



My China Diary, May-June 2007

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Since our Secretariat moved from USA to China in April 2003, we have been improving our performance, at first gradually and lately more so. As we considered the Secretariat to be a very important part of the association, I decided to go to China this year to find ways to create collaboration amongst institutions in that great country. Hopefully, this will make our association stable and help sustain its activities in the long run. **See the map of China and the routes which I traveled on page 11.**



I landed at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport on **May 13, 2007** and met with Dr Hu Yaoguo and Mr Luo Wen. They took me to the Cornucopia Hotel, where I met Dr Li Dingqiang during dinner. Dr Li is Director of the Guangdong Institute of Eco-environmental and Soil Sciences (www.soil.gd.cn).



May 14, 2007. I went to the Institute and met Dr Guo Zhixing who is responsible for IT matters at this institute. He has accepted responsibility to take care of the new website of WASWC.



Dr Li has agreed to host our website when the one in Bangkok terminates. The Institute has also rented out some buildings to a school, so that they can get some income to support their activities.



Miao, an ancestral temple in the heart of Foshan - a 1,000-year old establishment, now a part of the Foshan Museum. Then we visited the Big Reclining Buddha nearby and later returned to Guangzhou.



At lunch I met Ms Jing Liu or Jane. She had just come back from the USA,



where she had accompanied her husband during his tenure at North Carolina for a year. Jane will take care of my logistics during this stay in Guangzhou. She has an attractive appearance and works fast, so it is a pleasure to work with her.



During dinner on that day at the South China Botanical Gardens, I had a chance to pay respect to Prof Zhao Qi-Guo, Soil Scientist and Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (middle in the photo, right is former director of GD Inst.). He was invited to come from Nanjing to inspect some implemental works of the Guangdong Institute of Eco-environmental and Soil Sciences.



May 15, 2007. The day was spent working with Dr Guo in constructing the website. In the evening I went to meet my good friend, Ms Zhang Li, at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and had dinner with her.

May 16, 2007. I accompanied Dr Li to Foshan, a small town just outside Guangzhou, for sightseeing and learning about the topography of the floodplain of the Zhujiang (Pearl River). We discussed cooperation between his institute and WASWC. His main interest was in



May 17, 2007. I gave a lecture about the activities of WASWC to staff members and some post graduate students at the Institute. Audiences were interested in seeing Al Gore's film An Inconvenient Truth, which I had previewed at the beginning of my talk.

So I then suggested that the Institute to organize one afternoon sometime later and show this film in full, while tea is being served. (Photo: Prof Zhou, Jane and Dr Hu Yaoguo helped operate the powerpoint during my lecture.)



In the evening, I left Guangzhou for Beijing by train from Guangzhou East train station. The train was fully packed but I got a hard bed, with air-conditioning to provide comfort over the next 21 hours.

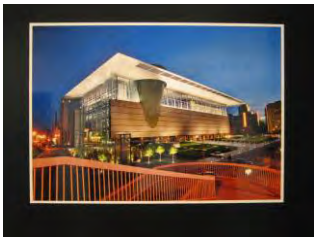


May 18, 2007. I met and talked with some young fellow travelers on the train. Then arrived in Beijing and went to stay at the China People's Palace Hotel or ZHI GONG ZHI JIA in Chinese, not far

from the good old Yanjing Hotel, which has been under renovation to receive guests during the Olympics in July 2008. Prof Henry Lu Shunguang had kindly booked this hotel for me. In the evening I went to listen to a famous Chinese artist, Ms Fan Xu, playing the guzheng, a traditional string instrument, at the Beijing



Concert Hall. Later she was signing autographs for fans. Then I went on to the Wangfujing tourist Street where much of the area is being repaired or rebuilt to welcome the Olympics.



May 19, 2007. My friend Ms Wang Zhaoyan came to take me to visit the nearby Capital Museum (above). This museum shows everything about the capital city - archaeology, trade and livelihoods. This is the most modern museum of Beijing, having just opened very recently and I saw from TV that our Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn had recently visited in April this year. After having a late lunch at one of Beijing's Macdonald's restaurants, Zhaoyan went back to attend a lecture at the Beijing University of Forestry where she is a doctoral candidate in Forest Ecology.



May 20, 2007. Zhaoyan came to take me to Zhoukoudian (~60 km SSW of Beijing) by car to see the site of Peking Man (who lived ca 220,000 to 500,000 years ago). This was discovered in 1921 and is now registered as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. We used the same car and driver that took us to the Ming Tombs last October, so we were in good company. This is really a nice place to make a day trip. It involves little effort



to go up the hill and down the valley/ crevasse to observe various spots that archaeologists of the time had put their efforts into discovering these



priceless human and animal remains.



We spent the afternoon strolling across the Marco Polo Bridge and along the main street of Wanping City, watching people making a movie and viewing a local

market. This nicely rounded off the Beijing tour program that this good friend had kindly organized for me.



May 21, 2007. Henry Lu Shunguang, our WASWC Executive Secretary, came to meet me at the hotel and we had a discussion about the roles and functions of the WASWC Secretariat in the way that concerns the several institutions

of China. Henry is an active executive. Being the Deputy Director of the Monitoring Center of Soil and Water Conservation (www.cnscm.org) of the Ministry of Water Resources, he has to rush here and there to accomplish his responsibilities. But this one-hour breakfast dialogue has proved very useful and afforded an important dimension of this trip.

In the afternoon, I went to work at an internet cafe located in the old railway station and walked past the Olympic countdown at Tian'anmen Square to make a short visit to the



hilly Jingshan Park behind the Forbidden City. Presumably the material to build the hill was brought here from the moats of the Forbidden City site. From one of the five pavilions on the hill you have a stunning view of the city - something that the emperors and their courts must have enjoyed hundreds of years ago. I also found a memorial at the tree (left)



where Chongzhen, the last emperor of Ming Dynasty, hanged himself in 1644.

Then I was off to the Beijing West train station. To my surprise, my friend Zhaoyan came to see me off. She took her duty seriously - after making sure my heavy luggage was on the train and I was in the correct bunk she called her friend Zheng Haijin in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, and asked her to come to collect me next morning - when and where. Chinese efficiency and hospitality - no where else that we can witness such a thing like this!



May 22, 2007. Zheng Haijin came to collect me as planned. I was brought to the Jiangxi Provincial Institute for Soil and Water Conservation Research and gave a lecture



to staff members and some students about the role of WASWC in soil and water conservation worldwide. As usual, audiences were interested in seeing the film of Al Gore and Prof Zuo Changqing, Director of the Institute, promised to show it one afternoon while tea was being served. A big welcome lunch was arranged for me at a restaurant in Nanchang; everyone enjoyed this 'togetherness'.



After having had a good rest in the afternoon (Chinese friends always insist on me having a rest, judging me to be somewhat older than themselves), Haijin came to accompany me to take a trip to the recreation area across the Ganjiang River where they have a fountain dance show every day at 20.00 hrs.



May 23, 2007 - The 44th birthday of the Land Development Department of Thailand, and the 300th of Carl Linnaeus, Father of Plant Taxonomy. Haijin had asked a colleague (Wang Nong, right in the photo below) to go with me by car to Jinggangshan City, a mountain resort which is the historic

place where Mao Zedong gathered his troops before taking the Long March to Shaanxi during the 1930s. Charli, a school teacher-cum-guide, joined us before arriving at the resort (left in the right picture).



We visited a couple of buildings which have the typical yellow color of that period and bought some souvenirs. This is a nice place to relax for a day while you are also learning some parts of the history of China. Strolling in the evening, we saw many people joining the evening



(ballroom) dance on the lakeside – it was lovely. If interested you may like to view a couple of videos about Long March in www.history.com/media.do?action=clip&id=mm_farmplow_broadband.

May 24, 2007. I took photos of the bioengineering sites near the city where they sprayed grass seeds on the slopes of the road cuts and covered with perforated plastic sheet. This is a general practice being adopted throughout China. Several Soil and Water Conservation institutions also have companies that sign contracts to do the works to earn additional income. Along the road back to Nanchang, there are so many sites that clearly show this kind of work.



After lunch (and a short rest) I was driven to the Nanchang train station. I assured Prof Zuo that WASWC would try to help assist the work of his institute.



May 25, 2007. Arrived in Xi'an after almost 24 hours on the train, and by a young colleague of Prof Li Rui I was driven to Yangling, 85 km west of Xi'an, in just over an hour. Prof Li Rui hosted a dinner for me, with Prof Zheng Fenli and Ms Zhang Wei also accompanying us. Prof Li Rui is our Vice President for China, with responsibility for China, and he



has been hugely instrumental in making soil and water conservation work flourish in his country, having operated several watershed and soil conservation projects during past 20-30 years.



My visit this time is to discuss what he and the Institute of Soil and Water Conservation (ISWC, www.iswc.ac.cn) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences can contribute to making WASWC's presence in this country useful to people inside and outside. He made an appointment with me so that we could discuss this thoroughly on May 27, leaving May 26 as a day of rest.



May 26, 2007. I went to meet a friend, Mr Martin

Parkes, at his apartment overlooking the beautiful suburbs of Yangling city. I met Martin last October and found his presence in Yangling interesting, so had asked to meet him again this time.

Martin is from UK, having worked in agricultural development in Africa during early 1970s, we share many common ideas. Presently he is encouraging students at the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University to improve their fluency in spoken English. Before leaving the apartment, I observed that



the flat roofs of many buildings now have many solar water heaters installed. The use of renewable energy is being accepted widely in

China. Martin hosted a delicious lunch for me and a Chinese friend.



During dinner today I also met some other Chinese friends (Zhao Yanyun and Wang Mingming) whom I had met during the



conference last October. I also met Liu Bingwu, a staff member of ISWC who has already been translating the WASWC Newsletter from English to Chinese for about 2 years. After dinner he invited me to his apartment.



May 27, 2007. I met with Prof Li Rui today and we discussed a lot of things, mostly concerning how to promote WASWC and soil and water conservation in various provinces, municipalities and

autonomous regions of China. Prof Li Rui made it clear that the ISWC has interest in serving WASWC by promoting SWC to professionals and academics who help bring related work to fruition throughout the country. This work is best done by involving the Chinese Society of Soil and Water Conservation, which has its Secretariat at the Beijing University of Forestry. The Society has around 8,000 members all over China.



I had lunch with Ms Meng Qiang, a PhD candidate working with Prof Li Rui. It's a delicious Hot Pot with fish.



Today I got an invitation by e-mail from Prof Su-Chin Chen of the National Chung-Hsing University in Taichung, Taiwan to go to attend a conference in October this year. Prof

Chen is a new Life member of WASWC but a very active one. I replied to him positively, and I think this is a good opportunity to establish an effective link with Taiwanese friends.

This afternoon, I stopped to purchase a dozen apricots from a young pretty looking girl (right) selling on the footpath on the way between the Institute and the hotel. It cost me only one yuan (13 US cents). I consumed all of them during the next two days, quite delicious! (When arriving home my wife blamed me for NOT bringing any apricots home - I just forgot that she has a mania for apricots! I record it here, so as not to forget again next time.)



In late afternoon, I met Xiao Weiwei, a young friend whom I met last year for the first time. She told me she was going to graduate with her MSc in resource management quite soon. We had dinner together at a noodle shop. We ordered only 4 pieces of noodles, which were

served with a soup and that was enough food for us. Each noodle is about 5 cm wide and 1 m long - being typical of Yangling. Weiwei took me to buy some souvenirs and showed me a little bit of the night life of Yangling - just a karaoke bar! She complained there were too few of such places.



May 28, 2007. Prof Li Rui brought me to meet Prof Shao Mingan, Director of the ISWC. We shared with him what we had discussed yesterday and he promised to support WASWC as much as he could. Ms Meng Qiang also took me to have lunch today, now with an Australian scientist, Dr Tim McVicar, who came to do research with ISWC and Dr Yang Qinke. Tim came here after



having attended the Eco-Summit conference in Beijing. In the afternoon,



A student of Prof Li Rui, Yu Hao (left), took me by car to Xi'an to take the train to Nanjing, with a quick glance of the city's famous Bell Tower (above). Weiwei also came to see me off. Xi'an train station is quite crowded, since it is located at the approximate center of the country.

May 29, 2007. The train arrived in Nanjing during early afternoon. Students of Prof Liyu Xu came to collect me from the train station to hand over to their professor at the hotel of the Institute of Soil Science of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (ISS-CAS - www.issas.ac.cn).



Prof Xu is the Chairman of the Vetiver Network of China and we meet each other every now and again since 1995 when he came to the Soil Conservation Extension workshop in Chiang Mai. Last time we met in Guangzhou during the 3rd International Vetiver Conference in October 2003. That evening Prof Xu took me to have dinner at a buffet



restaurant, which I think is rather rare in this country. Then we went for a walk in a tourist area close to the ancient examination room. It is popular in China now to have one street or a whole area closed to motor traffic and let people come to have an easy and carefree stroll.



May 30, 2007. Prof Xu brought me to meet Prof Shi Xuezheng who has responsibility for soil and water conservation at the Institute. I explained that I wished that the ISS-CAS could have a role in promoting SWC in China along with the other 3 institutes, i.e. Monitoring Center of Soil and Water Conservation in Beijing, ISWC in Yangling, Shaanxi, and the



Guangdong Institute of Eco-environmental and Soil Sciences in Guangzhou. We discussed to a great length about how the interest among academics could be increased. At last, Prof Shi agreed to discuss the matter with the administrator of the Institute.



Then I took a short stop to see Prof He Yuanqiu, Secretary General of the Chinese Society of Soil Science (above left), to whom I proposed that a Chinese version of WASWC



Newsletter should be printed and distributed among their members.

Prof Xu took me to visit the Presidential Museum of Nanjing. This museum has exhibits about its use as the Headquarters of the



Kuomintang government of the Republic of China during the first half of the 20th Century, right after



the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1912. Some old photos showed people who were active in the government of that time, including Jiang Kaishek. It also dealt with the period of war with Japan when several hundred thousands of Nanjing people were killed.



After lunch, a couple (left) who were students of Prof Xu came to bring me to the Railway Station to take train to Suzhou, the place I expected to have a nice holiday - the city that I dreamt to visit for a very long



time. Trains to Suzhou from Nanjing are quite frequent, almost hourly.



This is the part of Shanghai-Beijing rail line. I arrived in Suzhou not so late, so after checking into my hotel (Home Inn, member of a hotel chain) I went out for a stroll. In the 13th Century, Marco Polo said that it was one of the most beautiful cities of China, being of the same rank as Hangzhou. However, it is a big city and the places of interest (especially scores of famous gardens) are scattered widely. I decided to go back to the hotel and watched CCTV9 in English. A good TV series on the Southern Kingdom of Nanyue was of interest. They had found a tomb quite intact in the middle of Guangzhou city in



1983. Since then archaeologists had been able to gather evidence to show the Southern Kingdom had existed and prevailed for more than 100 years before the one from the North - and that was over 20 centuries ago!

May 31, 2007. Took a walk to find an internet cafe, but missed the right direction by 90 degrees, so had to get help from people in a shop who advised how to get to the right place by bus.



Spent a couple of hours at the cafe and finished dealing with many e-mails. In the afternoon, I bought a train ticket for Huangshan Mountain, in order to start the travel before midnight of June 1. After that I went to a small garden called Garden For Lingering In. Though it was raining, the garden was so nice and it made me imagine how beautiful it would be if it did not rain. These gardens used to belong to individuals in the old time and they have now been given to the State. A good income could be generated from selling tickets, some may cost 40-50 yuan, and the most admired one, the Humble Administrator's Garden, which I would visit on the next day, asked a hefty price of 70 yuan each. I bought a number of Suzhou silk scarves to give to friends.



In Suzhou I saw many people driving electric bicycles, which is more eco-friendly than ordinary ones, but they still need to charge their batteries!

I walked back and found there was a food festival nearby, where people from many provinces came to sell their foods on the pedestrian street. A very popular one was the



the Muslims from Xinjiang who were barbecuing and selling mutton and beef

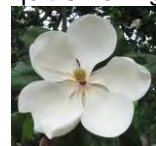
kebabs. Interestingly, they sang and danced to music all the time that they baked the meat - thus drawing a big crowd who giggled openly. Whether they could get a lot of sales or not, I could not say. At one place I found an Indian man named Ricky, saying he came from Malaysia and had his business in Guangzhou but coming up here only during this festival to sell kebabs (left, in white). He offered me a sizzling barbecue and introduced the



owner of the business to me. We had a good chat and promised to communicate further.



Tonight the CCTV9 program featured no-smoking as it was almost No-Smoking Day, June 1 is already around the bend. A WHO expert came to have a chat with an interviewer and concentrated on how to quit smoking. Interesting to get some statistics, that in China there are 350 million smokers, while those passive (or 'second hand') smokers can number as high as 540 million and have to suffer sicknesses while they themselves did not smoke.

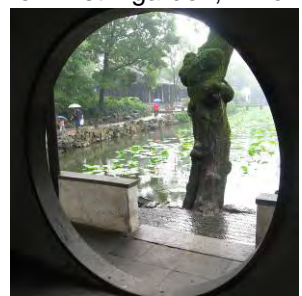


However, this cigarette production - especially in Yunnan - has earned a lot of money for the government, so the willingness to reduce people's smoking habit has not been as strong as it should be. The expert argued that people should think another way. If people smoked less, there would be more money left to spend for other purposes and the government might get even more revenue from those areas.



June 1, 2007 - the World No-Smoking Day. Seems it is still business-as-usual for most smokers in China. I set a record of visiting one museum (for free) and two gardens. The first garden, Lion

Grove Garden (previous column), was interesting, but the second one was the real gem of the city - the Humble Administrator's Garden (right). With a large area of about five hectares, it needed several hours to get around and check the various locations. The garden features streams, ponds, bridges and islands of bamboos and among them there are many pavilions.



A Chinese lady guide (left) gave a talk to a group of French students (in English of course). She talked about why Chinese emperors only lived to 30-40 years of age. This was because they had too many concubines and had to fully complete their duties. This caused a big roar from the visitors. Many people came to visit this garden each day, being both locals from other cities and foreign.

Common sights amongst the visitors are cameras. Luckily, digital photography has developed and spread quickly, so most people have successfully shifted to using it rather than the film cameras. Otherwise there could still be a lot of pollution because of the use of films.

Photography can help link people as well. The lady (left) came to the garden alone, so she needed someone to help take photo of her with a 'stone' crane on the footpath. I therefore volunteered. I observed today that Chinese girls know very well how to take a photo with other people. Mostly, they would lean close to each other or to hold hands or to hug each other lightly. But there is one thing - I don't know why - I hate it when people show the V sign (Victory sign of Churchill) when being photographed. Forgive me if you happen to be someone who likes it that way!



I went to Guanjian Jie tourist area and ate Japanese dinner - not expensive - and lingered around for a while, then went back to fetch my bags from the hotel to wait for the train at Suzhou train station (left). While waiting, a young boy approached me and talked Chinglish (China or Chinese English) with me and we exchanged e-mail and phone numbers too. After that, he brought

two lady friends to introduce to me; they were quite

charming (right). Though he was travelling by the same train as mine but it was in a different coach, we were far from each other. He regretted that he could not help me carry my heavy bags up to the train but at least he helped pulled my bag to my coach before saying good bye.



On the train I met two young German youths, male and female, who came to do practical jobs in Shanghai for three months, but every weekend took off to visit various interesting sites of China. This time they decided to go to Huangshan (Yellow Mountain) and we happened to be on the same train and in the same compartment. I just thought that they would not be able to do that in Europe, especially going such a great distance; in China the price of train tickets is quite affordable.

June 2, 2007. It happened the train was a special one from Shanghai to Huangshan, just to serve people who go to this very famous mountain of China.

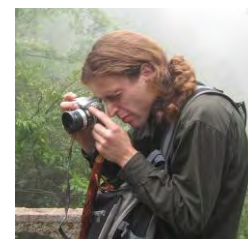


After leaving my bags at the Left Luggage room, I jumped onto the last bus and departed for the mountain, 70 km away in a Northerly direction. The tourism

industry flourishes in this country; people travel a lot particularly during various festivals - Chinese New Year, Spring Festival (May 1-7) and National Day (October 1-7). Not knowing how to speak Chinese poses some disadvantages and sometimes making the trip more lengthy and expensive - but I didn't experience cheating, as is common elsewhere. I was taken to a hotel and people tried to persuade me time and again to stay the night there, though I strongly insisted that I wanted to go to the mountain and stay up there. But they succeeded in getting me to eat their very expensive lunch before 'releasing' me.

At last I was on my way. In the bus to the Gate of Huangshan Park I met a young Canadian guy, called Kepok (lower right), who was traveling alone. It

happened he had some knowledge of Chinese and could communicate well, so we became hiking partners for the next 60 hours. We shared many things during that brief period and I feel lucky to have met him. Otherwise I would not know



what I would do when going up the mountain alone among the thousands who came in groups among their friends. However, Kepok had to pay 200 yuan to enter the Park because his student's card was not accepted, while my passport identified me as a senior citizen.

(I'm still puzzled about the Chinese system. The average life span for Chinese men is 70 and for



Chinese women is 73. At most tourist places they show clearly the age is 70 for a senior citizen to get a cheaper ticket, normally half-price. This means that people must be on the point of dying, to be

eligible to get a reduced fee. But with courage and an

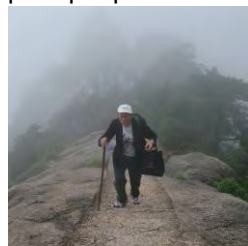
urging from inside - as my cash reserve was low - I requested to pay less for entering Huangshan Park. The lady at the ticket booth asked to see my passport and allowed me to buy a half-price ticket for 100 yuan. At the gate, the gatekeeper also asked to see my passport and waved me past without any problem. This made me



think people might say one thing and do another thing. They just make it known you have to reach that age before getting a reduced fee. But if people asked and they are almost at that age, they would be allowed the concession.)

The easiest way to go up the mountain is to catch a cable car, which is not so expensive. But Kepok and I preferred to walk up all the way from the Gate to the Summit area. It was not too difficult, but, ummm, not an easy task either for a senior person. We finally reached it, proudly - with vertical distance of less than 1 km - within 4 hours and 15 minutes (though a guidebook says between 2 and 3 hours). It was cloudy all the way up but we saw many beautiful scenes as well.

On the summit we found that Huangshan has many peaks and people have to walk from one to another through concrete steps like the way we came up. We went to the White Goose Hotel and found the price for a double room to be 1,380 yuan; we decided to stay outside and save the money. That hotel is the best place for observing sunrise at 5 am and it seemed to be full already. People say all other places charge the same, that they do not have low-cost accommodation, meaning that Huangshan Tourism does not cater for poor people at all.



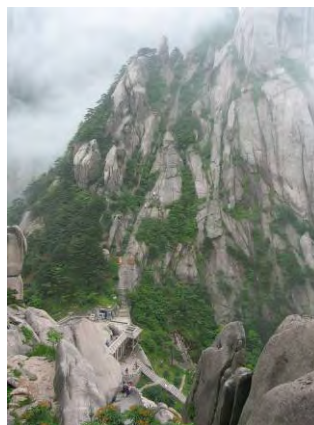
We went to an open space and put on whatever we had with us to protect from the cold air and slept up to almost 5 am of **June 3, 2007**. People from the hotel had already wakened up, only to find the sky full of clouds.

According to the map there are many spots of interest on Huangshan but we were determined to go to visit the top peaks, wherever they were, and go down on the same day. We went first to the second highest peak, the Brightness Apex, at 1,840 m. We



had a rice soup breakfast there and went to the highest peak, called Lotus Flower Peak (1,864 m – above photo). All the time we were passing through many features of the mountain until at last we reached the ancient 'welcoming' pine tree (Yin-Ke-Song, 迎客松) where thousands of people were gathering to take photos with this particular 'trademark' of Huangshan.

We lingered here for sometime, and after a coffee-and-corn snack, we left the summit area to descend along the cable car route (different from the one we came along yesterday) but immediately faced another



summit, Heavenly Capital Peak (right), which is the 3rd highest peak (1,829 m). This is the famous one, which many people like to go up. With over 1,300 steps to reach the top, those who achieved it would get a medal. It was too late for us, and the gate to this heavenly peak would close soon, we decided to leave this famous and nostalgic peak for our next climb.

On the way down, many carriage operators tried to persuade me to use their service, but we were steadfast in our aim to complete this mountain trip on the principle of up-and-down-all-by-our-own-strength. I'm quite proud of having done it - but quite exhausted, an experience that I have not had for years! See more info about this famous mountain in www.huangshanguide.com/english.htm.

Kepok and I stayed at a small hotel in the foothill town of Tangkou, had a meal and used the internet. Next day (**June 4, 2007**) we left by bus through the spectacularly beautiful valley for Huangshan train station, him for Nanjing and me



for Guangzhou. We had some three hours to walk around and see traditional market area of the Hui people close to the river. It was disheartening when we had to leave each other after having spent 60 hours together. He really acted as my 'mouth' (language) and me his 'legs' (direction). He gave me a Quebecois turtle, which is a traditional Amer-indian gift to wish for a long life.



I took the train at almost midnight, my destination being Guangzhou. I had to sit up all night because all beds were sold. Next day, **June 5, 2007** - World Environment Day, the train was still running in Jiangxi, then into Hunan, before turning south to Guangdong in the afternoon.



Traveling "hard seat" is good in a way; you meet ordinary people coming up and going down all the time, and all the way. You can learn about what Chinese people think and do when sitting on the train for a few days. There are a lot of things to talk about Chinese trains, but we have no space for it in this short journal. If you

want to learn about what train goes where in China and what facilities each train has and how much each



seat or bed costs, you may simply click: www.travelchinaguide.com/china-trains/.

Jane and Luo Wen came to pick me from the Guangzhou train station and we went directly to the restaurant of the Cornucopia Hotel where Dr Guo Zhixing was waiting. Thus a new life had begun again, in connection with Chinese gastronomy. When I was alone I could not taste so much of the Chinese food, as I did not know how to order. Now, with Chinese friends around, that was no longer the case.



June 6, 2007. Director Luo Wen came to fetch me from the hotel where we had breakfast together. I resumed work at the Guangdong Institute of Eco-environmental and Soil Sciences again. Dr Guo had downloaded most of the files from our Bangkok website



and put these into the Guangzhou one (<http://waswc.soil.gd.cn>). After lunch, we stopped at a fruit stall in front of the Institute and found they had various kinds of fruits to sell, both tropical and sub-tropical. I

bought few cans of coffee - a rarity of this country - to help freshen me up.



June 7, 2007. Continued the work and met some students during lunch. A girl student from Inner Mongolia (middle in the right photo) had almost finished her PhD. Late in the evening Dr Li invited me to have dinner at a Sichuan restaurant, which had very hot food to offer, such as Hot Pot. Sichuan is a well known



province where people are used to eating hot food. When going to that province the hosts used to offer such food to visitors and therefore such Sichuan restaurants exist everywhere in China.

June 8, 2007. I'm almost done with the website. At midday, Dr Xia Hanping of the South China Botanical Gardens came to fetch me to have lunch at a restaurant in the Gardens. Joining us at the



restaurant were his graduate students, Ms Yang Bingbing and Ms Xiong Yanmei; both of whom had almost finished their PhD. After the delicious and sumptuous meal Dr Xia asked the students to guide me around the Gardens, the real pride of Guangzhou and South China as a whole. I was in a good hand again since Ms Yang Bingbing usually takes visitors to tour the Garden during Sundays. They showed me the tree Champi Sirindhorn (*Magnolia sirindhorniae*) that our Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn planted there in October 2003 during the ICV-3 (left column). Our readers may remember her as the one who won a Vetiver Prize of The Vetiver Network (TVN) last year as she had done basic research on developing a cold-tolerant variety of vetiver. She was scheduled to go to present her work at the 4th International Conference on Vetiver (ICV-4) in Caracas, Venezuela. But the trip did not take place for 'technical reasons', which had caused so much regret to the whole group of Chinese vetiverites.



I must say that Dr Xia has always been very kind to me but sometime I was also too unkind to him. At one time when he took a duty of Deputy Mayor of Guigang City in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region he had to come to fetch me from the train station at 4.00 AM!!!! Since that time I have determined to avoid any appointment during such an un-civilized hour.

By the evening, Dr Guo and I finished the website and we congratulated ourselves on having accomplished this marathon task. In the plan, Dr Li will soon especially hire a PhD to look after this website, apart from some other duties. The Guangdong Institute is on its way for a huge development to boost its international recognition and I am assisting Dr Li in identifying certain academics to go and help with related work from time to time.

June 9, 2007 - already Saturday, the day I will return home.



Dr Xia was so generous as to assign Ms Yang Bingbing to take me to town so I could visit certain places I had not been to. During the past 10 years I had been to



China 10 times, but *only* 7 times to Guangzhou – so still a lot of important places that have not yet been visited. At my request, Bingbing took me to Shamiandao, the island



(~0.5 sq km) in the Pearl River where foreign representatives came to settle over one hundred years ago. This has a nice atmosphere and now it has become a tourist site, with most of the foreign looking buildings restored to a good condition. Even the locals come to practice (ballroom)

I would like to thank everyone who had welcomed, assisted and befriended me during this long tour, the longest of the 10 trips I have made so far to this great country. It was a successful tour of duty. This trip has opened my eyes to various things, and at the same time it opened up the opportunity for WASWC to be a long-term partner with tens or even hundreds of highly learned institutions of China. (I particularly thank Martin Parkes whom I asked to correct my bad mistakes, but I believe he did much more than that!)

I arrived home again at small hours of June 10, 2007.

Home Sweet Home - this expression is always true.

dancing during the daytime. After having had a nice stroll there we went to a temple, called Guangxiao Temple, a large complex with more than half a dozen halls. We decided to eat vegetarian food at a restaurant of the temple, which was quite delicious. I even took some leftovers to show my wife in Bangkok. I am glad it is now normal - in China and elsewhere - that after a meal people will ask the waiter/ waitress to pack some foods on the table that still look decent to 'take home'.

After Bingbing brought me back, Dr Li came to take me to have a final chat at a teashop not too far from the hotel. We discussed how to improve the performance of the Institute and of WASWC with a big input from the Institute, since there are many able people willing to help. Willingness to improve is the main item that makes things to happen. If, for any institution, some people are so satisfied with their



performance and are not willing to improve, this means that with time the people and institutions involved will eventually fall back and will be far behind the others.

Jane and Luo Wen took me to the airport, giving me all the assistance necessary to make my travel back to Thailand as smooth and pleasant as possible, considering that this old man must have spent too much energy during his 4-week sojourn in the vast territory of their country.





FOOTNOTE: Shortly after my return, the UNESCO Committee on World Cultural Heritage Sites that met in Christchurch, New Zealand, on June 28, 2007 had agreed on declaring **Kaiping Tower**, a unique structure of Kaiping City, 150 km SW of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, a world cultural heritage. One almost perfect example of Kaiping Tower is shown in the photo to the right. Following information from the internet about this structure - The Kaiping Diaolou in Chinese - is of interest:

The Legendary Land of **Kaiping Diaolou** - The Kaiping Diaolou, the unique vernacular architecture in the area of Kaiping, are the multiple-storey castle-like houses for the purpose of defence and dwelling, harmoniously integrating the Chinese and Western architectural art into one entity. They reflect, in a specific period and specific region, the historical development of the multi-culture exchanges of the Chinese countryside with the West. They have been generally recognized as a striking art gallery for architecture. Thus, the Kaiping Diaolou, with the remaining number of 1833, is also regarded as a brilliant logo of Kaiping City. Moreover, the Kaiping Diaolou were, by the State Council, selected as the Cultural Relics of the National Importance under the Protection of the State in June of 2001, and approved as one of the China's applying projects for the World Cultural Heritage in February 2002. The application documents concerned have been sent to the World Heritage Center under the United Nations, and the said project was inscribed on the standby list for the world cultural heritage.

