributions.



1000-year-old life sized ebony figure

Next we perused the specimen centre of Chinese herbs where we saw every conceivable herb, mineral or animal specimen presented neatly in rows of glass cabinets. As we toured we asked many questions regarding research, extent of foreign student facilities and education, about famous herb growing regions etc. After some hours we returned to the faculty board room in time to witness the President of the university formally present to Professor Wong Lun a Certificate of Honorary Visiting Professor of Chengdu University. We felt very happy to see that Professor Wong was again being honoured in this way. After group photos and as we left the complex I'm sure more than one of us - particularly those in private practice in large western cities - felt closer to the modern heart of this great medicine.

Our next cultural experience in Chengdu was the **Daoist Green Ram Monastery**. An exquisite combination of wood crafted buildings within immaculate gardens and courtyards. The **Hall of Wu Ji** or hall of the Three Purities was first built in 1669 during the reign of the Qing Dynasty. Inside the hall 36 large round pillars support the ceiling. Amongst these 36, 8 particular pillars represent the eight major Daoist

Deities and the remaining pillars depict the 28 constellations. Carved into the hall arches and external wall frames are the designs of the famous artist *Liu He*. Enshrined at the central positions within the hall are the figures of the Three Purities, or the supreme Daoist Deities, being the Celestial worthy of original beginning, Celestial worthy of numinous treasure and Celestial worthy of the Dao (great cycle) and virtue. Also enshrined here is a figure of Lao Zu, the author of *Dao De Jing*. We were filled with a distinct sense of awe for both the magnificence of the artistry and craftsmanship and the depth of meaning contained within the philosophical symbols and verse. The living quarters of the monks were at the rear, a few were about and they were warm towards us.



Daoist Green Ram Monastery

Lanzhou - Gansu Province

Gansu province lies in central north China. It is bound on the east by *Ning Xia* province, on the south by *Sichuan* province, on the west by *Qing Hai* (Tibetan plateau) and on the north by Inner Mongolia. Gansu province is dry and short of rainfall. Topography is complex, marked by many gullies and clay Mountains. Gansu is inhabited by many nationalities. Apart from the *Han* – which makes up most of China's population, are ten others including the *Hui*, Tibetan, Mongolian, *Hasake*, *Tu*, Manchurian etc and they all live in compact communities. Thirty or so minority nationalities also live in scattered groups. Two legendary thoroughfares pass through Lanzhou city, the broad Yellow River and the ancient trade route known as the Silk Road. The Silk Road runs across central Asia, historically allowing trade with Europe and the rest of the world.



The city of Lanzhou is bisected by the mighty Yellow river, said by all to be the giver of life. A woman and her baby resides on the bank as a symbol of the life giving nectar offered by the river, in this otherwise dry harsh clay soil environment.

Lanzhou and Gansu province is an agriculturally poorer part of China however, some famous Chinese Medical herbs are produced and exported from here; including *Dang Gui*, Angelica Condonopsis, *Da Huang*, Rheumania Officinale. This region has become well known to

archaeologists as finds have been made from the earliest times of Chinese history.

Our purpose here was to attend the **Second Symposium of TCM at the Lanzhou College of TCM**. The papers presented represented examples of the latest research and clinical break throughs. Our Australian contribution was to illustrate concepts concerning the effectiveness of combining the five methods of TCM into an integrated treatment method - supported by case studies. Professor has practiced and refined this style of diagnosis/treatment throughout his sixty years of clinical practice. Supported by classical writings, he puts forward the view that the combination of methods provides a holistic approach, with each method specific to presentation; acupuncture for the Qi/meridians, herbs to address the material substance, exercise therapy to address structural imbalances etc. The conference was over three days. Our welcome and subsequent sense of connection to the wider family of Chinese medicine was an inspiration for all the students and introduced us to many new colleagues and friends. The following day we attended a banquet in our honour from the college President and Secretary and such a banquet it was, I stopped counting the dishes at twenty-five. Truly our digestions had a wonderful time in China. Afterwards we enjoyed a floorshow and many toasts of good cheer.

The medical students and practitioners amongst us assisted Professor Wong in treatment consultation at the Lanzhou Academy of TCM. This place is our Sister clinic to the Academy of TCM in Northcote Australia. Located in central Lanzhou, the clinic offers medical services to the local people. Word had passed that Professor Wong was coming and over three days, Professor administered to around sixty patients. As with the practice in Northcote, students would stand with Professor during the diagnosis, then receive instructions from him concerning treatment method i.e. massage, guasha, cupping acupuncture etc.



Second Symposium of TCM at Lanzhou College of TCM.

Tianshu, Gansu Province

We left Lanzhou by train to travel 300 km south and a little east. Our high spirits were being tested by the thought of a 9-hour train ride however, upon boarding we were relieved to find comfortable 4 bunk berths with card tables, even a dining car serving an “interesting lunch”. This cross-country journey passed through rugged rolling mountains and dry gullies. We saw villages perched atop hills and everywhere evidence of thousands of years of agricultural activity - graduated hillsides and cutaways sometimes of whole hills and always for as far as the eye could see, all to create more land for cultivation. A modernisation program to rescue land degradation has been instigated to protect the hillsides and valleys to inhibit erosion. To realise all we could survey was formed from the hard labour of hand and oxen over thousands of years, indeed took the breath away.

As we headed south the land greened. Tianshu has an ancient history as a transport crossroads; major routes especially from the north and east converge there effectively forming a doorway to the rich middle kingdom of China. Throughout the ages Tianshu has and still is the strategic northern military stronghold for defence of the middle kingdom. The last time Tianshu served this function was against the Japanese in the 1930s. Obvious to the eye as we passed through were a variety of army bases and airfields of jet aircraft. The climate here is congenial and resources plentiful with great quantities of

minerals and plant fauna. Many famous temples, mountains and streams are there and this region is particularly famous for its laquerware.

Our purpose here was to visit the Temple of *Fu Xi*. ***Fu Xi* was a legendary sovereign, thinker and inventor** and the first of China's three great cultural heroes - The Three Demiurges of Chinese history of whom it is said laid the foundation of Chinese culture. Scholars believe he lived around 6000 BC. Through his study of nature he wrote the *Lo Shu Wei* and *Ho Tu Wei* discourses describing recognisable patterns of heaven and earth. From these commentaries the **eight-tri grams of the *Ba Gua* were designed** enunciating the eight basic conditions/qualities of the universe that serve to logically symbolise the movement/changing between the polarities of nature i.e. the movement between Yin and Yang. This way of thinking evolved to form the 64 hexagrams of **the *Yi Jing*, or the famous Book Of Changes**. And these same precepts are also employed to define the Yin/Yang condition of a patient in T.C.M. clinical practice. He was a marvellous thinker who also invented many practical items; fishing nets, the institution of marriage and he is often depicted holding a mathematical protractor, the Chinese symbol for building and architecture and also of magic and curative forces of nature.

His temple is physically beautiful and along with magnificently carved building features and ornamentation, the courtyards contain lovingly cared for 500 and 1000 year old trees. One of these was so old it was propped and supported with timber struts, though as one looked brand new life in the form of shoots were sprouting fourth at the tips.

We continued our travel with an ever-upward and winding coach drive through mountainous terrain to reach the **Buddhist Maijishan Grottoes**. We stopped at what seemed the highest level of the vast and well-treed mountain range. Before our eyes was a sheer cliff face and carved directly into the rock face was a 30 metre high standing Buddha. Straddling the cliff face was a precarious looking scaffolding of steep steps and platforms. Attempting to avoid vertigo we climbed the scaffolding to find niches or hollows dug into the rock and within were marvellous painted sculptures. These included the deities of Buddhism including Sakyamuni – the Buddha, warrior and reclining ox, many figures in meditation posture and all so vivid and full of life belaying the fact they were 1000 years old. Looking out over the valley from the face of the cliff took in a majestic panorama, Lord Buddha's benevolent gaze cast outward from the highest vantage point. A community of Buddhists created this work 1000 years ago, the figures look almost impossibly vibrant for so long a time. The east and west cliff faces contain over 194 niches with over 1000 sculptures

still intact. The materials used for their construction was wood frame and local clay – of which there is abundance. It is thought the stone figures were brought in from elsewhere.



Temple of Fu Xi



Buddhist Maijishan Grottoes

Our overnight stay was at Ping Lian, located approximately 200 km east of Xian, a small town recently made more accessible by the coming of a train line. We left Ping Lian to make our way towards what is believed to be the region of the **earliest origins of Nature Dao, Kong Dong Shan**. Pundits say that the foundation of Chinese culture throughout history has been based on the Dao, studies of the great cycle or great ultimate. Nature Dao is not to be mistaken as a religion or any form of worship rather; the original form of Dao seeks to understand the way of nature and how this relates to human beings.

During China's long history as for the world, history clearly records destructive times of strife where traditions are forgotten, moral principles are lost and longevity reduced. Often these times have served as a catalyst for the emergence of a great movement or traditions of which China has had its share. For example, it is said that Confucius wasn't born so clever but as he travelled he perceived a desperate need to uplift the moral condition of the people. *Lao Zu* wrote *The Dao De Jing*, and he is often regarded as the father of modern Daoism, he and Confucius met. Buddhism rose in 480 BC with the life of Sakyamuni. Three streams of thought have permeated Chinese culture these last 3000 years, Buddhism, Nature Dao, and Confucian teachings. All contribute to Chinese Medicine and Chinese culture. Nature Dao origins are much older as they reach back as far as 16,000 years.

Professor spoke about this time period. I researched Buddhism many years ago and sought out the origins of the founder Sakyamuni, who became the Buddha. Well-known stories tell about the times of hardship during his early travels. One day and before he attained enlightenment Sakyamuni found himself deeply troubled. He was a spiritual seeker and had wandered from place to place in search of the truth. He came to realise that trouble existed in many places and that even in spiritual communities and holy places was widespread selfishness, ego and corruption and this is what made him upset. From what he learned about the true nature of the world and the nature of suffering and from what he attained - began the Buddhist tradition. I will speak more about Sakyamuni in future talks.

Confucius was born in China and lived around 500 BC. The birth of Sakyamuni was in India around 480 BC. Prior and up to this time was tremendous strife, conflict and the moral condition of the world was very low. Brother turned upon brother, sons killed fathers for power and position, people turned on each other and the value of human life was very low. A time when the distinction between *Ren Xing*, natural human character, and *Shou Xing*, animal character was lost. This was an ideal setting for the rise of popular belief systems that could impart

basic truths concerning propriety of conduct in daily life, this being the thrust of Confucian teaching. And the idea that good actions and thoughts performed in this life will prepare one's spiritual self for gaining the inner state of the Buddha, (enlightenment) or at least a higher life station next rebirth, thus essentially aiming the focus of development upon the Spiritual, the thrust of Buddhism. Both paths serving to present new and popular belief systems to help people again evolve out of the creeping grip of *Shou Xing*, animal character.

Confucius was born around 551 BC. The Doctrine of Confucius presented teachings directly concerned with propriety; the actions, thoughts and speech most appropriate for leading mutually beneficial and up lifting lives. Universally acknowledged as a great educator, he resinating timeless truths to nourish hearts and mental intelligence thereby leading people to re discover a high moral intelligence - development. Confucius placed great importance upon exercises of appropriate behaviour in daily life thus forming the foundation for a process of individual self-improvement.

Nature Dao. Dao is the intelligence that forms the order and natural wisdom of individual life, and the way that this harmonizes with the universe as a whole. Dao describes the natural order pre-existing within all living things. A flower will unerringly and perfectly grow from seed to full bloom and reproduce again because of the Dao of a flowers natural nature. Should a flower not grow to its full potential is because of an inability to access appropriate nurturing of the Dao in time and place. Dao also describes the order of the inanimate; the Dao of the universe is to be a universe. The force that causes/creates all of the myriad events and patterns of the universe, even that of the behaviour of a single inanimate particle suspended in space, or of a single living cell - finally displays a profound order of intelligence and this is the Dao. Dao is the intelligent order that rises from and underlies the seemingly random cataclysmic chaos of events - of chemical and quantum Yin/Yang reactions/relationships.

Nature Dao studies are related to recognition of the Dao, then to follow the Dao of human life in harmonious relationship with nature, society and the universe. We are a part of nature, connected to all aspects both seen and unseen. Nature Dao training is to move toward a natural state. There are many kinds of Dao; one kind expounds various methods of sexual techniques in order to balance Yin and Yang. I believe this way is wrong and will exhaust the body. Another is to catch the devil and this is related to spirits and the warding off evil influences. Another has formed into a religion. Our way is *Xian Dao*, which is to follow the Dao of nature with regard to human beings.

The universe is comprised of Yin and Yang. Nature exhibits hot and cold, wet and dry seasons. A human being has a physical body and twelve main meridian Qi channels. Human beings display deficiency and excess. Nature Dao training is to strengthen both the physical body and spirit to form an integrated combination where each can balance and harmonise the other. When a person can manage the polarity Yin/Yang shifts of the universe, assimilate the knowledge of Qi circulation throughout the body and adjust appropriately to the rhythms of the four seasons, they will have clarity of spirit and not be assailed by any physical disorder. This is the foundation for maximum potential leading to long healthy and happy lives.

We were now in our third day on the road, this day making a 12-hour coach drive east towards Xian. We travelled through beautiful rich winding green mountains and rugged valleys. Towards mid afternoon we approached the high mountain home of one of the ancient worlds great but secluded Daoist sites, **Kong Dong Shan Temple**. Our final approach was like climbing the dragons winding back and when the coach could climb no further, jeeps awaited to take us onward. We then took to our feet to scale the final 729 steep stone steps to reach the peak and the temple site itself. Stunning beauty surrounded us, which our senses drank in as our exertions brought a pause to our climb. Half way up we paused to view the hallowed figure of *Zhang San Feng*, high master and founder of our own Daoist *Tai Ji Quan*. His *Mruti*, statuette is housed in a stone and ornately carved wooden temple. As we ascended we passed the discerning and fierce gaze of temple guardians similarly housed. Finally reaching the summit, was revealed the kind of panoramic scene only found in the purest of dreams. Green abundantly treed mountain peaks and deep valleys, a mighty blue lake seemingly tiny resting at the base, our view from above scanning all the way to the horizon in three directions, thus drenching us with rare occasion as we overlooking the land roamed by the legendary *Huang Di*, The Yellow Emperor of China.

We looked upon stone-carved Yin/Yang symbols and admired the granite stones (steles) of etched calligraphy describing the way of the Dao. The main building complex housed figures revered in Chinese history, The Three Purities, as well as other revered figures of Daoism. The centre building revealed a hall where monks were chanting accompanied by traditional instruments; bells, drums, and stringed instruments we couldn't identify. Their sound was exquisite amongst the physical splendour. What could we do, our tiredness washed completely away replaced by an energetic thrill and a distinct sense of **what it is to touch the tranquillity of a profound inner state**. We saw a temple room with an adorned figure representing *Lao Zu*.

Decorating the courtyards were steeles of calligraphy and depictions of the *Ba Gua* eight sided tri grams that were carved into the raw stone of the building foundations. All around were the reminders of an ancient lineage unbelievably still relevant and in use today, the world of Dao. Looking outward again and below to the blue lake, the slope down was so steep as to give the impression of this temple being perched upon a tower of rock. To our right a narrow path led to a marble bridge that crossed a sheer chasm, this to reach a marble gazebo type structure, here one looked out to the east and west sides of this mountain peak.

Descending again I was acutely aware that the previous tiredness had vanished, my legs felt young and I even chased Michael Wong for a time before realising I was missing the exquisite nature of where I was. I slowed down again to drink it in. We passed the homes of the families and monks whose work revolves around caring for *Kong Dong Shan*. Many of these families have children who are already monks or will become so in the future. Despite the three days of hard travel we were refreshed, who knows how! Half way down we stopped for tea at the tiny chai shop, greeted warmly by the family there. We sat as the sun was setting, gazing into the eternal light. And feeling distinctly like there might actually be harmony between heaven, life and the earth.

Kong Dong Shan Temple





View from Kong Dong Shan Daoist temple



Kong Dong Shan Daoist Temple

Xian, Shan Xi Province

When ancient Peking (Beijing) was just a remote trading post, Xian was the capital of the "middle Kingdom of China" and one of the world's greatest and richest cities. Palaces, pavilions and pagodas crowned the skyline. Architects, artists, poets and of course chefs catered to the demands of the imperial tastes. **Xian was the beginning of the Silk Road** trading route and the most outlandish foreigners congregated there. The Silk Road concludes in Rome and measures 7000 kms. Traffic began in the 2nd century BC and the flow lasted until the 15th century when use gradually declined as a result of the development of sea transport. In the long span of 1700 years the road became and remained the main thoroughfare for economic and cultural ties between states in the east and west. From Xian the Silk Road heads north reaching Lanzhou city, from here the route stretches through a vast forbidding region of two vast deserts, one being the Gobi desert. Here is a world of moving sand often pressing a great struggle for travellers to reach through to the desert oasis town of

Dunhuang. And moving on was also fraught with the same risk and many camel caravanserais perished without a trace. Once through the deserts the road divides into two routes, one to the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the other through to Afghanistan and Iran. The famous Italian traveller **Marco Polo** went over the Pamir Plateau from the Mediterranean Sea reaching China via this route.

The history of *Xian* spans several thousand years presenting a treasure house of Chinese civilisation, the city and countryside holds the hoards of eleven dynasties. This region can look back almost with detachment upon its regal past. During the *Zhou* Dynasty (ending 770 BC,) several places within the *Xian* district served as capitals. In the 3rd century BC the *Qin* Dynasty capital city named *Xian Yang*, was settled just north west of the current city. When the *Han* Dynasty took over in 206 BC a grandiose new capital named *Chang An* (everlasting peace) rose just north of the current city. Imperial splendour returned under the *Sui* Dynasty (581-618 AD) when the capital was called *Da Xing* (great prosperity). The *Tang* Dynasty emperors who followed greatly enlarged and beautified the city and returned the name to *Chang An*.

The golden age of *Chang An* ended more than a thousand years ago when the Sung Dynasty succumbed to rebellion and anarchy. The great city walls and official buildings of Xian were constructed in the 14th century and are features of the Ming era. Xian is the capital of Shaan Xi province, which lies in the rich hinterland of China. Shaan Xi has a continental monsoon climate and is bordered by the provinces of Ning Xia, Gansu, Sichuan, Hubei and the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia. The major crops are wheat, corn, millet and sorghum. Other crops are black one inch and fragrant rice. Inch rice is finely grained, nutritious and offered as tributes to the royal family. Walnuts are traditional export products and there is an old saying regarding the variety of medicinal herbs grown there; no herb is useless in Shann Xi.

We made a visit to the Xian city wall, which has a history of six centuries; it is surrounded by a deep moat and is the best-preserved and largest ancient city wall in China. The wall is 14kms long and wide enough for two-way chariot traffic to manoeuvre along the roadway on top. A major renovation program is under way to repair the ramparts, beautify the moat and to provide gardens and lawns.

One of China's greatest archaeological attractions is the **Qin Dynasty Army Vaults**; 2000-year-old terracotta warriors of the Qin army standing in battle array. They stand about 30 kms east of Xian. The life sized (some slightly larger) infantrymen, archers, officers, horses and battle paraphernalia remain stunningly well preserved; a

constantly vigilant force standing guard over an ancient imperial necropolis. The vanguard presents in 3 rows of 210 crossbow and longbow bearers who stand at the eastern most end of the army. Close behind is the main force of armoured soldiers holding spears, dagger axes and other long shafted weapons and they are accompanied by 35 horse-drawn chariots. Every figure differs in facial features and expression.



Terracotta warriors of the Qin army standing in battle array

The horsemen are shown wearing tight-sleeved outer robes, short coats of chain mail and wind proof caps. The archers have bodies and limbs positioned in strict accordance with the ancient classic - Sun Zu's The Art of War. Around 7000 figures have been located to date with the likelihood of many more yet to be uncovered. This was the army that first united China, their commander and chief *Qin Shi*, became the first Qin Emperor. *Qin Shi* declared that this army should live forever because of the great service of uniting China. To pursue this end, well before his death in 210 BC he conscripted thousands of his subjects and 10,000 of the greatest craftsmen of the day in order to recreate an exact likeness. It is believed that all the major figures of the campaign posed for artists.

Our next visit was to what is considered Xian's number two attraction, **Banpo Neolithic Village**. Banpo is the earliest example of the *Yang*

Shao culture. Surrounded by a moat to keep out wild animals, the village appears to have been occupied from 4,500 to 3,700 BC and clearly indicates an example of an intelligent collective society with organisational know how. A large hall has been built over the residential section of the village and there are adjacent buildings housing pottery and other artefacts. Pottery found south of Qinling Shan suggests that a time even earlier than Banpo village demonstrates a similar level of collective agricultural sophistication and that communities may have existed there. The Banpo ruins are divided into three parts; a pottery-manufacturing area, a residential area and a cemetery. These include the remains of 45 houses or other buildings, over 200 storage cellars, 6 pottery kilns and 250 graves. We were able to trace the evolution of the dwelling from round or semi-underground to a rectangular house with slanting roofs – the prototype of the typical Chinese house. On display in the Banpo museum are some of the objects found during the excavation; axes, fish hooks, cooking pots, and artistically ornate ceramics. All signs analyse the skills of the Banpo villagers as ingenious Stone Age pioneers.

By James Middleton,