

*The Early  
Eighties*

*T r a v e l e r s '   
Tales*

## *Tales from Travelers*

*After having been closed for over thirty years, China finally opened its doors to the outside world. Naturally, visiting China became a matter of interest, delight and privilege. Members of the Tripod staff were eager to meet their brothers and sisters in the faith and interested in finding out what had gone on in the church and in China during those long years of isolation. Consequently, one of the main features of early publications were accounts of visits to various churches and places in China. Today, a trip to China is not necessarily "hot" news, although they have not completely lost their fascination and attraction. What follows are excerpts of five accounts from those early days when members of the Tripod staff first went to China.*

### *Visit to the City of the Five Rams [1982]*

*The first excerpt is taken from Lucia Lee's "Visit to the City of the Five Rams" For her as well as for others, a visit to China was also an opportunity to touch family roots for the very first time.*

I was born in Guangzhou (Canton) but came to Hong Kong as a small child with my parents. Since I grew up in Hong Kong I never had the opportunity to see and experience the native customs and lifestyle of China. So I was fortunate that my work provided an opportunity to return to my native city. Here I would like to record for our readers some of my impressions about the history, religion, culture and characteristics of the people of Guangzhou. We hope to share similar material about other places in the future.

China is such a vast country with such a long history and an-

cient culture that it cannot, of course, be absorbed in a short time. And one cannot in one trip visit all the cities and towns, mountains and rivers of China. Since Guangzhou is so close to Hong Kong and has many contacts with the people of Hong Kong, I chose it as my first stop. There is a feeling of closeness between the people of the two places and to an extent, Guangzhou's lifestyle has been influenced by Hong Kong. Moreover, it is the capital of Guangdong province and the southern terminus for trains from Beijing. So it is a very important city. (Excerpt from #8, 1982 p. 73)

## *A visit to Fujian Province [1982]*

*Father Peter Barry, M.M. who has been with the Holy Spirit Study Centre since the very beginning, has made numerous trips to China over the years. Below is an excerpt of his visit to Fujian Province in 1982. Fr. Barry notes that Fuzhou and Xiamen are among the 200 or more cities in China open to foreign visitors. These early narratives give us a idea of just how much China has changed during the last fifteen years. One thing that does not seem to have changed, however, is the inspiration that visitors always derive from visiting the Christians of China and their pastors.*

**I**n July, an American friend and myself had the unique experience of a visit to Fujian Province in China. We visited the cities of Fuzhou and Xiamen. These two cities are among the 200 or more cities in China which are open to foreign tourists.

Everywhere we went the people were most gracious. For instance, when we asked for directions on the street, as we often did, people were very helpful. I felt that their courtesy was due to the genuine good manners the Chinese people have always been famous for, and not only to recent campaigns, such as "spiritual civilization month five stresses and four beauties."

The contact with religious personnel was rewarding. I was impressed with the apostolic fervor of the Christian clergy, both Protestant and Catholic. In spite of their advanced age (the youngest were in their 60's), the pastors and priests were only interested in instructing the faithful and building up the church again after the "ten catastrophic years."

I had the feeling upon my return that we should visit China more often. And the words of one of the Fujian priests came back to me: "Instead of always going to the big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, why not visit Fuzhou and Xiamen!" Now that's good advice. (Excerpt from #11, 1982, pp. 61-62).

*The church on Gulangyu, Xiamen*



## *A Visit to Shanghai [1983]*

*Lucia Lee, in "A Visit to Shanghai," first situates Shanghai geographically and gives something of its demography. She then concentrates on the village life outside of the city.*

Shanghai is one of the three cities of China directly administered by the Central Government (the other two being Beijing and Tianjin). Encompassing an area of 5,800 square miles, it is divided into twelve districts. The 1982 official government census numbered the population at 11,849,748, which ranks it second to Tokyo as the most densely populated city in the world.

### **A visit to the countryside**

Since most of the people in China are engaged in farming, my friend and I were determined to spend three days living and working with farmers in a rural village. We hoped to gain some insights into their way of life, despite the brevity of our visit.

### **The daily life of the villagers**

Village life is simple.

One begins work when the sun rises and rests when it sets. After work, the villagers take time out to look after their own small allotted plots. Except for the fish and meat which they buy in the market, the rest of their food is the product of their own toil.

During the day while the adults work in the fields, pre-school children are brought to a day-care centre and taken back home when the adults have finished their work. The family then gathers for supper, after which they sit on the porch and chat with their neighbours. Very rarely do the farmers go to the nearby town for amusement; nor do they engage in organized social gatherings or other forms of entertainment. (Excerpt from No. 13, 1983, pp. 94-100)



## *A Vacation Venture to Guangzhou [1982]*

*In his "A Vacation Venture to Guangzhou," Peter Barry, M.M. recounts some of the difficulties encountered in trying to locate Ricci's house in Zhaoqing. Today, the place is easily found and hundreds of visitors yearly visit the place where Ricci lived when he first came to China.*

Because this year is the 400th anniversary of the famous Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci's arrival in China, my friend and I were anxious to visit Zhaoqing, a town on the West River, 110 kilometers west of Guangzhou, where Ricci first resided when he came to China. Zhaoqing is fast becoming a popular tourist attraction with its many scenic places of natural beauty, like Seven Star Park and Ding Hu Mountain. We stayed at the newly opened (October, 1982) Overseas Chinese Hotel. My friend and I visited Seven Star Park, but of course we were also interested in tracing the footsteps of Matteo Ricci. We were not sure where to start, but seeing a sign for the city government's Cultural Bureau, we stopped and asked the officials if they knew the approximate location of Ricci's place of residence in Zhaoqing. "We would like to take photographs of the spot, no matter what existed there now, as commemoration of our visit," we added. The officials replied that they were not certain of the location, but as for taking photographs, we would need the permission of the Foreign Affairs

Department. Mr. Li of the Foreign Affairs Office, a young man in his 30s, said that he would inquire about the location of Ricci's place of residence, and inform us at our hotel the next morning. It seemed as if we were getting the official brush-off.

However, much to my surprise a knock sounded on our hotel room door at promptly 9 A.M. the next morning announcing the arrival of Mr. Li. Mr. Li reported that a professor of history whom he had consulted told him that the site of Ricci's residence could not be determined for certain. Some people say that it was at Star of the Sea (Hai Xing), a section in the old walled city; others say that it was on the site occupied by the town's department store now; still others hold that it was near the Chongxi Pagoda, the famous landmark of Zhaoqing. After living in Zhaoqing for some years, Mr. Li continued, Ricci went to live with some Buddhist monks at a monastery in a mountainous area outside Zhaoqing. Besides preaching a religious doctrine, Ricci introduced western science to China and also cured some sick people, he said. Ricci's contribution to



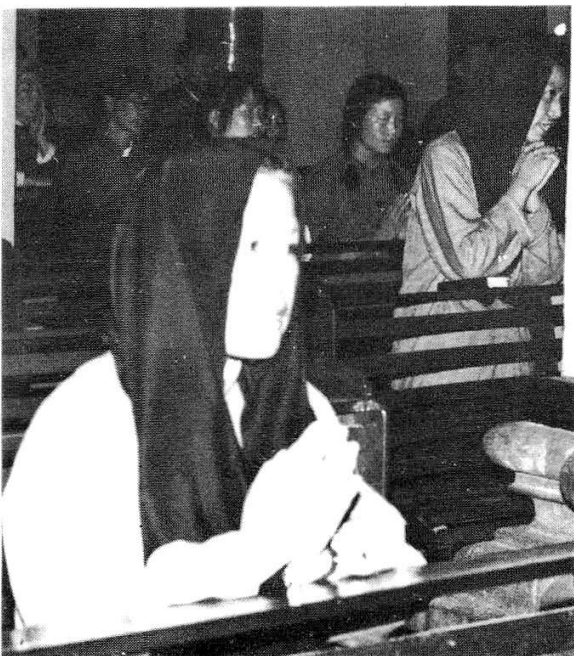
China is definite and must be acknowledged, Mr. Li concluded. As for taking pictures, we were free to do so anywhere in town and we even could take them of

people, if they did not object. I was impressed with the conscientiousness and spirit of service of this young government official.

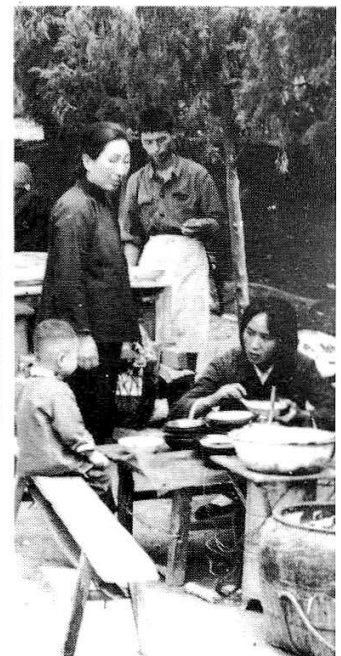
(#13, 1983, pp. 88-93)



*The Nestorian stele, the first evidence of Christianity in China, is one among many famous steles in Xian.*



*Visits to China*



## *Visit to Xi'an [1983]*

*Xi'an has always been considered a city with a distinct personality and history. Its Nestorian tablet and various other steeles as well as its clay sculptures from the Qin Dynasty and its many historical museums have attracted visitors for centuries. It is no wonder that one of Tripod's first "travelogues" include Xi'an. Lucia Lee writes:*

**X**i'an has numerous historical museums to display the rich cultural legacy of their ancestors. The very famous "The Forest of Steles" is located in the Shaanxi provincial museum. Its collection of stone tablets is the oldest and most numerous in China. It displays very precious tablets dating back to the Han Dynasty. Among these tablets is one called "Shi Dai Xiao Jing", explaining the classic of filial piety. It is an annotation made by emperor Yuan Zhong Li Lungji of the Tang Dynasty. For the sake of promoting Confucianism he tried to annotate this Confucian classic, and he wrote the characters on the stone tablet himself. Another famous tablet is the Nestorian Tablet which records how Christianity, with its doctrines and liturgy, was introduced and developed in China. (For details regarding this tablet, refer to TRIPOD, No. 4, pp.49-57).

The "Forest of Steles" offers much information for those with an interest in researching the art of Chinese calligraphy and church mission history in China.

This city has many buried cultural objects which have not yet been unearthed and which show forth the epitome of the ancient wisdom of the ancestors and encourage ongoing excavations, e.g. the royal graves and monuments of the emperors of the different dynasties and the tomb figures of warriors and horses which were buried along with Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty.

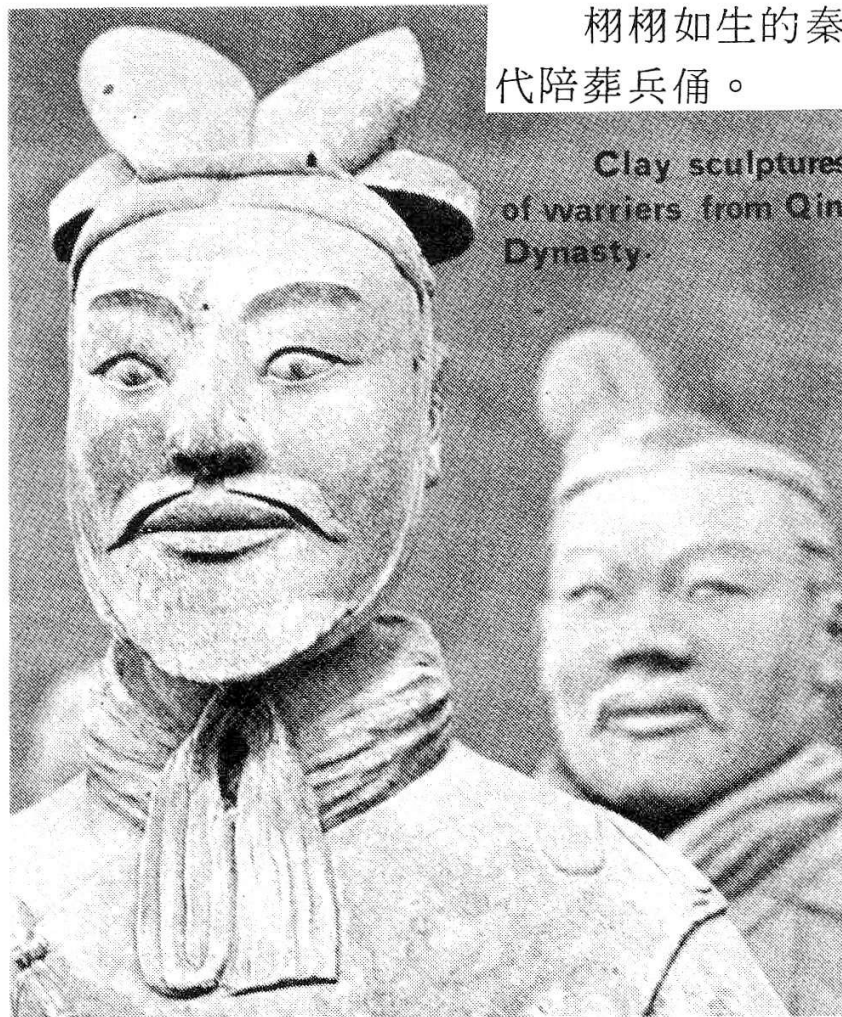
The grandeur of the buildings and unearthed artifacts give one a sense of great wonder and admiration. These tremendous structures and the elegance and number of the hidden treasures were made possible because the emperor did not hesitate to sacrifice human labor and mobilize national wealth of the empire for the construction.

There is no doubt that all this effort and expense preserved many priceless national treasures for future generations.

I personally liked Xi'an very much because it has its own characteristics and attractiveness which make one want to linger as

long as possible. The life of the people in this city is simple, frugal, tranquil and relaxed. I visited the "Gui Fei Pool" and it made my heart feel expansive and my spirit at ease. As one climbs the hill to the historical location of the inci-

dent of Xi'an, we are moved to reflect and grieve over the difficult times during the vexing ebb and flow of the events in that era of Chinese history. (#14, 1983 pp.30-31)



栩栩如生的秦  
代陪葬兵俑。

Clay sculptures  
of warriors from Qin  
Dynasty.