

China – Summer 1995

This year I took the chance offered by the Lepton-Photon Conference in Beijing to make a trip to China. Constrained by the dates of the conference, Aug. 10-15, as well as by Karl's vacation, I planned on a trip after the conference. I started in April, well in advance I thought, to plan the trip and to search for the cheapest air fares. I found a British Airways flight that would get me to Beijing the day before the conference and return a day afterwards. Instead of returning immediately, I could stay a couple of weeks longer. I planned my trip based on these dates. However, in June BA canceled the flight. By that time most other flights in the days around the conference were fully booked. The only possibility was Austrian Airlines, which meant leaving a day earlier and returning a day later. There was, however, still a small chance for the same days: the wait list for Swissair, which flew on the same dates as the original BA flights. Foolishly, I waited for that rather than re-plan my trip in China. The Swissair flight was probably full of physicists from CERN; anyway, I did not get on their flight. So, towards the end of July I decided definitely on Austrian. By then it was too late to change much in China. Fortunately, I could change my final flight from Xi'an to Beijing to connect with the Austrian flight rather than going to Beijing the day before, as originally planned. The net result was one day more in Beijing and one day more in Xi'an than planned. I could have better used these days to add another stop to my itinerary.

At the last minute I was asked to give a talk at the European Physical Society Conference on High Energy Physics in Brussels. This was from July 27 to Aug. 2. On Aug. 6 I was to leave for China. I spent the week before Brussels, apart from preparing my talk, in FAXing and telephoning to China to reserve hotels in Shanghai, Xi'an, and for my first night in Beijing. I had already arranged to stay in the guest house of the High Energy Physics institute for the nights after the conference. It was surprisingly easy to get hotel reservations. The only complication was when the telephone number had changed since the publication of the guide book. But the Dutch PTT's information service could find the number for me.

Sunday, Aug. 6. To get the cheapest fare, I naturally also had to fly Austrian from Amsterdam to Vienna. The later KLM flight would have been more convenient and still have been in plenty of time for the connection. Since I was leaving on a Sunday, and the plane was at 9, there was no train to Schiphol. I therefore had to take a taxi service, which was somewhat more expensive. The taxi picked me up a little after 5:30. I had gotten up at 4, since the taxi was to come sometime between 5 and 5:30. I was beginning to get a bit worried when he didn't show up. It seems he did not have a map of Nijmegen and had trouble finding our street. He had to pick up another person, in Den Bosch. But there was almost no traffic so early on a Sunday morning and we arrived at Schiphol before 8. The advantage of an early connecting flight is that you check in for both flights at once and can thus get the kind of seat you want, in my case no smoking, window. I like the window for long flights so that I can lean against the side to sleep.

I had set the alarm for 4 and gone to bed at 8, after pulling the plug on the phone, and managed to sleep pretty well. It was a 6 hour time change to Beijing so that I had gotten up at 10 a.m. Beijing time. So, I hoped, I was already partially adjusted.

The wait at the Vienna airport was long (4 hours) and boring. The new idea for

airports is apparently to turn them into shopping centers. Waiting rooms disappear to be replaced by tax-free shops which are more expensive than the normal shops in town. That is also happening at Schiphol. In Vienna it was virtually impossible to find a place to sit down, and when you were lucky enough to find a place there was sure to be someone chain smoking next to you.

Monday, Aug. 7. I slept reasonably well on the plane until we were awakened for breakfast. They could have waited a while before awakening us, because Beijing was fogged in. After circling for an hour, they decided the fog was not going to lift very soon, and we headed for Tientsin, where we landed at 8:00. It is just a small airport. Other planes were collecting on the ground. SAS, Aeroflot, Kazakhstan Air, Orenburg (apparently some Russian company, since its number, like Aeroflot's, begins with RA). We took on some fuel and sat and waited. Finally, around 9:20, the SAS plane began to move and the pilot announced that we would soon follow.

We landed in Beijing at 10:00, 3 hours and 50 minutes behind schedule. Passport control went quickly. There were lots of police on duty so that there was only one person ahead of me in line. Of course, he had some problem; two people got through the neighboring line while I waited for him. A quick stamp in my passport and I was waiting for my baggage. That took almost an hour. My things were near the last, and it seemed as though they stopped for a cup of tea after each cart of suitcases. Fortunately, I could use the time to change some money. You got slightly more than ¥5 (5 yuan) for a guilder or ¥8 for a U.S.\$.. The procedure was that you first had to fill in a form with name, passport number, and the amount of money you wanted to change. Then you handed that in with the money and your passport. In exchange you got a metal disk with a number on it. Then you waited while your money and papers were passed to a clerk who calculated the amount of yuan you would get and passed everything on to a second clerk who repeated the calculation and counted out the money, which was checked by the first clerk and handed back to the person who manned the window. He called the number which was on your metal disk, and you could exchange the disk for the money, your passport, and the form saying you had changed the money. This form was to be saved so that you could exchange excess yuan for hard currency upon leaving China. Of course, it was not an orderly line at the window (nor anywhere in China), and everyone was being taken care of simultaneously. But somehow it all worked.

Customs was just like in Western Europe: a red line if you had something to declare and a green line if you didn't. So I was in the airport lobby by 11, trying to find the bus into town. I bought my ticket for ¥12, refusing to leave when they said they didn't have change, which they eventually found. The bus took a six lane toll road towards Beijing. The toll barriers were sort of cute: just like in the West, except the roof, which was the tile architecture you are familiar with from photos of Chinese palaces and temples.

According to the folder the stops would be announced in Mandarin and in English. Well, I never heard any English and the driver only stopped where requested. But I was going to the end, the Beijing central railway station, from which I thought it not too far to my hotel. But he didn't actually go to the station; I think he stopped at the stop before. The driver and others sort of waved in the general direction and I started out, accompanied by an Australian girl who had been on the bus and who was heading for the station. Helped by various maps, from guidebooks and picked up

while waiting for luggage, we arrived at a street with a building at the end that just *had* to be a station.

I said good-bye to the Australian and headed in the direction of my hotel. Just before getting to it I stupidly made a wrong turn and walked about half a kilometer before realizing it. But after retracing my steps I finally got there. The hotel was OK, but sort of expensive (about $f90 = \$50$), which was to be the rule rather than the exception in China. The hotels, at least the ones you would be willing to stay in, charge prices which in Europe would be considered a reasonably good deal, but which seem very expensive in a “low-cost” land like China. After registering, and paying (most hotels wanted payment in advance and sometimes a deposit in addition “to make sure the key is returned”), I was conducted to my floor where I signed in with the floor attendant, received the room key, and was conducted to my room together with a large thermos of hot water. In the room there were tea bags. As in most of Asia, one should only drink water that has been boiled. In the bathroom I found not only the usual bar of soap, but also a toothbrush, toothpaste and a comb. This would be the rule at all my hotels in China.

After a cup of hot tea I decided to spend the afternoon visiting Tiantan (Temple of Heaven) Park, which is on the southern side of Beijing, like my hotel. (The conference was on the northern side of town.) Heading for the park I again made a wrong turn, but that was OK, since it showed me another part of town with drab, run-down apartment buildings, which reminded me of Warsaw, and a fancy new apartment building with nice grounds and a big fence with guards—apparently a new yuppie area.

Tiantan Park proved to be further away (about 2 km.) than it appeared on my little map without a scale. I have to remember that Beijing is a huge city. The population of Beijing is larger than that of The Netherlands. Chinese with whom I spoke often asked where I was from and then how big The Netherlands is. They could hardly believe that a *country* could be so small.

Tiantan Park was the site of the major ceremonial rites. The most important was just before the winter solstice when the emperor came with full entourage to perform sacrifices and atone for the sins of the people. This began at the Round Altar at the southern end of a north-south axis and would proceed to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at the northern end. In between is the Temple of the Gods, which is surrounded by a circular (35 meter diameter) “echo” wall. If you stand close to the wall and say something, someone close to the wall on the opposite side of the compound should be able to hear it. There are also three “echo stones”. Of course, all these nice echos do not work well when, as is usual, the courtyard is full of people trying to make echos.

The white marble Round Altar, constructed in 1530, comprises three tiers of terraces each surrounded by a white marble balustrade. The imperial number 9 plays the key role here. Odd numbers were considered heavenly and 9, being the largest single-digit odd number, was particularly important. The top tier, which symbolized heaven, has nine rings of stones, each composed of a multiple of 9 stones: 9, 18, 27, . . . , 81. The middle tier, earth, continues with rings 10-18, and the bottom tier, humankind, with rings 19-27, the last one of $9 \times 27 = 243$ stones. The balustrades each have 360 pillars, another multiple of 9, as is also the number of stairs. Or so my guidebook said; I didn’t count.

The Temple of Gods, or Imperial Vault of Heaven, is octagonal in shape and used

to contain tablets of the emperor's ancestors, which were used in the ceremony at the Round Altar. It is somewhat similar to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, but smaller and less elaborate. And less interesting, I might add.

From the Temple of Gods one proceeds northward six or seven hundred meters along a walkway and through a gate to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. Besides home of these temples, Tiantan Park is also a park where local people come for recreation. Along the walkway there were many people strolling, sitting, and flying kites.

The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests is the highlight of the park. After the ceremony at the Round Altar the emperor would proceed here to spend the night in fasting and prayer. It was built in 1420 but burned to the ground in 1889, apparently because of being struck by lightning. The following year it was rebuilt. It is set on a triple marble terrace, each with a balustrade. The terraces are intersected by eight flights of stairs. The major one (on the south) includes a carved marble ramp. The temple is round with three roofs of glazed blue tiles, and on top is a gilded ball. The temple is 38 meters (123 feet) high and 30 meters in diameter. Apart from the roof tiles, it is entirely made of wood. No nails or cement are used, which for a building so large is quite impressive. The exterior is lavishly decorated in red, blue, and green with elaborate gilt overlays. There is only one door, on the south. There are four central columns, representing the seasons, surrounded by two circles of twelve columns each, which represent the months and the twelve "hours" of the day. (In the old Chinese system the day was divided in 12 rather than 24 hours.) The columns, each made of a single tree (Oregon fir), support an elaborate system of beams and pillars which hold up the roofs, a remarkable arrangement. In addition, there are two rectangular pavilions flanking the temple on the eastern and western sides, whose architecture fits in well with that of the temple and gate. They are currently occupied by an assortment of souvenir shops.

In all, it is very impressive, and it is easy to understand why this temple is one of the sites most often used to represent China. I, of course, did not have the site to myself. Apart from several Western and Japanese tourist groups there were numerous Chinese both in tourist groups and individually. I eventually got used to it, but at first it was quite surprising when a Chinese came up to me and, motioning with his camera, asked me something. At first I thought he wanted me to take a picture of him and his girlfriend. But no, he wanted to take a picture of his girlfriend with me! I must have been approached 5 or 6 times that afternoon; I felt like Mickey Mouse in Disneyland. Sometimes it was a group of two or three friends, but usually it was parents who wanted a photo of their kid with a Westerner (at least I assume that was the reason). However, in talking later to others at the conference, I was surprised to learn that no one else had had this experience. So maybe it was my aura of charm and sophistication, or maybe just because I was alone.

After the park I walked back in the direction of my hotel. I decided to get off of the main street, which apart from the smog, which was everywhere, was very noisy. According to the guide book this area was supposed to be picturesque, and it was. There are not so many old areas of Beijing left; much has been replaced by high-rise. But here was a real *hutong*: narrow streets, small shops, small houses behind walls. People in the streets looked sort of surprised at me, so I guess I was a bit off the tourist track. Young boys, as in Indonesia, called "hello", but without the "mister" which Indonesians used. I saw one boy with a dragonfly on a string which he was

taking out for a “fly”. I had seen (and would see) lots of kids with nets—I guess this is what they were all trying to catch. There are certainly lots of dragon-flies around.

Life seemed to take place on the streets, the houses apparently being very small. People were also cooking outside on charcoal fires, adding to the smog of the city. The whole city suffers from air pollution from charcoal cooking and auto exhaust. As if that were not enough, there are lots of small sand particles in the air blown in from the Gobi Desert. I ended up a little lost, but soon found where I was at an intersection that was on my map; fortunately the street signs in Beijing have the name of the street in pinjin as well as Chinese characters.

I decided to eat near the hotel at one of the famous Peking duck restaurants, which was located just across the street from the hotel. But by the time I got back to the hotel and rested a bit from all the walking, it was a bit after 8 when I arrived at the restaurant. That was too late; they stop serving at 7:30! What a surprise, but I was later to learn that that was true at all the state-owned restaurants—fairness to the restaurant workers, I guess. So I walked around the neighborhood, hoping that not all restaurants closed so early. I took the first thing I could find. It turned out they only served Mongolian hot pot. This was not exactly my idea of what I wanted at the end of a hot summer day, but there were plenty of Chinese there who were enjoying it. The boiling water fit into a burner under a hole in the center of the table. They kept bringing more things, mostly varieties of sea food, to put into the pot. Since I didn’t really know what to do, waitresses took turns coming around and adding things to the pot and fishing stuff out for me. Unfortunately one insisted on adding salt and MSG (at least I think it was MSG) to the things on my plate, so much that I could hardly eat it. The effect was fiery, like lots of chili pepper. But I survived. The dinner cost ¥80 or \$10, including two beers, which I thought was quite reasonable at the time, although later it would turn out that it was one of the more expensive meals of the trip.

After dinner I went back to the hotel. It was a bit early, but I was tired and went straight to bed, leaving it until morning to think about what I would do the next day. The room was way over-air-conditioned, and I was a bit afraid that I would catch cold, but fortunately didn’t. It seemed strange to sleep under a thick blanket in the middle of the summer, but I guess that’s luxury.

Tuesday, Aug. 8. I got up and went down for breakfast. It turned out that the breakfast included in the price of the room was not really breakfast but a voucher for ¥15 towards breakfast. The breakfast was, at least, a real Chinese breakfast, *dim sum*: tea and choices of a thin rice porridge, pickled vegetables, various dumplings. I tried a few of the dumplings, but found them only so-so. I’ve had much better in New York and Djakarta. These were rather dry; I was reminded of someone’s description of them as putty, a description which at the time had surprised me. At the end the price of everything you took was added up.

I checked out of the hotel, leaving my suitcase to be picked up later. I had asked the previous day at the desk where the travel agency was where I had to pick up my tickets, but no one knew. Nevertheless, I noticed on my map a street name which was the same as that on which the travel agency was supposed to be located. It started at one metro station and ran to the next station. I decided to go there and walk along the street. Maybe I would find the travel agent, and if not, I would still end up near the Drum Tower, which I wanted to see.

The metro was easy to use. You first buy a ticket for $¥0.5 = 5$ jiao (also called a “mao”), which you then hand to the ticket collector at the entrance to the platform. There are two metro lines, one circular, under the second ring road, with trains going in both directions, and another line going from the center out to the west (now being extended to also go out to the east). My hotel was at one of the circle line stations; I only had to take a train to another station on that line. The halts are posted in pinjin as well as Chinese characters; many signs in the metro (like exit) are in English as well as Chinese; and halts are announced on the loudspeakers in the trains in English too, but whether you notice the transition from Chinese to English is rather problematic given the noise of the train, the poor quality of the speaker system, and the usually poor pronunciation of the announcer. However, I did get off at the right exit. And after a bit of wandering around I did find the street I was looking for. But I did not find the travel agency, although I walked the full length of the street. (The search for the travel agency will be a recurring theme.)

As I was standing looking at my map to see which street to take to the Drum Tower, a man came up and asked me where I was going. I checked that I was really at the intersection I thought I was at, and said I was going to the Drum Tower. It turned out that he lived close to the Drum Tower. He was just going home; we could take the bus. It wasn't all that far, but he showed me how the bus works. He did not need a ticket since he had a pass, but he helped me get mine from the conductor—1 jiao = 2 Dutch cents for the first zone (up to 3 stops). The man spoke pretty good English. He had worked for a heavy equipment manufacturing company, which even exported machinery to Western Europe. Now he was retired, but, not being able to make ends meet on his pension, had a part-time job as the local representative of some foreign firm (from Singapore if I remember correctly). He was very friendly and besides the bus, also explained the difference in taxis: the price depends generally on the size of the car, starting at $¥1$ per kilometer. But there is a minimum charge of $¥10$. Since the places you generally want to go in Beijing are not so far apart, you can generally get by with the minimum price if you take the smallest taxi. The price per km. is always posted on the outside of the taxi, and the taxis all have meters. However, he pointed out, the taxi is still *very* expensive compared to the bus. After we got off the bus, he pointed me in the direction of the Drum Tower and we said good-bye.

The Drum Tower was not all that exciting, but still rather impressive. Built in 1420, it is a large building atop a solid brick base. It used to house several large drums which were beaten to mark the hours of the day, time being kept with a water clock.

Nearby is the Bell Tower, built originally about the same time but burned down and reconstructed a couple of hundred years ago. It is even less interesting. However the surrounding area was interesting to walk through. There was a street market, which is always interesting, houses, and small businesses in house-sized buildings. This seemed to be a somewhat better area than where I had walked the previous day.

I found my way to a metro station, went back to the hotel and got my bag, and then took the metro again to the station near which was the terminal of the 308 bus, which according to the sketch in the information brochure for the conference could take me to the hotel where I was to stay for the conference. After a little searching I found it and boarded an empty bus which looked like it would be the next one to depart. It was an old decrepit articulated bus, like most Beijing buses. After a few

minutes the driver and two conductors came. I showed one the name (in Chinese) of the hotel from the conference brochure and she held up five fingers, meaning 5 jiao. Being the first one on the bus meant I had a seat. Usually the buses are so packed you are lucky to be able to squeeze in. The bus rode north, eventually passing the Olympic stadium and Olympic Village area. It is in the Olympic Village that the Convention Center is located where the conference will be held. (The U. N. Women's Conference the following month also was held there.) This area is, needless to say, very modern and would not be much out of place in any booming capitalistic Asian country. A bit further north, at the edge of town, things were back to normal, including much construction replacing old one-story houses by tall apartment buildings. Turning west, we eventually came to the hotel, and the bus conductor motioned to me that I should get off.

The Chinese who was meeting the conference delegates was very surprised that I had come by bus: "Your first time in Beijing and you got here by bus—it's even hard for Chinese to find this place."

About the hotel, I should explain, that this was the cheap second hotel of the conference. The main hotel was next to the conference center. Back in the Spring when I had to choose my hotel, I asked how much the university would pay. I was told that the *per diem* for China was US\$90, which was about what the main hotel cost. So I opted for the cheap hotel at \$35. That, it turned out, was the wrong thing to do. For two reasons: The quality of the hotel left much to be desired, as you shall hear; and when I got back and was filling in my expense account I learned that as of July 1, the *per diem* had been increased to \$170. Had I known what the name of the hotel meant (Workers' Building) I might still have chosen the expensive hotel.

I was shown to my room and was surprised to find that it was a suite: a bedroom, bathroom, and another room, the size of the bedroom, with a large desk and several easy chairs. I could just see the party bosses meeting there.

The furniture was rather decrepit and the place was not exceptionally clean, but I was prepared to make the best of it. I had just unpacked when the girl from the reception knocked on the door. I had to move to a different room, just a bedroom and bath—no office. She gave a reason, which I've forgotten, but it was different than what the assistant manager said when she arrived a few minutes later. Neither was the real reason: that they simply had made a mistake.

The receptionist again apologized for my having to move and also for her poor English. She had studied Russian and only a year ago had begun with English. Actually her English was not that bad, but her Russian was really fluent, as I could tell from the conversations she had with Russian physicists staying at the hotel.

The physicists staying at the cheap hotel were mainly those from poor countries, such as Russia, the former Soviet Union, and India, with a few adventurous westerners like me and a couple of young back-packing Americans. I knew most of the Indians, since they also work on the L3 experiment.

There were shuttle buses to and from the conference center in the morning and evening, and one of them was about to go. So I waited for it and then went to register. Then I went to eat at a restaurant nearby. Being in the fancy convention center area, it was more stylish than the previous night, and rather more expensive. I had tea, a nice mushroom dish with a bit of ground meat, a dish of some type of cabbage, and beer for ¥121.

Of course, after dinner there was no shuttle bus to take me back to the hotel. So I

took a normal bus. The conductor was the same woman as when I went to the hotel in the afternoon; she remembered where I had to go (I think). She was a particularly active conductor, getting up from her seat to go to the passengers to sell tickets and check passes, which, given the packed condition of the bus, is more difficult than it sounds. Her companion in the front of the bus stayed seated.

Back in the hotel I looked over the conference program and went to bed early.

Wednesday, Aug. 9. Today was a free day, the conference not starting until Thursday. After a practically un-eatable breakfast in the hotel, I tried calling the travel agency, but the one number resulted only in a recording saying that the number did not exist (first in Chinese and then in English), and the second number resulted in someone who only spoke Chinese. So, I took the shuttle bus to the conference center where I explained my problem to the Chinese organizers. One of them tried to call, but now there was no answer. After trying several times, we could only conclude that the number was incorrect, since at 10 o'clock there should certainly be someone at a travel agency to answer the phone. I got one of the Chinese to call the number of the travel agent in Hangzhou (at my expense, ¥10.40). Fortunately that number was correct, and we learned the correct number of the agent in Beijing. We also learned that the plane tickets had only been sent that morning and would take two or three days to reach Beijing. The Chinese made sure that the Beijing number was correct by calling it. I was to call them after a few days to make sure the tickets were there.

In the afternoon I took the bus back towards the center of town, getting off just before the second ring road. I sat for a while in Ditan Park, which has nothing in particular to recommend it, but was quiet and relaxing. There was music from loudspeakers in the trees. Most of the Chinese visitors were, like me, mainly interested in resting. Their calisthenics is pretty much reserved for the early morning.

After I felt rested enough I walked to the other side of the second ring road to the Yong He Gong (Palace of Peace and Harmony or the Lama Temple or Lamasery). We have all heard of the Dalai Lama and the form of Buddhism he heads in Tibet. This is the Beijing outpost. It was originally a palace of Yong Zheng before he became emperor in 1723. But apparently the former palaces of emperors could only be used for temples. In 1744 it became a lamasery and many monks from Tibet and Mongolia took up residence. It has survived communism and even the Cultural Revolution, being declared a major historical relic in 1949. In 1979 a major renovation took place, and it is now apparently an active temple.

The layout is typical of Chinese temples: a linearly arranged set of courtyards separated by pavilions (or halls or temples or gates) and with lesser buildings (or galleries) along the sides. Of course, as you proceed the pavilions become increasingly magnificent. This temple is particularly nice, I thought. There are five courtyards and as many pavilions. In the courtyards, before the pavilions (and also before the side galleries), is a fire to light incense and a place to kneel to pray. As was to be the case in most places, most of the visitors were Chinese. And quite a few offered incense and knelt to pray.

There was one woman who seemed to be burning incense and kneeling at *every* available place. There was also a man who looked like he had just stepped out of a propaganda film. He wore a hard hat and gave every appearance of having decided to visit the temple during his lunch break from a nearby construction site. He, apparently knowing nothing, was amazed and intrigued by, and interested in, everything.

The pavilions and their contents become increasingly magnificent. The final Pavilion of Ten Thousand Happinesses has a magnificent triple roof and contains a giant statue of the Maitreya Buddha in his Tibetan form. Carved from a single piece of sandalwood, it is 18 meters high (plus an 8 meter base underground for a total length of 26 meters). A sign proudly tells that this Buddha is in the Guinness book of records! I wondered for what: tallest Buddha in Beijing carved from a single piece of sandalwood?

After I had to leave when the temple closed at 5:30, I walked down a nearby street. A sign at the entrance stated in Chinese and English that it was a typical street of old Beijing and now a national monument. It was about two lanes wide with broad sidewalks and lined with trees and walls of brick covered with grey cement, which I guess were the outer walls of houses. Every so often there was a doorway. At both ends of the street and about half way along it were “arches” like you see in old movies on China.

I had thought that I would eat, albeit early, at a restaurant on that street which was mentioned in a guidebook. But it was closed. So I decided to go back to the convention center and see if there was anyone I knew to go to eat with. There wasn't. I asked one of the Chinese organizers to recommend a restaurant. He asked, “But don't you want to eat in the hotel?” I said, “Not *every* night.” He then told me of a restaurant a couple of blocks away and when I asked if it was a good one he said it was where they (the organizers) went. I said that that was a good recommendation, and I went there. It was certainly not used to foreigners. But they did have a small translation menu so that I at least had some idea what I was ordering. With my phrase book I could also get beer and rice, which you need to order separately. I think the phrase book had the wrong word for rice—there are many words depending on exactly how it is fixed. Anyway, there was some discussion and I agreed to what the waitress said (although she only spoke Chinese) and got exactly what I wanted: plain ordinary rice. I had beef and vegetables braised in soy sauce (except that there also seemed to be some gizzards mixed into it, not that I objected) and a dish of mushrooms and bamboo shoots. It was all a bit more than I needed, but quite tasty if not what I would call a great meal. And it was the cheapest meal so far: ¥50.

The breakfast in the hotel had been so awful that I stopped in the “shopping center” at the conference place to buy some “baked goods” for breakfast—something resembling a French *chausson*—to have with tea made from the tea bags and thermos of hot water which the hotels always provide.

The store was interesting, certainly not a typical Chinese store, but rather a place for foreigners and Chinese yuppies. It was well-stocked with beer, including many Western brands (North American, including Mexico, and European), most of which are produced under license in China), Western-style baked goods, ice cream, wines (Western types produced in China), Western brand-name canned goods, and exclusive Chinese products such as tea, sesame oil, spices. Prices were certainly expensive for Chinese, although low by Western standards (50-80% of that here). Customers, when I was there, seemed to be divided about 50-50 between foreigners and Chinese.

Thursday, Aug. 10. After my self-made breakfast I took the conference shuttle bus and got to the conference site with plenty of time to log in in Nijmegen and read my e-mail. The connection from Beijing to Nijmegen was actually better than it had been from Brussels to Nijmegen the week before, probably because of the time

difference, it being the middle of the night in Europe.

The “working lunch” was a buffet and quite nice, or so it seemed the first day, but not really worth the US\$10 we had had to pay (long in advance) for it. In the evening there was a reception which turned out also to be a buffet dinner, considerably better than the lunch. So I did not have to find a restaurant.

Friday, Aug. 11. I again ate breakfast in my room, which I will continue to do for the rest of the trip.

I found and killed a cockroach in my bathroom this morning. One of the Indians told me that she was awakened by a cockroach crawling over her face.

The conference continues; the working lunch is the same as yesterday. I ate dinner this evening with a few of the Indians at our hotel. The food was not bad. The dead roach, which I had left conspicuously visible, was gone, and there is a white powder around the baseboards in my room and all along the hall. I am not sure that I would not rather have suffered the occasional roach.

Saturday, Aug. 12. The conference continues; the working lunch is the same as yesterday. Tonight was our “Chinese culture” evening—a performance by a “Chinese circus”, which is mostly acrobatics and juggling. Some of it was rather good, but some not. It was clearly not one of the top groups and contained a number of very young performers (9 or 10 years old). But it was enjoyable nonetheless.

Sunday, Aug. 13. Today was the conference excursion to the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall. As to be expected with 700 people, there was lots of waiting in the buses. But when we got moving it went well. We made a convoy with police escort. Spending more time in the lanes for oncoming traffic than in our own, we did not stop once between the hotels and the Ming Tombs.

The surroundings are very nice, but being herded, deep underground through the one tomb that has been excavated was a great disappointment. It was described as about as exciting as either (a) an underground experimental hall before the apparatus has been installed or (b) a bank vault already completely emptied by burglars. The latter description is perhaps not far from the truth; the most recent “robbery” was during the Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately there was no time to go to the part where there are statues along the road, which the guidebooks say is the nicest part. By the car park there are a great many stands selling souvenirs or fresh fruit and cold bottled water (for the highest prices they can get).

After the Ming tombs we were taken to a large restaurant for a very nice lunch—the best meal so far.

After everyone was loaded into the buses again we headed for the Great Wall where there was one big traffic jam. It seems that half of Beijing goes to the wall on Sunday. But the wall was worth it—very impressive, although one could better call it rebuilt than restored. I walked to the end of the restored section. Of the wall beyond there is not so much left. I had read that the wall was wide enough for two horse-drawn carts to pass. It was indeed that wide, but at places it was so steep (with steps) that horses could never have hauled carts over it.

In the evening two physicists from Amsterdam and I were invited out to dinner by Zhang, a Chinese who got his Ph. D. in Amsterdam a couple years ago working on

L3. He was always very friendly and it was a nice evening with him and his girlfriend at a good restaurant. That became the current best meal in China.

Monday, Aug. 14. Tonight was the conference banquet, served at the conference center by the same people who made the “business lunches”, and it wasn’t much better. In fact part of it seemed to be left-overs from lunch. This is one of the worst conference banquets I’ve ever been to. This surprises me since I always thought banquets were a Chinese specialty—the one in Singapore was very good.

Tuesday, Aug. 15. Today was the last day of the conference. This evening all the members of the L3 collaboration were invited to dinner by the Chinese members. It was the best meal so far and included Peking duck as well as many other dishes. For the Chinese it seems not to be customary to sit around talking after dinner, for as soon as everyone was finished eating it was over, and we all got up and left.

Wednesday, Aug. 16. This morning I was picked up by an Institute car and brought to their guest house. It is not only cheaper and, with a metro stop next to the entrance, more convenient to town, but also cleaner than the dump where I had been staying.

I then set off to visit the Forbidden City (Imperial palace). I first walked around Tian’anmen Square and a bit of the surrounding area. It soon started to rain. I bought a couple of bananas and ate one for lunch while standing under the eaves of a store building waiting for the rain to stop.

The ancient walled city started with Qianmen, a large double gate at the southern end of Tian’anmen square. The outer gate gave entrance to a courtyard from which the inner gate opened into the city. Thus an enemy which breached the outer gate would still have to fight its way through the next gate, while being surrounded by walls topped with soldiers. Of the original nine sets of gates, this is the only one left.

Tian’anmen Square is now the location of the Mao mausoleum and, a bit further north, the monument to the revolution.

Across the street on the western side of the square is the Great Hall of the People, which we would want to think of as the parliament building, but of course can hardly be called that. Besides being the meeting place of the occasionally convening, rubber-stamp “parliament”, it is the place of numerous meeting rooms and banquet halls for official functions. Across the street on the eastern side is the Chinese History Museum. I sort of wanted to visit that just to see what kinds of things they display, but never got to it.

At the northern end of the square, across the wide Chang An Boulevard, is the next gate, Tian’anmen Gate. In front of this gate are the grandstands from which 20,000 officials and guests can review large parades. A huge picture of Mao hangs from the gate. Built in the 15th century, it has always been used as a rostrum from which proclamations were read to the masses. To get to the gate one crosses a stream by one of seven bridges. There are then five doors in the gate. Which bridge and gate you used depended on your rank. Only the emperor used the central door and bridge.

Some way beyond this gate is the moat surrounding the Forbidden City. The Forbidden City is laid out along a north-south axis, and access became more and more restricted as you proceed north. At the northern end was the private palace of

the emperor. However, before you get that far you pass through several courtyards and ceremonial palaces. They, and their ornamentation, become more luxurious the further north you go. By the time I got to the private quarters it had started to rain. I sat a while under the eaves of a palace until the downpour had somewhat lessened, but ended up seeing the last part, the imperial gardens, in the rain. Fortunately I had an umbrella

Streets do not seem to have any drainage, so there were big puddles both in the palace courtyards and in the streets. My shoes got completely soaked through. Just my luck: good weather all through the conference and then rain when I have time to see the sights.

Thursday, Aug. 17. The weather appeared much better this morning. I took the metro to the exit closest to the zoo, there being, according to the guidebook, a minibus which left from near there for the Summer Palace. Sure enough, as I came out of the subway there was a minibus waiting to go to the summer palace. There was just one seat left. So I took it. I was charged Y10, which I think was too much—maybe I should have tried to bargain. Anyway, it roared through traffic, horn blasting almost continuously, and managed to get there without an accident.

The Summer Palace is called that for the obvious reason that that is where the court moved to in the summer to avoid the heat of Beijing. It was burned in 1860 by an Anglo-French force, and rebuilt in 1888 by Empress Dowager Ci Xi using money earmarked for expanding the Chinese navy. Perhaps because of that she included in the reconstruction a large marble boat. The palace was again damaged in 1900 during the Boxer rebellion and again restored, in 1903.

The summer palace seems a cross of real historical buildings and Disneyland. Like everywhere in China, it was full of Chinese, mostly local, I think, having a day's outing. There were also a lot of tours of "overseas Chinese". To me the name Summer Palace seems something of a misnomer. It is more of a park than a palace, consisting of temples and pavilions, some groups of which are widely separated. The historical buildings were rather difficult to get excited about. They were certainly interesting to see, but rather for the total ensemble than for any particular building. For the Chinese it may have been interesting that so-and-so was confined in house arrest to a particular building, but I didn't know who so-and-so was. You could not enter most of the buildings but could try to look through dirty windows at a poorly lit interior to get an idea of how they were furnished a hundred years or so ago.

One of the most interesting features was a 700-meter long covered walkway linking two sets of pavilions. The columns and interior of the roof were painted with historical and mythical scenes. There was also a set of pavilions around a pond which I found quite pleasant.

The place is huge, 660 acres of which three quarters is taken up by a lake. So it was lots of walking. After having seen most of the "important" sites I sort of got lost wandering along some of the trails. I never did find Suzhou Street, which is one of the Disneyland-like new creations. That was no big loss, since I would be going to the real Suzhou in a few days.

By 4 I had just about had it, having been walking around since 10:30. I found the exit and took the normal bus, rather than a minibus, back to Beijing. That cost only Y0.40 and did not take much longer. By being at the front of the "line" and not letting too many people push past me I even had a seat.

The end of the bus line was near the zoo. I tried to find three restaurants listed in the guide book (1995 edition) but without luck. I think that Beijing is expanding so fast that they had become victims of urban renewal. I'm sure that was the case with one of them. That entailed a lot more walking, but part of it was interesting, seeing more of the street life of Beijing: a whole block with eating stalls along the street, all apparently serving the same things; barbers cutting hair on stools on the sidewalk. Finally, I went back to the Sechuan, where Zhang had taken us. It was good this time too. Then the subway back to the Institute and fairly early to bed; after all the walking I was really tired.

Friday, Aug. 18. The first item of the day was to go and pick up my tickets. On the phone the girl said that the travel agency was right at the top of the east subway exit. But when I got there I only found a computer store selling Apples. I tried walking a few hundred meters in both directions—nothing! So I went back to the computer store and asked. “Oh yes, along that corridor to your right.” After asking directions a few more times I finally got there, deep in the recesses of the building. The girl on the phone spoke pretty good English, but the girl in the office preferred to speak French. She gave me my plane tickets and the ticket for the train to Tai'an. It seems that train tickets can only be bought at the station of departure. I will be met in Tai'an and will receive train tickets from the “guide” at each stop along the way. She assured me that there would be no problems. In fact her favorite expression seemed to be *pas de problème*. I had been offered a car and driver to take me to the train station from the institute. So I seemed to be all set for departure the following day.

I spent some time walking around the city before going to Coal Hill Park, which is around an artificial hill just north of the Forbidden City. From the top there is a nice view looking down on the palace, or at least it would be nice if it were not so smoggy. At the exit of the park you (or your kids) could get dressed up in old imperial costumes and have your photo taken while being carried around in an old sedan chair carried by four bearers in costume to the accompaniment of a few, also in costume, musicians. Doting, camera clicking, Chinese parents were making the most of it.

In the evening I went to eat at the Peking duck restaurant at which I was too late on my first evening in Beijing. It was rather a disappointment. Half of a duck is really too much for one person, and it is so greasy. The Peking duck we had as part of the L3 banquet was not only better, but was part of a many-dish meal. The difficulties of traveling alone!

After pigging out on duck and an awful lot of beer I felt in need of a walk. The waitress had asked did I want a small glass or a large glass, and I had of course said large. It turned out that by glass she had meant pitcher. So I wandered around downtown Beijing for a couple of hours. I'm not sure exactly where I walked, but came across a street with mostly restaurants on one side and a solid line of food stalls on the other where you could get snacks or entire meals. That went on for a couple of blocks. I finally ended up at Tian'anmen square where a lot of people were wandering around. I caught what could well have been the last subway train back to the institute.

Saturday, Aug. 19. I left my bag at the guest house and went to town. I walked around Tian'anmen Square to get a few photos I may have missed in the rain. Then

I went to Beihai Park. This is just northwest of the Forbidden City and was the private park of the emperors. It includes an artificial lake supposed to have been dug out in the time of the Kublai Khan. The Khan's palace was on a small hill, then an island and hence more easily defensible, just inside the entrance, the Round City, but nothing is left from that time except a huge jar made of green jade, which was supposed to have been a present given to the Khan in 1265 and is supposed to have been used for wine. In the Light Receiving Hall there is a white jade Buddha inlaid with jewels which is 1½ meters high, a gift from Burma a hundred or so years ago to the Empress Dowager Ci Xi, the one who built the marble ship at the summer palace.

Befitting an imperial park, there is much landscaping with artificial hills, lake, trees as well as temples, pavilions, covered walkways. In the usual layout of successive gates or pavilions but here also rising steeply up the slope of the artificial hill on the island in the middle of the lake is a temple which culminates in the White Dagoba, built by the emperor in 1651 to commemorate the first visit of the Dalai Lama to Beijing. It is a 36-meter high, white structure looking sort of like a bottle for some fancy perfume. From the platform around the White Dagoba there is a nice view of the Forbidden City and Beijing.

In the lake there was an aquatic version of our carnival bump-autos. They looked rather like large inner tubes filled in with a floor and seats and an outboard motor through a hole in the floor. You could steer around the lake and bump into others quite safely, or so it appeared.

On the other side of the lake there were several smaller temples and pavilions and the Nine Dragon Screen, which I thought was very nice. It is 5 meters high and 27 meters long and made of large colored glazed tiles forming nine dragons in *bas* (or perhaps not quite so *bas*) *relief* on each side. Such screens were supposed to ward off evil spirits.

After the park I walked around a bit more, but was too tired to keep that up for long. I went back to the institute a little after 5. It was a bit early to eat, but I went anyway. I had asked Mr. Deng to recommend a restaurant nearby, but he had said they were all about the same. So I walked up and down the street looking at the restaurants and finally went to the one just next to the gate to the institute. Since I was so early, I was the first customer there. No one spoke a word of English. Nor did they have a translation of their menu. So I pointed at a few things in my phrase book, and they said no until I came to things they had. They were very friendly and it cost less than \$5 for two dishes—stir fried mixed vegetables and chicken with peanuts and chili peppers—with two bowls of rice and a large bottle of beer, all quite good. I was done eating by 6:30, which left me an hour to wait at the guest house until Mr. Deng would come to take me to the station at 7:30. At 7:28 I got a call from him saying he was still tied up with a dinner for visiting Japanese. He was very sorry he couldn't come, but the driver had been instructed. At 7:31 the driver arrived. Just as I had been told it took a half hour to reach the station.

Mr. Deng had told me on the phone not to go upstairs but to go in the left door and go to the back of the station where there was a waiting room for first-class passengers, or foreigners or something.

The square in front of the station was full of people. It looked like they were camped out—sitting on the pavement, or eating or sleeping on a blanket they had spread out. Inside the station it was the same. I understand that the trains cannot meet demand. So maybe they are camped there waiting days for a ticket. I noticed

that people going in the central doors had to put their luggage through an x-ray machine, and I got worried about my film. But I also noticed that there was no machine at the left-most door, which is where I had been told to go. Also no one was going in there, but I tried it and nobody stopped me.

I found the waiting room Mr. Deng had mentioned, but it appeared to be for international trains, like ones to Hong Kong or Russia. So I showed my ticket to the man at the gate to make sure. He told me to go upstairs.

I went back to the front of the station and joined the line for the escalators along with the people who had just come from the x-ray machines. So much for security! Of course, a Chinese might not have gotten away with it.

Upstairs it was easy to find the right gate, since they were marked by large signs with the train number and departure time as well as with some Chinese characters, presumably the destination. Through the gate we all descended to the platform where there were two trains. The destinations were written on them in pinjin as well as in Chinese characters, so it was easy to pick the right one. I found my car, a soft sleeper. The attendant showed me to my compartment and I gave her my ticket in return for a plastic domino-like block with my seat (berth) number on it.

The compartments contained four couchettes, two on each side. I had a lower. A man, who boarded shortly after me, got the couchette above me. He immediately took off his shoes and climbed into his bunk. A little later he descended with a metal dish and a tooth brush and went to the washroom. When he returned he went straight to bed. We departed promptly on time (20:58), according to my watch—maybe even a minute earlier. There was a short stop after about 15 minutes and another an hour later where a woman and her son boarded and got into the other two couchettes in our compartment. Then it was non-stop to Ji'an where we arrived about 5 a.m. So I was able to sleep reasonably well.

Sunday, Aug. 20. That was rather a long stop, probably unloading mail or something. I was just about asleep again when the attendant came in to awaken me, give me back my ticket, and tell me that Tai'an was the next stop. She indicated, by running her finger around her watch, that it would be about an hour. I don't know why she couldn't have waited a bit longer before waking me up.

At 6 a.m. wakeup music came on the loudspeakers. The evening before there had also been music for a time, presumably until what they regard as a proper bedtime. At about 6:15 we arrived in Tai'an. I was met just outside the station by my CITS guide, a car, and a driver. They were supposed to bring me to my hotel, which is on the top of the Tai'shan mountain.

The guide suggested we go for breakfast since it was so early. I foolishly agreed and ended up getting stuck with the tab—not that it cost so much, ¥30=f6, but it is the feeling of getting ripped off.

Then I had to pay the entrance fee for the car into the park as well as, of course, my own admission. Further, the road only goes half way up the mountain. Then you have to get a cable car (or walk). The guide said I had to pay the cable car myself too, although I understood the arrangement as including transportation to my hotel. So, there will be a small argument with the travel agency when I get back.

Then the “worker” who sells tickets for foreigners was not there. The “worker” who sells tickets to ordinary Chinese was selling tickets like mad, and there was a long line waiting for the cable car. After a while the guide found someone to open the VIP

waiting room and a while later we were able to buy my ticket. Then I went to the front of the line and got on the next car—sometimes you do get special treatment in return for the double or more price you have to pay. The guide did not accompany me to the top, although again, as I understood the agreement, he was supposed to bring me to the hotel.

At the top it was a walk up some steps and across the mountain top to get to the hotel. There they had never heard of me, but after finding someone who spoke a little English they called CITS and heard that they were supposed to have a room for me. The hotel is so-so, better than the one during the conference but worse than the institute's guest house.

The real way to get up this mountain is to walk, or rather climb the more than 7000 steps. I saw the end of this long “stairway” at the top, and the stairs are steep. But there were lots of people coming up the stairs. A few “cheat” by hiring porters to carry them up in a chair mounted on two long poles and carried by two men. Not only people, but also goods are carried up in bundles on the ends of poles. The porters' shoulders are deformed from years of carrying such loads.

Unfortunately it is rather cloudy and mist blows in from time to time. So the views are not so great. But it is interesting to see the hordes of people clambering over the rocks and stairs. Besides the hotel and a few guest houses there are a number of temples—this is one of the Buddhist holy mountains after all—and steles with, presumably important, inscriptions. Noteworthy is the different calligraphy on the steles.

By 6 most of the hordes had left and it was almost peaceful, but also cooling off. It was the first time since arriving in China that I actually felt cool. Of course, one of the great things about the mountains is supposed to be the sunrise and sunset seen from a peak above the clouds. But this evening the clouds were above the peak, not below, and it was hazy.

Dinner in the hotel was a set meal—everyone got the same for ¥40=ƒ8: some sort of chicken pieces (lots of bones) with some kind of big mushrooms in a dark sauce, quite good; melon (or maybe it was a sort of cucumber) cooked; some cold noodles; cold vegetables (looked like little green beans but wasn't—I had never seen them before); rice; dumplings; peanuts cooked (boiled) in the shell, cold, which tasted sort of like cooked chestnuts; a soup with chunks of bean curd and some leafy vegetable. All in all it was quite good, especially for that price. And it was a meal with lots of dishes, something you can't have when dining alone. After dinner, it was early to bed.

Monday, Aug. 21. At 4:30 there were taps on the door. I stayed in bed a bit longer and then got up to go view the sunrise along with a horde of Chinese, many of whom had just arrived at the top. The sunrise was disappointing—it was quite cloudy and hazy. So there was no sun to be seen for quite a while. By then it had gotten high enough that there was no spectacular red sky but just a red ball through the haze. Apparently that was enough for the Chinese though. They cheered when the sun was finally above the clouds. And took lots of photos, their automatic flashes flashing uselessly.

I then went back to the hotel, packed, and left. By going to the back door and showing my ticket I got put to the front of the line for the cable car and was below by 7:45. The guide was there and we drove to Qufu.

Most of the way to Qufu was on a four-lane divided highway. However, it was being repaired. So for more than half of the time it was only two-lane. They were breaking out bad sections of concrete, presumably to be replaced by new concrete. The breaking out was done by hand: sledge hammer or hammer and chisel; there wasn't an air compressor or jackhammer in sight.

Although bad news for drivers, it was good news for some. I saw people drying grain on sections of pavement closed to traffic but not yet being torn up.

The hotel in Qufu was the nicest one so far and conveniently located in the center of town just one street away from the Confucius family mansion. However, I had been there for less than ten minutes when the new guide showed up to tell me that my train to Suzhou had been changed to a night train instead of a day train. That would give me one more day in Qufu and a half day less in Suzhou, not to mention the inconvenience of a night train—once was enough. If the night train really was necessary, I would have preferred a night less in Qufu. Then I at least would not miss any sight-seeing time. I called the head office of the travel agency in Hangzhou, but could get nothing more than the promise to refund the price of the night in the Suzhou hotel that I would not use. My guide then talked with them. They would try to exchange the train ticket for a day earlier. However, I am not hopeful.

I then set out to spend the afternoon in the Confucius Forest (or cemetery or park). It is a large wooded area where Confucius and many of his descendants are buried. I hadn't realized that his descendants became a big, rich, powerful family, which essentially ruled this part of China. Confucius is Kong Fu in Chinese. The Qufu tourist brochure says that the population of Qufu today is half a million and that 20% have the surname Kong, as did my guide. The Qufu tourist brochure does not say what my guidebook says: that in 1948 the first-born son of the 77th generation of the Kong family fled to Taiwan breaking the 2500 year continuous occupation of Qufu by the Kongs. The Forest was something of a disappointment. It was hot and very humid and, apart from the tomb of Confucius himself, totally uninteresting, just stones (presumably gravestones) scattered around in the woods. There was a nice area around Confucius' tomb with statues and, nearby, souvenir sellers.

Tuesday, Aug. 22. Rain! But it slowed down a lot by 9 and finally stopped completely around 9:30. I called CITS to hear that they were unable to change my train to a day earlier. The train was full, they said, but the way they said it made it sound more like a convenient excuse. But what can you do; they know as well as I that I can't do anything about it. I went to visit the Kong Mansion, which is in need of some restoration. Probably not much has been done since the Kongs left.

The guidebook says the Kong mansion is on a level with the imperial palace in Beijing with respect to luxury and architecture. I found it far less grandiose, although still an impressive palace complex. Maybe because it is not lived in, it seemed less interesting and less nice, as well as smaller, than the palaces in Yogyakarta and Solo in Indonesia. It was hard to spend more than a couple of hours there.

With only the Confucius Temple left as a top attraction, I decided to spend the afternoon just walking around town and visiting a lesser temple. Like everywhere else I visited, there was much construction activity. In Beijing I had been surprised by the almost total lack of motor-bikes. They seemed to make the transition bike to car directly without the intermediate step of a motor-bike. But in Qufu there are lots of motor-bikes and few cars. I was told in Beijing that many people can afford a car,

but that they do not buy one because there is no place to park it. Most of the cars are owned by companies. In Qufu there seemed to be more room, but maybe there are fewer rich companies and consequently less rich people.

Wednesday, Aug. 23. I tried to sleep late this morning, without much success. I had put a “do not disturb” sign on the door and so was not bothered by the maids. I spent a leisurely morning being bored by CNN, reading, and packing. I finally checked out at 11 and paid for my telephone calls, ¥49. I left my suitcase at the hotel and went to the Confucius Temple to pass the day. It was very pleasant there, and it was a nice day, not too warm and even sometimes a breeze. There were real birds in the trees and no recorded music. Lots of tourists (almost all Chinese) passed through, snapping photos of each other in front of almost everything. I took lots of photos too: First I made my way through taking color slides; then I went back to the beginning and went through again using black and white. That way I hoped to keep the photos in some semblance of order, but later I took a few more shots of things I thought I had missed. I am afraid it will be something of a mess to try to straighten out at home, and I will certainly not succeed, since even when I take the picture I seldom know exactly what it is I am shooting.

I stayed the rest of the day there until it closed; it was certainly much more pleasant than the hotel lobby where I would have to spend a lot of time waiting until 8:45 to be picked up to be taken to the train.

I remembered having seen a bench just after the entrance to the Temple and went there to rest a bit. It was occupied by a Western woman who was talking in Chinese to a Chinese. I walked up and sat down on the other end of the bench, and after a little while the Chinese left. We started talking, and it turned out she was from Minnesota and a journalist for National Public Radio covering Asia. She had just completed an intensive Chinese course in Beijing, having just been transferred from Bangkok to Hong Kong. She was taking a short vacation before covering the U. N. women’s conference.

After the temple closed I wandered around a bit, ate at a small restaurant near the hotel, and then waited in the hotel lobby. Precisely at 8:45 my guide entered. It took about half an hour to drive to the train station in the neighboring town. That meant about an hour’s wait in the grungiest station I have ever seen. There was one large bare room with flood lights directed into the room from each end and two double rows of folding chairs running the length of the room.

Fortunately, the train was on time and my guide helped me find my place, which was not so simple. Probably because it was not the originating station of the train (it came from Jinan), the car and berth were not specified on the ticket. So we had to find a car with a free place.

What a difference this train was compared to the previous one. Instead of being old and dirty, this one must have been almost brand new. It was clean, even the windows, and there was an arrangement of real flowers on the table. The procedure was also somewhat different. Again I traded my ticket for a plastic tag, but this time they also entered the names of the passengers in a book. I had an upper berth and slept quite well.

Thursday, Aug. 24. Chinese trains have knuckle couplers like in the U. S. rather than being tightly chained together against spring buffers as in Europe, which I was

to verify when I disembarked and which explains the jolts that I felt whenever the train would start to slow down. The jolts had, however, not been such as to spoil my sleep.

Not only in Beijing, but in all the cities and towns we go through, there is a great deal of construction and urban renewal. In Beijing that usually meant replacement of old single-story houses by high-rise apartment buildings. In Qufu it seemed to be being done in a nicer way, the new buildings preserving pretty much the style and character of the town. It was difficult to judge from the train what was happening in other towns.

I was met when getting off the train in Suzhou by a new guide and taken to my hotel. She suggested several sights to see (which coincided with what I had planned on seeing), gave me my next train ticket, and said she would meet me the next day at 7 to take me to the train.

Then I visited two of the famous gardens: The Garden of the Master of the Nets was first, and I thought it very nice. It dates from the 12th century, being restored in the 18th, and apparently was the house of a high official, but not so high that it would have had an official function. I would describe it as a nice house rather than a garden, a house consisting of several pavilions, close together with interesting rocks and ponds and trees, but no flowers, in the intervening “gardens”. A replica of one of the pavilions is in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. A group of students was busy sketching the buildings. When I sat down to write in my book what I had taken photos of, three of them simultaneously came to look over my shoulder to see what my sketches looked like—there was general laughter when they saw that I was merely writing.

Next on my list of things to see was the Humble Administrator’s Garden. I walked from the one garden to the other. Since they were at opposite ends of town, this gave me a chance to walk along the canals and see how the local people live. Like most canals, these did not smell so pretty, but there were people in barges scooping up some of the muck. The streets along the canals are narrow and the people do a lot of things outside in the street, such as the wash. In some places there was room between the canal and the street and people had chairs, sometimes with a permanent covering against sun and rain. And here there were flowers!

The Humble Administrator’s Garden did not interest me so much. It is huge, more than 10 acres. The humble administrator was a very high official, and probably not so humble. There are pavilions and lakes with rocks, paths, trees, but again no flowers. Many of the pavilions are connected by covered walkways. It is quite nice, but I preferred the smaller garden of the Master of the Nets.

After the garden closed I did a bit of shopping and started walking back through the center of town. I ate at a restaurant which was in one of the guide books, good and not expensive. Walking back to my hotel in the dark and drizzle, I overshot my street by half a kilometer or so before realizing it and had to backtrack.

Friday, Aug. 25. I had a surprise this morning when I was woken up by the phone at 7. It was my guide—my train was at 7:45 *in the morning*, not in the evening as I had thought when she had said she would pick me up at 7. This made me really angry since I was supposed to go to Shanghai in the afternoon. So now I have lost another day in Suzhou!

I hurriedly got ready and the driver drove as fast as he could so that we just

made the train. Sitting across from me was a German physicist and his wife. We recognized each other as physicists because we both were carrying a “Dallas bag”, the handy shoulder bag we all got to carry our papers in at the 1992 physics conference in Dallas.

Arriving in Shanghai I first looked for the bus which, according to the guide book would get me close to the hotel. I found the stop, saw that there were lots of people waiting, and also saw a sign to the Metro. Thinking that if there was a metro it would *have* to stop at Renmin (People’s) Park or Square, I decided to try it. Of course there was no map of the Metro outside. I asked the lady at the ticket booth “Renmin?” She seemed to say yes, so I bought a ticket. In the train I could see on the map that it was the third stop. Coming out of the metro, I saw my hotel just across the street—fantastic!

The Pacific is a pre-war hotel, quite comfortable with wooden jalousie doors outside the ordinary doors to the rooms. These doors are now quite superfluous since everything is air-conditioned. But I could imagine earlier days when such doors allowed a much-needed breeze while preserving some privacy. After checking in and unpacking, I set out for the river and the famous street, the Bund, about 1½ km. away.

Shanghai was the most important Western center in China back in the bad old days of Western domination. All of the major western powers had large investments here; Shanghai was the financial center of Asia, and the Bund was the center of it all. Ignoring a light drizzle which had begun to fall, I walked along the river, which sports a large variety of ships, and admired the monumental neoclassical buildings, which would not look out of place in Chicago or New York, on the other side of the street. Later I went into a couple of them to look around, namely the Peace Hotel (formerly the Cathay Hotel, then the most palatial hotel in the East) and what is now the Bank of China, where I cashed a travelers check while admiring the ornate interior.

Then I headed for the old town, which in the time of the concessions was too dangerous for Europeans. Parts of it still stand, though others are giving way to urban renewal. The narrow streets and typical buildings were interesting. I also visited the Yu Gardens. These were more compact than the Humble Administrator’s Garden in Suzhou and to my mind nicer. Again it was a layout of many pavilions mostly connected by covered walkways, and ponds, trees, and artificial hills.

In the evening I made the mistake of going out without my umbrella. It was OK in the beginning, but then it began to pour. It was difficult finding a restaurant since those listed in my guide book did not seem to exist any more, a consequence of the urban renewal which was overall. By the time I finally chose a restaurant I was pretty soaked. Fortunately it was so warm that being soaked was less unpleasant than you would think. The food was good, although I did have to argue a bit in order to get Chinese beer instead of Heineken. I was almost dry by the time I finished. But it was still pouring, so that I was soaked again by the time I got back to the hotel. After a warm shower, their hot water allowing no danger of burning yourself, I felt better.

Saturday, Aug. 26. This morning I went to the Temple of the Jade Buddha. I caught a bus not too far from the hotel that took me right to the place. There was a long line of Chinese stretching around the corner. I foolishly got in line only to be waved away at the ticket office—foreigners had to go directly to the entrance. Just inside the entrance was a special ticket booth with the expensive tickets, ¥15=ƒ3.

Inside it was packed; you could hardly shuffle around. There were a couple of priests who, for a fee, would enter your prayer—at least I suppose it was a prayer—in a book. People were buying and burning incense and prostrating themselves before the various Buddhas. Few (only the tourists) went around back and up the stairs to actually see the Jade Buddha itself. It was also mostly tourists looking at the two reclining Buddhas in one of the side buildings. I guess most of the Chinese were really there to worship. Since there are not many temples left, the place was so packed.

After leaving the temple, I walked a few blocks to Suzhou Creek to take a look at the pollution and boats, and then started walking back towards the center of town. It started to rain, so I went back to the hotel where I ate a piece of cake and an apple I had bought for lunch and watched some CNN.

In the afternoon I went out and looked through some stores. Just about anything you would want to have is from the West and at almost Western prices. I did buy a couple of books at the International Book Store—two mysteries, probably pirated, certainly printed in China: an Agatha Christie for ¥6.40 and a Saint mystery for ¥10. There were also lots of English classics with print you need a magnifying glass for, but not really cheaper than the £1 Penguin Classics.

Late in the afternoon it started to rain again and I decided to eat in the hotel, which was a bit on the expensive side, but not too bad.

Sunday, Aug. 27. The rain has stopped. Today looks like a nice day, but I can't do much since I must take the shuttle bus to the airport at 12:15. Actually I could have waited until later and taken a taxi. But the hotel's shuttle bus was free and a taxi would have been rather expensive. Also, I was feeling rather tired and not up to a day of walking around, and there was nothing left in Shanghai that I wanted all that much to see.

Feeling lazy, I decided to spend the morning in the Renmin (People's) Park across the street from the hotel. It cost a few cents to get in, ¥0.20, and for once foreigners did not have to pay double. It is sort of a normal city park with a playground for the kids, trees and paths, a couple of ponds. I had seen on TV (BBC) a few months before that there was an "English corner" in the park where Chinese gathered to practice English. I didn't know which corner it was though.

I sat down on a bench next to a pond and soon noticed that a mother and daughter about 12 years old seemed to be going over an English lesson—at least I heard English sentences every so often between the Chinese. But soon another woman came over to carry on a short conversation with me. After she left the mother and daughter came to talk, one on each side of me. It turned out that the mother was a translator (written) but wanted to practice conversation and wanted her daughter to, but the daughter was too shy to attempt more than a few sentences. After a while a man, about 60, came to join us. He was quite communicative. He told about the trees in the park, how many of them came from Europe and about tulips in the park which came from Holland. The mayor of Shanghai had brought them back from a visit to Holland, a special exhibition had been organized and the proceeds used to improve the park. We talked about education. In China, at least there in Shanghai, children start English in school at about the same age as in Holland. Learning English is seen as an important asset in getting a good job. University used to be free, but now there are fees, which are increasing each year. The mother wondered whether she would be able to pay for her daughter to go to the university. I said we had the same worries

in the West.

When they had all left me, 3 girls aged 13, 12, 12, came up. The 13 year old did most of the talking, but it was mostly stock questions: Where are you from? Do you like Shanghai? Do you like the food here? Do you like Kentucky Fried Chicken? (There was a Kentucky Fried Chicken just outside the park.) A boy, also 13, from the same school joined us. He wanted to know if I liked American football and if I liked “Italian” football, by which he meant soccer. Then, who was my favorite soccer player? His favorite soccer team was AC Milan. The girls kidded him for being a bit fat and for not getting good grades in school because he only thought about sports. So I asked him how good the girls’ grades were and he said that they weren’t so good either. Kids are the same everywhere.

I went for a short walk around the park, but it wasn’t really all that interesting. Then I walked by the English corner and was immediately surrounded. Everybody wanted his chance to ask questions, and it was mostly adults. However, there was one very outspoken boy, Jerry, who is either very small for his age or only about 8. He spoke very good English. Later he gave me his “business card”, made on his computer, and was very disappointed that I did not have a card to give to him. The adults joked about the youngster with a computer who was already a “businessman”. One of the men asked what I did and when I explained a bit about high energy physics he said that there was a Chinese physicist who had discovered a particle and gotten a Nobel prize. I asked him which particle and he said the J. He was impressed when I said I worked with Ting. He said I was “very lucky”; I tried to qualify that a bit.*

I took the shuttle bus to the airport and then had a few hours to wait for my plane, which wasn’t until 6. The plane was an Airbus, and the flight went smoothly. It took about 2 hours to fly to Xi’an. Service on board was very similar to that in the West. First we got drinks and nuts (pistachios). Then dinner: 2 small, very spicy chicken legs, a nondescript gelatin-like dessert, a piece of cake, some kind of spicy munchies, and tea or coffee to drink. I took tea; most of the Chinese took coffee. I learned early on at the conference coffee breaks not to take coffee, which is served weak and heavily laced with milk—undrinkable.

From the Xi’an airport I took the bus, which is supposed just to go to the air terminal. However the driver was very nice (or under the charms of a pretty overseas Chinese and her Western boyfriend) and took us on to the hotel.

Monday, Aug. 28. I woke up late and spent the day walking around town. The bus looked so jam-packed that I decided to walk to the Big Goose Pagoda. The temple was founded in 648 A.D. and the original pagoda built a few years later to house the Buddhist scriptures brought back from India by a monk, who then had the job of translating them into Chinese (19 years resulting in 1335 volumes). The pagoda has, of course, been renovated, restored and enlarged many times. It is now 7 stories high. Nobody seems to know how it got its name.

*Sam Ting is of Chinese origin and since a long time professor at MIT. His team discovered an important particle, which he called the J, at Brookhaven. Virtually simultaneously a team at Stanford discovered the same particle and called it the ψ . Ting and Richter, leader of the Stanford team, shared the Nobel prize. The particle has since been known as the J/ψ . Ting is supposed to have named the particle the J because the Chinese character for Ting is very similar to a J. That this is so I verified in Shanghai where I saw a laundry with the name of the proprietor in Chinese, J, and in Roman letters, Ting. Ting is the leader of the L3 experiment, which is what I have been working on for the last 10 years or so. Ting is notoriously difficult to get along with.

It was rather a disappointment, especially after walking several miles to get to it. However, the very modern Shanxi Historical Museum nearby was very nice. The history of this part of China from prehistoric times until recent (a couple of hundred years ago) was beautifully displayed in a modern museum. The facilities would certainly not be out of place in the West. Displays were labeled in English as well as Chinese. And, it was air-conditioned. I enjoyed the museum so much that it got too late to visit the Little Goose Pagoda on my way back to town.

I did walk through a large covered market. Especially interesting were the spices—huge piles, and very colorful.

Xi'an is in the north, and it is clearly a dumpling rather than rice area. This morning I bought a couple of steamed dumplings from a small shop, one of many along the street, for breakfast. This evening I had dumplings with dinner. They are quite good here, unlike the ones I had for breakfast at my first hotel in Beijing.

Tuesday, Aug. 29. I began the morning again with a couple of dumplings. I had no idea what kind of dumplings I was getting; I just pointed to two different ones of the five or six kinds they had. For ¥0.80=ƒ0.16=\$0.10 apiece, you can't really go wrong, and they were good.

Then I caught a local bus to go to the Banpo Neolithic site, which is 7 or 8 kilometers outside of Xi'an. There is a small museum with some of the things they dug up. The site itself is protected by an enclosure with a roof. The village is dated at 4500–3750 B.C. One can view the excavation from a gallery surrounding the site. Various interesting things are labeled and posters give explanation in English as well as Chinese. Next to the archaeological site is a reconstruction, almost Disneyland-like, of what it may have been like. That too was interesting, the style of hut changing with time.

I had planned to go on to the Terra-cotta Warriors, but couldn't figure out which of the many buses to take. So I went back to town. I ate an apple for lunch and went out to explore the Muslim area of town. Xi'an has a large Muslim population (60,000 or so). I got caught by an "art student" who worked me into an exhibition, and I ended up buying some paintings. I don't think I got such a bad deal.

I saw the Great Mosque, the largest (or at least one of the largest) in China. I was surprised to see that it is laid out like a Buddhist temple with many gates and pavilions leading to the final one, but of course without the Buddhas and incense. To quote the back of the fancy plastic tourist entrance ticket: "The Mosque is a blend of traditional Chinese and Islamic architecture. Its construction started 742 (the 1st year of Tiambao period of the Tang dynasty) and additions were made during the Song yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties to make it and ancient architectural complex: its floor space is about 5000 square metres. It's a key provincial historical site under special protections and place where Moslems lead their religious life."

Wednesday, Aug. 30. I ate two dumplings for breakfast, bought at my usual place on the way to the train station. Buses to the Terra-cotta soldiers are supposed to leave from the east side of the station. The art student yesterday had told me that the 106 or 107 bus left from there. Later someone else who wanted to practice English (and guide me into a silk weaving place, which I declined) had told me the 307 bus. Anyway, there was a sign 306/307. And I was immediately pounced upon by several women, each wanting to guide me to her minibus. One started hopefully at ¥30 round

trip. But I didn't want a round trip (then they have your money and you have to try to find them to get back). I said one-way. The price came down to ¥10. I still hesitated and looked around, especially since that minibus had almost no one in it and usually they only go when full. Also, the art student had said it should cost only 4 or 5 yuan. Soon I found one nearly full for ¥5. I got in and after 5 or so minutes we left. The only problem was that we got caught in some kind of traffic jam and after that a police check, I guess of the driver's papers. They seemed to be stopping all the minibuses.

A surprise was that I had to transfer to a different minibus in a small town. I expected a repeat of what happened to me several times in Indonesia when I thought I had a ride to where I wanted to go only to be switched to another where I had to pay again. But the Chinese are more honest. I was not asked to pay in the second bus and it brought me to the site of the Terra-cotta soldiers.

There are three excavations, all with buildings built around/over them. It is all very impressive—a whole army of soldiers, cavalry, generals, *etc.*, to defend the tomb of the emperor. What is remarkable is not only the number, but the variation among the soldiers. They are not all stamped out of the same mold. The faces, in particular, show great variation.

Also extremely interesting are the chariot and coach discovered at a site closer to the tomb but displayed here. Each is drawn by four horses. Both are about half scale.

To come back I took the regular bus rather than a minibus. It was only ¥3.50, but did not take the expressway. But since there was no traffic jam or road blocks, it was faster. It also went past the Banpo site, so I now know the bus I should have taken yesterday.

Walking back from the station I passed a market street and went in to take a look. There were various pieces of cooked meat in stalls on one side of the street, sausages and fresh meat (un-refrigerated, lying on cardboard) on the other. Further along were tanks with fresh fish and others with shrimp, snakes, turtles, frogs, eels, crabs, *etc.* At the end of the street was a covered market with staples. It makes the local Chinese stores in Nijmegen look very limited.

Tonight's meal was the cheapest so far, ¥12.50, although I must admit it was less than I usually eat. I went to a Muslim restaurant. You get a large bowl and two, approximately 5 inch diameter, pieces of very dense, dry bread. The waitress asked if I spoke Chinese and when I said no explained in good English that first I was to wash my hands at the sink, then to break the bread in very small pieces. When that was ready she would take it to the kitchen where a ladle of beef would be poured over it. A clothes pin with a number was attached to the bowl so that I could be sure that I got my own bowl back. There were chili peppers (sambal) and some herbs that one could add and cloves of fresh garlic to eat with it. It tasted pretty good, but clearly I had not broken my bread fine enough since it did not absorb all the broth as did that of some Chinese locals sitting nearby.

Shortly after I had started breaking bread, a Chinese, also alone, was seated at the same table as I—it was a large table for 8 or 10 and was the only free table so that they were using it for the singles. He asked me in good English if this was my first time at the restaurant. When I said "yes", he said "me too." It turned out that he was a mechanical engineer from Beijing in Xi'an to do some consulting. He had been to Finland and Norway and was supposed to have gone to Holland a few years ago but the trip had been canceled. He said he had heard that you just had to try

this restaurant when in Xi'an. He also did not break his bread fine enough, and his opinion of the meal was the same as mine: not bad, but not to be repeated too often.

After dinner I walked down to the South Gate. It was very pleasant. The walls and the guard houses on top of the walls were outlined in colored lights. There was music from the loudspeakers and lots of people about enjoying the evening. It looked like there might be a sort of amusement park on top of the walls, but I did not go up, deciding to wait until tomorrow when I can take some pictures.

Thursday, Aug. 31. I was right about the amusement park, but first things first.

I started the day with three dumplings instead of two because last night's dinner was so light. Then I walked to the Small Goose Pagoda. I would have walked right by the entrance had a Chinese woman not told me what it was (in Chinese). Like the Big Goose Pagoda, it is not very interesting, being almost entirely brick. But the grounds were nice. It was clear that it is no longer used for worship—no monks, no incense. Instead there are souvenir shops in *all* the buildings.

I then walked back into town and did some shopping. Then back to the hotel for an early (12:00) lunch of one big apple. I asked at the hotel desk about transportation to the airport. They had nothing to offer except a "special arrangement" with a taxi for Y120 instead of (they say) Y150. I pointed out that the shuttle bus only costs Y11. They got me a bit worried saying that I would then have to leave so much earlier, and I decided to go to the air terminal to check. When I had inquired at an airline booking office in the hotel I had been told to take the 6 a.m. bus, but now they were saying 5 a.m. The air terminal was not that much out of the way since I was going to the West gate anyway, only about 3 km. more there and back. They confirmed that the 6 a.m. bus was the right one.

Back at the west gate, I went inside and climbed the stairs. There was a ticket booth at the entrance, but no one there; so I got in for free! However, from this gate you could not go further along the walls, which is what I wanted to do. So, back down and I walked along the inside of the walls heading south. At the SW corner you could get up onto the walls (for Y10). Unfortunately, walking along the walls was rather boring, although there were views of the town and of men playing cards in the shade of trees below, until I got near the south gate, where, indeed, it was sort of like an amusement park, but one geared to small children—say up to 6 or 7.

Friday, Sept. 1. My last day in China! I was up by 5, checked out of the hotel, and took a taxi, for which I had to pay the minimum price of Y10 even though the distance was much less. I arrived well before 6 at the air terminal, which was good, because the minibus filled up quickly. By 6, when we were to leave, the bus was overflowing, with the aisle packed full of standing passengers. I was glad I had a seat because it took 40 minutes to get to the airport, which is far outside of town.

The airbus to Beijing was uneventful. After a bit of searching at the Beijing airport, I found the international departure area. I paid the departure tax and then found the exchange booth to change my remaining yuan into hard currency. I chose U.S. dollars since they have lower value bills than do other hard currencies. (I don't understand why the U. S. persists with \$1 bills, but here it was handy.)

I got my baggage through the X-ray machine and then stood in the departure area carefully watching for the check-in gate that would be for Austrian Air. I noticed people with an Austrian Air sign near one gate. So I went there and was one of

the first in line when the check-in finally started. But my cleverness was all for nothing, because Austrian Airlines insisted that suitcases be tied with a special tape immediately after the X-ray. They only did that at one of the machines. And I had put my bags through the other one. By the time I had walked back to the guys doing the binding, who bound my bag without my having to put it through the X-ray again (so much for that safety precaution), there was a long line of shoving people. I have never been in such a disorganized check-in. It seemed to be largely tour groups from Eastern Europe who were doing the most shoving. I complained to the poor Austrian Airlines ground stewardess, holding my Swissair-Austrian Air frequent flyer card conspicuously. I asked her to check if my number had been entered and if there was a window seat still available. She set aside the seat for me, and after that I didn't really care how much longer I had to wait in line.

From then on, it was uneventful: a long flight, a long wait in the Vienna airport for the plane to Amsterdam, and then the train home.

Aftermath: The travel agent willingly refunded my extra expenses and my unused hotel but balked at compensation for the loss in sightseeing time, citing a couple of passages in their tour conditions. But I didn't accept that and after another exchange of letters got what I asked for.